

Interpreting the Cause of Tess' Tragedy: Dualism

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Abstract

Tess is widely recognized as the "best novel" of the 19th century by British realist novelist Thomas Hardy. The female protagonist Tess of the novel has also become an immortal artistic figure in the minds of readers. Tess in the novel was born into a poor peasant family, but has the blood of a declining aristocratic lineage. So she not only inherited the humble obedience, tenacious fighting spirit, and survival ability of her grandmother's family, but also had the self-esteem and arrogance from the declining aristocrats of her father's family, as well as the tendency of self destruction. This fact about bloodline is reflected in Tess, which is the duality of her personality. This article analyzes Tess' behavior and demeanor in the novel, more importantly her reactions and choice made to certain matters of significance, focusing on her contradictions in terms of the following aspects, that is, her self-esteem and inferiority complex, her pursuit of instinctual desires, and her construction of a fortress of religious ethics in her heart, her tenacious fighting spirits and weakness in mind. It not only interprets the stubborn and weak willed personality traits of life, but also explains the decisive role of personality in Tess' tragic fate.

Keywords

Duality; Contradiction; Tragedy.

1. Introduction

One characteristic of tragic characters' personalities is their duality, as acclaimed by Aristotle. Both Achilles in the Iliad and the famous Hamlet in Shakespeare's works demonstrate this duality without exception. And this duality also leads to Tess's tragic fate, causing her death at the end of the story. Hardy referred to Tess as a pure woman in the subtitle of the novel, nevertheless, according to social moral standards, Tess undoubtedly can not be defined as pure. She had an inappropriate sexual relationship with Alec before and after marriage with Claire. Hardy clearly presupposes a contradiction here. If life were compared to a game, readers would easily realize at the beginning of the novel that Tess was destined to be a failure.

Whether Tess is a pure woman or not, though important and deserving discussion and analysis, is not the concern of this essay. But Tess's contradictory personality is beyond doubt, and as evident. She is a descendant of a prestigious family, but comes from and born into a poor peasant family. She is inherently kind and never takes the initiative to cause harm to others, but in despair, she stabs Alec to death with a knife. She is driven by her instinctive desires to pursue her own happiness, but always remembers all the religious ethics that suppress human instincts. She constantly strives for self-improvement and is full of fighting spirit, but she occasionally thinks of her own death, and even thinks of suicide several times after her husband Claire expresses the message of breaking up with her. She is both the unpretentious "Tess Derby" and the aristocratic Miss "Theresa d'Urberville". These two qualities magically combine within Tess, bringing about various conflicts and contradictions in her personality.

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2. Dualism-Doubleness in Personality

Positive apperception cannot be separated from attitude. Attitude has a point when it can be both conscious and unconscious. Conscious is intentional, while unconscious is a natural response. When perceiving a new type of content, an already aggregated combination of content often focuses on qualities and elements that clearly belong to subjective content. Therefore, wherever you want to exclude anything irrelevant, selection and judgment are indispensable. And what is coherent and what is irrelevant should be judged by the combination of already gathered content. Whether this control point is conscious or unconscious, it will not have any impact on the choice of attitude, as choice has long existed autonomously within the attitude. However, it is necessary to distinguish between consciousness and unconsciousness, as these two attitudes - conscious and unconscious - are ubiquitous. That is to say, the content gathered by consciousness is completely different from the content gathered by unconsciousness, and we often see this dual phenomenon in psychological disorders.

There is a certain kinship between the concept of attitude and Wundt's(2015) concept of apperception. However, there are still some differences between the two, that is, apperception involves the process of connecting already aggregated content with newly perceived content, while attitude is solely related to subjectively aggregated content. It can also be considered that apperception is a bridge that connects aggregated content with new content, with an attitude towards the pier on one end of the river bank and a new content towards the pier on the other end. Attitude refers to expectations, and the role of expectations is selective and has directional significance. When a content with a strong emotional tone appears in the field of hallucinations of consciousness, a special psychological aggregation (perhaps along with other content) is formed, which corresponds precisely to a specific attitude. Its content prompts it to perceive all similar things, suppress all different things, and create a corresponding attitude. This autonomous phenomenon fundamentally leads to a one-sided orientation of consciousness. If psychological self adjustment or compensation cannot be used to correct consciousness and attitude, psychological balance will be completely lost. Therefore, in this sense, the duality of attitude is a normal phenomenon that only interferes with the one-sidedness of consciousness when it becomes excessive.

