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Creon's Role in Sophocles' Antigone

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CREON'S ROLE IN
SOPHOCLES' ANTIGONE

by

John Joseph Kilgallen, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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VITA AUCTORIS

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEM AND METHOD

Most theses contain implicitly within themselves a flickering hope that they have contributed something in the field of knowledge. In dealing with tragedy, our end product should be a greater understanding of the meaning of the plays or play which we treat—here, the Antigone of Sophocles. The end of a play is its successful production, a success which entails the catharsis of pity and fear as the main object.¹ In order that the play, be it Antigone or any other, achieve its purpose, it is necessary that the director and the actors understand the play in detail, and, most of all, realize the prominence of each player as intended by the playwright. We feel that the Antigone deserves special consideration along the latter line, regarding the personality of Creon; indeed, we feel that he is the central figure, the protagonist of the play. Our objective attempt, however, will merely

¹Cf. Aristotle, Poetics, XIII.2, 1452b, in Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, by S.H. Butcher, 4th ed., (1951), p. 45.

be a definition of the status of Creon in the Antigone; our method will be to measure him according to the standards of a protagonist. If he fails, then we have the assurance of the unequivocal pre-dominance of Antigone and of the subordinate, but necessary role of Creon.

The question of protagonist in this play is not easily answered; many scholars have responded differently to the query. Professor Woolsey says in passing, "neither Creon's wrong...nor a few faint words of praise can wipe out their decided condemnation of the heroine for her want of wisdom."² Professor Kirkwood also applies the title of protagonist to Antigone: "Critics who want an Antigone against whom no breath of criticism can be uttered tend to undervalue the interplay between the protagonist and her sister. But we shall not understand Sophocles' protagonists by closing our eyes to these aspects of their portrayal..."³ Earlier he had said, "It (the Antigone) is of a somewhat different structural type, for

²Theodore Woolsey, The Antigone (Hartford, 1879), pp. lv-lvi.

³Gordon MacDonald Kirkwood, A Study of Sophoclean Drama (New York, 1958), p. 121.

in it a direct encounter between the principals is the central theme of the play...indeed, in the emotional sense Antigone dominates the play...the double nature of the play is nonetheless clear; there are two persons whose fates contribute to the tragic meaning...⁴ Another who upholds the dominance of Antigone is Professor D'Ooge: "In Antigone the heroine is a representative of the latter class."⁵ Professor Bates, too, is quite adamant in his opinion: "When one stops to consider the dramatis personae he finds that the principal character is, as it should be, Antigone. She dominates the play...one cannot imagine the play named for Creon."⁶ Along the same lines, A.J.A. Waldock maintains, "Call it Creon, it is sometimes said, and every difficulty will be seen as unreal. This seems to me a counsel of despair. Good acting can do much for Creon, but there are limits to what acting can do, and I doubt whether the best acting in the world could turn the

⁴Ibid., pp. 51, 43.

⁵Martin L. D'Ooge, Sophocles Antigone (Boston, 1888), p. 6.

⁶William Nickerson Bates, Sophocles (Philadelphia, 1940), p. 88.

Antigone into Creon's play. No; the Antigone is rightly named."⁷ Another adherent of this opinion is Victor Ehrenberg who, in discussing Antigone and Oedipus Rex, asserts, "We are fully justified in concentrating on the two tragedies set apart and the character of the king in either play. It is of less importance in this context, though we shall not forget it, that Creon is not the hero of the play while Oedipus is."⁸ F.J.H. Letters makes passing reference to the fact that Antigone "is the heroine."⁹ Cedric Whitman is quite definite in his choice: "Bowra...since he finds Antigone and Electra innocent, is constrained to draw the moral of these plays not from the tragedy of the protagonists, but from the punishment of the villains, Creon, Clytaemnestra, and here paramour—a result more fitting for melodrama."¹⁰ Finally, we note the division of parts given by M. Croisset: "Protagoniste:"

⁷A.J.A. Waldoock, Sophocles the Dramatist (Cambridge, 1951), p. 123.

⁸Victor Ehrenberg, Sophocles and Pericles (Oxford, 1954), p. 53.

⁹F.J.H. Letters, The Life and Work of Sophocles (London, 1953), p. 157.

¹⁰Cedric H. Whitman, Sophocles (Cambridge, 1951), p. 28.

Antigone, Hémon; deuteragoniste: Ismène, garde, Tirésias, messagers; tritagoniste: Créon, Eurydice."¹¹

On the other hand, we note opinions which either completely favor Creon or suggest some symptoms of a problem about the protagonist. If G. Kirkwood's position is studied carefully,¹² we find that he allows of two main characters, though only of one protagonist. Tending towards a somewhat similar position, J.C. Opstelten first remarks, "The reason is that tragic suffering consists of a conflict, and, as such, appeals to the heroic sense in man, whether that heroic sense be a desire for self-preservation (Ajax) or an heroic surrender to something greater than man (Antigone),"¹³ but later refines, "In the last part of the play, the figure of Creon assumes a more and more central position."¹⁴

¹¹Alfred and Maurice Croisset, Histoire de la Littérature Grecque, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1935), III, 254. Cf. R.C. Jebb, Sophocles Antigone, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1891), p. 7, where he has the same distribution of roles except that "Eurydice" is taken also by the protagonist instead of by the tritagonist.

¹²Cf. page 2.

¹³J.C. Opstelten, Sophocles and Greek Pessimism, trans. by J.A. Rose (Amsterdam, 1932), p. 24.

¹⁴Ibid., 100.

W.J. Oates, too, seems to agree with Opstelten, "Creon is distinctly a tragic figure...Creon gains in stature at the conclusion."¹⁵ Another who takes a middle position says, "The play is rightly called Antigone: for she is the most important figure in it; but, so far as composition is concerned, it deals with Creon even more than with her."¹⁶ Championing more the cause of Creon, Blaydes remarks, "In many places resembling Oedipus, his (Creon's) character well befits the tragic hero."¹⁷ Norman DeWitt, claiming that we are led astray in the matter of heroes by our acclamation of martyrs (and, thus, of Antigone), states: "It is Creon who is technically the hero of the play."¹⁸ Robert Goheen, in his valuable treatment of Sophoclean imagery, first talks of the "two protagonists";¹⁹ then he concludes: "...there

¹⁵ Whitney J. Oates, The Complete Greek Drama, ed. by W.J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York, 1938), I, 422.

¹⁶ D.W. Lucas, The Greek Tragic Poets (London, 1950), p. 127.

¹⁷ F.H.M. Blaydes, Sophocles (London, 1859), I, 442, though he earlier states, "the heroine of the play is undoubtedly Antigone," p. 440.

¹⁸ Norman DeWitt, "Character and Plot in the Antigone," CJ, XII, (March, 1917), p. 394.

¹⁹ Robert Goheen, "Imagery of Sophocles' Antigone" (Princeton, 1951), p. 98.

can be no doubt that Creon is the more closely developed and dramatically dominant character...Creon...comes closest to embodying in himself a full attitude toward the tragic world we have seen unfolded."²⁰ Finally, the most central energetic proponent of Creon, H.D.P. Kitto, says, "there is not one central character but two, and that of the two, the significant one to Sophocles was always Creon."²¹

Here, then, is a representative sampling of opinions as to the protagonist of Antigone. Our main purpose has been to show briefly the problem that has arisen in the interpretation of this play; hence, we have only cited those authors who have explicitly mentioned something about "hero" or "protagonist." Indeed, many others in treating different topics implicitly give their opinions on this problem, most of them championing Antigone. It is this diversity which has given rise in our thesis to a re-examination of the question, at least from a limited point of view. The general and factual difficulties, accompanying the choice of Antigone as protagonist, may be expressed rather succinctly in the

²⁰Ibid.

²¹H.D.P. Kitto, Greek Tragedy (London, 1939), p. 123.

words of Professor Kitto:

The Antigone is accused, though more gently, of the same fault as the Ajax: the heroine drops out half-way through and leaves us to do our best with Creon, Haemon, and their fortunes.

We must recognize that if there is a fault it is a radical one, due to deliberate choice and not to oversight or to the inability of Sophocles to cope with a difficult situation. It is inevitable that Antigone disappear, but it is not inevitable that so little should be said in the Exodos about her, that her lover's corpse but not hers is brought back, that Creon should at such length lament his own fate, least of all that Eurydice should be so unexpectedly introduced in order to kill herself immediately. Why Eurydice?...She is only relevant to Creon. Clearly the close of the play is all Creon, deliberately so, for there is less of Antigone than might have been...we may note that Creon's part is half as long again as Antigone's, a point which is less mechanical than it sounds, and that it is the more dynamic part...most of the dramatic forces used in the play are deployed against Creon--the slight reserve with which the chorus receives his edict, the news that he has been defied, and that too by a woman, the opposition of Haemon, the disapproval of the city, the supernatural machinery of Teiresias, the desertion of the chorus, the death of Haemon, the death of Eurydice...The chief agent is Creon; his is the character, his the faults and merits, which are immediately relevant to the play...²²

These objections and problems of Professor Kitto (and he is not alone in many of them)²³ we feel demand a re-evaluation of the

²²Ibid., 123-126.

²³N. DeWitt, p. 394; another solution is offered by the term "diptych," used in Kirkwood's A Study of Sophoclean Drama, p. 42.

play, with the result that we shall, as we mentioned before, measure Creon for the size of its protagonist.

Our method of approach will be twofold: first, we shall ask and answer the question whether Creon might be worthy of the title, protagonist; secondly, we shall inquire whether Creon is truly the protagonist of this play. Since the opposition to Creon comes on both levels, we must make some attempt to handle both aspects. But our exposition in the succeeding chapters will make clear our procedure as well as possible.

We would like to take up briefly now one of the problems that has been raised against Creon and which will not be answered in either of the following two chapters. The question is often put this way, "If Creon is the protagonist, why is the play called Antigone?" Certainly the custom of the stage over the centuries validates this objection and we must try to answer it. Robert Goheen offers a solution: "Antigone gives her name to the play probably because she is the more unusual creation and because she finally most represents the right in the complicated interplay of ends and means which the play presents."²⁴ However, one might

²⁴Goheen, p. 98.

cite the words of A.E. Haigh to the effect that: "we find that of three or four hundred titles of Greek tragedies which are still preserved, all but about twenty fall into two classes—those which are called after the chorus, and those which are called after the leading personage...But by far the most ordinary kind of title is that which consists merely of the name of the chief personage."²⁵

Should not, then, the leading person in the Antigone be she who gives her name to the play? We can note two objections to this criticism. First, Mr. Haigh immediately cites an exception which is valuable to us: "Sometimes, however, as in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, the person of highest rank, and not the person of most importance in the action, gives the designation of the play enacted..."²⁶ Not because of her rank, but because of the unique qualities she portrays, as mentioned by Goheen, does Antigone designate the play. Also, we note an ancient reason why Antigone gives her name to the tragedy. In the Argument of the play, Salustius writes, "The drama receives its naming from Antigone who

²⁵A.E. Haigh, The Tragic Drama of the Greeks (Oxford, 1896), p. 396.

