

Biblical Reading of Macbeth: Focus on the existence and the life

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Abstract

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Traditionally dualistic Macbeth reading focuses on the contrast between evil which was represented by Macbeth's resistance to repent and righteousness which judges that evil and builds the new order. It sounds very convenient resolution to judge and punish the evil and save the other but this thesis is asking the question that if you are the one who deserve the endless punishment and are the last individual who does not get any possibilities to be saved finally then what you will do. The analysis of all the existing creatures contrasting living creatures especially considered as soul possessing creatures bring us to the conclusion that anthropocentric leveling up of human nature to the higher than other creatures cannot be the solution for the monstrous disasters we have brought up already and to the conclusion that to be or not to be is important question but more important is how to be, how to live and how to die, especially whether you are the very last sinner who should be blamed like the protagonist in the tragedy of Macbeth by examining problematically with the sight of the holy Bible.

Key words: Macbeth, Bible, Eve, David, To be or not to be

1. Introduction

Generally, human race believed in the perspective that we are imperfect creature potentially excellent. This recognition of the imperfection brings a necessity to point out which is the evil and who should be blamed and deserve the hatred. Macbeth has a long history of the example who refused to repent and be saved as the model of the evil.

This thesis digs straight into that concept with the sight of the holy bible directly investigating the destiny of the evil creatures. For the first step to the investigation, it compare and contrast two distinguished perspective which is the dualistic and problematic reading of the *Macbeth*.

Traditionally well built dualistic *Macbeth* reading serves the idea that one individual would be the symbol of the evil and might be eternally punished. As the opposite

perspective of it, the problematic model argues that individual has its own psychological basis for the cause of their action and should be treated concerning special motivation of their own life. But this perspective may not guarantee the happiness or salvation of that evil doers.

The evil shall be punished to protect the healthy society. "fair is fair and foul is foul" as the axiom of the history and in this respect Macbeth is just one of tragic happening occurs at everyday basis.

"foul is fair and fair is foul" is just one of those so many non-senses. Then how non-sensual statement is it that all those precious souls must be saved and those all the evil doers should be punished at the same time with those final and eternal judgement also eternally postponing?

Yes, justice prevails sooner than we expect and there must be the final judgement. In this aspect, important matter is that Macbeth is the model of mortals who had unsolved and unavoidable consequences named the sin and the judgement. It is easy to solve the matter with the eternal punishment.

But isn't it convenient but irresponsible? If you agree that it is a convenient escape for all, just consider the case that this last individual who should be perished is yourself. The failure to rescue the individual is the failure of the universe to you and all considering how can the universe mean something without the "I" over there?

So the interest of this thesis transfer from Macbeth's fate to the creature and the creation of all and the creator himself or themselves. The question and distinction between the existence and the life naturally appear on the way of studying the subject of Genesis. Aborted children and the character Macbeth's nature will be examined carefully. Then the contrast and comparison of Eve vs. lady Macbeth and King David vs. Macbeth will be discussed.

The cause of argument will move on from the question of to be or not to be and to die or to live to the more important questions of how to be and how not to be and how to live. Some related questions of how to sacrifice and how to be saved will also be asked So, as a significant subject and the matter of consequence this thesis of the *Shakespearean tragedy of Macbeth* and the *Bible* studies them not as a history or the past but as a matter of the future for all that matters.

2. Dualistic and Problematic Macbeth

The motivation of this chapter's critical stance to the dualistic view is not to negate the distinction between the 'evil' and 'good' but to make clear that there always exist some state or institution need to deviate the circumstance and make someone or something to be blamed. For example, in this pandemic COVID-19 chaos, so many of neighborhood Korean says that this is not a disease but a biochemical attack from China to the US. This is a clear example of what really happen inside the logic of blaming the evil to impute the internal problem which we should solve by ourselves to

the others.

Macbeth has been used as a symbol of the evil who shall be punished and gradually the point has been moved from the ethics to the psychology of him. It means that internal process of his crime is not being judged as a devil's control but the cause of imperfection of human nature.

While written at the introduction, we are imperfect creature potentially excellent but the imperfection itself sometimes excellent. This doesn't mean that his treason and murders deserve our praise. But the pain and illusion of the ghosts present that his consciousness still was working in him and his human nature strongly urge him to repent and accept the consequence of his guilt while his arrogance wanted to bear it in his own way.

3. The Existence and the Life

Speaking short of the long story, there were the creation of the existence and the life by different name of God. These double layered creation urge us to bear the burden of double layered creature.

1. Elohim and YHWH

Elohim, as a plural form of the God El, of the Chapter 1 of Genesis and YHWH, as an original name of Jehovah, of the Chapter 2 of the same book are the Creators of the world and human being but at the different layers of the creation., the existence and the life, especially the life of human being.

Because of these double creation, human fundamentally embrace two basic question, to be or not to be and to die or to live. We might be absolutely humble before the question of 'in the beginning' or 'before the beginning' because it fails our knowledge and imagination. But this story of the Genesis makes clear that when we ask the matter of existence we should go to Elohim, and the matter of life, go to YHWH as of more personal matters because it is more elaborate form of creation and the relationship is more intimate. For the example of the kind of creature who doesn't have a licence of the life, I want to mention the two creature, one is Macbeth and the other is my only child who was aborted long time ago.

2. Macbeth, life or existence?

Does Macbeth exist? Yes, he exist here with different type of life to the real person. Does an aborted child exist? It is very sensitive matter by it exists, more safely speaking, it did. But are they have a life? As it was said before, they did not have a licence of life legally and biologically. But as two layers of creation reveals, the level of

existence matters, they still exist with different forms and natures but the level of the life they are not. So why does it matters?

