

# Machiavelli's republican political theory

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## Abstract

The author argues that the interpretation of Machiavelli's political theory is to be prominently a republican one, escaping its commonly simplified and stereotypical interpretations, which reduce his theoretical legacy to so-called 'Machiavellianism'. The article claims that while elements of 'Machiavellianism' do exist in all of his books (especially in *The Prince*), they do not define the core line and purpose of Machiavelli's political theory. This article presents how Machiavelli followed the legacy of republican Rome and of the medieval and Renaissance city-republics of Italy (including Florence) in developing his republican conception. Furthermore, it is argued that the theory of the humours – used as a basis of his interpretation of republican tradition – resulted in the anticipation of modern liberal republicanism in Machiavelli's legacy. His statements that conflicts of interests among different humours/classes/estates were not only unavoidable, but were also useful in enacting good laws, did anticipate modern pluralism. The author argues that the theory of the humours served Machiavelli as the core background he used in differentiating the main forms of political orders: monarchy/principality, republic and *lizenzia* (institutionally, a republic, but effectively, an imbalanced quasi-aristocratic rule). The criterion Machiavelli used was the quality of relations existent among those humours, in the sense that only the republic secured the satisfaction of the needs and interests of all humours, and insofar represented a well-balanced, healthy body politic. Machiavelli's intention was to offer 'practical lessons from the study of history' through comparison of the 'ancient events' of the Roman republic with the 'modern events' of the existing *lizenzia* in Florence, so that a real republican order be (re)established in the Florence of his days.

## Keywords

Good laws, humours, Niccolò dei Machiavelli, 'Machiavellianism', pluralism, republicanism

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## Introduction

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) expressed his republican ideals primarily in his *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy* [hereafter cited as *Discourses*],<sup>1</sup> as well as in ‘A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence’;<sup>2</sup> however, the main inspiration for all of his works, including his most well-known book *The Prince*,<sup>3</sup> as well as his *Florentine Histories*,<sup>4</sup> was a republican one in nature. The interpretation of Machiavelli’s legacy as being republican in nature is far from commonly accepted and uncontested. Machiavelli’s theoretical legacy is inherently controversial and complex, eliciting different and even mutually contrasting interpretations of his work.<sup>5</sup> His best-known treatise of *The Prince* has long associated Machiavelli’s name and work with the unscrupulous struggle for political power, giving rise to the term of ‘Machiavellianism’ used in this respect.<sup>6</sup>

Anthony Parel clarifies the relationship between Machiavelli and Machiavellianism; he differentiates ‘popular’ or ‘vulgar’ Machiavellianism and ‘philosophic’ Machiavellianism.

Popular or vulgar Machiavellianism is related to the type of political behaviour that existed before Machiavelli and continues to exist independently of him. As Parel asserts:

By a quirk of history, Machiavelli’s name has come to be associated with a certain kind of political behaviour, according to which rulers and politicians de facto act out of expediency, disregarding moral rules and conscience, or with a devilish and manipulative cunning.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Parel clarifies that philosophical Machiavellianism is related to Machiavelli’s philosophical explanation and justification for resorting to culpable evil and injustice as legitimate means of achieving and defending certain political ends:

In other words, with Machiavelli, we pass from the so-called vulgar Machiavellism to philosophical Machiavellism. Thus, in Machiavelli’s Machiavellism we can find not only an explanation of but also a justification for culpable evil and injustice.<sup>8</sup>

A similar negative estimate of Machiavelli has continually persisted in the academic world, as well as in everyday speech and popular consideration. There has been little change in Machiavelli’s reputation with time, and the words ‘Machiavellian’ and ‘Machiavellianism’ still carry such implications in ordinary and often in academic discourse today. Even more, encyclopaedias and dictionaries almost by rule use the aforementioned clouded prism for explaining Machiavelli’s legacy.<sup>9</sup>

Interpretations of *The Prince* from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> considered Machiavelli to be a ‘teacher of evil’ and often simply reduced his theories to this idea of ‘Machiavellianism’.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, even five years after his death, *The Prince* was published in Rome and provoked sharp reactions from the Roman Catholic Church; it was put on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1559. The Inquisition decreed the utter destruction of all his works, which was confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1564<sup>11</sup> and they were to remain in this proscribed status until 1890.<sup>12</sup> Cardinal Reginald Pole was among the first to harshly rebuke Machiavelli in 1536; in his book *Apologia ad Carolum V. Caesarum* [Apologia to the Emperor Charles V], he qualified his method as ‘satanic’, Machiavelli

himself as 'an enemy of the humanity' and his book *The Prince* as the devil's Bible which had been written by the devil's hand.<sup>13</sup>

According to Gauss – the writer of the Introduction for *The Prince*,<sup>14</sup> – the prohibition of Machiavelli's works was understood to be a signal for numerous attacks against him; therein, both political writers and dramatists from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and onward (including Shakespeare) used his name in the sense of the negative syntagma of 'Machiavellianism'.

However Gauss remarks that *The Prince* (especially Machiavelli's nationalistic ideas, i.e. his pledge for the unification of Italy, and his 'exhortation to liberate Italy from the barbarians') as well as his scientific ideas (his divorcing of the study of politics from the study of ethics) attained a certain kind of positive connotation (accompanied by Hegel's conception of the state) in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, e.g. upon the Romantic rise of nationalism and first attempts of building nation-states in Europe.<sup>15</sup> According to Gauss, the scientific and patriotic/nationalistic quality of *The Prince* does not contradict the concept of unlimited state-power proposed therein.<sup>16</sup> Gauss notes a revival of interest in Machiavelli's work – especially in *The Prince* – in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to the 'modern' implications of Machiavelli's real-political/'scientific' approach in regard to attributing unlimited power to the state:

... Machiavelli would have had the right to conclude that the core of the state was power. In regarding the state as a dynamic expansive force, Machiavelli was closer to reality and *Realpolitik* than much nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinking, and in this respect is modern.<sup>17</sup>

Conversely, Gauss also assumes Machiavelli's praising of the Roman republic in *The Discourses* not to be 'modern'. He simply does not see any modern implications in Machiavelli's republican ideas in *The Discourses*.<sup>18</sup> As has been already mentioned, he notes certain 'modern' implications of *The Prince*; however, he still does not acknowledge any 'modern' implications either in *The Discourses* or in *The Prince*, which would be related to the issue of limiting state power.<sup>19</sup>

Similar to Gauss and a few years after him, Leo Strauss<sup>20</sup> utilized *The Prince* and 'Machiavellianism' as a prism through which to interpret Machiavelli's legacy. Contrary to Gauss, Strauss maintains that the main connotation of *The Prince* has been diabolic and not patriotic or scientific.<sup>21</sup> He considers Machiavelli to be a 'devil teacher' of a 'devil theory':

We shall not shock anyone, we shall merely expose ourselves to good-natured or at any rate harmless ridicule, if we profess ourselves inclined to the old-fashioned and simple opinion according to which Machiavelli was a teacher of evil. Indeed, what other description would fit a man who teaches lessons like these: princes ought to exterminate the families of rulers whose territory they wish to possess securely; princes ought to murder their opponents rather than to confiscate their property since those who have been robbed, but not those who are dead, can think of revenge; men forget the murder of their fathers sooner than the loss of their patrimony ... If it is true that only evil man will stoop to teach maxims of public and private gangsterism, we are forced to say that Machiavelli was an evil man. Machiavelli was

indeed not the first man to express opinions like those mentioned . . . But Machiavelli is the only philosopher who has lent the weight of his name to any way of political thinking and political acting which is as old as political society itself, so much that his name is commonly used for designating such a way. He is notorious as the classic of the evil way of political thinking and political acting . . . Machiavelli proclaims openly and triumphantly a corrupting doctrine which ancient writers had thought covertly or with all signs of repugnance.<sup>22</sup>

Strauss asserts that his interpretation of Machiavelli, based upon *The Prince* and upon what is meant by 'Machiavellianism', is old-fashioned and simple, though appropriate. He opposes the view, which he claims 'is more characteristic of our age' and is 'altogether misleading', according to which we find the full presentation of Machiavelli's teaching in *The Discourses*, so much so that we must always read *The Prince* in the light of *The Discourses* and never by itself. However, although assuming *The Prince* and 'Machiavellianism' to be the main framework to understand Machiavelli, he is of the opinion that it is still not exhaustive, e. g. that *The Prince* is in that respect 'insufficient'.<sup>23</sup> Namely, he acknowledges an importance of *The Discourses* and recognizes that Machiavelli wrote them in order to encourage imitation of ancient republics, and with a hope for the rebirth, in the near or distant future, of the spirit of ancient republicanism.<sup>24</sup>

