

participation and ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are heard can contribute to a more just and inclusive society, reflective of Plato's idea of a harmonious, well-ordered state.

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-517-4-18>

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY OF NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

ПОЛІТИЧНА ДУМКА ТА ФІЛОСОФІЯ НІККОЛО МАКІАВЕЛЛІ

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Introduction

Political and philosophical thought have a long and rich history, dating back to ancient China, India, and even Mesopotamia. Each political-philosophical period was characterized by certain values and characteristics. In short, we divide the philosophical period into three historical periods – antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern era.

This article deals with the Renaissance era. The core of the article is an analysis of the political thinking of a significant and key philosopher from the Renaissance political period – Niccolo Machiavelli. Renaissance thinking was unique and represented progress compared to the previous period. It brought many pragmatic attitudes and ideas.

The article aims to fulfill two main goals. The first is to clarify the political-philosophical thinking of Niccolò Machiavelli. The second is to briefly characterize Machiavelli's most famous works.

The article is divided into several chapters. From a chronological point of view, it will be the following parts: Introduction, literature review, Niccolo Machiavelli – life and views on the state and society, brief characteristics of his work, discussion and conclusion.

Literature review

Several relevant authors within the professional literature address this topic. Howard, in his book *"The Primacy of the Political"*, connects Machiavelli with the values of political realism [6]. In his book *"A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century,"* Allen describes Machiavelli's life and his views on several areas of social life [2]. Among other important topics within Italian political thought, Rubinstein brings several facts related to the political thought and works of Niccolo Machiavelli [16]. In a monograph that captures political and philosophical thought from ancient Greece to the present, Ryan analyzes the life of Niccolo Machiavelli from a political context [13]. Ball, in a scholarly work from Oxford University Press, analyzes Machiavelli's philosophy and points to a shift in morality or moral change within his political thought [3].

Niccolo Machiavelli – life and views on state and society

Machiavelli came from a family of Florentine notaries. His father was a friend of the Florentine humanists, which ensured Niccolo access to humanist circles and a good education. Niccolo was friends with several important figures, such as Michelangelo and Da Vinci. Machiavelli's greatest idol was Duke Cesare Borgia, with whom he had long conversations. Based on this, he came to the conclusion that politics cannot be conducted on the basis of moral principles [17]. Cesare Borgia also became the main character of his most famous work, *The Prince* [10].

Machiavelli worked in the Florentine city-state, and his work is associated with it. On the political level, he held the position of secretary of

the ruling Council of Ten. He subsequently worked as a diplomat and traveled the world as part of his profession [7]. He finished his studies at the age of thirty and worked in politics as Secretary of the Government of the Florentine Republic. His position brought him significant political experience, which he later put to good use [11]. In examining society, he discovers that the spring of people's actions are their interests and desires, e.g. the interest in acquiring and protecting property. Machiavelli was aware that his homeland was on the verge of decline. He drew hope for a better future for Florence mainly from the study of ancient authors, e.g. Aristotle [4].

From a philosophical point of view, Machiavelli believed that man could not be judged according to the standards of Christian morality, but should be considered as a rational being endowed with energy, will and strength. However, in his opinion, people are usually unable to consistently direct their actions. For this reason, it is necessary for a state to be established that will regulate people's behavior. In addition to the theory of the state, he also compared the Venetian and Florentine constitutions. He positively evaluated the institutions in the Venetian constitution that fought against tyranny and criticized the institutions that limited the republican form of government. He associated greater stability and longer duration with a mixed form of government, in which the prince, the aristocracy and the people would have a certain share in the government. The legislative power was to be administered by the middle class [1].

Brief description of the work

In his work and political thinking, he drew from several sources. The first was history, the second was personal experience gained as an active politician. The third source was the observation of domestic, but especially foreign, politics. Machiavelli had a positive attitude towards religion. He appreciated that it strengthens civic virtues in society and argued that the power of religion must be supplemented by the power of the state. Nevertheless, he blamed the Catholic Church for the causes of political separatism and the moral decline of Italy. He divided all political systems into two groups – republic and autocracy. He tended towards a republic with a mixed form of government, combining elements of monarchy, aristocracy and popular rule. The basis of the preferred system – a republic – must be respected by all laws and it better guarantees the stability of the system or ensures general freedom [10].

His works, or rather his books, were included in the list of prohibited works, and this instruction was issued by the Catholic Church itself. As already mentioned, he advocated the separation of politics and ethics, arguing that actions and deeds are never right or wrong and must be judged in the context of their final results. Although he favored a republican constitution, he also recognized the need for autocracy when law and public

spirit were not functional. He also argued that private and public morality must not be combined or merged [14].

In the book, *The Prince* presents an outline of a political theory that considers the preservation of the state and the increase of its power to be the only and most important goal. [15] However, the book is not addressed only to the ruling prince and primarily deals with principalities. Machiavelli describes them as possessions that princes can acquire. [5] The second work, the so-called *Discourses*, is about the qualities that citizens of a republican city must have. In this work, he develops his argument in favor of a republic. Only this form of government best preserves the freedom of the individual and the city also benefits from it. [8] In addition to these works, he also wrote *The Art of War* and *The History of Florence* [12].

Discussion and conclusion

The analyzed philosophical period of the Renaissance of the 15th century would be appropriate to define as an era in which the approach to the world began to change more and more within society. In the Renaissance, man becomes the starting point with a significant emphasis on individualism. The Renaissance also represented a revival of ancient philosophy. It was also a connecting element between medieval and modern philosophy. It emphasized political, economic and social changes. On a practical level, these thinkers (Machiavelli and others) were mainly concerned with the issues of the nature of the state, state power, international relations or the denationalization of state social life [4].

Machiavelli brought to the history of political thought a number of new perspectives and approaches, on the basis of which he earned the definition of "*a significant phenomenon of the time*". His teachings are still considered to be ideas that have never been evaluated positively. They have even been the subject of endless discussions and polemics. It was the founder of this teaching that went down in history as the villain of world statesmanship. [9] From the point of view of political thought and philosophy, his teachings significantly influenced the further development of political theory and statesmanship in Italy and other countries [1].

The aim of this article was to bring an analysis of a significant representative of Renaissance political thought – Niccolò Machiavelli. In the article, we characterized his life, as well as the political views that he promoted through his famous work.

In contemporary society, morality and politics are a big topic, and in many ways it turns out that Niccolò had the right views when it came to separating morality and politics. Contemporary world politicians often do not have to act illegally, but they often act immorally and on the edge of ethical principles. What are the ideas that Niccolò expressed in his works.

With his worldviews, he ranked among the very controversial personalities from the world of political thought or philosophy. Machiavelli's philosophy is based on pragmatic elements with elements of realism. Compared to his predecessors, there was a significant difference in looking at the world and especially politics.

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