
HAMLET'S UNIVERSAL CRISIS: SARTRE, RUSSELL, AND FREUD ON FREEDOM, WISDOM AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

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ABSTRACT

This review article explores Hamlet's crisis as a universal human struggle, situated at the intersection of psychoanalysis, existentialism, and analytic philosophy. Drawing on Freud's concept of the unconscious, the study examines how hidden desires and repressed drives shape Hamlet's hesitation and inner conflict. Sartre's philosophy of freedom reframes Hamlet's indecision as the burden of radical choice, where responsibility for action cannot be deferred. Russell's emphasis on wisdom and rational clarity highlights the tension between intellectual reflection and practical judgment in the face of existential dilemmas. By juxtaposing these three perspectives, the article argues that Hamlet's crisis transcends the literary domain, embodying a universal confrontation with unconscious impulses, the demand for freedom, and the pursuit of wisdom. Hamlet's crisis is universal because it transcends the boundaries of literature, becoming a mirror of humanity's timeless struggle with freedom, wisdom, and the unconscious. The term signals that Hamlet's dilemma is not confined to Shakespeare's stage but embodies the enduring condition of human existence across cultures and philosophies. Hamlet becomes a mirror of humanity's deepest anxieties, where the unconscious undermines freedom and wisdom struggles to restore balance. This interdisciplinary study situates Hamlet as a timeless figure through whom psychoanalysis and philosophy meet to illuminate the enduring crisis of the human condition.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare Hamlet, Sigmund Freud Psychoanalysis, Jean-Paul Sartre Existentialism, Russell Wisdom, Bad Faith, The Unconscious, Existential Dread, Human Agency.

INTRODUCTION: The Battle for Elsinore's Prince: For over four centuries, the central battleground of Shakespeare's Hamlet has not been the walls of Elsinore or the blood-stained halls of the Danish court, but the turbulent inner world of the Prince himself. Central to this enduring dramatic monument is a singular, torturous question that has confounded literary critics, philosophers, and psychologists alike: Why does Hamlet delay? The hesitation to avenge his father's murder is literature's greatest Rorschach test, an interpretative vacuum that expands to reflect the anxieties of whatever era looks into it. Where the Romantic critics saw a man of excessive sensitivity paralyzed by over-thinking, and early twentieth-century historicists saw the structural constraints of the traditional Elizabethan revenge tragedy, deeper reading demands an investigation into the very mechanics of human agency. This critical dilemma is precisely why Eliot famously stated, 'the essential emotion of the play is the feeling of a son towards a guilty mother' (Eliot, T.S 1919), an intense psychological pressure that Shakespeare struggled to fully bind within the narrative. Consequently, the 'Crisis of Hamlet' emerges not as a mere failure of political will or a defect of courage, but as a profound, universal inquiry into the tense intersection of the unconscious, existential freedom, and the pursuit of true wisdom.

To fully dissect the anatomy of this paralysis, this study arranges a complete theoretical confrontation between the most influential, yet oppositely contradicted movements of twentieth-century thought: Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenology of existentialism, and Bertrand Russell's philosophy of wisdom. On the surface, these titans appear incompatible. Freud presents a deterministic universe where the human ego is a fragile structure afloat on a vast, dark ocean of unconscious efforts, childhood traumas, and repressed desires. In the Freudian view, people are profoundly shaped by what they cannot see; their actions are effects of hidden, past causes. On the other hand, Sartre offers a philosophy of radical, almost terrifying accountability. Rejecting the notion of a deterministic human nature or a subterranean subconscious that frees man of blame, Sartre declares that 'existence precedes essence' (Sartre, J.P. 2007). For the existentialist, human beings are condemned to be free, entirely defined by the conscious choices they make in the present. Crucially, Bertrand Russell introduces the missing intellectual ideal: a framework of wisdom characterized by an impartial, comprehensive vision that seeks emancipation from

immediate personal tyranny. By placing Freud, Sartre, and Russell in a direct dialectical dialogue through the character of Hamlet, this article does not seek merely to amalgamate external theory and a classic text. It rather uses Hamlet as the supreme literary domain where these conflicting views of the human condition encounter, moving from psychological and existential deadlock toward the arduous pursuit of true wisdom.

