



ISSN Print: 2664-7699
ISSN Online: 2664-7702
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00
IJHA 2023; 5(2): 26-32
www.humanitiesjournals.net
Received: 19-06-2023
Accepted: 25-07-2023

Anwesha Ganguly
Undergraduate Student,
Department of English, Lady
Shri Ram College for Women,
West Bengal, India

Philosopher King or Machiavellian Prince? A comparative analysis of two ideal kingship models with reference to *The Tempest*

Anwesha Ganguly

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26647699.2023.v5.i2a.52>

Abstract

The *Tempest* is a Shakespearean tragicomedy that deals with several complex issues like colonialism, power-politics, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and most importantly, the impact that language has on social relationships. This paper argues that all of these issues have as their kernel the issue of kingship or more precisely, the model of kingship practised by Prospero on the island. His manner of kingship oscillates between the ideal of the philosophical king (the Platonic political ideal) and the Machiavellian Prince (Proposed by Niccolo Machiavelli). The manner in which Prospero exercises authority dictates the actions of people on the island as well as the existence of physical forces (If one can think of Ariel as a physical force). However, the question of whether it is a sense of political idealism that guides his actions or a magnification of his own personality in order to govern, remains the subject of this paper. It is established at the end that the model of kingship practised by Prospero has less to do with consequences and more to do with intentions. His ideals are personal and his motives are political.

Keywords: Authority, colonialism, nobility, state, utopia

Introduction

Power, especially the existence and exercise of political power inevitably warrants an identification and analysis of its nature in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of its consequences, for the exercise of power has fewer agents than victims. What usually emerges upon a careful scrutiny of political might is that it can be categorized, rarely neatly, into one of the three schemes- rationalist, realist or revolutionist ^[1], as has been observed through studying the patterns of exercising power. The first one requires an acceptance of the current order and a desire to alter the same through rational political thinking, which indirectly refers to adopting mechanisms to avoid a revolution. The third one, revolutionist political theory, preached by the likes of Karl Marx, involves a complete rejection of the current order and a replacement of the same by one that supposedly does not contain the same evils. The second one, realist political theory, involves an understanding of the Hobbesian concept that man is inclined towards animosity and the adoption of a benevolent approach will result in mismanagement of state security. Realist political theory again has two significant branches – offensive and defensive realism, and it is the mark of a true statesman to be able to distinguish between the two. The question of how to be a fit ruler has always dominated political scholarship, with every suitable philosophy for the same failing to meet the criteria warranted for its fulfilment. This paper primarily deals with the ideal of kingship and seeks to analyze two opposing brands of kingship based on the political philosophies of Plato and Machiavelli, the former basing the authority to rule on knowledge and the latter on political machinations and strategy. To understand whether scholarly knowledge of state affairs is the primal

Corresponding Author:
Anwesha Ganguly
Undergraduate student,
Department of English, Lady
Shri Ram College for Women,
West Bengal, India

¹ In the field of international relations, there exist two mechanisms of assertion of political hegemony – offensive realism, proposed by John Mearshimer and defensive realism proposed by Kenneth Waltz. For more details, refer to *The Past, Present and Future of Realism* by Arash Heyderian.

necessity in deciding the appropriateness of a person to take the throne would require an analysis of *The Republic*. If what is required to steer a state is knowledge, it inevitably opens up the question of the nature of epistemology required and the manner in which they should affect the workings of the state, which in turn opens up the question of the Guardian and the nature of balance among the citizens:

A person's actual interests may already coincide with his real interests. Plato's aim is to show such a person that only if he is ruled by a psyche of which justice itself is a homoiomerous essential extensional component can he achieve what is for him real justice and real happiness. If he is a philosopher, this psyche will be his own. But if he is a money-lover or honour-lover, it will not. And this is where the Kallipolis plays a crucial role. Money-lovers and honour-lovers can achieve what is for them real justice and real happiness only in a polis ruled by just philosophers.

But then philosophers can themselves become reliably just and happy only in such a polis. So everyone is better off in the Kallipolis than out of it.

