

## **A Philosophical Investigation of Niccolo Machiavelli's Political Philosophy**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

Machiavelli's attempt to resolve human nature is very controversial and problematic. One fundamental problem with the Machiavellian doctrine is that it reveals political despotism and political tyranny. It reveals political realism, pragmatism, freedom, prudence and stability. Machiavelli's political philosophy represents civic republicanism. Machiavelli suggest that the Prince ought to be equipped with intellectual sagacity. Machiavellianism poses a negative doctrine. Machiavelli as a genuinely modern political thinker tries to distinguish between the temporal (politics) from the spiritual (religion). The Machiavellian conceptualization of politics exposes the unethical and amoral behavior of people and the maintenance of rulership in the state. Machiavelli's views on politics, ethics and religion are skeptical. This paper adopts the analytical framework and hermeneutical method in unravelling the debates and counter debates associated with the Machiavellian conception of politics, ethics and religion. This paper, therefore, concludes that the Machiavellian tradition has been misconstrued. It has been misunderstood that Machiavelli despises the concepts of the good, religion and ethics. Machiavelli's political philosophy demonstrates the doctrine of the state characterized by social order. Machiavelli's doctrine of the state reveals the superiority of the state over the individual. It guarantees the normative structure of the political state as an organism. Machiavelli's conceptualization and contextualization of politics reveals the normative outcomes and the idea of the common good. The maintenance of rulership in the state requires intellectual sagacity, social order, and social stability. Machiavelli's notion of the state reveals the limits of a historical context and trajectory that is constructed by the struggle between virtue and fortune or good and evil.

**Keywords: The Prince, Politics, Ethics, Religion, Society, the State**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Machiavelli (1469-1527) is known at present as the author of a number of shockingly frank maxims about the ruthless nature of politics, for example, that it is better to be feared than to be loved, or that one should keep one's word only when it is in one's interest to do so (Fukuyama, 1992, 184). He taught at the beginning of the modern era the good states will have to take their cue from the bad ones if they are to survive and remain states at all

(Fukuyama, 80). For Agudoso, the well known slogan attributable to Machiavelli, “the end justifies the means” which makes “might” right when it achieves the desired end has been adopted as a linchpin in political philosophy. The Machiavellian might, which is right, has no doubt eaten deep into African political systems such that the means to the attainment of power is never questioned let alone the means to its retention (Agudoso, 2004, 587). Machiavelli has been regarded as a teacher of evil. Machiavelli is genuinely referred to as a modern political thinker. The Machiavellian tradition of politics reveals liberal despotism, freedom, pragmatism, realism, prudence, and stability. Machiavelli attempts to separate ethics from politics but this does not presuppose the fact that Machiavelli despises religion or ethics. Machiavelli attempts to present a complex relationship between the temporal (politics) and the spiritual (religion). The Machiavellian doctrine of the state assumes the political dimension of political order and political authority. Machiavellian doctrine of the state reveals the superiority of the state over the citizens. It reveals the organizational structure of the political state. Machiavellian conception of politics exposes the unethical behaviour and the maintenance of rulership in the state. The Machiavellian conception of the state reveals the limits of a world that is constructed as a struggle between virtue and fortune. The Machiavellian doctrine of the state guarantees nobility and republican liberty. Machiavellian doctrine of the state is political realism, the maintenance of rulership, political order and state authority. Machiavellian republicanism reveals the limits of a world that is characterized by a struggle between virtue and fortune, good and evil. For goodness is an inverted idea of ensuring that the Prince is not ruined. Machiavelli argues that learning not to be good will help the Prince to keep his estates.

### **1.2 Hermeneutics of Machiavelli’s Political Philosophy**

However, Machiavelli is the first genuinely modern political thinker, and there is a sense in which this statement is true (Foster, 2001, 268). The negative doctrines of Machiavelli are those which first strike the reader’s attention. He attacks the separation of the temporal (politics) from the spiritual (religion) sphere (Foster, 269). This does not mean that Machiavelli despises religion (Foster, 270). A Prince should therefore be careful that nothing ever escapes his lips which is not replete with the five qualities -mercy, good faith, integrity, kindness and religion (Foster, 274). Foster, however, argues that:

*Moreover, in the actions of all men and most of all Princes, where there is no tribunal to which we can appeal we look to results. Wherefore, if a prince succeeds in establishing and maintaining his authority, the means will always be judged honourable and be approved by everyone. The essence of Machiavellianism is not merely that it supplies a system of technical rules for the acquisition and maintenance of power. Such a system of rules would not necessarily involve a*

