

Cultivating an Ethos of Civility: Good Manners in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*

Sibbyl Nickerson

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Political Science

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Public Policy and Public Administration)
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

August 2008

© Sibbyl Nickerson, 2008



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45316-2
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45316-2

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

ABSTRACT

Cultivating an Ethos of Civility: Good Manners in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*

Sibbyl Nickerson

Baldesar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* ventures to give an account of how the well-mannered courtier ought to comport himself upon entering into the company of others. The text has alternately been received as one which presumes to delineate the methods of instantiating an idealized principality; or as one which fatuously lauds the merits of form for form's sake; or as a text that cynically espouses the political merits of deceptively pleasing manners. A great deal of attention has been also paid to the interlocutor's treatment of the relationship between the courtier and his prince. I propose that the text's treatment of good manners is best understood as an ethical and political consideration of the meaning and aims of pleasing behaviour. In this vein, I identify the author's reliance upon Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and refer to this text's treatment of the virtues of "friendliness," "truthfulness" and wit to develop an understanding of the principles which underpin and inform Castiglione's treatment of pleasing words and deeds. Ultimately, I propose that *The Book of the Courtier* implicitly recognizes the merits of cultivating an ethos of civility at court and suggest that this ethos can fruitfully help guide civil courtiers in their relations with one another as well as their prince.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Dell and Linda Wickens; their devoted support and loving encouragement sustain me in my work and my life. I am grateful to Paula Frampton for her kind and constant good friendship.

I would like to thank Dr. Ed King whose creative insight, indefatigable enthusiasm and, of course, winning ways and good humour have always proven to be *la dolce liquore che addolcisce ogni vaso*. I extend my thanks to Dr. Travis Smith whose instructive comments lent valuable perspective to my work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1. The Meaning of Manners in <i>The Book of the Courtier</i>	6
Chapter 2. "Ways and Manners": Civility as Aristotelian Virtue	29
<i>Civility as an Ethical and Political Virtue</i>	29
<i>The Virtues of Civility</i>	41
Chapter 3. Civility and the Courtier	62
Chapter 4. The Civil Courtier and the Prince	95
Conclusion	123
Works Cited	129

INTRODUCTION

Baldesar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* recounts a series of four nightly dialogues between several courtiers to Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. The expressed aim of these dialogues, according to Federico Fregoso, is to form "in words a perfect Courtier, setting forth all the conditions and particular qualities that are required of anyone who deserves this name."¹ Over the course of their discussions, Castiglione's interlocutors give special regard to the correct and pleasing manners which the good man at court ought to adopt. Castiglione's assiduous treatment of good form, however, has left him open to accusations of ethical and political vacuity: *The Courtier* has long been read as a text which makes manifest the intrinsic frivolity of court interactions and of the courtier himself. J. R. Woodhouse reminds us that

Ever since it had circulated in manuscript form, the *Cortegiano* had been most highly valued for the more superficial techniques described in Books I, II and III. Since its publication (until the present day, indeed) many influential writers have adversely criticised its shallowness. Castiglione had succeeded so well in sweetening the pill of his didactic purpose that only the sweetness came eventually to be considered. The huge audience that his book subsequently reached was more intellectually attuned to court fripperies than to the tougher austerity of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for it is to Aristotle that Castiglione looks for his most important advice [i.e., on how the Courtier ought to educate his Prince].²

While Woodhouse's comments focus our attention on the ethical and political possibilities of the text, they also insinuate that the decorous practices investigated in its first three books are merely ornamental until they are joined to Ottaviano Fregoso's discussion of the courtier as preceptor in Book IV.³ This assumption compels us to consider two important and related questions: first, are we justified in thinking that the earliest three dialogues afford the reader little more than an eloquent but prescriptive

technical guide to the development of refined courtly etiquette? Second, are we justified in limiting our efforts to discover the ethical and political import of this text by exclusively focusing our attention on the courtier's relationship to his prince? Accordingly, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, it seeks to explore the meaning and aims of the good manners set forth by Castiglione's interlocutors throughout the text: in this vein, we will consider the possibility that Castiglione's espousal of good manners in the earliest dialogues reflects an ethical concern with right action in common court situations. Second, this study seeks to examine the ways in which the courtier's cultivated manners might impact upon his ability to negotiate a myriad of court relationships: we will consider how and why the civilized courtier's seemly behaviour might allow him to interact with and significantly affect other courtiers as well as his prince.

The first chapter begins by investigating several disparate readings of *The Courtier* and of Castiglione's pivotal treatment of good manners. We focus on three analyses in particular which serve as theoretical backdrops for our own investigation: the first analysis describes Castiglione as advocating an idealized aesthetic which he ostensibly found to be in evidence at Urbino; the second construes Castiglione as recommending the practice of indiscriminately conforming to current courtly manners; and the third portrays Castiglione as advocating, *tout court*, the merits of cunning deceit in those pleasing displays which the courtier is pressed to adopt. Instead, I suggest that the text's treatment of good manners is best understood by considering the ethical as well as the political import of pleasing behaviour. I identify the author's reliance upon

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and refer to this text to develop an understanding of the principles which underpin and inform Castiglione's treatment of civil actions. Ultimately, I propose that *The Book of the Courtier* implicitly recognizes the merits of cultivating an ethos of civility at court.

The second chapter takes up an examination of the qualities that can be ascribed to civility and the role which good manners play in fostering ethical consociationalism. Civility, in this case, is related to the triad virtues of "friendliness," "truthfulness," and wit as they are discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. By examining these virtues and their corresponding vices, we come to learn something of the character of the virtuously civil and the viciously uncivil man. In particular, we can more carefully distinguish between the animus and aims of the courtier and the flatterer who both seek to adopt a pleasing mien in their courtly interactions.

Expanding on this analysis, the third chapter addresses the courtier's relations with other men at court. The courtier — who must always be prudent in suiting his actions to his company — must be able to correctly appraise himself and others while also being able to understand how others appraise him in turn. We come to see that the cultivation of good manners allows the courtier to maintain his position at court, but it also allows him to form salutary friendships with other men of worth and to negotiate dangerous enmities within the court.

The fourth chapter turns to an analysis of the courtier's relationship to his prince. Here we see that the courtier's appraisal of his prince's character is crucial in deciding how the he will come to serve his ruler. Should the courtier find himself in the service of

a beneficent or educable prince, then he will direct his actions towards ameliorating and preserving the existing regime; should he find himself in the service of an inveterate tyrant, however, then he might find himself compelled to direct his actions towards the destruction of the regime. In each case, the good manners that the courtier displays in the company of his prince will take on a different quality according to the political aims he identifies.

In our concluding chapter I will revisit this analysis to argue that the courtier's good manners find their most meaningful and useful expression when they are inextricably tied to ethical and political considerations of the right ends of civility. In short, the courtier's cultivation of his own good manners might alternately help him to preserve a passively defensive posture or to obscure an actively offensive position, yet they might also foster the good will between men of worth which allows the courtier to forge good friendships and useful political alliances. We, no less than the courtier himself, must consider the content and aims of his refined manners if we are to understand the courtier's character and his position and role within the court.

1. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 19.

2. J. R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione: A reassessment of The Courtier* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 143.

3. *Ibid.*, 143 - 145. Woodhouse goes on to write that

Speculation will inevitably continue on Castiglione's purpose, not only in writing Book IV, but in compiling the whole treatise. It would be wrong, whatever one's solution to the problem, to declare dogmatically that he had any one purpose in writing. It was, yes, an attempt at recording for posterity the idyll at Urbino; it was a means of fashioning an ideal of courtly behaviour, at the superficial level of Books I-III; and it was an attempt to give a purpose to that perfection of court life, namely to influence one's political master. [. . .] Without the *final cause* [of influencing one's political master] the courtier's purpose would be unfulfilled, just as the prince's role, without his *final cause* (good government), is not only worthless, but self-contradictory and pernicious for his subjects. (145)

CHAPTER 1

THE MEANING OF MANNERS IN *THE BOOK OF THE COURTIER*

In his effort to give an account of the excellent courtier, Castiglione assembles a company of diversely accomplished men who are themselves described as representing “the most excellent of every kind of talent that could be found in Italy.”¹ Castiglione’s company includes military experts (e.g., Pietro Monte), diplomats (e.g., Ludovico da Canossa, Niccolò Frisio), poets and artists (e.g., Giuliano de’ Medici, Unico Aretino) and future ecclesiasts (e.g., Federico Fregoso, Pietro Bembo). Under the auspices of Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga and signora Emilia Pia, these and other interlocutors devote the next four of their nightly discussions to their new enterprise: the immediate two-fold purpose of the interlocutor’s exchanges is to debate and discover the constituent qualities of the worthy courtier and to distinguish these from the qualities possessed by pretenders to good courtiership.² Early in the endeavour, Count Ludovico da Canossa identifies a ruling quality which must guide the worthy courtier’s actions: “in all human affairs whether in word or deed,” Ludovico tells us

[the courtier ought to] avoid affectation in every way possible as though it were some very rough and dangerous reef; and [he ought to] practice in all things a certain *sprezzatura* [non-chalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said to appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it. And I believe much grace comes of this: because everyone knows the difficulty of things that are rare and well done; wherefore facility in such things causes the greatest wonder; whereas, on the other hand, to labor and, as we say, drag forth by the hair of the head, shows an extreme want of grace, and causes everything, no matter how great it may be, to be held in little account.³

This imperative informs the interlocutors’ subsequent dialogues and focuses our attention on central qualities which attend the practice of good courtiership: the good courtier must

display an easy and pleasing manner in all he undertakes, he ought to undertake actions which evince his own excellence and he must be solicitous of others' esteem.

The interlocutors' imaginative formation of a well-mannered courtier has been subject to several disparate readings. Occasionally, Castiglione has been understood as composing an idealized panegyric for the court of Urbino's past excellence, with some pointing to his epistolary mention of the great felicity that accompanied the duchy's men during Guidobaldo's rule as evidence for the text's commemorative function.⁴ According to this conception, the imagined courtier commensurately personifies those ideal characters the young Castiglione knew and loved during his tenure at the idyllic court of Urbino. Consequently, some have been tempted to dismiss the text as a sentimental evocation of a lost past on the part of an aging courtier — the author's own expressed ambivalence towards nostalgic idealism notwithstanding.⁵ Idealizing analyses also tend to rest upon the identification of a crucial dissonance in the fourth book of *The Courtier*. It is suggested that this book — wherein Ottaviano crowns the imagined courtier with “a greater perfection” than has hitherto been ascribed to him⁶ and Bembo attains an ecstatic vision of the mysteries of Love⁷ — reveals Castiglione's superseding purpose in composing the dialogue. From this perspective, the formal structure of the text is seen as synchronous with a Ficinian Platonism which deems Aristotelian thought to be propaedeutic to an understanding of higher, esoteric Platonic thought: for Ficino, Aristotle's natural philosophy was valued as the pathway to the ascendent, soul-purifying philosophy of Plato.⁸ To linger with Aristotle, then, is to remain stultified; to return to Aristotle after having achieved Platonic wisdom is to retrogress. Ultimately, according to

this schema, the political duty of the illuminated Platonic philosopher is to instantiate good governance.⁹ Those who read *The Courtier* as an ascendant text in the Ficinian Platonic style, then, tend to see its first three books as merely preparatory for the Platonic dialogue set out in the fourth book.

Joseph Falvo, for example, argues that Castiglione's portrait of the courtier offers an amplified reflection of the excellence of Urbino: the effect of this glorified portraiture is to paint Guidobaldo and Elisabetta as good shepherds who, by their preeminently virtuous and beneficent actions, merit the dutiful service of their excellent courtiers.¹⁰ Politically, Castiglione is seen as lauding a hierarchy of mastery equivalent to "Plato's ideal society where power is created and justified through the fiction of a cosmic hierarchy [and where the] noble and wise should be leader over those who are inferior of birth and uneducated."¹¹ In this cosmology, the role of the courtier is to serve as the quasi-divine prince's aide in establishing a rightly-ordered nation.¹² Jacob Burckhardt equates Castiglione himself with the perfect Courtier — or with a man so self-sufficient and complete in his virtue that no court or prince could be equal to his great magnanimity.¹³ Burckhardt ascribes particularly apolitical aims to the text when he elevates and divorces the fourth book, with its "magnificent praise of ideal love," from the discussion which precedes it.¹⁴ As the supremely virtuous man, the courtier is ultimately described as the most fit and least inclined to rule: consequently, his final efforts are not directed towards service to the prince but towards spiritual self-perfection.¹⁵ In this vein, the more contemporary Wayne Rebhorn attributes distinctly metaphysical ends to Castiglione's endeavour. *The Book of the Courtier* itself, he argues,

serves to memorialize and enshrine the excellence of Urbino as a moral reference point for future generations.¹⁶ While the preponderance of the text is devoted to a lilted but problematic imagining of the courtier's worldly qualities, for Rebhorn this is only a prelude to Bembo's final rapture which breaks from what has come before and recasts the courtier "as a mystic lover seeking self-transformation into pure spirit."¹⁷ Once Bembo's recitative ecstasy has passed, Urbino is refigured as a harmonious court bound together by a transcendent love rather than by the courtiers' willful efforts to achieve some measure of consonance.¹⁸

If we read *The Book of the Courtier* as a text primarily concerned with leading its readers to the apprehension and uncritical acceptance of a recondite ideal, its import for political action becomes highly limited. On one hand, if the chief purpose of the dialogue is to transform the courtier into a spiritual seeker, the text becomes a primarily pneumatological treatise whose political aims are suppressed or overturned by the metaphysical truths it addresses. On the other hand, if the chief purpose of the dialogue is to describe a programme for instantiating the perfect Courtier operating within the perfect Regime, then Castiglione seems to have set his readers off in chase of a political *ignis fatuus*. At the very least, it would become difficult for his audience to identify a principle of action which allowed for fruitful political engagement in a less-than-perfect regime. At worst, his readers might think themselves impelled to direct all and every action toward the creation of an apolitical utopia characterized by beneficently masterful rule. If the singular pith of Castiglione's argument resides in a Ficinian plan for perfecting the courtier and his court, then the author reveals his remarkable innocence of the mundane,

limited condition of man and politics: as Hankins observes, “what is striking, indeed, about Ficino’s reading of the *Republic* [. . .] is his lack of skepticism — compared with Plato himself — about the possibility of using philosophical wisdom in the ‘real’ world of politics and government.”¹⁹ More pressing than this is Ficino’s lack of skepticism about the plausibility of purifying the soul and attaining perfect wisdom. If the plausibility of this final resolution is open to doubt and if Book IV is understood as an unqualified advocacy of this resolution, then the entire political salience of Castiglione’s endeavour comes into question. If *The Courtier* is in fact consonant with a Ficinian Platonism then we are likely justified in loosing Book IV from its earlier textual moorings: however, by shunting the text’s first three books aside and by predicating our analysis on a supposition that the text’s true import lies in the uncritical assimilation of an ideal elucidated in Book IV, we risk occluding its practicable consequences for our daily political judgments and actions.

While it is not certain that we can justify such an occlusion, an attempt to salvage the text’s more practicable political tenets is no less fraught with difficulty. In some cases — occasionally with the help of reductive editing — *The Courtier* has been rendered a practical and prescriptive manual of civility and formal etiquette.²⁰ As a court functionary, the courtier operated in an environment where the private commitments of the prince and the public exigencies of political governance were deeply intertwined.²¹ As a result, “public administration was not separated from the private household of the ruler; loyalty was focused on a man, not an institution; and the ruler-by-passed the system whenever he wished to grant favour to a suitor. In appointments and promotions, the

prime necessity was the prince's favour."²² Not unreasonably, this description of the court focuses upon the lawlessness or potential lawlessness of political activity under the rule of a monarch. Indeed, Hale tells us that by 1604, some seventy-five years after *The Courtier's* first publication, "Castiglionesque behaviour had become in some circles a byword for place-seeking and a socially divisive code of manners."²³ Given the text's focus on mannered displays it is not difficult to see why it would be plumbed for practicable details about correct behaviour at court and read with an eye to describing the possibilities of profitable courtiership under the auspices of a powerful and capricious prince. Where the eminently powerful prince's personal and political prerogatives determined how actions were to be undertaken at court, the sensible courtier soon learned to follow his prince's lead.²⁴ The sensible courtier, in other words, did well to act in accordance with the existing mores of courtly behaviour: when operating within a highly prescribed code of courtly etiquette, any deviation from this code could displease the prince and be detrimental to a courtier's station and opportunity for advancement.²⁵ By meticulously adhering to a code of conduct, the courtier could signal his obeisance to his prince and to existing court structures. There is also an element of self-aggrandizement informing the practice of good courtly form: if the court served as a shining specimen of civilized life, the well-mannered courtier stood elevated above and contradistinguished from the rude masses and their mundane lives.²⁶ It is suggested that to reenforce his claim to political supremacy the courtier had to act with *sprezzatura* if he was to elide the cultivated quality of his actions and suggest his inborn excellence: according to this conception, *sprezzatura* was advocated "to imply the natural or given character of one's

social identity, and to deny any earnedness [*sic*], any labor or arrival from a social elsewhere."²⁷ By mastering a courtly code of manners the sensible courtier could both preserve the favour he enjoyed from his prince and preclude the competitive intrusion of ambitious commoners into his court.

If we read *The Book of the Courtier* as little more than a prescriptive guide to formal etiquette, however, we risk rendering Castiglione's courtier culturally ornamental and politically effete. Indeed, for Victoria Kahn, the courtier's allegiance to empty aesthetic form signals his conscious and submissive retreat from active political life.²⁸ The fatuously polite courtier is relieved of any political impetus to deliberate, decide or act as he is reduced to the status of a comely but ineffectual placeholder. In an effort to return political agency to Castiglione's courtier, some have sought to attribute the qualities of guileful or cynical deceit to the concept of *sprezzatura*. It has been argued that Castiglione, far from vacuously lauding the aesthetic merits of good form, deplored the excessive vanity and frivolity of the court which he saw as a catalyst for the decline of the Italian city-state's power.²⁹ Following on the idea of the lawlessness of political life under an autocratic ruler, the man of the court is often seen as engaged in a permanent and indiscriminating struggle against his peers for the recognition of their prince. To persevere in his struggle he must involve himself in the constant process of winning favour for himself through an exaggerated display of his personal merits. Consequently, Castiglione has been associated with Machiavelli as a political theorist who was primarily concerned with the benefits which might come from seeming rather than being or, in other words, from being "all show and no substance."³⁰ Virginia Cox argues that since the

courtier is inescapably exposed to and dependent upon the vicissitudes of courtly approbation — and since he is far from certain to meet with praise and advancement even if he is perfectly well-behaved — he must at least be willing to consider abandoning the principles which might guide his pleasing actions if these principles stand in the way of his political success.³¹ Despite its pretence to ethical seriousness, Cox asserts that the text

comes dangerously close to providing a morally neutral science of human behaviour, in which virtue is effectively replaced by the ability to simulate virtue. It never quite comes to this, of course: Fregoso continues to insist [. . .] that the courtier should actually *be* virtuous as well as appearing so. But his emphasis on techniques of manipulating appearances is such that, without compromising himself, he provides all the necessary hints for one less scrupulous than himself — a Machiavelli, or a Iago [*sic*] — to develop into a fully-fledged art of simulation.³²

For Harry Berger, Jr. the courtier's conspicuous mastery of a deceptive *sprezzatura* is a boon in itself because it signals his own merit as an artful deceiver: the courtier's pleasing and graceful manners act as a foil to his true nature and convey the clear impression to his prince that "the ambition and aggressiveness the courtier pretends to mask is really there and available for his prince's use."³³ This quality of manly aggressiveness, he suggests, would elevate the masterful courtier and render him politically useful to Italian princes who were often beleaguered by martially superior outside forces.³⁴ John White, however, criticizes Castiglione for his focus on the merits of seeming rather than being. For White, a politically destabilizing and ethically barren relativism precedes the judgment that every action ought to be measured only according to its immediate, often self-serving, utility.³⁵ Dismissing the ethical and moral tone of Book IV as a logical and textual aberration,³⁶ he suggests that the courtier's focus on seeming to the exclusion of being renders him indiscriminately serviceable to any prince, even the tyrannical one.³⁷ For Daniel Javitch, however, deception is intimately tied to the ethical and political aims described in Book

IV. Javitch refutes the idea that the qualities ascribed to the courtier are shaped by and meant to appeal to courtiers themselves.³⁸ Instead, Castiglione's interlocutors are compelled by the demands of the lawless tyrant to imagine a deceptively pleasing courtier who can insinuate himself into the tyrant's good graces with the hopes of thereby leading him to virtuous rule.³⁹ He finishes by acknowledging that

we, as modern readers, may feel dismayed by the growing sense that most of the beautiful manners advocated in the book are made necessary by the loss of sincerity and free expression, by the sycophancy and servitude that individuals are made to bear in a despotic political system. Yet in the sixteenth century, when autocratic rule gained such ascendancy in Europe, when despotic courts became the centers of power and fashion, was it not precisely because Castiglione provided an ideal of artful behaviour tailored to suit the dictates of such institutions that readers found his book so pertinent and instructive?⁴⁰

Javitch's own deep scepticism about the educatory possibilities open to the courtier, however, seems to reverse the idea that the dialogues are pertinent and instructive for the courtier who seeks to become a politically active court agent:⁴¹ the text's most prominent feature, according to this read, seems to be its quiet, plaintive and impotent lament for the political conditions which necessitate the courtier's subterfuge.

While in some cases the deceptively pleasing courtier appears to gain some measure of agency for himself, a number of problems emerge from this reading. First, if the exigencies of *sprezzatura* merely compel the courtier to behave with deceptive pleasingness in order to win his prince's favour, then the interlocutor's task seems to be one of imagining a utile but indiscriminate servant. This courtier ends by achieving little more agency than the complacently servile courtier: he renders himself conspicuous to his prince but, in the end, becomes nothing more than a potentially useful tool. In this vein, it remains unclear why the courtier would wish to make use of the favour he has won to

lead the tyrannical prince to more lawful rule: having secured his place as an instrument to the prince, the courtier becomes aimless in his actions except where they are directed to maintaining favour or fulfilling his prince's will. Indeed, according to this reading, it seems unlikely that the deceptive courtier has any basis upon which he can judge the lawfulness of his own or his prince's actions. Neutered and lawless, the deceptive courtier cuts a less than striking figure. This reading also sharply circumscribes the political applicability of the text. Fine manners, cultivated with the sole intent to deceive, only treat a peculiar relationship between the deceptive courtier and the lawless prince which is not readily translated to other relationships within the court: for example, if *sprezzatura* aims only at the acquisition of a talent for deception, Castiglione would appear to have very little to say to the courtier who finds himself in the service of a beneficent prince.

