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"Boundary" in the Political Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli

„Granica" w myśli politycznej Niccolò Machiavellego

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Abstract
The research goal is to identify the issue of "boundary" in Machiavelli's political thought. Machiavelli criticized the state of contemporary culture, particularly the world of politics, which was subordinated to moral principles. The subject of this article is not a description of Machiavelli's political thought per se, but rather an examination of the issue of boundary in the context of the above interpretations. The research method is based on textual analysis. The first part points to the boundary in the context of the European Socratic-Christian order, which serves as a prelude to a more detailed definition of boundary in human life. The second part describes the boundary of human well-being. The third part addresses the issue of the boundary of human action in politics, constituting the conclusion and culmination of the problem. Machiavelli opposes the Socratic-Christian order and its principles to draw a line between the religious and the political.

Abstrakt
Celem naukowym jest wyodrębnienie kwestii „granicy" w myśli politycznej Machiavellego. Machiavelli krytykował stan ówczesnej kultury, zwłaszcza podporządkowany zasadom moralnym świat polityki. Przedmiotem badań artykułu nie jest opis myśli politycznej Machiavellego jako takiej, lecz wskazanie na zagadnienie granicy w kontekście powyższych interpretacji. Metoda badawcza opiera się na analizie tekstu. Pierwsza z nich wskazuje na granicę w kontekście europejskiego porządku sokratejsko-chrześcijańskiego, co stanowi wstęp do bardziej szczegółowego zdefiniowania granicy w życiu ludzkim. Druga opisuje, czym jest granica ludzkiej pomyślności. Trzecia odnosi się do kwestii granicy ludzkiego działania w polityce, co stanowi konkluzję i kulminację problemu. Machiavelli przeciwstawia się porządkowi sokratejsko-chrześcijańskiemu i jego zasadom, aby wyznaczyć granicę między tym, co religijne, a tym, co polityczne. Odwraca porządek

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He inverts the moral order. The existing boundaries between good and evil lose their validity in politics, where utility becomes the decisive criterion. Power, however, has its defined limits within which it can pursue its plan to seize power – on the one hand, it is the unpredictable Fortune, on the other, *virtú* must be within the bounds of humanity. In conclusion, the author points out that the boundaries of political activity are determined by the unpredictability and changeability of circumstances, or the absolute impossibility of transcending the idea of humanity. The novelty of Machiavelli's thought lies in the fact that humanity should be the center of attention and the subject of all reflection.

Keywords: Niccolò Machiavelli, creative power of evil, Fortune, *virtú*, boundary, human being

moralny. Dotychczasowe granice między dobrem a złem tracą ważność w polityce, gdzie użyteczność staje się decydującym kryterium. Władza ma jednak swoje określone granice, w których może realizować swój plan zdobycia władzy – z jednej strony jest nieprzewidywalną Fortuną, z drugiej *virtú* musi mieścić się w granicach człowieczeństwa. W konkluzjach autorka wskazuje, że granice działalności politycznej wyznacza nieprzewidywalność i zmienność okoliczności lub absolutna niemożność wyjścia poza ideę człowieczeństwa. Novum myśli Machiavellego polega na tym, że to człowiek powinien znaleźć się w centrum zainteresowania i być przedmiotem wszelkiej refleksji.

Słowa kluczowe: Niccolò Machiavelli, twórcza siła zła, Fortuna, *virtú*, granica, istota ludzka

Machiavelli would put it bluntly:
This is what you have to do if you want to seek and hold
on to power,
but today's mediocre political advocates
lack the courage to openly admit the secrets of their craft

(Teodor Jeske-Choiński)