Contrary to the aforementioned statement about a specific connotation of *The Discourses*, Strauss concludes that there is no essential difference between *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, as both books deal with rules of action that merely aim to seize and maintain power either by the 'actual prince' or the 'potential princes':

Just as the addressee of the *Prince* is exhorted to imitate not only the ancient princes but the ancient Roman republic as well, the addressees of the *Discourses* agree not only in regard to their subject matter but in regard to their ultimate purpose as well. We shall then try to understand the relation of the two books on the assumption that *The Prince* is that presentation of Machiavelli's teaching which is addressed to actual princes, while *The Discourses* are the presentation of the same teaching which is addressed to potential princes.<sup>25</sup>

To summarize, Machiavelli presents in each of his two books substantially the same teaching from two different points of view, which may be described provisionally as the points of view of the actual prince and of potential princes. The difference of points of view shows itself most clearly in the fact that in the *Prince* he fails to distinguish between princes and tyrants and he never speaks of the common good nor of the conscience, whereas in the *Discourses* he does distinguish between princes and tyrants and does speak of the common good and the conscience.<sup>26</sup>

Given these views by both Gauss and Strauss, as well as many other authors, it can be surmised that interpretations that reduce Machiavelli's legacy to 'Machiavellianism' are found to remain dominant throughout the history of political and theoretical thought. Isaiah Berlin observes accordingly that

. . . the commonest view of him, at least as a political thinker, is still that of most Elizabethans, dramatists and scholars alike, for whom he is a man inspired by the Devil to lead men to their doom, the great subverter, the teacher of evil, *le docteur de la scélératesse*, the

inspirer of St. Bartholomew's Eve, the original of Iago. This is the 'murderous Machiavel' of the famous four-hundred-odd references in Elizabethan literature.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding, trends of a more balanced and less reductionist interpretation have also emerged. Twentieth-century interpretations recognize elements of 'Machiavellianism', even if they do not establish it within the core of Machiavelli's political ideas and messages. For instance, Bernard Crick – the editor of *The Discourses* and the writer of the Introduction to them<sup>28</sup> – assumes that 'Machiavellianism' is present in both *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. Namely, in 'states of emergency' republics may also make use of absolute power; in addition, Machiavelli does not prioritize republican rule over princely rule when stability and peace are endangered, while he attributes the highest value to political stability. When elaborating on Machiavelli's republican ideas, Crick notes the absence of monistic, transcendental truth, and the existence of thinking in alternatives, of contextual truths, different value systems – 'Pagan standards' and 'Christian standards', conflicts of values and interests.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Crick also notes Machiavelli's normative political approach, e.g. the fact that Machiavelli prioritizes republican rule over princely rule. This author highlights Machiavelli's ideas in which well-managed republics are, in fact, stronger than principalities are, which stems from the fact that republics are more adaptable to diverse circumstances, have a diversity found among their citizens, are able to mobilize the power of their people and integrate their populations into public life, and endure better while nurturing and satisfying the needs of different factions.

Crick calls attention to the specific sense of political morality found in Machiavelli's work, which is based on refusing Christian morality, as well as praising political activism and pagan morality,<sup>30</sup> i.e. a secular view point of politics. According to Crick, Machiavelli 'is not simply taking politics out of morality or putting it above morality':

The sense in which, in effect, he advocates a political morality is not in terms of a divorce between ethics and politics, but in terms of the prime and heroic dignity given to politics and political action in classical pagan morality. He sees all the time two moralities side-by-side each making conflicting demands: the morality of the soul and the morality of the city ...

Certainly, suspended between these two moralities, Machiavelli did achieve a radically secular viewpoint. He laid the basis for a secular study of society, and showed why in the future, more and more, exercise of power had to be justified in secular and utilitarian terms. Politics itself emerges as a secular activity, and it is in a narrow sense, *autonomous*, in that *one can* if one wishes ... and if one has both skill and will, is both a lion and a fox, change the character of human society.<sup>31</sup>

In his book entitled *Machiavelli*, Kosta Čavoški<sup>32</sup> also extensively analyses the existence of 'Machiavellianism' in *The Prince* and even in *The Discourses*. However, he considers Machiavelli to be a republican thinker:

Without any attempt to negate the contestable advice Machiavelli gives to princes and all others who strive towards the heights of power, it is intended for this book to demonstrate that Machiavelli possessed firm knowledge as to how the state is to be founded or how a

ruined and corrupt state is to be improved . . . and to demonstrate that he was a supporter of freedom, republicanism and the rule of law, and that he had been much less a teacher of evil and much more a teacher of virtue conceived as a creative force of history.<sup>33</sup>

David Held, in his book *Models of Democracy*,<sup>34</sup> also considers Machiavelli to be a republican thinker, and concentrates more upon Machiavelli's *The Discourses*. However, just as the aforementioned authors have done, he systematically takes into consideration elements of 'Machiavellianism' which exist in *The Prince* as well as in *The Discourses*. He differentiates the two models of politics which seem to appear according to Machiavelli's conception as 'power politics' and 'politics based on just laws':

His judgement moved uneasily between admiration of a free, self-governing people and admiration of a powerful leader able to create and defend the law. He tentatively sought to reconcile these preferences by distinguishing between, on the one hand, the kind of politics necessary for the inauguration of a state or for the liberation of a state from corruption and, on the other hand, the kind of politics necessary for the maintenance of a state once it had been properly established. An element of democracy was essential to the latter, but quite inappropriate to the former.<sup>35</sup>

Among republican interpretations of Machiavelli's legacy exist also the ones that more or less cast aside 'Machiavellianism', and primarily focus on republican discourse and ideas of a free state, a perfect republic, public freedom, active citizenship, civic-spiritedness, the greatness of a self-governed political body, good laws, the satisfaction of needs of all social strata, and the mutual balancing of different interests. Among such republican interpretations, some of the most inspirational are those of Quentin Skinner<sup>36</sup> and Anthony Parel.<sup>37</sup>

Compared with Anthony Parel, Quentin Skinner promotes more traditionalist republican approaches in his scholarship on Machiavelli. In that, Skinner notes the positive resemblances between the republican arguments of *The Discourses* and the earliest traditions of Italian republicanism which emerge from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and continue until the Renaissance. Skinner also underscores the axiomatic relevance of Machiavelli's theory of the humours, and Parel follows him in this respect. However, the latter reconsiders Machiavelli's political thought as a whole from the point of the theory of the humours. It even could be stated that Parel offers a unique interpretation of Machiavelli's republican thought, as articulated and systematically elaborated upon from the theory of humours itself.

The motivation for writing this article comes from the estimation that Machiavelli's name and work have been massively degraded throughout history by the so-called name and legacy of 'Machiavellianism'; its inspiration comes from the representatives of republican scholarship, primarily from Skinner and Parel. However, this article still does not attempt to ignore the fact that elements of the philosophical justification of the 'power politics', e.g. of so-called 'Machiavellianism', do indeed exist in *The Prince* and in *The Discourses*.

It is not merely in *The Prince* that Machiavelli sometimes defends cruel means as needed to achieve final aims; the use of extraordinary methods, arms and force for the

protection of the republic is also to be found in *The Discourses*. In chapter 18 of book one, he observes 'How in Corrupt Cities a Free Government Can Be Maintained where it Exists or Be Established where it Does Not Exist'.<sup>38</sup> He explains that it is not enough to act against gradual corruption through the simple introduction of new laws, rather that new institutions are also necessary. For such an action, normal methods do not suffice and are not good enough. 'Hence it is necessary to resort to extraordinary methods, such as the use of force and an appeal to arms, and before doing anything, to become a prince in the state, so that one can dispose it as one thinks fit.'

Elements of traditional republicanism, as well as significant anticipation of modern pluralist/liberal republicanism, are present in Machiavelli's theoretical legacy. It could be added that Machiavelli's world-view was influenced by the commonly shared Renaissance cosmology/astrology of his lifetime. Moreover, his legacy also anticipates a modern way of political thinking in a methodological and epistemological sense.

