CHAPTER I

Another philosophy

> There is another philosophy that is better suited for political action, that takes its cue, adapts itself to the drama in hand, and acts its part neatly and well.
>
> Sir Thomas More

In Machiavelli's most famous comedy, *La mandragola* (1518), the desperately love-sick Callimaco asks his clever friend, Ligurio, for help in getting into bed with the beautiful Lucrezia, the childless and unhappy wife of Nicia, a wealthy merchant and "the simplest and most stupid man of Florence."[1] Ligurio, a former marriage-broker, who now is said to "make his living out of deceiving people," accepts the assignment.[2] Acting as something of a playwright in the play, at one point likening himself to a military captain giving orders to his troops before going into battle, Ligurio selects his cast, invents his plot, and sets it in motion. Busy attending to things big and small, he provides the other characters with motivations, reasons, and pretexts for their actions, and coaches and supervises their performances. When he first introduces Callimaco to Nicia, presenting him as a famous physician at the court of the king of France, he carefully constructs his friend's fictitious character, his *ethos*, so that it will impose itself on the merchant, and win his trust. Knowing that unlettered men like Nicia are easily impressed by people who have a knowledge of Latin, he encourages Callimaco to embellish his speech with a store of Latin stock phrases and maxims. Predictably enough, Nicia is taken in by the charade and comes to view Callimaco, alias the famous physician, as a man of great dignity and worthy of faith.

Nicia yearns for an heir, and on Ligurio's advice Callimaco persuades him that the most effective way of making his wife pregnant is to prepare

[1] Niccolò Machiavelli,"La mandragola" in *Opere*, vol. IV, ed. L. Blasucci (Turin: UTET, 1989), [hereinafter *La mandragola*], p. 119: [CALLIMACO]: "el più sciocco omo di Firenze."
[2] *La mandragola*, p. 124: [CALLIMACO]: "Io lo credo, ancora che io sappia ch'e' pari tuoi vivino di uccellare gli uomini."

her for the sexual act by giving her a magic concoction made of mandrake root. The only catch, Callimaco goes on to explain, is that the power of the drink is such that it will cause the death of the first man who has intercourse with her. The ever-resourceful Ligurio has a solution at hand, though. By exploiting Nicia's simplicity, and by playing on his emotions, his vanity, and his uncontainable desire for male offspring, he makes him accept the idea of having another man sleep with Lucrezia in his place. The plan is put into effect, and the play is brought to a climatic end as Nicia, acting as the unwitting, and ridiculously happy, accomplice in his own cuckolding, leads Callimaco, now disguised as a young street-singer, into his wife's bedroom in the false belief that the youth, after having made Lucrezia pregnant, will die of the potion she has been given for the purpose.

As this brief account makes evident, *La mandragola* is a comedy imbued with rhetoric. Perhaps, it could even be argued that the main theme of the play is the art of persuasion itself, and its conspiratorial use within the private sphere. Almost every scene of the play is staged as a scene of persuasion: Ligurio filling Callimaco with hope; Ligurio insinuating himself into Nicia's confidence; Ligurio tempting Father Timoteo, the cunning priest in the play; Father Timoteo and Lucrezia's mother, Sostrata, seeking to influence Lucrezia; Callimaco exhorting Nicia; Callimaco, in a soliloquy, talking sense to and inspiring courage in himself, and so forth. A detailed study could also be made of how Machiavelli throughout the play employs the traditional functions of classical rhetoric – reason (*logos*), character (*ethos*), and emotion (*pathos*) – for persuasive ends.

The rhetorical nature of *La mandragola* is also evident from the extent to which its characters are fashioned according to their different degrees of insight into the principles and the workings of rhetorical manipulation. Ligurio acts the master rhetorician, displaying an unerring sense for *kairos* – the rhetorical situation – that is, the circumstance, the place, the time, and the persons involved, and a great capacity for improvisation. He is an exemplary specimen of what Richard Lanham has called the rhetorical man, *Homo rhetoricus*. According to Lanham's definition, this is a type of person who conceives of himself as an actor on the public stage, and has a sense of identity that "depends on the reassurance of daily histrionic reenactment." His focus is on the local and the contemporary, and his motivations are of a "ludic" and "agonistic" nature. He is trained "not to discover reality but to manipulate it," and reality for him comes therefore to be "what is accepted as reality, what is useful."[3]

[3] Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 4.

