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“Gli umori delle parti”: Humoral Dynamics and Democratic Potential in the *Florentine Histories*

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Introduction

After decades of relative neglect in relation to his other major political works (at least within Anglophone scholarship), recent years have seen a growing number of political theorists and historians of political thought turn to the study of Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories* and its place within his overall intellectual trajectory. One of the most significant normative issues around which debate has crystallized is the democratic or non-democratic character of this text, particularly in relation to the increasingly recognized populist commitments of the earlier republican histories presented in the *Discourses on Livy*. The majority judgment thus far tends to posit the relationship between the *Discourses* and the *Histories* primarily in terms of break or transition, Machiavelli's normative political goals having been redirected to the extent that he is seen as coming to adopt a far more pessimistic position regarding the political competencies of the commonality of citizens. The later Florentine works are thus seen as characterized by a newfound elitism. On the other side of the debate are democratic readers, who see in these works the perpetuation of Machiavelli's popular egalitarian commitments. These commitments are seen as expressed in a continuing adherence to an intrinsically disputatious class analysis, in which the people's desire for freedom is articulated negatively in relation to the great's desire to dominate.

In this paper I position myself in opposition to both of these interpretative tendencies, although from different theoretical standpoints. I suggest that the advocates of the conservative thesis err in uncritically accepting as a generalizable empirical fact Machiavelli's immediate

depiction of the people and/or the *plebe* in the *Florentine Histories*. They forget, on the contrary, that every Machiavellian depiction of civic behaviour refers us not to a positive conception of human nature, but only the particular and contingent institutional configuration that marks the precise social-historical context under consideration. The democratic readers, on the other hand, err not as interpreters of Machiavelli, but rather as interpreters of democracy. Specifically, affirming the natural bifurcation of the humors of the people and the *grandi* as well as their mutual co-constitution, Machiavellian democracy is articulated in terms of the perpetual struggle of the former against the oligarchic drives of the latter. The popular realization of freedom is thus seen to depend upon an apparently ontological division of the social field. In other words, Machiavellian democracy affirms popular freedom, but at the cost of eternalizing social inequality, inequality in fact being the very condition of possibility of freedom.¹ In a sense, if the neo-Roman republican readers of Machiavelli want equality without freedom – that is to say, the protection of a sphere of negative liberty in which each is equally able to pursue their private goods independently of actively sharing in government² – the democratic readers of Machiavelli want freedom without equality – that is to say, the people's free expression of their intrinsic political capacities through civic engagement, but necessarily in opposition to a distinct class that possesses asymmetrical economic and social power relative to it.

My suggestion is that a more internally consistent theory of democracy based upon Machiavellian principles must recognize and affirm the indissociability of freedom and equality, the latter being realized through the dissolution of all historical class divisions, including that between the people and the *grandi*. It is this possibility to overcome social stratification through the abolition of particular parts of the city, as well as their correspondent humors, that *The Florentine Histories* reveals. Both the *Histories* and the *Discourses* are democratic texts, but they emphasize differing dimensions of democratic life. As has been

pointed out by many, the democratic significance of the *Discourses on Livy* lies in Machiavelli's advocacy of a form of republican institutionalization that provides the generality of citizens with access to participatory organs facilitating political judgement and deliberation. On the other hand, the democratic significance of the *Florentine Histories* lies in Machiavelli's demonstration of the potential to establish a concrete social equality within the body politic. The realization of a more egalitarian form of life is achievable through the abolition of the oligarchic elements within the city, which far from being expressions of natural psychological humors, are merely social manifestations of class relations.

In arguing that Machiavellian democracy is only completely articulated via the juxtaposition of the unique lessons of the *Histories* with those of the *Discourses*, I do not mean to suggest that such an articulation is one consciously and systematically undertaken by Machiavelli himself. Rather, Machiavelli's narrations suggest to us certain political potentialities that can be seized upon and redeployed for the sake of the advancement of democratic theory more generally. Indeed, as various readers have argued, the very form of Machiavelli's historical work functions to generate an interpretative field that necessarily transcends the body of the former, the openness of the text facilitating the creative extension of meaning beyond Machiavelli's own immediate concerns.³ Reconsidering Machiavelli's depiction of humoral and class dynamics in the *Florentine Histories* allows us grasp the fragility of the form of the humors, and how the latter's elimination must be seen as a necessary condition for the establishment of that social equality required for stable republican institutionalization. The case of Florence reveals, through disclosing the possibility of equalizing the social field via the abolition of the nobility more particularly, a radical democratic potential, even if this potential went unrealized as a consequence of the specific institutional failures of the city.

The Normalization of Originary Division in Democratic Readings of Machiavelli

From the standpoint of the so-called democratic turn in Anglophone Machiavelli studies⁴, one of the many notable contributions made by John McCormick in his most recent book is the repudiation of what he identifies as that “now nearly hegemonic interpretation”⁵ which posits a break between the early and admittedly populist republican works, and the supposedly more conservative later Florentine texts. McCormick writes that “The notion that the later political writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, in particular the *Florentine Histories*, convey his newly developed conservatism has today become settled opinion.”⁶ The elements of this conservative turn are seen to include a more critical view of the political capacities of the people, a rejection of the democratic Roman paradigm of constitutionalism in favour of a Venetian-style aristocratic one, and an adoption of a tripartite as opposed to bipartite model of class analysis.⁷ While in broad agreement with McCormick on the issue of Machiavelli’s continuing affirmation of the political competencies of the people and his continuing commitment to democratic republican institutionalization, I suggest that the *Florentine Histories*’ more explicit articulation of the nature of political humors reveals the extent to which, not only is social division irreducible to a binary class analysis that takes the people and the great as its primary terms, but that such a reduction forecloses the very possibility of theorizing democracy on Machiavellian grounds. Machiavellian democracy, in others words, is not possible independently of a rejection of the idea of a natural division of humors.

The mode of articulation of Machiavelli’s apparently primary, and apparently universal, form of social class division is well-known, it being specified in each of his three major political works. In *The Prince* he writes that “in every city these two diverse humors are found, which arises from this: that the people desire neither to be commanded nor oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people.”⁸ In the *Discourses* he grounds his early discussion of the productivity of social conflict in a recognition “that in every republic

are two diverse humors, that of the people and that of the great.”⁹ He goes on to specify the content of this bifurcation one chapter later, writing that “Without doubt, if one considers the end of the nobles and of the ignobles, one will see great desire to dominate in the former, and in the latter only desire not to be dominated.”¹⁰ And in the *Florentine Histories* the division is articulated not in terms of a specification of its potential contribution to the establishment of freedom, but rather in terms of it as a source of corrupting factional conflict: “The grave and natural enmities that exist between the men of the people and the nobles, caused by the wish of the latter to command and the former not to obey, are the cause of all evils that arise in cities. For from this diversity of humors all other things that agitate republics take their nourishment.”¹¹ Noting the extent to which Machiavelli continues to affirm the distinction between the trajectory of popular and noble desire in the *Histories*, McCormick concludes that the differing diagnoses of the social situations in the *Discourses* and the latter text cannot be grounded in any changed conception of the relation between the humors, but should rather be located in Machiavelli’s sociological perception of the extent to which the differing modes and orders within each city channel the two humors in distinct ways, thereby generating unique public outcomes.¹² Although it is true that Machiavelli in the *Histories* speaks of the emergence of a third class in the Florentine case – the *plebe* as apparently distinct from the *popolo* – such is not evidence of a “newfound normative preference on Machiavelli’s part,” but rather an indication of his sensitivity to the particularity of the social-historical context as it emerged concretely in this instance.¹³ Machiavelli thus continues to read the opposition between the great and the people as a “natural division,”¹⁴ and continues to affirm a “bipartite class analysis.”¹⁵

