

Beyond Stoicism: an Epicureanism Glance at Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra

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Abstract

This work aims to analyze the principles of ancient philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism and the modernist thinkers' attitude that showed how ideology reigns supreme. Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, when read for the first time, seems to be a play about thirst for power in which there is a victor, Octavian, and the vanquished, Antony and Cleopatra. But there is more to this play than meets the eye throughout analyzing and contrasting outlooks of two countries Rome and Alexandria, it became ascertained that this play is more about the battle of ideas and social beliefs than other issues. Also, George R.R. Martin's A Game of Thrones, seems in contrast to these Stoicism and Epicureanism attitudes, by drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and Habitus likewise for Lacanian perspective, which refers to the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of particular social groups that are achieved by the activities and experiences of everyday life. It seems that every value for which they strive for is contextualized and they live in a prison of ideas, so reality is under question. In addition, this study intends to show how our material context of existence produces our numerous experiences of possibilities and impossibilities, probable and improbable consequences, and in turn mold our unconscious sense of the possible, probable and essentially desirable for us.

Keywords: Lacan, Antony and Cleopatra, Stoicism, A Game of Thrones, Epicureanism

I. INTRODUCTION

The reconciliation that Antony created between these contraries before the main battle shows that among plurality of imposing ideas, an almost firm personality can be written by human himself with free will in the very contexts in which he or she is bounded. From the beginning of the play Roman characters, friends of Antony seem to be appalled by the way their commander acts, they value things that have no meaning for Alexandrians. However, the appropriation of outside of the contexts can be analyzed through the contexts. Vast leaps in perspectives help to create portrait of characters and local multiplicities, and constitute one of the Antony and Cleopatra's famous characteristics. This unique play of Shakespeare makes such vast leaps, from one edge of the known world to the

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other, and back again. Leaps in space parallel the jumps in discourses of each country. For example, in scene four and five, we get two completely different descriptions of Antony compared to other scenes before. As explained before, the concepts that give value to these characters differ in these two different contexts, they are relative, like love and honor as a signifiers.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, researchers leap from Egypt to Rome and they encounter acknowledged discourses each country tends to live by. The play Begins in Alexandria where portraits Antony indulging himself in the royalty, life of senses and pleasure, he is quite epicurean in comparison with stoicism which resides in Rome as the play shows. In Epicureanism, a system philosophy based on the teachings of Epicurus, *senses* are the first criterion of truth. Contrary to Epicureanism, Stoicism is about the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive emotions (Russell 254).

In this play, researchers are confronted with highly fickle perspectives percolated through the play, which tend to find a stability triggered by the very power. tend to show that the power in which *Antony* himself resides is not venom to demolish him or the other characters without causing them to resist and seek for reason in their lives; all the characters in this play both challenge and are challenged by power in a dialectical manner, and this way Antony comes to confess how he has found who he is before he dies. Antony is a center from which Shakespeare's play emanates, however, he is an unstable center composed of contrary customs, and believes, and attitudes that substitute one another during the journeys he takes to Rome and Alexandria.

Claude Lévi-Strauss used bricolage to characterize the common patterns of mythological thought in contrast with engineer's creative thinking. According to Strauss, mythological thought utilizes available materials again to solve new problems (The Stavage Mind 1966). If *bricolage* involves the need to borrow one's concepts, from the very heritage one is challenging, *every* discourse is *bricoleur* (Derrida 16).

II. ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

2.1 Victor and Octavian

The opposite of the *bricoleur*, who works gradually and in an experimental manner, would be the *engineer*, someone who visualizes and designs his whole project in advance, constructing "the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon". But as far as discourse is concerned, such an engineer is a myth: a subject who would be the "absolute origin of his own discourse," constructing it out of nothing (Derrida 135).

Antony's flighty and shaky personality is amalgamation of the alternate extremes, he doesn't appear to have authority over himself and is enticed by talks' savage play, he isn't the specialist of his own character, and each unexpected occasion drives in various ways. Along these lines, to look further on how contrasting ideas concede Antony's personality and make him a bricolage, specialists examine prevailing talks: In *Antony and Cleopatra*, two predominant talks exist from which the meaning of life of the characters begins; the manner in which the characters

will in general glance at the world, their encounters of life is molded by them. They are luxurious talk and unemotional talk that can be clarified in regard to Epicureanism and Stoicism.

