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THE "MARBLE-HEARTED FIEND": MATERIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN *KING LEAR*

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Abstract

The parent-child relationship is one of the most important subject matters in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Lear* in the sense that from it naturally spring the major themes of the play. Themes like regeneration of wisdom, distribution and effect of power and pelf, human and divine justice, and man's relationship with man and nature, are all presented on a universal scale, spatial and temporal, passing from the palace to the hovel, from the court to the heath, and from moments of folly to moments of enlightenment through moments of purgatorial sufferings. This universal scale can be regarded as connected to the political contexts of Britain, modeled on the prototypical and primary unit of a family. And since family, which involves principally the begetter and the begotten that also has the potential of begetting, is the primary and fundamental unit of the whole universe from both human and animal perspectives of life, this paper seeks to investigate how the familial background of the parent-child relationship in *King Lear* is portrayed against the backdrop of the kingdom and the universe. In order to do so, these three units – family, kingdom, and in natural and metaphysical senses the universe – are considered to be deeply interconnected with human relationships, corresponding consecutively to its psychological, material, and spiritual aspects. Shakespeare has illuminated the tragic truths about the relationship between the parents and their children by showing a profound interaction between the family, kingdom, and the universe with respect to their corresponding psychological, material, and spiritual aspects.

Keywords: Drama, parents, children, material concerns, psyche, spirituality

Introduction

King Lear is one of the four great tragedies of W. Shakespeare (Bradley, 1992; Muir, 1963), where the playwright has delineated multifarious aspects of the relationship between the parents and their children. There are numerous studies on Shakespeare's *King Lear*; many of them are from the perspectives of Lear's psychology, his relationship with his daughters, the question of material power, as well as from moral standpoints while some are from supernatural perspectives too.

To speak of material concerns like power first, there have been various studies conducted about the role of the kingdom in *King Lear*; for example, the question of hereditary monarchical succession (Hadfield, 2003); the psychology of power (McLaughlin, 1978); political contexts of Britain (Draper, 1937); political wisdom (Jaffa, 1957); politics and church (Greenblatt, 1985); and the role of Lear's desire in the transference of power (Stern, 1990). From psychological perspectives, there are several critical works; some explore Lear's psychology and death (Snyder, 1982; Hess, 1987); psychology of motives and particular forms of enactment (Chaplin, 1969); and Cordelia's moral psychology (Holiday, 2018). There have been many studies on Lear and his daughters including those by A. C. Bradley (1992), J. Kott (1965), L. C. Knights (1960), and M. Mack (1993). Some recent studies explore the nature of

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sibling relationships and parent-child relationships viewed from the perspectives of stage performance (Young, 2009; Davies, 2017; Schwarz, 2011), as well as mystical symbolism and inner drama (Lings, 2006).

Some critics have studied in *King Lear* the nature of justice and justice of nature (Heilman, 1963; Moseley, 1988; Lowenthal, 1997; Craig, 2001; Kahn, 2000). The Play has been approached from the perspective of sins and divinity, as well as patriarchy and contemporary political context (Linley, 2015). *King Lear* has been discussed from theological standpoints, for example, as a Christian play (Chambers, 1940; Knight, 1936; Wilson, 1929), as well as from non-theological viewpoints, without trying to fit it into Christianity (Empson, 1952; Sewell, 1951; James, 1951). *King Lear* is also considered a pagan play (Elton, 1980), yet "neither wholly pagan nor wholly Christian" (Halio, 2005). Nature has been studied in the play and found to be both benignant and malignant, but "strongly contrasted and mutually exclusive" (Danby, 1948, p. 19), and the principles of hierarchy and correspondence in the great chain of being is also explored (Tillyard, 1952), while duality of "the human condition and its paradoxical mixture of nature and convention" is also examined (Cantor 2008, p. 248).

Though *King Lear* has been discussed from all these various perspectives as there are different important themes, one important point of focus can be to see the nature of the relationship between the parents and the children from a much wider angle. Taking into consideration the family, the kingdom, and the universe can provide this angle since these are the three important units that Shakespeare uses to reveal the parental and filial relationship, which has three related dimensions – the material, the psychological, and the spiritual.

In *King Lear,* the principal focus is on Lear's family and mostly on how he plans to redesign his relationship with his three daughters, as it constitutes the main plot of the tragedy. However, by exploiting a related subplot, which enhances the subtlety of the parent-child relationship with illuminating parallelisms and cogent contrasts, Shakespeare develops this subject matter of the parent-child relationship on a tripartite scale of family, kingdom, and universe through an in-depth representation of the material, psychological, and spiritual aspects of human relationship. *King Lear* as a play has a wide, universal appeal, which, for good reasons, appears to emanate from the causes, as well as the consequences, of the destruction of the familial harmony between the parents and the children and also its subsequent reconstruction. Since family is the basic unit of a society in any country, all the social and political dimensions of a human's life can be regarded as affecting the unit of a family and also as being affected by it. Since the play itself begins with and rotates on the questions of the political powers of the kingdom, the political context of the play can be considered as related to the material aspect of human life. The play also involves the issue of natural justice, considered as both universal, i.e., widely applicable, and immanent, i.e., widely evident in nature, if nature is regarded as both the physical universe, implying what is natural, and the metaphysical universe, implying the supernatural and the spiritual.

The play thus does not remain limited to a family environment only; instead, it expands the family context of parental and filial bonds and affections to far wider contexts, into the kingdom and the universe. On the one hand, there is the material aspect of power, which starts within the family but embroils the whole kingdom; and on the other hand, there is the spiritual aspect of ethics, which relates to the question of justice, i.e., the moral concept of justice and punishment. Moreover, there is the psychological aspect of human relationship that primarily pertains to the family members. The psychological aspect of this familial relationship involves emotions like love but extends to reason and folly. Therefore, this paper investigates the relationship between parents and children in *King Lear* from the material, psychological, and spiritual perspectives which traverse the grounds of the family, the kingdom, and the physical and metaphysical universe. These materials, psychological and spiritual aspects of human relationships are encapsulated in Shakespeare's phrase, the "marble-hearted fiend", which Lear uses to describe his daughter Goneril once she refuses to obey his conditions (1.4.214); through this phrase, Lear emphasizes the idea that due to vested material interests, the psyche of a human being desiccates into something like mere matter as well as into something utterly immoral, though supernatural.

