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**EXAMINATION OF KING OEDIPUS, A FICTIONAL CHARACTER,  
THROUGH ETHICAL AND POLITICAL VALUES**

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**KURMACA BİR KARAKTER OLAN KRAL OİDİPUS'UN ETİK VE  
POLİTİK DEĞERLER ÜZERİNDEN İNCELENMESİ**

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## FOREWORD

Like many individuals who are sensitive to the society they live in, I have never felt outside of the social and political influence of that society. In living conditions that are becoming increasingly difficult for everyone every day, thinking about life can sometimes be seen as insignificant or useless for some. Nevertheless, I believe that in such an environment, it is an important distinction to move away from anxiety and decide to produce. While these distinctions create our character, our choices of action originating from our *selves* shape our lives and direct us. The area that emerges with the distinction of these *preferences* is the subject of my thesis.

The Ancient Greece tragedy character King Oedipus, who made mistake because of his *self* at this point of distinction, and the consequences of his choices of action are a good basis for today's modern person to understand himself. Today, just like King Oedipus, it seems inevitable for us to suffer destruction/(anxiety) or unhappiness/(disappointment) due to the limited state of being that wants to go beyond the conditions we are in. From this point of view, the necessity of discussing the question of *what is a good/right action* is an essential effort.

Therefore, since the *ethical* and *political* approach of Aristotle, one of the Ancient Greece thinkers, is proper for this subject perspective, his thoughts will be opened to a detailed examination. This, of course, corresponds to the fact that a difficult philosophy literature has been passed through. This practice of thinking will not only bring happiness to me with its life-affirming aspect, but will also increase hope at the same rate.

I would like to thank my dear teacher and thesis advisor Ferda Keskin, who guided me through this process and helped me see some important details. In addition, I would also like to thank my dear teachers Kaan Atalay, Dr. Zeynep Talay Turner, Dr. Ömer Behiç Albayrak for their efforts in the Master's Program in Philosophy and Social Thought.

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## ABSTRACT

The choice of the thesis subject comes from today's social problems concerning the distinction between good and evil preferences of action. The sum total of these preferences, therefore, creates a culture. Thus, the whole reality of life, positive or negative, that we encounter today and that we are currently exposed to, conveys to us as a result of the sum of these action preferences. In particular, a healthy analysis or interpretation of the effects of social events that we have experienced in our country over the past two decades on the distinction of *good* and *evil* will be able to contribute to the production of life. I believe that this assumption will be possible by examining the Ancient Greece philosopher Aristotle's *ethical* and *political* concepts with this study. I also find it valuable that my thesis forms a direction through Aristotle's ethical and political understanding. Of course, this is an -activity of thinking-.

First of all, it should be noted how the proceeding of the thesis will be. There will be a detailed examination of the origin of myth and tragedy, and in the light of this information, the myth of King Oedipus will be conveyed in the first chapter. The ethical and the political will be explained and reinterpreted in the sub-title from Aristotle's philosophical point of view in the second chapter. The action preferences of the fictional character, King Oedipus, will be examined through ethical and political values, that are the subject of philosophy in the third chapter, which is the last chapter. The purpose here is to see the reflections of the fictional character King Oedipus's actions that he performed as a result of his preferences on ethical and political concepts, to bring to light the details that serve as a guide for us today or at least to develop a practice of thinking.

It can be seen that opening the action of King Oedipus to interpretation with Aristotle's ethical and political understanding is possible for today's people to think about the possibility of *good* action, but only by reaching the knowledge of the reason and just/*ethical* good -the state of perpetuation-.

**Keywords:** Tragedy, Ethic, Political, Value, Character.



## ÖZET

Tez konusunun tercihi, günümüz toplumsal sorunların kaynağının eylem tercihlerinin iyi ya da kötü olanın ayırımından geldiğini düşünmekteyim. Bu eylem tercihlerinin birliğinin toplamı, dolayısıyla, bir kültür yaratmaktadır. Böylece bugün, karşılaştığımız ve güncel olarak içinde dolaştığımız, maruz kaldığımız; olumlu ya da olumsuz yaşamın bütün gerçekliği, bu eylem tercihlerinin toplamının bir sonucu olarak, bize ulaştırmaktadır. Özellikle, son yirmi yılda ülkemizde yaşadığımız toplumsal olayların yaratmış olduğu etkilerinin *iyi* ve *kötü* ayrımı üzerinden sağlıklı bir analizinin ya da yorumunun yapılması, yaşamı üretme noktasında katkı sağlayabilecektir. Bu çalışma ile bu varsayım, Antik Yunan filozofu Aristoteles'in *etik* ve *politik* kavramlar üzerinden inceleme konusu yapılmasıyla mümkün olacağı inancındayım. Ayrıca tezimin Aristoteles'in etik ve politik anlayışı üzerinden bir yön oluşturmasını değerli bulmaktayım. Elbette bu, bir, -düşünme etkinliği-dir.

Öncelikle tezin işleyişinin nasıl olacağı belirtilmelidir. Birinci bölümde mitin ve tragedyanın kökenine dair ayrıntılı bir inceleme söz konusu olacak ve bu bilgiler ışığında Kral Oidipus miti aktarılacaktır. İkinci bölümde ise; etik olan ve politik olan açıklanacak, alt başlık içinde Aristoteles'in felsefi bakış açısıyla yeniden yorumlanacaktır. Son bölüm olan üçüncü bölümde ise; kurmaca karakter olan Kral Oidipus'un eylem tercihleri, felsefenin konusu olan etik ve politik değerler üzerinden incelemeye açılacaktır. Burada söz konusu olan kurmaca karakter Kral Oidipus'un tercihlerinin sonucu gerçekleştirmiş olduğu eylemlerinin, etik ve politik kavramlar üzerinden yansımalarını görmek, bugün için bize bir yol gösterici nitelikte olan ayrıntıları gün yüzüne çıkarmak ya da en azından bir düşünme pratiği geliştirmeyi, sağlamaktır.

Kral Oidipus'un eyleminin Aristoteles'in etik ve politik anlayışı ile yoruma açmak, bugünün insanına *iyi* eylemin imkânı üzerinde düşünmenin belki de ancak akıl ve adil/*etik* olan iyinin bilgisine ulaşmanın -sürekli kılma hali- ile mümkün olabileceği görülebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tragedya, Etik, Politik, Deđer, Karakter.



## INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the tragic play of *Oedipus the King* of the Ancient Greek author Sophocles through ethical and political concepts.

The Classical Age, covering the Vth and IVth centuries BC, when the greatest works in the genre of tragedy and comedy emerged in Ancient Greece, constitutes the brightest period in terms of the world of art and philosophy. The written theater plays were staged at festivals held in open-air theaters and for audience ensembles consisting of Athenian citizens.

Athens prospered with the development of trade, and under the rule of Pericles, it was experiencing its golden age, while the rise of Athenian democracy in the Vth century BC was also the period of development of plastic arts and theatre. The reason for the rise of tragedy and comedy in Athens is the coexistence of different and even contradictory value judgments in the society. Motion/action (imitation/mimesis), which is unique to the art of theater and arises from the conflict of opposites, has been fed from this social contradiction. This social contradiction can perhaps be explained by the transition of the Greek society from a feudal order to a democratic one. Ancient Greek society, which was democratic in form, used ancient beliefs and vital values to a certain extent. The inner contradictions of the society have formed the conflicting forces of the tragedies, and tragedy is said to have arisen from this balanced opposition.

It is seen that the real material of the tragedy is the social thought specific to the city/state and especially the legal thought that is tried to be formed with an intense effort in the urbanization process. Tragic poets reveal the incompatibilities and the *political* within the body of the legal thought with the action of the character, and at the same time, they reflect the conflicts existing in the society through the *ethical* thought with the character they have created. During this time, law was separated from religious tradition and ethical thought. Despite this, they could not mutually draw the boundaries of their jurisdictions clearly enough.

Here, at this point, a contradiction arises. This contradiction - the *value(s)* that emerged as a result of the existence of power/(s) (city/state-myth/divine)- is the subject of discussion.

But it should not be forgotten that tragedy also points to a very different place from juridical debate. This discussion is about a *human* who lives personally (King Oedipus) and at the same time is forced to make a decision and compelled to direct his action in a world of uncertain values that show that nothing is orderly or has a single meaning under any circumstances. This is the first side of the conflict. On the other side, it is known that tragic heroes emerge from legends and myths that are the transition of life experiences. The reason for this is that the tragedy authors are rooted in the mythical narrative tradition. Nevertheless, the author distances himself from the myths in the expression or reception of the hero, questions them, and compares the heroic values and old religious representations with the new ways of thinking of law within the framework of the city/state.

This situation raises new questions. Tragedy leads us to think on the human being with questions of

*“What is this being that both dominates all nature with its rational thinking and cannot govern himself, both farsighted and blind, both guilty and innocent, both perpetrator and passive, incomprehensible and deviated or been deviated? What is the relationship of this person to the acts that we see on the stage that he decides, takes the initiative, and bears responsibility for, but that are beyond the meaning of the truth and beyond his comprehension?”<sup>1</sup>*

And the thinking activity begins at this point. The adventure of seeking truth will continue in this way.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Sevgi Tamgüç – Reşat Fuat Çam, (Istanbul: Kabalcı Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2012), p. 27.

So Tragedy is not just an art form. It is believed that the tragedy also turned into a social institution in which the political and legal bodies of the city / state take part alongside the competitions. In this way, the city/state transforms itself into the theater form. It sees itself as the subject of some kind of play and plays itself in public. But, it reflects the reality of the society and makes it the subject of debate. Like the questions posed above, it makes itself entirely problematic by presenting itself as fragmented and divided against itself.

The Socratic proposition, repeated by Plato, *that doing evil is ignorance, is illiteracy*, is an extension of the understanding approved in pre-city/state, pre-law society. The hero of Tragedy is not extraordinary in terms of morality or justice according to Aristotle. He should not be low in morality or evil. There must be a mistake of the person who is better than the average. This mistake/*hamartia* is the choice/decision/action that a good person makes unknowingly or the weakness that is far from ethical values. And the person is subject to destruction because of this mistake (*hamartia*).

This mistake appears as a religious stain, a spiritual weakness. Mistake/*hamartia* means a blindness that brings failure, confusion of mind. The individual who performs the *hamartia* seems to be suffering from mental illness, he is in the grip of a criminal delirium. He is a stray person who has lost his common sense. The *Erinyes*<sup>2</sup>, to name it in Ancient Greek, surrounded the person from inside, penetrated him like a sinister religious force. In a sense, they identify with the character while at the same time staying outside of it and surpassing it.

The contagious stain (*miasma*) of this crime (murder) spreads and clings beyond individuals, to their descendants and relatives. It is capable of encircling an entire city, as well as polluting an entire land. The same catastrophic power can

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<sup>2</sup> *Erinyes*\* They are known as the goddesses of vengeance, sometimes shown as one, sometimes as many, sometimes as three. It has been accepted that the Erinyes are three women and their names are Alekto, Tisiphone, Megaira. Erinyes are thought of as the dogs that go after the perpetrators and especially the murderers; These dogs are female, they immediately smell the blood and run and drive the criminal they are chasing crazy by endlessly chasing them. (Azra Erhat, *Dictionary of Mythology*)

be the embodiment of punishment when the ultimate consequences of crime/murder and its most distant principles (destiny/*daimon*) reappear in successive generations, in the murderer and beyond. It is clear that within this framework there can be no absolute individual will. As a result, what the conflict, investigation arising out of the tragedy raises, without giving a definitive answer, without ending the questioning is the riddle of the human condition. Trying to understand this riddle forms the basis of my thesis.

It is necessary to examine the concepts of myth and tragedy in detail, before Aristotle's ethical and political understanding of the action of King Oedipus is opened to interpretation.

## CHAPTER ONE: TRAGEDY IN ANCIENT GREECE

### 1.1. MYTH (MYTHOS)

While discussing the reflection of King Oedipus, who is a fictional character, through ethical and political values, the values that reveal him will be tried to be explained respectively and to be conveyed in the context of the subject.

Myths are verbal transmissions that describe the power of nature and its meaning, and its relationship with humans, in an atmosphere of life where various supernatural beings live together. All reference books beginning with “first there was the *Word*” proves this situation. “*The word, which comes into existence as something called and heard, ‘intervenes’ when it is called and heard. The word is first and foremost ‘intervening’: It is the one that comes between me and the world, me and you (he/she) and me and me. By intervening, the word opens a gap, creating the difference that gives the things it comes in between their identity (what they are). However, where there is a difference, it is possible to reach the difference, to intervene, to recognize, to understand and to know.*”<sup>3</sup> The existence of the human can only be possible with this *intervening word*. And it should be noted that the equivalent of this word is myth. “*In every place inhabited on earth, in all ages and in all conditions, myths of human have arisen, and these myths are the source of inspiration for all that is revealed by the actions of human's body and mind. It would not be overstepping to say that myth is a hidden rift that drains the unending energies of the cosmos into human cultural creation. Religions, philosophies, arts, social forms of primitive and historical man, great discoveries in science and technology, sleepless dreams all arise from that basic and magical myth circle.*”<sup>4</sup> To convey the definition of myth in general, it is possible to define it as the transfer of a life experience.

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<sup>3</sup> Taylan Altuğ, *Dile Gelen Felsefe*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Publications, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, Joseph, *Kahramanın Sonsuz Yolculuğu*, (Istanbul: Ithaki Publications, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2020) p. 13.

In order to talk about the concept of word in Ancient Greece, it is necessary to introduce three main concepts. These are respectively; *mythos*, *epos*, and *logos*. We can explain *mythos* as spoken word, heard word, tale, story or legend. Each oral transmission can take a subjective, sophisticated and formal form in itself. So that it will want to take it to a more striking or aesthetic level. *"The melody that originates from the natural origin of languages is the 'emphasis', it expresses groans, cries of pain or joy, threats, whining, imitating the inflexions of sound."*<sup>5</sup> Here, too, the *epos* arises. Epos; we call *poetry*, *melody* or *epic*. It is a text written with the word (myth) read that the narrator tells and reads with ornate words, drawing a magical atmosphere, with a weighed, harmonious and melodious measure. If all this is a structure, creates a meaning. This meaning brings forth the Logos. *"Forgetfulness because it is a mediation and the departure of the logos from itself. Without writing, the latter would remain in itself. Writing is the dissimulation of the natural, primary and immediate presence of sense to the soul within the logos."*<sup>6</sup> Logos is *thought* in human, but *law* in nature. It exists in the whole universe. Finding it, revealing it may be possible with the self-realization of thought/science. With this concept, humanity divides it into sections within knowledge/science.

