

Machiavelli asserts  
that having evil  
qualities are better  
than good literature  
re...

[Law](#), [Evidence](#)



The question of leadership has been a philosophical, ethical, social and sociological conundrum for centuries. It has been tackled by various writers for more than a thousand years over a thousand cultures. Two such great writers were Dante and Machiavelli. While Machiavelli sort to define a good leader, Dante sort to place them in their transcended ecumenical hierarchy. This paper seeks to see where Machiavelli's ideal prince in his work would, "the Prince" fit In Dante's famous work "the comedy of errors."

The two works are in themselves religious in a non-religious sort of way. While Machiavelli was inspired by the intrigues of the Catholic Church and increasing evidence points to the Borgia family. "I will never fear to cite Cesare Borgia and his actions." (Pg851) Dante is rumored with increasing evidence to have been inspired by the Quran. The evidence of which is the seven heavens and the striking similarities to the torments of the hereafter in the chapter Isra in the Quran. This describes the prophet's ascent into the heavens. What is fascinating is what Dante has to say about the fate of leaders and Machiavelli's description of what it takes to be a good leader. The central thesis of this work is that Machiavelli's ideal prince would be hell bound in Dante's inferno. It is the qualities that a leader must have according to Machiavelli that make him/her hell bound.

A leader must be familiar with war fare in all its respects, "a prince must not have any objective nor any thought, nor take up any art, other than the art of war and its ordering and discipline" (pg838) There is nothing noble about war or death. One of the realities of war is innocents must die. In military speak collateral damage.

"Et etiam let him not care about incurring infamy for those vices without

which he might hardly save the state; because, if one considers everything well, one will find that something that appears a virtue, if followed, would be his ruin, and that some other thing that appears a vice, if followed, results in his security and well-being."(pg834)

A leader must use and never fear to be mean and cruel in order to maintain power. "" a prince must not care about the infamy of cruelty in order to keep his subjects united and faithful; because with very few examples he will be more merciful than those who, because of too much mercy, allow disorders to go on, from which spring killings or depredations: because these normally offend a whole collectivity, while those executions which come from the prince offend an individual."(pg837)

Where would Dante place such a leader? In Dante the conspicuous role of leaders are the Cardinals and Popes which ties in well with Machiavelli in that his investigations of attaining power were centered on the power struggles to become Pope. Dante tackles this via the relationship between the offender and his/her victim. The bottommost two circles all fall under the title of deception or Fraud. " Fraud wherewithal is every conscience stung." (Pg630) Fraud comprises the malicious use of reason in order to carry out acts. It is one of the most distasteful things to God. More than violence and sins of concupiscence. The offender victim relationship in this case is due to the existence of a Trust between the two. " How many are esteemed great kings up there who here shall be like unto swine in mire leaving behind them horrible dispraises."( pg 624)

Of violence Dante states, " a death by violence, and painful wounds are to our neighbor given; and his substance ruin, and arson, and injurious levies;

whence homicides, and freebooters, the first round tormenteth all in companies diverse. Man may lay violent hands upon himself and his own goods; and therefore in the second round must perforce without avail repent." (pg636) In his view they must repent and it is no doubt a sin a view very different from that of Machiavelli.

Another aspect of leadership is that there is an element of falsehood. Which according to Dante deserves the eighth circle of hell narrates:

" If I thought my answer was

this flame would move no more;

but since from this depth it never happened

that anyone alive returned (if I hear right),

without fear of infamy I'll answer you" (pg631)

In conclusion, the moral character of Machiavelli's ideal prince is in congruence with Dante's punishment. It is interesting that both writers were Italian and they were reacting to what they were observing in there societies which happened to be the same. The difference in how they viewed leaders shows the reality of politics and the ecclesiastical reality are two different things. Machiavelli's ideal prince is a hell bound prince thus proving the central thesis of this work.

## **References:**

Overton William (2011). World Literature Anthology. APUS ePress.