THE ECONOMIC THOUGHT OF GEORGIOS GEMISTOS - PLETHON AND NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI: SOME COMPARATIVE PARALLELS AND LINKS[1]

C. BALOGLOU* A.D. KARAYIANNIS**

Abstract

In the present article are analysed some parallels and similarities between the major economic ideas of two distinguished scholars of 15th century such as Georgios Gemistos Plethon and Niccolo Machiavelli. Also, the present paper intends to fill a gap in the special pre-Smithian histories of economics in order to shed light on some interesting ideas concerning economic policy suggestions.

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1. Introduction

Although economic science is not more than two centuries old, economic matters have been discussed and analysed for a very long time. Roman A. Ohrenstein and Barry Gordon (1992, preface), who have attempted to outline the understanding of economic processes in Talmudic literature, explain the contribution of various civilizations to the history of economic thought as follows: "Economics, as we know it today, began to take shape in Europe during the eighteenth century. Yet, economic analysis has a much longer lineage. Such analysis may be found in the writings of the ancient Greek philosophers, Islamic scholars, medieval schoolmen, and the Mercantilists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The literature of ancient China, as well that of India, also provides instances".

Most of the specific and general histories of economics texts that focus on the pre–Smithian background ignore the economic thought of

* PhD, Hellenic Telecommunications Organization, Athens.

** Associate Professor, University of Piraeus, Department of Economics.

Byzantine Period, as well as the economic ideas of the Renaissance. They rather adopt Schumpeter's (1954, pp. 73 - 74) statement: "The Eastern Empire survived the Western for another thousand years, kept going by the most interesting and most successful bureaucracy the world has ever seen. Many of the men who shaped policies in the offices of the Byzantine emperors were of the intellectual cream of their times. They dealt with a host of legal, monetary, commercial, agrarian and fiscal problems. We cannot help feeling that they must have philosophised about them. If they did, however, the results have been lost. No piece of reasoning that would have to be mentioned here has been preserved [...]. So far as our subject is concerned we may safely leap over 500 years to the epoch of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), whose Summa Theologica is in the history of thought what the south-western spire of the cathedral of Charters is in the history of architecture".

However, such a claim of "discontinuity" is patently untenable as a substantial body of contemporary social thought, including economics, and it is traceable to Byzantine and Renaissance scholars[2]. Thus, the present article is an endeavour to analyse some parallels and similarities between the major economic ideas of two distinguished scholars, one Post–Byzantine and one from the Renaissance: Georgios Gemistos - Plethon (1355 – 26. June 1452), a "theoretical philosopher of Neoplatonism" (Masai, 1956, p. 87), and Niccolo Machiavelli (7 May 1469 – 20 June 1527), one of the most characteristic representatives of the Renaissance in Italy[3]. This comparison is interesting insofar as it takes in consideration that both scholars had similar activities and held the same offices: they were engaged in writing about social, political and economic issues, lived in the courts of prominent leaders and were employed as their advisors. Also, the present paper intends to fill a gap in the special pre-Smithian histories of economics in order to shed light on some interesting ideas primarily concerning economic policy suggestions rather than analytical devices.

2. Plethon and Machiavelli in the tradition of economic thought of their worlds

The work of both scholars constitutes an organic continuity of a long literary tradition, characterized by the literary genre of "mirror for princes"

(speculum principiis, Fürstenspiegel). The relevant literature, which traces its beginnings to the speeches of Isocrates in Classical Antiquity, reached its peak in Hellenistic times (Hadot, 1972) and was continued in the literature of Islam, the Arabs (Essid, 1992; Hosseini,2003) and the Byzantines (Blum, 1981) and it used since the Middle Ages (Skinner, 1988; Lowry, 2000). The "mirrors for princes" described the ideal prince or king as the personification of the law itself and were based upon the Neopythagorean ideas[4] of the Living Law ("Nomos empsychos"). The king was considered a model and example for all citizens, and all looked to him and imitated his ways. He dispensed of the four virtues: courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom. The "mirrors for princes" included advice on tax policy and personnel management for the absolute ruler, whose power was measured by the wealth and prosperity of his empire and the support and dependability of his military and commercial population.

