they had been Christians'. So he insists without qualification that, heathen though they be, 'there is no justification whatever for despoiling either their princes or subjects of their property on the grounds that they were not true owners of it'.

These scholastic debates about the nature of _iurisdictio_ and _imperium_ were not of course without their parallels in Renaissance Italy. At the time of the Great Schism, one of the leading advocates of the conciliar thesis was an Italian, Cardinal Francisco Zabarella, whose treatise _De schismate_ appeared as early as 1408. Even at the end of the fifteenth century, it is not uncommon to find the republicanism of the Italian city-states being defended in a purely scholastic style. The best-known instance is that of Girolamo Savonarola, whose _Trattato_ on the government of Florence, published just before his fall in 1498, argued for a broadly based form of republican government in precisely the terms already used by his fellow-Dominican Ptolemy of Lucca almost two centuries before.

Generally speaking, however, the themes and idioms of Italian political literature began to diverge sharply from those characteristic of scholasticism by the middle years of the fourteenth century. With Marsilius' great treatise of 1324, we not only reach the culmination of the scholastic defence of the Italian city-states; we also come to the end of the period in which the political theorists of the _Regnum Italicum_ made their most creative contribution to the development of scholastic political thought. Thereafter we find them asking new questions, citing new authorities, proclaiming new values, all in a style usually felt to be far more typical of the Renaissance than anything so far discussed. It is with these contrasting developments in Italy, accordingly, and with their eventual impact on the rest of Western Europe, that the rest of this chapter will be principally concerned.

**POLITICAL THOUGHT IN RENAISSANCE ITALY**

Some of the new features of Italian political theory in the fourteenth century are best explained as a series of attempts to come to terms with changes in Italian political life. As we have seen, the tradition culminating in

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90. Ibid., ii, p. 309 (i.23): 'sine dubio barbari erant et publice et privatim ita veri domini sicut Christiani; nec hoc titulo spoliari, aut Principes aut privati rebus suis, quod non essent veri domini.' For a full discussion of the issue of _dominium_ see Pagden 1982, pp. 65–80.


the work of Marsilius had argued that, to ensure the preservation of peace, the safest plan will always be to vest the ultimate powers of *iurisdiction* in the hands of the people. During the very period when such theories began to be increasingly espoused, however, they began to look increasingly implausible. The close of the thirteenth century witnessed the deepening of factional quarrels in many cities governed by *podestà*, as a result of which there were widespread moves to replace these elective systems of government with the rule of hereditary *signori*, the professed aim being to secure a greater degree of civic unity and peace.93 Such changes took place in Mantua and Verona in the 1270s, in Treviso, Pisa, Piacenza and Parma by the end of the 1280s and in Ravenna, Rimini and elsewhere before the end of the century.94 It was thus entirely accurate of Dante to observe in the *Purgatorio*, although his phrasing may have been tendentious, that ‘all the cities of Italy’ had by that time become ‘full of tyrants’.95

*The acceptance of princely government*

One reflection of the above developments was that, even among the protagonists of popular government, a tone of increasing pessimism can be heard about the prospects of combining republicanism with civic peace. Remigio de’ Girolami writes with despair about the ruinous effects of faction in his *De bono communi*,96 as does his fellow-Florentine Dino Compagni in his *Cronica* of the same period.97 A similar anxiety pervades Albertino Mussato’s tragedy *Ecerinis*, in which he vainly sought to warn his fellow-citizens of Padua that their constant feuding would be sure to bring a return of the tyranny they had endured under Ezzelino da Romano half a century before. The Messenger points the grim moral at the moment of announcing Ezzelino’s conquest: ‘O fearful feuding of the nobles! O fury of the people! The outcome of all your quarrelling is at hand. The tyrant is here, the gift of your own rage.’98

But the main effect of civic disorder was to prompt a revival of the suggestion that a strong monarchy should after all be accounted the best

