THE SOPHOKLEAN OIDIPUS AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

by E. L. de Kock (University of Pretoria)

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

It is well-known that the tragedians of the fifth century got the raw material for their dramas almost without exception from the heroic myths of a few families—a few families, because with great dramatic insight they must have realised that the stories of just these families possess to a pre-eminent degree the essential ingredients to make great and effective tragedies. Few myths supplied more rewarding material for tragedy than that concerning Oidipus. Nevertheless, though about fifteen Oidipus plays were staged in ancient Hellas and Rome, we really know only one Oidipus, that of Sophokles in his Oidipus Tyrannos, and it was Sophokles’ O.T. that made Oidipus classic, immortal. The question arises: why? What makes Sophokles’ Oidipus so different, what is Sophokles’ contribution, what his originality? Because we may suppose that Sophokles built upon foundations laid by predecessors, there arises a second, and for our argument the most important, question, namely: upon which predecessors in particular did Sophokles depend? On Aischylos or on another, or did he borrow motifs at random from a variety of sources as his requirements dictated? We can thus summarise our problem in two points:

i) what originality does Sophokles display in his O.T.?

ii) where in particular did he get his raw material?

For the sources of Sophokles’ Oidipus we must trace the pre-Sophoklean myth, with special regard for chronology and for the contribution(s) made by the various individual pre-Sophoklean poets. This leads us along well-trodden paths. During the past century, in particular, scholars of distinction and from almost all over the globe have ventured into the search for Oidipus. Yet, there is still obscurity and disagreement on many facets of Oidipus, due mainly to two reasons: (i) the chronological uncertainty of our already meagre sources, and (ii) the problem of determining the particular individual’s contribution(s) to the complex Oidipus structure.

For the birth of Oidipus lies far back. Presumably it originates from the world of folktale (Märchen) where, in its infant years, it must also have had

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1 This paper was read, in Afrikaans, to the 4th conference of the Classical Association of S.A., at Grahamstown, 2 Febr. 1961.


3 Daly R. E. 17,2107,8 ff.

4 See Bibliographical Addendum for authorities and abbreviated references.

5 The whole problem as to the original nature of Oidipus is a delicate and disputed one. Cf. i.a. Béral Mélanges de mythologie, Paris 1877, 165 ff.; Wecklein 683 ff.; Robert ch. 1 and 3 (with the searching criticism by Nilsson GGA 36—46); Farnell Greek Hero Culs 332 ff.; Daly R. E. Supp. VII. 784—6 (his criticism of Lamer’s viewpoint as ’etwas licherlich’ — 786.22 — is rather too sharp); Deubner 38 ff.; Dietmeier 7 and passim; Wehrli 108 ff.; Delcourt ix ff. (a good survey of present viewpoints).

Robert considered that Oidipus originally was a chthonic hero belonging to the sphere of Demeter, and who as entiautos daimon annually killed his father and in the spring married
the typical characteristics of the folktale, namely i.a. an anti-tragic conclusion and a loosely knitted structure of motifs which does not bear with why's — no more than Red Riding-hood. But Oidipus, as almost every Greek myth, is also a very complex structure — the collective achievement, through the centuries, of people, and of poet, and of plastic artist, all adding motifs to the Oidipus edifice and thus raising it to its majestic structure. So for centuries this structure was being moulded. He who wishes to search in this structure — or rather in the scanty remnants of the once proud structure — for the contributions of the individual poets, and also wants to show regard for chronology, is indeed treading on slippery ground. But this is our ambitious task. In the available time it is valueless to present you with a mere catalogue of viewpoints; and I shall, moreover, be compelled to pass over most delicate problems with dogmatic certainty.

Our first introduction to Oidipus in literature is in ancient epic, where we come across him quite incidentally in the Iliad and in Hesiod. A more clearly outlined, but probably later, Oidipus we meet in the Nekyia, in the eleventh book of the Odyssey. (I assume — as even unitarians admit — that the Nekyia is a later passage, presumably not earlier than the beginning of the seventh century.) Unless I am mistaken, the Iliad and Hesiod not only present a uniform picture of Oidipus, but also supplement each other. The Oidipus we meet there, is Oidipus the hero in the sphere of physical achievements like a Herakles and a Theseus.

The Iliad and Hesiod

In Iliad 23, 678/80 we read that a certain Mekisteus, an Argive, once came to Thebes for Oidipus' funeral when the latter 'neergeplof bet' (as van Rensburg renders in Afrikaans, i.e. 'when he had fallen in battle'). This report is supplemented by a Hesiod fragment (probably from the Eoiai = Loeb fr. 24)

his mother, the earth goddess (the hieros gamos 1.58), in the winter to suffer his own path and death; after Nilsson's sound refutation this idea would today surely be accepted by few. Also unconvincing is Miss Delcourt's idea of Oidipus as a ritual hero only developing out of a specific rite — 'héros rituel dont les actes sont antérieurs à la personne'. (In an incisive review Daly, C. Ph. 43 (1948) 47—51, objects to Miss D.'s optimism that the roots of the mythology could be found at all (47); Bates, A. J. Phil. 69 (1948) 113—4, and Rose, C.R. 60 (1946) 122—3, point out that D. is wrong in assuming that a myth is always a decadent rite.) The strict 'historical' attitude of i.a. Rose, Modern Methods in Classical Mythology, 24 ff., and of Lamer, R. E. XII 511, finding in Oidipus a real king of Thebes, may contain a kernel of truth, but in my opinion remains unsatisfactory towards understanding the growth and development of the myth. Personally I prefer the 'Märchen' viewpoint, tracing the myth to a folktale origin, and supported by the authority of i.a. Gruppe Griech. Myth. 304 ff., Nilsson o.c. and Myc. Orig. 199 ff., S. Luria Raccolta di Scritti in Onore di Ramorino 289 ff., Daly o.c., Wehrli 113 (i.a.) and, to a more limited degree, Dirlmeier.


Wehrli 108—9. Nor should we nowadays underestimate the contribution from Asia Minor; cf. i.a. Lesky Gr. Literaturgesch. 69, Dirlmeier 16.

See note 33 below.

Cf. i.a. Robert ch. 3 and 4, esp. 115 ff.; Deubner 31 ff.; Wehrli 111; Baldry 26; Richter 21.
telling us that, when Oidipus died at Thebes, Argeia\(^{10}\), the daughter of Adrastos, went to Thebes with other Argives for the funeral games and the burial of Oidipus. And a papyrus fragment (= P.S.I. 131, from the 2nd to 3rd centuries) relates how the Cadmean women stared with admiration at the Argive Amphiarao when he visited Thebes at the time of Oidipus’ funeral. Therefore, Oidipus died at Thebes and his funeral attracted visitors from as far as Argos.

In order to reconcile the words δεδουστής Οίδιποδιο in the Iliad with the later classical Oidipus figure of a blind outcast, a remarkable dance has been performed. This commenced with the scholiast\(^{11}\) who was convinced that Oidipus ‘fell from a cliff with thundering noise’, and led to a twentieth century ‘classical’ rendering by Richter\(^{12}\) who suggests that ‘Oidipus versinkt unter unterirdische Donner in die Tiefe’. But in view of the well-known Homeric idiom (we think e.g. of δοτυσμεν\(^{13}\) δε πεσον, Iliad 4.504; 5.42, 540, 617; 11.449; 13.426) there can be only one correct interpretation, that given by Aristarchus\(^{14}\) (rightly followed by van Rensburg): Oidipus fell in battle. Well then, an Oidipus who fell in battle, whose funeral at Thebes attracted visitors even from Argos, could not have been blind, nor an outcast or an exile from his throne, but he was a king who died gloriously and was buried gloriously at Thebes. In short, this was not Sophokles’ Oidipus.

