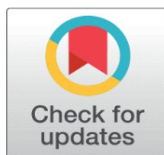
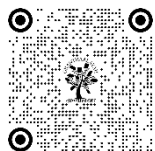


# THE EVOLUTION OF CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: FROM PLATO TO MACHIAVELLI

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## ABSTRACT

Examining the evolution of classical political theories with respect to the contributions made by eminent political philosophers from Plato to Machiavelli, this study emphasising the importance of pragmatic administration, virtue, and constitutional government, contrasts Aristotle's political realism with Plato's idealism focused in the idea of philosopher-king and his vision of a desirable society. The study then moves to the Middle Ages, underlining the impact of St. Augustine's Christian political philosophy, which offered a dualistic perspective of heavenly and earthly government, therefore affecting the interaction between church and state. At last, the research revolves on Niccolò Machiavelli, who broke with the moralistic approaches of his contemporaries to advocate political pragmatism and realism. Machiavelli's ideas on power, leadership, and the division of ethics from politics in *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy* placed modern political realism starting with statecraft and survival above idealistic elements. By means of a comparison of these thinkers, the research reveals how the idealistic notions of Plato gave way to Machiavelli's pragmatic approach whereby power and adaptability were vital for political success. The study also examines the different ways during these centuries power, morality, and authority influenced political systems. The study underlines how still today classical political philosophy shapes contemporary political institutions and methods. It finishes with highlighting the continuous relevance of these ideas in contemporary political discourse and provides suggestions for next study on the evolving character of political philosophy. This analogy highlights the basic contributions made by every thinker as well as the procedures guiding the foundation of present political philosophy.

**Keywords:** Classical Political Theory, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Idealism, Realism, Political Ethics, Governance, Power, Authority

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Studying Classical Political Philosophy helps one to acquire a basic knowledge of the key ideas that have shaped political philosophy and government throughout multiple centuries. The evolution of political philosophy reflects the changing needs and conditions of civilizations trying to understand authority, power, and the role of the government. One may start this process in the idealism of Plato and the realism of Machiavelli. In his writings, particularly in *The Republic*, Plato presents an idealistic picture of a just state governed by philosopher-king and stresses the quest of the common good by means of reason and knowledge (Davis, 2019). Emphasizing on the balance between several forms of government, the value of citizenship, and the need of the middle class in preserving a stable political order, his pupil, Aristotle, presented a more pragmatic and realistic attitude to state (Harris, 2020). While augmenting some of Plato's ideas, Aristotle's method was more firmly based on experience. Christian political thought originated with medieval intellectuals such as St. Augustine and other thinkers. Within this perspective, the development of medieval governance institutions was much influenced by divine providence and the interaction between the earthly state and the City of God (Brown, 2017). A major proponent of power and pragmatism in government, Niccolò Machiavelli broke away from the moralistic customs of his forebears and concentrated on political realism during the change to the Renaissance (Smith, 2015). This was a time of a major change. In order to keep power and stability in their own nations, Machiavelli's *The Prince* underlined the need of leaders being smart, adaptable, even harsh at times (Machiavelli, 2015). The aim of this study is

to chronicle the evolution of these political systems from idealism to realism and juxtaposition the many points of view on power, ethics, and government. Furthermore, the study clarifies the ongoing impact of these ancient intellectuals on modern political systems by proving how their ideas still resonate in the political debate of the present. This paper aims to present a complete understanding of the development of political philosophy from Plato to Machiavelli in the course of the research.

## **Plato: Idealism in Political Thought**

### **Plato's Background and Context**

Plato, who is largely recognized as one of the most prominent thinkers in western political philosophy, was born in Athens in the year 427 BCE. This was an era in which the city was going through a period of immense political volatility and turmoil. Socrates was his first teacher, and later on, he became Aristotle's teacher. In the beginning, he was a pupil of Socrates. Individually and together, they were essential in laying the framework for what is commonly recognized as Classical Greek philosophy (Taylor, 2013). The philosophical convictions that he holds with reference to ethics, politics, and justice are portrayed in his works, the most notable of which being *The Republic*. It is a dialogue in which Plato, through the character of Socrates, takes part in disputes about the nature of justice, the ideal state, and the role of people within that state. This work presents an outline of Plato's concept of a perfect society, which he felt to be necessary in order to establish genuine justice and harmony. Plato imagined that such a society would be dominated by philosopher-king. He was of the belief that this was the lone mechanism by which these ideals could be attained. The political context of Athens at the period, which was distinguished by the downfall of its democratic system and the murder of Socrates, had a huge impact on Plato's aversion to democratic government (Zeitlin, 1997). This hostility was a direct result of the events that transpired. Plato's philosophical beliefs on the significance of intelligence and understanding in leadership were also greatly influenced by this background, which played a critical part in doing so.