In fact, we can better understand the political import of *sprezzatura* if we first consider its ethical import. Albert Menut observes that *The Book of the Courtier* draws heavily upon Aristotle's ethical thought: over the course of their dialogues, Castiglione's interlocutors invoke and discuss several virtues of character and thought as they are laid out in *The Nicomachean Ethics*.⁴² In this case, however, we might suggest that Aristotle is not propaedeutic to the study of Plato, but is rather in accord with Platonic thought.⁴³ Hankins observes that Castiglione was informally, eclectically, yet thoroughly, educated in a number of schools of philosophy — particularly those dealing with Aristotelian and Platonic thought.⁴⁴ While it is highly unlikely that Castiglione could have been innocent of Ficinian Platonism, the customarily heterodox nature of his education might suggest to

us that he was less indebted to this school of thought than the myth of the monolithic and exclusive Florentine academy would lead us to believe.⁴⁵ Indeed, it has been plausibly proposed that each of the four nights of Castiglione's dialogue corresponds to each of Aristotle's causes⁴⁶ and that Book IV of *The Courtier* is actually devoted to exploring Aristotelian precepts which are concordant with Platonic precepts.⁴⁷ While Hankins argues that Castiglione's use of both Aristotelian and Platonic precepts in *The Book of the Courtier* reveals his sympathies with a Ficinian form of concordist thought,⁴⁸ it is far from certain that Castiglione intended to subsume Aristotelian thought to Platonic thought in his text. It is not, then, insignificant that Ottaviano speaks of Aristotle and Plato together as though they were in consonance in their understanding of perfect courtiership.⁴⁹

The ascendant tone of the text and Bembo's rapture notwithstanding, it becomes difficult to rend the latter part of *The Courtier* from that which precedes it if we understand that its parts form an integral whole: in other words, if the Aristotelian virtues which are elucidated in the earlier books are not subordinate but integral to the last, more explicitly Platonic book of *The Courtier*, we need not consider ourselves stultified or retrogressive if we linger or return to these earlier parts once we have come to understand Book IV. It also becomes difficult to contend that the exclusive pith of the text lies in Ottaviano's perfecting of the Courtier and his formation of the magnanimous Prince or in Bembo's transcendent, mystic rapture. While the point may seem a fine one, one significant consequence arises from this. If we cannot justify a tendency toward textual disjunct which denigrates the importance of the earlier books of the text, neither can we

justify a single-minded focus on the final aims described by Castiglione in the final book of the text: we do not simply end our task by understanding and then instantiating the perfect Courtier and by forming the magnanimous Prince or just Regime, but must instead return to evaluate and reevaluate what we know of courtiership and the possibilities associated with action in view of this understanding. Indeed, a skepticism characterized by fear and hope underpins the final dialogue concerning the formation of the courtier and his prince. Here, Ottaviano finds himself situated between the notably skeptical Frisio — who expresses his fear that “like the Republic of Plato [. . .] we shall never see the like of [the magnanimous Prince], unless in heaven perhaps”⁵⁰ — and the notably credulous Ludovico who expresses his earnest hopefulness that such a prince might arise in the courts of his acquaintance.⁵¹ Ottaviano strikes a balance between the two:

We can still hope for things to come to pass which are possible, even though they may be difficult. Thus, in our time we shall perhaps yet see him on earth: for, although the heavens are so chary of producing excellent princes that one is scarcely seen in many centuries, such good fortune might befall us.⁵²

Here, the ascent of the courtier to perfection only sees its completion in the instantiation of the magnanimous Prince and the just Regime through the caprices of fortune. As Lawrence Lipking observes,

like the courtiers of Urbino themselves, the fictive courtier of whom they speak is peculiarly composed of real and ideal, of incredible virtues set against practical limitations. [. . .] Ideals, if they are to have any utility, must be tested against the nature of the world as it is, and in that test reveal the truth of their claims on our conscience; in dreams begin responsibilities. Just as the *The Courtier* [sic] balances a past society against our present knowledge of its passing, so it balances the perfection of courtiership against our knowledge of its possibilities in life.⁵³

A recognition that the interlocutor’s task is always informed by a pragmatic concern with action seems to rescue the text from accusations of idealistic political flaccidity and

suggests the necessity of reading and rereading the text as an integral whole.

Castiglione's interlocutors' actions are not limited to wishing, however. As Ottaviano's reply to Frisio and Ludovico suggests, it is fitting to identify and aim at good outcomes even when we understand that we are limited — if only by the caprices of fortune — in our ability to enact these outcomes. Castiglione's interlocutors seek to describe the qualities of character which describe good and bad courtiers but, more than this, they fashion the courtier — as the courtier must fashion himself — in accordance with that "instructed reason [which is] necessary to any man who will consciously shape himself or another to fit a role."⁵⁴ Eduardo Saccone, discussing Castiglione's multiple uses of the word "grace," notes that the courtier must act with grace (that is, engage in pleasing behaviour) in order to win grace (that is, to cause others to react by praising or honouring him): more importantly, he notes that the grace the courtier displays is not limited to winning a vertical dispensation of grace from the prince to the courtier but must also be cultivated horizontally with the aim of winning praise and honour from his courtly peers.⁵⁵ If we consider the courtier's actions with an eye to Aristotle's ethical thought, however, these actions seem not to be undertaken with the unqualified aim of achieving praise and honour — though these are far from inconsequential to Castiglione's aims or to Aristotelian thought — but with the aim of discovering how the courtier might judge himself and others in order to best govern himself within the court. The courtier, in other words, does not please for the sake of pleasing, or win praise for the sake of praise but instead seeks to please and win praise virtuously: his words and deeds are enacted "at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the

right way.”⁵⁶ This suggests that the courtier’s actions are not simply undertaken with the single aim of achieving dominance or ascendancy over all other men at court, but that he must be in a position to deliberate about his own and others’ characters in order to direct his actions rightly. Saccone, however, draws a direct correspondence between *sprezzatura* and Socratic irony as Aristotle addresses it his treatment of the virtue of truthfulness; he writes that Castiglione means to instruct the great Courtier in the art of ironic self-deprecation which is meant to palliate the many and to be understood as a consciously deceptive form of understatement by the courtier’s equals.⁵⁷ Saccone cites Aristotle’s ostensibly unequivocal condemnation of boastfulness and refers to his ambiguous attitude toward ironic self-deprecation as a lesser deviation from the virtue of truthfulness.⁵⁸ Like the magnanimous man, the courtier finds himself in a position of being truthful with his equals but when he comes to deal with the many he will tend more toward a dissimulative depreciation of his own qualities in order to form a pleasing impression in their minds.⁵⁹ Courtiers are unified in their mutual understanding of each others’ deception — they will understand that this self-depreciation is meant to highlight the courtier’s actual greatness rendering the proper recognition of *sprezzatura* as “the test the courtier must pass in order to be admitted to this club, to obtain the recognition of his peers”⁶⁰ It is only those who lack the discernment to understand the courtier’s dissimulation who will be deceived and excluded “from the club of the happy few.”⁶¹

Jennifer Richards replies that Castiglione’s treatment of the courtier’s *sprezzatura* is more ambiguous than Saccone allows: she observes that what might be taken for aristocratic irony in some parts of the text might also be taken as a fitting “modest or

humble demeanour” in others.⁶² If Socratic irony proper does have a place in Castiglione’s text, however, it is in the interlocutors own discussion of *sprezzatura* itself: in particular, Ludovico and Federico’s discussion of the necessity of native nobility and the seemingly deceptive qualities of imitation are intended to gradually and quietly signal their opposite points to the reader: in other words, while seeming to laud born nobility and deceptive imitation, the interlocutors intend to impart the understanding that nobility can be acquired through practice⁶³ and that imitation is to be understood as the earnest attempt to thoroughly assimilate another’s partial or complete virtue.⁶⁴ Indeed, the very suggestion that the courtier must engage in right and pleasing actions with a mien of effortless suggests that he is not yet blessed with complete virtue. In this case, the quality of effortless non-chalance which Ludovico early on ascribes to the courtier suggests the nascent quality of his virtue: though his actions aim at the right things, he is under the constant challenge of having to evaluate and cultivate his understanding of right action. *Sprezzatura*, or the apparent effortless of his actions, seems to signal his voluntary, decisive and deliberative effort to habituate himself to right action: in other words, the courtier having identified a good mode of action seeks to act successfully in accordance with that mode of action. These chosen actions become displays which help to reveal the orientation of his character to other observers: that he signals a facility with these actions suggests that he wishes to achieve and to be associated with a virtue that he does not yet possess in the round. As Marcel Tetel observes:

On the surface, Castiglione’s notion of *sprezzatura* borders on hypocrisy, but in fact it assumes that nothing is natural [i.e., innate] to a man who acquires and assimilates fully learned and complete attributes by acting them out repeatedly. This repetitive action naturalizes the acquired attribute and transforms it into a completely learned skill. Such an aesthetics of negligence does not spring forth from a yearning for facility or necessarily as a reaction to simplicity but on the contrary from

a conviction [. . .] that a greater challenge for order and harmony is created when one starts from an apparent disorder and that order and harmony eventually emanate from a cumulative and converging process and not from the imitation of an absolute model. [. . .] Nonchalance then is a means of self-challenge and of challenging others; in the process it exposes an oscillation between sincerity and gamesmanship in order to sharpen, not define, meaning.⁶⁵

In this case, Castiglione is less intent upon cultivating seeming at the expense of being and more intent on cultivating seeming as a part of the deliberate and active process of coming-to-be. As Aristotle reminds us in his discussion of habituation, “[actions in accord with virtue] are not only the sources and causes both of the emergence and growth of virtues and of their ruin; the activities of the virtues [once we have acquired them] also consist in these same actions.”⁶⁶ In his completion, the Courtier will be fully habituated to virtuous action and will both *seem to be* and *be* effortless in practice; in other words, in his excellence there will be no disunion between what he seems to be and what he is. However, in the absence of completion, it is still worthwhile for a courtier who is habituating himself to virtue to evince *sprezzatura*: this laudable quality both signals his deliberate choice of a worthy aim and serves as a personal calling to account whose countersign is found in the active process of more successfully striking his mark. Indeed, the better habituated a courtier is to virtuous actions, the greater effortlessness he will exhibit in his undertakings.

Accusations of profligacy are not only aimed at Castiglione for his advocacy of *sprezzatura*, however. At first glance, we might think that the courtier’s attention to courtly manners seems better befitted to an affected dilettante than an ethically aware, pragmatic political agent: in other words, his attention to manners and courtly conduct seems to be non-ethical. Lawrence Ryan identifies Aristotle’s ethical imprint on the text

but suggests that Castiglione's focus on seemingly frivolous manners and decorum is largely a function of

the author's artistic instincts [which] may have told him that in order to make [his doctrine] acceptable to an aristocratic literary audience, he would have to begin with the familiar, with the courtly code as they already understood and practiced it, as well as to delight them through the depiction of characters from real life with whose thoughts and manners they could identify. Only by starting where his readers were, however long he may seem to have taken in getting them under way, could he guide them, gently and subtly, to his own more perfect vision of courtiership.⁶⁷

While the manners Castiglione's interlocutors describe serve a purpose here, it is suggested that this purpose is merely to lure the audience — and presumably the interlocutors themselves — to a consideration of grander ethical and political problems. Jennifer Richards, however, identifies the interlocutor's "preoccupation with aesthetic decorum" as more than an exemplary, foppish lesson in learning how to give pleasure and suggests that the interlocutors' interests — and their very manner of discussing these interests — reflects a recognition of the virtue of temperance.⁶⁸ Virtuously temperate decorum, then, serves as "a means to accommodate listeners to a variety of perspectives, to remind them of the importance of their audience, and to contain willful self-assertion" with a final political view to affecting the relation of power between courtiers and their prince.⁶⁹ Aristotle, however, identifies the virtue of temperance as that virtue which is concerned with the bodily appetite for touch, in the form of food and sex.⁷⁰ He tells us that

Temperance, then, will be about bodily pleasures, but not even about all of these. For those who find enjoyment in objects and sights, such as colors, shapes, a painting, are called neither temperate nor intemperate, even though it would also seem possible to enjoy these either rightly or excessively and deficiently. The same is true for hearing; no one is ever called intemperate for excessive enjoyment of songs or playacting, or temperate for the right enjoyment of them.⁷¹

Aristotle's affirmation that the activities he describes can find a virtuous mean between

excess and deficiency suggests that our display and sensory enjoyment of manifest qualities are indeed subject to ethical consideration: however, it is problematic to identify the virtue of temperance too closely with the interlocutors' dialogues about fitting courtly manners.

Though Castiglione's courtier is instructed to make a pleasing show of himself at court, his manners are essentially consociational in character: in other words, they reflect a consideration for right modes of action (and interaction) within a courtly setting. Certainly the courtier's displays are predicated upon his awareness of their perceptibility to others and their ability to satisfy others' pleasures, however they can also reveal him to be a social man of goodwill. Burke observes that while Castiglione invokes a number of standard classical, medieval, and early Renaissance terms throughout the text, he also lays a distinct and uncommon emphasis on terms such as "affable (*affabile*)," "amiable (*amabile*)," and "pleasing (*piacevole*)" in his treatment of good behaviour.⁷² In this vein, I propose that *The Book of the Courtier* implicitly recognizes the political merit of cultivating an ethos of civility at court. Rather than associating the courtier's pleasing manners with the virtue of temperance, however, I suggest that the virtue of civility is closely tied to the small virtue of "friendliness" and to its corresponding virtues of "truthfulness" and wit. These deeply interrelated virtues offer us the opportunity to better understand how and why courtiers might commonly engage in right and graceful actions in their interactions at court. Ultimately, the cultivation of civility carries import not only for courtiers' relations to their prince but for their relations to one another as well: civility helps to inform shifts and movements in court status which, in turn, affect relations of

power in ways that can serve to preserve or upset courtly regimes. To understand how this virtue can come to affect court dynamics, however, we must first turn to an examination of the quality of civility.

1. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 13.

The most excellent and complete Courtier seems to incorporate the many diverse talents and vocations which were to be found in several of Guidobaldo's own courtiers. For biographical overviews of Castiglione's interlocutors see: Baldassarre Castiglione, "Appendice Dizionario Biografico" in *Il Libro Del Cortegiano*, ed. Vittorio Cian (Florence: Sansoni, 1947); Baldesar Castiglione, "Characters in *The Courtier*" in *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 1976), 23-29; and J.R. Woodhouse, "Life and Experience" in *Baldesar Castiglione: A Reassessment of The Courtier* (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 6-37.

2. *Ibid.*, 19.

3. *Ibid.*, 32.

4. Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1996), 33.

5. Castiglione, 65 - 69. Before returning to the dialogue, Castiglione opens Book II with an interrogation of those old men who would hearken back to an improbably idealized golden age; these men, he writes, characterize past courtiers as being perfectly virtuous while condemning men of the present age as being utterly given over to dissipation and vice. (65) Memory, Castiglione avers, is treacherous since it often chooses to focus on the pleasures of the past to the exclusion of anything painful; in this vein, old men of "senile spirit" find their judgement impaired and complain of men's present-day pleasures since they can no longer enjoy or properly understand them. (66) Castiglione is critical of these desiccated old men who foolishly ascribe perfect virtue to the world they once inhabited and perfect vice to the world they now occupy; their wizened passions, he suggests, cause them to prejudicially exalt an imagined world that never was and denigrate the tangible world they now observe.

6. *Ibid.*, 206.

7. *Ibid.*, 258 - 259.

8. James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance: Volume II, Platonism* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004), 462 - 463.

9. *Ibid.*, 465.

10. Joseph D. Falvo, "Urbino and the Apotheosis of Power," *MLN* 101:1 *The Italian Issue* (January 1986), 141 - 143.

11. *Ibid.*, 145.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York: The Modern Library, 1954), 287.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

-
16. Wayne A. Rebhorn, "The Enduring Word: Language, Time and History in *Il Libro del Cortegiano*," *MLN* 96:1 *The Italian Issue* (January 1981), 38.
 17. Wayne A. Rebhorn, "Ottaviano's Interruption: Book IV and the Problem of Unity in *Il Libro del Cortegiano*," *MLN* 87:1 *The Italian Issue* (January 1972), 39.
 18. Rebhorn, "Ottaviano's Interruption," 58-59.
 19. Hankins, 465 - 466.
 20. Burke, *Fortunes*, 43 - 44, 124 - 127.
 21. Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), 216.
 22. Burke, *Italian Renaissance*, 220.
 23. John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (New York: Atheneum, 1994), 490.
 24. Burke, *Italian Renaissance*, 216-217.
 25. Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991), 69. We are told, for example, that

King Louis XIV and his predecessors, in collecting together the nobility of France to live with the sovereign at Versailles, instituted a sort of school of manners. At the palace, the courtiers lived under the despotic surveillance of the king, and upon their good behaviour, their deference, and their observance of etiquette their whole careers depended. If you displeased Louis, he would simply not see you the following day; his gaze would pass over you as he surveyed the people before him. And not being "seen" by the king was tantamount to ceasing to count, at Versailles. [. . .] The point about Versailles was that there was no escape: the courtiers had to "make it" where they were. The stage was Louis's, and the roles that could be played were designed by him. It was up to each courtier to fit him- or herself into one of the slots provided. (Visser 69).

26. Burke, *Italian Renaissance*, 217.
27. Frank Whigham, "Interpretation at Court: Courtesy and the Performer-Audience Dialectic," *New Literary History* 14: 3, *Renaissance Literature and Contemporary Theory* (Spring 1983), 626.
28. Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca; Cornell UP, 1985), 185.
29. J. R. Woodhouse, "Book Four of Castiglione's 'Cortegiano': A Pragmatic Approach," *The Modern Language Review* 74: 1 (January 1979), 67.
30. Burke, *Fortunes*, 109.
31. Virginia Cox, "Castiglione's *Cortegiano*: The Dialogue as a Drama of Doubt," in *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch, trans. Charles Singleton (New York: Norton, 2002), 317.
32. *Ibid.*, 318.
33. Harry Berger, Jr., "Sprezzatura and the Absence of Grace," in *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel

Javitch, trans. Charles Singleton (New York: Norton, 2002), 297 - 298.

34. Berger, Jr., 298.

35. John White, *Renaissance Cavalier* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 13 - 14.

36. *Ibid.*, 61 - 62.

37. *Ibid.*, 19 - 20.

38. Daniel Javitch, "Il Cortegiano and the Constraints of Despotism," in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983), 18 - 19.

39. *Ibid.*, 26 - 27.

40. *Ibid.*, 28.

41. *Ibid.*, 27.

42. Albert D. Menut, "Castiglione and the *Nicomachean Ethics*," *PMLA* 58: 2 (June 1943), 318 - 320.

43. *Ibid.*, 321.

44. Hankins, 493.

45. For a discussion of the myth of the Florentine Academy's singular dominance of Renaissance Platonic thought, see "The Invention of the Platonic Academy of Florence" in Hankins, 351 - 383.

46. *Ibid.*, 495.

47. *Ibid.*, 498.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Castiglione, 241.

50. *Ibid.*, 236.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. Lawrence Lipking, "The Dialectic of 'Il Cortegiano,'" *PMLA* 81:5 (October 1966), 360.

54. Linda Bradley Salamon, "The Courtier and The Scholemaster," *Comparative Literature* 25: 1 (Winter 1973), 21.

55. Eduardo Saccone, "Grazia, Sprezzatura, Affettazione," in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983), 48- 49.

56. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 24

[1106b22-24].

57. Saccone, 57 - 59.

58. Ibid., 57.

59. Ibid., 58.

60. Ibid., 60.

61. Ibid.

62. Jennifer Richards, "Assumed Simplicity and the Critique of Nobility: Or, How Castiglione Read Cicero" *Renaissance Quarterly* 54: 2 (Summer 2001), 463.

63. Ibid., 475.

64. Ibid., 477.

65. Marcel Tetel, "The Humanistic Situation: Montaigne and Castiglione," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10:3, *Renaissance Studies* (Autumn 1979), 74 - 75.

66. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 21 [1104a28-31].

67. Lawrence V. Ryan, "Book Four of Castiglione's *Courtier*: Climax or Afterthought?" *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972), 178.

68. Jennifer Richards, "'A wanton trade of living'? Rhetoric, Effeminacy, and the Early Modern Courtier," *Criticism* 42: 2 (Spring 2000), 196.

69. Ibid.

70. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 46 [1118a31-33].

71. Ibid., [1118a1-10].

72. Burke, *Fortunes*, 30.

CHAPTER 2

“WAYS AND MANNERS”: CIVILITY AS ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE

Though Castiglione is attentive to the pleasing modes of speech and behaviour which must characterize the courtier's actions, he is also at pains to distinguish these from the flatterer's affectations: at first glance both the most refined courtier and the wiliest flatterer might resemble one another in their appeal to others' pleasures, but the courtier is compelled to give particular attention to the limits as well as to the distinct ends of his pleasing behaviour. The man at court must take careful stock of himself as well as his companions in order to know how to adapt his manners to court life in a fitting way: he must not only be able to please but to please “well,” and this holds true in his relations with other courtiers as well as in his relations to his prince. While it is unlikely that any courtier will be complete in his adherence to civility, it will be his task to acclimate himself to this quality of character in his courtly interactions. If the courtier is to have right relations with his acquaintances and his prince, then, he ought to reflect upon and have some understanding of why and how he cultivates appealing and graceful manners or, more precisely, why and how he must appeal to the pleasures of others.

Civility as an Ethical and Political Virtue

Though we can readily recognize that civility serves a practicable goal — that is, it helps facilitate social interaction by promoting goodwill in our everyday social

situations — we may still harbour the suspicion that there is something false in identifying civility as an ethical virtue and in describing good manners as being ethically imperative. The popular distinction made between an intrinsic moral good and the superficial display of manners lingers. G.A. Johnston aptly recounts the popular opinion which sharply partitions the realm of morals from the realm of manners:

The plain man cherishes the distinction between manners and morals. Morals, he believes, are of the heart, manners are only skin-deep. Morality is the expression of a man's inmost character, courtesy a superficial veneer. Morals are natural, manners artificial. Morals are spontaneous, manners petrified. Morals are honest and straightforward, manners deceitful and sinuous. The popular mind delights in such contrasts as that in "The Cloister and the Hearth" between the rough, unmannerly German who sells good shoes and the smooth, polite Frenchman who sells bad shoes.¹

An understanding that good manners can be misappropriated for bad ends as well as an understanding that the civil man must circumscribe and shape his actions according to an understanding of others' characters, seem only to confirm our suspicions about the fundamental incredibility of civil behaviour. From an Aristotelian perspective and against common sentiment, however, it is impossible to rend mannered actions from ethical actions: the ethical content of our character is in part determined and revealed by how we choose to act and react in everyday social situations. To begin to allay the wholesale suspicion that many have cast upon good manners, we must turn to a consideration of the quality of civility as an ethical virtue.

David Colclough writes that an ethos of suspicion founded upon the distinction between the truthful man who speaks without adornment or harshly and the false man who speaks in a pleasing manner is central to the classical Greek understanding of free political speech²: good and trustworthy counsel is least suspect when it comes from the candid man who does not deign to indulge the pleasures of his audience by making his

arguments and especially his admonishments palatable to their sensibilities.³ Colclough exposit that from Plato to Demosthenes, citizens' willingness to tolerate the harsh delivery of salient truths in public debates has been, in part, an index of the health of that society's political freedom.⁴ Free and noble men welcome the opportunity to both offer and receive unpleasantly-presented truths, particularly when they are contradistinguished from the pleasant stylings of "dangerous demagogues who win over the populace with devious rhetoric and bare-faced flattery."⁵ The subsequent wedding of frank and pleasing speech is identified as the necessary and palliative expedient that any political speaker must employ if he is to win his audience: Roman rhetoricians soon made "the association between frankness and 'praise' (*laus*) or flattery; they are not, as in the Greek texts, directly opposed to one another, but rather held together as having usefully complementary effects. Before certain audiences, either frankness or 'praise' alone could be unhelpful, one causing 'wrath and annoyance' and the other 'error'; but when combined they prevent either."⁶ However, it might be hasty to characterize the Greeks as adhering to a simple oppositional distinction between pleasing and truthful speech: Woodhouse, for example, points to Plato's advocacy of measured seemliness in word and deed in the *Politicus* and identifies it as a guiding principle in subsequent classical and Renaissance texts treating various subjects from oratory to deportment — including Castiglione's own.⁷ In any event, Colclough argues that this adulterated conception of free speech came to underpin early modern European discourse on the nature and possibilities of political counsel, especially in view of the counselor's task to counsel his prince:

The counsellor was variously imagined as being the prince's inferior governor, to be entrusted with the administration of provinces of the realm or with the management of policy, or as a philosopher or sage who would proffer more general advice on the moral conduct of government. [. . .] The friendly admonition that he was obliged to supply should, it was argued, appeal to the reason rather than (like flattery) to the passions; indeed, the contrast between these appeals to the two different parts of the prince's soul was regarded as one of the tell-tale signs in distinguishing flattery from counsel.⁸

The counselor found himself torn between his allegiance to philosophical truth and political necessity and so was caught in an "apparent double bind of remaining wedded to the truth but separated from the arena in which it could be uttered, or taking a place at the council table and finding [his] advice ignored or punished."⁹ The device of mingling pleasing and true speech, though politically useful, is nevertheless painted as the concession which must be made to a soft audience who cannot bear to hear the harsh tones which are presumed to accompany hard and flinty truths: the truth, it is supposed, must be depreciated and adorned when it is inserted into public debate since few are willing to receive the man who reveals its harsh and unyielding face.

