

Political Ambition in an “Uncorrupt” Republic: The Misjudgment of Manlius and Camillus’s Concord

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A central concern for Machiavelli, his historic “moment”—and his political thinking generally—is the problem of political contingency.¹ Yet, the concept of contingency and reflection upon it as a political phenomenon can be seen in various forms. Two of the most prominent of these forms featured in Machiavelli’s major works, *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy*, involves the theorizing of contingency in terms of institutional prescriptions as well as advice for those aspiring to gain distinction or institute robust reforms in their own orders. In other words, much of Machiavelli’s political thought is attentive to the changing nature of political circumstance and thus how both actors and institutions must be made to adapt to the fluctuating political world. This paper intends to focus on these two major themes by exploring the methods of regulating political ambition in what Machiavelli will characterize to be an “uncorrupt” republic.

By concentrating on two notable Romans from the early republican period, Manlius Capitolinus and Furius Camillus, I hope to demonstrate how the regulation of ambition in a specifically “uncorrupt” context operates in a twofold manner. First, political circumstances and the character of the regime one lives under should dictate the course of one’s actions if one is to act in a politically prudent manner. Second, a political regime, through its institutions and social practices, should regulate, and ultimately punish, particular actions of its most ambitious citizens that intend to undermine or overthrow important republican modes of life. In this way, my analysis will concentrate both on the political regulation practiced by the early Roman republican peoples and

¹ J.G.A Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), xxiv, chaps. 5 and 6.

their political institutions over their most ambitious citizens while also attending to the self-regulation of ambition (and lack thereof) exemplified by these same spirited men.

My argument, and thus this paper, is organized into five parts. First, I will discuss both Livy and Machiavelli's view of "the salutary benefits" or "utility" involved in the reading of history, focusing on how such readings should allow us to see the contingency involved in political circumstances, the nature of politics, and thus how to conceptualize one's present circumstances. Second, I attempt to illuminate what Machiavelli takes to be the "uncorrupt" context in which my two exemplary figures, Furius Camillus and Manlius Capitolinus, operated. Through doing so, I then turn to analyzing the misjudgment of these times by Manlius as well as the concord exhibited by Camillus in the third and fourth sections by attending to their descriptions in the writings of both Plutarch and Livy as well as Machiavelli's commentary on these sources. Finally, in the last section, I will focus on the regulation of ambition in Machiavelli's new and innovative democratic-republic. This will include a brief treatment of the Machiavellian "captain" since such a figure serves as an example of the proper balance between regulating one's own ambition through a regime's political order while also preserving and perhaps restoring its institutions to ensure their regulatory character into the future.

Livy, Machiavelli, and the Reading of History

By following the example of historiography set by ancient authors such as Polybius, Livy, and Plutarch, Machiavelli presents the majority of his political ideas through interpretations of historic events or commentary on historic actors. He suggests that history and its exemplary actors can provide valuable insights into how one can and should act in the world.² Historic figures then

² For a discussion of exemplary history in the Roman context, see Rebecca Langlands, "Roman *Exempla* and Situational Ethics: Valerius Maximus and Cicero *de Officiis*," *Journal of Roman Studies* 101 (2011) 100-122.

serve as particular models, models of proper or improper conduct as determined by specific circumstances. As Titus Livy remarks at the outset of writing his 142 volume history of the Roman republic, of which only thirty-five are extant, he does so with a specific purpose, a purpose associated with the value of history and its continued relevance: “The special and salutary benefit of the study of history is to behold evidence of every sort of behavior set forth as on a splendid memorial; from it you may select for yourself and for your country what to emulate, from it what to avoid, whether basely begun or basely concluded.”³ In this way, a careful study of these deeds, the circumstances surrounding them, and, in turn, the prudence or miscalculation of the actors involved allows an attentive reader of history to be able to draw fruit from its lessons.

Perhaps no better examples, both Machiavelli and Livy contend, can be seen than in those of the peoples found within the early Roman republic since, as Livy notes, “there has never been any state grander, purer, or richer in good examples, or one into which greed and luxury gained entrance so late, or where great respect was accorded for so long to means and frugality.”⁴ However, although Machiavelli and Livy might agree on the great power of history and its ability to illuminate the nature of political life or perhaps human nature nature itself, there is a disagreement between these authors on how they believe history’s lessons should be applied. For instance, for Livy, although it is his “wish is that each reader will pay the closest attention to [...] how men lived, what their moral principles were, under what leaders and by what measures at home and abroad our empire was won and extended,” he demurs on the question of being able to apply or adopt these virtuous actions in his “own age,” a time of high Augustan corruption, where he and his contemporaries could “endure neither [their] vices nor the remedies needed to cure them.”⁵ In

³ Livy, *The Rise of Rome: Books 1-5*, trans. T.J. Luce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Preface, pg. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

other words, it may seem to him that much is lost and that it is simply important to reflect on the former great deeds of his *patria*.