²⁶Ibid., 396-397.

supplies the subject."²⁷ It may seem a prejudice that the translation of παρεχούσης τὴν ὑπόθεσιν is given as "subject." Yet, we find that in the Oxford Classical Dictionary, "hypothesis," in its strictest meaning signifies subject, not necessarily implying, therefore, a dynamic cause of action.²⁸ But one who "supplies the subject," or hypothesis, is not necessarily indicative of the hero or protagonist of the play. Thus, Salustius, instead of giving proof that Antigone is the protagonist, really just gives a reason for the naming of this play, a reason we would not have otherwise guessed. With these replies of Salustius, Haigh and Goheen, we can see that there is no definite designation of Antigone as protagonist simply because she has given her name to the play.

As a final note to this chapter, we mention that many of the difficulties in interpretation, such as have been seen even in the few varying opinions given above, come from a general theory of tragedy, of the seven plays of Sophocles, or of hamartia. No

²⁷Salustius, "Hypothesis," Sophoclis Fabulae, ed. by A.C. Pearson (Oxford, 1953). τὸ δὲ ὄραμα τὴν ὀνομασίαν ἔσχεν ἀπὸ τῆς παρεχούσης τὴν ὑπόθεσιν Ἀντιγόνης.

²⁸Oxford Classical Dictionary, ed. by M. Cary (Oxford, 1949), p. 445, s. "hypothesis."

doubt these new theories are fashioned a posteriori; nonetheless, the exposition of them is usually based on a presentation of lines which accord with the thesis in question. Thus, granted Whitman's new notion of hamartia, we are left with only one possible choice as to the hero of Antigone. We do not deny the value of Professor Whitman's contribution; rather we wish to look at the single play, Antigone, precisely at the points whence he would draw his principle and there begin to study with him, and indeed with all others, the lines of Antigone.

The plan then is clear. We are asking only two questions, "can he be the protagonist?" and "is he the protagonist?"; the latter will be answered on a primarily interpretative, not structural level. Certainly there are many other interesting and valuable questions to answer in the Antigone; but we must insist upon rigidity of intention and procedure so that we may, in the space allowed, arrive at some suitable and worthwhile conclusion about

²⁹ Cf. C. Whitman, pp. 8, 9; also, J.C. Opstelten, pp. 3, 4, 27, 76-77 and Kirkwood, pp. 169-170, 177. Also, for a solution along the structural method, cf. Kirkwood: "The diptych is a deliberate form, not a failure of a form. Whether the diptych plays are failures is of course another question." p. 46.

a most striking and argued subject.

CHAPTER II

CREON: HERO OR NO

Many writers and editors believe that Creon not only is not the protagonist of Antigone, but that he cannot be its focal point. Thus, before answering any questions as to Creon's role in the Antigone, we must decide whether he is capable of playing the most important role. If he is not so capable, then the task of defining his position becomes so much the easier; if he is of tragic stature, then our attitude towards him must broaden with his tragic personality. Since, however, most of the analysis of Creon has been, and still is, negative, we must answer the most crucial of the objections raised against him. But in so doing, we will affirm the good in him, precisely in denying the bad or malicious. Thus, our method has a double goal: to deny what is unreasonable in Creon's character, to affirm what is really meant and intended in his words and actions.

To determine, however, whether a man has the makings of a particular type of personality demands that we have a norm by

which we may come to a legitimate conclusion about the person in question. For the present, we prefer to use Aristotle's theory. Granted that there are many adversaries to the Poetics, still the test of the ages fortifies this work and makes it more trustworthy than less tried and newer adaptations. Let us apply these norms to the personality of Creon.

The definition of the protagonist is found in Aristotle's words:

(Tragedy)...should imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation. It follows clearly, in the first place, that the change of fortune presented must not be the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity: for this neither moves to pity nor to fear; it merely shocks us. Nor, again, that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity...Nor again, should the downfall of the utter villain be exhibited...There remains, then, the character between these two extremes—that of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous—a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families. The change of fortune must not be from bad to good, but reversely, from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error, or frailty in a character either such as we have described, or better than worse.¹

¹Aristotle, Poetics, XIII₄, 1453a—XIII₂, 1452b in Butcher, p. 44. ...δεῖ (τραγωδίαν) ταύτην φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν εἶναι μιμητικὴν (τοῦτο γὰρ ἴδιον τῆς τοιαύτης μιμήσεως ἐστίν), πρῶτον

We have here the following elements: the protagonist must move to pity and fear; he must be a noble or good man, but not eminently so; he must have some cause of failure, something less than vice or depravity; he must be highly renowned and prosperous. It is easy to see that, if the last three notions are fulfilled, the first will likewise obtain. Let us, then, begin with a decisive discussion of the second idea, that the protagonist must be a good

μὲν ὁπλον ὅτι οὔτε τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς ἄνδρας δεῖ μεταβάλλοντας φαίνεσθαι ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν, οὐ γὰρ φοβερόν οὔδ' ἐλεεινὸν τοῦτο ἀλλὰ μίαιρόν ἐστιν· οὔτε γὰρ τοὺς μοχθηροὺς ἐξ ἀτυχίας εἰς εὐτυχίαν...οὐδ' αὖ τὸν σφόδρα κνηρόν ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταπίπτειν...ὁ δὲ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνη, μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ ὁδῷ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἷον οὐδίοιους καὶ θυέστης καὶ οἱ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων γενῶν ἐπιφανεῖς ἄνδρες. ἐνάγκη ἄρα καὶ μεταβάλλειν οὐκ εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν, μὴ διὰ μοχθηρίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν μεγάλην ἢ οἴου εἶρηται ἢ βελτίονος μᾶλλον ἢ χείρονος.

For other help in this, cf. Gerald Else, Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument (Leiden, 1957): "the plot of the best tragedy...must be (a) single, not double, (b) go from prosperity to misfortune, and (c) spring from a hamartia." p. 391; "Tragic fear, like tragic pity, is based on the broader feeling of community with the hero.. he is 'like us,' one of us." p. 372; "...the hero must fall somewhere between good and average; high enough to awaken our pity but not so perfect as to arouse indignation at his misfortune; near enough to us to elicit our fellow-feeling, but not to forfeit all stature." p. 377-378.

man. The flaw will be taken up after that.

In general we might note that, given thirty authors, we will have thirty different adjectives, thirty degrees of intense adverbs to describe the personality of Creon. Though we do not wish to waste time, we believe it profitable to express the varied value judgments offered by commentators to the readers of Antigone.

We find such statements as, "but only when a man has wilfully set his face towards evil, when he...like Creon in the Antigone has been guilty of obdurate impiety, is a moral darkening inflicted on him in judicial anger";² again, "Haemon urges...the beauty and dignity that would be in Creon's control of a cruel passion born of absolute power, the moral hideousness of tyranny."³ Earlier criticism took the position that "with him (Creon), selfish aggrandizement is the mainspring of action";⁴ or again, "In Creon we recognize a man of a haughty, imperious temper, irritable, impatient, obstinate, self-willed, overbearing and

²S.H. Butcher, Some Aspects of the Greek Genius (London, 1891), p. 115.

³Robert Tyrrell, Essays on Greek Literature (London, 1909), p. 60.

⁴Theodore A. Buckley, Sophocles, 2nd ed. (New York, 1892), p. 11.

harsh; a perfect ideal of the despot, who is feared by all, who acknowledges no will but his own, and who expects his subjects to be the blind instruments of that will; consequently an advocate of principles, which must have rendered his character especially hateful to an Athenian audience."⁵ In a passing reference, Creon's tyrannical nature is implied: "The conservative (Sophocles) could not conceive that a democratic politician who had achieved a unique position could possibly fail to take advantage of it and become a tyrant."⁶ In the most recent commentary on the play we find the following criticisms:

In the solemn opening speech there is nothing palpably wrong; we later realize that even in this first speech... he is just a little too pompous, too given to maxims, too eager to justify himself... Creon's impatience with the guard, his futile anger at his report, his immediate suspicion of bribery, and his long tirade on the evils of money, reveal with merciless clarity his want of dignity and self-confidence. We know now that Creon, in spite of the grandiose nature of his first speech, is a man of little stature... Creon launches on an elaborate vindication of his course of action and a denunciation of insubordination. But the finale of the speech is nothing more dignified than the fear 'lest we be called the inferiors of women'... Creon, angry and illogical, takes refuge in explicit tyranny... Creon is completely broken; in his kommos

⁵Blaydes, p. 441.

⁶T.B.L. Webster, Political Interpretations in Greek Literature (Manchester, 1948), p. 52.

at the end of the play there is nothing but despair, self-abasement, and recognition of his error and folly.⁷

Another important indictment against Creon may be summed up in the following words, "...this fellow (the guard)...does not take his insignificance and Creon's formidableness seriously at all, the reason being that his humor rests on a feeling of superiority and that he gets this feeling from a belief in genuine and lasting realities against which, in the last resort, every form of power that is false and self-assumed must look like a grotesque pose that is bound to lead to ruin...here the undying values are hidden under the triviality of a man out of the common people, but, for that very reason, they more powerfully put to shame the man who imagines himself almighty--the vanity on which his gloria mundi is built."⁸ Professor Bates also has some unflattering description of Creon: "This speech again illustrates well the pettiness of the king...He distrusts himself...on the one hand we have the petty, rancorous Creon, resentful and fearful that his authority will not

⁷Kirkwood, pp. 122-124, 127.

