



On Machiavelli: The Search for Glory (Liveright Classics)

Alan Ryan

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An essential, comprehensive, and accessible guide to the life and works of Machiavelli.

In *On Machiavelli: The Search for Glory*, Alan Ryan illuminates the political and philosophical complexities of the often-reviled godfather of realpolitik. Thought by some to be the founder of Italian nationalism, regarded by others to be a reviver of the Roman Republic as a model for the modern Western world, Machiavelli remains a contentious figure. Often outraging popular opinion with his insistence on the amoral nature of power, Machiavelli eschewed the world as it ought to be in favor of a forthright appraisal of the one that is. Perhaps more than any other thinker, Machiavelli has suffered from being taken out of context, and Ryan places him squarely within his own time and the politics of a Renaissance Italy riven by near-constant warfare among rival city-states and the papacy.

A well-educated son of Florence, Machiavelli was originally in charge of the Florentine Republic's militia, but in 1512 the city fell to papal forces led by Cardinal Giovanni de Medici, who thus restored the Medici family to power. Machiavelli was accused of conspiracy, imprisoned, tortured, and eventually exiled from his beloved Florence, and it was during this period that he produced his most famous works. While attempting to ingratiate himself to the Medicis, the historically minded Machiavelli looked to the imperial ambitions and past glories of the Roman Republic as a contrast to the perceived failures of his contemporaries.

For Machiavelli, the hunger for power and glory was inextricable from human nature, and any serious attempt to rule must take this into account. In his revolutionary *The Prince* and *Discourses*—both excerpted here—Machiavelli created the first truly modern analysis of power.

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