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Historical Knowing and Creative Politics in Machiavelli and Vico

by

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Abstract

Historical Knowing and Creative Politics in Machiavelli and Vico

by

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The following reading of Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova* (1744) employs a Machiavellian lens to illustrate how issues preventing political longevity and encouraging ever-proliferating contingencies are overcome epistemologically, not through atemporal Cartesian reason, but rather through a layered, trans-historical hermeneutics. Because Vico frequently references (both tacitly and explicitly) Niccolò Machiavelli and because the two thinkers have a common grounding in humanist studies, particularly in rhetoric, the present discussion will explore the ways in which they share a distinct worldview that defines history as the epistemological experience of the individual and places concerns for proper governance at its core.

A triadic interpretive schema will parse through three major thematic threads common to both Machiavellian and Vichean thought—advice; the individual; and communal laws—in order to analyze their three corresponding modes of argumentation—the visual, the metaphorical/poetical, and the legal—that are essential to substantiate the affinities and novelty of these two thinkers' practical philosophies.

The Introduction will discuss Machiavelli and Vico's similar peripheral location with respect to modernity as a means to establish the basis for their comparison. Specifically, the Introduction will explain why Machiavelli's writings deepen comprehension of the *Scienza nuova* and the claim Vico puts forth within it of its innovation from his pro-Descartes contemporaries.

Chapter One, entitled "Allegorical Thinking and the Problem of Contingency," will confront the difficulty of securing universally applicable praxes, as typified by the slippery counsel in Machiavelli's *Principe*, and will analyze how Vico proposes a solution through the *Scienza*'s frontispiece. By foregrounding the rhetorical and interpretative techniques that enable allegory to link two levels of meaning—surface and hidden, poetical and philosophical—Chapter One will show how the Machiavellian prince anticipates the overcoming of temporal obstacles that is central to the reading and

implementation of Vico's science, particularly through the visualization of two moments in time.

Chapter Two, entitled "The Individual, the Collective, and the Fictions of Exemplarity," analyzes the entity responsible for the resolution of contingency, moving from the individual to the many. Machiavelli, in his *Vita di Castruccio Castracani*, obliquely answers the question he proposes on the waning validity of the self as both model and propagator of continuity, overturning the efficacy of legacies according to filial succession for one based on interpretative ties. Chapter Two contends that Castruccio's sayings look forward to the ways in which Vico argues Homer's exemplarity as depending less on an individual's merits and more on a collective representational impulse, with a person's identity becoming the vehicle for the majority's ideas, desires, and will.

Chapter Three, entitled "Legislating the Histories of Human Thinking," brings together the allegorical and collective modes of thinking from Chapters One and Two, respectively, in order to demonstrate how both Machiavelli and Vico envision laws as essential to political stability and history as essential to practical philosophy. By comparing representations of legal processes and order in Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* and in the final two books of Vico's *Scienza*, Chapter Three's argument will highlight the core kinship between these two thinkers' political theories as centered on the need to safeguard societies against change by using the very source of change itself—the human mind and its concrete, disembodied manifestations in society.

For my family

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of
wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth
alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

John 12:24

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Pairing Machiavelli and Vico: The New beyond Modernity

Whether for the amorality of his prince or for the psychology of his plebs, Niccolò Machiavelli's turn toward modernity centers on politics. The degree of this move presupposes that civic involvement in some ways reflects a modern viewpoint, and as J.G.A. Pocock describes, the "Machiavellian moment" reflects a concern for man's experience and for his understanding of change that is precisely what Cartesian certainty aims to resolve.[1] To have Machiavellian republicanism correspond to modernity defined as such is to admit a foundation in the individual as well as a similar interconnectedness between thought and language, between language and action, whose epistemological newness relates to a new form of government. Yet this presupposed relation misses the fundamental stability and self-sufficiency that modernity sought to establish, and is at odds with both the atemporality modernity proposes itself as having and with the narrative and interpretive elements at play that make literature and history invalid sources in the formation of a new, modern frame of mind.

The tendency to emphasize as paradigmatic certain aspects of Machiavelli's texts results in a series of studies that too quickly conflate man's anxiety and perception of change with modernity's quest for stability. Pocock (1975), for example, builds from the Machiavellian distinction of *fortuna* and *virtù* to develop a language of politics for which the terms "custom," "grace," and "fortune" explain the rise of modern republics and therefore of a stable form of government. In a similar vein, Gustavo Costa (1977) traces the depiction of Germanic culture from Machiavelli to Giambattista Vico (a thinker on the other temporal side of Descartes and modernity), employing republicanism as a "hermeneutic instrument" to understand all nations.[2] For Costa, Germanic culture

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[1] The word "man" is intentionally used and not as a gender-neutral term. Both Machiavelli and Vico describe their realities with a distinct, masculine subject in mind, and both thinkers figure women and femininity against or in conflict with this male subjectivity. To a large extent, Vico's texts engage in Machiavellian gender politics and therefore imagine a cognitive power as exerting itself a distinctly gendered object, the most concrete example in the *Scienza nuova* of the *primi uomini* beating and dragging the *schive e ritrose donne* into caves and thus forming society's first families. One could also explore the implications of Vico's maternal metaphors in his description of the *mondo fanciullo* and, more broadly, the strong emphasis on the body; see Said (1976). While such a study of gender in Vico remains to be written, for an overview of this type of scholarship on Machiavelli, consult Spackman (2010) and Falco (2004).

[2] Costa explains, "Due versioni diverse, ma non contrastanti, del germanesimo risultarono definitivamente acquisite: quella machiavelliana, eminentemente etico-politica, per cui la Germania veniva a coincidere con la libertà e la purezza delle origini; e quella tassiana, soprattutto eroico-estetica, per cui la Scandinavia, tradizionalmente considerata la matrice dei popoli

simultaneously represents the paradigm of stable governance and the barbarous creativity that will trigger the return to this ideal republic.[3] It is, according to Pocock and Costa, the individual's involvement in politics that allows him to perceive change and, from this frame of mind, to transform himself into maker and center of his environment. Yet in attempts to counteract Benedetto Croce's "absolute historicism" that focuses on the immanent quality of the human experience, scholarship on both Machiavelli and Vico has gone too far in a historicist direction, preventing a clear understanding of how these thinkers relate to each other and, as a consequence, to modernity. Rocco Montano (1977) is an early example of this post-Croce tendency: he concludes that, given the differences in the currents and habits of their respective milieus, no affinity can exist between Machiavelli and Vico, but rather a teleological relationship in which Vico corrects the problems Machiavelli puts forth. Enrico Nuzzo (2001), educated in the historicist school of Pietro Piovani, has more recently attempted to question Vico's relation to the history of historicism, and while not overtly rejecting the validity of the historicist position, Nuzzo explores the nuances of Vico's distinction between universality and individuality in order to reevaluate the possibility of a historically-informed modern reason that does not preclude a metaphysics.

Newer studies have thus reopened the possibility of relating Machiavelli to Vico genealogically, returning in part to Croce's universality of genius, specifically to the observation that both individuals constructed a world vision around human action and, more significantly, around the philosophical potential of the human maker or poet. Current attention to both rhetoric and the imagination reveals a concern for praxis at the base of the Machiavelli-Vico connection. Indeed, as Giuseppe Mazzotta (1999) periodically states throughout his work on Vico and Nancy Struever (1992) explicitly affirms, the link between Machiavelli and Vico revolves around a specific theoretical premise that has practical consequences.[4] Both these two scholars and others note that Machiavelli and Vico share in the literary culture of the early humanists; this commonality explains the fundamental link between rhetoric and politics that characterizes their respective works, grounding man at the center. It also suggests a more innovative figuration at the core of their thought. The union of the arts and the spectacle of politics that the Medicis' Florence represented for Machiavelli propagated instability of meaning and an account of the world as multiplicity. In contrast, the world of Vico, having abandoned the utility of literary education to civic life, demonstrated a singular form in its post-Cartesian allegiance to certainty through reason. An effect of these two

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germanici, diventava l'estremo rifugio della fantasia poetica" (121). In his view, Vico is responsible for synthesizing these two versions in his description of the *primi uomini*.

[3] Costa interprets *germanesimo* as a *topos* within the entire Italian literary tradition, but its effect is most clearly evidenced by the shift from Machiavelli to Vico.

[4] Struever writes, "The important resemblance between the Machiavellian and Vichean investigational programs lies in the intrication of abstractness of mode and impurity of topic […] Theory—strong arguments which establish the interactive status of separate investigative elements—justifies narrative and metaphorical modes" (214-215).

worldviews on understanding the material production of Machiavelli and Vico is to define history as the epistemological experience of the individual. History is not what one does, but is how one knows. According to Machiavelli and Vico, the concern for proper governance is an interpretative struggle that man wages at different moments in time and under different contingencies, and that history, defined as an individual's mode of cognition and action, becomes the way to understand what this struggle entails.

Such readings that in different ways theorize the historicist and interpretive aspects of Machiavelli's and Vico's texts begin to explore the consequences of a modern epistemology to these thinkers' political descriptions. As in the case of Roberto Esposito (1980), the tension between subjectivity and power originates in Machiavelli and sets off the evolution of political forms that ends with the development of ideology.[5] In the case of Mazzotta, he attributes a prophetic and metaphysical stance to the individual's mode of cognition as history, returning to Christian typology of the Hebrew Bible. But even as these scholars recognize the existence of a thinking "I" and an "I" embedded in language, they skirt the full epistemological implications of a political philosophy. For example, the role Machiavelli gives to rhetoric as determining action independent of any model makes him a champion of neither the prince nor the people; instead it makes him aware that forms of government reflect an individual's specific interpretive attitude whose expression aims to persuade others to act or behave in a certain way. These characteristics suggestive of the Machiavel are the aspects that Vico overtly attacks, but it is through this antagonism that Vico acknowledges his concern for the same problems Machiavelli raises and offers a solution that underscores their shared epistemological concerns—that is, how can one know the causes behind human creation. The term "modernity" for Machiavelli and Vico signals a reassessment of the previous scholarship's historicist position in order to reorient history within a different, philosophical framework. The modern question zeroes in on the problems left unresolved by modernity itself in order to propose an alternative mode of thinking whose expression is not through the detached, internalized "ego" but through the socialized, creative individual whose interpretive knowing composes history.

It may seem paradoxical to deny the historicist's position that gives priority to the context in which each thinker worked and in the same breath affirm the centrality within their thought of history *qua* the interpretive experience of the individual; but it is how man describes and makes sense of the past that grounds Vico's overt antagonism toward Machiavelli, namely toward Machiavelli's denial of a form underlying collective human

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[5] Esposito characterizes Machiavelli's problematic as "la costituzione del sapere […] tocca e percorre sia la forma del potere che la storia della soggettività […] da un lato è ancora il potere a determinare il soggetto, dall'altro è il soggetto ad affacciarsi, a penetrare, e ancora a rappresentare il cerchio, pur sempre chiuso e sintetico, del potere." The endpoint of ideology that Esposito describes relates to Gramsci's and Althusser's respective interpretations of Machiavelli; their readings emphasize the practical means of action and the strategic mobilization of the state form. In contrast, Leo Strauss attacks Machiavelli for precisely these reasons and for denying the philosophical-rational grounds for action.

experiences. Machiavelli's use of cycles in his works, most notably in his *Discorsi*, suggests an underlying structure, yet it is ultimately without a metaphysical ground. If Providence orders human experience in such a way as to make its interpretation indicative of a purposeful whole, to deny Providence is to deny the difference between right and wrong action and to reject meaning in the synthesis of experience across time. The schism between morality and politics that characterizes Machiavelli's novelty means to forever divorce the exercise of a morally responsible free will, governed by the intellect and models of the good and the bad, from that of a will to power in which man's desires replace these models to dictate necessity and choice.[6] Machiavelli pinpoints morality as the cause behind the crisis of exemplarity that prevents the applicability of specific qualities to varying contexts.[7] When morality imposes itself on the will, it conceals the true lessons of interpretation, that the individual variously perceives circumstances and determines different yet equally possible actions; but to remove morality from the determination of proper action is to liberate the human mind and to open it up to its own infinite potential to create. The individual is no longer restricted to the parameters of exemplary lives, and the threat of pure contingency reappears as a productive imagination with no bounds to its interpretation of the world. Thus when Vico states that history is what humans make, and humans know only what they make, Vico reclaims history as a form of knowledge independent of morality and entirely dependent on the creativity of the mind.

Despite then his providential ground to human experience, Vico's conception of the human mind and of the knowledge it grasps lacks the teleological formulation that later develops into Hegelian idealism. History is not what people do following a paradigm for action, toward a goal of an ultimate (if unknowable) good; it is how people think according to their own desires. Vico's society is Machiavellian insofar as it prioritizes these positivistic practices determined by the individual and his desires over morally dictated relations. Therefore Vico's attempt at mitigating Machiavellian chaos reveals an affinity with a core set of Machiavellian principles: that infinite desires drive men; that fundamental inequalities in society differentiate men; that these differences are beneficial to the state and that they manifest themselves through the interaction of arms and laws; and more importantly that the will to power is the power to persuade. As Roberto

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[6] Irrespective of the extent to or manner in which Machiavelli and Vico explicitly addresses the issue of free will in their concern with the practical decisions of everyday life (for example, Lady Fortune in Chapter 25 of the *Principe*), both raise questions of freedom and choice in their treatment of history as a demonstration and development of human thought. Vico may suggest an ultimate goal of the good in history, that is, in man's thinking, but he nevertheless shares Machiavelli's valorization of a creative human mind unconcerned with controlling choice against an Ideal. Furthermore, these choices engender a certain power responsible for unifying a collectivity through practices. The concept of a "will to power" follows Nietzsche's treatment of history in the hands of men in his *The Use and Abuse of History*. See also Rosen (1987).
[7] On manifestations of the crisis of exemplarity in Machiavelli, consult Hampton (1990) and Kahn (1993).

Esposito explains, Machiavelli and Vico are connected through the progressive intertwining of the instruments of power and the instruments of knowledge within the context of the individual's subjectivity.[8] Machiavelli's insistence on arms, for example, champions in many ways the spectacle of power over pure brute force because it is this spectacle of power that most effectively conditions and convinces.

Yet rather than reject morality *tout court*, Vico relegates it to the realm of the true and of the divine that potentially coincides with the beginning of each *corso*.[9] He attributes the unknowability of morality to an innate *giustizia* that is beyond the scope of intelligibility of an individual's mind, even as that mind constructs the laws and customs of its society. The object of the intellect is for Vico the certain and the empirical rather than the true, to which Christian truth and goodness belong. Vico accepts the unknowability of morality in order to acknowledge the most creative and innovative capabilities of the human mind that are willed by desires and that constitute the substance of human understanding. History as this material interpretation of human creation, the poetical-political, inaugurates an entirely human mode of knowledge. When Vico states that poetic figures, like Tasso's Goffredo, are truer than historical individuals, he grasps the possibility and validity of Machiavelli's composite prince, for example, and reorients the question of exemplarity within the context of allegorical figures. Machiavelli and Vico devise an archetype of power that conceives of politics as a series of persuasive interpretations for which history describes the mode and ground for action.

By giving history-as-thought-process a transcendent form, Vico modifies the implications of never having politics and morality coincide: he transforms Machiavelli's politics from an interpretative paradigm on the verge of pure artistic creation into a science whose laws preserve man from skepticism and destruction.[10] Vico's concern is to preserve Machiavellian creativity, but never to the exclusion of divine purpose, for it is against this divinity that Vico sanctions and taps into what is wholly human. History is didactic not by virtue of the actions it organizes, but because of the thought process that

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[8] Esposito states, "[Il] rapporto che lega il nodo potere-sapere […] al tema della soggettività. *Quali* soggetti forma la storia del potere e che tipo di sapere è capace di renderli *soggetti* di quella storia? Che nesso il potere stringe tra soggettività e forma e come la soggettività può sapere/potere su questo nesso?" (14).

[9] There has been considerable discussion on how to interpret Vico's definition of Providence and as a consequence his configuration of the relationship between the certain and the true. Scholars have yet to reach consensus on Vico's religiosity however through his *verum-factum* principle, one can generally conclude that Vico connects the certain and the true as between theory/metaphysics and praxis/reality. The extent to which these terms are separated from each other corresponds to a specific moment in the *corso/ricorso* cycle.

[10] The distinction between the republican Machiavelli of the *Discorsi* and Machiavelli's Machiavelli of the *Principe* suggests two distinct treatments of continuity—the former prioritizing stability, the latter prioritizing the new. However, while Vico overtly positions himself against the Machiavel, this study will explore the possibility of a third Machiavelli, best perceived in his *Istorie fiorentine*, whose patterns infiltrate Vico's cyclical conception of human knowing.

these actions reflect and can be interpreted as having. By reading the *Scienza nuova* chronologically through the lens of different iterations of Machiavellian creativity, one can begin to understand how history reflects an intellectual mode and that which is properly human. When Machiavelli and Vico respectively evoke "la verità effetuale delle cose" and "il certo," both emphasize a specific conception of man's understanding of his thought process, a process that extends over time and changes through history, which is nothing other than the development of the human mind's understanding of its own being in the world.[11]

The present study will demonstrate how Machiavelli elaborates specific problems whose implications resonate throughout Vico's *Scienza nuova* (1744). This study will offer a book-by-book reading of the *Scienza nuova* in order to home in on how Vico uses his response to Machiavelli to develop a different ground for philosophy. The purpose of reading the *Scienza nuova* chronologically and of isolating each of its sections is to draw attention to the particulars of how Vico understands and describes the process by which humans create their own society through language and how he conceives this process as dependent on the development of the human mind. Moreover, this attention to human creation and understanding reflects how Vico explicates and expects his reader to understand his science as a "nuova arte critica" (*SN* 7). Vico's theory of human knowledge is also a lesson in knowledge, structured so that others may understand. Such a parallel in the content and mode of his work stresses the importance of language and emphasizes the definition of human choice and action as persuasive interpretations.

Machiavelli is in this respect already implicitly coded into any reading of the *Scienza nuova*. His explicit addition to this analysis of Vico's text will draw out the details of the interconnectedness between human imagination and human authority, and will also demonstrate how Vico builds upon and responds to the problems of boundless human creativity that Machiavelli raises. The search for meaning that Machiavelli and Vico, both working from the rhetorical tradition, attribute to the use and development of language is always relational and therefore situates action within a community. According to this tradition, the question of whether rhetoric holds meaning in and of itself sets up a series of dualities between words and deeds, public duties and private desires that culminate in the duality between the subject who speaks and writes, and the object of that speaking and writing. Rhetoric defines meaning within the context of a community, and politics mediate the ever-shifting parameters for action. Yet attention to the meaning derived from these rhetorically dictated dualities and relations misses the greater implication of the meaning this use of rhetoric implies. In many respects, Machiavelli and Vico's innovation is the recognition of the power an individual employs to construct a community for which language mirrors a specific mental state. This power is an effect of man's mode of thinking, and this mode is the cause of all action. By pairing a Machiavellian text with a single book of the *Scienza nuova*, the reader may begin to understand Vico's strategies at mitigating Machiavellian creativity. This coupling more

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[11] This thinking individual is opposed to the self-enclosed, Cartesian subject.

generally proposes the anxious awareness within Machiavelli's creative mode of its insufficient grasp of the true causes of things.

Chapter One, entitled "Allegorical Thinking and the Problem of Contingency," will analyze Book One of the *Scienza nuova* through Machiavelli's *Prinicpe*, focusing on man's position in nature as indicative of man's understanding of himself vis-à-vis a metaphysical origin and man-made beginnings. The providentially sanctioned call for action in the troubling final chapter of the *Principe* makes clear the problem against which Vico presents his science. As the explication of the Vichean *dipintura* as a *mappa mundi* delineates the bounds and limits to human knowledge, an argument first put forth by Mazzotta (1999), the parameters for the advice Machiavelli gives his prince similarly circumscribe the knowledge it contains. Yet in contrast to Cartesian certainty that claims man's mastery of nature as beginning a unique epistemology that he creates for himself and that disposes of interpretive understanding, both Machiavelli and Vico propose a different kind of mastery for which the senses and experience grasp the verisimilar rather than the true. For Vico, the use of allegory stresses a particular dialectic of surface images and underlying meaning that enables what Angus Fletcher (1986) describes as a sense of the sublime, by which through a direct sense of experience's limits, the individual perceives indirectly the divine's limitless existence.[12] The sublime, however, serves Vico's purpose to the extent that it emphasizes humanity's limits, as this sensual suggestion of the divine defines human creativity and affirms the realm of human action. It is this sensation that the *dipintura* as a mnemonic device prepares for how memory functions in the epistemological system Vico teaches the reader and will become explicit in his figuration of the *ricorso*. Furthermore, the duality of allegorical construction and interpretation as well as its effect of the sublime return to the mobilization of the verisimilar and the poetic by Machiavelli's prince in order to anticipate action. Tapping into debates over the distinction between philosophy and poetry, the prince's verisimilar mode relies on the disorienting experience of a new landscape and denotes the creative beginning of an epistemology whose main object of study develops into politics and involves the simultaneous thinking of two temporal moments, suggesting a consonance between theory and practice.

Chapter Two, entitled "The Individual, the Collective, and the Fictions of Exemplarity," will build from anxieties about contingencies to question the didactic potential of the individual, as represented in Machiavelli's portrait of Castruccio Castracani, to which Book Three of the *Scienza nuova* proposes the figure of Homer, evacuated of all its individuality, as the answer. Machiavelli's concern for longevity across generations circumscribes a larger anxiety for permanence that exceeds the limits of the individual and to the kind of human knowledge it projects. In response, he and Vico redefine the limits of the individual into the limitlessness of the poetic aspect of the human whole, the constructive capability of humanity. The interpretative tools therefore

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[12] For a more general analysis of the sublime in Vico, consult Lollini (1994). For an interpretation of the sublime in Machiavelli's *Principe*, see Greene (1984).

employed to knowing Castruccio Castracani, who would otherwise have limited validity in the context and action of the specific individual's life, transform into what can be learned outside of this specificity in the mode of the collective, of the *sensus communis*, with which the Ancient Greeks figured Homer. Book Three of the *Scienza nuova* therefore enacts a redefinition of humanist exemplarity and consequently modifies how the individual, both a font of historical events and of historical order, relates to and interacts with universal truths. More specifically, the paired analyses of the *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* and the third book of the *Scienza nuova* demonstrate how the personal, temporal struggle between fathers and sons anticipates techniques for the survival of states and their laws over time, as the didactic purpose of exemplars, of expressing models in narrative that fit in the greater narrative of human actions (history), gives way to a deeper insight concerning how humans think and create, but also on how individuals reach consensus on shared beliefs and thus on the formation of communities.

Chapter Three, entitled "Legislating the Histories of Human Thinking," will combine the allegorical and collective modes of thinking from Chapters One and Two, respectively, in order to demonstrate how both Machiavelli and Vico envision laws as essential to political stability, and history as essential to practical philosophy. The apparent incommensurability of time and exemplary politics (or politicians) becomes a threat to the knowability and predictability of history, and by comparing representations of legal processes and order in Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* and in the final two books of Vico's *Scienza*, Chapter Three's argument will highlight the core kinship between these two thinkers' political theories as centered on the need to safeguard societies against change by using the very source of change itself—the human mind and its concrete, disembodied manifestations in society. Moreover, descriptions of group dynamics and impulses shed light on multiplicity and repeatability, specifically on how both relate to political stability (or lack thereof) and the start of knowledge; as governments figuratively die and are reborn, the processes through which earlier man's experiential knowing becomes the present man's *a priori* understanding of the world give shape and meaning to history, embedded in laws and without recourse to a divine origin. Chapter Three will thus conclude by underscoring how the battle Machiavelli and Vico wage against contingency is proof of their shared difference with respect to other thinkers as well as of their essential affinity around history because together they effect a new, experiential method to perceiving and mitigating the causes behind change by locating them within the individual's mind.

CHAPTER ONE
Allegorical Thinking and the Problem of Contingency

Signor', mirate come 'l tempo vola,
et sí come la vita
fugge, et la morte n'è sovra le spalle.
Voi siete or qui; pensate a la partita:
ché l'alma ignuda et sola
conven ch'arrive a quel dubbioso calle.
Al passar questa valle
piacciavi porre giù l'odio et lo sdegno,
vènti contrari a la vita serena;
et quel che 'n altrui pena
tempo si spende, in qualche acto più degno
o di mano o d'ingegno,
in qualche bella lode,
in qualche honesto studio si converta:
cosí qua giù si gode,
et la strada del ciel si trova aperta.
                       Francesco Petrarca, "Italia mia," *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,
                       CXXVIII.97-112

         When Niccolò Machiavelli concludes his *Principe* by citing Francesco Petrarca's
poem, "Italia mia," Machiavelli invokes a similar exhortation to change the miserable
political condition of the Italian peninsula and in so doing reinforces his own call to
action directed at Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino. The plea for this realization of an
Italia involves delineating borders around a landscape that is to be governed by a political
leader whose ruling method, as scholars such as Giuseppe Mazzotta and Nancy Struever
have noted, appropriates techniques from the poet. The extent to which Machiavelli
presents his prince as new in comparison to Petrarch's "signori" is an essential part to the
intertwining of the poetic and the political that has become a variably articulated *topos* in
the works of Italian writers. In the most general sense, however, Machiavelli's innovation
lies in the manner in which he offers a response to the more far-reaching questions first
posed in Classical debates over the distinction between philosophy and poetry.
         From Classical antiquity through Machiavelli's age, discussions over philosophy
and poetry persisted, as did, more importantly, the techniques that characterized them.
Allegory, in particular, is relevant because it is an interpretive process that mediates
between two different planes of meaning and therefore similar to, as the present
discussion will suggest, the role politics plays between a leader's actions and the

metaphysical abstraction grounding his vision of the state in history. Petrarch's "Italia mia" already demonstrates that guidance is necessary to catalyze and facilitate the shift from a material existence to another state of being: the soul traveling through the "valle" must rein in the emotional turmoil that like "vènti contrari a la vita serena" prevent the individual "qua giù" from leading the kind of life that opens up the path "del ciel." The movement between these two different planes of consciousness is also, for Petrarch, analogous to the motion in which "quel che 'n altrui pena / tempo si spende […] si converta" into a "bella lode" or "honesto studio." That the "bella lode" and the task for which the "signori" are called into action result from the same operation emphasizes how mediating entities are able to collapse distinctions between philosophy and poetry, or more generally, following Struever's interpretive model, between theory and practice.

Whereas on the surface Machiavelli's *Principe* appears less concerned with political longevity as a means to spiritual salvation, by quoting Petrarch, Machiavelli signals that his mode belies the work's content insofar as a desire to combat time's passing and create something lasting remains. Machiavelli's apparent glorification of contingency, while touted as the solution to ineffectual politics, is shown rather to be an astute diagnosis of the terminal illness that will always be politics' undoing. Machiavelli praises those leaders who can employ a relativism of method, never mind that no one such person exists at a given moment in time, but he also emphasizes aspects of this method that are more suited to the poet, namely the ability to create and, if necessary, re-create the point of origin for something and renew the conditions at hand.

Giambattista Vico, as he himself claims, brings to completion Machiavelli's attempt at a new method. From the very first page of his *Scienza nuova*, Vico shows how allegory can fulfill politics' potential to create something that strives for the eternal; by simultaneously representing two moments, allegory becomes the model for collapsing the destructive contingencies that have precluded successful and cogent plans of action into a stable, if not predictably cyclical thought paradigm. For Vico, simultaneity will open the mind to its most complete understanding of the world and will attenuate the tragic temporal element that will always characterize human consciousness. As Petrarch cautions his ineffectual leaders, "mirate come il tempo vola," Machiavelli and Vico reverse a series of endings by making each ending contemporaneous with a beginning. The recognition that divine and eternal peace is inimical to life on earth, despite the perfect nature of its creator, allows both thinkers to reorient themselves and their readers to what humans can create. This is in many respects the core of humanistic thought. However unlike Pico della Mirandola's chameleonic human, Machiavelli's and Vico's subjects must harness not only an ability to change form, but also the ability to change time.

The present discussion will first offer a critique of the allegorical tradition and, in so doing, orient the analysis of Machiavelli's and Vico's respective innovations because each uses allegory to structure his search for hidden stability within a fluctuating reality. Moreover, since allegory both applies to the work of authors and of their interpreters, it is essential to examine the aspects of these distinct traditions in order to make clear how Machiavelli and Vico take from both in their attempt to combine practice and theory,

poetic creation and epistemological principles, as they battle with contingency. Close readings of Machiavelli's *Principe* and Book One of Vico's *Scienza nuova* will then aim to show how allegory—once the mediator between a poetic surface and metaphysical core—brings together two moments in time and consequently allows the individual to tap into stable meaning, specifically within the political sphere.

1.   Allegory as the Practice of Authors

The *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines allegory as "a term that denotes two complementary procedures: a way of composing literature and a way of interpreting it" (31).[1] Allegory, then, is either the process of "construct[ing]" or "explain[ing]" a literary work, the most basic difference between the two processes depending on whether the work in question is being or already is completed. Furthermore, "compositional allegory is essentially a grammatical or rhetorical technique" that transforms abstract ideas into characters in a narrative and to a lesser extent can present itself as "a brief trope," "a sustained metaphor," or "an ironic form of discourse, in which a speaker says something other than what he intends" (Whitman *Allegory* 4; *Princeton Encyclopedia* 31).

The first century C.E. Roman rhetorician, Quintilian, writes about a "verborum habitu" or "verbal dress" as the necessary presentation of an idea that does it justice and prevents its corruption; he includes compositional allegory as one of the many rhetorical strategies that enable and facilitate meaning while also providing embellishment (*The Orator's Education* 8.Prooemium.20; 8.6.3; 8.6.57). Like Cicero before him, Quintilian never wavers on the true focus of any good rhetorician: "Quare non ut intellegere possit sed ne omnino possit non intellegere curandum" ("The thing to aim at is not that he should be able to understand but that he should anyway not be able not to understand," 8.2.24). In other words, the rhetorician who employs allegory can never fail his audience and must prioritize comprehension above all else. Yet this definition of allegory, particularly for the connection Quintilian makes to metaphor, makes issues of transparency and clarity inherent in allegory as an orator's tool, for one, when allegory is used ironically to soften harsh facts (8.6.57) and for another, when it lapses into enigma (8.6.52).[2]

The interplay between the apparent substance of a work that rests on its surface and the mode by which a work's second, hidden meaning is presented has implications

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[1] For an overview of contemporary scholarship on allegory, consult *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, edited by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck.

[2] Theresa Kelley, *Reinventing Allegory*, 22: "Whether it inverts meaning or otherwise ironizes the narrative it offers, allegory disturbs ordinary expectations that outward appearances might accurately convey meaning." Such disruption to "ordinary expectations" adds to the sensation of deception, on the part of the rhetorician, by drawing attention to the artifice used to communicate a message, indirectly and perhaps dishonestly, that can impede comprehension.

that extend beyond the realm of rhetorical strategies. Perhaps the most significant consequence is, as Theresa Kelley notes, that compositional allegory communicates meaning through a relationship between a perceived visual and an intellectually constructed argument; what allegory elicits in a reader is visual, suggesting therefore that compositional allegory's two levels—literal and hidden—can also be respectively described as visual and abstract (*Reinventing Allegory* 17).

Erich Auerbach, in his essay "*Figura*," attributes the title-term's original meaning to "plastic form" and traces its grammatical, philosophical, and poetical inflections in various texts of Classical antiquity (11). He discusses Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and notes the author's difficulty in maintaining a distinction between *figura* and trope (25-26). This is significant because it emphasizes the former term's ability to encapsulate any type of rhetorical technique that manipulates language to create another meaning different from a single word's or expression's literal significance. Auerbach continues, writing that *figura*'s legacy as it approached the medieval period stressed dynamism and a simultaneous fascination with and concern for "the shades in meaning between form and copy, in changing form and the deceptive likenesses" (21). It is, however, during the subsequent era that, as Auerbach states, early Christians transform *figura* to have greater implications on not only textual meaning, but also on meaning more generally, of the spiritual self and of the real world.

The fifth century C.E. poet Prudentius narrates the story of Abraham in the preface to his *Psychomachia* and concludes, "haec ad figuram praenotata est linea, / quam nostra recto vita resculpat pede" ("This picture has been drawn beforehand to be a model for our life to trace out again with true measure," 50-51). The use of *figura* here suggest how compositional allegory, during the early stages of the tradition made attempts to cohere both Classical literary traditions and Christian teachings, as well as to inaugurate an affinity between the Old and New Testaments, wherein stories from the Hebrew Bible anticipate the life of Christ and mirror the linear trajectory of each individual's creation, fall and redemption in this world.[3] As Marc Mastrangelo writes, "The characters in the poem are not merely epic warriors but are also abstract virtues and vices that demonstrate a Christian soul's content and structure. [...] The plot is not just a series of set piece

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[3] Marc Mastrangelo in his book, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul*, emphasizes Prudentius' "interest in apophatic or negative theology, the idea that human reason in the form of language can neither describe nor capture adequately the divine godhead and, by extension, the divine part of the soul" (83). Allegory becomes the way to approach and impart this knowledge, and Mastrangelo makes the claim that "poetry can express the truth of Christian dogma and universal history with absolute clarity, not in explanatory words, but in words that represent typological allegories that express the inexpressible" (170). Moreover, just as the *Princeton Encyclopedia* describes the *Psychomachia* as an example of compositional allegory's "chronological force," Mastrangelo stakes a claim for Prudentius as a precursor to later medieval figural poets because "already in Prudentius, Rome's political and military success is universalized through a simultaneously diachronic and synchronic history of Christian salvation" (33; 172).

battles between good and evil but, rather, the story of individual and collective spiritual struggle of Roman Christians" (82). Mastrangelo makes a claim that Prudentius anticipates the typological innovation Auerbach attributes to later authors, such as Dante Alighieri, because of the presence of a historical reality in an allegorical composition that invokes biblical history or a divine chronology (173).

Allegory becomes the scheme that allows the coexistence of two temporal planes and the trajectory of a narrative, of a human life, of a soul's redemption and articulates something beyond the realm of human language and rationality. However, for Auerbach, while what is figural is allegorical, what is allegorical is not necessarily figural.[4] Citing Dante's *Commedia*, Auerbach states that both Cato (from *Purgatorio* 2) and Virgil (from the first two canticles) exemplify the innovation of figural representation in that historical persons achieve a new, elevated meaning in Dante's poem; Auerbach writes:

> Cato of Utica stands there as a unique individual, just as Dante saw him; but he is lifted out of the tentative earthly state in which he regarded political freedom as the highest good [...] and transposed into a state of definitive fulfillment, concerned no longer with the earthly works of civic virtue or the law, but with the *ben dell'intelletto*, the highest good, the freedom of the immortal soul in the sight of God (67).

The importance of persons on the level of the text echoes their significance in the "real world" of the reader, only to then be replicated and magnified on a universal level by their placement within the divine plan that Dante constructs. Indeed, Dante's figurative allegory, which simultaneously combines multiple levels of significance, is suggestive of the Platonic relation between object and Form as well as the Neoplatonic interplay of the One, *nous*, and the phenomenal world in that each level of meaning is enriched by another corresponding level, whereby "the earthly event is [...] viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which is to say that in transcendence the revealed and true reality is present at all times, or timelessly" (Auerbach 72). Such simultaneity modifies and reorients how the process of knowing is understood, shifting it from a causal sequence in which one step informs the step that follows, to a single yet variegated instance of meaning. Moreover, the figural characterization of each historical person in the *Commedia* is not merely a multilayered re-signification; it is also a lesson on how to read.[5]

Dante's tactic of encoding a way of reading in the manner in which he creates his allegory overtly tests the parameters of interpretation and implicitly builds upon a wider

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[4] Auerbach actually differentiates three terms—symbolical or mythical, allegorical, and figural. All three represent the technique of expressing two meanings simultaneously however only a figural construction relates to history; a symbolical construction, to an ancient past; and an allegorical construction, to an abstract philosophical concept (54-58).

[5] As early as *Inferno* 5, Francesca and Paolo exemplify the perils of faulty reading that recur throughout the *Commedia*, along with the frequently wayward conclusions of Dante-pilgrim's own readings of the souls' self-narrations.

anxiety over the parameters of representation.[6] Dante writes of "quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna" (*Inferno* 16.124) and claims that, as an allegory of theologians, both levels of his text are true, leading Singleton to conclude: "the fiction of the *Comedy* is that it is not a fiction" ("The Irreducible Dove" 129). The *Commedia* therefore undoes poetry's intrinsically fallacious nature by recuperating its capacity for truth and presenting a doubly-true allegory. Yet Dante's self-professed success at reconciling an incredible, poetic surface and underlying meaning is attenuated throughout the *Commedia* by counter examples of prideful artists and wordsmiths.[7] Dante self-consciously toes the line between piety and blasphemy and, in so doing, safeguards his fantastic poem's claims to truth. This anxiety, whether genuine or not, more significantly enables him as an author to showcase and indulge in his poetic skills, mirroring the shifts within the compositional allegory tradition from attempts at temporal and theological coherence with Scripture to later attempts at structural coherence, or "formal control of diverse figures" within a given work (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 34).

The dual purpose of delighting and giving substance to surface tales of pleasure either by providing a moral education (or meditating on its efficacy), or by making a bitter pill easier to swallow, becomes increasingly prevalent in the epic poetry of the Early

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[6] Dante lays out a manner of reading throughout the *Commedia*, leaving precise and deliberate markers of how he expects and wants his reader to perceive his text. Moreover, he stipulates what type of allegory the *Commedia* employs in *Convivio* II.i and the Epistle to Cangrande, wherein he distinguishes between the allegory of poets and the allegory of theologians, claiming in the latter text that he is basing his allegory on Scripture. Discussion on what allegory Dante uses and how his text instructs the reader to interpret his allegory is vast and outside the scope of the present chapter. For a thorough analysis of Dante's definition of the type of allegory he employs, see Albert R. Ascoli's "Access to Authority: Dante in the *Epistle to Cangrande," Seminario Dantesco Internazionale* (1994) and "Tradurre l'allegoria: *Convivio* II, i," *Critica del testo: Dante, oggi*; "Giuseppe Mazzotta's *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the* Divine Comedy, specifically chapter 6 "Allegory: Poetics of the Desert," 227-274, for summary and bibliographical references. Key critics on this topic more generally include Robert Hollander, "Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'"; Charles Singleton, "Dante's Allegory"; John Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*; for more recent studies, see Teodolinda Barolini's *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*; Albert R. Ascoli's *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*.

[7] Ulysses is a central figure in this regard. He is damned to the eighth *bolgia* of Hell because he overstepped the bounds of truthful representation with his "orazion picciola" and led his shipmates to their deaths (*Inferno* 26.122). The moving friezes in *Purgatorio* 12 also warn against humans overstepping their boundaries, with the punishment of Arachne for her weaving appearing in the middle of the list of prideful souls (lines 42-45). The corrective of divine art (as exemplified by these friezes on the first terrace) to the value of human art is already anticipated by Cato's rebuke in *Purgatorio* 2.121-123. Dante's anxiety for his own position as poet vis-à-vis divine knowledge is seen when Casella sings the opening line to one of Dante's *canzoni* and provokes Cato's reprobation, causing the souls to scatter "sanza mostrar l'usato orgolio" (line 126).

Modern period as a means to substantiate a work's more formal elements and highlight an author's poetic ability.[8] It is in many respects this surface artifice that fueled Tasso's obsessive revisions to his *Gerusalemme*, confounding Inquisitors, but also suggesting allegory's potential at dissimulation as the Counter Reformation gained momentum.[9] Baroque poets' delight and abandon in absolute fiction circumvented problems of metaphor brought on by the Reformation and Protestants' rejection of Catholic transubstantiation; rather than attempting to reconcile what had become a thorny correspondence between word and meaning, these poets valorized the surface beauty of words above any hidden significance.[10] Emblem books from the sixteenth century responded in an even more extreme visualization, cataloging pictorial "alphabets" of discrete, individual entities that could stand alone without the anxieties of preserving coherence with a secondary, greater meaning.

2. Allegory as the Practice of Interpreters

The importance of preserving a work's integrity with respect to its potentially conflicting parts and with respect to wider religious or philosophical systems external to it is, for the work's creator, a delicate balance between two levels of meaning, one that risks failure in the absence of a connecting thread. Working from, and at times against, a long-

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[8] The Alcina and Astolfo episodes in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* rework allegory's efficacy to transmit knowledge and are representative of the poem as a whole in which fantastical, poetic artistry is repeatedly offset by its deceptive potential. Similarly, as most explicitly stated in the prologue, Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* reflects on the ability of a text to serve and educate its reader in an unexpected and pleasing fashion. For further reading, see Albert R. Ascoli's *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance*, specifically chapters two and three; Jo Ann Cavallo's *The Romance Epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso: From Public Duty to Private Pleasure*, specifically chapters seven and 15.

[9] Guided by Aristotle's *Poetics*, Tasso's *Discorsi del poema epico* stipulates the necessary unity that grounds and binds any epic's fantastical elements. Also, Walter Stephens states that Tasso writes his *Allegoria del poema*, an apparent explication of how to read the *Gerusalemme*, to hide the poem's real significance from Counter Reformation censors. See "Metaphor, Sacrament, and the Problem of Allegory in *Gerusalemme Liberata*," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 4 (1991), 217-247. For a wider view of how poets during the Early Modern period use allegory to delineate and limit their readership as well as the information their works communicate, see Michael Murrin's *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in Its Rise and Decline*.

[10] Theological issues aside, the idea that the Eucharistic bread and wine cease to be in substance what they are in appearance relates to the problem of correspondence between both levels in allegory. How an author constructs his compositional allegory is no longer a question of the rhetorical techniques used but instead of the reader's faith. It is clear here, as it will be explored below, the type of overlap that occurs between the compositional and interpretive allegorical traditions. Also see: Robert L. Montgomery, "Allegory and the Incredible Fable: The Italian View from Dante to Tasso," *PMLA*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (1966), 45-55.

standing tradition of deceptive authors, a text's capacity to fulfill its self-professed purpose is fraught with difficulties that, as various souls in Dante's *Commedia* exemplify with their misreadings, are only half-attributable to the text's creator. In the past century, psychoanalysts like Freud and post-structuralists like Paul de Man, have gone further, linking allegory to the unintentional meanings—psychically repressed or ideologically imposed—that are implicit in words themselves and can make any work doubly significative, even unbeknownst to the author. How this relationship between different meanings and the whole that contains them is maintained correlates with the strategies similarly employed by a work's interpreter, for an interpreter relies on the allegorical markers within a text's construction to sanction the possibility of a second meaning. Both creator and interpreter must weigh, therefore, "what a text says, the 'fiction,'" with "what it means, the 'truth,'" but unlike the rhetorical emphasis intrinsic in compositional allegory or perhaps even the heretical allegiance to truths in falsehoods, interpretive allegory is principally a "philosophic or exegetical" process; rather than create, the exegete must parse through and make sense of the different elements of a work that may sanction "saying one thing and meaning another" (Whitman, *Allegory* 2, 264). It is by this operating logic that interpretive allegory (allegoresis) represents a form of reading with the potential to produce knowledge or a system of thought that alters the interpreter's perception of the world.

Whitman offers one etymology of the word "allegory" as coming from the Greek *allos,* meaning "other," and *agoreuein,* meaning "to speak in the assembly (*agora*)"; the resulting term, then, defines a phenomenon of openly communicating something while simultaneously communicating a second, hidden meaning for only a select few to uncover (*Allegory* 263). This type of privileged knowledge, which for the compositional tradition showcases an author's unique skills, has similarly given interpretive allegory an element of elitism, restricting its practitioners to a distinct few. Allegory as an exegetical procedure began in the sixth century B.C.E. when thinkers sought to sanitize and redeem stories from the oral tradition; philosophers evaluated and interpreted Homeric tales in order to resolve the problem of having a false and, at times, blasphemous literal level. Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic philosopher from the sixth century B.C.E., begins his *Homeric Problems,* cautioning and honing in on the problem:

> It is a weighty and damaging charge that heaven brings against Homer for his disrespect for the divine. If he meant nothing allegorically, he was impious through and through [...] And so, if one were to believe that it was all said in obedience to poetical tradition, without any philosophical theory or underlying allegorical trope, Homer would be a Salmoneus or a Tantalous (1).[11]

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[11] In section 43, Heraclitus describes the ekphrastic description of the construction of Achilles's shield (from the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*) as the reconstruction of the creation of the world. The visual element to allegory will be elaborated on below.

The need for an underlying principle of truth to salvage and redeem stories of significant cultural and affective capital extended to a larger desire to define and sanction different vehicles for knowledge. Specifically, these debates centered on what effects a mode of expression had on the knowledge expressed so as to determine, increasingly, what is and is not necessary for the construction of a state, the control of its citizenry, and the education of its leaders.

Subsequent exegetical practices from the third to fifth centuries C.E. widened the scope and sought to understand the *logos* underneath the *mythos* of Homeric works, attributing to the order of a composition the greater order of existence (Whitman, *Allegory* 3; *Interpretation* 36). These Neoplatonists, who viewed Plato as a theologian, made attempts to reconcile the surface presentation with its underlying philosophical truth, in other words, establish the connection between the disparate components and the unified meaning they make up when combined (Brisson 88; Coulter *The Literary Microcosm* 78). Porphyry's third century C.E. *On the Cave of Nymphs* is an elaborate exegesis of the eponymous episode from Book 13 of the *Odyssey.* From the perspective of the compositional allegory tradition, the Homeric cave of nymphs showcases the structural components that maintain a work's integrity across two different planes of meaning. Porphyry's reading, however, identifies and explains how these components serve the philosophies and ideologies evoked and thereby link the fiction to real life. A significant purpose of early interpretive allegory was "to associate both the provisional sense and the projected sense of a text with the progression of actual events over time" (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 32-33). For example, the first scholars of Christianity moved away from treating the Old Testament as solely a record of the Hebrew people and towards a teleological view of human history that integrated these Hebraic narratives within the greater narrative and doctrine of the Christian faith. Over the course of the interpretive tradition, it was crucial that allegory become the mode through which interpreters looked outwards from a text and elucidated detailed connections to the world it described.

In an effort to re-shape reality through new textual relationships, early Christians harmonized the differences between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament by identifying recurring "figures" in the former text and demonstrating their eventual fulfillment in the latter. To believers who viewed the Old Testament as the historical truth of the Hebrew people, scholars sought to establish continuities with the New Testament that would resonate with a larger group of people and facilitate the spread of Christianity.[12] Similarities in content aside, scholars also began to address and explain away the wider contradictions suggested by biblical language. Saint Augustine warns against trusting the literal meaning of words and writes in Book III of his *On Christian Doctrine* about the "bondage" of misinterpreted signs; he explains, "Whatever there is in

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[12] Analyses of note include Henri de Lubac's *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Sense of Scripture* and Alan C. Charity's *Events and Their Afterlife: The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante*.

the word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative" (III.10.14). That "purity of life or soundness of doctrine" is necessary to assure continuity in meaning hones in on the interpreter's task of looking outwards to sanction textual plausibility.[13] In other words, the virtue of a text is not necessarily found on the literal level, but rather requires external validation for it to appear. However even as Augustine may anticipate Auerbach's historically true *figura* for the authority he gives to the interpreter, Augustine is more concerned with offering a solution to extreme figurativeness that can deceive than with the sort of amplification in meaning that Auerbach attributes to an equally fictive and historical sign. Whoever interprets figuratively, in contrast to the individual writing in a figurative manner, must cautiously determine how and at what level to interpret Scripture and, more importantly, whether these two levels must be read in opposition.

Much like the Classical interpreters of the Homeric tales who were fascinated by the parallels between the micro level of a narrative and the macro level of the cosmos, early Christians studied "patterns" and "categories" and consequently developed the "four senses" of medieval typology. The priority given to establishing continuity between the Old and New Testaments made typology instrumental in averting problems in the "conceptual transfer" from the Judeo to Christian traditions "while preserving a sense of continuous history" (Whitman, *Interpretation* 42). The identification of patterns or "types" in the interpretation of events and the exegesis of Scripture involves four lenses through which to glean meaning: the "'literal' or 'historical' facts recorded in the text; their 'allegorical' fulfillment in Christ and/or the Church; their moral or 'tropological' application to the individual; and their 'anagogic' significance in the other world" (*Princeton Encyclopedi*a 33). The reinterpretation of the Hebrew Bible according to this four-fold scheme demonstrates allegory's efficacy at causing a paradigm shift toward the development and diffusion of the Christian faith.

The concerns of Classical interpreters and Christian exegetes, while similar in tone, began to merge more fully in the twelfth century C.E., when Christian grammarians began reevaluating and translating Classical texts—what some might see as the next hurdle to Christian hegemony. Thinker Bernard Silvestris, in his commentary to the first six books of Virgil's *Aeneid,* designates Virgil as both poet and philosopher, stating in his preface that Virgil's "procedure is to describe allegorically by means of an integument what the human spirit does and endures while temporarily placed in the human body" (Preface 5). For Bernard Silvestris, understanding "the double order of narration" is not merely a problem of text but is, perhaps more significantly, a problem of thought that is

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[13] Augustine's definition of "figurative" anticipates Auerbach's formulation precisely for the interpreter's need to look outwards, in Auerbach's case to the historical, to give the literal level added weight in its truth claims. To repeat his formulation once more, Auerbach defines figural interpretation as "'allegorical' in the widest sense" and attributes its difference to "the historicity both of the sign and what it signifies" (54).

analogous to the embodied individual's work at perceiving and understanding the world through the senses as a means to develop the intellect and grasp the imperceptible, greater order created by God. Uncovering the truth behind the veil of a text is the same process as activating the intellect through and in spite of the limitations of the body. Bernard's Neoplatonism builds upon the Augustinian concern for identifying the correct interpretation of a text, echoing Augustine when he cautions that "one must pay attention to the diverse aspects of the poetic fictions and the multiple interpretations in all allegorical matters if in fact the truth cannot be established by a single interpretation" (Book I 11). Like the "purity of life and soundness of doctrine" referred to in *On Christian Doctrine* to determine and authorize a specific reading, multiple interpretations are mobilized to discern the truth. The interpreter must wade through the *multivocationes* within a text as one would discern the divine in the world through its various, sensorially perceived echoes on earth—that is, by tapping into the varying analogies within a text, an interpreter employs the same method that reveals the parallels between the two orders of the universe.

Scholars from the Cathedral School at Chartres, like Bernard of Chartres, similarly believed that the very act of interpreting Classical texts was "a means to new and authentic knowledge, an invitation to genuine speculation and a potential source of insight into the divine plan" (Wetherbee 211). The Christian core of the School of Chartres informed its participants' belief that Classical authors had insight to knowledge later illuminated by Christianity, and what was allegorical in their texts, "a 'veil' or 'covering,' *involucrum* or *integumentum*, is a conscious recourse of the author, a way of preserving philosophical language" (Wetherbee 214). The interpreters' task is to look behind these protective surfaces, as frivolous in content as they may seem, to the truth they shield, and in so doing, validate the ingenuity and skill involved to create them. Moreover, the interpretation and explication of these *integumenta* repeat the manner in which the universe, the underlying *logos*, and the varying manifestations of it in the natural world, form "an intricate system of divine unfolding (*explicatio*) and enfolding (*complicatio*)" (Whitman *Interpretation* 53). As a result, imagined narratives, such as Classical myth or Virgil's *Aeneid*, could be viewed as a form of human speculation of the divine order.

