The Hard Things or the Soft?  
Idealism and Realism in the Responses of Castiglione and Machiavelli to Political Disorder

Ryan Alexander McKinnell  
St. Francis Xavier University

He who want to change the world – who wants it to be different from what it is – has not yet started to philosophize, and mistakes the world for world history, and that for a human creation.

Karl Löwith

The relationship between Machiavelli and Renaissance humanism remains disputed. While the scholarship of Hans Baron, J. G. A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli demonstrates the influence of humanism on Machiavelli, the work of Leo Strauss, Harvey Mansfield, Paul Rahe, Vickie Sullivan, and Catherine Zuckert suggests that Machiavelli’s writings also offer an explicit critique of humanism. The ambivalent nature of the relationship between Machiavelli and humanism in turn informs the larger debate on the extent of the originality of Machiavelli’s political theory.

As Quentin Skinner rightly reminds us, Machiavelli’s thought is not *sui generis* but situated within a particular context, and it is only when we have grasped this context that we can properly understand the comparative originality of Machiavelli. For Skinner, this context is provided by the humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, particularly mirror-for-prince writers such as Patrizi, Pontano, and Castiglione. Skinner argues that Machiavelli and the humanists rebelled against the Augustinian conception of
fortune as a law-like force of necessity and reverted to the “classical belief that the human predicament is best seen as a struggle between man’s will and fortune’s willfulness.”4 Fortune becomes a “capricious power” of irrational flux. By exercising the “creative powers” of their will against this flux, human beings are “able to shape” and “remake his social world to fit his own desires.”5 While interpreting Machiavelli and the humanists to agree on a conception of virtue and fortune, Skinner argues that the root of Machiavelli’s disagreement with humanism rests on a question of method. Machiavelli departs from other mirror-for-prince writers and the more orthodox defenders of republican orthodoxy in rejecting their contention that traditional morality is compatible with successful statecraft and subjecting political life to a different moral calculus. If a prince or ruler truly wishes to maintain his state, he must “shake off the demands of Christian virtue, wholeheartedly embracing the very different morality which his situation dictates.”6 In this reading, Machiavelli’s originality is founded on deriving political practice from observation and experience and applying the “methods of realism to the realm of political thought.”7

The catalyst for Machiavelli’s new approach to politics, one might argue, was the turmoil unleashed by the French invasion of 1494. Felix Gilbert argues that Charles VIII’s crossing of the Alps awakened the need for a new, rational approach to politics.8 Previously, humanist writers did not elaborate a comprehensive political science but instead offered works of moral admonishment or panegyrics designed to cultivate prudence and wisdom. The humanists held that cultivation of high culture—a classical education in rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy—would make good princes.9

For Gilbert, the aspirational nature of humanist political writings proves to be their weakness, for they make little attempt to investigate how their ideals could be put into practice. They share classical political philosophy’s noted lack of realism—the emphasis on transcending desire rather acquiring the power to satisfy it, internal politics rather than foreign policy, and imperialism. The failure of humanism to meet the challenges posed by the new
political context revealed the need for a new approach to replace the “blurred mirror” of humanist political writings.\textsuperscript{10} This is certainly Machiavelli’s assessment. As Jarrett Carty observes, for Machiavelli, in failing to educate princes adequately, humanism failed to address the crisis of the age.\textsuperscript{11}

Skinner’s interpretation of classical, Christian, and humanist understandings of virtue and fortune is challenged by Waller Newell, who argues that while the “creative” view of virtue can be found in Machiavelli, this is incompatible with the classical and humanist view of the relation between human virtue and the transhuman world. Newell argues that for Greek and Roman thinkers, “virtue is the conditioning of the soul that brings one into closer proximity to eternal being” and that “the objects of the virtues are prescribed for man by a rationally ordered cosmos.” Thus, Newell insists that the classical notion of virtue has no connotation of mastering fortune or the external world. By cultivating the virtues, one lessens one’s desires and therefore one’s dependence on external goods. It is only in this sense that “virtue makes one less vulnerable to the reverses of fortune.”\textsuperscript{12} While the classical conception differs from that of Augustinian Christianity to the extent that Augustine conflates Aristotle’s final cause with the efficient cause of an interventionary God who creates and sustains all thing, it does not resemble the idea of virtue as creative will exerting itself or fortune as capricious.\textsuperscript{13}

An investigation of humanist texts reveals that while they may have been more impressed with the power of fortune than their medieval Christian and classical predecessors, they did not embrace a conception of “creative” virtue and fortune as “irrational flux.” A reading of Petrarch, Manetti, Pico, and Alberti does not reveal an understanding of virtue as creative will or fortune as a capricious power but a continuation of the classical conception of virtue as a conditioning of the soul and fortune as a subsidiary dimension in the order of the causes. The turmoil of Italian politics may persuade the humanists of the inadequacy of orthodox Christian doctrine to give an account of human vulnerability to fortune, but they still maintain that human beings are subordinate to a natural hierarchy
of ends and should reconcile themselves to the divine rational order of the cosmos. In Newell’s persuasive reading, Machiavelli’s originality lies not simply with his political method but in a novel understanding of virtue and fortune.

Thus, for Machiavelli the failure of humanism to address the crisis of the early sixteenth century is not simply a matter of methodology, it is rooted in the understanding of the world on which their methodology rests. Machiavelli indicates this by writing in *The Prince* that the rulers of Italy did not think “the quiet times could change” or believing that fortune cannot be countered by prudence, let themselves “be governed by chance,” thus open the way for the humiliation of Italy. The onset of disorder, though, is useful in liberating us from the illusion of an ordered universe and demonstrating the need for a new political method to replace imaginary principalities. The answer to the crisis of the age is not instruction in the “soft things,” the traditional moral and intellectual virtues of humanism, but a revival of “the hard things” of ancient political practice, including the art of war and a disciplined, calculating prudence that can ensure the security and well-being of a state. Machiavelli argues that by orienting oneself to the disorder of nature and matching the impetuosity of fortune a prince of outstanding virtue can grasp the opportunity presented by fortune to impose form onto matter, introducing new modes and orders and expelling the barbarians from Italy. In my view, Machiavelli’s originality lies in this heterodox synthesis of political realism and idealism. By going to what Machiavelli takes to be “the effectual truth of the thing rather than the imagination,” Machiavelli believes we can achieve a degree of mastery over fortune never imagined by premodern political thought.

