

A Study of Hamlet's Morality, Existentialism and Religion Through a Nihilistic Lens



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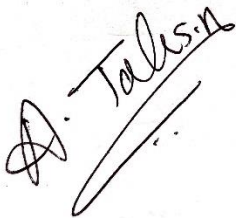
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.


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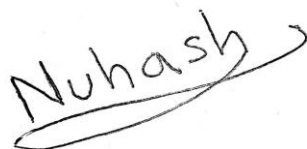
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nuhash". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

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Abstract

Nihilism is a complex and sophisticated theory whose identity and characteristics were pioneered by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. The traits related to this theory are not easy to identify or understand upon analyzing characters in real life or in literature. A timeless and iconic piece of literature is the play *Hamlet* written by William Shakespeare, which has such a protagonist whose attitude and actions portray many fragmented attributes of nihilism. The aim of this research is to investigate and analyze the protagonist Hamlet and try to understand whether he displays traits of nihilism and how it affects his actions with the other characters in the play. In order to strengthen the foundation and credibility of this research, it has been conducted qualitatively using several secondary scholarly sources which emphasize or express about Hamlet's character and his nihilistic traits as well as discuss similar related topics. Furthermore, Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of nihilism is the theoretical framework which has been used in order to analyze the primary text. Although *Hamlet* is a very old text, it contains many interpretative elements which can be explored using new and distinctive viewpoints even in the modern age. As such, this paper aims to examine Hamlet's characteristics through a nihilistic lens. By the end of this research paper, an overall conclusion is constructed which uncovers Hamlet's nihilistic aspects, and these findings can further contribute new and fascinating information and knowledge to the field of literature.

Chapter One

Introduction

The play *Hamlet* written by William Shakespeare is one of the most famous and iconic pieces of literature. Despite being written sometime between 1599 and 1601, this play has withstood the test of time as it is still widely read and appreciated in the modern age. The plot centers around Hamlet, the young prince of Denmark, who sets a goal of avenging his father who was murdered by his uncle Claudius. In addition, throughout the entire play, Claudius manipulates Hamlet's close companions in order to scheme against his plan of revenge. Perhaps the most significant evil deed which he committed was marrying Hamlet's mother Gertrude immediately after killing Hamlet's father. The play focuses on Hamlet's character based on how he acts and performs certain tasks. As such, the play puts emphasis on Hamlet's journey to becoming a revenger and accomplishing his revenge. Shakespeare's style of writing has delved deep into individualistic human suffering. Hence, the play appears to expand a plot of what looks to be a simple revenge story into a voyage of suffering, pessimism, nihilism and death. The main points which are highlighted in this research are centered on matters such as Hamlet's behavioral changes, unnecessary delays of action and lack of assertiveness and other related matters.

Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of nihilism is the theoretical framework which has been utilized in order to study and examine the primary text. Hence, this paper's goal is to establish a connection between Hamlet's attitude and nihilism; in addition, how his nihilistic attitude affects his actions towards his companions. There are various scholarly journal articles which discuss and explore different aspects of Hamlet's attributes and connect them with the theory of nihilism.

However, none seem to have focused specifically on Hamlet's nihilism emphasizing on the factors of his morality, existentialism and religion.

The objective of this research is to focus on some of Hamlet's characteristics as seen in the play and examine them on the basis of three categories: morality, existentialism and religion. Firstly, for morality, matters such as moral ethics, the difference between right and wrong, moral human limitations and the truth about moral standards have been discussed. Secondly, for existentialism, more focus has been concentrated on Hamlet's existential crisis and what reasons are causing him to think about human existence in a nihilistic manner. Lastly, for religion, the main features which are explored are related to Hamlet's hypocritical belief in Christianity, the variability of his faith, religious self-doubts and his transformation for overcoming traditional Christian principles. Afterwards, upon analysis of these three categories, this research can provide an understanding of how Hamlet depicts nihilistic characteristics and how it affects his actions. The following research questions were established in order to proceed with the study.

Research Questions:

- Does Hamlet portray characteristics of nihilism?
- How does his nihilistic attitude affect his actions towards the other characters in the play?

Chapter Two

Methodology

This research utilized a qualitative approach in order to investigate Hamlet's character and establish a connection with nihilism. The main framework which has been used is the theory of Nihilism developed by Friedrich Nietzsche. In particular, two of his books have been used for this research which are *God is Dead* along with *Beyond Good and Evil*. Furthermore, in order to establish a better foundation for Nietzsche's framework, three other books have also been used. These books are *The Temptation to Exist* and *On the Heights of Despair* by Emil Cioran as well as *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus. A few interesting points from each of these three books have been included to aid the research with a more in depth understanding of the traits of nihilism. In addition, for one particular part of this research, the chapter of "Psychoanalytic Criticism" from the book *Beginning Theory* by Peter Barry has been employed for an exploration of Hamlet's unconscious psyche and how it correlates to his nihilistic behavior. Moreover, several scholarly journal articles have been reviewed and included in order to enhance the quality of the research. This research aims to present the play *Hamlet* in a new and unique literary and theoretical scope.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

This research wishes to explore and examine the characteristics of nihilism portrayed by Hamlet. Using the framework of nihilism, Hamlet's outlook and attitude towards morality, existentialism and religion will be investigated along with how this affects his actions. As such, several secondary scholarly sources which discuss or contain relevant points of interests have been included in this literature review. These secondary sources will provide beneficial points of information to this research.

Lawrence J. Hatab in his article "Nietzsche, Nihilism and Meaning", explains about the characteristics of nihilism and how individuals portray such traits. He emphasizes nihilism as having a type of restrictive attribute, most notably the denial of truth, value and meaning in the world. It can be referred to as having the most supremely negative outlook on critiquing or collapsing the traditional belief systems of the western culture. The author further elaborates on nihilism's main persona which expresses that human existence has no meaning, the knowledge which exists in the world has no proper foundation and the world itself has no values whatsoever (Hatab, 91). Furthermore, the article discusses Nietzsche's ideology of nihilism where he stated that following the principles of complete nihilism is dangerous for an individual and this perspective needs to be overcome. Moreover, nihilism exists in Christian moral traditions which has a connection to the "death of God" (Hatab, 92). The author mentions that while Nietzsche stated the idea that the "death of God" is a necessity, this act ultimately destroys the very foundation the entire world and its cultures were built upon. This sacrificial end of God leaves humans with an "infinite nothing" (Hatab, 94). The article also mentions that while people may

oppose traditional, religious and moral viewpoints and principles in many circumstances, it should not be denied that it is the value of these elements which protect humanity from meaninglessness and despair (Hatab, 100). The collapse of these viewpoints and principles can result in a dangerous and deadly outcome which can make humans fall prey to nihilism (Hatab, 101).

