

Fate vs. Freewill in Oedipus Rex: A Tragic Interplay

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Destiny and Freewill This is one of the most important themes in the play and leaves the reader with the engrossing question of whether or not freewill is an illusion. The play doesn't actually answer this question, but it shows the complex interplay of fate and freewill that culminates in Oedipus' tragic plight. Jocasta, Laius and Oedipus all try to escape the prophecy but they are unwittingly led into their seemingly unavoidable fate. This element of the play is intended to show the reader the power of prophecy and the supreme authority of the gods in contrast with the futility of human beings. The play also shows how human nature plays a vital role in the fulfilment of the prophecy. Compassion and pity on the shepherd's behalf prevents Oedipus from dying as a baby. Oedipus' own impetuous temper results in the murder of his own father, Laius. His momentary display of intelligence in solving the riddle is his ultimate triumph as well as his seed of destruction as it results in marriage to his mother, Jocasta. In resolving to find out the truth about his birth, he brings the suffering on himself. His arrogant, taunting attitude towards Teirisiias further exposes the terrible truth. In this way, the play shows how freewill also contributes to Oedipus' downfall. **Pride and humility** Pride is Oedipus' fatal flaw; his arrogance towards both the gods and human beings leads to his destruction. Sophocles probably intended to teach people the importance of humility and recognising the superiority of the gods that they believed in. Oedipus' arrogance is displayed in his long, speeches and in the hot-headed way he unknowingly killed his father. His initial refusal to accept any blame or wrongdoing on his part shows that he has a high opinion of himself. One of the main sources of his pride is his defeat of the Sphinx, which saved Thebes and put him on the throne, and yet the reader knows that this was also the cause of one of his foulest crimes, marriage to his mother. In this way, the playwright communicates a message about the folly of taking human achievement too seriously. Because of this, the play is not very humanistic but belittles human beings as futile and flawed. **Wisdom and ignorance** The conflict between Teirisiias and Oedipus represents the conflict between wisdom and ignorance, Teirisiias being wisdom and Oedipus being ignorance. Teirisiias' comment "To be wise is to suffer" is ironic because it comes true for Oedipus. When he learns the truth about himself and becomes wise, he is in utmost agony. The play shows that perhaps having knowledge is not necessarily a good thing, as Teirisiias warns, and that there are limitations to our knowledge that we should accept. **Sight and blindness** Teirisia is a blind seer, which sounds like a contradiction in terms. However, even though he is physically blind, he has the insight and knowledge, which Oedipus lacks. When Oedipus finally gains this insight at the end of the play, he blinds himself physically. Throughout the play, Oedipus is blinded by his own arrogance, shown in his refusal to accept...

Oedipus Rex Fate Vs Will Essay

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