Two passages from Hesiod confirm and also supplement this picture, namely Erga 161 ff. and Theogony 325 ff. In the Erga passage Hesiod, the Boeotian from Askra, extols the battle ‘for the cattle of Oidipus’ (μηχων ένεκ Οίδιποδιο) as one of the two most important events of early times, the other being the war fought around Troy ‘for the sake of rich-haired Helen’ (Ελένης ένεκ ήπωκμοι). Though scholars of the standing of Nilsson\(^{15}\) here found a reference to the fight of the Seven against Thebes, I fully endorse the interpretation of, among others, Robert, Deubner and Wehrli\(^{16}\). We have here literally a case of a battle ‘for the cattle of Oidipus’, i.e. a war caused by cattle-raiding. Cattle-raiding, as at least two Homeric passages\(^{17}\) and also a fresco from Tiryns\(^{18}\) prove, was not only a typical feature of heroic times, but could also lead to most sanguinary wars. Presumably, therefore, this is a case of a war against some neighbouring city because of cattle-raiding. In this regard the Minyans of Orchomenos, traditional and hereditary enemies of Thebes, could immediately be called to mind. In fact, Apollodoros (2.4.11) tells us of a war waged against

\(^{10}\) Read with this Schol. T. on Iliad 23.679 (= fr. 35 Rz.) and a papyrus fragment (= fr. 245 b, p. 272 ff., Rz. 8).


\(^{12}\) Richter 22.

\(^{13}\) On this point cf. in detail M. Leumann Homerische Wörter, Basel 1950, 217 ff. and 270.

\(^{14}\) K. Lehrs de Aristarchi Studiis Homerici, Leipzig 1882, 103 and 38.

\(^{15}\) Nilsson G. G. A. 42 ff., Myc. Orig. 108 ff. More or less similarly Geist I. 11; Daly Supp. 776-34 ff. on the strength of Εοιαί fr. 245 b; Wilamowitz Hesiodos Erga 60 considers that it concerns the ‘Erbschaft des Oidipus’.

\(^{16}\) Robert 113 ff., Deubner 16, Wehrli 111.

\(^{17}\) Iliad 16.671 ff., Od. 11.287 ff.

\(^{18}\) Cf. Rodenwaldt Der Fries des Megarons von Mykenai, Tiryns I, 2.13 ff., no. 16 (quoted by Deubner 32).
Thebes by the Minyan Erginos as a result of which the Thebans had to pay an annual tribute of 100 cattle for twenty years. A fragment of Pherekydes (FGrH 3, 95, 1. 16) mentions the death of two of Oidipus’ children at the hands of the Minyans and of Erginos. Apparently with Boeotian patriotism Hesiod set a local war caused by cattle-raiding in an exaggerated perspective by associating it with the war for Helen. This does not, of course, mean that he invented the existence of such a bloody war with a neighbouring people.

The Theogony passage mentions that the woman-dragon monster Echidna bore two children to her own son Orthos, namely the deadly Phix (= Sphinx) and her brother the Nemean lion. The Phix — which popular etymology, presumably, later changed into Sphinx [20], the strangler — yea, death to the Cadmeans (Καδμείωτος θάνατος). The Sphinx which ever since Mycenean times had been known in Greece as a predominantly decorative motif, the Sphinx which for centuries had a vague and more or less meaningless and rather undefined existence, here, for the first time, appears as a more or less defined character — and this in the context of the Boeotian saga. A character which was to become the prototype of all later Sphinx figures in Greece [21]. The name Phix [22]—obviously connected with the Φίξων or Φίξεων δροσερό close by Thebes — indicates that the monster of the Phikeion hill and the centuries old decorative ‘Sphinx’ had become associated and united — a new figure, being purely a creature of mere physical strength. So the Sphinx was initially a creature of brute force and only subsequently began to ask riddles [23]. The riddles are a secondary element.

We find proof of this in the appearance of the Sphinx: a monster with the body of a lion is a figure of strength and force and hardly compatible with intellectual prowess, with riddles. The context in Hesiod confirms this impression, as he would only have represented Sphinx and Nemean lion as brother and sister if their natures were similar. Of the Nemean lion he says that Hera reared it on the Nemean hills as a menace to man. The context is clear: it deals with creatures which presented a menace in the pioneer period of taming a still wild country and of establishing civilization. Had the Sphinx, as creature of brute force, at this stage already become part of the Oidipus saga? We cannot say for certain, but presumably it had. It is more important to realise that the Sphinx did enter the Oidipus saga as a creature of brute force and only later

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19 Thus Robert 48; also cf. E.M. s.v. sphinx. With reserve also Lesky R. E. ΠΙΑ 1709.
20 On the Sphinx and all the related problems (which naturally cannot be considered here) cf. Robert 48 ff., 11 17 ff.; J. Ilberg Die S. in der griech. Kunst und Sage, Leipzig 1896; A. Lesky R. E. ΠΙΑ 1703—1726 (very good) and also Herbig R. E. ΠΙΑ 1726—1749. In passing some aspects are touched upon by Rzach R.E. XI (s.v. Kyklos) 2358.52 ff. (who in my opinion wrongly accepts that the S. asked riddles already in the Oidipodeia) and by Bethe Theb. Held. 19 ff. The article by Lullies, ‘Die lesende Sphinx’, in Festischri Schuster 140 ff., could not be traced anywhere in sunny Africa.
21 Lesky, o.c. 1704—6, where the different views are surveyed in outline.
22 Lesky, o.c. 1705. From schol. Theog. 326 and schol. Aspis 35, beside Plato Crat. 414d, we know that the form Πήγα (or Phika) was the original and specifically Boeotian. The Phikeion hill (cf. Hes. Aspis 35, also Palaiph. 4, Apollod. 3.5.8, Hesych., Steph. Byz., schol. Eur. Phoin. 26) is derived explicitly from Phikes by schol. Theog. 326, schol. Aspis 33 and Etym. gen. s.v.
23 Thus i.a. Robert 49, Bethe 20, Lesky 1709.22 ff., Wehrli 111. It is difficult to decide when the Sphinx began to ask riddles and in this capacity became part of the Oidipus saga; cf. however notes 69—74 (together with the text itself.)
became the poser of riddles. So the Oidipus who had to defeat her at this early stage, had to do so by brute force and not by intellectual prowess. This conclusion indirectly confirms the picture of Oidipus in the Iliad as a figure of physical strength. At least two independent witnesses plainly confirm that the Sphinx entered the Oidipus saga in this capacity. The somewhat older contemporary of Pindar, the lyric poetess Korinna, who as a Boeotian presumably knew and also drew from indigenous traditions, tells us that Oidipus killed not only the Sphinx but also the Teumessian fox. Again the context indicates an act of strength. Also a red-figure Attic lekythos at Boston testifies irrefutably to the original form of the saga: Oidipus — his name is stated explicitly — brandishing a club faces the Sphinx who menaces him from a rock on the Phikeion hill.

Hesiod and the Iliad tell us the same story about Oidipus. He is primarily the strong man, the hero that brings civilization during the heroic period; who like a Herakles helped in clearing up the world, and also defended it against attacks from neighbours. And in this fight he died gloriously and was buried gloriously at Thebes. Whether patricide, the marriage with his mother, and incestuous children were already familiar, we cannot say — the latter presumably not. Yet we may state without hesitation that even if these motifs had already been introduced, their impact on the life of Oidipus must have been merely of an episodic nature — so episodic that they had not broken his spirit, and in any case had not made of him an ἀγώς, an outcast, in the eyes of his people.

Oidipus in the Nekyia

What we have just presumed, we find stated explicitly in the Nekyia. In the world of the shades Odysseus meets Epikaste (the older name for Iokaste) and then relates: 'I also saw there Oidipus' mother, fair Epikaste; unwittingly she had wrought a dreadful deed by marrying her own son. He had killed his own father and took his mother to wife. Straightway (κατὰ), however, the gods revealed these things to man. Yet Oidipus, tortured by misery through the dreadful decrees of the gods, continued his reign over the Cadmeans in beautiful Thebes. But Epikaste went down to the abode of Hades, the mighty warder. Yea, from a high beam of her palace she, overcome by grief, hung the fatal noose! And for Oidipus she left behind sorrows as many as the avengers of a mother bring to pass'. (Odys. 11.271 ff.)

