

Reconstructive Understanding of Machiavellianism in Modern Perspective

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Abstract

Machiavelli's ideological views have been gradually transmitted since the 17th century; since then, the study of Machiavelli and other outstanding thinkers of the same period based on historicism has begun. Through the analysis of Machiavelli's life experience, the general social environment and the flowing work Monarchy, Machiavelli's political philosophy centered on human nature, the view of the state, power and The Prince has been presented in its entirety. Among them, the parts of military monarchy, polity and power are inextricably linked to the development of modern political thought, and are extremely informative for understanding the history of the evolution of the modern view of the state and state power. The study of the connection between the two provides a deeper understanding of Machiavelli's view of the state, humanity, and power and monarchy. It is also of great learning value for a comprehensive study of the modern philosophical view on the composition of the subject of power and the formation of the modern view of the state.

Keywords

Machiavelli; Philosophy; Political science.

1. Introduction

Machiavelli, as an almost landmark figure in the development of Italian political thought in the world, played a key role in the development of the transformation of world political thought, which in general can be described as the escape from the state dilemma of the prevailing ecclesiastical supremacy in Europe at that time, in order to establish a state system of government different from that of its contemporaries. Machiavelli's turn of thought in the creation of the world also determined its long-term influence on the political thought of later generations, and his political masterpiece *The Prince* has a profound influence on the construction of the modern Western political system through the description of the concept of state and power. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the modern political concepts of state building and power, the sections of Machiavelli's *The Prince* on the construction of the state and the concept of power are understood in comparison with the modern politics, giving a more advanced understanding from a different perspective. In contrast to the archaeological approach of historicism, Machiavelli's life, the social environment of the time, and so on, are integrated and deepened.

Machiavelli was born in Florence on May 3, 1469 to a decadent noble family, his father was a practicing lawyer, and in 1494 he participated in the revolt against the Medici family led by the religious reformer Abbot Savonarola. The Medici family was overthrown and the Florentine Republic was founded. 1498, he became the secretary of the Committee of Ten in charge of military and diplomatic affairs of the Florentine Republic, responsible for drafting government documents and the defense of Florence, and went on missions to various countries in Italy and France and Germany. 1512, the Medici family overthrew the Florentine Republic with the support of Spain and returned to power. 1513, the Medici family was restored to power.

Machiavelli was arrested and imprisoned, and was relieved of all his duties. He was soon released.

After regaining his freedom, he lived in seclusion on his estate for a long time and wrote books. In order to be appreciated by the Medici family, he wrote a work that had a profound influence on the political history of the world, *The Prince*, although it was not even presented to the Medici family. Soon after, his two books, *The Prince* and *On the First Ten Books of Titus Livy's Roman History*, appeared. After that he began to write the comic opera *The Flower of Mandala*.

The character of Machiavelli and the true meaning of his philosophy have been a mystery in recent history. He was seen as an extremely cynical man, a man of passion. These comments about him by a strong nationalist have some validity, despite their contradiction. However, all these views are extremely incomplete, both as to his person and his ideas. The book *The Prince* made Machiavellianism a new ideological buzzword. The result of the Florentine referendum overwhelmingly prohibited Machiavelli from holding any public office. But by this time Machiavelli was already seriously ill and died without having had time to hear the bad news. He took with him a dream of revitalizing Florence and even all of Italy, leaving behind a glorious page in the history of philosophical thought in the world.

2. A Realist and Empiricist Who Transcended His Time

The starting point of Machiavelli's political construction is based on a similar starting point to that of the modern state, which is the same as the core of the national interest of the modern state. Machiavelli combined his more than ten years of experience in government and his observation of foreign polity building, and rejected the idealistic and dogmatic religious reason. Bringing the rationality under realism and Renaissance into political thinking, although it cannot be called a materialistic view, "Machiavelli's exposition in his book moves the theoretical view of politics away from morality and towards power as the basis of law, thus shifting the basis of political science from morality to power." [1] A great progress compared to the old religious political thinking, Marx and Engels studied the state from a historical materialist point of view, analyzed the dependence of the state as a superstructure on the economic base, specified that the nature of the modes of production and exchange determines the position of each class in society, and argued that the economically dominant class is necessarily politically dominant position and the state is only the state of the economically dominant class.[2]

According to Sir Acton of England, the most faithful interpretation of Machiavelli is the whole history behind him. Machiavelli was the first and most exhaustive person to introduce cold political thinking to our world. To this day, our world is still shrouded in the shadow of this Florentine of more than 500 years ago. The origins of the modern state actually developed on the basis of nation, state and even class, and it was with such political acumen that Machiavelli observed the Italian reality on the eve of the great bourgeois revolution that the world was about to witness in the 16th century, attempting to lead it into a different era.