A comparison of Machiavelli’s realism with the humanist political program of Baldesar Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* can therefore help us perceive the original nature of Machiavelli’s response to political disorder. Castiglione is particularly useful for this purpose. Recognized by Skinner as an important contributor to the mirror-for-prince genre, Castiglione differs from Carafa, Patrizi, Sacchi, and even Pontano in that unlike these thinkers he
witnessed the full depth of the disorder afflicting Italy following the trauma of 1494. Furthermore, like Machiavelli, Castiglione was an active participant in the politics of the day, serving as a courtier, diplomat, and Papal Nuncio. Finally, Castiglione died only a couple years after Machiavelli in 1529, still plagued by the struggles of the Pope and Charles V. Despite being situated in the same political and intellectual context, Castiglione did not envision a “realistic” politics and is satisfied with rearticulating the humanist political program in *The Courtier* as a response to the same disorder. Although Castiglione bemoans the cruelty of fortune, he reaffirms the apprehension of nature as a divine rational order articulated in the works of Alberti, Ficino, Manetti, and Pico. His perfect courtier cultivates the classical virtues celebrated by Palmieri, Patrizi, and Pontano and seeks to come into accord with the eternal, lessening their dependence on the perishable and securing themselves against the reversals of fortune. While the courtier does hope to instill virtue in their prince with the aim of establishing a virtuous political community, like Plato’s city in speech one can only wish that fortune allows for the possibility. It remains a prayer. For Castiglione there is no political solution to what Gilbert refers to as the “inexorable dynamics of world-historical events.” Paradoxically, Castiglione’s idealism leads to a more sober appreciation of statecraft’s potential for countering fortune.

This article aims to clarify how Machiavelli’s “realistic” rejection of the aspirational political science of humanism is paradoxically founded on an embrace of an idealism hitherto absent in classical and humanistic thought. While for Castiglione the soft virtues of humanism provide the means by which we may endure the malignity of fortune but not master it, for Machiavelli the hard things give us the tools, at the very least, to weave fortune’s warp. Thus, for all of his realism, Machiavelli articulates a politics of hope in the face of misfortune.

**Why the Princes of Italy Have Lost Their States**

_The Art of War_ (1521) serves as an excellent introduction to Machiavelli’s critique of humanism, as it is dedicated to correcting
the neglect of the art of war and contains a denouncement of humanistic education. It is presented as a recollection of a conversation between the mercenary Fabrizio Colonna and a group of aristocratic young men led by Cosimo Rucellai (grandson of Bernardo Rucellai) in 1516 when Fabrizio was visiting the city. Joining Cosimo are Zanobi Buondelmonti, Bastia della Palla, and Luigi Alamanni. These four young Florentines would regularly gather with Machiavelli to read the *Discourses on Livy* in the *Orti Oricellari*. The characters who will be instructed, therefore, are all young men, those whom Machiavelli elsewhere writes “deserve to be princes.” No less important than the youths is the central character Fabrizio. The veteran commander is an interesting choice for a spokesman. Fabrizio is a mercenary—a man who had fought for the French and the Spanish. Machiavelli, the Florentine patriot, is famous for his denouncement of mercenaries and partially blames them for Italy’s subjection. Why then choose him as a mouthpiece?²¹

Machiavelli draws the reader’s attention to Fabrizio’s involvement in the military campaigns of 1512 that brought about the collapse of the Florentine Republic. By reminding us of Fabrizio’s actions, Machiavelli draws attention to the defeat at Prato of the Florentine militia that Machiavelli himself had organized. He highlights his own political failure and the collapse of the regime he served by making Fabrizio a character. Later when Fabrizio speaks of his own failure to revive the art of war of the ancients and his hope that by educating his youthful companions the reforms he wishes to initiate will live on, the parallel with Machiavelli’s own stated desire is unmistakable. We can make a few more observations regarding the participants of the dialogue. None of Machiavelli’s characters are women. Nor are there poets, writers, or anyone else engaged in an activity that the Florentine would call an “honorable leisure.” While Castiglione has the action of *The Courtier* presided over by a duchess and the climax of the dialogue consisting of a prayer to love by a poet-philosopher, Machiavelli’s characters are a mercenary captain and the sons of politically active aristocratic families whose topic of conversation is warfare.
Not only is a political tone established immediately by his choice of characters, but Machiavelli also implicitly criticizes what in *The Prince* he refers to as the “effeminacy” of Italy’s rulers.

The setting of *The Art of War* is also of great importance: the Rucellai Gardens or the *Orti Oricellari*—precisely where the previous generation’s humanist scholars and leading Florentine citizens would meet. Now, however, the young have replaced the old: Cosimo Rucellai has taken the place of his grandfather as host and Fabrizio (Machiavelli) has supplanted the Neo-Platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino as the guiding spirit.

Instead of debate being guided by questions of moral philosophy, the discussion will be concerned with war. The intimation that the new and martial is unseating the decayed and effeminate hangs over the dialogue. As a spokesman, Fabrizio himself is representative of this. Rather than a foreign philosopher or scholar coming to educate the Florentine youths, Machiavelli provides them with an accomplished military commander who will attempt to purify the corruption of the times by providing a new art of war modeled after the hard and warlike ancients.

The action of the dialogue begins with Cosimo inviting the visiting Fabrizio to his family gardens along with his friends. Because of the great heat Cosimo leads the party into the shadiest and most secret part of the garden. While settling down Fabrizio is taken aback by the different trees and plants, many of which he does not seem to recognize. Noticing this Cosimo informs him that “you perhaps do not have knowledge of some of these trees. But do not marvel at this, for some of these are more celebrated by the ancients than by common usage today.” Cosimo goes on to explain that his grandfather went to a great deal of effort and expense to cultivate the garden in accordance with the ancient catalogues.