In Chinese culture, a subject is to possess goodness. The goodness is an innate product of human nature, as believed by Laozi (2014). This kind of goodness originates from the human primordial spirit (subconscious), manifested in the form of inaction without thinking, with the virtues of fairness, and justice as the main content. It is mainly characterized by human instinctive behavior. The reason why practitioners practice according to the principle of "keeping quiet and devout" is to reveal the "primordial spirit", so that the goodness of human nature can be revealed, and thus return to human innate nature - goodness. It is worth mentioning that one also has non-goodness, or vice, which is a product of human nature and is created by the harmony of heaven and earth. It is determined by human animalistic nature, and is manifested in the form of "doing without thinking". The main content is the immorality of

unfairness, and injustice, which is generated by human beings in a state of non natural thing, It is mainly characterized by human subjective behaviors. The reason why rulers targeting evil is to completely curb the non-goodness of gods and return them to the innate nature of human beings - goodness.

Both of the concepts of innate goodness and evil originated from the Confucian school in the late Warring States period, and has been passed down to this day. Until now, the debate between "nature is inherently good" and "nature is inherently evil" continues. However, it is the two schools of Buddhism and Taoism that clarify the right and wrong sides of "nature is inherently good" and "nature is inherently evil". The dual nature of human nature can only be revealed through the separate use of the "two senses" of their two families, namely, the use of the "original consciousness" by Buddhism or the use of the "original spirit" by Taoism, which reflects the "inherent goodness of human nature"; Buddhism uses "subjective consciousness" to act, or Taoism uses "ordinary gods" to take actions, reflecting the "evil nature", which gradually becomes clear in practice. And recognized by people. In Tess' case, she makes decisions and choices with her two mindsets, she is torn between the duality which puts her in struggle and in misery at the end.

3. Self Esteem, Pride, Vs Inferiority, Obedience

Tess has a distinct contradictory personal trait, which seems to be related to her special family background. She has a pair of parents with vastly different backgrounds. The father is a descendant of a declining aristocrat, while the mother is an ordinary working woman of a low social status. Tess was born into a poor family, but she was also of superior birth, a descendant of a noble family. On the one hand, she possesses the arrogance and self-esteem of a person of noble descent, on the other hand, she inherits qualities such as patience, obedience, and humility from her mother's side.

At the beginning of the novel, Tess's father was drunk the night before and couldn't get up early to drive to the market to sell the bee hives to a second dealer. Her mother suggested finding a young man who had a crush on Tess to carry out the task, but the proud Tess exclaimed, "Oh, that's not possible. I don't want this to happen even if it takes my life" (Hardy, 1997:24). Filled with self-esteem, she was too proud to ask for help from a man whom she did not have interests in. As a result, while traveling alone with her younger brother, Tess's carriage collided with another carriage, killing the only horse nicknamed "prince" in the family who was used to transport and sell goods. The small business at home originally relied mainly on this horse, but now that the horse is dead, the business is also over. The Tess family faced difficult times. Tess' mother suggested that Tess go and join a wealthy family named d'Urberville who lived near the hunting ground (it turned out that the family only bought d'Urberville's surname, but not Tess's real noble relative). Tess "has a lot of self-esteem, and if she wants to join relatives and friends to enjoy the autumn breeze, she will feel unhappy in her heart. (Hardy, 1997:30) But later Tess still went, out of a sense of pride and responsibility, Tess always felt that she had killed the horse, so she should do something to make up. And it was Tess's innate sense of pride and responsibility, inherited from aristocratic descendants, that pushed her into the abyss of tragedy. There, Tess met Alec, the playboy of the D'Urbervilles, who later defiled her and made her lose her virginity. However Despite of Alec's efforts to retain her, the proud Tess did not choose to stay by Alec's side, but angrily left the D'Urbervilles and returned to her hometown of Marlowe Village.

