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A Study of the Elements Which Determine Man's Life as Noted in Greek and Shakespearean Drama

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A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTS WHICH
DETERMINE MAN'S LIFE AS NOTED IN
GREEK AND SHAKESPEAREAN
DRAMA

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
EASTERN ILLINOIS STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

BY
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FEBRUARY 23, 1955

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PART I

GREEK DRAMA

The idea of the source of man's troubles has, in every age, been of primary interest to the people of that age. Each age has had its own concept. The Greeks believed their lives to be ruled and guided by the gods of their race. Shakespeare saw that the process of man's life, his fate, was determined by the individual himself, by that individual's thoughts and subsequent actions. The trend today is toward the belief that society and its influence upon the people in its culture is the determining factor.

It is my purpose to show, through a study of the Greek dramas and those of Shakespeare, what the fundamental concept of man's fate was at the particular time in history in which each of the plays was written.

The subject matter of Greek drama was drawn largely from their mythology. While the dramatists were free to write of any one or any thing they chose, and while they were at liberty to write of events from any age, they chose to write of their own age and wrote usually of only a few personages: Oedipus, Orestes, Thyestes.

Regardless of the person chosen as the subject for a play, always the underlying theme dealt with morality and the punishment of immorality. Then, as now, the concept of morals changed from year to year and from generation to generation. But religion was always present. Their religion was a product of their imaginative way of conceiving the world; it was a passive process put there by a whole course of concrete experiences.

The Greek deities were personifications of the human passions; they were the founders and the sustainers of society. They were the personification of

the powers made evident in nature. Sacrifice to these dieties insured a favor in return. In the early culture period (499-458), atonement involved only an external act, for the individual was punished for a guilty act rather than for an inward sense of sin. During the first of the culture period, the Greeks believed that they committed a wrong act because some god was angry at them. The act itself was a form of punishment. In this way, the individual was absolved of any responsibility for his morals. The plays of Aeschylus are filled with this theme. However, through an investigation of the dramas of Aeschylus, writing in the early period, Sophocles, writing in the middle period and Euripides, writing in the last period, one can trace the slow growth from this concept to the idea that man himself fixed his character, determined his acts and worked out his own destiny, though the former idea was never quite lost.

In an effort to quiet the doubts and fears of the mind of the Greeks of the early culture period, they evolved the dieties in a likeness to themselves. In this manner the gods were made real; then, by building to a god a house, by fashioning an image of that god, the Greek made his diety tangible. This religion gave intelligible and beautiful form to those things of nature which were strange and elusive. Nature became a company of spirits; the earth, the wind, the sea, the sky, each was represented by a god and that god had power absolute to give or to take away his presence.

Thee, Bromius, too, I worship, not unweeting
 How, led by these, the furious Thyads rushed
 To seize the godless Pentheus, even as a hare
 Is dogged to death. And you, the fountains pure
 Of Pleisthus, and Poseidon's mighty power
 I pray, and Jove most high, that crowns all things
 With consumation.¹

¹ J. S. Blackie, "The Eumenides," The Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus (New York; C. P. Dutton and Company, 1911), p. 141.

The external world was not the only strange element to the Greek. There were those inner drives and compulsions which puzzled and frightened him. They were a part of himself and yet he felt them to be not of his doing. In an effort to understand such phenomenon they created gods—a tangible representation. They created Aphrodite, goddess of love; war and hate in the god Mars; to Athena they attributed wisdom and Apollo the god of fine arts. Conscience and guilt became embodied in the Furies. In this way nothing which constituted character was a product of the individual but was present because of the whim of the gods. The Greek religion did not concern itself with conscience. What one did, what one felt, what one thought came from a force greater than self and was shaped and transmitted by this force. However, such an attitude had no tendency to make them immoral for they had given themselves a universal conscience (though they didn't recognize the fact) in the Furies. Another aspect of this conscience was embodied in the belief that the guilt of one generation was visited upon a member of each succeeding generation unless that guilt was avenged. In the "Choephorae," Orestes kills his mother in order to fulfill the belief that "blood will avenge blood." Orestes says:

Thus to do
 He gave me strict injunction; else myself
 With terrible pains, of filial remiss,
 Should pay the fine; the evil-minded Powers
 Beneath the Earth would visit me in wrath,

 and from my father's tomb
 Ripe with avenging ire the Erinnyes
 Should ruthlessly invade me.²

2 J. S. Blackie, "Agamemnon," The Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus, p. 107.

The god, being rather human in mood and temperament, could be persuaded by sacrifice to grant a boon. Oftentimes, upon hearing the individual's request, a god might demand a particular sacrifice in exchange for a favorable answer.

This was the case when Agamemnon, ready to sail for Troy to aid his brother, was unable to begin his journey for lack of a wind. Agamemnon approached Jove with his request for a driving wind but Jove demanded the sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia.

That all conspire
 Thus hotly to desire
 The virgins blood-wind-soothing sacrifice--
 Is the god's right. So be it.

 Thus he
 Gave his own daughter's blood, his life, his joy,
 To speed a woman's war, and consecrate
 His ships for Troy.³

The most constant theme of Aeschylus' was this idea of guilt and punishment. He gives vivid portrayal to the horror of the avenging powers; their long pursuit of the guilty; their loathesome appearance. But always remember-- the sense of personal guilt was non-existent. Orestes was no sinner when he killed his mother. He killed her to avenge the murder of his father whom she had killed. Orestes killed because he was so instructed by Apollo. He suffered, not because he had sinned, but because he was a slave to the curse of his race. There had been many murders in the Atridan tribe and each generation had been compelled to murder because of a like act committed in the preceding generation. Thus we have the belief:

³ Ibid., p. 49.

Wont hath been and shall be ever,
 That when purple gouts bedash
 The guilty ground, then BLOOD DOTH BLOOD
 DEMAND, AND BLOOD FOR BLOOD SHALL FLOW.
 Fury to havoc cries; and havoc,
 The tainted track of blood pursuing,
 From age to age works woe.⁴

No one is exempt from the power of the gods. It is the fate of all to be visited by the wrath of the all-powerful gods--gods rule the world and rule mankind.