What the poet of the Iliad did not state explicitly, is here set out clearly. The Nekyia knows the patricide, the marriage with his mother and her suicide — all regular ingredients of the later vulgate. However, Oidipus is not blind here — at any rate this is the opinion both of the scholiast (1.275) and of

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25 Cf. H. Goldman A. J. A. 11(1911) 379 fig. 1; Robert 49, Plate 14.
27 It is preferable to connect 'by the councils of the gods' with ἀγώς πάσχον rather than with 'rule'. Thus rightly schol. Odys. 11.276 (cf. also Höfer 701.45, Nilsson G. G. A. 42, Deubner 35). Differently Margani 45 (see below) and Paulson Eranos 1 (1896) 14,1.
Eustathius (Od. 1684, 15) who considers that, if Oidipus had put out his own eyes, the poet would never have remained silent on this score. This is presumably correct, for a blind king is possible, but, in the heroic era, improbable. Also, Oidipus here has not four incestuous children as in the later vulgate. This is a point in dispute and scholars have actively attempted to reconcile the *Nekyia* also in this respect with the later version of the myth. Towards this end *𝜙ας* has not been given its literal and normal meaning of 'immediately, soon, straightway' (*ἑδῶς*), but the meaning of *ἑξαλθής* 'suddenly'. But this dispute is quite futile, whether we accept a literal meaning or not. Oidipus was in any case not married long enough to procreate four incestuous children. And even if he did beget one incestuous child — which is most unlikely — this fact would only heighten the difference between the Oidipus of the *Nekyia* and the later Oidipus (see below).

The poet also says that Oidipus suffered woes through the curse of his mother, a curse ratified by the gods. We do not learn what these woes were, and this is where scholars started conjecturing, making the woes range from those of a broken spirit (thus Margani Il mito di Edipo 1927, p. 45) to those of warfare (thus Robert 112). A clear and categorical answer is hardly possible. But for our purpose it is sufficient to realise that the woes could not be due to a broken spirit. Oidipus emerges with an all but broken spirit. After everything that happened Oidipus retained his throne in spite of his woes and his mother’s curse. The patricide and the marriage to his mother were so episodic in their effect on Oidipus himself that he could still retain his throne. There is good evidence that he even married after all this. So Oidipus certainly did not consider himself a broken man or an outcast. Equally important is that, in spite of patricide and marriage to his mother, he did not become unacceptable to the Thebans either. What has been found to be the case in the *Iliad*, applies here in an even higher degree. This Oidipus has little or nothing in common with the Oidipus which received his classical portrayal from Sophokles. The Oidipus of Sophokles who at the discovery of his true identity, at the discovery of the non-episodic impact of his actions, put out

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29 Cf. i.a. Baldry 25, Robert 108 and II 37 (n. 91), Häfer 728.56, Legras 56 (peu après le mariage), Schneidewin *Philol.*, 3 (1848) 353.7. Already a scholiast in this connection remarked: ὁδὲ ἀδόξας ἐπεὶ πῶς ἀγέε ἐκεῖδας. ἄλλ’ ἀξιόντες. Kirchhoff 37 assembled interesting additional evidence as to why *ἄξιον* must here mean ‘directly, straightway, soon’ and why Oidipus could not have had children from Epikaste. He contends that all heroines in the *Nekyia* catalogue who had children, have their children explicitly mentioned. Deubner 37, however, rightly points out that this does not always apply. Deubner himself assumes [on the strength of i.a. *FgrH* 3, F. 95, 16, (Pherekydes)] that Oid. and Epikaste must have had the twins Phrastor and Laonytos. This assumption is unnecessary.

30 Thus e.g. Welcker 333 suggests blindness and bad treatment by the children (so too Schneidewin 166). Paulson o.c. 14.1 suggests a troubled conscience; Margani 45 ‘angosce di un animo affranto’; also cf. Daly 778.24 ff.

31 Correctly and aptly Wehrli 111; also cf. Deubner 38, Lamer 473.38 ff., Bethe 177. Whether the *Nekyia* passage is later than the *Oidipodeia*, as Wehrli assumes (112), is the thorniest problem of the whole argument and at least requires proof (which W. does not supply!)

32a To be discussed in connection with the Peisander Scholium in the next volume of *Acta Classica*.
his own eyes in despair, abandoned his throne while uttering a curse upon himself, the Oidipus who considers himself cast out as an abomination to both god and man, this Oidipus is absolutely incompatible with the Oidipus of the \textit{Iliad} of Hesiod or of the \textit{Nekyia}\textsuperscript{33}. The Sophoklean Oidipus is an \textit{άγος} to himself, to his people and, in his own view, also to the gods. The Oidipus of the \textit{Nekyia} might have been an \textit{άγος} to his mother who cursed him; he certainly was not such to himself or to his people. The Sophoklean Oidipus might reveal Delphic, but certainly not Homeric influence.

It is clear that Oidipus had to change before becoming the Sophoklean hero. If my subsequent argument is correct, this change was due to additions made to the saga in the time before Pindar, i.e. in the era\textsuperscript{34} of the epic cycle, in which all the essential features of the later Oidipus are already present in embryo. It should be stressed that they were present only in embryo. Two factors in particular contributed to the change of Oidipus, namely the transformation of the Sphinx and the increasing infiltration of Delphic and Delphic theology into the Oidipus saga. It is in the poems of the Epic Cycle in particular, therefore, that we should search for the sources of the Sophoklean Oidipus.

\textit{The Epic Cycle}\textsuperscript{35}

We now enter the most important, the most difficult, but alas also the most neglected stage in our search for Sophokles' sources. Difficult, because the Epic Cycle has, at most, survived in fragments and its chronology, moreover, is uncertain. Neglected, because it is generally considered that these poems are mere

\textsuperscript{33} In trying to reconstruct the picture of Oidipus I have thus far almost taken it for granted that the \textit{Iliad} passage is earlier than Hesiod, and Hesiod earlier than the \textit{Nekyia}. I also (see further on) assign the \textit{Oidipodeia} to a time more or less contemporary with the \textit{Odyssey} passage or, perhaps, a little later, and I suppose that the \textit{Thebaid} passages are rather later than earlier than the \textit{Oidipodeia} or, to be on the safe side, rather contemporary with the \textit{Oidipodeia} than earlier. It is so generally agreed by both unitarians and analysts that the \textit{Iliad} is older than the \textit{Odyssey}, and also older than Hesiod, that on these two points no further argument is really necessary. I have the responsibility of proving that Hesiod is earlier than the \textit{Nekyia} passage. Now, the fact is that the Oidipus account actually forms part of the Catalogue of Heroines (= \textit{Od.} 11.225—327). And in this regard the work of Pfeiffer (\textit{Philol.} 92 (1937) 1 ff., esp. 6 and 14) and Barteleter (\textit{Stud. Ital.} N. S. 19 (1945) 8ff.) have established it beyond all reasonable doubt that the source of this Catalogue is Hesiod's \textit{Eoiai} (cf. also Merkelbach \textit{Untersuchungen zur Odyssee} 1951, esp. 188; V. d. Muhl \textit{R. E. Suppl.} VII. 727). Consequently, whatever our judgement may be on the \textit{Nekyia} as a whole within the framework of the \textit{Od.}, and on the \textit{Od.} as a whole in relation to Hesiod, the relevant \textit{Od.} passage dealing with Oidipus is in time later than both Hesiod and the \textit{Iliad}. (For the relative chronology \textit{Od.} — \textit{Oidipodeia} — \textit{Thebaid} see n. 50).

\textsuperscript{34} The lyric poets before Pindar tell us nothing new about Oidipus, as is to be expected after all. The introduction of a specific motif into the Oidipus complex really needs a poet, and it seems a \textit{priori} probable that this should have been an epic poet. On the chronological problem regarding the Epic Cycle, cf. note 50.

\textsuperscript{35} Cf. on this whole section the literary histories of Schmid II 202 ff. and Lesky 75 ff.; Rzach R. E. XI esp. 2357—2374 and Robert 149—251 (both of whom give good reconstructions of the contents, but rather disappointing on the chronology); F. G. Welcker \textit{Der epische Cyclus} II\textsuperscript{4} (the best general survey), Wecklein 661—692, Bethe 1 ff. (esp. for the reconstruction of the \textit{Oidipodeia}), Bethe \textit{Hom.} II, Richter 1—31 (supplementary to Wecklein, but disappointing) and Deubner (esp. 1—27 on the Peisander scholion). For further bibliography cf. Schmid P 202 n. 3.
extensions — and second-rate extensions at that — of Homer. Yet this is the most important stage in our search for Sophokles' sources. For already in antiquity it was realised that Sophokles' favourite source of raw materials for his plays was not Homer, but the poems of the Epic Cycle. This we are told explicitly by Chamaileon (Athenaios 7, 277ε). And though statistics can be misleading, it is surely of great significance that at least 38 percent of Sophokles' 114 (?) plays — including six of the seven surviving tragedies — indeed derive their material from the Epic Cycle.