This article will first consider these innovations in Machiavelli's conception of knowledge. After reviewing traditionalist elements related to how Renaissance cosmology is to be found inherited in Machiavelli's thought, the article's analysis will focus on Machiavelli's republicanism, both in its dimensions of supporting the legacy of the Roman republic and that of the Italian self-governed city-republics of the Renaissance, and also that of anticipating modern pluralist ideas. Moreover, conceptual clarifications are to be offered for 'old' traditional republicanism and 'new' republicanism in this context; the latter of which shall be further divided into communitarian/traditionalist/collectivist and pluralist/liberal republicanism. A conceptual clarification of Machiavelli's theory of the humours will also be given; this was the prism through which he understood the legacy of the Roman republic and the city-republics of the Renaissance, and it could be considered to be the source of his pluralist ideas.

## **What is 'new' and 'old' in Machiavelli's conception of knowledge?**

### *A new way of political thinking*

From his preface to the *Discourses*, Machiavelli's statement<sup>39</sup> of his decision 'to enter upon a new way, as yet untrodden by anyone else' (and that he intended to do that regardless of consequence, as he believed it to be for the common benefit of all) has been widely interpreted. Many authors (for example, Leo Strauss,<sup>40</sup> Christian Gauss<sup>41</sup> and Isaiah Berlin<sup>42</sup>) and many textbooks remark that Machiavelli's 'new way' in fact demanded a real break with traditional political philosophy as an introduction into modern political theory.

This 'new way' of political thinking actually meant breaking away from Christian political thought, as well as from the ancient Greek ideal of the unity of politics and ethics in the *polis*. Furthermore, his 'new way' also suggested utilizing ancient Roman republican thought and experience in order for its imitation; e.g. for the sake of establishing a republic in Florence and Italy, instead of the rule of the abovementioned *lizenzia*. 'Imitating' implied a technical/engineering understanding of political

action, which is 'modern' in the (contemporary) sense of applicable knowledge (which has empirical roots/approval and which may be used to create new experiences/new social reality).

Machiavelli's own use of the terms 'ancient' and 'modern' must be contextually understood; by 'ancient', he meant things, events, ideas, or persons belonging to pre-Christian classical culture, and by 'modern' he meant things, events, ideas, or persons belonging to Christian culture. As Anthony Parel remarked in this regard:

... the overall purpose of his new teaching is to persuade his readers to reject the present, i.e. modern, i.e. Christian understanding of things, and to imitate the ancients – but only those among the ancients who stress *vita activa*, and this only insofar as such imitation will enable them to reject the 'present' and bring out something 'new'.<sup>43</sup>

Machiavelli believed in the power of knowledge, in the power of a theory about a proper model of republican political order. In the Preface to his book *The Discourses*, he also elaborates on the erroneous ways of reading historical texts and the misunderstanding of history, in the sense of hearing about various incidents, yet never thinking about the possibility of imitating relevant historical events.<sup>44</sup> According to him, one should seek to obtain practical lessons from the study of history. Here is precisely what he meant by a 'new way'.

The practical orientation and intention of his thinking anticipated the political thought of the New Age and modernity, in which citizens/individuals – instead of God – would be considered the real creators of their political and social lives.<sup>45</sup> While Machiavelli himself neither anticipated nor accepted the modern theory of natural law and the social contract, he did believe that politics create society and (political) order, that individuals are neither good nor bad, rather that they can be modelled by good laws and state institutions, that different humours as well as their conflicts might contribute to the enactment of good laws, and that successful historical experiences should be imitated. This resonates with the secular and pragmatic orientation of modern social and political sciences.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, Strauss remarks that this secular and pragmatic orientation is not linked to positivist descriptive or analytical political science for Machiavelli. Instead, since it aims to be useful, scientific knowledge must be based on the comprehensive analysis of practice or the experience of contemporary items ('particular knowledge'), as well as on the continuous readings of what is ancient, e.g. on relevant 'general knowledge' which should be imitated according to its best results. Therefore, useful scientific knowledge also contains a normative dimension; it must be applicable, but what is meant to be applied is the 'imitation' of a certain ideal or model:

'The firm science' or the 'general knowledge' which is meant to be useful is for this reason at least partly perceptive or normative. Machiavelli does not oppose to the normative political philosophy of the classics a merely descriptive or analytical political science, he rather opposes to a wrong normative teaching the true normative teaching. From his point of view, a true analysis of political 'facts' is not possible without the lights supplied by knowledge of what constitutes a well-ordered commonwealth.<sup>47</sup>



Habermas notes that the technical/engineering sense of the concept of praxis entered political thought with Machiavelli and Thomas More.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Held asserts in Machiavelli's case that politics creates society and, moreover, that it plays a creative role. In this respect, he states that 'there was no natural or God-given framework to order political life. Rather it was the task of *politics* to create order in the world . . . Politics is thus ascribed a pre-eminent position in social life as the chief constitutive element of society.'<sup>49</sup>

In short, politics based on the rule of law – not on 'power politics' – is that which is singularly able to create virtuous citizens instead of indolent and selfish individuals; mixed government secures public freedom and 'makes citizens good' as this manner of government is most likely to balance the interests of rival social groupings. The creative role of politics in building a social reality presupposes the 'technical-engineering'/practical/applicable meaning of Machiavelli's conception of political knowledge conceived as the proposed 'imitation' of the best historical role-model of the Roman republic.

### *The traditional worldview – impacts of Renaissance cosmology*

Parel remarks on the traditionalist world-view of Machiavelli, his following of Renaissance cosmology, physics and astrological natural philosophy, which all propose the unity of the heavens, nature, 'things of the world' and 'human things':

Regarding the theme of the heaven/s, Machiavelli appeared to accept the contemporary position of astrological natural philosophy that the heavens are the general cause of all particular motions – human, elemental and natural – occurring in the sublunary world. That is to say, the motions of history as well as of states are subject to the motions of the heavens.<sup>50</sup>

According to Parel, the relationship of the heavens to fortune (*Fortuna*) for Machiavelli was determined by two controversial stimuli: in correspondence with the popular thought of his day, the heavens and fortune were often equated, and fortune itself symbolized the power of the heavens and their divinity. However, the natural philosophy of his time considered the heavens to be the source of unchanging determinism, fate, or the necessity of the universe, while fortune referred to chance events that occur in a universe determined as such. Machiavelli himself sometimes spoke about the heavens and fortune as if they were the same entities, but more often than not, he spoke about them as being distinct entities in accordance with the more actual philosophical understanding present in his contemporaneity. As is the author's conclusion, this is in accordance with Machiavelli's political concepts of the *vita activa*, civic virtue, public-spiritedness, and acting in the interest of human freedom, human causality and human virtue.<sup>51</sup>

Machiavelli thought that the restraints of human autonomy and freedom originate not only from the heavens and from fortune, but from individual humours/character as well. He also utilized the (astrological) notion of 'the quality of times', which refers to the dependence of virtue on certain cosmological factors. In both *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, he noted the importance of conforming the modes of behaviour of politicians and innovators to the 'quality of times' (given conditions) in order that they be successful

in their own innovative intentions.<sup>52</sup> In spite of all the restraints that originate from the heavens, fortune and 'quality of time', Machiavelli's cosmology does allow some space for human autonomy, for the *vita activa*, for virtue conceived as the political activism of individuals, public-spiritedness and devotion to the common good, instead of for only private interests.

## Machiavelli's republican political theory

Before elucidating on Machiavelli's republicanism and the differentiating elements of both traditional and pluralist/modern republicanism in his legacy, it is necessary to provide at least a minimum of conceptual clarifications of what traditional and modern republicanism are.

The theory of the humours is also to be especially considered, as both traditionalist and implicit modern thought of Machiavelli may have been mutually intertwined and distinguished precisely through this concept. Therein, a special section shall be devoted to the issue of what the humours meant in Renaissance cosmology/astrology and in Machiavelli's own interpretation.

### *Conceptual clarification – 'old' and 'new' republicanism*

Republicanism in the traditional sense (the heredity of Aristotle, Cicero, Italian cities of the Renaissance) denotes a theoretical and practical orientation towards a mixed government, as well as devotion to a well-ordered political body of the city-state, to the public good, civic virtue and self-government as a sign of liberty. It also denotes the priority of the collectivity, e.g. the city-state's interest and the common good over the well-being of the individual.

