

Machiavelli and Spartan Equality

The Image and Function of Lycurgus' Heritage

Filippo Del Lucchese

Abstract: In this article, I explore the meaning and function of Lycurgus in Machiavelli's thought. While the exemplarity of the mythical Spartan legislator progressively fades in Machiavelli's thought in favour of the Roman model, Lycurgus' reforms are central in Machiavelli's works on two issues of primary importance: wealth and land distribution. First, I analyse Machiavelli's use of the ancient sources on both Lycurgus and other Spartan legislators to show how the former builds a selective and strategically balanced reading of the ancient sources to build an image of the latter as a pro-popular ruler and of the subsequent Spartan reformers as followers not only of the mythical legislator generally, but also of his most controversial and popularly oriented attempts to reform property ownership in ancient Sparta. Lycurgus reveals how Machiavelli, far from seeing mixed government as the best form of government, promotes a strongly anti-aristocratic model. Second, I show that in Machiavelli's thought the Spartan question can largely be seen as a background for his reading of Roman history, particularly its most crucial, conflictual and controversial period – that in which the Gracchi brothers' attempted to achieve agrarian reform.

Keywords: ancient legislators, economy, Florence, history of economic thought, history of political thought, Rome, Sparta

The Spartan regime has traditionally been represented as an oligarchy, often in opposition to Athenian democracy.¹ Against the



isonomía of Athens, that is, equal rights or the equal share of resources, there is the *eunomía* of Sparta, the best order, the justice that does not distribute political rights and economic resources in equal measure, but rather to each according to their own merit. According to its detractors, when contrasted with the best order, Athenian equality becomes *kakonomía*, the worst constitution.² However, before *eunomía* took on an openly anti-democratic meaning, many of the sources considered the Spartan political order, which was created by the lawgiver Lycurgus, to be a profoundly egalitarian *kósmos*. So while classical literature, starting at least with Plato, used the Spartan order to maintain pro-aristocratic positions, something of its radical egalitarianism has survived through the centuries. My thesis in this article is that, at the beginning of the modern age, Niccolò Machiavelli took up the legacy of Lycurgus' radicalism.

Within Machiavellian historiography, there is no lack of even major historians, such as J. G. A. Pocock, who discard Sparta from the most important themes of Machiavellianism, denying its influence or presence in favour of the Roman model. For Machiavelli, Pocock writes, 'the interesting case is not that of Sparta . . . it is that of Rome' (1975: 190). In this article, I will argue instead that the Spartan model plays a role of paramount importance in Machiavelli, not as an opposition to the Roman model, as might appear from a hasty reading of some passages, but as a reading key for the politics that go far beyond Greek history and that *also* involve the Roman model itself. The reason for this is that Machiavelli was not exclusively interested in the politico-institutional dimension, but also – and above all else – in the economic dimension, particularly the content of the social reform that Lycurgus put into place. As it turns out, the two cities, Rome and Sparta, have more in common in this context than was previously thought.

The methodology I follow in this article is based primarily on the study of Machiavelli's ancient sources. In particular, I focus on how Machiavelli's careful and strategic reading of the ancient sources allowed him to build the image of Lycurgus as a pro-popular ruler and of subsequent Spartan reformers as followers not only of the mythical legislator generally, but of his most controversial and popularly oriented attempts to reform the balance of property in ancient Sparta. Machiavelli selects and focusses on key socio-economic

aspects of his ancient sources to build a set of theoretical and political arguments that go beyond the boundaries of ancient Spartan history. He then uses these arguments in his crucial major argument about Roman history.

What will also emerge from my argument is the need to not limit ourselves to the presence of Lycurgus alone, but rather to consider the entire treatment of the history of Sparta – both the mythical and archaic and the more recent and historical – as a whole. The consistency and unity of this ‘Spartan matter’ for Machiavelli comes from the fact that the same theme, that is, economic equality and the distribution of wealth, emerges in different epochs thanks to the action of different historical figures, such as the two populist monarchs Agis and Cleomenes. I will demonstrate how Lycurgus’ economic reforms and those of his later imitators play a fundamental role in Machiavelli’s reflection on equality and the necessity of achieving it, not only for the sake of freedom but also for the sake of the military power of a Republic.

In the first section of the article, I analyse *Discourses (D)* I.6, in which Machiavelli introduces the Spartan example via Lycurgus’ reforms, which were referred to by the sources as the Great Rhetra. I show here that Machiavelli’s interest is as much institutional and political as it is economic, and that it is his concept of equality that allows him to tie these different domains together. Equality, as we will see, should be understood in two different but mutually related ways: first as the intended outcome of the economic reforms Lycurgus implemented in a specific historical situation, and second as the anthropological conception upon which, more widely, Machiavelli grounds his appreciation of human nature, thus going beyond the specific historical experience of Sparta.

In the two sections that follow, I examine the historiographical basis that allowed Machiavelli to develop this theoretical position on Sparta. Through textual analysis of the work of the relevant classical authors, it will be possible to better understand Machiavelli’s selective and partial treatment of the sources. I show two things in these sections: (1) the radically egalitarian reading of Lycurgus and his legacy largely derives from Plutarch’s *Lives*; and (2) Polybius and Aristotle are equally essential for opening up an alternative front of reflection in Machiavelli, namely that of military power, which depends precisely on a certain socio-economic equality.

In the fourth and final section, I demonstrate how the conjunction of the aspects discussed in earlier sections – military power and its economic and political basis – serve Machiavelli in constructing an ideal bridge towards the history of the Roman Republic and particularly the second-century BCE attempts at reform which revolved around agrarian law. My thesis is that Machiavelli offers a *Spartan* reading of the Gracchi brothers in which he appreciates their egalitarian intent, just as he appreciates that of Lycurgus’ reforms.

Sparta’s Paradoxical Equality

Within Machiavellian historiography interested in economic thought, what stands out is the almost total absence of any reference to the events and characters of what I called the ‘Spartan matter’ above in the introduction, particularly the mythical legislator Lycurgus.³ This absence is remarkable, in that, as we will see in this first section, the economy is precisely one of the central axes upon which Machiavelli’s interest in Sparta is founded. Such interest is by no means antiquarian, as is always the case in his decision to mobilise the ancients. The treatment of the Spartan matter, in other words, highlights how the economy and politics are interwoven and how it is not possible for Machiavelli to produce theory in one field without entering into – and taking part in – the other.

Machiavelli synthesises the properly economic and political nature of Lycurgus’ constitution in a passage that moves quickly and that in my view has not been adequately investigated, not so much with regard to a specific attribute of the Lacedaemonians as with regard to a more general characteristic of his political theory. Lycurgus, we read in *D* I.6,

with his laws made more equality of belongings in Sparta and less equality of rank; for [1] there was an equal poverty and the plebeians were less ambitious because the ranks of the city were spread among few citizens and were kept at a distance from the plebs; nor did the nobles, by treating them badly, ever give them the desire to hold rank. [2] This was because the Spartan kings, placed in that principality and set down in the middle of the nobility, had no greater remedy for upholding their dignity than to keep the plebs defended from every injury, which made the plebs not fear and not desire rule. Since the plebs neither had

nor feared rule, the rivalry that it could have had with the nobility was taken away, as well as the cause of tumults; and they could live united a long time. [3] But two principal things caused this union: one, that there were few inhabitants in Sparta, and because of this they could be governed by few; the other, that since they did not accept foreigners in their republic they had opportunity neither to be corrupted nor to grow so much that it was unendurable by the few who governed it.

This is a complex text, in which Machiavelli identifies the specific nucleus of Lycurgus' constitution, the Great Rhetra, a nucleus that is then explained in three moments of which not only the reciprocal connection but also the respective coherence must be adequately investigated. Let us examine this passage more closely. The first phase, intended to draw in the reader, is dazzling: Lycurgus' constitution consists in having made 'more equality of belongings [. . .] and less equality of rank'. The explicit claim of a close connection between economy and politics which I referred to above cannot be ignored. It characterises the main nucleus of the constitutional reform. Rank (*grado*) and belongings (*sostanze*) are articulated in a relationship of inverse proportionality whose effect is a long and concordant stability.

The explanation of the causes that produce such an effect is articulated in three moments whose coherence is far from obvious. The first moment deals with the regime of affects established in Sparta, for which the plebs not only have little ambition but do not have space to desire the 'ranks' of the city, because they are not oppressed or haunted by those who already hold those ranks, thus being at the highest level of the social scale. People and nobility remain far away, separated, as two spheres which do not communicate, and they also lack the desire or ambition to do so. The high and low, we could say, in this way lack a common ground on which they could battle one another.

The second moment of explanation, however, introduces an element (this time political-institutional), which reduces the importance of this affective dynamic. Desire and ambition are not spontaneously moderated or naturally separated but instead are neutralised by the presence of the kings in the middle of the two social classes. The kings act as a screen and protect the plebs from the injuries of the nobility. The kings find themselves *among* the nobles, but it is by relying on the plebian element, *external* to the

nobility, that they are able to defend their own status and power.⁴ Without the kings, therefore, it is reasonable to think that the affective economy we just noted would immediately be destabilised. The social and politico-institutional moments, again, are interwoven, without being able to say for sure whether it is the egalitarian structure of society that allows the kings to play their protective function, or whether it is the constitutional organisation of society that prevents the nobility from perverting the economic equality which is the cause of political stability.