Discussion

Two family units are introduced in *King Lear* both of which primarily pertain to father and children; and though mother figures are mentioned casually, they do not play an important role in impacting the father-child relationship. The families of Lear and Gloucester run parallel in this family drama of acute psychological and physical interaction by pointing out both analogies and contrasts. However, there is a metaphysical and universal aspect of this familial relationship, which is not only ominous but also foreordained. According to A. C. Bradley, the repetition of the

parent-child relationship in the subplot, "startles and terrifies by suggesting that the folly of Lear and the ingratitude of his daughters are no accidents or merely individual aberrations, but that in that dark cold world, some fateful malignant influence is abroad, turning the hearts of the fathers against their children and of the children against their fathers" (1992, p. 224).

Lear has three daughters of whom two inflict injuries on him while the third endeavors to alleviate them, and Gloucester has two sons, one of whom toys with his life while the other tries to safeguard it against suicidal despair. There is a strong psychological dimension in the characters of both Lear and Gloucester, who are blind to parental love and consequently dissociate emotion and intellect in matters relating to their children. However, learning to see rightly, both the fathers can successfully reintegrate their emotions and intellect after almost parallel courses of rectifying sufferings, which shows that, despite marked contrasts, there are remarkable analogies between their respective causes of misjudgments, their sufferings, and recuperation as well as their enlightenment.

The Material Aspect: Everything Royal

King Lear is not a play where the king will carve out the kingdom after he hears from his daughters how much they love him and give them the parts according to their love. In this play, the king has already measured his daughters' love and carved out the kingdom accordingly. What he intends to do is to find his assessment reflected in his daughters' protestation of love so that he can distribute the parts accordingly. And this he wants to do to satisfy his royal ego, and that too before the royal court.

King Lear at the very beginning of the play is presented in his royal court and in a royal manner, quite naturally, but when he begins by saying, "we shall express our darker purpose" though "we have divided / In three our kingdom" (1.1.31-33), some premonition is sparked in the audience's mind as to the psychological condition of the king's mind, and also as to how his psyche with the "darker" intention will deal with the material powers of a king. What is presented to the audience is a king with a formidable psyche. Therefore, it is not unusual that Lear does not refer to any gods at the beginning, but he does so only when his most beloved daughter Cordelia would decline to participate in Lear's moral game of justice, the universally famous trial of love of the three daughters; and infuriated with Cordelia's stubbornness, when Lear refers to gods, he first refers not to any god-like Apollo or Jupiter or Juno, but to the goddess of the lower world, the patroness of witchcraft:

> For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
> The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
> By all the operation of the orbs
> From whom we do exist and cease to be,
> Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
> Propinquity and property of blood,
> And as a stranger to my heart and me
> Hold thee from this forever. (1.1.103-10)

Lear mentions the metaphysical universe, the supernatural world, so strongly because his psyche has become turbulent, because he feels disconnected from his dearest family member, and because his sense of power as a king to disinherit a child becomes overwhelming.

Lear's psychological condition is presented as extremely flawed at the beginning of the play so he lets his material power and concerns overrule his moral and spiritual thoughts. Carving the kingdom proves to be breaking the family, so much so that the metaphysical universe he connects with is only the nefarious one, suitable to his mental state. Though none of his daughters mentions the gods or refers to the supernatural world in the first scene, Lear swears by Apollo and Jupiter when Kent is being scolded and banished because he is trying to bring Lear to his senses (1.1.154; 1.1.172). In the same breath Lear disowns Cordelia, he says before her and the full court that what is more intimately covetable than his "sometime daughter" is the cannibalistic peoples who feed upon parents and children (1.1.110-14). How infuriated Lear is at the reply of Cordelia is visible in what he says to Kent: "Come not between the dragon and his wrath" (1.1.116), a reference to the natural world, selected because it is extremely dangerous. Lear is in fact indicating the disintegration of the family bond, both the paternal and the filial connections, but he is not relying on the moral dictates of the spiritual world, the supernatural universe, nor on the natural world that would show normal psychology.

To Lear, love is not all; power too is important; thus, family or daughters are not his only concern or the first priority over the kingdom. The material concern seems too important and plays a pivotal part in creating the tragedy. Lear says that his "fast intent" (1.1. 33) is to "shake all cares and business from our age, / Conferring them on younger strength while we / Unburdened crawl toward death" (1.1. 34-36); but he refers to leaving power only parenthetically and tangentially as he wants to be relieved of the work and stress, but not the kingship, even if titular only: "(Since now we will divest us both of rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state)" (1.1.44-45). And only after he disowns Cordelia, he does make plain to his other daughters his intention, possibly his "darker purpose", his desire for "reservation of a hundred knights / By you to be sustained" (1.1.127-28), "only we shall retain / The name and all th' addition to a king: the sway, / Revenue, execution of the rest" divested to the two sons-in-law (1.1.129-131). Lear's ego is hurt, and his psyche is disturbed, but more than anything it is his royal pride that takes the brunt of the failure of the love trial; thus, before the full court he speaks of "strained pride" and "our displeasure" and says to Cordelia: "Better thou / Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me better" (1.1.163; 1.1.193; 1.1.228-29). Lear's psyche is molded by his love for material power, not less than by his love for the daughters. Kent's clarification of it ("To plainness honour's bound, / When majesty falls to folly") will not make Lear see that his error of judgment lies in connecting love with power (1.1.142-43).

