**Understanding *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Oedipus the King***

*The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Oedipus the King* are related to each other in many different concepts. Both poems have similar concepts in terms of kingship, values (expressed with the concept of evil), the idea of gods, links between humans and gods, and comparisons between city and wilderness. In both poems, kingship is linked with power, wisdom, and other godlike features. Gilgamesh is described as a “wild bull” which represents power and being brutal (Tablet I. 35). Similarly, Oedipus is also portrayed as a “wild bull” who has done unspeakable brutality (Sophocles, 565-577). In addition, Gilgamesh’s father is considered to be a god while his mother is human. Similarly, even though it’s not real, the writer fantasizes about Oedipus’ father (Polybus) being a god while his mother (Merope) is human (Sophocles, 1318-1329). While fantasizing, gods are mentioned with their relations to geographical elements, mountains in this case: Pan who roams the mountainsides, Bacchanalian god dwelling on the mountain tops (Sophocles, 1320-1326). In Oedipus, mountains are linked with male gods and show their strength. Similarly in Gilgamesh, Humbaba (guardian of the cedar forest) is connected with the forest and the wilderness. Furthermore, when fighting Humbaba, he reshapes the landmass, smites the ground (Tablet V. 153). Thus, Humbaba is also responsible for creating mountains, and other shapes of the land. Therefore, in both poems, some gods are related to different types of geographic elements whether it’s a forest or a mountain. In addition, mountains in Oedipus and forests in Gilgamesh are similar and both considered to be wilderness. No human except hunters and shepherds lives in the wilderness, it is dedicated to gods and animals. Like the exact opposite, cities are where humans live. In both poems, there are distinct oppositions between the city and the wilderness. In Gilgamesh, hunters, animals, and Enkidu for some time live in the wilderness while other humans live in Uruk. Similarly, in Oedipus, only the shepherds and animals live in mountains while people live in cities. In addition, Laius sends Oedipus to a mountain and leaves him to death since mountains are isolated places where no one ever goes (Sophocles, 863-865). Furthermore, in both poems, wilderness (mountains and forests) is considered to be brutal, cold, and isolated while cities are full of life and prosperity, safe, and warm. Even though the contrast between city and wilderness is present in both poems, such contrast is reversed in Oedipus. The palace, which should have been a warm, prosperous, and safe place, has turned into a cold, isolated crime scene. Thus, the understandings from Gilgamesh exist in Oedipus in reversed order. Wilderness also plays a crucial role in characters understanding their roles. Both Gilgamesh and Oedipus willingly wanted to go to the wilderness. Gilgamesh’s journey to his immortality brought him to the cedar forest, to find Uta-Napishti (Tablet IX. 5-6). Similarly, Oedipus wanted to be exiled to the mountains when he realized he was the source of pollution who killed his father and married his mother (Sophocles, 1793). Another similar concept in both poems is the links between gods and humans. Gods are immortal while humans are not. They separate themselves from humans, in both poems, there are places dedicated to gods. For instance, in Gilgamesh, gods live in temples such as Eanna the temple of the sky (Tablet I. 16). Similarly, in Oedipus, gods live in shrines such as Pythian Apollo’s shrine (Sophocles, 70). When comparing gods and humans, the concept of evil has different meanings changing between humans and gods in both poems. In Gilgamesh, evil corresponds to human suffering for humans (Tablet I. 85-86) and changing the order of things for gods (Tablet I. 222-223). Similarly, in Oedipus, most evil crimes are considered to be father killing and incest for humans. In addition, the person who commits such crimes is considered as pollution and gets punished. However, when gods commit these crimes, nothing happens. Oedipus kills his father and sleeps with his mother, and gets punished at the end while Zeus overthrows and banishes his father, and marries his sister without seeing any punishment. Thus, what is considered to be the evilest crime for humans doesn’t necessarily apply to gods.

Finally, similarity in some concepts between both poems helps us understand the poems and their perspectives better. As an example, knowing that evil has different meanings for humans and gods from Gilgamesh helps us understand the concept of evil in Oedipus which also has different meanings when it comes to humans and gods. Thus, comparing similar concepts helps consolidate our knowledge and helps us understand both of the poems better.

**Bibliography**

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