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FEAR OF INCESTUOUS OIDA-POUS: UNEQUAL DISCOURSES AND TRAGEDY IN OEDIPUS THE KING

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Abstract
This research aims to explain the enigmatic fact in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, where the discovery of regicide and origin coincides with the tragedy of patricide and incest in Oedipus. To achieve this, the research explores the unequal discourses of language and knowledge that result from the new awareness of the contingency of language. This research concludes with three discoveries through a forensic study of the discrepancies between the syntax in the text and the *épistémè* of the dramatic character. First, the tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles) is the symptomatic appearance of the unequal discourses between language as correspondence and language as a tool. Second, Oedipus' tragedy of patricide and incest was a semantic reality rather than a real-life event representing a divine register. Third, as seen in the interplay between the oracle, fate, and the tragic self-knowledge in *Oedipus the King*, this drama explicates the incestuous origin of knowledge and its tragic impact on the body. This study contributes to the many-have-done discussions and critics of *Oedipus the King*. This research demonstrates that a lack of awareness regarding unequal discourses can lead to tragic consequences.

Keywords: contingency, forensic analysis, oracle, semantic truth, tragedy

Introduction
As a literary piece produced in the era of epistemological change around the discourse of language and knowledge in early Greek philosophy, *Oedipus the King*[1] embodies the metaphoric struggle in epistemology presented in the tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles).

Oedipus the King is one of the literary works produced in the atmosphere when Platonic idealism had been put into question. Segal (1982) stated that the epistemological struggle occurring around *Oedipus the King* was similar to

[1] The version of *Oedipus the King* (OTK) explored in this research is that translated by Robert Fagles. The text appears in S. Lawall (General Editor) & M. Mack (General Editor Emeritus), *The Norton anthology of world literature*, Volume A – Beginnings to A.D. 100, Second Edition (pp. 617-658). New York, NY; London, England: W.W. Norton and Company.

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Parmenides' account and his contemporary philosophers who wanted to reach the truth in a world of appearances. The question about platonic doctrine in early Greek philosophy was already evident in the sophist theories of language, which pointed to the question of the relation between words and reality. Seen in such a perspective, *Oedipus the King* is a case where words have the power to deceive, win unfair cases, and confuse moral issues (Segal, 1982, p. 10).

Greek tragedy, primarily written in the artifacts of the 5th century BC, has had a profound influence on European attitudes towards life and death, human responsibility and limitations, human relationships on the horizontal axis, and the vertical axis concerning the sacred, God, destiny, and transcendence. Since its performance at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza in 1585, *Oedipus Rex* has captured the attention of many observers due to its exploration of the high stakes involved in its story (Decreus, 2004). However, not all performances and interpretations of the play focus on the issue of tragedy. During the Baroque and Romantic eras, Oedipus was portrayed as a sinner, a political leader, or a *pharmakos*, a person who was sacrificed for the salvation of others. It was not until the 18th century, during the time of Immanuel Kant, Schelling, and Schopenhauer, that the study of tragic experiences became a serious pursuit. In his work *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1967 [1872]), Nietzsche saw Oedipus in the context of a revaluation of reality and Dionysian energy trapped in the "*principium individuationis*," which asserts that the human condition is determined by individuation (Smith & Riley, 2009, p. 21). Since the publication of Nietzsche's writings, Dionysus has been presented as a radical figure, a foreigner who dares to question human nature radically and terrifyingly.

Nietzsche’s interpretation of tragedy in Greek culture helps to reveal the unpredictable and undefined side of reality. This is confirmed in Nietzsche’s view of the relation between language and reality, namely that language does not reflect objects. Because its concepts are too general, language removes each object’s differences (uniqueness) from other objects. Consequently, the truth expressed in language can never be treated as more than a metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism (Smith & Riley, 2009, p. 21). The pre-rational element outside language is a vast field to investigate and discuss.

Nietzsche’s thoughts about the contingent nature of language have sparked the birth of major schools such as existentialism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism, which -in Nietzsche’s terms- is the language found by the Dionysian power to speak. One of the prominent postmodernists is Richard Rorty, whose pragmatic thoughts on the contingency of language are metaphorized as the Ironist (Rorty, 1989, p. xv). In Rorty's picture, Ironist doubts the last vocabulary he has, questions his moral identity, and doesn't even believe in the sanity of his mind and thoughts. He must always converse with other people and meet another final vocabulary to produce new descriptions of reality (Rorty, 1980). The goal of human life is ironic not in terms of its transformation that makes him transcendent and achieve “the Truth," "The Real," and "the Goodness," but in the openness to perform human social functions (Rorty, 1980, p. 377).

Drawing attention to the importance of the sanity of mind and thought in creating the openness that helps humans perform their social functions as Rorty said, Oedipus in *Oedipus the King* can be seen as an Ironist who embodies the tense connection between himself as a character of drama whose fate has been

determined by the author of the text and himself as the character who questions and challenges the text, language, and beliefs (See also Nikolarea, 2021). This research on Oedipus and his tragedy is an effort to make an opener to see the tragic epistemological experiences a person should bear if he is keen to function socially. Included within the discussion would be the function of evidence, the enigmatic correlation between meaning, author, text, and reality, and the awareness of the existence of the unequal discourses of language and knowledge in the tension one may encounter. For such concern, this research addresses two questions. What does it imply for the study of knowledge and language that Oedipus' terrifying tragedy of regicide, patricide, and incest occurred once the truth he sought was revealed? How can the relationship between the search for truth and the birth of tragedy in *Oedipus the King* be explained?

Literature review

This study adds to the ongoing discussions and criticisms of *Oedipus the King* but with a focus on the epistemological question of the contingency of language. It aims to expand upon Nietzsche's perspective on the contingent nature of language, by incorporating Rorty's ideas on contingency from his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Rorty, 1989). To achieve this goal, the study begins by examining previous works on text investigation. The insights gained from the text investigation provide a foundation for fresh interpretations of *Oedipus the King*.

