



## Gods, Fate and Knowledge : The destruction of Oedipus's self-discovery

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### Abstract

Sophocles' Oedipus Rex serves as a springboard for examining the interplay between divine pronouncements, fate's influence, and the pursuit of knowledge in shaping human destiny. This analysis approaches the play as a meditation on identity, free will, and the fundamental human experience. It explores the destructive nature of a life built on deception and the agonizing struggle to reconcile self-image with a horrifying truth. Through Oedipus' tragic trajectory, the paper delves into a central question: does true understanding offer solace or merely inflict a cruel burden? This inquiry underlines the complexities of human existence within a seemingly predetermined fate.

**Key words:** Gods, Fate , Knowledge , Oedipus, self-discovery.

الآلهة والقدر والمعرفة: تدمير اكتشاف أوديب لذاته

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### خلاصة

يعتبر أوديب الملك لسوفوكليس بمثابة نقطة انطلاق لدراسة التفاعل بين التصريحات الإلهية، وتأثير القدر، والسعى وراء المعرفة في تشكيل مصير الإنسان. يتعامل هذا التحليل مع المسرحية باعتبارها تأملاً في الهوية والإرادة الحرة والتجربة الإنسانية الأساسية. إنه يستكشف الطبيعة الدمرة للحياة المبنية على الخداع والنضال المؤلم للتوفيق بين الصورة الذاتية والحقيقة المرعبة. من خلال مسار أوديب المأساوي، تتعقب الورقة في سؤال مركزي: هل الفهم الحقيقي يقدم العزاء أم أنه مجرد عبئ قاس؟ يسلط هذا التحقيق الضوء على تعقيدات الوجود الإنساني في ظل مصير محدد سلفاً على ما يبدوا.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الآلهة، القدر، المعرفة، أوديب، اكتشاف الذات.

### Introduction:

Ancient Greeks (5th century BC onwards) were deeply curious about the beginnings of tragedy and comedy. While the exact origins remained unclear, influential figures like Aristotle offered explanations and creation myths. These excerpts showcase how the ancients viewed the birth of these dramatic forms.

In literature, Oedipus Tyrannus occupies a position similar to that of the Mona Lisa in art. Everyone is familiar with the story, which is considered to be the first detective story in Western literature, and everyone who has read or watched it has been lured into its enigmas and moral issues. It depicts a nightmare image of a world flipped upside down: a decent man realizes that he has killed his father,



married his mother, and had children with her without his knowledge. It's a story that makes one quiver with terror and feel sympathy merely by hearing it, as Aristotle puts it in the *Poetics*. However, in Sophocles' hands, this old tale is transformed into a profound meditation on the issues of guilt and duty, the order (or chaos) of our universe, and the essence of man. The tragedy opens with Oedipus, King of Thebes, ruling over a pandemic city. Oedipus promises to discover the root of the contamination since he is sought after and admired by his citizens. The plague, however, will only be lifted until the murder of Jocasta's first husband, Laius, is solved, according to an oracle from the Greek god Apollo. Oedipus was nurtured in a lie-filled environment from the beginning, thinking Merope and Polybus to be his real parents. This veil of mystery not only protected Oedipus from his biological parents' awareness, but also served as a trigger for his escape from Corinth.

In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the revelation of truth, often hailed as liberating, plunges the protagonist into a self-imposed darkness. While seeking answers, Oedipus unknowingly walks a path towards his own destruction, a fate foreshadowed throughout the play. Sophocles employs dramatic irony and foreshadowing to illuminate Oedipus' tragic awakening, fostering a strong emotional connection with the audience who witness his descent. In *Oedipus Rex*, unveils the protagonist's pursuit of truth in a layered progression. Initially, Oedipus embarks on a seemingly rational quest – to uncover the cause of Thebes' suffering. This focus then transforms into a determined pursuit of King Laius' murderer. However, the investigation takes a dramatic turn as it begins to implicate Oedipus himself. It's at this stage, fueled by fervor, that Oedipus recklessly disregards the potential consequences of his relentless truth-seeking. To fully evaluate Oedipus' journey, a segmented analysis, dissecting each transformation, is necessary before unifying them as a whole.

