

Panel 3.2 Abstracts

Machiavelli on Exodus 32: Moses and the combat of envy**Hugo Tavera Villegas**

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At the end of chapter 6 of *The Prince*, after pointing out that “nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders”, Machiavelli links this difficulty with a particular affect: envy (*invidia*). In effect, only when the innovators had “eliminated those who had envied them”, Machiavelli writes, they can “remain powerful, secure, honored, and happy” (P, 6, italics are mine). In the *Discourses on Livy*, the connection between the resistance to new orders and envy is outlined even more straightforwardly. This occurs in the 30th chapter of the third book, where Machiavelli writes that envy prevents the accomplishment of things very “useful for the fatherland”, and that “whoever reads the Bible judiciously will see that since he wished his laws and his orders to go forward, Moses was forced to kill infinite men who, moved by nothing other than envy, were opposed to his plans” (D, III, 30, italics are mine). This, the only direct mention of the Bible in all the book, is a reference to Exodus 32, specifically to the golden calf episode. Interestingly, neither in the Bible nor in the most authoritative interpretations of this passage envy is ever mentioned. This is a story about the sin of idolatry, not envy, and was cited almost exclusively in the context of the debates over religious persecution and holy war, that is, regarding the perpetual struggle between members of the *civitas Dei* and pagans (inhabitants of the earthly city). Machiavelli’s reading also locates this event on a conflictual terrain. Nevertheless, by omitting God and His orders Machiavelli transfigures a theological conflict between good and evil into a political one, a conflict that confronts Moses (his orders) and those who opposed him “moved by... envy”. Moreover, while interpreters like Harvey Mansfield had argued that if Moses was forced to kill “infinite men” it was because all men were his rivals, I will argue that Moses’s rivals, the enemies of the new regime were not all the people but the *grandi*. The reference to envy is key here: it leads us toward another revolt against Moses (“in the camp they grew envious of Moses”) by “250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council” (Numbers 16:1). The second topic discussed by Machiavelli in *Discourses III, 30* is how to order the defense against city’s enemies. On this he commends that the multitude has to take arms with “certain order and...mode”. I will conclude arguing that from this it is possible to argue that for Machiavelli the only way to combat the envious is by arming (“with certain order”) the people. Only by doing this Moses was able to conquer envy and secure his laws.

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The Dilemmatic Nature of Politics in Machiavelli's Thought**Waldemar Hanasz**

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The critics of Machiavelli's thought have considered his major notions equivocal and some argumentations logically incoherent. Others – even when accepting some critical observations – attempt to find a common denominator consolidating his diverse notions. The subject of this paper is to demonstrate that both sides miss the point. The apparent ambiguities and dichotomies constitute, in fact, a key feature defining Machiavelli's vision of politics.

Machiavelli explicitly declares a binary structure of his reasoning. He defines numerous concepts as opposing "either-or" distinctions between extremes and emphatically rejects solutions based on any compromising "middle way". Many concepts follow this pattern. His fundamental understanding of knowledge is divided between factual empiricism and abstract theoretical constructs; he uses methods of rational analysis as well as rhetorical persuasion based on emotional appeal. Two political goals – republican liberty and imperial expansion – seem to be in conflict yet both are ultimate. The means of achieving these goals are also dichotomous: both ruthless autocratic rule and the invisible rule of soft power can be optimal. In effect, two forms of political regimes – autonomous republics and autocratic principedoms – are both legitimate. Machiavelli deliberately and systematically constructs such notions to demonstrate the dilemmatic nature of politics. Thus, while acting in public affairs one has to face dilemmas that are contradictory and unsolvable.

One may argue that Machiavelli's vision remains valid in contemporary politics. There are not only conflicts of interests between countries and governments. Some conflicts are deeper, touching the very essence of politics. There are, for instance, intrinsic contradictions between liberty and security as ultimate values crucial for citizens, between liberalism and populism as dominating ideologies, between liberal democracies and populist autocracies as political regimes, between the policies of consensus and divisive partisanship. These unsolvable dilemmas will not go away soon.

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Between Form and Matter: Rethinking Machiavelli's Concept of Corruption**Gio Maria Tessorolo**

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The aim of this paper is to analyse Machiavelli's treatment of corruption by putting forward two interrelated claims. The first is that the lexis of corruption is used by Machiavelli to characterize two distinct levels of reflexion, the individual and the collective one. By defining it as a process based on anthropological and appetitive traits shared by all human beings, such as depicted not only in the Discourses but also in "minor" works e.g. the Capitoli or the The Golden Ass, individual corruption can be thought of as the inevitable outcome of any interaction between human nature and the social dimension, with passions such as ambition and avarice as its clearest epiphenomena. At the moment of the foundation, politics attempts to mould human "matter" into moral and psychological "forms", which are however always partial and unstable: as Discourses 3.I makes clear, even in the best republic all the individual members of the population are constantly undergoing a process of corruption and there is no way to prevent it. From another point of view, the terms *corruzione* and *corrotto* are also used in Machiavelli's writings to indicate the presence of phenomena such as inequality, sects and partisans, which are social processes, only indirectly related to the individuals' passions and behaviour, and which will eventually cause the death of the republic.

The second claim is that, since all States are always to a certain degree corrupt at the individual level, virtuous politics should not try to eliminate individual corruption but instead to deal with it in a shrewd way. Most of the theoretical structures presented by the Discourses can therefore be understood not as ways to prevent "microscopic" corruption but to hinder its turning into a "macroscopic" phenomenon: prescriptions such as the tolerance of "good" conflicts or going back to principles are basically means to make human nature express itself in a way that does not forge a link between individual and collective corruption, which is what (in contrast to a "Mandevillian" perspective) according to Machiavelli would otherwise happen. The interplay between virtue and corruption is not a confrontation between two forces, one either winning or losing against the other, but an interaction: virtue always defines itself in terms of degree against the constant presence of corruption and vice versa. Such a nuanced understanding of this dynamics is surprisingly similar to the one present in Rousseau's Social Contract, in which corruption is a largely overlooked theme which nonetheless plays a crucial role. Moreover, this link between these two thinkers provides us with a valuable lesson in political realism, reminding us that politics' goal should often be, rather than a "perfectionist" conception of republican citizenship, a more modest and concrete strategy intended to deal with the "effectual truth": in a world in which corruption is frequently condemned but seldom analysed from the theoretical point of view, recovering the complexity of Machiavelli's analysis can be a step towards a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

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Killing the Innocent in the 16th Century and Today**Brian Smith**

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In the 16th century, there emerged several novel ways to explain or justify the killing of innocent people. The Spanish Moralistic tradition (Vitoria, Molina, Vasquez, and Ayala) had modified certain features of Aquinas' principle of double effect, which allowed for the unintentional killing of innocents as a side-effect of justified military operations. Around this same time, a martialist tradition (Rich, Williams, Styward, and Smythe) arose which saw the death of innocents largely as a breakdown in planning or in military discipline. The innocent die at the hands of the incompetent and the unwise. Through the science of military affairs, unintended death would simply not occur. And perhaps the most consequential development of this period was Machiavelli's claim that a prince may need to transgress the boundaries of moderation out of necessity. Innocent people may be killed by way of 'well applied' cruelty for the 'common good.' While each of these three traditions have influenced contemporary military ethical discourse in key ways, this paper will argue that Machiavelli's position is the best suited to reign in some of the excesses of 'double effect' and 'martialist' thinking that dominate the civilian casualties debate today.