This explanation opens the door for Fabrizio. He responds that the gardens remind him of similar places of study in the Kingdom of Naples. Aragonese Naples had been the home of Giovanni Pontano, the celebrated humanist, first minister to Ferdinand I and Alfonso II and leader of the *Accademia Pontaniana*. Pontano’s
influence had extended to Florence as Bernardo Rucellai had consulted him on the writing of his *De Bello Italico*, and many of those who gathered in the *Orti Oricellari* shared Rucellai’s admiration of the Neapolitan. While Ficino’s Neo-Platonism had focused more on metaphysical questions, Pontano’s writings consider more practical topics. In his *On the Prince* (1468), Pontano seeks to advise the future Alfonso II to exemplify the princely virtues of justice, piety, generosity, and mercy. Pontano instructs Alfonso that statecraft requires learning in the liberal arts: that a prince’s private life must mirror their public image. This means that a prince must cultivate a proper character through proper dress and speech, in their comportment with subjects and servants, and that during times of leisure, a prince should engage in music, archery, hunting, and horsemanship. Finally, a prince should follow the example of the famous men who came before and model his behavior on that of Xenophon’s Cyrus and the precepts of Cicero’s *De officiis*. Pontano’s work, like Castiglione’s, is typical of humanist thought.

While Machiavelli’s discussion of the qualities a prince requires in chapters XVI–XXI of *The Prince* is no doubt in part a direct refutation of Pontano’s arguments, there the Neapolitan goes unmentioned. While he still refrains from naming Pontano directly in *The Art of War*, by having Fabrizio reference Naples, Machiavelli draws a more explicit contrast between the political aims of the humanism of Pontano and his admirers on the one hand and Machiavelli’s own art of politics on the other. Fabrizio declares:

> If I did not believe I would offend, I would state my opinion; but I do not believe I would, since I am speaking with friends so as to dispute things and not calumniate them. How much better they would have done, may it be said with everyone’s leave, to seek to be like the ancients in the strong and harsh things, not in the delicate and soft ones, and in those that they did under the sun, not in the shade, and to take up the modes of the true and perfect antiquity, not the false and corrupt one. For after these studies pleased my Romans, my fatherland went to ruin.
This opening sets the stage for the rest of the dialogue, as Fabrizio begins to instruct his youthful companions into the proper modes and orders. We are introduced to several important ideas here, the most important being that there are at least two different versions of antiquity: the true antiquity and the corrupt one.

The question that therefore lingers is what, exactly, accounts for the differences between them? Fabrizio offers the following clue. The true antiquity is the actions that the ancients undertook under the sun, whereas the corrupt is found under the shade. In other words, ancient deeds in the political arena or on the battlefield are worthy of imitation rather than what was contemplated in the schools under the porticos and the trees. The Rucellai Gardens, like Pontano’s academy, or Ficino’s, are an imitation of the false and corrupt antiquity. Like Rome before it, Italy according to Fabrizio has been corrupted by these studies; in book VII of the dialogue he exclaims:

Before they tasted the blows of the ultramontane wars, our Italian princes used to believe that it was enough for a prince to know how to think of a sharp response in his studies, to write a beautiful letter, to show quick wit and quickness in deeds and words. … Nor did these wretches perceive that they were preparing themselves to be the prey of whoever assaulted them. From here then arose in 1494 great terrors, sudden flights, and miraculous losses; and thus three very powerful states that were in Italy have been sacked and wasted. But what is worse, those who are left persist in the same error and the same disorder.

Here in the shade of the Orti Oricellari—a place designed to imitate the spirit of classical antiquity—Machiavelli’s Fabrizio claims that Bernardo Rucellai, and by extension other adherents of the studia humanitatis, contrary to Petrarch’s intention, have not only failed to restore ancient virtue but also in fact deepened the corruption. This is a powerful criticism, and Bernardo’s grandson refuses to accept this affront to his grandfather’s civic project.
Cosimo therefore presents a counter to Fabrizio’s accusation. According to Cosimo, his grandfather—more than any other man of his time—despised the soft life and was a lover of hardness. Yet, despite his true preferences, he could not educate his children in the way he wanted if he wanted to avoid being ridiculed. His era was one of too much corruption, so he was forced to imitate those modes which would cause less amazement from his fellows. Bernardo Rucellai was forced into compromising his beliefs.  

Fabrizio accepts Cosimo’s defense of his family’s honor but responds by explaining that what he has in mind does not involve such extremes. Instead he is thinking of more “humane” modes that are more in conformity with the present and which would not be difficult for a prince or a republic to introduce. At this point the difference between Bernardo and Fabrizio is twofold. As already noted, Fabrizio claims that Rucellai and others like him chose the wrong antiquity; rather than the strong they chose the corrupt. He also points out, however, whereas Bernardo selected a model that was too difficult to reintroduce, his own model is more easily restored. In an echo of chapter XV of *The Prince*, Fabrizio declares that his aims are practical and realistic. He does not take his bearings by imaginary principalities and republics. Fabrizio’s aim in his discussion with Cosimo and the other youths is to educate them in the art of war—namely, military tactics, training, necessary political reforms, and the like—so that they can reverse the disorder that plagues Italy. Fabrizio has no time for the study of plants that the Rucellai family have managed to cultivate or gaze upon the busts of ancient heroes. Nor does he discuss literature, rhetoric, or philosophy. The salvation of Italy is at stake and requires an art of politics that takes the political things with the utmost seriousness.

*The Prince* provides a further elaboration of the arguments in the *Art of War* for the need of a revived art of war and a statecraft founded on ancient political practice rather than ancient aspirations. As both Gilbert and Skinner note, the central chapters of *The Prince* are devoted to the art of war. Machiavelli informs us in chapter XIV that “a prince should have no other object, nor any other thought, nor take anything else as his art but that of war and
its discipline; for that is the only art which is of concern to one who commands."31 Without an understanding of military matters a prince cannot be trusted or esteemed by his soldiers and the subjects will not be happy either. “Therefore, he should never lift his thoughts from the exercise of war.”32 As both The Prince and the Discourses insist, possessing one's own arms is the foundation of prosperity and liberty, whereas to be unarmed a state is wholly obligated to fortune and lacks the virtue to defend itself. In neglecting the importance of the art of war, Machiavelli's predecessors did not prepare princes for securing themselves against threats. The softness of humanism's antiquity is simply inadequate for the hard reality of sixteenth-century Italian political life.

