

## If I call you a Hobbesian Machiavel, is that a compliment?

Read and consider two concise and modern statements describing Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

### Statement 1:

Machiavelli's best-known book, *Il Principe*, contains a number of maxims concerning politics, but rather than the more traditional subject of a hereditary prince, it concentrates on the possibility of a "new prince". To retain power, the hereditary prince must carefully maintain the sociopolitical institutions to which the people are accustomed; whereas a new prince has the more difficult task in ruling, since he must first stabilize his newfound power in order to build an enduring political structure. He asserted that social benefits of stability and security could be achieved in the face of moral corruption. Aside from that, Machiavelli believed that public and private morality had to be understood as two different things in order to rule well. As a result, a ruler must be concerned not only with reputation, but also must be positively willing to act immorally at the right times. As a political scientist, Machiavelli emphasized the occasional need for the methodical exercise of brute force or deceit.

### Statement 2:

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes set out his doctrine of the foundation of states and legitimate governments – originating social contract theory. *Leviathan* was written during the English Civil War; much of the book is occupied with demonstrating the necessity of a strong central authority to avoid the evil of discord and civil war.

Beginning from a mechanistic understanding of human beings and the passions, Hobbes postulates what life would be like without government, a condition which he calls the state of nature. In that state, each person would have a right, or license, to everything in the world. This, Hobbes argues, would lead to a "war of all against all" (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). In such a state, people fear death, and lack both the things necessary to commodious living, and the hope of being able to toil to obtain them. So in order to avoid it people accede to a social contract and establish a civil society. According to Hobbes, society is a population beneath a sovereign authority, to whom all individuals in that society cede some rights for the sake of protection. Any abuses of power by this authority are to be accepted as the price of peace. There is no doctrine of separation of powers in Hobbes's discussion. According to Hobbes, the sovereign must control civil, military, judicial, and ecclesiastical powers.

### Statement 3:



Machiavelli described Moses as a conquering prince, who founded new modes and orders by force of arms, which he used willingly to kill many of his own people. The Bible describes the reasons behind his success differently.

**Short Answer Directions:** Select one quotation from either Machiavelli or Hobbes, and in a coherent paragraph, discuss how the quotation reflects Renaissance ideals about The Great Chain of Being and Shakespearean tragedy. Be sure to integrate between 3-7 words from the primary text into your answer.

**Wisdom from Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1505)**

"Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are."

"If an injury has to be done to a man it should be so severe that his vengeance need not be feared."

"There is no other way to guard yourself against flattery than by making men understand that telling you the truth will not offend you."

"It is much safer to be feared than loved because ...love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails."

"The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves."

"Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception."

**Wisdom from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651)**

"Curiosity is the lust of the mind."

"Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry... no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

"The condition of man . . . is a condition of war of everyone against everyone"

"When all the world is overcharged with inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is war, which provideth for every man, by victory or death."

"In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

**NOTE:** In your next SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT, please use either the term Hobbesian or Machiavellian. Also for 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 5 bonus points on Assessment 1 (which you turned in this week) to the first person to find and show me a direct reference to either thinker in one of the course readings.