⁸Opstelten, p. 227.

be respected...one cannot imagine the play named for Creon."⁹

Again we find, "He is a narrow bigot...wholly wrapped up in strict and formal rules of statesmanship...and sooner than endure to be called 'weaker than woman' he will risk the loss of everything."¹⁰

A.J.A. Waldock gives a scathing interpretation of Creon's personality: "Antigone is of tragic stature; Creon does not approach within hail of it. He is, in essence, an uninteresting man, commonplace in all but his obstinacy—that, it is true, is on a dangerous scale. But he talks more prosily than any other character in Sophocles. His maxims are consistantly platitudinous, his lectures must have set off many yawns...as for his reasoning powers, they are puerile...Creon's remorse, strictly speaking, is contrived...it is by no means dramatically established, the processes of it are non-existent."¹¹ Ehrenberg, too, attacks

Creon: "Creon is living in a world which has no room whether for human magnanimity and greatness or for the unwritten laws of the

⁹Bates, pp. 76-88.

¹⁰Haigh, p. 157.

¹¹Waldock, pp. 123-124.

gods, because the power of the State has become an instrument of totalitarian politics...There is an old man, proud of his brain as well as his power, relying on nobody and nothing but himself as the ruler...He is the type, only especially important because of position and power...¹² Sir Maurice Bowra also offers criticism:

"Creon, we feel, does not hold his views with much conviction.

The maxims flow too easily to carry much weight. Creon advances them with such glibness that we soon suspect him of trying to make a good impression or wonder if he does not deceive himself."¹³

"Not Antigone, but Creon, is a bold, and at the same time, a stupid innovator," is one conclusion of F.J.H. Letters.¹⁴ Another pungent writer of modern acquaintance, basing his conclusions on his new theory of hamartia, says, "...there is nothing tragic or morally interesting about him...He is puny...Creon is the new version of the Atreidae. He is more subtle, but he is still the illegal ruler...he addresses Antigone...as his slave...His quick-

¹² Ehrenberg, pp. 73, 57, 65.

¹³ Maurice Bowra, Sophoclean Tragedy (Oxford, 1944), p. 69.

¹⁴ Letters, p. 174.

ness to wrath, his rejection of criticism, his suspicion of corruption among the people, his resentment of women, and his demand for utter servitude all find their parallels in the familiar habits of the great Greek tyrants."¹⁵

Such, then, is a representative sample of the criticism attached to the personality of Creon. In all fairness, we must admit that not all those cited above are completely against the king; often, they have saving things to say in his regard. But the general tenor cannot be disregarded, and the conclusion often is implicit that Creon could not be a tragic hero of this, or of any other tragedy. On the other hand, there are at least some who, though considering Antigone the protagonist of the play, still grant much to the character of Creon, realizing in this portrait a great degree of goodness and substance. These authors we shall note in a more advantageous place later in this work.

As is apparent, we cannot afford to plunge ahead blindly and ignore the opinions of the past and present; rather we must offer a plausible answer to these direct objections. It is precisely in answering these difficulties, however, that we can best establish

¹⁵Whitman, pp. 89-91.

the goodness of Creon. Let us then look to the two key notions implicit or explicit in many of the adversaries of Creon: the twin facets of tyranny.

The first fact we wish to discuss is the decree of the non-burial of Polyneices.¹⁶ Here there is a vital distinction to be made. That Creon should have allowed the burial of Polyneices is a tenable position; tenable, that is, if one understands the meaning of "should." That the refusal of burial was repulsive to most people at this particular time, and therefore, that burial should have been granted, can be conceded. But that the decree of Creon had no binding power, that it rested on no other similar decrees, that it was completely unjust (not merely unwise in this case) we cannot wholly believe. Let us first note the statement of Professor D'Ooge who says, "The only limitation of this custom (that a body had to be buried) seems to have been the κοινός Ἑλλήνων νόμος, which forbade interment within the borders of their native of sacrilegious persons and of traitors who had borne arms against

¹⁶Cf. Bayfield, The Antigone of Sophocles, 2nd ed. (London, 1950), p. xxvii: "at the same time the service which she rendered was one demanded by her religion...No man could have the right to forbid the performance of such an office, and if Creon presumed to do so, the responsibility for the conflict...was solely his."

their fellow citizens. But against this practice the moral sense of the people grew gradually more and more repugnant."¹⁷ Also, the ninth book of Plato's Laws can offer us some material. In this section, Plato, eager to reaffirm the "ancient tale" of how any deliberate slaying of fellow citizen is drastically punishable, notes the measures to be employed: "the officers of the judges and magistrates shall kill him and cast him out naked at an appointed cross-roads outside the city; and all the magistrates, acting on behalf of the whole State, shall take each a stone and cast it on the head of the corpse...and after this they shall carry the corpse to the borders of the land and cast it out unburied, according to law."¹⁸

In support of Plato, M. Bowra mentions that, "He (Creon) proposes to punish the dead man after death, and in this he follows not the custom but his own theories. Such a punishment is unusual

¹⁷D'Ooge, p. 4.

¹⁸Plato, Laws, ix, 873b, ed. by Robert G. Bury (London, 1926) II, 265. οἱ μὲν τῶν δικαστῶν ὑπηρεταὶ καὶ ἄρχονταὶ ἀποκτείναντες, εἰς τεταγμένην τρίοδον ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, λίθον ἕκαστος φέρων, αἱ δὲ ἀρχαὶ πᾶσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ νεκροῦ γυμνοῦ βάλων ἀφοσιούτω τὴν πόλιν ὄλην, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο εἰς τὰ τῆς χώρας ὄρια φέροντες ἐκβαλλόντων τῷ νόμῳ ἄταφον.

but it is not unique. For Plato, another theorist, ordains that the slayer of kinsmen--and such Polyneices was--shall be cast out of the land unburied (Laws ix, 873c). When he prescribes the same punishment for the impious and for robbers of temples and parricides (Laws x, 909c; xii, 960b), he may be called in to support Creon's decision.¹⁹ Professor Jebb offers a good criticism in noting that the action of Creon is more like that of Hippias than in accord with the constitutional character of the laws sanctioned by the Ecclesia.²⁰ Yet, on the contrary, we have the example of the surreptitious burial of Themistocles in 459B.C., just sixteen or so years before Antigone. In this regard, Thucydides tells us: "His family say that his remains were carried home at his own request and buried in Attica, but secretly; for he had been accused of treason and had fled from his country, and he could not lawfully be interred there."²¹ Moreover, D.W. Lucas, in founding his

¹⁹Bowra, p. 70

²⁰Jebb, p. xxiv.

²¹Thucydides, History, A, 1386, ed. and trans. by E. Jowett (Oxford, 1881), I, 87. τὰ δὲ ὅσα φασὶ κομισθῆναι αὐτοῦ οἱ προσήκοντες οἴκαδε κελεύσαντος ἐκείνου καὶ τεθῆναι κρύφα Ἀθηναίων ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ· οὐ γὰρ ἐξῆν θάπτειν ὡς ἐπὶ προβοσίῳ φεύγοντος.

statement that "it was the Athenian practice to refuse burial in Attic soil to traitors,"²² cites the example of Antiphon and Archeptolemus after the revolution of 411B.C.²³ We also learn that the old Draconian Law or Code allowed that a body of a traitorous citizen should not be buried in Attic soil, and this under pain of death.²⁴ Finally, Lysurgus, the orator, in his famous speech Leocrates, mentions that Phrynichus the traitor was not allowed burial.²⁵ From this evidence it may be concluded that Creon at least had some examples which would make his judgment consonant with both prior and subsequent history. This point is relatively minor in itself; yet, its easily being forgotten can lead authors to unwarranted claims of tyranny against Creon, which claims can obscure the fundamental judgment on his character.²⁶

²²Lucas, pp. 23-24; cf. "notes," n. 30, p. 233.

²³Antiphon, "Vita Antiphontis," Orationes et Fragmenta, ed. by Theodore Thalheim (Lipsiae, 1914), pp. xv-xvi.

²⁴J.T. Sheppard, Aeschylus and Sophocles (New York, 1927), p. 44.

²⁵Lysurgus, Leocrates, 112-113, Selections from the Attic Orators, ed. by E.E. Genner (Oxford, 1928), p. 244.

²⁶Cf. Hamlet, where the condemnation of the hero's attempt for the throne and the life of Claudius as unjust destroys the character of Hamlet. Such a judgment is false and harmful.

With this point explained, let us go on to consider the other facet of Creon's tyranny, his lack of right reason in his command.

To put the point succinctly, those who oppose Creon say that his attitude has no basis as firm as that of Antigone; rather, he is unreasonable, completely so.²⁷ His arguments are illogical, his viewpoint is purely materialistic and selfish, his desires are essentially self-centered. Our aim here is to show that Creon did have solid grounds for his position, for his anger and obstinacy, that he was not so selfish as he may appear.

Early critics say that "Creon has been regarded by some as a tyrant in his nature, but this is by no means so. As another has remarked, he began with good intentions."²⁸ Again, in the introduction he offers to Antigone, Whitney Oates says, "Creon is distinctly a tragic figure who holds firmly to what he believes to be right and who has no doubts as to the absolute validity of his beliefs...Creon gains in stature at the conclusion because he realized his guilt and assumed responsibility for it."²⁹ One of

²⁷Cf. pp. 13-18.

²⁸Woolsey, p. vii.

²⁹Oates, p. 422.

Creon's partisans is D.W. Lucas: "All the same, Creon is no ignoble character. Creon was no merely vindictive tyrant; he did not refuse Polyneices burial out of personal hatred."³⁰ We also can profit from the statement of Lewis Campbell that "the ear of the spectator, although strained to the uttermost with pity and fear for the heroic maiden whose life when full of brightest hopes was sacrificed to affection and piety, has still some feeling left for the living desolation of the man whose patriotic zeal, degenerating into tyranny, brought his city to the brink of ruin and disaster..."³¹ Professor D'Ooge comments, "It is not in a spirit of simple wantonness surely that Creon proclaims his decree, but as the result of short-sightedness and failure to weigh carefully all the circumstances."³² H.D.F. Kitto remarks, "...Creon, one who was excellent in some ways, as a statesman, yet failed as a man."³³ Finally, we can consider the remarks of

³⁰Lucas, p. 125.

³¹Lewis Campbell, Sophocles, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1879), I, xvi.

³²D'Ooge, p. 7.

³³Kitto, p. 145.

