

Partial Reading List and Notes
April – July 2020

Lawrence C. Chin

26 April

In Ch. 20 of *The Prince* Machiavelli almost suggests that the prince should orchestrate false flag attacks when there are no “naturally occurring” enemies:

... e però la fortuna, massime quando vuole fare grande uno principe unovo, il quale ha maggiore necessità di acquistare reputazione che uno ereditario, li fa nascere de' nemici, e li fa fare delle imprese contro, acciò che quello abbi cagione di superarle, e su per quella scala che gli hanno pòrta e' nimici sua, salire più alto. Però molti iudicano che uno principe savio debbe, quando ne abbi la occasione, nutrirsi con astuzia qualche inimicizia, acciò che, oppresso quella, ne seguiti maggiore sua grandezza.

As noted, Mansfield thus does go so far as to suggest the utility of false flag attacks. In the Introduction to his translation of *The Prince*, he also notes:

Fortune supplies the prince with nothing more than opportunity, as when Moses found the people of Israel enslaved by the Egyptians, Romulus found himself exposed at birth, Cyrus found the Persians discontented with the empire of the Medes, and Theseus found the Athenians dispersed (Chapter 6). These famous founders had the virtue to recognize the opportunity that fortune offered to them – opportunity for them, harsh necessity to their peoples. Instead of dispersing the inhabitants of a free city (Chapter 5), the prince is lucky enough to find them dispersed (Chapter 6). This suggests that *the prince could go so far as to make his own opportunity by creating a situation of necessity* in which no one's inherited goods remain to him and everything is owed to you, the new prince (emphasis added).

27 April

Began reading Winfried Schneider-Deters' *Die Ukraine: Machtvakuum zwischen Russland und der Europäischen Union* (2012) and Harvey Mansfield's *Manliness* (2006).

29 April

And so, under Mansfield's teaching, Cheney believes that the US must act like a hungry man and acquire more even when he is not hungry and there is still plenty: the US must acquire the remaining oil reserves in the world in preparation for Peak Oil. Just as Machiavelli has counseled in Chapter 24 of *The Prince*:

... perché, non avendo mai ne' tempi quieti pensato che possono mutarsi (il che è comune defetto degli uomini, non fare conto, nella bonaccia, della tempesta), quando poi vennono il tempi avversi, pensorono a fugini e non a defendersi...

Cheney might have also drawn his lesson from Ch. 25: the prince must learn to change his nature as the time changes – or else will come to ruin. The most usual is one who is unable to change from what nature has inclined him or one who, having prospered by going on one path, cannot be persuaded therefrom when the time changes.

Credo, ancora, che sia felice quello che riscontra el mode del procedere suo con le qualità de' tempi, e similmente sia infelice quello che con il procedere suo si discordano e' tempi...

Né si truova uomo sì prudente che si sappi accomodare a questo; sì perché non si può deviare da quello a che la natura lo inclina; sì etiam perché, avendo sempre uno prosperato camminando per una via, non si può persuadere partirsi da quella...

Time has changed such that if the US is unwilling to change its nature and become a totalitarian state, it will not be able to remain the greatest empire the history has ever known. The American people have been so used to their rights under the Constitution that they don't know how to change or can't be persuaded to change.

3 May

Around this time, watched Michael Radford's "The Merchant of Venice" and Uli Edel's "Julius Caesar".

Read Schneider-Deters' book review, „Ein Paradiesvogel unter Aasgeiern“: Die Metamorphose der Julija Tymošenko, Osteuropa, Vol. 56, No. 9, September 2006, p. 121-128.

6 May

Began reading Shadia Drury's *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (1988). Also watched two documentaries on the Borgia family (Pope Alexander VI with his four children), including the German "Der Fall Borgia".

10 May

Listened to Prof. Laurie M. Johnson's lecture on Machiavelli.

Machiavelli's most central teaching is that the prince, for the sake of the preservation of his state and in order to accomplish great things, must from time to time commit injustices and do immoral things – crime is especially necessary during the founding of a new regime (new modes and orders) – but that, when committing injustice and doing immoral things, the prince must take care to conceal it or do it in such a way as to let it pass unnoticed by the people because, although morality means nothing to him, the people take it all seriously and will judge him by it. This is the most important thing which Mansfield must have taught Cheney. However – lest it be denounced as simply common sense – Mansfield is likely to have been more comprehensive in this teaching insofar as, whereas Machiavelli has left the *origin* of this situation unsaid, Strauss has had extensive reflection on this matter. At issue is the elaboration of the conventionalist view of the origin of morality which both Strauss and Mansfield

regard as the correct view, namely that morality is a mere convention which society has invented (or which the wise has promulgated) so that social order can be ensured and society can survive. (To survive, we need to cooperate, and to cooperate, we need to be moral with each other.) As Shadia Drury explains in *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (quoting Strauss):

Strauss regards the interpretation of Averroes and the *falasifa* or the Islamic Aristotelians to be more plausible... In this interpretation, natural right refers to the broad rule of justice that necessarily grow up in every civil society, and without which it cannot be preserved. They are only 'quasi-natural' because they depend on 'ubiquitous convention'. They correspond roughly to the Second Table of the Decalogue, but include the command of divine worship. Despite the fact that they are necessary and universally recognized,

'they are conventional for this reason: civil society is incompatible with any immutable rules, however basic, for in certain conditions the disregard of these rules may be needed for the preservation of society; but for pedagogic reasons, society must present as universally valid certain rules which are generally valid. Since the rules in question obtain normally, all social teachings proclaim these rules and not the rare exceptions. The effectiveness of the general rules depends on their being taught without qualifications, without ifs and buts. But the omission of the qualifications which makes the rules more effective, makes them at the same time untrue. The unqualified rules are not natural right but conventional right.'

The view of the *falasifa* is, not untypically, esoteric. It amounts to saying that the rules that are necessary to preserve society, when regarded from a philosophical point of view, are only rules of thumb. They indicate the most successful means to achieve a given end under most circumstances. They do not obligate us absolutely. They are akin to signposts in a fog. On a clear day, when a more direct route presents itself, it is foolish to insist on following the signposts. The rules should, to use another example, be regarded by statesmen in the same manner as the almanac is regarded by a skillful navigator. Failure to calculate accurately, not to mention lack of goodwill, are bound to wreak havoc on a society that understands its moral rules as rules of thumb that do not bind unconditionally. It is therefore dangerous to make this view public. The effectiveness of the rules depends on their being regarded as absolute and unconditional. The easiest way to ensure this is to regard the rules as having intrinsic dignity and more importantly, as being backed by divine sanction.

Strauss maintains that his own interpretation of Aristotle's brief and elusive statements regarding natural right are a middle position between the Thomistic and Averroist interpretations. However, a careful examination of Strauss's view reveals that it is more accurately described as a variation or fuller account of the Averroist view (p. 99 – 100).

Mansfield, as well as Strauss, would have held that such was Machiavelli's understanding of morality as well insofar as the wise everywhere and at all times instantly perceive the same truth, whether they say it or not or in whatever way they may say it. It is important to notice that herein is explained why morality has such a strong hold on the common people and why the prince, though ruling with the

knowledge that natural justice does not exist, cannot rule with complete indifference to it. Namely, the very means by which morality can become effective in its goal of preserving society – making people believe that it is natural (or divine), absolute, and applicable in all circumstances – becomes a hindrance to the true understanding that it is no more than a rule of thumb invented for expedience’s sake and that in some circumstances it must not be observed for the sake of the same expedience, in circumstances in which the prince is especially apt to find himself when it is his job to preserve the state and to do great things, both for himself and for the people. When the prince is being too obvious in his purely utilitarian (true) understanding of morality, the people will not understand it because they have been brainwashed to believe it is not merely for the sake of utility – for the very sake of this utility. In consequence, the people will not judge him good and admire him but would hate him and hold him in contempt, and Machiavelli’s whole point is that, if the prince is to rule successfully, the people must *want* to obey him, so that he must avoid being hated and held in contempt by appearing to the people as if he does believe as the people do that moral rules are natural or divine or absolute and does in fact act in conformity to them. This is why Machiavelli makes the distinction between Agathocles of Syracuse and Cesare Borgia: both have used inhuman cruelty to achieve the effect of ruling but the former should not be “celebrated among the most excellent men” (*infra gli eccellentissimi uomini celebrato*) for being too obvious whereas the latter should.¹

Most common people, weak and stupid, will not understand this true nature of morality if you explain it to them. Only the wise can understand, and handle, such cynical truth about what is right and what is wrong. The prince, having grown up in the same way as the people and been subjected to the same brainwashing, can thus only become wise and come to realize such truth through a “process of brutalization” that is the essence of Machiavelli’s teaching. Namely, if he is going to become an effective ruler, his teacher must break the hold which morality has on him as it has on everyone else. This is what Machiavelli means (Mansfield would say) when he says that the prince must learn to not be good (*The Prince*, Ch. 15) or when he says that the ancients taught this by saying that Achilles and the other ancient princes were given to Chiron the centaur to be raised (*The Prince*, Ch. 18).

To have as teacher a half-beast, half-man means nothing other than that a prince needs to know how to use both natures; and the one without the other is not lasting.

Il che non vuole dire altro, avere per precettore uno mezzo bestia e mezzo uomo, se non che bisogna a uno principe sapere usare l’una e l’altra natura; e l’una senza l’altra non è durabile.

In the Straussian context, this process of brutalization is the same process of becoming a philosopher from a common person, i.e. the getting out of the Cave to see the sunlight in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave or “liberation from the charms of society which obstruct the philosophic effort”.²

When it comes to Mansfield, he will note that the prince, in order for his state to survive, must first of all acquire and conquer: the state certainly cannot afford “justice” with its neighbors, so that the prince must not be held down by morality.

The prince, such as Cheney, is thus a psychopath and not a psychopath in this sense. An ordinary psychopath is indifferent to right and wrong – but takes care to appear to believe in, and adhere to, right

1 *The Prince*, Ch. 7 and 8.

2 Shadia Drury, *ibid.*, p. 24.

and wrong – because he is born to have no regard for other people’s wellbeing and see everyone else as merely a means to his end. The prince is however like this because his teacher has carefully taught him so through a process of brutalization: he *becomes* a psychopath by acquiring wisdom.

12 May

Shadia Drury implies two times in PILS that Strauss (and, by extension, Mansfield), as a philosopher, would have advised the prince to frame and condemn an innocent man in order to appease a lynch mob and prevent riots and deaths: the prince should always be ready to commit injustice in order to advance the public good. Mansfield has cited Machiavelli making the same point in the *Discourse on Livy*. Mansfield thus would have taught Cheney to agree with the French generals in the case of the Dreyfus Affair: to condemn Dreyfus knowing that he was innocent because society must not lose its trust in the military establishment. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli’s example in this regard is Cesare Borgia’s betrayal of Messer Remirro: Borgia first installed the most cruel Remirro de Orco in Romagna and gave him all the power in order to reestablish order there and then, once his usefulness had been exhausted, executed him so as to gain the people’s heart.³ Machiavelli praises such unethical behavior as “deserving of notice and being imitated” (*degni di notizia e da essere imitati da altri*). It is probably just such teaching which had inspired Cheney to frame somebody like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed with a clear conscience: the United States (the CIA) originally recruited KSM in the 1990s to fight the Russians in the Caucasus; once Cheney came into power, he framed him for master-minding the 911 attacks and ordered him thrown into secret prisons and tortured in order to force him to admit that he did plan the 911 attacks. This, so that Cheney can start building his greatest empire the world has ever seen. Such blatant betrayal of someone who was once loyal to you! And yet Cheney would have thought that such behavior on his part was worthy of imitating by others (just as he had imitated Cesare Borgia)!

16 May

Read parts of Francisco Socas’ *Lucrecio: La naturaleza*. Watched “Imperium der Päpste“, in 3 parts (from the Avignon Papacy to Alexander VI, Julius II, and Leo X to Clement VII, the sack of Rome, and Paul II). Also read about the sacking of Rome in Durant, *ibid*.

21 May

Read the summary of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and watched biographical presentations of Robert Louis Stevenson (including the case of Deacon Brodie). Wes is like Jekyll and Hyde: nobody knows that this respected professor of political science has another job of working as an informant for intelligence agencies against his friend Lawrence.

Also watched documentaries about Alessandro Manzoni and his *I promessi sposi*.

22 May

Sabine Hossenfelder’s presentation “Is faster-than-light travel possible” allows me to understand that time travel to the past means merely your going through your earlier life and becoming a child again until you are born. Namely, no difference at all, just as a particle going from left to right while going

3 Ch. 7.

backward in time is simply, to us the observer, going forward in time from right to left. It doesn't mean going to the past to meet your ancestor (in which case, there is no consistent arrow of time because you are actually growing older while going backward in time).

Impressed by Ben G Thomas' presentation on Denisovans (12.04.2020). The early world where multiple human species existed and interbred is more like the world of Star Trek than the world of the Lord of the Rings.

24 May

"Paul Cantor on Shakespeare's Rome", Conversation with Bill Kristol, 24.09.2017.

Done with reading Mansfield's "Party and Sect in Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*". Read Oliver Hidalgo's "Tocqueville, die Neocons und das amerikanische Imperium. Enthält »Über die Demokratie in Amerika« ein Plädoyer für die gewaltsame Verbreitung der liberalen Gesellschaft?" (*Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, Dec. 2007, p. 331-354).

27 May

In the past few days, reading: Shadia Drury's new introduction ("Straussians in Power") to the 2005 edition of *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*; parts of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* (German, Spanish, and the English Oxford edition); more of Livy and Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*; Alan Bloom's introduction to Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*; and learning about Donald Kagan and Robert Kagan (e.g. Donald Kagan's interview and lecture on the Peloponnesian Wars); also about Bernard Lewis; also listened to many lectures by Nina Jablonski on the evolution of human skin colors.

The neoconservative cabal as a coalition of Jewish and non-Jewish imperialists. The Jewish group is itself a coalition of Straussian and non-Straussian imperialists. The non-Straussian: the Kagan group; Bernard Lewis; Douglas Feith and Richard Perle; and so on. Despite their diverse origins, they all agree on one thing: the only way for Jews to survive is to secretly rule America and steer America to conquer the whole world.

29 May

Reading Harvey Mansfield, "Strauss on 'The Prince'", *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 75, No. 4, Fall 2013. And rereading Strauss' *Thoughts on Machiavelli*.

Watched "Les vies d'Albert Camus" and "Secrets d'histoire: comment devient-on Napoléon?"

30 May

In "Strauss on 'The Prince'", while explaining Machiavelli's enterprise (*impresa*) as "spiritual warfare" or "redemption of mankind" (redemption of the world from Christianity), Mansfield again alludes to the necessity for the Prince to commit crimes all the way, from the very beginning, i.e. the exhortation for Cheney to orchestrate 911 attacks before Peak Oil ever makes conquest necessary:

Machiavelli will redeem Italy from the ‘barbarians’ who oppress it; he will indeed redeem the world from the oppression of virtue by chance. Machiavelli will in a sense redeem the world from its sins, as did Christ, but not through expiation and penitence. He will redeem them by showing that they are excused by human necessities, particularly those of survival that humans share with animals. Thus Strauss points out that Chiron, the teacher of princes – the Beast-Man – substitutes for Christ, the God-Man. But because Machiavelli teaches openly what the ancients showed covertly, this ‘is a Chiron of an entirely new kind’... The occasional exception to the moral and noble way, taken with embarrassment when necessity suddenly appears, as by chance, becomes the norm of virtuous princes now taught to anticipate chance and to do the vicious deed out of necessity, but before it is plainly seen to be necessary.

