

# Analysis of hamlet's morality

Literature, British Literature



Hamlet is one of the greatest dramatic characters created. Throughout the play, we acknowledge the complexity of his persona. Even without Shakespeare providing an elaborated description of Hamlet's characteristics, we instantly perceive him as contradictory. At the beginning of the play, Hamlet is presented to us as a cautious and courteous man; however, due to the negative circumstances he has to face, we see how his moral character becomes reckless and uncivil. Shakespeare uses antithesis, allusion, and irony, to show the "demoralization" of Hamlet's character.

Throughout the play, Hamlet is overwhelmed by a feeling of revenge but hesitates in the murder of Claudius due to his fear of making the wrong decision. Hamlet is held back by his consideration of religious morals and beliefs.

This is clearly shown right after Hamlet stages the play. "Claudius " rises" in guilty startlement at The Mousetrap's revelations" (Essays on Values in Literature). After this point, Hamlet is fairly certain that Claudius is guilty, and comes across Claudius in the chapel.

Hamlet is given the perfect opportunity to kill Claudius, but he decides that he doesn't want to kill him while he is praying. Hamlet feels that if he murdered him during prayer, he would dishonor his father by sending Claudius to heaven. Instead, Hamlet wants to kill him while he is doing something horrific, ensuring Claudius goes to hell, where Hamlet feels he deserves to go. Hamlet says: Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;

and now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven,  
and so am I revenged. That would be scann'd:

A villain kills my father; and for that,  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.

...No.

Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.

(3. 3. 77-83, 93)

A very significant component to Hamlet's loss of morality is his decision to act insanity. It is a major risk he is willing to take in order to accomplish his father's request. Hamlet realizes this is the only way he will be able to investigate his father's death without being perceived as a threat. However, for this plan to work he has to unchain a group of new personality traits that contribute to the deterioration of his morality. Hamlet puts into practice his new role with Ophelia, whom along with her father, believes his madness is a result of his rejection of her.

This display takes Ophelia's father Polonius to Claudius, and together they set a plan to spy on Hamlet, using Ophelia as the lure. Nevertheless, Hamlet is a clever man, and rapidly finds out what is happening. This is a devastating point in Hamlet's life as he comes to the conclusion that he has lost everything he once loved. The terrible realization that his last source of hope is now lost takes Hamlet to a new stage. The last sense of respect he had towards the people around him is now gone. Hamlet starts to exceed his rely on his "madness" to tell the truth about his thoughts. First to Polonius: Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are

wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.(2. 2. 214-222)

And later to Ophelia and his mother:  
O God, your only jig-maker.

What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.(3. 2. 130-135)

Hamlet exhibits a new change in attitude after he returns from his uncompleted trip to England. He starts to feel a consuming anger against Claudius for his father's death. He recognizes that his indecisiveness has been preventing him from action. Hamlet makes it clear that he wants to end his indecisiveness when he claims, " O, from this time forth/ my thoughts be bloody ore be nothing worth" (4. 4. 68-69) With this proclamation, Hamlet shows his deep desire to focus on the death of his uncle. This change makes Hamlet able to seek full revenge for his father's death no matter the consequences. Hamlet is then completely transformed into a man that acts out of pure revenge. This is clearly demonstrated when Hamlet thinks Claudius is spying on him again and kills Polonius by accident. At this moment, it is evident that this is not the same cautious man we met before.

Eventually, Hamlet's new characteristics lead him to the achievement of his main and primary goal. In this play, " the moral component is there in

Hamlet's thinking" (Corruption in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, 70). His use of reason was his only tie to morality, and once this connection was broken, so was his moral character. However, Shakespeare plays with the idea of "what circumstances might justify an individual taking the law into his own hands" (Corruption in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, 69); leaving us with the question of whether Hamlet had lost his morality, or he was the only moral man in an immoral world. The complexity and contradictions expressed in this play and in Hamlet's character make this work exceptional.

#### Works Cited

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