Father Timoteo is a perceptive witness to Ligurio's performance and a fairly competent con-artist himself. Callimaco is capable of dissimulation and concealment when coached by Ligurio, and is also aware of the fact that appearances and false impressions can work the same effect on a person's state of mind as realities and true emotions. At the bottom of this hierarchy, we find the gullible and self-deceiving Nicia. In contrast to Father Timoteo, who, even though he realizes that Ligurio is taking him in, plays along in the intrigue, because he believes that it will serve the interest of his church, Nicia has no grasp of what Ligurio and his companions are up to. While he is generally aware that people have designs on each other and engage in intrigues,[4] he is totally incapable of comprehending the true nature of the role he is asked to play, believing as he does that the whole plot has been set up for his sake and for the purpose of giving him a child. In a sense, it could be claimed that the personal disaster Nicia brings upon himself is a direct consequence of his failure to read Ligurio and the other characters rhetorically, and his inability to grasp their intentions, and to see how they control his responses and actions by manipulating his emotions, his sense of commonplaces, and the shortcomings of his character. Nicia, in short, is a bad interpreter of Ligurio's and the other figures' rhetorical performances.

As a play about rhetoric and deception, *La mandragola* could be read as a reflection back on Machiavelli's best-known work, *The Prince* (1513). Ligurio's mastery of persuasion, deception, and staging, and his ability to exploit the weaknesses of others, give him – and his associates – within the private sphere a power over men that resembles the political power of the Machiavellian prince. Ligurio's manipulation of Nicia can be read as an illustration or enactment of Machiavelli's dictum in *The Prince* that great pretenders will always get the better of the simple and the obedient, and that the deceiver will "always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived."[5] This analogy is fairly obvious and has often been commented upon, but could Machiavelli's comedy contain a model or blueprint for how to read *The Prince* as well? Could it be that the Florentine, by laying bare in *La mandragola* the mechanisms of rhetorical manipulation, has given us clues and interpretative tools that, if properly understood and used, will allow us to dissolve the mysteries surrounding this, his most famous masterpiece? The current study is an attempt to explore this possibility by situating Machiavelli's intellectual and political project within the contexts of classical rhetoric and early Cinquecento Florentine politics. But before

[4] Cf. *La mandragola*, p. 126: [NICIA]: "io non vorrei che mi mettessi in qualche lecceto, e poi mi lasciassi in sulle secche."

[5] Niccolò Machiavelli, "Il principe," in *Opere*, ed. C. Vivanti (3 vols., Turin: Einaudi, 1997–), 1 [hereinafter *Il principe*], p. 166: "colui che inganna troverrà sempre chi si lascerà ingannare."

we can begin to approach this important chapter in the history of Western civilization, we need to gain a firmer understanding of the form of interpretation Nicia failed to develop in *La mandragola*; in other words, we need to find out what it means to read rhetorically.

MACHIAVELLI THE RHETORICIAN

Ever since the revival of rhetoric in the 1950s, the term "rhetorical reading" has been loosely employed to describe a form of textual interpretation that focuses on how the author seeks to provoke, control, and manipulate the responses of his readers. In his now classical *Rhetoric of Fiction* of 1961, Wayne Booth discusses at length, and with explicit reference to Aristotle's poetics, how authors of fiction employ character and emotion – *ethos* and *pathos* – to engage their readers ethically and emotionally in the narrative.[6] Later in the sixties, Edward Corbett defined rhetorical reading, or rhetorical criticism, as "that mode of internal criticism which considers the interaction between the work, the author, and the audience." According to Corbett, the chief interests of rhetorical reading are in "the *product*, the *process*, and the *effect* of linguistic activity, whether of the imaginative kind or the utilitarian kind . . . It is more interested in a literary work for what it *does* than for what it *is*."[7] More recently, Thomas Sloane has claimed that rhetorical reading can be distinguished from other forms of textual close analysis by the fact that it is founded on the assumption that "language reflects a speaker's design as he confronts an audience, who he assumes are not possessed of *tabulae rasa* but of minds filled with associations, conventions, expectations, which he must direct, control, or take advantage of."[8]