Machiavelli believes the neglect of questions of political necessity permeates the educational program of the humanists. They teach that princes aim to always be good; that they should cultivate liberality, mercy, generosity, honesty, humanity, and the love of their subjects. The effect of this “soft” education has been to guide princes to their ruin rather than their preservation. Thus, in chapters XVI–XXI of The Prince, Machiavelli repudiates the humanist catalogue of the virtues on the grounds that they are impractical and politically ineffective. In Machiavelli's telling, parsimony, cruelty, hardness, and the cultivation of fear make for a more reliable foundation for statecraft. Rejecting Cicero's insistence in De officiis on the compatibility of honestum and utile and the bestial nature of force and fraud, Machiavelli argues that “since a prince is compelled by necessity to know well how to use the beast, he should pick the lion and the fox.”33

Thus, in the place of the ineffectual and effeminate humanist education, Machiavelli foregrounds a new scale of virtues predicated on necessity. While the humanists admire statesmen such as Scipio Africanus and Marcus Aurelius for their embodiment of the classical virtues, Machiavelli argues that by practicing these virtues Scipio was nearly ruined and Aurelius was only secure due to his position as a “hereditary” prince. In their place Machiavelli offers Hannibal Barca and Septimius Severus. While previous writers condemned these individuals for their cruelty and criminality,
Skinner points out that it is with a degree of asperity that Machiavelli argues that it was the very cruelty of Hannibal that made his achievements possible. The necessity of calculating severity is repeated in the *Discourses* with Machiavelli’s praise for the severity of Manlius Torquatus over the humanity of Valerius Corvinus. The climax of the repudiation of humanism comes in chapter XXIV of *The Prince*:

And if one considers those lords of Italy who have lost their states in our times, like the King of Naples, the duke of Milan, and others, one will find in them, first, a common defect as to arms, the causes of which have been discussed at length above; then, one will see that some of them either had a hostile people or if they had friendly peoples, did not know how to secure against the great. … Therefore these princes of ours who have been in their principalities for many years may not accuse fortune when they have lost them afterwards, but their own indolence; for never having thought that quiet times could change (which is a common defect of men, not to take account of the storm during the calm), when later the times became adverse, they thought of fleeing and not of defending themselves.

But as we observed earlier, Machiavelli’s criticism of humanism is not simply one of methodology but of its theoretical commitments as well. As Newell demonstrates, Machiavelli consistently treats humanity and fortune as opponents, never examining fortune under its traditional rubric of a subsidiary order of the causes. Instead, he equates fortune with all conditions external to human will. Because fortune is changeable, successful statecraft requires a prince to learn adaptability. A prince must be in accord with fortune—he must imitate its impetuousness. Disorder is therefore *the order* of things.

Machiavelli repeats this formulation in the *Discourses*, writing that because “all things of men are in motion,” to succeed a republic must be ordered in a way that adheres to this natural disorder.
It must follow the modes and orders of Rome rather than Sparta or Venice and expand to ensure its stability. Machiavelli’s political realism therefore rests not only on a vision of human nature but also on an interpretation of nature as disorder or strife. It is not for nothing that Paul Rahe suggests Machiavelli is a disciple of Heraclitus.

However, the Florentine’s realism is of a particular kind. Eric Voegelin notes that despite their shared pessimism about human nature, there is no space in the thought of Francesco Guicciardini for his older friend’s dream of a united Italy. Or as Maurizio Viroli argues, contrary to its reputation, Machiavelli’s work is a call for revolutionary political action. Machiavelli points in this direction when he informs us that in quiet times fortune can be dammed and diked by virtue to contain the raging river. He takes the idea of matching virtue against fortune one step further later in the chapter when he declares that “fortune is a woman; and it is necessary, if one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down … and so always, like a woman, she is the friend of the young, because they are less cautious, more ferocious, and command her with more audacity.”

That fortune can be imposed upon is the theme of Machiavelli’s discussion of armed prophets in chapter VI. “One does not see they had anything else from fortune than the opportunity, which gave them the matter enabling them to introduce any form they pleased.” The outstanding virtue of Moses and Romulus allowed them to grasp the opportunity presented and impose new modes and orders. It is this ability to impose form on matter that Machiavelli offers to a potential prince in his climatic call to liberate Italy from the barbarians in chapter XVI of The Prince. By promising them that by observing the method advanced in the previous chapters a prince can follow the example of “those excellent men who redeemed their countries, he incites the prince to seize the opportunity fortune has presented.” While more restrained in the Discourses, Machiavelli nevertheless argues that writers such as Livy and Plutarch were wrong to attribute the cause of Rome’s empire to fortune rather than virtue and suggests that
with a proper knowledge of the histories a founder can repeat the accidental perfection of ancient Rome and order a perfect republic from the beginning. He even holds out the possibility that "if a republic were so happy that it often had one who with his example might renew the laws, and not only restrain it from running to ruin but pull it back, it would be perpetual." And while at other occasions in the *Discourses* Machiavelli cautions against the possibility of ordering a perpetual republic and admonishes that in the contest with fortune it is only possible to "weave its warp but not break it," he still encourages action rather than passivity.

By discrediting the belief in an ordered universe and (what he understands to be) its imaginary constraints, Machiavelli perceives himself to be engaging in an act of liberation. For if the world does not supply us with a standard, then it is left to a prince or citizen of outstanding virtue to exercise their creative will to reshape "the world to fit his own desires." Disorder therefore must not be met with a retreat into the shadowy corners of effete humanist gardens but challenged with belligerence, violence, and calculating prudence. It is though the cultivation of the hard virtues of the *verità effetuale* that Machiavelli teaches his readers to hope for a degree of political mastery over disorder unimagined by any classical thinker. Machiavelli’s realism therefore serves as the foundation of an idealistic conception of the possibility of politics. Thus, as Guicciardini understood, despite appearances to the contrary, Machiavelli is one of the great political optimists.

**The Remedy for Our Miseries**

Baldesar Castiglione was among the most celebrated diplomats, scholars, and soldiers of the Italian Renaissance. Born in 1478 to a noble family in Mantua, Castiglione received a humanistic education and became a member of the courts of Milan and Urbino. He served one campaign in southern Italy, conducted diplomatic missions in England, France, and Rome, and ended his life as the Papal Nuncio in Spain and Bishop of Avila. Upon his death, Charles V eulogized him as “one of the best knights in the world.”
Despite the tributes offered by his friends and admirers, the fruits of Castiglione’s political life were decidedly mixed. Castiglione had difficult relations with several of his patrons, a fairly unremarkable military record, and near the end of his life he suffered the embarrassment of being caught between the rock of Pope Clement VII and the hard place of Charles V when the mutinous forces of the latter sacked Rome in 1527.\textsuperscript{50} Castiglione may have possessed the virtues of the classical gentleman, but as a courtier he had been unable to correct the decline of Italy and assist in bridging the divide between Rome and Madrid. By publishing \textit{The Book of the Courtier}, he could only hope that the fruits of his words would succeed where his deeds had failed.