Robert Goheen:

He definitely is not a simple figure of baseness or villainy of intent, as contrasted to a purity of motive in her (Antigone)...By this deeply ironic, two-leveled manner of presentation we are, I feel, reminded that the things in which Creon genuinely believes—civic order, filial duty, discipline, the duty of the individual to the social organization—are genuine qualities and true necessities for men in terms of society. We are not, that is, led to deny these values or the needs, but we are required to suspect their self-sufficiency, their validity when appealed to as ends in themselves and not treated as parts of a larger moral complex which, in the play, definitely includes the value of the individual person and religious values.³⁴

These few citations point up well the description we shall endeavor to sustain. Our position in general is the following: Creon definitely is wrong in his attitude toward the Antigone situation; but his intentions are quite sincere until the scene with Teiresias when Creon learns, for the first time with certitude, that he and the gods are discordant.³⁵ Let us, then, look

³⁴Goheen, pp. 82, 26.

³⁵Cf. Lucas, p. 126: "The new manifesto which is the prelude to his decree that the traitor shall not be buried would be acceptable to the wisest and most benevolent of kings. He intends to rule without fear or favor, putting the interest of the city first in all things." Also, Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: "Dramatic art implies some self-assertive energy. It is not a rounded whole; it realizes itself within a limited sphere, and presses forward passionately in a single direction." p. 310.

to Creon, and to his overall, general sincerity which has been called into question by many critics,³⁶ as well as to the validity of the arguments he proposes.

In this section, it seems best to interweave line criticism and generalizations together, lest on the one hand the account become detailed and boring, and on the other, the inductions seem unfounded. Our first meeting with the theme of devotion to the state is the assertion of Ismene: "I have no strength to break the laws that were made for the common good."³⁷ This is not, of course, the only motive keeping Ismene from helping her sister; but rather it is, it seems, a tone indicative of the polis of her day.³⁸ Then, with the *parados* of the chorus, in which is ex-

³⁶E.g., Kirkwood: "Creon, as we have noticed, has maxims forever on his lips; Antigone's speech is markedly simple, direct, genuine; Creon has his everlasting fear of damage to his prestige." p. 126.

³⁷Sophocles, *Antigone*, ll. 78-79, Greek Plays in Translation, ed. and trans. by Dudley Pitts (New York, 1953), p. 461. ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἄτιμα κοινοῦμαι, τὸ δὲ βίᾳ πολιτῶν ὁρᾶν ἔφου ἀμήχανος.

³⁸Cf. Sheppard: "They (the citizens) do not approve of Creon's edict, forbidding, under pain of death, the burial of Polyneices. But, when they hear of it defied, their instinct puts them on its side. For men and cities alike, they say, respect for the law is the one hope of safety. They disown the man whose disobedience imperils what human wisdom has contrived." p. 43.

pressed the hatred of Polyneices' attack on Thebes, we find the beginnings of a new theme: the old men claim the protection of the war-god.³⁹ Thus, the city and the gods seem to be in accord, a situation Creon will presume to exist between himself and the gods when he governs as ruler of the polis.

After the chorus's song, onto the stage for the first time strides the new king of Thebes, Creon. Let us for convenience sake note his speech in full; in that way we can more easily make references:

Sirs, the vessel of our State, after being tossed on wild waves, hath once more been safely steadied by the gods; and ye...have been called apart by my summons, because I knew.. how true and constant was your reverence for the royal power of Laius; how, again, when Oedipus was ruler of our land, and when he had perished, your steadfast loyalty

³⁹Sophocles, Antigone, ll. 110-134, The Complete Greek Drama, ed. by W. Oates, trans. by R. Jebb, I, 426-427. Henceforth, this will be the translation used; references will be: Ant. ---. The Greek text used is Sophocles, Sophoclis Fabulae, ed. by A.C. Pearson (Oxford, 1953).

⁴⁰Ant. 162-210. ἄνδρες, τὰ μὲν δὴ πόλεος ἀσφαλῶς θεοὶ πολλῶν σάλπασεῖσαντες ἔρθωσαν κάλιν· ὑμᾶς δ' ἐγὼ κομποῖσιν ἐκ πάντων εἶχα ἔστειλ' ἰκέσθαι, τοῦτο μὲν τὰ Λαίου σέβοντας εἰδῶς εἰς θρόνων δεικράτη, τοῦτ' ἀθεῖς, ἠνίκ' οἰοίκοις ἔρθου πόλιν, κάκει διώλετ', ἀμφὶ τοὺς κείνων εἴτι παιδᾶς μένοντας ἐμπεδοῖς φρονήμασιν. ὅτ' οὐδ'

still has upheld their children. Since, then, his sons have fallen in one day by a twofold doom—...each stained with a brother's blood—I now possess the throne and all its powers, by nearness of kinship to the dead.

No man can be fully known, in soul and spirit and mind, until he hath been seen versed in rule and law-giving. For if any, being supreme guide of the State, cleaves not to the best counsels, but, through some fear, keeps his lips locked, I hold, and have ever held, him most base; and if any makes a friend of more account than his fatherland, that man hath no place in my regard. For I—be Zeus my witness, who sees all things always—would not be silent if I saw ruin, instead of safety, coming to the citizens; nor would I ever deem the country's foe a friend to myself; remembering this, that our country is the ship that bears us safe, and that only while she prospers in our voyage can we make true friends.

Such are the rules by which I guard this city's greatness. And in accord with them is the edict which I have now published to the folk concerning the sons of Oedipus...Polyneices—who came back from exile, and sought to consume utterly with fire the city of his fathers and the shrines of his father's gods—sought to taste of kindred blood, and to lead the remnant into slavery—touching this man, it

τανύ... ἐκεῖνοι πρὸς διπλῆς μοίρας μίαν καθ' ἡμέραν ὄλοντο παῖσαν-
τές τε καὶ πληγέντες αὐτόχειρι σὺν μιάσματι, ἐγὼ κράτη δὴ πάντα καὶ
θρόνους ἔχω γένους κατ' ἀγχιστεῖα τῶν ὀλωλότων. ἀμήχανον δὲ παντὸς
ἀνδρὸς ἐκμαθεῖν ψυχὴν τε καὶ φρόνημα καὶ γνῶμην, κρίν ἂν ἀρχαῖς τε
καὶ νόμοισιν ἐντριβῆς φανῆ. ἐμοὶ γὰρ ὅστις πᾶσαν εὐθύνων πόλιν μὴ
τῶν ἀρίστων ἀπτεται βουλευμάτων, ἀλλ' ἐκ φόβου του γλῶσσαν ἐγ-
κλήσας ἔχει, κάκιστος εἶναι νῦν τε καὶ πάλαι δοκεῖ· καὶ μείζον' ὅσ-
τις ἀντὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ πάτρας φίλον νομίζει, τοῦτον οὐδαμοῦ λέγω. ἐγὼ
γάρ, ἴστω Ζεὺς ὁ πάνθ' ὀρῶν αἰί, οὐτ' ἂν σιωπήσαιμι τὴν ἄτην ὀρῶν
στείχουσιν ὡτοῖς ἀντὶ τῆς σωτηρίας, οὐτ' ἂν φίλον ποτ' ἄνδρα δυσ-
μενῆ χθονὸς θείμην ἐμαυτῷ, τοῦτο γιγνώσκων ὅτι ἦδ' ἐστὶν ἀφχουσα
καὶ ταύτης ἔπι πλέοντες ὀρθῆς τοὺς φίλους ποιούμεθα. τοιοῖσδ' ἐγὼ
νόμοισι τήνδ' αἴξω πόλιν.

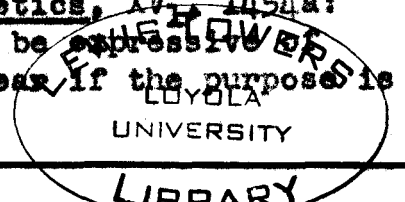
καὶ νῦν ἀδελφὰ τῶνδε κηρύξας ἔχω ἀστοῖσι παῖδων τῶν ἀπ' οἰδίου

hath been proclaimed to our people that none shall grace him with sepulture or lament...

Such the spirit of my dealing; and never, by deed of mine, shall the wicked stand in honour before the just; but whose hath good will to Thebes, he shall be honoured of me, in his life and in his death.

Creon's first words are indicative of his whole concern, his whole interest at this stage (and, indeed, throughout the play). He is the new ruler, meeting for the first time with the men of position and understanding in the polis. His credentials presented (both for information's sake—balancing the introduction of Antigone—and to show his title to kingship), he begins with Sophoclean clarity and conciseness a verbal portrait of himself. He is clearly interested in his new position, even anxious about it; he is obviously a man of action, someone used to waking slaggards or striding into a situation, hearing the opposite opinions and solving the difficulty then and there. As is certain from the pas-

περί ... τὸν δ' αὖ ξύναιμον τοῦδε, Πολυνείκη λέγω, ὅς γ' ἦν πατρώαν καὶ θεοῦς τοῦς ἐγγενεῖς φυγὰς καταλθὼν ἠθέλησε δ' αἵματος κοινοῦ κῆσασθαι, τοῦς δὲ δουλώσας ἄγειν, κυρὶ κρησαι κατάρκας, τοῦτον πόλει τῆδ' ἐκκεκῆρυκται τάφω μῆτε κτερίζειν μῆτε κωκυσαί τινα, ... τοιοῦτο δ' ἐμὸν φρόνημα, κοῦποτ' ἔχ γ' ἐμοῦ τιμῆ προέξουσ', οἱ κακοὶ τῶν ενδοικων. ἀλλ' οστις ευνους τῆδε τῆ πολει, θανων και ζῶν ὁμοίως ἐξ ἐμοῦ τιμησεται. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, XVII, 1454a: any speech that manifests moral purpose will be expressive of its character. The clarity of goodness will appear if the purpose is clearly seen as good." p. 52.



age, Creon has ideals of citizenship which are high and demanding, insisting on social and political cooperation to the utmost. Creon will be the first to show, by "versing himself in law-giving," that he gives and demands wholehearted loyalty to the city. In this type of character we find heavy and light, black and white, no greyish or fuzzy notions and judgments. He instinctively unites the words "ruin, instead of safety" and "a country's foe"; thus, Polyneices stands for only one thing in Creon's mind, clear and total ruin. It is this ruin which so upsets him, which confounds his conception of the perfect state. Creon, we feel, is misunderstood and hence maltreated when his character is judged by standards such as J.C. Opstelten offers: "This passionate agitation, produced by an inescapable conflict and a heroic inward feeling...endows the tragic sense with something sublime which pessimism lacks...qualifications in regard to the Sophoclean hero which, like the word personality, call for more delated elucidation: I mean the terms activity, passionate-ness, and inwardness,"⁴¹ or as Miss Woodbridge mentions, "We saw

⁴¹Opstelten, pp. 24, 77.

that the drama meant struggle, either with outer forces or, as in almost all the greatest dramas, with inner forces."⁴² If we look for a man of deep, inward reflection, Creon is not that person. Rather, he is the perfect type of the man of affairs, a man whose temperament is active, quick, demanding, who drives his opinions and grasps at challenges. He dabbles in no speculative thought; he prefers to rule, to interest himself in the many facets of government, to take his joy in a well-organized and disciplined society. Such has been the training shown by Creon here that his focus in a complicated situation is clear, mainly because it has always been and still must be so. A statesman must be able to judge in one sweeping glance, then to act. His decisions are as forceful and dynamic as his allegiance: "I never deem the country's foe" a friend of mine; "if any...keeps his lips locked, I hold and have ever held, him most base"; "never, be I king or no, shall the wicked, by deed of mine, stand in honor before the just."