On my account, I take there to be two significant problems with such a theorization of the relationship between the people and the *grandi* from the standpoint of democratic theory. On the one hand, the popular desire for political activity is reduced to a merely reactionary

effort to resist the encroachments of the great, the people being interpreted, to the degree that they desire only not to be oppressed, as tending naturally to passivity, and thus lacking any immanent desire for political self-expression.¹⁶ Just as such a reading naturalizes – although via its lack – the trajectory of popular being, so too does it with respect to noble being, converting the latter’s desire for oppression into an “ever-present” social fact of aristocratic domination.¹⁷ Hence, secondly, the historical form of the relation between the classes is reified into a quasi-metaphysical opposition between two social entities whose perpetual form is seen as a reflection of a self-identical, stable, and transhistorical psychology. Far from being a unique attribute of McCormick’s reconstruction of Machiavellian democracy, this *de facto* hypostatization of the fact of social domination characterizes the greater part of democratic readings of Machiavelli, receiving a representative expression in the pioneering work of Claude Lefort. For Lefort and the democratic readers who follow him, once we “recognize the permanence of the desires and the humors” we can understand why Machiavelli’s judgement on the relation between the two primary classes has “universal application”.¹⁸ Desire, regardless of its specific trajectory, is not oriented towards the acquisition of any particular object, but rather is co-constituted in its mutual relation with its opposite. Society is incapable of being reduced to a unity precisely to the degree that each class’s desire – the one to oppress and the one to not be oppressed – is insatiable and ineradicable. The upshot of such a conception of the nature of the co-relation of desire is the construction of a paradoxical situation in which the political expression of freedom is articulated only negatively in relation to an adversary whose being is essential. Freedom is realizable only to the extent that domination is perpetual: the people, as Lefort acknowledges very clearly, are never able to liberate themselves from domination, precisely to the degree that the struggle against domination is the condition for the actualization of the democratic impulse.¹⁹

The eternalization of a principle of domination through the reification of the form of desire reproduces that misplaced naturalism that characterizes the being of the humors in terms of shared psychologies that are biologically structured, such structuration legitimating the reduction of the political community to the image of an organic entity whose contours are fixed in determinate ways. Anthony Parel produces perhaps the most well-known of such readings, writing that the “political humors refer to desires and appetites that are natural to a social group.”²⁰ This contention is simply one element of Parel’s general reading of Machiavelli’s political thought as one grounded in a positive cosmology considered as an element of natural philosophy. For Parel every political society, regardless of its specific form of articulation, is defined by a primary division of humors: “The opposition between these dispositions are natural, permanent, and necessary.”²¹ Parel notes that Machiavelli is here appropriating, in a condensed typology, the ancient Galenic medical science, in which the health of the organism is interpreted in terms of the mutually reinforcing and balanced opposition of the various humoral elements, the coexistence of the one term with the others operating as a necessary condition for the well-being of all. What Parel recognizes, which various democratic readers like Lefort seemingly fail to, is that to think originary division is to necessarily fall back into biologism and the realm of organic law. Such a naturalization of the division of humors characterizes even those more critical readings which correctly understand that Machiavelli’s appropriation of the language of the Galenic science, the engagement with which being so commonplace during the medical Renaissance, is made not for the sake of the construction of a stable and harmonious political system modelled on an organic image of the body as an hierarchically organized entity tending toward a shared end.²² For Roberto Esposito, for example, the Machiavellian organic metaphor stresses that the healthy body is one whose humors are conflictually related and perpetually opposed, yet nevertheless a body whose constituent elements, regardless of the form of the relation of the parts, are equally essential to

the former's reproduction: "A body is healthy not when one of its humors is being drained by the dominance of an opposing humor, but only when that humor is able to resist its opposite with equal vitality."²³ The nature of the relation between the essential elements is reconfigured, but the essentiality of these elements is still taken for granted.

Machiavelli's utilization of the language of humorism, however, cannot be taken as evidence that he accepts thinking the humors in the ways suggested above. Scholars have noted the extent to which Machiavelli often rhetorically deploys established language and images – for example that of the Polybian cycle of regimes²⁴ or Chiron the centaur²⁵ – in order to fundamentally subvert those theoretical paradigms and political conclusions traditionally associated with them. That a similar operation is at play with respect to the humoral question is suggested by Machiavelli's portrayal of the dynamics of the humors in the *Florentine Histories*. The perpetual dissolution and reconstitution of the form of relation between the parts of the city within the *Histories*, and the subsequent reorientation of the direction of group desire in light of such movement, problematizes the extent to which it is legitimate to attribute to particular social entities determinate psychological attributes. This problematization ultimately points the way to a more robust form of Machiavellian democracy, one that would achieve social equality within the republic through the abolition of the city's oligarchic tendencies and factions.

The Historical Dynamics of the Humors in the *Florentine Histories*

As Étienne Balibar has noted, the term *umori* is "notoriously difficult to translate in modern languages, since it refers at the same time to classes, interests, and regimes of passions."²⁶ The referral speaks not to a conceptual identity between the relevant terms, but rather the fact that the content of each category is necessarily articulated in relation to the others. One is justified in speaking of a humor only to the degree that one can identify the consolidation of a group of

discrete individuals into a relatively stable social entity on the basis of their perception of the at least immediately overlapping direction of their desire, these now unified individuals acting in common so as to pursue the actualization of their shared interest. Machiavelli uses the term *parte* to refer to a social group that has amalgamated itself in such a way, into a conventional unity on the basis of the discernment of a shared end. Far from fixing in advance the contours of this association or the nature of the interests stimulating it, Machiavelli deploys the concept of “the part” to refer to a wide variety of entities, be they identified traditionally as economic classes, political factions, and so on. This fact acutely reflects the complicated dynamics of the Florentine social situation, in which internal division is not only irreducible to a simply binary, but in which the fissures demarcating the parts transcend any one single interpretative lens, as notably expressed, for example, in the intersection of the political and the economic in the struggles over guild representation.²⁷ The idea of a humor is ultimately associated with a part to the degree that the relative coherence of the latter is expressed through the former, a humor not existing by nature, but rather being artificially generated through the part’s incorporation. Crucially then, a humor is thus not an individual psychological property, but rather a manifestation of social inter-relationship. This fact is covered up by those commentators on Machiavelli who abstract the humor from the part, as if the humor could have a disembodied being exterior to the social entity.²⁸ Hence the significance of Machiavelli’s deployment, throughout the *Histories*, of the language of the “the humors of the parts.”²⁹

