

“OEDIPUS THE KING” BY SOPHOCLES IN THE IMMANENT INTERPRETATION OF EMIL STAIGER

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The article aims to distinguish the original immanent reception of Sophocles tragedy “Oedipus the King” by the famous Swiss literary scholar Emil Staiger and to present it to Ukrainian explorers for the first time. Due to the complex application of the historical-cultural, comparative, descriptive methods, the methods of linguistic-stylistic and figurative analysis, the authentic change of the traditional angle of interpretation has been identified: it eliminates the motif of the ancestral curse based on the Theban cycle of myths and shifts the emphasis on personal guilt. It is established that Staiger departs from the traditional explanation of category ἀμαρτία as “error” and interprets it as a deep cause of offense, which lies within ourselves, but is devoid of malice, which weighs all the consequences and pursues a specific goal. A “plastic Greek” perceives his guilt as destiny, and destiny differs from conscious activity.

It is noted that the researcher distinguishes the work of Sophocles from a number of “tragedies of fate”, recognizing the oracle as a core element of dramatic tension creation. Moreover, the oracle is not interpreted as a symbol of blind reign of eternal fate, but only as a sign of infinite divine knowledge. Thus, the central conflict of the tragedy is the antagonism between Apollo and Oedipus, the god and the mortal: it is not a matter of showing that everything on earth is predetermined, but of distinguishing between infallible knowledge of god and limited knowledge of man and illustrating the gap between man and god. “Know thyself!” – know that you are a human, not a god – this famous aphorism can be considered the idea of tragedy, and Oedipus is the embodiment of the finiteness of human knowledge.

It is stated that due to the motive of the court the whole tragedy is perceived as a model of Staiger’s dramatic style (observability of the action, brief description of the characters, conciseness of language). It is notable that the role of judge takes the protagonist himself and he finds the criminal in himself. So the movement returns to its starting point: the circle composition in “Oedipus the King” becomes a loop that is tightened around the neck of the hero. The interpreter names it “tragic irony”, which permeates the semantic outline of the work (especially the double meaning of the words of the characters) and it is manifested in each plot (the man himself fulfils the prophecy, trying hard to divert it).

Staiger’s distinctive interpretation of the problem of freedom is emphasized: no matter how deceived Oedipus goes, he comes to admit his guilt and realize the need for punishment, and in the choice of punishment lies his freedom. Ultimately, Oedipus must be defeated in order to preserve the truth of the divine word. However, wilful acceptance of punishment is not a reconciliation of freedom (the hero fought against his fate) and necessity (he lost the fight against fate) in the classical sense, but rather it is related to the tragic emotions, which cause admiration.

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