



WHO WAS NICCOLO` MACHIAVELLI?

Una questione che forse

Non si chiuderà mai:

La questione di Machiavelli.

(B. Croce)¹

It is with this quotation from Croce that Isaiah Berlin ended his ground-breaking essay, “The Originality of Machiavelli”², in which he attempted to distinguish if not explain, the many different and often contradictory types of interpretations to which Machiavelli’s works had been subjected in the more than 400 years since his death. As a Fulbright student at the University of Florence in 1954-55, I was myself subjected to a diversity of interpretations in a “*corso singolo*” entitled “*Machiavelli e gli Anti-Machiavellisti.*” Since that time the profusion of works adding to that diversity has only increased, almost in direct relationship to the lack of consensus which has prevailed. Virtually every line, every “jot and tittle” of every letter, play, poem, essay, as well as every book, history and “prayer” that he ever wrote, has been subjected to such minuscule scrutiny that no one else undergoing such scrutiny today could ever possibly hope to survive the types of accusations and denunciations as well as applause—running the gamut from proto-fascist to proto-liberal---to which he has been subjected.³

It is not the purpose of this volume, however, to attempt to reduce the confusion or present any single harmonious viewpoint or explanation of Machiavelli’s mindset or

approach to politics, but rather to add another dimension to the discussion, that of feminism. In this volume we hope we have collected every major strand of feminist thought on “*la questione di Machiavelli*” to enable the reader to see how feminists generally, have been responding over the past few decades to the “modern” (or “proto-modern”) approach to political thought which he represents.⁴ This collection is not exhaustive, however, since it does not present materials from outside the English-speaking community. It does demonstrate how at least these feminists have viewed, reacted to and in some instances adapted for their own purposes, those political and ethical aspects of his thought which they have found most critical to their understanding of this time and place.

La Questione di Machiavelli

First, an introduction to the subject of this volume, Niccolò Machiavelli himself, and some of the reasons why, while there has been so little agreement over the interpretation of his works, there has indeed been universal consensus over the extraordinary impact which he, and/or some version of his thought, has had on modern political discourse. For it is no exaggeration to say that almost every day somewhere in the world someone is invoking his name, either as a cautionary against some particular political action or as a template for understanding particular events.⁵

Also, to attempt to understand the complex and somewhat inconsistent nature of his political thought as well as his views and attitudes towards women, it is necessary to consider the circumstances under which his intellectual and psychological formation occurred—whatever one concludes those views to be. As Pitkin has pointed out⁶, so little is known about Machiavelli's childhood or family life that one must broaden the scope of one's inquiry to include the cultural and political aspects of his times as well as his private letters and public writings if one wishes to “humanize” this sometimes “frightening” revolutionary thinker.

Niccolo` Machiavelli was born in 1469 of a minor branch of the Machiavelli family of Florence, Italy, during a time of transition in Florentine politics from that of a long-standing republican/communal city-state to one of the petty despotisms which were in the process of replacing many similar systems throughout northern and central Italy. The difference was that Florence retained the semblance of republican institutions throughout this transition (except for the period from 1512 to 1527), almost until the final blow was delivered by invading armies and the devastating eight-month siege of the city in 1530.

Florence had also served throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the center of ideological upheaval against feudalism and in favor of the civic life (*il vivere civile*) or republicanism, led by the humanistic scholars who served as chancellors of the city during the period in which Florence was engaged in an almost life and death struggle against the despotic regime of the Visconti of Milan.⁷ The

belief in republican liberty was deeply engrained in the citizenry of Florence, even among the leading merchant families, but especially among the minor guilds (*arti*) whose members periodically revolted to obtain greater and greater representation in the city government.

Machiavelli's father, Bernardo, was a middle-class jurisconsult and a highly-thought-of student of the classics who obtained for his son an excellent education in Latin. He compiled an index of place names for an edition of Livy's history of the early Roman Republic and was given a copy by the publisher for his own library. The more prominent branch of this family provided numerous elected members of the Signoria and Priori and at least four Gonfalonieri to the city.⁸ Both father and son witnessed the gradual usurpation of power by the clever scions of the enormously wealthy Medici banking family, in particular by Cosimo and his grandson Lorenzo "the Magnificent." It was a usurpation more *de facto* than *de jure*, conducted basically through the use of influence, money and the manipulation of the voting process rather than through the overt occupation of any particular office.

Machiavelli was a child of nine in 1478 when a conspiracy inspired by Pope Sixtus IV and carried out by the Riarii and their Florentine allies, the Pazzi family (forever known as the "Pazzi Conspiracy") against Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano was perpetrated during High Mass in the Cathedral and resulted in the assassination of Giuliano and the narrow escape of Lorenzo. He could not help seeing the terrible

vengeance wreaked by the citizenry of Florence against the Riarii and the Pazzi families⁹ and witnessed the political aftermath in which the lists of candidates for all city elections were thereafter even more restricted than they had been under Cosimo.

