

Niccolò more considerate than a leader who

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Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Thomas More's *Utopia* share an exploration of the complex architecture, mores and cultural aspects of a particular society .

Both books attempt to solve embedded societal problems by critiquing other institutions and orienting within their own solutions; however, the outlooks of such solutions differ considerably in the two works. *The Prince*, written in 1513, provides a handbook for a Prince to maintain and satisfy his empire. *Utopia*, written in 1516, portrays an ideal civilization that will live happily and without problems. These works, although similar on the surface, reflect the views each author has on the ideal values and systems of a civilization, and they do so in very different ways. In the imaginary civilization of *Utopia*, More organizes the structure of society around the well-being of its populace. *Utopia* focuses on caring for its citizens in order to maintain order and happiness within the people, the premise of this lifestyle being "to get through life as comfortably and cheerfully as we can, and help all other members of our species to do so too" (More, p. 91). This is achieved by practicing tolerance and embracing equality for each citizen.

All decisions that were made benefited the Utopian society as a whole, and in turn, this sense of equality was instilled in the people, enabling all to live blissfully. Contrary to *Utopia*, the focus of an ideal society is the hierarchy of power and the longevity of the state, according to Machiavelli. *The Prince* was written for the use of one man to dominate and control his kingdom. Machiavelli argues that devastating a region is the most reliable way to secure power; "the surest way is to wipe them out" (Machiavelli, p. 18). He does not address the ethical or moral aspects of his advice. Machiavelli

declares that a leader who brings stability and peace by way of cruelty, should be thought of as more considerate than a leader who brings destruction upon his state with misplaced kindness.

He answers the question of whether it is better to be loved or feared by saying: "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 better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both" (Machiavelli, p. 54). It is clear that the use of cruelty for its own sake is not advised, however a prince must be willing to take cruel measures if he believes it benefits the state. For Machiavelli, it is control of a kingdom that takes precedence over the happiness of the people. The types of governments in the two respective societies are also explored. In *The Prince*, the government is an absolute monarchy, a true dictatorship. Power and war are the basis of forming a strong government. Machiavelli focuses on the manipulation of people to maintain power.

As long as one person holds the power in the society, all the rest will serve only to obey; and therefore the Prince will rule successfully. The society More created is a hybrid of socialism and democracy. The leaders are elected by the people, and all decisions reached by the government support the best interests of the society as a whole; once again, the well-being of the people are a pillar of leadership, not money or commodities of any sort. A fundamental example of this in *Utopia* is that citizens do not own or obtain any private property. This is achieved because everything on the island of *Utopia* is extremely uniform. "There are fifty-four splendid big towns on the island, all with the same language, laws, customs, and institutions. They're

all built on the same plan, and so far as the sites will allow, they all look exactly alike" (More, p.

50). Clearly, More's Utopia holds a tremendous respect for an equal experience of life for all of its citizens. In essence, these two 16th century literary works reflect the authors' contrasting views of human nature.

Machiavelli suggests to his readers how to dominate what is assumed to be a static understanding of human nature, whereas More creates the conceptual world of Utopia in an attempt to portray and support the better aspects of human nature. More believed human nature to be inherently good, however he was not blind to the imperfections of the human being, he simply associated them with the external environment. More shows that if the social, political, and economic conditions are positioned correctly, then humans have the opportunity to nurture their best attributes and, in turn, better their behavior. He demonstrates this most drastically by eliminating private property in the utopian society, stating: " as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all things, I cannot think a nation can be governed either justly or happily" (More, p.

42). More, seemingly, believed in his utopia and improvement of human nature by way of manipulating external circumstances for their highest expression. Machiavelli presents human nature to be largely self-centered. He has a general distrust of people in general, believing that in times of prosperity they may be trustworthy but in times of hardship, they quickly turn selfish and dishonest. He advises a prince: " Men are wretched

creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them” (Machiavelli, p. 57).

He details how to manipulate one’s thoughts in order to place oneself in a position of control, and in doing so, Machiavelli provides a guide to manage the nature of human beings through domination as a way to serve the best interests of the state. Although the views of the authors differ dramatically, they both use imaginative thinking in rethinking values and systems of civilization during the 16th century, and explore these approaches in both *The Prince* and in *Utopia*. In short, Machiavelli suggests a Prince must exercise authority over its people to ensure they are dependent on him, while More uses respect for equality and human rights to create bliss within a society.

Both writers explore social, political, and economic problems, but from entirely disparate directions. These literary works represent the two polar solutions to these problems: the pragmatic approach of a realist versus the conceptual approach of an idealist.