Isidora Novaković[*]

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

THE PRINCE OF THE RINGS: CAN FILMS HELP US UNDERSTAND POLITICS?

Abstract

In this paper, I will try to explore whether films that seemingly have nothing to do either with our world or our politics can still lead us to knowledge or, at least, a better understanding of political theories. By doing this, I will compare Machiavelli's The Prince and Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy based on J. R. R. Tolkien's books of the same name. My goal is to show that we can come to the same conclusions about certain topics explored by Machiavelli by watching the trilogy. These films should also nudge us in the right direction when it comes to understanding the true meaning of the advices relayed in The Prince. I will try to point to Machiavelli's prescribed prince in the trilogy. Also, because of the stigma about Machiavelli's name that survives through the word "Machiavellian", I will also try to show that Machiavelli himself can be found in a beloved character from The Lord of the Rings.

Keywords: *politics, fiction, knowledge, Machiavelli, The Lord of the Rings.*

[*] isidora.novakovic@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

It is indisputable that there are political films. Just think of, for instance, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*), a propaganda film, or documentaries and biopics about political figures, for example, *Darkest Hour* that revolves around Winston Churchill. Those genres are capable of conveying actual truth. But what about fantasy?

The first part of the paper will deal with the more universal ideas – what is the relationship between film and politics; what is fiction and can we rely on it, and can we learn from films? In an attempt to provide answers to these questions, I will put a special emphasis on the question whether we can gain substantial, non-trivial knowledge from art, specifically film, or if we can exercise our cognitive abilities in contact with films. Particular examples that can illustrate these ideas better are going to be the topic of the second part of the paper. There, I will compare Machiavelli's ideas with their exemplary counterparts from *The Lord of the Rings*. That should ultimately lead us to both understand Machiavelli's ideas better, and also to see them in action and to put the plot of the trilogy in the context of a broader political system.

FILM AND POLITICS

The story of *The Lord of the Ring* goes, briefly, as follows: the Dark Lord Sauron deceived the ruling Elves, Dwarves and Men by gifting them the Rings of Power while leaving them in the dark about the fact that he has forged himself the One Ring "to rule them all". Although Sauron was defeated, his Ring, that has the power to corrupt seemingly everyone, was not destroyed. Because of that, Sauron can return. In order to come back to his full power, he is collecting followers and subjects, building an army, and trying to reunite with the One Ring. On the other side, the Fellowship of the Ring is formed with a sole purpose of guiding and guarding Frodo, a hobbit, to destroy the Ring. The Fellowship experiences many toils and 'side quests', gets torn up, but ultimately succeeds. Apart from Frodo, some of the characters on which a special emphasis is put are the wizard Gandalf, and the foretold king, Aragorn, with a multitude of other important creatures.

Lydia Goehr remarks that "[i]n its history, art has been conceived antagonistically in relation to politics"[1] by becoming "disenfranchised

---

[1] Lydia Goehr (2003), "Art and Politics", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 472.

from politics. 'Disenfranchisement' connotes an act or attitude of neutralization such that art and/or philosophy are rendered 'impotent' to 'make anything happen' in the world". Still, most agree "that the arts have many and diverse functions in the social or political sphere",[2] but Goehr tells us that some emphasize art's particularity,[5] as opposed to, for instance, philosophy's universality. Yet, Goehr says that Danto recognizes a paradox: how is it that this impotent art (or film) still has a role, so much so that it is sometimes decided that it has to be censored?[3] This assumed 'impotence' of art would stand in opposition to politics for which one of the things that matters the most is action. Recognizing the importance of action, Machiavelli also emphasised how the ruler and his actions ought to appear.[4] Thus, we can use films as a means to understand better, say, Machiavelli's ideas from *The Prince*.

