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ENGLISH

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Effects Of The Past

# Introduction

Sophocles “Oedipus Rex” is one of the famous plays in the world. The story is based on a character which is generally acknowledged as one of the world’s greatest tragedies (Thomas, 2017, n.p). However, this tragedy was a fate-ridden as well, in its cycle of events. It has been a hot topic of debate among the critics from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle’s “Poetics” till the present world’s critics. They are wondered about the way Oedipus achieved the status of tragic hero. That’s why it has been a favorite research topic among the researchers of the world.

Once the Oracle of Delphi forecasted one of the kings of Thebe, was asked by a priest either he and his wife Jocasta have a son. Then she added that their newborn baby will kill him and will get marry his mother (the wife of Laius). The king and his wife decided to avoid the harm of their son when his child was born the king and queen ordered one of their loyal servants to kill their newborn baby. The servant didn't kill the infant and saved him. The Oracle of Delphi professed the same to Oedipus when he was young. So he decided to go to his city Corinth to avert this curse. Both Oedipus and Laius met at the spot which was too narrow and was hard to pass at the same time. The prophecy of their meeting was proved and made us believe in God and the fate of man. Both Oedipus and Jocasta met, married, and died, being ignorant of the tragic fate. Finally, Oedipus protested against the penalty he got for the crime which he had not committed. However, the act of God compelled him to do so, and he was forced by external factors. Oedipus had developed psychological complex known as Oedipal complex. This concept was used by the great psychologist Freud in his book The Interpretation of Dreams in 1899. He revealed in his book that Oedipus had the feelings of sexual desires for an opposite-sex parent, anger toward a same-sex parent, and have jealousy. He had a feeling of rage and rivalry towards his same-sex parent for the attention and affection toward the opposite sex parent. Oedipus was an angry person, and he expressed his rage throughout the play.

Although Oedipus, the king of Thebes in Sophocles's Oedipus Rex, focuses on ruling as king, he struggles with his past through his hamartia of anger, his prophecy, and the decisions of the parents.

**Discussion**

The play has generated a large number of debates and critical views. None of the critics since the era of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle up to date could ignore the importance of the play. The protagonist Oedipus is the center of attraction for every renowned psychologist since Freud. There is a lot of psychoanalytical critic on the main character of the play, from Hoffman to Jacques Lacan, who analyzed the play and related it to the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis named it as Oedipus complex. The provoking psychoanalytical study of the play is "The body of Oedipus" which provided meaningful information about the psyche and nature of the protagonist (Waggoner, 2017, p.86).

Oedipus was the son of the king of Thebes Laius and Queen Jocasta. They were childless for a long time, and they consulted with Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The oracle predicted that they would have a child, who will kill the king (his father) and will marry the queen (his mother). The king was worried about his life and decided to kill his newborn son. After the birth of his son, Laius first pierced his ankles and feet to make him unable to crawl, and then his mother gave him to the servant to take him to the mountain. The king finally ordered the servant to go outside Thebes and give the child to a shepherd from Corinth. Further, he advised the servant to ask the shepherd to forward the baby to other shepherd and the second shepherd had to forward to another. Finally the infant Oedipus reached to the king of Corinth Polybus and his queen Merope. They adopted him and rared him because they had no child of their own. They named him Oedipus or Oidipous the Greek word means swollen. The child had swollen feet and ankles because of his father.

Prophecy:

Once a drunk person told Oedipus that he was bastard and that he was not their biological son. Oedipus asked his parents about this issue. However, they refused it. Oedipus visited the oracle with whom his parents were consulted. The oracle told him that he will kill his father and will marry his mother (Jemison, 2016, p.6). He thought that the oracle revealed about his adopted parents, so he quit his parent and did not return home to Corinth. He traveled to Thebes, which was quite close to Delphi. On his way to Delphi, he reached Davlia, where he met his birth-father Laius. Both had to cross a narrow path where only one person could pass. So they fought over who had to pass first, and Oedipus killed his father and ran over his dead body. The brother of the queen announced publically that if someone could kill the Sphinx would be made as a king and will marry to the widow queen Jocasta. Oedipus married became the new king and married Jascota, her biological mother, that was the fulfillment of the prophecy. He had four children from Jocasta, two daughters, and two sons. After many years of his marriage, the country had certain a plague of infertility, and he tried to meet the Oracle. He also had to ask about the murderer of the previous king and had to take revenge on his wife first husband. His brother in law (Jocasta's brother) told him to meet with a blind prophet Tiresias the renowned and respectable person of the state. He visited Tiresias and asked about the murderer of Laius, but Tiresias warned him not to ask about the killer of Laius. Oedipus had a heated exchange, Tiresias exposed that he is the killer of Laius. After learning about this story he asked his wife, she revealed about his first bore baby, and they considered that their child would have died. Meanwhile, he knows that his father Polybus has died. He also realized that he had killed his father in the narrow path. The messenger told him that Polybus had adopted him, and he should not seek his father, because he had killed his biological father Liaus. Jascota hanged herself because of her great distress. Oedipus tried to verify the claim of the messenger, he learned about the fact that he is the biological son of Laius and Jascota, and was adapted by Polybus and Merope.

