

Timothy Fuller, ed., *Machiavelli's Legacy: The Prince After Five Hundred Years* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). Print, 216 pp., US\$47.50, ISBN: 9780812247695.



Review

To this day, a fundamental lack of understanding of Niccolo Machiavelli and his iconic work, *The Prince*, permeates discourse of the man and his philosophy. Accessible and thorough, this collection of eight essays edited by world-renowned scholar Timothy Fuller makes a significant contribution towards bridging the gap between what Machiavellianism actually is, and what it is usually taken to mean. This volume continues the long-standing mission amongst scholars of Machiavelli's work to advance a nuanced and well-rounded view of his theories across the breadth of his readership by applying a variety of methodologies to answer two core questions: what exactly made Machiavelli a revolutionary, and what influence has his revolution in thought had on society and governance in the five hundred years since the writing of *The Prince*?

Fuller's introduction succeeds in pre-emptively unifying these papers by pointing out the remarkable consistencies among diverse approaches, such as the authors' special focus on the well-known and oft-noted paradoxes within the corpus of Machiavelli's writing. He suggests that '[w]e remain fascinated by Machiavelli in part because he reminds us of what we seek to transcend, but also because we remain uncertain of our capacity to achieve that transcendence' (p. 10). This tension — between what is and what may (never) be — is one of the fundamental themes of this collection, as the authors discuss the ethical, philosophical, political, and commercial aspects of statecraft as formulated in *The Prince*.

The first essay, 'Machiavelli's Enterprise' (pp. 11–33) by Harvey Mansfield, is an exploration of the complexities of the new philosophy set forth by Machiavelli which locates the innovation of *The Prince* in the author's notion of 'effectual truth'.

Mansfield suggests that, for Machiavelli, the 'truth' of an idea is measured in its effect. What this means, in simplified terms, is what were considered 'virtues' in the Christian tradition might not in actual truth be virtues when we consider goodness from the perspective of effect rather than intention. In this paradigm leaders are only truly good in as much as they are able to be effective, and to that end 'some combination of vice and virtue, is more powerful than virtue alone' (p. 27).

In 'The Redeeming Prince' (pp. 34–53), Maurizio Viroli locates Machiavelli's true innovation in the prophetic address in the concluding chapter of *The Prince*. He sees the theme of redemption, and the myth of the political redeemer, as the key to unlocking the meaning of the text as a whole. Viroli thoroughly addresses the competing scholarly approach that sees the 'Exhortation to Liberate Italy from the Barbarians' as a later addition that jars with the rest of the book: he demonstrates that *The Prince* is in fact structured as a very traditional oration, building to its ultimate point in the conclusion. His careful consideration of Machiavelli's correspondence supports his dating of the 'Exhortation.'

For Catherine Zuckert, 'Machiavelli's Revolution in Thought' (pp. 54–69) is closely aligned the 'effectual truth' addressed by Mansfield. She zeroes in on the infamous Machiavellian maxim that a Prince 'must learn how not to be good' and explores what that really means in light of the 'effectual truth' that a leader's goodness is measurable by his effectiveness in governing the many. For example, a Prince's generosity to his entourage was traditionally viewed as a virtue; but in Machiavelli's thinking, since the masses would ultimately have to pay for that generosity, a Prince was more virtuous for not taking from the many to give to the few (p. 60). Far from meaning that a leader should practice vice for the sake of acquiring personal power, Zuckert's analysis shows that for Machiavelli, learning 'not to be good' was instead a reassessment of moral virtue in the context of effective governance.

Arlene Saxonhouse suggests in 'Machiavelli's Women' (pp. 70–86) that his treatment of female figures in *The Prince*, and other writings, is the key to understanding his paradigm-shifting view of the world. She looks beyond Machiavelli's dichotomy of Fortuna/virtù (the feminised, changeable and temperamental 'fortune' to be subdued by masculinised discipline and vigour), and finds that in his examples of successful female leaders and unsuccessful male leaders lies the lesson that adaptability and mutability are the crucial requirement for establishing 'new orders'. The exemplary women he addresses have been able to adopt masculine traits, whereas counter-exemplary men have failed to adopt the 'feminine' ability to dissemble.

In 'Machiavelli and the Business of Politics' (pp. 87–104), David Wootton draws our attention to the slipperiness of the term 'reason of state' as derived from Machiavelli's theories. The Italian word 'ragione' in this period was not simply 'reason' or 'rationale' as later authors used it, but also included the idea of 'business' or commerce, and before Hobbes, 'stato' (state) was a term that covered everything from the physical territories and the subjects controlled by the ruler, to the authority of the ruler, and the mechanics by which rule was gained and consolidated. Most of these meanings are covered by the all-encompassing term 'politics', and Wootton discusses this evolution in terminology across the centuries.

The standout feature of David Hendrickson's essay, 'Machiavelli and Machiavellianism' (pp. 105–26) was his discussion of the three modes of republic expansion addressed by Machiavelli: the confederate approach, the 'imperial association' approach and simple subjugation. Hendrickson shows that Machiavelli promoted the 'imperial association' approach of the old Roman Empire, wherein the conquered were allowed to become a part of the Roman Empire, but to cede their autonomy entirely. A confederacy, on the other hand, is made up of equal but separate communities who each have a say in the actions of the whole. Hendrickson goes on to address current practices in foreign policy, with special reference to

America, in light of the lessons to be gleaned from Machiavelli on these different methods of expanding and consolidating a republic.

Along similar lines, Thomas Cronin's 'Machiavelli's *Prince*: An Americanist's Perspective' (pp. 127–55) explores the ways in which current political trends and norms can be elucidated by reference to Machiavelli's best-known text. While the infamy of *The Prince* precludes almost any unbiased discussion of it, Cronin notes that our modern preferences of the attributes that we want in our politicians are in fact Machiavellian qualities, although we are loath to admit it. While we want leaders who can demonstrate dignity and morality, as modern voters we support those whom we know would prioritise the greater good of our community over adherence to morality simply for the sake of it. A particular highlight was Cronin's overview of Machiavelli's life and work, in the subsection 'The Man and The Writer' (pp. 129–155).

In the concluding essay, 'The Riddle of Cesare Borgia and the Legacy of Machiavelli's *Prince*' (pp. 157–70), Clifford Orwin argues that Cesare provided Machiavelli with the ultimate confirmation that the right qualities exercised within the wrong system would not yield any long-lasting results. Machiavelli portrays Cesare as having limited virtù, because his successes — as his failures — were fashioned within the paradigm of papal power. Orwin sees Cesare as a relic of an obsolete order, who prefigures the redeemer that Machiavelli hopes for: one who will possess virtù unlimited and transcend the existing system.

This book succeeds in its mission to explore, from a variety of academic perspectives, where Machiavelli's innovation lies, and how that has affected the landscape of political thought and practice in the past half-millennium. The truly great achievement of this volume is that its audience will be spurred to a renewed discussion around the ethics of statecraft — a timely discussion, indeed, in this period where America, Australia and Europe are all facing significant political choices, especially with regard to foreign policy. These essays encourage us to

question what is the greater good of statecraft, and what role do we as the masses who submit to being governed by the few play in the system? Our awareness of that role is the real legacy of Machiavelli. This collection does the utmost justice to the complex oeuvre of a man whose life's mission it was to show things as they are, so that we might understand the impediments to approaching what might be.

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