Machiavelli was a young man of twenty-three when Lorenzo died in 1492, and he watched somewhat incredulously while Florence succumbed to Savonarola's rhetorical powers¹⁰ following the French invasion of Italy and the subsequent expulsion of the Medici in 1494 for having cravenly surrendered to Charles VIII, virtually without a fight. The loss of the port city of Pisa in the melee further aggrieved the Florentines against the Medici whom they had earlier so befriended.

The new constitution which Fra Girolamo Savonarola established for the Republic of Florence¹¹ shortly thereafter was the most democratic of all the republics of northern Italy, including that of Venice after which it had been partially modeled. Upon Savonarola's execution for heresy in the Piazza della Signoria directly in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in 1498, the Florentines did something heretofore unheard of in such circumstances: they not only retained the democratic institutions Savonarola had established, but they strengthened them. And in that same year Machiavelli, a member of the *popolani* (popular faction) but not of the *piagnoni* ("weepers") or followers of Savonarola, found himself elected Second Secretary/Chancellor of the Republic at the ripe old age of 29. Some say he had the help of the new First Secretary, Marcello Virgilio Adriani, a lecturer at the *Studio* or University of

Florence.¹² For the next decade-and-a-half Machiavelli continued to be re-elected to that post until the government itself was overthrown and the Medici reinstated as *de facto* rulers of the city in 1512.

For most of that time he served under the administration of Gonfaloniere (Chief Executive) Piero Soderini, who had previously left the ranks of Savonarola's followers in disillusionment. Within a few years after his accession, Soderini was elected *Gonfaloniere a Vita* (for life) when the exceedingly short terms of the members of the Signoria made consistent and coherent foreign policy extremely difficult to maintain. Machiavelli became Soderini's chief advisor and preferred legate to foreign powers because of his brilliant analyses of difficult situations and his excellent reportage.

Machiavelli's first important mission as Secretary to the Ten or Second Chancery, was to the remarkable Countess of Forlì, Madonna Caterina Sforza, in 1499. It was then that he received his first lesson in diplomacy when a promise made one day could be broken the next before an agreement could be signed. This woman, for whom the term "virago" was said to have been invented¹³, thus taught Machiavelli what it meant to be a "fox" when one was too weak to be a "lion," and he rewarded her with citations of her tactics, successes and losses, in all four of his major political works.¹⁴ Later, when Cesare Borgia failed to fulfill his hopes for a unified Italy, he thought her son, Giovanni delle Bande Nere might succeed.¹⁵ Instead it was that lady's grandson Cosimo dei Medici, who became the first Duke of Tuscany under a

system of near-permanent division of Italy, rectified only by the upheaval in European politics that resulted from the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the Risorgimento and the dissolution of the Papal States in 1870.¹⁶

During the period in which he served the Florentine Republic, Machiavelli was sent on many diplomatic missions to all the major courts of Europe and Italy. He helped conduct the war for the re-conquest of Pisa and campaigned vigorously for the establishment of a citizen army (and succeeded briefly in recruiting a small contingent of rag-tag peasants from the *contado*) after seeing the predatory and treasonous behavior of mercenary troops, the mainstay of many Italian city-states in this age of large, highly disciplined, well-armed national armies.

He witnessed first hand the brutal tactics of Cesare Borgia in conquering the renegade cities of the Romagna on behalf of his father, Pope Alexander VI (including Forlì, the domain of Caterina Sforza), and pronounced the people of Cesena to be “gratified and awestruck” at the gruesome execution of Remirro de Orco, Borgia’s first in command, when he wanted to deflect their ire away from himself and toward his underling for some of the more rapacious activities of his regime. Machiavelli also recounted Borgia’s carefully devised assassination of a group of conspirators in the town of Senigallia after inviting them to join him for a “friendly” meeting—all of which turned out to be grist for Machiavelli’s mill when he later wrote *The Prince*.¹⁷

This closely studied alliance between the Papacy and a powerful, if unscrupulous *Condottiere* (military leader), with the intention of doing for Italy what the rulers of Spain and France had recently done for their countries—i.e.—the defeat of petty feudalities and the consolidation of large “states” into what we today call nation-states, made a profound impression on Machiavelli. It should come as no surprise, therefore, when, in 1513, a year after he witnessed the fall of the Florentine Republic, the re-instatement of the Medici, and the election of Giovanni dei Medici as Pope Leo X, that he should call for just such a combination to lead Italy into what was rapidly becoming the “modern” world of absolute monarchies.

