ing into configurations of sculptural grandeur and simplicity, and (*pace* Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff) a refusal to sacrifice the deep ethical and philosophical issues to merely pathetic or narrowly theatrical effects. These qualitites play no small role in forming that impression of unity, proportion, and severity, the hallmarks of the Sophoclean "classic" style admired by critics from Aristotle to the present day.[30]

30. E.g., Paul Shorey, "Sophocles," *Martin Classical Lectures* 1, ed. L. E. Lord (Cambridge, Mass. 1931) 57–95, especially 88ff.

CHAPTER 5

Sophocles' Praise of Man and the Conflicts of the *Antigone*

It is no coincidence that the most influential interpretation of the *Antigone*—and one of the most influential interpretations of any Greek tragedy—comes from a philosopher of idealism and dialectics.[1] The *Antigone* is certainly a play of antitheses and conflicts, and this state of conflict is embodied in the presence on stage of two protagonists, each diametrically opposed to the other. Yet as a result of Hegel's famous analysis, much discussion of the play has focused on the question of which of the two protagonists has more of the right on his side. This approach runs the risk of conceptualizing the protagonists too simply into antithetical principles that somehow are, and dialectically must be, ultimately reconciled.

This is not to say that no conceptual issues are involved in the characters of Creon and Antigone. But the issues are too complex to be satisfactorily reduced to a single antithetical formulation. We must avoid seeing the protagonists as one-dimensional representatives of simple oppositions: right and wrong, reason and emotion, state and individual, or the like. Such oppositions have some validity, but it is a validity purchased at the price of oversimplification and ultimately a misunderstanding of Sophocles' sense of the tragic. The characters,

1. For Hegel's treatment of the play see A. C. Bradley, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London 1909) 69–95, with the references there cited. Hegel's views, along with Bradley's essay, are now most easily accessible in *Hegel, On Tragedy*, ed. and trans. A. and H. Paolucci (New York 1962): see esp. 73–74. On the limitations of Hegel's treatment of the play see Victor Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 33 with n.1; F. J. H. Letters, *Life and Work of Sophocles* (London 1953) 159ff.

like the play itself, have many levels that fuse organically, sometimes indistinguishably, into a complex unity; and here the confrontations of the two protagonists create an ever-ramifying interplay between interlocking and expanding issues.

It is the essence and the marvel of works of the classical period that concrete and generic so perfectly meet and unite. In this quality Sophocles is preeminent. In the *Antigone* the characters *are* the issues, and the issues the characters. But the characters are not only issues. They are individuals moving as all men do in a complex entanglement of will and circumstance, passion and altruism, guilt and innocence. Their searching, suffering, growth to understanding, and death give to the philosophical issues substance and the breath of life. Hence they can move us with a statement that does not falsify the intertwining of idea with particular, concept with action, loss with attainment, which forms the structure of our reality.

Recent critics, abandoning the simple thesis-antithesis opposition and looking at the play in terms of the action itself, have made it clear that it is hard to find much pure right on Creon's side, though this is not to say that his fate entirely lacks a tragic dimension or that the conflict is settled merely by a kind of moral default.[2] Antigone, on the other hand, is vindicated by the end of the play but only at the cost of tremendous suffering, her own and that of those closest to her. Indeed, since she disappears a little after the half-way point of the drama, one may wonder whether it is not the gods, Teiresias, and the rights of the corpse that are vindicated rather than Antigone herself.

Antigone and Creon are clearly the central focus of the play, yet together they give the play a double focus. The "double center of gravity" in the work, as one critic has called it,[3] creates a tension and richness that makes it possible for the action to reflect back upon itself

2. The problem of Creon's "tragedy" has been much discussed. C. H. Whitman surely goes too far in asserting that "there is nothing tragic or even morally interesting about him": *Sophocles, A Study of Heroic Heroism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1951) 90. He is not simply a bad man who gets his desserts, for as Ehrenberg (note 1) 59, points out, he does not alienate all sympathy, and he does, toward the end of the play, become increasingly human. For a discussion of Creon's role and character see also A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951) 123ff., who shares Whitman's view. At the other extreme is Letters (note 1) 168ff., who sees Creon as "technically" the hero.

3. R. F. Goheen, *The Imagery of Sophocles' Antigone* (Princeton 1951) 97.

in complex ways. And, as another critic has aptly pointed out, the decisive quality of the moral judgment expressed at the end of the tragedy requires a movement in which there can be complexity sufficient to make the play an adequate artistic expression of the complexity that exists in life.[4]

The complexity lies in part in the fact that the two protagonists, though totally opposed in their views, are nevertheless each bound to the other, "demonically bound" as Karl Reinhardt has put it.[5] Each is necessary to define the other. On the one hand, as C. H. Whitman has well remarked, "Antigone is the balance in which Creon is weighed, and found wanting";[6] on the other, Antigone's harshness would make no sense without Creon's authoritarian willfulness. It is the essence of the tragedy that the one figure seems to generate the other, that the two coexist as complementary parts of a whole. This whole is not necessarily a Hegelian synthesis of two opposing "spiritual substances" but something both infinitely simpler and infinitely more complex, something that is antecedent to and more basic than the conceptual formulations about spirit and absolutes. It is nothing less than the nature of man, his place in the world, and the possibilities and limitations of his actions. Around these issues and derivative from them revolve the antinomies that have been conceptualized in so many different ways: divine versus human law, individual versus state, religious versus secular, private versus public morality.

The conflict between Creon and Antigone has its starting point in the problems of law and justice. At any rate, the difference is most explicitly formulated in these terms in Antigone's great speech on the divine laws (450ff.), a speech that is both confession and defense, both plea of guilt and self-vindication, almost encomium. Against the limited and relative "decrees" of men she sets the eternal laws of Zeus, the "unwritten laws of the gods." She couples her assertion of these absolute laws with her own resolute acceptance of death (460). Thus she begins to extend the conflict outward to issues of wider scope. She chooses the divine command over the human compulsion and rejects life with its compromises for the absolutes of death. In-

4. See C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 66–67.

5. Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*, 3d ed. (Frankfurt a.M. 1947) 74.

6. Whitman (note 2) 86.

deed, in her terms these absolutes are, paradoxically, just the things that "live always" (456–57).