It is useful to note that Colclough's own analysis briefly raises the ethical question that faces audiences who are on the receiving end of what are characterized as harsh political truths. In his discussion of Isocrates' explicit valorization of his own strident but truthful oratory in "On the Peace" Colclough writes:

this explicit announcement of the intention to speak freely [ensures] that the audience or reader is aware of the speaker's valorisation of his or her words, and is forced to take a position in relation to this valorisation: is this true free speech or simply abuse? Is it appropriate or not? Such questions force the auditor or reader into an area of ethical consideration which immediately validates the notion of free speech even if what is being responded to is not accepted as such.¹⁰

The limits of pleasing speech are not the only question under consideration, the limits of harsh speech must also be taken into account. The flatterer might appeal to the popular

imagination by disguising his false ideas under the guise of pleasing words, but the abusive boor might just as easily disguise his own false ideas by assuming the guise of the maverick benefactor who delivers salvation in the form of bracing truth. In other words, the demagogue might just as easily appeal to the popular imagination by playing to his audience's desire to see themselves, and to be seen by others, as stalwart lovers of truth who are sturdy enough to withstand — if not actively welcome — the most strident delivery of truth. In either case, the uses and incidence of pleasure in political discourse are rendered suspect: if an audience accepts a pleasingly-packaged proposition, then they leave themselves open to the accusation of being self-indulgent and bovinely duped by the popular but detrimental machinations of the flatterer; if they reject a harshly presented proposition, then they leave themselves open to the consonant accusation of insipidly withering under the salutary truths of a man who disdains the trifling and misleading — if not outright false — conventions of decorum. Colclough describes Isocrates as establishing in his oration the very conditions which close off the political possibilities attendant to his audience's decision-making process: "Isocrates invokes a number of contextual factors to excuse his boldness: the nature of the audience; their potential reaction to a speech of this nature, and the intention of the speaker. Any who attempt to challenge him are, by this argument, making a terrible error of judgement and playing into the hands of the state's enemies."¹¹ Indeed, politics that are contextualized by an ethos of strong suspicion toward pleasing words seem to be as much predicated upon a dare as upon due consideration of an argument's merits: accept a pleasantly-framed proposition or reject an unpleasantly-framed one at your peril, the audience is told, for your concern

with pleasing decorum reveals you to be soft and base creatures who are unfit to contend with hard and unpleasant political truths — the unflinching acceptance of which must accompany truly free rule.

Alternately, we might conceive of pleasing modes of speech and action as that which ought to accompany good social and political discourse: it might be right, in other words, that we consider and appeal to others' pleasure as well as their reason when we engage with them socially and politically. Man, as Aristotle so famously reminds us, is an intrinsically political animal.¹² The assertion that we are each naturally consociational is significantly different from the assertion that we are each naturally distinct as individuals. The former asserts that as a complete human being we are both our distinct selves and our relational selves. Man cannot be counted a complete human being without either self and, were we able to separate these out, we could say that neither "self" is more particularly authentic than the other. We do not exist either in relation to ourselves or in relation to others but rather, as human beings, we exist in relation to ourselves *and* others. The notion of man as an individual takes a significantly different view of our nature and of our social and political associations:

In a civilization with a certain degree of maturity people know that what needs to be brought out into the open where it can be considered jointly or collectively, and what should be left to the idiosyncratic individual responses of each of us. This is the cultural recognition of the complexity of life, *and of the great variety of essentially ununifiable worlds in which we live.* [. . .] We do not have to deal with the full truth about our feelings and opinions in order to interact usefully and effectively: In many respects each of us can carry on with our personal fantasies and attitudes, and with our private reactions to what we know about the private reactions of others, while at the same time dealing with one another on a fairly well-defined, limited field of encounter with regard to those matters that demand a more collective reaction.¹³

Here, first and finally, we are our distinct selves: we are wholly private animals. Though we find it necessary, useful and sometimes pleasant to interact with others, this

associationalism is not an intrinsic part of ourselves. Indeed, as Nagel suggests, when the individual deals with others he partially constrains his true (that is, distinct) self and acts within an external and artificial matrix of agreed-upon manners; he does this in order to avoid transgressing upon others' private selves (by suspending his oppositional reactions to others) and to protect his own private self (by averting others' oppositional reactions to himself).¹⁴ When we are civil we are being untrue to ourselves and are engaging in a more-or-less conscious deception. Together, civility and good manners constitute nice and expedient artifices which close off our own individual states and valuations from others' individual states and valuations: civility and good manners, then, are not in play once we get down to serious business where we must abandon civility in favour of frank and open discussion. No wonder, then, that Nagel can write of the limits of civility in politics thus:

What we can tolerate having out in the open between us depends on what we think we can handle jointly without crippling our relations for other purposes. [. . .] In general it's not a bad idea to stick with the conventions of reticence that have developed to govern social, commercial, and professional interactions in normal circumstances. It is best not to overload the field of interaction with excess emotional and normative baggage. On the other hand, politeness sometimes excludes material which, though disruptive, is relevant to the matter at hand and whose exclusion affects the results. [. . .] Politeness is also a disadvantage where one party to a situation takes advantage of the conventions of mutual restraint to make excessive claims whose excessiveness he knows cannot be publicly pointed out without impoliteness. Politeness leaves us with few weapons against grasping selfishness except exclusion from the society, and that is not always an available option.¹⁵

Civility is conceived of as that which allows us to be distinctly private people even in public, to adhere to our own ideas and judgements, and to extinguish contest. When some conflicting private valuations take on such urgency that they *must* be contested we are required to abandon civility in favour of ostensibly open, frank and less-than-civil encounters to determine whose idea will prevail. Civility, here, is rendered a disposable

artifice for extrinsically associational individuals rather than a necessary virtue which is practiced by intrinsically consociational human beings.

Man as a social and political animal, however, is not an island of distinctive and idiosyncratic affective and thought states complete onto himself. Rather than conceiving of each man as being an essentially atomized vessel containing a personal identity which is defined by a number of peculiar states, Aristotle considers each of us to be born with capacity: like all forms of life we are materially bounded and have the physical capacity to move through our environment (if only through growth);¹⁶ as with all animal forms of life we have the capacity for sensory perception of our environment;¹⁷ but unlike other forms of life human beings have the capacity for reason.¹⁸ Each of these capacities (barring, perhaps, the capacity for growth) have a good or bad end which, to a greater or lesser degree, we can effect through right or wrong action.¹⁹ The unique function of man is to exercise his capacity by engaging in actions in accordance with reason.²⁰ However, the single man does not simply exercise his capacities well (or poorly) by praxis in reference to an inborn but abstracted idea of the good: rather, he has the inborn, ever-present capacity to act well or poorly and *learns* how to effect good or bad actions.²¹ Prudence is the virtue of thought which deals with knowledge of the truth about particulars²² — or, in other words, prudence is that which is “concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being.”²³ Though we each have the capacity for prudent thought, our understanding of particulars and how we should act to live well is heavily influenced by our experiences.²⁴ Human character, then, is comprised of and revealed by the actions a man chooses to undertake vis-à-vis the best aim of living well.

If each man has properly constituted capacities for choice and action why, then, does Aristotle assert that

The city is [...] prior by nature to the household and to each of us. For the whole must of necessity be prior to the part; for if the whole [body] is destroyed there will not be a foot or a hand, unless in the sense that the term is similar (as when one speaks of a hand of stone), but the thing will be defective. [...] That the city is both by nature and prior to each individual, then, is clear. For if the individual when separated [from it] is not self-sufficient, he will be in a condition similar to that of the other parts in relation to the whole. One who is incapable of participating or who is in need of nothing through being self-sufficient is no part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god?²⁵

If the single human being contains within himself the capacity for virtue of character and thought why must he also be intrinsically consociational? We can begin to answer this question by understanding that as a materially bounded creature, each man is necessarily circumscribed in his ability to know: that is, each man's experience is necessarily finite and he can only attain so much knowledge about the particular truths of human existence. The development of character requires capacity, thought and action: while for the most part each man is equal in capacity, he is limited in what he knows and so is limited in his ability to act well. Even if we assume that he deliberates well and correctly understands that which he experiences — an improbable assumption in itself since we are all severally talented in our deliberative faculties²⁶ — the intrinsic limits upon his ability to observe all particulars suggests that, to some degree, he still errs by omission. If it is a part of each man's estate to be wanting in those things which allow us to live a fully human life, then we will seek out others to help alleviate this mutual want. Only those who are divinely inspired with complete knowledge of particulars or those who are bestially unconcerned with relieving their estate can consider themselves, rightly or wrongly, devoid of a consociational self.

This idea concerning the nature and the proper ends of man informs our ethical

understanding of the virtue of civility. Enhancing and evaluating our incomplete knowledge of particulars is central to cultivating prudent thought and virtuous action in our social and political interactions. Through communication, in other words, we each proclaim and consider the merits of several particular courses of action and proposed ends. However, given our bounded experiences, we are each limited in our ability to express a right and true course of action: hence, even as we enter into *community* we enter into *contest* to discern which of us have the best claims to describing right actions. Civility, though, is not an external protective wall that we place between our several, wholly distinct authentic selves once we enter society: instead, it is an ethical virtue which compels us to act in a way which acknowledges our complex nature as both limited and consociational beings. We each come together for the purpose of exchanging and enhancing knowledge and understanding, not to seek dominance for our peculiar understanding irrespective of others.’ Indeed, in his discussion of civility as an Aristotelian virtue of character Philip Smith points to “the logic of intolerance” that we must adopt before we can justify treating all others as opponents to abuse and annihilate rather than fellows to commune with:

The assumption that truth exists is not the problem. We need further assumptions to make the logic of intolerance work. First, we need to think, not only that truth is valuable, but also that we have access to the right formulation of the truth. Second, we must assume that we have access to the right formulation of the truth independent of the thought of those who disagree with us. Third, we must believe that the truth itself is compatible with intolerance. A “fallibilist” rejects the first two of these assumptions; that is, a fallibilist will always keep alive in her mind the possibility that she is wrong, and she will believe that opposing views may be useful — perhaps necessary — in the pursuit of truth.²⁷

While the virtue of civility certainly does not require us to be self-denying, it does require us to avoid the rocky shoals of excessive egoism in asserting our claims to truth and to

avoid overturning the very ends we pursue by entering into community with others. Though Cheshire Calhoun and Sarah Buss both consider civil actions to be characterized by constraint of our ostensibly authentic selves, they usefully identify the moral principle upon which civility rests. Civility, Calhoun tells us, is not just a negative mode of inaction: civility must also take the form of positive expression — it is an “essentially *communicative* form of moral conduct” which is clothed by a meaningful display of manners.²⁸ Buss tells us that to behave civilly toward another “is to act in a way that acknowledges their dignity, and to act this way *because* they have dignity. [. . .] When we treat one another politely, we are directly expressing respect for one another in the only way possible. We are, in effect, saying: ‘I respect you,’ ‘I acknowledge your dignity.’”²⁹ In other words, by behaving civilly we are communicating our implicit affirmation of a moral principle which acknowledges the intrinsic moral dignity of other human beings and their worth to us as fellows. We are not just valuing others, as is proper to a fully constituted human being, we are also making sure that those others know that we value them and how. We must recall, however, that as human animals we are each endowed with the capacity for pleasure and pain (*via* our capacity for sensory perception) as well as the capacity for reason: though we must employ our reason to determine how we are to best give and receive pleasure, it does not follow that we must seek to annul that part of ourselves which has the capacity for pleasure — even, and perhaps especially, when we find ourselves engaged in a reasoned consideration of what is right or true. Any complete consideration of human dignity must encompass a consideration of our human capacity for pleasure as well as our capacity for reason: in his social and political interactions, the

civil man will measure his words and deeds in a way that demonstrates that he values both.

It is not quite right, then, to consider civility to be little more than a trigger lock that we willingly impose on our fundamentally warring selves because we agree that it is more comfortable to avoid certain skirmishes lest we descend into a state of perpetual war. Civility as a virtue tacitly acknowledges our shared limitations and the peculiarity of our several understandings: certainly, it acknowledges the tensions that are bred from testing these different conceptions of particulars and the good when we enter into the company of others. However, it also acknowledges that in seeking the company of others we can engage in contests about these things in a right way. Civility is not that which we adhere to *until* it is time to enter into contest; it is that which allows us to contest in the right way. In practice, the goodwill evoked by pleasing manners can help mediate — without dissolving — the tensions bred of conflict so that they are not disproportionate to the endeavour. Certainly praise and admonishment alike are a part of the political endeavour, but we must not suspect that pleasing manners are in themselves a simple sign of obsequy or a form of duplicity fitted only to the slavish or the base, nor must we accept that an utter disregard for pleasing manners ought to accompany truth claims or our efforts to mediate these claims. Instead, when adapting our manners to our social and political contexts, we must consciously consider who we must please or pain as well as how, when and why we must please or pain them. Aristotle's discussion of the small virtues of "friendliness," "truthfulness" and wit seems to offer some guidance in helping us deliberate about the ethical import of our manners.

The Virtues of Civility

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies three virtues of character which ought to govern our interactions “in meeting people, living together, and common dealings in conversations and actions.”³⁰ The first of these virtues, “friendliness,” characterizes the friendly person as one who will act in a manner which allows him to share pleasure with and avoid visiting pain upon others.³¹ The second virtue, “truthfulness,” describes the truthful person as one who observes honest and decent limits in conveying his own qualities to others.³² The third, “wit,” concerns the witty person who is conscious of sharing pleasure and avoiding pain so that he both hears and tells jokes in a fitting manner.³³ Together, these virtues address the question of how and why manners ought to be observed in our common, routine but less-than-intimate engagement with others.

Of these three, Peter Johnson identifies the virtue commonly rendered as “friendliness” as that which is most closely associated with civility. Remarking upon the formal namelessness of this virtue, Johnson asserts that

The idea that the mean between too much and too little deference to others is logically complex gives us a clue to its namelessness. Indeed, Aristotle seems to accept that such intricacy is not open to purely quantitative understanding, and this makes it difficult for us to think of it as a state specifying a single, named virtue. Its composition is better explained in terms of a variety of feelings and dispositions, virtues and manners. [. . .] Aristotle is right to leave it nameless, but for the straightforward reason that there is no single state to name. The notion of a single state is a fiction.³⁴

Johnson’s suggestion that the particular instances of friendliness are too wide-ranging and complex to narrowly and exhaustively detail is cogent. However, his observation that

“friendliness” does not encompass a single, distinct virtue leads him down the problematic path of teasing out a multitude of hidden virtues which are ostensibly subsumed under “friendliness.” These constituent virtues include politeness (“It is to put aside one’s own dispositions and preoccupations to allow others to express their own.”)³⁵; agreeableness (“the presence of a willingness to agree to accommodate or please others”)³⁶; accommodation (“a willingness to adjust to meet the specific requirements of others”)³⁷; propriety (“a compass for the virtues” which allows us to judge and react to the moral appropriateness of our own and others’ behaviour)³⁸; and civility (“a virtue displayed in the disposition to treat others civilly, to approach them with consideration and respect”).³⁹ Certainly, the dispositions identified here as virtues seem cognate with Aristotle’s conception of friendliness in the sense that they are concerned with “the proper ways to spare or to hurt the feelings”⁴⁰ of our acquaintances, and in detailing these dispositions Johnson helps to illuminate our understanding of the spirit of friendliness. However, from an Aristotelian standpoint it is questionable whether these dispositions can be identified as virtues proper.

First, these dispositions tend to adhere to an antipodal binary schema of virtue and vice which is devoid of a particular virtuous mean: one might be polite or impolite or somewhere in-between, for instance, but in this case any medial point fails to identify a virtuous state situated between a vice of excess and a vice of deficiency. Second, the overfine distinctions wrought between these dispositions tend to dissect friendliness into a number of constituent parts, giving each the pronounced appearance of being essentially alienated from the others. The effect of this is to obscure the close and complex

relationship between these dispositions. For example, that which Johnson identifies as “propriety” corresponds closely to Aristotle’s notion that, *vis-à-vis* friendliness, we must “always refer to the fine and beneficial”⁴¹ as an overarching consideration in judging and identifying the right limits of friendly behaviour. Though Johnson acknowledges that propriety is less a distinct virtue than it is a guiding principle,⁴² the particularly close relationship he draws between “propriety” and “accommodation”⁴³ seems overdiscriminate. We can just as easily imagine being guided by propriety in our polite, agreeable or otherwise right-mannered behaviour. Consider, too, the difficulty of consistently distinguishing between these dispositions. It is difficult, for example, to imagine being polite (or agreeable, or accommodating) without also being civil. Ultimately, from an Aristotelian standpoint, it seems better to consider these qualities as dispositions which help to characterize the spirit or principle of “friendliness” rather than as distinct, categorical virtues onto themselves.

Johnson’s analysis of the nameless virtue rendered “friendliness” remains apposite in two respects, however. First, through Johnson’s examination of the spirit of this virtue we arrive at an understanding that the principle it describes rehearses a good part of civility’s constituent qualities. Though friendliness plays a significant part in informing our understanding of civility, we should not utterly conflate these two lest we risk ignoring the other constituent qualities of civility or eliding the relationship of “friendliness” to the virtue of friendship. Aristotle compares and contrasts these last two virtues by saying

This state [i.e., friendliness] has no name, but it would seem to be most like friendship; for the character of the person in the intermediate state is just what we mean in speaking of a decent friend, except that the friend is also fond of us. It differs from friendship in not requiring any

special feeling or any fondness for the people we meet. For this person takes each thing in the right way to new and old acquaintances, to familiar companions and strangers without distinction, except that he will also do what is suitable for each; for the proper ways to spare or to hurt the feelings of familiar companions are not the proper ways to treat strangers.⁴⁴

We can observe that this relationship is not insubstantial: for example, the goodwill which characteristically arises from friendliness is identified as a necessary precursor to the more enduring love which is characteristic of friendship.⁴⁵ While remaining mindful of the correspondence between this virtue and the virtue of friendship, we can still benefit from identifying this “friendliness” as a part of “civility” since the term puts us in mind of what we might owe others in cultivating those outward, pleasing displays of speech and action we call “manners.” Second, the formal namelessness of this virtue may indeed point us toward an understanding of its close relationship to other virtues. *Contra* Johnson, however, these other virtues are not constitutive of friendliness but are distinct from and immediately adjacent to friendliness. Here, we refer to the cognate virtues of “truthfulness” and “wit.” What can we learn of these three virtues, two of which — “friendliness” and “truthfulness” — are formally nameless and one of which is alternately described as “wittiness,” “agile-wittedness”⁴⁶ and “dexterousness?”⁴⁷ All three virtues, Aristotle tells us, are “concerned with common dealings in certain conversations and actions. They differ insofar as one is concerned with truth, the others with what is pleasant. One of those concerned with pleasure is found in amusements, and the other in our behaviour in the other aspects of life when we meet people.”⁴⁸ It should be noted that these virtues are not unique in their namelessness: the virtue concerning small honours, for example, is similarly nameless. It should also be observed that these three identified virtues *as* identifiable virtues are meaningfully and necessarily distinct from one another.

However, the formal problems attendant to naming — and, so, firmly delineating — these virtues might tacitly compel the reader to consider their close, symbiotic relationship: though they are not perfectly triune, they form a close triad of virtues. These three virtues, in other words, seem inextricably and thematically linked through their shared concern with civility and the proper manners which ought to characterize the virtuous person's everyday interactions.

The virtue of friendliness, the first of these to be introduced, seems to compass the widest scope when dealing with manners: it is the virtue concerned with our modes of behaviour in almost all common social situations. This virtue addresses the proper mien we must adopt with others in order to please or avoid paining them by our words or actions: as with any virtue, we must always act “at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way.”⁴⁹ When we fall short of the mean and are unconcerned with even the good pleasures and pains of others, we position ourselves in opposition to our company and are revealed as “cantankerous and quarrelsome.”⁵⁰ Because the quarrelsome man cannot be moved to right action in everyday situations acquaintances correctly and quite readily characterize him as indifferent to his company's pleasures and pains and, so, viciously asocial. When we exceed the proper bounds of this virtue, we behave obsequiously and reveal ourselves to be either ingratiating (if we are oversolicitous in our efforts to please) or flatterers (if we seek some material return for our behaviour).⁵¹ Of these two, the flatterer seems furthest from the mean: while the ingratiating person seeks the correct end in his actions, the flatterer chooses an end which is not proper to the virtue of friendliness. We can imagine

that the ingratiating person will too easily err, for example, by attempting to please the wrong person or the right person but in the wrong way in an effort to promote goodwill: in other words, there is a blameable but redeeming unwittingness about his actions. Because he still seeks the proper aim of friendliness — that is, sharing in the pleasure of others in social situations — we can suppose that the ingratiating man is not too far from being corrected and striking the mean. In any event, he is not so far from this as the flatterer. Because the flatterer primarily and quite consciously appeals to the pleasure as a means of achieving gain, it is a matter of relative indifference to him whether he pleases the wrong person in the wrong way so long as he profits thereby. Unlike the ingratiating man, the flatterer entirely disavows the proper end of friendliness. In this sense, he is as asocial as the quarrelsome man because he reveals himself to be fundamentally unconcerned with ethical consociationalism in everyday situations: however, he will be more adept at evading discovery than the quarrelsome man because his actions more closely mimic those of the friendly and the ingratiating person. This evasion is important for the flatterer because it obscures his indifference to his companions, except insofar as they are instruments for his gain, and allows him to maintain his place in social situations from which he seeks to exact this gain.

The pronounced interpersonal nature of friendliness suggests that our own deportment can only be developed in accord with virtue if we are adept at refining our social acumen: in other words, the civil man must be skilful at observing others and be acutely aware of the character of the company he keeps in order to best judge how he ought to behave. In turn, this implies that he must not only judge whether the company

he keeps pursuing good or bad pleasures, but he must even come to know *how* good companions partake of their pleasures. In order to behave civilly, then, we must learn how to skilfully negotiate the conventional manners which mediate our good companions' pleasures. If we neglect to observe decorum while in good company, we risk behaving in an unseemly way and inadvertently causing pain. When we happen to find ourselves in sufficiently bad company, however, we are enjoined by virtue to cause some measure of discomfort or pain. The friendly man, Aristotle tells us, must always refer to the good in choosing his actions and if he finds

that it is not fine, or it is harmful, for him to share [the bad pleasures of his company], he will object and will decide to cause pain instead. Further, if the other person will suffer no slight disgrace or harm from doing an action, and only slight pain if he is crossed, the virtuous person will object to the action and not accept it. [. . .] What he will choose in itself is to share pleasure and avoid causing pain. But he will be guided by consequences, if they are greater — that is to say, by the fine and the expedient; and to secure great pleasure in the future he will cause slight pain.⁵²

We can, for example, imagine meeting with a moderately quarrelsome acquaintance who has alienated himself from many of his companions through his churlish behaviour. In this case we do not go amiss if we object to his bad manners. However — insofar as it remains commensurable to the offence and the situation — our objection might take a number of recognizable forms besides harsh rebuke. We might communicate our objection by emphasizing the contrast between our acquaintance's behaviour and our own: we might choose to maintain a coolly decorous manner or remain pointedly silent in the face of his hostility. Decorum can guide us even in admonishment: this is not to suggest that our response should be disproportionate to the offence but, rather, that conventions can offer many salient ways to deliver admonishment. However we object, if our acquaintance reveals himself to be vicious of character — that is, if he cannot be

corrected or convinced to pursue better action for the sake of those pleasures which accrue from civil interaction — we will have to abandon his company if only to secure our own greater pleasure.