For Machiavelli, however, even though he believed that the times in which he was living in were “corrupt,” he still believed in the possibility of political reform of his native Florence as long as the reforms were adjusted to the contingency of specific historic circumstances.⁶ His reflections on politics, which are discussed in his major works, are products of “long experience with modern things and a continuous reading of ancient ones”; consequently, he was attentive to the “actions of great men” but also to how the character or spirit of these actions could be reaffirmed or reinstated in the modern world.⁷

As Machiavelli notes in his prefatory remarks to the first book of his *Discourses*, he “judge[s] it necessary to write on all those books of Titus Livy that have not been intercepted by the malignity of the times [...] so that those who read these statements of mine can more easily draw from them that utility for which one should seek knowledge of histories.”⁸ By comparing his prefatory remarks to that of Livy’s, one can see that Machiavelli believed that his historical commentary could actually do something effective by transforming his reader’s notions about the purpose of reading history and in turn its applicability. As he says, “in ordering republics, maintaining states, governing kingdoms, ordering the military and administering war, judging subjects, and increasing empire,

⁶ For example, Machiavelli intended for many of his political writings to have a political impact during different periods of republican reform. Most famously, this would be seen in the 26th chapter of *The Prince* where Machiavelli calls for a “redeemer” of Italy, citing that the time was right for Italian unification; see Pocock, *The Machiavellian Movement*, chap. 6, pp. 156-82. Others, however, such as Leo Strauss have argued that Machiavelli is ironic in claiming that his texts seek reform, claiming that by dedicating his work to Lorenzo de’ Medici and producing concealed slights in his Dedicatory letter that Machiavelli never thought Lorenzo, or perhaps Florence herself, could produce political reform; see Leo Strauss, “Niccolò Machiavelli” in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 302. To counter this influential claim, one should consult Niccolò Machiavelli, “A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence” in *The Chief Works and Others: Machiavelli*, translated and edited by Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 101-15. Here, in a work written in 1520, Machiavelli proves himself to be serious about pursuing republican political reforms through advising the Medici once more.

⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Dedicatory Letter, pg. 3; see *Discourses*, DI.pr, pp. 5-6 and DII.pr, pp. 123-5.

⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), DI.pr, pg. 6.

neither prince nor republic may be found that has recourse to the examples of the ancients.”⁹ As a result, the intention of his commentary on and reinterpretation of Livy’s history is so that his readers can more aptly apply its lessons, allowing them to gain “a true knowledge of histories” by “getting from reading them that sense [and] tasting that flavor that they have in themselves.”¹⁰ Thus, after appreciating Machiavelli’s insights, ancient virtuous action is no longer to be appreciated as a historic replica of a fundamentally distinct time “as if heaven, sun, elements, men had varied in motion, order, and power” but to be viewed as available for “imitation” by his readers who are both his contemporaries as well as those beyond his times.¹¹ In this way, Machiavelli does not write in the same manner as Livy, demonstrating the salubrious benefits resultant from the reading and contemplation of history; rather, he reads, interprets, and presents the lessons that he has derived from such reflections with a specific “utility” in mind, a utility to be noted and pursued by his various readers.¹²

Therefore, Machiavelli, in his writings, can be seen to reinterpret the Roman history provided by Livy so that he could provide the framework for a new republican political life: a “mixed regime.” This regime, as he conceived, was one that that could transcend the classical cycle of regimes developed by ancient authors such as Aristotle and Polybius by “avoiding each of these modes by itself, [and choosing] the one that shared in all” and thus allowing it to “be capable of revolving for an infinite time.”¹³ As Harvey Mansfield notes, Machiavelli, through a close reading of ancient histories, was able to understand the hidden causes, cultural practices, and institutions that influenced the actions of the Romans and other great men, and, as a result, was able to extract

⁹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.pr, pg. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., DI.pr, pg. 6.

¹¹ Ibid., DI.pr, pg. 6; see DII.pr, pg. 125.

¹² See Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, Preface, pg. 4; Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.pr, pg. 6.

¹³ Ibid., DI.2, pg. 13. See Aristotle, *Politics* 1276b10-12, 1278b11-13, 1288a23-24; Polybius, *Histories* I.I.5, V.2.9-10. On the importance of the “mixed regime in Machiavelli’s thought, see Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, chap. 6 pp. 183-218; John P. McCormick, “Addressing the Political Exception: Machiavelli’s “Accidents” and the Mixed Regime,” *The American Political Science Review*, 87 (1993).

political lessons that these actors and their founders themselves could not see.¹⁴ For example, as Machiavelli claims, the Romans were able to develop a “mixed” and “perfect republic” that incorporated all three political qualities, that of the kingly, aristocratic, and democratic sentiments, when the Tribune of the Plebs were finally instituted.¹⁵ Yet, such an institutionalization was not a product of Roman prudence but more so as a result of the help of “Fortune” and the disunion between the plebeians and the patricians.¹⁶ Through recognizing this and innovating upon it, Machiavelli’s prescriptions for a possible “new regime” is based on the proper reinterpretation of Livy’s history.¹⁷

