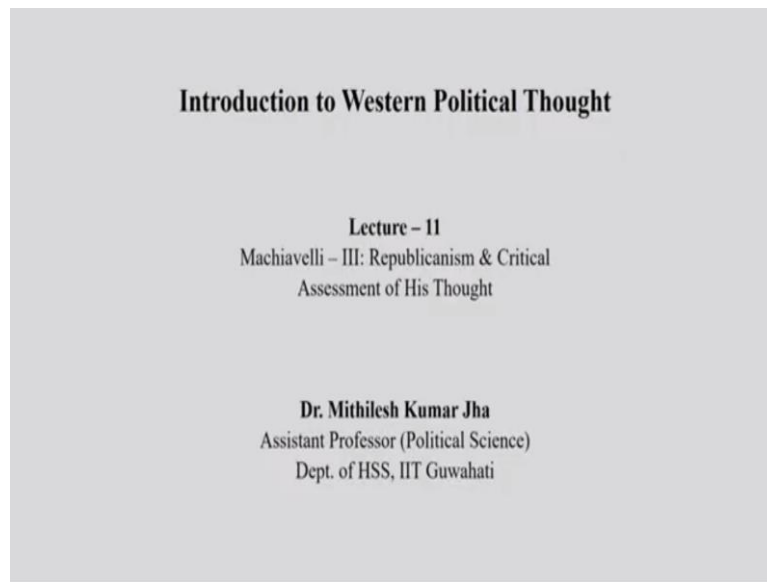


Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture No. 11
Machiavelli – III: Republicanism and Critical
Assessment of his thought

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Hello and welcome everyone. This is the third and concluding lecture on Machiavelli. Today, we are going to focus on the first part of another important text of him, *Discourses on Livy*, and his characterization of republics as a better form of government than the principalities. In the second part of the lecture, today, we are going to assess the contribution of Machiavelli in the western tradition of political thought.

Machiavelli was someone subjected to different kinds of interpretation as a republic thinker who wanted an all-powerful sovereign ruler to unify. And in pursuit of such unification, he should not be concerned about the ethical or moral concern of the conventional Christian ethics. He was someone who was interpreted as a classical humanist thinker.

In the previous two lectures, we have discussed his views on Virtù or Fortuna. The context in which he was writing was the fragmentation of Italy or all-pervasive political, moral decay, and the inability of Christian ethics or religion to provide stability in that context.

Machiavelli was someone trying to rescue or move away from the dominant Christian ethics or morality and to reset the classical humanist tradition of belief that human beings through their reason and rationality could create a better society for themselves and their community. And

Machiavelli comes as the first thinker in the medieval or late medieval era to project politics which could create the conditions for a better life for the individuals and community.

In doing that he remained somewhat uniquely positioned in the sense he was not modern like Hobbes, Lock, and Rousseau nor he was a medieval thinker like Saint Augustine or Thomas Aquinas. This we have discussed and his views on Virtù and Fortuna in the first lecture. In the second lecture, we particularly focused on his text, *The Prince*, and the advice that he gave to the prince for the creation of new principalities. And how to govern them effectively given the corrupt or weakened human nature.

Thus, Machiavelli through his advice to the prince was trying to develop the theory of politics which helped human beings to create a system of government or polity in a condition where people are imperfect, morally corrupt, or violent prone. So, how to create a perfect state in the imperfect condition. And what kind of advice the ruler needs to create such perfect order that is the basis of *The Prince*.

In today's lecture, we are going to focus on how Machiavelli preferred the republics and explain the nature, characteristics of such republics. His other equally significant perhaps more significant than the text, *the Prince* in many political commentators is *the Discourse*. In the *Discourse*, he outlined the nature and characteristics of the republics which we are going to focus on in the first half of the lecture, today. And then we will conclude to assess the contribution of Machiavelli's thought and its different kinds of interpretation.

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➤ Machiavelli, as a morally and ethically neutral thinker, leaves us with a theory of politics whose sole concern is to establish a stable polity and how to govern it effectively. Considering the wickedness and violent nature of human beings that is combined with the everchanging situations in politics, he wanted the rulers to know situations as they are and respond to them appropriately.

➤ He discussed two types of government or polity – principalities and republics and argued that republics are more stable than principalities. He elaborated upon the characteristics and virtues of the republics in the *Discourses on Livy*. *Discourses* is a dense and challenging text to read but represent the complexities of Machiavelli's political thought. Much of his political thought is reflected in the *Discourses* where he comes out as a humanist and republican thinker, which is in sharp contrast to his image in *The Prince* as a defender of the principality and 'advocate of evil.'

➤ Machiavelli was above all a republican thinker. It becomes more evident when we read *The Prince* and the *Discourses* together. If we study another of his text, the *Art of War*, with his emphasis on military virtù, we get a very different picture of his thought. And therefore, Machiavelli's works have been subjected to many and often contradictory interpretations.

Machiavelli was a morally and ethically neutral thinker. So as we have discussed Machiavelli on the

matter of politics or governing was not taking any ethical or moral position. In his assessment of politics or his advice, he appeared to be an ethically or morally neutral thinker. With this approach to politics as an ethical and morally neutral observer or a thinker, Machiavelli lived with a theory of politics whose sole concern was how to establish a stable polity and govern them effectively.

This was the central concern of Machiavelli's political theory to establish a stable polity given the imperfect nature of human beings' constant warfare and the fragmentation of principalities or cities in the Italian Peninsula. His immediate concern was to have a polity that would unify this fragmented polity which was constantly at war with each other in a more stable or untied form of a rule.

And then, how to govern them effectively? That was the central concern in Machiavelli's political thought and he provided us a theory of politics which helped us to understand how to create a stable order and govern them effectively. And in doing so, there was an ethical or morally neutral stand that Machiavelli took.