Moreover, we know that among those poems of the Epic Cycle which dealt with the Theban cycle, at least two entire epics must have assigned a prominent role to Oidipus, namely the Oidipodeia, an epic on Oidipus traditionally assigned to an otherwise unknown Kinaithon of the eighth century, and the Thebaid, an epic singing of the war of the Seven against Thebes, as a counterpart to the Iliad. It is therefore a priori probable that any later author wishing to deal with this same history would at least have taken in hand these two works, that is to say if they were esteemed at all. This we may, at all events, assume for the Thebaid. Pausanias praises the Thebaid as the best epic beside Homer, and no less a person than Aischylos proves that at least this poem was both esteemed and well-known. In his Septem he derives from this poem not only the curse of Oidipus upon his sons but — and this is the important point — he assumes that his audience is well acquainted with it. We should also consider that the introduction of new motifs make considerable demands upon a poet. We may assume, therefore, that in the context of the epics of the Theban cycle the character of Oidipus must have developed and changed.

Unfortunately we tread here on even less solid ground than in the case of Homer. We meet Oidipus only five times in all throughout the remains of the Epic Cycle: once in a practically insignificant reference in the Cypria, twice in the Oidipodeia, and twice in the Thebaid. These fragments in themselves are insufficient for reconstructing a complete picture of Oidipus, and our

36 This, at any rate, has since the time of Aristarchus been the almost unanimous verdict. After the brilliant work of the 'neo-analyst' W. Kullmann, Die Quellen der Ilias, Hermes Einzelschr. 14, 1960, the time has however come to reconsider our judgement. Kullmann (who, unfortunately for us, discusses only the Trojan cycle of saga) has in my opinion proved convincingly that a tremendous number of the motifs from the epic cycle deserve priority above the Iliad. This of course does not necessarily imply (cf. his hypothetical reconstructions 360 ff.) that also some of the poems themselves (e.g. the Cypria, the Aethiopis and the Iliupersis) are pre-Homeric. The work of Kullman, like neo-analistic work done in particular with regard to the Memnonis (Pestalozzi, Kakridis, Schadewaldt) should however caution us to be careful.

37 Schmid P 326, 457; Pearson, The Fragments of Sophocles I (1917) XXXI, puts it at 43%. Also cf. Kirkwood, o.c. 28 ff.
38 Thus according to the Borgia table = C. I. G. XIV 1292 II. 11. Cf. with this Rzach 2357.44 ff., also 2358.1—15. On the person of Kinaithon, Rzach R. E. XI. 462—3 (quoting the meagre literature).
39 Pausanias 9.9.5. A different judgement is given by Aristotle Poet. c. 23, 1459 b 1.
40 Thus already Wecklein 661—666 (advancing five grounds for his thesis); also cf. Richter 4 ff. The much disputed ουσίας (Septem 783) is very important evidence. In his Septem Aischylos contaminates the two curses of the Thebaid (cf. below) in motivating the content of the first curse by means of the circumstances of the second curse (cf. Groeneboom's commentary p. 217—8).
41 Allen Homeri Opera V, p. 103,22 = Evelyn-White Hesiod (Loeb) p. 492, 1. 3.
42 See below.
answers to all the attendant questions are so closely bound up with the admissibility or not of additional sources, that I am constrained to indicate here the main points only.

The Oidipodeia43. Our first fragment 44 is a verbal quotation derived from a certain Peisander (whom it is, incidentally, difficult to place in point of time). It relates that the Sphinx 'also killed noble Haimon, the beloved son of blameless Kreon, Haimon the comeliest and loveliest of boys'. Here for the first time we meet Kreon, whether as king or as regent, and we also learn that, as the climax to a series of victims, Haimon too was killed by the Sphinx. What is important now, is that in an epic with Oidipus as its hero the Sphinx could only make sense if its defeat too belonged to the hero's heroic achievements. In view of the well-known folktale motif in which the hero receives as reward for his achievement the throne and the hand of the princess, we may also presume that this motif received a tragic tinge in the Oidipodeia in that the hand of the princess was that of the hero's own mother, the former queen. So here the liberation of Thebes, royal rule and marriage to his mother seem to be certain — all motifs which we have found already in the Iliad, Hesiod and the Nekyia.

The second fragment of the Oidipodeia we know via the same Peisander — a very important point — and also via Pausanias (9.5.11). Pausanias is concerned with the question with which grammarians have clearly been struggling even before his time, namely, how in Homer Oidipus could have begotten four children by his own mother Epikaste, particularly in view of the fact that Homer (Od. 11.271 ff.) explicitly states that the gods directly (εὐθὺς) disclosed the incestuous marriage. Pausanias then solves the problem by stating that not Iokaste but Euryganeia, daughter of Hyperphas, was the mother of these children, adding 'as the author of the Oidipodeia explicitly says.' Pausanias finds this interpretation also confirmed by the fact that the painter Onasias executed a painting in the temple of Athene Areia at Plataea depicting Euryganeia, bowed in sorrow, present at the fratricide of her two sons. Although Robert, Rzach and also Daly categorically deny a second marriage of Oidipus — because, it is said, this would be incompatible with the epic or with a true epic hero 45 — and suppose that Euryganeia is, like Iokaste, merely another name for Epikaste, I believe as categorically that we must accept two marriages. No grammarian would have been able to suggest this lysis if the Oidipodeia too had

43 On this whole section cf. Robert 149 ff., Bethe 26 ff., 64, Gruppe 508(2), Deubner 27 ff., Richter 29 ff., Rzach 2357 ff., esp. also 2361.25 ff. (on the date of origin), Schmid I 202, Legras 19,39,51, Höfer 700 ff., Jacoby FgrH 417 (on Pherekydes 3.95). On the strength of the indirect evidence of Eusebius [5.181 and 7, 1, 87b, 12, ed. Helm, Berlin (1956)] we may assume, with Deuber 38 and Legras 19, that this work originated in the vicinity of the eighth century, and so is about contemporary with the Homeric poems. (In Eusebius' Chronicle Kinaithon is mentioned as author of a Telegony, either in Ol. 3.4 = 775 B.C. (according to the Armenian version) or in Ol. 4 = 774 B.C. (according to Jerome); cf. however Rzach R. E. XI. 463.1—20).


known only one marriage 46. Surely, if in the dispute about reconciling Homer's ἐγκυμοσύνη with four children Pausanias chose sides and appealed to the very Oidipodeia to confirm his interpretation, it is logical that the Oidipodeia must have known at least two marriages: the first with his own mother Iokaste, the second, from which the well-known four children were born, with Euryganeia. This is confirmed by the Peisander scholium (= schol. Eur. Phoin. 1760) which expressly mentions it.

We are on solid ground, therefore, in assuming at least the following as certain ingredients of the Oidipus saga as portrayed in the Oidipodeia: patricide, defeat of the Sphinx and liberation of Thebes, marriage with his mother and the subsequent revelation of this, a second marriage from which the well-known four children issued.

The four children could therefore not be incestuous as in the later vulgate. And because the two sons were thus not born in incest, the most important motif for the father's curse is lacking 47. Presumably, therefore, the Oidipodeia like the Nekyia did not know the father's curse. Moreover, the effects of the revelation of his patricide and his marriage to his mother were so episodic — as in the Nekyia — that Oidipus at least could enter upon a second marriage.

We may, therefore, indirectly conclude that, as in the Nekyia, Oidipus remained on the throne after the anagnorisis, a conclusion implicitly confirmed by the Peisander scholium 48. And since Oidipus does not end up as a broken man, as is proved inter alia by his second marriage, the well-known motif for self-mutilation or self-destruction is also lacking. So in the Oidipodeia there can hardly be room for a blinded Oidipus (not even to mention blinded by his own hand) or for an Oidipus going into exile of his own accord or under compulsion.