Mythos conveys the content, the essence, while the epos gives it its form. It tells stories. This whole process brings us knowledge of past experiences. Examination of this conveyance reveals the logos. And thus the concept of *mythologia/mythology* emerges. The important known narrators of mythology are *Homer* and *Hesiod*. *"Homer and Hesiod had a privileged role in this regard. His narratives of divine beings have acquired almost the value of a canon. They became both a touchstone for the authors who came after them and a precedent for the audience that listens or reads them."*<sup>7</sup> The transcription of the conveyance

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<sup>5</sup> Atakan Altınörs, *Dil Felsefesi*, (Istanbul: Science and Future Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2014), p. 134-135.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Gramatoloji*, trans. İsmet Birkan,(Istanbul: BilgeSu Publishing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2014), p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Religion in Ancient Greece*, trans. Murat Erşen, (Istanbul: Alfa Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2016), p. 20.

begins with them. But it is not possible to remain there. As the genres of literature differed, mythos were also enriched with new narratives. They have been the subject of epics from lyric poetry genres and then tragedies. Mythos regained its vitality with tragedy. They have been transformed into an irreplaceable form with the skills of the authors of tragedy and have been a reflection of the human drama.

It is assumed that tragedy arose from the songs of dithyrambic sung in ceremonies in honor of the god Dionysus. *“The discovery of the literary genre of the theater, which puts the fiction on the stage as if it were real, only emerges within the framework of the cult of Dionysus, the god of illusion, confusion, the constant intertwining between reality and appearance, and truth and fiction.”*<sup>8</sup> The choir members in these songs were disguised as a goat, the sacred animal of Dionysus, and sang and danced roughly. This experience is actually the *mimetic rituals* of the primitive communities. These choral songs, which gradually began to be written in a certain form and order, began to gain a poetic quality. Then the *speaker/hypocrites* (responder) is added to these choral songs. Thus, the dialogical element of the theater emerges. This would be called conversational *tragoidia/tragedy* by combining the Greek word *tragos*, which means goat, and the word *oidia*, which means song. These songs and the choir have turned from being a part of a religious ceremony into an artistic show. *“Tragedy, which has its origins in dithyrambic, is now becoming a drama genre that separates from it and develops new aesthetic features. From now on, dithyrambic in the tragedy will turn into a choral song (khorikon), the singing and speech of the actor will be completely separated from the choir.”*<sup>9</sup> The Dithyrambic choir, on the other hand, has gradually become a regular structure.

While the choir members imitate the gods of Olympus, they actually turn into a hero/(character). In fact, the characteristic of the rituals is also preserved by the fact that the choir people remain under a mask. What the choir tells is, in a

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<sup>8</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 278.

<sup>9</sup> Banu Kılan Paksoy, *Tragedya ve Siyaset Eski Yunan'da Tragedyanın Siyasal Rolü*, (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Publications, Edition. 2011), p. 55.

sense, an opening towards the outside world. Tragedy turns into a play that has a similar meaning as the ritual of death and resurrection, while the mystery of the magic in the dynamics of the ritual leaves itself to thought. The collective creation of magic has transformed itself into the individual creation in the play. This shows us the transition of some rituals to art.

When explaining the reasons for these rituals, scientists indicate that the desired situation is symbolically revived, such as the end of winter (death), the arrival of spring (life), the revival of the soil, and the increase in fertility. The purpose here is to survive in the struggle with nature. Because natural events affect the primitive human. Man has developed behaviors aimed at understanding the seasonal change in nature and making sense of it. The primitive human tried to control these existing changes by means of magic against the negative tendencies that would be towards them. *“Rather than establishing an orderly exchange relationship with the divinity of mutual trust, it is to keep evil forces at bay, to appease a fearsome Power that must be defended and guarded when it approaches to avoid harm.”*<sup>10</sup> But, later he realized that these changes were beyond his own magic power. They believed that this power belonged to the existence of a superior transcendent power beyond natural phenomena. Just like the soil dries up in fall and turns green in spring... *“The projective or symbolic death and resurrection of the candidate - expressed in a concrete form. The ceremony takes various forms. Some are very realistic, involving the murder of the candidate and his rebirth from a woman; in others it is assumed to have been swallowed up by a god or spirit and vomited back.”*<sup>11</sup> Tragedies wanted to influence these forces by portraying these events. *“During the duration of the ritual, it is not to separate the sacrifice performer and the participants from their family and citizen groups, their daily activities, and their human world, but to place them in the necessary places and forms, and to integrate them into the city*

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<sup>10</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Religion in Ancient Greece*, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> George Thomson, *Tragedyanın Kökeni*, trans. Mehmet H. Doğan, (Istanbul: Payel Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2004), p. 114.

*and this world life in accordance with the world order governed by the gods.*"<sup>12</sup> Also, for them, religion reflects a collective feeling and thought. But what should not be overlooked is that the illusion ceremonies performed also serve a social and political function apart from being religious.

## **1.2. TRAGEDY**

The Classical Age, covering the Vth and IVth centuries BC, when the greatest works in the genre of tragedy and comedy emerged in Ancient Greece, constitutes the brightest period in terms of art and the world of thought. The developments in every field of art emerged as a result of the strengthening of the Athenian state after the Persian wars. Written plays were staged in open-air theaters and in festivities to audiences of Athenian citizens.

On the other hand, as trade developed, Athens also got richer. While Athens was experiencing its golden age under Pericles, the rise of Athenian democracy in the Vth century BC was also the period of development of plastic arts and theatre.

The myth of Dionysus emerged as a result of rituals. Dionysus is known as the god of wine and ecstasy.

*"His role is not to stall and consolidate the human and social order by sanctifying it. Dionysus makes this order the subject of discussion; He leads to a crack in this order by revealing, by its own existence, another notion of the sacred, which is not ordered, fixed, and definite, but alien, strange, incomprehensible, and perverted."*<sup>13</sup>

Like other gods, it was believed that he died and rose again. His death and resurrection were represented through these illusionary ceremonies. Although there are some formal differences in different geographies, it is seen that the

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Religion in Ancient Greece*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.78.

content is generally the same. He is generally thought of as a goat (the killing of the goat was first accepted as killing the god, but later it was accepted as an offering to the god).

In time, competitions of tragedy were started in the Dionysus ceremonies. The imitation of myths through action has revealed the heroes of the tragedy and the dramatic structure. We can say that tragedy has developed with the characteristics of rituals and has survived to the present day with its own artistic and independent features by breaking away from it. Only a limited number of tragedy texts have reached us from this century. This period brought up tragedy authors such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and a comedy author such as Aristophanes. In the hands of these authors, while the myth, magic and sorcery element remaining from primitive ceremonies were replaced by contemporary thought and imitation/(mimesis) gained a theatrical value.

We obtain the source of much formal information about tragedy from Aristotle's *Poetics*. The *Poetics* written by Aristotle, who is thought to have been born in 384 BC, is known as the first and most important text in this field. This text influenced and transformed many forms of theater. In addition, it can be said that its influence still continues today. According to Aristotle, tragedy

*“is an imitation of an action of a certain length, which is morally dignified, has a beginning and an end; has an artistically beautified language; special tools are used for each part it includes; represented by those taking action. In this respect, tragedy is not just a story (mythos). The duty of tragedy is to cleanse the soul of passions (catharsis) with the feelings of pity and fear it evokes. When I say artistically beautified language, I understand harmony, that is, a language that includes the measure of song and verse. When I say that special instruments are used for each section, I understand that in some sections only the measure is*

*used, and in some sections, the music and the song are used at the same time.*"<sup>14</sup>

With this definition, the framework of tragedy has been determined and its necessary features have been revealed. Accordingly, there are six elements of tragedy. These are the story (mythos), characters, language, thoughts, decoration and music. These elements are the necessary conditions for the emergence of tragedy. It is seen that all these features embody the principle of balance, proportion and harmony that distinguishes Ancient Greek art. So this also reveals a composition; the composition of a complete, unified unity... "*Art is a synthesis of the real and the ideal, but the ideal is always superior to the real.*"<sup>15</sup> Aristotle made it competent by saying that tragedies imitate life. Here, imitation should not be considered as a copy. Imitation is an activity of representation or re-creation.

As the authors of tragedy imitate life, since they imitate those who commit an act, those who commit an act must represent good or evil. Thus, authors of tragedy imitate in their texts either better or worse than the average person, or the actions of the average person. "*Because tragedy is not an imitation of people, but rather of their actions, a life spent in happiness and disaster. Happiness and disaster are based on action, and the last thing in our lives is action, otherwise it's not something that happens outside of action. In terms of character, we are either this or that; In terms of action, we are either happy or not. In that case, the poets of tragedy do not aim to imitate the characters while revealing the people who act. On the contrary, they also reveal characters together through actions. Thus, we can say that the actions and the story constitute the end of the tragedy. The final end is the most important of all.*"<sup>16</sup> While the character traits is the sum of the person, the *action* is a form of behavior. The moderation/beauty and harmony in the understanding of art are reflected in the character through action. The

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<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, trans. İsmail Tunali, (Istanbul: Remzi Bookstore, 17<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2008), p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, p. 23-24.

moderation and harmony of the character in that society will lead us to look for good and evil in the democratic society structure.

It is also necessary to mention the concept of *hybris/arrogance*. *Hybris* is used for spirits that need to be punished in Ancient Greece. There is a belief that if a person is arrogant and goes to extremes, he has *hubris*.. It should be noted that there is a parallelism between *dying and resurrection* in the rituals and the excess, pride and consequent destruction of the hero in the tragic plays. This concept will be explained in detail in the following chapters.

### **1.3. DISTINCTION BETWEEN MYTH AND TRAGEDY**

It is an indisputable fact that there is an organic link between rituals and art and the concrete reality of life. It is necessary to elaborate on the subject and to mention about the differences between ritual and art. The purpose of rituals is to be practical, while life is imitated. It is imitated for the purpose of influencing or sharing what is happening in life. However the purpose of art is not to get a practical result. Art imitates life, but its main purpose is to reveal itself. Tragedy and critical thinking have replaced the existing and unchanging belief in illusion ceremonies. While motion and work/(economic) in rituals are important, there is word/(aesthetics) in art. While this aesthetic expression (rhetoric) is sometimes made with long words of praise like a ritual, it is sometimes used to satirize. The main subject of magic is usually monotonous. Art, on the other hand, seeks new resources for itself and enriches it. While life itself is in ritual, life in art shows similarity. The participants of the ritual remain in a state of great excitement, perhaps fear, while art restrains these excitements (catharsis/purification). *“The moving mimicry performed by ecstatic dancers is to invoke and assimilate inner strength. Its features are that it is done collectively, heard collectively. It includes motions that show the transition of life from one state to another such as birth, death, marriage, and puberty. This dance move creates great tension and then provide relief. Magic dances are both reminiscent and guiding. It can reflect an event before it happens, as well as after it happens. The purpose is to keep the*

*society in order, to make each individual a harmonious element of this order. For this, the individual must share in a common power.*"<sup>17</sup> It wants it to be perceived in an order. Again, it is equated with life in ritual. In art, while observing the outside world, deficiencies are revealed and new methods are developed about the reasons for this. Therefore, it is worth noting that while drama often goes through the ritual stage, not every ritual will turn into art.

Over time, the importance of rituals has decreased with the changes in the society. Because of the tradition that comes from belief in gods, someone who is tangible (person) has had an important place in society. Shrines and prayers took the place of magic ceremonies. Although there was an empowerment towards the inner world of individuals in rituals, the power in divine belief is external. The person is waiting for help from the god he believes in. While ritual is advocating togetherness, praying to god is the result of an individual interest. As a result of these changes, the motifs processed in ritual ceremonies left their place to mythology.

For example, thread in the ritual as leaving a state of unrest to a conflict, surviving after a battle, establishing a new order as a result of the return of peace, and celebrating accompanied by a feast is also seen in tragedy plays. We can say that the endings in the tragedy texts come from this structure of the rituals for the re-establishment of the order.

#### **1.4. KING OEDIPUS AND HIS MYTH**

There is no doubt that the most important sources among the literary forms left to us in order to understand the human being are the texts of the tragedy. *"The poet of tragedy draws its subjects from the huge repertoire of heroic epics shaped by Homer and other epic generation authors and painted on vessels by Athenian*

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<sup>17</sup> Sevda ŞENER, *Tiyatro Kaynağına İlişkin Kuramlar*, (Article, Ankara: Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History - Geography, 1977), p. 30.

painters.”<sup>18</sup> Many tragedy heroes we know have been taken from these repertoires and fictionalized.

A myth in which the deep wisdom of the Ancient Greece people was conveyed is also included in Nietzsche's book named *The Birth of Tragedy*. “*The old legend says that King Midas chased the wise Silenos, the companion of Dionysus, in the forest for a long time, but could not catch him. Finally, one day, when he fell into his hands, the king asked Silenos what is the best and most perfect thing for people. Stiff and still, the daimon remained silent, until he was forced by the king; Finally, with a ringing laugh, these words came out of his mouth: ‘Poor, one-day-lived species, children of chance and grief, why would you compel me to say what it is best for you not to hear? The best thing is completely out of reach for you: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. The second best thing is for you – to die as soon as possible.’*”<sup>19</sup> This exemplary myth seems to be calling out first to humanity and then to King Oedipus, the fictional character that is the subject of my thesis.

“*According to Marx, Ancient Greece is the childhood of humanity.*”<sup>20</sup> The art object also creates a consciousness that is sensitive to itself and knows how to take pleasure from aesthetics. “*The invention of Ancient Greece tragedy in V. century Athens was not only the production of literary works intended for and evoked spiritual consumption objects for citizens, it is also the interpretation, imitation and installation of a literary tradition through representation, the creation of a "subject", the tragic consciousness, the revealing of a tragic person.*”<sup>21</sup> Tragedy has its roots again in tragedy. “*And we explain nothing by saying that the word 'tragedy' means the song sung at the time of the sacrifice of a goat (tragos). It is people, not a goat, who are killed in tragedy, and if there is a*

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<sup>18</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 411.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Tragedyanın Doğuşu*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>21</sup> *Eski Yunan'da Mit ve Tragedya*, p. 325.

