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### ABSTRACT

#### The Art of Ruling: Machiavelli's The Prince

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**Background:** In *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli discusses ruling and the exercise of power. It is intended as a practical guide for leaders seeking to maintain their hold on power and ensure the stability and prosperity of their domains. Machiavelli presents a clear-eyed and unsentimental view of the reality of power and the challenges that rulers face. He advocates for the use of cunning, deceit, and force as necessary tools in the quest for power and the maintenance of control, regardless of the morality of the actions taken to achieve that.

**Objectives:** Although Machiavelli's intention is to write an amoral treatise, i.e. about what is practically good but not what is morally good, I will investigate in this paper the question of *The Prince's* moral and ethical commitments in more details: to what extent is Machiavelli's account amoral? While Howes in *Creating Necessity* supports Machiavelli's claim about the amorality of his doctrine, Hösle ('Morality and politics: Reflections on Machiavelli's Prince') shows that Machiavelli's account does indeed commit to moral assumptions. Departing from Hösle's analysis, this paper will show further moral commitments which Hösle seems to dismiss.

**Methods:** Comparative essay, Conceptual analysis.

**Results:** Because scholars commit to moral rigorism as the only standard to evaluate the moral significance of a deed, they fail to see the other dimension, namely consequences of the same deed to be morally significant as well. Analyzing *The Prince*, while taking both dimensions (intention and consequence of a deed) into account as morally significant, I conclude that the politics outlined in *The Prince* is far from being a morally free domain. Furthermore, by applying the moral



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principle of human dignity according to which no individual life ought to be valued more than the other, I will show that Machiavelli's account commits to immoral principles of action.

**Conclusion:** Both Howes and Höslé provide similar yet different takes on Machiavelli's rules of governance. Each of them provides Machiavelli with certain benefits that support his idea but play up or down certain extremes in order to get their point across. Although it is easy to agree with either of them it can sometimes prove to be somewhat problematic due to certain words and language that they use which could be interpreted in a way that possibly goes against most contemporary thought about law and ethics within the sphere of governance. Their differences are minute and easy to miss if not careful. It is within these small differences that we can observe how different thinkers were able to interpret and develop a single idea from a single source.

**Keywords:** Machiavelli, Höslé, Howes, Deceit, Force, Ruling, The Prince, Governance, Power, Ruler, Morality, Philosophy, Ethics.

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