So, considering the wickedness and violent nature of human beings combined with the ever-changing situation in politics. He wanted the rulers to know the situations as they were rather than as we ought them to be. Machiavelli's political thought or political thinking was based on the exact or correct assessment of the situation.

The ethical and moral concern that everybody would behave was ideally, morally, and ethically in an honest manner. But the given actual condition was not ideal. So, for a ruler to establish a rule he must be knowledgeable enough through history by mixing the virtue of fox and lion to understand the situation as it is. Rather than as we ought them to be. Thus, once a ruler understands the situation as they are then his responsibilities are to understand what is the appropriate response to that particular situation. In other words, what is the necessity of that particular situation? And once a ruler fulfills those responsibilities and responds to such situations accordingly then it will bring glory to his rule or principalities or kingdom.

That was the advice that Machiavelli gave to the prince. He discussed the two types of government or polity. One is principalities and the major concern in his text, *the Prince* was about how to rule principalities orderly, how a new prince could acquire new principalities, and govern them effectively. So, in *the Prince*, the subject matter was principalities.

And the other form of government or the types of government was the republics and he argued that in the long run, the republics or a form of government where citizens would play a proactive role in the government through their institutions, laws, and constitutions are more stable than principalities.

Because in the principalities, there would be constant conspiracies. There would be constant traps, enviousness among Aristocrats to outperform the ruler, the king, or the prince.

But in the republics which was ruled by the public institution through the participation of the citizen, durability or stability of the polity could be maintained or achieved. He argued that republics were more stable than principalities. He elaborated upon the characteristics and the virtue of republics in *the Discourses on Livy*. So, *Discourses* is a dense and challenging text to read. But it represented the complexities of Machiavelli's political thought.

If you start reading *Discourses*, it is a very complex text. And in Machiavelli's political theorization you will not have a kind of systematic or scientific kind of approach to politics. Because he combined his knowledge of history or classical Roman republics and its institutions. The Greek states such as Sparta and Athens, he selectively talked about to argue or to use that as a basis for his advice to the ruler or prince.

In *the Discourse*, if you start reading it is not an easy text to understand. However, it represented a more complex terrain of political thinking in Machiavelli, than it appeared in *the Prince*. In fact, for a century, thinkers or philosophers took *Discourses* more seriously than *the Prince*. However, the dominant understanding that we have of Machiavelli as the thinker of evil or immoral practices in politics is based on the prince.

Is the late twentieth century revisit of this text under the new set of ethics in Victorian England or France about the moral and ethical behaviors in the polity. And how to govern the polity or republic based on certain ethical and moral norms. In those approaches, Machiavelli's image of being a thinker of evil or immoral practices were of late development.

But much of his thinking and theorization for a very long time was based on this text *Discourses* which represented the more complex terrain of his thoughts and thinking. And I request you all to read this text to arrive at your conclusions and understanding of Machiavelli and his political thought. Its complexities were reflected in the *Discourse* where he came out as a humanist and republican thinker. This is very contrast to Machiavelli's image in *the Prince*. So, in *the Prince*, he appeared to be a defender of the principality that means how a ruler should acquire the principalities or acquire new territories. And in acquiring such territories how he should not be guided by conventional morality or Christian ethics. There was a kind of severe resentment or critic in Machiavelli against the Christian ethics or Christian religion which he associated with corrupt practices.

In *the Prince*, he wanted the ruler or prince to acquire the new territories or principalities and

govern them effectively by combining the virtue of lion and fox and have the flexibility to respond adequately to the changing circumstances in the polity. And that ability of Virtù in Machiavellian term brought glory to the prince and his principalities. So, in *the Prince*, his concern was on principalities. But in *Discourses*, he focused more on the republics. However, we will see in the latter part of this lecture that how there is a kind of overlapping also. Machiavelli in *the Discourses* appeared to be a republican thinker. This republican and humanist streak of thought in his writings was evident in *the Prince* when we focus that how a king should seek friendship with the common people in the long term. Thus, the rule of common people and the protection of their property or family was the concern in *the Prince* and it becomes much more evident in *the Discourses*.

So, Machiavelli was a republican humanist thinker and it would become clearer or evident if we read these two texts together, *the Prince* and *the Discourses*. Our crude caricature of Machiavelli as a thinker of evil would be unsustainable if we try to understand the overlaps between *the Prince* and *the Discourses* in Machiavelli.

He wrote another text, *the Art of War*. It was the basis of understanding warfare even today or military preparedness or the relationship between citizens and military preparing the citizen's army. So, if we read this text, *the Art of War*, we have altogether different notions of Machiavellian thought and polity based on the military Virtù or military preparedness.

Therefore, Machiavelli's work had been subjected to many and often contradictory interpretations which were open to new newer kind of interpretation. There was no sector debate on the corrupt interpretation of Machiavelli whether he was a republican or a defender of principalities. Whether he was someone who disregarded the role of religion or he wanted to use it for political purposes.

So, there was a kind of contradictory or ongoing interpretation or engagement with Machiavelli's works. He continued to inspire different traditions of thinking and theorization about the polity and actually, the politicians of different ages and generations continued to derive inspiration from his text, *the Prince*. And of course, the reading of which was more complex than the crude caricature in the commonsensical understanding of Machiavelli which we will return to in the second half.

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Discourses on Livy: Views on Republics

- Machiavelli regarded republics in which every citizen could participate in the pursuit of common goods as a more stable and durable form of government in comparison to principalities. His support of principalities and the role of the prince in creating one was a transitory form of rule which should eventually pave the way for the republican institutions and rule by the people.
- His preference for the republics again shows Machiavelli's patriotism and his historical approach to address the challenges of Italy of his time. He regarded the Roman classical republican institutions as the pinnacle of success or glory for the community. He argued that the fullest growth of the city or the community both economically and militarily or politically is possible in the republics alone which ensure conditions of personal safety and liberty of all. Such conditions of freedom for all is not possible in principalities. Only a republican form of government can guarantee the freedom of the individuals.
- Machiavelli's preference for republics over principalities is based on his understanding of politics as a domain is always in flux, and only that form of the rule could endure in the long run, which could innovate and change itself according to the changing circumstances. According to Machiavelli, a republic with its institutions and class conflicts are most suitable for such changes and innovations.

