

Different thinkers reject Machiavelli's view of using morality for his program. Hobbes (1651, p. 80), in the *Leviathan*, argued that the failure to do agreement is injustice but, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli advises his compatriots to ignore agreements when it is necessary to keep the security of the state. He not at all left any moral room, this as bad and that as good. His writings in *The Prince* merely talk about how to use different means to maintain power and preserve the state. Therefore, for him morality and immorality should not be used for their own seeks rather they should be used for political goals.

Christianity in Machiavelli's Political Thought

There is no universal understanding among thinkers on Machiavelli's view on religion particularly on Christianity. For Medieval political philosophers, religion was the basis of the state. For example, Aquinas (1964, pp. 1100, 1146 & 1210), in *Summa Theologica*, said that man requires the guidance of the divine law. But Machiavelli detached the state from the control of religion. He was influenced by the thought of St. Augustine of Hippo since his thought on Christianity and politics are similar. For St. Augustine, politics is the result of domination by force and Machiavelli also believed in this idea. For him, 'politics is seen as evil and the result of fallen man and the state was founded by a fratricide, Cain'. Thus, there is no justice in this world. It is true that the city of Rome was founded by fratricide, Romulus. Therefore, Machiavelli considered his political view from Augustine (Korvela 2006, p. 111). In the article '*Augustine and the Case for Limited Government*', Raeder (2003) also affirmed this view. Since Linda C. Raeder argued that, for Augustine, coercive rule was a compulsory aspect of human life since government and law exist as a punishment for the sin of Adam and Eve. Accordingly, for him, "political man is a fallen man".

Why the Christian theologians and thinkers developed different views on Machiavelli's power politics in *The Prince*? Both Fredrick Nietzsche and Niccolò Machiavelli forwarded horrific remarks on Christianity (Korvela 2006, p. 31). One of the main factors that led to Machiavelli's critics on Christianity was during his time; religion had a great role in political affairs. Political life is subordinate to religion but the church was unable to direct and united Italy these irritated Machiavelli and pave the way to criticized Christianity (Korvela 2006, p. 54). Machiavelli argued that Christianity makes the world womanish (Rahe 2008, p. 96) since Christianity is worthless in politics. It supposes that humans are naturally liable to goodness (Korvela 2006, p.

112); however, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli (1903, p. 70) considered all men as wicked. For him, political greatness and the unity of the state are possible when princes shift their character according to situations rather than by being virtuous (Korvela 2006, pp. 18-19). The state is autonomous, sovereign, and superior over all institutions. State is out of and above religious and moral considerations and it is secular. As well, according to Machiavelli (1981, p. 62), a prince is out of the confines of religion:

... [a] ruler and especially a new prince cannot always act in ways that are considered good because, in order to maintain his power he is often forced to act treacherously, ruthlessly or inhumanity and disregard the precepts of religion.

Christian moralities are useless for him in itself and he used religion for the realization of political goals. State power for him is the end and Christianity should be used as an instrument (Strauss & Cropsey 1987, p. 308). For example, for Machiavelli (1903, p. 88), in Spain, Ferdinand of Aragon used religion as a tool and came to power through it. According to Machiavelli (1998), politics is independent and has its own rules and puts it at the center and judge others in reference to it. Christianity must be judged by its consequence and if it is politically harmful, it must be omitted.

In the views of Christianity, Machiavelli's understanding of religion was not religion at all. His meaning of Christianity is unusual and different (Korvela 2006, p. 18). His notion of the "internals" was unorthodox for Christians since he thought that the human soul is not able to find its own peace and has not natural rule of integrity. The characteristics of the soul are to increase once own power in politics. The highest form of human consciousness is possible when people are engaged in political affairs (King 2007, p. 196). For Plato and many Christian thinkers, anguish is better than doing wickedness; but Machiavelli advises princes to do evil to maintain their power (Korvela 2006, p. 23).