The revival of a Neoplatonic conception of the cosmos in the interpretive allegory tradition aligned poetry with revelation and with Scripture. As medieval typology interpreted Scripture as having, most basically, a historical significance, increasing attention to Aristotelian poetics, to structure and proper language, fueled interest in the "historical continuities of the literal sense" and resulted in the classification of the ways in which Scripture expresses meaning at varying levels, to different audiences (Whitman, *Interpretation* 11). Saint Thomas Aquinas and other Scholastic thinkers, like Bernard of Clairvaux, privileged the letter of a text over an overarching theoretical principle, which informed their Neoplatonic predecessors' readings of Scripture and Classical narratives. By focusing on how a text communicates its message through careful study of its particulars, informed in part by a Thomistic wariness of poetry's ability to express truths,

Scholastic thinkers and grammarians were then able to extend their scope of inquiry to the dynamic between author and reader, how one constructs and the other reacts, and theorize its resemblance to the intellectual journey undertaken by the individual to understand God and God's divine presence on earth (Whitman *Interpretation* 55-56).

Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs explores the minute ways in which language mediates between human understanding and divine knowing, concluding in reference to the Bible that "unde constat hoc opus non humano ingenio, sed Spiritus arte ita compsitum, ut quamvis sit difficle intellectu, si tamen inquisitu delectabile" ("It must follow that this work was composed, not by any human skill but by the artistry of the Spirit, difficult to understand indeed but yet entice one to investigate," I.3.5, 4).[14] The study of the Word establishes, therefore, a mediated connection in the absence of an immediate relationship to God, and as a result, formulates a theory of language and meaning that mirrors how the reader approaches God. Thus every Biblical interpreter must overcome the obstacle of believing the literal level of Scripture in order to understand the manner in which its language expresses truth. When Bernard of Clairvaux states that the characteristics attributed to God, like bodily features such as hands, are "per effectum, non per naturam," the interpreter is made aware of language's limitations that require circumlocutions to communicate to the human senses and express the perfect, immediate essence of God (Sermo 4.III.4).

The interpreter's understanding of language as a mode that results in different levels of meaning gradually led to evaluations on the purpose of myths, specifically on what earlier forms of storytelling could reveal about the development of language and of humanity's perception and understanding of the world. Much like Early Christians' approach to the Hebrew Bible, rising exposure to Classical texts encouraged the tendency to recuperate mythology by reorienting and retelling these stories within a Christian framework. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium* from the fourteenth century assimilates mythological figures into historical reality, characterizing these figures as elements of a precursor theological system and therefore within the chronology of Christian time. Boccaccio undertakes his task—"to regard the obscurities of poetry as Augustine regards the obscurities of Holy Writ" (Book XIV, 61)—as an exegetical procedure that conceives history as "a doubly invented 'story'—originally fashioned to

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[14] An example of the focused attention to the formal qualities of Scripture: "Tell us, I beg, by whom, about whom and to whom it is said: 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.' How shall I explain so abrupt a beginning, this sudden irruption as from a speech in mid-course? For the words spring upon us as if indicating one speaker to whom another is replying as she demands a kiss—whoever she may be. But if she asks for or demands a kiss from somebody, why does she distinctly and expressly say *with the mouth*, and even with *his own* mouth, as if lovers should kiss by means other than the mouth, or with mouths other than their own?" (Sermon I.3.5, 3). Meaning, therefore, is not a one-to-one relationship between sign and significance, but a third entity, that is, the kiss between the kissing mouth and the person kissed, mediates and enables a relationship in the face of an impossible immediate connection to God.

express the human and the cosmic conditions that underlie the antique fables, and retrospectively fashioned by the interpreter himself" (Whitman *Interpretation* 270). The parallel to Augustine empowers the interpreter to identify and approve significance and to also organize significance within time; not only is there one correct meaning to validate out of many possible meanings, there is as well a specific time to that meaning. Giuseppe Mazzotta calls Boccaccio's *Genealogia* a theory of history, explaining that "history, like the myths the text retrieves and glosses, is a work of imaginative reconstruction of the past, a reflection on origins so that a new beginning may be envisioned" (364). In this manner, Boccaccio prefigures the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' fascination with the origins of myths as well as emphasis on historical documentation.[15]

The distinction between allegory and symbol that subsequently begin to characterize the allegorical tradition in the nineteenth century, while not specifically pertinent to the authors to be discussed, is relevant insofar as the distinction underscores a critical temporal effect inherent in allegory, one previously intimated by Boccaccio. As Mazzotta terms it, Boccaccio's retrieval of the past through the interpretation of myths highlights the temporal disjunction between author and reader in any interpretive allegory. Nineteenth century Romantics articulated the symbol, different from allegory, as allowing simultaneity in being and interpretation. Yet Walter Benjamin's critique of the Romantic symbol suggests that the simultaneous unification of object and Idea is illusory.[16] What is then unique and tragic about allegory is that it can combine two snapshots of perceived reality, but a unified whole can only be known as a relic, retroactively reassembled through its fragmented parts. The temporal disparity between its levels transforms allegory into a nexus of distinct systems of thought and engenders reflections on allegory as a theoretical model. Allegorical speculation tests and explores the bounds as well as the capabilities of this fictitious mode of philosophizing, and invariably "theorists of allegory repeatedly seek to turn the very configurations of texts into expressions of the complexities of time" (Whitman *Interpretation* 303). In other words, allegory is a theoretical construct that pivots on time as a way to understand and elucidate the steps within processes of philosophical and poetical thought.

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[15] Over the course of the centuries in between, particularly during the sixteenth century, interpretive allegory undergoes two radical shifts. Firstly, renewed interest in Aristotle's *Poetics* necessitates structural integrity for textual plausibility, and allegory provides that unified, interpretive framework to reading fantastic narratives. Secondly, the rise of Protestantism diminishes the scope and validity of four-fold allegorical interpretations of Scripture and raises broader, representational concerns with the validity of icons and emblems.

[16] To this point, Paul de Man will follow with a post-structuralist critique, at the level of language, in which any sign can never "coincide" with its original meaning. Walter Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragedy* is discussed in greater detail below.

3. Allegory and the Origin of the Whole in the Debate over Philosophy and Poetry

There are three things at stake when allegory's relationship with time is foregrounded: the debate between philosophy and poetry; philosophy and poetry's shared goal for a unified whole; and their respective potential and search for a beginning. A basic difference between philosopher and poet is that the poet does not rely on syllogism but on embellished veils to express a truth: Boccaccio writes, "Such then is the power of fiction that it pleases the unlearned by its external appearance, and exercises the minds of the learned with its hidden truth; and thus both are edified and delighted with one and the same perusal" (Book XIV, 51).[17] Fiction's "external appearance" is a material and, in particular, a visual mode of expression that appeals to the senses rather than to the intellect yet like the embodied soul, contains within it traces of an immaterial order. The "power" Boccaccio ascribes to fiction is the ability to give truth two dimensions similar to "Platonic notions of visible phenomena pointing to invisible forms" (Whitman *Interpretation* 46). Indeed, the disjunction between levels of a fiction, as in any allegory, is part and parcel to the human soul's grasping of the indivisible Truths (*noeta*) and expressing them "in the discursive medium of language, fragmented in time"; the "fundamental distortion" of human representation that results perceives truth as poetry, eternity as time (Lamberton 84). This representational deviation is then a veiling of truth, and it is this veil that taps into poetry for its visual force and its capacity to put ideas in space. Porphyry speaks of "a *phantasia*, an imagining, an image" as the most basic articulation of experiential perception of the world that can serve the intellect in understanding noetic truths (Lamberton 83). For the image to serve the intellect involves the simultaneous realization of the whole, that is, the world seen both through the sensual lens and in time, and within the eternal, abstract framework grounding all being.

According to Stanley Rosen, the quarrel between philosophy and poetry is in essence this desire for "the whole," the Platonic *to holon,* achieved in practice by the

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[17] "Poetry" and "fiction" are here used interchangeably as the distinction between literary genres is less relevant to the present discussion than the distinction between literary and philosophical discourses. Moreover, the etymologies of "poetry" (from Greek *poiein* "to make, create" and "fiction" (from Latin *fingere* "to shape, feign") share the two characteristics used by philosophers as charges against any discourse different from abstraction by syllogism, namely the empirical, and therefore imperfect, sense-based knowledge and its potential to deceive humanity in believing a false rather than divine truth. While Aristotle notes that the senses may serve as the basis for all knowledge, he is influential in effacing poetry's enigmatic potential by designating appropriate discourses to different subjects, specifically precise language to systematic philosophizing. It is with Platonic thinkers, such as Proclus, that the boundaries marking poetry's capacity for truth widen and the arbitrariness of the distinction between poetry and philosophy is clear.

dramatic dialogues of Plato's philosophizing and his references to myth.[18] In fact, the division between poetry and philosophy covers over their fundamental affinity and likeness, and is symptomatic of a whole that can only be perceived by its separate, divided parts; in other words, "every attempt to describe or to explain unity [...] or the whole as a whole rather than as an articulated sum of parts, is necessarily a concealment or dissolution of the whole" (Rosen *Quarrel* ix). Philosophy works at the service of poetry and myth in so far as it proceeds from both, sifting and categorizing the true from the false, because without these differences, unity cannot exist to the human mind.[19] The tendency, however, to define separate components, which affirm the division between *logos* and *muthos*, obscures unity and undermines the integrity of a reincorporated whole, already a shadow of its original coherence.

It is important to reiterate the points that characterize the division between philosophy and poetry in order to better understand the motivation behind the differences that hide their affinity. Plato's apparent rejection of art lies in the belief that poetry replicates falsehoods rather than true forms; Socrates explains, "A poetic imitator uses words and phrases to paint colored pictures of each of the crafts. He himself knows nothing about them, but he imitates them in such a way that others, as ignorant as he, who judge by words, will think he speaks extremely well about cobblery or generalship or anything else whatever" (*Republic* X.601.a). The ignorant judgment "by words" that Plato laments is first and foremost an indictment of the poet who, with the creation of surfaces with no substance, deceives the unsuspecting and impressionable spectator. Secondly, because "a maker of an image" has no true understanding of the thing he represents, he "has neither knowledge nor right opinion about whether the things he makes are fine or bad" (*Republic* X.601.b, 602.a). Therefore the measure of a "fine or bad" image-maker is

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[18] Rosen notes that Aristotle differentiates himself from Plato by privileging a monologic form and therefore *logos* whereby "there is no account of the whole as whole, but only separate accounts of distinct families of phenomena" (*Quarrel* viii).

[19] "If there is a whole [...] a unity to human experience, it is accessible only via poetry, whereas if there is no whole, then we are forced to invent it, again via poetry. In either case, philosophy is devoted to the role of servant, perhaps as prime minister or counselor of state to the poet-kings. The history of philosophy is accordingly revealed as the chronicle of the progressive defeat of rebellious counselors, or of their steady transformation into poets on the one hand and technicians on the other" (Rosen *Quarrel* x). It is the interpreter, frequently a counselor to a prince, whose attempts at theorizing action expresses the whole poetically and thus underscores the fragility and instability of the state. Machiavelli and Vico, as this discussion will show, assume the role of the interpreter. The definitional slippage of poetry and philosophy shows their fundamental affinity and likeness, and informs Machiavelli's advice to his Prince and Vico's instructions to his reader on how to use and interpret all human actions, past and present. Brisson makes a similar comment on the pivotal nature of such a figure, stating that "the poet was the privileged intermediary between a community and the systems of explanations and values to which this community adhered. In short, the whole of a community gave itself as a model of itself through myth" (*How Philosophers Saved Myth* 7).

the ability to stir and kindle an irrational, unsubstantiated pull on a spectator's emotions and desires. When Socrates refutes Ion's idea that a rhapsode is an intermediary between the gods and man, he invalidates "the interpreters of interpreters" who have "as many forms as Proteus" and whose knowledge of Homer equals a knowledge of empty appearances (http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/ion.1b.txt).

The folly of poetry lies also in the careless choice of subject matter, of gods misbehaving and acting in a less than perfect manner, and accordingly, in poetry's indiscriminate choice of audience, for "the young can't distinguish what is allegorical from what isn't, and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable" (*Republic* II.378.d). The exclusion of poetry from the ideal republic is ultimately a preventive measure against the corruption of its citizens' minds and for the preservation of its educational program, which is set in place to maintain order. Socrates explains, "All such poetry is likely to distort the thought of anyone who hears it, unless he has the knowledge of what it is really like, as a drug to counteract it" (*Republic* X.595.b). Who the individual in possession of such an intellectual antidote is explains why Socrates disparages poetry. His exclusion of poetry is not a rejection of poetry's affinity to philosophy; it is a realization that this affinity must be hidden and therefore is a strategic move to prevent pandemonium and to facilitate the rule of the philosopher king who employs both poetry and philosophy to govern. If poetry is a "false discourse that gives an unfaithful image of the reality it claims to depict," then the task of "distinguishing between discourse bearing upon intelligible forms and that which deals with sensible things" necessarily belongs to the individual who wants to shape and control reality for a specific end (Brisson 21).[20]

Rather than acknowledge the strategic elision of poetry and philosophy's connection that Plato makes, as in Rosen's interpretation, Luc Brisson provides an account of myths employed at the service of philosophy that is, in many ways, the opposite phenomenon. Poetic language does not beget philosophical discourse, but rather philosophy recovers and re-forms an outdated mode. The philosopher can recuperate and salvage myth insomuch that its poetic language can fit or be made to fit within the logic of philosophical discourse. Brisson speaks of "conformity" rather than true consonance between poetry and philosophy, explaining that "truth and error no longer depend on the correspondence of a discourse with its supposed referent but on the correspondence of a discourse [...] with another discourse held up as norm" (25). He also terms it as harmonizing old principles with new ideas (29). Brisson accepts the primacy of these new ideas even as he acknowledges the roles of allegory and tragedy within a society, the former "claiming to save the explanatory value of myths and preserve their ethical validity

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[20] Brisson's position on Plato with respect to myth is different from Rosen's in that Brisson, while taking Plato's words against poetry to the letter, does not factor in the poetical, theatrical mode with which Plato expresses himself. For him, Plato claims that it is not within the philosopher's job to "transform the falsity of myth into a truth" (Brisson 27).

by uncovering a deep meaning beneath the narrative fabric" and the latter "reinterpret[ing] myths as a function of the values of a city" (10, 29). Yet philosophy determines these roles, and they are efficacious because of the power with which philosophy imbues them. Poetry is, as a result, impotent and antiquated on its own thus while Brisson elevates myth from mere storytelling, he recapitulates its difference from philosophy by subordinating the one (poetry) to the other (philosophy).

What Plato appears to do in contrast is to subtly make poetry pivotal to philosophy; when Socrates says, "It's appropriate for the founders [of a city] to know the patterns on which poets must base their stories and from which they mustn't deviate," Plato is emphasizing the importance these patterns play to the molding and understanding of the human mind for the ends of the state (*Republic* II.379.a). The patterns are also the foundation of a political philosophy because by deciphering these patterns the philosopher king can incorporate them within the republic's *modus operandi*. Socrates explains that "if it is appropriate for anyone to use falsehoods for the good of the city, because of the actions of either enemies or citizens, it is the rulers" (*Republic* II.389.c). The exceptional position of the ruler is conditioned upon the ruler's poetic and philosophic knowledge that empowers the ruler but also requires transparency on the part of the citizenry "because for a private citizen to lie to a ruler is just as bad a mistake as for a sick person or athlete not to tell the truth to his doctor or trainer about his physical condition or for a sailor not to tell the captain the facts about his own condition or that of the ship and the rest of its crew—indeed it is a far worse mistake than either of these" (*Republic* II.389.c). Each citizen must therefore disclose everything for the preservation of the state and in turn the philosopher king becomes the repository of such disclosed knowledge from which he gains power. To use Brisson's terms, then, with slight modifications, the philosopher king uses myth and poetry to effectively conform the citizenry to the prescriptions of the state yet it is not the philosophy behind this practice that is the source of its efficacy, but rather the poetical patterns themselves that motivate the people to conform.

Taking what Socrates says with respect to the philosopher king, poetry and the interpretive allegory used to explicate it seem exempt from Plato's reprobation depending on who plays the role of interpreter. Poetry is at fault principally for what it leads its interpreters to believe, and the danger of misinterpretation becomes the flip side of its potential for manipulation and control. Moreover, if, according to Brisson, "myth is an unverifiable discourse because its referent is located either at a level of reality inaccessible both to the intellect and to the sense, or at the level of sensible things, but in a part of which the speaker of the discourse can have no direct or indirect experience," then the appropriate interpreter requires a degree of specialization to avoid misinterpretation and to facilitate the referential and temporal jump between myth and reader (23). It is perhaps this temporal divide—the interpreter's lack of experience as regards myth's referent—that best illustrates the poetical underpinnings for the ruler's political philosophy because the verification of mythical discourse involves the construction of a new theoretical allegory, namely an interpretive scheme that allows both myth and referent to exist in concert.

In Vico's *Scienza nuova*, allegory is a "univocal" mode of signification, "passing beyond the semiology of metaphorical transfer toward the morphology of the developing mind" therefore "mythology is 'true' not by its 'ingenious' correlation with later philosophy and theology, but by its authentic articulation of a foundational way of perceiving and constituting a world" (Mali 285). Allegory in Vico is, as a result, representative and illustrative of human comprehension at two different moments in time that are united in one history. The unity achieved through the imposition, or "conformity" to use Brisson's word, of one system onto another is rather, in Vico, an intrinsic unity that shows "historically *logos* has a *muthos*" (Mali 289). Vichean allegory verifies mythic discourse in an age of abstract thought by preserving the characteristics of both without risking the integrity of a theoretical whole.[21]

The risk that Vico averts affirms once more the necessity of an appropriate poetic interpreter and the specialization required to understand myth within the context of the polis. Stanley Rosen explains that because "the purpose of myth is to illustrate the ambiguous nature of the relation between physics and politics, but not to resolve this ambiguity," the philosopher king must negotiate between appeals to the populace's senses through the use of poetic patterns and his allegiance to the theoretical ideals ordering the republic (*Quarrel* 67). It is in the interest of politics to understand how physical principles ground both the temporal and visual components that make myth appealing and evocative to the non-rational part of humanity. Similarly, physical needs dictate a politics that will best resolve them as well as mediate and order the natural shifts of any living entity. Yet as myth brings to light the ambiguity that enables the symbiosis between physics and politics, Rosen states that "the ambiguity cannot be resolved; to do so would be to remove the obscurity surrounding the origin of the polis, or to transform political science from *phronesis* into a function of *dianoia*" (*Quarrel* 67). Politics cannot change from a praxis of action to become a step in mathematical knowing, a means to an abstract end; to abandon its service to material existence for the speculative realm of Forms would invalidate politics as the nexus between poetry and philosophy. In similar fashion, a shrouded origin means that while the pursuit of a whole is slippery and even illusory, it is necessary for the polis to function and inextricably links the search for unity to the need for a beginning, a recapitulated origin.[22]

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[21] Similarly discussing the persistence of mythic discourse across history, David Kelman's article, "Diversiloquium, or, Vico's Concept of Allegory in the *New Science*," terms Vico's allegory as a "univocal mode of signification" and a "multiplicity of happenings" (9). Kelman explains, "[T]he condition of possibility of a poetic character is that it is a repetition of an originary event, or rather, the recurrence—again and again—of an event that constitutes history," meaning that poetic language is the foundation of all human developments (10).

[22] Edward Said has written about beginnings in a work by the same name, inspired in part by Vico's concept of *corsi* and *ricorsi*. While the distinction between an origin and a beginning, between a divine and a man-made start, is valid for the present discussion, the concept, of beginnings being necessary to birthing a new method or mode, recurs often in the Italian literary

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4. Visualizing a New Beginning, in Theory and in Practice

As the present discussion will aim to show, the desire for renewal and the ability to recapitulate a beginning is a crucial strategy politics must implement against its greatest threats: contingency and change. The preservation of the ambiguity surrounding the origin then inaugurates a method of beginnings critical to politics as *phronesis* and in addition delineates a political role for memory. Memory accounts, most basically, for the longevity and lasting belief in myths' value to society, for "the special protection of memory," as Hans Blumenberg explains, is frequently interpreted as a consequence of the truths contained within the myths themselves (*Work on Myth* 149). Memory as well as history, a recorded memorial to events past, can contain truth because both, like art, rely on "unities of meaning" as the building blocks to an epistemological construct (Hans-Georg Gadamer *Truth and Method* 56-57). In other words, "the structures of meaning we meet in the human sciences, however strange and incomprehensible they may seem to us, can be traced back to ultimate unities which themselves no longer contain anything alien, objective, or in need of interpretation" (Gadamer 57). These significative units, "whereby the non-sensory is made apparent to the senses," are unique to poetry and the visual arts but to allegory as well. Even as Gadamer states that these unities of meaning require no interpretation in and of themselves, allegory functions as the framework through which such unities can be remembered, recalled in the present with their emotive power intact and their underlying, immaterial significance made clear (62-63).[23]

Moreover, the belief that the identification of aesthetic units of meaning is fundamental to human comprehension remains consonant with the process of elucidating the primary affinity between philosophy and poetry. Vico, for example, begins the explication of his process and his identification of a logic to the whole of human history with a frontispiece, in essence the visual representation of his entire science *in nuce*. Taking the frontispiece as an allegory of the "new science" and of humanity's historical

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and philosophical Canons, although it is not unique to these traditions; Descartes, for example, in his *Discourse on the Method* (Part Three) will raze the foundation of Western thought to the ground in order to rebuild and start anew. Taking these multiple "ground zeros" into consideration alongside Benjamin's *Origin of Human Tragedy* reveal how allegory often serves to create a whole out of two different temporal layers and resists contingency by countering it with the idea of simultaneity, which will be explained in greater detail below.

[23] Gadamer is insistent on the distinction between allegory and symbol, attributing to the latter greater physicality and representational power. Also, he states that "the symbol is the coincidence of the sensible and the non-sensible, allegory, the meaningful relation of the sensible to the non-sensible" (*Truth and Method* 64). The difference between "coincidence" and "relation" once again emphasizes the importance of timing to signification and to the understanding of meaning. What is essential to the present discussion, however, is Gadamer's claim that these two "procedures" have the ability to make abstract ideas perceptible as (art) objects, which have physical weight and play to the senses in order to express meaning.

perspective, Vico continues in the tradition constructed by earlier political thinkers: he begins from the premise of unifying the sensual and intellectual as a foundational means of the state. The skill a ruler endeavors to master is sight and requires an eye trained in the task of discerning how best to represent the state to its people. Yet the degree to which this representation successfully functions as an instrument of the state depends upon the ruler's intellectual acuity and, in Vico's case, corresponds to the relevant step in the development of the human mind.

To the extent that allegory resembles the visual arts for unifying the sensory and non-sensory, the explication of the interplay between these two modes of signification (sensory and non-sensory) reveals allegory affinity to ekphrasis, the verbal representation of a visual. James Heffernan attributes to ekphrasis the ability of the *paragone*—the comparison and competition of modes—as well as the ability of *prosopopeia*, of "speaking out or telling in full" (*Museum of Words* 6). Like philosophy at the service of poetry, or poetry at the service of philosophy, in an allegorical scheme, the competition encouraged by ekphrasis renders permeable the boundaries separating different representative methods. The ekphrastic "speaking out in full" resembles the allegorical mantra of "saying one thing, meaning another" insofar as both manipulate representation for a specific end of meaning and as a result give a voice to an otherwise hidden significance.[24] Integral to this manipulation is how allegory enables the intellect to mine the persuasive and representative powers of poetry and myth by facilitating their remembrance and making their past efficacy relevant to the present. Such temporal dynamism stimulated by memory resembles the "pressure of narrative" in any ekphrastic interpretation that transforms art into something subject to time's passing and thus every-changing; by providing a verbal counterpoint to a visual, visual art becomes "perishable" as its components are plotted along a temporal axis to form a sequence of past, present, and future actions.[25] Furthermore, what happens to truth as it moves from visual to verbal representations suggests firstly, the important role of sensual perception as the initial frontier of comprehension; and secondly, its similarity to the process internalized by each individual who uses the intellect to understand the truth behind a reality initially perceived through the senses.

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[24] Heffernan emphatically distinguishes ekphrasis from pictorialism and iconicity because the latter two "aim chiefly to represent objects and artifacts rather than works of representational art" (4). This is an important difference that substantiates the ekphrasis-allegory connection that depends on their shared tactic of unifying seemingly contrastive modes of representation.

[25] Frederick de Armas attributes another dynamic innovation to ekphrasis, noting that Renaissance artists decided "to reverse the movement from the visual to the verbal and attempt instead to compose art works based on ancient ekphrases, thus fully integrating the concept of the sister arts through the double link" (*Ekphrasis in the Age of Cervantes* 14). Giovanni Bellini's *Il festino degli dei* from 1514 is one example, incorporating descriptions from Ovid's *Fasti*. Also, *Il culto di Venere* (1518-1520), by Bellini's pupil, Tiziano Vecellio, draws from the descriptions *Imagines I, VI* by Philostratus.

It is worth noting that, whether or not the interplay between visual and verbal representations can accurately reveal truth, each mode's individual capacity for truth coincides with the anxieties and conflicts over the respective ability of poetic and philosophic languages to articulate true knowledge. "False" knowledge, a wolf in sheep's clothing, derives its deceptive potential from the interpreter's reliance on and faith in not only surface appearances, or mimesis, but also the dependable and unwavering correspondence between different representational levels. The criticism Plato levels against painting is the same as that which he levels against poetry, for a true understanding of the world delves deeper, past mimetic surfaces or appeals to the senses, and involves an understanding of underlying Forms. Heffernan explains, "When Plato (*Republic* 10.602) compares the painter to a person holding a mirror up to the universe, he does so precisely to argue that painting appeals to our basest impulses: manipulating appearances, it represents not the true dimensions and proportions of things but only their appearances" (176). That a mirror can deceive is particularly relevant to the innovative technique of perspective, which makes the individual's point of view the grounds for all representation and the artist function as the mirror that reflects back a recreated reality.[26]

Developed by Renaissance artists, perspective allowed the faithful replication of the sensual world. Subsequent artistic movements, such as Mannerism and the Baroque, exaggerated this technique in order to emphasize the artificiality and thus the human imagination behind the images; rather than create a strict visual echo of the world, the artist stretched his manipulative capacities and ceased to hide the subjectivity inherent in being a human lens. The consequences of such manipulation, however, extend beyond the visual arts to the realm of philosophy. Indeed, the individual as the creator of all things requires some understanding of the world that acts as the guiding principle, as the foundation, to this new order.

Yet the process, a reverse ekphrasis shifting from the verbal to the visual, is similarly fraught with epistemological danger because the relationship established by moving from the abstract to sensual, just as from philosophy to poetry, risks distortion. Frederick de Armas, in discussing don Quixote's perspectival illness, writes that "while Sancho describes the functioning of the windmill, don Quixote transforms these tangible

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[26] Heffernan summarizes the evolution of this artistic innovation and its intellectual ramifications when he states, "Since the artists of the Renaissance essentially adopted the Protagorean principle that man is the measure of all things, the capacity to represent what we *see* became virtually identical with the capacity to represent what *is*; to capture the way things 'really' looked was to capture the way they really were. But when Parmigianino captures the way his upper body really looks in a convex mirror, he is actually inviting us to consider the elegance and style with which he has mirrored an appearance made by artifice" (Heffernan 176-177). The prevalence of emblems in the sixteenth century and the subsequent fascination with hieroglyphics in the seventeenth century connect human creativity in depicting the world with the explication of humanity's understanding of it thus mode and meaning are related as creation and interpretation involve similar representational methods (Whitman *Interpretation* 278-279).

objects into fantastic visions. This misperception is based on personification and figurative thinking. The knight sees stones (and wood) and shapes them into giants" (de Armas 17-18). Don Quixote's misapprehension of Sancho's words overrides the knight's senses, or rather, transforms the sight he perceives in order to conform to his interpretation of the narrative Sancho tells. What don Quixote constructs in his mind vividly shapes the world before him therefore just as the knight is "an artist who reinvents the reality around him," he is similarly a poet whose familiarity with figurative language influences his identification of those patterns in the world. Don Quixote's primary understanding, his "ur-ekphrasis" to use de Armas's term, elucidates the characteristic bleeding between poetry and philosophy that stems from the problematics of different cognitive methods employed in different interpretive frameworks (20).

Benjamin operates from a similar wariness (with added weariness) of cognitive processes, writing, "If contemplation is not so much patiently devoted to truth, as unconditionally and compulsively, in direct meditation, bent on absolute knowledge, then it is eluded by things, in the simplicity of their essence, and they lie before it as enigmatic allegorical references, they continue to be dust" (229). The waywardness associated with thinking in general is only further complicated by the allegorical potential of any thought process that allows for discrepancies or loose associations between things and their meanings. What is ruinous to the integrity and constancy of meaning is the need to approximate truth through any allegorical interpretation in which "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (Benjamin 175). But "that all of the things which are used to signify derive from the very fact of their pointing to something else" results in "a power" that both ennobles and demeans the very things that constitute the human world (175).[27] Whereas tragedy is the realization of this transcendence on earth, Benjamin notes that humans are perpetually marred in the historical and immanent awareness of themselves and of their surroundings so the dust remains and settles on the ground as an accumulation of eluded and hidden meanings.[28]

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[27] Benjamin later explains allegory's referential power with the fact that "allegory established itself most permanently where transitoriness and eternity confronted each other most closely" (226). In other words, the need to harmonize confusing or heretical language with redemptive and elevating principles, as early Christian exegetes interpreted the Bible.

[28] The notion that tragedy uncovers the transcendent in the immanent world of mortals is indirectly Aristotelian in origin. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy by its subject matter (the imitation of the actions of persons of high distinction) as well as by its ability to provoke catharsis in the audience in response to a protagonist's reversal in fortune and his/her recognition of it (1.XI, 2.XVIII). The cause of this reversal is unavoidable due to a "fatal flaw" (*hamartia*) within or made by the protagonist, but the pity and fear that such a reversal inspires can be interpreted as revealing the transcendent powers at play in a human reality. While tragedy's purgative qualities are beneficial to the Aristotelian community, it is precisely this onslaught of emotions that justifies Plato's exclusion of fiction from the republic. Interestingly, even as Aristotle finds a place for poetry within the state, the Platonic republic more clearly articulates the unity of philosophy and

Benjamin characterizes history as a process of "irresistible decay" that makes the understanding of humans' interpretation of things over time an archeological search for lost wholes, for meanings consonant with truth; "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (177-178). These thoughts in ruins that result from human contemplation, which requires allegorical interpretation, point to the illusory potential in humanity's process towards true meaning. Benjamin explains that evil is born of man's desire for knowledge, making knowledge of evil primary to knowledge of good and, in its pure subjectivity, prevents or obscures factual knowledge, resulting in "the triumph of subjectivity and the onset of an arbitrary rule over things, [which] is the origin of all allegorical contemplation" (233). Allegory is the only form of signification afforded to man after the Fall therefore humans necessarily think allegorically, and "the intention which underlies allegory is so opposed to that which is concerned with the discovery of truth that it reveals more clearly than anything else the identity of the pure curiosity which is aimed at mere knowledge with the proud isolation of man" (Benjamin 229). This pure curiosity motivates the satisfaction of an individual's desires to the exclusion of the discovery and adherence to an overarching principle that binds all humans together in community. The isolation consequently experienced is symptomatic of an absent understanding of truth that fails to immunize humanity from contingency and subjectivity.

Determining then the conditions for the foundation of a city and for its preservation over time involves methods of combatting the curiosity-driven isolation within every individual. As myth factors heavily in the collective history of a given community, the recognition of philosophy's indebtedness to poetry, of their fundamental unity, and of why allegory facilitates the revelation of their affinity underscores how politics serves as the locus in which the distinction between these two modes is clearly articulated.

It is important to first reiterate the charges Plato makes against poetry, specifically in the *Republic*, in order to understand the exception made of the city's founders, the philosopher kings' use of poetic patterns and why myth is essential.[29] Rosen summarizes

poetry in its exclusion. The discussion below will explain how, particularly in the context of the search for a whole and for remedies against change (a proto-Nietzschean response to the Apollonian and the Dionysian forces in the world).

[29] The division between the Platonic and Aristotelian systems of thought depends upon the degree to which a theoretical unity is achieved. Whereas "the expulsion of the poets from Socrates' city is a secondary act that owes its justification to the actual dependence of the city upon poetry in the primary sense," for Aristotle, the city and politics are in the very nature of humanity and not reliant on art or philosophy (Rosen *Quarrel* xii). Therefore Aristotle distinguishes between innate and learned disciplines. Furthermore, when Rosen specifies "Platonic madness and Aristotelian sobriety," he draws attention to the metaphors of weaving that make politics an art form for Plato and a natural tendency for Aristotle. The "madness" results from the fact that, while the Aristotelian human needs only to guide and hone innate inclinations that follow natural rhythms,

Plato's attack on poetry, beginning with the claim that poetry "produces images instead of a direct apprehension of originals, or in other words, falsehoods masquerading the truth" and similarly that "poetry is morally or politically defective because it encourages the license of desire, and in particular, of Eros" (*Quarrel* 1). The true guide to the city must be philosophy, according to Plato, as philosophy strives for "completeness as wisdom" in contrast to "completeness as satisfaction" of desire (*Quarrel* 13). The systemic classification Aristotle devises to organize the various inclinations within humanity offers a variegated composite in contrast to Platonic completeness. Yet this completeness fails to account for change because change cannot be rationally understood; Plato's republic can never fully safeguard itself from that which resides outside its operating system. Therefore no science of change can exist for the protection of the state even as laws and customs provide the appearance of stability and mask their unscientific foundation against this irrational threat (*Quarrel* 30).

The institution of laws and customs nevertheless invoked as an authoritative response to flux explains how the founders' elided use of poetic patterns is a strategy that not only provides insight into the purpose of literature in politics to correct the curiosity-driven isolation in every citizen, but also blurs the boundaries between cognitive modes; in other words, "a corrective to the abstractions of 'theory' requires not merely a turn to the world of practice, but a self-conscious and self-consciously literary turn that refuses the neat distinction between theory and practice" (Cascardi *Discourse of Politics* 9).

Such a corrective—necessary for the success and continued efficacy of politics— that collapses the immanent world of practice and the transcendent realm of theory is prevalent in and, according to Roberto Esposito, unique to the Italian context.[30] Esposito contends that politics, in Italian thought, is at its most innovative and problematic when expressed through the relationship between transcendent stability and immanent conflict, and that the treatment of history is similarly inventive for the claim that all history contains within itself the ahistorical (*Pensiero vivente* 27). He writes, "Già lo scarto, incolmabile, tra storia sacra e storia profana scompagna l'ordine cronologico della successione, sdoppiando l'origine in due polarità non coincidenti," revealing how the persistent search for an origin is, always and already, illusory. Secular history consists of

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the Platonic man must contend with the impossible task of conducting politics despite nature's unpredictable changes (xii-xiii).

[30] Noting the excluded or peripheral position of politics and history within modern philosophical thought, Esposito makes a claim for Italian difference. He writes, "Diversamente dalla tradizione che, tra Descartes e Kant, si istituisce nella costituzione della soggettività o nella teoria della conoscenza, la riflessione italiana si presenta rovesciata, e come estroflessa, nel mondo della vita storica e politica." He explains, "l'impressione è che il nostro pensiero, per esprimere un oggetto irrappresentabile nel gergo filosofico professionale, adoperi un lessico di volta in volta diverso di tipo politico, storico, poetico, per poi ricostituirsi, in forma rovesciata, all'interno di ciascuna di essi" (*Pensiero vivente* 12-13). The reworking of language from the inside-out of different discipline enables Italian thinkers to express ideas through and across previously unrelated modes.

"una molteplicità di tempi, a loro volta nati da diversi origini" and as a result, "la doppia conseguenza della inoriginarietà della storia—nel senso che essa non ha una sola origine—e dell'astoricità dell'origine, dal momento che questa si sottrae a un'integrale storicizzazione [...] l'origine non si scioglie nella storia, così come la storia non si riduce al tempo" (27-28). The flexibility afforded to chronological history ensures that every origin is a constructed beginning, and the individual uses fiction to resume the task that theory fails to complete, namely "of gaining a complete and accurate view of the whole" (Cascardi 10). As the civic humanists of fifteenth century Italy demonstrated in their dialogic method of argumentation and textual explication, language substantiates the historical and geographic specificity of politics; by validating interpretive authority and correlating a text's integrity with truth, humanists legitimized politics as the proper alignment of words and their corresponding actions, in time and in place.

But the humanists' prowess as rhetoricians engendered mutable and varied truths that, though still adhering to the historical and geographical peculiarities of a given language, transformed these arbiters of courtly politics and textual authority into manipulators of different representational modes. The interpretive potential of any text or argument risks deviating from exegesis of the original to the creation of something new and therefore relates to the impulse to restart time as well as inaugurate a new political beginning as both rely on the manipulation of language; correspondingly, "to recognize that politics is subtended by a historical ontology means that it roots in creatures whose nature is to make and remake their world by means of what they say and do" (Cascardi 13).[31] The threat of dissonance between saying and doing is not dissimilar to the disjunction that Esposito claims results from philosophy receiving its expression and its form from painting, wherein the "sovrapposizione di pittura e idea, di immagine e parola, non è mai perfetta, non perviene mai a un'assoluta integrazione, anzi determina sempre una sorta di sporgenza dell'una nei confronti dell'altra" (87). The agon between modes, as was previously described in ekphrasis, reaches a more theoretical tone here in that Esposito characterizes Italian philosophy for its potential to move and mediate between (abstract) understanding and representation, without destroying its claims to truth.[32]

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[31] Humanism's combination of historical and linguistic specificity blurred the interpretation and creation of texts as distinct processes towards truth. The self-fashioned reality of humans engaging with language (as writers and/or interpreters) and practicing politics risks misalignment of what is said and what is done, and more broadly of representational and abstract modes. The specific example of don Quixote, who "remains visibly out of step with the historical world, yet he brings history itself to light by virtue of what he is *un*able to do, viz., to remake the world by what he says and tries to do," engages with the broader question of humanism's efficacy in its pursuit of truth (Cascardi 14). Faith in the authority of language diminishes when language no longer properly corresponds to the "right" referent, or rather, when language and its referents constantly change, and it is this mutability that allegory confronts.

[32] Esposito continues along the line of other scholars, most notably Ernesto Grassi (see *Rhetoric as Philosophy*), who maintain that Italian humanists devised an alternate mode of philosophizing in

Therefore the "never perfect union," like the potentially discordant words and deeds, presents an alternative cognitive process that can account for an idea's representational and speculative capacities; additionally, an idea's visualization depends upon an interpretive scheme that succeeds at grasping a whole in spite of its varying parts.

The humanists and their sixteenth century successors were writing as much in time as they were in space so the visual parallel Esposito attributes to philosophy's explication of ideas aligns the sensual perception of the world and the mind's articulation of it with political making and remaking. In this vein, Carlo Galli contends that "every political thought and institution hosts a spatial dimension within itself" and that both "come into being as relatively stable and durable (epochal) regulating responses to concrete perceptions of the structures of space and their transformations" (*Political Spaces and Global War* viii). Such a phenomenological impulse transforms a three-dimensional reality into an abstraction by way of perception; consequently, Galli's goal "to reconstruct the fixed link between political theory and spatiality" is in essence not only an epistemological activity but also a representational one that mirrors the slippage between modes necessary to effectively interpret. As the subsequent discussion will demonstrate, what is at stake is the representational value of perspectival making and the theoretical potential of fiction, first articulated in allegory.[33]

Galli states that the implicit or metaphorical spatialization of political language derives from the actual sensual, experiential reaction to a specific location and how a state asserts its power over this land and determines those acting upon it, namely the identities and roles of individuals and groups within a state—ruler, populace, ally, enemy. Moreover, by using space literally and figuratively, political thinkers can discuss politics theoretically while preserving "space as an arena of praxis," much like speaking philosophically through a veil (8).

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contrast to the modern definition of philosophy ideated by Descartes. This alternate philosophy recuperates poetry, rhetoric, and thus more sensual perceptions as grounds for knowledge. See also Jerrold Seigel's *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* and Nancy Struever's *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance*. For historical accounts of rhetoric's central role to humanist thought, see Eugenio Garin's *L'umanesimo italiano* and Ronald Witt's *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni.*

[33] Discussing the shift in how Early Modern thinkers use space, Galli notes that "the tendency toward skeptical inner life begins here, with the subject's withdrawal from an external space that is now senseless into a sort of private utopia." This utopia is best represented by the Cartesian razing of the old to make room for a new foundation and thus the victory of the individual's *cogito*. Galli continues: "In the course of this reconquest of space that is modernity and that is made possible by the discovery of America, space assumes a sort of 'perspectival' value: the initially relativized and senseless space of absolute alterity becomes a space 'for us,' a space newly legible, but only from the point of view of Europe's new artificial and scientific rationality" (19). Michel de Montaigne most notably plays with these shifting boundaries and sense of identity in his essay, "On Cannibals," pointing to the tenuous hold reason has on reality.

5. Allegorical Spaces in Machiavelli's *Principe*: A Response to Galli

The significance of writing in space will be the focus of the present discussion on Niccolò Machiavelli's *Principe* as this visual concept provides an opening for an alternate mode of cognition and lays the groundwork for what Vico will do with allegory. In spite of the charges made against him for turning politics into an amoral theater of blood, deception, and power, Machiavelli writes his *Principe* with acute sensitivity to the rules, if only by appearance, that inform governance and the advice a counselor gives to his prince. Machiavelli is a dispenser of adaptable, mutable practices, consciously playing with the desire for reliable, stable theory and predictability in politics. The prince is not so much an allegorical figure as his articulation by Machiavelli-the-counselor is, namely the process of advice giving mimics allegory as a vehicle for negotiation between modes, with space as its point of departure. When Benjamin discusses the Baroque *trauerspiel*, he describes the allegorically charged intermediary figure, part-tyrant, part-martyr, who mediates attempts to control the struggles of the state, and it is in this characterization that Machiavellian *savoir faire* sings its swan song before the self-proclaimed triumph of rationality eclipses it.

According to Galli, space in politics revolves around the fact that "politics does not consist in escaping reality" therefore "it is played out within the specifically tragic dimension of contingency, a dimension in which conflictual political action is able to qualify as 'glorious' but without also, however, finding itself able to 'modify' the world in a constructivist sense" (*Political Spaces* 22). Being and acting in space is being and acting in time, and time is the determining characteristic of politics in that political action is rendered significant by the moment of action more than the change it may or may not effect. In other words, an inability to "'modify' the world" results from the absence of a fixed, stable, and infallible scheme whose laws replace chance for predictability in governance. Galli explains, "Machiavelli is incapable of 'construction' because he lacks not only the modern notion of the Subject who is able to represent himself and his power in the state, but also, and more important, the logic and regulating finality that sustain modern rationalism's entire political thought" (22). Without a logical scheme to underpin all action, political glory is isolated to one moment and is inimitable because it fails to be replicated; additionally, it remains the outcome of an individual who, unlike the modern Subject, achieves success haphazardly and without lasting payoff.

What is then tragic—and what Machiavelli's *Principe* pointedly displays—is the recognition of the immanent and unstable nature of the world; the individual's incapacity to prevent changes; and the frequently destructive aftermaths. Yet while Galli rejects the constructivist aspect in Machiavelli, there is a strong reliance on the imagery and idea of construction in the *Principe* that, as this chapter will demonstrate, extends beyond the *topos* of building, prevalent in philosophy.[34] Galli states that "even though space does not

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[34] Galli differentiates Machiavelli's space from the space constituted by Italian humanists who "reorder space in terms that are simultaneously objectively Platonic and anthropocentric" and,

bring 'measure' to politics, it does constitute a variable in the expression of the energy of politics" (23). To understand a political entity's scope and scale is to therefore grasp the degree to which its leader and citizenry designate a figurative space through action and thought; individuals functioning as "coordinates of energy" are a modern phenomenon "because they imply a perception of nature's lack of spatial and ontological Order of Being" (Galli 24). Again, the phenomenological thrust of Galli's contention that without people, space would have no form or time clarifies and is in sharp contrast to what he sees is Machiavelli's space forming impetus, "the link between conflict and glory," virtue and fortune (22).[35]

Unlike "the link that rationalism would later institute between conflict and order," Machiavelli articulates a dynamic in which an individual's political energy is more anticipatory than regulatory, meaning that politics is imprecise and unscientific, reliant on the coincidence of skill and opportunity rather than on the adherence of immutable and unerring laws. Machiavellian space, therefore, remains nebulous, "determined by potential politicity (*politicità*) and latent conflicts," its formation deferred to a future moment (Galli 22). According to Galli, this is most explicitly seen in the fourteenth chapter of the *Principe* when the prince's survey of landscapes during times of peace serves the politics of the present and anticipates times of war, following the conflation of "good laws" and "good arms." Space here is a projected canvas of suspended and inchoate actions that, taken together, devise "a specifically practical knowledge of politics [...] which translates both space and order into a new code within a different horizon" (Galli 21). This new political frontier, distinct from the preceding model of politics, initiates leaders who jettison morality as their guide and who do not yet fill that void with reason.

But whereas Galli interprets Machiavelli's innovation as a step in the linear evolution towards the rise of reason-based states and later of globalism, the present discussion suggests that Machiavelli's break from tradition catalyzes a bifurcation in political philosophy. What subtends the prince's practical knowledge is an alternate theoretical mode, constructivist insofar as it builds a new ground for thinking and perceiving, that operates on two distinct planes and disrupts the causal and sequential nature, characteristic of reasoning. Machiavelli's politics foresees in the face of

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more radically, from "the formless uniformity of a fully available and potentially scientific space" of Hobbes (21). Galli explains how this latter difference from Hobbes derives from the fact that "political virtue is [...] the standard and the objective of Machiavelli's discourse, which is not oriented around a State-owned space in which politics is represented (as in Hobbes), but around a municipal political space" (23). This "municipal" space is formed and acted upon by an individual leader but does not preclude the participation of its citizens, nor is it bound by the same set of operating principles, which are reason-based and invariable.

[35] Rather "Machiavelli thinks a logical and spatial continuum between contingency and political action, a 'natural' affinity between fortune and virtue that arises from his intuition that chance and contingency are [...] ungovernable by even the most capable human work" (22).

problematic contingency and of historical exemplars void of their didactic function a doubling, both rhetorical and intellectual, that is meant to subvert failure.

6. Allegorical Spaces in Machiavelli's *Principe*: The Prince Conquers Space and Time

In order to stave off political disaster, Machiavelli advises in the fourteenth chapter of the *Principe* that "nella pace vi si debbe più esercitare che nella guerra: il che può fare in due modi; l'uno con le opere, l'altro con la mente" (XIV 59). Machiavelli differentiates the two manners in which the prince must "exercise" and first explains, in detail, what it means to *esercitare con le opere*, writing that, aside from its obvious purpose of "assuefare el corpo a' disagi" through activities like hunting, it also serves to "imparare la natura de' siti, e conoscere come surgono e' monti, come imboccano le valle, come iacciono e' piani, et intendere la natura de' fiumi e de' paduli, et in questo porre grandissima cura" (XIV 59). Machiavelli's prince must engage with his surroundings, similar to Galli's belief that people give form to a space, yet the nature of this engagement is a literal walking around a perimeter and deviates from the model Galli constructs because the spatial exercises Machiavelli requires of his prince result in and perpetuate a political energy that is more individual than collective. Machiavelli elaborates on the second advantage (in addition to its health benefits) of a prince's survey of his land, stating:

> La quale cognizione è utile in dua modi. Prima, s'impara a conoscere el suo paese, e può meglio intendere le difese di esso; di poi, mediante la cognizione e pratica di quelli siti, con facilità comprendere ogni altro sito che di nuovo li sia necessario speculare […] tal che dalla cognizione del sito di una provincia si può facilmente venire alla cognizione dell'altre (XIV 59).

The movement involved in surveying his land before the next outbreak of war most explicitly fits the definition of exercise by action and serves to engineer a proper defense and to anticipate a proper offense. Yet the crux of this activity is to understand one's land so well that it can stand as a proxy for any potential frontier, and the repeated words of cognition ("cognizione"; "conoscere"; "intendere"; "comprendere"; "speculare") belie the extent to which *esercitare con le opere* remains strictly a physical activity. The prince renders the physical inspection of his land into a private mental activity, and as a result of such *esercitare con le opere*, the prince's space is less a projected surface onto which citizens' actions are extended outwards than a reflective one that draws attention inward to the processes of the prince's mind; the goal is to develop a method for strategizing.

The mapping of a mental activity onto a physical space emphasizes the instability of the distinction previously made between *esercitare con le opere* and *esercitare con la mente*. As he does throughout the entire *Principe*, Machiavelli undermines dualities and conflates entities first defined as polar opposites; he continues, "Ma quanto allo esercizio della mente, debbe el principe leggere le istorie, et in quelle considerare le azioni delli uomini eccellenti, vedere come si sono governati nelle guerre, esaminare le cagioni della

vittoria e perdite loro, per potere queste fuggire, e quelle imitare" (XIV 60). In contrast to the repetition of similar words of cognition, as was done to describe the prince's *opere*-based tasks, for *esercitare con la mente,* Machiavelli varies his language and plays up different verbs ("leggere"; "considerare"; "vedere"; "esaminare"; "fuggire"; "imitare"), and while the principal function of this second form of *esercitare* is to study, its subject—the actions of others—transforms it from a purely mental activity into something more active. Indeed, its goal as a thinking-based operation is to act successfully.

The blurred difference between the survey of space and the examination of past exemplars relates to the manipulation of appearances that is central to how the prince confronts change as he conducts politics. In order to manipulate appearances, the prince must tap into similarities, which repeatedly undo the distinctions Machiavelli makes, and he must also, as a consequence, construct a mirage of an unchanging reality. Albert Ascoli and Angela Capodivacca describe this strategy as deriving from "the pleasures of an aesthetic experience" whereby "coping with the 'variability' of existence entails recognizing the power of the imagination to understand and shape the realities around us and the historical conditions that contribute to creating it" ("Machiavelli and Poetry" 201). Imagination involves the creation of something, etymologically an image, that, while not perceived by the senses as existing in reality, appeals to the senses nonetheless and conjures itself into being. Machiavelli famously denies the utility of such ventures, of political utopias in particular, when he writes that "sendo l'intento mio scrivere cosa utile a chi la intende, mi è parso più conveniente andare drieto alla verità effettuale della cosa, che alla immaginazione di essa" (XV 60).

The contrast posed between the "verità effettuale" and the "immaginazione" of truth revolves around real-life relevance and utility, the capacity to materialize in the world what is already in the mind. Machiavelli explains, "E molti si sono immaginati repubbliche e principati che non si sono mai visti né conosciuti essere in vero; perché elli è tanto discosto da come si vive a come si doverrebbe vivere, che colui che lascia quello che si fa per quello che si doverrebbe fare, impara più tosto la ruina che la perservazione sua" (XV 60). The distance "da come si vive a come si doverrebbe vivere" emphatically reaffirms the opposition between effectual truth and the imagination of it, and this rephrasing signals the underlying purpose "immaginazione" serves the prince. As Ascoli and Capodivacca point out, "Machiavelli sketches a theory of aesthetic pleasure not as a utopian escape but an integral and inevitable feature of human reality" and "it is precisely the 'effectual truth of things' that demands that we account for human *fantasia* and give the literary imagination its due" (204). Scholarly conjecture can never systematically order the chaos Machiavelli perceives is rampant and pervasive in contemporary life because for every imagined utopia, an infinite number of endlessly variable human actions perpetuate

that chaos, a variability Machiavelli echoes in his ever-shifting rhetorical acrobatics, which evacuate all of his exempla of their didactic function.[36]

Moreover, overwhelming differences render all scenarios equivalently plausible, and like the surveying prince from chapter fourteen who must prudently recognize similarities in the face of future differences, any prince must rely to some degree on an alternate, imagined dimension that flattens out time and collapses distinctions behind a veil of unchanging appearances. When Machiavelli advises that "uno principe, adunque, non è necessario avere in fatto tutte le soprascritte qualità, ma è bene necessario parere di averle," he encourages the prince to cultivate his imagination, his ability to project an image of himself, and therefore correlates political power and stability with the degree to which the populace derives "aesthetic pleasure" from that image and faithfully perpetuates its existence (XVIII 68). Machiavelli states, "E li uomini in universali iudicano più alli occhi che alle mani; perché tocca a vedere a ognuno, a sentire a pochi," and the reason why sight is a more democratic form of judgment is that "ognuno vede quello che tu pari, pochi sentono quello che tu se' (XVIII 69). The alignment of *vedere* with *parere*, in contrast to *sentire* and *essere*, is at the core of Machiavelli's plan against change: in order to combat contingency one must imagine something that is different from "quelllo che tu se," which by necessity is always and secretly in flux. The surveying prince from chapter fourteen similarly projects appearances and represents a form of political simulation that employs literary techniques and, as will be demonstrated below, conflates the functions of two distinct modes of signification, the poetic and the intellectual, in order to elide differences.

