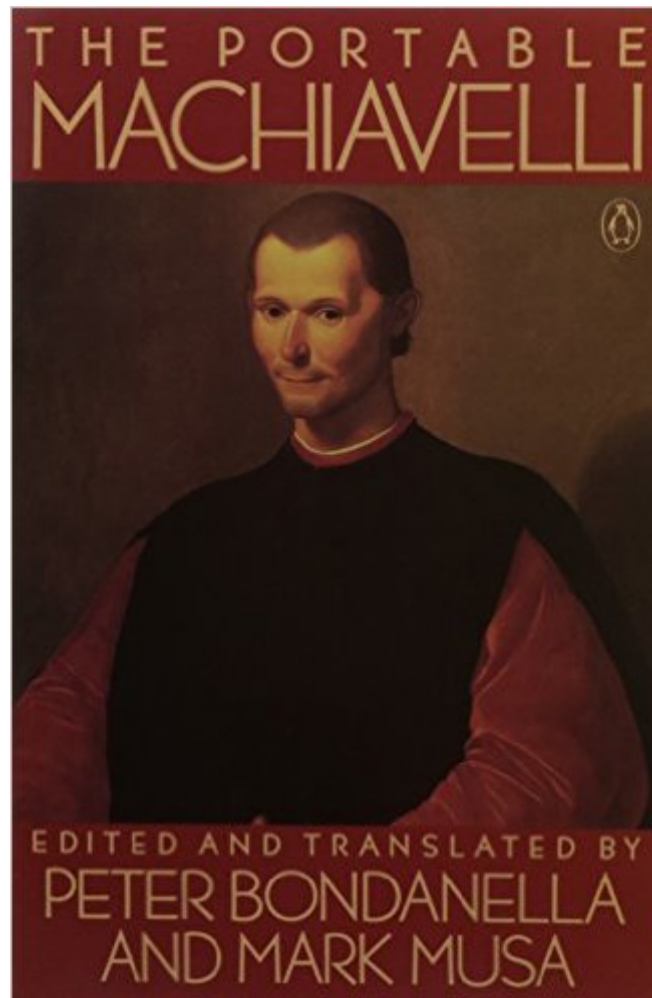


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The Portable Machiavelli



Synopsis

In the four and a half centuries since Machiavelli's death, no single and unanimously accepted interpretation of his ideas has succeeded in imposing itself upon the lively debate over the meaning of his works. Yet there has never been any doubt about the fundamental importance of Machiavelli's contribution to Western political theory. The Portable Machiavelli brings together the complete texts of *The Prince*, *Belfagor*, and *Castruccio Castracani*, newly translated by Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa especially for this volume. In addition, the editors include an abridged version of *The Discourses*; a play, *The Mandrake Root*, in its entirety; seven private letters; and selections from *The Art of War* and *The History of Florence*.

Book Information

Series: Portable Library

Paperback: 576 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; Revised ed. edition (January 25, 1979)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140150927

ISBN-13: 978-0140150926

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #114,467 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Modern Renaissance](#) #31 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Renaissance](#) #266 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Political](#)

Customer Reviews

In the course of my political science training, I studied at great length the modern idea of *realpolitik*. In that study I came to realise that it was somewhat incomplete, without the companionship of 'The Prince', by Niccolò Machiavelli, a Florentine governmental official in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. 'The Prince' is an oft quoted, oft mis-quoted work, used as the philosophical underpinning for much of what is considered both pragmatic and wrong in politics today. To describe someone as being Machiavellian is to attribute to the person ruthless ambition, craftiness and merciless political tactics. Being believed to be Machiavellian is generally politically incorrect. Being Machiavellian, alas, can often be politically expedient. Machiavelli based his work in 'The

Prince' upon his basic understanding of human nature. He held that people are motivated by fear and envy, by novelty, by desire for wealth, power and security, and by a hatred of restriction. In the Italy in which he was writing, democracy was an un-implemented Greek philosophical idea, not a political structure with a history of success; thus, one person's power usually involved the limitation of another person's power in an autocratic way. Machiavelli did not see this as a permanent or natural state of being -- in fact, he felt that, during his age, human nature had been corrupted and reduced from a loftier nobility achieved during the golden ages of Greece and Rome. He decided that it was the corrupting influence of Christianity that had reduced human nature, by its exaltation of meekness, humility, and otherworldliness.

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