### **Theory of Forms and Ideal State**

Among the most important aspects of Plato's philosophical viewpoint is his 'Theory of Forms', which also serves as the basis for his political views in *The Republic*. This theory is considered to be one of the most important components of his philosophical perspective. Plato's depiction of the Forms suggests that they are ideals or concepts that are perfect and unchangeable, and that they are believed to reside in a realm that is beyond the domain of the physical world. The material cosmos contains nothing more than an imperfect image of these real Forms. This is the only thing that can be found in the universe. All things that exist are consistent with this statement (Sedley, 2016). To demonstrate this concept, let's take into consideration the fact that every physical manifestation of justice is a faulty mirror of the ideal form of justice. This will help us better to understand the issue. As a further development of this metaphysical phrase, which he applies to his model of governance, he suggests that the ideal state ought to be a representation of the state in its most perfect form. The ideal state, for Plato, is one in which the rulers, who are sometimes referred to as philosopher-kings, are endowed with the wisdom to comprehend the Forms, most especially the Form of the Good (Sedley, 2016). This is the perfect state. The most suitable individuals to rule are these philosopher-kings because they have attained enlightenment and are guided by reason. They are the ideal candidates for leadership (Plato, 2015). In order to govern for the good of all citizens, they are able to look past the faulty facts of human life and see the bigger picture. Plato is of the opinion that the concept of philosopher-kings highlights the fact that the only people who are appropriately qualified to wield positions of leadership are those who are in possession of actual knowledge. Because of this, it is certain that knowledge and justice, rather than power or fortune, are the foundations upon which governance is built (Davis, 2019).

### **Justice in Plato's Thought**

Plato's *The Republic* presents justice as a fundamental virtue that applies to both the individual and the state. This portrayal of justice is very important. At the same time, it is conceived of as a beautiful order that comes together. In the eyes of Plato, justice in the state is comparable to justice within the individual, in which every component fulfils the job that has been assigned to it while simultaneously preserving harmony with the total. When an individual's reason, spirit, and appetite are in harmony with one another, the individual is able to achieve internal harmony (Plato, 2015). Similarly, the state is able to achieve justice when its three social classes—rulers, warriors, and producers - each fulfil their tasks in the appropriate proportions. This is similar to how an individual is able to create happiness within themselves. It is the responsibility of three distinct groups of individuals to steer the state in the right direction: the rulers, who are driven by knowledge and reason; the warriors, who are driven by courage; and the producers, who are motivated by their

desires and provide for the tangible demands of society. Therefore, justice is a state of harmony: a state in which every individual and class executes the responsibility that has been assigned to them for the benefit of the community, thereby ensuring the stability and order of society (Foster, 1951). Plato's conception of justice goes beyond the idea of merely being equal or fair in the eyes of the law. Rather, it is concerned with the right alignment and functioning of all aspects of society, where the interests of the individual and the collective unite in the pursuit of the common good (Keyt, 2011, Santas, 2018a). In other words, justice is concerned with the right alignment and functioning of all aspects of society.

### **Critique of Democracy**

Plato's ideas on democracy are marked by a profoundly negative attitude, and they are presented within the setting of *The Republic*. It was his direct encounters with the democratic system in Athens and the execution of his mentor, Socrates, that directly led to the formation of his viewpoints. His perspective was that democracy was a defective and potentially dangerous type of government that put the demands of the majority ahead of the preferences of those who have more knowledge or experience. He believed that democracy was a form of government that emphasized the needs of the majority over the preferences of those who have more experience or knowledge. He was under the impression that this action was taken in order to fulfil the desires of the great majority (Scott, 2000). Plato defines democracy as a kind of government that grants authority to individuals who are frequently unfit to govern and who are driven more by their own personal interests and sentiments than by reason and understanding. In other words, democracy encourages individuals to govern themselves. Democratic government, to put it another way, is a form of government that grants power to individuals who lack the expertise necessary to rule. Plato contends that the absence of competent leadership is the primary reason for the chaos and disorder that exists in the world. This is because judgments are made mostly based on the opinions of the general public rather than on what is genuinely helpful for society. Under such circumstances society become unorganized and chaotic. Plato was of the belief that democratic institutions result in an excessive degree of freedom, which causes anarchy to emerge as the ultimate outcome. This is as a result of the fact that people are unrestricted in their ability to pursue their own objectives, which eliminates any potential obstacles that may arise (Tvedt, 2021). Furthermore, he was of the belief that the stress that democracy placed on equality led to the development of a disdain for hierarchy and competence, which ultimately resulted in the choice of leaders who lacked the necessary level of competence to effectively manage the issue (Scott, 2000). Plato believed that the democratic system was the prelude of tyranny because it allowed demagogues to grab authority and exert influence over the general public, which ultimately led to the corruption of the political system (Santas, 2018). This was feasible because the democratic system made it possible for demagogues to seize power.

