

Machiavelli and more essay example

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The prince is a political treatise which political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli which was a dedication to Lorenzo di Piero de medici. in this dedication Machiavelli describes the type of society they live in and advices the prince on how to maintain a firm grip of his political power and ensure loyalty from all his statesmen. Machiavelli opens his work by saying, “ all states all powers that have held and hold rule over men have been either republics or principalities” (Machiavelli, p. 1). This is perhaps one of the earliest instances of the use of the word state to refer to an administrative territory. Machiavelli precedes to advice the prince on the best ways to govern his territory with emphasis on maintenance of power. Thomas More’s utopia describes a seemingly perfect society with rampant equity and a blissful coexistence between members of the society. Both works are chiefly concerned with the core issues of society, how society works, and how it develops a self-sustenance and self-maintenance mechanism. Surface analysis may show similarities between the two works but the divergence occurs on the author’s opinion on handling of power.

I am of the opinion that Machiavelli presents a selfish self-centered point of view while More presents a selfless and community centered point of view. Machiavelli presents radical ideas aimed at elevation of self while more takes a more conservative approach, which aims at the general elevation of the entire society.

Machiavelli in his work to the prince describes power as a high priority necessity, which is to be acquired at all cost and maintained by any means necessary. Machiavelli advices the prince to consolidate his power and ensure a firm grip over his territory. Loss of power to other quarters is

unacceptable and must be prevented by any means necessary. In utopia, the description of power is an entity inherent to all people and thus all people are viewed as highly empowered. The cosmic struggle for power does not exist in utopia and attaining power is not the true essence of life. Power is a communal entity, which all citizens of utopia are entitled to, and its acquisition and consolidation around one person or entity lacks ethical merit. Utopia explicitly condemns the act of one person or a group of people consolidating all the power around them at the expense of the greater society and More writes, “ they are generally set on acquiring new kingdoms, right or wrong, than on governing those they possess (More, p. 5)

Machiavelli argues that undoubtedly power is not meant to be held by lesser mortals. Moreover, power should be used exclusively for the good and continued flourishing of the prince who wields it. The issue of whether or not the local people receive empowerment of any kind is of little if any significance. The crucial issue with pivotal importance is that the prince uses his position and his power to maintain the most important aspect of his existence, which is his personal interest. Machiavelli writes, “ all armed prophets have succeeded and all unarmed ones have failed, for in addition to what has already been said, people are originally by nature changeable” (Machiavelli, p. 27). In utopia, More provides a different point of view. What truly matters and is of utmost importance in utopia are the actions of the local people thought to be lesser members of society. More focuses less on empowerment of a single person or empowerment of the general society as a whole but rather the empowerment of ideals that govern the actions and traits of the society. In utopia, the focus issue is not even the discussion on

power but rather the relentless pursuit of ethical and acceptable ideals that elevate the entire society to a higher paradigm of existence as opposed to the elevation of a single person or entity at the expense of the greater society. More writes, “ the prince is for life, unless he is removed upon suspicion of some design to enslave the people” (More, p. 32).

In his dedication to the prince, Machiavelli describes the existing form of government as either a dictatorship or a theoretical monarchy. Machiavelli sheds light on techniques that could be employed to ensure manipulation of the people to ensure maintenance of power by the supreme prince. The minor grass root details have little significance. The punch line is that in a monarchy or in the situation of a dictatorship one person is the true and only absolute holder of power in a society and the rest of society is in existence only to serve and obey him. Machiavelli writes, “ I conclude that since men love as they themselves determine but fear as their ruler determines, a wise prince must rely upon what he and not others can control” (Machiavelli, p. 61). In utopia, More talks about a society where communism is the order of the day. Leaders serve to ensure machinations in the best interest of the local people and absolute power is not owned by any single individual. The existing power is equitably distributed throughout the entire society thus empowerment. More writes, “ also the great essence to whose glory and majesty all honors are ascribed by the consent of all nations” (More, p. 72). Machiavelli and More share antagonistic opinions on the concept of war and its essence and importance in society. More strongly condemns the act of war and describes it as inglorious and unethical, “ nothing is more inglorious than that glory that is gained by war” (More, p. 64). More not only condemns

the act of war but also condemns all its seemingly glorious outcomes and terms them as null and void and inglorious. Machiavelli is of a contrary opinion on the issue of waging war and the glory that comes with a victory. He maintains that waging wars is a pivotal way of life that would undoubtedly ensure consolidation of more power by the prince. He argues that glory acquired through warfare would guarantee the prince unconditional allegiance of his constituents as well as respect and reversion from his defeated opponents,

” a prince must have no other objective, no other thought, nor take up any profession but that of war, its methods and its discipline, for that is the only art expected of a ruler” (Machiavelli, p. 54).

Machiavelli insists that warfare is what constituents expect from their ruler and emphasizes the importance of a ruler being well versed in the art of warfare. Expertise in waging war is a pivotal part of being a prince and a prince must have no other business than that of gaining military prowess and waging wars.

In an ideal driven society, which has set its main goals as, uncover of truth and an unrelenting pursuit of justice, the concept of one person’s goal to be the full consolidation of power is impossible. Machiavelli clearly shows an attitude that is lacking in idealism. Machiavelli presents his arguments to the prince in a manner indicating strong inclination towards a hint of selfishness. The idea that one is capable and allowed to do anything as long as his position remains untainted and uncompromised shows a great deal of selfishness, a feeling of self-worth and self-superiority with total disregard for other members of the society. Certainly one does not talk so casually and so

lightly on the issues of crime and potential murder for the sake of ensuring maintenance of the state for oneself without being selfish. Machiavelli presents a nationalistic point of view which in essence is the concept of a nation being extensively egocentric. More presents a frame of thought that is inclined towards the general good of the entire human race as opposed to rising to prominence of one nation over other nations. More presents ideals such as truth and justice and equity for all and it is on this basis that it can be argued that his work views power as the ultimate source of corruption in mainstream society, contrary to Machiavelli who praises power.

“ a conspiracy of the rich, who on pretense of managing the public only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts they can find out, first that they may, without danger, preserve all that they have so ill acquired, and then that they may engage the poor to toil and labor for them at so low rates as possible, and oppress them as they please” (More, p. 83). Here we see More strongly condemn the act of gaining prominence and flourishing at the expense of others. He frowns upon acts of selfishness that work to see a person triumph and flourish while the rest of the society suffers. More does not explicitly condemn the rising of an individual to power but only condemns it so long as it involves infringement in the liberties of other people and their continued oppression.

It can however be argued that Machiavelli proposes tactics that are realistic and highly necessary in the current political predicament while More presents nothing but a fantasy world whose achievement is highly unlikely and notably improbable. True to the words of Machiavelli it is highly important, especially in current times, to consolidate political power around

an individual or an entity which will ensure order and dispensation of the law. Distributing power to the people will inevitably give rise to anarchy and impunity will run rampant in our streets. The notion of power equally distributed to the people will bring about a situation where there exists a vacuum on who should check the conduct of the people since they are all empowered. Consolidation of power in a certain authority ensures that the people, either because of fear or because of the respect they hold for the existent authority, will toe a certain line thus averting chaos and disorder. As much as the idea of an individual or an institution consolidating all the existing power sounds selfish and lacking in ethical values it is a necessary evil to ensure that the conduct of the citizens is checked thus the ends justify the means. The people are deprived of power to ensure that they can meticulously conduct their activities without fear of their fellow citizens.

Works Cited

Machiavelli, Niccolò, and Mark Musa. *The prince*. A bilingual ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004. Print.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*. Raleigh, N. C.: Alex Catalogue, 2003. Print.