Sophocles initially presents Oedipus as a paragon of humanism. His intellectual prowess, exemplified by solving the Sphinx's riddle, fosters self-confidence and public adulation in Thebes. The imagery surrounding him reinforces this humanistic portrayal, symbolizing order and human control. Goldhill, in *Reading Greek Tragedy*, draws a connection between this imagery and the "Ode to Man" in *Antigone*, which celebrates human achievements in mastering the natural world. However, as the play unfolds, this very imagery becomes corrupted, mirroring Oedipus' downfall. The initial symbols of human control morph into those of pollution, reflecting the ultimate failure of human agency.

*Oedipus Rex* delves into the origins of human life, the person's balancing act between "one" and "many" identities, the discovery of one's true self, and the quest to unravel the underlying mystery of individual selfhood (Sega, 2001, p.4). It dramatizes Oedipus's lonely journey of self-discovery, in which he separates his



true self from a false self-definition provided by an oracle as a result of his power's external status, and retraces his journey from king to isolated wanderer, excluded by his father and mother, city, home, and even his name.(p. 4-5)The drama examines how individuals interpret their existence, how their environment obscures the ultimate truth from them, the gods' mysterious aloofness, and the ambiguity of language. Furthermore, the play raises the following question: if individuals understood what "truth" was, could they discover the end pattern governing their lives' progression; would it provide hope or solace, or would it turn out to be a cruel joke? (p. 4) Oedipus is both free and regulated at the same time. He is capable of making decisions, yet he is powerless in the face of previous decisions and circumstances he could not control, such as his origins. Accordingly this paper try to investigates the role of Gods, Fate and Knowledge in the destruction of Oedipus.

### **The problem of the research**

This research paper endeavors to deconstruct the interplay between divine pronouncements, the notion of an unyielding fate, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge in orchestrating the tragic downfall of Oedipus in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. The analysis will delve into how these forces, both internal and external, coalesce to propel the narrative towards its devastating conclusion.

### **The significance of the research**

This research paper transcends a mere retelling of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. Its significance lies in its meticulous deconstruction of the intricate interplay between divine pronouncements, the concept of an inflexible destiny, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge. By employing this specific lens, the paper offers a novel interpretation of the play's enduring thematic concerns. These include the age-old debate between free will and predestination, the inherent limitations of human knowledge, and the enigmatic role of divine intervention in shaping the course of human lives. Through a nuanced analysis of how these forces coalesce, the paper sheds new light on Oedipus' actions and motivations, moving beyond simplistic portrayals of him as either a hapless victim of fate or a tragic hero. Furthermore, the paper delves into profound questions regarding the essence of existence, the arduous path of self-discovery, and the very boundaries of human knowledge. These are timeless questions that continue to resonate with audiences today, thus ensuring the enduring relevance of analyzing Oedipus Rex even beyond its historical context.

### **Research objective**

1. To understand the complex interplay between Gods, Fate, and Knowledge in Oedipus Rex: This involves a deep analysis of how pronouncements from



the Gods (especially Apollo's prophecy), the idea of an unchangeable fate, and Oedipus' relentless pursuit of knowledge all work together to bring about his tragic downfall.

2. To offer a fresh perspective on Oedipus: By examining these forces and how they influence him, the paper aims to provide a new interpretation of his actions and motivations. It goes beyond simply labeling him a victim of fate or a tragic hero, instead revealing a more complex and nuanced understanding of him as a character.

### Key Terms:

- Oedipus: The protagonist of the play, King of Thebes, driven by a desire for truth and justice.
- Knowledge: A central theme in the play. Oedipus relentlessly pursues knowledge, particularly about his own origins, but this knowledge ultimately leads to his downfall.
- Truth: Closely linked to knowledge. Oedipus seeks the truth, but the truth he uncovers is unbearable.
- Fate: The concept of fate, embodied by Moira, casts a long shadow over the play. The prophecy seems to predetermine Oedipus's actions, yet it offers no clear path for him to avoid his doom.
- Gods: The role of the gods is shrouded in ambiguity. Apollo's prophecies set the stage for the tragedy, but the gods do not force Oedipus down this path.
- Prophecy: Apollo's prophecy that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother sets the stage for the entire play.
- Ignorance: The play explores the idea that ignorance can sometimes be preferable to knowledge, as knowledge can lead to suffering.
- Blindness: A symbol with multiple meanings in the play. Oedipus is physically blind at the end, but he also gains a form of self-awareness that he lacked before.

