

Two blind men

Business



An eye for an eye leaves men blind. When grandma was chanting, “ life isn’t fair,” “ take all you want, and want all you take,” or my Uncle Blaine whispered some advice, “ take an eye for an eye,” they shared moral codes. Morals define the edges of our grey lives. They give guidance as we squander through our day-to-day as well as life-altering decisions.

Delicately, these morals hold our hands and take us towards what we deep down believe to be the most effective choice for our well-being. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, it is reoccurring in this theme of “ an eye for an eye”. Each character is confronted either directly or indirectly with settling their conscience when the decision of an action being right or wrong is presented. I can confidently state it is not even close to an optimal choice to apply the moral and take another’s eyeball, ripped from its socket, to justify having a missing one.

It can be obviously observed, in a few prominent places, as the most damaging of the moral codes when the moral is applied to the lives of Fitzgerald’s characters, and causes a whole lot of heart ache. From marital affairs to murder, the best choice is not always to do as has been done unto you. Fitzgerald’s first use of “ an eye for an eye” is that neither Tom nor Daisy feels guilt over an affair because Daisy’s moral code is encrypted with “ take an eye for an eye”. It didn’t matter Tom may be having his affair because he is discontent and Daisy “ just ain’t cuttin’ it” anymore. Daisy finds justification for her own in that Tom has one at all.

She cares not for his motives or if she is to blame. It’s enough in her slightly dim head to know simply that he is having one. More often than not, our

society feels the same way. It is encouraged, with a false moral, to disregard the “ why” of any situation and simply take note of that it already is. No amount of questioning would change the fact it already is or has happened, and so it becomes justifiable to send the ripple of discomfort back to the sender. Thus, if I were to stand at one end of a rope with a second individual at another, according to society and Daisy’s moral codes, it is practically expected of me to flick the rope back with all my might and snap the second person if they had done it to me.

If I’m hurt they must be too! Conclusively, I would be seen as an idiot if I choose not to reciprocate, which fails to make sense because society and Daisy both struggle with intelligence. Though, that’s a topic for another paper all-together. The second prominent example of “ an eye for an eye” begins with a mask called revenge, because they are closely related. When Myrtle’s distressed husband, George, discovers his wife’s death may not have been an accident, he seeks revenge. Deranged, driven by emotion, and armed with the thought of “ an eye for an eye,” George slays Jay Gatsby in the comfort of his home. He takes Gatsby’s life believing he is only settling a score.

To George, Myrtle was his life. He was a feeble man and lacked enough of his own existence to be able to stand without her. When George’s life was taken from him, he took revenge, as it was only fair he take the life that stole it. George was driven by a moral code telling him to “ take an eye for an eye”. This example is clouded by the revenge, and should really be recognized as a destructive moral application.

“ An eye for an eye” leaves a common side effect of revenge; a cold, harmful, game in which there are no winners. In some scenarios, the moral repeated in *The Great Gatsby* is appropriate. It does not always cause trauma and despair. It may, for example, bring everyone up if the “ taker” of excellent service at a restaurant feels compelled through moral integrity to be a better customer, as this is all they can give, to the one they are taking the service from. The moral offers justification that it will end with settling the score. Unfortunately, it will spark a growing use of the moral until the mass destruction levels observed in *The Great Gatsby* are achieved.

Like starting with a cigarette and escalating to methamphetamine, this is gateway thinking. It is helpful to note both examples are connected through a chain-reaction caused by thinking, “ take an eye for an eye”. Had Daisy not decided to cheat because Tom did, she would not have brought Gatsby into town that day with them. If they had not been in town, Myrtle would not have seen Jordan with Tom. Myrtle would not have run out into the road. George would not have had a death to avenge.

The characters seeking to take an equal of what they felt was taken from them only resulted in more loss. Had everyone consulted only their own feelings, possibly satisfy themselves with a little pity party instead of trying to force a back-lash unto another, the excess loss would be eliminated. The application of the moral “ an eye for an eye” in *The Great Gatsby* is the cause for several instances of trauma and distress. It’s an unfortunate truth that claiming another’s eye will not bring back your own. One Daisy and George failed to ever see. Tom didn’t love Daisy any more for her loving Gatsby.

No one cued the music to an embrace in the meadow. Myrtle was no more alive after Gatsby's murder than she was lying covered by a sterile white blanket on the black tar. Taking "an eye for an eye" also caused a chain reaction of growing problems and revenge. In the case of the affairs, ultimately they both still cheated. In the case of the murder, ultimately both individuals were harmed. Justifying the moral by thinking it will simply settle the score is gateway thinking and only continues to grow the problem.

It's comparative to the smelly manure growing those lovely azalea's in the backyard. Comparative if they azaleas then tried to commit adultery and murder, of course. Conquering the internal choice to take an eye for an eye, is a choice best won with the decision to not. Abstaining from using the moral as a justification to settle the soul by settling the score will actually give the desired result of stopping the excess loss. This choice is much stronger than the choice following directions from a small and vague sentence: "Take an eye for an eye."