### **Aristotle: Political Realism and Practical Governance**

#### **Aristotle's Critique of Plato**

It is essential to recognize that Aristotle, who was Plato's student, possessed an idealism that was fundamentally different from that of his master, particularly with regard to their perspectives on the administration of government. This is something that the reader should take into consideration. During the course of his argument, Plato advocated for the reign of philosopher-king who possessed a thorough understanding of the Forms. On the other hand, Aristotle was against this concept, arguing that it was excessively abstract and could not be taken into consideration in every situation. Plato's Theory of Forms was rejected by Aristotle, who believed that true knowledge and governance must be based on practical reality rather than on ideals that are abstract. According to him, this is the only way to comprehend the world around us (Fine, 1993). The fact that he did not take into account the complexity of human nature was the driving force behind his conclusion that Plato's idea of a perfect state could never be achieved. In order to attain stability and order, Aristotle placed a significant amount of emphasis on the necessity of possessing a grasp of the political systems that are already in existence and working within those institutions. However, he did not support the establishment of a utopian government or any other kind of government under any circumstances. He did not advocate for the formation of any kind of government. According to his point of view, the foundation for government should be based on the conditions of the state and the wants of the people who live there, rather than on the utopian notions that are already in existence. He was worried that this would be more successful than the other option. Plato places a stronger emphasis on idealism and intellectual understanding as the foundation for administration, whereas Aristotle's political theory is focused on realism and practicality. Idealism and intellectual knowledge come from Plato. The emphasis that Plato places on idealism and intellectual understanding as the basis for administration stands in stark contrast to this.

### **Aristotle's Concept of the 'Best Regime'**

In *Politics*, Aristotle's idea of the "best regime" hinges around the concept of polity, which is a hybrid form of government that incorporates elements of both democratic and oligarchy in its organizational structure. His argument was that there is no one form of governance that is perfect in every way, regardless of whether it is a democracy, an aristocracy, or a monarchy. He believed that this was the case without exception (Aristotle, 2021). The best government, on the other hand, is one that successfully strikes a balance between the interests of a small group of wealthy persons and those of the general public, thereby establishing stability through the utilization of a constitution that is a combination of many types of laws. Through the utilization of this unique blend of forms of administration, it is feasible to steer clear of the extremes of dictatorship and mob control while simultaneously advancing the common good. Moreover, Aristotle was the first person to introduce the concept of the golden mean in the context of government, which is an area in which moderation is of such critical importance. According to his theories, the fundamental reason for instability is the presence of extremes in political institutions, regardless of whether these extremes represent the concentration of power or the opportunity to exercise unrestricted freedom (Bartlett, 1994). A government that is balanced, in which power is distributed across a variety of classes and institutions, offers the best possibility for achieving justice and maintaining stability over the course of a lengthy period of time (Johnson, 1988). In particular, the development of constitutional democracies was significantly influenced by the revolutionary idea of a government that is both balanced and mixed. This idea has had a huge impact on the political philosophy that will be developed moving forward.

