

excerpts from *The Prince*

by Niccolò Machiavelli

CHAPTER I: HOW MANY KINDS OF PRINCIPALITIES THERE ARE, AND BY WHAT MEANS THEY ARE ACQUIRED

[1] All states, all powers, that have held and hold rule over men have been and are either republics or principalities.

[2] Principalities are either hereditary, in which the family has been long established; or they are new.

The new are either entirely new, as was Milan to Francesco Sforza, or they are, as it were, members annexed to the hereditary state of the prince who has acquired them, as was the kingdom of Naples to that of the King of Spain.

[3] Such dominions thus acquired are either accustomed to live under congratulations a prince, or to live in freedom; and are acquired either by the arms of the prince himself, or of others, or else by fortune or by ability.

CHAPTER XIV: THAT WHICH CONCERNS A PRINCE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE ART OF WAR

[4] A prince ought to have no other aim or thought, nor select anything else for his study, than war and its rules and discipline; for this is the sole art that belongs to him who rules, and it is of such force that it not only upholds those who are born princes, but it often enables men to rise from a private station to that rank. And, on the contrary, it is seen that when princes have thought more of ease than of arms they have lost their states. And the first cause of your losing it is to neglect this art; and what enables you to acquire a state is to be master of the art.

[5] Francesco Sforza, through being martial, from a private person became Duke of Milan; and the sons, through avoiding the hardships and troubles of arms, from dukes became private persons. For among other evils which being unarmed brings you, it causes you to be despised, and this is one of those ignominies against which a prince ought to guard himself, as is shown later on. Because there is nothing proportionate between the armed and the unarmed; and it is not reasonable that he who is armed should yield obedience willingly to him who is unarmed, or that the unarmed man should be secure among armed servants. Because, there being in the one disdain and in the other suspicion, it is not possible for them to work well together. And therefore a prince who does not understand the art of war, over and above the other misfortunes already mentioned, cannot be respected by his soldiers, nor can he rely on them.

40 [6] He ought never, therefore, to have out of his thoughts this subject of war, and in peace he should addict himself more to its exercise than in war; this he can do in two ways, the one by action, the other by study. As regards action, he ought above all things to keep his men well organized and drilled, to follow incessantly the chase, by which he accustoms his body to hardships, and learns something of the nature of localities, and gets to find out how the mountains rise, how the valleys open out, how the plains lie, and to understand the nature of rivers and marshes, and in all this to take the greatest care.

50 [7] Which knowledge is useful in two ways. Firstly, he learns to know his country, and is better able to undertake its defense; afterwards, by means of the knowledge and observation of that locality, he understands with ease any other which it may be necessary for him to study hereafter; because the hills, valleys, and plains, and rivers and marshes that are, for instance, in Tuscany, have a certain resemblance to those of other countries, so that with a knowledge of the aspect of one country one can easily arrive at a knowledge of others. And the prince that lacks this skill lacks the essential which it is desirable that a captain should possess, for it teaches him to surprise his enemy, to select quarters, to lead armies, to array the battle, to besiege towns to advantage.

60 [8] Philopoemen, Prince of the Achaeans, among other praises which writers have bestowed on him, is commended because in time of peace he never had anything in his mind but the rules of war; and when he was in the country with friends, he often stopped and reasoned with them: "If the enemy should be upon that hill, and we should find ourselves here with our army, with whom would be the advantage? How should one best advance to meet him, keeping the ranks? If we should wish to retreat, how ought we to pursue?" And he would set forth to them, as he went, all the chances that could befall an army; he would listen to their opinion and state his, confirming it with reasons, so that by these continual discussions there could never arise, in time of war, any unexpected circumstances that he could not deal with.

