

22 Machiavelli on Ethics and Politics and Government

Machiavelli believed that human being is essentially selfish and the only uniting factor in these selfish human beings is the desire for security. The subjects join the state because they find themselves insecure without the effective protection of the state. The people in general are bad and the wise ruler shall formulate his policies on this assumption.

Medieval political philosophers believed that the religion was the basis of the state. They felt that development of state could only be judged by the religious progress which is made. It was felt that the state was only a department of the church and church fathers assumed supremacy over state affairs. Aristotle tried to differentiate between the state and church functions. Machiavelli divorced religion from politics and separated them completely from each other. He tried to subordinate religion to the state. At

"Fame is the perfume of heroic deeds." - Socrates

the same time he agreed that morality had its own limited place in society which much be preserved. Since he did not bother about the morality of means for achieving the ends, he can be called the founder of utilitarian ethics. He differentiated between public and private morality and assigned the former a preferential place and position over the latter. Patriotism is the only end of a good citizen.

Like Aristotle, Machiavelli classified the governments into normal and perverted forms. In the normal form the government is monarchy, aristocracy and limited democracy or constitutional democracy. The perverted forms are tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. Machiavelli, however, agreed with Polybius and Cicero that only a mixed form of government is the best or ideal attainable one. As a realist he felt that in a state there should be close relationship between economic development and political stability. The stability of a government depends on the economic development.

"A happy family is an earlier heaven." - Sir John Browning

24 Machiavelli liked the rule of many on election basis rather than rule of one on hereditary basis. He had definite preference for elected government over hereditary basis system. He argued that the people no doubt are unable to understand intricate and complicated policy matters but their sharing in government for ordinary affairs is bound to bring stability to the state. Training and equipping of a citizen army is the primary need of a nation. For a successful ruler it is the most important to know the art of war. He pleaded for compulsory military training for all able bodied persons.

In addition to this, he stood for republic form of government as one which was for him conducive to efficiency and also responsible for promoting individual liberty. It is, however, not clear as to why he was in favour of liberty for those to whom he characterised as selfish and nasty to be controlled with strong hands.

"If a wise father that knows his own child." - William Shakespeare

Machiavelli strongly believed that the state should either expand or expire. He held the view that the state must go on expanding itself both in absolute monarchy or republic. From expansion he understood not blending of organisation but annexation of states to be dominated and governed by one Prince. He pleaded that a Prince should not depend on the policy of taxation because that was not a dependable source of income. Prince should believe in royal plundering. A successful Prince ought to believe in outward shows for catching the imagination of his subjects as well as the subjects of other states. This outward show will certainly influence all other subjects and create praise for his state in the minds of others.

"We make our fortune is and we call them fate." - Benjamin Disraeli

