

Methodologies of targeting – Renaissance militarism attacking Christianity as ‘weakness’

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Dates:

Received: 24 July 2012

Accepted: 05 June 2013

Published: 13 Dec. 2013

How to cite this article:

Venter, J.J., 2013,
‘Methodologies of targeting
– Renaissance militarism
attacking Christianity as
“weakness”’, *Koers – Bulletin
for Christian Scholarship*
78(2), Art. #62, 17 pages.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/
koers.v78i2.62](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/koers.v78i2.62)

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Intellectuals in the post-Medieval West, striving for scholarly emancipation, developed methodologies to target so as to free themselves from the dominant Christian, largely Roman Catholic, intellectual tradition. Machiavelli was one such critic, calling for the reprimand of pre-Christian classics. Such methodologies are never without an inherent quest for power. Machiavelli developed a Classicist, ‘heroic exemplar’ hermeneutic in order to extol the republicanist, manly, ferocious, imperialist virtues of Rome, *vis-à-vis* the divisive, meek, caring, justice-seeking, unpatriotic, Christian leaders of his day. He therefore initiated Modern ideological militaristic competitiveness with its mutually suspicious balance of powers practices. This article forms part of a series of articles on methodologies of targeting groups.

Teikenmetodologieë – Renaissance militarisme val die Christendom as ‘swakheid’ aan.

In die na-Middeleeuse Weste het intellektuele, in hul strewe na wetenskaplike emansipatie, metodologieë ontwikkel om hulself van die dominerend-Christelike, meesal Rooms-Katolieke, intellektuele tradisie te bevry. Machiavelli was een so ‘n kritikus; hy het gestreef na ‘n reprimand na die voor-Christelike Klassieke. Sulke metodologieë is nooit sonder ‘n inherente magstrewer nie. Machiavelli het ‘n Klassistiese, ‘heroïes eksemplaristiese’ hermeneutiek ontwikkel om die republikeinse, manlike, aanvallende, imperialistiese deugde van Rome te vereer, in teenstelling met die verdelende, sagsinninge, sorgsame, reg-soekende, onpatriotiese Christelike leiers van sy tyd. Hy het toe die Moderne ideologiese militaristiese kompetereidheidsidee met sy onderling-suspisieuse magsbalansgedagte ontwikkel. Hierdie artikel vorm deel van ‘n reeks van sulke metodologieë wat groepe teiken.

Anticipating ideological modernity

As part of a wider study, which could be entitled: presuppositional philosophical apologetics from a Christian perspective, I have engaged in studying philosophical critiques of and attacks on Christianity, initially focused on the criticisms presented by William James [1913], Niccolò Machiavelli and Voltaire. In terms of a presuppositional analysis (an ontological transcendental critique), I have attempted to uncover the trench and the angle from which the salvos came. In the available Western primary literature since the Renaissance, different forms of Christianity (especially Catholicism) have often been targeted by philosophers. In a superficial reading of these texts, Christians may tend to counter the attacks by criticising the ‘facts’ presented: Christians have killed so many people during the Crusades, the witch-hunts, and so forth.

What appears to be neglected is exactly the uncovering of the trenches and angles: the presuppositions and perspectives that carry the attacks. Especially forgotten here is the type of telescopic sight used to aim at the target. Westerners have a special respect for method and technique; they tend to view them as innocent means to be used to reach one’s goals, as if neither one’s worldview nor one’s aims have any influence on the internal structure of the means, whether apparatus, plans, procedures or recipes. One of the most common of perspectives is the present adage of the pro-gun lobby: ‘Guns do not kill people; people kill people.’

My purpose in this article is to focus the presuppositional apologetics exactly on *the technical side of criticisms of Christianity* – guns are structured to kill or maim. Certain critical methodologies – such as that of William James or Voltaire or Machiavelli – have been structured in such a way that Christianity in particular is targeted. My argument will be that the principles behind Machiavelli’s ontology, his philosophical anthropology, his view of society and especially of scholarship, led him to structure his scholarly method in such a format that Christians could not but emerge from his analysis as the villains of society. In short, *the method is prejudiced because the designer of the method was prejudiced.*

In a thoroughgoing article entitled ‘Outlines of a deontology of scientific method’, Stoker (1970) analyses the norms relevant to scholarly methods. One of the important norms he points to is

that methods, being plans, have to be structured such that they reach the goals of scholarship. This, of course, implies that in specific cases the methods have to be structured so that the specific aims of the investigation are reached – guns have been structured as technical means to certain ends. In war, the position of the marksmen (their trench or starting point), the angle from which they aim (positional perspective), the position of the enemy, are all determinants of the efficiency of the attack. All of these converge in the plan and thus in the efficiency of execution. A complete method can never be reduced to the technical apparatus, but if the barrel of the gun is crooked, all other skills will be in vain. Thus the aim of the gun has to be structured into the gun – it is a necessary condition for the efficient execution of the total plan.

In my analysis of William James, Voltaire and here also of Machiavelli, I have found that their (quite important) critiques of Christianity have been prejudiced to a serious extent. Thus one finds attacks on Christian viciousness (Voltaire), Christian inefficient meekness (James) and the fairness and just actions of Christian leaders (Machiavelli). The fact that these criticisms clearly contradict one another in some respects shows that the facts of the matter (at least those taken into account) have not been decisive for the judgements made.

Methods are artefacts, determined from two sides: the objective and the subjective. On the objective side the field of study has a decisive role: one can study a physical object by hitting it with a hammer, but hitting a poem with a hammer will not tell us anything about the meaning of the poem. I do realise that there is a bond between the two fields: studying the physical properties of the material the poem is written on may help us to date the poem and therefore help us to find the lingual context of the words. The structure of the method will have to reflect the nature of the field of study.

On the subjective side, in scholarship (and probably in general), the aims are usually determined by problems experienced or changes to be made. Whereas specialised animals are at home in some environments and not in others, the human being is fairly unspecialised and therefore – to a certain extent – a misfit in every environment. ‘Culture’, including ‘planning’, is humankind’s way of coping with this apparent misfit: the human being changes the environment to a large extent in order to be at ease and at peace in it.¹ Karl Jaspers would say that God speaks in secret code in order to set us free and let us do the decoding as the situation directs us. Modernity has read ‘providence’ (‘nature’) as coercing us to become lords and owners of nature autonomously, for own advantage (Venter 2012a:ch. 5; 2012b:chs. 3, 4, 5).

1. Modernity, as it became more secularised, provided all kinds of naturalistic explanations for this incongruence between humankind and environment. Turgot and Kant transformed ‘providence’ into ‘nature’. ‘Nature’ then becomes the motor force to push humankind beyond paradisiacal animalism (the fitting environment of the animal) into an inimical world with infinite possibilities and lots of suffering for the sake of finding itself as the rational summit of progress. The misfit is thus open-ended and has in fact to build up itself autonomously. In Irrationalism this doctrine of postponed rationality becomes the doctrine of continuously postponed and situationally recovered essence of the open-ended, autonomous human being.

This latter view shows the subjective determinant of Modern methodologies: our deepest trust relationships and foundational beliefs will co-determine the structures of our plans. Humans have aims regarding their environment. Since Pico in the Renaissance, the belief has been cultivated that humankind has to take responsibility for its own essence. The environment includes other human beings whom we may regard as not having realised as much of their humanness as we have, or who may be seen as obstructing the realisation of the full potential of all or part of humanity. How are plans evolved with regard to groups of belief systems that seem obstructive of another group’s ideas of the direction the ‘world’ has to take? The power of the planning group will come into play here: again, this will be a determinant of the structure of the method.

I have mentioned the basis of Modernity, an ontology of mastery and appropriation and human self-advantaging. Modernity did not come about by a Copernican revolution in which all old ideas suddenly disappeared and totally new ones emerged. It rather came about by continuous bends and recombining Ancient and Medieval ideas that created new growth during the Renaissance and early Modernity. One of the central shifts was a reaction against Christianity as taught and practised by especially the Roman Catholic Church. Towards Middle Modernity, after the Reformation had established itself, Lutheranism and the Reformed tradition also became targets (e.g. in De Saint-Simon’s [1825] *Nouveau Christianisme*).

For now my focus is on Machiavelli. Not only was he quite influential in this area, but many of his own ideas are clear anticipations of Modern attitudes towards Christianity.

Machiavelli as proto-Modern critic of Christianity

Machiavelli (1469–1527) is one of the most outstanding examples of antipathy towards Christian goodness. He was a Renaissance classicist, oriented very much towards the military cultures of Sparta and Rome. His attitude was that of ‘restitution’, that is, to recover the Classical Age in its pristine form. Antipathy towards Christianity constructed as a scholarly methodology has a long history. All too often this antipathy has been part of civility since the Renaissance. Unexpectedly, Christians have been attacked, not for the outrages of the Crusaders, the popes or the church hierarchies, the witch-hunts and so forth but: *for being such nice people: peaceful, fair and caring*.

Intellectuals tend to focus on what other intellectuals say or do not say. Machiavelli, like William James, confused theological doctrine with religious practice, even though expressions such as ‘strength to suffer’ indicate that Machiavelli may have had a somewhat deeper understanding of Christian practice (see Venter 2013).

However, he should have taken the mendicant friars and the Franciscans more seriously. Christians who have

the strength to suffer are in fact people of action and determination. They are prepared to serve in circumstances of suffering; to suffer with those who suffer. Strength in suffering is not an end in itself; martyrdom is not something to be sought after; it is imposed by the powerful who fear those attempting to fulfil their calling to justice and care (Overduin n.d.: 7ff.).

As with all worldviews, Christianity has its deviants. I do not believe it has more devious people than any other belief system. The truth of the matter, however, is that in South Africa charismatic Christians, sometimes ridiculed for their literal use of the Bible and for their sentimentalism, have been doing and spending much more for the sake of the poor than the pretentious left-wing government.

