

Jungian Archetypes and Oedipus the King

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The play Oedipus the King by Sophocles has multiple examples of collective unconscious archetypes from the theories of Carl G. Jung. In general Jung's theories say that there are archetypes that define the world, its people, and why people participate or commit certain activities. Jung explains that these archetypes are harbored in the collective unconscious of every person's mind. The archetype of the hero is one of them. The middle of Oedipus the King shows the character Oedipus as the Jungian archetypal hero and sacrificial scapegoat. In order to understand Jung's theory of archetypes, the reader must first have an understanding of the reasoning behind them. Carl G. Jung explains the conscious mind by dividing it into three different psyches: the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. The ego is simply Jung's interpretation of the conscious mind. The personal unconscious is anything that is not presently conscious, but can be. The collective unconscious is a reservoir of human experiences that is passed from generation to generation. It includes the archetypes of self, which are archetypes for different kinds of people or characters in literature (Jung 67). They can be described as things such as *déjà vu*, or love at first sight. It is the feeling that what is being felt or experienced has been felt or experienced before. Jung describes the hero as an "archetype of transformation and redemption," (Guerin 163). The character of Oedipus is a concrete example of Jung's hero archetype.

Jung says that the hero archetype first goes through the "quest" to become a hero. The "quest" of the hero in Jungian theory is described as a "long journey in which middle of papert the final step to being a sacrificial scapegoat. Oedipus finds out that he is the killer of King Laius and will become the archetypal sacrificial scapegoat for the city of Thebes. Throughout this passage from the play, Oedipus is continually gathering incriminating evidence against himself from the source of his own wife and mother, Jocasta. He discovers through her attempted reassurance that his quest from Corinth set his fate to be the killer of his biological father and the sacrificial scapegoat for the welfare of the people and land of Thebes.

Works Cited
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