

PERIODICALS

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Machiavelli Outfoxed

"Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception" by Mary Dietz, in *American Political Science Review* (Fall 1986), 1527 New Hampshire Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

"The people resemble a wild beast," wrote Florentine statesman Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527). "A prince [is] thus obliged to . . . imitate the fox and the lion." Stealth and ferocity were the required leadership qualities, for it was "far safer to be feared than loved."

Thus did Machiavelli, in his masterpiece *The Prince*, counsel Florence's new aristocratic ruler, Lorenzo de Medici, in 1513. Then, after the Medici fell to the forces of the Holy Roman emperor, Charles V, in 1527, Florence became a free republic for the second time since 1498. The republicans banished Machiavelli to the countryside. Frustrated and bitter, he spent his last years indulging a favorite pastime: catching thrushes with his bare hands.

Exile sealed Machiavelli's reputation as a cold-blooded opportunist who began his political career as a republican chancellor (1498–1503) and ended up as a historiographer for the Medici. Scholars have linked *The Prince* to the realpolitik of statesmen such as Henry Kissinger. Many treat Machiavelli with sympathy, and applaud him for writing, as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) put it, about "what men do and not what they ought to do." Some modern analysts even see *The Prince* as a disillusioned liberal's plea for law and order.

Dietz, assistant professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, has another angle: She interprets Machiavelli's "humble" advice to Lorenzo de Medici as a "republican snare." Beguiled by *The Prince* into suddenly seeing how fortresses (which offered him crucial protection) were useless, why the aristocracy (natural allies) should be mistrusted, and why rulers should reside in the city (rather than at a prudent distance), Lorenzo would unwittingly arrange his own downfall.

Machiavelli's cunning tract had one major flaw, argues Dietz: The au-

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thor could not force Lorenzo to read it. The young lord received a gift of greyhounds on the day a messenger took *The Prince* to the Medici palace; the hounds intrigued him far more than questions of governance. Only when the republicans regained power would *The Prince* get attention—as a turncoat's antirepublican creed.

Thus, Machiavelli "outfoxed" himself with a Machiavellian deception that even his fellow republicans could not penetrate, Dietz concludes. In the end, the archschemer himself saw the problem: "If I do sometimes happen to say what I think, I always hide [the truth] under so many lies that it is hard to recover."

Drug Screening?

"Screening for Drug Use: Technical and Social Aspects" by John Grabowski and Louis Lasagna, in *Issues in Science and Technology* (Winter 1987), National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.

Drug screening is now becoming standard practice among U.S. government agencies, backed by a National Institute on Drug Abuse survey indicating that at least 37 million Americans take illicit drugs at an annual cost in lost productivity of \$34 billion. The Pentagon has tested its employees for a decade. Newcomers include the FBI and the CIA. In the private sector, more than a third of the *Fortune* 500 and many small companies now have antidrug programs. Average cost per individual test: \$35 to \$50.

Grabowski, a psychologist formerly with the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and Lasagna, dean of the School of Medicine at Tufts University, wonder if this war on drugs makes sense. Will its "cumulative health care and social costs" eventually parallel the estimated loss in productivity?

The question of "social costs" arose last year, when the Plainfield, N.J., fire department locked its employees in the firehouse for a surprise urine sample collection. The firemen sued. A federal district court found "harassment, coercion, government excesses . . . and intrusions in constitutional rights." But surprise attacks may be the only way to catch dedicated users; urine can be altered to foil testing procedures (one entrepreneur has developed a "safe" urine sample), and some narcotics, like cocaine, can go up the nose Sunday and be out of the body Monday.

Grabowski and Lasagna anticipate a major unforeseen medical consequence of screening: Employees who take drugs for medical or behavioral conditions such as anxiety, seizures, eating disorders, or insomnia may test "positive" and be forced to explain their condition, inviting discrimination by both bosses and peers. Fear of being fired or demoted could also deter people from following prescribed treatments.

The authors suggest that selective, regular testing of those civilians in critical positions (pilots, bus drivers, locomotive engineers, stockbrokers, surgeons, anesthesiologists) has more "practical and historical merit" than does universal testing. Unless it can be clearly justified to the public, any drug screening will encourage cheating and yield nothing but "mistrust"