The "Boundary" of the Socratic-Christian Order

Towards the end of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that Sophists' political philosophy identifies politics with rhetoric. Sophists tried to teach future politicians the "power" of the word. "In other words, the Sophists believed or tended to believe in the omnipotence of speech. Machiavelli surely cannot be accused of that error. [...] Xenophon, who was a pupil of Socrates, proved to be the most successful commander precisely because he could manage both gentlemen and nongentlemen. Xenophon [...] was under no delusion about the sternness and harshness of politics, about that ingredient of politics which transcends

speech. In this important respect Machiavelli and Socrates make a common front against the Sophists" (Strauss, 1987, p. 317). Strauss' statement might first raise a lot of doubts. How can Socrates' political thought be possibly identified with Machiavelli's? On the one hand, we have the Greek thinker, with philosophy often viewed as the cultural core of the Christian Europe, on the other, probably the first "master of suspicion,"[1] abandoning the sacred in favour of the profane, and breaking with the previous moral order that all human affairs had to align with. Machiavelli appears to be an intellectual who "taught how to do evil: he taught how to use conceit and violence to gain and keep power, and how to make conspiracy succeed. He argued that it was not worth threatening, insulting or wounding your enemies, but if you can kill them, you should do that" (Manent, 1994, p. 27). Socrates claimed that everyone can act rightly, and that to choose evil is to show ignorance. According to Socratic ethical intellectualism, one acts rightly if they know how they should behave.

Should we want to agree with the Strauss' argument, the question of "knowledge" might appear as the common ground for the two thoughts in spite of the completely different interpretations of this "instrument" and its employment in the political universe. We know that Socrates would be far from saying that the end justifies the means. Both thinkers, however, agreed with each other that one has to define "good" and "evil" in the political realm in order to act rightly. Of course, what they defined as "acting rightly" did differ. Both of them sought cues in human reason rather than in mythological justification. This might be the essential difference with respect to Sophists. "Sophists peddle the foods of soul, but as they know neither the foods nor the soul, they do not know whether they help or not. Socrates, in contrast, is shown clearly as the one who knows these foods and the soul and thus presented indirectly as 'the doctor of the soul'"[2] (Reale, 2000, p. 320). In a similar vein, Machiavelli can be said to know the food and the soul of the Renaissance human as he tells us how humans should act to achieve their political goals. He does not peddle words; he examines the state of the political culture of the sixteenth-century Europe and then defines the boundaries of the "good ruler conduct." Aware of the brutality of politics, Socrates steers clear of it. Machiavelli shares this awareness as well. The former believes

[1] In his book *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, Paul Ricoeur made a comprehensive analysis of the concepts by Freud, Nietzsche and Marx, "the masters of suspicion." He posited that "the masters of suspicion" are the intellectuals particularly committed to criticizing the culture of their time. Freud stresses the significance of sex; Nietzsche reveals the role of power; and Marx observes the role of economic factors in human life. Ricoeur also points to their critique of all kinds of religiousness. Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1977). *Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation*. New Haven. Within postmodern thought, the term "hermeneutics of suspicion" acquired a new meaning: it came to be identified, against Ricoeur's intentions, with extreme suspicion, or skepticism. Both senses make it justifiable to apply this term to Machiavelli.

[2] See Plato, *Protagoras*.

that only a morally perfect human can be a real politician (Plato, *Gorgias*); the latter says that immoral actions are advisable in order to achieve a political goal. The fundamental difference is that Machiavelli does not evade politics.

Pierre Manent aptly notes that modern people indulge in using abstract words with an infinite semantic scope. They love discussing Machiavelli's "realism." And to speak of Machiavelli's "realism" is to align with his point of view: in politics, "evil" is more significant and more "real" than "good" (Manent, 1994, p. 27). Political realism precludes utopian thinking. It is reason that is meant to define the workings of politics without judging it against transcendent rules that human should follow – Machiavelli, therefore, prefers abstract speculation to practical experience: "And as I know that many have written on this point, I expect I shall be considered presumptuous in mentioning it again, especially as in discussing it I shall depart from the methods of other people. But, it being my intention to write a thing which shall be useful to him who apprehends it, it appears to me more appropriate to follow up the real truth of the matter than the imagination of it (Machiavelli, 2016). Machiavelli's take on politics is one of extreme rationality. Politics means acting, and the purpose of political action is to gain and keep power. The knowledge of how to "act right" does not necessarily translates into one's efforts to provide the ideal conditions that constitute a state. A politician who "acts right" seeks to achieve their goals based on historical experience and empirical observation. Despite the similarity between Socrates and Machiavelli, the claim that politics is more than just rhetoric, which Strauss points to in contrast to Sophists, the above marks a fundamental difference between the thinkers. Machiavelli questions not only the Christian way of framing the reality, but he also contests Socratic "psyche" and, consequently, "knowledge" related to morality.

