Abstract – This paper studies Dante’s encounters with Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti (died ca. 1280), a wealthy Florentine Guelph and father of Guido, Dante’s “first friend” and Farinata degli Uberti (the leader of the Ghibelline party), in Inferno X analogous to the dialectical relationship politics has with poetry, love, and friendship. The juxtaposition between the two dramas will be studied as a single representation of a society in which public and personal interests are intertwined. We shall see how the root of Farinata’s and Cavalcante’s pathos is to be traced back to love, to a misguided and inordinate love of finite and transitory goods. Mistaking the source of good and virtue to be in humans rather than in God, Farinata, Cavalcante, and Guido failed to raise their virtues from the realm of natural ethics and philosophy to the realm of spirituality and theology; thus, their actions were never elevated from the civic community to the spiritual community of Christ. Lacking in Grace and engrossed in earthly matters, politics, and family, they failed to channel their love in the proper upward direction towards God, who is caritas.

Keywords: Dante, Inferno, Caritas, friendship, poetry, politics, justice