The twenty-fifth chapter of the *Principe* brings to the fore the collapse of the text's most famous opposition, between *virtù* and *fortuna*, and as a result, crystallizes how imagination is integral to effectual truth, the alleged, sole solution to unpredictable change. In the two images of fortune, Ascoli and Capodivacca observe, "Machiavelli reveals that the notion of an unadorned language, transparent to historical reality, emptied of 'poetic' devices, is itself utopian, because 'reality' is always mediated by the imposition of narrative order and the deployment of rhetorical figures" ("Machiavelli and Poetry" 193). Interestingly, in its attempt to combat flux, politics can never escape "the imposition of narrative order" and thus of time, and once in a temporal sequence, co-opts literary techniques to better conceptualize itself and determine what, if anything, is worthy of preservation. After efforts to control the flooding of river fortune only temporarily prevent disaster, Machiavelli advises political flexibility, a strategy that in chapter eighteen sanctions hiding political machinations behind a surface of unwavering

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[36] Victoria Kahn's essay, "*Virtù* and the Example of Agathocles in Machiavelli's *Prince*," and Timothy Hampton's chapter, "Reading from History," in his book *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* deal specifically with the rhetorical play that Machiavelli employs to evacuate his exempla of their efficacy as exemplary models. This lack of potency underscores the ways in which contingency risks destroying all human plans and will clarify what Machiavelli takes from poetry.

morality. Machiavelli reaffirms the necessity to adapt one's actions to changing circumstances, despite the similarly necessary maintenance of an unchanging appearance, however in the penultimate chapter Machiavelli reveals that every prince risks stubbornly adhering to the patterns of his own psychopathology. In fact, the skills of a virtuous prince that are activated by the coincidence of ability and opportunity, lose their exemplary quality in chapter twenty-five, and rather than guaranteeing political success are now contingent on whether or not a prince can modify, or even discard them completely; Machiavelli explains, "ché, se si mutassi di natura con li tempi e con le cose, non si muterebbe fortuna" (XXV 93). The cautious "uomo respettivo" who builds dikes in anticipation of flooding waters is, by the second image of fortune, abandoned for the impetuous leader, more apt to take risks.

Yet the facility with which a risk-prone leader acts brazenly does not guarantee a brazen deviation from his fundamental character; Pope Julius II, the model impetuous man, is equally dubious as an exemplar because despite a lifetime of successes, "la brevità della vita non li ha lasciato sentire el contrario; perché, se fussino venuti tempi che fussi bisognato procedere con respetti, ne seguiva la sua ruina; né mai arebbe deviato da quelli modi, a' quali la natura lo inclinava" (XXV 94). The failure of a specific prince is not, however, a failure of politics *in toto*. Literary techniques are crucial to successful political thinking because, as Pope Julius' projected failure beyond the narrative of his life suggests, literary language can represent change by anticipating it and through this representation partially redeem politics. From the image of river fortune breaching man-made walls in chapter twenty-five, Giuseppe Mazzotta concludes that the entire *Principe* "è un testo che propone sì una incondizionata prassi politica, ma al tempo stesso fornisce anche la rappresentazione estetica del fallimento di qualsivoglia piano o idea politica (*Cosmopoiesis* 70). Paradoxically, the description of a praxis includes evidence of that praxis's own failures.[37] Most exemplars will see the day when their politics will fail them, and Machiavelli circumscribes his exhortation to the Medici with a fear for ephemerality, as the task of gaining control and coming into power lapses into maintaining that control over time. The move from victory to longevity, often noted as central to the *Discorsi*, is in the *Principe* the exploration of how the language representing failure can productively serve politics. It is from these failures that Machiavelli produces a thinking of politics with a poetical ground.

For the prince who surveys his lands to anticipate future battlegrounds, and for the prince who simulates an unwavering moral persona to hide changes in political

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[37] In his essay, "Machiavelli's Gift of Counsel," Ascoli elaborates on how such foresight into an imagined (and thus illusory) future characterizes any prince who despite the impossibility of his (or his counselor's) plans succeeding nonetheless is prudent to believe that they will. Ascoli notes how the *Principe* demonstrates that a "hard-headed 'pragmatism' is profoundly utopian and shot through with an implicit transcendental faith, because it pretends to know and to act on an empirical basis, even though the futurity toward which that knowledge and those actions are oriented is always, necessarily imaginary, and thus literary" (256-257).

strategy, imagination enables the recognition of similarities in order to maintain and propagate stability. Yet the "aesthetic pleasure," discussed earlier as deriving from an imagined and unchanging reality, shares the rhetoric that characterizes Machiavelli's "aesthetics of failure." In both instances, language levels out differences, but for all of imagination's involvement in politics, the resulting sameness does not necessarily resolve the problems of contingency; rather it heightens them. The opposition Machiavelli poses in chapter twenty-five between "l'uno respettivo" and "l'altro impetuoso" collapses as the distinction is not fundamental to each character but rather determined by the "qualità de' tempi, che si conformano o no col procedere loro"(XXV 92). The equal possibility of success—"dua egualmente felicitare con dua diversi studii"—negates the potency of each individual's unique virtue and, as a result, cannot abate the risk of failure (XXV 92). As early as chapter six, Machiavelli equates the failure of virtue with virtue's equivalence to fortune and anticipates the futility of desiring to control it. In distinguishing Moses, Cyrus, Romulus and Theseus from other leaders, Machiavelli states that their exemplary virtue hinged on real-life circumstances, for which fortune provided them the occasion, "la quale dette loro materia a potere introdurvi drento quella forma parse loro; e sanza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e sanza quella virtù la occasione sarebbe venuta invano" (VI 29). The chiastic phrasing of *occasione* and *virtù* is critical to the rhetoric Machiavelli employs to undo oppositions; the idea that virtue gives form to the material which fortune provides demonstrates not only a necessary affinity between these two opposed concepts, but also a fundamental intellectual component to political action that extends beyond praxis.[38]

The involvement of rhetorical language in this praxis of surface aesthetics translates to an intellectual pursuit of sameness in time. For example, Machiavelli affirms that good advice "conviene naschino dalla prudenzia del principe, e non la prudenza del principe da' buoni consigli" (XXIII 89). The chiasmus between prudence and good advice, created to differentiate a proper causal order, suggests more accurately an equivalence that relies on the prince identifying which of his counselors' advice concurs with what he already has in his mind. Machiavelli ties this prudence, just like virtue, to the identical timing that eliminates differences, in action and in thought. Similarly, on deciding which side to take in war, Machiavelli states that "la prudenzia consiste in sapere conoscere le qualità delli inconvenienti, e pigliare il men tristo per buono" (XXI 85-86).

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[38] Scholars frequently cite the chiasmus from chapter twelve in which Machiavelli renders arms and laws equivalent and, as a consequence, abandons his discussion on laws for one on arms. This chiasmus is representative of a rhetorical strategy Machiavelli implements throughout the *Principe* that elides differences in response to the changes time imposes on politics, changes that dictate when arms or laws are best used. By making arms transposable with laws, however, Machiavelli demonstrates how both are equally applicable, or worse, equally irrelevant and useless. His attempt at mediating contingency with rules results in an abandonment to the chaos that contingency causes unless Machiavelli can train the mind to mimic the chiastic rhetorical patterns and effect similarities in the face of differences.

To perceive and take a lesser evil for something good not only removes the difference between these two entities, but also sees future effects in the present, that is, the benefits of this equivalence, and mentally collapses temporal sequence into simultaneous actions. Prudence as foresight, while true to its etymology, has a purpose beyond practical matters in the *Principe* and denotes a cognitive process, akin to poetic analogy, that removes differences and underscores similarities.[39]

In chapter three, Machiavelli explains the concrete circumstances surrounding new principalities and begins, stating that such endeavors involve in practice "una naturale difficultà" and "un'altra necessità naturale et ordinaria" (III 16). The integrity of each individual threat is undermined by their chiastic relationship to each other as the difficulty and necessity both describe how a prince must act to equally avert them. Yet when Machiavelli offers an analogy to elucidate the nature of all problems of state, he affirms the intellectual basis for all responses; each plan put into practice depends first on the prince's perception of the threat, which resembles any physical illness "che nel principio del suo male è facile a curare e difficile a conoscere, ma, nel progresso del tempo, non l'avendo in principio conosciuta né medicata, diventa facile a conoscere e difficile a curare" (III 20). Early recognition and action stave off changes to and preserve the status quo, and the switch from "facile a curare e difficile a conoscere" to "facile a conoscere e difficile a curare" points to the primacy of the mind to visualize future differences from and in the present. Still, the extent to which this poetic analogy reflects how politics can avert the effects of contingency does not accurately translate to success. In fact, the analogy provides a clearer articulation of what is at stake, of what needs preservation, and painfully materializes the risk of failure. What is hardest to recognize now, will be hardest to cure then so it is imperative that the mind be astute enough to anticipate change and thus capable of preemptively effecting similarities, conditions to maintain sameness, in the present, if that is even possible. Through this visualization that strives to render threats manageable, Machiavelli shows how the control of time continues to be as arbitrary as it is elusive.

Machiavelli concludes the *Principe*, once more directly addressing the Medici, by quoting Petrarch's poem, "Italia mia." The function of this poetic citation encapsulates all the concerns that drive Machiavelli's elision of differences and persistence at coinciding thought and timing. Ascoli and Capodivacca attribute the choice to quote Petrarch as

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[39] Criticism on prudence during the Early Modern period (in Machiavelli's works and in those of his contemporaries) is expansive, both quantitatively and thematically. For an emphasis on prudence's rhetorical and interpretive uses, specifically as a political application of the deliberative practice of *in utramque partem*, see Victoria Kahn's *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* and *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter Reformation to Milton*; similarly, for an emphasis on prudence's influence on Machiavellian exemplarity, specifically the interpretation and application of models to different political modes, see Eugene Garver's *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence;* for an emphasis on its classical and civic implications, see J. G. A. Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*.

illustrative of a pervasive attention to "the radical historicity of the human condition," and that the "recurrent theme of mutability" taps into poetry as "the domain of figural displacements (metaphor as *translatio*) and structured narrative reversals," central to Machiavelli's incorporation of imagination in politics ("Machiavelli and Poetry" 197). According to them, the manner in which Machiavelli incorporates poetry is "not as part of an overt, rational, and linear argument, but obliquely through the thematic accretion of meaning by the repetition in difference of key words and images," as in the opposition between virtue and fortune, echoed one last time in the specific Petrarchan quote as "virtù contro a furore" (192). These poetic aspects, however, extend to the text's structure and, specifically, to its repeated use of chiasmi that, rather than accumulating differences, emphasize what politics gains from poetry, namely an ability to mentally affirm similarities, a solution to any prince's desperate subordination to contingency. Machiavelli's final call to action forms a chiasmus with the conclusion of his prefatory letter. Structurally, the text's ending looks backwards as its content directs the reader's sight forward, a nod to the crisscrossing movements of the chiasmus that ties together the following two passages, reprinted in full:

> Pigli, adunque, la illustre casa vostra questo assunto con quello animo e con quella speranza che si pigliano le imprese iuste; acciò che, sotto la sua insegna, e questa patria ne sia nobilitata, e, sotto li sua auspizi, si verifichi quel detto del Petrarca:
>
> > 'Virtù contro a furore
> > Prenderà l'arme, e fia el combatter corto;
> > Ché l'antico valore
> > Nell'italici cor non è ancor morto' (XXVI 98).

> Pigli, adunque, Vostra Magnificenzia questo piccolo dono con quello animo che io lo mando; il quale se da quella fia diligentemente considerato e letto, vi conoscerà drento uno estremo mio desiderio, che Lei pervenga a quella grandezza che la fortuna e le altre sue qualità li promettano. E, se Vostra Magnificenzia dallo apice della sua altezza qualche volta volgerà li occhi in questi luoghi bassi, conoscerà quanto io indegnamente sopporti una grande e continua malignità di fortuna (Prefatory letter 14).

Firstly, the "assunto," or call to action, recalls the "piccolo dono" that Machiavelli presents his *Principe* as and whose description of Machiavelli's bad fortune gives occasion and form to the Medici's concluding virtue, by way of Petrarch. It is, more importantly, "quel detto del Petrarca" that coincides with Machiavelli's prefatory "io" as both are the objects of the Medici's gaze. The poetic voice blends with the political adviser's voice, suggesting an equivalence, a shared attempt at finding a solution for, within a painful articulation of, change and instability. The desire to turn time into something of unwavering integrity drives the process of meting out differences, and in this regard, Machiavelli advises his prince to do as he himself constructs his *Principe*. In the lines

immediately following Machiavelli's quotation of "Italia mia," Petrarch writes, "et quel che 'n altrui pena / tempo si spende, in qualche acto piú degno, / o di mano o d'ingegno, / in qualche bella lode, / in qualche honesto studio si converta"(106-110). It is perhaps Machiavelli who, in gifting his "piccolo dono," hopes to ingratiate himself with the Medici and return to Florence out of exile, but it is also the mind's task to follow these instructions as it perceives the perpetually changing world and then determines how to act, that is, to think a reality into existence.

7. Imagining Human History and the *Scienza nuova*'s Allegorical Thinking

If in the *Principe* Machiavelli makes politics a measure of the mind's ability to build a state and establish "nuovi ordini," Vico in the *Scienza nuova* elevates politics to being humanity's defining characteristic. Vico's goal to educate his readership and disseminate his idea of human history—the rise and fall of political systems over time—is identical in structure to the promise Machiavelli makes to "darle facultà di potere in brevissimo tempo intendere tutto quello che io in tanti anni e con tanti mia disagi e periculi ho conosciuto" (Prefatory letter 13). The speed with which a reader grasps the didactic virtue of both thinkers' texts also depends on Machiavelli's and Vico's respective abilities to contract their knowledge, learned from experience and study, into a manageable form. When Machiavelli speaks of a *facultà* that takes shape through the examples of surveying and simulating princes, Vico invokes his *scienza* that is, first and foremost, a method of reading. This reading strategy, as the following discussion will show, reflects the manner in which Vico structures the *Scienza nuova*, which in turn, recalls the pivotal function of rhetoric to Machiavelli's intertwining of aesthetics and thought.

That Vico relies on a frontispiece and its explication to begin his lengthy text is indicative of how he transforms Machiavelli's aesthetic concerns into providing a framework that better understands, and thus escapes, time and its effects. The framework Vico employs is allegory, and whereas the process by which Machiavelli gives advice resembles allegory for negotiating between two different modes, the poetical and intellectual, and for attempting to elide temporal differences, Machiavelli's relativism of method can never fully avoid failure. Vico, in contrast, manages to redeem it, and mobilizes allegory as a response to contingency by presenting simultaneous thinking as the key to change.

Early in the *Scienza nuova*, as he describes the subject of philosophy, Vico references a ciceronian antithesis that also recalls Machiavelli's position against utopias. Vico, who works from the same rhetorical tradition as his Florentine predecessor, writes, "La filosofia considera l'uomo quale dev'essere, e sì non può fruttare ch'a pochissimi, che vogliono vivere nella repubblica di Platone, non rovesciarsi nella feccia di Romolo" (*SN*

131).[40] The antithesis differentiates the ideal from the real, the "quale dev'essere" of philosophy from praxis, but it also narrows the distance between Vico's subject matter and Machiavelli's effectual truth. Those very few who want to live in Plato's republic cannot, despite their *volere*, escape the "feccia di Romolo"; the verb *roversciarsi* is particularly suggestive of the material reality that characterizes human politics. Individuals as well as communities tirelessly establish and destroy political entities, and accurately depicting these patterns is the shared project of Machiavelli's and Vico's texts.

Like Machiavelli, Vico plots time in space to better define the objects of his study; he writes, "I grandi frantumi dell'antichità, inutili finor alla scienza perché erano giaciuti squallidi, tronchi e slogati, arrecano de' grandi lumi, tersi, composti ed allogati ne' luoghi loro" (*SN* 357). The purpose of Vico's science is to not only explore this terrain, but also unveil meaning from its fragmented ruins. The "grandi lumi" retroactively reconstruct the "frantumi" and thus reveal their essence in the present, and it is the hermeneutical process of making known what was previously hidden that relates to Vico's spatialization of beginnings. He explains, "Natura di cose altro non è che nascimento di esse in certi tempi e con certe guise, le quali sempre che sono tali, indi tali e non altre nascon le cose" (147). Like Machiavelli, the process of gaining meaning in the world and finding stability is undermined by a reality that nature is not constituted by immutable absolutes; rather, nature is characterized by the times, the contingencies that make a specific age different from another moment in time and therefore more conducive to particular outcomes.

The "certi tempi" and "certe guise" emphasize the method, in contrast to the intrinsic characteristics, of a specific age, suggesting that the reconstruction of these circumstances occurs through memory, not of the individual's recollection of his past actions but, as Paul Colilli puts it, of the scientist "transfiguring" the "relics" of the past and thereby "thinking history according to spatio-temporal intuitions" (*Hermetic Reason* 114). Vico takes the Machiavellian prince's impulse to search for similarities and thus effect simultaneity to prevent change, and systematizes it. Colilli elaborates, "The ability to visualize and think, to remember and reorganize or reinterpret the elements or contents of the 'reminiscing'" and elucidates the key to the science that "the core of historical being, that is the human as creator of maker of works in consonance with a universal law, rests in the present, that is, the eternal contemporaneity of history" (114). Colilli highlights that, in Vico, present thoughts are born out of poetic origins and that the "new art of memory is a reconstruction of the imaginative process by which the poets of antiquity gave shape to their perception of the world" (103). Why it is necessary that these poetic origins come to light in the present is because these origins provide insight to the changes that characterize and plague human existence. More importantly, they are also indicative of an alternative to reason, of a new mode of cognition that is truer to

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[40] All citations refer to the 1744 edition of the *Scienza nuova* and are specified according to paragraph numbers, as per the 1744 edition.

understanding and thus resolving the mutability inextricable from humanity after the Fall.

As David Marshall summarizes it, Vico defines knowing as "a knowing from causes, but at the same time it is also a temporal activity concentrated on the movement from experience passively received to experiment actively contrived" (*Transformation of Rhetoric* 198). The causes are poetic, or sense-based, and the artificiality in recreating the past "is the simultaneous perception of that which happened non-simultaneously," so as to reveal the ultimate Cause, which is God (Marshall 205). In light of this process, differences begin to make sense, and poetic-based knowledge is redeemed. More importantly, the re-imagining of the past in the present confirms the function of the frontispiece, which opens the *Scienza nuova*. Colilli maintains that the frontispiece is "the eidetic medium through which the work is to be thought," and that the images it contains are mnemonic for the components to Vico's science that are first articulated through the explication of those images (*Hermetic Reason* 105). By choosing to begin his *Scienza* with an image and its explication, Vico works within the tradition of Renaissance thinkers whose treatises on memory tied the interpretation of images to the development of memory and linked human imagination to the workings of the cosmos (Colilli 102-103). For Vico, however, mnemonics hones the individual's perception of existence in time, and the poetic constructs retrieved from the past are the revealed underpinnings of thought in the present. Colilli distinguishes Vico from Hermeticism because he "imposes historical limits on the interpretation of the images" and gives "primacy to a poetic text or history as epistemological medium" (106, 34).

Andrea Battistini documents the intellectual and literary trends preceding Vico's system of thought, with its poetic origin and subjection to contingency. Battistini writes, "È tipico dell'età barocca il desiderio di rincalzare la parola con un suo corrispettivo plastico in grado di incarnare un intero processo di pensiero, per il bisogno di certezze sensuali da assimilare attraverso una procedura visiva" (*Antichi e moderni* 165). Vico furthers this desire by creating a system of thought out of the process of rendering "la parola" plastic and then, as a result, theorizing human history as a whole. Battistini compares Vico to a painter, "cui non basta l'*inventio* degli oggetti ma occorre il progetto tassonomico della *dispositio*," meaning that even for Vico "sorge il problema dell'unità da cogliere con un solo sguardo d'insieme" (*Antichi e moderni* 163). The sixteenth and seventeenth concepts of *ut pictura poësis* is, according to Battistini, the "erede laica dell'allegorismo cristiano" and intrinsic to the development of semiology proceeding from the study of hieroglyphs (147). Through comparisons to Giordano Bruno, Francesco Patrizi, and Emanuele Tesauro, Battistini affirms Vico's individuality because Vico alone integrates images and utilizes allegory as an instrument to glean the poetic origin of a system of thought that is subject to contingency (160-161).

In the very first paragraph of the *Scienza nuova*, Vico writes that "noi qui diamo a vedere una Tavola delle cose civili, la quale serva al leggitore per concepire l'idea di quest'opera avanti di leggerla, e per ridurla più facilmente a memoria, con tal aiuto che gli somministri la fantasia, dopo di averla letta" (1). Preceding this table, however, is the

opening *dipintura*, or frontispiece, and then Vico's explication of it, but by looking forward to a more schematic mode of argumentation, Vico, in the work's first sentence, underscores how non-rational beginnings (as, for example, an image) subtend logical arguments, and how both can work in tandem to constitute meaning. The opening statement also demonstrates how the reader's remembrance of Vico's science mirrors memory's centrality to the way in which the new science functions; in other words, the act of reading and learning the text reenacts the phenomenon it describes. Donald Verene has written extensively on the "three memories" in the *Scienza,* and contends that *memoria*, *fantasia*, and *ingegno*, termed together as "recollection," are "the basis of philosophical thought instead of reflection and speculation" and, as a result, are "associated with the image" and thus the imagination (*Imagination* 101-102).[41] Vico couples the mnemonic power of the image with the constructive ability of the human mind to recuperate past knowledge by mentally visualizing it in the present; as Verene continues to explain, if "intelligibility is something made," then recollection reverses the decay of the past into something constructed in the present, collapsing spatial and temporal differences (103).

The productive potential of these differences when they collapse relies on always perceiving the world in time, and Verene, in an earlier publication, writes how from the "wisdom of the Muses, of that which they teach—the telling of past, present, and future," Vico envisions that "historical experience is originally poetic" and that "all human events have a beginning, middle, and end" and, as a consequence, can only tragically approximate the *storia ideale eterna* (*New Art* 32-33).[42] Battistini, when referring to the hieroglyphic elements of the *dipintura*, states that all images demonstrate human reality after the destruction of the tower of Babel and that "il politeismo appare una conseguenza della loro polisemia" (*Antichi e moderni* 159). He then concludes, "Ma nella molteplicità dei significati i geroglifici rappresentano sempre nel sistema vichiano degli accadimenti di vita sociale e politica, a certificare ancora l'unità della teoria complessiva" because these images form a pattern that becomes "una prova filologica della *storia ideale eterna*, parallela al dizionario mentale comune a tutte le nazioni" (159-160). In other words,

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[41] Verene defines the three terms as follows: *memoria* is "the power to bring to mind what is not before the mind, to find in the *here* the *not-here* and in the *now* the *not-now*"; *fantasia* is "the power to reorder what has been recalled and to shape it after the general form of the subject"; and *ingegno* is "the power of the subject to move from one act of formation of sense to others, to create further acts of formation and to have past acts combine and influence present ones" (*Imagination* 104-105). The underlying premise of this three-pronged recollection is the Vichean concern for how knowledge appears as an image in the individual's mind and not external to it in response to objects it sees in the world (Verene *Imagination* 80-81).

[42] The poetic origin and temporal conditions of this approximation recall Machiavellian prudence, and insofar as the approximation fails to match the *storia ideale eterna*, the wisdom of the Muses resembles the counsel gifted to the Prince. See Ascoli's "Machiavelli's Gift of Counsel," *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, 219-258.

multiplicity in meaning results from the cycle of the three ages that characterizes the perpetual *corsi* and *ricorsi* of human history, but the collapse of differences that memory affords the individual thinker in the present can never eliminate time, or engender the ideal eternal history on earth (even as it hints at its structure). "Divine truth is affirmed by the lack of progress toward it in history," Verene writes, and "the production of this opposite of truth is itself a truth" (*Imagination* 113). Temporal differences among the three ages of man are essential so as to grasp the cycle of human history, for, as Mario Papini explains, in the first two ages, "non vi è spazio strutturale per l'autoriflessione" as humanity cannot see beyond its base needs, therefore necessitating the age of philosophy; but the age of philosophy in and of itself cannot save man for if it were to come first, humanity "resterebbe definitivamente atterrita—o mortalmente attratta come Narciso—dal proprio non essere" ("Ignota" 197). The individual thinker can understand the divine in the eternal nature of these changes and in their cyclical evolution and devolution into each other.

Recollection in the third age of humanity is the method by which the past becomes relevant to the present, yet recollection depends on maintaining a temporal gradient among the different ages. Like Machiavelli, Vico cannot escape contingencies, but he attempts to make them productive by emphasizing their simultaneity in time. Giuseppe Mazzotta correlates the centrality of memory to a fascination with Egyptian culture during Vico's period; Mazzotta explains, "Egypt is the literal embodiment of time and death, of time as death, and it stands for the phantasm of nostalgia, for the idolatry of the past" and later of the belief "that death is the beginning of all things" (*New Map of the World* 126). With a similar faith in what lies beyond the bounds of a lifetime or of human history, Verene writes, "The heroic response to the tragedy of any *corso* is based on piety toward the eternality of its structure" (*Imagination* 121). Chronology plays an important role to the discovery and comprehension of the order of changes, how the cycle of changes can end and thus inaugurate another beginning, as Vico's philosophers fall back into barbarism.

Interestingly, the end that lapses into a *ricorso* is the lens through which to see the past *corso*, or origin; "the process of seeking an origin is [...] a process in which the origin is approached as if it were something present to the senses" (Verene *Imagination* 154). The present moment is thus pregnant with tragic, sensual, and contingent overtones while also reflecting an eternal order; it demonstrates the Vichian principle of the *verum et factum* that allows human history to "passare [...] della cruda effettualità (*factum*; *temporalitas*; Tacito) al divino inveramento (*verum*; *aeternitas*; Platone) (Papini "Ignota" 193). Because, as Papini describes it, the "corpo e mente indicano non una irrappresentabile dualità di sostanze, ma 'momenti' diversi di una indivisibile continua realtà tensionle," each polysemous point in time must be understood according to "un'intrinseca trasmutante identità o continuità di [...] funzioni mentali e di mezzi o tramiti expressivi" ("Ignota" 181). Vico terms this recollective study of philology and history as "una nuova arte critica, che finor ha mancato," combining aesthetics and cognitive theory with rhetoric and praxis (*SN* 7). Here, Vico defines philology as "la

dottrina di tutte le cose le quali dipendono dall'umano arbitrio" that philosophy examines despite the "oscurezza delle cagioni e quasi inifinita varietà degli effetti." The search for the causes out of the effects of things determined by human will, be they poetic language or political action, is "un orrore" of reasoning but succeeds in transforming these human artifacts "in forma di scienza, col discovrirvi il disegno di una storia ideal eterna" (*SN* 7). The horrific process, imbued with emotions like frustration, and the form of a science reflect the eternal *disegno*, echoed structurally in Vico's choice to open his work with the *dipintura*.

The frontispiece to the *Scienza nuova* is both a mnemonic device and a summary of the entire work *in nuce*. It is also, more crucially, a demonstration of how Vico understands time in a fallen world, and with this understanding, the reader sees the ways in which Vico attempts to resolve Machiavellian contingency. In his reading of the frontispiece, Marshall notes that "Vico's sense of time is Plotinian and Augustinian," rather than Platonic or Aristotelian, insofar as Vico privileges the individual's point of view and his experience of time, which is the "motion of the soul" (Plotinus) and the differential measure between two different points (Augustine) (*Transformation* 257-258). Marshall explains that, from these two thinkers, Vico locates time within the individual who can interpolate chronology by conjuring past and future moments in the present. The simultaneous perception in the now of entire human history, or at least its overall structure, is a hermeneutical process with epistemological consequences.[43] Verene writes that *fantasia* elevates the "particular" to a "universal," for "the power of the mind to have something before it rests on its power to rise beyond immediacy," yet it is from this "state of pure particularity" between shifting moments that causes the first men to "achieve stability of meaning" (*Imagination* 81-82). Marshall similarly writes how "the perception of time is a cognitive achievement," for the "invention of Jove was the coming into being of language" and "the metonymic movement from effect to cause, from thunder and lightening to Jove, is a movement into the past" that also suggests a future to which Jove aims his effect (*Transformation* 249).

If human thought builds from a mythological origin, then the actions dictated by this thought process form a true myth, or *vera narratio* whose patterns mimic human development in its mutability; Vico "saw that in our (and in any other) civilization the fictions of mythology illuminate the 'real world' by constituting or 'prefiguring' all its human actions and institutions" (Mali 435-436). The prefigurement aligns with Vico's understanding of how the minds of the first men operate and with his definition of

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[43] Verene explains the connection between the interpretation of language and the evolution of human epistemology, writing that "the movement from imaginative class concepts to intelligible class concepts is not simply an alteration of thought, but it is accomplished through an alteration of the type of linguistic symbolism involved" (*Imagination* 74). He states earlier that "thought and society can be seen as co-determinate structures, wherein a certain type of thought is inconceivable without a certain social structure, and vice versa," keeping in mind the poetic, imaginative ground to all social and political entities (*Imagination* 73).

allegory as "particulars [that] are directly conceived as universals" because "the poetic mind can univocally predicate a poetic genus of a collection of elements" (Verene *Imagination* 76). Vico defines allegory as "*diversiloquium*, in quanto, con identità non di proporzione ma, per dirla alla scolastica, di predicabilità, esse significano le diverse spezie o i diversi individui compresi sotto essi generi: tanto che devon avere una significazione univoca, comprendente una ragion comune alle loro spezie o individui" (*SN* 403). The univocal meaning comes from the first men whose limited rational capacity ("debolissimo raziocinio") renders them incapable of equating different entities through analogy and instead, with their "fantasie robustissime [...] se ne scuoprono le vere sentenze poetiche, che debbon essere sentimenti vestiti di grandissime passioni, e perciò piene di sublimità e risveglianti la maraviglia" (*SN* 34). The chiasmus between reason ("debolissimo raziocinio") and imagination ("fantasie robustissime") heightens their inverse relationship, and while the "identity of proportion" results from an abstraction in which one entity contains elements that make it part of a greater whole, the "identity of predictability" depends on the time, that is, the perfect coincidence of signifier and signified. During the first age man, identity can only be based on equivalence, not on similarity, because these first men contain senses "non filosofici ma istorici" and, consequently, time is a primary necessity of signification and indispensable to a human epistemology determined through the hermeneutical remembering of history (*SN* 34).

The key to the entire *Scienza nuova* is the discovery that the "principio di tal'origini e di lingue e di lettere si truova essere stato ch'i primi popoli della gentilità, per una dimostrata necessità di natura, furon poeti, i quali parlarono per caratteri poetici," including allegory (*SN* 34). Indeed, the process of naming by these first poet-men is the catalyst for the rise of social and political structures, but also the two eyes of history—chronology and geography (*SN* 17, 348). Time and space give form to the whole operation of Vico's poetic science, "che l'etimologie delle lingue natie sieno istorie di cose significate da esse voci su quest'ordine naturale d'idee, che prima furono le selve, poi i campi colti e i tuguri, appresso le picciole case e le ville, quindi le città, finalmente l'accademie e i filosofi (sopra il qual ordine ne devono dalle prime lor origini camminar i progressi)" (*SN* 22). Vico states here that by analyzing language, an individual in the present recapitulates the progression of human civilization just as a reader of the *Scienza* reenacts the transformation of space through the interpretation of the hieroglyphs within the frontispiece.

Vico affirms, "La mente umana è naturalmente portata a dilettarsi dell'uniforme," and in light of the vagaries of human history, the frontispiece is the locus where Vico grapples with invariable theory and mutable praxis (*SN* 204). Marshall contends, "The text is not at all allegorical, but no assertion may be taken at face value, and every assertion must be moved around the text so that it comes into contact with every other assertion in the work," most notably with the opening maxims and their reiterations and expansions throughout the rest of the work (*Transformation* 196). The effect is "an enthymematic structure that requires the ingenuity of others in order to function," putting the reader in the position of experiencing the very intellectual development that

Vico describes as occurring over the course of human history (Marshall 200). Marshall, however, glosses the *dipintura* superficially and is thus too quick to dismiss how allegory fits within the rhetorical tradition in which he grounds his reading of Vico. Just as decorum in rhetoric organizes a whole and emphasizes the integrity of Vico's organization of his science, as "the reconstruction of past human actions is the simultaneous perception of that which happened non-simultaneously" in the present, so too does allegory, except allegory has the added benefit of being a Janus-faced mode, looking simultaneously at rhetoric and philosophy, praxis and theory (Marshall 205).[44] In defense of allegory's importance to the *Scienza nuova*, Angus Fletcher maintains:

> To say that he [Vico] writes a type of syncretic allegory that reveals its interest through four complementary 'terministic screens'—philosophy, speculation, historicism, and prophecy—is to note once more that the basic dynamic principle of the *New Science* is the idea that the human mind undergoes 'modifications,' that modifying capacity is precisely what the allegorical mode expresses and tests ("On the Syncretic Allegory of the *New Science*" 41).

The changes that characterize the evolution of the human mind in history the reader experiences when interpreting, sequentially, the opening frontispiece and the text that follows; it is an evolution *into* rhetoric from images that predate it. Margherita Frankel was first to note how Vico structures his *Scienza* to reflect and "enact" its content, and as Fletcher summarizes her position, "What is emblematically stilled by the engraving becomes active and dynamic in the whole work" ("On the Syncretic Allegory of the *New Science*" 29-30). Moreover, the move from visual and figurative languages to rational arguments represents a causal order that parallels allegorical exegesis (from the apparent to the hidden) and requires both levels of meaning to be taken into account. Vico formulates a cognitive process that exploits allegory's layered meanings to firstly, create a system of knowledge with a poetic, non-rational foundation and secondly, create a system of knowledge that acknowledges and resolves contingency.

Still, the nature of this resolution is not an elimination of time; Fletcher writes how the "space of the *dipintura*, like the 'space' of the written discourse, is [...] subject to

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[44] Marshall distinguishes historical time from "time conceptualized simply as an axis that denotes constant motion." He explains, "Historical time asserts that the unit of significance is not the individual event, but rather the matrix of relationships between the events, practices, and structures of a particular epoch" therefore these matrixes "signify something beyond the sum of their parts" (*Transformation* 253-254). The resulting historical totality that contextualizes events is then "the radicalization of the rhetorical concept of *decorum*, as a systematic inquiry into the fabric of suitability woven by any given social system" (254). While it is true that Vico's science provides a framework to analyze and understand all human activity, the "matrix" of rhetorical decorum cannot describe how the process of history involves different modes (visual, rhetorical, philosophical) across time and how these modes mediate between each other in one moment. Vico's point is not purely rhetorical, but equally contains the qualities of every mode.

temporal warping," reflecting in its *figura serpentinata* "the turbulence of actual, relativistically understood, rather than absolute *storia*" ("On the Syncretic Allegory of the *New Science*" 36). As Marshall explains the "not social scientific, but rather hermeneutic" science, he notes the difficulty in transposing thought to praxis because both are distorted (from the divine ideal) by time, stating, "The intractableness of politics for Vico [...] is diagnosed with reference to the sheer plurality of temporal scales, desires and aversions endemic to a society that cannot generate genuine co-presence by means of institutions" (*Transformation* 261-262). The difficulty for politics to resist decay points to the fact that, despite time's productive influence on the human intellect over the course of history, each transition to a different age is fraught with chaos, violence, and endings. In other words, at the level of praxis, there is no deviation from Tacitean flux in Vico's reality.

Yet because Vico both opens his *Scienza* with a visual allegory and makes the first men's perception of the world allegorical, the reader must interpret each failing or decaying political system as codetermined by the intellect that coexists with it or, more interestingly, by an intellect that imagines coexisting with it while it exists in a future moment. This latter intellect will perceive the dissolution of a state resulting from "la lotta di classe tra patrizi e plebei" as putting humanity on the path towards the most evolved form of government and reflecting an intellectual development (*SN* 18). Vico stops short of giving history a teleological form; instead Vichian history is an interpretive process that unveils from the degradation of contingent politics, as well as from other mutable objects of concrete reality, a theory of human thought. This theory, with its practical objects of study, fails to safeguard against a *ricorso* but momentarily subverts time through simultaneity, similar to Machiavelli's grappling of unpredictable change and his recourse to the imagination; recall, for example, what Machiavelli advises the surveying prince from the fourteenth chapter of the *Principe*: to imagine future landscapes in the present.

Vico expands the Machiavellian *occasione* on an epistemological level, and the Vichean *occasione*, or moment, contains both different times and creations, differences that the human mind perceives together in the same manner as the reader understands the whole of the *scienza* through the 114 *degnità*. These *degnità*, "come per lo corpo animato il sangue, così deono per entro scorrervi ed animarla in tutto ciò che questa Scienza ragiona della comune natura delle nazioni" (*SN* 119). It is precisely such animation, the revival of inanimate things, that renders the process of reading and understanding the structure of the science analogous to the first men's poetic knowing; Vico writes, "Il più sublime lavoro della poesia è alle cose insensate dare senso e passione, ed è propietà de' fanciulli di prender cose inanimate tra mani e, trastullandosi, favellarvi come se fussero, quelle, persone vive" (*SN* 186). The act of giving "senso e passione" to a perceived reality is fundamentally allegorical because through this animation, the individual elevates significance from a feeling to a constructed thought. Moreover, the verbs "trastullandosi," "favellarvi" not only stress the constructivist aspect of the human mind, but also express how language is responsible for engendering a human reality and for creating a human

community, as both are projected forward from an individual's sensations; note how the reflexive babbling ("trastullandosi") turns into group storytelling ("favellarvi").

Poetry is also the only recourse the individual has, "da quella miseria [...] della mente umana, la quale, restata immersa e seppellita nel corpo, è naturalmente inchinata a sentire le cose del corpo e dee usare troppo sforzo e fatica per intendere se medesima, come l'occhio corporale che vede tutti gli obbietti fuori di sé ed ha dello specchio bisogno per vedere se stesso" (*SN* 331). The attempts to usefully manage contingency through poetry are here synonymous with the mind's understanding of itself through seeing, perceiving via the senses, a projected image of itself. The mirror recalls allegory as a doubly-valent mode of signification (both sensual and abstract), and by having poetry serve as that reflective surface, Vico establishes how interpretation of language, of sense-based things extends to the essence of human cognition. For his reader then, Vico explains the goal of the *Scienza nuova*: "Onde la propia continua pruova che qui farassi sarà il combinar e riflettere se la nostra mente umana, nella serie de' possibili la quale ci è permesso d'intendere, e per quanto ce n'è permesso, possa pensare o più o meno o altre cagioni di quelle ond'escono gli effetti di questo mondo civile" (*SN* 345). Vico combines the philosophical *riflettere* and the material *combinar* to emphasize the simultaneous operations needed to understand, "per quanto ce n'è permesso" by the imposition of time after the Fall, the reasons behind the effects of human reality. Therefore, because these effects are the "mondo civile," in other words, creations evolved from poetic origins, sprung from poetic minds, the inductive method that through the accretion of these effects formulates their cause, also narrates a history of actions and thought. This is an indirect method to understanding the cause of these effects as the cause is only suggested by the cycle of *corsi* and *ricorsi*, and to understand this invariable pattern is to redeem destructive contingency, since at that moment of recognition, all times simultaneously exist for one end.

In concluding his explication of the *dipintura*, Vico thrice recapitulates the purpose of his new science, and as a consequence, structurally mirrors allegory's layered mode of signification and different temporal planes. He first writes, "Ora—per raccogliere tutti i primi elementi di questo mondo di nazioni da' geroglifici che gli significano..." (*SN* 40); then, "Laonde tutta l'idea di quest'opera si può chiudere in questa somma..." (*SN* 41); and finally:

> E alla fin fine, per restrignere l'idea dell'opera in una somma brievissima, tutta la figura rappresenta gli tre mondi secondo l'ordine col quale le menti umane della gentilità da terra si sono al cielo levate. Tutti i geroglifici che si vedono in terra dinotano il mondo delle nazioni, al quale prima di tutt'altra cosa applicarono gli uomini. Il globo ch'è in mezzo rappresenta il mondo della natura, il quale poi osservarono i fisici. I geroglifici che vi sono al di sopra significano il mondo delle menti e di Dio, il quale finalmente contemplarono i metafisici (*SN* 42).

The sequence aims to *raccogliere*, *chiudere*, and *restrignere* the explanation of the opening frontispiece, perfectly mirroring, in a different form, the concise, image-based summary

that the frontispiece itself represents. More than replacing the *dipintura* with these final three recapitulations, Vico intends to demonstrate their interdependence, an interdependence that acknowledges the contemporaneity of "gli tre mondi" during the last age of men when "le menti umane della gentilità da terra si sono al cielo levate" and thus see the world through a divine lens. Indeed, Vico states:

> Chi medita questa Scienza egli narri a se stesso questa storia ideal eterna, in quanto—essendo questo mondo di nazioni stato certamente fatto dagli uomini (ch'è 'l primo principio indubitato che se n'è posto qui sopra), e perciò dovendosene ritruovare la guisa dentro le modificazioni della nostra medesima mente umana—egli, in quella pruova 'dovette, deve, dovrà', esso stesso sel faccia; perché, ove avvenga che chi fa le cose esso stesso le narri, ivi non può essere più certa l'istoria (*SN* 349).

Again, Vico superimposes philosophy and poetry, equating the contemplation ("chi medita") of his science to the narration ("egli narri") of the object of his study, "questa storia ideal eterna." The conjugation, "'dovette, deve, dovrà,'" while preserving the temporality intrinsic to narration, subverts it by gesturing to a different, atemporal plane. Similarly, the triangulation of politics ("questo mondo di nazioni"); of the individual's mind, both of any human and his reader ("la nostra medesima mente umana"); and of history serves to accentuate the simultaneous differences, in time and in essence, that conflate and come together in one political science, one epistemology, and one story, "certamente fatto dagli uomini."

The problem of contingency that drives Machiavelli towards the imagination as a way to anticipate change, or at least to develop a consciousness to better cope with change's effects, even if it is to willfully ignore them or blissfully exhort their virtues, enables Vico to innovate further. Vico all too well grasps the danger inherent in Machiavelli's advice and in the vision of the world it creates, and through allegory, Vico perceives a method to acknowledge flux and render it productive, formulating a philosophy distinct from the rationalism prevalent in his contemporaries' works. The project of his science then continues in line with the idea that poetry and other things of this world are foundational to the development of different forms of knowledge, and that the existence of the latter (abstract knowledge) always depends on preservation of the former (poetry). Thus, despite their ever shifting natures, together they form what is certain on earth in order to glean the form of what is eternally true.

CHAPTER TWO

The Individual, the Collective, and the Fictions of Exemplarity

So speaking glorious Hektor held out his arms to his baby,
who shrank back to his fair-girdled nurse's bosom
screaming, and frightened at the aspect of his own father,
terrified as he saw the bronze and the crest with its horse-hair,
nodding dreadfully, as he thought, from the peak of the helmet.
Then his beloved father laughed out, and his honored mother,
and at once glorious Hektor lifted from his head the helmet
and laid it in all its shining upon the ground. Then taking
up his dear son he tossed him about in his arms, and kissed him,
and lifted his voice in prayer to Zeus, and the other immortals:
'Zeus, and you other immortals, grant that this boy, who is my son,
may he be as I am, pre-eminent among the Trojans,
great in strength, as am I, and rule strongly over Ilion;
and some day let them say of him: "He is better by far than his father,"
as he comes in from fighting; and let him kill his enemy
and bring home the blooded spoils, and delight the heart of his mother.'
                                                    Homer, *Iliad* 6.466-481

'But come now tell me this and give me an accurate answer.
Are you, big as you are, the very child of Odysseus?
Indeed, you are strangely like about the head, the fine eyes,
as I remember; we used to meet so often together
before he went away to Troy, where others beside him
and the greatest of the Argives went in their hollow vessels.
Since that time I have not seen Odysseus nor has he seen me.'
Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:
'See, I will accurately answer all that you ask of me.
My mother says indeed I am his. I for my part
do not know. Nobody really knows his own father.
But how I wish I could have been rather son to some fortunate
man, whom old age overtook among his possessions.
But of mortal men, that man has proved the most ill-fated
whose son they say I am: since you question me on this matter.'
                                                    Homer, *Odyssey* 1.206-220

'E aggiungasi a questo quanto sia nelle faccende utile mano quella de'figliuoli, quanto e' figliuoli a te stiano presti e fedeli ad aiutarti sostenere e propulsare gl'impeti avversi della fortuna e le ingiurie degli uomini, e quanto e' figliuoli più che alcuno altro sieno apparecchiati e pronti a difenderti e vendicarti dalle ingiurie e rapine degli scellerati e audacissimi uomini; e così nelle cose prospere quanto siano i figliuoli sollazzosi e atti in ogni età a contentarci e darci grandissime letizie e voluttà.'

<div style="text-align: right">

Lionardo in Book Two, Leon Battista
Alberti, *Libri della famiglia,* 129

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'I cittadini, disse, o mio Pietro, senza dubbio ti riconosceranno quale mio successore. Né temo che tu in questo stato non abbia a godere di quella medesima autorità della quale ho goduto io fino ad oggi. Ma poiché, come dicono, ogni stato è un corpo con molte teste, né si può compiacere a tutti, ricordati di seguire nella varietà dei pareri sempre quello che ti paia il più onesto, e attienti piuttosto al parere di tutti, che non particolarmente a quello dei singoli.'

<div style="text-align: right">

Lorenzo de' Medici on his deathbed,
Poliziano, *Letter to Iacopo Antiquario from
May 18, 1492*[1]

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The mutual support between father and son that Alberti presents as the key to seamlessly extending the limits of an individual's lifetime is poignantly absent from the Homeric examples above: Hektor meditates his infant son's future that death will prevent him from seeing; Telemachos muses the past that obscures his father's identity. This absent support underscores how tenuous an individual's aspiration for immortality is in contrast to the continuous genealogical line that affords the Alberti family strength in longevity: fathers are meant to grow old with their sons' aid and enjoy their shared successes, reaped in large part from knowledge imparted, generation to generation. Transcending the birth and death of an individual to the greater temporal span of a family and, by extension, of a community of families, is a survival mechanism with genetic as well as political implications. For glory, fame, or political power, an individual transforms something as finite as the body into an entity that is durable and continuously propagative by means that produce the *sensus communis*, the voice of a community; the people, Lorenzo tells his son, will recognize him as his successor, and authority will pass from father to son at Lorenzo's death.

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[1] "'Cives, inquit, mi Petre, successorem te meum haud dubie agnoscent. Nec autem vereor ne non eadem futurus auctoritate in hac republica sis, qua nos ipsi ad hanc diem fuerimus. Sed quoniam civitas omnis corpus est, quod aiunt, multorum capitum, neque mos geri singulis potest, memento in eiusmodi varietatibus id consilium sequi semper, quod esse quam honestissimum intelliges, magisque universitatis quam seorsum cuiusque rationem habeto'" (Eugenio Garin, *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento* 891).

Yet when Lorenzo cautions Pietro that a state has many heads, he insists on the priority of political stability and on the inevitability of political change that require tools to interpret reality correctly and judge prudently. The anxious quest to preserve the status quo of authority is thus equivalent to the epistemological need to fix meaning and is figuratively analogous to elderly fathers ceding their place to adult sons, who will continue, if not surpass, their fathers' legacy. The move from the physical and the particular to the mental and the universal is to some extent specific to the biographical form and its purposes of transcending the temporal limits of the body through an emphasis in the timeless creations of the mind. Beyond the succession of births and deaths, what is a family if not a constructed, narrated, and binding identity, semantically marked with a family name?

As the biography of Castruccio Castracani will show, Machiavelli's concern for longevity across generations circumscribes a larger anxiety for permanence that the juxtaposition of the body and mind uniquely demonstrates. First suggested in the failed exemplar of Cesare Borgia, whose unexpected illness cuts his life short and thus his success in the *Principe*, Castruccio Castracani's illegitimacy and similarly sudden death allows Machiavelli to elaborate the move from bodily weakness to the potency of sayings. In Book Three of the *Scienza nuova*, Vico casts aside the physical integrity of an exemplum all together, and through the disembodied figure of Homer, meditates on the wisdom of an entire people. If the limits of the individual suggest a different kind of limit to human knowledge, not only to the applicability of a person to another person's situation but to the various interpretations of a situation, it also suggests greater limits on creative knowing.

The focus of the present discussion is to explore how, in response to the pedagogical insufficiencies of models and the wider crisis of exemplarity, Machiavelli and Vico redefine the limits of the individual into the limitlessness of the human whole. Both Castruccio's and Homer's singularity resides not in their individual persons, but rather in their collective effect, that is, in the constructive capability of all humans. The methods of interpreting the identities of Castruccio Castracani and Homer, who would otherwise have limited educative value to the context and action of a specific individual's life, become the mode of the many that is the foundation of politics and, in particular, of laws.

1. Defining the Exemplar of Allegorical Thinking

In Vico's *Scienza nuova*, the distinction between the philosopher's allegory and the allegory from the first age of man stems from a distinction between the different intellectual capacities of these peoples that in turn reflect different historical times. Neither form of allegory is superior to the other; instead, they stand in genealogical relation to each other. The "new science" takes allegory as a framework, but rather than prioritizing rational abstraction over poetic imagination and using the former to anachronistically interpret the latter, Vico imposes a temporal coincidence between these two different modes of thinking. By allowing for both modes in a single instant, an

interpreter of Vico's text—and of the human world—can acutely perceive and gain insight into change and, as Chapter One sought to underscore, begin to circumvent its destructive effects.

Indeed, Chapter One showed how both authors' interlocutors—Machiavelli's prince and Vico's reader—must actively engage their respective texts in order to learn how to reorient their perspective on the world and, in effect, think allegorically—that is, construct a frame of mind that perceives two different moments in time contemporaneously and anticipates change by preemptive continuity. Ultimately, a more productive view of mutability leads to a greater understanding of how political systems emerge, fall apart, and critically, how they survive. Despite the end goal of developing a new politics, the agent of this process remains the individual, and thus the need to expand the bounds of applicability is at the core of any political construction. Machiavelli re-imagines the portraits of princes genre in *Castruccio Castracani*, and, by revealing and accentuating the risks and shortcomings of following exemplary models, he questions the integrity and wholeness of selves more generally. If the attention given to defining what it means to be a model is in vain, then do shifting circumstances equally weaken and render ineffectual the care afforded to constructing the self, whatever a "self" is? The answers Machiavelli suggests obliquely Vico crystallizes in the centrally positioned third book of the *Scienza nuova*. In "Della scoperta del vero Omero," Vico investigates the ways in which Homer's exemplarity depends less on an individual's merits than on a collective representational impulse. That a person's identity becomes a vehicle for the majority's ideas, desires, and will reinvents the crippled exemplary model and its role in guaranteeing political stability.