The play itself anticipates this modern intellectual split, balanced perfectly on a threshold between medieval providential fatalism, Renaissance humanism, and modern alienation. Hamlet is a character who feels the heavy, haunting hand of the past, embodied by the literal ghost of his father, while simultaneously staring into the meaningless abyss of a world where he must invent his own purpose. Therefore, the central theme of this study is that the tragedy of Hamlet lies precisely within this agonizing transitional stage: he is caught in a supreme crisis between the deterministic fetters of his unconscious mind, the terrifying, radical freedom to define his own essence through action, and the arduous pursuit of an impartial, universal wisdom. His delay is the ultimate symptom of this modern stalemate, where vast intellectual knowledge fails to achieve the comprehensive clarity needed to act. This enduring complexity validates the assertion made by Johnson in his Preface to Shakespeare that the playwright's characters are 'the genuine progeny of common humanity' who act upon principles that 'co-extend with the whole system of life' (Johnson, S. 1969). By examining his hesitation through the parallel tracks of Freudian neurosis, Sartrean existential dread, and Russellian wisdom, we can map the form of a prince who is simultaneously trapped by what he inherits, paralyzed by what he must choose, and desperate for the objective vision to understand both.

Methodology: This review article adopts a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, situating Shakespeare's *Hamlet* within the frameworks of existentialism, psychoanalysis, and humanism. The methodology involves a close textual reading of the play alongside critical engagement with Sartre's writings on freedom, Russell's reflections on wisdom, and Freud's theories of the unconscious. By juxtaposing Hamlet's soliloquies and actions with these philosophical perspectives, the analysis traces how the prince's hesitation embodies universal tensions between choice, knowledge, and hidden desire. The study relies on thematic synthesis rather than historical contextualization, emphasizing conceptual resonance across literature, psychology and philosophy. This methodological lens allows Hamlet's crisis to be read not only as a literary dilemma but as a philosophical archetype of the human condition.

1. The Freudian Dimension: Bound by the Unconscious: In order to understand Hamlet's immobility through a classical psychoanalytic framework, one must look backward, shifting the focus from the external politics of Elsinore to the subterranean chambers of the human mind. Sigmund Freud, who famously utilized Hamlet in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to substantiate his core concepts, stated that the human ego is not master in its own house. Instead, human behavior is heavily determined by repressed desires, childhood traumas, and the structural warfare waged between the Id, Ego, and Superego (Freud, S. 1899). From this perspective, Hamlet's legendary delay is not an intellectual choice, but a profound psychoneurotic symptom. He is a man functionally chained by his own unconscious mind, rendering him completely incapable of executing the revenge commanded by his father's ghost.

2. The Repressed Oedipus Complex and Identification with Claudius: The most important point of the Freudian reading lies in the radical reinterpretation of Hamlet's relationship with his uncle, Claudius. On a conscious level, Hamlet dislikes Claudius, branding him a 'murderer and a villain,' a 'bloody, bawdy villain.' Yet, whenever the opportunity arises to strike and finish him, the Prince hesitates. Freud (2010) argues that this hesitation occurs because Claudius has unconsciously become an externalized mirror of Hamlet's own deepest, repressed childhood impulses. According to the theory of the Oedipus complex, every male child entertains an unconscious desire to eliminate his father and possess his mother (Freud, 2010). As the child develops, the psychic mechanism of repression buries these prohibited desires deep within the unconscious mind. Hamlet delays killing Claudius because Claudius has carried out the very infantile desires that Hamlet himself has unconsciously repressed (Freud, 2010). By murdering King Hamlet and marrying Gertrude, Claudius has removed the father and taken his place beside the mother.

As a result, Hamlet sees Claudius not only as an enemy but also as a reflection of his own hidden childhood wishes. This creates a deep inner conflict: Hamlet consciously hates Claudius, yet unconsciously identifies with him. Therefore, killing Claudius becomes psychologically difficult, leading to the hesitation and inaction that characterize Hamlet throughout the play. This psychic deadlock becomes vividly apparent in Act III, Scene iii, when Hamlet discovers Claudius alone and praying. This is the ultimate operational moment for revenge, the target is defenseless, and the environment is quiet. Yet, Hamlet rationalizes his delay by claiming that killing Claudius during prayer would send his soul to heaven: '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.' (*Hamlet*, 2006)

Through a psychoanalytic lens, this elaborate theological justification is a classic ego-defense mechanism: a rationalization masking a deep internal resistance. As Jones observed in his landmark psychoanalytic study of the play, the conscious mind invents a highly logical, spiritual reason to avoid action because the unconscious mind is paralyzed by the terrifying self-recognition that killing Claudius is equivalent to killing his own hidden self (Jones, E. 1949).