Republicanism in the modern sense means the intrusion of certain republican institutions and features into the liberal-democratic order. Modern republicanism itself has been part of constitutional democracy and the modern liberal-political order. Moreover, the modern political combination of republicanism and liberalism has possibly created a better equilibrium of individual well-being and common good in the framework of constitutional democracy and the rule of law.<sup>53</sup>

Ideologically and theoretically, the contemporary revival of republicanism has had a twofold effect: the first is its communitarian interpretation (for instance, Charles Taylor and Quentin Skinner), which follows the traditional concept of the active citizen in favour of the common good, in the context of a particular collectivity; the second is liberal republicanism/republican liberalism, which maintains liberal individualism and focuses on the value of individual rights, while still insisting on the value of citizen participation in decision-making (e.g. public autonomy as conceived as freedom), as well as on the value of civic virtues and the devotion of citizens to public matters and the common good.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the commitment to collective self-determination based on deliberation and the mutual accommodation of plural interests among the free members of a political collectivity is at stake. Collective political identity is founded on the free will and autonomous intention of individual citizens.

Public autonomy necessitates freedom conceived as non-domination inside a restrained government. Whereas the modern republican state is based on constitutionalism, constitutional democracy itself presupposes constitutional guarantees of individual rights, restraint upon the part of the government, division of power, resistance to majoritarian will, and a counter-majoritarian condition in which laws can be legitimately altered.<sup>55</sup>

### *Machiavelli's reception of the republican tradition*

Quentin Skinner<sup>56</sup> explores Machiavelli's traditionalist approach, particularly the fact that Machiavelli followed the mood and content of the republican thought that had been born in Italian cities from the closing of the 12<sup>th</sup> until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He describes how, at the beginning of this period, a distinctive system of republican government had come to be well established in most major cities of the region (the *Regnum Italicum*). At that time, chief magistrates called *podesta* were elected for a period of 6 or 12 months, and executive councils – including the *podesta* itself – enjoyed a status no higher than that of public servants of the commune, which elected them. However, only after the recovery of Aristotle's moral and political philosophy in the latter part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was the theoretical articulation of this new form of urban politics possible. Without touching upon ancient Greek philosophy, yet inspired by the practice of the communes and by Roman authors and historians (especially Cicero and Sallust), Florence had a unique role at the start of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in giving rise to the development of ideas more appropriate for urban life: the ideology of self-governing republicanism. Therein, the revival of Aristotle and the rise of Florentine humanism were both of vital importance in the evolution of republican thought in Machiavelli's time.<sup>57</sup>

According to Skinner, Machiavelli followed pre-humanist literature and Renaissance republicanism. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli actually presented his defence of republican values in traditional terms. Machiavelli's inspiration stemmed from pre-humanist treaties on city government, model speeches designed for praising the glory and honour of incoming *podesta*, and praising the greatness, peace and equality of citizens before the law (legal equality), all of which linked liberty with elective forms of government in the practice of communes.<sup>58</sup>

In his book *The Discourses* Machiavelli fully endorsed the idea that the highest ends for which any city can strive are civic glory and greatness (a free state internally and externally). He praised the practice of cities being founded by their own citizens, and regarded cities established by princes as not having free beginnings and, hence, as not being able to attain greatness. He also recommended traditional beliefs in the importance of the common good (the behaviour of each citizen in accordance with virtue and public-spiritedness), as well as civic greatness (as opposed to corrupt behaviour in which factions or individuals give priority to their own personal ambitions and factional allegiances).<sup>59</sup>

According to Skinner, Machiavelli's constitutional proposals were largely dependent on the traditional arguments; namely, the rule of a prince instigates the harmful behaviour of the prince to the city and the harmful behaviour of the city to the prince. Only a republican form of governance (an elective system of government) is capable of

ensuring the promotion of the common good. Machiavelli adheres to the idea of all pre-humanists and of latter Renaissance apologists, that of the communes, where only under such elective constitutions can the goal of civic greatness ever be achieved.<sup>60</sup>

Machiavelli connects liberty with greatness, and states that it is only possible to live 'in a free state' when it is under a self-governing republic, and that only the republic can achieve greatness. His constitutional proposals are linked with the experience of the Roman republic, as he notes that the Romans' free manner of living began when they first elected two consuls in place of a king.<sup>61</sup> A self-governing republic can be preserved only if its citizens cultivate civic virtue and public-spiritedness, which are the capacities that enable one willingly to serve the common good (expressed as courage and prudence).

Individual liberty in Machiavelli's republican thought had nothing to do with individual rights, but rather with the duties of the individual to uphold the institutions of a free state. In regard to the mechanisms needed to coerce self-interested individuals, he recommends laws; therein, Machiavelli cites the experience of the Roman republic as an example of laws to be emulated. He further discusses cultivating civic virtue, for which religion and a citizens' army can also be an instrument.

It could be remarked that here Skinner primarily focuses on what Machiavelli accepted from ancient and Renaissance traditions.<sup>62</sup> However, he also takes into consideration important points in which Machiavelli forwent traditional republican thought. In this respect, he observes that internal discord for Machiavelli was not at all lethal for civic greatness; he speaks about Machiavelli's theory of the humours as 'axiomatic' for his political theory.<sup>63</sup> Therein, Skinner, with his awareness of the importance that the theory of humours plays in Machiavelli's legacy, creates an opening through which to understand how this theory of the humours leads far beyond traditional political ideas and practice.

### *The theory of the humours and the anticipation of modern republicanism*

As has been hitherto mentioned, Machiavelli's republicanism contained all the elements of traditional republicanism. However, with his theory of the humours, Machiavelli also anticipated some elements of modern pluralist, liberal republicanism.

There are important ideas in Machiavelli's republicanism which are discordant with traditional republican thought. Machiavelli did not follow one particular idea that was central to the Italian republicanism of his time and of the ancient Roman period, namely, that internal discord is invariably fatal to civic greatness, and that the common good and greatness of a city republic require the preservation of concordance, as well as the avoidance of internal strife. Machiavelli also did not accept the traditional republican idea that political actions need be judged primarily by their intrinsic rightness; quite on the contrary, he gave priority to the effects of political actions. Therein, the former of these ideas anticipates modern pluralist thought, while the latter<sup>64</sup> anticipates modern political pragmatism.

In relation to Machiavelli's first point of departure from Italian republicanism, Skinner asserts:

Everyone had treated the preservation of concord, the avoidance of internal strife, as indispensable to upholding the common good and thereby attaining greatness. By insisting that tumults represent a prime *cause* of freedom and greatness, Machiavelli is placing a question-mark against this entire tradition of thought. What he is repudiating is nothing less than the Ciceronian vision of the *concordia ordinum*, a vision hitherto endorsed by the defenders of self-governing republics in an almost uncritical way.<sup>65</sup>

Machiavelli repudiates Cicero's *concordia ordinum*, affirming to his core ideas the existence of the different humours (*umori*), as well as their conflicting and pluralist mutual relation.

Machiavelli utilized this concept of the humours in a multidimensional manner. On the basis of Anthony Parel's ideas, it is herein argued that the theory of the humours guided Machiavelli's thought in a direction that was both traditionalist and anticipated modernity. This theory designated his entrenchment in the astrological world-view of the Renaissance, while his specific political interpretation of the humours shifted into envisaging a more modern political world-view.<sup>66</sup>

The concept of the humours had originated from pre-modern medical science and the cosmology/astrology/natural philosophy of the Renaissance. The humours were originally considered to be the constituent elements of the human body, even pertaining to one's individual character. They also were thought of as being constituent elements of the heavens and nature (elemental matter divided into heat and coldness, dryness and wetness). Machiavelli accepted an astrological view on the interrelation of the heavens, e.g. causality in the 'things of the world'/'human things' and fortune (the personified intervention of the human use of the humours as effectual in changing causality). Early Renaissance political thought had even accepted these ideas prior to Machiavelli.<sup>67</sup>

Machiavelli appropriated the notion of the humours from the Renaissance's world-view, as well as from early political theory, and innovatively used their notion in a significant political manner.

The theory of the humours, the plurality of mutually conflicting humours and the issue of how essential conflicts are resolved in a political order was of great concern to Machiavelli.

Machiavelli designated the humours as relevant social groups of the given body politic. Political humours in Machiavelli's usage refer to different social groups and to their particular, and mutually conflicting, aspirations.

