

Aristotle and poetics

Literature



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Oedipus the King and poetics Sophocles' Oedipus the King, which was first performed in 429 BC, is regarded by many scholars as a classic tragedy. The play makes use of a lot of images that bear different meanings. An image can be defined as a verbal picture that is used to represent tangible objects in real life. In plays and poetry, imagers can have very straightforward meanings or the meaning may be a lot of meanings based on various perspectives. The image of sight and blindness is one of the biggest pictures used in the play by Sophocles. The image of sight and blindness has both a straightforward meaning in the play while also having hidden meanings that the author tried to pass across to the audience. In Oedipus the King, there are two cases of blindness. Teiresias the prophet for instance is physically blind from birth and cannot therefore see his surroundings (Murray). Oedipus the king on the other hand is also regarded as being blind in the spiritual sense such that he is blind to the truth and does not know the reality of his situation as it had been foretold by the oracle.

The image as used in the play elicits both spiritual and cultural connotations and is very helpful in furthering the spiritual theme throughout the play. In the Greek culture at the time, blindness was simply regarded as the inability to not only see the physical surroundings but also the intangible reality (Smith 34). Blindness and sight therefore have both cultural and spiritual aspects. In the play, Teiresias the blind prophet who is oblivious of his physical surroundings is regarded as one of the best spiritual leaders in the city state. She is able to see the spiritual reality and the truth about the situation of Oedipus. Despite her situation, she is able to see beyond the physical reality and become aware of the message from the gods. Oedipus on the other hand has the physical sight but is spiritually blinded from

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knowing the reality. It is therefore difficult for him to see the truth in the oracles foretold about his situation until when it finally dawns on him that the oracle has come to pass. In the end, he blinds himself by poking his eyes in order to become physically blind.

The image comes to have its full meaning when the truth about the oracle comes to pass. This is when Oedipus realizes that he had been blind to the truth all along, while the blind prophet could indeed see the truth. The image is linked to the character and the plot in a number of ways. The plot is centered upon Oedipus the king trying to evade the oracle but in the end, it only turns out that he was running in the dark due to his spiritual blindness. This image is closely related to other images in the play such as the image of the ship that is used to represent Oedipus as the ship of the state and its leader in the sense that it despite being regarded as the greatest leader, he had his own flaws too like normal human beings who could succumb to blindness and other realities. I chose to focus on this image because it helps best to support one of the main themes in the play, the theme of fate and destiny.

Reference

Murray Gilbert. *Oedipus King of Thebes* by Sophocles. University Of Oxford, 2008.

Smith, Helaine. *Masterpieces of Classic Greek Drama*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2005.