To live in an ideal state ruled by an ideal ruler is better than any other alternative available to a citizen, thus suggesting that citizenry is determined by ideal kingship and vice versa. Both Plato and Machiavelli write about the ideal ruler of an ideal state and their doctrines were based on a desire to witness their states emerge from the dregs of political instability that they had subsided into ^[2]. However, Plato bases his conception not on history but on idealist philosophy ^[3] whereas Machiavelli bases his conception on events that he had witnessed in his lifetime of being a diplomat ^[4]. In *The Tempest*, Prospero claims that he lorded over the ideal state in Milan: "Through all the signories it was the first, And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed In dignity, and for the liberal arts Without a parallel;" How Prospero ultimately ends up achieving such a venture is shrouded in questions because he decides to renounce both power and knowledge towards the end. Both politics and drama, owing to the very nature of these two actions and the settings that they operate in, rely strongly on performance (Howard 17). Drama, akin to politics, is a lived experience

and thereby, requires one to be a firsthand witness for accurate comprehension of what follows, something that again finds a parallel in the concept of inductive reasoning preached by Machiavelli, or the act of experience preceding action backed by it.

Shakespeare seems to have constructed a notable dichotomy of wisdom and realism in Prospero's character in *The Tempest*, for the latter is a combination of scholarly wisdom as well as astute statesmanship, skilled in the political nuances of a regime, which is something he has clearly gained from his past experience of banishment. It is necessary here to mention and also draw a parallel between Prospero and Machiavelli: Machiavelli relied on inductive reasoning in order to arrive at a conclusion about what an ideal king should behave like, instead of the earlier a priori method (Wight 4). However, there does not seem to be an exact point of induction for Prospero because he, unlike Machiavelli, was a witness by virtue of his victimization. His subsequent experiences like those of enslaving Ariel, commanding the spirits on the island and resisting Caliban's monstrosity have been the sources of his political and strategic induction and the areas where he had applied such knowledge as he had obtained. His betrayal resulted in his wisdom for he had understood how benevolence does not befit a position of political prowess as stated by Machiavelli himself:

"But since he is unable to possess them, or comply with them, entirely-the human condition does not permit it-he must be prudent enough to know how to escape the opprobrium of those vices that do cost him his power. He must protect himself, whenever possible, from those vices which would not deprive him of that power; but when this is impossible, these latter vices need trouble him less". (259)

"As he puts it, (Machiavelli's) intention of writing "a thing useful for one who understands it" renders it "more profitable" for him "to go after the effectual truth of the matter (andare dritto alla verita` effettuale della cosa) rather than its image (che alla immaginazione di essa)." (Rahe 19).

The purpose of the Machiavellian argument is to preserve the philosophy of kingship or rather, the righteous mechanism of asserting power, something that finds a parallel in Prospero. It is true that Prospero does not document his findings even in memories, for he buries his "elements" deep in the earth but it seems that the purpose of Prospero's activities founded on his scholastic research was to create a lasting political effect on the island, evident from his treatment of his subjects. The nature of Prospero's Dukedom in Milan was hereditary, as is evident in his monologue to Miranda where he describes her as being of no inferior birth: "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father Was Duke of Milan, and his own heir And princess – no worse issued." However, the uninhabited island is conquered by Prospero whilst residing with the inhabitants of the island which, according to Machiavelli, is the most effective way to conquer a foreign land ^[5]. Caliban telling Stephano about the several voices and charms of the island appears to be

² The Peloponnesian war was fought between Athens and Sparta between 430 and 404 BC. Plato was in military service from 409 to 404 BC and he is believed to have wanted a political career rather than a military one at this stage. At the end of the war, he joined the oligarchy of the Thirty Tyrants set up in 404 BC but left immediately after. Machiavelli inhabited Italy at a time when it was torn by strife.

³ Plato's idea of a Republic for the noble citizens is something that does not have a historical foundation. Machiavelli, on the contrary, bases his analysis of holding on to power on the basis of his observations as a diplomat and public servant. Thus, the argument is that Plato's approach is idealistic and Machiavelli's is realistic.