Today, Castiglione’s \textit{Courtier} is primarily remembered as a book presenting the ideal of Renaissance courtiership and offering readers a window into sixteenth-century Italian court life. Its status as a work of humanist political thought is mostly forgotten by political theorists.\textsuperscript{51} In part, this is due to the very ideals it promotes. A book that once shocked for its paganism, anti-clericalism, and suspect orthodoxy—earning it a place on the Church’s Index—now offends popular conventions for a new host of reasons. As George Bull argues in the introduction to his translation of \textit{The Courtier}, it is “hard to think of any work more opposed to the spirit of the modern age.”\textsuperscript{52} While it may serve as a record of Renaissance court life, it does not strike the modern reader as immediately relatable. Thus, as Frank Lovett suggests, with its focus on the proper conduct and demeanor of the courtier, and by addressing potential courtiers rather than princes, \textit{The Courtier} came to be classified as an apolitical work.\textsuperscript{53} By acquiring this reputation, the study of Castiglione is left primarily to literary scholarship, which while providing insightful interpretations is largely concerned with the composition of Castiglione’s text.\textsuperscript{54}

Ultimately, though, the underappreciation of \textit{The Courtier} by political theorists is due to the shadow of Machiavelli looming over Castiglione and the other Renaissance mirror-for-prince’s writers. Despite offering advice to courtiers rather than princes, scholars have correctly identified \textit{The Courtier}, like Machiavelli’s \textit{The
Prince, as belonging to the mirror-for-prince genre.\textsuperscript{55} This recognition contributes to scholars viewing The Courtier as an inferior work owing to the perceived lack of “political realism” in comparison to Machiavelli. Thus, in contrast to Castiglione, Bull argues that “Machiavelli indeed has come into his own in the modern world which understands and appreciates the unabashed language of power; whereas Castiglione’s pretenses—in the context of normal social behavior or high politics—are remote.”\textsuperscript{56} Even Lovett, while arguing that Castiglione should not be dismissed and seeking to explore the political program of The Courtier, finds Castiglione to be ineffective in comparison to Machiavelli.

Interpreting the arguments in favor of principalities over republics in book IV of The Courtier to be in response to diminished opportunities for civic participation with the loss of republican government, Lovett views Castiglione’s courtier as an outlet for political ambitious citizens to engage in public service. In the absence of republican institutions, a courtier must gain the trust of one’s ruler to guide them towards benevolent government.\textsuperscript{57} In devising a political program to bring this about, Lovett concludes that Machiavelli is more effective and likelier to succeed. Where Castiglione instructs the courtier to cultivate the virtues in their prince, Machiavelli appeals to the prince’s love of power to lay the foundation for securing the prince’s rule and the security of their state. “The real would-be courtier Machiavelli, in short, outdoes the perfect courtier imagined by Castiglione—he finds more effective means to the same end.”\textsuperscript{58}

There is much to be gained from Lovett’s study, particularly its highlighting of the political dimension in Castiglione through the examination of the courtier’s political activity and the consideration of the virtues of principalities and republics. However, by not extending this analysis to the discourse on Love that follows the discussion of the political role of the courtier in book IV, Lovett ignores the connection between Castiglione’s political program and the theoretical foundation upon which he builds. This obscures Castiglione’s intention and the nature of his “idealism” vis-à-vis Machiavelli’s “realism.” Hence, my analysis of The Courtier will
focus on how Castiglione’s political teaching is developed within the contours of the classical and humanist conception of virtue and fortune to demonstrate why Castiglione does not devise an “effective” political program to respond to political disorder.

Castiglione opens *The Courtier* by writing that his only intention is to recollect the outstanding men and women of Urbino and that he made the decision to publish his manuscript when he became aware that earlier drafts of it had begun to circulate among the public. Despite his claims, it is clear that his recollections of Urbino were not simply intended to comfort himself and his friends after so much misfortune but to provide a means of cultivating virtuous courtiers and rulers. The perfect courtier is to serve as a model for the politically ambitious to follow. Castiglione admits that some may find his attempt to uncover the perfect courtier to be a vain pursuit, for it may be difficult or impossible to find or cultivate a man as perfect as he wishes the courtier to be. However, he tells us that if this is the case then he is glad to err in the company of Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero, who also sought for the Idea of the Perfect Republic, the Perfect King, and the Perfect Orator. While Machiavelli pointedly distances himself from the heroes of Renaissance humanism, Castiglione explicitly situates himself in the classical tradition, going so far as to imitate the opening lines of Cicero’s *De Oratore* at the beginning of book I of *The Courtier*.

*The Courtier* takes place over four evenings in March 1507 after Pope Julius II had passed through the region. Led by Elisabetta Gonzaga, the Duchess of Urbino, the gentlemen and ladies of the court assemble each night to discuss what they would desire in the “perfect courtier.” The Urbino that Castiglione presents us with, though, is an idealized version of history. The members of the court have been stripped of their more unappealing qualities—they have been made young and beautiful. Castiglione even follows the example of Plato by claiming that he himself was on a mission to England and only heard a report of the discussion.
The setting of *The Courtier* at the court of Urbino suggests a relaxed affair. Unlike in Machiavelli’s writings, particularly chapter XXVI of *The Prince*, there is no urgency to the discussion. We are told that the lords and ladies of the court often gather together in the company of the duchess to find ways to entertain themselves. The investigation into the perfect courtier is introduced as another “game” they will play. There is a lightness, or a sense of levity to the entire enterprise. There is none of the sense of urgency that one finds in Machiavelli’s works. The atmosphere of Castiglione’s Urbino is closer in spirit to the Baiae described by Pontano in his poems than it is to the version of the *Orti Oricellari* presided over by Fabrizio. Politics is but one of many subjects the members of the court appear to be interested in, and one is given the impression that is not the most important.