By being able to see the contingent circumstances experienced by the Romans, reflected through Livy, and thus presented in a new light, Machiavelli was able to highlight and communicate the importance, and often essential nature, of ensuring that individuals understood the particular circumstances in which they were to act as well as pursue their ambitious designs. In this way, Machiavelli, especially in his *Discourses on Livy*, can be seen as presenting both political prescriptions and institutional advice to his fellow Florentines, future reformers, and the individuals who can both construct and navigate this reimagined republic. As I will argue, an essential component of this reinterpretation is a treatment of political contingency, a contingency that is to be understood in terms of cultural mores, political institutions, and their implications on the designs of spirited actors.¹⁸

¹⁴ Harvey C. Mansfield, “Machiavelli’s New Regime” in *Machiavelli’s Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 235-57.

¹⁵ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.2, pg. 14.

¹⁶ Ibid., DI.2-DI.3, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ Mansfield, “Machiavelli’s New Regime,” 240.

¹⁸ See Machiavelli, *Discourses*, DII.pr, pg. 125; See also John P. McCormick, “Democratic Republics and the Oppressive Appetite of Young Nobles” in *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36-61. here McCormick argues that Machiavelli, in at least the first section of the *Discourses*, is making an argument for why the young nobles, Zanobi Buondelmonti and Cosimo Rucellai, who are the dedicatees of the *Discourses* should be attentive to his argument that gives preference towards democracy and its institutions. This point will importantly remerge in the later sections of this paper.

A Machiavellian Maxim and the “Uncorrupt” Context

In terms of advising and assisting political actors in interpreting their historical circumstances, one of Machiavelli’s major, and perhaps most important teachings can be boiled down into what one could call a “Machiavellian maxim,” mainly that “men in their proceeding – and so much the more in great actions – should consider the times and accommodate themselves to them.”¹⁹ This same maxim on the necessity of knowing one’s times and acting accordingly emerges most recognizably in the infamous 25th chapter of *The Prince*, the chapter in which Machiavelli pronounces the controversial claim that “fortune is a woman.”²⁰ Yet, in his milder treatment of fortune earlier in the chapter, comparing it to a river, Machiavelli presents his conception of political success in terms of conforming one’s actions to the nature of his regime. As he states there, “he is happy who adapts his mode of proceeding to the qualities of the times; and similarly, he is unhappy whose procedure is in disaccord with the times.”²¹ There is a two part lesson to this maxim: one one hand, one must know the character of the times and thus the regime he lives under; on the other hand, one must also act in accordance with those times. This, however, as Machiavelli will argue, and as will be proved by the example of Manlius Capitolinus, is much easier said than done.

As Machiavelli notes in multiple texts, the difficulty of matching one’s actions with one’s times not only lies in understanding the character of the times in which one lives but that one must also learn to act in accordance with them, especially if the times are ill-suited to one’s own nature. As he states in the 25th chapter of *The Prince*, “For one sees that in the things that lead men to the

¹⁹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DIII.8, pg. 238. Much Machiavelli scholarship has focused on this maxim in terms of the relationship between *fortuna* and *virtù*, specifically that one’s *virtù* corresponds to adequately accounting for the forces of *fortuna* and overpowering them. For brief reference, see Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, chaps. 5 and 6, especially pp. 175-82; Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 6-52.

²⁰ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 25, pg. 101. See Hanna Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Further, it could be argued here that Machiavelli is writing this chapter in preparation for the presentation of the necessity of an Italian redeemer to act impetuously as will be noted in the proceeding chapter (see chap. 26, pp. 101-105).

²¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 25 pg.101.

end that each has before him, that is, glories and riches, they proceed variously: one with caution, the other with impetuosity; one by violence, the other with art; one with patience, the other with its contrary – and with these different modes each can attain it.”²² As he remarks, the arrival at the same successes through pursuing various modes “arises from nothing other than from the quality of the times that they conform to or not in their procedure.”²³ Yet, the conforming of procedure is no simple task since the greatest challenge presented is if one’s political circumstances change. The ability to recognize these significant changes as such, or perhaps one’s initial misjudgment of his times, is to be viewed as centrally important. Continuing, Machiavelli claims, “Nor may a man be found so prudent as to know how to accommodate himself to this, whether because he cannot deviate from what nature inclines him to or also because, when one has always flourished by walking on one path, he cannot be persuaded to depart from it.”²⁴ Therefore, in Machiavelli’s conception, prudent political actors are to be made to understand their times and adapt to them continuously, and, in this instance, when focusing on actors such as Furuius Camillus and Manlius Capitolinus, one must be made to understand the “uncorrupt” context in which they would operate.

