The Prince: Analysis Of Philosophy In The Book

The Prince by Niccolo' Machiavelli, was a book that he'd gifted to Lorenzo de Medici. The Medici family was the monarchy of Florence, the book is an analysis of how to acquire and maintain political power. The Prince is divided into sections, types of principalities, types of armies, the behavior of a prince and Italy's desperate political situation. A theme that is constant throughout the book is a ruler finding a balance between two characteristics in order to be a successful ruler. In the sections of the behavior of a prince, Machiavelli talks about feared and loved rulers, which is better for a prince to be to have a successful rule.

Chapter seventeen is focused on the balance between a ruler being cruel and merciful, Machiavelli states, "Proceeding to the other qualities before named, I say that every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel" (68). Machiavelli then warns to not misuse mercifulness because it is better to be cruel than to do the right thing. Rulers who show too much mercy or compassion will lead things into turmoil and cause disorder. Machiavelli is saying that rulers need to find the balance between mercy and cruelty, because too much mercy will cause chaos and too much cruelty as well. Another statement, "Nevertheless, he must be cautious in believing and acting, and must not be afraid of his own shadow, and must proceed in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity…" (69) being confident as a ruler is a good thing because people view that in a good way, it helps keep the order, but too much confidence can be seen as a bad too. Machiavelli is focusing on finding the balance of these characteristics because that is what makes a great leader. Keeping order without the proper blane causes chaos. A key part of a rulers' success is based on how they keep the order of their people/ kingdom.

Being loved and feared is another balance a ruler needs to find to be successful. In a few lines below, it then states if a prince "ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting" (69). Love and fear are powerful motivations but fear motives obedience. For example fear motivates people to obey the laws; people fear the consequences. Again there needs to be a balance between too much fear and too little because it will cause people to disobey. Too little fear will cause disobedience because there is little to no punishment. Too much fear resulting in harsher punishments will cause resistance and overt disobedience. It is safer to be feared than loved because most likely people won't go against someone they fear. Love does not last long but fear for punishment does.

Machiavelli also mentions hatred, "Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that if he does not gain love, he at any rate avoids hatred…" (69) a prince needs to be strong, bold and cruel to avoid gaining love but without being too cruel because people will start to hate the prince. In general a prince doesn't need to be bad but know when to be, "Thus it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may able to change to the opposite qualities (74) being good all the time is not helpful, knowing how to be bad helps rulers survive. Appearing good is important but rulers need to know when to be deceivingly bad, when it's time rulers must be demanding and act based on the circumstances not on their own morals. A way to gain hatred is greed, "by being rapacious, and usurping the property and

women of his subjects, which he must abstain from doing” (76) a ruler must be careful to not take too much. Taking away money, property and women will gain hatred because it shows greed, a ruler does not need to take away so much from their people. A ruler needs to know how to be mean/ cruel when needed in order to not be taken advantage of, but not too cruel because then it causes disorder and people will rebel. But being too nice will cause disorder because people will take advantage of a ruler and not take laws seriously or be the cause of a ruler’s downfall.

A concern a ruler has is being conspired against, “But with regard to the subjects, if not acted on from outside, it is still to be feared lest they conspire in secret, from which the prince may guard himself well by avoiding hatred and contempt, and keeping the people satisfied with him, which it is necessary to accomplish, as has been related at length” (77) every ruler is afraid of betrayal by the ones they are most close with; they have more to fear when they are hated by their subjects because it gives their subjects more of a reason to conspire against them. There is a way for a ruler to avoid conspiracies “... is that of not being hated by the mass of the people” (77) a ruler must avoid being hated by the majority of the people. Even through the ruler has a lot of power, the real power is with the people because they can rise against a ruler if they are very unhappy with the ways in which he rules. Being a liked by the masses helps a leader not worry so much about any conspiracy against him “that a prince need trouble little about conspiracies when the people are well disposed, but when they are hostile and hold him in hatred, then he must fear everything and everybody” if the people like you then it’s better than being hated but having a balance of being a little feared is safer than being very trusting or extremely cruel. Machiavelli is making a point that a ruler does not need to be loved by everyone to be successful, but needs to avoid being hated. A ruler must gain the respect of the people to avoid being hatred. Having the balance of being a little cruel to show power in the right way is better to gain respect and trust to avoid conspiracies than being cruel to the point of hated and lose the respect of the people.

An important attribute for a ruler is to present themselves as they lead, appearance symbolizes everything a ruler is about. A ruler has to guard themselves against “being thought changeable, frivolous, effeminate, timid, and irresolute” and show “grandeur, spirit, gravity, and fortitude” (76) look strong because appearances matter, a strong ruler is what every kingdom wants; for example many Roman emperors displayed statues of them looking stronger than what they originally looked like to show power and create fear for anyone who tried to take over. A reputation is important for a ruler, “The prince who created such an opinion of himself gets a great reputation, and it is very difficult to conspire against one who has a great reputation, and he will not easily be attacked, so long as it is known he is capable and reverenced by his subjects” (76-77) no one wants a ruler with a bad reputation because it reflects the whole country or region, not just the ruler. A good reputation has an impression on the people too, it can influence if they respect their ruler based on the rulers reputation. The impression a ruler makes shows how they act all the time, having good manners sets a good reputation that will stay with a ruler for a long time.

The Prince is similar to a guide for rulers to be successful, it demonstrates well what makes a successful ruler. Being a loved ruler with causing a little bit of fear to show control is what makes a successful leader. It’s having the balance between being loved and feared with balancing being cruel and merciful that makes a successful ruler. Having too much or too little of another can cause disorder, as mentioned being too cruel and feared will cause the people to plan conspiracies but being too loved and merciful will cause the people to not take their ruler

seriously. To also be successful a ruler needs to have a good reputation of themselves to prove they are worthy to rule, impressions and reputations matter, it can impact or influence people forever. Balancing these characteristics are essential for ruler, having the perfect balance maintains success, losing the balance will cause disorder. Losing the balancing between cruelty, fear, mercy and love is the destruction of a successful ruler.