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Christianity and Populism in the Roman Histories of Augustine and Machiavelli

By

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"For it is one thing, from the mountain's wooded peak, to see the land of peace, and not find the way thither—in vain to attempt impassable ways, opposed and waylaid by fugitives and deserters, under their captain the lion and the dragon; and another to keep to the way that leads there, guarded by the host of the heavenly general, where they who have deserted the heavenly army, which they shun as torture, can assail you not."

—St. Augustine of Hippo, Confessions, VII

"Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation."

—Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, XV

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1 *Augustine, Machiavelli, and Political History.*

Niccolò Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* seems, upon a first reading, to be little more than a Renaissance-era re-examination of Livy's history of Rome, *Ab Urbe Condita*. Indeed, the scope of his work is even smaller if one notes that the work's original title is the *Discourses on the First Ten [Books] of Titus Livy*.[1] The bulk of the *Discourses* is, to be fair, devoted to Machiavelli's analysis of Roman History, with special attention to the history of early Rome contained in the first ten books of Livy's history. Yet Machiavelli's work is, in fact, a work of political philosophy *par excellence*. Examining both the assumptions which underlie Machiavelli's analysis and the way in which he evaluates and even distorts history, one is able to see that his work lays out a comprehensive and coherent vision of politics, albeit one which deliberately eschews the form and function of systematic philosophy. Careful and idiosyncratic reading of Machiavelli's history of Rome is required to understand his political teachings; in particular, one must understand that his history is, in reality, a *political history*, with historical narratives and judgements which are designed to implicitly define a vision of politics. The act of rectifying the seeming contradictions of the work, then, is another difficult task altogether. It is thus no wonder that many even today continue to overlook or underemphasize Machiavelli's contribution to the history of political thought: to understand his work requires us to trust in his coherence and to actively work on behalf of Machiavelli's project, at least insofar as we must take hold of Machiavelli's history and out of it construct, or re-construct, Machiavelli's political thought.

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[1] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi Sopra La Prima Deca Di Tito Livio*, Ed. Corrado Vivanti (Turin, Italy: Giulio Einaudi Publishers s.p.a., 2000): Title.

St. Augustine of Hippo seems to stand very far from Machiavelli. The late antique African bishop is, deservedly, remembered first and foremost for his pious and blessed life, and, perhaps ironically, for the carnal and tumultuous life which he lived prior to his conversion to Catholic Christianity as documented in his eternal *Confessions*. Second, perhaps, Augustine is remembered for his testament to and contributions towards the beliefs of Christianity, especially as regards his use of rational philosophy as handmaiden to theology. Thus his political work is often regarded as a tertiary contribution by readers of the venerable Doctor of the Church. Political theorists who do not explicitly study Augustine tend to take up his politics principally as an investigation of the effects of Christianity on the arc of political philosophy in general. His political views are rarely taken to have made a significant contribution to political philosophy *as such*, but instead are often viewed as merely the curious attempt of a theologian to use the dry bones of classical political philosophy to fashion a state which could adequately serve the mission of the Church. Thankfully, many great minds have given Augustine's political thought proper attention. Those who do analyze the political work of St. Augustine tend to focus on the nineteenth Book of the *City of God*, which details his vision of a politics rooted in and directed towards the maintenance of peace. The particular definition, scope, and nature of this peace is the primary object of scholars like Jean Elshtain and R. A. Markus, the latter of whom tends to view Augustine as a kind of forerunner to modernity in his separation of the secular and ecclesiastical powers.[2] This issue, while interesting, is much narrower than many of the controversies found in works of classical or secular political philosophy. This fact is often taken

[2] See Jean Elshtain, "Augustine and a Politics of Limits" in *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 89-112; and R. A. Markus, "*Civitas Peregrina*: Signposts" in *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 154-186.

as proof that Augustine's politics are of a fundamentally lower order than the politics of the ancients or moderns; those who accept this proof, we will see, are sorely mistaken.

Machiavelli and Augustine, ultimately, deserve attention together. First, there is a methodological and meta-political gain made by bringing them together. Augustine's *City of God*, ostensibly, was begun as a work of Roman history "Against the Pagans," and indeed, spread throughout these first ten books is a far-reaching and unique history of Rome.[3] Political theorists have not paid a great deal of attention to the Roman history of Augustine's *City of God*. This is a shame: the Roman history of the *City of God* contains a myriad of judgements, many unexpectedly pointed or idiosyncratic, which serve to broaden and deepen our understanding of the thought of St. Augustine. Augustine, contrary to the common narrative which tells us that the *City of God*'s first ten books are a mere attempt to exonerate Christianity for the fall of the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., does not merely write a rhetorical treatise chastising the Romans as blameworthy failures or doomed pagan sinners. With Machiavelli in mind, it becomes clear that Augustine's Roman history can provide a plan or sketch of a more comprehensive theory of politics. That is, applying the methods used to extract Machiavelli's political thought from his history in the *Discourses*, one might be able to uncover a coherent and comprehensive political vision from Augustine's history. Indeed, as we discover, his judgements of Roman history are based principally upon a conception of the political good which, revealed through his various historical arguments, is consistent and novel.

That Augustine's political thought can be understood on a deeper and more granular level in light of the methodology of Machiavelli is reason enough to bring these two thinkers' histories

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[3] St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God Against the Pagans,* Trans. Robert W. Dyson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998): Title.

together. Further, there is inherent interest in examining two Roman histories at opposite ends of the Medieval era, the one examining Rome with respect to the challenges and prospects of expanding Christianity, and the other looking back to Rome as Christian political institutions undergo rapid transformations. A comparison of the *Discourses*' evaluation of the events of Roman history explored in the *City of God* will surely serve to sharpen the points of the one in contradistinction to the other. Likewise, the similarities and differences between the two will better situate the two relative to one another and relative to the whole history of political thought. However, it is the strikingly populist character of both of their Roman histories that makes our comparison worthwhile. Augustine's history ultimately sides with the people, both sympathizing with their oppression under the patrician class and actively supporting their political cause. His politics are truly populist, desiring that the people's political desires be satisfied. This populist character runs against the tumultuous politics of the Roman Republic and pays little attention to the moral weight of the institutional order of Rome; this blend of populism and institutional ambivalence, alongside Augustine's steadfast belief in the necessity of the state, leads to his support for Caesar and Caesarism. Machiavelli, likewise, seems to be a populist, insofar as he praises the virtues of the people and chastises the nobility for oppressing them or expecting them to bend to patrician will. However, Machiavelli's populism does not actually desire the political rule of the people or even the effects of such rule. Rather, Machiavelli's populism is instrumental, focused on placating and satisfying the people toward the preservation of institutional forms. As such, he ultimately stands against great men and popular will alike, revealing the true nature of the disagreement between the two, and bringing to light these two emphatically different visions of populism.

2 *The Political History of Augustine's City of God*.

I Augustine's Roman History

Against those who sought to read modern "progressive" or so-called "capital-H" views of History into the thought of St. Augustine of Hippo, Fr. Ernest L. Fortin argued that the bishop saw the inscrutability of Providence as prohibiting any strong modern conception of historical progress or laws.[4] If Augustine was a historian in the modern sense of the term, then he was a historian of the absurd, chronicling the ways in which historical narratives failed to predict things correctly. He was, Fortin notes, especially keen to caution Christians eager to depict the nascent Christendom of the fifth century A.D. as the culmination of historical progress and the beginning of a new era of uninterrupted peace and glory of man and state rightly ruled by God. Yet Fr. Fortin's characterization of the animating force behind Augustine's history seems to go awry. He writes that the bishop's history was, in summary, one in which:

> Civilizations flourish at one moment and then vanish just as mysteriously. While we have it on the authority of Scripture that all power wielded by human beings ultimately comes from God, the reasons for which in the course of time it passed from one people to another have not been imparted to us. What is more, there is no correlation between just or unjust rule on the one hand and earthly prosperity or misfortune on the other.[5]

To be clear: Fr. Fortin is almost certainly correct that Augustine does not see—and indeed, actively rejects—the notion of a progress to history rooted in divine Providence. However, the above seems to go much further than this. While it is true that Augustine sees no reason why Providence or fortune will favor just countries and punish unjust ones, this does not preclude Augustine from believing that there are reasons behind the flourishing and vanishing of different

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[4] Ernest L. Fortin, "Augustine's '*City of God*' and the Modern Historical Consciousness," *The Review of Politics* 41 no. 3 (Jul. 1979), 323-343.
[5] Fortin, "Augustine's '*City of God*,'" 326-327.

civilizations. Conversely, it would be a mistake to read Augustine's history as a mere litany of examples of events where the unjust and immoral succeed or the just and righteous fail. To his credit, Fortin himself does not go so far as to say this; but he does not analyze—here or elsewhere—the political implications of the Roman history of St. Augustine. Others similarly ignore the political content of Augustine's Roman history. Dorothy Donnelly claims that:

> At no point in his voluminous work does Augustine, as [a classical philosopher] would, talk about specific social and political arrangements. The truth is that the issues of central importance to the utopist-political, social, economic, and cultural arrangements-are deliberately eschewed by Augustine.[6]

Her claim, which attempts to deflate the notion of Augustine as participating in the tradition of classical political philosophy, rests on an analysis of the *City of God* which does not pay any attention to the Roman histories of the work. Herbert Deane, similarly, makes little gesture towards the Roman histories of the *City of God*, mainly focusing on Rome's connection to *libido dominandi* when he makes mention of the eternal city in his seminal work *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*.[7] Elshtain makes similarly little mention of Rome.[8] These analyses contain truth in them: Augustine's politics, even rightly understood, are very different from classical eudaemonist political theory, and likewise it is true that, at some points, Augustine's Rome is merely emblematic of love of praise and love of glory.[9] Yet these points cannot be said to summarize the way in which Augustine's Roman history contributes to his politics; indeed, we venture that the Roman history of the remaining work, rightly understood and examined as a

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[6] Dorothy F. Donnelly, "The '*City of God*' and Utopia: A Revaluation," *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977), 121.

[7] Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 50-53, 118-122, 168-171.

[8] Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 19-23, 97-98, 105-107. Only in the last section does her analysis overlap with our own, but her attention on the justice of Roman expansion is more focused on the question of just war theory.

[9] We reject completely the notion that Augustine believes Rome itself exemplifies, in any way, *libido dominandi*. As will be shown, Augustine does not see Rome this way, and uses the term to refer only to the lowest actions of certain leaders of the Roman regime. Augustine mentions only Nero as an example of true *libido dominandi*, in *City of God* Book V, Chapter 19.

coherent whole, should be hailed alongside the works of Livy, Sallust, and Machiavelli as a political-philosophical history of Rome.

Our task in this chapter, then, is to pay proper political attention to the Roman history of the *City of God*. In fact, a close reading of Augustine's evaluation of Roman history reveals an implicit theory of politics that extends far beyond the explicit political theory of Book XIX of the *City of God*. Book XIX deals primarily with the ends of government, war, and the proper scope of the body politic. It does not examine prudential political questions or the Roman history of the *City of God*—especially that found in the oft-overlooked second through seventh books of the work—wherein St. Augustine makes consistent and insightful judgements concerning the form of government, the morality and rightness of political decisions, political virtue, and the proper relationship between the classes. These judgements themselves range across a number of issues and are not always addressed in one place or in an order whose meaning is obvious. Therefore, we will begin with Augustine's evaluation of the origins of Rome itself; next, attention is due to his scathing critique of the Republic in its foundation and zenith; penultimately, we deal with Augustine's narrative of the fall of the Republic and the rise of the Caesars; and finally, it is important to analyze Augustine's comments on the virtues and vices of Rome as understood from the perspective of a newly-ascendant Christianity.

Augustine largely criticizes the origins of Rome itself, exposing Romulus' fratricide of Remus, the Rape of the Sabines, and the many wars of early Rome as immoral and inexcusable, even if they led to good ends.[10] Augustine continues his political history into the Republican age, showing how the Roman Republic was designed to encourage oppression of both virtuous

[10] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 99-117 (III.6-14). Dyson's translation is very reliable and pays special attention to translating political passages with clarity. When the particular words used matters, or where readers may especially benefit from a literal translation of the Latin, we supply it.

leaders and the people alike. Similarly, his view of the Caesars—both Julius and Augustus—differs from both the pessimistic account of Sallust, who mourned the loss of the Ciceronian Republic, and the optimistic views of imperialists, who likened the Augustan Age to the era of Romulus. While he agrees with Sallust that the principate dimmed the famed liberties of the Romans, he ultimately praises Julius Caesar's political virtue and offers striking praise of Caesar Augustus.[11] Indeed, in Augustine's reading, Augustus seems to transcend the love of praise and glory which animated the rest of Rome, even perhaps fulfilling the will of God in his reconstitution of the Roman body politic under the helm of an anti-Republican strongman.[12] Thus, Augustine's history of Rome is not merely a religious screed, and contains a populist flavor that seems comfortable with fluidity with respect to regime legitimacy, even if it does not countenance compelling political actors to act contrary to morality.

II Augustine on the Founding of Rome

Our political analysis of Augustine's history of Rome should, fittingly, begin with his understanding of the founding of Rome. Across all of the events he discusses, Augustine stresses the ways in which Rome's founding was stained by immoral decisions made by its leaders. Here, he proposes a theory that, though perhaps not exactly novel in the context of Christian ethics, proves crucial in light of the rest of his analysis of Roman history: namely, that acts of grave personal immorality cannot be excused by any political successes that result from them. It is particularly significant that Augustine claims to support this principle given the way in which, at other points in his history, he seems to excuse actions that violate the laws and mores of the *res publica*.

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[11] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 130 (III.21).
[12] Ibid., 218-223, 891 (V.18, XVIII.46).

Beginning, then, with the legendary founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus, Augustine shows that the city's history is rife with events where unjust means were used toward achieving political goods. He argues that the fratricide of Romulus should have provoked vengeance upon the city by the gods, as Romulus killed Remus because he "had been unwilling to accept his own brother as his fellow-ruler."[13, 14] However, he goes further than to claim that the fratricide of Remus was wrong in and of itself: he shows that the personal immorality was in fact a political wrong. He argues that the murder of Remus "should in any case have been avenged" by the city of Rome.[15] Since Rome "as a whole overlooked" Romulus' murder of Remus, it "as a whole committed the crime," which for the city was not just a fratricide, but a parricide.[16] The city was thus not merely founded by a private act of vice that could be excused by or separated from the city itself; the city, being a whole and free moral agent, is guilty of all private crimes it let go unpunished. Here, Augustine has a strong understanding of the connection between justice and the punishment of criminal acts: he condemns Rome as guilty not because reparation should have been made or because it might encourage similar crimes, but instead because the crime was committed against the city itself. The city, in turn, was duty-bound to have "avenged" this crime.

