

## LOVE, EMOTION, AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

*Yushi Nakatsuka, Sora Takeda, Ryouhei Kuroda*

*Saitama University*

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### THE ISOLATION OF A KING: AN ANALYSIS OF “OEDIPUS REX”

#### An Outline of “Oedipus Rex”

The purpose of our essay is to examine how Creon (Oedipus’s uncle and brother-in-law) is portrayed in the trilogy of Thebes. While the outline of “Oedipus Rex” is very famous and many readers know the story, we will begin providing a summary of its plot.

To solve the pollution in his country, Oedipus, king of Thebes, goes to Delphi and obtains an oracle. The oracle says, “If the murderer of Laios (former king of Thebes) is banished, the pollution will come to an end.” Laios was killed by someone on his way to Delphi. The murderer has not been caught yet. Oedipus tells Thebes’s people to arrest the murderer. And Oedipus asks Teiresias, a prophet, about the murder. Teiresias finds out who killed Laios but refuses to tell Oedipus. Oedipus verbally abuses Teiresias. He says Teiresias is a false prophet. Teiresias becomes furious and says that the person who killed Laios is Oedipus.

Oedipus thinks that Creon cooperates with Teiresias and deceives him. He condemns Creon for it, but Creon objects to him. Then, Jocasta shows up and intercedes between Oedipus and Creon. She tells Oedipus that Teiresias’s prophecy is unreliable. As an example, she tells the story of a child born to Laios and Jocasta. She says that Laios received an oracle in Delphi and, that if he had a child, the child would kill him, but the oracle didn’t come true because he was eventually killed by someone in the mountain.

However, this story makes Oedipus anxious because he once had killed a man on the mountain. He tells his past to Jocasta. He was the son of Corinth’s king, but he heard strange rumor about him and left his country.

#### Oedipus

“At a banquet, a man drunk with wine [780] cast it at me that I was not the true son of my father. And I, vexed, restrained myself for that day as best as I could, but on the next went to my mother and father and questioned them. They were angry at the one who had let this taunt fly. [785] So I had comfort about them, but the matter rankled in my heart, for such a rumor still spread widely.”

He went to Delphi to find out the truth, but he couldn’t get a response. Instead of a fortune response, he got a terrifying oracle from Delphi like this:

[...] but in his response set forth other things, full of sorrow and terror and woe: that I was fated to defile my mother’s bed, that I would reveal to men a brood which they could not endure to behold, and that I would slay the father that sired me. When I heard

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this, I turned in flight from the land of Corinth, [795] from then on thinking of it only by its position under the stars, to some spot where I should never see the fulfillment of the infamies foretold in my evil doom. And on my way I came to the land in which you say that this tyrannos perished. [800] ... Now, wife, I will tell you the truth. When on my journey I was near those three roads, there I met a herald, and a man in a carriage drawn by colts, as you have described.

They violently attacked Oedipus because he would not yield. In the end, he killed all of them, heralds and a man in a carriage. And his true father, Rios was also killed. Then, the messenger from Corinth shows up, and he tells Oedipus that he became the king of Corinth because the former king died. Oedipus fears the fulfillment of the oracle and refuses to return to Corinth. The messenger from Corinth tells Oedipus that he is not the child of the former king. A long time ago, the messenger took a baby who was abandoned on a mountain from a servant, and he gave the child to the king of Corinth. After hearing this, Jocasta realizes the truth and disappears from Oedipus to commit suicide. Oedipus commands people to bring the servant to him. Then, a servant in Thebes is brought in. He is thought to be the key to the case.

However, he claims he knows nothing about the case. In front of Oedipus and the servant, the messenger relates the following story,

### **Messenger**

“And no wonder, master. But I will bring clear recollection to his ignorance. I am sure he knows well of the time we spent together in the region of Kithairon [1135] for six-month periods, from spring to Arktouros, he with two flocks, and I with one. And then for the winter I used to drive my flock to my own fold, and he took his to the fold of Laios. [1140] Did any of this happen as I tell it, or did it not?”

### **Servant**

“You speak the truth, though it was long ago.”

The servant doesn't want Oedipus to know the truth, but he can't avoid telling it.

### **Oedipus**

“Oh, oh! All brought to pass, all true. Light, may I now look on you for the last time – I who have been found to be accursed in birth, [1185] accursed in wedlock, accursed in the shedding of blood.”

Laios once kidnapped a boy and killed him. The boy puts a curse on Laios saying that, “if he has a child, he will be killed by that child.” Oedipus's unfortunate fate began there. Oedipus killed his father and had children with his mother. Then, a servant shows up and tells Oedipus about the death of Jocasta. He feels guilty for her death, and he stabs himself in the eye with a gold clasp. Oedipus becomes blind, and he asks Creon to expel himself from Thebes.

So, now, we'll see how Creon is portrayed for more details.