*reversal of moral standards. A handbook of carpentry provides a system of technical rules for the working of wood and a man who has mastered them may make use of them to enable him to break into houses, or for other illicit purposes. But the handbook is not said to have an immoral tendency because it imparts a knowledge which may be used for an immoral end (Foster, 274-275).*

Machiavelli's "*The Prince*" is in part just a technical treatise: but Machiavelli's notion of 'virtue' makes it something much more than this (Foster, 275). According to Machiavelli cited by Foster, the two great forces which govern the lives of men are 'fortune' and 'virtue'. Human affairs are so governed by fortune and by God (Foster, 276-277). The difference between the Machiavellian and the Christian conceptions of power by which human affairs are controlled is the obverse side of the difference which we have already observed between the Machiavellian and the Christian views of human nature (Foster, 277). The Machiavellian doctrine of the state assumes the superiority of free states. But liberal despotism is not what Machiavelli means by a free state. The superiority of the state relies on freedom, prudence and stability. It is germane to note that there is a sense in which it would be true to say that freedom for Machiavelli means self-government (Foster, 277-278). The state is made a state by a certain structure of organization, as the body is made an organism by similar structure among its parts (Foster, 280). For Mansfield, "*The Prince*" as a textbook of political philosophy reveals that Machiavelli offers a defense of popular liberty and republican government (Mansfield, 1998, 17). Mansfield, however, argues that:

*Machiavelli posits a complex relationship between ethics and politics that associates princely virtue with the capacity to know and act within the political world as it is and with the beastly abilities to dispense violence and practice deception. Behind this argument dwells the distinctively Machiavellian insight that politics is a realm of appearances where the practice of moral or Christian virtues often results in a Prince's ruin while knowing how not to be good, may result in greater security and wellbeing for both the Prince and people (Mansfield, 17-18).*

Machiavelli's political theory elicits political elitism. Machiavelli's elitist proclivities in "*The Prince*" has helped to fuel a vast interpretive literature concerning his political attitudes, his theory of politics, and the nature and meaning of Machiavellianism in Western political thought. The notoriety of the Prince rests primarily upon the nature of Machiavelli's advice concerning the 'methods and rules' that a leader must follow in order to exhibit strength (virtu), gain and maintain his position within a particular territory (lo

stato) and secure the state itself (Mansfield, 18). Machiavelli further argues that a more complex relation between value (or ethics) and politics in *“The Prince”*. Machiavelli’s political theory advocates that goodness is sometimes disastrous in politics and cruelty less ruinous than clemency. According to the Machiavellian tradition, the real truth is that in politics, a ruler must be ready to play upon falsehoods and appearances, being often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity and against religion. Accordingly, the Prince must learn how not to be good (Mansfield, 1998).

*In contemporary vocabulary, the terms Machiavellian and Machiavellianism capture an understanding of politics as a domain that embraces naked self-interest, the maintenance of rulership at all costs, the utility of unethical behaviour and the centrality of power as an end that justifies any means. The metaphysical picture behind his account of politics is that an all-pervading necessity that forms the fabric of the world but wherein freedom as the exercise of human control over circumstances, is a real possibility at least most of the time (Mansfield, 18-19).*

Nevertheless, *“The Prince”* as a textbook of politics allows us to see the limits of a world that is constructed as a struggle between ‘virtue’ and ‘fortune’ a world wholly devoid of human mutuality, reciprocity and genuine civic life. The contemporary significance that Machiavelli attaches to liberty cannot be overstated, for he argues that only a city free from servitude is potentially capable of achieving greatness whether in power or wealth or both. Machiavellian republicanism involves a defense of the people (popolo) as the active guardians of public liberty. As usual, Machiavelli’s reasoning on this matter is complex and contextual and it does not denote an absolute rule (Mansfield, 1998, 19-20). The emphasis on political struggle which as we have seen is an indelible aspect of Machiavellian politics. It leads to the most audacious element of Machiavellian republicanism. Machiavelli recommends as most beneficial to republican liberty a government that combines ‘a princely virtue’ a nobility and the power of the people under the same constitution. Machiavelli is regarded as a defender of republican citizenship and liberty, self-government and civic virtue (Mansfield, 20-21). Machiavelli’s political philosophy reveals the normative ideal political order. Machiavelli argues that injustice threatens the normative foundation of human society. Machiavelli’s philosophy and political thinking is the politics of human society. The politics of human society presupposes that social life was the best indeed the only for them to develop their rational nature. Machiavelli tries to separate morality from politics. Cohen further argues that:

