



Intricacies of Human Nature in William Shakespeare's Play 'Hamlet'

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Abstract:

Human nature is a term that encompasses the hopes, desires, jealousy, virtues, madness, hatred and flaws that are intrinsic to our humanity. At the core of these characteristics are our intricacies. William Shakespeare, the great dramatist of Elizabethan era was a champion who provides fascinating insight into human nature in his tragedies. Many intricacies of human nature are explored through his tragic plays and the complex relationships with one another. This paper explores the intricacies of human nature in major characters of William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. In this tragedy we see a brother (Claudius) who has to save his brother but kills his own brother as he is a power monger. Women characters like Gertrude and Ophelia change immediately. Hamlet is not the only character in Shakespeare's play who offers us a soliloquy. Claudius, Hamlet's uncle and the murderer of Hamlet's father (Claudius' own brother), also gives us a detailed insight into his thoughts. We can never predict human nature as it is very complex. Situations rule, we become victims of circumstances.

Key words: *Human nature, Hopes, Intricacies, jealousy, trust, victims, circumstances.*

The play *Hamlet* is much about the betrayal, manipulative nature, intelligence and mourning. In the play of Hamlet it is found to create several intricacies in order to attract attention and impression of the readers and give moral values of life. In Hamlet, Shakespeare tries to provide some internal and external conflicts which creates the tragedy of suffer, revenge and death. King Claudius in this play is both intelligent and

well-spoken, two traits that, put together, complement his manipulative and dangerous nature. In fact though, it is his conscience that makes Claudius such a complex villain. He rose to power by carefully executing his plan by killing his own brother. In this play, Hamlet is introduced as a troubled man in deep depression. He was mourning the death of his beloved father and his mother's marriage to his uncle. In Act 1 Scene 2 Claudius gives Hamlet a speech to try and get him to stop bringing up his father, probably fearing that the more the late King was talked about, or remembered, the more likely people were to look into his death. It is understandable that he wanted Hamlet to move on quickly. This speech seems carefully planned out, as if Claudius had written it out before he delivered it. Hamlet had probably been lamenting his father's death for quite some time now, so Claudius had ample time to compose the speech.

Hamlet was convinced by Laertes that his grief "*shows a will most incorrect to heaven*", meaning that he should instead be happy for his father, for he is now in heaven. But it isn't until later that we find out that the ghost isn't in heaven at all, instead suffering in "sulfurous and tormenting flames". After hearing about his father's murder Hamlet's sadness quickly turns into anger, and he plots the revenge that he feels his father deserves. Gertrude, who is instrumental in handling the emotional Hamlet, after all, it is she who convinces Hamlet not to go Wittenberg, showing how well Claudius is able to manipulate people, even the ones he claims to love. It is successful in both getting Hamlet not to act, but keeps him from traveling to Wittenberg. What he does not count on, is his victim's ghost igniting Hamlet's thirst for revenge. Claudius' sneaky and manipulative ways eventually lead to the death of Polonius at Hamlet's hands. Instead of punishing Hamlet for Polonius' murder himself, Claudius sent the prince to England alongside Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with letters that would arrange Hamlet's death, making it look like an accident. Despite the remorse shown in act 3 scene 3 when Claudius prays for forgiveness, he still wants Hamlet dead because he fears losing both his throne and his life. Readers are led to believe he is having someone else do the dirty work to save the Queen's feelings, but I think it had just as much to do with politics. Hamlet was well liked by the people, for reasons we are not aware of, and his punishment could lead the people to rally around him and rise up against the King. Claudius' plans fall apart when Hamlet alters the letters himself, having Rosencrantz and Guildenstern executed in his place.

Meanwhile, Laertes has returned from France to find that his father, Polonius, has been murdered. He first blames the King, but Claudius places the blame on Hamlet. While speaking to Laertes Claudius suddenly receives a letter saying that Hamlet was alive and returning home. Claudius being opportunistic finds yet another way to avoid killing Hamlet himself in Laertes.