The third moment further tests the coherence of this chain, shifting attention this time onto the relation between the internal and external dimension of the city. Indeed, the union is no longer connected to either the egalitarian structure of society or the protective role of the kings, but rather to the maintaining of a low number of inhabitants, which renders it possible for the *few*, that is, the nobles, to govern ‘few’, that is, a low overall number of citizens. The possibility of the contrary, namely that few govern a great number, is implicitly excluded by Machiavelli.

Machiavelli describes, with a concise synthesis, the socio-political structure of Sparta, which is the first cause of its longevity. However, in my view, he is also emphasising a dimension that is at least apparently paradoxical, which is to invite the reader to pose the problem in a way that is perhaps unexpected. One might expect, in fact, that the inequality of rank and belonging would proceed according to a direct proportionality: the greater the political force of the aristocracy, the more effective the economic and institutional mechanisms that allow it to control and dominate the lower strata of society will be and the clearer the effects of accumulation and concentration of wealth will be. However, the apparent paradox of Lycurgus’ legislation is that the proportionality, in the case of Sparta, is inverse: an aristocracy exists, but economic and political inequality are not directly proportional; rather, they are inversely proportional in that there is great inequalities of rank and small inequalities of material belongings. This apparent anomaly, in my view, can be explained by turning to the sources of this passage, to what the ancient historians transmit to Machiavelli, and to what he decides to select and maintain at the centre of his own analysis. However, before turning to investigate these sources, it is necessary to specify the theoretical framework within which Machiavelli

carries out his historical analysis, which also affects the concept of inequality itself.

Developing an interesting hypothesis on the stratification of the *Discourses*, Paul Larivaille (1982) completed an in-depth analysis on the theme of equality a few decades ago. The French historian argues that, with rare exceptions, when the term *equalità* appears, it has a political meaning and is often accompanied by the adjective 'civil', where *civile equalità* is the literal translation of the Polybian *politicae aequalitatis* in the Latin translation used by Machiavelli.⁵ The term appears only one time in the 1519–1520 *Allocuzione a un magistrato*. It is absent in *The Prince*, reappearing several times in the *Discursus* and the *Florentine Histories* (FH) where it always has a political valence, and then in the *Discourses* where, for Larivaille, the political meaning, rather than the economic one, almost always has greater importance.⁶

Although *civile equalità*, not only for the Florentine Secretary but also for many authors of late humanism, certainly has a political valence, it seems difficult to me to exclude the presence, at times implicit or latent but not for this reason less fundamental, of a genuine economic *concept* of equality in Machiavelli.⁷ Even when the economic meaning is not open and manifest, as in *D I.6* regarding Lycurgus' reforms, it is almost always present, subtending or even guiding his reflection on politics. We can take *D I.55*, for example, one of the most theoretically dense chapters on the concept of *equalità*.⁸ The status of the noblemen, a mix of feudal arrogance and cultural backwardness typical of several Italian provinces which acts as an obstacle to free and republican organisation, is undoubtedly political and economic at the same time. The inequalities described in *FH III.1* that paradoxically developed in virtuous Rome and then tapered out in corrupt Florence are simultaneously political and economic.

Among these texts, *D I.17* is also of great import. Here, Machiavelli emphasises the failure of Epaminondas, a virtuous general and politician, to transmit his virtue to the Thebans after his death. His life was too short to allow him to be able to stop the corruption and reverse course. But precisely this text, then, indirectly confirms the immense value of Lycurgus' intervention, as he too faced corruption 'alone' like Epaminondas and was instead capable of stabilising his work so that it could be maintained in a lasting way.

Discourses I.6 and I.17 must therefore be read together, not only to demonstrate the fact that equality is an enemy of corruption, but also to illustrate which type of *equalità* is at issue and how the economy has to do with politics. Yet again, albeit indirectly, it is Lycurgus' reforms which demonstrate this reality. In conclusion, I would thus reverse Larivaille's reading in order to say that only rarely, when Machiavelli speaks of *equalità*, can an exclusively political meaning be deduced.⁹

A further clarification is required concerning corruption, a pivotal idea in Machiavelli's thought. The examples of Epaminondas and Lycurgus do not suggest that Machiavelli believes only in individual virtue as exclusively exercised by exceptional historical characters. Whenever Machiavelli evokes such examples, he is trying to show the long-lasting egalitarian reforms that arise from the potentially conflictual and sometimes highly divisive reforms that these virtuous rulers put in place. Lycurgus' egalitarian reforms, as we shall see, do not bring peace but conflict. This aspect is essential to grasp Machiavelli's idea of corruption, one that makes his position entirely original in late humanism and puts it at odds with more recent liberal interpretations of his republicanism.¹⁰

Now, turning to the question of sources, Machiavelli's choice of putting equality front and centre should not be surprising, because the classical historians, Plutarch first of all, understood how this is a matter of real contention which fuels the conflict between the people and nobility.¹¹ In the *Life of Agis*, the equality that the prophecies inspire the Spartan king to establish is without any doubt economic. When Leonidas opposes his rival, putting into play the memory of Lycurgus and claiming that he had not cancelled his debt, Agis replies that the ban on precious metals means nothing other than the abolition of debt and the restoration of a lost equality. Finally, when Cleomenes takes up Agis' project, Plutarch emphasises that it was precisely equality that could no longer be spoken of in Sparta without raising the spectre of bloody conflicts. And it is precisely these conflicts that Machiavelli was not afraid to raise when he explored the tragic evolution of the agrarian reform of the Gracchi in *D* I.37.

Naturally, the historical conditions of Sparta and Rome are not identical. What, then, authorises Machiavelli to bring the two together? What exactly does Machiavelli understand when he refers

to equality? My hypothesis is that a broader reflection is at work here, one that looks past the economic or political circumstances of a particular historical situation and entails an overall conception of human nature. And this conception, for Machiavelli, has a radically egalitarian root and nucleus. I am not proposing here a *strong* concept of nature or the subordination of historical analysis to it. I tend to think that anthropology and history appeal to one another on a plane of immanence. However, because of this concept of equality the conclusions Machiavelli arrives at by reflecting on Sparta are not limited to that historical period but are rather generalised and generalisable, making it possible to read other historical periods in which similar causes respond to similar effects similarly.

There are multiple passages throughout Machiavelli's work in which the unity and homogeneity of human nature is emphasised. From antiquity, the nature of men has remained almost constant, because they 'are born, live, and die always in one and the same order' (*D* I.11). And although the difference between aristocratic and popular humour sometimes takes on the characteristics of a real anthropological fracture (*P* IX), Machiavelli defends a substantial equality in human nature, and at times even in a radical way, as in the discourse on the anonymous *ciompo* that, although not entirely and perfectly reflecting his political programme (as is obvious), on this and other points does not contradict anything Machiavelli always maintained about equality.¹²

We can now turn to investigate the sources of *D* I.6 and Machiavelli's Lycurgus, that is, delve into question that has been so thorny and often obscure generally due not only to the scarcity of direct references to it in Machiavelli but also to the original and unorthodox way he treats ancient authors. The Spartan question is at the height of such difficulties, which is an issue that has been highlighted several times by scholars.

Machiavelli and the Ancient Sources

Some of Machiavelli's sources have been identified in a fairly undisputed way; for example, Harvey Mansfield did so in his commentary on the *Discourses* (2001 [1979]: 33, 39–40, 48–53): in addition to the scarce references to Thucydides, it is Aristotle's

Politics, Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, and finally Book VI of Polybius' *Histories*, which have already led to Machiavelli's greatest interpreters spilling much ink (see, among others, Sasso 1987: 3–65, 67–118). I intend to show here how it is not only possible to integrate them with other sources, which are just as important, if not more important, but also that Machiavelli's force and originality can only be understood by grasping the selective and sometimes partial treatment that he makes of his preferred authors.

Aristotle is the first author of a certain importance on whom Machiavelli certainly meditated who links the distribution of land to the question of finances and the indirect but essential impact they had on military organisation and thus the power of the city.¹³ Aristotle's critique of the Spartan system is founded on the paradoxical inequality in wealth and possession of land which, contrary to common opinion, had come about. The reason, for the Stagirite, is the freedom and excessively independent status of Spartan women, which Lycurgus unsuccessfully tried to control. For Aristotle, it is true that the Great Rhetra prohibited the sale of lands, but the successive practice did not exclude their transfer or donation, and this, thanks to the particular status of Spartan women, thus led to the concentration of landed property and thereby to the ruin of the moderate economic balance of the city (*Pol.* 1270a).¹⁴

Although the judgement on the limitation of landed property is rather neutral, or at least not openly negative, the results are historically blameworthy, since the Spartans managed to accumulate and concentrate landed wealth *despite* Lycurgus. It is a connection of maximum importance to the problems Machiavelli faces, not only from a historical and theoretical point of view, but also from a practical one, in his long experience of reorganising the Florentine militia.¹⁵ Beyond the mythical fame that the Spartan army had, the reality of the facts, for Aristotle, was quite different. The problem was not so much the courage or military efficiency of the Lacedaemonians, but the real power that the city's economy allowed on the basis of its social organisation (*Pol.* 1271b).

