

Niccolò Machiavelli

Il Principe The Prince

Dual Edition: Original and
Clear Modern English

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Il Principe | The Prince

In Clear and Accessible English



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In Clear and Accessible English

This bilingual edition presents the full original text alongside a clear, carefully adapted English version. The English rendering is not a free literary translation, but a close, sentence-by-sentence translation designed to convey meaning directly and precisely. Only the language level is adjusted; structure, content, and meaning remain fully intact. Nothing is cut, omitted, or simplified in substance. The original text remains visible at all times, allowing direct comparison of wording and structure.

In the clear version, sentences are set line by line to support orientation and reading flow, especially in longer or denser passages. This layout is intentional and supports focused reading and close bilingual comparison.

Reading complex texts with clarity and confidence

This Dual Edition offers the original text together with a clear modern English version, presented side by side. The format is designed for readers who need to work through demanding texts carefully, whether by choice or by requirement.

It is especially helpful in homeschooling and classroom settings, including high school and college study, history and humanities courses, and ESL learning. When time, experience, or reading practice is limited, the clear version supports steady progress without breaking contact with the original text.

Additionally, glossaries explain difficult terms where needed, and short summaries support overall comprehension. This allows readers to meet

academic or curricular demands with greater confidence, less frustration, and full awareness of the text's structure and ideas.

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Note from the Editor

A Word about the Word "Prince"

Machiavelli's *Il Principe* is usually translated as *The Prince*, but the word "prince" itself requires a word of explanation. In English today the word denotes a hereditary title or a king's son; it belongs, in other words, to the world of ranks of nobility.

In Italian, then as now, "principe" refers above all to whoever holds supreme political power in a state, however that power was acquired, and not primarily to a rank within a noble hierarchy.

A modern reader might think of heads of state, military rulers, or party leaders, but also of any figure who exercises real authority over an organization or community.

For this edition we considered rendering the word as "leader", which at first glance seems a natural fit. But that term is both broader and weaker than what Machiavelli intended, covering too many kinds of authority that lie outside his concern.

We have therefore kept the original term “prince”, because it more accurately reflects the specific political role at the center of this work.

Although Machiavelli wrote about the rulers of Renaissance Italy, his observations on power, loyalty, reputation, and decision-making reach well beyond that world.

And that is, after all, why *The Prince* is still read and argued over today.

But we leave it to the reader to decide for themselves how far those observations extend, and to whom, today, they apply.

Dedication

Niccolò Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici

Sogliono, el più delle volte,
coloro che desiderano
acquistare grazia appresso
uno Principe, farseli incontro
con quelle cose che infra le
loro abbino più care, o delle
quali vegghino lui più
delettarsi; donde si vede
molte volte essere loro
presentati cavalli, arme,
drappi d'oro, prete preziose e
simili ornamenti, degni della
grandezza di quelli.
Desiderando io adunque,
offerirmi, alla vostra
Magnificenzia con qualche

Those who wish to gain the favor of
a prince usually present him with
the things they value most
themselves or believe will please
him most greatly.

For this reason, princes are often
given horses, weapons, cloth of
gold, precious stones, and other
ornaments worthy of their
greatness.

Therefore, wishing to present
myself before your Magnificence
with some proof of my devotion, I
have searched among my

testimone della servitù mia verso di quella, non ho trovato intra la mia suppellettile cosa, quale io abbia più cara o tanto esístimi quanto la cognizione delle azioni delli uomini grandi, imparata con una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne et una continua lezione delle antique: le quali avendo io con gran diligenza lungamente escogitate et esaminate, et ora in uno piccolo volume ridotte, mando alla Magnificenzia Vostra. E benché io iudichi questa opera indegna della presenza di quella, tamen confido assai che per sua umanità li debba essere accetta, considerato come da me non li possa esser fatto maggiore dono, che darle facultà di potere in brevissimo tempo intendere

possessions for something worthy of such a purpose.

Yet I have found nothing more precious to me, nor anything I value more highly, than my knowledge of the actions of great men.

I gained this knowledge through long experience of modern affairs and through constant study of ancient history.

I have examined these matters carefully and reflected upon them for many years.

And after considering them with the greatest diligence, I have gathered them into this small volume and now send it to your Magnificence.

Although I judge this work unworthy of your presence, I nevertheless trust that your humanity will lead you to accept it kindly.