Machiavelli thinks of "knowledge" as a collection of empirical and historical facts, prioritizing their usefulness in furthering one's political endeavours. There is no trace of mediaeval heritage or Platonic or Aristotelian theology in Machiavelli; nor can we find there any references to some ideal order or concept of human's locus within nature or in some specific hierarchy of beings. Machiavelli sets a clear boundary between the Socratic and Christian order and the one that has evolved from his ideas and culminated with modern thought. His political realism emerged with rejection of metaphysics and of theology. For his contemporaries, it was rather a revolutionary attempt to separate politics from the principles that governed the world. He draws a boundary the moment he rejects any natural order of the soul and hence the natural hierarchy of values, both the one derived from the spirit of Socrates and the one derived from the spirit of Jesus Christ. The main idea of the Socratic-Christian order can be expressed as follows: the only effective truth is that the practical reality is all that exists. Machiavelli noticed that at the dawn of modernity the concept of "good" within the context of *polis* was void. There is nothing but effective agency. He deprives

Europe of illusions: the world has split in two and the only part that remains is the type of human and realities depicted in Machiavelli's *Prince*. This is where the originality of his thought resides: "One of the deepest assumptions of western political thought is the doctrine, scarcely questioned during its long ascendancy, that there exists some single principle which not only regulates the course of the sun and the stars, but prescribes their proper behaviour to all animate creatures […]. It is this rock, upon which western beliefs and lives had been founded, that Machiavelli seems, in effect, to have split open." (Berlin, 1979, pp. 67–68). Prior to Machiavelli, the vision of impersonal Nature, Logos-Reason, or the Divine Creator, a purpose that determines human life, had been the focal point of the order. All things and creatures had specific roles prescribed for them. Fixed ways of pursuing happiness also applied to them. Machiavelli put to an end to this monistic vision of the world.

The "Boundary" of Human Prosperity

The human is the major point of departure for the Renaissance philosophical, political and social reflection. On the one hand, we observe an inquiry into the thoughts that revolve around "existence"; on the other, all relationships between the subject and "the transcendent" constitute a problem. This reflection is inevitably undertaken by intellectuals and others alike. The thinking about the world may start with the human or with what transcends them. The kind of concept of the world we will have to deal with depends on which part of the existence-transcendence relationship we pick as the point of departure. Should the thought remain grounded in European civilization and culture, then any deliberations aimed at solving this Gordian knot, or the fundamental question about transcendence and existence, which essentially relies on transcendence, shall address the human relationship with the Christian God.

The Platonic concept sets two levels of existence, two types of cognition, in the world (Plato, *Phaedo*). This split of cosmic and human nature expands the area of inquiry into two orders; one – divine – marked by invariability, immortality, transcendence, extrasensoriality, and, most importantly, perfection and force derived from it, the latter subjugating the "flawed" elements; the other one – earthly – its negation. "Niccolò Machiavelli was a teacher of sobriety, who based his interpretation of the human condition on the idea of the boundary. The author of *The Prince* assumes that the human is dependent solely on their own capacity. The world he represents is the world without God. There is no room for any certainty. Reality must be improvised; everything must be struggled for in order to overcome difficulties. Machiavelli decisively forsakes the realm of

representations shaped by the Christian tradition, which allowed us to think about the world created by God, which has a clearly defined framework. He is also not interested in [...] the views of philosophers who look for a deeper foundation." (Filipowicz, 2008, p. 73)