The Punishing Superego and Melancholia: This internal conflict is further exacerbated by the severe imbalance within Hamlet's psychic structure. His Ego is utterly crushed between the primal, chaotic force of the Id and a monstrously overdeveloped, punitive Superego. In his seminal essay '*Mourning and Melancholia*' (Frued, S. 1957), Freud distinguishes between healthy grief and pathological depression. While mourning is a normal, healthy reaction to loss, melancholia is characterized by a profound diminishment of self-esteem, intense self-loathing, and delusional self-reproach. Freud writes that in melancholia, 'the shadow of the object has fallen upon the ego,' meaning the individual internalizes the lost person and directs all their complex, unexpressed anger inward. Hamlet stands as the supreme literary archetype of the Freudian melancholic. His very first soliloquy reveals a mind already leaning heavily toward the death instinct; Hamlet's internal torment is grounded in a deep desire for non-existence, a wish to simply fade away from the corruption surrounding him:

'O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd

His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!' (Hamlet, 1.2.129–132)

As his mourning for his father is contaminated by unexpressed anger toward his mother's hasty remarriage, Hamlet turns his aggression completely inward. His Superego relentlessly tortures his Ego, manifesting as the intense self-punishment seen in his later soliloquies, where he brands himself a 'rogue and peasant slave,' a 'dull and muddy-mettled rascal,' and a coward. He is so consumed by internal struggle and an unconscious desire for self-punishment that he lacks the psychological counterbalance required to project directed, purposeful energy outward into the real world.

3.The Ghost as the Return of the Repressed: Finally, within this psychoanalytic reading, the Ghost of King Hamlet cannot be treated as a simple, objective supernatural entity. Instead, it operates as the ultimate manifestation of the ‘return of the repressed.’ In Freudian theory, whatever material is forced out of conscious awareness does not simply vanish; it remains active in the subconscious, constantly searching for weak points in the ego-defense wall to force its way back to the surface, often in distorted, haunting forms.

There is symbolism in the appearance of the Ghost to Hamlet in the dead of night, dressed in full armor, demanding blood for blood. This spectral figure represents the crushing weight of ancestral trauma, patriarchal law, and the unresolved guilt of the survivor. It acts as an externalized personification of Hamlet’s punishing Superego, demanding an absolute moral purity and an act of violence that Hamlet’s fragile Ego cannot reconcile with his unconscious reality. The Ghost tells Hamlet to ‘Remember me,’ which is essentially a psychic command to remain forever anchored to the pain of the past. Being bound by these invisible psychological chains, the Freudian Hamlet is entirely a creature of determinism. He cannot move forward into the future because his psychic energy is completely locked in a civil war with his own history, his repressed desires, and his internalized ghosts.

4.The Sartrean Counter-Perspective; the Terror of Radical Freedom: To pivot from Sigmund Freud to Jean-Paul Sartre is to shatter the deterministic cage of the unconscious and step into the glaring, unprotected light of absolute human accountability. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre famously declares that ‘man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does’ (Sartre, J. P.1956) For the existentialist, there is no subconscious realm, no past trauma, and no biological wiring that can legitimately serve as an excuse for our behavior. To claim that we are driven by forces that we cannot control is a profound lie. Through this philosophical lens, Hamlet’s legendary delay undergoes a radical transformation. He is no longer viewed as a helpless neurotic paralyzed by an Oedipus complex; instead, he is unmasked as an autonomous agent experiencing a profound existential crisis. Hamlet delays because he is fully aware of his radical freedom, and he is utterly terrified of the absolute responsibility that comes with it.