Writing by Koper (2006) provides an insight that locates the critical analysis and examination of evidence in *Oedipus the King* as innovations in Sophocles' plays. However, Sophocles' method still reeks of the 5th century B.C. Greek mythical tradition. Koper sees the investigative element in this drama as a reflection of the progress of Athenian society, moving from a model of the family feud to the Areopagus court system as in Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*, or from oppression to the investigation as in *Oedipus the King* (Koper, 2006). As stated in Ong's sociological research, the change in the way of thinking of Athenian society was motivated by Athens's maturity in written narrative skills (Ong, 1982). Athens moved from a narrative culture that produced myths to an investigative community. Oedipus (Οιδίπους) is the product of the first generation that used the investigative method before Socrates. Ong explains that the alphabet, turning words into written abstractions, develops previously latent human abilities. Abstract thinking was not possible before literacy. Ong quoted from Luria, a Russian linguist, that Russians who are entirely illiterate are not able to make simple analyses. What changed the situation was the introduction of the alphabet (Ong, 1982).

Koper's opinion on Ancient Greek literacy helps elucidate the study of grammatical puzzles in *Oedipus the King*, such as plural and singular, three and five, including the *paronomasia* (pun) of the name Oedipus. Segal (1982) said that the language play in *Oedipus the King* is an epistemological symptom that begins to question the correspondence of words with reality. Fosso (2012) even suspected that Oedipus' name was not only a nickname for "Swollen Feet" but also a pun for "knowing-where" (*oidi-pou*) as when a messenger from Corinth asked where Oedipus' house was, or "knowing-all" (*oidi-pâs*) as used by Tiresias to mock Oedipus who thinks he knows everything, or "two-legged" (*oi-dipous*) as used in

the riddle of the Sphinx, or "knowing-foot" (*oidi-pous*) which associates searching (knowing) the origin (legs/base) of Oedipus (Fosso, 2012, p. 41). Fosso thinks that *oidi-pous* (knowing-foot) is Sophocles' signal that the primary concern of *Oedipus the King* is not about the origin of Oedipus' *oedi-pus*-"swollen feet" but about the *oidi-pous*-"the origin of knowledge."

The insights from Fosso, Segal, and Koper that place Oedipus' search for truth in the context of the 5th century BC sophist philosophers' struggles in the fields of semantics, rhetoric, ontology, and epistemology spark efforts to understand *Oedipus the King* as a metaphor for the manipulative nature of truth. The truth-seeking that Oedipus refers to in *Oedipus the King* is understood in several nuances: that a message corresponds to an event, that an event is the image of a divine plan, that the divine plan is accurately reflected in words, and that a representation is the same as it is represented (Pieri, 2019). The term "true" here expresses two things: the accurate nature of the correspondence between foundation and representation and the existence of a foundation. In Rorty's, truth is a semantic truth. Contingency concerning truth refers to the absence of a foundation for reality, incommensurability, and the instrumental nature of language. Conversing with those writings, this paper aims to explicate how unequal discourses contribute to the tragedy of the human person.

Method

By way of explaining the enigmatic fact in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, namely the simultaneity of the discovery of the truth about regicide and origin and the birth of the tragedy of patricide and incest in Oedipus, this research explored the unequal discourses between the authorship and the text that holds language as a tool and knowledge as agreement, and the *épistémè* that has language as correspondence to reality and knowledge as the representation of the truth.

Table 1. The unequal discourses

	No. of Data	Truth as objective reality	No. of Data	Truth as semantic reality
Language	T1/1	Language is a correspondence to reality (the Truth).	T1/3	Language is a semantic tool to describe reality.
Knowledge	T1/2	Knowledge is the mirror (representation) of reality (the Truth).	T1/4	Knowledge is an agreement about fact.

For this reason, in the first part of the research, a summary of the plot of the investigation that Oedipus carried out as told in the drama was presented. This research section describes how Oedipus conducted the courtly investigation and made judgments. Particular attention was given to the way Oedipus juxtaposed his investigation side by side with his construction of understanding that the Delphi narrative has decided his life events. The next section of the research was a forensic study of the text that concerns Oedipus' investigation.[2] Here, Oedipus'

[2] Forensic text study is a text interpretation method by observing the interaction between phenomenological reality and hermeneutic analysis of evidence. In textual forensics, physical

process of investigation, both its semantics in the text and its mental system in Oedipus, was compared with the semantic facts of the text, assuming it as the thoughts of the scriptwriter, Sophocles. The semantic relation of the text with Oedipus' *épistémè* during his investigation showed the interlays of discourses in Oedipus' paradigm and Sophocles' paradigm. In this interconnection, there were compatibility and discrepancy. These points were raised as epistemological issues and reflected in the last part of the paper. Insights from Fosso, Segal, and Koper lay a framework to read the data of studies from the perspective of the 5th century B.C. sophist theory of language. We also referred to Rorty's views on the contingency of language to facilitate the reflection.

Findings and Discussion

The examination of Oedipus's investigation and the forensic study of the discrepancies between the syntax in the text of Oedipus the King and the *épistémè* in Oedipus as the dramatic character leads this research to conclude with three surprising discoveries.

First, the tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles) is the symptomatic appearance of the unequal discourses between language as correspondence and language as a tool. Oedipus' search for truth in the drama resembles the linguistic turn discussed later in the twentieth century's study of language and epistemology, in which truth is semantic correctness rather than a transcendental reality founded in the Real, the Goodness, or the Truth. Second, Oedipus' tragedy of patricide and incest was a semantic reality rather than a real-life event representing a divine register. Third, as seen in the interplay between the oracle, fate, and the tragic self-knowledge in *Oedipus the King*, this drama explicates the incestuous origin of knowledge and its tragic impact on the body.

Oedipus' investigation: knowledge as a representation of the truth and language as correspondence

Sophocles does not provide any indication about the origins of the myth of Oedipus, leaving readers with many unanswered questions. What was the original story like, and how did the oracle's prophecies and curses play out? However, in Greek mythology, the story of Laius provides some context for the tragic events in *Oedipus the King*. According to the myth, Laius kidnapped and raped Chrysippus, the son of King Pelops, while living in Pelops' palace. Chrysippus later committed suicide, and as punishment for his crime, Laius was cursed that his own biological son would eventually kill him. This background information sheds light on the events leading up to the investigation of Laius' murder in *Oedipus the King*, but many questions about the origin of the myth remain unanswered.

