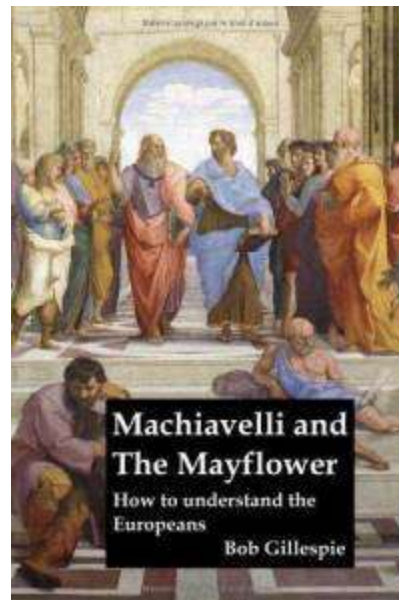


Gillespie, Bob, *Machiavelli and the Mayflower: How to Understand the Europeans*

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Reviewed by Dr. George Simons at diversophy.com

Is a new set of cultural dimensions worthwhile at a time when the dimensional approach itself is under heavy criticism from many quarters? I asked myself this question the moment I opened and began reading Bob Gillespie's *Machiavelli and Mayflower*, and I was tempted to put it down at that point. However what caught my interest was the memory that I myself long held some unstructured thoughts along the lines of several of the dimensions that the author began to discuss. Furthermore, I was intrigued because the book addressed religion and politics, two areas where intercultural analysis fears to tread. I am not sure whether this is due to conflict avoidance or the fact that it doesn't look like it will pay much money, or both.



It had long seemed obvious to me that the religious divisions of Europe between Reformation Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in some way also marked significant though porous demarcations of cultural difference in values, thinking and behavior, and that one could find strongly expressed and often conflicting characteristics that fell on either side of this dividing line. Historically, it is a moot, perhaps a chicken-and-egg question as to whether and to what degree these regional or ethnic differences preexisted or created the split in question. I would be fascinated to learn more historical perspectives about this.

Gillespie posits four clusters of culture:

1. ROM (Romanism), the Western Catholic tradition which shaped Europe for over a millennium.
2. REF (Reformism) representing the ascetic reformed tradition.

These religious perspectives are complemented by two political ones, namely:

3. MON (Monarchism) representing monarchical traditions, and
4. REP (Republicanism), "republican" in this case referring to the form of government by social contract, not to the political party of that name in the United States.

Each of these dimension are described in a separate chapter with both historical insights and discourse about the behaviors they generate. The author also spends some time describing what he calls dysfunctional versions of these dimensions, that is, how people think and behave in ways that reflect the dimension, but in fact distort its archetypal configuration. Gillespie addresses thinking and behavioral characteristics and of course is not resistant to seeing them in some sense as stereotypes, but stereotypes in the sense that there is a set of characteristics recognizable though not suitable to everyone in the group.

Combining these dimensions provides us with a relatively simple matrix in which four dimensions form a grid on which to place the nations of Europe in terms of their mental and moral orientation and behavioral characteristics: REFREP, REFMON, ROMREP and ROMMON.

Gillespie then goes on to discuss the dimensions once again, but now in their religious and political combinations. He chooses a typical individual who reflects each of these combinations and describes his lifestyle and his behavior in line with the dimension he represents. I was a bit uncomfortable with the fact that the characters chosen to illustrate these situations were all men and situated at a rather high level in work or society. Perhaps there are female and other class versions as well but in the author's short treatment they do not put in an appearance.

Given that Europe is such a mixed bag of nationalities and ethnicities, one might find it hard to imagine that strains of this sort would somehow dominate the thinking and behavior of people **on any large-scale**. However, one must also remember that when dealing with cultures, especially the urcultures, those deep social constructions which are taken largely unquestioned as the reality in which we find ourselves, easily extend and propagate themselves across regions and generations and do so in a particularly effective way because we tend not to notice them as such. I would class Gillespie's dimensions to exist at this level.

The author takes into account the plus/minus and hit and miss nature of the dimensions he is creating and, while he knows that many of these dimensions may somehow address situations outside of Europe, particularly where European culture has had a colonial influence, he is nonetheless careful not to stretch the concepts beyond their elasticity, though there are some provocative paragraphs in this direction. He simply suggests that his work is an exploration of caricatures that provide "an entertaining tool to analyze relationships and events," as well as on a larger level, "a useful framework to evaluate *collective* behavior across nationalities." There are several interesting pages in which he looks at how the dimensions might shed light on the diverse approaches to handling of the current worldwide financial crisis and he does a reflection on the nature of the youth revolution of the 60's as well as addresses some contemporary tendencies in the management of foreign affairs.

The book is a relatively small one and the issues it raises certainly deserve much to be researched. There is a succinct glossary and a chorological listing of books the author used as signposts in developing his work. Of note are the appendices where the author provides demographics according to his dimensions and attempts correlations of criminality with them. Finally the largest appendix attempts to overlay the Hofstedian dimensions with the author's own dimensions. I found this an interesting essay, but in fact hard to pin down any conclusions, given the almost endless numbers of variables that could come into play.

I take Gillespie to be a ROMMON. I wonder if he would agree.