### Literature review

While some scholars, like E.R. Dodds (*The Greeks and the Irrational*), emphasize the predetermined nature of Oedipus's fate due to Moira (fate) and view him as a mere pawn in the hands of the gods, with free will being illusory, others like Bernard Knox (*Oedipus at Thebes*) offer a contrasting perspective. Knox argues that Oedipus's downfall is driven by an intrinsic character flaw: hubris, or excessive pride, coupled with an unrelenting pursuit of truth, even when it becomes personally devastating.

Literary critics, such as Jeannette L. Hopper ("Fathers and Sons in *Oedipus Rex*"), delve into the paradoxical roles of sight and blindness within the play. Initially, sight, interpreted as intellectual knowledge, ironically blinds



Oedipus to his true identity. This blindness persists until his physical sight is taken, at which point a form of self-awareness emerges. Additionally, scholars like David Grene (*Oedipus Rex* introduction) emphasize the destructive potential of knowledge itself. Grene argues that Oedipus's unrelenting pursuit of truth ultimately leads him to a truth he cannot bear, becoming the very cause of his downfall.

The issue of divine retribution is another facet of the play's interpretation. Scholars like Eva Cantarella (*Pandora's Box*) propose that Oedipus's suffering serves as punishment for Laius's transgression, possibly referring to his same-sex relationship. This perspective suggests a cause-and-effect dynamic where the sins of the father are visited upon the son. In contrast, scholars like Charles Segal (*Sophocles and the Tragic Chorus*) view the play through the lens of a larger cosmic order. In this interpretation, the gods act as maintainers of balance, punishing those who disrupt it. Oedipus's tragic fate, then, becomes a reflection of this cosmic principle, with his actions restoring equilibrium by atoning for Laius's crime.

### Knowledge :

The idea that knowledge inherently conquers ignorance has a long history, arguably starting even before the Enlightenment. While Enlightenment thinkers emphasized the power of scientific knowledge, earlier societies, including early Christians, valued a different kind of knowledge – religious faith. For them, adhering to the correct religious doctrine wasn't just intellectual assent; it was seen as crucial for personal morality and even salvation. As the New Testament itself declares, "Your faith has saved you" (Luke ,2014,p.50). In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the concept of knowledge is far from straightforward. It's not simply a matter of reason prevailing over ignorance. Instead, the play pushes the boundaries of reason to its breaking point, revealing its limitations. Oedipus, initially appearing as a champion of reason – a solver of riddles and follower of Apollo – embodies this struggle.

Sophocles rejects the simplistic idea that knowledge leads to a perfect state, whether religious, social, or technological. For him, the pursuit of knowledge wasn't a path to utopia, but a harrowing journey into disturbing truths and unimaginable realities. This complexity mirrors the very essence of tragedy. The Greeks revered wisdom precisely because it forced us to confront the potential dangers of dissecting the universe with limited human understanding. A true seeker of knowledge wouldn't see it as a source of comfort, but as a harsh truth that reveals new problems alongside solutions. It's a powerful tool, but one that can be as destructive as it is healing. While *Oedipus Rex* explores grand themes like free will, fate, and the significance of knowledge, these concepts only hold meaning through the protagonist's firsthand experience. Unlike philosophers who merely



theorize, Oedipus undergoes a transformative journey. From solving the Sphinx's riddle to ultimately blinding himself, he actively confronts the power and limitations of knowledge in a visceral way.

While sight undeniably serves as the central metaphor for knowledge and truth in *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles employs a rich tapestry of imagery beyond this. Notably, the play utilizes a range of symbols that directly connect to the themes of human control, divine interaction, and pollution.