The virtue rendered as “truthfulness” seems inextricably linked to the virtue of friendliness since it is concerned both with how we display ourselves to others and how others react to this display. While the virtue of friendliness is notably outward-looking in its focus, truthfulness is a virtue primarily concerned with an inward-looking form of self-representation. “Having discussed those who aim at giving pleasure or pain when they meet people” Aristotle turns his attention to a discussion of “those who are truthful and false, both in words and in actions [. . .] in their claims [about themselves].”⁵³ The truthful person, in this case, is one who is able to intelligently evaluate his own good qualities of character and to display these qualities to others in a fitting manner.⁵⁴ He should have a correct sense of self-esteem and should desire and accept praise in proportion to his worth. While truthfulness in matters of self-representation does not take on the urgency attendant to truthfulness in matters of justice, it is suggested that the truthful man will be more inclined to behave ethically and to seek truth when more consequential matters of justice are in question.⁵⁵ Decency in everyday matters, however, first requires that the truthful man avoid behaving in either a viciously self-deprecating or viciously boastful manner.⁵⁶

Of these vices, however, boastfulness is particularly troublesome and complex: indeed, the vice of self-deprecation itself is rendered “boastfulness” in its extreme form.⁵⁷ Those who are given to boasting unabashedly for the sake of being able to claim qualities

they do not possess are simply fatuous — that is, they are eminently blameworthy because they revel in and take their pleasure from acting falsely.⁵⁸ However, a more familiar distinction is made between other boasters: some boast in order to win a fine reputation for themselves and are “not to be blamed too much as [boasters]” while others are “more disgraceful” because their actions are directed toward achieving the stature which will lead to material gain.⁵⁹ The critical distinction is this: “Boasters who aim at reputation [. . .] claim the qualities that win praise or win congratulation for happiness. Boasters who aim at profit claim the qualities that gratify other people and that allow someone to avoid detection when he claims to be what he is not.”⁶⁰ Because the former is rightly oriented *vis-à-vis* virtue itself, he is less blameworthy than the latter. In other words, the boaster who seeks a good reputation is the man who has evaluated the state of his character and is duly chagrined by his shortcomings: he understands that what is truly praiseworthy is in accord with virtue and that virtue, in turn, is in accord with and helps lead us toward the principle good of happiness.⁶¹ He falls short of truthfulness because he seeks praise for good qualities that he does not yet possess, but we can also imagine that he is the sort of man who would both desire and feel compelled to develop the praiseworthy qualities he has claimed for himself. Because he is consciously and acutely aware of his deficiency and of how this deficiency ultimately leads to his own blameworthy state, he will seek to improve himself and to develop the qualities that will justify the praise he prematurely wins from others. Further, he cannot fail to be aware of how his lack of truthfulness itself contributes to his shortcomings: he might remedy this lapse by confessing his lack of truthfulness to others or he might remedy it by ambitiously

developing the praiseworthy characteristics he claims becoming, in effect, truthful. Since this boaster has already revealed himself to be sensitive to the judgement of others and somewhat oversolicitous of their praise, it is less likely that he will bring due shame to himself by confessing his lapse than it is that he will duly act to live up to his claims. The boaster who seeks good reputation assuredly errs at first, but he is not irremediably vicious and might readily be lead to improve his character and to achieve the virtue of truthfulness.⁶²

The boaster who aims primarily at material gain is a more pernicious man, and akin to the flatterer in that he is motivated to act primarily by the promise of wealth — though in the particular case of the servile flatterer who praises men far beyond their worth while seeming to depreciate himself, it might be that the vices of self-deprecation and boasting for profit are particularly closely linked. This understanding, of course, does not rest upon a facile condemnation of the pursuit of wealth: indeed, we know that wealth rightly used can contribute to our happiness.⁶³ However, the man who deceives for profit does not have the right attitude toward wealth or virtue. Though his appearance mimics that of the truthful man who is solicitous of and wins a reputation for worth, the boaster for profit is viciously asocial in the sense that he is primarily unmoved by considerations of winning praise or blame rightly — or, in other words, he is unconcerned with how any praise he wins relates to his own character or his actual worth. The primary end he seeks is his own profit and if he is able to profit from seeming to be praiseworthy, then he is satisfied. If his deception regarding his own worthiness were to be revealed, we can imagine that this man would be essentially unmoved and unbothered by the ensuing

public disapprobation in itself. His primary concern, in this case, would be that he would lose what profit he had gained from his deception or that he would lose the opportunity for further profit. It is difficult to imagine that this man's character will compel him toward truthfulness: rather, we can imagine that it will compel him further in the direction of vice. He will seek to maintain his false reputation lest he risk losing what profit he has accrued, but he will see no purpose in trying to be worthy of his reputation. Further, if he finds himself dissatisfied with his gains it is likely that he will engage in even more outrageous deceptions to win more. The boaster who seeks profit seems almost irremediably vicious: he is further away from the mean than the man who boasts in order to win good reputation and is closer to the utterly vicious fatuous boaster.

The virtue of truthfulness suggests that our efforts to please others in our common dealings must not only be bounded by a consideration of pleasures rightly pursued, but by truthfulness rightly adhered to. Civility, in other words, consists not only in observing how others take their pleasures and in decorously adjusting our manners according to the company we find ourselves in. The virtue of truthfulness serves to remind us that we must tailor our own words and deeds according to an honest, self-reflective appraisal of ourselves lest we claim or accept too much or too little for ourselves and from our companions. While truthfulness is correctly identified as a distinct virtue, it is also corollary to civility in this way.

The virtue of wit deals with one method of engaging in particularly hazardous civil actions in a court setting. Our everyday interactions give us ample occasion for humour and jokes offer us a particular sort of pleasure which we both tend to be

excessively fond of and to misunderstand.⁶⁴ “A joke,” Aristotle reminds us “is a sort of abuse.”⁶⁵ Both jokes and abuse depend upon identifying foibles, or weaknesses of character, and bringing them to the attention of others.⁶⁶ Aristotle further makes the distinction between the civilized and the slavish person’s amusements: “[this distinction can be seen] from old and new comedies; for what people used to find funny was shameful abuse, but what they now find funny instead is innuendo, which is considerably more seemly.”⁶⁷ The suggestion here is that base humour partakes of and revels in our animal nature while *abandoning* reference to the reasoning part of our souls; it is more fitting and seemly for a human being to engage in civilized humour which *also* pleases or stimulates the intellect.⁶⁸ This does not mean that good humour must be devoid of reference to our animal appetites and desires; instead, it means that we must be mindful of their proper place and worth. Jokes which refer to a man’s excessive appetite or sexual incontinence are not without their place, but they lose their meaning and not a little of their comedic value unless they are set against some understanding of the virtue of temperance. From this perspective, good humour appeals to the human being as something more than an animal.

An instructive analysis of the dangers of base humour informs the denouement of Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*. This may serve to illuminate our understanding of humour, the virtues of the wit, the excesses of the buffoon and the deficiencies of the stiff boor. The novel’s plot hinges upon the murderous Jorge’s fictionalized recovery of the missing portion of Aristotle’s *Poetics* discussing comedy. In the climactic scene Jorge inveighs against Aristotle and the very suggestion that wit and laughter are at all proper to

virtue:

When he laughs, as the wine gurgles in his throat, the villein feels he is master, because he has overturned his position with respect to his lord; but this book could teach learned men the clever and, from that moment, illustrious artifices that could legitimize the reversal. Then what in the villein is still, fortunately, an operation of the belly would be transformed into an operation of the brain. That laughter is proper to man is a sign of our limitation, sinners that we are. But from this book many corrupt minds could draw the extreme syllogism, whereby laughter is man's end.⁶⁹

Jorge's appraisal helps us identify the dangers of base humour: having overturned the natural order of things, the bad jester tells jokes which have the effect of subsuming reason to appetite. Because the pleasure associated with laughter is so intense, there is a particular danger that the jester and his audience will mistakenly come to justify and applaud his reversal: that is, there is always the sneaking danger that they will allow their intense pleasure to dominate their reason and that they will persuade themselves that it is either right or a matter of indifference that they elevate appetite and vice and denigrate reason and virtue. Weakness of character might come to be lauded as strength of character and be sought after as man's most choiceworthy end. If a clever man were so inclined he could easily mount a convincing defence of this sundering of appetite from reason and vice from virtue. Such an apology for bad humour might have far-reaching consequences, of course, but for our immediate purposes it is sufficient to say that the truly witty man will not joke in this base and lawless way.⁷⁰ Indeed, Jorge's intuition that all humour takes this form and that all wit is fundamentally blameworthy or nihilistic is misguided.

We know that, above all, the witty man will be mindful of hearing and telling jokes in the right way.⁷¹ This implies that the true wit must begin by understanding how and why he jokes: he cannot afford to be innocent of the right relation between reason

and appetite and virtue and vice. The crux of good humour seems to lie in its nature as a foil: foibles would not be funny if we did not think them somehow absurd and they would not be absurd if they did not depart from the natural. That is, if lapses of character were in accord with nature they would be in accord with virtue and happiness and would seem to be laudable rather than laughable. Laughter, then, seems an appropriate response to absurdity: it is right to be pleased by laughter if we recognize laughter as a congruous response to an incongruous situation. The wit does not seem to take pleasure in foibles, but takes pleasure in acknowledging the queerness of foibles: he laughs *at* rather than *with* weaknesses of character.

This, however, is why it is particularly perilous to seek to arouse pleasure in relation to that which is also intrinsically painful: laughter at the absurd is appropriate, but it also has an air of reproach about it. Though the man of wit must always be mindful of how and why he jokes, he must also understand the right ways to provoke laughter: in a world abounding with fodder for his humour, he must tread lightly lest he dishonour the subject of his joke. What counts as a decent and seemly joke seems to be gauged by the worthiness of the person telling the joke and the worthiness of the audience receiving the joke.⁷² Having truthfully appraised his own worth and that of his company “the witty man [ought to be] characterized both by a readiness to enjoy a good joke, even the joke is directed toward himself [as well as] the ability to make a good joke.”⁷³ While the wit is necessarily engaged in the act of laughing at foible, he must not exceed the bounds of propriety and laugh at more than he would be willing to laugh at in himself. In other words, he must not hint at reproach more than he himself is willing to be reproached. Of

course, it is also true that he must not tell jokes which are out of proportion to his target's worth or he risks imputing more — and, in some cases, less — reproach to a man than is right. By imputing more reproach than is fitting, the wit descends into unseemly abuse; by imputing less reproach than is fitting, he risks making light of that which deserves heavier censure than he offers. The wit must be particularly civilized and mindful of decorum in this perilous situation because, here, he particularly risks inadvertently causing pain by exceeding the mean.

It might then seem safest to avoid telling or hearing any jokes at all. Yet Aristotle's discussion of the rigidly dour man, who does just this, suggests otherwise. The boor disassociates himself from his companions when they share laughter: he "is useless when he meets people in these circumstances. For he contributes nothing himself, and objects to everything."⁷⁴ Like the quarrelsome man, he positions himself in opposition to his company: he is unwilling to cause pleasure by venturing to share in joke-telling and will cause pain by his constant objections to others' jokes. He is disinterested in evaluating and partaking of even the right pleasures of good companions. Like the boaster he also seems to claim too much for himself: by objecting to all wit he first suggests that he is loathe to acknowledge his own absurd foibles and, further, that no man can fittingly reproach him even in jest. In other words, he cannot bear to hear or make jokes because he knows that he might, in turn, find himself the subject of a fitting joke: reticent to admit his own deficiencies and fearful that the reputation he has claimed for himself will be revealed as false, the boor simply cannot bear to countenance this possibility.

Aristotle, however, emphasizes the particular danger attendant to vicious buffoonery. Here, the vicious man will not observe any bounds of decorum in the jokes he tells and hears, nor will he spare anyone pain if he thinks that he can raise a laugh thereby.⁷⁵ In some respects the buffoon might seem akin to both the flatterer and foolishly self-deprecating person: pretending to think too little of himself he is willing to accept and deal out more reproach than he should under the guise of humour; being oversolicitous of his company's pleasure he is too free and voluble in telling jokes. If he has consciously disavowed the proper end of wit, the buffoon will wield humour as a means of indiscriminately stimulating the pleasures of others in order to profit himself: his foolish self-deprecation seems designed to render himself amenable to those who would take pleasure in his humorous self-reproach. However, if he is variable in the reproach he deals out — variable, that is, because he abandons the proper judgement of worth that must accompany true wit — the acute pain that he causes others risks revealing him as intransigently asocial: just as the flatterer and the avaricious boaster seek to evade discovery by mimicking consociational behaviour, this jester must hide the self-seeking nature of his actions to preserve his opportunity for profit. The buffoon's own self-abusive behaviour might go some way toward palliating the offensive sting of his outwardly directed wit. He may also be aided in evading discovery by the nature of humour itself: because we are too readily given to taking pleasure in jokes we might all the more readily mistake the impertinent buffoon for the true wit. The true wit, however, will be particularly adept at distinguishing the buffoon's abuse from his own use of humour and will not be lulled into endorsing his behaviour.

An analysis of the characters of the friendly, truthful and witty man highlights the intimate and closely symbiotic relationship between these three consociational virtues. The virtues of civility require a high degree of interpersonal social awareness and compel the man of civil character to fit his manners to his company. By identifying civility as a virtue we lend ethical content and force to these external displays which are too often adjudged to be the mere artefacts of superficial convention, devoid of all ethical or moral import. We must now turn to an examination of the courtier's relations with others to explore how these might play out in the world of the court.

-
1. G.A. Johnston, "Moral and Manners," *International Journal of Ethics* 26: 2 (January 1916): 193 - 194.
 2. David Colclough, "*Parrhesia*, or licentiousness baptised freedom: the rhetoric of free speech" in *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12 - 77.
 3. *Ibid.*, 16-18; 21 - 25.
 4. *Ibid.*, 22 - 23.
 5. *Ibid.*, 21.
 6. *Ibid.*, 28.
 7. J. R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione: A reassessment of The Courtier* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 77. Woodhouse writes that

The concept of *grazia* (and later *sprezzatura*) was adapted to [Castiglione's] purpose from a long tradition of 'artless' embellishment which probably has its origins in the Greek notion of *τὸ πρέπον* (that which is seemly). There is a curious and [. . .] important example of its use in Plato's *Politicus*, 243e: 'πρὸς τὸ μέτριον καὶ τὸ πρέπον,' where the concept of 'seemliness' is linked to an idea of 'equilibrium' or 'just measure.' (77)

Woodhouse goes on to trace the history of this idea in its various incarnations — incarnations such as "*decorum*" or "*decor*" (for Cicero and Quintilian respectively) and "*misura*" (for Della Casa) -- and its influence in helping Castiglione to develop his own thoughts on the nature of manners and *sprezzatura*. (77)

8. Colclough, 65.
9. *Ibid.*, 65.
10. *Ibid.*, 22.
11. *Ibid.*, 23.
12. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 8 [1097b11-12].
13. Thomas Nagel, "Concealment and Exposure," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 21:1 (Winter 1998), 14. Emphasis mine.
14. *Ibid.*, 17.
15. *Ibid.*, 16:
16. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9 [1098a1-2].
17. *Ibid.*, [1098a2-3].
18. *Ibid.*, [1098a4-5].
19. *Ibid.*, [1098a16-17].

-
20. Ibid., [1098a6-7].
 21. Cary J. Nederman, "The Puzzle of the Political Animal: Nature and Artifice in Aristotle's Politics," *The Review of Politics* 56: 2 (Spring 1994), 293-294.
 22. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 92 [1141b-15-20].
 23. Ibid., 90 [1140b5-7].
 24. Ibid., 93 [1142a10-16].
 25. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 37 [1253a20-29].
 26. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 94 [1142b26-29].
 27. Philip D. Smith, *The Virtue of Civility in the Practice of Politics* (New York: University Press of America, 2002), 64.
 28. Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29: 3 (Summer 2000), 260.
 29. Sarah Buss, "Appearing Respectful: The Moral Significance of Manners," *Ethics* 109: 4 (July 1999), 802.
 30. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 62 [1126b12-13].
 31. Ibid., 63 [1127a4-5].
 32. Ibid., 64 [1127a24-26].
 33. Ibid., 65 [1128a10-11].
 34. Peter Johnson, *The Philosophy of Manners: A Study of the 'Little Virtues'* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1999), 98 - 99.
 35. Ibid., 141.
 36. Ibid., 148.
 37. Ibid., 150.
 38. Ibid., 161.
 39. Ibid., 162.
 40. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 62 - 63 [1126b27].
 41. Ibid., 63 [1126b29-30].
 42. Johnson, 152.
 43. Ibid., 151.

-
44. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 62-63 [1126b22-27].
 45. *Ibid.*, 143 [1167a8-9].
 46. *Ibid.*, 65 [1128a10-11].
 47. *Ibid.*, 66 [1128a33-34].
 48. *Ibid.*, [1128b5-9].
 49. *Ibid.*, 24 [1106b21-23].
 50. *Ibid.*, 63 [1127a10-12].
 51. *Ibid.*, [1127a8-10].
 52. *Ibid.*, [1126b30-34, 1127a4-6].
 53. *Ibid.*, [1127a18-21].
 54. *Ibid.*, 64 [1127a24-26].
 55. *Ibid.*, [1127a35-1127b10].
 56. *Ibid.*, 63 [1127a21-23].
 57. *Ibid.*, 65 [1127b28-31].
 58. *Ibid.*, 64 [1127b10-12].
 59. *Ibid.*, [1127b13-15].
 60. *Ibid.*, [1127b18-21].
 61. *Ibid.*, 15-16 [1101b13-28].
 62. For a similar analysis of the quality and remediable character of the boaster for reputation, see Paul Nieuwenburg, "Learning to Deliberate: Aristotle on Truthfulness and Public Deliberation," *Political Theory* 32: 4 (August 2004), 449-467.
 63. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 11 [1099a29-1099b1].
 64. *Ibid.*, 65 [1128a13-16].
 65. *Ibid.*, 66 [1128a30-31, 33-34].
 66. Hans Speier, "Wit and Politics: An Essay on Laughter and Power," *The American Journal of Sociology* 103:5 (March 1998), 1372-1373.
 67. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 65 [1128a22-26].
 68. *Ibid.*, 9 [1098a5-7].

-
69. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, 1984), 474.
70. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 65 [1128a18-19].
71. *Ibid.*, [1128a18-20].
72. *Ibid.*, [1128a26-29].
73. William W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle and the Questionable Mean-Dispositions," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968), 217.
74. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 66 [1128b3-4].
75. *Ibid.*, 65 [1128a5-8].

CHAPTER 3

CIVILITY AND THE COURTIER

Castiglione's interlocutors take it as axiomatic that they are, for the most part, discussing how the imperfect man can exercise his capacities for reason and action in an effort to perfect his character. Ludovico attests to the possibility of imagining men who are

born endowed with such graces that they seem not to have been born, but to have been fashioned by the hands of some god, and adorned with every excellence of mind and body; even as there are many others so inept and uncouth that we cannot but think that nature brought them into the world out of spite and mockery. And just as the latter for the most part, yield little fruit even with constant diligence and good care, so the former with little labor attain to the summit of highest excellence.¹

The courtier they are fashioning, however, will not be so exempt from the exigencies of diligence, good care and labour: we are told that because "there is a mean to be found between such supreme grace on the one hand and such stupid ineptitude on the other [. . .] those who are not so perfectly endowed by nature can, with care and effort, polish and in great part correct their natural defects."² The courtier must reflect upon his deficiencies and consciously act to improve himself. It might seem strange, then, that the discussion immediately turns to an examination of the optimality of the courtier's good fortune in being of noble birth and beautiful countenance. Under the force of Gasparo's objections, Ludovico admits that these gifts of fortune have little to do with a man's character, but points to the importance of first impressions in the minds of those who have yet to discern a man's worth.³ Ludovico identifies the lingering effect that reputation has in insulating the "dull-witted and maladroit" courtier from censure and in burdening the unfortunate

man with the task of winning esteem.⁴ The prince's favour plays no small part in forming reputations: if the prince accords his favour to a man because he has been blessed by the vicissitudes of fortune, undiscerning courtiers will adhere to this opinion and will tend to overlook unworthy actions which would otherwise seem to merit disfavour.⁵ Ludovico, ostensibly in defence of the merits of good fortune and public opinion, tells us that

if we notice anything which seems contrary to the prevailing opinion, we suspect that we must be mistaken, and, and we continue to look for something hidden: because we think that such universal opinions must after all be founded on the truth and arise from reasonable causes. And also because our minds are quick to love and hate, as is seen in spectacles of combats and of games in every sort of contest, where the spectators often side with one of the parties without evident reason, showing the greatest desire that this one should win and the other should lose. Moreover, as for the general opinion concerning a man's qualities, it is good or ill repute that sways our minds at the outset to one of these two passions. Hence, it happens that, for the most part, we judge from love or hate.⁶

Thus, the argument goes, the courtier must always be mindful of his reputation and strive to form a good and pleasing impression in the minds of others.⁷

This discussion highlights a number of themes which underlie the interlocutors' formation of the courtier. First, Ludovico's exposition draws our attention to the difference between apparent worth and true worth, or in other words to the imperfect correlation between seeming and being. He first suggests that those qualities which are bestowed upon us by fortune do much to help create a positive impression of ourselves and to conceal our character in the minds of the many: a well-born and beautiful courtier can readily be accepted at court even if he proceeds to behave as an incompetent dimwit. This strict differentiation between seeming and being draws our attention to the potential deceptiveness of appearances and the first impressions these engender. If the many are ready to indiscriminately accept those happy accidents of birth as being indicative of

worth, then it is likely that they will also accept the cultivated appearance of pleasing beauty as being indicative of worth. Ludovico tells us that “anyone who aspires to have the rank and name of good Courtier must strive from the beginning to make a good impression.”⁸ If the courtier is blessed by fortune then he has an advantage; if he is not then he must yet strive to create a good and pleasing first impression. Second, Ludovico’s discussion about the importance of reputation draws our attention to how good fame helps the courtier secure his esteemed status at court. The incompetent dimwit’s good reputation allows him to capture the interest and attention of the court but also allows him to coast on this reputation even when his actions suggest that he ought to lose favour. Ludovico tells us that the many are quick to judge on the basis of their passions — in other words, they primarily appraise other men by referencing their unreflecting emotional reactions — and that reputation is that which makes the first and most vivid impression on these passions. Even when others find some discrepancy between the incompetent dimwit’s good reputation and his bad actions, this will only cause the many to seek to resolve their cognitive dissonance in favour of his good reputation: if he is blessed with a good reputation then he gains an immediate advantage at court which, for the many, is not readily overturned through the exercise of reason. Third, if the prince graces a courtier with his favour then this is wont to influence popular opinion and to enhance a man’s reputation and status at court. If the powerful prince bestows his favour upon an incompetent dimwit because of his fortunate birth, the many will tend to adhere to and adopt the prince’s opinion and seek to justify it in their own minds. The courtier, then, ought to hope for or actively seek the favour of his prince in

order to gain status within the court.