*Machiavelli is the first writer to move away from the paternalism of traditional society towards something closer to our notion of democracy. In his political writings, the masses ignorant and vulgar though they may be, are better guardians of stability and liberty than individuals can ever imagine. And despite his reputation for lyricism, Machiavelli reminds us that injustice threatens the foundations of society from within and urges that it always be combated wherever it appears and whoever it affects (Cohen, 2008, 91).*

Machiavelli's writings are primarily a historical and contemporary political analysis of how power is won, maintained and lost (Cohen, 96). Machiavelli is often narrowly portrayed as simply promoting the use of force and duplicity. Machiavelli's intention was highly moral: to protect the state against internal and external threats and ultimately to promote the welfare of the citizens not simply the interests of the Prince (Cohen, 102). In the *Discourse*, Machiavelli advocates 'civic virtue' putting the common good ahead of selfish interests and identifies that curious feature of collective decision making that the judgement of the masses may be sounder than that of even enlightened individuals. The state is only as good as citizens. The rulers must be aware of the dangers of allowing civic spirit to wane (Cohen, 102-103). For Cohen:

*Republics flourish when they respect customs and traditions; when town dominates country; when a large-middle class exists; when popular power is institutionalized; and when there is plenty of civic spirit. It is really only in times of crisis that a Prince is needed such times as when, for example, a ruthless individual cannot be stopped, or when the state lacks virtue and there is civic-injustice or when the republic has been fashioned by 'unsuitable material'. Unfortunately, where there is a Prince who does things in his own interests usually harms the city and what does in the interests of the city harms him. The masses have following their own interests too in conducting themselves (Cohen, 99).*

Furthermore, one section in the *Discourse* is headed with the warning: How frequently erroneous are the views men adopt in regard to matters of moment; it explains that men are easily corrupted; they pass from one ambition to another and having first striven against ill-treatment inflict it next upon others (Cohen, 2008). Machiavelli argues that political community should be defined by a common weal. Machiavelli's assessment of the basic motivating force is remarkably close to Thomas Hobbes a century later in England: man is primarily concerned to impose his will on others or to impress them and gain recognition. Aristotle, too, had described man as a political animal but, unlike

Machiavelli's version, as one naturally disposed to work within a community for the commonwealth as defined by the aristocrats (Cohen, 101). Machiavelli is the first major European figure to praise freedom as a primary virtue, writing variously that those who set up a tyranny are no less blameworthy than the founders of a Republic or a kingdom praiseworthy and that all towns and all countries that all in all respect freedom and profit by this enormously. Machiavelli's democracy only extends like that of the Greeks to a minority of the richest countrymen whose job it is to stop others seizing power and perhaps, by exploiting the power of the mob (Cohen, 101-102). Popular government is better than tyranny not for any overriding 'moral' reason but by reason of its success in bringing about certain political goals: national independence, security and stability (Cohen, 102). Machiavelli, following Aristotle, says that there are six types of government of which three are bad and three are good in themselves but easily becomes corrupt. The good ones are principality, aristocracy and democracy and the corresponding bad ones are tyranny, oligarchy and anarchy. States are perpetually degenerating and regenerating through the various forms. Although, fortunately, Machiavelli thinks, a state in one of the inferior forms will normally fall under the political control of the one better organized (Cohen, 97).

### **1.3 Machiavelli's Political Philosophy**

Machiavelli, like the ancients, expects the state to follow a cycle of growth, maturity and then decay (Cohen, 97-98). Machiavelli views on societies as characterized by certain internal contradiction resorting to the claim that the 'end justifies the means' even if the means fall below the publicly held standards of morality. Machiavelli's political philosophy reveals political dishonesty and achievements in the light of the initial promise. Machiavelli's state was a secular entity with no relation to the Church. A well-ordered and stable state could be successful if it had a strong government at the centre, an integrated public authority recognized by all and a citizen army. Machiavelli was equally hostile to hereditary monarchy and feudal nobility (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005, 157). Machiavelli's theory of social change occurs due to the role of fortune. According to Machiavelli, fortune favours and befriends the brave in society. Machiavelli's ideal was a Republic. Machiavelli, in his conceptual analysis of the characteristics and dynamics of the modern nation state understands the strength that was denied from possessing a common language and customs (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 158-159). Human control is attained by systematic and self-conscious statesmanship (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 160). And achievements in the light of the initial promise. Machiavelli's theory is political realism and pragmatism and the fact that he writes about human nature; the nature of political society and its actual operations; and with a concern about how things were rather than how they ought to be (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 137). Machiavelli underlines the