To be more precise, Machiavelli’s enterprise is to redeem the world from Christianity by appropriating Christianity and using it to defeat itself and root out the sickness it has sown among mankind. Almost like the secularization of Christianity which, according to Voegelin, Marxism and the *gnosis* of modern nation-states are all about. The sickness which Christianity has sown in Italy is the weakness of the Italian people (*Discourses on Livy*) and the harmful divisions within a city that prevent its rise to great strength vis-à-vis other cities and powers (*Florentine Histories*). Appropriating Christianity and using it to root itself out means imitating it while waging spiritual warfare against it – coming as Christ and forming a sect and sending out philosophers and princes as propagandists to transform culture and society into the opposite of their current Christian state. In a way, this is precisely the neoconservative enterprise today: here the great evil that has sown sickness and which must be rooted out in a spiritual warfare is not Christianity per se but “modernity” or “liberalism” (in just the way that Carl Schmitt has criticized).

The fact that Machiavelli saw himself as the savior is probably what he had in mind when he wrote, in the very beginning of the *Discourses*, that he was moved by a “natural desire that has always been in him to bring common benefit to everyone” (“... spinto da quel naturale desiderio che fu sempre in me di operare, senza alcuno rispetto, quelle cose che io credea rechino comune beneficio a ciascuno...”).

31 May

Watched “Secrets d’histoire: un homme nommé Jésus” (it ends with Clovis’ conversion to Christianity) and the excellent movie: “Hannibal: Rome’s worst nightmare”. Have been listening to Robert Kagan: (1) Discussing his book, *The World America Made* (C-SPAN, 05.03.2012); (2) “Authoritarianism and the threat to liberal democratic order” (Conversation with Bill Kristol, 06.04.2019).

1 June

“Secrets d’histoire: Lucrece Borgia, une femme au Vatican” (29.06.2018). Then, more of Robert Kagan’s talk: (3) “The Jungle Grows Back”, 9.10.2018, Chicago Council on Global Affairs. (4) “Of Paradise and Power”, 23.04.2003, the John Adams Institute.

3 June

C-SPAN’s Book TV interview with Bernard Lewis at his home (probably some time in 2003). Also Arabic grammar for understanding Koran.

5 June

“Biografia de San Gregorio Magno” (Buena Noticia). Then listened to Cheney’s introduction and Charles Krauthammer’s speech about US foreign policy during AEI Annual Dinner 2004 (10.02.2004). Then several more videos on the life and views of Krauthammer (including an interview with his son on The View after his death).

6 June

Watched Fox News Special: “Charles Krauthammer: A Life That Matters” (25.10.2013). Then various videos of David Frum (“Trumpocracy” and “Trumpocalypse”), Abram Shulsky (a lecture on Aristotle at the Catholic University of America), and Max Boot (“Conservatism in the Age of Trump”, Hofstra University, 24.04.2019).

7 June

Delighted by Joseph Luzzi’s lecture, “Boccaccio, Petrarch, and the invention of Dante” (23.11.2017). Also: “Who is Randy Scheunemann?” (The Real News Network, 08.09.2008); Daniel Pipes on militant Islam (UCTV, 13.03.2008); Daniel Pipes on the Middle East (Hoover Institute, 23.09.2008); and Arthur Brooks on how he came to lead the American Enterprise Institute (Conversation with Bill Kristol, 25.10.2015).

8 June

Listened to part of Maria Farmer’s conversation with Whitney Webb (about a few weeks ago). Received Shadia Drury’s book on Alexandre Kojève and began reading it from time to time. (Also Arthur Melzer’s *Philosophy Between the Lines*.)

9 June

Watched: John Podhoretz on politics and policies (Hoover Institute, 27.05.2010); Thomas Donnelly on Conversation with Bill Kristol (10.09.2017); Glenn Beck on the Twelfth Imam (19.02.2011).

10 June

Watched several discussions of Richard Pipes with William Buckley on his books on the Russian Revolution and communism. Then ISIA Edmonton lecture, “The Link: Prophet Jesus and Imam Al-Mahdi”.

11 June

Listened to Father Luis Miguel Palacios’ lecture, “Santo Domingo de Guzman y la Orden de Predicadores” (03.12.2015). Watched the movie “St Francis of Assisi”.

Continued to read everyday Strauss’ *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, Machiavelli’s *Florentine Histories* (Book II, Italian together with Mansfield’s English and Christian Bec’s French translations), and Livy’s

History of Rome (Book VII, German translation (Sammlung Tusculum) and English translation by Betty Radice (Penguin Classics)).

12 June

A German documentary, “Der Fall Karthagos”.

Have been thinking: Cheney and Mansfield were also concerned with the weakness of America just as Machiavelli was concerned with the weakness of Italy. Whereas Italy was made weak by the Roman Church, America was made weak by liberal democracy. After the Cold War, America’s weakness had become part of the larger picture of the weakness of humanity brought forth by the “universal homogeneous state” at the “end of history”. Cheney and Mansfield were on the same boat as Carl Schmitt and Alexandre Kojève, afraid that this “universal liberal democracy” is going to abolish history, banish any seriousness from life, and reduce humanity to the perpetual seeking of entertainment. This is how America, and humanity, are made weak: it is different from Machiavelli’s notion. Whereas Machiavelli regarded republics as more able to make people strong and principalities as frequently making people weak, Cheney and Mansfield thought that the American republic (in the form of liberal democracy) was making people – or rather the nation – weak while America’s transformation into totalitarian dictatorship would make them – or her – strong. This is because the secular “liberal democracy” has triumphed and replaced the Roman Church in our postmodern time as *the* dominant “Great Tradition”.

14 June

Watched the movie “The Celestine Prophecy” (plus the reviews of this book).

15 June

Watched various videos of talks by Elliot Abrams.

In *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 216, Strauss comments:

[Machiavelli] had used the story of the Gallic War in II 29 in order to show the power of Fortuna. He uses the same story in III 1 in order to show that mixed bodies must frequently be restored to their beginnings. Such restoration can take place in the case of republics through ‘intrinsic prudence’ or through ‘extrinsic accident.’ The restoration or rebirth of Rome at the time of the Gallic War was caused by ‘extrinsic accident.’ Every mixed body has a natural tendency to decay or to become corrupt. This tendency can be arrested by unexpected disasters which compel the mixed body or its rulers to restore order and virtue. Not Fortuna had then blinded the Romans at that time, but the Romans had degenerated by a natural process or they had become careless and vile; therefore they made disastrous mistakes; but their disasters brought them to their senses. When discussing his subject ‘at length,’ Machiavelli replaces the figurative expression ‘Fortuna judged’ by the proper expression ‘extrinsic accident caused.’

Mansfield might have again inspired Cheney to orchestrate 911 attacks with this passage: namely, America, weak and corrupt, shall be jolted back to order and virtue by an “extrinsic accident”. Of course, 911 attacks were no accidents. But, again, Cheney was taught that, if Fortuna doesn’t do the work, he the Prince shall do it in her place. If Fortuna has no “accident” for America at this crucial moment, the Prince shall orchestrate the accident in her place as part of his conquest of Fortuna.

16 June

Elliot Abrams’ appearance (together with Allen Nairn and Senator Robert Torricelli) on the Charlie Rose Show in 1995 to discuss the scandal: this Guatemalan captain continued to remain on the CIA’s payroll even after he had assassinated an American citizen (an inn keeper).

17 June

Listened to Harvey Mansfield talking about crime novels, Churchill, and Johnathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* on Conversation with Bill Kristol (25.09.2016).

Strauss’ comments on Machiavelli’s esoteric message in *Discourses*, I 26, runs thusly in his contribution in *History of Political Philosophy* (p. 312).

The lesson of the chapter itself is this: a new prince who wishes to establish absolute power in his state must make everything new; he must establish new magistracies, with new names, new authorities and new men; he must make the rich poor and the poor rich, as David did when he became king: *qui esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisti inanes*. In sum, he must not leave anything in his country untouched, and there must not be any rank or wealth that its possessors do not recognize as owing to the prince. The modes that he must use are most cruel and inimical, not only to every Christian life, but even to every humane one; so that everyone must prefer to live as a private man rather than as a king with so great a ruin of human beings. The Latin quotation that occurs in this chapter is translated in the Revised Version as follows: ‘He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.’ The quotation forms part of the Magnificat, the Virgin Mary’s prayer of thanks after she had heard from the angel Gabriel that she would bring forth a son to be called Jesus; he that ‘hath filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich empty away’ is none other than God himself. In the context of this chapter this means that God is a tyrant, and that king David who made the rich poor and the poor rich, was a Godly king, a king who walked in the ways of the Lord because he proceeded in the tyrannical way. We must note that this is the sole New Testament quotation occurring in the *Discourses* or in the *Prince*. And the sole New Testament quotation is used for expressing a most horrible blasphemy. Someone might say in defense of Machiavelli that the blasphemy is not expressly uttered but only implied. But this defense, far from helping Machiavelli, makes his case worse, and for this reason: When a man openly utters or vomits blasphemy all good men shudder and turn away from him, or punish him according to his deserts; the sin is entirely his. But a concealed blasphemy is so insidious, not only because it protects the blasphemer against punishment by due process of law, but above all because it practically compels the hearer or reader to think the blasphemy by himself and thus to become an accomplice

of the blasphemer. Machiavelli thus establishes a kind of intimacy with his readers par excellence, whom he calls ‘the young,’ by inducing them to think forbidden or criminal thoughts.

It must have been this Machiavellian teaching – I 26: “Uno principe nuovo, in una città o provincia presa da lui, debbe fare ogni cosa nuova” – which underlies Cheney’s persistent employment of “Disaster Capitalism”: tear everything down, wipe the slate clean, and build everything anew. Namely, Naomi Klein has not penetrated to the core of the neoconservative (Cheney’s) *modus operandi*. Hence Cheney’s plan: to orchestrate a nuclear holocaust and destroy human civilization altogether and then build his *Weltstaat* on an empty slate. Before I simply thought that this was Cheney’s most efficient way of dealing with a corrupt system. Now I understand that this is in fact what he has learned from Mansfield as to what he ought to do if he wants his new modes and orders – the absolutely tyrannical regime – to last.

Another thought: Why did Mansfield in late 1970s choose to comment on Machiavelli’s *Discourses* as a way to establish himself as the *Massimo*? He must have been dissatisfied with the “weakness” characteristic of that era: the Watergate scandal, the Church Commission, and how the Democrats had completely castrated the President. Like Machiavelli, he was looking for those worthy in the “next generation”, the potential princes, to start a movement for a new form of government, to revitalize the Executive. He must have been part of the growing chorus of neoconservatives in late 1970s who were discontent with the trend to emasculate the executive branch. (See Greg Grandin’s *Empire’s Workshop*.)

18 June

Watched “Secrets d’histoire: Marie de Médicis ou l’obsession du pouvoir” (20.07.2018).

19 June

Lately have been on Paul’s Langfocus a lot: Caucasian languages; Modern Standard Arabic; the Korean language, etc.

Now, the question of why Machiavelli teaches evil. I want to quote a sample of Strauss’ long commentary on Machiavelli’s reflection on morality (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 234 – 244) in order for you to get a sense of how deep the philosopher’s reflection is on the nature of morality and yet to demonstrate to you how, in the end, the philosopher could have so loosened himself with his deep reflection as to no longer deny himself the practice of evil. Pay special attention to the italics which I have added and recall that whatever thoughts Strauss has attributed to Machiavelli are also his own thoughts:

Before he can show the uselessness or wrongness of classical political philosophy, Machiavelli must show that he has understood classical political philosophy. Classical political philosophy claims to be in fundamental agreement with what is generally said about goodness. Machiavelli must therefore reproduce the outlines of what is generally said about goodness. He knows that these generally held opinions are not entirely baseless. They contain elements which he can preserve. Besides, by reproducing those opinions he furnishes himself with the indispensable ‘first statements.’ As he shows in his very attack on the principle of classical political

philosophy, he does not deny that there are good men and he agrees with his opponents as to what is a good man. He knows that the generally held opinions regarding goodness have an evidence of their own and are not arbitrary. 'I know that everyone will confess that it would be most praiseworthy for a prince to possess all the above-mentioned qualities which are held to be good,' i.e. liberality, mercy, fidelity, courage, chastity, sincerity, religion, and so on. There exists 'knowledge of honest and good things' as well as of justice. All men understand by goodness and badness the same things and they know that goodness deserves praise and badness deserves blame. This does not prevent them from acting badly in many cases, so much so that, as is universally admitted, the legislators must assume all men to be bad. Goodness in the wider sense is identical with virtue, i.e. moral virtue. To act virtuously means to act as one ought to act. Virtue embraces many virtues or praiseworthy qualities which are the opposite of vices, i.e., of blameworthy and detestable qualities. 'One cannot call it virtue to murder one's fellow citizens, to betray one's friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion.' Machiavelli can use 'virtue' as the synonym of Dante's 'probity.' 'Goodness' can also designate one of the moral virtues. A good man is an unselfish man, a man who avoids hurting others and who thinks more of benefiting others than of benefiting himself; he is therefore in particular a law-abiding man; if he is a prince, he will never kill a subject except by due process of law. Goodness is the habit of choosing good means for the good end. The good end is the common or public good. Good means are means other than fraud and lawless force. Goodness or virtue is both praiseworthy for its own sake and useful as regards its effects. It is followed by honor and glory, and it preserves and makes great kingdoms and republics. For instance, a republic will increase its well-being by treating its neighbors as brothers and not as enemies, and the most important concern of the prince is to benefit his subjects. On this basis one can easily make a distinction between the prince and the tyrant: the prince in the strict sense is informed by virtue and dedicates himself to the common good, whereas the tyrant is prompted by ambition and greed and is concerned only with his own good; the prince, being loved by his subjects, lives in much greater security than the tyrant, who is hated by them. What moral demands are to be made on the prince appears from Machiavelli's remark that the prince has to contend with the ambition of the great and the insolence of the people, and in some cases also with the cruelty and avarice of the soldiers. However this may be, the common good is taken care of only in republics, so much so that one can equate the common good with public liberty. In other words, republics are to be preferred to princes because they are morally superior to the latter: they are less given to ingratitude and bad faith than are princes. Goodness as the habit of benefiting others includes honesty as the habit not to hurt others or not to deprive them of the good things which they possess. From this it follows that the demands of the common people are more honest than the demands of the great: the common people merely desire to keep the few good things which they possess or not to be oppressed whereas the great desire to oppress. Goodness is primarily respect for possession: he who possesses nothing in the first place or has not been deprived of anything by others cannot in decency complain; nothing remains to him except to ask for favors. The man who receives favors or benefits is obliged to be grateful. On the other hand, he who is merely left in possession of what he has or who is not hurt feels no obligation. If goodness consists in dedication to the common good, the good man

