

Analysis on hamlet's to be or not to be

Experience, Meaning of Life



Hamlet Commentary This soliloquy, spoken by Hamlet in Act III, scene I, is the passage I choose for my commentary. Hamlet reveals the problem of whether to commit suicide as a question of "To be, or not to be," meaning, to live or not to live. He debates the consequences of both living and dying. Does it show more strength to struggle through life, "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," without too much distortion or action on one's part, rather than for one to try to stop their suffering by ending their life? He compares death to sleep and the end to suffering and pain it might bring, "The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to." In this metaphor, he decides that suicide is a desirable course of action, "a consummation / Devoutly to be wished." Meaning for the thought of the ending of suffering and pain to be worshipped religiously, but that in that course of thinking, it must also lead to the thoughts of afterlife, Hamlet immediately realizes this, and he alters his metaphor of sleep to include dreaming; he says that the dreams that may come in the sleep of death are daunting, that they "must give us pause." Stopping to the thought of the consequences suicide has in the afterlife. He then decides that the unsure nature of the afterlife is essentially what keeps humans from committing suicide to end the pain of life. He lists a large amount of bad experiences; moving from lovesickness, to hard work, to political oppression, and asks who would choose to bear that burden and pain if he could bring himself peace with a knife (Killing one's self), "when he himself might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin?" He answers himself again, saying no one would choose to live, except that "the dread of something after death" makes people submit to the suffering of their lives rather than go to another state of

existence which might be even more miserable. Choosing to suffer through one thing, in fear that if you move on, you would find something worse, the fear of the afterlife, Hamlet decides, leads to a sense of right and wrong that makes action impossible: “ conscience does make cowards of us all . . . thus the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought. ”

This speech connects many of the play’s main themes, including the idea of suicide and death, the difficulty of knowing the truth, and the connection between thought and action. This speech is also important for what it reveals about the quality of Hamlet’s mind. His deeply passionate nature is only added in beauty by his intellect, which works to find a solution to his misery. He had turned to religion and found it inadequate unhelpful, and here, he turns to a logical inquiry and thought and finds it equally frustrating.