In Machiavelli criticism, the term rhetoric has until recently been used almost exclusively for denoting the final chapter of *The Prince*, where Machiavelli in an ardent, patriotic appeal addresses his Medicean readers, exhorting them to liberate Italy from the barbarians.[9] Commenting on the state of Machiavelli studies some twenty-five years ago, Eugene Garver

[6] Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edn (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).
[7] Edward P. J. Corbett, *Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. xxii.
[8] Thomas O. Sloane, "Reading Milton Rhetorically," in *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1983), p. 398.
[9] For a typical example, see Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 143–44: "It is true that in the last chapter his cool and detached attitude gives way to an entirely new note. Machiavelli suddenly shakes off the burden of his logical method. His style is no longer analytical but rhetorical."

observed that *The Prince* as a whole, despite all that had been written and said about the treatise, rarely, if ever, had been defined, or interpreted, as a work of rhetoric.[10] Incredible as this remark may sound to us today, there can be no denying that it carried a great deal of truth at the time.[11] This anomaly has been abundantly compensated for in recent years, which have seen a vast, and still-growing, flood of studies emphasizing the rhetorical character of Machiavelli's work and teaching. Today, it is taken more or less for granted that Machiavelli in his youth received a formal rhetorical training and that these studies constituted an important aspect of his intellectual formation.[12] The forceful, and often manipulative, rhetoric of his Chancery writings has been studied by Jean-Jacques Marchand, Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, and Anthony Parel.[13] Theodore Sumberg has offered a perceptive and subtle rhetorical reading of Machiavelli's *Esortazione alla penitenza*,[14] and the rhetorical *bravura* displayed in his comedies, embodied by the figure of Ligurio of *La mandragola*, has received penetrating treatment from Giulio Ferroni, Wayne Rebhorn, and Harvey Mansfield.[15] Several studies have attempted to define Machiavelli's views on rhetoric and his rhetorical view of politics in relation to the general tradition of classical and humanist rhetoric. John Stephens has argued that Machiavelli's realism,

[10] Eugene Garver, "Machiavelli's *The Prince*: A Neglected Rhetorical Classic," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 13 (1980), p. 99.

[11] Kenneth Burke's oft-quoted discussion of Machiavelli's administrative rhetoric in *A Rhetoric of Motives* of 1950 had at the time received little attention from Machiavelli scholars. See Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1969), pp. 158–66. That Leo Strauss in *Thoughts on Machiavelli* of 1958 treated *The Prince* in part as a philosophical, in part as a rhetorical work, seems to have gone largely unnoticed, even by Strauss himself, who preferred to speak of the rhetorical level of the text in terms of the modern phenomenon of propaganda. See Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 172–73. Strauss also speaks (pp. 154 and 172) of Machiavelli as an unarmed captain engaging in spiritual warfare. On one occasion, he defines him (p. 45) as an artist who, in an artful way, uses examples that "are beautiful without being true." Cf. Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. xi and 4.

[12] On Machiavelli's education, see Robert Black, "Machiavelli, Servant of the Florentine Republic," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, eds. G. Bock, Q. Skinner, and M. Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 71–99.

[13] Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, *Machiavelli o la scelta della letteratura* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1987), pp. 39–61; Jean-Jacques Marchand, *Niccolò Machiavelli: I primi scritti politici (1499–1512): Nascita di un pensiero e di uno stile* (Padua: Antenore, 1975); Anthony J. Parel, "Machiavelli's Notion of Justice: Text and Analysis," *Political Theory* 18 (1990): 528–44.

[14] Theodore A. Sumberg, *Political Literature of Europe: Before and After Machiavelli* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 47–62.

[15] Giulio Ferroni, "*Mutazione*" *e* "*riscontro*" *nel teatro di Machiavelli* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1972); Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Harvey C. Mansfield, "The Cuckold in Machiavelli's *Mandragola*," in *The Comedy and Tragedy of Machiavelli: Essays on the Literary Works*, ed. V. B. Sullivan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 1–29.