It strikes us that this picture is essentially in agreement with the one we accepted for the Nekyia. We find ourselves in a world completely different from that of the tragedy. Whatever our judgement may be on the very thorny question as to whether the Oidipodeia is anterior to (as Wehrli 49 thinks) or posterior to (as the prevailing opinion has it) or more or less contemporaneous with the Nekyia, 50 it is an irrefutable fact that the Oidipodeia and the Nekyia,

46 Cf. with this Jacoby p. 417 on 3 (Pherekydes) 95, Deubner 27 ff., Wehrli 112 (who assumes two marriages also for the Nekyia passage).

47 Well noted by Wehrli 112 — though he is not there concerned with the Oidipodeia.


49 Wehrli 112.

50 Very few scholars have had the courage to deal with the thorny question of the relative chronology of the Od. — Oidipodeia — Thebaid. Wehrli was the one exception and his chronological order is Oidipodeia — Odyssey — Thebaid. As this order differs from mine rather radically (see n. 33), a few words may be added. For the priority of the Oidipodeia over the Odyssey passage W. rather surprisingly adduces no evidence whatsoever. In regard to the late date of the Thebaid (for W. a late 'kyklische Thebais' and not the better known Thebaid) W.'s argument is the following: The first verse (= fr. 1 Kinkel) of the Thebaid suggests that the Argives are already advancing on Thebes, and W. then concludes that this 'schliesst auch eine ausführliche Behandlung von Oidipus' Schicksalen als Vorgeschichte aus' (= 113 n. 27). But even though much is nowadays made of the difference between the so called 'chronographic' epic in contrast to the more 'dramatic' epic (as e.g. Homer) — I believe this must have been at the back of W.'s mind —, we nevertheless must state that in no epic known to us the opening of the poem is necessarily also the strict chronological beginning, thereby automatically excluding any Vor-
purely in point of motifs, present a more or less contemporaneous picture of Oidipus. And the characteristic of this picture is a hero who is clearly not deeply affected by the effects of patricide and mother marriage.

Though this picture of the Oidipus in the Oidipodeia — however incomplete — is quite sufficient for us to proceed immediately with the argument to the Thébaid, certain questions in this connection are so often asked and answered by scholars that it might perhaps be fitting to try to draw some finer details into the Oidipus picture of which we clearly know at least the outlines. This we could do for the Oidipodeia if we could answer the following questions:

(i) How does Oidipus in the Oidipodeia defeat the Sphinx — by force or by intellect?
(ii) How, if at all, is the presence of the Sphinx motivated in the Oidipodeia?
(iii) Does Oidipus in the Oidipodeia enter on a third marriage (as Deubner 30 ff. believes)?
(iv) Does the Oidipodeia, which definitely knows of two marriages (with the four children of the later vulgate at all events not incestuous), also know of any incestuous children at all (as Deubner 29 believes)?

In my subsequent argument (p. 21) reasons will be advanced for assuming that Oidipus's victory over the Sphinx at this stage was still in the nature of a feat of strength, and not by solving a riddle. This gives us the answer to (i) above.

geschichte to feature elsewhere in the poem, and therefore I see no reason why e.g. the curse of Oidipus on his sons, which chronologically would precede the opening verse of the Thébaid, could not feature later in the poem. As my starting point I therefore assume that both fragments containing Oidipus' curse are from the well-known Thébaid. On the very delicate problem of the dating of the Oidipodeia and the Thébaid the problem of space compels me to confine myself to the following:

The Kypselos lid, from more or less the end of the 7th century, supplies us with a fairly reliable terminus ante quem (cf. i.a. Robert 222 ff., Rzach R. E. XI, 2365.8 ff., discussing i.a. Paus. 5.17.7). We have no definite terminus post quem. In this connection I consider Pausanias 9.9.5 as a very unreliable witness (thus agreeing with Hiller (Rk.M. 42 (1887), 322—3) as against Rzach (o.c. 2363), Curtius and the more generally accepted opinion). Homer (e.g. Iliad 4.372 ff., 5.800 ff., 6.222 ff., 10.285 ff., 14.346 ff., 679 ff., 23.679 ff.) presupposes acquaintance with the same 'history' dealt with in the Thébaid and the Oidipodeia, but does not presuppose the finished poems. In line with the almost canonically accepted verdict of Aristarchus (and perhaps also Aristotle, Post. c. 23, esp. 1459a 30 ff.) that Homer comes before the poems of the Epic Cycle, I believe that both the Oidipodeia and the Thébaid are post-Homeric. The fragments we have are too meagre to enable us on the strength of mere linguistic considerations (cf. Kullman o.c. 362 ff.) to describe them definitely as 'younger than Homer'. Yet, the total picture which we gather from linguistic and aesthetic considerations, as well as from arguments of motif and the tradition, leaves the impression that the works tend to be more recent than Homer. It is e.g. difficult to believe that the first line of the Thébaid was not modelled on that of the Iliad. From the point of motif the Nekyia and the Oidipodeia convey a more or less contemporaneous picture of Oidipus with hardly a trace if any of Delphic influence. The Thébaid's picture of Oidipus, however, leaves the impression of being younger — the voice of Delphi can be heard here. For the date of the Oidipodeia the Chronicle of Eusebius, which dates it (or rather Kinaithon, its reputed author) contemporaneous with Hesiod but definitely post-Homeric, may perhaps suggest that our own chronology, dating it as more or less contemporaneous with the Nekyia, is not too far off the rails. And on the strength of arguments of motif the Thébaid is perhaps rather later than the Oidipodeia.

[Eusebius' dates are: Homer 913 (Helm 77b, 18) — is Eus. following Aristarchus? —, Hesiod 767 (Helm 87b, 9), Kinaithion 764 (Helm 87b, 12)].

To be discussed in more detail in the next volume of Acta Classica.

51a Thus also Lesky R. E. III A 1715—25 ff.
The answer to the remaining questions is closely bound up with the further, hotly disputed and delicate, question about the admissibility of three additional sources, namely a Pherekydes fragment (FgrH 3, 95), a Homer scholium (on Iliad 4.376) and the already mentioned Peisander scholium. If these are admissible, the further question is to what extent they can be mutually reconciled. The problems involved here are so multi-headed that at most their gist could be indicated and their implications suggested. As such a discussion would interrupt the progress of our argument, I have relegated this matter to a separate note which will be published in the next volume of Acta Classica. Suffice it to state here my opinion that, on the positive side, we cannot gain much from these sources towards a more finished picture of Oidipus, though on the negative side a few points may be scored. It seems as if (ii) the presence of the Sphinx was left unmotivated in the Oidipodeia, as if Oidipus defeated it by physical force, and (iii) did not marry a third time. About (iv), the incestuous children (Phrastor and Laonrytos), no decisive answer can be given. What is important, as has already been said, is that the four well-known children were not incestuous, that the motif for the father's curse was therefore lacking and that the death of the two sons at each other's hands, if it did take place, presumably could not have been motivated as in the later vulgate (after the Thebaid).

The Oidipus, we have reconstructed thus far, had grown in breadth rather than in depth. Before the time of Pindar, in whose poetry we meet the almost full-fledged Oidipus of the tragedy, he must have acquired a tragic stature. He must not only have become blinded and an outcast, but what had thus far been happening mainly in the physical sphere, had to be transferred to the sphere of the spirit. What had thus far had a mainly episodic effect — patricide and mother marriage — must have become such an essential experience as to strike down Oidipus personally and make him an outcast in the eyes of others. What had thus far been isolated and unintegrated — Oidipus' grief — must have been linked with the sin of a father who disregarded the Delphic oracle and must also have been extended to the third generation. In short, Oidipus had to become a tragic figure by a transformation in the depth. The first traces of this change are revealed by the two Thebaid fragments, though here only in embryo.

The Thebaid

In the first Thebaid fragment we are told that Polynceikes placed before his father Oidipus a silver table, which once belonged to Kadmos, and Laios'...
golden cup filled with wine. This in spite of Oidipus having forbidden it as he did not want to be reminded of the murdered Laios. (So Athenaios adds to the picture, Athen. 11.465). Oidipus consequently invoked a curse on both his sons. The contents of the curse: that they might never share the paternal heritage in equanimity, indeed, that war and enmity would continually be their fate. Of fratricide nothing is said.