In the journal article “Ethics and the Experience of Death: Some Lessons from Sophocles, Shakespeare and Donne”, Dennis L. Sansom discusses the issues of morality and moral dilemma which Hamlet seems to struggle with. Sansom also mentions how morality within humans contains a connection with death. He explains how the universal code of morality and how following the rule of “what is morally right” does not theoretically solve the unsettling fact of death (Sansom, 23). Instead, death forces people to examine their own motives behind their own moral actions and come to understand the contradictions against their true will. In a normal scenario, people perform moral duties in the hope of receiving a reward for lawfully abiding by correct moral standards. However, the thought of death reveals the weakness in one’s own will and finally allows for understanding the rationalization of the best moral actions (Sansom, 24). Sansom further adds that Hamlet’s thoughts of death portray a realistic fact about morality. It teaches the limitations of people’s efforts to control their destinies through the presumptions of moral purity (Sansom, 25). These points will assist in exploring Hamlet’s nihilistic attitude toward his own moral limitations and moral dilemma.

Similarly, Walter Libby discusses the restrictive traits of Hamlet’s character in his article “Two Fictitious Ethical Types”. He argues by questioning how it is possible for a person to take action effectively if their will is restrained and subjected to reason and conscience. The hindrances of moral ethical standards is like an obstruction in a person’s will (Libby, 466). Hamlet is an indecisive character on account of his obedience to his Christian and moral ethics (Libby, 467).

Libby mentions that there are two types of morality: morality of masters and morality of slaves. The former consists of the good and the bad while the latter consists of the good and the wicked. For the case of morality of masters, the good consists of values from a sense of self-respect which is present among people of aristocratic classes, who consider themselves as the standard; and the bad consists of traits which are different from the standards they recognize. In contrast, for the case of morality of slaves, the good consists of standards which are useful and the wicked consists of standards which are injurious (Libby, 473). This article includes interesting informative points based on the indecisive nature and the wicked standards of morality, both of which are useful resources in connecting with and examining Hamlet's moral actions in the play.

Another journal article titled "The Tragic Conflict in *Hamlet*", written by J. J. Lawlor addresses the issues of Hamlet's delay in his actions and its connections to his existential problems. Lawlor expresses Hamlet as a doomed man who is bound by an inescapable authority for certain acts. Hamlet's situation is quite tragic as he evades from the action he is required to perform while also trying to endlessly seek a cause for delays. Lawlor mentions that Hamlet states many reasons for his delays in the play without mentioning the proper causes as he himself does not understand what the causes are. Moreover, Lawlor explains that this trait of making the hero fail to understand himself is one of Shakespeare's triumphant writing capabilities (Lawlor, 109). The author also emphasizes on the theme of death which influences Hamlet's existential dilemma. Hamlet cannot escape from the duty of carrying out his revenge, except in death. As such, he sees humanity as "reproducible corruption" and denies the existence of the real world thinking that it would have been better to not be born (Lawlor, 110). This article will aid this paper by examining Hamlet's probable reasons and causes for delays in his actions and establish a connection to his existential crisis.

Likewise, the author John Von Szeliski discusses the attributes of a pessimistic character in his journal article “Pessimism and Modern Tragedy”. Pessimistic characters have a weak moral vision and vague attitude towards evil actions. The nature of hopelessness is an indication that struggling in life is pointless as life itself is meaningless (Szeliski, 40). The author further elaborates on whether death or self-destruction can be portrayed as tragic if the character is the one who welcomes death in order to escape the challenges of life (Szeliski, 41). Pessimistic characters have very little admiration and respect for what they see around them and what they see in themselves which further makes it difficult to establish a proper tragic identification through these characters and their enormous implications on the universal struggle of man (Szeliski, 43). An example of this are Hamlet’s dialogues in Act 2, Scene 2 of the play to his two friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern where he explains his miserable outlook on life. Moreover, the author states that pessimism in tragedy portrays that the ultimate power in the universe is “evil” and however mighty man may struggle, he is doomed to be defeated from something which results in nothing good. Observing the world in such a purposeless manner, pessimistic individuals embrace atheism or agnosticism while ironically having glimpses of belief in Christian Catholic principles in order to hope for a more rewarding afterlife after death (Szeliski, 44). These points about pessimism will enable a more elaborate understanding of Hamlet’s nihilistic attitude towards his existence.

Another journal article written by Ronald Knowles titled “Hamlet and Counter-Humanism”, describes Hamlet’s behavioral changes in accordance to his existential dilemma. The article emphasizes on Hamlet’s rhetorical thinking of his will, means, cause and strength as a point of argument for him to think about whether he should or should not act (Knowles, 1058). Furthermore, Hamlet does not wish to let others know about his pessimistic viewpoints as he

refuses consolation from Claudius as well as Gertrude and instead isolates himself. The author also states that Hamlet's grief and sexual loathing have brought about his subjective alienation which further puts him in a state of suspension of time from the actions that follow codes of revenge and honor. For Hamlet, this "sense of being bound" influences his outlook of contemplating Denmark as a prison (Knowles, 1059). An important point to note is that Knowles describes the use of skepticism, pessimism and seeming madness as existential defenses for Hamlet (Knowles, 1060). He offers an insight by mentioning Shakespeare's attraction to the genre of revenge tragedy. Shakespeare appreciated and was drawn to the genre of the revenge tragedy as it allowed him the opportunity for confronting a condition for acting and being. He focused greatly on Hamlet's delay in his revenge in the play in order to explore and express an individual's suffering, both internally and externally, psychologically and socially, to create Hamlet's unique alienation. Moreover, Hamlet's father's death and his mother's remarriage to his uncle produced a significant degree of grief and loathing which emotionally affected his being and disoriented his identity as a prince (Knowles, 1063). The matters discussed in this article provide useful insight into Hamlet's behavioral changes which will aid in examining his existential suffering.