In mentioning Julius II, Castiglione reminds us that the dialogue is taking place during a time of war and upheaval in Italy (the Pope had passed through Urbino upon returning from his campaign against Bologna). But the courtiers, he shows, are not interested in the state of the military arts. While the martial virtues of the perfect courtier are initially emphasized, they quickly recede into the background. Count Lodovico recounts a humorous story of a courtier refusing a lady’s request to dance, being too focused on martial valor, and criticizing the French for believing that letters are harmful to arms. All the participants agree that a courtier who possesses only skill in fighting would be a bore; martial virtue must be complemented by grace, charm, and refinement. Pietro Bembo meanwhile insists on going farther. He argues that arms should serve only as adornment to the profession of letters, which are superior in dignity to arms as the soul is to the body. In other words, Castiglione’s characters desire to cultivate aristocratically ideal gentlemen and ladies, in which hard, martial virtues—given predominance by Machiavelli—are subordinated to the intellectual and moral virtues of the ancients.

This desire for a courtier embodying aristocratic manners is reflected by the participants themselves. The lords and ladies spend their evenings laughing, flirting, and dancing. The first and
second evenings are guided by a discussion of what qualities the group desires in their courtier. Following the lead of Federico Fregoso and Count Lodovico, the party agrees that the perfect courtier should be of noble birth, possess a natural beauty, and carry himself with grace. The courtier should vigorously pursue the practice of arms, be loyal, and have an undaunted spirit. He should be kind and avoid ostentation—only claiming the honors that he deserves. The courtier should become proficient in the arts of speaking and writing, develop into a skilled musician, and take up other forms of art, whether painting or sculpture. Finally, he should be in love with the perfect lady. The initial sketch of the perfect courtier follows Aristotle’s magnanimous man. Despite their martial attributes, the courtier’s primary virtues are good manners and habits. He is tall (but not too tall) and an excellent speaker and writer. The courtier possesses grace and wit and regularly partakes in hunting, fencing, and tennis to display his prowess and physical form. Like Pontano’s prince, the private and public behavior Castiglione’s courtier forms a unified whole.

Like the gentleman of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, the virtues of the perfect courtier serve an ethical purpose. As Lovett argues, the courtier is not an isolated “work of art” but is expected to engage in public service. Castiglione follows Palmieri’s *Civil Life* in arguing for a connection between the cultivation of individual virtue and a virtuous political community. Therefore, in book IV Ottaviano Fregoso takes up the task of explaining the end to which a perfect courtier aims. According to Ottaviano, the end of the courtier is to win the mind and favor of the prince he serves so that he can advise him and oppose the prince if he seeks to do something unworthy. The goal, then, of the courtier is to guide the prince toward the practice of virtue and bring about the possibility of virtuous rule.

Castiglione’s courtier is therefore to function as the cure to what Ottaviano calls the corruption of evil living that is besetting Italy. Arguing that “ignorance of how to govern peoples, gives rise to so many evils, so much death, destruction, burning and ruination, that it may be said to be the deadliest plague of all,”
Castiglione, like Machiavelli, argues that the root of the political crisis besetting Italy is a lack of virtue. But they disagree on what they understand virtue to be. Castiglione places himself squarely in the classical tradition by arguing that the ignorance of princes lies in a belief that reason and justice act as a bridle to their desires. Castiglione has Ottaviano follow Plato and other classics by arguing that reason must rule the passions and the prince must be brought to realize that true happiness can only be found allowing his soul to be guided by reason and justice. Ottaviano declares that “if they enjoyed true knowledge there is no doubt that they would not fall into error.” Vice for Castiglione is ignorance; virtue is knowledge. Since the courtier is in possession of the virtues and has true knowledge, they can teach the prince by example and therefore will be able to cultivate virtue in their prince. What will the prince be like once his education under the perfect courtier has been completed? “He will be very just, continent, temperate, strong and wise, full of liberality, munificence, religion and clemency; in short, he will earn glory and favor among men and God, through whose grace he will acquire that heroic virtue that will raise him above human limitations, and be capable of being regarded as a demigod rather than a mortal man.” Under the tutelage of Castiglione’s courtier, a prince will come to understand that happiness is not found in the unrestricted pursuit of the passions but by aligning themselves with the natural or divine hierarchy of ends.

Once the prince himself has become virtuous the possibility of founding a just regime enters the discussion. After debating the merits of monarchies and republics, Ottaviano and the others conclude that monarchy is preferable because it is more in accord with the rational order of the cosmos. Like Aristotle and Cicero, Castiglione assumes a differential moral and political rationality, the unequal distribution of reason. One is therefore more likely to find one virtuous individual than many. However, the monarch’s rule is not unlimited. He must assemble a council of the wisest gentlemen in their kingdom to serve as ministers and advisors. It is the duty of the good ruler to ensure that his subjects can live dignified lives in tranquility and how to make use of the fruits of leisure.
Following Aristotle and contrary to Machiavelli, Ottaviano argues that “it is wrong to always be at war and not seek to attain peace as the objective; although to be sure, some rulers suppose that their principal aim must be to subjugate their neighbors, and in consequence they incite their people to become bellicose and aggressive in rapine, murder and so forth, and they encourage this with rewards, and call it virtue.” Such an approach is impossible to sustain unless a prince wishes to conquer the world. Therefore, rulers should “make their people warlike not for lust of conquest but in order to ensure the defense of themselves and their subjects against anyone endeavoring to enslave or injure them in any way, or to expel tyrants and give good government to those who are abused or to enslave those whose nature is such as to qualify them for slavery, with the purpose of governing them fairly and bringing them peace, tranquility and leisure.”

How does Castiglione intend to set this political program in motion? Even though the discussion of the perfect courtier has led to an investigation on reforming politics, the participants never offer specific plans for political reform. The closest the participants come to offering a concrete political program is the wish of Ottaviano Fregoso and Bernardo Bibbiena that the young princes of France, England, and Spain (the future Francis I, Henry VIII, and Charles V), embodying the virtues of magnanimity, generosity, justice, prudence, and courage, will unite Christendom and join in a crusade against the Turks and Moors. But the hopes of 1507 when the dialogue is set had proven to be an impossibility twenty years later when Castiglione completed The Courtier. Far from uniting Christendom, Francis I and Charles V repeatedly went to war for hegemony in Europe in the early decades of the sixteenth century with Henry VIII often supporting one and then the other. In having his characters express a wish that we know was not fulfilled, Castiglione suggests that no political program can bring about a golden age. The travails that beset human life cannot be overcome through political means.