In the *Discourses on Livy*, he expressed his views on republics. Machiavelli regarded republics in which every citizen could participate in the pursuit of common goods as a more stable and durable form of government in comparison to principalities. In this text, Machiavelli regarded the republic as the kind of rule which would ensure maximum participation from the citizens and their fullest growth.

And that would lead to the development of the city both politically and economically from the internal and external threats. Machiavelli regarded republics in which every citizen could participate in the pursuit of common goods. And here, we have to understand that politics ultimately was not about personal good or particularly good. It should be based on the common good.

The corruption or stability occurred in the polity when it was used for the sake of personal benefit or the sake of particular interest. It would lead to factionalism, upheavals, or rebellions. So, politics is the pursuit of the common good, and a prince if he can do it is good. In fact in the given condition of it, he thought that the strong leader alone could unify the warring or fragmented city-states.

And once such unification was done where a ruler should leave governing the city to the republican institution. He argued that in this way the durability or stability of the political order could be maintained when the participation of citizens and functioning of the polity was for the pursuit of the common good or public good. It is relevant even today if you look at the politicians and political practices in different democracies or government.

When the politicians and political party's functions for the public good or common good and take everybody along in the pursuit of such common good, there is stability. There is support for the government and the party. But when it tries to represent the interest of only one section or the personal interest of the ruler or party then there is a kind of protest, demonstration and it is evident

even today in different democracies and politics.

For Machiavelli, this understanding of politics was the pursuit of the common good that is something which we have to keep in mind when he discussed why republics were a more stable form of government than the principalities. Because in the principalities, there would be constant enviousness and conspiracies among the nobles against the ruler or prince.

So, to avoid that a ruler or prince once established the rule should promote the republican institution or public institution and enabling the participation of citizens which would ensure the durability and stability of his kingdom or polity.

His support of principalities and the rule of the prince in creating such principalities or one such rule or polity was regarded by many thinkers. It is called a kind of transitory thing. He wanted the rule of a strong ruler like Cesare Borgia or the young ruler of the Medici family Lorenzo. So, his support for the strong ruler or prince was to acquire or establish a strong rule and the polity.

But that was transitory which gradually paved the way for the republican institution with the participation of citizens, to ensure the sustenance and durability of the rule. He regarded the principalities or a prince should create one polity that is the transitory form of rule which should eventually pave the way for the republican institution and the rule by people that enabled citizen's participation.

His preference for republics again shows Machiavelli's patriotism and his historical approach to address the challenges of Italy of his time. In *Discourses* as well as in *the Prince*, one of the things that become very crucial is his patriotism to unify Italy and bring back the classical republican glory of Rome.

He regarded the Roman classical republican institution as the pinnacle of success or glory for the community. So, the way this text, *Discourses on Livy* started as a reflection or engagement with the writings of Livy who wrote about them the history of the Roman Empire. And its republican institution, its citizen's army, and the way class interests were balanced in the classical Roman Empire through its republican institution. And how it helped the empire to achieve glory in philosophy, art, science, and military warfare or its political arrangements.

That becomes the basis for Machiavelli to address the contemporary challenges that the Italian Peninsula was facing where the catholic Church or Papacy has become morally corrupt. And politically weak city-states were constantly at warfare. In that condition, how a strong ruler or prince would unify them and they would eventually pave the way for a republican institution that

ensures the freedom and liberty of the people.

And when the freedom and liberty of the people are guaranteed that will lead to the pinnacle of success in the polity. So, in the modern economic thinking which we trace in the writings of Adam Smith's, *Wealth of Nation*. He argued that society would become more prosperous when citizens were given freedom or opportunity to choose in the material matters that concern them.

A society that gives maximum liberty for the citizens to choose the life which is more suitable to them will result in a more prosperous society economically and materially. Similarly, in Machiavelli, you have this kind of defense of liberty necessary for the prosperity of the city-states for its better governing, and stability from internal warfare or conspiracies and external interferences.

To do that the ruler or republic must ensure that citizens have maximum freedom that will bring glory and prosperity to the city-states which will lead to its durability and stability. So that is the basis of his republican thinking and theorization in his writing *the Discourse*.

He argued that the fullest growth of the city or community, both economical and militarily or politically were possible in the republics alone which provided the conditions of personal safety and liberty of all. So, when there was political stability or political upheavals or rebellions there was a constant threat to life and liberty.

And if life and liberty were under threat, nobody would pursue the interest of economic development or how to strengthen the polity. It will create a state of confusion that will not ensure the stability of the order. The first and foremost thing for Machiavelli was to provide the condition for the safety and liberty of the citizens.

Now, in the principalities, there was the relative stability or protection of individual life. However, it was constantly at the mercy of the ruler or prince. The best guarantee of individual life and liberty was possible only in the republican form with the republican situation, laws, and constitutions. Therefore, he argued that the republic form of government alone could ensure the maximum freedom and liberty for the citizen in the long term. It will ensure the stability of political rule.

So, that is the kind of interdependence between the rule and liberty of the citizens which was better balance in the republic than in the principalities or other forms of government. Such conditions for freedom for all were not possible in his principalities. Only a republican form of government could guarantee the freedom of individuals necessary for the strength, the stability of the city-states, and polity.

Machiavelli's preference for republics over principalities was based on his understanding of politics as a domain always in flux. This defense of the republican form of government was based on the assessment of Machiavelli about politics, constantly in flux. Ever-changing circumstances were happening in politics.