Rome and Romulus alike receive similar treatment when Augustine recounts how the city, under the command of its founder, committed the rape of the Sabine women. Augustine

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[13] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 109 (III.13).

[14] St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God, Volume I: Books 1-3,* Trans. George E. McCracken, Loeb Classical Library 411 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 308-311, "sed quando et istum diu toleraret, qui fratrem geminumque non pertulit," most literally, "but when and for what time could he tolerate this, he who could not bear [rule with his] brother and twin?"

[15] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 99 (III.6).

[16] Ibid. The Latin of the whole passage discussed reads, "…quoniam debuit utique vindicari, tota hoc civitas fecit quod tota contempsit, et non iam fratrem, sed patrem, quod est peius, occidit," or, most literally, "since it was obliged, in any case, that it be avenged, this city as a whole did what it as a whole disregarded, and now it killed not a brother, but a father, which is worse." Latin taken from Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 282.

points out the Romans showed they understood that the tricking and kidnapping of the Sabine women was wrong in the fact that, despite commemorating the event with the annual Circensian games, they refused to "sanction the emulation of [Romulus'] deeds as an abductor of women."[17] This makes the crime of the city of Rome all the more egregious: while one might find a way to justify or downplay Romulus' fratricide, it is clear here that the Romans deliberately ignored that which they considered a crime. Thus, the city of Rome was founded by two acts of injustice, but in both cases it was by the excuse of these injustices that the city itself erred.

Augustine's other main critique of the founding of Rome comes in the form of a moral argument concerning the wars waged by the Tarquin kings of the city and what actions of early Rome deserve praise. Numa Pompilius' reign of peace is a key example: if it was his piety and religiousness that led to such a beneficent peace for the city, Augustine asks, why was the *Pax Numae* so short-lived?[18] In reality, he ventures, perhaps the Romans desired war, preferring it to the "quiet and secure" state it held under Numa's policy.[19] However, this is but an ersatz answer that precedes Augustine's actual argument, the particulars of which are worthy of reflection.

The argument begins again by appealing to Roman love of peace—as evident by how much they praised Numa's peace—and how much the Romans claim to abhor war and conquest.[20] He compares their expansion of territory to a body that has "attain[ed] gigantic size" only to find itself "plagued with ills which are greater in proportion to the size of the body's members"; he quotes Sallust's claim that the Romans lived "free from greed" before expansion

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[17] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 70 (II.17).
[18] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 102-103, 109-110 (III.9, III.14). In the former passage, Augustine notes that "there was only one [year]—the year, commemorated as a great wonder, following the end of the first Punic War—during which the Romans were able to close the gates of war."
[19] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 103 (III.10).
[20] Ibid.

and Virgil's corresponding belief that, with conquest, "little by little, there came a baser, paler age, bringing both the fury of war and the love of gain."[21, 22] Having established this position, then, Augustine takes up the principal Roman argument for their expansion: that "they were compelled to resist the savage incursions of their enemies […] by the necessity of defending life and liberty."[23] He agrees that expansion in the face of hostile enemies is done "honorably," but shows that this results in a dilemma: either "such means [as used by Numa] could surely have been used at other times also," or "if it was not in her power to do this," then the peace of Numa was only due to the fleeting quiet of her enemies.[24] Thus, Augustine conditionally accepts the argument concerning the justice of the Roman wars, but implies that such justification robs the peace of Numa of its glory. If, taking the other condition, the methods of Numa were able, later on, to support a body politic "of moderate stature with good health," then the expansion of Rome was unjust by their own standards.[25] Regardless, it was not a sign of the virtue of Rome that the city came to rule widely, but either a sign of their own bloodlust or of the iniquities of their neighbors. Of course, this does not mean that their military capabilities meant nothing—Augustine praises the martial prowess of the Roman army—but that Augustine does not believe that the empire embodies or exemplifies Roman virtue.[26] In all, the arc of Augustine's critique of the founders of Rome rests on the notion that crimes or sins cannot be excused by their political ends, with the striking corollary that attempting to do so makes the city as guilty as the

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[21] Ibid.
[22] The Virgil is quoted exactly by Augustine and translated literally by Dyson. See Publius Vergilius Maro, *Aeneid*: *Books 7-12*, Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Rev. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 64 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 82-83 (Book VIII Ln. 326-327).
[23] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 104 (III.10).
[24] Ibid.
[25] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 103 (III.10).
[26] See especially V.18, entitled "How far Christians ought to be from boasting if they have done anything for the love of their eternal fatherland, when the Romans did such great things for the sake of human glory and any earthly city," wherein Augustine especially praises the virtue and self-sacrifice of Roman soldiers. Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 218-223.

transgressor himself. It is for this reason that Augustine interrogates the praise for the peace of Numa in light of the many wars fought against other Italian tribes in Rome's early days. Either the Numan peace was unjust or the expansion of Rome's rule was; in the former case, Numa is to be scolded for his imprudence, but in the latter, Rome's conquest was the result of vice as much as virtue.

III Augustine on the Roman Republic

Our political examination of Augustine's history of Rome must now turn its attention to the Roman Republic. His history of the Republic reflects less upon the moral guilt of Rome than upon the particular dealings of and prudential questions concerning Roman leaders and parties. While particular questions are best examined in particular, over the course of this section of the history, a pattern emerges: one in which the Republic's government is largely seen as a jealous guardian of its self-serving political authority against both the exceptional men best capable of wielding it and against those who would most benefit from such men, namely, the people.

Beginning with the overthrow of the Roman monarchy and the subsequent formation of the Roman Republic, Augustine shows that the Republic committed injustices of its own out of a fear of monarchy and strong leadership. He argues that Lucius Collatinus was a "good and innocent man" who, though he helped depose the corrupt Tarquin king, was exiled by his co-conspirator Junius Brutus simply because Collatinus "was of the name and lineage of Tarquin" in a move that was "of no profit to the commonwealth."[27, 28] The example of Collatinus serves to highlight a subtle popular character of Augustine's history. In Livy's account of the exile of Collatinus, for example, Livy argues that—though the citizens of Rome were the first to believe

[27] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 70 (II.17).
[28] Ibid., 117 (III.16).

that "the Tarquinii knew not how to live as private citizens" such that "their name was irksome and a menace to liberty"—it was the plebs that turned so "anxious and suspicious" that Brutus felt it necessary to call a council to discuss Collatinus' future.[29] Further, Livy claims that Brutus, in his speech exiling Collatinus, praises his fellow consul's actions but urges him to leave to "relieve the state of what is, perhaps, an idle fear" of the people.[30] Augustine's narrative of the event is far kinder to the people and far harsher to Brutus. Rather than cast this as a mistake committed by the people, Augustine claims Brutus himself "would not suffer [Collatinus] to dwell in the city" and that Collatinus was exiled regardless of "the favor or sufferance of the people."[31] That is, Brutus is the reason Collatinus was exiled, and the people neither caused nor necessitated the action; perhaps they can be blamed insofar as they are part of the city that absolved Brutus of his crime, just as the city was guilty of the crime of Romulus, but this is hardly the blame assigned to the people in other narratives. Further, Augustine even praises "how just the people were in paying heed to the morals of [this] citizen rather than his name" by electing him consul, arguing that the exile must have been the "impious" act willed by Brutus to sate his "love of praise."[32] Augustine chooses to praise the people of Rome for rightly admiring Collatinus, and absolves them of any blame for his exile. Brutus, then, becomes an ambitious

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[29] Titus Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita, Volume I: Books 1-2,* Trans. B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library 114 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 222-223 (II.2).
[30] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 225 (II.2).
[31] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 70 (II.17). The Latin supports the reading that Augustine believed the crime to have been committed principally by Brutus and only with the passive participation of the people: "Quod scelus favente vel patiente populo fecit, a quo poulo consulatum idem Collatinus sicut etiam ipse Brutus acceperat," most literally, "Which crime [Brutus] did, with the favoring or the resignation of the people, the people from whom that same Collatinus, just like Brutus himself, had received the consulship." Latin taken from Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 199.
[32] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 117 (III.16). We note that the fact that Augustine praises the people for having elected Collatinus is further proof of the reading of "patiente" as "sufferance" or "resignation," as opposed to "support" or "permission": since the people already elected Collatinus despite his name and lineage, it makes sense that, at worst, they merely tacitly allowed his exile to happen.

and jealous ruler who wished not to share his rule with Collatinus; Augustine's account, meanwhile, avoids assigning virtually any blame to the people.

The people's role in Collatinus' exile is not the sole historical factor ignored by Augustine. He seems to minimize the notion that there was legitimate fear—either on the part of the people or the aristocracy—that the Republic would sink back into a monarchy or tyranny, instead suggesting that the problem of Collatinus could have easily been solved by having him drop the "Tarquinius" from his name.[33] Here, Augustine seems to indicate that, through such a symbolic act as a name change, Brutus could have assuaged the fears of the people and the citizens without having to give Collatinus the same punishment as Tarquin himself. It is not, then, simply the case that Augustine absolves, excuses, or omits the role of the people in the exile of Collatinus. Rather, Augustine believes that the people could have been soothed or assuaged by such a symbolic act, provided that it was backed by the support of a strong leader. The onus is on the leader for leading the people astray. Notably, the leader Augustine blames is Brutus, not Collatinus: Brutus could have and should have satisfied the people's desire only partly, and in fact, Augustine implies (in stating that Brutus actually did such a thing "with the favor or sufferance of the people") that the people may not have even had such fears, or that they only developed them because of the panic of Brutus.[34] The Roman political system, thus, is blameworthy in allowing Brutus to act so unjustly, and likewise the people are not to blame for the exile in any way, either by their own action or by the result of Brutus' incitement.

The popular character of Augustine's history of the Roman Republic continues with his evaluation of Marcus Camillus, who, like Collatinus, embodies the role of a virtuous leader and

[33] Ibid.
[34] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 70 (II.17).

potential strongman persecuted by the jealous and ambitious elites of the Republic. Here, Augustine is seen as a supporter both of the people and of strong and virtuous leaders. A kind of dual system emerges in Augustine's critique of the Republic: he sees the Republican system as oppressing or ignoring both the lowest and the greatest, namely, the plebs and the principes. Augustine writes that Marcus Camillus, by his "virtue," succeeded in the war against the Veientes "with consummate ease" where ten years of incompetent leadership had failed.[35] His virtue and renown upon the defeat of the Veientes attracted the "envy" of powerful elites: in particular, it is noteworthy that Augustine blames the "insolence of the tribunes" rather than the people whom they represent.[36] Thus, Augustine again blames ambitious Republican elites and leaves as innocent both the great leader himself and the people, who seem, by other accounts, to have been clamoring for action.[37] Even when he does describe Camillus' exile as the condemnation of an "ungrateful city"—the most popular or common agent upon whom Augustine ever places the blame—he pays no mind to the notion that Camillus may have been responsible for his own exile through his high expectations of the city.[38, 39] Augustine thus casts the Republic as litigious, divided, and persecutory toward men of great virtue, who should, it seems, be able to obtain power in a political system oriented toward the common good. The

[35] Ibid.
[36] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 71 (II.17).
[37] See, for example, Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita Volume III: Books 5-7,* Trans. B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library 172 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 80-83 (V.23), and Plutarch, "Camillus," in *Lives, Volume II,* Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 47 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 122-123. Livy writes that the city saw some of Camillus' actions as "undemocratic" (that is, "non modo civile," "not in the civil way") and "irreverent." In a slight contradiction indicative of an indignant or childish people, Livy argues that Camillus' decision that men tithe to the god Apollo in gratitude for victory against the Veientes (just as Camillus swore to the god the city would do with the spoils from the war) "alienated the affections of the commons" (plebs) "from Camillus." Plutarch remarks that "the people were exasperated, and would plainly lay hold of any pretext whatever for condemning [Camillus]."
[38] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 120 (III.17).
[39] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Vol. 3, Loeb, 80-89 (V.23-26).

people, therefore, are not the source of this suspicious character. Rather, it originates in the ruling class, or, at worst, the city as a whole.

Camillus' return from his exile in Ardea adds another dimension to the political implications of Augustine's history: namely, Augustine's treatment of the exile reveals that he is willing to excuse extraordinary actions on the part of men of great virtue. Augustine's language and omissions make it useful, here, to examine first this story in the history of Livy, to whom Augustine responds. Livy begins by telling the story of how Camillus assembles an army of exiled friends in Ardea and slaughters a camp of the Gauls within the walls of Rome.[40] Later, emphasizing how everything the Romans did was "so modest" toward "preserving the proper distinctions," Livy notes that even in this "desperate case" their recall of Camillus still followed Senatorial procedure.[41] He then claims without foundation that it is his belief that Camillus "did not quit Ardea until he had learnt that the law was passed."[42] Livy might be serious in his conviction, perhaps holding Camillus in such high regard that he manufactures the incident; but it seems just as likely that Livy is attempting to massage the facts of a story that he knew to be messy. Either way, Livy's history clearly shows a deep concern for the laws on the part of historian and historical subject, portraying Camillus as a soldier who obeys the orders of his Republic's rulers and their laws. Plutarch follows on this, inventing the notion that fleeing Roman soldiers came to Camillus and told him he was "no longer an exile […] now that our country is no more, but is mastered by the enemy."[43] Plutarch's account goes even further than Livy's, as he claims that Camillus rejected this legal argument and "refused [to take command]

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[40] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Vol. 3, Loeb, 148-151 (V.44-45).
[41] Ibid., 156-157 (V.46). The Latin reads "…adeo regebat omnia pudor, discriminaque rerum prope perditis rebus servabant," most literally, "so shame ruled all and preserved the distinctions of things [even] while things were nearly destroyed."
[42] Ibid. The Latin is very straightforward.
[43] Plutarch, *Lives,* Vol. 2. Loeb, 154-155.

before the citizens on the Capitol had legally elected him" even though he recognized that the situation was so grave that "preserving the country" was at stake.[44] Thus, both Livy and Plutarch attempt to make Camillus' actions seem as much as possible to have been within the ordinary means of the city and her laws.