One could also say that James was a late-ideologue and Machiavelli an early-ideologue. Calling them 'post-' and 'pre-' ideologues would imply a 'having left behind' and 'a not yet', as in 'post-' and 'pre-Modern' (see Venter 2013). This actually implies a neglect of historical continuity. A historical shift implies continuity.² If ideology is a phenomenon of Modernity, then in many ways James (with other Pragmatists, supposedly a grandpa of 'Post-Modernism') is late-Modern and Machiavelli, being early-Modern, provides anticipations of his views.

They shared the *form* or format of ideology – *end-driven* strategic thinking without ado. Machiavelli (followed by Hobbes [1946], Rousseau, Voltaire and all supporters of the French Revolution, and also Kant to a certain extent) adopted the Ancient pagan tribalist view of the state. Regarding the latter as a new 'encompassing whole', they had no patience with people who would not serve *their* divinity. Rousseau (DCS, Bk IV:ch. 8) really denigrated the meekness of this international religion, Christianity, as untrustworthiness, as did Nietzsche a century later (*GM, Erste Abhandlung*:7).

Machiavelli anticipated Modernity up to and including late Modernity, for that matter: he developed many doctrines that have been absorbed into Modern intellectual culture. In fact, his teaching is often quite near to what is called 'Post-Modernism'. The latter pretends to have emptied out all doctrine, leaving only the empty shell of procedures – template-like technical science in which means follow upon means – the ends being hidden. In their denial of grand (ideological) causes, they still serve hidden Modern norms. The early-Modern Machiavelli and the late-Modern James, for example, share:

2.'Ideology' is rooted in Modern forms of Neo-Platonism but has developed beyond it. In Plato, ideas were ontic absolutes, a world in themselves, that determine the earthly world in a mimetic sense. In Modernity, Ideas have become subjective absolutes and a universal transcendental subject had to be construed as arguing for the universality of these Ideas. Ideology came into being as elitist claims to have insight into these governing universal Ideas, especially the idea of 'freedom' (more or less in the vicinity of Hegel and Fichte). Within the naturalistic inversions of Idealism, a shift occurred: the 'Ideas' became determining historical causes led by the *final cause* of human progress. Ends became inevitable laws, led by this or that group, absorbing others into the struggle for the 'cause'. A final cause still has clear contents. As the faith in progress collapsed, the final cause disappeared with its content and the intermediate causes remained (apparently without content). Thus the form, presented as method remains: one has to restate ends upon ends. This means the subject, whether social or individual, remains in search of ends. The struggle for the cause, as before, remains and, as before, it is by and large a struggle for the cause of the powerful.

- A trust in *method* that supposedly will guarantee finding both the correct way and the road to the good life – Renaissance pre-Modernity and Irrationalist late-Modernity are both located in the continuity of Western intellectual history.
- A *distrust of Christian voluntary kindness*, given its practical inefficiency (each in terms of his own expectations of an efficient or effective doctrine).
- A strong *belief in a strictly 'empirical scientific' approach*, even though their ideas of the 'empirical' may differ. Machiavelli put his trust in historiography, taking the old narratives as empirical evidence; James was a bit more playful in experimenting and observation.
- A deep conviction that conceptual work had to find its real fulfilment in practical activity and change, James from a subjectivistic pragmatist perspective, Machiavelli from an (apparently) objectivistic practicistic³ viewpoint.
- A situationistic (local) focus – doctrines had to work in specific situations, and to a certain extent the situation, being problematic, was given a prescriptive role. But the difference in conception here is strong, bound up as it is with the historical position of each. Machiavelli believed in a fixed world cycle, which supposedly made replication of earlier events possible – a pre-Rationalist Aristotelian scientism – whereas James supposed an experimental trial-and-error process to find what works best – a post-Positivist scientism where laws, as expressed in rules, were but approximations.

The most important shared conception between Machiavelli and James is this: Machiavelli provides an early-ideological anticipatory approximation (not much clear content yet), whereas James presents us with a late-ideological, formalistic, methodological emptiness.

Machiavelli was quite clear about his favoured *faraway ends*: the stability of a republican empire. He was also clear about the *broad means* to reach this: instilling civil virtue in the sovereign and replication of its exemplars from the Classical era. But given his practicism, the normative content directing the methodical execution remains vague. However, basic concepts such as 'civil virtue' allowed for much leeway and left the guiding norms almost empty.

The broad framework of his *method* was made clear: *compare the virtues of Ancient times with the weaknesses of today* (the fragmentation and instability of Italy as such and Europe at large). But with what aim? And according to which criteria have the aims been developed?

Civil virtue is the criterion. Let us, as an initial working hypothesis, assume that 'virtue' indicates a socially acceptable moral life, and that 'civil' indicates life as a citizen of a political

3.Three different terms express three different views of the relationship between thinking and practical life. Practicism has objectivistic tendencies – it says that we can only find truth via practical experience in objective situations; thinking is near to remembering the recipe. Practicalism says that rational logic about practical situations will make us practical. Fichte went as far as saying that if one is a good student of philosophy, then knowing how to cook one's own meals will follow all by itself. Practicalism teaches universal rational plans for similar situations. Pragmatism stands near-practicalism in the sense that subjective planning comes before application, but there is an interaction: one can force fit the empirical into one's plans, but a shifting reality will force us to renew our plans continuously by experimenting.

community. One may then infer that for Machiavelli being a valuable or useful citizen of a strong political community has some supremacy when one has to determine one's way of life and that any supreme norm or value or belief system that requires a different loyalty would have to face up to severe criticism and even denigration. 'Civil virtue' in so many different formats in fact became the supreme law for so many Modern thinkers (including the liberal individualists) that in this respect (as will be unpacked below) Machiavelli was a proto-Modern thinker.

When 'virtue' becomes the critical point of difference with another group, then surely one will have to identify the enemies of virtue and take up a polar extreme position against them. *The means have to be determined in terms of one's conception of virtue.*

In Machiavelli's case, virtue meant *Romanist* republican stability as established by manly ferocity (over and against Christian meekness) – the precursor of Nietzschean and also Fascist virtue. 'Civil virtue' – as a formal idea – indicates being a useful and loyal citizen in the Roman (and Spartan) sense.

Classicism

Like the majority of later Renaissance thinkers, Machiavelli adopted the Classicist position (quite uncritically), defending 'virtue' by playing out the 'virtue' of the Classical era against the deviations from 'virtue' in his own days. As opposed to the meek Christians, the pure Classical era was good, he believed, given its militaristic ferocity. Some two centuries later, Voltaire would swap the characterisations: Classical civilisation was not really violent; the Christians have been brutal (but that's for another article).

Recovering the pristine classics

Renaissance Classicism's 're-priming' was unsuccessful in regaining the pristine Ancient Classical; it inverted itself into a search for novelty. No re-priming can ever be successful: the 'good old days' can never return; recovered ideas require *re-thinking*. Between the Renaissance and the Ancient Classical era about fourteen centuries of Medieval Christianity and its intellectual culture, feudal socio-economic structures, lords and vassals, popes and priests, had passed by and had left consequences. The struggle between pope and emperor, between princedoms and republics, between town and gown, which Machiavelli attempted to solve, was simply not part of the issues in Sparta and Rome. In Machiavelli the 'newly new' occurred in the method (*hermeneutics*) of recovering the 'oldest old' – the normal irony of re-priming:

- On the one hand, the Renaissance elaborated on the old: Cicero, Livius, Ovidius, Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism, Romanism, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, even the Pre-Socratics reappeared in so many forms, but the contributions of the Middle Ages were wilfully ignored. Thus, older issues (such as that of 'universals' for

example) that had been milled and baked to the limits during the Middle Ages, were revisited.

- On the other hand, the contributions of the Middle Ages did survive in different formats, mostly without acknowledgement (the 'solutions' of the Middle Ages were often endorsed).

Once the adoration of the 'heroic' Classical era had taken root, every aspect of Ancient culture was idealised or heroicised. The Neo-Marxists have often pointed out that good ideas easily become oppressive established dogmas. Machiavelli's striving to recover the Roman republic – an empire – was an *oppressive impossibility* – the supposed Spartan and Roman belief in a harsh life and permanent struggle for an empire was not attractive to Renaissance citizenship; *every city had its own nationalism*. Looking the other way in cases of corruption and murder as means to good statesmanship (though eclectically refined by Machiavelli) was not attractive either; the citizen could not but ask: When is it my turn to become the victim?

Quite simply, the structure of the developing 'Modern' urban society with a new economic system, a growing formalised education, political parties, princedoms, technology in warfare, the printing and distribution of information, and the reformation of the church – none of these was a primary issue in Ancient Rome. Machiavelli (1975) himself had already begun to theorise free individual market competitiveness based on the insatiable appetites of humankind (*Disc.*, II, 2:9), thus leaving Rome and Sparta behind.

Yet Machiavellian Classicism survived in the Italian nationalistic scholarly spirit and was revived in the late 19th century and early 20th century in the form of Fascism, with its militaristic and Roman symbols (Hegel and Nietzsche making their contributions to this). The idealisation of the Classical era made it difficult to break the shackles of Classicism. *The struggle to be pristinely Classical dialectically included how to be radically new*. Machiavelli claimed to have a *new method* for reading the Classics, so that they became socially *relevant to his own days*.

Adherents of the idea of 'science for science's sake' will find it difficult to show really pure examples supporting their belief. Machiavelli and others explicitly connected their scholarly procedures with extra-scholarly interests for leadership, and there were those like Descartes who knowingly withdrew from social life. Yet none of them claimed that what they had to say had no implications for praxis; in Descartes's case, in fact, the opposite was claimed. One could take up a 'neutralist' viewpoint in astronomy, as Copernicus seems to have done, or in present-day astrophysics, or – in the short term – in Kuhnian paradigmatic research. Somewhere, however, human purposiveness will surface, and be traceable further back in and at the basis of the methodological plan.

Re-priming, then, is home to an inherent dialectic: any attempt to go back in time tends to fast track a movement away from the past.