Dark are the doings of the gods; and we
 When they are clearest shown, but dimly see.
 The gods so will that, late or soon,
 Each mortal taste of sorrow.⁵

Thus are the dramas of Aeschylus; but Sophocles, living in an age diligently seeking an escape from such convictions reflects the struggle for belief in the "self." It was a vain search the result of which was an attitude of utter distress. These Greek people wanted to believe that they were responsible for their own small accomplishments and successes, for their own abilities, for their own goodness; but how could such a belief exist when great and good people were daily assailed with unreasonable troubles and inevitably failed. They found that life was filled with unhappiness and hopelessness. Yet, the thing that mattered, the beginning of growth out of darkness, was in the minds of all--it was a doubt--are the gods absolute?

Throughout Sophocles' dramas runs a deep discord, a sadness deeply engrained, throbbing with the yearning search for an anchor to which to cling and in which to believe. At the instant of reaching out for hope

⁴ J. S. Blackie, "The Choephorae," The Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus, p. 123.

⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

and faith, fear and doubt assailed to cause them to shrink back into the old ways. They were afraid to embrace a new idea or ideal for, if wrong, they would suffer fresh disappointments.

The Greeks in so doing were definitely limiting their own lives. If a man became successful, rich, famous, only inevitably to fail, then, evidently, one should seek a middle path. The Greek word for the doctrine was Sophrosne or nothing-too-much. Too much fame, too much love, too much pride, too much faith—anything in excess ends in oblivion and unhappiness.

Naught in excess
 Enters the life of man without unhappiness.

 For wandering hope too often among mankind
 Seems pleasurable; but to many a mind
 Proves but a mockery of wild desires.⁶

In order to explain the individual who lived his life seemingly with no ills visited upon him the thought that though a particular individual escaped punishment, his sins would only be postponed and would overtake the future members of his family came gradually into being. Thus, he actually does not escape.

Happy the man whose cup of life is free
 From taste of evil! If heaven's influence shape
 them,
 No ill but follows, till it overtake them,
 All generations of his family.⁷

In spite of this attitude the Greeks, as is human, faced and struggled with life's problems toward self-preservation. They had succeeded in

6 Sir George Young, "Antigone," The Dramas of Sophocles, p. 20.

7 Ibid., p. 19.

establishing an ordered way of life, they had become an articulate people, they were learning of escapes from pain. And yet, ever in the mind was the thought that man's labours were profitless. These things man had accomplished, yet rounding all and ending all was death, that which man cannot conquer or change or bend to his will.

He has gotten him speech and fancy breeze-betost,
 And for the state instinct of order meet;
 He has found him shelter from the chilling frost
 Of a clear sky, and from the arrowy sleet;
 Illimitable in cunning, cunning-less
 He meets no change of fortune that can come;
 He has found escape from pain and helplessness;
 Only he knows no refuge from the tomb.⁸

Yet, in spite of this underlying pessimism coming to effective expression in Greek drama, the Greeks found joy in life as witness their sculpture, their athletic contest, their great literature, their intellectual energy, their poetry. Pessimism was evidently not synonymous with defeatism.

Thus, in the dramas of Sophocles and, more particularly, in the dramas of Aeschylus, one senses the feeling that life is a desperate game in which the gods are over-shadowing participants, mankind being the checkmates of these gods.

However, Euripides gives man hope and breathing space. Man has become restless, drawing away from the old and stilted beliefs, and is openly questioning and questing. One can almost picture the Greek of this time begin to lift his head, expand his chest, and straighten his shoulders as he finds faith in himself and his destiny; as he begins to realize that in his will rests the path of his life, in him is a potentially good or evil man. Whichever it is, he is the determining factor.

⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

Man was gaining the strength of his convictions; he was growing in courage to accept the responsibility for his actions.

In the "Orestes" of Euripides, we find that Orestes is very ill and seems to be demented. He has killed his mother, Clytemnestra, and is haunted by three terrible gorgon women. When Menelaus comes to see Orestes in his illness he asks what seems to ail him and Orestes, in all clarity, answers:

Conscience, the conscious guilt of horrid deeds.⁹

Here we see that Orestes finds the fault and the guilt in himself and not, as in Aeschylus, in the gods. Along with the conscious guilt of having sinned Orestes also feels shame, for when his old friend, Tyndarus, comes to his side we hear Orestes say:

Ah me! He comes indeed, whose presence most
Fills me with shame for what I have misdome.
I was his darling once; my infant age
With tenderness he nursed, caressed me, bore
the child of Agememnon in his arms.

..
and it is thus, my soul,
Thus, O my bleeding heart, that I requite
Their ill paid love.¹⁰

He feels his guilt in the deed, and yet, as all men are wont to do, he seeks a means of escape through rationalization and lays the blame again at the doorstep of the gods. In a series of three speeches he makes the following statements:

⁹ Milman, Deang Potter, and Wodhull, "Orestes," The Plays of Euripides, p. 208.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 208.

Yet have we where to charge our miseries.

 Phoebus, by whose command I slew my mother.

 We to the gods submit, whate'er they are.¹¹

Vascillating between these two ideas Orestes begins to doubt seriously the justice of the gods and the orders issued by such gods. However, he hesitates in taking such a diverse step.

. . . in thee unholy is the deed.
 Yet Phoebus, Phoebus-----But, my king is he,
 I will be silent: yet, though wise, he gave
 To me response not wise.¹²

And again, a short time later, we find the chorus busy with these same questionings for they cannot understand why, since the gods are omnipotent, they had permitted Orestes to complete the deed with no attempt to intervene. The gods answer:

The dire necessity
 If fate impelled it, and the voice unwise
 Of Phoebus, from his shrine.¹³

Iphigenia scorned such unjust machinations. She scoffed at the fact that the gods should point an accusing finger at a mortal and call him impure or murderous who shed another's blood when those very gods demanded a sacrifice of human blood at their altars.

11 Ibid., p. 210.

12 Milman, Deans; Potter, and Wodhull, "Electra," The Plays of Euripides, p. 195.

13 Milman, Dean; Potter, and Wodhull, "Iphigenia," The Plays of Euripides, p. 345.

These false rules of the goddess much I blame;
 Who'er of mortals is with a slaughter stained,
 Or hath at childbirth given assisting hands,
 Or chance to touch aught dead, she as impure
 Drives from her altars: yet herself delights
 In human victims bleeding at her shrine.¹⁴

Iphigenia senses the tendency of Orestes and others to rationalize their misdeeds, and while she does not place all of the blame at the feet of the guilty, so also does she not place the blame entirely within the sphere of the gods.

and I think
 These people, who themselves have a wild joy
 In shedding human blood, their savage guilt
 Charge on the goddess.¹⁵

This train of thought, this tendency to doubt, is so new a thing as to leave the individual with a feeling of misgiving. All want to believe in man's independent will and yet they seem to sigh and say that, after all, life at best is only a matter of chance. It lies in the hand of mischievous and whimsical fortune whether good or evil comes ones way.

