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11/15/96
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Richard III

In William Shakespeare's Richard III, we see Shakespeare's interpretation of despot rule and the parallels that stem from this interpretation. The character type of Richard has been examined and marveled for thousands of years. From Plato's examination of despot rule in the Republic, we see the motives of what drives despot rulers. A look at the background of Richard and how his upbringing and personal life contributed to his insecurities will help to understand why someone may become a despot. The comparison of Adolf Hitler to that of Richard, shown by the modern motion picture Richard III, will show the rapid rise and fall of the despot and the reality of totalitarian rule.

Plato's Republic, a fascinating look at the comparison of the just soul and the unjust soul, allows one to see the philosophical motives behind despot rule. Despot rulers are simply driven by fear. Their anxieties and insecurities lead to a hatred that has a desire to destroy, deep-rooted in violence. Despot rulers are also never satisfied with the power they have at any given time, thus exposing their constant fear of retaliation from their subjects. This examination of the despot ruler by Plato clearly shows the motives by which despot rulers rule, but it fails to explain why and how these motives originate in the human mind.

In order to comprehend why such a high level of fear and insecurity can be brought about, a look at the upbringing and personal life of Richard should be brought into discussion. One of three brothers, Richard was in constant competition of who

would succeed in gaining the throne of England. Richard, like his other brothers, wanted the title of king quite badly, but as time pressed on it seemed less likely that

Richard would succeed in gaining the throne. His shrewd attitude and a physical deformity, that left him nearly paralyzed, were two of the many reasons why Richard would be kept of the throne. Richard quickly became aware of this and he therefore began his rampage to insure himself the throne. After killing off his brothers and many

others, who were eligible to succeed, Richard finally became King of England. This title

did not bring comfort, and Richard continued to kill anybody who posed a threat in keeping him from remaining king. Richard's reign as king lasted only two years, and

during this two year period Richard was never once happy, thus showing how the unjust

soul will never be happy. His insecurities and fears worsened as he gained more and

more power. This proves Plato's examination of the unjust soul or the despot ruler. To

understand why he became this way, one must look at how his competitive nature was hindered by his deformities and how he could not come to understand his disposition.

It is clear that the motion picture Richard III aims to exhibit a parallel between

the lives of Richard and Adolf Hitler, but why? The film aims to show a universal theme:

the reality of the despot ruler. Richard ruled over England during the sixteenth century, a

time when totalitarian rule was quite prevalent. Hitler's rule however, took place in the

twentieth century, which seems quite amazing seeing how the ideas of liberty and justice

had been accepted by most western countries. What is more amazing is that Hitler was able to gain so much power without military intervention by other countries. By the

time the allies decided to take a stand, Hitler's empire had conquered many eastern European lands, and had occupation over France.

Therefore, rule by a despot is something we must always be aware of. Though it is becoming harder to attain authoritarian rule because of organizations such as the United Nations, one must never close our eyes to the fact that man was given the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. One also must never forget that government is meant to preserve these rights, not to take them away. We must learn from history, not forget about it. We must take into account the works of Plato and Shakespeare and try to understand the motives of a despot and how they come about. If we are able to do this our society, will eventually prevent totalitarian rule from ever again occurring.

