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## Epilogue

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It was to be the great work of the regimes after 1343, culminating in the formation of the territorial state of the late *trecento*, that repressed recalcitrant patrician, obdurate magnate, and overly expansive corporate bodies. In the course of this process traditional forms of government intimately associated with the era of the medieval commune dissolved, while successive regimes replaced private immunities with public law.

Out of this experience emerged a cohesive aristocracy quite different from the patriciate of the communal age. They were concerned with the procedures of communal finance, the techniques of diplomatic maneuver, and the conduct of the interminable wars of the early *quattrocento*. Sedition and violence were more sporadic than formerly, and the disputes between *optimates* centered around the management of the funded communal debt or the extent to which the signory should sponsor mercantilistic programs. The ties of *consorteria* and even of guild slackened, and an intimate nexus developed among the great oligarchs, who were now virtually stockholders in a giant corporation called the state. They were joined in this partnership by the most affluent of the *novi cives*. Less and less was the signory forced to play its great medieval role of peacemaker. The canopy of law, bureaucracy, and public power spread increasingly over private lives. Swarms of treasury officers and judicial officials entered state service during the mid-*trecento*, so that within a generation Florentine bureaucracy had increased threefold, with a corresponding increase in power. Further, the same men tended to continue in office throughout their adult lives. Regularization of political procedure contributed to the efficiency of law enforcement. Judicial dispensation and annulment of sentences eventually became rarities in the less permissive world of the new polis.

If one subscribes to Burckhardt's vitalistic, rationalistic historiographi-

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cal approach to the Renaissance, together with his commitment to an interior ideal unity of historical personality as the hallmark in defining the ethos of this era, then the taming of the Florentine magnate and the exercise of political pressure upon high-born burgher to conform to the norms of law loom significant. To argue that Renaissance Florence is characterized in part by the citizen's discovery of his persona or ego is to suggest that what came to be unveiled was a new self-consciousness of will and personality. In other words the individual approached society in a new guise. To capture this self-consciousness, one must attempt to recognize and understand the kind of presuppositions with which the individual approached himself.

In the interval of Florentine experience we have considered before 1343, the fused patriciate (part burgher, part magnate) failed to furnish leadership for a variety of reasons. As a consequence, confidence in government, with its reliance upon exhortation, admonition, and political magnanimity, ebbed. In addition the recent disastrous results of the Florentine flirtation with despotism dissuaded citizens from ever attempting such an experiment again. With the political pendulum no longer swinging so freely from oligarchy to despotism, democratized rule that exalted the power and majesty of communal law came into being. This popular signory is to be less responsive to the perquisites and prerogatives of privileged citizenry and venerated medieval orders and institutions. The implication, then, is that the development of the persona or citizen ego as well as the cultivation of citizen perspective will acquire a new creative and resilient adaptability. Not only was the *bonus civis* required to suppress all proclivities for violence, but he was expected to demonstrate an intense concern for the life and welfare of the polis. If he was to compete he had to direct his ambition according to the norms of a burgeoning civic humanism rather than to the promptings of a chivalric code or a Christian ethic of individual *renovatio*. Essentially, therefore, 1343 marks the firm beginnings of the extension of the imperatives of collectivity over the impulses of the magnate individual, the privileged corporate body, or the venerable, semiautonomous institution. Thus the "repressive" aspect of civic life in Florence after 1343 should be accorded a slightly different emphasis than that lent to the Italian experience by the most celebrated of Renaissance historians. Jacob Burckhardt, in his masterpiece *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, may well have underestimated the role of public law in tightening the bonds of society. We have observed the role played by *novi cives* in asserting the primacy

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of the public world over private interests. It remains, however, to sketch briefly the part played by the mounting public debt in creating a stronger, more durable political form to replace the medieval commune. To rephrase Burckhardt, the emerging Renaissance state was not so much a work of art as an inadvertent by-product of the assertion of rights by *novi cives* and the exigencies of mounting public debt. We have seen that from just under 50,000 florins in the early *trecento* this debt rose almost twentyfold over a generation. By the 1360's the total was more than 1,000,000 florins and more than 2,000,000 in the next decade. In 1400 it stood at 3,000,000 florins, and just two generations later it reached the grand total of 8,000,000. Such a series of giant leaps did irreparable damage to traditional medieval political and economic structures. New allegiances and bonds were created; private interests diminished in the face of a mounting concern with state affairs. In pre-1343 communal society the church, the magnates, the confraternities, the Guelf party, and above all the great guilds with their affluent member bankers and industrialists, had provided capital and credit. Until the mid-*trecento* money and credit were almost exclusively controlled by these orders and medieval corporations, for the commune had little wealth. By the early fifteenth century, however, the state had become the largest consumer of capital, and a rentier class had invested heavily in the interest-bearing public debt. After the early 1340's the private system of multiple economies—lay and ecclesiastical—evolved toward the formation of a unitary public fiscal structure. The management of the debt affected not only the fortunes of the citizenry but the well-being of the Florentine business community, which was using *Monte* shares as negotiable instruments. But this is the stuff of another volume.