He was known as the opponent of Christianity (Rahe 2008, p. 4) since he used Christianity for his own program as a means. This view is supported by different thinkers. According to William E. Klein, Machiavelli discarded Christian morality and used it as a means for his political purpose (Seaman 2007, p. 407). In reaction to this, as said by Olli Loukola, Machiavelli did not accuse Christian morality he simply said that Christian morality did not fit into the world we live in (Leonidas 2011, p. 102). Conversely, for Giuseppe Prezzolini, Machiavelli was cynical thinker

who rejects the worth of Christian morality for politics. For Machiavelli, the ultimate goal of a prince is to realize great things like glory, fame, and to maintain the state. Following the Christian virtue led to the failure of the state. From the view of Christianity, the virtue of Christianity is imperative for political purposes but due to his evil and silly thinking, Machiavelli rejects Christianity. For Christianity, the Holy Bible preaches goodness which is a key element to live peacefully within the state; since the Holy Bible said that 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31 (Leonidas 2011, p. 46). This is an essential principle to administer the people peacefully. While the thought of Machiavelli contradict with this thought of Christianity.

Christians make Machiavelli responsible for the murder of St. Bartholomew's in 1572 and the religious war in Europe. Ambrogio Catrino-Politi, the Bishop of Cosenza, excommunicated his work on religion. As stated by Reginald Pole's, Henry VIII became wicked and rejected monasteries due to his taking of his teaching in *The Prince* (Leonidas 2011, pp. 120-21). Machiavelli aimed at power and he was anti-Christian (Russell 1945, p. 762). According to Pedro de Rivadeneira and Claudio Clemente, Machiavelli was amoral and a marker of tyranny. For Clemente, he was blessed politics and discarded religion. He made religion subordinate to politics and thought amorality. He used religion as a means for political goal and this contradicts with the traditional view that the state was part of the divinely order. For some thinkers like Felix Raab, Machiavelli was rejected by Christianity because he made religion subordinate to politics. Thomas Fitzherbert recognizes him as one that developed wrong perception towards religion (Leonidas 2011, pp. 121-127).

Machiavelli's view on religion, particularly on Christianity, led to the occurrence of divergent views among thinkers. Some scholars claim that Machiavelli was a true Christian in his personal life. However, he believed that both political and religious lives are two different things as a result politics should have its own law and morality. For example, Roberto Ridolfi, in his book *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli*, said that his frank expression and impolite writing gave him wrong reputation and named as an enemy of Christianity. This shows that Christianity used for political ends. For Sebastian de Grazia, Machiavelli desired to shift the role of the prince from saints to heroes since God care for those who defend their country (Korvela 2006, p. 44).

Then again, others argued that he was an atheist who wanted to demolish Christianity totally. According to Leo Strauss, Machiavelli was an atheist and the “teacher of evil” (Drury 2005, p. 117). Strauss (1957) suggested that Machiavelli made the church responsible for the deterioration of Italy and the loss of its political virtue. But for Korvela, there is no any evidence that affirms this view. For Germino, Machiavelli was purposely seeking to destroy Christianity and his motivation was simply earthly (Korvela 2006, p. 44). According to Korvela (2006, p. 10), his text is totally against the views of Christianity but this does not make him an atheist.

Therefore, for Korvela (2006, p. 48), Machiavelli did not assert that religion should be eliminated at all rather it should be used as a tool for politics. Religion is vital for political mobilization and to protect the state from foreign enemies. According to King (2007, p. 196), Machiavelli gave instrumental value for religion since he used it for his program. For Machiavelli, religion should be used like that of the ancient Romans since the ancient Romans used religion “according to virtue” (Hornqvist 2004, p. 83). In chapter 18, Machiavelli (1903, p. 70) described the value of religion in making citizens obedient and it is crucial to seem religious for the rulers. Therefore, for Korvela, Machiavelli uses Christianity as tool for the realization of his goal.

Thus, Korvela (2004, pp. 38 & 150) argued that Fredrick Nietzsche, Niccolò Machiavelli and Marquis de Sade were responsible for the ruin of Christian morality since they used it for their own purpose. Marquis de Sade rejected prescriptive moral framework in sexual behaviors. For de Sade, ‘sexual pleasure obtained by inflicting harm on others’ called “sadism”. Likewise, Machiavelli rejected any limitations in politics rather it should be used as a tool but for Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, modernity results following the decline of religion. Thus, for them, Machiavelli paved the way for modernity because he used Christianity as a means for his aim. Having this view, many thinkers argued that Machiavelli developed political secularism. But he used religion as a means for his political program.