What most apparently and widely seems to lie in the heart of the tragic parent-child relationship in *King Lear* is the material aspect of Lear's relationship with his daughters, and it undoubtedly is seen linked with the question of power, which, however, is connected neither with the family, nor with the natural or metaphysical universe, but with the kingdom itself. "The transference of Lear's kingdom occasions the very tragedy it is designed to prevent", argues J. Stern (1990). However, more than the court, or the supernatural world, it is his own psyche that is more important to King Lear at the beginning of the play unlike the end. Tragedy of Lear ensues because he fails to strike any balance between family, kingdom and universe, and instead gives all-out importance to his own psyche, tainted with royal pride. When family and court fade into nonentity, the metaphysical universe also loses its proper significance, which however would gain strength later when Lear's agony will multiply soon through his two daughters' desire for material powers and manipulation of the kingdom's affairs. Lear's psychological condition determines his character and action as it is affected by his material concerns; moral considerations are immaterial at the beginning of the play.

The Psychological Aspect: Love, Reason, and Words

Apart from power, which relates to the material aspect of human relationships, the most important causes of the destruction of the harmony between the parents and the children in *King Lear* are psychological. Love, the folly of dissociating emotion and intellect, hypocrisy, and rashness are interlinked and one evolves out of another. Love, the root of familial harmony, paradoxically becomes the primary cause of its disintegration. There is an overbalance of love on the side of the fathers. Lear's love for his children is initially discriminatory while Gloucester's is not. Lear says about Cordelia, "I loved her most" (1.1.117), whereas Gloucester says to Kent, before conspiracies begin, that Edgar "yet is no dearer in my account" (1.1.16) than Edmond and later says that "I loved him, friend, No father his son dearer" (3.4.152-53). Love, whether overabundant or not, tends to be discriminatory, and this in Lear's case is the subconscious cause that prompts Lear to attempt unreasonably to weigh his daughters' love with the oratory of words, "merit" being practically unsought for even though it is mentioned (1.1.48).

Lear does his majestic and love-blinded folly by integrating love and power which once connected have the potential to exert explosive and corrupt power on the progeny whose love for parents is deficient. Power, once gained, brings out the power-crazy nature of Goneril: "If our father carry authority with such disposition this last surrender of his will but offend us as he bears" (1.2.294-96). The fear of losing power newly inherited through a flawed distribution overpowers Regan's and Goneril's filial love and impels them to disrespect and maltreat their father. Goneril, after insulting Lear, sardonically observes,

> How have I offended?
> All's not offence that indiscretion finds,
> And dotage terms so. (2.4.288-90)

Thrusting out the father in the raging storm, Regan shuts the door because the king is "attended with a desperate train" of loyal knights who may "incense" him to regain his power (2.4.298-99). Lear has already diagnosed the cause of this familial discord and now he determines to change the scenario by assuming authority once again: "I'll resume the shape which thou dost think / I have cast off forever" (1.4.263-64). Love and power are conflated by

Gloucester too, and it becomes the root of his parental discomfiture. Edgar is poisoned in Gloucester's ears because Edmond cannot obey the law of inheritance, the "plague of custom" (1.2.3), which precludes the illegitimate from rightful inheritance. Having Edgar disinherited, Edmond is prompt to hand his father over to the ruthless Cornwall to be falsely accused of treason so that he himself can be the Earl of Gloucester: "The younger rises when the old doth fall" (3.4.22). Shakespeare clearly shows how materialism can seriously undermine the psychological foundations of familial bonds, especially when it is filial and parental. Greed for material power, whether the kingdom is in full or parts of it, destroys the roots of the families in *King Lear*.

Shakespeare shows that the materialism of treacherous children can reveal their psychological depravity which not only can desiccate filial love but also can, as a consequence, jeopardize the very life of the parents because materialism shatters love, which is universally regarded as the core of a family. To gain power, these children with deceptive hearts exploit their parents' love; furthermore, these children lacking proper and sufficient filial love and responsibility resort to hypocrisy because they know that love impairs the intellectual faculty of the parents. Pretentious and inane phraseology is the medium of hypocrisy that the two elder daughters of Lear adopt. Thus Goneril, the eldest, professes with a sonorous rhetoric that she loves Lear "As much as child e'er loved, or father found" (1.1.54). Ironically, her love for Lear is not "Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare" (1.1.52), and becomes a forfeit she has to pay for her love for power which desiccates her filial obligation. After stating that Goneril "names my very deed of love", Regan asserts, "Myself an enemy to all other joys / Which the most precious square of sense possesses" (1.1.66-69). Regan's protestation too is extremely ironic since she later develops adulterous love for Edmond and neglects utterly the welfare of her father.

However depraved some children can be, not all the children in a family are unloving, power-crazy and immoral, Shakespeare shows; therefore, the loyal and caring children can easily identify pretentious expressions as reflective of the dark psyche of the ungrateful siblings. Thus, cogently contrasted to the two elder sisters' hypocritical protestations of filial love is Cordelia's simple and straightforward expression that "I shall never marry like my sisters to love my father all" (1.1.98). This exasperates Lear quite unreasonably even after she plainly explains:

> You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you, and most honour you. (1.1.91-93)

Cordelia, who loves her father "According to my bond, no more nor less" (1.1.88), consciously lacks "that glib and oily art, / To speak and purpose not" (1.1.219-20), and is repudiated and banished by her father, whom she has to leave in the hostile hands of the "professed bosoms" of her sisters with an earnest appeal, "Love well our father" (1.1.265-66).

