

“From Machiavelli to Botero— *La ragion di Stato*(1589) and Principal Characters of Italian Political Philosophy in the late 16th Century”

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The separation of politics from ethics done by Machiavelli at the beginning of the 16th century contributed greatly to the rationalization of politics under the name of “*Ragion di Stato*.” However, it concurrently gave political leaders during the epoch heavy spiritual agony. To reintegrate politics with ethics, determining the coverage of “*Ragion di Stato*”, became the request of the age.

Machiavelli paid attention to the new prince’s work to establish, with his “*virtù* (virtue),” order from disorder, whereas Botero paid attention to the way in which the hereditary monarch could fight against the disorder that, by chance, entered the order. Machiavelli and Botero together were interested in fighting against *fortuna* (fortune) or disorder. However, while one who considers such disorder to be the normal condition of his politics estimates more *impetuoso* (impetuous) than *rispettivo* (respective or careful), another who considers disorder to be the extraordinary condition emphasizes *prudenza* (prudence) more than *valore* (value or bravery).

Machiavelli identified *rispettivo* with *astuto* (cunning), using the metaphor of the fox according to the occasion. Botero accused Machiavelli and his *astuto*, which, even if a little similar to Botero’s *prudenza*, subtly different from Botero’s *prudenza*. What difference, then, was there between Botero’s *prudenza* and Machiavelli’s *astuto*? Botero said “while *prudenza* considers more *onesto* than interests, *astuto* seeks only interests”. So from this citation, one can say that Botero’s *onesto* is nothing but legal-ethical limit which conditions human act of seeking interests. In other words, one can consider political leader’s *onesto* as seeking only his own interests when it is inevitable after amplifying domain of legitimacy as large as possible. Just on this point, Botero found his true “*Ragion di Stato*” to be rightly different from the false “*Ragion di Stato*” of Machiavelli.

Botero has conceptualized his true “*Ragion di Stato*” supposing Italian middle states or *domini mediocri* (middle states) that maintain its power and amplify its territory according to the rule of international relationship under the Hapsburg hegemony in the late 16th century. For this reason, we can say that the problem of establishing a sovereign state that surmounts the limit of *domini mediocri* should have been studied by legists of states out of the Hapsburg hegemony, like France and England.