Still, in spite of this, man can still play his part because fortune, being fickle, can be wooed. She can be influenced by a firm and a determined mind. So, if a man is of good and earnest mind he can win fortune to walk at his side as a boon companion. Man must work to show himself approved unto his gods. There seems to develop a relationship of man and his gods working together in an effort to shape the mortal's destiny.

14 Ibid., p. 345.

15 Ibid., p. 345

and Fortune her, I ween,
Will aid us; to the firm and strenuous mind
More potent works the influence of the divine.¹⁶

and again:

for no idle wretch
With the gods always in his mouth, can gain
Without due labour the support of life.¹⁷

How like the Christian idea of faith, without works, being dead!

Therefore, let man work to win his right to life and not bemoan the
ills which come his way; it does not make his load lighter but does weigh
down his spirit. Let man accept, as a part of life and living, those un-
pleasant things which are encountered on his journey.

Him I esteem unwise
Who, when he sees death near, tries to o'ercome
It's terrors with bewailings, without hope
Of safety: ills he adds to ills, and makes
His folly known, yet dies. We must give way
to fortune.¹⁸

So we see through the study of the dramas of these three giants of
Greek literature who so vividly depicted their world and times, the steady
tendency of the Greeks to turn from the absolutism of their gods to an
acceptance of their own responsibility in shaping their lives and to a be-
lief in the dignity of man and the selectivism of his will.

16 Ibid., p. 358.

17 Milman, Dean; Potter, and Wodhull, "Electra," The Plays of Euripides, p. 348.

18 Milman, Dean; Potter, and Wodhull, "Iphigenia," The Plays of Euripides, p. 348.

So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in
 them,
As, in their birth--wherein they are not
 guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his orgin--
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of
 reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'erleaven
The form of plausible manners, that these men
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being natures livery, or fortune's star,--
Their virtues else--be they as pure as grace
As infinite as man may undergo--
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault:

Hamlet I, v., 22-35.

I
PART II

SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMAS

The creator Shakespeare gave life to life; drew man as man with no coloring, no addition or subtraction. His pictures of human kind were done in vivid color--laughter and lightness, groans and deep shadows--no intermediate shades, startling differentiations. Man's tragedy lies in inner conflict or some weakness of the spirit. Cassius accurately describes the fundamental element of a Shakespearean tragedy when he states; "Men at some time are masters of their fates; The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings." (Julius Caesar, act I Sc.2, L.147). It is man's fumbling fight with circumstances coupled with personal weakness that inevitably leads to the brink of doom and destruction. Everywhere in this tragic world man's thought translated into action is transformed often into the opposite of itself. His act, occupying a moments' space, develops into a monstrous cloud which at last envelops a kingdom and destroys its possessor.

In almost all Shakespearean characters we observe a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction, an incapacity, in certain circumstances, for resisting the force which draws in this direction. There is a fatal tendency or habit of mind. We see men and women confidently striking into the existing order of things in pursuit of their sole objectives. But that which they achieve is not what they intended; it is terribly, woefully unlike it. They seem to fight blindly in the dark and the power that works through them makes them the instrument of their downfall. They act

freely, yet their very act binds them hand and foot. It matters not whether they meant well or ill.¹⁹

This, then, is the fundamental concept of Shakespearean tragedy. True, there are underlying forces which supplement this primal cause of the tragedy; (such as: use of abnormalities of mind, supernatural forces, and the use of "chance" happenings). It is the idea of man's character and actions that is of primary importance, however.

To verify this idea one needs but to investigate three of Shakespeare's better tragedies; Othello, Hamlet and Macbeth.

Othello is, in one sense of the word, the most romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes. This seems true partly from the strange life of war and adventure that was his through childhood, partly because of his mysterious descent from men who partook in a royal seige, and partly because of his wanderings through vast deserts and among strange people. He is romantic because he carries the idea that he was born to a charmed life.

He comes dark and grand into the presence of the council that needs him to execute their war; the council before whom he must defend his love. He is no longer young, but grave, self-controlled, simple, and stately in bearing and in speech; one who is naturally modest but fully conscious of his worth.²⁰

Rude am I in speech,
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace;

19 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1905), p. 20.

20 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 189.

For since these arms of mine had seven year's pith,
 Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
 their action in the tented field,
 And little of this great world can I speak,
 More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
 and therefore little shall I grace my cause
 In speaking for myself, Yet, by your gracious patience,
 I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver
 Of my whole course of love.²¹

He is unelated by honour, secure in himself,

My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
 Shall manifest me rightly.²²

And now his life is crowned by love as strange and glorious and romantic
 as his own history.

Othello is equally admired and honored by all who meet him. His pride
 and security are justified in the attitude which others have toward him
 both for his past record and the present status which he had fought to make
 his own. Iago, though he is intensely jealous of Othello's choice of
 lieutenants, grudgingly admits that the state could not carry on its present
 war without the unmatched leadership of Othello.

the state,
 However this may gall him with some check,
 Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embark'd
 With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
 Which even now stand in act, that, for their souls,
 Another of his fathom they have none,
 To lead their business:²³

21 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare (New York and Chicago: Foresman and Company, 1932), I, iii, 81-91.

22 Ibid., I, i, 31-32.

23 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, I, 1, 148-154.

He is highly regarded by the council whom he serves and is deeply loved and respected by the men who have served under him and fought with him. Montano, when it is feared that Othello has been killed in the tempest, says:

Pray heaven he be; (safe)
For I have served him, and the man commands
Like a full soldier.²⁴

The sources of danger in Othello's character are all too apparent as the web of the story progresses. In the first place, Othello's mind, though it is poetic, is very simple and often slow.

