

Hamlets sanity essay



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Hamlet's Sanity Is Hamlet insane? That is the question. Literary scholars have debated this question for more than 400 years. Throughout the play "Hamlet," by William Shakespeare, there are questions of whether Hamlet is sane or not. In general there two types of theories about him, one is that he suffers from some sort of malady, either insanity or neurosis. Then there are those who believe Hamlet is a genius and a hero. A character who was put through an extreme test and triumphed over his moral problem.

In the Article "Hamlet's Precarious Emotional Balance," by Theodore Lidz, he states that although he is clever, he still doubts himself. In the article "Madness," by P. J Aldus, he states that hamlet suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. Hamlet was definitely a genius and a moral man. He does struggle with the decision to avenge his father's death. He is so obsessed with his father's murder that he over reacts to and rejects the people around him, giving reason to suspect his insanity. In the end Hamlet does get revenge for his father's death, thus winning a very spiritual victory in the face of death.

In Aldus' article, "Madness," he states that Hamlet is suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. He says that Hamlet is in a "paranoid state,"(Aldus 4). He says that Hamlet is "most often in a state of suspicion; he is surrounded by spies who intend to harm him even to kill him, and therefore he must spy on everyone and seek to kill," (Aldus 4). Aldus says that Hamlet's "paranoid quality is locked to the arrogance, which is often violent, always potentially. He is also obsessed by the compulsive power of sex," (Aldus 4). First Hamlet is never violent, he only time he acts violent is in the end when he fights Laertes, which he thinks is just for fun. Then when he kills Claudius, after

everyone knows that Claudius is a murderer. Hamlet never has sex in this play. He vows to forget about everything, even Ophelia, to avenge his father's death. Aldus also says that all the "schizophrenic's enemies--the spies, the hunters, the ever present threatening killers--are extensions of his own distorted dream," (Aldus 5). Hamlet didn't dream any enemies up. He knew when Claudius was trying to have him killed.

He outsmarted Claudius when he sent him to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, only to be killed. Hamlet figured out his plan. He didn't dream up where Laertes wanted to kill Hamlet. Claudius set that up. Hamlet didn't make up anything; everything was brought upon him by Claudius. In Theodore Lidz article "Hamlet's Precarious Emotional Balance," he knows that Hamlet is faking his insanity. He says that Hamlet is becoming unstable, "Claudius is still alive and Hamlet's emotional balance has become precarious," (Lidz 1).

Hamlet is so torn about killing Claudius, he knows that it is wrong, "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, /That I was ever born to set it right," (1. 5. 189-190). He wants to make things right, but he does not know how to do so. Lidz says that Hamlet "has become a tormented soul struggling to survive in a world has lots its meaning to him, and scarcely cares if he survives or not," (Lidz 3). Hamlet is still struggling with the murder of his father who was killed by his uncle and now married to his mother. Of course Hamlet is going to feel like this, but this does make him insane.

Lidz says that Hamlet "conceives a way out of uncertainty, a way to make certain that he has not, because of melancholy, simply hallucinated the

ghost's revelations or been tricked by an evil spirit. "(5). He puts on a play to gain proof that Claudius is guilty of murder, " The play's the thing/wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (2. 2. 539-540). This proves that Hamlet is a very smart man. He knows that once Claudius sees the play his reactions will show that he is guilty of killing his father. Lidz says that Hamlet is suicidal. Hamlet does speak of suicide, To die: to sleep:

No more; and by sleep to say we end
The heart ache and the thousand
natural shocks That flesh is heir to, ' tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. (3. 1. 60-64) Here he again fights a moral battle with himself. He has made a promise to the ghost to avenge his death but knows that is wrong and it could be he who goes to hell. His thoughts of suicide does not make him out to be insane, just confused. If Hamlet chooses to avenge his father's death, he could go to hell. If he does not avenge his death, he could go to heaven, dishonoring his father's command. Both authors make Hamlet out to be insane.