And the ruler or government must respond to such changing circumstances. Now, which form or which kind of rule could respond effectively or correctly? So, if a prince is wise and has sufficient requisite knowledge and Virtù in political and military matters, he is best suitable to unify. But what happens if the successors or the inheritors of his rule is weak.

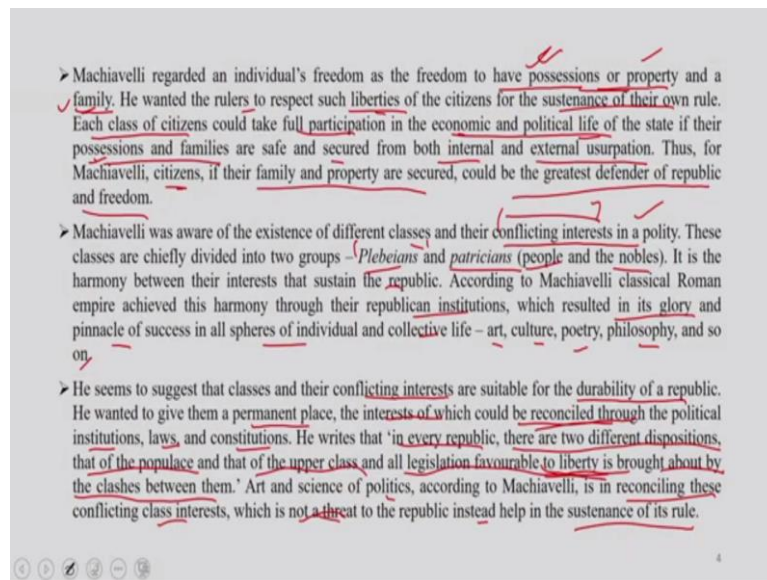
And his successor was again weaker than the previous one. Now, that would create chaos or lead to conspiracies or enviousness or rebellion even. In the principalities, in the long term, even when the founder of the principality was morally or politically had sufficient knowledge and Virtù to address changing circumstances. There was no guarantee that his inheritor or successor would be equally virtuous or strong or capable of responding to changing circumstances.

It was the republic that could constantly innovate itself or change itself to the changing circumstances in the polity. Therefore, it is most suitable to address the flux or challenges or everlasting or constant changes in the life of polity or political life which characterize the polity. The government or the ruler are constantly responding to one challenge after the other and there is no end of the newer challenges that come the ruler's way.

And the success and the glory of the ruler is based on how adequately and appropriately they respond to such challenges or changes constantly occurring in the body politic. He regarded the republican form with its institutions, laws, and constitution as more suitable to respond to the changing circumstances than the principalities or a rule by the king.

According to Machiavelli, the republic with its institution and class conflicts would come to this question of class conflicts and the conflict in the interests of different classes and how republic could form better governance or manage this conflicting interest in the cause that leads to innovation and changes for securing the liberty or freedom in a better manner in the republic in a moment. But he regarded such class conflicts and constant changes happening in the politics were based on respondents with the republican form of government.

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Let us discuss what Machiavelli meant by individual freedom or liberty which should be secured in republics for its stability and safety. The notion of the republic or what kind of freedom and liberty is desirable remained different from our liberation understanding of political freedom or liberty.

For Machiavelli, individual freedom was the freedom to have possessions or property and a family. It was very different from John Stuart Mill or Isaiah Berlin or many other conceptions of freedom or liberty for the individuals. How it should be guaranteed by the state through the constitution and the laws?

So, Machiavelli regarded that for the protection of the state or polity, it was necessary to guarantee certain freedom and liberty to the individual. This liberty meant that individuals should have the freedom to have possession of the property and the state or ruler should not use those properties or interfere with the family of the individual.

If it does it will bring rebellions or resentments from the people which will destabilize or lead to rebellion against the rule or polity. Machiavelli's understanding of individual freedom was the freedom to have property and family. He wanted the rulers to respect such liberty. The resources of the states should be increased not by unnecessarily taxing or extracting resources from the people but by conquering the new states or expanding the territory of the states.

And once, the ruler starts extracting revenues or usurpation the property from the people it would lead to chaos. It would lead to rebellion. So, Machiavelli advised the ruler even in the republics and in the principality not to usurp or extract resources from the common people. He wanted the ruler to respect this liberty of possession and family of citizens for the sustenance of their own rule.

In the republics, each class of citizens could take full participation in the economic and political life

of the state if their possessions and families were safe and secured from both internal and external usurpation or appropriation. So, what Machiavelli meant that the citizen could participate in the life of polity when the safety of their property and family were guaranteed.

In the absence of that, they would not take interest or participate in public life. For creating the condition, where citizens could proactively participate in the life of the city both politically and economically. And thereby to ensure its stability, the ruler needed to secure the personal property or safety of their family life. That enabled or motivated citizens to participate in public life, in the pursuit of the common good. In its absence, citizens couldn't be driven by public interest rather than personal interest. There was a dichotomy between the pursuit of personal interest and the public interest.

The republic and its strength lie when the citizens were driven by the public interest. When the public institutions, laws, and constitutions were in the pursuit of the common good and not the personal or particular good of any sections of the population. Machiavelli thought that the economic and political life of the state was more secure when the citizens were guaranteed their possession and families without any appropriation by the internal or external forces. For Machiavelli, if a citizen's family and property were secured, it could be the greatest defender of both republic and freedom. And this you can contrast with the apprehension about the rule of nobility or aristocrats or noble birth in the sustenance of republic.

Even in the principalities as I have said, Machiavelli advised the ruler to have friendship with common people in the long run. Machiavelli wanted that the republics could be better secured and defended by citizens in the long run, and not by the nobles or aristocrats or even by the prince. So, Machiavelli was aware of the existence of different classes and their conflicting interests in a polity.

And this was very strange or unique in Machiavellian political thinking and theorization. Unlike Marcus or even in Plato, there was a kind of search to remove the class conflicts. So, in Plato, the idea was to have harmony of existence or in Marcus, there was the idea of revolution which would end the class nature of society and thereby the rule of polity and state.