⁴ As part of his diplomatic duties, Machiavelli visited the Spanish court and that of Louis XII in France. He was also sent to Rome where he could witness the notorious acts of the powerful Pope of the Borgia family, Alexander VI and his illegitimate son, Cesare Borgia, a ruthless and successful Condottiere, who were busy expanding the papal states in the name of religion. In *The Prince*, Chapter 7, he holds up Cesare Borgia as an outstanding example of virtue in a prince. Throughout the book, he offers examples, both from classical history and events from his own day and age to illustrate his ideas.

⁵ According to Machiavelli, there are three ways of assuredly conquering a foreign land – the first is to devastate them and the

Prospero's self-executed indoctrination of himself, in which he lived on the island for a while before he actually annexed it from Caliban. According to Machiavelli, it is easier to hold on to a hereditary kingdom (Owing to the lack of opposition to his power) than an annexed one, the latter requiring a thorough knowledge of the land to be conquered and subsequently, inhabited in the future, a method whose efficacy Prospero seems to be aware of.

Was Prospero's decision to establish his kingdom on the island something that he had pondered upon previously? It would not have been a viable option if Sycorax was alive because Prospero would have lacked Ariel's support and Caliban's servitude in consolidating his position on the island. The arrival of Sycorax on the island and the banishment of Prospero on a rugged boat are strongly tied to the question of fate. While establishment of his rule on the island would not be a tough consolidation, what is also valid is that Prospero might initially have been convinced against political power, after his banishment into exile.

The renewal of the flame of political understanding seems to have arisen at the hope that he might be able to return to his homeland someday, something that he attributes to his daughter^[6]. What might seem like an affectionate bond on a superficial level is revealed to be a political conspiracy later on – Prospero had trained Miranda to be the future queen of Naples and thereby, establish an alliance between Italy and France. However, none of the events unfolding in succession would have been possible if Sycorax herself was not banished from Algiers owing to her terrible acts of sorcery and left on the uninhabited island to perish. Therefore, the role of Fate is essential in the concept of politics and how people in positions of power wield it, as illustrated by Machiavelli himself: "I conclude, therefore, that as fortune is changeable whereas men are obstinate in their ways, men prosper so long as fortune and policy are in accord, and whRegarding the question of acquisition of the uninhabited island, whether the island was uninhabited in the first place is open to conjecture because that would discount Caliban's presence as an inhabitant. Prospero never actually calls it uninhabited and actually acknowledges Caliban's presence: "Then was this island save for the son that she (Sycorax) did litter here". If the event of Sycorax's banishment would not have transpired, Prospero, upon his arrival would not have had access to the several springs and other sources on the island that he himself admits to. Did Prospero initially believe that Caliban was his equal, as Plato proposes in his theory of the guardians? Or did his rejection of Caliban upon the attempted molestation of Miranda happen because of his inductive understanding of prior events? The treatment of Caliban opens up a number of questions, mostly in the context of similarities between the initial positions of Prospero and Caliban.

The decision to establish a de facto kingdom on the island appears to be an a posteriori one because it was based on the conquistador's banishment and the political lessons as well as survival strategies learnt from the same. The nature of the kingdom, however, is a complex one because it has two outlooks to justify it. One would be Caliban's assertion and his ownership of the island by hereditary rights and his

second is to go and live in them; and the third is to let them live under their own laws, exacting tribute and creating within them a government consisting of a few men who keep the state well-disposed towards you (Atkinson 137).

⁶ The contrast between Machiavelli and Plato at this point.

dethroning would be an act of usurpation of power. However, the question of what made Prospero think that Caliban, who was a native, was not capable of exercising power is crucial because it is a parallel to the spearheading of his own banishment by his brother Antonio who did not think that his brother was capable of executing royal duties and therefore, deposed him. The question of capability opens up a new domain of discussion because it links Prospero and the philosophy of his own kingdom to Plato – the necessity to be a Guardian to rule. It goes on to illustrate that epistemic capability was valued by Prospero whereas astute statesmanship was valued by Antonio. Prospero's control of the ship reflects his control of the Dukedom as well as the state of France. Prospero had lost his kingdom to a family member, that too his own brother. He most definitely admits to his own negligence, owing to his submergence in scholarship.

However, Prospero never for once makes a statement against scholarship. Indeed, to the contrary, he takes pride in having instructed his daughter in the scholarly arts, and says that he has trained his daughter better than any tutor could have instructed her. It is the question of combining action with scholarship and therefore, understanding that intelligent kingship demands a blend of necessary traits.

