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Great Con 217A

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<center>Fear and Love in Machiavelli's *The Prince*</center>

How to obtain and maintain power is a question on leaders' minds around the world, and it has been since the beginning of globalization. In non-democratic countries, monarchs must find ways to stay in the public's favor to avoid rebellions and coups. The pursuit of influence and sovereignty dominates the political climate in the United States today due to frequent reelections, and this causes a state of constant campaigning for votes and donations. In his political treatise, Niccolò Machiavelli gives extensive guidance on effective leadership of newly acquired principalities. Machiavelli is widely considered the first modern political scientist, and his words had a tremendous impact on the thinking of many political thinkers after him. Among his instructions, Machiavelli states that it is ideal that a leader should be both loved and feared, but if they should have to choose one, they should be feared rather than loved. There are many historical, political, and psychological reasons why Machiavelli would think this way, but this stance is not realistic or successful in the long term on the political or individual level. Through an examination of Machiavelli's distinction between fear and love as well as human nature, we will discuss the basis for which we can determine why it is not a realistic piece of advice for anyone in today's society.

The topic at the center of this debate on leadership is discussed in chapter 17 of *The Prince*. Machiavelli begins the chapter by warning against a leader who is too compassionate,

and then he proposes the central question. "Is it better to be loved than feared, or vice versa? My reply is one ought to be both loved and feared; but, since it is difficult to accomplish both at the same time, I maintain it is much safer to be feared than loved, if you have to do with one of the two" (Machiavelli 52). He continues to say that people are less afraid of offending someone who they love rather than fear, and that while love does bind people to an extent, it is much easier to break an agreement of love than an agreement based in fear. In addition, Machiavelli posits that it is "perfectly possible to be feared and not hated" (52). In order to avoid being hated, a leader must make sure that when they kill someone they have a reason, and most importantly a leader must not touch their subjects' property, "for men are quicker to forget the death of their father than the loss of their inheritance" (52). This is the basis for which Machiavelli makes his claim that a leader should be feared rather than loved, and through historical context and political psychology we will determine why these claims are flawed in this political age.

To start, we must assess the historical context in which Machiavelli was living and observe the implications it had on his idea of a leader, as well as natural human behavior. Machiavelli grew up in a tumultuous era in Italy, in which Italian city-states were being acquired by popes and military leadership was extremely inconsistent. In his adult life, he was appointed to be in charge of the Italian militia, a position through which he gained most of his political knowledge and experience. After being sent to jail for allegedly conspiring against the Medici family, Machiavelli spent three weeks in prison where he was tortured. Following his release, Machiavelli retired and began writing his two political treatises: *The Prince* and *Discourses*. It is no surprise that Machiavelli would have the cruel and possibly amoral outlook on politics that he presents in *The Prince*, that "emphasizes the notions that the ends justify the means and that one

must be willing to use force if necessary to achieve one's political goals" (Kasper 45-46). A politically cruel world is what Machiavelli is used to, and that is the audience to which he is catering. A person who was physically tortured with no basis for guilt would logically distrust people in power, and in turn would have a negatively biased view of human nature. The fact that Machiavelli's political advice was so colored by the cruel and unjust time and location in which he lived makes all of his assumptions about human tendencies lose credibility.

Next, it is important to consider Machiavelli's basis of political psychology and how it aligns with his theory of fear and love. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli writes in a way that differentiates the capabilities of rulers and princes from that of the majority population. He writes directly to the potential prince with advice on how to utilize their unique leadership abilities, and he paints the prince's subjects as one large flock that thinks and feels exactly alike. Part of this is based in what Markus Fischer claims to be the way Machiavelli categorizes the population; founders, princes, and the multitude. He describes the founders as such: "On the highest level are founders like Moses or Romulus, whose imagination recognizes the true good to consist of the perpetual glory earned by those who benefit men with lasting institutions, and who have the ingenuity to introduce wholly new orders and modes by using force and fraud" (Fischer 803). Princes are not intelligent or innovative enough to be founders, but they have more cunning than the majority which allows them "to manipulate the many by various kinds of fraud, such as pretending to be virtuous, manipulating elections, and promoting religious beliefs that sanction their rule" (Fischer 804). On the bottom rung of the hierarchy is the multitude, or the general population of subjects. As stated, Machiavelli paints a broad picture of the multitude

as beings that are easily influenced by a sovereign power and are simply acting on their desires without truly weighing the consequences.

This portrayal of all subjects in all principalities is the most troublesome part of his depiction of society. It is clear that Machiavelli does not think the multitude capable of basic humility (hence the claim about people forgetting their father's death before the loss of their inheritance) and encourages the leaders to whom he is writing to view their subjects in an almost animalistic way. Machiavelli's opinion on human nature is very deterministic, in which he assumes that certain people are born suited for a certain position in society (ie. a prince or a part of the multitude). However, he does not account for the possibility that a founder or a prince could emerge from the multitude based on learned experiences, or that all people in any place in the hierarchy are equally capable of love and self-awareness. His distinctions of society in this three-fold manner doesn't leave room for his own identity; a person who grew up as part of the multitude but rose to have military power. Machiavelli fails to identify himself in this system he has created, and this in itself is contradictory; the world and the human race is not as black and white as Machiavelli would make it out to be. His massive generalizations about human tendencies are unfounded, thereby undermining his assertion about fear and love.

