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In Praise For Monstrosities. The Case of Niccolò Machiavelli

Abstract: In the paper author refers to the passage from *The Prince* of Niccolò Machiavelli, in which the famous Florentine says that there are two kinds of combat: one with laws, the other with force. Author defend the claim that by writing this, Machiavelli opened up a new and still unused way of thinking about nature-culture relationship. A follower of this way of thinking withdraws from saying that nature is surpassed by culture, or that nature is nothing else but a subject of an on-going human speculation, and rebuts the sole hypothesis that what there is, is nothing but nature. Modern Western culture entrusted its key opposition to the nature-culture relationship. By and large, political philosophy is a story about surpassing the nature in order to establish a state under the rule of law. According to Machiavelli, the juxtaposition of nature and culture, the narrative on surpassing by politics the laws of nature, just as well as the narrative on us being stuck in it, are all utterly wrong. Accepting the ambiguity of the opposition between nature and culture and assuming that the social contract is indeed fictitious, author would like to question Machiavelli about his vision of subjectivity and politics in a world where "natural objects" appear to be socialized, and "cultural subjects" appear to be dissocial. In the way author puts the question: does Machiavelli recommend monstrosity by writing stories in praise of monstrosity as it may well seem?

Keywords: armed citizen, continuity of nature, diplomat, monsters, necessity of the monster, situation, prince, *virtù*

> We must, therefore, I think, in order to be pardoned for our faults, commit new ones; redoubling the mischief, and multiplying fires and robberies; and in doing this, endeavor to have as many companions as we can; for when many are in fault, few are punished; small crimes are chastised, but great and serious ones rewarded.
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> Niccolò Machiavelli (2007)

> Concepts are really monsters that are reborn from their fragments.
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> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari (1994)

> No facility, but no impossibility in principle. No transcendence, but no prison of immanence either. Nothing but the ordinary work of politics.
>
> Bruno Latour (2004)

> We live in an age of monsters and of the body-panics they excite.
>
> David McNally (2011)

A Lamb with a Pig's Head

François Jacob, in his famous 1970 (1993) work entitled *La logique du vivant, une histoire de l'hérédit*, states that a sixteenth-century description of the animate world is

filled with various, colorful, more or less fabulous monsters. There are authors who, like Ulysses Aldrovandi and Ambroise Paré, devote their whole books to them (Jacob 1993). According to Jacob, the Renaissance monsters always reflect the properties of the visible world; there is no monster that would not resemble something and would not be a combination of body parts of other animals. Monsters always reflect and reproduce similarities, but similarities which violated the rules and ceased to match the ordinary, monotone workings of nature. The combinations and signs, which can be read from them, do not reveal the order existing in the world, but show errors, which can slip into this world. François Jacob writes about it thus:

> Each monster is the result of iniquity and bears witness to a certain disorder: an act (or even an intention) not in conformity with the order of the world. Physical or moral, each divergence from nature produces an unnatural fruit. Nature, top, has its morality (Jacob 1993: 46).

According to Jacob, the Renaissance knowledge of monstrosity constitutes a whole and complete system, in which everything has its place. Therefore, generation was only one of the methods, which God used to maintain the world within the particular limits and creating likeness. Here is a world in which nature is endowed with morality. Yet, a question arises: is a world in which morality exists in nature not a world without morality, a world so to speak beyond good and evil, a world beyond the division into facts and values, or rather a world, in which values exist only as much as they are facts, and the facts are taken into consideration only when they aspire to being values?

When we look into Ambroise Paré's oeuvre, the 1573 treatise *Des monsters et prodigies*, our contemporary imagination is astounded the most by the admittance for almost infinite shape-shifting and alteration of organs in the animate world and by the recognition in the act of procreation a source of this ecstatic diversity and plasticity of nature. Ambroise Paré writes about a lamb which had a pig's head because the ewe had been covered by a boar. The world in which nature has its morality is a world of strengthened and generalized, dispersed and transactional monstrosity. Paré does not state anywhere what the offspring produced by the lamb with pig's head looks like or if it produced any other lambs with pigs' heads. Yet he talks about the necessity of the existence of such a kind of monsters in the world economy. Jacob, commenting on those fragments in Paré, states that the Renaissance does not differentiate between the necessity of phenomena and the random occurrence of events. "For if horse was obviously born of horse and cat of cat," we read in Jacob,

> this was not the effect of a mechanism that permitted living beings to produce copies of themselves, somewhat as a printing machine produces copies of a text. Only towards the end of the eighteenth century did the word and the concept of reproduction make their appearance to describe the formation of living organisms. Until that time living beings did not reproduce; they were engendered (Jacob 1993: 19).

What does this signify? What is the meaning of the enigmatic statement that before the 18th century living beings did not reproduce but were brought into existence? In what sense is reproduction distinct from engenderment? Does in the economy of the world, in which nature has its own morality and every monster is a result of an error and proof of a violation, engendering emerge as a source of error, and thus of

monstrosity? Well, not rushing to far reaching conclusions, I will take it to mean that until the 18th century the shaping of a living being was considered to be a singular event, regardless of any other act of creation and resembles more the creation of a work of art by an artist than creating a copy by the printing press. We can therefore talk about the Renaissance art of engenderment, but not about the Renaissance art of reproduction. The art of reproduction is an art form in the day of mass production. Here, the creator became the manufacturer.

The already mentioned captivating intermingling of forms in nature, i.e. the world economy allowing for any transaction, is the reason why in the 18th century thinking there is no species understood as a formal structure maintaining itself in time, i.e. for the succeeding generations. Live organisms create organisms similar to themselves not out of necessity of nature. To explain the formation of an organism, each time one has to refer to the work of God or his agents (ibid: 46). François Jacob describes the Renaissance epistemological system, in which Paré operates, in the following manner:

> The likeness which Ambroise Paré invokes to explain the formation of the lamb with the pig's head did not have the same status as today. In order to know things then, it was necessary to detect the visible signs which nature had placed on their surfaces precisely to permit man to comprehend their relationships. It was necessary to discern the system of resemblances, the network of analogies and similitudes providing access to certain of nature's secrets (ibid: 36).