In the second Thebaid fragment, contained in a scholium on Oid. Kol. (O.K. 1375) — a scholium which according to Robert can be traced back to Didymos — Oidipus curses his sons a second time. The scholiast relates that Oidipus' two sons, Polyneikes and Eteokles, were in the habit of sending, after each sacrifice, the shoulder of the victim to their father. Once, however, whether due to carelessness, or for some other reason, they forgot, and to rectify this omission they sent him the haunch. Oidipus noticed it, considered himself slighted and in a petty way pronounced a curse on both sons, yea, quite contradictory to what is expected of a nobleman. The scholiast quotes first the verba ipsissima of the curse of the Thebaid and then adds a long citation from an unknown work — perhaps a parody in a comedy — where the same provocative events are described and the curse is repeated in more or less the same words. The second curse of the Thebaid reads: 'And when Oidipus noticed the haunch, he threw it on the ground and exclaimed: Woe me, my sons sent it me as an insult. To Zeus and the other immortals he prayed that we might enter the gates of Hades killed by the hand of a brother.' We, therefore, have in the Thebaid two curses markedly different in content and intensity. Of more importance, however, is the fact that the provocative events are in inverse proportion to the intensity of the curses. Common to both is the fact that Oidipus is being kept captive as a hostage, presumably on religious grounds, and that he is already blind. In the first curse there is an indication of evil purport and the initiative is Polyneikes'. Contrary to the express command of Oidipus that he does not want to be reminded of his patricide, Polyneikes gives him Laios' cup. Yet the curse of eternal enmity is in fact less pernicious than the second curse. Quite different are the circumstances of the second curse. Here there is no thought of purposely slighting their father. Because of carelessness (so the scholium) or simply because they forgot (so the parody), the sons did not send their father his customary portion and they then try to rectify their error. For this much lesser error Oidipus invokes upon his sons the harshest sorrow — death by the hand of a brother.

Although Welcker and Bethe, as well as Richter, try to justify Oidipus' irresponsible anger in invoking the second curse by saying that the
children neglected their duty of γνησιότητα towards their father and consequently committed a grave offence, we must deny it categorically. In the first place, the scholiast clearly describes Oidipus’ action as μηκυντός καὶ τελέως ἀγέννως. Secondly, the parody draws the same picture. Furthermore, we find it again in the Pseudo-Platonic Alkibiades 182 (141 A & 138 C). Plato also confirms this picture in his Lages (11.931 B) when he mentions the curse of Oidipus in the same breath as the irresponsible curse of Amyntor invoked upon Phoinix or of Theseus on Hippolytos. More important still is the testimony of Aischylos in his Septem and Euripides in his Phoinissai. Aischylos, who, as has already been mentioned, derived the curse of Oidipus on his sons from the Thebaid, relates that Oidipus angrily (724), yea, in the madness of his heart (μανικμένα πράξεις 780) hurled curses at his children with a bitter tongue. Euripides describes Oidipus’ action as that of an unbalanced mind (66), in fact, that of a νοσόν (874). How is the Oidipus of the Thebaid portrayed? The Oidipus of the Thebaid is blind, rejected, the father of incestuous children 63, already tottering, an ἀγων, at least, to others. He is blind — this the ἐφρασθη from the first and ἐνόπη from the second fragment suggests; the parody states it expressly ἐπαφεῖσθαι (1. 7) and τῷ ἐνῷ γινώσκει (1. 10). Aischylos who borrows from the Thebaid for his Septem underlines this fact. He is rejected. It is clear that he no longer reigns, but presumably, Polyneikes. Furthermore, that he is ἀγων, is an outcast, and debarred from the sacrifice 64. His sons perform the sacrifice and not he. Whether he considered himself as ἀγων because of his deeds, we do not know, neither whether he is in isolation against his will. We know, however, that the people and his children, at least, regard him as ἀγων. With this we have already entered a different world to that of Homer. We have said farewell to the world of Homer where the heroes cared little for murder and homicide. We have entered the world where the voice of Delphi and Delphic theology already exercises an influence. The world where bloodshed demands cleansing, the world where the uncleansed are debarred from intercourse with man and god 65.

Above all, Oidipus is himself already tottering. Perhaps he is already showing signs of being mentally unbalanced under pressure of the sorrow already experienced. The severity of the second curse in sharp contrast to the insignificance of the imagined offence proves this. The Oidipus of Homer survives patricide and matricide so well that he could continue to reign. The Oidipus of the Oidipodeia can also marry without being rejected by his people. The Oidipus of the Thebaid survives patricide and matricide, but then blind, dethroned, indeed detained as being an ἀγων. The Oidipus of Homer and the Oidipodeia maintains his power even though it be amidst sorrow. The Oidipus of the Thebaid has such diminished power that he could enforce obedience only by invoking a curse. The Oidipus of the Thebaid has developed more than halfway to that of a Sophokles. And he has advanced to this extent because he grew in depth. Sorrow experienced has had its lasting effect in the realm of the spirit.

63 Thus Wehrli 112 ff. from considerations of motif.
64 Differently Rzach 2364.52.
65 See notes 87 and 88 (with the text).
The Sphinx as poser of the riddle and Delphi

Yes, more than halfway to the Oidipus of Sophokles. All the motifs which made his Oidipus something great were present in embryo — all except two, namely, the Sphinx as posing a riddle and Delphi that set the ball rolling by a valid oracle to Laios. Yet, I believe that both these motifs formed part of the Oidipodean structure in the period of the Epic Cycle.

Pindar provides a fixed terminus ante quem for both. In the second Olympic ode of the year 476 Pindar declares that Oidipus, the μύριμος υἱός, fulfills an old Pythian oracle (ἐν δὲ Πυθώνι χρησθέν τελαμώνοι) by killing Laios. And in the 4th Pythian ode (presumably of the year 462) he lauds the wisdom of Oidipus (γνώθι σέν τάν Ὀλύμπιδα σοφίαν), while in a fragment (117, Snell) mention is made of the riddle of the maiden with the cruel jaws, the riddle of the Sphinx (αἰνιγμα παρθένου· ἔξε, διπλαβον γνώθιον). A red-figure scale, the Meister-Schale 66, depicting Oidipus, the Sphinx and two words of the well-known riddle (the riddle 67 as we know it via Asklepiades FgrH 12 fr. 7a), not only confirms these reports, but also pushes the riddle as motif and the Sphinx as poser of the riddle back to the sixth century 68.

Such radical changes in the Oidipus structure could have been introduced either by the people as a whole, or by a poet — preferably an epic poet —, or, in the case of Delphi, by the increasing infiltration and powerful hold Delphi began to exert.

Our problem is not only when these elements became a part of the Oidipus structure, but especially how their introduction affected the structure. About the Sphinx's riddle I follow Lesky 69 and assume that the motif of the riddle was introduced later, presumably not before the 6th century, from the realm of the imagination of the people. The riddle as motif is as old as the hills 70. The riddle, which involves the death of him who fails to solve it, is known from Greece to India 71. Moreover amongst the late epics, the Melampodeia 72 knows of the famous Kalchas accepting the challenge of a certain Mopsos to

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66 Robert 51, Plate 16.
67 On the different forms in which the riddle was asked see i.a. Athen. X. 456 b, Anib. Palat. XIV. 64, Hypothesis O.T., Hypothesis Eur. Phoin. (= Schwartz p. 243), Schol. Lyk. 7, in prose form in Apollod. III. 58; also cf. Diod. IV. 509. On the original hexameter form and the development cf. Lesky R.E. IIIA 1717-48 ff.
68 Cf. n. 69.
69 The best on this in R.E. IIIA 1716—1725 where all the problems are clearly reviewed. Gruppe too thinks (523) that the riddle is not earlier than the sixth century. Also cf. Wehrli 112, Robert 57. To prove an earlier date for the Sphinx riddle much unjustified reliance has been placed upon Hes. Erga 553 (on this see Lesky 1718), Epicharmus fr. 149 (Kaihel) and Aisch. Agam. 79 (τρίτος δεμάν δεδομεν στρατιάμεν does indeed indicate acquaintance with the riddle). From about the same period dates the Meister-Schale (cf. Lesky 1718.40 ff.). Reich R.E. XI. 2358.52 ff., wrongly connects it already with the Oidipodeia. The words καλ τρίτον may, but need not, indicate a hexameter form, and so need not per se refer to a rather old epic poem, as e.g. the Oidipodeia. In the reshaping of the riddle Delphic influences should not be looked for either (thus Robert Theb. Heldens. III 891; differently and correct Lesky 1717.20 ff.). The riddle is not a reshaping of γνώθι σουτόν.
70 Cf. e.g. Crusius Lit. Zibl. 1892, 1699 (quoted by Lesky 1716).
72 Strabo XIV 642 ff., Apollod. ep. XXI. 26 ff., Evelyn-White, o.c. p. 266 (text of Melampodia).
solve a riddle. Kalchas dies in sorrow when he fails. A later development is also the *Agon of Homer and Hesiod* \(^{73}\), where Homer meets his end owing to his failure to solve a riddle. Whether, in the steps of Wehrli \(^{74}\), we should see in this the prototypes for the introduction of the riddle as motif in the Oidipus is not certain. However, it is certain that the associating of the riddle with the Sphinx is secondary, and it is equally certain that this addition had to have a marked result on both the Sphinx and Oidipus. It made the Sphinx a contradiction in terminis. It made Oidipus a wise man. It is these elements in particular, which Sophokles used to create the classic Oidipus.