*state of sacrifice, it means a changed state of sacrifice.*"<sup>22</sup> Thus, there is benefit to say that the layers of meaning created by the tragedy reveal its own reality.

Among the poets of tragedy, Aeschylus is the first to use the legend of Oedipus. In 467, he participated in the competition with the plays called *Laios*, *Oedipus*, *Seven Against Thebes*. The plots of the three plays tell what happened to the sons of Cadmus, who were tied to each other. Sophocles wrote the Oedipus legend after this play. Comparisons are not possible, as the first two of this trilogy have been lost. As a result, this legend and the tragic situation of the character deeply affected many great writers and the art world after Sophocles.

The Oedipus myth is not actually tragic in itself. It was Sophocles who fictionalized it in this way. Homer's Oedipus actually dies on his throne in Thebes. "*Myths contain many violations such as incest, patricide, matricide, and the act of eating their children, on which tragedy feeds but they do not contain in themselves the authorities to judge these acts, as the city-state has created or as the choir expresses in its own way.*"<sup>23</sup> The primitive version of the myth in which it was first told is only the legend of the enthronement of a child who was found, who killed his father and was with his mother.

In order for Sophocles' King Oedipus to be understandable, the summary of the dramatic structure described in fiction should be quoted. Oedipus, who is a descendant of the Theban king, is the son of Laios, the king of Thebes, and the grandson of Labdakus, who is descended from Cadmus and Harmonia. His mother is the unfortunate Jocasta. Jocasta has a dream while pregnant with Oedipus. Tiresias, the blind seer of the period, is asked to interpret the dream. Tiresias says that the child to be born will kill Laios, the king of Thebes. Thereupon, when the child is born, he is left on the mountain with his ankles pierced and a strap inserted through it. The name Oedipus, meaning swollen foot, is derived from this event. The child is found by the shepherd of Polybos, king of

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<sup>22</sup> *Eski Yunan'da Mit ve Tragedya*, p. 412.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 413.

Corinth. This is a coincidence that Polybos and his wife Periboia had no children. The shepherd delivers the boy to the king. Ploybos and his wife treat the child as their own child. Oedipus also knows them as his own family. Years pass. When Oedipus is a young boy, a strange rumor circulates: that he was adopted, not a king's child...

Oedipus sets out for Delphi, the temple of the god Apollo, to learn the truth. While passing through a narrow road near Thebes, he comes across a man with a car. They fight over who should get out of the way and give way to the other. *"Apollo never answers Oedipus' "Are Polybos and Merope my mother and father?" question. He merely prophesies: you will sleep with your mother, you will kill your father—and this prophecy, in all its horror, leaves the question in the air."*<sup>24</sup> The enraged Oedipus then kills the old man and his two soldiers. According to some, this event is said to have taken place as a result of his encounter on the road in anger, right after God Apollo told Oedipus that he would kill his father and be with his mother, on the way back to the Delphi temple.

Oedipus decides not to go to Corinth again, to his family. After these events, he reaches the city of Thebes. At the entrance of the city of Thebes, the monster called the Sphinx strikes fear into the people. She breaks up those who do not answer the riddles it asks correctly. Sphinx has two riddles. Who is the creature that sometimes walks on two legs, sometimes on three, and sometimes on four? They are two siblings, one gives birth to the other, and the second is born from the first. Oedipus knows both riddles. The answer to the first riddle is *human*, and the answer to the second riddle is *night and day*. Thereupon, the Sphinx drops herself off the rocks. Thus, the people of Thebes also breathe a sigh of relief with the intelligence of Oedipus. Oedipus also becomes a hero who knows the riddles of the Sphinx and thus saves the city from the monster that plagues it. Thereupon, the kingdom of the recently deceased king and his widow, Jocasta, are bestowed upon him. Oedipus is unaware that the prophecy has come

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<sup>24</sup> *Eski Yunan'da Mit ve Tragedya*, p. 110.

true when he becomes king of Thebes. He marries Jocasta and becomes a father of four children. Antigone, whose name we have heard in many works, is one of the daughters born of this marriage. Others are Ismene, Eteocles and Polyneices.

In the intervening years, a plague broke out in the city of Thebes. People start to die in this epidemic. Thereupon, Oedipus sends Jocasta's brother, Creon, to Delphi to find out the cause of the epidemic. God Apollo told Creon that whoever killed King Laios should be found and exiled from the city. Hearing the news, Oedipus begins to investigate who the murderer of the old King Laios is. Meanwhile, he makes horrible threats to the perpetrator. In order to know the truth, Oedipus this time asks the Prognosticator Tiresias who is the murderer of the king. *"The priest hesitates to answer. A fight breaks out between Oedipus, Tiresias and Creon. Jocasta intervenes and refers to the dream he once had, that Laios was killed in a narrow passage. When he hears these words, doubt enters Oedipus. Meanwhile, a messenger arrives from Corinth, informing him that Polybos has died and that Oedipus has been summoned to Corinth to be king. Oedipus is still ambivalent: his father's death was not by his own hand, but he hesitates to go where his mother is. Then the messenger says that he is not the son of Polybos and Periboia, but that he was brought to the palace by a shepherd. When the shepherd is brought in and reveals the truth, Oedipus and Jocasta no longer have doubts. The Queen takes refuge inside the palace and kills herself. Oedipus blinds his eyes with the needle of the woman who is his mother and wife."*<sup>25</sup> In this part, which is the tragedy text of King Oedipus by Sophocles, the story ends with the expulsion of Oedipus from the city of Thebes by Creon.

Sophocles continues the story of King Oedipus with the tragedy text in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Oedipus, with his eyes gouged out, on the arm of his daughter Antigone, with her help, they leave the city of Thebes. *"King Oedipus is treated like a god at the beginning of the play, and at the end of the play Oedipus*

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<sup>25</sup> Azra Erhat, *Mitoloji Sözlüğü*, (İstanbul: Remzi Bookstore, 19<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2011), p. 226.

*becomes the pollution that descends on the city of Thebes.*"<sup>26</sup> They go to the province of Colonus in Attica. Theseus, the king of Attica, welcomes King Oedipus hospitably and accepts him. Because, rumor has spread that after the death of Oedipus, the lands where his body was found would be blessed by the gods. Thereupon, Creon and Polyneices try to talk Oedipus to come back to Thebes. Oedipus furiously curses his sons and the city of Thebes. He reiterates his decision to stay in Attica. He dies in the place of his tomb, which will become a secret in the company of Theseus. Except for Theseus, no one knows his exact location. This is how the fictional structure ends.

Behavior/action pattern preferences that emerge here will push to think about the concept of *ethics* from there. Therefore, the concept of ethics needs a detailed explanation.

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 437.

## CHAPTER TWO: ETHICAL AND POLITICAL

### 2.1. ETHICAL

The fact that the character and action of King Oedipus form a value in a composition/(structure/fiction) or a work of art is the main subject of my dissertation. Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to grasp the current meaning of the concept of ethics, to explain its counterpart in the Ancient Greece period when tragedies were written, and to see what it corresponds to through Aristotle's ethical view.

Since ethics corresponds to very inclusive meaning areas and at the same time, it has turned into a concept where it is not determined exactly what these meaning areas correspond to. It is generally confused with the concept of morality. *“Ethics, one of the most fundamental disciplines of philosophy, has a close relationship with morality. Although both morality and ethics derive from the same root, that means morals, tradition, custom, habit, character, disposition, temperament, it is "morality" in terms of philosophy understood when ethics is mentioned, it is a general theory of principles or "philosophy of morality". Ethics is both a field independent of philosophy and also forms the basis of one of the main disciplines of ethics, namely philosophy. Morality, as a sociological and cultural field largely independent of philosophy, corresponds primarily and to a very large extent to a system of norms and rules that has been somehow established within society.”*<sup>27</sup> There is often an ethical value in people's relationships, actions or decisions with each other.

In general, ethical problems are directly related to the situations themselves, which are part of our daily life, in which we have to take action every day. *“The ethics of virtue was created by the tradition of Greece thought, among which there were three philosophers with a teacher-student relationship, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, respectively. The culmination of classical ethics, the*

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<sup>27</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, (Istanbul, Say Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2014), p.12-13.

*founder of which was Socrates, is the virtue ethics of Aristotle.*"<sup>28</sup> The concept of ethics here, as defended by many thinkers, argues that what makes a human human is to be directly related to value and to be a value creator and also a value bearer.

The concept of ethics is in a close relationship with morality as one of the main areas of philosophy. The words morality and ethics are derived from the same root. The Greek word *ethos*, *morality* (Eng.), *moralité* (Fr.) meaning morality in Western languages derives from the Latin word *mos*. And these concepts mean custom, tradition, disposition, habit, temperament, character. Most of the time, morality refers to the development of a certain behavior attitude as a result of attributing value in the relations of people who exist in a certain society or culture at a certain time. These can also be considered as unwritten norms. These norms establish systems of what is *good* and *evil* for a given community at a given time.

Therefore, they are the changing and differentiating norm systems that express what people should and should not do in general. These rules and norm systems generally take their source from religions or social conventions. *"It points to God and the moral law that He sends to people as the source of moral rules that inform man of his obligations, what he should abstain and what he should do."*<sup>29</sup> The reason for this is considered to be the correction of man's imperfect existence and corrupted content by God. The Social Contract, which is secondary in terms of historical source, realizes itself in the secularized public sphere. *"Here, too, just as in the religious source, the emphasis is once again placed on the negative, "someone else's wolf" nature of man. When this is the case, morality refers to a system of principles or rules that make it possible for the elements that*

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<sup>28</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 16.

*make up a society, or rather a nation, namely individuals or groups, to live together in peace.*"<sup>30</sup> These moral norms have nothing to do with ethics.

Whereas, ethics is what we face every moment in our daily life and what we need to take action to resolve our choices in a good or evil attitude. *"I prefer to use it for the branch of philosophy that takes the phenomenon of ethics as an object and illuminates it as a whole, and reveals the knowledge of ethical values and ethical values in interpersonal relations. This philosophical knowledge of ethics and ethical values is also the main condition for the development and implementation of any declaration of morality, as well as the main condition for taking actions in everyday life, in certain situations, without harming human dignity."*<sup>31</sup> Ethics is a manifestation of making existence meaningful, beautifying it and idealizing it again. *"Ethics is a discipline of philosophy that deals with and discusses moral life, consists of moral values and ideals in question, and is oriented towards this phenomenon that we call morality. Accordingly, where morality is the practice of action, ethics must be the theory of action."*<sup>32</sup> In addition, ethics gains a universal existence where morality is local/(a specific community).

Social contracts or unwritten teachings, which we call norms, are not sufficient to make decisions that protect ethical values or to act in accordance with ethical values. The reason for this is that every situation in which action is taken is sole and unique. In such a case, it is possible to behave in accordance with a norm, but if it is in ethical perception, it may be possible to act unworthy. Sometimes, individuals can be forced to behave in accordance with the norms, but they cannot be forced to want to protect value through an ethical perception and to act by protecting it.

### **2.1.1. Aristotle's Understanding of Ethics**

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<sup>30</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> İoanna Kuçauradi, *Etik ve Etikler*, Article, Ankara: Turkey Engineering News Issue, 423-2003/1), p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 18.

When the issue of ethics was moved to Ancient Greece, it is necessary to mention *eudaimonia* in Aristotle. Aristotle's ethical understanding is based on the *good life* and the “*self-satisfaction*” that it will provide. Because, according to him, the main purpose of life is *happiness*. It is possible to explain the search for goodness and happiness of King Oedipus, who is the subject of my thesis with his tragic life, by Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the concept of *ethics* in Ancient Greece and then the concept of *eudaimonia* in Aristotle.

Ethics/Ethos is a concept that expresses its own qualities of a culture which means character/personality, behavioral patterns and the structure/spirit of that period in Ancient Greece. Its subject, on the other hand, corresponds to human actions.

First of all, it is necessary to say that the first interpretation of the concept of ethics before Aristotle was Socrates in Ancient Greece. The reason for this is that it was first questioned by him for the first time in question about the behavior and lifestyles of people in a real sense. The basis of his questioning is reason and knowledge. According to Socrates, we can only reach a valuable life that is ethical through reason and knowledge.

There is also a similar perspective in Plato. “*The good life in question arises when the reason sets the purpose for each part and for the whole and measures it into parts and shows its functions.*”<sup>33</sup> According to him, the structure of man, which is very diverse, will find the *good* when it moves in harmony and balance. This *good* presents *knowledge* and knowledge as a prerequisite for understanding our own good. Therefore, the desire to leave the cave is related to ourselves (ethos). “*He thought that it could be reached when each of the parts that make up the soul does its duty and when he brings his own natural virtue to life, that is, with a virtuous life. Accordingly, he thinks that a person who is wise, brave, moderate and naturally just will have access to happiness, which is*

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<sup>33</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 160.

*whatever health is in the body, holistic human nature and what it is for the soul.*"<sup>34</sup>

The number of those who say that Aristotle's ethical understanding is at the highest point of Greek ethics is quite high. Aristotle acknowledges that he is the continuator of the ethical tradition, which began with Socrates and continued with Plato. Because in many of his works, he responds by referring to them. But the ethics introduced by Aristotle places much more value on character, and also positions it more strongly in its practical and social life.

According to Aristotle, there is a purpose for people to continue their lives. In addition, people also have ultimate purposes that, by their very nature, fall into line with them. Aristotle says that this purpose is *eudaimonia*, as in Socrates and Plato.

According to Aristotle, all actions, the acquisition of knowledge itself, all branches of art and our preferences are carried out in order to achieve the good. Thus, everything has to acquire beings to achieve good. *"If we aim for something for itself, if we want other things to reach it, and if we don't want something for another thing, this is the best situation."*<sup>35</sup> *If we don't do this, our will in this issue will lose its meaning."* In this case, trying to reach knowledge is very important for our life. But what we are looking for with good is not that simple. *"The more things there are, good can be expressed so differently. For this reason, there cannot be one good or a good for everyone."*<sup>36</sup> As we said before, since every action or preference has a purpose, everything should be good for itself. *"Then if we have a purpose that is good itself, it means that it is good that we are looking for."*<sup>37</sup> It is what is wanted for itself. It is self-sufficient. *"What is self-sufficient is also what is the purpose."*<sup>38</sup> Human is also a social being. Therefore, human

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<sup>34</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 162.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, trans. Furkan Akderin, (Istanbul: Say Publications, 5th Edition, 2020), p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

actions reveal the science of *ethics*. The sum of the holistic actions of this social being indicates the political one. This subject will be returned in the content of the next topic title.