The storm could be a conjuring of reality because no one other than Prospero knew about the mechanism and it could be an extension as well as an instance of how the colonizers ruled over the natives, by way of seeming to be aware of tactics that the latter were not aware of. This concept has been illustrated in depth by Greenblatt, who relates the account of Peter Martyr and the deception wrecked on the Lucayans by the conquerors (Greenblatt 226). Prospero's difference in narrative of Caliban's purpose on the island resembles the conquest of the Lucayans (now known as the Bahamas) by the Spaniards^[7], as related by Peter Matyr in *De Orbo Novo* (Greenblatt 226). Prospero informs Miranda, while updating her of their history on the island that Caliban is crucial to their existence, because he does chores for them like fetching the wood and the like. His dismissal is difficult for the same reason. However, while speaking to Caliban, his language is slightly different and he says that he tried to civilize Caliban, who ended up protesting by adopting the vices of civilization. There is also a hint of wisdom in this kind of an action, for to civilize Caliban would be to create a replica of the Western gentleman, something which would inevitably require a hint of the philosopher king in Prospero^[8]. To understand this, one only needs to take a look at the

⁷ Greenblatt goes on to discuss how the gullible Lucayans were exploited by the Spaniards, who needed people to work in their caves as miners. Their beliefs of a messiah who would come to liberate their race was exploited by the Spaniards and this took a turn for the worse for the Lucayans, who decided to starve themselves to death. It is similar to the treatment of Caliban in that Prospero had taught him to name the sun, the moon and use language so that he could induct him for his own benefits as is revealed shortly afterwards to Miranda.

⁸ By the usage of the term "Western Gentleman", I refer to the sophistication that arises with educational and therefore, social improvement and mobility. The only way to preserve the colonized and gullible as slaves was to ensure that they did not necessarily attempt to free themselves from control. The theory of the Guardian in the Republic was to indoctrinate the chosen citizens on a certain philosophy that would make them capable of yielding political power. Here, that philosophy takes the form of language until Caliban decides to reject it, supposedly out of his own accord.

conversations that ensue between Prospero and Caliban. When Caliban is finally allowed a voice of his own, he chooses to comment on his exploitation, the apogee of which is the plan to murder Prospero, with the assistance of Trinculo and Stephano. It is essential to talk about how the ones who were not chosen by virtue of their social status to be aristocrats, comment and share their viewpoints on power. Their understanding of power is based on its acquisition and not its retention, for they wish to overthrow Prospero with the help of a creature that they condemn and consolidate their power through the marriage of Miranda. It becomes one of those opportune moments where the lower classes comment on the activities of the higher classes, thus indicating why class privileges shouldn't be an eliminating factor at all. This strongly opposes the Platonic theory because it reverses the question of civilization. What would serve to remember at this point is that Trinculo and Stephano, similar to the prisoners in the cave, do not understand the true nature of power and seem to be in a state of perpetual intoxication with the "shadows on the wall"⁹.

There have been instances in history of rulers being overthrown by members in their own family, as happens with Prospero. According to the classical mythological account, Amulius, the younger brother of Numitor, the rightful king of Alba, deposed him. To avert the possibility that Numitor's children, Romulus and Remus, might seek revenge, Amulius had them thrown into the Tiber; but a flood carried them to shore. There they were suckled by a she-wolf and found by a royal herdsman, Faustulus, who with his wife brought them up.

Hence the "necessity" that aided Romulus was entirely circumstantial-hardly an example of the initiative and industry of Machiavelli's legendary exemplar. It is useful to compare Machiavelli's assumptions about Romulus here and in Discourses, I, 9 with St. Augustine's (*De civitate dei*, III, 6). The latter argues that Romulus's cruelty, including the murder of his brother, taints all the glory of Rome. Machiavelli does not deny the cruelty, but believes that the results of Rome's greatness may have necessitated these measures at the outset. Thus, Augustine's appeal is to morality; Machiavelli's, to history (Atkinson 37). The existence of feuds within the Milanese Dukedom is a reflection of a similar strand of conflict - Prospero's eviction seems to have been determined by Antonio's personal ambitions for political power combined with Alonso's desires for political expansion and conquest.

