

Passion vs reason in the play medea

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Medea: Passion vs. Reason “ The passions are like fire, useful in a thousand ways and dangerous only in one, through their excess,” stated Christian Nestell Bovee a famous mid-19th century author. “ Logic, like whiskey, loses its beneficial effect when taken in too large quantities,” stated Lord Dunsany a famous Anglo-Irish writer during the 1900s. These quotes demonstrate a strong theme in the Greek play Medea written by Euripides. In the play Medea, the protagonist Medea learns that her husband Jason breaks every vow and betrays her by taking another woman to bed.

Feeling outraged and hurt, Medea decides to take revenge. She carries out her plan successfully and the play concludes with Medea escaping off to Athens. Throughout the play, two distinct concepts of beliefs and point of views are revealed in the two main characters of the play, Medea and Jason. Medea sees the world through the views of passion whereas Jason sees the world through the views of reason. The main characters express an extremity of either passion or reason which leads them to their own downfall; moreover, through both Medea and Jason's actions, the strength and weakness of each attribute is revealed.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, passion is defined as a “ strong and barely controllable emotion and a state or outburst of strong emotion”. The protagonist of the play, Medea, demonstrates an excessive passion which leads her to destruction. The strongest factor that contributes to Medea's unreasonable passion is her extreme love for Jason. In the beginning of the play the nurse mourns that, “[Medea's] heart on fire with passionate love for Jason; nor would she have persuaded the daughters of Pelias to kill their father... and she herself helped Jason in every way” (P. 1).

The protagonist passionate love for Jason deceives her thoughts and leaves her with nothing but hope for Jason's love. However, Medea's hope strips and shatters to pieces when she learns that Jason has left her for another woman. Medea explains to the chorus that, " It has broken [her] heart. [She is] finished. " (P. 8). Medea simply wishes to die. However, Medea's suicidal mind fades away as her excessive passion feeds upon her hatred and rage which leads her to uncalled acts of revenge. She calls out to the gods to pray that "[she] may see [Jason], him and his bride and their entire place hattered for the wrong they dare to do [her] without cause" (P. 6). Motivated by animosity, Medea successfully murders the Princess and the king. However, lost in the sea of hatred Medea then decides to " kill [her] own children" (P. 26). From her own actions, Medea destroys everything that she cares for due to an excessive in both love and hatred. Medea's superfluous love makes her sacrifice herfamily, status, and home. Furthermore, Medea's actions due to hatred destroy her future. For example, to achieve ultimate revenge, Medea kills her own two sons to make Jason suffer.

However, at the same time "[Medea] feel the pain [herself]. [She] share[s] in [Jason's] sorrow" (P. 44). The killing of her own children will make her feel a lifelong agony. For Medea, love does not simply turn to abhorrence. A main cause of this sudden shift in passion is Jason's betrayal. Also to Medea, it is her redundant and hurtful pride that unleashes the hate inside her. Many times throughout the play Medea expresses " For it is not bearable to be mocked by enemies" (P. 26). Medea cannot allow others to laugh at her misfortune and only through the murder of her enemies could she feel redeemed and her pride restored.

Reason defined by Oxford Dictionary means to “ think, understand and form judgment logically”. Through his own excessive reasoning, the antagonist of the story, Jason, falls to destruction. Firstly in his mind, Jason sees everything to be explained by reason. Jason betrays Medea by marrying the Princess of Corinth. His purpose for such a cold hearted action is simply “ that [they] might live well, and not be short of anything” (P. 18). To Jason, all the betraying is just a desperate act in hope to have what is best for the family. Secondly, in Jason’s mind he never expects Medea to act irrationally because he neglects her feelings.

In Jason’s eyes “ it would have been for better far for men to have gotten their children in some other way, and women not to have existed” (P. 18). Jason believes that the only reason and positive outcome of marriage is children. Another example is when Jason argues that, “ women have got such a state of mind that, if [their] life at night is good, [they] think [they] have everything; but, if in that quarter things go wrong, [they] will consider [their] best and truest interest most hateful” (P. 18). Jason thinks that Medea is outraged because he took another woman to chamber. In addition, because he disregarded

Medea’s love for him, he does not take into consideration that it is his betrayal that outrages Medea. Having too much reasoning and too little passion, Jason is left with nothing but hopeless and misery. Jason’s inability to see Medea’s revenge causes him to fall from the top to the bottom leaving him with nothing: no power, wealth, family, bloodlines and respect. In his last conversation with Medea, Jason cries that, “ for [him] remains to cry aloud upon [his] fate, who will get no pleasure from [his] newly wedded love, and

the boys whom [he] begot and brought up, never shall [he] speak to them alive.

Oh, [his] life is over! ” (P. 44). Medea’s final blow to Jason’s life is providing him with a prophecy about his death. In his character, Jason’s ratio of reason to passion is surely not proportional which blinds him from seeing Medea’s irrationality thus his downfall resulted. Everyone in society has both passion and reason. No one has one without the other. Both passion and reason have its own strengths and weakness which expresses through the main characters of Medea. Through the behaviors of Medea, many strength and weakness of passion are seen.

For Medea, Passion is able to become strength and motivation for her reprisal. In text, Medea’s abundant love for Jason causes her to do anything for him, including sacrificing her own family. On the other hand, Medea’s excessive hatred overpowers her mind and becomes overboard with her actions. For instance, Medea plans “ Next after [killing the princess]; for [she] shall kill [her] own children” (P. 26). Medea killing her own children will surely be the most evil act of humanity and all result from immoderate passion. Also, positive and negative aspects of logic are shown through Jason’s arguments.

Strength of being rational is to be able to think about the positive and negative of things before making a decision. For example, “ when [Jason] [arrives] here from the land of Iolcus ... [he] [is], in every kind of difficulty,” he exclaims, “ what luckier chance could [he] have come across than this, an exile to marry the daughter of the king? ”(P. 18). The outcomes of Jason’s plan have far more advantages than disadvantages. However, an extremity

of reasoning may lead to neglecting the feelings of others. For instance, Jason neglects Medea's love.

Even though both have positive and negative aspects, in Euripides' view having excessive passion is better than excessive reasoning. He consummates the play with Medea having her triumph and escaping to Athens with "such a chariot has Helios, [her] father's father given [her] to defend from [her] enemies" (P. 43). With Medea having the final victory, readers may tell that Euripides chooses passion over reason. One may think, without the ability to feel and to have emotions, human would be no different from robots. These qualities are what make one human.

The play Medea justifies both Christian Nestell Bovee's point, "The passions are like fire, useful in a thousand ways and dangerous only in one, through their excess" and Lord Dunsany's view, "Logic, like whiskey, loses its beneficial effect when taken in too large quantities". The extremity of passion and reason are revealed in the play Medea. Jason played a role of a rationalist and Medea an irrationalist. Via Medea's superfluous passion, disastrous events occur in which guilt and grief will accompany Medea for the rest of her life. On the other hand, Jason is left with nothing due to his acute logical mind.

His inconsideration for feelings and desire for acquisition are all causes of Jason's denouement. Through the events in the story, properties, reason and passion have its own strength and weakness. Too much passion could lead to poor choices. On the contrary, de trop reasoning could lead one to a stone-heart. Both Jason and Medea possess an extremity of passion or reason which proves to be their hamartia. Even though each attribute has its

own strength and weakness people should have a harmonic balance between reason and passion. Only then would one be ideal in making decisions. Just like in life, everything needs to have a balance.