Human reaches its individual happiness with action. The purpose and result of this action is *happiness*.<sup>39</sup> The result of happiness is naturally, pleasure. Since human and *character/s* are the source of the action here, tragedies are a good example at this point. *Because tragedy is an imitation not of people, but of their actions, on the contrary, of a life spent in happiness and disaster.*<sup>40</sup> The fact that a person has knowledge does not make it good. One can only be good by choosing the good and taking good action. Good things arise from *virtue*. As a result, the condition of living in good is possible by having *virtue*.

Virtue is about emotions and actions. Therefore, Aristotle says that it is also necessary to determine whether an action was committed intentionally or forcibly. *“If an action is forced to be done or if it is done due to ignorance, it enters the group of those made unintentionally. If an action is committed by the person who committed it, or if he has no part in the commencement of this action, that action is done forcibly.”*<sup>41</sup> While the actions carried out due to preference are voluntary actions, unintentionally or forced actions are non-voluntary actions. *“The determining point here is the purpose and under which conditions the action is done. When the action is taken as a result of such ignorance, it is necessary to feel sad and regret.”*<sup>42</sup> Therefore, most of the optional actions are giving happiness. But the actions taken without optional give sadness. *“If an action was committed by force or was done because of ignorance, then voluntary actions are those whose beginning is in our hands.”*<sup>43</sup> Every action done voluntarily leads to a

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<sup>39</sup> *Happiness*: The concept of Eudaimonia has been translated as "happiness" for a very long time, but it should be said that this translation is not enough. However, I should point out that following this tradition, the term "happiness" will be used.

<sup>40</sup> Nurhan Tekerek, *Aristoteles'te Poetik ve Etik Bütünlük Örneklerle Eylem, Karakter ve Erdem*, (Article, Journal of Theater Studies, 26:2008), p. 76.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 55.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

choice. It is believed that making a choice is about passion or desire. But there is a need for *reason* to make a choice. But there is no need for reason for passion or wish/desire. It is present in the body as a self-emotion. *“Although there is a possibility of learning, those who do not learn and do not care about it are punished. Because they could learn something. It can also be said that these people will not make any effort to learn because of their characters, but in this case, the reason why their characters are like this is because of themselves. Again, they are themselves the reason why they live unjustly or on pleasure and do not have a purpose.”*<sup>44</sup> As a result, the person who keeps his preference in mind instead of his desire is the *moderate* person who dominates himself. The moderate person is a happy person.

If *happiness* is an action of the soul for the purpose, and this action takes place in accordance with virtue, then this time it is also worth studying virtue. *“Virtue is a habit of preferences. This is the ability to find the moderate way determined by the reason or a wise man. Excess and deficiency are both evil separately, and here the moderate way is found. Evil is a state of excess or deficiency in affecting or actions. Virtue is to be in the middle of them.”*<sup>45</sup> In short, being virtuous means *finding the midpoint*.

The way to reach this midpoint is also possible only with reasonable actions and activities of the soul. Because as a result, a person is a being with a reason. Happiness and human goodness are possible with the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. But, as is known, although everyone has reason, again, not everyone takes actions aimed at virtue. The priority here is to use the reason effectively with the right method rather than having a reason. *“It means not only character, but it also means where a person lives his life and the right habits he develops there.”*<sup>46</sup> In addition, against the question of what the *soul* is, Aristotle says that man consists of a body and soul dichotomy. He points to the soul as the

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<sup>44</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 65.

<sup>45</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 49.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, (Istanbul: Say Publications, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2014), p. 417.

source of our thoughts and actions. He also divides the soul in two. The side that is devoid of reason and the side that has reason... While the part of us that lacks intelligence includes features such as appetite, desire and reaction in common with other living things, the part of reason is divided into two as theoretical and practical. While the theoretical reason goes after existence and knowledge, the practical reason is dragged after daily life and the desire and appetite that it creates. It is these divisions in the soul that make us think about the source of virtue.

Virtues, on the other hand, consist of two parts, *the virtues of thought and the virtues of character*. While the virtues of thought are about the ability to make the right decision/reason or about knowledge, the virtues of character are related to the way of behavior. Virtue is therefore also related to emotions. *“If an emotion has not had its share of reason, we cannot say that it is very human.”*<sup>47</sup> Where emotion gets a share of the mind, it is passed to the concept of preference. This concept will lead to the emergence of the *value(s)* created by the action preferences of King Oedipus, which is the subject of this research. Oedipus' preferences are also an inevitable source for the analysis of the *value(s)* that his character will create.

The things we call desire, passion or opinion among the concepts mentioned here are the opposite of preference. Because desire, passion and opinion/sight can be about anything. It can come across very extreme ideas that are unlikely to happen, some of which are good and some are evil. But the preference is for *the good and the evil*. It is a choice. We are good or evil not because of our desires, but because of our preferences. This way of thinking compels us to make the following inference. The decision that a person makes as a result of the harmony of *emotion/thought* is a preference. The thing that causes the emergence of an action is the person himself. Therefore, we create a value with actions. These values are good or evil. These values reflect our character (ethos).

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<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 59.

According to Aristotle, reaching good and happiness is possible with three different lives. These are the pleasure life, the political life and the theoretical life styles.

According to Aristotle, although pleasure is generally perceived as the elimination of deficiency, *it is what emerges during the elimination of deficiency*. He says that pleasure is also a purpose added to what is being done. *“There is a pleasure according to every sensation, and likewise there is a pleasure according to every thought and theory. The most beautiful activity is the complete activity, the most complete activity is the most virtuous of the activities in that title, on the other hand, pleasure is something that completes the activity.”*<sup>48</sup> Since living is itself an activity, what completes it is pleasure. As a result, pleasures develop depending on the activity.

According to Aristotle, the purpose of political life, which is the second style of life, is to gain honor. Those who pursue it are the elite and the people of action. *“... The concept of honor is also associated with the person honoring you.”*<sup>49</sup> In fact, the concept of honor is more directly related to the one who honors him, not the one who is honored because of his virtues. Therefore, pursuing such an emotion is also not an very appropriate life. Because virtue has been accepted as a self-sufficient, good thing.

Aristotle accepts *theoretical life* as the best style of life. It has no purpose (pleasure-honor) like other types of life. The sense of pleasure he feels is directed towards himself. *“Those who are interested in philosophy have the simplest and most admired pleasures. Those who know what the truth is enjoy more than those who seek truth in life. Being self-sufficient is also a condition suitable for the action of theory.”*<sup>50</sup> Such an action is appropriate for happy people. *“Of course, this must include the whole of life, or there can be nothing that is not complete when it comes to happiness. But such a life is something that transcends the*

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<sup>48</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Aristotle, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, p. 225.

*boundaries of man, because the features here are divine features.*"<sup>51</sup> Here Aristotle says that the intellectual virtue called "*nous*" in the human soul corresponds to a divine existence, while at the same time sanctifying to prefer such a life. Finally, Aristotle reiterates that a *happy* life will also be achieved by this method, since the right thing for man will be to choose what is reasonable.

## **2.2. POLITICAL**

Every being exists for the purpose of preserving and maintaining its own existence. The desire to spend his life as pleasant as possible can drag him into an insecure or conflict area. In order to protect one's own existence, one must accept the existence and needs of others. In the chapter on ethics, it was concluded that the most important thing necessary for life is virtue. It was also clear that good action was needed for virtue to emerge. In this way, it seems possible to predict that the unity of the multiplicity of actions of individuals leads us to the concept of *society*.

In modernity, political philosophy is formed on the basis of the subject or individual. The transition to individualism completed itself in the interim periods. The process that started with the Renaissance was completed with the establishment of nation-states. State governance was legitimized with a rational mind rather than religious values or divine will. "*Since the Renaissance, all the political theories of the modern era have tried to remove the principles offered by religion from being the explanatory principles of society and to comprehend society based on a worldly principle. The modern political doctrines that put the human being in the center and emphasize the will of the people, evaluate the society not as a natural structure, but as a structure created by human beings.*"<sup>52</sup> Different value structures of individuals living in the society should be protected on the basis of law within the organized structure of the state. The purpose of law is to provide justice.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 227.

<sup>52</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *17. Yüzyıl. Felsefesi*, (Istanbul: Say Publications, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2013), p. 35.

First of all, both *morality* and the *state* have determined the necessary rules to prevent the chaos that will arise and to maintain order at the same time, where anyone can do whatever they want. “*Historical studies show that morality precedes law in almost all cases, and that law sanctifies the existing system of moral rules and values. In other words, human societies have had a morality from the moment they passed to the stage of society, and the state and law emerged later. There have been societies without a state and without law, but there has not been a society without morality.*”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, societies have unique behavioral patterns, ethical values and cultural structures.

The sum of all these corresponds to some legal written rules. “*With the emergence of the state and the construction of civil society, on the one hand, the rules of positive law are defined and expressed in order to deliver justice and punish those who violate the law, on the other hand, moral values and moral rules are revealed as the minimum commons of living together.*”<sup>54</sup> This order, which is needed for these emerging societies to live together and well, creates an inevitable reality. The bearer of this reality is *laws*.

How the boundaries of these laws should be determined by the own *values* of that society. In addition, while laws are written, morality corresponds to conscience. “*There are sanctions for those who violate the rules in law; it has officials who interpret the laws and give punishments. However, there is no sanction in morality; In it, at most, there is a negative voice coming from the conscience of a morally developed person with a moral consciousness.*”<sup>55</sup> Since it is seen in historical studies that morality precedes law, law exalts the existing moral rules and value system.

### **2.2.1. Aristotle's Understanding of Politics**

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<sup>53</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 14-15.

<sup>55</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 15.

Another of the leading thought theories of Aristotle's philosophy is political philosophy, which is also inseparable from his *ethics*. Under this title, the equivalent of his political theory will be examined within the necessary scope.

It should be said that his political ethics and virtue ethics show an inseparable integrity. *“Yet, his political philosophy is neither a section or branch that is separable from his ethics, nor consists of the implementation of his ethics; much more importantly, political philosophy is a complement and continuation of his ethics.”*<sup>56</sup> In addition, everything else related to human beings can be dealt with within the scope of political philosophy and made a subject of discussion on a legitimate basis. Other sciences and different arts would be good sources for this legitimate basis.

While explaining the formation of the state, Aristotle argues that families first emerged, villages emerged from the unity of families, and the city-state was reached from the unity of villages. He defines the arrival of this organic structure, starting from the individual and growing towards the family and the village, to the polis/city, both as a natural progression and as a result of a teleological process. *“The reason I say good is because all people try to do what is called good in their actions. Since all communities are trying to achieve what is called good in one way or another, then the state, which is the highest and all-inclusive of the communities, should also aim for the best. What is called the state is a community, and this community is political.”*<sup>57</sup>

We have already mentioned that there is a purpose/teleology inherent in everything. Naturally, there is a purpose in the nature of the city-state. Because we call the very nature of what grows to complete itself. Human, community or everything else comes into existence in order to reach their own nature. The ultimate purpose is self-sufficiency, and self-sufficiency is both a purpose and a competence.

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<sup>56</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 437.

<sup>57</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, trans. Furkan Akderin, (Istanbul: Say Publications, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2020), p. 23.

While Aristotle's ethics prioritizes the individual, politics examines the state, which includes the social one. And the question of what is good for both the individual and the state is the precondition of his philosophical discourse. "*Ethica shows us what form and style of life is necessary for happiness; politics shows us what form of constitution, what set of institutions, is necessary to enable and preserve this form of life.*"<sup>58</sup>

As a result of Aristotle's readings, and especially in his work *Politics*, he says that the way to achieve a good life will be a *good* organization of the state institution. According to him, the manifestation of the good life actually means the manifestation of human nature. Exploring human nature also means revealing what is good for human beings. This can only be possible with the existence of the city-state. The good here is not as good as in Plato's world of ideas. Aristotle's good is a common good. Therefore, according to him, it is not possible for the well-being of the individual to be realized without the well-being of the society.

In addition, Aristotle stated that despite everything, women and slaves were not considered citizens in a masculine language of discourse. "*He excluded craftsmen and workers, not only from the good life but also from citizenship, because they lack the free time to develop whatever talents they may have; and slaves and women because of their lack of skills to develop, even if they had free time.*"<sup>59</sup> And again, according to him in his work in *Politics*, the definition of the citizen is as follows: "*People who attend the courts, who have the possibility of litigation and being sued, are called citizens.*"<sup>60</sup> A citizen is a citizen not only in the sense that he is part of the executive organ, but also in the sense that he contributes to the enactment of the laws of the state. "*It is the absence of a name to cover both the judges and the members of the People's Assembly. Perhaps it would be appropriate to call them authorities. Citizens belong to this group.*"<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre, *Etik'in Kısa Tarihi*, trans. Hakkı Hünler & Solmaz Zelyüt Hünler, (Istanbul: Paradigma Publications, 2001), p. 66.

<sup>59</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 443.

<sup>60</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, p. 90.

Here, the boundaries are determined based on the nature of the citizen in society. There must be also a resource for the managerial duty for the citizenship. Therefore, the state structure also arises in the majority of citizens who have the right to judge and make laws.

Here, the duty of the state is of course only possible by providing the function of individuals in the best way. It should not be confused with today's liberalism or neoliberalism. It makes no distinction between the well-being of the individual and the community. According to him, the state is an organized institution that must exist for individuals to realize themselves. Therefore, what is necessary for the individual to lead a happy life and realize himself is the state itself. *“He regarded him as a person who has the potential to reach a good life ethically and socially, and who can carry the kind of development potential made possible only by the city/state.”*<sup>62</sup> As we have already emphasized here, it is necessary to remind of the need to separate women, workers and slaves. Because, in order for them to participate in political activities, they must have free time.

According to Aristotle, man is a political animal (*phūsei policyon zoon*). *“Because, unlike other creatures, man is a political animal that lives in herds.”*<sup>63</sup> Man is also a creature with feelings. Therefore, it is quite difficult to explain it only by the laws of the state, regardless of feelings. He also says that it will not give a healthy result for a person who is a social being to live independently of that society, completely alone. *“The ultimate and highest purpose of the state is to make the good life possible for individuals. Creating a certain character in your compatriots is making them really good people.”*<sup>64</sup> However, an individual can be active within the structure of the state, which is a representative of an institutional union. Therefore, action can be taken with a common good for a specific purpose. *“People, much more importantly, have a unique or specific function (koinon ergon). The most important element that gave birth to Aristotle's political*

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<sup>62</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 442.