So, the idea is to have communism of life where there is no private property, no need of the state, polity, and harmony would prevail. Machiavelli was someone who wanted this class conflict to acquire a kind of permanent nature. And the rule of the republic was to manage the class conflict rather than eradicate or remove it.

Machiavelli acknowledged the existence of different classes and their conflicting interests. So they had different interests which were not similar. That is something that should not be extreme. Like

nobody should be truly wealthy or not, the majority of the population should not be too poor. Of course, that will lead to rebellion or upheavals or political stability.

However, the class conflict to a great extent was necessary for the health of the republic for its sustenance. And the role of republican institutions was to manage this class interest or conflicting interest in the classes. He again went back to the classical Roman republic times, where its institution managed those interests perfectly well. That led to glory in the field of arts, politics, poetry, philosophy, and military.

He regarded that these classes were chiefly divided into two groups. They were plebeians and patricians. Plebeians were the people or populous and the patricians were the nobles. It was the interest of harmony interest that sustain the republic. According to Machiavelli, the Classical Roman Empire achieve this harmony through their republican institution that resulted in its glory and the pinnacle of success in all spheres of individual and collective life – art, culture, poetry, philosophy, and so on.

He wanted that to be reestablished or achieved again under the republican form of government. So he seemed to suggest that classes and their conflicting interests were suitable for the durability of the republic. He wanted to give them a kind of permanent place. The interest of which could be reconciled through political institutions, laws, and constitutions. He wrote that in every republic, there were two different dispositions that of the populous and of the upper class. All legislations were favorable to the liberty of securing the liberty that was brought by the classes between them.

This was the conflicting interest between the plebeians or patricians that resulted in the lesson which secured maximum liberty and freedom for the individuals. Therefore, he wanted these class conflicts to remain and be managed for the health of republics. He did not want it to be eradicated. He did not want the harmony of existence as we have seen in Plato.

It was necessary for the health of the republics. Thus, the arts and science of politics, according to Machiavelli was reconciling these conflicting class interests which were not a threat to the republic, instead, it helped in the sustenance of its rule.

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Mixed Constitution and the Role of Laws & Institutions

- Machiavelli does not prefer one form of polity over the others, such as monarchy over democracy or vice-versa. He regarded them all as far from satisfactory. Each of them has its specific strengths and weaknesses. He wanted republic to be based on a mixed constitution that combines the virtue of a strong leader i.e., king or prince with that of aristocracy and democracy or popular rule. Machiavelli writes, 'the prudent legislators, aware of their defects, refrained from adopting as such any one of these forms, and choose instead one that shared them all, since ... such a government would be stronger and more stable.'
- He, however, regarded the role of common citizens in the republic as more important than nobility or even the prince. He wanted the citizens to be trained in the political and military *virtu* for a republic to survive longer. For the glory of the republic, he wanted the citizens to be sufficiently liberty-minded with a sense of *civic virtue*. This *civic virtue* is the basis of the republican form of the government and is different from the private interests of the citizen. It is associated with the common or public good of the whole community. Politics in a republic is thus the pursuit of the common good.
- Machiavelli further argues that the public good could be better achieved through the institutions, laws, and constitutions. However, these institutions, in the absence of *civic virtue*, become ineffective and corrupt. They might be used for the pursuit of personal interests. It would lead to further corruption in the body politic, which would again require a strong ruler to reunite the people for the pursuit of achieving the foundational values of the republic. Thus, Machiavelli, in his defense of the republic, is guided by the cyclical view of history.

He argued about the mixed constitution for the health or strength of republics. So, Machiavelli did not prefer one form of polity over the others such as monarchy or aristocracy or tyranny or oligarchy or rule by the populous or rule by the few in the form of democracy. He was not taking any moral or ethical position on preferring one form of polity over the others. And he regarded all of them as far from satisfactory in practice.

So, each of them, for Machiavelli had their specific strengths and weakness. He wanted the republic therefore to be based on a mixed constitution. That is the combination of the virtue of different forms of polity. There could be a ruler. But he alone could not govern the polity effectively for the long term. Thus, he wanted to combine the virtues of the strong leader or king or prince with that of aristocracy and democracy of popular rule.

The republic for Machiavelli was the combination of all these three: a strong leader with a set of aristocrats knowledgeable in governing and the participation of many, or the rule of many. So, Machiavelli wrote the prudent legislator was aware of their defects. That meant the defects of all forms of quality refrained from adopting any one of these forms.

So, a prudent or wise legislator or ruler would not be guided by any one particular form of quality. He chose one, instead of one that shared them all. That meant the mixed constitution. And such a government would be stronger and more stable than the one particular form of government. However, he regarded the rule of common citizens in the republic as more important than nobility or even the prince.

And that is why Machiavelli's republican notion became much more evident. He wanted the citizens to have the supreme or maximum rule in the governing city or sustaining the rule of republican institution. He wanted the citizens to be trained in the political and military *Virtu* for a

republic to survive for longer and the glory of the republics. He wanted the citizens to be sufficiently liberal-minded.

When the citizens were morally corrupt and driven by personal interest, there would be a threat to the republics. So, for the citizens to participate proactively in the life of polity they must be driven by the public interest or common good. He wanted the citizens to be sufficiently trained in the political and military Virtù. He also argued about the relationship between the military and citizens in the text.

He wanted citizens to be liberty-minded with a sense of civic Virtù for the sustenance and strength of the republic. This civic Virtù was the basis of the republican form of government based on the classical notion in today's democracy or republic in many countries. So, the role of citizens was of prime importance for the stability or sustenance of modern democracies and republics, also.

This civic Virtù for Machiavelli was the basis of the republican form of government. It was very different from the private interests of the citizen. So, it was associated with the common or public good of the whole community to the personal good or particular interest of any specific section of the society.