Oedipus is a seeker of knowledge and truth in *Oedipus the King*. Despite several cautions to leave the truth alone, he continues to investigate Laius's murder and his own identity. Oedipus' quest for knowledge and truth, however, leads to destruction when he discovers his fate, which he would have been better off not knowing. This implies that knowledge is harmful and has a limited ability to bring happiness to those who seek it. He has no idea how perilous the knowledge he desires is, so he begins by looking for the killers of Thebes' former king. Oedipus was warned that if he continued to seek the truth, he would become blind and be driven out of the land, but his curiosity won him. He persisted in his search for the dangerous truth about his true father and Laius' murder. Then he discovered that the man he thought was his father wasn't his father at all, and he proceeded on his path to oblivion.

In *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles crafts Oedipus as a leader defined by swift action. He proactively dispatches Creon to the oracle upon the priests' request and immediately pursues consulting Tiresias after the chorus' suggestion. This decisiveness aligns perfectly with Athenian ideals of strong leadership. However, this very strength becomes a double-edged sword. Oedipus' tendency for impulsiveness extends to his interpretations. He misconstrues the hesitation of Tiresias and Creon as a scheming power grab, fostering suspicion without any evidence. This inherent haste paves the tragic path towards his downfall.

This excerpt explores the perilous nature of seeking truth in *Oedipus Rex*. Lauren Silberman (1986) highlights this danger through Oedipus's initial response to the prophecy. Confronted with the horrifying prediction of murdering his father and marrying his mother, Oedipus lacks the context to understand how it relates to his origins. Consequently, he flees his adoptive parents, a decision driven by fear of fulfilling the prophecy. This act of avoidance ironically sets the stage for its eventual realization, as he unknowingly kills Laius on his journey. The passage suggests that knowledge of the prophecy, rather than providing agency, fuels his actions and propels him towards his tragic fate (p. 296). Vellacott (1964) reinforces this concept by proposing that if Oedipus had established specific boundaries, such as avoiding older men and women, he might have averted disaster. However, the emphasis is on the inherent difficulty of such foresight. Oedipus, lacking the full picture, was ill-equipped to formulate these safeguards.



Overall, the passage argues that the pursuit of truth in *Oedipus Rex* is a double-edged sword. While knowledge can be empowering, it can also lead to unintended consequences, particularly when the full scope of the truth remains obscured (p. 140).

In *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus's proclamation to personally unravel the mystery surrounding King Laius's murder showcases his celebrated intelligence and leadership. However, this very clarity blinds him to the truth about his own past. It is Tiresias, the blind prophet, who pierces this self-assuredness, planting the first seeds of doubt. Oedipus's mockery of Tiresias's blindness backfires with a chilling prophecy of his own impending blindness. This chilling foreshadowing tragically becomes reality as the full weight of his actions – killing his father and marrying his mother – crushes him. Though physically blinded by self-inflicted torment, Oedipus gains a new, agonizing awareness of fate's power and the gods' influence. His journey exemplifies the high cost of uncovering an unwanted truth.

In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the horrific events that lead to Oedipus's downfall predate the play's action. Years after Laius's murder, Oedipus, a prosperous king, lives blissfully ignorant alongside his wife Jocasta and their children. This fragile peace shatters with the plague's arrival and the oracle's demand to find Laius's killer. Duty-bound, Oedipus vows to unearth the truth. Throughout his investigation, characters – Creon, Tiresias, Jocasta, and the shepherd – exhibit a reluctance to speak, hinting that disturbing secrets lie buried. Creon advises discretion, Tiresias remains silent until provoked, Jocasta pleads for the investigation to stop, and the shepherd reveals the truth only under threat. Oedipus's relentless pursuit of truth, fueled by his desire to be a good king and save his people, transforms him into his own prosecutor, judge, and ultimately, self-punisher.

The insatiable human desire for self-discovery, particularly prominent in *Oedipus*, is presented as a double-edged sword. While the pursuit of knowledge is a fundamental human drive, the play suggests that some truths are better left concealed. The revelation of the prophecy concerning Oedipus's patricide and marriage to his mother dismantles his world and shatters his perception of himself. This newfound knowledge, instead of empowering him, plunges him into despair and sets him on a path of self-destruction.