Machiavelli reflected reality as if in a mirror and did not demand that the medieval view of politics reflect the principles of order that prevail in creation. It should be noted, however, that he did not assume, as opposed to humanists, the identity between the ideal of a ruler, a prince, and the ideal of human. Not only did he abandon the Christian concept of virtue, but also the teleological concept of Aristotelian virtue.[3] Although Aristotle was concerned about transcendent good as well as immanent good (not the permanently present good, but the good one can attain, one made for human actions), he still argued that the Socratic advice "to take care of the soul" was the right way for humans to pursue happiness. Consequently, in Aristotle, we find the concept of *areté*, materializing through specific human actions, that is reason and reason-based agency of the soul. The true human good consists in improving and pursuing rational activity. Machiavellian *virtú* was rather the force of nature, semantically covering qualities such as ambition, drive, courage, energy, will power, competence and independence. For the Italian thinker, "virtue" was not synonymous with spiritual goods, which would be goods in the most proper sense of this word, as in Aristotle (Aristotle, Nicomachean ethics). "Virtue' exists in this case not as a sole value in itself, in its specific sense, always existing for a particular purpose that a human being seeks to achieve. For Machiavelli, what is the highest value in the Greek and Christian sense is a relic of traditional metaphysics. Humans impose moral limitations on themselves. Conventions set the boundary between good and evil conduct, as a human is a social being and manages their community relationships to prevent *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Human beings set boundaries for themselves due to the natural necessity of human existence; this is not the heritage of the biblical myth and divine creation or the Aristotelian part of human nature. In this case, on one hand, we are dealing with the concept of boundary in its demarcation aspect when we separate good and evil from each other and define them; on the other, we have a limitative aspect when humankind sets a boundary beyond which it will not go. In dictionary definitions, the word "border" has more general meanings and is synonymous with such basic concepts as dividing line (line of division), scope, range, end, edge, limit, and it is etymologically derived from the word "ridge," meaning a sharp, difficult-to-access mountain ledge. Here, we see that the concept of "border" can have two meanings: as a dividing line (demarcation) between areas of different affiliation, constituting the basis or cause of

[3] Renaissance did draw upon Aristotelian thought, absent from Machiavelli's political concepts. Machiavelli does indeed remove "sin" from politics, but he does not employ the principles of the Aristotelian concept for the world of politics he depicts and rejects the principles that a "good" ruler should follow.

distinction (separating something from something else), and in the sense of limit, it denotes a point or value that something approaches but usually does not reach (mathematically), that is, indicating an area beyond which one cannot enter. In the analysis of Machiavelli's thought, the concept of "border" appears in these two meanings, which will often overlap or merge.

This, however, does not imply that Machiavelli does not realize that social order is governed by certain rules. He adopts the pagan concept of Fortune embodied by the unbridled goddess (Machiavelli, 1993, p. 128). Only *virtú*, consisting in bravery, decisiveness, firmness and perseverance is capable of resisting the power of Fortune. A human creates their own destiny and their success depends largely on their physical and mental strength; however, they are not absolutely free, they are not independent of the world around them. They are part of the realities that define their desires and the possible means of achieving them (Maneli, 1968, p. 35). Despite Machiavelli's critical remarks on religion and metaphysics, the concept of Fortune plays a key role in his deliberations. As human life is often hindered by some difficulties, everyone is challenged by obstacles. Fortune is never an ally. Where *virtú* is absent, Fortune is merciless and decides on human failure. Fortune can be resisted with actions of the individuals who have the "courage," yet it can be dominated to some extent only. Unbridled actions of ambitious individuals willing to cross all boundaries to claim total power end up in a failure. Fortune makes their actions fail since one cannot cross the barriers she sets up. "Ultimately, the power of Fortune cannot be tamed or controlled. We are always on the edge. The weak will inevitably fail, and the strong will keep their balance and avoid falling. Some unquestionable advantage, success not endangered by anything, is out of question, though. Fortune will sooner or later claim its rights. The waters will rise again. All dykes will prove too fragile to stop the thrust. The whims of fortune are the **boundary** that human will never cross" (Filipowicz, 2008, p. 74). This means that his historical experience and factual inquiry led Machiavelli to conclude that the world will never be different.

The pressure of Fortune makes circumstances unpredictable, surprising and ever-changing. Is not this actually what the boundary set for humankind by the transcendent God, or the Socratic psyche? The answer is clear. Challenged by Machiavelli, the Socratic-Christian order offers no avenue for the human to achieve happiness with their own efforts. They shall submit to these transcendent rules, and, consequently, can achieve happiness either through actions of the soul in line with virtue, assisted by reason and consisting in specific activity, namely, the containing of aspirations and impulses, or they can give in to the vision of the world where the original sin determines their life and where happiness can be achieved through divine grace. However, Machiavelli despised the concepts that the individual must humbly submit to. People are capable of shaping their destiny. Only those who can adapt their character to changing circumstances,

who show Machiavellian *virtú*, are capable of "being courageous" (Machiavelli, 2004) and can be the right ruler.