importance of politics as a public responsibility and the need for rules and maxims distinct from those applicable in the private sphere. Machiavelli had tremendous faith in history outside of the conviction that the study of history was of crucial significance for an understanding of contemporary reality. Freedom of the country on a common ground remains the normative core or theme of Machiavelli's political writings. Politics was ultimately and finally a constant struggle for power and domination which has to be judged by its own rules and norms so that states could survive (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 147). Machiavelli's political importance was in providing a normative outlook that accepts both secularization and amoralization of politics. He takes politics out of the context of theology and subordinates moral principles to the logical necessities of political existence and people's welfare (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 160). For Cohen:

*Machiavelli also accepted conflict as permanent and universal seeing it as natural unlike his predecessors who viewed social conflict as unnatural and curable by certain kinds of social systems. The basis of social conflict was the permanent struggle between the common man, the powerful and the moneyed; although, he does not explain the struggle in economic terms. For Machiavelli, a well ordered state ensures the well-being and security necessary to combat social conflict and the radical selfishness of human nature. The state has no higher end or any divine purpose (Cohen, 2008,162).*

Gramsci praised the greatness of Machiavelli for separating politics from ethics. However, undeservedly, Machiavelli was seen as the devil's advocate confined to permanent infamy for preaching villainy and duplicitous pursuit of political power (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 162-164). Machiavelli was described as a founding father of fascist theory (Hoffman and Graham, 2009, 287). Machiavelli advocates for the Prince to study "his ruin than his preservation: for a man who wishes in all particulars to make a profession of good comes to ruin among so many who are not good. Rosen argues that: whence it is necessary that a Prince, if he wishes to maintain himself, he must study not to be good and to use this knowledge or not as necessity demands (Rosen, 2007, 77). Machiavelli argues that there are qualities which can earn Princes either blame or praise. According to Machiavelli (1592) cited by Stanley Rosen (2007) e.tal, they argued that:

*And this is the reason that someone is held to be liberal, someone miserly (using a Tuscan term because avaro in our language is still he who desires to possess by means of rapine, misero we call one who holds back too much from using his own); someone is held to be a donor, someone rapacious, someone cruel, someone given to pity; the one a breaker of trust; the other trustworthy; the one effeminate and*

*pusillanimous; the other ferocious and spirited; the one humane; the other proud; the one lustful; the other chaste; the one a man of integrity; the other astute; the one harsh; the other easy going; the one grave; the other light; the one religious; the other disinclined to belief; and similarly. And I know that everyone will confess that it would be a most praiseworthy thing for there to be found in a Prince all of the qualities written out above that are considered good; but because they cannot be possessed nor with integrity be observed since human circumstances do not consent to this; and it is necessary for him to be prudent in such a manner as to know how to flee the infamy of those vices that of those vices that would lose him his estate and with regard to those that would not to be on his guard if it is possible or if everything is well considered, there will be found something seeming to be virtue which if followed, would be his ruin and there will be found something else seeming to be vice which if followed, would produce his balance, security and well-being (Rosen, 2007, 77-78).*

Machiavelli argues that a well ordered society is the society characterized by virtue, human well-being and security. For Rosen, to a Prince, then, it is not necessary to have the qualities written of above but it is necessary to seem to have them (Rosen, 78). Machiavelli's notion of politics reflects the normative assumption of political authority and liberty. According to Mackenzie:

*At the threshold between antiquity and modernity, Machiavelli's "The Prince" provides us with a third source for the normative justification of political order: brute force. According to Machiavelli, the princely ruler is entitled to do whatever is necessary to maintain order (given that order is the real raison d' e'tre of political life) and therefore can use all necessary means to achieve that end. The people (and, more importantly, the Princes' rivals) will not step out of line knowing that to do so is to risk the cunning and strength of the Prince being used against them (Mackenzie, 2009, 21-22).*

Accordingly, Mackenzie holds that people began to question the traditional sources of political order (morality, religion, state force) and indeed, people began to revolt against and overthrow the established orders that promoted and sustained these forms of politics (Mackenzie, 22-23). The Machiavellian position assumes that self-preservation is a universal feature of human existence (Mackenzie, 26). The state and civil society has become increasingly blurred in contemporary liberal democracies. Machiavelli's political realism encapsulates elitist tendency in the name of political pragmatism (Mackenzie, 3).