Camillus becomes, in Augustine, a very different sort of figure. Augustine's history does not even speak of an invitation from the Senate or any other revocation of Camillus' banishment and makes no mention of its legality or the observance of the laws. Likewise, he does not praise the Roman veneration of the laws as in Livy's story, instead casting Camillus' return and dictatorship as the free gift of a heroic "savior" to an ungrateful Rome.[45] Augustine portrays Camillus as a hero "mindful of his native land," a "savior" who "rescued" or "delivered" his "ungrateful country" when he returned to the city to fight against the invading Gauls.[46, 47] The language is telling, casting Camillus as the sole figure who freed or avenged Rome (as opposed to one who merely helped Rome in the fight). Camillus is explicitly described in the language of vengeance and liberation, the free man who comes to the aid of a Rome in chains; he is not the dutiful leader recalled to or summoned up from within Rome, but instead, a vindicator who returned because of his heroic virtue and acute knowledge that the city needed him. In other words, Camillus was not a soldier obeying the commands of the city sovereign, but instead the sovereign of the city himself, taking what had become (or was) rightfully his own.

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 71 (II.17).
[46] Ibid., 151, 71, 120 (IV.7, II.17, III.17).
[47] See Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 200, 340, (II.17, III.17); Vol. 2, 26 (IV.7): Dyson translates "vindex" (lit., "protector, avenger") as "savior," "vindicavit" (lit., "protected, avenged") as "delivered," and 'liberavit" (lit., "set free, liberated") as "rescued." All of these terms indicate Augustine saw Camillus as the sole agent of Roman victory or salvation.

The great men Collatinus and Camillus are both used by Augustine as examples of how the Republic's government disfavored the great men who were rightfully meant to lead Rome. On the surface, both are rightful rulers in the sense of having an explicit right to rule: in Collatinus' case, the legal right, and in Camillus' case, the natural right (by his being the only one competent to defeat the threat of the Gauls). Yet it is also important that, in both cases, the men are also rightful rulers by their being the best men for leadership of Rome; it is even more important that both were exiled because of accusations concerning their greatness, that is, their potential or ability to take power for themselves. Thus, in the *City of God*, the virtue of Marcus Camillus and Lucius Collatinus and the rightness of their ruling over Rome is elevated in importance, while the laws—in particular, the Senate's jealous suspicion of both and their use of legal exile against them—are de-emphasized. The story of Camillus particularly shows that Augustine's Roman history is inflected both with populism and a kind of deferential attitude toward exceptional men: he is perfectly happy to paint Camillus as virtuous even in his violating of norms and laws for the sake of the greater, or greatest, good. It has also been shown that Augustine softens or diminishes the responsibility of the people in these events, either by ignoring accusations of their role in them or through the claim that the elite, and not the popular interest itself, is responsible for the actions of the mob. It has yet to be shown, however, that this popular bias is anything more than a kind of merely personal or private kindness or charity towards the uneducated masses. As we will now show, Augustine's evaluation of class relations in the Roman Republic shows that he not only favors the cause of Rome's most exceptional men against a corrupt elite, but also that he is aligned with and actively supports the political cause of the people.

Augustine's populism can also be seen in his narrative of the decline of Republican Rome. Concluding his examination of the exiles of both Collatinus and Marcus Camillus, Augustine writes that these and other events "convulsed" the city throughout the Republican era as the elites "strove to make the common people their subjects" and the plebs in turn "resisted [these] attempts to subdue them."[48] He views the class conflict and competition as dire to the common weal, as they were moved more "by love of victory than by any consideration of equity and goodness."[49, 50] The only place where he is critical of the plebs is regarding the famed *secessio plebis*, and even in this place there is some ambiguity as to what kind of crimes he accuses them of. Augustine writes that "after long and grave seditions at Rome, finally the plebs in hostile retreat seceded to the Janiculum," probably having the plebs in mind as the sources of said seditions.[51] Yet in likening the secession itself to a "hostile retreat," Augustine portrays the plebs as losing a war against the upper class, and in saying they "finally" retreated, he seems to suggest that their actions were, at the very least, unsurprising or expected.[52] Augustine obviously does not praise or even support their actions, but at the same time, there is a sense that their actions are understandable and should have been anticipated. Likewise, it would seem—

[48] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 71 (II.17).
[49] Ibid.
[50] "…et utriusque partis defensores magis studiis agerent amore vincendi, quam aequum et bonum quicquam cogitarent," most literally, "…and the defenders of both parties were more driven in enthusiasm by love of victory than they were considering anything fair or good," per Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 200 (II.17).
[51] Sanctus Aurelius Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei Libri I-X*, in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina XLVII* (Turnholtus: Typrographus Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1955), 84 (III.17). We cite here our translation of the Latin, "quando post longas et graves Romae seditiones, quibus ad ultimum plebs in Ianiculum hostile diremptione secesserat." The word "diremptione" (abl., "separation," "schism," "retreat") is supported by 5 manuscripts, while only one (which does not seem to be more trustworthy than the others) has "dereptione" (thought to be a variation of "direptione," "plundering"). Dyson (121) and the Loeb both follow the "direptione" reading in their English translations, although Loeb curiously still writes "diremptione" in their Latin, cf. Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 342-343 (III.17). In support of our reading is the fact that, according to the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, of all eighteen documented uses of "diremptio" in the classical and antique Latin corpus, thirteen are Augustine's (and indeed, he is the only author listed who uses it more than once), cf. "Diremptio, -ōnis" in *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Vol. 5, 1, (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1913) 1230.
[52] Ibid.

given the extent to which he criticizes crimes of others—that the commoners should merit far greater criticism than they receive. Augustine does not excuse them, and indeed, his lack of excuse shows that his populism remains grounded in the ultimate exultation of Christian politics across—and between—all classes. Ultimately, Augustine's history of the plebs is rooted in the notion that their grievances are basically well-founded; they are always in retreat or otherwise 'resisting' the dominative desires of the patricians.

The people of Rome receive more than mere sympathy from St. Augustine; indeed, his description of the class conflicts of Republican Rome are proof that Augustine actually advocates for their cause. His history of this issue generally follows Sallust, but not always; likewise, the *City of God* is the only source for many of the Sallust quotations Augustine cites, so even in places where his analysis mirrors Sallust, it is relevant to analyze this argument in detail.[53] Augustine points out that Sallust, in the *Histories*, clarifies his well-known theory that it was the fear of Carthage that kept the Romans virtuous. He notes that Sallust understands that Rome's descent into "oriental luxury" and "discord, avarice, ambition, and other evils" after their final victory over Carthage was not a sharp turn for the city.[54] Rather, Augustine agrees with Sallust that these ills were "wont to arise and increase even before" the end of the Second Punic War, i.e., because there was moral rot in the Republic's elite from its earliest days.[55] Sallust continues that "injuries were wrought by the more powerful men" against the plebs "from the beginning," with only a brief period of "equitable and moderate" rule during the time when the Republic still feared the return of Tarquin kings.[56] After this time, patricians began to treat the

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[53] Gaius Sallustius Crispus, *Fragments of the Histories and Letters to Caesar,* Ed. and Trans. John T. Ramsey, Loeb Classical Library 522 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 10-11, 14-15 (I.9 11aM, 9Mc, 8D, 9K and I.10 11bM, 10Mc, 9D, 10K; I. 13* 16M, 13Mc, 12D, K).
[54] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 129, 71 (III.21, II.18)
[55] Ibid., 72 (II.18).
[56] Sallust, The Histories I.11; quoted in Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 72 (II.18).

plebs "as their slaves, and dealt with their lives and bodies after the fashion of the kings," especially with regard to their occupation of common lands.[57] While Sallust believes that the discord between the two ended with the destruction of Carthage, it seems that this class conflict came to an end only because prosperity led to decadence and "depravity," wherein the *mores maiorum* were "swept away […] as if by a torrent" and the young were unable to preserve their own prosperity.[58, 59] The theory being espoused by Augustine, through these fragments, is that Rome's golden age was one of cruel rule of the patricians over the plebs. Upon the end of the struggle with the Carthaginians, which made Rome prosperous, these antagonisms largely ceased, being replaced by luxury and depravity. Augustine seems to support the notion that luxury was the worst of the ills of Rome, being at least "worse than any enemy," but at the same time he offers little praise of the government of Republican Rome, for which elite intellectuals often yearned.[60] That is, Augustine offers a kind of conservative populism, at once lamenting the elitist abuses of the Republic's zenith and the post-Punic era's low character.

Yet one may still object that Augustine has merely been shown to be popular, sympathizing with the people and criticizing the aristocracy, rather than genuinely populist, i.e., favoring the political cause of the people.[61] Augustine's praise for the Gracchi brothers provides evidence that his populism was not merely a rhetorical sympathy or antiquated grievances about the politics of the early Republic, but instead a consistent concern of his political thought. Taking their side in the debate, he writes very plainly that the Gracchi hoped to "divide among

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 73 (II.18).
[59] Sallust, The Histories I.16; quoted in Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 73 (II.18).
[60] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 129 (III.21).
[61] This terminological taxonomy is our own. We avoid, generally, the notion of "democratic" politics, as this implies a form of plebiscite.

the people land which the nobles wrongfully possessed."[62] While he continues to follow Roman custom and label the Gracchi as inciters of "seditions," he openly praises their advocacy for the agrarian law, portraying them as brave men to even "dare" to "attack so ancient a wrong."[63] This populist narrative is then heightened when Augustine frames their murder at the hands of the Senate as a "conflict of armed mobs" and accuses the Senate of "[using] the device of judicial inquiry" to silence political opposition.[64] Augustine's attention to class is unique in several ways, but especially because it counters the narrative of the Gracchi as simple power-hungry demagogues who threatened the Roman way of life. The Gracchi had admirable ideals and aims, according to Augustine's reading, but they were, perhaps, guilty of exciting the passions of the plebs too much. This criticism sharpens a tension or relationship that has been present throughout Augustine's history of the Roman Republic: namely, the mutual responsibility between the plebs and the patricians. Augustine more or less sides with the plebs, supporting the political rectification of their poverty and lack of power; however, in both the case of the Secession and the Gracchi, he finds fault in the means used in order to bring about changes. The people, in Augustine's view, are able to be led and led astray in seemingly equal measure (with, perhaps, citing the cases of Brutus and Camillus, a propensity toward badness). Therefore, it is not acceptable, in his view, to blame the people for being excited or irascible: a good leader can lead the people and advocate for their cause without sedition or other problematic side-effects. The importance of the leader in Augustine's populism, however, is best seen in other examples.

The Roman Republic is thus no object of great admiration for St. Augustine. Indeed, it is in his critique of the Roman Republic that the politics of Augustine's history become both more

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[62] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 132 (III.24).
[63] Ibid.
[64] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 133 (III.24).

subtle and more complex, focusing both on the morality of actions and on evaluations of right, prudence, and political virtue. The subtlety of this part of his history may prompt suspicion in some. His critique, however, is not merely an indiscriminate attack on the politics and society of Republican Rome, but rather a truly calculated and deliberate account of a coherent view of politics. If Augustine merely wanted to demonize Rome, he would not need to praise Collatinus and Camillus so greatly (especially Camillus, whose story—unlike Collatinus'—ends in the triumph of a virtuous Roman). Further, if he had no designs on laying out a coherent political theory, then he would have in vain taken the pains he clearly does in weaving a subtly populist historical narrative, glossing over actions of the people in various historical events and softening critiques of their cause in other cases. Why praise virtuous Camillus at all if the point of the work was simply to deflate puffed-up Republican nostalgia? Why, in a work whose language and content are obviously aimed toward learned men, does Augustine choose to support the people in such intense ways? The answer to these questions is clear: Augustine's Roman history has a political undercurrent, either as a deliberate encoding of his political beliefs or as a reflection of his consistent understanding of the political. In particular, his political understanding favors the people, but it does not, in doing so, ignore or fail to praise the noble and virtuous aspect of political life. Indeed, the great men of Rome find their enemy not in an unruly or irascible people, but instead, in the litigious aristocrats who controlled the legal structure of the Republic. Ultimately, it is in the relationship between great man and people that Augustine's political analysis becomes most interesting: for although Brutus and other aristocrats led the people astray, Augustine is confident that the people would have supported the great men of Rome against their enemies had the Roman political structure not been designed with corrupt elites in mind. This becomes all the more clear in Augustine's analysis of the first two Caesars

of Rome, who are praised precisely for their blend of political virtue and respect for the people of Rome.

IV The Caesars and Augustine

Just analysis of Augustine's Roman history, therefore, must now turn to the advent of the Roman Empire, and in particular the figures of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus. Augustine's analysis of these two men sketches a favorable view of their political rule in comparison to the Republic, but a less rosy view of their desires to obtain political power; in these evaluations, Augustine develops a theory of the figure of a Caesar more generally. The particulars of his arguments reveal that Augustine seems to harbor great political sympathy for the figure of (and especially the Roman example of) the Caesar. While Augustine's theory is built primarily upon the first two Caesars, it is relevant to examine first the problem of Cato the Younger, as Augustine's principal discussion of Julius Caesar is a comparison between him and Cato. Augustine believes that Caesar's rival Cato came "far closer to true virtue" than Caesar himself.[65] However, he argues that Cato was more flawed in his evaluation of Roman politics; thus, Cato was the better man, but Caesar the wiser political actor. Cato is not merely a rash or irrational actor in Augustine. Rather, he seems to signify the doomed position of Rome's declining traditional elite, destined to failure because of his failure to see things for what they were. Cato's primary political obsession or motivation, according to Augustine, was his disgust for the "luxury and avarice" of his contemporaries and a nostalgia for early Republican political structures.[66] Cato, Augustine suggests, is triply wrong: first, agreeing with Sallust, Augustine argues that Cato yearns for an era made possible only by factors "which we do not have,"

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[65] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 210 (V.12).
[66] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 211 (V.12).

especially a moral and vigilant populace.[67] Second, Augustine points out that the very past for which Cato yearns is imagined, and was in fact an era defined by great fear of foreign threats and great oppression of the plebs at the hands of the elites.[68] That is, Cato neglects the fact that Rome has always been beset by "domestic upheaval" and that men "only acted with justice and moderation" when they were afraid of a threatening outside force or of a strong ruler.[69] Finally, Cato fails to see that the "evil times" of the Republican era were "endured or mitigated by a foresight of those few good men,"; the "outstanding virtue of a few citizens" was behind Rome's many "great feats."[70, 71] Cato is, in a sense, blinded by a nostalgia for a Rome that never was, and erroneously believes that the Roman laws and customs made Rome great. Failing to see the chronic ills of the government of the Roman Republic, Cato believes that the Republic's structure and mores made Rome exceptional. Instead, Augustine writes, the few great men of Rome—men who were, ultimately, not partisans of the patrician class or scribbling slaves-to-the-law—resulted in Rome's heroic victories against the odds. Thus Caesar, perhaps himself one of these great men, was able to achieve higher political ends than the more virtuous Cato, who remained held back by his belief that restoration of laws (rather than the actions of men of heroic virtue) would restore Rome to her former glory.