Machiavelli believed that different necessary factions existed in each political body, e.g. that each body politic consists of different humours (people and the nobles). He believed that the quality of political order can be measured only by the quality of the institutional regulation of the interrelations of the humours themselves,<sup>68</sup> and that the 'regimes are the "effects" of the conflicts between political humours'.<sup>69</sup>

Machiavelli also believed the constitutional/legal balancing of different humours/classes/social groups (i.e. satisfying the interests of all social strata/estates/factions; for instance, the poor and the rich) to be the main purpose of a well-ordered body politic.<sup>70</sup> In this respect, he regarded republican Rome as being the best governmental form and was of the opinion that its sharing authority among the royal estate, aristocracy and the populace 'made [it] a perfect commonwealth'.<sup>71</sup>

According to Machiavelli, creating good laws was possible only in a free republic,<sup>72</sup> due to the fact that the laws in this system are created by all mutually conflicting social groups and can be accepted by every group; tumults have been solved in the republic on the common benefit of all social strata. Only a free republic can manage to overcome the particular interests of each and all estates and represent a common interest.<sup>73</sup>

In book one, discourse 4, of *The Discourses*, subtitled 'That Discord between the Plebs and the Senate of Rome Made the Republic both Free and Powerful', Machiavelli described those who condemned the quarrels between the nobles and the plebs as having not understood that the primary cause of Rome's retaining its freedom lay in these conflicts. They incorrectly paid no attention to the positive effects that these quarrels produced, nor did they 'realize that in every republic there are two different dispositions, that of the populace and that of the upper class and that all legislation favourable to liberty is brought about by the clash between them'.<sup>74</sup>

In the same discourse, Machiavelli asserts the necessity of a mutual humoural balance for enacting good laws:

One cannot, therefore, regard such tumults as harmful, nor such a republic as divided, seeing that during so long a period it did not on account of its discords send into exile more than eight or ten citizens, put very few to death, and did not on many impose fines. Nor can a republic reasonably be stigmatized in any way as disordered in which there occur such striking examples of virtue, since good examples proceeded from good education, good education from good laws, and good laws in this case from those very tumults which many so inconsiderately condemn; for anyone who studies carefully their result, will not find that they occasioned any banishment or act of violence inimical to the common good, but that they led to laws and institutions whereby the liberties of the public benefited.<sup>75</sup>

In book one, discourse 2, Machiavelli elaborates on how exactly Rome became a republic. Originally, Romulus and other kings had established good laws, quite compatible with freedom. However, since they intended to establish a kingdom instead of a republic, many institutions lacked any preservation of liberty when the city became free. Therefore the kings were expelled and two consuls were appointed at once; yet only the title of the king was expelled, not the royal power itself. Subsequently, the consuls and the Roman senate represented the principality and aristocracy, but a place of democracy was to be established. Machiavelli remarked on how the Roman nobility, with its overbearing behaviour, provoked the populace to rise against it, and on how the nobility – stemming from the fear of losing it all – granted the populace a share in the government:

It was in this way that tribunes of the plebs came to be appointed, and their appointment did much to stabilize the form of government in this republic, for in its government all three estates now had a share ... The blending of these estates made a perfect commonwealth; and ... it was friction between plebs and the senate that brought this perfection about.<sup>76</sup>

In book one, discourse 3, Machiavelli reiterates the importance of introducing the institution of tribunes for securing/completing republican constitutional order in Rome. In this discourse, he switched from his previous historical explanation to a normative

proposition about an importance and a productivity of social struggles and conflicts among the humours, so as to improve the institutional order of the republic. The title of that discourse implies his statement: 'What Kind of Events Gave Rise in Rome to the Creation of Tribunes of the Plebs, Whereby that Republic Was Made More Perfect'.<sup>77</sup>

In the already mentioned book one, discourse 4, Machiavelli also commented on the situation in which dissatisfactions of the common people resulted in introducing an institution of tribunes: 'Hence if tumults led to the creation of the tribunes, tumults deserve the highest praise, since, besides giving the populace a share in the administration, they served as the guardian of Roman liberties.'<sup>78</sup>

According to Machiavelli, the institutions of the senate, consuls and tribunes of the Roman republic during this flourishing period of the Roman state had successfully balanced differences and tensions in the humours. Nevertheless, the corruption in the balance of the humours led towards the decline of Roman republic itself.

With his interpretation of the humours, Machiavelli set aside any ethical differentiation of regimes, and used the humours and satisfaction of their needs as a merit of differentiation between them. Thus, to Machiavelli republican regimes were preferable, as they succeeded in establishing a balance among the existent humours and their internal conflicts; accordingly, they possessed 'positive effects' and represented a healthy and acceptable body politic.

He further ethically differentiated the aspirations of the different political humours, in the sense that the aspirations of the oppressed are more honourable: 'For the aim of the people is more honest than that of the nobility, the latter desiring to oppress, and the former merely to avoid oppression.'<sup>79</sup> However, this differentiation is not that of the traditional republican meaning where ethical behaviour is linked to virtue. The oppressed are more honourable and eager to defend liberty, but this is not due to the fact that they are more virtuous, rather that they cannot seize power themselves and will therefore not permit others to do so.<sup>80</sup>

Machiavelli used the notion of the 'humours' to define the results of the interactions among social groups; for instance, he termed the 'humours of Florence' the 'factional conflicts of Florence'.

Sometimes Machiavelli also utilized this notion for conflicts among states. In addition, he used this term in order to describe the political meaning of 'good' and 'bad', in the sense of healthy and malignant humours, depending on whether they contributed to the health or the sickness of the body politic.

Finally, and most importantly, as Parel maintains, Machiavelli used the term of the 'humours' to reconsider political regimes. 'Regimes are the "effects" of the conflicts between political humours: how they combine or fail to combine them is the key issue.'<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore, according to Parel, the theory of the humours was a means for Machiavelli to classify political regimes.

*The theory of the humours and the classification of political regimes.* As has already been noted, a regime can be classified as being a principality, a republic, or a *lizenzia*, according to the institutional merit of satisfying the humours relevant to them. In this regard, Parel asserts:

Surprisingly, in Machiavelli's hands *umore/i* becomes a means of classifying political regimes – in my view, this is surely one of the most original achievements of Machiavelli's political thought. That he uses this concept to distinguish princedoms, republics and *lizenzie* permits us to wonder whether *The Prince*, the *Discourses*, the *Florentine Histories*, and the 'Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence' could be read from a new perspective.<sup>82</sup>

For Machiavelli, the Aristotelian difference between monarchy and tyranny lost its meaning. Monarchy no longer sought the common good, since it was only important that the prince maintained his own power by aligning himself with the strongest political humour and satisfying the needs of this dominant humour.

Machiavelli uses this theory of the humours to demonstrate the superiority (better fortune and endurance) of republics over monarchies. According to him, social groups in a republic are better capable of resolving their differences through the mediums of its constitution and laws. They are capable of self-government and do not need the mediation of a prince. In a republic, there is a share in the division of power between groups, and while group conflict does remain, it does not degenerate into a struggle in which one group seeks the total elimination of the other. As Parel comments:

... a republic encourages the flourishing of citizens of different humours and temperament, whereas a monarchy does not. Because of this, republics are more lively, more flexible, and more successful in their foreign relations than are monarchies.<sup>83</sup>

In contrast to a republic, social groups in a *lizenzia* are always at odds with one another. Consequently, the possibility of a stable government is low in this form of government as antagonism among the humours is strong; each group pursues only its own interest, often at the expense of its rivals, and always without any due regard for the interest of the whole. In this manner, 'groups become factions, and the constitution and the law become instruments of factional conflicts'.<sup>84</sup>

As has been already mentioned, Parel suggests that Machiavelli's main works can be reinterpreted according to the theory of the humours, and that different regimes can be reconsidered according to their internal relations among the humours themselves:

Seen from the perspective of humours, *The Prince* appears to present us with the picture of a body politic whose humours are not in proper proportion, and whose cure would require the intervention of the 'doctor' to prepare and administer purges, strong medicines, or whatever else it might take to improve the health of the organism. Machiavelli's 'new prince' is such a 'doctor', and political ethics appears to acquire the features of a natural science, admittedly a pre-modern natural science. The *Discourses*, on the other hand, presents us with the picture of a healthy body politic. Rome is able to develop itself into a free, virtuous, and expanding republic, precisely because here the humours were operating in an ordered manner. The *Florentine Histories*, in its turn, presents us with the picture of a body politic whose humours are malignant, and which is unlucky enough to be without an innovator – until, that is, Machiavelli himself was asked by Leo X to write the constitution for it. And while Machiavelli could not be a new prince for Florence, he could certainly be its legislator. And although he did not think highly of those philosophers who wrote only of imagined



republics, he himself, when given the chance to submit a *discorso* for a real republic, could not do much better than to produce a draft on paper. Yet the insights from which Machiavelli starts his legislative enterprise are insights derived from the theory of humours, and the recommendations which he makes for what he variously calls 'the perfect republic' or 'this republic of mine' are also based on the same theory.<sup>85</sup>

According to Machiavelli, variances between principalities, republics and *lizenzie* do not stem from the classical notion of a regime's form, but from the notion of the humours and their satisfaction. A republican regime best satisfies the needs of all the humours and does so in the common interest.