In the *Histories* Machiavelli takes care to highlight the co-determination of the concepts of humor and part through various of his historical accounts of their emergence. The historical basis of such emergence is of the utmost significance. Far from existing naturally, the historicity of the humors is revealed through the contention that their concrete advent in time is stimulated by the development of “new causes”³⁰ within the social field. That the generation of a humor is the productive consequence of the solidification of the part is revealed, for

instance, through the example of the rise to prominence of the Ghibellines, Machiavelli writing that “when Frederick II came into Italy and the Ghibelline party became powerful through the work of Ezzelino, Ghibelline humors rose in every city.”³¹ Hence also the generation of White and Black humors through the organization of opposing parts associated with the Cancellieri in Pistoia.³² This division would eventually infect Florence through the incorporation of the Cerchi and the Donati, the humors growing with each new consolidation of the parts.³³ Indeed, if there is one feature of the dynamics of the Florentine social situation that Machiavelli is at pains to highlight, it is the seemingly inexhaustible tendency of parts and humors to develop, mutate, dissolve, and multiply over time, the city being characterized by a perpetual multiplicity of opposed elements. The potential range of the plurality of existent humors at any one moment was for Machiavelli acutely revealed in Florence after the failure of Niccolao da Prato to pacify the parts of the city, the latter being “agitated not only by one humor but by many, there being enmities in it between the people and the great, the Ghibellines and the Guelfs, the Whites and the Blacks.”³⁴ This plurality was a characteristic constantly stressed, Florence being a city that “was full of diverse humors,” including not only the above, but at different times those also of the greater guilds, the lesser guilds, the plebs, and so on.³⁵ As Machiavelli regretfully notes in the “Minuta,” “how many sects, how many divisions, have for the past, and for all time, perturbed, divided, and spoiled the city of Florence.”³⁶ The perpetual reconstitution of division in Florence results precisely from the fact that the self-identity of the part is irreducible to an intrinsic essence shared by all of said part’s individual elements. Machiavelli posits a radical diversity of individual desire, the republic indeed meriting an ethical priority relative to other political forms precisely to the degree that it is capable of more adequately externalizing this multiplicity of being via its mode of institutionalization.³⁷

The organization of necessarily diverse particular individuals into parts covers up, for the sake of the realization of a shared interest that is articulated in relation to a part with a

correlatively inverse interest, a diversity of differing desires and wills. Machiavelli writes, “The enmities in Florence were always accompanied by sects and therefore always harmful; never did a winning sect remain united except when the hostile sect was active, but as soon as the one conquered was eliminated, the ruling one, no longer having fear to restrain it or order within itself to check it, would become divided again.”³⁸ The merely contingent organization of the multiplicity of actors will thus inherently dissolve with the overcoming of the being of that opponent which stimulated the construction of its identity. The non-identity of interest reappears within the part, individuals now self-organizing themselves into new parts on the basis of the perception of new differences revealed after the suspension of its identity in light of its social victory. Machiavelli deploys as an example revealing this historical logic the case of the party of Cosimo de’ Medici, which in 1434 was, although the most powerful, nevertheless opposed to a subservient yet still strong opposition that functioned to keep Cosimo’s party internally unified. After the death of Nero Capponi and the dissolution of the opposition party, however, fissions immediately began to appear in Cosimo’s party. These fissions could no longer be covered up via the shared opposition to the prior antagonist: “the state found difficulty in reassuming its authority, and Cosimo’s own friends, very powerful in the state, were the cause of it, because they no longer feared the adverse party that had been eliminated, and they were glad to diminish Cosimo’s power.”³⁹ The mechanics by which a diversity of individual desires may be so united by a shared end that is sufficient to mask their non-identity is further highlighted by Machiavelli in book 7 of the *Histories*. Here the author narrates the conspiracy between Dietisalvi Neroni, Luca Pitti, Agnolo Acciaivoli, and Niccolò Soderini – individuals who “were moved by diverse causes” – to wrest authority away from Cosimo’s son Piero and take the state for themselves through their disingenuous appeal to the language of liberty: “With such *diversity of humors*, these conspirators nonetheless announced

publicly *one identical cause*, asserting they wanted the city to be governed by the magistrates and not by the advice of a few.”⁴⁰

At the same time that the *Florentine Histories* reveals the contingent being of the humors of the parts, the text also articulates the contingent nature or direction of these class dispositions. It is precisely the variable quality of the humoral orientation that has led advocates of the conservative turn thesis to posit a fundamental shift in Machiavelli's thinking about the potential political function of the people.⁴¹ The error lies in fixing, independent of consideration of the specific form of social-historical institutionalization, a group nature revealed through analysis of discrete characteristics and behaviours seemingly essential to the part. The very fact that Machiavelli's statements on the so-called nature of individuals, even well-before the *Florentine Histories*, shift from text to text, or even chapter to chapter within the same text, reveals the inadequacy of such an ascription. Hence the stark contrast, for example, between the presentation of individual desire in *The Prince*, where the founder must presuppose the intrinsic egoism and self-interest of his subjects, and that towards the end of book 1 of the *Discourses*, where the people are identified as competent judges of the demands of civic life and willing to subordinate private interest for the sake of the advancement of public good. The very theoretical effort to attribute a nature to the part is a misplaced one, no individual or group possessing an inherent being exterior to the historical form of society. Such is why normative judgment must take the latter as opposed to the former as its object. This is particularly well-revealed in his summary of the countryside of Pistoia, where Machiavelli writes that it is “seen through experience that the thefts and robberies and burnings that were done in the countryside, were in good part caused by the ruin of that countryside.”⁴² That is to say, and perfectly consistent with his theoretical writings on the nature of the people, criminal behaviour on the part of popular elements is mostly derived from the corruption of the social environment that

grounds these elements, and hence why, in this case, the obligation to render restitution for damages done by the people lay in the municipality itself.

As Vittorio Morfino points out, political theory for Machiavelli must be grounded in consideration of those contingent facts of human existence whose generation results from precise historical modes of socialization: “no form of government exists in the absolute. What does exist is a form of government adapted to the habits and laws of a determinate people in an irreducibly singular history. The logic presiding over Machiavelli’s political theory is therefore the logic of the cogency of the structure of habits, customs and laws that comprise the historical existence of a people.”⁴³ Any reader of Machiavelli must thus be attuned to the specific social-historical conditions adhering in Machiavelli’s texts. What fundamentally characterizes the Florentine social situation is the fact that, through virtually all of its institutional reorganizations, a universality of access to political office was never achieved. Machiavelli puts into the mouth of a Milanese ambassador appealing to the Count Francesco the following words: “To those who desire the whole, a part cannot be satisfying.”⁴⁴ It is not any particular immanent psychological orientation that generates the will to domination, but rather the very condition of political inequality. Disproportionate privilege relative to one’s fellow citizens becomes internalized so as to stimulate a sensibility that filters desire through a lens validating hierarchical division. As Machiavelli writes, “as men do almost always, the more authority they have, the worse they use it and the more insolent they become.”⁴⁵ The inextinguishable character of elite insolence is not a consequence of a shared nature amongst the members of the *grandi*⁴⁶, for example, but rather of the perpetuation of the particular class relations that sustain their privilege. It is for the same reason that the people, in those very rare moments in which they manage to attain exclusive rule in a politically divided society, manifest precisely the same tendency. The change in the descriptive language that Machiavelli applies to the people in the *Florentine Histories* does not refer to a changed normative conception

regarding their intrinsic political place within the life of the republican city. Rather, it reflects the particular failure of Florence to create institutional outlets for the venting of the ambition of all members of the community, a failure that was manifest regardless of which particular part managed to attain exclusive rule.

