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Lunt / Sn. English

The Story of Oedipus

After reading Oedipus, one may think that in this story, there was no justice, and nobody could avoid their fate. King Laius and Queen Jocasta, fearing the prophecy of the Delphic oracle, had the young Oedipus left on Mount Cithaeron to die, but the father dies and the son marries the mother anyway. Oedipus, seemingly a good person, also tries to avoid the second prophecy, only to fulfill the first. But even through all this, I have done some research and feel that there was justice in Oedipus, The King, and their fate wasn't completely sealed.

First, the murder of King Laius. Laius seemed to die a unwarranted death, but he was not necessarily in complete innocence, for he had done some malicious things earlier in his life, such as the attempted murder of his son, Oedipus, and the kidnapping and rape of Chrysippus, a young man Laius fell in love with before Jocasta. And Oedipus wasn't as guilty under ancient Greek law as he is under our modern laws. It was every Greek's duty to harm his/her enemies, and as far as Oedipus knew, King Laius was an enemy.

Queen Jocasta wasn't exactly guiltless, either. The great Queen had also tried with King Laius to kill their son, and had no respect for the prophecies of Apollo: "A prophet? Listen to me and learn some peace of mind: no skill in the world, nothing human can penetrate the future." She was also the other half of a mother-son marriage. Greek law considered the act, not the motive - meaning that even though she nor Oedipus knew they were related, they committed the crime.

Finally, Oedipus's guilt. In some ways, Oedipus was the most guilty of them all. Consider his 'hubris'. He regarded himself as almost a god, assuming that since he alone had solved the sphinx's riddle, he was the one of the gods' favorites. He was very quick to judge, and judged on the most flimsy of evidence. He calls on Tiresias to tell him what he should do, and when he doesn't like what he hears, Oedipus says, "Your words are nothing - futile", and accuses Creon of plotting with Tiresias to hatch a plan to overthrow him.

I don't think that fate is inescapable. If it was, then why would the blind prophet Tiresias tell Laius, Jocasta, and Oedipus their future, if not to let them change. I believe they were all involved in their own 'fate'. In how they reacted to the original prophecy, combined with actions before and after the prophecy, the three decided how the prophecy would be delivered. Justice, in terms of Greek law, was served.