Aldus' is saying that Hamlet's action are caused by schizophrenia. Where Lidz is saying that Hamlet is driving himself insane. However Hamlet is not insane at all. He is very depressed because of his father's death and his mother's hasty marriage to Claudius. Besides being depressed, he is acting like a madman to conceal his motive of revenge for his father's murder. After Hamlet gets the visit from the Ghost, he asks Horatio and Marcellus, who were witnesses to seeing the ghost, to swear they will not tell the ghosts secret, " Never make known what you have seen to-night" (1. . 144). These people give credibility to the ghost's existence. If Hamlet was the only one who saw the ghost, then we could assume that he was mad. Another

important part of Hamlet's sanity is how he patiently devises a plan to prepare for his revenge. He asks actors to perform a certain play called Mouse-Trap. In a certain scene it will resemble the murder of King Hamlet. His mounting of the play with-in the play is another well laid out plan to trap Claudius into admitting guilt. When the play brings him concrete proof, he careful not to take his revenge at the wrong moment.

He could easily kill Claudius while he is praying, but restrains himself insuring that there is no chance of him entering heaven. Although Hamlet's patience can be seen as an example of procrastination, it can also be seen as a sign of rationality. When Claudius realizes through the play within the play that Hamlet knows the truth about his father's death, he immediately sends him away to England. The piece of evidence demonstrating Claudius' knowledge of Hamlet's sanity is the fact that he feels threatened enough by Hamlet to order him killed by the king of England:

The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England; For like the hectic in my blood he rages, And thou must cure me: till I know ' tis done, Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne're begun. (4. 3. 61-64) Hamlet figures out Claudius' plan to have him killed. He outsmarts him by switching the letters to the king of England and has Rosencrantz and Guildenstern killed instead. This shows that Hamlet is perfectly capable of action, as well as rational thoughts. In the scene in his mother's bedroom, Hamlet tells Gertrude that his insanity is assumed: It is not madness That I have utt' red: bring me to the test,

And I the matter will re-word, which madness Would gambol from. (3. 4. 142-145). Even without his confirmation the queen has seen through his act.

While Hamlet is reprimanding her, she is so upset that she describes his words as “daggers” (3. 4. 96), and claims, “Thou hast cleft my heart in twain” (3. 4. 157). The words of a madman could not have penetrated her soul to such an extent. The queen takes every word Hamlet says to her seriously, proving she respects him and believes his mind to be sound. Furthermore she believes Hamlet’s confession of sanity immediately.

She does not question him at all instead promises to keep it her secret, “Be thou assur’d, if words be made of breath/And breath of life, I have no life to breath/What thou hast said to me,”(3. 4. 198-200). Throughout the play, Hamlet’s soliloquies reveal his inner most thoughts, which are completely rational. In one speech, Hamlet criticizes himself for not having yet taken action to avenge his father’s murder: Why, what an ass I am! This is most brave That I, son of a dear father murder’d, Prompt to my revenge by heaven and hell, Most, like a whore, unpack my heart with words. (2. 2. 517-520) Hamlet calls himself a “dull and muddy-mettled rascal” (2. 2. 500), a villain and a coward, but when he realizes that his anger does not achieve anything other than the unpacking of his heart, he stops. These are not thoughts of a madman, his emotions are real and his thoughts are of a rational man. Even when he contemplates suicide in the “To be, or not to be,” soliloquy, he reasons himself out of it through a very sane consideration of the dangers of an unknown afterlife, “And thus the native hue of resolution/Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” (3. . 84-85). This is a very sane remark. Through all Hamlets’ struggles, in the end he does kill Claudius, after Gertrude and Laertes die. Now, Hamlet has avenged his father’s death but to do so he had to die. Though Hamlet does die, he wins

the struggle and finds peace. So is Hamlet mad? If all the evidence is considered, Hamlet is way too smart to be mad. Although Hamlet was full of grief for his father and anger towards his uncle and mother, it was not enough to drive him into madness. Hamlet's thoughtful, calculating personality was not prone to rash acts.

Therefore he could not have been insane. Work Cited Shakespeare, William.

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