If readers read more of Tess's self-esteem and pride before she lost her virginity, then the loss of virginity undoubtedly magnified Tess' humble side of character. Even though the villagers of Marlowe Village did not know much about Tess's unfortunate experiences and gradually forgot them over time, Tess still felt uneasy in the village and decided to leave home to make a living

somewhere far away. Then she landed a job as a mild maid at Talbotes. There Tess met the man called Claire she loved the most in her life. In Tess' eyes, Claire was perfect, without any flaws, simply a perfect embodiment of everything good. She felt that she was never worthy of him, finding him to be too good for her. Although he did casually like her more than the other female companions, and although she knew she was born more agreeable, intelligent, and beautiful than them, she knew well that in terms of social customs or norms, she did not have the right to be loved by him. The girls who were average in appearance and he despised were much more "qualified than her". (Hardy, 1997:150) So Tess tried every means to evade and delay Angel's proposal, and after agreeing to Angel's proposal, hesitated whether to tell Angel about her tainted past. The entanglement of self-esteem and inferiority made Tess lose the opportunity to tell Angel everything, and on the night of her wedding, it was already too late for Tess to tell Angel about the past. This belatedness put her in trouble, after Claire found out the truth, that is, Tess' impurity. Besides, Claire also dislikes feeling being deceived. Afterwards, Claire left Tess for Brazil, and Tess made the wrong decisions again and again, missing out on opportunities for happiness with a mixture of inferiority and pride. Whether it was going to Angel's parents' house to ask for their forgiveness, or writing letters to Angel to confess and ask for help.

Alec and Angel were two important men in Tess's life, and together they sent her to the gallows. If Tess did not meet these two people, or only met one of them, then Tess's fate would be rewritten, and she was just an ordinary commoner woman, living an ordinary life like many of her companions. These two men respectively represent the paradoxical and contradictory personalities of pride and inferiority in Tess's personality. In front of Alec, Tess was proud, individualistic, intense, and irritable. She would beat Alec with a leather glove, as if her armored ancestors were possessed. In the end, she dared to act recklessly and used killing to seek justice for herself, punishing Alec in the most brutal way. These all demonstrate her noble dignity and personality. But in another man Angel, what we see is another Tess, who is gentle and humble. In front of Tess, Angel was a divine existence, Tess was absolutely obedient to his commands, treating every word of him as truth. For him, Tess can sacrifice anything. In front of Angel, Tess had completely lost her intensity and pride in front of Alec, and in the words written by Eileen Chang behind the photo she gave to Hu Lancheng, it was "as low as the dust" (Hu Lancheng, 2003:68).

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4. Instinctive Desire Vs Religious Ethics

Although Tess came from a poor background, she was in the most precious period of a pure and innocent girl in life. Like other girls, she had an instinctive desire to pursue happiness. However, as the eldest daughter in the family, she occasionally withdrew from this instinctive joy and returned to the cruel reality. At the village party, she could have played even later, but she wanted to know what was wrong with her father, who was drunk in the afternoon and seemed out of sorts, so I returned home early. The only source of support at home was an old horse named 'Prince', who was hit and killed. Driven by her inner sense of responsibility, Tess, despite being very contemptuous of her mother's vain attempt to marry her out, ultimately complied with her mother's wishes because she longed for this action to compensate for the family's

misfortunes. It was really driven by Tess's sense of guilty and responsibility that she gave up her desire to become a teacher and forced herself to obey her parents' demands to become a chicken worker in the D'Urbervilles. From then on, her life was full of thorns and hardships.