Behind the similitudes lies the nature of things, and the similarity of children to their parents is only one particular aspect of all those resemblances, which have secretly linked all living beings. In this epistemological order, a living being cannot be reduced only to its visible structure. The visible structure is only a part of the mesh of the secret net, which encompasses all of the world's objects. Each animal and each plant becomes a kind of shape-shifting body, which extends itself not only to other living beings, but also to stars and stones, or even to the activities of humans.[1]

Let us summarize this train of thought. Ambroise Paré's biological imagination is open to such a great degree that it allows for any experiments with nature. Those experiments are conducted in the act of generation, which is different from the mechanical act of reproduction. Teratology, or rather monsterology[2]—the science of monsters—allows us to put in the ontological register of the world forms which would have been consistent with *The Book of Imaginary Beings* or the *A Universal History of Infamy* of Jorge Luis Borges. We will find here the representatives of the Acefali

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[1] The likeness which Ambroise Paré invokes to explain the formation of the lamb with the pig's head did not have the same status as today. In order to know things then, it was necessary to detect the visible signs which nature had placed on their surfaces precisely to permit man to comprehend their relationships. It was necessary to discern the system of resemblances, the network of analogies and similitudes providing access to certain of nature's secrets. The very nature of things is hidden behind the similitudes. Thus the resemblance of a child to its parents is only a special aspect of all those by which beings and things are secretly linked. A living being could not then be reduced to the visible structure alone. It represented a link in the secret network tying together all the objects in the world. Each animal, each plant was viewed as a sort of protean body extending not only to other beings, but also to the stones, the stars and even to human activities.

[2] David McNally (2011) explains that he prefers "the term *monsterology* to the more common "teratology," given the latter's connection to the normativising study of birth-defects."

people—without heads, with faces between their arms, representatives of Sphinxes—lions with human heads, Manticores—a mixture of a lion, bat and a scorpion, Astons, who do not have lips and feed on smells and are infinitely delicate beings, Ichtrofags, feeding exclusively on fish and drinking only salt water, Antropofags—cannibals who eat their parents out of respect for them, or finally representations of cyclopses, sirens, winged horses, or troglodytes. This is the real, democratic parliament of humanity and un-humanity. Renaissance biological imagination allows for recording in the register of beings all kinds of mutants, hybrids, flawed creatures, surprising, creatures and creations which for us are impossible. Although in the Renaissance memory nature has its morality, this morality allows for or even demands the selection of such a kind of rule of equivalence, this type of transactional system, which minimizes the externality, and maximizes the internality, i.e. keeps to a minimum that which is excluded from the imagined collective of the world, from this morality of nature, the triumphant parade of monstrous, constantly recurring act of generation, and not reproduction of creatures.

Monsters Without a Future

It is interesting that those highly inspiring guidelines and comments on the topic of monstrous imagination of the Renaissance, formulated by the French biologist François Jacob, are made almost at the same time by a French historian Michel Foucault and his probably most daring work entitled *Les Mots et les Choses* ([1966] 1992). In a significant chapter of the book entitled Monsters and Fossils, wondering about the historical roots of evolutional thought and its archeological source, Foucault notes that one of the consistent problems of evolutionary thought is the matter of transformation of live organisms. The fundamental problem is the transformation from one form to another. History is facing the following question: should we assume that a live organism has a spontaneous affinity towards changing its form or acquiring features slightly at variance with the initial matrix in the future generations, through which this trait becomes with time blurred and uncertain? Or should we rather ascribe to living organisms the blind drive towards achieving the final form of a species, which would show all the preceding traits of the species, but on a higher level of complexity and perfection, on a higher level of integration? (Foucault 1992: 205).

Foucault says that in essence there are two solutions to this problem. According to the first idea, it is suggested that there exists a natural equilibrium of forces between the continuity-preserving memory for patterns and the tendency for deviation, from which phenotype differences and varieties emerge. When the balance between the memory of the imitating mechanism and the tendency towards change becomes disrupted through excessive modifications, monstrosity is born. The same monstrosity, which causes the fall of organisms, is also the reason for diversity and evolutionary progress. The multiplicity of species came into being due to some reoccurring transgressions, errors, mutations, micro-damage. Mutation is always blind, since one does

not know if it will be evolutionarily advantageous. Each change is a risk of regress or progress. But without risk there is no life.

According to the second, competing solution to the problem of the changeability of forms, the continuity of the species is not preserved by memory, but by the initial design. The architecture of natural creations lies between the simplicity of the design hidden in the dark recesses of history, and the engineering complication of the concrete realizations and incarnation of this project, i.e. the empirical organisms, which link into ever greater wholes. So the thing that can be named the "splendor and lushness of nature" and its striving towards ever greater complexity is a notion responsible for the production of monstrosities. Yet, in this paradigm the monsters do not have a different nature than species, they are merely metamorphoses of the early prototype. Monstrosity here is productive and progressing, and serves to create new forms.

Foucault notes that this productive mode of thinking about monsters has two nontrivial consequences. The first consequence is the very necessity of the appearance of monsters. Monsters are no longer an accidental, unwanted, unintentional effect of life; their existence is necessary. As Foucault states, monsters here are like an "endless murmur of nature," the language of monsters does not tell anything, although it is never silent. If evolution really needs to probe all possible combinations, monsters are as necessary for the nature as geological catastrophes are necessary to formation of the earth's layers. Proliferation of monsters without a future is a necessity. Without monsters the world would have been infinitely flat, uniform, monotone. Foucault writes: "The monster ensures in time, and for our theoretical knowledge, a continuity that, for our everyday experience, floods, volcanoes, and subsiding continents confuse in space." (ibid: 207). Not only ontological, but also epistemological necessity of the monster results from the fact that their existence fills out empty spaces, openings, breaks, gaps in time, missing links, which like hyphens allow us to understand the continuity of nature, the lack of breaks in the existential structure of the animate matter.

