# 

**Debatable Issue**

**The [or a] debatable issue for our unit on Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* is:**

**In his introduction to the 1950 Vintage Books edition of *Oedipus Rex*, Princeton professor Whitney J. Oates argues that the enduring power of Sophocles’ seminal tragedy depends on our recognizing that Oedipus has moral culpability for his tragic fall, rather than our reading the play as a terrible plaint against fate.**

***Oedipus Rex* has sometimes been called a tragedy of Fate, in which the characters are caught in a web of circumstance, from which they feebly and vainly try to extricate themselves. This may be partially true, but certainly there is a greater significance to the paly than this theory would lead us to suspect. Oedipus in some sense is presented as master of his own destiny, or else it is meaningless that at the end of the play he does not excuse himself by pleading that he did not know what he was doing, but rather accepts full responsibility as a moral agent for all his acts, whether done in ignorance or not. In this point seems to lie the high distinction of the paly, and its universal appeal (120).**

**If we accept Professor Oates’ argument, for what moral or character deficiency or transgression can we indict Oedipus? What focused fault is he guilty of that leads him to acknowledge that he deserves the fate he suffers? Or is Professor Oates incorrect, and is Oedipus actually more victim than perpetrator?**