This speech is also the focal point for themes that reverberate throughout the play. Antigone opposes the "decrees" (*kerygmata,* 454) of Creon to the "laws" (*nomima*) of the gods and thus sharpens the issue of what constitutes law (*nomos*). By implication she introduces the distinction between the man-made and the natural, the artificial and the eternally existent. The two words "decree" and "law" have been used confusedly and indiscriminately by Creon (*kerygma,* 162; *nomoi,* 177; *nomoi,* 191; *ekkekeryktai,* 203, etc.); and they now are seen to diverge.

The same divergence occurs with justice (*dike*). Antigone here appeals to the "Justice that dwells with the gods below" (451), whereas Creon is later to define the justice of a man solely in relation to the polis, the state, and to identify justice in private life with that in public life; "For he who is a good man in his domestic affairs will be shown just in the city too" (662–63). The certainty of this identification is severely shaken in the following scene, where the question of justice comes up in the most intimate of Creon's domestic relations and drives a wedge between public and private justice. Creon taunts his son with "going to law" (in Greek, "being at a case of justice," *dia dikes*) with his father (742) and is told in reply that he is mistaken in the matter of what is just (*ta dikaia,* 743). The chorus is to accuse Antigone of having "fallen against the lofty seat of Justice" (854–55) but will exclaim, at the end, to Creon, "Alas, you have seen justice late, as it seems" (1270).

Antigone's unqualified declaration for absolute values thus precipitates a redefinition of some basic moral and ethical categories. They do not fit her and have consequently to be remade. She is "a law to herself," *autonomos* (821); and as she is well aware (460ff.), she must pay the price for standing outside the conventional definitions of law and justice. She challenges human law with an absolute that she backs up with the resolve of her own death, for this is the fullest assertion she can make of the intensity of her moral convictions. She can assert what she is only by staking her entire being, her life. It is by this extreme defense of her beliefs that she rises to heroic and deeply tragic stature; and simultaneously, by the same gesture she makes herself incomprehensible to the other actors, Creon, Ismene, the chorus. Only Haemon, who at a lower level makes and fulfils a similar re-

solve to die, comes close to understanding her; and in his final act, affirming himself truly her betrothed, he is indeed married to her in death. Death is the only possible union of such natures (1240–41):

> A corpse upon a corpse he lies, the unfortunate, having got his marriage portion in Hades' house.

In Antigone's speech on the unwritten laws, emphasis naturally falls upon law and justice, for the setting is a juridical one and Antigone is, as it were, on trial. But in the close-knit fifth-century city-state, "law" and "legality" have a far wider range of application than they would in the more compartmentalized ethics of modern civilization. For Sophocles and his contemporaries they involve the entire public and private life of the citizen, his relations with the gods and with his fellow men, and all the responsibilities, moral, political, and social, implied in those relations.

A sense of this wider realm of conflict is given in Antigone's repeated use of the word *kerdos,* "profit," "gain," in her great speech (461–64). She counts it "profit" to die before her time (461–62), "For whoever lives amid many woes, as I do, how does not such a one win *profit* in dying" (463–64). "Profit," however, is one of the words used throughout the play to characterize Creon's narrowly rationalistic and materialistic view of human motivation.[7] But in Antigone's mouth it carries exactly the opposite significance: emotion, nonrational (though equally firm) determination that willingly accepts or even seeks self-destruction, not self-advancement.

In the face of Antigone's resistance all of Creon's rationalism breaks down and is helpless. "Who is so foolish as to love to die" the chorus said at the announcement of Creon's decree (220). Yet Antigone exults in her foolishness and turns the word back upon her judge: "But if I now seem to you to be engaged in foolish deeds, perhaps I am accused of foolishness by one who is foolish himself" (469–70). In the very first scene of the play Antigone has asked to be left to suffer the consequences of her folly (95–96), and her attitude continues to the end. Hers is the woman's emotional resistance to the ordered male reason of the state. And she reinforces her action by the least rationally com-

7. For the theme of gain and Creon's character, see Goheen (note 3) 15ff. and passim.

prehensible of human acts, the sacrifice of her life. It is not that she acts on unreason but rather that Creon's kind of reason is inadequate to grasp her motives and her nature. This challenge to Creon's supposed rationalism is to make itself felt even after her disappearance from the stage, for the theme of reason and intelligence (*phronein*) dominates the last three hundred fifty lines of the play. Creon is to see too late the mistakes of his ill-founded intelligence (*phrenôn dysphronôn hamartêmata,* 1261), and the chorus' admonition about proud words teaching intelligence in old age ends the play (1350ff.).[8]

Given the close interconnections in Greek civilization among all the major aspects of life—intellect, morality, religion—it is natural that this theme of intelligence should be firmly linked to the problem of man's relation to the gods. In Sophoclean tragedy, as in much of Greek thought before and after Sophocles, it is primarily the realm of the gods which defines the boundaries of what man can know. Where the one realm ends, the other begins, and to overstep the boundary line is a dangerous violation of the things that are. It is a matter of "know thyself" generalized to the human condition as a whole. In this play, as in the later *Oedipus Rex,* knowledge, or the presumption of knowledge, reflects the limits of human power and man's responsibilities to the areas of the unknown, the uncontrollable, the sacred.

To return to Antigone's crucial speech, it is thus significant that in discussing the divine laws, she makes a point of man's not knowing their origin ("and no one *knows* when they appeared," 457). Later in her rapid exchange with Creon she opposes a similar statement of ignorance to his positive assertions about law, right, and piety: "Who *knows* if these things are held pure and holy below?" (521).

Creon understands nothing of the limits on human power and control. For him, to know the ways of men is also to know the ways of the gods; he sees the human realm as exactly coextensive with the divine. He expresses this presumption, with characteristic blindness, in his repeated invocations to Zeus; and these slowly build up in a crescendo of arrogance and disaster.[9]

8. The conflict of Creon and Antigone in terms of rational versus emotional or intuitive modes of apprehension is well discussed by Goheen (note 3) 75ff. And on the *phronein-aphrosynē* motif see also 83–84.

9. On the religious significance of Antigone's Zeus in 450 B.C. see R. C. Jebb's note *ad loc.* in his edition of the play: *Sophocles, The Plays and Fragments:* Part III, *The Antigone* (Cambridge 1891) 89.