Novelty

In their desire to leave the 'Christian Middle Ages' behind – a clear purpose based on normative choices – Renaissance and early Modern thinkers overstated their claims to novelty, often quite ironically: *the very old was explicitly recovered as the very new*. In this respect, *method* supported the claim: one could claim that the very old is brought up to date through *totally new means*.

Another way to strengthen the idea of originality is to play one's own work out against the generally known, the products of one's contemporaries and of the most recent past. The faraway past rests in the shadows of history. The sharper one can profile one's own work over against the recent past, the more original it will appear. One can strengthen this profile by making one's contemporaries and direct predecessors appear bad, whilst polishing one's own contributions. Machiavelli was a master of this strategy – using the supposedly very old whilst pretending to give us something radically new; so did Descartes, Voltaire and even William James.

Machiavelli represented his procedure as a totally, even a dangerously, *new* way of reading the very old. He presented the very old as a new way to cope with contemporary problems, because the new is always old and the old always new – history (*causally* understood) can be repeated if the (*causally* understood) correct initiatives are taken.

Some aspects of Machiavelli's method can surely be characterised as innovations – innovations that served his personal Classicist prejudices against Medieval and Renaissance Christendom (especially in its Roman Catholic form). However, even methodologically he was firmly rooted in the Classical era, especially in Aristotle. Even though he ascribed the perceptions of dangers in his proposals to envy, it is also clear that his views held dangers for the powers that be:

- Taking sides in a power struggle and preaching that the end justifies any means to remain in power – this makes one vulnerable to attacks from the opposition.
- Allowing for crime as a justified means to sustain civil power surpasses one's right to freedom of thought, speech, information and even academic freedom.
- Loyalty is not to be expected from a supporter who believes that the ends justify the means, so Machiavelli's powerful friends might have feared the practice of his theories too near to themselves.
- Preaching republican freedoms in an environment in which even republicans were often power-manipulators was even more dangerous.
- Republican governments were often run by powerful families acting as political parties – thus a balance-of-power republicanism, as proposed by Machiavelli, could land on hard soil.
- In spite of the progressive decline of the powers of the Roman Catholic Church, attacking its power in even a nuanced way – as both Machiavelli and Dante Alighieri

did – was surely quite a dangerous undertaking. This Church had, since the 12th century, been pushed onto the back foot by oppositional currents such as the Joachimists, the Cathars, the Albigensians, the Pre-Reformation and the Reformation, the Mendicant Friars (all born within its own structures). There was a continuous struggle between religious and secular authorities from the summit down to the local authorities. The Church showed overt sensitivity towards any kind of challenge, as Galilei and Descartes experienced even in the seventeenth century.

Classicism and militarism – Constructing a methodology

In the Preface to the *Discorsi* Machiavelli (1975) claims novelty for his method and gives the principles for its operation. This we have to read intensively in the light of his methodological practices in the *Discorsi*. Important here is not the novelty itself but its hidden sting: *a method structured to attack, to unmask*. Unmasking is also the hidden purposive criterion of Pragmatism in the sense that showing the inefficiency of the opponent is a requirement in Pragmatist critique:

Extract 1: Although owing to the envy inherent in man's nature it has always been no less dangerous to discover new ways and methods than to set off in search of new seas and unknown lands because the generality of mankind are much more ready to belittle than to praise another's actions, none the less, impelled by natural desire I have always had to labour, regardless of anything, on that which I believe to be for the common benefit of all, I have decided to enter upon a new way, as yet untrodden by anyone else.

When, therefore, I consider in what honour antiquity is held, and how – to cite but one instance – a bit of an old statue has fetched a high price that someone may have it by him to give honour to his house and that it may be possible for it to be copied by those who are keen on this art ... and when, on the other hand, 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 worn themselves out in their country's service, is rather admired than imitated; nay, is so shunned by everybody in each little thing they do, that of the virtue of bygone days there remains no trace, it cannot but fill me at once with astonishment and grief ... in constituting republics, in maintaining states, in governing kingdoms, in forming an army or conducting a war, in dealing with subjects, in extending the empire, one finds neither prince nor republic who repairs to antiquity for examples.

This is due in my opinion not so much to the weak state to which the religion of today has brought the world, or to the evil wrought in many provinces and cities of Christendom by ambition conjoined with idleness, as to the lack of a proper appreciation of history, owing to people failing to realise the significance of what they read ... Hence it comes about that the great bulk of those who read it take pleasure ... but never think of imitating them, since they hold them to be not merely difficult but impossible of imitation, as if the heaven, the sun, the elements, and man had in their motion, their order, and their potency, become different from what they used to be.

Since I want to get men out of this wrong way of thinking, I have thought fit to write a commentary on all those books of Livy ... It will comprise what I have arrived at by comparing ancient with

modern events, and think necessary for the better understanding of them, so that those who read what I have to say may the more easily draw those practical lessons which one should seek to obtain from the study of history. (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, Preface, 1–3)

The quote, somewhat lengthy, condenses all the important aspects of Machiavelli's strategy:

- a self-endangering one
- the importance of the Classical era for one's own days
- the weakening of people by religion
- the importance of comparing old-time virtue with present-day vice.

The first important point he makes is that fellow Renaissancists appreciate the Classical era *for the wrong reasons and thus in the wrong way*. They were honouring the Classics as a bygone era never to be recovered again. Thus a component of the novelty of his method would be: *how to understand the Classical heritage as relevant for the present*.

He felt at home in *Romanist* Classicism where the security of the *Roman* civil state was of prime importance. The Romans lived a competitive life: from the North the Germans and the French were threatening; from the South the Arabs (Hannibal not to forget). He was a descendant of these glorious Romans. Their glory had to be recovered. In Italy this striving for Ancient glory remained all through the unification movement (Mazzini, Garibaldi, etc.) up into the *fasces* symbolising Fascism. His Romanist heroic exemplarism was a militarism reinserted into the Western worldview. Western social thought really submerged itself into the militaristic aspects of Classicism.

Hobbes restructured militarism into a view of the human being as an individual: *to be a warmonger is a strong component of being-human*. Militarism, combined with the doctrine of balance of powers in free competition, became the mechanism of progress and of structuring international politics. In 18th century Romanist militarism the ideal of the balance of powers also became part of republicanism and Enlightenment civil religion. Marcuse saw in Kant a liberal Lutheran, but not even Kant escaped the deeper militarism in his social views, as is clear from his later essays, amongst them *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerliche Absicht* (Kant 1975a; Marcuse 1983:79–94).

In Machiavelli, military Classicism became methodised. Militarism, patriotism, and heroism are closely associated ideas. He did not work with an abstract history. His was more of a genial and heroic type of historiography. Machiavelli's historiographical and political exemplarism was a down-to-earth one. He lauds the admiration of the classics but laments the fact that imitation is neglected. How is it, he asks, that we read the classics only for pleasure?

Different classicisms

Forms of Classicism had been present in the West since the Hellenistic and early Christian era. To differentiate between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance on the basis

that the Renaissance was a return to the Classical era is to misunderstand a large part of Western history. The Classical era has always been present but in limited and 'mixed' formats, from long before the Renaissance until long after it had ended. Early Christianity integrated especially Plato and the Stoics into Christian doctrine; scholasticism recovered different forms of Aristotelian thought, initiating the search for a more pristine Aristotle. In the aftermath of Renaissance Classicist and 18th century Neo-Classicist education Romanist patriotism was indirectly taught in South African schools via history and via Latin at least until a few decades ago (which, together with mathematics, was seen as an 'elite' subject for 'intelligent' minds).

The earlier Renaissance scholars had learnt from the Scholastics that being-literate in the originals was important. They increased the reading of works from the Classical era by expanding literacy. Apart from the Pre-Reformation and Reformation, Renaissance authors have been so fascinated by the 'originals' that they strove for an adoption of these pre-Christian originals, literally 're-paganising' vast sections of the full cultural range. Not even the Catholic Church was spared, for Ancient Occultism was re-introduced in it via the Florentine Academy.

The full spectrum of the classics was recovered in the Renaissance, when we find different currents reminiscent of Ancient (even pre-Socratic) Greek and Roman culture. One has at least to distinguish between a Romanist and a Graecist Renaissance Classicism, although one cannot find pure forms of the one or the other. Machiavelli's Romanist militarism was but one form of such Classicism. As we shall see, his dominantly Romanist outlook was undergirded by Greek sources, the most important of which was Aristotle.

There was a distinct way in which the Renaissance adopted the Classical era, namely as:

- *informative* content
- *models* to be imitated
- *technical plans* to be followed.

But Renaissance Classicism was not the last era of Classicism in the West. In the late 17th century and all through the 18th century another Classicism, called 'Neo-Classicism', surfaced. It was visible in the arts (e.g. Jacques Louis David) and in the attempts to revive republics similar to the Roman one (Napoleon using this to become the 'first consul' wearing a caesarist laurel crown). It was also evident in theorising: it is not by accident that Jean-Jacques Rousseau inserted an analysis of Ancient constitutions into his *Du contrat social* (see Rousseau 1968); nor that Kant viewed real historiography as beginning only with the Greeks (Kant 1975a:48fn).

Neo-Classicism, though, was 'neo' in the sense that it still adhered to the Classical as in *models*, above.

But it derived its *technical plans* and *information* from Modern science.

Machiavelli, adopting all three options from older Classicism, wanted to draw practical consequences for political leadership from the classics, understood in the Renaissance way: the classics served him as source of *information*, also as a source of *models*; then in a certain sense as *method*.

He claimed that his research method was 'novel'. But one has to measure this novelty against its practical execution. Machiavelli being a Classicist, the novelty is restricted to how he reinterpreted the Classical authors and their methods, and partially also in how he restructured their scholarly strategies.

Within the continuity of methodological developments a shift was occurring. Not only Machiavelli claimed novelty of method; Bacon, Descartes and his contemporaries, Locke, Hume, Hegel up to Vico, also made such claims. Scholarly method became all-important.