Because Lear conflates love and power, he is incapable of detecting hypocrisy, yet he puts all his faith in the protestation of love in ebullient phrases. He does not realize that such declamations cannot be expected to be sincere when he is losing his authority by renouncing his power. Thus blinded, he cannot reconcile himself to that bare and jejune fact and brushes aside Kent's explanation that they are not "empty-hearted whose low sounds / Reverb no hollowness" (1.1.146-47). While sonorous declamation is the strategy of hypocritical deception of the two of Lear's daughters, Gloucester's younger son Edmond's weapon of hypocrisy is an evil plot. Camouflaging Edgar's letter, Edmond deceives Gloucester whom he knows to be a "credulous father" (1.3.151), and who, consequently, allies himself with one son to punish the other whom he now believes to be parricidal in intention.

What Shakespeare presents as the psychological cause of parental failures, when it concerns the question of material power, is the intellectual folly of the fathers, which is the reason why they fall into such vicious pitfalls of the hypocritical children. A certain amount of impetuosity taints the judgments of both Lear and Gloucester. Goneril's observation that "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash" may not be credible (1.1.286), but the inadvertence with which Lear disinherits Cordelia, banishes Kent and parts with the King of France is not unmistakable. This inadvertence is a natural outcome when the parental expectation of love is frustrated. Though Gloucester understands that "The king falls from bias of nature, there's father against child", he too readily gives credence to Edmond's words, ascribing it also to heaven's foreboding, without peeping into the matter for himself: "bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction: there's son against father" (1.2.96-98). This impetuosity of the two fathers is generated also by a tragic deficiency of insight so that their love

for several of their children seems to be based on a very fickle and unstable ground – the fear of material loss, the loss of power of kingship and earldom. This lack of insight is produced when both the fathers fail to integrate their brain engendered intellect and their heart-generated emotion. There is no lack of love in them but their unfortunate decisions are taken when they decide to judge their children's love absolutely intellectually.

Had the two fathers taken into practical consideration their children's love, they would not have been content with mere words of the children and with their own peculiar reliance on the intellectual analysis of the situations, and thus would not have forfeited the family and lost their material power, though for a temporary period. When Lear decided to consider intellectually Cordelia's plainness of protestation as a proof that her love is too scanty, and when Gloucester regarded Edmond's hypocritical account of Edgar's supposed intrigue against his father as proof of Edgar's lack of filial love, both Lear and Gloucester were emotionally aroused but in a wrong direction, the direction towards hate, and this misdirected emotionalism of theirs could not naturally produce any positive and accurate emotional and intellectual assessment of the situations.

The psychological balance and imbalance of emotion and intellect both prove to be immensely consequential, whether in destroying the family and the kingdom or in rebuilding them. This association or dissociation of emotion and intellect plays its part not only in the fathers' case but also in the children's attitudes towards their fathers. The evil group of children demonstrates the hereditary traits of dissociating emotion and intellect and instead relying mistakenly, and preponderantly, on intellect in matters of the emotion of love. What they lack is filial love, not physical love which they exhibit excessively when they dislocate themselves from parental authority, as is evident in the evil love trio – Goneril, Regan, and Edmond. Their relentless suppression of filial love by judging intellectually that their fathers are not worthy of receiving it impels them to ignore their hearts and cherish material power and physical pleasures instead. This also deters them from realizing how evilly they have maltreated and vanquished their fathers.

Lear and Gloucester have the potentiality, and they later prove it, of reconciling emotion of parental love and intellect, and this trait of theirs is manifest in Cordelia and Edgar who always esteem a harmonious association of filial love and intellectual faculty. So, Cordelia must express this quality, however discordant it may sound in the love-trial scene, and continue to love Lear and struggle wholeheartedly to restore him to intellectual sanity. This is most vividly shown in her stoic encounter with the news of the deplorable degradation of Lear's psyche:

> All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
> Spring with my tears; be aidant and remediate
> In the good man's distress. (4.3.16-18)

Finding Gloucester venomed and enraged, Edgar cannot but flee, yet he later nurtures his father in distress and saves him from despair. He teaches his father that there should be a balance between emotion and intellect and that sorrows on earth are ineluctable but men must endure them and be ready for all possible consequences: "Ripeness is all" (5.3.11), and thus Shakespeare points to the universal and spiritual aspect of filial and parental bonds.

The Spiritual: Natural, Unnatural, Supernatural

Shakespeare integrates the family and the kingdom as well as the psyche and power in *King Lear*, but does not limit the parent-child relationship in the contexts of a family or a kingdom only. Instead, as a dramatist he takes every opportunity to impart a moral lesson on a far stronger plain by connecting the family and the kingdom with the natural and supernatural worlds, the universal context of moral concerns. To invigorate the moral lesson of family connections between the parents and the children, Shakespeare has extended the ethical domain of the play to a universal context. Universality does not remain fixed in the notion of the widest possible acceptability, but it encompasses everything, and to do so the playwright has from the beginning of the play refers to the physical and metaphysical universe whenever there is such an occasion. Thus, what Shakespeare presents as natural is not only related to what morality dictates universally but also what nature itself exemplifies through numerous instances. What is natural for a man to do or to be like is what is found in natural environment.

This duality of what is natural is a powerful strategy with which Shakespeare has delineated the different dimensions of relationship between parents and children. Though family and kingdom are extended to natural universe, and the psychological and material aspects of filial and parental connections are mostly delineated, it is the children's side that is most strongly indicated, and in this, what is unnatural is emphasized more than what is natural,

and it is so because this is what pertains to the tragedy. So, the unnatural means not only what is universally unacceptable from the ethical point of view, but also what goes against the common phenomena in the natural universe.