On Julius Caesar himself, Augustine's evaluation is mixed, but further reveals the comfort he has with the rule of a competent or politically virtuous strongman. Augustine points to Caesar as the man who was most "led to do many great deeds" on account of his great "desire

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 212 (V.12).
[71] Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 2, Loeb, 204-205 (V.12): "Sed per quosdam paucos, qui pro suo modo boni erant, magna administrabantur atque illis toleratis ac temperatis malis paucorum bonorum providentia res illa crescebat," most literally, "But through a certain few, who were good [each] according to his own mode, great matters were governed, and, [with] those ills endured or moderated by the providence of a few good men, that state grew."

for praise and glory."[72] In another passage, Augustine admits that Caesar began his quest for power out of jealousy towards Pompey and that he "exceeded [Pompey's power] in turn when Pompey was defeated and slain"; however, Augustine ends this passage's discussion of Caesar by noting how he "exercised his victor's power with clemency towards the citizens, and granted both life and honours to his opponents."[73, 74] Caesar is thus seen as a leader who desired power not for its own sake—i.e., out of *libido dominandi*—but instead as one who took power in order to rule with magnanimity and greatness. Motivated by this aforementioned "desire for praise and glory," Julius Caesar was willing to exercise liberality and mercy in order to keep his power. In favorably describing Caesar's rule, Augustine tacitly concedes that this attitude toward power is good, or at the very least, in resulting in good rule, was no grave ill for the city of Rome. The defenders of the Republic, on the other hand, saw the trade offered by Caesar—power to Caesar in exchange for good and effective rule—as low or degrading. Thus Cato committed suicide rather than "bear Caesar's victory," for though Cato loved his son and did not wish to die, "more greatly did he hate […] to give Caesar the glory of pardoning himself."[75] Cato understood it preferable to die with his notion of freedom under law intact rather than submit to Caesar's unbound regime, even though he well knew that Caesar would rule magnanimously and spare him, so much was Cato's disdain for Caesar's authority.

That Caesar, according to Augustine, is motivated by a "love of praise" is a fact worthy of careful study as well. The love of praise, Augustine writes, seems like a virtue "because

[72] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 208 (V.12).
[73] Ibid., 139 (III.30).
[74] Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 390-393 (III.30): "Pompei quippe victorem Gaium Caesarem, qui victoriam civilem clementer exercuit suisque adversariis vitam dignitatemque donavit…," most literally, "Gaius Caesar, victorious over Pompey, who exercised [his] victory mercifully upon the citizens and [who] granted life and honors to his adversaries…"
[75] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 35, 36 (I.23).

greater vices are restrained by it."[76, 77] God granted Rome a plentiful supply of otherwise ordinary men who

> For the sake of honor and praise and glory, so devoted themselves to their fatherland that they did not hesitate to place its safety before their own, even though they sought glory for themselves through it.[78]

Thus Caesar's personal desire for glory was one and the same as that which made Rome successful. While Augustine believes that this desire is, in fact, a vice, it is nonetheless the one that allowed both Caesar and Rome to achieve political greatness. Indeed, Augustine presents the love of praise or glory as a kind of solution to the problem of "lust for mastery" (*libido dominandi*) which he recognized as the root cause of the brutal, warlike nature of the Roman monarchy.[79] Love of glory, it seems, motivates men "not to displease men of good judgement," and has the power to turn a man toward virtuous and honorable self-sacrifice.[80] That is, lust for mastery drives leaders to exercise power over subjects for the pure pleasure of ruling them, whereas love of praise drives them to please and become praiseworthy in the eyes of their subjects; love of glory, it seems, ensures that leaders do not pursue temporary and unsustainable greatness, but instead the praise that comes from doing lasting good for the state. This praise, Augustine confirms, comes from the whole "fatherland," even those with "foolish suspicions" like the common people.[81] Thus, Julius Caesar was not an aspiring tyrant or warlord like the corrupt King Tarquin, but instead seems to strive after "authority and lordship" according to the "true way [*vera via*]"—that is, in a way which earnestly desires the admiration and love of his

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[76] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 212 (V.13).
[77] Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 2, Loeb, 206-207 (V.13): "…cum sit vitium, ob hoc virtus putatur quia per ipsum vitia maiora cohibentur," most literally, "…while it is a vice, is regarded to be a virtue because of this: because through it greater vices are restrained."
[78] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 212-213 (V.13).
[79] Ibid., 111 (III.14).
[80] Ibid., 224 (V.19).
[81] Ibid., 212, 224 (V.13, V.19).

people, rather than in a way which desires the luxury of power by force of cruelty.[82] Thus, Augustine's portrayal of Julius Caesar is surprisingly forgiving, not touching at all on the usurpations that launched him to political success, and simultaneously portraying him as more in-touch with the virtues that truly made Rome great. That is, Caesar had "good morals," at least, in the political sense: morals which merited him the reward of power as it merited Rome the reward of victory.[83] Essential, then, to the figure of Caesar in Augustine is the love of praise and glory which he possesses.

Augustus, however, is the one who in the end is the great exemplar of Augustine's theory of the Caesar. Foreshadowed by the alignment proposed concerning Julius Caesar and the common people of Rome—at least, insofar as he was praised by them—Augustine lays out a historical evaluation of Caesar Augustus as an archetypal strongman whose return to the good of ancient custom and anti-aristocratic tendencies improve a decadent and divided Republic. In describing Augustus' rise to power, Augustine describes Augustus as a formidable ruler who was nurtured by the "blind" Cicero of the late Republic: Cicero, emblematic of a failing aristocratic elite, assumed that training Augustus in political virtue would enable his student to restore the Republic. Instead, Augustus enacted the exact kind of rule against which "Cicero had issued so many warnings."[84] Augustine does not seem to blame Augustus here; rather, it almost seems natural to him that the Republican elite, so removed from political reality, would not see that the only solution to their ills was the destruction of their political system. Augustus, like Julius, seems to exemplify in his actions what is best with the Republic, but ultimately his value of glory

[82] Ibid. The Latin comes from Augustine, *City of God*, Loeb Vol. 2, 238-239 (V.19).
[83] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 215 (V.15).
[84] Ibid., 140 (III.30).

and security over law and liberty is an inversion of Cato and Cicero's more traditional aristocratic politics.

With the advent of the reign of Augustus, Augustine emphasizes the way in which Caesar's government—though breaking with the Republic's order of things—was more fitting for Rome as it had become. Further, he credits Augustus' new reign with bringing peace and improving both the country and its people. The main passage concerning Augustus comes in the twenty-first chapter of Book III of the *City of God*, and is so essential that we will include it below both in Dyson's translation and translated literally from the original Latin:

> We come next to the period down to the time of Augustus Caesar. Augustus seems in every way to have wrested their liberty from the Romans; but that liberty was in any case no longer glorious even in their own judgement, but full of contention and danger, and now deeply weakened and depleted. He once more submitted all things to the will of a monarch, and, in doing so, seemed to restore the commonwealth to health in its feeble old age.[85]

And from our own more literal translation:

> This [is] the whole time up to Caesar Augustus, who is seen in every way to have wrested from the Romans [their] liberty, which was not now even in their own opinion glorious, but contentious and dangerous and now wholly enervated and weakened, and to have brought all [things] back to kingly judgement and, in a way, to have restored and renewed the republic [which had] collapsed into diseased old age…[86]

He begins by conceding that the Emperor "seems in every way to have wrested […] liberty from the Romans." However, he immediately qualifies this by noting that Rome's liberties were "no longer glorious," but rather "contentious" and "dangerous" to the republic, a reference to the

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[85] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 130 (III.21).
[86] Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 366-367 (III.21): "Hoc toto tempore usque ad Caesarem Augustum, qui videtur non adhuc vel ipsorum opinione gloriosam, sed contentiosam et exitiosam et plane iam enervem ac languidam libertatem omni modo extorsisse Romanis et ad regale arbitrium cuncta revocasse et quasi morbida vetustate conlapsam veluti instaurasse ac renovasse rem publicam…" The translation of the phrase "et ad regale arbitrium cuncta revocasse" offered by George E. McCracken in the Loeb edition is strikingly loose and misleading, writing, "…and who reintroduced the totalitarian absolutism of kings," as if Augustine could have possibly made reference to "totalitarian absolutism" of any kind. We include our translation both because this is a single sentence, a fact which is significant to our theory that Augustine deliberately is silent concerning much in the life of Augustus, and because even Dyson's translation of the aforementioned phrase is somewhat lacking.

chronic bickering of the Patrician class who were the principal holders of Roman liberty. The Roman Republic had become "enervated and weakened" by a decadent aristocracy and a disgruntled underclass; thus, according to Augustine, Augustus' strong rule "restored and renewed the republic," staving off the fate of the "diseased" and aged Republic. Importantly, Augustine separates the "commonwealth" or "republic" (*res publica*) of Rome from the legal order of its government.[87] That is, Rome remains Rome even with less of its *libertas*. In this way, he avoids contradiction with his firm commitment against the Roman Monarchy's excusing of unjust means for the sake of just ends. Augustus, not blinded by the nostalgia of Cato and Cicero nor the lust of domination of Romulus and the Tarquins, is able to do away with the sclerotic Roman attachment to their ancient liberties, for which the underlying polity of Rome had become wholly unfit. Augustus did not unjustly seize power, but instead justly re-fit the laws and government of Rome to fit the character of the underlying res publica. This notion of "fit" does not mean that his government was degraded (as if a degraded government fit the character of a degraded polity), but rather, that Augustus was a physician, his regime acting as a fitting treatment to save the "diseased" polity from languishing under laws unfit to cure its political ill. Augustus' motivation, like that of Caesar, remained glory, but his political outcomes are more praiseworthy according to Augustine, because they established a new order that actually improved things as they were. Cato and Cicero can thus be seen as individuals who did not see that the disease in the body politic could not have been remedied within the existing modes of the Republic; Julius Caesar, in contrast, seems to be one who understood and manipulated the sickly condition of the republic toward his own glory, perhaps not even seeing said condition as moribund. Augustus combined the prognostic understanding of Cicero and

[87] Ibid.

Cato with Julius Caesar's realization that the polity had become fit for new and kingly orders, restoring the republic by bringing its government under his "kingly judgement." While Augustine admits that Augustus "wrested" liberty from the Romans, it was this beloved liberty which was seen to have been enabling the republic's decay: that is, Augustus' success in restoring and healing the body politic shows that, even if liberty was not necessarily the actual cause of Rome's disease, the lack of liberty was a good cure. This narrative is particularly surprising given the ways in which Augustus violated the laws and customs of Rome in order to obtain power. While Augustine does not discuss Augustus at length, it is his silence on this matter which demonstrates his particular leniency towards violation of the laws of the *res publica* and entrance into a state of exception. His leniency towards Augustus is demonstrated also in his willingness to make Augustus an essential part of the conditions necessary to the advent of Christianity itself.

Augustus is rigorously discussed in only one other place in the whole work: notably, in the first sentence of Augustine's chapter concerning the birth of Christ.[88] While Augustine is an enemy of the notion that one can read the will of God into the sequence of historical events after Christ, he supports and argues in favor of reading Providential will into historical events that impact the narrative of the Bible during the age of revelation. It is thus of no little importance that Caesar Augustus is the primary focus of the opening line in this chapter that focuses in a particular way on that which "had been prophesied," in and around the biblical Christmas

[88] It is notable that the title of this chapter centers not merely on the history of Christ, but specifically on his birth, role, and prophetic fulfillment; thus, it is all the more significant that he begins this chapter with a discussion of Caesar. Dyson translates the title as follows: "Of the birth of our Saviour, in Whom the Word was made flesh; and of the scattering of the Jews among all the nations, as had been prophesised," Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 891 (XVIII.46). The Latin reads "De ortu Salvatoris nostri, secundum quod Verbum caro factum est, et de dispersione Iudaeorum per omnes gentes, sicut fuerat prophetatum," most literally, "On the birth of our Savior, according that the Word was made flesh, and on the dispersion of the Jews through all the nations, just as had been prophesized," Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. 6, Loeb, 46-47 (XVIII.46).

narrative.[89] This is a rare occurrence of historical analysis of events in the New Testament, and the only such example which significantly involves Rome; most of the events Augustine analyzes are related to the history of the Jews of the Old Testament. In this line, Augustus is credited with having "brought peace to the whole world," making the "condition of the commonwealth […] changed" such that Christ could come into the world.[90, 91] Augustine sees Augustus as essential to the narrative of Christianity itself and writes the Caesar into the Christmas narrative without any detraction or demonization of the emperor. There seems to be a causal link between Christ's birth and Augustus' changing the "condition of the commonwealth" and the peace he instituted across "the whole world." One may consider this causal link to merely be a reference to the centralizing impulse of Augustus' government, as said impulse led to the census described in Luke 2:1.[92] However, a more compelling analysis must account for the fact that Augustine himself makes grand gestures toward world peace and changing polities instead of simply describing the census. Indeed, his descriptions of Augustus' changing of the "state of the republic" and his claim that "the world [had] been made peaceful through him" may be a broader reference to the notion that Christ could come only "when the fullness of the time was come," indicating that Augustus' centralized order and world peace were essential to the timing of Christ's coming.[93] Indeed, the only two examples Augustine cites of men who

[89] Ibid.
[90] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 891 (XVIII.46).
[91] Augustine, *City of God*, Loeb Vol. 6, 46-47 (XVIII.46): "…apud Romanos autem iam mutato rei publicae statu imperante Caesare Augusto et per eum orbe pacato natus est Christus secundum praecedentem prophetiam in Bethleem Iudae," most literally, "…however, with the state of the republic now changed before the Roman people, with Caesar Augustus ruling and the world having been made peaceful through him, Christ was born according to the preceding prophecy, in Bethlehem of Judea." It is perhaps relevant to note that this does not necessarily violate Fortin's notion of Augustine as anti-Providential when it comes to history, since these events are related to revelation. With the era of revelation ended with the reception of *Apocalypse* by John, his argument against 'capital-H' History in Book I of the *City of God* still stands.
[92] Luke 2:1: "And it came to pass, that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled," Douay-Rheims-Challoner Version.
[93] Galatians 4:4: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," Douay-Rheims-Challoner Version.

brought lasting peace to Rome are Numa Pompilius and Caesar Augustus, the former a monarch and the latter a practitioner of "kingly rule." Thus, these two are the only rulers of Rome who were able to achieve what Augustine describes in Book XIX as that which "the whole use of temporal things is directed towards": peace.[94] Augustus is thus an important and unique political figure as well as, it seems, a character playing an essential role in actual, Providentially-driven, prophetically-revealed history: the history of the life of Christ.