He is not observant. He looks ever outward, is free from introspection. He is possessed of an open and trusting nature. Iago was well aware of this element of Othello's make-up. In the initial planning of a way in which to discredit Cassio in the eyes of Othello and thereby gain his place, this is the first thought that comes to Iago's mind--Othello is extremely gullible and will tend to believe what is told him.

The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.²⁵

Othello, though gullible in reference to people and events, was partly so because of his ignorance of the ways of civilization. Of this Othello was conscious himself and implies as much as he speaks before the council

²⁴ Ibid., II, i, 35-37.

²⁵ Ibid., I, iii, 405-409.

to give an account of his love and courtship. He was reared in a country with relatively little culture, dissimilar in every way to the one in which he now lives. He is ignorant of the corrupt products of this civilization and is ignorant of European women.²⁶

It should be noted also that though Othello put entire trust and confidence in the sincerity of Iago, it was no evidence of stupidity in Othello. His opinion of Iago was the opinion of practically everyone who knew him and this opinion was that Iago was before all things else an honest man, his very faults being those of excess of honesty.²⁷ This being so, it was quite natural for Othello to be moved by the warnings of so honest a friend. In fact, Iago's honesty and unwillingness to tell the whole truth where it must injure a friend are proven when Othello attempts to arrive at the facts about Cassio's drunken misdemeanor. After persistent demands from Othello that he (Iago) relate what had happened to cause the fight, Iago, in a series of speeches tells him thus reluctantly:

I cannot speak
Any beginning to this peevish odds;
Those legs that brought me to a part of it!²⁸

.

I had rather have my tongue cut from my mouth
Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio;
Yet, I persuade myself to speak the truth
Shall nothing harm him.²⁹

26 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 190.

27 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 192.

28 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, II,ii, 194-187.

29 Ibid., II,ii, 221-224.

In this manner, while telling what has gone on, Iago still is able to convince Othello that he is doing it against his will and also is able to imply that he knows much more than he speaks. Othello's reaction is immediate and deliberate. He accepts Iago's honesty, taking it at face value, and at once discharges Cassio from his service without a second thought. To Othello, Cassio's guilt has been proven; therefore he acts upon the information immediately.

This leads us to consider another aspect of Othello's character. For all his dignity and massive calm, he is by nature full of the most vehement passions. Calmness in him is a growth of constant and rigid control. We come to realize this when, after suspicion has become Othello's constant companion, we hear Lodovico, amazed at his violence, exclaim:

Is this the noble Moor whom our full Senate
Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature
Whom passion could not shake? Whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?³⁰

This same self-control is strikingly shown when Othello endeavors to solicit some explanation of the fight between Cassio and Montano. Here, however, there occur dark words which show how necessary this self-control was to Othello.³¹

Now, by heaven,
My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
And passion, having my best judgment collid,
Assays to lead the way.³²

30 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, IV,i, 275-279.

31 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 190.

32 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, II,iii, 205-210.

Having lost his self-control in doubt and suspicion and growing jealousy, Othello is engulfed by his passion. He is increasingly surly to his associates and, more noticeable, he gives vent to his passions by railing against Desdemona. Even as he wills himself to withhold judgment, we see him taunting her, hurting her with accusations and at last openly striking her for what he considers her brazen effrontery. Through all and in all we are violently aware of Othello's passionate despair and his aching longing to believe in his beloved:

O thou weed,
 Who art so lovely fair and smells't so sweet
 That the sense aches at thee, would thou
 hads't never been born!³³

A second aspect to consider is the noticeable fact that Othello's nature seems to be all of one piece. His trust, where he trusts, is absolute. Hesitation is almost impossible to him. He is extremely self-reliant and decides and acts instantaneously, as he does in dismissing Cassio from his service. Love, if he loves, must be an absolute heaven or is a thing not to be borne. If such a passion as jealousy seizes him, it swells until it infects his whole "self." He plunges headlong to find immediate conviction or immediate relief.³⁴ Once convinced he acts with the swiftness of a man who fears for his life. He acts as a man who considers his power absolute. He demands justice from himself as well as others.

As noted before, Othello was easily led but he still desires conviction. This is true in the case which Iago promotes against Desdemona.

33 Ibid., IV,ii, 66-69.

34 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 191.

Iago begins with slow half-statements to sow the seed of doubt. This is the same method which worked so well in Cassio's case--the sly implications, the teasing doubts--these seem to catch Othello's attention and enrage him. Othello begins to doubt and having doubted begins to be resolved. He must seek the truth but the truth must be, to him, concrete before he acts against Desdemona.

I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
 And on the proof, there is no more but this--
 Away at once with love or jealousy.³⁵

Though reluctant to believe that Desdemona is false one can witness the disintegration of Othello's love as his passionate jealousy becomes the driving power in his life. In a close series of speeches we see Othello's faith in Desdemona vanish.

I do not think but Desdemona's honest

 And yet, how nature erring from itself,

 Why did I marry?

 If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself!
 I'll not believe it.³⁶

Then comes information which to Othello is proof absolute. Iago says that Cassio has a handkerchief which he had thought was Desdemona's. It was Othello's first gift to her, one which she was to keep with her always. This is not to be endured and Othello is swallowed in his passion.

35 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, III,iii, 190-193.

36 Ibid., III,iii, 227-229, 242, 278.

Look here Iago,
 All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.
 'Tis gone.
 Arise black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!
 Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
 To tyrannous hate!³⁷

He swears to exact black revenge for this deceit.

Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
 Till that a capable and wide revenge
 Swallow them up.³⁸

The Othello of the fourth act is Othello in his fall. His agony is almost unbearable. He has passed judgment and controls himself only to make his sentence a vow. He is physically exhausted and his mind is dazed as from too sudden shock. He trembles and falls to the ground when Iago tells him that Cassio has confessed relationship with Desdemona. He recovers to see Cassio and thinks he is laughing at him. His rage becomes all-consuming and it is torture to wait for the night.

Yet before the end, there is again a change. The supposed death of Cassio satiates his thirst for revenge. The deed which Othello is bound to do is a deed of love and honor and sacrifice.³⁹ He must save Desdemona from herself. Sorrow, deep and infinite, has displaced anger. He enters her chamber murmuring:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul, —⁴⁰

37 Ibid., III,iii, 444-448.

38 Ibid., III,iii, 456-459.

39 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 196-197.

40 Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, V,ii, 1-2.

