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# From History's Hidden Lessons

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## ***MACHIAVELLIAN LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP***

By Robert Porter Lynch (excerpted from History's Hidden Lessons)

### ***Betwixt the Middle Ages and the Renaissance***

A hundred years after Mallory's classic tale, as a prelude and warning to the emerging Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli<sup>1</sup> wrote his own classic, *The Prince*, as a handbook for power and control.

One of the most important thought leaders of our modern world, Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* has influenced many of today's leaders, who have modeled their actions on his advice. Gravitating to his cultural roots, he used both contemporary Italy and Roman history as the source of his conclusions about human nature. Seeing the same confounding behaviors in Roman history that he saw in Medieval Italy, Machiavelli naturally assumed he had found "the truth."

All writers are products of their times. (A few, a very few, writers are able to transcend their times. Plato and Socrates are two; Madison and Jefferson are two others.) Machiavelli was not one of those transcendent thinkers. His thinking was deeply influenced by the times and his patrons. His sources of Roman history such as Livy (Titus Livius)<sup>2</sup> and Seneca are suspect because both these authors worked for the ruling dictator of their times: Octavian (Augustus) and Nero, respectively. The Emperor (a euphemistic term for Dictator) paid their salaries; the wrong word, or even the wrong false accusation, and death was proscribed. Thus, the insights and possibilities of a world of honor and dignity, such as those that were commonplace in the Greek experience, carried little weight compared to the preponderance of evidence he saw in ancient Rome and his own Italy.

Machiavelli, a student of *real politic*, details the use of initiating manipulative techniques to offset, counter-balance, overthrow, or combat others engaged in Mordred-like activities. In *The Prince*,

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<sup>1</sup> It's worthwhile to note the important distinction between Mordred and Machiavelli. The former was insidious, self-centered, and evil; the latter amoral and practical.

<sup>2</sup> See Machiavelli, *The Discourses of Livy*. He based his understanding of how republics could or should operate from Livy's History of Rome, written over one hundred years after the era of the Roman Republic. Livy was related to Octavian's (Caesar Augustus) wife, Livia. Livy began writing his history of Rome in 27 BC, the same year Octavian solely becomes Emperor, and the same year Virgil is commissioned by Octavian to write the Aeneid. Historians have said that Livy and Virgil coordinated their writings to ensure that what Livy was saying in prose was consistent with what Virgil was saying in poetry. It is highly likely that Octavian commissioned Livy to write these histories. Most of Livy focuses on war, war, and more war. The organization of his history reads more as a military history than a social or political or philosophic history. Unlike the most highly regarded Roman scholars of the time, Livy was not trained in Athens, and his command of the Greek language was mediocre. He never served in the military nor in the government, which some historians say made his history of these subjects rather superficial and subject to errors. However, Livy's accounts are all that remain of some of the earliest of the Roman era.

From Wikipedia: He wrote his history with embellished accounts of Roman heroism in order to promote the new type of government implemented by Augustus when he became emperor. In Livy's preface to his history, he said that he did not care whether his personal fame remained in darkness, as long as his work helped to "preserve the memory of the deeds of the world's preeminent nation." Because Livy was writing about events that had occurred hundreds of years beforehand, the value of his history was questionable, although many Romans came to believe what he wrote to be the true history of Rome's foundation. Livy's enthusiasm for the republic is evident from the first pentade of his work, and yet the Julio-Claudian family (the imperial family) were as much fans of Livy as anyone. He could not have been an advocate of any sort of sedition in favor of restoring the republic; he would have been put on trial for treason and executed, as many had been and would be. He must have been viewed as a harmless and relevant advocate of the ancient morality, which was a known public stance of the citizens of Patavium. His relationship to Augustus is defined primarily by a passage from Tacitus in which Cremutius Cordus is put on trial for his life for offenses no worse than Livy's and defends himself face-to-face with the frowning Tiberius. To avoid conviction, while waiting for a verdict Cordus committed suicide by self-starvation. His worst fears were realized in absentia: his books were sentenced to be burned by the aediles, but they performed the task without zeal and many escaped.

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Machiavelli formalized and codified the Age of Intrigue, making betrayal, conniving, conspiracy, and scheming an art form.

Machiavelli could draw no inspiration or even guidance from the Dark Ages – a time when humans produced nothing significant.