will be satisfied with having little of his own: the good republic will keep its citizens poor and the commonwealth rich. The virtuous man is guided by considerations not only of the honest but of the honorable as well. The honorable is that which gives a man distinction or which makes him great and resplendent. Hence extraordinary virtue rather than ordinary virtue is honorable. To possess extraordinary virtue and to be aware of one's possessing it is more honorable than merely to possess it. To have a sense of one's superior worth and to act in accordance with that sense is honorable. Hence it is honorable to rely on oneself and to be frank when frankness is dangerous. To show signs of weakness or to refuse a fight is dishonorable. To make open war against a prince is more honorable than to conspire against him. To lose by fighting is more honorable than to lose in any other way. To die fighting is more honorable than to perish through famine. Noble birth is honorable. A young nobleman of extraordinary virtue is more readily honored than an older nobleman of the same degree of virtue. The implicit distinction between the honest and the honorable reminds us of the distinction between justice and magnanimity, the two peaks of Aristotle's ethics. It is noteworthy that Machiavelli avoids mentioning justice in the most striking passages. For instance, he does not mention justice in his most comprehensive enumeration of the praiseworthy qualities. After having referred to the fact that all men agree in praising goodness or virtue and in blaming badness or vice, and hence in praising the virtuous rulers and in blaming tyrants, Machiavelli notes that the writers, and hence the unwary readers, praise the tyrant Caesar most highly. One could dispose of this difficulty by suggesting that while men have a clear grasp of first principles, of what is general, they are easily deceived regarding the application of those principles or regarding what is particular. But according to Machiavelli just the opposite is true: men err more easily regarding what is general than regarding what is particular. The fact that men agree in praising goodness or virtue does not then settle the question regarding the status of goodness or virtue. What men generally say is identical with what most men say most of the time or with what is said publicly. The common opinions regarding goodness or virtue are then most effective in states in which the most important decisions are made by public assemblies, by the assembled people, on the basis of public deliberation. Hence only a fool would dismiss these opinions as mere words and still believe that he can understand political things. Even granted that the substance of the virtues and vices is 'names' so that what counts is not that one is virtuous but that one has the name of a virtuous man, such names convey good or bad reputation and hence power or impotence. Yet public deliberations are in many ways prepared and influenced by private deliberations in which the power of the generally held and publicly defensible opinions is weaker than in public deliberations. The generally held opinions thus appear to be a surface phenomenon. Therefore the question arises as to how one can proceed in an orderly and convincing manner from the primarily given, from what can be known by everybody in broad daylight, to the hidden center. While all men praise goodness, most men act badly. It seems that the error contained in what is generally and publicly said can be recognized by simply confronting the manifest speeches with the equally manifest deeds. But the deeds which contradict the speeches praising goodness do not prove that those speeches are untrue, i.e. that men ought not to act virtuously; the deeds by themselves prove merely that most men do not in fact act virtuously. Yet the way in which men mostly act is also expressed by speech, by

laudatory speech. Hence the laudatory speeches contradict each other. Machiavelli's analysis of morality will therefore begin with the observation of the self-contradictions inherent in what men generally and publicly praise. The order of that analysis must be distinguished from the order in which its results are presented. Towards the end of his work, he indicates his procedure by the following sentence: 'Although to use fraud in any action is detestable, yet in the conduct of war it is praiseworthy and glorious.' *Common opinion on the one hand unqualifiedly condemns fraud. and on the other hand praises fraud when committed in certain circumstances. Common opinion, we may say, hesitatingly and inconsistently takes a middle course between unqualified blame of fraud and unqualified praise of it.* It is no accident that the chapter which opens with the sentence just quoted, the 133d chapter of the *Discourses*, ends with the last of the seven references, occurring in the book, to 'the middle course.'

The common understanding of virtue had found its classic expression in Aristotle's assertion that virtue, being the opposite of vice, is the middle or mean between two faulty extremes (a too little and a too much) which are opposed to each other. Machiavelli occasionally bears witness to the truth of this analysis. A prince must proceed in such a way that too much confidence does not make him incautious and too much diffidence (or too little confidence) does not make him unbearable. The Roman people kept its place honorably by neither ruling arrogantly nor serving abjectly. Liberty is the mean between principality or tyranny and license. On the other hand, however, people condemn 'the middle course' (*la via del mezzo*) as harmful. Mercy and justice despise the undecided, the lukewarm, those who are neither for nor against God. Furthermore, we may add in accordance with what Aristotle has said, justice is not a mean between two vices but is opposed only to one vice; in the case of some other virtues, Aristotle's view is not supported by usage: the alleged mean or one of the two alleged opposite vices has not received a name, perhaps because they are not generally regarded as virtues or vices. At any rate Machiavelli tacitly rejects the view that virtue is a mean between two vices. In his most comprehensive enumeration of virtues and vices, each virtue appears as the opposite of a single vice. Elsewhere he contrasts the equanimity of the excellent or great man with a single opposite vice of weak men; that vice consists of two 'defects,' conceit or arrogance on the one hand and vileness or humility on the other. What he means to convey can be stated as follows. *The two opposite defects are merely two aspects of one and the same vice which comes to sight in opposite forms in opposite circumstances;* one does not understand either defect if one does not see in each the co-presence of the other. The virtue in question on the other hand comes to sight as one and the same in all situations; it is stable and unchanging, for it is based on 'knowledge of the world.'

Machiavelli opens his most comprehensive enumeration of virtues and vices by making a distinction between the virtue of liberality and the virtue of giving. The distinction is connected with Tuscan usage. The Tuscan tongue distinguishes somehow between stinginess and rapacity. If stinginess and rapacity are two different vices, and if each vice is the opposite of one virtue and vice versa, there must be two virtues which correspond to stinginess and rapacity respectively. The stingy man

abstains ‘too much’ from using his own; the rapacious man desires to acquire by rapine what belongs to others. Since stinginess is an excess (‘too much’), it seems to demand a corresponding defect (‘too little’), i.e. prodigality; Machiavelli tacitly denies this by assigning to liberality only one opposite vice, namely, stinginess. Whereas stinginess is the only vice concerning the use of property, rapacity seems to be the only vice concerning acquisition. To our surprise Machiavelli identifies the virtue opposed to rapacity as the virtue of giving: he tacitly substitutes the virtue of giving for justice. He alludes to the fact that liberality has two opposite vices and he alludes to justice which is thought to have only one opposite vice. He explains the meaning of these allusions partly in the following chapter. That chapter is entitled ‘Of liberality and parsimony.’ It seems then to be devoted to the virtues dealing with use and preservation of property rather than with its acquisition. A prince, Machiavelli says, who desires to be regarded as liberal must exhibit every sign of sumptuousness. By doing this he is eventually compelled to become stingy: *the virtue of liberality necessarily turns into the vice and the infamy of stinginess*. What is true of liberality is even truer of prodigality; this is the reason why the difference between liberality and prodigality is irrelevant. The prince ought to practice parsimony; by being parsimonious, he will be enabled to be liberal in the sense that he will not be compelled to rob his subjects or to become rapacious. In the sequel Machiavelli retracts his distinction between liberality and the virtue of giving: not liberality and the virtue of giving but liberality and justice ought to be distinguished from each other. *Parsimony necessarily comes to sight as the vice of stinginess but this vice is preferable to the virtue of liberality*. Machiavelli's conclusion seems to be unnecessarily shocking; he could have limited himself to replacing the virtue of liberality by the virtue of parsimony. More precisely, since parsimony is praised because it prevents men from becoming rapacious and hence unjust, he could have contented himself with saying that the virtue of justice requires the sacrifice of the virtue of liberality. Only by considering his indications regarding justice can we understand why he denies that the virtuous mean is possible.

Machiavelli raises the question of whether it is better for a republic to devote itself to acquisition, i.e. to the acquisition of what belongs to others, or to the preservation of what it possesses, i.e. to forgo ambition. At first glance the second way seems to be preferable. It is the middle course between taking away from others what belongs to them and losing to others what one possesses. Yet since all human things are in a flux, one cannot always do what reason suggests but must sometimes do what necessity demands: a consistent policy limited to preservation is impossible. *One must choose between losing to others what one possesses or taking away from others what they possess. But the latter course is more honorable than the former*. One cannot leave it then at sacrificing the virtue of giving; one must choose the vice of rapacity. Or, if one prefers, *one may say that true liberality or the virtue of giving consists in giving away what one has taken from strangers or enemies*; the virtue of liberality is grounded on the vice of rapacity: the model prince Cyrus was liberal only in this sense. Justice as the stable mean between self-denial or giving away what one has on the one hand and injustice on the other is impossible; a bias in favor of the latter is necessary and honorable. Machiavelli discusses the same difficulty also in the following form. Men have the choice between the way of good and the way of evil but ‘they take certain

middle courses which are most harmful, for men do not know how to be altogether evil nor how to be altogether good, as will be shown in the following chapter by an example.' We pass over the fact that Machiavelli here calls 'certain middle courses,' and not the evil course, 'most harmful.' The promised example shows that a tyrant who lacked both goodness and conscience did not dare to commit a certain evil deed: he took a most harmful middle course because he did not know how to be altogether evil. But Machiavelli calls the evil deed which the tyrant did not dare to commit – a deed which by its greatness would have overcome every infamy – 'honorably evil'; the tyrant's previous deeds were unqualifiedly evil, altogether evil; the deed which he failed to commit could therefore be described as a mean between good and evil; precisely by committing the honorably evil deed he would not have remained altogether evil. Not all middle courses but only 'certain middle courses' are most harmful. Let us replace the tyrant by a virtuous prince whose previous deeds had been altogether good; if that prince out of his goodness or virtue had refrained from committing the honorably evil deed in question, he would have been as blameworthy as the tyrant referred to: he would have been blameworthy for remaining altogether good instead of taking a middle course between good and evil. It would seem then that the right way, at any rate for a prince, is indeed a mean yet not the mean between two opposite vices but the mean between virtue and vice. As we have seen earlier, according to Machiavelli the right course regarding fraud is the middle course between the unqualified rejection of fraud and its unqualified approval. Humanity is praiseworthy and makes a man loved whereas cruelty is detestable and makes a man hated; yet 'the true way' consists in not desiring 'too much' to be loved and therefore in not being too humane; it consists in a certain combination of humanity and cruelty: 'the true way' is 'the middle course.' 'The middle course' cannot be kept strictly because our nature does not permit it, but it ought to be kept as much as possible. A prince must know how to use the nature of man and the nature of the beast: he must follow a middle course between humanity and inhumanity, for humanity and goodness are appropriate for one kind of circumstances whereas the opposite vices are appropriate for the opposite kind of circumstances; since 'the times change,' the change from virtue to vice or vice versa, the movement between the one and the other, is the right course. One may therefore speak of a similarity of virtue and vice: unqualified virtue and unqualified vice are faulty extremes. The true way is the way which imitates nature. But nature is variable, and not stable like virtue. The true way consists therefore in the alternation between virtue and vice: between gravity (or full devotion to great things) and levity, constancy and inconstancy, chastity and lasciviousness, and so on...

The conclusion that excellence, and every kind or degree of excellence, necessarily carries with it its peculiar defect or evil is strengthened if excellence consists in an alternation between moral virtue and moral vice. To sum up, Machiavelli rejects the mean to the extent to which the notion of the mean is linked up with the notions of a perfect happiness that excludes all evil and of the simply perfect human being or of the 'universal man,' and therefore with the notion of a most perfect being simply which possesses all perfections most eminently and hence cannot be the cause of evil.

Here is why Machiavelli was prompted to teach evil. The most important thing is to be clear as to why Machiavelli departs from the Great Tradition: whenever there is disagreement in political discussion, it's useful to turn our attention to what the disagreeing parties' respective goals are, for, often, disagreement stems from the fact that people have different goals in mind. In 2013, Americans were debating about what Edward Snowden really was, with those on the right saying he was a traitor and those on the left saying he was a hero. The disagreement really arose because the two sides had different goals for America: if America's goal is to conquer the world, then Snowden is a traitor; but if America's goal is to be a transparent democracy, then he's a hero. The debate is only productive if it is a debate about the proper goal of America; and yet people didn't see that and debated about whether Snowden contributed to their respective goals for America without clearly naming these goals. Machiavelli teaches evil while others preach good perhaps because he has a different goal in mind.

(1) At the most fundamental level, Machiavelli represents a change in the goal of human life to self-preservation. The Great Tradition tells you to be good. Plato and Aristotle tell you to be good so that you will be the happiest and reach your full human potential, and the Christian tradition tells you to be good so that you can enter heaven after death. It seems that the Great Tradition is telling you to be good because such is the road to happiness, whether in this life or in the next life. Machiavelli on the other hand tells you that being good does not lead to happiness and, as can be empirically attested to, frequently leads to ruin. One must learn to not be good because the goal of life has changed from being good to preserving oneself. (2) In the case of the ambitious few, Machiavelli admonishes that they should seek glory in this world as the goal of their life rather than being good for the sake of being good or for the sake of salvation in the next world. To seek glory and, of course, to preserve oneself, the ambitious must learn to not be good. (3) Machiavelli's ultimate goal is the strength of the state (the extirpation of weakness), which, in the case of principalities, require a strong prince who can preserve himself and seek glory and, in the case of republics, people's love for glory in this world. Everyone, the people and the prince, must not feel constrained by morality in the pursuit of glory or what is generally desired. This ultimate goal gives rise to the previous two changes of goals.

What all these changes in the goal of life mean is a new focus on being effective in the art of controlling your people and prevailing over your enemies in the case of the prince and in getting what is desired without regard for morals in the case of private citizens. Recall the first reason why Machiavelli preaches evil to the prince: it is because the common people are stupid and have bad morals that the prince has to not be good in order to be effective with them, although, because the common people, despite their bad morals, nevertheless praise moral qualities, the prince, while not being good, must carefully hide his evil and take care to appear to be good.

Machiavelli's second reason for teaching evil to the prince relates to the problem of scarcity, so that self-preservation might also mean that one has to conquer (not to mention the pursuit of glory). Thus when one changes one's goals to strength and power, to the acquisition of glory (in the best case) and self-preservation (in the worst case), one has to practice evil while appearing good and subjugate and rob the weak who are not one's own people. Just the opposite of what is usually considered justice or what a just man does. (C.f., Plato's *Republic*.)

The decisive question is: which goal is better? The wise is wise because he realizes that what the Roman Church teaches – the next life – is but an illusion. This is easily understood. Machiavelli also realizes that the soul is an illusion so that what Plato has taught about how the most just man is also the happiest man, in this life as well as in the next, is but rubbish. (Not to mention Aristotle's view of the

goal of life as the perfection of human potentials.) The only realistic goal is self-preservation, glory in this world, and strength of the state. This is how, when Machiavelli becomes wise, he becomes evil and teaches evil as the “true way”.

Ultimately, what all people have in common is the desire to be happy. The primary goal of everyone, the ancient as well as the modern, the vulgar as well as the wise, is to be happy. Disagreement arises because people have different secondary goals, i.e., different conceptions as to the means by which they can achieve happiness, and they have different conceptions of the means because they have different conceptions of what reality consists of and how it works and because they see happiness in different things. When we say that the change of goals is decisive here, we mean the change in secondary goals. While the vulgar masses are happy when they can preserve themselves in relative comfort and security, the ambitious few are only happy when they can achieve something glorious. The ancients and Christians, because they believe in the existence of the soul and life after death, equate goodness with happiness, while the wise, because he does not believe in such myths anymore, is willing to be evil in order to be happy. In other words, Machiavelli preaches evil precisely because he is wiser, and he has become wiser when he has acquired a better, more realistic, understanding of what reality consists of and how it works.