By eliminating the historical fragment about Laius' curse, Sophocles presents *Oedipus the King* as a story about the successor of Thebes king named Oedipus, who investigates the cause of the plague in Thebes. This investigation of Oedipus ends in the tragedy of self-discovery: Oedipus has inadvertently committed patricide and incest. As the storyline changes from investigating the

facts, rhetorical formulations, networks, and interconnections are the various objects of the study (Greetham, 1999, p. 1).

cause of the plague to investigating who killed Laius and finally examining the origin of Oedipus, the object of investigation changes throughout the story.

The first object of Oedipus' investigation was the cause of the plague.[3] To investigate, Oedipus sends Creon to Delphi to ask Apollo's oracle what Oedipus must do or say to save the country (OTK, lines 81-84). The answer that Oedipus received from Creon was twofold: the plague occurred because of a crime in Thebes, namely the murder of the king (T2/1b) (OTK, lines 109-111; 113-4), and the killer of the king must be avenged (T2/2b) (OTK, lines 114, 122). Creon said that his answer came from Apollo, and Apollo was a god. Later in his meeting with Tiresias, Oedipus reformulated Apollo's answer: “The cessation of the plague can only occur in one way. Find the killers of Laius (T2/3b), execute them, or throw them into exile (T2/4b)." (OTK, lines 349-351)

The second object of investigation is the killer of Laius. This time, Oedipus took several steps. He first asked the location of the killer's whereabouts, and Creon answered, according to Apollo's words, that the killer was in the city of Thebes (T2/5b) (OTK, lines 123-125). Second, Oedipus sought testimony. The first testimony came from Creon, who heard from a servant who was Laius’ traveling companion who was able to escape when the murder occurred. Creon said that this servant has only one piece of information: “the robbers, a bunch, not just one robber,” killed Laius (OTK, lines 138-139). Oedipus asked -but in singular form- how "a" robber was so brave to kill a king.

After these talks, the plot was switched. The Choir Leader advised Oedipus to summon Tiresias, the blind priest at Thebes, whom they believed to have had Apollo's vision. From Tiresias, information was obtained that Oedipus was the curse and evil in Thebes (OTK, line 401) and that Oedipus was the killer being sought. Oedipus took this notice as a curse and accused Tiresias of fabricating the story. When Oedipus entered the palace, Tiresias said that the mystery had been revealed, namely that Oedipus is both a brother and a father to his children, a husband, and a son to his mother and that he "seeds the same flesh where his father sowed the seed"[4] and sheds his own father's blood (OTK, lines 520-523).

From Jocasta, Oedipus heard about a prophecy by the priest of Apollo that Laius would be killed by "a son, their son, a child of his flesh and blood (T2/8b)."[5] Jocasta also told a story he heard from a "servant" about the murder of Laius. Sensing similarities with his events, Oedipus examined more detailed information from Jocasta regarding the place and time of Laius' murder and the description of Laius' stature. Laius was killed by robbers (in plural form) in a place called Phocis, at the crossroads of Daulia and Delphi (T2/9b). Jocasta said that the incident was not long before Oedipus appeared in Thebes and was proclaimed king. At that time, the hair on Laius' forehead had started to turn white, his skin was dark, and he was about the size of Oedipus.

[3] Outbreaks take the form of fever, causing crops, pastures, and livestock to get sick and die. Likewise, women and children die in childbirth (OTK, lines 30-37).

[4] This phrase cannot simply be translated as “marrying his mother” or “having sex with his father's wife” because the issue of whether or not Oedipus’s incest is true is still a matter of investigation.

[5] Jocasta: “An oracle came to Laius one fine day (I won’t say from Apollo himself but his underlings, his priests), and it said that doom would strike him down at the hands of **a son**, **our son**, **to be born of our own flesh and blood**…” (OTK, lines 784-8)

At that point, Oedipus feared that what Tiresias said about him (T2/7b) was true (OTK, lines 823-4). The final question asked of Jocasta was whether Laius was accompanied by several armed men when the incident occurred. According to Jocasta, five people, including one courtier, attended a chariot carrying Laius.

Jocasta added that the witness for the account she told was a servant, whom she later called a "slave," the only survivor of the group (T2/10b). Unnoticing that Oedipus was becoming suspicious that the story of the death of the king was closely similar to the murder he committed, Jocasta naively told that once the man seeing Oedipus ascended the throne asked Jocasta to send him to a pasture far beyond Thebes. Oedipus asked this person, whom he called the "shepherd," to be presented. He wanted to check the similarity of information, namely whether those who killed Laius were "robbers" (thieves) or "robber," many people or just one person. Oedipus was sure that if it was one person, he was the killer of Laius.

The third object of investigation is the origin of Oedipus. The emergence of this problem was triggered by the presence of a person from Corinth -who was in character named "Messenger", but by the people of Thebes called "Stranger"- who informed Oedipus that King Polybus had died and "the people (in Corinth) wanted to make Oedipus king of Corinth." Oedipus said he would never return to Corinth to be near his "parents" because he feared that Apollo's prophecy at Delphi, namely that he was destined to have sex with his mother and kill his father, would come true. The stranger told Oedipus that Polybus and Merope, who had been the father and mother of Oedipus, were not Oedipus's biological parents (T2/15b). It happened because the stranger took Oedipus on Mount Cithaeron from a servant of Laius. The evidence of the account was that Oedipus' ankle was always swollen. Oedipus asked the "servant of Laius" to be presented. Jocasta strongly rejected the idea, saying "if you love your own life," "for yourself," "for what is best for you."[6] Since this time, Jocasta did not appear again until the end of the play. Oedipus insisted on completing the investigation to "solve, know, see, hear"[7] the mystery of his birth. The last thing he did was to hear the testimony of the "Shepherd" whom the stranger from Corinth told. The shepherd claimed to be "a slave" whose job was to "herd cattle". He said that he received from Jocasta, a baby from Laius' house (T2/11b), which people said was Laius' son (T2/13b), which then he gave to "a person". The Shepherd did not say that the stranger from Corinth was the "person" who received the baby from him. The Shepherd answered "yes" when asked, "did you give him the child" (T2/14b); that happened only when he was in pain because his hand was twisted behind his back (T2/16b).