Human acts under the pressure of circumstances, a kind of inevitability identified with Fortune. However, to some extent humans can be "masters" of their actions; nothing is ultimately sealed. Politics is an arena where human actions are driven by ambition. In opposition to Aristotle, the state manifests a tangle of ambitions and changing circumstances. A "good" ruler is thus the one who demonstrates *virtú*; one who boldly faces brutal Fortune. Human nature is not so much evil as it is transformable and malleable.[4] Machiavelli, however, is not blind to the workings of chance. He does not stray towards extreme constructivism typical of modernity. There is some distance between dynamism of Machiavelli's thinking, whereby one should never put their hands down as in politics there is always something useful to do, and a claim that it would be possible to become independent of chance. In politics, one is always between extreme determinism and voluntarism. The workings of chance shall be acknowledged, yet only within reasonable limits. Rational calculations and relevant human actions, derived from those calculations, are likely. Can Machiavelli's "prince," who doesn't give in to circumstances imposed on from outside, do anything he likes? Can a ruler act in a ruthless and unrestricted way? The concept of the "prince" is often interpreted as such a vision of a ruler.

The "Boundary" of Human Action in Politics

The idea of a "prince" is usually associated with a one-ruler dictatorship. Machiavelli draws attention to the need for absolute power of the individual and ruthlessness of their actions. When the strength and stability of the state is at stake, and, mind you, Machiavelli wished to create the national Italian state, not only is dictatorship permitted, but it is advisable. In the light of the widespread decline and demoralization of the Italian state and the failure of the republican

[4] Leo Strauss' critical analysis of Machiavelli's thought is based on the question of human nature. From the Straussian perspective, malleability and transformability lead to extreme constructivism. Strauss draws attention to the limitations of our nature, which is enslaved in so many ways, often pointing to Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies. The lack of restrictions can lead to a mad desire to create a new human being. Strauss' concern about the consequences of the constructivism related to human reason are understandable, especially in the post-Auschwitz world. (see Strauss, L. (1975). The three waves of modernity. In Gildin H. (Ed.), *Political philosophy: Six essays.* Pegasus-Bobbs-Merrill.; Strauss, L. (1998). Czym jest filozofia polityki? In Strauss, L. (1998). *Sokratejskie pytania* (P. Nowak, Trans.). Fundacja Aletheia.

system to materialize, Machiavelli claims that a dictatorship is necessary if a system threat occurs, especially after a coup that brings a system change. Any new order can be consolidated only by the power of the individual and the use of "extraordinary measures." The state thus requires double absolutism: to thwart overall corruption and ensure order and unity, and then to consolidate the new system. A ruler who abounds in *virtú* does not need to follow the principles of good. They do not have to be honest or have good faith. They can and should be selfish and cruel when needed – to the right extent. Any ruler who wants to make use of political facts, historical rationale and opportunities to achieve a political goal as part of effective governance should pretend to possess all virtues while at the same time breaking moral rules, if needed. Machiavelli famously claims as follows: "You must know there are two ways of contesting, the one by the law, the other by force; the first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second [...]. A prince, therefore, being compelled knowingly to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves" (Machiavelli, 2016).

Cunning and fearsomeness are in this context ruler's virtues. A prince who arouses terror and resorts to deceit has no virtues in the Socratic-Christian sense, but having *virtú* and acting in the face of circumstances, he shows virtues as meant by Machiavelli. These are virtues necessary to secure and hold power. The common political practice comes to be a legitimate model of conduct. "I," the only reality of the modern time, must operate *effectively* for the purpose of satisfying its insatiability, its eternal dissatisfaction. This is how the state should act. This is how the prince should act. After all, politics is about exercising power. Machiavelli's Florence comes across as a city of skeptics. A person of public opinion would act naturally and ironically both with respect of all ideals and the heritage of moral concepts. The realm of morality was of no interest to them. Relativism was embedded in politics, and every idea could be both false and true. Politics was void of moral ideals. A public person acted naturally and ironically both with respect of all ideals and the heritage of moral concepts. In this conviction, they had a sense of freedom and dignity (Marcu, 1938, pp. 43–44). The "individual" was the only reality. For the author of *The Prince*, the "I" became enormously powerful, and "power" decided about everything.