As I have mentioned, the social dynamics and struggles within Florence tended to perpetually shift the balance of power between the community's constituent parts, which were constantly reconfigured in new permutations. Machiavelli thus speaks of the tendency of Florence to move from "inequality to a wonderful equality."⁴⁷ The critique of the mode of expression of popular desire applies in those historical instances characterized by general political inequality, in which the city is divided between noble and popular parts, and yet authority is monopolized by an exclusive class element. Hence, for example, the contrast between the Roman and Florentine people, the particular desire of the latter being labelled as "injurious and unjust": "the people of Rome desired to enjoy the highest honours together with nobles, while the people of Florence fought to be alone in the government without the participation of the nobles."⁴⁸ The trajectory of the desire of the Roman and Florentine people is thus not identical, a manifestation of a singular humor whose form is immanent to the psychology of the entity. Rather, it is a contingent result of the precise nature of the mode of socio-political articulation of the class in relation to other classes within the historical field. This is why in Florence the political subjugation of the nobility, to the degree that it was not accompanied by a concrete elimination of the class as a separate social part, resulted in the displacement of the particular humor of the great, it manifesting now in a people who, far from integrating all particular citizens within it, however fleetingly monopolized rule at the expense of other parts. Machiavelli thus writes how "now it is seen through experience how mistaken the opinion of men is and how false their judgment, for the pride and ambition of the great was not eliminated but taken from them by our men of the people, who now, by the wont of

ambitious men, seek to obtain the first rank in the republic.”⁴⁹ Machiavelli has this principle expressed in chapter 4.9 through the figure of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who notes the extent to which the realignment of the form of the relation between the great and the plebs, where the former came to occupy a disproportionate political authority relative to the latter, generated a reorientation of the nature of each part’s desire: “He affirmed that it was prudence to know how to use men according to the times: for if their fathers had used the plebs to eliminate the insolence of the great, now that the great had become humble and the plebs insolent, it was well to check its insolence with their help.”⁵⁰

In 3.5 of the *Florentine Histories* a citizen articulates concisely the extent to which the city’s division into sects is responsible for “all the other evils and all the other disorders that appear in it.”⁵¹ Where generalized participation in public life via universal access to political institutions is not possible as a result of the exclusivity of rule, involvement in factional parties organized around narrowly shared interests becomes the norm, as “bad men out of avarice and ambition, and good men out of necessity, participate in them.”⁵² The perpetual multiplication of destructive social divisions is identified by the speaker to be a consequence of the reproduction of these conditions: the lack of equal access to rule generates parties that function as substitutes for participation; organized toward the realization of particular private goods specific to the part, these entities necessarily come into conflict with one another in their quest for each one’s private satisfaction; the defeat of one party stimulates further divisions within the victorious one, the latter constitutively lacking modes for the realization of the diversity of goods that necessarily characterize life in the city. As the speaker sums it up:

And if other cities are filled with these disorders, ours is stained with them more than any other; for the laws, the statutes, and the civil orders have always been and still are ordered not in accordance with free life but by the ambition of that party which has come out on top. Whence it arises that always when one party is driven out and one division eliminated, another emerges. For in the city that prefers to maintain itself with sects rather than with laws, as soon as one sect is left there without opposition, it must of necessity divide from within itself, because the city cannot defend itself by those private modes that it had ordered in the first place for its own safety.⁵³

Freedom and the Potential for Social Equality

S.M. Shumer correctly interprets Machiavellian freedom in terms of a “power-to-act-politically,” where “the liberty of each is the power to participate in a common activity.”⁵⁴ In the previous section I noted how perpetual mutations in the general organization of the Florentine state are mostly reducible to the fact that the will of the parts of the city desire to rule alone, hence militating against the establishment of such a condition. Within a so-called republic of this type⁵⁵, in which the public thing is not properly speaking public, that is to say, open to the active and equal participation of all, genuine freedom is impossible.⁵⁶ Such participation must be facilitated by access to empowered institutional outlets that are capable of venting desire, access that was sorely lacking in Florence after the defeat of the Ciompi, despite the formal multiplication of offices and magistrates. After the consolidation of the Albizzi-dominated oligarchy there emerged in Florence what John Najemy has called an ideology of consensus, which stressed the values of unity, harmony, and mutual implication in a shared civic world.⁵⁷ The perpetuation of elite rule in these circumstances was achieved through gaining the assent of non-elite major guild members, largely accomplished through the extension of political offices. Such a generalization of political access, however, was merely formal and symbolic, the offices lacking substantive authority. As Najemy writes, “Motivated by their fear of the working classes, non-elite major guildsmen accepted their inclusion among eligible officeholders, and an occasional office, as the reward for cooperation with the elite and a mark of recognition of their worth as good citizens.”⁵⁸ Such a stratagem was largely adopted by the post-oligarchy Medici as well, the latter similarly deploying an ideological image of consensus, and expanding networks of patronage to non-traditional elements in an effort to appear populist.⁵⁹

In the *Histories* Machiavelli is largely concerned with unmasking the mystifying language of social unity, and the degree to which it is deployed to neutralize genuinely democratic institutionalization. In narrating the events surrounding Manfred's deputy Count Giordano's subjugation of Florence and his abolition of its liberty, Machiavelli notes in passing the extent to which freedom is actualized through institutional forms, Giordano first of all eliminating the political offices that mediated free political self-activity in the city: "After the victory he went to Florence with the Ghibellines and brought that city to obedience entirely to Manfred by abolishing the magistrates and *every other order* through which *any form of its freedom* might appear. This injury, done with little prudence, was received universally with great hatred."⁶⁰ A more explicit identification of freedom with active self-government is articulated later in the *Histories*' same book. In his appeal to the duke of Athens for the latter to reconsider his plan to subjugate the city to the latter's sole will, a member of the Signori notes not only a natural desire on the part of citizens to live freely, but also the extent to which this desire is actualized through positive participation in civic life. The yearning for freedom is possible amongst those who have never experienced it precisely to the degree that the institutional forms through which it had been, and which it is necessarily expressed, continue to impose themselves on the political culture of the community:

That there is not enough time to consume the desires for freedom is most certain, for freedom, one knows, is often restored in a city by those who have never tasted it but who loved it only through the memories of it left to them by their fathers: and thus, once recovered, they preserve it with all obstinacy and at any peril. And even if their fathers had not recalled it to them, the public palaces, the places of the magistrates, the ensigns of the free orders recall it. These things must be recognized with the greatest desire by citizens.⁶¹

Unconvinced by the speaker's articulation of the content of freedom, Walter responds by repeating the classical republican definition of the latter, locating liberty not in popular self-activity but rather the stable reproduction of the community considered as a harmonious

organization of constituent parts, positing that “only disunited cities are enslaved and united ones free.”⁶²

Machiavelli’s ethical commitment to an ideal of inclusive rule is clearly revealed in his concrete proposals for state reform in Florence.⁶³ In the “Discourse on Florentine Affairs,” for example, he notes how each social part requires its own institutional outlet to the extent that each is seen as possessing the same intrinsic ambition in need of being externally vented, this latter human characteristic in fact constituting one of the few non-tedious elements of human nature.⁶⁴ Such a conception is entirely consistent with Machiavelli’s account of ambition in the *Discourses*, its specifically popular manifestation being most clearly revealed in the account of the conflict over the Agrarian law in 1.37.⁶⁵ The democratic innovation in Machiavelli’s Florentine writings is not to be located in the re-presentation of the form of relation between ambition, freedom, and political participation, but rather these texts’ more explicit concession regarding the potential for an establishment of a general social equality. The necessary condition for this to exist as a potential is precisely the contingency of the being of the parts and humors of the city. What was only marginally emphasized in his earlier writings – that the range of humoral division does not exhaust that between the people and the great, as noted in the recognition of a humor of the soldiers,⁶⁶ and that the classes associated with particular humors can be eliminated from the social field, as noted in the accounts of Clearchus of Heraclea⁶⁷, Agathocles the Sicilian⁶⁸, and the civil war in Corcyra⁶⁹ – assumes a far greater significance in the *Florentine Histories*.