5.Existential Dread and the Brink of Nothingness: At the core of Sartre’s philosophy is the concept of *angoisse* (anguish). Sartre distinguishes anguish from fear: fear is directed toward an external object or threat, whereas anguish is directed toward oneself. It emerges from the realization that human beings are radically free and therefore wholly responsible for their

choices. Anguish arises when we confront the fact that no external authority, moral code, or predetermined essence can ultimately decide our actions for us. Even when guidance is available, we must choose whether to accept it. This framework illuminates Hamlet's crisis. Although the Ghost commands him to avenge his father's murder, Hamlet cannot escape the responsibility of choosing whether to obey. The Ghost may demand revenge, but it cannot make the decision for him. Hamlet's hesitation reflects his awareness that the consequences of action or inaction will be his alone to bear. As he looks toward the future, he recognizes that no certainty exists to justify his choice and that he alone is responsible for what he becomes. This confrontation with radical freedom and personal responsibility produces the existential condition Sartre calls anguish. Hamlet's famous soliloquy in Act III, Scene i, is not merely the lamentation of a clinically depressed individual leaning toward a Freudian death force; it is the quintessential expression of existential dread.

'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.' (Hamlet. 3.1.56–60)

6.The Sartrean Existential Abyss before Hamlet: 'To be...' = authentic engagement with freedom, choosing to act and define his own essence. '...or not to be' = flight into nothingness seeking a passive exit to escape responsibility. The problem of terrifying realization is there is 'no God, no Ghost, no Fate can choose for him.' Here, Hamlet stands directly on the cliff of nothingness. He recognizes that existence precedes essence: he has been thrown into a corrupted world without an inherent blueprint, and he must actively choose whether to accept existence ('to be') or reject it ('not to be').

The agony in this speech stems from his realization that even choosing not to kill Claudius is a choice. He cannot rely on fate, providence, or cosmic justice to resolve the crisis of Elsinore. Every path before him is an open abyss of freedom. If he kills the king, he becomes a murderer; if he remains passive, he becomes a complicit coward. He is frozen not because he cannot move, but because he knows that whatever step he takes will define his essence forever.

This is precisely where his existential fear collides with his search for what Bertrand Russell terms true 'wisdom.' Russell notes that wisdom requires a 'comprehensive vision' and the ability to 'look beyond the immediate matter in hand' (Russell, B. 2009). Hamlet desperately

wants to achieve this wise, impartial clarity, yet he finds himself trapped. He cannot reach Russell's ideal because he is paralyzed by the realization that no amount of universal knowledge can protect him from the lonely, personal responsibility of his choice. He is caught in a deadlock: his intellect seeks the calm, objective distance of Russellian wisdom, but his reality forces him to face the terrifying, subjective anxiety of Sartrean freedom.

7.Hamlet's Feigned Madness as 'Bad Faith' (deceptive / dishonesty): Because of this radical freedom being too heavy a burden to carry, human beings frequently flee from it. Sartre terms this flight 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*). Bad faith is the act of self-deception wherein a human being pretends that he is not actually free. They treat themselves as a passive object (*en-soi*, or being-in-itself) driven by circumstances, societal roles, or external madness, rather than a conscious subject (*pour-soi*, or being-for-itself) capable of free choice. This concept provides a brilliant key to unlocking Hamlet's 'antic disposition' (the deliberate adoption of a bizarre, eccentric, or feigned-madness character.) Immediately after encountering the Ghost, Hamlet tells Horatio and Marcellus that he may find it appropriate: 'To put an antic disposition on.' (Hamlet. 1.5.172)

From a Sartrean perspective, this feigned madness is a masterpiece of bad faith. By adopting the mask of a madman, Hamlet seeks a psychic shelter. A madman is not responsible for his actions; a madman is viewed as an object driven by biological or mental destiny. This deliberate flight into unreason aligns with the theories of existential psychologist R.D. Laing, who argued that madness can be a conscious, strategic defense mechanism. In Laing's view, an individual splits his identity, creating a false, public self to act as a buffer against a hostile world, in order to preserve a sense of inner security (Laing, R.D. 1990). By embodying the role of the madman, Hamlet successfully shifts the burden of moral accountability away from his authentic self, hiding his true intentions behind a socially excused face. This retreat into a role prevents Hamlet from achieving what Bertrand Russell describes as the very core of wisdom: 'emancipation from the tyranny of the immediate present' (Russell, B. 2009) Instead of rising above his circumstances with a calm and comprehensive vision, Hamlet allows his immediate anxieties to force him into a state of self-deception.