his popular way of thinking, and his method based on the "effectual truth" all have their origin in the works of Cicero.[16] Recently, Virginia Cox has argued that Machiavelli's advocacy of force and deception, conceptually as well as technically, draws on the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*,[17] while Maurizio Viroli has traced elements deriving from classical rhetoric in his works.[18] Other scholars have inquired into how Machiavelli's view on rhetoric departs from that of his humanist predecessors. Special emphasis has here been given to the way in which Machiavelli extends the range of political persuasion by advocating a rhetorical use of means, such as visual displays, public rituals, sacrifices, threats, coercive action, and public executions, which traditionally had been precluded from the sphere of rhetoric.[19] Today it is also widely recognized that there exists a close analogy between the position Machiavelli, the author of *The Prince*, assumes in this work, and the role he prescribes for his princely reader: they are both innovators of new modes and orders, and they both use, or are expected to use, rhetorical deception and dissimulation to achieve their ends, the former within the sphere of discourse, the latter within that of political action.[20] In the light of this development, it is hardly an exaggeration to claim that the rhetorical approach in recent years has contributed to redirect and reshape the field of Machiavelli studies.

The present chapter contrasts the ideological readings of John Pocock and Quentin Skinner to the rhetorical approach. This discussion leads to a critical reexamination of Skinner's methodology and to a definition of the concept of rhetorical reading, which pretends to be more concise, and at the

[16] J. N. Stephens, "Ciceronian Rhetoric and the Immorality of Machiavelli's *Prince*," *Renaissance Studies* 2 (1988): 258–67. Cf. Marcia Colish, "The Idea of Liberty in Machiavelli," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971): 323–51.

[17] Virginia Cox, "Machiavelli and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: Deliberative Rhetoric in *The Prince*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 1109–41.

[18] Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 73–113.

[19] See for example Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, p. 161; Ezio Raimondi, "Machiavelli and the Rhetoric of the Warrior," *Modern Language Notes* 92 (1977): 1–16; John D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 47–63; Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 19, 36, and 52; Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, pp. 295–314.

[20] See for example Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 70–84 and 154; Claude Lefort, *Le travail de l'œuvre Machiavel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 356; Garver, "Machiavelli's *The Prince*," pp. 100–01 and 111–12; Thomas M. Greene, "The End of Discourse in Machiavelli's *Prince*," in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, eds. P. Parker and D. Quint (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 68, 70, and 77; Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, pp. 32–33; Lyons, *Exemplum*, pp. 36 and 47; Albert Russell Ascoli, "Machiavelli's Gift of Counsel," in *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, eds. A. R. Ascoli and V. Kahn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 238; Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, pp. ix–xvi, 3–5, 60–61, 125, and *passim*. Wayne Rebhorn claims that Machiavelli, by describing his new prince as "a master of disguising his motives and acts by means of some 'colore' or other," defines him as "a master rhetorician"; see Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*, p. 114.

same time more classically oriented, than current definitions of the term. In order to make explicit the general assumptions underlying the present study, I will then give a brief sketch of the methodological framework within which my own reading of *The Prince* will be performed.

IDEOLOGICAL, DIALECTICAL, AND DECONSTRUCTIONIST READINGS

Before anything else is said, it must be recognized that there exists no such thing as a well-defined rhetorical approach to Machiavelli. The numerous studies of recent date focusing on the rhetorical dimension of his work, or being pursued from a rhetorical point of view, are simply too diverse and too incongruous to allow for such a labeling. To a large extent, this diversity can be put down to the strong theoretical and methodological influences the field has come to receive of late from a variety of scholarly disciplines and approaches, such as linguistics, semiotics, speech-act theory, deconstruction, and post-structuralism. For our present purpose, though, the generic term rhetorical reading is sufficiently well understood, and yet broad enough, to allow us to describe a widespread, but far from uniform, tendency within contemporary Machiavelli research.

Since the rhetorical approach, which we have begun to outline here, in large part can be seen as a reaction to the ideological readings developed in the 1970s by John Pocock and Quentin Skinner, it would be appropriate to take their work as our point of departure. We will do so in two steps, beginning with Pocock and his critics, and then proceeding to a discussion of Skinner's methodology. Pocock's treatment of rhetoric in *The Machiavellian Moment* takes as its starting point a distinction, borrowed from Jerrold Siegel, between the philosophical outlook of the medieval schoolmen and the rhetorical mindset of the Renaissance humanists. In contrast to scholastic philosophy, which had aimed at establishing universal, timeless, and objective truth, Renaissance rhetoric was concerned with "persuading men to act, to decide, to approve" in social contexts "presupposing the presence of other men to whom the intellect was addressing itself." While philosophy subordinated particulars to universals, rhetoric was "invariably and necessarily, immersed in particular situations, particular decisions, and particular relationships."[21] According to Pocock, the intellectual outlook of the Florentine humanists, Machiavelli included, was not philosophical,