Claudius speech to Laertes, in light of this news, is very off the cuff, clearly lacking in preparation in comparison to his speech to Hamlet on mourning for fathers. It is noticeably shorter than his speech to Hamlet, giving Laertes less time to mull over what was being said. This made him more likely to act, and rashly at that. The length of his speech to Hamlet also helps to obscure what he is saying, where as he is very clear and to the point with Laertes. His speech was also more direct, intended only for Laertes, whereas his speech to Hamlet was also for Gertrude's benefit. Claudius insinuates that not to act would be evidence of him not loving his father, saying:

“Not that I think you did not love your father, but that I know love is begun by time, and that I see in passages of proof”.

His tone is probably hinting that yes, he does want Laertes to think that he doesn't love his father if he doesn't act. I imagine his delivery to be very much like when someone says, “no offense but...”, still offending someone, but trying to lighten the blow. Line 113 also uses alliteration, using “passages of proof” to draw your attention to the image that follows, that of a candle.

Going on, Claudius says “Time qualifies the spark and fire of it. There within the very flame of love A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it,” alluding to the idea that over time a candles wick will burn down, as well as Laertes feelings for his father. This is why Claudius wants Laertes to act as soon as possible, when his feelings are fresh and raw. A candle will burn down on its own, but a snuff requires action, and to get closure over his father's death, he needs to take action against Hamlet.

He then compares inaction to pleurisy, which can mean excess, or even a chest inflammation, coinciding with the theme of sickness that was appeared throughout the play. Is he insinuating that him taking too much time to think about it could lead to sickness? His comparison here does not seem too well thought out. Maybe it pertains to the next few lines, where Claudius “Dies in his own too much. that we would do, we should do when we would; for this “would” changes” indicating that he would stress over regrets he had about not acting. Note the repetition of the “ould”, an attempt to drive his point into Laertes brain even further.

Claudius continues to talk about the harm of delay, saying “ And hath abatements and delay as many As there are tongues, are hands are accidents; And then this should is like a spendthrift sigh, That hurts by easing.”. This means that if he waits long enough, he probably won't do anything at all, bringing to question whether he really loves his father. A caesura occurs in the middle of line 124, likely indicating a change in Claudius' tone, “But to the quick o'th' ulcer, Hamlet comes back”. He is indicating that Hamlet is the root of his problems and telling Laertes that now was the time to act, or like an ulcer, this pain would burn in his core for some time. Finally, he finishes his speech by asking Laertes what he plans to do about the death of his father, “What would you undertake to show yourself in deed your father's son more than in words. The last thing he says attempts to direct him to action, asking him what he plans to do about this. Laertes makes it very clear that he seeks vengeance, saying that he would “cut his throat”.

Ultimately, Claudius was successful in his plan to kill Hamlet, not due to some master workings of his own doing, but because of his ability to manipulate events according to his own desires. He may have gained the crown by vote, but not until after he took advantage of the king, killing him in his sleep. In the end, his manipulative and deceptive ways brought him temporary success, but only at the cost of his own life.

Conclusion: Intricacies of human nature are a force or tension which is bond to circumstances. In a play like Hamlet intricacy is one of the elements that is required to make a story interesting to read and understand the psychology of the major characters of the play. It is also required to educate the audience how to solve problem as the lesson of life. Some scenes in the play make the play alive, namely Hamlet after the death of his father is in shock when he sees his father's spirit urging him to take revenge on the death of his father. It informs him to take the crown from the cruel king. Hamlet also gets a deep suffer on a marriage of his mother to someone who murdered his father. Ophelia is also seen in deep confused state of mind on her affair with Hamlet which is refused by her father and brother. It becomes a burden in her thought and she gets a deep suffer from death of her father, even when she knows that someone who killed her father is Hamlet. The tension between Hamlet and Claudius is about revenge and convince. Hamlet wants to take revenge on the murder of his father by Claudius. Otherwise Claudius has a plan to kill Hamlet to hide the secret of his killing his brother. The moral values that this play showers on its readers are really useful teaching the people that revenge is not a good conduct for human because it only leads to additional suffering to everybody or himself and bring death. The greediness will affect everyone and give a loss to someone else. The greediness of wealth and power can bring someone to do a bad thing like murdering someone else. It, of course, really spoils oneself and other people.