At this point Pietro Bembo, who has stayed silent for most of the four evenings, invokes Diotima’s Ladder, from Plato's
Symposium. Love according to Bembo is the “longing to possess beauty; and since this longing can only be for things that are known already, knowledge must always of necessity precede desire, which by its nature wishes for what is good, but of itself is blind and so cannot perceive what is good. So Nature has ruled that every appetitive faculty or desire, be accompanied by a cognitive faculty or power of understanding.”

In effect, there are three ascending levels of faculties of the soul (the senses, rational thought, and intellect), which correspond to three kinds of love. The lowest form of love is that which is based on sensual pleasure, the desire to possess the beautiful represented by the body. The second form of love is the rational, which loves the beautiful soul. Finally, the highest form of love is that which loves the beautiful itself, in its own simplicity and purity.

Once this is accomplished the courtier may leave behind the ephemeral nature of the human things and contemplate the eternal. As Bembo puts it:

So instead of directing his thoughts to the outward world, as those who must do who wish to consider bodily beauty, let him turn within himself to contemplate what he sees with the eyes of the mind, which begin to be penetrating and clear sighted once those of the body have lost the flower of their delight; and in this manner, having shed all evil, purged by the study of true philosophy, directed toward the life of the spirit, and practiced in the things of the intellect, the soul turns to contemplate its own substance, and as if awakened from deepest sleep it opens the eyes which all men possess but few use and perceives in itself a ray of light which is the true image of the angelic beauty that has been transmitted to it, and of which in turn it transmits a faint impression of the body.

It is by arriving at this peak of contemplation that we are able to “find a most happy end to our desires, true rest from our labors, a sure remedy for our miseries, a wholesome medicine for our
infirmities, a most safe harbor from the raging storms of the tempestuous sea of this life.” Bembo concludes his discourse on love with a prayer to the god Love, tying the human desire for the beautiful with the fabric of the cosmos itself. In apprehending a rational order that transcends the malignity of fortune, Bembo’s vision of divine beauty and love closely follows Manetti’s “beatitude of tranquil immortality” and Pico’s “hierarchy of potentialities.” Courtiers who embrace angelic beauty over the sensible are analogous to Alberti’s demigods who out of contempt for the transitory are able to hover above the river of fortune. After the prayer, the court realizes that the night has past, and dawn is breaking over Urbino’s hills as they depart to their bedchambers.

Castiglione’s Courtier is thus representative of classical and humanist political thought, as the education of the gentleman ultimately points beyond the acquisition of virtues of the “great souled man” and the best regime to the contemplation of the eternal and the life of true happiness. The courtier fulfills the role of the philosopher, attempting to give order to political life, educating the ruling class, and guiding the best beyond the perishable. Castiglione recognized that the Italy of his youth was doomed and that it was not within his power to restore it. However, despite the sadness he felt at the loss of so many friends, he did not despair. In sharing his recollections of Urbino, he could remind his readers of the virtuous men and women he had known to provide models to be emulated in the future.

Idealism and Realism Revisited
We began by observing that Machiavelli’s repudiates humanist political thought because he perceived it to be unrealistic. In adhering to the standards of imaginary principalities and republics, humanist writers lessened the importance of achieving power, glory, and liberty for the actual cities. Under the influence of humanism, political writers and statesmen neglected questions of political necessity. They fiddled while Rome burned. In place of a rationally ordered universe Machiavelli sees fortune as an irrational flux of happenstance. Lacking a telos, it is left to the statesman to
subdue fortune through their creative will rather than be subdued by it. Machiavelli’s intention, therefore, is to advance a political science that offers at least the possibility of overcoming the cycle of regimes, of securing a prince and people’s well-being from the malignity of fortune.

As we have also seen, however, while Castiglione’s political program in response to political disorder is also grounded on an apprehension of the cosmos and the human being’s place within it, that program is one he shares with earlier classical and humanist thinkers. For Castiglione, human beings need to submit and reconcile themselves to the divine rational order. Because the cosmos is rationally ordered, the human telos is prescribed from a transhuman source. While there is space for rulers and citizens to grapple with everyday political life prudentially, human freedom is far more circumscribed than it is for Machiavelli, as there is no room for imposing modes and orders. Therefore, while Castiglione is not insensitive to the suffering meted out by the reversals in fortune, his response to it is passive rather than active. He echoes the lesson of Plutarch “that although fate may defeat the efforts of virtue to avert misfortune, it cannot deprive us of the power to endure it with equanimity.”

The interpretation of Machiavelli forwarded by Gilbert, Skinner, and other scholars as the proponent of a realistic political science therefore requires modification. While Machiavelli presents himself as a hardheaded realist articulating a practical political method in contrast to the soft dreamers of imaginary republics and principalities, his optimism in the possibility of political power to counter disorder far outstrips the hopes of humanist and classical writers. In understanding human beings as situated within a rational order, humanist and classical thinkers view human power to be restricted and the ability of political action to confront the reversals of fortune to be limited. Therefore, their political teaching is one of austere endurance and equanimity dedicated to encouraging the intellectual and moral virtues to lessen human vulnerability to misfortune. Machiavelli, by contrast, struck by the impotence of the Italian powers to resist French and Spanish
aggression and taking the political turmoil as indicative of a disorderly cosmos, is forced to find salvation in politics rather than faith in the Christian God or the cultivation of the classical virtues. Thus, his ostensibly realistic conception of politics and human nature leads him to embrace political idealism.

If we recall, Gilbert argues that the cataclysm of the French invasion of 1494 served as the impetus for Machiavelli to develop a realistic political science to modify the idealism of humanism. It is perhaps more accurate, however, to follow Eric Voegelin in arguing that the trauma of 1494 impressed Machiavelli to the extent that he came to see the mystery of power as the whole of politics and human nature to the point that “his picture of reality is out of focus.”82 It was this picture of reality that convinced him of the need for political mastery. Castiglione in contrast does not accept Machiavelli’s vision of politics because he shares the classical and humanist view that “the disorder of human things is never complete chaos. Ultimately this disorder represents the periphery of a sensibly ordered universe that under any circumstances would have its periphery.”83

Notes
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4. Ibid., 94, 96.
5. Ibid., 97, 98.
6. Ibid., 134–35.
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19. After the publication of *The Art of War*, Buondelmonti, della Palla, and Alamanni would go into exile after a plot to restore Machiavelli’s
former political patron Piero Soderini was exposed. Buondelmonti and Alamanni are the dedicatees of *The Life of Castruccio Castracani*, and Buondelmonti is also a dedicatee of the *Discourses* along with Cosimo Rucellai. Cosimo’s early death in 1519 makes it impossible to know whether his loyalty to his family’s alliance with the Medici would have outweighed his Machiavellian education. See Maurizio Viroli, *Niccolò’s Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli*, trans. Antony Shuguar (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2000), and J. N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985), 117–21. For the role played by the *Orti Oricellari* in the development of Florentine political thought, see Felix Gilbert, “Bernardo Rucellai and the Orti Oricellari,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 12 (1949), 101–31.


