

Moral Reasoning 74:
The Theory and Practice
of Republican Government

Lecture 04:
Machiavellian Republicanism I

Professor Daniel Carpenter
Harvard University

Announcements

Sections Start This Week

Office Hours Tomorrow: 3-5PM, Knafel

Paper Questions Posted Later Today. Due
Monday, February 23rd, 8PM. ["Stamp" is
electronic; 8:31:00 or later counts as late;]

Writing Demands I

1. Clear Argumentation

- Argument on paper's first page.
- Argument should be summarized (or able to be summarized) in one sentence.

2. Clear organization: ("Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em, tell 'em, then tell 'em what you told 'em.")

- Papers should have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Paragraph is the basic building-block of the paper.

Writing Demands II

3. Proper Grammar and Spelling

- Use spell-check
- Grammar: Strunk & White: *Elements of Style*.
- Use grammar-check
- Have a friend (even someone else in class) read your paper.

4. Counterarguments

- Essential to good argumentation
- Actively consider (and briefly refute) arguments against your position

Echo from Last Lecture – Polybius: Republic is superior & equilibrated

Polybius *Histories* III, Book VI, Section 18, sentence 8: “All in fact remains in statu quo, on the one hand, because any aggressive impulse is sure to be checked and from the outset each estate stands in dread of being interfered with by others....”

Machiavelli – Major Themes

- I. The Idea of a Republic
- II. The Optimality of the Mixed Regime

Thursday:

III. VIRTU

IV. RELIGION

Conclude Thurs with other features and notes

Machiavelli's Concept of a Republic

3 modes, each with good & bad instantiations:

Principality v. tyranny

Aristocracy v. oligarchy

Popular rule v. license/corruption

Why Popular Government at All?

D I, 58: The Multitude are Wiser and More Constant than the Prince.

- (1) Power of numbers and the ability for discourse to enter into judgment;
- (2) popular government is at a greater remove from most actions. "there is no one who can speak to wicked prince."
- (3) "Incentives" differ: the people oppress those who will threaten the common good; the prince oppresses those who threaten *his* good.

The Mixed Regime

D I, 2 [13]: I say thus that all the said modes [principality, aristocracy, popular rule] are pestiferous because of the brevity of life in the three good ones and because of the malignity in the three bad. So those who prudently order laws having recognized this defect, avoiding each of these modes by itself, chose one that shared in all, judging it firmer and more stable; for the one guards the other, since in one and the same city there are the principality, the aristocrats, and the popular government."

The Mixed Regime

Fortune was so favorable to it that although it passed from the government of kings and of aristocrats to that of the people, by the same degrees and for the same causes that have been discoursed of above, nonetheless it never took away all authority from kingly qualities so as to give authority to the aristocrats, nor did it diminish the authority of the aristocrats altogether so as to give it to the people. But, remaining mixed, it made a perfect republic, to which perfection it came through the disunion of the plebs and the Senate....”

Value of Embedded Conflict

“I say that to me it appears that those who damn the tumults between the nobles and the plebs blame those things that were the first cause of keeping Rome free....in every republic there are diverse humors, that of the people and that of the great, and that all laws that are made in favor of freedom arise from their disunion, as can easily be seen to have occurred in Rome. From from the Tarquins to the Gracchi, which was more than three hundred years, the tumults of Rome rarely engendered exile and very rarely blood.

Value of Embedded Conflict

D I, 6, 4 [23]: “...I believe that it is necessary to follow the Roman order and not that of the other republics – for I do not believe that one can find a mode between the one and the other – and to tolerate the enmities that arise between the people and the Senate, taking them as an inconvenience necessary to arrive at Roman greatness.”

Importance of Emergency Powers

D I, 34.3: "In a republic, one would not wish anything ever to happen that has to be governed with extraordinary modes. For if the extraordinary mode may do good then, nonetheless the example does ill; for if one sets up a habit of breaking the orders for the sake of good, then later, under that coloring, they are broken for ill. So a republic will never be perfect unless it has provided for everything with its laws and has established a remedy for every accident and given the mode to govern it."

Emergency Powers

Machiavelli: constrain emergency powers by time and by popular authority.

D I, 34.2: "One sees that while the dictator was appointed according to public orders, and not by his own authority, he always did good to the city. For magistrates that are made and authorities that are given through extraordinary ways, not those that come through ordinary ways, hurt republics..."

"in Rome...no dictator ever did anything but good to the republic."

So embedding contingency allows for popular restraint of executive authority necessary in contingency.