> In order for action to be valued and evaluated – that is, to become valuable as a political thing – it must be made available to our sensorial and experiential apprehension. In this way, it is modern political thought's privileging of the visibility of action – of action's movement – and practices of beholding that brings closer to appreciating why film matters to political theory.[5]

Panagia sees film as something of importance for politics in the sense that it shows ways "of political resistance that does not rely exclusively on the model of an overturning of power".[6] He believes that "film matters to political theory because it provides an account of discontinuity of action as a resource for thinking about new strategies and forms of political resistance today".[7] *The Lord of the Rings* shows us Sauron's oppression and tyranny through the One Ring, and a new strategy for political resistance – the forming of the Fellowship with a mission to destroy the Ring. Panagia states that "[t]he stochastic serialization of moving images that films project makes available an experience of resistance and change as a felt interruption of succession, rather than as an inversion of hierarchical power".[8] Yet, *The Return of the King* also

---

[2] *Ibid*, 478.

[3] *Ibid*, 479.

[4] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *The Prince and Other Writings*, San Diego: World Cloud Classics, 85-86.

[5] Davide Panagia (2013), "Why film matters to political theory", *Contemporary Political Theory 12* (1), 6.

[6] *Ibid*, 2-3.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *Ibid*, 3.

gives us Aragorn who's crowning represents "an act of inverting the hierarchical distributions of power" through an establishing of a different rule, as opposed to Sauron's ideology.[9]

> From a methodological perspective, then, what film also affords political thinking is the possibility of presenting ideas such that their assemblage into a concept-formation is not determined by a principle of necessity (that is, causal determination), or semiotic designation (that is, symbolism) of formal argument. … [A] clear argument is nothing other than a series of discontinuous impressions, retroactively assembled according to a conventionally available partition of the sensible.[10]

It is precisely in this sense that we can turn to reading *The Prince* upon finishing watching the trilogy and in doing so gain new insights. But we can also find this discontinuity and contingency in *The Fellowship of the Ring* when Galadriel shows Frodo the Mirror in which he can see what could be were he to fail.

Goehr, with Adorno in mind, states that art becomes *political*

> through the indirect, concealing ('secret and silent') use of aesthetic technique or artistic form. … Irony, metaphor, humour, symbolism are the *aesthetic* means … by which a grand illusion is sustained, the aesthetic illusion that keeps attention on art *qua* art, or the political illusion that this art is not political though it clearly is.[11]

In the *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli advises the ruler to beware conspiracies, but also the people to be careful when they are conspiring. Still, he believes that it is "better [for the people] to live contentedly under the rule that destiny bestowed upon them, however it may be".[12] These are the words of the same person that addressed *The Prince* to the ruler of Florence which should render us more careful in the interpretation of this book.[13] But, were we to let ourselves say that *The Prince* advises the ruler on how to be powerful and oppress the people, then, in accordance to Goehr, we could find metaphor and symbolism in *The Lord of the Rings* and use the films to see a way out of both Sauron's,

---

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Davide Panagia (2013), *Ibid*, 5.

[11] Lydia Goehr (2003), *op. cit.*, 474.

[12] Nikolo Makijaveli (2020), *O zaverama*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 9.

[13] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 3-4.

and the oppression of a tyrant that uses *The Prince* as a literal handbook in all of its 'bad' aspects.

In the end, "Danto ... doubts that art can 'save the Jews' or 'save the whales' directly; but he does consider the possibility that art might communicate indirectly what cannot be communicated directly" and that, although "not all feelings lead to actions, but some do, and some feelings prompted by art thus make something happen".[14]

FICTION

Philosophical interest for fiction is, as Friend notices, twofold. We can focus on the difference (or relationship) between fiction and reality, or we can inquire into our emotional and/or cognitive reactions to fiction. "[T]he distinction between fiction and non-fiction is not simply the distinction between the true and the false, or between what is known and what is made up".[15] Similarly, Lamarque tells us that