If this thesis concerns only the matter of to die and to live, Macbeth is just one of the tragic happening in a story long time ago. But if we concern the existence of all that matters, especially while he was connected and compared to the characters such as Eve of the Genesis and King David of the Samuels, we feel the importance of him and also feel that he is alive and he represents the most important part of our lives.

Those who lived in the past are now do not exist, who are alive now will not exist in near future, and the life in the future will come and go and fail to exist forever. So concerning that time goes on and on, existence matter much more than the life concerning its short span. So we can admire the Macbeth on stage and can write the letter to the unborn baby, if we really consider those are important in our lives. If you want to concern about the time when we are alive, just remind that your licence of life has a very short expiration limit. The existence matters for longer than we imagine.

3. The Korean translation of 'to be or not to be'

Ironically, Korean language does not have the corresposive term for the question 'to be or not to be.' It is roughly translated 'to exist or not to exist' but it sounds weird in the language, so it is introduced as 'to die or to live, this is the question.'

So far there is no problem with this translation but for the logic of this thesis, to be and to live should be clearly defined as different reference if not as the opposite senses.

The reason why this translation appears is that the concept of the life and after life is radically different between the West and the East. In Korean as a member of Eastern tradition, every soul transmigrates that means human being today will transform to the snake or cow someday in the after life. So their existences have no continuous identities which will never change and do have that core of soul which connect this life and after life as in the Western concept of the life.

The aim of life in the Eastern philosophy, especially in Buddhism, is to be a chain breaker and be free from the transmigration. It is ironic because even the most of existence already free from the cycle, the creatures who has the most elaborate form of the existence, the life's target is to get back to the basic form of matters. In the sea of pain, some truth seeker's target is to escape from the pain but some brave pioneers are voluntarily searching for the valuable truth of life in this sea of the pain and also the temptation. The way which connect the Korean tradition and the world of Shakespearean tragedy with the holy Bible lies on the realized life itself so it will not be tricked by the biases of theories and ideas. The study of actual characters such as Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, Eve and the King David may show us clear understanding of how various types of the lives and existences are struggling to live or die and to be and finally not to be.

Because of this tradition, to die or to live have had no problem as being understood 'to

be or not to be' until the matter of existence and life should be defined elaborately to examine the world of the *Shakespearean tragedy of Macbeth* and the *Bible*. Next two chapters will contribute to the construction of main characters' ideas and fate then to study the way we are dealing with the biblical matters of the sin, the salvation and the sacrifices.

4. The Characters

The ideas connecting through this thesis are the existence and the life especially the existence beyond the limit of every lives. So, the lives of the characters contain the senses over their realization of lifespan and reveal the eternity which existed before they were born and after they died. Most of the characters described in this thesis are almost the symbol of the evil. But what it means evil to themselves which matters to all of us? For my experience the pure evil is the endless and boundless pain. If it is not a hell what it could be? So while examining these characters, to focus on the pain is very important to understand their state of mind even it looks like the pain and its cure is the life of them itself.

1. Lady Macbeth and Eve

The deeds of Lady Macbeth and Eve were foul considering their intentions and consequences. Why then the fair is foul and vice versa? If there between the fair and foul were the same, this expression all goes nonsense. What these distinction and comparison mean? For Eve, God's order to forbid the fruit considered fair and Eve's disobedience the foul. But in this case, the foul was not the kind in the 100m sprinter, but in the basketball.

By making a foul, the player itself did not disqualified, but the foul was carefully planned and used to win the game. Only God knows all and planned all we declare. If there were no Eve, there were no Jesus, and even none of us could be born.

Here lies one implication of the tragedy of lady Macbeth. If the couple's deed was successful and they became happy in the zone, would it be the sign of blessing from the heaven? Will she feel lucky and never be the victim of her consciousness? That is not the case. Her foul was fair enough. Her pain taught a lot instead of her success. Her hideousness shocks and stuns the beholder maybe and at the same time, she was lucky enough to feel the consequences of her evil in her life time. That was not too bad.

2. Macbeth and King David

Originally the existence of the king was the punishment to the people disobedient to

God. People would suffer under the rule of a king because they wanted the human king instead of the rule of God according to the Bible. But at the same time to be a king meant that he was chosen by God and be blessed. But not every king was happy and blessed. Absolutely not to Macbeth it was. He even never was being called the King Macbeth, not like the King David or even the King Saul in the Book of Samuel. There were so many contrasting descriptions between Macbeth and King David, and the most distinctive difference is that King David was God chosen, blessed and loved and Macbeth was not. It is so painful finding that someone was God blessed but some others were not. No argument is useful for that matter because it is God's decision. But as I described earlier, even the least beloved evil man, though I never consider there were someone who are not beloved, has their own value of his live and that last individual must be saved finally.

5. Conclusion

To compensate the drastically and painfully shortened latter part of the thesis for the presentation, part of the Apostle's Creed was quoted and final statement presented.

Apostle's Creed

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried
He descended into hell The third day He rose again from the dead
He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty
From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead...

As not yet well admired, the part of 'He descended into hell, The third day' brought me to shock of affection while after I tasted a little bit of that hell's pain. Three days into the hell is felt equal to the eternity. And without that experience he might not understand the pain of all, including Macbeth and us. For that reason I accept that the sacrifice means the salvation. So tragedy of Shakespeare may be read as the introduction to the symphony of all that living, dying and inanimate creatures' existence.

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