The second consequence of this productive thinking about monsters is that the signs of the continuity of nature, which monsters are, belong entirely to the order of imitations. Foucault writes here in the rhetoric of François Jacob: all biological forms are trapped in the logic of probability, experiencing all possible metamorphoses, they are only signs, signals of evolution, i.e. the progression of nature in the world. For this very reason nature, beginning its sketches from the primitive prototype, is not exhausted in the human figure. Nietzschean figures of the last men—Soothsayer (symbolizing the wish of expiring), Sorcerer (symbolizing the manufacturer of mercy), the Noble One (symbolizing the moralist distorting values), two Kings (symbolizing the triumph of the rabble) are in reality figures of monstrosity. One of nature's qualities is the ability to abandon, to betray the already produced forms. That is why the world is a cemetery of fossils and monsters, fossilized monstrosities, a dumpster of the monstrosities, which could not adapt and make home in the world. Foucault writes: "The fossil, with its mixed animal and mineral nature, is the privileged locus of a resemblance required by the historian of the continuum, whereas the space of the

taxinomia decomposed it with rigour" (ibid: 207). For this reason Foucault states that in the register in which the power of continuity administering nature is the essential power, only the monster allows for discernment of the difference, and only the monster is the progenitor of specification. Fossil allows for the survival of monsters, i.e. the transfer of even the greatest anomalies. The question is: does science about monsters thus understood become exhausted in the field of natural history?

Situation

I claim that the idea of productivity and the necessity of monstrosity has been used the most by the thought of Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli's monstrosity is naturally a part of Renaissance imagination. Yet Machiavelli gives this imagination a strictly political character: it tears out the monstrosity from the dictionary of natural history and transferring the category of monstrosity into the dictionary of politics. It is not solely important that—as François Jacob suggested in his reading of Aldrovandi and Paré—in Machiavelli's imagination "nature has its morality" and in the world economy there exists an extensive interchangeability of everything and everyone. It is also not the most important—as Michel Foucault suggested in his reading of the *avant la lettre* evolutionists—that before evolutionism was invented monstrosity could be the sign of the continuity of nature. Without a doubt, to Machiavelli monstrosity is productive and even more than that: monstrosity is constructive, but it does not have to be the sign of continuity. Rather, it is a sign of mutation and discontinuity. To the author of *The Prince*, only monstrosity is imaginable and this monstrosity is hard to grasp because the monstrosity is nominal, it is the struggle of contradiction, as if Machiavelli wanted to say, long before Deleuze and Guattari, that *concepts are monsters coming back to life from their remains*. This central role of monstrosity in Machiavelli's work allows me to recognize him simply as a theoretician of monstrosity, and his work as one great praise of monstrosity.

Niccolò Machiavelli is a mysterious thinker, ambiguous and ambivalent. Almost all of Machiavelli's concepts are afflicted with this ambiguity and double entendre. For example, Machiavelli writes about history and time as if they had no influence on the nature of things, but also as if they were a primary property, finally, he writes about temporality as if it were entangled in a circle of eternal return. Machiavelli writes about human nature as if it were unchangeable and constantly destined to suffer from the same deficiency, suggesting, for instance, that nature "has created men so that they are able to desire everything and are unable to attain everything. So, since the desire is always greater than the power of acquiring, the result is discontent with what one possesses and a lack of satisfaction with it" (Machiavelli [1517] 2003). On the other hand, Machiavelli suggests that human is a being without nature, a being condemned to eternal experiments with him—or herself and with nature, spelling doom to those who cannot fit into the changing conditions. Machiavelli writes about rule and power as if its sole goal was to keep the subjects in a state in which they cannot, or are not forced to do damage to the prince (ibid: 214); on the other hand,

he suggests that proper rule is possible only where we have a conflict between the poor and the rich, the plebs and the aristocracy, where it is not possible for one side to attain definite advantage. Machiavelli writes about the people that they are vain and fickle, but also constant and capable of gratitude, able to make a better choice than the ruler, and finally, that it is the sole mirror in which the ruler can look into and achieve self-awareness. How can the people be both constant and fickle, full of gratitude and ungrateful, able to make decisions and absolutely passive?

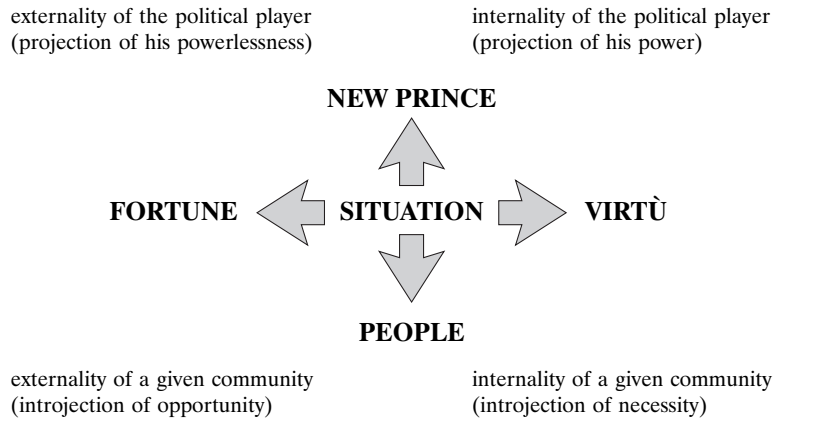
On the other hand, Machiavelli writes about the prince as if he had the virtues of a leader and general, recalling Cyrus, the creator of the Persian empire, who according to Herodotus got to power with deceit and treachery, but also Mark Aurelius and Cesare Borgia. Yet the prince is also supposed to be endowed with the virtues of an "armed prophet," whereby Machiavelli provides the examples of Christ and Moses. Finally, the prince is supposed to have the virtues of legislator, lawgiver, for whom the models are Lycurgus and Solon. Finally, above all else, the prince is supposed to prove himself capable of forming a new country—a political innovator with the temperament of Romulus or Theseus. The question is: what is the monster which is simultaneously a general, a legislator, a player, a prophet and a founder?