Machiavelli is widely considered a proponent of political immorality. The principle is this: all judgements shall be made on the basis of non-moral criteria. Machiavelli conceives of politics as power and technique in their pure form, or agency independent of traditional moral principles. We can speak of its pure form as manifested by utilitarianism. Benedetto Croce presents Machiavelli as an advocate of political amorality (Croce, 1925, pp. 59–67). In this context, politics would be positioned outside of moral categories. In Nietzschean terms, we

could say that "politics is beyond good and evil" (Nietzsche, 2010). It was meant to focus on practical principles of proper state governance rather than on the implementation of traditional moral norms. Politics is a set of its own rules, and a given human action may be a success or a failure in political terms. This interpretation of Machiavelli's thought allows for a conclusion that he does not dispute the absolute importance of Christian morality but observes the contradiction between politics and ethics, though this argument may raise some reservations. Machiavelli challenges the values of altruistic moral ideals and questions all hierarchies of values where moral good is given the chief and unquestionable position, especially with regard to the realm of political action.

Immoralism thus comes with the demand to criticize morality in the realm of political action and to question the usefulness of the category of "good" and moral judgement. This does not mean that all judgement principles shall be waived, though. Machiavelli sets his own principles to judge political human beings and their activities. This criterion is "usefulness," the capacity to achieve goals. To this end, a "good" ruler can use any means they want. They can operate without being limited by any kind of morality – they transcend it – politics is merely a convention.

Hardly any inner suffering can be found in Machiavelli. It cannot be assumed that he is a representative of the universal truths of the Christian doctrine. Christian ideas, whose foundations were very firmly rooted in the European conceptualization of the structure of reality and the relevant locus of the human within the universe, are strongly opposed by the Italian thinker; he seeks to restore the idea of the human condition and human's relationship with what transcends them, the idea where human beings are subjects rather than objects of action with vitality conditioned by some transcendent force. Machiavelli wishes to bring the human being out of this "passive dance" of Christianity. The most significant issue is the autonomy of human agency, and, in spite of the inevitability of Fortune, this Christian determination should be overcome. Machiavelli asks why people used to love freedom more than they do now? Piety and fear of God's punishment are an irreplaceable source of social discipline. His is an instrumental approach to religion. Christianity glorifies those who are humble and contemplative and consists in the contempt for human possessions. Machiavelli decries Christian doctrine for its apotheosis of servility and weakness.

> This we may gather from many of their [A.T.K.: pagans'] customs, beginning with their sacrificial rites, which were of much magnificence as compared with the simplicity of our worship, though that be not without a certain dignity of its own, refined rather than splendid, and far removed from any tincture of ferocity or violence. In the religious ceremonies of the ancients neither pomp nor splendour were wanting; but to these was joined the ordinance of sacrifice, giving occasion to much bloodshed and cruelty.

> For in its celebration many beasts were slaughtered, and this being a cruel spectacle imparted a cruel temper to the worshippers. Moreover, under the old religions none obtained divine honours save those who were loaded with worldly glory, such as captains of armies and rulers of cities; whereas our religion glorifies men of a humble and contemplative, rather than of an active life. Accordingly, while the highest good of the old religions consisted in magnanimity, bodily strength, and all those other qualities which make men brave, our religion places it in humility, lowliness, and contempt for the things of this world; or if it ever calls upon us to be brave, it is that we should be brave to suffer rather than to do. And if our religion demands that you have fortitude, it is not because you are able to act, but because you can endure suffering more easily. (Machiavelli, 2004)

MacIntyre is critical of this and shows the incommensurability of the contemporary language of morality with the ongoing moral changes. The collapse of the universal and rational justification of morality leads to the emergence of emotivistic theories, according to which all moral disputes are unresolvable in a rational way. The solution that MacIntyre proposes is a narrative conception of human persons and Aristotle's virtue ethics renewed through the concepts of practice, narrative and tradition (MacIntyre, 1983; 1988; 1996; 2002).