### **Creon's Personality and His Role in Thebe's Trilogy**

Creon appears in all trilogies, as an aide to King Oedipus, and as a ruler of Thebes. Even

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Oedipus doesn't appear in "Antigone." From this fact, we think Creon can be considered the shadowy protagonist of Thebes trilogy.

In "Oedipus Rex," Oedipus suspected Creon of harbouring an ambition for the throne, but Creon calmly supports Oedipus. From a point of interest, Creon claims his innocence. He is also more concerned with profit and loss than a blood relationship with Oedipus.

Next, we would like to consider the character of Creon in "Oedipus at Colonus." "Oedipus at Colonus" describes Oedipus's death after years in exile from Thebes. In this story, Creon, now king of Thebes, tries to bring Oedipus back to Thebes. Oedipus refuses strongly because of Creon's dishonesty. He describes Creon's character like this.

### **Oedipus**

"You who will dare anything, who from any just plea would derive a crafty trick, why do you make this / attempt on me, and seek once more to snare me in your trap where I would feel most grief? [765] / Yet such is the nature of your own offers to me: noble in appearance, but in substance base. / But you have come here with fraud on your lips, yes, [795] and with a tongue keener than the edge of / a sword; yet by their use you may well reap more sorrow than salvation."

In these lines, Oedipus points out Creon's hypocrisy. He is good at speech, but he is not faithful. Also, he is blamed for not being interested in the blood relationship between Creon and Oedipus. This point of view overlaps with the character of Creon in "Oedipus Rex."

Now, we would like to examine the character of Creon in "Antigone." "Antigone" is the story of Oedipus's daughter, Antigone, who returns to Thebes after Oedipus' death. After his death, his two sons fought against each other and died. Creon forbids the funeral of one of the two sons, Polynices, because he had betrayed Thebes. Antigone wants to bury Polynices because of love for her brother and fights against Creon. In this story, Creon is the authoritative king who forbids the burial. Even though Antigone is the fiancé of his son, Haemon, he does not forgive her. Creon condemns Antigone to death because she rebels against his law. Haemon is depressed and commits suicide. Creon's wife, learning of her son's suicide, also dies. Thus, he lost all his family.

In the confrontation between Antigone and Creon, his personality seems to have changed. Creon strongly believes that breaking the law he has established, such as burying his enemy, would disturb the peace of the country. Therefore, Antigone's action makes him furious. He does not consider her love for her brother. Such characters are seen in the conversation between him and his son, Haemon. Haemon attempts to stop Antigone's execution. Creon, however, gets mad and insults Haemon.

### **Creon**

"Shall Thebes prescribe to me how I must rule?"

### **Haemon**

"[735] See, there, how you have spoken so much like a child."

### **Creon**

"Am I to rule this land by the will of another than myself?"

**Haemon**

“That is no city, which belongs to one man.”

**Creon**

“Does not the city by tradition belong to the man in power?”

**Haemon**

“You would make a fine monarch in a desert.”

He cannot believe his stepdaughter and his son. His thinking is very similar to Oedipus, who suspects Creon of attempting to take the place of the king in “Oedipus Rex.”

The relationship between Creon and the prophet Tiresias is also the same as that of King Oedipus. Both insult and ignore him and Tiresias, angered, predicts their tragic destinies. In “Antigone,” the prophet Tiresias recommends that Polynices be buried for the Gods. Creon, however, does not listen at all because he thinks that Tiresias wants only money. Tiresias is angered and predicts that Creon will lose one of his children for his sins.

**Tiresias**

“Then know, yes, know it well! You will not live through many more [1065] courses of the sun’s swift chariot, before you will give in return one sprung from your own loins, a corpse in requital for corpses. For you have thrust below one of those of the upper air and irreverently lodged a living soul in the grave, [1070] while you detain in this world that which belongs to the infernal gods, a corpse unburied, unmourned, unholy.”

After hearing this prophecy, Creon is scared and decides to stop Antigone’s execution. However Antigone is already dead, and he loses Haemon and his wife. Creon, like Oedipus, is destroyed because the prophecy comes true.

### Conclusion

To summarise, we have looked at the images of Creon in the trilogy of Thebes. When comparing Creon in “Antigone” and “Oedipus Rex,” we found that Creon’s role and personality are different in each work. In conclusion, in the story of “Antigone,” Creon is portrayed as a tyrannical and cold-hearted character who abuses Antigone for breaking the law of the state and respecting the laws of the gods. Creonother, in “Oedipus Rex,” Creon is portrayed as a calm and clever character. He advises the confused Oedipus and tries to correct his mistakes.

What can we say from these two very different images of Creon? We can say that Creon’s character changed greatly after he became king of Thebes. Creon gets political power in Thebes after the death of Oedipus. However, his constant pursuit of the nation’s interests made him unable to trust even his children. Creon is almost the same as King Oedipus, who fears that a prophecy will come true. From the Oedipus trilogy, we can learn the king’s isolation and fear of losing power. And this lesson does not only apply to Oedipus and Creon. It could also apply to us.

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