> [t]he element of representation, in any artform, that involves what is invented, made up, or imaginary, bears on the realm of fiction. ... There is philosophical interest also in the status of 'fictitious entities', not only those theoretical fictions figuring in science, mathematics, law, and metaphysics, but also the made-up persons, places, and events occurring in novels, dramas, myths, and legends. These are ontological issues, delimiting what exists or is real. Other issues draw on semantics and the philosophy of language and involve the peculiarities of names, sentences, and truth-values in fictional contexts.[16]

There is a strong intuition that there is some reality to the motion picture (e. g. the actors are real). As Gaut suggests, this could be because of the film's photographic history. There seems to be some political or ideological functions and uses of certain films too, which would imply a strong connection to realism.[17] But, of course, the objects represented didn't have to exist – they could've been digitally created.[18] Peter Jackson

---

[14] Lydia Goehr (2003), *op. cit.*, 481-482.

[15] Stacie Friend (2019), "Fiction as a Genre", in P. Lamarque and S. H. Olsen (eds.), A*esthetics and Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell), 402.

[16] Peter Lamarque (2003), "Fiction", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 377.

[17] Berys Gaut (2003), "Film", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 628.

[18] *Ibid*, 641.

did just that – he used special effects (e. g. one where a massive wall of water forms and reforms into the wraiths of charging stallions, and possibly most noticeably, for the creature Gollum). Following Cavell, Panagia sees these human-like projections on the screen as human somethings:

> The artificial person, human something, or automation on the screen is a broken appearance, human in every respect, save something. So with film something real bodies forth. But it is, importantly, a *something* real, which is what Cavell means when he says that 'a human *something* is, and something unlike anything else we know.[19]

Furthermore, as Lamarque emphasizes, fictiveness and unreality don't always go hand in hand. "Not everything unreal is a fictional object, nor is everything false a fictional description; and it can be argued that a certain kind of reality pertains to fictional objects and a certain kind of truth to fictional descriptions".[20]

If we were, as Lamarque tells us, to follow Russell's analysis of names,[21] we could be inclined to say that, since the name 'Gandalf' has no object that it denotes, it has no meaning. Yet, it seems that I can assign a truth-value to the sentence "Gandalf is a great wizard." Because of that some "theorists take fictional objects to be not *nonexistent* objects but instead a species of *abstract* objects".[22] Carroll informs us that

> [i]n producing a fiction, a storyteller makes up a narrative by articulating descriptions that are supposed to elicit a certain response ... When the storyteller, so to speak, "creates imaginary worlds," what she is actually doing is forming sentences (or other structured, sense-bearing signs) with propositional content, which propositional content is intended to become the focus of a special kind of imaginative effort on the part of the audience.[23]

KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH IN FICTION

There is a strong intuition that we cannot gain knowledge from something fictional, yet, as Carroll states, according to Novitz, that may not always have been the case. Novitz believes that this intuition comes

---

[19] Davide Panagia (2013), *op. cit.*, 26.

[20] Peter Lamarque (2003), *op. cit.*, 378.

[21] *Ibid*, 379.

[22] *Ibid*, 382.

[23] Noël Carroll (1996), "Review", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 54* (3), 297-300.

from the positivists who "admit no role to the imagination in the acqui-sition of knowledge".[24] And, although imagination forms the basis of fiction, Novitz sees it as essential for knowledge in general:

> [T]he imagination ... provides us with constructs, construals and hypotheses, *and*, as these serve our purposes, we come to regard them as knowledge. ... Furthermore, if the fanciful imagination operates this way with respect to knowledge acquisition across the board, the fact that some of our hypotheses are concocted in fictions should serve as no impediment epistemically so long as those hypotheses turn out to be successful – successful, that is, with respect to illuminating the world.[25]

These hypotheses can then be used in our experience in differ-ent ways. For example, we can take something from a work of fiction to form hypotheses for our political theories. But in order to understand that, Novitz emphasizes that we have to be aware that propositional knowl-edge is not the only type of knowledge there is. Of course, "fiction can yield hypotheses that afford propositional knowledge that is akin to that provided by science".[26] We can watch, say, *Interstellar* and form prop-ositions that can figure as hypotheses in philosophy of time. But fiction