For I cannot offer you a greater gift than the ability to understand, within a very short time, everything

tutto quello che io in tanti anni e con tanti mia disagi e pericoli ho conosciuto. La quale opera io non ho ornata né ripiena di clausule ample, o di parole ampullose e magnifiche, o di qualunque altro lenocinio o ornamento estrinseco con li quali molti sogliono le loro cose descrivere et ornare; perché io ho voluto, o che veruna cosa la onori, o che solamente la varietà della materia e la gravità del subietto la facci grata. Né voglio sia reputata presunzione se uno uomo di basso et infimo stato ardisce discorrere e regolare e' governi de' principi; perché, cosí come coloro che disegnano e' paesi si pongano bassi nel piano a considerare la natura de' monti e de' luoghi alti, e per

I have learned over many years through great hardships and many dangers.

I have not adorned this work with elaborate phrases, grand language, magnificent expressions, or any of the external ornaments with which many writers decorate their works.

For I wished either that nothing should give it distinction or that only the variety of its subject matter and the seriousness of its theme should make it worthy of attention.

Nor do I wish it to be considered presumptuous that a man of low and humble condition dares to discuss and judge the governments of princes.

For those who draw maps place themselves in the plains to study the nature of mountains and high places.

considerare quella de' bassi
si pongano alto sopra monti,
similmente, a conoscere
bene la natura de' populi,
bisogna essere principe, et a
conoscere bene quella de'
principi, bisogna essere
popolare.

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 dentro 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,

And to study the nature of the
plains, they place themselves upon
mountains.

In the same way, one must be a
prince to understand the nature of
the people properly.

And one must belong to the people
to understand the nature of princes
properly.

Therefore, let your Magnificence
accept this small gift in the spirit in
which I send it.

If you examine it carefully and read
it with attention, you will discover
within it my deepest desire.

It is my wish that you may attain
that greatness which fortune and
your own abilities promise you.

And if your Magnificence, from the
height of your position, should
sometimes turn your eyes toward
these lower places, you will see how
undeservedly I endure the great
and continual hostility of fortune.

conoscerà quanto io
indegnamente sopporti una
grande e continua malignità
di fortuna.

Key points: Those who seek favor from a prince typically bring expensive physical gifts. What is offered here instead is knowledge of the actions of great rulers, gained through long study of history and direct experience of political life. Just as a painter steps back to see a landscape clearly, a man of humble station may understand princes more clearly than princes understand themselves.

Chapter 1

How Many Kinds of Principalities There Are, and How They Are Acquired

Tutti li stati, tutti e' dominii che hanno avuto et hanno imperio sopra li uomini, sono stati e sono o repubbliche o principati. E' principati sono o ereditarii, de' quali el sangue del loro signore ne sia suto lungo tempo principe, o e' sono nuovi. E' nuovi, o sono nuovi tutti, come fu Milano a Francesco Sforza, o sono come membri aggiunti allo stato ereditario del principe che li acquista, come è el regno di Napoli al re di

All states and all dominions that have held and continue to hold power over men have been and still are either republics or principalities. Principalities are either hereditary, in which the ruling family has governed for a long time, or they are new.

And new principalities are either entirely new, like Milan under Francesco Sforza, or they are added as territories joined to the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them, as the Kingdom of

Spagna. Sono questi dominii
cosí acquistati, o consueti a
vivere sotto uno principe, o
usi ad essere liberi; et
acquistonsi, o con le armi
d'altri o con le proprie, o per
fortuna o per virtù.

Naples was joined to the King of
Spain.

States acquired in this way are
either accustomed to living under a
prince or used to living freely.

And they are acquired either
through the arms of others or
through one's own arms, either
through fortune or through ability.

Key points: All states are either republics or principalities. Principalities are either hereditary or new, and new ones are either entirely new or added to an existing state. They are acquired by one's own arms or those of others, and either by fortune or by ability.

Chapter 2

On Hereditary Principalities

lo lascerò indietro el
ragionare delle repubbliche,
perché altra volta ne ragionai
a lungo. Volterommi solo al
principato, et andrò tessendo
li orditi soprascritti, e
disputerò come questi
principati si possono
governare e mantenere.