If previously one could talk about the existence of a social and political order determined by certain distinction between good and evil, namely by, in general terms, Christian morality, then Machiavelli initiated the schism noted by I. Berlin. As Strauss rightly points out: "Machiavelli's new 'ought' demands then the judicious and vigorous use of both virtue and vice according to the requirements of the circumstances. The judicious alternation of virtue and vice is virtue (virtú) in his meaning of the word [...] Machiavelli's distinction between goodness and other virtues tends to become an opposition between goodness and virtue: while virtue is required of rulers and soldiers, goodness is required, or characteristic, of the populace engaged in peaceful occupations; goodness comes to mean something like fear-bred obedience to the government, or even vileness" (Strauss, 1987, p. 301).[5] Thus, Machiavelli's political virtues are a source of moral and civilizational disorder, an expression of a disease that cannot be easily overcome; because of the tyrannical idea of happiness in societies consumerism is very

[5] Leo Strauss points to two concepts in this context: "virtú" and "bontà," as distinguished by Machiavelli. This is probably an allusion to the Ciceronian division of virtues, whereby "good people" are modest, moderate, keep promises and are above all just; they are not necessarily brave and clever, though. This is the reference to the concept of virtues that we find in Plato's *Republic*: moderation and justice are two of the chief virtues that every citizen of a *polis* possesses. Courage and wisdom are the virtues that characterize, respectively, guardians and philosophers, who shall rule the state. See: Strauss, L., & Cropsey, J. (Eds.). (1987). *History of political philosophy* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

widespread and many politicians still dream of becoming enlightened tyrants (Piekarski, 2007, p. 468).

Machiavelli is mounting another boundary in his thought: he does not blur the difference between good and evil – on the contrary, he keeps it in order to maintain the main scandalizing argument – "evil" is the basis of "good" (Manent, 1994, p. 29). Manent ventures further in his interpretations: "good" can occur and is sustained due to "evil." This implies that a peaceful life, that is life under justice in the sense of traditional heritage that citizens carry with certain morality, is possible under normal conditions within the state. This applies to the conditions of the state that has some degree of stability. Machiavelli, however, addresses public life from the perspective of its origins and sources rather than from its purpose. He suggests that "ordinary" morality should be suspended or conditioned by "extraordinary" immorality (Manent, 1994, p. 29). One of the deepest-rooted traits of the post-Machiavellian mind is, therefore, to doubt the status of good. Freedom may be founded on tyranny, justice on injustice, and morality on immorality. What has been "good" in the Christian sense is now seen as "evil" in the Machiavellian sense. Humility, love, weakness, and justice as conceived within Christian morality work to the detriment of the state and thus to the detriment of the public good and citizens' capacity to achieve happiness within the state in the sense indicated by Machiavelli, namely successfulness. In no way should politics open up to anything superior. Giving in to the absolute determination, accepting the fundamental human "disability," defining one's own existence through the transcendent: things that were "good" in the former order are wrong, ineffective and "bad" in the new order. What in the old order was clearly defined as "evil" becomes acceptable for Machiavelli. The "prince" should establish order in the state with violence and fear. Public good originates in the "immoral" stance, which is "extraordinary" as it aims to provide citizens with conditions for them to be able to attain happiness. It is defined by the practical dimension of human existence. The constitutive principle of the political order is the self-sufficiency of the secular order. Machiavelli does not obscure the difference between good and evil but draws a clear line between them.

As Strauss observes, however, "there is of course a great difference between Terror for its own sake, for the sake of its perpetuation, and Terror that limits itself to laying the foundation for the degree of humanity and freedom that is compatible with the human condition (Strauss, 1987, p. 302)." Machiavelli is not a thinker who calls for violence as a value in itself. *Virtú* is a pagan virtue; after all, it is also a public virtue. The author of *The Prince* emphasizes: "I believe that this [A.T.K.: the ruler's inability to maintain peace in the state] follows from severities being badly or properly used. Those may be called properly used, if of evil it is possible to speak well, that are applied at one blow and are necessary to one's security, and that are not persisted in afterwards unless they can be turned to the advantage of the subjects. The badly employed are those