Thus, as filial love pales into insignificance and nullity before the domineering wrong-headed intellect, the evil group of children demonstrates what Lear calls "Monster ingratitude" (1.5.32). This ingratitude, Lear realizes, is most unkind when it is inflicted by one's own offspring:

> Ingratitude! Thou marble-hearted fiend,
> More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
> Than the sea-monster. (1.4.214-16)

"Parents' disappointment at their children failing to perform a filial duty is forcefully expressed" by Lear (Daniel, 2019, p. 2). Lear experiences how a daughter can turn against his father, as Goneril does, and he laments: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is / To have a thankless child" (1.4.243-44). Even physical pains are nothing in comparison to such mental agony as Lear experiences when he is repudiated and remains unsheltered in the storm:

> This tempest in my mind
> Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
> Save what beats there: filial ingratitude. (3.4.12-14)

However, what is unnatural, in the sense that it is against the laws of human nature, does not remain limited to human nature only, but is extended to the physical universe, i.e., the natural environment. Thus, Shakespeare provides some instances which show that aberrations and deviations occur in nature too, even as part of nature, precisely speaking the animal world. Shakespeare presents such instances in such a way that these natural phenomena seem morally unacceptable, and thus they can be easily regarded as unnatural. Lear's analogy comes to reflect what the fool has already predicted before him: "The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, / That it's had it head bit off by it young" (1.4.175-76). The filial ingratitude undergoes such evil changes that it becomes a real mortal threat. Still feeling the hurt from his own daughters and feeling in his psyche empathy for a madman, i. e., the disguised Edgar, Lear refers not only to cruelty and death but also to natural justice and nature itself through his use of the image of the pelican, as it was "proverbial for feeding its young with its own flesh and blood, and the young were proverbial for cruelty to their parents" (Halio, 2005, p. 187):

> Nothing could have subdued nature
> To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.
> Is it the fashion that discarded fathers
> Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?
> Judicious punishment: 'twas this flesh begot
> Those pelican daughters. (3.4.65-70)

In every such instance, which normally seems improbable though not unimaginable, the emphasis is on the relationship between parents and their children.

To show the importance of what is normal and thus natural, Shakespeare emphatically portrays what may prove to be abnormal and unnatural in family bond, and for this he exposes the depravity of the human children in greater details. Both Lear's and Gloucester's families are involved in this unnatural act, where some of their children go as far as seeking death of their fathers, in fact plotting to kill them in order to usurp the kingdom and enjoy material power. The greed for material gains blinds these children to such an extent that they forget the emotion of love, let alone filial duty, and indulge in unnatural acts. Goneril and Regan, after exposing their father to the storm because he "must needs taste his folly" (2.4.284), degenerate to such a level that they want him to be killed. Gloucester says to Kent, "His daughters seek his death" (3.4.147) and "I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him" (3.6.45). The haste with which Gloucester shifts Lear to safety gives ample credence to this intrigue. Edmond too wants his father murdered. Knowing that the punishment of treason may amount to death and seeing that Cornwall is inflamed to hear the report of treason, Edmond leaves his father, after falsely accusing him of treason, to the revengeful Duke who now plucks out his eyes. Because Gloucester rescued Lear, Regan wants that Gloucester be blinded completely as he wants to save the King from being blinded by his own daughters, whom he represents as having nonhuman attributes from the animal world:

> I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs. (3.7.55-57)

Regan even later declares a reward for Gloucester's death. This life-threatening attitude of the children towards their fathers points to the monstrosity or unnaturalness of their individual making.

Lack of filial love, recourse to hypocrisy, dissociation of heart and brain, and demonstration of life-threatening ingratitude are some serious psychological deformities of Goneril, Regan, and Edmond, and thus point to the unnaturalness of the human psyche in a familial context. Unnaturalness here means the state of being an exception to the law of nature, the law of harmonious parent-child relationship. Shakespeare presents "familial connections as natural; consequently, violations of love and loyalty within the family are called 'unnatural'" (Young, 2009, p. 70). Edmond, the illegitimate product of Gloucester's illicit relationship with Edmond's mother, is portrayed as unnatural as a consequence. Edmond's contemptuous observation that the position of the stars at the time of his parents' sexual intercourse should make him "rough and lecherous" is ironically true (1.2.114-15). Though Kent finds this issue of the illicit sex "so proper", Gloucester drily states that "the whoreson must be acknowledged" (1.1.14-20). Distracted by Edmond's venomous words, Gloucester, however, terms his legitimate son Edgar as "unnatural" and becomes anxious that "the bond [is] cracked 'twixt son and father" (1.2.95-96), and later decides to bequeath his property to Edmond, his "Loyal and natural boy" as he calls him (2.1.83). Illegitimacy, however, is not the cause why Lear calls Regan a "Degenerate bastard" (1.4.209), and calls Regan and Goneril "unnatural hags" (2.4.271). Lear's words to Regan, who after a provocative neglect of her father formally expresses her gladness at meeting him, demonstrate that the daughter's mother was, in fact, not an adulteress:

If thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulch'ring an adultress. (2.4. 122-24)

However, Lear cannot but question "his own wife's fidelity. Could such unnatural creatures be his natural daughters?" (Klevar, 1972).

Infuriated and embittered even in the love trial scene, Lear is completely unable to diagnose the cause of such unnaturalness of his two daughters who do not know the "offices of nature, bond of childhood" (2.4.171). When Lear later utters in despair: "Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?" (3.6.34-35), he is still seeking to explain the destruction of the filial bond by attributing the cause to human nature, i.e., the natural universe, and also to the supernatural, metaphysical universe where it seems to him uncertainty rules. Emotionally devastated and materially deprived, Lear has already taken his parental suffering to the spiritual realm when he first expresses his uncertainty about whether the gods are responsible for this:

You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age, wretched in both;
If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely. (2.4. 265-69)

However, Lear has already with a grief-stricken heart acknowledged the evil daughters as a fault in his own nature, his psycho-physical constitution, the unnaturalness in his own, and says to Regan:

thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter,
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine. (2.4.214-216)