Scholarly method had to make all the difference – between truth versus falsehood, for the sake of good versus bad. Pretending that a good method would guarantee insight into the truth was quite pretentious and very Western – the equation of wisdom and prudence with scholarship. Machiavelli, himself a writer on military matters and an active statesman, should have known that old books and a good, scholarly method of reading do not guarantee good practice. His selection of the types of old books (e.g. Livius) already shows that Classicism as a method is prejudiced. He too easily slipped into the scientific attitude, probably influenced by Aristotle.

Importantly, within an original Classicism one has to expect that a scholarly method will include as normative information models and technical approaches from Ancient times.

Ontology, methodology and replication of ancient practice

Aristotle provided Machiavelli with an ontological assumption – organismic,⁴ causal determinism. Given that Machiavelli worked historically in a pre-experimental phase, the empirical side of his work came from historical events: *scientism informed by practicisim*.

He therefore found it scientifically easy to propagate replication of Ancient heroic deeds – *the practical could be repeated*, based on the deterministic belief that *the heaven, the sun, the elements, and man had in their motion, their order, and their potency not at all changed from what they used to be*.

The macrocosmic cycle and the human social cycle are similarly repetitive; the human one can also be repeated

⁴'Organismic' here stands in contrast to 'mechanistic'. 'Organismic' thinkers are 'holists' and in social terms totalitarians of some kind. They tend to see the whole – however it is defined – as having a life and a personality of its own, and as life-giving to its parts, of which humankind is the purest imitation of the whole. Organismic thinkers tend to be pantheistic and often end up in a social mysticism, in which the individual is partly or completely absorbed into the whole. Mechanistic thinkers view the universe as a machine, every part of which is seen as replaceable. In social contexts they tend to be individualistic and view the social whole – however it is defined – as an aggregation of individual contractual choices (see Venter 1997:41ff.). There is a tendency to view the most powerful whole as the governing one – after the Middle Ages, the state began to occupy this position.

by wilful engagement initiating a causal chain (such as the constitutional cycle discussed in the next paragraph).

Revised Ancient models: Macrocosmic cycles and local balances

Doctrinally speaking, Machiavelli anticipated middle Modernity's absorption of individual behaviour into the grand scheme of things. Although one may have the appearance of change on a microscopic level, in the grand scheme of causal movements, imbalance moves to balance, after which over-compensation and re-compensation may take place. Kant argued that even though on a micro level, we can only see arbitrary (even chaotic) events, on a macro-level individual actions are part of the aggregate as if the individual were a dog on leading strings (1975c:85ff.). Both of them imagined a macro-balance that determines history in general. Machiavelli (1975) argues:

Extract 2: When I reflect that it is in this way that events pursue their course it seems to me that the world has always been in the same condition, and that in it there has always been just as much good as there is evil, but that this evil and this good has varied from province to province. This may be seen from the knowledge we have of ancient kingdoms, in which the balance of good and evil changed from one to the other owing to changes in their customs, whereas the world as a whole remained the same. (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, II, 1:5)

Machiavelli was fascinated with the centuries-enduring stability of Sparta and Rome and the expansion of Rome into a republican empire. Apparently these two states succeeded to come-into-step with the stable macrocosmic cycles. With Livy he lamented the return of autocracy under the caesars. The republican stability was the product, he believed, of a special constitutional dispensation: one based on *the balance of powers*. The pendulum movement of republican civility described in extract 2 could be fixed by a constitutional balance of powers in which the different over-compensations were held in check and moderated. (After Newton's equilibrium of gravitation, the idea of a universal automatic balance became much more pronounced.)

Machiavelli used the Platonist–Aristotelian doctrines about constitutional change as the basic model to explain how such a balance could be effected. This made him a real precursor of Descartes, who believed that once one knows the causal links of nature, one can control it (Descartes 1982:ch. VI). Plato and especially Aristotle presented a pendulum-cycle between good and bad constitutions. They 'predicted' an order of succession but they did not indicate technical measures for controlling the cycle or offer advice as to how to let it run optimally. This was Machiavelli's (1975) innovation.

In this latter sense, especially in combination with the idea of competitive economic freedom for advantage, Machiavelli had already become an early Modern thinker (Disc., II, ii, 9).

Aristotle's model, as cited by Machiavelli (*Disc.*, I, ii, 1ff.), encompassed three oppositional pairs (good versus bad) of constitutional dispensations, each succeeding the other in a repetitive cycle:

(I, 1) *monarchy*, which deteriorates into
 (I, 2) *tyranny*; this creates a reaction amongst good people and leads to
 (II, 1) *aristocracy*, which deteriorates into
 (II, 2) *oligarchy*; this leads to revolt amongst the people and a
 (III, 1) *democracy* is established; unlimited freedom leads to
 (III, 2) *anarchy* – this demands strong-handed tactics;
 (I, 1) as a consequence, one finds a *return to monarchy*;
 the whole cycle then repeats itself ... (see also Aristotle 1967:III, 7ff.)

The Aristotelian cycle can be presented as a circle in which one argues from the point where anarchy slips over into monarchy. Monarchy is supposed to be the starting point, since small groups of people, such as families, come together for security reasons and submit to the leadership of a *paterfamilias* or a similar leader.

It is, however, *not a vertically standing circle* with the best at the summit and the worst at the bottom (on the circumference opposite to the summit): it is a horizontal, flat-surfaced circle where the worst is right 'next' to the best (monarchy being Aristotle's analogical ideal type of government). Once the pendulum of deterioration has run the full circle back to anarchy, the original pre-monarchic insecurities return – predictably a monarchy is re-established. It is to be remembered that Aristotle in particular had no sense of a world-beginning like the one in the biblical Genesis. His world was one of an eternal cycle of cause and effect; of combination and dissolution: these were the effects of the monarchic Prime Mover (unknown to the Mover himself).

All histories presented as circles (Hegel or Nietzsche) have 'beginnings' on the circumference. Such beginnings are also ends. The linearity of our logical thinking demands a beginning and an end. Earthly monarchy, as the Beginning-End in Aristotle, reflects ontological monarchianism: the *First Unmoved Mover* is also the *Final Cause*. Aristotle's cycle was a pre-Christian one of unbroken repetition; Machiavelli's cycle sustained this, but with the possibility of creating a fairly long term good balance (using conflict as means).⁵ According to Machiavelli, an original monarchy is necessary for a unitary constitution. Monarchy belongs to the good forms in the Aristotelian cycle; the problem is that it does not offer long-term stability. It was necessary, at the founding of Rome, for Romulus to kill Remus in order to give a unitary legal foundation to the city.⁶

Aristotle did study contemporary 'empirical' constitutions but he believed that the only real scholarly method was the deductive one. He used induction as a way of generating

5.The cyclical view of history has undergone a further development in Modernity. Repristination was again not possible: the linearity of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic view of history was too influential to simply be discarded; it was secularised into the belief in progress (discussed below with regard to Joachimism and Pico della Mirandola). Hegel begins at the top of a vertically standing circle with (the) Idea – spiritualistic – moving downwards to Matter at the very bottom and upwards on the other side, ending at the same point with Philosophy as Absolute Spirit. Nietzsche (1906) followed an inverse route – naturalistic – in a similar circle: upwards from living matter to the summit of the *Übermensch* and down again: 'eternal recurrence.'

6.Here Machiavelli probably gave the discursive basis for the later guiding norm of the unity of science with its reductionist consequences still present in Einstein, Logical Positivism and surreptitiously so in Pragmatism (and even in 20th century Behaviourism with its insistence on a scientific totalitarian control of society. The Cartesian metaphor was, amongst other things, that of founding a city on a single legal basis (Descartes 1982:ch. II).

abstract universal rules; from this he deduced regularities such as the cycle summarised (Machiavelli (*Disc.*, I, ii, 1ff.)). Induction, for Aristotle, was a necessary *pre-scholarly* process. The later Aristotle of the *Analytica posterior* (see Aristotle 1966) considered the ideal deduction to be from affirmative *causal* definitions. The study of constitutions delivered such causal premises and one could predictively deduce the ebbs and flows and the return to the origin.

From a methodological point of view the ontological presupposition of determinism was an inevitable requirement. The Platonist and Aristotelian view of scientific scholarship (*epistême*), reducing all of 'real' knowing to deduction (whether the first principle is to be found empirically or via retro-duction), imposed a 'naturalistic' type of historical determinism onto those who wanted to take the empirical into account from the very beginning. In the interaction between scientific requirements and intellectual intentions, Machiavelli could not but assume that humankind (at least in a holistic sense) functioned as in a fixed process, rather than taking historically epoch-making decisions. It is this tradition about scientific knowledge that finally forced even Kant to turn human freedom into a natural process and to reduce historiography to a natural science (Kant 1975a).

Though attached to Aristotle's model, Machiavelli was not a Graecist Classicist but rather a Romanist one. His interests were statecraft and warcraft. His surroundings were the small principdoms, republics, larger national states coming into being, vassals, church properties; the harsh control of the popes, cardinals, princes, kings, and feudal lords; and the perpetual conflicts between the two great institutions: church and state. He was faced with severe political instability and constant inter-city wars, each city attempting to annex the next one and every king wanting to expand his tax base by overrunning a city or two belonging to some or other monarch or tyrant, or republican leadership.

Around him every sovereign political entity probably seemed to be in a different phase of the constitutional cycle. I read him as wondering: *How can one co-ordinate these so as to keep all of them in one good phase of the cycle?* The situation on the ground was probably near anarchic. It was a situation of mini-states in tension with one another, within larger, loose units.

His real question was: *how to establish a viable, stable order in which people can thrive.* Given his own prejudices, one can imagine Machiavelli seeing the only solution to be a tightly controlled macro-empire: an imperial republic modelled on Ancient Rome with a strong central authority and much leeway for local freedoms. In this, he was some three centuries ahead of his times in working for a unified Italy.

