

Memorization Assignment

Hamlet 3.1.64-96

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
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler 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,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

The question is: is it better to be alive or dead?
Is it nobler to put up with
all the nasty things that luck throws your way,
or to fight against all those troubles
by simply putting an end to them once and for all?
Dying, sleeping—
that's all dying is—a sleep that ends
all the heartache and shocks
that life on earth gives us—that's an achievement
to wish for. To die, to sleep—
to sleep, maybe to dream. Ah, but there's the
catch:
in death's sleep who knows what kind of dreams
might come, after we've put the noise and
commotion of life behind us.
That's certainly something to worry about. That's
the consideration
that makes us stretch out our sufferings so long.
After all, who would put up with all life's
humiliations—the abuse from superiors, the
insults of arrogant men,
the pangs of unrequited love, the inefficiency of
the legal system,
the rudeness of people in office, and the
mistreatment good people have to take from
bad—when you could simply take out your knife
and call it quits? Who would choose
to grunt and sweat through an exhausting life,
unless they were afraid of something dreadful
after death,
the undiscovered country from which
no visitor returns, which we wonder
about without getting any answers from
and which makes us stick to the evils we know
rather than rush off to seek the ones we don't?
Fear of death makes us all cowards,
and our natural boldness
becomes weak with too much thinking.
Actions that should be carried out at once
get misdirected, and stop being actions at all.

(Modern English Translation)