[6] Jocasta: "That man…why ask? Old shepherd, talk, empty nonsense, don't give it another thought, don't even think…" (OTK, lines 1157-9) "Stop…in the name of god, **if you love your own life**, call off this search! My suffering is enough." (OTK, lines 1163-4) "No, please…**for your sake**…**I want the best for you**!" (OTK, lines 170-2)

[7] Oedipus: "What…give up now, with a clue like this? Fail **to solve the mystery** of my birth? Not for all the world!" (OTK, line 1160-3) "…I must **know** it all, must **see** the truth at last." (OTK, line 1168-9) "I must **know** my birth, no matter how common it may be…I must **see** my origins face to face…" (OTK, 1183-5) "And I'm at the edge of hearing horrors, yes, but I must **hear**!" (OTK, lines 1283-5)

Table 2. Oedipus' investigation

Object	No. of Data	Method	No. of Data	Answer
Cause of the plague	T2/1a	Asking the Oracle	T2/1b	The existing crime of the murder of the king
	T2/2a	Asking the Oracle	T2/2b	An avenge should be made
	T2/3a	Asking a seer: Tiresias	T2/3b	To find the killer
	T2/4a	Asking a seer: Tiresias	T2/4b	To execute or exile the killer
The killer of Laius	T2/5a	Asking about the location of the killing	T2/5b	In Thebes
	T2/6a	Hearing the testimonies	T2/6b	By robbers
	T2/7a	Asking the Seer: Tiresias	T2/7b	By Oedipus
	T2/8a	Listening to Jocasta	T2/8b	In line with the curse against Laius
	T2/9a	Investigating Jocasta	T2/9b	Robbers in Phocis – the crossroad
	T2/10a	Listening to Jocasta	T2/10b	One of the servants in the palace witnessed it
Origin of Oedipus	T2/11a	Investigating the Shepherd	T2/11b	Receiving a baby from Laius' house
	T2/12a	Listening to the Shepherd	T2/12b	Jocasta gave the baby to him
	T2/13a	Listening to the Shepherd	T2/13b	He conveyed what people said regarding the child as Laius's son.
	T2/14a	Investigating the shepherd with pain enforcement	T2/14b	Saying yes when he was asked if he gave the baby to the Shepherd
	T2/15a	Listening to Messenger	T2/15b	Polybus and Merope were not the biological parents of Oedipus.
	T2/16a	Investigating the Messenger	T2/16b	Confessing that he got the baby from the Shepherd

After hearing information from the Shepherd, Oedipus said, "Everything happened, everything became clear… I finally saw…cursed for being born, cursed for marriage, cursed for the lives of those who were slain by these hands." (OTK, lines 1307-1311) Oedipus' own words emphasize at the end of the play that what is meant by "all happening" is the decision in Oedipus' mind that he had killed his father (patricide) and committed intercourse with his mother (incest).

Oedipus concluded about his incest and patricide based on the story of his origin he heard from the Messenger and the Shepherd. However, throughout the investigation, Oedipus constructed an account related to the curse he wanted to

avoid. This construction of thought impliedly becomes the rationality of Oedipus' judgment. First, he thought, "The Delphi oracle said I had been destined to kill my father and marry my mother." When he heard the account by Jocasta about the killing of Laius, Oedipus thought, "I have actually killed my father if the witness (the servant, or the shepherd; I call Witness A) says that Laius' killer was one person." Oedipus did not proceed with the investigation on the number of the killer. Instead, he was interested in investigating his origin and finally concluded, "It is confirmed that I have committed incest with my mother. The baby Jocasta gave to the Shepherd (Witness A) was the baby that the Messenger (I call Witness B) gave to Polybus and Merope, my parents." Based on the discovery of his incest, he also concluded his patricide, "Because it has been proven that I committed incest with my mother, it is also concluded that I killed my father." The progress of the discovery throughout the investigation led Oedipus to the same point as what he knew about the curse he should fulfill, thinking "I know that from the beginning I was destined to prosecute the two prophecies: to kill my father and to marry my mother."

Two essential notes need to be added here regarding the investigation by Oedipus, namely, what did not happen until the end of the investigation.

a) As Jocasta no longer appeared until the end of the play, the question of whether the "Shepherd" present in front of Oedipus was the same person who witnessed the murder of Laius, is never confirmed by Jocasta.
b) Oedipus did not ask the "Shepherd" whether the killer of Laius was one person or many.

Textual forensic study on Oedipus' investigation: Sophocles' truth

Readers of *Oedipus the King* who wish to investigate Oedipus' investigation and its verdict need to be aware that for Oedipus, the crimes of patricide and incest he unknowingly committed were real-life events. Sophocles wrote Oedipus' self-disposition in *Oedipus at Colonus*. In the text of this drama, Oedipus explains 1) that he defended himself when the murder incident occurred (*Oedipus at Colonus*, 1954, lines 270-291), 2) that he did not know whom he was killing or marrying (*Oedipus at Colonus* lines 537- 548), and 3) that his actions were predetermined before his birth (*Oedipus at Colonus* lines 960-999). These three explanations need to be considered in assessing the status of Oedipus' *épistémè*[8] during his conducting an investigation. We want to reexamine the process of Oedipus knowing his patricide and incest.

A distinction must be made between the views of Oedipus and Sophocles. According to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1990), the three confessions of Oedipus do not necessarily convey Sophocles' opinions, even though they could be the product of the writing and the tendencies of Sophocles' thoughts. In other words, Oedipus sees that patricide and incest are his facts. In contrast, Sophocles sees that what Oedipus says is a one-sided fact because other parties, such as readers of the text, see textual evidence that does not support Oedipus' conclusion. Oedipus' thoughts and tendencies are detected in the words and actions of the characters in the text. In contrast, the views and tendencies of Sophocles can be seen, among

[8] *Épistémè*, as in Michel Foucault's, refers to conditions that generate knowledge and to Thomas Kuhn's: paradigm.

others, in the thoughts and preferences of the characters, plus the intrinsic elements in the characterizations, storyline, setting of place and time, themes, and their apparent interconnections. Text forensics was carried out on the evidence used in Oedipus' investigation due to the possible discrepancies that appear in the contrasts.