Byzantine scholars who adopted the views of Hellenistic authors, such as the Stoics[5] and Neopythagoreans were influenced by Christianity (Goodenough, 1928; Scholz, 1998). Treatises of Byzantine scholars emphasized the importance of taxing the peasantry or merchants lightly, so as not to discourage or affect commerce or production in negative ways. They reflected a sophisticated administrative tradition concerned with delegation and separation of power, the appropriate role of the king and the effective judging of personality and assignment of duties.

Gemistos' treatises (1414, 1416, 1418) belong to a long tradition of the "mirror for princes" in Byzantium (Blum, 1981, pp. 30 - 59; Baloglou, 2002a, pp. 110 - 114; Triantare-Mara, 2002). In these "advisory" treatises, he analysed a specific program which would reform the socio–economic and military structure of the Peloponnese aiming at the best way of confronting the Turkish threat, which ultimately was to sweep away the Byzantine Empire in the decade after Plethon's death. The central theme of these reforms, as we shall see in the coming pages, is the mobilization of all socio–economic and political factors in order to create a centralized, self-sufficient and defensible territory.

Machiavelli's Il principe (1513) also belongs to a long tradition of "mirror for princes" in Medieval Europe (Berges, 1938). It is noteworthy that in the same period, three "mirror for princes" treatises were written by three contemporary authors: Il principe was written towards the end of 1513 and was completed during the winter of 1514; Institutio Principis Christiani was written by Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/9 – 1536) in 1516, while a third

"mirror for princes" treatise was written by the famous humanist Giullaume Budé (1467 – 1540), entitled De l' institution du prince and was published in 1547 (Blum, 1981, pp. 18-9). The unique quality of Machiavelli's small "mirror for princes" treatise was not its format, but rather its argumentation. He was the first author of such treatises to defend deception and mendacity on behalf of the prince. Thus, Rothbard (1995, p. 191) rightly concluded that "Machiavelli [...] was unquestionably a new phenomenon in the western world: a conscious preacher of evil to the ruling class".

3. Plethon's politico – economic proposals for the recovery of the State

Byzantine thought and literature has produced neither a tradition of economic thought similar to that of the West nor specific contributions that would make for a creative renovation or a systematic elaboration of economic ideas and doctrines of the authors of Classical Antiquity. Thus, there seems to be a gap in the historic evolution of economic doctrines and theories in the East, which cannot be filled only by the economic ideas of the Fathers[6] or some other sporadic authors (Baloglou, 1998b). Moreover, these ideas functioned mainly as empirical observations of economic phenomena or as dutiful suggestions in favor of state intervention in the functioning of the economic process (Baloglou, 2003c).

The last two or three centuries of the Byzantine empire are, characterized by the simultaneous appearance of a political, economic and social decline of the state and, also , by a significant cultural development which left its influence on the Western Renaissance. This period, known as the "last Byzantine Renaissance", as Sir Steven Runciman (1970, p. 2) called it, began after the liberation of Constantinople by the Greeks in 1261 (15. VIII. 1261) and ended after its conquest by the Ottomans (29. V. 1453).

In sharp contrast with its economic and political decline, Byzantium's intellectual life was shining brilliantly throughout those two centuries. This was an age of eager and erudite philosophers, its later years culminating in the ideas of one of the most original of all Byzantine thinkers, Georgios Gemistos Plethon.

Gemistos was born in Constantinople, educated by Demetrios Cydones

and later by El(l)issaeus, an Arab–Aristotelian philosopher in Turkish-occupied Adrianople (Edirne). He settled in Mistra, the capital of the Despotate of the Morea (Peloponnese), where during the 14th century a number of significant scholars studied Platonic philosophy (Baloglou, 2002a, pp. 37-8). There he served as judge in the high court of, and as advisor to, the emperor Manuel II Palaeologos (r. 1391 – 1425), later serving, in that same capacity, the emperor's second son, the despot Theodore II (r. 1407 – 1428).

Plethon is considered an important figure in the diffusion of Platonic learning in the West. His circle of students included both the future Cardinal Bessarion and Manuel Chrysoloras. While he was a member of the delegation to the Council of Ferrara – Florence (1438 – 1439), he lectured on Plato at the palace of Cosimo de' Medici and is thought to have been a prime influence on the foundation of the Florentine Academy[7]. His treatise On the differences between Aristotle and Plato (1438) spawned an extensive and enlightening international controversy whose most important product was Bessarion's In calumniatorem Platonis (1460). Plethon's contributions to Western learning were so well remembered that Sigismundo Malatesta had his remains re-interred at Rimmini in 1465, his epitaph reading in part "prince among the philosophers of his time" (Blum, 1988, p. 6).