Exemplarism and replication

Machiavelli's was an Aristotelian exemplaristic understanding of history. Given Aristotle's causal model, he could interpret the history of geniuses and heroes from Ancient times in very

much the same way that Aristotle viewed them as warnings and as the way to *catharsis* (purification) in his doctrine of the tragedy.

In his *Ars poetica* Aristotle ([1508] 1870; see Aristotle *et al.* 1977) analysed the plot structure of a tragedy. In a specific situation the hero errs in *thinking* and consequently errs in practice. The cause–effect wheel is turned (an almost ‘scientific’ presentation of the wheel of fortune, whom Machiavelli so often blames). Our hero is finally overcome by the inevitable (bad) consequences of the initial mistake. An ideal type would not have erred. But the hero in a tragedy is almost (i.e. just short of) the ideal type; this is why we as audience can identify with him or her and experience *catharsis* (Aristotle 1983).

Machiavelli’s claim to novelty was warranted by his different understanding of the classics. He intentionally attempted to transform the way the classics were read, understood and used, looking for an imitative understanding, a *direct practical relevance*. As we have seen above, he attempted to extract practical value from Aristotle’s view of the constitutional cycle, combining this with a practical, exemplaristic interpretation of ideal-type thinking, finding exemplars in the sense of near-ideal counter-examples: the republics of Sparta and of Rome. One was a city state and the other an empire; each lasted for about eight centuries from their earliest form.

William James was also asking for the *practical effects* of an idea (see Venter 2013). Both Machiavelli and James had a *utilitarian* approach to theory. However, Machiavelli certainly did not, like James much later, reduce meaning and truth to practical outcomes. He was near to *practicism*, studying practical events technically with the aim of directly imitating or even replicating them.

There is no need to rethink praxis. Good practice follows objective cyclical patterns; one can but copy and replicate – historical change does not differ from the natural cosmic cycles. As stated above: historical praxis provided instances of a scientific, law-guided politicology and historiography.

How did Sparta and Rome succeed in staying beyond the causal links of the constitutional cycle?

‘Exemplary’ reading, political praxis and balance of powers

The hermeneutic of ‘exemplary’ reading, intended to recover the distant old for the newly new, follows the Aristotelian tradition but is clearly updated. Aristotle, though never adopting the theory of Ideas or Forms, followed Plato’s *method of ideal typing*: both Plato and Aristotle had been influenced by the mathematics of their day. Aristotle concentrated all that is ideal in the simplicity of the transcendent divine, the First Mover and the Good (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII).

Finding his starting point in empirical reality, Aristotle had to indicate *earthly* ideal types. These were the supposedly

excellent in each category. Amongst humans the (analogical) earthly ideal types were the exemplary persons, analogues of the ideal (God/the Unmoved Mover/the Good). Thus the most heroic human being was the one to imitate in war; the best theoretician had to be imitated in contemplative intellectual work, and so forth. The tragic hero was often an example of a not-so-ideal ideal type.

Aristotle did have criteria to identify these ideal human beings: they had to have their sub-rational aspects under the control of the intellect. This would guide them to the golden mean between the two extremes. The golden mean between arbitrary discrimination and absolute equality is justice; that between cowardice and audacity is courage, and so forth (Aristotle, *NicE*, II).

Machiavelli elaborated on this. His examples were not exactly golden mean examples. One could, however, say that he was constructing a golden mean between tyranny and anarchy by using the positive elements from the constitutional cycle. He used examples of power consolidation by the elimination of opposition whilst leaving something of the old intact (for the people to feel at home and identify with). Instead of playing with ideal types or near-ideal types, he was more down to earth: he integrated what Aristotle wanted to do separately (in a book on comedy) by including the non-ideal (deviant leadership) in order to find an ideal balance of power. Livy’s history of the Roman republic provided the material for this.

He searched for cases that were *exemplary in serving the purpose of state stability* under external and internal threats, teaching how external threats could be used to quell internal unrest. In Rome (the empirical ideal type exemplar), the nobility organised a war whenever the plebeians became too demanding about actually implementing promised rights, sending the plebs out to defend the fatherland against some country that was not a threat in the first place; thus the empire was expanded.

Machiavelli’s examples were selected under the guidance of the doctrine of the balance of powers – the nobility’s threat-of-war game balanced their minority power against that of the plebeian masses. *But this was Machiavelli’s interpretation of political history; the doctrine of the balance of powers was not Aristotelian.* The examples of Rome and Sparta were read as showing that stability could be achieved for very long periods by establishing a constitutional dispensation that combines tradition and innovation in terms of the cycle:

- Rome replaced the kings with two consuls, each governing monarchically for six months and open to prosecution after their year in office.
- It sustained the aristocracy (nobility) in the senate, giving them vast powers of legislation and advocacy.
- And it expanded participation in an aristocracy by creating a limited democracy, allowing for representatives of the people, the tribunes.

These three good elements of the cycle kept one another in balance: the consuls would face the wrath of the senate and tribunes

if they overstepped the mark; the senate could not do as it wished, for the people would take them on, and so forth. Once the balance between the good elements is disturbed, the cycle returns with the bad elements included.

Both the *presentation* of doctrine and the *selection of examples* have a function in the persuasiveness of an argument and should not be ignored in an analysis of method. My mathematics teacher at school regularly warned against the use of special cases to prove a general point. Machiavelli did not completely fall into this trap: since the republic of Rome lasted for many centuries, he could find many examples of different inductions to serve his use of the constitutional cycle. On the other hand, when it comes to critical differences or similarities, *his selection was prejudiced in favour of Rome*.

Every historiographer faces this issue: *How long a period is long enough to make a deduction and how many examples are needed?* Even more difficult is: *How to select exemplars?*

Renaissance hermeneutics

The hermeneutic of 'exemplary' reading was not standard in Renaissance scholarship. The more popular hermeneutic was probably allegorical exegesis (or *eisegesis-exegesis*), with a long history originating in Plato, Philo Iudaeus and the Alexandrines, via Augustine up to at least Dante Alighieri. The latter, known for his majestic confessional poem, *Divina commedia* (Alighieri [1904] 2012), wrote smaller theses on aesthetics and politics. Augustine summarised this 'exemplary' way of reading, rehearsed below, for the generations to come.

The tradition of the fourfold meaning

The Manichaeans, Augustine complained, replaced the authority of Scripture with that of human reason since they had problems understanding certain biblical passages. In practice this happened by means of the hypothesis of text corruption, to be revised by human rational changes. One did not need the hypothesis of text corruption at all, Augustine said, if one would but accept that the Bible as a whole was transmitted to us in a fourfold meaning:

The (1) *historical* meaning was the presentation of the events as such; the (2) *aetiological* meaning clarified and eliminated perceived clashes between Old and New Testament; the (3) *moral* meaning was touching on good and bad behaviour; the (4) *allegorical* meaning was the figurative sense behind the literal. According to Augustine, Jesus and his disciples had also understood the Scriptures in terms of these four meanings (Augustine, *De utilitate credendi*:iii, 6).

My guess is that Augustine's so-called 'moral' meaning, combined with the idea of exemplary behaviour, may have given some impetus to Machiavelli's empirical search for examples. Aristotle's own exemplarism was built on a strong sensitivity for empirical examples and facts, and a morality based upon the balance between the sub-rational ('emotional') extremes, as guided by the intellect.

That the maintenance of a good moral life was somehow the task of the intellectual in the context of the state was an Ancient Greek and Roman totalitarian idea adopted by Machiavelli and, since Hobbes, by Modernity. Machiavelli himself believed that 'good' morals are part of good citizenship and statesmanship. This was in fact a return to pre-Christian points of view: a recovery of the *zooion politicon* [social living being] philosophical anthropology, as can so vividly be seen in Plato's representation of the court case against Socrates – the man who (supposedly) did not believe in the gods the state prescribed.⁷

Machiavelli transformed his good exemplars into icons and role models; the bad ones played the opposite role. 'Good' and 'bad' here, of course, are to be understood in terms of his doctrine of 'virtue'.

Exemplaristic eisegesis

Machiavelli's empirical exemplars were chosen *to serve a purpose*. Compared to present-day exemplaristic preaching, iconising and role modelling, he attempted no purification of heroic action. His purpose was quite different from the tradition about such exemplars: he really searched for those exemplary cases that served his ethical norms (or lack of them). His only criterion was *state security in a Roman republican format*. When talking of 'virtue', the interests of the *patria* were always uppermost.

His way of reading texts was different from, but not unrelated to, the more popular mode of allegorical exegesis – a 'reading-in-reading-out'. Exemplaristic reading inherited a good deal of this 'reading-in-reading-out' tradition. In the hierarchy of *eisegesis-exegesis* [an interpretation of a text] one reading presupposed the others: the historical or more literal meaning has always been presupposed. A moral interpretation of a story about Sarah and Hagar could thus not clash with the code given in, say, the Ten Commandments. Machiavelli did read-in and read-out, but he went much further:

- His reading-in-reading-out procedure, '*heroic exemplary*' reading, relinquished these control beliefs inherent in the older method of reading. The only correct way to read the classics was to search for exemplars of pro-state-security and anti-state-security actions.
- For the sake of the state, he demanded sacrifice; imitating

7. Reading in terms of human exemplars has not departed from us as yet: I have in the past year heard two sermons in which the Bible was read in this way: the exemplary Jesus. His behaviour at Emmaus (caring for people while not identifying himself) was explained in this way; also that of the apostles (Peter and John healing the paralysed person). Jesus and the apostles were represented as exemplary in making time to look a person in the eyes while keeping their own egos suppressed. In both cases the sermons began with empirical examples of recent historical persons who have touched other lives in a similar exemplary way.

Within the secular world, especially politics, we also find this: the 'iconising' of heroic personalities. The world's obsessions with persons like Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela, and the attempts to recover their behaviour (heroicised into angelic purity) may count as cases of this. Creating present-day 'icons' has traits of 'mythologising' (or generating divinities). Visiting the Ghandi monument in India, one has the distinct feeling of visiting a shrine to some divinity.