**Lizenzia v. republic in Florence.** As has been explained above, the Renaissance theory of the humours served Machiavelli in his particular anti-traditionalist, pluralist interpretation of the republican order. According to Machiavelli, his idea about maintaining well-balanced interrelations among the humours (the populace and the upper class) as had occurred in the healthy times of the Roman republic was to be imitated in the Florence of his time. For him, the malignant conditions of the misbalance among the existent humours in the *lizenzia* of Florence needed to be replaced by new institutional arrangements as proposed in order to become a real republic.

According to this interpretative framework, the work of Machiavelli, called 'Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence',<sup>86</sup> would demonstrate his own attempts to provide a constitutional draft to replace the *lizenzia* in Florence with a real republic and to establish a new healthy body politic in the city: one based on well-balanced humours.

The form of government in the Florence of Machiavelli's time was corrupted; it was a *lizenzia* that did not satisfy the interests of its general citizenry. Possessing subsequent dominant antagonisms, the *lizenzia* did not bode well for Florence, a city that knew how to produce wealth and yet did not know how to produce free institutions. With the creation of such institutions, these antagonisms between the different classes/humours would have been better kept under control. Therein, with the introduction of the proposed republican constitution and with the establishment of a controlled humoral, plural character, i.e. through the satisfaction of the competing interests of all its constitutive groups, Florence would have a healthy and dynamic body politic.

In his constitutional draft for Florence, which aimed to establish an actual republic in the city instead of its corrupted *lizenzia*, Machiavelli proposes the introduction of the following institutions: a body of *Colleagues* numbering 65 (to satisfy the *primi*), from which a chief magistrate was to be chosen; a *Council of Two Hundred* (to satisfy the *mez-zani*); and a *Council of One Thousand* or at least of *Six Hundred* (to satisfy all citizens). According to him, all societal groups necessitated their own respective satisfaction, as no 'perfect republic would be possible without satisfying the citizens in general. He also proposes a further body of 16 *gofalonieri*, among whom 4 would be chosen to sit with the highest administrative bodies. In addition to these three 'assemblies', he recommends a *Court of Appeal* that would consist of 30 citizens. Such an institution would guarantee the independence of the judiciary, as well as the security of the life, liberty and property of all citizens. Although these institutions would safeguard republican liberty,

Machiavelli also thought that Florence would require a head [*capo*] in order to be a genuine republic, and that this leader needed to be a constitutional or 'public' one.<sup>87</sup>

*The theory of the humours and anticipation of modern pluralism in Machiavelli.* For Machiavelli, the aim of politics is that the needs of different social groupings be met as they arise from different temperaments/humours. Social struggles are therefore unavoidable, since different humours are by definition in mutual conflicts. Machiavellian polity requires a humoral unity, a unity of opposites, and a balance among conflicting humours.

As Held interprets and comments on Machiavelli: '[A] quite unconventional conclusion was reached: the basis of liberty may not just be a self-governing regime and a willingness to participate in politics, but may also be conflict and disagreement through which citizens can promote and defend their interests.'<sup>88</sup>

Machiavelli's notion of the humours and their conflicts cannot be reduced to a dialectical notion of class conflicts since Machiavelli mentions no necessity of overcoming class/humoral conflicts and none of eliminating certain classes/humours.

Parel concludes that, in Machiavelli's opinion, each group requires the active opposition of the others as a precondition for its own existence, and the conflict of the humours provides healthy results only when all the humours are preserved through satisfying the needs of each and every single one.<sup>89</sup> He asserts:

Otherwise, the body politic as a whole will suffer. To this extent, Machiavelli is a pluralist. In his humoral theory, normatively, classes do not oppose each other for the purpose of mutual exploitation. Indeed, mutual opposition and mutual toleration can and must coexist in a healthy political system.<sup>90</sup>

In accordance with Parel's analysis, it could be assumed that Machiavelli was a pluralist thinker in the framework of his interpretation of the political humours; in that he significantly envisaged modern pluralist thought, e.g. liberal republicanism. On the track of Held's analysis of deliberative democracy,<sup>91</sup> it could be stated that Machiavelli also anticipated, though quite distantly and only implicitly, deliberative democratic ideas about enacting good laws through the widespread participation of all political agents in the decision-making process, and in replacing 'the language of interests with the language of reason'. In this respect, Machiavelli's idea on the necessity of cultivating individual civic virtues, as well as his idea on the importance of including a share of all political humours in the government and in enacting good laws, are both entirely relevant.

As already mentioned, Machiavelli considered civic virtues of citizens as crucial for keeping a self-governing republic in existence. However, according to Machiavelli's anthropology, 'all men are wicked', 'they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers' and they have 'evil dispositions'.<sup>92</sup> Individuals are generally reluctant to cultivate the qualities that allow one to serve the common good. They tend to be 'corrupt', or by natural tendency ignore the claims of the community as soon as these seem to conflict with the pursuit of their own immediate interests and advantages.

In regard to those mechanisms needed to coerce self-interested individuals, religion and a citizens' army could be the instruments for cultivating civic virtue. In this context, it should be kept in mind that Machiavelli has still been far from articulating the individual rights of citizens; namely, individual liberty in his republican thought has nothing to do with individual rights, but rather has much to do with the duties of the individual to uphold institutions of a free state.

Republican institutions represent the most important mechanism to coerce self-interested individuals; more precisely, to involve all political humours into the decision-making process and to enact good laws. The main purpose is for an institutional mechanism to check and balance the conflicting interests of different humours.

On Machiavelli's use of the experience of the Roman republic in this respect, Skinner remarks:

He finds the key in the fact that, under their republican constitution, they had one assembly controlled by the nobility, another by the common people, with the consent of each being required for any proposal to become law. Each group admittedly tended to produce proposals designed merely to further its own interests. But each was prevented by the other from imposing them as laws. The result was that only such proposals as favoured no faction could ever hope to succeed. The laws relating to the constitution thus served to ensure that the common good was promoted at all times.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

What is called 'Machiavellianism' in its 'vulgar' form could be understood to be the reality of political life that has developed in its own content and dynamics throughout history, and which has been used to transcend/eliminate the peaceful/regulated/political means of political power struggles.

Machiavelli's 'philosophic Machiavellianism', in its form either of the explanation or even of the justification of using 'evil' or unjust means ('culpable evil') in achieving and defending certain political ends ('a blueprint for dictators'), has maintained its actuality due to the persistence of so-called 'vulgar Machiavellianism' in real political life. However, philosophic Machiavellianism is simply not able to have the same meaning and consequences in different political contexts; it is different in historical periods in which limited government is far from achievable in political reality, and in modernity/contemporaneity in which constitutionally limited liberal-democratic government is the paradigmatic mode of political reality.

Machiavelli alone cannot be responsible for what in any political reality could be characterized as 'Machiavellianism' in its 'vulgar form'. Equally, what could be called 'Machiavellianism' in the real politics of our own time has been the product of modern times; 'vulgar Machiavellianism' in the context of the modern democratic politics cannot be the same as the one valid in Machiavelli's age; insofar as by attacking Machiavelli one cannot 'save the world' from the 'Machiavellianism' of modernity.<sup>94</sup>

Generally, 'Machiavellianism' in its 'vulgar' form has developed its own 'life' and doggedness independent from Machiavelli's own opus. This statement should be admitted in spite of the fact that Machiavelli himself states that *The Prince* should or could be

used as a concise manual, a handbook for those who would want to acquire or increase their own political power. In fact, *The Prince* has actually been used as a handbook by many kings, authoritarian rulers and modern dictators.<sup>95</sup>

Machiavelli's 'Machiavellian' ideas from *The Prince* (as well as from *The Discourses*) are still actual today insofar as they are helpful in understanding contemporary politics according to both the possible dangers linked to political vices and corruption, and the possible slipping of modern democratic government into unlimited state power. Therefore, the notion 'Machiavellianism' has played an important role in contemporary political and academic discourse with good reason. Nonetheless, Machiavelli's republican and pluralist ideas from *The Discourses* have been implicitly modern and essentially relevant from the point of view of contemporary democratic political theory and practice. For this reason, reducing Machiavelli's political legacy to mere 'Machiavellianism' is essentially wrong. Controversies related to the interpretations of Machiavelli's legacy and arguments in favour of its actuality in modernity/contemporaneity hinge between his ideas of unlimited state power and corrupt politics, and his pledging for republican order and just laws (efficient democratic government).