As Machiavelli alludes to through the *Discourses*, an “uncorrupt” republic is one that is defined almost exclusively by the “virtue” of its citizens and their political equality. These virtues he defines as a commitment to liberty, religious tradition, and particular political institutions, such as those that allow for public accusations and others that institute both rewards and punishments to its citizens.²⁵ Those who preserve these virtues and customs are seen to be the people for Machiavelli, as is argued, against Livy, in the claim that “The Multitude is Wiser and More Constant than a Prince.”²⁶ In the chapter entitled by the preceding claim, Machiavelli makes the compelling

²² Ibid., chap. 25, pg. 99.

²³ Ibid., chap. 25, pg. 99.

²⁴ Ibid., chap. 25, pg. 100.

²⁵ See, for example, Ibid., DI.7, DI.58, DIII.1, DIII.3.

²⁶ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.58 (title), pg. 115.

argument that it is not that “the nature of the multitude [is that ...] it serves humbly or it dominates proudly,”²⁷ as Livy suggests, but that when it comes to “prudence and stability,” the people are to be viewed as “more prudent, more stable, and of better judgment than a prince,” especially when supported by the proper laws, customs, and institutions.²⁸

In the case of the establishment of “uncorrupt” republican context, the prime example, for Machiavelli, is the foundation of the Roman republic after the actions of Lucius Junius Brutus, “the father of Roman liberty.” It was in this time when the Tarquin Kings were expelled and the people were fundamentally committed to securing their liberty after Brutus killed his sons and thus disposed of the partisans of the old monarchical order.²⁹ Livy notes that after this the Roman citizens were suspicious of any man seeking such kingly authority like the Tarquins, as the name and what it represented became “an anathema because it was a threat to liberty.”³⁰ While this was the case, it is obvious that such a commitment to liberty did not mean harmony between the patricians and plebeians, finding themselves constantly maintaining a “tumultuous” relationship, a relationship Machiavelli finds led to the republic’s flourishing.³¹ In fact, this tumult actually allowed for the proper republican practices, or “modes,” that allowed the Roman peoples to “vent” their ambitions and accusations.³²

Through Machiavelli’s appreciation of the Tribune of the plebs, Machiavelli not only suggests that these institutions assisted in checking aristocratic avarice but that they also allowed for the republic’s imperial expansion. In regards to the former praise, a praise that was by no doubt controversial during his time, Machiavelli lays out an argument for why the people are to be

²⁷ Quoted from Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.58, pg. 116; see Livy, *Hannibal’s War: Books 21-30*, trans. J.C. Yardley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XXIV.25, pg. 223.

²⁸ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.58, pg. 117.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, DIII.II, pp. 214-5.

³⁰ Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, II.2, pg. 72.

³¹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.4, pp. 16-17.

³² *Ibid.*, DI.5, pg. 17.

empowered in order to check the dangerous designs of ambitious aristocrats, the humor that desires to oppress, by proving how the people serve an important role in maintaining the character of a republic and thus the prevention of its subversion or denigration.³³ As he states, “The desires of free peoples are rarely pernicious to freedom because they arise either from being oppressed or from suspicion that they may be oppressed.”³⁴ Thus, such peoples are continuously suspicious of the types which would desire to subvert their own freedom as well as that of their republic.

Additionally, as he mentions in a later discourse, “The cruelties of the multitude are against whoever they fear will seize the common good.”³⁵ In this way, this realization justifies why Machiavelli believes that not only did the Roman people and their cultural practices preserve the uncorrupt republic for centuries but that all republics should rely on their peoples and these principles. In fact, he claims that “governments of peoples are better than those of princes.”³⁶ As a result, the people are to be made to maintain it and, in turn, exercise the cruelties against those who seek to subvert its ways while also recognizing those who serve its good, as will be seen in the discussion of the two exemplary figures in the proceeding sections.

The Misjudgment of Manlius

Manlius Capitolinus, noted by both Plutarch and Livy of being a man with a great thirst for personal distinction, originally rose to public prominence by defending the Capitol from the Gauls at night during a desperate time for the republic.³⁷ For, it was on the Capitoline hill that Manlius

³³ On the controversial character of Machiavelli’s statement, see Francesco Guicciardini, “Considerations of the Discourses of Niccoló Machiavelli” in *The Sweetness of Power: Machiavelli’s Discourses and Guicciardini’s Considerations*, trans. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002) pg. 393-4. On the two humors and the desire to oppress, see Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.5, pg. 18; see also, Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 9, pg. 39.

³⁴ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.4, pg. 17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, DI.58, pg. 119.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, DI.58, pg. 118.