Machiavelli argues for the state to be the monopoly of force. Machiavelli assumes the superiority of the state over the people.

#### **1.4 Machiavelli's Conceptions of the Prince and the State**

Machiavelli's text "The Prince" is a peculiarly fertile ground for the arts, for philosophy and for political thinking. It is the politics of human society and human nature. According to Machiavelli, "a prince must want to have a reputation for compassion rather than for cruelty: nonetheless, he must be careful that he does not make bad use of compassion. A prince must not worry if he incurs reproach for his cruelty so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal. He must guarantee unity, restored order and obedience from his subjects. (Machiavelli, 2001, 53). Nothing brings a prince more prestige than great campaigns and striking demonstrations of his personal abilities (Machiavelli, 71). Machiavelli's most important and original points are usually considered as the analysis of the conditions for republican government. In addition, Machiavelli writes that our religion has glorified, humbled and makes men contemplative rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation and contempt for mundane things (Cohen, 2008, 93-94). For Cohen, Machiavelli heralds the tactics of the emerging societies in redefining their relationship with the moral authority of the Church and is very clear: The Prince has a 'higher' morality rather than no morality at all; and this is not just a Machiavellian view; many societies depend on just such a contradiction resorting to the claim that "the end justifies the means"; and even if the means fall below the publicly held standards of morality (Cohen, 95). The state is only as good as its citizens -the rulers must be aware of the dangers of allowing civic spirit to wane. People are all a mixture, none much superior to any other; and no system is perfect either. Even a good Prince can become corrupt; and so it is best to design the state with a series of checks and balances (Cohen, 95-96). For Foster:

*Machiavelli rejects the doctrine of Natural Law. Machiavelli does not believe that man is destined to a supernatural end. Machiavelli does not confine man's end to merely material well-being. Machiavellian doctrine of humanity reveals the values of greatness, power and fame. The temporal ruler was the custodian of Human Law and the custodian of Divine Law was the Church. Machiavelli's theory is not hostile to religion. Princes and republics who wish to maintain themselves free from corruption must above all things preserve the purity of all religious observances and treat them with proper reverence (Foster, 2001, 268-269).*

Machiavelli argues that virtue is the sum of those qualities that tend to make a man great, powerful, and famous. Machiavelli measures a man's virtue by his ability to attain power and fame (Foster, 272). According to Foster:

*Machiavelli's notion of virtue is correlative to his notion of the human end and human nature. Human virtue must comprise those qualities by which man is enabled to achieve the end for which he is destined and for Machiavelli this end is the attainment of success, power, and fame. It follows that for him the virtue of a man consists in the qualities which fit him to win these things. This is what he means by the Italian word 'virtu' a term which occurs throughout his writings and stands for a notion cardinal in his philosophy (Foster, 271).*

Machiavelli's concept of "The Prince" presupposes an ideal state which is aimed at the common good. For Raphael, the state carries out its purpose by laying down laws backed by force; and requiring everyone to refrain from actions (crimes and torts) that harm the common good and to contribute in taxes and other imposts for the upkeep of services (such as defense, public utility and social security services) that promote the common good. We have seen that the general will includes the idea of the common good as the object or aim of the state (Raphael, 2007, 107). For Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, Machiavelli commands a sinister reputation as no other thinker in the annals of political theory. Rousseau projects Machiavelli as a republican, a satirist of tyranny and described him as a good citizen and an honourable man. For Machiavelli, success was the yardstick to measure and judge political activities and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of an ideal political state (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 137). Machiavelli thinks that religion is necessary for the health and prosperity of a state (Foster, 269-270). Machiavellian conception of politics exposes the unethical behaviour and the maintenance of rulership or Princeship in the state. Machiavelli's political theory is appropriate for understanding human nature and misleadingly presented. For Warburton, political theory helps to understand the concepts and terms used in a political argument and analysis (Warburton, 2008,7). The Machiavellian conception of the state reveals the limits of a world that is constructed as a struggle between virtue and fortune. The Machiavellian doctrine of the state guarantees nobility and republican liberty.