Upon approaching her bed he still finds her so lovely and so dear that he is almost persuaded not to kill her. But, justice must be served.

Ah, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword.⁴¹

Othello considers himself to be the instrument of justice carrying out a just decree; otherwise, as he says to Emilia:

O, I were damned beneath all depth of hell,
But that I did proceed upon just grounds
To this extremity.⁴²

But Othello, even in defeat, has regained his calm, his dignity and his magnificence. His mind, his belief in his essential righteousness, and consequently the readers own belief in mankind, stand firm and untouched.

I pray you in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
.....
Nor set down ought in malice: then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplexed in the extreme;⁴³

By his own statement here as he bids farewell to his friends, he reveals his weakness, that part of his character which created the tragedy of his life. His whole nature, though indisposed to jealousy, was so open to deception that, once stirred, he became overly wrought and his passions ruled him. He acted decisively with no time for reflection.

He does hold himself and his own weakness accountable for the fall of events in his life.

⁴¹ Hardin Craig, "Othello," Shakespeare, V,ii, 16-17.

⁴² Ibid., V,ii, 137-139.

⁴³ Ibid., V,ii, 340-346.

Hamlet was the observed and the observer at the Danish court. He was, evidently (one must infer this because the Hamlet of the play is not the Hamlet he was before his father's death) a well-rounded person. He was a good soldier, regarded thus by captains of war; he was a favorite of the people, treating them all equally. The grave-digger, the player, all receive the attention of his groping mind. Fortinbras considered that he was likely, had he been raised to the throne, to have "proved himself most royally." Hamlet was fond of acting and he was fond of fencing. His actions show him to be fearless, quick, and impetuous for he rushes after the ghost, kills Polonius, boards the pirate ship--all in sudden spurts of energy. He was a scholar but not one-sidedly so.

Hamlet was a person of great sensibilities. This attribute, though he suffers because of it, never deserts him. He turned with eagerness to those about him. His words of adoration for his father are sheer lyric. Such adoration for his mother is not shown; yet, there are signs of his love for her. He never once had a suspicion of anything unworthy in her. His was the tendency to see only what is good unless forced to see the opposite. This unsuspecting nature survived throughout all the conflicts of his life. He saw no cause for doubt in the fact that the king, his uncle and deadly enemy, arranged for the duel between Laertes and him even though Laertes was a boy sworn to avenge the death of his sister, Ophelia. To the very end his soul reacts instantly to good or evil, loving the one and hating the other.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 112.

Here, in Hamlet's firm moral sensitivity there is undoubtedly a danger. Any great shock which life might inflict on it would be felt with extreme intensity and result in eventual tragedy.⁴⁵

One shock has already come to Hamlet as the play opens. We see a Hamlet transfigured by grief. He is grief-stricken not merely because his dearly loved father has died but more because of the conduct of his mother. All of his life he had believed in her as such an intense son as Hamlet would. He had noted her devotion for his father; her tears as she followed his father's body to the grave. And then, within a month, she had married Hamlet's uncle, a man very different from his father, contemptible in his eyes. She had married him for no reason of state or family affection but in such a way to reveal to Hamlet her shallowness and sensuality. Hamlet is left desolate by this revelation and contemplates suicide.

O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!⁴⁶

A man less sensitive, more limited and positive in mind might not have been so utterly engulfed and encumbered with the disgust and disbelief that entered. But Hamlet had an imagination which feels and sees all things in whole. Thought was the center of his life.⁴⁷ There was a hunger in his

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁶ Hardin Craig, "Hamlet," Shakespeare, I,ii, 129-133.

⁴⁷ A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 119.

being which drove him to search below the surface and to question what others merely accepted. His thoughts now became infected. He could not prevent himself from probing into the wound which he had undergone. He broods over his disillusionment and lapses into a life of morbid contemplation. Reflection comes to fill his whole being and his life is spent in the self-torture of remembrance until he reaches an extreme state of melancholy. His passion against existing circumstances fades and is replaced by boundless weariness and a desire for death.

It is in this depressed state of mind that Hamlet must face his life's greatest crisis. The ghost of his father returns and reveals the entire plot against his life--his actual murder by his wife and his brother. At any other time and in any other circumstances Hamlet would have been entirely equal to the task of exacting revenge for his father's death. It is a cruel quirk of fate that the crisis of his life comes on him at the one moment when he cannot meet it and when his great gifts tend to paralyze, rather than to aid him.

For a moment his mind leaps at the impact of the words of his father's ghost and his spirit bounds with a passion to fulfill his will.

The ghost leaves Hamlet with the words, "Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me," and he breaks out:

O, all you host of heaven! O, earth! What else?
 And shall I couple hell? O, fie, Hold, hold, my heart;
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
 Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,

That youth and observation copied there;
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain,
 Unmixed with baser matter: Yes, by heaven!

, meet it is I set it down,
 That one may smile and smile, and be a villain;
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark;
 So uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
 It is 'Adieu, adieu! remember me.'
 I have sworn it.⁴⁸

In the midst of the first outburst he suddenly checks himself with the exclamation, "O, fie." He must not permit himself to be caught up in mere feeling and passion. He must not let his heart break, his muscles grow old through inactivity. He must remember! He continues to repeat this "remember" as though he is really afraid he will forget. He feels that he must wipe from his memory everything that it has heretofore contained. All of the knowledge he had accumulated, his youth's remembrances, must be done away with. Nothing is to remain but the command "remember me" and he swears to it.

The demand on his action comes too late and the passion to answer that demand soon disintegrates. Now, it serves only to drive the last nail which shuts him up in his world of melancholy and subsequent passivity. He comes to dread the thought of his duty.

O curse'd spite
 That ever I was born to set it right,⁴⁹

Two months go by and all that Hamlet has done is to put on an "antic disposition" to make people think he is a lunatic. This is no constructive

⁴⁸ Hardin Craig, "Hamlet," Shakespeare, I,v, 92-104, 106-112.

⁴⁹ Ibid., I,v, 189-190.

act on his part; it serves, at best, as an escape from the performance of his duty. This results in the queen being greatly concerned and his uncle, now king, disliking his presence at court more and more. The king becomes apprehensive and, wishing to know the cause for this transformation, sends for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to get the reasons through them. Hamlet easily recognizes what they are about and has no trouble eluding them.