It was on the basis of a starting point similar to the fundamental national interest in modern theory that Machiavelli took into account a series of realities, such as human nature and wealth, in accordance with the reality of Italy at that time. In the midst of such a development, it was necessary to organize the people, to enact laws, to impose disciplinary measures, and to establish a state different from the previous one. Although Machiavelli raised the relevance of the sinister nature of human nature to an extremely high level; unlike the utopian thinking of other times or contemporaries in political science thought, Machiavelli actually became disgusted with the cowardice and corruption of the state brought about by such a religiously ruled order, elevating a reality that had never been the concern of his predecessors; this also determined his landmark contribution in the history of human political legality. "The free use of property by every man, the protection of the security of the people, and the happiness of the

world" [3] The refutation of the rule under theocracy by human nature and the introduction of modern scientific reason into political theory are the reasons why Machiavelli remains relevant to our life today.

From the point of view of modern political philosophy, Machiavelli's ideas are evaluated in various ways, but in general such "innovations" are confirmed. There was a shift from classical philosophy to a more realistic and empirical thinking. Political science was no longer just a debate of the ancient Greek period, no longer just the "ideal state" of Plato's thinking. From this time onward, the Machiavellian political science began to think, and subsequent political thinkers were more or less inspired, and a modern era different from the medieval one had already arrived in their minds.

3. The Revival of the New State and the Decline of the Old Dogmatic Ethics

The origin of the modern state cannot be separated from the class development brought about by the development of material production. As a result, with the improvement of the means of production and the development of the productive forces, the original system ruled by clans, popes, feudal landlords, etc. and the decadent ideology would not be able to maintain the status quo. Although Machiavelli in the 16th century did not consider these problems beyond his time, he was driven by the desire to revive the Roman Empire and was aware of the need to break with the ideas that maintained all decadent rule, namely religious ethics. In such a system of thought, Machiavelli, while affirming the importance of morality for the development of a good society, did not hesitate to point out the obstacles to the development of the state. The dogmatic moral ethics could not be of practical help to the monarch, the nation, and Italy was struggling to survive in the tumultuous European environment between the cracks. National security, national renewal, and the power of the monarch the ensuing set of construction problems divorced it from moral ethics and turned to the most practical political system.

Machiavelli placed national development ahead of dogmatic ethics, breaking the shackles of the times. Whether in late Qing Chinese society or in Machiavelli's Italy, dogmatic ethics were merely a tool of the old rulers to maintain their rule. For a modern or modern state, such a cage must be abandoned in order to achieve national independence. For Machiavelli's time, it was to achieve the prosperity of the Italian state.

The starting point for national prosperity (national interest), Machiavelli believed that in the larger international context or international politics, national security and interests should be the basis for political behavior, and ethics under religion should be removed from the development of political behavior and construction. The criterion of national interest is classified in modern political science with different criteria, in the view of the country subject starting from the national interest of Italy; specifically, it can also be said that Machiavelli for the purpose of driving the barbarians out of Italy, that is, the interests of national security, national development of Italy.

In the light of political interests, Machiavelli was bound to think more far-reachingly for the Italian monarchs, free from dogmatic morality: in the language of modern thought, he could also describe the interests of the state as being too great for the proper functioning of state power and the establishment of a suitable system to achieve real development. "In Machiavelli's view, the nature of human nature is evil, selfish and self-reliant, man is born to pursue what is to his advantage, life is a constant pursuit of satisfying his desires, and once man stops this pursuit, he also stops his life." [3] Machiavelli eventually arrived at the other parts of *The Prince* through his own judgment of human nature and his rejection of traditional ethics. Machiavelli thus passed on to think about the problems facing a modern state: how to be independent as a nation, how to unite all parts of the country, and how to preserve the rule of the monarch in order to unify the country. This is a common problem in modern politics, but in Machiavelli's

time it was an anomaly that was difficult to tolerate. This, of course, is related to the different context of the time, but through such insights. The ideas related to the interests of the state, origins, etc. in modern political science did not come out of nowhere, but were developed by the constant search of great thinkers such as Machiavelli.

4. The Continuous Practice of The Idealists - The Construction of A System of Rule That Tends to Be Closer to The Modern Polity

The greatest thing about Machiavelli's famous work ,The Prince, is nothing less than the discussion of the development of Italian state building under realism and experience, creating a path unprecedented from the past and from the world of that time. Of course, it is not exactly the same as the theory of the origin of the state construction of other later European political thinkers, but it already has the prototype of modern European state construction. Machiavelli had extremely rich experience in political practice based on his own observation and study of various countries, combined with his experience in government from 1494 to 1512, when he had traveled to France, the German Empire, Switzerland, and other countries. Through his knowledge and study of rulers, combined with the realities of Italy, he eventually developed his The Prince.

