



Machiavelli's Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the Discourses on Livy (Applications of Political Theory)

By *Patrick J. Coby*

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Although Machiavelli is usually considered a pioneer among modern political philosophers, he read deeply in and was greatly influenced by the works of classical Roman thinkers such as Livy. There is thus a fundamental tension between the modern and the ancient within Machiavelli's philosophy; he is both a precursor to the Enlightenment and a throwback to republican Rome. This is the main thesis behind Patrick Coby's innovative study of the neglected Machiavellian classic Discourses on Livy. Coby argues that scholars have been too quick to dismiss the ancient antecedents of Machiavelli's thought, particularly with regard to the modes and orders of the Roman republic. The book seeks to resolve the central paradox of the Discourses, that Machiavelli recommends adoption of Roman modes and orders even though those modes and orders destroyed the virt-, the strength, which Machiavelli would have moderns resuscitate by imitating Rome. A sophisticated, highly engaging book, Machiavelli's Romans will be of special interest to political theorists, Renaissance scholars, and classicists.

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Editorial Review

Review

Coby's book provides a much-needed textual analysis of Machiavelli's Roman sources and displays a wide and masterful knowledge of the formidable body of scholarly literature. . . . The book undoubtedly represents the most thoroughgoing investigation of Machiavelli's interpretation of the Roman precedent. (*Sixteenth Century Journal*)

Under Coby's able guidance the reader gets a grand tour of contemporary Machiavelli scholarship and interpretations. The discussion of liberty and greatness is especially stimulating. . . . All in all, the book makes the *Discourses* less mysterious, more intelligible, and more exciting than it is thought to be. (*American Political Science Review*)

About the Author

J. Patrick Coby is Professor of Government at Smith College. He is the author of *Socrates and the Sophistic Enlightenment: A Commentary on Plato's Protagoras* and of numerous writings in political theory, including articles on Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Hobbes, Locke, and Marx.

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