Fortune is a fickle, changeable and unjust, pitiless and perjurious goddess, but it is also a lottery, a praise of any aleatoricism. Fortune is also a chance, a threshold, an event, a mutation changing the course of events. But who cannot use her cannot reach the threshold of new possibilities, their potential to recognize their own power. Finally, *virtù*—the collection of specific political abilities: energy, initiative, ability to make decisions and take swift action, described by Machiavelli as a virtue which is the condition for any creative activity, the beginning of any innovativeness, which would mean that it is nothing but the favor and will of fate, Fortune, opening oneself to what happens by chance and what is unknown.

„I confess this course is bold and dangerous, but when necessity presses, audacity becomes prudence," writes Machiavelli, and adds "[…] no one ever escaped from embarrassment without some peril" (Machiavelli [1525] 1988).

On the other hand, *virtù* is an inner trait, allowing the prince and the state's formation to be based on Fortune, and to impose on her his own model of constitutional order. *Virtù* is violence inflicted on Fortune. One should also remember that a part of *virtù* is to double the evil, multiply the arsons and rapine. Therefore, *virtù* is both a virtue and a non-virtue.

Here is the political teratology and monsterology of Niccolò Machiavelli's concepts. In this teratology there is no one concept which would be unambiguous, not looking for an explicit or hidden ambivalence, there is no transcendence, but there is also no prison of immanence. There is nothing but the ordinary, hard work of politics, in which notions such as monsters, even if they are not restored to life, they are surely revived in their outer edges, on their borders. Let us remember that monsters always reflect and reproduce similarities, which violated the rules and ceased to match the ordinary, monotone workings of nature. In Machiavelli, the monster is always formed by a creative error and shows a new configuration, a new conjuncture.



It seems that the main axis of tension in Machiavelli's system runs along the vertical axis linking the prince and the people and along the horizontal axis linking the notion of Fortune and virtue—*virtù*. Prince's nature is complex. He is both the phantasmal space of projection of the people's wishes, a kind of personification of the general will, and the *Great Other*, a superhuman who is the foundation of the whole political order. The character of prince's nature is personal and suprapersonal. Analyzing the case of Sparta, Venice, Rome, and Florence, so the political orders of diverse regimes, Machiavelli forwards a conclusion that the sole recommended political order is such an order in which there is a constant separation of interests and powers between the aristocracy and the people, in which the defense of the freedom of the republic is not in the hands of the people or the notables, but in the unstable dynamics and the network of their mutual relationships, as well as the relationships between the entire "state" and Fortune. Two reasons for the fall of Rome are, first, the increase of inequality and the resulting hate between the people and the notables, and second, the privatization of army, which lead to the disarmament and neutralizing of the "armed citizen," i.e. a citizen who was simultaneously a warrior, and his division into the powerless, impotent "citizen" and the warrior, who is armed but without prerogatives. Machiavelli's famous book entitled *The Art of War* ([1520] 2001) is on this very subject, i.e. the subject of the necessity of being an armed citizen. In Machiavelli's eyes a citizen is a *condottiere*.

I claim that as a result, the sole concept allowing us to approach the monstrosity of the people and the monstrosity of the prince in the vertical relation, and to recognize the power of the people in the prince, and the power of the prince in the people, and to juxtapose, horizontally, the monstrosity of Fortune and the monstrosity of *virtù*, and to recognize fate's will in Fortune, *amor fati*, and in *virtù* the person of the player affirming chance, who knows that the probability is created not by the amassed number of throws but that the repetition of the throw is possible thanks to the nature of the randomly drawn number, the sole concept which can reconcile all these contradictions is the notion of situation, and that Machiavelli's entire philosophy and politics attains

the designation of politics of situation, meaning the politics of what is singular, the politics of the event.

For this reason Machiavelli's texts are purely and solely the studies of singular events, laboratories, in which the monstrous fossils are reconstructed, and Machiavelli's imagination is not only the Renaissance imagination which adores the proliferation of forms, but, above all, it is the structural imagination justified more by its effectiveness, truth defined by Machiavelli by the results, *verita effettuale della cosa*, and less by the method, i.e. the imagination leading to the use of old languages in a new way. Monstrosity of situation is the unpredictability of Fortune meeting *virtù*, and the prince meeting the people. Monstrosity of situation is another name given to overdetermination (Freudian *Überdeterminierung*). The subject of Machiavelli's imagination is no longer the lamb with pig's head, but the overdetermination of situation.

Goddess Circe

Let us start with a cardinal and categorical statement. The history of political thought of the West is one great struggle with monstrosity. The politics of the West escapes the phantasmal monstrosity of nature by building a no-less phantasmal artificial monsters called states. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* begins with a declaration of the possibility of constructing a mortal God, a monster, a Leviathan, a great animal, a great automaton and a great man—a synthesis of machine, organism, and soul. Although in Hobbes ([1651] 2010) the figure of Leviathan appears only three times, it foreshadows the mythical completeness consisting of human, animal, and machine. This completeness may aspire to the designation of a mortal God. If we look from the mythological perspective at three names constitutive to the modern political order—Machiavelli, Vico, and Hobbes—then we will see the embroilment of these persons in myth. Vico did not create any myth, but he saw in the history of nations a history of myths. Hobbes is neither a mythologist, nor a myth. Only in his picture of Leviathan did he approach, perhaps against his own will, the mythical sphere. Finally, Machiavelli in his entirety, with all his writings and his name itself, achieved a mythic status (Schmitt [1938] 1966). This state of affairs requires explanation. When Antonio Gramsci writes in *The Modern Prince* (1968) that *The Prince* is neither a political treatise, nor even a revolutionary treatise, but a live (endowed with performative power) word, in which political ideology fuses with political reflection and assumes a dramatic form of myth, he obviously follows this mythological path.