We must consider the implications of Ludovico's exposition, particularly in view of the interlocutors' subsequent endeavours to form a courtier who cultivates his appearance and seeks to win praise at court. Through his discussion of the fortunate but incompetent dimwit, Ludovico highlights the very real effects which reputation and public opinion have upon a courtier's status within the court: it is imperative that the courtier know how to judge others rightly. If the many can be deceived into according status to the incompetent dimwit by dint of his appearance and reputation, then consider how much better the competent and clever courtier might fare provided that he too is blessed with or cultivates a good appearance and fine reputation. We might be tempted to conclude that it is enough for Castiglione's courtier to cultivate pleasing manners and to win praise with the simple aim of securing his position at court. Indeed, we might conclude that it is imperative for the courtier to deceive others into thinking that he has qualities he does not possess in order to win and keep their approbation. These conclusions, however, are too hastily drawn. Certainly, it is necessary and useful for the courtier to understand how the many at court judge worth; however, it is insufficient for the courtier to uncritically observe and accept these reasons as his own. If the courtier only seeks to satisfy courtly caprices through any means available to him, then he leaves himself open to thinking as the many do and to being deceived in turn. The courtier, then, must first understand precisely how and why the many at court are self-deceived. The error lies not in beginning to form a first impression based upon appearance or reputation — nor, indeed, does it lie in attributing some value to appearance and

reputation. Instead, the error lies in valuing these things in the wrong way. The many begin by ascribing worth based upon appearance and reputation rather than upon those words and deeds which evince a man's character: in other words, having first formed an opinion of a man's worth they then decide upon that opinion and employ their reason to affirm rather than to test this decision. It is important to note that the many err even if a man's reputation and character happen to be in accord: because they seek to affirm their opinion rather than to understand a man's character, any correct judgment that the many might arrive at is specious and accidental. Further, the error does not lie in referring to the prince's judgment of a man's worth, but in referring to his judgment indiscriminately. The many heedlessly seek to be in accord with their prince without first considering if the prince himself is a worthy man capable of judging other men's worth. Indeed, it is much the same to the many whether the prince grants favour based upon an ill-conceived opinion or whether he bases it upon the correct valuation of a man's character: in this way, the many are at least as likely to begin by ascribing worth to an unworthy man as they are to a worthy man. Having harnessed their reason in the service of affirming their own opinion, the many compound their error by harnessing their reason in the service of affirming their prince's opinion. As before, they can only stumble into a correct judgement about a man's worth. Of course, the error also does not lie in loving or hating a man, but in loving him too hastily, too passionately and in the wrong way. Where the many are pleased by a courtier's appearance and reputation they will *feel* that a man is worthy of their approbation: their passions inflamed, they will tend to love a man and to allow their minds to be favourably swayed in his direction. If they bring their

subordinated reasoning faculties to bear on the matter of the courtier's worth at all, we can expect that it will most likely be to support and maintain the impression that their passions have so firmly stamped upon their minds. The many, then, tend to ascribe worth to a man in a slavish and extraordinarily poorly reasoned fashion. It should be noted that while this characterization of the many tends to debase the plurality of courtiers into men who seem somewhat bestial or less than fully human — and so, in this sense, this characterization might be considered an unrealistically exaggerated one — it might yet serve to illuminate many courtiers' prevailing dispositions or tendencies. It is still the case, then, that Castiglione's courtier must understand how the many tend to err but it is not fitting or sensible for him to adopt their errors in turn.

If the courtier is to avoid being deceived or buffeted by the caprices of the court, he must first have the right understanding of appearances, reputation, first impressions, praise and worth. A man's cultivated appearance and the reputation he enjoys might indeed tell us something of his worth, but these things cannot be considered apart from or supercedent to his actions and behaviours. The courtier does not act wrongly if he begins to form an impression of a man based upon his appearance and his reputation: however, he must exercise his reason to test this first impression by examining and evaluating the man's chosen actions since it is these which begin to reveal his character. Appearance and reputation allow us to form opinions about a man, but these opinions are best understood as particulars which must be deliberated upon before deciding a man's worth: in other words, our first untested opinion of a man may compel us to deliberate upon the question of his worth, but we should not resolve opinion and reasoned judgment as

though they were one and the same. If, as we deliberate, we find that a man's actions accord with the opinion which precedes him, then we can say that we have come to some understanding about his character and his worth and, so, we can decide upon our opinion. The courtier will strive to come to a true understanding of a man's worth but, at the very least, deliberating in this way will allow him to arrive at a tested — or more-or-less-true — opinion of a man's worth. While it is not unreasonable to consider the opinion of others when deliberating upon a man's character, it is also useful to know whether these opinions are formed well or poorly. If, for example, a courtier's good reputation is confirmed by another who we know to deliberate well in these matters, then we can consider the opinion we receive to be a tested one. Of course, it is often the case that we do not know how a man has come by his reputation — that is, whether he has come by his reputation deservedly on the merits of his character or undeservedly on the basis of indiscriminating opinion. Even if we do know that the opinion or understanding we receive is likely to be a well-tested one, we are more certain of a man's worth if we observe his actions and deliberate upon his character ourselves: a trustworthy opinion must only serve as a part of our deliberation, even if we accord it more weight than we would an untrustworthy opinion.

It is also imperative that the courtier not decide to love or hate a man on the basis of a passionate response that subsumes his reason to his appetite for pleasure. While the courtier may be pleased by another at first glance, as above he must determine the man's worth before he can judge whether the man is worthy of love or hate. If, for example, a man seems pleasant but reveals himself to be of bad character through his vicious actions,

it is right for the courtier to be displeased with that man. Though it is in the matter of appearances that first impressions can be most treacherous a man's consciously cultivated appearance may nevertheless reflect upon his character. Federico, for example, suggests that the courtier ought to be mindful of "what manner of man he wishes to be taken for, and dress accordingly; and see to it that his attire aid him to be so regarded even by those who do not hear him speak or see him do anything whatever."⁹ In response to Gasparo's objection that it is not right for a man of worth to judge a man's character by his manners rather than by his words and deeds, Federico acknowledges that first impressions do not always tell us what sort of character a man has but explains that "a man's attire is no slight index of the wearer's fancy, although sometimes it can be misleading; and not only that, but ways and manners, as well as deeds and words, are all an indication of the qualities of the man in whom they are seen."¹⁰ Good appearance, ways and manners, for Federico, are like the effects which arise from a man's chosen actions.¹¹ If a man actively seeks to cultivate a pleasing appearance it may be that he displays a fitting measure of self-love which causes him to choose those things which duly grace his appearance and make it fine and that he demonstrates a fitting consciousness of making himself pleasant to others. Alternately, a selfish or egoistic man may also cultivate a pleasing appearance motivated by that vanity which takes indiscriminate pleasure in self-adornment and in the promiscuous praise he might win from others.¹² The manner of behaviour a man adopts, in other words, might reveal an adherence to a fitting, virtuous civility which is conscious of the right pleasures of others just as it might reveal an adherence to that flattering, vicious incivility which only seeks to indiscriminately stir the pleasures of others. In this

case, manners and even appearance are not inconsequential for the courtier, but it becomes evident that he must test his first opinion of a man against his words and deeds if he is to judge a man correctly. The courtier, in the end, must know both how others judge wrongly and how he should judge rightly.

This understanding of the courtier's ability to correctly judge others underpins the interlocutor's subsequent discussion of how he is to display his own personal qualities. The interlocutors' analysis of the courtier's qualities leads to a discussion of virtue that is bracketed by two expositions: the first on the warlike man and the second on the winsome man. First, Ludovico highlights the character of the warrior who cannot suit his actions to his situation by recalling a court lady's cutting response to one such warrior:

We do not wish [the Courtier] to make a show of being so fierce that he is forever swaggering in his speech, declaring that he has wedded his cuirass, and glowering with such dour looks as we have often seen Berto do; for to such as these one may rightly say what in polite society a worthy lady jestingly said to a certain man [. . .] whom she sought to honor by inviting him to dance, and not only declined this but would not listen to music or take any part in the other entertainments offered him, but kept saying that such trifles were not his business. And when finally the lady said to him: "What then is your business?" he answered with a scowl: "Fighting." Whereupon the lady replied at once: "I should think it a good thing, now that you are not away at war or engaged in fighting, for you to have yourself greased all over and stowed away in a closet along with your battle harness, so that you won't grow any rustier than you already are"; and so, amid much laughter from those present, she ridiculed him in his stupid presumption.¹³

If the warrior is depicted as being akin to a vicious attack dog the winsome man seems more akin to a dumb and fawning lap dog. Here, Ludovico addresses Bernardo's questions about the particulars of the courtier's countenance by telling him that it should have a graceful, yet manful quality about it, not

soft and feminine as many attempt to have who not only curl their hair and pluck their eyebrows, but preen themselves in all those ways that the most wanton and dissolute women in the world adopt; and in walking, in posture, in every act, appear so tender and languid that their limbs seem to be on the verge of falling apart; and utter their words so limply that it seems they are about to expire on the spot; and the more they find themselves in the company of men of rank, the more they make a show of such manners. These, since nature did not make them women as they clearly wish to appear and be, should be treated not as good women, but as public harlots, and driven not

only from the courts of great lords but from the society of all noble men.¹⁴

The apparent distinction made between the active theater of war and the quiescent theater of court obscures the conditions of contention and alliance which exist within the court: for example, we can observe that the warlike man is wounded by the court lady while Ludovico advocates routing the winsome man from society. However, the quickness with which Ludovico imagines these men being dismissed from court belies the difficulty of such a task. Though the warlike man evinces an overabundance of spirit and the winsome man a deficit of spirit, both these men are similar in that they want reasoned control of their appetites. The warlike man's tyrannical desire for mastery compliments the winsome man's slavish desire to be mastered. Their resonant natures are united through their respective qualities of unfettered bloodthirst and yielding lust, coarse aggression and beguiling enticement, brutish domination and obliging submission. These striking men could only resonate with the many who hastily award praise and blame and give their love and hate passionately and almost unreasoningly. The courtier must be avoid blame and win praise from the men at court, but in this case he is figured as consciously striking a graceful mean: he must evince his excellence in all things but always with well-practiced "good judgment and grace, if he would deserve that universal favor which is so greatly prized."¹⁵ The courtier must always be genial but must "never depart from comely conduct, [behaving] with that good judgment which will not allow him to engage in any folly."¹⁶ That the courtier deliberates about the circumstances and ends of his activities before choosing to engage in them does not mean that he is without spirit: he should be willing and able to engage in those activities which display his

“manly vigor, [such as] the hunt” and in leisure he must be able to “laugh, jest, banter, frolic, and dance.”¹⁷ However, the courtier’s primary exercise of reason allows him to direct, rather than to be directed by, his spirit and his appetites; in turn, he is inured to and free from the bestial behaviours of the warlike and the winsome man. He must first know how, when and why he should act to cause pleasure or pain within the court, and he must know who is a worthy ally and who a worthy opponent.

Given the visceral nature of the appetites described here, we might expect that the virtue bracketed by these expositions would be the Aristotelian virtue of temperance. Strikingly, however, Gasparo and Ludovico instead discuss the Aristotelian virtue of truthfulness: objecting to Ludovico’s suggestion that the courtier must avoid excessive praise of himself, Gasparo asserts that “he who feels himself to be of some worth, and sees that his works are ignored, is indignant that his own worth should lie buried; and he must make it known to someone, in order not to be cheated of the honor that is the true reward of virtuous toil.”¹⁸ Ludovico’s own somewhat indignant retort echoes Aristotle’s discussion of truthfulness: he reiterates his point that self-praise must befit a man’s worth and that he must not fall into the vice of boastfulness.¹⁹ Nor must he “cause annoyance or envy in the person who listens to him” but must achieve the difficult task of signaling his own worth without seeming overanxious to do so.²⁰ Having established the courtier’s ability to rule his passions and appetites with good reason and sound judgment, Castiglione seems to tacitly acknowledge that the courtier will be disposed to deplore the impolitic qualities associated with mastery and servility. The interlocutors’ discussion of truthfulness seems designed to point us toward a reading of these expositions in relation

to the virtue of civility. Having first discussed the courtier's ability to judge his company, Ludovico offers us examples of two men who lack this ability and who are consequently precluded from behaving rightly in the company of worthy men. At court, the grimacing warlike man seems akin to the boorish man in his indifference to the pleasures of others, while the languid winsome man seems akin to the flatterer in his special enthusiasm to subordinate himself to and please men of rank. Having both decided that their ruling passions are most estimable they are each quick to exceed the bounds of propriety in flaunting their qualities. The base warlike man makes a point of displaying his spite and derision toward others, while the winsome man makes a show of his meretriciousness. In the theater of the court, these men are remarkable for their quarrelsome and obsequious manners respectively and might easily strike an impression upon the readily overawed, plastic minds of the many who judge passionately but poorly: if the many will be inclined to hate the quarrelsome man they will also be inclined to love the flatterer. The courtier, by adopting civil manners, certainly seeks to be loved and to avoid being hated, but he does not seek these ends indiscriminately.

The courtier must be guided by a reasoned understanding of himself and others before he can know what manners to adopt. Signor Unico refuses to list particular rules of etiquette to his fellow interlocutors, citing the difficulty and superfluity of the task, but offers examples of egregiously ill-mannered behaviour.²¹ Federico objects that while it should be easy for the courtier to avoid extremes of bad behaviour, inattention and especially ambition can cause a man to be blind to his own inconspicuously bad behaviour.²² Having already agreed that prudence must guide the courtier's actions,

Federico asserts that

to win praise deservedly, and a good opinion on the part of all, and favor from the princes whom he serves, I deem it necessary for him to know how to order his whole life and how to make the most of his own good qualities generally in associating with all men, without exciting envy thereby. And how difficult this is in itself can be inferred from the rarity of those who are seen to reach such a goal; for, truly, we are all naturally more ready to censure errors than to praise things well done; and many men, from a kind of innate malice, and even when they clearly see the good, strive with all effort and care to discover some fault or at least something that seems a fault.²³

Discretion is decided to be the better part of prudence and Federico asserts that the courtier must take careful stock of himself as well as his company in order to know how to present himself: "let him consider well what he does or says, the place where he does it, in whose presence, its timeliness, the reason for doing it, his own age, his profession, the end at which he aims and the means by which he can reach it."²⁴ Before we turn to an analysis of how the courtier might avoid unfitting censure, we must consider how he is to win right praise and seek to avoid right censure. The courtier must be ever mindful that "it is wrong to seek false glory or what is not deserved, [even as he knows that it is] wrong also to rob oneself of a deserved honor and not to seek that praise which alone is the true reward of virtuous labors."²⁵ The courtier ought to seek praise for the qualities he has mastered however, we are told that because complete perfection

is very rarely, and perhaps never, found in human nature, a man who feels himself wanting in some particular ought not to lose confidence in himself or the hope of reaching a high mark, even though he cannot attain to that perfect and highest excellence to which he aspires. For in every art there are many ranks besides the highest that are praise-worthy, and he who aims at the summit will seldom fail to mount more than half the way. Therefore if our Courtier knows himself to be excellent in something besides arms I would have him with propriety derive profit and honor from it: and let him have the discretion and good judgment to know how to bring people adroitly and opportunely see and hear what he considers himself to excel in. [. . .] And in everything that he has to do or say, let him, if possible, always come prepared and ready, but give the appearance that all is done on the spur of the moment. But, as for those things in which he feels himself to be mediocre, let him touch on them in passing, without dwelling much upon them, though in such a way as to cause others to think that he knows much more about them than he lays claim to know [. . .] Then, in those things wherein he knows himself to be totally ignorant, I would never have him claim ability in any way or seek to gain fame by them, when need be, let him confess openly that he knows nothing.²⁶

As we might imagine, Federico is pressed hard by the disquieted interlocutors for appearing to form a courtier who, in matters where he has imperfect knowledge, makes the categorically deceitful distinction between seeming and being.

The ever-sceptical Gasparo observes that Federico seems to suddenly be lauding vice, and that his vision of the courtier has departed egregiously from the praiseworthy virtue of truthfulness in order to enter into “an actual deceit.”²⁷ Having already asserted that, above all, he wishes the courtier to highlight the talents that he does have and to deemphasize or admit to those that he simply does not,²⁸ Federico deals with the troublesome issue of having the courtier touch lightly upon those things that he knows only moderately well while imparting the suggestion that he knows them better than he claims to. Federico is somewhat half-hearted in his response to Gasparo’s accusation, saying that he does not think that this is deceit but that, if Gasparo insists upon calling it this, he does not think it is much one to be blamed.²⁹ Here Federico seems to tacitly consider that the courtier, when he is inescapably pressed to hold forth in those areas in which he has imperfect understanding, might be compelled to deviate from the virtue of truthfulness — perhaps even erring in the direction of boasting for praise by careful, quiet omission. The courtier’s own ethos prevents him from explicitly claiming those qualities which he does not have, but when he is pressed his quiet omission regarding those skills he has knowledge of but has yet to master in full might seem to go beyond the avoidance of extravagant self-depreciation and to encroach upon less-than-virtuous territory.

We must recall, however, that the imperfect courtier is a creature who is always in the process of coming-to-be; as Federico suggests, the courtier is rightly oriented toward

virtue and to doing good actions and understands that he must always strive to achieve greater excellence. In this case, if he seeks praise for talents he cannot yet claim to possess in full he still keeps the proper end of truthfulness in sight — that is, he does not lose sight of the fact that praise rightly earned is the proper end of truthfulness. He is also fully aware of his own shortcomings and always acts with the understanding that he must strive to transform himself into that which seems most praiseworthy to him: he does this, as we recall, by observing men of different professions and by “conducting himself with that good judgment which must always be his guide, [to] go about choosing now this thing from one and that from another [. . .] taking from each the part that seems most worthy of praise.”³⁰ Ultimately, his efforts are directed towards transforming himself into the several excellent men he learns from by practicing and incorporating their excellent qualities until they are natural to him.³¹ If it is improbable that he will fully attain this goal, he always seeks to come as near to it as is humanly possible. Though in some instances the courtier seems to prematurely imply that he might possess certain talents which he has yet to master, we cannot imagine that he does so with an utter lack of scruples or hoping to win indiscriminate praise with the aim of achieving material gain as, for example, the boaster for profit will do. The courtier does not seek praise at any cost but seeks to be praised for cultivating his own excellence and for choosing good actions. Unlike the boaster for profit he will not be indifferent to his deficiencies, thinking that so long as he achieves an effect it is of no consequence whether or not he possesses the qualities that he claims; instead he will recognize his deficiencies as lapses which ought to be corrected but whose partial lack should not be counted too strongly

against him in the interim. The praise he values most highly, then, must come from those who value excellence and good actions similarly: in other words, he primarily seeks to win the esteem of other good men at court. If the courtier errs in the direction of boasting for praise, these good men will have the right understanding of the courtier's actions: they will praise him for the excellent qualities that he does have and if they will not praise him for those which he prematurely claims they will also understand why he does not deserve the same censure that the flatterer or the boaster for profit deserves. Indeed, since we must assume that these equally worthy men will be similarly imperfect we can also assume that they, more than anyone, will understand the quality of the courtier's claims for himself and why this must be distinguished from unscrupulous and base viciousness. We might also suspect that they, rather than simply censuring the courtier, might be inclined to help him achieve a better command of that quality he wishes to master but finds himself only moderately well in command of. Over time his right orientation and good actions will lead him closer to more fully being that which he seems to be rather than farther away from it: in other words, he will always tend toward achieving excellence rather than toward descending into baseness. If he is to be blamed at all, then, Federico is right to suggest that he is not to be blamed much.

Of course, we cannot dismiss the effect that the courtier's quiet implication will have on the many. While a decorous display of excellence can win the admiration and perhaps the love of the many, the suggestion that the courtier is even partially deficient in some area might just as easily sway those capricious minds to derision and perhaps even hatred. Of course, the courtier primarily avoids this unreasoning hatred by emphasizing

his excellence and deemphasizing his deficiencies but, in some cases, he also avoids it by quietly suggesting he has a greater command in some particular area than he has yet to achieve. This implication, of course, can only help the courtier to avoid the unreasoning derision of the capricious many even as it suggests his worthy aims to the discriminating men at court. However the many, unlike the more discriminating, would likely tend to be unable or unwilling to understand the quality of the imperfect courtier's implicit claims for himself and should they discover the disunion they might think themselves categorically deceived: in their passionate overeagerness to deride the courtier, the censure they might be inclined to deliver could only be disproportionate to the ostensible offense. Further, their censure — rather than being delivered in the spirit of correction or of prompting the courtier to ameliorate his condition and increase his command in some area — would tend to be delivered in the simple spirit of denigration. In this way, it is conceivable that the best but imperfect courtier would stand improperly accused and unduly reviled in the eyes of the many. In this case, discretion demands that the courtier recognize this probability and insulate himself from the undue and malign censure of the immoderate many.

Moderation, of course, must factor into the courtier's display of his own talents: as Federico's exposition reminds us the courtier must not only achieve the difficult effect of making his own talent manifest and emphasizing his own skill, but he must do so without exciting envy or resentment thereby. Federico suggests that the completed Courtier will be the object of wonder but that he will marvel at no one, before promptly averring that the courtier ought not to be possessed of a "proud and inhuman rigidity,

such as some have who refuse to show any wonder at all at what others do, because they think they are able to do much better, and by their silence scorn those things as unworthy of mention; and act as if they wished to show that no one is their equal, let alone able to understand the profundity of their knowledge.”³² In fact, we can imagine that the rare completed Courtier, in his perfect excellence, might be justified in adopting the very mien of disdain which Federico seems to disavow: Federico’s qualification, however, helps us to apprehend the proper mien that the incomplete courtier ought to adopt when he makes his own particular excellences manifest. It is both fitting and prudent that the civil courtier not accompany a display of his own talent with the suggestion of derision or with the suggestion of an overweening desire for praise. Since the courtier is neither quarrelsome nor fawning any display of his skill must be calculated to win approval without paining those who witness it (by haughtily and boorishly presuming to suggest their own lack) and without demanding that they take too much pleasure in it (by presuming to suggest his matchless superiority). When the courtier is in the company of men of similar worth, it is not fitting that he adopt a mien meant to connote his own superiority and his companions’ inferiority — and this is so even if he finds that he excels in one skill (for example, horsemanship) and his audience excels in a motley of different skills (poetry or archery, for example). He seeks to win his fellows’ fitting favour and applause for his particular talents, not their complete submission: his excellent command of one or more skills does not imply that he ascends above his companions either in terms of general skill or general worth. Consequently, he ought to learn to “praise the good achievements of others with kindness and good will” just as he would wish to be praised

for his own good achievements.³³ Most of all the courtier seems to be concerned with fostering good will between himself and men of equal worth, but we must also be mindful of the effect that the courtier's decorous display of skill will have on the many. The courtier's display of his own talents must be calculated to please even those spectators who might be possessed of lesser skill or worth, and a moderate and well-mannered display of these talents can go far towards obviating the envy which might be aroused in the many. In particular, the many might be inclined to denigrate the courtier in his shining moments if the courtier's excellence is displayed in a way that makes them feel their own lack too acutely: if he is to remain a pleasant object of wonder, then, the courtier must concentrate his focus on being decorously graceful and moderate in the praise he accepts and attributes to himself while remaining unobtrusively reserved on the matter of his audience's skill or worth.

That said, the courtier does not only or even primarily seek to maintain the favour of the many at court. Federico describes the effect that the goodwill generated by virtuous civility can have and suggests that relationships between courtiers are of particular importance because they are "more universally the case, and a man finds himself more often engaged with such company than with princes."³⁴ He begins by distinguishing the courtier and the flatterer's relationships with others, describing flatterers as

fools, who, even if they are in the company of the best friend in the world, upon meeting with someone better dressed, attach themselves at once to him; and then, if they happen on someone even better dressed, they do the same again. And if the prince should pass through the square, church, or other public place, then they elbow their way past everyone until they stand beside him; and even if they have nothing to say to him, they insist on talking, and hold forth at great length, laughing and clapping their hands and slapping their heads to make a show of having important business, so that the crowd may see that they are in favor. But since such as these deign to speak only with princes, I would not have us speak of them.³⁵

While the flatterer is extraordinarily variable in his aim to be in the company of the most conspicuously esteemed or powerful man at court, it is quite likely that he will generate some measure of goodwill amongst the many at court. Aristotle reminds us that “because the many love honor they seem to prefer being loved to loving. That is why they love flatterers. For the flatterer is a friend in an inferior position, or [rather] pretends to be one, and pretends to love more than he is loved; and being loved seems close to being honored, which the many certainly pursue.”³⁶ Though transient and variable in his attentions, the flatterer’s excessively and indiscriminately pleasing words and deeds may be enough to form a positive impression upon the passionate minds of undiscerning courtiers. Feeling themselves to be loved, the many are readily willing to accept the flatterer’s pleasing words and deeds at face value. Further, this first impression might be difficult to overturn: even though the flatterer’s pleasing mien is countered by his less-than-pleasing tendency to abandon his current companion when better prospects appear on the horizon, the many, as we recall, tend to overlook these things in an effort to confirm their passionate first impressions. The discerning courtier, however, cannot feel goodwill toward the flatterer whose inconstancy belies his overriding, egoistic self-love and his indiscriminate profit-seeking nature. It is not coincidental that the flatterer’s pleasing ministrations are most closely directed at the prince: given the flatterer’s aim, he can only gravitate toward the man most able to accord him the profit he seeks and he can only view other courtiers as competitors for the prince’s favours. At all times, the flatterer tacitly establishes himself as a rival to other men and seeks to vanquish them by

placing himself in the first position at court: he is particularly pernicious because, while his overriding, egoistic desire for profit causes him to begin and end by setting himself against all men, he also attempts to smooth the rough edges of his self-serving behaviour by adopting overbearingly pleasing manners which many might be inclined to mistake for truly civil behaviour.

