

Since the beginning of time, man has used various methods on which to pass down stories, beliefs, and myths which explain different aspects of life. From oral tradition, to pictographs, to clay tablets, and onto paper, all compose the world of literature. Literature has always been an infinite realm of ideas, morals, and trains of thought. Although the sphere of literature is encircled with extreme diversity of thought, its core is focused on one theme: man. All literature carries with itself three main characteristics: it is written by man, for man, and about man. Oedipus the King, the great Greek tragedy by the unparalleled philosopher, Sophocles, is no exception to literature's domain. It deals with one king, Oedipus, and his plight to avenge the death of his predecessor, King Laios. In his determined search to find the murderer, he establishes a proclamation which would demand the banishment and even the death of the murderer. In his ironic action, the reader discovers that this murderer that Oedipus is so determined to discover is none other than Oedipus himself. In adherence to the definition of literature, this tragic plot reveals to the reader three main commentaries about the nature of man: man cannot escape his past, pride is the sin which leads man to greater evils, and although the life of man is in itself a positive good, there will always be a shadow of terrible tragedy that falls across it.

All throughout literature, many works have portrayed characters who carry with them a dark and gloomy past, and try to tear this shameful history of their lives from the books of their life. Unfortunately, this is impossible due to the fact that the past is a precursor to the present which, in turn, determines one's future. It is one's past that makes one what he or she is today. For example, if an individual committed ruthless acts such as theft or murder, was not caught by the law, and later realizes that that particular aspect of his or her life has caused them great grief and regret, he or she will make the effort to change and become a new individual. Let us say that individual becomes one who cares about the welfare of others and takes social action against the injustices of society. This individual became what he or she is today because of an incident which occurred in his or her past. This "catching up" of the past need not always be negative and be portrayed as some type of revenge infringed upon the individual possibly due to a vile incident in the past, but the past will always effect the future and its toll is inevitable.

As proclaimed by the Catholic church in the middle ages, seven deadly sins exist which ultimately lead to the loss of salvation by the soul which indulges in such

evils. Of the seven, pride has been the one which serves as the catalyst for the remaining six. Pride creates in an individual a disposition of excessive self-love and the need to be better than another. Once a person has excessive pride, he or she must have the satisfaction of knowing they are better and must prove this "higher status" through material possessions and/or power. This has led to the next sin, greed. This domino effect will continue on until the individual recognizes his or her faults and reconciles, or until he or she has immersed themselves in the totality of evil and suffers the consequences through death or horrible suffering. As evidenced in this work, pride was one of the factors which helped to create the tragic plot of the story. Both King Laios and Oedipus exhibited the characteristics of pride. When King Laios was traveling down the path where the three roads met, he and his men encountered a man walking alongside named Oedipus. King Laios, in his need to show he was more powerful and of a higher status, requested his men to run Oedipus off the road. Oedipus was angered by this show of egotism, and in his need to show he was not someone who would take such an act, he went as far as to kill all but one of the traveling party, even the king himself. This show of pride, in the fulfillment the prophecy, contributed to the downfall of the protagonist and set the stage for the plot.

Man, through the definition of literature, is a fallible creature who is susceptible to the temptations of the immoral. It is in man's nature for him to err. It is also in concordance with the very nature of the universe that he should suffer for the actions of his errors. This brings into view the third commentary about man and his existence: that although the life of man is in itself a positive good, there will always be a shadow of terrible tragedy that falls across it. This shadow is always cast by either or both of two different bodies: an unconscious error committed by an individual, and/or an error committed due to some flaw in man's nature. In this Greek tragedy, the protagonist suffered through an aspect of his own nature which in Greek is called hubris, or as today's society knows it, the deadly sin of pride. His pride led him to act irrationally in the incident at the place where three roads met, where he unknowingly committed the act of regicide, and later realizes that he also has committed parricide, and fulfilled the prophecy of his destiny. Man himself is not omnipotent, but a fragile, mortal being who unavoidably must suffer downfalls in his life.

As in all literature, the main objective which exudes from each literary work applies itself to the existence of man. In the Greek tragedy, Oedipus the King, three dissertations of human nature are exhibited. These three are: man cannot escape his

past,
pride is the sin which leads man to greater evils, and although the life of man is in itself a positive good, there will always be a shadow of terrible tragedy that falls across it. The plot in this renowned Greek tragedy emphasizes the role of literature. With the protagonist having to suffer for the acts he committed in his past, to the flaw of pride which led him to commit the act, and finally, to the consequences he had to suffer due to his actions, it clearly states and exhibits how the actions of the characters in this story pertain to the common individual not of only the society of Sophocles' time, but also to the individual of the twentieth century as well.