Put it in this way: the secondary goals which Machiavelli has devised are superior to those which the Great Tradition has taught. Morality was originally meant to ensure happiness, and yet it has turned out to be more a hindrance to happiness than a help. The wise man therefore disregards morality. One can recall many instances of such sort of “Machiavellian wisdom” in popular representations as well. For example, the movie “Sicario”. Benicio del Toro and his CIA people are willing to violate the laws to get the bad guys because the original purpose of the laws is to stop the bad guys; if these laws somehow become a hindrance to getting the bad guys, then they feel perfectly justified in bending or even disregarding the laws. They look down on the FBI agent Emily Blunt who isn’t willing to violate the laws to fight evil and regard her as “weak” because she somehow couldn’t understand all this and takes the means to an end to be the end in itself. As such representation clearly demonstrates, the acquisition of wisdom leads to the practice of evil, or the disregard of morality, and disdain for those who have too much scruples. (As Benicio tells Emily in the end, “Go to a little town where laws still matter. *Here* you have to be a wolf, and you are not a wolf.”)

Machiavelli demonstrates his superior wisdom vis-à-vis the Great Tradition often with silence. Of course the subscriber of the Great Tradition will admit that being good and never deviating from goodness and morality will often ruin the prince, but he will insist that the prince will thereby not have to go to hell after he dies. Machiavelli makes no mention of such obvious kind of objection and so no attempt to answer it in either the *Prince* or the *Discourses*. As Strauss emphasizes, the wise shows his disapproval frequently by being silent about it. The wise *knows* that there is no afterlife, no heaven and no hell, *because* he is wise. Again, wisdom leads to cynicism and the disregard of morals.

Here Strauss essentially says that Machiavelli departs from the Great Tradition when he has acquired a new understanding of reality – in this case, the understanding that there is no such a thing as “soul”:

The result of that analysis can be stated as follows. Moral virtue, wished for by society and required by it, is dependent on society and therefore subject to the primary needs of society. It does not consist in the proper order of the soul. It has no other source than the needs of society; it has no second and higher source in the needs

of the mind. Through an irony beyond Machiavelli's irony, his silence about the soul is a perfect expression of the soulless character of his teaching: he is silent about the soul because he has forgotten the soul, just as he has forgotten tragedy and Socrates. It is ironical in the same way in which his half silence about philosophy is ironical (*Thoughts*, p 294).

Then Strauss again from *Thoughts*, p. 244 onward:

The common understanding of goodness had found its classic expression in Aristotle's assertion that virtue is the habit of choosing well and that choosing well or ill as well as the habits of choosing well or ill (the virtues or vices) are voluntary: man is responsible for having become and for becoming virtuous or vicious. Man can choose the good or the bad; he possesses a free will. This freedom is compatible with the 'natural and absolute necessity' through which man is inclined towards the perfect good or true happiness; it is also compatible with that necessity through which means or particular good or evil things are linked to ends or the end: by choosing the means without which he cannot possibly achieve his end or achieve it well, man chooses freely. But freedom of the will is incompatible with the necessity of compulsion through which a man is literally compelled by other agents to act against his natural inclination. Machiavelli seems to adopt this view. In accordance with the fact that he teaches throughout his two books what man ought to do, he explicitly rejects the opinion of 'many' who hold that chance and God govern all things of the world: that opinion is incompatible with the recognition of free will and therewith of prudence and virtue. Chance, he declares, rules half of our actions whereas 'our free will' or 'we' rule the other half. 'Our free will' or 'we' seem to be limited only by chance; there seems to be no room for nature or necessity. Chance is irresistible to everything except virtue or the wise use of our freedom; virtue can limit, if not break, the power of chance; virtue can subjugate chance, i.e. it can put chance into its service. Man can be the master of his fate. Yet chance presupposes nature and necessity. Therefore, the question concerns less the relation of freedom and chance than the relation of freedom on the one hand and nature and necessity on the other: can virtue control nature and necessity as it can control chance?

If the core of virtue is freedom of the will, the acts of virtue consist in freely choosing the right means for the right end or in freely choosing to do what, as reason or prudence shows, ought to be done. Actions prompted by virtue are fundamentally different from actions prompted by necessity; only the former deserve praise. For instance, to relieve the burden of the common people out of liberality is radically different from doing the same action because necessity compels one to it or because one has no choice but to do it. To act virtuously means to follow reason and in so doing not to be subject to necessity. Yet it is not always possible to follow reason (e.g. to be liberal or to be just). Men are compelled by necessity to do many things of which reason disapproves. In such cases acting virtuously consists in submitting to necessity – and even to the necessity to sin. Necessity makes it impossible for men always to obey what we would call the moral law. Since people ascribe to man a much greater freedom than he possesses, or since they ignore the power of necessity, they frequently blame men for actions which those men were compelled to commit.

They believe for instance that it was Caesar's wickedness that was responsible for the fall of the Roman republic: he was free to live in his fatherland like Scipio before him; they do not see that the Roman republic fell because of its corruption which antedated Caesar and which was caused by the strife connected with the agrarian law and by the prolongation of military commands, to say nothing of the inevitable ruinous consequences of Rome's glorious conquests and also to say nothing of the fact that Caesar's action was excused by the ingratitude which the Roman republic had exhibited toward him.

Strauss passes over the fact that a change of goal is decisive here. A man who has determined to be good (his goal in life) would not be compelled by necessities to do something of which his reason (i.e. his moral) disapproves. He would rather let himself be ruined in order to remain good than preserve himself or succeed while no longer qualifying as good. Again, the difference between the wise man and the good man is that the former recognizes that the latter also in fact wants happiness – and therefore self-preservation or success – but is simply too blinded by the traditional, erroneous, view which equates goodness with happiness to see that he *should have* let himself be compelled by necessities to do evil in order to achieve happiness. Everyone has experience of this sort – to reinforce the earlier example of the movie “Sicario”: the wise looks down on the unwise because the latter refuses to budge and violate the rules for the sake of expediency: what is really going on is that the wise sees that the unwise has not acquired a more correct understanding of what the goal of life is, what the structure of reality is like, and what the proper means to happiness are. It's not necessarily the case that the common people blame Caesar because they underestimate the power of necessities. It could be that they are similarly too blinded by the traditional, erroneous, equation of goodness with happiness as to judge that Caesar should have adopted the goal of being good rather than being successful.

Strauss continues to explain why being evil is the true way (*Thoughts*, p. 254 – 260): the Machiavellian reason why the foundation for morality is immorality and why the end of any state, or the “common good” to which any good citizen should contribute, is in fact something immoral, the conquest and domination of the weak in the international domain, and the Machiavellian insight into reality that moral rules are “effective” only in ordinary cases and that immoral actions are required to achieve the common good in extraordinary cases. Again, pay attention to the italics I have added:

From Machiavelli's point of view this means that the best regime, as Aristotle as well as Plato conceived of it, is an imagined republic or an imagined principality. Imagined states are based on the premise that rulers can or must exercise the moral virtues and avoid the moral vices even in the acts of ruling. According to Machiavelli this premise is based on the more fundamental premise that most men are good; for if most men are bad, the ruler cannot possibly rule his subjects if he does not adapt himself in a considerable measure to their badness. As will appear later, Machiavelli has indicated precisely the root of his disagreement with the classics by pointing to the fact of human badness. But every indication is insufficient and may even be wrong if taken literally. For Aristotle teaches as clearly as Machiavelli himself that most men are bad as well as that all men desire wealth and honor. Yet this very fact leads the classics to the conclusion that the best men, to be rewarded with outstanding honors, ought to rule the many bad by coercing them; they must indeed know thoroughly the bad and their ways; but such knowledge is perfectly compatible with immunity to badness. Yet according to Aristotle, man is the worst of all living beings

if he is without law and right, and law and right depend upon political society. In other words, men become virtuous by habituation; such habituation requires laws, customs, examples and exhortations, and is therefore properly possible only within and through political society. In the words of Machiavelli, good examples arise from good education, good education arises from good laws, and good laws arise from most shocking things. For if virtue presupposes political society, political society is preceded by pre-moral or sub-moral men and indeed founded by such men. There cannot be a moral law of unconditional validity; the moral law cannot possibly find listeners and hence addressees before men have become members of civil society, or have become civilized. Morality is possible only after its condition has been created, and this condition cannot be created morally: morality rests on what to moral men must appear to be immorality. One can avoid this conclusion only by making one of the two following assumptions. Either one must assume that men are good, not only at the beginning of republics but at the beginning simply; in that case they would not need civil society for becoming good. Or one must assume that civil society is founded by men of heroic virtue – of a kind of moral virtue which is not derived from habituation. To make this assumption means from Machiavelli's point of view to have an unwarranted belief in the goodness of which man's nature is capable and in the power of that goodness. Not semi-divine or divinely inspired benefactors of the human race but men like Cesare Borgia and especially the criminal emperor Severus reveal to us the true features of the first founders of society. The situation in which the foundation took place recurs whenever society as a whole is in grave danger from within or without. In all such situations, the modes used by the original founder must be used again if there is to be society and its offspring, morality. Morality can exist only on an island created or at any rate protected by immorality.

The primary badness which is severely limited by civil society and especially by the good civil society affects civil society however good. Reason may dictate the practice of moral virtue; necessity renders such practice impossible in important areas. Therefore the best regime of the classics is merely imaginary. The classics demand that the end of civil society be the practice of moral virtue. But even the sober Aristotle is compelled to admit that no state which has 'ever been seen and known to be truly' makes moral virtue its end: to the extent to which actual states have any single and supreme end, that end is lording it over their neighbors without any regard to right or wrong. These states admit that virtue is necessary and they praise and honor virtue; but they conceive of virtue as a means for obtaining external goods, i.e., wealth and honor or glory. But if no state regards moral virtue as its end, how can one say that the natural end of the state is the promotion of virtue? Can something which is contradicted by the universal practice of mankind be natural to man? Classical political philosophy culminates in the description of imagined states and thus is useless because it does not accept as authoritative the end which all or the most respectable states pursue. *That end is the common good conceived of as consisting of freedom from foreign domination and from despotic rule, rule of law, security of the lives, the property and the honor of every citizen, ever increasing wealth and power, and last but not least glory or empire.* The common good as pursued by states which are 'seen and known to be truly' does not include virtue, but a certain kind of virtue is required for the sake of that common good. In accordance with how men live one

must then start from the fact that virtue, far from being the end of civil society, is a means for achieving *the common good in the amoral sense*. Virtue in the true sense is patriotism, full dedication to the well-being of one's society, a dedication which extinguishes or absorbs all private ambition in favor of the ambition of the republic. The common good is the end only of republics. Hence, the virtue which is truly virtue can best be described as republican virtue. Republican virtue has some affinity to moral virtue, so much so that republics come to view as morally superior to principalities. Republics are less given to ingratitude and faithlessness, and they possess greater goodness and humanity than do princes. Political freedom is incompatible with corruptness of the people. This does not mean however that republics are to be preferred in the last analysis on moral grounds. They are to be preferred with a view to the common good in the amoral sense. Republics can adapt themselves better to the change of times than can monarchies because their government consists of men of different natures, and different natures are required in different kinds of times. Republics do not depend upon the hazards of hereditary succession. They are incompatible with absolute power of any individual. In republics there is more life and therefore greater dedication to the common good than in monarchies. The moral superiority of republics is to some extent an accidental result of the republican structure. A republic can afford to be more grateful than a prince because, if it is properly constructed, it has a sufficient supply of able captains who mutually supervise and check one another so that no harm will come to the republic from the gratitude by which it encourages its victorious captains. Republics keep better faith than princes because of the cumbersome character of republican proceedings, which do not permit sudden and secret switches from one policy to another.

One of the reasons why Machiavelli distinguishes between virtue and goodness is his desire to indicate the difference between republican virtue and moral virtue. Goodness is not always compatible with the common good, whereas virtue is always required for it. Acts of kindness, however well-intentioned, may lead to the building up of private power to the detriment of the public power. A most important means for making a republic great is to keep the public rich and the citizens poor. To permit the citizens to become rich means to permit some citizens to become rich and hence to make possible the dependence of citizens on private citizens or the destruction of civic equality. At the same time it means to introduce luxury and therewith effeminacy into the city. To keep the citizens poor, the republic must honor poverty; it must prevent the preponderance of trade and the mingling with foreigners. Austerity and severity are the clearest signs of republican virtue. The leading men in a republic ought to be harsh rather than gentle, cruel rather than humane, hated rather than beloved, lest the people adhere to them rather than to the republic. By becoming humane, a republic runs the danger of becoming abject. This is not to deny that humane conduct towards enemies may sometimes be more conducive to conquest than force itself. In the chapter which is devoted to proving this proposition, Machiavelli retells the story of how Scipio acquired high reputation in Spain by his chastity: he returned a young and beautiful wife to her husband without having touched her; it was not his chastity, which in the circumstances would have been a politically irrelevant virtue, but his generosity which redounded to the benefit of

Rome. The substitution of republican virtue for moral virtue implies a criticism of moral virtue which can be stated as follows. From the point of view of society at any rate, the moral virtue which comprises all other moral virtues is justice. In order to bring to light the nature of justice, Plato wrote the Republic in which he demanded among other things that the guardians of the city be savage toward strangers. Aristotle, the classic exponent of moral virtue, i.e., of the highest kind of that virtue which is not knowledge, reproves Plato for having made that demand: one ought to be gentle toward everyone, one ought not to be savage toward anyone except toward those who act unjustly. Aristotle assumes that it is always possible and safe to distinguish between foreigners and unjust enemies. He certainly refrains from reproving Plato for having purified the luxurious city without having forced it to restore the land which it had taken from its neighbors in order to lead a life of luxury. Cruelty towards strangers cannot be avoided by the best of citizens as citizens. Justice which is the habit of not taking away what belongs to others while defending what belongs to oneself rests on the firm ground of the selfishness of society. 'The factual truth' of moral virtue is republican virtue. If the common good in the sense stated is the ultimate end, every means, regardless of whether it is morally good or not, is good if it is conducive to that end. The killing of innocent men, even of one's own brother, will be good if it is needed for that most just and laudable end. It can only be for lack of a suitable example that Machiavelli did not apply to parricide what he teaches regarding fratricide. The example of Junius Brutus enables him to say that those who wish to maintain a newly established republic must kill the sons of Brutus, i.e., those disaffected with the republic. Those who say that the killing of innocent men for the good end sets a bad example forget that terrible things manifestly done for the salvation of the fatherland cannot be used to excuse the doing of terrible things which have no connection whatever with the salvation of the fatherland. This is to say nothing of the fact that only known or professed misdeeds can be used by others as examples. For if deception is laudable and glorious when practiced against foreign enemies, there is no reason that it should not be permissible against actual or potential domestic enemies of the fatherland, i.e., of the republic-for where there is no republic there is no fatherland-and not merely after the outbreak of a civil war or when it may be too late. When the existence of the fatherland is at stake, one ought not to be concerned with justice or injustice, with compassion or cruelty, with the laudable or the infamous. There cannot be republics where there is no equality; such equality is abhorred by the feudal nobility or gentry, i.e., by a certain kind of men who live in abundance without having to work; such men must be destroyed if there is to be a republic. All laws favorable to public liberty arise from civic discord, from the liberty-loving people venting its ambition, its anger, its malignant humors against fellow citizens in tumults or riots; since the effect is good, the causes – discord, disorder, the passions – must be declared to be very good if it is true that the principal cause is of higher rank than its effects. The multitude does not desire public liberty in all cases; in case it does not, to use fraud and force against the multitude itself for the sake of public liberty is unobjectionable. If every mode of action and every quality deserves praise or blame only with a view to its being conducive or harmful to the common good, able governors or captains degraded by vices however unnatural which do no harm to the republic and do not become publicly known are infinitely to be preferred to saintly rulers who lack political and military ability. To use the words

of a historian who is well-known for his strict adherence to moral principle, 'a weak man may be deemed more mischievous to the state over which he presides than a wicked one.' The common good may be endangered by the legal use of public power; in such cases it is unobjectionable, if appeals to the patriotism of the power-holder are useless, to bribe him for the sake of the public good. *One may summarize Machiavelli's thought on this point by saying that moral modes of action are the ordinary modes, the modes appropriate in most cases, whereas the immoral modes are the extraordinary ones, the modes required only in extraordinary cases.* One may object to Machiavelli's view of the relation between moral virtue and the common good by saying that it abolishes the essential difference between civil societies and bands of robbers, since robbers too use ordinary modes among themselves whenever possible. Machiavelli is not deterred by this consideration. He compares the Roman patricians, the most respectable ruling class that ever was, to small birds of prey, and he quotes Livy's observation that a certain chief of pirates equalled the Romans in piety.

