

great one on a mind like Hamlet's. So I don't think it would have been anything extraordinary, if his mind did become unbalanced. After the ghost had departed, Hamlet rejoined his friends and in answer to their inquiries, he spoke, as Horatio says, "wild and whirling words." These men were all faithful to him, and there was no need of deceiving them; so, when he acted so strangely with them, I think it shows that his mind had been affected.

Joe—Yes, they were friends of his for all ordinary purposes; but if he had told them of what the ghost had revealed and of his own purposes of taking revenge on Claudius, they might not have kept silence, so he acted as he did to evade their questions, not to make them think he was mad. He took the shortest way to get rid of them, and so showed his common sense.

Dick—Well, let that pass. Let us consider his conduct towards Ophelia. He loved her ardently, and would surely cause her as little pain as possible. But in the second act, we see how much he frightened her by his strange conduct, and in the third act, he seems to be absolutely indifferent to her, and repulses her savagely. This is carrying on the matter further than concealment of his design could require.

Joe—In the second act, he had probably suspected that Ophelia's change of manner was due to Polonius' interference, and by behaving so strangely, he caused Polonius to imagine that his madness was caused by love. This was carried to the king and fell in perfectly with Hamlet's desire. In the third act, he evidently knew that spies were listening, and he spoke for their special benefit. Perhaps it was somewhat cruel to cause Ophelia so much pain, but he was compelled to do it.

Dick—How about his conversations with Polonius?

Joe—He must have seen that Polonius was an old busybody and he took great pleasure in railing at him. His conduct in this matter shows what a true estimate he had formed of the character of Polonius, and proves Hamlet's discernment.

Dick—But Hamlet himself admits that he cannot always control himself. He tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, that for some unknown reason, his mind has been clouded. Also, just before their bout in the last act, he tells Laertes, as a reason why