

Oedipus – free will vs fate

Literature, Play



Oedipus as the Puppet and the Puppeteer The bad luck that befall Oedipus the King in Sophocles' play show an essential relationship between the will of the gods and man's complimentary will. The ancient Greeks believed that the gods ruled the universe and had an irrefutable function in the conditions of man's existence. Man was free to make his own choices however was eventually delegated his actions. The principles of complimentary will and fate play an important role in Oedipus' damage.

Although he was a victim of fate, Oedipus was not entirely controlled by it.

Undoubtedly, Oedipus will satisfy the prediction delivered by the oracle prior to his birth. He attempts to prevent his fate and thinks that he has actually outmaneuvered the gods by leaving Corinth. He obviously thinks in the principle of predestination but declines to obey it himself. Like Laius and Jocasta, who tried to kill him after his birth, he sought ways to leave his awful fate.

The chorus takes the side of the gods and preaches their power throughout the play, just deviating from this position as soon as. " However if any guy comes striding, high and mighty/in all he says and does,/" ; let a rough doom tear him down.

" The mortal who disregards the laws of the Universe shows hubris and is destined stop working. (Ode 2. 972-82) If Oedipus handles to prevent the prophecy he will decrease belief in the power of the gods. A paradox surface areas when the chorus fears he might show the gods incorrect, however at the very same time fears that the predictions may show to be true. Although Oedipus shuns the idea of fate and the absence of complimentary will, it

appears that he thinks in and is fearful of them. After hearing rumors that he was not “ his daddy’s boy”, Oedipus relies on the oracle and finds that he will sooner or later kill his father and wed his mom.

Oedipus flees in a desperate attempt to escape, proving that he believes in fate. If he had control, he would have no reason to run. During his travels, Oedipus meets with a “ brace of colts/drawing a wagon”, and after being thrust off the road he reacts violently and kills all but one man. Oedipus fled because he was afraid he would fulfill the prophecy. His actions support the argument that free will does exist. He knew what was prophesized yet still acted in rage and committed murder rather than trying to avoid it. Oedipus cannot be held responsible for the life set out for him by the gods.

He can, however, be accused of having too much pride, which inevitably leads to his own downfall. Perhaps he could not have prevented the actual patricide and smarmy incest, but he could have allowed himself to realize his identity. Oedipus is merely an unfortunate victim of circumstance. He possesses the ability to make his own decisions within the structure created by the gods. Oedipus displayed free will by killing Laius at the crossroads and could have prevented his sins but only temporarily. If it had not been at that time, he would have fulfilled the prophecy later.

Disgusted by his sins and his blindness to them, Oedipus literally puts himself in the dark. The chorus asks him “ what superhuman power” drove him to it and he replies that “ the hand that struck my eyes was mine,/mine alone”” no one else””/ I did it myself! ” He will not accept fate as his downfall. Jocasta also tries to deny fate. “ Fear? / What should a man fear?

It's all chance,/ chance rules our lives. " (scene 3. 1069-71) Oedipus claims full responsibility for his sins and shows that he still believes in free will.

Perhaps his true sin lay in his overzealous attempt to raise himself above the gods and escape his fate. When Oedipus tears at his eyes with Jocasta's broaches, he is accepting the full burden of his actions. Therefore, the last act of destruction is caused by his free will, but is only done in protest of his misfortunes that came about because of the nature of the gods and their role in human affairs. The chorus concludes in the exodus by warning the Greeks that the only way to attain happiness is through humility and respect of the gods, both which are qualities that Oedipus lacks.

Oedipus, a puppet of the gods, never accepts this and serves as an example to all men alike. He does have some control over his own life, however, which is shown when he commits the murders and blinds himself. Oedipus chooses not to commit suicide at the end of the play and shows that he has control over his own death. The opposite poles of destiny and free will are present in the play and their differences end up complimenting each other, forming a tragedy which is able to portray Oedipus as both an innocent victim and a criminal who is responsible for his own downfall.