Aristotle holds that in Sparta land belonged only to citizens, that is, only to the Spartans themselves and not the Helots, and thus only to a privileged minority. It should be noted that, historically, Aristotle is correct: in all likelihood, this was the direction in which the property regime evolved starting from the Dorian invasion and

continuing through the time of Agis and Cleomenes. Aristotle is thus speaking about this late, already corrupt Sparta, wherein the moderating intent of Lycurgus is blurred. This is a state in which the public is impoverished at the expense of private citizens – that is, the minority of Spartans – and their greed. What Aristotle is referring to, therefore, is the failure of Lycurgus' egalitarian intent. His desire for economic reform has been neutralised and weakened by the reform of customs, particularly regarding the status of women.

When Machiavelli introduces the Spartan model, then, he is referring to a completely different situation. Machiavelli speaks of the egalitarian intent of the original Great Rhetra and the efficacious containment of the greed of the Spartan minority, thanks to the 'equality of belongings' introduced by Lycurgus and maintained over the centuries thanks to his foresight. Machiavelli borrows the analysis and even the language of Aristotle but reverses their meaning: if the Stagirite emphasises the failure of the lawgiver, Machiavelli instead concentrates on his success. The echo of the egalitarian nature of that provision becomes for Machiavelli a genuine socio-economic objective to be pursued, which is summarised in the famous conclusion that 'well-ordered republics have to keep the public rich and their citizens poor' (*D* I.37). According to Machiavelli, this is exactly what Lycurgus was able to accomplish, while according to Aristotle it is this that has been lost in the Sparta to which he is closer and which has now become corrupt. Aristotle points the finger at the degeneration of Lycurgus' project and the unexpected but predictable reversal – nearly a heterogenesis of ends – which the Spartan situation had reached.

Thus, Machiavelli argues against Aristotle, but also against the ancient authors who, in one way or another, omitted or misunderstood the essential reform of the divine Lycurgus, forgetting to talk about the redistribution of land.¹⁶ However, this is not the case for all ancient authors. I can think, for example, of Plutarch, who provides Machiavelli with perhaps the most important amount of information and whom Machiavelli, as usual, does not hesitate to interpret in the way that is most congenial for himself.¹⁷

In Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, we find all of the historiographical elements already noted, particularly the contempt for wealth, which the lawgiver had managed to inculcate in his people in a lasting manner (Plu. *Lyc.* 24). Of course, Plutarch does not at all hide that

such contempt was due to the abundance already present among the Spartans and procured for them by the Helots, who cultivated the land in their stead. The fact remains that ‘one of the noble and blessed privileges which Lycurgus provided for his fellow-citizens, was abundance of leisure, since he forbade their engaging in any mechanical art whatsoever, and as for money-making, with its laborious efforts to amass wealth, there was no need of it at all, since wealth awakened no envy and brought no honour’ (Plu. *Lyc.* 24).¹⁸

In Plutarch, Machiavelli is finally able to read an argument that is absent from the other main sources, or one that is only rapidly treated, such as in Polybius. He places this argument at the centre of his analysis of social dynamics, well beyond the description of what happens in Sparta. It is the question of the partial and divisive nature of Lycurgus’ politics, which is embodied in the redistribution of land, that is, the measure that, more than any other in the ancient world, stirred up spirits and provoked bloody conflicts. There is no doubt for Plutarch that it is not a matter of a generic orientation towards new values, such as for example civic virtue instead of wealth, or morality instead of utility. Instead, it is a matter of a pragmatic and extremely partial intervention against a few holders of wealth in favour of the many poor people. We read in *Lyc.* 8 that:

there was a dreadful inequality in this regard, the city was heavily burdened with indigent and helpless people, and wealth was wholly concentrated in the hands of a few. Determined, therefore, to banish insolence and envy and crime and luxury, and those yet more deep-seated and afflictive diseases of the state, poverty and wealth, he persuaded his fellow-citizens to make one parcel of all their territory and divide it up anew, and to live with one another on a basis of entire uniformity and equality in the means of subsistence, seeking pre-eminence through virtue alone, assured that there was no other difference or inequality between man and man than that which was established by blame for base actions and praise for good ones. Suiting the deed to the word, he distributed the rest of the Laconian land among the ‘perioeci’, or free provincials, in thirty thousand lots, and that which belonged to the city of Sparta, in nine thousand lots, to as many genuine Spartans.¹⁹

Wealth and poverty are long-running evils amongst the Spartans that Lycurgus manages to remove with this intervention. It is a clear injustice, if by justice we understand (as Cicero understood it in the wake of Plato) respect for the right of individual property. Here, we

have an opposite model of distributive justice, intended to displace the concentration of landed capital and create in its stead a widespread property for the purpose of a subsistence economy. Given the partiality of this intervention, against the rich and for the poor, it sounds almost ironic, in Plutarch's words, that Lycurgus himself sees in his reforms the realisation of a generalised brotherhood and a perfect harmony amongst the inhabitants of Sparta, for whom 'all Laconia looks like a family estate newly divided among many brothers' (Plu. *Lyc.* 8).

Actually, the revolutionary character of the Great Rhetra regarding wealth does not escape Plutarch, a theme to which Machiavelli certainly pays great attention. The reaction of the Spartan aristocracy does not take long, and the latter explodes with violence against the person of Lycurgus himself, who clearly does not benefit from the sacred character in which he tried to cloak his reforms by making them a Delphic gift. In this sense, Plutarch uses his sources in order to interpret another element of the myth of Lycurgus, namely the fact that he lost one of his eyes when a noble attempted to kill him. For Plutarch, this fact about Lycurgus does not have a mythical-symbolic valence, but rather a material and political one, that is, the violent reaction of the landowners (*Lyc.* 11).

These were lasting reforms, therefore, but reforms which had not been done without effort and resistance on the part of the class that had been stripped of wealth. Like Plato before him, Plutarch makes Lycurgus a model (see Plato 1976, 1991). Unlike Plato, however, or Polybius, who hints at it briefly, Plutarch highlights not so much the harmonising, almost divine, or transcendent elements of his reforms, but rather those juridical and political elements based on the material and structural content of the new, more egalitarian organisation of the people of Sparta.²⁰

Plutarch's attitude is of considerable importance not only for the radicality that he attributes to Lycurgus, but also for the way in which he is the privileged source of Machiavelli's argument. Indeed, Plutarch expands and explicitly connects the redistributive politics of the Great Rhetra to the subsequent reform attempts that took place in Sparta, particularly those of the pro-popular kings Agis and Cleomenes, combining these events that took place in distant times with a red thread that runs through to ideally join Republican Rome. In this way, between Plutarch and Polybius,

Machiavelli assigns massive importance not only to the individual figure of Lycurgus, but also to the legacy of his reforms as a basis for interpreting subsequent history.

The link which, according to Machiavelli, unites the mythical Lycurgan reforms to the later Spartan reforms has a real historical foundation. As Gabriele Marasco (1981) noted in his commentary on Plutarch's biographies of Agis and Cleomenes, it is precisely the *isótēs* that constitutes the common and revolutionary trait linking the two epochs. Although this economic equality, of whatever period of Spartan history we consider, is itself more mythical than real, the fact remains that it was considered the essential element needed to popularly bend and democratically characterise the Lacedaemonian system.²¹ It was a mixed government, then, but one in which, as Machiavelli saw very well, 'equality of belongings' had greater weight than any other element. It is not by chance that the redistribution of land becomes the heart of the action of the pro-popular kings and the nucleus of the aristocracy's ruthless opposition.

Machiavelli follows Plutarch more than any other author in making a judgement on the agrarian reforms and their consequences in the socio-political field.²² He openly recognises the value of egalitarian economic measures. In this, he is opposed by most of the historiographic tradition, which instead strongly condemns such reforms; Cicero was one of the main representatives of this tradition.²³ But whereas Plutarch participates to a large extent in the process of idealisation that had been under way for a long time, Machiavelli is not interested in the construction of a myth, either of the Lacedaemonians or of their divine lawgiver, Lycurgus.²⁴ When Sparta and Rome are compared, in fact, it is the latter which is chosen rather than the former. The reason is that for Machiavelli a different perspective comes into play, which remains in the shadow for many ancient authors, with the important exception of Aristotle and Polybius, namely the dimension of the link between military virtue and economic demography, which I investigate in the next section.

On the Paradoxical Military Weakness of Sparta

In *Discourses* II.3, Machiavelli returns to the theme of ancient constitutions. This time, he does so not only with an eye to the social

distribution of resources, but also with an eye to ability of ancient cities to gather the necessary tools to face external enemies. It is true that the implications of the Spartan model have social, economic and political consequences. It is also true, however, that Machiavelli sometimes appears to shift his focus to its military implications, as if the success in resisting external threats and widening dominion was the ultimate test for a political entity. Despite the proverbial military virtue of the Lacedaemonians, this time Sparta is similar to Athens for its powerlessness and inability to resist external threats. While being well-armed and well-ordered republics, Sparta and Athens fail to match the greatness of the Roman Empire. The responsibility, this time in a negative manner, falls onto Lycurgus (Athens, clearly less important, disappears from the argument), who did everything to prevent foreigners from settling in Sparta or trading with Spartans. But in this way, the size of the city remained contained, and this meant it was unable to sustain a vast empire. Lycurgus' model of closed citizenship is the first and foremost reason for the weakness of Sparta's military outcomes.

