

Revenge vs justice(macbeth)



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Revenge causes one to act blinding through anger, rather than through reason. It is a part of human nature that forces us to seek revenge against the person who has granted us with pain. But following the principle of an “eye for eye, tooth for tooth”, is not intelligent way to pursue justice. This is the same case in the play Hamlet written by Shakespeare, in the 16-----th century. In the play the two of the character’s fathers are brutishly murdered. The first murder character is the king Hamlet who is supposed to be revenged by his son prince Hamlet to king Claudius. The second murder of Lord Polonius supposes to be revenge by his son Laertes. Both Prince Hamlet and Laertes go to seek revenge for the death of their fathers. The revenges lead to the death of the entire Royal family. Also Fortinbras, King of Norway, was killed by King Hamlet; slain by sword during the duel. So Prince of Norway, son of King Fortinbras seeks for revenge on Denmark of his father’s death. Also revenge is improper and wrong way to punish someone for his fault. Their acts of emotion lead to the downfall of two, and the rise to power of one.

After the death of King Hamlet, King Claudius married late Hamlet’s wife, Queen Gertrude. Prince Hamlet, son of King Hamlet has a meeting with the ghost of his death father king Hamlet. Ghost conveys to his son that his own brother Claudius has murdered him. “ The serpent that did sting thy father’s life / Now wears his crown.” (I, v, 39-40). His father’s ghost informs Hamlet that he needs him to take revenge through the death of his brother Claudius.

The ghost also asks Hamlet to:

Let not the royal bed of the Denmark be

A couch for luxury and damned incest

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But, howsoever thou pursuest this actd
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother ought; leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To pick and sting her. (I, v, 84-89).

The ghost asks to take revenge without hurting his mother because she does not know any thing and she is a “ seeming-virtuous queen;” “(I, v, 47).

Hamlet already hates Claudius even before he met the ghost. His views about Claudius can be seen in the soliloquy, when Hamlet compares his father to King Claudius. “ So excellent a king; that was, to this, Hyperion to a satyr / My father’s brother, but no more like my father”(I, ii, 139-140). He also incenses his mother for marrying Claudius almost immediately after the death of his father. The rejection of Ophelia and the marriage of his mother and the shocking news from the ghost make Prince Hamlet panics and make him upset. Hamlet first decides to act insane. Ophelia’s father thinks that the ignorance of Ophelia causes Hamlet madness. Hamlet’s mood changes constantly, when he speaks to the people. He says to Ophelia “ you jig, you amble, and you lisp...and make your wantonness your ignorance”(III, i, 145-146). But she still loves Hamlet. She keeps calm and polite. When she returns Hamlet’s love token, Hamlet speaks with her very angrily “ Get thee a nunnery: Why would thou be a breeder of sinners?” (III, i, 121). Hamlet is still waiting for the time to take revenge of his father’s death, but he is confused and double minded about whether the ghost is really his father’s spirit or a devil.

In his soliloquy he says:

The sprit I have seen

May be the devil: and the devil hath power

To assume a pleasing shape: yea, and, perhaps

Out of my weakness and my melancholy (II, ii, 596-599)

Hamlet makes a plan:

...I have heard,

That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,

Have by the cunning of the scene

Been stuck so to the soul that presently

They have proclaim'd their malefactions;

For the murder, though it hath no tongue, will speak

With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players

Play something like the murder of my father

Before mine uncle; I'll observe his look; (II, ii, 586-594).

Hamlet in this plan is planning to see the reaction of Claudius during the play, and if reacts unusually then he is definitely guilty of his crime.

During the play "The Mouse-Trap" is acted by the players, Hamlet observes Claudius' emotions and he knows that Claudius is "that adulterate beast," (I, v, 43) who killed his father. Hamlet's plan works, his uncle throws a fit and runs out the room. Later on, when Hamlet finds him, he is kneeling down praying, and Hamlet pulls out the sword and, is ready to kill Claudius. But all of a sudden, Hamlet changes his mind because, if he kills him while he is

praying he will go to heaven and Hamlet wants him to go to hell. “ His soul may be as damn’d and black as hell, where to it goes” (III, iii, 95). So Hamlet postpones the execution of his uncle. After that Hamlet proceeds towards his mother’s room. He speaks to his mother angrily and blames her for marring his uncle “ You are the queen, your husband’s brother wife” (III, iv, 16).

During the conversation, the ghost appears. Hamlet talks with the ghost but queen Laertes can not see the ghost. So she gets more convinced that Hamlet is in madness. In the queen’s room Hamlet performs the murder of Polonius accidentally in the thought of him being Claudius. “ Nay, I know not is it the king? (III, iv, 29).

