

Crime vs. punishment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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Punishment “ Who is more arrogant within his soul, who is more impious, than one who dares to sorrow at Gods judgment”(XX, 28-30). Here Dante challenges anyone who may question the judgment of God and the punishment of sinners. In Dante’s Inferno, questioning God’s judgment is looked at as renouncing God. However, I deem it totally natural to question: Does the crime fit the punishment In Oedipus the King and Antigone, Sophocles illustrates how the pursuit of truth while taking a stand for a cause is a crime that yields critical and excessive punishment by the gods. “ Led by my guide and his truth, I leave the gall and go for the sweet apples of delight, but first I must descend to the center of all,”(XVI, 61-3) says the pilgrim, Dante. Dante symbolizes the common sinner emerging from the “ Dark” Ages, stranded in “ the Dark Woods” (I, 3) of vices bound to Hell. The U-turn in his journey to the “ sweet apples of delight”(XVI, 62) in heaven, extends to the potential enlightenment of all others.

In the pilgrims journey, Christian-Humanist, Dante advocates the importance of Gods “ Divine Illumination” in humanitys self- fulfillment or salvation and enlightenment. God placed the gift of choice into mans hands and so man is responsible for his own fate, as is his achieving his own salvation or lack thereof. In comparing Dante’s Inferno with Oedipus and the King and Antigone the punishment that sinners received in hell definitely fits the crime. Sophocles’ Antigone is a heartrending interesting story of retribution because of the past events of her family’s history. Antigone, who is determined to stand for what she believes in, buries her brother with appropriate honors so his soul may go on to rest in peace in its designated

place. Creon is the king and is therefore positioned to enforce punishment upon anyone who commits a crime against his decrees. To Creon's surprise, the latest criminal set to receive capital punishment just so happens to be family.

The people of Creon's kingdom are against killing an Antigone as they believe she is innocent. Creon's son, Haemon, even stands against his father while pleading for Antigone's life. Believing that her crime fits the punishment, Creon's personal pursuit to prove a point as king is soon confirmed wrong. After careful consultation from the gods, Antigone is found innocent of a crime punishable by law. Creon realizes that he should release her but before he is able to, she commits suicide. Antigone's belief that she is committing an act morally justifiable by the laws of the gods, leads her to be sentenced to death by her own account. And Justice living with the gods below sent no such laws for men. I did not think anything which you proclaimed strong enough to let a mortal override the gods and their unwritten and unchanging laws.

, as stated by Antigone. Allowing her dead brother to be left in the street as if his life served no meaning or purpose is the same to Antigone as allowing herself to ignore her own personal values or morals. Antigone must stand up for what she believes in. Antigone sacrifices her life because she is devoted to the laws of the gods.

She clearly understands that it is her duty to bury her brother and does not want a curse to precede her for not doing so. She is obedient to the laws that are higher than any laws that are written on earth. Retribution in Antigone?

™s case is considered excessive because her death cannot be justifiable by the law of man. Her love for her brother, her devotion, and her obedience to the gods, are not enough reason to have her sentenced to death.

Her death rests upon the hands of Creon, because he has honored his own law above the law of the gods. In contrast, Sophocles??™ ??? Oedipus the King??? illustrates how one can commit a crime unknowingly and still be punished. Oedipus is a king, whose life is predestined for failure. When Delphi an oracle foresees Oedipus will grow up to kill his father, marry his mother, and bear children with her, early prevention is put in place to avoid his future as a criminal. He is given to a noble family and is raised as their biological son but as an adult he hears this prophecy about his life. Not knowing that he is adopted, he runs away from home. Unable to escape his gruesome fate while running from the laws of destiny, he kills his biological father and has an incestuous relationship with his biological mother. Oedipus is ultimately punished for a crime that he does not know that he commits.

His father, King Laius??™s death is an accidental one by way of self defense. However, once he kills the king, he takes the king??™s place and marries the king??™s queen. Completely blinded by fate, Oedipus is eventually punished for killing his father as well as producing children with a woman that he does not even know as his own mother. Life proves to be very unfair in the case of Oedipus verses the gods and fate. “ Pride breeds the tyrant violent pride, gorging, crammed to bursting with all that is overripe and rich with ruin....