The *Tempest* opens with depictions of class tensions, which on one side represents the ongoing social tensions in English society between the aristocracy and the gentry and on the other side, establishes the theme of social and political power directly in the play. It becomes apparent upon a cursory analysis that Antonio and Sebastian are distempered towards opposition, a foreshadowing of their deeds as well as their belongingness to that group of people which seeks to obtain power for the sake of being powerful and not for the purpose of enforcing lasting change. The class conflict is a reflection of assertion of authority, the boatswain's interjection that class hierarchy is not a determinant of expertise. It is interesting to draw a comparison between this and the second scene because the boatswain here is allowed

a voice, unlike the second scene where Prospero speaks in an uninterrupted fashion, in order to create and fashion a hegemonic narrative of power. The boatswain here can share his thoughts on aristocratic oppression and the superficiality of the class system but characters like Ariel, Caliban and Miranda are not allowed to share their perspective on their experiences because Prospero, owing to his knowledge, seems to proclaim that he is aware of the truth. It is hard to not notice the transparent resemblance with the manner of the Socratic dialogue where Socrates speaks and only questions in order to gain approval from the ones listening to him. He seems to be controlling their experiences and directing even their perceptions about the same, as is visible in Miranda not being surprised at the tempest, even though she was on the island and equally at risk. It showcases her faith in Prospero as an effective Guardian and her willingness to submit to his authority. The whole of the second scene is a dialogic metaphor for the assertion of Prospero's authority. Prospero does not allow a differential narrative to exist and his complimenting of Ariel is of the nature of manipulation and not flattery. His commandment of supernatural spirits is something Prospero does not understand and therefore, is apprehensive of. The imprisonment of such characters shows the Machiavellian strands in Prospero's nature and they're little more than devices for him to achieve what he desires – the unification of France and Italy, which he ends up achieving through his daughter. Here, Prospero's actions are extremely Machiavellian but are once again driven by his knowledge of politics and statecraft, which culminate in his arrangement of the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda.

Ferdinand and Miranda's relationship is one of the strongest machinations of Prospero and is intended to achieve something that Machiavelli himself was desirous of in his lifetime – the unification of France and Italy. The subjection of Ferdinand to physical persecution and mental exhaustion is Prospero's examination of his prowess in order to verify whether he is worthy of being the King of Naples. Miranda becomes a political weapon nurtured for sixteen years by Prospero in the manner of royalty, for this alliance to be ordained. This alliance is only a subset of Prospero's political ambition – to achieve a political consolidation of Italy and France. However, Prospero does quite a similar thing when he seals the relationship between Italy and France forever, through the marriage alliance of Ferdinand and Miranda. Such a tradition was quite common in that day and age and was a mechanism of holding on to power that could not be questioned. Prospero's acknowledgement of the aristocratic status of Ferdinand comes about in the fourth act. His utilization of his daughter as a political tool is evident in this scene when he says that by the gifting of Miranda, he has acknowledged Ferdinand's capability to entreat his daughter as well as his kingdom to the highest status.

The first scene of the second act is the first time that one gets to have an exclusive look at the royalty, with no presence of different classes to challenge or question or undermine their authority. Members of the royal family make known, for the first time their personal philosophies of and ambitions for power come to light with all of them sustaining different conceptions of power. The pawning of soldiers in order to regulate the king's cargo across the seas is significant because it shows people's willingness to die for their king without questioning and is also an indication

⁹The shadows could stand for the shadows of power – owing to their limited insight, they can't possibly fathom the abilities required to be a Guardian, enlightenment being a foremost one.

of class conflicts on the flip side because it signifies the valuation of life. The question of fate is equally sharp once again in the text because the shipwreck is obviously believed to be a natural calamity. This is also a reflection of Machiavelli's deductive approach, something which is indicative of looking back and deciding to look at the good side. Antonio and Sebastian's battle of wits against Gonzalo sets the stage for Gonzalo's personal ambitions to come to the fore and it is interesting to note the difference in the methodology adopted by the two of them – Gonzalo expects that he will attain power in a natural state and Antonio inspires Sebastian to overthrow Prospero.