2. On Homer's Exemplarity

Debates on Homer, a Classical poet, and on the exemplarity of his texts predate the crisis of exemplarity that undermined the moral and political models of Christian, Early Modern Europe. Nevertheless, the concerns of Classical philosophers over the role of poetics in philosophy and in politics have much in common with the anxieties over rhetorical and practical exigencies that could justify or elide un-Christian actions. Thinkers beginning from Classical antiquity employed allegory as the solution to the interpretation not only of problematic texts, but also of texts whose temporal distance undermined their relevance to the interpreter's world. However increasingly during the Early Modern period, a heightened awareness of historical specificity and the contingencies that would nullify an exemplary text's validity incited new analyses of Homer and, more broadly, debates on human models across various disciplines. As Catherine Labio notes, these new discussions combined the allegorical practices of biblical scholars with the humanists' pursuit for linguistic historicity, of which Lorenzo Valla's refutation of the *Donation of Constantine* is an example, in order to sanction a new interpretive model with historical knowledge as its lens (*Origins of the Enlightenment* 37-38).

Labio explains how, from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns became the stage for trends in historiography, poetry, and philosophy to converge, as all shared the concern for discovering and understanding "the origins of our ideas, our societies, and our art" (12). She contends that the "consensus" within the eighteenth century was "that origins can be known only through a process of internalization and aestheticization" therefore when Vico conceives Homer "not as a source of esoteric wisdom but rather as a source of insight into primitive minds," he "is able to free genetic epistemology from chronometric consideration" and conceive "the notion that origins are not just past but also present" (*Origins* 55, 49). By removing time as a barrier to understanding entities in the distant past, Vico is representative of the impulse to move beyond contingencies' limits, and by reconfiguring relationships without time as a factor, not only does the individual change how he relates to models, but also how he defines them and ultimately how he defines himself, now that the self is the locus for any pursuit of knowledge.

For Labio, Descartes is the essential link between the previous crisis of exemplars and the subsequent dawn of the modern subject. She states that eighteenth century thinkers "debt to Descartes" is evidenced by: "the focus on the maker as source"; the emergence of aesthetics, which is "a response to and elaboration of the Cartesian position that conception and invention are a condition of knowledge"; and lastly "the emphasis on demonstrability and certainty [...] to the study of origins and originality" (8-9). Charles Taylor in *The Sources of the Self* similarly affirms Descartes's pivotal role in empowering the self with a greater creative capacity, but whereas Labio focuses on the epistemological effects of this internalization, Taylor explores its ramifications on morality; he explains, "Relative to Plato, and relative to Augustine, it [Descartes's formulation] brings about in each case a transposition by which we no longer see ourselves as related to moral sources outside of us, or at least not at all in the same way" (143). The "inwardness," to use Taylor's term, is, as Labio sees it, key to Vichian repeatability that out of "psychological necessity" enables an individual to recapitulate both historical origins and similarly Homer's poetry at any moment in time (*Origins* 9). To the eighteenth century thinkers debating the Ancients versus Moderns dilemma, origin and originality were either the same chronological marker, that is, a point or work in time with no known predecessor; or distinct epistemological descriptors, the former being the cause and the latter the "ability to sever one's ties to the past or at least ignore them" (Labio 9-10).

Because Vico's *Scienza nuova* presents his epistemology as a theory of history, or rather, because he uses the chronology of human events to elucidate the workings and development of the human mind, his similarity to Descartes remains at the level of the mind's capacity for creation; both the subject matter and method of explication of these creations is, for Vico, necessarily rooted in the politics and therefore praxis of human

ideas in the real world.[2] Labio explains, "Unlike Descartes, Vico privileges history because mathematics and physics are at best asymptomatic, human codes that try to decode the world of nature," which, according to Vico, is outside the realm of human creation and thus of human knowability (56). The epistemological power then internalized within the individual is the idea of "auto-archeology," an interpretative process that begins externally in the study of words, which have "a retrosignification that includes the history of nations," and returns to the individual because nations are "determined by the modifications of the human mind"; this circuitous hermeneutics establishes a new epistemological subject as "consciousness and institutions are not autonomous" but mutually generative (Labio 58).

Operating according to what Labio calls a genetic principle, the individual who is the subject and actor of the world is prized for creating the objects of his study, objects that can only be known once the thinking subject internalizes the creative origin, that is, collapses temporal differences and thinks, as Chapter One explained, contemporaneously. Taylor, speaking of the creator's privileged position in European thought after Descartes, states, "It depends on that modern sense [...] that what meaning there is for us depends in part on our powers of expression, that discovering a framework is interwoven with inventing" (*Sources of the Self* 22). What motivates humans to articulate themselves as subjects vary, Taylor explains, from fame to control of the environment through reason and through a transformed will, yet the subject who pursues meaning requires a creative act to propagate the very system of interpretation that will make meaning real. Taylor writes how "the invocation of meaning [...] comes from our awareness of how much the search involves articulation," that is "finding a believable framework as the object of a quest" (17-18). For the modern self, this new framework departs from an older one based on morality as the latter relies on exemplary models external to the subject and the former is the subject itself. Selfhood becomes as a consequence less an individual creation and more a communal imitation, but whereas Taylor's goal is to examine the modern self vis-à-vis larger entities from which it is distinguished and yet to which it remains morally obligated, whether for the aim of the good or the right, the present discussion aims to elucidate the fictiveness of the modern self. In this regard, Taylor's argument is helpful for prioritizing articulation as integral to the meaning of identity it conveys, but it cannot

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[2] Labio discusses how Descartes's *feintes* or fable in the *Discours de la méthode* allows him "to demonstrate that even if the world itself turned out not to exist, this would not affect the (Cartesian) principles—arrived by means of conceptual fictions and visions—according to which we know it could have existed" (24). In contrast, Vico, who works from the experiential problems of history that Machiavelli acutely portrays, concerns himself with the certain, or real-world approximation of the truth. In fact, "whereas Descartes had turned to his fable-making abilities to picture and stage in the present the moment the creation of the world, Vico insisted on the continued presence of the past in all human endeavors and authored a hermeneutics of myth and history" (Labio 35).

fully explain the strategic role the subject—and subject-making—plays in the community from which it stands apart as a single, whole entity.

One characteristic of selfhood that Taylor presents as modern is "the affirmation of ordinary life," or "the life of production and reproduction, of work and the family" (23). Such utilitarianism diverges, Taylor notes, from the lofty, immortal glory sought by ancient warriors and from the Platonic Ideal; more importantly, however, it underscores what it means to be a "self" and delineates the nature and scope of the purpose that subject serves in the modern world. Despite the inwardness that enables a whole "I" to materialize, the expansion of the individual's internal world comes with a decreased role in society, and in Taylor's estimation, "ordinary life" diminishes the social effects of an individual's life as it gives greater freedom for the individual to cultivate the self. Chapter One discussed how personification allegory elevates imaginary figures into vehicles of undisputed truths as a means to redeem the mundane, but as the statue of Homer in Vico's opening frontispiece demonstrates, personification, just as allegory more generally throughout the entire *Scienza nuova*, does not function traditionally and forces a reevaluation of individuality in line with Taylor's "affirmation of ordinary life." Giuseppe Mazzotta writes that the frontispiece's Homer "turns his back to the source of light and he seems to look inward," signifying his absent "transcendent viewpoint from where he can use and organize the whole of history" (*New Map of the World* 160). The Vichian "self" therefore becomes a ground-zero for creation rather than reflection, which is represented by Lady Philosophy who stands behind Homer and mediates the illuminating light from God's Eye; Mazzotta explains, "That eye is the epistemologically necessary, absolute perspective rescuing history from its apparent randomness," but Homer's blindness to it affirms the range of human knowledge and the purpose of individual creation (161).

For David Marshall, *provvedenza*, rather than rescue history from randomness, "subsume(s)" it, meaning that Vico employs providence in "an imaginative capacity [...] coupling the determinacy of the past that cannot be undone with the indeterminacy of the future that cannot be calculated" ("The Impersonal Character of Action" 111). Marshall states that, as a result, Vico employs irony as "the historical mode in which providence produces public goods out of private vices, or rather general interests out of particular ones" therefore an individual acting on his own impulses, however small, will collectively impact and effect part of the divine order (112). Citing Vico's example of the Roman plebeians, Marshall contends that "providence had acted ironically to sublimate human intent by transforming natural into civil right and private into public finance," and as a result, Marshall presents how the "use of irony in historiography" sanctions the byproducts of the ordinary life "by bracketing individual intentions, by emphasizing the public, impersonal character of action, and by testifying to the power of speech both to specify action and to render it available for public use" (113). The value then given to the individual's everyday processes, which would otherwise be restricted to particular and isolated accomplishments, derives from a community of selves, with, as will be seen, very significant political implications.

The rhetorical lens through which Marshall interprets the *Scienza nuova* is appropriate as it rightfully acknowledges Vico's debt to the humanist tradition. Nevertheless, this lens only partially explains the rationale behind Vico's order and method of argumentation, specifically why Homer is both centrally figured and located in his work and why the question of his individuality is the crucial first step to Vico's discussion of politics. Whereas irony justifies the sensual, poetical human experience that Vico conceives as his science's epistemological ground, the emphasis on irony makes this experience secondary and works from the need to prioritize providence's role. The presence of God's Eye in the opening *dipintura* asserts the reality of the *Scienza nuova* as distinct from Machiavelli's vision of the world, which lacks it, yet the interpretation from Marshall's rhetorical angle foregrounds the divide separating human knowability and divine knowledge at the expense of the former's independent validity and profound role in shaping human life and thought. Marshall can make a claim for providence's ironic appearance as a means to justify the individual and the byproducts of the ordinary life that are, for Vico, the foundation of all language and communal institutions, but irony cannot explain why Vico's particular descriptions of the self are necessary in the first place and, in effect, why the statue of Homer takes up nearly two-thirds of the frontispiece's picture plane.

Mazzotta, in contrast, stresses the primacy of the Homeric question as the lead-up to the political and historical discussions of Books Four and Five of the *Scienza nuova* because "the distinct categories of poetry, politics, law, history [...] are woven together and overlap" (*New Map of the World* 160). Through this interpretive lens, Mazzotta allows for other humanist traditions to come to the fore, specifically discussions of exemplarity and representations of model individuals, because "like the disjointed, contradictory, episodic structure of the Homeric poems, history is made up of loosely arranged parts, anonymous and discordant voices, and heterogenous happenings that, in their spontaneous, blind occurrences, resist a harmonious unified totalization if not imposed by the political will of a tyrant" (*New Map of the World* 159). Indeed, it is this pivotal role of the individual that transforms an act of the will into an interpretive and epistemological necessity to perceiving human society and thought, and while the present discussion will flesh out the implications of this characterization, Mazzotta's statement introduces the centrality of Vico's transitional third book on Homer. Book Three enacts a redefinition of humanist exemplarity and consequently modifies how the individual, both a font of historical events and of historical order, relates to and interacts with universal truths.

3. Paternal Authority, Filial Succession: Machiavelli's Problem with Exemplarity

Nancy Struever presents Machiavelli's mode of argumentation as a precursor to Vico's as both methods translate humanist rhetorical practices into solutions to political and theoretical concerns, and more importantly, both employ portraits of individuals to exemplify their arguments' form and result. She explains, "Although Machiavelli deals

with structures of willed and unwilled events rather than with structures of valid and invalid inference, *The Prince*, in the form of its content is a collection of *sophismata*," propositions with curious premises or premises that provoke bizarre effects; Struever concludes, then, that "problematizing is pushed to bizarre lengths, as Machiavelli considers the odd and odder consequences of simple propositions which restate factitious political programs" (*Theory as Practice* 159). The contrived nature, for example, of Cesare Borgia's life in the seventh chapter of the *Principe* "is not protoscientific or pseudohistorical, but has the status like that of the hypothetical sentences of philosophical discussion," from which Struever concludes, "Borgia maps illusions of control of events" (159, 162). What is contrived is not the sequence of events, but the manner that describes it, and Barbara Spackman similarly notes how Machiavelli manipulates his narration of Borgia's failure without violating the terms of the maxim for which Machiavelli initially presents Borgia as the example ("Machiavelli and Maxims" 154-155).

The operative words, "It would have worked," Spackman notes, produces an irony that ensures the preservation of the rule, and as Struever writes, because the prince is powerless, "Machiavelli must delimit an artificial political sphere drained of noumenal, customary restraints," since in the face of the prince's failure, "he [Machiavelli] strives for clarity of definition of political capacity stripped of non political ceremonial justifications, the institutional parameters which are merely self-fulfilling, simply reproductive" (Struever 160). The purpose of an exemplar's life, as a consequence, is to sanction the existence of an alternate reality that obscures the sobering contingency of real-life circumstances with the delusion or deceptive promise of control. The doubleness, even duplicity, of Machiavelli's rhetoric "maintains the moral system as a contiguous possible realm which demands political mastery, but with no automatic enhancement of political power" (Struever 162). Therefore what is at stake is the past's influence on the present and, more importantly, the future—in other words, a method to interpret the accretion of individual action as means to developing or controlling subsequent events.

Closer examination of how Machiavelli supports his arguments through exemplary men reveals the anxieties against which Vico positions his interpretation of narrative, politics, and history, and by viewing these two thinkers in relation to each other, a reader can see the profound effects the individual has on the collective. For Machiavelli, the individual's possibility of failure in following impossible models underscores the dangerous futility in determining political guidelines, and yet, these guidelines are necessary to perpetuate the appearance of mitigating the chaotic forces that undermine any stable community. Timothy Hampton writes that "understanding the self in terms of narrative" is inherent to any discussion of exemplarity and that the "central function of narrative is [...] linked to the function of the exemplar in the promotion of processes of socialization" (*Writing from History* 29). The Machiavellian appearance of control then serves a didactic function, but one whose lesson is directed internally and, as the present discussion will show, leads only to dead ends.

For Vico, the individual's self-awareness in narrative is a condition of all of humanity thus the instruments of exemplarity transcend the situational and ultimately

temporal difficulties that mire Machiavelli's examples. Despite this surface difference, the thinkers' shared rhetorical techniques from the tradition of exemplarity reveal a pattern for discussions on generation and longevity that builds from the personal and physical dynamics of a family, to the cultural legacy of an entire people.

The idea that an exemplary life can expand the scope and scale of an individual's worth to the life of a community relates in part to the difficulties that arose in the development of historiography and biography during the Early Modern period. Eric Cochrane in *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* explains that by the seventeenth century, the century separating Vico from Machiavelli, the difficulty in developing a coherent scheme to address "a problem of content at the level of municipal history, of organization at the level of regional and national history, and of methodology at the level of world and universal history" lead historians to take on a greater editorial role and "to borrow certain elements that had been developed independently of them within several other, parallel humanist disciplines" (393). Whereas autobiography "remained wholly untouched by humanism," biography allowed scholars to perceive historical events according to a different form of periodization based on "culture," which resides in the lives of individuals (413, 395). Moreover, biography "could offer them a deeper perception of the relationship between a single individual and the historical circumstances in which he lived" and of "the peculiar character of individual historical agents" (Cochrane 406).

Similarly and contemporaneously, as Hampton elaborates, exemplarity "shifts emphasis from the questions of political action [...] and focuses attention on the character of historical agents" (46-47). Cochrane notes, however, that biography and history would diverge over the course of this period as a consequence of increasing skepticism about the value of exemplars, explaining, "having nothing to learn from their predecessors, they had nothing to teach their contemporaries, either noble or not noble [t]hus the purpose of biography became merely decorative or celebrative" (415-416). Yet interestingly the concurrent view of history as a "multiplicity of narratives" may have helped precipitate the downfall of models in the first place; Hampton writes, "Though late sixteenth century historiographers sought to define 'methods' that would marshal all deeds of the past under a single 'universal' or 'perfect' history, it is safe to say that until Hegel the exercise of historiography, at least as it involved antiquity, was marked by a play of multiple versions or stories" (33). Despite the fact that historians did not accept biography as a proper historiographical form, biography still shed light on the ways in which thinkers from different disciplines conceived the matters of history and confronted the problems that historically recurred. Moreover, the shared need to mediate between different, potentially conflicting narratives underscores the importance of identifying, interpreting, and positioning the various human components to history, that is, the individual within the continuum of other individuals, before and after.

Hampton notes how advice treatises allow "us to explore the relationship between historical exemplars and practical advice without being forced into a study of historiography proper" (31). If "exemplarity aims at exhorting the reader to move from

words to deeds, from language to action," then the exemplar both offers his actions and his body as interpretive surfaces, but it is only "through the interpretive gloss by the humanist" that the reader can glean any meaning from either (Hampton 29, 44). In the case of Machiavelli's *Principe* and its use of exemplars, "the narrative miniatures within the text [...] provide an episodic discontinuous frame; like the picaresque novel, the structure [...] is formally open, ideologically closed" wherein "both the fictional rogue and the confected, artificial prince are disallowed maturational, unitary development: each is constantly forced back on the task of reinventing his role" (Struever 150-151). The parallel that Struever later makes between Machiavelli and Vico in general is more specifically seen here as Machiavelli's treatment of exemplars involves having to accept change as a source of stable meaning, or rather stasis as constant movement in order to perceive any model life's or body's significance. This is similar to how Vico's narrative of his new science reveals the nature and substance behind cyclical human history across a temporal divide, that is, after the first two ages of man have past, but also after all five books of the *Scienza nuova* have been read—and reread. In the case of Machiavelli's *Principe*, Struever explains that:

> If Machiavelli [...] has rejected the narrative example as a simple, lucid illustration of a moral paradigm, he also refuses to place the narrative example as a segment of historical project, a single unitary frame of a continuous, unitary historical truth. The prince is perpetually engaged in event, but incapable of being regenerated by means of, or within, a continuous narrative, or of generating history as supremely meaningful continuity" (*Theory as Practice* 152).

Machiavelli compensates for the fracturing of narrative as a vehicle of meaning through an overwhelmingly strong principle of now-ness, which postpones future failings. Struever, in directing her attention to the subject of the *Principe*, demonstrates that the other princes, who are the substance of the advice presented, fail in their didactic function because every model, even the Prince who follows others in an effort to match or even surpass them, will never arrive at being a stable exemplar without moving beyond the present.

The process of becoming a successful prince is a perpetual action that never transforms into a continuous state of being. Victoria Kahn reasons that this is due in part to the fact the Prince "is not a person but rather a personification of a function. In a world of *Fortuna*, in short, the hero becomes of necessity the embodiment of *Virtù*" ("*Virtù* and the example of Agathocles in Machiavelli's *Prince*" 215). She explains, "To redefine virtue as *virtù* is thus to rediscover a sense of the morally ambivalent power in action [...] but it is also, ironically, to run the risk of doing away with free will" (215). Without the exercise of his free will, the prince strips himself of any responsibility for his exemplary qualities and becomes as powerless in dictating his successes as he is in preventing his misfortunes.

In contrast to Kahn's argument, Chapter One discussed how the function, signified by *virtù* and necessarily embodied by any prince, may not pose as great of a risk

to the will since such a power is internalized and requires the individual to mentally confront the multitude of contingencies that prevent longevity, universal applicability of rules, and guaranteed success in action. The exemplar as well as the prince who studies him remain integral units through this action, despite the forces that according to Struever stall the completion of the each subject's developmental arc and thus break the continuity between model and student, required for historical replicability. Hampton writes that "Machiavelli has displaced the question of exemplarity from the moment of the great gesture to the space between moments, to the hero's ability to extend the moment of political survival through time" therefore the actions of his exemplars are meritorious not in isolation and for their individual merit, but for their existence in a narrative (67-68). Kahn is right to identify the threat of a lost free will insofar as it heightens the importance of these moments of passage in Machiavelli's texts and explains the need to personify Fortune as a woman in order to keep male potency a real, attainable concept (Kahn 216). Similarly, Struever's observation that Machiavelli presents exemplary models as discrete episodes with no ties or lasting effects beyond the confines of their lives' narratives helps confirm the wider disillusionment for temporal continuity at the center of Machiavelli's treatment of history.

The attempt to teach how to subvert temporal changes through action is particularly clear in Machiavelli's attention to sons' failed imitation of their fathers for "in Machiavelli's model of history, difference undoes repetition" (Hampton 71).[3] Crises of generational succession represent a fear of lost stability and constancy that J. G. A. Pocock believes expand to the fundamental crises of state and are necessary to inspire the reinstitution of republican laws; the distinction between *popolo* and prince that, for Machiavelli, arbitrates the control and maintenance of political power also dictates a critical shift in the educative function of exemplars (*The Machiavellian Moment* 269). As the *Discorsi* demonstrate by foregrounding the Roman peoples, "the narrative that the modern student of history reads is no longer the biography of the heroic individual but

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[3] The Nineteenth Chapter of the *Principe* ("in che modo si abbia a fuggire lo essere sprezzato e odiato") presents the examples of Commodus and Antoninus who, for different reasons, were incapable of continuing the legacies of the respective fathers, Marcus Aurelius and Severus. The failures described here will be recapitulated in different forms in the *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* and are central to how Machiavelli conceives the collapse of the individual in favor of the collective in the quest for political stability. Also of note is the final paragraph of this chapter as Machiavelli states once again that exemplars have shifting didactic values and advises his reader to pick and choose what is appropriate: "Perché a Pertinace et Alessandro, per essere principi nuovi, fu inutile e dannoso volere imitare Marco, che era nel principato iure hereditario; e similmente a Caracalla, Commodo e Massimino essere stata cosa perniziosa imitare Severo, per non avere avuta tanta virtù che bastassi a seguitare le vestigie sua. Per tanto uno principe nuovo in uno principato nuovo non può imitare le azioni di Marco, né ancora è necessario seguitare quelle di Severo; ma debbe pigliare da Severo quelle parti che per fondare el suo stato sono necessarie, e da Marco quelle che sono convenienti e gloriose a conservare uno stato che sia già stabilito e fermo."

rather the ethnological narrative describing the customs and virtues of nations" (Hampton 78). Consequently, the scale and specificity of what defines and circumscribes a model increases, thereby modifying the lessons of history, and the present discussion will show how the personal, temporal struggle between fathers and sons anticipates the concerns and techniques for the survival of states and their laws over time.

4. Debating the Exemplarity of Machiavelli's *Castruccio Castracani*

The so-called crisis of exemplarity during Machiavelli's time period became a vehicle, then, for the expression of various anxieties, and in the *Vita di Castruccio Castracani*, Machiavelli prepares for a shift in the use of models that Vico will fully articulate in the creation, function, and preservation of state laws by way of the figure of Homer. The didactic purpose of exemplars, of expressing models in narrative that fit in the greater narrative of human actions (history), gives way to a deeper insight concerning how humans think and create, but also on how individuals reach consensus on shared beliefs and thus on the formation of communities. Vico contends that at the base of any community's history and identity is marriage however he is not constructing his science according to gender relationships. Rather, he uses these gender relationships to concretize invisible, intellectual developments. Vico's novelty in extrapolating a specific, historicized epistemology from a physical and historical gender binary relies in large part on how Machiavelli expresses model political thought through physical, sexualized actions. The gender politics of the Prince's *virtù* and Lady Fortune as well as the generational issues that make, for example, Pope Julius and Cesare Borgia an unsuccessful father-son duo, reflect the overwhelming desire for the generation and propagation of exemplary bodies, succinctly figured in Machiavelli's *Castruccio*.

Criticism on this partially fictitious biography have foregrounded the singularity of Castruccio's genealogy as a foundling, who "overcomes any disadvantage connected to his genetic ignorance and makes himself powerful, a founder, thanks to the sheer force of his *virtù*," and the implications of his adoptive name; Valeria Finucci explains, "Doubly and inescapably inscribed with his original lack, Castruccio ('Little Castrator') Castracani ('Castrator of Dogs'), man with no father, adopted by a father who could not biologically father because of his church ties, and himself unwilling to father any legitimate issue [...], grows into the father of all citizens, the absolute *pater patriae*" (*The Manly Masquerade* 117).[4] The degree to which such gender thematics of exemplars apply to state building

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[4] In discussing Machiavelli and gender, Barbara Spackman writes that Freudian "male lack is replaced and concealed by the invocation of an overwhelming female force and plenitude" ("Machavelli and Gender" 225). She cites one of Castruccio's final sayings in Machiavelli's portrait of him ("I have taken her, not she me") to demonstrate that "virility in all its senses— gendered, generational, sexual, and as a set of character traits that includes boldness and self-discipline—is constituted and confirmed by displaying the ability to subject sexually a force figured as female. This force is not associated with the traditionally feminine quality of passivity

and legislation and ultimately to the development of the human mind, as Vico envisions them all, deserves greater attention, particularly given the ambiguity surrounding the community beneath the "absolute *pater patriae.*"

While concentrating on the gender inflections in the language Machiavelli uses to describe Castruccio's potent individuality, Finucci notes how the generational problems, which Castruccio faces and seemingly overcomes to build his empire, also relate to degeneration (*The Manly Masquerade* 84). Finucci quotes Tommaso Garzoni's definition of the castrator from his *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, writing, "'un medico da testicoli, anzi più tosto un barbiero, il quale, pien di rigore, non sa sanar la piaga se non impiaga'" (239). The paradox of healing a wound through a greater wound is reminiscent of the preemptive violence to which Machiavelli's prince must subject his people and, as Spackman notes, performances of gender that require "displays of virility and manliness in relation to the subordination of a force represented as female or feminine" or, as it were, to the emasculation of a potent, virile threat ("Machiavelli and Gender" 236). Yet the difference between castrator and castrated, much like that between *virtù* and *fortuna*, is slippery and mutable, pointing to "a fundamental ambivalence about masculinity [...] in particular about the degree to which masculinity must prove itself independent of the feminine," an ambivalence that "is inextricable from a concern with autonomy: of states, of armies, of men as solitary founders, of men as manly" (Spackman 227).

Hannah Pitkin's identification of authorial weakness in all of Machiavelli's sexualized politics allows her to generalize on the nature of autonomy, both in the governance of a state and of the self. She writes that "at every level and in every sense, the idea of autonomy is itself problematic, implying both a connection and a separation" and that autonomy may be "a kind of sovereign isolation" or "the rightful acknowledgment of interdependence" (*Fortune is a Woman* 8).[5] Her conclusion is critical in confirming that what is at stake in Machiavelli's representation of Castruccio is the status of imitation and, more importantly, the nature and scope of the relationship dictating who gives or receives lessons and laws. Pitkin explains that the founder as an archetype, of which

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[...] this force is frequently identified with *fortuna* and thus draws on already established gendered personification" (223).

[5] Pitkin aims to demonstrate the "interrelationships of meaning" between personal and civic autonomy and thus revise the belief of politics as a distinct realm from disciplines regulating all other human actions and behaviors (*Fortune is a Woman* 5-6). She highlights the basis for these affinities, writing, "The word *autonomy* derives from the Greek *auto*, meaning 'self' or 'own', and *nomos*, meaning 'law, rule, binding custom, way of life.' Autonomy thus means having or making one's own laws or principles: independence, self-control, self-government, freedom [...] Autonomy concerns borderlines, found or made; it concerns the question of how and to what extend I (or we) have become of can become a separate self (or community) [...] Autonomy is a problem in the living of any human life, the workings of any human community" (*Fortune is a Woman* 7).

Castruccio is representative, "must serve as a model for imitation, must inspire admiration, respect, even love, and embody for his subjects the character they are to acquire by following them—a character not of terrifying cruelty, but of genuine virtue" (77). The goal is to invoke a "personal" authority in the absence of "traditional and legal authority" because politically "only in their relationship to the inspiring leader can fragmented and factionalized men begin to feel their shared membership, their communality, and find the courage to trust" and as a result, yield their identity to the will and psychology of the group (Pitkin 77).[6] These motivations for being a model father to his citizens strive to resolve a "deeper problem lodged in Machiavelli's understanding of the educational, transformational task itself," namely the transmission and longevity of power beyond a leader's death (Pitkin 77). The resolution involves the expansion and manipulation of exemplary narratives and begins, as Pitkin first notes in her Founder, with the implementation of political archetypes.

Guido Ruggiero references Stephen Greenblatt's articulation of Early Modern "self-fashioning" and balances this idea of self-presentation and self-performance ("process of social identity negotiation and maintenance") with the tempering role of what he defines as "consensus realities," meaning "imagined realities [...] shared within the various groups with which an individual lived and interacted" and whose purpose is "social discipline" (*Machiavelli in Love* 8). As has already been suggested, the push and pull between individual and community reaches a critical mass at a leader's deathbed, and Ruggiero, like Pitkin, explains how the value of an exemplary life's narrative is set at death; he writes:

> paradoxically the very moment that formally canceled identity mobilized the circles of one's social existence, the most crucial judges of the performance of self in the Renaissance, and provided the ultimate measures of identity—one last series of consensus judgments considered more than *virtù*, but the significant role played by this crucial term suggests that death in a way gives life to the deeper meaning of *virtù* and identity in the Renaissance (*Machiavelli in Love* 164).

The gender dynamics surrounding *virtù* in life factor equally in death as the transmission of *virtù* to biological successors depends upon the potency of the exemplar's narrative to still influence communal action. The immediate "consensus judgments," or the biographical reflections on an individual's life upon death, serve to perpetuate *virtù* in the behavior of his peoples, and more significantly, to sustain the authority passed onto his successor. Nevertheless a successor's authority in the guise of inherited *virtù* cannot

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[6] Spackman again cites the Castruccio's reassertion of his taking of a woman, not she him as a "homosocial exchange [...] constituted by gossip about sex between two men," which serves to affirm the importance of autonomy to the logic of Machiavelli's text ("Machiavelli and Gender" 228).

preserve indefinite control over community action and thought, as the lifespan of an individual, exemplary narrative falls short of that of "consensus realities."

The attempt to generalize and transform exemplars into archetypes, however, begins to expand the former's relationship to time, especially as it relates to overcoming problems of succession. Pitkin identifies Castruccio as an example of the Founder and underscores the generational interactions essential to this archetype, writing:

> the true Founder must not only be a foundling, independent of the past and self-made in his origins, but he must also be ruthless toward the future, ready to sacrifice [...] the immortality of the blood promised through his offspring for that larger and more individual immortality promised through the glory of his founding (*Fortune is a Woman* 60).

The Founder's abilities, which are an antidote to his absent past, ensure the singularity of his future to the detriment of his material and genetic offspring because he prioritizes the temporal arc of his perpetual life story over that of any potential genealogy. As a result of this narrative priority, metaphors of birth and paternity themselves beget interpretive difficulties. Pitkin explains that "the Founder is the forefather par excellence, embodiment of a generative paternity so potent that it can create lasting masculinity in other men, even in a sense overcoming death"; if a founding "means creating something that lasts, but above all something great, an expansion of *virtù*," then the Founder's style of manhood is "pure source" and "initiates and induces free action of others, so that his project becomes what they willingly carry out, even without his enforcing presence" (*Fortune is a Woman* 53, 54). Decidedly, it is "*his* project" and his stamp of *virtù* that others serve to generate, or perhaps regenerate in his physical absence, as the transmission to subsequent ages requires using his life's narrative as a referent in order to recapitulate him as a source of authority. The central interpretive difficulty lies in determining what is created as a result of this invocation and for how long does it survive. Moreover, since immortality is the Founder's goal, what from his exemplary narrative becomes incorporated in a community's shared understanding and how does this move ensure longevity?

Wayne Rebhorn, acknowledging how Castruccio's political rags-to-riches life story embodies the ideology of Renaissance self-fashioning, defines another, similar archetype to the Founder, that of the "confidence man." Critically, in his definition, Rebhorn emphasizes an integral narrative component to this identity: "The ambiguity of Renaissance confidence men usually depends less on their actions, which are often immoral or at least antisocial, than on their author's manipulation of the audience's response," explaining that at the core of these strategies is "to keep their heroes in a sphere beyond any simple judgment" (*Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men* 20). The interpretable qualities of a confidence man's life are fluid and easy to manipulate, revealing "a truly ambiguous character who is both good and evil, attractive and repulsive, possessing traits both socially advantageous and socially dangerous," thereby making the exemplar's narrative of authority adaptable and thus void of any intrinsic, immutable model virtue (Rebhorn 22). As a result, the narrative that a confidence man aims to weave

into the fabric of the community he sets out to govern must retain a level of uncertainty and flexibility in order to change with and over time.

Leo Strauss, in contrast, sees no ambiguity and, as a consequence of Machiavelli's and his profiled men's unequivocal godlessness, determines that there is no fundamental concern for longer temporal measures of authority as the evilness pervading his texts rejects the ultimate longevity, that of God's eternal order. Supporting his contention that Machiavelli's obsession with political rises and falls is not an anxious search for stability but a glorification of change, Strauss cites Castruccio's deathbed scene, explaining, "Castruccio, who speaks in his witty sayings and elsewhere of God, mentions Fortuna in his dying speech five times, but never God [...] mentions this world once in his dying speech and the next, never" (*Thoughts on Machiavelli* 224-225). Strauss then contends that Machiavelli undermines the mentions of God in Castruccio's final sayings because he culls these sayings from "such unsung and undignified philosophers as Aristippus and Diogenes and hardly at all of Aristotle," hedonistic philosophers whose principles never rise above the earthly pleasures and experiences at the center of their thought (225).[7]

In presenting his own archetype of the witty politician, Stephen Rupp cites established interpretations of Machiavelli's Castruccio, stating that, for Gennaro Sasso, this tyrant's life reveals the "dominance of fortune in human affairs" and similarly, J.H. Whitfield's conclusion, that "unbridled *virtù* cannot secure or maintain a stable regime" (Rupp 379). Against such apparent powerlessness, Rupp explains why rhetorical wordplay, particularly wit, serves "as an economical means of assertion and control [...] a gentle gaming that allows the prince to keep the upper hand" (Rupp 379). He sustains that, despite being a conventional ending to a biography, the sayings at the end of the *Vita* affirm "the connection between princely authority and verbal ingenuity," which is "a marker of power and social superiority" (377). Rupp writes, "The tyrant's wit expresses by verbal means the coercive force that he exercises over others," suggesting that its preservation in sayings expands the shelf life of his authority after death (378).

Despite the various categorizations of Castruccio into different archetypes—a founder (Pitkin); a confidence man (Rebhorn); a godless heathen (Strauss); a rhetorical wordsmith (Rupp)—that serve to understand the effect and duration of his authority, the question of what the individual can learn from Castruccio's so-called exemplary life remains. Erica Brenner, in *Machiavelli's Ethics*, summarizes how the *Vita* fits within the

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[7] Strauss interprets the *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* as part of what he defines as the "movement of fundamental thought" in Machiavelli's *Principe* and *Discorsi*: "a movement from God to Fortuna and then from Fortuna via accidents, and accidents occurring to bodies or accidents of bodies, to chance understood as a non-teleological necessity which leaves room for choice and prudence and therefore for chance understood as the cause of simply unforeseeable accidents" (Strauss *Thoughts on Machiavelli* 223). This reduces all models and model action to a peripheral role in the construction and preservation of any political community and limits the possibility for these exemplary narratives to transform into more stable identities of the people, an idea articulated at length in the *Discorsi*.

tradition of Classical 'rise-to-tyranny' literature, suggesting that what can be learned is the degree to which a tyrant's rise to power is a carefully constructed work of manipulation and appearances.[8] Joseph MacFarland differentiates Castruccio from Cosimo de' Medici—who is, evoking the preface to Book One of the *Discorsi*, "a life to be admired rather than imitated"—because in Machiavelli's writings on both rulers, the *Vita* "is mostly the product of an imagination enriched by ancient histories" therefore "the failure of even the imaginary Castruccio to master fortune indicates that the man of deeds needs the author's ability to imagine a particular life as an education for others" ("Machiavelli's Imagination of Excellent Men" 133). In other words, "the imagination is not only compatible with the 'effectual truth' but also is indispensable for teaching it" (134). What is taught, MacFarland contends, is "a kind of reflection that is similar to the imaginative activity through which Machiavelli invented *Castruccio*" and that correlates the founding of a state to the creative narration of a life (135).

The "imaginative activity" requires a picking and choosing of relevant ideas in order to weave together a new political authority, which he believes is not radically different from the lesson expressed in the *Principe*, however MacFarland does not elevate this "reflection" to the level of a model action, a new mode of thinking that can escape the pitfalls, undermining any exemplar's success; instead this reflection only serves to identify useful characteristics. Yet he explains that "not even emulating the imaginary Castruccio would suffice for achieving the greatest glory." He concludes, "Just as the defects of an unarmed Cosimo," a man of letters, "lead one to seek Castruccio's virtues, the defective judgment of the well-armed Castruccio leads one to seek the missing, requisite virtue," but this recognition usually comes too late, as Castruccio recognizes his lack on his deathbed (MacFarland 145). According to MacFarland, Machiavelli's skepticism of all political models means in the end that these models teach nothing.

Catherine Zuckert draws a similar conclusion although her explanation for the inefficacy of Castruccio's life narrative lies in the fact that he fails to learn from and for himself, continuing to reveal his defects through their effects on his successor, Pagolo. Zuckert compares Castruccio to Cesare Borgia, rather than to Cosimo, arguing that Castruccio is an "important corrective to an erroneous but persistent reading of *The Prince*" and "brings to the fore the question of the character and philosophical basis of the

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[8] Brenner's summary states: "In Herodotus and earlier writers, (1) new tyrants generally emerge from conditions of civil strife or *stasis*, promising to restore order; (2) they gain supporters by cultivating appearances of justice, liberality, and honest dealing, so that their ascent to tyranny occurs by popular will, not undue violence; (3) when they finally seize power, some deception is used to create an aura of legitimacy for their actions; (4) once in power, tyrants typically rely more and more on mercenaries for defense. The often engage in expensive building projects to keep up their reputation, including houses 'fit for kings'; and their often rustic origins are contrasted with the magnificence and pomp of their later way of life. Most such tyrants leave behind material evidence of greatness (*megalos*), but in other respects leave their cities worse off than before" (*Machiavelli's Ethics* 24-25).

political education" ("*The Life of Castruccio Castracani*: Machiavelli as Literary Artist, Historian, Teacher and Philosopher" 579). Like in the case of Cesare, "Machiavelli first attributes [Castruccio's] inability to establish a lasting regime to his own untimely death," but "as Machiavelli explicitly demonstrates in the case of Cesare, so he implicitly suggests in the case of Castruccio, his failure to establish a lasting regime was also a result of bad judgement" (Zuckert 591). Bad judgment refers not simply to the inability to determine prudent action, but more significantly to the failure in modifying the principles behind such actions, based on perceived reality. Ultimately, because Castruccio fails as a teacher to his heir—the empire he acquires in life quickly falls apart after his death—he cannot serve as a model prince. Zuckert explains, "Castruccio may have increased the estate he passed on to Pagolo, but he had not served as an effective tutor [...] because he had not reflected on his own experience and drawn appropriate conclusions from it"; this absence of "self-knowledge" is the greatest injury to Castruccio's exemplary status, not his untimely death (593).[9]

Furthermore, this lack of self-awareness and reflection results in a legacy that encourages adherence to "anti-political philosophers," and Castruccio's sayings, according to Zuckert, are final proof "that [Castruccio] did not understand one of the basic requirements of his own position, the need for a prince to maintain a certain kind of public position or front" (598). He lived and died impetuously, recalling the character distinctions in Chapter 25 of the *Principe,* and the trademark of such haste is a blindness to reflected knowledge and to acute perceptions of given, particular circumstances; the undoing of any exemplar's validity to another individual's life is now the undoing of the exemplar to his own.

Jeffrey Schnapp passes over the implications of Castruccio's failure to survive his illness and/or preemptively secure his empire from falling apart upon his death, both of which imply his unsuitability as an exemplar. Instead, Schnapp takes Castruccio's failure as a sign of Machiavelli's modernity, defined as a "rupture" or "decline away from glorious precedents," putting into question the appropriateness of exemplarity in the modern age (Schnapp 663). The potential to inaugurate a new beginning determines the present's relationship with the past; Schnapp asks, "Are ancient beginnings inimitable and forever cut off from the present, or are they part of a continuum that renders them imitable and repeatable?" ("Machiavellian Foundlings" 654). The proclaimed faith in the "humanist doctrine" that "history forms a coherent and legible book with recurrent patterns, principles, and laws, which are readily translatable to the present," Schnapp claims "is symptomatic of deeper problems and uncertainties" (655). Indeed, Machiavelli

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[9] Zuckert describes Castruccio's failings in more detail, writing: "Having discovered that Pagolo was not war-like 'by' nature, Castruccio had not reversed his own experience and given his heir to a priest to teach him what Castruccio himself had refused to learn from Messer Antonio. Nor had Castruccio imitated Messer Francesco's prudent policy by finding a young man with a suitable nature to adopt and educate, who would be able to lead his troops when he himself was no longer able to do so" (593).

presents *virtù* and *prudenza* as the means "to deflect and creatively alter ancient precedent, thereby leaving one less certain about the value of the past than of the need for the [...] powers of discrimination" (655). Schnapp reasons that "if imitation can provide only a partial response to the question of modern decline [...] Machiavelli's ultimate answer assumes the form of a generative counter-myth that appropriates and transforms ancient prototypes" (655).[10] Castruccio embodies "this counter-myth," rewritten and deviating from historical fact as Machiavelli transforms him into a foundling, that "consists in a virtual theory of spontaneous generation wherein modernity cares to be identified with the figure of the foundling: as that whose origin is so dispersed that it may be said to belong to anyone and everyone" (Schnapp 655). If the foundling is a privileged emblem of modernity, he has already rejected all the exemplary models that came before him because he is, by definition, a historical ground zero.

Moreover, as Schnapp contends, the foundling's temporal singularity results in a universal replicability, that is, anyone at any time may personify this model, and yet by definition, to guarantee perpetual ground zeros, a foundling must also erase the future too; Schnapp writes, "[G]enerational succession always equals degeneration" of a specific family line (654). The modern age, then, requires an abandonment of a specific self as a model in favor of a new one, of a general kind, and Machiavelli's Castruccio becomes a vehicle for what Schnapp perceives as foundlings of yet another variety: the biography's concluding sayings, or "mobile wisdom" that valorizes human wit and linguistic skills through Machiavelli's modifications of source materials (654).

But if these sayings are all that Castruccio can produce and leave to posterity rather than a healthy genealogical succession, they are a sign, Schnapp believes, of the exemplar's monstrosity and specific inimitability, affirming that a founding myth represents only a moment, incapable of being sustained through time.[11] Thus the

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[10] The fundamental way in which Schnapp notes this phenomenon is in how Machiavelli appropriates and deviates from earlier biographies of Castruccio Castracani. Machiavelli's *Vita* therefore becomes a pastiche of facts and facts-turned-fictions from various sources as well as of details from Biblical and Classical sources. Schnapp summarizes the differences and the effects: "Making of Castruccio a humble foundling, he denies him any and all ancestral ties, omits any reference to his nine daughters and sons, and forces a strictly artificial genealogical link to the later Guinigi dynasty. Moreover, he grants Castruccio a precocious and prodigious childhood, builds a complex family romance around his beginning and end, magnifies his acts of treachery and cruelty, and assigns to him some 34 ancient witticisms at the narrative's conclusion" ("Foundlings" 658). For more detail on what specifically is integrated and from where, see Louis Green, "Machiavelli's *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* and its Lucchese Model," *Italian Studies* 42 (1987), 37-55, and *Castruccio Castracani: A study on the Origins and Characters of a Fourteenth Century Italian Despotism* (1986) as well as Giuliano Lucarelli, *Castruccio Castracani degli Antelminelli* (1981).

[11] On Castruccio as monstrous, that is "at once an aesthetic wonder, a portend, and a disclosure of the boundary line separating the natural from the divine," Schnapp writes: Castruccio "is at once

significance of the *Vita* "staging [...] modernity as an impasse [...] resides less on the thematic plane (e.g. crisis of succession) than in Machiavelli's authorial stance," which works "to redeem the time, to find and, if not to find, then to invent, a tentative link between the reading past and a future that can never be more than a hypothesis" (Schnapp 674). Consequently, as Schnapp claims, historical continuity is artificial and that human action based on this artificial construct occurs solely through language—a realization that modernity appropriates to assert its innovation and inaugurate its existence as a break from the past.[12]

The troubling notion that a coherent and educative concept of time exists solely in language and as a result of an individual's rhetorical manipulations only partially explains the anxieties Machiavelli displays in his portrayals of fathers and sons, despite Schnapp's contention of their lesser relevance. Barbara Spackman, in her paper "Machiavelli and Maxims," takes into account the rhetorical tradition from which Machiavelli is writing to articulate a more thorough analysis of how the treatment of exemplars through the images of generational succession defines what can be learned from Castruccio and how that information reflects a changed reality vis-à-vis a new, absent subject.[13] Spackman summarizes how Machiavelli's *Principe* effects a significant ideological shift in the contemporary approach to politics around "maximatic discourse" that demonstrates a complicated relationship between maxim and exemplar, specifically the action on which such model is meant to instruct. The fundamental question then that Spackman's argument raises is, What does it mean when reality does not meet or coincide with the truth put forth in a maxim, or as she asks, "Does the text prove, exemplify, illustrate or even contradict the *sententiae* that it surrounds?" (140).

The potential discordance, similar to the temporal divide between past exemplar and present subject that might preclude applicability, would seemingly be resolved, in part, by the fact that a maxim's "main verb is almost always in the durative present tense, in a present tense that summarizes and absorbs the past and excludes the possibility of a future differing qualitatively from the present" ("Machiavelli and Maxims"141). Indeed, within the tradition of political advice treatises that aim "*to put time on your side*," the

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a remedy and a symptom, a living monument to ancient glory and a sign of modern fragmentation. A practitioner and accomplice of ancient aphoristic wit, Castruccio also appears as its embodiment, whether *in bono* or *in malo*. Even his name is a model of alliterative play and aphoristic expression" ("Foundlings" 670).

[12] Schnapp's analysis is in debt to Hans Blumenberg definition of modernity as a phenomenon of self-assertion as new. See Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age (*1983).

[13] This absent subject results from Machiavelli's persistent use of maxims, or "maximatic discourse." Spackman explains that "the maxim announces a universally applicable statement describing a rule of morality or conduct, and appears in didactic discourse. Grammatically, the subject of the sentence is frequently 'humanity,' an abstract noun or moral quality, or the sort of 'absent subject' provided by the impersonal *on* in French or the *si* in Italian" ("Machiavelli and Maxims" 140-141).

maxim's "timeliness" and its binary structure would ensure "the possibility of effective action" (144). Yet Machiavelli is, according to Spackman, using the maxim to change the tenor and goal of advice treatises, "transforming the maxim as an abstract rule into the maxim as a command" (144). The nature of this command relies on the "transformation of a former, classically established antithesis into a quasi-identity," meaning that two components contrasted as opposites become instead equivalent and representative of a singular entity (146).[14]

The exemplars then supporting these maxims ensure that they "[maxims] appear as names for paradigms, rubrics under which are subsumed demonstrations drawn from history that then becomes [...] a pool of archetypes" ("Machiavelli and Maxims" 153). These archetypes are fixed in such a way that "when events fall short of adherence to the directions given by the maxim, the fault is in reality, in history itself," a fault that Machiavelli illustrates by means of a modal shift in the language of his narrative, from the indicative to the past conditional (153). The resulting "hypothetical construction" makes "adequation possible" between maxim and reality, and preserves the maxim's integrity therefore similarly fabricated calls to action, like Machiavelli's exhortation to the Medici in the *Principe*'s final chapter, are as effective, if not truer in their efficacy, than the actions reality itself demands. Spackman explains, "However else we wish to read Machiavelli's claim to speak of the 'effective truth of the matter,' we must read it as a claim to speak a truer truth as the substitution of a new 'dover esser' for an outmoded one," initiating a shift in exemplarity's paradigm, from the lives of model individuals to the manipulative, flexible rhetoric narrating them. (152). Machiavelli, by emphasizing the construction involved to establish congruity between language and history, recognizes the arbitrariness as well as the artificiality of continuity, in time and in meaning. The revisionary potential of history correlates with the rhetorical prowess of the historical interpreter, but such potential undermines the chronology established, even guaranteed, by genealogical succession.

5. The New Exemplar and his Verbal Children: An Analysis of Machiavelli's *Castruccio Castracani*

The present discussion sees genealogy as a lens through which authors articulate themselves grappling with exemplarity's failings and their reformulation of its purposes, and the adequation and substitution that Spackman attributes to the maxim positions Machiavelli's *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* as a significant point of transition within this

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[14] "No longer a metaphor referring to an autonomous force outside the subject, fortune is redefined as that which is produced by an error of 'virtù,' as a metaphor for a lack. Fortune is, in other words, simply an excuse, an alibi, for the failed virtue of a subject" ("Machiavelli and Maxims 148). Chapter 26 of the *Principe*, with its exhortation to the Medici to act on the opportunity before them, is therefore "a fiction that must be believed in order to mobilize 'virtù' (150).

process of transformation. Principally, after the death of Castruccio, when Machiavelli extends the logical end to his biography with a series of Castruccio's sayings, the narrative's final statement completely divorces the exemplar's actions from any imitable value and renders insignificant the continuity in authority that Castruccio's successors fail to maintain; Machiavelli writes,

> Potrebbonsi raccontare delle altre cose assai dette da lui, nelle quali tutte si vedrebbe ingegno e gravità, ma voglio che queste bastino in testimonio delle grandi qualità sua. [...] E perché vivendo ei non fu inferiore né a Filippo di Macedonia padre di Alessandro, né a Scipione di Roma, ei morì nella età dell'uno e dell'altro; e sanza dubbio arebbe superato l'uno e l'altro se, in cambio di Lucca, egli avessi avuto per sua patria Macedonia o Roma (*Vita di Castruccio Castracani* 491).

As Machiavelli substitutes the value of Castruccio's actions with that of his sayings, which "bastino in testimonio delle grandi qualità sua," he also safeguards these sayings' virtue by employing the strategic rhetorical manipulations that Spackman theorizes, shifting to the past conditional in the biography's final lines: "sanza dubbio arebbe superato l'uno e l'altro se, in cambio di Lucca, egli avessi avuto per sua patria Macedonia o Roma." Machiavelli apologizes for history's shortcomings in the face of such a singular individual and guarantees Castruccio's greatness despite the fact that history prevented his actions from succeeding.

In essence, Castruccio is a victim of bad timing, but while such absolution of responsibility may seemingly protect Castruccio's exemplary legacy and preserve it in his sayings, it belies a skepticism of history as a repository of models, who instruct on how to combat unpredictable flux. To blame a different "età" and "patria" for Castruccio's failure in becoming the next Philip or Scipio is to undermine any faith in the premise that history can educate stable, universal truths, or that exemplars can embody imitable, always applicable, and timeless virtues. Moreover, since age and country determine the expression, and not the quality, of an individual's exemplarity, Machiavelli relinquishes Castruccio's successors of any culpability for the loss of his empire and asks whether chronology rejects genealogy, like history, as a worthy, effective process of transmitting any idea or action over time.

The singularity of Castruccio's success and the implications of his name when juxtaposed with the blameless failures of his heir, Pagolo, and Pagolo's descendants redefine the significance of the ties binding fathers and sons. Castruccio, in Machiavelli's portrayal of his upbringing, is a genealogical dead end for his erroneous faith in individual action and its ability to bring about continuity. Castruccio's first adoptive parents— Antonio, *canonico*; Dianora, *vedova*—deliberate and seemingly choose to reanimate their lineage, yet Machiavelli signals the tenuous logic of their decision to adopt by their choice in naming the foundling: Antonio, "udendo el caso e vedendo il fanciullo, non meno si riempié di maraviglia e di pietade che si fusse ripiena la donna, e consigliatisi intra loro quale partito dovessero pigliare, deliberorono allevarlo, sendo esso prete e quella non avendo figliuoli" (464). Despite the affective pull "di maraviglia e di pietade," the two

look at the situation matter-of-factly, with the limiting variables being their respective childless and marriage-less states. They elect to, after considering and weighing the different sides of the argument, to seize this opportunity—and boy—but their attempt to propagate the Castracani lineage oddly reaffirms their status prior to adopting another "Little Castrator."