Gloucester, on the other hand, attributes the reason for the filial ingratitude to the perversion in human nature when he refers to Edmond: "Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile, / That it doth hate what gets it" (3.4.129-30). However, the play's final reasoning about the unnaturalness in the human psyche comes from Kent when he, like Lear, ascribes this to the metaphysical universe, as in the Quarto version of the play:

The stars above us, govern our conditions,
Else one self mate and make could not beget
Such different issues. (4.2.31-33, p. 305)

Kent's belief, which ignores heredity, is one-sided whereas Lear sought to fathom the cause of the unnatural aspect of filial bond in both human nature as well as in the metaphysical realm. However, apart from Regan's and Goneril's unnatural acts, Lear's own unnatural dealing with Cordelia is to a considerable extent responsible for his own

"unnatural and bemadding sorrow" (3.1.09, p. 297). On an unjustifiable and irrational ground, he earlier pronounced his judgment on Cordelia, "I disclaim all my paternal care, Propinquity and property of blood", and said to her, "Better thou hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better", and wrongly called her "a wretch whom nature is ashamed almost to acknowledge hers" (1.1.228-29). It is thus evident that nature, according to Lear, is both human nature and the metaphysical universe, the latter he refers to as female, and also as just and invested with psychic power and capable of spiritual dealing.

Shakespeare shows what is unnatural and what therefore must be undone. And thus, poetic justice must be ensured to assert the restoration of the natural order or the order in nature, that is the natural world of humans and the supernatural, metaphysical universe; consequently, family harmony must be established, and in order to do so, justice must be meted out. The unnatural children must be punished, since "a society without justice and law would be monstrous and, in that sense, unnatural", and this is what "the play seems to confirm" (Cantor, 2008).

Shakespeare represents Lear's family as not distinct from his kingdom; however, more than this, he shows the family as innately connected with the supernatural universe. Such a connection helps the playwright show the moral considerations within a family as closely related to the supernatural universe, which in fact helps him to show that the psychological affairs in the human family in reality reflect the moral dictates of the spiritual universe. Because the material concerns mold the psychic activities of a family member, whether royal or not, both what is material and what is psychological become ultimately connected with what is spiritual. Thus, Shakespeare links up mind, matter, and morality from the beginning of the play. And this is why showing the spiritual universe and connecting it with the family and the kingdom is among the playwright's major concerns in *King Lear*.

To Lear the metaphysical universe becomes important since he can seek justice from it though, ironically, in the love trial scene he has shown his awareness of the supernatural world only after he receives his first shock in the play from his dearest young daughter. And though it is true that with "nature" he refers to human nature, the natural world and the supernatural world, he sometimes equates the supernatural world with the natural world itself, as he exclaims after Goneril refuses to shelter Lear along with his "hundred knights and squires" (1.4.196), his token of royal power: "Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, hear / Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend / To make this creature fruitful" (1.4.230-32). It is argued that Lear's address to the goddess is "closer to a personification of the orthodox Elizabethan conception of nature", which is Christian in spirit, since "God being the author of Nature, her voice is but his instrument" (Halio 2005, p.136). And it is also argued that Lear's curse on Goneril, "Into her womb convey sterility" (1.4.233), is very much like those of the Old Testament (Halio, p. 136). Lear wants that "the great gods" find out "their enemies now" (3.2.47-49), but considers himself less culpable: "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.57-58).

Lear suffers for his unnatural dealing with Cordelia and also for the unnatural treatment by Goneril and Regan, who in turn must suffer, which is more a punishment than suffering. This is the intricate pattern of heavenly justice Shakespeare presents where human beings, in this case, the fathers and the children, are employed as agents. This is what Albany predicted, and later he defines Goneril's and Regan's deaths as the "judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble" (5.3.205), and in the Quarto version of the play Albany says:

> If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
> Send quickly down to tame these vilde offences,
> It will come.
> Humanity must perforce prey on itself
> Like monsters of the deep. (4.2.15-19, p. 302)

Through Albany, Shakespeare has expressed the universal idea of heavenly justice, where the supernatural intervention in human affairs is inevitable, even though it may occasionally be delayed, in which case there is the possibility of human transgression, which Shakespeare links to the animal world, suggesting that humans, unlike the animals, are supposed to be just in recompense, not transgressive in retribution, even when necessity so demands since humans have the faculty of reason, the token of the human psyche. G. W. Knight observes, "This question of human justice is, indeed, part of the wider question: that of universal justice" (1949, p.193).

Lear links universal justice to the metaphysical world, as he suspects that the gods are stirring "these daughters' hearts / Against their father" (2.4.267-68). However, he also seeks natural justice through divine intervention and invokes heavenly retribution on his evil daughter Goneril, which should be in the form of

something unnatural: "Create her child of spleen, that it may live / And be a thwart disnatured torment to her" (1.4.230-238). Lear's execration of Goneril, "Th' untented woundings of a father's curse / Pierce every sense about thee" (1.4.255-56), is related to the psychological aspect of human existence. As Lear's curse comes true, Goneril forgets the bond of sisterhood for the sake of Edmond, whom Reagan desires too, and she poisons Regan to death before she herself commits suicide with a knife. "In the Edmond-Goneril-Regan group the philosophy of natural impulse and egotism has been revealed as self-consuming", observes L. C. Knights (1960, p. 107). But the supernatural intervention to meet out justice for the father and the daughters cannot be ignored. Lear's curse may have some effect on Goneril and Regan who persist vehemently in disregarding heart while malignantly insisting on their essentially flawed intellect and bodily pleasures; both of them die unredeemed.

