

# Hypocrisy in 'phaedra' and 'tartuffe' essay sample



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In both 'Tartuffe' and 'Phaedra' the underlying motive for hypocrisy manifested by the characters are the momentary defeat of reason and excessive passion. In 'Tartuffe' the excessive piety or excessive passion for religion causes the hypocrisy, while in 'Phaedra' it is the excessive passion and lust that cause the hypocrisy. Some of the greatest hypocrisies in 'Phaedra' are Phaedra's feelings for Hippolytus. The excessive passion she feels for him is not a result of a strong and inevitable feeling of genuine love for Hippolytus, but rather a result of her fear of age and perceived loss of attractiveness.

Hippolytus' youth, handsomeness and his challenging improbability as a pursuit make him seem like the solution to Phaedra's problems with mortality. She probably felt that by being with him, she could become youthful and beautiful once again. Further, this fear is possibly a resistance of death in aging. Thus, even her expressed desire to die seems hypocritical, as death seems to be the cause of her fear. When she kills herself, however, it seems that her hypocrisy turned into a genuine desire to die. Furthermore, Phaedra is also hypocritical in behavior towards her husband.

She is not only deceiving him and lying to him, but she also influenced him first to banish Hippolytus and then to disown him, for her own peace of mind and emotional healing. And even her revenge in the end is hypocritical. If one loves someone deeply, they cannot hurt him. Therefore, if her feelings of affection for Hippolytus were genuine, she would not want to hurt him, even in an indirect way, but she did falsely accuse him. Theseus is also hypocritical. He accepts Phaedra's claim as truth not because he is devoted

to her and blindly believes in her innocence and integrity, but because he himself feels threatened by Hippolytus.

His selfishness and insecurity about his own legitimacy motivate his quick-tempered curse against Hippolytus. He would not even let Hippolytus give an explanation, as Theseus most likely knew somewhere within him that Hippolytus was innocent. But, in a moment of loss of reason, overcome by passion, Theseus decides to be a hypocrite, side with Phaedra and banish Hippolytus. Even Hippolytus himself is hypocritical as he is presented as a very dutiful individual who obeys all of his father's demands, and then hypocritically, falls in love with Aricia.

In *Tartuffe*, Moliere ridicules excessive piety or piety to the point of fanaticism and attacks hypocrisy in general, by showing the audience the nature and ruthlessness of hypocrites. Tartuffe is hypocritical in his behavior towards Orgon and his family. While pretending to be a pious, honest man, Tartuffe is becoming a part of their life in order to eventually gain everything they have for himself. Everything he does is hypocritical; he preaches to be a genuinely pious person and worshipper of God but in fact his acts prove exactly the opposite.

While the genuinely sacred person believes in sanctity of marriage, Tartuffe is trying to break Orgon and Elmire's marriage as he attempts to seduce her and have her for himself. Tartuffe preaches the irrelevance of any secular things (he gave up all he has for the poor), but readily accepts all the secular things that Orgon provides him with. He preaches the importance of family, but attempts to destroy Orgon's family and create disharmony. Furthermore,

unlike a pious person who believes in modesty, Tartuffe preaches modesty by using boastful language. Even Orgon is hypocritical.

He admires Tartuffe for his piety and wishes for himself and his family to be more like Tartuffe. However, he does this in a hypocritical manner. Orgon believes that by marrying Mariane to Tartuffe and giving Tartuffe all he owns, he will become more religious, considerate, caring and honest, as Tartuffe pretends to be. But this in itself is hypocrisy as Orgon needs to be emotionally closer to God to be a better person, not to just marry his daughter to someone he believes is very religious. He does not have his daughter's best interests in mind, but his own.

In both 'Tartuffe' and 'Phaedra' hypocrisy is represented as a power leading to devastation and bad ways, far away from piousness. However, this hypocrisy is resolved in both plays by revelation of truth in the end. As 'Tartuffe' is a comedy, this truth that prevails makes the outcome positive and the Prince's order, like a *deus ex machina* saves the situation from complete devastation where Orgon and his family would lose everything they own. Although the truth is revealed in tragedy of 'Phaedra' as well, this truth only brings about the devastation sooner, as Hippolytus dies and Phaedra poisons herself.