A fundamental contradiction has thus eroded Lycurgus' constitutional project from the beginning. In order to keep this project intact – this is Machiavelli's consideration, which as we will see shortly is based on ancient sources – Lycurgus did everything to keep the Spartans separated from other people, removing the main reason for doing so, that is, trade and the possibility of mutual enrichment. By preventing exchange, Lycurgus condemned his own work to failure. Who would even bother to trade with a people whose coins are made of iron or leather?²⁵ As we will see, Machiavelli's explanation does not concern either the disinterest in wealth instilled in the Spartans, or the equality achieved amongst them with the division of land. It is rather the limited external exchange that is being blamed. By preventing the proliferation of inhabitants, Lycurgus forced the city to remain small, and this happened despite the relative and widespread wealth of the country. Historiography has emphasised that the closest text and most probable source of this passage is probably Book VI of Polybius' *Histories*. Machiavelli follows the contradiction, highlighted by the historian from Megalopolis, between the divine inspiration of Lycurgus' project on the internal level and its consequences, unintended and in the long run disastrous, on the international level. Indeed,

though he made them the most disinterested and sober-minded men in the world, as far as their own ways of life and their national institutions were concerned, he left them in regard to the rest of Greece ambitious, eager for supremacy, and encroaching in the highest degree. (Plb. VI.48; see also VI.49–50)

On this basis, Polybius (and with him Machiavelli) prefers the constitution and economic organisation of Rome to Sparta, because Rome was able to increase wealth and, with this, power, both material and military, at the same time. However, I would like to emphasise a slight nuance between Polybius' argument and Machiavelli's. For the Megalopolis historian, in fact, it is the rapacious desire and expansionistic mentality that, not being supported by the adequate socio-economic structure, leads Sparta to ruin in the stubbornness to conquer Messenia. For Machiavelli, the main cause of Sparta's ruin is instead due to the Theban revolt and to the fact that the Lacedaemonians neither knew nor were able to find allies against them (*D* II.3 *in fine*). The main problem for Machiavelli is the small size of the colonial centre in comparison to the colonised periphery, from which the critique of the incapacity to increase wealth and with it, power, derives. However, it does not seem to me that a critique of the distribution of wealth attributed to Lycurgus can be deduced from this point, either in Polybius or in Machiavelli.

Aristotle's argument in the *Politics* is slightly different. In this text, he puts forward the theme that Polybius will also undertake, namely the lack of armed men. However, Aristotle does not emphasise the equality of the land regime due to Lycurgus (and it is difficult to imagine that that was unaware of it). The scarcity of the possible and necessary number of armed men derived precisely from its opposite, namely the unequal division of land, which he recommended the city-state could overcome through a more equitable policy (*Pol.* 1270a 28ff).

Thus, Aristotle and Polybius offer Machiavelli some tools for clarifying his choice of the Roman model over the Spartan one. Machiavelli had already elaborated an original reflection allowing him to select arguments within his sources, leaving aside what had not convinced him or interested him. In both Aristotle and Polybius, he appreciates the emphasis placed on the strict, necessary and inevitable connection between the economy and war. In the

comparatio between Lycurgus and Numa, even though Plutarch ultimately sided in favour of the conservative poverty of Sparta over the expansive wealth of Rome, this would not be possible for Machiavelli (Vlassopoulos 2012: 43ff). Following Polybius on the dynamic interpretation of the life-cycle of republics, Machiavelli maintains that necessarily, sooner or later, republics will come into contact with external enemies (See also *D* II.19). Lycurgus clashed against this necessity, of which he was unaware, as did every legislator after him.

The connection Machiavelli makes between wealth and military power allows him to both criticise the traditional image of Sparta as a military power and implicitly distance himself from Cicero, who thought that if civil works are as important as military ones, if not even more so, then among the Greeks it is Lycurgus who should be praised.²⁶ Cicero approached this differently than Aristotle, for example, because he had already condemned the egalitarian and redistributive measures. Setting those aside, for him the military argument resolves in the exceptional valour of the Spartans. For Machiavelli, in contrast, since redistributive measures are at the centre of his interpretation of Spartan history, from a military point of view it is actually Sparta's limits that emerge: *despite* the martial valour of the Lacedaemonians, the effects of the small city-state's conservative poverty were ultimately disastrous.

Eric Nelson (2004) has suggested the pivotal importance of the Greek tradition in early modern republicanism. In Nelson's view, the 'neo-Roman' category employed first by Quentin Skinner and eventually popularised by the Cambridge School risks obscuring the paramount influence of Greek sources. More seriously, it tends to overemphasise the celebration of the imperial expansion and glory, and undermine a concept of justice as a way of living in accordance with nature and political stability based on a fairer redistribution of property amongst citizens. Building on Nelson's work, in a recent volume on statecraft in Renaissance Italy, James Hankins has urged us to reappraise the category of 'neo-Roman' liberty, offering us instead the concept of 'neo-classical politics' (2019: 101). Undoubtedly, Greek sources and Greek history are at least as important as Roman sources for Machiavelli, as I hope my article has thus far also demonstrated. However, I think that this point does not require reassessing Machiavelli's crucial interest

in the reform of the army and, more generally, in the necessity of military power in the international arena. Machiavelli is not interested in the Greeks because he looks for an idea of justice based on a morally fairer distribution of resources: he is interested in the Greeks, and Lycurgus in particular, precisely *because* the Spartan legislator's reforms allowed a professionalisation of the army similar to what Machiavelli hopes for Florence. The aim for an increase in military power is not undermined by his interest in the Greeks; on the contrary, it is supported by it, particularly by his interest in Lycurgus and the Spartans.

Machiavelli's judgement of Sparta and Rome depends largely on the connection between economic power and military strength. If he prefers Rome to Sparta, it is because its expansive regime made it possible to displace conflicts over time, without suffocating the state or its citizenry, and to increase the forces and colonial power of Rome against its enemies. Economic power and military force, however, must be separated in Machiavelli's view. Despite Sparta's irreversible crisis, his positive judgement of Lycurgus' reforms and the initial land distribution remains. Without openness and expansive growth, not only military valour but also the value of the initial equality is swept away by the whirlwind of wars.

From the Later Spartan Reformers to the Gracchi

Machiavelli chooses the expansive model of Rome over the conservative model of Sparta (and Venice).²⁷ My thesis, however, is that Machiavelli does not renounce his positive judgement of Lycurgus' socio-economic reforms. Following Rome instead of Sparta, for Machiavelli, does not at all mean abandoning what Lycurgus had done with the Spartans, namely making a people organised on an egalitarian basis, in which great wealth was wiped out by force. And what interests Machiavelli is not so much ideological, in a reductive sense, as it is pragmatic and entirely oriented to the reflection on military power, which is demonstrated by the way he continues to follow the vicissitudes of Lycurgus' originally revolutionary nucleus in other historical characters, such as the later reformers Agis and Cleomenes, the paradoxical tyrant Nabis, and then in the Gracchi brothers.

Plutarch again occupies centre stage in Machiavelli's ideal discussion with the ancients. In no other place save the *Cleomenes* can Machiavelli read with as much clarity how equality and the distribution of wealth were not pursued out of an abstract and moralising love of poverty. These were instead pursued because they were the material basis and condition of the power of the Spartan army. The possession of land (the κλήροι) was the condition and premise for the professional expansion of the army, which Lycurgus wanted and which was pursued by Agis and above all Cleomenes (Marasco 1981). The entire complex of Lycurgus' measures required the indispensable creation of an at least relative equality with the aristocrats that would ensure each citizen enough land and the necessary resources to serve in the army. The defeat of Sellasia and the conclusion of the Cleomenean War cannot be considered a condemnation of Cleomenes' political programme, which consisted in reviving Lycurgus' laws, including land distribution. According to Machiavelli, great glory would have resulted for the Spartan king 'if it had not been for the power of the Macedonians and the weakness of the other Greek republics. For after such an order, when he was assaulted by the Macedonians, found himself alone and inferior in strength, *and had no one with whom to seek refuge*, he was conquered; and his plan, however just and praiseworthy, remained imperfect' (*D I.9*; my emphasis).

The key point of this passage is that Cleomenes 'had no one with whom to seek refuge'. The fact that Machiavelli reaches this conclusion in the chapter dedicated to the need to be alone in the ordering or reforming of a republic seems to be almost paradoxical. Actually, however, from a more careful reading which above all is mindful of Plutarch's *Lives*, we see that the cause of his ruin was much different. The Spartan king was not alone but had instead one and only one person to turn to, namely Ptolemy of Egypt, who, unfortunately for him, held the entire purse strings of the Spartan military campaign. Cleomenes succumbs to the forces of the Achaean League not because he is alone, but because he is completely dependent on Egyptian finances. It is the lack of autonomy that creates a lethal outcome for Cleomenes' 'poverty', which is crushed by the wealth of Antigonos III.²⁸ Not even in Plutarch, therefore, and even less in Machiavelli, can we read the story of Cleomenes as adhering to the well-known saying that 'money is the sinew of war' (see *D II.10*).²⁹

Cleomenes succumbs on the battlefield in Sellasia not so much for his poverty but for his complete lack of autonomy over the finances of war, which were rigidly controlled by the Alexandrian sovereign.

