



Machiavelli's Prince: A New Reading

Erica Benner

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Why did Machiavelli write the Prince - and why did religious and political authorities find it so threatening? Five hundred years on, this book tries to answer these questions.

In the first detailed, chapter-by-chapter reading of the Prince in any language, Erica Benner shows that the book is a masterpiece of ironic writing. Machiavelli's style is deliberately ambiguous: he often seems to say one thing, but gives readers clues that point toward a very different message. Beyond its 'Machiavellian' surface, the Prince has a surprisingly moral purpose. It teaches readers how to recognize hidden dangers in political conduct that merely appears great or praiseworthy - and to mistrust promises of easy solutions to political problems.

This highly engaging new interpretation helps readers to see beyond the Prince's deceptive first appearances. Benner sets out Machiavelli's main ironic techniques at the outset, especially his coded use of words to signal praise or blame. Once readers become familiar with these codes, they will find it easier to grasp the Prince's surreptitiously pro-republican message - and its powerful critique of charismatic one-man rule and imperial politics.

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