Something crucial to note is that Antonio and Sebastian, unlike Prospero, did not have wisdom as the basis of power. Machiavelli's treatise is merely a doctrine of instruction which might assist one in obtaining power and a failure in retaining it. The actions of Sebastian and Antonio become a strong critique of both philosophies. The *Tempest* also has the theme of class tensions, which were a reflection of the socio-political conflicts in Shakespeare's own day and age. However, neither of the two political philosophers being discussed here have made allowance for class-pertinent struggles and their role in political philosophies, largely because of the humanist nature of the societies they inhabited. This is an extension of the theme of how drama and politics are performative disciplines and rely on contemporary pragmatism rather than antiquated idealism.

Incidents take an intriguing turn when Sebastian decides to partake in the design to overthrow Prospero, in an almost similar state, for Prospero was intoxicated with the pursuit of knowledge and Alonso is intoxicated with sleep induced by Ariel. However, the failure of the coup is a significant symbol because it does not get averted by any strong security system established by Alonso but rather by Prospero who has understood the importance of a consolidated army that he has established successfully on the island through his magical art. The reason why these soldiers of Prospero's authority operate according to his commands is not because they respect his purpose but because Prospero's exploitative nature has enabled him to understand that there are certain factors which a person isn't exactly confident of in himself and therefore, these become sore points of exploitation. This is the exact reason which leads to Caliban's powerlessness as a subject, except that he thinks that Prospero's knowledge is something unattainable for himself^[10].

The nature of the king is an essential question for both Plato and Machiavelli because they both seem to think of it as a factor dictating power. While both of them operate on the basis of their understanding of a period fraught with tension^[11], they seem to arrive at polarized conceptions. While Plato thinks that the philosopher king is someone who embodies the highest form of the Good, Machiavelli thinks that goodness is an unfavorable quality for a ruler to have. What is interesting is that Prospero, who emerges as the ideal king on several levels at the end of the play, embodies both goodness and political shrewdness and the only reason

that can be found for his political failures towards the conclusion is his dichotomous understanding of the necessities of both these political and personal faculties.

The arrival of Trinculo and Stephano on the island signals the formation of one more political faction in opposition to the royal faction. Both compete for political agency over the island. The contrast between them is expressed through their methodology and purpose of obtaining power. This diversion or subplot appears to reveal a furrow in the two political philosophies being discussed so far as well. Being intoxicated, Trinculo and Stephano can, at the most, dream of gaining power but not end up actually earning it. The fact that Caliban suggests that Stephano can become king of the island through arranging a marital alliance with Miranda is partly a foreshadowing of future events and partly, an indication of what the commoners thought about marital alliances of the aristocracy. Their political strategy is quite intriguing because it reflects Caliban's naivete and how the people aspire to overthrow a tyrannical ruler. Both Machiavelli and Plato make little space for discussing the notion of subjects unhappy with what they perceive as state tyranny – while Machiavelli says that the prince should not aspire to be good or generous, Plato somehow implies that the members or citizens of the Republic would somehow just come to believe in the Guardian and agree with what he does, owing to his enlightenment^[12]. Shortly thereafter, Ferdinand and Miranda acknowledge each other as political tools for each other's physical and spiritual emancipation. Ferdinand acknowledges that he had tried to find a companion capable of being his equal and that he needs a bride who is his equal. Prospero's happiness at the end of the scene is for a two-fold reason – the rejoicing at the unification of two members of the Republic worthy of becoming future guardians and rulers of the Republic and naturally, the wedlock of his daughter.

Caliban's love for the exotic is exploited by Prospero by employing his spirits to distract him. However, what Caliban's claims reflect is that he was the king of the island or at least, he believed so? It is hard to not judge as to how effective a king Caliban himself was.