On a different note, the journal article titled "The Tragedy of Hamlet's World View", written by Richard A. Levine focuses on Hamlet's perspective on Christianity. The author describes that in order to search for a world view for taking direct action, Hamlet rejected his Christian complex. In Act 5 of the play, Hamlet emerges as a purger who is driven by principles which are in opposition with Christian terms (Levine, 540). Traditional religious beliefs and stoicism are competing with each other to gain mastery over Hamlet's ethos. This internal conflict within himself causes him to become incapable of taking straightforward action. He cannot act willfully as the final end of all action is unknown to him and he is unable to resolve the uncertainty

(Levine, 541). Furthermore, Levine discusses the prayer scene in the play where Hamlet failed to kill Claudius. He explains that religious viewpoints are present within Hamlet during the prayer scene; however, it can be best described as semi-Christian as Hamlet's outlook on these religious principles is based on fear and superstition rather than faith and love (Levine, 542). The article further elaborates that in Act 5 of the play, Hamlet completely rejects thoughts of the afterlife as his perspectives are motivated by stoic determination. He concludes that death is the ultimate victor over life and the Christian principles which were present in his viewpoints for a while had been rejected (Levine, 543). For this reason, Hamlet was able to kill Claudius in the final act of the play compared to the prayer scene where he was restrained by a conflict between stoical-nihilism and religion (Levine, 544). The matters discussed by the author will be useful for analyzing Hamlet's nihilistic attitude towards religious principles.

Correspondingly, another article titled "Hamlet and Providence" written by William Hamilton addresses Hamlet's transformation through his reduction in belief of religious principles. Hamilton explains that the ghost of Hamlet's father commanding him to perform an act of revenge had caused him to change his views on religion and transform into a more able being. In the play, Hamlet seems to take note of and follow religious vows and principles even when faced with the opportunity of killing Claudius. The author states that throughout the play, Hamlet would believe God to be a separate being from himself while he was still gathering evidence for proving Claudius's crime as he was unsure about the ghost's claims. As such, his viewpoints on religious tradition collapsed when he realized that his father's ghost was right about Claudius being the killer. Due to this realization, Hamlet had slowly shifted from believing in traditional religious views and he became his own God (Hamilton, 204). The article also mentions that this transformation and change of viewpoints which occurred in Hamlet resulted in the death of

Polonius. In the prayer scene, Hamlet failed to kill Claudius as he was praying for forgiveness; however, in the following scene where Polonius was caught spying on the conversation between Hamlet and his mother, Hamlet took immediate action and killed Polonius as his new role of God's scourge and minister (Hamilton, 205). The points discussed in this article will aid in examining Hamlet's nihilistic actions resulting from religious doubt.

In addition, Fredson Bowers in his article "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge" emphasizes on Hamlet's role of taking revenge. To begin with, Bowers mentions that while Polonius's foolish attempt at eavesdropping was met with death at the hands of Hamlet; it does not erase the fact that Hamlet had killed an innocent man and had stained his hands with blood without accomplishing his main objective (Bowers, 741). The author highlights the beginning scene of the play which involved a conversation between Hamlet and the ghost of his dead father. When the ghost commanded Hamlet to avenge his unjust murder, Hamlet interpreted this as a matter of a private revenge for which he took the responsibility upon himself. The important matter which Hamlet failed to understand or think about is that if he wanted to avenge his father and become Denmark's ruler with honor, he should have thought about bringing Claudius to justice publicly. Instead, upon receiving information from the ghost, Hamlet became influenced and decided that the secret murder of his father must be avenged through a private form of revenge where he acts as a minister punishing those he sees as wrong or evil (Bowers, 744). This article will aid this research paper in better understanding Hamlet's determination for taking revenge.

Likewise, another journal article titled "'Hamlet' and the Shape of Revenge" written by Mark Rose, uncovers the revengeful and artistic mindset of Hamlet. The author denotes Hamlet as a kind of artist who attempts to shape his revenge according to his own standards even though his will is not his own (Rose, 132). In the beginning of the play, the ghost of Hamlet's murdered father

bound Hamlet to the idea of vengeance. The article expresses Hamlet's "prison" as more of a mental rather than a physical comprehension. Hamlet has been "subjected" from his birth, tethered by Claudius and then bound on a path of revenge by the ghost (Rose, 134). Additionally, Rose notes that despite Hamlet's role being tied to "revenge", he does not appear to play the role of a typical revenger. Throughout the entire play, Hamlet controls himself quite strictly when confronting Claudius in different scenarios. He does not indulge in vengeful speeches or hostile acts which is a typical characteristic of a normal revenger (Rose, 137). The author explains that Hamlet's problem is an aesthetic one: of suiting the word to the action and the action to the word, in order to create a satisfactory shape for his revenge (Rose, 138). He cannot escape his role of carrying out his revenge; however, he wishes to at least be a revenger in a manner which does not offend his human dignity. Thus, Hamlet burdens himself with an inner conflict of performing his revenge while exercising discipline (Rose, 140). This article gives valuable information regarding Hamlet's self-control and lack of aggression which will be useful to this research for exploring his disciplinary characteristics on revenge.