Plethon's influence on the West would, however, have been even greater had not most of his posthumous Treatise on the Laws (1438-40) been burnt by the Patriarch Scholarios in an unfortunate act of censorship. The portions that still remain show Plethon to have been an advocate of a Platonic–Spartan theocracy, which resurrected the Hellenic pantheon (Alexandre, 1858, p. 2).

In order to develop a normative analysis of an attainable "best society", Plethon claimed (1438-40, pp. 13-4, 19-21) that, above all else, the scientific method, using the processes of introspection and deduction, must be applied when analysing human nature and capabilities. He deeply investigated the problems of his times and, through specific proposals and measures, aimed to schedule an economic framework through which a well-functioning and happy society might be established not only for Greeks, but also for the mankind (Alexandre, 1858, p. 248). In his Treatise on the Laws (1438-40), Plethon tried to lay the foundation of the "greatest city", wherein - in his own words - "living in prosperity is a common wish of all people" (Ibid., p. 16). For the planning of such a "mostly great" city, which can be established solely

by means of virtue, as Plato argued long ago[8], Plethon (1416, pp. 116-7,129; 1418, p. 310) attempted a review of the Greek past: Lycurgus's Sparta, Epameinondas's Thebes and Philip's and Alexander's Macedonia achieved their prosperity because they all had the necessary features of a "great politeia".

In several of his "advisory" epistles, Plethon (e.g. 1414, p. 309) stressed that the Byzantine Empire and some of its territories, such as the Peloponnese, were administered "badly". He recognized clearly the following causes of such a damaging governance: (a) the impact of foreign enemies (1418, pp. 246, 247); (b) the self-interested attitude of statesmen (1438-40, p. 12); and (c) the corruption of members of state mechanism (1416, p. 118). By accepting the principle that the statesman must be a "servant of the people", (1414, p. 313), he turned against to any feudal structure of economy. Thus, he emphatically suggested (1416, pp.120-121) that all those belonging to the higher levels of state mechanism, such as civil servants and soldiers, must not be allowed to exercise any economic function as by so doing their productivity would decrease, whilst additionally, they would be able to exploit others economically by exerting power on them.

Plethon considered monarchy to be the best-suited system of government. He claimed that monarchy is "the safest and most beneficial" (1416, p. 114), and is approved "by all those who think of the best" (1416, p. 119)[9]. Plethon, like Plato (Republic, III 398b; V 459, 473; VI 497a – 502c; Laws, IV 709e) and other Byzantine scholars such as Agapetos Diakonos (527-548) -(see also Blum, 1981, pp. 59-80)- and Theophylact of Ochrid (1078), preferred monarchy to oligarchy and democracy because he considered that it provided the most noble laws and efficient administration (Peritore, 1977, pp. 177 - 8; Blum, 1981, pp. 59-80)[10]. Plethon regarded (1416, pp. 118-9) that neither oligarchy nor democracy promote the public good, because of the irrationality introduced into legislation by private interests, popular ignorance, and the struggle between rich and poor.

He argued that the main function of government is the protection of individuals' property rights and peoples' freedom. Thus, it seems that he regarded sovereignty as a kind of "social contract"- a theory more fully explicated during the 17th century by T. Hobbes and John Locke (Spiegel, 1991, p.691). Within such a framework, Plethon ascribed (1416, pp. 126-30) a paternalistic role to the statesman.

For Plethon, the monarch would be surrounded by a council: the number of advisors must certainly be restricted, yet it must be sufficient, the members being of moderate financial status and having an excellent education (1416, pp. 118-119). However, he was well aware of the various human weaknesses of the statesman and of his civil advisors. Thus, he stressed (Ibid.) that the selection of civil servants and advisors must be based mainly upon their special knowledge and their non-self-interested behaviour. Also, he suggested (1416, p. 119) that all civil servants should be chosen by using objective criteria, namely that of meritocracy, and claimed that their corruption should be severely punished.

