

Response to the prince by machiavelli essay sample



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Your friend insists that Machiavelli believed that gaining power was the ultimate goal, regardless of human morality. Analyze the following passage from *The Prince* and use this passage to help your friend understand Machiavelli in a different light: “

Yet it cannot be called prowess to kill fellow citizens, to betray friends, to be treacherous, pitiless, irreligious. These ways can win a prince power but not glory”

(*The Prince*, 29). While you must base your rebuttal to your friend’s position on the above passage, you may quote one secondary example from *The Prince* (not the lecture) to support your point.

Therefore, when a prince decides to seize a state, he must determine how much injury to inflict. He needs to strike all at once and then refrain from further atrocities. In this way, his subjects will eventually forget the violence and cruelty. Gradually, resentment will fade, and the people will come to appreciate the resulting benefits of the prince’s rule. Most important, a prince should be consistent in the way he treats his subjects. The other way a prince can come to power is through the favor of his fellow citizens. Princes who rise through this route are heads of what Machiavelli calls constitutional principalities.

A prince created by the people must retain the people’s friendship, a fairly easy task. A prince created by the nobles must still try to win over the people’s affection, because they can serve as protection from hostile nobles. Benevolence is the best way to maintain the mandate of the people. If

people expect hostility from a prince but instead receive kindness and favors, they feel a great obligation to their prince.

These chapters describe how different types of princes should establish power, within a state's environment of fluctuating power dynamics.

Machiavelli makes an eloquent argument for the importance of a domestic power base. He does not hesitate to acknowledge the necessity of cruelty and crime in establishing this power and even explains how to use cruelty most effectively. He does not advise moderation in the degree of cruelty used, but rather a limit on how long extreme cruelty is to be employed. That is, Machiavelli does not say that princes must be cruel but not extremely cruel. Instead, he argues that cruel acts must be committed as necessary, but all at once and then ceased, so that the populace will forget them. This kind of argument is extremely pragmatic and ignores all questions of right and wrong. Taking historical examples as the basis for his argument, Machiavelli simply describes how power has effectively been deployed and consolidated in the past, and does not assume that human nature will take a turn for the better in the future.

While any prince can achieve and maintain power, glory remains a more elusive goal. Although Machiavelli is primarily concerned with how princes perform as rulers, he also gives an assessment of the different kinds of princes. Machiavelli's view is that the prince who rises and survives by means of treachery and the prince who succeeds by his innate prowess are both technically princes. But he also admits that the two are not equal in honor or glory, and, perhaps, even moral worth.

1. At this point one may note that men must be either pampered or annihilated. They avenge light offenses; they cannot avenge severe ones; hence, the harm one does to a man must be such as to obviate any fear of revenge. Explanation for Quotation 1 >>

This passage from Chapter III is an example of logical reasoning conspicuously devoid of ethical considerations. A prince must realize that he has two options: benevolence and destruction. Because the latter option will cause resentment among the people, he should choose it only if he is absolutely sure there will be no ill consequences—that the destruction he incurs will eliminate or disable any parties that might seek to revenge themselves against him. Feelings of pity or compassion are meaningless. Self-interest and self-protection are in this case the motivating factors and are to be pursued ruthlessly.

Borgia would do the most to shape Machiavelli's opinions about leadership. Borgia was a cunning, cruel, and vicious politician and many people despised him. Machiavelli believed Borgia has the traits necessary for any leader who would seek to unify Italy.

The Prince was written as a practical guide to help Lorenzo de' Medici stay in power during a time of political turmoil but became a book that was criticized as being immoral, evil, and wicked.

Sir Niccolo Machiavelli,

I personally understand your desire to return to politics and I appreciate your desire for a position within my government. However, the desire of an

ordinary citizen to advise, instruct, and influence the minds of rulers like <https://assignbuster.com/response-to-the-prince-by-machiavelli-essay-sample/>

myself is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. When you use the metaphor, “ a person standing on a mountain is best positioned to survey the landscape below, and a person standing below is best positioned to survey the mountain, (Dedication, 1) you attempt to convince me you know more about the art of ruling than myself.

Your relations with the cunning, cruel and vicious politician Cesare Borgia help me to further understand your opinions on leadership. You hold the beliefs that Borgia had the traits necessary for any leader who would seek to unify Italy, and believe I should follow in those footsteps. I do not wish to be associated with such a ruler.

Touching on your thoughts of virtue when you quote, “ of all the things he must guard against, hatred and contempt come first, and liberality leads to both” (XVI, 2), I am confused by your advice to disregard the principles of virtue. The letters I receive regularly from members of the church talk about the importance of a prince to act virtuously, with the ethical premise that one who acts well, will govern well. I respect my church, and find it troubling for you to give me advice against what they believe.

My people will begin to view this book as a guide to atheistic tyranny, which I can see now. This work is a godless promotion of immorality, and I can see your intentions of self-serving manipulation. It is a dangerous game to play being anti-Christian, and your contempt for the papacy and political ambitions of the Catholic Church is evident.

To conclude, I will not be sending an invitation to serve as an official in my government, and ask you no longer pursue these thoughts. Men will be <https://assignbuster.com/response-to-the-prince-by-machiavelli-essay-sample/>

arriving to your home shortly after you receive this letter to take you to where you belong.

Good day,

The Medici

Essay Question #1: You are a Medici prince and you are returning the manuscript of *The Prince* to Machiavelli with a letter explaining why you will not hire him as your political adviser. As you will recall from Unit 4, the Medici were a powerful Florentine family. Remember to include a main idea that guides your rejection letter and to include specific quotations from *The Prince* (not the lecture) that support your argument.