93. Ercole 1932, pp. 279–86, 306–11 argued that the *signori* generally assumed power with the consent of the relevant body of citizens. The point is still worth stressing, if only because of the influential contrast developed in Baron 1966 between republican ‘liberty’ and the ‘tyranny’ of princely regimes. For a helpful corrective see Robey 1973, pp. 4–10 and references there.
98. Mussato 1900, p. 32: ‘o dira nobilium odia, o populi furo|ris |titus liti|bus vestris adest|ade|st
tyrannus, vestra quem rabies dedit.’
form of government. Some writers reverted to the age-old claim that the surest means of bringing concord to the *Regnum Italicum* would be to accept the overlordship of the emperor after all. Compagni supports this solution in his *Cronica*, but the most eloquent presentation of the Ghibelline case was undoubtedly Dante’s in his *Monarchia*. Dante begins with the familiar Aristotelian assumption that our highest earthly aim should be to live ‘in the calm and tranquillity of peace, since universal peace is the finest of all the gifts that have been ordained for our happiness’. He then devotes the whole of his opening book to defending the suggestion that, if the disorders of Italy are ever to be resolved, complete trust must be placed in the emperor as the sole authority capable of ending the prevailing strife.

A yet more backward-looking defence of universal monarchy was also revived at this time. Pope Boniface VIII, in a series of pronouncements culminating in the Bull *Unam sanctam* of 1302, restated with unparalleled ambitiousness the papacy’s traditional ‘hierocratic’ claim to bind and loose in all temporal as well as spiritual affairs. The argument was widely repudiated even by the theologians, who generally concentrated on vindicating the more moderate thesis of ‘indirect’ temporal control later defended by such Counter-Reformation papalists as Bellarmine. Yet it survived for an astonishingly long time, surfacing in the writings of such unrepentant theocrats as Tommaso Campanella as late as the start of the seventeenth century. In Campanella’s utopian dialogue of 1603, *La Città del Sole*, the ruler is a priest ‘who is head of all spiritual and temporal affairs’. And in his *Monarchia messiae* of 1605, the argument culminates in the claim that ‘since the incarnation, the apostolic power of the papacy has been placed in authority over every kingdom in the world’.

Among Italian writers of the fourteenth century, however, the most usual proposal was that the numerous local *signori* who had come to power ought simply to be accepted with gratitude as bringers of a stabler form of government. Padua became a leading centre of such writings in favour of princely rule, just as it had earlier provided the context for Marsilius’ great statement of the opposing case. Ferreto de’ Ferreti, a member of Mussato’s humanist circle at Padua, composed a verse panegyric *De Scaligorum origine*
soon after the accession of Cangrande Della Scala as signore of Padua in 1328, in which he expressed the hope that Cangrande’s descendants ‘will continue to hold their sceptres for long years to come’. Pier Paolo Vergerio, who lived in Padua between 1390 and 1405, wrote his De monarchia during those years, addressing it to the Carrara lords who were ruling the city by that time. Giovanni da Ravenna, Chancellor of Padua during the 1390s, further celebrated the Carrara family in his Dragramologia de eligibili vite genere of 1404. And Petrarch, who spent the closing years of his life in Padua, wrote his famous account of princely government in the form of a long letter to Francesco da Carrara in 1373.

For all these writers, the highest aim of government is to ensure that, as Petrarch puts it, ‘each citizen can live his life in freedom and security, with no innocent blood being spilled’. If this framework for living the good life is to be held in place, he adds, everyone in authority must be concerned above all else with public peace. But peace can never be secured under any form of communal or republican government. Vergerio treats this as obvious, while Giovanni da Ravenna points to the history of ancient Rome as conclusive evidence of this general truth. The moral is said to be obvious, and all these writers duly point it out: if there is to be any prospect of peace, we must cleave to princely government. As Petrarch triumphantly assures the Carrara family, it is wholly due to their standing as hereditary signori that they have ‘ruled for so many years over a flourishing community in serene tranquillity and constant peace’. To these familiar claims a more highflown argument was sometimes added, an argument derived from a fundamentally Augustinian vision of the well-lived life. Such a life, Petrarch affirms, will be one of withdrawal from mundane affairs — vita solitaria, as he describes it in the title of one of his most famous books. This alone affords us the leisure or otium needed for great literary labours, as well as the tranquillity needed for contemplation and prayer. The same commitment underlies Giovanni da Ravenna’s