Plethon believed that each individual should be given the opportunity to function in accordance with his natural inclination and abilities within the sociopolitical order. He regarded (1416, p. 132) that every human being was endowed with particular capabilities and qualities by the Divine Being, according to which he should be placed in the socio–political hierarchy. Thus, successful application of the social division of labor would contribute both to the improvement of state ("politeia"), the achievement of happiness ("eudaimonia") and the existence and function of justice. As a result of this procedure the division of population in three classes would occur. Following the tripartite division of the state ("polis"), which had been proposed by ancient authors, like Hippodamus of Miletus[11] and his own cosmological and metaphysical speculations, Plethon proposed (1416, pp. 119-20) a relevant division of the population : (i) The first and most necessary part of the state would be the class of producers, designated as "Helots", an old term used in ancient Sparta (Baloglou, 2003b). This class would be composed of primary producers: farm laborers, farmers, and shepherds. (ii) The second class would be composed of craftsmen, wholesale merchants, and retail traders. (iii)The third or ruling class incorporates the public officers, intellectuals and priests.

The production of basic goods for subsistence is the main contribution of the first class. The second class includes both the manufacturers, who through the accumulation and investment of capital increase the productivity of labour and the supply of manufactured goods[12], and the merchants who contribute in the following ways: (a)Through wholesale activity, the disequilibrium of quantities and prices among different individuals and places is eliminated (1416, p. 124)[13]. (b) Through the retail trade activity, time is saved and, thus, the productive efficiency of economy

is increased (1416, p. 125)[14]. The third class, comprising statesmen and civil servants, contributes to the protection of civil freedom, of property rights and to the enforcement of law and justice (1416, p. 131).

According to Plethon (1416, p. 155; 1418, pp. 219, 221), the reward of individuals belonging to the first and second classes seems to be determined by market forces, while that of the third class is determined by the "willingness" of the statesmen and the rate of public revenues (gathered mainly through taxation). Plethon developed (1418, pp. 225, 233) a functional distribution of income based on the three main economic factors, namely: labour, capital and the state mechanism. Thus, he turned against land rent as a justified reward for the variability of land fertility and suggested instead the concept of communal property and use of land.

Plethon's economic recommendations were based on the presupposition that the Peloponnese, a rich producer of raw materials, could be rendered economically self-sufficient[15]. As he claimed (1418, p. 249), if sumptuary laws restrained the court's penchant for foreign luxury goods, only iron and weapons would logically need be imported. For the attainment of a self-sufficient growing economy, he suggested the following policies and measures:

(1) He introduced (1416, pp. 159-61, 179) a reformed taxation system based upon four principles of tax assumption: (a) the equal treatment of citiz

p. 163; see also Spentzas, 1964, pp. 118, 120, 129) on behalf of a self-sufficient economy in which the importation of some goods must be restricted, particularly luxury goods[17]. No import duties should be charged on necessary goods, but both the export of goods needed for domestic consumption and the import of luxuries should be hindered by heavy tariffs[18]. In his self-sufficiency strategy, he proposed (1418, p. 263) the substitution of imports and foreign currencies with home products and currency. In order to eliminate debased foreign coinage as the domestic exchange medium, he advocated (1416, p. 124) a quasi – barter economy, utilizing payment-in-kind in lieu of coin – taxes, restraining the use of coinage in domestic trade, and limiting imports to those exchangeable for cotton.

(4) He was opposed to the prevailing luxurious standard of living and he suggested diminution of the production and importation of luxury goods. He justified his hostility to luxurious living, mainly of the ruling class (civil servants and rich), because he regarded (1416, pp. 161, 171, 179; 1438-40, pp. 43, 70) such living to be the principal cause of increased public expense, as well as the self-interested behaviour of politicians and civil servants, who were somehow functioning against the general welfare.

(5) He turned against the landed aristocracy and suggested confiscation of their estates. Because the land therein lay fallow while many peasants remained unemployed, he maintained (1418, pp. 260-1) that labour alone should give title to land and that the idle landlords should be forced to accede to the common good. He claimed the right of every citizen to till the soil, plant the land and build his own house (1418, p. 260; see also Spiegel, 1991, p. 691). By such a measure not only would agricultural production be increased, thereby augmenting the taxation base, but, in addition, the real per capita income would be maximized. He also suggested (1418, p. 229) the abolition of various economic privileges in order to enforce the competitive function of the market.