Furthermore, Don Parry Norford in his article "'Very Like a Whale': The Problem of Knowledge in Hamlet", focuses on Hamlet's problems of not being able to perform his revenge. Holland stated that Hamlet consisted of two waves of actions: the first is words and second is actions. Hence, Hamlet is a man of actions and words and yet he is not able to combine these two together. He is someone who can "talk beautifully and act on impulse"; however, he is unable to construct a proper plan and take action with it. Hamlet seems driven by words more than actions in many instances. Such as, in the play within the play, he only gains evidence through Claudius's behavior which in no manner leads to any real action or real revenge (as cited in Norford, 1979, p. 562). Norford elaborates on Hamlet taking the word of his father's ghost and forcing "guilt" to

uncover itself. As Hamlet was waiting for “guilt” to show itself, he missed the opportunity to kill Claudius in the prayer scene and instead ended up killing Polonius by accident. Hamlet was fooled by appearances several times in many instances where he could have accomplished his revenge. At the end of the play, Claudius’s guilt was finally revealed by Laertes during the final battle. The author adds that throughout the course of the play, Hamlet was confused between appearances and reality; at the end of the play, however, he finally learned that appearance “is” the only reality and underneath it lies a chaos of instincts (Norford, 572). The points discussed in this article will allow for a better understanding of Hamlet’s lackluster attempt of carrying out his revenge.

All of these scholarly journal articles will provide exceptional information regarding Hamlet’s characteristics which will be beneficial for this research paper. As such, the points of discussions made by each author will allow for a more elaborate and deeper investigation and analysis of Hamlet’s moral, existential and religious nature and establish a connection of these with the theory of nihilism.

Chapter Four

Analysis

4.1. Moral Nihilism and Hamlet: Hamlet's Nihilistic Attitude Towards Morality

Hamlet's nature towards moral ethics in the play seems to be highlighted by his somewhat nihilistic attitude towards how he regards morality based on the actions he carries out. Friedrich Nietzsche stated in his book *Beyond Good and Evil*, that the very system of morals teaches an individual on how to view life in a limited perspective and reject the greater freedom that life has to offer. Moreover, morality in life instructs an individual to restrict their perspectives on many matters and live under the influence or command of someone else (64). For Hamlet's case, these points become significant in order to analyze his nihilistic behavior towards morality. With his father no longer beside him, he lives his life under the command of his uncle Claudius. Throughout the entire play, Hamlet makes several attempts to try and gather evidence on Claudius regarding the murder of his father. This is worth mentioning as it is an indication that Hamlet is living his life under his uncle Claudius's supervision; therefore, hesitates to confront or attack him directly. This drives forth Hamlet to think nihilistically about the lack of freedom in his life due to abiding under Claudius. He wishes to act upon his instincts and thoughts; yet, he restrains himself to stand still and not do anything hastily. This nihilistic trait of Hamlet's character can be addressed in correlation to the journal article "Moral Nihilism and its Implications" written by Marc Krellenstein. In the article, he mentions that someone may judge someone else's behavior as morally wrong in relation to what are perceived as inconsistency in moral commands about how people should treat each other. Underlying principles of morality can be asserted by an individual which contain arbitrary values. However, this does not prevent people from reasoning with other

people with whom there are shared values; hence, this allows for determining the behavioral consistency or inconsistency of such shared values (Krellenstein, 77).

Being a prince of Denmark means that he is expected to act, speak and have certain manners befitting of a prince. Thus, the life that Hamlet lives is very restrictive compared to a commoner's life who might have more freedom than someone like him. As discussed by Nietzsche, the system of morals are simply suggestions made in order for individuals to adapt themselves to their own dangerous behaviors (*Beyond Good and Evil* 70). In this case, Hamlet's nihilistic attitude towards morality is nurtured by the restrictions placed on him which limits his action of taking revenge for his father's murder. It is the moral ethics of life which instructs people that murder and killing is an evil doing and is morally wrong. For this reason, Hamlet hesitates to take immediate action in killing his uncle Claudius. The shackles of morality prevent him from taking any drastic actions quickly and hastily. The following lines from the play are an indication of this:

HAMLET. Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,

And can say nothing; no, not for a king

Upon whose prosperity and most dear life

A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward? (2.2, 523-528)

In these lines, Hamlet questions his lack of assertiveness for not being true to his cause of seeking revenge. However, he is unable to confront his uncle head on by stating that he can "say nothing" as Claudius is the king.

In addition, one task he carried out was asking his mother to seduce Claudius in their bedroom for revealing any secrets or information regarding the murder of his father. The reason

for mentioning this particular scenario from the play is due to its strange absurdity with how Hamlet carried out this action. According to Nietzsche, an individual who is less intellectual may morally judge or condemn someone who is more intellectual, as a form of revenge (*Beyond Good and Evil* 94). It is rather difficult to determine what Hamlet's opinion and feelings are towards his mother Gertrude in particular. In the play, he does not show any intention of killing her; instead, blames her absurd decision for re-marrying Claudius so quickly after the death of the former king who was her husband and Hamlet's father. It raises the question about what exactly is the moral nihilism that Hamlet is portraying here. Again, referring to the article "Moral Nihilism and its Implications", Krellenstein mentions that in a practical matter, most individuals have deeply felt emotions as well as deep-rooted beliefs about what they want and if they wish to believe that something is or is not acceptable even if they are not able to justify such beliefs. Moreover, personal values can have an effect in the life a person lives. Based on the analysis of an individual's beliefs, they may adopt a rational point of view and accept things as artificial (Krellenstein, 82). In terms of morality, Hamlet's attitude toward his mother in this scenario can be considered shameful and in some manner can be considered an incestuous act. Thinking about this matter in real life in a scenario where a son may ask his mother to seduce a man might make the discussion clearer as to how absurd and shameful it sounds. Yet, Hamlet has no hesitation when performing this action. He disregards morality in this situation and simply asks Gertrude to assist him in his plan for trapping Claudius. No morally sane person, let alone a son could ask his mother to partake in an act like this. Hamlet during this scenario appeared to be using less of his intellect compared to his mother who was being hesitant to carry out this particular task according to his instructions. However, due to Hamlet's constant blaming and shaming of his mother's marriage to his uncle,

she finally starts listening to Hamlet's words and becomes bewildered with shock and disappointment.

QUEEN. What shall I do?