Neither could he draw guidance from the leadership of the Christian Church of the last thousand years. Since its inception under the reign of Constantine in the fourth century, a long string of Popes had replicated the grandeur, dictatorial arrogance, and distance from the people that was the hallmark of the Roman Emperors. While certainly Christianity in the timeline between the Fall of Rome and the Renaissance (Rebirth) did produce monks in monasteries who were humble servants of God and their people, such as Francis of Assisi, this style of servant leadership was lost on the hierarchy of monsignors, bishops, cardinals and their succession of Popes. Between the Fall and the Rebirth, Christianity as a religion was usurped by authoritarian despots and firebrands who either conspired with crooked emperors devoid of conscience and possessed with greed, or using guilt and fear as a weapon manipulated their following to false truths, leaving no room for creativity and innovation.<sup>3</sup>

Machiavelli's *Prince* is not strictly evil, he is a fox. And a fox he must be in a world of Mordreds, where there may be limited options to slay the dragon Mordred. Outfoxing a kingdom well populated with Mordred's takes the cunning of a fox.

Many authorities have said that Machiavelli is one of the ten most influential writers in history and his influence on the world's leaders has been more than substantial. For this reason, I decided to get to know Machiavelli better and understand what he really said. What I found, frankly, surprised me, even after having read *The Prince*, once in college, and again several years ago. .

### ***How Machiavelli Saw His World***

Machiavelli,<sup>4</sup> a young man of twenty-nine began his professional career in 1498 as a secretary for the Second Chancery, an office he was to hold for fourteen more years. As he began his job, the streets of Florence were abuzz with the execution of Friar Savonarola. This story well sets the stage for Machiavelli's view of humankind:

Savonarola was an Italian Dominican friar, Scholastic, and an influential contributor to the politics of Florence from 1494 until his execution in 1498. He was known for his book burning, destruction of what he considered immoral art, and his perception of what he thought the Renaissance – which began in his Florence and was at its beginning – ought to become. He vehemently preached against the moral corruption of much of the clergy at the time, against his main opponent, Rodrigo Borgia otherwise known as Pope Alexander VI.

A student of the Bible, St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, Savonarola stood against morally corrupt clergy and prophesized the end of the world. Wanting to correct the transgressions of worldly Popes and secularized members of the Church's wayward Roman Curia, he vehemently expressed his contempt for the Curia by terming it 'a false, proud wench'.

In Florence in 1490 he began to preach passionately about the Last Days, accompanied by testimony about his visions and prophetic announcements of direct communications with God and the saints.

Finally, with the year 1500 fast approaching, Savonarola saw the Last Days were impending. Eventually, the ruling de Medici family became targets of Savonarola's fiery preaching, not uncommon at the time. But a series of circumstances quickly brought Savonarola great success, as an epidemic of syphilis gave credibility to his proclamations.

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<sup>3</sup> It is not coincidental that the Reformation came on the heels of the Renaissance. Just as Machiavelli had foreseen, the tyranny of despotism evokes hatred and reform, with which comes inherent dangers.

<sup>4</sup> It is thought that he did not learn Greek, even though Florence was at the time one of the centres of Greek scholarship in Europe

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After Charles VIII of France invaded Florence in 1494, the ruling Medici were overthrown and Savonarola emerged as the new leader of the city, combining in himself the role of leader and priest.

He set up a republic in Florence. Characterizing it as a "Christian and religious Republic," one of its first acts was to make sodomy, previously punishable by fine, into a capital offence. Homosexuality had previously been tolerated in the city, and many homosexuals from the elite now chose to leave Florence. His chief enemies -- the Duke of Milan and Pope Alexander VI -- issued numerous restraints against him, all of which were ignored.

In 1497, he and his followers carried out the *Bonfire of the Vanities*, sending boys from door to door collecting items associated with moral laxity: mirrors, cosmetics, lewd pictures, pagan books, immoral sculptures (which he wanted to be replaced by statues of the saints and modest depictions of biblical scenes), gaming tables, chess pieces, lutes and other musical instruments, fine dresses, women's hats, and the works of immoral and ancient poets, and burnt them all in a large pile in the Piazza in Florence.

Many fine Florentine Renaissance artworks were lost in Savonarola's notorious bonfires -- he is alleged to have thrown some of the artworks into the fires himself.

Florence soon began to riot and revolt against Savonarola because of the city's continual political and economic miseries partially derived from Savonarola's opposition to trading and making money. When a Franciscan preacher challenged him to a trial by fire in the city centre and he declined, his following began to disappear. Dancing and singing returned as taverns reopened, and men again dared to gamble publicly.