And the theme returns with force in the *Tiberius Gracchus*, in which it is clear that the poverty of large sections of the population mainly has the effect of weakening the army, which was drafted on the basis of the census. Thus, it is clear that agrarian reforms are also, at the same time, military reforms. Perhaps more than any other, this is the reason behind Machiavelli's positive judgement of reforms of the Gracchi brothers, 'whose intention one should praise more than [the] prudence' (*D* I.37). The politics of the Gracchi was universally believed to be the cause of the decline that led to civil war and the end of the Republic. Among the major sources, it is above all Cicero's vehemence, yet again, where Machiavelli can read the condemnation of the Gracchi, destroyers of the state and villains, for resurrecting the ancient Spartan idea of redistribution. Tiberius' assassin, therefore, deserves praise, just as all of those who supported Caesar's populism do (*Cic. Off.* I.22.).³⁰ For Cicero, money and wealth must be preserved because it is on the respect of the right to property that every healthy civil society hangs (see, for example, *Cic. Off.* II.21–3). And even more: from this viewpoint, property is functional to the realisation of natural law, and is therefore even more important than life itself (*Off.* III.5).

Through reading the sources, it is possible to see how these 'defenders' of natural law, that is, the aristocrats, put all manner of strategies into play, beyond and even against the law, this time positive law, to oppose land reforms. Already in Sparta, it was the Ephors who took charge of the resistance to Agis, reaching what could seem to be a genuine *coup d'état* at the time of Cleombrotus, the successor to Leonidas. However, through the *Lives*, Machiavelli can also cherish the description that, in a similar manner, unites the Spartan and Roman aristocracies in a ferocious opposition to the reformers. Indeed, it is in an analogous way, for Plutarch, that the aristocratic tactics develop in Rome against a law that was of great moderation and expressed only the reasonable request of the Roman people. The *Lives* therefore advances an openly positive judgement on these reforms, a judgement that can be traced back to the spirit of Lycurgus' Great Rhetra and his attempt to decrease the power of the rich.

Keeping the public rich and the private citizens poor – a recommendation which returns several times in Machiavelli (see, for example, *D* II.10 and III.16) – means, in my view, precisely this, that is, being able to impose the egalitarian regime that Lycurgus introduced in a lasting way in Sparta and that neither Agis nor Cleomenes, nor the Gracchi in Rome, were able to revive. Machiavelli thus emphasises the transformative virtue of Lycurgus, capable of lasting success against the Spartan nobility while, instead, the Gracchi ended up failing against the Roman nobility.

The fact that Machiavelli was well aware of the measures taken by the Spartan kings is strongly supported by Giorgio Cadoni (1994) in one of the most important interventions within Machiavellian historiography on the Spartan matter.³¹ I disagree with Cadoni, however, when he concludes that Machiavelli was incoherent in bringing the Spartan reforms, especially Cleomenes', together with the Gracchi, because the unfortunate Roman brothers never wanted to establish an 'equality of belongings'. It is certainly not a matter of attributing to the Gracchi an identical economic and political project to that of Lycurgus and Cleomenes. But in what direction can agrarian reforms, and specifically the Gracchi reforms, go except that of greater equality? By tracing an implicit but clear path running from Lycurgus to the Gracchi, Machiavelli wanted to interpret a history, or better, construct a narration, that can also be interpreted in a political sense.

In support of this thesis, there is also a second point that for Cadoni would manifest an inconsistency in Machiavelli's analysis: the positive judgement of Cleomenes' attempt to reactivate Lycurgus' constitution would draw along with it the worm that ended up gnawing at Spartan military power, making it a republic suited only for defending and preserving itself. But, as we saw above, Machiavelli intends to separate the two arguments. The choice of the conflictual and open model of Rome, with respect to the conservative and closed model of Sparta, does not cancel his judgement on the socio-economic basis established by Lycurgus. Indeed, this could – and perhaps still can – be read as a necessary condition for increasing the size of an army based on a census draft.

Mario Reale has also pointed out, from a different point of view on the double-beginning of the history of Rome, the importance of the juxtaposition between the late Spartan reformers and the Gracchi.

Cadoni pointed out to Reale that Machiavelli was hardly able to know the *comparatio* between the lives of Agis and Cleomenes and the Gracchi. Indeed, this is not contained in the translations of Alamanno Rinuccini (for Agis and Cleomenes) and Leonardo Bruni (for the Gracchi), which circulated together as early as 1470 in the Roman edition of Ulrich Han, edited by Giovanni Antonio Campana, but only in the Giunta edition of the Greek, which was published in 1517.³² However, one could respond to Cadoni that, at this point, direct knowledge of the brief Plutarchan *comparatio* is of little importance, as it does not contain any reference to the theoretical and politico-economic contents Plutarch analyses in earlier pages. What matters most is that a comparison can be made, and that it has been made: implicitly, in the type of analysis and positive judgement Plutarch offers, and explicitly, in Cicero's *De officiis*, which Machiavelli, in my view, frontally opposes. Even without the *comparatio*, Machiavelli had all the elements available for building an ideal link and a courageously partial and positive judgement on the attempts at egalitarian reform.

Cadoni's (1994) conclusion, from this point of view, can also be revised with regard to another fundamental point, namely Machiavelli's unreserved judgement on Cleomenes' work. Cadoni invites us to interpret it on the basis of an abstract intention (ultimately, a sort of 'idealisation') of the reformers with respect to his concrete historical action. An idealisation, therefore, similar to that expressed regarding the Gracchi in *D I.37*, whose intention was praised more than their prudence; for him, it is more the tendency they had indicated than the timing with which they had acted (see Cadoni 1994: 86ff). My thesis is analogous but somewhat contrary to this: rather than using the Gracchi to explain Cleomenes, it seems useful to use Cleomenes – understood as a follower of Lycurgus – to explain the Gracchi. I think Machiavelli offers a *Spartan* interpretation of the Gracchi and their attempt at reform, an interpretation, that is, which goes back to the first nucleus of the reflection and the positive judgement on the 'equality of belongings', which is never revised or denied. I would thus propose reading the conclusion on the Gracchi's lack of prudence in light of the brief and dazzling text in *D I.20*, focussed on Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, which shows how 'two virtuous princes in succession are sufficient to acquire the world' (*D I.40*).

Machiavelli argues that only long-lasting and egalitarian reforms implemented through virtuous action can save republics and principalities from a relapse into corruption. Two successive or close generations of princes, as in the case of Philip and Alexander, are the example of this principle, and the failure of the Gracchi can be read precisely in this light, even if the Gracchi themselves are not princes. On the one hand, in fact, Machiavelli himself suggests in *D* I.20 that there is no difference and that, indeed, this conclusion is even more valid in republics than in principalities. On the other, the entire story of the Gracchi had been commented on by Plutarch himself in light of a very similar principle to that expressed here by Machiavelli. Despite the differences in character, Plutarch writes, the two brothers were similar in virtue. However, ‘Tiberius ... was nine years older than his brother; and this set a different period for the political activity of each, and *more than anything else* vitiated their undertakings. They did not rise to eminence *at the same time*, and so did not *combine their powers* into one. Such a united power would have proved irresistibly great’ (*TG* 3; my emphasis).

Being interested in the duration of virtue over time, in the continued action of two or more generations of leaders and virtuous politicians, Machiavelli can hardly not have thought about his favourite source on Spartan matters. In the judgement of *D* I.37 on the lack of prudence of the Gracchi, with respect to their just intention, one can perhaps hear the echo of Plutarch’s comment. The bad timing of the Gracchi – this is the reading I propose – would not be so much with respect to the historical moment as to the reciprocal action of the two brothers. Too far away from each other in time, they could not have taken advantage of the good timing, like Philip and Alexander did and who instead worked one after another without interruption.³³

Polybius, and therefore to some extent Aristotle but above all Plutarch, provides the basis for Machiavelli’s reflection on the link between economic inequality and military power. The latter’s selective and critical reading of the ancient sources also reveals how different his position is from another author who was very interested in Lycurgus, namely Francesco Guicciardini. In a series of works that remained unpublished until the nineteenth century, Guicciardini praises Lycurgus’ politics. In *Delle buone leggi e della forza*, he emphatically refers to Lycurgus’ scalpel, namely the tool

the Spartan legislator had employed not only to divide the property, but also to amputate a deleterious cancer, that of inequalities and richness, from the body of Spartan society: ‘The good physicians should be imitated, who, when they cannot cure the disease with ointments and sweet medicines, resort to iron and fire’ (cited in Guicciardini 1857–1867, X: 379–381).³⁴ Although in his youth, as Nikola Regent (2019) has noted, Guicciardini favoured the reduction of inequalities, he was hostile to any radical and revolutionary intervention, and his moderation becomes even more evident in his later, more mature works.³⁵

Guicciardini’s *La Decima scalata* demonstrates the impossibility of applying Lycurgus’ scalpel to Florence, because, as he points out, the city does not have a citizen army and thus depends on mercenaries, whose enormous cost can only be supported by aristocratic wealth. This, according to Regent (2020), proves not only Guicciardini’s moderation but also his lucidity and realism in economic matters, which Machiavelli in contrast lacks because of his radicalism and insufficient realism.³⁶ Moreover, Guicciardini would not be the ‘advocate of wealthy “oligarchs”’, as claimed by scholars like John McCormick (2011), who Regent accuses of turning things upside down, or, as he writes, ‘puts things on their heads’ (2020: 54): as the *Discorso* shows, Guicciardini would not defend wealth in itself, but rather the individual virtue; to use a modern term, he promotes meritocracy (see Guicciardini 1857–1867).