From the previous analysis, it may be deduced that Plethon was proposing economic measures with a view to increasing the national and general welfare and not of advancing the luxurious living of statesmen and civil servants. He developed such a thesis because he recognized that by the concentration of economic and civil military power in the hands of few, the economic welfare and liberty of the many would be lessened. Finally, as he was a strong advocate of intense state economic intervention, Plethon may be considered a predecessor of the various mercantilistic theories and policy suggestions of the 18th century (Spentzas, 1964, pp. 135-7).

4. Machiavelli's politico – economic proposals for the development of a State

Niccolo Machiavelli was born in Florence. As son of the jurist Bernardo Machiavelli, he served as Secretary General of the Second Chancellery in Florence after the death of Savonarola in 1498. Later, he served as Secretary of the Council of the Ten. He undertook several diplomatic missions to France (in the years 1500, 1504, 1510, and 1511), to the German emperor Maximilian (1507-8) and to the Pope (1503). He was also instrumental in establishing the national guard in Pisa. The Spaniards restored the Medicis in Florence in 1512, was the year in which when Machiavelli went into retirement. Later, Cardinal Julius of Medici entrusted him with the composition of the "History of Florence" and Machiavelli finished the first chapters in 1525 when Julius was elected as Pope Clemens VII. After a rather tumultuous career, in and out of the public arena, Machiavelli died in 1527.

During the first quarter of the 16th century, at a time when Machiavelli still writes, Western Europe was experiencing all those conditions that would lead to the birth of the modern national states (England, Spain, France). After the discovery of the "New World" and the repeated explorative campaigns of the Europeans with a view to exploiting its wealth, the interest shifted from the Mediterranean, while in Europe the import of precious metals caused a tremendous increase of money in circulation, capital and in the level of prices. The impact of these events would be immediate and crucial, particularly for Italy, since its cities were mainly involved in trading with Eastern Mediterranean ports where trade was limited after the fall of Constantinople. The Italian banking system suspended its productive investments. The competition among the Italian cities, the Pope's "secular" ambitions, the frequent interventions by foreign powers superior in terms of military equipment, as well as the bankruptcy of Italian banks: all sealed Italy's regressive course.

Italy, at the time of Machiavelli, was experiencing extremely deep political and military upheavals at a rapid pace, thereby creating a situation that brought to light problems dating back to earlier eras. Machiavelli combines both the necessity and the utility of a knowledge of history under his argument (1521, p. 49) that a leader must follow the example of capable historical leaders. He functions in this respect as a true carrier of the spirit

of his era and, at the same time, leaves his print on the conceptualization of the past (Mehmel, 1948). He adopted a particularly critical stance towards history, not hesitating to challenge some of the founding beliefs of ancient writers. It is necessary to mention at this point that in his Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio (1521a), Machiavelli wanted to debunk the views of Titus Livius (which Plutarch had also espoused), according to which the rise of Rome had been primarily due to fortune (see Skinner, 1981, p. 53). Machiavelli's philosophy of history stands closer to the views of early humanists who argued that knowledge of heroic achievements of the past is a requisite for intelligent political acts of the present. Such knowledge was considered synonymous with a revival of the ancient grandeur and glory.

When he temporarily withdrew from active political activities upon the conquest of Florence by the Spanish, Machiavelli found in San Casciano the luxury to process and develop his past experience on a theoretical basis. There, he was to write The Prince (1513), which he dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici, duce di Urbino and tackle the Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio which was to be finished in 1521 (Skinner, 1981, p. 71). Machiavelli manages to combine his political experience with his knowledge of antiquity, matching in the most fruitful manner the elements of the past with the perspectives of the future and seeking to trace the very human "essence" which runs throughout and rejuvenates history. Machiavelli tries to deduce from ancient historians and politicians those guidelines and rules relating to the government of a powerful and free state (Festa, 1935, pp. 78-9). That is why he proceeds (1513, ch. XXVI) with the formulation of specific measures, deemed necessary for the implementation of his plan, which is nothing more than the identification of the prince who would unite Italy and liberate it from the "barbarians". Lorenzo de' Medici appears as the embodiment of virtue, an example for other princes to follow and the only one capable of bringing Machiavelli's plan to fruition[19]. To implement this plan, Machiavelli proposes the adoption of some mainly political measures (Spiegel, 1991, p. 701). More specifically, he stressed (1513, p. 33) that monarchy is the most suitable and appropriate political system for the advancement of the national state. Based on the hereditary transfer of power, he claimed (1513, pp. 33-4) that state divisions are avoided, as well as those misfortunes brought about by candidates competing for power. Of course, he did not overlook the king's