Gloucester's prayer for divine intervention, "I shall see / The winged vengeance overtake such children" (3.7.64-65), applies not only to Regan and Goneril but also to his own son Edmond whose unnaturalness he can see, ironically, after being blinded. Edmond's hypocritical reflection, "the revenging gods / 'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend" (2.1.44-45), proves ironically true for him. Mortal retribution is meted out to Edmond by Gloucester's legitimate and loyal son Edgar, who shows how justice is done through a human agency where the metaphysical intervention takes into consideration both what is righteous and what is wrong, as he also refers to his father before the dying Edmond: "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us" (5.3.160-61). And as Edmond now learns to reconcile his emotion of filial love with his intellect, he realizes Edgar's meaning, "Th' hast spoken right; 'tis true" (5.3.163), and though he with Goneril signed the "note", their death warrant (5.3.28), he now wants to save the imprisoned king and his daughter from hanging "despite of mine own nature" (5.3.218).

Of Lear's three daughters, it is Goneril who barely speaks of gods, and it is because Shakespeare wants to show her as the most unnatural. Even Reagan mentions the metaphysical world as she utters, "O the blessed gods!" (2.4.161), when she fears a curse from Lear similar to that on Goneril, but that rare mention does not hide the fact that she too is unnatural. Cordelia, however, is seen as referring to the supernatural world of gods when she is nurturing her ill father: "O you kind gods, / Cure this great breach in his abused nature; / Th' untuned and jarring senses" (4.6.14-16), and she too, like Lear, speaks of human nature occasionally, as in this case of Lear's psychological condition. Edgar speaks of gods a few times, but always in reverence (4.1.12; 5.3.160), "the clearest gods, who make them honours / Of men's impossibilities" (4.5.73-74). However, to Edmond, the natural son of Gloucester, nature is a deity, to whom he asks for assistance in all his evil deeds: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound" (1.2.1-2). Edmond's conception of the supernatural world, unlike his brother Edgar's, is evil: "Now gods, stand up for bastards!" (1.2.21-22).

The Psychological in the Ascendancy

In meting out justice, Shakespeare does not give metaphysical intervention the most important role. It is the human agents that the supernatural world acts through, and it is also the human psyche where both the vices and the virtues work. Thus, the psychological aspect of crime and punishment, sin and suffering, is no less important. As the two fathers have intellectualized their parental love and as that intellectualization has been unsound and essentially flawed, they must be rectified through a course of emotional suffering that they incur upon themselves and that is inflicted by their unnatural children. And such rectification of the fathers becomes complete as they feel once again the sincere and warm love of their loyal and faithful children, and as they realize their error of judgment, their tragic error.

Compared to Lear's realization, Gloucester's is simple. Once physically blinded, Gloucester begins to see mentally and correctly: "O, my follies! Then Edgar was abused. / Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him" (3.7.90-91). However, desiring ultimate physical destruction, death, to annihilate the mental agony of compunction, Gloucester becomes absorbed in despair and becomes critical of the metaphysical world: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; / They kill us for their sport" (4.1.36-37). Later, saved and nurtured by the disguised Edgar through a manipulated miracle, Gloucester learns to endure physical torment and mental anguish caused by filial hypocrisy and savagery:

> Henceforth I'll bear
> Affliction till it do cry out itself
> 'Enough, enough', and die. (4.5.75-77)

His integration of emotion and intellect is ultimately complete when he accepts Edgar's consolation as true, which is as usual a product of the integration of heart and brain, as he says,

> Men must endure
> Their going hence even as their coming hither:
> Ripeness is all. (5.3.9-11)

And only then can Edgar reveal his true identity to his reformed father, who can now see the psychic man in the moral universe.

Like Gloucester, Lear also shows self-immolating attitude because the mental agony is unbearable, and invokes the tempestuous nature to "let fall / Your horrible pleasure" against "a head / So old and white as this" (3.2.17-23). He too, however, tries to dispel despair, but finds the human and the metaphysical agents working together to wreck his psyche. Thus, he calls the elements of nature "servile ministers, / That will with two pernicious daughters join" (3.2.20-21), and takes shelter in a hovel assisted by a faithful retinue. Lear's mental agony has already deteriorated when he begins to realize his folly of intellectualization of love, i.e., intellectual measurement of love without integrating love and judgment:

> O most small fault,
> How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
> Which, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature
> From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,
> And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!
> Beat at this gate that let thy folly in
> And thy dear judgement out. (1.4.221-227)

He realizes that his evil and hypocritical daughters "flattered" him "like a dog" (4.5.94-95) and regrets that he has given Cordelia's due rights to his "dog-hearted daughters", so "burning shame / Detains him from Cordelia" (4.2.43-45, p. 305-06). Lear says to her, "your sisters / Have, as I do remember, done me wrong. / You have some cause; they have not" (4.6.71-73); he also expresses his contrition:

> Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead. (4.6.43-45)

Lear expresses severe mental agony and extreme bodily pain, but above all, he alludes to his miscalculation about material power: "They told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof" (4.5.101).

The eldest of his daughters Lear has already termed the "marble-hearted fiend" (1.4.214), by which he emphasizes the fiendish nature of a human and stresses the moral, spiritual aspect of the human mind which is related to the supernatural universe. Through this phrase, Shakespeare shows the idea that since morality guides a human heart if a human loses morality, the mind loses its inherent goodness and the person turns, metaphorically speaking, into a marble, a meaningless matter, and more than that into something akin to an immoral, devilish supernatural being. However, Lear later admits before Cordelia, "I fear I am not in my perfect mind" (4.6.60), and moments before he will be last seen with Cordelia alive, he rejects her proposal of meeting the two evil daughters, and presents an all-encompassing vision with the truthful daughter, a vision where he merges the family with the kingdom as well as with the physical and the metaphysical universe:

> Come, let's away to prison.
> We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage
> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news, and we'll talk with them too –
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out -
> And take upon 's the mystery of things,
> As if we were God's spies (5.3.10-17)

Here Lear shows the connection between the psychological, material, and spiritual aspects of human life. However, and more importantly, this shows that Lear now puts the family first, neither the kingdom nor the spiritual world. To him now the bond between father and daughter is the highest reason for existence, everything else being on the periphery – court, nature, and metaphysical mystery. However, the vision of a happy father-daughter relationship, regenerated at last though in captivity, is represented as being in harmony with the existence of a normal working court and colorful nature, complete only with the metaphysical universe, the supernatural and the mystical, both integrated into the prospect of a happy family.

