

Adolf hitler to machiavelli's "the prince" essay sample

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When Machiavelli wrote "The Prince" in the 1500's, his intentions did not apply to the twentieth century. Some very important figures of the twentieth century used basic ideals from "The Prince" to obtain and maintain their position in power. One of these individuals was Adolf Hitler. Hitler used numerous Machiavellian ideas to win his respective place in Germany's government. The two most important Machiavellian principles that Hitler used were winning the people and how he dealt with cruelty and murder. Adolf Hitler, the self-proclaimed "savior" of the German people, was an insecure, egotistical man, who ominously controlled the German people. Hitler thought that he could change things with force, which soon got him into trouble, and landed him in jail. During his time in jail, Hitler had turned over direction of the Nazi party to Alfred Rosenberg.

Rosenberg edited the party's newspaper, Popular Observer, but had no administrative ability. As a result, Hitler easily resumed complete control of the party upon his release in December 1924. In the years from 1925 to 1930; Hitler built up a network of local party organizations over most of Germany. Hitler's mass of followers began to grow, and soon those who didn't follow him became the minority. Hitler gained political power soon after his reign of terror began, ending with the deaths of over 6 million Jews that were persecuted by the Nazis, because they were supposedly the problem in Germany (Schramm 13). One of the Machiavellian principles that Hitler used to rise to power was gaining the full trust of the German people. Hitler was able to do this through his powerful public speeches. He is often

referred to as one of the world's greatest speakers (Schramm 13). He believed that everyone should hear his speeches. In order to make this possible, the German government manufactured thousands of cheap radios that were made available for the general public.

These radios were only powerful enough to pick up broadcasts inside Germany so that the people could not get information from other countries. This meant that the majority of Germany could hear his speeches, and the more people heard his speeches meant the more people could follow his ideals and join the Nazi party. This helped Hitler on his rise to power because before he was arrested he had very little political backing and not many people had heard of the Nazi party. With his newfound following, he now had the political backing to make his move into the government. After he made his move into the German government, he slowly began to destroy it from within and went on to have a complete dictatorship of Germany. Hitler indiscriminately followed some of Machiavelli's principles as described in "The Prince". Whereas he embraced Machiavelli's ideas concerning human nature, and separation of politics and morality, he ignored Machiavelli's concept of military power, which led to his downfall. Hitler's ambition led to his ultimate downfall. Machiavelli warns about ambition because it can lead to your collapse. Hitler had a strong army but his ambitious mind placed his army in a situation it could not avoid. This led to the weakening of his army and his government.

As described in Niccolò Machiavelli's "The Prince", to be a successful ruler, you must incorporate the principles or guidelines he sets in this pamphlet,

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three of the most important being, his concepts of human nature, his ideas about separation of politics and morality, and the reality of military power. In chapters XV, XVI, XVII Machiavelli devotes a long time describing aspects of human nature that a prince must understand. Machiavelli says it is human nature to praise certain qualities and blame others. According to Machiavelli certain qualities are considered praiseworthy, for example: generosity, courage, and mercy. Other qualities can be considered blameworthy such as cowardice and treachery. But according to Machiavelli: "... And I know that everyone will admit, that it would be a very praise worthy thing to find in a prince, the qualities mentioned above, those that are held to be good; but since it is neither possible to have them or to observe them all completely, because the human condition does not permit it, a prince must be prudent enough to know how to escape the bad reputation of those vices that would lose the state for him, and must protect himself from those that will not use it for him" (Machiavelli, 52).

In other words Machiavelli says that human nature praises certain qualities and blame others, but there is no way that humans can do all the good things while avoiding the bad things. What makes a "good prince" in the eyes of Machiavelli is one that figures out how to not take so much blame when he does wrong, and tries to do as many good things as he can. For example regarding generosity and miserliness, Machiavelli says to be considered truly generous, one must be miserly at times: "A prince, therefore, being unable to use his virtue of generosity in a manner which will not harm himself... should, if he is wise, not worry about being called a

miser; for with time, he will come to be considered more generous..." (53) In one final contrast, according to Machiavelli in regards to courage and cowardice, mercy and treachery he says " That every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel; never the less, he must take care not to misuse this mercy...Therefore, a prince must not worry about the reproach of cruelty, when it is a matter of keeping his subjects united and loyal" (55).

According to Machiavelli, there are times when you do not worry about doing the right thing, if it leads to the end you are seeking. This kind of thinking is the basis for his ideas concerning the separation of politics and morality. In essence, Machiavelli's philosophy concerning politics and morality is this: In order to achieve political prowess you may need to break the rules, or be immoral. In chapter VIII and IX, Machiavelli describes the ways a man can become a prince. In addition to gaining a fortune, and political prowess, criminal acts and popularity contests can help a man's rise to power. Machiavelli uses King Agathocles of Syracuse as an example of a man who rose to power through crime (30). King Agathocles rose to power through cruelty, and didn't care about what was right or wrong (morality).

As described in Chapter IX, another means of achieving your political goals is " When a private citizen, not through wickedness or any other intolerable violence, but with the favor of his fellow citizens, becomes prince..." (33) He goes on to say " I maintain that one reaches this principedom either with the favor of him common people or with that of the nobility" (33). Machiavelli's idea was that a prince needs to please sides, the rich and the poor, by any means possible. Even if that means telling them what they want to hear,

lying, doing whatever is necessary. Machiavelli suggests that it is acceptable to be immoral, if it gets someone what he or she wants. This appears on the surface to be very harsh and cruel, but he tempers his position by saying the one who gains power by treacherous means, may not gain as much glory as the one who gains power by virtuous means.

Understanding human nature, and manipulating politics and morality are fine, but the true measure of a prince, is in his ability to wage war.

Machiavelli measured the success of all principalities on their ability to gather an army. Machiavelli judged a prince on whether he could protect himself, or needed the protection of others. "I say that I judge those princes self-sufficient who, either through abundance of troops or of money, are able to gather together a suitable army and fight a good battle, against whoever should attack them" (37). A strong prince must build strong armies, and there are three types of armies; the prince's own troops, mercenaries, and auxiliary troops. "Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous" (42). According to Machiavelli, these troops are undisciplined and disloyal. Machiavelli concludes that the only good army is one that is made up of your own countrymen (48). So important is the waging of war, and the building of a fearful army, Machiavelli suggests that this is the only thing a prince should think about.

"A prince, therefore, must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he take anything as his profession, but war, its institutions, and its discipline...it is evident that when princes have given more thought to personal luxuries than to arms, they have lost their state." (49) For

Machiavelli a prince must devote a considerable amount of time in developing an army by use of any means possible, (once again playing on human nature) training in war time, and in peace time. A key principle to Machiavelli is the necessity of a strong army. A strong army is always to a prince's advantage. Hitler established a strong army because of the trust he established with the German people. He obtained this faith from the people by winning them over through his powerful and convincing public speeches, and through his convincing promises. Hitler had no need for auxiliary or mercenary troops, he relied solely on the faith of his soldiers.

The true measure of a successful prince as seen by Machiavelli is in his ability to manipulate human nature, which involves a balance of contradiction and hypocrisy, achieving your political means morally or immorally, and securing your success by the establishment of a strong army. The German people thought that Hitler was going to do something to change the current state of the nation. Instead Hitler took the nation and made it go into whatever direction that he pleased, which was eventually into another world war. Perhaps if Hitler had adhered to these principles in the correct measure, he too would be seen as a successful " prince."