

The words here quoted or rather misquoted from a previous part of the play are adduced to show that Shakespeare represents Hamlet to be a Christian. As this circumstance demonstrates nothing, as before proved, the quotation might be passed without notice. It may be remarked however that it is no conclusive evidence for the christianity of Hamlet; some of the heathens were not without knowledge of the "Canon 'gainst self-slaughter."

"Quare et tibi, Publius, et piis," etc., *cic. de rep.* VI. 15.

Wherefore, O Publius, it is your duty and the duty of those that have any piety, to keep their souls (secure) in the custody of the body, nor, without the command of Him by whom your soul was given you, to force it to depart from this human life, lest you should seem to desert the post of duty which has been by God assigned to you."

"This might be a good argument in a heathen or Pagan *such indeed Hamlet really was*, but Shakespeare has already represented him as a good Catholic."—GOLDSMITH.

Hamlet was a heathen, here he is represented as a Christian—this is a charge of inconsistency and one that has sometimes been advanced. It is fallacious.

Shakespeare's Hamlet is not a heathen. He is not the Hamlet that is said to have lived about A. D. 700. Of that Hamlet nothing is known with certainty. Some Danish chief of that name there probably was concerning whom traditionary notices, through the misty interval of 500 years, reached Saxo-Grammaticus and others, and which were made the foundation of a fabulous narrative or novel in the French language in 1570. From this, or a translation of it, some play or plays in English appear to have been constructed. Which of these were the foundation of Shakespeare's Hamlet is a question that has been much agitated. It seems a question of little significance for the Hamlet of Shakespeare is not the Hamlet of these productions but a new creation no more to be compared to their's than Hyperion to a Satyr. To allege an inconsistency by subinducing the identity of the two Hamlets is a fallacy of equivocation, *ambiguitas potens* in law logic. It was not *that* fabulous Hamlet whom the genius of Shakespeare endowed with the eloquence and wit, the knowledge and reasoning that have instructed and delighted the better part of mankind.

Another of Goldsmith's attempts to demonstrate the errors of Shakespeare's reasoning in the soliloquy has reference to the following passage, which he quotes:

"And makes us rather bear the ills we have,
Than fly to others which we know not of."

"This declaration," he says, "expressly asserts that there must be ills in that (other) world, though what kind of ills they are we do not know. The argument, therefore, may be reduced to this lemma, (*sic.*): This world abounds with ills which I feel; the other world abounds with ills, the nature of which I do not know, therefore, I will rather bear these ills I have, than fly to others which I know of: a deduction amounting to a certainty with respect to the only circumstance that could create a doubt, namely, whether in death he should rest from his misery, and if he was certain there were evils in the next world as well as in this, he had no room to reason at all about the matter."

In this extraordinary march of intellect we have certain propositions laid down, which are employed as the premises of an argument, or syllogism. He calls it a "lemma," but as his "lemma" is constructed of two propositions and a third introduced by the illative "therefore," he must consider it an argument; and, besides, he calls the conclusion a deduction. The media of his argumentation are false assumptions, whose falsity are manifest by simple inspection merely.

Hamlet does not *expressly* assert that there must be ills in that other world.

He does not assert it indirectly or by implication.

He does not assert that "the other world abounds with ills."

He does not assert "*though what kind of ills they are we do not know*," nor "*the nature of which ills I do not know*."

From these, whatever conclusions are legitimately inferred must be fallacious, and Shakespeare's reasoning, therefore, *quoad hoc*, remains invalidated.

In the quotation above made from Hamlet's speech, reference is made to "the dread of something after death," and it is this dread that, as Hamlet says, "makes us rather bear the ills we have than fly to others which we know not of," the signification of which may be given as follows: Makes us prefer bearing the ills we have to putting ourselves (by suicide) in a position in which we fear we may encounter ills of which we know nothing.

"From the language of Hamlet, we have," Goldsmith says, "a deduction amounting to certainty, that in death he should not rest from his misery,"—a deduction amounting to certainty. Now the ills referred to are represented as contingent. They are the something after death which was dreaded, and Goldsmith himself speaks of them as uncertain. The conception of uncertainty is involved in his own interpretation of the language, which interpretation is this: "The dread of what *may happen* after death, he (Hamlet) says." Hence we have two assertions, one affirming uncertainty, the other affirming certainty, a logical suicide, or contradiction.

"If he was certain there were evils in the next world as well as in this, he had no room to reason at all about the matter."—GOLDSMITH.

It has been shown that Hamlet did not profess the certainty here adverted to, and that it cannot be rightly inferred from a rational construction of his language. Therefore, on this ground alone, Hamlet's room to "reason about the matter" remains undiminished.

But supposing Hamlet were certain, does it follow that he had no room to reason at all about the matter? Every object of human thought has numerous properties and relations, and consequently there is plenty of "room" to reason about them; and with regard to this object in question, it was his undeniable privilege, and, considering the circumstances, a necessity with him to reason about "the ills," to speculate, say, upon their "nature" and "kind," as spiritual or material, upon their duration, above all, on their magnitude, so that his "room for reasoning" was not a minimum, not "that which has no magnitude, as some of the