Cole Schneider

Mrs. Rutan

AP Literature & Composition

05 August 2013

Noble?

In the movie *The International*, a wise man said, “Sometimes a man can meet his destiny on the road he took to avoid it.” Oedipus manages to do just that in *Oedipus the King*. Despite the actions he takes to avoid a disturbing prophecy, he finds himself on a troubling path. His best intentions lead him directly to the situation he had attempted to avoid.

By fleeing Corinth, Oedipus believed that he would be able to escape his destiny, as told by the Oracle of Delphi. However, he proves the prophecy accurate by unknowingly killing his father. This raises an interesting question. Is Oedipus at fault for the situation? Or were his actions determined by someone else, leaving him helpless? It seems that by predicting Oedipus’ future, the oracle helped put Oedipus on the same road as his father. Oedipus’ attempts to avoid it seem to make him a victim. Yet, he still killed a man in a simple argument. He may have tried to avoid his destiny, but that does not change who he is or what he did.

Oedipus’ biggest mistake is misunderstanding the significance of the prophecy. His choices and personality bring about the dilemma. He believes that he is smarter than the oracle. He thinks that running from Corinth is a way of beating the prophecy. When he kills the old Theban man who turns out to be his father, his clever escape becomes the destiny from which he fled. By murdering the man, he may have revealed a minor flaw in his character. His anger got the best of him, and it put him into a position which would later expose an even bigger flaw.

As king, the people adore Oedipus. Having defeated the Sphinx, they awarded him with the kingship. The priest said that they see him as the “first of men” (prologue. 36-37), which is why the go to him to solve ease their latest troubles. He sends Creon, his wife’s brother, to learn from Apollo what he must do to help his people. Upon Creon’s return, it becomes clear that Oedipus is the one in trouble. Creon says that the city must rid of a “monstrous growth” by banishing or killing the murderer of former King Laius (prologue. 106). Oedipus takes it upon himself, unaware that he is the criminal.

Oedipus appears to be a noble man, which is why he swears to find whoever is responsible for killing Laius. However, he is also quite oblivious. Neither of the two characteristics does him any good. Trying to help the people he says:

*“I am resolute, and shall not stop*

*Till with Apollo’s help all-blessed we emerge,*

*Or else we are lost – beyond all purge.”* (prologue. 157-59)

He calls out, asking for anyone to step up with information, but nobody responds. Tiresias arrives and hints at the fact that Oedipus is the wanted man. He then states it outright, several times, but Oedipus will not hear it. He believes himself a noble and worthy king. His ego causes him to blame Tiresias and Creon of attempting to overthrow him. This causes confusion, and is likely to spell more difficulty for Oedipus.

In the second choral ode, the situation and the opposing views are presented in the strophes and antistrophes. Oedipus’ history as the savior of the city gives him some credibility, but the accusation from Tiresias creates doubt among the people. For the meantime, Oedipus’ reputation protects him, but some flaws have been exposed. Perhaps, he is not such a noble man.