There are three proportions of truth in Epicurean epistemology: sensations (aisthêsis), inclinations (prolepsis), and feelings (pathê). The essential norms of truth are sensations (aisthêsis), Epicurus saw sensations as the 'direct physical contacts between the living being and the outer physical reality' (DeWitt 134). So as to accomplish this point, he contended that sense-recognitions are in every case valid, despite the fact that our decisions about them can be bogus. Prolepsis can be interpreted as "essential comprehension" like "man" since everyone has an assumption of that. Sentiments (pathê) furnish man with an immediate understanding into the activities of nature, which is the reason anything amicable to nature is experienced as pleasurable, while anything uncongenial is experienced as agony (Laertes 34). Epicurus accepts this as evident proof that the objective of life is the dynamic evacuation of agony.

In the start of the play, it is found out that Antony is a delight searcher without thinking about any measure. The play begins with *Philo*, companions of Antony, referencing how Antony has become extreme:

His captain's heart, which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst the buckles on his breast, reneges all temper (Shakespeare, "Antony and Cleopatra" Act I, scene i)

Cleopatra asks Antony to decide the measure from his affection towards her, yet whatever wakes up are regarded to be valid for luxurious demeanor, having a proportion of something isn't wonderful, it falls into the domain of reason, it is this essential previously established inclination that Antony sticks to, he doesn't plan to expound upon the idea love, it is the thing that he definitely knows marvelously, or it is the thing that can be seen as the prolepsis in Epicureanism:

CLEOPATRA. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

ANTONY. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.

CLEOPATRA. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.

ANTONY. Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth. (Act I, scene i 13-16)

Following this discussion, a delivery person enters with the updates on Rome, however Antony excuses him, not in any event, irritating himself to be aware of states of Rome, it isn't suitable to the circumstance that he is. Antony proceeds to explain his objective throughout everyday life in order to avert any difficulty that may trouble his present existence with Cleopatra in Alexandria, and his Dionysian tendency. It is pathê which Antony voices:

ANTONY. Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch of the rang'd empire fall!

Here is my space.

Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike

Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
Is to do thus [embracing], when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.(Act I, scene i 35-36)

2.2 The consideration of signifier and signified

Throughout the play the characters are in state of flux, particularly those who experience both Alexandria and Rome, with their warring discourses; how characters are considered as subject is important; therefore, we intend to look at the exposition of the notion of the term “sign,” “signifier,” and “signified.”

The sign, which unites signifier (the word or sound-image “table”) and (Signified (the concept of “table”) refers to an actual object in the world. Saussure sees no inner or natural relationship between signifier and the signified, the bond hinges upon collective behavior or convention, so the relation is what he designates as arbitrary (CGL 69).

Completely in “A Cixousian Reading of Adrienne Rich’s ‘Diving into the Wreck’, ‘The Floating Poem’, and ‘I Dreamed the Death of Orpheus’” both William Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* and Adrienne Rich face and portray the same male-controlled powers (patriarchal authority), that as per Cixous, check creative mind and sterile development, and are powers that attempt to draw wall among sexes and limit sexual investigation to hetero relations. In her poem, *I dreamed of the death of Orpheus*, Rich increases the level of her opposition to a poetic mission:

In this poem, Rich blatantly touches on themes that are alluded to or indirectly treated in the rest of her poems. Here, she describes herself as ‘a woman in the prime of life’, running through a light and dark arcade, threatened by certain ‘authorities’ who curb her ‘certain powers.’ The powers that the speaker speaks of can quite adequately refer to the feminine powers that a woman possesses and the mysterious authorities whose faces are rarely seen by the speaker quite well represent the forces of the patriarchy, which by definition, attempt to ‘limit’ those powers. (AlhmdniThulfiqar and Al-hasaniHayder 280)

In part II of his *Course*, Saussure goes on to explicate the essential link between thought and language. He views thought as formless prior to thought, i.e. there are no ideas, he insists, before the appearance of language (Saussure 1966).

