
The Concepts of Fate and Free Will in The Kite Runner and Oedipus

Fate and Free Will

The elements of fate and free will are not black and white. Humans have an unconscious free will while making everyday decisions: what we want to wear, where we want to go, and when we want to sleep. Sometimes, however, we make large-scale mistakes, so large they haunt us our entire lives, eventually leading to tragedies. It is important to recognize these errors in personal freedom and attempt to mend our mistakes before our fate goes into full effect. Every action has a consequence (a fate), one we cannot afford to be blissfully ignorant to.

In both *The Kite Runner* and *Oedipus*, the concepts of fate and free will are intertwined heavily throughout each storyline. Both protagonists have made extremely influential decisions, setting in motion a slew of negative outcomes. Amir and Oedipus also ignore the choices they have made by running away from them. This only further strengthens the intensity of their mistakes, rather than weaken them. The methods they use in attempts to escape are different, however. Oedipus' naturally prideful personality is what drives him to project his guilt and blame onto others, while Amir's non-confrontational personality drove him to flee from the actions of the past, and anything reminding him of said actions. Either way, they have surged the consequences of a fate that could have been avoided. For example, in *The Kite Runner*, Amir's detrimental mistake was remaining a bystander and allowing Hassan to be raped by Assef. Instead of prioritizing the dignity of a loyal friend and brother, Amir's only concern was the possibility of praise from Baba. But even after receiving admiration, he still felt guilty. Yet, he refused to apologize to Hassan. Ultimately, the shame ate him alive, as he tried to get Hassan to leave. Amir even framed his best friend for stealing his new watch and birthday money. Later, as the Taliban fought against Russia's communist agenda, Baba and Amir decided to flee their home, and left Hassan to fend for himself in a country destroyed by war and hatred. Amir, however, was unaffected as he fled to the United States, running from his past actions and striving to forget they even occurred. This proved to be unsuccessful in the long run, as news of Hassan's death and his full relation to Amir was unveiled by Rahim Khan. Amir has now lost the one person who truly cared about him and is unable to gain closure for the event that occurred during his childhood. Instead, he must find an alternative route. Amazingly, all of this could have been avoided if he made a crucial choice to save Hassan and prevent his rape entirely.

Although Oedipus started out fate-oriented, the story later progressed into an equal balance of

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choices and consequences. In the beginning, Oedipus reigned as the new king of Thebes, alongside his queen, Jocasta. After hearing of a plague outbreak in the city from his citizens, he orders his brother-in-law, Creon, to find the oracle and ask for assistance. Upon Creon's return, Oedipus is told to find who murdered Laius, whom was king prior to Oedipus' arrival to Thebes. Determined to persecute the suspect, he summons Tiresias, a blind prophet, to his kingdom. At first, Tiresias is reluctant to reveal what he knows, but he then accuses Oedipus for killing Laius. Oedipus is furious upon hearing this allegation, and angrily mocks and blames the prophet. Before departing, Tiresias warns Oedipus of his true fate: he will kill his father and sleep with his mother. Riddled with anxiety, Oedipus speaks with Jocasta, to obtain a second opinion on his alleged fate. Jocasta rejects it and advises Oedipus to ignore the prophet's claims. She further explains a prophet once informed her that Laius would die at the hands of her son. However, the child was abandoned and died, while her husband was murdered by a pack of thieves. Oedipus becomes anxious, disclosing his violent encounter at a crossroads with a man who looked like Laius prior to arriving to Thebes. This was the error that jump-started a plethora of tragedies. Oedipus made the detrimental choice to express his anger through violence, brutally murdering Laius. He remains blissfully unaware of this, however. Eager to discover the truth, he summons the only surviving witness of the murder: a shepherd. Before the shepherd's appearance, a messenger informs Oedipus his father, Polybus, has died. Relieved, Jocasta tells Oedipus his father's death is proof the fate is not going to happen, but the messenger clarifies Oedipus' adoptive father died of natural causes, not his biological father. The messenger himself delivered Oedipus to Polybus after receiving him from the shepherd, whom was given the child by Laius and Jocasta. Overcome with fear, Jocasta begs Oedipus to cease the investigation, but he continues. She runs into the palace, horrified. The shepherd confirmed, after threat of force, to admit the truth: Oedipus is really the son of Laius and Jocasta. With feelings of fear and agony boiling inside, Oedipus bolts into the palace to find Jocasta's lifeless body hanging by a rope. Devastated, he steals the brooches from her dress and stabs himself in the eyes, blinding himself permanently. These atrocities could have easily been evaded by Oedipus restricting his expression of hostility through brutality, and instead calmly addressing Laius' presence at the crossroads.

If a large-scale mistake is made, it must be mended. It cannot be left to fester and accumulate over time. It cannot be blamed on blissful ignorance or escaped through elaborate schemes. This interaction of free will and fate can either lead to the successes of others, or the downfalls of others. Human life is much too precious to allow the prospect of consequence to be unfortunate.

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