Forensic analysis of the text is focused on three things: the status and function of the evidence in the text, the relationship between the evidence and the reality (probity), and the demands of cultural expression surrounding the text's formation. These three things are the main themes that contemporary epistemology deals with in examining the process of how humans know something (Greetham, 1990, p. 7). If in the investigation by Oedipus it is the "Shepherd," in the forensic analysis, the document text is the witness, in this case, the semantics of the text of *Oedipus the King*. Witnesses and testimonies are weighed, not counting how many or less, whether they are aggravating or mitigating. The conclusions to be reached in text forensics depend on the paradigm, but in this paper, the findings to be achieved are whether the conclusion is appropriate or inappropriate and reasonable or unreasonable.

Three texts will be reviewed forensically in this discussion: 1) the number of people killed by Oedipus in the incident at the intersection, 2) the number of people who killed Laius, and 3) Oedipus' origin. In Oedipus' memory, there were three people killed in the incident, namely the guide (a herald, *kerux*), the person on the train (an older man), and the coachman (T3/1b). Oedipus killed them all. In Jocasta's description, five people (T3/2b) were accompanying Laius. The text shows no data on who the other two are and why they were not visible to Oedipus. The text of the drama shows that information from Jocasta and information from Oedipus differ (T3/3b). This difference increases the possibility that Jocasta and Oedipus are referring to two separate incidents of murder, even though the circumstances of the two alleged murders are very similar.

The reason for creating this possibility is reinforced by doubts about the authenticity of Oedipus' memories of the place where he committed the murder. Oedipus calls the three-way intersection. The words were spoken in the context of repeating information from Jocasta that Laius was killed "where three roads meet" (T2/9b). The term "just now" in Oedipus' expression "Walk towards the intersection earlier..." suggests that Oedipus is equating the events in his memory with Jocasta's story. Thus, it is possible that Jocasta's account distorted the retelling of Oedipus' memories.

The second thing to review is the number of murderers people have told compared to the number in Oedipus' memory. In his investigation, Oedipus said that if there were one killer (T3/4b), it would be Oedipus. In the text of Creon's report on the words from the Delphi oracle, the term "killer" is written in the plural (T3/5b): "…and Apollo commands us now – he could not be more clear, 'Pay the **killers** back - whoever is responsible.'" (OTK, lines 120-2; My bold font style). The text in Creon's report matches the semantics of the news he heard from eyewitnesses (T3/5b), namely the servant (*oikeus*, housemaid) who survived the incident: "He said **thieves** attacked them – a whole band, not single-handed, cut King Laius down." (OTK, lines 138-9) Oedipus repeated the words but with a semantic change, namely in the singular (T3/4b): "**A thief**, so daring, so wild, he'd kill a king? Impossible, unless conspirators paid him off in Thebes." (OTK, lines

140-3) Oedipus consistently mentions Laius' killer in the singular form the next time: "What stopped you from tracking down **the killer** then and there?" (OTK, lines 146-7) In Jocasta's hearing, the servant's report was the same as what Creon heard: "…But Laius, so the report goes at least, was killed by **strangers**, **thieves**…." (T3/6b) (OTK, lines 788-90) Likewise, the Choir Leader recalled the story -which he called a rumor- that "Laius was killed, they say, by certain **travelers**." (T3/7b) (OTK, line 331)

Oedipus was aware of the difference in the number of Laius' killers. The other characters were not aware of the importance of the difference. However, the reader is aware of the difference because the reader sees the semantic facts of the text (T3/8b). Oedipus wanted to ask eyewitnesses about the number of Laius' killers, one person or many people. Yet to the end of the play, Oedipus never asked about it; the witness never gave direct information about it to Oedipus. The text provides no other evidence. This critical piece of evidence has never been confirmed.

Table 3. Forensic investigation

Object	No. of Data	Method	No. of Data	Answer
The number of people killed in the incident	T3/1a	Referring to Oedipus' memory	T3/1b	three
	T3/2a	Referring to Jocasta	T3/2b	five
	T3/3a	*Conclusion*	T3/3b	• The numbers uttered are different. • There is a probability that Oedipus and Jocasta refer to different events.
The number of people who killed Laius	T3/4a	Referring to Oedipus' memory	T3/4b	one
	T3/5a	Referring to Creon's report	T3/5b	Plural: thieves
	T3/6a	Referring to Jocasta's hearing from a witness	T3/6b	Plural: strangers, thieves
	T3/7a	Referring to Choir Leader	T3/7b	Plural: some travelers
	T3/8a	*Conclusion*	T3/8b	• The number uttered and the semantic counting identifier is different. • There is no conclusion regarding the number of people who killed Laius.

Witnesses	T3/9a	Referring to the Shepherd	T3/9b	The baby is from Laius' house
	T3/10a		T3/10b	The baby was given to him by Jocasta.
	T3/11a		T3/11b	He was conveying what people said regarding the child as Laius's son.
	T3/12a	*Conclusion*	T3/12b	• Jocasta never confirmed whether the baby was her son or other people's son. • It was not clarified in the text which the people who said the baby was Laius' son. • Jocasta never confirmed that this shepherd was the man she gave the baby to.
	T3/13a	Referring to the Messenger from Corinth	T3/13b	Confessing that he got the baby from the Shepherd
	T3/14a	*Conclusion*	T3/14b	• There is suspicion about the probability of his opportunistic motive as no one sent him to convey the news. • Only under pain the Shepherd said yes concerning the fact that he gave the baby to this particular Messenger.

The semantic formulation of the number of killers of Laius, which differs from Oedipus' knowledge that he was alone when he committed a murder, raises several conjectures. The first assumption is that the servant (Witness A) who reported Laius' murder was never present during the incident. In other words, the report was false. This is consistent with Oedipus' confession, namely that there were only three people he met, all of whom he killed. The second assumption is that from the beginning, Oedipus was so afraid of oracle prophecy that he practiced or experienced verisimilitude, which is the feeling that prophecy is happening when similar events or stories exist (Peradotto, 2002, p. 12). As a result, discrete events were accepted as events referred to in the prophecy. Thus, Oedipus' statement that there was only one killer contains two possibilities. First, he accurately refers to his knowledge, namely that he knows precisely that the killer is one person. Second, he is experiencing verisimilitude, so the murder incident he is listening to he considers his own. That's why he said there was only one killer, even though the narrator (Choir Leader) said there were many.

The third assumption, the consistency of the witnesses and even the oracle in mentioning the plural number of Laius' killers, raises the suspicion that the killing committed by Oedipus differed from those described by Jocasta, the servant, Creon, the Choir Leader, and the oracle.

