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Higher Studies/ M.A./ English Literature

Drama

Machiavellianism and other Terms

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1-Machiavellianism: in psychology, refers to a personality trait characterized by manipulation, a cynical view of morality, and a focus on self-interest. It is one of the traits that make up the Dark Triad, along with narcissism and psychopathy. Individuals high in Machiavellianism are often strategic, calculating, and willing to exploit others to achieve their goals.

"Machiavellian" describes a person who is cunning, manipulative, and unscrupulous, often in the pursuit of power and self-interest, and indifferent to morality. The term originates from Niccolò Machiavelli, a Renaissance political philosopher whose book *The Prince* advocated for a pragmatic approach to governance where the ends justify the means, even if those means are considered cruel or unethical.

Main Characteristics of Machiavellianism:

-Manipulation:

High Machiavellians are skilled at manipulating others to achieve their desired outcomes.

- Cynicism:

They hold a cynical view of human nature, believing that people are inherently selfish and untrustworthy.

- Self-interest:

Machiavellianism is driven by a strong desire for personal gain and advancement.

- Lack of Empathy:

They have difficulty understanding or sharing the feelings of others.

- Strategic Thinking:

Machiavellians are often adept at long-term planning and strategic thinking to achieve their goals.

Machiavellianism in different contexts:

-Psychology:

In psychology, Machiavellianism is a well-studied personality trait, and researchers use scales to measure an individual's level of Machiavellianism.

- Politics:

In political science, Machiavellianism refers to the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli, which emphasizes the importance of power and pragmatism in governance, even if it means using unscrupulous means.

- Organizations:

Machiavellianism can manifest in organizational settings, with individuals using manipulative tactics to gain power or influence.

2-The Wheel of Fire: The image of the wheel of fire generally signifies suffering, torment, and a cyclical process of change and transformation.

The "wheel of fire" is a potent image found in various contexts:

-Shakespeare: In *King Lear*, the phrase "But I am bound upon a wheel of fire, / That mine own tears do scald like molten lead" illustrates the character's suffering and torment.

-J.R.R. Tolkien: In *The Lord of the Rings*, the One Ring is described as a "wheel of fire," symbolizing its corrupting power and the suffering it inflicts.

- Religious Symbolism: The wheel, often depicted as flaming, is a symbol in various religions, representing God, eternity, and the cyclical nature of life and suffering.

3-The wheel of fortune: is turned by a Roman goddess, symbolizes the fluctuating nature of fate and the reversal of fortune in tragedy.

4-Anti-Semitism: Is defined as hostility, prejudice, discrimination, or violence against Jewish people or the Jewish faith. It is a form of racism or group-focused enmity that has persisted for thousands of years, adapting and taking on various forms over time, including religious, racial, economic, and political manifestations.

In the context of Renaissance England, where Shakespeare wrote, anti-Jewish sentiment was common, and Jews had been banished from England for centuries. Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* is often cited as a significant example of how antisemitic tropes were reflected in art of the period, primarily through the character of Shylock.

5- Dues ex Machina: is a plot device where a seemingly unsolvable problem in a story is suddenly resolved by an unexpected and improbable event, character, or object, originating from ancient Greek theater where a crane (the "machine") lowered an actor playing a god to provide a quick solution. It is essentially a contrived or artificial resolution that feels unearned, often appearing as a sudden savior or lucky break to bring order out of chaos, though it is generally seen as a weakness in storytelling unless used intentionally for effect. Ex.: *As You Like It*, *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*.

6-Problem play: is a term used to describe certain Shakespearean plays that do not fit neatly into the traditional categories of comedy or tragedy. These plays mix elements of both genres and often present complex moral, ethical, or social dilemmas without offering simple resolutions. Critics like A.C. Bradley and Harold Bloom note that the play explores issues such as the conflict between law and morality, sexual ethics, and the abuse of power, all of which make it difficult to classify purely as a comedy or tragedy. Northrop Frye calls it a "dark comedy" because it retains the comic structure but exposes the corruption, hypocrisy, and ethical complexity of society. Ex. *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*.

7-The term "**Dark Triad**" was coined in 2002 by psychologists Delroy L. Paulhus and Kevin M. Williams at the University of British Columbia to describe a collection of three personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. These traits are considered "dark" because they are associated with socially aversive behaviours and negative interpersonal outcomes. While not classified as clinical disorders, individuals high in the Dark Triad traits tend to exhibit characteristics like manipulation, a lack of empathy, and a sense of grandiosity.

1-Narcissism: Characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy.

2-Machiavellianism: Involves a manipulative and exploitative approach to interpersonal relationships, with a focus on self-interest and a willingness to deceive others.

3-Psychopathy: Includes traits like impulsivity, antisocial behavior, and a lack of empathy or remorse.