His first references to Zeus seem pious enough, though danger signs are tensely present. He first calls upon Zeus (184) after describing the guilt-stained death of the two brothers (170ff.) and asks that the god bear witness to his own principle that the state comes before everything (182ff.). This oath is followed, significantly, by the decree itself, the announcement of a deed that all Greeks would recognize as an unusually cruel and severe punishment, if not an actual violation of accepted religious usage.[10] He next calls upon Zeus (304ff.), also in an oath and when discussing piety and impiety. Yet here he is not even the calm, assured statesman of the earlier passage; hot with anger and perhaps fearing for his own position, he threatens the guard with death and worse if he fails to capture the violator of the decree. What gives this passage special point is the flash of impatience and the intolerant jibe at the chorus' foolishness and old age when they suggest, shortly before (278ff.), that the burial might be the result of divine intervention. Anger and irreverence both mount in Creon when, shortly after Antigone's great speech, he swears her and Ismene's punishment, "even if she is a sister's child, even if she is closer in blood than any who worships Zeus at the altar of our house" (486–87):

ἀλλ' εἴτ' ἀδελφῆς εἴθ' ὁμαιμονεστέρα
τοῦ παντὸς ἡμῖν Ζηνὸς ἑρκείου κυρεῖ. . . .

Literally, the second line goes "closer in blood than the whole altar of Zeus Herkeios" (Zeus who stands in the forecourt as the household god). This statement is outmatched only by his reply to Teiresias, shortly before the tragic reversal (1038–41):

> You will not cover him in burial, not even if the eagles of Zeus wish to snatch him up and carry him off as food to Zeus' throne.

This from the man who first entered with "the gods" on his lips (162). And, a line and a half later, he adds, in a characteristic fusion of the

10. On the Greek view about burying the dead, even enemies, see Bowra (note 4) 64–65, 68. He notes, for instance (92), that the Greeks buried the Persians killed at Marathon and argues persuasively (69–70) that not even Polyneices' treason would justify this violation of the religious code. See also Ehrenberg (note 1) 28ff. and I. M. Linforth, "Antigone and Creon," *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 15, no. 5 (1961) 191–93 and 248. Instructively parallel are Eurip. *Suppliants* 306–13 and 524ff.

intellectual and the religious themes, "For I *well know* that no man can pollute the gods" (1043–44).

It is, then, not by accident that Antigone begins her great speech with Zeus (449ff.):

> *Creon.* Dared you then to transgress these laws?
> *Antigone.* It was not *Zeus* who made these decrees of yours, nor are such the laws that Justice who dwells with the gods below established among men. . . .

Zeus is relevant, of course, because he is the supreme god and, as sky-god, is especially affected by the pollutions involved in the corpse. But as a focal reminder of Creon's *hybris* and, more important, as the fullest single embodiment of the realities of the universe, he is the measure of Antigone's dissent and of her heroism.

The gulf between Creon and Antigone thus becomes immense. It is among the ironies of the play that he who talks constantly of "pollution" and "reverence" (*sebas*) understands them only in the narrowest and least reverent way. He who has risked total pollution of the city in exposing Polyneices' corpse will seek to avoid pollution by the limited expedient of burying Antigone alive (773ff.). (The decree originally demanded death by stoning, 35–36.) It is Antigone, condemned for "impiety" (*dyssebes,* 514, 516), who is far closer to understanding what piety and the gods mean: "In acting piously I have gained [the charge of] impiety" (*dyssebeian eusebousa,* 924). Her very last words in the play reiterate her claim: "See what I suffer, and from whom, reverencing piety" (942–43). Her piety, as her paradox (924) makes clear, is not easy nor easily grasped by others, least of all the chorus (872), who assert that "self-willed passion" destroyed her (875). Yet it is almost an essential part of Antigone's action that it be not understood, that she stand alone against Creon's socially convenient claims of piety, the easy and popular inconsistencies that all agree upon and follow. It is only the tragic character who sees things through to their logical conclusions and so dies. Antigone, like Ajax, rejects life as compromise, gives up existence when it ceases to come up to the measure of the heroic self-image. "For you," she tells Ismene shortly after her great speech to Creon, "chose to live, but I to die" (555). Here both Ismene's gentleness and Creon's self-willed rationality are left furthest behind.

It is again among the tragic paradoxes of Antigone's position that she who accepts the absolutes of death has a far fuller sense of the complexities of life. Creon, who lacks a true reverence for the gods, the powers beyond human life, also lacks a deep awareness of the complexities within the human realm. Hence he tends to see the world in terms of harshly opposed categories, right and wrong, reason and folly, youth and age, male and female. He scornfully joins old age with foolishness in speaking to the chorus (281) and refuses to listen to his son's advice because he is younger (719ff., esp. 726–29). Yet his opposition of old and young is later to be turned against him by Teiresias (1088ff.), and he is, in the end, to be taught by the young son (725–26) who dies, Creon laments, "young with a young fate" (1266).

All these categories imply the relation of superior and inferior, stronger and weaker. This highly structured and aggressive view of the world Creon expresses perhaps most strikingly in repeatedly formulating the conflicts between Antigone and himself in terms of the woman trying to conquer the man (484, 525, 678, 746, 756). He sees in Antigone a challenge to his whole way of living and his basic attitudes toward the world. And of course he is right, for Antigone's full acceptance of her womanly nature, her absolute valuation of the bonds of blood and affection, is a total denial of Creon's obsessively masculine rationality.

Antigone's acceptance of this womanly obligation stands out the more by contrast with Ismene's rejection of it: "We must consider," Ismene says, "that we were born as women with women's nature, and are not such as to fight with men" (61–62). Ismene feels her womanhood as something negative, as a weakness. Antigone finds in it a source of strength. Ismene capitulates to Creon's view; Antigone resists and finds in her nature a potent heroism that cuts across Creon's dichotomizing of things and has its echoes even after her death in the equally womanly, though less significant, death of Eurydice.