Then the players come to court. Hamlet loves acting so he is happy for a while; but not for long. The speech of the player telling of Hecuba's grief over her slaughtered husband awakes again his sense of duty. He feels he must act. He conceives the idea of having the players reenact his father's murder before the king. He intends to watch the king's reaction and so determine his guilt. He suddenly wishes to be alone and asks himself in bewilderment why he has thus far done nothing. Why should he have any doubts about the Ghost and its story? Why should he need to see the king's reactions? But he reassures himself that if the king acts guilty then he knows his course.

This is most brave,
 That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
 And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,

 The spirit that I have seen
 May be the devil: and the devil hath power
 To assume a pleasing shape;

 I'll have grounds
 More relative than this: the play's the thing,
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.⁵⁰

50 Ibid., II,ii, 611-616; 627-629; 632-634.

That evening the play is given and it succeeds beyond any of Hamlet's wild hopes. The king not only becomes fearful and turns pale, but rises and rushes from the hall. Hamlet is elated by this success and is emboldened to believe that now he can do the deed or any other that might be required of him.

now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.⁵¹

Hamlet proceeds to his mother's room in this vehement and vengeful mood. On his way he discovers the king as he is kneeling, conscience-stricken, trying to pray. Here is his enemy before him but Hamlet again finds an excuse not to commit the deed.

Now might I do it pat, Now he is praying;
And now I'll do it. And so he goes to heaven;
And so am I revenged. That would be scann'd.⁵²

Melancholy's sember shadow has lived with him so long that he finds he is unable to pull himself out of his lethargy and so act as he has been commanded. The very words, "now might I do it," show that he has no intention and no desire to "do it."⁵³ And when his father comes again to remind his son of his duty we see that Hamlet does not try to offer any excuse for not having killed the king when he had the opportunity.

51 Ibid., III,ii, 408-410.

52 Ibid., III,iii, 73-76.

53 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 135.

Do you not come your tary son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!⁵⁴

We reach the play's turning point when Hamlet spares the king's life. Until this time none had suffered from the delay. Now he sacrifices Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Laertes, the Queen, and himself. Polonius is the first to fall. He spies, hiding behind the arras, as Hamlet and the Queen talk. Hamlet discovers him and thinking him to be the king stabs him immediately. Here Hamlet is already excited and in action and the chance comes so suddenly that he has no time to think about it. The king would have been caught in a dishonest act and so would have died, sinning.⁵⁵

Hamlet tries to encourage his mother to confess her sins and give up her sinful life. We see the truth of the matter here. Hamlet hates his uncle and recognizes his duty to his father but the horror of his whole heart is centered around his mother's wrongs and he wishes to raise her.

Hamlet is forced to leave England. He still has not relinquished the idea of obeying the Ghost.

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
.....
I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'

⁵⁴ Hardin Craig, "Hamlet," Shakespeare, III,iv, 105-109.

⁵⁵ A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 137.

Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
 To do it
 Oh, from this time forth
 My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!⁵⁶

During Hamlet's absence Ophelia goes mad over the death of her father. Laertes returns in a fighting mood because the king, afraid to face the inevitable trial, has buried him secretly with no pomp or ceremony.

Hamlet outwits Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, successfully helps to conquer a pirate ship, and manages to return to Denmark. These small successes change Hamlet. He seems more determined, more active and seems to be conscious of a power within himself. There is no more talk of life-weariness or death-longing. He seems confident that all will be well. Hamlet now feels that he is in the hands of providence.⁵⁷ This idea had been born just after he killed Polonius. He said to his mother:

 For this same lord,
 I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
 To punish me with this and this with me,
 That I must be their scourge and minister.⁵⁸

This does not mark any change in his general condition, however. It seems to be a kind of fatalism rather than any faith in providence because it is not allied with any determination to do the will of providence. Rather he is the instrument of providence, to be moved at will by that providence.

 There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
 Rough-hew them how we will,⁵⁹

56 Hardin Craig, "Hamlet," Shakespeare, IV,iii, 32-35; 43-46; 65-66.

57 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 144.

58 Hardin Craig, "Hamlet," Shakespeare, III,iv, 172-176.

59 Ibid., V,i, 10-11.

The Hamlet of the fifth act is a person who is so weary and bowed down by a sense of duty that he neither perceives nor acts clearly. What is more, he does not care; his is a state of complete indifference.

As he stands musing vacantly over a newly dug grave, they come, bearing Ophelia to her grave. He learns that it is she, learns the way of her death, and learns that Laertes blames him. Yet he appears absolutely unconscious of the fact that he has injured Laertes and asks:

What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever: but it is no matter.⁶⁰

In this last statement is revealed his complete indifference; nothing matters. Melancholy holds him in thrall and he sinks ever deeper and deeper under her spell.

The king arranges for him to fight Laertes. He is not suspicious for he does not care what may happen in the event. He feels that one time is as good as another in which to die.

there's
A special providence in the fall of a sparrow.
If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to
come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it
will come: the readiness is all: since no man
has aught of what he leaves, what isn't to
leave betimes?⁶¹

He goes to the duel with this attitude of complete indifference. He uses no care in his selection of a weapon. Fate drops her hand on his enemies, his mother, and himself.

⁶⁰ Ibid., V,1, 312-313.

⁶¹ Ibid., V,11, 230-235.

Yet Hamlet is not utterly defeated. He is able to carry out the command of his father by stabbing his uncle and in so doing it seems that he gains release from this smothering melancholy that had o'ershadowed his essential goodness and nobility. He finds it in his heart to forgive Laertes for fighting with a poisoned rapier; he remembers his mother and says goodbye, not knowing that she is already dead. There is heard no more bitter lamentations, no self-accusations.⁶² He thinks of the future of the state and takes what steps he is able to insure her welfare. He is troubled that people may get the wrong impression as to why things have fallen out as they have and asks Horatio to tell his story.

And so we see that through human charges and countercharges, accidental circumstances, and carnal lust the house of Hamlet falls. It is as Horatio sums up the accounts at the close:

And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
 How these things came about: so shall you hear
 of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
 Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
 Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
 And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
 Fall'n on the inventor's heads:⁶³

62 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 147.