Generally, Machiavelli used Christianity as a tool for his political ends. His main purpose was to establish a strong United States of Italy under a princely rule in *The Prince* and to transform it in to republican system like the Romans model through different ways like killing, deceiving, and through both moral and immoral means which are contrary to the doctrines of Christianity. He gave instrumental value for religion and morality since he followed the secret of Roman

greatness. All religions including Christianity are humans and not heavenly origin (Strauss & Cropsey 1987, p. 312 & 314). However, in the doctrines of Christianity, Christian life is a preparation for the eternal life after death, John 12:25 (Korvela 2006, p. 70). It is a life of peace and harmony. Accordingly, Machiavelli in *The Prince* used religion as a means for his political ends or political program.

***Virtù* in Machiavelli's Political Thought**

There are different thinkers that grant different interpretation about the concept of Machiavelli's *virtù* (virtue) in *The Prince*. According to Matei (2011), in his article, *The Machiavellian Concept of Civic Virtues*, Machiavelli's concept of virtue is not entirely conflicting to the traditional concept of virtue. Quentin Skinner argued that Machiavelli did not define what *virtù* is; but he used it consistently. It is the quality which enables a prince to winning honour and glory for himself and the security of his government. Skinner said that *virtù* has a clear and consistent meaning if its definition is in line with Fortuna¹⁵ (Leonidas 2011, pp. 5-6). However, for George Bull, Machiavelli used the term *virtù* 'openly, nearly always in antithesis to Fortuna, at times with the sense of willpower, efficiency, and virtue'. For Bull, fortune is prowess¹⁷ (Machiavelli 1981, p. 25). On the other hand, according to Timo Airaksinen, the meaning of *virtù* is open like that of the meaning of fortune. Fortune for him is resource, lack or destiny, chance and uncertainty (Leonidas 2011, p. 6). For Korvela (2006, p. 19), Machiavelli's *virtù* is simply the moral flexibility of the action and the ability to discard moral rules when it is necessary. It is the tool that human controls the world. In the view of Pocock (2003, p. 156), the dilemma of fortune is the dilemma of virtue. For Thomas Hobbes, moral virtue and the fear of God are unnecessary for the creation of a good political order. Selfishness is the right foundation of political system. But for the ancients morally virtuous man is ready to sacrifice himself for the interests of the society (Drury 2005, pp. 142-146). At this juncture, one should understand that *The Prince* is a guide book for politics; as a result, rulers used it differently in their understanding of *virtù* and Fortuna. This makes the system of politics problematic.

If I explore the views of different thinkers about the concept of Machiavelli's *virtù* in *The Prince* this much; then, now I try to scrutinize the roles of his concept of virtue for his program. I argue that his concept of *virtù* is one means for his program and it is incompatible with the traditional concept of virtue since Machiavelli (1998, p. 56) said that virtue is whatsoever was best for the

state and related with power. His concepts of *virtù* have different meanings with the traditional concept of virtue since he used the word *virtù* in relation with power rather than having or developing good qualities because *virtù* for him is related with political success. How political success could be brought about? To give an answer for this question, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. For him, civic virtue is based on individual virtue. The virtue of individuals is imperative to maintain the order of the state (Wagner 2006, p. 61). Therefore, *virtù* refers ability, skill, energy, strength, and the like to solve troubles. Machiavelli (1903, p. 57) argued that the above qualities enable a prince to acquire reputation. This idea is found in *The Prince* and reads as follows:

A prince should therefore have no other aim, nor take up any other thing for his study, but war and its order and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who command, and it is of such virtue that it not only maintains those who are born princes but often enables men of private fortune to attain to that rank.