Machiavellian doctrine of the state is political realism, the maintenance of rulership, political order and state authority. Machiavellian republicanism reveals the limits of a world that is characterized by a struggle between virtue and fortune, good and evil. For goodness is an inverted idea of ensuring that the Prince is not ruined. Machiavelli holds that learning not to be good will help the Prince to keep his estates. Machiavellian doctrine

of the state reflects the struggle between virtue and fortune. According to Rousseau, cited by Aaron that Machiavelli reveals with clarity pretending to give great lessons to kings, he gave great lessons to people. Machiavelli's political philosophy is historicity, society and tyranny. No one wants to be known as Machiavellian; a few confess an admiration for Machiavelli; many declare themselves as Marxists. Rousseau and Spinoza in trying to rehabilitate Machiavelli and make him an exponent of republicanism and a defender of freedom (Aaron, 1978, 95). Machiavelli is referred to as a political realist. Realism simply means seeing things the way they are. Machiavelli's political realism has janus-face; lessons in freedom to peoples; and it teaches tyranny to Princes. Machiavelli's political teachings make the Prince formidable to his subjects and estates (Aaron, 89-90). "The Prince" must not equip himself with Christian virtue. Conflict and cruelty are inescapable aspects of Machiavelli's political action.

Moreover, the idea of good and evil are reflected in Machiavelli's political philosophy. Freedom remains the metaphysical implication of Machiavelli's account of politics. Freedom remains the all-pervading logical necessity that forms the fabric of the socio-political world. Machiavelli's political realism reveals phenomenological puzzle about human action, human nature, human character, circumstance and method. Machiavelli argues that goodness is disastrous in politics and a *leader* must play upon falsehood and appearances (Aaron, 91-92). A Prince must have a determination to exercise a steady self-control and calmness. Machiavelli refers to the idea of virtue and glory as being gendered. According to Pitkin (1984), cited by Aaron, Machiavelli's metaphysics is decisively gendered (Aaron, 94-95). According to Aaron Machiavelli celebrates politics as a sphere of unrestrained evil and power as the exercises of unremitting violence (Aaron, 98-99). Machiavelli remarks: it cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow citizens; betray one's friend; be without faith; without pity; and without religion. You gain power and not glory. Glory (*gloria*) elicits a crucial qualification. Power is simply for self-aggrandizement. Leaders should be feared and not hated. Machiavelli displayed the role of an adviser to the Prince and he holds that we should see reality as it is (Aaron, 99-100). Accordingly, Aaron however, argues that:

*Machiavelli simplified and caricatured an otherwise rich and subtle body of thought. Machiavelli displayed the role of an adviser to the Prince, whoever this might be, one man, or all men, a monarchy or the Republic. As a political thinker, Machiavelli said repeatedly with absolute candour that we must see reality as it is and not as we would wish it to be. Machiavelli's thought presupposes the saying: the end justifies the means. His political philosophy reflects the normative outcome of an amoral study of political and historical reality. The mystery of*

*Machiavelli; his intentions and the state of his soul at any given moment exists only outside the limits of this elementary and basic problem (Aaron, 98-99).*

Furthermore, Machiavelli is referred to as a teacher of evil; his political thought reflects deception and violence. Machiavelli teaches men to be cruel and cunning. Machiavelli's politics is anchored on the moralist question. It reveals the amoralization of politics in society. The moralists question the relation between what is and what should be, between the effectiveness of the means and their conformity to ethical standards. Machiavelli's philosophical journey stretches from the writings of his youth to that of the philosophy of desperation (Aaron, 91-92). Machiavelli's study of civic virtue is at the heart of his republican theory of citizenship. Republicanism is the condition of being free from subjection to a foreign power and governed by one's own institutions, laws and ordinances. The significance that Machiavelli attaches to liberty cannot be overemphasized. Machiavellian republicanism involves a defense of the people (popolo) as the active guardian of liberty (Aaron, 94-95). Machiavelli reminds us that the limit of our world is tied to the struggle between virtue and fortune. Our world is wholly devoid of human mutuality, reciprocity and genuine civic life (Aaron, 93-94). Machiavelli's politics encompasses a vast array of historical and political topics. The promotion of the public good and not his private interests (Aaron, 98). Machiavelli's texts '*Mandragola*' talks about domestic affairs while '*The Prince*' talks about politics.