Recognition of his own folly has already moved Lear, whom Cordelia calls "this child-changed father" (4.6.17), to seek atonement in prayer and pardon: "Pray you now, forget / And forgive. I am old and foolish" (4.6.81-82). No longer does he want to suffer from any revengeful feeling for his malignant daughters. Instead, he wants to end his life in a state of alienation from all kinds of material concerns, which earlier caused him to make all the psychological blunders and suffer consequently in mind more than in body. Since he has gained the knowledge and ability to renounce the material considerations, he happily accepts his fate of an enforced confinement along with Cordelia. And when he says, "Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, / The gods themselves throw incense" (5.3.20-21), he is reintegrating the conception of the family with that of the metaphysical universe. The family becomes more important to Lear than the kingdom, and becomes endorsed by the metaphysical world, so much so that he refuses to bow down to any plot of separation from the daughter: "Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starved first" (5.3.25).

When Lear's suspicion comes true, in his rage he kills the hangman of Cordelia but cannot save his daughter, as becomes apparent at the close of the tragedy. The death of his beloved daughter gives him another psychological blow, this time more devastating, as hopes of a reintegrated family fade altogether. A strong psyche Lear now shows to the world, whom he terms as pitiless and unsympathetic; however, no less important is it that, at such a point of existence, he finds even the metaphysical world as unmoved and unpitying:

> Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones.
> Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so,
> That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever.
> I know when one is dead and when one lives.
> She's dead as earth. (5.3.231-35)

It is quite dramatic and ironic as well, that Lear can now demonstrate to the audience how important the human psyche is, for it is guided primarily by love and pity, the two emotions he lacked quite conspicuously at the start of the play. While emotions now have overtaken him, unlike those around him who urged him to show pity when he was disowning Cordelia in the love trial scene, what is no longer found to be responding to him in his direst emotional distress is the metaphysical universe, the pitying spiritual world that he often called to his aide after he began realizing his mistake. Now the psychological aspect of the human mind in the affairs of men, in the parent-child relationship, seems to him far more important than the spiritual world. The meaning of family lost, the metaphysical universe too now loses all its urgency, and thus Lear sees his beloved daughter Cordelia as merged with nature only ("dead as earth"), while he receives the news of his eldest daughters' deaths without any emotion at all, with a casual and meager response, "Ay, so I think", even after Kent's sorrowful portrayal of this tragic end, "All's cheerless, dark, and deadly" (5.3.264-66).

Remarkable it is that Lear learns to integrate reason with emotion, though to no avail, as is apparent in his frequent references to his ability to know whether one is dead or alive, even in his demand for a looking glass or a feather to examine if she is still breathing. The knowledge thereof or reason whatsoever cannot undo the lack of reason he showed at the beginning when he sadly lacked the emotion of love besides pity. Lear is now stressing the extent of his emotion again and again: Cordelia's life restored could "redeem all sorrows / That ever I have felt" (5.3.240-41). And as his psyche finds the loss too hard to bear, he curses the intrigue of the family and the court: "A plague upon you murderers, traitors all" (5.3.243). In his dying moments, Lear refers to the natural world, but no longer to the metaphysical universe: "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, / And thou no breath at all?" (5.3.280-81), but thereby he only distinguishes his daughter's existence, and thus his concept of human existence, from the natural world too. To him now only the family, the connection between a father and his daughter, matters, and thus the psychological aspect of this relationship has all the cogency: "Thou'lt come no more, / Never, never, never, never, never" (5.3.281-82). And though Lear is seen as aware, however unconsciously, of his surroundings,

i.e., the court and the kingdom, his last words before death reveal how he prioritizes, though at last, this family bond, this psychic connection with his daughter, more than anything else, whether the kingdom or the natural and supernatural worlds:

> Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.
> Do you see this? Look on her! Look, her lips.
> Look there, look there. (5.3.283-85)

Lear's dying words show a stark contrast with how Lear, at the beginning of the tragedy, conceptualized his family, connecting it with the natural and the supernatural worlds, when his daughter Cordelia refused to cater to his royal ego, his folly of falsely tying reason with emotion on the ground of material power. The need for moral justice or natural justice is fulfilled at last, though through the tragic deaths of Lear and all his three daughters. Thus, the physical and metaphysical universe is upheld but is required no longer. What remains important is the psyche of a human, as it is only there that the fundamental connection with the family members lies.

Conclusion

The material concerns of Lear and his eldest daughters as well as Gloucester and his elder son have been most important in determining the relationship between the fathers and the children. Both the fathers realize their errors of judgment and their psychological mistakes, and both integrate their reason with emotion at last. The spiritual universe with its moral justice has always been behind the moral and immoral conduct of the family members, though not in any active role and working through human agents. What is conceived as moral is represented as natural, embodied in the physical universe, and ordained by the metaphysical universe.

Shakespeare begins *King Lear* with the questions of power in a kingdom, entailed by issues of love and reason in a family. And his tragedy ends where it began, i.e., in the family, which is decimated and no longer tied to material powers. Through his protagonist, Lear as a father, king, and moral agent of the metaphysical universe, as well as through the other father and all their children, the playwright upholds the supremacy of a family, the need for a family bond, the filial connection, and parental responsibility. Ultimately, it is the human psyche that is emphasized, not the material concern or the supernatural world. The family proves to be more important than the kingdom and the physical and metaphysical universe. The psychological aspect of family relationships outweighs all material concerns and spiritual needs though it is the latter two that determine a man's psychic journey from ignorance to understanding, from suffering to realization, and from pride to sorrow.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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