

Intelligence evolution and being a king

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Shakespeare's tragedy Hamlet is actually a conglomeration of many subtragedies. One of these smaller tragedies within the story of Hamlet is the mental evolution of Prince Hamlet, to the point where he acted king-like and would have made a great king. Throughout the story there are many leadership qualities seen in the character of Hamlet that give the reader (or audience) the impression that he would be a great king. Likewise, there are many qualities seen in Hamlet that give the reader the impression that he would not have made a great king, until the end of the story.

When we first meet Hamlet in Act 1 scene ii, he is downhearted, distraught, and depressed, not so much over his father's death, but over his mother's remarriage so quickly to his Uncle Claudius, who is now the King of Denmark. In this scene, Hamlet seems to have the mentality of an adolescent boy who is not getting his way. When Claudius forbids him to go back to France, he reluctantly agrees. When he is left alone, he immediately begins a violently emotional speech in which he says that he wishes he were dead, complains that suicide is a sin, describes the world as useless and disgusting. He then comes to the cause: his father's death. His father, compared to Claudius, was like a god next to something half man and half beast. His mother adored her husband, but in a little over a month after his death she has married her husband's brother whom Hamlet describes as, "no more like my father than I to Hercules." As you can see, he is not very king-like at the moment. Yet later in the scene, when Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo come to Hamlet to tell him about the ghost they have seen, Hamlet's attitude changes drastically. He is now poised, alert, articulate, and prepared for action which is reflected in many of his lines, "If it assume my noble father's person, I'll

speak to it, though hell itself should gape and bid me hold my peace.” This could be viewed as the beginning of Hamlet’s transformation.

In Act 1 scene iv, Hamlet sees the ghost for the first time, who beckons Hamlet to come with him. Hamlet’s friends don’t want him to go off with the ghost, because they are afraid of what it might do. But Hamlet is determined to go. His courage and resoluteness are signs of a king, but the reasons for his courage are still childish, “ Why, what should be the fear? I do not set my life at a pin’s fee.” Hamlet believes his life to be worthless and that going off with the king would not ruin his life any further.

Once the ghost tells Hamlet about how his father died, Hamlet swears to seek revenge. Hamlet is not a monster, he doesn’t immediately go and kill Claudius. Instead, he wants to wait and have solid evidence that Claudius really did murder his father. This again illustrates Hamlet becoming king-like. He’s determined, and he’s open-minded. Another illustration of Hamlet’s open-mindedness in this moment is when he tells Horatio, “ There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” Horatio is a scholar who does everything “ by the books.” But Hamlet knows that there are things in the world that go beyond factual, scientific explanation.

In Act 3 scene i, Hamlet recites the well-known soliloquy “ To be or not to be that is the question...” This speech concerns Hamlet contemplating suicide. He admits that he is a coward because he is scared of death, or what lies beyond death, “ Ay, there’s the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come...” All of this, Hamlet’s contemplation of suicide, his whining over

his troubled life, and his cowardice concerning death, are all signs that Hamlet is not yet ready to be a king.

In Act 3 scene iii, after Hamlet is sure that Claudius is guilty of his father's death, Hamlet is greeted with the opportunity to kill Claudius, and obtain the vengeance he has been seeking. But Hamlet sees that Claudius is praying when he comes in, so Hamlet decides that he will wait, because if he kills Claudius now, Claudius will go to heaven. Thus, due to Hamlet's arrogance and his need to play God (he wants to send Claudius to hell), he misses the perfect chance to do "his duty" given to him by the ghost. He is still not acting like a king.

In Act 4, scene iv, Hamlet has his last soliloquy during which he resolves upon bloody action. In this scene, Hamlet, who has infinite justification for his action, is shamed by Fortinbras' willingness to sacrifice twenty thousand men for a plot of land not large enough to bury them. "O, from this time forth," he concludes, "My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!" In this final soliloquy the reader sees the same reasoning side of Hamlet that you saw in his "To be, or not to be" speech. Yet a change has occurred. The traumatic events that have led to his being shipped off to England have awakened in Hamlet the realization that there is no escape from his destiny. He prepares to confront his fate with a full knowledge of what it entails. At this point, the reader can feel that a decision has been made. At some point he must act. This last view of Hamlet, decisive and at peace with himself, is not only a way of foreshadowing the violence that is soon to come, but a major illustration of Hamlet's thoughts becoming king-like.

In the final scene of Hamlet, we fully see Hamlet becoming king-like in his thoughts and actions, and it is revealed through his language. When Hamlet is talking with Horatio before the fencing match begins, Horatio says that he will tell everyone that Hamlet is not fit to fight and that the match must be called off, to which Hamlet replies, “ Not a whit. We defy augury.” He’s saying that people oppose prophecies or divine natures. Hamlet is saying that one must follow their own heart. He uses the word “ We,” clearly showing that he is acting like a king and keeping in mind not only himself, but also the people of Denmark. After the fighting and the bloodbath is over, Hamlet asks Horatio to tell his story (because he knows Horatio is honest) and he names Fortinbras his heir (because he knows Fortinbras is a good ruler and will take good care of Denmark and the people).

In Fortinbras’ last lines of the play, he says, “ Let four captains bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage, for he was likely, had he been put on, to have proved most royal.” The real tragedy of Hamlet is evidently clear: that Hamlet would have made a great king in the end, if he had not come to such an untimely end. The reader/audience can observe Hamlet’s evolution throughout the play, from a depressed and angered child, to a loving, loyal king.