

## THE PRINCE by Niccolo Machiavelli

5. Here a question arises: whether it is better to be loved than feared, or the reverse. The answer is, of course, that it would be best to be both loved and feared. But since the two rarely come together, anyone compelled to choose will find greater security in being feared than in being loved. . . . 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.

This passage from Chapter XVII contains perhaps the most famous of Machiavelli's statements. Often, his argument that it is better to be feared than loved is taken at face value to suggest that *The Prince* is a handbook for dictators and tyrants. But a closer reading reveals that Machiavelli's argument is a logical extension of his assessments of human nature and virtue. In the first place, people will become disloyal if circumstances warrant. In the second, the prince's ultimate goal is to maintain the state, which requires the obedience of the people. From these two points, it follows that between benevolence and cruelty, the latter is the more reliable. Machiavelli never advocates the use of cruelty for its own sake, only in the interests of the ultimate end of statecraft.

Explain what Machiavelli is saying.