The idea of a role model. Celebrities are sometimes punished for transgressions not directly linked to the origin of their celebrity status, since they are supposed to be 'role models'; young fans might imitate their (bad) behaviour. This was one of the complaints against Socrates. Quite often the role-model status is willy-nilly. Role models are punished for sinning against a status which they may not have wanted. I am not confessing here to double standards on my own side, but criticising double standards on the part of 'public opinion': sins that ordinary people are not penalised for become deadly sins in a 'role model'.

the ancient heroes – here the ends will justify the means. Note the code inherent in his method: *one had to read Livius in such a way that specific results would come to the fore – results that favour a stable state and highlight the dangers to it.*

This recovery of Ancient state absolutism is the origin of Modern state totalitarianism: Bodin, Filmer, Hobbes, and Rousseau, the totalitarian ideologies of the French Revolution and of the 18th century to the 20th century.

Machiavelli's Classicism developed the Aristotelian empirical heroic-causal way of reading into a *hermeneutic of empirical exemplarism and counter-example, in a causally deterministic sense.*

Had he been influenced more by Plato, his historiography would have followed a pattern like that of Giambattista Vico (Venter 2012b:ch. 5, 4, B1ff., i.e. he would have focused not on heroic persons and their causal deeds but rather on an ideal transcendent structure in a Universal Spirit or a divine *Logos* [reason]) given flesh by human actions, external differences that hide an ideal universal spinal column.

Changing the way of reading therefore touched not only on the heroic deeds but also on what went wrong. Exemplars of the 'wrong' had to be compared with exemplars of the 'good'.

Comparative reading: Heroic exemplarism

Since Ancient times, tradition and the old have had a certain authority. The *mores maiorum* [ancestral custom] were important in Ancient Rome. Later authors would often backdate their works, ascribing them to earlier authors in order to give them authority: well-known examples are the *Corpus hermeticum* and the works of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. Even in my own student days, lecturers were willing to give authority to a statement by saying: 'The Ancient Greeks had already seen that' Machiavelli argued that it is not reasonable to be prejudiced in favour of the past and to overlook recent or contemporary advantages, yet he still iconised the Ancient (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, II, 1:1ff.).

Directly following the summary of his *ontology* (in extract 1 and extract 2), Machiavelli concluded to *method* (see extract 3). By commenting on Livy's history of Rome, he wanted to lead people out of the wrong way of thinking, believing it too difficult or impossible to repeat past great events. Livy himself had a heroic patriotic, republicanist attitude; this served Machiavelli's (1975) purpose well:

Extract 3: It will comprise what I have arrived at by comparing ancient with modern events, and think necessary for the better understanding of them so that those who read what I have to say may the more easily draw those practical lessons, which one should seek to obtain from the study of history. (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, I:Preface)

Machiavelli wanted to produce a commented reading aimed at political praxis. *Comparison* is his method, such that one can see present errors in the light of Ancient exemplars. The way he goes about it shows something of the nature of comparison (see Venter 2013). For Machiavelli and

many other Renaissance thinkers *comparative values* were provided by the social setting and the intellectual tradition of reprinting Classicism. Machiavelli knew quite well how to compare, setting unstable constitutional dispensations from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance against stable Ancient Classical ones. His use of the Aristotelian constitutional cycle provided him with a theoretically quite strong instrument for selecting points of comparison. But then: *How to select the critical differences and/or similarities?*

In *opposing* the supposedly good to the supposedly bad, one had to look for *difference – critical difference*. Similarities and differences in a comparison do not carry the same weight. Subjective and objective contexts meet here and often the subjective context (one's prejudices) dominates. A falsification approach may help to discipline the mind here. In Machiavelli, isolating such difference was founded in his *own idea of virtue and dignity*, in tough-minded leadership in stabilising a republic. Being a proponent of militarism and Classicism, he found the men of his own era lacking virtue. Of course the deficiencies were determined in terms of implicit valuations.

Directing his comparison (and the inferences made from it) was the *romanticising of stable Classical dispensations and their heroic defenders*. Whereas Aristotle would have made the generalisations in terms of constitutions and those who executed them well, followed by inferences according to Euclidean deductive patterns, Machiavelli played around with specific, situational and often personal *counter-examples in contrast to the impersonations* of Ancient good exemplary behaviour. He narrates how a contemporary civil society (like a city republic) was destabilised by the actions of individual leaders, showing these leaders' mistakes by referring to the behaviour of Classical heroic leadership under similar circumstances. The specific aspect abstracted here is 'political *situation*' (guided by 'stability versus instability' as a criterion).

A situation is prescriptive: *Anankê*, the divinity of 'necessity' (rather than *Tyche*, the accidental), hides in it. It allows for limited options and one has to take the expedient alternative. As the Romans said, *fortes Fortuna adiuvat* ('Fortune helps the courageous'). But one has to show respect for the boundaries Fortune sets. In *The prince*, Machiavelli ([1532] 2011) argued that it is necessary for a prince to learn *how to do wrong* and *how to hide* this; the prince has to know how to act the beast as well as the man (Walker 1975:75). (The beastly human nature of Hobbes had thus been suggested previously by Machiavelli.) He would have found present-day attempts at transparency and steps taken against corruption to be totally against the general interest and a threat to stability. (The echoes of the state security and stability arguments are still audible today; in the 18th century, Machiavelli was popular reading matter.)

When it is necessary for a politician to exercise a certain option, Machiavelli argues, he has to exercise it or suffer blame. Soderini faltered by acting Christianly (!): by not

doing 'wrong' against a hostile group, he was deposed to his own and *the state's detriment*; this was blameworthy (*Disc.*, I, 52:2).

Often, then, a leader has only one option: *do!* Here Machiavelli anticipates *Modern activism*. Sartre would later make this an alternative: if the 'to-do' is not responsible, then one's only other option is 'to-die': commit suicide! Hobbes would have preferred to say: the citizens – not the leaders – are beasts (seldom rational) and the state is the active 'reason' that has to control the beast in the citizen by any means it deems fit. Machiavelli had proposed the idea, but he had not made all the refined distinctions.

However, the political world was unstable. Much was beyond human control. Where nothing human disturbed the situation, Machiavelli provided for an option: the moment a leader felt safe and at peace, the goddess *Fortuna* would play a trick on his or her comfort. Brother Leader catches a cold and dies of pneumonia or is murdered in his bed. His empire collapses. Hobbes derived the equality of the sexes from such 'un-Fortunate' events: Ms Jael, wife of ordinary citizen Heber, could tent-peg a sleeping Mr King Sisera through his temples – he never woke up (Jdg 4:18, New International Version).

Machiavelli's search for stability in the civil state became a rather funnelled spiral in which *doctrine and method mutually strengthened one another* on a cyclical growth path of centuries. He left the Western world with the outline of *an agenda and a procedure to work through the agenda: welfare, well-being, safety and peace. Stability* (in the first place) *supposedly could produce all this*.

Machiavelli's problem with Christianity (later repeated by Hobbes and Rousseau) was that it wanted to serve God first whilst serving the state, causing tensions and thus instability. Christians were so different from what the state needed.

The fixed flux of being – Machiavelli as proto-Modern thinker

The influence of Machiavelli on Modern thought may have been underestimated; one does not often find references to him when studying the great Modern philosophers since Descartes. In Book II of the *Discorsi* (see Machiavelli 1975) he stated many 'factual–normative' ideas. These, in other formats, have guided Modernity ever since.

In Book II, 1, 4 Machiavelli uses an expression apparently quite typical for his own times, yet anticipating Modernity in its early Hobbesian format. He says it sometimes does make sense to praise the old and to criticise the contemporary: 'since human affairs are ever in a state of flux, they move either upwards or downwards'. This expression could be explained as some form of the Renaissance idea of: 'the great vertical chain of being', but then one has at least to recognise, first, that the Renaissance produced a variety of such hierarchies and, secondly, that they did not simply disappear with the advent of Modernity's horizontalism.

For example, another prime pre-Modern 'great-chain' scheme would be that of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). Coming from the side of Renaissance Neo-Platonism and Hermeticism (the Florentine Academy) with its *homo miraculum* [miracle human being] idea, Pico believed that humankind was situated in the middle of a hierarchy, sharing a divine spark with the upper echelons of the hierarchy and materiality with the lower ones.

The human being has no essence: it can move upwards via all the hierarchies of heavenly bodies and angels to become unified with God (a 'positive' mysticism), or it can move downwards to become brutes or plants or even mineral (a 'negative' mysticism). Pico's concern was with the dignity of the human being; Hermeticism provided a theoretical avenue to develop this concern. Pico anticipated Modernity's postponement of the human essence. When Modernity horizontalised the chain of being in its faith in progress, the human being makes its own essence in and through history, the summit in Enlightenment terms being the rational and in Irrationalist terms being, for example, Sartrean 'authenticity'. In Pico the human being finds its really dignified being at the summit. The essence is postponed.

One of the most serious reasons for Renaissance humanism's Classicism was the lament that scholasticism had left human issues aside whilst focusing on logical puzzles. Scholastic authors, Renaissance thinkers argued, did not focus on the dignity of the human being. Pico attempted to show the way to promoting human dignity: *verticalistic, upwards mysticism*.

Both forms of mysticism would return in Modernity, but then in cyclical or spiral formats, as we can see in Hegel and Nietzsche. Note that even though Pico ascribed a kind of divinity to humankind and denied any fixed human essence (as if anticipating Sartre), he did not make any allowance for moving out of the hierarchy in any sideways direction. Modernity opted for a *sideways* motion, then as a *horizontally upwards gradient* in time – the historicising of the ontology (Venter 1999).

However, whether a cyclical or a horizontally linear upwards gradient is chosen, the really important issue was where to *begin*. Pico started in the middle, allowing only for vertical movements. Hegel started at the upper summit, allowing for a cyclical movement with the characteristics of both a spiral (every cycle enriching the previous) and a circle (the enriched end is the beginning). Nietzsche, following Turgot (the chemistry of his own days and the cyclical thinking ascribed to 'Zoroaster'), began at the lowest turning point of an upright circle. Hobbes took his point of departure at the bottom, allowing only for a vertical movement: either thumbs up or thumbs down. So did Marx, but only horizontally upwards.