When Hamlet treats Polonius with absurdity, mocks Ophelia, or acts erratically before the court, he is performing a role to avoid authentic engagement with his reality. He uses his 'madness' as a grand existential stall tactic. He can pretend to himself and to Denmark that he is incapable of structured action because he is 'insane,' thereby temporarily escaping the crushing responsibility of looking Claudius in the eye and making the conscious choice to

drive a sword through his chest. He attempts to reduce his free human subjectivity to the status of a passive, un-blamable object, a direct violation of both Sartre's demand for authenticity and Russell's ideal of facing reality with an open, impartial mind.

8.The Ghost as ‘The Other’ and the Struggle for Autonomy: Furthermore, a Sartrean reading radically alters the understanding of the Ghost. Rather than a psychological symptom of a repressed past, the Ghost represents the terrifying intrusion of The Other. Sartre famously wrote in *No Exit* that ‘Hell is other people,’ because the stare of another human being attempts to objectify people, stripping them of their freedom by defining who they are from the outside (Sartre, J.P. 1989). The Ghost of King Hamlet arrives in full military attire and delivers a rigid, external essence to his son. It commands: ‘If thou didst ever thy dear father love...’ ‘Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.’ (Hamlet. 1.5.23–25) The Ghost is trying to strip Hamlet of his existential freedom to define himself. It wants to turn Hamlet into a mere tool, an instrument of ancestral law.

This conflict deeply resonates with Bertrand Russell’s observation that true wisdom requires ‘emancipation from the tyranny of custom’ and the ability to look at life with total intellectual independence (Russell, B. 1912). The Ghost represents the ultimate tyranny of custom, the ancient, blood-for-blood law of revenge. Hamlet’s agonizing delay is, at its core, a rebellion against this external objectification. He hesitates because he inherently resists letting a dead man’s decree dictate his life's purpose or cloud the independent reasoning necessary for Russellian wisdom. He spends the play struggling to reclaim his autonomy, trying to ensure that if he strikes down Claudius, it is because he has chosen to do so as a free agent with a comprehensive understanding of his action, not because he is a puppet performing a script handed down by a ghost from the past. Thus, Hamlet is a man wrestling with radical freedom, using madness as bad faith, and resisting the objectifying gaze of the Ghost, while smoothly grounding his struggle in Russell’s pursuit of intellectual emancipation.

9.The Critical Convergence: ‘The Mask of Madness:’ To understand Hamlet’s crisis, we must compare Freud’s and Sartre’s ideas directly rather than studying them separately. Shakespeare’s genius is that Hamlet supports both viewpoints at the same time. Freud sees Hamlet as controlled by unconscious desires and past experiences, while Sartre sees him as struggling with the burden of freedom and personal choice. Hamlet’s tragedy comes from being caught between these two forces. He is torn between the psychological influences that shape him and the freedom that demands he choose his own path, creating the deep inner

conflict that drives the play. The epicenter of this theoretical clash is the mask of madness, Hamlet's celebrated 'antic disposition.' It is here that the fundamental debate over human agency, responsibility, and the capacity for self-determination must be settled.