His principles, too, are clear-cut and simple, good prin-

⁴² Elisabeth Woodbridge, The Drama, Its Law and Technique (Boston, 1898), p. 117-118.

ciples worthy of the experiences culled through many years of governmental life. Polyneices is judged according to these lucid principles, and his punishment is as simple as his norm: no man can be a personal friend who is a public enemy.

For, and this is Creon's fundamental credo, "our country is the ship that bears us safe, and that only while she prospers in our voyage can we make true friends." Perhaps this would not be the guiding thought for more quiet and reflective minds; but Creon is not that type of personality; hence, he must be considered anew and seen in the full light of the worth of the practical statesman, a man worthy of respect and honor. Robert Goheen, in working out the images indicative of Creon, says, "the character of Creon's imagery is consistently sensory and concrete, directed to the eye and touch and to practical experience..."⁴³ This does not mean that Creon is a dolt; rather his intellect is sharp, quick decisive, but not speculative, "intuitive," philosophical.

To our minds there is no more basic notion or viewpoint of

⁴³Goheen, p. 84-85.

life in Creon's personality than devotion to the polis. A number of times Creon must show his loyalty to the state, too: "No! be she sister's child or nearer to me in blood than any that worships Zeus at the altar of our house—she and her kinsfolk shall not avoid a doom most dire."⁴⁴ Again, he says: "If I am to nurture mine own kindred in naughtiness, needs must I bear with it in aliens. He who does his duty in his own household will be found righteous in the State also. But if any one transgresses, and does violence to the laws, or things to dictate to his rulers, such an one can win no praise from me... disobedience is the worst of evils. This it is that ruins cities; this makes homes desolate; by this, ranks of allies are broken into headlong rout. But, of the lives whose course is fair, the greater part owes safety to obedience."⁴⁵ It is to be noted, too, that

⁴⁴Ant. 486-489. ἀλλ' εἴτ' ἀδελφῆς εἰθ' ὀμαιμονεστέρα τοῦ παντός ἡμῖν Ζηνὸς ἐρκείου κυρεῖ, αὐτῆ τε χῆ...μόρου κακίστου.

⁴⁵Ibid. 659-677. cf. also 1050-1051 Creon values counsel. εἰ γὰρ δὴ τὰ γ' ἐγγενῆ φύσει ἄκοσμα θρέψω, κάρτα τοὺς ἔξω γένους. ἐν τοῖς γὰρ οἰκείοιςιν ὅστις ἀνὴρ χρηστός, φαινεῖται κὰν πόλει δίκαιος. ὅστις δ' ὑπερβᾶς ἢ νόμους βιάζεται, ἢ τούπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατύνουσι νοεῖ, οὐκ ἔστ' ἐπαίνου τοῦτον ἐξ' ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν...ἀναρχίας δὲ μείζον οὐκ ἔστιν καχόν. αὐτῆ πόλεις τ' ὄλλοισιν, ἢδ' ἀναστάτους οἴκους τίθησιν' ...τῶν δ' ὀρθουμένων σφζει τα πολλὰ σώμαθ' ἢ πειθαρχία.

not just a willy-nilly ruler, who knows no success in government; Teiresias admits that, with his help, "Therefore didst thou (Creon) steer our country's course aright."⁴⁶ Still, too, it is only the seer who will offer the guidance necessary for the metanoia. Polyneices, in Creon's mind (and we have no other picture of him), merited the most heinous of names. Creon felt only one punishment commensurate, as his quick decision based on practical principle told him: a punishment fitting in well with that prescribed by Plato and the "ancient tale." Creon solidifies his contention: "never, by deed of mine, shall the wicked stand in honor before the just; but whose hath good will towards Thebes, he shall be honored of me, in his life and in his death."

⁴⁶Ant. 993. τοιγάρ δι' ὀρεῆς τήνδε ναυκλήρεις πόλιν.

Jebb recognizes this attitude of Creon when he notes: "Creon is to be conceived as entirely sincere and profoundly earnest when he sets forth the public grounds of his action. They are briefly these: Anarchy is the worst evil that can befall a State; the first duty of a ruler is therefore to enforce law and maintain order. The safety of the individual depends upon that of the State, and therefore every citizen has a direct interest in the obedience necessary. This obedience must be absolute and unquestioning. The ruler must be obeyed in 'little things and great, in just things and unjust.' (v.667)...In Antigone, again, he sees anarchy personified, since, having disobeyed, she seems to glory therein. Her defense is unmeaning to him, for her thoughts move in a different region from his own."

xxxv-xxxvii.

The merits of Creon's position were clearly understood by the audience of his time. No matter what their feelings on government, they realized the need for political unity. The Persians had convinced them of that; and no doubt, the success of the Pentacontesia had a like effect. The peculiar attraction for unity among the Greek city-states lends great emphasis to Creon's plea for solidarity.

The practical bent of Creon's whole character is evinced likewise in his dealings with the guard. The king is ever ready, it seems, to accuse any wrongdoer of accepting a bribe for a crime. His longer speech, in anger and determination brings this charge to his lips. For us who realize the value and goodness of the burial, Creon obviously wanders from the right track. Yet, given his ignorance of what has happened between Ismene and Antigone, and granted his number of years in the court of Oedipus and his (as well as Sophocles') knowledge of why most men agree to political fraud and conniving, we can see that he reached a decision based on acquaintance with human nature, even second-guessing to the extent that he would accuse the guard of ap-

proaching him after already taking the bribe.⁴⁷ Creon, as far as practical insight into human nature is concerned, had general success. A ruler must know the inner workings of his subjects; that is a necessity for his permanency in power.

To confirm this attitude of practicality and to show most completely Creon's sincerity and a main source of his obstinacy, we wish to note most emphatically the suggestion and its reply by Creon that the burial of the body may have been "the work of the gods."⁴⁸ Creon's words show us more than ever his bent of mind, as well as his type of religious attitude toward the gods:

Cease, ere thy words fill me utterly with wrath, lest thou be found at once an old man and foolish. For thou sayest what is not to be borne, in saying that the gods have care for this corpse. Was it for high reward of trusty service that they sought to hide his nakedness, who came to burn their pillared shrines and sacred treasures, to burn their land, and scatter its laws to the winds? Or dost thou behold the gods honoring the

⁴⁷cf. Ant. 648-652, 745-746, 756, (other motives understood).

⁴⁸Ant. 278-279. ἄναξ, ἔμοί τοι μή τι καὶ θεήλατον τοῦργον τόδ' ἢ ξύννοια βουλευέει πάλαι.

wicked? It cannot be. No!⁴⁹

An insincere man would not recall the charges against Polyneices with such accuracy, nor would he always concentrate upon the same aspects. But even more, we have here the beginning of another dominant key to Creon's firmness; he cannot believe that the gods are against him. When he is convinced by Teiresias, then he surrenders. But until then, he cannot even conceive of the possibility that he and the gods are at odds. The gods must love the laws of the city; otherwise, all would be unintelligible and society would from its inception be frustrated. Now, he was only adding another to the many laws, in the same manner and with the same power as former rulers, and with a demanding motive against Polyneices. Why should the gods ever hesitate to affirm his decision? Obviously, those about him are the ones who are wrong. As R.C. Jebb mentions, "...he assumes that under no imaginable circumstances can the gods disapprove of penalties inflicted on a

⁴⁹Ant. 280-289. παῦσαι, πρὶν ὀργῆς κάμει μεστῶσαι λέγων, μὴ φευρέθης ἄνους τε καὶ γέρον ἅμα. λέγεις γὰρ οὐκ ἀνεκτὰ δαίμονας λέγων πρόνοιαν ἴσχειν τοῦδε τοῦ νεκροῦ περὶ. πότερον ὑπερτιμῶντες ὡς εὐεργέτην ἔκρυπτον αὐτόν, ὅστις ἀμφικίονας ναοῦς πυρώσων ἦλθε κάναθήματα καὶ γῆν ἐκείνων καὶ νόμους διασκεδῶν; ἢ τοὺς κακοὺς τιμῶντας εἰσορᾷς θεοὺς; οὐκ ἔστιν.

disloyal citizen."⁵⁰

In the latter half of the speech delivered against the possibility of the gods' intervention, we have a final example of Creon's sincerity; he says of money that "this drives men from their homes, this trains and warps honest souls till they set themselves to works of shame; this still teaches folk to practice villainies, and to know every godless deed,..it is not well to love gain from every source."⁵¹ Creon gives an indication of his respect for a life that is lived well, a life that is in accord with the gods and good reason. He is not the complete villain, nor does he give any reason for our doubting his sincerity; too often does he repeat sentences like these and in times of heated discussion where a man is most apt to speak what he believes, not to search for empty, meaningless phrases.

Another characteristic to be noticed and which causes many people to dislike Creon is his gruffness and inconsiderateness in

⁵⁰Jebb, p. κκxvi.

⁵¹Ant. 297-312. τοῦτο καὶ πόλεις ὀρθεῖ, τὸδ' ἄνδρας ἐξανίστησιν δόμων. ἐκδιδάσκει καὶ παραλλάσσει φρένας χρηστὰς πρὸς αἰσχροῦ στασθαι...οὐκ ἐξ ἅπαντος δεῖ το κερδαινεῖν φιλεῖν.

speaking to others.⁵² Indeed, before the guard, Creon seems angry from the earliest words, when he says, "then tell it, wilt thou, and so get thee gone?"⁵³ The same accusation is brought against Creon in the scene immediately following with Antigone, where the king says much with great acidity and sharp cross-questioning, as well as in the meeting with Haemon and Teiresias, when he accuses the one of partisanship and foolishness,⁵⁴ the other of accepting bribes.⁵⁵

There are three factors to be considered here, all of which taken together might explain Creon's attitude. One is the personality we have been describing in these last pages. Creon intellectually sees no alternative to the command he has given, especially since he believes completely that the gods favor him. He says to Antigone, as his final stand on the matter of princi-

⁵²e.g., cf. Whitman: "He addresses Antigone, his own niece and the daughter of his former king, as a slave," p. 89.

