

Machiavelli - the qualities of the prince critical thinking

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Question 1

Machiavelli praises skill in war because it is the only weapon that a prince can use to hold on to power. For instance, Machiavelli heaps praises on Caesar Borgia, who was a cruel and ruthless dictator, despised and looked upon by many people. The question is whether Machiavelli agrees with such actions from a leader. The answer is that he did not admire Caesar as a person, but he liked his quick and deliberate qualities. To Machiavelli, these qualities were important in uniting Italy.

Question 2

In dealing with the question of whether it is better to be loved than feared, Machiavelli says, “ The answer is that one would like to be both the one and the other; but because it is difficult to combine them, it is far safer to be feared than loved if you cannot be both” (46). As he posits, the engagements one makes during a time of peace cannot be kept in a time of danger. However, those that are made as a result of fear are kept out of fear. In essence, the prince must ensure that he is not feared to the point of hatred, which is very much likely. He says that a leader should not touch properties of his subjects without a good cause. According to Machiavelli, a leader must instill fear to the troops so as to keep a large garrison united. A leader must also observe cruelty since it is the only way he can get respect from the troops.

Question 3

Machiavelli believed that a prince should do all his bets to retain power. He highlighted all the qualities that a prince should have " all mercy, all faithfulness, all integrity.... (47). Indeed a prince should give his subjects all that they need even if it means through deceit. According to Machiavelli, " a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin so many who are not good." (40) This means that if one tries being good too much he will turn out to be bad. Machiavelli says that a prince ought to keep the people satisfied by all means. The government does the same by keeping people in the check. In short, many people are not all bad or all good but lie somewhere in the middle.

Question 4

Machiavelli looks at the real world and not an imagined one. There is a big difference between the way people ought to act and the way do act, and that any prince who tries to do what he should will destroy himself. A prince must know when to act immorally. All people agree that a prince must have good qualities; however, as this is impossible, a wise prince should avoid vices that will destroy his hold on power.

Question 5

Contemporary leaders should be well versed in war and the same leader must show exemplary skills during the time of peace.

Question 6

Machiavelli also poses the question concerning liberality and whether generosity or being a miser is more beneficial is also posed. Machiavelli states that “ only spending of your own is what harms you. And there is nothing that uses itself up faster than generosity, for as you employ it you lose the means of employing it, and you become either poor or despised or in order to escape poverty, rapacious and hated” (43). His argument concerning this issues is that if you start out being generous so that people love, you have to deplete all your resources and then as a leader you will have to tax the people more. On the other, if you are not being generous, people are become dissatisfied and start hating you. In addition, if you are a miser, people may not love you as much, but at least you are not that much hated.

Question 7

Most leaders seem to follow Machiavelli’s advice. For example Machiavelli said if that a prince must choose to be either feared or loved, it is better to be feared. This seems to be the same message employed by the US government in the killing of pirates of the Indian oceans and annihilation of tribal leaders in Afghanistan. Many governments depend on contradictions, just like Machiavelli. They resort to claim that the end justifies the means, even if this end falls below the expectations of the standards of morality held by the society. Most princess will succeed by following the advice of Machiavelli but only if they satisfy the will of the majority, not their short lived selfish ends.

Works Cited

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince* . London: Penguin. 2004. pp 37-52