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2/20/20

QCQ #7

Quotation #1:

“…I have always thought that when a person doesn’t want certain things to be known, he mustn’t mention them at all…” (p. 7)

Quotation #2:

“As far as the conscience goes, you have to bear I mind this general principle, that, when confronted with a good that is certain and an evil that is uncertain, one must never renounce that good for fear of that evil.” (p. 36).

Comment(s):

This first quote from Callimaco is not so much significant as it is true. Though on the first page of the play, and read before knowing what was to come next, it presents as an interesting lead in to a play that is entirely about lying and deceit. I think it’s interesting mainly because of how true it is; even telling one thing to someone can be spread so easily and this is true regardless of the time, place or person.

This second quote comes Friar Timoteo as he is trying to convince Lucrezia and Sostrata to go along with Callimaco’s plan. Callimaco and Ligurio have, rather absurdly, decided that because Lucrezia cannot get pregnant, and because her husband so wants her to have a child, they will play into this point of vulnerability between the married couple in order for Callimaco to get closer to the beautiful lady, as he would otherwise have no chance. The plan revolves around Callimaco, who is pretending to be a doctor, giving Lucrezia a potion made of mandragola, from which she will get pregnant. However, he also claims that she must sleep with a man before her husband as the first man to lay with her after she takes the potion will die (having taken all the infection from the potion). This play is filled with absurd ideas and works upon the notion that women are easily fooled, though so are the men but no one is to be affected by this plan so much as Lucrezia. Her Friar also convinces her that to not go through with the plan would be a sin, since it is a sin to displease one’s husband. I thought this particular quote was interesting because though it seems like it could be “profound” or at the very least a sort of philosophical way to look at things, it is really just an example of another character working to be “shrewder” than another. However, that being said, it still presents as an interesting dilemma; to choose a certain thing that is good, or to not because of the uncertain evil. The entire play revolves around fraud and who can be more successfully deceitful. It is an obvious satire or comedy, yet I wonder what Machiavelli is trying to say or communicate.

Question:

What is Machiavelli trying to communicate through this play? Why does he have the characters like Lucrezia fall for such an absurd plan?