HAMLET. Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,
Pinch wanton his cheek, call you his mouse,
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out, (3.4, 184-190)

QUEEN. Be thou assured, if words be made of breath

And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me. (3.4, 201-203)

4.2. Hamlet's Existential Crisis and Nihilistic Attitude towards Existentialism

Another factor of Hamlet's nihilism extends towards the purpose and meaning of his life. As described by Nietzsche, one of the primary characteristics of nihilism within an individual is placing faith in a "confirmed nothing" instead of an "unknown something". This is the indication of a melancholic individual with a mortally fatigued soul (*Beyond Good and Evil* 8). This brings this research analysis to one of the most crucial parts in the entire play which is Hamlet's soliloquy and his signature line:

HAMLET. To be, or not to be, that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation (3.1, 56-63)

One of the most significant points of Hamlet's existential crisis stems from the following line:

HAMLET. To be, or not to be, that is the question.

This line is very significant as it displays his indecisive personality. Hamlet's existential crisis stems from his inability and hesitation of choosing which path of action to take. He regards life as this problematic phenomenon where people have to make a choice of choosing whether or not to confront their own individualistic troubles and matters. Only for this particular part of the research, his delay and hesitation of not taking action will be analyzed more in-depth using the concept of psychoanalysis from the chapter of a particular book. In the chapter "Psychoanalytic Criticism" of

his book *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry explains that the main cause of Hamlet's delay has to do with his unadmitted desires hidden within his unconscious mind. Barry explains that Hamlet has an Oedipus complex towards his own mother. Thus, he came to realize that he was no better than his own uncle as Claudius was actually able to accomplish Hamlet's repressed desires by killing his father and marrying Gertrude (108). As such, Hamlet subconsciously delays his actions due to his repressed desires despite not confessing it. This lack of not being able to take action of fulfilling his repressed desires nor avenging his father fuels his existential nihilism. It forces him to think about how people are capable of making insufferable choices like these in their lifetime instead of accepting death.

In addition, Hamlet also dwells on the unknown aftermath of what comes following death. In Emil Cioran's book *On the Heights of Despair*, he states that death introduces one to an element of nothingness. One cannot think about death without thinking about the nothingness involved with it. Life consists of principles of negativity while death consists of nothingness (43). Hamlet concludes in his mind that perhaps this fear of the unknown; especially in regards to death, is what forces or manipulates an individual's mind to tolerate the punishments and sufferings that life has to offer. What is even more critical is that Hamlet mentions that dying is a one time experience. Once an individual dies, wherever or whenever they may go after death, they will never return as a living, breathing human being as he expresses in the following lines:

HAMLET. But that the dread of something after death,
 The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all, (3.1, 78-83)

Thus, this fear of the unknown forces an individual to bear the problems of life instead of ascending to the greater beyond populated by distinctive strangers of many characteristics. Hamlet's existential crisis is materialized in the sense that he does not know whether he should live and endure his troubles or should he die and travel to the land of the unknown.

Another glimpse of Hamlet's existential nihilism is shown through his remarks on Denmark along with the world when conversing with his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

GUILDENSTERN. Prison, my lord?

HAMLET. Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ. Then is the world one.

HAMLET. A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and

dungeons, Denmark being one o' th' worst. (2.2, 235-239)

Cioran mentions that individuals can become pessimistic from an inner turmoil which rises from within themselves and causes depression which attacks life at its roots (*On the Heights of Despair*, 137). Due to his constant anxiety of wanting to accomplish his revenge and avenge his father, Hamlet's inner distress causes him to think of the world as a prison with Denmark being the worst one. His frustration is with Denmark in particular because he cannot perform his vengeful actions on Claudius unless an opportunity presents itself. Furthermore, Hamlet also appears quite irritated with his own life as he mentions in the following lines:

HAMLET. I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth,

forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my

disposition, that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile

promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave

o'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden
fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent
congregation of vapors. (2.2, 282-288)

Cioran exclaims in *On the Heights of Despair*, that when social, aesthetic, religious and moral reasons no longer guide someone's life, the individual is unable to sustain life without succumbing to nothingness (27). Hamlet expresses himself that he is unaware when he lost his cheerfulness and started seeing his surroundings and lifestyle as a kind of sickness. As mentioned previously, perhaps his obsession for revenge and the inability of fulfilling it immediately has driven his sense of humanity to a negative and pessimistic state. As a result, he views his life and his surroundings as a sort of sickly prison which he feels imprisoned in. Hamlet's expression in this particular scene demonstrates that he no longer has his life in control and is suffering a sense of existential nothingness. He displays traits of nihilism towards his existence and the existence of life itself by not only claiming Denmark as being the worst of prisons but also declaring the entire world as a prison maintained by an authoritative system. This might signify an indication that Hamlet is frustrated living his life under the authoritative guardianship of his uncle and wishes that he could break free from this prison.

4.3. Hamlet's Nihilistic Attitude Towards Religion

Hamlet portrays a rather hypocritical, nihilistic attitude towards religion which becomes apparent near the end of the play. In the beginning, Hamlet does appear to follow the principles and rules of Christianity; however, towards the end of play, especially during the final battle, he seems to disregard his religious vows altogether. In his book *God is Dead*, Nietzsche explains that religion can be described as an outgrowth where an individual's own doubts develop and cause changes in their personality. Christianity has caused people to diminish themselves and separate their own character into two categories; one very mournful and fragile while the other is very powerful and extraordinary (8). Christianity from the dawn of time has been about sacrificing all of one's own pride, self-confidence and freedom. This religion contains cruelty and takes for granted the pain that humans subject themselves to when adapting to this faith (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 37). One of the primary obstacles which prevents Hamlet from taking his revenge quickly and hastily is his obedience towards Christianity. Throughout the play, there are many statements and references to God and Heaven. For Hamlet, his obedience towards religion is what restricts him from killing Claudius when he is alone praying for forgiveness for killing Hamlet's father.

HAMLET. Now might I do it pat, now 'a is a-praying,

And now I'll do't—and so 'a goes to heaven,

And so am I revenged. That would be scanned.

A villain kills my father, and for that,

I, his sole son, do this same villain send

To heaven.

Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge. (3.3, 73-79)

Hamlet hesitates and fails to deliver the killing move on his uncle due to him being in a state of salvation and repentance. Hamlet's belief in his Christian principles and vows causes him to discipline his thirst for revenge as he does not want his uncle to ascend to Heaven. Interestingly, in this scenario, his own thoughts on his revenge appear to be subjected to religious constraints, which forces him to not kill his enemy. This scenario showcases a significant contrast compared to the final part in the play where Hamlet finally does kill his uncle without hesitation or mercy. Nietzsche adds that religion causes a kind of suspension in an individual's reasoning as well as reducing all of their motives into a state of fear and hope where there are punishments and rewards (*God is Dead* 13). As such, Hamlet mentions that if he were to kill Claudius while he is in the state of praying for redemption, his soul might ascend to Heaven. For Hamlet, this situation feels more like a reward for his uncle as Hamlet does not want Claudius's soul to find salvation in Heaven. On the other hand, it feels like a punishment for Hamlet as he describes his uncle's soul going to Heaven as a form of revenge on himself.

Therefore, this brings focus to the discussion of whether or not Hamlet has any nihilistic viewpoints on religion. The answer is "yes" to some extent based on his final battle in the play where he kills Claudius. It should be noted that during Claudius's prayer scene, Hamlet decided to avoid taking his revenge then and there and instead let his uncle go free. Hamlet's religious faith played a part in stopping him from killing someone. However, at the finale of the play, Hamlet disregards his religious vows and principles and decides to kill Claudius as was his initial objective which accomplishes his plan of revenge. Additionally, a point of interest worth mentioning is that Hamlet had already thought about killing Claudius during a time when he would not be seeking salvation or redemption.

HAMLET. When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,

Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,
 At game a-swearing, or about some act
 That has no relish of salvation in't—
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
 And that his soul may be as damned and black
 As hell, whereto it goes. (3.3-3.4, 89-95)

In order to analyze this part further, a scholarly journal article titled “The Elizabethan Settlement of the Church of England” written by John F. Hurst has been included as reference for understanding the practice of religion during Hamlet's time period. The play *Hamlet* was written during the 1600s by Shakespeare when Queen Elizabeth I was ruler of England; thus, *Hamlet* is beheld as an Elizabethan text. Hurst mentions that when Queen Elizabeth took the throne in 1558, she conformed to the Roman Catholic religion. Afterwards, she had made intentions of not keeping England and the Pope in unity; instead, the nation would be bribed and spoiled by the church (679). The author mentions that the Parliament's restoration of the spiritual headship of the crown in England in 1559 empowered the queen to take more biased and drastic decisions. She would give commissions to people who she believed to be fit to “reform, order, amend and correct all errors, abuses, heresies and offenses” which could all be done so in a lawful, jurisdictional and authoritative manner. This act transformed the queen's title to “supreme governor” from “supreme head” (Hurst, 683). The article also mentions Queen Elizabeth's religious dictatorship where she had 50 Catholic gentlemen arrested and imprisoned for not attending church. Due to this, many people refused to acknowledge Queen Elizabeth as England's religious dictator. As a result, many of these people were put to death using barbaric practices such as being hanged, disemboweled, cut down alive and beheaded (Hurst, 689). Because of these devastating and violent practices, the

people of England dreamt and hatched many plans to eliminate Queen Elizabeth. There is also speculation that both the Protestants and Catholics believed that the death of a ruler like Elizabeth who was a persecutor and monster in their eyes, was considered reasonable (Hurst, 692). This article's reflection on the queen of England's tyranny and religious dictatorship can be used as reference to understand Claudius and his rule in the play. Claudius has an authoritative and religious demeanor over the kingdom of Denmark. In the most crucial scene which is the prayer scene, he is seen asking for forgiveness and presents himself in a pitiful state of redemption:

CLAUDIUS. O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;

It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,

A brother's murder. Pray can I not, (3.3, 36-39)

In this state, Claudius's religious spirituality is protecting him from Hamlet's vengeful intentions. Even Hamlet in this scene is unable to do anything to counter his uncle's religious significance. However, similar to the Protestants and Catholics judgment of the tyrannical queen; similarly, Hamlet had shifted from being weak-willed and inactive. After this scenario, the following incidents in the play transformed Hamlet's outlook on traditional religious principles and his belief in Christianity slowly faded away. As explained by Nietzsche, the doctrines of Christianity alternate its emphasis which favors weak-willed people. Due to this, the "typical Christian" slowly begins to accept all of the things which were previously rejected. This transforms a "Christian" into a politician, a philosopher, a patriot, or a soldier; also, this allows the "Christian" to partake in activities which were previously denied such as rage, punishment and self-defense (27). Hamlet at the end of the play decided to overcome his limitations of religious rules and vows and decided to confront his enemy head-on. The aspect of this character development trait can be referenced to Nietzsche's theory of the *Urbarmensch* (overman) as Hamlet, by the end of the play, conquers his

own personal restraints and limitations in order to accomplish his goal of revenge. His belief in Christianity's principles and vows did not prevent him from taking action against his uncle in the end. Strangely, as mentioned previously, he did showcase hesitation and defeat when confronting Claudius in his state of prayer. Thus, this transitions into the matter of how Hamlet is portraying traits of nihilism against religion. Nietzsche explains that an individual can judge their own actions as "this is right" and so comes to a conclusion that "this must be done". As a result, the individual carries out the action which was recognized as "being righteous and necessary" (*God is Dead* 61). Hamlet follows this ideology when confronting and killing Claudius at the end. In the final battle, when dueling against Polonius's son Laertes, Hamlet's mother Gertrude dies due to consuming the poisoned drink which Claudius had prepared for Hamlet. Due to this shocking turn of events, Hamlet comes to the conclusion that his uncle's evil intentions know no limits and therefore, he must be dealt with immediately. Hence, Hamlet stabs Claudius, only to wound him and then forces him to drink the same poisonous liquor which his mother accidentally met her tragic end by. One final point of discussion is to point out Hamlet's transformation from a morally correct and religiously disciplined person into a vengeful murderer. While it may seem that Hamlet succeeded in avenging his father by fulfilling his goal of getting revenge on his uncle Claudius for murdering his father; at the end, Hamlet transformed into the very murderer he sought to punish. On top of that, he does not even ask for salvation from God or Heaven; instead, he follows his instincts and decides to accept his fateful death.