### **Virtue and Citizenship**

Aristotle was of the opinion that virtue was the most important trait to take into consideration when it came to matters of politics and citizenship. In his opinion, the primary objective of the state was to foster the growth of morally upright individuals who were able to make a positive contribution to the general welfare of the population. This was the primary goal of the state. According to Aristotle, citizenship was not just a legal status, but also a moral obligation to actively engage in public life (Aristotle, 2021). He believed that citizenship was a dual concept. He was of the opinion that citizenship meant a sense of obligation. When it came to making decisions that would be to the benefit of the entire community, virtue, and more especially practical wisdom (phronesis), was crucial and necessary for decision-makers as well as the general populace (Mulieri, 2021). They are the only people who are capable of leading in a just manner, according to Aristotle, because they are motivated by the welfare of the state rather than by their own personal advantage on the job. The only people who are capable of leading in a just manner are men and women who are virtuous. The issue of virtue is not merely a private one but also a public one. To ensure that citizens are able to perform the tasks that they are meant to play in society, Aristotle felt that the state should encourage virtue through the use of education and regulations. This would ensure that citizens meet their responsibilities. To ensure that citizens are able to fulfil their responsibilities, this would be the best strategy. In contrast to Plato's political philosophy, which placed a greater focus on the advice of philosopher-kings, Aristotle's political philosophy places a greater priority on virtue and active engagement (Woods, 2014). This is one of the ways in which Aristotle's political philosophy is distinguished from Plato's. Plato, on the other hand, placed a higher focus on the wisdom that philosopher-kings shared with their subjects.

### **Constitutional Government**

Aristotle came up with a taxonomy of constitutions, which is considered to be one of the most significant contributions that he made to the field of political thought. He differentiated between three ideal types of constitutions, which were monarchy, aristocracy, and polity, and its corrupted counterparts, which were tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy among the constitutions. He also contrasted between the three ideal constitutions (Aristotle, 2021). According to his point of view, monarchy is the most successful form of government when it is led by a king who is morally upright; nevertheless, it is prone to degenerating into tyranny if the ruler is corrupt who is in charge of the government. If the governing elite governs for its own convenience, it is also conceivable for aristocracy, which is a style of government in which the most capable individuals retain power, to degrade into oligarchy. Oligarchy is a form of government in which the most powerful individuals hold power. Polity, which is a hybrid type of governance, is Aristotle's preferred style of administration since it includes elements of democracy and oligarchy (Abbasi, 2021). Polity is a blended form of governance. In order to accomplish this, it promotes the common good while making it illegal for any side to engage in excessive behavior. As an additional point of interest, Aristotle emphasized the significance of the rule of law in the process of maintaining a government that is both just and stable (Harris, 2020). Because laws are free of any kind of personal bias, he argued that laws, and not people, should be the ones to govern. He believed that this would be more



effective. The rule of law is a system that works to ensure that justice and fairness are upheld, thereby prohibiting those in positions of authority from using their authority in an arbitrary manner.

### **Relevance to Modern Political Thought**

The emergence of constitutional democracies and the idea of the rule of law are two examples of how Aristotle's political realism has had a long-lasting impact on the political frameworks that are in existence today. In particular, the rise of constitutional democracies and the concept of the rule of law are two examples. His focus on mixed governance and the balance of power has been reflected in the structure of many modern governments, particularly the division of powers and checks and balances systems. His emphasis on these two concepts contributed to the development of the modern government. The importance that he places on these ideas has shown to have a significant effect (Hueglin, 2008). This has been demonstrated to have a major impact as a result of the significance that he places on these concepts. When it comes to discussions on civic responsibility and democratic involvement, Aristotle's thoughts about the relevance of virtue and active citizenship continue to reverberate from time to time on more than one occasion (Smith, 2015). As an additional point of interest, his viewpoint that laws, and not persons, should be the ones to make decisions is the foundation of the current legal and constitutional systems that place an emphasis on equality before the law. Providing a foundation for grasping the intricacies of political life, Aristotle's pragmatic approach to government, which focuses on constructing stable, workable systems based on the facts of human nature, has been a significant contribution to the field of political science. On the other hand, this stands in stark contrast to the idealistic perspectives that have been put up in the past on the topic of government. Through the utilization of this approach, it is possible to get a more profound comprehension of the realities that are inherent in the human nature. His insights on the nature of political stability, moderation, and the role of the middle class continue to be vital in the political discourse of the present day making him a significant figure in the annals of contemporary political thought.