The play emphasizes the tragic consequences of knowledge acquisition through various means. Oedipus' initial ignorance, his overpowering curiosity, and his subsequent psychological torment all serve as evidence of the potential for knowledge to act as a catalyst for disaster. The play challenges the traditional notion that "knowledge is power" by suggesting that seeing or knowing the truth does not always lead to a positive outcome. In fact, the play argues that sometimes ignorance can be preferable. Since knowledge compels action, and the



consequences of such actions are not guaranteed to be positive, Oedipus finds himself trapped in a predicament. He cannot cease his quest for knowledge until he possesses the very information that will ultimately destroy him. The warnings of Teiresias and Jocasta further underscore this point. Their pleas for him to abandon his investigation go unheeded, highlighting his tragic blindness to the dangers lurking within the truth. Finally, the passage emphasizes the act of demanding the truth from the herdsman as a metaphor for the "horrible speaking and frightful listening" that awaits Oedipus. This foreshadows the devastating consequences of his relentless pursuit of knowledge.

A tragic irony emerges in *Oedipus Rex* through the protagonist's relentless pursuit of knowledge. Driven by a fervent desire for truth and justice, particularly in the face of the Theban plague, Oedipus embarks on a relentless quest for answers. However, as David Grene astutely observes, the truth he ultimately unearths proves to be an unbearable burden. This very intellectual prowess, initially celebrated for its ability to solve riddles, ironically blinds him to the most crucial truth: his own identity. Jeanette L. Hopper accentuates this paradox by pointing out that it is ultimately physical blindness, not intellectual insight, that grants Oedipus a form of self-awareness that had previously eluded him.

### **Gods and Fates :**

In ancient Greece, the concept of divine foresight was prevalent. Prophets, like Tiresias, were believed to possess visions of the future, while oracles, such as the one dedicated to Apollo at Delphi, acted as conduits for the gods' pronouncements. However, during Sophocles' 5th century BCE Athens, intellectual circles began to cast doubt on the validity of these pronouncements and the traditional pantheon itself. The role of the divine in *Oedipus Rex* is shrouded in ambiguity. While Apollo's prophecy foreshadows Oedipus's patricide and incestuous marriage, it remains unclear whether the gods actively manipulate human lives or act as detached observers. This ambiguity fuels ongoing debate: are the gods omnipotent forces dictating human destiny, or merely impartial entities revealing a predetermined future?

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* presents a complex view of the divine. While the gods undeniably hold immense power and drive the play's plot, their motivations remain ambiguous. The Thebans' reverence for the gods reflects a belief system where divine authority is unquestioned. Through their actions and anxieties, Sophocles might be suggesting a cosmic order overseen by powerful, yet potentially cruel deities who demand respect. Analyzing the text reveals this interplay between human actions and the seemingly predetermined will of the gods. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the gods' role is painted in a harsh light. The play opens with a scene depicting Thebes ravaged by a plague sent by Apollo, the



"fever-god". This plague serves as a constant reminder of the gods' ability to inflict suffering upon their devotees.

The cruelty of the divine is further emphasized through the prophecy revealed to Jocasta by Apollo: Laius was destined to be murdered by his own son. Despite Jocasta's attempt to thwart this prophecy, it ultimately comes true. This highlights the seemingly capricious and cruel nature of fate, orchestrated by the gods. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the tragic downfall of both Oedipus and Laius is intricately linked to the will of Apollo. An oracle pronounces that Laius will perish at the hands of his son. This prophecy sets the stage for a chain of events orchestrated, or at least influenced, by Apollo. Oedipus, fearing he might kill Polybus, whom he believes to be his father, flees Corinth. This very act of attempting to escape his fate ironically leads him to a fateful encounter with Laius at a crossroads, where he unknowingly fulfills the prophecy by killing his biological father (unknown to him at the time). Thus, Apollo's pronouncement is a catalyst for the tragic events that unfold.