Once again it must be emphasized that the main line of Machiavelli's thought is republican in nature. Even if there are elements of 'power politics' present, the concept of political power as based on a constitution and legal means, including the minimal/legal use of force, is the core concept of political power in Machiavelli's case.

Defending Machiavelli from 'Machiavellianism' is important for the sake of intellectual scrutiny. Still, it is even more important to emphasize the republican legacy of Machiavelli's thought, especially in its modern, pluralist implications. Long before political modernity, Machiavelli closely and deeply anticipated with his theory of humours the contemporary liberal/civic republicanism, constitutionalism and deliberative democracy.

## Notes

1. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses*, ed. and intro. Bernard Crick (Harmondsworth, Mx: Penguin Books, 1970).
2. Originally, the title of this work was: *Discursus Florentinarum rerum post mortem iunioris Laurentii Medices* [cited hereafter as *Discursus*]. Anthony J. Parel, in his book *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1992), uses for this text the title: 'A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence', as well as the abbreviation '*Discursus*'. In this article, *Discursus* has been analysed and quoted from the Croatian edition: N. Machiavelli, *Politička dijela* [Political Works], ed. D. Grubiša (Zagreb: Globus, 1985), pp. 366–75.
3. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, a Mentor Classic, intro. Christian Gauss (New York: Mentor by arrangement with Oxford University Press, 1952), reprint of the original hard-cover edn by Oxford University Press; (the translation by Luigi Ricci was first published in 1903, the present revised translation by E. R. P. Vincent was first published in 1935).
4. N. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, intro. H. C. Mansfield (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
5. In his Introduction to his edn of *The Discourses*, Bernard Crick states that, according to Isaiah Berlin, there have been no fewer than 25 leading interpretations of *The Prince* alone (Machiavelli, *Discourses*, p. 15).

- Isaiah Berlin comprehensively presents a multitude of differing and even mutually contrasting interpretations of Machiavelli. See Isaiah Berlin, 'Originality of Machiavelli', in Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. H. Hardy (London: Hogarth Press, 1979), pp. 25–79 (pp. 26–35); 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
6. A. J. Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 158–61.
  7. *ibid.*, p. 158.
  8. *ibid.*, pp. 158–9.
  9. 'Machiavellism [is linked to] Niccolo Machiavelli, Florentine statesman, author of work *Del Principe*, in which unscrupulous statecraft is advocated' in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934).
- 'Machiavellian – pertaining to Machiavelli, or to the unscrupulous doctrines of political opportunism associated with his name' in *Webster Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary*, Encyclopedic edn, ed. Sidney I. Landau *et al.* (Chicago, IL: Ferguson, 1987), p. 431.
- 'Machiavellian – adj. elaborately cunning or deceitful. Named after Niccolo dei Machiavelli (1469–1527), an Italian statesman who advised the use of any means, however unscrupulous, that would strengthen the State', from the *Oxford Dictionary of Modern English*, comp. Joyce M. Hawkins, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983[1979]), p. 392.
- 'Machiavellianism' is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'the employment of cunning and duplicity in statecraft or in general conduct, deriving from the Italian Renaissance diplomat and writer Niccolò Machiavelli, who wrote *Il Principe* (*The Prince*) and other works. The word has a similar use in modern psychology where it describes one of the dark triad personalities, characterized by a duplicitous interpersonal style associated with cynical beliefs and pragmatic morality. "Machiavellian" (and variants) as a word became very popular in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century in English, though "Machiavellianism" itself is first cited by the Oxford English Dictionary from 1626', entry 22 August 2012, accessible @: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machiavellianism>
10. K. Čavoški, *Makijaveli* [Machiavelli] (Novi Sad: Orpheus, 2008), pp. 11–16.
  11. Gauss, 'Intro.', in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 13.
  12. Čavoški, *Makijaveli*, p. 11.
  13. *ibid.*
  14. Gauss, in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 13–14.
  15. In his introduction, Gauss writes:

To him the Italians, above all other peoples, deserved to have a nation state of their own, and the increasing momentum to nationalize institutions and to create nation states in the rest of Europe did bring his own nationalism again into the foreground and bring this trend in his thinking back into the main current of the nineteenth century . . . Both of these conceptions, that of the nation as a mystic entity rooted in the Folk, and Hegel's notion of the state as a divinity ordained force and ultimate power in shaping civilization were steadily to gather momentum and to merge into the notion of the nation state. This paved a way for a far more favorable attitude toward the nationalistic ideas of *The Prince*. The ban that had been laid upon Machiavelli was to be lifted. In Italy the achievement of national unity of which he was so clearly the prophet would make him a hero. Italians made of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in 1869 a national celebration. (Gauss, in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 18–19)

16. *ibid.*, p. 25.

17. *ibid.*, p. 27.

18. *ibid.*, Gauss writes:

In another respect we must repeat that Machiavelli was not modern, and remained an Italian humanist of the Renaissance. He had no sense for what we call historical evolution. He found his ideals in Rome. For him the Roman Republic marked the high point in human achievement and it is plain throughout *The Discourses* that to him the Roman Republic itself was the most highly perfected form of government that man had devised. (Gauss, in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 27)

19. *ibid.*, Gauss writes:

Upon our form of government and what we call Jeffersonian democracy, it can be said that he had no influence whatever. A rereading of much of Jefferson and a scanning of the indices to all of his published work have failed to disclose a single reference to Machiavelli. Nowhere in *The Prince* is there any limit placed upon the power of the state, and it was this problem of limiting state power that concerned Jefferson. (Gauss, in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 27–8).

20. L. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958).

21. Strauss remarks that 'even if we were forced to grant that Machiavelli was essentially a patriot or a scientist, we would not be forced to deny that he was a teacher of evil' (*Ibid.*, p. 11).

22. *ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

23. *ibid.*, p. 26.

24. *ibid.*, p. 16.

25. *ibid.*, p. 21.

26. p. 29.

27. Berlin, 'The Originality of Machiavelli', p. 35.

28. B. Crick, 'Introduction', in Machiavelli, *Discourses*, pp. 13–73.

29. In *ibid.* Crick asserts:

There is something far more profound in Machiavelli than simply a distinction between what is right and what is possible, or a reminder of 'the price' we may have to pay for 'seeming good' actions. Two standards are at work simultaneously. He implicitly challenges the whole traditional view that morality must be of one piece. He is not, strictly speaking, a relativist: he only recognizes two views, but then he only really recognizes two circumstances: historically, the ancient and the modern world, and politically, the republic and the principality. (Crick, 'Introduction', in Machiavelli, *Discourses*, p. 65)

30. *ibid.*, p. 66.

31. *ibid.*, pp. 65–6.

32. Čavoški, *Makijaveli*.

33. *ibid.*, p. 19.

34. D. Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

35. *ibid.*, pp. 42–3.

36. Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); G. Bock, Q. Skinner and M. Viroli (eds) *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); paperback edn 1993.

37. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*.

38. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, ed. Crick, book One, discourse 18, p. 160.