### **St. Augustine and Medieval Christian Political Thought**

#### **The Role of Christianity in Political Thought**

The political philosophy that was dominant during the medieval period was profoundly impacted by Christianity, particularly with regard to the formation of concepts surrounding governance and administration. As a result of the fact that Christianity finally became the official religion of the Roman Empire and spread throughout the empire, theological theology started to play an increasingly important part in the political and social life of the civilization (Brown, 2017). There was a direct correlation between the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire and theological theology. Between the Christian worldview and the governmental authority, a crucial relationship existed throughout history. The ideas of moral obligation, divine justice, and the afterlife were accorded a tremendous amount of importance within the framework of the Christian worldview. During the period, it was common for people to believe that God bestowed governmental authority upon them. At the same time, it was expected of those who held positions of power that they would govern in line with Christian principles promoting justice, charity, and moral integrity. Reason and the conclusions drawn from empirical observation were the primary pillars upon which the basis of political philosophy was built in the ancient intellectual tradition. The fact that political and religious authority were merged in this manner signified a considerable break from the paradigm that had been used in the past. There were a number of famous Christian political theorists who believed that the legitimacy of political power was founded on its conformity with the will of God. Saint Augustine was one of these philosophers (Mommsen, 2017). When earthly rulers were subordinated to a higher, spiritual authority, it was with the intention of creating political power as the ultimate aim. This action was taken with the intention of acquiring political power. By laying the groundwork for those beliefs, this strategy created the foundation for medieval political philosophy that highlighted the role of the church in guiding rulers and constructing governance. These philosophies were important because they laid the foundation for those ideas. These ideas brought to light the fact that the church has a significant role in the formation of governance.

#### **The City of God and Earthly Governance**

Considered as St. Augustine's most well-known work, *The City of God* provided the dualistic perspective on political and spiritual life. The evolution of political philosophy during the Middle Ages was profoundly influenced by this work. Augustine set aside the "City of Man", which stood for the temporal and earthly domain of human life, from the "City of God", which reflected the eternal and spiritual sphere. When Augustine began writing on the City of God, this difference developed in his writings. Unlike the City of God, which is run under divine love and justice, Augustine thinks that sin,

conflict, and the search of self-interest plague the City of Man. Conversely, the governing ideas of the City of God show divine love and justice. Augustine holds that seeking atonement and perpetual peace in the City of God marks the ultimate goal of human life (Brown, 2017). Human existence aims at this ultimate point. Conversely, Augustine believes that earthly rule is only a way of maintaining order and reducing the effects of human wickedness. Augustine's dualist theory emphasises the truth that earthly politics are not faultless and the need of help from heaven in concerns of human affairs. Although physical government is transient and comes second to spiritual restoration, even if it is vital (Roberts & Ogle, 2021). The ultimate aim is spiritual redemption. The idea of dual power - that which combines spiritual and earthly authority—developed as a major topic of debate in medieval political theory over several centuries. The link between the state and the church underwent a significant change.

### **The Role of Divine Providence**

When it comes to the functioning of human activity and the administration of government, Augustine's political philosophy places a strong focus on the role that divine providence plays in both of these areas. He was of the idea that the Will of God ultimately dominates the world, dictating the course that history takes and determining the fate of both individuals and nations through its influence. He believed that this was the planet's ultimate destiny (o'Daly, 2020). Because of this belief in divine providence, political events, regardless of whether they were favorable or negative, were considered to be a component of God's larger purpose for humanity. Individuals who held positions of authority on earth were considered to be agents of divine will, and their authority was considered to have been ordained by God (Augustine, 2015). This was the case regardless of whether or not the individuals in question were personally virtuous or immoral. Augustine maintained that citizens ought to submit to political authority, even when it was unfair, as a technique of sustaining social order and completing the divine purpose. He argued that heavenly law and justice were superior to human laws, and that resistance was permissible in instances where political authority manifestly contradicted the will of God (ibid). On the other hand, this obedience was not without its boundaries. Augustine believed that human rules were inferior to divine law and justice. During the Middle Ages, the idea of divine providence played an important part in the formation of attitudes regarding monarchy, political legitimacy, and the moral obligations that rulers were expected to fulfil. Furthermore, as a result, the conviction that God was ultimately responsible for governance was strengthened.

