

Comparing and contrasting the ideas of socrates and machiavelli



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Plato's *The Apology* provides an account of the speech that Socrates made at the trial in which he gets charged of corrupting the youth, inventing new deities, and failing to recognize the gods of the states. Machiavelli's *The Prince* is an address to Lorenzo de Medici, and it talks about the issues of power in the society. The two authors offer various conflicting ideas while presenting their arguments but both agree that in general people are not fond of seeking out wisdom.

Socrates argues that knowledge is the most crucial element for the survival of society. Knowledge is one of the main ideas that Plato supports in *The Apology*. When he set out to discover wise people and encounters the poets, Socrates notes that " I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise" (Haraldsen, Olof, and Oda 16). Socrates maintains that while a person may have adequate knowledge in one field, it does not infer that they are knowledgeable in all other areas. Socrates appeared to be wiser than everyone around him since he was aware of his limitations. Therefore, people in society should know their limitations regarding knowledge to have a chance for survival.

Machiavelli, on the other hand, believes that power is the most important goal in life regardless of the state or the individual. He argues that perfection is not real, and thus, people should not strive to achieve it but focus on making power; " So long as you promote their advantage, they are all yours. . . And will offer you their blood, their goods, their lives, and their children when the need for these" (Machiavelli, and Ninian 3). Hence he does not champion for people to be knowledgeable in the society except for the <https://assignbuster.com/comparing-and-contrasting-the-ideas-of-socrates-and-machiavelli/>

Prince. Consequently, knowledge, as presented by Machiavelli, is a tool of manipulation that people in power should use to control the foolish subjects.

Socrates places importance on dedication to society by professing his duty to enlighten the ordinary people of Athens. “ Apart from reputation, men, to me it also does not seem to be just to beg the judge, nor to be acquitted by begging, but rather to teach and to persuade” (Haraldsen, Olof, and Oda 17). He places a sense of obligation on the people in leadership positions. The argument infers that good leaders tend to receive little appreciation for serving the people as depicted by how Socrates gets mistreated and subjected to trial. Hence, service to the people should continue even if a leader is criticized and rebuked for his sacrifice to the society.

Machiavelli, however, believes that serving the people should not involve sacrifices but involves convincing the people that you are a good leader. To him, a good ruler should be humane, merciful or frank provided his best interest is met (Machiavelli, and Ninian 4). Machiavelli, therefore, preaches deviousness, ruthlessness, and maliciousness as methods of serving the people. Essentially, Machiavelli is not too concerned about society’s welfare but that of the individual. People who stick to Machiavelli’s points of view becomes selfish to the community since they will only mind their interests.

Both Machiavelli and Socrates agree that people, in general, fail to seek wisdom. The two note that if people are lied to or cheated, they appear not to mind. Machiavelli claims that “ One should do good, on the other hand, little by little, so people can fully appreciate it” (Machiavelli, and Ninian 4). The quote infers that after people are wronged, wrongdoers can offer

something nice to rectify the mistake successfully. The Socrates also confirm that most people in the society may be knowledgeable, but they lack the wisdom of knowing what exactly happens in their lives. As such people fail to note that the real understanding in life is establishing that humanity is ignorant, and thus, they become easily manipulated.

The two authors disagree on many ideas, for instance, while Plato places more importance on dedication to society, Machiavelli views an individual's interests to be of utmost importance. The two, however, agree that people are not fond of seeking out wisdom, and hence, they get easily manipulated.