**Abstract**

‘To be or not to be’: The Biocentric *Hamlet*

*By*

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William Shakespeare’s ‘*Hamlet*’[[1]](#footnote-1) (Shakespeare, 2011) has long stood as a paradigm of literary study, inviting diverse interpretations. Central to its enigmatic appeal is the contemplative soliloquy ‘To be or not to be,’ which encapsulates the existential deliberations of its eponymous protagonist. This paper posits that within this contemplation lies a deeper resonance with the philosophical doctrine of biocentrism—a perspective that prioritises the intrinsic value of all living entities, acknowledging their interconnectedness and conscious experiences. By interweaving the thematic tapestry of ‘*Hamlet*’ with biocentric thought, this research elucidates the play’s latent environmental and moral dimensions, offering novel insights into Hamlet’s psyche and the play’s broader metaphysical implications.

Biocentrism, first articulated in contemporary discourse by figures such as Robert Lanza, extends beyond anthropocentric paradigms to suggest a profound egalitarianism among living entities[[2]](#footnote-2) (Berman, 2009) It argues for the centrality of life and consciousness in understanding the universe, thus challenging the long-held human-centric view of existence.[[3]](#footnote-3) By juxtaposing ‘*Hamlet*’ with biocentric principles, this analysis reveals an alternative framework through which to interpret the play’s examination of life, death, and humanity’s place in the natural order. The soliloquy’s meditation on existence and non-existence—often read as a personal existential crisis—can be reinterpreted through the lens of biocentrism as reflecting a universal crisis, one that extends beyond the individual to encompass all life forms. Such a perspective not only reinvigorates the analysis of Hamlet’s internal conflict but also compels a re-evaluation of the play’s ethical underpinnings, particularly in relation to the environment and the non-human ‘others’ that inhabit it.

In pursuing this inquiry, this paper will navigate through the intricate layers of ‘*Hamlet*,’ deconstructing the play’s engagement with life’s sanctity and the inherent connection between all sentient beings. It aims to contribute to scholarly discourse by inviting reconsiderations of classic literature through contemporary philosophical prisms, asserting that such cross-disciplinary dialogues can illuminate timeless texts in transformative ways. This introduction sets the stage for a complex exploration of Shakespeare’s work through a modern philosophical framework. It positions the paper at the intersection of literary analysis and environmental ethics, promising a fresh and academically rigorous investigation of ‘*Hamlet*.’

# Bibliography

Berman, R. L. a. B., 2009. *Biocentrism: How life and Consciousness are keys to understanding the true nature of the Universe.* Dallas: BenBella Books, Inc.

Shakespeare, W., 2011. *The Arden Shakespeare Complete works.* London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)