It is surprising that although Oedipus paid close attention to Jocasta's words that Laius' killers were "thieves" and he was fully aware that "One cannot equal many,"[9] this discrepancy in numbers was never considered by Oedipus again that at the end he concluded that he had seen the truth: he had killed his father and has married his mother (OTK, lines 1493-4). He also did not ask the witness again about the figure. This textual fact of Oedipus' decision process echoes Jocasta's words to Oedipus, "Woe to you - you will never know yourself!"[10] This means that Jocasta kept information that she never said, which, if Oedipus knew, Oedipus' knowledge would be different.

The reader needs to be acutely aware that there is never any definitive momentum in the text to indicate when Oedipus explicitly concludes that he killed Laius (regicide) or his father (patricide). As has already been said, Oedipus seems to have relied on conclusive evidence: if the servant who survived the murder said the number of Laius' murderers was the same as Jocasta's, Oedipus was not the killer.[11] This evidence was never obtained by Oedipus or provided in the text by Sophocles. Then, the most probable suspicion is that Oedipus judged the regicide of Laius based on verisimilitude.

However, considering the structure of the storyline of *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus' decision regarding the regicide, which later became, at the same time, a patricide, follows the verdict that he had committed incest: Jocasta, his current wife, was his mother. Oedipus' decision-making structure can be summarized in Figure 1.

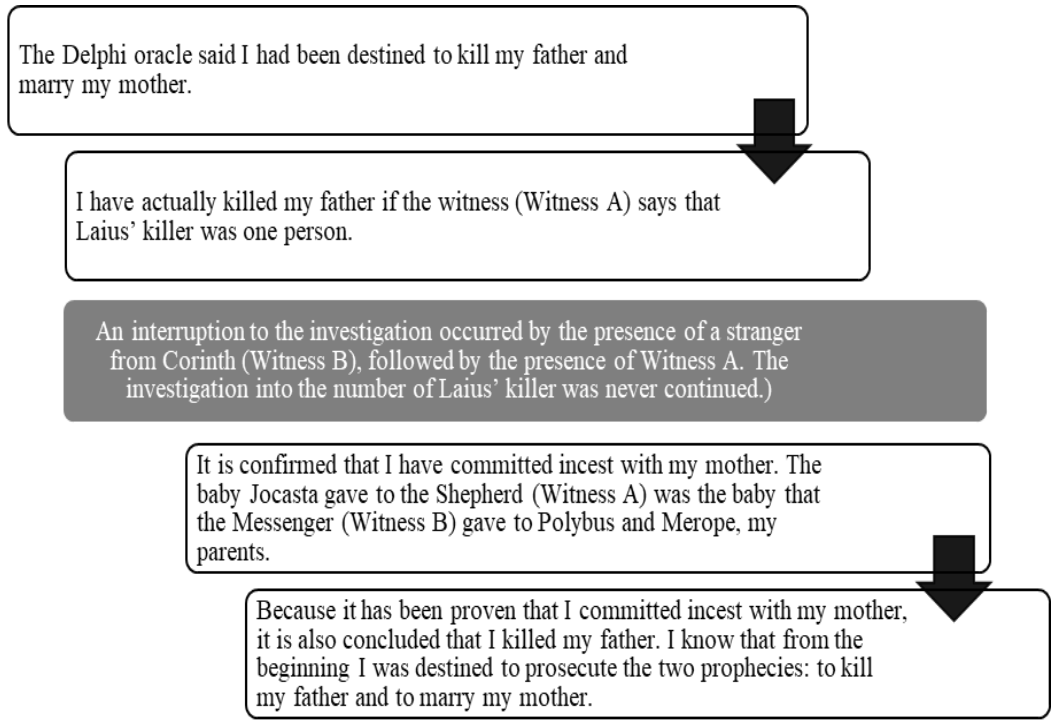


Figure 1. Oedipus' structure of his verdict

[9] Oedipus: "…One can't equal many." (OTK, line 934).
[10] Jocasta: "You're doomed – may you never fathom who you are!" (OTK, lines 1172-3).
[11] Oedipus: "You said thieves – he told you a whole band of them murdered Laius. So, if he still holds to the same number, I cannot be the killer…" (OTK, lines 932-4).

Crucial to Oedipus' reasoning is the proof that Jocasta was Oedipus' mother. Oedipus as the prosecutor of evidence made his decision based on the statements of Witness A (the Shepherd) and Witness B (the Messenger from Corinth). Witness A testified under threat of torture: that the baby he gave to Witness B came from Laius' house. The baby was given to him by Jocasta himself. Witness A added that "they said" the baby boy was Laius' child.[12] There is no explanation in the text as to who the "they" referred to by Witness A is.

Regarding Witness A, the Choir Leader said only Jocasta could confirm that he was the same person who witnessed Laius' murder and received Jocasta's baby. In the text of the drama, Jocasta never affirms Witness A because Jocasta immediately leaves the scene and does not appear again except for the news of her death. Witness A himself never said that he witnessed Laius being killed. Although from the beginning to the end of the drama, it was noted that Witness A was the same person in the two incidents being investigated, the two people who could give affirmative statements did not do so, namely Jocasta and Witness A himself (T3/12b).

Regarding Witness B, there are doubts about the veracity of his statement because the text shows his intention to come to Thebes was opportunistic (T3/14b). Witness B did not come to Thebes because he was officially sent but conveyed a rumor that Oedipus was about to be king of Corinth in place of Polybus. Oedipus believed what this man said: that he took Oedipus from a shepherd in Cithaeron (T3/13b) and handed him over to Polybus.

Doubts about the two witnesses are discussed because they form an essential part of the third doubt regarding Oedipus' investigation. This third point has to do with Oedipus' paternity and maternity. It is known from Witness A's confession that the baby brought by Witness A is from Laius' house (T3/9b), but it cannot be confirmed that he was born to Jocasta or was born to a slave.[13] Witness A asked Oedipus to ask Jocasta who the child's father was (OTK, lines 1286-8). Without questioning Jocasta -because Jocasta was no longer there-, Oedipus immediately concluded that the child was Jocasta's. If the child was not born by Jocasta, the marriage relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta is not incest. There is no textual indication in *Oedipus the King* that confirms that Oedipus was the son of Jocasta.

