

Panel 2.1 Abstracts

Machiavelli and the “Modern Machiavellians”: Machiavelli and the Elite Tradition in Contemporary Political Thought**Natasha Piano**

University of Chicago (United States)

Contact: natashapiano@uchicago.edu

This paper brings Machiavelli back into conversation with the so-called “Modern Machiavellians”: Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto. While contemporary scholarship has put the Florentine thinker into fruitful discussion with the “revolutionary” tradition of Marxist authors on the one hand and the “republican” tradition of the Cambridge School on the other, I resuscitate Machiavelli’s conception of class conflict and leadership vis-à-vis The Italian School of Elitism. Many have argued that Mosca and Pareto drew from Machiavelli in order to legitimate representative institutions as the unqualified bedrock of modern mass democracy; on the contrary, I contend that Mosca and Pareto followed Machiavelli in his critique of such institutions, and in so doing, attempted to integrate Machiavelli’s anti-oligarchic and anti-plutocratic voice into their respective views of liberal democracy. The so-called “elite” theorists’ readings of Machiavelli, I argue, can help us reconcile both sides of Machiavelli’s political agenda: the lover of Roman senatorial *authoritas* in republican institutions and the critic of oligarchic threats that reside within them.

The analysis begins with an explication of the relevant portions of Mosca and Pareto’s purported “elite” theories of democracy. Drawing upon original archival research, I demonstrate the specific ways (and the specific passages) in which Mosca and Pareto intended to use Machiavelli’s teachings in *The Discourses*, both substantively and methodologically. I then deploy their readings to turn back to Machiavelli’s texts and explain why, according to Mosca and Pareto, such contrasting political lessons can be drawn from Machiavelli’s political thought. The conclusion of the essay explores why so many political thinkers of the twentieth century, such as H. Stuart Hughes and James Burnham, for example, assimilated Mosca and Pareto into a “Machiavellian” tradition that exclusively focused on the elite/representative elements of his thought at the exclusion of the anti-plutocratic strain.

Panel 2.1 Abstracts

Machiavelli's Lessons for Modernity: Normative Realism in Democracy**Eric Janec**

Binghamton University (United States)

Contact: ejanec1@binghamton.edu

I argue that a close reading of Hobbes and Machiavelli justifies an independently normative political realism. Hobbes describes the basic conditions of politics, while Machiavelli demonstrates its normative status independent of morality. Modern politics is not subject to the same specific concerns that Machiavelli considers, but his methodology clarifies the demands of politics on modern political actors, which require both the exercise of power, and additional contingent normative political considerations. As a result of these interpretations, modern Machiavellian politics include not just political leaders, but appointed officials and citizens as well. All members of a democratic polity are required to concern themselves with political normativity when acting politically.

Hobbes demonstrates that the conditions of politics are such that the politics produced by them are a *modus vivendi*; any additional requirements on the practice of politics will be contingent. The Hobbesian basic legitimation demand (BLD) of safety and security is achieved through an equal divestment of rights by all people to a political authority. Multiple models of political construction are possible, including a Machiavellian prince or a modern democracy, so long as they continuously satisfy the population's need for safety and security. As the BLD is continually satisfied and a political structure chosen, Machiavelli is then able to give us insight into how we should construct political normativity for a modern perspective.

Machiavelli describes the normative requirements of political power, based on the specifics of a given polity. These demands are political in nature, and independent of moral considerations. Isaiah Berlin claims that Machiavelli is describing a conflict between two moral codes, of honor and of the church but once the political is treated as normative without reference to the moral, Machiavelli's recommendations are better understood as the interplay of the distinct demands of political and moral normativity. Every political agent simultaneously occupies political and moral roles, with the rules for each type of activity determined by their separate normative demands.

Specific Machiavellian rules are not directly relevant to modern democratic nation-states, but the reasoning behind them is: political agents may act morally only when it does not conflict with normative political demands. In modern democracies political action requires the exercise of power, but it includes other normative requirements as well. Liberal democracy has secondary demands on its political actors, including universal freedoms of speech, representation, and so on. All of these are contingent to their given nation-states, but no less pressing for that contingency. Given the reality of these requirements, political agents must consider them even when acting politically.

These additional political demands remain less fundamental than safety and security, and so should be observed just until doing so would threaten the polity's ability to satisfy the BLD, without which politics is no longer possible. In those situations only, leaders should ignore any additional requirements, and citizens should not demand them. Moral compunctions about the hierarchy of the political should be ignored, just as Machiavelli shows that prince must ignore moral compunctions of his own.

Panel 2.1 Abstracts

The Prince's Populism**Miguel Saralegui**

Ikerbasque (Spain)

Contact: miguelsaralegui@gmail.com

Contemporary populism has stressed the special link that unites the people and the leader. The different populist movements do not rely on the institutions that are normally regarded as elitist, but in leaders. In this presentation, I will focus my attention in the way Machiavelli portrays the relationship between the «principe nuovo» and the people. The aim of this work is to stress that Machiavelli's description of this link is far more realistic and interesting than the one portrayed by Ernesto Laclau in *The populist reason*.

Why Machiavelli's concept of the link between people and prince is more interesting? First of all, he will not occult that the new prince needs to commit violence on the people. If the people may acknowledge the necessity of the transgression, this will not be erased of politics. Second, even if Machiavelli describes the society divided in «los de arriba-los de abajo» [the upper and the lower], he will show that the prince never belongs to «los de abajo» [the lower]. The prince is not a member of the people, is just an aristocrat that prefers to use the violence in an horizontal way and not in a vertical one.

Thanks to these two features, Machiavelli is capable to avoid the inclination of the populism to see an acritic ally in the leader that supports his political objectives.