



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO
DIPARTIMENTO DI
SCIENZE SOCIALI E POLITICHE



workshop

RESPONSIBLE POLITICS AND DIRTY HANDS

MACHIAVELLIAN INSIGHTS

November 28TH, 2013

h. 9.30 - 18.00

SEMINAR ROOM

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL, LEGAL, HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES -DILHPS
Faculty of Political, Economic and Social Sciences
via Conservatorio 7, Milano

PROGRAM

MORNING SESSION **To do wrong in order to do right: the Machiavellian dilemma**

9.30 - 12.30 Chair **Antonella Besussi** *Università degli Studi di Milano*

Learning 'how not to be good': Machiavelli and the Problem of 'Dirty Hands'

Joseph Femia *University of Liverpool*

Corruption, virtue and Republic in Machiavelli

Thierry Menissier *Université de Grenoble-Alpes, France*

Discussants **Martine Leibovici** *Université Paris Diderot-Paris VII*

Alessandro Arienzo *Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II"*

AFTERNOON SESSION **Learning how not to be good: reasons, consequences**

14.30 - 16.30 Chair **Angelo Panebianco** *Università di Bologna*

Re-examining 'democratic dirty hands'– accountability and the transference of moral pollution'

Stephen De Wjize *University of Manchester*

16.30 - 16.45 *Coffee Break*

16.45 - 18.00 **Machiavelli on Good and Evil. The Problem of Dirty Hands revisited**

Giovanni Giorgini *Università di Bologna, University of Chicago*

Discussants **Beatrice Magni** *Università degli Studi di Milano*

Luca Mori *Università di Pisa*

Outline and Purposes of the Workshop

Machiavelli's Prince is five hundred years old, and it still provides insights for lively discussion. Machiavelli is an original thinker who breaks with the past and reframes the categories of his time. Unconcerned with metaphysical or theological subjects, Machiavelli's approach seems to be eminently and purely political and pragmatic. With a special focus on conflict, his political theorizing is aimed at facing up uncertainty and at securing stable and non-utopian regimes. Machiavelli puts forward a repertoire of tools and methods, meant to enable political actors to cope with the intricacies of politics and to achieve their goals.

Not by chance, The Prince was qualified by Bertrand Russell as a "handbook for gangsters". Machiavelli emphasizes the need to "learn not to be good": when necessary, political actors must be ready to do what is morally wrong. Contemporary reflection around the theme of dirty hands relies on the very same insight: in politics, being morally innocent and doing the right thing do not necessarily coincide. From a Machiavellian perspective, political responsibility rests on the availability to dirt one's hands, to endorse morally reprehensible means in order to achieve valuable ends. The notion of dirty hands more clearly conveys the idea that, even when doing evil is the right thing to do, responsible politicians should preserve the awareness about the morally blameworthy character of their conduct.

The 500th anniversary of The Prince offers an occasion both to celebrate Machiavelli and to critically reassess his approach to politics, and particularly his attempt to avoid moralism without becoming unprincipled. Promoted by the Political Theory Project, the main aim of the workshop is to offer, through direct engagement with Machiavelli's thought and through the notion of dirty hands, a deeper understanding about political responsibility, about the ethics of political leadership and about the implications connected to political decisions in times of trouble.

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