Constructing a rational system under the appropriate method, Machiavelli believed that in order to achieve political ends one should choose the appropriate political means. In his The Prince, Machiavelli divided the state into republics and monarchies, and monarchs were divided into hereditary and new monarchs. In the Monarchy on the means of ruling, Machiavelli discusses in detail the handling of different situations, the profound description of the political skills used by the ruler, and the details of the scenes. Machiavelli presents his own path for the revival of the Italian state that differs from others through the four sections of the Monarchy (Different Types of States, Monarchs and Enemies, Subjects and Friends, Prudence and Chance) in its entirety.

The daring admonition brought about the dawn of another era. Although Machiavelli cannot be classified as a modern thinker in the true sense of the word, it cannot be denied that he has made a significant contribution to the entire history of Western political thought. Without Machiavelli's freedom from theological politics, modern social contract ideas such as Hobbes and Locke might have come later. There has been more overlap between Machiavelli's view of the state and monarchy in his Monarchy and the theoretical ideas of the development of the state in modern Europe. For understanding the political thought in the post-19th century European capitalist world, we can still glimpse a few shades of Machiavelli in it.

5. Comparison with Different Thinkers

Plato, Machiavelli and the Chinese Confucius are all thinkers of different periods. Both Plato's Ideal State, in which he pursues the rule of a philosopher-king type of city-state, and Confucius' Western Zhou System, in which he pursues a utopian ideal society, are the pursuit of a utopian type of society. Even though the two thinkers, who were separated by thousands of miles, lived in different civilizations, the perfection of society has been a common ideal among thinkers from ancient times to the present.

The ideal society is rooted in ideal values. In his The Republic, Plato's detailed discussion of justice is intended to answer the question of the values practiced in the ideal city-state under the rule of his philosopher-king; from the individual to the city-state, from the bottom to the top, Plato does not answer the question of what justice is, but we can still understand his construction of the value system practiced in the ideal city-state. The description of the virtues of wisdom, courage, and temperance is a direct statement of his opinion on the ideal value

system. The familiar Chinese thinker Confucius' advocacy of benevolence is actually an exposition of his views on the values of an ideal society, whether from his classic work *Analects* or *Mencius*, which succeeds Confucius' thought; it is a complete construction of a set of values that establishes the Confucian theory The value system of the ideal society. Despite the limitations of the ideal society envisioned by Plato and Confucius, their attempts to construct a value system containing democracy, fairness, and moderation are still great ideas worthy of reference for the development of today's society.

The ideal system of government and society is the core of both theories. It is easy to see the limitations of either idealism or idealism when we re-examine the thinking of the two thinkers on the ideal polity from the perspective of present-day people. But this is in accordance with the laws of history, whether in the ancient Greek civilization on the oceanic islands or in the Chinese civilization on the Asian continent; both are still at the beginning of their development, and the development of productive forces in the society behind them determines the development of human thought and civilization. It is not surprising that the ideal utopian society was imagined. In China, at the beginning of feudal society, Confucius hoped that the benevolence of the king would educate the people and thus develop his ideal feudal kingdom. Plato, on the other hand, advocated the ideal administrator of the philosopher-king style, and proposed his own answer to the polity of the ideal city-state society. One side is a continental civilization and the other is a maritime civilization; although there are great differences, there are commonalities in the most sought after ideal polity by different thinkers.

6. Conclusion

Machiavelli's view of humanity, state, power and monarchy is not the same as the concept of state and power in today's political textbooks, but it is still of great value to reconstruct our understanding of the concepts in today's modern political science by studying the ideas of figures with inflection points in political thought. Under the textual center, this is one way to deconstruct his valuable political thought anew. Machiavelli's original aim of presenting his work to the then ruler, His Imperial Highness Lozolom, was highly relevant and ultimately established his immortal place in the history of political philosophy. Machiavelli's human nature and morality, which are directly related to political reality, in fact have a modern scientific spirit, which shows the necessity of studying modern concepts of political science in conjunction with both of them in depth. Although the best thinkers and their ideas were created and evolved based on solving the social problems of their time, the history of human beings has never been fragmented, and they still deeply elaborate the laws of human politics and society centuries later. Similarly, the political disciplines that mankind has drawn from modern political construction have in turn mapped the evolution of the state system and the concept of power from clan and slave societies to feudal societies. The study of the link between the two will facilitate our further study of the traditional masterpieces and lead to thoughts and inspirations that are different from modern theories.

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