But before that could happen, Machiavelli was deposed as Second Secretary and investigated for possible participation in a conspiracy against the new Medici regime in Florence because of his close connection to Piero Soderini and some of the conspirators. He was imprisoned, tortured with the *strappado*¹⁸ and released during the general amnesty that followed the election of Leo X. He was fined and sentenced to remain in Florentine territory for a year during which time he retreated to his tiny farm in Sant’Andrea in Percussina near San Casciano just outside the city. He was recalled from time to time to give an accounting of the monies spent on “his” militia during his service in office. Machiavelli was now forty-three years of age.

It was during this desperate period in his life that Machiavelli turned to writing the works on which his reputation is based. That he was truly conflicted in his approach to politics is no secret. A dedicated republican at heart and a member of

the middle class, he was literally impoverished by the loss of his position, and this former Second Secretary of the Republic was almost reduced to the status of a servant (tutor) except for the occasional assistance of his friends. Nevertheless he considered himself to have been a servant of the state rather than of any particular regime, and proceeded to write a handbook for the new generation of absolute rulers of Florence in whom he placed his hope, not only for future employment, but for the unification of Italy.

Machiavelli first addressed *The Prince*¹⁹ to Giuliano dei Medici whom he partially credited with having assisted in obtaining his release from prison²⁰, and later, to Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino, who became the *de facto* ruler of Florence. It is reported that the latter gentleman paid more attention to a gift of hunting dogs than he did to this slender volume.²¹ Not so for the numerous political leaders who read it after the author's death and its publication in 1532. For this little book became the clarion call of the type of politics that ruptured the traditional bonds between ethics and politics that had been cited throughout the history of political theory from the time of Aristotle and Cicero through the Middle Ages and the pre-eminence of Christianity. In what Botero called "the reason of state"²², Machiavelli asserted the separation of the "is" from the "ought" in practical politics²³ and paved the way for the instrumentalism, impersonalism and "rationalism"²⁴ that has so characterized "modernism" and its values. ²⁵

There is little doubt that Machiavelli paved the way for the secular state, divorced from any authority than that of the state itself. By redefining Roman *virtus* as *virtu`* and excising the notion of honor and obligation from this practice of “manly” vigor and power, Machiavelli completely circumvented all appeal to the Christian virtues upon which the medieval handbooks for the guidance of princes had been written.²⁶ In adapting the Roman Goddess *Fortuna* to express not the goodness of nature but its fickleness, Machiavelli undermined the very notion of Divine Providence and asserted the ability of human will to overcome *Fortuna* at least “half of the time”.²⁷

This belief in free will was not unique to Machiavelli, of course,²⁸ but the context was. From now on, a prince’s (or political leader, founder, reformer or even a republic or state collectively) ability to overcome adversity would depend upon what actions he, she or they, would be willing to take, good or evil, in the pursuit of their goals. What mattered was not the immediate evil perpetrated but the ultimate purpose behind those actions.²⁹ And, much to the confusion of his readers, that purpose was not evil for evil’s sake, nor or even exclusively self-interest, or the attainment or maintenance of power³⁰, but the “common good”. Nor was this evil to be exercised indiscriminately, but through necessity only, and never in so extreme a³¹ fashion as to arouse the hatred of the people. And always, the *appearance* of goodness (*bonta`*), or virtue in its Christian sense, was to be maintained.³² At least that was the strategy Machiavelli believed most successful princes pursued, no matter what their stated purposes.³³

What upset his readers even more, perhaps, was the implication that religion was also to be used as a tool of the state. While condemning the activities of some individual Popes on behalf of their own family interests, and the existence of the Papal States generally as the principal obstacle to the unification of Italy, he also condemned the very ethic of Christianity as encouraging people to submit to their oppressors. And the *otium* or leisure which enabled everyone from the ancient Greeks to the medieval monastics to devote their time to contemplation of the “higher” or “better” aspects of spiritual or intellectual life, he saw as *ozio* or laziness. It was the religion of the ancient Romans as established by Numa to bind those first unruly tribes to the new city-state that he most admired. Action, not contemplation was the sign of a “virtuous” (having *virtu`*) ruler.

