

# Fate: crafted by man or a higher power? essay

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The Fate of Men There are many themes in the Sophocles' tragedies; among them is whether fate is crafted by man or a higher power. In other words " Does mankind have the power to shape their own destiny or is their fate already decided for them? " In the Oedipus Cycle, we can see that men have limited control over their destiny. Their fate is already decided by a higher power and cannot be avoided. No matter what path you choose or how you react, your destiny will be fulfilled one way or another. The first clear example of how fate cannot be changed or escaped would be the prophecies that surrounded Oedipus.

While trying to figure out who killed the previous king Laius, Oedipus calls in Tiresias, a blind prophet. Tiresias tells Oedipus that he killed Laius and also questions him about his true parents. Oedipus denies all of this but later on makes the connection while talking with Jocasta, his wife. During this scene we find out that the oracle at Delphi told Laius that he will be killed by his son. The oracle also tells Oedipus that he would murder his father and sleep with his mother. Oedipus realizes the truth about his past and is overwhelmed. The oracle and the prophet were right all along and Oedipus was not able to escape this fate. This clearly shows that no matter what Oedipus did he could not escape from murdering his father or sleeping with his mother.

In the scene where Tiresias and Oedipus are discussing who the murderer is, they exchange a couple of lines that show Oedipus cannot change his fate. Oedipus questions the prophet and his skills, frustrated Tiresias tell Oedipus " Well, it will.... thy pent-up rage" (Sophocles, 341-347), these lines show us

that Tiresias knows that regardless of what Oedipus does or believes in, his fate will be played out just as the gods intended.

Another vivid example of humans trying to change their fate would be in Antigone. Antigone defies Creon's order for giving Polynices a proper burial she is punished. Creon decides to condemn her and her sister. At the same time he is confused and asks other people for advice on how he should deal with Antigone's betrayal to him. Once again he calls upon Tiresias and promises to do whatever he says. Tiresias tells Creon that he should release Antigone or else the gods will punish Creon.

Creon is outraged at this but agrees with Tiresias only because he does not want Thebes to be cursed by the gods. But he soon finds out that Antigone has hung herself and his son (her betrothed), Haemon has killed himself. His wife overhears this and also kills herself and curses Creon with her last words. Anyone can clearly see that Tiresias knew the fate of Creon and his family. He warned Creon but Creon acted too late and suffered the god's curse.

Creon had his fate in his hands but in the end the gods changed everything and he could not escape the deaths of his family. In both examples the fate of the men are decided by the gods. Both Oedipus and Creon go to men of god for answer. The oracle at Delphi and the blind prophet, Tiresias, knew the fates of both men.

The gods blessed them with the gift of foreseeing the truth. It is ironic that Tiresias knew so much even though he is blind. In both plays Tiresias tells

the men what they want to know. Of course both Oedipus and Creon deny what Tiresias is saying.

By not believing in Tiresias, they do not believe in what the gods have written. However they soon find out that the gods are right and they cannot avoid the fate that Tiresias or the oracle has foreseen. Fate was a very important concept in many traditions including Greeks. A brilliant illustration of another culture with the question of fate would be The Epic of Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh is part god and part human and he is focused on one thing, living forever. Both Gilgamesh and Enkidu are causing trouble for the gods and one must be punished. The gods decide Enkidu's fate and there is no escaping it. When his friend Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh realizes that he too is going to die.

He goes on a long journey to find the answer to eternal life. But the gods have also decided that Gilgamesh will die because only immortals can live forever. Although Gilgamesh did everything he could to find a way to live forever, his fate was decided from the beginning just like Enkidu's. As you can see no man can control his destiny.

There is a higher being writing men's fate and no matter what we do, we cannot avoid it. Both Oedipus and Creon learned the hard way that fate cannot be avoided and that the gods know everything. Gilgamesh also found out that the gods decide who live and who dies. Enkidu had no choice except to accept the fate the gods had for him.

Gilgamesh himself could not do anything to stop his death from coming. The chorus of Sophocles' tragedies sums up the main point of this essay. If men

could craft their own fates, than there would be no need for gods. If the prophecies did not come true then there would be no sort of order between the heavens and mankind. Bibliography 1.

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