

An Analysis Of Oedipus Rex By Sophocles

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Oedipus king (in Greek Οἰδίπους τύραννος, Oidipous Tyrannos, in Latin Oedipus Rex) is a [Greek tragedy](#) of Sophocles, of unknown date. Some indications say that it could be written in the years after 430 a.C. Although the tetralogy of which he was a part (from which the other works have been lost) only achieved second place in the dramatic agon, many consider [Oedipus Rex](#) the masterpiece of Sophocles. Among them is Aristotle, who analyzed it in Poetics. The work presents Oedipus at his most splendid moment, as king of Thebes and husband of Jocasta.

Structure Of The Play

Oedipus Rex is a dramatic work in a single act because the whole work takes place in a unit of time. The work is a tragedy (Roby et al. 1962). As such, it presents eminent persons of high social status, uses solemn and elevated language and concludes with the sacrifice of several characters (in this case, two: Jocasta and Oedipus), who pay with death (Jocasta) or blindness and exile (Oedipus) his actions. It consists of a prologue, followed by eight episodes (written in iambic trimeters), among which are interspersed the solo interventions of the choir (párodos, cuatro estasimos) and the lyrical dialogue of the choir with the other characters (Roby et al. 1962). The parts of the choir (including the lyrical dialogue with the other characters) were sung; the rest was recited. In the recitation, in addition to iambic trimeters, there are also some passages in anapests and catallactic trochaic tetrameter (Roby et al. 1962).

Basic Premises Of The Tragedy

Queen Yocasta, after hearing the full story of the messenger, already understands all the deep mysteries and flees after trying in vain for Oedipus to stop his investigation.

Finally, the witness of the crime arrives (Knox and Bloom, 2006). Oedipus and the messenger interrogate him, and at first, he refuses to give answers, but before Oedipus' threats, he reveals that the child he had been given to leave him in Mount Citeron was the son of King Laius and Queen Jocasta and that they had delivered to die, preventing a dismal oracle was fulfilled. However, he had delivered it to the messenger out of pity (Knox and Bloom, 2006). Oedipus realizes that Jocasta and Laius are his true parents and that all the predictions of the oracles have been fulfilled. From this revelation, a messenger of the house tells all the details of Queen Yocasta's suicide and the subsequent blindness of Oedipus (Knox and Bloom, 2006). Oedipus appears with bloody eyes and asks to be banished.

He says that he has preferred to be blinded because he can not afford to see, after his crimes, his

parents in hell, the children he has fathered, or the people of Thebes (Sophocles et al. 1949). Creon, who assumes power, asks the Thebans to take pity on Oedipus and make him enter the palace. He then says that he will consult the oracle again to find out what he has to do with Oedipus (Knox and Bloom, 2006). He says he has no mercy on him, asks to be banished and tells Creon to take care of his two daughters, an act that is finally consummated (Sophocles et al. 1949). The last verses of the corypheus are a kind of conclusion or moral in which it is expressed that even those who seem happy and powerful are at all times exposed to suffering misfortunes (Sophocles et al. 1949). Upon hearing Oedipus' fears, the messenger explains these past events with the intention of calming Oedipus down. However, the king of Thebes wishes to know more about his origin and discovers that the same pastor who witnessed the crime of Laius had delivered Oedipus when he was a baby to the messenger (Knox and Bloom, 2006).

Plague In Thebes

Oedipus, king of Thebes, addresses a crowd led by a priest, who has gathered before the king to ask for a remedy to the plague that ravages the city of Thebes. To know the causes of this misfortune, Oedipus himself sent his brother-in-law Creon to consult the oracle of Delphi (Knox and Bloom, 2006). His answer is that the plague is because he has not avenged the death of Layo, the previous king: his bloodshed threatens to kill all the inhabitants of the city until the murderer is executed or exiled (Knox and Bloom, 2006).

Theme Of Tragedy

One of the key things that the narrative of the story is talking about seems to be a tragedy (Sophocles et al. 1949). Most of the time, what is happening is that the characters are receiving bad omens about certain things, and when they act to make sure that they are able to avoid the misfortune, they end up instead fulfilling the prophecy that was said earlier (Knox and Bloom, 2006). As a matter of fact, one can see the parallel with some of the other Greek tragedies due to the fact that the prophecy seems to play an important part in the whole process. For example, if one talks about the story of Sophocles, then it can be seen that the character of Oedipus, who is his son, is eventually going to kill him, and the precondition that is given is how the murder is going to take place (Sophocles et al. 1949). Years later, Oracle tells Oedipus that his father is going to be killed by him (Knox and Bloom, 2006).

Taboos in Family Relationships

Another major theme that one gets to see and witness a lot during the course of the story is how the formation of the family relationship is carried out. It is seen that how Oedipus is willing to kill any person under the circumstances that he is willing to give his life (Vernant et al. 1978). There are

themes related to incest as well, even the sexual relationship being implied with the other. The key thing, though, is that Oedipus is performing these facts but does not have the knowledge that these acts are morally not right (Knox and Bloom, 2006). The argument that is made by Freud during the narrative of this play is how the process of sexual awakening happens during childhood. Later on, Freud made the assumption that these primitive human inheritances were the product of the work that was being done earlier (Knox and Bloom, 2006). The rejection of incest and parricide was one of the things that led Oedipus to attack himself and go blind during the course of the whole process (Knox and Bloom, 2006).

Conclusion

To save, the city begins to investigate the death of the previous king, Layo. Little by little, the truth is discovered: Oedipus is the killer he seeks. Layo was his father. His wife, Yocasta, is his mother at the same time (Vernant et al. 1978). Yocasta commits suicide, and Oedipus, after blinding himself, asks his brother-in-law Creon to let him go into exile and stay with his two daughters since his two sons are men and they will know how to act (Knox and Bloom, 2006).

Works Cited

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