In addition, violence is fundamental and instrumental in Machiavelli's political thought. Machiavelli recommends as most beneficial to republican liberty a government that combines a Princely virtue; nobility and the power of the peoples under the same constitution. Machiavellian republicanism is aimed at finding ways of channelling the energies and agitations within the state to good effect (Shanks, 1995, 94). Deception, is for Machiavelli, an admirable example of his intellectual sagacity (Shanks, 94-95). Machiavelli's political realism forms part of a philosophy of history. It is a philosophy of progress as well as dialectical philosophy (Shanks, 95-96). Furthermore, Machiavelli's political thought represents a typical way of considering history, politics and action (Shanks, 93). Machiavelli's political ideal is the republic of free citizens (Shanks, 95). Machiavelli holds that one must conquer fortune not for the glory of one man but for the safety of all in society. The Machiavellian tradition argues that the ultimate goal of the Prince is the search for power and glory (Aaron, 95-96). Machiavelli's contemporary political philosophy cuts across the threshold of political action (Aaron, 101-102). Finally, politics, virtue, freedom, republicanism, glory, power, fortune, history, violence, cruelty, deceit and religion are fundamental elements in Machiavelli's views on human nature and politico- philosophical thinking. His vision of politics and society is based on the notion of

human social progress. For Fukuyama, the father of the modern notion of social progress was Machiavelli, for it was he who proposed that politics be liberated from the moral constraints of classical philosophy (Fukuyama, 1992, 57). His vision of modern society reflects the moral evaluation of political power. For Gewirth, the central concern of political philosophy is the moral evaluation of political power (Gewirth, 1965, 1). His views on political power reflects the need for the public good of all individual members in modern society. For him, the prince should be concerned with not just political power but the general happiness and the common good of all his subjects. His political realism is humanism of some sort. For Stumpf, Niccolo Machiavelli was not technically speaking a humanist, but was nevertheless a product of the Italian Renaissance (Stumpf, 2003, 195).

### **1.5 Evaluation**

Machiavelli's thought on politics represents the need for social order. Social order though difficult but it is attainable, but its attainability is dependent on prior establishment of a proper human nature. Which is universal, an effective legal system, a theory of justice where every man is given his due, a course of common good being the reason or bond of human interdependence, a theory of democracy that takes care of the interest of both majority and minority (Ukagba, 2013, 33). Machiavelli's political philosophy represents political realism and his political realism signifies pragmatism a philosophy that stresses the ultimate relationship between thought and action (Lawhead, 2002, 577). His theoretical reconstruction represents civic republicanism. Civic republicanism offers a model of citizenship that a political liberal can happily accept as an integral part of the self understanding of liberalism. Civic republicanism is another form of contemporary political agenda (Thomas, 2006, 304). Machiavelli's political philosophy represents the holistic dimension of the common good in the political state. The idea of the common good is based on reciprocity. Reciprocity is the disposition through which distinct quantities can be brought in relationship to each other, such that each, more or less, recognizes the necessity of the mutual interdependence that is fundamental for the ordered execution of their functions (Asouzu, 2003, 80). Human society is characterized by moral reciprocity. Machiavelli's political philosophy is the amorization of society. Machiavelli's theoretical reconstruction represents liberal-humanist ideal of human personhood and the structured hierarchies of human lives (Howie, 2009, 20). The Machiavellian vision was actually aimed at addressing these fundamental challenges of human nature and the problem of rulership and the need for the normative principle of social order in human society.

### **1.6 Concluding Reflections**

Machiavelli's political philosophy reveals the doctrine of the state in a pragmatic framework. Machiavelli's political thought is political realism. Machiavelli's

conceptualization of politics reveals liberal despotism, freedom, pragmatism, political realism, prudence and stability. Machiavelli attempts to separate ethics from politics. It has been misconstrued that Machiavelli despises religion or ethics. Machiavelli attempts to present a complex relationship between the temporal (politics) and the spiritual (religion). Machiavelli's political philosophy demonstrates the doctrine of the state characterized by political order. Machiavelli's doctrine of the state reveals the superiority of the state over the individual. It guarantees the organizational structure of the political state as an organism. Machiavelli's conceptualization and contextualization of politics reveals normative outcomes. The maintenance of rulership in the state requires intellectual sagacity, social order and political stability. Machiavelli's notion of the state reveals the limits of a historical world that is constructed by the struggle between virtue and fortune or good and evil.

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