Hamartia (Anger/Rage)

One of the major flaws of Oedipus was his anger. In the story, there are not more examples of his anger. However, he showed his anger as he had to kill his father. Though he did not know that the person he had killed was his father. Moreover, he did not attend the funeral of his father Polybus who raised him and saved his life when his biological parents had tried to kill him. Once he had got angry at Tiresias, who had predicted that Oedipus had killed the late king. At one occasion he tried to kill his best friend Creon (Kohon, 2018, p.260). His anger shaped his character throughout the play, and how he had found his ways. He irrationally dealt with all his issues, because of his short temper and quickly getting angry. Even he lost his best friend who had always been honest and loyal to him. He killed him without any reason, and he didn't investigate the issue. Freud identified many psychological disorders of Oedipus and called him Oedipus complex. According to the analysis of Freud, Oedipus has feelings of jealousy, aggression, and rage (Bylund, 2015, n.p). Freud had proposed the concept of Oedipal complex in his book in 1899. He did not use the term Oedipus complex before 1910.

Parent Decisions

The decision of parents was very horrible for Oedipus. Oedipus was the first son of the king Laius and Queen Jocasta. They did not have any child before Oedipus when the queen was pregnant, the king and his wife visited a spiritual lady. They consulted with Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The oracle professed that they would have a child, and he will kill his father and will marry the queen after his father died (Felman, 1983, p.1029). The king strongly believed in her statement, and was anxious about his life and determined to kill his newborn son. After the birth of his son, Laius first pierced his ankles and feet to make him unable to crawl, and then his mother gave him to the servant to take him to the mountain. The king finally ordered the servant to go outside Thebes and give the child to a shepherd from Corinth. Further, he advised the servant to ask the shepherd to forward the baby to other shepherd and the second shepherd had to forward to another. Finally the infant Oedipus reached to the king of Corinth Polybus and his queen Merope. They adopted him and rared him because they had no child of their own. They named him Oedipus or Oidipous the Greek word means swollen. The child had swollen feet and ankles because of his father.

Ruling As King

In this play, Oedipus had three tragedies in his life, which dramatically changed his life, and faced many hardships in his life. The first tragedy was after his birth, and his childhood, when God survived him and sent him in the safe hands. The second tragedy was killing his father, while the third major tragedy was to become a king of the kingdom where he did not belong to. As a king, different facts were disclosed to him, and he married his biological mother. He had four children from her mother, and the interesting fact was that he didn’t know that he had married his mother. He killed the king, and he did not identify him. Then accidentally he became the king after the murder of his biological father. The story began with the narration that people were begging their king Oedipus to find the solution of the plague that had the biggest threat to the destruction of the city. Oedipus sent his brother in law, Creon to the oracle to ask him how to cope with this challenge (Gale, 2016, p.135). When the Creon returned and told him the instructions of the oracle to find the killer of the late king Laius, who ruled Thebes before the take over of Oedipus. The plague would end by the discovery and punishment of the murderer. Oedipus was seriously concerned about to seek the murderer and kill him, to release his citizens from the plague. Finally, after the suicide of his wife and biological mother, he was disgraced and blinded about many uncovered facts. He decided to hand over the command and control of the kingdom to his loyal friend and brother in law and was waiting for the decision of Oracle humbly either to stay in Thebes or leave the place forever.

**Conclusion**

Oedipus Rex was the king of Thebes, and his life was full of mystery and fulfillment of prophecy. He had many tragedies in his life from birth to the end of the story. It was an ancient story around 429 BC, discussed by ancient philosophers Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. This story had been a hot topic of debate for the researchers of the literature of the current era. It was written by Sophocles, the main character of this story was Oedipus. The main theme of this play was that the king of Thebes would have a son, who will kill his father (the king), and will marry his wife. The king and queen decided to stop this happening and infanticide the newborn baby. However, they did not know that the fate could not be change, Oedipus returned Thebes when he was young, and unknowingly he killed his father. Then he became the king and married the widowed queen, he did not have the idea that she is her biological mother, neither her mother had the idea that her new husband is her son. At the end of the story, all the truth comes to light finally. As a result, the queen suicides and Oedipus withdrew from his authority and handed over the leadership of Thebes to his brother in law. Finally, Oedipus was waiting for the decision of Oracle humbly either to stay in Thebes or leave the place forever.

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