Finally, a year before Machiavelli assumed his official duties, Savonarola was excommunicated by Pope Alexander VI. The following year, in 1498, Alexander demanded his arrest and execution.

As Machiavelli was waiting for his appointment, Savonarola surrendered along with two other friars, his two closest friends. Savonarola was charged with heresy, uttering prophecies, sedition, and other crimes (called religious errors by the Pope.)

During the next few weeks all three were tortured on the rack, the torturers sparing only Savonarola's right arm in order that he might be able to sign his confession. All three signed confessions.

On the day of their executions, they were ritually stripped of their clerical vestments, and degraded as heretics. The three were hanged in chains from a single cross and an enormous fire was lit beneath them. They were thereby executed in the same place where the "Bonfire of the Vanities" had been lit, and in the same manner that Savonarola had condemned other criminals himself during his own reign in Florence.

The historian of the day who was present at the incident wrote that his executioner lit the flame exclaiming, "The one who wanted to burn me is now himself put to the flames." The burning took several hours, and that the remains were several times broken apart and mixed with brushwood so that not the slightest piece could be later recovered, as the ecclesiastical authorities did not want Savonarola's followers to have any relics for a future generation of the rigorist preacher they considered a saint. The ashes of the three were afterwards thrown in the river that ran beneath the Ponte Vecchio.

In the intervening period, Machiavelli was deprived of office in 1512 by the returning Medici rulers. In 1513, Machiavelli was accused of conspiracy, and arrested and imprisoned and tortured ("with the rope", where the prisoner is hanged from his bound wrists, from the back, forcing the arms to bear the body's weight, thus dislocating the shoulders). Denying any involvement, he was released. (As the record contains no details, we can only image he was physically and spiritually damaged by this horrible incident.)

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After being tortured, he wanted to ingratiate himself to the Medici family and become an advisor to them. At this time he wrote *The Prince*, which he described as being the un-embellished summary of his knowledge about the nature of princes and "the actions of great men", based not only on reading but also, unusually, on real experience.

### ***Advice to the Prince***

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli shares his insights about power and leadership:

**Advice of Greatest Importance:** In the actions of men, and especially of Princes, one looks at the result; and the end justifies the means.

**Ambition:** Ambition is so powerful a passion in the human breast, that however high we reach we are never satisfied. Men rise from one ambition to another; first they seek to secure themselves from attack, then they attack others.

**Appearances:** A leader must take great care to say only the words of mercy, faith, humanity, and morality, for men in general judge more by what they hear and see, than by what they experience. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few know who you really are. And the few who know who you really are will seldom dare to oppose you in light of the many who support you.

**Arms:** There is no comparison whatever between an armed and disarmed man; it is not reasonable to suppose that one who is armed will obey willingly one who is unarmed; or that any unarmed man will remain safe....

**Conspiracy:** Whoever conspires cannot act alone, and cannot find companions except among those who are discontented; and as soon as you have disclosed your intention to a malcontent, you give him the means of satisfying himself, for by revealing it he can hope to secure everything he wants.

**Cruelty:** A leader must not mind incurring the charge of being cruel if it is for the purpose of keeping his subjects united and faithful.

**Deception:** So simple-minded are men and so controlled by immediate necessities, that a prince who deceives always finds men who let themselves be deceived.

**Fear:** It is much better to be feared than loved.

**Fighting:** There are two methods of fighting, the one by the law, the other by force: the first method is that of men, the second of beasts; but as the first method is often insufficient, one must have recourse to the second.

**Hate:** Hatred is gained as much by good works as by evil.

**Human Nature:** Man is semi-animal, semi-beast. The leader is thus obliged to know how to act as a beast, and must imitate the fox and the lion, for the fox can recognize traps, and the lion can intimidate. If all men were good, this would be poor advice; but as they are bad and will not be loyal to you, you are not bound to be loyal to them.

**Judgment:** Men in general judge more by the eyes than by the hands, for everyone can see, but very few have to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are, and those few will not dare to oppose themselves to the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them.

**Leadership:** A prince who is ignorant of military matters, besides other misfortunes... cannot be esteemed by his soldiers, nor have confidence in them.

**Public Policy:** A prince must not mind incurring the charge of cruelty for the purpose of keeping his subjects united and faithful; for, with a very few examples, he will be more merciful than those who, from excess of tenderness, allow disorders to arise, from whence spring bloodshed; for these as a rule injure the whole community, while the executions carried out by the prince injure only individuals.