**Delphi** \(^{75}\)

Historians and archaeologists assume quite generally that Delphic Apollo became established in Greece not long before the end of the 8th century \(^{76}\), being presumably derived from Asia Minor \(^{77}\). The scanty literary tradition also confirms this fact. In Homer \(^{78}\) Delphic Apollo is still entirely in the background. In Hesiod \(^{79}\) his influence is slight. It is only in the *Cypria* \(^{80}\) that an oracle of the Delphic Apollo clearly makes its debut in an epic, just as it first appears in *Tyrtaios* \(^{81}\) among the lyric poets.

Scholars are also agreed that it was only in the course of the 7th century that Delphi and the Delphic oracle exercised an ever increasing influence, in fact even gained an increasing hold over ever increasing spheres of life in Hellas — a powerful hold that gradually became even more powerful owing to Delphic propaganda. The part played by Delphi in colonisation, in the arrangement of religion and cult, in legislation, the arrangement of the calendar and in the sphere of general ethics, is well known \(^{82}\). Before the end of the seventh century the verdict of Delphi was respected at Athens in matters of blood guilt, as is proved by the history of Kylon \(^{83}\) (632) and the Alkmaionidai — a

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\(^{73}\) Cf. i.a. Allen p. 225 (for the text), Plut. *via Hom.* I. 4, and *Curt. Hom.* et *Hes.* esp. 322 ff. (Allen 1. 190 ff.) For an apt case from India where the king makes the gymnosophists compete with their life at stake, Plut. *Alex.* 64.

\(^{74}\) Wehrli 112.


\(^{76}\) Among the earliest proofs are perhaps the following: the Chalcidians at the founding of Naxos in Sicily erect an altar to Apollo Archegetes (Thuc. 6.3.1); the rôle of Delphi at the founding of Byzantium: (cf. Steph. Byz. s.v., Dion. Byz. p. 11.10 Güng, Latte *R.E.* XVIII 1.844.12 ff.); the Theran inscription — 7th cent. — to Delphinios (I.G. 537, cf. *R.E.* IV 2542.46); Gyges 687–652 (cf. Jacoby *C.Q.* 35 (1944) 99 and notes). Cf. with this Berhe 149; Wilamowitz (cf. *R.E.* IV. 2543.33) considers that Delphi penetrated into Athens before 683.

\(^{77}\) Latte *R.E.* XVIII 1.840.18 ff., 841.35 ff.; Wilamowitz *Hermes* 38,575.


\(^{80}\) Cf. *R.E.* XVIII 1.840.15.

\(^{81}\) P.L.G. II 9, Plut. *Lyc.* 6; cf. with this *R.E.* IV. 2540.

\(^{82}\) On the growing influence cf. i.a. von Gaertringen *R.E.* IV. 2540 ff.; Nilsson *Gesch. d. Griech. Rel.* I (1941) 592 ff. (a very good survey); Parke-Wormell passim, esp. 49 ff. (colonisation), 99 ff. (early influence), 362 ff. (cults), 378 ff. (moral sphere), 416 ff. (conclusion). Cf. the case of Spartan Doricus (Herod. V. 42) and the reshaping of the cult at Cyrene as a result of which the old Doric god was replaced (Latte *R.E.* XVIII 1.845, Nilsson *Gr. Piste* 118 ff.).

judgement that from 700 to 450 was respected indisputably and was proclaimed by the Apollonian exegetai. Since the 7th century, at any rate, the influence of Delphi and the Delphic theology must undoubtedly also have had some influence in the structure of the sagas. What was this influence? The Delphic Apollo was no prophet of a radically new theology, but at most a careful reformer, who in time of unrest and political, social and religious anxiety, yea, in the unstable 7th and 6th centuries, wished to ensure man's peace with god. He does it under the slogan: honour the paternal customs, honour the laws of the state. Yet, in many respects Delphi inaugurated a new dispensation and for this reason we may justly speak of Delphic theology. I confine myself to two aspects of the 'new' theology, viz. (i) purification and penalty for, or atonement of sin, (ii) the relationship man-god.

Purification and atonement
In Homer's world there was no distinction between murder and homicide. In both cases the ius talionis applied, and the responsibility thereof was not the responsibility of the state but that of the relatives. Even then there were no fixed rules, but the whims of the individual were the only norm. Of importance is the fact that the guilty party could be freed of guilt by fleeing or by paying ransom (Wergeld). Of purification or atonement, in the true sense, there was no thought. In this respect Delphi introduced a new idea. In future purification and the penalty would no longer depend on the whims of the individual or the family. It became the responsibility of the community. Henceforth the community had to see to it that a particular crime was atoned for in a manner as prescribed by Delphi or its exegetai — this is the important point. Only in this manner could the punishment of the gods be escaped. Delphi, therefore, stresses that the crime is something terrible, that unatoned blood invokes the anger of the gods on the city, and that the key to atonement is, in the last instance, in the hands of Delphi.

Until the guilty party was purified and atonement had been made in the way prescribed by Delphi, the community had to see to it that the guilt-stained party was excluded from the sanctuaries, from the market, in fact from the community. In this we are reminded, yea, even sense the atmosphere of the Oidipus Tyrannos (235 ff., 815 ff.). The impure party is stained and his contact will stain others. The validity of this law is so absolute that even Apollo himself after he had killed the Python monster first had to be purified and atonement had to be made. The participation of Delphi immediately renders patricide and marriage with one's mother a deed monstrous and terrible for the guilty party and city alike. As important
is the fact that henceforth *degrees of guilt* existed. Not so much the guilty deed as such, but the evil intent, the attitude as such, ultimately determined the guilt. (This is irrefutably proved by Herodotos' story of Delphi and Glaukos; 6.86). Even then Delphi has the final say. By this attention is prominently focussed on the personal attitude, the personal motive behind the deed, and thereby the deed as such becomes, to a certain extent at least, less significant.

The relationship man-god

Delphi also represents a second and, as far as we are concerned, an equally important doctrine. It is best expressed in the well-known saying, γνώθι σαυτόν, which Delphi appropriated from the world of practical wisdom of the famous seven sages 89 and to which it attached new significance. Man, know your place! Realise that you are man. Realise that the chasm between god and man is great, that the divine word is authoritative and valid, the human word not, and, therefore, be humble.

If the changed Sphinx made of Oidipus a wise man, then the entry of Delphi must at least have brought home the fact that bloodshed involves defilement and the unatoned sinner must be outcast. Therefore, man must undoubtedly also have been confronted by the profound truth: man is insignificant, god great.

But we also know that, besides the infiltration of Delphic theology, Delphi itself became involved in the myths, and this to an ever increasing extent. In the myths Delphi did not become an incidental motif, but often, due to a particular theology, altered the whole tenor and significance of the myth 90.

We know via *Aischylos' Oresteia* how the entry of Delphi put Orestes' murder on an entirely different footing and established a totally new problem. As far as we are concerned it is of more importance that it was especially on the myths of the Theban cycle that Delphi got a firm hold. Besides Delphi's entry in the Oidipus structure, Delphi was attached by Pindar already to Kadmos' founding of the city Thebes (fr. 13, Bowra). In Sophokles' *Alkmaion* — by the way, presumably the model for Orestes' murder in *Aischylos* — an oracle of Delphi initiated Alkmynes' murder of his mother Eriphyle 91.