Can such a man, so desperate, still boast he can save his life from the flashing bolts of god”, states Oedipus. Nevertheless runs directly into a trap

that has been set by fate and the gods and his only defense mechanism is to cease his search of the truth. However, what is life without a search for the truth As king Oedipus is responsible for finding out the evil that has been plaguing his country. However the gods show no mercy on Oedipus??™ life, because his life has no significant value to it in comparison to all the other residents of Thebes. The punishment presented in Sophocles??™ works is both excessive and problematic in terms of methods of retribution. Both Antigone and Oedipus??™ commit crimes that are justifiable to human nature though as a result the gods punish both of them very harshly. In contrast, the way that punishment is rendered in Dante??™s Inferno, examines the price one pays in hell for not living to the full potential ??? standards of God. The Inferno is the universal epicenter of sin and sinners.

All “ souls who have lost the good of intellect,” (III, 17-8) and chosen to sin, “ chose” to go there. Thus, they “ all pass over eagerly to hell” as, “ Divine Justice rightfully purs them so.” (III, 121-2) Within a humanist approach, Dante believes that free will and the responsibility thereof of falls into hands of the individual. God is light.

He is “ Sovereign Wisdom,” “ High Genius,”(II, 7) “ Ultimate Intellect,”(III, 6) “ Adversary of All Evil”(II, 16) Lost individuals have lost intellect; theyve lost Gods light and turned to Evil. Amidst, this “ nation of lost souls,”(VII, 25) Dante must learn to recognize sin in its dark light and in doing so, renounce it. To feel sorrow for sinners who are punished is just like condoning the evil that they have done and so, renouncing God, the “ Adversary of All Evil.” Renunciation of God is the exact opposite of what Dante wishes to achieve. At first, the naive Dante is constantly “ swept by pity and confusion,”(V, 72)

for every sinners pain and torture. As he proceeds further into hell and is further bombarded with more examples of “ fair” counter-punishment, Dantes clouded confusion dissolves to the God-lit reality that sinners have worked for just what they receive. Virgil, the embodiment of Human Reason, aids this realization. He really drives home the concept by elucidating the symbolic retribution in the many sins punishment.

When necessary, he scolds Dante for bad judgment in pity. This occurs exclusively towards the end when Dante has learned to recognize the nature of sin and knows better than to pity Gods right judgment towards a wrong committed (XX). The “ Sage” managed to restore with his reasoning, “ the good of human intellect” which Dante had begun to lose before. Towards the end, Dante declares, “ O Sovereign Wisdom...How justly Thy power judge and assign.

“(III, 9) It is as if the pilgrim has been awoken by the “ light of God” and “ reason of Virgil.” All that sinners did on Earth, is reattributed back to them in Hell, as a sinner says and Dante found out, “ What I was living, the same I am now, dead.”(XIV, 48) His newly attained, “ clear conscience, strengthens Dante...” It is, “ that good companion that upholds a man within the armour of his purity”(XXVIII, 125-7) Within this “ armour of purity,” Dante can see clearly that he has no reason to pity and “ becomes as numb as any callous,”(XXXIII, 101) apathetic towards the misery sinners have earned. By the time he reaches Cocytus, Dante not only recognizes sin, but also renounces it.

This is expressed through his sadistic abuse of the sinner, “ I had a good grip of his hair...yanked out more than a fistful of it.” (XXXII, 101-2) This is the last stage of the first phase of Dantes pilgrimage to enlightenment in Heaven. “ There is a longer ladder yet to climb,”(XXIV, 55) ahead, the more arduous phase of penance, before the final sweet light of Paridisio.

All Dante must do in this third phase, is bask in the purity of God and his “ self” shall be “ fulfilled.” All others who follow in the pilgrims footsteps, shall too, be “ fulfilled.” Questioning the wrath of God or the gods is natural to any soul yearning for answers. However, who dares to challenge rather the crime actually fits the punishment In Dante??™s Inferno, Dante??™s inquiring of God??™s verdict over those who has sinned is looked at as renouncing God. However, after experiencing hell for himself, Dante is certain that the crimes committed by the sinners who inhabit hell are proper, suitable, and absolutely irrefutable.

Although in comparison Sophocles illustrates adverse and disproportionate penalty by way of fate and the pursuit of truth. In Oedipus the King and Antigone, the crimes place upon the heart of man by the gods there of do not fit the punishment.