<sup>63</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, p. 26 /1253a.

<sup>64</sup> Ahmet Cevizci *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 445.

*naturalism, which argues that humans have a natural function and that their existence as political animals is an inseparable part of human nature, has to be the teleological approach here as well.*"<sup>65</sup>

The fact that man is a rational being, using language and reason, makes him a complete political animal. *"However language serves to express what is useful and what is harmful, what is right and wrong. The biggest difference between humans and other animals is that humans can distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. What makes a city, family, or community is that we have a common view on such matters."*<sup>66</sup> Here, through an individual area where we will determine what is useful and harmful with our linguistic and rational side, we should go beyond the individual benefit with our rational side, to the community that is related to justice. *"All knowledge and purposes and desires are good. It is right that the state and citizens try to reach the best. Justice is what the state understands from goodness. Justice is for the good of the people. It is clear that justice in society is for the good of all."*<sup>67</sup> It should be emphasized that by the concept of justice here it is meant that the equality of *opposition of individuals* is achieved.

Aristotle considered man to be a social being, while some philosophical teachings in the modern period say the opposite. For example, according to Hobbes, man is wolf to man (*homo homini lupus*). *"Unless there is a state, everybody is always at war against everybody. From this it becomes clear that when people live without a general force that will keep them all in fear, they are in a situation called a war, and this is everyone's war against everyone."*<sup>68</sup> In Hobbes' view, individuals are more self-centered, self-interested, selfish beings. However, according to Aristotle, it is not possible for a human being, a political animal, to act solely for his own benefit. At the same time, the individual should consider the well-being of others as well as his own well-being while living both

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 443.

<sup>66</sup> Aristotle Politika p. 26-27.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.108.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, trans. Semih Lim, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Publications, 2007), p. 94.

in the family and in the community. *“In order for the state to arise, there must be differences between those who participate in the state. The state is the balance between different parts.”*<sup>69</sup> Thus, people have the opportunity to realize their potential effectively. At the same time, this situation prepares the ground for the formation of the state. Because the indispensable condition for the individual to gain identity is the existence of the state. Therefore, it is necessary to have a good state for this. *“Here it is aimed to establish a friendship between people, what keeps us in society is that we love other people. In this way, it contributes to a good life, which is the aim of the state. According to us, to live well is to live a happy and noble life. In other words, the political union called the state aims not only to live together but also to ensure that we act in a noble manner.”*<sup>70</sup> According to Aristotle, it is not possible for the individual of that community to create his or her own *good* life within the structure of that society, unless both goodness and good laws are revealed in the state. The good here is *common interest*. *“Accordingly, when the governors or those holding political authority in a state use their sovereign rights in a way that serves the common interest of the community of free citizens, that government will be a legitimate or correct one.”*<sup>71</sup> It should be said that the common interest in question prioritizes the interests of each individual, not the holistic interest of a community.

It should also be noted that the *common interest* that Aristotle is trying to say here is justice. *“If the state looks after the common interests of the citizens, that state must inevitably be a just state.”*<sup>72</sup> The concept of justice leads us back to the concept of ethics. Our aim was to show that the ethical and the political give birth to each other. This detail has an important place for the axis of this study.

Lastly, it will be quite challenging at the point of the limits of this thesis to give a detailed introduction to the differences of Aristotle's teacher Plato's idea of

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<sup>69</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, p. 50 / 1261a.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.103 / 1280b.

<sup>71</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 451.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 451.

politics. However, it must be said that the two philosophers were fed from the same Socratic tradition. In its simplest form, we can make a very general allusion by saying that in Plato's understanding of being, there are ideas and the sensible world. In its simplest form, we can make a very general allusion by saying that there is a world of ideas and senses in Plato's understanding of being. Plato's state is more compatible with a dualist philosophy. In his understanding of the state, it cannot be foreseen that the happiness or well-being of the individual is higher than the good of the state or society. It is more important that a holistic happiness spreads to every part of society than the happiness of single individuals. In short, Plato says that society will be possible through a good education that will be provided in a just political order that philosophers will govern. Thus, the idea of the good becomes the state itself. He carried this to an idealist line and talked about a metaphysical possibility. But Aristotle adopted a realistic and at the same time empirical approach. What we can show as reality that comes into existence in his eyes is this world itself. But for the two philosophers, ethics is inseparable from politics. What we can say about Plato is limited to this much within the scope of this study. Because his philosophy and understanding of the state are at a level that can be the subject of another thesis.

## CHAPTER THREE: ETHICAL AND POLITICAL REFLECTION OF THE ACTION PREFERENCES OF THE KING OEDIPUS CHARACTER

### 3.1. ETHICAL VALUE AND ACTION OF KING OEDIPUS

There will be a comparative analysis of the evaluation made on Aristotle's concept of ethics in the previous chapter with the character (ethos) formed as a result of the action preferences of the fictional character King Oedipus in this chapter.

It was emphasized that the first complete work related to the field of art was seen in Aristotle. Aristotle's explanations about the art of poetry are seen in the work of *Poetics*. Although he commented on many branches of art in this work, he mostly focused on tragedy. What should not be missed here is the fact that he reached his thoughts on theater after examining the plays of his age. Because at the time when *Poetics* was written, Ancient Greece theater lived its golden age and many tragic characters such as King Oedipus appeared. Many works belonging to the most important authors of Ancient Greece (Aiskhylos, Sophocles and Euripides) are in the hands of Aristotle so that he can make them the subject of research. This situation has led him to interpret the art of his age on different fields within certain measures. Aristotle points out that “*art is at least somewhere between history and philosophy, or close to philosophy. It then emphasizes its moral role through the purification effect it provides.*”<sup>73</sup> He tried to show that the way of mimesis/imitation (as a narrative tool) is a good tool for the search for truth or that is universal.

Aristotle, saying that tragedies imitate life, makes both the tragedy and the characters of the tragedy competent. As we have stated before, imitation should not be considered as a copy here. Imitation/mimesis should actually be accepted as an activity of *representation* or *re-creation*.

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<sup>73</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 454.

According to Aristotle, every art has its own object. While poetry is the word for art, it is sound and rhythm for music. The object of tragedy is the *imitation* of human action. “*Poetry art in general seems to owe its existence to two fundamental reasons based on human nature. One of them is the imitation impulse, which is innate in humans; Humans are distinguished from all other creatures by their extraordinary ability to imitate, and they acquire their first knowledge through imitation. The second is the liking for all imitation products, which is characteristic of man.*”<sup>74</sup> Just as there is a purpose to living, and this is possible with a good life, art also has a purpose for itself.

As explained in the previous titles, Aristotle said that everything is done for a purpose. That purpose itself is to find the good one. So, it is necessary to look for the good in *action*.

In addition, Aristotle makes art valuable, unlike Plato, by saying that the sense of enjoyment / beauty through mimesis / imitation corresponds to the pleasure one receives from the act of learning. Plato used to say that art leads us to the truth twice. “*The entire mob of poets, beginning with Homer, are imitators of images of perfection and other things they 'create' and cannot capture the truth.*”<sup>75</sup> Because for him, art was the imitation of the imitation of ideas. Plato used to say that art has an emotive side and that it coincides with its enthusiastic side, and with this, the unsteady nature of man emerges. “*The same objects may appear bent-flat or concave-convex when viewed in and out of water, relative to the observer's position. It is clear that such complexities exist in our souls as well. So landscape juggling and other such schemes are nothing but sorcery in exploiting this weakness of our nature.*”<sup>76</sup> At this point, Aristotle received the knowledge and emotional side of art from his teacher, and it is seen that the necessary dignity was given to art with the work of *Poetics*.

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<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, p. 16.

<sup>75</sup> Plato, *Devlet*, trans. Neval Akbıyık – Serdar Taşçı, (Istanbul: Metropol Publications, 2002), p. 364.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

Aristotle explains the relationship between real life and tragedy as follows. *“Tragedy imitates life, but deals with the general and typical side of life, the universal side, the plausible and the possible. It also reflects it not as it is, but as it should be, that is, by correcting and empowering.”*<sup>77</sup> This thought of Aristotle is related to his ontological view. For him, existence is what is visible in this world. *“The being wants to reach the last being by constantly developing. Concrete reality is not a shadow and a reflection, is the first form of being that will develop, and a push from within is towards the Divine. Art reflects the realities in their natural development and empowering them to reach the Divine.”*<sup>78</sup> Therefore, art is the one that is reached from the concrete world but perceived within the abstract ideal of beauty.

As stated above, the art of poetry mostly makes use of the general. The details of this general one are required. *“But there should be nothing unlikely (irrational, unnatural) in the tragedy. If such a thing cannot be avoided, then it must remain outside the tragedy. As in Sophocles' Oedipus.”*<sup>79</sup> The artist, who creates the art and the work of art, first sees the human as a certain *type* and shows him how to behave in certain situations. In addition to the main behavior of the *type* feature, which is treated like a picture here, it also gives it a universal dimension. Thus, the author has made clear the general and therefore the universal.

Art can deal with things that are not possible in life, beyond human power, and what is potential and possible. In short, it is mentioned about an understanding of art in which what is not suitable for common sense is discarded. While determining the subject of art in Aristotle's *Poetics*, it was said to imitate the action of the better-than-average for theater. Imitation here means to be close to the ideal and the ideal reality. Imitation means *“the typical, convincing and*

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<sup>77</sup> Sevda Şener, *Dünden Bugüne Tiyatro Düşüncesi*, (Ankara: Dost Kitapevi Publishing, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2008), p. 27-28.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>79</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, s. 44.

*ideal representation of reality.*"<sup>80</sup> Imitation also corresponds to the creative side of art. While recreating reality, art transcends it and brings it to the end.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics* and *Politics* works, stated that he believed in the educational side of the art of poetry and examined the benefit he left to the society. Tragedy has an important place in the field of study because of the feeling of enjoyment it creates. It has been stated that this sense of enjoyment is related to the *imitation impulse* that is inherent in human beings. With this feeling, human beings are separated from other living things, and with this feature, they have the capacity to develop themselves. Given that man has learned his first knowledge through this behavior, imitation is waiting to be discovered in an important place in life. "*Poetry art in general seems to owe its existence to two fundamental reasons based on human nature. One of them is the imitation impulse, which is innate in humans; Humans are distinguished from all other creatures by their extraordinary ability to imitate, and they acquire their first knowledge through imitation. The second is the enjoyment of all imitation products.*"<sup>81</sup> With this sense of enjoyment arising from learning, people also show that they like an orderly structure (rhythm, compliance and harmony). "*Then, since the imitation impulse is inherent in humans and the same is true for the emotions evoked by harmony and rhythm – because it is clear that measure in poetry is a kind of rhythm –, people who have always been capable of it and gradually develop this ability, first formed the art of poetry by starting from the trials made without thinking for a long time.*"<sup>82</sup> A similar use of this form is also seen in tragedy.

It should be understood that imitation of movement better than average corresponds to the *action* of an individual of society. Thus, the subject of character emerges. "*The first, but also the most important feature, is that the characters must be morally good.*"<sup>83</sup> The good here is very similar to the *good* in Aristotle's understanding of ethics. "*No matter what kind of speech and action a*

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<sup>80</sup> Sevda Şener, *Dünden Bugüne Tiyatro Düşüncesi*, p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, p. 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

*man may be, if he shows a certain aspect of will, he has character. If this aspect of will is morally good, that person's character is morally good.”*<sup>84</sup> His (character)/*ethos* is understood from the behavior of a play character. All his moral values, behaviors, temperament and tendencies emerge through *ethos*. The character of the play is a good character in terms of morality, on the other hand, the behavior and the direction of intention is related to the will. This direction is a preference. So it's about willpower. *“As all that is revealed via reasoned speech enters the field of thoughts, evidence, refutation, fear, the arousal of such feelings by anger, and furthermore the magnification and reduction of events also enter.”*

<sup>85</sup> In order to establish the desired sympathy between the tragic hero and the receiver, it should not contradict the moral and ethical values of the audience. *“Because the feeling of pity is felt in front of a person who has suffered even though he is not worthy. Fear also arises from the fact that we find a similarity between the sufferer and ourselves. So the fall of someone who is utterly evil from happiness to disaster evokes neither fear nor pity.”*<sup>86</sup> Tragedy must therefore inevitably arouse in us a sense of fear and pity. The tragic character is *“extraordinary neither in moral competence, nor in justice, nor in wickedness and immorality. On the contrary, he is someone who has been accused of any crime, Oedipus and Thyestes, like other well-known heroes of those generations, enjoy great honor and lead a happy life.”*<sup>87</sup> As a result, when an evil event happens to a virtuous person, instead of a feeling of fear and pity, he gets a feeling of resentment and anger. When an unfortunate event happens to an evil person, this time it is thought that he deserves the misfortune. In either case, nothing tragic happens. Therefore, the *middle(s)* of the two must be a character. This issue was mentioned above under the title of “ethical”. It has been stated that being virtuous means *finding the midpoint*.

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<sup>84</sup> Aristotle, *Poetika*, p. 43.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Aristotle says that ethical and psychological sympathy with the performance of the tragic art creates a purification/catharsis. “Some emotions have a very strong hold on some people, pity or fear or enthusiasm. However, these feelings affect others, albeit slightly. What we call enthusiasm is an excitement that affects some people. It can also be caused by religious music, or people who listen to similar provocative music are seen standing as if they are being purified. Those who feel pity, fear, or other emotions may be affected in the same way. Everyone gets a nice sense of purification and relaxation.”<sup>88</sup> This passage stems from Plato's saying that artists are not only deceptive, but also dangerous. “We must add that the imitative poet creates dreams and deceptions far removed from reality and also creates an unclean structure in each soul by fawning over the insensitive element, which cannot distinguish the larger from the smaller, and which names the same thing differently at the same time.”<sup>89</sup> However, Aristotle emphasizes that the sense of catharsis that art will create will purify the soul from evil feelings and at the same time take an educational role with a sense of imitation. There is an interpretation that the word catharsis here may have been used with the meaning used in medical science. “Accordingly, catharsis means the removal of evil substances from the body.”<sup>90</sup> There is also another comment. “Used in the sense of religious ritual (orphic).”<sup>91</sup> What is implied by catharsis is the healing of euphoria and the purification of the soul.

