



Machiavelli calls this sort of behaviour ‘virtuous’. It is good, he insists. It’s just not good by conventional standards. It is good by political standards. The idea that politics has its own code of conduct that is separate from conventional morality is a distinctively modern one. It makes politics a separate sphere of life rather than an exemplification of how to live. It means politicians can’t be expected to set a good example. It allows them to be worse people than us by our standards, but better people than us by their standards. What they are better at is politics.