

Nhi Pham (ID: 026078856)

Dr. Wida

CLCS 101 Sec 04 Greek Mythology

April 17, 2021

**Write a brief argument in 300+ words, in which you state which way you think the play should be interpreted. Cite key passages and action that would support your position.**

**Citations should be simply the line number, e.g. (622).**

Personally, it is hard to determine which is the right way to interpret the play as I read it in the combination of both views. In the first part of the play, I view the play with a “sympathetic view of the rash king as an ascetic martyr.” Pentheus first appeared in the play as a young king who had just left Thebes for a short time when Dionysus came to spread his cult (215). It is surely frustrating when you come back to the place you govern, and it suddenly becomes wild, chaotic, and out of your control. Moreover, it is understandable that when holding that much power at such a young age, Pentheus was more envious and fonder of surpassing others. He wanted to use his power to control rather than being controlled by an unfamiliar god. Also, at this point, the whole story of Dionysus’s birth and his divinity was hard for Pentheus to believe. Pentheus was raised in a family that started the fake rumor of the birth of Dionysus. Therefore, he did not believe that Dionysus was actually existed and hold such a power to create the madness. However, as the play further develops, I tend to lean more toward the idea that the king was “the myopic psychopath who was unable to accept human nature as it is and foolishly tried to suppress it.” Throughout the play, Pentheus was warned by many people about the power of Dionysus but he did not listen. After witnessing the cult and receive words of wisdom from his own grandfather and Teiresias (263-342), who was their old prophet, Pentheus should have

listened and changed his attitude instead of mocking them (241). Moreover, when his palace got destroyed by Dionysus and he witnessed every magical move, he should have believed and stopped going after Dionysus instead of mocking Dionysus for his power (650). After Herald told Pentheus about what he saw in the jungle with the frenzied Bacchantes, it did not calm Pentheus down but make him more rush into preparation to attack, which caused Dionysus angrier (770-792). Dionysus warned Pentheus: “even though you’ve treated me badly, I ask you to calm down. You mustn’t raise arms against the god. Dionysus will not take kindly to you sending his Bacchantes away from the mountains where they hold their rites”, but Pentheus completely denied any advice from Dionysus (792-799). Thus, being filled with foolish eagerness, Pentheus fell into the trap of Pentheus, and finally being killed. It was more because of Pentheus’s stupidity in which he wanted to fight with the god and go against human nature that led him to death.

Cited above:

Morford, P. O. & Lenardon, R. J. 2007. *Classical mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.