Not only is the apparent universality of bipartite class analysis problematized, but the very deployment of the language of the former is historically contextualized. The historical form of class division is suggested as early as the preface to the *Histories*, where Machiavelli notes that the disunion between the plebs and the nobles emerged initially after the expulsion of the kings, at a determinate point that can be dated with precision. Speaking to the Florentine

situation after the weakening of both the Guelf and Ghibelline parties, Machiavelli affirms that at this time, as a result of the near elimination of these two entities, “Only those humors were still excited that are naturally wont to exist in all cities between the powerful and the people.”⁷⁰ Note, however, that Machiavelli does not claim that these two humors themselves exist by nature, but only that they naturally manifest in social conditions characterized by a specific division of the political community: that between the great and the people. The same circumstances apply in Machiavelli’s other affirmation in 3.1 of the “natural enmities that exist between the men of the people and the nobles,” the so-called naturalness of the humors presupposing the constituted existence of classes whose own naturalness cannot be taken for granted.⁷¹ The seemingly primary opposition of desire that apparently characterizes all societies in fact only characterizes those societies articulated on the basis of a particular conventional – as opposed to ontological – division of the political community. It is hence not insignificant that, as Fabio Raimondi has pointed out, in the *Florentine Histories* Machiavelli uses the term *popolo* in a plurality of ways, it referring at various times to all non-nobles, the middling-elements of the people, a part of the people exclusive of the plebs, and so on.⁷² Lacking a particular content that can be associated with a precise part of the city, the category signifies simply the existence of hierarchical division within it.

It is within the context of this recognition that we need to re-evaluate Machiavelli on the question of socio-economic equality, the parts of the city tending to be self-organized on the basis of a perception of shared class interest, even if the latter does not exhaust the range of these parts’ potential forms.⁷³ Scholars are increasingly cognizant of the extent to which Machiavelli was concerned with the problems that economic inequality poses to republican institutionalization.⁷⁴ Such problems are occulted by those readers who, usually focusing exclusively on the account of the social non-function of “gentlemen” in *Discourses* 1.55, reduce the Machiavellian critique of inequality to the rejection of specifically feudal modes of

property accumulation alone. Machiavelli is interpreted by them as a proto-liberal for whom a necessary element of freedom is the release of unbridled commercial activity and the entrenchment of expansive market relations.⁷⁵ Although certainly lamenting the degree to which the natural wealth of the land is wasted when disposed of by idle lords,⁷⁶ Machiavelli also notes the extent to which the production of disparities in the distribution of wealth – irrespective of the particular social relations structuring said distribution – has debilitating effects on social cohesion, the drive toward the private maximization of economic good being incompatible with the advancement of civic virtue.⁷⁷ Hence in the *Histories*, for example, Machiavelli identifies social corruption with a type of decadent and conspicuous consumption facilitated by economic inequality, an inequality more sharply revealed when the emergencies of war, which function to cover it up through the symbolic unification of the divided city against a common enemy, are lacking. He writes, “Hence arose those evils in the city that are customarily generated most often in peace, because the young men, more unrestrained than usual were spending beyond bounds on dress, banquets, and other similar abandonments.”⁷⁸ In response to the specific situation detailed by Machiavelli, “the good citizens thought it necessary to apply a brake, and with a new law they set a limit on clothing, burials, and banquets.”⁷⁹

It is within his 1508 “Report on the Affairs of Germany” that Machiavelli perhaps most explicitly identifies the degree to which the institution of a free way of life leans upon the establishment of a general condition of socio-economic equality. Here he explicitly links the freedom and equality enjoyed by the German people within the free cities. The political support of independent communities is given autonomously on the basis of the consideration of their own needs, Machiavelli writing that “his peoples, being freed and rich are not moved by need or by any affection, but serve him only by order of their community and for their price.”⁸⁰

Machiavelli goes on to elaborate on what exactly he means by richness in this context, the community's wealth being constituted by the poverty, that is to say equality, of its citizens:

And if I say that the people of Germany are rich, so it is the truth. And they are made rich in large part because they live as poor, for they do not build, nor dress, nor furnish their houses expensively, and it is enough that they abound with bread and meat, and have a stove wherein to take refuge from the cold. Those who do not have other things do without them, and do not seek for them....none take account of what they lack, but only of that of which they have need; and their needs are much less than ours. And because of these customs it results that money does not leave their country, they being content with that which their country produces, and in this they enjoy their rough and free life.⁸¹

As Machiavelli notes, however, the free cities are still home to some elites, and it is this which accounts for the antagonism of the Swiss, who have achieved a greater equality:

It perhaps seems a strange thing to say that the Swiss and the [German] communities are most hostile to one another, each of them straining toward the same goal, preserving liberty and guarding against princes; but their disunion emerges because the Swiss are not only enemies to the princes as are the communities, but are also enemies to the gentlemen, because in their country there is neither the one nor the other group, and everybody enjoys, without distinction between men – excepting those who sit in magistracies – a perfect freedom. This example of the Swiss scares the gentlemen that remain in the communities, and all their industry is toward keeping them disunited.⁸²

The combination of the normative lessons drawn from the two examples generates the Machiavellian political insight regarding the relationship between freedom and equality: the case of the German free cities reveals initially the interrelationship between the two categories, the case of the Swiss confirming a positive correspondence through the revelation that a more “perfect freedom” is achieved through the abolition of all residual social hierarchies (in this instance the elimination of the gentlemen), that is to say, the establishment of a more perfect equality.

What is at stake in the actualization of this equality is revealed through recognizing the extent to which Machiavelli's deployment of the term “gentlemen” extends the conceptual range of the latter category well-beyond that suggested by *Discourses* 1.55, that is to say, beyond a merely idle class of expropriating lords who accumulate via feudal or rentier modes of obligation. It is within the Florentine writings, specifically the “Discourse on Florentine

Affairs,” that this is revealed most clearly. Once again maintaining that republican life is impossible in a political community which tolerates the existence of gentlemen, Machiavelli now uses this term synonymously with that of the nobility. Hence if one wishes to order a republic in a city with inequality, “it would be necessary to eliminate *all the nobility*, and reduce it to an equality with the others; for between them they act so extraordinarily that the laws are not enough to restrain them, but you need a living voice and a royal power to restrain them.”⁸³

The affirmation of the contingency of the noble part of the city is not new. Machiavelli already in *The Prince* specified that its unity is not a reflection of an ontological division within the social field, but rather the will of the instituting political actor – the prince – who can “make and unmake them every day.”⁸⁴ Alfredo Bonadeo historically contextualizes Machiavelli’s vocabulary here, noting that the latter was writing in a social environment in which the term *grande* was used synonymously with terms such *nobile*, *gentiluomo*, and *potente*, by the end of the 13th century the category of noble having been extended so as to not exclusively refer to a social status grounded in heredity.⁸⁵ Rather, the rise of wealthy members of the *popolo* through commerce permitted them to acquire a power and status previously reserved for members of the feudal nobility. As a consequence of these shifting social dynamics they acquired standing as members of the *grandi*. Hence Bonadeo observes that “‘gentiluomini,’ ‘nobili,’ ‘signori,’ ‘ottimati,’ ‘potenti,’ ‘ricchi,’ ‘principali,’ ‘grandi,’ and similar terms appear with the same meaning. All designate people who may be noble, either by extraction or by acquisition, or may not be noble; but they are wealthy and either have political power or are seeking it as socially prominent citizens.”⁸⁶ Machiavelli hence uses the term *grandi*, as Yves Winter has also recently noted, to refer “to anyone who benefits from economic and political privilege, whether that privilege is based on birth, wealth, power, or prominence.”⁸⁷

To the extent that the *grandi* are generally unified through consolidation around the perception of shared class interest, however it is uniquely articulated in the concrete-specific

case – that is to say, however social relations of production and consumption structure the unequal distribution of society’s social product – the establishment of socio-economic equality necessitates the abolition of this social part and its correspondent humour. As Machiavelli maintains in *Florentine Histories* 4.2, the elimination of a humor is a practical possibility, although such an elimination depends in the first instance on the eradication of that class which is the subject of the humor.⁸⁸ The significance of this text lies in its suggestion of the possibility of such an operation: not in its reproduction of the class analysis of the *Discourses*, but rather in its rejection of the latter’s apparent universalism. It demonstrates the mutability and historicity of all humors, the fact that there is no originary division of the social that inheres in every civic context. It is precisely this observation that reveals the potential for the instauration of an egalitarian mode of society beyond hierarchical class division, in which one part of the community monopolizes political authority for itself.