Carl Schmitt is surely right when he writes that there is no political image more suggestive than the figure of a large animal: we find it already in Plato, who in *Republic* describes the crowd endowed with affects as a large, colorful animal (Schmitt [1938] 1966). While writing about political monsters one should remember that the strict distinction between the organism and mechanism ultimately occurred towards the end of the 18th century. Kant in *Critique of Judgment* formulated this opposition on the grounds of the opposition between the inner and the outer, contrasting the living being with the inanimate thing, as a result of which the notion of mechanism

was deprived of any mythical or spiritual elements, or even the vitality itself. Machine became a soulless device, it ceased to be an organism. When Nietzsche, in his *Thus Spoke Zaratustra*, calls the state "the coldest of all cold monsters," in a certain sense he ends this mythological, vitalistic kind of thinking about the state's animality, in which Machiavelli's thought probably marks a watershed. It is no coincidence that Nietzsche is capable of discovering his affinity only with Machiavelli, writing in *Nachlass*, "Highlights of Integrity" (*Höhepunkte der Redlichkeit*): Machiavelli, Jesuitism, Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld. Germans as a return to moral hypocrisy" (Nietzsche 1973; Dombowski 2004).

Similarly, when Peter Sloterdijk (1988: 231) describes the rule of cynical reason as the "vitality of dead men," which has its embodiment both in reality and in literature—in the figure of the vampire, and when David McNally (2011) diagnoses an epoch of global capitalism as an era of zombies and vampires, zombies-institutions, and vampire-institutions, then both Sloterdijk and McNally add a certain supplement to the imagination, in which the automatons can only be soulless and the monstrosity assumes the shape of the vampire. Let us stress this strongly: Sloterdijk's and McNally's monsters can only be vampires because they have lost their power of fertility and productivity, characteristic of Machiavelli's monsters, these monsters are parasites, they live a borrowed life, not their own, they borrow or rather steal vitality, they are no longer generous givers of life as in the paradigm of *The Prince*. Late capitalism is conducive to the birth of monsters bred from superstructure, and not the economical basis. Are the media not promoting today a kind of fashion of "vampires in rehab," "recovered vampires," changing the vampire icon in series such as *True Blood*, or in series such as *Twilight*, into the figure which the vampire always has been: the figure of a demonic, metrosexual seducer from the other world? (Davis 2007).

Yet let us return to Machiavelli. Hanna Pitkin, in a famous book entitled *Fortune Is a Woman* (1984), may be most helpful in the insightful reading of Machiavelli's work, leading to a complete reconstruction of the notion of "nature," which permeates both the literary and political writings of the Florentine, when she states that the notion of *nature* in Machiavelli's work is touched by ambivalence resulting in its characteristic gender politics. Could it be otherwise, since, as it has been presented, all of Machiavelli's notions are monsters revived in their outer edges, on their borders.

For Pitkin, the outset is the observation that in his theatrical and poetic works Machiavelli constantly refers to the world of women, using male, chauvinist phantasms. On the other hand, in political text about the political sphere, women are practically absent. Out of this overrepresentation of womanhood in the private life and lack of representation in the public sphere, Pitkin concludes that to Machiavelli womanhood is a force, which should be restrained. This restraint results in a return of the supplanted woman element from another stage, i.e. the stage of life.

Maybe the most suggestive example of Machiavelli's ambiguous style of thinking and the return to that, which was supplanted on another stage, are his novella entitled *Belfagor arcidiavolo* in which a woman turns out to be worse than Lucifer, and the ending remarks in the third tome of *Discourses on Livy*, where Machiavelli considers

the case of Lucretia, and ambiguously generalizes: women are the reason for the fall of states. Perhaps a more reliable complement of Machiavelli's well-known political texts is his unfinished poem entitled *The Golden Ass*. The prototype of this work—*Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*, i.e. the fantastic-satirical romance of Apuleius which described the adventures of a young man, who wanted to learn magic and for that reason journeyed into a magical land. Incidentally transformed into a donkey, he retained all human qualities, apart from speech. With the help of merciful goddess Isis, the young man recovered his human form and from that time served the goddess as her priest. Similarly, Machiavelli's hero is unaware of how he was transported from the city space into an extremely harsh and wild forest. He is helped by beautiful Diana, who serves at the court of goddess Circe, who in turn possesses the power of turning people into animals.

In Circe's kingdom—the forest, a kingdom of nature, we find animals which are healthy and degenerated. Healthy animals have always remained a part of nature and never dreamed of transgressing it, never succumbed to the fantasies and dreams of transcending nature and becoming something different than nature. Degenerated animals, on the other hand, are the world of men, fallen, enchanted, and imprisoned in nature. In this poem Machiavelli reconstructs not only the opposition between nature and culture, between the male *polis* or *virtù* (politics) and the female world of non-discernment (Fortune), between the city and the forest, the ordered patriarchy and the tangled and homogenous matriarchy, but, above all, Machiavelli draws here the difference between the decline into animality, which is the simultaneous exclusion from humanity, and becoming an animal, or being an animal so that the animal may become something else. Machiavelli in *The Golden Ass* recalls as a digression a history of one Florentine, whose ailment, indisposition, or even a compulsive-obsessive disorder consisted therein that to surprise of his surroundings and without a clear reason he started running in the streets. A doctor ordered for him to be watched day and night, but it was of no use: suffering from the neurotic compulsion, the hero ran. What is interesting, in the *Florentine Histories* Machiavelli returns to this theme, describing the customs in Genoa, and in particular the custom of communal running as an act of achieving freedom.

Pitkin concludes from this ambiguous presence/absence of women in Machiavelli's work that to Machiavelli Fortune was a woman which needs to be conquered and treated brusquely, since that is what the finishing fragment of the 26th chapter of *The Prince* tells us:

> Fortune is a woman and […] she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her (Machiavelli [1513] 1985).

Contrary to Pitkin, I would claim that it is not a matter of excluding the female element, or identifying femininity with nature and glorifying bio-political regimes, but rather a triumph of the active over the reactive forces. Reactive forces separate power from the ability to act, while the active forces are those, which are capable of reaching the limit of their abilities.