After the death of Polonius, Ophelia wants to take revenge of her father’s death, but she can not, because she still loves Hamlet. This situation causes Ophelia’s madness and the state of cognitive dissonance. She sings songs in her father love. “ His beard as white as snow, / All flaxen was his poll: / He is gone, he is gone...” (IV, v, 192-194). These events take her to the mouth of death. When the news of the death of Polonius reaches to his son Laertes, he comes back with a desire to take revenge of his father’s death. Laertes believes King Claudius responsible for the death.

Laertes speaks to King:

I dare damnation: to this point I stand,
That both the worlds I gave to negligence,
Let come what come, only I’ll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father. (IV, v, 131-134).

Laertes is ready to kill the king right away thinking that Claudius murdered

his father. But Claudius tells him that Hamlet killed his father. Laertes is obsessed to take revenge with Hamlet “ To cut his throat; the church” (IV, vii, 127). When Laertes heard the news of Ophelia madness due to Polonius death, he gets more mad and wants to take harmful revenge “ By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight...”(IV, v, 154). King Claudius also found out that Hamlet has escaped from the trap that he setup to get him murdered. So king Claudius sets up another plan with Laertes. His plan calls for Hamlet and Laertes to have a mocking sword fight, but Laertes will use a real poised sword. Laertes agrees to this. However, if this plan fails Claudius will add poison to the Hamlet’s drinks. “ And that he calls for drink, I’ll have prepared him / A chalice for the nonce;”(IV, vii, 160-161). When the sword fight begins Hamlet is winning, but Laertes gets frustrated and stabs Hamlet with the poised sword when Hamlet is not ready. Meanwhile, Queen Gertrude drank Hamlet’s wine and died. Hamlet then turns around and manages to take the sword from Laertes and stabs him with it. In the last moments of Laertes life, he discloses that this is all Claudius’ plan “ I can no more the king, the king to blame” (IV, v, 192). Listening to this Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poised sword and force him to drink the poised wine “ Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned / Dane, Drink off this potion.” (V, ii, 318-319).

King Hamlet killed King Fortinbras of Norway, so the son of Fortinbras seeks for revenge on Denmark of his father’s death. Young Fortinbras deeply enraged by the death of his father, and he wants revenge against Denmark because of this occurrence. Fortinbras wants to the regain the lands that had been lost by his father to Denmark. Prince Fortinbras wants to attack on

Denmark to get back the honor of Norway. But he attacks on Poland to reduce his anger. At the end of the play, when Hamlet is dying, he gives his approval to Fortinbras as Denmark's new king. " But I do prophesy the election lights / On Fortinbras; he has my dying voice". (IV, ii, 348-349).

Fortinbras regains his father's land, without the use of violence, or death to himself. And becomes King of Denmark.

In the end of the play all the royal family gets killed in the revenge of Hamlet and Laertes. If Hamlet wants justice, he would be content with merely killing the King, for that would satisfy " eye for eye, tooth for tooth" justice. His passing on this opportunity leads to a great unbalance justice. Hamlet is clearly motivated and driven by revenge and is clearly on the wrong path. Furthermore Hamlet emphasizes the injustice and has committed the very wicked deed. Moreover, Hamlet wants Claudius damned and black. He murdered an innocent man, Polonius; nonetheless the act of injustice is done. Hamlet is blinded by revenge, and he ironically commits the very wicked act that he hates. On the other side, Laertes believes that Hamlet deserves to die and they kill each of them while motivated by revenge. Hamlet is judged wrongly and murdered by Laertes. Hamlet kills Laertes father, but he did so accidentally. A person who kills another person should be put to death. But if a person is killed accidentally, though, the killer should be punished, However, he does not deserve death. Hamlet does not deserve death, and his death marks an act of great injustice. After the death of Hamlet, Fortinbras becomes the king of Denmark, which shows that Fortinbras is the real conquer in the play who achieves everything what he wants without using violence and revenge. Fortinbras uses his intelligence

and patient in a right manner to get what he wants. Hamlet's and Laertes' acts of emotion lead to the downfall of them, and cause the rise to power of Fortinbras.

In conclusion, the revenge of Hamlet and Laertes lead them and the whole royal family to the death, and causes the gain of the power of Fortinbras. So revenge is improper and wrong way to punish someone for his penalties, which creates more troubles and problems. Vengeance is unjust.

Shakespeare uses this powerful imagery to show the injustice that takes place when people are judged on their action, without any thought to their reasons. Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to enhance the injustice of revenge. Punishment is a must for a better society, but revenge is not a suitable form of punishing. But people still insist on the revenge and create more problems. The only logic solution to these problems is to put them on trail, and hope for justice. Instead of taking revenge or killing each other, people should seek justice, go to the courts, do not use power, more better is to forgive and forget.