It is Antigone's very nature, even more than her actions, which stands in such challenging opposition to Creon. Thus she concludes her first, and most important, clash with Creon with the pointed line: "It is my nature not to share in hating [*synechthein*], but to share in loving [*symphilein*]" (523). Her words not only answer Creon's charge that Polyneices is an enemy and hence deserving of hate not love (522) but also expose more of the fundamental differences between the two protagonists. In the conflict over such basic terms as "law," "piety,"

and "profit" lies much of the movement of the play.[11] The words for "love" and "hate" used by Creon and Antigone (522–23 and passim) have a certain ambiguity. *Echthros,* "enemy," means also personally "hated"; *philos,* "friend," means also an intimately "loved one." Creon simply identifies the two meanings; that is, he identifies personal and emotional love (*philein*) with political agreement (e.g., 187) and hate with political enmity. But Antigone's being and her action place into dramatic conflict the question of who deserves love and who hate. Hence at the end of their first encounter Creon answers Antigone's "It is my nature not to share in hating but to share in loving" with one of his characteristic dichotomies of man-woman, superior-inferior: "Go below then and love them, if love them you must; but no woman will rule me while I live" (524–25).

Creon's definition of man by his civic or political relations alone extends to areas other than love. He can conceive of honor only for benefactors of the state (207–10) and angrily rejects any idea that the gods could honor a traitor (see 284ff.). He again presumes that human and divine—or political and religious—values exactly coincide. Antigone, on the other hand, looks at honor in terms of what is due to the gods (77); and Haemon can find Antigone, a woman and a violator of the ruler's edict, "worthy to gain golden honor" (699).[12]

Not merely human relations are involved in the conflict between Creon and Antigone, but basic attitudes toward the whole of existence. It is the first stasimon, the famous ode on man (332ff.), which marks the first significant expansion of the meaning of the action to this broader level. The ode is not without its ambiguities and ironies, for its praise of man's intellectual achievement is severely qualified in the course of the play. It is preceded, moreover, by several blasts from Creon of very nonintellectual anger; and immediately before, the guard, a simple and conventionally pious man, dilates on the element of chance in human life (328) and exits with a statement of gratitude to "the gods" (331).

11. Goheen (note 3) 17 observes the importance throughout the play of such a "recurrent split of the two protagonists over certain common words" and traces this split at length through diction and imagery.

12. In the phrase "golden honor" (699) is implicit also the money image that especially characterizes Creon's materialistic reasoning. On this image in the play see Goheen (note 3) 14ff. and passim. In this connection too it should be noted that *timē,* "honor," has another meaning in Greek: "price," "value," in a strictly material, calculable sense.

The ode itself is also perhaps not so confident as might at first appear. The adjective that describes man, *deinos,* means not only "wonderful" but also "terrible," "fearful," as several commentators have pointed out.[13] But the greatest ambiguity lies in man himself. Man claims control and domination, yet he cannot control himself, has difficulty in controlling other men, and perhaps cannot even control the natural world. The irony of self-control is pointed up by the word used to describe man's civic and legal "temper" (*orgas,* 356) in the ode, for this word means also "anger" and is so used shortly before in the scene with the guard (*orge,* 280). Similarly the word for "thought" in the ode (*phronema,* 354) signifies also "pride" and has that sense in the ensuing scene with Antigone (459) as well as at other crucial points in the play.

There is little question that the ode reflects much of the optimistic rationalism of Sophocles' time: the Sophistic view of man's ability to work creatively upon his environment and the probably Protagorean concept that the state, the polis, along with law and justice, is a human creation and perhaps the most important stage in man's assertion of himself over against a hostile or indifferent world. The enumeration of man's cultural advances may itself derive from Sophistic culture-histories, or at least from the new rationalistic, anthropological view of man which treats of human civilization as the result of a gradual, slow advance. Similar ideas are already present in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound,* written perhaps some twenty years before the *Antigone.*

Though Sophocles draws heavily on these rationalistic views, he does not necessarily fully approve them. Through this ode he throws them into the dramatic action of the play and allows them to be weighed in the balance of the tragic outcome. It is not that he denies their validity, for he too is obviously much impressed with the range of human achievement. But he can no longer regard progress and a Promethean conquest of nature as having the heroic possibilities that Aeschylus—and perhaps Protagoras—saw in them. Sophocles sees in reason and technical control not simply a source of human freedom, as Aeschylus did, but also a potential source of human bondage and

13. On the multiplicity of meanings involved in deinos see J. T. Sheppard, *The Wisdom of Sophocles* (London 1947) 46–48. Also Goheen (note 3) 53 and 141 n.1 with the references there cited. Scholars have suggested, plausibly, a reminiscence of the far more sinister *deina* of Aeschylus' *Choephoroe,* 585ff.: see Jebb (note 9) *ad loc.,* Ehrenberg (note 1) 61ff., and Linforth (note 10) 196ff.

limitation. And his reflections on this subject are to mature in the *Oedipus Rex* where, it will be recalled, knowledge and intelligence are by no means unambiguous goods, though they are nonetheless inseparable parts of man's endowment.

Thus, to come back to the ode on man, when the chorus takes up the creation of law and justice after the praise of man's other achievements, they say that men may come "now to good, now to ill" (367). He may be "high in his city" (*hypsipolis*) but also "without city" (*apolis*) should he be led to an act of rashness (*tolma*).[14] His nature then, as this rashness or daring suggests even here, contains an irrational or violent and destructive potential. Perhaps in this shift of emphasis Sophocles means to suggest that success in law and justice, the areas that concern relations with other human beings, is more difficult and less certain than control over the lower orders of nature. Though the Sophist Protagoras is probably more optimistic, it is interesting that Sophocles' suggestion of the greater difficulty of law and justice would correspond roughly with Protagoras' emphasis on the difficulty and importance of justice and reverence, the qualities that make it possible for men to unite in cities or societies, in the myth that Plato puts in his mouth (*Protagoras* 320c–323a).