In the final instance the *Discourses on Livy* and the *Florentine Histories* must be interpreted, from the standpoint of a Machiavellian theory of democracy, as two complementary parts that each speak to a lack in the other. The historical narratives in each text refer us to the other’s democratic deficits. Neither Rome nor Florence should be taken by democratic theorists as ideal models to be uncritically emulated and reproduced, their political potential for us being delimited and constrained by the particularities of their circumstances. That said, although the works do emphasize differing elements of democratic life, these emphases are not mutually incompatible, thereby necessitating our thinking the form of relation between them in terms of break or transition. The complete revelation of a Machiavellian form of democratic life as a normative political goal is only achieved through a combination of the various lessons contained within these works. On the one hand, in the *Discourses* Machiavelli highlights the fact that democratic life requires universal access to political modes and orders that are capable of productively channelling or venting human ambition. This possibility was

closed off in the Florence of the *Florentine Histories* as a result of the lack of stable institutional orders respected by and open to all citizens. On the other hand, in the Florentine writings Machiavelli highlights the fact that the historicity of the being of the humors of the parts potentially allows for the dissolution of the seemingly natural and originary division of the social field, and hence the concrete actualization of a general social equality. This possibility was closed off in the republican Rome of the *Discourses* as a result of the continued existence of the *grandi* as a separate social class.⁸⁹ The synthesis of these two accounts, never undertaken systematically by Machiavelli himself, generates a more complete and internally coherent democratic model.

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¹ Hence, for example, Arlene Saxonhouse’s critique of John McCormick’s ideal of Machiavellian democracy for not going far enough in thinking the isonomic potential for equality, to the degree that the latter essentializes class division: “If anything, McCormick is looking for an equality of the experience of oppression for members of the *popolo*, not an equality of ownership as one finds in the Athenian model.” Arlene W. Saxonhouse, “Do We Need the Vote? Reflections on John McCormick’s *Machiavellian Democracy*,” *The Good Society* 20, no. 2 (2011): 179. See also Lawrence Hamilton, *Freedom Is Power: Liberty through Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 62.

² For a selection of the some of the most well-known neo-Roman republican readings of Machiavelli see Quentin Skinner, “The Idea of Negative Liberty: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives,” in *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, ed. Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 193–222; Quentin Skinner, “The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 293–309; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Quentin Skinner, “Machiavelli on *Virtù* and the Maintenance of Liberty,” in *Visions of Politics, Volume Two: Renaissance Visions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160–85. For critiques of those republican readings that interpret popular desire merely in terms of the passive appeal to not be ruled or oppressed, as opposed to an active will for political self-expression, see John P. McCormick, “Machiavelli Against Republicanism: On the Cambridge School’s ‘Guicciardinian Moments,’” *Political Theory* 31, no. 5 (2003): 615–43; J.G.A. Pocock, “Machiavelli and Rome: The Republic as Ideal and as History,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 155; Nadia Urbinati, “Competing for Liberty: The Republican Critique of Democracy,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 3 (2012): 607–21; John P. McCormick, *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements, and the Virtues of Populist Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 176–206.

³ See, for example, Barbara J. Godorecci, *After Machiavelli: “Re-Writing” and the “Hermeneutic Attitude”* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993), 143–44; Eric Weil, “Machiavel aujourd’hui,” in *Essais et conférences, Tome 2: Politique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1991), 189–217; Carlos Frade, “An Altogether New Prince Five Centuries On: Bringing Machiavelli to Bear on Our Present,” *Situations* 5, no. 1 (2013): 35–60; Christopher Holman, “Machiavelli’s Constellative Use of History,” *Theory & Event* 19, no. 2 (2016); Ronald Schmidt, Jr., *Reading Politics with Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴ For a selection of significant readings that might be seen to constitute important moments of the recent democratic turn within Machiavelli studies, although differing greatly on the question of the form and/or content of democracy itself, see Miguel Vatter, *Between Form and Event: Machiavelli’s Theory of Political Freedom* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000); Filippo Del Lucchese, *Conflict, Power, and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza* (London: Continuum, 2009); John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Miguel Vatter, *Machiavelli’s The Prince* (London:

Bloomsbury, 2013); Filippo Del Lucchese, *The Political Philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Yves Winter, *Machiavelli and the Orders of Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); McCormick, *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements, and the Virtues of Populist Politics*.

⁵ John P. McCormick, "Faulty Foundings and Failed Reformers in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories," *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 1 (2017): 204.

⁶ McCormick, *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements, and the Virtues of Populist Politics*, 69.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), chap. 9.

⁹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1.5.

¹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Laura F. Banfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3.1.

¹² McCormick, *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements, and the Virtues of Populist Politics*, 69. Many readers in fact distinguish between the differing modes of conflict expression portrayed in Machiavelli's work, the productive form institutionally channelling conflict through public modes, the destructive form immediately and privately expressing conflict independently of civic order, thus exasperating faction and calumny. See, for example, Neal Wood, "The Value of Asocial Sociability: Contributions of Machiavelli, Sidney, and Montesquieu," *Bucknell Review* 16, no. 3 (1966): 1–22; Alfredo Bonadeo, *Corruption, Conflict, and Power in the Works and Times of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 62–65; Nicolai Rubinstein, "Machiavelli and the World of Florentine Politics," in *Studies on Machiavelli*, ed. Myron P. Gilmore (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1979), 3–28; Gisela Bock, "Civil Discord in Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 181–201; Marco Geuna, "Machiavelli ed il ruolo dei conflitti nella vita politica," in *Conflitti*, ed. Alessandro Arienzo and Dario Caruso (Napoli: Libreria Dante & Descartes, 2005), 19–57; Anna Maria Cabrini, "Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 43; Mark

Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 53; Fabio Raimondi, *Constituting Freedom: Machiavelli and Florence*, trans. Matthew Armistead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 32–53.

¹³ McCormick, *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements, and the Virtues of Populist Politics*, 100.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶ McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, 29, 44–45. It is true that McCormick is someone ambivalent on this point, and later in the text speaks of “the less than *exclusively reactive* quality of the tribunes and the people.” McCormick, 94. Emphasis added. Even here, however, the people’s transcendence of a “merely passive and reactive” mode is still seen as demanded by the need to “contain and control” insolent elites. Ibid., 204 n11.

¹⁷ Ibid., 31.

¹⁸ Claude Lefort, *Machiavelli in the Making*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 265, 139. See also Vatter, *Between Form and Event: Machiavelli’s Theory of Political Freedom*, 225–26; Geuna, “Machiavelli ed il ruolo dei conflitti nella vita politica,” 1.3; Miguel Abensour, “Machiavel: le grand penseur du désordre,” *Le monde*, April 11, 2006. On the extent to which the Lefortian affirmation of an originary division of the social is subject to Marxian critique affirming the social and historical nature of desire, see Farhang Erfani, “Fixing Marx with Machiavelli: Claude Lefort’s Democratic Turn,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 39, no. 2 (2008): 209.