The exact time when Delphi entered the Oidipus myth can not be determined, but it wouldn't be later than the 6th century. In other words, still in the time of the later outcrops of the works of the Epic Cycle. Of the utmost importance is how the entry of Delphi affected the structure and how it will affect our judgement of Sophokles.

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89 Cf. Nilsson *Gr. Rel.* I 616, also *Greek Piety* 47 ff.

90 Good on this point is Parke-Wormell 295 ff. (*The Oracle in Greek Myths*).

Judged superficially, the oracle, directed as a warning to Laios, motivated the exposure of Oidipus, and thus also the patricide. However, the entry of Delphi with its theology of punishment for unatoned guilt immediately added a further dimension, a chain of sin and guilt that could even continue till the third generation. What Aischylos did in his Laios and Oidipus, the first two of the Septem trilogy of the year 4722, we cannot ascertain with certainty from the scanty fragments9. He might have portrayed the chain reaction and indicated how the sin of Laios raged through three generations with ever increasing intensity. Of importance, however, is that, whatever influence Delphi had in establishing such a chain of unatoned guilt binding a doomed son and his father, it certainly had no influence in this respect on Sophokles' Oidipus, for the simple reason that for Sophokles this link does not exist at all. Sophokles severes the link Laios-Oidipus, unatoned sin-guilt, completely, and offers merely the tragedy of Oidipus, not of Oidipus the doomed son of Laios, not Oidipus the link in the chain reaction of sin and guilt.

How did the entry of Delphi influence Sophokles?

It is difficult, indeed dangerous, to give the message and significance of any drama in a few phrases. This is particularly true in the case of Sophokles' work where the message and significance of any one of his dramas can be abstracted only with the utmost difficulty, at any rate, can never be reduced to one interpretation and one message, as has alas so often been done. Yet, I would like to attempt it, although we know in anticipation that no complete picture can be given, and even though we know that particularly in the case of the Oidipus Tyrannos4 the significance cannot be detached from Oidipus himself.

In no other Sophoklean drama have we such a continued and dynamic tension, such an absolute, close-knit unity, where all the irrelevant has been excluded right from the start, as is the case in the Oidipus. There is nothing episodic, and nothing irrelevant is incorporated. The exclusion of one single element would cause the whole Oidipus structure to collapse. Mark in this an aspect of Sophokles' originality and greatness, perhaps even his greatest achievement.

In no other Sophoklean drama the whole drama, from beginning to end, is so

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2 The more traditional date is 467; but cf. Mette Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos, Berlin 1959, p. 58 on fr. 169.

3 Cf. Mette fr. 169—178 as against Nauck2 121 & 122, 173. The effort of Deubner (41) to discover an indication of the contents of Aischylos' Oid. in the Androtion Scholium on Od. 11.271 is as hypothetical as all other efforts at reconstruction from such meagre relics.

absolutely centred around the tragedy of one person, as is the case in the O.T. — Elektra is perhaps the closest to this. The tragic figure of Oidipus dominates the whole drama. Kirkwood quite rightly calls this structure linear. In the O.T. we are only concerned with Oidipus. The entry first of Teiresias, then Kreon, followed by Iokaste and the herdsman from Corinth, yea, even the entry of the chorus, illuminate again and again by contrast effects just one thing — the character of Oidipus in erring. An Oidipus who is the favoured leader, helper, king, who appeared on the scene as bulwark of his people against death, only, on perceiving his true identity to leave the stage, weighed down by the curse expressed by himself, as the most wretched, indeed the blind outcast and most thoroughly broken spirit. Indeed the greatness of the O.T. is in the sharpness of the contrasts. The contrast between the Oidipus of line 1 and the Oidipus of line 1530; the contrast between Oidipus the first of men and Oidipus the most accursed; the contrast between the clear-visioned sovereign and the blind seer, where the one with vision goes astray and the blind, Teiresias, the servant of Apollo, at all times speaks truthfully and validly; especially the contrast between the insignificance of human knowledge and the infallibility and eternal validity of divine knowledge; the contrast between appearance and reality. How were these contrasts conveyed? They were conveyed in the person of Oidipus, the wise man, in his erring, no, in the person of man, the apparent wise. The Oidipus we see tottering before us is in the first place the wise man Oidipus. The man who through wisdom delivered the land of a former danger, the man that could also now in the hour of anxiety caused by the plague through intellectual prowess reason clearly and could quickly draw ‘intelligent’ conclusions to ‘save’ the city, the people and himself. Oidipus is also par excellence the one who, thanks to his prowess of reason, could swiftly establish the identity and the intrigue and the motives of the murderers of Laios, the identity, yea, of those who threatened him, the king — yea, could do this thanks to his keen acumen. And yet he continued to move ever deeper in a world of illusion, in a world of mere appearance, and fight continually a purely illusionary enemy.

However, the most basic of all questions, the question of his own identity, the identity of the apparently happy man, he could not fathom with his powers of reason, neither could he give an answer to this question with reason. The moment when the answer to this basic question came from another quarter Oidipus not only steps from the world of appearance, he had been moving in, to the world of reality, not only does he only then discover his own true self and also god, but at that very moment he experiences that the blind seer has vision, yea, that the divine word is at all times valid and true. Only then does he discover the tragedy concerning himself, the tragedy of man, that the intelligence can give no real answer to the most basic question, that god, however, can. The O.T. relates the tragedy of the wise, and at the same time sings the praise of Delphi; that Delphi, no, the realm of god, is valid and true. A song of praise too of Delphi’s slogan — Man, know thy place: Between god and man there is a chasm, a chasm of reality and appearance, and the wise man can, in spite of his wisdom, never bridge this gap.

95 o.c. 55 ff.
96 Robert 287 ff. already stressed this.
Did Oidipus illustrate this truth merely as a pawn? Happily, no. His struggle to discover his own identity is genuine. Does Sophokles present an unfriendly world of the gods? It concerns the validity of god as reality opposed to the apparent happiness and the erring of man, the wise man that remains in the world of appearance. It concerns the validity of god, not his righteous dealing with man. Is Oidipus' downfall due to sin, deserved or undeserved? Fortunately, this is quite irrelevant. He has no hamartia other than I, the human being. If he has hamartia it is his and my hamartia, the hamartia that even I, a wise man, should stumble over the most basic of all questions — the question of my own identity and this in spite of my wisdom, or rather because of my wisdom being limited. Whereas the divine word is valid, true and certain.

In this we have Sophokles' originality. His originality in the last instance lies in the fact that he incorporated all the known motifs that he could use and he used them in their very highest intensity. Especially two motifs, however, which were formerly only present in embryo he developed fully: Oidipus the wise, and Delphi, the valid. Indeed utilised the known in its highest intensity and this all around Oidipus. For this reason Oidipus becomes blind and that self-inflicted; for this reason he suffers not because of the curse of his mother, but because of the valid curse pronounced by himself; for this reason patricide, marriage with his mother and incestuous children are not episodic but are real enough that even the mere knowledge of this knocks him down; for this reason he is not only an θυγός to others (Thebaid), but also an θυγός to himself. Delphi penetrated to the depths. In the highest intensity all these motifs are concentrated in Oidipus the very moment he faces his true self, merely to emphasise once again the distance between the apparently happy king of the first line and the blind outcast of the last line. This distance is great enough to fulfil requirement number one of the true tragedy — the requirement of a significant fall. The struggle of the wise man Oidipus against the infallible validity of the divine laws, sufficient to let even me say: his struggle is in the last instance also mine, nostra res agitur.

On whom did Sophokles depend for his material? His motifs he mostly got from the works of the Epic Cycle. The development and concentration of these around only one person, Oidipus, the wise man, was his own contribution. The product and perhaps also the one message would survive the ages. Man, know thyself.

97 Interesting on this is M. Ostwald: 'Aristotle on Hamartia and Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus' in Festschrift Ernst Kapp, Hamburg 1958, 93 ff. and esp. 107 and 108.
98 Lesky's 'bedeutende Fallhöhe' (see Gr. Trag., 21 ff.).
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