And yet...and yet, Machiavelli also delivered an oration based on the *De Profundis* entitled, “An Exhortation to Penitence”³⁴ before one of the several religious charitable organizations of the city of which he was a member. The theme, again, was action, not just repentance, to take away the “opportunity for evil”, through imitation of the works of St. Francis and St. Jerome and the giving of alms and doing good toward one’s neighbor. Was this, too, an exercise in “keeping up appearances” as some of his critics claim?³⁵

Machiavelli’s poignant appeal in the final chapter of *The Prince* to the Medici who now controlled both the Papacy and the city of Florence, to do what the Borgias had been unable to do—to unite all of Italy under a single standard as had been done in

France and Spain—invoke to this day a sadness and a regret for “what might have been”. Likening such a leader to Moses and similar figures of biblical proportions, he believed that only extraordinary means could prevent the piecemeal dismemberment of the country by foreign powers and the disintegration of whatever integrity and dignity the people of Italy might still retain. The corruption due to weakness was far more obvious to him than whatever goodness may have been attributed to perceived meekness and humility. And this was the conundrum facing Machiavelli. For, while he condemned the Church he needed it, but always to create the political entity necessary, in his view, to the survival of a people.³⁶

And yet...and yet, Machiavelli also proclaimed the superiority of a republic to any form of monarchy, feudal or absolute. The entire *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*³⁷ is a paean to the advantages of the liberty of republics over principalities, to the judgment of the populace over that of the prince, and to the need for diversity and what he called the occasional “tumult” (and Jefferson echoed as “revolution”) for the health and stability of commonwealths. In fact, after many years of unsuccessfully seeking employment from the new Medici rulers of Florence, Machiavelli was given a commission by Leo X (through Cardinal Giulio dei Medici, the future Pope Clement VII, his duly appointed Governor of Florence) in 1520 to advise them on ways in which the government of the city might be reformed. And it is here in this document that all the ambiguities of Machiavelli’s thoughts were clearly delineated.³⁸ For, not only did he advise the Pope on ways in which the rule of the Medici could be strengthened, he suggested they use the republican

institutions of Florence to do so! Because, as he said, "...in all cities where the citizens are accustomed to equality, a principedom cannot be set up ..."³⁹ Further, he stated (either deliberately falsely or very naively) that he knows that the Pope is "much inclined toward [a republic] and [would] defer to establishing [one]."⁴⁰ Was this the "triumph of hope over experience", or an attempt to "teach" (or manipulate) when he could no longer "do"?⁴¹

In that same year Machiavelli was given another commission by Leo X to write the history of Florence⁴² from its earliest beginnings. He deliberately ended the book with the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent without criticizing in any way the methods by which the Medici came into power, because, as he told one of his many correspondents, he did not feel free to express his own opinions, and "what I am not willing to say as coming from myself, I shall have his [Cosimo's] opponents say."⁴³ It was turned over to the second Medici Pope, Clement VII, in its incomplete form in 1525.

In 1521 the only (quasi) theoretical book of Machiavelli's published during his lifetime, *The Art of War*, was issued. In it he stressed once again the importance of a citizen army as a means of rallying the people in defense of the state and of educating them in the discipline and values of citizenship.⁴⁴ Of all his works this was perhaps dearest to his heart, because in it he was able to sum up everything he had learned from his study of warfare as conducted by the Roman Republic while adapting it, even in his lifetime, to the battlefields of Renaissance Italy. That much

of what he wrote was mistaken, ill-conceived⁴⁵ and insufficiently aware of the differences in war tactics brought about by the use of artillery, goes without saying. He nevertheless felt that such an army was absolutely essential to the revival of *virtu`* in the people and necessary for the maintenance of the *stato*.⁴⁶

During this same period, Machiavelli rejoined the community of discourse in the city and participated in many meetings of the *litterati* in the *Orti Oricellarii* (Gardens) belonging to the Rucellai family. In addition to discussing his thoughts and works with these young men initially in a somewhat guarded fashion⁴⁷, he also turned to writing poetry, plays, short stories, and for the entire time that he was unemployed, many, many letters to family, friends and acquaintances throughout Italy,⁴⁸ some of them humorous, raucous and bawdy, and some just eloquently sorrowful.⁴⁹

Among the most important of these works were the two plays that are perhaps of most interest to feminists, *La Mandragola* and *Clizia*, the plots of which have been summarized in the addendum to this volume. The chief protagonists in both works are women who demonstrate without a doubt, their ability to “rule a kingdom”. *La Mandragola* is considered by many to be the most important comedy to have been written during the Italian Renaissance⁵⁰, despite its somewhat unsavory “moral” (if one may use this term in this context). Other works include the story of *Belfagor, the Devil who Married, The (Golden) Ass*, a take-off on the work of Apuleius, *The Life of Castruccio Castroceni*, several tercets, including one on *Fortune*, several Carnival songs, three sonnets written to Giuliano dei Medici while he was

imprisoned, and an *Epigram* for Piero Soderini, which perfectly sums up his attitude towards “good men” who do not know how to “play the game” of politics to win:

