
Research on Oedipus Rex: Annotated Bibliography

Annotated Bibliography

Hull, Robert. 'Hamartia and Heroic Nobility in Oedipus Rex.' *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 17 no. 2, 1993, pp. 286-294. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/phl.1993.0047

The article is written by Robert Hull, and he argues that one's consequences are already displaced by their character flaws at the beginning of the story, as opposed to those who believe that Oedipus will cause his consequences by his own actions. This article begins with a discussion about how readers are taught to think about human morality and life when reading a tragedy written by Sophocles. He discusses how Aristotle uses the idea of hamartia to dictate what direction the action in a tragedy should be taken in, while also containing the elements a normal tragedy would have. Hull then cites a passage where Aristotle mentions that a tragedy should be about a character falling from grace to doom such as "Oedipus Rex", where the protagonist falls into that doom because of a certain mistake, rather than them being cruel or morally unjust and then being punished for it. Although, Hull states that while Oedipus is neither a cruel nor totally good-hearted character, he still sinned and was punished even though it was due to a character flaw, rather than a mistake, while asking if Aristotle would think the same. He states that if a tragedy is to function properly, the character must be punished undeservingly. Hamartia used in this situation cannot be confused with something, such as, the character making a moral mistake and then being punished for it. The audience will have an emotional response and then be angry with the character for being so unjust, is what Aristotle thought. If hamartia is used, the character will be a victim of a flaw that does not involve their morals, and does not allow them to be blamed, which is why Oedipus is a properly written character. He goes into details about the doubts of Aristotle's and Sophocle's definitions of hamartia and how it relates to tragedy. Hull then discusses how Oedipus' flaws and actions are due to his hamartia and how Sophocles wrote Oedipus as someone who ironically brought his doom into the light through his refusal to acknowledge the truth, his pride, and other flaws which happen to cause his fate to be displaced. He also compares other stories to the story of "Oedipus Rex" and how the characters in these stories all had a similar fate, which was them paying a great price for something they wanted. This article was intended for those who believe consequence is purely based on action, especially in a story such as "Oedipus Rex". Hull's thesis is unfortunately not met all the way despite the textual evidence provided, which does make it credible, however, he does not have enough evidence to prove that Oedipus was going to be brought to his doom regardless of what events occurred. The story is told more in a point of view where Oedipus causes his own demise through his own flaws. This article is useful partly because it supports the argument that Oedipus was brought to his demise through pride and stubbornness, but mainly because it argues against the point that Oedipus brought his demise on himself instead of just staying at Corinth, rather than it being out of his control. The article was very brave to question what Aristotle thought about tragic tales and how they should function, while also going against what most present day philosophers think, which is what made it enjoyable to read.

Ford, Randal. "Why We Fail: How Hubris, Hamartia, and Anagnosis Shape

Organizational Behavior.” Human Resource Development Quarterly, vol. 17, no. 4, 2006, pp. 481–489., doi: 10.1002/hrdq.1187.

This article was written by Randal Ford, and he describes how a corporation is set up to fail when its workers have the tendency to fall victim to hubris, hamartia, and “anagnosis”. He starts off by explaining that if an organization runs into a failure at any point, it must recover and learn from it, and that workers must let go of their ego in order to do so. Randal created the term “anagnosis”, meaning “without knowledge”, which is compared to Aristotle’s term “anagnorisis”, meaning “recognition”. When workers are victims of anagnosis, hamartia, and hubris, they fail. He then discusses the difference between hamartia and hubris, where hamartia is a flaw of a character, and hubris is the ego to compare oneself to that of a god. He puts these two terms into a triangle with anagnosis, and explains how they relate through the unwillingness to listen, to a narrow perspective, and then to ignorance, which hinders the workers’ progress and again, sets them up to fail when exposed to it. Examples of hamartia and hubris are then listed, and he discusses how isolation leads to anagnosis. He then talks about “Nucor Corporation” and how it almost fell into economic collapse, but saved itself through pay cuts and less work scheduling. The company heads described the error of their ways to their workers and were able to create a good relationship with them through learning from their mistakes. They let go of their egos and worked towards one unified goal for everyone. He then explains that other managers try to mimic this, but instead fail at doing so, causing the costs and overproduction to rise. This is due to these different managers seeing this strategy as something from their own ego and perspective, and refusing to listen to actual logic and reason. They are people who have fallen victim to hubris, hamartia, and anagnosis. When working as a group, and letting go of ego, the company will prosper. This article is intended for those who need to be exposed to the dangers of hubris, hamartia, and anagnosis, and how it can set you up to fail as a worker or organization, while also educating them on how it takes effect on a person as a whole. It is useful because it supports the idea of hamartia and hubris being a huge danger, which correlates perfectly with the events in “Oedipus Rex”. This can show readers that Oedipus set himself up for failure through these mistakes. When you don’t let go of your ego (hamartia), self-comparison to a god (hubris), and limited perspective of life (hamartia), you are prone to fail, and since Oedipus did not do that, he was brought to his demise. He thought he could outsmart the gods and take control of his destiny with his huge ego. Ford met the criteria of his thesis that companies can be set up to fail from those three dangers through strong reasoning, comparisons to Aristotle’s philosophy, and provided examples of incidents where companies recovered and avoided that triangle of danger, which provides the strong credibility of the article. It was shockingly philosophic and thought-provoking for an economic-esque piece of work, and that is what made it enjoyable to read.