70 [9] But to exercise the intellect the prince should read histories, and study there the actions of illustrious men, to see how they have borne themselves in war, to examine the causes of their victories and defeat, so as to avoid the latter and imitate the former; and above all do as an illustrious man did, who took as an exemplar one who had been praised and famous before him, and whose achievements and deeds he always kept in his mind, as it is said Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar Alexander, Scipio Cyrus. And whoever reads the life of Cyrus, written by Xenophon, will recognize afterwards in the life of Scipio how that imitation was his glory, and how in chastity, affability, humanity, and liberality Scipio conformed to those things which have been written of Cyrus by Xenophon. A wise prince ought to observe some such rules, and never in peaceful times stand idle, but increase his resources with industry in such a way that they may be available to him in adversity, so that if fortune chances it may find him prepared to resist her blows.

**CHAPTER XVII:
CONCERNING CRUELTY AND CLEMENCY,
AND WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO BE LOVED THAN FEARED**

80 [10] Coming now to the other qualities mentioned above, I say that every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel.

[11] Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; notwithstanding, his cruelty reconciled the Romagna (Rome), unified it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. And if this be rightly considered, he will be seen to have been much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid a reputation for cruelty, permitted Pistoia to be destroyed. Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow disorders to arise, from which follow murders or robberies; for these are wont to injure the whole people, whilst those executions which originate with a prince offend the individual only.

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[12] And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to avoid the imputation of cruelty, owing to new states being full of dangers. Hence Virgil, through the mouth of Dido, excuses the inhumanity of her reign owing to its being new, saying: "*Res dura, et regni novitas me talia cogunt Moliri, et late fines custode tueri.*" [. . . against my will, my fate / A throne unsettled, and an infant state / Bid me defend my realms with all my pow'rs / And guard with these severities my shores.] Nevertheless he ought to be slow to believe and to act, nor should he himself show fear, but proceed in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence may not make him incautious and too much distrust render him intolerable.

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[13] Upon this a question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with. Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children, as is said above, when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you. And that prince who, relying entirely on their promises, has neglected other precautions, is ruined; because friendships that are obtained by payments, and not by greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned, but they are not secured, and in time of need cannot be relied upon; and men have less scruple in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared, for love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.

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[14] Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred; because he can endure very well being feared whilst he is not hated, which will always be as long as he abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women. But when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it on proper justification and for manifest cause, but above all

120 things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men more quickly forget
 the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Besides, pretexts for taking away
 the property are never wanting; for he who has once begun to live by robbery will always
 find pretexts for seizing what belongs to others; but reasons for taking life, on the contrary,
 are more difficult to find and sooner lapse. But when a prince is with his army, and has
 under control a multitude of soldiers, then it is quite necessary for him to disregard the
 reputation of cruelty, for without it he would never hold his army united or disposed to its
 duties.

130 [15] Among the wonderful deeds of Hannibal this one is enumerated: that having led an
 enormous army, composed of many various races of men, to fight in foreign lands, no
 dissensions arose either among them or against the prince, whether in his bad or in his
 good fortune. This arose from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty, which, with his
 boundless valor, made him revered and terrible in the sight of his soldiers, but without
 that cruelty, his other virtues were not sufficient to produce this effect. And short-sighted
 writers admire his deeds from one point of view and from another condemn the principal
 cause of them. That it is true his other virtues would not have been sufficient for him may
 be proved by the case of Scipio, that most excellent man, not only of his own times but
 within the memory of man, against whom, nevertheless, his army rebelled in Spain; this
 arose from nothing but his too great forbearance, which gave his soldiers more license
 than is consistent with military discipline. For this he was upbraided in the Senate by
 140 Fabius Maximus, and called the corrupter of the Roman soldiery. The Locrians were laid
 waste by a legate of Scipio, yet they were not avenged by him, nor was the insolence of
 the legate punished, owing entirely to his easy nature. Insomuch that someone in the
 Senate, wishing to excuse him, said there were many men who knew much better how
 not to err than to correct the errors of others. This disposition, if he had been continued in
 the command, would have destroyed in time the fame and glory of Scipio; but, he being
 under the control of the Senate, this injurious characteristic not only concealed itself, but
 contributed to his glory.

150 [16] Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I come to the conclusion that,
 men loving according to their own will and fearing according to that of the prince, a wise
 prince should establish himself on that which is in his own control and not in that of
 others; he must endeavor only to avoid hatred, as is noted.