which, notwithstanding they may be few in the commencement, multiply with time rather than decrease" (Machiavelli, 2016). Increasingly popular is the interpretation that the Italian intellectual was an advocate of what was later termed *raison d'état*, that is, the justifying of immoral actions taken under unusual circumstances for the state benefit. It seems that this interpretation is due to the misunderstanding of Machiavelli. For the representatives of the *raison d'etat*, the use of immoral measures is justified by the uniqueness of those measures. Those measures are employed to save the system, whose aim is to create a situation where such measures will not be necessary. For Machiavelli, the methods are not of unique nature; they are something ordinary. This does not imply a conflict of values; public life is guided by its own "morality," or its own criteria. The boundary he has mounted between politics on one side, and theology and state teleology on the other, is clearly defined and needs no justification. It is a sharp divide between morality and power.

Berlin discusses "the originality of Machiavelli," which has been dividing the European culture to this day: "One is obliged to choose: and in choosing one form of life, give up the other. That is the central point. If Machiavelli is right, if it is in principle (or in fact: the frontier seems dim) impossible to be morally good and do one's duty as this was conceived by common European, and especially Christian ethics, and at the same time build Sparta or Periclean Athens or the Rome of the Republic or even of the Antonines, then a conclusion of the first importance follows: that the belief that the correct, objectively valid solution to the question of how men should live can in principle be discovered, is itself in principle not true. This was a truly erschreckend proposition" (Berlin, 1979, pp. 66–67). However, it should also be borne in mind that the Renaissance thinker put "human" at the centre of his interest. The separation of religion and state was driven by the will for autonomy on the part of the individual who possesses *virtú* and is able to resist even the merciless Fortune. This kind of individual does not have absolute rules requiring them to submit to transcendent rules imposed on them. This means that, despite consenting to the non-exceptionality of using immoral measures in politics, Machiavelli does not agree to the use of absolute violence for the sake of it or for Prince's insatiable vanity. It was supposed to be, as Strauss would point out, terror limited to establishing a space of humanity and freedom to the extent that they can be reconciled with the human condition. It was meant to be the situation, argued Machiavelli, where cruelty benefits citizens. Violence and terror are justifiable in political life from the perspective of its origins. Prince's enterprise is a temporary dictatorship for the individual to organize a new order. This is not a direct action programme, but a far-reaching plan for a stable and sustainable state. One can thus draw another boundary in line with Machiavelli. Within the new state, a human regains their freedom and autonomy. It is an individual liberated from all pressures of Christian morality. A human is aware of the workings of Fortune, but they can try to overcome the

circumstances in which they have come to live. They are also aware that Fortune is ever unpredictable. Therefore, *virtú* can not have "inhuman" characteristics. It has to remain within certain *limits*. Morally as much as possible, immorally as much as necessary. And if necessary, amoral action is useful. Machiavelli's insights on governance do not imply acquiescence for politicians to act immorally. Immoral actions are necessitated by situations where moral measures prove insufficient. When the principle of humanness and goodness help a politician achieve their goal more effectively than cruelty and rape do, they shall rely on humanness and goodness (Riklin, 2000, p. 65). This is to say, within the limits of humanness, where one shall be mindful of uncertainty. The Machiavellian world of politics is always uncertain. By *virtú*, "Prince" can gain and keep power. This is the art of governing. To be successful, the ruler has the right to use violence. However, they must not use it unreasonably. They should constantly keep in mind that success and effectiveness are never ultimate. "In the same manner, having been reduced by disorder, and sunk to their utmost state of depression [A.T.K.: within the state], unable to descend lower, they, of necessity, reascend; and thus from good they gradually decline to evil, and from evil again return to good. The reason is, that valor produces peace; peace, repose; repose, disorder; disorder, ruin [...]" (Machiavelli, 2013). *Virtú* requires subtlety from the ruler. Brutality and violence ruin all subtlety. The world of Machiavelli has no fundamental, fixed principles. The rupture that comes with the Italian author leaves the political world uncertain. A good politician should be a virtuoso in recognizing when to cross boundaries and when to respect them.

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