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**Training:** The wise Prince never withdraws his thought from training for war; in peace he trains himself for it more than in time of war.

**Virtue:** It will be found that some things which seem virtuous, if followed, lead to one's ruin, and some others which appear vices result in one's greater security and well-being.

It cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow citizens, betray one's friends, be without faith, without pity, and without religion; by these methods one may indeed gain power, but not glory.

**War:** A prince should therefore have no other aim or thought, nor take up any other thing for his study, but war and its organization and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who commands.... And one sees, on the other hand, that when princes think more of luxury than of arms, they lose their state. The chief cause of the loss of states, is the contempt of this art.

To the modern reader, the advice in *The Prince* seems immoral, manipulative, and perverse. Machiavelli's name is now indelibly associated with treachery and deceit.

The next book he wrote, the *Discourses on Livy*,<sup>5</sup> Machiavelli presents a series of lessons on how a republic should be started and structured. It is more than four times larger than *The Prince*, and it more openly explains the advantages of republics. It includes early versions of the concept of checks and balances, and asserts the superiority of a republic over a principality. It became one of the central texts of republicanism in the Age of Enlightenment. French Enlightenment philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered the *Discourses* to be more representative of Machiavelli's true philosophy:<sup>6</sup>

*Machiavelli was a proper man and a good citizen; ... he could not help veiling his love of liberty in the midst of his country's oppression. ... The contradiction between the teaching of the Prince and that of the Discourses on Livy shows that this profound political thinker has so far been studied only by superficial or corrupt readers. The Court of Rome sternly prohibited his book. I can well believe it; for it is that Court it most clearly portrays.*

Unfortunately, the more licentious *Prince* is the one that nearly everyone associates with Machiavelli. Those who take the time to read the more principled *Discourses on Livy* discover another side of Machiavelli that advocates a more just government and understands the value of democratic justice. Perhaps the five years that it took to write the *Discourses* allowed his mind to heal from the torture at the hands of the Medici family.

If only more of today's leaders would give equal time to reading both *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, we would have a more balanced view of reality. (In Volume Six, I will quote from *The Discourses*.)

### ***Machiavelli becomes imbedded in our culture***

As the Italian Renaissance evolved a century later into the English Age of Enlightenment, Shakespeare took Machiavelli to the theatre. Shakespearian tragedy is the personification of betrayal. *Romeo and Juliet*, is the story of the Quest for Synergy in the form of love betrayed by class distinction.

In *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* the audience is bedazzled by a string of multiple betrayals that enfolds us in the tragedy of a denied dream of collaboration, honor and joy.

In the *Merchant of Venice*, the hope for synergy<sup>7</sup> in Portia's Quality of Mercy speech is contrasted with Shylock's betrayal of the code of fairness in his desire to extract a pound of flesh.

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<sup>5</sup> Today, while *The Prince* and *The Discourses* are often packaged as a single book, most people just read the earlier portion (first in the book) - *The Prince*. The second portion, which is less interesting, goes unread.

<sup>6</sup> From Savonarola and Machiavelli, excerpted, condensed, and edited from Wikipedia & Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book III.

<sup>7</sup> In *Henry V*, Shakespeare stakes out another one of his visions of synergy:

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*Julius Caesar* pits the betrayals by the conniving Cassius and the murderous Brutus against the vision of patriotism and honor of Mark Antony. As Cassius observes to Brutus of the evil:

*Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world ....  
Peep[ing] about to find ourselves dishonorable graves.  
Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.*

(Act I, Sc 2)

*Think of him as a serpent's egg,  
which hatch'd, would, as his kind,  
grow mischevious, and kill him in the shell....*

*O Conspiracy,  
Sham'st thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,  
When evils are most free?....*

*How many ages hence  
shall this ... be acted o'er,  
in states unborn and accents yet unknown!..  
Oh! Pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,  
that I am meek and gentle with these butchers!*

(Act II, Sc 1)

Then Caesar's friend, Mark Antony proclaims:

*Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones....  
Caesar ... was my friend, faithful and just to me.*

(Act II, Sc2)

Here Shakespeare leaves us with an epic struggle with no classic heroes, no optimism for defeating Mordred or disarming Machiavelli.

In *Henry VI*, written in 1596, Shakespeare speaks of the *Machiavellian Prince*, a clear indication that Shakespeare had read Machiavelli, and more than likely had actually modeled many of his plays on the themes and strategies outlined in Machiavelli's writing.