This complex connection between control and human relations has a further significance for Antigone. Her womanly nature, centered on sharing in love, opposes Creon's attitude of domination which stands apart from the otherness both of men and of nature and looks upon them as a potential enemy to be subjugated. Thus it is Antigone the woman—or perhaps, at another level, the woman in him—that Creon must subdue or, in one of his favorite metaphors, must yoke.[15] It is interesting in the light of this opposition that when Antigone seeks a heroic exemplar for herself, she invokes the figure of Niobe, a loving mother but also a human being who is at the same time organically fused with the natural world: she whom "the growth of rock, like intensely winding ivy, subdued" (826–27). Antigone's Niobe belongs both to humanity, with its feelings and sorrows, and to inanimate nature; and she symbolically unites the two realms. Thus the snow and rain are not hostile missiles to be warded off, as in the first stasimon

14. For this interpretation of hypsipolis see Ehrenberg (note 1) p. 64 n.1.
15. See Goheen (note 3) chap. 2, passim.

(356ff.), but are as her own tears, which she feels running down the rocky ridges of what is now her face (828–32):

> Still, as she wastes, the rain
> and snow companion her.
> Pouring down from her mourning eyes comes the water that soaks the stone. (Wyckoff's translation)

Niobe, like Antigone, suffered from excessive love and pride; yet in her, as in Antigone, loneliness and sorrow are transmuted to a higher plane.

It is significant that the limitations in Creon's attitudes are borne in upon him not only in the area of his personal relations but also in language that makes another connection between human relations and the natural world and points toward a view resembling the Niobe image (though less profound), a view in which man does not dominate nature but learns from it sympathetically. Hence in urging his father to yield, Haemon chooses, as examples of yielding, trees that bend in the winter flood rather than straining stiffly against it (712ff.), and he prefaces his advice with a statement about human wisdom (*sophos*, 710) which echoes the praise of wisdom in the ode (365).

To yield is exactly what Creon finds most difficult, and there is perhaps a further irony in his statement after the encounter with Teiresias, "To yield is terrible [*deinon*], but to resist and strike my proud spirit with disaster stands also in [the realm of] the terrible [*deinon*]" (1096–97). Thus when forced by confrontation with the uncontrollable to yield, he echoes the lead-word in the earlier praise of man's power of control: "Many are the wonders [terrors, *deina*], and nothing more wonderful [terrible, *deinon*] than man."

Antigone, who in her own way also refuses to yield, images more fully the greatness of man. But this greatness is measured also against Creon's limitations. The contrast between the two kinds of not yielding is well exemplified in the single, concentrated line with which Antigone cuts through Creon's long rant (473–96): "Do you want anything more than my capture and death?" (497).

The scene with Haemon which follows and first explicitly introduces the yielding motif brings out more fully the limitations of Creon's strength. Though Creon spoke for his son's feelings in the previous scene (569ff.), he nevertheless fears to encounter in Haemon

the same emotional temper and spirit of resistance which he found in his betrothed. He indicates his fears in opening the interview with the question, Are you here *raging* at your father . . . ?", thus applying to Haemon the same verb that he used of the two women earlier (*lyssainōn*, 633; *lyssōsan*, 492; the word itself is not common and occurs only in these two places in the play and, indeed, only twice more in the extant plays). The verb is expressive not only of the way in which Creon regards those who oppose him but also of the areas where he feels himself most exposed and most uncertain. He is obviously reassured at Haemon's "Father, I am yours," the first words that his son, wisely, chooses to utter (635); and he expresses his relief in the expansive speech that follows (639–80), full of his favorite commonplaces about rule and authority.

In another way too the scene suggests that Creon's position is perhaps not so unshakeably firm as might appear. It reveals that Creon in fact relies heavily on the support of others, whether his son or the chorus. He cannot brook disagreement. He cannot, like Antigone, stand alone, and those who disagree he will coerce into agreement. At the same time he lacks the calm definiteness of Antigone and is actually far less reasonable than the raging womanly natures he insults. Indeed, nothing perhaps better illustrates the instability of his supposedly rational and consistent views than his treatment of Haemon here. Reconciliation and praise in the first part of the scene are followed not only by sharp insults in the second but even by the cruel threat to have Antigone put to death in her "bridegroom's" very presence (760–61). In these sudden shifts of mood Creon undermines the rational bases of his action on which rests, in part, his authority. But also he, the ruler, the man of consistent policy, indicates an increasing qualification of the image of man in the first stasimon as the reasoning being, the artificer whose intelligence is shown in the cities he creates and rules.

Another qualification of this ode comes to center on Antigone. The ode included the catching of birds as one of man's triumphs. From the beginning of the play, however, birds battening on the exposed corpse are sinister reminders of Creon's authority (e.g., 29ff.) and hence also of his subordination of religious usage to political decree. Yet it is these birds which carry to Teiresias the warnings about Creon's violation of that to which human control does not pertain. The birds too are the subject of an art (*techne*, 998), prophecy, which

in its sympathetic listening to the voices of nature stands apart from the more systematic arts of control and device (*to machanoen technas*, 365–66) which man has "taught himself."

It is significant, then, that the guard, in describing Antigone's capture, compares her to a bird lamenting its young: "She raises the sharp cry of lament of a mother-bird in bitter grief, as when, in the empty nest, it sees the bed stripped of its nestlings" (423–25). And a little later the guard speaks of "hunting" Antigone (433). Yet though he thus connects his action with the imagery of domination in the preceding ode, he has also shown himself capable of a different attitude in the bird simile, one marked by pity for the hunted creature. At the same time, however, Antigone is the victim and is the one identified with a part of the subjugated natural world (and, as noted earlier, she is herself to deepen this identification in her Niobe simile, 823ff.). The guard, though aware and sympathetic, still allows himself to be forced into the position of the hunter, the controller. Like Ismene, he has good instincts but lacks the force to carry them through (esp. 439–40, "But it is my nature to count all other things as less important than my safety"). He fails where Antigone, his prisoner, succeeds; and her success, in death, has effects that create a drastic change in the attitude of the master-hunter, Creon.

The guard's simile not only underlines the sex of Antigone but also prepares for Creon's far cruder use of the imagery of animal conquest after Antigone's speech (473ff.); there too Creon connects conquests of nature with domination of male over female (484–85, 525). The parallels sharpen the difference between the guard's pity and the master's unfeeling severity.