That night when Piero Soderini died,
His spirit went to the mouth of Hell.
Pluto roared: “Why to Hell? Silly Spirit,
Go up into Limbo with all the rest of the babies.”⁵¹

Machiavelli’s last years were indeed bitter-sweet. After years of asking friends like Francesco Vettori, the Florentine ambassador in Rome, and Francesco Guicciardini, the Papal Governor of the Romagna, to intervene on his behalf with Rome to allow him to obtain some means of employment beyond the occasional commission for manuscripts, Machiavelli finally decided to go to Rome himself after the fall of Pavia in 1525⁵² to present his unfinished *Istorie* to the Pope and to plead the cause, not so much for his own employment⁵³, but for the establishment of a national militia to help defend the country against the Imperial armies that were poised to invade Italy *en masse*, and for the immediate fortification of the walls of the city of Florence against such an attack.

Nothing came of his plea for a national citizen army in Rome, probably because Guicciardini argued against arming the people of the Romagna who might not be loyal to the Pope.⁵⁴ But his constant efforts to warn the Pope and the Florentines on the need to strengthen the walls of the city in anticipation of a siege by the combined

German and Spanish armies of the Emperor Charles V, eventually led to the establishment of a body known as the “Five Curators of the Walls” with Machiavelli as its Chancellor. But neither he, nor the municipal government of Florence, nor the pleadings of Guicciardini could persuade Clement VII to spend the money necessary to complete the fortifications in time.⁵⁵ Instead, the Pope signed a series of truces with the Emperor and his rivals, the Colonna family of Rome, and, much to the dismay of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, disbanded his troops in an effort to save money (!). Those truces were almost immediately broken and Clement VII was imprisoned until he was able to pay a large ransom.⁵⁶

And when, in 1527, those armies did indeed come south, Florence barely escaped their initial onslaught but Rome did not. For eight days the starved, rapacious, undisciplined mob of German and Spanish troops sacked the city of Rome, killing, raping, and demanding ransom of thousands of the city’s inhabitants--cardinals, clergy, nuns, merchants, children as well as adults, rich and poor alike--to the extent that the waters of the Tiber ran red with blood.⁵⁷ Clement VII himself was forced to seek shelter, first in the Castel Sant’Angelo (Hadrian’s Tomb), and then to flee into exile to the city of Orvieto, just south of Florence. The pike marks of the German troops can still be seen on the walls of the Raphael *Stanze* in the Vatican, where, it is reported, horses were stabled. They left Rome months later after destroying many of the works of art and libraries of the city, and retreated to Naples heavily laden with gold objects and religious artifacts from churches, homes and monasteries alike.

The immediate effect was the overthrow of the Medici government in Florence and the return of the institutions of the Savonarolan republic. Machiavelli, now a worn-out, sick man of 58, believed that since he was currently in the Chancery working to complete the necessary fortifications for the city (while also serving periodically as an emissary for the government and Guicciardini), he would be retained. Instead, the man who had served as Second Secretary under the just-exiled Medici was appointed to the position with no thought of Machiavelli or of all the work he had already put into the project.⁵⁸

Having long been held suspect by the Medici for his republican connections, he now found himself distrusted not only for his Medicean connections, but also for his personal reputation as a *roue*' and because many Florentines believed that his writings had served to teach the tyrants how to despoil them of their liberties⁵⁹. Therefore, while others like Vettori and Guicciardini eventually survived the overthrow⁶⁰, Machiavelli did not. His social status was not sufficiently high enough for him to garner the kind of public support necessary for him to achieve a second political reincarnation under the restored republic, nor did he live long enough to join his friends Vettori and Guicciardini in the new Medici regime that was established in 1530.⁶¹

Machiavelli died on June 22, 1527, some say of a broken heart, but more likely of a ruptured stomach ulcer. The epitaph on his tomb⁶² in the Church of Santa Croce in

Florence reads: “*Tanto nomini nullum par elogium*” (“To such a name no eulogy is equal”). But perhaps a more apt epitaph should have read: “I love my native city more than my own soul”.⁶³

ENDNOTES

¹ Croce, Benedetto, *Quaderni della “Critica”* 5 No. 14 (July, 1949), 1-9.

² Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, New York: Penguin Books, 1979, pp. 25-79.

³ A very recent interpretation and application of Machiavelli’s doctrines as a democratic thinker, may be found in an article by John P. McCormick, “Machiavellian Democracy: Controlling Elites with Ferocious Populism”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95 (June 2001), pp. 297ff.

⁴ See McIntosh, below.