His concept of virtue is related with politics because in chapter 8, Machiavelli (1998, p. 34) suggested that Agathocles ‘always kept to a life of crime at every rank of his career, nevertheless, his crimes were accompanied by such virtue of spirit and body.’ In this expression, Machiavelli talks about individual virtue of Agathocles and *virtù* does not mean that of having virtuous character (Leonidas 2011, p. 62). The usage of the word *virtù* for him in these two examples above indicates the force and abilities of the prince rather than having good qualities. Machiavelli (1998, p. 22) employed the word strength and virtue interchangeably. Virtue, for him, is the ability to use one’s power over his subjects to maintain power and preserve the state. According to Juhana Lemetti, virtues are moral traits and to do with excellence. A virtuous person and action has an element of moral excellence. In addition to this, for Aristotle, virtue is any actions that contribute to the furthest aim of humanity like peace. But for Machiavelli, virtue is to do whatever is necessary for the preservation of one’s state and it is political and has amoral characteristics. Morality and rationality are not necessary for a prince even if the action of the prince is prohibited and evil (Leonidas 2011, pp. 79-81). So, his thought of *virtù* is related with political game. For Giuseppe Prezzolini,¹⁸ Machiavelli’s notion of virtue is not fit to the traditional concept of virtue. However, Plato’s notion of virtue is the fundamental pillars of Christianity (Korvela 2006, p. 45). Machiavelli used both virtue and vice depending on the necessities of circumstances. Goodness is vital for citizens engaged in peaceful occupations

while, *virtù* required for princes and soldiers to preserve the state and to maintain power (Strauss & Cropsey 1987, p. 301).

In chapter 6 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli (1998, p. 22-23) argued that *virtù* is related with political agents. Political agents are individuals, groups, states, and the like. Individual *virtù* is individual physical and mental power like courage, prudence, and so on. The virtues of Romulus, Agathocles, Cyrus, Theseus and others are examples of individual virtue. Virtue is the only means to acquire political success. Machiavelli (1903, p. 105) used the term *virtù* to express groups and the power of the state. In *The Prince*, he asserted that there is great virtue in the Italians to be superior in strength. In book 1, Machiavelli (1996, p. 27 & 53) also argued that, “virtue of the army” and “virtue of the Romans”. According to Machiavelli (1903, p. 57), virtue of the army is imperative to maintain the security of the state. In this part, he discussed the significance of individual virtue to be successful in political affairs. For example, Machiavelli (1903, p. 77) considered the virtue of Marcus in *The Prince* as a good case as follows:

Marcus alone lived and died in honor, because he succeeded to the empire by hereditary right and did not owe it to the soldiers or to the people; besides which, possessing many virtues which made him revered, he kept both parties in their place as long as he lived and was never either hated or despised.

In spite of its different uses, virtue for him is simply the abilities of political agents to be successful in politics. He did not preach the value of virtue in itself but its use for his program (Stokes 2006, p. 59). Besides this, his virtue is related with conditions or opportunities¹⁹. This thought is found in chapter 5 of *The Prince*. In this chapter, he considered the case of Moses, Cyrus, Romulus and Theseus. These rulers were with great virtue but they could not do anything without the opportunity which made them successful. Machiavelli (1998, p. 23) portrayed this as follows:

Moses found the people of Israel enslaved by the Egyptians, Romulus found himself exposed at birth, Cyrus found the Persians discontented with the empire of the Medes, and Theseus found the Athenians dispersed.

Thus, *virtù* (virtue) is related with opportunities since all the above great leaders will not be successful only through their virtues if they did not found the opportunity to be great leaders. *Virtù* for Machiavelli (1998, pp. 26-27), is related with fortune. In chapter 7, he declared that:

Francesco became duke of Milan from private individual by proper means and with a great virtue of his own...On the other hand Cesare Borgia, called Duke Valentino by the vulgar, acquired his state through the fortune of his father and lost it through the same.

He criticized the Italian political system because he said that Italy lost its former *virtù*. Virtue, for Machiavelli, is increasing prudence for the necessity of security at the expense of morality. Being virtuous²⁰ for a ruler leads to devastation while acting brutally will often bring safety (King 2007, p. 157). Machiavelli (1560, p. 14) in his book *The Art of war* said that virtue is ability, political genius, and prowess. Therefore, his notion of *virtù* (virtue) is a means to maintain power and preserve the state.

Conclusion

Consequently, for Machiavelli to establish a republican system in *the Discourses* like the Romans model *The Prince* should be used as a means. Because Machiavelli believed that democratic system is possible after tyrannical beginning. In this tyrannical system everything is possible to maintain power and to establish a strong and united state of Italy under a princely rule. Morality, immoralities, Christianity, virtue, cunning, deceptions, killings, and any other evil and good things are used for the purpose of his political ends.

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