The point of departure determined the character of the whole movement. It was very difficult for a Humanist to recover the human from the plant or the brute once one had taken the point of departure on the 'natural' side; thence dialectical materialism.

Pico died (in 1494) at the young age of 33; Machiavelli was born some 5 years later. The latter was a contemporary of Luther and John Calvin, although he does not show knowledge of their reforms. Machiavelli thus worked in the atmosphere of Renaissance humanism, focusing on human affairs and its ups and downs, but (as stated above) in a very down-to-earth way, prefiguring the naturalist starting points in Hobbes, Turgot, Kant, Marx, Darwin and so many others. Analogical to the Aristotelian constitutional cycle, he viewed human civil history as moving through cycles of virtuosity:

Extract 4: When I reflect that it is in this way that events pursue their course it seems to me that the world has always been in the same condition, and that in it there has always been just as much good as there is evil, but that this evil and this good has varied from province to province. This may be seen from the knowledge we have of ancient kingdoms, in which the balance of good and evil has changed from one to the other owing to changes in their customs, whereas the world as a whole has remained the same. The only difference is that the world's virtue first found a home in Assyria, then flourished in Media and later in Persia, and at length arrived in Italy and Rome. And if, since the Roman Empire there has been no other which has lasted, and in which the world's virtue has been centred, one none the less finds it distributed among many nations where men lead virtuous lives. ... the Franks, ... the Turks ... and today all the peoples of Germany. ... (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, II, ii, 5)

Note the quasi-Modern discursive *humanistic concentration of the world in humankind*: twice within a few lines he uses the expression, 'the world's virtue'. This virtue is (ideally) concentrated in an imperial civilisation of a republican kind. In a world-historical pendulum movement such concentrations of virtue move from site to site, sometimes (ideally) centralised, in other eras dispersed; at times the 'good' dominates, then again the 'bad'. Humankind, however, does have the ability to stretch the eras of the good by stabilising civil society, using its inherent laws of power balance.

After Machiavelli, this secular concentration of the world, or more specifically its meaning, in humankind would remain a part of Western self-consciousness. In initiating globalisation, the Renaissance would become the starting point of Eurocentric world-historiography and hegemony, with Machiavelli's new-look historiography surely one of the most influential directives for a Modern Humanistic hermeneutics of history.

Machiavelli believed that 'virtue' (that is, stable statehood) was shifting from one civilisation to another. Although he did accept city states as one of the good Aristotelian forms, his great admiration was for republican empires. The ups and downs of empires and the shifts from one civilisation to another – this is Machiavellian historiography. And, in some sense, by horizontalising, it also became Modern historiography. One has but to read Vico, Kant and Hegel on history to see the return of Machiavellian themes.

Importantly, however, in Machiavelli's verticalism one could move with simple shifts of the balance from good to evil. Within the Modern faith in progress the rise and

collapse of civilisations and empires was difficult to include, since it factually denied progress. Theoretically, this was managed by metaphorising Bonnet's idea of natural catastrophes. Bonnet, an early evolutionary biologist, in his later career argued that within every female of any species miniatures exist. Through catastrophes such as the legendary great flood all the adults of the species had been decimated whilst the miniatures moved one rank higher: plants became animals; animals became human – next, humans will become angels ...

It is almost as if Bonnet had adopted Pico's hierarchy and evolutionised the mystical way from the bottom end horizontally upwards. Enlightenment believers in inevitable progress argued that civilisations and empires grow to a summit, then decline, very much like any individual living being. When on the decline, a miniature of such a civilisation is already forming in the womb of the old. Catastrophe overtakes the old and the new outgrows it to a higher summit. If one construes a graph tangential to the successive summits, this will show progress. This is the half-cycle historiography referred to above.

Another interesting point in extract 4 is the absence of any reference to the Jews. Machiavelli, surrounded by forms of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, did not see any cultural importance in them. Kant at least inserted the Jews into history after Thucydides (Kant 1975a:48fn). Machiavelli's perspective was so heavily statist and militaristic that he completely overlooked the vast influence of the Jews (and Arabs) on Western culture. After the Romans, the Franks are mentioned, even the Turks. But what image did Renaissance Europeans have of Turkish civilisation? In Hegel one can still read the reminiscences of Machiavelli's idea of pockets of virtue left amongst the Germans. These are not the only anticipations of Modernity. Machiavelli quite explicitly anticipates the Hobbesian starting point in the hierarchy: humankind's insatiable desires and the necessity to balance these within the context of the state:

Extract 5: Furthermore, human appetites are insatiable, for by nature we are so constituted that there is nothing we cannot long for, but by fortune we are such that of these things we can attain but few. The result is that the human mind is perpetually discontented, and of its possessions is apt to grow weary. This makes it find fault with the present, praise the past, and long for the future; though for its doing so no rational cause can be assigned. Hence I am not sure but that I deserve to be reckoned amongst those who thus deceive themselves if in these my discourses I have praised too much the days of the ancient Romans and have found fault with our own. Indeed, if the virtue which then prevailed and the vices which are prevalent today were not as clear as the sun, I should be more reserved in my statements lest I should fall into the very fault for which I am blaming others (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, II, ii, 7)

In these few sentences so many anticipations of Modernity reveal themselves:

- The basis of capitalist theory has been the discrepancy between human desire and the means to satisfy it. This Machiavellian belief in the infinity of desire versus the

relatively limited means to satisfaction has been the cornerstone of explanatory theories in economics ever since.

- The perpetual discontent with the present is another theme to be found all through Modernity. In Hobbes it is represented as the perpetual striving to be the winner and to take all that one can. Hobbes, like Machiavelli, viewed the world in terms of alternatives. After Hobbes, however, with the advent of the faith in progress, the alternatives became successive phases of history: the era of desire was supposed to be the driving force of progress towards the age of reason.
- Machiavelli has an explanation for the discontent with the present: desire and boredom bring both a longing for 'paradise lost' and a hope for more, better or different in the future. This presentation of history remained all through Modernity in many revised forms, the faith in progress being the primary example. So much of these few sentences reappear in, for example, Kant's *Mutmässlicher anfang der menschengeschichte* (1975c) – a commentary on the narrative of human origins in the biblical Genesis.
- His doctrine of the insatiability of desires combined with the doctrine of balance of powers became the source of the Modern view of suffering into a source of progress. Desire causes conflict; conflict causes progress. Conflict and competition also cause an intra-civil and international balance of powers and thus perpetual peace (Kant 1975a, 1975b, 1975c). However, at least since Kant, doubts have been expressed about the overspending of resources for the sake of the arms race; Bertha von Suttner (1889) would almost viciously attack this. Machiavellian militarism finally did not expand virtue, but brought immeasurable suffering.

In his introduction to his standard translation of the *Discorsi*, Father Walker refers to Machiavelli's analysis of the distribution of 'virtue' (citizens' involvement in the military) amongst peoples in the *Art of war* (II, B, 300b) (see Walker 1975:26ff.). Machiavelli there theorises that where one has many states one finds a mutual security threat; thus there will be many more military preparations, skills and courage than where there are only few states. As the Roman Empire expanded, such virtue went into decline since the external threats were diminished. Yet Machiavelli still believed in the sensibility of an empire; a divided Italy remained unacceptable.

Kant, however, himself a proponent of the doctrine that mutual threat leads to progress, had to lament that the continuous preparation for war had become an obstruction to enlightenment (in his *Idee zu einer allgemeine Geschichte ...*, Kant 1975b:45; *Siebenter Satz*). By then the idea of a civil, patriotic, enlightenment education had established itself (as proposed by Rousseau and Quesnay and practised by the French Revolutionaries [Venter 2012b:ch. 5]).

Critique of Christianity

Much has already been said about Machiavelli's attitude towards his own days, and especially the lack of good

political leadership. Machiavelli treaded carefully, knowing that there was a pope, a cardinal or even a favour-seeking prince looking over his shoulder, but the hidden dagger had a very specific target: Christianity. Right at the beginning of the *Discorsi* (see Machiavelli 1975) he had already suggested that religion had weakened society and that Christendom had brought many evils, but immediately moderated this by saying that the real reasons for the weakness of his times were the lack of a proper appreciation of Ancient history and the practical potential in imitating it. Having seduced the reader to follow his arguments into the second book, he makes a complete about-turn, in fact blaming Christianity for the weaknesses of his days.

Ancient virtues versus present vices

Surely the expression 'if the *virtue* which then prevailed and the *vices* which are prevalent today were not as clear as the sun' (in extract 5) is of prime importance. In this context, he argues his case at length: although so many are guilty of exaggerating the virtues of the past and overreacting against the evils of the present – given many factors such as age and appetite – he could not see himself as guilty of such a distortion:

Extract 6: If one asks oneself how it comes about that peoples of old were more fond of liberty than they are today, I think the answer is that it is due to the same cause that makes men today less bold than they used to be; and this is due, I think, to the difference between our education and that of bygone times, which is based on the difference between our religion and the religion of those days. For our religion, having taught us the truth and the true way of life, leads us to ascribe less esteem to worldly honour. Hence the gentiles, who held it in high esteem and looked upon it as their highest good, displayed in their actions more ferocity than we do. This is evidenced by many of their institutions. To begin with, compare the magnificence of their sacrifices with the humility that characterises ours. The ceremonial in ours is delicate rather than imposing, and there is no display of ferocity or courage. Their ceremonies lacked neither pomp nor magnificence, but, conjoined with this, were sacrificial acts in which there was much shedding of blood and much ferocity, and in them great numbers of animals were killed. Such spectacles, because terrible, caused men to become like them. Besides, the old religion did not beatify men unless they were replete with worldly glory: army commanders, for instance, and rulers of republics. Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation, and contempt for mundane things, whereas the other identifies it with magnanimity, bodily strength, and everything else that tends to make men very bold. And if our religion demands that in you there be strength, what it asks for is strength to suffer rather than strength to do bold things. (Machiavelli, *Disc.*, II, ii, 6)

Machiavelli directed the critical side of his method at the dominant Western religion of his days: 'Christendom' (*in casu* Catholicism). He complained about evils wrought by ambition, idleness, but mostly *about not appreciating what they had been reading about the Ancient situation*. The point he was trying to make was similar to that of William James much later: *Christian education produces tender-minded people – actually, weaklings*. The blood and gore of Ancient sacrifices,

the pomp, the striving for honour, the ferocity – all of these make for ferocious people (that is: *valuable* citizens).