⁵ The information covered in the following pages owes much to the biographies of Machiavelli written by Pasquale Villari, *The Life and Times of Niccolò Machiavelli*, 2 vols., trans. Linda Villari, Haskell House, New York., 1892/1969; Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli*, trans. Cecil Grayson, Rutledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1954/1963; Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, and *Niccolò’s Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli*, trans. Anthony Shugaar, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2000; Federico Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, trans. David Moore, introd. A.P. D’Entreves, Harper & Row, New York, 1958; John Hale, *Machiavelli and Renaissance Italy*, The English Universities Press, Ltd., London, 1961; Quentin

Skinner, *Machiavelli*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1981; and Sebastian DeGrazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1989. If one wants to see examples of how his name is invoked, one need only examine the multitude of references in the editorials and commentaries of newspaper and magazine columnists over the appointment of Henry Kissinger by President George W. Bush to the commission to investigate the September eleventh bombings in November of 2002, and Michael A. Ledeen's book, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership: Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago*, St. Martin Press, New York, 1999.

⁶ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Afterthoughts", *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999, p. 332.

⁷ See especially Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966. The Florentines saw themselves as heirs to the Roman Republic carrying on the classic tradition of self-government. However, Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998, claims that "'Civic' humanism, during the late Quattro- and early Cinquecento, did not exist. Its origins lie in the political and intellectual history of the Weimar Republic. ..." p. 293.

⁸ Ridolfi, puts the number at 12 gonfalonieri and 54 priori, op. cit., p. 2. In fact, another Niccolò served in the Signoria during our Niccolò's lifetime, and caused considerable confusion for early historians.

⁹ See sketch by Leonardo da Vinci of the hanging of one of the conspirators in DeGrazia, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁰ Machiavelli implied (according to Ridolfi, p. 9) that Savonarola was a "fraud" and a "liar" when he said in a letter to Ricciardo Becchi two months before the friar's execution, "...he acts in accordance with the times and colors his lies accordingly". See Letter 3, 9 March, 1498, in James B. Atkinson and David Sices, trans, eds, introd., *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 1996, pp. 8-10. However, Marcia L. Colish argues that Machiavelli's objections to Savonarola had more to do with his use of politics to promote religious objectives than with any criticism of the republican structures of government Savonarola imposed on Florence, in: "Republicanism, Religion, and Machiavelli's Savonarolan

Moment”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 60, (October 1999), pp. 597ff.

¹¹ For extensive analyses of the reforms initiated by Savonarola as well as for detailed biographies of this Dominican monk, see: Pasquale Villari, *The Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola*, 2 vols., trans Linda Villari, Haskell House, New York, 1888/1969. See also J.C.L. De Sismondi, *A History of the Italian Republics*, introd. Wallace K. Ferguson, Peter Smith, Gloucester, MA, 1966/1970, for a one-volume summary of the history of the major Republics of Italy from the eleventh to the eighteen centuries.

¹² Godman disputes this, saying that there is no evidence that Machiavelli was ever a student of Adriani at the *Studio*, op. cit., p. 149.

¹³ For a biography of Caterina Sforza see: Ernst Breisach, *Caterina Sforza: A Renaissance Virago*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967. For an analysis of the accuracy of Machiavelli’s portrayal of Madonna Caterina, see: Julia L. Hairston’s “Skirting the Issue: Machiavelli’s Caterina Sforza”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 53, (Autumn, 2000), pp. 687ff. For Lorenzo di Credi’s portrait of the lady, see: J. H. Plumb, *The Italian Renaissance*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1961/1989, p. 140.

¹⁴ For the original report which Machiavelli wrote of his encounter with Caterina Sforza, see: Christian E. Detmold, ed trans *The Historical, Political and Diplomatic Writings of Niccolò Machiavelli*, 4 vols, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., New York, 1882/1891, vol. 3, pp. 6-26. The works in which he cites her activities are in: *The Prince*, Chapter 20; *The Discourses*, Book 3, Chapter 6; *The Art of War*, Book 7; and *The Florentine Histories*, Book 8, Chapter 34.

¹⁵ Letter 305, to Francesco Guicciardini, 15 March, 1526, Atkinson and Sices, op. cit., pp. 382-383.

¹⁶ For a history of these events see: Spencer M. Di Scala, *Italy from Revolution to Republic: 1700 to the Present*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995, and Rene Albrecht-Carrie`, *Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1950.

¹⁷ For Ramirro de Orco see: *The Prince*, Chapter 7; for the assassinations at Senigallia see: *The Prince*, Chapter 8, and the more detailed account written for the *Florentine Histories*, but never included in that volume, see: Allen Gilbert’s translations of Machiavelli’s *Chief Works and Others*, 3 vols. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1958/1989, Vol. 1, pp. 163-169.