Sophisticated by Saussure’s treatment of language, Jacques Derrida unwinds the resistances which have appreciated the special spot in Western Metaphysics. Derrida calls attention to binarized classes, for example, soul and body, ace and slave, female and male as “fierce progressive system”. In contrast to Saussure’s thought of implied, Derrida sees sets meant as an illusion brought about by our situation inside language, he proceeds to see

connoted as basically follow in the situation of signifier. The hallucination of quality of implied is made by the signifier:

Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived. (Derrida 442)

Changing scenes from Rome to Alexandria explains the dark capacity of signifier, and how setting bound it is. The quickness of the accepted signifier is subjected to the diaphaneity of the implied, for example, the signifier "love" is expected as unworldly that can't be estimated and known, it tends to be appeared in the discussion among Antony and Cleopatra in ACT I. SCENE I. However, when the setting changes, love will be the measure for tackling the conflict among Antony and Caesar when Agrippa thinks of the possibility of the marriage among Antony and Octavia, it is unfortunate obligation:

AGRIPPA. To hold you in perpetual amity,
To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts
With an unslipping knot, take Antony
Octavia to his wife; whose beauty claims
No worse a husband than the best of men;
Whose virtue and whose general graces speak
That which none else can utter. By this marriage
All little jealousies, which now seem great,
And all great fears, which now import their dangers,
Would then be nothing. Truths would be tales,
Where now half tales be truths. Her love to both
Would each to other, and all loves to both,
Draw after her. Pardon what I have spoke;
For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,
By duty ruminated. (Act II , scene ii 132-144).

In order to know more about the way the truth in which characters live is context-bound, we intend to analyze Stoicism: Occurring at the same time with Epicureanism, Stoicism, founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in

early third century (Russell242). The Stoics posited that knowledge can be obtained through the use of reason. Stoicism teaches the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of rising above destructive emotions; the philosophy maintains that becoming a clear and impartial thinker allows one to fathom the universal reason (logos). A primary aspect of Stoicism involves improving the individual's ethical and moral well-being (Russell 254). Truth can be distinguished from fallacy for stoics; even if, in practice, only an approximation can be made (Laërtius49).

In contrast to Egypt, Rome embodies pain, business, duty, discipline, austerity, care, factiousness, the head, and the life of calculation. Rome has its absolute orders and demands. Roman Antony's actions and manners, and his responses to these demands are just the opposite of Alexandria when he has a conversation with Octavia:

I have not kept my square, but that to come / Shall all be done by the rule' (Act II, scene iii 6-7)

2.3 Symbolism through investigation of Rome and Alexandria

These two inverse terrains, with their varying traditions, symbolism become the ground example of the play's significance. As is clear when Antony talks by and large, he needs to grasp the standard, maybe his character has experienced an emotional change since the start of the play, he is inside the talk of Rome, and aloof disposition is clear the manner in which he converses with Octavia. Secret, oddness, endless prospects have abided in Alexandria; Rome of that which is fixed, known, measurable, unsurprising. The Nile presents wellspring of all living things, yet the Tiber is simply a waterway on which to dispatch warships. Rome is unbendingly male, Egypt alluringly female, Egypt is connected with delight, occasion, sport, overabundance, inebriation, luxury, gaiety, the heart, and the life of the faculties. Antony originates from a universe of obligation, where force implies duty. Cleopatra considers sovereignty to be a privilege to the fullest delights life and riches can offer. She doesn't originate from anything remotely moving toward the customs of the Roman Republic; her heredity, for a considerable length of time, has been regal. She can abuse others as she sees fit, since she is managing subjects, while a Roman, even one in power, is managing residents, when an errand person shows up from Rome. For example, Cleopatra plays with the poor man as a feline with a mouse, promising rich award for uplifting news and discipline for awful news:

CLEOPATRA: Antony's dead! If thou say so, villain,
Thou kill'st thy mistress; but well and free,
If thou so yield him, there is gold, and here
My bluest veins to kiss- a hand that kings
Have lipp'd, and trembled kissing. (Act II, scene v 26-29)

Egypt is immutable contrasted with Rome, far more established, and with an unquestionably progressively steady and static structure of intensity; at this point, pharaohs have controlled Egypt for a long time. Cleopatra doesn't have to effectively acquire her position of authority. Not once do we see Cleopatra making a significant, compelling choice of state. Rule implies joy; the differentiation isn't just to Antony, yet to Octavius, who might most likely utilize power for various finishes. All through the play Antony's various changes of mentality between Alexandria's luxury and Rome's aloofness make it difficult to characterize his temperament of being; he is moving between these two talks until he is dead.

Between this division, by relating themselves to other people, characters cause connotation conceivable by letting themselves to be debilitate by characteristic of their connection to the future component, in this manner building implied by methods for this connection to what isn't. Consequently, as a bricolage, Antony is the locus of two opposite talks, in one scene he obtains his ideas from what he is testing. In another word, Rome gives the legacy of his words, or his comprehension about the world, as of now clarified, suspected is undefined preceding language. Antony, in contrast to Cleopatra, moves between two opposite spots, and by standing up to two unique dialects, it is clearly demonstrated how signifiers are subjected to be temporary setting bound implied by methods for the other.