Honour and glory, in Ancient times, were but military and civil, not aimed at the humble, the meek or the spiritual world. Note here the importance of:

- *action, bodily strength and boldness* rather than strength in suffering
- *driven action* rather than contemplation.

It is as though he used 'virtue' in terms of its philological roots: *virtus* (from *vir* = *man*) in Classical Latin meant: '*manliness*', '*manly excellence*'. This was generalised into *excellence, capacity, worth, goodness, virtue*. In human beings: *virtus animi, corporis* (of 'spirit' and 'body'). Even in animals, inanimate or abstract things: of horses, of herbs, or of oratory. Especially however: (1) *moral excellence, virtue* ... (2) *valour, bravery, courage* (Simpson 1966). Machiavelli's idea of virtue seems to have encompassed all these Classical moments, focused in the republic. The '*manliness*' in 'virtue' was recovered in the Fascist idea of human '*dignity*' (Venter 2002:352ff.).

Worldview, religion, and patriotism as primary virtue

Machiavelli's comparison of the Ancient with his own times was thus skewed in favour of the Ancient for a very particular reason, rooted in his *worldview*: his love for the *state* and the ferocity, manliness, and military skills needed to lead it and serve it. The Catholic Church hierarchy and Scholasticism had failed Italy, had proven Christianity (narrowed down to institutional power relationships) useless.

His humanism was the precursor of that of Hobbes: the perpetual striving for glory, wealth and honour. Yet he shows very little of Hobbes's individualistic tendencies with regard to the natural state. Being pre-Cartesian, he was not as conscious of the opposition between mechanistic animality versus rationality (in its civil form). The Modern dialectic of individual plurality versus collective unity did not yet surface clearly in Machiavelli's works: his focus was on leadership, citizenship and the stability of the state.

His whole *methodology*, that is: (1) the way he used Aristotle's constitutional cycle, (2) his way of reading Ancient texts, and (3) the aims carrying his comparisons, was focused on this: *to show Christianity in the wrong*, in fact, as the *enemy* of greatness, patriotism, of the very *world's virtue*.

Italy, according to Machiavelli, was in bad shape; quite unstable and anarchic. The reasons for this, as Walker (1975:26) notes, were (1) its divisions and (2) the decline of military discipline. Machiavelli blamed the Christian religion for both:

- In so many places he blames the papacy for Italy's *divisions*. He did not necessarily reject a papal empire: the problem was exactly that the pope was not strong enough to form an empire, yet strong enough to pose a threat to every secular authority.

- Secondly, as he states in the *Art of war* (Walker 1975:27), the Christian religion is too kind to those defeated. In Ancient times, large numbers of the defeated would be killed; some would be in jail for long periods, cities would be destroyed down to the ground, property taken as spoils, and so forth. This did not happen after Christianity became the dominant religion. This means that people can afford being defeated in war and thus *discipline* collapses. His theory that many states threatening one another promoted ferocity and thus virtue fell flat in the face of these kind Christians. The second example is the action of a good leader who had been all too good. Soderini, for example, was quite constitutional – all too honest – and so had no way of remaining in power once the Medici began to undermine him (*Disc.*, I, 52:2–3). Savonarola is blamed for not inciting his mob of followers to violence. Both of them had established fine constitutions, yet both of them failed as statesmen because they had been so very nice:

Extract 7: He who reads the Bible with discernment will see that, before Moses set about making laws and institutions, he had to kill a great number of men who, out of envy and nothing else, were opposed to his plans. The need for this was clearly recognised by Friar Girolamo Savonarola and also by Piero Soderini, the Gonfalonier of France. ... [*Savonarola's*] sermons were full of indictments ... against ... those who were envious and were opposed to his ordinances. The other believed that his goodness, the favour of fortune, and his beneficence toward all, in time would extinguish envy. ... he thought he would be able to get the better of those whom through envy were opposing him, without either scandal, violence or disturbance. What he failed to realise was that time waits for no man, that goodness alone does not suffice, that fortune is changeable, and that malice is not placated by gifts. So that both these men were ruined, and in both cases their downfall was due to their not knowing how, or not being able, to overcome envy. (*Disc.*, III, 30:4)

Even Moses was subjected to an 'exemplary' reading; the textual context is overlooked. Was Machiavelli in some sense the author of the later combinations of the national with the Christian? I am not sure, but given Modernity's secular, state-absolutist patriotism after the Romanist end of the French Revolution and its concordats with the Church – see the statues on the sides of the entrance to *Sacre Coeur* in Paris – one might think that Machiavelli's Romanist reading of the Bible may have given some direction to this. In the environment of the French Revolution some European countries, the United States of America, and the Afrikaners in South Africa became fervently patriotic and republicanist.

Machiavelli's discourse would still be echoed in the late 18th century, when Adam Smith, the real builder of capitalist theorising, argued that *beneficence was not necessary* to establish a stable society; competitive exchange alone would do the job. Father Walker (1975:29ff.) views Machiavelli's approach as an *utterly pagan* view, arguing that Christianity helped to pacify Europe and that the final advent of international organisations for peace have a Christian root. Modern Humanists, such as Hobbes and Voltaire, had the opposite view of Christianity.

Whatever the truth about Christianity, Machiavelli carefully construed a method that puts it (almost singularly) in the box of the accused.

Not only, thus, was he a precursor of Hobbes, but surely also of Nietzsche. Though Nietzsche remained in the mould of minority elitism and Machiavelli stood nearer to collectivism, their ideas of heroic action, desire for power and denigration of Christian meekness are similar enough.

One also needs to keep in mind in this context that for all his republicanism, Machiavelli was also the author of *The prince* (see Machiavelli [1532] 2011). His sense of the importance of ferocious leadership was very strong, and ferocious leadership included preserving *unity and stability* in the empire or principedom at any cost. Hobbes had similar views on state leadership; as far as he was concerned, one had to honour Caesar rather than God for one's own advantage, because Caesar reigns in God's very own kingdom (Hobbes 1946, Bk III: *Of a Christian Commonwealth*). The greatest of all evils, Hobbes believed, was civil war.

All is fair in love and war

The ancient Romans had a saying: *When arms rattle, rights are invalid*. The balance of power model is in fact a perpetual arms race; a perpetual suspicion of the 'other'; it perpetually sets justice, fairness, love (*agapé/caritas*) beyond reach. A statue of a soldier in full armour on horseback (somewhere in Spain), with wife and children clinging to the horse's legs, broken down in pain and fear of never seeing daddy again, says it all. Living in a perpetual suspicion of the other, working in an environment of artificially imposed competition at every level, *is living a life of broken relationships*. Since the 19th century, one of the outcomes of Machiavellianism has been the theme of a necessary *alienation*.

Machiavelli's re-pristination of Rome constituted a recovery of *Caesarism*. He himself warned that the worst kinds of oppression come from a *republic* turned oppressive, for, given its stability, it is not easy to overturn it. Was it accidental that, some centuries later, Voltaire ([1738] 1992) would represent Newton as a *Logos* and himself wearing a Caesar laurel crown (the frontispiece of his *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*). And soon after that a first consul, wearing the Christian symbols of justice, would crown himself, standing upright instead of kneeling before a cardinal, with the laurel crown of a Caesar? He promised to repair the broken relationships of his republic; instead he destroyed hundreds of thousands of European lives.

Machiavelli was early-Modern and late-Renaissance, a transitional figure. He reintroduced imperialism, enmity towards care and kindness, made the courage to 'love one's enemy' into a laughing stock; actually took his followers in European leadership (apparently even Frederick the Great of the German empire) back to tribalist vengefulness: two eyes for an eye.

Ideologues will sacrifice those in their power for their own cause, which is always a cause to save humankind from its present misery on the basis of some intellectual's predilections. Machiavelli was a *proto-ideologue*, transforming his own local cause – the glory and unity of Italy – into a universal *virtue*. Ferocity of leadership – this was his confession – was necessary. It did have an immanentist religious meaning, as he himself tells us: the Ancient peoples did not beatify those who suffered in humility, but those who led ferociously as generals or statesmen. From an exemplaristic perspective, he preferred the blood and gore of Ancient sacrifices above little pieces of bread and one sip of wine, or the smell of burning herbs in the Catholic Church.

He developed a scholarly method of interpretation, which does not even contain a sprinkling of searching for *wie es eigentlich gewesen sei* [how it actually was], to show how virtuous Ancient paganism was *vis-à-vis* the *vices* – he does use this word – of the Christianity of his day. It was a methodology of exemplaristic reading, seeking for role models and icons. The criterion for the selection of such Ancient icons was 'virtue'.

One could be at ease if Machiavelli's approach was but a once-off deviation in the history of Western scholarship. However, it became part and parcel of Modernity. It is not about defending the *real* outrages committed by Christians. It is about developing a scholarly method to single out one group to blame it for all the world's woes and to present another group as the really good. Voltaire would explicitly repeat such a methodology, whilst blaming Christianity for the opposite reasons (atrocities), and thus in fact ascribe such goodness to the Classical era as Machiavelli blamed Christianity for. *Vis-à-vis* James's late-ideological formalism, Machiavelli produced a *proto-ideological methodology* in a transitional anticipation of mature Modern ideologies.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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