Thus it is exactly the womanly element in Antigone which Creon cannot grasp. He must reduce her act to terms analogous to his own in order to understand it, and this he does most clearly in the language in which he voices his suspicions about Ismene (though he means his words to apply to Antigone as well):

> φιλεῖ δ' ὁ θυμὸς πρόσθεν ἡρῆσθαι κλοπεὺς
> τῶν μηδὲν ὀρθῶς ἐν σκότῳ τεχνωμένων.
>
> The mind of those artfully devising [*technōmenōn*] nothing honest in the dark is wont to be caught beforehand in its thievishness [literally "as a thief," *klopeus*]. (493–94)

The word "thief" used of Antigone's deed immediately classifies it in Creon's mind with the calculating desire for "gain" (*kerdos*), one of his favorite concepts. The verb "artfully devising" contains the root *techne,* "device," "craft," which, as already noted, figures prominently in the ode on man. But as the techne of the ode on man is answered (in part) by Teiresias' god-directed techne of prophecy, so the reduction of Antigone's motives to a narrowly conceived thieflike calculation is answered, also by the gods, in Creon's cry when he hears his son's voice close to the end: "Am I deceived, thief-like, by the gods" (*theoisi kleptomai,* 1218).

The themes of the birds, techne, and male domination over female are all linked as parts of a single complex, the multiple aspects of control and authority; and in this complex, which involves Antigone's death and the prophetic birds of Teiresias, it is perhaps suggested that the world of nature, to say nothing of the world of man, is neither so helpless nor so easily controllable as the first stasimon might lead one to suppose.

Antigone, as a woman and hunted victim, and Teiresias as interpreter of the signs from the gods and as a helpless, blind old man, are closely related to each other in their attitude of sympathetic relation with this natural world (and the comparison of Antigone to a screaming bird helps reinforce this association). Both have a special reverence for the divine which deeply antagonizes Creon. Both belong to an order of being or a stage of life of which Creon is contemptuous; and yet both in the end are vindicated at Creon's expense.

In putting Antigone to death, Creon has indeed gained his object, solidified his authority, crushed the refractory element that opposed—and this was the only element, so far, that did oppose. He expected men (248, "Who of men [*andrōn*] dared to do this deed") and gain-seeking calculation and finds instead a girl who seeks her only gain in death (461ff.) and looks to the gods, not to men. Rebellion there is, as he feared, but rebellion against a profounder and more deep-seated aspect of himself and his rule than he yet suspects. It is with the vindication of these rebellious areas, the womanly, the divine, the nonrational, that the latter half of the play is largely concerned; and it is perhaps this reason which in part accounts for the increasing prominence of Eros and Dionysus; the mythical embodiments of the least rational or controllable elements in human experience, in the odes of the second half of the play.

The answer to Creon, then, is twofold. In the person of Antigone is revealed Creon's reduction not only of womanly nature but of human nature in general. In his reply to Antigone's speech on the divine laws, Creon uses not only the language of technical control (fire and metallurgy, 474–76) and animal subjugation (the taming of horses, 477–78) but also implicitly compares Antigone to a slave (*doulos,* 479). The progression of the thought is highly significant, for it reveals the link between man's proud conquest of nature and Creon's debasement of man. Antigone's ability to resist the weight of argument and civic authority brought against her is itself a reply, a vindication of the unconquerable dignity and worth of the individual. She replies to the insult of slavery quite specifically, and her answer is the love and devotion of one individual to another under the sanctity of ties that are independent of the artificial aspects of the social order. It is the irreducible humanity of her bond, her refusal to let Polyneices become less than what she has felt him to be, that forms the kernel of her terse reply: "It was no slave [*doulos*] but a brother who died" (517).

The other part of the reply to Creon comes from the subdued realm of nature, wherein the gods are most manifest. This answer too is necessary for the wholeness of the play, for Creon has violated not only personal relations but something in the relation of man to the world, a sense of the sanctity in things, in nature as in man. These realms, the divine and the human, the natural and the divine worlds, fuse in the rapid movement of events which precipitates Creon's disaster: first, Teiresias' birds, then the terrible encounter between Creon and his son. The language used in this latter scene creates an even more decisive and more bitter inversion of the man-nature, human-animal theme. There is here an ironic alternation of tameness and wildness, but fearfully presented at the height of the peripety in Creon's own son. Haemon's voice, Creon cries out, "fawns on me" (σαίνει, 1214); and the verb recalls the terms for animal-like servility both in the ode on man (340, 350–52) and in the exchanges between Creon and Antigone (477–78, 509). Immediately after, however, Haemon is like a wild, untamed animal, with "wild [*agriois*] eyes," spitting, and finally turning on himself in his savagery (1231–36). Like an animal too, he has lost man's proud achievement of speech (354) and seems not to understand his father's words (1230).

Creon's brutalization of his human relationships has thus re-

bounded upon him and with it the tameness and obedience he demands from his own environment. Creon pays through his son for a reduction of man which he has previously inflicted on him. He had totally rejected, or refused to see, any possible love between Haemon and Antigone and thus rejected too the human individuality of his son. In the words "There are other fields for him to plow" (569), he brings the most intimate of human relations, with its traditional sanctities, down to the level of a brutish act and makes a connection too with the attitude in the ode on man (note the emphasis on plowing at the end of the first strophe, 337ff.). This degradation of the marriage tie continues in Creon's cruel taunt to Haemon that Antigone will die "in the presence of her 'bridegroom'" (760–61) and in Antigone's long, ensuing lament that she is "wedding" Acheron (816) and that her tomb is her "bridal chamber" (891). The pattern is fulfilled in Haemon's marriage, in death, to Antigone (1240ff.) with the consequent destruction of Creon's marriage and the son it produced.

Creon thus comes to learn the consequences of his attitudes and actions on two levels, which might be labeled internal and external, the personal realm and the outside world. Internally, through his sufferings in his own most essential relations, those which both define and express what a man is, he learns that one does not devalue the human realm without doing harm to one's own humanity. Antigone, with her absolute valuation of human ties, would then express the fullest development of this humanity and in her Niobe-image rises to almost godlike stature. Creon, having demeaned the sanctity of these ties, is left without any and hence scarcely human, a nonentity, as he says at the end, "existing no more than a nobody," or, as Wyckoff translates, "I who am nothing more than nothing now" (1325).

Externally, through the intervention of the divine powers in the person of Teiresias, Creon learns by coercion that there are areas of existence which cannot or should not be subjected to control and authority. But this compulsion from the realm of the gods and the natural world is at once brought home to him in terms of his own fate, and he is touched by the broader reversals connected with the birds through the animal imagery of his son's attempted parricide and death. Thus the two realms, internal and external, human world and natural world, are inseparably linked, and the play, in its greatness and complexity, is an expression of this unity.

