
Book Review: The Prince

In my opinion, the main purpose of "The Prince" by Machiavelli was that he desperately wanted to return to politics. The main idea of the Prince is that his primary claim is that a leader is there to make difficult decisions in times of need for all his subjects.

In order to acquire states in a providence one must have two concerns: "one, that the bloodline of their ancient prince be eliminated; the other, not to alter either their laws or their taxes; so that in a very short time it becomes one whole body with their ancient principality." (Machiavelli, p. 9).

The prose is simple and its logic is straightforward. The first chapter defines the different types of principalities and princes. It constructs an outline for the rest of the book. In the third chapter it talks about different problems that grow and how they are hard to put down "So it happens in affairs of state, because when one recognizes from afar the evils that arise in a state... but when they are left to grow because they were not recognized, to the point that everyone recognizes them, there is no longer any remedy for them." (Machiavelli, p.12). But the Romans always found a remedy for them and never allowed them to continue so as to escape a war. In its' own way it says that war is inevitable. Also in chapter three, it talks about how they should maintain their friendships to keep the kingdom intact.

Ministers hold no role over people; everyone is the prince's subjects. There are two ways to govern a principality. The first involves a prince and appointed ministers. The minister helps govern everyone, while everyone remains compliant to the prince. As I'm reading this book, I find it's harder to take over a country if a prince uses ministers because they have little incentive to be corrupted by foreign powers or to turn on their prince. Ministers are hardest to conquer and easiest to rule, but with barons they are easy to conquer and hard to maintain. Barons always seek innovation and have followers.

There are three modes for those who want to hold what they have already acquired which are: destroy them, go live there personally and let them live there by their laws. Using these modes make the states need princes to exist. They must destroy them in order to rule them. If free states aren't ruined, they will revolt and destroy their patron. It is easier for someone to rule a place when it has already been ruled.

Something that stood out to me is that Machiavelli was part of the Florence republic when the Medici's came into power. By setting goals it makes the ruler better. In the book it talks about Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. I took it upon myself to look up what each one was the founder of because I was curious. Moses is the founder of Jews, Cyrus is the founder of the Persian Empire, Romulus is the founder of Rome, and Theseus is the founder of Athens.

They used force, or arms, to establish a new order. Just like as prophets finding a religion would keep people under your rule. The last paragraph of chapter six is a good example of the path they took to become prophets. The best way to establish a prince is to lay a foundation, which means building a house. The use of barons to solidify the states makes the people peaceful and hate the baron not him then he wins their loyalty.

As my analysis I am going to analyze how Machiavelli builds his case through a combination of examples and structured argument. The sharp distinctions that he makes between the different states are very successful intent as they enable him to present his ideas intelligibly and briefly. He creates an impression of honesty and impractical by presenting the world in simple terms. Machiavelli defines virtues as qualities that are praised by others. He argues that a prince should always try to appear virtuous, but that acting virtuously for virtue's sake can prove detrimental to the principality.