Unlike modern romantic notions of destiny, Fate for the ancient Greeks was a harsh and inescapable reality. They believed the gods dictated human lives, with pronouncements from the oracle at Delphi acting as pronouncements of this divine will. These prophecies, though sought after, were often cryptic and unsettling. They offered glimpses of the future but lacked crucial details, leaving people both hopeful and confused. A famous example involved a general who received the prophecy of a great victory if he attacked his enemy. However, the oracle remained silent on who would ultimately claim that victory. The concept of character in Greek tragedies differs significantly from modern audience expectations. Today, plays and films heavily rely on character development and exploration to engage viewers. However, according to Aristotle, a tragedy could function effectively even without complex characters, as long as the plot – the characters' actions and their consequences – remains central.

The play presents a complex portrayal of the divine in *Oedipus Rex*. While Apollo's prophecy sets the stage for Oedipus's tragic fate, it remains unclear whether the gods actively compel him down this path. Apollo's silence regarding Oedipus's true origins is particularly noteworthy. Perhaps the vast power differential between humans and gods makes it impossible for the divine to directly intervene without overwhelming mortals. This could explain Apollo's refusal to force Oedipus's hand or provide a clear answer. Furthermore, the unexplained scars on Oedipus's feet and the drunken stranger's veiled remarks, seemingly common knowledge to others but not to Oedipus, suggest a systematic withholding of the truth. These cryptic clues pique Oedipus's intellect, adept at deciphering riddles, and fuel his self-doubt. Feeling intellectually inadequate due to his inability to



identify his biological parents, he embarks on his journey from Corinth to Thebes. This very quest for knowledge, ironically, leads him to uncover a truth far more devastating than he could have imagined.

It's likely that the above results are the result of gods like Apollo deciding to conceal the truth, such as Oedipus' origin, and refusing to reveal Oedipus the truth throughout the drama. As a result of the god's choice having such a big influence, the hero commits unforgivable sins that will haunt him for the rest of his life. Even though the gods do not present during the drama, their messages are delivered via prophecy. These enigmatic prophesies provoke the individuals' tragic fates and prohibit them from avoiding them. The prophecy delivers no answer to Oedipus' identification question, and all of the information it provides confuses him, preventing him from avoiding his tragic fate. Everything the prophecy gives is both pointless and irrelevant. Oedipus will kill Laius and marry Jocasta, according to the prophecy. It does not, however, state that if Laius does not murder Oedipus, Oedipus will kill him. It also doesn't say that if Oedipus flees his homeland, he would be able to avoid his terrible fate. None of the projections and statements are based on any kind of action. As a result, neither Oedipus nor Laius will be able to respond appropriately when confronted with their prophecy.

In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the intricate relationship between mortals and the divine comes under intense scrutiny. Oedipus' futile struggle against his prophesied fate, his misinterpretation of Apollo's pronouncements, and his ultimate failure to grasp the true extent of divine power all point towards a fundamental human limitation: the inability to fully comprehend the workings of the gods. This play can be interpreted as a cautionary tale, warning against the perils of arrogantly pursuing a self-constructed truth, particularly when confronted with forces beyond human control.

Furthermore, considering the play's historical context, one can view it as a veiled commentary on the political and religious upheavals of Sophocles' era. The playwright might be advocating for a conservative approach towards established religious beliefs. The play suggests that attempting to reform or even understand divine power is a foolhardy endeavor, best left to those possessing the necessary knowledge and authority.

Unlike plays that rely on plot twists for dramatic effect, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* hinges on the audience's awareness of the tragic fate awaiting the characters. The play doesn't focus on surprising revelations, but rather on the agonizing spectacle of the characters unknowingly hurtling towards their predetermined doom. Therefore, a synopsis revealing key plot points would be entirely appropriate. The play presents a complex interplay between fate and free will in *Oedipus Rex*. The prophecy, embodying the concept of Moira (fate), casts a long shadow over the events, seemingly predetermining Oedipus's actions. However,



the prophecy itself is riddled with ambiguity, offering no clear path for Oedipus to escape his tragic destiny. This ambiguity fuels the debate regarding the nature of fate: is it an absolute and unyielding force dictating human actions, or does it simply establish a framework within which choices are made and consequences unfold? Laius's attempt to defy the prophecy by abandoning the infant Oedipus ironically sets the stage for its fulfillment, highlighting the paradoxical nature of fate in the play. The question remains: does fate predetermine human actions, or do our choices, even those made with the intention of defying fate, ultimately lead us down a predetermined path?