³⁷ Plutarch, “Camillus” in *Lives*, ed. Arthur Hugh Clough, trans. John Dryden (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 188.

defended his city by striking the Gauls that were seeking to conquer the summit by pushing them over the precipice and protecting the hill throughout the night. In the morning and following days, Manlius was awarded and recognized for his deeds and valiant actions. Such recognition was a collection of the daily rations of each man, including “half a pound of bread and one eighth a pint of wine” from each of the serving men.³⁸ As Livy notes, although “a small thing in the telling, [it was] a great proof of the high reward in which he was held, given the scarcity, when each man deprived himself of sustenance he needed to keep body and soul together and gave it by way of honour to one man.”³⁹ However, when Camillus returned from exile to defeat the Gauls, he became the Roman aristocrat to achieve the greatest prominence after the war, much to the chagrin of Manlius. As Plutarch says, Manlius was “a man of consular dignity, of strong body and great spirit,” but plagued by an “envy” that was singularly focused on Camillus and his high praise.⁴⁰ Further, as Livy artfully describes, Manlius was “angry that Camillus *alone* now enjoyed such pre-eminence,” thinking that “Most of Camillus’ glory should belong to the men who had won the victory along with him” whereas “in [his] victory, no other man had taken part.”⁴¹

The festering “envy” and “anger” with Camillus and the abundant public praise directed towards him as a result of his deeds led Manlius to strive to overcome Camillus’s glory by choosing an alternative path towards gaining his own distinction. Rather than learning to be content with his praise or pursue it through ordinary modes, he became “driven along by popular favour rather than his use of judgment” and chose “to champion the popular cause” of the people; in this, he “prefer[ed] to have a grand reputation rather than a good one.”⁴² This “championing” meant playing up the class politics within the republic and supporting a class which he was not a part of, a

³⁸ Ibid., 188.

³⁹ Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, V.47, pg. 332.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 188, 195.

⁴¹ Livy, *Rome’s Italian Wars: Books 6-10*, trans. J.C. Yardley (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2013), VI.11, pg. 15.

⁴² Ibid., VI.11, pg. 15.

form of political scheming that Plutarch refers to as “that ordinary course towards usurpation of absolute power, namely, to gain the multitude, those of them especially that were in debt.”⁴³ Yet, as both authors show, this “ordinary course” caused great suspicion amongst patrician elites, especially since Manlius continued berating creditors, freeing debtors, and accusing the Senate of hiding the booty from the Gallic wars that would unburden the plebeians from their destitute states.

As the divisions within the city grew and Manlius continued to refuse to disclose the proof of his claims, claims that the bountiful war booty was being hoarded by the political elites. As a result, the tribunes chose to move his trial to the Peteline Woods, away from the Capitol where he won his glory, to eventually decide his fate. Although Manlius was a noble man who achieved high recognition and committed great deeds to protect the republic, his later insidious and corrupting actions eventually led to his capital punishment, being thrown from the Tarpeian rock, “the same place [that] served [...] as a monument to his extraordinary distinction as well as to his final punishment.”⁴⁴ It is upon this fate that Machiavelli, following Livy, remarks that “Manlius would have been a rare and memorable man if he had been born in a corrupt city.”⁴⁵ Thus, what Manlius did not realize then, as Machiavelli claims, is that “it is impossible that the life of one individual be enough to corrupt [a people] so that he himself can draw the fruit from it” since “if one wishes to take up authority in a republic and put a wicked form in it, there is need to find the matter disordered by time, and which little by little and from generation to generation may be led to disorder.”⁴⁶ By misjudging the “matter” then that he sought to corrupt, Manlius, for Machiavelli, is to be seen as a man in “disaccord” with his times and thus is a political character who turned out to be both unsuccessful and “unhappy.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, he is also a figure that Machiavelli believes can

⁴³ Plutarch, “Camillus” in *Lives*, 195.

⁴⁴ Livy, *Italian Wars*, VI.20, pg. 27.

⁴⁵ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DIII.8, pg. 238. Livy writes that “Such was the end of a man who, but for his having been born in a free state, would have left a distinguished memory” (VI.20, pg. 27).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, DIII.8, pg. 238.

⁴⁷ See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 25, pg. 101.

teach a valuable lesson about the necessity of a republican regime's ability to regulate political ambition, and specifically the dangerous insatiable thirst for distinction seen in Manlius.

The method of regulating the ambition of Manlius that most directly led to his downfall is in fact the first "mode" or political practice praised by Machiavelli of the Romans in his *Discourses*. In the eighth chapter of the first book, Machiavelli argues that one of the main reasons why the Roman republic was allowed to continue to be well ordered was that it allowed all of its citizens to bring about public accusations against others. As he notes, these accusations were different than calumnies that occur in "piazzas and loggias" since they transpire before a public council.⁴⁸ In this way, the burden of proof is placed on the accusers to prove or substantiate the claims made against his fellow citizens. Consequently, since Manlius was not able to provide evidence to his accusations, he was deemed a "calumniator, and not an accuser; and the Romans showed precisely in this case how calumniators should be punished."⁴⁹ Further, in offering this judgment, the citizens were not too heavily influenced by the past deeds exhibited by Manlius; rather, through the process of presenting and debating Manlius's corrupting public accusations, the Romans, many of whom had been previously won over by his cause, were not deceived by the fact that Manlius was shown to be a dangerous political figure in spreading such seditious accusations. As a result, they were able to move against him "without any respect for his merits" and past deeds.⁵⁰

Such an institutionalization of means of accusation is an essential component of the type of republican regime which Machiavelli praises and one that he desires to replicate, as is noted by Mansfield.⁵¹ Thus, this negative example of Manlius and his displayed miscalculation proves to be an important lesson about the proper habits and customs republican peoples can use in order to

⁴⁸ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.8, pg. 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid., DI.8, pg. 28.