¹⁹ Claude Lefort, “Machiavelli and the *Verità Effettuale*,” in *Writing: The Political Test*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 135. See also Abensour, “Machiavel: le grand penseur du désordre.”

²⁰ Anthony J. Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 105.

²¹ Anthony Parel, “Machiavelli’s Use of *Umori* in The Prince,” *Quaderni d’Italianistica* 11, no. 1 (1990): 93.

²² For a short, yet representative such account, see William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 17.

²³ Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 53. See especially Marie Gaille-Nikodimov, *Conflit civil et liberté: La politique Machiavélique entre histoire et médecine* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004).

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- ²⁴ Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 158; Salvatore di Maria, “Machiavelli’s Ironic View of History: The *Istorie Fiorentine*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1992): 251–52; Lefort, *Machiavelli in the Making*, 224; Christopher Holman, *Machiavelli and the Politics of Democratic Innovation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 221–23; Vittorio Morfino, *The Spinoza-Machiavelli Encounter: Time and Occasion*, trans. Dave Mesing (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 189–90; Miguel Vatter, “Of Asses and Nymphs: Machiavelli, Platonic Theology and Epicureanism,” *Intellectual History Review* 29, no. 1 (2019): 114.
- ²⁵ Daniel J. Kapust, “Acting the Princely Style: Ethos and Pathos in Cicero’s *On the Ideal Orator* and Machiavelli’s *Prince*,” *Political Studies* 58, no. 3 (2010): 590–608; Tania Rispoli, “Imitation and Animality: On the Relationship between Nature and History in Chapter XVIII of The Prince,” in *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy, and Language*, ed. Filippo Del Lucchese, Fabio Frosini, and Vittorio Morfino (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 190–203; Christina Christoforatu, “Ontologies of Power in the Sovereign Politics of Pindar and Machiavelli,” *Italian Culture* 33, no. 2 (2015): 88–89, 99.
- ²⁶ Etienne Balibar, “*Essere Principe, Essere Popolare*: The Principle of Antagonism in Machiavelli’s Epistemology,” in *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy, and Language*, ed. Filippo Del Lucchese, Fabio Frosini, and Vittorio Morfino (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 354.
- ²⁷ For an account of the indissociability of the political and the economic in Machiavelli’s thought see Filippo Del Lucchese, “Freedom, Equality and Conflict: Rousseau on Machiavelli,” *History of Political Thought* 35, no. 1 (2014): 29–49.
- ²⁸ One of the few readers to notice that social division within Machiavelli’s thought refers us not to human psychology but rather to the specific articulation of class relations within society is Kent Brudney. Kent M. Brudney, “Machiavelli on Social Class and Class Conflict,” *Political Theory* 12, no. 4 (1984): 507–19. I do not share his contention, however, that Machiavelli considered class conflict – regardless of its specific social-historical form – to have “timeless characteristics.” *Ibid.*, 513.
- ²⁹ For example, Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 2.10. Emphasis added. Translation altered.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.16.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.27.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 2.16.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 2.17.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.21.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.21.

³⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, “Minuta di provvisione per la riforma dello stato di Firenze,” in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971), 20.

³⁷ See, for example, Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 3.46. On this point see also R. Claire Snyder, “Machiavelli and the Citizenship of Civic Practices,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Niccolò Machiavelli*, ed. Maria J. Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 236; Del Lucchese, *Conflict, Power, and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza*, 141–45; Nicole Hochner, “Machiavelli: Love and the Economy of the Emotions,” *Italian Culture* 32, no. 2 (2014): 127–30. Sebastián Torres notes the degree to which the image of the body politic as a field for the intersection of the multiplicity of desire is already anticipated in chapter 9 of *The Prince*. Sebastián Torres, “Tempo e politica: Una lettura materialista di Machiavelli,” in *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy, and Language*, ed. Filippo Del Lucchese, Fabio Frosini, and Vittorio Morfino (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 178.

³⁸ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 7.1.

³⁹ Ibid., 7.2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.12. Emphasis added.

⁴¹ For some notable recent such contributions from the past few years see Robert Black, *Machiavelli* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Mark Jurdjevic, *A Great & Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Kiran Banerjee and Mauricio Suchowlansky, “Citizens, Subjects or Tyrants? Relocating the People in Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment*,” *History of European Ideas* 43, no. 2 (2017): 184–97. According to Sungho Kimlee, this interpretation is incorrect to the degree that Machiavelli was *never* a populist, his entire political oeuvre being marked by a critical orientation toward the *plebe*. Sungho Kimlee, “The *Plebe* in the *Florentine Histories*: Machiavelli's Notion of Humours Revisted,” *History of European Ideas* 44, no. 5 (2018): 493–512.

⁴² Niccolò Machiavelli, “De rebus pistoriensibus,” in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971), 7.

⁴³ Morfino, *The Spinoza-Machiavelli Encounter: Time and Occasion*, 45. It is for this reason that a variety of readers emphasize the extent to which Machiavelli refuses to posit a substantive conception of abstract human nature, thinking instead the historical openness of human being. See, for, example Vatter, *Between Form and Event: Machiavelli's Theory of Political Freedom*, 182; Jane S. Jacquette, “Rethinking Machiavelli: Feminism and Citizenship,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Machiavelli*, ed. Maria J. Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania

State University Press, 2004), 339–40; Joseph V. Femia, *Machiavelli Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 83; Gopal Balakrishnan, “Future Unknown: Machiavelli for the Twenty-First Century,” *New Left Review* 32 (April 2005): 11; Diego A. von Vacano, *The Art of Power: Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and the Making of Aesthetic Political Theory* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 63; Vatter, *Machiavelli’s The Prince*, 109; Yves Winter, “Necessity and Fortune: Machiavelli’s Politics of Nature,” in *Second Nature: Rethinking the Natural through Politics*, ed. Crina Archer, Laura Ephraim, and Lida Maxwell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 26–45; Christopher Holman, “Machiavelli’s Philosophical Anthropology,” *The European Legacy* 21, no. 8 (2016): 769–90; Vatter, “Of Asses and Nymphs: Machiavelli, Platonic Theology and Epicureanism,” 113; Morfino, *The Spinoza-Machiavelli Encounter: Time and Occasion*, 45.

⁴⁴ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 6.20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.32.

⁴⁶ On the fact that the people and the *grandi* possess the same essential nature see, for example, Dante Germino, “Machiavelli’s Political Anthropology,” in *Theorie und politik: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag für Carl Joachim Friedrich*, ed. Klaus von Beyme (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 37; J. Patrick Coby, *Machiavelli’s Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the Discourses* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999), 608; Filippo Del Lucchese, “Machiavellian Democracy,” *Historical Materialism* 20, no. 1 (2012): 239; Jurdjevic, *A Great & Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli’s Florentine Political Thought*, 78; Catherine Zuckert, “Machiavelli and the End of Nobility in Politics,” *Social Research* 81, no. 1 (2014): 90; Catherine Heidt Zuckert, “Machiavelli’s Revolution in Thought,” in *Machiavelli’s Legacy: The Prince after Five Hundred Years* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2016), 58; Catherine H. Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 67; Raimondi, *Constituting Freedom: Machiavelli and Florence*, 46.

⁴⁷ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 3.1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.5.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ S.M. Shumer, “Machiavelli: Republican Politics and Its Corruption,” *Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (1979): 14.

Erica Benner similarly relates freedom with political self-activity [Erica Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 231], however notably does not see the actualization of this condition as implying a correlative affirmation of political equality, reading Machiavelli as advocating “the need for a clear division of political labor between the few who exercise authority and the many who obey.” *Ibid.*, 270.