⁵³Ant. 244. οὐκ οὐν ἐρεῖς ποτ', εἴτ' ἀπαλλαχθεῖς ἀπει;

⁵⁴Ibid. 726-727, 746.

⁵⁵Ibid. 1055.

ples, "But the good desires not a like portion with the evil...A foe is never a friend—not even in death."⁵⁶ To Haemon he replies, "Is it a merit to honor the unruly?...Then is not she tainted with that malady?"⁵⁷ Creon, therefore, seems to have a degree of certitude which cannot be overturned and which cannot brook opposition. Once again we believe him to be a man of action and quick judgment; he has no time for psychological analysis of litigants, nor inquiry into the demand of others who obviously have no experience in ruling a state.

The second factor is the situations themselves. In the first passage with the guard, Creon is naturally hasty and brief with the man, as were and are most sovereigns intent on securing a polity so recently attacked.⁵⁸ When the guard begins to hem and haw, Creon asks the question, "...tell it, wilt thou, and so get thee gone?", not so much against the guard as an individual, as

⁵⁶Ibid. 520-522. ἀλλ' οὐκ' ο χρηστός τῷ κακῷ λαχεῖν ἴσον... οὗτοι ποθ' οὐχερὸς, οὐδ' ὅταν θάνῃ, φίλος.

⁵⁷Ibid. 730-732. ἔργον γάρ ἐστι τοὺς ἀκοσμοῦντας σέβειν;... οὐχ ἦδε γὰρ τοιαῦδε ἐπέιληπται νόσῳ;

⁵⁸Ibid. 237, 241-242, 244, 248.

an individual, as against one who was wasting his time.⁵⁹ Thus, Creon's natural impetuosity rebels against the aboulia of the guard.

With Antigone the matter is different. Creon here shows a double facet of his character: one, that he again is impetuous and impatient with anyone who would dare break the law (and this is understandable, since it was published so shortly before this time and the punishment was so grave); the other, that he has little affection towards Antigone. This latter quality we will discuss later, but it is good to mention it here and explain, insofar as it can be explained in relation to the dynamic nature we are here describing, Creon's attitude towards Antigone and Ismene. His treatment of Antigone in his opening remarks is rough, as suits his character. But shortly he becomes stubborn and violently angry.⁶⁰ If there is no reason, then Creon certainly is

⁵⁹cp. Oedipus' treatment of the herdsman: "Thou art lost if I have to question thee again," Oedipus Rex, 1166. μή πρὸς θεῶν, μή, δέσποθ', ἱστορεῖ πλέον... ὄλωλας, εἰ σὲ ταῦτ' ἐρήσομαι πάλιν.

⁶⁰Ant. 473ff.

acting most tyrannically, i.e., unjustly. But let us not forget that he is a king, an elder and a man. Antigone is a woman, a niece, and a subject. So when she says, in the conclusion of her opening words to Creon, "So for me to meet this doom is a trifling grief...And if my present deeds are foolish in thy sight, it may be that a foolish judge arraigns my folly,"⁶¹—granted that she has the law of the gods on her side, still it would be an understatement to say that such words would be considered as insulting. This consistent attitude, which causes Antigone to defend herself (nobly in our opinion), feeds the fires of wrath in the king who believes himself alone to be right.⁶² As for Ismene, she too suffers a like verbal condemnation,⁶³ but now because of Creon's conviction that "so oft, before the dead, the

⁶¹Ibid. 465-470. οὕτως ἔμοιγε τοῦδε τοῦ μόρου τυχεῖν παρ' οὐδὲν ἄλγος...σοὶ δ'εἰ δοκῶ νῦν μῶρα δρῶσα τυγχάνειν, σχεδὸν τι μῶρῳ μωρίαν ὀφλισκάνω.

⁶²cf. Ant., 495-496, 499-500, 506-507, 549 as examples of rather sharp language towards Creon.

⁶³Ibid. 531-532; cf. Creon's treatment to Haemon, 760-761.

mind stands self-convicted in its treason."⁶⁴ Otherwise, why would Ismene have wept so long and so bitterly all this time? Creon employs a fragile gift of quick judgment in the wrong way; hence, Ismene suffers. The situations in which we find Haemon and Teiresias also support this explanation of Creon's impatience towards others. The king's anxiety and nerves are both keen when Haemon enters, for he has just climaxed the most bitter and heated wrangling of the play. He looks for support from his son, only to find he has let himself in for more trouble than ever and from a quarter whence he least expected it. Here, too, he leaps for the motive most practical, that Haemon is acting out of regard for Antigone.⁶⁵ No matter how much Haemon protests against his love as the only motive, Creon can review the case no longer. For Teiresias, we need only look to the Oedipus Rex to find that noble king there accusing Teiresias once more of prophesying for money.⁶⁶ Thus, this second factor coupled with the first offers

⁶⁴Ibid. 494-495. φιλεῖ δ' ὁ θυμὸς πρόσθεν ἡρῆσθαι κλοπεύς τῶν μηδὲν ὀρθῶς ἐν σκότῳ τεχνωμένων.

⁶⁵Ibid. 740, 746, 748.

⁶⁶Oedipus Rex 399-400.

us some explanation, apart from Creon's own fault, for his gruff actions. The third factor we feel to be important is that of the king's fault or hamartia; for we do not intend to save him from being entirely bad by making him entirely good. Before discussing this point, however, we wish to note two final blemishes in Creon's character which seem outstanding.

The first difficulty concerns Creon's apparent resort to stubbornness in fear of surrendering to a woman. The question before us is to what extent Creon's sole motive is disgrace in yielding to a woman. His first statement of this kind occurs early in the play: "Now verily, I am no man, she is the man if this victory shall rest with her, and bring no penalty."⁶⁷ It is to be remembered that this is Creon's first reaction to Antigone who not only has broken the law, but has called the king foolish. If Creon is to yield to this girl just because of some whim of hers, he truly would be lacking in all the strength and nobility, the stability of the true king. No doubt, Creon became much more on his guard at Antigone's first words; to yield at the first

⁶⁷Ant. 484-485. ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἀνὴρ, αὕτη δ' ἀνὴρ, εἰ ταῦτ' ἀνατεῖ τῆς κείσεται κράτη.

harsh expressions would indeed be womanish. Creon here preserves not just the qualities of a man, but the characteristics of the king, as well.

Again, at the end of his long debate over the right to bury Polyneices, Creon ends with the statement, "While I live, no woman shall rule me."⁶⁸ It seems here again that Creon expresses more than just an unfounded refusal to be thwarted by a woman. Antigone has been talking language Creon finds hard, indeed, impossible to apply to practical standards. Her desire to live according to the unwritten laws, in love of her brother, is beyond him. He cannot, nor can any ruler, govern a state on such ideals, on such love or anything resembling it. Love is identified with the woman, and with it come all the assorted varieties of sympathy, forgiveness, humility and patience. While Creon lives, these qualities of a woman will not subdue him; his opinion is backed by practicality and experience, not by emotion and "intuition." Ultimately, Antigone's personality, the personality of a woman, has no part to play in the life of a king of Thebes.

⁶⁸Ibid. 525. ἐμοῦ δὲ ζῶντος οὐκ ἄρξει γυνή.

The third place this question arises is the speech of Creon to his son Haemon, before the king learns of Haemon's plan of attack. He concludes his lengthy remarks: "Therefore we must support the cause of order, and in no wise suffer a woman to worst us. Better to fall from power, if we must, by a man's hand; then we should not be called weaker than a woman."⁶⁹ This section seems to be added on to an already highly-motivated speech; hence it seems to bear little on his general trend of thought; with it come, too, all those qualities which are contrary to a courageous man and a dynamic king. Creon refuses to think of himself as inactive; rather he wishes to keep his vitality, aggressiveness, power and dynamism. The realm of the man is the polis and its transcendent discipline and order; the woman, as the king says, is "not to range at large." This type of character seems unimportant to the king, not worthy of great problems, but only fit for grief and other emotional states so unbecoming government and dynasty. To yield then to a woman

⁶⁹Ibid. 677-680. οὕτως ἀμυντέ' ἐστὶ τοῖς κοσμουμένοις, κοῦτοι γυναικὸς οὐδαμῶς ἡσσητέα. κρεῖσσον γὰρ, εἶπερ, δεῖ, πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐκπεσεῖν, κοῦκ ἂν γυναικῶν ἡσσονες καλοῖμεθ' ἄν.

means forfeiture of good government, the ultimate desire of the practical king.

Ultimately, this point comes down to much the same as the notion Creon expresses to Haemon and the Chorus, "Men of my age—are we indeed to be schooled, then, by men of his?" and "Am I to rule this land by other judgment than my own?"⁷⁰ Creon realizes the wisdom and the other qualities necessary for the maintenance and preservation of the thousands of individuals under the care of the state. Neither young men nor women should dare pretend to have the requisite knowledge, earned only by experience and toil over many years, to take upon themselves the intricate government of a whole nation.⁷¹ This, then, seems a legitimate understanding of Creon's position toward women. It is not one of cowardice; it is one of dislike for contradicting qualities and his judgment of the worth of women in a world to be governed and di-

⁷⁰Ibid. 726-727, 736. οἱ τηλικιοῖδε καὶ διδαξόμεσθα δὴ φρονεῖν πρὸς ἀνδρὸς τηλικουῶδε τὴν φύσιν;...ἀλλῶ γὰρ ἢ 'μοὶ χρὴ μετῆσδ' ἄρχειν χθονός;

⁷¹Ibid. for 993-994, 997, 1058, 1092-1095 where Creon shows, on the other hand, his respect for anyone experienced in politics and general wisdom. He must have concrete evidence for trusting others, and women, most of all young women, have no such credentials.

ected by men.