### **Medieval Political Philosophy on Authority and Power**

The relationship between the church and the state, which included opposing claims over authority and power, had a significant degree of impact on the political philosophy that was prominent during the Middle Ages. This influence was significant enough to be considered a significant factor (Johnson, 2016). It was Augustine's dualism, which placed a focus on the difference between the spiritual and temporal spheres, that served as the foundation for the understanding of power that was prevalent during the medieval period. It was essential for the growth of the mind in the medieval period to have this insight. While the state was responsible for preserving order, the church, which represented the spiritual realm, contended that it had the ability to make choices about matters of morality and religion. This was despite the fact that the state was responsible for maintaining order in the secular sphere (Burnell, 1992). This distinction, on the other hand, was a contentious issue that was continuously debated, as both the religious and secular administrations endeavoured to extend their spheres of influence over the region that was under the jurisdiction of the other authority. Throughout the medieval period, there were numerous power struggles between Popes and Kings, with each of them claiming their authority to oversee both spiritual and secular affairs. These power struggles brought about a number of conflicts (Burns, 2021). These disagreements were distinguished by differing degrees of authority over the parties involved. In the context of investiture, for example, the discussion centered on the question of whether or not Popes or Kings had the ability to pick bishops. This was the central question. Just one example is shown here. These disputes brought to light the tension that exists between the claim of the church to represent spiritual authority and the claim of the secular authorities to represent political power. The political climate of the Middle Ages was characterized by a complicated relationship between religious and secular authority (Brown, 2017). This interaction occurred throughout the period of the Middle Ages. It is essential to recognize that throughout this particular time period in history, the place of worship played a significant part in the formation of both political thought and administration.

### **Machiavelli: The Birth of Political Realism** **Machiavelli's Historical Context**

Machiavelli lived during a time that was marked by the ongoing instability of warring city-states, foreign invasions, and shifting political alliances. Machiavelli was a prominent figure in this period. The great political instability that was evident in Renaissance Italy during his time was a defining characteristic of this period. Throughout the entirety of this historical era, the figure of Machiavelli was acknowledged as one of the most significant personalities (Barthas, 2010). Florence, which was Machiavelli's hometown, was frequently the target of threats from both within the city and from beyond the city. These threats came from both inside and outside the city. A number of powerful neighbours, including France, Spain, and the Papal States, were among those who posed a threat. There were other instances of these threats and arguments occurring within the organization with one another. It was necessary for those in positions of leadership in Italy to combine flexibility and pragmatism in order for them to be successful. This was due to the fact that the political system in Italy was so fragmented that it produced an environment in which it was impossible to attain stability (Baccelli, 2017). His political career, which encompassed positions as a diplomat and a military advisor, was strongly impacted by the unstable environment in which Machiavelli found himself. Machiavelli's political career included both of these responsibilities. At various points in his political career, Machiavelli held both of these positions. To be more specific, the collapse of the Florentine Republic and his subsequent exile after the Medici Dynasty regained power had a significant influence on his perspectives on politics and administration. His opinions were significantly influenced by the personal events he had went through. Machiavelli was motivated to establish a pragmatic approach to politics as a result of the instability and failures that were associated with idealistic governments. With this approach, power, survival, and pragmatism were placed over moral or ethical considerations because of their importance. Machiavelli's strategy was founded on his observations of these failures, both positive and negative (Theodosiadis, 2021). The assumption that idealistic governance was not a solution that could be implemented was the foundation around which this approach was built.

### **Key Works: The Prince and Discourses on Livy**

*The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli's two most important works, give contrasting ideas on governance; nonetheless, both of these works exhibit Machiavelli's pragmatic approach to political authority. *The Prince* is Machiavelli's most famous work. It is a brief essay that helps monarchs through the process of attaining and maintaining power. *The Prince* is entitled *The Prince*. The year 1513 was the year that it was written. With its advocacy for ruthless pragmatism and its willingness to employ deception, brutality, and fear when it is necessary, it is frequently believed to be a guideline for political manipulation and strategy. This is because of the fact that it advocates for brutal pragmatism. According to Machiavelli, in order to be a great ruler, one must regard the stability of the state to be more essential than conventional morality (Barthas, 2010). He writes that this is the only way to achieve success. However, *Discourses on Livy*, which was published around the same period, provides a more in-depth analysis of republican rule. It was written around the same time. It investigates the benefits of civic virtue and mixed democracy by drawing on the history of ancient Rome as its primary source of information. When compared to *The Prince*, which focuses on the actions of individual rulers, *Discourses on Livy* places a greater emphasis on the significance of sturdy institutions and the active participation of citizens in the process of keeping a stable republic (Machiavelli, 2018). This is in contrast to *The Prince*, which emphasizes the acts of independent rulers (Theodosiadis, 2021). Machiavelli's political philosophy, which strikes a balance between personal leadership and bigger structural elements, is seen through the lens of both of these publications when viewed as a whole, which provides an all-encompassing perspective on Machiavelli's position.