> may [also] impart beliefs about values, practical skills – knowl-edge of *how* to do *x* (strategic skills) or new ways to think about x (conceptual skills) – and empathetic skills (the ability to expe-rience what it feels like to be caught up in certain situations), as well as deepening, and perhaps complicating, our understanding of our own values by exploring them in relation to challenging situations. In all these different ways, we can learn from fiction.[27]

Novitz believes that imagination has a role in the formation of hypotheses, but that it also helps us to interpret an artwork, although he doesn't see it as a sort of induction. On the other hand, that is exactly how Carroll sees it.[28] And if Carroll is right, then these hypotheses in-spired by a work of fiction can have their place in inductive reasoning. Induction is, notably, of great importance for science, which gives us a

---

[24] Noël Carroll (1990), "Review", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 48* (2), 167-169.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid*, 168.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid*, 168-169.

reason to put more trust in art. After all, "[t]he claim that imagination is central in the acquisition of knowledge is familiar in epistemology".[29]

When we try to interpret and understand artworks, "we take concepts already used to discuss human life and apply them"[30] to said artworks. In doing so, as Carroll says, we are discovering "what the work is about. This implicitly locates the cognitive value of the literary work [or film] not in the delivery of truths ... but in the exercise of" one's cognitive abilities.

> An adequate account of reasoning to what is true in fiction needs to capture the fact that at nearly every level the reconstruction of fictional worlds needs to invoke a variety of background data, including recognition of genre, ironical or satirical intent, symbolic or allusive frame, narrative mode, historical context, connotative meanings, and so on.[31]

So it is only when we recognize *The Lord of the Rings* as a fantasy that uses metaphor and symbolism (e.g. the One Ring as a symbol of power's ability to corrupt), different narrative modes, shifting points of view (e.g. Gollum/Smeagol, Frodo under the influence of the Ring), etc. that we get to interpret it and find its meanings. Those meanings can then be applied further and in various contexts. According to Lamarque, Lewis makes a mistake when he "requires that the narrator tells the truth in a pretty straightforward way, recounting only what he knows",[32] much like Galadriel does at the beginning of the trilogy.

THE PRINCE OF THE RINGS

In order for us to understand *The Prince* better, I will turn to *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. By comparing the two works, I will show the applicability of some of Machiavelli's ideas, and hopefully clear up some of the others. Much like Hunt,[33] I believe that we can utilize works of fiction, even of sci-fi and fantasy, to further our philosophical and/or

---

[29] Peter Lamarque (1989), "Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination (review)", *Philosophy and Literature 13* (2), 366.

[30] Noël Carroll (1996), *op. cit.*, 299.

[31] Peter Lamarque (1990), "Reasoning to what is true in fiction", *Argumentation 4* (3), 337.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] Lester H. Hunt (2006), "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource", in N. Carroll and J. Choi (eds.), *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, Malden, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 397.

political ideas. That can be done by looking into particular examples of the more universal ideas.

When we watch films we "must consider circumstances – those of fictional characters – which are distinct from"[34] what we are used to in our daily lives. And, despite the fact that we are obviously not those characters, Hunt notices that we still get to acquire beliefs and values from particular films. "These results can affect the beliefs they [the viewers] hold when they are no longer viewing the motion picture and actively contemplating this fictional world".[35] For instance, I can gain the belief that power can corrupt by watching *The Lord of the Rings*. "[T]he narrative itself, or part of it *is* the example that drives the argument",[36] which permits us to say that we can learn from motion pictures.