In the meantime, it should not be overlooked that the *Poetics* work has reached the present day in disjointed pieces. A more organized structure would enable us to see the field of art from a much richer perspective today.

Until this part, Aristotle's virtue ethics was taken as a source from his *Poetics*, and his thought on art was evaluated in the context of tragedy. In the next part, the actions of the fictional character King Oedipus will be evaluated in this context.

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<sup>88</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, p. 268/1342a.

<sup>89</sup> Plato, *Devlet*, p. 371.

<sup>90</sup> Sevda Şener, *Düünden Bugüne Tiyatro Düşüncesi*, p. 45.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Action and character are concepts that move people around in history and make them come into existence over and over again. Thus, the character of King Oedipus, which is the subject of imitation, is a good example for human life today, comes from the depths of history and knocks on the door of our soul. Therefore, this work, which Sophocles staged in the second half of the V century BC, is still an important literary source for humanity today. He is also very successful in conveying the spirit of Ancient Greece from this period to us through the work of Oedipus the King. It should also be said that the work of *Oedipus the King* is the main subject of many disciplines. Especially it has become an important source of psychology, which separated from philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The integrity of Oedipus/(character) is as important today as it was in his time. This is because he is like a representation of many other people. His condition is tragic. Tragic is in the meaning of painful (*pathos*). “*The tragic thing is that a person has a sense of responsibility towards both his freedom of conscience and his duties in society, when these responsibilities conflict with each other, he is forced to make a preference and makes the right preference by risking his destruction.*”<sup>92</sup> The conflicting emotions of the individual correspond to his enthusiastic side and the side under the control of the reason. The best example of this distinction is made over the *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* concepts in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. “*Think of them first, and let's think of them as disjointed art worlds of ecstasy.*”<sup>93</sup> These names come from the mythological god figures of the Greeks. Being an Apollonian is the visible at the top. “*The realization of apollon in the ethical sense is possible with human moderation. The words "know thyself, avoid excesses" are written in Apollo's temple of Delphi. A person can know himself by drawing boundaries between himself and what is not himself, by separating what is his own from those of others, and by setting boundaries for*

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<sup>92</sup> Sevda Şener, *Yaşamın Kırılma Noktasında Dram Sanatı*, (Ankara: Dost Kitapevi Publishing, 4th edition, 2011), p. 101.

<sup>93</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Tragedyanın Doğuşu*, trans. Mustafa Tüzel, (Istanbul: İşbank Cultural Publications, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2019), p. 17.

*himself. He can be himself.*"<sup>94</sup> The reason, on the other hand, realizes itself with knowledge.

The curse of Oedipus' lineage has trapped him in a stalemate. It seems impossible to get rid of the curse. With his own act *Miasma*/(stained with crime) the curse will be revealed again. It is not only the *curse of the sons of Cadmus*<sup>95</sup> that befell Laios. His curse is that he wished to kill his own son in the face of the prophecy that his son would kill him. Although he did not kill his son with his own hands, he desired it. It is a (criminal) request against the laws of society. Because bloodshed in the family was forbidden in Ancient Greece. The Greeks knew from the very beginning that the son would take the place of the father. This motif is also known from the conflict in the relationship between Kronos and Zeus, as in Uranus (*Sky*) and Kronos (*Time*) in mythology: "*Uranos merges with Gaia and creates many divine beings, he cradles them into the bosom of the Earth as soon as he is born, his balls are cut off from the hands of his son Kronos, and his sovereignty passes to the second god generation after this event.*"<sup>96</sup> When the father gets older, he will leave his place to his son. This situation is also

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<sup>94</sup> İoanna Kuçuradi, *Sanata Felsefeyle Bakmak*, (Ankara: Turkish Philosophy Institution Publications, 5th Edition, 2013), p. 23-24.

<sup>95</sup> *Cadmus*: Son of Agenor and Telephassa. He is descended from Io. Brother of Europe, Phoiniks and Kiliks. When Europe is kidnapped, Agenor sends his sons to look for her. Cadmus, who took his mother with him, realizes that this search was futile and after staying in Thrace for a while, he goes to ask what he will do to the Delphi prophecy when his mother dies. The spokesman of God says that he should establish a city rather than seek the traces of Europe. He will hang behind a cow he comes across and build a city wherever the cow lands. Cadmus sets out, after a while, he comes across a herd of cows, one of which carries two white spheres, symbolizing the moon, on both sides. Cadmus follows this cow, the cow goes, goes, and finally knees and lays somewhere in the Boeotia region. Cadmus realizes that this is the place chosen, he wants to sacrifice the cow to Athena, so he sends his friends to get water. They crest a dragon in front of the fountain called Ares Spring. At that time, the goddess Athena appeared to him and told him to plant the dragon's teeth in the ground. When Cadmus does this, armed men suddenly emerge from the ground. These are called Spartoi, sown men. They're all wild men like giants. As soon as they were born, they quarreled with each other, only five of them survived, and they helped Cadmus to establish the city. However, Cadmus must be punished for having killed Ares' holy dragon: He has to serve the god as a slave for seven years, then comes and becomes king in Thebes. The gods, especially Athena, protect him. Zeus gives Ares and Aphrodite's daughter, Harmonia, as his wife, and their wedding is celebrated with a bright ceremony. The gods came with their gifts to the castle of Thebes, which was named Cadmus Hill. The wedding gifts given to Harmonia became legendary, and then caused many troubles to befall the Theban dynasty. The most important of these is a dress woven by the Kharit goddesses and a gold necklace made by the blacksmith Hephaestus. (Azra Erhat, *Dictionary of Mythology*, p, 165.)

<sup>96</sup> Azra Erhat, *Mitoloji Sözlüğü*, p. 290.

appropriate in the order of nature. Such as life and death... Therefore, Laios was caught up in a *hybris* here. He moved away from the act of self-knowledge and fell into immorality. As a matter of fact, in the end, as a result of the inevitable prophecy, he was killed by his son he wanted to kill.

Mother Jocasta, fearing that the prophecy will come true, demands that he leave her son on the mountain while giving him to the shepherd. Because she is afraid of the *erinyes*, who are the followers of blood ties murders. As a result, she thinks that when the shepherd leaves the boy to loneliness and starvation and he will die by himself.

But things don't go that way. The mercy of the shepherd is not enough to pierce the child in the heel and hang it from the tree and leave it there alone. The shepherd gives the child to another shepherd. Another shepherd from Corinth gives the good news that he has found a child to King Polybos and Queen Periboia, who have no children. As can be seen here, the Shepherd's choice of action comes from a preference between good and evil.

In the light of this information, it is necessary to examine the decisions made by Oedipus as a result of his choice of action one by one. The myth of Oedipus was mentioned in the first chapter. Let's proceed by making an allusion.

Oedipus lived as heir to the kingdom of Corinth without knowing who he was. But he was not of Corinthian lineage, and soon the truth was on everyone's lips with the rumors circulating in the city. Finally, these rumors reached the ears of Oedipus. Oedipus then went to the temple of Delphi to consult the god Apollo, helplessly, under the influence of rumors. But the seer god Apollo had not told him who his real parents were. He only spoke of the unfortunate event that would happen to him. He was going to kill his father and marry his mother. Fearing that the prophecy would come true, Oedipus left Corinthos. *“He sees that his social ties are cut off and he is ostracized from people by a causeless curse. He is now*

*apolis; he is infleshed with the externalized man symbol.*<sup>97</sup> As a result, Oedipus is now a homeless man with nowhere to go.

Meanwhile, at the entrance of the city of Thebes, the Sphinx asks everyone a riddle and kills those who do not know. The vehicle of Laios, who went to Apollo to seek a remedy for this, comes across a young man at the crossroads of three roads. (These three paths are similar in motifs to the riddles of the Sphinx. As birth of human, life and death.) According to the legend, the subject of the conflict between them is the fact that Laios' chariot crushed Oedipus's foot or the priority of the right of way. This is an uncertain situation. Nevertheless, regardless of the reason, father Laios and son Oedipus were enraged, and with a sense of hybris they fell into extremism/immoderation in the middle of the three roads, at the crossroads of decision-making. Both of them, thinking that they are far from their own *daimon*, take action. The son and father, whom he thought to be dead, and the father and son, whom he thought to be far away, come face to face. Oedipus, who first killed his coachman and then Laios, could not prevent a person from escaping the scene in the last instance. "*Oedipus is presented as a hunter who follows the footsteps of a wild animal on the mountain, chases it, and takes it out of the forest. When his prey feels his run, it runs away, pushing him away from people. But in this hunt, the hunter eventually sees that he is also the prey: Oedipus, hunted by his mother and father's terrible curse wanders around here and there like a wild predatory animal, and he roars.*"<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, Oedipus, unaware of the fulfillment of the prophecy, desperately drives towards the city of Thebes.

However, the prophecy said that the person he killed would be his father. First of all, he should have taken care to be discreet to the point that he should not have killed anyone. Because Apollo had told him that he would kill his father. If so, he should have hesitated to kill anyone. Yes, that one wasn't his own father at the time. But in another time and space he might well have been his own father.

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<sup>97</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 132.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

As a result, this was exactly the case. He had killed someone's father. His own father...

Therefore, with this preference of action (*hybris*), Oedipus has forgotten the possibility of prophecy to come true, as well as the consciousness that causes a behavior to violate one's right to life (*Laios*). Therefore, we cannot take action as we want, arbitrarily or without thinking about it at all. It is necessary to see that the actions taken affect each individual of the society differently and are important. In addition, together with Oedipus, the people of Thebes will pay the price of this murder/miasma/hybris with the plague epidemic. As a result, Oedipus' act of killing and the fact that the person he killed is his own father correspond to a universal ethical value. Because, in the fictional structure, it is quite ironic that the person whom he killed as someone else corresponds to his own father. Thus, *the question of what is ethical value* revealed itself in a fictional structure (Oedipus the King). The spirit of the Ancient Greece of that period called on its citizens to be responsible against the laws of nature, god and man. Murder/killing is an evil act.

Miasma has begun. Therefore, the society that contains a criminal is gradually polluted. The criminal must be expelled from that society. Otherwise, the price may turn into a (plague)/evil epidemic. The thing that will prevent all this is justice itself. Dirty blood must be shed, the criminal must be punished and cast out of society. Thus, justice is achieved.

According to Aristotle, it was necessary to find the midpoint in order to be good. We had to adopt the temperate behavior in our preference of actions. "*The works of Athenian playwrights express and prepare a new style, a tragic vision for man to understand himself, to place himself in his relation to the world, to Gods, to others, to himself, and to his own actions.*"<sup>99</sup> Oedipus, with all his conflicts, represents man as a character. It contains both good and evil. Which of these values he chooses determines his *ethos*/character. His character will also

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<sup>99</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 325.

determine his *daimon*/destiny. This theme, which is mentioned at the end of the fictional structure, is seen in the order of the dramatic structure.

When Oedipus came to Thebes, Laios, the king of the country, died. The knowledge about how he died was forgotten and not researched due to the chaos created by the monster Sphinx, who held the head of the city. Creon promised the person who rescued them from Sphinx that he would marry his sister, Jocasta, whose husband had just died. Oedipus answers both Sphinx's riddles. The fact that the answer to the first riddle is *human*, and the answer to the second riddle is *night and day*, is weaving the webs of the *daimon* waiting for Oedipus. Someone came to the city with the happiness of someone who knows the riddle. With the whispers of the inhabitants of the city, word spreads that he got rid of Sphinx with the intelligence of Oedipus. This is how the hero of Creon's promise to marry appears. Therefore, there is no obstacle for the marriage of Oedipus-Jocasta. Thus, the second part of the prophecy comes true.

Oedipus's lack of *hybris* and *sophrosyne* here, that is, his excessiveness, is due to his assumption that he is competent in everything after knowing the riddle and taking the risk of becoming a king. The fact that Oedipus, despite his fate/*daimon*, still desires the marriage with Jocasta is both his *hamartia* and his *hybris*. God Apollo told Oedipus that he would kill his father and be with his mother. His actions became his destiny/*daimon*. What determined his *daimon* was his character/*ethos*.

After a long time, four children were born from the marriage of Oedipus/Jocasta. While Oedipus was enjoying the family happiness he had established, a plague epidemic broke out in the city of Thebes, and the city of Thebes began to suffer great losses due to this epidemic.

*"-PRIEST: You see, the city can no longer withstand the hurricane of disaster that it has fallen into. Crops and herds are destroyed, children are stillborn. A hideous, nasty cataclysm with fevers, the plague wreaking havoc,*

*ravaging the sons of Cadmus, and dark Hades feeding on groans and screams.*”<sup>100</sup>

However, Oedipus, unaware that he has turned into a titan in his palace and that *miasma* has realized itself, lives in great shame with his four children and Queen Jocasta. The tragedy that activates the fictional structure begins at this very point. The people gathered in front of Oedipus' palace to save themselves from the epidemic. The people of Thebes are fully convinced that their King, Oedipus, will save them from this plague just as he once saved them from Sphinx. The news from the temple of Delphi states that the plague epidemic will disappear with the expulsion of the murderer of the old king Laios from the city of Thebes. Oedipus' titanism is seen to come true with his words, while he threatens to exile Laios' murderer from Thebes.

*“-OEDIPUS: He will not be killed, his punishment will be to be exiled from this city.*”<sup>101</sup>

Then he gets hybris more than necessary and wants the murderer to be found for his own benefit.

*“-OEDIPUS: The hands that fall into the blood of Laios can also mean my life. By avenging her, I will be protecting myself as well.*”<sup>102</sup>

Oedipus himself may fall victim to the same fate as the deceased King Laios. Therefore, this behavior is an expression of extra pride for the Greeks. King Oedipus does not act immediately when the people are in the grip of death for a long time, he prioritizes doing this when the fact that the one who killed the king is living in the city poses a threat to him as well. *“People pay more attention to what is theirs than to what is common.*”<sup>103</sup> But we know that city governors

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<sup>100</sup> Sophocles, *Kral Oidipus*, trans. Bedrettin Tuncel, (Istanbul: İşbank Culture Publications, 15th edition, 2019), p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>103</sup> Aristotle, *Politika*, p. 52.

should think of their people first. They have responsibilities as the governor of the city/state. Therefore, this desire of Oedipus is quite selfish and he is late in fulfilling his responsibilities as a city/state governance.