[21] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 58–59. On Pocock's approach to Machiavelli, see John H. Geerken, "Pocock and Machiavelli: Structuralist Explanation of History," *Journal of*

but predominantly and self-consciously rhetorical. Their main concern was with the active life of the citizen, and they conceived of language as "a means of action."[22] In the light of such declarations, one could have expected Pocock to treat *The Prince* and the *Discourses* as works of rhetoric, immersed in the political and social reality of interacting particulars. But instead, Pocock reads Machiavelli ideologically. *The Prince* is in his view a theoretical treatise, "inspired by a specific situation but not directed at it." The work presents us with "a typology of innovators and their relations with fortune," but its analysis is not undertaken "in the specific context of Florence." To what extent Machiavelli meant to "illuminate the problems faced by the restored Medici in their government of Florence" must therefore remain a matter of speculation.[23] How, then, are we to understand Pocock's claim that Machiavelli was a rhetorician, and not a political philosopher? Machiavelli's works were rhetorical, he seems to argue, because they aimed at reconstituting "a world of civic action" and bringing about a revival of the ancient ideal of citizenship.[24] In the political culture that was to result from this reform, we are led to believe, rhetoric and a rhetorical understanding of politics would have a fundamental role to play.[25] So in Pocock's final analysis, Machiavelli is a rhetorician or a champion of rhetoric, who does not write rhetorically, but longs for a time when human communication and civic action will yet again be possible.

Dissatisfied with Pocock's ideological and essentially unrhetorical reading, recent scholars have sought other trajectories to approach the rhetoric of Machiavelli's texts. In an unorthodox and highly demanding study, inspired

the History of Philosophy 17 (1979): 309–18; Vickie B. Sullivan, "Machiavelli's Momentary 'Machiavellian Moment': A Reconsideration of Pocock's Treatment of the *Discourses*," *Political Theory* 20 (1992): 309–18; Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (3 vols., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Rahe, "Situating Machiavelli," in *Renaissance Civic Humanism Reconsidered*, ed. J. Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 270–308; Mark Bevir, "Mind and Method in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 36 (1997): 167–89; Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, pp. 6–8 and 243–48.

[22] J. G. A. Pocock, "Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Ancients and Moderns," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale* 2 (1978): 93–109; quote from p. 97.

[23] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p. 160. Pocock's discussion of the *Discorsi* is pursued along similar lines. The work is thus said to contain a typology of modern and ancient republics defined according to how they manage, or have managed, to cope with change and historical contingency. Presenting himself as a political analyst, operating "at a higher level of theoretical generality" (p. 186) than his contemporaries, Machiavelli already from the outset makes it clear that he will pay no particular attention to his native Florence, since the city fails to qualify as a true republic, having had an unfree beginning under the Romans and having never been able to achieve "stability of either dominion or liberty" (pp. 186–87).

[24] Pocock, "Machiavelli and Guicciardini," p. 97; cf. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p. 193.

[25] In Pocock's view, the *Discorsi* constitutes an analysis in general terms of the republic's quest for liberty, stability, and power, and of the conditions of active citizenship and participatory politics.

by semiotics, Russian formalism, and French post-structuralism, Michael McCanles argues that Machiavelli in *The Prince* combines a nondialectical and a dialectical form of discourse. On the surface of the text, McCanles claims, the work seems to be aspiring to a nondialectical mode of discourse characterized by differentiality between binary pairs, analyticity, noncontradiction, and well-formedness. But this closed and one-dimensional form of speech is adopted by Machiavelli only to demonstrate how nondialectical discourse, "despite itself," is bound to fall under "the regulation of a dialectical model."[26] By confronting his reader with discursive slides, conceptual slippages, and dissolving distinctions, Machiavelli seeks to impart a "competence in a discursive practice that allows one to think and speak dialectically, that is, to understand how differentially paired terms not only exclude each other but also imply each other."[27] The aim of this pedagogical project, McCanles maintains, is to make the reader aware of the dialectical structure governing human discourse and human action in general.[28] Having come to grasp "the logic that weaves words into texts, which is identical with the logic that weaves events into enterprises," the reader of *The Prince* will abandon the noxious and self-defeating nondialectical mode of proceeding and adopt a dialectical mode of thinking and acting instead.[29]

