

Pujush

## Oedipus Rex. Tragedy of Theme.

Irony, faith, idea, action, structure, rationality, experience, destiny, will, justice, human suffering

The structure of "Oedipus" the King is the bodying forth of a vision of life, and such technical details as the sense of character or irony or faith or complexity of circumstances are ultimately related to the tragic idea. The popular story of the Oedipus was a simple tale of man and destiny but Sophocles selects and orders certain persons and situations that it becomes a massive ironic statement about human nature. The drama presents no simple conflict of man and destiny but certain reversals and accidents of characters and circumstances through which an innocent and virtuous man becomes an outcast. The play is concerned with the power of fate over man. The slaying of a father and marrying with his mother unsuspected went on fast and strong, as it were, till it appears in the plague. The realistic treatment of the characters is itself an instrument of irony. We have a view of the autonomous characters: Oedipus, Creon, Jocasta, and the Phaedra.

Sophocles has a more complex and realistic sense of human beings and their circumstances than Aeschylus. Such a portrait actually emphasizes the freedom or apparent freedom of human actors like Oedipus, Tiresias, Creon, and Jocasta. Oedipus is intelligent, determined and self-reliant but too sure of himself. Certain significant chain of events combines now with the strong and now with the weak side of his characters to bring about the catastrophe. Had Oedipus been less hot-tempered he would not have reached to the insult of Laius; had he been less determined he would not have gone to Delphi, had he been less intelligent he would not have solved the riddle of the sphinx and become the hero of the Thebes. But even if he was less intelligent and perceptiveness

he was blind enough to marry the old woman, the central ironic fact which had been predicted by god before the birth of oedipus. sophocles never shows oedipus offending heaven, never in the strong sense that happens in the drama in the natural consequences of his weakness and weakness in combination with nature of the other people. destiny does not drive a thunderbolt upon his head. the gods do not only predict and do not compel or let chance do the will. the net of compulsion is woven by human hands. there is a plan, a justice operating through the complex web of human circumstances. the action embodies the pattern and this can be seen in the relation between the beginning and end of the play. at the three incidents points of climax reveal the rhythm of the play that reveals the tragic idea. they are: the condemnation of oedipus self-blinding of oedipus and the end of the play. At just oedipus is punished in all his power and knowledge although in his quest for the blind man. the theme of the blindness and wisdom is indicated in an ironic way. he is ~~the~~ certain and as the chorus comments: "swift is not always true" it is a tragedy of the blindness of an intelligent man, the great irony of the wisdom of city being turned out as it came. Intelligence means added to certainty that led oedipus to death and tragedy, shaken by his intelligence must save it by leaving the city.

Compared to this, the end of the play is a blind witness of the strength of reversal, which characterizes the tragic irony of sophocles, that oedipus in heaven and act this in his central view towards the

blind Oedipus and yet the later is very certain,  
and in haste about the will of gods being  
carried out exceeding him. Finally, when the small  
children are taken out from him Oedipus protests.  
Creon says, "I do not know and when I lack know-  
ledge I prefer not to speak." The contrast is betw-  
een certainty and caution, <sup>which</sup> is very much in Sphocles  
the you on more significantly seeking control in  
all things. Laius and Jocasta thought that thing  
liked about their children. Finally, when the small  
children are taken out from him Oedipus protests.  
Creon says, "seek not control in everything; the  
control you did have broke before the end, certai-  
nity, caution, control are illusory. Laius  
thought that he had control over course by  
killing the child; Oedipus too wanted the same kind  
of control when he intelligently avoided Corinth  
believing it to his real home Oedipus tried to  
avoid the curse by leaving Corinth and accepting  
the crown and queen of Thebes. Sophocles simply  
points to the fact that human judgment and  
intelligence can go wrong. The play is moving  
on a higher plane. Personal action is surrou-  
nded by something of universal significance,  
because the action takes place not only in  
the life of Oedipus only but also in the  
life of other persons. It reveals the illum-  
ination of irony in the course of the plays  
action

The middle part of the play is more complex  
example of subtle ironic interweaving of motive  
and meaning. Jocasta thought that at least an  
oracle failed in that the king was not murdered  
by his son. Her scepticism of oracle grows when  
she performs sacrifice before Apollo seeking di-  
vination. Just at the same a time a messenger  
from Corinth comes with the news that Polybus  
is dead. The security of her confidence was strong-

then considering that the prophecy - that oedipus would kill his father proved false, and she expressed the view that human affairs are not guided by chance. As soon as this judgement was passed in her mind her security was shattered when she heard the people talking, with the result that she hanged herself. In the case of oedipus, this accident produced horror and he thought that he was the son of chance. But his confidence was shattered when the shepherds declared that he was the son not of chance, but of laius and jocasta, now his wife. Prophecy came true. Religion is not fraud.

Such use of irony reveals the unseen gods directing apparently the force of human existence. It is neither a determined nor a private tragedy but involves a question of "universal justice". The justice in "oedipus" presents greater problem. The children of oedipus "will many you born as you were born" - such is the life in which innocent suffer with the guilty. Why should oedipus suffer for a curse laid on him before he was born? Why children suffer for what god made them do in utter ignorant? Why should a common shepherd come with the news of oedipus' mysteries, childhood expectancy, reward and back with the burn of misery. ~~is~~ this simple revelation has brought about.

Actually, the play is a profound experience of justice as proportion and order. Jocasta had said, "If these oracles are not merely manifestly fulfilled, why should I join the sacred dance". The catharsis is complete in transforming the painful story into a sublime one with the discovery of wisdom and vision of truth. Oedipus was dismayed like a man who unknowingly interferes with the natural flow of electricity. Actually the blinding glare of oedipus' misery and illumination by ironic reversal seem to reveal the path now before us in momentary flash.