So far, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the forensic facts of the text do not support Oedipus' conclusion that he committed regicide (killed King Laius). Second, the intrinsic facts of the drama, namely the storyline, show that the claims of Oedipus' involvement in the regicide and patricide are concluded from the discovery of the identity of his paternity and maternity. Third, the textual facts do not show that Witness B's words can be trusted. The text also indicates the possibility of another child's mother mentioned by Witness A. The paternity of Oedipus of Laius can be ascertained if the words of Witness B can be trusted. The maternity of Oedipus of Jocasta can be confirmed if there is an acknowledgment from Jocasta herself.

[12] Shepherd: "All right! His son, they said it was – his son! But the one inside, your wife, she'd tell it best." (OTK, lines 1286-8).

[13] Oedipus asks Witness A about this matter, "A slave? Or born of his own blood?" The witness answers, "Laius' son."

It can be further concluded that based on the findings of the forensic text examination of *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus' decision that he committed patricide and incest is flawed. In line with Oedipus's confession in *Oedipus of Colonus*, Oedipus' conclusion about patricide and incest is more verisimilitude to the narrative of Delphi. Allegedly, the text of *Oedipus the King* was written by Sophocles with a different or more purpose than just dramatizing the tragedy of Oedipus.

The unequal discourses of language and knowledge and the subject

The discrepancies of data found in the examination of Oedipus' investigation and the textual forensic study led this research to an attempt to understand *Oedipus the King* in the context of the 5th century B.C. sophist philosophers' struggles in the fields of semantics, rhetoric, ontology, and epistemology. We learn from the writings by Fosso, Segal, and Koper that the question of platonic doctrine was already evident in the sophist theories of language, which pointed to the question of the relation between words and reality. This insight contributes to the study of *Oedipus the King* by explicating that words have the power to deceive, win unfair cases, and confuse moral issues. Seen in such a perspective, *Oedipus the King*, as a text and as a tragic drama, is a metaphor for the manipulative interplay of words and truth in the human person. Embracing the prophecy presented in Delphi's narrative, Oedipus shaped his beliefs, decisions, and actions, assuming that his life event should be in correspondence with this narrative (Pieri, 2019).

The tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles) as seen in the examination of Oedipus' investigation through the textual forensic study is the symptomatic appearance of the unequal discourses between language as correspondence and language as a tool. Oedipus holds that reality is the mirror of the Truth (T1/2) and language is its correspondence (T1/1). In contrast, Sophocles has the truth as a semantic reality (T1/4) for which a language is merely a tool (T1/3).

Being held as the Truth for life events, Delphi's narrative of patricide and incest shows its strong influence on Oedipus in the form of fear, in Oedipus's tendency to compare other people's stories to his own (verisimilitude), and in the gaps in reasoning when Oedipus makes his decisions. At first glance, this reminds Barthes' view in *Mythologies* (1972) about myth. Myth takes from humans all the necessary historical realities, then returns them to humans but in a form that, for humans, is very natural. In this perspective, history is a coincidence that looks natural in human eyes as it is wrapped in myth.[14] For Oedipus, Delphi's narrative of patricide and incest is not seen as a myth or a mere product of language but as an innate nature that must happen to him. The semiotic reading of *Oedipus the King* makes explicit -in Peradotto's terms (1994) – Oedipus's ideological tendencies,[15] namely the standardization of what was initially random into natural,

[14] In a system of signs, words and objects always appear natural to the utterer, as if what they say is eternal, true, and a must, whereas both are random, artificial, and contingent (Barthes, 1972, p. 142-3).

[15] "For in our time, it is largely semiotics and discourse analysis that have reversed this history of rhetoric by exposing our unreflective tendency (on which Aristotelian rhetoric heavily relies) to confuse linguistic or narrative reality with so-called "natural" reality, or better, to confuse what is

which originally happened incidentally to be a necessity (1994, p. 94). So, it is also imperative that the study of the text of *Oedipus the King* includes a review of the Delphi narrative as the most standard ideological and epistemological device in Oedipus' reasoning.

As seen in the investigation, the Delphi narrative is a model of rationality for Oedipus. The Delphi narrative becomes a reference, measurement tool, theory, and ideal in Oedipus' paradigm (Scodel, 2008). As a theory, the Delphi narrative is where Oedipus finds his explanation of the events of his life. For reference, the Delphi narrative is the cause; as a measuring tool, the Delphi narrative becomes the standard of objectivity or the level of reasonableness and irrationality of consideration. The Delphi narrative becomes a framework for induction and deduction as a theory. As an ideal, the Delphi narrative is the destiny and destiny that Oedipus must accept. The text of *Oedipus the King* shows repeated contact between Oedipus and the oracle and god of Apollo at Delphi. For example, he consulted Delphi when he heard rumors that he was an illegitimate son. He again asked Delphi when looking for a solution to the plague that hit Thebes. He invites Tiresias to "see" who killed Laius.

Uttered in Rorty's terms, Oedipus gets the "final vocabulary"[16] in the Delphi narrative. The final vocabulary, which can be in the form of theory, paradigm, language, or philosophy, contains the rationality of a person, group of people, or era. According to Rorty, from the time of Plato to the 17th-century period, the system of knowledge was built on the belief that there is a foundation for reality, there is a unique reality that must be represented, there is an essence in the cosmos, and there are truths and objective concepts as said by Plato (Rorty, 1979), so that explanations and theories are needed, or science is mandatory. The struggle of the philosophy of science revolves around the formulation of correspondence, reference, commensurability, objectivity, truth, and accurate representation. Rorty does not deny the immense value of concepts such as truth or objectivity. However, he emphasizes that these concepts bring different content and forms according to their place. He termed it the ethnocentric nature of what is called "true" or "objective". Rorty proposed that the ethnocentric nature of truth and objectivity helps concepts get out of their pure and abstract hypostasis so that they can help humans take action (Rorty, 1979, p. 179). For Rorty, the final narrative or vocabulary -as it is contingent- is not to claim to have absolute truth but apodictic truth. Such absolute claims and assumptions show the nature of tyranny rather than revealing the truth.