Machiavelli and Guicciardini certainly have a different and even opposed attitude regarding a radical and violent approach to reforming a corrupted city, as well as the possibility of using ‘the knife’.³⁷ This is not, however, the only difference between them. I believe that when Regent underestimates Machiavelli’s profound analysis of Spartan politics and economic matters, it is actually Regent who is putting ‘things on their heads’: Machiavelli’s reading of Spartan history reveals neither a lack of realism nor an insensibility to economics. On the contrary, Machiavelli presents a *political* thesis about the relationship between equality and military strength. Whereas Guicciardini comes to defend, especially in his later works, the necessity of wealth *because of* the lack of a citizen army, Machiavelli argues for the imperative of destroying inequality and richness *in order to* create and develop the citizen army that Florence so sorely needed.³⁸

That Machiavelli's reading is first and foremost *political* is also revealed by the pivotal and polemical use he makes of another character, Nabis, King of Sparta. Machiavelli places Nabis' name in the list of tyrants 'worthy of reproach' (*D* I.10). In *D* I.40, and even more strongly in *P* IX, this is the case even though Nabis becomes the prince who could resist mighty enemy powers because he sided with the people against the *grandi*.³⁹ McCormick has correctly insisted on the role played by this polemical use of the Greek tyrant as a positive paradigm in Machiavelli's discourse (McCormick 2015). It is unusual for Machiavelli to highlight a historical character traditionally seen as a tyrant and usurper so positively.⁴⁰ McCormick (2015) underscores that this positive description must be an implicit anti-oligarchic statement about the current state of Florentine affairs, particularly the struggle of the Medici and the pro-Medicean nobility against the former republican and pro-popular establishment under Piero Soderini's rule.

It is equally important to underline how Nabis' anti-oligarchic politics can be read as a specific case of a more general trend of pro-popular policies that were attempted in Sparta, not only those of Agis and Cleomenes but also, once again and paradigmatically, those of Lycurgus. A line can be traced uniting these Spartan reformers to the Gracchi as, once again, McCormick maintains. This is precisely, although implicitly, Machiavelli's reading. The inclusion of Nabis in the pro-popular and egalitarian attempts to reform the distribution of property lets us see how Machiavelli pursues a political position that not only ties Spartan history to Roman history but that also unequivocally reveals the kind of pro-popular and anti-oligarchic economic policy that he recommends to the virtuous prince.

A further step can now be taken by analysing another historian who is equally important for the author of the *Discourses*. This is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, to whom Gabriele Pedullà (2018) has recently and convincingly called attention by presenting him as one of Machiavelli's major sources.⁴¹

As is well-known, Dionysius makes the Roman constitution the work of Romulus, with clear inspiration from the archaic history of Sparta and the individual figure of the mythical Lycurgus (see Vlassopoulos 2012: 105). The parallels proliferate, especially in Book II of the *Roman Antiquities*, in which Romulus learns from

the errors of the Lacedaemonians and distances himself from their customs, for example when he welcomes refugees by giving them land or when he combines the exercise of two virtuous activities, agriculture and war, in the free man (see D.H. II.15 [= Biragus: xxviii, *Asylum*] and II.28 [= Biragus: xxxi, *Agriculturae et militiae laudes*], respectively). But Lycurgus' inspiration for Romulus is even clearer in the egalitarian distribution of land, a real catalyst for a multitude around the institutions and values of what will become the greatest power in the ancient world:

The people being ... divided and assigned to tribes and curiae, he divided the land into thirty equal portions and assigned one of them to each curia, having first set apart as much of it as was sufficient for the support of the temples and shrines and also reserved some part of the land for the use of the public. This was one division made by Romulus, both of the men and of the land, which involved the greatest equality [Biragus: *maxima aequabilitas*] for all alike. (D.H. II.7 [= Biragus: xxvii])⁴²

Dionysius, therefore, offers a Spartan interpretation of Romulus and the earliest Roman institutions – a Spartan and egalitarian interpretation, precisely on the model of what the mythical Lycurgus had done with the Great Rhetra. And the egalitarian impulse does not stop with the first institutional foundation. The division of land and the spoils of war led the Romans to support military campaigns and colonial expansion (D.H. II.28 [= Biragus: xxxi]). The impulse also continues in Numa, who remedies some of Romulus' flaws precisely on land distribution: 'Having found the affairs of the State in such a raging sea of confusion, first relieved the poor among the plebeians by distributing to them some small part of the land which Romulus had possessed and of the public land' (D.H. II.62 [= Biragus: xxxix, *Clementia Numae*]).

In conclusion, therefore, it can be claimed that through the selective and shrewd choice of sources, particularly Plutarch and Polybius but also Dionysius, Machiavelli found elements to see, in the filigree of Roman history, the best effects of the socio-political heritage of Spartan equality. On this line of thought, Machiavelli has reconstructed a narrative functional to his political interest, that of a prosperous and armed republic which, differently from ancient Sparta, is open and conflictual, but in which the characteristic equality established by Lycurgus is not forgotten, because it is

precisely this which constitutes the best socio-economic basis for an autonomous and efficient army.

Filippo Del Lucchese is Associate Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Bologna, Alma Mater Studiorum, and Senior Research Associate, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg. He is the author of *Conflict, Power and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza* (Continuum Press, 2009), *The Political Philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015) and *Monsters in Thought: Philosophy of Otherness in Ancient Thought* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019). He is currently working on a project entitled ‘Monstrosity in Modern Philosophy’. E-mail: filippo.dellucchese@unibo.it

Notes

1. For the classical sources, I use the abbreviations of the online *Diccionario Griego-Español*, <http://dge.cchs.csic.es/index> (accessed 10 January 2022)
2. The term *ισονομία* has an ancient origin. It appears long before *δημοκρατία* and means much more than the reductive meaning that political theorists often assign it (see, for example, Arendt 2005: 118) when they define it simply as a political feature of democratic regimes, as opposed to aristocratic and monarchic regimes. Using Herodotus (Hdt. III.80, 83; V.37) and two *scholia* preserved by Athenaeus (Ath. XV.695a–b), philologists have reconstructed the original and early combination of *isos* with *nómos* or, more probably, with the verbal root *νεμ/νομ νωμ*. See Lévy (2005). The etymology of *isonomia* points to a broader sense of distribution and division of resources, with a strong moral dimension of equity. It thus has a meaning much broader than simple equality under the law or an equal right to speak. Isonomy refers to the community (unlike *ἐλευθερία*, which refers to the individual) and evokes the egalitarian dimension of the Athenian democracy (see Frei 1981; Rausch 1981; Sancho Rocher 1991; and Sinclair 1988).
3. By way of example only, we can cite Arias 1928; Tangorra (1900); Tommasini (1883–1911); and, more recently, Lefort (1978). See also two studies of Machiavelli, which are, in my view, amongst the best to appear in recent years: Barthas (2011) and Guidi (2009). I was not able to take into account Barthas (2021), which deals with Nabis and Cleomenes, as Lycurgus is the core of this article rather than the former.
4. Here, the echo of an equally fundamental text in Machiavelli’s work, *P IX*, on the difference in ambition between nobles and the people and the need for the prince to rely on latter rather than the former, should not escape us.
5. See Larivaille (1982: 176, *passim*). An important scholarly debate has emerged on the problem of which translation of Polybius Machiavelli would have read. Jack Hexter (1956) advanced the hypothesis of the now-lost translation by Janus Lascaris. His thesis has been heavily criticised by Gennaro Sasso (1987) but recently John Monfasani (2016) reassessed the whole question and advanced again solid arguments supporting Hexter’s thesis. For the editorial history of Polybius, see also