10.The Great Debate on Agency: Neurosis vs. Choice: When Hamlet acts erratically, whether he is contemplating suicide, terrorizing Ophelia in her closet, or speaking in fragmented riddles to Polonius, the two theorists diagnose the exact same behavior from opposite poles of the world of thought. This critical deadlock is precisely where Bertrand Russell's philosophy becomes indispensable. Russell observed that the ultimate goal of wisdom is to achieve an 'impartiality' that balances competing forces through a 'comprehensive vision' (Russell, B. 1950). Without this Russellian clarity, Hamlet remains hopelessly trapped within a binary collision: what Freud diagnoses as a helpless, unconscious neurosis driven by a destroyed past, Sartre unmask as a deliberate, conscious choice designed to escape the terrifying responsibility of the present (Freud, S. 1961; Sartre, 1956). The Prince's madness, therefore, becomes a battleground where determinism and absolute freedom pull him in opposite directions, leaving him completely paralyzed in his pursuit of a wise, balanced path to action. The mask of madness and Freud's diagnoses are: A true neurosis, Ego is fractured under the weight of Id and the mask is real, it is a symptom of psychic trauma (Freud, S. 1961). Sartre's diagnosis is an act of bad faith (Sartre, J.P. 1956). For Freud, Hamlet's madness is an authentic symptom of a fracturing Ego (Freud, 1961). It is a psychoanalytic necessity, a compromise formation created by a mind that can no longer bear the immense pressure of its own repressed realities (Freud, 1961). Hamlet does not truly 'choose' his madness; his shattered psyche adopts it as a desperate containment strategy to keep from slipping into absolute, irreversible psychosis. His delay is a genuine structural inability to act (aboulia), rooted in the fact that his internal psychic energy is fully spent on fighting an internal war. For Sartre, this diagnosis is an unacceptable renunciation of human dignity and responsibility. Sartre would argue that framing Hamlet's madness as a 'neurosis' is itself an act of 'bad faith' perpetrated by critics who want to excuse the Prince's cowardice. To Sartre, the antic disposition is a highly deliberate, calculated performance. Hamlet chooses to play the role of a madman because it provides an immediate exemption from the rules of engagement. If he is mad, he is an object, a force of nature, an erratic machine, and an erratic machine cannot be blamed for failing to carry out an assassination. His delay is not an inability to act, but a terror of the consequences of his choice.

This profound division between Freudian determinism and Sartrean choice perfectly illustrates Bertrand Russell's warning regarding the separation of vast knowledge from actual wisdom. Russell observed that 'knowledge without wisdom can be harmful,' as it leaves an individual trapped in narrow, conflicting perspectives without a unifying, higher purpose (Russell, B. 2009). Hamlet possesses an overabundance of psychological knowledge and existential self-awareness, yet he lacks the 'comprehensive vision' that Russell champions. As he cannot reconcile the hidden forces of his past with the terrifying demands of his present freedom, his brilliant intellect remains a weapon turned inward, prolonging his paralysis.

11.The Textual Melting pot: Hamlet, Act III, Scene IV (The Closet Scene): This conceptual rift narrows down beautifully in the intense melting pot of Gertrude's bedchamber (Act III, Scene IV). During this highly charged scene, Hamlet savagely rebukes his mother for her sexual complicity with Claudius, displaying an aggression that feels intensely personal and explosive.

From Freudian Reading: This scene is the ultimate validation of the Oedipus complex. Hamlet is consumed by a fierce, sexually charged rage directed at his mother's body. His fury is not about his father's honor; it is the raw, unadulterated jealousy of the Id, punishing the mother for offering herself to another man. When the Ghost suddenly reappears in this scene, visible only to Hamlet and completely invisible to Gertrude, Freud is justified. The Ghost is a textbook visual hallucination, a projection of Hamlet's intense guilt and his punishing Superego returning to chastise his faltering Ego. The psychoanalyst Jones argued that Hamlet's hesitation is not a lack of courage, but a 'neurotic inhibition' rooted in the Oedipus complex (Jones, E. 1947).

From Sartrean Counter-Argument: Sartre reads this scene not as an outburst of animalistic drives, but as a violent existential confrontation. Hamlet is acting as an existential moral agent, desperately trying to force Gertrude to look into her own mind and acknowledge her *mauvaise foi* (bad faith). He holds up a mirror to her so that she can see her choices, demanding that she should stop pretending to be a passive queen swept along by political currents and instead take radical responsibility for her lifestyle. When the Ghost enters, Hamlet's immediate reaction is not fear of a psychological specter, but a sudden, stark awareness of the objectifying gaze of 'The Other' (in philosophy, this term refers to an individual or group perceived as fundamentally different from or alien to the dominant social identity, often used to justify marginalization or exclusion.) The Ghost arrives to reduce

Hamlet back to a mere instrument of vengeance, and Hamlet's anxiety spikes because he feels his hard-won freedom slipping away under the weight of external expectations.