ulterior, albeit restricted, motivations in his alignment with the demands of the rising middle/bourgeois class. Nor did he disregard the possibility of class struggle, as he stressed (1513, p. 68) that the nobles "want to oppress the people, whereas [the people] want only not to be oppressed". Although he can foresee the eventual establishment of a novel social hierarchy and stratification - stemming from the people, continuing with local princes and ending with the king (Noutsos, 2001, p. 38)- he does not hesitate to praise a country like France that applied such a hierarchy in a classical manner, calling it (1521, p. 138) an ideal of welfare. In his ambitious plan for the liberation of his country from the "long agony" (1526), he will take into account the balance of power between the king and the people.

According to Machiavelli, the monarch must express the convergence of processes that will ensure and guarantee Italy's independence and unification. Also, the monarch must not only be surrounded by capable counselors (1513, pp. 124-7) of moderate financial status and supreme education, but he must also avoid flatterers and fawners[20].

For Machiavelli, laws are considered necessary for the existence of a welfare state. As he noticed (1521a, Lib. I, ch. 55, p. 138): "And if one accuses both the people and the prince at the same time, one may tell the truth; but if one leaves the princes out, one is mistaken, [...] principe not bound by laws will be more ingrate, more fickle and more careless". Reference to specific historical examples such as Thesaeus, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Septimus Severus, etc. provides support to his views (1526, lib.I, ch. 19; lib.II, ch. 4). He resorts to the historical evidence of such processes, since, according to Gramsci (1977, p. 1578) "Machiavelli did never say he thought of or that he has the intention to change reality, but only to specifically demonstrate how the forces of history should act in order to bear fruition". Machiavelli used such an approach as he believed that a positive analysis is needed before proceeding to normative conclusions and suggestions. As he noticed "the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done learns the way to self-destruction rather than self-preservation" (1513, p. 91).

In the Il principe, special emphasis is placed on the well-being of the citizens, particularly with respect to their employment. Machiavelli recognized, taking as an example the cities of Germany, that a full-

employment situation is of paramount importance for the welfare of the people (1521, p. 72).Thus, he claimed that "well-organized states and wise princes have always taken great pains not to make the nobles despair; and to satisfy the people and keep them content; this is one of the most important tasks a prince must undertake" (1513, p. 105). He also regarded (1513, pp. 130-3) that Fortune, is one of the leading forces of the government of human affairs. It is Fortune that governs human affairs; and, to some degree, human virtue. A theory, which states that Fortune tends to be found where there is virtue, has its roots in the Latin rather than the Greek classics[21]. The association between virtue and fortune was, therefore, more than a mere literary convention in Renaissance Italy. Its use and redefinition reflected the widely held belief in humanist circles that it was man's free will, his ability to choose his own path and thus to mould his fate through the exercise of willpower and intelligence, which gave him his dignity.

Machiavelli adopted these ideas of the Italian humanists. In his work (1513), he claimed that virtue in a prince was something rather different from what was expected from a private citizen. His position required the prince to act for the good of the state in ways that would be considered immoral if he followed them for himself (Flanagan, 1972). He also stressed that stable laws and justice, accompanied by a fair and low tax system, are of prime importance to the economic advancement of people and of the state. He claimed that a prince "must encourage his citizens so that they can go peaceably about their business, whether it be trade or agriculture or any other human occupation. One should not be afraid of improving his possessions, lest they are taken away from him, or another is deterred from starting a new business by high taxes. Rather, a prince should be ready to reward men who want to do these things and those who endeavour in any way to increase the prosperity of their city or their state" (1513, p. 123). He believed that his suggestion would be fruitful for the state provided that the Church was placed under the authority of the state[22].