63 Hardin Craig, "Hamlet," Shakespeare, V,ii, 390-396.

Macbeth was a general of extraordinary powers who covered himself with glory by putting down a rebellion and repelling the invasion of a foreign army. In these conflicts he showed great personal courage, a quality which he continues to display throughout the drama in regard to ordinary dangers. He was thought honest and honorable; he was, apparently, trusted by everyone. Macduff, a man of integrity, loved him much. He had a keen sense of honor and of the worth of a good name.⁶⁴ His wife uses the phrase "too full o' the milk o' human kindness" in scorn, yet certainly he was far from devoid of humanity and pity.

At the same time, he was exceedingly ambitious. He probably was of a naturally ambitious temperament but the tendency was strengthened by his marriage. When we first see him it has been further stimulated by his remarkable success and by the consciousness of exceptional powers. His ambition becomes his passion and engulfs his whole being.

This ambitiously bold man is possessed also of a lively and very realistic imagination. Through his imagination come the pictures which, to him, are intimations of conscience and honor. Macbeth's better nature is incorporated in images which possess the power to alarm and terrify him.⁶⁵ His imagination is thus the equal or the associate of his ambition. His imaginings are the very painting of his moral consciousness.

What appals Macbeth and saps his mind is always the image of his own guilty heart or bloody deed. These, when they arise, hold him in a trance.

64 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 351.

65 Ibid., p. 352.

As Macbeth and Banquo return victorious from the battle field, they are confronted by three witches who prophesy that Macbeth shall be Thane of Cawdor and king. When Macbeth hears them he starts so guiltily and so violently that Banquo readily notes the effect which the prophecy has on him. Macbeth is immediately lost in speculations of becoming king and repeatedly seeks reassurance from Banquo that they did say he would be king. He withdraws into his mind and considers all the angles which might be involved. He is, at first, troubled as to whether this prophecy, coming from witches, might be evil or good.

This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth?-----
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth transfix my hair
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs.⁶⁶

His soul cringes at the thoughts which ambition brings to mind. He is unwilling to commit any act on his part to obtain the title. Perhaps, as he says, the prophecy will come true without any effort from him.

If chance will have me
 king, why, chance may crown me,
 Without my stir.⁶⁷

It is almost a certainty that Macbeth had thought of being king even before he was accosted by the witches. This is evident from the manner with which he received the prophecy, the way in which he started as though he had been caught in a guilty act. It is evident also when, in begging pardon of his friends for his preoccupation in their presence, he says:

⁶⁶ Hardin Craig, "Macbeth," Shakespeare, I,iii, 130-136.

⁶⁷ Ibid., I,iii, 144-146.

Give me your favour: my dull
 brain was wrought
 With things forgotten.⁶⁸

This occurs immediately after he and Banquo have talked to the witches on the heath. In other words, Macbeth had desired to be king and had, perhaps, half formed plans as to how he could make this come about. Then he had been caught up in the wars and the following successes had appeased him to such an extent that he had temporarily forgotten the idea until the witches recalled it to his mind.

Upon greeting the king after his return from battle, Macbeth learns that Malcolm, the king's son, has been made Prince of Cumberland and will succeed Duncan to the throne.

It is this information that resolves Macbeth and from this time forth his will is bent in every effort to be king--come what may.

The Prince of Cumberland!
 that is a step
 on which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
 For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
 Let not light see my black and deep desires:⁶⁹

But, during his journey homeward, his resolve weakens. Those images which are his conscience come to haunt him. When Lady Macbeth very definitely states that Duncan shall never ride forth from the castle, Macbeth only says they will talk later and walks away to converse with his thoughts in the privacy of his own chambers. He dreads the deed. He does not fear

68 Ibid., I,iii, 148-150.

69 Ibid., I,iv, 48-52.

the deed but hates it because it is so ugly and so vile. Duncan is his cousin, his house guest, and has been a worthy king. All of these things argue against the murder, make it a horror to think upon.

He goes to Lady Macbeth to deliver his decision. The business is to be forgotten; he has had many honors of late and has not even become accustomed to them yet. He is satisfied with things as they are.

We will proceed no further in this business:
 He hath honoured me of late; and I have bought
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
 Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
 Not cast aside so soon.⁷⁰

The Lady feels in an instant that everything is at stake, and ignoring his decision, overwhelms him with indignant and contemptuous personal reproach. He yields because he is, himself, half ashamed of his decision.

Macbeth never accepted as the principle of his conduct the morality which takes shape in his imagination. He is moral enough to see and realize the evil that exists and stands in absolute horror of such evils, but this morality is not a part of his "self." Thus, he is infirm of purpose; he is torn between two distinct personalities. He would never have committed the murder had not the combination of his ambition, the prophecy of the witches, and most of all, Lady Macbeth's stinging persuasions, pushed him on to do the deed. As it is, the deed is done in horror and without the faintest desire or sense of glory; done as if it were an awful duty. The instant it is finished its futility is revealed to Macbeth as

⁷⁰ Hardin Craig, "Macbeth," Shakespeare, I, vii, 30-35.

clearly as its vileness had been realized by him beforehand.⁷¹ As he staggers from the scene he mutters in utter despair:

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou could'st.⁷²

And again the horror of the deed hangs about him and he stands appalled, seeing Duncan's blood on his hands.

What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?⁷³

The horror of it; the deep, deep despair of the man! When a few moments later, he returns with Lennox from the room of the murder, he breaks out:

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.⁷⁴

This is the despair of a man who realizes that he has sold his own soul and sees too late that those things for which he sold it are mere trifles. He has sold those things of his life, honor, grace, love, which he had held dear; he had not fully known how dear they were until they were no longer his. The rest of his life is a mockery and a shadow.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

71 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 358.