Queen Elizabeth, who reigned over England in Shakespeare's day, was so concerned about Machiavelli's *Prince* that she banned the book. Certainly, this factor alone would encourage Shakespeare to obtain a personal copy. Many scholars now believe that Shakespeare used *The Prince* as his handbook upon which to draw the characters of many of his tragic figures – role models for modern society to draw its view of life, now firmly implanted in movies, television, and theatre.

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*From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered:  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother...*

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Consequently, despite the great artistic vision of the Renaissance, as a practical matter, western society was left with a helpless archetype for a role model, a modern Hamlet bedeviled by treachery, cunning, and manipulation, with few tools or strategies to create a sustainable Camelot. Only by combining iron will with the cunning of the ruler can the forces of Mordred be held back.

Literature that prevails in our hearts today like Alexander Dumas' *Three Musketeers* tells the tale of friendship through adventure. What could be more synergistic than the exploits of D'Artagnon, Athos, Portos, and Aramis?

### ***Mordred & Machiavelli in the Modern World***

As the Age of Enlightenment unfolded in America, the synergy quest became the united passion of the founding fathers. Blessed with a deep understanding of the fundamentals of the Greek experiment with democracy and trained in reading the ancient Greek language, coupled with a strong foundation in Christian theology, a unique group (Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Franklin, et al) converged to frame the Declaration of Independence and later the Constitution.

Each document carefully outlines the vision for a synergistic new republic based upon a rebirth of Plato's Republic. The system of rights was designed to produce a win-win relationship between people and their society, while the system of checks and balances prevented tyrannical abuses from the Mordreds and Machiavellis that continually prowl and prey upon the idealistic vision of democracy.

The American Revolution produced its Mordred in the personage of Benedict Arnold. In the fifty year period after the revolution a string of Mordred's appeared, the most recognized today being Aaron Burr, or the scandalous theft of the presidential election of 1824 by John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, along with other scoundrels of equal magnitude, despite their relative historical obscurity today.<sup>8</sup>

The American Civil war, with its monumental loss of 600,000 lives, is deep testimony to the commitment by Abraham Lincoln to the vision of unity and community, and the betrayal of those values by the South with its rigid adherence to an anachronistic system of economic piracy reliant upon the enslavement of others.

In Europe Marx and Engels produced a highly idealistic (and equally unrealistic) Communist Manifesto based on other movements in Europe and America to form economic communities and collaboratives based on common ownership and interest. Not having reconciled the relationship between common and self interest, and reacting more to the perceived enslavement of the working class by capitalism, Marx sought the unity of interest and the release from economic bondage of those less fortunate.

Similarly, the massive union movement of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries drew passionate cries among the oppressed. Sharing in the wealth stimulated Robin Hood behavior in public policy.

### ***Dictators as Modern Mordreds & Machiavellis***

But the ultimate betrayal of the Communist Movement came not at the hands of the dreaded capitalists, but from the Mordreds and Machiavellis within. Lenin, then Stalin and Mao Tse Tung, under the guise of noble idealism, slaughtered or imprisoned tens of millions (perhaps over 100 million all tolled) in the name of justice falsely intended.

During that same era, Hitler, and later Pol Pot became the unapologetic manifestations of Mordred, setting a new standard for hideous and uncompassionate disregard for human life.

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<sup>8</sup> The amateur historian may look to the actions of James Wilkinson or Jesse Duncan Elliott as epitomes of more modern Mordreds in the early 1800s.

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In America, the Mordred of the mid-twentieth century was Senator Joe McCarthy, who abusively spread fear, hate, and distrust across the land with the campaign to find a communist in every closet.

From the ashes of ages of continental strife, the nature of the European Economic Union is based on a desire for synergy among compatible differences to predominate.

In Israel, the Kibbutz movement has attempted to keep Marx's values alive in a quasi-communistic-capitalistic economic world.

### ***Mordred & Machiavelli Today***

As the latter half the twentieth century unfolded, the Quest for Synergy became more and more manifest. The Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King, dramatically envisioned unity, community, belonging, and equality. His language was Arthurian in scope:<sup>9</sup>

*We must learn to live together as brothers  
or perish together as fools.*

At the same time King was uttering these words, President John F. Kennedy was in the White House and American was talking about building a Camelot. Both men were assassinated. Mordred and Machiavelli struck again.