4.4. How Hamlet's Nihilistic Attitude Affects His Actions Towards Others

Hamlet's nihilistic viewpoints in his attitude affects the way he interacts with his family members and companions throughout the play. His nihilistic perception transforms him into this mechanical, unfeeling, merciless individual. Nietzsche exclaims that every individual is susceptible to growing and having a "mask" which is a manifestation of the continuously fake and artificial interpretation of every step taken and every word uttered (*Beyond Good and Evil* 32). The characteristics of nihilism that manifested within Hamlet resulted in him becoming a more cruel, hateful and aggressive version of himself. These vile traits are visible in him based on his actions towards his mother Gertrude, his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Lord Polonius, Polonius's son Laertes and daughter Ophelia, and finally, his uncle Claudius.

Hamlet's actions towards his mother were absurdly strange and rather outrageous in comparison to how a normal son would act towards their mother. As mentioned by Nietzsche, man is secretly tempted and driven forward by his cruelty, by the ominous thrill which his own cruelty expresses on himself. A seeker of knowledge works as a kind of artist which glorifies cruelty and forces his own spirit to perceive against his own inclinations which more often than not goes against what his heart actually wishes (*Beyond Good and Evil* 104). Hamlet does not actually have any intentions of harming his mother in the truest sense; however, he does loathe her actions of re-marrying Claudius. For this reason, Hamlet decides to manipulate his mother to obey his instructions and act as a sort of interrogator to trap Claudius. As such, Hamlet does not intentionally want to hurt or bring harm to his mother in any way. He even mentions so by stating that he "must be cruel only to be kind". He does not wish to bring this unfortunate circumstance to Gertrude as deep down he still loves her dearly and is still subconsciously influenced by his repressed desires about her. Yet, his nihilistic attitude is compelling him to act and be this cruel

and twisted version of himself which forces him to behave unjustly with his mother in this immoral way.

Two of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, succumbed to the same vile behavior portrayed by Hamlet. It is important to note that in the play, Claudius persuades and convinces both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet. Additionally, he also instructs them to go with Hamlet to England in order to observe and prevent him from creating any further nuisances. When Hamlet came to know about this, he regarded his friends as traitors as they took the side of his uncle Claudius instead of his. When he is confronted for killing Polonius, who was working as Claudius's secret informant, he argues against his friend's sudden shift in loyalty.

HAMLET. To be demanded of a sponge—what replication should be made by
the son of a king?

ROSENCRANTZ. Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET. Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards,
his authorities. (4.2-4.3, 10-14)

Nietzsche adds, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that among people, only a few can actually become independent. Only those who can and are able to achieve this independence possess a strong will (25). Unlike his two friends, Hamlet is able to overcome the authoritative dominance which is spread around the kingdom by Claudius. To add to this, Hamlet's nihilistic aspects cause him to treat his companion's betrayal with a repulsive outlook which further fuels his drive to eliminate them because they stand before him as obstacles which exist to prevent him from taking his revenge. Hence, Hamlet decides to eliminate them using his cunning and does not care in the least about their tragic demise.

HAMLET. They are not near my conscience; their defeat

Does by their own insinuation grow.

“Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes

Between the pass and fell incensed points

Of mighty opposites. (5.2, 58-62)

It is to be noted that the one character to become the most unlucky victim of Hamlet's nihilistic conduct was none other than Polonius, a lord and very close friend to Claudius. His death was a very sudden and unexpected outcome which resulted from none other than Hamlet's own actions. Albert Camus mentions in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, that the systems of morality are established on the idea that actions have consequences which validate or cancel it. People involved in such actions may be responsible in terms of the action performed but not guilty. One might use their past experiences as a basis for future actions (44). Hamlet's killing of Polonius was never a part of his revenge plan; unfortunately, Polonius's loyalty to the king is what caused him to meet his end. In Act 3 Scene 4, Polonius made a plan to spy on Hamlet's conversation with his mother and later report to Claudius. When Hamlet found out someone was spying on him while hiding behind the curtains in the room, he mistook this person for Claudius and decided to stab him through the curtains with his sword immediately. Before this incident took place, Hamlet had already failed to kill Claudius previously in Act 3 Scene 3 as he was seeking salvation through prayer. As Hamlet let his vengeful mindset submit to his religious principles, he decided to spare Claudius. However, upon realizing that he was being spied on while conversing with his mother, he instantly thought his uncle was the spy and decided to take action immediately on account of him failing to do so earlier. He also mentions himself that he thought his uncle was the one spying on them when his mother was shocked by his deed:

QUEEN. O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET. Nay, I know not.

Is it the king? (3.4, 26-28)

Later, Hamlet lifts the curtains and finds out it was Polonius, who died from the fatal sword stab. Curiously, killing Polonius does not affect Hamlet in the slightest; he does not suffer any form of shock, regret, guilt or shame whatsoever. He simply expresses his disappointment and rage towards Polonius's corpse; dreadfully, Hamlet even mentions wringing Polonius's heart within his dead corpse.

HAMLET. Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.

Thou find'st to be too busy in some danger.—

Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down

And let me wring your heart, for so I shall (3.4, 32-36)

Similarly, both Polonius's son Laertes and daughter Ophelia met their unfortunate demise by Hamlet's hand. Nietzsche expresses that every individual is forced to think for themselves where they would like to portray their love or hatred; as such, there is an attribute of intentionally causing injury to someone's character (*Beyond Good and Evil* 104). For the case of Laertes, Hamlet decided to finally confront yet another obstacle which stood before his path. Hence, in Act 5, he challenged Laertes to a duel where he killed him off. It is important to note that Hamlet does not feel apologetic nor sympathetic for killing Laertes' father Polonius. Instead, Hamlet makes a choice of killing the son after already having killed the father. In addition, Ophelia also does not escape from Hamlet's nihilistic acts either. Cioran mentions that fear stimulates one's senses and action cannot happen without it. However, excessive fear can invade and overwhelm a person which causes the fear to transform into cruelty (*The Temptation to Exist* 182). Obsessed with his

plan for revenge, Hamlet decided to manipulate Ophelia into hating him and cutting ties with him in their relationship. Hamlet did not try to kill Ophelia directly unlike with Polonius or Laertes; instead, he tried to persuade Ophelia and explain that it is better if they cut ties with each other and she becomes a nun instead of getting married as getting married would likely result in her creating more “monstrous” men similar to Claudius.