Fortune, which in Machiavelli's work assumes a variety of guises—from the image of a flood, which suddenly surprises us, to the image of chance (opportunity), which we can use only in the given moment; well, this Fortune is not a special, singular event, or a combination of many factors shaping the event, or even a consequence of imperfection of the human calculating abilities, but with the externality of politics (of the republic), which becomes nothing more than the art of dealing with life's vicissitudes. For this reason Machiavelli writes explicitly in *The Prince* that "he will be successful who directs his actions according to the spirit of the times, and that he whose actions do not accord with the times will not be successful." (Machiavelli [1513] 1985:102). To Machiavelli, the most difficult thing in life was the ability to abandon previously successful tactics and remaining sensitive to the changeable and very fickle mutations of time. The only strategy he recommended was the strategy of using several different tactics, the strategy of a chameleon. The hero of *The Golden Ass* also sheds human nature to resurface in the counter-nature of an animal, however, this turns out to be the same kind of disguise, the same mask of being as was the primal nature. As a result, Machiavelli writes: the only laws of nature are mask and deceit. One can overcome the mask only by giving it another meaning, and not by freeing oneself from it for some true nature.

Virtù, the virtue recommended by Machiavelli, has to be both the cunningness and strength, the duplicity and righteousness, deceit as well as law, because only this configuration allows one to lean into time, which is the sole protagonist of actions. That is why the figure recommended by Machiavelli is not at all the philosopher (wise man), attorney (man of law), economist (businessman), anthropologist (expert in foreign cultures), nor, finally, a doctor or a psychologist (expert in human nature and its imperfection), but a diplomat, who is more cunning than the moralist, more relentless than the scientist, more businesslike than the politician, who is both *our own* and *the other*, who is foreign among his own and at home somewhere else, he is, to define him through the monstrous traits which are his nature, a hybrid, a monster, reviving himself from his remains and in his outer edges. Perhaps it is difficult to notice it because of their mythical disguise, but both the goddess Circe, and the centaur Chiron are dealing with diplomacy—they receive the messengers from the unexplored externality and make apparent the frailty of that, which they consider "natural."

Here Machiavelli is a couple of centuries ahead of the thought of Bruno Latour, for whom the figure of a diplomat is also paradigmatic. The problem with the diplomat is that we do not know his goal, his method, or even his range. The goal of politician's politics can be anticipation, adaptation, revolution and instigation, as well as preservation and archiving; his method can be to attack or to wait, to build and to dismantle, to patiently delay and to audaciously conquer; finally, the range of his actions can be the sphere of reproduction of life (fertility) and the accumulation of goods, the sphere of education and armament, demographics and sports, finally art as well as politics. In her book *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt (1963: 40–45) insightfully notes the ambiguity of "conservative revolutionary politics" of Machiavelli, writing that when the author of *The Prince* uses the expression *mutazioni del stato* he

is constantly referring to Cicero's notion of *mutation rerum*. The word "revolution" initially meant restoration, a return to the beginning; hence, it is not surprising that Machiavelli's favorite concepts—*mutazioni, variazioni, alterazioni*—concepts at the service of conspiratorial struggles, inciting the crowd to rebellion and encouraging them to lawlessness, accompany the republican rhetoric of recreating and reinstating the power of Rome. For Machiavelli, the situation of Italy's anomy in the 15th century was the ideal, revolutionary atmosphere giving hope that a new order would evolve—*lo stato*.

Hence, Louis Althusser (1999) is right when he writes about Machiavelli's solitude and his everlasting relevance, which at least in part is a consequence of identification of Machiavelli's intellectual and political positions. Machiavelli's relevance results not from his closeness to us, but from his broaching the subject of relevance,[3] in the sense which Foucault (1994: 139–48) gives it in his "The Art of Telling the Truth," relevance understood as a necessity of diagnosis of the situation, political conjuncture, and the answer to the question: what in the present (situation at this moment) is the relevant sense for philosophical reflection understood as a political practice? Machiavelli's intrigue lies in its mysteriousness, in its enigmatic monstrosity, in its enigmatic attachment and imprisonment in the present, in the situation.

When one reads Machiavelli's works one should resist the temptation of thinking about him as a leading republican and ideologist of the republican virtues, to which we could be induced by reading his *Discourses on Livy*,[4] as well as a theoretician of the amorality of power, prince without conscience, who realizes his political goals beyond the good and evil, using pure calculation, to which we could be induced by a cursory reading of *The Prince*,[5] as well as the father of the theory of *raison d'état—ragion di stato*—and a new formula of necessity.[6] Machiavelli's monstrosity, and his resulting loneliness, which is but another name for monstrosity and singularity, lies therein that he denies the claim that the natural course of things is unchangeable and stable, as well as the proposition that everything is in constant motion, and even the statement that it is not the being which returns, but the return constitutes the being, forces us to reconsider history and politics and pose the questions: under what conditions would it be possible to liberate oneself from the circular necessity of Fortune and to establish such form of government, such organization of the state, such dictatorship of freedom, such tyranny of unity of the people and the prince,

[3] This difficulty in diagnosing Machiavelli's position affects even as serious thinkers as Isaiah Berlin, who gives us probably the most complete list of mistaken identifications of Machiavelli's proper intellectual and political positions, after which he inadvertently adds himself to the list of those erroneous interpretations by suggesting that Machiavelli's merit was not liberating politics from ethics or religion, but conflicting two ethical ideals—pagan—based on courage, discipline, strength, attachment to the body, and praise of action, and Christian—based on compassion, generosity, charity, and faith in the afterlife. See: Isaiah Berlin (1980).

[4] This interpretation is prevalent from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, through J. G. A. Pocock (1975) to Quentin Skinner (1978; 2006) Paul A. Rahe (2006).

[5] This interpretation, on the other hand, is prevalent from the Jesuits to Leo Strauss (1958). This also concerns an otherwise very interesting book by Erica Benner (2009).