- De Keyser (2016: 17), who endorses Hexter's thesis and Monfasani's supporting arguments.
6. On the theoretical importance of the *Discursus*, see Raimondi 2003.
 7. See Balestrieri (2007) and his entry 'Equalità e inequalità' in Sasso and Inglese (2014, *sub voce*).
 8. And yet it is by no means the only one, against what Balestrieri (2007) claims.
 9. Nelson (2004: 77ff) discusses the limits of the scholarly debate on Machiavelli's treatment of *inequality*, especially in Bock (1990); Gilbert (1965); and Pocock (1975).
 10. Camila Vergara (2020) has developed an insightful reading of Machiavelli's concept of corruption along with a criticism of its neo-republican interpretations. Vergara addresses the mainstream interpretations of Pocock, Skinner, and Pettit, which fail to see the weakness of the liberal appropriation of Machiavelli's thought. She also addresses readings, for example that of Robert Sparling (2017), that despite their criticism of the neo-republican approach miss a central point in Machiavelli's thought, namely his positive evaluation of social and political conflict, as well as the institutional outcomes that such conflict brings about that help resist corruption. Corruption thus should not be read as an individual lack of morality or a transgression of the law (these are consequences, not causes, of corruption), but rather as a systemic problem deriving from inequality and oppression, as Marie Gaille-Nikodimov (2007) has already pointed out. For a substantive criticism of the Skinnerian approach, see Pedullà (2020).
 11. Most of Plutarch's *Lives* was available in Latin around the 1430s, and in 1458 Cosimo de' Medici commissioned Vespasiano da Bisticci to produce a complete edition. Marianne Pade (2007) underlines that Plutarch was one of the most read authors during the fifteenth century, although his popularity fluctuated according to political circumstances. For example, Francesco Filelfo (2012), who did not side with the winning Medici party in the 1430s, explores the Spartan matter with a series of translations of Xenophon and Plutarch that he presents, in his dedication to Cardinal Niccolò Albergati, as an example to be considered in the contemporary crisis of the Florentine Republic.
 12. On the discourse of the anonymous ciompo, see Del Lucchese (2009); Pedullà (2003); and Winter (2012).
 13. More uncertain and probably indirect is Machiavelli's knowledge of Hdt. I.65–6 and Ephor. Fr. 148 [FGH n. 70] = Plb. VI.46–8. On these texts, see Tigerstedt (1965: 214, *passim*). For a critique of Ephorus, see Plb. VI.45, 48. FGH refers to Jacoby (1929–1958).
 14. See Rawson (1969: 74) and Tigerstedt (1965: 293ff). On the Spartan women, see Cartledge (1981).
 15. On Machiavelli and the question of war, see Frosini (2013); and Guidi (2009, 2020).
 16. In addition to Herodotus and Ephorus, see Xenophon, *Lac.* VII and *passim*, in which there is no trace of the redistribution of land.
 17. Domenic Taranto (2009) has emphasised the importance of a direct reading of Plutarch on Machiavelli's part.
 18. See also *Lyc.* 9 for the division of mobile goods and the abolition of debts and coins, which led to the renowned isolation of Sparta in the Greek world.
 19. The exact division had already been forgotten by Plutarch's time, but what matters is the spirit of the reform and the fact that it tended to rectify the exploitation of the majority (Helots) by the minority (Spartans).
 20. On the idealisation of Plutarch and its differences with Platonic analysis, see Tigerstedt (1965) and Vlassopoulos (2012). By following Plutarch, therefore, Machiavelli distances himself from the mythical dimension attributed to the legislator by

- Plato or eventually Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example. For an opposing view, see Feinberg (1970).
21. See Marasco 1981; *Agis*. IX.4 and *passim*. See Musti 1967.
 22. Although speaking at length of Lycurgus, Taranto (2009) does not focus on the aspect of land reform.
 23. Cic. *Off.* III.6. An exaltation of geometric proportion, more just than a simple arithmetic equality, dates back to Plato (see *Grg.* 508a and *Lg.* 757b). See also Arist. *Pol.* 1301b 29ff and Isoc. VII.21, who attributes the geometric proportion to Athens in the time of Solon and Cleisthenes. Finally, see Plu. *Moralia* VIII.719a–b. The same idea returns in the fragment entitled ‘Monarchy, Oligarchy, Democracy’, which is now in Plutarch (1993).
 24. On the Spartan myth, see Ollier (1933, 1943).
 25. The tradition mainly refers to iron coins. Taranto (2009) suggests that leather instead of iron derives from Sen. *Ben.* V.14.4.
 26. See Cic. *Off.* I.22. On the theme, see also Frosini (2013). For a different view, see Colish (1978).
 27. On this point, see also Cambiano (2000, *passim*) and Vatter (2000: 78–79).
 28. In Plutarch’s story, it is only by chance that Antigonus does not abandon the field before the battle in order to return to his homeland.
 29. Barthas (2011) has exhaustively analysed the question.
 30. On this traditional condemnation, see Nelson (2004: 54ff, *passim*).
 31. This text is *Machiavelli e i tardi riformatori di Sparta* (1985), published in Cadoni (1994: 47–91). See also the entry for ‘Sparta’ in Sasso and Inglese (2014).
 32. Again, see *Machiavelli e i tardi riformatori di Sparta* in Cadoni (1994: 47–91). For the question of Plutarch’s texts, in addition to Giustiniani (1961) today one can see Gallo (1997) and above all the precious Cortesi and Fiaschi (2008). We know from a letter to Biagio Buonaccorsi that, already in October 1502, Machiavelli was avidly interested in reading the *Lives*, which, however, were still difficult to find in Florence at this time.
 33. For an interpretation of the Gracchi that is also positive but based on a different hypothesis, see McCormick (2018: 57–58).
 34. The *Discorso* was published posthumously in 1867; it was edited by Giuseppe Canestrini. See Guicciardini’s *Discorso di Logroño* and Regent (2008, 2019, 2020). See also Nelson (2004: 70–71) and Pedullà (2018: 82).
 35. Regent (2019) showed that the metaphor of Lycurgus’ knife derives from Plutarch’s *comparatio* of Agis and Cleomenes with the Gracchi.
 36. See Regent (2020: 49): ‘Unlike his more famous older friend and co-citizen Machiavelli, the younger [Guicciardini] paid close attention to topics connected with economy, trade and finance, both public and private’.
 37. See Pedullà (2018, esp. 81–82) in response to Regent. See also Winter (2018).
 38. Pedullà (2018: 74) shows that, in his *De institutione reipublicae*, only Francesco Patrizi of Siena, among earlier humanists, came closer to a radical defence of equality. Yet even Patrizi does not dare to claim a revolutionary intervention to reform the situation if it would damage civic concord.
 39. I will not discuss here whether Nabis, whom Machiavelli employs as a paradigmatic example in the chapter on the Civil Prince, can rightly be considered a Civil Prince. On this question, see, for example, Descendre (2015).
 40. The classic sources are Liu. XXXIV; D.S. 27.1; Plu., *Flam.* 13.1; and Paus. 4.29.10; 7.8.4. See Birgalias (2005).
 41. See also his dense introductory essay in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2010).
 42. Immediately after this division of the lands, Romulus distinguished the plebeians from the ‘fathers’, realising, as Machiavelli would say, ‘more equality of belongings . . . and less equality of rank’.

References

- Arendt, H. 2005. *The Promise of Politics*. Ed. J. Kohn. New York: Schocken Books.
- Arias, G. 1928. 'Il pensiero economico di Machiavelli', *Annali di economia dell'Università Bocconi di Milano* 4: 1–30.
- Balestrieri, G. G. 2007. 'Equalità e ineguaglianza in Machiavelli', *Teoria politica* 28: 129–137.
- Barthas, J. 2011. *L'argent n'est pas le nerf de la guerre: Essai sur une prétendue erreur de Machiavel*. Rome: École française de Rome.
- Barthas, J. 2021. 'Cleomenes Redivivus: Machiavelli from *The Prince* to the *Discourses*'. In J. Davies and J. Monfasani (eds), *Renaissance Politics and Culture: Essays in Honour of Robert Black*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 83–106.
- Birgalias, N. 2005. 'Nabis: un prince hellénistique?', *Gerión Anejos* 9: 139–151.
- Bock, G. 1990. 'Civil Discord in Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*'. In G. Bock, Q. Skinner and M. Viroli (eds), *Machiavelli and Republicanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 181–201.
- Cadoni, G. 1994. *Crisi della mediazione politica e conflitti sociali: Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini e Donato Giannotti di fronte al tramonto della Florentina Libertas*. Rome: Jouvence.
- Cambiano, G. 2000. *Polis: Un modello per la cultura europea*. Bari: Laterza.
- Cartledge, P. 1981. 'Spartan Wives: Liberation or Licence?', *Classical Quarterly* 31: 84–105.
- Colish, M. L. 1978. 'Cicero's *De officiis* and Machiavelli's *Prince*', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9: 81–94.
- Cortesi, M., Fiaschi, S. a cura di 2008. *Repertorio delle traduzioni umanistiche a stampa (secoli XV–XVI)*. Florence: Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo.
- De Keyser, J. 2016. 'Polybius'. In G. Dinkova-Bruun, G. et alii ed. (eds), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries. Annotated Lists and Guides*. Vol. XI. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1–60.
- Del Lucchese, F. 2009. *Conflict, Power and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza: Tumults and Indignation*. London: Continuum.
- Del Lucchese, F. 2015. *The Political Philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Del Lucchese, F., F. Frosini and V. Morfino (eds). 2015. *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy and Language*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.
- Descendre, R. 2015. 'Of "Extravagant" Writing: The Prince, Chapter IX'. In F. Del Lucchese, F. Frosini and V. Morfino (eds), *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy and Language*. Leiden: Brill, 56–72.
- Dionysius Halicarnaseus. 1498. *Antiquitates romanae*. Trans. Lapus Biragus Florentinus. Reggio Emilia: Francisco de Mazalibus.
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus. 2010. *Le antichità romane*. Ed. F. Donadi and G. Pedullà. Trad. E. Guzzi. Turin: Einaudi.