Prospero overthrowing him suggests that he was not a cautious ruler and did not believe in himself to the point of commanding the spirits on the island. It serves to remember that Prospero's domination owes itself to his knowledge, something that Caliban would not have

On a subconscious level, he understands that it is not just Prospero's scholarship but also his political prowess and his ability to be a shrewd commander with an astute knowledge of human nature that makes it possible for him to retain power. This is definitely a commentary on Prospero but also on Caliban, for he thinks that it is merely Prospero's shrewd nature that makes him a good ruler and thus, reveals a one-dimensional understanding of kingship and what it takes to exercise and retain political prowess. Access to and therefore, he could not have commanded the spirits or even been aware that they could be commanded. Prospero's power lay in his magic, the seeds of which lay in his

¹⁰ Caliban, in keeping with the theories of the savage, seems to believe that scholarly knowledge is something he is incapable of attaining because of certain flaws inherent in his nature that cannot be improved by nurture.

¹¹ The purpose of both of these political philosophers, ironically, was to restore peace and neither of them makes allowance of war in their political theories.

¹² This remains an open-ended question at best. What could be concluded is that Prospero knew that one had to be tyrannical in order to retain political power over his subjects, which he occasionally alleviated with the granting of compliments to his spirits. Caliban seems to be too base to be acknowledged. This is one of the rare moments in the play when he acts in dissonance with any mold of political philosophy.

knowledge, something that Caliban did not have any form of access to. What is noteworthy is that Caliban was only taught to speak and not read things for himself, which is reflective of the apprehension that Prospero had - he knew that if Caliban could gain access to his books and interpret them for himself, he would no longer be a docile subject but a potent rival.

Whether Prospero overthrowing him suggests that he was an ineffectual king himself is an interesting question because they differ in how they define kingship – Prospero’s purpose is to achieve his objective whereas Caliban’s is to gain his freedom through establishing his power. Perhaps that is why Caliban had not tried to command the spiritual forces because he was a free resident of the island.

Exploitation of the exotic continues to be an essential political theme and the basis of Prospero’s power. Prospero exploits the ignorance of the travellers. It is interesting how Prospero embodies the knowledge of the exotic, because he had been trapped on the island for twelve years. If one is to view the Machiavellian in Prospero, this could be read as Machiavelli composing his treatise after years of being in exile. Prospero utilizes his experiences in a similar manner. Different insights into power are offered in Prospero’s exploitation of the exotic, especially when Alonso seems to regret his poignant position and it almost seems to be an ethical rejection of himself and Gonzalo is back to being an unbiased narrator. Sebastian relates the concept of the gentleman’s duel. Usage of unfair means is inevitable in Prospero’s case because he combines political scholarship with shrewd machinations. His exploitation of the exotic in nature reaches its culmination in the masque.

The masquerade is a revelry of nature as well as of personal philosophy. All of Prospero’s knowledge and experience in the exotic comes to the fore in his own words, before he decides to shut the doors to magic once and for all: “I’ll break my staff, bury it certain fathoms in the earth, and deeper than did ever plummet sound I’ll drown my book.” (5.1). For the first time, the audience is given a closer look at Prospero’s legion or army, the result of his scholarship. It is compelling to argue that Prospero, besides being a scholar, was also an astute politician who knew how to inspire fear. Prospero’s invocation of the Gods is a rejection of the Greco-Roman world as well as a significant instance of the greatness of man, which was a crucial aspect of Renaissance humanism, man being the median between God and beast¹³.

Prospero’s personal philosophy comes to the fore. For the first time, his status as a philosopher king is revealed to the audience, when he chooses to talk about how everything, including the Earth itself is but a dream – a reiteration of the Theory of Forms. For the first time, there is a transparent resemblance with the Socratic dialogue when he accepts that all on earth is but an illusion, an imitation of the ultimate. Interestingly, Ferdinand and Miranda reply in the manner of Glaucon and Adeimantus, when they wish him peace. There is an immediate transition from the philosophical state to the Machiavellian state, when he decides to pursue Caliban and the disorganized nature of the coup emerges in contrast to the careful scheming of the royalty, intended to send across the message that class mobility was a sham and commoners

were’t capable of exercising power, thus pressing home the concept of the chosen citizens in the Republic.

Prospero seems to be fulfilling the purpose of the Guardian in the Republic, where the sailors and pretty much everyone on the island could be viewed as prisoners of an illusory order. “My charms crack not” symbolizes his political success as well as his desire to bring all of the royal courtiers under the umbrella of truth – he wanted to reveal to them the truth of Forms. The question seems to be, does Prospero adopt the tactics of the philosopher king throughout the course of the play? Was there ever a tactic of the philosopher king in the first place? Prospero establishes a sense of superiority as well as harmony simultaneously, when he tells Ariel that the state of his abducted captives has moved him to pity and, for the first time, talks about his achievements as separate from oppression. The idea of the men coming to their senses represents the kind of enlightenment that Plato required from the citizens of his Republic.

