**The Prince**

Niccolò Machiavelli

Introduction:

Machiavelli composed The Prince as a practical guide for ruling. This goal is evident from the very beginning, the dedication of the book to Lorenzo de' Medici, the ruler of Florence. The Prince is not particularly theoretical or abstract; its prose is simple and its logic straightforward. These traits underscore Machiavelli's desire to provide practical, easily understandable advice.

It focuses on the qualities of the prince himself. The Prince", written by Niccolo Machiavelli, is one of the first examinations of politics and science from a purely scientific and rational perspective. Machiavelli theorizes that the state is only created if the people cooperate and work to maintain it. The state is also one of man's greatest endeavors, and the state takes precedence over everything else. The state should be one's primary focus, and maintaining the sovereignty of the state one's most vital concern. The state is founded on the power of its military. Therefore, a strong military is vital to maintaining the state.

The final sections of *The Prince* link the book to a specific historical context: Italy's disunity. Machiavelli sets down his account and explanation of the failure of past Italian rulers and concludes with an impassioned plea to the future rulers of the nation. Machiavelli asserts the belief that only Lorenzo de' Medici, to whom the book is dedicated, can restore Italy's honor and pride. Machiavelli lived in the 15th century where the renaissance was back then.

With the discovery of new lands, the growth of cities and the discovey of new fortunes, the renaissance and the back to the Greek culture began. In Rome the church was powerful, people had religious mentality, they cared so much for the second world, after the renaissance people continued to believe in god but a new concept appeared which is “the humanism” where man is the center of the universe. They started to read Greek work and books, they moved to a more pragmatic and realistic life, their whole life changed. Machiavelli was affected and influenced by the renaissance because he gave examples from Greek books and was impressed by their theology. In the prince Machiavelli didn’t write moralities, he wrote practical advices.

**Themes**

**For Machiavelli the most important thing to keep the state and protect it from falling is to acquire power, and most importantly is to keep it.**

**Statesmanship & Warcraft**

Machiavelli believes that good laws follow naturally from a good military. His famous statement that “the presence of sound military forces indicates the presence of sound laws” describes the relationship between developing states and war in *The Prince.* Machiavelli reverses the conventional understanding of war as a necessary, but not definitive, element of the development of states, and instead asserts that successful war is the very foundation upon which all states are built. Much of *The Prince* is devoted to describing exactly what it means to conduct a good war: how to effectively fortify a city, how to treat subjects in newly acquired territories, and how to prevent domestic insurrection that would distract from a successful war. But Machiavelli's description of war encompasses more than just the direct use of military force—it comprises international diplomacy, domestic politics, tactical strategy, geographic mastery, and historical analysis. Within the context of Machiavelli's Italy—when cities were constantly threatened by neighboring principalities and the area had suffered through power struggles for many years—his method of viewing almost all affairs of state through a military lens was a timely innovation in political thinking.

**Goodwill & Hatred**

To remain in power, a prince must avoid the hatred of his people. It is not necessary for him to be loved; in fact, it is often better to for him to be feared. Being hated, however, can cause a prince's downfall. This assertion might seem incompatible with Machiavelli's statements on the utility of cruelty, but Machiavelli advocates the use of cruelty only insofar as it does not compromise the long-term goodwill of the people. The people's goodwill is always the best defense against both domestic insurrection and foreign aggression. Machiavelli warns princes against doing things that might result in hatred, such as the confiscation of property or the dissolution of traditional institutions. Even installations that are normally valued for military use, such as fortresses, should be judged primarily on their potential to garner support for the prince. Indeed, only when he is absolutely sure that the people who hate him will never be able to rise against him can a prince cease to worry about incurring the hatred of any of his subjects. Ultimately, however, obtaining the goodwill of the people has little or nothing to do with a desire for the overall happiness of the populace. Rather, goodwill is a political instrument to ensure the stability of the prince's reign.

**Free Will**

Machiavelli often uses the words “prowess” and “fortune” to describe two distinct ways in which a prince can come to power. “Prowess” refers to an individual's talents, while “fortune” implies chance or luck. Part of Machiavelli's aim in writing *The Prince* is to investigate how much of a prince's success or failure is caused by his own free will and how much is determined by nature or the environment in which he lives. Machiavelli applies this question specifically to the failure of past Italian princes. In Chapter XXV, Machiavelli discusses the role of fortune in determining human affairs. He attempts to compromise between free will and determinism by arguing that fortune controls half of human actions and leaves the other half to free will. However, Machiavelli also argues that through foresight—a quality that he champions throughout the book—people can shield themselves against fortune's vicissitudes. Thus, Machiavelli can be described as confident in the power of human beings to shape their destinies to a degree, but equally confident that human control over events is never absolute.

 A good leader should also have many characteristics such as:

A prince should know geography and this will him in conquers because he has to know the nature of the land and the characteristic of the land that he is going to conquer.

A prince should know history to learn from the past, but he should not imitate the predecessors because each method work for a specific time. It is not to follow the history blindly, it is to see the adequate conditions and work according to them.

A prince should know what he is doing or else the state will fall.

A state will be prosperous if the ruler encourages the people and acquire that good will of the commoners.