Politics in a republic is thus the pursuit of the common good and not the personal good or the private good of the citizen. Machiavelli, further, argued that the public good could be better achieved through the institution such as laws and the constitution. And he also wanted to hold the officials accountable and punish them, according to the laws and not to the fancies or whims of the ruler.

So, if a public official was punished because of corrupt practices through the laws and institutions then there would be no threat to the republics as such. Because the citizens would believe that there was the official who was corrupt and not the republic. And if the ruler punished a corrupt official not privately, but through public institution then it would prevent factionalism. The impersonal kind of rule through the institution and punishing those who betray the republican principals or behaved corruptly would sustain the republics in the long run.

The institutional laws and constitutions should be driven by the pursuit of public good and in the long term, it is driven by the public good that sustains the republic and its order. However, these institutions in the absence of civic Virtù became ineffective and corrupt in the long term. And there was a kind of cyclical notion in Machiavelli where these republics required strong rulers to start with.

Gradually, it paved the way for the public institutions or laws and constitutions might ultimately become corrupt. Now, once it becomes corrupt then there is again the rule of the new leader or the strong leader to reunite the masses under the founding or principal or virtue of the republic. That is the common good, not the personal and private good of the citizens or any fraction of it.

He argued that these institutions and laws in the absence of civic Virtue became ineffective and corrupt. They might be used for the pursuit of personal interest of the rulers or a set of groups or the fraction and it would lead to further corruption in the body politic which would again require a strong ruler to reunite people for the pursuit of achieving the foundational values of the republic. This is the cyclical kind of view of history in Machiavellian political thought and thinking.

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Assessment of Machiavelli's Political Thought

- Whether Machiavelli was a medieval or a modern political thinker? Machiavelli was uniquely positioned in the history of political thought in the western tradition. He was not entirely a medieval thinker rooted in Christian theology or metaphysics, nor was he a modern thinker like Hobbes. Although he did explain the distinct sphere of politics and separated it from the clutches of religion, he remained rooted in the ideas like *Fortuna*, *Virtu*, and the Christian understanding of the wickedness of the human nature and so on.
- Another way to assess Machiavelli's thought is to carefully examine the similarities and differences between *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy*. Although both the text were written simultaneously (*The Prince* in 1513 and *Discourses* in 1513-1517), there is a reason to believe that *Discourses* is his mature work. He favours republics to principalities, which could be a better guarantee of the freedom and liberty of the citizens. Although he wanted the republic to be governed by a mixed constitution, the faith and the trust he showed to common people and their abilities are quite radical for his age rooted in the hierarchical division between plebian and patricians.
- In contrast to the dominant understanding of Machiavelli as the theorist of evil or 'murderous Machiavel' which is based on the selective perhaps incorrect reading of *The Prince*, many thinkers regard him as a renaissance man and a republican theorist of humanist traditions. Spinoza (1632-1677) and Rousseau (1712-1778) regarded him as the republican thinker. They based their analyses of Machiavelli's thought on *Discourses* and considered *The Prince* as a satirical text not to be taken seriously.

So, now we move to assess his political thought and his contribution to the tradition of western political thought. The first question that comes when we assist Machiavellian political thought is whether he was a medieval thinker or a modern political thinker. To address the first question, we have to understand his unique position in the history of political thought in the western tradition, where he was not entirely a medieval thinker rooted in the Christian theology or metaphysics nor he was a modern thinker like Hobbes.

He was somewhat in between or in a phase in the history of political thought in a western tradition where he was moving away from the medieval modes of thinking about politics. But he was not sufficiently modern in his approach to politics. In Hobbes, as we see that he was regarded as the first modern thinker and not Machiavelli even when there was kind of sufficient move away from medieval modes of thinking in Machiavelli.

Although he did explain the distinct sphere of politics and separated it from the clutches of religion, Machiavelli remained rooted in the ideas like Fortuna, Virtù and the Christian understanding of the wickedness of human nature and then explain how to establish the government or effectively rule them through the advice that he gave to *the Prince* and *the Discourses*.

In Machiavelli, you have this tension of positioning him as a medieval thinker or a modern thinker where he appeared to be somewhere away from the medieval. But not yet modern or sufficiently modern like Hobbes. However, many interpreters had also argued Machiavelli as a renaissance or a modern classical republican thinker.

Another way to assess Machiavelli's political thought was to read these two texts of him, *the Prince* and *the Discourses* together. Although both the texts were written simultaneously, *the Prince* was written in fifteen hundred thirteen and *the Discourses* in fifteen hundred thirteen to fifteen hundred seventeen. Both these texts were published after his death in 1527. So, *the Prince* was published a year later than *the Discourse*.

That is *the Discourse* was published in 1531 and *the Prince* was published in fifteen hundred thirty-two. Now, there is a lot of overlap between these two texts and to understand Machiavelli's thought properly, one needs to simultaneously engage with these two texts. Of course, there is an obvious difference between the two is that in *the Prince*, his defense principalities, or the rule by one man in *the Discourses*, he argued about the republics.

So, once you engage with the two texts you conclude here, *the Discourse* appeared to be mature works of Machiavelli in comparison to *the Prince*. And he favored republics to principality which could be a better guarantee of freedom and liberty of the citizens as we have discussed. Although, he wanted republics to be governed by a mixed constitution, the faith and the trust he showed to the common people and their abilities were quite radical for his age which was rooted in the hierarchical division between the plebeians and patricians.

Both in *the Prince* and more explicitly in *the Discourses*, Machiavelli posed his trust or faith in the abilities of the common man. And this is the kind of humanist tradition, where human beings can govern themselves better without relying on philosophical speculation or religious modes of thinking. That is the virtue of civic life or civic Virtù and how to govern the polity in a better manner through the participation of citizens.