The common good claims to be the good of everyone. But since the common good requires that innocent individuals be sacrificed for its sake, the common good is rather the good of the large majority, perhaps even the good of the common people as distinguished from the good of the nobles or of the great. This does not mean that the majority ought to rule in order to take care of the good of the majority. The majority cannot rule. In all republics, however well ordered, only a tiny minority ever arrives at exercising functions of ruling. For the multitude is ignorant, lacks judgment, and is easily deceived; it is helpless without leaders who persuade or force it to act prudently. There exists in every republic an antagonism between the people and the great, the people desiring not to be oppressed by the great and the great desiring to lord it over the people. It is in the best interest of the people that it be confronted and led by a virtuous and warlike nobility with which it shares political power in due proportion. Only if political power is shared by the great and the people in due proportion, or in other words if there is a proper proportion between the force of the great and the force of the people, will there be public liberty and proper consideration for the common good. What that proper proportion is depends decisively on whether the republic in question wishes to found an empire or is content with preserving itself. A republic dedicated to aggrandizement or acquisition needs the voluntary cooperation of its armed plebs; an armed and virile plebs will naturally demand a considerable share in political power and in the fruits of conquest, and will not hesitate to support those demands with indecorous, disorderly and even illegal actions; republican greatness and perfect order are incompatible; an imperial republic must give its plebs a greater share in political power than a non-imperial republic. In fact, republics are not free to choose between a policy of aggrandizement or one of mere preservation. Every republic may be compelled by circumstances to engage in a policy of aggrandizement and must therefore prepare itself for such contingencies by enlisting the fervent cooperation of the common people. It would be more precise to say that 'the desire for acquisition is very natural and ordinary, and when men who are able to acquire do acquire, they will always be praised and not blamed.' Accordingly one of the ends of every republic is to make acquisitions.

21 June

Read the beginning of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Salvador Nunez's introduction to the Spanish translation of Cicero's *La invención retórica* (on the early life of Cicero). Listened to Christopher Caldwell on the situation in Europe, Conversation with Bill Kristol, 26.05.2017. Also listened to the interviews with Dick Cheney and Elizabeth Cheney at the Reagan Foundation's virtual event on 15.06.2020.

Strauss explains the Machiavellian reason why the people are the keepers of morality and why they demand that the rulers be always good and moral as well:

The goodness of the people consists less in its inability to commit impious or atrocious actions... than in its inability to color its wicked actions: it does not understand the things of the world... What Machiavelli means to say is that the natural home of goodness is the people because the people lacks responsibility for the common good and can therefore afford to be good or to abide by those rules of conduct with which the citizens must generally comply if there is to be society. Machiavelli does not mean to say that the people is by nature good... (*Thoughts*, p. 263).

When the peace-loving people oppose Cheney's plan to invade Iraq, or when they form a grand jury to indict Cheney on criminal charges when he is about to leave office, this is why Cheney looks down on them: these ignorant people do not understand the things of the world and believe that it is possible for the prince to be always law-abiding because they have no comprehension of how the common good – and their own interests – can in fact be achieved rather than simply imagined.

22 June

More quotes from Strauss' "Machiavelli's Teaching" to support the foregoing:

The people are then guided by a false notion of virtue. 'True virtue,' 'the true way,' consists not in the extirpation of ambition but in ambition guided by prudence. Lacking prudence, the people identifies human excellence with goodness or with unselfish devotion to the well-being of others (p. 264).

Machiavelli is far from denying that man's dependence on man compels most members of a society in their intercourse with one another to comply with certain simple and crude rules of conduct (the prohibitions against murder, fraud, theft and so on) and to cherish such qualities as gratitude, kindness, faithfulness and gentleness; but he contends that the same needs which make man dependent on other men compel him to form political societies the very preservation of which requires the transgression of those simple rules no less than their observation, as well as the practice of those virtues no less than that of their opposites. (p. 264 – 265)

He is far from denying that there are some men who are genuinely kind and humane, not from fear or calculation but by nature; yet he contends that such men when entrusted with high office can become a public menace (p. 265).

Just the opposite of Professor Drury's warning about the Straussians!

Goodness is the sum of habits which the majority of men living together must possess in order not to be disturbed by one another and by their government in the enjoyment of life, liberty and property. Virtue as it has hitherto come to sight is the sum of habits which the rulers must possess in order to protect themselves and the good subjects against the bad subjects as well as against foreign enemies; the army, i.e., the citizenry, must partake of this virtue to some extent. (ibid.)

Thus, in order for the state to be strong, the people will have to be strong also to some extent – strong enough as to be willing to sacrifice morals for the sake of expediency: thus Machiavelli wrote *La Mandragola* to persuade the people to be a little more utilitarian and a little less moral (to loosen up).

The difficulty concerning the transformation of a principality into a republic consists rather in the unwillingness of the prince to effect such transformation, and this unwillingness is not altogether reprehensible. In order to make a given corrupt matter incorrupt and thus to make possible freedom and the common good, it is necessary to commit innumerable acts of murder, treachery and robbery or to display an extreme cruelty. A humane prince will shrink from such a course, especially since the future realization of the common good is of necessity uncertain, and will instead prefer to tolerate the prevailing corruption and thus perpetuate it (p. 268).

The distinction between the common good and the private good is less pronounced in the case of the prince than in that of a republican magistrate; for the prince 'to maintain the state' means 'to maintain himself.' The prince is justified in committing all kinds of terrible deeds provided they are necessary for his security and the security of his power and provided he uses his power afterward for benefiting his subjects. In order to benefit his subjects or to make his fatherland most happy, it is not necessary that he be dedicated to the common good or possess goodness and conscience. It is sufficient if he realizes that his power cannot be secure and his ambition cannot be satisfied unless he benefits his subjects, if he has a clear grasp of what constitutes the well-being of his subjects, and if he acts vigorously in accordance with this knowledge. Exclusive concern with his own well-being, i.e., with his security and glory, so long as that concern is guided by intelligence and sustained by strength of will or temper, is sufficient to make a prince a good prince and even to earn him eternal glory. He certainly need not possess and exercise moral virtue proper, although the reputation for possessing some of the moral virtues is indispensable for him. The prince need not even possess virtue in the sense of such dedication to the common good as excludes ambition. But he must possess that virtue which consists of 'brain,' or 'greatness of mind,' and manliness combined – the kind of virtue praised by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* and possessed by the criminals Agathocles and Severus. This is the most obvious message of the *Prince* as a whole (p. 269).

And just as free states may be established by means of violence, tyranny may be established by consent. For the proper conduct of tyrannical government, it is necessary to remember that while the end of the many is most respectable, the many

themselves are not. They are unable to rule themselves or others. Those whose cause is most just are least capable of defending it; it must be defended by men whose end is, to say the least, less just; justice depends on injustice (p. 271).

Thus the message of *La Mandragola* for Cheney: the American people need oil but they do not know how to get it: they do not know how to be so bad as to invade foreign lands to take their oil. They need Cheney to do it for them without their knowing.

Machiavelli draws the conclusion that the citizens who in a republic engage in an enterprise either in favor of liberty or in favor of tyranny, must consider the available matter: the neutrality of his advice corresponds to the moral neutrality of the problem, namely, of the problem as to how to seek glory or to 'acquire' (p. 273).

According to Drury, this is part of Strauss' (the ancients') "tyrannical teaching". The wise never condemns the tyrant for using fraud and violence to get, and maintain himself, in power. The wise doesn't care. What he does care is whether the tyrant listens to the advice of the wise when it comes to ruling. Hence Machiavelli never condemns the tyrant for being a tyrant, but only blames him when he lacks virtue. Therefore:

There is then no essential difference between the public spirited founder of a republic and the selfish founder of a tyranny: both have to commit crimes and both have to pay due regard to that part of society the cause of which is most just. As for the difference between their intentions, one may say with Aristotle that the intentions are hidden. In the last analysis farsighted patriotism and farsighted selfishness lead to the same results. In other words, regardless of whether we start from the premise of justice or from the premise of injustice, we arrive at the same conclusion: in order to achieve its goal, justice must use injustice and injustice must use justice; for both, a judicious mixture of justice and injustice, a certain middle course between justice and injustice, is required (p. 273).

23 June

To the extent to which Machiavelli's two books are meant for immediate prudent use rather than for rendering secure the basis of prudence, their broad purpose is to show the need for reckoning with the selfish desires of the rulers and the ruled as the only natural basis of politics, and therefore for trusting, not in men's good will, nor in mercenaries, fortresses, money, or chance but in one's own virtue (if one possesses it) as the ability to acquire for oneself the highest glory and hence to acquire for one's state whatever makes it strong, prosperous, and respected. The wise rulers who act with a view to their own benefit will enlist the cooperation of the ruled, who likewise act with a view to their own benefit, in such activities as cannot but be detrimental to others. Since the many can never acquire the eternal glory which the great individuals can achieve, they must be induced to bring the greatest sacrifices by the judiciously fostered belief in eternity of another kind. (*Thoughts*, p. 282).

The foundation of Machiavelli's new modes and orders is the liberation and validation of selfishness. How to manipulate it so that, while pursuing one's selfish interests, one is contributing to the common

good at the same time. This is the true way because it is in accord with nature, as well as conforming to the correcting understanding of what reality consists of and how it works. Machiavelli wants to bring benefit to everyone by teaching everyone the truth, the true way, and liberating everyone's selfishness from the constraints of morality. Hence *La Mandragola*. This is the teaching of the wise when he is disillusioned with the Great Tradition and becomes enlightened as to what nature and reality really are.

In this way Machiavelli has initiated modernity even though, when his successors follow him, they distort him to some extent. For modernity, ever since Enlightenment, has been about the liberation of human selfishness from moral restraints by arguing that, within a good system, the common good is enhanced when everyone pursues his or her own self-interests rather than damaged. Thus, for example, Adam Smith. The successors distort Machiavelli because their notions of self-interest and the common good are primarily economic (the individual citizens' pursuit of monetary advantages and the economic prosperity of the whole society) rather than political.

24 June

Began reading again Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* (Italian and the Mansfield/ Tarcov translation) and Mansfield's *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders*. Also browsed through John Bolton's new book, *The Room Where It Happened*.

Listened to Quentin Skinner's talk, "Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction": Google Talk on 06.02.2020. He emphasizes how Machiavelli wrote his *The Prince* as a commentary on Cicero, how the other classical thinker he had in mind was Seneca, and how the *Discourses* was widely read by the Republicans during the Glorious Revolution and by the Founding Fathers during the American Revolution (thus having an influence on the republican movements during Enlightenment). Also Marilyn Migiel's talk about her book, *The Ethical Dimensions of the Decameron* (23.05.2016).

Commenting on Machiavelli's seeming discouragement for anyone who wants to conspire against a prince in *Discourses*, III 6 – the most important section in the book – Mansfield writes:

Conspiracy is discouraged directly, and with such detail that it is thereby encouraged indirectly. This proves to mean that direct conspiracy is discouraged and indirect conspiracy encouraged... This chapter is chiefly addressed to the man of notable quality (III 2) who would rather retire. It shows him how to enter politics effectively by indirect conspiracy. It shows him how to avoid the dangers of conspiracy by separating the movers or executioners of the conspiracy from the one who has inspired it, while maintaining a connection between them which combines 'extrinsic accident' and 'intrinsic prudence' (III 1). Machiavelli had said in the proemium to the first book that he believed he could carry his burden so as to leave a short journey to another to carry it to its destined place (MNMO, p. 319).

Following Drury's procedure – i.e. to attribute the view which the philosopher attributes to the grand master on whom the philosopher is commenting to the philosopher himself – we may see that Mansfield intended to run an indirect conspiracy by separating himself from the executioner of his conspiracy. The purpose of the conspiracy was to direct America to conquer the world and make itself into the greatest, and the last, empire in human history, but Mansfield ran it indirectly by staying behind the scene and letting Cheney do it. This also conforms to what Drury says is Strauss' vision, the

indirect rule of the wise from behind the scene. The conspiracy became even more indirect when Cheney used George W. Bush as a front and conducted his programs from behind the scene as well. The executioner, i.e. Bush, was thus two steps away from the mastermind of the conspiracy, the *Massimo Mansfield*.

25 June

Here Strauss mentions how enlightenment and wisdom could lead to evil – here, universal contempt – rather than to universal love:

The most excellent man, as distinguished from the most excellent captain, or soldier of war or of love, acquires full satisfaction and immunity to the power of chance through knowledge of ‘the world.’ To the extent to which this knowledge permeates a man, it engenders in him a humanity which goes together with a certain contempt for most men (*Thoughts*, p. 290).

Today, done with reading *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. From now on, Shadia Drury’s book on Alexandre Kojève, Mansfield’s MNMO, Livy’s *History of Rome* (German), and Machiavelli’s *Discourses* (Italian).

Listened to Walter McDougall’s lecture, “America’s Machiavellian Moment” (Foreign Policy Research Institute, 21.05.2018). He emphasizes that the Venetian Republic was the model for both the republicans during the Glorious Revolution and the Founding Fathers during the American Revolution.

26 June

In this passage (Machiavelli on Brutus in Book III 2 of *Discourses*), Mansfield is again referring to himself: “... the necessary connection between wisdom and public motive for which we looked in vain in the nonphilosophic Brutus. The hidden public motive of the philosopher is Machiavellian in a noble sense, which is intended to direct and to justify all the hidden private motives of politicians vulgarly called Machiavellian” (MNMO, p. 308). The politicians with hidden private motives are presumably the other Republicans, such as Newt Gingrich. (Cheney is presumably not vulgar although Machiavellian.)