The courtier's pleasing manners, in contrast, are directed toward better ends: his agreeable and affable manners are chosen with the aim of developing the sort of conscious and reciprocated goodwill which Aristotle describes as characterizing friendship.³⁷ Aristotle tells us that it is base people who will be friends for utility or pleasure alone, but that true friends will be friends because of each one's love for the other's goodness.³⁸ The courtier seems to aim at that sort of complete friendship which occurs between good people, where each loves the other, desires to spend his days with the other, and wishes the other good for the other's own sake.³⁹ The friendship of virtue, we are told, is the most reliable, enduring and free from slander and distrust⁴⁰ and is characterized by

Equality and similarity, and above all the similarity of those who are similar in being virtuous. [. . .] For virtuous people are enduringly [virtuous] in their own right, and enduring [friends] to each other. They neither request nor provide assistance that requires base actions, but, you might even say, prevent this. For it is proper to good people to avoid error themselves and not permit it in their friends. Vicious people, by contrast have no firmness, since they do not even remain similar to what they were. They become friends for a short time, enjoying each other's vice. Useful or pleasant friends, however, last longer, for as long as they supply each other with pleasures or benefits.⁴¹

The complete friendship, however, seems to be an extraordinary good for the courtier to achieve in practice: it requires both an exclusive and intense mutual love and a deep familiarity with one another which must be developed over a significant period of time.⁴²

Indeed, Gasparo in particular mistrusts the possibility of forming complete friendships with others, citing “malice or envy or inconstancy or some other evil motive” as those things which make it impossible for men to love each other as they ought.⁴³ Federico acknowledges the difficulty of achieving complete friendship with another courtier, saying:

I should wish our Courtier to have one special and cordial friend, of the sort we described, if possible; and then, that he should love, honor and respect all others according to their worth and merits, and seek always to associate more with those who enjoy high esteem, are noble, and known to be good men, than with the ignoble and those of little worth; in such a way that he too may be loved and esteemed by such men. And he will succeed in this if he is courteous, humane, generous, affable, and gentle in his associations with others, active and diligent in serving and caring for the welfare and honor of his friends, whether they are absent or present, tolerating their natural and bearable defects, without breaking with them for some trivial reason, and correcting in himself such defects as are in kindness pointed out to him; never putting himself before others in seeking the first and most honored places; nor doing as some who appear to hold the world in scorn and insist on laying down the law to everyone with a certain tiresome severity; and who, besides being contentious in every little thing at the wrong time, blame their friends for what they do not do themselves; and are always seeking a pretext to complain of them — which is a most odious thing.⁴⁴

In many ways, the qualities which Federico claims for the courtier’s friendship with all other men resonates with the qualities we might find in a complete friendship of virtue. In this case, even if he does not *achieve* complete friendship, the courtier should *aim* towards this goal in his relationships and seek to foster concord between himself and other men of equal worth. Gasparo’s objection reminds us of the distrust which can underlie court relations: certainly, the courtier’s well-mannered displays — with their effect of pleasing without being so overbearing that they excite pain — go far towards generating goodwill and mitigating distrust and envy on the part of the many. In the case of friendship, however, it is not only that the courtier *seems* to avoid seeking a position of dominance but that he actually *does* avoid seeking dominance. It is neither fitting nor prudent for the courtier to seek a position of power over men of similar virtue, reason and

aims, rendering them rivals to be vanquished rather than friends to be consulted. As good but imperfect men of diverse talents and skills it is right that they praise each others' particular excellence and preserve each others' reputations and that they avoid harsh and scornful censure of one another in their imperfections as though they wished to decimate one another rather than help one another improve. More importantly, because these courtiers are imperfect in their knowledge but judge well of reputation and worth, they can best judge when and why they must cause pleasure or pain, to whom and in what way together: as Aristotle reminds us, "those in their prime need friends to do fine actions; for 'when two go together....,' they are more capable of understanding and acting."⁴⁵ Knowing themselves to be political agents who can decide and act well, they can only view the flatterer's fawning and submissive profit-seeking as that which undercuts the political viability of courtiership in general and of good courtiers in particular. These courtiers are useful political agents, not only because of the particular skills they possess, but because of their ability to prudently exercise these skills: if courtiership is rendered nothing more than place-seeking and servility to the prince, then these men's political talents are squandered. It is fitting, then, that the courtiers seek to achieve political dominance over the slavish flatterer: the flatterer is a particular rival to the courtiers — both within the court and *vis-à-vis* the prince — because he least of all is inclined or fitted to use the favour or reputation he wins for good political ends. Yet the flatterer is just as likely as the courtier to win favour and reputation amongst the many at court: he is also just as or more likely to come into the presence of the prince given his unmitigated place-seeking actions. Though the flatterer's success in winning the prince's favour is to some

degree dependent upon the nature of the prince himself, it is also true that his favourable but unmerited reputation at court can only help him in achieving his goals.

The courtier, then, must seek to discredit the flatterer and reveal him as the unworthy man that he is. While it is preferable for the courtier to ensure that the flatterer does not earn the court's esteem in the first place it is also possible for him to discredit the flatterer after he has won favour. Bringing an already favoured man into disfavour is a dangerous course of action for the courtier to undertake, however: if he is matter-of-fact in his derision he is both unlikely to be taken seriously by the many who have already decided to overlook the flatterer's bad actions and he is likely to be taken for a tiresome boor and an unpleasant, haranguing prosecutor. He must also be careful not to impute blame to those who favour the flatterer, and in this he must be careful to limit the scope of his abuse. Wit is a particularly effective way to deliver censure within the court, since it offers the possibility of combining the pleasures associated with laughter as well as the pain which accompany fitting censure. Bernardo Bibbiena leads the interlocutors through a lengthy discussion of the correct aims and modes of wit and asserts that the courtier, as always, must consider his actions well:

If the Courtier, with his banter and witticisms, has regard for time, person, and his own rank, and takes care not to use them too often (for it proves really tedious to persist in this all day long, unseasonably, and in every discussion, he may be called a humorous man: and if he takes care also not to be so sharp and biting that he be known as malicious and as one who attacks without cause or with evident rancor either those who are very powerful, which is imprudent; or those who are weak, which is cruel; or those who are too wicked, which is useless; or says things that offend persons whom he would not wish to offend, which is ignorance. For there are some who feel bound to speak and attack indiscriminately whenever they can and regardless of what may come of it.⁴⁶

We can assume that the courtier will not act from ignorance and offend other worthy men with his wit — or if he does inadvertently err in the direction of buffoonery we can expect

that he will correct himself once his error becomes apparent to him. However, he must tread carefully when he deliberately uses his wit to censure: most of all, Bernardo tells us, “it is proper to ridicule and laugh at the vices of those who are neither so wretched as excite compassion, nor so wicked as to seem to deserve capital punishment, nor of so great a station that their wrath could do us much harm.”⁴⁷ The courtier, first of all, must limit the scope of his censure to the man who most deserves it: the many, though they are blamable in favouring the flatterer, seem most like the weak in their often unthinking rashness. It is both fitting and prudent, then, that the courtier censure the flatterer without seeming to impute scorn or blame to those who might favour him. The vicious flatterer seems to fit Bernardo’s criteria most of all and so to establish himself as a proper target for the courtier’s actions: the flatterer is favoured by the many but does not seem to arouse a pitying sort of compassion, so provided that censure is delivered in a pleasing way the minds of the many may be swayed to hatred without great dissonance. Provided the flatterer is not so egregiously corrupt in his place-seeking that he graduates from patent impropriety to the sort of viciousness that might justly condemn him to death, his actions do not warrant the more direct response of assassination. And though the flatterer may hold great sway at court, he is not so much more highly-ranked than the courtier that the courtier is precluded from delivering censure and keeping himself from harm at the same time.

Indeed, the courtier seems well positioned *vis-à-vis* the flatterer in this respect: the courtier will not be subject to serious censure since his good reputation will be confirmed by that which he says and does, while the flatterer’s own actions offer ample opportunity

for humorous censure. This, of course, does not mean that the flatterer will not retaliate by heaping undeserved abuse upon the courtier: in fact, it is likely that the courtier might find himself the subject of the flatterer's vengeful, unfitting censure. Bernardo touches upon this and related issues when he shares the instructive story of the chess-playing Portuguese monkey.⁴⁸ He begins by telling the interlocutors that "the story I want to tell you is not so clever, however it is a good one,"⁴⁹ and, indeed, it contains a number of cautionary messages. In this anecdote, the enraged gentleman bluntly and viciously abuses the monkey upon his defeat: this suggests that when a courtier undertakes to win a game of strategy against a passionate and unworthy opponent he must also be ready to defend against the most outrageous abuses. Whether the monkey appeals to the king piece or to the King proper for justice,⁵⁰ both remain silent on the matter: this suggests that the courtier cannot rely upon having recourse to the prince for his defense. Indeed, since it is the king piece that the gentleman manipulates to abuse the monkey, we can infer that the courtier faces particular danger from having the wrathful flatterer seek revenge through the person of the manipulable, and especially the tyrannical, prince. He must, therefore, be mindful of both the flatterer and his prince when he undertakes to defeat the former. That the monkey achieves victory by mating the king with his pawn while simultaneously overturning the gentleman and defending himself implies that the courtier must be able to achieve victory even from a position of relative disadvantage or weakness, and that he must do so while dexterously negotiating and avoiding a number of traps. The image of the masterful closing pawn mate calls to mind an opposing image of the sacrificial opening pawn gambit whose success relies upon fortune as much as skill.

Indeed, given the dangerous nature of the game, the courtier must have a strong command of the skill of joke-telling and he must not be content to leave anything to fortune.

However, if the courtier is dexterous enough in his wit, he might turn even the most disadvantageous situation to his benefit. Bernardo tells the interlocutors that

It is delightful too when a man is given a jibe in the very thing in which he first jibed his fellow. As in the case of messer Alonso Carillo who, being at the Spanish court and having committed some trifling youthful errors, was put in prison by the King's order and left there overnight. The following day he was taken out; whereupon he went to the palace in the morning and came into the hall where there were many cavaliers and ladies. And as they laughed about his imprisonment, signora Boadilla said: "Signor Alonso, I feel very sorry about this misadventure of yours, because all who know you thought that the King was going to have you hanged." Then Alonso said quickly: "Madam, I too was much afraid of that; but then I had hope that you would ask my hand in marriage." You see how sharp and witty this one was, because in Spain (as in many other places also) it is a custom that when a man is led to the gallows, his life is spared if a public courtesan asks to marry him.⁵¹

Even under the most adverse and tyrannical circumstances, the adept courtier will be able to deliver censure if he is sufficiently dexterous in his wit. It is notable, however, that the tyrant is not described as being present to witness Alonso's barb. We might wonder if this banter would have taken place in the presence of the tyrant who might be averse to having his serious sanction made light of. If the exchange had occurred in the presence of the tyrant, however, Alonso seems to have come away from it better. Boadilla's taunt, though clearly ironic, centers upon making a jest of the tyrant's power to mete out life and death: this power is perhaps the most sacrosanct to the tyrant himself, since it is that which best preserves his ability to maintain mastery over his subjects. The mere suggestion that this power could be treated lightly as the impetus for a joke might be unpleasant to him. Alonso, however, first responds by suggesting his earnest fear of this power — thereby avoiding the suspicion that he thinks little of the tyrant's power — and then by scorning his abuser. Even the temporarily disgraced courtier standing in the

presence of his tyrant might deliver a direct blow without suffering backfire or afflicting collateral damage. Indeed, Bernardo suggests the possibility of using the flatterer's own abuses against him in the prince's presence when he says:

among other witticisms, those are very well turned that are made by taking the very words and sense of another man's jibe and turning them against him, piercing him with his own weapons as when a litigant, to whom his adversary had said in the judge's presence: 'Why do you bark so?' replied at once: 'Because I see a thief.'⁵²

The advisability of this course of action is left to the courtier's discretion: however, in delivering any humorous censure the courtier must be mindful of the effect he seeks to achieve. If the prince is more beneficent than not, he will more readily come to be disabused of any notion that the flatterer has earned his reputation; the beneficent prince is likely to understand or be brought to understand the merit of the courtier's accusation and to react to the flatterer with disfavour. If the prince is more tyrannical than not then he, like the passionate many, might be carefully convinced to turn from loving to ridiculing and deriding the flatterer. In this case, it is the pleasure the tyrant takes from the courtier's careful witticism and the flatterer's disgrace which can first sway the capricious tyrant's mind, rather than any particular understanding of the merit of the courtier's accusation.

The courtier's adherence to civility and his cultivation of decorous manners, then, allows him to negotiate a myriad of court relationships. Since he is able to judge of his own and others' manners and characters he is able to correctly and prudently measure his own words and deeds and to secure his reputation and some measure of general favour within the court. He is also able to discover and cultivate particular friendships and to uncover antagonists in a way that allows him to negotiate threats to himself and the

endeavour of courtiership as a whole. The courtier, however, is still left with the pressing task of deciding how to negotiate his relationship to his prince: here, as before, the courtier must appraise the quality of his prince's character before deciding how he should present himself to his prince and what role he should adopt within the court.

1. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 22.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 23.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 24.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 90.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 147 [1169a5-20]. We are told in this passage that:

[The self-lover] differs from [the base self-lover, or selfish man] as much as the life guided by reason differs from the life guided by feelings, and as much as the desire for what is fine differs from the desire for what seems advantageous.

Those who are unusually eager to do fine actions are welcomed and praised by everyone. And when everyone strains to achieve what is fine and concentrates on the finest actions, everything that is right will be done for the common good, and each person individually will receive the greatest of goods, since that is the character of virtue. And so the good person must be a self-lover, since he will both help himself and benefit others by doing fine actions. But the vicious person must not love himself, since will harm both himself and his neighbours by following his base feelings.

For the vicious person, then, the right actions conflict with those he does. The decent person, however, does the right actions, since every understanding chooses what is best for itself and the decent person obeys his understanding. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169a5-20)

13. Castiglione, 25.

14. Ibid., 27.

15. Ibid., 29.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 25.

19. Ibid., 26.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 70.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 71.

24. Ibid., 72. In terms of age, Federico suggests that the courtier must be both inclined to good judgment and to the spiritedness which allows him to act upon that good judgment. He says:

Just as a calm and judicious youthfulness is most praiseworthy in a young man, because the levity that is the peculiar fault of that age seems to be tempered and corrected — so in an old man a green and spirited old age is to be highly esteemed, because the vigor of his spirit seems to be so great that it warms and strengthens an age that is so weak and chill, maintaining it in that middle condition which is the best part of our life. (Castiglione 79)

Manhood, for Federico, is the mean that the courtier should strike. (Castiglione 78) In old age men tend toward harsh severity which causes them to “insist that everyone should do things their way.” (78) Young men, on the other hand, tend to be led by their appetites and passions which causes them to be quarrelsome and “hostile to anyone who gives them good advice.” (Castiglione 78) This suggests to us, first, that the courtier must be inclined to philosophical contemplation but that he should also be inclined to an active political life. Further, this passage seems to oppose the idea that the courtier must ascend to perfect wisdom before he can partake of political life. The imagery here seems to suggest that the imperfect courtier must attempt to unite understanding and passion in a way which allows them reason well but also to act upon their decisions with vigour.

25. Ibid., 72.

26. Ibid., 99 - 100.

27. Ibid., 101.

28. Ibid., 100.

29. Ibid., 101.

30. Ibid., 32.

31. Ibid., 31.

32. Ibid., 99.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 87 - 88.

35. Ibid., 88.

-
36. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 128 [1159a15-19].
 37. *Ibid.*, 121 [1155b30-35].
 38. *Ibid.*, 124 [1157b1-5].
 39. *Ibid.*, 125 [1157b20-1158a1].
 40. *Ibid.*, 126 [1158b10-15].
 41. *Ibid.*, 128 [1159b4-13].
 42. *Ibid.*, 125-126 [1158a11-17].
 43. Castiglione, 91.
 44. *Ibid.*, 92.
 45. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 119 [1155a14-16].
 46. Castiglione, 131 - 132.
 47. *Ibid.*, 106.
 48. The story of the chess-playing Portuguese monkey is related thus:

Some days ago a certain friend you have heard me speak of before was telling about the country or world recently discovered by the Portuguese sailors, and of the various animals and other things they bring back to Portugal from there, and he told me he had seen a monkey (of a sort very different from those we are accustomed to see) that played chess most admirably. And, among other occasions, when the gentleman who had brought it was one day before the King of Portugal and engaged in a game of chess with it, the monkey made several moves so skillful as to press him hard, and finally it checkmated him. Whereupon, being annoyed, as losers at the game usually are, the gentleman took up the king piece (which, in the Portuguese fashion, was very big) and struck the monkey a great blow upon the head with it; whereupon the monkey jumped back, complaining loudly and seemed to be demanding justice of the King for the wrong that had been done it. Then the gentleman invited it to play again; and, after refusing for a while by means of signs, it finally began to play again and, as it had done before, once more drove him into a corner. At last, seeing that it was going to be able to checkmate the gentleman, the monkey conceived a clever way to keep from being struck again: without revealing what it was about, it quietly put its right paw under the gentleman's left elbow (which was fastidiously resting on a taffeta cushion) and, in the same moment that with its left hand it checkmated him with a pawn, with its right it quickly snatched the cushion and held it over its head as protection against the blows. Then it leaped before the King gleefully, as though to celebrate its victory. Now you see how wise, wary, and discreet that monkey was. (Castiglione 113 - 115).

49. *Ibid.*, 113.
50. JoAnn Cavallo points out that

Although the reader can easily distinguish between the chess piece and the Portuguese sovereign through the use of lower and upper case letters, the courtiers that Castiglione imagines gathered

around Bibbiena, upon hearing these words spoken, could have appreciated the humor caused by the fact that the same term *il re* ("king") referred to both.

JoAnn Cavallo, "Joking Matters: Politics and Dissimulation in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53: 2 (Summer 2000), 417.

51. Castiglione, 126.

52. *Ibid.*, 115 - 116.

CHAPTER 4

THE CIVIL COURTIER AND THE PRINCE

The courtier, it must be recalled, operates within a court system where the character of his prince plays a significant part in determining how the court and the territory he rules will be governed. The courtier does not seek to instantiate a regime but, rather, to negotiate and influence the regime in which he finds himself. Here, Aristotle's preliminary observation in his discussion of the genesis, maintenance and reform of political regimes is salient:

One ought to introduce an arrangement of such a sort that they will easily be persuaded and be able to participate in it [by the fact that it arises directly] out of those that exist, since to reform a regime is no less a task than to institute one from the beginning, just as unlearning something is no less a task than learning it from the beginning. Hence in addition to what has been said the political expert should be able to assist existing regimes as well [. . .] So the variety of regimes — how many there are and in how many ways they are combined — should not be overlooked. And it is with this same prudence that one should try to see both what laws are best and what are fitting for each of the regimes. For laws should be enacted — and all are in fact enacted — with a view to the regimes, and not regimes with a view to the laws.¹

As a political agent, the prudent courtier must govern himself with an eye to the nature of the regime he occupies; if he cannot afford to be innocent of the his fellow courtiers' diverse characters, he must be just as diligent in appraising the character of his prince. The courtier's role and the actions he chooses to undertake will vary with respect to the possibility of achieving his goals within a monarchical regime and with respect to the nature of that monarchical regime.

Early in their discussions, Castiglione's interlocutors debate the sort of manners the courtier ought to adopt in the presence of their prince. Predictably, Federico asserts that the courtier ought to be particularly mindful of behaving with pleasing grace in his

prince's company, but he also goes on to suggest that the courtier should seek to love his prince in the spirit of friendship.² Federico hints at the possibility of equality in conversation between courtiers and their prince, but this must be understood with an eye to the interlocutor's subsequent discussion of the formation and character of the good prince.³ In his analysis of friendship, Aristotle reiterates his understanding that

though admittedly, as we have said, an excellent person is both pleasant and useful, he does not become a friend to a superior [in power or position] unless the superior is also superior in virtue; otherwise, he does not reach proportionate equality by having a proportionate superior. And this superiority both in power and in virtue is not often found.⁴

Though the interlocutors will come to address this scepticism about discovering an excellent and politically powerful prince who understands the quality of good rule, Federico first wishes to explore the quality and aim of the courtier's good manners in relation to his prince. He suggests to the company that "in addition to making it evident at all times and to all persons that he is as worthy as we have said, I would also have the Courtier devote all his thought and strength of spirit to loving and almost adoring the prince he serves above all else, devoting his every desire and habit and manner to pleasing him."⁵ Presented with this argument, Pietro da Napoli cannot restrain himself and hastily interjects that Federico has managed to imagine nothing more than a "noble flatterer."⁶ Federico takes umbrage at this accusation and uses the opportunity to circumscribe the limits of the courtier's pleasing manners asserting that "it is possible [for the courtier] to obey and further the wishes of the one he serves without adulation, because by wishes I mean such as are reasonable and right, or those which in themselves are neither good nor bad."⁷ While the courtier must be willing to amiably acclimate himself to his prince's reasonable pleasures with good humour and grace, Federico is also

careful to say that the courtier must strike a mean between taciturn boorishness and slavish flattery:

[the Courtier] will not be obstinate and contentious, as are some who seem to delight only in being troublesome and obnoxious like flies, and who make a profession of contradicting everybody, spitefully and indiscriminately. He will not be an idle or lying babbler not a boaster or inept flatterer, but will be modest and reserved, observing always (and especially in public) the reverence and respect that befit a servant in relation to his master; and he will not behave like many who, when they meet a great prince (and even if they have spoken to him only once before), go up to him with a certain smiling and friendly countenance, as if they meant to embrace an equal or show favour to an inferior.⁸

Further, though it is fitting that the courtier should desire and accept favours from his prince, he should not be so overinvested in these that he becomes like those self-interested flatterers who seem as though

they would die if they did not get [favours] and if they chance to meet with any disfavor, or if they see others favored, they suffer such agony that they are quite unable to conceal their envy. [. . .] Then again, if they happen to be favored beyond the ordinary, they are so inebriated thereby that they are paralyzed with joy, and seem not to know what to do with their hands and feet, and can hardly keep from calling the whole company to come and see and congratulate them as though for something they were never accustomed to receive before.⁹

In contrast, the courtier must be sure that favours are offered voluntarily, received with modest aplomb and, above all, that they are well-deserved.¹⁰ Certainly, the courtier endeavours to foster goodwill, to avoid causing irritation or resentment and to win his prince's favour but, as Federico reminds his fellows, the flatterer's unctuously pleasing manners and his overeager place-seeking are capable of causing vexation in themselves: the flatterer's fawning and self-congratulatory displays, as well as his obstreperous disregard for propriety, might finally make him "the laughingstock of everyone and [cause his master] to favor anyone at all, merely in order to spite [him]."¹¹ If the flatterer is particularly obstreperous in his efforts to be pleasing, then he might bring about the very opposite of the result he seeks to effect.

