

Plato

Philosophy



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Inserts His/her Inserts Inserts Grade (22, 06, Plato Plato's ideas about government are very different from the form of government practiced today. Plato was not democratic and believed that ruling a state is a special responsibility that should be dispensed to the most able men. Plato defines 'able' men in his Allegory of the Cave. A man who sees the light of knowledge and understands fully the truth (reality) is fit to rule people who are in living in darkness. This ruler, of Plato, will have seen the good and will be capable of 'real' good. Plato actually wants philosophers to rule because they have knowledge and insight that cannot be achieved or attained by the normal public. The masses rely on knowledge of senses which is misleading and in order to fully understand the reality contemplation is required, and through contemplation philosophers understands the real good. The virtue of wisdom, Plato says, cannot come from worldly efforts rather it is divine. This means that Plato's ruler will have to have a divine element in him. Also Plato thinks that the best ruler is one who is not eager to rule instead he is reluctant to rule because he has seen the true light. Also ruler is expected to provide a life to his statesmen that is better than his own life so that they do not desire being part of the government. Machiavelli believed in a totalitarian form of government where power was the most important thing to achieve and maintain. It is through power, according to him, that one can govern a state and moral goodness is not a criterion to judge rulers. Another major characteristic of ruler will be pragmatism says Machiavelli. The main difference between philosophy of Plato and Machiavelli is that Machiavelli believes goodness cannot guarantee power. The main goal of a ruler is to maintain power and acquire power in order rule. Docility, Machiavelli believes, can only be made ubiquitous in a state through correct application

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of power. It is important that power is exercised and maintained by the ruler because people only abide by the law because they fear from punishment that will follow. This fear will only be in their hearts if a ruler is powerful enough to make his statesmen obey. Lao-Tzu on the other hand believes that inaction should constitute the purpose of a government. Instead of totalitarianism Lao-Tzu believes in a form of government where freedom will prevail and this freedom is in terms of personal freedom. The society that Lao-Tzu recommends is one in which people live with simplicity and there is no desire or ambition. He also says that coercion is not the way to go for any ruler. The aim of the ruler is to establish peace but force cannot be used against people. In contrast with Machiavelli, Lao-Tzu view of politics is deeply inspired by his ethical teachings. Duty of the government and that of a ruler are set in accordance to the ethics of Lao-Tzu. A good ruler for him is one who demands nothing from the people and is humble. He is not interested in creating laws rather people should be left on their own so that they themselves can improve. Everything a ruler does is must not be for his own self. Fulfillment of his own desires is considered a great flaw in a ruler because this will bring problems in the society as ruler will prosper and masses in general will suffer. Lao-Tzu also does not approve of war and heavy taxes because both of them cause problems for the society. The use of force is allowed only when it is not morally objectionable to use force otherwise it is prohibited. Plato's view of goodness in a ruler is similar to the views of Lao-Tzu. Machiavelli thinks totally opposite from both of them. Today's attitude towards government is very different from all these views. It is in the middle of a continuum whose extremes are Lao-Tzu and Machiavelli. One believes in inaction and other believes in totalitarian government. Today

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we believe democracy is the best system of government which would not have been approved by all of them. Works Cited Page Plato. Allegory of the Cave. Republic Book 7