39. *ibid.*, p. 97.
40. Strauss observes that Machiavelli in his teaching concerning morality and politics challenges not only the religious teaching but the whole philosophic tradition as well; that he 'offers a wholly new estimate of what can be publicly proposed, hence a wholly new estimate of the public and hence a wholly new estimate of man' (Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 322).
41. In his intro. to *The Prince*, Christian Gauss states that Machiavelli's regarding the state as a dynamic expansive force was closer to reality and realpolitik than much 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century thinking and 'in that respect is modern' (Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 27).
42. 'There is nothing here of what Popper has called "essentialism", a priori certainty directly revealed to reason or intuition about the unalterable development of men or social groups in certain directions, in pursuit of goals implanted in them by God or by nature. The method and the tone are empirical.' (Berlin, 'Originality of Machiavelli', p. 37).
43. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, p. 155.
44. See Machiavelli, *Discourses*:  

[I] notice that what history has to say about the highly virtuous actions performed by ancient kingdoms and republics, by their kings, their generals, their citizens, their legislators, and by others who have gone to the trouble of serving their country, is rather admired than imitated . . . Hence it comes about that the great bulk of those who read it take pleasure in hearing of the various incidents which are contained in it, but never think of imitating them, since they hold them to be not merely difficult but impossible of imitation. (Machiavelli, *Discourses*, p. 98)
45. Leo Strauss thinks that the real novelty of Machiavelli's teaching is in linking theoretical-political knowledge with concrete-political knowledge:  

Machiavelli has indicated his new principle by opposing it to the principle underlying classical political philosophy. Traditional political philosophy took its bearings by how one ought to live or what one ought to do or by 'good man' . . . The traditional teaching is therefore useless. Being concerned with usefulness, Machiavelli is more concerned with 'the factual truth', with how men are seen to live or with what men are seen to do than with imagined things and with what exists only in speech but not in deed . . . That teaching combines 'general knowledge' with 'particular knowledge' or 'practice', for no science can be possessed perfectly without practice. (Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 232–3)
46. Isaiah Berlin mentions a wide range of authors who consider different possible modern scientific implications of Machiavelli's theoretical-methodological approach:  

For Cassirer, Renaudet, Olschki and Keith Hancock, Machiavelli is a cold technician, ethically and politically uncommitted, an objective analyst of politics, a morally neutral scientist, who (Karl Schmid tells us) anticipated Galileo in applying inductive methods to social and historical material, and had no moral interest in the use made of his technical discoveries – equally ready to place them at the disposal of liberators and despots, good men and scoundrels. Renaudet describes his method as 'purely positivist', Cassirer, as concerned with 'political statics'. (Berlin, 'Originality of Machiavelli', pp. 29–30)
47. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 233–4.
48. Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis* [Theory and Practice] (Darstadt and Neuwied: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 47–67.
49. Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, p. 41.

50. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, pp. 7, 99.
51. *ibid.*, p. 8.
52. *ibid.*, p. 92.
53. Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, pp. 299–309; Jürgen Habermas, 'Constitutional Democracy – a Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?', *Political Theory* 29(6) (December 2001): 766–81.
54. R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues – Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
55. P. Pettit, *Republicanism – A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Held, *Models of Democracy*; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
- For further information on the inherent tensions of liberalism and republicanism expressed through tensions between the principles of presentation and participation, and through the ups and downs of civil society, see also J. Terrier and P. Wagner, 'Civil Society and Political Modernity', in P. Wagner (ed.) *The Languages of Civil Society* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), pp. 9–28 and J. Terrier and P. Wagner, 'Declining Deliberation', in: Wagner (ed.) *Languages of Civil Society*, pp. 83–99.
56. Q. Skinner, 'Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and the Pre-humanist Origins of Republican Ideas', in Bock, Skinner and Viroli, *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, pp. 121–41.
57. *ibid.*, p. 122.
58. *ibid.*, p. 135.
59. See Machiavelli, *Discourses*:

It is easy to see how this affection of peoples for self-government comes about, for experience shows that cities have never increased either in domain or wealth, unless they have been independent. It is truly remarkable to observe the greatness which Athens attained . . . But most marvellous of all is to observe the greatness which Rome attained after freeing itself from its kings. The reason is easy to understand; for it is not the well-being of the individuals that makes cities great, but the well-being of the community; and it is beyond question that it is only in republics that the common good is looked to properly in that all that promotes it is carried out. (Machiavelli, *Discourses*, book Two, discourse 2, p. 275)

See also *ibid.*, book one, discourses 1–10, 'The Best Form of Government', pp. 97–138.

60. Skinner, 'Machiavelli's *Discorsi*', pp. 121–41.
61. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, book one, discourse 25, p. 175.
62. Skinner, 'Machiavelli's *Discorsi*', p. 123.
63. Skinner, *Machiavelli*, p. 65.
64. In regard to the latter point of Machiavelli's departure from Italian republicanism, Skinner states:

There is a further point at which Machiavelli appears to be offering a critical commentary on traditionalist republican thought. This is in his formulation of the doctrine that political actions should be judged not by their intrinsic rightness but by their effects. The notorious passage in which he puts forward this doctrine occurs in his discussion of Romulus' founding of Rome in Book I, chapter 9. 'No discerning person' he maintains, 'will ever criticise anyone for taking any action, however extreme, which is undertaken with the aim of organising a kingdom or constituting a republic. For it is right that, although the fact of the extreme action may accuse him, its effects should



excuse him. It is those who use violence to destroy things, not to reconstitute them, who alone deserve blame. (Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, p. 136)

65. *ibid.*

66. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, pp. 1–10, 102.

67. *ibid.*, p. 104.

68. In both *The Prince* and *Discourses*, Machiavelli claims that there are two main and mutually opposite humours in every city-state: the *grandi* (the aspiration to dominate) and the *people* (who strive neither to be commanded or oppressed). When addressing Florence, he mentions three humours: the *grandi*, the *popolo* and the *popolo minuto* (or the *popolo grasso*, the *popolani* and the *plebe/plebe infirma*, or the *primi*, the *mezzani* and the *ultimi*).

69. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, p. 107.

70. See *ibid.*, p. 106.

71. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, book one, discourse 2, p. 111.

72. Skinner explains: 'As Machiavelli expresses the point at the beginning of his *Discorsi*, free states are those "which are far from all external servitude, and are able to govern themselves according to their own will".' (Q. Skinner, 'The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty', in Skinner and Viroli, *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, pp. 291–309 (p. 301).

73. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, book I, discourse 4, p. 114.

74. *ibid.*, p. 113.

75. *ibid.*, p. 114.

76. *ibid.*, book one, discourse 2, pp. 110–11.

77. *ibid.*, book one, discourse 3, pp. 111–13.

78. *ibid.*, discourse 4, p. 115.

79. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 64.

80. Machiavelli writes:

Let us deal first with the appeal to reason. It may be urged in support of the Roman view that the guardianship of anything should be placed in the hands of those who are less desirous of appropriating it to their own use. And unquestionably if we ask what it is the nobility are after and what it is the common people are after, it will be seen that in the former there is a great desire to dominate and in the latter merely the desire not to be dominated. Consequently the latter will be more keen on liberty since their hope of usurping dominion over others will be less than in the case of the upper class. So that if the populace be made the guardians of liberty, it is reasonable to suppose that they will take more care of it, and that, since it is impossible for them to usurp power, they will not permit others to do so. (Machiavelli, *Discourses*, book one, discourse 5, p. 116)

81. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, p. 107.

82. *ibid.*, p. 8.

83. *ibid.*, p. 108.

84. *ibid.*

85. *ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

86. Machiavelli, *Discursus* (see above, note 2).

87. *ibid.*, pp. 371, 372. Machiavelli states: There is no other way of escaping these ills than to give the city the laws that can by themselves stand firm. And they always will stand firm when everybody has a hand in them, and when everybody knows what he needs to do, and in whom

he can trust, and no citizen, whatever his rank, either through fear for itself or through ambition, will need to desire further innovation. (*Discursus*, p. 375)

See also Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, p. 151.

88. Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, p. 42.

89. According to Parel:

For him, each social humour validly exists in a social group; if one group determines to eliminate the other, as happened in Florence, civic freedom will be lost to oppression and domination. The humoural conflict, if it is to produce healthy results, must preserve the identity of all the contestants, and must give due satisfaction to all. (Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, p. 111)

90. *ibid.*

91. See D. Held, 'Deliberative Democracy and the Defence of the Public Realm', in *Models of Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, pp. 231–59.

92. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, book one, discourse 3, p. 112.

93. Skinner, 'The Republican Ideal', in Skinner and Viroli, *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, p. 306.

94. Parel, *Machiavellian Cosmos*, p. 161.

95. Christian Gauss notes that a long line of ministers and kings – from Richelieu, Christina of Sweden, Frederick of Prussia, to Bismarck and Clemenceau – studied it for the sake of their own power credentials, even if it were also such an inspiration for 20th-century dictators such as Mussolini, Hitler, Lenin and Stalin (Gauss, 'Introduction', in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 8).