103. Ferreto 1920, iii, p. 100: ‘ut longos teneant sceptra per annos’.
104. For the date of composition and biographical details see Robey 1973, pp. 8–9. 20–1.
105. For the date of composition and biographical details see Giovanni da Ravenna 1980, pp. 22–9.
106. For details of this part of Petrarch’s life see Wilkins 1959, pp. 141–314. The letter is in the Epistolae de rebus senilibus (xiv.1).
Dragmalogia, which culminates in a bitter denunciation of the evils and hypocrisies inevitable in politics and an eloquent defence of the good life as one of rustic retreat. To both writers this suggests a further reason for concluding that, as Giovanni puts it, ‘the rule of a single man is always to be preferred, even if the man in question is only of moderate worthiness’. Where one man rules, ‘the rest of us are left completely free of public business, and are able to pursue our own affairs’. This is a highly desirable arrangement, indispensable for the completion of any important task, but ‘it is one that has rarely existed under a government of the people, though often under the rule of a king’.

The dawn of humanism

As well as the shifts of political allegiance mentioned above, far larger transitions are to be observed in Italian political literature in the course of the fourteenth century. A new set of moral and political values appears, combined with an element of outright hostility — especially evident in Petrarch and his many disciples — to scholastic philosophy. To understand these transformations, we must turn to contemplate the dawn of humanism and the changes it brought to the Italian universities and the conduct of public life.

One of the subjects taught in the Italian universities had always been rhetoric, usually as a preliminary to the study of law. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the subject came to be approached in a new way, evidently under the influence of the methods of instruction prevailing in the French cathedral schools. No longer were the manuals of ancient rhetoric examined simply as sources of practical rules; they were also used as guides to good Latin style. Out of this renewed interest in the language and literature of ancient Rome the first glimmerings of the humanist movement emerged. At Arezzo and especially at Padua in the early fourteenth century, a growing number of literati — most of them originally trained as lawyers — began to interest themselves in the full range of the ancient studia humanitatis. They immersed themselves in Roman poetry, especially Horace and Vergil; in the Roman historians, especially Livy and Sallust; and in the writings of such moralists as Juvenal, Seneca and above all Cicero.

113. Ibid., p. 132: ‘nam ubi unus dominatur, suo quisque negotio prorsus publici securus vacat.’
114. Ibid., p. 118: ‘quod monarcha dominante sepe, politia raro, contigisse’.
115. For a classic statement of these themes see Kriseller 1961a. For the French background see Simone 1965. For the indigenous background see G. Billanovich 1981—, Witt 1982 and their many references.
116. For the Paduan background see G. Billanovich 1981—, 1, pp. 1–33 and Siraisi 1973, pp. 43–58.
whom they turned into the best-known and most widely quoted author of antiquity.

Once the literature of Rome became a subject of so much fascination, the humanists chiefly busied themselves about the recovery of ancient manuscripts, the editing of texts, the establishment of attributions and so forth. But some of them – above all Petrarch – conceived the wider ambition of restating the themes of ancient poetry, history and moral philosophy, with the hope of bringing about what Leonardo Bruni in his Dialogi of 1402 praised Petrarch for having achieved: ‘a true restoration of the studia humanitatis at a time when such studies had become extinct’.117

The fruits of these ambitions belong in part to the history of literature, including Petrarch’s own revival of the Vergilian epic in his Africa and Mussato’s pioneering attempt to emulate Senecean verse tragedy in Ecerinis. But since the humanists were no less interested in the moralists and historians of ancient Rome, their growing confidence as exponents of the studia humanitatis also had an impact of overwhelming importance on the evolution of Renaissance moral and political thought.