⁵⁰ Ibid., DI.24, pg. 60.

⁵¹ Mansfield, "Machiavelli's New Regime," 235.

preserve their freedom. In addition, Manlius's missteps, interpreted through the eyes of Machiavelli, show us that he was a man who was deceived in his ability to corrupt the order in which he lived, fueled by envy and a thirst for honor, which, in turn, made himself unable to live in accordance with it as did Furius Camillus.

Camillus's Concord

As Plutarch remarks at the outset of his commentary of Camillus, "Among the many remarkable things that are related to Furius Camillus it seems singular and strange above all, that he, who continually was in the highest commands, and obtained the greatest successes, was five times chosen dictator, triumphed four times, and was styled a second founder of Rome, yet never was so much as once consul."⁵² What gained him such positions, and, in turn recognition, Plutarch argues, was that "when alone in authority, he exercised his power as in common, but the honour of all actions redounded entirely to himself."⁵³ Camillus first rose to recognition by defeating Veietians through overseeing the draining the Alban Lake, the digging extensive tunnels, and directing sieges.⁵⁴ In addition, with this victory, he returned to Rome in triumph, with a statue of Juno in tow, a statue who had supposedly nodded to the soldiers when they inquired if she would like to make her way back to their city.⁵⁵

Yet upon this return, as Plutarch notes, Camillus was "puffed up with the greatness of his achievement in conquering a city that was the rival of Rome [... that] he assumed to himself more than became a civil and legal magistrate."⁵⁶ Such presumption led him, "in the pride and haughtiness of his triumph," to drive "through Rome in a chariot drawn with four white horses,

⁵² Plutarch, "Camillus" in *Lives*, 170.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵⁴ Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, V.19-24, pp. 302-7.

⁵⁵ Plutarch, "Camillus," 174; see Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, V.22, pg. 306.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

which no general either before or since ever did” since “the Romans considered such a mode of conveyance to be sacred, and specially set apart to the king, and father of the gods.”⁵⁷ While this indubitably “alienated the hearts of his fellow-citizens,” such displeasure was compounded by the fact that Camillus frequently spoke against the plebeian desires to colonize Veii and faced great resentment for promising a tenth of the Veitian spoils to Apollo.⁵⁸ During his next military exploit, he gained further acknowledgment in battle against the Falsci’ however, he won more veneration among the enemy than his fellow citizens by punishing the Falsci master that sought to sacrifice young nobles to the Romans. By choosing to make peace in this instance, Camillus fell into further disrepute at home by forgoing possible booty from the enemy and continuing to oppose colonization at Veii.⁵⁹ Such disrepute eventually led to his exile at Ardea until he was called by his city once more to defeat the invading Gauls.

During his leave from the city, the Romans experienced a demoralizing sack by the Gauls who crossed the Alps and invaded much of the Italian peninsula. Many fled the city as the Gauls approached, except the few valiant ones like Manlius Capitolinus who defended the Capitol in the face of the invaders.⁶⁰ It was at this point in which the Romans were in a panic that they sent secretly for Camillus and sought him as dictator once more to command victory against the Gaul onslaught. Accepting the office, only after it was legally approved, Camillus returned to and eventually reconquered Rome after a lengthy siege and the assistance of pestilence amongst the enemy.⁶¹ Upon victory however, Camillus maintained his controversial repute, seen as the highest military commander who saved the republic but also the man who continuously opposed the plebeian’s plans for expansion and settlement at Veii. In a rousing speech against such plans later in

⁵⁷ Ibid., 174-5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁵⁹ Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, V.26-29, pp. 310-5.

⁶⁰ Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, V.47, pp.331-3; Plutarch, “Camillus,” 188.