The influence that Machiavelli's political ideals had on past and current leaders of all different kinds of governments can also reveal the flawed nature of his advice. Even though his writings in *The Prince* were intended to be applied to a newly acquired principality, it is certain that Machiavelli's treatise has transcended that category of government. A Machiavellian way of leading implies a definition in itself; "'the view that politics is amoral and that any means however unscrupulous can justifiably be used in achieving political power'" (Kasper 46). Even

though Machiavelli says himself in the introduction that he does not intend to write about an imaginary political situation but rather how politics really work, his suggestion for a leader to be feared rather than love does not hold up in any realistic form of government. In a hereditary dictatorship such as North Korea, the leader does not gain the public's favor purely by fear; rather, the leader convinces (and perhaps brainwashes) his subjects to undoubtedly love him. While this love could be based upon a deeply rooted fear, he is a successful and powerful leader because of how much his citizens appear to favor him — fear alone could not maintain the kind of public admiration needed. In the United States, the two party system almost requires that some people hate a candidate while others fully support and love them. In the case of the current administration, Donald Trump did not gain power by making people fear him; rather, he used citizens' existing fears of certain demographics to his advantage and gained their love by validating those fears. While it is true that Machiavelli had a very specific type of political situation in mind when writing his advice to be feared rather than loved, his Machiavellian ways are more imaginary than he would have liked to believe at the time of authorship.

Machiavellianism has not only become a political term but a psychological term as well, and it implies a type of ruthless way of interacting with people in daily life. The skills and attributes that Machiavelli encourages all leaders to have could in reality be a psychologically damaging way of looking at the world. A person who follows Machiavelli's advice in their personal relationships and strive to be feared rather than loved can arguably be considered a sociopath in today's society. Jared Koliscak gives a comprehensive definition of what Machiavellianism means in a psychological context: "Machiavellianism... is the outright disregard of other human beings as a means of fulfilling one's personal goals and agenda. With a

great lack of empathy and emotion, these individuals treat others as utilitarian tools to further their goals and their perceived sense of self justifies their actions" (Koliscak 1692). Many scholars have assessed the impact of Machiavellian traits in adolescents, including Visser et al. who performed a series of psychological tests to affirm the existence of the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, narcissism and subclinical psychopathy) and other corresponding traits, such as Status-Driven Risk Taking (Visser et al. 485). The tests revealed that people in the study who exhibit Dark Triad traits were primarily extrinsically motivated rather than intrinsically motivated by emotions or relationships. Although being extrinsically motivated can certainly earn someone's status and power, their interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence is severely weakened by their tendency to view other people as a means to their end. The fact that modern psychology categorizes Machiavellianism alongside narcissism and psychopathy implies that Machiavellianism is not seen as a healthy form of thought, and therefore its implications are greatly altered from what Machiavelli intended and are not transferable from his time into ours.

In an examination of historical, political, and psychological contexts and implications of Machiavelli's advice for a leader, specifically regarding his preference of fear over love, it is clear that his idea of effective authoritarian personality traits cannot be identically applied to today's version of a leader. It is impossible to know whether Machiavelli had even intended for his advice in *The Prince* to have such a lasting effect over political science and psychology, or whether he would approve of the way the term Machiavellianism is used colloquially today. Nevertheless, the impact of his words can be detected in many walks of life, from the common citizen to a powerful dictator. No matter the status, in order to be successful in political

command and in life, one must balance the power of love and fear, and therefore the dichotomy

that Machiavelli draws is of no use in today's social order.

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Writing Desk Edits

I met with a Writing Desk tutor twice throughout the process of writing this paper. The first time was early on and I just needed to talk through my thesis with another person. I expressed my concern with the nature of the assignment and my confusion about it being a research paper but not supposed to be based in research. After slightly clearing up my confusion, I was able to narrow down the structure of my essay topic and include a more focused section on the text itself. In my second tutoring session, I went in with a little over four pages written and much more content to discuss. I read my paper out loud with my tutor and frequently paused to make corrections and ask the tutor if my argument was understandable. The fact that this tutor was not a conner helped greatly with assessing the overall structure of my argument, besides the content of my topic. It was extremely helpful to hear which parts did not make sense to someone who had not read Machiavelli, as it is hard for me to put things in the reader's perspective. This meeting gave me many additional ideas that I did not have before, such as Machiavelli's identity within the social system he creates (he is very much in between social statuses), and the concept of a political leader not necessarily being feared themselves, but using the fears of others to their advantage. These two sessions gave me a better direction as to where my paper was going, and clarified what I was truly arguing.