The impacts of verbose practices is to make it for all intents and purposes difficult to consider outside them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be distraught, to be incomprehensible and thusly reason (Young 48). As can be seen all through the play, Antony's companions can't comprehend the manner in which he entertains himself with Alexandria's luxurious lifestyle, Philo, as a Roman can't understand this luxurious disposition of Antony, and considers him a simpleton:

Look where they come!

Take but good note, and you shall see in him

The triple pillar of the world transform'd

Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see (Act I, scene i 12-13)

As referenced previously, it is difficult to consider outside talk, Antony attempts to liberate himself from emotionless existence of Rome, however when delivery person lets him to think about the states of Rome, especially his better half's passing Fulvia, he drastically changes his perspectives, and plainly he can never escape Rome's talk:

These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,

Or lose myself in dotage. (Act I, scene ii 125)

In spite of the fact that Antony and different characters are bound to the common talks of Rome and Alexandria, they are not simply like a manikin to be controlled in a certain and foreordained manner, we mean to show how power is logic through which the characters both test and are tested by it. Accordingly, we allude to Foucault's view towards force and how he thinks that its positive and profitable. He passionately expresses this point in the accompanying section:

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.' (Foucault 1977)

To perceive how positive force can be, and how it delivers a lot of good standards and qualities, we will in general glance at the discussion among Pompey and Menas. Following tanked festivity on Pompey's kitchen, Menas thinks of executing the three triumvirs and Pompey making himself leader of Rome. In any case, Pompey turns it down, and thinks that it's disgraceful. Despite the force with its allure, Pompey opposes the proposal:

MENAS. These three world-sharers, these competitors,

Are in thy vessel. Let me cut the cable;

And when we are put off, fall to their throats.

All there is thine.

POMPEY. Ah, this thou shouldst have done,

And not have spokeon't. In me 'tis villainy:

In thee't had been good service. Thou must know

'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour:

Mine honour, it. Repent that e'er thy tongue

Hath so betray'd thine act. Being done unknown,

I should have found it afterwards well done,

But must condemn it now. Desist, and drink. (Act II, scene vii 77-87)

How Pompey keeps away from this chance of being a ruler needs further examination as far as the thought of opposition. Foucault discovers opposition not in a place of exteriority according to control; in this way, for Foucault power is "coextensive with obstruction; gainful, delivering constructive outcomes; it is pervasive, it very well may be found in each sort of relationship, as a state of the chance of any sort of relationship" (Kelly 38).

As it is clear in from the preceding conversation, power is *productive* of truths, rights, and the conceptualization of individuals through discourse. The importance of discourse is evident, it is due to stoic attitude of Pompey that the suggestion of slaughtering the three triumvirs doesn't happen. Pompey would have found Menas's act 'good service' if he had done it without his awareness, however, he finds Menas's act vile since honor is graver and far more critical than just the throne. Honor is relative in Rome, but in Alexandria rule is essential, it originates from itself, the ruler is like a god or goddess who decrees the values himself/herself. In Rome, as mentioned before, people are viewed as citizen, but in Alexandria they are subjects. This results in a mutual definition of state between authorities and people, but this relativity doesn't have any meaning as regards

Alexandria, since no reciprocal definition is defined. So, what would happen if Pompey were an Alexandrian and killed the three triumvirs?

Throughout the play we see how parochial and narrow minded Antony acts. In one scene he seems like a Roman, in another as an Alexandrians, but these unstable states reach a rather stable state between two different countries' prevailing discourses through resistance to power. It seemed as if he reconciled two warring sides in him when he prepared to battle against Octavian in IV, II:

ANTONY. To-morrow, soldier,
By sea and land I'll fight. Or I will live,
Or bathe my dying honour in the blood
Shall make it live again. Woo't thou fight well?

ANTONY. Ho, ho, ho! (Act IV, scene ii 4-6)

The passage above shows how his stoic side still remains, and the passage below shows his epicurean side and how he intends to drown himself in festivity and enjoy the fleeting moments:

Antony: Now the witch take me if I meant it thus!
Grace grow where those drops fall! My hearty friends,
You take me in too dolorous a sense;
For I spake to you for your comfort, did desire you
To burn this night with torches. Know, my hearts,
I hope well of to-morrow, and will lead you
Where rather I'll expect victorious life
Than death and honour. Let's to supper, come,
And drown consideration. Exeunt (Act IV, scene ii 37-44)

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