The Caesars, then, are not afterthoughts in any way in the politics of Augustine's *City of God*. One might, against our analysis, note the relative infrequency of their mention and the brevity of Augustine's discussion about them, complaining that Augustine's arguments are insignificant or that our arguments make very much out of very little. Yet Augustine's analysis is so striking precisely because he remains silent about the many cruelties and bloody acts done by the Caesars. Augustus in particular receives a kind treatment, especially compared to that of historians like Suetonius, for instance, who emphasizes Augustus' cruel and impious treatment of political enemies.[95] Some might claim here that Augustine is silent on these issues not because of a legitimate political belief, but because of some rhetorical strategy designed to assuage the egos of the powers that be. Yet in a work that in no way avoids harsh criticism of Rome, it is hardly reasonable to think that in these cases alone Augustine wishes to be kind toward Roman elites or citizens. One may think that his writings are, perhaps, designed to flatter the emperor by

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[94] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 940 (XIX.14).

[95] Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Volume I,* Trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 166-167: "He did not use his victory with moderation, but after sending Brutus's head to Rome, to be cast at the feet of Caesar's statue, he vented his spleen upon the most distinguished of his captives, not even sparing them insulting language. For instance, to one man who begged humbly for burial, he is said to have replied: 'The birds will soon settle that question.' When two others, father and son, begged for their lives, he is said to have bidden them cast lots or play mora, to decide which should be spared, and then to have looked on while both died, since the father was executed because he offered to die for his son, and the latter thereupon took his own life."

praising the imperial system—but why focus praise on the Caesars, whose respective roles as *dictator* and *princeps* do not resemble the dominate of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D.? Ultimately, it is clear that Augustine's silence with regard to Caesar must be considered as part of his political analysis of Caesar. One might be tempted to say that his silence amounts to consent, that is, tacit approval of violence and political sedition in service of the preservation of the state. However, it seems more convincing to say that Augustine is deliberately silent in order to idealize—and therefore typify—Caesar, not excusing his acts of political violence, but instead creating a character or political type of the Caesar. Augustine's depiction of Caesar is less focused on history and more on expounding a political theoretical archetype: the Caesar, a leader who must—by necessity—violate political norms and take power from political enemies by force in order to restore peace and order to the *re publica*. Thus Augustine, through his history of the principate, contributes, if only in a sketch, a model of rule that is unique in classical political theory. Augustine's most striking praise is reserved for that potent combination of populist reforms (such as the Agrarian Law he so praises in his analysis of the Gracchi), unsentimental reform of political institutions, and the subjugation of a corrupt people into a new body politic: Caesarism.

We have thus demonstrated that Augustine's Roman history contains in it a coherent—though certainly by no means complete—political worldview. In the case of Romulus, he lays out a foundational political principle, namely, that acts of immorality cannot be excused by their resulting political good. On early Rome, he also deflates the notion of wide rule as preferable to a peaceful but limited republic. From there, he laments the way in which the Roman Republic's oligarchic system suppressed men of great virtue and oppressed the poor. This system, which failed to give due recognition to the dutiful Roman public and actively worked against its true

optimates, was unjust and soon became filled with corruption as a result. Finally, Augustine praises the political wisdom of the Caesars, and proposes Augustus Caesar as the bringer of peace and enemy of the decadent aristocracy, the embodied answer to his prior critiques of Rome.

3 *Machiavelli's Discourses in Light of Augustine's History.*

I Machiavelli and the Problem of Augustine's History

The Roman history of Machiavelli has received little comparison to that of St. Augustine of Hippo. Few thinkers have sought to draw even general comparisons between the two. This is striking not only because both sit at the bookends of the era of an ascendant Christendom, but also because both are deeply concerned with ordering (or re-ordering) the relationship between Christianity, pagan philosophy, and worldly politics. Leo Strauss, for example, never names St. Augustine anywhere in his seminal *Thoughts on Machiavelli*.[96] Maurizio Viroli, in *Machiavelli's God*, mentions St. Augustine only three times: once for distinguishing between types of love, once as a master of biblical commentary, and the last time as a writer admired in the time of the Renaissance (but never in relation to Machiavelli).[97] Harvey Mansfield, in *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders*, discusses Augustine a few times; however, besides a parallel drawn between Machiavelli and Augustine in their critique of the nobles' abuses of the plebs, all mentions of Augustine relate to theology more than politics.[98]

These works, having no explicit focus on Augustine, can gladly be forgiven for failing to give his politics—let alone his histories—their fullest due; after all, his philosophy and theology are rightly hailed as his crowning achievements. It is, however, somewhat odd to see his history so largely ignored in Paul W. Wright's article comparing the conception of terror and the city in

[96] Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957): 347-348.
[97] Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli's God* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010): 45, 91, 252.
[98] Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979): 41, 63, 190, 260. Mansfield is, of course, correct to point to Augustine's theology in contrast to certain precepts of Machiavelli's thought, but our investigation will primarily focus on Augustine as a political writer (our treatment of his theology of Christ and Caesar was undertaken to emphasize the political importance of the latter).

Machiavelli and Augustine.[99] Wright does compare Machiavelli and Augustine on their evaluation of Brutus' filicide, and claims it is significant that Augustine and Machiavelli both reduce "Lucretia's very real trauma to the status of *exemplum*."[100] Wright's analysis here does not say much: Machiavelli depicts Lucretia's rape as a political event that could have given her power, while Augustine portrays her rape as evidence of the superiority of Christian tenderness—which holds her chastity to have been preserved until her suicide—to pagan harshness. Even if we grant Wright's stretch of an interpretation, this does not seem to fulfill Wright's goal of using Augustine to make Christianity more than the "background, context, or [...] the victim [of] or foil [to]" Machiavelli.[101] Notable for our purposes is, perhaps, his attempt (of dubious success) to interpret Machiavelli's mixed evaluation of Piero Soderini as a transformed "Augustinian" typological evaluation.[102] This interpretation seems to make Machiavelli's intense focus on preventing the easy slide into the evils of tyranny akin to the 'Augustinian' obsession with man's fallen tendencies toward sinfulness and depravity.[103] The remainder of Wright's work focuses on drawing attention to their shared belief in the transitory nature of the earthly city, but unfortunately he does not explore this concept with deep attention either to Machiavelli's praise of political conflict or Augustine's conception of political peace.[104]

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[99] Paul W. Wright, "Machiavelli's *City of God*: Civic Humanism and Augustinian Terror," in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Oxford, UK: Lexington Books, 2005), 297-336.
[100] Wright, "Machiavelli's *City of God*," 304, 308-309. It is worth noting that Lucretia is thought to have died in 510 B.C., i.e., 919 years before Augustine began writing *City of God* in A.D. 410 and 2,026 years before Machiavelli is thought to have begun writing the *Discourses* in A.D. 1517; therefore, one wonders how much anyone should have been expected to treat a one- or two-thousand millennia-old legend as "very real trauma," however much we ourselves may mourn the fall of El Cid's Valencia or celebrate certain auspicious events occurring under the consulship of Caesar and Paullus.
[101] Wright, "Machiavelli's *City of God*," 309, 299.
[102] Ibid., 304.
[103] Ibid., 305-306.
[104] Ibid., 317-326.

Fruit, however, can be found in Wright's effort to show that there is good reason to compare Augustine and Machiavelli. He offers evidence that Machiavelli seems to be responding to the thought of Augustine, whether directly or as received through other sources. Wright offers as evidence the clearly Augustinian angst and piety of Machiavelli's "Exhortation to Penitence." The prayer seems to show that Machiavelli understood the Church Father's desire to "repress our itch for usury, or for shameful pleasures, or for the tricks we delight in playing on our neighbors," the last of which might explicitly reference the infamous examples of *cupido peccandi* in Augustine's *Confessions*.[105, 106] Machiavelli's involvement in the "Company of Piety" and his admiration for Savonarola show that, if nothing else, he was no stranger to the intensely prayerful circles of Renaissance-era Roman Catholicism.[107] Finally, Wright appeals to the notion that Machiavelli's "moral pessimism" reflects a kind of "conversation" between him and Augustine.[108] Too many, according to Wright, take the fact that it is difficult to verify whether Machiavelli actually read Augustine in order to claim that "they have nothing to say to one another."[109] That is, Machiavelli and Augustine both engage with the question of political Christianity and political philosophy more generally through the examples of Roman history. Thus, we are free to place the two in conversation even if neither author had knowledge of the other.

We, therefore, may—and must—forge our own path in comparing, in detail, the Roman histories of Augustine and Machiavelli. Wright gives several good reasons for the belief that Machiavelli understood and interacted with Augustine's ideas, even if he did not actually read

[105] Ibid., 297-298.
[106] See St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, II.4.
[107] Wright, "Machiavelli's *City of God*," 298. See also *Discourses on Livy* I.45 and Prince VI.
[108] Wright, "Machiavelli's *City of God*," 300.
[109] Ibid.

Augustine. More importantly, however, is the notion that the two deserve to be compared simply by the facts of their histories themselves. As Leo Strauss asserts in *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, the "true character of Machiavelli's thought" is revealed only if "one recovers for himself and in himself the pre-modern heritage of the western world, both Biblical and classical."[110] Machiavelli and Augustine are both interested in the project of political philosophy, and both use Roman history in order to make political judgements. Additionally, as Wright notes, both come from an intensely Christian milieu, even granted that Machiavelli's Christianity may or may not have been a genuine or long-held faith. Thus the aim of this project is not only supported, but, in fact, necessary for a deeper understanding of the two thinkers. If some balk at the notion of 'putting Augustine and Machiavelli in conversation,' then a suitable metaphor may be found in the art of Machiavelli's Renaissance. The light of Augustine, that is, the clear moral system that he lays out in his history, can illuminate the subtleties of the light and shadow of Machiavelli's thought. Thus, having shown Augustine's history to be a political one, the task at hand is to read Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* in light of the Roman history of St. Augustine. The *Discourses* will be the primary text of Machiavelli's that we work with, both because it is an explicit history of Rome (and therefore is more aptly studied in conversation with Augustine) and because it is a work which, unpublished until Machiavelli's death, is more likely to represent his true political views (insofar as it was not softened or censored for public consumption). Indeed, we can learn much about Machiavelli's *Discourses* from our reading of Augustine. Ultimately, their disagreements stem far more from their moral evaluation of the facts than from their understanding of the facts themselves. The similarities between the two of them on the history of the Republic—including, on the surface, a strikingly popular character—serves to put

[110] Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 12.

into stark contrast the actual differences between the two of them. While the men disagree on the subjects of freedom and great men, they seem to agree on questions of class, meaning that they agree regarding favor of the people but not regarding how this favor should transfer to political rule. Augustine's more Caesarist, populist political outlook reflects a genuine belief that the people are good and will remain so when justly submitted to strong leadership; this stands in stark contrast with Machiavelli's understanding of the people as a group whose irascible will is best made to serve the state in the absence of a political strongman.

II Machiavelli on the Founding of Rome

Conveniently, we begin with Machiavelli on the founding of Rome, both because it is the first relevant event in historical chronology and because it provides a good example of one of the primary patterns or paradigms of agreement and divergence between Machiavelli and Augustine. Machiavelli agrees with St. Augustine that the fratricide of Romulus was, contrary to the narrative of Livy, done with the intent towards ruling.[111] Augustine argues that Romulus murdered his brother because he "had been unwilling to accept his own brother as his fellow-ruler"; Machiavelli writes that the crime of Romulus was committed because "to order a republic it is necessary to be alone."[112, 113] The two deny the Roman attempts to smooth over the crime of

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[111] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Vol. 1, Loeb, 24-25 (I.6), "Priori Remo augurium venisse fertur, sex vultures, iamque nuntiato augurio cum duplex numerus Romulo se ostendisset, utrumque regem sua multitudo consalutaverat: tempore illi praecepto, at hi numero avium regnum trahebant. Inde cum altercatione congressi certamine irarum ad caedem vertuntur; ibi in turba ictus Remus cecidit," most literally, "It is said an augury came to Remus first, six vultures, and then it was announced that an augury with double the number had appeared to Romulus, [thus] each was hailed king by his own multitude: the one were supporting the [claim to the] kingship by time, whereas the other did so by the number of birds. From there, with an altercation of fighting [and] a battle of ire they were led to carnage; then in the turmoil Romulus, struck, was slain." Livy also recounts the "more vulgar" narrative of Remus hopping over the walls of Rome to demonstrate their inferiority, but he clearly favors the narrative that Remus was killed in a fray, almost as if by accident.

[112] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 109 (III.13).

[113] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 30 (I.9.5). We follow Mansfield and Tarcov's translation for the *Discourses* due to its clarity and adherence to the original text, with investigations into the Italian used only for passages of special importance.