Considering that Federico's espousal of modesty takes place in conjunction with a discussion of the flatterer's mode of behaviour, it might be read as a lesson in how to become a more shrewd and subtle flatterer — that is, he might be understood as advising courtiers to temper otherwise promiscuously pleasing behaviour with modesty in order to avoid falling prey to the flatterer's most egregiously impolitic errors. However, Federico's discussion of judicious modesty suggests that this quality ought to accompany the words and deeds of any worthy man who seeks to avoid excesses of pride and pusillanimity: by behaving with modesty the courtier avoids becoming like those "who stand so aloof that they shun human society too much, and so far exceed a certain mean that they cause themselves to be regarded either as too timid or too proud."¹² Modesty is a quality that accompanies the actions of the consociational courtier; as a man worthy of esteem it is right that he seek recognition from his prince and not fall prey to self-deprecating and self-defeating pusillanimity, but in evincing his own excellence he must avoid the excessive presumptuousness which comes from a lack of modesty and the excessive haughtiness which comes from an inordinately excessive modesty that is "so dry and arid as to amount to boorishness."¹³ Certainly, a proper sense of modesty helps the courtier to behave with fitting propriety in the presence of his prince. The courtier must not only demonstrate a proper regard for himself but a proper regard for the prince and his station as the head of the body politic: both fawning overfamiliarity bred of presumptuousness and querulous boorishness bred of haughtiness serve to signal a courtier's own egoistic conceit and his depreciation of the prince. Modesty is a part of the courtier's endeavour to make himself agreeable to his prince but, lest we forget,

Federico reminds us that the courtier must “above all [. . .] hold to what is good [and never] bring himself to seek grace or favor by resorting to foul means or evil practices.”¹⁴ In this sense, modesty is a quality which accompanies the courtier’s rightly chosen actions, not that which tempers promiscuously pleasing behaviour.

When the interlocutors’ discussion resumes on the fourth and final evening, Ottaviano takes the opportunity to describe how the courtier may be brought to completion. While he attests to the praiseworthiness of the pleasing qualities so far ascribed to the courtier, Ottaviano argues that if these qualities are cultivated without an eye to their political ends the courtier risks being rendered effete. He insists that if

the Courtier were to bring forth no other fruit than to be what he is, I should not judge it right for a man to devote so much study and labor to acquiring this perfection of Courtiership as anyone must do who wishes to acquire it. Nay, I should say that many of those accomplishments that have been attributed to him (such as dancing, merrymaking, singing, and playing) were frivolities and vanities and, in a man of any rank, deserving of blame rather than of praise; for these elegances of dress, devices, mottoes, and other such things as pertain to women and love (although many will think the contrary), often serve merely to make spirits effeminate, to corrupt youth, and to lead it to a dissolute life. [. . .] But if the activities of the Courtier are directed to the good end which they ought to be directed, and which I have in mind, I feel certain that they are not only not harmful or vain, but most useful and deserving of infinite praise.¹⁵

Ottaviano’s singular focus on the political ends of the courtier’s pleasing manners compels him to argue that the civil courtier ought to win the favour of his prince in order to help educate him and direct him toward right political action: the courtier will make use of his “readiness of wit, charm, prudence, knowledge of letters and of many other things” in order to persuade the prince to act in accord with “justice, liberality, magnanimity, gentleness, and the other virtues that befit a good prince.”¹⁶ However, Ottaviano does not linger long upon these assertions before he turns to a discussion of the perniciousness and corrosive influence of the flatterer within the court. He paints the

courtier as a friend to even the most ignorant and egoistic prince, while the flatterer is rendered the prince's enemy.¹⁷ The sort of friendship that the courtier can engage in with his prince will be shown to vary according to the character of that prince, but Ottaviano's immediate purpose is to describe the dangers of allowing the flatterer to win influence at court. His animosity toward the flatterer is revealed to be partially fueled by the tight competition amongst courtiers to win the prince's ear.¹⁸ More important than this, however, is the flatterer's vicious impetus for action and the possibility of the prince's receptiveness to the flatterer's ministrations: since the indiscriminate tyrant in particular is best able and suited to satisfy the flatterer's appetites, all that remains for the flatterer to do is to manipulate his prince's will so that he may profit thereby. This, Ottaviano argues, is accomplished through means of falsehood and deception:

from friends these men become flatterers, and, to gain profit from their close association, always speak and act in order to please, and for the most part make their way by dint of lies that beget ignorance in the prince's mind, not only of outward things but of himself; and this may be said to be the greatest and most monstrous falsehood of all, for an ignorant mind deceives itself and inwardly lies to itself.¹⁹

The flatterer, then, is figured as a corrupting influence who can lead the prince to exercise his power in the service of his own indiscriminate appetites and, by extension, the appetites of those who most please him. If the prince is primarily surrounded and influenced by flatterers then, at the very least, he will be sorely tempted to descend into tyranny: once the prince is encouraged to loose himself from those moorings of "duty and honor" that help preserve good governance, he all the more readily descends into licentious rule and the sort of autarchic despotism which precludes the courtier from exercising any real measure of political agency.²⁰ Ottaviano, then, is probably quite

sincere when he insists that

there is no punishment atrocious and cruel enough for those wicked courtiers who direct gentle and charming manners and good qualities of character to an evil end, namely to their own profit, and who thereby seek their prince's favor in order to corrupt him, turn him from the path of virtue, and bring him to vice; for such as these may be said to contaminate with a deadly poison, not a single cup from which one man alone must drink, but the public fountain that is used by all the people.²¹

Since the flatterer's conspicuous display of servility is best matched to the tyrant's inflated conception of himself, it is imperative that the good courtier undermine the flatterer's influence within the court. The flatterer, who can go further in pleasing the tyrannical prince than even the most well-mannered and pleasing courtier, reinforces the tyrant's lawlessness even as he himself seeks to profit from it. If the courtier fails to set himself to the task of undermining the parasitic flatterer, then he risks losing all influence with his prince and all political agency within the court: at the very least, if he is not driven from court, he risks being forced into a position of servile obedience himself.

Good and prudent courtiers must not only know how to keep enemies from their prince but must also understand how to achieve favour and make use of their favoured position to effect their regime. Since the prince is a conspicuously powerful figure within any court, it is imperative that the prince learn the art of governing well lest he abuse his power and destabilize — or perhaps destroy — his regime bringing all other men down with him. Though Ottaviano lauds good princely rule as a salutary and natural political state of affairs, for the republican Bembo the aforementioned danger is evidence for the intrinsic superiority of republican rule: he puts forth the argument that it is dangerous to accord power to one man who can too easily be lead into abusing his power and echoes Aristotle in his assertion that

it seems that since liberty has been given us by God as a supreme gift, it is not reasonable that it should be taken away from us, or that one man should have a larger portion of it than another:

which happens under the rule of princes, who for the most part hold their subjects in the closest bondage. But in well-ordered republics, this liberty is fully preserved: besides which, both in judging and deliberating, one man's opinion happens more often to be wrong than the opinion of many men; because the disturbance that arises from anger or indignation or lust more easily enters the mind of one man than that of the many, who are like a great body of water, which is less subject to corruption than a small body.²²

For Bembo, a well-ordered republic represents the best possible regime within which reasoning political agents might operate without fear of or danger from tyranny: only in a republic, he insists, is there the possibility of political action characterized by “true and equal liberty, when those who sometimes command obey in their turn.”²³ He goes on to say that in order for the prince to rule justly he would necessarily have to be of an improbable quasidivine, superhuman nature.²⁴ It is striking that Bembo's unabashedly republican argument is made within a court setting: the intrinsic danger he ascribes to princely rule seems to be somewhat obviated by his fearless willingness to openly propound the merits of republicanism against monarchism in open court. Bembo's galvanizing argument, with its explicit threat to the right of princely claim to rule, can only pique the attention of his companions and the Duchess who governs their game. However, there can be no doubt amongst the interlocutors that Ottaviano — who has already explicitly positioned himself as favouring monarchy — will act as the defender of princely prerogative: Bembo's brash republican argument is a threat which is certain to meet with the possibility of reprieve in Ottaviano's counterargument.

Ottaviano begins by reviewing Aristotle's notion of right and deviant constitutions and identifies the good prince as one whose rule is not “absolute and violent, like that of masters toward their slaves, [but is] more mild and gentle, like that of good princes over the citizens by means of laws.”²⁵ Gasparo presses Ottaviano to

describe how the reasonable men should be ruled by a prince, and Ottaviano's reply reveals his own doubts about the possibilities of discovering a perfectly beneficent or magnanimous prince: no more than the courtier does the prince spring fully-formed from the ether; instead he must be "aided by the teachings and the training and skill of so prudent and good a Courtier as [the interlocutors] have devised, [so that] he will be very just, continent, temperate, strong, and wise, full of liberality, magnificence, religion and clemency."²⁶ Here we should observe that the prudent prince is not described as being perfectly virtuous or magnanimous, but as being continent in the extreme: in light of this mitigated understanding of the good prince's character, Ottaviano's suggestion that the prince he describes will ascend to quasidivine status has the scent of cautionary tale about it. Ottaviano goes on to say that the even if the Prince is found to be "not of another species higher than the human" the ministrations of a good courtier might help incline him toward excellence: it is only by the grace of God, however, that "he will attain the heroic virtue that will bring him to surpass the limits of humanity and be called a demigod rather than a mortal man."²⁷ If the imperfect but meritorious prince comes to think of himself as being supremely virtuous, he will tend to exceed the bounds of his mandate and consider it fitting that he rule with absolute authority: not unlike the tyrant, he will fall prey to excessive egoism and consider it right that he monopolize authority and power. If the worthy courtier, who is similarly imperfect but oriented toward virtue, is reduced to obeying the prince in absolute terms then he has unjustly been reduced to being ruled without having the opportunity to rule in turn.

The courtier must not only make use of his pleasing manners to win the prince's

favour and orient him to virtue and good rule, but must do so in a way which allows him to understand how he can first preserve and then govern his principality. To preserve his rule a prince must ultimately allow himself to be drawn toward the devolution of power which Aristotle describes as preserving monarchies: “the fewer things over which [kings] have authority,” we are told “the greater the period of time their rule as a whole will necessarily last: they themselves are less like masters and more equal in their characters and less envied by those who rule.”²⁸ In this vein, at the Duchess’ prompting, Ottaviano at last spells out his optimal regime:

I should teach [the prince . . .] that he should choose among his subjects a number of the noblest and wisest gentlemen, with whom to consult on everything, and that he should give them authority and free leave to speak their mind to him about all things without hesitation; and that he should act toward them in such a way as to show them all that he wished to know the truth in everything and that he detested falsehood. And, besides such a council of nobles, I should advise that from among the people other men of lower station should be chosen who would constitute a popular council to confer with the council of nobles concerning the affairs of the city, both public and private. And in this way there would be made of the prince (as of the head) and of the nobles and the people (as of the members) a single united body, the government of which would depend chiefly on the prince, and yet would also include the others; and such a state would thus have the form of three good kinds of government, which are monarchy, optimates, and people.²⁹

Ottaviano warns that the prince who aspires to the sort of absolute mastery which is only merited by a quasidivine ruler will come to be hated and will create the conditions which foster “seditions, conspiracies, and a thousand other evils.”³⁰ The bestial, licentious tyrant, however, will also be hated for his inability to conform to, enact and enforce stable laws.³¹ Notably, Ottaviano’s own defense of monarchical regimes is not without its own cautionary import: it is infused with Ottaviano’s own warning against adopting a mode of governance characterized by heavy-handed autarchical mastery and by his cataloguing of dissolute tyrants who have led a life of distress and insecurity by cultivating the enmity of their citizens.³² If the prince wishes to preserve his regime he must avoid these

extremes and instead exercise human prudence in “maintaining with all men a strict equality in certain things, such as justice and liberty; and in certain other things, a reasonable inequality, such as in being generous, in rewarding, in distributing honors and dignities according to differences in [men’s] merits.”³³ The prince’s reward for authority well-exercised is not only peace of mind or ineffable praise and honour, but the preservation of his own fitting prerogative and profit within the principality. As a worthy man and reasoning political agent, the courtier also seeks to win for himself a fitting measure of power, honour and profit and, under the right conditions, courtiers might win these things in a well-ordered principality. The prince’s good governance in distributing offices, honours and profits will address the matter of equality in justice and liberty: no part of the principality will be without claim or opportunity to rule in its own way, and no part of the city will want for honour or profit if their merit supports their ambition. While Bembo is not incorrect in his assertion that courtiers might win political agency in a well-ordered republic he is too quick to abandon the prince as a lost cause; Ottaviano’s reply suggests that the courtier might also effectively influence and participate in the princely regime in which he finds himself. Further, though Bembo’s republican threat carries with it the connotation of revolution and regime change — his exposition on the merits of republicanism considers both why republican rule is the best in an absolute sense and why it is superior to princely rule particularly — there is no certainty that this sort of upheaval would result in the well-ordered republic Bembo envisions. If the courtier can achieve his political ends without having to undertake the significant risks and dangers attendant to revolution and regime change, then he would be imprudent to seek to overturn the

principality without first attempting to serve, strengthen and preserve it.

The courtier's role in ministering to his prince is to a significant degree dependent upon the character of the prince himself. If the courtier comes into the service of a prince who is already well-educated and who has established a largely stable and viable principality then, Ottaviano says, it is enough for the courtier as minister and optimate to serve his prince in a way that helps preserve the regime: worthy courtiers, in this case, will be mindful of offering such counsel as is required to preserve the distribution of power and offices and of undermining either overambitious flatterers or slanderers in their attempt corrupt and destabilize the regime.³⁴ Though good courtiers will make themselves friendly to their prince, perhaps entering into the sort of rare political friendship Aristotle describes, they will not exceed the bounds of propriety or of their own offices in offering counsel or in seeking to rule: if courtier and prince are to achieve their mutual goal of good governance of the principality then the courtier, no less than the prince, must allow for the finitude of his own part in deciding and ruling. This suggests that the political relationship between courtier and prince must be mediated by a sort of mutual adherence to a pleasingly civil political deliberation which communicates their felicitous welcome and respect of each other when undertaking to effect their shared aim of preserving the principality: the courtier ought to behave in a way which positively acknowledges the prince's particular role in exercising power in accordance with his best understanding of good political action and the prince, in turn, ought to behave in a way which positively acknowledges the courtier's particular role in refining the prince's understanding of good political action.

Before the evening's end, however, Elisabetta expresses her concern with Ottaviano's description of the worthy courtier as occasional preceptor and suggests that if the courtier is qualified and inclined to *educate* a prince, he might also consider himself qualified and inclined to *become* a prince himself.³⁵ Giuliano supports Elisabetta's contention and openly accuses Ottaviano saying that "the Courtier, through whose instruction the prince is to become so excellent, would have to be more excellent than the prince; and, in this way he would also be of greater dignity than the prince himself, which is most unseemly."³⁶ Giuliano goes on to suggest that the stable principality Ottaviano describes can only be viable if the prince and his courtiers are sufficiently close in understanding and worth: otherwise, their aims will be so disparate that they will be at crosspurposes and the possibility of good governance, as Ottaviano describes it, will be unfeasible.³⁷ The conversation is once again galvanized by Elisabetta's insecurity and the deftness with which Giuliano stokes this insecurity. Indeed, all things being equal the worthy courtier seems to have little incentive to delay deposing a less worthy prince and assuming his role; the interlocutors, however, are not prepared to advocate this hasty course of action. Ottaviano's reply, as before, offers the possibility of reprieve from this threat but is as much contingent upon the prince's receptiveness to the courtier's efforts as it is upon the courtier's efforts themselves. Ottaviano asserts that the viability of a principality depends upon the condition of the prince's character:

I will say that I did not hold that the Courtier's instructions should be the sole cause of making the prince such as we would have him be, For if the prince were not by nature inclined and fitted to be so, every care and every exhortation on the part of the Courtier would be in vain: even as the labor of any good husbandman would also be in vain if he were to set about cultivating and sowing the sterile sand of the sea with excellent seed, because such sterility is natural to it; but when to good seed in fertile soil, and to mildness of atmosphere and seasonable rains, there is added also the diligence of man's cultivation, abundant crops are always seen to grow in plenty there. Not that the husbandman alone is the cause of these, although without him all the other things would avail

little or nothing. Thus, there are many princes who would be good if their minds were properly cultivated; and it is of these that I speak, not of those who are like sterile ground, and are by nature so alien to good behavior that no training can avail to lead their minds in the straight path.³⁸

If the courtier finds himself in the service of a worthy prince who is sufficiently inclined towards continence, good governance and, ultimately, towards entering into friendly relations with men of worth, then it is not only prudent but also fitting that the courtier adopt a pleasing and friendly manner with him. The possible danger, of course, is that the courtier will encounter a prince whose conceits and experiences with power will find him more incontinent and autarchically-minded than continent and civically-minded. This in itself, however, is not enough to render the prince an irremediable tyrant nor is it enough to warrant an attempt by worthy courtiers to usurp the prince; if the prince is found to be incontinent but not inveterately resistant to education and correction, the courtier might still impress upon him the dangers to his principality and the ways in which he might improve and preserve it. Though this prince cannot properly be characterized as being absolutely tyrannical, his inclination toward tyrannical rule suggests that the courtier must consider the political possibilities associated with the reform of a tyrannical regime. Aristotle conceives of two methods of preserving a tyranny, insofar as this is possible: the first and least agreeable to courtiers' ends depends upon entrenching the tyranny by having it conform absolutely to the despotic rule³⁹ and the second depends upon having the tyranny conform more closely to a civic kingship.⁴⁰ As a result of the latter, Aristotle tells us,

not only will [the tyrant's] rule be nobler and more enviable by the fact that he rules over persons who are better and have not been humbled and does so without being hated and feared, but his rule will also be longer lasting; *further, in terms of character he will either be in a state that is fine in relation to virtue or he will be half-decent — not vicious but half-vicious.*⁴¹

The distinction Aristotle makes between these king-like rulers' characters is important: if the prince who is found incontinent proves to be an apt or willing pupil he can conceivably become rehabilitated and be brought to enact better governance. In other words, the reeducated, more continent prince will *become* more princely and not only *seem to be* princely and stand in better relation to virtue; the reformed principality, in this case, will not merely be a veneer which covers its essentially tyrannical nature. If the courtier comes into the service of an educable but incontinent prince, his pleasing manners are displayed in order to both

seek to gain the good will and captivate the mind of his prince that he may have free and sure access to speak to him of anything whatever without giving annoyance [. . .] and also, little by little, to inform his prince's mind with goodness, and teach him continence, fortitude, justice and temperance, bringing him to taste how much sweetness lies hidden beneath the slight bitterness that is at first tasted by anyone who struggles against his vices; which are always noxious and offensive and attended by infamy and blame, just as the virtues are beneficial, smiling and full of praise.⁴²

The courtier does not seek to win the good will of the true tyrant any more than he attempts to win the goodwill of the flatterer; but it is worth cultivating the goodwill of the prince who is capable of being educated and brought to good governance. Certainly, when the worthy courtier is called upon to serve a profligate prince, we cannot say that he will enter into the sort of friendship of equals that he might enjoy with another prince who is better inclined toward virtue: the courtier can only judge the incontinent prince to be in a more blameworthy condition than himself and in need of that correction which the courtier can provide. However, if the incontinent prince proves to be capable of being taught to execute better governance of himself and his principality, then it is fitting that the courtier be friendly towards this prince and make himself amenable to sharing in and praising those of the prince's pleasures that are worthy or do not exceed the bounds of

decency.

It is in the character of the incontinent prince, however, to be just as or more inclined to blameworthy rather than praiseworthy actions: the well-mannered courtier must be prepared to address the prince's blameworthy actions, but he must be prudent in delivering censure. In his efforts to educate the incontinent prince, the courtier will first strive to keep his mind

occupied with worthy pleasures, yet always impressing upon him also some virtuous habit along with these enticements, [beguiling the prince] with salutary deception; like shrewd doctors who often spread the edge of the cup with some sweet cordial when they wish to give a bitter-tasting medicine to sick and over-delicate children.⁴³

The quality of this ostensible deception, however, bears consideration: in order to educate his prince, the courtier will never say less than he ought to help persuade his prince to orient himself towards virtue, but he will be mindful to avoid earning the prince's displeasure or ire and to avoid antagonising the prince and worsening his condition. Friendliness, as we recall, requires us to occasion pleasure and pain in the right way and in accordance with a particular aim. The courtier who is friendly to his prince and devoted to improving the principality will begin by adopting pleasing manners in the presence of a ruler who is primarily prompted to action by his appetite for pleasure. If the prince receives the courtier's pleasing manners and his solicitousness of the prince's pleasure as evidence that the courtier is as invested in pleasure for pleasure's sake as he himself is, then in this he is more self-deceived than misled by the courtier. In his argument for habituation to virtue and vice, Ottaviano describes the process of educating the child to rule and exercise his natural capacities and appetites well: "first," we are told "we are able to see, hear, and touch, then we do see, hear, and touch, although many of

these activities are improved by discipline. Wherefore good masters teach children not only letters, but also good and seemly manners in eating, drinking, speaking, and walking with appropriate gestures.”⁴⁴ It is necessary for the prince who is more given than not to the childlike trait of being led by his appetites to be educated by a master who, “by his teaching and good reminders,” will both implicitly and explicitly evoke the qualities of character he seeks to help develop in his prince.⁴⁵ By behaving with pleasing grace from the first, the courtier not only makes himself genial to the prince but renders himself an immediate “good reminder” of how worthy men engage in their pleasures with one another: from exemplifying and teaching the pleasantness of the virtues of civility, the courtier might also begin to guide the prince to those other virtues which will ameliorate his condition and his rule.

If the courtier is to be effective in his role as preceptor to the prince, however, he must be able to offer reminders of how unworthy men take their pleasures and highlight the undesirability of these actions. In delivering censure, however, the courtier must skillfully highlight the personally and politically detrimental nature of blameworthy actions by indirectly arousing and then more directly allaying the prince’s solicitousness of his own comfort and well-being. For Ottaviano, the key to choosing to act with greater continence is a true, clear recognition and understanding of those things which are detrimental to our person.⁴⁶ Given the incontinent prince’s character, however, it is difficult to imagine that the courtier might begin by appealing too directly to his reason and understanding to persuade him of the detrimental nature of his behaviour: though the remediable prince is figured as having some sense of how his actions are detrimental to

himself and his rule — there is, in other words, some struggle between his reason and his appetites and passions — his habitual inclination to yield to his appetites at first renders him ill-prepared to receive a strong appeal to his reason. In his efforts to educate his prince, the courtier will offer friendly encouragement designed to persuade the prince to emulate the example of famously lauded, worthy men⁴⁷ but will also venture to keep the cautionary image of the distressful and ignominious life of the tyrant before his prince's eyes. Ottaviano's own defense of good princely rule — appended as it is by detailed cautionary examples of hated tyrants who lived private lives beleaguered by perpetual discomfort and unease — offers the prince the means and incentive to choose good actions but also a disincentive to choose poor ones. While the courtier delivers tangible pleasure to the incontinent prince, he also refers him to the prospect of living a life whose pleasures are always diluted by disease and fear. When the indirect cautionary example of the tyrant offered by the courtier is made ancillary to his own directly pleasing and friendly demeanour, the consequences it imputes to the incontinent prince's own blameworthy behaviour takes on the cast of friendly rather than menacing cautionary advice: in other words, the courtier indirectly exposes the prince to the prospect of danger should he choose to pursue tyrannical actions without seeming to be a potential cause or source of this danger. The courtier who begins by approaching his prince in the spirit of friendliness, who is primarily solicitous of engaging in his prince's worthy pleasures and indirect in his censure of his prince's unworthy ones, and who offers the prince a viable and appealing alternative to tyrannical rule might all the sooner render his prince receptive to the ethically and politically valuable instruction and advice he offers

both as preceptor and advisor.