The most important new element the humanists introduced was a distinctive vision of the goals of political society, especially the goals appropriate to those entrusted with its leadership. Without ceasing to endorse the assumption that all rulers have a duty to promote peace and security, Petrarch and his disciples added an overriding emphasis on the characteristically Roman ideals of honour, glory and fame. A more complete reversal of the values of scholastic political philosophy would be hard to conceive. Thomas Aquinas and his pupils had of course been aware of this strand of Roman thought, but had always denounced it with vehemence.118 ‘It is altogether inappropriate’, Giles of Rome had declared, ‘for a holder of kingly power to seek his own fulfilment either in the attainment of glory or even of fame.’119 Thomas Aquinas in De regno had put the point even more forcefully. ‘The desire for human glory destroys any magnanimity of character’, and ‘to hold out such a reward to princes is at the same time very harmful to the people, since the duty of a good man is to show contempt for glory and all such temporal goods’.120

118. Marsilius perhaps constitutes a partial exception. See Marsilius of Padua 1928, p. 81 (i.16.14).
119. Giles of Rome 1607, p. 27 (i.1.9): ‘quod non decet regiam maiestatem, suam ponere felicitatem in gloria, vel in fama’.
120. Thomas Aquinas 1973, p. 265 (i.8): ‘deinde humanae gloriae cupido animi magnitudinem auertit simul etiam est multitudini nocivum, si tale praemium statuatur principibus: pertinet enim ad boni viri officium ut contemnatur gloriam, sicut alia temporalia bona.’
The humanists profoundly disagreed. Petrarch assures Francesco da Carrara that ‘true virtus never rejects deserved glory’, and adds that his whole purpose in offering advice is ‘to lead you to present fame and future glory in the best possible way’. 121 He acknowledges that rulers ought to cultivate those qualities ‘which serve not merely as a means to glory but as ladders to heaven at the same time’. 122 But this represents his sole concession to the deeply rooted Christian suspicion of gloria mundi and those who pursue it. The rest of his letter is filled with exhortations to Francesco ‘to undertake such tasks as will bring you a share of glory that your ancestors never attained’ 123 and to ‘lust after a form of greediness that is generous and beyond reproach: a greediness to obtain the treasure of virtus and the outstanding attribute of fame’. 124

The early humanists also provided a new and characteristic account of how these goals are to be attained. Drawing above all on Cicero, they argued that the key to glory lies in the possession of virtus generalis; that ‘glory necessarily follows from a love of virtus’, as Cicero had proclaimed. 125 Petrarch gave influential expression to this belief when he argued that ‘true virtus brings us glory even when it may not be desired’. 126 By the end of the fourteenth century, this assumption had become firmly entrenched as the leading tenet – almost the defining characteristic – of humanist political thought.

Placing all their emphasis on virtus meant that the early humanists found little to say about two issues on which the schoolmen had always supposed it vital to pronounce. The latter had generally recognised that the peace and security of a community will sometimes depend on a ruler’s willingness to act with vis as well as virtus, with military power as well as moral force. As a result, Thomas Aquinas and his pupils had been much preoccupied with the concept of the Just War, seeking to specify the nature of the circumstances in which the waging of warfare can be morally defended. 127 By contrast, the early humanists are apt to stigmatise any appeal to vis at the expense of virtus as a sign of bestiality, endorsing the Stoic and Ciceronian proposition that

122. Ibid., p. 423: ‘haec sunt autem non ad gloriad modo, sed ad coelum scalae.’
123. Ibid., p. 426: ‘arripe quaeso, et hanc gloriae partem, quam maiores tui omnes . . . non viderunt.’
124. Ibid., p. 428: ‘cupiditatem irreprehensibilem generosam, virtutum thesauros, et praecolumn famae supellectilem concupiscis.’
125. Cicero, Tusculan Disputations 1.38.91: ‘cupiditate . . . virtutis, quam necessario gloria . . . consequatur’.
126. See Petrarch 1554, p. 420 for the idea that ‘vera virtus’ brings glory ‘eamque vel invitant’.
127. For the classic defence of the bellum justum, see Thomas Aquinas 1963c, ii, pp. 223–4 (ii.11.40.1).
*virtus* is the eponymous characteristic of the *vir*, the man of truly manly as opposed to brutish qualities. As a result, they not only place a question mark, if only implicitly, against the doctrine of the Just War; they also exhibit much less interest in arguing systematically about the relations between warfare and government.

