**University of Oum El Bouaghi January, 31, 2025**

**Faculty of Law and political sciences First Year**

**Department of Political sciences**

***The Prince*: Analyzing Power**

Traditionally, political philosophers of the past posited a special relationship between moral goodness and legitimate authority. Many authors (especially those who composed mirror-of-princes books or royal advice books during the Middle Ages and Renaissance) believed that the use of political power was only rightful if it was exercised by a ruler whose personal moral character was strictly virtuous. Thus rulers were counseled that if they wanted to succeed—that is, if they desired a long and peaceful reign and aimed to pass their office down to their heirs—they must be sure to behave in accordance with conventional ethical standards, that is, the virtues and piety. In a sense, it was thought that rulers did well when they did good; they earned the right to be obeyed and respected on account of their moral and religious rectitude.

Machiavelli criticized at length precisely this moralistic view of authority in his best-known treatise, *The Prince*. For Machiavelli, there is no moral basis on which to judge the difference between legitimate and illegitimate uses of power. Rather, authority and power are essentially coequal: whoever has power has the right to command; but goodness does not ensure power and the ruler has no more authority on account of being good. Thus, in direct opposition to morally derived theories of politics, Machiavelli says that the only real concern in politics is the acquisition and maintenance of power (although he talks less about power *per se* than about “maintaining the state”). In this sense, Machiavelli presents a trenchant criticism of the concept of authority by arguing that the notion of legitimate rights of rulership adds nothing to the actual possession of power.

*The Prince* purports to reflect the self-conscious political realism of an author who is fully aware—on the basis of direct experience in the service of the Florentine government—that goodness and right are not sufficient to win and maintain political supremacy. Machiavelli thus seeks to learn and teach the rules of political power. For him, it is necessary for any successful ruler to know how to use power effectively. Only by means of its proper application, Machiavelli believes, can individuals be brought to obey and will the ruler be able to maintain the state in safety and security.

Machiavelli’s political theory, then, excludes issues of moral authority and legitimacy from consideration in the discussion of political decision-making and political judgment. Nowhere does this come out more clearly than in his treatment of the relationship between law and force. Machiavelli acknowledges that good laws and good arms constitute the dual foundations of a well-ordered political system. But he immediately adds that since coercion creates legality, he will concentrate his attention on force. He says, “Since there cannot be good laws without good arms, I will not consider laws but speak of arms” (*Prince* CW 47). In other words, valid law rests entirely upon the threat of coercive force; authority is impossible for Machiavelli as a right apart from the power to enforce it. Machiavelli is led to conclude that fear is always preferable to affection in subjects, just as violence and deception are superior to legality in effectively controlling them. He observes that

**Questions :**

**1/ text comprehension :**

a/ determine what **the main ideas of the text** ?

b/ why do we consider Machiavelli as **a realist thinker in political sciences** ?

c/ **paraphrase** the following sentence:

“Machiavelli acknowledges that good laws and good arms constitute the dual foundations of a well-ordered political system”.

d/ give **synonyms** and **antonyms**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Synonym** | **Antonym** |
| Legal = ……………………… | Wickedness **≠………………..** |
| Merits =……………………… | Hailed **≠……………………** |
| Hegemony =………………… | Loss **≠ ……………………..** |
| To execute = …………………. | Idealism **≠………………….** |
| Nationals =……………………… | Hatred **≠………………….** |

**2/ Mastery of Language:**

a/ turn into **passive voice**:

* Political philosophers of the past posited a special relationship between moral goodness and legitimate authority.
* Machiavelli presents a trenchant criticism of the concept of authority

b/ turn into **active voice**:

* Many political ideas were expressed in reference to Machiavelli.
* The merits of a central authority had been mentioned in the 17 century.

c/ fill in the gaps:

For Machiavelli, it is meaningless and futile to speak of any claim to the authority to command detached from the possession of superior political power.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Noun** | **Verb** | **Adjective** |
| …………………….. | …………………………. | meaningless |
| ………………………. | To command | ……………………………….. |
| power | ……………………………. | ……………………………….. |

d/ correct **the** **mistakes**:

If the thirty religious wars had not ended, the nation state would not appear in 1648.

e/ find in the text (**a phrase, a clause and a sentence**)

**3/ Translation:**

a/ **translate** the following into **Arabic**:

( For Machiavelli, there is no moral basis on which to judge the difference between legitimate and illegitimate uses of power. Rather, authority and power are essentially coequal: whoever has power has the right to command; but goodness does not ensure power and the ruler has no more authority on account of being good ).

**Your Teacher I.Benammar**

**GOOD LUCK**