Romulus, and describe the event as a simple issue of the desire to rule alone. The difference, however, is that Machiavelli explicitly supports the city's excuse of Romulus' fratricide. Machiavelli writes that,

> A wise understanding [will never] reprove anyone for any extraordinary action that he uses to order a kingdom or constitute a republic. It is very suitable that when the deed accuses him, the effect excuses him; and when the effect is good, as was that of Romulus, it will always excuse the deed; for he who is violent to spoil, not he who is violent to mend, should be reproved.[114]

It is exactly this logic that Augustine implicitly denies: that is, Augustine believes that the city has no power to actually "excuse" Romulus of his guilt. The city can only transfer guilt upon itself, that is, upon "the city as a whole."[115] The act that Augustine describes as "worse" is exactly the one which is supported by Machiavelli.[116]

Yet even if one grants Augustine the point that the city cannot truly excuse the action of Romulus, it is not clear Machiavelli's point is completely refuted. That is, Machiavelli's point is twofold: that Romulus should be excused, and that Romulus should be excused because his actions were done for good reasons. Thus Machiavelli writes

> That Romulus was of those [good men], that he deserves excuse in the deaths of his brother and of his partner, and that what he did was for the common good and not for his own ambition, is demonstrated by his having at once ordered a Senate with which he took counsel and by whose opinion he decided.[117]

That is, Machiavelli believes Romulus' action was justified because an "orderer […] not for his own succession but for the common fatherland" must "contrive to have authority alone."[118] Machiavelli thus turns what was in Augustine a selfish or vain desire to rule alone into a bona fide necessity, a condition that had to be met. The reason for this is intrinsically linked to the

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[114] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 29 (I.9.2).
[115] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 99 (III.6).
[116] Ibid.
[117] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 29 (I.9.2).
[118] Ibid.

fact that Machiavelli conceives of Romulus as an "[orderer] of laws."[119, 120] The orderer of laws seems to fulfill the role that the ruler fulfills in Augustine. The orderer of laws must be alone, Machiavelli writes, because the many "are not capable of ordering a thing because they do not know its good," or at least, they cannot be sure of it "because of the diverse opinions among them."[121] Indeed, he must be completely alone, even in time: Machiavelli writes that "he should indeed be so prudent and virtuous that he does not leave the authority he took as an inheritance to another," lest his successor "use ambitiously that which had been used virtuously by him."[122] The orderer of laws exists to prevent a tyrant from emerging, and therefore can neither allow other powerful men the opportunity to overthrow himself, nor allow a successor to have the power he himself exercises, nor forfeit power to the feuding hands of the many. Our analysis might end here: but it is clear that Machiavelli intends the orderer to be alone precisely because he is, in fact, the supreme and sole ruler in perpetuity.[123] The very same "many" who are incapable of ordering (or re-ordering) a state are those to whom the orderer must entrust the "care" and "maintenance" of his order, at least, if he wants his order to "last long."[124] Thus in Machiavelli the orderer of laws is the sole ruler in a republic for the entirety of its existence: all others exist to support the "care" and "maintenance" of the orderer's order, in perpetuity.[125]

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[119] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 30 (I.9.4).
[120] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Ed. Vivanti, 31 (I.9.2), 32 (I.9.3), "ordinatore d'una republica" and "di buone leggi ordinatori," literally, "orderer of a republic" and "orderers of good laws."
[121] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 29 (I.9.2).
[122] Ibid.
[123] That is, the orderer of laws who correctly orders a state is he who is the sole ruler (or orderer) in perpetuity; Machiavelli alludes to the fact that Romulus did not perfectly order Rome in I.2.7, writing that Rome "did not have a Lycurgus to order it in the beginning in a mode that would enable it to live free a long time," but that the conflicts between the plebs and the Senate granted that "what an orderer had not done, chance did." Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 14 (I.2.7). The implication here is that it was only by happenstance that the Roman order was able to use the tension between the plebs and the Senate.
[124] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 29 (I.9.2).
[125] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Ed. Vivanti, 32 (I.9.2), "la rimane alla cura di molti e che a molti stia il mantenerla," most literally, "it remains to the care of the multitude and that the multitude attends to the maintaining of it."

This divergence between Machiavelli and Augustine here is mostly on the moral evaluation of facts rather than on the facts themselves. Machiavelli's history does not disagree with that of Augustine, but he does differ in his understanding of *politics*. The political-philosophical disagreement is clear: Machiavelli thinks it is necessary for a founder to be alone in the history of the republic, whereas Augustine has no such belief. The ultimate origin of this disagreement can be seen most clearly in comparing Machiavelli's observations concerning Numa Pompilius and the wars waged by the Roman monarchy to those of Augustine. Machiavelli's observations on Numa's reign are subtle and therefore deserve careful attention. He begins by giving Numa a kind of backhanded compliment, claiming that he "found a very ferocious people and wished to reduce it to obedience with the arts of peace."[126] While this may sound positive, this description bears a great resemblance to the corrupt people whose "ferocious and feral nature" has been tamed by being "nourished in prison and servitude" so that they desire to live "beneath a yoke."[127] Numa continues to receive mixed evaluation: where "the authority of God was not necessary" for Romulus to order the city of Rome, Machiavelli points out that it was "quite necessary for Numa" to have "pretended" to have an affair with a nymph in order to obtain power over the Roman people.[128] Numa himself is not the problem—that is, Numa is not simply some inadequate or weak ruler—rather, the problem is that Numa "wished to put new and unaccustomed orders into the city."[129] The "extraordinary laws" of Numa thus caused him to have to have recourse to the gods, and seemingly made it difficult for his extraordinary modes to

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[126] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 34 (I.11.1).
[127] Ibid., 44 (I.16.2).
[128] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 35 (I.11.2).
[129] Ibid.

be repeated.[130] His reign by the "art of peace" caused Rome's neighbors to judge them "effeminate" and therefore made it necessary that the "reputation of Romulus" be "regained."[131]

Machiavelli describes the peace of Numa in a starkly different manner than St. Augustine, who praises—at least conditionally—the *Pax Numae*. Augustine proposes that either the peace of Numa was just, in which case it should have been maintained by the other kings of Rome, or it was unjust, in which case it should have never been pursued.[132] Yet Machiavelli rejects this dichotomy. He argues that the peace of Numa could have been maintained, and that such peace is not wrong in and of itself, but that ultimately the pursuit of the art of peace leads to failure for a political body. A republic that "stays within its limits" and pursues "the true quiet of a city" will be crushed. Even if "heaven were so kind" as to make the state such that "it did not have to make war," such a state would be destined to become "either effeminate or divided."[133] This goes far beyond the notion that peace is unlikely to be achieved or that peace is a gift of "heaven"; these things even Augustine admits, as he notes that peace can be broken because of the iniquities of one's enemies, and that—though governments should aim at peace—peace is "a benefit which comes from the true God."[134] Machiavelli's belief is much stronger. He asserts that the pursuit of peace is always doomed: the republic that pursues peace will always become "effeminate or divided," and, in reality, heaven never gives the republic the gift of peace anyways. The republic in pursuit of peace will not obtain it, Machiavelli believes, and even if it did—perhaps indicating his belief in the inevitability of war is not such an iron law—such a republic would be doomed by internal troubles. In other words, to Machiavelli, all peace is

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[130] Ibid., 35 (I.11.3).
[131] Ibid., 53 (I.19.3).
[132] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 104 (III.10). Augustine uses the language of just and unjust peace in this passage, which we apply to Machiavelli in order to bring to light the differences between the two.
[133] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 22, 23 (I.6.4).
[134] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 104, 103, 932-933, 938-942 (III.10, III.9, XIX.11, XIX.13-14).

unjust for a republic, insofar as all pursuits of peace doom a republic. This is because, according to Machiavelli,

> All things of men are in motion and cannot stay steady, they must either rise or fall; and to many things that reason does not bring you, necessity brings you. So when a republic that has been ordered so as to be capable of maintaining itself does not expand, and necessity leads it to expand, this would come to take away its foundations and make it come to ruin sooner.[135]

Peace, Machiavelli believes, is neither possible nor desirable for the state because the natural condition of the world—or, at least, the world of men—is motion.[136] The actions of men are always changing, and therefore the things that rule them "either rise or fall," or, more accurately, are always either *rising* or *falling*, lest one think that things can even achieve the doomed stability of peace. Therefore, attempts to "balance this thing" or "maintain this middle way" are doomed. The solution cannot be to try to counter the constant passions of men by structuring governments that soothe and mold men into good citizens. In other words, if one aims for stasis, supporting harmony, concord, and quiet, then one will be at the whim of fortune: either being given, by way of good fortune, the gift of temporary peace and thinking that his order is working; or being subjected to the natural order of things, that is, the constant motion of men either toward lethargic decay or passionate fervor. One must therefore order a republic with an eye toward war, expansion, and tumult, lest—like Venice and Sparta—his order be subject to swift and sudden destruction at the whim of fortune.

Peace, then, could perhaps suffice to explain the differences between Augustine and Machiavelli, at least in terms of the basis of their political thought. That is, between the two, the case can be made that their political points-of-divergence all stem from an initial break: the issue

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[135] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 23 (I.6.4).
[136] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Ed. Vivanti, 24 (I.6.4), "Ma sendo tutte le cose degli uomini in moto," most literally, "But all the things of men being in motion…"

of peace, or rather, the question of motion. It is, after all, notable that this is one of the only explicitly philosophical statements in the *Discourses*, asserting something about the nature of things of men, universally, and without reference to Roman history. It is doubly notable that this explicitly rejects perhaps the most famous part of Augustine's political philosophy, namely, that

> God, therefore, is the most wise Creator and just Ordainer [*sapientissimus conditor et iustissimus ordinator*] of all natures, Who has established the mortal human race as the greatest adornment of all things earthly, and Who has given to men certain good things appropriate [*congruus*] to this life. These are: temporal peace, in proportion to the short span of a mortal life, consisting in bodily health and soundness, and the society of one's own kind; and all things necessary for the preservation and recovery of this peace.[137]

Machiavelli explicitly rejects the notion that God has given men "all things necessary for the preservation and recovery" of peace; even further, he rejects the idea that peace is even "appropriate" (*congruus*, "fitting") for "this life," since all things of men are in motion.[138] The tension is clear, and these two lines might be considered comparison enough. Certainly this would be true if one or the other left the consequences of his political theory as an exercise to the reader. Fortunately, however, both wrote much more than this, and therefore it is helpful to recall the reason that Augustine's history was examined as a serious work of political philosophy in the first place: namely, that his history contained much detail concerning the prudential questions of regime form and function that could not be certainly derived from first principles alone. Thus, since the fullness of Augustine's political theory is only understood through analyzing his history—that is, the various consequences of his political principles—so to might

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[137] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 940 (XIX.13). The Latin, per Augustine, *City of God*, Vol. VI, Loeb, 178-181 (XIX.13), is "Deus ergo naturarum omnium sapientissimus conditor et iustissimus ordinator, qui terrenorum ornamentorum maximum instituit mortale genus humanum, dedit hominibus quaedam bona huic vitae congrua, id est pacem temporalem pro modulo mortalis vitae in ipsa salute et incolumitate ac societate sui generis, et quaeque huic paci vel tuendae vel recuperandae necessaria sunt," most literally, "God, therefore, the most wise founder and most just orderer of all natural things, who appointed the mortal race of men the greatest of ornamentations of earthly things, who gave to men certain good things fitting to this life: that is, temporal peace, for the measure of mortal life, in health itself, and in security, and also in society in a class of its own; each thing [required] for the defending or recovering of this peace."
[138] Ibid.

one conceive of Machiavelli disagreeing with Augustine on first principles but agreeing with him in his evaluation of Roman history. Therefore, we must investigate the way in which Machiavelli evaluates the events of Roman history examined by Augustine to see to what extent the two thinkers find themselves in accord or in conflict.

III Machiavelli and the Great Men of the Roman Republic

Machiavelli's fundamental political principle, then, is the notion that all things are matter in motion, which necessarily means that the temporal end of politics cannot be peace in any form (political or spiritual). It is relevant to examine how this principle—established in Machiavelli's evaluation of the history of early Rome and standing in stark contrast to the animating principal of Augustine's politics—manifests itself in events of Roman history evaluated by both Augustine and Machiavelli. After all, while their theoretical disagreement has been established, theoretical disagreements often have surprising consequences when it comes to their application (surprises are especially expected given how much Machiavelli deliberately eschews the clear, strict, and expected application of abstract philosophical principles). Next, then, it is necessary to evaluate Machiavelli's understanding the establishment of the Roman Republic and the men who defined its halcyon days. In particular, our examination of Machiavelli's views must recall Augustine's evaluation of the Roman Republic as favoring ambitious aristocrats over both virtuous men-of-action and the put-upon people of Rome. On the great men of the Republican era, Machiavelli is less supportive, viewing them with suspicion both because of their capacity for exceptional politics and because of his conviction that the truly great man is, by definition, resistant to tragedy or injustice.

First among the great men of Rome, then, is Lucius Collatinus, who Augustine uses as a model of the kind of strong leadership that the Republic continued to betray. In a curious move,

Machiavelli actually agrees with Augustine on the surface. Though Collatinus is discussed at length only one time, Machiavelli admits that Collatinus, “even though he had been found to have freed Rome,” was “sent into exile for no cause” other than his name.[139] Collatinus is, in fact, used as an example to show that Rome “would not have been more merciful toward its citizens” than Athens if, like Athens, it had once had its freedoms taken away.[140] Our analysis, then, could stop here, showing a point of total agreement between Machiavelli and Augustine. However, this is not the extent of Machiavelli’s evaluation of the case. For one, Machiavelli never actually claims that the exile of Camillus was excessive or wrong: only that it was done because of his name and that Rome was “suspicious and severe” in doing so.[141, 142] Further, the next chapter of the *Discourses* indicates that the ingratitude or suspicion on display here is, in fact, a good thing for the republic. Machiavelli argues that ingratitude caused by suspicion deserves “some excuse” because of the fact that this is among the “errors in maintaining itself free”[143] and because “it must be” that such errors occur in order to have a free state.[144] Thus Brutus too merits “some excuse” by this definition, and even more because Machiavelli believes that it was the people of Rome that was the principal source of suspicion in the city.[145] Thus Collatinus was, perhaps, regrettably deposed and exiled, seemingly at the hands of the people (contrary to Augustine’s narrative); yet Machiavelli says that this was, in essence, a good thing, or at the very least, a regrettable side-effect from or collateral damage toward the maintenance of a good thing. Ultimately responsible for this belief is Machiavelli’s belief that all things of men

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[139] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 64 (I.28.1).
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Ed. Vivanti, 68 (I.28.2), “sospettosa e severa.”
[143] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Ed. Vivanti, 70 (I.29.3), “errori per mantenersi libera,” most literally, “errors toward/through maintaining itself free.”
[144] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 65, 66 (I.29.1,3).
[145] Ibid., 66-67 (I.29.3).

are in motion. Whereas Augustine believes that the people need not have chosen between servility and suspicion—that is, that Brutus could have calmed them without stifling their freedom—Machiavelli understands the passions or desires of men to have velocity, always overflowing their banks or failing to meet their mark. Therefore, it is only natural that, for the sake of freedom, Machiavelli gladly permits a certain amount of the right kind of injustice.