The contrast between a nondialectical and a dialectical mode of discourse and action, McCanles establishes, bears a close resemblance to Eugene Garver's and Victoria Kahn's distinction between ideological and rhetorical, or dialectical, politics. Reading Machiavelli in relation to the humanist rhetorical tradition and the reception of Machiavelli among later Renaissance rhetoricians, Kahn argues that the Florentine writer adopts a "rhetorical view of politics" and employs rhetorical devices to criticize the traditional ideological approach to politics.[30] Following the lead of McCanles, she argues that Machiavelli by "showing the reader how to think rhetorically – on both sides of a question – about notions such as imitation, virtue and the good . . . exposes the ideological nature of all such positive terms."[31] The pedagogy of *The Prince* aims at educating the reader's "practical judgment," understood as his capacity to deliberate about particulars "within the contingent realm of fortune."[32] By recreating on the discursive level "the practical problem of judgment" the prince will encounter in political life, Machiavelli seeks to "engage the reader in a critical activity" which will help him to develop this specific quality.[33] For Kahn, Machiavelli's

[26] Michael McCanles, *The Discourse of* Il Principe (Malibu, CA: Undena, 1983), p. 110.
[27] Ibid., p. 84. [28] Ibid., pp. 107 and 109. [29] Ibid., p. 110; cf. ibid., pp. 18 and 39.
[30] Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, p. 19. [31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p. 20; cf. p. 59. [33] Ibid., pp. 31–33.

rhetorical view of politics is not ideologically neutral, but closely linked to his preference for republics over principalities. Already in *The Prince*, she argues, "the superiority of republics emerges out of a rhetorical and dialectical analysis of principalities."[34] In the *Discourses*, the political success of the ancient Roman republic is seen by Machiavelli as "a consequence of its ability to conduct its politics rhetorically and dialectically."[35] But since a rhetorical approach to politics can be adopted by princes as well as by republics, Kahn claims that Machiavelli's work is reducible to neither an ideological reading nor a one-sided republican theory.

Also in Garver's view, *The Prince* is a text that teaches political prudence to its readers by "presenting its own argument as an example of prudent action which forces the reader to engage in prudential activity."[36] The work problematizes the relation between rules and cases, discourse and action, writer and reader, and encourages the new prince to imitate Machiavelli's discursive argument in his extradiscursive action.[37] *The Prince* and the *Discourses* are rhetorical works because their aim is "to initiate political discourse, not just discourse *about* politics but talk and texts which embody commitments by the speaker and aim at practical consequences."[38]

In contrast to McCanles, who views the discourse of *The Prince* as being completely self-referential, save for the dedicatory letter and the final chapter, Kahn and Garver both claim to offer rhetorical readings of Machiavelli's work. Garver is aware of the fact that *The Prince* "has an author and some readers, a purpose and an intended effect,"[39] and elaborates on a distinction borrowed from speech-act theory between illocutionary acts and prelocutionary effects. In a brief aside, he defines the intended prelocutionary effects posited by the work's "dramatic framework" to be the author's attempt to obtain employment for himself, and the future unification of Italy through the agency of the reader.[40] But this distinction seems only to serve the purpose of isolating the discursive aspects of the text from its extradiscursive implications and aims. Kahn, on her part, argues that Machiavelli's work "needs to be read and analyzed rhetorically,"[41] and claims that what she herself is proposing is "a rhetorical analysis"[42] of *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. But what she in reality offers, it seems to me, is an analysis of Machiavelli's general teaching of how to conceive of politics in rhetorical instead of ideological terms. She demonstrates how he conveys

[34] Ibid., p. 19. [35] Ibid., p. 52.
[36] Eugene Garver, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 50.
[37] Ibid., pp. 50–51. [38] Ibid., p. 54; cf. p. 57. [39] Ibid., p. 51.
[40] Ibid., p. 56. [41] Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, p. 243. [42] Ibid., pp. 6 and 16–17.