Machiavelli accentuates the impossibility of willfully deviating from Antonio and Dianora's natural circumstances when he describes Castruccio's resistance to changing his own natural inclinations. Castruccio's rejection of Antonio's ecclesiastical education spurs him, at the age of fourteen, to accept another adoptive father, Francesco Guinigi, whose curriculum more suitably hones Castruccio's natural skills. The idea that an adoptive father must in some way replicate or resemble the nature of his son in order to ensure a proper education and continue a familial legacy, irrespective of genealogy by blood, anticipates the genealogical grafting Castruccio, Guinigi's adoptive son, will need to acknowledge at Guinigi's untimely death, with Pagolo, Guinigi's thirteen-year old biological son. The similar age of adoption between Castruccio and Pagolo intertwines education and genealogy to suggest that there is no guarantee of continuity and that nature dictates the governance of time.

As in the case of Antonio and Dianora, Guinigi's decision to adopt Castruccio reveals a significant flaw in the adoptive parent's thought process, something that similarly, in Castruccio's acceptance of Pagolo as his responsibility, will deflate the validity of an exemplary model. Nature, which derails Antonio's curriculum for Castruccio, is not simply transposed *fortuna* in the context of family lines; rather, unlike Fortune undoing the virtuous princes from the *Principe*, nature here accentuates the precariousness of family bonds and of the family unit as an entity of both continuity and fixed identity. Nor is nature here an affirmation of blood ties, as the present discussion will show how Francesco too fails to anticipate the Castruccio's unsuitability as Pagolo's adoptive father and teacher. When Castruccio, "alla età di quattordici anni," boldly and fearlessly flouts Antonio and Dianora's authority and refuses to read any "libri ecclesiastici," Antonio realizes that "se pure ei [Castruccio] leggeva alcuna volta, altre lezioni non gli piacevano che quelle che di guerre o di cose fatte da grandissimi uomini ragionassino," which causes Antonio "dolore e noia inestimabile" and precipitates Francesco's decision to adopt Castruccio (465). Machiavelli again terms the transfer of parental rights as a reasoned choice; he writes that Francesco Guinigi "in brevissimi giorni operò tanto che messer Antonio gliele concedette. A che lo spinse, più che alcuna altra cosa, la natura del fanciullo, giudicando non lo potere tenere molto tempo così" (465-466). The contrast between the two fathers' respective actions—*operare* and *giudicare*—accentuates the pairing that matches father and son's similar natures. Nevertheless, the correctness of this decision—and on whose part—is unclear. The decision not only confirms Antonio's

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original, childless status thereby rendering Antonio's first choice to adopt a mistake, but it also foresees Guinigi's shortsightedness with respect to his biological son, Pagolo.[15]

Perhaps Antonio, by reconsidering his paternal obligations and allowing his "dolore e noia inestimabile" to prime him to Francesco's "opere" and thus give Castruccio up, is the true exemplary father for having the self-knowledge that Zuckert believes Castruccio lacks and thus makes him a failed tutor to Pagolo. Yet this self-knowledge results in the same fractured continuity as Castruccio's self-ignorance thereby suggesting that any reliance on genealogy for lasting exemplary lessons in politics and in political longevity is illusory. Machiavelli equates Antonio's discontinued family name with the Guinigi's faded political power after Castruccio's death, equating therefore lapses in judgment to the educational promise linking father to son. Castruccio instructs Pagolo on how to kill as a team, to lead soldiers on his own, and to guard a city in Castruccio's stead, "del quale, per la memoria del padre, faceva quella stimazione che se e' fussi nato di lui" (472).[16] By pairing the ambiguity behind "la memoria del padre," namely which father Pagolo recalls and thus incites his actions, with "quella stimazione" for Castruccio, Machiavelli sets up a causal relation between paternity (be it blood or adoptive) and learned behavior.

Pagolo's various life-lessons in battle and in politics reveal the malleable limits to the family unit and, more importantly, the broader dynamics of the individual and the many, that is, the risk of denying the latter's validity. For example, in the face of possible revolt on the part of the Roman populace, Castruccio goes to Rome, but leaves Pagolo behind in Lucca, where he misses the opportunity to see how "in brevissimo tempo la sua [Castruccio's] presenza rendé tanta riputazione alla parte dello Imperio che, sanza sangue o altra violenza, si mitigò ogni cosa" (476). Machiavelli's systematic charting of Pagolo's

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[15] The scene at Francesco's deathbed recapitulates the timing and motivations behind Castruccio's second adoption. Machiavelli writes, "Ma sendo venuto messer Francesco Guinigi a morte, e avendo lasciato uno suo figliuolo di età di anni tredici, chiamato Pagolo, lasciò tutore e governatore de' suoi beni Castruccio, avendolo innanzi al morire fatto venire a sé e pregatolo che fussi contento allevare el suo figliuolo con quella fede che era stato allevato egli, e quegli meriti che e' non aveva potuto rendere al padre, rendesse al figliuolo" (467). The "fede" and "meriti" that Castruccio must impart onto Pagolo are the active principles that transformed Castruccio into "uno eccellente cavalcatore," a successful participant "nelle giostre e ne' tornamenti," and a possessor of, surprisingly given his disobedience with Antonio and Dianora, "una modestia inestimabile era riverente ai maggiori" (466).

[16] The two other educational instances, referenced above, are respectively: "Tanto che entrati dentro, quando parve a Castruccio, fece il cenno a Pagolo; dopo il quale l'uno uccise Iacopo da Gia e l'altro Bastiano di Possente" (475); "[…] e Pagolo Guinigi mandò con cinquemila fanti in Pisa" (481). The "cenno" in the first example as well as the subject (Castruccio) of the verb "mandò" in the second underline the agency given to Castruccio (the teacher) and consequent passivity of Pagolo (the student) in determining and judging the subsequent actions. Pagolo's exemplary imitation is merely a pantomime without a grounding rationale.

participation in and absence from the front lines of Castruccio's political machinations reveals the crippling absence of a didactic logic to guide Pagolo's education.

What is, however, more significant than Castruccio's lack of self-awareness with respect to the appropriate content and timing of Pagolo's education is the fact that Machiavelli phrases the premise rendering son and pupil equivalent within a system in which families are loci of shifting, capricious emotions. That a father-teacher strives to educate his son-pupil into his own image and thus replicate a continuous line of power proves ungrounded when the unit meant to combat the damages of time's passing is in fact the origin of change. Indeed, Machiavelli correlates the act of becoming a father-teacher with the destruction of family unities: "Morto pertanto messer Francesco Guinigi, e rimaso Castruccio governatore e tutore di Pagolo, accrebbe tanto in reputazione e in potenzia, che quella grazia che soleva avere in Lucca si convertì parte in invidia," inciting slanderous talk and conspiracies among the citizenry, particularly Giorgio degli Opizi (467). Machiavelli notes how, in response, Castruccio with Uguccione "ammazzorono messer Giorgio con tutti quegli della sua famiglia," extinguishing one family line with the rise of another—Castruccio's (468).

Uguccione's fate introduces another layer to how Machiavelli envisions the family unit, differentiating it from previous iterations of epic and humanist lineages, to which the opening citations from Homer, Alberti and Poliziano refer. The external factors that sanction the authority of one family above all others—be it through military strength, financial power, or intellectual honor—are instead, in Machiavelli's vision of the family, outweighed by the internal qualities of individual family members, particularly the *pater familias*. Like Guinigi before him, Uguccione falls ill and "si ritirò per curarsi a Montecarlo, e lasciò a Castruccio la cura dello esercito" (469). The subsequent battle is a significant coup for Castruccio however it results in the death of Uguccione's son, Francesco. Machiavelli describes how Uguccione responds to the news that makes "tutto grande il nome di Castruccio," writing, "in tanto che a Uguccione entrò tanta gelosia e sospetto dello stato suo, che non mai pensava se non come lo potessi spegnere, parendogli che quella vittoria gli avessi non dato ma tolto lo imperio" (470). The grief Uguccione feels and the death he mourns is for his political authority, not the death of his son, and Uguccione's "gelosia e sospetto" emphasize the displaced faith in genealogical continuity in favor of the individual's state of mind.

Following the examples of Guinigi and Uguccione, Machiavelli depicts a succession of family portraits that demonstrate a weakened reliance on authority passed down from generation to generation. The circumstances in which these families fall apart shifts the blame for such disintegration onto individuals' poor choices, reaffirming the greater importance of proper thinking over the presence of an heir. In fact, Uguccione fails to ensure his political position and undermine Castruccio because of his son's unwise decision; Machiavelli explains:

> E dubitando Neri che nel farlo [Castruccio] morire sanza alcuna
> giustificazione il popolo non si alterasse, lo serbò vivo, per intendere
> meglio da Uguccione come gli paressi da governarsi. Il quale, biasimando

> la tardità e viltà del figliuolo, per dare perfezione alla cosa con
> quattrocento cavagli si uscì di Pisa per andarne a Lucca (470).

Uguccione is left to correct "la tardità e viltà del figliuolo," yet in his absence, the Pisani revolt and kill his family while "Castruccio, subito ragunati sua amici, col favore del popolo fece èmpito contro a Uguccione. Il quale, vedendo non avere rimedio, se ne fuggì con gli amici suoi, e ne andò in Lombardia a trovare e' signori della Scala; dove poveramente morì" (471). Machiavelli juxtaposes the assessments of Neri and Uguccione and their consequent actions—respectively, to wait and to retreat—in order to show not only how quickly sentiments and conditions shift, but also to contrast more sharply Castruccio's success, that is, the consonance of situation and choice.

Similarly, in the case of the Poggio family, whose members make Castruccio "non solamente grande […] ma principe," Machiavelli terms their undoing as a result of flawed thinking, stating that "non le parendo essere remunerata secondo i suoi meriti, convenne con altre famiglie di Lucca di ribellare la città e cacciarne Castruccio" (473).[17] The verb *parere* accentuates how the Poggio assess and perceive their circumstance as seemingly unjust and without proper remuneration, or appropriate reaction for their original action. Machiavelli continues:

> E volendo seguire di levare il popolo a romore, Stefano di Poggio, antico e pacifico uomo il quale nella congiura non era intervenuto, si fece innanzi, e costrinse con la autorità sua i suoi a posare le armi, offerendosi di essere mediatore intra loro e Castruccio a fare ottenere a quegli i desiderii loro. Posorono pertanto coloro le arme, non con maggiore prudenza che le avessero prese; per che Castruccio, sentita la novità seguita a Lucca, sanza mettere tempo in mezzo, con parte delle sue genti, lasciato Pagolo Guinigi capo del resto, se ne venne in Lucca. [...] Venuti adunque sotto la fede di Stefano e di Castruccio, furono insieme con Stefano imprigionati e morti (473-474).

Machiavelli's definition of families as loci of shifting emotions circumscribes his entire treatment of their dissolution. Because families form a natural unit bound by name, to

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[17] The failures of Uguccione and the Poggio illustrate separate lessons from Machiavelli's *Principe*, namely the need to act quickly, as the youth famously do more than their measured elders (Chapter XXV); and to destroy those who were previously one's allies (Chapters III, IX). Machiavelli's attitude on political coups and plots also reference Chapter XIX of the *Principe* as well as Chapter VI, Book III of the *Discorsi*. In the latter section, Machiavelli also cautions against having faith in those both with whom you conspire with and against. All these parallels collectively emphasize the discrepancies among different individuals and their perceptions or assessments of reality. The *Vita* does not so much as echo the themes of Machiavelli's more strictly political treatises as it adds to the intrinsic instability of any human community, illustrating the variability of how people perceive the world and subsequently act, especially among individuals from the same family. The temporal and situational differences that weaken continuity are then amplified by the differences within every individual.

then work as a collective requires a decision-making process. Stefano Poggio, who was not a part of the plot against Castruccio due to his "antico e pacifico" nature, invokes his seniority to stop it from occurring, but his intervention causes his family members to drop their arms—"non con maggiore prudenza che le avessero prese," Machiavelli cautions. The hierarchy of authority based on age, not on character suitable to the intended action or present circumstances (the *congiura*), is imprudent because it affords Castruccio the time to punish and eliminate the entire Poggio clan.[18]

The conditions favoring Castruccio's success thus seemingly coincide with the Poggio's bad decisions. However in all the above examples of destroyed families, the patriarchs invoke the stability of the *popolo* as motivating their choice of action. This larger entity is a powerful counterpoint to the smaller family units, but attempts to cater to this entity result in personal failure. Success with respect to the *popolo* is perhaps better suited to another political system to which individuals, or princes, do not belong. Whereas in his *Discorsi* Machiavelli explores the longevity afforded to states dependent upon the *popolo*, here in the *Vita* he uses the repeated destruction of families not to suggest the futility of catering to the *popolo* as a general rule, but to underscore how much more susceptible an individual's choices are to Fortune's whims.

Certainly, Machiavelli predicates the entire basis of Castruccio's biography on the constructed nature of families who choose to adopt and on the ability to make of one's life whatever one is capable of effecting, despite the lowly starting point Fortune might dispense; he begins, writing:

> E' pare, Zanobi e Luigi carissimi, a quegli che la considerano, cosa maravigliosa che tutti coloro, o la maggiore parte di essi, che hanno in questo mondo operato grandissime cose, e intra gli altri della loro età siano stati eccellenti, abbino avuto il principio e il nascimento loro basso e oscuro, o vero dalla fortuna fuora d'ogni modo travagliato; perché tutti o ei sono stati esposti alle fiere, o egli   hanno avuto sì vil padre che, vergognatisi di quello, si sono fatti figliuoli di Giove o di qualche altro Dio (463).

The ability to elide or revise one's own life narrative—*e farsi figliuoli di Giove o di qualche altro Dio*—through choice and action (as the reflexive verb *farsi* suggests) determines the greatness and exemplarity attributed to an individual. The perception that all such people rise from humble beginnings "pare [...] cosa maravigliosa," but who these individuals are, Machiavelli comments, "sendone a ciascheduno noti molti, sarebbe cosa a replicare fastidiosa e poco accetta a chi leggessi; perciò come superflua la ometterero" (463). Castruccio is, however, "uno di quegli," worthy of having his story told, yet before Machiavelli narrates his biography, he offers a reason for these perceived rags-to-riches

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[18] Note, once again, Pagolo's absence from this teachable moment.

models.[19] He opines, "Credo bene che questo nasca che, volendo la fortuna dimostrare al mondo di essere quella che faccia gli uomini grandi, e non la prudenza, comincia a dimostrare le sue forze in tempo che la prudenza non ci possa avere alcuna parte, anzi da lei si abbi a ricognoscere il tutto" (463). The ambiguity of "questo," to what it refers, belies the confidence expressed by the adverb "bene," attributing to Fortune not merely the prevalence of such low-to-high biographical trajectories, but also the tendency to omit specific examples and speak about them in generalities, that is, "tutti coloro." Machiavelli, by writing specifically about Castruccio, seemingly bucks the trend; nevertheless, his treatment of Castruccio's rise from obscurity illustrates the role Fortune plays in precipitating the expansion of discrete examples to more general phenomena, freed from the specificity of individual lives.

The case of Castruccio affords Machiavelli the opportunity to exemplify how Fortune acts on the decisions of an individual more than that of the many, or the *popolo*. Because change is an inevitabile, unpredictable force, the effects of any choice made vis-à-vis Fortune implicates an individual's thought process. Machiavelli portrays how families fall apart as a means towards presenting a more acute characterization of how modes of thinking can either be a binding or destructive factor. Moreover, the educational missteps Castruccio takes in Pagolo's regard, having already introduced the failure of models to teach how to think and act, now add to the arbitrariness of a single person's success at accurately understanding and anticipating the results of their choices.

The circumstances leading up to Castruccio's death are pivotal to reevaluating the worth and scale of any exemplum as both Castruccio and his opponent in battle, Ruberto, king of Naples (along with Florentine troops), share the same belief before the conflict starts, only to both be wrong at its end. Machiavelli explains why Ruberto engages in battle, writing "non tanto per lo onore fattogli dai Fiorentini, quanto perché sapeva di quale momento era allo stato suo che la parte guelfa mantenessi lo stato di Toscana" (480). The quantitative assessment Ruberto makes, as expressed by the "tanto […] quanto" comparison, prioritizes timing over the emotions of the Florentine people, and Machiavelli echoes Ruberto's moment with Castruccio's own logic about the perfect timing of his action, stating that Castruccio "pensò che questo fusse quel tempo che la fortuna gli dovesse mettere in mano lo imperio di Toscana" (481). During the subsequent battle at the Arno river, Castruccio captures Ruberto's son, Carlo, fractures yet another family unit, and is victorious. However Machiavelli quickly undermines Castruccio's assessment of Fortune's magnanimity: "Ma la fortuna, inimica alla sua gloria, quando era tempo di dargli vita, gliene tolse, e interruppe quelli disegni che quello molto tempo innanzi aveva pensato di mandare ad effetto, né gliene poteva altro che la morte impedire"

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[19] Machiavelli writes, "Fu adunque Castruccio Castracani da Lucca uno di quegli." He explains why Castruccio is a worthwhile subject to narrate: "La quale mi è parso ridurre alla memoria delli uomini, parendomi avere trovato in essa molte cose, e quanto alla virtù e quanto alla fortuna, di grandissimo esemplo" (463).

(484). The repetition of "tempo" marks the dissonance between the completion and planning of an action, and by making Fortune the obstacle to the transformation of intellectual processes into practice, Machiavelli redirects his attention to the origin of Castruccio's entire trajectory towards glory, namely how his thought processes (or *disegni*) failed, given their priority.

To have Fortune as one's enemy implies then a personal deficiency that blinds the individual to telltale risks. Castruccio's ultimate defeat comes from a habit of greeting his soldiers on their return from battle in order to "con la presenzia sua ricevere e ringraziare, e parte, se pure cosa alcuna nascesse dai nimici che in qualche parte avessino fatto testa, potere essere pronto a rimediare; giudicando lo officio d'uno buono capitano essere montare il primo a cavallo e l'ultimo scenderne" (484). The motivations behind Castruccio's judgement of his responsibilities as a leader involve perfectly timed control over the masses (through surveillance disguised as gratitude), yet he fails to consider a third motivation—the maintenance of his health—when confronted with the wind at the Arno river, "la quale cosa non essendo stimata da lui, come quello che a simili disagi era assuefatto, fu cagione della sua morte" (484).[20] On his death bed, Castruccio tells Pagolo, "'Se io avessi creduto, figliuolo mio, che la fortuna mi avesse voluto troncare nel mezzo del corso il cammino per andare a quella gloria che io mi avevo con tanti miei felici successi promessa, io mi sarei affaticato meno e a te arei lasciato, se minore stato, meno inimici e meno invidia'" (484). The primacy of the verb, *credere*, in this contrary-to-fact construction locates the error in Castruccio's perception and understanding of his circumstances, and contrasts it with Fortune's desire; Fortune wants to prevent the glory Castruccio's thoughtfully conceived actions promised him.

Moreover, Castruccio fears the same threats to his state as those of the families previously destroyed, lamenting the envy and hatred of the *popoli* of Florence and Pistoia. The irony of this parallel not only assures Castruccio's similar genealogical decline, but further undermines the soundness of his judgment, concluding "'[M]a, fattomi e l'uno e l'altro di questi dua popoli amici, arei menata la mia vita, se non più lunga, al certo più quieta, e a te arei lasciato lo stato, se minore, sanza dubbio più sicuro e più fermo'" (485). The adverbs signaling certainty—"al certo" and "sanza dubbio"—are odd and incongruous assurances to the plausibility of the entire hypothetical phrasing, emptying Castruccio's assessment of any merit with respect to his present situation, despite his confidence in this alternate reality.[21] Castruccio continues to bank on his logic,

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[20] Machiavelli uses different words of cognition to describe how Castruccio falls ill and realizes his grim prognosis: *giudicare*, *stimare*, *cagione*, *accorgersene*. This stylistic decision thematically prepares for Castruccio's own speech to Pagolo that terms Castruccio's premature death as a cognitive failure.

[21] Castruccio's hypothetical reality fits the rhetorical paradigm that Spackman describes in her essay, "Machiavelli and Maxims" (see discussion above). Castruccio's faith in his alternate life prepares for the sayings Machaviavelli will use to salvage Castruccio's exemplarity and expand his didactic function.

explaining, "'Ma la fortuna, che vuole essere arbitra di tutte le cose umane, non mi ha dato tanto giudicio che io l'abbia potuta prima conoscere, né tanto tempo che io l'abbi potuta superare'" (485). Castruccio preserves the validity of his thought processes, namely their appearance as such, and by correlating Fortune's will with his ability to act, he externalizes the cause of his apparent failure—his premature death. Castruccio's equally deficient "giudicio" and "tempo" are therefore weakened threats to his exemplary status.

The past conditional phrasing Castruccio uses to express regret serves not solely as a corrective to his (perceived to be) absent judgement or foresight, as it also signals a shift in the educative paradigm Castruccio set up for Pagolo. On his deathbed, Castruccio recapitulates his life's narrative in order to acknowledge the rationale behind his dedication to Pagolo, telling him:

> 'Tu hai inteso, perché molti te lo hanno detto e io non l'ho mai negato, come io venni in casa di tuo padre ancora giovanetto e privo di tutte quelle speranze che deono in ogni generoso animo capire, e come io fui da quello nutrito e amato più assai che se io fussi nato del suo sangue; donde che io, sotto el governo suo, divenni valoroso e atto a essere capace di quella fortuna che tu medesimo hai veduta e vedi. E perché, venuto a morte, ei commise alla mia fede te e tutte le fortune sue, io ho te con quello amore nutrito, ed esse con quella fede accresciute, che io era tenuto e sono' (485).

Castruccio describes the manner in which Francesco Guinigi loves and nurtures him as a "governo" that enables him to capitalize on the circumstances he encounters. The parallel between education and governance that Castruccio draws intends to predict and ensure Pagolo's authority as his successor. Similarly, the juxtaposition of "quella fortuna" and "tutte le fortune sue" plays on the double meaning of fortune in order to identify the materials that guarantee a successful fate. Castruccio's desire to pay his debt to Francesco by educating Pagolo according to "quello amore" and "quella fede" that educated him establishes a specific genealogy. Castruccio, however, disrupts the continuity, instructing Pagolo to deviate from the model of his actions and instead follow this last lesson: "'È cosa in questo mondo di importanza assai cognoscere se stesso, e sapere misurare le forze dello animo e dello stato suo; e chi si cognosce non atto alla guerra, si debbe ingegnare con le arti della pace di regnare'" (486).

That Castruccio perceives Pagolo as ill-suited for war harkens back to his decisions to leave Pagolo behind during key battles (as discussed above), yet more significantly, this invocation of character deflects responsibility and failure away from Castruccio, whose judgment and actions at the time of his death prove valid only in his hypothetical construction. Thus the educational paradigm he now instructs Pagolo to follow recalls the logic Antonio, Castruccio's elided first father, uses to give up his adoptive son to Francesco; in other words, to abide by the whims of a son's natural inclinations. After Castruccio's death, Pagolo loses his inherited empire and "con fatica si mantenne il dominio di Lucca, il quale perseverò nella sua casa infino a Pagolo suo pronipote" (486). In essence Machiavelli postpones, or rather extends, Pagolo's failure to his great-grandson

as they both share the same name, but the superficial continuity from father to son that a shared name affords nevertheless results in the Guinigi's eventual degradation and loss of authority. Like Antonio and Dianora before him, a family name provides no guaranteed continuity.

If the family unit cannot instruct and safeguard against change, towards what didactic goal does a patriarch strive when his descendants play no role in his legacy and successes are assured only within the duration of his life?[22] Castruccio validates an erroneous faith in his vision of Pagolo's future, stating "'il che ti riuscirà facilmente, quando stimi essere veri questi miei ricordi'" (486). According to Castruccio, the belief in memories, like the belief in hypothetical constructions that make exemplars out of failed princes (e.g. Cesare Borgia in the *Principe*), is similarly capable of making immutable truths out of fiction, not out of historical facts. Yet while Pagolo fails and negates in practice Castruccio's guarantee for success in thought, Machiavelli perpetuates the truthful memory of Castruccio's exemplarity in the *Vita*'s concluding sayings.[23]

Machiavelli explains, "[Castruccio] Era ancora mirabile nel rispondere e mordere, o acutamente o urbanamente; e come non perdonava in questo modo di parlare ad alcuno, così non si adirava quando non era perdonato a lui. Donde si truovono di molte cose dette da lui acutamente, e molte udite pazientemente" (487). The equal value given to statements and silences suggests a multi-faceted and nuanced portrait of Castruccio however it also introduces a paradox, specifically to what extent a saying's claim to truth depends on or reflects the virtue of its particular author. Machiavelli locates this interplay within his larger discussion on exemplarity, accentuating how the priority of generalities would seemingly need to erase individual markers. Nevertheless, as the material concerns of these sayings' original authors implicitly suggest, Machiavelli uses these non-verbal examples to accentuate Castruccio's unique physical presence.

The tension between ahistorical, general truths and contingent, particular characteristics is first clear when, before listing Castruccio's famous sayings, Machiavelli describes Castruccio physically. The decision to wait until the final pages of the *Vita* for this description seems contrary to the biographical tradition, but it effectively foregrounds the didactic limits to individual models. Machiavelli writes, "I capegli suoi pendevano in rosso, e portavagli tonduti sopra gli orecchi; e sempre, e d'ogni tempo, come che piovesse o nevicasse, andava con il capo scoperto" (487). Immediately following the scene at Castruccio's deathbed, this physical description reanimates its subject and recapitulates his

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[22] Castruccio's last words to Pagolo are: "'E arai ad avere meco duoi oblighi: l'uno, che io ti ho lasciato questo regno; l'altro, che io te lo ho insegnato mantenere'" (486). Pagolo fails on both counts by quickly losing Castruccio's empire and by choosing to pass on his own name rather than his adoptive father's.

[23] As discussed above, scholars such as Green and Lucarelli have identified the sources of these sayings in Classical thinkers whose primary concerns were for the material, not the spiritual. These origins undermine the explicit claims that Castruccio's alleged statements are firstly singular and secondly worthy of transmission over time.

life narrative yet it also recalls the reason behind Castruccio's early demise—a sweaty brow by a windy riverbank! That the cause of his downfall points to an inadequate self-knowledge, deemed characteristic of him, undercuts the merit of all his sayings, and by looking at examples in which Castruccio gives non-verbal responses, the futility of continuity and longevity through education is clear.

Castruccio, in two separate instances, spits at his interlocutors—one an adulator, another "uomo ricchissimo e splendidissimo" who is showing Castruccio a particularly sumptuous room in his home (487, 488-489).[24] Machiavelli frames Castruccio's replies as praiseworthy although they also confirm the prince's indiscriminate behavior in the face of different contexts. Furthermore, while the adulator retorts in a manner that Castruccio respects and then rewards, in the case of a philosopher, Castruccio is left speechless. Machiavelli writes, "Dicendo Castruccio a uno el quale faceva professione di filosofo: 'Voi siete fatti come i cani, che vanno sempre dattorno a chi può meglio dare loro mangiare;' gli rispose quello: 'Anzi, siamo come e' medici, che andiamo a casa coloro che di noi hanno maggiore bisogno'" (488). The philosopher's comeback recalls again the scene of Castruccio's death and the evaluative deficiencies that cut short the prince's imperial aspirations, but Machiavelli, by including this example, does not privilege theory over practice. In fact, it is the literal doctor who Castruccio needs and who ultimately fails to cure him.

Another saying has Castruccio specify the position of his corpse in burial: "Domandandolo uno, quando egli era per morire, come e' voleva essere seppellito, rispose: 'Con la faccia volta in giù, perché io so che, come io sono morto, andrà sottosopra questo paese'" (490). The Castruccio here differs from the adoptive father who instills confidence in Pagolo as his successor, highlighting once more the instability of the family unit as a guarantor of continuity. Moreover, the equivalence between his position in death and the state of affairs changing comments on the inevitability of flux. Earlier in the *Vita*, Castruccio becomes a senator of Rome; Machiavelli describes the pomp and circumstance that marks the occasion, redolent of Ancient Rome, explaining, "e si misse una toga di broccato indosso, con lettere dinanzi che dicevano: 'Egli è quel che Dio vuole', e di dietro dicevano: 'E' sarà quel che Dio vorrà'" (476). The temporal mapping onto Castruccio's body marks the limits of the individual and permanently places it in time, yet by concluding his biography with a list of sayings, and in particular sayings that

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[24] The two examples are as follows: "Avendo intorno uno adulatore, e per dispregio avendogli sputato addosso, disse lo adulatore: 'I pescatori, per prendere un piccolo pesce, si lasciono tutti bagnare dal mare, io mi lascerò bene bagnare da uno sputo per pigliare una balena.' Il che Castruccio non solo udì pazientemente, ma lo premiò" (487); "Sendo invitato a cena da Taddeo Bernardi lucchese, uomo ricchissimo e splendidissimo, e, arrivato in casa, mostrandogli Taddeo una camera parata tutta di drappi e che aveva il pavimento composto di pietre fine, le quali, di diversi colori diversamente tessute, fiori e fronde e simili verzure rappresentavano, ragunatosi Castruccio assai umore in bocca, lo sputò tutto in sul volto a Taddeo. Di che turbandosi quello, disse Castruccio: 'Io non sapevo dove mi sputare che io ti offendessi meno'" (488-489).

describe others'—the flatter's, philospher's, and the world's—reaction to him homes in on what kind of value Machiavelli preserves or even redeems from an exemplar. The value appears less to do with who the exemplary person is; rather it has more to do with how that person is representative of an audience or of a particular reception. While such value remains embedded in a specific (temporal) moment as well, it also is capable of recapitulation.

6.   From Failed Exemplars to the Model of a Popular Homer: A Critical Background to Book Three of Vico's *Scienza nuova*

Machiavelli, in articulating the deficiencies and the risks of believing in the didactic function of an individual over time, opens the door to another framework dependent on a larger entity. Book Three of Vico's *Scienza nuova*, "Della discoverta del vero Omero," categorizes Homer not as a single person, but rather as an intellectual position that is temporal, not individual, and whose subject is historical, not philosophical. As the present discussion aims to show, the "Discovery" is an interpretive mode by which to view history without an anachronistic frame of mind, meaning that no moment is irrelevant to another—past, present or future.

Giuseppe Mazzotta contextualizes Vico's argument within the eighteenth century revival of Ancient Greek culture and the debate over Homer's identity; according to Mazzotta, Vico argues against contemporary positions on the so-called Homeric Question (*The New Map of the World* 151). Joseph Levine similarly notes the milieu surrounding Vico's reevaluation of Homer and the increasing fervor with which intellectuals compared the ancients and the moderns and debated the literary and philosophical priority of Homer ("Giambattista Vico and the Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns" 69). Levine explains, "There were […] two separate areas of conflict between ancients and moderns—philosophy and literature—separate in origin, separate in the character of the issues that divided them, and separate" because of the long-standing, classically-imposed division of "the culture of the West into competing forms of *paideia*" ("Quarrel" 64). The contentious and divisive Quarrel is, as Levine contends, an impetus for Vico to resolve it through the use of both disciplines, that is, to locate the nexus of literature and philosophy in Homer without out resorting to allegory in the traditional sense.[25]

Furthermore, Mazzotta attributes the revival of Homer to "the nostalgic estheticism of the past and […] the auto-idealization of the present," embodied in Italy by Vico's "friend and frequent interlocutor," Gianvincenzo Gravina (*New Map* 152).

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[25] A main feature in the eighteenth century debate over the ancients and moderns and over the identity of Homer was "whether the first of the poets was also a philosopher and whether the *Iliad* could still be made to serve as a model for present life and literature," a concern similarly held by the earliest practitioners of allegorical interpretation (Levine "Quarrel" 74). For an analysis of how Vico, in contrast, employs allegory, see the discussion in Chapter One.

Mazzotta describes Gravina's Arcadia as representative of "the neoclassical counterfeiting of mythical Greece" and as "a mechanical imitation or reproduction of the past"; Vico's critique of Gravina and thus his innovation is to reject "an altogether philosophical and reflexive mode of conceiving the relationship between philosophy and poetry" because "the modern appropriation of the past annihilates the *truth* of Homer's discovery, and this truth is also the consciousness of Homer's differences from the present" (*New Map* 154-155).[26] These differences preclude sameness and mimesis across a temporal divide and instead sanction the discovery of Homer's true purpose with respect to the modern age.

Mazzotta emphasizes the relevance of the word *discoverta* both to the title of Book Three and to the logic with which Vico constructs his science. He writes, "The term 'discoverta' must be seen as a variant of the *inventio*, a category that from Cicero's *Topics* reappears in Ramus, Agricola, Descartes, and Bacon […] who in his *Novum Organum* makes of *discovery* the principle of any authentic knowing" and "distinguishes two classes of knowledge: a knowledge based on argument and a knowledge based on a discovery to be pursued through the inductive method" (*New Map* 141). For Vico, the latter, inductive method involves the imagination and the rejection of the philosopher's atemporal position for that of the historical subject who uncovers a past truth existing in the present, albeit underneath the layers of the philosophers' imposed meanings.

Rather than having an individual point of view, the historical subject thinks ironically in the same creative manner attributed above to Machiavelli, namely by reconstructing a different, alternate reality from that which the thinking person is experiencing. Mazzotta claims that Vico's "special narrative stance" in Book Three "casts himself [Vico] as the philosopher who reflects critically from the outside on the essence of poetry and on the truth of Homer but is not deluded by philosophical claims of philosophy's primacy over poetry," yet this claim presupposes Vico's new definition of philosophy and its contingent relationship to poetry (*New Map* 142). The alternate reality is the poetical past at the foundation of the present day's intellectual world, and discovery

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[26] Paolo Cristofolini, in his article "Da Dante a Omero, da Gravina a Vico," notes that the basic idea Vico takes from Gravina is his conception of language as a repository of "parole, locuzioni, espressioni" of a particular people, culled from "tutti i diversi dialetti della Grecia in un caso (Omero), dell'Italia nell'altro (Dante)" and brought together by each poet, respectively. Cristofolini explains, however, that Vico deviates from Gravina's thought in his subsequent versions of the *Scienza nuova*: starting with the 1730 edition, "si è compiuto un passaggio all'università del carattere eroico, non solo per il dissolversi della sua individualità di uomo singolo nell'espressione diffusa di tutti i popoli della Grecia, ma anche perché il carattere trasversale dei miti" reveals and constructs "un sostrato comune fra le antichità gentilesche, greche e non, che tutto quanto trova in Omero ricettacolo ed espressione" (379-380). Of note in regards to general criticism on the Classical Greek poet, Vico was the first to conjecture an expanded or dilated identity of Homer; see Kirsti Simonsuuri's *Homer's Original Genius: Eighteenth-Century Notions of the Early Greek Epic (1688–1798)*, 90-98 (1979).

is an interpretive mode to view history without an anachronistic frame of mind. Therefore central to the ideas of Book Three is the rejection of Homer's allegorical significance as a philosopher and, instead, the articulation of his status as a poet.[27]

Mazzotta summarizes the key questions Vico asks and then answers: "Is Homer the sole author of the Greek epics? If Homer is not the only author—as Vico, with some qualifications, believes—how, then, did the poems come into being?" (*New Map* 143). The dynamic between poetry and philosophy is central to Vico's answers, as is the role of history, which Vico sees as philology "in so far as philology is a discipline disclosing the nature of time and of texts as time-bound productions" (*New Map* 148). B. A. Haddock, in his discussion of the structure of Book Three, examines the two types of proofs Vico uses to construct the discovery of the true Homer. Vico begins with a series of philosophical proofs that "serve to delineate the conceptual range of the phases through which the thought-structures of both individuals and societies must pass, and thereby to establish the limits of possible meanings which can be construed from the utterances of any given phase" (Haddock "Vico's 'Discovery of the True Homer'" 594). Vico's choice to then follow these philosophical proofs with philological proofs lays bare the errors of the current philosophical age and then corrects its imposed meanings in order to recapitulate the *Scienza*'s central premise—that by correlating the stages of human civilization to the those of the human mind's development, the individual can accurately perceive the nature and value of a particular age.

Haddock writes that the philological proofs "constitute a motley assemblage of documentary and literary evidence which confirms that the phase of development of modes of thought to which Homer should be assigned is indeed that designated by Vico as 'poetic wisdom'" ("Vico's 'Discovery'" 595). In light of the philosophical proofs that precede these latter ones and enable their historically-specific identity to be uncovered, Vico resolves the contradictions that characterize the details of Homer's identity—"the variety of dialects, the many idioms of the Greek people […], the diversity of styles […], the fact that the Greek peoples vied with each other for the honor of being Homer's fatherland" (Mazzotta *New Map* 150). As Haddock explains, quoting Vico:

> The discordance revealed in the various pieces of evidence pertaining to Homer, then, considered in isolation and without the benefit of an interpretive theory, 'become proper and necessary in Homer herein

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[27] By focusing on the frontispiece of the *Scienza nuova*, Chapter One sought to characterize the allegory Vico uses as distinct from the allegory of philosophers that he believes is an obstacle to understanding the truth behind human thought. The redefined allegory is significant to the present discussion as well, and as Mazzotta notes, Homer's importance to the entire work "was unequivocally foreshadowed by the emblem feature on its frontispiece […] in the center of the emblem, and in a forest clearing, there stands the statue of Homer, who, blind and looking inward, is struck from behind by a ray of light" (*New Map* 143). The opacity to Homer's poetry is due not to its construction as such, purposefully and intentionally, but to its temporal distance from the present.

discovered' because the air of paradox which surrounded them is removed once they are placed in the context of a philosophical theory that sketches the conceptual lineaments of the society to which they refer ("Vico's 'Discovery' 596).

Therefore the discovery of the true Homer is the conception of a new interpretive mode that undoes previous opinions of the Homeric poems and in their place introduces the idea that their author, Homer, is not an individual, but rather a representation of the entire Greek people. Thus to interpret Homer's poems involves tapping into the mores and politics of a previous age and recognizing these poetic beginnings as the origins of the current one.[28]

Vico's identification of Homer with the poetic age of humanity has implications for the authority of the individual and of the populace, suggesting a new purpose to the role of exemplars after the crisis of exemplarity that Machiavelli describes. Vico in Book Three correlates the nature of poetry with that of man, writing, "Ecco l'Omero innarrivabile nel fingere i caratteri poetici […] de' quali gli più grandi sono tanto sconvenevoli in questa nostra umana civil natura! Ma eglino sono decorosissimi in rapporto alla natura eroica […] de' puntigliosi" (*Scienza nuova* 783). Vico further demonstrates the congruence among language, thought, and time in Homer's metaphors—"quasi tutte le comparazioni prese dalle fiere e da altre selvagge cose"; he explains:

> Ma concedasi ciò essere stato necessario ad Omero per farsi meglio intendere dal volgo fiero e selvaggio: però cotanto riuscirvi, che tali comparazioni sono incomparabili, non è certamente d'ingegno addimesticato ed incivilito da alcuna filosofia. Né da un animo da alcuna filosofia umanato ed impietosito potrebbe nascer quella truculenza e fierezza di stile, con cui descrive tante, sì varie e sanguinose battaglie, tante, sì diverse e tutte in istravaganti guise crudelissime spezie d'ammazzamenti, che particolarmente fanno tutta la sublimità dell'Iliade (*SN* 785).

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[28] Mazzotta elucidates the main points to Vico's argument in Book Three: "First, Vico repudiates the subjective theory of the author. Authority does not reside in an individual. Political authority determines the shape of the two epics. But Homer is not the Cartesian subject who occupies a disengaged perspective on the events of history; rather, Homer is the imaginative point of context of various dictions and *contra*dictions. Second, the poems are an encyclopedia of Greek dialects. The educational value of Homer's work is thus vindicated against Plato's strictures. Third, poetry is history, rather than a mimesis of reality as both Plato and Aristotle, with different emphasis, believe. As history, poetry does not generate extemporal truths as allegorist and makers of philosophical mythologies think. Fourth, poetry, and not philosophy, is the foundation of knowledge of the city" (*New Map* 150-151). How Homer's reevaluated identity, as these points summarize, relates to the crisis of exemplarity specifically will be the subject of the discussion to follow.

Vico describes the differences between the poetic and philosophic ages, using adjectives such as "addimesticato," "incivilito," "umanato" and "impietosito" to suggest a development from the bloody, violent, and wild scenes of Homer's *Iliad* to the philosopher's dryer analyses because the "truculenza e fierezza di stile" can only come from minds not yet primed for philosophy. The authority of any word reflects and must corroborate "the ideas and institutions characteristic of the period in which it was uttered," extending philology's equivalence to history to the nature of the souls common to a specific time (Haddock 592). It is this widespread, shared mentality that, while confining its authority to a specific temporal period, also suggests a proper historical study—a study that characterizes distinct ages and thus develops "a set of criteria to distinguish the compass of meanings for the utterances of any one period" (Haddock 598). The application of Vico's method requires then the "recognition that the transmutation of cultures was at the same time a transmutation of modes of thought […] for it is only by matching the artifact with its presuppositions (difficult though this may be in the case of brutes incapable of ratiocination) that the historian is saved from the temptation of his own 'conceits,'" which anachronistically impose one mentality onto another (Haddock 598).[29]

To understand the true nature of Homer as representative of the peoples of the poetic age of man is, according to Vico, a recognition of and then resolution to the temporal conditions limiting the apprehension of an exemplar's applicability across different situations. An individual can, by acknowledging the specificity and uniqueness of an example (person or word) from the past, "[divulge] primeval truths" to the present and consequently perceive the "human totality" within history and gain "an expanded consciousness" of the mind's changes over time (Armstrong 7, 13). This totality, or rather the knowledge of it, depends on Homer's representational and archival status, even of a past more distant than his own, as Vico writes that the materials attributed to Homer arrived to "him" already altered and corrupted, diverging from their first change into myth.[30] Armstrong quotes Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth* to underscore how insight

[29] Richard Armstrong similarly analyzes Vico's restoration of the past from the present's frame of mind, describing Homer "as an archive of social memory" into which the method of the *Scienza* can tap; he writes, "The civilized mind […] has to work against its own ingrained rationality in order to grasp the 'first operation' thinking of the heroic age, which, Vico clearly asserts, was closer to its own corporeality and in a sense to Nature. Behind the negativity of the Homeric mythology, then, stands the inherent historical alienation of the human mind from itself through the course of its development. For the thought-world of the past is in essence falsified by the thought-world of the present" ("From *Huponia* to Paranoia: On the Secular Co-optation of Homeric Religion in Vico, Feuerbach, and Freud" 5).

[30] In his analysis of the "sapienza poetica," specifically "nella discoverta de' caratteri poetici, ne' quali unicamente consiste l'essenza della medesima poesia," Vico historically contextualizes Homer: "Ond'egli è da porsi nella terza età de' poeti eroici: dopo la prima [età], che ritruovò tali favole in uso di vere narrazioni, nella prima propia significazione della voce *mûthos*, che da essi

into this intellectual transfer across history makes the past's relationship to the present intrinsic to an atemporal mode of thought; in other words, "'the historical power of myth is not founded on the origins of its contents […] but rather in the fact that, in its procedure and in its "form," it is no longer something else'; hence it is important 'to describe myth itself as already the manifestation of an overcoming, of the gaining of a distance'" ("Homeric Religion" 13). Vico concludes therefore that the interpretation of historical products, such as myths and mythical individuals, is a recuperation of the thought processes which formed them and an analysis of their traces in present. Furthermore, while the scale of Vico's attitude towards models points to the error of viewing Homer as an individual and offers instead a theory on the construction of popular wisdom, Vico's intention is more specific, as his redefined Homer begins a discussion on human laws, from questions of their creation to the identity of their subjects.

The authority of the individual transmuted into that of the many is a procedure for which Vico prepares through the ancillary role his *Autobiografia* plays with respect to the *Scienza nuova*. The *Autobiografia* makes explicit the *Scienza*'s "master key": "a literary or linguistic discovery, that the origin of language and letters was a result of the fact that the first men were natural poets who spoke in poetical characters—not philosophers concealing their wisdom in allegory" thereby "breaking with the conventional view that there had been philosophers among the first men and poets who shared their wisdom" (Levine 67).[31] The genealogical relationship set up between philology and philosophy mirrors the procedural, sequential nature of Vico's autobiography when he concludes, "In quest'opera [*Scienza nuova*] egli ritruova finalmente tutto spiegato quel principio, ch'esso ancor confusamente e non con tutta distinzione aveva inteso nelle sue opere antecedenti" (*Autobiografia* 54). That Vico's previous works lead him to this discovery is, as Elvio Guagnini describes it, the purpose of his autobiography, written in the third person: "la autobiografia del Vico si limita volutamente al campo degli studi […], è una autobiografia intelletuale (non solo metodo), definisce un percorso di formazione e di carriera considerato in relazione allo sviluppo degli studi, delle pubblicazioni, dei concorsi, del lavoro intellettuale, con esclusione di altri elementi della biografia" ("Vico: la forma

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greci è diffinita «vera narrazione»; la seconda di quelli che l'alterarono e le corruppero; la terza, finalmente, d'Omero, che così corrotte le ricevé" (*SN* 808).

[31] Vico recapitulates the entire argument of his *Scienza* in the final pages of his autobiography, excluding the 1731 addition (54-60). He explains, in the third person, philology's priority over philosophy, writing that Vico "discuopre questa nuova Scienza in forza di una nuova arte critica da giudicare il vero negli auttori delle nazioni medesime dentro le tradizioni volgari delle nazioni che essi fondarono, appresso i quali doppo migliaia d'anni vennero gli scrittori, sopra i quali si ravvoglie questa critica usata; e, con la fiaccola di tal nuova arte critica, scuopre tutt'altre da quelle che sono state immaginate finora le origini di quasi tutte le discipline, sieno scienze o arti, che abbisognano per raggionare con idee schiarite e con parlari propri del diritto naturale delle nazioni" (55).

dell'autobiografia" 352). The trajectory Vico experiences is "quasi la dimostrazione sperimentale dei risultati conclusivi di un percorso," one that can belong to any individual or, rather, to everyone (Guagnini 346). This universality, attributed to a work typically associated with a single person, echoes in practice the discovery of Homer's expanded identity in Book Three of the *Scienza*.

According to Mari Lee Mifsud, Homer is central to the *Scienza nuova*'s pedagogical goal because "Homer, for Vico, is a figure of speech, and as such, he symbolizes a figural consciousness" ("The Figure of Homer in the Rhetorical Structure of Vico's Pedagogy" 42). Mifsud ascribes the connection between language and epistemology to how Vico mediates "Cartesian criticism and the ancient rhetorical art of topics" (38). While the extent to which topics affect the novelty of Vico's new critical art is outside the scope of the present discussion, Mifsud rightly observes how Homer's figural position is necessary for Vico to connect poetry and politics; she explains, "The heroic mind in its wisdom dedicates itself to connecting the whole, the self to the civil, the civil to the divine, and in doing so creates the *sensus communis*, the sense of shared, communal human experience" (43).

Pericles Lewis, in his article "The 'True' Homer: Myth and Enlightenment in Vico, Horkheimer, and Adorno," concludes that such common, shared impulses demonstrate how "Vico's providence relies less on supernatural agency than on the collective potential of human institutions to refine and civilize humans themselves," meaning, "individuals living together create society, but society also creates individuals" (32). The source of generation and degeneration are thus entirely dependent on human-made, that is, human-thought entities, to which Lewis draws a conclusion with Machiavellian connotations:

> If the realization of human 'nature' depends precisely on the repression of all that is non-human, the theory of 'man-made history' reveals its aporia: it must assume the division of man against nature and reason against the body, promulgated by enlightened thought, and can offer no other standard by which to judge the relationship between humanity and nature than the model of domination (34).

The need to regulate that which lies outside of the purview of human language and intellect reveals itself in Vico, despite his protestations against Machiavelli's senseless change, as a similar attempt to justify its movements through faith in the example of Homer, newly discovered, and through the transmission of laws over time. The individuals who, according to Lewis, Vico's society makes, are collectively an exemplum of a given period's mode of cognition and can overcome temporal limitations in the same manner as Castruccio's sayings by perpetuating and reproducing a shared perception of reality, thereby allowing for the continued relevance of humanity's poetic origin to the present and future.

The natural and bodily deficiencies that in Machiavelli's *Principe* and *Vita* represent the uncontrollable and ungovernable forces weakening all political authority over time are, for Vico, manifestations of man's intellectual development as its

incongruity with a current age propels change into another. Moreover, the so-called contradiction inherent to "Vico's 'modifications of the human mind' […] suggest[s a] reliance on the conception that, however influenced by the course of human institutions, the human mind has certain 'natural' tendencies which it expresses in history, and which surface in the philosophy of history *not* as human nature but in the camouflage of 'developmental laws' of society" (Lewis 34). What is 'natural,' then, is the recourse to laws as the genealogical impetus begetting one age after another, undermining the force of unpredictability that otherwise thwarts human stability; these laws, despite existing within an epistemological framework, are, as the elision Lewis describes suggests, agents of community, universality and physical, mass-control, like Castruccio's sayings and the prince's hypothetically correct maxims. Closer examination of Book Three of the *Scienza nuova* will demonstrate how Vico's redefined (or discovered) example of Homer expands Machiavelli's solution to failed fathers and transforms the desire for replicability and stasis from humanity's poetic forefather into a genealogy of human politics.

7. The Model of a Popular Homer and the Birth of Laws: An Analysis of Book Three of Vico's *Scienza nuova*

Book Three opens with the premise central to the "discoverta" of the true Homer: Vico writes, "Quantunque la sapienza poetica, nel libro precedente già dimostrata essere stata la sapienza volgare de' popoli della Grecia, prima poeti teologi e poscia eroici, debba ella portare di séguito necessario che la sapienza d'Omero non sia stata di spezie punto diversa; però […] noi qui particolarmente ci daremo ad esaminare se Omero mai fusse stato filosofo" (*SN* 780). The acknowledgement of Homer's temporal specificity to the poetic age of man determines the quality of the significance he imparts, that of the "sapienza volgare," and preludes his identification as a philosopher. Vico's willingness to deduce from this premise a conclusion he already knows to be false underscores the interpretive core to the science that juxtaposes two different modes—the poetical and the philosophical—in order to dispel the confusion obscuring their relationship. Thus through the "pruove filosofiche" that follow, Vico makes explicit the inappropriateness of the opening inquiry as philosophy cannot interpret the products of an earlier mode of thought without understanding first its poetic logic. Vico explains in a key philosophical proof:

> Che i caratteri poetici, ne' quali consiste l'essenza delle favole, nacquero da necessità di natura, incapace d'astrarne le forme e le propietà da' subbietti; e, 'n conseguenza, dovett'essere maniera di pensare d'intieri popoli, che fussero stati messi dentro tal necessità di natura, ch'è ne' tempi della loro maggior barbarie. Delle quali è eterna propietà d'ingrandir sempre l'idee de' particolari […] perché la mente umana, la qual è indiffinita, essendo angustiata dalla robustezza de' sensi, non può altrimenti celebrare la sua presso che divina natura che con la fantasia ingrandir essi particolari (*SN* 816).

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The "necessità di natura" that gives rise to the poetic mode of signification is the "maniera di pensare d'intieri popoli," which cannot abstract specifics from subjects but rather from specifics enlarge ideas in a fantastical manner. The word "ingrandire" describes a different transformation from that of an abstraction and its temporal primacy makes it not only a developmental origin, but also the first step towards philosophy.