¹⁸ See Letter 206 to Francesco Vettori (18 March, 1513), on his “pride” in having survived six pulls of

the rope and 22 days in manacles in the *Stinche*: “I consider myself more of a man than I believed I was”. Atkinson and Sices, *op. cit.*, p. 222. For a description and sketch of this particular form of torture, see: DeGrazia, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁹ *Princeps* in Latin, or “First Citizen”, previously the title of the leader of the Roman Senate, a republican title preferred by Augustus to that of Dictator assumed by Julius Caesar. For more on this distinction and its implications, see Leo Paul S. De Alvarez, *The Machiavellian Enterprise*, Northern Illinois University Press, De Kalb, 1999, chapter one.

²⁰ Letter 206, *op. cit.*

²¹ Godman, *op. cit.*, says it is more likely that Lorenzo never received the manuscript because “The gloved hand of the lay censor had reached out to Rome.” p. 236. For an in-depth analysis of the *eminence gris* overshadowing all of Machiavelli’s efforts to gain employment from the Medici and his latter-day limited success only after the temporary fall from grace of the First Secretary, Marcello Virgilio Adriani, see Godman, especially Chapter VI.

²² See: Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics, 1250-1600*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992, and Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d’Etat and its Place in Modern History*, trans. Douglas Scott, introd. W. Stark, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1957/1965. For an extensive evaluation of Botero’s work, see: Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, Chapter 3, pp. 60-84. For an excerpt see: Eric Cochrane and Julius Kirshner, eds, *Readings in Western Civilization*, 5 vols. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986, vol. 5: *The Renaissance*, pp. 230-251.

²³ On this point see Chabod, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-142.

²⁴ See Nederman and Morris, below.

²⁵ That Machiavelli himself was the dispassionate rationalist he is so often depicted is a matter of some dispute. See: Anthony J. Parel, “Machiavelli *Minore*” in *The Political Calculus: Essays on Machiavelli’s Philosophy*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, pp. 179-208.

²⁶ See: Ptolomy of Lucca , et. al.

²⁷ See De Alvarez, *op. cit.*, on this point, pp. 126-124. See also Thomas Flanagan, “The Concept of

Fortuna in Machiavelli” in Parel, op. cit., pp 127-156.

²⁸ See: Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), and Erasmus’ *A Disquisition Upon Free Will* (1524). See also Lorenzo Valla’s “Dialogue on Free Will” in Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oscar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr., eds. *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1948, pp. 155-182, for a humanist’s conflicted view of the matter.

²⁹ This concept has frequently been translated as “the end justifies the means”, based upon the statement made in Chapter 18 of *The Prince*, “*si guarda al fine*”. For the original Italian and a much more accurate translation of this phrase, see: Mark Musa, trans., ed. *Machiavelli’s The Prince: A Bilingual Edition*, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1964. See also, De Alvarez’ interpretation of this phrase, op. cit. p. 90, as well as John M. Najemy, *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters of 1513-1515*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, pp. 187-188. In my opinion, this last is the most accurate in assessing the sense implied by the phrase.

³⁰ See different interpretations of the concept of “prudence” in Zuckert below. See also De Alvarez, op. cit., p. 103ff and Eugene Garver, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1987. See also, Parel, op. cit., “Machiavelli’s Method and his Interpreters”, pp. 3-32.

³¹ For an interesting analysis of Machiavelli’s revolutionary “moral philosophy” and his “Un-Golden Rule” see De Grazia, op. cit., Chapter 12.

³² *The Prince*, Chapter 18.

³³ See Najemy, op. cit., p. 190, on the difference between *immaginazione* and *la verita` effettuale* in Machiavelli. See also, *The Prince*, Chapter 8.

³⁴ Allan Gilbert, trans, *Chief Works.. op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 170-174.

³⁵ For the more prominent negative criticisms of Machiavelli’s intentions see: Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, Free Press, Glencoe, 1958; Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996; Mark Hulling, *Citizen Machiavelli*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983; and to some extent, Vicki B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli’s Three Romes: Religion, Human Liberty and Politics Reformed*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 1996. Even Viroli (2000)

thinks it merely a “commissioned” piece, p. 258, and Godman, *op. cit.*, calls it “an exercise in an official genre, a sign of Machiavelli’s gradual return and partial acceptance”, p. 282. But Parel in “Machiavelli *Minore*”, *op.cit.*, thinks otherwise. Regarding the possibility that Machiavelli may have been a “closet” atheist, it is interesting to see how that term was used in the 16th century and why “Not until the end of the eighteenth century would a few Europeans find it possible to deny the existence of God.” Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993, p. 287. For a refutation of these criticisms of Machiavelli’s religious beliefs, see: Cary J. Nederman, “Amazing Grace: Fortune, God and Free Will in Machiavelli’s Thought.” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 60 (October 1999), pp 617ff.