The story of Camillus extends Machiavelli's evaluation of the great men of Rome by implying that the ruling classes should handle or placate the people, expecting and anticipating the viciousness of the popular faction. Machiavelli admits, like Augustine, that Marcus Camillus was a great man, noting how he "freed Rome from the oppression of the French" and "made all Roman citizens yield to him."[146] This praise, however, must be understood as partly ironic, at least insofar as Machiavelli believes it a sign of corruption for the people—let alone the aristocracy—to yield easily to strong leadership. Indeed, Machiavelli expresses his restrained unease with Camillus' leadership when he names Camillus as among the "princes of the city" later in Book I.[147] Similarly, in the chapter of the Discourses devoted completely to the exile of Camillus, Machiavelli offers a mixed evaluation of the famed leader. In particular, Machiavelli focuses on the proud and haughty manner of Camillus, who was ultimately hated because he was "more severe in punishhing [his men] than liberal in rewarding them," implying high standards for virtue and low tolerance for vice.[148]

On the exile of Camillus itself, Machiavelli departs from Augustine, focusing on Marcus Camillus' vow that one tenth of the booty captured from the war with the Veientes be reserved for sacrifice to Apollo. Augustine makes no mention of this tithe, and his narrative, in contrast,

[146] Ibid., 26 (I.8.1).
[147] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 37 (I.12.1).
[148] Ibid., 269 (III.23).

blames Camillus' exile on the "envy" of certain elites and the "insolence" of the Tribunes.[149] Machiavelli's narrative holds the Roman people as the source of the cause of Camillus' exile. The vow of the tenth and the Senate's action to enforce it were seen as "injuries […] done to the plebs" by Camillus.[150] Indeed, Machiavelli later characterizes Camillus' vowing of the tenth as requiring him to "take [booty] out of the hands of the soldiers who had already seized it."[151] Here, Camillus errs in expecting the piety of the people to outweigh their love of their property and their disdain for having their things taken from them. It is notable that Camillus in no way can be said to have 'taken' the booty from the soldiers directly: Machiavelli is characterizing, here, the guilt felt by the plebs for placing upon them a personal religious obligation. This is especially true considering that the Senate merely allowed each man to give what he owed on his own honor.[152] Similarly, Camillus' decision to "[apply] to the public the money that was drawn from the goods of the Veientes that were sold" should, in theory, have been good, given Machiavelli's praise for the poverty of private citizens and the enrichment of the public.[153, 154] However—once again, presumably, because the soldiers lacked the virtuous spirit of Cincinnatus and others who accepted poverty for the sake of the common good—Camillus' actions directed to bring men to virtue instead drive them away from it. In all of these cases, it is Camillus' excess of virtue which makes the public upset, with his encouragement of moderation and piety through the public allocation of booty and the seizure of the tithe of Apollo being seen as "depriv[ing] it of something useful."[155] Here, Machiavelli blames Camillus for having acted in this way, because, as a great man, he should have seen that his actions would incite envy and

[149] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 71, 117 (II.17, III.16).
[150] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 66 (I.29.3).
[151] Ibid., 269 (III.23).
[152] Ibid., 110 (I.55.1).
[153] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 271-272 (III.25).
[154] Ibid., 269 (III.23).
[155] Ibid.

resentment in the people. That is, the truly virtuous man cannot, according to Machiavelli, simply hold all citizens to his own standards of conduct and inculcate them by punishment and force. Instead, the virtuous leader must understand the people as fundamentally less virtuous than himself; he must recognize his own greatness for what it is, and, if he is to teach the people at all, it is his responsibility to ensure that such education does not turn the people against him. The truly great leader anticipates these kinds of responses and reactions from the people. Since Camillus failed to do this, Machiavelli seems to conclude, he was deserving of his exile.

These two great men, then, flesh out an important part of Machiavelli's theory of great men in the republic. In the case of Collatinus, Machiavelli seems to agree with Augustine that the exile of the co-liberator of the city was an injustice. He disagrees with Augustine by blaming the people for this act, portraying them as ungrateful and suspicious. Yet for Machiavelli, this is a good thing: the suspicion of the people is, perhaps, in and of itself bad, but its presence is a sign of the greater good of a love of freedom. One may be tempted to absolve the people of the crimes done, then, and instead blame the love of freedom in the abstract; it is unclear, however, if this makes any difference, since Machiavelli's history squarely houses the love of freedom in the people. That is, Machiavelli blames the people insofar as they are the party responsible for the exiles, even if he thinks that this is an inevitable consequence of the people's virtue. A virtuous people will be suspicious and unfortunate events like the business of Collatinus will occur; yet it would be wrong to think that Machiavelli believes that Collatinus' exile was a true tragedy. As is most clearly expressed by the exile of Camillus, Machiavelli believes that the onus is on great men to rise above the fickle and irascible nature of the people. Camillus, if he were a great man, should never have been exiled in the first place, since a truly great man should have understood how to channel the people and anticipate the excesses of their passions. It

should be noted, however, that the difference between Machiavelli and Augustine here is more subtle than meets the eye. When Augustine argues that it was by the "envy" and "insolence" of the Tribunes that Camillus was exiled, or when he claims that Collatinus was exiled by Brutus with "the favor or sufferance of the people," he blames the leaders of the people for making them suspicious and exciting them into calling for a seditious exile.[156] Thus neither Augustine nor Machiavelli actually believe that it was, morally, the people's fault that Collatinus and Camillus were exiled. Augustine blames the Roman leaders who were jealous of men of great virtue and, ultimately, the system that allowed them to persecute such great men; Machiavelli, meanwhile, blames the so-called great men, whose greatness was, evidently, not enough to assuage or suppress the people.

IV Machiavelli, Augustine, and the People

The narrative of Camillus and Collatinus leads, in Machiavelli and in Augustine, to larger questions concerning a political theory of the people. In particular, a pattern emerges in the history of Collatinus and Camillus. Where Augustine absolves the people of blame by making their leaders guilty, Machiavelli claims their vices are signs of greater virtues, only to conclude that it was the responsibility of great men to avoid the wrath of the people in the first place. This pattern is reflected in their broader characterization of class relations in their histories of the Roman Republic. Augustine, on the one hand, believes that the chronic class conflict in Republican Rome was a bad thing in and of itself, and he shows that the system fueled increasing antagonisms between the two. Machiavelli, on the other hand, believes that the conflict between the patricians and the plebs is a good thing for the Republic and therefore is not undesirable;

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[156] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 71, 117 (II.17, III.16).

further, he praises the people in a backhanded way, wishing for the ruler to overlook or anticipate the vices of the people while opposing their actual victory over the aristocracy. Thus, while Machiavelli does not wish for aristocrats to succeed in their perpetual mission to dominate the people, it is clear that his allegiance is not with the people themselves, but instead with the preservation of the republic's order.

It is useful to begin, as we did with Augustine, to analyze the popular sentiment in the *Discourses* beginning with its evaluation of Camillus. In describing the Senate's attempt to enforce Marcus Camillus' Apollonian tithe, Machiavelli says that the Senate "trusted in the goodness [of the subjects]" when they chose to ask that each man simply present what he owed on his own honor.[157] Machiavelli writes that the people did not even consider "defrauding the edict in any part by giving less than it owed," seemingly in praise, only to tell us that they instead chose the path of "freeing [themselves] from it by showing open indignation."[158] The people, it would seem, did not consider lying or cheating to get their way and keep their spoils from the public treasury; instead, they simply chose to reject the authority of the Roman Senate and the Roman religion entirely. Machiavelli agrees, concluding that this incident shows "how much goodness and how much religion were in that people, and how much good was to be hoped from it."[159] In isolation this seems to be in line with the populist character of Augustine; but if this incident does indeed show "how much goodness and how much religion were in that people," then the amount in them must actually have been very little. Machiavelli uses this incident to show how *little* goodness and religion actually resided in the popular element of Rome, and consequently, that his audience cannot expect and ought not 'hope' for selflessness or self-

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[157] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 110 (I.55.1).
[158] Ibid., 110 (I.55.1).
[159] Ibid.

sacrifice from the people, even for the common good or the civil religion. Augustine, on the other hand, certainly praises the selflessness of Rome's great men more often than the people as a whole, but he believes that the people can be led to (and from) virtue by good leadership, and that their grievances are not absolute, but relative. That is, Machiavelli believes that a good people must always jealously guard their freedom and "only desire not to be dominated," while Augustine supports the people's desire for freedom only insofar as he sees that they are actually suffering, but not absolutely, e.g., when used by Brutus against Collatinus.[160] Machiavelli understands the mark of a virtuous people to be a love of freedom. It is clear that his comments here are not meant solely to praise the people's jealous guarding of their property: instead, he is warning the other classes (presumably the nobility in particular) that the goodness of the people cannot be depended upon. In other words, his view of the people in the case of Camillus, while far from advocating the oppression of the plebs by the nobles, is far from popular.

It is clear that Machiavelli's notion of the people, at best, pays more attention to their shortcomings than that of Augustine. However, it is clearer still that Machiavelli's understanding of what made Rome great interrogates—and in fact, rejects—one of Augustine's fundamental political assumptions, namely, that discord between the classes is undesirable in and of itself. The tension between the plebs and the nobles, Machiavelli writes, produced "laws and orders in the benefit of public freedom," because the plebs, through "ordinary" modes, were able to check the pernicious desires of the Senate.[161] Writing on the zenith of the Roman Republic, Machiavelli argues that "if Rome wished to remove the causes of [its] tumults, it [would remove] too the causes of expansion."[162] Since, as was argued with regards to the Numan Peace, a lack of

[160] Ibid., 18 (I.5.2).
[161] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 16, 25 (I.4.1, I.7.3).
[162] Ibid., 21 (I.6.3).

expansion would have caused Rome to decline, the "tumults" of Rome must have been necessary, the conflicts of Rome acting to push and pull the republic *forward*. Yet Machiavelli goes even further than this in his rejection of Augustine's analysis of class relations in the Roman Republic. He agrees with Augustine that, after the fear of the Tarquins had dissipated, the aristocrats "began to spit out that poison against the plebs that they held in their breasts" and "offended it in all the modes they could."[163] However, Machiavelli argues that, upon the establishment of the Tribunate, the Republic arrived at a time with "security of the plebs" and lacking "the insolence of the nobles.[164] This understanding of Roman history is very different than that of Augustine, whose Sallustian notion of the Republican era essentially tells of the domination of the plebs by the nobility until the end of the Second Punic War. What Augustine characterizes as an era of abuse and anger, Machiavelli portrays as a time of controlled and channeled tension. Although Machiavelli admits that "either one appetite or the other can be the cause of very great tumults," the balance of the two against one another creates a kind of dynamic equilibrium.[165] Thus, the aristocracy desired to be abusive and oppressive to the plebs, but likewise, in contrast with Augustine, the plebs are portrayed in Machiavelli as basically vicious and, therefore, not themselves deserving of political authority, e.g., satisfaction with their level of freedom.[166] Here one can clearly see the work of Machiavelli's belief that "all things of men are in motion and cannot stay steady."[167] While it is perhaps desirable in the abstract that the people and the aristocracy be in harmony, their natural tendency toward passionate motion would make such an educative effort temporary at best.

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[163] Ibid., 15 (I.3.2).
[164] Ibid.
[165] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 19 (I.5.4).
[166] This is especially seen in Machiavelli's analysis of the Gracchi, which will be discussed further below.
[167] Ibid., 23 (I.7.4).

While Machiavelli agrees with Augustine that the nobles mistreated the plebs often, he proposes as the alternative policy that the Roman aristocracy "placate" the people by giving the popular interest a means to "vent its ambition."[168] Machiavelli's language invokes the notion that the desires of the people are being redirected and channeled rather than truly fulfilled or addressed. Thus Machiavelli's praise of the popular "guard of freedom"—that is, his analysis of the Tribunate—is one that does not actually favor the popular cause in and of itself, but instead, favors the dominance of the Roman system above all its citizens. The people, Machiavelli writes, have "restless spirits" that cause "infinite dissensions and scandals" that will in turn "reduce the nobility to a certain desperation" if they are allowed to rule.[169] With all of these arguments in favor of the baseline assumptions of anti-popular politics, it may seem unclear why or how Machiavelli could support the people over the aristocrats for the position of guard of freedom. Examining the turn where he does this, Machiavelli writes that those who possess (i.e., aristocrats) develop the same ambition of those who "desire to acquire"; this ambition is more dangerous in those who possess, however, because they are "able to make an alteration with greater power and greater motion."[170] He concludes by saying that such sweeping "incorrect and ambitious" action by the ruling class:

> Inflames in the breasts of whoever does not possess the wish to possess so as to avenge themselves against them by despoiling them or to be able also themselves to enter into those riches and those honors that they see being used badly by others.[171]

Thus, the problem is seen in full: making an aristocrat the guard of freedom will provoke the lower classes and make them desire to possess. The people desire not to be ruled, but they must be ruled, or else they will fall into vice. Machiavelli solves this problem by having the

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[168] Ibid., 17 (I.4.1).
[169] Ibid., 18 (I.5.2).
[170] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 19 (I.5.4).
[171] Ibid.

aristocracy give the people a form of negative rule: not ruling in and of itself, but rather 'guarding the freedom' of the citizenry, participating through a role like that of the Tribunes. In other words, the democratic element of government (the Tribunate) is introduced in order to *protect* the legal rule of the aristocracy and, most essentially, the order promulgated by Romulus and Brutus. By not holding the office of the guard of freedom, the aristocracy secures their rule against the threat of the people, making the people politically impotent by satisfying them in other, less consequential ways. Likewise, by giving the people bargaining power in terms of the laws being made—even power as uncouth as rioting, evasion of conscription, or accusation—Machiavelli ensures that the aristocracy themselves are unable to exercise princely or dominative rule over the people of Rome.

Thus, Machiavelli's favor for the people is, in essence, a way of advocating against their true empowerment, i.e., in order to stop them from desiring to buck the laws that force them into virtue. Importantly, it is not correct to say that the people are empowered simply because necessity compels the aristocracy to give them what they want; Machiavelli does not see the people as a kind of union, listing demands in exchange for their loyalty and manpower, but instead, as an incorrigible mass whose urges can either be harnessed toward the order of a city or against it. The fact that the ruling class should "Anticipate" the desires of the people shows that the people are not playing an active role in determining the policies of the city, but instead are being treated like one of the body politic's unthinking biological "humors."[172] The popular element does not actively demand or support anything but instead is satisfied or headed off by the ruling class in order to keep it in line. Likewise, the aristocrats themselves are—albeit more

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[172] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 103, 16 (I.52.T, I.4.1). The Italian is "umori," Machiavelli, *Discorsi,* Ed. Vivanti, 17 (I.4.1).

subtly—portrayed as a "humor," insofar as their drive to dominate the people is placated by their constant need to "Anticipate" the means of popular revolt.[173] Ultimately, this view of the Roman Republic and, consequently, the ideal class relations of a state, does not resemble that of Augustine. Both men rightly see the Republic as rife with suspicion, anxiety, and frustrated desires, but Augustine, unlike Machiavelli, takes a firm side, favoring the cause of the people at least insofar as it could have achieved its demands in a reasonable way. In contrast, Machiavelli's populism is countered by his implicit support for the indirect power of the aristocracy—and, most importantly, the true aristocrat of the republic, namely, its orderer of laws—against what he sees as an uncouth and vicious popular element.