       It is important to note, however, that the genealogical relationship Vico conceives between poetry and philosophy and maps onto history (e.g. time's passing) contains no value judgment or teleology; rather each significative mode reflects the minds of a people and consequently the nature of their laws, knowledge that in turn, when studied through the lens of the new science, provides insight to change and man's methods in weathering its effects. Vico continues to underscore the distinct characters of the poetic and philosophic forms of cognition; he writes, "Che la ragion poetica determina esser impossibil cosa ch'alcuno sia e poeta e metafisico egualmente sublime, perché la metafisica astrae la mente da' sensi, la facultà poetica dev'immergere tutta la mente ne' sensi; la metafisica s'innalza sopra agli universali, la facultà poetica deve profondarsi dentro i particolari" (*SN* 821). Vico stresses the opposing movements of these historically distinct mental faculties, contrasting again the acts of abstracting from the senses and of complete immersion in them. The reflexive verbs *innalzarsi* and *profondarsi* heighten the inevitable contradictions that result from using one mode to analyze the products of another, that is, from interpreting poetic characters with philosophy. Therefore, these two verbs signal the inefficacy of philosophy in identifying and understanding the first poet, sanctioning, as Vico's evocative and physical language suggests, the appropriateness of the "pruove filologiche" to discover a new Homer.

       The "pruove filologiche" outline the linguistic peculiarities of the Homeric poems as irrefutable evidence of their author's true and new, according to Vico, identity. Vico explains that despite the editing these poems have undergone, they still contain a variety of Greek dialects and expressions; and because there is no knowledge of Homer's provenance or age, the poems' irregularities allow all the peoples of Greece to claim Homer as their own, and to attribute the *Iliad* to Homer's youth and the *Odyssey* to his elder age.[32] Yet while these varied linguistic characteristics seemingly confuse who and where Homer was as an individual, Vico acknowledges again the fault and limits of the contemporary frame of reference; he writes, "Però, essendo il fine della poesia

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[32] The key passages are: "Che Aristarco emendò i poemi d'Omero, i quali pure ritengono tanta varietà di dialetti, tante sconcezze di favellari, che deon essere stati vari idiotismi de' popoli della Grecia e tante licenze eziandio di misure (*SN* 860); Di Omero non si sa la patria (*SN* 861); Quasi tutti i popoli della Grecia il vollero lor cittadino (*SN* 862); […] forti congetture l'Omero dell'Odissea essere stato dell'occidente di Grecia verso mezzodì, e quello dell'Iliade essere stato dell'oriente verso settentrione (*SN* 863); Non se ne sa nemmeno l'età (*SN* 864); Dionigi Longino, non potendo dissimulare la gran diversità degli stili de' due poemi, dice che Omero essendo giovine compose l'Iliade e vecchio poi l'Odissea: particolarità invero da sapersi di chi non si seppero le due cose più rilevanti nella storia, che sono prima il tempo e poi il luogo" (*SN* 866).

d'addimesticare la ferocia del volgo, del quale sono maestri i poeti, non era d'uom saggio di tai sensi e costumi cotanto fieri destar nel volgo la maraviglia per dilettarsene, e col diletto confermargli vieppiù" (*SN* 782). The incompatibility between the goal and content of poetry exists from the perspective of the "uom saggio" only, and does not contradict the expertise of the poets.

In fact, the apparent inimitability of Homer's style, as Vico recalls Aristotle's and Horace's observations, further points to the temporal specificity dictating accessibility to meaning, and the recollection of the current age's philosophical impositions onto poetry affirms why the discovery of Homer is essential (*SN* 824).[33] Vico recapitulates with urgency the correct lens to interpret the Homeric poems' language, both in the final paragraph of the introduction to Book Three and towards the end of his "pruove filosofiche"; the equivalence between paragraphs 787 and 829 centers on the linguistic markers that reflect an age's character and thus "sono materie per le quali incomincian ad uscir i dubbi che ci pongono nella necessità per la ricerca del vero Omero" and are "impossibili da un filosofo fingersi con tanta naturalezza e felicità" (*SN* 787, 829).[34] By underscoring that temporal and intellectual appropriateness are linked, Vico goes further in his goal to "dai sensi mistici restituir alle favole i loro natii sensi storici" and, in his philological proofs, provides a means towards overcoming access to and applicability of contingent knowledge.

In sum, the "pruove filologiche" clarify the political end of poetry and direct the argument of the *Scienza nuova* to its core concern—the origin and longevity of laws. Mazzotta cites the following philological proof as foregrounding the political motivations to the discovery of the true Homer: "Che i Pisistratidi, tiranni d'Atene, eglino divisero e disposero, o fecero dividere e disponere, i poemi d'Omero nell'*Iliade* e nell'*Odissea*: onde s'intenda quanto innanzi dovevan essere stati una confusa congerie di cose, quando è infinita la differenza che si può osservar degli stili dell'uno e dell'altro poema omerico (*SN* 853). Mazzotta explains the significance of Athenian tyrants' editorial power, writing, "This insight into the structural features of the compilation, which constitutes the Homeric encyclopedia, gives access to an oblique reflection of Vico's: the link between poetry and politics, which is here represented by the tyrants' decision to unify into a false unity the originally disjunct, heterogenous, and contradictory Homeric poems" (*New Map* 149). The emphasis Mazzotta places on this particular explanation for the linguistic variety of Homer's work certainly affirms not only poetry's malleability as a reflection of

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[33] From "le comparazioni poetiche prese da cose fiere e selvagge" and "l'atrocità delle battaglie omeriche e delle morti," Vico deduces, "Ma tali sentenze, tali comparazioni, tali descrizioni pur sopra pruovammo non aver potuto essere naturali di riposato, ingentilito e mansueto filosofo" (*SN* 826-828).

[34] Paragraphs 787 and 829 also share Vico's richly descriptive language of the childlike minds of the earliest humans; lists of adjectives (e.g. "rozzi, villani, feroci, fieri, mobili, irragionevoli o irragionevolmente ostinati, leggieri e sciocchi") characterize this age's "costumi" that are similar to those of "violentissimi giovani" and thus incongruous with rational man's intellectual nature.

cognitive choices, but also its status as a link (or domesticating force) between rulers and the masses. Nevertheless, the present discussion offers instead the power of archetypes as a more politically significant angle from which to elucidate how the newly discovered Homer prepares for the *Scienza nuova*'s final two books and overcomes contingency as an obstacle to the past and its didactic function.

Vico elucidates how the poetic age's cognitive ability, through its construction of Achilles and Ulysses as poetic archetypes, unifies its peoples to create a whole; he writes:

> E ad entrambi tali caratteri attaccarono l'azioni de' particolari, secondo ciascun de' due generi, più strepitose, le qual'i greci, ancora storditi e stupidi, avessero potuto destar e muover ad avvertirle e rapportarle a' loro generi. I quali due caratteri, avendogli formati tutta una nazione, non potevano non fingersi che naturalmente uniformi (nella quale uniformità, convenevole al senso comune di tutta una nazione, consiste unicamente il decoro, o sia la bellezza e leggiadria d'una favola); e, perché si fingevano da fortissime immaginative, non si potevano fingere che sublimi (*SN* 809).

The attribution of particular characteristics and actions to these poetic archetypes is a unification of meaning across similarities (comparable in form to an analogy), and is also the foundation of a community. Like how the rhetorical term decorum describes the overall whole of a "favola," Achilles and Ulysses as reservoirs of characteristics give shape to uniform ideas. Vico equates poetical signification to the "senso comune di tutta una nazione," or rather, uniformity in meaning to the unification of a nation, leading him to define "due eterne propieta in poesia": "che 'l sublime poetico debba sempre andar unito al popolaresco; […] ch'i popoli, i quali prima si lavoraron essi i caratteri eroici, ora non avvertono a' costumi umani altrimente che per caratteri strepitosi di luminosissimi esempli (*SN* 809). That sublime poetry is also popular marks the origin of the collective practice of constructing examples as a means of communication. Achilles and Ulysses as archetypes also signal the elision of an earlier mode of signification, extending further back in time the interpretive necessity of historical and cognitive contextualizations. Vico concludes, therefore, that "essi popoli greci furono quest'Omero" (*SN* 875). He explains:

> Così Omero, sperduto dentro la folla de' greci popoli, non solo si giustifica di tutte le accuse che gli sono state fatte da' critici […] Ma, oltre a questi, gli convengono tutti gli altri privilegi ch'a lui danno tutti i maestri d'arte poetica […] E, quel ch'è più, egli fa certo acquisto degli tre immortali elogi, che gli son dati:
>
> primo, d'essere stato l'ordinatore della greca polizia o sia civiltà […]
>
> secondo, d'essere stato il padre di tutti gli altri poeti […]
>
> terzo, d'essere stato il fonte di tutte le greche filosofie […] (*SN* 882, 892, 898-901).

Vico empties Homer, "sperduto dentro la folla," of his individuality because if he were an individual, all the criticisms and praises attributed to him would be ungrounded, and in so defining a popular exemplum, Vico offers a didactic model in possession of a wider temporal and contextual range of applicability.

In response to the contingency that crippled exemplarity in Machiavelli's time and precluded the philosopher in Vico's from accurately understanding his past, the new science's discovery of the true Homer provides a scheme to access history's significance to the present. Vico clarifies the political implications of a dilated, popular figure in Homer, stating, "Ma sopra tutto, per tal discoverta, gli si aggiugne una sfolgorantissima lode: d'esser Omero stato il primo storico, il quale ci sia giunto di tutta la gentilità" (*SN* 902-903). Homer can also be the first historian because the process of his creation, which elides the figural embodiment of the Greek peoples, repeats in Solon's singular role in the dissemination of the laws of the Twelve Tables. Vico writes:

> Tanto che lo stesso fato è avvenuto de' poemi d'Omero, che avvenne della legge delle XII Tavole: perché, come queste, essendo state credute leggi date da Solone agli ateniesi, e quindi fussero venute a' romani, ci hanno tenuto finor nascosta la storia del diritto naturale delle genti eroiche del Lazio; così, perché tai poemi sono stati creduti lavori di getto d'un uomo particolare, sommo e raro poeta, ci hanno tenuta finor nascosta l'istoria del diritto naturale delle genti di Grecia (*SN* 904).

That Vico draws this poetical and political analogy at the end of Book Three points to the genealogical impulse behind the development of the human mind. Moreover it ties history, or the chronology of human civilizations, to the collective creation of archetypes that persist as repositories of knowledge, upon which new knowledge depends and from which cognitive modes of the past stay relevant to the present.

Indeed, Machiavelli's redemption of Castruccio's failure as a father through the dissemination of his sayings, words that others may own and beget by repeating them and, more significantly, reacting to them, becomes in Vico's Homer the celebration of the many's creations. The development of an archetype in Achilles and Ulyssses, and then of a first poet and historian in Homer reflects the shifts in the mind's intellectual and signifying capacities, with the Discovery safeguarding against anachronistic interpretations. Contingency no longer precludes the application of the past to present, but rather makes the past continually accessible. With this archival knowledge, the origin and evolution of laws become clearer, allowing for a more precise articulation of human government and the methods of its preservation over time.

Ed elli a noi: 'O anime che giunte
siete a veder lo strazio disonesto
c'ha le mie fronde sì da me disgiunte,
raccoglietele al piè del tristo cesto.
I' fui de la città che nel Batista
mutò il primo padrone; ond'ei per questo
sempre con l'arte sua la farà trista;
e se non fosse che 'n sul passo d'Arno
rimane ancor di lui alcuna vista,
que' cittadin che poi la rifondarno
sovra 'l cener che d'Attila rimase,
avrebber fatto lavorare indarno.
Io fei gibbetto a me de le mie case.'
<div align="right">The anonymous Florentine to Dante-Pilgrim, Inferno 13.141-153</div>

E un ch'avea l'una e l'altra man mozza,
levando i moncherin per l'aura fosca,
sì che 'l sangue facea la faccia sozza,
gridò: "Ricordera'ti anche del Mosca,
che disse, lasso!, 'Capo ha cosa fatta,'
che fu mal seme per la gente tosca."
E io li aggiunsi: "E morte di tua schiatta";
per ch'elli, accumulando duol con duolo,
sen gio come persona trista e matta.
<div align="right">Mosca de' Lamberti to Dante-Pilgrim, Inferno 28.105-13</div>

"Sempre la confusion de le persone
principio fu del mal de la cittade,
come del vostro cibo che s'appone;
…………………………………………
Le vostre cose tutte hanno lor morte,
sì come voi; ma celasi in alcuna
che dura molto; e le vite son corte.
E come 'l volger del ciel de la luna
cuopre e discuopre i liti sanza posa,
così fa di Fiorenza la Fortuna:
per che non dee parer mirabil cosa

ciò ch'io dirò de li alti Fiorentini
onde è la fama nel tempo nascosa.
…………………………………………
La casa di che nacque il vostro fleto,
per lo giusto disdegno che v'ha morti,
e puose fine al vostro viver lieto,
era onorata, essa e suoi consorti:
o Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti
le nozze sue per li altrui conforti!
Molti sarebber lieti, che son tristi,
se Dio t'avesse conceduto ad Ema
la prima volta ch'a città venisti.
Ma conveniesi a quella pietra scema
che guarda 'l ponte, che Fiorenza fesse
vittima ne la sua pace postrema."

<div align="right">Cacciaguida to Dante-Pilgrim, Paradiso 16.67-69, 81-89, 138-149</div>

The anonymous Florentine who the Pilgrim encounters in the seventh circle of Hell, reserved for the violent against the self, remarks on his city's change in forefather and in so doing attributes Florence's weaknesses to this altered paternity. The literal splintering that the damned soul endures as punishment for his self-inflicted death evokes the figurative destruction of Florence herself, of the body politic, for her willful deviation in origin.[1] As was the main interpretative focus of Chapter Two, genealogical language serves as a means to explore the "arte" necessary to propagate and maintain the health of the polis (or more dangerously its opposite state), and is echoed here in the correlation the anonymous suicide makes between beginnings and political influences. In fact, the statue of Mars located at the start of Ponte Vecchio and thought to be, according to the anonymous soul, responsible for Florence's lingering military prowess in Late Antiquity, now represents an inclination lost to commercial interests, literally outnumbered by the images of the city's new father, St. John the Baptist, stamped on every Florin coin. Nonetheless, Florence's original and forgotten forefather marks the sight of a specific and pivotal event in the city's more recent history, one with divisive ramifications that will be the present discussion's point of departure: the murder of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti to avenge his broken engagement.

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[1] The anonymous Florentine is able to suggest the sense of a city divided against itself—in essence civil war as suicide—by "making a gibbet of his houses," that is, of plural homes, thereby interpellating all of Florence. Durling and Martinez also add that "his anonymity facilitates his being taken as a symbol of the 'divided' city itself destroyed by its warring factions, its 'houses' (note *Inferno* 13.151).

The ill-fated betrothal of Buondelmonte to the daughter of Lambertuccio degli Amidei in 1216 is the oft-cited cause, according to the chroniclers Dino Compagni and Giovanni Villani for example, of Florence's acrimonious political upheavals and subsequent instability, and runs throughout the *Commedia* as the catalyst for many misfortunes, including Dante's own exile.[2] When, among the fraudulent counselors of violence and discord in the ninth *bolgia* of the eighth circle of Hell, the Pilgrim comes face to face with Mosca, the principal proponent of Buondelmonte's murder, he is dismembered, with bleeding stumps for hands. His eternal punishment, like that of the anonymous Florentine of *Inferno* 13, condemns him to physically realize and personify the divisiveness of a state at war with itself; the parallel to a disfigured body politic only heightens in irony as Mosca references the "head," or desired end of the conflict that he intended the murder of Buondelmonte to be but instead marked the beginning of many more clashes. His words of encouragement formed the "mal seme per la gente tosca," and genealogical language and political imagery again intertwine to amplify the futility and danger an individual propagates by intervening in matters of the state, even more so upon the Pilgrim's revelation of the very personal consequences to Mosca's family line for the discord he bred within Florence (*Inferno* 28.110). Mosca's absent descendants therefore are a testimony of, most basically, the ephemerality of human-made entities and, more significantly, of the inefficacy of a single person to beget and ensure long-term stability— an anxiety-producing reality that was the principal concern in Chapter Two and for which recourse to the collective, to the many, was its proposed resolution.

The example of Buondelmonte may suggest the inevitable and deleterious recurrence of an individual's desires within state rule and, as the source of all contingencies, within history. Yet more importantly, the ripple effect from this murder looks forward to a reevaluation of the demands placed on failed exemplars, namely a condemnation not of irrelevant words and deeds, but of the tools used to interpret what is said and done to universal effect. Chapter One advanced, in the absence of widely-applicable guides to predictable results, an allegorical epistemology that, functioning at the individual level, achieves constancy through the contemporaneous thinking of different moments in time. Chapter Two widened the temporal frame beyond the birth and death of the individual—and thus beyond his personal desires for fail-proof outcomes—to introduce a collective mode of thinking that can perceive sources of guaranteed longevity. More precisely, the realization that exemplary qualities are not inheritable virtues reveals genealogy to be a false representation of continuity and its

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[2] Durling and Martinez explain, "Villani tells of how Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti, betrothed to one of the Amidei, rejected her when offered a more appealing candidate," a member of the rival Donati family; "the Amidei, with the Lamberti and other families, urged by Mosca, decided on revenge. On Easter Sunday, 1215, Buondelmonte was dragged from his horse and stabbed to death next to the statue of Mars at the head of the Ponte Vecchio. The old chroniclers see this murder as the origin of the division of the city into Guelf and Ghibelline factions"(note, *Inferno* 28.106).

participant selves equally false representations of whole and stable entities. As the Pilgrim's ancestor Cacciaguida explains under the influence of his city's original forefather, in the Sphere of Mars, human lives consist of ephemeral actions, and the finite lengths of these lifespans make individuals blind to those few creations capable, in contrast, of outliving their makers. The cyclical ebb and flow of time's passing makes Fortune, like the moon on its changing tides, conceal these hidden truths even further, rendering the past's greatness—and its errors—momentarily invisible and unredeemable to the present.

Thus if virtues no longer serve as the objects of individuals' aspirations, specifically in regards to longterm success, then what can history reveal that is? Cacciaguida sounds almost Machiavellian in the linguistic certainty he employs to lament Florence's degradation over time, the "sempre" that assures any city's misfortune at the mixing of migrating peoples, or the contrary-to-fact hypothetical that would have successfully prevented the Amidei family's need to avenge Buondelmonte and the chain of aftereffects from his murder. Yet the process by which the Pilgrim's ancestor unveils Florence's idyllic past from the shroud of history also anticipates elements of how Vico proposes the collective's epistemology operates, using the insight it gleans from earthly life to understand the whole of its existence. In his beatified state, Cacciaguida recognizes continuity from a devolution into perpetual differences, making his historical narrative a revelation not merely of content, but of the mode required to fully understand it; indeed, the Pilgrim's entire experience of Paradise necessitates, as Beatrice and the other heavenly souls repeat, a series of mental leaps towards a new and total understanding of being. Furthermore, Cacciaguida's recognition of Buondelmonte as the duly offered victim to "quella pietra scema" acknowledges a Vico-like vestige of the past through its effect on the present, one that, by sanctioning a sacrifice to the city's first father, properly augurs a cyclical return to original impulses.

It is, nevertheless, the representational nature of the "pietra scema" that most immediately recalls Chapter Two's discussion of Homer and his exemplarity, and consequently helps clarify where the search for continuity shifts, once exemplars fail. Because Vico identifies the first father of poetry as the Ancient Greek people *in toto*, whatever acclaim posterity ascribes to him relies not on traits consistent with his individuality, but on his power to signify collective ideas, desires, and will. As the previous chapter stated, Vico's discovery of the "true" Homer elucidates a communal mode of thought that positions the Homeric poems, in a manner similar to Castruccio's sayings, as representative of the means to define and reproduce a shared, perceived reality through interpretation. The instrumental deployment of such signifiers among a people resembles how the Florentine souls throughout the *Commedia* repeatedly characterize the statue of Mars as a flashpoint for the impulses and actions that define Florence and determine the fate of her citizens. The "pietra scema" also and more crucially to the present argument stands for both the temporal and material threshold that marks the end of one system and the beginning of another, and concretizes attempts to understand how and when political

entities fail or succeed—a simultaneous gravestone and foundational block measuring the degree to which time disfavors or privileges a specific politics' applicability.

The purpose of this signification is to identify the least corruptible means towards stability, and while this identification is hermeneutical in action, involving the interpretation of the past's ruins in the present, it derives from an epistemology that must both think two historical moments in time and think as an entire people. Turning back to the beginning of this project as it prepares to end, recall the statue of Homer in the opening *dipintura* to the *Scienza nuova* who, with a blind and downcast gaze, contemplates man-made *geroglifici*, which represent the course of human societies; like the statue of Mars, Homer simultaneously represents the temporal and ancestral pasts, and serves as a figure for the narration of historical development and decline that forms the entire *Scienza nuova*. Yet what circumscribes such a representation is the fact that the individual has replaced its wholeness as an exemplar and as a vehicle for propagating continuity, with its being the epistemological motor of the many; the *sensus communis*, which Homer embodies, is individual and exemplary precisely because it is intellectual and thus indicative of that which is human-made. Determining political longevity and durability, as a result, casts aside the single, heroic politician, that is, the desire-filled individual, for the traces of individuals' intellect within the products of the community.

The present argument will elaborate laws as the ideal and practical repository of collective intellect, and will thus endeavor to fully articulate the epistemology that evolves from the intellectual modes of the previous two chapters and that in turn identifies laws as the possibility for continuity amidst political instabilities and failures. Chapter Three's primary aim is then to examine how the move from discussions of failed exemplarity, already collapsed as per the previous chapter's analysis, enables laws to become the impersonal products of the poetical-turned-abstract processes of the mind that they represent. Indeed, in large part because of his acute attention to failed words and deeds, Machiavelli continuously plays with the binary of laws and arms, most famously in the *Principe* where a damaging equivalence evacuates both of their respective potency, or in the *Discorsi* where ancient Romans' clear distinction of each entity's function paved the road for the Republic's political success. Yet it is in his *Istorie fiorentine* that laws finally supersede arms in theory, but not, devastatingly so, in practice, a revelation that is a byproduct of his lessons in history.[3] Moreover, precisely because the *Istorie fiorentine* offers a portrait of Machiavellian history *qua* history, putting aside the plurality of the work's title for the moment, it is the most fully rounded counterpoint to the theoretical objections Vico levels against the Florentine in the final two books of the *Scienza nuova,* where the Neapolitan reveals laws as the ultimate subject of his science. In fact, nowhere more than in Books Four and Five does Vico reprovingly cite Machiavelli, with the goal

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[3] This theoretical supersession results from the stabilizing, long-term force laws have in cities where arms and martial culture have instituted peace. See chapters one from Books IV and V of the *Istorie fiorentine*, two passages that will be discussed in greater detail below.

of correcting his predecessor of an erroneous historical view and, more significantly, of what Vico believes is an underlying epistemological fault.

Chapter Three intends to forgo a blow-by-blow commentary on the decline of governmental models from ancient Rome to contemporary day and thus a comparison of the cycles of political models between these two thinkers because rather than emphasize the products of such a cycle, it is the mentality necessary to create these systems of government that is worthy of deeper analysis. The purpose of choosing this different angle of approach is to underscore how Vico pointedly seeks and responds to the questions and anxieties of political stability that Machiavelli so acutely portrays in the *Istorie*, and how Vico betrays a core affinity with Machiavelli around the nature and capacity of the individual. As the present discussion's point of departure, the murder of Buondelmonte will act as a nexus of Vico's overt and hidden opinions of Machiavelli's ideas, demonstrating how this pivotal start to Florentine decline attributes fault to errors in thought, redefining what is universal in effect from individually exemplary into what is legal.

1.   Critical Overview of the *Istorie fiorentine*

In her essay "Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*," Anna Maria Cabrini attributes the development of the ideas found in the *Istorie* as beginning years before Cardinal Giulio de' Medici commissioned the work in 1520. She explains that after the fall of the Soderini-led republic, the Medicis' return to Florence in 1512 sparked Machiavelli to write the *Principe* and the *Discorsi* in close succession and thus home in on two key points that would act as the subtext to his *Istorie*: Cabrini cites Chapter Nine of the *Principe* and its exploration of the conflict between "il popolo" and "i grandi," generalized as civic disunity; and Book I of the *Discorsi* and its distinction between ancient Rome and Florence, specifically the qualities that set the Roman republic as a foil for its degraded Florentine counterpart.[4] To her, these thematic preoccupations serve as the basis for

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[4] The extent to which these themes inform Machiavelli's construction of the *Istorie* also applies secondarily to how Machiavelli modifies the historiographical traditions of his predecessors; while he made use of works by chroniclers Giovanni Villani, Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, Neri Caponi, Giovanni Cavalcanti, and Giovanni di Carlo, his most notable interlocutors are Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini and their respective histories, *Historiarum Florentini populi libri XII* and *Historia Florentina*. Machiavelli's changes, Cabrini summarizes, revolve around "the language, structure, and the period to be covered," considerations he began to address when writing the *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* ("Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories* 130). In the choices he makes regarding these three aspects, Machiavelli is more concerned with how their effects on the historical narrative created innovates from the tenets that ground the political ideologies of his Humanist forefathers; Cabrini writes on Machiavelli's disregard for factual veracity and willingness to change historical details, explaining, "His aim was to identify the causes and consequences of events, to study the motivations and undertakings of individuals and groups, and

Machiavelli's increasing scrutiny of the means by which the Medici gained power as well as his heightening urgency to address the political problems that remained in Florence without resolution. Cabrini elaborates that "the contrast between the exemplum model of Rome and the negative model of Florence, hinging on the condition of their respective *ordini*," serves to demonstrate throughout the *Discorsi* that "Florence's negative exemplarity […] is caused in large part by the instability of its 'wise' citizens to draw lessons from history, Rome's, of course, but also Florence's" (129-130). However while in this work Machiavelli foregrounds Roman success, which tacitly speaks to the didactic potential of history, it is only in the *Istorie* that the failure of such potential merges overtly with the political mistakes of its participants, all the more clearly understood through their crippling effects on the present.

The extent to which laws implemented in the present measure the ability to discern and apply lessons from the past correlates a certain, synchronized mind-frame with insight into the future, that is, into political longevity. By the time Machiavelli writes the *Istorie*, he has so perfected the lens of Republican Rome that he is, as a result, primed to elucidate the slippery variables behind the epideictic language of historical writing, compellingly so because he is set to reevaluate and re-conceive the history of his city.[5] According to Cabrini, the intertwining of history and laws over the course of Machiavelli's theoretical evolution from the *Discorsi* to the *Istorie* complicates the stark opposition between the positive Roman model and the negative Florentine one, rendering clearer his primary concern with contemporary politics and its shortcomings. Therefore when in the preface to his *Istorie* Machiavelli phrases Florence's uniqueness as a circumstantially successful hypothetical, proven by the city's ability to survive obvious failings, he reprises a contrary-to-fact logic that pits "the historical reality of these domestic conflicts" against an untapped "exceptional greatness"(Cabrini 131).

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to shed light on short- and long-term effects" (134). Criticism describing the ways in which Machiavelli employs and modifies his source texts is lengthy: see Anselmi (1979); Cabrini (1985, 1990, 2010); Dionisotti (1980); Garosci (1973); Martelli (1992); Matucci (1991); Philips (1984); and Richardson (1971). The focus of Chapter Three's discussion, however, is different. Nevertheless, the fact that Machiavelli works through his ideas within a history, namely, under the rhetorical and formal practices of a true historiographical account (he freely employs free direct discourse, for example), that is different from his earlier models has implications to the epistemological claims Vico perceives in the Florentine's political thought and against which he positions himself.

[5] This is not to say that his earlier treatises, like the *Principe*, do not overtly and painfully illustrate the impossibility of learning from history and applying those lessons to situations under different temporal and constraints; nor that the *Istorie*, by virtue of its later date of completion, represents his definitive and concluding insight on history. Rather, the task of writing a history, giving shape (and sense) to a chronology of events, forces authorial decisions that provide a fuller, multifaceted elaboration of how history is an object of study and what methods are necessary to complete it.

Machiavelli juxtaposes fact and the factually possible in a rhetorical move that suggests to the reader how to judge the shifting efficacy of *ordini* in the sections to follow.

The rhetorical potency with which he inflects *ordini* throughout the *Istorie* Machiavelli immediately establishes in the opening charge that he levels against his predecessors, Poggio Bracciolini and Leonardo Bruni, for neglecting to emphasize Florence's "civil discords" in their histories of the city. By attributing to himself a unique perspective, Machiavelli disavows universal lessons in favor of specificity and thus carves a new plane for his historical narration that is, from the onset, hyperaware of the contingencies deviating the path of Florence's unused potential, in content and in analysis. Such acknowledgement of variability that extends beyond the innumerable actions constituting history to the commentary framing and describing these actions, transforms *ordini* into the means by which to critique praxes and also establish theoretical faith in them. Cabrini elaborates how Machiavelli's "analysis of the kinds and frequency of civil conflicts, closely connected to the problem of the absence or defective nature of Florence's *ordini* […] underscore the intimate tie between past and present that runs throughout," concluding that *ordini* are both "a *lezione* to be conveyed" and "the direction and driving force of political action and/or polemical recrimination" (132). Machiavelli displaces, in Cabrini's view, the motor behind politics from the individual to an inanimate entity, thus the more fraught political choices are with the emotions and desires of their actors, the further reality deviates from the hypothetical success praised in the *Istorie*'s preface. The rhetorical frame Machiavelli introduces to differentiate himself from his predecessors advances an imagined, alternate reality as a barometer of history, and history, no longer a chronology of heroic or dishonorable leaders, is an ever-shifting experiment in the forms a functioning politics takes.

With her rhetorical angle, Cabrini pinpoints a definitive juncture in the scholarship on the *Istorie* that overall has, notwithstanding slight differences, prioritized political science over any epistemological undercurrent. Despite the frequency with which Machiavelli characterizes history as a battleground of individuals attempting to outwit time, scholars primarily interpret *ordini* to establish the degree to which Florentine success fits within a spectrum of governing systems, from unabashed support of republicanism to that of monarchism; any rhetorical play undermining the stable meaning of the words constituting these laws only corroborates where on the spectrum an interpretation falls.[6] Machiavelli's Florence seems doomed to perpetual anachronisms between practice and theorized politics, regardless, insofar as laws are deficient and learning from the past is impossible. Similarly, the contingency-laden subject, mired in the present, suffers from a form of historical blindness that fails to see the causes of ineffective rule, or the sense and shape of history. There is, as a result, a limited

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[6] Examples of such readings from key figures in Machiavellian criticism are forthcoming and will demonstrate how treatment of the *Istorie* as a peripheral work has encouraged literal studies of it and neglected interpretative avenues unconventional to its historiographical genre.

understanding of how the political goals and desires of an individual can ever constructively (as opposed to destructively) contribute to governing a community over time. The underlying epistemology motivating and connecting words with deeds seems ripe, then, for more detailed analysis, particularly because Vico cites Machiavelli precisely under these terms to theorize his own view of history.

In his book *A Great and Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought*, Mark Jurdjevic calls for greater variety in readings of the *Istorie* while nonetheless operating within the realm of political science. Like Cabrini, Jurdjevic takes Machiavelli's contrary-to-fact success of Florence as a jumping point to sustain how the prevalent opinion "that Florence served chiefly as a repository of negative examples and that the political theory underpinning the *Histories* passively recycled the convictions of the *Prince* and the *Discourses*" shuts readers' minds to Machiavelli's "considerable estimation of the city's as yet unrealized political potential," which displaces ancient Rome as the sole, attainable republican model (4-5). Jurdjevic seeks to recuperate the *Istorie* from the periphery of Machiavellian scholarship by coupling it with another late work, the *Discorso delle cose fiorentine* from 1520; the *Discorso* is Machiavelli's proposed key to the problems which the *Istorie* analyzes in depth, calling for a renovation of the city through "a complex and original arrangement of new institutions," whose importance Machiavelli confirms by the failures that result in their absence across the *Istorie*. Together, Jurdjevic claims, both works offer an exposition on why laws are crucial to ensure political longevity in republican form (11).[7]

Nevertheless, Jurdjevic's own attempt to position his reading within existing criticism confirms the continued difficulty in asserting the *Istorie*'s importance on par with Machiavelli's earlier writings.[8] All too frequently focus on the historicity of the *Istorie*

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[7] Jurdjevic repeatedly acknowledges the debt his reading owes to John Najemy's work on the *Istorie*, particularly to the centrality of the need for stable political institutions for which the *Discorso delle cose fiorentine* proposes a solution. Jurdjevic writes, "The *Histories* demonstrate in detail the institutional configuration of every single one of the city's failed attempts to create such institutions. Read as urgent political commentary, every episode in and manifestation of Florence's broken, limping failed political experiment leads directly and inexorably to the *Discourse on Florentine Affairs*. Najemy wrote not only that there are no lawgivers in the *Histories*, but their absence maybe meant to suggest that the *Histories* points to Machiavelli himself as the city's redeeming lawgiver" (12). A more careful explanation of how Najemy's work will feature in the present argument follows below. Other scholars who have noted in passing the relationship between the *Istorie* and the *Discorso* are: Nicolai Rubenstein (1967), page 958; Gennaro Sasso (1993), page 169; Martina Marietti (1974) page 109; and Gisela Bock (1990), pages 189-192.

[8] Jurdjevic, on his count, takes Machiavelli's hypothetical Florentine success as an indicator of the thinker's final and definitive attitude on the nature of meaningful and effective politics: he contends, "Machiavelli's political and historical writings from the 1520s espouse a more engaged, activist republican agenda than any of his earlier writings," concluding that "Machiavelli deployed a realist republicanism, specifically informed by Florentine history, in an attempt to stave off the rising autocratic tide that threatened to engulf Florence," and thus Machiavelli "intended his

results in scholars interpreting it as either lacking a theoretical foundation—a pessimistic testament to Machiavelli's resignation of Florence's increasing distance from a true republic and unlikelihood to change as the Medici increased in power—or as a watered-down, rehashing of the main ideas from the *Principe* and *Discorsi*.[9] With these two interpretive poles struggling against each other to definitively categorize the *Istorie* within Machiavelli's *oeuvre* and on its own merits, the mystery of how to reconcile the conditions behind this commissioned history and the acerbic commentary within it endures.

A foundational proponent from the past century of what Jurdjevic characterizes as the "utopian" line of reading is Felix Gilbert (*A Great and Wretched City* 10). Gilbert interprets the cycle of history, which the *Istorie*'s account of Florentine decline portrays in part, as implicit optimism because an eventual upswing will always rid Florence (or any city) of its corruption and augur a new, more just age, even in the absence of explicitly named catalysts. Jurdjevic counters that, without an explanation of how to bring the cycle's positive turn into effect and thus corroborate its possibility, "Gilbert's argument remained conjectural at best, given the degree to which its utopian argument hinged, somewhat counterintuitively on precisely the absence in the text of any actual positive or utopian statements about Florence or any political developments that clearly suggested the arrival of a redeeming context" (9). Indeed, the narration of Florence's decline from its beginning to the almost-present-day that is the whole of the *Istorie* leaves little proof of a balancing rise.[10] Jurdjevic's objection builds from the work of Carlo Dionisotti, who similarly argued for the lack of philological evidence behind Gilbert's claim; in his *Machiavellerie*, Dionisotti relies on textual indicators to conclude that Machiavelli wrote the *Istorie* in phases, thus accounting for his equivocation over an entirely positive or negative outlook on Florence's history (383).

Dionisotti stops short of determining the *Istorie*'s degree of optimism or pessimism; rather, his heavily historiographical and rhetorical reading underscores the urgency with which Machiavelli sets out to innovate from his predecessor texts and

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vision of relentless failure in the *Histories* to elucidate a recurring problem in the Florentine political culture" (1, 11).

[9] Among the scholars who argue that the *Istorie* reiterates the ideas first elaborated in the *Principe* and the *Discorsi*, the most notable are: Eric Cochrane (1981); Roberto Ridolfi (1963); Luigi Rossi (1949); and J.H. Whitfield (1947).

[10] Gilbert positions Machiavelli at the center of the formation of modern political science based on his (Gilbert's) idea that a cycle is an unwavering, natural law. In *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence*, he explains, "Machiavelli clung to the idea that politics had its own laws and therefore it was, or ought to be, a science; its purpose was to keep society alive in the ever-moving stream of history," with the result being "a recognition of the need for political cohesion and the proposition of the autonomy of politics" (199). For Gilbert, the existence of such a cycle serves not to identify political actors, but to confirm the modern age's need for politics as its own entity—a conclusion that Machiavelli's attention to individual failures in the *Istorie* only partially, if at all, supports optimistically.

accentuate the political edge over which Florence risks falling to its ruin. For example, Dionisotti reads the use of Tuscan, not Latin, to narrate Florence's history as building from the fact that Machiavelli recognizes the "condizioni di isolamento della letteratura fiorentina" in the early sixteenth century, and posits the choice of the vernacular as "il proposito di rompere l'isolamento, di accettare e dare battaglia su un terreno retorico, dialogo, biografia, storia, che fosse comune agli emuli e avversari di tutta Italia" (*Machiavellerie* 378). The tactics Machiavelli employs to convey his message are Dionisotti's primary concern, but less for their own merits as examples of varied historical prose than for the reasons why Machiavelli mobilizes them; in fact, the degree of historicity within the *Istorie* evidences the theoretical impulse of the work as a whole. Dionisotti explains, "[L]'esemplificazione storica fa in Machiavelli tutt'uno con la dottrina" and that also, in the *Istorie*, "si ripete e però probabilmente sussiste il proposito di sperimentare un diverso procedimento, di aggiungere alla dottrina, all'esemplificazione libera e sommaria, una rappresentazione continua, fino a un certo segno obbligata, di uomini e fatti in un determinato spazio e tempo" (*Machiavellerie* 367). Together, the multiple histories Machiavelli advances are distinct from the historical accounts of his source authors due to the timely and contingent-laced lessons they illustrate and the creative, genre-bending political theory they represent. Dionisotti elaborates further, stating that "Machiavelli storico è eccezionale per i risultati, non per l'impiego che egli fece di una tecnica volta a volta retorica e drammatica, con le scelte, i tagli, i bruschi trapassi e scorci, le pause, che una tale tecnica, proprio dell'età sua, importava"; in other words, the facts of Florentine history, which undoubtedly tie Machiavelli to preceding historians in "un rapporto, di attrazione e repulsione," more significantly reveal that earlier accounts, when juxtaposed with the *Istorie,* ought to serve, "non come a testimonianze del vero, cui si applichi il ragionamento analitico e comparative, ma come alternative storiografiche, letterariamente convertibili" (368-369). Dionisotti acknowledges the slippage between literature and history in the *Istorie* as being attributable to Machiavelli breaking novel ground in the theoretical potential of the historiographical genre beyond its deployment as a reservoir of moral ideals, now that exemplarity has lost its rhetorical efficacy.

In general, historiographically angled criticism, of which Dionisotti is representative, charts how Machiavelli uses his predecessors' histories to create his own hybrid narrative. Yet a byproduct of this approach is insight into the validity of interpretations focused on the *Istorie*'s optimism (or pessimism), namely whether such determinations accentuate or distract from identifying Machiavelli's recurring ideas and his presentation of them according to a specific pattern. Gian Mario Anselmi, in *Ricerche sul Machiavelli storico*, categorizes the ways in which Machiavelli recombines historical snippets in order to illustrate his underlying concerns strategic to the *Istorie*'s overall message. More than previous scholarship has acknowledged, Anselmi's study correlates specific authorial choices and manipulations of source materials to a few intercalated themes, stemming from Machiavelli's anxiety for present day Florence's weaknesses: the materiality of human desires; the formlessness of history; and the slippery circumstances

contextualizing human actions. Anselmi writes that the multiple Florentine histories constituting the *Istorie*'s eight books function on three levels, wherein the first "di scorrimento apparentemente frammentano e caotico degli eventi" relates to "un secondo livello di più generale *ratio* del loro decorso (lotta di classe, lotta di potenza fra gli stati, ecc.) fino ad un terzo ed ultimativo livello, immobile e originario, quello della *natura*, in cui l'uomo è calato e in cui ogni vicenda deve svolgersi secondo generalissime ma precise leggi" (83). Thus the non-teological motor behind the apparently random movement of history mobilizes "un pragmatismo […] legato alla ricostruzione oggettiva e rigorosa del passato come premessa indispensabile alla comprensione politica dello stesso presente" (Anselmi 109).

The wholeness of history that historiography conceives and projects is, in light of Machiavellian pragmatism, a momentarily illusion, changeable and reconfigurable on the demands of the next, different moment in time. The historiographer of the present, whenever he may be, sees history from its disparate parts only subjectively, but the accretion of these narratives over time provides objective proof—that is, applicable to many subjects—of historical patterns. Anselmi perceives such a materialistic impulse, which "alla materialità del reale (sia essa quella degli influssi astrali sia essa quella delle dinamiche sociali fra le classi) continuamente rinvia la verifica della storia, i cui grandi movimenti sembrano in qualche modo ricalcare i grandi cicli naturali," as an ideological innovation mirroring the *Istorie*'s deviation from tradition, brought on by coopting and rearranging its source texts (199). That "Machiavelli tende di continuo alla messa in luce dei processi oggettivi, alla chiarificazione dei loro intrecci con le iniziative dei soggetti" is all "funzionale a questo tipo di ricostruzione, non ultime la particolare 'riduzione' delle fonti e la prevalenza accordata a quelle secondarie, in cui il materiale appare già decantato e individuato nelle sue valenze più macroscopiche (Anselmi 117). Whatever agenda his humanist predecessors inscribed within their histories disappears when Machiavelli reduces their works to lowest common denominators—isolated actors and actions. Objectivity, consequently, derives from the integrity of these historical building blocks, disengaged from narrative parameters yet tied together by political exigencies.

To Anselmi, Machiavelli inverts the historiographical genre in order to parse through the forces behind change and mobilize agents towards political solutions. The *Istorie*'s methodological shifts are clearly visible because, "nella necessità di costruire un'analisi capace di esprimere, a vari piani, tutta la complessa articolazione di processi […] che non si esauriscono né in meccanica ripetizione di leggi né in individualistiche o causali azioni ma che nella cerniera della politica hanno il loro segno più alto e denso di significazioni," Anselmi conclude che the newness of Machiavellian historiography serves "ad esprimere non più solo distaccati giudizi sul passato indistinto dell'umanità ma ad individuare le scelte politiche e le necessità oggettive che hanno determinato il presente, indicando perciò stesso le vie operative per incidere in esso e per comprendere lo svolgimento" (200). The unwavering priority of the present moment sanctions Machiavelli's manipulation of his sources so much so that he "si impadronisce di questo 'classico' strumento didascalico e lo trasforma radicalmente […] in modo da delineare una

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organica teoria della storia," that ultimately works "alla lotta per l'instaurazione di nuove realtà sociali ed istituzionali" (Anselmi 88, 86). The true emphasis is on entities mediating the ebb and flow of the natural and individual.[11]

Anselmi is quick to clarify that his interpretation of a naturalism laced with what is human is far from the oversimplification against which Gennaro Sasso cautioned. Sasso has made a formidable contribution to *Istorie* criticism by stressing the different pattern of change Machiavelli describes compared to that of the ancient Greek historian, Polybius. Anselmi writes how to this classical notion of naturalism, Machiavelli adds "un elemento di grande rilievo, la capacità dei soggetti di interpretare e 'costringere' le leggi della natura, la loro capacità di poter tenere fronte all'ignoto, la funzionalità cioè operativa e politica simbolizzata dalla virtù" (83). According to Amedeo De Vincentiis, in "Storiografia e pensiero politico nelle *Istorie fiorentine* di Machiavelli: L'interpretazione di Gennaro Sasso," Sasso perceives such manipulation as being the sole impetus for historical change, providing the framework that renders his work "una ricerca in cui l'interesse per gli aspetti teorici si è sempre congiunto con quello concernente la sua storicità (e le varie dimensioni, politiche e culturali, che la specificano)" (De Vincentiis VII). The issue of validating the *Istorie* as an expression of theory rather than a reconfigured narration of facts depends, for Sasso, on working backwards, interpreting Machiavelli's historiographical decisions as a reversal of the process by which historians of thought theorize history (De Vincentiis 2); Sasso states "per quanto ad alcuni possa dispiacere, le *Istorie fiorentine* sono opera di pensiero; e la natura di questo è cercare la sua espressione" (*Studi su Machiavelli* 41). However, De Vincentiis is quick to clarify that Sasso refutes "una definizione in senso 'aprioristico' dell'apparato concettuale e interpretativo che Machiavelli impiega e fornisce […] come se la realtà e l'osservazione del concreto svolgersi delle vicende storiche venissero 'adattate' a sistemi interpretativi predeterminati e immodificabili" (9). Rather, an acute "sensibilità per i propri 'presenti tempi' […] si trasforma in uno strumento del passato che consente di rintracciare nella storia le ragioni del presente," distinct from the revisionism Machiavelli's predecessor historians employed "in funzione di immediati interessi" (9). Sasso is, as a consequence, putting forth a system of historical theorization that reflects what he perceives is Machiavelli's very human motor to change from within (history).

The momentum behind cyclical change, in contrast to that of Polybian naturalism, is, as Sasso writes, due to a "mancanza di materia vitale," which "può derivare dal progressivo esaurimento del corpo sociale e politico, dal suo consumarsi attraverso il ritmo del sue 'mutazioni,' e può invece derivare dall'intervento di una forza esterna"; regardless of the cause, "si direbbe che il corpo sociale delle repubbliche sia sottoposto al

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[11] J. G. A. Pocock cites the rise of institutional priority—the so-called "Machiavellian moment"—as offering definitive support of the Florentine's republican angle throughout the *Istorie*. See Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, particularly pages 183-219.

medesimo destino dei corpi umani," that is, a finite end, underscoring the explicit difference from unstoppable Polybian flux[12] (*Studi* 172). Moreover, "il complesso gioco di passioni, di sentimenti, di vizi e di virtù che Polibio descrive analizzando le forme politiche […] non può avere, nella sua logica, alcun autonomo rilievo, quelle passioni essendo appunto da concepire come effetti, come 'fenomeni' della natura"; once again, Sasso affirms the central humanness that drives the shapes and metamorphoses of civic community, noting that "in Machiavelli, quelle passioni sono effettivamente passioni, non dipendono dalla logica della natura, ma dalla loro stessa logica, umana e terrena […]" (200). This distinction explains why Machiavelli reinvents classical anacyclosis, relying on Polybius similar to the ways in which he depends on his historian forbearers—only insofar as he can uniquely and strategically deviate from his sources and then develop his own historiographical method and theory. Reflecting on Machiavelli's attribution of human passions to political change, Sasso concludes, "[…] ed e ben comprensibile quindi che, essendo cose dell' uomo, l'uomo possa trasformarle quando si rivelino produttive non di bene, ma di male, non di buoni ordini e di buone leggi, ma di caos e di barberie" (200). A powerful agency builds from an acute sense of doom, but from the inevitability of historical ruin, Sasso interprets the *Istorie fiorentine* as providing no solution, evidencing rather grim examples of passions run amok and of depleted faith in the Medici.[13]

     Mark Phillips, working within the historiographical vein of *Istorie* scholarship, contends that from these plentiful examples, specifically via the way in which Machiavelli innovates their narration, the identity of who or what is capable of acting on such human

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[12] Sasso explains, "Il ciclo di Machiavelli si attua consumandosi, e smentendo quindi, mediante la sua stessa attuazione, la regola polibiana della sua indefinitività." He continues to state how each thinker conceives the shift from distinct governmental forms as occurring differently with respect to time, writing that "mentre la visione di Polibio tende alla cosmicità e all'unicità ciclica, quella di Machiavelli tende alla risoluzione dell'unico ciclo in vari cicli comitati, ma non necessariamente convergenti in armonia" (*Studi* 173). Sasso concludes that the contemporaneity of cycles in Machiavelli is indicative of the fact that variation and political instability depend "non dalle legge di natura che guida inesorabile il ciclo costituzionale, ma dal 'caso,'" one that mirrors human desires and "passioni" (199).

[13] See Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli, vol. 2: La storiografia* (1993), pages 200-208, for an extended analysis of the *Istorie*'s focus on history in crisis and, secondarily, the Medici's role in it (for more on Machiavelli and the Medici, see also pages 42-45). It is important to note that this study by Sasso concerns itself more with Machiavelli and the Florentine historiographical tradition and to a lesser degree with the theoretical underpinnings for the events narrated, particularly in regards to the Medici and republicanism. John Najemy's "Machiavelli and the Medici: The Lesson of Florentine History" (1982) offers a counterpoint to Sasso's interpretation, prioritizing Machiavelli's analysis of Medici responsibility; Najemy contends that the *Istorie* demonstrate Machiavelli at his most nuanced when analyzing the Medici's political failings and successes, suggesting a different outlook (from Sasso's) for republicanism in the wake of historical crises. A more detailed reading of Najemy's contributions to scholarship on the *Istorie* is below.

potential comes to the fore. In "Barefoot Boy Makes Good: A Study of Machiavelli's Historiography," Phillips insists against the tendency "to focus on the abstractions of political theory," in lieu of narrative details, that would force the *Istorie* to become "a sort of domesticated version of the *Discorses* in which the diffuse anecdotal materials of history muffle the energies of Machiavelli's political analysis" (587). The guise in which his analysis presents itself allows historical personages, like Michele di Lando, leader of the Ciompi revolt, to embody the heroic and dangerous capacities of leadership that Machiavelli aims to theorize ("Barefoot Boy" 604).[14] The fullness of Machiavelli's historical actors is, as John Najemy acknowledges, a vestige passed on to him from Leonardo Bruni, a fact hidden underneath the *Istorie*'s opening criticism of earlier Florentine historians ("*Arti* and *Ordini* in Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine*" 162).

Yet according to Najemy, the need to elide this rhetorical affinity is a consequence of a fundamental difference between Bruni's and Machiavelli's conceived purposes to rewrite Florence's past—Bruni "neglected altogether any account of the origin, development, or function of the Florentine guilds during the very century and a half (1250-1400) in which the importance of these corporations was at its greatest," and in so doing, aimed to "avoid the disturbing implications of Florentine social and corporate history: that the upheavals of 1378 might somehow relate to the very structure of Florentine society; and that the ideals of consensus and unity […] might prove to be a facade covering a much grimmer reality" ("*Arti* and *Ordini*" 163, 168). Bruni's "sturdy defense of such principles as the sovereignty of law and civic responsibility of citizens under the law is testimony to [his] conscious attempt to transmit some very deep-rooted Florentine values to his own and future generations," of which the guilds had no part, as they "represented the potential for the institutionalization of social conflicts, for the legitimization of the possibility (and occasionally the reality) of political confrontation based on socio-economic difference" (167-168). The sanctity and purity of laws that Bruni sought to propagate and maintain at the expense of historical inclusivity is, Najemy notes, at the crux of Machiavelli's criticism of his predecessor's history. Because according to Bruni, "problems of structure, power, and class […] were internal to the life of the guilds […], the Ciompi revolt becomes an illustration of the relationship of social forces to political institutions and of the impossibility of understanding *civili discordie* or *ordini* without referring the one to the other"; but the flaws that Bruni willfully omits, Machiavelli opening decries as impossible to ignore. Certainly, as Najemy notes, "the fundamental importance within Machiavelli's political vocabulary of the term *ordini* and its variations and derivatives (*ordinato*, *ordinario*, *disordine*, etc.) has been demonstrated,"

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[14] Phillips, here and in "Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and the Traditions of Vernacular Historiography in Florence" (94), as well as Donald J. Wilcox, in *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (105), both ascribe Machiavelli's dramatic historical reenactments to Leonardo Bruni specifically, but they also note that narrative details and the integration of classical techniques (e.g. free direct discourse) are central to the legacy humanist historians left to historiography.

by their sheer repetition and under the premise that "a healthy political society was one founded on *ordini*; a corrupt society was *disordinata*, or *in disordine*; lawgivers and founders of states were *ordinatori*; a tyrant ruled outside the *ordini*, or *straordinariamente*" (171).[15] In the case of the guilds, Machiavelli maintains that despite their limitations, they provide (the potential for) "a concrete example of those *ordini* […] essential to a healthy and free political society"; with their decline, Florence definitively seals its historical fate, namely its dependence not on a republican foundation, but on a single actor (185-186).