Dico, adunque, che nelli stati
ereditarii et assuefatti al
sangue del loro principe sono
assai minori difficoltà a
mantenerli che ne' nuovi;
perché basta solo non
preterire l'ordine de' sua
antinati, e di poi

I will leave aside discussion of
republics because I have written
about them at length elsewhere.
Rather, I will turn only to
principalities and follow the order
already described above.
And I will examine how such
principalities may be governed and
maintained.

I say, therefore, that hereditary
states, accustomed to the family of
their prince, are far easier to
maintain than new states.
For it is enough that the prince does
not abandon the customs of his
ancestors and that he knows how to

temporeggiare con li
accidenti; in modo che, se
tale principe è di ordinaria
industria, sempre si manterrà
nel suo stato, se non è una
extraordinaria et eccessiva
forza che ne lo privi, e
privato che ne fia,
quantunque di sinistro abbi
l'occupatore, lo riacquista.

Noi abbiamo in Italia, in
exemplis, el duca di Ferrara,
il quale non ha retto alli
assalti de' Viniziani nello 84,
né a quelli di papa Iulio nel
10, per altre cagioni che per
essere antiquato in quello
dominio. Perché el principe
naturale ha minori cagioni e
minore necessità di
offendere: donde conviene
che sia più amato; e se
extraordinarii vizii non lo

adapt himself to changing
circumstances.

Thus, if such a prince possesses
ordinary ability, he will always
maintain himself in his state unless
an extraordinary and overwhelming
force deprives him of it.

And even if he is deprived of it, he
will recover it whenever the
occupier suffers any serious
misfortune.

In Italy, we have the example of the
Duke of Ferrara:

He survived the attacks of the
Venetians in 1484 and those of
Pope Julius in 1510 for no reason
other than the ancient strength of
his rule in that state.

For a natural prince has fewer
reasons and less need to offend his
subjects.

As a result, he is naturally more
loved.

fanno odiare, è ragionevole che naturalmente sia benevoluto da' sua. E nella antichità e continuazione del dominio sono spente le memorie e le cagioni delle innovazioni: perché sempre una mutazione lascia lo addentellato per la edificazione dell'altra.

And unless extraordinary vices make him hated, it is reasonable that his people will feel affection toward him.

In long-established states, the memory of earlier changes and the causes that produced them gradually disappear.

For one political change always leaves behind the foundation for another.

But long continuity weakens those memories over time.

Key points: Hereditary principalities are easier to hold than new ones. A ruler who governs by established tradition needs only to adapt carefully to changing circumstances. Even if temporarily overthrown, he can usually recover, since the population remains loyal to a familiar ruling line.

Chapter 3

On Mixed Principalities

Ma nel principato nuovo consistono le difficoltà. E prima, se non è tutto nuovo, ma come membro, che si può chiamare tutto insieme quasi misto, le variazioni sua nascono in prima da una naturale difficoltà, la quale è in tutti e' principati nuovi: le quali sono che li uomini mutano volentieri signore, credendo migliorare; e questa credenza gli fa pigliare l'arme contro a quello; di che s'ingannono, perché veggono poi per esperienza avere peggiorato. Il che dipende da un'altra necessità

But difficulties arise in *new* principalities.

First, when a new territory is joined to an older state, the result is a *mixed* principality.

Such states are unstable for a reason found in all new principalities.

Men willingly change rulers because they believe they will improve their condition.

This belief causes them to take up arms against their prince.

But they deceive themselves:

They discover quickly that their condition has become worse.

This too comes from another natural and common necessity.

naturale et ordinaria, quale fa che sempre bisogni offendere quelli di chi si diventa nuovo principe, e con gente d'arme, e con infinite altre iniurie che si tira dietro el nuovo acquisto; in modo che tu hai inimici tutti quelli che hai offesi in occupare quello principato, e non ti puoi mantenere amici quelli che vi ti hanno messo, per non li potere soddisfare in quel modo che si erano presupposto e per non potere tu usare contro di loro medicine forti, sendo loro obligato; perché sempre, ancora che uno sia fortissimo in sulli eserciti, ha bisogno del favore de' provinciali a intrare in una provincia. Per queste ragioni Luigi XII re di Francia occupò subito Milano, e subito lo perdé; e bastò a torgnene la prima volta le

A new prince is always forced to burden his new subjects with soldiers and with countless other injuries that come with conquest. As a result, all those you harmed during the conquest become your enemies.