V Machiavellian Populism Against Caesarism

Augustine and Machiavelli thus disagree on the subject of the people rather subtly: on the surface, both seem to be champions of the people, and indeed, both could very well be considered populists of different sorts. However, the differences between what might be called Augustinian and Machiavellian populism have profound effects when it comes to the question of the political aims of the people. Both welcome the failure of the Roman aristocrats to dominate the people and praise the people's loyalty and virtue in the face of such a hostile elite. But Augustine's support for the people is directed toward a goal of harmony and unity between the classes, and as such, he desires to see the political aims of the people achieved. This is perhaps best seen in his evaluation of the Agrarian Law, wherein he indicates his support for the reparation of this injustice even in the face of populist leaders' problematic actions; it is this desire for the political victory of the people, combined with his belief that the laws of a country

[173] Ibid.

should fit its citizens, that ultimately leads to Augustine's support of the Caesar. Machiavelli, on the other hand, argues against the actual achievement of political aims of the people, and, placing the maintenance of the orders of a republic above the maintenance of its moral character, he rejects the intervention of the Caesars and Caesarism in general.

Machiavelli's suspicion toward the Caesars and Caesarism and his anti-popular sentiment is clearly seen in his disdain for the Gracchi and the Agrarian law of Rome. He argues that the plebs, having grown to feel "secure […] against the nobles," were no longer "constrained by necessity" and therefore exercised "ambition" in their demands for an Agrarian law.[174] Here, Machiavelli characterizes the Agrarian law as fundamentally decadent, having arisen out of the popular element facing a lack of political pressure from the nobility. While both Augustine and Machiavelli agree that the wrongful possession of public lands by the aristocracy was a "disorder," and that Rome may have been better off had the law been "made at [its] beginning," Machiavelli ultimately concludes that the law was bad because of the "scandalous" nature of correcting such an ancient ill.[175] That is, Machiavelli's concern is less with the content or nature of the law's action, but rather, the consequences such a sweeping or fundamental law has on the system of law itself. Thus, it was not "prudent" for the Gracchi to attempt to indulge the desires of the people, as their sympathy for it "aroused" the people to fight for the law with ambition.[176] In other words, the law would have amounted to actual rule of the Republic, and excited desires to see the ordinary orders of the Republic upended or overhauled completely. It is not clear, to be certain, that Machiavelli believes that the aristocracy's position was correct: indeed, he seems to imply that the Roman nobility's "strong […] obstinacy" concerning its property was the

[174] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 78 (I.37.1).
[175] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 81, 79 (I.37.3, I.37.1).
[176] Ibid., 80, 78 (I.37.3, I.37.1).

mistake that led to the people's eventual recourse to "extraordinary modes."[177] However, what is clear is that Machiavelli does not believe that the Gracchi were correct in attempting to enact the will of the people, and that those who upend ordinary government for the sake of sweeping reform—even justified reform—does an ill to the republic.

Where Machiavelli seems annoyed or worried by the Gracchi, he is made angry by the Caesars. Julius Caesar is, in a certain sense, the ultimate enemy of Machiavelli's political philosophy. He numbers him among the "founders […] of a tyranny" "worthy of reproach" in the tenth chapter of the first book of the *Discourses*, arguing that Caesar was praised only because he made men "corrupted by his fortune" and "awed by the duration of the empire."[178] The corruption of life under an all-powerful ruler, is permanent, such that even when "the whole line of Caesar was eliminated," Rome still "could not even give a beginning to freedom."[179] His argument concerning the permanent and impermanent effects of the Caesars recalls his assertion concerning the necessity for the orderer of laws to be the only true ruler in the lifetime of a regime. He writes that in the empire, emperors were often deposed by violence, and there were "good" emperors killed "by the corruption that his predecessor had left in the soldiers."[180] In other words, the problem of Julius Caesar's system was that it had at its helm a living ruler, and so each emperor was, in a sense, ruler of an entirely new regime, able to cause lasting changes to men while being unable to secure any changes made to the laws. In other words, different emperors, being granted the ability to totally reorder the laws and systems of the Empire, were, in effect, each founders of orders which would last past their deaths only by fortune (and indeed, often emperors' deaths were brought about specifically to end their regimes). In Machiavelli's

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[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid., 31, 31-32 (I.10.T, I.10.3).
[179] Ibid., 47 (I.17.1).
[180] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 32 (I.10.4).

system, the tumults and changes of a system allow different groups to be in power, expressing and venting buildups and lacks in the fickle humors of the body politic, without changing the system of the orderer of laws by recourse to extraordinary modes. Caesar was not an orderer of laws, but rather, a mere author of laws, failing to create an unchangeable or perpetually-regenerating system able to outlast his own life.

This characterization reveals how important it is that Julius Caesar, not Caesar Augustus, is the archetypal Caesar in Machiavelli's thought. Machiavelli writes that the best emperor is able to create an almost super-human level of goodness in a state, almost certainly nodding subtly to Caesar Augustus when he describes such a reign:

> For in those governed by the good [emperor] he will see a secure prince in the midst of his secure citizens, and the world full of peace and justice; he will see […] all quiet and all good, and, on the other side, all rancor, all license, corruption and ambition eliminated. […] He will see, in sum, the world in triumph, the prince full of reverence and glory, the peoples full of love and security.[181]

Machiavelli's description of the good emperor reflects the character of Augustine's Augustus: a powerful man (re-)submitting all to the will of peace and justice, quieting discordance and creating "golden times" (perhaps a nod to the fact that the Augustus' reign is often referred to as Rome's Golden Age).[182] The notion that the good emperor makes the world "full of peace and justice" is remarkably similar to Augustine's notion that Augustus "brought peace to the whole world," and the notion that he eliminates "all rancor, all license, corruption and ambition" likewise echo's Augustine's belief that Augustus came to power in order to suppress the liberties that were "no longer glorious even in their own judgement, but full of contention and danger, and now deeply weakened and depleted."[183, 184] All of this goodness, however, is not enough,

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[181] Ibid., 33 (I.10.5). The Italian is very straightforward.
[182] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 33 (I.10.5).
[183] Augustine, *City of God*, Trans. Dyson, 891 (XVIII.46).
[184] Ibid., 130 (III.21).

because Caesar Augustus (or, really, Julius Caesar) was, unlike Romulus, not "so prudent and virtuous" as to avoid leaving "the authority he took as an inheritance to another."[185] These successors, Machiavelli writes, inevitably destroy the golden age of the good emperor, making the state "atrocious because of wars, discordant because of seditions, [and] cruel in peace and in war."[186] He continues to lament in even stronger language the sheer destruction and corruption of the rule of bad emperors, angrily predicting "Rome burning, the Capitol taken down by its own citizens" and "the sea full of exiles, the shores full of blood."[187] This Machiavelli does not blame on the bad emperors themselves, but in fact, the system of the Empire itself, a 'system' which was in fact a lack of system, or at the very least a system which had no ability to transfer power besides through natural death or seditious murder. The death and destruction created by the lack of long-term system in the Empire is thus what "Rome, Italy, and the world owe to Caesar."[188] Caesar and Augustus, for all of their greatness as rulers and generals, did not "reorder" the corrupt city given them.[189] Instead, by failing to restrain their own power (and that of their successors) by way of a new legal order, they tacitly allowed for the "sempiternal infamy" of the disorder that followed them.[190] Thus it is clear that Augustus cannot be upheld as the prime example of the imperial order, because he only embodies one half of the order's products. Rather, the true model of the empire in the *Discourses* is Augustus' predecessor, who succeeded while alive but failed in his death: Julius Caesar.

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[185] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 29 (I.9.2).
[186] Ibid., 33 (I.10.5).
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 33 (I.10.6).
[190] Ibid.

4 *A Conclusion: Motion and Peace*

The mission of comparing the Roman histories of Augustine and Machiavelli has thus been achieved. Augustine's populism begins with moral roots, and indeed, his politics never lose this moral air. Yet it is clear that Augustine views political actions as somewhat orthogonal to morality: thus, while Romulus is guilty of having killed Remus, it is not clear that Camillus is in any way blamed for violating his exile. Meanwhile, his interpretation of the Roman Republic gives rise to a unique view of the people. On the one hand, he depicts them as being led astray by dangerous corrupt elites; on the other hand, he tends to sympathize with and support the desires of the people, going beyond mere *noblesse-oblige* and arguing for truly populist politics. Having established all this, Augustine's character of the Caesar comes into full view: a restorative force, acting toward the political good, re-establishing the order of the state against the wills of corrupt elites and toward the praise of the people. Machiavelli's narrative, on the surface, seems to be very similar. He begins with a narrative that accuses Romulus of fratricide without any cover story; he praises the people of Rome in the face of the difficulties of life under the rule of dominative patricians; and he argues that Caesar completely reconstituted Rome in a moment of great corruption in the city. Yet these similarities reveal the extent of divergence between the two. Machiavelli excuses and even praises Romulus for his fratricide, arguing that founders of republics have *carte blanche* to ensure that they are alone in ordering a republic. On the people, where Augustine absolves them of blame by pointing to the abuses of patricians and the corruption of elite demagogues, Machiavelli actively blames the people for their suspicions and seditions. This blame is, of course, only on the surface: in reality he is happy to allow them all manner of vices and appetites so long as they are connected with their unruly virtues. Ultimately, Machiavelli's populism is only populism insofar as it concedes the necessity of

popularity: its aim is to keep the elites and the regime popular, but it does not desire the political victory of the people nor view them any better than oligarchic or aristocratic thinkers would. We might, from this comparison, venture to generalize their views of populism. The first, the Augustinian, prioritizes the fit between the state of the populace and the regime, such that the people might express right frustration and be re-integrated into the body politic as necessity demands; the second, the Machiavellian, prioritizes the preservation of the form and order of the founder against inherently chaotic forces, such that the flare-ups and imbalances among the classes might be kept in-check and therefore irrelevant or unthreatening to the political order. Augustinian populism desires rule of rightful rulers who, like Caesar, re-form the people by force wielded by natural right; Machiavellian populism, suspicious or pessimistic of the prospects of perpetual re-formation, seeks to remind ruling classes that their power is most secure if the people's urges are affirmed, satisfied, or—even better—anticipated. Machiavelli's desire to support and extend the life of the legal and political order of cities is what ultimately leads him—despite so many similarities with Augustine—to so vehemently oppose the Caesar reified by Augustine's history. Ultimately, then, the comparison between Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* and Augustine's *City of God* has revealed the great importance of their underlying political principles and philosophical assumptions. That is, as the ancient saying goes, "a small difference in the beginning makes a great one in the end."[191]

In taking stock of what exactly these important assumptions are, it is perhaps best to work backwards. Machiavelli, we saw, assumes that (as we will cite directly for the third and final time) "All things of men are in motion and cannot stay steady."[192] It seems that it is because of

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[191] Traditional.
[192] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Mansfield and Tarcov, 23 (I.7.4).

this assumption that Machiavelli and Augustine, despite sharing many of the surface-level political convictions and factual historical priors—for example, the favor of the popular interest relative to patrician historians, or the belief that Romulus killed Remus in order to rule alone—Machiavelli and Augustine end up with very different political judgements and conclusions. This assumption obviously explains Machiavelli's excuse of Romulus' fratricide and the warlike nature of early Rome, justifying rule alone and expansion as necessary in order to successfully maintain an ordered state. In the case of Collatinus and Camillus, it excuses their exile at the hands of a frenzied people, because great men—either by convincing the people or by avoiding scandal towards them—should be able to anticipate the motion of the opinions and passions of the people. If we cast a glance at the class relations of the Roman Republic, we see it is Machiavelli's comfort with motion which allows him to see the tumult between the people and the ruling class as a motor, constantly turning itself over in a pattern guided by the laws and regulated by necessity. Finally, it is his belief in the naturalness of motion which makes the Empire so offensive to him. The Caesars attempted to subdue the motion of the Republic, which had grown wild and chaotic, into a quiet calm. While Julius and Augustus Caesar each themselves succeeded in doing so during their lifetimes, the motion of the things of man returned after their deaths and, finding no channels in their structures of government, moved unpredictably between glory and destruction.

Returning, then, to Augustine, it is clear that the assumption which pervades all of his thought is a deep and abiding sense of peace, both in its low (or political) sense and in the sense of the Eternal Peace which is union with God. Thus, while both share a deep conviction that the things of man are, in a sense, doomed to corruption and decay—and, even more deeply, a conviction that men are chronically vicious and inconstant—they end up in different places

because of their different conception of the ends of man. Augustine believes not in the lowness of man, but the fallenness of man: that is, he clings fast to the notion that man now lives “by faith as a foreigner among the ungodly,” awaiting the day he arrives at his “eternal home” in “final victory and perfect peace.”[193] Thus man is made to be lifted up and improved, and the task of doing so is worthwhile even if man cannot help but fall in one way or another. Augustine is not a utopian; indeed, he shares with Machiavelli, as the epigraph of this work suggests, a dissatisfaction with the purely theoretical precisely because he who can only “see the land of peace,” much like he who has only “imagined republics and principalities” to his name, may spend his life trying in vain to obtain what was only ever an image to him. Yet herein lies the difference: for Augustine, the land of peace is real, and the way to it—however narrow—is really and truly “the way, and the truth, and the life” knowable and accessible to all men who are willing to walk.[194] In Machiavelli, however, no such hope exists: his land of peace is “imagined,” and there is no attempt made by his City of Man to participate in the fight of this age, that is, the endless struggle to bring men to peace. Machiavelli thus attempts to create systems which channel man’s constant falling, thrusting against the trends and tendencies of history by way of ingenious and hidden modes and orders. In the end, Augustine’s vision reflects the Christian vision of man struggling, by the grace of God, to subdue himself to a humbler and more peaceful state, in preparation for his true end in the Eternal Peace: the world of his politics is full of tragedy, but also hope. Machiavelli’s vision, on the other hand, sees the realm of peace as something which might as well be imaginary, because it is so far away from

[193] Augustine, *City of God*, Loeb, Vol. 1, 10-11 (I, Preface): “Gloriosissimam civitatem Dei sive in hoc temporum cursu, cum inter impios peregrinatur ex fide vivens, sive in illa stabilitate sedis aeternae quam nunc expectat per patientiam, quoadusque iustitia convertatur in iudicium, deinceps adeptura per excellentiam victoria ultima et pace perfecta…”

[194] John 14:6, Douay-Rheims-Challoner Version.

the natural state of man as we find him: the world of his politics, in the face of such despair, is therefore full of restless motion and defiant permanence.

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