Najemy concludes that Machiavelli's correlation of the "crisis of Florentine *ordini*" with "the political decline of the Florentine guilds" rendered Florence "capable of neither liberty nor a true republican constitution ("*Arti* and *Ordini*" 185, 187). This conclusion begins to suggest novel insight into the circumstances and reasoning behind Machiavelli's decision to accept the Medici's commission of the *Istorie*. In a later article, Najemy cites the *Discorso delle cose fiorentine* (1520) as demonstrating the necessary theoretical shift that in the *Istorie* Machiavelli would fully materialize; he explains, "The historical perspective that Machiavelli assumed in the *Discourse* of 1520 seems to have resulted in a more complex view of politics as a theatre of conflict among collective forces and structures in which the ability of any single individual to act for either good or evil was fare more restricted," compared to the ideas of the *Principe* and the *Discorsi* ("Machiavelli and the Medici" 565). As a result, Najemy notes, Machiavelli brings Florentine history to the fore, no longer second to classical Roman history, and he possesses "the conceptual means to condemn the larger process [of history] while still appreciating the admirable qualities of individual Medici and the political wisdom and efficacy of some of their actions" (565). Whatever restrictions implicit in the Medici's commission, Machiavelli overcomes, and Najemy interprets his distinction between historical process and individual action as "the very essence of his methods" in the *Istorie*, that is, "the need for different criteria in judging political behavior, on the one hand in the context of individual purpose, and on the other in terms of its impact on collective structures" (566). By articulating his view of Florentine history—a history in which "the Medicean hegemony cannot be understood solely in terms of the ambition or talents of the Medici themselves" but "the product of a political system and style in which the entire upper class shared"—Machiavelli recognizes, then, that Medici pose no overt threat to the truth of his account, just as they are incapable of radically deviating its course (572). Najemy states that, in writing the *Istorie*, "Machiavelli completed the process of his self-liberation from the myths of the *Prince*," because "far from existing apart from the corruption that plagued the republic, the 'prince' was now seen as its product and ultimate expression […] he was its prisoner, not its maker and far less its savior" (574).

As Chapter Two suggested, lost faith in exemplars precipitates a shift in understanding the forces behind historical change, moving from the individual to the

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[15] See Ercole, *La politica di Machiavelli* (1926), chapters two and three; and J.H. Whitfield, *Discourses on Machiavelli* (1969), pages 141-162.

collective. Najemy ends his analysis, writing that Machiavelli's "faith in the collective *virtù* of the Florentines" gains credence from "the myth of inevitably cyclical nature of all societies," replacing his now-impotent *principe* with a newly-redirected hope in the many ("Machiavelli and the Medici" 575). But recourse to the Polybian "myth" of cycles, to use Najemy's term, is not an automatically positive turn; indeed, David Quint and Salvatore Di Maria interpret Machiavelli's portrayal of individual weakness as a wry admission of history's senseless mutability.

Quint, in "Narrative Design and Historiography in Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine*," observes that irony best describes Machiavelli's strategy, which he achieves "by artfully juxtaposing parallel events of his history" (32).[16] His goal, according to Quint, is to indirectly critique the Medici, yet also more significantly, to portray history as a reflection of infinitely variable episodes of "corruption and decline" ("Narrative Design" 45). Therefore, drawing attention to the plurality of the work's title, Quint states how the ease with which Machiavelli's textual juxtapositions suggest the possibility of connected histories, it similarly and almost effortlessly suggests the opposite, namely that "however much events may seem alike, they do not coincide, and their non-correspondence opens a space for ironic reflection on historical narrative itself, which may not so much find patterns among human affairs it retells as disclose the absence of pattern: one damned thing after another" (46). The historical narrative that Machiavelli tells is, ultimately in Quint's interpretation, one that "test the limits of historical intelligibility," thematically "unified by a story of general Italian decline and the particular decline of Florentine political life" and formally coherent "through repetitions and juxtapositions whose typical effect is ironic, revealing less a meaningful conjunction among events than their incongruity" (47). The overall effect is, then, destabilizing and precisely ironic in its whole lesson of incomprehensible disorder.

Salvatore Di Maria offers a similarly grim reading, but unlike Quint, he approaches "the disposition of the facts and the discourse in which they are couched" of the *Istorie* via a wider, more thematic lens: that of Polybius and anacyclosis ("Machiavelli's

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[16] Quint states that Machiavelli models this technique from Livy's *History of Rome*, wherein "the historical narrative generates meaning not only *directly* by its recounting an individual event or by describing an individual protagonist, but also *indirectly* by comparing them to other events and individuals" ("Narrative Design" 32). An example pairing that Quint explicates from Book VII of the *Istorie* is the revolt against Florentine rule in Prato (chapters 26-27) and the revolt of Volterra (chapter 29), "the implication [being] that Florence herself has become a subject city, in a state of servitude to its Medici masters" ("Narrative Design" 39). Quint elaborates further, writing that Machiavelli underscores such an implication by juxtaposing "the insurrections in Prato and Volterra […] to the next of paired events" from Book VIII—"the successful plot to assassinate Galeazzo Maria in Milan" and "the Pazzi conspiracy to rub out the Medici brothers in Florence"—thus repeating once more "that in Lorenzo Florence has herself been producing a tyrannical Galeazzo Maria in her midst and that both now will become targets of assassins trying to restore republican institutions" ("Narrative Design" 40).

Ironic View of History: The *Istorie fiorentine*" (249). Like Sasso and Dionisotti before him, Di Maria reiterates the humanness that distinguishes the Machiavellian cycle from the Polybian one, claiming that, in the *Istorie*, a historical moment derives from the conflict between an individual, who "attempt[s] to bring about specific changes in his socio-political environment by forcing drastic changes to the existing order," and a perceived "obstacle to that change" ("Machiavelli's Ironic View" 252). The historian's narration of these events betrays his own view of the world, however, and in Machiavelli's case, Di Maria identifies "a preference for tragedy" and a "focus primarily on the pathos of the protagonist, especially on the tragic isolation of his last moments," which heightens the folly of his inciting ambition (255, 257). It is to this narrative preference that Di Maria attributes Machiavelli's "ironic mode of discourse," which "aris[es] from the tension between the protagonist's stated goal and the characterization of his inadequacies," and reverberates with the irony of historical change—that the cycle of history "is grossly incompatible with the individual's belief that he can actually affect the course of human events" (260, 261). For Di Maria, Machiavelli cannot avoid these ironizing, narrative decisions because of the position in which his commission places him—"both the dispassionate observer and the observed, that is, one of the victims populating his view of the world" (266).

The narrative-level disparities that are responsible for inscribing the *Istorie* with an ironic tone draw attention to and in some ways parallel the emphasis on factions in the work's content. As noted above, Najemy's argument that Machiavelli coincides the disappearance of the guilds with the essentially impotent reign of the Medici also implies a dangerous leveling of social differences ("Machiavelli and the Medici" 574). Indeed, Book II of the *Istorie* ends with Machiavelli mourning the loss of noble culture, specifically of its military tradition, whose loss solidifies Florentines' dependence on mercenary troops and vulnerability to foreign invasions. Gisela Bock, in "Civil Discord in Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine*," notes a shift in Machiavelli's position, from the *Discorsi* to the *Istorie,* in the ways in which civic strife and equality contribute to (in Rome's case) or undermine (in Florence's case) the integrity of a republic; Jurdjevic concurs, writing that what "in Rome […] were sources of Roman greatness […] are the causes of Florentine weakness" in the *Istorie* (*A Great and Wretched City* 233).[17] He elaborates 09that "the absence of social distinction between the ostensible 'noble' and 'popular' parties" in the remaining six books of the *Istorie* marks the "collapse […] of Machiavelli's initial conceptual distinctions between nobles and people […], that the qualities he had previously exclusively identified with nobles were in fact universal aspects of human nature" (118). The newly defined *popolo*, particularly in light of historical examples demonstrating its "immoderate desires and propensity for violence" not unlike the nobles, comes, according to Jurdjevic, at Machiavelli's "realization that because the people have

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[17] On the question of equality and republicanism in Machiavelli, see also Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (1996), 137-175.

the same inherent ambitions as 'nobles,' they cannot play the role ascribed to them in the *Prince* and the *Discourses* of anchors or guardians of collective liberty" (130).[18] The feasibility of such a role reaffirms the distinction between theory and practice, clouding, as a result, what Machiavelli-historiographer intends to reveal in narrating the events of his crippled city.

In "'Vox Populi': Machiavelli, *Opinione*, and the *Popolo*, from the *Principe* to the *Istorie fiorentine*,"Albert Ascoli makes a claim for the relevance of Machiavelli's opinion and of "individuals who do not have a direct role in politics themselves" because these opinions exist "at the boundary line between public and private, nobles and plebs, prince and people," and in so doing, "anticipate a kind of 'sovereign subjectivity' which would eventually—when generalized to an internally differentiated collectivity specifically composed of opinionated individuals—become characteristic of what is now frequently called the 'public sphere' or 'civil society' (11).[19] Ascoli, however, is quick to distinguish the *Istorie* from the *Principe* and *Discorsi* for depicting an absence of the conditions necessary to fuel "conflict and critique to social consensus" (16). He explains, "The world of the *Istorie* […] is one in which individual and collective opinions proliferate, and, as they do, conflicts—usually erroneous—multiply, and solutions seem more and more remote," with blame falling equally on "each of the various sub-groupings" (18). Machiavelli's faith in the people's ability to govern, Ascoli concludes, is difficult to identify, increasingly so due to what Ascoli perceives is the *Istorie*'s primary goal: to underscore the fact that the Medici's "programmatic usurpation of power in Florence" depends on "the continual subversion of popular government from within and, then, the Medici's ability to manipulate the 'popolo' to advance its own ends" (19). The singularity of the *Istorie* seems, then, inextricable from the lexical and contextual markers that signal Machiavelli as its author, untangling and weaving together the supposedly objective, untainted events of Florentine history.

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[18] Jurdjevic sees the confusion of neat social categories as inscribed within the language of the *Istorie*, noting the "increasing complexity of his [Machiavelli's] vocabulary," particularly the use of "hybrid compound terms" derived from *popolo* and *grandi*; for example: *stato di ottimati*; *maggiori popolani*; *nobili popolani*, *antica nobiltà*; *popolani potenti*; *popolani nobili*; *principi dello stato* (*A Great and Wretched City* 115).

[19] Gabriele Pedullà similarly vouches for more detailed attention to the ways in which Machiavelli's voice nuances the content of his discourse. His article, "Il divieto di Platone: Niccolò Machiavelli e il discorso dell'anonimo plebeo (*Istorie fiorentine* III.13), notes how Machiavelli breaks from Plato's prescription to reserve third-person narration for the depiction of non-exemplary characters (*Republic* III.215), and as a result, goes beyond his humanist predecessors' use of "orazioni […] per attirare l'attenzione sui punti salienti […] e mettere in luce la posta in gioco di una battaglia o di una decisione politica analizzandola *in utramque partem*"; in contrast, Pedullà claims that Machiavelli strategically mobilizes orations "per segnalare il suo distacco dalla narrazione principale, facendo della 'multifocalità' lo strumento del proprio dissenso non tanto o non solo dal predomio dei Medici, quanto dall'intera storia cittadina" (265).

2. *Ingiuriose Congiure* and the Patterns of Individual Thinking in the *Istorie fiorentine*

      Machiavelli opens Book II of the *Istorie*, narrating the cause of Florence's first ruinous division, which "è notissima, perché è da Dante e da molti altri scrittori celebrata; pure mi pare brevemente da raccontarla" (II.2). His decision to retell the story of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti's murder foregrounds errors in thought and anticipates the role faulty thinking will play in how the entire *Istorie* conceives history, that is, as a course of steady decline, which although implicitly part of a cycle, with laws providing a means towards an upswing, has only capricious individuals to rely on for a chance at mitigating instability. Machiavelli describes the pivotal transgression, writing:

> Il cavaliere, veduta la bellezza della fanciulla, la quale era rara, e
> considerato il sangue e la dote non essere inferiore a quella di colei ch'egli
> aveva tolta, si accese in tanto ardore di averla, che, non pensando alla fede
> data, né alla ingiuria che faceva a romperla, né ai mali che dalla rotta fede
> gliene potevano incontrare, disse: 'Poi che voi me la avete serbata, io sarei
> uno ingrato, sendo ancora a tempo, a rifiutarla'; e senza mettere tempo in
> mezzo celebrò le nozze. Questa cosa, come fu intesa, riempié di sdegno la
> famiglia degli Amidei e quella degli Uberti, i quali erano loro per
> parentado congiunti; e convenuti insieme con molti altri loro parenti,
> conclusono che questa ingiuria non si poteva sanza vergogna tollerare, né
> con altra vendetta che con la morte di messer Buondelmonte vendicare. E
> benché alcuni discorressero i mali che da quella potessero seguire, il Mosca
> Lamberti disse che chi pensava assai cose non ne concludeva mai alcuna,
> dicendo quella trita e nota sentenza: 'Cosa fatta capo ha.' Dettono
> pertanto il carico di questo omicidio al Mosca, a Stiatta Uberti, a
> Lambertuccio Amidei e a Oderigo Fifanti. Costoro, la mattina della
> Pasqua di Resurressione, si rinchiusono nelle case degli Amidei, poste intra
> il Ponte Vecchio e Santo Stefano; e passando messer Buondelmonte il
> fiume sopra uno caval bianco, pensando che fusse così facil cosa
> sdimenticare una ingiuria come rinunziare ad uno parentado, fu da loro a
> piè del ponte, sotto una statua di Marte, assaltato e morto (II.3).

The calculation Buondelmonte makes, "considerando" the respective merits of his current and potential betrotheds, precludes him from thinking—"non pensando"—of his decision's effects. Yet, he is no different from his punishers who, despite concluding "questa ingiuria non si poteva sanza vergogna tollerare, né con altra vendetta che con la morte di messer Buondelmonte vendicare," are dissuaded by Mosca Lamberti from further examination of their action's consequences. The indictment Mosca makes against thinking—"che chi pensava assai cose non ne concludeva mai alcuna"—is a call to arms against Buondelmonte, capitalizing on his ill-thought faith in the ease with which one can "sdimenticare una ingiuria" to catch him off guard and end his life. Machiavelli, by underscoring the thought processes that enable all involved parties to willfully ignore their decisions' effects, introduces an equivalence between insults (*ingiurie*) and plots

(*congiure*), anticipating the flawed reasoning behind Florence's problematic handling of arms in the absence of laws.

Indeed, Book II progresses with the nobles and people jostling for power, alternating recourse to arms and then to laws, but at the start of Book III, Machiavelli affirms a fundamental flaw in this dynamic; he explains that, unlike the classical Roman nobility's clash and subsequent resolution with the plebeians via the establishment of laws, which were equally beneficial to both classes, "il desiderio del popolo Fiorentino era ingiurioso ed ingiusto; tale che la nobiltà con maggiori forze alle sue difese si preparava, e per ciò al sangue e allo esilio si veniva de' cittadini; e quelle leggi che di poi si creavano, non a comune utilità, ma tutte in favore del vincitore si ordinavano" (III.1). The legacy of the *popolo*'s definitive win, fueled by vindictive "umori" and clouded foresight, is a dual lapse in judgment, resulting in a uniform society and the loss of noble, martial culture. Machiavelli states that the people's choice to deprive the nobility political weight incites the nobility to, in turn, "con il governo, con l'animo e con il modo del vivere simili ai popolani non solamente essere, ma parere" (III.1). As a consequence, in a city leveled of differences, only "da un savio dator di leggi potrebbe essere in qualunque forma di governo" (III.1). Machiavelli admits, however, the rarity of such an occurrence, "che, per buona fortuna della città, surga in quella un savio, buono e potente cittadino, da il quale si ordinino leggi per le quali questi umori de' nobili e de' popolani si quietino, o in modo si ristringhino che male operare non possino," and from a foundation of "buone leggi e buoni ordini fondato" a state "non ha necessità della virtù d'uno uomo, come hanno gli altri, che lo mantenga" (IV.1). From this moment of origin, a city transcends the individual to become a self-sufficient and self-propagating entity, yet Machiavelli quickly acknowledges Florence's failure, its constant governmental changes trapping it in a tautological pursuit of the very thing from which it needs evolve so that peace and stability may finally thrive.

The possible existence of a *savio* necessitates recognition of his responsibility in the rise and decline of the city he momentarily governs, particularly with respect to divisive *umori* and tellingly to actions' effects, which are repeatedly ill-thought out. For example, when in Book IV Rinaldo degli Albizzi stands before an assembly of his fellow citizens, "i quali con buone parole gli umori mossi dalla moltitudine quietassero," he aspires to elevate himself, "con la virtù sua," into a leading political role. Machiavelli recounts that he:

> […] parlò lungamente, mostrando che non era prudenza giudicare le cose dagli effetti, perché molte volte le cose bene consigliate hanno non buono fine e le male consigliate l'hanno buono: e se si lodano i cattivi consigli per il fine buono, non si fa altro che dare animo agli uomini di errare; il che torna in danno grande delle republiche, perché sempre i mali consigli non sono felici: così medesimamente si errava a biasimare uno savio partito che abbia fine non lieto, perché si toglieva animo ai cittadini a consigliare la città e a dire quello che gli intendono. Poi mostrò la necessità che era di pigliare quella guerra […] (IV.7).

Judgment, for Rinaldo degli Albizzi, is a measure impartial to an action's outcome and to its repercussions, relying rather, on its normative function to preserve a republic's integrity from deviants and ensure citizens' ability to openly "consigliare la città e a dire quello che gli intendono." The preservation of such an ideal good to determine a plan's value remains abstract, though, riddled with hypothetical ills and a reliance on an uncertain distinction between "mali consigli" and "uno savio partito," one that, by no guarantee and contrary to its claim of their irrelevance, alleges to anticipate an action's future effects and thus offer its definitive judgment in the present. Thus Rinaldo degli Albizzi's attempt to assume the leadership role of "uno savio" provides no resolution to the epistemological flaw of acting with little reflection of consequent effects, and behind his rhetorical posturing, he promotes his own call to arms, and later "l'inganno o la forza" against the plebs (IV.9). Machiavelli immediately juxtaposes Rinaldo degli Albizzi with Giovanni de' Medici, who instead claims "che l'uffizio d'un savio e buono cittadino credeva essere non alterare gli ordini consueti della sua città, non sendo cosa che offenda tanto gli uomini, quanto il variare quelli; perché conviene offendere molti, e dove molti restono mal contenti si può ogni giorno temere di qualche cattivo accidente" (IV.10). Giovanni's appeal to the inviolability of the city's *ordini* rests on his foresight into their longterm impact and role in mitigating dangerous *umori* and, unlike Rinaldo, he looks to a future "cattivo accidente" to rhetorically substantiate his opinion of the present.

By positioning these two potential *savi* side-by-side, Machiavelli appears to contrast the respective efficacy of arms and laws as the tool by which a virtuous leader may reorder a crippled Florentine republic. However, he also foregrounds the rhetoric involved as each individual pleads his case, via so-called "buone parole," and in light of Florence's loss of martial culture, Machiavelli seems to suggest, by the *Istorie*'s midpoint, how these leaders may contribute to the city's decline. Book V thus begins, explaining the changes that inevitability bring "provincie […] dall'ordine venire al disordine, e di nuovo dipoi dal disordine all'ordine […] e così sempre dal bene si scende al male, e dal male si sale al bene" (V.1). Machiavelli predicates this cycle on a community's shifting dependence from arms to letters, explaining:

> Perché la virtù partorisce quiete la quiete ozio, l'ozio disordine, il disordine rovina, e similmente dalla rovina nasce l'ordine, dall'ordine virtù, da questa gloria e buona fortuna. Onde si è da i prudenti osservato come le lettere vengono drieto alle armi, e che nelle provincie e nelle città prima i capitani che i filosofi nascono. Perché avendo le buone e ordinate armi partorito vittorie, e le vittorie quiete, non si può la fortezza degli armati animi con il più onesto ozio che con quello delle lettere corrompere; né può l'ozio con il maggiore e più pericoloso inganno che con questo nelle città bene institute entrare (V.1).

The contradictory description Machiavelli uses to delineate the role of letters couples "onesto" and "inganno," thereby drawing attention to the ease with which military prowess gives way to destructive leisure. However letters' distance from arms and proximity to *disordine* leaves unstated where laws fall in relation to either arms or letters,

or to the cycle of political rises and declines. Indeed, their (laws') very absence in the wake of increasingly rhetorical orations that justify ever-shifting conspiracies for political authority is telling enough, a reminder of Florence's difference from its classical foil. Machiavelli then cites Cato's decision to expel all philosophers from ancient Rome, upon seeing the effects of Diogenes and Carneades on the Roman youth, as a sage precaution against systemic political ruin; yet Italian cities seem too far gone, or worse, paralyzed on the edge of a definitive downturn because intercity conflicts and short-lived truces are neither virtuous war nor leisurely peace, making the peninsula vulnerable to foreign invaders, who are, according to Machiavelli, representative of its political rockbottom.[20]

Book V continues to depict Rinaldo degli Albizzi as propagating a strange collusion between warfare and rhetorically persuasive calls to arms, rendered all the more ineffective by the personal motivations grounding any decision, as laws, if present, guide and restrain *umori* less and less. For example, when Rinaldo leads a group of exiled Florentines to the Duke of Milan, in the hopes of invading Florence together, he likens war to medicine, explaining: "perché le città […] hanno con i corpi semplici somiglianza, e come in questi nascono molte volte infirmità che sanza il fuoco o il ferro non si possono sanare, così in quelle molte volte surge tanti inconvenienti che uno pio e buono cittadino, ancora che il ferro vi fusse necessario, peccherebbe molto più a lasciarle incurate che a curarle" (V.8). The *savio* disappears in favor of the "pio and buono cittadino" who is swayed to act in order to avoid sinning, a problematic change Machiavelli underscores by affirming the futility of such an extended metaphor, admitting in the proceeding chapter that "non erano necessarie molte parole a persuadere al Duca che movesse guerra a' Fiorentini, perché era mosso da uno ereditario odio e una cieca ambizione, la quale così gli comandava" (V.9). Rinaldo, rather than presenting a convincing argument, provides the Duke only a pretext for his attack on Florence because longstanding hatred and ambition have already determined the Duke's course of action, and these very personal reasons ironically echo the true and all too familiar *infirmità* ailing the body politic—*umori*.

To the coupling of words and emotions that up to this point in the *Istorie* has increasingly been figured in terms of faulty reasoning and of ill-considered effects, Machiavelli hastens to add plots against the state. Book VI depicts the *congiura* of Stefano Porcari in Rome; Machiavelli writes:

> Desiderava costui, secondo il costume degli uomini che appetiscono
> gloria, o fare, o tentare almeno, qualche cosa degna di memoria; e giudicò

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[20] Machiavelli writes: "Dalla virtù adunque di questi nuovi principati, se non nacquono tempi che fussero per lunga pace quieti, non furono anche per la asprezza della guerra pericolosi; perché pace non si può affermare che sia dove spesso i principati con le armi l'uno l'altro si assaltano; guerre ancora non si possono chiamare quelle nelle quali gli uomini non si ammazzano, le città non si saccheggiano, i principati non si destruggono: perché quelle guerre in tanta debolezza vennono, che le si cominciavano sanza paura, trattavansi sanza pericolo, e finivonsi sanza danno […] alla fine si aperse di nuovo la via a' barbari e riposesi la Italia nella servitù di quelli" (V.1).

non potere tentare altro, che vedere se potesse trarre la patria sua delle mani de' prelati e ridurla nello antico vivere, sperando per questo, quando gli riuscisse, essere chiamato nuovo fondatore e secondo padre di quella città. Facevagli sperare di questa impresa felice fine i malvagi costumi de' prelati e la mala contentezza de' baroni e popolo romano; ma sopra tutto gliene davano speranza quelli versi del Petrarca, nella canzona che comincia: "Spirto gentil che quelle membra reggi", dove dice:

> Sopra il monte Tarpeio, canzon, vedrai
> Un cavalier che Italia tutta onora,
> Pensoso più d'altrui che di se stesso.

Sapeva messere Stefano i poeti molte volte essere di spirito divino e profetico ripieni; tal che giudicava dovere ad ogni modo intervenire quella cosa che il Petrarca in quella canzona profetizzava, ed essere egli quello che dovesse essere di sì gloriosa impresa esecutore; parendogli, per eloquenzia, per dottrina, per grazia e per amici, essere superiore ad ogni altro romano. Caduto adunque in questo pensiero, non potette in modo cauto governarsi, che con le parole, con le usanze e con il modo del vivere non si scoprisse, talmente che divenne sospetto al Pontefice […] (VI.29).

Stefano Porcari hungers for glory, specifically to be known as and called Rome's "nuovo fondatore e secondo padre," and what feeds his delusional quest are verses by Petrarch, as he knows ("sapeva") and judges ("giudicava") himself to be the executor of the poet's prophesied mission. The error of his thinking, into which he has fallen, manifests itself in all his actions and words, and as result reveals his plot, thus dooming it from the onset. Nonetheless the folly of Stefano's "disegno" lies not in his intention to free Rome from corruption, but squarely in his judgment; Machiavelli explains that "veramente puote essere da qualcuno la costui intenzione lodata, ma da ciascuno sarà sempre il giudicio biasimato; perché simili imprese, se le hanno in sé, nel pensarle, alcuna ombra di gloria, hanno, nello eseguirle, quasi sempre certissimo danno" (VI.29). The juxtaposition of an action "nel pensarl[a]" and "nello eseguirl[a]" implies a nearly irrevocable causality between the reasoning behind an action and its executed outcome, one whose susceptibility to desires results in clouded thinking and thus predetermines its failed ending.

After narrating Stefano Porcari's failed revolution, Machiavelli returns to comment on how to evaluate another's actions, and to what end such judgment serves. Back in Book IV, Rinaldo degli Albizzi cautioned against the danger of judging "cose dagli effetti, perché molte volte le cose bene consigliate hanno non buono fine e le male consigliate l'hanno buono" (IV.7). The "ombra di gloria" blights the ideation and consequently the realization of Stefano's plot so it exemplifies both an ill-counseled and badly ended thing; nevertheless, Machiavelli concedes that "veramente puote essere da qualcuno la costui intenzione lodata," staving off posterity's categorical indictment of

Stefano Porcari. Additional to thought and action, intention appears as a third quality that is worthy of either praise or blame, although Machiavelli is initially vague about how it relates to the other two, and why such a more invisible and private aspect, while termed as more deliberate than erratic and violatile emotions, factors into the description and unfolding of historical events. Yet over the course of the *Istorie*'s final three books, Machiavelli is increasingly clear; he cites intention not only to underscore the incongruence between an individual's thinking and executing of an action, once more emphasizing the intellectual errors at the core of all ruinous events; but also and more significantly, he cites intention to act as a key for others to better perceive these historical moments and their contributions to the political present. Intention provides the link from the faulty judgment of individuals and their lost exemplarity to a wider commentary on the validity of interpreting others, specifically the historian's judgment of them on account of his perpetually erroneous subjects.

Machiavelli concludes Book VI, describing a terrible storm, out of which "nasceva uno romore […] dal quale usciva tanto spavento che ciascuno che lo sentì giudicava che il fine del mondo fusse venuto, e la terra, l'acqua e il resto del cielo e del mondo, nello antico caos, mescolandosi insieme, ritornassero" (VI.34). Machiavelli continues that "fe' questo spaventevole turbine, dovunque passò, inauditi e maravigliosi effetti," and in the wake of this incredible storm, "gli uomini stupidi al tutto erano rimasi." The recurrence of the words *giudicare* and *effetto*, now transposed from human machinations onto a natural event, suggests the role intention plays in the evaluation of the world through the lens of an individual's desire-consumed thinking and acting.[21] Machiavelli writes how the survivors of the storm conclude from its impact that:

> Volle senza dubio Iddio più tosto minacciare che gastigare la Toscana; perché se tanta tempesta fusse entrata in una città, infra le case e gli abitatori assai e spessi, come l'entrò fra querce e arbori e case poche e rare, sanza dubio faceva quella rovina e fragello che si può con la mente conietturare maggiore. Ma Iddio volle, per allora, che bastasse questo poco di esempio a rinfrescare infra gli uomini la memoria della potenzia sua (VI.34).

The perceived intent of God's moderate threat—the distinction between "più tosto minacciare che gastigare"—is one people arrive at, without a doubt, by interpreting the storm's effects, from which they then project a more damaging, hypothetical outcome, "che si può con la mente conietturare maggiore," had the storm shifted trajectory. God's intent validates the interpretation of this natural "esemplo" however when Machiavelli

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[21] Machiavelli continues to emphasize the process by which humans perceive and interpret the storm's effects through the repetition of the verbs *vedere* and *sentire* as well: "Vedevasi il paese desolato e guasto; vedevasi la rovina delle case e de' templi; sentivansi i lamenti di quelli che vedevano le loro possessioni distrutte, e sotto le rovine avevano lasciato il loro bestiame e i loro parenti morti: la qual cosa a chi vedeva e udiva recava compassione e spavento grandissimo" (VI.34).

applies such an intent-focused strategy to the interpretation of human schemes, he reveals why it is the historian's task to demonstrate the ways in which political inefficacy is an individual's error—because in the absence of imposed order, like in a storm-wracked space, humanity sees only as far as its emotions. In Book VII, Piero de' Medici justifies his response to the dissension undermining his authority, explaining that "non quello che prende prima le arme è cagione degli scandoli, ma colui che è primo a dare cagione che le si prendino" (VII.16). Much like the conclusion drawn from the divinely-motivated storm, Piero prioritizes intent as a catalyst for chaos; he then calls on his adversaries to *pensare* ("pensassero") "quali erano stati i modi loro verso di lui […] perché vedrebbono che le convenzioni notturne, le soscrizioni, le pratiche di torgli la città e la vita lo avevono fatto armare; le quali arme non avendo mosse dalle case sue, facevano manifesto segno dello animo suo, come per difendere sé, non per offendere altri, le aveva prese" (VII.16). His dissenters' actions, listed alongside their intent to "torgli" both his city and life, move him to arm himself in self-defense, which in turn, because of the manner by which he accomplishes it, proves to be "manifesto segno" of his own aim. Machiavelli juxtaposes the two parties' intentions to emphasize their fundamental similarity as they deflect responsibility onto each other, not only for their respective emotion-filled decisions, but for other, third-party observers' perception of them.

The language Machiavelli employs to open Book VIII repeats the logic Piero de' Medici's uses, heightening the thematic importance intent has as a bridge between the ideation and interpretation of *congiure*, the increasingly persistent threat to the Florentine state. Machiavelli's stylistic choice is, by the *Istorie*'s final book, progressively less surprising if one recalls the murder of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti and the equivalence established between plots and threats. Like Piero's guiltless justification for his action as an effect of his conspirators' scheming, Machiavelli writes that to a leader, plots, "perché queste, con lo esemplo loro, gli danno cagione di temere, il temere di assicurarsi, l'assicurarsi di ingiuriare: donde ne nascono gli odii, di poi, e molte volte la sua rovina. E così queste congiure opprimono subito chi le muove, e quello contro a chi le son mosse in ogni modo con il tempo offendono" (VIII.1). The slippage between *congiurare* and *ingiuriare* painfully lays bare the emotionally-driven domino effect that incites the (potential) *savio*'s ruin, as the former act sets an example for the latter one; or rather, it offers a detailed close-up of historical decline and the quickness with which it barrels through whatever meek attempts a *savio* puts forth to stop it. For example, when Cosimo de' Medici decides to wed his niece Bianca to Gugliemo Pazzi, his son, Lorenzo, inherits a chain, already set in motion, of emotion-filled responses that snowball to become the Pazzi Conspiracy; Machiavelli opines, "Non di meno, tanto sono i disegni nostri incerti e fallaci, la cosa procedette altrimenti," and from Lorenzo's following counsel that advised against lavishing his in-laws, "fece che a messer Iacopo e a' nipoti non erano conceduti quegli gradi di onore che a loro, secondo gli altri cittadini, pareva meritare: da qui nacque ne' Pazzi il primo sdegno e ne' Medici il primo timore, e l'uno di questi che cresceva dava materia all'altro di crescere (VIII.2). That *sdegno* and *timore* grow hand-in-hand, as each effects the other's escalation, affirms the weakness intent-driven

judgment propagates, inextricable from its subjects' *umori*; but also, as the word *materia* implies, this pairing elucidates the core focus of Machiavelli's historical trajectory and the responsibility he assumes as historian, namely to circumscribe the vacuum, which was created in the absence of *ordine* (order) and *ordini* (laws), with detailed descriptions of the chaos that ensues, as no individual can avert the subsequent decline.

Lorenzo survives the Pazzi's attempt on his life, despite his mistaken judgment that their *sdegno* had not yet reached the point to incite such a fear in him.[22] He delivers a powerful oration, for which Machiavelli employs free direct-discourse, decrying that the true victim of the *congiura* is the entire body politic, "'perché dovevono offendere chi offendeva loro, e non confundere le inimicizie private con le ingiurie publiche; il che fa che, spenti loro, il male nostro è più vivo, venendoci, alle loro cagioni, il Papa e il Re a trovare con le armi'" (VIII.10). The sudden distinction Lorenzo draws between "le inimicizie private" and "le ingiurie publiche" only functions rhetorically, heightening the criticism he levels at his conspirators. However their alleged confusion of this critical difference belies the systemized confusion that has plagued all politics (and politicians) with mutable, unwieldy *umori*. Indeed, the similarity between the Pazzi and Lorenzo, as scorn and fear grow in tandem, Lorenzo himself confirms, yet, like Piero before him, his phrasing deflects blame; Lorenzo states, "'Ma perché sempre le ingiurie che i potenti fanno con qualche meno disonesto colore le ricuoprono, eglino hanno preso questo modo a ricoprire questa disonesta ingiuria loro'" (VIII.10). The equivalence between him and his conspirators is the effect of the *ingiuriosa congiura*, which has lifted the veil that would otherwise have separated private *inimicizie* from the public. Still, Lorenzo's rhetorical admission implicates him nonetheless as it recalls the cycle Machiavelli noted in the first chapter of Book VIII: "e quello contro a chi le son mosse in ogni modo con il tempo offendono" (1). Fittingly, the *Istorie* ends with the death of Lorenzo. Machiavelli, within the restrictions of his Medici commissioners, turns again to the interpretation of nature, and under the guise of mourning, he delivers his final charge:

> E come dalla sua morte ne dovesse nascere grandissime rovine ne mostrò il
> cielo molti evidentissimi segni: intra i quali, l'altissima sommità del
> tempio di Santa Reparata fu da uno fulmine con tanta furia percossa, che
> gran parte di quel pinnacolo rovinò, con stupore e maraviglia di ciascuno.
> […] Ma se quelli avessero cagione giusta di dolersi, lo dimostrò poco di
> poi lo effetto; perché, restata Italia priva del consiglio suo, non si trovò
> modo, per quegli che rimasono, né di empiere né di frenare l'ambizione di
> Lodovico Sforza, governatore del duca di Milano. Per la quale, subito

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[22] Repeating the direct relationship between *sdegno* and *timore* from the book's opening chapter, Machiavelli writes, "Sapevano Giuliano e Lorenzo lo acerbo animo de' Pazzi contra di loro, e come eglino desideravano di torre loro l'autorità dello stato, ma non temevono già della vita, come quelli che credevano che, quando pure eglino avessero a tentare cosa alcuna, civilmente e non con tanta violenza lo avessero a fare; e per ciò anche loro, non avendo cura alla propria salute, di essere loro amici simulavano" (VIII.6).

> morto Lorenzo cominciorono a nascere quegli cattivi semi i quali, non
> dopo molto tempo, non sendo vivo chi gli sapesse spegnere, rovinorono, e
> ancora rovinano, la Italia (VIII.36).

The "molti evidentissimi segni," including the tree struck down by lightning, confirm
their intended meaning through their "effetto," namely the unbridled ambition of
Ludovico Sforza, among others. Lorenzo's singularity Machiavelli emphasizes indirectly,
through his incapable ("non si trovò modo, per quegli che rimasono") and absent ("non
sendo vivo chi gli sapesse spegnere") successors, but the scope of his greatness Machiavelli
more directly undermines, for Lorenzo was neither the sole sower of "quegli cattivi semi"
nor their destroyer, even if Florentine society, as a product of its historical decisions,
needed such a redeemer. Ironically preceded by death, birth ("nascere") repeats, paired
together with ruin, thus in this final paragraph where the natural life cycle seems inverted
or even perverted, Machiavelli affirms his interpretive task as historian: to reveal and
demonstrate the supersession of the individual as history's focus in favor of the patterns of
ordini and *disordini* that human minds and their emotionally-driven decisions repeat over
time.

3. Discussions of Machiavelli and Vico on Humanness: Theorizing the Practice of
    Making and Knowing History

It is clear, particularly in the nonexistent portrayal of his cycle's upswing, that
Machiavelli presents less of a systematized, totalizing vision of history in his *Istorie* than
Vico in his *Scienza nuova*. Each successive book of the *Istorie* builds from and magnifies
descriptions of emotionally-charged individuals who run amok and, in the absence of
laws, misuse arms to damage their enemies and thus dismantle the integrity of their
shared state. By the work's end, Machiavelli narrates a dilation of ruinous effects, a far cry
from the type of interpretive resolution history, as a narrative and science in Vico, might
suggest; but Machiavelli also presents a definitive view of the individual's position vis-à-
vis history, namely its diminished sphere of influence, singly, yet collectively suggestive of
a still-to-be-met political need that results from a succession of human decisions. As
scholars John Najemy and Mark Jurdjevic, for example, have noted, Machiavelli allocates
civic institutions to fulfill such a need, entities whose decisions are, unlike those of its
participants, less susceptible to human desires. Even so, the *Istorie*, when read on its own
and not alongside the *Discorso delle cose fiorentine*, exemplifies the many and perpetual
errors in thought of individuals as well as their effects in cities without laws, and it is
Machiavelli's representations of people as history that Vico aims his criticism.

The discussion above has shown, however, that the very individual-oriented focus
of the *Istorie* betrays Machiavelli's belief in its failure as a historical subject; in fact, such a
focus is indicative of the confusion over the politics Italians lack, a systemic fault that is,
according to Machiavelli, symptomatic of the historiographical tradition's limits, with its

emphasis on *savi* and not the historical circumstances that would condition the need for one.[23] Therefore, the aim of the following discussion is to not simply to show that Vico's historical actors are Machiavellian subjects, but rather that the position Vico assumes of correcting his Florentine predecessor and his history-making process belies the epistemological failings of the *Istorie*'s individuals, especially in their dependence on a single redeemer. Moreover, the Neapolitan's objections have less to do with the fact that the *Istorie* only implicitly valorizes laws, but that in it, Machiavelli explicitly presents no way to employ them, and from the imposition of an overarching historical scheme throughout the *Scienza nuova*, Vico brings to the fore what Machiavelli leaves hidden— that the historian's interpretive and representational tasks are inextricable from the development and execution of the law.

Victoria Kahn, in *Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts*, asserts that the manner in which restrictions to "human self-fashioning and self-determination" are figured is significant to understanding how individuals perceive and relate themselves to the natural world, contingency, and "some principle of authority […] for a functioning state" (6). Kahn cites what is known to Vico as the *verum-factum* principle, that "we can know only what we have made or constructed ourselves," in order to emphasize its inclusion of such limits, which are decidedly out of the bounds of human knowledge or control; for example, "that human beings do not create the world they come into" (6). While her primary focus is on the principle's wider implications on Early Modern configurations of and intersections between theology and politics, Kahn acknowledges Vico and Machiavelli's shared "notion of *poiesis*" that acts as their platform to "provide powerful meditations on what it means artfully to construct the world of human interaction and political order" (6). For both, history is the means by which such meditations occur as the narration of historical moments evidences the interrelationship between humanity's creative and political impulses. Kahn, in her book, seemingly builds from an earlier argument that she presented in the essay, "Habermas, Machiavelli, and the Humanist Critique of Ideology," in which she draws out the ideological undertones behind humanism's attitude toward and treatment of history; from humanists' dual interest in the past for its own sake and for its relative dis/similarity with the present, she identifies the humanist "notion of practical rather than theoretical reason and that the criterion of this practical reasons seems to have been justified […] by faith that such reason exists" (470). The coexistence of "rationale critique of ideology and the practical arbitration of conflicting but equally valid demands" manifests itself in Machiavelli in the ways in which he "analyzes the political consequences of the truism that what is to be virtuous (ethical) will not always turn out to be so in practice" (472, 470). History,

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[23] Machiavelli's decision to shift the starting point of his history (compared to those of his predecessors') is precisely to account for the circumstances at play that lead him, at the end of Book III, to conclude the *savio* as a conditioned effect of the trajectory of Florentine history. Only then can he properly interpret and represent Florence's past.

therefore, becomes a tool for the present, which wills into being and legitimizes parameters on action, as per the demands of praxis. The acknowledgement that the present is a product of the historical past, despite the ideological priority given to the now, nevertheless shows how this play with time ties together Machiavelli and Vico in their respective history-making.

Hayden White, offering a more rhetoric-based theorization of history, characterizes the temporal displacement between historian and history as resulting in the "historian's Irony" (*Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* 375). Like Kahn who noted that the humanist marks the distance between himself and the object of his study (the past) with precise interests in order to effect a certain praxis, White believes that an irony-producing skepticism, a result of the historian's characterization of a similar distance, engenders a specific critical posture, one that enables the historian to glean truths from "a collection of documents"; White explains, "he [the historian] must assume that the documents [of historical record] mean something other than what they say or that they are saying something other than what they mean, and that he can distinguish between saying and meaning, or there would be no point in his writing a history" (*Metahistory* 375). The "historian's Irony" is thus "a tactical tool" that may inscribe the resulting narrative or facilitate its evolution in style however White is quick to expand this "methodological element" into "an Ironic (or, if one wishes, a skeptical) attitude, not only with respect to the historical record, but with respect to the whole enterprise of the historian as well" (378). The latter position recognizes the ever-present limit to history-making in general, that "the whole historiographical enterprise may still be undergirt by unacknowledged presuppositions or assumptions," which may impinge on a historical narrative's "critical attitude with respect to itself" (378). Kahn's interpretation of Machiavelli may be seen as the Florentine capitalizing on such underground, invisible intentions or forces for strategic (political) ends; but White's distinction between the two types of irony due to writing and theorizing history helps elucidate the different postures that Machiavelli and Vico must assume, specifically as respective historiographers of the *Istorie* and *Scienza nuova*.

In an article comparing Machiavelli and Vico, James Morrison seems to conflate the poetical thrust of the *verum-factum* principle with how historical writing engages with theoretical and practical urges. He argues that "Machiavelli's teaching concerning the relation between knowing and making and theory and practice differs profoundly from Vico's" because "Machiavelli radically *inverts* the relationship between philosophical theory and political practice by placing theory in the service of practice" ("Vico and Machiavelli" 3). Morrison, in a move echoing Kahn's claim above, states that Machiavelli "endeavors to find in theory a basis for a secure and effective practice," distinguishing between what "is true for all times" and "what ought to be done at a particular time" (3). As a consequence, Machiavelli articulates laws and their function in the running of a state under a different core premise than Vico does, a distinction that Morrison attributes to Machiavelli's valorization of "customary law (*legge*)" and Vico's of "natural law (*diritto naturale*)"; in other words, the difference between "whether a law exists prior to and

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independent of men's actions [natural law], or whether all law is the product of human doing and making [customary law]" (5). Morrison further explains that, despite the thinkers' shared interest to document the state in its varying degrees of development ("the high in the low") and thereby basing their political and philosophical views on history, Machiavelli never wavers from humanity's priority in a praxis, which is dictated by "the same passions and desires at all times and places" that do not, unlike Vico's subjects' thoughts and emotions, evolve (and devolve) over time (10). Machiavelli thus offers a restricted portrait of man compared to the totalizing—"political and social"—view Vico displays, yet Morrison's observations only cursorily identify the lines of potential differences and commonalities, rendered all the more generalized by the lack of textual evidence. Still, his focus on laws rightly pinpoints the central pivot on which any comparison between Machiavelli and Vico must hinge.

Marco Vanzulli, in "La soglia invalicabile della politica su Machiavelli e Vico," deduces from the two thinkers' praise of ancient Rome and their quest to theorize from its governing virtues that "il fallimento di Vico era già stato il fallimento di Machiavelli," namely that "il problema non è la definizione scientifica della politica, piuttosto la politica non si fa governare dalla scienza in ciò che le è essenziale, la determinazione dell'azione politica e della sua necessità" (6-7). Unlike Morrison, Vanzulli recognizes in Vico's *Scienza nuova* the same human nature that Machiavelli articulates in his entire *oeuvre*, and for politics to be a science, society, and history, Vico must resort to the stratification of all four entities. Vanzulli explains how Machiavelli's *Discorsi* already anticipate a similar scheme, writing that:

> lo sfasamento tra teoria e pratica dipende dalla molteplicità dei soggetti interagenti in una determinata congiuntura, sempre in bilico verso un nuovo equilibrio, ove tutti i soggetti possono determinarsi all'azione in vari modi, rendendo, da una parte, possibile il quadro teorico retrospettivo delle alternative e del giudizio storico-politico, ma rendendo, dall'altra parte, alquanto arduo stabilire *in fieri* il peso politico-*effettivo* dei soggetti prima che la situazione critica non si sia sciolta, ma tenendo comunque per principio un esito non necessario, in sense stretto non prevedibile (8).

Law, as a result, "è la migliore mediatrice" because, for both Machiavelli and Vico, Vanzulli claims that "la politica non può […] guardare al di fuori di sé per trovare la propria unità teorico-pratica" and, as such, must take on the role of "*conservatio*—il mantenimento o il ripristino" of the status quo, even in spite of the fact that it is subject "al cambiamento culturale e all'azione di forze politiche che assumono diverse valenze e che vanno intese nella loro relazione" (8). Vanzulli therefore contends that the comparison between Machiavelli and Vico reveals their shared struggle to figure the problem of political stability in theoretical terms, according to "la scienza delle nazioni e la teoria del buon governo"; this problem, which seemingly cannot escape practical exigencies, rather than being resolved is transformed as both history and politics embrace, in the thinkers' articulations of them, a sort of *filosofia della prassi*, to use Vanzulli's term, "cioè un pensiero in grado di elaborare una diversa teorizzazione dell'ordinamento sociale

più *stabile* e più *equo* attraverso la composizione dei motivi dinamici e processuali" (9, 10). Thus, the way to embrace contingencies is to incorporate them methodologically as socio-cultural attributes intrinsic to the development of politics and history.

4.   Critical Overview of Laws in the *Scienza nuova* [Books Four and Five]

        Insofar as Machiavelli conceives the *Istorie* as a historiographical critique whose end is to also critique the politics it depicts, acutely making plain the limits of individuals as its subjects and actors, Vico in the *Scienza nuova* mobilizes this dual intent to the service of his epistemologically-determined and cyclical vision of time. Silvio Suppa, in *"Diritto e politica nella scienza vichiana,"* notes that Vico distinguishes between jurisprudence and politics in order to foreground his primary dialectic "fra storia ed eternità" and thus recreate the past in the present, reconciling the mutability of his subject with the fixed, theoretical scheme organizing it; in other words, Suppa explains, "La combinazione fra storia ed eternità, che è la chiave propriamente vichiana della ricostruzione critica del moderno, nel dialogo fra diritto e politica istituisce un decisivo strumento di ricostruzione del passato e di verifica del presente," thereby gauging "l'adeguatezza dell'intero sistema del tempo presente, rispetto all'irresistibile insorgenza di una nuova deontologia che la correlazione fra mutevolezza della storia e costanza della filosofia domanda" ("Diritto e politica" 157). Vico is, according to Suppa, working from the varied sixteenth and seventeenth century opinions on "la ragion di Stato," namely "il nesso problematico fra oggettività del diritto e mutevolezza della politica" as it determines civic order, which presents itself in Vico's thought as a two-pronged "indagine, una critica e l'altra propositiva": Suppa clarifies, "La prima corrisponde ad un confronto con la filosofia dei *veteres*, recuperati al ruolo della critica e della deontologia, fra retorica, *exempla* e senso della *respublica*; la seconda si misura invece con la scienza dei moderni e con il tema della sovranità" (160). The overlapping of two different investigative frameworks, from past and present, testifies to Vico's intended focus on jurisprudence and politics, especially his recognition of the "l'importanza della dimensione materiale della vita," a representative "segno dell'attualità e della normalità del rapporto fra bisogno individuale e ordine" (161). The overt nod to Machiavellian human nature Vico reinforces in the role laws play to mitigate individual *umori* and "frenare ogni interpretazione arbitraria della giustizia ed ogni forma di legittimazione all'agire priva di fondamenti di oggettività" (161). Suppa interprets Vico's "esordio passionale del bisogno," despite its irreverence toward and disinterest in the social good, as a "possibile viatico, se assistito da una giusta coscienza e dal ruolo dell'ordine, ad una vita civile più autentica, e persino ad uno Stato più forte e durevole," an attempt to overcome the all-too-familiar "connessione fra la mutevolezza dei segni della prassi politica, se separata dai suoi compiti di disciplinamento e di realizzazione di scopi universali, e il sussidio 'filosofico' del diritto" (163). Because Vico ascribes these individual urges within the

realm of the *certo*, he re-invokes the problematic dialectic between theory and practice, but not under condemnatory terms.[24]

Therefore, Suppa contends that Vico objects to Machiavelli on the grounds of the Florentine's resolute surrendering to contingency, furthermore explaining how, for Vico, "il trittico Epicuro-Machiavelli-Hobbes […] soffre dell'uniforme debolezza di considerare del tutto casuali gli atti della politica, secondo un atteggiamento mentale da opportunismo, o addirittura egoismo, più che da universalismo filosofico nell'esercizio del potere" ("Diritto e politica" 168). However Suppa is quick to note that Vico's innovation in articulating jurisprudence's place in politics depends on, regardless of his vociferous critique, a "consapevolezza machiavelliana del ruolo delle leggi," and that individual interests alone cannot contribute to societal unity the way they can when paired with those of the public (175). Suppa writes, "L'interesse individuale possiede un carattere 'naturale' [in Vico], che lo instaura in modo irreversibile all'interno di un'idea giuridico-politica dell'ordine, quasi a rivelare la ponderazione e l'equilibrio di una scienza civile riportata al doppio codice di politica (cioè Stato), e diritto (cioè individuo regolato)" (176). In other words, Suppa maintains that Vico effects a "giuridificazione dei rapporti sociali" not only to curb and redirect individual will towards the common good, but to systematize it within the confines of a redefined state reason, one that productively works with contingent, material forces (178).

While Suppa's argument revolves around how Vico neutralizes the destructiveness of the individual and his desires to the integrity of the state, he does so exclusively by means of a practical theorization of law, that is, the individual's subordination to the will of the State, over and across time. In contrast, Nancy Struever perceives that any attempt to combat contingency and critique political attempts to control it is a byproduct of rhetoric and historiography's proximity to mutability, drawing a "relation of the rhetorical view of language to a historical view of event" (*The Language of History in the Renaissance* 16). Indeed, by comparing ancient Greek historians and Sophists with Italian humanists from the fifteenth century, she claims that "a change of language habits forces change in historical attitudes," especially in how political actions and decisions are judged and who assumes this role as judge; therefore "the Humanists' re-creation of the self-conscious purpose and public role of the rhetorician both militates against philosophical or religious withdrawal and helps make possible a methodic 'saving of the phenomena' and thus a saving of history" (39). Struever believes, then, that the writing of history reflects, in its language, the anxieties and efforts to glean meaning from events otherwise senseless in the absence of a stable, overarching theory, and for her, the writer of history, while rescued by humanists to become an essential commentator of politics, nonetheless

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[24] Suppa locates Vico's method and subject matter as resting between "da un lato vi è il nesso fra Platone e Tacito, dall'altro il rapporto fra la formalizzazione gius-romanistica della legge, e il giusnaturalismo moderno, secondo il modello elaborato da Grozio e variamente ripreso dagli interpreti successivi" (164).

remains peripheral to the daily functioning of a state. Without elaborating further, she names Vico as the culmination of such a trend that acknowledges the significance of rhetoric to the lessons of history (65).