The intemperance of Oedipus continues exponentially in the whole fictional structure. It prepares him for an unfortunate end. While Tiresias warns Oedipus, Oedipus belittles Tiresias by telling him that a blind person cannot know the truth, instead of reflecting on himself and going to any assessment. *“This hybris is typical of the tyrant. Because the investigation pursues another purpose beyond the murder of Laios: It makes Oedipus the subject of discussion: clairvoyant, riddle solver Oedipus and Oedipus, who is an enigma to himself, which he can not solve in his royal blindness.”*<sup>104</sup> However, the Ancient Greeks believed that such bodily deficiencies would add superiority to the person. With this approach, Oedipus again realized his hybris with his intemperances.

Another person whom Oedipus attacks is Creon. Telling Creon that he wants to seize power, he blames him, and therefore creates an enemy for himself. But Oedipus seems to have forgotten that it was Creon who gave him power. Oedipus here again reveals his intemperance. His anger and accusations against Creon continue to increase. He almost lost his common sense to learn the truth, and went into an ecstatic state. Although the choir invites him to be temperate, he still does his own thing.

At last, he belittles his mother/wife, Jocasta under the influence of Hybris.

*“-OEDIPUS: Do not be afraid, even if it turns out that I was of slave blood three generations ago, you will not lose anything from your dignity.*

*“-JOCASTA: Ah, unfortunate! I can't find any other name for you anymore. From now on, you will not hear any other name from my mouth.”*<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 111.

<sup>105</sup> Sophocles, *Kral Oidipus*, p. 41.

With the realization of the truth, Jocasta leaves the stage and the play. The truth itself is unbearable, the same truth kills itself. This excessive behavior/action of Oedipus actually reveals his self-state-character, essence/ethos. His character is revealed with pure clarity. He is unaware that his soul, wrapped in excess, is preparing him for his terrible end. He attacks around him with the air of a titan who has forgotten that he is mortal. This intemperance is the blindness of his soul. Blindness is character. This disease of death, whose blindness (*ethos/miasma*) has infected him like a disease, has turned into destroying many others along with him. The way to get rid of this death disease is perhaps possible by being physically blind.

When the truth is revealed, he realizes that he has lost to his daimon. King Oedipus, who cannot see the truth with his seeing eyes, prefers to be blind himself. So being blind is the right thing to do. Against the truth, this time he goes out his eyes with a needle belonging to Jocasta. Perhaps, with this act, he intends to send homage to his relationship with Jocasta. At the end of this action, empathy is established with him and and great pain will be felt upon him. However, this act of his is intemperate. Oedipus' high pride demanded a large share for itself, his eyes...

With the help of his daughter Antigone, he leaves the city of Thebes to do what is necessary as a result of the miasma. Oedipus is deterritorialized again. It is possible to see the cost of miasma, which fell to his daughter Antigone, in the tragic work Antigone written by Sophocles.

Oedipus came to Colonus, the city of Theseus, the King of Athens, to purify the evil in his soul. He feels that death is approaching and his body is looking for the land where he will find peace. If they accept him, he promises that he will protect them against all the dangers that may arise in the city, with the spiritual feeling created by his body. What should be noticed here is that Oedipus' life experience has given him the image of an oracle. The knowledge of life experience (myth/knowledge of the past) has given him a superiority, a wisdom.

*“What they did unknowingly, without malice, without a criminal desire, was still the most dreadful attack on the divine order that governs human life. To put it in the words of Aeschylus, like birds that eat bird flesh, he ate his own flesh twice, first by shedding his father's blood and then combining with his mother's blood. Thus, Oedipus sees that his social ties are cut off and ostracized from people by a causeless curse as much as the election that the other heroes of the legend benefit from. It is now apolis; It incarnates the symbol of the excluded person. In his solitude he appears both below the human, like a ferocious beast, like a wild beast, and above the human, like a daimon with a frightening religious character. His stain is none other than the reverse of the supernatural power concentrated within him to destroy his agos: holy and saintly, as well as tainted, are hieros and eusebes. He will bring the guarantee of the greatest blessings to the city that will embrace him, to the land that will hold his body.”<sup>106</sup>* It adds meaning to its existence in a sense of pride and attributes divine features to himself. Thus, he pays the price of the hamartian he has done with this great pain he has experienced.

Creon, on the other hand, wants to take Oedipus and his daughter Antigone back to Thebes in order to end their suffering during the exile and not to shame the name of their country. The unending anger of Oedipus continues here as well. At Creon's call, he explains that it is more important for him to stay in Colonus because of the spiritual value of his body. *“Tombs and cults of hero play the role of glorious symbols and talismans for a partnership through the dignity of the honored person; their location is sometimes kept secret because the survival of the state depends on its protection.”<sup>107</sup>* He wishes to honor the land he is in with his body. Maybe this request has an equivalent at the time of the legend. But today we can conclude that the *ethos* of Oedipus (character) bears a *hybris* and that he is a criminal. Because he is a murderer who killed two people in his life.

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<sup>106</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant – Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 132.

<sup>107</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Religion in Ancient Greece*, p. 46

With the expulsion of Oedipus from the country, his sons decided to govern the country at a certain time. However, Eteocles did not do this, even though it was time to cede the royal throne to Polyneices. It has turned into a battle for the throne between these brothers. According to the fictional structure, whichever side Oedipus will support will be the one who will win the war.

*“- POLYNEICES: Because if we believe the prophecies, whoever you stand next to will win this war.”<sup>108</sup>*

Oedipus responds to his son Polyneices with great anger. While he was exiled from the country, he says that he is the one sitting on the throne of the king and accuses him of thinking of his own interests. He tells the two brothers that he will repeat his curses before. He tells them that they will be stained with each other's blood. This curse/miasma is the blind curse of both his descendants and himself, and ultimately of a father. The excess in the character of Oedipus continues with all its violence.

He then meets death in a place only Theseus knows. He doesn't want him to know where his dead body is. He wants to disappear as if he never existed. The irony of his homelessness thus took place in another space. Oedipus's existence is gone, but his act is written into eternity.

The behavior of the tragic character Oedipus corresponding to *hybris* should also be seen to reflect the whole human condition. This human condition, on the other hand, is the fact that a person can have these feelings in his life and that these weaknesses can occur. It contains what is good and evil in the human will/ desire. But which will/desire we feed at this point is a much more important clarity. At this point, it is seen that the character emerges with the preferences made.

### **3.2. POLITICAL VALUE AND THE ACTION OF KING OEDIPUS**

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<sup>108</sup> Sophocles, *Oidipus Kolonos'ta*, trans. Ari Çokona, (Istanbul: İşbank Cultural Publications, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2019), p. 54.

In the second part, there will be an analysis of the comparison of the evaluation on Aristotle's concept of politics and the character (ethos) of the fictional character King Oedipus as a result of his preferences of action.

It was said that the formation of the city/state would be possible through the unification from families to villages. Individuals who could not live alone formed a political space when they came together. Because human nature is not a living being that can live alone. *“People have a tendency to be partners with their natural relatives. An element of friendship is always necessary in all relationships created by kinship and intimacy within people. Since friendship and agreement will not be without negotiation, friendship in any union means "virtue".”*<sup>109</sup> True friendship should be the sum of wanting one's own well-being and wanting the well-being of others. The unity of a society's desire for the good constitutes the structure of a city.

Therefore, since people are not self-sufficient and cannot realize themselves outside the city/state or society by nature, the city/state is ahead of individuals in the Ancient Greek democracy. Individuals needed the city/state not only for their material resources or their needs arising from it, but also in terms of value/ethical development. At this point, of course, the contribution of art is inevitable. It has been explained in the previous parts that the human nature (imitation)/mimesis impulsion makes the existence of art inevitable. It was also mentioned that this *value/ethical* development can be achieved with the catharsis effect created by art. *“Art is determined not for aesthetic enjoyment, but for moral value; this moral value becomes objectified in the process of catharsis. The task of art is not only to arouse aesthetic pleasure, but also to create a moral pleasure. This moral pleasure occurs when the soul is purified, emptied. Therefore, Aristotle's theory of art does not yet have the character of being a discipline independent of morality. Because in his eyes, art serves the realization of a moral*

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<sup>109</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *Felsefe ve Toplum Bilim Yazıları*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2017), p. 29.

*purpose.*”<sup>110</sup> The essence of tragedy is to imitate human actions through action and to describe his spiritual world. Keeping the conflict in the spiritual world in balance is the prerequisite for happiness and living together. This prerequisite is a purpose. The purpose is the right *thing* for the good. Where the purpose realizes itself is the unity of action. Actions/characters/individuals that are in conflict with each other and the value(s) formed as a result of them are the source of the tragedy.

An illusion is created between the symbolic/exhibitive world created by tragedy and the concrete reality of life. This illusion finds its place in real life. This can sometimes be reflected in a language of discourse, sometimes in the forms of relationship itself, or in the spirit of a whole period. Tragedy then ceases to be an imitation/play (illusion) and becomes real life itself. This is an inevitable situation. Because Tragedy imitates real life. Of the average man. The average man is therefore in the state of the harmonious/temperate man. Thus, the political is realized by the action of the character.

What will be balanced here, of course, is to try to bring the desire for good and evil in the depths of the human soul to a rational field. There is a balance, measure, order and harmony in the dramatic structure of tragedy. This balance and harmony are also possible things that can happen to the average man. All these possibilities reach a fiction in the unity of measure and harmony, which is the structure of art. In this process, it is to make the functioning rules or *functions* of the object in question knowable. Therefore, structure, unity in this art correspond fantasy/fiction, while in the state this harmonious unity can be achieved by order/law.

The word “cosmos” is used in ancient Greece, which means an orderly, meaningful, lively, purposeful and harmonious whole. This word is used to express the structure of the universe. *“For the Pythagoreans, it is clearly revealed that the universe is a competent, ordered and purposeful whole, formed by the*

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<sup>110</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *İlk Çağ Felsefesi*, p. 460.

*overcoming of the limit to the limitless. By researching this order, man re-creates the said order and harmony in his own soul.*"<sup>111</sup> Man can only perceive the existing order in the world, the existing harmony and the structural principles that govern the cosmos, through reason. The structure in tragedy derives from life. Life takes the *good* from the order in nature. Because the purpose of nature in itself is for living. Human nature also has a purpose. This purpose is also for living. In order for a person to survive, he must want the good for himself. This good exists in the laws of nature and it is hidden in the practice of rational understanding. Man can find this meaning only when he thinks in unity with nature.

In this century, where individuals are looking for ways to live together and harmoniously, it is important to be a measured and prudent citizen in Greek democracy or city/state life. Therefore, it is indispensable to be harmonious, measured and balanced. Since man will realize his own nature only with other people, the political community must also be good. Political life itself, like the life of the individual man, must be towards the good. Being a political animal in this universe reveals the necessity of living in the city/state. At the same time, the city/state turns into an educational institution that teaches individuals the rules of living together. While the city/state provides the citizens to reach happiness in this state, it is responsible for making them good citizens who take care of their spiritual aspects. In particular, while ensuring the spiritual development of individuals, it should tend to transform them into virtuous beings.

The biggest difference that distinguishes humans from other living things is that they can distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. With this rational aspect, a man should be able to think about the ways of being a prudent citizen in the community he belongs to.

In Aristotle's *Poetics*, the tragic hero's destruction occurs because of an unknown mistake/*hamartia* and also because he succumbs to his *hybris*, which is

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<sup>111</sup> *İlkçağ Felsefesi*, p. 47.

his character trait. At the end of this, with the feeling of pity and fear (*catharsis/purification*) that occurs in the audience, the soul is healed from bad feelings. The political reflections of King Oedipus' preference of action should be looked at through this path.

Oedipus is the smallest part of that society with his self-state. He transforms that society with his action. Who he is is determined by his preference of action. Metagrobolised by his own truth, a chariot belonging to a nobleman that Oedipus came across while returning from the Delphi Temple was narrowing his passage. Oedipus, who overdoes the grounds of discussion and being superior (will to power) and behaves inconsiderately, kills his aide-de-camp with the old man. Despite the prophecy of God Apollo, he executes the act/murder. *“It is Oedipus who erred, not worrying about the silence of God, but interpreting his words as an answer to the question of his origin. This mistake of Oedipus is based on two features of his character: he is not inclined to doubt his interpretation of event because he is very confident, believing in his gnome and reasoning; because he has a proud nature, he always and everywhere wants to be the first, the governor.”*<sup>112</sup> Oedipus, who took away the right to life of others with a momentary desire, ignited the wick of miasma that would infect the city of Thebes by being hybris. *“The person who does these acts is trapped in the power he unleashes. Action transcends and envelops the person, rather than expanding from the doer as if from its source; it encompasses the person in a power that includes the object of the action through a series of actions that last more or less in time with the person. The “effect” of pollution thus encompasses a field of action whose parts, moments are linked in a chain. For example, in the case of murder, miasma incarnates in every being or object related to the murder.”*<sup>113</sup> If the spilled blood is from the family, the stain spreads to the whole country. It realizes itself through events such as plague epidemics, deaths, unproductive

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<sup>112</sup> *Eski Yunan'da Mit ve Tragedya*, p. 110.

<sup>113</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Discourse and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Mehmet Emin Özcan, (Istanbul: İmge Kitapevi Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1996), p. 127.

lands, and sick children. This is, of course, a move to disrupt the social order. So, temperance seems inevitable for coexistence.

The extraordinary side of Oedipus and his ability to know the riddle of Sphinx made him the hero of the city of Thebes. This side of him actually confines him to an ambiguous area. Perhaps the extraordinary thing about him that is unique to heroes may also have caused him to kill his father. *“Oedipus describes himself with arrogant confidence as a riddle solver. And the whole drama is, in a sense, like a detective riddle that Oedipus takes it upon himself to solve.”*<sup>114</sup> While his actions seem astonishing and extraordinary, it is also an indication that he has a terrifying side. It can be said that his inability to find this balance in a way prepared his destruction.

As someone who knows the riddle of Sphinx, this time the belief that he will find out who the murderer of the former King Laios is, who caused the plague epidemic shows that he considers himself superior to other members of the society. *“At the end of the tragedy, the monstrous creature, reminiscent of the riddle that he thinks he had found the solution to with the arrogance of a ‘scholar’, appears as identical to the creature.”*<sup>115</sup> This is also a *hybris*. He turned into a titan rather than a king's dominion in the power structure. *“The identification of Oedipus with his father and with his own children, the union of mother and husband in Jokasta makes Oedipus equal to himself; It turns him into an argos, apolis, who does not conform to general standards, has no equal with other people, and sees himself as equal to God while finally seeing that he is equal to nothing.”*<sup>116</sup> Its dominance in the city/state turns into a representation of a debated and contested field. Thus, the character and its status make the structure of the society the subject of discussion in a context suitable for the purpose of the tragedy.

