

Hamlet's own
personal views on
divinity change
drastically throughout
the play



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He has an incessant struggle going on within his mind that is trying to determine which plays a more powerful role in his life; his own free will, or fate. Up until act 5 scene 2, I see him having a little bit more "faith" in his own cunning, but it is at that point in the story that he utters this statement to Horatio, "Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting that would not let me sleep. Methought I lay worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly- and praised be rashness for it; let s know, our indiscretion sometime serves us well when our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will-" (5. 2. 5-11).

Speaking this remark shows that Hamlet's mind has been plagued by perplexity brought on by his own hesitation, Christian ideals, appearance versus reality, and Claudius's good "fortune". But it also shows that he has turned his life over to fate, and the remainder of it will no longer be based on his own thoughts or free will. But what he is unaware of is that he is ignorant to the act that the more he thinks he is manipulating fate, or controlling his own destiny, he is simply playing into fate's demented hands. Even though it seems that from Hamlet's words he believes he can decide the happenings in his own life, there is foreshadowing in act 3 scene 2 which states differently. In the play performed by the players, the actor who plays the king says, ".

.. ur wills and fates do so contrary run that our devices still are overthrown; our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own. "(3. 2. 223-225).

I interpreted that statement to mean that a person's will and fate may run in opposite directions, and as strong as that person may think their will is, the

fate will still prevail, and the result will be that which is desired by fate, and all they will have left of their will is a memory. I found this statement to be directly related to Hamlet's predicament. His desire, during the entire play, is to avenge his father's murder. However, no matter what precautions he takes, or schemes he devises, he is still unable to carry out the deed. The second part of that statement, dealing with strong will, relates to Hamlet's soliloquies.

In his private speeches, Hamlet demonstrates his great desire and determination to finally gain vengeance on Claudius. He even goes as far as to contemplate the value of his own life; which essentially is a question of his own will. Or maybe it isn't. Maybe he doesn't mean the words he speaks, perhaps he's just trying to give himself a boost of confidence. I mean, it is quite possible that even beginning at that point in the play, Hamlet subconsciously believes the murder of Claudius is inevitable, and the only thing he must do is watch over the king so no one else meets an unfortunate fate. Therefore, Hamlet's tragic flaw is not that he thinks things over too much, or has such high morals that it makes killing difficult.

It's his full belief in destiny and inability to take action because of it. More evidence that plays into this is solution is Hamlet's own definition of divinity. I feel that Hamlet thinks of divinity as a heavenly circumstance that will arise no matter what precautions are made to thwart it. For example, it could be said that he manipulated fate when he escaped death by switching the letters with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but in my opinion he simply broke down a poorly thought out plan by the king, and outwitted a couple of half-wits.

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His true fate was to vindicate his father's death, and obey the ghost's orders. Support of this explanation is found where Hamlet pronounces, " My fate cries out and makes each petty artery in this body as hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve. " 1. 4. 91-93. Upon making this utterance, Hamlet must in some form conceive that his one true destiny in life is to follow that personification of fate, and do it's bidding.

Further evidence from this same scene come shortly after Hamlet runs off to pursue the ghost, and Horatio and Marcellus are left alone. After a small debate on whether they should follow Hamlet or not Marcellus says, " Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. (1. 4. 100).

Which Horatio then follows with, " Heaven will direct it. "(1. 4. 101). When Horatio says this, it seems as if he already knows the outcome of the play and is giving the audience a clue to the ending. The clue being that he does not say Hamlet will direct it, he says Heaven.

The one conclusive example of Hamlet trusting that his fate is his agreement to dual with Laertes. Had he not such a strong " faith" in fate, I think he would be much more skeptical in accepting his challenge. If not merely for fear that his own life may be in danger, then for fright of never having the heinous wrong justified. This may also be an explanation of his calm demeanor previous to the fight, and also for his quick acceptance of death after he has been assured. However, I think the serene disposition and quick embracing have more to do with his fate as the king. This fate being the restoration of order for the people and state of Denmark, and this also being the fate that shows Hamlet's true character, compassionate, and selfless.

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