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### ***A Personal Note***

The Mordred Factor is highly visible in today's sports arena. Several coaches are notable in their ability to eliminate the Mordred's from their teams, thus producing a synergy of performance excellence. Take the following sports examples:

Basketball: Red Auerbach of the Boston Celtics was a mastermind in building team players who create mutual value in each other. His teams had players like Bill Russell, Bob Cousy, Tommy Heinsohn, Jim Havlicek, Larry Bird, Robert Parrish, and K.C. Jones, whose selfless commitment to team synergy created an unparalleled string of championships. Coach Krzyzewski at Duke, John Wooden at UCLA or Pat Riley (Lakers, Knicks, Heat) are adherents of ensuring there are no Mordreds or Machiavellis on their teams.

Football: Bill Belichick of the New England Patriots has carried on the Celtic tradition into football. Joe Paterno at Penn State was a "character coach" By contrast, Terrell Owens is a classic Mordred, has been cast off from many teams for inciting internecine, self-interest warfare on teams. The New Orleans Saints (ironic name) put a bounty on opposing players, seeking to maim their opponents, which is simply psychopathic.

Teamwork: Arguably, the greatest athlete of the twentieth century was hockey's Wayne Gretzky, because he not only led his sport in points scored, but also in assists – handoffs to other players who then scored. Watching this man play was synergy in motion.

Every leader, whether of a family, a team, or an organization, must be ever-vigilant; cutting out the Mordreds and Machiavellis like one gets rid of a cancer. As one respected leader told me recently:

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<sup>9</sup> The entire *I have a dream* speech is the embodiment of the Quest for Synergy.

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*"I'm leaving my organization to join another. My boss hired a person for our team who has been so disruptive that now everyone is being played off against the other. I spend all my time now worrying about who is going to put a knife in my back. I used to be a high flyer. Unless I leave I'll have no future."*

Another executive lamented about her subordinates:

*"I hired the most qualified people I could afford. But they are always breaking down, working for their own self interest. There is no teamwork, no synergy, and no synchronicity.*

*We don't coordinate well. No amount of team building seems to work."*

Unknowingly, she made the mistake of hiring her team based on competence, not character,<sup>10</sup> resulting in a majority of people being or becoming "Marginal Mordreds."

How an organization creates a culture of innovation and collaboration is critical in either stimulating or repressing the Marginal Mordred and the Machiavelli Maneuver. As I was editing this piece, the phone rang. It was a senior manager from a large corporation who lamented:

*"There is no real innovation here and little collaboration. We all have a fear of failure because people are fired if they fail. If we do make a mistake, we are criticized in front of others.*

*So no one takes any risks.*

*We talk of innovation, but we don't walk it. No one collaborates unless someone else is willing to take the risk and responsibility if something doesn't work out.*

*When we try to work in alliance with other companies, there's an attitude that our products are always better, and theirs are junk. We see only a very limited set of options.*

*If someone does have something good, our approach is arrogant: 'We'll just buy them.' When we do, we kill all their innovation."*

This was said by a man of courage and vision who had been struggling for years to rally his small team against the overwhelming power of an antithetical culture. Yet we cannot expect those of vision and courage to act forever like fools. Unless new leadership is brought in, or alternatively, those of courage join forces as a "band of brothers," each of the courageous visionaries will be picked off, one-by-one, or be relegated to live a sorry life of disillusionment and despair.

Leaders play an enormous role in determining attitudes and behavior.

Unknowingly, many leaders unintentionally betray their subordinate's expectations for being acknowledged and rewarded for excellent work, innovative thinking, and willingness to take risks for the greater good of the organization.

When these expectations are unfulfilled, their morale takes a long, low road to disappointment and despair. The climate of excitement and innovation yields to an attitude of complaint, blame, and resentment. It is in this swamp of despair the Marginal Mordred breeds like a mosquito.

If the ghosts of Mordred and Machiavelli are rampant in an organization, look to the top where their spirit may reside. And also look within to see if you are trapped in a culture of intrigue, innuendo, and doubt in which you've become one of the principal or supporting actors.

Like the smoker who gets a momentary nicotine high, leaders who feast on a diet cynicism, criticism, blame, negativity, and rule by fear may get an emotional power-high, but in the long run, with each passing day, sustainable energy is drained from the organization on its slow decline to death. Work then becomes nothing more than a bitter-sweet travail with neither victory nor valor, honor nor heroics.

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<sup>10</sup> Japanese corporations are more skilled at getting teamwork to prevail. They hire on the basis of character weighing in at 80% of the person's value, and competence at 20%. American companies typically base their decision on just the opposite proportion.