From Russellian Synthesis: The Absence of Cosmic Vision (a comprehensive worldview or ideology held by a culture, society, or individual): This explosive closet scene perfectly dramatizes what Bertrand Russell identifies as the ultimate failure of a mind unguided by 'wisdom.' According to Russell, true wisdom requires a 'comprehensive vision' that rises above personal passions, as well as 'emancipation, as far as possible, from the tyranny of the here and now' (Russell, B. 2007). As Hamlet remains entirely captive to the immediate emotional trauma of his mother's actions and the physical presence of his father's ghost, he lacks the necessary sense of proportion and impartiality required to execute a balanced path to action. In this room, Hamlet is entirely trapped at once. Whether he is blinded by the raw, Oedipus complex of the Freudian Id or consumed by the desperate, localized desire to break Gertrude's Sartrean bad faith, his vision is completely narrowed. Hamlet lacks the 'impartiality' that Russell champions, the intellectual distance needed to see the tragedy of Elsinore not as a personal assault on his ego or his freedom, but as a broader, cosmic disorder (breakdown of natural laws). As his vast intellectual energy is burning through a localized emotional and existential civil war, he cannot achieve the calm, objective clarity required to restore justice to Denmark wisely.

Ultimately, this intersection reveals that the Hamlet's profound paralysis is far more than an isolated personal breakdown; it is the universal crisis of Hamlet. Freud explains the gravity of the heavy anchor dragging Hamlet back into the depths of his history, where repressed, unconscious childish desires dictate his modern pathology. Conversely, Sartre explains the terrifying, open horizon that stretches out before him whenever he tries to look into his future, forcing him to confront a radical freedom he desperately attempts to evade. The 'universal crisis of Hamlet' is the timeless tragedy of a human being who realizes that he is simultaneously shaped by a deterministic past he cannot alter, yet remains entirely responsible for a future he must choose.

This structural deadlock finds its ultimate resolution through the third pillar of the inquiry: Bertrand Russell's framework of wisdom. Trapped between the backward pull of Freudian determinism and the forward dread of Sartrean choice, Hamlet spends the majority of the play in an intellectual paralysis where immense knowledge fails to translate into meaningful action. He has a brilliant mind, but it lacks a unifying, objective purpose. It is only in Hamlet's Act V, most notably in the graveyard scene, that the Prince achieves what Russell

calls a ‘comprehensive vision’ and ‘emancipation from the tyranny of the immediate present’ (Russell, B. 2009) By looking upon the impartial skull of Yorick (skull is exhaled by the important character), Hamlet transcends his personal Oedipus complex and his subjective existential dread. He adopts a grander, large perspective on mortality, climaxing in his quiet realization that ‘the readiness is all.’ By synthesizing these three dimensions, the study concludes that Hamlet’s final, authentic capacity to act emerges only when he steps out of his psychological and existential civil war and ascends into the calm, universal clarity of true Russellian wisdom.

Conclusion: From the existentialist perspective, Hamlet’s crisis is the embodiment of Sartre’s insight that freedom is both absolute and anguishing. Every hesitation on the stage reflects the burden of radical choice, where meaning must be created without guarantees. Hamlet’s torment is thus not indecision but the existential condition itself: the necessity to act authentically in a world where responsibility is inescapable and certainty forever elusive. His freedom is terrifying precisely because it is limitless, demanding courage in the face of ambiguity. Through the psychoanalytic lens, Freud reveals that Hamlet’s delay is not simply rational deliberation but the eruption of unconscious forces into consciousness. The ghost of the father becomes a projection of repressed desire and unresolved conflict, while Hamlet’s hesitation mirrors the fractured nature of the psyche. Freedom and wisdom are never pure, for they are entangled with hidden impulses that unsettle intention. Hamlet’s universal crisis is therefore psychological as much as philosophical: the struggle to act while haunted by desires and fears that remain beyond awareness.

Finally, Russell’s humanism reminds us that wisdom lies not in certainty but in the humility to live amidst doubt. Hamlet’s reflections embody the fragile clarity of reason, which seeks understanding even when truth is provisional. His crisis becomes a mirror of the human condition: the ceaseless effort to balance freedom with responsibility, to confront the unconscious without surrendering to it, and to cultivate wisdom in the face of uncertainty. In this convergence of existentialism, psychoanalysis, and humanism, Hamlet’s dilemma transcends the stage, becoming a timeless meditation on what it means to live, choose, and know oneself.

“In the end, Hamlet’s universal crisis reminds us that to live authentically is to embrace the anguish of freedom, confront the shadows of the unconscious, and pursue wisdom with humility, an eternal drama that defines the very essence of being human.”

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