



SALVATORI CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM
CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE



TYRANNY ANCIENT AND MODERN

WALLER R. NEWELL

Wednesday, May 6, 2015

Claremont McKenna College

Kravis Center, Room 345, Keck Library

12:00 TO 1:15 PM, LUNCH WILL BE SERVED

RSVP to ehuerta@cmc.edu. (Limited seating available)

Whether there is a difference between ancient and modern tyranny has been a long and complex debate. Drawing on his recent book *TYRANNY: A NEW INTERPRETATION* (Cambridge University Press), in this talk, Prof. Newell will begin with some contemporary perspectives on this debate including those of Leo Strauss, Alexandre Kojève and Martin Heidegger. He will then argue that Machiavelli's emphasis on the conquest of nature does constitute an important break with the classical understanding of the psychology of tyranny and its relationship to the city. While for Plato, tyranny is a deformed variety of eros whose possible cure lies within the horizon of an eros properly directed toward the common good and philosophy, for Machiavelli, the capacity of princes of "outstanding virtue" to impose whatever form they choose on nature can create "security and well-being" for both princes and peoples. Thus, whereas for Plato, the therapy for the tyrannical temptation lies in our reconciliation to the natural order through a soul harmonized by eros properly understood, for Machiavelli tyranny can only be reformed if it attempts to stand outside of nature altogether, including human nature.

He will also argue that, by assimilating the virtue of princes, founders and statesman to their will to resist nature, Machiavelli is re-defining the meaning of both virtue and vice, and promoting the transfer to human agency of a concept of the will previously reserved for the Abrahamic God.

Waller R. Newell is Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Carleton University (Canada). His new book *TYRANTS: A HISTORY OF POWER, INJUSTICE AND TERROR* is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press in 2015.