HAMLET. Get thee to a nunnery, farewell. Or if thou wilt needs

marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters

you make of them. To a nunnery go and quickly to. Farewell. (3.1, 134-136)

This diabolic action from Hamlet resulted in Ophelia losing trust in him. Furthermore, Hamlet’s killing of her father Polonius set in motion her untimely and tragic death afterwards where she accidentally fell and drowned in a lake while grieving and thinking about her father’s death.

The last person to suffer the fate of death at the hands of Hamlet is none other than Claudius. While Claudius might have been spared from Hamlet’s vengeful acts during the initial stage in Act 3 Scene 3 due to his prayers to God and Heaven, he ultimately met his demise at the end of the play in Act 5 Scene 2 when Hamlet finally decided to deliver the killing blow. One might ask, why is it that Hamlet does not perceive any principles of religion during his final encounter with Claudius which would supposedly prevent him from committing this murderous act? Based on Nietzsche’s statement, for those who are independent, strong, trained and destined to command, and have within them incorporated the skill and judgment of a ruling race, religion is simply an extra obstacle for overcoming resistance in order to gain a power of authority - as an affiliation which ties both subjects and rulers, surrendering and betraying to the latter the conscience of the former, which would have difficulty escaping obedience (*Beyond Good and Evil* 47). Hamlet only perceives and follows religion during his initial interaction with Claudius when

he was praying for forgiveness. As Hamlet does not want Claudius to ascend to Heaven upon being killed, he decided to reject his option of killing him then. However, at the end of the play, Hamlet finally overcame this hesitation and decided his uncle cannot be left alive any longer to commit any more of his evil antics. An important matter to be noted is that during the final battle scene, Hamlet's mother accidentally consumed the poisoned drink which Claudius had set up for Hamlet. As a result, she died unfortunately due to Claudius's scheme which ignited Hamlet to finally take action. Hence, he quickly and immediately delivers the killing move on his uncle. Moreover, Hamlet does not stop at that; his sword stab only wounds Claudius, therefore, he brings forth the cup with the poisonous drink in it and forces it down Claudius's throat, which quickly kills Claudius once and for all. Ultimately, Hamlet accomplishes his plan of revenge through his nihilistic acts.

HAMLET. The point envenomed too?

Then, venom, to thy work. [*Wounds the KING.*]

ALL. Treason! Treason!

KING. O, yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt.

HAMLET. Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane,

Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?

Follow my mother. [*KING dies.*] (5.2, 300-306)

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Hamlet being perceived as a nihilistic character according to the basis of this research might appear as a strange speculation to some. The reason for this is that commonly Hamlet is stated as being a tragic hero in his own tragedy within the play. However, this research delves into a different literary and theoretical scope and decides to analyze Hamlet's character from a unique and distinct point of view. Examining the primary text using Nietzsche's theory of nihilism has produced a new literary perspective on this classic archaic text. This might allow for a different sense of interpretation among readers and researchers when reading *Hamlet*.

Perhaps the most significant matter worth highlighting is the findings this research has discovered. That is, Hamlet's nihilistic attitude in correspondence to his morality, existentialism and religion which played a role in affecting his actions. This further compliments Shakespeare's writing of *Hamlet* which appears quite different compared to a typical revenge story. He focused more on developing Hamlet's individualistic struggles and limitations as a human being. As such, the main focus in the play shifted from simply taking revenge to uncovering what appears to be a portrayal of human characteristics affected by the problems presented by life. This research examined these characteristics within Hamlet based on his nihilistic attitude towards his morality, existentialism and religion. First, his nihilism towards morality was influenced by his lack of action and continuous delays of performing his revenge. He could not carry out his actions in many situations due to lack of opportunities; hence, this frustrated him. Every minute he wasted not doing anything appeared to him as though he was not fulfilling his dead father's wishes. Interestingly, perhaps the most significant lack of morality he displayed was murdering Polonius

and not feeling guilty for it. This violent gesture showcased a very certain lack of morality within Hamlet. Secondly, the research investigated Hamlet's existential nihilism. The primary focus was on his thoughts regarding death and the bane of human existence. Hamlet conveyed traits of pessimism in several instances while also anticipating about the afterlife which comes after death. Lastly, an analysis was conducted on his nihilistic behavior towards Christianity. This research established the outcome that Hamlet's sense of faith and belief is based more so on fear and traditional obedience instead of actual religious belief. His attitude towards his religion appears to be swayed by his obsession with his revenge. In many instances Hamlet showed restriction in his actions due to his belief in Christian principles; however, his primary intentions were always about how he would perform his revenge. The main scenario which represented this was the prayer scene where Hamlet spared Claudius due to him seeking forgiveness. In this scene, Hamlet mentioned that he spared Claudius on account of his religious act and would kill him later when the opportunity would present itself. Thus, the research established its findings and reached its conclusion through the investigation of these three categories based on Hamlet's characteristics and connected them with the theory of nihilism.

To elaborate further, while this research has conducted a thorough analysis and examination of Hamlet's characteristics based on his morality, existentialism and religion as well as established a connection with the theory of nihilism, it does leave room for further research on similar topics of interest. One such aspect which could potentially be studied more critically which this research did not explain or analyze in much detail is Hamlet's behavior of "madness". While this research did mention Hamlet's "madness" as a form of a defense mechanism which was used primarily for the sake of his obsession of accomplishing his revenge, it did not provide an in-depth analysis on this matter. As such, there is a potential for carrying out further studies and research

on Hamlet's "madness" as well as investigating the factor of whether or not it caused him to actually lose his sanity as the play progressed.

Hamlet is described as a classical and timeless text written by one of the most famous playwrights and poets in the world, William Shakespeare. Despite its archaic age, it is still read and enjoyed by modern audiences. Therefore, this research has showcased that despite being old, this text contains many elements that are correlated with human nature which are present in modern literary texts as well as real life such as pessimism, existentialism, lack of morality, religious doubts and nihilism. Furthermore, this will enable a new approach of conducting literary research using new and unique theories.

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