21. While scholarly opinion generally assumes Fabrizio speaks for Machiavelli, this assumption is challenged by Harvey Mansfield, who claims that it is Cosimo and his friends that stand in for Machiavelli as they undermine Fabrizio throughout the dialogue; see Mansfield’s *Machiavelli’s Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 194–98, 202. Despite Mansfield’s oftentimes insightful analysis in the end I find his conclusions unconvincing and prefer Christopher Lynch’s position that Fabrizio is a restrained version of Machiavelli himself. See Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, trans. Christopher Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), xxv.


26. Pontano’s *On Fortune* is referenced by Francesco Vettori in a letter to Machiavelli in 1514. See Machiavelli, *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their
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30. In his defense of his grandfather Cosimo lists the maniacal wisdom of Diogenes, the beastial courage of the Spartans, and the austere restraint of the early Romans but drops the fourth cardinal virtue, justice. In addition, the three virtues that are named are taken to their extreme, and there is no mention of Plato or Ficino. See Lynch, “Interpretative Essay,” in The Art of War, 220–24.


32. Ibid., P.14.59.

33. Ibid., P.18.69.

34. Ibid., D.III, 22.

35. Ibid., P.24.96–97.


40. Viroli, Redeeming the Prince. Compare with Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli, and Zuckert, Machiavelli’s Politics.

41. Harvey Mansfield observes that everyone knows that Machiavelli’s use of the word virtù is exceptional, forcing scholars to attempt to define it and giving translators difficulty rendering it. Mansfield, Machiavelli’s Virtue, 6–7. As Newell points out, Machiavelli plays on the ambiguity of the concept of excellence to replace the classical argument that virtue is achieved by reconciling ourselves with the pattern of nature with a new definition of virtue as mastery or the strength to oppose nature. Newell, Tyranny: A New Interpretation, 232. See also Isaiah Berlin, “The Originality of Machiavelli,” in Against the Current (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 25–79; Mark Hulliung, Citizen Machiavelli (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Pocock, Machiavellian Moment, chapters 6 and 7; Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, vol. I, chapters 2 and 3; and Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), 195–238.
43. Ibid., P.6.23.
44. Ibid., P.26.104.
45. Ibid., D.I.26–7, 6.4; II.1.
46. Ibid., D.III.17; II.29.3.
51. The Courtier went through more than a hundred editions in its first century, was translated into multiple languages, and was said to be one of the books Charles V kept at his bedside (possibly alongside either Machiavelli’s Prince or Discourses). See Burke, Fortunes of the Courtier, 58, 61–66, 158–62; and Joseph Anthony Mazzio, Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of European Thought (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 131.
52. George Bull, “Introduction,” in Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 15. As Bull notes, The Courtier earned the suspicion of ecclesiastical authorities almost immediately upon its publication. Emilia Pia, one of the most prominent figures in the dialogue, caused a scandal when she died discussing passages of The Courtier rather than taking the sacraments of the Church, and when Castiglione’s son sought to prepare a new edition in 1576, the authorities insisted on “corrections” to the text.
54. For examples of the literary study of Castiglione, see Ghino Ghinassi, “Fasi dell’elaborazione del Cortegiano,” Studi di Filologia Italiana, vol. 25 (1967), 155–96; José Guidi, “De l’amour courtois à l’amour sacré: La condition de la femme dans l’oeuvre de Baldessare Castiglione,”
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57. Lovett, “Path of the Courtier,” 603.
58. Ibid., 604.
61. As Bull points out, Castiglione would have returned from England a month before the suggested dating of the four evenings the dialogue takes place over. Castiglione, The Courtier, 360.
63. Ibid., 54–55.
64. Consider Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1109b30–1119a18, 1119a20–1128b36. Lovett finds the discussion of the courtier’s manners curious and noteworthy that such weight is given to apparently frivolous things. Lovett, “Path of the Courtier,” 593–94. Lovett’s and other readers’ difficulty with Castiglione’s focus on the articulation of the proper manners of the courtier reflects the divide between classical and modern virtue. As Karl Löwith demonstrates, the Greek and Chinese concern with manners seems trivial because those of us brought up within a religious or postreligious tradition do not think of morals in terms of manners. For the classics and humanists, morals are mores. The orderliness of the gentleman reflects the rational order of the cosmos. See Karl Löwith, Nature, History, and Existentialism, ed. Arnold Levison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 204–13.
66. Lovett, “Path of the Courtier,” 600.


69. Ibid., 287.

70. Ibid., 293.

71. Castiglione, *The Courtier*, 299. The description of the virtuous prince as a demigod rather than a mortal man owes far more to a pagan mindset than a Christian one—yet another indication of why the Church was somewhat suspicious of Castiglione and his work. Nor is Castiglione’s discussion of the virtues the only element of *The Courtier* that the Church found unpalatable. As Skinner notes, Castiglione’s discussion of fortune in the text eventually landed *The Courtier* on the Index for the heresy of attributing so much power to a pagan deity. Skinner, *Foundations*, 120.


73. Ibid., 303.

74. Ibid., 309. Lovett interprets Castiglione’s preference for monarchies through the lens of contemporary civic republicanism, viewing the goal of “peace, tranquility, and leisure” as a version of the desire to be left alone as understood by negative liberty. Lovett, “Path of the Courtier,” 602–3. Ottaviano’s reference to “spiritual riches,” however, indicates Castiglione is thinking more along the lines of Aristotle. The purpose of political community is not freedom but virtue.


76. Long sections of Francesco Guicciardini’s *History of Italy* are devoted to the constant plots, summits, and wars fought between these three rulers to the point that one can forget who is opposing who with who’s support.


78. Ibid., 339–40.

79. Ibid., 341.