### **The Separation of Ethics and Politics**

Machiavelli's ability to differentiate between ethics and politics in a clear and concise manner is one of the most revolutionary contributions that he made to the subject of political thought. Machiavelli claimed that in order to sustain power and ensuring the safety of the state, political leaders should be willing to set ethical issues to the side. On the other hand, this is in contrast to the teachings of older philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, who believed that virtue and morality should be the fundamental guiding principles of administration. Machiavelli is credited with stating the famous remark that it is preferable for a ruler to be feared rather than loved, provided that he is unable to be both. This is the condition under which the assertion is considered to be true. Fear is a more reliable motivator than attachment (Taylor, 2018). There is a reflection of Machiavelli's opinion that the survival of the state is of the utmost importance, and that moral considerations can be overlooked if they are in conflict with the requirement of political action. This conviction is reflected in the stress that Machiavelli places on pragmatism. It was his belief that the world was essentially chaotic and unpredictable, and that in order for leaders to keep their power and safeguard the security of the state, they needed to

be able to adapt, be cunning, and be prepared to participate in behaviors that were ethically wrong (Machiavelli, 2015). He believed that this was the only way for them to be able to do so. Within the framework of contemporary political realism, power and statecraft are typically taken into consideration via a pragmatic rather than an idealistic perspective. The modern political realism that we see today is founded on the principle that ethics and politics should be kept separate.

### **The Concept of Virtù and Fortuna**

Regarding Machiavelli's political philosophy, the ideas of virtue and fortune take front stage in the debate. A leader must possess the traits and abilities known as "virtù" if he is to appropriately handle the difficulties inherent in political life and run his government. This collection of qualities covers many dimensions, including strength, intelligence, decisiveness, and the capacity to change with the times. Machiavelli believed that good leaders were those who, by virtue of their application, could properly establish their will and choose their own fate. He also recognised the significance of fortuity—often known as chance—in helping political achievement to be accomplished. Fortuna is a metaphor of the flux of the powers of luck and the external variables that could shape the fate of a king since it stands for their unpredictable nature (Vavouras, 2021). Though luck is beyond human control, Machiavelli thought that a good leader should minimise its effects by being ready, flexible, and ready to move boldly when chances presented themselves. In *The Prince*, he emphasises the need of keeping a balance between virtù and fortuna—that is, of combining strategic thinking with personal strength under knowledge of the erratic character of politics. He underlines also the need of striking a balance between morality and wealth. Another trait he claims is essential for a good leader to be strategic thinker.

### **Machiavelli's Influence on Modern Political Realism**

Machiavelli's beliefs have had a significant and long-lasting influence on modern political realism, a school of thought emphasising more power, security, and pragmatic reality of government than idealistic or moral concerns. With reference to modern political realism, Machiavelli's opinions have been rather powerful (Taylor, 2018). Political philosophers like Hobbes and Weber who followed him have reflected the focus he placed on the relevance of power, pragmatism, and the use of deft techniques in leadership. His thoughts have had a major impact and have greatly changed the political surroundings (Johnson, 2016). In the framework of modern politics, Machiavellian realism and realpolitik show a significant relationship. Realpolitik is a theory that emphasises on reaching political goals by means of pragmatic methods combined with, occasionally, harsh ones. Machiavellian method is usually associated with realpolitik in the political sphere since talks on international relations, diplomatic strategy, and political strategy still reflect his views on the nature of power dynamics, statecraft, and leadership (Theodosiadis, 2021). His writings have helped to shape the contemporary discussion on nature of political leadership. Ethically dubious qualities of adaptability, strategic thinking, and a readiness to participate in activities are still considered as absolutely essential to effectively negotiate policy decisions. In the subject of political science, his influence is still felt since his writings remain a vital tool for comprehending the nature of political power and the means of its application.

### **Comparative Analysis: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Machiavelli Evolution from Idealism to Realism**

From Plato to Machiavelli, the evolution of political philosophy throughout history shows the change from idealism to realism. Plato addresses his ideal society in *The Republic*, a utopian vision in which philosopher-king - endowed with total knowledge of the Forms - rules in line with justice and the general good. His philosophy places a great emphasis on intellectual and moral purity, therefore providing the basis for politics with idealistic character. Under the limitations of this paradigm, it is hoped that politicians will be competent, unselfish protectors of the state. Conversely, Machiavelli's method - which is most obvious in *The Prince* - is based on realism and political reality. He is renowned for stressing the harsh reality of power and for having rejected the notion of an ideal state. He stated that those in positions of power should be flexible, smart, and ready to embrace methods that are ethically dubious if they wish to maintain their positions of stability and power. Tracing the significant change in political philosophy from the intellectual idealism of Plato to the political realism of Machiavelli, one may find that Machiavelli reflected the development in political realism. This change emphasises the real needs of ruling authority inside a given environment rather than the theoretical objectives of political authority.



