
The Consequences Of Power And Pride In The Play Oedipus

“In truth, pride is double-edged: destructive and ludicrous in the wrong place and the wrong proportions, but heroic and admirable in the right ones” (Aicinena). Pride has perplexed philosophers and theologians for centuries, and it is an especially paradoxical emotion. People think that they win when they look like “the best” and when their ego has not been touched. In fact, we become slaves of our ego as soon as we follow it, when we start feeding our pride, so it just gets bigger and stronger. With pride always comes power, since power is almost always the reason for excessive pride. Power is an inescapable feature of human social life and structure. It is a much-needed feature in the human social life since it enforces order and hierarchical, it is normal for a person with power to have some pride. But, if a person isn’t wise enough to know that pride has its own limits, that person will cause his own downfall. Throughout history, men and women occupied many powerful statuses and with those ranks came a tremendous self-confidence that led to numerous horrible social and psychological consequences. An example of this feature and its consequences is found in the play “Oedipus The King”, where a king was too powerful and prideful to see the truth.

Pride and power affect a prideful person’s life immensely; they play a very important role in the social life of that person when it comes to his/her relationship and interaction with others. A study conducted by Jeanne Nakamura obtained experiences of people feeling pride at work and at home. This research found that most situations that elicited high levels of pride were 'social' in nature. That is, pride was experienced most strongly when others were around, such as family members or work clients (McClatchie). Pride has no room in any loving relationship, as excessive pride is the cause of all conflict. It is a wall preventing entrance to the truth. There is no real connection or communication when pride takes precedence. Relationships are all about compromise and understanding whereas pride is an assertive stance which does not back down. The only relationship where pride wins is a destructive one. There is no peace when ego enters the room (Yaz). Excessive pride makes it seem impossible for the person to trust anyone around him, no matter how much effort the other person does to gain the trust of the superior individual, he won’t succeed. An overbearing person thinks that he cannot trust anyone because he is too sure that only he is right and the only right way of thinking is his way of thinking. In the play “Oedipus The King”, Oedipus stopped trusting many people throughout the play for many reasons but mainly because of his pride. After seeking help from Theirisias, the blind soothsayer of Thebes, and after a huge argument between the two because Oedipus thinks Theirisias is hiding something from him, obviously blinded by his pride and ignoring the fact that maybe Theirisias is actually protecting him, Oedipus becomes angry and thus pushes Theirisias who informs him that he is the murderer he’s searching for. The king criticizes Theirisias’s powers wildly and insults his blindness, but Theirisias only responds that the insults will eventually be turned on Oedipus by all of Thebes. Driven into a fury by the accusation, Oedipus proceeds to concoct a story that Creon and Tiresias are conspiring to overthrow him. Although Therisias was wildly known to be very wise and accurate with his predictions, Oedipus still doubted him and did not agree with his declaration because he was too blinded by his pride that does not let him trust anyone around him. In addition, the same argument that Oedipus had with Theirisias led to the assumption that Creon stabbed Oedipus in the back. Another social consequence pride forces upon us is loneliness (sophocles, Oedipus The King 682-692). When

a person has too much pride, he/she starts losing the people they care about or the people that keep them company because of their attitude which then leads to complete loneliness. Accordingly, throughout the play, Oedipus lost his trust in so many people because of his pride and ended up alone in the end when he killed himself in his wife's room. He preferred to kill himself than to stand all alone and face the harsh truth he has been too proud to face.

To add, a prideful person will have to face many consequences when it comes to his/her psychology and character especially when it comes to progress and to the mental health. Pride and power slow the process of progress since the person would be too blinded by his power to see the truth or the ways he can use to progress and thus falls in many problems he can't escape. Just like in the play, King Oedipus was too proud to realize that he's the murderer, no matter how much he wanted to know the truth, he couldn't. So many people that cared about him tried to open his eyes and show him the accuracy, yet he chose to ignore them, and this shows how pride slows progress since if Oedipus wasn't that proud, he could have seen the truth and prevented his own death (Sophocles, Oedipus The King). To elaborate, a study has been done to see how authentic pride affects runners' training progress. When participants reported lower authentic pride than usual on a given week, training progress increased the following week, conversely, greater authentic pride was associated with greater training progress on average (Gilchrist, Gilchrist and Sabiston) and this shows how pride greatly affects the progress of a person since when the athlete did not show high authentic pride, he showed more progress. To add, in addition to the lack of progress, pride also causes anxiety. An article indicates that pride and anxiety come wrapped in the same package. If you insist on doing it your way, then expect to feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. The only way you can rid yourself of this kind of needless anxiety is by first ridding yourself of the notion that you're the center of the universe (Furtick).

Furthermore, excessive pride may lead to the failure of the person occupying a powerful position, for example his personality may be affected or maybe he/she will cause his/her own downfall. The personality of a prideful person goes through so many changes: just like in the play "Oedipus The King", King Oedipus went from being a prideful king to become a desperate man. After realizing that the truth was always right in front of his eyes, but he didn't see it because of his pride, King Oedipus was really affected as we see in the play when he said: "Light of the sun, let me never look on you again." (Sophocles 712). He was desperate and angry with himself, he preferred to pierce his eyes wishing to never see the cruel world he lived in than to kill himself, he wanted to go somewhere even darker than death. This shows how angry he was from himself, he thought that death was an easy punishment and that blindness provides much more torture. This also shows how miserable Oedipus was after he realized the whole truth, after he knew that the only thing that was standing between him and the truth was his own pride. In addition to those personality changes, excessive pride may become the reason of a man's own downfall. There are so many examples that show how pride can get the better of someone, for example: people who turn down roles they deem 'beneath them,' missing potentially valuable stepping stones to bigger and better opportunities, or people who opt to struggle on in a role they aren't capable of doing well rather than ask for help and support, afraid of being judged poorly for doing so, or even people who are afraid to take a risk in their career or business, because they can't bear the consequences of their failure (Warell). This phenomenon is also present in the play "Oedipus The King", the king's tragic flaw led to his own downfall, his pride controlled him so much that he couldn't see the truth, and when he was finally able to uncover the whole truth, it was too late. Consequently, the king lost control of his empire and even of himself and caused his own downfall by blinding himself and asking for his

own exile (sophocles, Oedipus The King).

As a conclusion, pride and power have their own consequences on an individual's social life, psychology, and achievements such as relationship or health problems, or the person can even get to a point where he/she causes his/her own downfall. As shown in the play "Oedipus The King" and as proved in real life, those consequences can never be harmful unless pride exceeds its limits, therefore a person who has pride should be very careful and aware that pride has limits that shouldn't be crossed.

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