Not by one man, not by few men, but by the community coming together. In contrast to the dominant understanding of Machiavelli as the theorist of evil or 'murderous Machiavelli' as we have in Shakespeare or any of the fiction and non-fiction writings in England or France. It is a very

crude caricature or selective. One could argue perhaps the incorrect reading of *the Prince*. Many thinkers regarded Machiavelli as a renaissance man and republican theorist of the humanist tradition. Spinoza and Rousseau regarded him as a republican thinker.

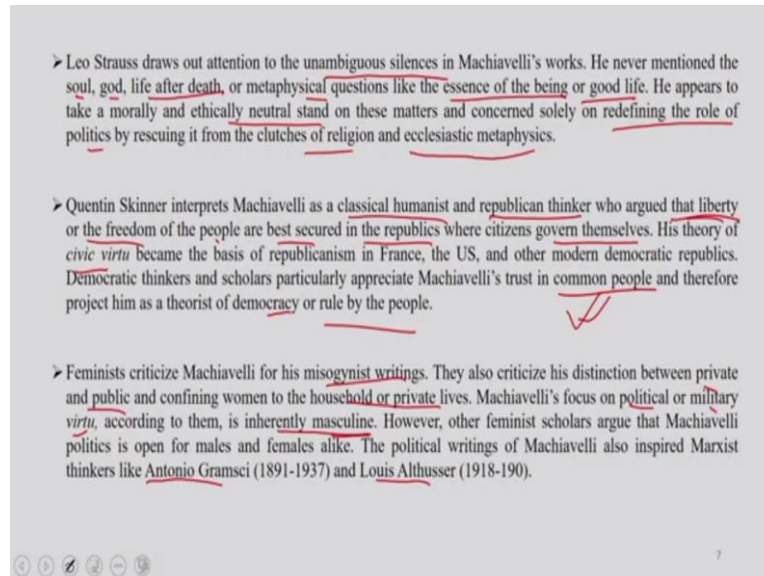
For Spinoza and Rousseau, *the Prince* was more a kind of satirical text which should not be taken seriously and representative of Machiavelli's thought. They regarded that the thought that is represented by Machiavelli is *the Discourse*. However, the modern dominant understanding of Machiavelli is based on his text, *the Prince* and even that understanding is very selective and crude.

So, when you would argue the incorrect understanding of *the Prince*. The role that he desired a Prince to perform in the given context of Italy was to unite the fragment city-states and then gradually paved the way for the growth of republican institutions, laws, and constitution where the citizens would participate in the governing. That would ensure their liberty and bring republican glory for the polity and the republics.

In Machiavellian politics, it was not just about acquiring power. Politics was about the glory of how a Prince could achieve the glory or how a citizen could achieve the glory together as something which guided his political thinking and theorization. Both in *the Prince* and *the Discourse*, he was looking for a politics that could re-establish the past glory of the classical republic.

So, it would be incorrect to put Machiavelli in a very straightjacket modern caricature or fact crude caricature of being a theorist of evil or immoral actions or murderers action which was treacheries and invidious based on the nonfiction or fictions written in Victorian England and France.

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Now, Leo Strauss, drew attention when we got engaged with Machiavellian thought to pay attention to the unambiguous silences in Machiavelli's works, where he never mentioned the soul god, life after death, or the metaphysical questions like what is the essence of being or good life. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, he was not bothered about these metaphysical questions or the notion of soul life after death.

He appeared to take a morally and ethically neutral stand on these matters and concern solely with redefining the rule of politics by securing it from the clutches of religion and ecclesiastical metaphysics. Quentin Skinner interprets Machiavelli as a classical humanist and republican thinker who argued that the liberty or freedom of the people is best to secure in the republics where citizens govern themselves.

His theory of civic Virtue became the basis of republicanism in many modern liberal democracies such as France, the US, and India. The idea that the citizens are the ultimate sovereign power that a ruler exercises was derived from the people and people through their election and participation legitimize the rule.

So, this idea was based on the civic notion that is there in Machiavelli which helped in the sustenance or legitimacy of the rule and defended the states from political upheavals and instabilities. Similarly, many democratic thinkers and scholars, particularly appreciate Machiavelli's trust in the common people which the connecting thread between *the Prince* and *the Discourses*.

And they projected Machiavelli as a theorist of democracy or rule by the people. There were feminist criticisms of Machiavelli for his misogynist writings. And these feminists criticized

Machiavelli's distinctions between private and public life and confining women to the household or the private lives alone.

In Machiavelli, if you read his focus on political and military Virtù, according to the feminist scholars is inherently masculine. Therefore, confine the role of women in public life. So, there is pluggable valid criticism against Machiavelli about his conception of politics which was inherently masculine about the strength. That is about the boldness or ruthlessness of the lion or male who can bring glory and there is little or no rule for the women except in the private lives or the life of the family.

Now, many other feminists have given contrary interpretations of this by arguing that Machiavelli in politics was open equally to both males and females. He did not discriminate between the male and the female. Similarly, the political writings of Machiavelli had also inspired Antonio Gramsci and many post-Marxist, particularly Louis Althusser and many others who argued that *the Prince* should be written in a radically different way to read.

Where *the Prince* was not about the one ruler as such but for the common people and that radical interpretation of prince will allow the citizens or community to have a more stable or equitable rule or governing which would represent the interest of all the sections and not just a few of those who are wealthy or property.

Now, of course, this one could question but there is the kind of Marxist engagement with Machiavellian thought as well. As we have said, Machiavelli's political thinking and theorization had been subjected to different kinds of interpretation from the classical humanist republican tradition to the feminist, to the Marxist, and the democrats.