Watched two presentations by Christopher Caldwell at the Program on Constitutional Government at Harvard where he was introduced by Mansfield: “The Election: What just Happened” (22.12.2016) and “The Endless 1960s” (23.12.2014).

28 June

To elaborate the note from 15 June. Indeed, Mansfield has elaborated Strauss’ point in MNMO, p. 299 – 305, i.e. his commentary on *Discourses*, III 1, about periodic need for renewal to return to the beginning. The method which Machiavelli proposes is sensational execution to generate great fear in the people, which fear they had felt in the very beginning just before the establishment of the regime. Mansfield first emphasizes that the event has to be sensational:

Machiavelli indicates that although executions enforce laws, their true purpose is political in maintaining a certain government and its 'way of life', and the means is sensational display rather than dignified legality (p. 302).

Then, as Machiavelli uses the examples of the attempts by St Francis and St Dominic to renew Christianity by bringing it back to the beginning, that to bring the order back to the beginning one in fact has to create a new order: the orders which St Francis and St Dominic introduced were in fact new orders, not merely revival of old but extinct orders. Then, that St Francis and St Dominic failed in their renewal or return to the beginning because they failed to inspire fear but instead tried to inspire love:

Returning to the beginning requires new orders, for the beginning is not old but new; but the purpose of the new is to inspire fear (p. 304).

Finally, Mansfield emphasizes that the return to the beginning is supposed to be carried out by one virtuous man rather than relying on an institutional order. For example:

Returning republics toward their beginning arises also, we are reminded, from the simple virtue of 'one man' without depending on any law that incites (*stimoli*) you to any execution... (p. 303).

When Cheney introduces his new modes and orders, he is also trying to return America to its beginning. And he knows he has to do it himself (although through a conspiracy planned by him) and has to inspire fear. Hence 911 attacks. The only thing he has changed from Mansfield's teaching is that a sensational terrorist attack (murder of innocent citizens) has here replaced a sensational execution (of supposed criminals).

Watched Christopher Caldwell's lecture "How to think about Putin's Russia", Hillsdale College, 18.04.2017.

1 July

Listened to James Corbett, New World Next Week (1558) (25.06.2020): the Nova Scotia shooter withdrew money on 30 March just before the shooting in a manner consistent with the way RCMP paid its informants and assets: the shooter must have had connection with RCMP.

2 July

Watched Russland.RU, "Russland: Große Mehrheit für Verfassungsänderung" (01.07.2020).

3 July

Watched ARTE "China: Erzwungene Geständnisse im TV-Tribunal" (25.06.2020). Then listened to Whitney Webb's first interview on Ghislaine Maxwell's arrest (plus comments on the government's reaction to Coronavirus).

4 July

Listened to Whitney Webb's interview on The Tim Dillon Show (04.07.2020). (On Ghislaine Maxwell.)

7 July

Watched Nicolas Cage's "Lord of War" (the movie supposedly based on the life of Viktor Bout). At one point, Cage's wife pleaded that he not do arm-trafficking anymore. She: "We have enough already..." Cage: "But I'm good at it..." That's apparently his motivation. Suddenly, the Machiavellian principle became clear to me.

I have always rejected the Straussian view that there is no moral because there is no objective foundation for morality. I have argued, from my thermodynamic point of view, that there is such objective foundation: good is superior to badness because it is harder to be good and to do good; it's like an uphill process. And yet, the Machiavellian amoral view, that the Prince should not allow morality to tie his hands and prevent him from doing great things to achieve glory – that he should not let morals restrain his "virtue" – is in fact also based on the same thermodynamic point of view. When the Prince lets morals tie his hands, he is suppressing the development of his human potentials. It is harder to develop one's human potentials than not to develop it and to simply sit comfortably at home and not take any risks. This is why Machiavelli – and Strauss and Mansfield – object to moral constraints on the Prince. When the Prince wants to do great things and achieve glory, he is also going uphill. If he does nothing and simply takes refuge in comfort, he is going downhill. If Cage doesn't do what he is good at – even though it violates the laws or moral standards – he is resting and letting his potentials rot and so going downhill. Machiavelli – and Strauss and Mansfield – value nobility and struggle and war precisely because these things are harder on life – an uphill process – while mere consumption and entertainment (the ideal life of the typical citizen in the "universal and homogeneous state") are easy and so a downhill process. Carl Schmitt has in fact made this point: he objects to liberal democracy because, by reducing life to mere consumption and entertainment, it suppresses the development of human potentials.

15 July

Watched Laura Poitras' "CitizenFour".

17 July

Since the beginning of April, I have started composing my speculative essay on the possible relationship between Dick Cheney and Harvey Mansfield as the source of the former's politics during the turbulent years of the Bush Administration. By the beginning of July, I have finished most of the introductory comments. I'll probably finish the essay within a year and, so, for now, I would like to include here the introductory comments I did finish composing.

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HARVEY MANSFIELD AS THE SOURCE OF DICK CHENEY'S POLITICS

1.
Cheney's evil "enlightened" teacher

For anyone who knows about the true face of Cheney – namely, those 911 conspiracy theorists who know that Cheney was the master-mind behind 911 attacks – Cheney must have appeared to be a psychopath. While they are better than those who call Cheney “Darth Vader” without even believing that it is he who has orchestrated 911 attacks, their knowledge of Cheney is nevertheless still quite limited. Most of them do not know that, before 2007, Cheney’s plan in the Middle-East was actually supposed to result in military confrontation with Russia so that a nuclear holocaust would eventually engulf the whole world with the US emerging triumphant and Russia and China obliterated. Most of them have also quite missed the episode (in 2007) where Cheney was planning to explode nuclear warheads in the US and blame it on “terrorists in Iran” so that, still dreaming of nuclear holocaust, he could overcome the Establishment’s resistance and bomb Iran with nuclear bombs. If they knew about all this, they would be even more shocked as to the extent of Cheney’s supposed psychopathy – the extent to which he is their “Darth Vader” – and the greatest criminal in human history. (Indeed, Paul Craig Roberts, who, during the later years of the Bush administration, knew something about Cheney’s plan, announced in the harshest words his shock as to how Cheney was building concentration camps all over the US and planning to bomb the Muslims with nuclear bombs: just how far does the psychopathy of this man go!) My story, as you have seen and shall see more soon, is that, after 2008, Cheney’s plan had evolved into using this International Court trial over me to chip Russian officials and remotely control them to start the nuclear holocaust he had always wanted so that it would in the end all look like it was Russia’s fault. Only the Russian government knew something about this last true face of Cheney, and of course they were even more shocked as to just how evil this man could be.

What I would like to do in this essay is to examine, not Cheney’s psycho-pathology in order to exhibit to the world just how bad and sick this man really was, but the philosophy which had motivated him in the first place in order to make it known that, being not so much more evil than a typical man with maybe too much testosterone, he had merely been taught by a certain great philosopher that doing evil was in fact doing good and that he should therefore be as evil as he possibly could.

The great philosopher in question is the renowned Harvard professor Harvey Mansfield. Many left-wing political commentators during the Bush administration years have been wrong in tracing the Bush administration’s politics all to Leo Strauss. Peter Minowitz has amply demonstrated this error in his *Straussophobia* (especially the first chapter, “All Hate Leo Strauss”). The critics at the time had the tendency to indiscriminately call members of the neoconservative cabal “Straussians” – when the neocons had in fact come from diverse backgrounds with Straussianism being merely one of them: more on this below – and then mis-attribute everything they did to Leo Strauss’ teaching. A minority of scholars do pay homage to the diverse origins of the neoconservatives, the most famous being Justin Vaïsse in his 2008 master-piece *Histoire du néoconservatisme aux États-Unis*. Vaïsse’s approach, however, I find rather shallow. Not only did he fail to penetrate to the esoteric core of the neoconservative ideology, but the several dozen or so intellectuals that make up the neoconservative movement since the 1990s have, in my view, merely played a supporting role in the politics of the Bush administration, which had a hidden center on which few commentators have focused their attention. In reality, insofar as Cheney was the secret head-master of the Bush administration – this hidden center of which I’m speaking – one should rather trace all of this administration’s policies to Harvey Mansfield. The *kernel* of the Bush administration’s agendas was constituted amidst the intellectual exchanges between Dick Cheney, Bill Kristol, and Harvey Mansfield. I came to this conclusion when I was studying Harvey Mansfield’s interpretation of Machiavelli and the philosophy of government he derived therefrom and noticed that it was as if I was reading Cheney’s playbook.

However, this discovery has quite humbled me as to the supposedly evil character of Boss Cheney. Professor Mansfield struck me as a great genius. I was as much impressed by him as by Friedrich Hayek when I was once reading *The Constitution of Liberty*. A defining sign of a genius is the ability to think out reasons which no one has ever thought of to convince people why what people have always thought is bad is in fact good. For example, in *The Constitution of Liberty*, Hayek has produced an amazing demonstration as to why inequality is desirable – why it is also in the poor man’s interest to be unequal to the rich man under whose shadows he toils and survives. Now Cheney’s world-view is basically that the strong should beat up the weak and rob the weak of all that he possesses so as to become even stronger, until he rules the whole world and everyone is his slave. Since this sounds obviously stupid and psychopathic, a great philosopher is required to introduce a new way of thinking, a new way of looking at the world, in which Cheney’s action might actually appear to be doing good. When one reads Mansfield’s interpretation of Machiavelli, one indeed sees the framework of a new way of looking at the world in which beating up and robbing the weak appears to be goodness and doing good to humanity. At which point one can’t help but praise Mansfield as a genius. Ask yourself: can you create a world-view in which robbing and dominating the weak and making yourself the emperor is clearly goodness and doing good to humanity?

What I’m getting at is this. Most people have a rather limited view on wisdom and enlightenment when they restrict it to that view on the world in which everything and everyone is so beautiful and worthwhile so that the „enlightened one“ is filled with love and appreciation for everything and everyone. The „enlightened one“ is s/he who is able to see beauty where others can’t, as the New Ager would say.⁴ On the other hand, I have been for a long time considering the possibility of enlightenment in the opposite direction, or „inverse enlightenment“, where, as one acquires wisdom, one realizes just how worthless the common people and so on are and becomes filled with disdain and contempt for everything and everyone so that the „enlightened one“ comes to see deceiving, manipulating, and exploiting the ignorant masses as doing them a favor. That is, I’m warning you against mindlessly assuming that the acquisition of wisdom always leads to all-encompassing love and appreciation but want to remind you that, in many cases, in fact far more frequently than you think, wisdom is correlated with the devaluation of everything and everyone around you and hence with psychopathic behavior. It is my contention that, thanks to the teaching of his very wise teacher, Cheney is an „enlightened one“ in this opposite sense rather than having simply been born a psychopath. When he was confronted by those leftwing and liberal peace-lovers who tried to prevent him from invading Iraq, he truly looked down on them and despised them *because he could see how stupid they were* – namely, how much wiser he was than they: they were opposing him because they didn’t know what he knew. I cannot overstate the matter to you: not every „enlightened spiritual master“ teaches you universal love, universal compassion, universal appreciation, and universal forgiveness. Many such enlightened masters teach you just the opposite. Read, for example, Machiavelli, Leo Strauss, and Harvey Mansfield: they are so much wiser than you can ever imagine, and yet they teach you to be evil.

The task of tracing Cheney’s politics to Harvey Mansfield is made tremendously difficult by the fact that Cheney nowhere mentions his “teacher” in any of his writings and pronouncements. In his 2011 “autobiography”, *In My Time*, and in his 2015 policy book, *Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America*, there are several references to Bill Kristol – Mansfield’s most famous student – among other neocons, but none to Professor Mansfield. If one searches online archives, one finds

4 While writing this introduction, I came across James Redfield’s *The Celestine Prophecy*. As I examined the book, I realized how much it was the pinnacle expression of the “ordinary” enlightenment which is supposed to result in universal love and appreciation. The Straussian Machiavelli is thus the exact opposite of *The Celestine Prophecy*.

Cheney praising Bernard Lewis or Charles Krauthammer or any other neocon intellectuals during his Vice President years but never Professor Mansfield. All this is to be expected since, following the esoteric tradition handed down by Machiavelli, rediscovered by Leo Strauss, and now perpetuated by Professor Mansfield, the “teacher” – the *Massimo*, as you shall see – must remain out of sight. The true origins of Cheney’s ideas and practices must remain unknown to the public. Cheney, as well as other neocon intellectuals, is certainly not dumb enough to reveal what is *really* on his mind anywhere in the public domain. In fact, such “autobiography” as *In My Time* is not even useful for understanding anything he does. It is written for ordinary American mamas and papas who don’t know anything about politics but who get their picture about their government and politicians entirely from the bullshitting mainstream news – *it is written to dupe the common people*. I have only made use of this book in order to learn the basic facts about Cheney’s life, where he was at what time: how he dropped out from Harvard, how he started his PhD program with his wife Lynne at the University of Wisconsin, how he ended up working for Rumsfeld in the Nixon and then the Ford administration, how he returned to Wyoming during the Carter administration, how he came back to Washington DC as a congressman from Wyoming during the Reagan administration, how he became the Secretary of Defense during the George H. W. Bush administration, and so on and on.

If one doesn’t suppose the unlikely scenario that Cheney learned all his Machiavellian philosophy from Bill Kristol – the ties here have never been kept secret – one has but one admission from Mansfield, that during the late 1980s or early 1990s he had worked with Lynne Cheney on the advisory council of the National Endowment for the Humanities when she was the director of the NEH.⁵ What I propose to do here is to read through Mansfield’s academic writings – especially those on Machiavelli – and to discover ideas which seem to have inspired Cheney and underlie his actions. It is strange that no political commentators have so far done something like this; everyone has had an exclusive focus on the political commentaries of the neocon intellectuals who merely play supporting roles but never paid attention to the philosophical works of the “teacher” – with the exception of Shadia Drury, who has however erroneously focused on Leo Strauss as the teacher of some of the supporting neocon intellectuals rather than on Harvey Mansfield as the secret teacher of the central figure Dick Cheney.

2. esotericism and the neoconservative mission

I have learned Italian (not a great feat when you already know French and Spanish) simply in order to read Machiavelli in his original tongue. This is necessary because, as Strauss and then Mansfield have repeatedly emphasized, Machiavelli practiced esoteric writing and yet, to make the matter worse, translations of Machiavelli’s works (except for Mansfield’s and other Straussians’) are typically of very bad quality.⁶ Although Straussians, being members of the neoconservative cabal, would have been

5 *The New York Times*, 12.03.2006.

6 In *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 121, Strauss, after stressing that Machiavelli is one of the most skillful esoteric writers (more on this below), emphasizes the enormous care he employed to write his books: “The perfect book or speech obeys in every respect the pure and merciless laws of what has been called logographic necessity. The perfect speech contains nothing slipshod; in it there are no loose threads; it contains no word that has been picked up at random; it is not marred by errors due to faulty memory or to any other kind of carelessness; strong passions and a powerful and fertile imagination are guided with ease by a reason which knows how to use the unexpected gift, which knows how to persuade and which knows how to forbid; it allows of no adornment which is not imposed by the gravity and the aloofness of the subject matter; the perfect writer rejects with disdain and with some impatience the demand of vulgar rhetoric that expressions must be varied since change is pleasant.” Then Strauss offers his judgment on the translations of Machiavelli’s works: “The translations of Machiavelli as well as of other great writers, even if they are done with

described as the “Enemy” in my Secret History, you would be utterly wrong to not credit them, as many do not, with the highest level of scholarship. For one thing, they only read Machiavelli and other great philosophers in the original language. Secondly, they always assume the thinker in question to be not stupid or sloppy when they see him committing blunders. Many ordinary commentators, on the other hand, have tended to dismiss Machiavelli as a sloppy thinker because his writings are so full of errors. Only the more careful Straussian is able to recognize that these errors are intentional (“manifest blunders”) and one of the various ways in which Machiavelli conceals what he wants to say or in which he says what he wants to say only indirectly. Namely, only the more intelligent Straussian is able to realize that Machiavelli is a wisest esoteric writer.