When discussing the limits of the courtier's duties to his prince, however Castiglione's interlocutors raise the specter of the irremediable tyrant. Though the tyrant who is so committed to his own depravity that he can rarely, if ever, be moved by the most diligent ministrations of the courtier may represent the rare case, he is still a consideration for the interlocutors. The tyrant who reveals himself to be unwilling or incapable of learning and of incrementally bringing himself to gain an understanding of and adopt responsibility for his own character and governance can never support a stable and viable principality. At best, courtiers who seek to educate the inveterate tyrant and improve his regime might meet with sporadic success but they will find themselves engaged in a perpetual, white-knuckled form of governance which, from moment to moment, threatens to regress back into absolute or near-absolute tyranny. Of course, if the courtier is merely content to remain with the tyrant and earn what profit he can within the regime, he is reduced to slavish obedience and commits an act of treachery towards himself and the principality: that is, he allows himself to abandon his prerogative as a political agent and to become a servile instrument of the tyrant who manages nothing more than to enforce and deepen the regime's lawlessness. The quality of the worthy courtier's actions when he finds himself in the service of a tyrant must shift significantly, then. On this topic, Ottaviano reminds his companions that

Plato taught Dion of Syracuse, and later, when he found the tyrant Dionysius like a book full of defects and errors and in need of complete erasure rather than of any change or correction (since it was not possible to remove from him that color of tyranny with which he had been stained for so long), he decided not to make use of the methods of Courtiership with him, judging that they would all be in vain; which is what our Courtier ought also to do if he chances to find himself in the service of a prince of so evil a nature as to be inveterate in vice, like consumptives in their sickness; for in that case he ought to escape from such bondage in order not to incur blame for his prince's evil deeds and not to feel the affliction which all good men feel who serve the wicked.⁴⁸

Ottaviano leaves the question of exactly how the courtier ought to escape the tyrant's bondage open to evaluation. Earlier in Book II, Vincenzo Calmeta asserts that the courtier's greatest misfortune lies in beginning to serve an inveterately malevolent prince in the first place since it becomes difficult for him to quit the service of a tyrant without bringing blame and dishonour upon himself.⁴⁹ Federico avers that the courtier ought to be solicitous of his own reputation even when he is in the service of an inveterately bad prince and affirms that the courtier must not act in any way that might bring blame or dishonour to himself: for worthy courtiers who find themselves in the service of a bad prince

duty should come before all other considerations. And provided a gentleman does not leave his lord when he is at war or in adversity — for it could be thought that he did so to improve his own fortunes or because he feared that his chances for profit had failed him — in any other time I think he has a right to quit, and ought to quit, a service which in the eyes of all good men is sure to disgrace him.⁵⁰

Given that the tyrant, as Ottaviano reminds us, is always in a position of adversity either at home or abroad the courtier seems caught in a quandary: the provision Federico spells out seems an unlikely, if not impossible, one. In effecting his duty, then, the courtier is faced with the difficult, seemingly impossible options of remaining in the service of the tyrant while retaining his reputation or of abandoning him without damaging his reputation.

Should the courtier opt to remain in the service of the tyrant he might, with his conspicuous display of pleasing manners, position himself well within the tyrannical court. The tyrant, Aristotle tells us,

[must guard] against anything that customarily gives rise to two things, high thoughts and trust. Leisured discussions are not allowed, or other meetings connected with leisure, but everything is done to make all as ignorant of one another as possible, since knowledge tends to create trust of

one another. Also, residents [of the city] are made to be always in evidence and pass their time about the doors [of the tyrant's palace]; in this way their activities would escape notice least of all, and they would become habituated to having small thoughts through always acting like slaves. [. . .] Also [a feature of tyranny is] to slander them to one another, and set friends at odds with friends, the people with the notables, and the wealthy with themselves.⁵¹

First, regardless of the tyrant's intent, the courtier's pleasing ways and manners might help him to win the goodwill of other good men and allow him to foster trusting and relatively high-minded friendships with those who are able to correctly judge the content and meaning of his actions. In the eyes of the undiscerning tyrant who tends to judge in the same way as the many, however, the courtier's attention to pleasing ways and manners might suggest a sort of frivolous small-mindedness and preoccupation with pleasure for pleasure's sake which obscures the threat that the courtier presents to his rule; the self-deceived tyrant will not tend to distinguish the courtier from the slavish and inconstant flatterer who is wantonly solicitous of his ruler's pleasures and fickle in his friendships. Kingship, Aristotle tells us, "is preserved by friends [of the king], but it is characteristic of the tyrant to distrust his friends, on the assumption that all wish to overthrow him], but these are particularly capable of it."⁵² While the prince is figured as profiting from his close association with and politic treatment of good courtiers, the tyrants Ottaviano describes are figured as foundering under the weight of their own actions and bringing themselves and men of worth to a dangerous state by pursuing the typically paranoid tyrannical politics of "recklessly [persecuting] the good and the wise and [exalting] the wicked; [allowing] no friendships in their cities nor unions nor understandings among the citizens [and] sowing discord to keep men disunited and weak."⁵³ If the courtier discovers himself to be in the service of an irremediably

tyrannical prince, then he and his fellows will soon come to understand that their ends are not to educate or serve but to undermine and destroy: through a combination of the courtiers' friendly and pleasing behaviour and the tyrant's poor judgment of this behaviour, worthy men at court might find themselves in a relatively safe position, free from the tyrant's suspicions, to achieve their ends.

However, if the courtier chooses to remain in the court of the inveterate tyrant the quality of the advice he offers will have to accord with the character of his ruler: having found the tyrant to be unmovable and utterly resistant to undertaking the policies associated with good kingship, he is left to make use of any favour he wins to advise the tyrant in the ways he might strengthen his regime by bringing it to conform more closely with absolute despotism. By serving in this capacity, however, the courtier exposes himself to a considerable risk: in actively advising and encouraging the tyrant to undertake the actions which will ultimately impoverish his rule and hasten his own demise, the courtier risks becoming too closely associated with the hated tyrant. While fellow courtiers will be unlikely to impute blame to him and might even aid him in this course of action — that is, they will tend to understand that this advice is offered in the spirit of undermining and hastening the downfall of the tyrannical regime — the subtlety of the courtier's actions might be lost on the many. If the courtier is seen as complicit in encouraging the tyrant's policies, then he might become favoured by the tyrant but vicariously hated by those who would seek to enact the tyrant's downfall and, by extension, the seemingly complicit courtier's as well.

On the other hand, if the courtier opts to abandon the service of the tyrant,

leaving him to founder under the weight of his own ineradicable vice and corruption, men of worth are likely to understand that his actions are not motivated by cowardice or profit-seeking inconstancy but by the impossibility of the courtier's task in attempting to ameliorate and preserve the regime by rehabilitating the tyrant. While the many are more likely to suspect that fear and greed are indeed the motives which compel the courtier to leave the tyrant's service, it is unlikely that they will assign blame, properly speaking, to the courtier — if anything they might relate to and sympathize with the motives they assume compels his actions. Even then, however, if the many are inclined to voice their assumption that the courtier escapes the tyrant because he is simply motivated by mercenary inconstancy, his reputation with other men of worth — and so his immediate political prospects at any court he escapes to — might be negatively affected: if other men of worth receive the newly-arrived courtier as a man who is suspected of being motivated simply by self-interested inconstancy, then the courtier will begin by being on less sure footing with his peers at any new court. While this might not prove an insurmountable barrier to achieving influence in a new court under a less vicious prince, it will present some measure of difficulty. Though the courtier will bring himself and his actions be understood by other men of worth who will come to judge his actions in a positive light, he might be aided in this endeavour by his association with those fellow courtiers he has previously formed a friendship with. As friends, these courtiers will be solicitous of his reputation and will seek to persuade others that no blame is rightly imputed to him for abandoning the irremediable tyrant. Any prince the courtier escapes to, however, might be less inclined to forgive the courtier for his ostensible inconstancy in abandoning his

service to the tyrant: the prince, no less than the abandoned tyrant himself, might suspect the courtier of treachery proper. Though, from the courtier's perspective, entering into the service of almost any prince is preferable to remaining in the service of the inveterate tyrant Castiglione's interlocutors seem to suggest that not just any port will do in a storm. While the courtier ought to always seek to enter the service of a prince who governs well in times of peace — that is, of a prince who is more inclined to good governance and less to tyranny — it behoves him to serve a man who directs his military passions to the destruction of tyranny.⁵⁴ If the courtier is to best serve the principality he flees, he should make himself friendly to and enter into the active service of the tyrant's most worthy enemy: whether this man begins as a prince or aspires to the rulership of the tyrant's principality he, more than any other man, might be inclined to welcome the courtier if it is made apparent that they share the mutual aim of effecting the tyrant's downfall. By directing his efforts to raise a new prince, who he might then enter into a fruitful political relationship with, the courtier effectively remains loyal to his principality by ameliorating its condition and reenters political life with the improved potential to engage in fruitful political action.

The courtiers' pleasing manners in relation to their prince, then, help to create the conditions which will allow them to preserve, strengthen or undermine a principality. Should courtiers find themselves in the service of a prince who acts as good governor, then their pleasing manners will facilitate their political relations with this prince. Should they find themselves in the service of a redeemable prince, the goodwill that their pleasing manners earn them will allow them to help reform and stabilize his rule and, in

turn, to ensure their own political prerogative. Should they find themselves in the service of the rare irremediable tyrant, however, they will find themselves left with the task of undermining the regime so that it might give rise to a better-governed and more politically propitious principality.

-
1. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 119 [1289a11-20]
 2. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 80.
 3. *Ibid.*, 80. Federico tells his companions that “I think the conversation which in every way the courtier must try to make pleasing is that which he has with his prince, and, although this term ‘conversation’ implies a certain equality which would not seem possible between a lord and a servant, still we will name it so for the present.” (Castiglione 80) Though the prince holds a preponderance of power at court, Federico’s comments suggest that similar understanding and aims can significantly help to bridge the gap between courtiers and their princes; in this sense, as the courtier can form friendships with other courtiers equal in virtue, he can possibly form a friendship with a more-or-less beneficent prince under similar conditions.
 4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 126 [1158a33-37].
 5. Castiglione, 80.
 6. *Ibid.*
 7. *Ibid.*, 81.
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. *Ibid.*, 82.
 10. *Ibid.*, 82 - 83.
 11. *Ibid.*, 82.
 12. *Ibid.*, 84.
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. *Ibid.*, 85.
 15. *Ibid.*, 209-210.
 16. *Ibid.*, 210.
 17. *Ibid.*, 211.
 18. *Ibid.* Ottaviano highlights the rivalry between prudent and able courtiers and flatterers, specifically, when he reminds his companions that “among [the prince’s] friends there are few who have free access to them, and those few are wary of reprehending them for their faults as freely as they would private persons, and, in order to win grace and favor, often think of nothing save how to suggest things that can delight and please their fancy, although these things be evil and dishonorable.” (Castiglione, 211)
 19. *Ibid.*
 20. *Ibid.*

21. Ibid., 214.

22. Ibid., 220. Cf. Aristotle's argument that:

any one [person in a regime] taken singly is perhaps inferior in comparison [to the best man]; but the city is made up of many persons, just as a feast to which many contribute is finer than a single and simple one, and on this account a crowd also judges many matters better than any single person. Further, what is many is more incorruptible: like a greater amount of water, the multitude is more incorruptible than the few. The judgment of a single person is necessarily corrupted when he is dominated by anger or some other passion of this sort, whereas it is hard for all to become angry and err at the same time. (*The Politics*, 111 [1286a27-35])

23. Castiglione, 221.

24. Ibid., 221.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 222.

27. Ibid.

28. Aristotle, *The Politics*, 173 [1313a19-24].

29. Castiglione, 228.

30. Ibid., 229.

31. Ibid., 229.

32. Ibid., 223 - 224.

33. Ibid., 229.

34. Ibid., 239.

35. Ibid., 237.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 237 - 238.

38. Ibid., 238.

39. Aristotle, *The Politics*, 173-175 [1313a35-1314a29].

40. Ibid., 175-178 [1314a30-1315b10].

41. Ibid., 178 [1315b4-10]. Emphasis mine.

42. Castiglione, 213.

-
43. Ibid., 213.
 44. Ibid., 215.
 45. Ibid., 216.
 46. Ibid., 217.
 47. Ibid., 213.
 48. Ibid., 241.
 49. Ibid., 85.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Aristotle, *The Politics*, 174 [1313a40-1313b25].
 52. Ibid., [1313b30-32].
 53. Castiglione, 223. Aristotle describes the typical life under the tyrant

[The tyrant must guard] against anything that customarily gives rise to two things, high thoughts and trust. Leisured discussions are not allowed, or other meetings connected with leisure, but everything is done to make all as ignorant of one another as possible, since knowledge tends to create trust of one another. Also, residents [of the city] are made to be always in evidence and pass their time about the doors [of the tyrant's palace]; in this way their activities would escape notice least of all, and they would become habituated to having small thoughts through always acting like slaves. [. . .] Also [a feature of tyranny is] to slander them to one another, and set friends at odds with friends, the people with the notables, and the wealthy with themselves. It is also a feature of tyranny to make the ruled poor, so that they cannot sustain their own defense, and are so occupied with their daily [needs] that they lack the leisure to conspire. (Aristotle, *The Politics*, 174 [1313a40-1313b25])

54. Castiglione, 232 - 233.

CONCLUSION

Castiglione's advocacy of pleasing ways and manners seems designed to help courtiers become conscientious men of goodwill who, in their social and political interactions, are mindful of adopting a gracious mien in the company of others. While the civil courtier ought to become well-practiced in the pleasing behaviour that renders him welcome and genial to his company, he is precluded from allowing his actions to be governed by an indiscriminately thoughtless or empty desire to ingratiate himself to other men at court. The courtier is compelled to deliberate upon his own qualities and the quality of his fellows before deciding how he should govern himself in the company of others. The courtier must guard against indulging in the severe, haranguing and perhaps abusive behaviour of the boorish man whose actions betray a thorough disregard for the right pleasures, opinions and human dignity of others in his community. At the same time, in acknowledging and being solicitous of the right pleasures, opinions and dignity of his fellows, the courtier must guard against descending into the sort of indiscriminate excesses of adulation that characterize the servile flatterer's manners. The courtier must be ever-mindful of striking a right and fitting mean in his consociational behaviour.

Given the myriad of diverse men who compose the court, however, it seems almost unavoidable that the quality of the courtier's civil behaviour will vary from person to person and from circumstance to circumstance. While the courtier begins by striving to make himself genial to his company in general, over time his acumen will help him to form closer bonds of friendship with estimable men of equal worth, to maintain amiable

relations with most others, and to distance himself from the most irremediably blamable men at court. Friendliness is a virtue whose intermediate mean is closer to one vicious extreme than the other¹: because friendliness seems more akin to flattery, the distinction between the courtier's preference to "share pleasure and avoid causing pain"² and the flatterer's indiscriminate oversolicitousness of other men's pleasures might too readily be obscured. If the courtier prefers to share in the pleasures of others he is no less limited and discerning in his praise than he is in his censure: the courtiers' good manners — bounded as they are by those considerations of "the fine and the expedient"³ which are foreign to the flatterer — must be exercised when offering both. Consequently, the courtier's good manners are not only "good" in the sense that they consider the pleasures of others but in the sense that they reflect a measured understanding of the right ways to appeal to the pleasures *as well as* the pains of others. His attention to the right ways of causing pleasure and pain does not merely reflect an adherence to a hollow form of etiquette that depreciates and adorns the truth for the pleasures of base men. The civil courtier does not abandon a consideration of others' pleasures even when he is in the company of his most worthy and familiar friends, where some might suppose him to engage in an abstracted form of austere, ratiocinative speech: as Federico reminds us, the courtier's closest friendships with men of equal worth and capacity for reason will be characterized by a pleasing mutual felicity which is "courteous, humane, generous, affable and gentle" and even when these friends have occasion to correct one another they will do so "in kindness" never belabouring trivial errors or descending into "scorn" or "tiresome severity."⁴ The courtier is never freed from the ethical exigencies of civility:

when entering into social and political intercourse with other fully-constituted human beings, he must always undertake an intercatenated consideration of their capacity for pleasure as well as their capacity for reason and demonstrate that he is solicitous of and values both.

Nevertheless, in considering how he must negotiate the pleasures and pains of others, it becomes apparent that the quality of the courtier's appeal will vary, particularly when he finds himself facing the possibility of offering correction or delivering censure. To some degree, the particular dilemma facing the courtier when he decides if and how he ought to cause pain by objecting to something that "is not fine, or harmful"⁵ comes about as a result of the nature of friendliness itself. Since the civil courtier will be more inclined to share pleasure than to cause pain it might be that when he encounters errors that are slight, casually incurred or incidental to his immediate aims he is correct to avoid causing pain by passing them over in silence. On one hand, the overpunctilious, explicit elaboration of every lapse or flaw in another's words and deeds might be considered right — and so justified — according to some stringent and abstracted conception of truth which sees no error as more or less ponderous or worthy of remark than any other; however, by belabouring every error with equal fervour the civil courtier seems to abandon any reference to that which is fine or beneficial for human life. When venturing to offer positive censure, the courtier ought to be "guided by the consequences [he foresees for his actions so that] to secure greater pleasure in the future he will cause slight pain."⁶ In some cases, then, causing even slight pain by choosing to remark upon the error of another's actions might be an incommensurate and purposeless response to that

lapse in view of the foreseeable consequences. It is inescapable, however, that the directness or indirectness of the courtier's positive censure is influenced by his appraisal of the possibilities of having this censure effectively received: if, after considering the aims and consequences of his actions, the courtier thinks it necessary to deliver censure but anticipates that he will be discredited or become the subject of undue opprobrium in response, then he will behave judiciously by rendering his censure indirect. It is here that the quality of dissimulation may begin to enter into the courtier's civil actions: if the particular character of his audience compels him to adopt a passively defensive posture or to obscure an actively offensive one then, even as he remains committed to delivering censure, he will seek to deliver it obliquely. The designation of this indirection as "deception" is questionable, however: the courtier will never say less than he is ethically compelled to or simply avoid causing pain when this action is called for — at the very least, to do this would defeat any practical or edifying effect that his necessary censure might have — but in order to ensure that the censure he offers is received he will tailor it to the immediate capacities of his audience.

Castiglione's imperative that the courtier should endeavour to cultivate a pleasing and effortless grace in his social and political actions is not constituted by a frivolous adherence to form, an ethical barrenness or the advocacy of wholesale deceit: instead, civility is that which guides his decisions about how, when and to what end he should cause pleasure or pain when entering into social and political intercourse with other men. The courtier must be able to correctly appraise himself and others while also being able to understand how others appraise and receive him in turn. By cultivating his own civility,

the courtier is able to negotiate a myriad of different relationships with other courtiers and the prince he serves and he is more readily able to preserve and exercise his own political prerogative and positively influence the court he finds himself in.

1. The closeness of the virtue of friendliness to the vice of flattery seems to reside in the nature of the virtue itself. Aristotle tells us that when, “in some cases the deficiency, in others the excess is more opposed to the intermediate condition,” it is occasionally because of

the object itself. Since sometimes one extreme is closer and more similar to the intermediate condition, we oppose the contrary extreme, more than this closer one, to the intermediate condition. Since rashness, for instance, seems to be closer and more similar to bravery, and cowardice less similar, we oppose cowardice, more than rashness, to bravery; for what is further from the intermediate condition seems to be more contrary to it. This then, is one reason, derived from the object itself. (28 [1109a1-13])

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999).

2. *Ibid.*, 63 [1127a4-6].

3. *Ibid.*

4. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 92.

5. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 63 [1126b31].

6. *Ibid.*, [1127a5-6].

WORKS CITED

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans Terence Irwin. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999.
- _____. *The Politics*, trans Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Berger, Jr., Harry. "Sprezzatura and the Absence of Grace" in *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch, trans. Charles Singleton. New York: Norton, 2002: 295 - 307.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore. New York: The Modern Library, 1954.
- Burke, Peter. *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1996.
- _____. *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.
- Buss, Sarah. "Appearing Respectful: The Moral Significance of Manners." *Ethics* 109: 4 (July 1999): 795 - 826.
- Calhoun, Cheshire. "The Virtue of Civility." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29: 3 (Summer 2000): 251 - 275.
- Castiglione, Baldesar. *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.
- Cavallo, JoAnn. "Joking Matters: Politics and Dissimulation in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*." *Renaissance Quarterly* 53: 2 (Summer 2000): 402 - 424.
- Colclough, David. *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Cox, Virginia. "Castiglione's *Cortegiano*: The Dialogue as a Drama of Doubt" in *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch, trans. Charles Singleton. New York: Norton, 2002: 307 - 319.
- Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt, 1984.
- Falvo, Joseph D. "Urbino and the Apotheosis of Power." *MLN* 101:1 *The Italian Issue* (January 1986): 114 - 146.

- Fortenbaugh, William W. "Aristotle and the Questionable Mean-Dispositions." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968): 203 - 231.
- Hale, John. *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*. New York: Atheneum, 1994.
- Hankins, James. *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance: Volume II, Platonism*. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004.
- Javitch, Daniel. "Il Cortegiano and the Constraints of Despotism" in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand. New Haven: Yale UP, 1983: 17 - 28.
- Johnson, Peter. *The Philosophy of Manners: A Study of the 'Little Virtues.'* Bristol: Thoemmes, 1999.
- Johnston, G.A. "Moral and Manners." *International Journal of Ethics* 26: 2 (January 1916): 193 - 206.
- Kahn, Victoria. *Rhetoric, Prudence and Skepticism in the Renaissance*. Ithaca; Cornell UP, 1985.
- Lipking, Lawrence. "The Dialectic of 'Il Cortegiano.'" *PMLA* 81:5 (October 1966): 355 - 362.
- Menut, Albert D. "Castiglione and the *Nicomachean Ethics*." *PMLA* 58: 2 (June 1943): 309 - 321.
- Nagel, Thomas. "Concealment and Exposure." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 21:1 (Winter 1998): 3 - 30.
- Nederman, Cary J. "The Puzzle of the Political Animal: Nature and Artifice in Aristotle's *Politics*." *The Review of Politics* 56: 2 (Spring 1994): 284 - 304.
- Nieuwenburg, Paul. "Learning to Deliberate: Aristotle on Truthfulness and Public Deliberation." *Political Theory* 32: 4 (August 2004): 449 - 467.
- Rebhorn, Wayne A. "Ottaviano's Interruption: Book IV and the Problem of Unity in *Il Libro del Cortegiano*." *MLN* 87:1 *The Italian Issue* (January 1972): 37 - 59.
- _____. "The Enduring Word: Language, Time and History in *Il Libro del Cortegiano*." *MLN* 96:1 *The Italian Issue* (January 1981): 23 - 40.

- Richards, Jennifer. "Assumed Simplicity and the Critique of Nobility: Or, How Castiglione Read Cicero." *Renaissance Quarterly* 54: 2 (Summer 2001): 460 - 486.
- Ryan, Lawrence V. "Book Four of Castiglione's *Courtier*: Climax or Afterthought?" *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972): 156 - 179.
- Saccone, Eduardo. "Grazia, Sprezzatura, Affettazione" in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983): 45 - 67.
- Salamon, Linda Bradley. "The *Courtier* and *The Scholemaster*." *Comparative Literature* 25: 1 (Winter 1973): 17 - 36.
- Smith, Philip D. *The Virtue of Civility in the Practice of Politics*. New York: University Press of America, 2002.
- Speier, Hans. "Wit and Politics: An Essay on Laughter and Power." *The American Journal of Sociology* 103:5 (March 1998): 1352 - 1401.
- Tetel, Marcel. "The Humanistic Situation: Montaigne and Castiglione." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10:3, *Renaissance Studies* (Autumn 1979): 69 - 84.
- Visser, Margaret. *The Rituals of Dinner*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Whigham, Frank. "Interpretation at Court: Courtesy and the Performer-Audience Dialectic." *New Literary History* 14: 3, *Renaissance Literature and Contemporary Theory* (Spring 1983): 623 - 639.
- White, John. *Renaissance Cavalier*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- Woodhouse, J. R. *Baldesar Castiglione: A reassessment of The Courtier*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978.
- _____. "Book Four of Castiglione's 'Cortegiano': A Pragmatic Approach." *The Modern Language Review* 74: 1 (January 1979): 62 - 68.