The confounding of tameness and wildness in Haemon's death is

connected with an even more fundamental reversal in the play and with another qualification of Creon's views of civilization. This appears in the theme of shelter. In the second scene with the guard, which follows the ode on man and is an obvious pendant to the first scene in this symmetrically structured play, the guard dwells on his and his companions' exposure to the elements as they watch the body: the force of the winds, the heat, the open air, the barren hills (410ff.). The fact that these details come so soon after the ode is significant, for there shelter from storm and the open air was prominently enumerated among civilized man's achievements (356–59):

> . . . δυσαύλων
> πάγων ἐναίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη. . . .
>
> (Statecraft is his,)
> And his the skill that deflects the arrows of snow,
> the spears of winter rain. (Fitts and Fitzgerald's translation)

A literal translation makes the connection a little more explicit:

> He has taught himself to flee the missiles of frosts of the open air [*enaithreia*] that make hard lodging and the arrows of storm.

The storm described by the guard fills "the open air" (*aither,* 415, 421), and the image of arrows or missiles was used in Creon's previous angry interview with the guard (241, keeping the reading of the mss. with Jebb) and is to be used again by him, also in anger, against Teiresias (1033–34). Creon himself is responsible for a storm of sorts, for the guard begins his second scene with Creon by describing his first interview in terms of "the storm of your threats to which I was subject" (391) before going on to the real storm (417ff.). Combine this with the animal and hunting images (423ff. and 433), and the contrast with the ode is impressive.

That these themes of shelter and exposure have also the broader implications of communal life in general appears from Haemon's cross-examination of Creon (739–40).

> *Creon.* Is not the polis considered as belonging to the ruler?
> *Haemon.* You would exercise a good rule alone, over a deserted [*eremos*] land.

And something of this suggestion is acted out when, subsequently, Creon makes Antigone "deserted," "isolated" (*eremos,* 887, 919), and her cave is in a wild and "deserted" (*eremos,* 773) place. Thus Creon, for all his praise of law, has failed to grasp some of the essential qualities of civilization taken in its broader, more humane sense; and he appears as reversing, as it were, the process of civilization itself in exposing man to the desolation and violence of the world he has supposedly conquered.

This regressive tendency is present in the fundamental situation of the plot itself, the exposure of a man's body to dogs and birds. In the corpse, as in the storm and in Antigone's cave, we are reminded of the reality of the still untamed wildness that lies outside human civilization. Like the plague in the *Oedipus Rex,* the moldering corpse, quickly but effectively described (e.g., 29–30, 205f., 410) makes us uncomfortably aware of something disturbing, offensive, nauseating.

In the Greek view, however, these physically offensive elements have a profounder religious significance. They constitute, as Teiresias brings home, a *miasma,* a "pollution," an infectious taint that is the concrete manifestation of a violation of some religious sanction.[16] The exposed corpse is both an outrage of moral sanctions and a source of real pollution, a possible cause of plague, blight, barrenness, of the outbreak against man of all the uncontrollable and mysterious forces on which his survival depends. When the right relation with these forces is broken, man's very existence is threatened, on the level both of political coherence (1080ff.) and personal happiness (as Creon is to learn).

As leader of the polis, Creon must be concerned with such pollutions; yet it is only superficially that he grasps the significance of a pollution coming from a violation of the divinely established order of things. In his limited concern for the way in which the city will "escape pollution" (776), in the case of Antigone's death and, more markedly, in his hybristic statement about man's not being able to "pollute the gods" (1043f.), he shows his lack of a sense of the larger sphere of which the polis, and every human creation, may be a part.

16. For the significance of the miasma and related ideas in Greek religious thought see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951) 35ff. Also C. Segal, "Nature and the World of Man in Greek Literature," *Arion* 2, no. 1 (1963) 25ff. and 36ff.

Near the very end, in a final utterance about pollution, he conveys his newly gained sense of the limitations of human action: "O harbor of Hades, *hard to purify,* why, why do you destroy me" (1284f.; see also 1142).

Thus the corpse, in its connections with the themes both of shelter and of pollution, serves as an active link between the two aspects of Creon's irreligious attitude, his degradation of man and his disregard of the divine sanctions. The two themes are linked, of course, in Antigone too, for her burial of Polyneices is both a vindication of the divine sanctions and a more authentic statement of the dignity of man than the assertion of human independence and control affirmed by Creon. As the presence of the exposed and animal-torn body makes clear, the purely man-centered magnification of human achievement may involve, paradoxically, a debasement of man.

It is not that the confidence of the first stasimon is utterly negated. The image of man's greatness persists throughout the play, but it persists in the figure of Antigone rather than Creon.[17] The qualification of the view of man implied in the ode only works toward a clearer definition of the wholeness of man, the feminine with the masculine, the weakness and uncertainty that are always there, even in his most splendid achievements, the nothingness in the face of which his greatness is asserted. This greatness, as Sophocles sees it, has not reached its full measure unless is has confronted its own negation in death. This Antigone alone does. Death is merely brushed aside in the ode on man (361–62) and used as a threat of punishment, another instrument of control, by Creon.

Yet here the fates of the two protagonists, Antigone unshakeably firm and accepting death heroically, Creon crushed to "nothingness" (1325), are at extreme polarities. Though the original positions of strong and weak are reversed, the two are still separated each from the other as by an infinite gulf. In the *Oedipus Rex* of perhaps a decade later, Sophocles' statement about the complex interplay of human greatness and human weakness will be more fully unified in a single protagonist. And at the end of his life he will again use the figure of

17. It is interesting in this connection that Whitman (note 2) 91 takes the first part of the ode on man as referring to Antigone, "under the heroic type of humanity, limited by mortality and moral law, but unlimited in the scope and daring of her soul."

Oedipus as his prototype of a still more profound restatement of this complex relation.

The forceful presence of death, whether in the exposed dead body or in Antigone's acceptance of a living death, sharpens the problem of the nature and dignity of man. Death can be a degradation or an affirmation of human value in the face of inflexible necessities. Antigone's death affirms this value not only for herself but also for the dishonored corpse. For her it is still a human figure, still inseparable from a human personality. Creon, in maltreating the corpse, devalues also the image of living man. It is interesting to consider Creon's act in the light of the heightened emphasis on the human form in the mid-fifth century. Sophocles presents a play that centers about the desecration of a human body at the very time that his contemporaries working on the Parthenon were discovering and expressing the beauty and nobility of man's body as it had never been expressed before.