- Feinberg, B. S. 1970. 'Creativity and the Political Community: The Role of the Lawgiver in the Thought of Plato, Machiavelli and Rousseau', *Western Political Quarterly* 23 (3): 471–484.
- Filelfo, F. 2012. *Traduzioni da Senofonte e Plutarco: Respublica Lacedaemoniorum, Agesilaus, Lycurgus, Numa, Cyri Paedia*. Ed. J. De Keyser. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Frei, P. 1981. 'ΙΕΝΟΜΙΑ: Politik im Spiegel griechischer Wortbildung', *Museum Helveticum* 38 (4): 205–219.
- Frosini, F. 2013. 'Guerra e politica in Machiavelli' [War and politics in Machiavelli], *Tiempo da Ciência* 20 (40): 13–46.
- Gaille-Nikodimov, M. 2007. 'L'annexion républicaine de Machiavel dans la pensée anglo-saxonne: principes, finalités, effets interprétatifs et tensions internes'. In P. Carta and X. Tabet (eds), *Machiavelli nel XIX et XX secolo/ Machiavel aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*. Padua: CEDAM, 287–307.
- Gallo, I. (ed.). 1997. *L'eredità culturale di Plutarco dall'antichità al Rinascimento*. Naples: M. D'Auria.
- Gilbert, F. 1965. *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Giustiniani, V. R. 1961. 'Sulle traduzioni latine delle "Vite" di Plutarco nel Quattrocento', *Rinascimento*, Seconda serie 1: 3–62.
- Guicciardini, F. 1857–1867. *Opere inedite*. Ed. G. Canestrini. Florence: Barbera, Bianchi & C.
- Guidi, A. 2009. *Un segretario militante: Politica, diplomazia e armi nel segretario Machiavelli*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Guidi, A. 2020. *Books, People, and Military Thought: Machiavelli's Art of War and the Fortune of the Militia in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Europe*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.
- Hankins, J. 2019. *Virtue Politics: Soucraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Hexter, J. H. 1956. 'Seysssel, Machiavelli and Polybius VI: The Mystery of the Missing Translation', *Studies in the Renaissance* 3: 75–96.
- Isocrates. 1928–1962. *Discours*. Ed. G. Mathieu and E. Brémond. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Jacoby, F. 1929–1958. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.
- Krappé, A. H. 1924. 'Quelques sources grecques de Machiavel', *Etudes Italiennes* 6: 80-6.
- Larivaille, P. 1982. *La pensée politique de Machiavel: Les "Discours sur la Première Décade de Tite-Live"*. Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy.
- Lefort, C. 1978. 'Machiavel: la dimension économique du politique'. In C. Lefort, *Les formes de l'histoire: Essai d'anthropologie politique*. Paris: Gallimard, 215–237.
- Lévy, E. 2005. 'Isonomia'. In U. Bultrighini (ed.), *Democrazia e antidecrazia nel mondo greco*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 119–138.

- Machiavelli, N. 1988. *Florentine Histories*. Trans. L. F. Banfield and H. C. Mansfield. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Machiavelli, N. 1995. *Discourses on Livy*. Trans. H. C. Mansfield and N. Tarcov. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Machiavelli, N. 1998. *The Prince*. Trans. H. C. Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mansfield, H. C. (1979) 2001. *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marasco, G. 1981. *Commento alle biografie plutarchee di Agide e Cleomene*. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.
- McCormick, J. P. 2003. 'Machiavelli against Republicanism: On the Cambridge School's "Guicciardinian Moments"', *Political Theory* 31 (5): 615–643.
- McCormick, J. P. 2015. 'Machiavelli's Greek Tyrant as Republican Reformer'. In F. Del Lucchese, F. Frosini and V. Morfino (eds), *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy and Language*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 337–348.
- McCormick, J. P. 2011. *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCormick, J. P. 2018. *Reading Machiavelli: Scandalous Books, Suspect Engagements and the Virtue of Populist Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Monfasani, J. 2016. 'Machiavelli, Polybius, and Janus Lascaris: The Hexter Thesis Revisited', *Italian Studies* 71 (1): 39–48.
- Musti, D. 1967. 'Polibio e la democrazia', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Serie II* 36 (3): 155–207.
- Nelson, E. 2004. *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ollier, F. 1933. *Le mirage spartiate: Étude sur l'idéalisation de Sparte dans l'antiquité grecque de l'origine jusqu'aux cyniques*. Paris: E. de Boccard.
- Ollier, F. 1943. *Le mirage spartiate: Étude sur l'idéalisation de Sparte dans l'antiquité grecque du début de l'école cynique jusqu'à la fin de la cité*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Pade, M. 2007. *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.
- Pedullà, G. 2003. 'Il divieto di Platone: Niccolò Machiavelli e il discorso dell'anonimo plebeo (Ist. Fior. III, 13)'. In J.-J. Marchand and J.-C. Zancarini (eds), *Storiografia repubblicana fiorentina*. Florence: Franco Cesati, 210–266.
- Pedullà, G. 2018. *Machiavelli in Tumult: The Discourses on Livy and the Origins of Political Conflictualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pedullà, G. 2020. 'Humanist Republicanism: Towards a New Paradigm', *History of Political Thought* 41 (1): 43–95.
- Plato. 1976. *The Laws of Plato*. Ed. E. B. England. New York: Arno Press.

- Plato. 1991. *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*. Trans. W. R. M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Plutarch. 1927–2004. *Plutarch's Lives*. Trans. B. Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Plutarch. 1993. *Monarchia. Democrazia. Oligarchia*. Trans. and Ed. A. Caiazza. Naples: M. D'Auria Editore.
- Plutarch. 1972–1996. *Propos de table: Oeuvres morales*. Trans. and ed. F. Fuhrmann, F. Frazier and J. Sirinelli. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Pocock, J. G. A. 1975. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Polybius. 2010. *Histories*. Trans. W. R. Paton. Rev. F. W. Walbank and C. Habicht. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Raimondi, F. 2003. 'Il paradigma-Firenze nel Discursus florentinarum rerum di Machiavelli: in principio sono i conflitti, i conflitti governano'. In M. Scattola (ed.), *Figure della guerra: La riflessione su pace, conflitto e giustizia tra Medioevo e prima età moderna*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 145–175.
- Rausch, M. 1981. *Isonomia in Athen: Veränderung des öffentlichen Lebens vom Sturz des Tyrannis bis zur zweiten Perserabwehr*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang.
- Rawson, E. 1969. *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Reale, M. 1985. 'Machiavelli, la politica e il problema del tempo: Un doppio cominciamiento della storia romana? A proposito di Romolo in 'Discorsi' I 9', *La Cultura* 23: 45–123.
- Regent, N. 2008. 'A "Medical Moment": Guicciardini and Lyncurgus' Knife', *History of European Ideas* 34 (1): 1–13.
- Regent, N. 2019. 'In the Shadow of Lacedaemon: Luxury, Wealth, and Early-Modern Republican Thought', *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 41 (4): 477–509.
- Regent, N. 2020. 'Guicciardini and Economic (In)Equality', *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 27 (1): 49–65.
- Sancho Rocher, L. 1991. 'ISONOMIA KAI DHMOKRATIA', *Revue des Études Anciennes* 93 (3–4): 237–261.
- Sasso, G. 1987. *Machiavelli e gli antichi e altri saggi*. Milan: Ricciardi.
- Sasso, G. and G. Inglese (eds). 2014. *Enciclopedia machiavelliana*. Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia.
- Sinclair, R. K. 1988. *Democracy and Participation in Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sparling, R. 2017. 'The Concept of Corruption in John G. A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment*', *History of European Ideas* 43 (2): 156–170.
- Tangorra, V. 1900. 'Il pensiero economico di Machiavelli', *Rivista italiana di Sociologia* 4: 556–593.

- Taranto, D. 2009. 'Machiavelli e Plutarco', *Il pensiero politico* [Political thought] 42: 167–197.
- Tigerstedt, E. N. 1965. *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Tommasini, O. 1883–1911. *La vita e gli scritti di Niccolò Machiavelli nella loro relazione col machiavellismo, storia ed esame critico*. Rome: E. Loescher.
- Vatter, M. 2000. *Between Form and Event: Machiavelli's Theory of Political Freedom*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Vergara, C. 2020. *Systemic Corruption: Constitutional Ideas for an Anti-Oligarchic Republic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Vlassopoulos, K. 2012. 'Sparta and Rome in Early Modern Thought: A Comparative Approach'. In S. Hodkinson and I. Macgregor Morris (eds), *Sparta in Modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture*. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 43–69.
- Winter, Y. 2012. 'Plebeian Politics: Machiavelli and the Ciompi Uprising', *Political Theory* 40 (6): 736–766.
- Winter, Y. 2018. *Machiavelli and the Orders of Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.