In *Oedipus Rex*, the protagonist operates with a sense of good faith. When Jocasta recounts past events, his trust in her compels him to prioritize finding Laius's killer. Based on her testimony, the pronouncements of Tiresias, the messenger from Corinth, and the shepherd's revelations, Oedipus becomes increasingly convinced that he is responsible for the deaths of the strangers on the road. This aligns with the prophecy's prediction of regicide. Furthermore, the plague ravaging Thebes is attributed to the unavenged murder of the king. However, the prophecy itself remained silent on the acts of incest and patricide, leaving both Oedipus and the citizens of Thebes in the dark about the true nature of his crimes. This very lack of complete knowledge forms the foundation of the play's dramatic power. Both Oedipus and the Thebans focus solely on identifying the mysterious killer responsible for the external threat of the plague. The subsequent investigation exposes not only the regicide but also the previously unknown crimes of incest and patricide committed by Oedipus in his unconscious state.

Oedipus' attempt to defy his fate is driven not by arrogance but by a relatable desire to avoid terrible sins. He makes a cautious choice to leave the land of his supposed parents. Ironically, his attempt to avoid violence at a crossroads leads him to a rash confrontation that results in his father's death. This tragic encounter fulfills the very prophecy he sought to escape. Oedipus' relentless pursuit of Laius's killer showcases his usual brilliance but also reveals his excessive confidence. He approaches the mystery like a heroic quest, certain that solving it will bring him the same glory as conquering the Sphinx's riddle. This very self-assurance blinds him to the truth of his own fate, setting him on a path towards a devastating downfall, both literal and metaphorical. Oedipus' belief that he controls his destiny ultimately positions him as a victim of fate, rather than its victor.

### Conclusion:

Sophocles portrays Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* as a man of decisive action. Upon receiving the priests' plea, he proactively sends Creon to the oracle. Similarly, the chorus' suggestion to consult Tiresias is met with swift action from Oedipus. This



decisiveness aligns with Athenian ideals of strong leadership. However, this very trait becomes his undoing. Oedipus's propensity for hasty decisions and actions extends to his interpretations. He misinterprets Tiresias and Creon's reluctance as a conspiracy to usurp him, fueling suspicion without evidence. This impulsive nature paves the way for his tragic downfall. *Oedipus Rex* transcends the boundaries of a simple tragedy, delving into the complexities of human existence. The play explores the interplay between fate (Moira), the pursuit of knowledge, and the enigmatic role of the gods in shaping human destiny.

While Oedipus undeniably suffers a horrific fate, the play presents a more nuanced picture than simply him being a guiltless victim. The prophecy undoubtedly casts a long shadow, initiating a chain of tragic events. Laius's attempt to defy the prophecy through infanticide sets the stage for Oedipus's unwitting fulfillment of it. Oedipus's own actions, however, are not merely predetermined. The pursuit of knowledge, initially fueled by a desire to control his destiny, becomes a double-edged sword for Oedipus. As David Grene suggests, the truth he uncovers is ultimately devastating. However, Jeannette L. Hopper's analysis of sight and blindness adds another layer. While initially, Oedipus's intellectual prowess blinds him to the truth, physical blindness brings a form of self-awareness. ***Oedipus Rex*** remains a powerful exploration of human limitations in the face of seemingly predetermined fate. It compels us to consider the interplay between fate and free will, the destructive nature of unchecked pride, and the paradoxical consequences of knowledge.

*Oedipus Rex* is not simply a story about a man who fulfills a prophecy. It is a cautionary tale about the destructive potential of unchecked pride, the limitations of human knowledge, and the devastating consequences of a quest for truth when the answer may be unbearable. In the end, Oedipus's self-discovery is not a path to liberation, but a descent into despair, leaving him a shattered man stripped of his identity, his kingdom, and ultimately, his sight.

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