

Machiavelli vs lao-tzu

Profession, Writer



Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was a political philosopher as well as a statesman during the time of the Renaissance. He is most famous for writing his political views in *The Prince* (1513), which has become an important part of modern political philosophy. *The Prince* offers advice to the monarch in order to keep himself in power. His recommendations are policies that discourage mass political activism by channeling the people around him to use their energies for private pursuits. Machiavelli wanted to influence the monarch by showing him that he can better keep his power by judiciously using violence, understanding and respecting his subjects private property and traditions, and by promoting materialistic prosperity.

Machiavelli believed that a political life is not governed by a set of morals or a religious absolute. The monarch can be excused sometimes for using acts of violence or deception for a means, which would not be ethical if he were a civilian. *The Prince* was written at the height of the Renaissance when intense political conflict between the dominant cities and states of Florence, Milan, Venice, the Papacy, France, Spain as well as the Holy Empire. This incendiary conflict ended in massive political intrigue, violence and blackmail to which Machiavelli concluded with a plea for unity in Italy as well as an end to foreign involvement.

The great differences between Niccolo Machiavelli and Chinese Taoist Philosopher, Lao-Tzu, is their beliefs on how a government should be run. Machiavelli refers to what a prince should have as he places a totalitarian government. He believed governments should be very structured and controlled as well as powerful. Lao-Tz belief is that one person cannot have total control and they should let everything run its course. Machiavelli

argued in his book that, Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius that a republic would, be strengthened by their conflicts if they engage in open political participations and debates.

Machieavelli's, pragmatic view of ethics and politics is a Prince should be more practical than moral. A prince must learn to be cunning and deceitful to maintain his power. He believed it is more important for a prince to be feared than loved by his people. This is in direct contrast to Lao-Tzu's belief in living life with goodness and respect to others. He did not write a guide to his views like Machieavelli, because he wanted his philosophy to be a natural way a human being should live. He believed a person's behavior in his or her life should be influenced by their instincts and conscience.

Lao-Tzu believed that humans as well as the universe are governed by unseen outside forces. The key to one's truth and freedom is simplicity. He encouraged followers to seek out and to understand the laws of nature, to build up power among themselves, as well as to utilize that power to lead their life with love without force. The differences are even clear as how these philosophers are remembered.

Machieavelli's views of ethics and politics, lead people to misinterpret these views as to describe anyone who deceptively manipulates people in an opportunistic way. I. E.: Machieavellian.

Lao-Tzu is said to have went off on water buffalo to the desert, saddened by the evils of man. It is said that when he arrived at the gate of the Great Wall of China, where he was persuaded by the gatekeeper to record his principals

of philosophy. This recording became the ancient Chinese text “ Eighty-one sayings of the Tao-Te-Ching.”

-Works Cited-

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