Friend highlights that people are still prone to doubting fiction. Yet, she follows Prentice and Gerrig (1999), and Green and Brock (2000) when she shows that some parts of a narrative can relate to the real world more universally.[37] Fiction can deal with universal topics that are also of philosophical interest in a more accessible way. But that does not mean that non-fiction is always correct. We can notice problems and unreliability in non-fiction as well as in fiction:

> According to the ancient Roman conception of history that had a defining influence on European historiography in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, the point of history was to provide moral and especially political instruction through examples. The choice of examples and the way they were treated constituted aesthetic and didactic decisions, not motivated primarily by fidelity to the facts.[38]

I believe that this can secure us a basis for the connection between *The Prince* as a non-fictional work that, at times, strays away from the facts in order for Machiavelli to make his arguments stronger, and *The Lord of the Rings* as a fictional work that, in part, deals with the same problems.

---

[34] *Ibid*, 400.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Stacie Friend (2019), *op. cit.*, 411.

[38] *Ibid.*

POWER AND DECEPTION

One of most prominent examples of rulers in *The Prince* is Cesare Borgia. He was chosen for this because of the fact that his rule was quite stable. Machiavelli advises him:

> who considers it necessary to secure himself in his new principality, to win friends, to overcome either by force or fraud, to make himself beloved and feared by the people, to be followed and revered by the soldiers, to exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him, to change the old order of things for new, to maintain friendship.[39]

Let's take a look at the actions of the duke. It seems as if *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy changes the duke's name and instead speaks of Sauron. Sauron considered it necessary to secure himself in his new principality, he won over Men as friends and overcame the Elves and Dwarves by giving them the Rings of Power. He tried to exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him (e. g. Elrond, Isildur and his father Elendil), he tried to change the old order of things for his tyranny. And, in the end, he maintained friendship with the Nine kings of Men who, corrupt by the Ring, became the Nazgûl.

Machiavelli continues in the similar vein and says that "our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word".[40] As has been said, this is what Sauron did. Machiavelli states that it is of great importance for the ruler to reconcile his two beastly characteristics – he should be brave like a lion and cunning like a fox.

> [H]e who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best. But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.[41]

---

[39] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 37-38.
[40] *Ibid*, 83.
[41] *Ibid*, 84.

This passage perfectly captures both what Sauron did by gifting away the Rings of Power while keeping the One Ring for himself, and how those who were gifted the Rings acted afterwards. *The Prince* tells us that if the ruler has to choose, it is better for him to be feared than loved.[42] Sauron recognized the importance of fear and used it to corrupt Denethor, the Steward of Gondor, making him fearful of Gondor's fall and distrusting of Gandalf.[43] On a lighter note, cunning can also be used in the service of good. This can be seen in *The Return of the King* when Gandalf encourages Pippin to light the beacon in Minas Tirith as a signal for Aragorn that Gondor needs Rohan's aid despite Denethor forbidding it.

FRIENDS AND ADVISORS

Machiavelli recognizes the importance of choosing one's friends and enemies and sticking by that decision. Being lukewarm and neutral proves to be disadvantageous, especially in times of war

> because if two of your powerful neighbors come to blows, they are of such a character that, if one of them conquers, you have either to fear him or not. In either case it will always be more advantageous for you to declare yourself and to make war strenuously; because, in the first case, if you do not declare yourself, you will invariably fall prey to the conqueror … Because he who conquers does not want doubtful friends who will not aid him in the time of trial; and he who loses will not harbor you because you did not willingly, sword in hand, court his faith.[44]

In *The Two Towers*, the Ents recognized the importance of this and sided with the Fellowship, which ultimately led to the destruction of Isengard, one of the two centers of enemy forces. Another important thing that Machiavelli emphasizes in *The Prince* is the wise and careful choice of one's advisors:

> [T]here are three classes of intellects: one which comprehds by itself; another which appreciates what others comprehended; and a third which neither comprehds by itself nor by the showing

---

[42] *Ibid*, 79-80.
[43] Eric T. Kasper and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *Machiavelli Goes to the Movies: Understanding The Prince through Television and Film*, London: Lexington Books, 173-174.
[44] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 107-108.

of others; the first is the most excellent, the second is good, the third is useless.[45]

To understand this, it is best to turn to the case of Théoden. Thus, Kasper and Kozma paint us the scene:

> The Rohan are semi-nomadic warriors, trained early in horseman-ship and combat. While a free and independent people, they have long been allied with Gondor, and so when the wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) arrives at the Golden Hall of Meduseld, to consult with King Théoden, he is disturbed to find that Rohan's defenses have been neglected and that Rohan's army is scattered and unpre-pared for war. As he enters the Golden Hall, he clearly perceives why. Théoden's chief advisor, Grima Wormtongue (Brad Dourif) sits beside the King, who appears near death.[46]

Machiavelli actually nudges us in the direction of recognizing aw-ry advisors. If the ruler has something that the advisor wants so much that he is willing to stop working in the interest of the ruler and instead works only for himself, even deceiving the ruler, he is a bad advisor.[47] As it turns out, Grima works for Saruman because he has been prom-ised rule and Éowyn's hand.

> Wormtongue has poisoned his king, both in mind and his body. By a magical spell, he has made Théoden pliable and susceptible to suggestion and, by manipulating Théoden's grief at the loss of his son, Grima has managed to gain control of the kingdom. Grima's rule is so entrenched that he no longer bothers issuing proclama-tions in the king's name. When Gandalf and his companions ap-proach the Hall, they are disarmed by the order of Grima Worm-tongue himself. It is only after Gandalf counteracts the magical spell, that Grima's treachery is revealed and Théoden realizes the terrible danger that his people face.[48]

And it is again in this moment Gandalf's cunning that turned the situation in the Fellowship's advantage. While Grima did manage to dis-arm Gandalf's companion, Gandalf himself pretended that he needed his staff to walk, being an old man he was. Without the staff he couldn't have dispelled Grima's spell casted on Théoden.

---

[45] *Ibid*, 111.

[46] Eric T. Kasper and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *op. cit.*, 172.

[47] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 111-112.

[48] Eric T. Kasper and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *op. cit.*, 173.

THE PRINCE AND MACHIAVELLI

The goal of *The* Prince is to help a ruler, if there must be one, to rule in the best possible way. To do that, Machiavelli informs the prince that "[a] wise man ought to follow the paths beaten by great men, and to imitate those who have been supreme".[49] And almost from the beginning of the trilogy we get the feeling that Aragorn is to become this great prince, the foretold king. After all, he is the heir of the legendary King of Gondor, Isildur, who fought Sauron. It seems as if Aragorn should finish what Isildur started. Let us examine if and how Aragorn followed Machiavelli's advices.

> [I]t has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men that nothing can be so uncertain or unstable as fame or power not founded on its own strength. And one's own forces are those which are composed either of subjects, citizens, or dependents.[50]

When he led his battle against Sauron's forces in *The Return of the King*, he relied on his own army, consisted of his allies from Rohan, his own men from Gondor and dependents – the Army of the Dead cursed by Isildur for abandoning him to remain ghostly apparitions that cannot be at peace until they fulfill their oath to help the king of Gondor.[70] Point for Aragorn! In Machiavelli's system, it is of an utmost importance for a good ruler to always prepare for war. He does that by hunting, exploring the terrain and studying history.[51] At the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* we meet Aragorn as the ranger Strider, and throughout the trilogy we see him very observant of the tracks, and knowledgeable of geography and history of the Middle Earth.

Machiavelli also points out that "every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency".[52] When Grima's spell gets broken and Théoden learns of his treachery, Théoden is swift in his attempt to punish Grima. This is something that Machiavelli would have considered wise in this particular situation, because he believes that the people could learn from that example not to jeopardize the ruler and that "those executions ... offend the individual only".[53] At that moment,

---

[49] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 25.

[50] *Ibid*, 68.

[51] *Ibid*, 69-71.

[52] *Ibid*, 78.