72 Hardin Craig, "Macbeth," Shakespeare, II,ii, 74.

73 Ibid., II,ii, 59-61.

74 Ibid., III,iii, 96-101.

And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.⁷⁵

That heart-sickness which comes from Macbeth's perception of the futility of his crime and which never leaves him for long, is not, however, his habitual state. It could not be so. The consciousness of guilt is stronger than the consciousness of failure. It keeps him in a perpetual agony of restlessness and forbids him simply to droop and pine. There is a fever in his blood which urges him to ceaseless action in the search for oblivion. Despair could not be his perpetual state because ambition, the love of power, are much too strong in Macbeth to permit him to resign the prize for which he had given his peace of mind. The forces which impelled him to aim at the crown again assert themselves. He never dreams of admitting defeat. He even challenges fate into the lists.⁷⁶

Macbeth's determination is frightful to behold. He speaks no more of honor or pity. The sleeplessness which torments him is caused, he decides, by a feeling of insecurity. Why should he feel insecure? He searches his field for the reason and his eye falls upon Banquo; Banquo, who cannot fail to suspect him. This, then, is the cause for his restlessness and it will banish with the death of Banquo. There is no hesitation, no remorse. He hastens feverishly to the task. He no longer looks to Lady Macbeth to guide and aid him. In fact, he does not even mention his plan to her. This time

⁷⁵ Ibid., V,v, 23-28.

⁷⁶ A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 359-360.

he does not commit the act but procures Banquo's murder. There seems to be some strange idea in his mind that the thought of the dead man will not haunt if the deed is done by other hands. For when Banquo's ghost appears at the feast we hear Macbeth exclaim:

Thou canst not say I did it: never shake
Thy gory locks at me.⁷⁷

The deed is done and Banquo is murdered but his son, Fleance, escapes. This is the turning point for Macbeth. From this point on we watch his gradual descent to his final doom. Peace will not come. From the depths of his half-dead conscience arises the ghost of Banquo and the horror of the night of the first murder returns to him. But it has less power and he has more will. Trembling, he faces this image and it yields:

Why so, being gone,
I am a man again.⁷⁸

But that inner torture is unassuaged and he will not bear it. Roughly he seeks for the continual cause of his feverish anxiety and this time his eye falls on Macduff.

How says't thou, that Macduff denies his person
At our great bidding?⁷⁹

Macbeth is so desperate now that nothing can stop him as he feverishly saws from one course to another in his search for self-peace. He is determined that nothing shall stand in his way. He feels that he has lost all that he can lose.

77 Hardin Craig, "Macbeth," Shakespeare, III, iv, 50-51.

78 Ibid., III, iv, 107.

79 Ibid., III, iv, 127-128.

For mine own good
 All causes shall give way: I am in blood
 Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
 Returning were as tedious as go o'er:
 Strange things I have in head that will to hand,
 Which must be acted ere they can be scann'd.
 My strange
 and self abuse
 Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
 We are yet but young in deed.⁸⁰

What a vast change from the man who thought of Duncan's virtues, remembered pity, love, and honor. That man is now one who strides furiously and violently forward to do violence to others in an effort to escape from the evil to which he has given birth.

Macduff's house is seized and his family killed; this, even though Macbeth knew that Macduff was not there but had fled. After this purposeless slaughter his images (conscience) bother him no more. The whole flood of evil that is part of his nature is let loose and it spreads throughout his kingdom, covering it with hate and secret death and blood-shed.

Each morn
 New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
 Strike heaven on the face,⁸¹

.

Where nothing,
 But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile:
 Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air
 Are made, not mark'd.⁸²

80 Ibid., III, iv, 135-140, 142-144.

81 Ibid., IV, iii, 5-7.

82 Ibid., IV, iii, 165-168.

The people will stand no more; and the powers of the land unite to march against Macbeth at Dunsinane castle.

Macbeth still feels no fear, no doubt concerning his victory for the witches have said that he can not be defeated until "Birnam wood shall move against Dunsinane" and he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. So he faces the approaching armies with no fear, only with a great world-weariness and resignation.

I am sick at heart,
 When I behold,—
 I have lived long enough: my way of life
 Is fallen to the sear, the yellow leaf;
 And that which should accompany old age,
 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
 I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
 Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
 Which th' poor heart would fain deny, and
 dare not.⁸³

His utter indifference to what is ahead rather startles him and into his vague thoughts comes a clear picture of the man he has become.

I have almost forgot the taste of fears;
 The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
 To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
 As life were in it. I have supped full with horrors;
 Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
 Cannot once start me.⁸⁴

In this state of mind Macbeth goes forward into battle. Almost at once he is told that Birnam wood is moving against the castle. The soldiers are decked with tree limbs for camouflage. Macbeth begins "to be weary of the sun, and wish the estate o' the world were now undone." He realizes now

83 Hardin Craig, "Macbeth," Shakespeare, V, ii, 19-28.

84 Ibid., V, v, 8-14.

that the witches spoke only half-truths and sees that he has been betrayed by his own ambition. He has read into his prophecies what his vaulting ambition wanted to hear.

And yet he refuses to admit defeat--he will "try the last." He dons his armor and fights his way through the ranks of his foes, magnificent and courageous as he was ever. Then he is face to face with Macduff and with Macduff comes the memory of all the evil deeds which had been momentarily forgotten in the excitement of the battle. Here we can realize that his innate dislike of villainy and evil have not been entirely lost. He turns to Macduff reluctantly and wails:

Of all men else I have avoided thee:
But get thee back; my soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already.⁸⁵

Macduff faces him in indignant outrage, proclaiming that now Macbeth has met his doom for he, Macduff, was not born of woman but was "snatched untimely from his mother's womb." He scorns Macbeth saying that he must fight or yield and bow to Malcolm and be driven through the streets the object of jeers and scorn and hate.

And so Macbeth, for the last time, takes up his sword in defense of those qualities in himself which he held most dear and which he had almost, but not quite, killed. He fights for his own innate pride, honor, honesty, and courage.

Because Shakespeare has given man's own life into his personal hands he has shown man as noble, full of dignity, hopeful and aspiring. This

⁸⁵ Hardin Craig, "Macbeth," Shakespeare, V, viii, 5-7.

element is lacking in early Greek drama and for this reason I think them less effective, less tragic; they have less power to move the soul of the reader.

Shakespeare's idea of man's life was far larger than that of the Greeks. Their concept of tragedy was that of a sudden reversal of fortune coming unawares upon one of high and noble state. This caused sympathy and fear in the common mind. Shakespeare includes this idea and much more. Shakespeare's tragedies are dramas of action. The actions are deeds which are the outward semblance of that which lies within man. One is always aware of the possibilities which are inherent in man. Though the leading character may fall from his place, may fail, may be wretched, he is never contemptible or small in the eyes of the reader. One is always made aware of the marvelous worth of a human soul. Though man falls, the struggle which all enact to attain a degree of perfection of soul makes the life of all and each noble and worth while.

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