

The concept of willful blindness in oedipus the king

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



Oedipus, our ironic hero, suffered many tragic events that led up to his foretold fate in the play Oedipus the King. Why did he suffer through so much grief and what could one learn from such a taboo play.

Unfortunately, Oedipus was a victim of the concept of “ willful blindness” as almost all humans are. Every aspect of the play lends hand to his psychological term. Our hero goes from blissfully in ignorance to thrown into the reality of his true identity. “ Willful blindness” is an innate human mechanism that keeps our minds in the dark, and it usually plays out in almost everything we do. This can be seen in the common example of the phrase “ How could I have been so blind?” which is heard often in television or every day conversation. Willful blindness is driven by many factors and our brain’s capacity simply cannot take in everything it sees and hears. With that in mind, it would make sense why a lot of data that is processed through only to be edited or filtered into what we actually want. This can also be mirrored by the darkness and light are tightly tied together with the theme of sight and blindness in Sophocles’ play. Oedipus as well as his faithful citizens are in the dark about his own origins and the murder of their past king. After Oedipus finds out what has happened, he sadly takes on the truth of the way everything has indeed ‘ come to light’.

The information that we do let in, usually reflects what makes us feel good about ourselves or even worse, what makes us the most comfortable.

Meaning, a lot of what unsettles our fragile being is usually left out without much of a second thought. The hubris that Oedipus experienced lead to his eventual symbolical and physical blinding was linked to how the people around him treated him. He was surrounded by people that were familiar to

him and these citizens as well as closest friends made him feel secure and happy. The natural need to feel good is innate to human nature, we are bound to seek pleasure and assurance in any way we can. This can be clearly seen when Oedipus stated " Here I am myself-you all know me, the world knows t fame. I am Oedipus." But, with that comes everything else that doesn't provide us with such sensations. Everything else can be described a blind spot.

In the play, Oedipus was blind to all the warning signs throughout his travels. He refused to see, due to his human nature (and hubris). In the end, when he was forced to confront his uncomfortable and taboo fate, he blinded himself. Leading him to be exactly as he was at the beginning of the play figuratively. We as human beings are driven to find and protect the relations that help us bring up our main " feelgood" chemicals such as endorphin, dopamine, or oxytocin in our brain. This drive, real main purpose is to reflect our identity of self-worth.

Yet, I believe that this curse of willful blindness isn't bound to lead to our downfall as it did for Oedipus. Readers of any age that followed the sad hero across his journey to meet face to face with his fate can take it as a warning sign to be more conscience of what information we take in and why. Willful blindness might be a natural tendency, but it can possibly tend to flawed trait with the right combination of attention and willpower.