### **The Role of Morality in Politics**

The function morality plays in the political sphere has been a subject of discussion since ancient Greek period. Effective administration cannot exist without virtue and morality, Plato and Aristotle agreed. Both of them considered them to be really important. Plato thought that the ideal leader was someone with moral insight to govern for the good of the society establishing justice and peace. This, he concluded, was the essence of the ideal leader. Aristotle constantly highlighted the role of morality in politics even if he was more pragmatic than other political philosophers. More notably he stated that the foundation of successful government is the development of morally upright leaders and people. Originally put up by St. Augustine, the Christian viewpoint maintains that morality is derived from divine law and political power is answerable to God. Augustine contends that even if human depravity makes earthly politics essentially bad leaders should endeavour to follow Christian morals in their reign. Machiavelli, on the other hand, clearly deviates from this pattern. Renowned for his blend between ethics and politics, he maintained that individuals in positions of authority should give the life and stability of the state top priority over moral considerations. He was well known for stressing the significance of keeping ethics apart from politics. Machiavelli believed that leaders should be ready to engage in immoral activity when it was quite necessary to retain their power since the goal justified the means.

### **The Changing Concept of Power and Authority**

Over the course of their respective works, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Machiavelli each significantly helped to shape the concept of power and authority. The basic elements - knowledge and virtue—that constitute everything determine Plato's conception of power. Two factors, according to Plato, define the legitimacy of leaders' positions: their degree of wisdom and their ability to rule in a fit manner. More rooted in pragmatic management, Aristotle believed that power should be applied in line with the rule of law and the common good (Johnson, 2016). He also devoted great attention to a government with balance. Since Augustine believed that political power eventually submitted to the will of God, he gave the concept of authority a spiritual element. He thought of it finally as in God's will. Augustine thought that those in positions of power were tools of divine providence and that their authority was authorised as long as it suited Christian philosophy. On the other hand, Machiavelli maintained that power was merely a byproduct in and of itself. The ability of the ruler to keep control and adapt with the fluctuations of politics gives the force in his political reality. The ruler's capacity to retain power rather than morality or divine intention defines his power (ibid). Machiavelli argues, unlike earlier intellectuals who linked authority with moral or divine validity, it is about pragmatism, manipulation, and the efficient use of force. This marks a major break from the past school of thought.

### **Influence on Modern Political Systems**

Among the thinkers whose ideas have most shaped contemporary political systems and philosophy are Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Machiavelli, to name a few. Although contemporary governments have not officially adopted Plato's idealism, it has affected utopian political organisations as well as scholarly debates on justice and the role of elites in government. This is thus even in cases when modern nations have not formally embraced it. Especially in the framework of democratic and republican political systems, Aristotle's idea of mixed governance - which stresses equilibrium and the rule of law—has had a major influence on the construction of modern constitutional frameworks. Aristotle's formulation of the concept of double government exposes this influence. His point of view that civic virtue is of ultimate value is still relevant since discussions on democracy and citizenship are under way. Augustine's mix of politics and theology formed the basis for Middle Ages' governmental system. This combination also influenced the ongoing discussion on the role religion performs in political life. Machiavelli's political realism has had a significant impact on modern statecraft particularly in the areas of diplomacy, international relations, and political strategy. Still driving the contemporary debates on leadership and management are his concepts of power, pragmatism, and the division of ethics from politics. These eminent intellectuals considered together have made significant contributions to the development of basic ideas that still shape contemporary political discourse on statecraft.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

The evolution of classical political philosophy from Plato to Machiavelli from idealism to political realism shows that Plato's ideal state, rooted in moral and intellectual goodness, stands very apart from Machiavelli's pragmatic focus on survival and power. Emphasising hybrid government and the importance of morality in politics, Aristotle offered a middle path. From St. Augustine's Christian perspective, government bound to divine will has a spiritual component.

These intellectuals taken together have greatly moulded modern political systems, therefore impacting discussions on authority, ethics, and leadership that still have tremendous relevance in current political discourse.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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