The last point to be dealt with in the character of Creon is his attitude expressed in the *komos*. Indeed, he does seem to despair in the part, to show a kind of weakness and cowardice; but this should not lead us to think that Creon has given up any struggle for life. Truly he says: "Oh, let it come...that fairest of fates for me, that brings my last day—aye, best fate of all! Oh, let it come, that I may never look upon to-morrow's light."⁷² Yet, this type of self-incrimination and confusion is common in Greek tragedy, as is evinced in Oedipus Rex, where the greatest of heroes asks for exile and claims unworthiness to view the world again.⁷³ Moreover, the *komos* of Creon is actually rather short in duration, though powerful and dynamic in content. Between the time of the final explanation of Eurydice's fate and the last words of the chorus, there is allotted a very short number of lines, thirty-nine, six of which belong to the chorus.

⁷²Ibid. 1329-1332. ἴτω, ἴτω, φανήτω μόρων ὁ κάλλιστ' ἐμῶν ἐμοὶ τρομίαν ἄγων ἀμέραν ὑπατος· ἴτω, ἴτω, ὅπως μηκέτ' ἄμαρ ἄλλ' εἰσίδω.

⁷³Oedipus Rex, 1340-1346, 1346, 1518.

Hence, only the major emotions and expressions of inner sorrow can be expected; and these necessarily must be equal to or surpassing the sorrow and grief Creon has caused in mounting tension throughout the play. Also, the penalty Creon deserves should be proportionate to the crime, which makes him responsible for three deaths, as well as the total destruction of his entire family.

What else could he ask for, in a tragic situation thus constructed? Finally, we may note that Creon does not end his role with words of death; rather, he seems more quiet, though still stunned, as he says: "Lead me away, I pray you...who have slain thee, ah my son, unwittingly, and thee, too, my wife—unhappy that I am! I know not which way I should bend my gaze, or where I should seek support; for all is amiss with that which is in my hands..."⁷⁴ To construe Creon's broken spirit as a sign of his weakness or cowardice seems a misunderstanding of the terrible situation of this play, a misunderstanding of the interior meaning to Creon of all the suffering and destruction he has

⁷⁴Ant. 1339-1345. ἄγοιτ' ἄν μάταιον ἄνδρ' ἐκποδῶν, ὅς, ὦ παῖ, σέ τ' οὐχ ἔκων κατέκανον σέ τ' αὖ τάνδ', ὧμοι μέλεος, οὐδ' ἔχω πρὸς πότερον ἴδω, πᾶ κλιθῶ· πάντα γὰρ λέχρια τῶν χεροῖν...

brought about, a suffering so personal and fundamental to him, killing the very members of his family.

In this chapter we have considered the prominent accusations and difficulties that would prevent the acceptance of Creon as a protagonist according to Aristotelian norms. In our answers to these objections, we hoped not only to free the personality of Creon from these attacks but also to affirm the opposite in the same stroke, and show that, in the absence of defamatory remarks, we can assume him to be worthy of the title, protagonist. Especially do we build this claim around his devotion to the state, relying on the power of a practical and forceful, a powerful, demanding, and imposing personality. Most of all do we wish to eradicate the notion that Creon is a whimpering or weak tyrant. Answering the suppositions that he is petty in his anger and fear of women, we have sustained the motive of his devotion to duty and his desire for manliness and its consequent characteristics. Showing that he had some precedents for his action toward Polyneices and emphasizing the importance of the common good for the preservation of individual and family love, we have shown his

action as understandable and, thus, not completely and tyrannically irrational.

But to help balance our interpretation of Creon, another study must be undertaken, that of his tragic fault. It may seem strange that the hamartia be mentioned in a chapter devoted to an explanation of Creon as better than average among men. Moreover, there is little question, really, as to the existence of a flaw of character, so why discuss it? We have two reasons for taking up the problem of the flaw: one is that by a careful delineation of its limits and nature we can loose Creon from the false shackles fastened on him by others (a task which has engaged us throughout this chapter), the other is that it will serve as an introduction to the next chapter in which an interpretation of the play, dependent on the hamartia, will be evolved. We mention that this will serve as an introduction only, so that, though a definite idea of the fault is given, its fullest description will be presented at a later and more appropriate time.

It was noticed earlier that Aristotle asks for a hamartia or flaw in the character of a protagonist. S.H. Butcher elaborates this demand in giving us the fourth meaning of hamartia, a

meaning most suited, it seems, to the character of Creon:

Lastly, the word may denote a defect of character, distinct on the one hand from an isolated error or fault, and, on the other, from the vice which has its seat in a depraved will. This use, though rarer, is still Aristotelian. Under this head would be included any human frailty or moral weakness, a flaw of character that is not tainted by a vicious purpose. In our passage there is much to be said in favor of the last sense, as it is here brought into relation with the other words of purely moral significance, words moreover which describe not an isolated act, but a more permanent state.⁷⁵

By fulfilling the statements cited we can presume that depravity is not a characteristic of Creon's personality and thus show that he is above average, though not "eminently good." A confirmation of the above type of hamartia could be the interpretation of the flaw given by Gerald Else in his latest work:

"recognition is a change ἐξ ἀγνοίας εἰς γνῶσιν ; might not hamartia be the agnoia from which the change begins?"⁷⁶ Whatever be our reaction to Else's suggestion, let us go on to offer the hamartia of the king of Thebes. This fault we would describe in a general way as ignorance and stubbornness, a failing of intel-

⁷⁵Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, p. 319.

⁷⁶Else, p. 379.

lect and a failing of will.

Creon begins well, in the belief that he has the right to leave the body of Polyneices unburied. Yet, everyone knows from the presentation of Antigone that there is only one final answer to this decree of the king, its humbling withdrawal. Thus it is quite apparent to all the dramatis personae that Creon is making a great mistake, and as many have noted, this mistake is primarily one of vision. The root of this fault, of course, lies in the very personality which makes Creon worthy of the position he has attained, the personality of the dynamic, hasty ruler. Robert Tyrrell gives us a hint of this when he describes Creon's strictness as a "narrow but not malevolent rigour."⁷⁷ Another reference to Creon's fault is mentioned in passing by H.D.F. Kitto: "But he (Oedipus) did it in all ignorance—not for example like Creon in the Antigone, who offended against comparable sanctities deliberately, from sheer unwisdom."⁷⁸ More to the

⁷⁷Tyrrell, p. 72.

⁷⁸H.D.F. Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher (London, 1958), p. 50.

point, D.W. Lucas gives a brief account of Creon's peculiar difficulty:

Creon, the central, if not the most important, figure in the Antigone, is guilty of a rarer crime, intellectual pride. He tries to be a good king, putting the welfare of his city first; but he prefers his own conception of justice to the common traditions of Greece; because traitors deserve punishment he tried to punish them beyond the grave...⁷⁹

Another modern critic offers us Creon's fault in the words, "To Antigone, Creon's political, worldly wisdom means nothing; she moves in a different atmosphere, and her concern is with family loyalty, not with political loyalty...she scorns as superficial Creon's world of political obsession."⁸⁰ "At the end of our poet's life, the belief in one's own opinions—the decision to take one's own fate in one's own hands—proved damaging, not only to piety, but also to the social sense, and Sophocles was convinced that, if the state and the individual were to be saved, the had to combine inextricably within his own heart piety towards the gods and a feeling for the foundations of human

⁷⁹Lucas, p. 151.

⁸⁰Kirkwood, p. 125-126; cf. Ehrenberg: "the deepest roots of the conflict...are...the incompatibility of their spiritual words," p. 55.

society," aptly notes J.O. Opstelten.⁸¹ Probably the best description of Creon's moral problem is expressed by Professor Goheen in his summary statement:

For finally the tragedy of Creon is not that he was evil in intent or even that he aspired to political tyranny, but that he was limited in his 'rational' and factual wisdom and did not know it until terrible events which he had initiated came down heavily on his head. To Creon's materialistic rationalism Antigone's innate feeling serves as both a foil, partially illustrating the shortsightedness of such a view, and as a corrective, offering a complementary way of knowing.⁸²

Since we wish to spend only a short time in the general description of Creon's flaw, we will point out just a few of the places in the play which exemplify this notion quite well. Probably the most important⁸³ expression of Creon's lack of understanding comes from the lips of the final chorus: "Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness; and reverence towards the gods must be inviolate. Great words of prideful men are ever punished with

⁸¹Opstelten, p. 229; cf. also p. 117.

⁸²Goheen, p. 94.

⁸³cf. Kirkwood: "Final chorus tags do not ordinarily have more than a very general relevance to the theme; but in this play the chorus' words...form a comment of great significance for the theme of the play," p. 127.

great blows, and in old age, teach the chastened to be wise."⁸⁴

This is only an impartial statement of Creon's cry immediately preceding: "Lead me away, I pray you; a rash, foolish man; who

have slain thee, ah my son, unwittingly, and thee, too, my

wife...I know not which way I should bend my gaze, or where I

should seek support; for all is amiss with that which is in my

hands."⁸⁵ A bit earlier, knowing only of the suicide of his son,

Creon exclaims, "Woe for the sins of a darkened soul, stubborn

sins, fraught with death! Ah, ye behold us, the sire who hath

slain, the son who hath perished! Woe is me, for the wretched

blindness of my counsels!...Alas, my son...thy spirit hath

fled...not by thy folly, but by mine own!"⁸⁶ These are particu-

⁸⁴Ant. 1348-1353. πολλὰ τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας πρῶτον ὑπάρχει· χρὴ δὲ τὰ γ' ἐς θεοὺς μηδὲν ἀσεπτεῖν· μεγάλοι δὲ λόγοι μεγάλας πληγὰς τῶν ὑπεραύχων ἀποτείσαντες γῆρα τὸ φρονεῖν ἐδίδαξαν.

⁸⁵Ibid. 1339-1345. ἄγοιτ' ἂν μάταιον ἄνδρ' ἐκποδῶν, ὅς, ὦ παῖ, σέ τ' οὐχ ἐκῶν κατέκανον σέ τ' αὖ τάνδ', ὦμοι μέλεος, οὐδ' ἔχω πρὸς πότερον ἴδω, πᾶ κλιθῶ· πάντα γὰρ λέχρια τάν χεροῖν.