It is in her essay, "The Impersonal in Vico: 'The Classical endures because it's impersonal,'" that Struever delves into the particulars of how Vico informs the construction of history with a specific, legal rhetoric, suggesting that his rhetorical stance of impersonality "uses civil inquiry to replace moral inquiry" (334). She equates the corporeal with corporate, noting that "Vico's interests in civil history are genetic, seeking the birth […] of all civil phenomena, jurisdictions, justice, arms," and as a result, he intends to explicate "the continuity of law" as well as "the identity of the polity" by superseding the methodological lens of the individual (326).[25] Donald Verene has made a similar argument for the resonances impersonality has on the theoretical claims Vico elaborates on history in the *Scienza nuova*. In fact, Verene in "Vico's Vita" outlines the ways in which his *Autobiografia* "reflects Vico's claim in the *Scienza nuova* that fables were the first form of human thought and they embodied the first truths," and thus preparing the *Scienza nuova* to be "the autobiography of the human race, told as an objective account"; Verene explains, "If Vico can present his own life as a cycle of providential events, he has verification of his history or science of humanity" (140). Furthermore, by looking to the manner in which Vico concludes his *Autobiografia*, detailing his teaching as a professor of rhetoric, Verene concludes, "Vico's science is based on rhetoric in the sense that the principles of rhetoric must guide the presentation of a legal case in order to secure the truth" as "rhetoric […] is the key to jurisprudence" (141). Impersonality therefore evidences rhetoric's closer proximity to the law than to the individual, displacing the source of its truth claims from the one to the many.

In his book, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe*, David Marshall argues that "Vico is sublimating rhetoric by taking law as a very precise record of collisions between […] the reciprocity of orator and auditor […] and the complex tissue of precedents past and future that have been or will be incorporated into the law as written signs" (156-157). What this means, as Marshall cites Vico's *Il diritto universale* (1720-22), is that "the language of the law […] may be framed in an impersonal way that purports to render justices blind, but in fact the law is nothing more than the expression of the interests of those who have the power to make legal pronouncements" (166). Vico criticizes Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza for their skepticism in regard to laws' scope and ideological impartiality when in fact their doubt points to "the peculiar quality of legal pronouncements […] that they outlive the

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[25] Struever ascribes Vico's "stigmatization of solitude" as indicative of the shift away from the individual in Vico's mode of inquiry, citing two concepts from the *Scienza nuova* that are closely tied to the individual and to civic decline; she writes, "Both the solitude of sense of barbarism and the solitude of the barbarism of reflection constitute non-civil space; it is solitude as personal possession of a pure, simple space, a habitation of a single agent, and disallows the civil" ("The Impersonal in Vico" 333).

purposes that prompted them" therefore "even if the powerful speak in the most perfectly bad faith, their utterances can be taken seriously at a later date" (167). Thus Vico subverts these thinkers' skeptical drive "[to unmask] the interests behind ostensibly disinterested articulations of the just" by affirming that the fundamental nature of laws means their value will always exceed their superficial appearance because history transforms them, just as for Vico "the gods of antiquity themselves become symbols of different ways in which the community can be said to be deliberately with itself" (169). Marshall further explains, noting how rhetoric in Vico is characteristic of "the ongoing field of legal inquiry," not "a preceptive art of persuasion" or "a theorization of society's form of disputation"; consequently "in the *Scienza nuova*, the law becomes a model for a kind of social system that has potent but unconscious powers of recall, that inscribes the precise terms of discord into the community's chief public possession—language" (174). Rhetoric as "legal inquiry" displaces its interlocutors—"orator and auditor"—at different historical moments, transforming laws into archives of societal conflicts, resolved and then overcome, that the present can reveal. The knowledge uncovered is, as Marshall contends, "a phenomenology of social transactions," so that through the law, a "society possesses [the tool] for representing the community to itself in all its historical complexity," and the representational essence of the law is experiential, not logical (191). According to Marshall, Vico phrases the potential incongruence of laws to the present as an interpretive problem that is overcome because laws, however foreign they may seem, are already and have always been of the same community as products of the same history of experiences, recorded through changes in language.

Unlike Marshall and his primarily rhetorical lens, Donald Verene offers a wider interpretation of Vico's articulation of laws and its centrality to the *Scienza*'s historical writing; in his book, *Knowledge of Things Human and Divine: Vico's* New Science *and* Finnegan's Wake, he summarizes the crux of Vico's position, writing:

> Nations develop in history, and the law is part of their pattern of development. Law is not a universal sublime that is the same at all times and places. Nor is law a matter of contract or covenant. Law is a human thing that is tied to the meaning and conditions of all other human things. Vico is seeking a sense of the universality of law […] that will not dissolve law into the abstract, philosophical ideal of 'natural law' or 'natural rights.' Vico also does not dissolve law into the politics of particular nations at particular times. For Vico, law understood in this way is not truly law. Indeed, the dissolution of law into legal activity in the sense of making law be whatever we interpret it to be is a sign of what in the *New Science* Vico calls the 'barbarism of reflection.' Law must be connected to the true (127).

Verene, in reading Vico's earlier works on Roman law [*De antiquissima Italorum sapientia ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda libri tres* (1710); *Il diritto universale* (1720-22)], concludes therefore that three "senses of the law" ground his dialectic between the *verum* and the *certum* and thus determine the breadth of human knowability: *ius naturale, ius*

civile, and *ius gentium* (130). The difference between ideal and practical law that natural and civil law respectively signify Vico historicizes alongside the law of the *gentes*, which represents the original customs of any people. Yet Vico, in opposition to his contemporary natural law theorists (for example, Grotius, Selden, Pufendorf) who "accept a divine cause for the world, and regard natural law as in accordance with God" but who nevertheless "fail to understand the role of providence," rejects "an ideal based upon reason" for "a law by which the nations actually develop the order of their life" (196-197). Verene clarifies that Vico conceives in response a *ius naturale gentium*, which again firmly bases theory on historical experience, "connecting the idea of natural law with the idea of repetition in history and by connecting this idea with the idea of providence," as "providence is God's existence in history" (201). According to Verene, Vico's innovation rests in the preservation of experience-based differences in law, sanctioning their validity as a source of knowledge by means of the "ideal" and "eternal" patterns, which dictate the repeating cycle of "any nation's life [stages]," in whatever specific form and/or at whatever specific rate that may be (201).

Giuseppe Mazzotta elaborates further on the ways in which the *Scienza nuova*, particularly Book IV, evidences the connection between law and knowledge across history, noting how Vico's "triadic units" relate "the three stages of history's institutional forms" with three "different ways of thinking, which, in turn, express themselves as different social and symbolic forms" (*New Map of the World* 163). Ultimately, Mazzotta writes, Vico "shows that there are three kinds of nature, of natural law, of civil states or commonwealths, languages, jurisprudence, authority, and reason […], which ceaselessly repeat themselves," yet are united under Providence, the motor behind "this world of nations"; as a result, Vico equates "*ratio* as *law*," making law "the secure foundation for overcoming the political disintegration engendered by the self-interest dominant in the modern age" (163-164). That Vico acknowledges the individual's destructiveness to political entities, which nevertheless shift according to a providential will, and attributes to law the responsibility to attenuate it, Mazzotta ideologically locates the Neapolitan between the divinely sanctioned justice of natural law theorists Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf, and the utilitarian justice of thinkers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza (164). Yet Mazzotta's primary aim is to argue that Vico turns his focus from the interpretation of laws and its resulting difficulties "to work out a new conception of science or philosophy appropriate to the reality of man's historical existence, wherein all truths are historically conditioned"; laws necessarily predate philosophy, and their precedence signals, according to Mazzotta, that Vico "establishes philosophy as political metadiscourse" to critique "the foundation of the theories of natural law, the state of nature, and the moral virtues" (171, 183). In other words, Vico shares with Machiavelli the realization of "the unavoidable ambiguities of political discourse" as well as "the biology of politics" that compels recourse to an outside force as its rationale for change. Mazzotta juxtaposes Machiavelli's "blindfolded, erratic Fortune," who "wages war against and finally overcomes man's virtue," with Vico's Providence, "whose peculiarity is to work at odds with man's own destructive impulses and whose workings lie outside man's

range of vision" (252-253). From Vico's reversal of Machiavellian Fortune, Mazzotta concludes that the *Scienza nuova*, in the end, equates politics and theology, casting history and the knowledge it archives under a new, typological scheme.[26]

It appears, however, that Mazzotta's argument veers too far from the many detailed parts of human (legal) life that constitute the entire *Scienza nuova* in favor of the totalizing whole that Vico most clearly envisions at the work's end. Bruce Haddock explains the danger of such prioritization, writing that "though he [Vico] refers repeatedly to God's eternal order, his principal concern through the *Scienza nuova* is not to give a rational justification of God's plan but rather to account for the order which can be discerned in the emerging customs of men" (*Vico's Political Thought* 194).[27] Haddock continues, "Just how far the transcendent and immanent conceptions of providence are compatible, and indeed whether or not Vico's argument could be restated in purely secular terms, is among the most text questions in Vichian scholarship (194). For Haddock, who provides a lucid summary of how Vico's ideation of the law in history innovates from the legal positions of his contemporaries, the *Scienza nuova* explicates a new purpose for political philosophy, that is, "not to answer substantive questions about political life but to establish the framework in which particular arguments make sense"; for example, "instead of designating discrete spheres for the *jus naturale* and the *jus civile*, Vico maintained that the ends of *jus naturale* are in fact fulfilled through the *jus civile*" (200, 85). Any theory must depend on its historical actualization as Vico's "treatment of political ideas was a corollary of his larger reconstruction of the genesis of modes of thought" (202). Therefore, as Haddock explains, because "in 'making' civil institutions, men were thus contributing to the moulding of their own characters, [...] it was through the study of history that they could form an idea of what they were and what they could be" (202). Haddock argues that, through history, Vico finds a way to harmonize contingency and the theoretical inviolability of his science.

In his essay, "Vico's Theory of the Causes of Historical Change," Leon Pompa similarly foregrounds Vico's historically-placed legal theory, noting "a genuine resemblance between Vico's views and the theories of Natural Law and Social Contract schools" in that "men require [...] a legally structured social context" (9).[28] Despite this

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[26] For a similarly eschatological reading of the *Scienza nuova*, see Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, particularly pages 123-135.

[27] For a more succinct version of the arguments and observations Haddock details in his book, see his article "Heroes and the Law: Vico on the Foundations of Political Order."

[28] Pompa defines both Social Contract and Natural Law theorists as offering two different explanations for the formation of society. While both schools recognize society as a means to protect human life and secure rights, Social Contract theorists attribute its establishment to a fear-guided agreement (as man by nature is destructive and avaricious) and Natural Law theorists, to the inevitable fulfillment of an innate tendency. Rights, therefore, are either determined through the subjugation to an authority figure, or recognized as essential to all men equally. For a more detailed comparison of Vico and his contemporaries, see John D. Schaeffer's article, "Vico's

basic commonality, Vico pinpoints insurmountable deficiencies in both schools of thought; "the social contract theorists had gone wrong because they failed to realize how totally dependent man's abilities were on his social background and had tried to explain the social background by reference to some mythical prior abilities"; and regarding the natural law theorists, "Vico rejected the whole idea that man had inalienable rights and that man always had the faculty of reason which enabled him to distinguish what these rights were" (10). Pompa concludes that "Vico rejected both these conceptions because they failed to take into account not just the fact that man is socially conditioned but that he is historically conditioned" (11). In the development of society, Vico privileges the development of man therefore, as Pompa identifies the evolution from "communal" to "individual," he illustrates how Vico correlates the epistemological growth of man to his perception of a society so defined by either schools of natural law or social contract; Pompa writes that "at the very moment when men appeared capable of setting up the perfectly organized society, one based upon reason and not imagination, man's vices would reassert themselves and begin to undermine his socially conditioned behavior" (14). Thus attempts to safeguard humanity from a state of nature though the formation of society depend on forces prior to reason or reasoned choice, which can in fact precipitate the very instability they seek to avoid. Moreover, Vico, by contrasting his theories with those of his contemporaries, bestows upon the historian the task to force political philosophers to see beyond their frame of reference and understand the true causes of change as transhistorical, not individual.

Marco Vanzulli, in "Leggi e conflitto sociale in Giambattista Vico," synthesizes Pompa's argument on Vico's novelty, specifically focusing on the law's conciliatory role in society; he explains that the law is "*il medium* attraverso cui il sociale e il politico s'incontrano" because it intersects "la natura razionale dell'uomo" and "l'ordine 'eterno' che si ravvisa nelle cose civili" as an "elemento tendenzialmente parificatore nel senso dell'equità" (2). Vanzulli echoes Pompa's interpretation of how history, for Vico, plays a central role as mediator between the knowledge of legal practices and the establishment of civic duties, yet Vanzulli's argument primarily deals with the law "nella sua migliore espressione," namely in conflict resolution as an equalizing means, and he thereby introduces a prevalent thread in the studies of the *Scienza nuova*'s final two books (4). For example, in "Vichian Normative Political Theory: History and Human Nature," David Edward Rose compares the reasons behind society's acceptance of laws according to two theories: because these laws reflect values either held to be universal and true ("liberalism"); or because these values are already conditioned by and derived from the

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Counter-Enlightenment Theory of Natural Law," wherein he explains how "Vico's attitude [toward natural law] is that it is a product of a historical process that had a particular myth of origin, but a process that employed the religious and rhetorical resources of a certain *sensus comunis* in a long historical, political, and cultural development, to a arrive at rational (and ultimately secular) standards of equity" (105).

political system they are said to determine ("social thesis") (76). Through this comparison, Rose intends to demonstrate Vico's affinity to social thesis ideals and thus rephrase the basis of his difference from Cartesianism as "not an expression of anti-scientism but the implicit embodiment of a central distinction between two orders of knowledge: *il vero* (the intelligible) and *il certo* (the certain)"; as a consequence, Vico rejects epistemic reasoning in favor of a dual branched knowledge of the *verum-factum* principle, and also rejects moral realism since "ethical assertions are expressions of values and obligations determined by the social structure one inhabits" (80-82). History, Rose contends, affords Vico "not the clarity of certainty, but the ideal of intelligibility" to structure how the world shapes man into reason rather than how man reasons *a priori* the world (80). Therefore, the philosophy of history Vico depicts in the *Scienza nuova* is neither metaphysical (in the absence of teleology), nor empirical (in the need to offer "more than a mere explanatory law"), but hermeneutical as Vico informs and enriches his theoretical framework of "ideal eternal history" with the unveiled knowledge from practical historical examples (Rose 88-89). Ultimately, Rose argues that "the social critic" enables readers to understand the continued relevance of Vico's science by isolating and extrapolating onto contemporary society two of his claims: "that interference in other cultures and societies cannot be on our own terms, but must be on theirs (that is, values consistent with their way of life)"; and "that the laws and institutions of one's own way of life are consistent with the ideal of one's phase of history" (91). Rose sees in Vico an anticipatory critique of "cultural imperialism" and recognizes that any social change, reflected in the update of laws, must derive internally from society's artificiality because "it is society that supplies the substance to desires and human nature alone that give them their formal structure" (96). In other words, society depends on itself to effect change through its citizens who reflect the degree to which its form is or is no longer suitable.

Gianfrancesco Zanetti similarly acknowledges the contemporary resonances to Vico's *Scienza nuova*, particularly in regards to the relationship between state and citizen. As his book *Vico eversivo* outlines, Zanetti isolates "il tema dell'eguaglianza, anzi delle eguaglianze" as typifying Vico's characterization of governmental forms and, like Rose, Zanetti foregrounds the institutional determinism of human nature (25). He explains, "Vico ha idee molto chiare sulle base civili e sull'evoluzione dell'istituzione famiglia, che perfino nel nome (famiglia da 'famigli,' ovvero schiavi sottomessi) mostra il suo fondamento non-naturalistico, non sentimentale, ma storico e istituzionale (una storia, beninteso, voluta dalla Provvidenza)" (27). Zanetti argues for the acknowledgment, in the *Scienza nuova*, of a base human nature, which in its singularity advocates a fundamental equality among all men yet, because it is continually misinterpreted, results in the formation of governments with foundational inequalities; he cites the example of the first fathers who "erroneamente ritenevano la propria natura d'origine divina" (33). It is, however, during conflictual moments (between "patrizi e plebie" for example) when "la diseguaglianza" forces the recognition of similarity that Zanetti perceives the *Scienza* as documenting the actualization of "equality as a policy goal," distinct from its realization intellectually as a base property (37). Zanetti clarifies that the dialectic between societal

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equality and inequality is at the core of Vico's historical cycle insofar as each can "presentarsi non come il punto di partenza ma come il punto di arrivo, non il presupposto bensì l'esito, non l'*input* epistemico ma l'*output* pratico, non la causa ma l'effetto di fatti istituzionali, culturali, morali e pratici"(40). Therefore because he terms the development of normative practices around in/equality, Vico, according to Zanetti, demonstrates an intellectual relativism towards human nature, and its dependence on the processes of history raises prescient questions on the relativism of qualities as either natural or institutionally-determined goals.

Like Vanzulli and Zanetti, Rebecca Collins grapples with the overarching implications of Vico's historicization and seeks to elucidate their continued applicability with the help of contemporary theory. In "An Ontological Constructionist Interpretation of Vico's Philosophy of History," Collins deviates from the what she views is a popular tendency, that is, to "interpret [the *Scienza nuova*] as maintaining a realist conception of history," defined according to Leon Goldstein's specifications as the measure of "the real past as it was when it was being lived" against which all historical accounts "test for truth or falsify the products of historical construction" (34). For Collins, Vico himself does not subscribe to this theory as he instead maintains through his *verum-factum* principle that "regardless of the methodological possibility of uncovering the past, the past as it was could never be known due to the modifications of the mind through time"; as a result, Collins believes that "any charge of relativism fails to be problematic for Vico's theory of history when it is interpreted as being constructionist" (34, 43). The recognition of the past's unique historical contexts substantiates the need for Vico's science, but it also returns to the function and longevity of laws.

In *Le muse, le maschere e il sublime: Giambattista Vico e la poesia nell'età della 'ragione spiegata'*, Massimo Lollini recapitulates the knowability of Vico's history; he writes, "Lungi dall'approdare al relativismo culturale che sarebbe il conseguente sbocco di una posizione governata da un naturalism pago di se stesso, la ricerca di Vico si pone, fin dai suoi inizi, come tensione produttiva tra il particolare e l'universale, tra il tempo e l'eternità, la diacronia e la sincronia" (250). He also repeats Vico's innovation, explaining that "contro gli stoici, che attribuiscono la storia al fato, e contro i giusnaturalisti come Grozio e Pufendorf (che credevano in un'idea del diritto innate e universale), o contro quelli che considera in un certo senso i materialisti seguaci di Epicuro, come Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza e Bayle, Vico vuole recuperare la fiducia nella giustizia come *telos* e *logos* della storia, attivo in ogni presente storico" (252). The means by which justice faithfully catalyzes and moves history John Schaeffer, in "*Sensus Communis* in Vico and Gadamer," identifies as common sense, "the ground of the relationship between meaning and experience, a ground inhabited by both the individual and the community" (124). As such, Schaeffer emphasizes the centrality of the *Scienza nuova*'s move from the "true Homer" to the Laws of the Twelve Tables in Book Three, as both exemplify the *sensus communis* as repositories of collective social values and vehicles of consensus through language (125). The sequence from poetry to law is inextricable from the way Vico historicizes law. Indeed, A. Robert Caponigri, in *Time and Idea: The Theory of History in*

Giambattista Vico, associates two dimensions to law—"certitude" and "authority"—which reflect the *Scienza nuova*'s appraisal of historical contingencies and the universality of history's cyclical eternal form (37). Moreover, Caponigri establishes the validity of these dimensions through the dialectic of the *verum-factum* principle that delineates the planes for certain and true knowledge in history; he explains, "The 'certum' and the 'verum' […] are dimensions, not of single laws, but of the total process of law, and represent the alternate dynamism of that process, the one toward the immediacy, the concreteness, the multiplicity of the law in its historical structures, the other toward its unity in idea" (38). The unification of these two purposes of law, namely "the historical process of the formation of juridical structures and the ideal principle of law," leads to Caponigri's principal argument, which is to contend that Vico proposes ideas as time's true measure, transforming his science into "a pure phenomenology of human polity, that is, the order of the temporal succession of its concrete forms based on the inner articulations of its idea" (39, 91, 216). Tellingly, Caponigri returns the present discussion to the core dilemma between the one and the many, the individual's personal capacities and his role in the ideation and propagation of the collective, meriting, from this dilemma, a more detailed close-reading of the sequence from poetical Homer, to common sense, and finally to laws.

5.   Laws Fulfilled: Concluding the *Scienza nuova*

        In the opening *degnità* to the *Scienza nuova*, Vico lays out the core principles to his historiographical epistemology and testifies to the inevitability of Machiavellian resonances. Like Machiavelli's oft-cited precept of "andare dietro alla verità effettuale della cosa, che all'immaginazione di essa" (*Principe* XV), Vico affirms the fundamental practicality of politics, distinguishing it from philosophical theory; he states respectively in the sixth and seventh *degnità* that:

> La filosofia considera l'uomo quale dev'essere, e sì non può fruttare ch'a pochissimi, che vogliono vivere nella repubblica di Platone, non rovesciarsi nella feccia di Romolo.
>
> La legislazione considera l'uomo qual è, per farne buoni usi nell'umana società; come della ferocia, dell'avarizia, dell'ambizione, che sono gli tre vizi che portano a travverso tutto il gener umano, ne fa la milizia, la mercatanzia e la corte, e sì la fortezza, l'opulenza e la sapienza delle repubbliche (*Scienza nuova* 131-132).

The unavoidable *rovescia* into the bodily, emotional impulses, which necessitate laws, by virtue of their sober view of humanity, as appropriate guides, also and more significantly affirms Vico's practical understanding of the motor behind all social entities in (real) history: human nature with its *ferocia*, *avarizia*, and *ambizione*. Vico continues to explain the process towards the *legislazione* that serves to "farne buoni usi" of humanity's otherwise wayward characteristics, introducing his concept of the *senso comune* as it

negotiates with the individual's will; he writes in the eleventh *degnità* that "L'umano arbitrio, di sua natura incertissimo, egli si accerta e determina col senso comune degli uomini d'intorno alle umane necessità o utilità, che son i due fonti del diritto naturale delle genti" (*SN* 141). He immediately follows, specifying that "il senso comune è un giudizio senz'alcuna riflessione, comunemente sentito da tutto un ordine, da tutto un popolo, da tutta una nazione o da tutto il gener umano" (*SN* 142). Vico thus clarifies his focus on human nature as on an emotionally-mediated intellect, one that transcends its limits by reconciling with and perfecting itself within an interpretative collective— "comunemente sentito"—and in this shared perception, institutes laws. The repetition of "tutto" coupled with the successive dilation from "ordine… popolo… nazione… gener umano" outlines the unceasing political trajectory intrinsic to human society, wrestling Machiavellian *ordini* and *popolo* from the threat of *umori* into their fulfillment as the manifestation of human nature *in toto*.

It is, therefore, necessary to underscore the irrational motivation, the seemingly paradoxical "giudizio senz'alcuna riflessione," by which the one joins the many and thus originates the "diritto naturale delle genti": human necessities and utilities, not reason, mandate laws into existence.[29] Unlike his contemporaries, Vico further incorporates contingency into his understanding of judgment as the move from common sense to laws when he affirms his "gran principio" that validates "il senso comune del gener umano esser il criterio insegnato alle nazioni dalla provvedenza divina per diffinire il certo d'intorno al diritto natural delle genti, del quale le nazioni si accertano con intendere l'unità sostanziali di cotal diritto, nelle quali con diverse modificazioni tutte convengono" (*SN* 146). Providence's teaching inclines humanity to perceive the certain, that is, the value of the "diritto natural delle genti" from its various iterations, which as the *Scienza* posits, will always follow the same cyclical path in history and thus confirm law's "unità," or rather the trace of its divinity.

Indeed, the cycle Vico sets forth through his analysis of history, while embracing humanity's sensual and desirous urges, does so within a transcendental framework, yet that framework never encroaches on the historical and political outcomes of man's

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[29] As critics like Haddock and Pompa specified above, Vico here asserts his innovation from his natural law contemporaries, writing in the thirteenth *degnità* that: "Questa stessa degnità rovescia tutte l'idee che si sono finor avute d'intorno al diritto natural delle genti, il quale si è creduto esser uscito da una prima nazione da cui l'altre l'avessero ricevuto; al qual errore diedero lo scandalo gli egizi e i greci, i quali vanamente vantavano d'aver essi disseminata l'umanità per lo mondo: il qual error certamente dovette far venire la legge delle XII Tavole da' greci a' romani. Ma, in cotal guisa, egli sarebbe un diritto civile comunicato ad altri popoli per umano provvedimento, e non già un diritto con essi costumi umani naturalmente dalla divina provvidenza ordinato in tutte le nazioni" (*SN* 146). Vico thereby pinpoints the flaw in theories that prioritize reason, yet insist upon nations' divine origins, and the transmission of ideas rather than their development; he, in turn, proposes a new genealogy to emphasize how laws' universality properly indicates their divine sanction, that is, because they naturally follow a shared pattern of growth.

decisions, even as the task of his science is to bring it to the fore. Different from Mazzotta who gives precedence to the typological significance of Vico's historical divinity on politics, the present discussion interprets transcendence in relation to how it sanctions the intelligibility of the *Scienza*, which on account of its own structure mimics and thus renders visible the indirect didactic function of the *senso comune*, that is, "il criterio insegnato alle nazioni dalla provvedenza divina," across history. In other words, it is the reader who depends on transcendence, which Vico distinguishes from religion, as the key to clarify and explain the patterns that relate emotions to language, language to poetry, poetry to common sense, and common sense to law through the simultaneous reflection of different moments in time. The oft-repeated verb *accertarsi* further emphasizes the oblique manner by which man may approach divine truth via the perfection of governmental institutions, thus invoking the *verum-factum* principle and the epistemological certainty solely derived from man-made entities. For example, in a nod to Machiavelli's *Discorsi* (I.11), Vico introduces his thirty-first *degnità*, writing, "Ove i popoli son infieriti con le armi, talché non vi abbiano più luogo l'umane leggi, l'unico potente mezzo di ridurgli è la religione," which proves "che nello stato eslege la provvedenza divina diede principio a' fieri e violenti di condursi all'umanità ed ordinarvi le nazioni, con risvegliar in essi un'idea confusa della divinità, ch'essi per la lor ignoranza attribuirono a cui ella non conveniva" (*SN* 177). The "idea confusa" that, in its strategic mobilization of religion, becomes less a shrewd calculation and more a developmental step out of ignorance, explains why practices evolve without the imposition of moral judgement because morality cannot exist as a guide external to the mental capacities of a people at a given historical age; rather, a belief must come from and reflect the society within which it exerts its authority, contributing therefore to the practical invisibility of divine truth until it coincides with the age in which the reader comprehends Vico's science and finally perceives it.

Vico's narration of political changes according to the dynamic between arms and laws is a revelatory case study in this regard (namely, in the historical appropriateness of customs), not only since it counteracts the willful deviance spurring Machiavelli's articulation of the same interaction, but also since it seemingly repurposes Machiavellian impulses; in fact, the epistemological failings exemplified throughout the *Istorie fiorentine* by virtue of reckless *umori* substantiate Vico's belief that history is intellectually conditioned. The ninety-second *degnità* of the *Scienza nuova* stipulates that "i deboli vogliono le leggi; i potenti le ricusano; gli ambiziosi, per farsi séguito, le promuovono; i principi, per uguagliar i potenti co' deboli, le proteggono," mapping, as a consequence, desires onto the cycle of governments that, in turn, delineates in its movement the principles of the *storia ideal eterna* (*SN* 283).[30] Vico's innovation, then, is to elevate the

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[30] Vico outlines his cycle of political systems according to the ages of man in the sixty-eighth *degnità*, foregrounding human need and interests as catalysts for change: "I primi abbisognarono per ubbidire l'uomo all'uomo nello stato delle famiglie, e disporlo ad ubbidir alle leggi nello stato

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dynamic between arms and laws, displayed through the constant jostling of power between the plebs and nobles, from destabilizing and forever-proliferating contingencies to an eventual leveling of differences—an internal response to an external reality, with revelation about divine truth; he explains the process as follows:

> che la provvedenza fu l'ordinatrice del diritto natural delle genti, la qual permise che, poiché per lunga scorsa di secoli le nazioni avevano a vivere incapaci del vero e dell'equità naturale (la quale più rischiararono, appresso, i filosofi), esse si attenessero al certo ed all'equità civile, che scrupolosamente custodisce le parole degli ordini e delle leggi, e da queste fussero portate ad osservarle generalmente anco ne' casi che riuscissero dure, perché si serbassero le nazioni (*SN* 328).

The difference between civil and natural justice depends not merely on the ideation of the law, but more importantly on its interpretation and its varied applications across history, especially as it relates to the community and the individual. That "gli uomini intelligenti stimano diritto tutto ciò che detta essa uguale utilità delle cause," is the gradual overcoming of particularized historical praxes, with the many thereby relinquishing their adherence to the "parole degli ordini e delle leggi" in favor of individually-realized judgment of where laws source their authority (*SN* 323). In other words, Vico explains how history unfolds as the gradual diffusion of insight into the reasons behind laws' widespread applicability and power, irrespective of their various iterations. He juxtaposes "il certo delle leggi" and "il vero delle leggi," with the former defined as "un'oscurezza della ragione unicamente sostenuta dall'autorità, che le ci fa sperimentare dure nel praticarle, e siamo necessitati praticarle per lo di lor 'certo,' che in buon latino significa 'particolarizzato' o, come le scuole dicono, 'individuato,'" in order demonstrate the evolution of the ways in which man derives authority, from the specificity of legal language to the wider applications of impartial law (*SN* 321, 324). Consequently, Vico introduces the pivotal leap that systematizes poetic customs, sanctioned through hermeneutical practices, into a stable epistemology grounded in the truest, that is,

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ch'aveva a venire delle città; i secondi, che naturalmente non cedevano a' loro pari, per istabilire sulle famiglie le repubbliche di forma aristocratica; i terzi per aprirvi la strada alla libertà popolare; i quarti per introdurvi le monarchie; i quinti per istabilirle; i sesti per rovesciarle. […] una parte de' princìpi della storia ideal eterna, sulla quale corrono in tempo tutte le nazioni ne' loro sorgimenti, progressi, stati, decadenze e fini (*SN* 244). He also narrates that when circumstances of a given age demand recourse to a new set of laws, arms are the best means to effect change: "Poiché la porta degli onori nelle repubbliche popolari tutta si è con le leggi aperta alla moltitudine avara che vi comanda, non resta altro in pace che contendervi di potenza non già con le leggi ma con le armi, e per la potenza comandare leggi per arricchire, quali in Roma furon l'agrarie de' Gracchi; onde provengono nello stesso tempo guerre civili in casa ed ingiuste fuori" (*SN* 288). In light of Zanetti's argument above, see also *SN* 292-293 for a more detailed explanation of how arms-fueled shifts in laws follow shifting desires for equality ("ugualità").

universal, law—a theorization of historicized praxes that he labels as the fulfillment of the *diritto naturale delle genti*.

It is in Book Four that Vico explicates such a leap, having already established by the end of Book Three that Homer's true identity in the people of ancient Greece proves history's practical striving towards his theorized *diritto naturale delle genti*. Like ancient Romans' Law of the Twelve Tables, the Homeric poems identify public customs as societal bounds, demarcating civic rights and communal order; these prescriptions domesticate Machiavellian impulses by yielding them to the letter of the law.[31] Yet while for Vico, the true Homer overcomes the interpretive and temporal limits of contemporary man so that he may perceive across history the unifying power of the many via the *senso comune*, he acknowledges that the *senso comune* itself relies on its own type of blindness, one that is constitutive of civic justice; that is, widespread ignorance of the shared aim toward a common good because, as noted above, men cede to authority and adhere to the letter of the law, regardless of how ferocious its stated effect may be. Development from *equità civile* to *equità naturale* requires then that, on an individual-basis, men collectively understand what is common to all, above the particularities of legal praxes and their historically specific applications, in order to finally achieve the *diritto naturale delle genti*. However it is precisely in this recognition that legislative progress risks corruption and political decline when over-philosophizing veers too close to solipsism.

Book Four opens by making clear its intent: to present "un ordine di cagioni ed effetti" that is both the cycle of political institutions and consequently its unity under divine providence; Vico writes:

> […] il corso che fanno le nazioni, con costante uniformità procedendo in tutti i loro tanto vari e sì diversi costumi sopra la divisione delle tre età, che dicevano gli egizi essere scorse innanzi nel loro mondo, degli dèi, degli eroi e degli uomini. Perché sopra di essa si vedranno reggere con costante e non mai interrotto ordine di cagioni e d'effetti, sempre andante nelle nazioni, per tre spezie di nature; e da esse nature uscite tre spezie di

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[31] In overt disagreement with Machiavelli, Vico attributes ancient Rome's success to precisely this interpretive mandate to ensure obedience to laws; he writes, "Però qui è da ammirare la romana gravità e sapienza: che, in queste vicende di stati, i pretori e i giureconsulti si studiarono a tutto loro potere che di quanto meno e con tardi passi s'impropiassero le parole della legge delle XII Tavole. Onde forse per cotal cagione principalmente l'imperio romano cotanto s'ingrandì e durò: perché, nelle sue vicende di stato, proccurò a tutto potere di star fermo sopra i suoi princìpi, che furono gli stessi che quelli di questo mondo di nazioni; come tutti i politici vi convengono che non vi sia miglior consiglio di durar e d'ingrandire gli Stati. Così la cagione, che produsse a' romani la più saggia giurisprudenza del mondo (di che sopra si è ragionato), è la stessa che fece loro il maggior imperio del mondo; ed è la cagione della grandezza romana, che Polibio, troppo generalmente, rifonde nella religione de' nobili, al contrario Macchiavello nella magnanimità della plebe, e Plutarco, invidioso della romana virtù e sapienza, rifonde nella loro fortuna […]" (*SN* 1003).

> costumi; da essi costumi osservate tre spezie di diritti naturali delle genti; e, 'n conseguenza di essi diritti, ordinate tre spezie di Stati civili o sia di repubbliche; e, per comunicare tra loro gli uomini venuti all'umana società tutte queste già dette tre spezie di cose massime, essersi formate tre spezie di lingue ed altrettante di caratteri; e, per giustificarle, tre spezie di giurisprudenze, assistite da tre spezie d'autorità e da altrettante di ragioni in altrettante spezie di giudizi; le quali giurisprudenze si celebrarono per tre sètte de' tempi, che professano in tutto il corso della lor vita le nazioni. Le quali tre speziali unità, con altre molte che loro vanno di séguito e saranno in questo libro pur noverate, tutte mettono capo in una unità generale, ch'è l'unità della religione d'una divinità provvedente, la qual è l'unità dello spirito, che informa e dà vita a questo mondo di nazioni (*SN* 915).[32]

Regardless of the final "unità generale" that reflects traces of the divine on earth, Vico dedicates his analysis to the immanent aspects of life, valorizing and bringing to the fore the very quality of these aspects that is deemed most destructive—their mutability. Indeed, the "constante e non mai interrotto ordine" of causes and effects, paralleled in the structure of Vico's own explication by virtue of its dizzying accretion of facets and details, is essential to and symptomatic of the web of contemporaneity his *Scienza* imposes onto linear history as the sole means to glean its fullest significance. To that end, such changeability also serves to unite seemingly disparate disciplines, which themselves are multi-formed across history, divided from each other at different moments in time, as customs, language, and law all share a triadic pattern of historical movement from the ages "degli dèi, degli eroi e degli uomini." That each age imprints onto all aspects similar characteristics only confirms the fundamental, unwavering meaning derived from endless contingencies, which, wrested from the epistemological uncertainty cyclical history implies throughout Machiavelli's *Istorie* with its *umori*-dictated actors, becomes a pointed solution to senseless chaos.

Yet while Vico seeks to redeem historical movement from its Machiavellian resonances, his historiographical approach betrays an affinity with the Florentine's own method. Like the *Istorie,* the *Scienza* relies on an equivalence between *ordine* and *ordini* to elucidate the logic of "il corso che fanno le nazioni." Vico writes that "per tutta l'intiera vita onde vivon le nazioni, esse corrono con quest'ordine sopra queste tre spezie di repubbliche, o sia di Stati civili, e non più: che tutti mettono capo ne' primi, che furon i divini governi; da' quali, appo tutte, incominciando […] debbe correre questa serie di

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[32] For how Vico details each of the following, see: "tre spezi di nature" (*SN* 916-918); "di costumi" (*SN* 919-921); "di diritti naturali" (*SN* 922-924); "di governi" (*SN* 925-927); "di lingue" (*SN* 929-931); "di caratteri" (*SN* 932-935); "di giurisprudenza" (*SN* 938-940); "di autorità" (*SN* 942); "di ragioni" (*SN* 948-949); "di giudizi" (*SN* 955-975); and "tre sétte di tempo" (*SN* 976-977).

cose umane, prima in repubbliche d'ottimati, poi nelle libere popolari e finalmente sotto le monarchie" (*SN* 1004). The order, as in the sequence of governmental forms, cedes to a discussion of the laws (*ordini*) which constitute them, and this doubled significance draws attention to the shape and nature of historical meaning as well as to the entities responsible for both perceiving and effecting it. Vico continues, stating how the first fathers transform their respective "dominio alto privato" into the "dominio alto pubblico […], siccome delle potestà sovrane private, ch'avevano sopra le loro famiglie, essi composero la potestà sovrana civile de' loro medesimi ordini" (*SN* 1005). Thus the constitution of communal laws from the private laws of the family assures that as long as "i padri si conservarono cotal autorità di dominio dentro gli ordini loro regnanti, finché le plebi de' loro popoli eroici, per leggi di essi padri, riportarono comunicati loro il dominio certo de' campi, i connubi, gl'imperi, i sacerdozi e, co' sacerdozi, la scienza ancor delle leggi, le repubbliche durarono aristocratiche," yet the familial *ordini* metamorphose into the tools of the plebs, who eventually "divenute numerose ed anco agguerrite," institute popular rule (*SN* 1006). Invoking once more the dynamic between arms and laws, Vico shades the passing guardianship of laws (*ordini*) and its appropriate governmental form (*ordine*) with violent undertones, leading then, more significantly, to the cycle's fulfillment in monarchy; he explains that "poi che i potenti delle repubbliche popolari ordinarono tal consiglio pubblico a' privati interessi della loro potenza, e i popoli liberi, per fini di private utilità, si fecero da' potenti sedurre ad assoggettire la loro pubblica libertà all'ambizione di quelli, con dividersi in partiti, sedizioni, guerre civili, in eccidio delle loro medesime nazioni, s'introdusse la forma monarchica" (*SN* 1006). The coincidence of laws and "privati interessi" incites a similarly emotional convergence of "private utilità" and "ambizione" that facilitates the relinquishment of public liberty to the rule of a monarch. Moreover, the phrases "sedurre ad assoggettire" as well as "dividersi in partiti, sedizioni, guerre civili," which result from ambitious leaders, underscore yet again the extent to which Vico shares with Machiavelli a belief in history's subjugation to a volatile human nature.

Similarly, the responsibilities and efficacy of Vico's monarch feel all too familiar yet simultaneously redefine the roles of the individual with respect to society. Much like the forever absent *principe* in whom Machiavelli ironically places his faith for change, Vico specifies "un'eterna natural legge regia" that dictates the redemption of a crumbling society. He defines it as:

> concceputa con questa formola naturale di eterna utilità: che, poiché nelle repubbliche libere tutti guardano a' loro privati interessi, a' quali fanno servire le loro pubbliche armi in eccidio delle loro nazioni, perché si conservin le nazioni, vi surga un solo (come tra' romani un Augusto), che con la forza dell'armi richiami a sé tutte le cure pubbliche e lasci a' soggetti curarsi le loro cose private, e tale e tanta cura abbiano delle pubbliche qual e quanta il monarca lor ne permetta; e così si salvino i popoli, ch'anderebbono altrimente a distruggersi" (*SN* 1008).

By recognizing in man his inveterate selfishness, which uncurbed is detrimental to the political order, Vico appeals to arms as correctives to wayward laws, but while men, individually, are self-interested, they must eventually, collectively, relinquish ownership of the state to a single monarch when the threat of arms becomes too great. However, unlike the Machiavellian prince who is only hypothetically successful and still at the mercy of *umori*, Vico assures the singularity of such an individual by exempting him of precisely his individuality, that is, by invoking his representational status; Vico describes it as follows while stressing its dependence on an overt recognition of Machiavellian impulses: "ond'essendo i cittadini divenuti quasi stranieri delle loro nazioni," because of their selfish desires, "è necessario ch'i monarchi nelle loro persone le reggano e rappresentino" (*SN* 1008). Vico clarifies the process, beginning with the transition from popular government, in which a monarch governs:

> prima con le leggi, con le qual'i monarchi vogliono i soggetti tutti uguagliati; dipoi per quella propietà monarchica, ch'i sovrani, con umiliar i potenti, tengono libera e sicura la moltitudine dalle lor oppressioni; appresso per quell'altra di mantenerla soddisfatta e contenta circa il sostentamento che bisogna alla vita e circa gli usi della libertà naturale; e finalmente co' privilegi, ch'i monarchi concedono o ad intieri ordini (che si chiamano 'privilegi di libertà') o a particolari persone, con promuovere fuori d'ordine uomini di straordinario merito agli onori civili (che sono leggi singolari dettate dalla natural equità) (*SN* 1008).

The strategies of rule Vico articulates also specify the duties of the monarch, particularly of note the dispensation of privileges to specific *ordini* of citizens or to those individuals "fuori d'ordine" with "straordinario merito." As the *ordine/ordini* play emphasizes the clearly structured society over which a monarch presides, Vico builds toward his ultimate intent. He concludes Book Four, affirming that the *Scienza*'s narration of specific histories need not obscure its goal of explicating history's form, because through:

> un gran numero di materie si sono fatti circa i tempi primi e gli ultimi delle nazioni antiche e moderne […] si avrà tutta spiegata la storia, non già particolare ed in tempo delle leggi e de' fatti de' romani o de' greci, ma (sull'identità in sostanza d'intendere e diversità de' modi lor di spiegarsi) si avrà la storia ideale delle leggi eterne, sopra le quali corron i fatti di tutte le nazioni, ne' loro sorgimenti, progressi, stati, decadenze e fini, se ben fusse (lo che è certamente falso) che dall'eternità di tempo in tempo nascessero mondi infiniti" (*SN* 1096).

History "particolare ed in tempo delle leggi e de' fatti" provides the matter upon which to reflect and thereby determine the modes of understanding and explaining that constitute "la storia ideale delle leggi eterne." By writing the histories of the ancient Greeks in all its details, Vico resolves the senselessness of uncontrollable contingencies that defined Machiavelli's own historiographical endeavor. However, it is much too simplistic to ascribe this resolution to the imposition of Vichean providence and to thus ignore the content to which Vico dedicates all but the last book, which is the shortest, of the *Scienza*

nuova. Societal structures and thus historical form derive from the same source as its reckless, mutable impulses—humanity, particularly the mind, which at different moments in history is prone to sensual poetics and rational abstractions.

Vico explains in Book Five how providence serves only as a lens to sharpen the visibility of history's cycle, as Vico's history is no less immune to contingency's effects as Machiavelli's *Istorie*, but rather turns to those effects to better understand the methods of their causes in the human mind. Indeed, the epistemological priority of history, as both a reflection and product of thinking, Vico privileges over divine illumination, in the upswing of history's cycle and particularly in his description of governmental decline.[33] He narrates both developmental processes around a strategic mobilization of the word *ordine* and its derivations, and consequently affirms the very humanness at the center of historical change as well as meaning. Nevertheless, alongside human creations, he juxtaposes providential ones, writing in an example of the Roman plebs and nobles how "tra essi ordini civili trammeschiandosi vieppiù l'ordine naturale, nacquero le popolari repubbliche: nelle quali, poiché si aveva a ridurre tutto o a sorte o a bilancia, perché il caso o 'l fato non vi regnasse, la provvedenza ordinò che 'l censo vi fusse la regola degli onori" (*SN* 1101). That "provvedenza ordinò" the implementation of a new *ordine civile* in the census, which staves off beliefs in chance or fate, serves less to confirm the divine's visibility in history and more to assert the need for solutions to human conflicts that are immanent to human society. In other words, man manifests divinity on earth through his intellectual and constructive nature, but to stop at such a conclusion is too simple and indeed reckless to our understanding of history's didactic potential, especially if attention fixates and ascribes sole agency to providence. The *Scienza* imposes more nuanced judgments, which Vico exemplifies in the solutions to falling popular states. While he opens, explaining that "al quale gran malore delle città adopera la provvedenza uno di questi tre grandi rimedi con quest'ordine di cose umane civili," which foregrounds the instrumentality of human *ordine* at the hands of providence, Vico describes the salvific monarch, writing:

> di ritruovarsi dentro essi popoli uno che, come Augusto, vi surga e vi si stabilisca monarca, il quale, poiché tutti gli ordini e tutte le leggi ritruovate per la libertà punto non più valsero a regolarla e tenerlavi dentro in freno, egli abbia in sua mano tutti gli ordini e tutte le leggi con la forza dell'armi; ed al contrario essa forma dello stato monarchico, la volontà de' monarchi, in quel loro infinito imperio, stringa dentro l'ordine naturale di mantenere contenti i popoli e soddisfatti della loro religione e della loro natural libertà, senza la quale universal soddisfazione e

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[33] In a popular state on the verge of destruction, Vico states three possible solutions: the rise of a monarch (*SN* 1103); the enslavement of the state by another more powerful, external one (*SN* 1105); or regression to humanity's original bestial nature, at which point the cycle of governments will restart its course (*SN* 1106).

> contentezza de' popoli gli Stati monarchici non sono né durevoli né sicuri (*SN* 1103-1104).

Here, Vico transfers the literal handling of the people from providence to the monarch who "abbia in sua mano tutti gli ordini e tutte le leggi con la forza dell'armi," and by virtue of his will (*volontà*) reinforces societal integrity with similarly tactile, controlling verbs (*stringere* and *mantenere*). In so doing, the monarch echoes Machiavelli's coincidence of arms and laws as well as his representations of a redeemer, most famously in the final chapter of the *Principe*, but more critically, throughout the *Istorie*. The Florentine's lamentation of a monarch's absence at the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in Book VIII is a pessimistic culmination of the entire work, conceived as a testament to the historical circumstances that have rendered necessary and also predetermined the inefficacy of recourse to such a figure. Even for Vico, a monarch represents only one of three options to prevent a political and historical downswing.

Therefore the *Scienza*'s acknowledgment of a monarch's possible (historically conditioned) existence does not preclude two other, more destructive modes for renewal, and it is most clearly through the last option that Vico solidifies his affinity with Machiavelli, despite its phrasing as a corrective to the Florentine's view of history. Vico details the qualities that return to characterize humanity as it falls back into its bestial origin:

> così storditi e stupidi, non sentano più agi, dilicatezze, piaceri e fasto, ma solamente le necessarie utilità della vita; e, nel poco numero degli uomini alfin rimasti e nella copia delle cose necessarie alla vita, divengano naturalmente comportevoli; e, per la ritornata primiera semplicità del primo mondo de' popoli, sieno religiosi, veraci e fidi; e così ritorni tra essi la pietà, la fede, la verità, che sono i naturali fondamenti della giustizia e sono grazie e bellezze dell'ordine eterno di Dio (*SN* 1106).

From the very worst of human behaviors, from the materiality and egotism that led to their ruin, men are isolated and reduced to the whims of their basic needs and Vico conceptualizes another sensual beginning, a recurrence of the first age of man, *l'età degli dei*, wherein "la pietà, la fede, la verità" will enable communion and the establishment of the first society. Thus the proximity of disintegration to reconstruction assures for Vico the ultimate didactic value of history and its contingencies, namely to signal that "quali fini ristretti, fatti mezzi per servire a fini più ampi, gli ha sempre adoperati per conservare l'umana generazione in questa terra" (*SN* 1108). Vico then recapitulates the cycle of history in order to rehearse once more the very intelligibility of human praxes:

> Imperciocché vogliono gli uomini usar la libidine bestiale e disperdere i loro parti, e ne fanno la castità de' matrimoni, onde surgono le famiglie; vogliono i padri esercitare smoderatamente gl'imperi paterni sopra i clienti, e gli assoggettiscono agl'imperi civili, onde surgono le città; vogliono gli ordini regnanti de' nobili abusare la libertà signorile sopra i plebei, e vanno in servitù delle leggi, che fanno la libertà popolare; vogliono i popoli liberi sciogliersi dal freno delle lor leggi, e vanno nella

soggezion de' monarchi; vogliono i monarchi in tutti i vizi della dissolutezza che gli assicuri, invilire i loro sudditi, e gli dispongono a sopportare la schiavitù di nazioni più forti; vogliono le nazioni disperdere se medesime, e vanno a salvarne gli avanzi dentro le solitudini, donde, qual fenice, nuovamente risurgano (*SN* 1108).

The connection Vico establishes between verbs of desire (*volere*) and action (*fare*, *andare*) emphatically locates the causality of history in man, with interactions between classes of people and the political means (arms, laws) that legislate those relations as external manifestations of the human mind. Thus, as Vico clarifies, "Questo, che fece tutto ciò, fu pur mente, perché 'l fecero gli uomini con intelligenza; non fu fato, perché 'l fecero con elezione; non caso, perché con perpetuità, sempre così faccendo, escono nelle medesime cose," maintaining his *Scienza*'s originality from "Epicuro, che dà il caso, e i di lui seguaci Obbes e Macchiavello" and "Zenone, e con lui Spinosa, che danno il fato" (*SN* 1108). That the human mind chooses and wills the perpetual unfolding of history Vico substantiates through providence however providence must not elide the debt Vico owes to Machiavelli, who poses more of threat to understanding the scope of the *Scienza*'s novelty when Vico's criticism of him is accepted at face value than when not. Because as the *Istorie* shows, Machiavelli highlights the emotionally-fueled decisions that reflect history's determination of Florence's political weakness—without functional arms and laws, it must rely on a *savio*. What the reader then gains from acknowledging these two thinkers' shared goal—that is, to redeem disparate and variable human practices through the creation of a new, non-rational ground for political philosophy—is to tap into another view of chronology and causality, to discover new frameworks to perceive and derive meaning from the core attribute of human life—change. Machiavelli provides Vico the problems and the language with which to articulate them in order to project and promote the newness of his science. Vico ends the *Scienza* with a prescient yet also familiar reminder of providence's invisibility:

> Ma pur la provvedenza, per l'ordine delle cose civili che 'n questi libri si è ragionato, ci si fa apertamente sentire in quelli tre sensi: — uno di maraviglia, l'altro di venerazione c'hanno tutti i dotti finor avuto della sapienza innarrivabile degli antichi, e 'l terzo dell'ardente disiderio onde fervettero di ricercarla e di conseguirla; — perch'eglino son infatti tre lumi della sua divinità, che destò loro gli anzidetti tre bellissimi sensi diritti (*SN* 1101).

That these "tre bellissimi sensi diritti" unite irrational *umori* and civic *ordini* gestures towards the knowability of even the most confusing, mutable history. So in the absence of, or just hidden, divinity, humanity will nonetheless search for purpose and certainty in its creations, resisting change by wondering at its causes.

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