[6] Here the tradition continues from Giovanni Botero to Friedrich Meinecke.

humans and non-humans, animals and minerals, in which we would not dare or need to call it a "democracy"? Tu put it simply: what are the conditions and possibilities of non-hegemonic politics? Perhaps Machiavelli's true monster is the democratic order, and his famous *mantenere lo stato*, is nothing else but the construction of this monster.[7]

Constitution

Antonio Negri (1999) in his probably most theoretically advanced work entitled *Insurgencies Constituent Power and the Modern State*, formulates a thesis about the three paradigmatic ways of thinking about the relation between the constituent power and the constituted power, and as a result three models describing the constitution of the political world. In the modern times two concepts are closely linked with each other and frequently confused. Of course, those concepts are power and strength, *potere* and *potenza*, *povoir* and *poussance*, *Macht* and *Vermögen*.[8] The constituent power is an active force, giving reasons to establish a given political order and legitimizing this order. Constituted power, on the other hand, acts due to formal laws, regulations, and official political-judicial practice of a given subject, wielding power at the time. Constituent power is therefore the basis (power/potency) of the democratic process, whereas the constituted power constitutes the borders (power/reality) in the form of political practice. Naturally, the main problem of political theory is as follows: what are the relations between these two elements, these two powers?

Negri claims that there exist solely three solutions to this problem. According to the first construct, legislative power is transcendental with regards to the constituted power. The constitution itself is conducted through the initiation of an external force, which gives the mandate and right for a particular configuration of power to consolidate. Even if one does not state here openly that each power is ordained of God, one does seek within this paradigm instances of a higher order, which would explain and substantiate the worldly government. Negri claims that his position was occupied by German legal theorists—Georg Jellinek and Hans Kelsen—the creators of the con-

[7] For this reading of Machiavelli's work I am largely indebted to the reading of two books: Claude Lefort's (1986), and Mikko Lahtinen's (2009).

[8] How then can we avoid a theoretical path that eliminates, together with the vicious circle, the very reality of the contradiction between constituent power and juridical arrangement, between the all-powerful and expansive effectiveness of the source and the system of positive law, of constituted normativity? How can we keep open the source of the vitality of the system while controlling it? Constituent power must somehow be maintained in order to avoid the possibility that its elimination might nullify the very meaning of the juridical system and the democratic relation that must characterize its horizon. Constituent power and its effects exist: how and where should they operate? How might one understand constituent power in a juridical apparatus? This is the whole problem: to maintain the irreducibility of the constituent fact, its effects, and the values it expresses. Three solutions have then been proposed. According to some, constituent power is transcendent with respect to the system of constituted power: its dynamics are imposed on the system from outside. According to another group of jurists, that power is instead immanent, its presence is implicit, and it operates as a foundation. A third group of jurists, finally, considers the source—constituent power—as neither transcendent nor immanent but, rather, integrated into, coextensive, and synchronic with the positive constitutional system.

cept of Pure Theory of Law (*Reine Rechtslehre*). The starting point for Kelsen's theory is the radical distinction between law and morality, law and fact. The boundaries of the second distinction are set by the dualism of being (*Sein*) and duty (*Sollen*), where the law is contained in the sphere of duty.

According to the second solution, which Negri associated with the names of Max Weber and Carl Schmitt, the constituent power is always immanent in the constituted power, present *implicite*, hidden and silent, however, retaining the founding power. According to Weber's intuition, constituent power cannot be derived from the primal act of violence (charismatic or traditional rule), which cannot give the state a positive form of law and rule. Only legal power is capable of that, power which is a kind of ideal moment, a flash of reason in the historical casualness of politics, sanctioning this casualness as rational.

Finally, in accordance with the third paradigm, which Negri connected with the French school of institutionalists—Rudolph Smende, Ernst Forsthoff, or Costantino Mortati—constituent power neither transcends the constituted power, nor is it immanent towards it, but rather is integrated and synchronized with it, which means that it is a part of a not-fully balanced and harmonized system of institutions of a given state. In this paradigm, the constitution of the political order neither seeks the source of the norm, which would give the moral guarantee to the law in force, nor does it count on the perfection of the mind, which works within the limits of what is real, but assumes that the material conditions for action, the outskirts of politics, the boundaries of the country determine in the final instance the shape of politics. Machiavelli's originality, in short, consists in the fact that he is the actual founder and ideologist of this interactive paradigm.

Political antinomy, or even tragedy of politics in which we have been functioning for years is that—as we stated—every power understood as a force does not know the limits of its validity, it is a dynamic force, whose only impulse is expansion; on the other hand, each power understood as validity places boundaries, it is a static value, which only cares about the norms of enforcement. The tragedy of politics consists in the fact that power understood as *potentia* (*Vertretungsmacht*) is pure force, authority, meaning without enforcement, a reality which does not know its representation and validity; power understood as authority, *potestas* (*Darstellung*) is nothing more than a representation, false appearance of politics devoid of a real strength, it is a false consciousness, an ideological illusion, enforcement without meaning.

This division suggestively prompts us that there are only two possibilities: either reduction of *potentia* (strength) to *potestas* (authority)—a more conservative variant of politics, or the reduction of *potestas* to *potentia*—an emancipationist variant of politics. Machiavelli's diagnosis is as follows: neither myth nor ideological apparatuses of the state can handle resolving this antinomy, the resolution lies in the actions, practice of the prince, the monster, the centaur Chiron and the goddess Circe. Monsters are necessary in the economy of the world to resolve the basic contradictions by which it is plagued. There is no transcendence, but there is no prison of immanence either. There is nothing but the ordinary work of politics.

Chiron the Centaur

In this way we come to the most well-known fragment of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which offers praise of monstrosity and where the Florentine states:

> You must know there are two ways of combat, the one by the law, the other by force; the first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to understand how to avail himself of the beast and the man. This has been figuratively taught to princes by ancient writers, who describe how Achilles and many other princes of old were given to the Centaur Chiron to nurse, who brought them up in his discipline; which means solely that, as they had for a teacher one who was half beast and half man, so it is necessary for a prince to know how to make use of both natures, and that one without the other is not durable. A prince, therefore, being compelled knowingly to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves. Those who rely simply on the lion do not understand what they are about. Therefore a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer. If men were entirely good this precept would not hold, but because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to observe it with them (Machiavelli [1513] 1985: 71).

