

Oedipus the King

As I read Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*, different points of views become apparent; these points of views are of sum importance when considering Oedipus' innocence or fault and the gods' innocence or fault, as well. In my opinion, Oedipus cannot be held morally accountable for the charges held against him; notwithstanding, the gods are at fault. Oedipus is known for his nobility as a man and as a king; throughout the course of this essay his innocence will be explored, as the gods' fault will be proven.

In his first encounters with the city of Thebes, Oedipus proves himself to be a fine man and leader as he actually gains his position of King of Thebes by saving the city from the Sphinx's plague. If it were not for Oedipus' cleverness, the citizens would have suffered untold disasters at the merciless hands of the Sphinx. After proving his worth as a good man and his concern for the citizens of what was seemingly a foreign city, Oedipus was well liked by the people of Thebes. The people of Thebes liked their ruler, and he in turn ruled over them in a good and just way, trying to help them in their times of need. With that said, Oedipus cannot be held morally accountable for his crimes such as: patricide and incest. Because Oedipus knows nothing about the past of Thebes, he is simply not an assassin. Oedipus did indeed commit murder, but unknowingly of who King Lauis was. Oedipus' honor was his claim against the murder; had it been the other way around and Oedipus had lost the battle, King Lauis' alibi would've also been for reasons of honor: for reasons of royalty. Oedipus was royalty and knew it as well as King Lauis knew he was too. In other words, the main idea regarding Oedipus' innocence is royalty. Regardless of their social class standings, a fight took place and the one to start such fight was King Lauis' men; the fact that they lost is not the fault of Oedipus.

Considering that the first blow came from King Laius' chariot, it becomes clear that Oedipus reacted purely in self defense since he feared for his life as well as his honor. Oedipus is an innocent man whose fate was also his destiny. There was no way to stop the prophecy from taking place. He was the hero, the one that everyone looked to in a time of need. I dare say that, in this case, the good outweighs the bad. That Oedipus reacted as any other would in his position. Though the prophecy is what he was from, the prophecy is what he ran into. Oedipus did not want his fate to be his destiny; he wanted to be an honest person, to be a ruler and to do for others as he would want for himself. His hubris was his destiny. As far as he knew he left from Corinth to prevent this humiliation of committing incest as he married his mother and killing his father. His innocence is obvious. He does what needs to be done. Had he been guilty of murder of any other crime he would not have gone through the process of finding the truth behind King Laius' murder. Once Oedipus discovers he is the murderer he has been seeking, he determines his own punishment: banishment from Thebes and the incapability to see, as he took his own sight. He took his sight since he could not look at the people of Thebes knowing he had brought them much grief with the plague and he could not look at his children knowing he brought shame to their blood. Furthermore, Oedipus was innocent.

The fault behind Oedipus' fate lies on the oracle at Delphi, the representation of the god Apollo, and on the prophecy that was revealed to him. Had he been blind to that prophecy he would have remained in Corinth and ruled as a true ruler. He would not have married his mother nor would have murdered his father. The key to Oedipus' innocence truly lies in the fact that his fate belonged in the hands of Apollo and Apollo did not reveal the secret of his birthparents. Any decisions that Oedipus believes he is making as a free man are really just predetermined actions dictated by fate. The gods, when

determining his fate, took into consideration Oedipus's rash temperament and hubris, which they found offensive. It almost seems as if the gods plotted Oedipus' downfall in order to punish his excessive pride that made him believe he was superior to them. In my opinion, the gods anticipated his responses to certain events, and in that way, crafted a path to end that complemented Oedipus's characteristics. The gods are clearly at fault; take for example, their timing of sending the plague. If they had sent the plague sooner, then perhaps Oedipus would still be innocent of incest. Fundamentally, by utilizing fate, prophecies, the oracle of Apollo, and the plague, the gods played a significant role in the destruction of Oedipus and his family.

Oedipus, King of Thebes, cannot be held morally accountable of the charges held against him such as regicide and incest. An innocent man cannot be condemned simply because of his lack of knowledge of his birthparents' identities. Oedipus is a good man, noble king, and admirable father. Furthermore, he does not deserve such a tragic life. The fault behind Oedipus' fate lies on the oracle at Delphi, the representation of the god Apollo, and on the prophecy that was revealed to him.