And you cannot keep as friends those who helped place you there, because you cannot satisfy them in the way they expected.

Nor can you use harsh measures against them, since you remain obligated to them.

For no matter how strong a prince's armies may be, he always needs the support of the local population in order to enter a province.

For these reasons, Louis XII, King of France, quickly occupied Milan and just as quickly lost it.

And the forces of Ludovico alone were enough to take it back the first time.

Glossary

Sometimes a difficult or unusual word just can't be avoided. This glossary gives short, clear explanations for such terms, always based on how they're used in the text. It helps you follow the meaning more easily and read with greater confidence. Especially useful if you want to be sure you've understood everything correctly.

Gothic: Relating to the Goths, the Germanic peoples whose invasions contributed to the fall of the Western Roman Empire; Machiavelli uses the term to refer to the barbarian incursions that reshaped Italy's political landscape.

Messer: An Italian honorific title equivalent to "Sir" or "Master", used to address men of rank, learning, or civic standing.

Parsimony: Extreme reluctance to spend money; excessive thrift. Machiavelli discusses parsimony as a quality that, while it may harm a prince's reputation, ultimately preserves his resources and avoids burdening his subjects.

Praetor: A senior magistrate in ancient Rome responsible for administering justice and governing provinces; used by Machiavelli as an example of Roman methods of controlling conquered territories.

The Turk: Machiavelli's term for the Ottoman Sultan and his empire, used as a model of centralised despotic rule in which all power flows from a single ruler through appointed servants rather than through independent nobles.

affability: A friendly and approachable manner; Machiavelli lists it among the qualities a prince should appear to possess in order to maintain the goodwill of his subjects.

arbiters → arbiter: Those who have the power to judge or decide between competing parties; Machiavelli uses the term for states or rulers who hold the balance of power in a conflict.

arms: Military force; the soldiers, weapons, and means of war by which a ruler acquires and defends power. Machiavelli regards arms as the essential foundation of all stable rule.

chastity: Sexual restraint and fidelity; listed by Machiavelli among the virtues a prince should appear to possess, particularly to maintain the respect of his subjects.

dissembler: One who conceals his true intentions or character behind a false appearance; Machiavelli argues that a successful prince must be a skilled dissembler, presenting virtues he may not actually possess.

extortions → extortion: The use of force or threats to extract money or compliance from others; Machiavelli warns princes against permitting officials to practice extortion, as it breeds hatred among the people.

fickle: Changeable and unreliable in loyalty or opinion; Machiavelli describes the common people as fickle, easily swayed by immediate circumstances and quick to abandon a prince in adversity.

guilds → guild: Organised associations of craftsmen or merchants controlling the practice of a trade in a city; Machiavelli refers to them as part of the civic bodies a prince must manage to maintain order in urban communities.

hereditary: Passed down through family succession; Machiavelli argues that hereditary princes face fewer difficulties in maintaining power because their subjects are accustomed to their rule.

imperial power: The supreme authority of an emperor over a large territory; used by Machiavelli in discussing how Rome and other great powers extended and maintained dominion over subject states.

miserly: Unwilling to spend money; excessively tight with resources. Machiavelli distinguishes productive parsimony from destructive miserliness, which prevents a prince from rewarding loyalty and defending his state.

prince: In Machiavelli's usage, any ruler who holds sovereign power over a state, whether a hereditary monarch, an elected leader, or one who has seized power by force or ability.

principalities → principality: States or territories ruled by a prince; the basic unit of political analysis in *The Prince*, classified by Machiavelli according to how they are acquired and governed.

prudence: The ability to judge situations correctly and act wisely; for Machiavelli, a cardinal political virtue consisting in choosing the lesser of evils and adapting one's conduct to circumstances.

rapacious: Aggressively greedy; seizing the property of others by force. Machiavelli warns that a prince who becomes rapacious will be hated, which is the most dangerous condition he can bring upon himself.

sackings → sacking: The violent plundering of a captured city, in which soldiers loot property and harm inhabitants; Machiavelli cites the threat of sacking as evidence of the dangers that follow from a prince's weakness or generosity with military forces.

seize Italy with chalk: A phrase attributed to Charles VIII of France, meaning that he conquered Italy without resistance, needing only chalk to mark billets for his troops rather than weapons to fight his way through; Machiavelli uses it to illustrate Italy's political weakness and disunity.