Saying that Machiavelli is an esoteric writer might cause confusion, in this way. As is widely acknowledged, Machiavelli represented a revolution in the Western tradition in that he had completely inverted the classical (e.g. Aristotle) and Christian (e.g. Saint Augustine) tradition and thus set the stage for modernity. While the Straussian would also say that Machiavelli represented a revolution, what he means is that, insofar as philosophers of all time have recognized but one single truth, Machiavelli started modernity merely in the sense of being the first one to preach the truth – i.e. evil – in his own name rather than clandestinely or indirectly through the mouth of his characters.⁷ He boldly spoke the truth while the philosophers before him concealed it before the public because he had begun envisaging a different function for philosophy in the society in which it operates. This creates confusion because, on the one hand, Machiavelli has supposedly concealed what he wants to say but, on the other hand, he has distinguished himself by speaking boldly what he wants to say. What is going on?⁸

The confusion can be cleared up by realizing that there are different kinds of esotericism, approximately three. The first kind is complete concealment, in which case the philosopher means to say the opposite of what he has actually said. The second kind is half-way concealment, in which case the philosopher says one half of what he means to say and conceals the other half. The third kind is also complete concealment, but, whereas the philosopher in the preceding two cases does want a competent minority of his readers – the fellow philosophers – to discover his true meanings while concealing them from the rest of his readers, in this third case the philosopher absolutely doesn’t want anyone to discover what he has really in mind. According to Strauss, philosophers from the classical age (such as Plato) are usually of the first kind, so that one often has to assume that they mean the opposite of what they say. Now, according to Strauss, modernity is marked by the abandonment of esoteric writing because, envisaging a different function for philosophy in a different kind of society, the modern philosophers no longer regard it as necessary to protect society from philosophy. (More on this below.) But, in the beginning of modernity, they still had to hide a little and not always say what they had meant to say, and so they often said only half of what they had meant to say while leaving clues behind so that the careful reader can discover the other half on his own. In this case, the philosopher is not saying the opposite of what he means – there is no need to assume that he really means to say the

ordinary competence, are so bad because their authors read books composed according to the rules of noble rhetoric as if they had been brought forth in compliance with the rules of vulgar rhetoric.” While studying Machiavelli, I have also consulted the most typical Spanish and French translations in use. (More on this below.) My own experience has largely confirmed Strauss’ negative judgment here.

7 Leo Strauss, *Thoughts*, p. 10.

8 And so Strauss, *Thoughts*, p. 120, praises Machiavelli as one of the greatest representatives of the Great Tradition marked by esoteric writings while trying to break with that tradition: “Time and again we have become bewildered by the fact that the man who is more responsible than any other man for the break with the Great Tradition should in the very act of breaking prove to be the heir, the by no means unworthy heir, to that supreme art of writing which that tradition manifested at its peaks.”

opposite of what he has actually said; it's just that he doesn't say everything he has wanted to say. When the careful reader has discovered what he has meant but did not say, it is not the opposite of what he has actually said but either a continuation or extension of what he has actually said or a repetition of what he has actually said but on a deeper level. Now Machiavelli is an esoteric writer in this sense. He boldly teaches evil in his own name – and for this he is the founder of modernity – but not so bold as to preach all the evil he has ever had in mind to preach. The Straussian would say that, in the beginning of modernity, from 1500 to 1800, many philosophers, while wishing to abandon esoteric writing, nevertheless found themselves having to practice esoteric writing at least a little in this way, and that it is only after 1800 that esoteric writing was completely abandoned – and to such an extent that, by Strauss' time, it was actually forgotten and had to be rediscovered.⁹ This is not to say that philosophers during the beginning of modernity all practiced, when they had to write esoterically, the half-way sort of esotericism. In Strauss' opinion, for example, Spinoza is one who has meant to say the opposite of what he has actually said.

It is important to note that, luckily for us, both Leo Strauss and Harvey Mansfield practice the second type of esotericism. That is, they do not say everything they want to say, but neither is what they have actually said the opposite of what they have really had in mind. If, reading their commentaries, you have failed to penetrate to their real messages, you have at least learned something about them by staying on the surface. In no wise do you have to worry that, if you ever manage to discover the hidden messages in their writings, it would be something opposite of what they have plainly said. Shadia Drury has noticed this about Leo Strauss, although she has characterized the matter differently than I do here.¹⁰

9 In the opinion of Leo Strauss himself, Goethe was the last intellectual who was mindful that great sages of the past had practiced esoteric writing; *Thoughts*, p. 174. Arthur Melzer has more fully explained this Straussian view on the history of Western philosophy in his 2014 *Philosophy Between the Lines*. (More on this below.)

10 Thus she spells out her methodology in *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (p. lix - lxi): "In my attempt to uncover the hidden philosophy, I will not apply Strauss's method to his work. I will not attribute great significance to his silences. I will not draw any conclusions from the number of chapters in a book, or from the number of paragraphs in a chapter. Nor will I assume that what is in the center of a work is necessarily the heart of the matter. I will under no circumstances reverse what Strauss actually says or maintain that he believes the opposite of what he has actually written. I will not look behind the surface. Everything I will attribute to Strauss is directly there, not between the lines or behind the lines, but *in the lines*. The reader is entitled to wonder: if Strauss's own political ideas can be found 'in the lines', how can they be said to be hidden or esoteric? I believe that Strauss's philosophy is esoteric in the following senses. First, it is hidden behind a veil of scholarship or dispersed in the course of detailed and sometimes tedious commentaries. It is expressed in the most unsystematic fashion reflections on religious matters appearing in the context of discussions of social science methodology, insights about the crisis of modern times in the midst of interpretations of the plays of Aristophanes, and criticism of Aquinas in the context of an exposition on Marsilius of Padua.... The second sense in which Strauss's writing is esoteric is that his intention does not readily disclose itself. What Strauss appears to say clearly, explicitly and repeatedly is not the whole truth: it hides the full complexity of what he really thinks. I am not suggesting that Strauss believes the opposite of what he writes explicitly. I have no intention of dismissing what he says repeatedly and in the most obvious places as expressions of salutary myths that have no bearing on his real thought. I intend to take seriously everything that Strauss says. I do not regard, nor do I think that Strauss ever believed, that those who write esoterically are liars. Strauss says a great deal about noble lies and pious frauds, and he certainly regards these to be the essence of every genuine political philosophy. But these noble lies contain part of the truth and sometimes the whole truth. Strauss himself illustrates how the truth is contained in the lie by the story of the pious ascetic which Al Farabi uses to illustrate the secretive nature of Plato's writings... The pious ascetic was well-known in his city for his abstinence, abasement and mortification, for his probity, propriety and devotion. But for some reason he aroused the hostility of the ruler of his city. The latter ordered his arrest, and to make sure he did not flee, he placed the guards of the city gates on alert. In spite of this, the ascetic managed to escape from the city. Dressed as a drunk and singing a tune to cymbals, he approached the city gates. When the guard asked him who he was, he replied that he was the pious ascetic that everyone was looking for. The guard did not believe him, and let him go. The pious ascetic is the

The third type of esotericism is that which the ordinary neocon intellectuals – those whom I have dismissed as playing merely supporting roles – practice almost without exception. When they write a book or give a speech to advocate for a certain foreign policy approach, it is never something which they have really in mind, never the real reason why they want America to act in the way they are preaching about. And you cannot find in what they say any clues as to what they have really in mind, since there are none because they have never wanted any member of their audience – any – to discover what they have really in mind. What they have said is no more than an excuse, pure rhetoric to persuade you to do what they want you to do rather than any attempt to share with you the truth they have labored to discover. This third type of concealment is manipulation pure and simple: no matter how elegant the analysis they have presented or sophisticated the view-point they have articulated, you should never take it seriously since they don't take it seriously themselves.¹¹

Now this is how I classify the neocon intellectuals: they are either Jewish or non-Jewish, and, among those that are Jewish, either Straussians or non-Straussians.¹² As I have explained elsewhere, the mission which the Jewish neoconservatives have assigned to themselves is the crusade to save Jews – they were convinced that the holocaust would happen again if they did not intervene and that the only way to save Jews is for the Jewish elite to secretly take control of America, the most powerful nation in the world, and direct her to conquer the world and then use the empire thus created to protect Israel and shelter Jews everywhere in the world. It is a very simple agenda, obvious in all that they are doing, and yet it is their deepest secret which they will never want any outsider to know about. When it comes to the Jewish neoconservatives who are Straussians, the ultimate esoteric message that is never to be spoken about might be a little more elaborate: that the Jewish people are superior and, for this reason, frequently incur the jealousy and aggression of the inferior kind, just as the philosopher is always in danger of being killed by the stupid masses; that the superior kind, in order to survive, must then secretly take over America and direct her to protect Jews everywhere; and that what is wrong with Hitler and Stalin is not that totalitarianism itself is bad but that they have not practiced it correctly – that totalitarianism is in fact the right approach to governance, in two senses: (1) it is the cure to the disgusting “democracy” which always results in the inferior masses rising up to slaughter the superior

symbol of the esoteric writer. He lies in *deed* or manner or style of expression, but does not lie in *speech*. It is my contention that Strauss is like the pious ascetic: if we are to understand him, we must learn to take him literally. Strauss's own noble lies, like the lie of the pious ascetic, are not simple falsehoods. They are misleading not so much because of what they say, but because of the pious manner that Strauss generally adopts when he makes his most radical statements. Moreover, what Strauss actually says seems so contrary to his reputation that we are inclined not to believe him. The third sense in which Strauss's thought is esoteric has to do with the fact that Strauss's ideas are camouflaged by his dual use of key words like virtue, justice, nobility and gentlemanliness....”

11 This is, for example, how I read the classic neoconservative works by Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan which trace out the rise of the neoconservative agenda: “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy” (1996); *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in America's Foreign and Defense Policy* (2000); and *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (2003).

12 The non-Straussian Jewish neoconservative intellectuals I'm familiar with are: Robert Kagan and his brother Frederick Kagan; Daniel Pipes; Charles Krauthammer; David Frum; Max Boot; Douglas Feith; John Podhoretz; Richard Perle; Elliot Abrams; and David Horowitz. The Jewish Straussians include Paul Wolfowitz (although a disciple of Albert Wohlstetter); Abram Shulsky; and Bill Kristol (although not a rigorous Straussian at all). The non-Jewish neocon intellectuals that I have in mind include: Tom Donnelly, Gary Schmitt, Randy Scheunemann, and so on. There are of course also non-Jewish Straussians such as Francis Fukuyama. For many years, the best source of information on the neoconservative intellectuals on the Internet is The Right Web (<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/>). Since 2019, the Right Web has been replaced by The Militarist Monitor (<https://militarist-monitor.org/>), which still hosts a large database on all the neoconservatives.

race (it is democracy which has made it possible for a representative of mass men like Hitler to rise up and take over); and (2) it requires a totalitarian dictator (a “strong man”) to make America strong and lead America to conquer the world; Hitler had done it wrong not only in the sense that it should have been the superior, not the inferior, kind who should rule absolutely but also in the sense that the best totalitarian ruler should conduct his absolute rule from behind the scene without people’s noticing it (“secret kingship”).

I assume that the Jewish neoconservatives who aren’t Straussians share this more elaborate view as well even though they could have no understanding of Leo Strauss’ difficult philosophy. Thus, when Robert Kagan or Charles Krauthammer paint a gloomy picture of the world as dangerous and then emphasize America’s mission in using its military strength to rid the world of evil and spread democracy, they are, as you can certainly imagine, just trying to manipulate you to beat up the enemies of the Jewish people by appealing to your patriotism (or “ego”). They don’t necessarily have any high regard for “liberal democracy” which they constantly exalt and exhort you to implant around the world. In fact, as you can probably imagine, what they have really in mind is frequently the opposite of what is constantly on their mouth. When they want America to spread democracy, it really isn’t because America is democratic and democracy is so good and America must make the whole world good like herself. Rather, it is because, in their view, democracy is bad and makes a nation weak so that America, while making itself dictatorial in order to be strong, must make every other nation into a democracy so that, when all nations except America are made weak in this way, America can rule over them. When Daniel Pipes or John Podhoretz continually denounce “Islamofascism”, they have in fact probably no real distaste for fascism nor religious fanaticism; neither do they seriously believe that a bunch of religious fanatics in some backward countries could pose any sort of threat to America and the world. What they have really in mind is most likely that fascism and religious fanaticism are good because they make Muslims strong and so a threat to Israel so that America should go in and turn them into democrats in order that they remain weak and couldn’t threaten Israel. For this reason, I deem it not worth the time of a real philosopher to read the books on foreign policies which these ordinary neoconservative intellectuals constantly put forward as if from a mass production factory.

In my view, those Jewish neoconservatives who are not Straussians are, unlike the Straussians, simply a bunch of mediocre thinkers who are not worth the effort of any serious study.¹³ Even if they occasionally say something insightful, such as for example when Robert Kagan explained why Europe had drifted away from America during the Iraq invasion,¹⁴ you quickly lose interest as long as you realize that they don’t actually mean it and are just looking for excuses. Furthermore, critics have, in my view, grossly exaggerated their importance: it is my contention that their mission to save Jews has never played any decisive role in the Bush administration’s policies. They were able to form alliance with those non-Jewish neoconservatives because everyone here had the same means in view although the two sides had quite different ends in mind. Ultimately, as I’m trying to show here, it is the agendas of Dick Cheney and, with that, the teaching of Harvey Mansfield which matter, and neither of them is Jewish. Although Cheney was a “Judeophile” and certainly had no objection to saving Jews, his

13 I would certainly have to exclude from this harsh judgment the fathers of some of them, such as Donald Kagan and Richard Pipes, one of whom is a must-read scholar on the Peloponnesian Wars and ancient history in general and the other on modern Russian history and communism. John Podhoretz’s father Norman Podhoretz might also fall in here. On the other hand, the general high regard in which the non-Straussian neocon intellectuals hold themselves is simply incomprehensible to me.

14 His *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, as mentioned A quick way to familiarize oneself with his view is to listen to his speech at the John Adams Institute on 23 April 2003.

ultimate objective was to establish “new modes and orders” in the Machiavellian sense (*nuovi modi e ordini*). The neoconservative crusade to save Jews is subsumed within his new modes and orders and he installed the neoconservative intellectuals (both Jewish and non-Jewish) in key positions only in order to accomplish the intermediate stages on the way to his utopia.