⁶¹ Ibid., V.48-49, pp. 333-5.

life, Camillus pleaded with his fellow Romans to have respect and reverence for their homeland and their deities, asking if these men, in their plans to settle at Veii, “intend to abandon and profane all these things holy that are coeval with the city, some even attending to its founding.”⁶² Continuing, he inquired, “Does your native soil, does mother earth, as we call her, have so little hold on us that love of country is for the buildings and timbers placed upon her?”⁶³ Through such moving remarks, Camillus convinced his fellow citizens of the true importance of commitment to one’s country, especially in the time of great crises. As a result, the decision was made to rebuild Rome after the Gallic plunder and thus not settle Veii, and leaving Camillus to earn high distinction in being called “Romulus, parent of his country and the city’s second founder”⁶⁴

One of Camillus’s final actions, before his eventual death, however, was his dedication of a temple to Concord in the forum of the eternal city.⁶⁵ Such a dedication showed commitment to both Roman unity and allegiance to the soil of their city and her deities but also, as I will argue, Camillus’s concord with the character of his own times as Machiavelli will claim. This is because Camillus was able, although with a slight learning curve, to adapt and accommodate his modes of proceeding to his given time, the time of living in an “uncorrupt” republic and thus amongst “uncorrupted” peoples who are fundamentally committed to their liberties. By recognizing this, using it to his advantage, and eventually the advantage of his republic, he gained recognition amongst his Roman counterparts as “the city’s second founder,” or, as Machiavelli calls him, “the most prudent of all Roman captains”⁶⁶ Seen in this light, Camillus serves as a particular type of an exemplary figure for both Machiavelli and the Roman people, a man who is able to be “happy”

⁶² Ibid., V.52, pg. 337.

⁶³ Ibid., V.54, pg. 340.

⁶⁴ Ibid., V.49, pg.334

⁶⁵ Plutarch, “Camillus,” 200.

⁶⁶ Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, V.49, pg.334; Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DIII.12, pg. 249.

within his own times but not without suffering from varying levels of ingratitude.⁶⁷ In fact, accepting this ingratitude allowed Camillus to achieve a higher form of glory.

Machiavelli's engagement with Camillus occurs in multiple places in his *Discourses*. Yet, the ingratitude he suffers is specifically addressed in the twenty-third chapter of his third book of the *Discourses* entitled "For What Cause Camillus Was Expelled from Rome." In this chapter, Machiavelli discusses the two distinct sources that led to his expulsion to Ardea; these include the fact that he deprived his people of something useful and that he appeared too prideful in his ostentatious displays. In regards to the former, Machiavelli suggests that this is particularly dangerous "because when a man is deprived of things that have utility in themselves, he never forgets, and every least necessity makes you remember them; and because necessities come every day, you remember them every day."⁶⁸ Additionally, "appearing [to be] proud and swollen" is something "which cannot be more hateful to peoples, and especially free ones."⁶⁹ Thus, in depriving his fellow citizens of what they perceived to be their good and by adopting "such a mode of conveyance to be sacred, and specially set apart to the king, and father of the gods," Camillus acquired great suspicion amongst his counterparts⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Camillus took these slights in stride, viewing them as lessons which he can be seen to reflect upon during his time at Ardea, waiting for his republic to request the services of his virtues that he displayed in battles before. In this way, he came to appreciate the necessary and salutary ingratitude shown against a republic's greatest men and, in turn, the necessity of disguising his ambitions to fit with these times.

Camillus's concord then, in a Machiavellian sense, is most easily observed by his recognition of how to achieve the highest distinction in "uncorrupt" times. Rather than seeking to transform

⁶⁷ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. 25 pg.101.

⁶⁸ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DIII.23, pg. 269.

⁶⁹ Ibid., DIII.23, pg. 269.

⁷⁰ Plutarch, "Camillus," 174-5.

the “matter” he was given like Manlius, Camillus took this “matter,” the people, or the republic, as it was and used it to his advantage, playing down his deep ambition and realizing the specific type of ingratitude associated with republics. Such ingratitude, Machiavelli argues, inherent to republics is that which stems from avarice.⁷¹ Even so, Camillus was able to acknowledge or tolerate the injuries done to him by the people. For, as Machiavelli suggests, it was the case that Camillus was “not only recalled but at all times of his life adored as a prince.”⁷² As a result, he could tolerate the dissatisfaction of the people in their constant desire for material benefit but reemerge when his services, and thus his virtues, were required by his own political regime.

Camillus, then, is to be seen as the exemplary figure who learns about the nature of his own times by a mistake and adjusts accordingly. Furthermore, he learns to tolerate the necessary ingratitude that is naturally associated with these times. Upon learning this, he presents himself in humbler respects and recognizes that he can achieve the highest distinction by continually revolving within the the highest offices of a regime that recognizes his virtues, provides him with great authority, and considers him a “prince” but does not simply bow down to his authority.⁷³ It is in this sense that Machiavelli rightly characterizes Camillus as “the most prudent of all Roman captains” by way of showing how he properly accommodated himself to pursue his designs and thirst for distinction through the correct institutional modes and spirit that was in concord with both the times and the regime he lived under.⁷⁴ Consequently, this type of political acuity displayed by Camillus will serve as important tools in the formulation of Machiavelli’s reimagined republic.

⁷¹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.29, pp. 64-7. Here, Machiavelli argues that ingratitude exists through either avarice or suspicion, the former associated with republics while the latter is related to principalities. This leads Machiavelli to side with republics and thus avarice.

⁷² *Ibid.*, DI.29, pg.66.