³⁶ For a fascinating account of how the Medici used Machiavelli and made it impossible for him to complain when Agostino Nifo literally gutted the manuscript and published his own version as a white-washed handbook for princes, see Godman, *op. cit.*, pp. 255ff.

³⁷ See: Allan Gilbert, trans, *Chief Works...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 175 ff.

³⁸ “A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence”, *ibid*, pp. 101-115. For an analysis of this document as well as one written earlier, see Viroli (2000), *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201 and pp. 219-220.

³⁹ Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 106. Of course he suggested some tinkering with the elections process (a la` Cosimo), but he also advised that the Great Council, one of Savonarola’s most successful inventions, be retained.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴¹ Godman *op. cit.*, thinks Machiavelli and others were actually duped by Giulio dei Medici (later Clement VII) : “Machiavelli was made to seem the cardinal’s man...” p, 300.

⁴² Although Machiavelli entitled this work “*Istorie*” or “Histories”, Gilbert and others prefer to use the singular, “History”.

⁴³ Quoted by Allan Gilbert, *op. cit.*, Vol 3, p. 1028.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, vol. 2, pp. 561-726.

⁴⁵ At one point he attempted to drill some soldiers in a manner he thought appropriate and failed miserably. His hero at that time, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, smiled at his efforts and then showed him how it should be done: Ridolfi , *op. cit.*, p. 229; Viroli (2000), p. 241.

⁴⁶ For the various ways in which Machiavelli used this word, see: Mansfield, *op. cit.*, and Viroli (1992).

⁴⁷ They were originally supporters of the Medici but later several became involved in a conspiracy against them. Was this through Machiavelli's influence on his listeners as he read sections of the *Discourses* to them? See Ridolfi, *op. cit.*, p. 202, and Viroli (2000), p. 220.

⁴⁸ For some of the more recent collections and analyses of his letters, see: Najemy, *op. cit.*, and Atkinson and Sices, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ See especially Ridolfi *op. cit.*, p. 172: "*Io rido e il rider mio non passa drento; Io ardo e l'orison mia non par di fore*". (Freely translated: "I laugh and my laugh enters not within; I rage and my cry exits not without".) See also De Grazia, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

⁵⁰ Ridolfi, *op. cit.*, suggests it is the "best Italian play of all time", p. 175.

⁵¹ Allan Gilbert, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 1463. For the original Italian see: Allan Gilbert, ed., trans, *The Letters of Machiavelli*, Capricorn Books, New York, 1961, p. 28.

⁵² The defeat of the French army, Florence's traditional ally, opened up the entire country to invasion by the Imperial armies on their way from Milan to reclaim Naples as well.

⁵³ He had earlier been offered a high-paying job as advisor to Prospero Colonna in Rome but turned it down because he preferred to stay in Florence. Viroli, (2000), p. 203. It may also have been because the Colonna were viewed as enemies of the Pope and acceptance might have endangered his life and family in Florence. It was Soderini who informed him of the position during his own exile and before his death.

⁵⁴ Ridolfi, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁵⁵ Hale, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-169.

⁵⁶ Viroli (2000), p. 243; Hale, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁵⁷ For a detailed description of these events, see: Andre Chastel, *The Sack of Rome, 1527*, trans. Beth Archer, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977/1983.

⁵⁸ Interestingly enough, it was the plan devised for those fortifications by Michelangelo which was eventually accepted and acted upon by the city and which withstood an eight-month siege by the imperial forces in 1530.

⁵⁹ Ridolfi, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁶⁰ Both Vettori and Guicciardini fell out of favor after the fall of the Medici in 1527, but returned to become part of the new Medici regime under Duke Cosimo I. See: James Cleugh, *The Medici: A Tale of Fifteen Generations*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1975, p. 275, and Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1965, p. 274ff.

⁶¹ Hale, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁶² Quoted in Villari, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 508.

⁶³ Letter to Francesco Vettori, 16 April, 1527, Allan Gilbert (1961) p. 249. See also, Atkinson and Sices, *op. cit.*, p. 416, and Chabod, *op. cit.*, p. 141, who instructs us that the term Machiavelli actually used was *patria*. For the epitaph that Machiavelli jokingly said his friends had composed for him, see: Sebastian de Grazia, *op. cit.*, p. 385. De Grazia also holds that Machiavelli's true "love" expressed in his letter to Vettori was for Italy rather than for Florence per se: pp. 156, 351ff.

(Published as part of an Introductory Chapter to "Feminist Interpretations of Machiavelli" by Penn State Press in 2004.)