3. bibliographical notes

For Machiavelli’s works in the original, I have utilized *Tutte le opere* edited by Mario Martelli (Sansoni, Firenze, 1971). The main texts of Machiavelli’s on which I shall, in the following, build my thesis are: *The Prince (Il principe)*, *The Discourses on Livy (Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio)*, *La Mandragola*, and *Florentine Histories (Le historie fiorentine)*. The Mansfield texts on which I shall base my thesis are: *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders*, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, *Taming the Prince*, “The Cuckold in Machiavelli’s Mandragola”, and his translations (with others or not) of *Florentine Histories*, *The Discourses*, and *The Prince*. As Professor Drury has emphasized, the way Strauss presents his view is to express it through, and thus hide behind, his commentaries on a certain classic. Mansfield has done the same. This makes things more difficult for the reader since he must be extremely erudite in order to understand the philosopher in question. Mansfield hides his philosophy of government in his commentaries on Machiavelli. To understand these commentaries, the reader must first have read not only Strauss’ commentaries on Machiavelli in which they are rooted but also the principal works of Machiavelli. Then, to understand Machiavelli, since he was also frequently doing the same, one must first have read Livy’s *History of Rome* as well as possess a general knowledge of Roman history and the history of Italy, France, and Spain until his days – not to mention other classical writers such as Polybius or Plutarch or Cicero or Seneca. In addition, to understand Mansfield and Strauss, one should also have a general knowledge of the great philosophers of the Western tradition (Plato, Aristotle, Marsilius of Padua, Hobbes, and Locke). Strauss’ and Mansfield’s commentaries are hard enough by themselves; they are even harder because enormous erudition is required for their intelligibility.

This means that the Straussian philosophy of government is not only impenetrable to the other neocon intellectuals, but must have also been so for Cheney. Cheney, with his unfinished doctoral studies in *political sciences*, cannot be expected to have the necessary erudition to understand what he is reading if he is given a copy of Strauss’ *Thoughts on Machiavelli* or Mansfield’s *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders* and *Taming the Prince*. This means that Mansfield must have taught his secret student completely orally, without the vast amount of historical examples and references to other great philosophers which one encounters in his and Strauss’ commentaries.

In case, after reading the following, you would like to explore the matter further, I should elaborate a little on Strauss’ warning about the available translations of Machiavelli. The non-Mansfield (or non-Straussian) translations that I have used are, in the case of Spanish translations, *Discurso sobre la primera década de Tito Livio* edited by Edu Robsy, *El Principe* by Angeles Cardona, and *Historia de Florencia* by Luis Navarro; and, in the case of French translations, the standard edition by Christian Bec of Sorbonne, *Machiavel: Oeuvres* (Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 1996). I can very much attest to the vastly inferior quality of these translations.

The fatally defective character of these translations is most visible in the various incorrect translations of the most important Machiavellian concept, “virtue” (*virtù*). Machiavelli takes this word directly out

of Livy (*virtus*) and it means, literally, “manliness”. By this word Machiavelli refers to the ability to be effective – to courageously overcome obstacles and achieve one’s grand objective: that specific quality which the ancients especially attribute to the masculine gender. And yet no non-Straussian translators have ever translated the word correctly, by *virtu* or “manliness”. Christian Bec paraphrases it as *vaillance*; in Spanish translations it appears as *valiente* or *valientemente* and so on. In the German translation of Livy, *virtus* is rendered *Tapferkeit*... Now when Aristotle speaks of ἀρετή in *Politics*, it is translated as “moral virtue”. The translation is correct because, when Aristotle uses this word – “manliness” in Greek – its meaning has already changed. Machiavelli then creates confusion by using *virtù* in the original sense, “manliness”, while the translators have usually in mind Aristotle’s derivative meaning, so that they frequently feel compelled to use some other word, “courage” or “valiance”, to translate this very simple word which really needs no translation at all....

I have utilized a biography of Machiavelli in Spanish that is of passing quality, the *Estudio introductorio* of Juan Manuel Forte Monge. along with the introductory notes Christian Bec has furnished in his translations on Machiavelli’s works and life....

4.
the context: Leo Strauss’ teaching
about the history of philosophy

In order to understand Mansfield’s interpretation of Machiavelli, we must first have an idea about Leo Strauss’ view on the history of Western philosophy. Since, aside from Strauss’ understanding of Machiavelli, I have no expertise on his philosophy, I shall rely heavily on Shadia Drury, the only non-Straussian scholar who has labored to penetrate Strauss’ difficult philosophy. She started with her ground-breaking *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* in 1988, then continued with *Alexandre Kojève: The Roots of Postmodern Politics* in 1994, and finally published *Leo Strauss and the American Right* in 1997. In 2005, when she republished *Political Ideas*, she appended a new introduction, “Straussians in Power: Secrecy, Lies, and Endless War”. In the new introduction, she explains her intention back in 1988 in this way:

In writing the book, I was primarily motivated by the desire to expose the purposeful deception and studied obscurantism of a school of thought that had become so prevalent that it threatened the meaningful exchange of ideas in the academy. My initial desire was to smoke the Straussians out of their caves and force them to defend their ideas openly before their peers. With the exception of a few candid exchanges, mostly in private, the exercise was rather futile. But the book was also intended as a warning that the tendency of Strauss’ students to gravitate toward positions of political power is disconcerting because those who believe the things that Strauss believed are bound to behave badly when they are in positions of power and influence.¹⁵

It would seem that “exposing”, “warning”, and denouncing” were her most important goals. In *Political Ideas*, she suddenly comments thusly after explaining Strauss’ view as to the necessity for the philosopher to conceal his views from the public while revealing them to the few young men who are careful readers because they love to think (the would-be philosophers in the next generation):

15 Ibid., p. ix – x.

The only trouble is that there may be careful readers or ‘clever men’ who are not trustworthy, and having ‘found the author out’ would reveal all and denounce him to the authorities. Strauss raises this objection only to dismiss it, saying that thoughtful men are generally trustworthy and not cruel, and that the Socratic dictum that virtue is knowledge must be largely true or esoteric writing would not be possible.¹⁶

It seems that Drury is talking about herself here (a “clever woman”). If so, this would be the only esoteric message in all of her works on Strauss.

I’m to some extent imitating Professor Drury here, since I’m also here to “expose”, as best I can, a certain Straussian secret – and doing so as an outsider. In fact, I seem to be continuing her work insofar as she, just as everyone else, seems to have completely missed Harvey Mansfield’s influence within the Bush administration. No, it’s not Strauss, but Mansfield! Furthermore, I concur with her in regard to methodology as well. Just like her, I do not, when reading Strauss or Mansfield, bother to count paragraphs or the frequency of a particular word and only pay attention to such things when Mansfield says explicitly that Strauss uses this word this many times because he means to say this (or when Strauss says explicitly that Machiavelli uses this word this many times because he means to say this). And at no time do I suppose Strauss and Mansfield mean the opposite of what they say (although Mansfield, as I shall argue below, does sometimes say things he doesn’t mean – but merely for expediency.) One thing I do do is frequently consider the first and last words of each of Strauss’ and Mansfield’s commentaries to see if they might convey a message that they would judge imprudent to state explicitly. In any case, such inattention that I practice is, I suppose, okay even though both Strauss and Mansfield are esoteric writers because, as noted, they practice esotericism of the second type, saying things only half-way so that, even when you miss something deeper, at least what you have obtained from the surface is not false. But, unlike Professor Drury, I do not harbor any particular “harmful” intent: I’m not here to “denounce” Professor Mansfield to the rest of the world. Neither do I share the contempt which Professor Drury expresses everywhere in her works for Strauss and Straussians. I have tremendous respect for both Mansfield and Strauss and, as I shall point out in the end, my own philosophy bears curious resemblance to their Machiavellianism – in fact it is, in my view, the truer version. I do not disagree with Professor Drury that Straussians, when getting into positions of power, will do a lot of evil – just look at what Cheney had in mind – but I do not take this to be something seriously wrong *a priori*. As I have said in the beginning, behind my attempt at exposition is my intent to educate you about the fact that wisdom doesn’t necessarily always lead to goodness but frequently leads to evil. In other words, my ultimate goal is to make you wiser (here about wisdom itself), just as I have been doing in all my other essays and stories.

... The truth – which all philosophers supposedly recognize, whether they say it or not – is that there is no God, no afterlife, and no morality in the objective sense. Morality arises because, as Mansfield has noted in one of his conversation with Bill Kristol, human beings need to cooperate in order to survive. For the sake of survival, cooperation, and hence social order, human beings then dupe themselves into thinking that morality is either an objective feature of reality or a commandment from God which one must obey. Only the truly wise, the philosopher, is able to recognize that morality is but a fiction invented for convenience’s sake or to confront necessities. As Mansfield has summarized the matter:

16 PILS, p. 27.

When Machiavelli denies that imagined republics and principalities ‘exist in truth,’ and declares that the truth in these or all matters is the effectual truth, he says that no moral rules exist, not made by men, which men must abide by. The rules or laws that exist are those made by governments or other powers acting under necessity, and they must be obeyed out of the same necessity. Whatever is necessary may be called just and reasonable, but justice is no more reasonable than what a person’s prudence tells him he must acquire for himself, or must submit to, because men cannot afford justice in any sense that transcends their own preservation (Introduction to his translation of *The Prince*, p. xi).

Today this sort of view no longer sounds like great wisdom and many thinkers have re-formulated such common sense in their own way.¹⁷ One must keep in mind that at the time this common sense was revolutionary and set going the thinking of subsequent philosophers that define the modern tradition. Straussians (i.e Strauss and Mansfield) are fond of pointing out that this replacement of moral goodness, whether by nature or by God’s command, with self-preservation as the goal of life first started by Machiavelli was then explicitly formulated into the philosophical foundation of modern political theory by Thomas Hobbes. Now if the goal of morality is simply self-preservation, then it should not be observed when it becomes a hindrance to self-preservation under extraordinary circumstances. When necessities demand that one disregard morality – when one must violate moral codes in order to survive – then that is what one must do....

The central point is that, given the low quality of the common people, the ruler must practice evil in order to survive. Machiavelli is a teacher of evil because (1) self-preservation is the goal and (2) people are evil and stupid. In such case, even a good person can be persuaded to practice evil, so that Cheney was evil not necessarily because he was born evil but rather because he was wise. By tracing all of Cheney’s politics to the teaching of Mansfield (or the teaching of Machiavelli as mediated through Mansfield) we will come to see this man as a much deeper person than a simple view of him as an antisocial psychopath would suggest. (This, however, does not apply to Cheney’s protégé Michael Chertoff, who is indeed simply born an antisocial psychopath.)

The necessity to survive doesn’t simply mean that one should steal bread when one is starving to death. It also means that one must continue to acquire resources even when, apparently, one has already enough to live on. Even when rich, one must continue to strive to become richer and gain power over others. In this way Machiavelli has completely inverted the Aristotelian (classical) and Augustinian (Christian) tradition which reigned dominant in his time.¹⁸

.... All throughout 2009, Cheney had counted on establishing his “new modes and orders” using my ICJ trial, and he didn’t tell anyone about it: this time he was going to do it in secret. From 2009 onward, he appeared to be settling into the life of a retired politician, starting the work on his autobiography *In My Times* with his daughter Elizabeth.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Obama administration

17 The latest being the popular Israelite historian of the current age, Yuval Noah Harari.

18 For example, when Saint Augustine recommends the City of God as opposed to the City of Earth as the goal of life, Machiavelli recommends the City of Earth as opposed to the City of God. C. f. Nicola Abbagnano, *Storia della filosofia*, Vol. 1, p. 350.

19 During the Reagan Foundation’s virtual event on 15 June 2020, Cheney revealed that, for this book, he had Elizabeth listen to him recounting his stories for two years. That would date the start of the project to the middle of 2009, just when my ICJ trial was getting increasingly ferocious.

returned to the old policies of the Establishment (the Moderates) and the Bilderberg plan and neoconservatism seemed again to have been brushed aside completely. The most manifest sign of this was Obama's unfriendly posture to Israel and Netanyahu.²⁰ Everyone, except Cheney's protégé Michael Chertoff and a few people in the CIA clandestine service, thought that neoconservatism had forever departed: the appearance was only meant to deceive. Only a minority who were working on my International Court trial were aware that Cheney's plan was actually secretly ongoing. It was not over yet. Everyone was aware that the CIA and Michael Chertoff were still suing the Russians, but nobody knew what that was supposed to lead to in the end. The CIA pretended to have returned to their old Bilderberg self....

.... Yet Cheney was not entirely Machiavellian. When Cheney wanted the nuclear holocaust orchestrated in accordance with Biblical prophecies, I suspect that he was trying to return to Leo Strauss' conception of a perfect society rather than following in the footsteps of Machiavelli. The best society in Strauss' notions of things, you recall, is absolute rule of the wise where the wise devise noble myth to dupe the common people into being good and obedient....

5.

neoconservatism after Cheney's failure

As you shall soon see, although Russia had won this International Court of Justice trial, this trial was soon headed toward dismissal due to Russians' own mistake. When it was all dismissed, Cheney's neoconservative revolution was *finally* all over – even though he had completely got away with his “Cheney Plan”. The revolution, as noted, was not really over when Obama got into office on January 2009, but, rather, only when this ICJ trial was dismissed in October 2010. From now on the US Establishment would *really* return to power and dominate US policies again, so that the United States would *really* return to the original Bilderberg plan. And so, this time, the CIA had *really* returned to being its former self. This time they cut ties with Homeland Security, so that, as you shall see, the conflict between the two agencies would soon flare up again – and it was again about me. Cheney and his neoconservative cabal would be all discredited and marginalized – just as they were in the 1990s, except that, this time, they could never rise up and take control of the US system again. They would have control merely over the Republican establishment, so that neoconservatism would be reduced to being one mere partisan position among many others – in fact a minority position opposed to the majority position which the CIA and its Bilderberg allies represented. Cheney would summarize this partisan position of the newly limited neoconservatism in his *Exceptional*. The neoconservatives would continue their crusade to save Jews and so continue to agitate for strengthening America's military power and direct America to conquer the world, but, this time, they would have to stay within the Establishment's framework. Although the Establishment has also wanted to conquer the world, they have no particular focus on the Muslims since they don't care about saving Jews. The neocons must accept this and be content with the Establishment's tactics: fomenting color revolutions or supporting Islamic extremists. Thus, when Victoria Nuland, the wife of Robert Kagan, was working on regime change in Ukraine in 2013, she was merely doing what the CIA would have normally done. There is no more debate about whether color revolution is better or direct military occupation. When the Establishment wanted to remove Assad from Syria in 2012, General Petraeus also resorted to the old modus operandi of arming jihadists and sending them to fight America's enemies.

²⁰ See, for example, the Frontline episode, “Netanyahu at War”. This episode is excellent even though Frontline is normally part of the Establishment's war propaganda machine (all falsehood).

CODA:
My own Machiavellianism

.... Although I have always hated neoconservatives – or rather their head master – after many years of studying Mansfield and Strauss and their Machiavelli I have noticed many similarities between their Machiavellianism and my own political and social philosophy. In fact, insofar as I take my view of the nature of American society as correct, I see them as going on the right track but missing the target by just a little so that their philosophy ends up approximating to, but differing from, mine. The theme of my social philosophy is also a concern with the increasing weakness of postmodern people just as Machiavelli was principally concerned with the weakness of Italy in his time – and just as Cheney and Mansfield were concerned with the weakness of America with its liberal democracy at the “end of history”....