⁵⁵ Nicolai Rubinstein speculates that Machiavelli never considered Florence to be a proper republic, to the degree that his narration reveals the extent to which its history, in spite of formal republican institutionalization at certain instances, is dominated by the rule of oligarchic elements. Nicolai Rubenstein, “Machiavelli and Florentine Republican Experience,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3–16. John Najemy identifies this exclusion as the source of Machiavelli’s dissatisfaction with Florence: “Despite the façade of frequent consultation, large legislative assemblies, and more office holders than ever before in the republic’s history, the ‘people,’ Machiavelli insisted, were denied their proper role in government.” John M. Najemy, “Baron’s Machiavelli and Renaissance Republicanism,” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996): 126.

⁵⁶ On Machiavelli’s distinction between freedom and license see Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 4.1.

⁵⁷ John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence: 1200-1575* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2008), 182.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 250, 269.

⁶⁰ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 2.7. Emphasis added.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.34.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.35.

⁶³ Stressing the extent to which both of Machiavelli’s proposals for state reform in Florence, the “Discursus” and the “Minuta,” emphasize the extent to which a free republic must produce points of access to political office for the generality of citizens, Fabio Raimondi correctly understands Machiavellian freedom to be irreducible to the reactive desire to merely avoid domination. Freedom for Machiavelli is also productive, active, and institutionally participatory. Fabio Raimondi, *Constituting Freedom: Machiavelli and Florence*, trans. Matthew Armistead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 128.

⁶⁴ Niccolò Machiavelli, “Discursus florentinarum rerum post mortem iunioris Laurentii Medices,” in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971), 27–29. On ambition as a fundamental human trait and a primary stimulant to political activity see Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading of Political Theory* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988), 77; Giorgio Cadoni, *Crisi della mediazione politica e*

conflitti sociali: Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini e Donato Giannotti di fronte al tramonto della fiorentina libertas (Roma: Jouvence, 1994), 37; Luca Sartorello, “L’urna senza fondo machiavelliana e l’origine’ della politica,” in *Machiavelli: immaginazione e contingenza*, ed. Filippo Del Lucchese, Luca Sartorello, and Stefano Visentin (Pisa: Edizioni Ets, 2006), 210; Haig Patapan, *Machiavelli in Love: The Modern Politics of Love and Fear* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 52–54; Winter, “Necessity and Fortune: Machiavelli’s Politics of Nature”; Christopher Holman, “Machiavelli and the Concept of Political Sublimation,” *Italian Culture* 35, no. 1 (2017): 1–20.

⁶⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.37. On the extent to which this chapter articulates Machiavelli’s conception of popular ambition in terms of the desire for active participation in political life see Sartorello, “L’urna senza fondo machiavelliana e l’origine’ della politica,” 208; Cadoni, *crisi della mediazione politica e conflitti sociali: Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini e Donato Giannotti di fronte al tramonto della fiorentina libertas*, 35.

⁶⁶ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 9.

⁶⁷ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 1.16.

⁶⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 8.

⁶⁹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 2.2.

⁷⁰ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 2.12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 3.1.

⁷² Raimondi, *Constituting Freedom: Machiavelli and Florence*, 59.

⁷³ Tejas Parasher comes closer than most to recognizing the degree to which the particular orientations of the humors is structurally grounded in the unequal distribution of wealth: “The concentration of wealth among a few individuals is what consolidates differences between the humors and leads to oppression and *tumulti*.” Tejas Parasher, “Inequality and *Tumulti* in Machiavelli’s Aristocratic Republics,” *Polity* 49, no. 1 (2017): 55.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Alfredo Bonadeo, *Corruption, Conflict, and Power in the Works and Times of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77–78; John P. McCormick, “Machiavelli and the Gracchi: Prudence, Violence, and Retribution,” *Global Crime* 10, no. 4 (2009): 298–305; John P. McCormick, “‘Keep the Public Rich, but the Citizens Poor’: Economic and Political Inequality in Constitutions, Ancient and Modern,” *Cardozo Law Review* 34, no. 3 (2013): 879–92; Julie L. Rose, “‘Keep the Citizens Poor’:

Machiavelli's Prescription for Republican Poverty," *Political Studies* 64, no. 3 (2016): 734–47; Amanda Maher, "What Skinner Misses about Machiavelli's Freedom: Inequality, Corruption, and the Institutional Origins of Civic Virtue," *Journal of Politics* 78, no. 4 (2016): 1003–15; Benedetto Fontana, "Machiavelli and the Gracchi: Republican Liberty and Conflict," in *Machiavelli on Liberty & Conflict*, ed. David Johnston, Nadia Urbinati, and Camila Vergara (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 235–56; John P. McCormick, *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements, and the Virtues of Populist Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 45–68.

⁷⁵ Lionel A. McKenzie, "Rousseau's Debate with Machiavelli in the *Social Contract*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43, no. 2 (1982): 209–28; Robert Kocis, *Machiavelli Redeemed: Retrieving His Humanist Perspectives on Equality, Power, and Glory* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998), 17, 45; Jo Ann Cavallo, "On Political Power and Personal Liberty in *The Prince* and *The Discourses*," *Social Research* 81, no. 1 (2014): 107–32; Brandon Turner, "Private Vices, Public Benefits: *Mandragola* in Machiavelli's Political Theory," *Polity* 48, no. 1 (2016): 132. For readings of Machiavelli stressing what are seen as his liberal or proto-liberal credentials see Clifford Orwin, "Machiavelli's Unchristian Charity," *American Political Science Review* 72, no. 4 (1978): 1217–28; Eugene Garver, "After *Virtù*: Rhetoric, Prudence, and Moral Pluralism in Machiavelli," *History of Political Thought* 27, no. 2 (1996): 195–223; Philippe Van Parijs, *Just Democracy: The Rawls-Machiavelli Programme* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2011); Dragica Vujadinovic, "Machiavelli's Republican Political Theory," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40, no. 1 (2014): 43–68.

⁷⁶ See especially Niccolò Machiavelli, "Ritratto di cose Francia," in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971), 57.

⁷⁷ Such is noted in Hans Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought, Volume 1* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 255–56.

⁷⁸ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 7.28. Machiavelli's critique of such forms of consumption is repeated in several places elsewhere. See, for example, his account of the meeting of Castruccio Castracani and Taddeo Bernardi in Niccolò Machiavelli, "La vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca," in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971), 627. On Machiavelli's critique of luxury and decadence see Daniel Waley, "The Primitivist Element in Machiavelli's Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31, no. 1 (1970): 91–98.

⁷⁹ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 7.28.

⁸⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, “Rapporto delle cose della Magna fatto questo di 17 giugna 1508,” in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971), 65.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 66.

⁸³ Machiavelli, “Discursus florentinarum rerum post mortem iunioris Laurentii Medices,” 27. Emphasis added.

⁸⁴ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 9.

⁸⁵ Alfredo Bonadeo, “The Role of the ‘*Grandi*’ in the Political World of Machiavelli,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 16 (1969): 10.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 11–12.

⁸⁷ Winter, *Machiavelli and the Orders of Violence*, 18.

⁸⁸ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 4.2.

⁸⁹ Filippo Del Lucchese is one of the few commentators to note that such a perpetuation of inequality in the Roman context remained a barrier to the institution of genuine democratic life. Filippo Del Lucchese, “La città divisa: Esperiezza del conflitto e novità politica in Machiavelli,” in *Machiavelli: Immaginazione e contingenza*, ed. Filippo Del Lucchese, Luca Sartorello, and Stefano Visentin (Pisa: Edizioni Ets, 2006), 23–24.