A prince should take advice but only when he wants because he should keep his dignity and proud. He should give money to his advisers to make them feel that their life depends on him and to keep them sincere and loyal.

Machiavelli believes that men respect power, but they will take advantage of kindness. He believes that when given the opportunity one must destroy completely, because if one does not he will certainly be destroyed. The prince should lead the military, and he has to be intelligent. An effective politician can make quick and intelligent choices about the problems that constantly arise before him. He must also have virtue, which means he is strong, confident, talented, as well as smart. A prince cannot be uncertain, because uncertainty is a sign of weakness. Fortune controls half of human's actions, and man's will control the other half. Virtue is the best defense for fortune, and virtue must be used in order to keep fortune in check. The prince must take advantage of situations based solely on the concept- if it is best for the state. He should choose his decisions based on contemporary and historical examples. A prince cannot consider whether his acts are moral or immoral, and he instead must act in an unbiased manner for the state. Also, it does not matter how the state achieves its goals, as long as these goals are achieved. Finally, regardless of the personal morality involved, the prince should be praised if he does good for the state and berated if he hurts the state.

**Virtue**

 Machiavelli defines virtues as qualities that are praised by others, such as generosity, compassion, and piety. 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. A prince should not necessarily avoid vices such as cruelty or dishonesty if employing them will benefit the state. Cruelty and other vices= sins should not be pursued for their own sake, just as virtue should not be pursued for its own sake: virtues and vices should be conceived as means to an end. **Every action the prince takes must be considered in light of its effect on the state, not in terms of its intrinsic moral value**. It is good to follow virtue, but f virtue won’t lead to power we have to depart from it. It is important that the leader hold his word but it’s not feasible always. If this promise is not good for the state the prince should depart from this promise, but he shouldn’t let the others know that he did departed. Religion is nothing but a tool in the hands of the ruler to win the acceptance of people.

**Human Nature**

*Love endures by a bond which men, being scoundrels, may break whenever it serves their advantage to do so; but fear is supported by the dread of pain, which is ever present.*

Machiavelli has a very low concept of human nature, he asserts that a number of traits are inherent in human nature. People are generally self-interested, although their affection for others can be won and lost. They are content and happy so long they are not victims of something terrible. They may be trustworthy in prosperous times, but they will quickly turn selfish, deceitful, and profit-driven in times of adversity. People admire honor, generosity, courage, and piety in others, but most of them do not exhibit these virtues themselves. Ambition is commonly found among those who have achieved some power, but most common people are satisfied with the status quo and therefore do not yearn for increased status. People will naturally feel a sense of obligation after receiving a favor or service, and this bond is usually not easily broken. Nevertheless, loyalties are won and lost, and goodwill is never absolute. Such statements about human nature are often offered up as justifications for the book's advice to princes. People are superficial, liars, cheaters, ficklest, and he based his arguments on this concept. He asks the prince to see what human beings are and act according to their nature. A prince should rule like a lion which is courageous but at the same time it can be trapped , and he should rule also like fox which is caning, but it can be trapped by wolfs. Hence, a prince should act like a human and a beast.

 Machiavelli has a very low opinion of the people throughout history. In general, he feels that men are "ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceiver." "They shun danger and are greedy for profit; while you treat them well, they are yours. They would shed their blood for you ... but when you are in danger they turn against you." Machiavelli basically has little respect for the people, and he feels as though they have not earned much either. He uses this as justification for the use of fear in order to control people. He also feels that men are "wretched creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them." This sense of fairness justifies breaking one's word to men. Machiavelli also writes about how hard it must be for a prince to stay virtuous. He concludes that with so many wretched men around virtue is hard to create in oneself. "The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous." Overall, Machiavelli is very pessimistic about the abilities of the people. He feels that after examining people through history, his conclusions of wretched men are correct.

**Different ways to reach power:**

According to Machiavelli, there are four main ways a prince can come into power. The first way is through prowess, meaning personal skill and ability. The second is through fortune, meaning good luck or the charity of friends. The third way is through crime, such as through a coup, conspiracy, or assassination. The fourth way is constitutional, meaning through the official support of either nobles or common people.

The most important comparison to be made is that between prowess and fortune. Obtaining a state through prowess is clearly more demanding than benefiting from simple good luck. But a prince gifted with his own prowess is possessed of a strong foundation to maintain that rule, whereas fortune is unpredictable and may lead as easily to a prince's deposition as it had to his rise. Thus, maintaining rule is much easier when a prince has used his own skill. Because the maintenance of rule is most important to Machiavelli, he concludes that prowess is a better route to become a prince.

A second comparison might be made between criminal and constitutional means of achieving power. Here, the main point of difference is not the skill and experience of the prince but popular attitudes toward the prince. A prince who comes to power through crime runs the greatest risk because he may be forced to commit some cruelty toward his subjects, endangering himself by breeding hatred and resentment among the populace. A constitutional prince, however, comes to power with the support of either the nobles or commoners, and his job consists mainly of keeping the unsupportive group satisfied with his rule.

To sum up, prowess is to be preferred over fortune because prowess leads to a more effective ruler who is likely to garner lasting glory. Constitutional princes are preferable to criminal princes not only because they are more effective, but also because a criminal prince can achieve nothing other than power. A constitutional prince can achieve both power and glory.