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Concluding Remarks

- Machiavelli wanted the future prince of the Florence to unify Italy and to reestablish the past glory of the Roman empire. However, in doing so, he wanted the prince to do away with the Christian ideas on justice and morality. Politics must be based on the realistic and pragmatic assessment of circumstances guided by the knowledge of history rather than on any transcendental notion of ethics or morality. So the prince should, according to Machiavelli, must be flexible enough to adapt to the everchanging circumstances in politics.
- There is a mixed legacy of Machiavelli's thought. All the treacherous, deceptive, and ruthless manipulation in actual politics is often associated with him. So every harmful or unethical activity in politics is seen as Machiavellian politics. International diplomacy, even today, is inspired by Machiavellian politics. His advice to the prince has become the basis for many generations of politicians and statesmen to outwit their opponents. However, he was a republican thinker who was the first to rescue the politics from the clutches of religion and argued for the role of citizens in governing the polity.
- Machiavelli, having the cyclical view of history, wanted the unification of Italy under a strong ruler; however, its durability he argued was possible only under a republic form of government. However, the republics would eventually lead to moral decay, corruption, and factionalism, which would again require one strong leader to reunite the people under the foundational virtue of a republic. Machiavelli's works, over the last five hundred years, have been interpreted and reinterpreted in so many ways – as a theorist of evil or immoral actions; as a humanist-republican thinker; as a democrat; as a radical or revolutionary thinker and so on.

Now to conclude, Machiavelli wanted the future prince of Florence to unify Italy and to re-establish the past glory of the Roman Empire. So, that is the immediate concern of Machiavelli's political thought and theorization. However, he wanted the prince to do away with the Christian ideas on justice, morality, and politics that must be based on the realistic and pragmatic assessment of circumstances guided by the knowledge of history rather than on any transcendental notion of ethics or morality.

The politics for Machiavelli was about the realistic or pragmatic assessment of the circumstances. Even intuitive or unreflective understanding of these circumstances and then respond to them accordingly. That is political virtue or military virtue in the true sense of the term in Machiavellian thinking which is ethically and morally neutral and not driven by the transcendental idea of justice or morality or ethics.

The prince should according to Machiavelli must be flexible enough to adapt to ever-changing circumstances in politics and that is the adaptability that is necessary for success in the ever-changing moments or the circumstances in politics. And there is the mixed legacy of Machiavellian thought. So, all the treacherous, deceptive, and ruthless manipulation in actual politics is often associated with him. That is the dominant understanding of Machiavelli.

Thus, every harmful and ethical activity in politics is seen as Machiavellian politics that is a very crude and perhaps incorrect understanding of Machiavelli's thought. An international diplomacy event today is inspired by Machiavellian politics. His advice to the prince has become the basis for many generations of politicians and statesmen to outwit their opponents.

However, he as a republican thinker was the first to rescue politics from the clutches of religion and argued for the role of citizens in governing the polity. And this was very radical for his age where the hierarchy was considered as natural or just and the seriousness of individuals was based on his birth whether plebians, the patricians, the noble or people. Given that modes of thinking Machiavelli's arguing or posing his trust in the common people and their abilities in the sustenance of rule were quite radical. That shows the Machiavellian thought as the representative of classical humanist tradition rather than crude caricaturing of the Machiavellian politics as treacherous dubious.

He was not arguing for immoral action for the sake of it. And this often-used cliché that ends justify the means. But that ends are always the public or common good that is the political stability. And in pursuit of that common good, all kinds of actions are permitted or permissible. But not for the personal good or for the personal self-aggrandizing interest as we have seen in his explanation in many of the fictional and non-fictional writings in Victorian England and many contemporary writings.

So, Machiavelli having the cyclical view of history wanted the unification of Italy under a strong ruler. However, this durability, he argued was possible only under a republic form of government. However, the republics would eventually lead to moral decay, corruption, and factionalism which would again require one strong leader to rule and reunite the public under the foundational Virtù of a republic.

There is a kind of constant change that is cyclical in history. So, there is fragmentation which requires a strong leader to unite. But that leader alone could not sustain the rule for the long term. Therefore, he should give away for the civic republican institutions, laws, and constitutions. But this civic participation would ultimately lead to corruption in the body politic which would again lead to fragmentation factionalism which again requires the stronger.

Thus, there is a kind of cyclical move in the history that is there in the Machiavellian political thought. So, Machiavellian works, therefore, over the last hundred years have been interpreted and re-interpreted in so many ways. You have Machiavelli as a theorist of evil and immoral action. As a humanist republican thinker, as a democrat or as a radical or evolutionary thinker as in the Marxist interpretation of Machiavelli as well.

So, Machiavelli's political thought is open to different kinds of interpretations and you are welcome to arrive at your understanding of Machiavelli's political thought and thinking. Besides, what we have done in these three lectures on Machiavelli's thought. That you can do by engaging with

Machiavelli's writings particularly, *the Prince* and *the Discourses*.

And then, you are open to having your understanding and interpretation of Machiavelli beyond the crude caricature of Machiavelli as the theorist of evil or someone who justified all kinds of means in the pursuit of politics. Thus, there is a kind of very complex argumentation that is there which I hope you will understand once you engage with his writings.

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On Machiavelli whatever we have discussed, you can refer to some of these books which is part of the other lectures as well as David Boucher and Paul Kelly's, *Political thinkers from Socrates to Present*. Gary Browning's particular engagement with Skinner and his arguments in the history of modern political thought. Murray Forsyth's and Shefali Jha's texts remain the key texts to understand many of the thinkers including Machiavelli.

I will request you to read these two texts, Nicolo Machiavelli's, *the Prince*, and *the Discourses of Livy*. *The Prince* was edited and translated by Peter Bondanella and *the Discourses* was translated and edited by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella. Both these books are part of Oxford classics and Oxford University Press. The other text is by James Alan Ryan's, *On Politics* and Quentin Skinner's, *Machiavelli a very short introduction* you could refer to and also, Sheldon Wolin's, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*.

These are some of the texts which you should refer to understand more about Machiavelli's thought and his contribution to the history of western political thought. That is all in today's lecture. Do share your thoughts and comments. We will be happy to respond. Thank you all.