The novel repeatedly mentions that although Tess is still in her innocent teenage years, she still exudes a hint of childishness, unaware of everything and touching, "but there is no lack of the charm of a young woman" (Hardy, 1997:10). Her robust appearance and plump physique make her "have the charm of a young woman", even though she is only a young girl. (Hardy, 1997:38) It is precisely this mysterious and contradictory trait in Tess that makes Alec fall in love uncontrollably and maddly. During the two encounters with Alec, Tess was deeply controlled by her instincts, and the woman's pursuit of instinctual desires was evident in her. And this instinctive desire often makes Tess confused and unaware. Alec picked some roses for Tess and asked her to stick them in her chest. She was absent mindedly obedient and did not refuse Alec's seduction. Due to her inner sense of responsibility, Tess couldn't resist her parents' persuasion. On her second trip to the D'Urbervilles, Tess unconsciously hugged Alec's waist and gave him a half hearted kiss. Tess did not strictly stop and rebuked Alec's obvious deviant behaviors, which led to Alec's repeated and even more severe violations of Tess, forcing her step by step into the abyss of fate's pain. Lost in a daze, Alec finally raped her, and Tess lost her virginity to Alec.

On the night of being deprived of her virginity, Tess was drowsy and therefore unconsciously allowed Alec to lead her towards the depths of the jungle. She also leaned against Alec in a daze. When Alec reached out to embrace her, Tess did not show resistance, and even entered a dream like world without any precautions, allowing Alec to take advantage of it. From the above, readers can see that Tess's defilement and loss of chastity were not the fault of Alec alone. Tess' dreamlike unconsciousness at various critical moments provided Alec with an excellent opportunity. And all of this is due to Tess' nature and dual personal traits. "As far as her nature is concerned, she does not understand any social norms" (Hardy, 1997:76), and the so-called nature also includes human desires and needs. Alec took advantage of Tess' helplessness and ruthlessly took advantage of her. Tess let him alone, but later was deceived by his elegant demeanor and temporarily obeyed him.

If the loss of chastity happens to other women, it may not necessarily be a tragedy. As Tess's mother said, anyone could have made the man who plundered chastity marry him if he were another woman. But unfortunately, Tess couldn't do it. Because Tess is unique. Tess herself admitted, 'Maybe other women do, but I don't.'. (Hardy, 1997:79) Tess' uniqueness lies in her contradictions. Although she made mistakes by following her inner instincts for a moment, she did not let this inner desire control her. Instead, she immediately woke up and fell into a moral and ethical web she had woven, a world that Tess had fabricated with fragmented customs, and wrapped herself in it. Tess, who had lost her virginity, felt that she was no longer innocent and guilty, and even vowed not to marry any man again.

If Tess freezes her heart from now on, extinguishes all her desires for men, and becomes chaste from then on, it would be a good thing for her. But unfortunately, she met Angel, and what was even worse was that Angel was also a contradictory individual. Tess fell hopelessly in love with Angel. The journey from first meeting to marrying Angel was a torment of inner contradictions and struggles for Tess. Tess's contradictory personality was centrally reflected in this process. From time to time, she was attracted to Angel as if her soul were out of her body (Hardy, 1997:130), approached Angel, and occasionally reminded herself to stay away from Angel, 'spiritual forgetting coexists with rational memory'. Tess, who was so struggling and tormented in her heart, encountered Angel, who had a dual personality. It was destined to be a tragedy, and Angel's capriciousness, inconsistent words, actions, and behavior buried their happiness. One walked onto the gallows, while the other identified himself as the perpetrator and carried the charge for life.

5. Persistent Fighting Spirit Vs Weakness in Willpower

Hardy hopes that the characters in his novels have indomitable personalities, they can fight against fate, and ultimately adapt to their environment. Tess undoubtedly possesses this trait, inheriting the tenacious fighting spirit and positive and optimistic outlook on life from her mother's bloodline. She also has the power from the "unyielding grandmother's family" (Hardy, 1997:103), firmly believing that there always is and will be hope in life. After repeatedly being teased by fate and setbacks in life, she keeps moving forward, repeatedly getting up from where she fell and continuing to live unyieldingly. Her various attempts to change her life all prove that she is a woman with tenacious fighting spirit.

