

Hamlet as the Predecessor of Existentialism - A Study of Quintessential Expression of Existential Pondering

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Abstract : This paper attempts to treat Shakespeare's tragic hero, Hamlet as an existential hero who faces many dilemmas in the process of taking revenge for his father's murder. Hamlet can be considered as a predecessor of existentialism, and Shakespeare, as a pioneer, focused on some serious existential issues in the play much before they were fully developed in 20th century. Hamlet's internal struggles reflect existential themes such as alienation, despair, and the quest for authenticity. Hamlet's famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," is a quintessential expression of existential ponderings, contemplating the choice between life and death and the uncertainty of what lies beyond. Hamlet grapples with existential questions like the purpose and meaninglessness of life, the nature of morality, the inevitability of death, and the existence of an afterlife. He doubts the authenticity of appearance and the reliability of his own perceptions, highlighting the inherent ambiguity and uncertainty of existence. Overall, "Hamlet" aligns with existential philosophy by exploring the complexities of human existence, the search for meaning, and the individual's struggle to find their place in an inherently uncertain and perplexing world. The character of Hamlet and the play's exploration of existential themes continue to resonate with audiences and provoke contemplation on the nature of life and the human experience.

Keywords : to be or not to be, death, dilemmas, illusion and reality

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