Prospero’s unveiling as a magician is his revelation as a Duke, or a wielder of political authority. However, what is significant is that Prospero surrenders his powers shortly after he regains it, thus showing that he rated knowledge above power. The present debate is about the coexistence of the two. The concept of a certain trait dominating the human makeup is relevant at this point and Prospero displays this aptly in that he adopts power and knowledge as two distinct mantles for his identity, which gives birth to the notion of the “fearful country”. The fearful country, while it symbolizes the apprehensions of the aristocracy on the strange land, is also a metaphor for the human state and Alonso’s plea to God to deliver them is also a plea for clarity of vision and therefore, choice. Prospero, owing to the fact that he has combined knowledge with skill, does not require such redemption at the moment. The Republic is notoriously silent about what exactly the lucky philosopher will grasp when he grasps the Good at the end of his long intellectual journey (Rowe 125). Such a statement provides rulers or Prospero with notorious freedom in terms of interpretation and therefore, assertion of force. It is interesting to note that such an open-ended analysis is partly due to the lack of another assertive force but also due to the understanding that it takes special abilities to navigate through political power.

The way in which they recognize Prospero strongly resembles the manner in which the prisoners in Plato’s cave would have reacted to the philosopher king once he returned from his exile atop the hill. His political machinations are approved of, by Alonso. Gonzalo, in the role of the unbiased narrator, once again summarizes the political machinations on both sides. “All of us ourselves when no man was his own”, shows the restoration of political stability in Italy, something that Machiavelli had dreamt of extensively in his own lifetime. They are restored to the cell that they had started from. The essence of Plato’s theory is realizing that there is a certain social order which cannot be subverted and ends up getting regenerated in a cyclical way, something that happens with Prospero and the aristocratic order in the play.

The constant tussle between power and knowledge in the nature of the ruler or wielder of political authority goes on to show that both knowledge and political machinations are necessary to wield power successfully. Power politics in the last Shakespearean play does not quite appear to reach a

¹³ The idea of Gods being at the beck and call of man because of his central position in the Universe is a concept preached by the Renaissance that seeks to believe that man is positioned higher than the Gods in the hierarchy.

resolution because of the complicated nature of the human state itself. While Machiavellianism is what dictates the manner of exercise of political power, the knowledge and wisdom of a Guardian is what dictates the direction of exercise of power.

Both of these are necessary for exercising power and they cannot possibly exist in isolation in human nature or in the state concerned.

References

1. Willis, Deborah. Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 1989;29(2):277-289. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/450475. Accessed 6 July 2021.
2. www.jstor.org/stable/450475. Accessed 6 July 2021.
3. Solomon, Julie Robin. Going Places: Absolutism and Movement in Shakespeare's 'The *Tempest*. *Renaissance Drama*. 1991;22:3-45. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41917271. Accessed 6 July 2021.
4. Taylor, Francis D. The Disenchanted Island: A Political History of 'The *Tempest*', 1760-1830. *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 2012;63(4):487-517.
5. www.jstor.org/stable/41819766. Accessed 6 July 2021.
6. Reeve CDC. *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc; c2006.
7. Rahe, Paul A. *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic*, Cambridge University Press; c2008.
8. Wight, Martin, *et al.* *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*. Oxford University Press, USA; c2005.
9. Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Edited by James Atkinson. Hackett Publishing Co, 2008. King, Ross. *Machiavelli: Philosopher of Power*. Harper Perennial; c2009.
10. Charity Butcher, *Offense–Defense Theory: An Empirical Test*, *International Studies Review*. 2006;8(3):489-491. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2006.00608.x>
11. Smith, Kenneth. *Emile Durkheim and the Collective Consciousness of Society: A Study in Criminology*. Anthem Press; c2014.
12. Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago University Press; c2014.
13. Howard, Jean E. *et al.* *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*.