To substantiate a uniform state power and to make the presence of national states more dynamic in Europe, it was of critical importance for Machiavelli (1513, ch. XII) that a permanent army be established, appropriately trained. With respect to the former aim, he used as his model contemporary France, which had established universal recruitment throughout the country in 1439, thus gathering the necessary human

3. In the past, there has been undertaken a comparison between Gemistos and Thomas Morus (Derrett, 1965; Baloglou, 1998a, ch. IV), Gemistos and Ib. Khaldoun (Baloglou, 2002 b).
4. See, for example, those of Sthenidas, Diotegenes, Ecphantus (Stobaeus, IV 48, 61-66; see also, Steinwerter, 1946; Aalders, 1968).
5. The Stoics taught that monarchy is the best form of government, but that the monarch must be enlightened enough to rule in accordance with universal reason. If he himself has not got the time to become a philosopher, he should at least guide his government in accordance with the teachings of philosophers.
6. For a recent evaluation of the economic ideas of the Greek Orthodox Fathers, see Karayiannis (1994); Gotsis (1997); Karayiannis, Drakopoulou – Dodd (1998); Baloglou (2003a).
7. For Plethon's influence on the West, see Knös (1950); Kristeller (1961, pp. 50-60); Genakoplos (1962, pp. 85-6); Garin (1979); Woodhouse (1980); Monfasani (1995). Plethons' reintroduction of Strabo's geography to the West may have indirectly influenced Columbus' voyages (see Anastos, 1951; 1953;1966).
8. For an economic analysis of the Platonic society, see Karayiannis (2003); Moss (1996b).
9. Plethon, who admired the "golden age" of ancient Greece, did not fully accept the argument that monarchy originates in "God's will", although he recognized its hereditary character (1416, p. 130; 1418, p. 260).
10. The significance of good and educated advisors has been underlined by several Byzantine Scholars (see Maas, 1913).
11. For a comparison between Plethon and Hippodamus of Milet, see Baloglou (1996).
12. Plethon specified (1438-40, p. 91) that through technological improvements, the productivity of labour is increased.
13. Such a function was perfectly analysed by Aristotle (Politics, I 1257a, 15-30).
14. This positive effect of the retail trade activity was recognized by Plato (Republic, 371 C-D) and was particularly emphasized by Isocrates (Panegyricus, 42).

15. On the basis of a critique of the defense system of the Peloponnese, Plethon introduced (1416, p. 121; 1418, pp. 251-2) the establishment of a national army, a proposal "possibly introducing it for the first time" (Dedes, 1975-6, p. 428).
16. Plethon proposed (1414, p. 311) the exemption of soldiers from taxation.
17. The restriction of the exportation of necessary goods had already been put forward by Plato (Laws, 847 B-C).
18. The revenues realized through the imposition of selective duties, according to Plethon (1418, pp. 262-3), help defray diplomatic expenditures, ambassadorial display, tributes and bribes.
19. In the dedication of his 1513 treatise, Machiavelli addresses him as "The Magnificent" (p.29), presumably with the purpose of flattering. He was not Lorenzo il Magnifico (1449 – 1492), but his grandson, Lorenzo, father of Caterina de Medici (1519 – 1589), wife of Henry II of France.
20. The idea for the existence of counselors is ever present in the "mirror for princes" in medieval times (e.g. Sedulius Scottus, see Blum, 1988, p. 38,ft.34).
21. For example, Livy in his History of Rome (Bk. XXX, 12, 12) repeatedly associates the good fortune of the Romans with their virtues. Similarly, Cicero Tusculanae Disputationes (II, 13 - 4) argued that pain and evil can be overcome by virtue. This idea of fortune found in Livy and Cicero was imitated by the Italian humanists of the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as Petrarch (1577, p. 1).
22. He identified Italian misfortune with the person of the Pope. As he wrote: "The Church kept and has been keeping this provincia divided for, having its own as well as secular authority (imperio temporale), it has been neither powerful enough nor capable enough to seize power in Italy and become the country's prince; yet, it has not been weak enough on the other hand, so that fear of losing its control over secular affairs (cose temporali) has not prevented it from inviting someone strong, he who will defend her from whoever acquired extended force within Italy" (1521a, Lib.I, ch. 12).

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