I claim that Machiavelli, writing in this way opens a completely new and until now unused way of thinking about the nature-culture relationships. In this kind of thinking one does not say anymore that nature was surpassed by culture, but one also does not say that nature is but a string of human speculations on its subject, finally one rejects the hypothesis that only nature exists and nothing else. The modern culture of the West based its key opposition on the relation between nature and culture. The political philosophy to a significant extent is a story of surpassing nature with the goal of creating a state of law. In a state distant from nature we seek a place for the natural laws. Yet, according to Machiavelli confronting nature and culture as well as narrating the breach of political law of nature or its unavoidable observance are wrong. Confronting nature with culture has destructive consequences, both cognitive and political.

In allowing for ambiguity of the nature/culture opposition and by accepting the fictitiousness of the social contract, Machiavelli formulates new visions of subjectivity and politics in the world, in which the "natural objects" seem socialized and the "cultural subjects" seem antisocial. Machiavelli asks: is politics not a never-ending fantasy about the state of nature, which is either dignified or condemned by it, or denied, only because it uses naturalization as its primary tool? Is the political subject, who in the name of institutional facts (anti-nature) openly denies in the political discourse the existence of the "harsh social facts" (nature), not seeking a new base in the guise of false nature (para-nature)? Hence, does Machiavelli not recommend monstrosity to us, writing texts which to some extent praise it? Are the "natural objects," which are "socialized," and the "cultural subjects," which seem antisocial, not the best candidates for such monstrosity?[9] Are they not children of Chiron the Centaur and the goddess Circe?

[9] I will defend the claim that by writing this, Machiavelli opened up a new and still unused way of thinking about nature-culture relationship. A proponent of this way of thinking withdraws from saying that nature

As Bruno Latour convincingly demonstrates, political philosophy never ceased in its attempts to discover which type of rationality could put an end to civil wars: "from the *City of God* to [Hobbes's] social contract, from the social contract to the 'gentle bonds of commerce,' as Adam Smith put it, from economics to [Habermas's] discourse ethics, from morality to the defense of nature, politics has always had to make honorable amends for the lack of reason characteristic of human beings" (Latour 2004: 185; Latour 1993). From Machiavelli's point of view, however, nature and society are not entities existing in the world independently and in isolation, i.e. two separate areas of reality, but a certain particular form of public organization. There has never been politics other than the politics of nature and nature other than political. Epistemology and politics are one and the same undertaking embodied in the form of political practice, which blurs the distinctions of scientific practice and the basic subject of public life. One should once more cede a point to Latour's argument—"Perhaps not everything is politics, but politics deals with shaping everything" (Latour: 53). This is also true to Machiavelli, who seems to have freed politics from morality and religion.

As rightly states the not yet fully informed Machiavellian scholar Latour: it would have been preposterous to want to separate society and nature within one constitution, within one collective, since we could not expect from this connection anything but a mixture, i.e. monstrosity—mixture, which would at most constitute a horrifying *melting pot*, a monster even more horrifying than the speech of various non-humans know from history, the sheep with pigs' heads. The constitution of the new world, this monster above all monsters, i.e. the non-hegemonic democratic tool must be a kind of *melting pot*, but it is not about melting the objects of nature and the subjects of law into one mass. It is rather the case that the collective mixes powers, which can appropriate, exploit and express themselves in things, giving them voice again. They are not points of view, positions and posts to be taken, they assume certain values, but the values assume perspectives which maintain them, from which the values themselves are derived, including the classification into that which is mean and that which is noble.

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is surpassed by culture, or that nature is nothing else but a subject of an on-going human speculation, and rebuts the sole hypothesis that what there is, is nothing but nature. Modern Western culture entrusted its key opposition to the nature-culture relationship. By and large, political philosophy is a story about surpassing the nature in order to establish a state under the rule of law. It is in this state, as distant from nature as it can be, that we wish to embed natural law. According to Machiavelli, the juxtaposition of nature and culture, the narrative on surpassing politics by the laws of nature, just as the narrative on us being stuck in it, are all utterly wrong. The juxtaposition of nature and culture brings about destructive consequences to our cognition and politics. Accepting the ambiguity of the opposition between nature and culture and assuming that the social contract is indeed fictitious, I would like to question Machiavelli about his vision of subjectivity and politics in a world where "natural objects" appear to be socialized, and "cultural subjects" appear to be dissocial. Is politics a never-ending fantasy about the state of nature—ennobling it, condemning it, or suppressing it—because its own tool is naturalization? Is a political subject, who, in political discourse, on behalf of institutional facts (anti-nature) explicitly denies the existence of "harsh social facts" (nature) not in fact looking for a new base in the form of a false nature (para-nature)? Hence, does Machiavelli recommend monstrosity by writing stories in praise of monstrosity as it may well seem? Are "natural objects," that are "socialized" and "cultural subjects," which appear to be dissocial indeed best candidates for such a monstrosity?

One should not imagine the new politics as a force with a golden mean, uniting socialization and naturalization, as a golden ass, since the new politics knows no simple method of drawing a boundary between an unavoidable necessity of things and the requirements of freedom of the actors participating in the struggle for power. No one would surely imagine having to offer an elephant a greeting: "Citizen!" The point is not the extension of human morality to the world of nature, or extravagant projection of law onto the natural entities, or consideration of the entitlement of objects themselves, but simply the consideration of the inconsistency of removing the concept of external nature: there is no natural reserve in which we could keep the simple means identified through the once and for all defined goals.

Hobbes's man who is a wolf to another man was supposed to be educated by the law, fear of sudden death and prudence, is supposed to be replaced by the beast raised by Chiron—a seemingly immortal king of the Centaurs, lethally wounded by a poisoned arrow of his student—Heracles. This beast, this new entity is a figure consisting of a fox, a lion, and a man, a creature capable of recognizing traps and capable of scaring off wolves, an entity using many natures and many languages. It is simultaneously Chiron the Centaur and Circe the goddess. To be able to use both the human and the animal nature means to be beyond all nature, which *de facto* means to be a monster. A sheep with pig's head does not scare anyone anymore.

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