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<sup>114</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 110.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

It is the city/state itself that theatrics the tragedy itself and puts it on the stage before the whole society. *“Through the dialogue plays, the confrontation of the protagonists with the chorus, and the peripatetic (peripeteia) transformations that occur throughout the drama, the legendary heroes praised in the epic turn into a subject of discussion on the stage. When the hero becomes the subject of discussion in front of the audience, the Greek audience living in Athens in the 5th century discovers that the real problematic is itself in and through the tragic show.”*<sup>117</sup> This area of discussion also shows a society in which ideas are expressed. As in Teiresias' dialogue with Oedipus... Mutual ideas are in competition. This competition must come from equality. But, of course, this equality is not spread equally to all segments of society. It would be very difficult to say. But still, it is seen that equals face each other. Thus, it emerged that there was a *democratic* life form that the ancient Greece tried to preserve.

Although the prophecies that happened to Oedipus were told to him by Apollo, he was caught in a sense of personal pleasure and desire, tried to govern a country he did not know, and married Jocasta, whom he did not know. *“It is an unloved marriage with an alien woman that the city of Thebes imposes on him to carry him to the throne in order to reward his success.”*<sup>118</sup> The prerequisite for a happy life is possible by wishing well/making good decisions while in the bondage of emotions.

Sophocles aims to cure the society's feelings of pity and fear in the function of tragedies; He predicts that society will experience *catharsis/purification* through the bond that it will establish through the character of King Oedipus. *“A tragedy author is a person who wants to say something with his play, has an opinion about life and tries to convey this view to his audience in the most effective and convincing way. He assimilated his judgment about life into his play and presented it as the plausible outcome of the events displayed in the*

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<sup>117</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 255.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

play.”<sup>119</sup> This catharsis aspect of art is necessary for society to have common sense.

It is understood that Sophocles intervened in the social and intellectual discussion with the task he gave to Teiresias. The ground on which Oedipus scolds and humiliates Teiresias is the opposition of old and new values. “*His polyphony in his words refers not to the hypocrisy of his monolithic character, but to his double personality when viewed in more depth. Oedipus is double. He himself will solve his meaning on his own only when he discovers that what he believes to be and what seems to be is the opposite in every way. Oedipus does not hear the secret discourse that occurs in his own words without being aware of it. And no witness of the drama on the stage, except Teiresias, is able to understand it either.*”<sup>120</sup> The fact that Teiresias says that he does not know the riddle of Sphinx shows that he despises his life experience. But this is not fair. Because Teiresias is blind. However, Oedipus cannot see the truth with his seeing eyes. Finally, he misses the measure by saying that Teiresias himself may have committed the murder.

Jocasta falls into a similar mistake as Oedipus. According to her, the prophecy told about her in the past did not come true. Like Oedipus, she accuses the oracles of lying. “*If it is desired to clearly see the events in the past and the events that will show similarity or closeness in the future due to their unique human characteristics, it is adequate to evaluate them as useful.*”<sup>121</sup> However, her husband, the man she knows, is her own son and has had four children from him. Perhaps it is worthwhile to heed the knowledge of the past, the social experience/memory that is the transmission of life.

Another target of Oedipus' attack is Jocasta. Because Oedipus thinks that the reason for the investigation of Jocasta is that she sees her marriage with

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<sup>119</sup> Sevda Şener, *Yaşamın Kırılma Noktasında Dram Sanatı*, p. 94.

<sup>120</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 124-125.

<sup>121</sup> Jean – Pierre Vernant *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans., Mehmet Emin Özcan, (Istanbul: Alfa Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2017), p. 240.

himself as a wrong union with a low-class, degenerate, slave's son. *"But this "becoming" of Oedipus, which Jocasta reveals and which chills her with fear, is not her husband's slavery or her nobility, but not the great distance between them that threatens to separate them from now on, on the contrary, the noble lineage is this royal blood which, flowing in the same veins of both, brings them too close, turns their marriage not into an unmatched union but into an incest, and turns Oedipus into a living contamination."*<sup>122</sup> A government style is required in which the governors of the country renounce their will to power, look out for the interests of the society, and include an organized and democratic structure. Of course, it is essential to develop an understanding in which personal desires and interests are not in question.

Oedipus, with his accusation against Creon, reveals that he sees him as his enemy. He continues his intemperance towards his brother-in-law. In a sense, jealous of being liked by the public, he stubbornly continues the investigation because of this. *"By projecting his will to power onto Creon, he convinces himself that his brother-in-law, driven by the phthonos, with envy of the elders, wants to take his place on the throne of Thebes, and that in the past he may have instigated the murderers of the old king. It is this tyrannical hybris that causes the destruction of Oedipus and provides one of the motor forces of tragedy-if we call it as the choir does-."*<sup>123</sup> This rivalry between the two men is the result of a tyrannical skepticism. Creon is not his rival. The basis of this rivalry is a reflection of the power competition. The choir invites all opponents to be temperate. But it is of no use. Oedipus continues to go his own way. He says that he will find the murderer, and when he finds it, he will expel him from the city without pity. *"Tragedy would show the evils that should be avoided by holding a mirror to people's weaknesses and flaws on stage. He would warn the audience by exposing the volatility of fortune and God's justice with examples, Justice had to find its place in the work. It wasn't like that in life though; The wicked was not*

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<sup>122</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 112.

<sup>123</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 110-111.

*always finding their punishment, the good was not finding happiness.*"<sup>124</sup> When confronted with the truth, it is seen that Oedipus will not be so merciful to himself. This is again the excess of his ethos. The place where his destiny/daimon drags himself throughout the entire play is a gruesome ending. He is now a painful holy being who sees everything blindfolded. "*Multiplicity, voluminousness and plurality in the world are only appearances; an appearance caused by the trick of reason, an appearance caused by a trick exhibited by the mismatch between the ends we set before us in acting consciously and the consequences of those actions.*"<sup>125</sup> Oedipus questioned everyone in turn, renounced from his family in Corinth, killed the person who stood in his way, saved the city from the Sphinx, married the queen of the city/state and sat on the royal throne. "*In the face of the enigma caused by the plague, the forensic investigation—consulting the oracle, the seer, and the witnesses—with all the classical means of investigative procedures in Athens reveals himself to him: "Now everything is clear" The answer to the riddle asked by the Sphinx was "human". The answer to the riddle answered by Oedipus was himself.*"<sup>126</sup> Everything was over when the play started with this state. Oedipus is late. But nobody knows this. It realizes the irony of tragedy in a reality known only to the theater audience.

The text of *Sophocles in Oedipus at Colonus* has turned into a structure where the natural and the supernatural, two different oppositions in which gods and humans are often intertwined, and occasionally unite. Oedipus thinks that with his death he will rise to the level of the gods. "*Oedipus, who is treated like a God at the beginning of the Oedipus the King play, becomes a pollution that collapses on the city of Thebai at the end of the play. Oedipus, blind and miserable, who adjured to Theseus, king of the Eumenides and Athens, at the beginning of the Oedipus at Colonus becomes the guest and benefactor of*

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<sup>124</sup> Berna Moran, *Edebiyat Kuramları ve Eleştirisi*, (Istanbul, İletişim Publications, 24<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2013), p. 38.

<sup>125</sup> Mehmet Küçük, *Modernite versus Posmodernite*, (Istanbul: Say Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2011), p. 43.

<sup>126</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 426.

*Sophocles' city.*"<sup>127</sup> The extent to which the equality of citizens within the city/state applies to everyone emerged with the return of King Oedipus' peripeteia/fortune. "After defeating Polyneices, who begged him to return, and Creon, who tried to deliver him to Thebes, that is, after breaking the ties that still bind him to the city of Thebes, where Creon was tyrant, and to the oikos of sons of Labdakus, he becomes a guide to the hero's tomb where he will eventually be buried."<sup>128</sup> The battle of Oedipus with the new tyrant Creon and his sons is shaped by the will to power. Attempting to govern the city/state creates a tyrant under all circumstances.

Therefore, for the governance of the city/state, whoever replaces Oedipus, it is inevitable that the one who has power will reach an area where it will be *miasma/stained* in some way. Miasma/stain infects those who have power. It flows through time like a disease. This turns into a death disease and prevents the individuals of the society from realizing themselves. Therefore, until the dirty blood is shed and justice (dike) is achieved, this stain will follow humanity.

The daughters of Oedipus, Antigone and Ismene, perform the roles given to them by the society. "In initiation rituals, marriage and war appear as two complementary institutions; Marriage is the same for a girl as war is for a boy; For the girl, her exit from childhood determines the normal realization of sex, her entry into full womanhood."<sup>129</sup> Oedipus' daughters Antigone and Ismene are his companions. The feminine side of girls shines a light on Oedipus' blindness and transforms his life.

Moreover, it is possible to develop an attitude that is exactly opposite to the idea that I have tried to convey throughout the thesis and make a different interpretation. This method can also be seen as my own criticism of my thesis.

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<sup>127</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 437.

<sup>128</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 437.

<sup>129</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 104.

Archaic and classical Greece are civilizations where no words correspond to what we define as *will* today. “Therefore, we should avoid projecting our present-day organizational system of voluntary behaviors, our decision-making structures, our models of engaging in the actions of the self, on the Ancient Greek people.”<sup>130</sup> It does not seem entirely possible to reach the assumption that King Oedipus carried out his will. Because it is known that supernatural forces played an important role in the action preferences of the tragic heroes in Ancient Greece. “These religious forces do not exist solely outside the person; they intervene at the very center of the decision to force him even in his so-called “preferences.””<sup>131</sup> As a result, in the light of all these explanations, a different inference can be made. “When he goes through what he thinks he has decided, he unwittingly, unknowingly understands the true meaning of what has happened. In its humanitarian dimension, the perpetrator is not enough reason and justification for his actions: on the contrary, his activity, which returns to him according to the sovereign arrangement of the Gods, recognizes itself in his own eyes; It shows him the true nature of what he is, what he is doing.”<sup>132</sup> In this case, how can the tragic characters be expected to ruthlessly pay the price for the actions that they are not responsible for and therefore do not belong to them? How can the actions in question belong to them if it is not their preference? The possibility of this being the case of the characters in ancient Greece should not be ignored.

Therefore, besides trying to understand the many opposite meanings that tragedy tells, it is inevitable that the ancient Greek tragic texts will impose new meanings on people, just like King Oedipus, since the *polysemy* of human beings is constantly changing.

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<sup>130</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 50.

<sup>131</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 52.

<sup>132</sup> *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 84.

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that in Ancient Greece, the authors of tragedies, poets had an important place for society. They have provided an authentic epic accumulation with their religious beliefs, rituals, moral and political aspects. In these civilizations, authors/poets have always been shown as names that illuminate the facts. In Ancient Greece, epics were accepted as the first beginning of a philosophy activity that introduced life and gave information about human behavior. With Epic/Poetry, values education was provided to children, and it also turned into one of the morality tools that enabled adult individuals to develop in a positive way. Although the fields of philosophy and history were more developed later on, epic/poetry still remained the most effective tool in the education of the vast majority for a long time.

Tragedy plays tried to express the important problems of their age and the contradictions of the social structure in Ancient Greece. At the same time, its influence on the task of educating the public was also taken into account. Tragedy playwrights take their subjects from historical events or myths rather than current events. It is said that a major reason for this may be the result of political concerns to move away from time and space.

We have said that Plato also attaches importance to the educational aspect of art. He said in his *State* book that art is beneficial for society and important for the education of young people. Plato proposed that only the narratives that do not comply with the truth and morality should be banned because they do not give the knowledge of the truth. For him, art aroused people's excitement and prevented them from thinking in a healthy and moderate way. So for Plato, art was a way of activating dangerous emotions.

Aristotle had the same idea as his teacher Plato about the evaluation of art on a cognitive and moral basis. But Aristotle differs with his teacher Plato in terms of the point at which art acts. For Aristotle, art is not just a sense of

aesthetic enjoyment or pleasure. It also adds moral value. This value reveals itself in the catharsis process. Therefore, for Aristotle, tragedy not only arouses aesthetic pleasure in the audience, but also a conscientious value and pleasure. This, in turn, causes the society to live decently together. This use of art reveals the formation of a good ground necessary for the meanness/(*happiness-goodness*) path.

King Oedipus is first of all a tragedy of destiny. Our hero is hopelessly flowing through a life he does not know. However, Oedipus' action choices caused a murder that took place in the borders of the city of Thebes, the incest incident and the resulting plague epidemic. And all this is the result of his character. In addition to his superior features, the hybris he carried in his soul at the same time pushed him to an intemperate behavior and caused his destruction. The city will regain its former calm and health after the unfortunate game hero, who blinded his eyes to the truth and exiled himself with his daughter Antigone.

At the same time, he seems to be paying the price for a sin he is not responsible for. Because according to him, he didn't even do anything willingly. But a truth that should not be overlooked circulates in the soul of that era. When we think in terms of God, nature and man laws; at first, he took the decision to kill two people as a result of the incident arising from a small argument. He constantly took action using his own will until the end of the play. Again, the same character left Thebai, the city he ruled, to secure the justice and restore the broken order. The word of Heraclitus whispers in our ears: man's ethos is his *daimon*.

Because of the sharp gaps between gods and men in Ancient Greece, the knowledge of truth was closed to men. Tragedy, on the other hand, brings the drama of this rift/abyss to life. The tragedy shows the inevitability that a man in a dramatic situation is in a constant action without knowing it, is destined to make mistake, and therefore to be destroyed in his life. In life, the order of neither gods nor men is unjust. It is a mistake to hope for this. The unfortunate tragedy of many

tragedian heroes, such as King Oedipus, arouses pain. It makes us accept the inevitable.

Taking all these considerations into account, we can say that the art of tragedy is an art that contains contradictions in it. Tragedy tells us that we exist in an inexplicable life and demonstrates the contradictory nature of the rational man in it. Tragedy calls for reflection on these issues. Therefore, it makes the audience think by shocking with the feeling of pity, fear and pleasure. This feeling, experienced at the end of the tragedy, is a state of *formation* of a good path in which a person will understand how he should or should not live in a community.

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