The first major blow Tess suffered in life was when their only old horse, the 'Prince', was killed. Tess felt that she had caused her family to sink into the quagmire, but instead of blaming herself all day, she "remained silent, constantly pondering how she could save everyone" (Hardy, 1997:30). Then Tess was defiled by Alec, deprived of her virginity, and became pregnant with a child. Tess, who returned to her hometown, was depressed and trapped in a cage of anxiousness of ethics and morality. She was ashamed to see people and only had the courage to go out at night. Later, the child, who was only a few days old, died again, but Tess slowly cleared her mind, freed herself from temporary oppression, and regained hope for life. Step by step, she move from the Egdon Wilderness to her new life destination, the Talbotus Dairy Farm. There she met the beloved Angel of her life and married him. But because on her wedding night, she told Angel about her previous misfortunes and was then abandoned by Angel. Angel went to distant Brazil, and Tess, who was left alone, went through various hardships in life. However, she always lived with a tenacious will, believing that she "still has perfect hands to maintain her food and clothing". (Hardy, 1997:290) She struggled hard just to survive.

On the other hand, there is also a mixed flaw in Tess's declining nobility, which is also her personality flaw - humility and obedience, weak willpower, and even self destruction. At many critical moments that determine Tess's fate, she often exhibits weak willpower. For example, when her mother asked her to visit relatives at the d'Urberville house, she first refused and later giving in to her mother's continous push, Tess eventually obeyed her mother's orders. The various flatteries and malicious approaches towards Alec were also unbearable, and in the end, they were half done . After Angel left England for Brazil, Tess met Alex again at her workplace, unable to resist his temptation and persuasion, and more importantly his offer to a promise of well off life. Coupled with the hardships of life, Tess agreed to become Alex's lover. All of this indicates the weakness of Tess's will, and it is precisely because of her weak will that she approaches Alec time and time again, and Alec's involvement with Tess signifies tragedy.

Another aspect of Tess' personal trait, that is incompatible with her tenacious fighting spirit is her self-destructive personality weakness. Although this characteristic is not clearly reflected in the first half of the novel, readers can still easily find clues, such as Tess' thinking of "the day she died" (Hardy, 1997:97), and then in the second half of the novel, Tess' self destructive personality weakness is clearly exposed. When Tess told her husband Angel about her past of being raped by Alec, Angel despised her. Tess first thought of throwing herself into the river and was dissuaded by Angel. Later, she wanted to commit suicide under the mistletoe with the rope used to tie the box, but considering Angel's reputation, she then gave up. During Angel's sleep walking, Tess, knowing that her husband was likely to drown himself, still allowed him to embrace her and cross the tumultuous river. At that time, Tess even had an impulse to sway and sink into the deep water rapids with her husband, saying, "She is not in her own life, as for Claire - he has no right to be control.". (Hardy, 1997:259) And on the last night of running away from their hometown to London with Angel, Tess even sacrificed herself like a lamb and slept on the altar. Even though Angel had reminded her that sleeping there was not safe, Tess felt warm and comfortable there and didn't want to move on. The next morning, at this right place,

Tess, who had awakened from the altar, was taken to the execution ground by law enforcement officers. It is clear that Tess' insistence of staying behind the rocks and her refusal to keep running brought Tess' life to the end.

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6. Conclusion

The female characters in Hardy's works all have distinct personalities that are unforgettable and enduring. In "Tess", Hardy portrays Tess, the protagonist, as a plump female figure. Tess possesses various beautiful qualities of a rural girl. She is beautiful, kind, intelligent, and courageous, able to endure the hardships and difficulties brought by life, and has a sense of responsibility. As the eldest daughter of the family, she has the courage to take on the responsibility of the family's livelihood and has a sense of self-esteem. She is exceptionally intelligent, able to understand the profound truths which Angel told her, and often makes philosophical reflections on her own life and makes philosophical interpretations of matters regarding life and death. Readers can easily find the various virtues possessed by women in her age, but at the end of the story, she was hanged on the gallows and headed towards a dead end. Looking back at Tess's personal traits, it is easy to discover another psychological characteristic of her that goes against the various virtues mentioned earlier in this essay - Tess' inferior complex, blind obedience, weak willpower, bowing to so-called ethics, and even self destruction. And it was precisely her contradictory personal traits, that is duality in her personal features that made Tess lose in the game of life, and end tragically in the story. Tess failed as a victim of her fate.

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