Again, therefore, Creon's act has implications that he himself does not realize. In regarding death as another instrument of control, not as a necessary condition of existence to be approached with compassion and understanding, Creon disvalues his subjects and ultimately himself. He denies that the state has a place for death in this latter, generic sense. Yet at the end he who had imperiously ordered the maltreatment of a body enters, himself carrying a corpse, and one that is "not another's" but his own (1257–60). As a king, he has dismissed or used death only to discover and experience it as a man, mortal and tied to mortal beings. Hence Creon's state-centered view of man reveals its inadequacies in widening areas as the play proceeds and is shown to involve the loss of the full humanity not only of the subject citizen but of the ruler as well.

A political or historical interpretation of a work of the magnitude of the *Antigone* is, of course, inadequate; yet the historical side has some wider ranges of significance. The play, at one level, is almost certainly a statement about the nature and ideals of Athenian democracy. It rejects the autocratic materialism and narrow rationalism implied in Creon's outlook, which restricts man's nature to a functional capacity, reduces him to a member of a political unit only. What Antigone demands, on the other hand, is that the state take into itself the sanctity of blood relations, the value of affection and emotional ties, the uniqueness of the individual. The conception seems not unlike that put forth in Pericles' Funeral Speech:

> It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. (Thucyd. 2.37.1, Jowett's translation)

In such a state an Antigone could exist—perhaps in a fuller way than Pericles intends—demanding her rights and thereby shaping the state after the best elements in herself, making it an expression of her own full humanity.

It has often been suggested, as noted earlier, that Sophocles intended the play, at least in part, as a qualification of the rational optimism of the fifth-century enlightment as expressed in the speculations of Protagoras, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Hippocrates, and Hippodamus of Miletus.[18] It may be too, as Victor Ehrenberg has maintained, that behind the picture of Creon lies some reference to the "proud and austere" Pericles himself, "who with all his belief in humanity was so much less 'human' than, for instance, Sophocles."[19]

But the issues go far beyond the reference to specific men or classes of men. They are concerned with defining that in which man's humanity consists. Man would like to believe, the play seems to say, that he has developed wonderful resources for understanding and commanding his world. Yet man the artificer or deviser is not enough. Thus in the course of the play all the apparent conquests enumerated in the first stasimon prove to have a double edge. The sea, controlled proudly in the ode (335ff.) and for Creon, from his first appearance, boastfully associated with political control (the ship of state: 162ff., 189–90, etc.), returns in subsequent odes in connection with the helplessness of irrational suffering (see 584ff., 953ff., 966ff.), until Creon himself speaks of his disaster, ironically, as a "harbor" (1284). The animals and birds described in the antistrophe (343ff.) become the messengers of the violated divine order of things

18. For the connection of the ode on man with Sophistic and other philosophical speculation in the fifth century, see Ehrenberg (note 1) 61ff.; Goheen (note 3) 91ff., with the references cited in 152 n.28. See also B. M. W. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven 1957) 107ff. and E. A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (New Haven 1957) chap. 3, passim, esp. 66ff.

19. Ehrenberg (note 1) 157.

and, in the imagery connected with Haemon's death, almost the immediate instruments of Creon's doom. Speech and communication (354) degenerate into ranting and insult or the utter, animal-like silence of Haemon at the end. Shelter and the fruits of man's city-creating temper (355–56) are denied the corpse and even the guards who watch it, and are negated also in Antigone's desolate place of burial. Even the conquest of disease (363–64) rebounds on man in the "divine disease" of the storm (425) and, more seriously, in the pollution with which the city "is diseased" as a result of Creon's "thought" or "intelligence" (1015).

It is only death, that alone which man cannot control or "flee," as the ode says (361), which proves the fullest touchstone of man's greatness and the truest means to his assertion of his humanity. The *Antigone* is still bleak and dark by comparison to the sublime finale of the *Oedipus Coloneus* where the hero discovers his greatest powers in his self-guided movements at his call to death. Yet in the *Antigone* too a self-accepted death is the source of what is beautiful and heroic in the play. But if Antigone, with her heroic acceptance of the unknown, of death, most fully vindicates the dignity of man,[20] Creon comes to act out the equally tragic process of becoming fully human. With Antigone's death there comes, through the blindness and helplessness of the seer, the rebirth of Creon's humanity, until he too is plunged amid loss and suffering into his own experience of the unwritten laws that all men must face as mortal beings who sometime encounter the unknown and unknowable. And in his encounter he passes from his communal position as head of state to a loneliness and isolation perhaps more terrible than Antigone's.

Antigone's view, then, for all its idealism, is more realistic, in the full tragic sense, than Creon's. To live humanly, in Sophocles' terms, is to know fully the conditions of man's existence; and this means to accept the gods who, in their limitless, ageless power (604ff.) *are* those conditions, the unbending, realities of the universe.

Sophocles never says that to accept the conditions is easy. Yet he seems also to assert that man not only must accept the conditions but

20. See Whitman (note 2) 82–83: "Antigone, with her precise and unshakeable perception of divine law, is the embodiment of the heroic individual in a world whose institutions cannot change but have usurped a right to existence apart from the justifiable interest of the citizens. For such an individual every moment of life is tragic. . . ."

has, or finds, the strength to do so. Even Creon, though far from the broken but still imperious Oedipus at the end of the *Tyrannus*, does not kill himself, crushed as he is. He suffers and endures.

It is in his appreciation of human greatness that Sophocles is the true contemporary of the statesman who sponsored the new Acropolis and Parthenon and of the thinker who said that "Man is the measure of all things." But he is a universal tragic poet in his deeply felt knowledge that man's human qualities, in all their greatness, involve recognition of the unyielding factuality of "the things that are," the gods. The first stasimon is justly described as a praise of man; but exactly what in man Sophocles is praising can be seen only in terms of the entire play. In another chorus the elders sing, "Nothing of magnitude comes into the life of mortals without suffering and disaster" (613–14).

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