[53] *Ibid.*

Aragorn stops Théoden from executing Grima and instead they banish him from Rohan.[76] This scene is interesting because both rulers acted prudently in a way. Aragorn didn't want the people to see Théoden as cruel, but by letting Grima go, they ultimately suffered greatly in the Battle of Helm's Deep because he then told Saruman about the weakness of Rohan's fortress.

Another thing that makes Aragorn the Prince is the fact that he honored and awarded the Hobbits upon completion of the quest to destroy the Ring which is in accordance with Machiavelli's advice:

> A prince ought to show himself a patron of ability, and to honor the proficient in every art. At the same time, he should encourage his citizens to practice their callings peaceably, both in commerce and agriculture, and in every other following ... [T]he prince ought to offer rewards to whoever wishes to do these things and designs in any way to honor his city or state.[54]

Lastly, a good prince is to surround himself with good advisors to whom he will come in search of advice, but ultimately choose for himself what is right and of best interest for his people.[55] Over the course of the trilogy, we see Aragorn seeking advice from Gandalf and Legolas, yet still making his own decisions.[80]

Here we should focus on the ever present topic of advice in *The Prince*. After all, this book contains advices for the ruler, written by the advisor. And just as we have found our Prince in *The Lord of the Rings*, we can also find Machiavelli himself. Yet this may come as a surprise, Machiavelli is usually rendered as cruel and militant, especially because of statements such as: "[W]ar is not to be avoided, but is only to be put off to the advantage of others".[56] Gandalf, the Advisor, the Machiavelli of the trilogy, himself does something very similar, namely, encourages Théoden to take up his sword and not shy away from war.

CONCLUSION

Although they initially seemed quite different, film and politics can deal with the same problems. We can, thus, conclude that film can help us form and further our hypotheses, giving it cognitive dimension and value. Fiction can offer examples that help us understand political

---

[54] *Ibid*, 110.

[55] *Ibid*, 114-115.

[56] *Ibid*, 14.

thought better. We can come to the same truths from watching *The Lord of the Rings* and reading *The Prince*, even though the former uses symbolism to shroud those truths. Thus, we shouldn't run away from art thinking it is unreliable. After all, if we understand hypotheses coming from imagination that forms the basis of fiction as premises in an inductive argument, it would turn out that art is as reliable as science.

The second part of the paper offered a comparative analysis of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Peter Jackson's film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. In an attempt to show that film and politics can deal with the same concepts, we followed topics shared by both works. We were also on the lookout for the Prince and Machiavelli himself in *The Lord of the Rings* and found them in the characters of Aragorn and Gandalf. Ultimately, the goal of the paper was to show that we can use *The Prince* and the trilogy to better understand and interpret both.

REFERENCES

Carroll, Noël (1996), "Review", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 54* (3), 297-300.

Carroll, Noël (1990), "Review", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 48* (2), 167-169.

Friend, Stacie (2019), "Fiction as a Genre", in P. Lamarque and S. H. Olsen (eds.), A*esthetics and Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell), 402-416.

Gaut, Berys (2003), "Film", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 627-643.

Goehr, Lydia (2003), "Art and Politics", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 471-485.

Kasper, Eric T. and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *Machiavelli Goes to the Movies: Understanding The Prince through Television and Film*, London: Lexington Books.

Hunt, Lester H. (2006), "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource", in N. Carroll and J. Choi (eds.), *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, Malden, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 397-405.

Lamarque, Peter (1989), "Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination (review)", *Philosophy and Literature 13* (2), 356-374.

Lamarque, Peter (1990), "Reasoning to what is true in fiction", *Argumentation 4* (3), 333-346.

Lamarque, Peter (2003), "Fiction", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 377-391.

Machiavelli, Niccolò (2014), *The Prince and Other Writings*, San Diego: World Cloud Classics.

Makijaveli, Nikolo (2018), *Vladalac*, Beograd: Akia Mali Princ.

Makijaveli, Nikolo (2020), *O zaverama*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik.

Panagia, Davide (2013), "Why film matters to political theory", *Contemporary Political Theory 12* (1), 2-25.