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being *referred to* with what really *is*, to confuse the mutant and heterogeneous forms of culture and history (verisimilitude) with enduring universals of nature, particularly human nature. By exposing the mechanics at the secret core of narrative discourse, semiotics makes ideology explicit; it unmasks the process to which language is ever open, of making what is merely arbitrary seem *natural*, of turning the merely *accidental* into the *necessary*." (Peradotto, 1994, p. 94)

[16] Rorty describes "final vocabulary" as a set of words to justify one's reason for their actions, beliefs, and lives. The words are tools to express appreciation, displeasure, long-term plans, deepest doubts, or greatest hopes. The more specific the terms, the more they work. Final vocabulary shows the basic structure of a person's decisions. Some words contain the core of the moral, logical, or scientific theory, with evaluative, analytical, and epistemic functions. (Rorty, 1980, p. 73)

For Rorty, a narrative or final vocabulary can be a model of rationality and is called rational if it opens up a democratic space for exchanging ideas (Rorty, 1979). In Oedipus, there is no democratic space. The narratives Oedipus learned from the Delphi oracle, which he confirmed to be true through his investigations, are narratives with a tyrannical dominating nature. The more Oedipus investigates the prophecies of the oracle, the more he believes in the truth of the narrative. The root of Oedipus' difficulty is the paradigm that there is such a thing called the essence of reality, objectivity, and truth. Oedipus thought that his way of life was an exact reflection of an objective truth stated in the oracle of Delphi. In the case of Oedipus, prophecy, even though it is in the form of a narrative sentence, is seen as having an accurate correspondence with life events.

The tragedy: A semantic reality

As a second finding, the study shows that Oedipus' tragedy of patricide and incest was a semantic reality rather than a real-life event. Oedipus' search for truth in the drama resembles the linguistic turn discussed later in the twentieth century's study of language and epistemology, in which truth is semantic correctness rather than a transcendental reality founded in the Real, the Goodness, or the Truth.

Rorty explains that despite its usefulness, the term "objective truth" does not contain the name of an action or event directly connected to it. An event can be defined according to its causal description but cannot be linked to a causal "objective truth." This is because truth has no substantive content. According to Rorty, the truth lies in the sentence, that is, if all the semantic demands are met. A sentence is called true not because it relates to a value or reality, for example, because the Delphi oracle spoke it or because it is contained in a Scripture, or because it has other tools, for instance, a mantra. The truth of a sentence is semantic truth. There is no connection between semantic truth and the reality it is describing (Rorty, 1979, p. 308). Thus, pursuing the truth, as Oedipus did, will not lead to an "objective" line where actions and events have been prescribed. At best, what will be found is that all conditions are met or can be justified and agreed upon (Rorty, 1979, p. 337).

Investigations into *Oedipus the King* forensically reveal Oedipus' flaws in making decisions about the truth he seeks. Fosso says Oedipus' flaw lies in his haste. He suspected Oedipus' haste was in line with his impulsive nature (Fosso, 2012, p. 42). Oedipus' impulsive nature is seen several times, for example, his rush to seek advice from the oracle, his haste to flee from Corinth to avoid prophecy, his rush to accuse Tiresias of conspiring with Creon to usurp Laius' throne, including his rush to call witnesses and believe witnesses. Finally, Oedipus hastily judged that Delphi's predictions about patricide and incest had come true. Culler (1981) considers that the haste could be because he is the main character of the drama who must direct the course of the storyline: he must indeed submit to the "law of fate" being narrated, must do so, and make judgments. This is the weakness of discourse in drama (Culler, 1981, p. 174).

In *Oedipus the King*, the text leads Oedipus as a drama character to judge himself and make decisions in a way that is not by evidence. The semantic facts of the text are partially not in the *épistémè* of Oedipus as a dramatic character. The text reader can obtain semantic facts forensically regarding the evidence to be

weighed. While Oedipus, it is impossible to reach the forensic facts of the text because he is a dramatic character, whose actions, words, feelings, thoughts, and decisions can only be subject to what is written in the text. As Culler puts it, drama characters are subject to drama texts, including when they tragically make decisions in cases such as patricide and incest. Thus, the tragedy of Oedipus was not due to Apollo's divine predestination but to the text.

The fear of incestuous oida-pous

Finally, seen in the interplay between the oracle, fate, and the tragic self-knowledge in the drama, and reflecting the data of studies from the perspective of the unequal discourses of language and knowledge, *Oedipus the King* explicates the incestuous origin of knowledge and its tragic impact on the body.

Here it appears that Sophocles raised a significant theme that was only discussed in depth twenty centuries later, starting with Nietzsche, namely the question of the relation of language to reality. In *Oedipus the King,* it is shown that the tragedy of Oedipus has nothing to do with people's belief that fate is predetermined. It is also demonstrated that truth exists only in semantic reality and not in methods of investigation, opinions, thoughts, or ideas. *Oedipus the King* indicates that Oedipus' blindness, the tragedy of patricide and incest if they exist, are due to the semantic reality, i.e., to the text of the drama, and not to transcendent realities such as "the Real," intellectual realities such as "the Truth," or moral reality like "the Goodness."

As Miller (1990) puts it, *Oedipus the King*'s success over the hundreds of years lies in its prowess in showing the problematic "story" rather than in the greatness of human tragedy and its nature." (Miller, 1990, p. 74) In *Oedipus the King*, the narrative gives birth to text, but after its birth, text determines the fate of narrative forever, and it is narrative that reaches humans in the form of messages of knowledge. Thus, knowledge is always ironic about its origins because the narration -that is its origin- is born from texts that are also born of narratives. There is the horror of the incest of knowledge. That's where the tragedy of *oida-pous* occurs, namely in the conversation between knowledge (*oida*) and its origin (*pous, leg*).

Conclusion

This research presents a new perspective on the tragedy of *Oedipus the King*. Despite the belief that the curse from the oracle was the cause of the tragedy, this study argues that ignorance about the unequal discourses of language, authorship, and knowledge actually led to the tragedy. The study emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the existence of unequal discourses in order to create a more equitable space for social interaction. Many aspects of unequal discourses, including those depicted in *Oedipus the King*, have been revealed. The message is conveyed through conversation and interpretation rather than strict representation and correspondence. The study draws attention to the incestuous and unequal nature of knowledge, interpretation, and agreement, as demonstrated in the case of *oida-pous*. It warns against allowing one party to dominate the discourse, which could result in tragedy.

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