⁷³ See Plutarch, “Camillus” in *Lives*, 170.

⁷⁴ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DIII.12, pg. 249.

Ambition and Machiavelli's New Regime

As Machiavelli notes, and has been discussed prior, his intent in writing the *Discourses on Livy* is that “so those who read these statements of mine can more easily draw from them that utility for which one should seek knowledge of histories.”⁷⁵ Hence, by discoursing on the histories provided by Livy in his expansive work, Machiavelli aims to show how one can draw the proper lessons from history and apply them in active political life. Such application, however, occurs in a twofold manner as well. In one respect, it aims at advising “not those who are princes but those who for their infinite good parts deserve to be” on how to most prudently pursue their own ambitions, and perhaps their desires for distinction.⁷⁶ While on the other hand, it also advises such men on how to establish the “new modes and orders” that Machiavelli “believe[s] [would] bring common benefit to everyone” since “it is the duty of a good man to teach others the good that you could not work because of the malignity of the times and of fortune.”⁷⁷ Machiavelli’s didactic intent then, in writing, is to have his readers carefully examine the examples set forth before them and reinterpreted with his insights in mind so as to bring about the reimagined order that aims to surpass even that of the ancients.

By examining the examples set by Manlius Capitolinus and Furius Camillus, Machiavelli shows, at least in this instance, the importance regulating ambition in a political republic. With this in mind, his teachings include both institutional prescriptions, mainly the advantage of established orders which allow for public accusations, as well as advice for aspiring politically minded persons who have a thirst for distinction in their own order, specifically to augment one’s ambitions in accordance with the character of the times. By doing so, Machiavelli himself, I argue, seeks to create

⁷⁵ Ibid., DI.pr, pg. 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Dedicatory Letter, pg. 3.

⁷⁷ Ibid., DI.pr, pg. 5; DII.pr, pg. 125.

a new class of prudent “captains” who can both work to institute this new regime as well as function well under it.

This new regime, or republican framework, that Machiavelli imagines works in a similar way as did that of the Romans when it comes to the modes of regulating ambition. For example, as J. Patrick Colby notes in *Machiavelli's Romans*, “by and large, Rome handled the problem of ambition as it handled the problem of faction: not by suppressing it but by controlling its effects.”⁷⁸ Therefore, in channeling the passions of a political order’s most ambitious citizens, as well as the desires of the people to vent their own ambitions, Machiavelli’s reimagined republic, following the Roman model, would allow its citizens to pursue their political desires through a framework or institutional apparatus that would not only control the dangers associated with political ambition but use them to ends that are beneficial to the existing political order. As Machiavelli says, “The cruelties of the multitude are against whoever they fear will seize the common good.”⁷⁹ Accordingly, these cruelties are intended to be harnessed and institutionalized to punish those that seek to seize such power and motivate those who desire distinction towards pursuing the path of the political community’s common benefit. As Camillus’s example shows, this does not mean that a community will always respect the service of its greatest men. However, it is better to found on such people who are suspicious of the ambitious rather than granting the most cunning types to pursue their own goods at the public’s expense.

There is no debate that Machiavelli and his *Discourses* have been profoundly influential in the history of Western political thought. For example, some scholars have argued that Machiavelli was the founder of modernity, or at least “modern political philosophy.”⁸⁰ Others have claimed that he

⁷⁸ J. Patrick Colby, *Machiavelli's Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the Discourses on Livy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999), 160.

⁷⁹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, DI.58, pg. 119.

⁸⁰ Leo Strauss, “What is Political Philosophy?” in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 40.

heavily influenced the American founding and the broader “Atlantic republican tradition,”⁸¹ and some have even suggested that Machiavelli theorized a form of democratic politics that has yet to be achieved.⁸² Nevertheless, his writings, thought, and interpretation of the nature of political life provided by his treatment of political ambition and discussion of these two prominent Roman republican figures displays the way in which his thought can remain continually relevant to both political communities and politically ambitious persons. Upon reflection on his lessons, and, in turn, treatment of figures such as Manlius Capitolinus and Furius Camillus, there is a way in which political ambition and its regulated pursuit, both by the political community and by the individual, can go into serving a larger public good. This self-reinforcing order is the type the Machiavelli, in his own way, seeks to recreate. Through such a consideration, we can see that “not those who are princes but those who for their infinite good parts deserve to be” whom he writes to in his work are made to see that their ambitions may be made to coincide with Machiavelli’s own, thus making it so these men “who are more loved by heaven may be able to work” the good Machiavelli imagines.⁸³ Such a good could be working towards creating a new and regulated political order, becoming prudent captains of Machiavelli’s own that are to show the true “utility” that can be provided by the correct readings of histories.⁸⁴

⁸¹ See Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; As a refutation of this position, see John P. McCormick,

⁸² For Machiavelli as the radical democratic thinker, see John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁸³ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Dedicatory Letter, pg. 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, DI.pr, pg. 6.

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