The other topic on which their manuals are largely silent concerns the machinery of government. As we have seen, the scholastics had been much preoccupied with ensuring the people a proper share in government, and with confining both secular and ecclesiastical authorities within their proper spheres. By contrast, few of the early humanists have anything of substance to say about these matters at all. Marsilius’ hard questions about the relations between spiritual and temporal power largely disappeared from sight until the Reformation revived them with a vengeance. The humanists are generally content to assume that a prince of true *virtus* will of course be a loyal son of the church. Likewise, the careful arrangements devised by scholastic as well as legal theorists to prevent the enemies of peace from seizing control of the apparatus of government are scarcely echoed in early humanist political thought. The basic assumption shared by Petrarch and his successors is that, as long as the ruler himself is a man of *virtus*, the goals of peace and security will be assured.

If *virtus* is such an all-important quality, what does it mean for a prince to possess it? Petrarch’s letter to Francesco da Carrara gives a typical and highly influential answer. Such a prince will be distinguished by a number of personal virtues, in particular the avoidance of pride and avarice, the two gravest of the cardinal vices. Above all, however, he will be recognisable by the justice of his rule. Petrarch accordingly devotes his main attention to analysing the concept of justice, in the course of which he discloses, more clearly than at any other point, the overwhelming extent of his debt to Cicero, especially the doctrines of the *De officiis*.

When Cicero discusses justice in book 1 of the *De officiis*, he initially defines it in juristic terms as rendering to each his due (1.5.15). But his main concern is with what it means to speak of receiving one’s due, and in answering this question he divides his analysis into two halves. One is taken up with the discussion of generosity (*benejicentia*), a virtue he takes to be inseparably bound up with justice itself. His other contention is that justice is only secured when we avoid *iniuria*, the doing of harm contrary to right (1.13.41). Such harm can arise in one of two ways: either as the product of

128. See especially Cicero, *Tusulan Disputations* II.18.43: ‘appellata est enim ex viro *virtus*’; see also *De officiis* i.9.34 and i.13.41; and cf. Petrarch 1554, p. 433 quoting *De officiis* i.22.74.
fraud, the failure to keep one's word; or else as the product of force, of cruel or brutal treatment (1.13.41). It follows that the indispensable requirements of justice must be fides, the willingness to treat one's word as one's bond; and clementia, the avoidance of cruelty and violence (1.7.23; 1.11.35). A leader who possesses these attributes will always be loved and admired; and the capacity to inspire love rather than fear is the key to princely glory and fame (II.7.23; II.11.38).

Petrarch and his humanist successors follow this analysis almost word for word. Justice is indeed a matter of rendering to each his due, Petrarch first argues, and this requires not merely the observance of good faith but the exercise of clemency and generosity at all times. If we ask in turn what motives a prince may be said to have for behaving with justice, Petrarch simply refers us directly to the De officis, and especially to the crucial chain of reasoning — endlessly cited by later humanists — to the effect that justice is the sole guarantee of popular affection, while the love of the people is in turn the sole guarantee of governmental security and the prince's own glory and fame.129

The theory of republican government

Although the system of government by signori had spread through most of the Regnum Italicum by the end of the fourteenth century, there were two exceptions to this rule, both of the utmost significance. Florence and Venice each succeeded in fighting off the threat of internal 'tyranny' as well as external conquest, and in the course of doing so became increasingly hostile to the signori and their usurpations of traditional liberties. As a result, a new style of political literature began to emerge in both these surviving republics during the early years of the fifteenth century, a literature devoted at once to celebrating their civic greatness and explaining it in terms of their uninterrupted loyalty to their long-established methods of 'free' government.

As we have seen, Henry of Rimini had already sought to explain Venice's achievements by reference to her unique constitution in his treatise of c.1300 on the cardinal virtues. His analysis remained well known throughout the fourteenth century,130 and seems to have exercised a direct influence on Pier Paolo Vergerio, whose De republica veneta of c.1400 took a further step towards the definitive articulation of the myth of Venice.131 Vergerio agrees with Henry that the Venetians have proved uniquely successful in