⁸⁶Ibid. 1261-1269. ἰὼ φρενῶν δυσφρόνων ἀμαρτήματα στερεὰ θανατόεντ', ὡ κτανόντας τε καὶ θανόνας βλέποντες ἐμφυλίουσ. ὦμοι ἐμῶν ἀνολβα βουλευμάτων. ἰὼ παῖ...ἔθανες, ἀπελύθησ, ἐμαῖσ οὐδὲ σαῖσι δυσβουλίασ.

larly meaningful exclamations because of their strategic position in the play; even Creon himself is finally evaluating the judge of Antigone, Haemon, Ismene, Teiresias, and Eurydice. We have already noted earlier Creon's reactions to Antigone and Haemon, claiming before the one that she was but a woman, and that her attitude toward the dead was impossible, hastily and resolutely judging and criticizing the other for trying to interrupt the government of the state with immature ideas.⁸⁷

Not only have we indicated a fault of intellect in Creon; we also find a stubbornness and an unwillingness to relinquish an idea until it is completely and certainly known as false. This quality, we believe, has a twofold foundation. First, it is centered in Creon's conviction that he cannot possibly be wrong in this matter. Once he has made up his mind, there is no other way of viewing the question. He even can see the gods approving his deed, and that in all sincerity.⁸⁸ Firmness of purpose in the man of practical bent is essential; Creon, having such a per-

⁸⁷Ibid. 282-283; 726-727.

⁸⁸Ibid. 282-283.

sonality that depends so much on correct prudential judgment, has more than just the requisite firmness. The second source of his difficulty is the habit of the practical man to look for certitude. Creon, granting his limited use of reason and analysis, finds certitude only in the reports of Teiresias. A flaw in the play, as many think, lies in the suddenness of Creon's reversal of his resolve. We believe that this can be answered by the peculiar trait of this practical man, whose mind tends toward certainty only in the light of clear evidence; thought may always appear to him vague or indistinguishable, but facts cannot be denied, and it is upon them that he builds his life. Moreover, behind these facts must rest laws of experience; hence, Teiresias alone is worthy of credence for he alone has proved himself in the past and speaks in terms of punishment and of the gods.⁸⁹ Once Creon knows the truth, it is no longer a question of denying the fact; rather, he acts most justly: "Since our judgment hath taken this turn, I will be present to unloose her, as I myself

⁸⁹Ibid. 1091-1095.

bound her."⁹⁰ The main problem for Creon, though, is that his commitments have made this capitulation very difficult; the pain is increased in his realization that this, his first command, must be abrogated and he, supposedly possessing the wisdom of a king, must yield to the wisdom of a woman and a young man.⁹¹ Thus, he painfully expresses his crucial frame of mind, "I, too, know it well, and am troubled in soul. 'Tis dire to yield; but, by resistance, to smite my pride with ruin—this, too, is a dire choice."⁹² It is only the certitude of the seer of the gods that moves Creon to humble and humiliate himself; but it is important to note that, once the seer has spoken, Creon does yield. Creon is not a weak character; for it is only because of the strength of his driving personality that he has been able to keep up the struggle so long; he is a personality, rather, of rough and rough-hewn passions.

⁹⁰Ibid. 1111-1112. ἐγὼ δ', ἐπειδὴ δόξα τῆδ' ἐπεστράφη, αὐτὸς τ' ἔδησα καὶ παρὼν ἐκλύσομαι.

⁹¹Ibid. 654-658, 710-711.

⁹²Ibid. 1096-1097. ἔγνωκα καὐτὸς καὶ ταράσσομαι φρένας· τὸ εἰκαθεῖν γὰρ δεινόν, ἀντιστάντα δὲ ἄτη πατάξαι θυμὸν ἐν δεινῷ πάρα.

In this fashion then has Creon deserved to an extent the suffering he underwent. His conviction that he was right and his unwillingness to yield to others until the gods themselves had to speak personally to him represents a double fault, a fault which has for its origin an erring intellect and a will stubbornly subservient to it. The specification of Creon's misunderstanding will be contained in the following chapter. Here we only wish to ascertain the goodness Creon has shown in his dealings with others, the reasonableness of his demands based on his allegiance to the state, the fact that his primary fault was shortsightedness and not essentially lawless tyranny, complete unreasonableness, weakness and utter foolishness, and in this way to lay clear good qualities of devotion, sincerity, final self-accusation, courage, and at least a modicum of religious sensibility (as evidenced in his belief that he was ruling with the help of the gods, not against their wishes).

To conclude this chapter, we wish to make an important distinction in regard to Creon's fulfillment of the last of our Aristotelian norms. We have quoted S.H. Butcher's version of Aristotle's words, that a protagonist must be "highly renowned

and prosperous." Later in his exegesis Butcher comments: "He (the protagonist) is not eminently good or just, though he leans to the side of goodness. He is involved in misfortune...He is, moreover, illustrious in rank and good fortune; the chief motive, no doubt, for this requirement being that the signal nature of the catastrophe may be more strikingly exhibited."⁹² Else explains Aristotle's statement: "Prosperity and misfortune are the poles between which the tragic hero's action swings, the by which the change in the hero's status is measured and defined. If he did not stand in high fortune and repute at the beginning, his fall would not be drastic enough to affect us much...thus the requirement of high prosperity is as functional for the best type of tragedy as that of initial misery is for the converse kind."⁹³ Two points are to be noted here. First, Creon does fulfill this requirement of Aristotle, for he is held in great honor and has the highest rank of king. This is attested by the messenger at

⁹²Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, p. 409.

⁹³Else, p. 386.

the end of the play who says of his own accord: "For Creon was blest once, as I count bliss; he had saved this land of Cadmus from its foes; he was clothed with sole dominion in the land; he reigned, the glorious sire of princely children."⁹⁴ Secondly, we should note that both exegetes tell us that this norm of Aristotle is primarily functional; thus, it does not apply directly to virtue or morality. The degree of virtue has already been ascribed as better than average. Hence, good fortune belongs to another category outside virtue. This division between fortune and virtue is described by D.W. Lucas: "Few Greeks would be given to picturing themselves as tyrants, yet it is remarkable that, in spite of all the odium attached to tyranny, it was taken for granted by many that to be a tyrant was the height of human good fortune."⁹⁵ Thus, Creon fulfills this norm of Aristotle, without incurring the charge that his virtue is less than that of a king; such a comparison is invalid.

⁹⁴Ant. 1161-1164. Κρέων γὰρ ἦν ζηλωτός, ὡς ἐμοί, ποτέ, σώσας μὲν ἐχθρῶν τήνδε Καδμείαν χθόνα, λαβὼν τε χώρας παντελῆ μοναρχίαν ἦνθουσε, θάλλων εὐγενεῖ τέκων σπορᾶ.

⁹⁵Lucas, p. 20-21.

Having given this summary of Creon's character,⁹⁶ and having discussed some of the problems offered as reasons for rejecting him as capable of being a protagonist, we feel that we have given sufficient proof that Creon does have the personality necessary for a tragic hero.⁹⁷ The remaining question is whether Creon is the protagonist of Antigone. Let us move to the answer immediately.

⁹⁶cf. pages 40-41, 47-48.

⁹⁷Letters: "Whether the Greek play exhibits two tragic figures or not, whether it is a double or a single tragedy, Creon is a classical Aristotelian hero," p. 169.

CHAPTER III

THE PROTAGONIST OF ANTIGONE

In this chapter we shall try to solve the question "is Creon the protagonist of this play" by an interpretation of Antigone. We noted in the introduction some of the flaws which result from an interpretation of the play by which Antigone would have the lead.¹ Our underlying principle, then, is that there is a unity to the play, that it need not be considered as a dual tragedy, giving equal importance to two characters. The diptych may well be a species of drama, but we wish to see (and we believe we can see) Antigone as a more unified piece. Not only has Professor Kitto felt the need for such unity; Kirkwood's own division of diptych shows his understanding of the problem.² Bates, too, recognizes the disproportion of lines in the play³; Waldock goes

¹cf. Chapter I, p. 6-7.

²cf. Kirkwood, pp. 43, 46, 51.

³Bates, p. 88.

further; "It would be too much to say of the story of Antigone that it is doomed to be either a prologue or an epilogue; that, certainly, would be too extreme a statement. But it would be perfectly truthful to say of it that it has a natural gravitation towards one or other of those roles. In itself Antigone's story lacks staying power: there is hardly enough in it to make a full drama";⁴ and yet later he says, "the simple fact of the matter is that there is not enough of Creon to sustain a drama."⁵ At least these statements admit a problem in the Antigone. It would be profitable to consider more opinions, if we had not treated at some length already the various opinions as to the tragic hero of the play; in these opinions we find, too, the source of the problem of unity, for so many varying ideas indicate a difficulty in the play.⁶ Our aim, then, is to offer some idea of the protagonist of the play, and, we feel, the only way

⁴Waldock, p. 121-122.

⁵Ibid. p. 123.

⁶cf. Chapter II, pages 13-17.

to do this is by interpretation and analysis.

In discussing the play as a whole, there exist two methods, two possible procedures: structural analysis and thematic (interpretational) analysis. We prefer the latter method for the main work for two reasons: first, the use of both types would be far too large a project for this thesis, secondly, the nature of structural analysis is rather intricate for those (such as ourselves) who are not acquainted with it, especially since it can prone to the evils of relativism. Our procedure will be an analysis of the theme of the play, showing within it the character of main interest, though, as will be evident, we must make some reference in a subordinate fashion to the various functions of the different sections of tragedy.

With the understanding that it is one of our chief aims to reveal the unity in the tragedy with Creon as protagonist, let us go to the play and its analysis. We wish in the beginning to affirm most emphatically our acceptance of the traditional interpretation of the play: the struggle between the unwritten

laws of the gods and the written laws of men.⁷ Within this framework there have been some differences expressed in the past, namely that the Antigone is a play of individual conscience against the State. Most everyone today prefers to call the struggle something akin to nomos vs. physis; and with a bit of reflection we see rather easily that, in the case of Antigone, the physis or natural law with the gods as its cause and the rights of her private conscience are coincident, since it certainly is not only a question as to her right to speak, but also a question of what she is claiming as subject matter of that right to speak.

To develop the structure of this struggle a bit further, we note the scheme offered by Professor Goheen:

In simplest terms the dramatic vehicle is the conflict of two persons in respect to a burial. Besides the personal clash, their conflict is made to involve larger issues of various sorts: ethical (problems of family allegiance and conflicting views of personal conduct), political (systems which permit or encourage each way of life), religious (the sanctity of burial, the nature of piety, the attitude of the gods to human conduct) and philosophical (the nature of the individual, his means of knowledge, the relation of nature

⁷We do not cite particular authorities as regards this basic structure of the play because practically all agree on this point.

and law, the moral ordering of the universe).⁸

To say that all these notions have equal importance and lack subordination would be superficial; yet to deny their place in the play and in Sophocles' mind would be contrary to the images and notions found explicitly in the play. Another development along Professor Goheen's line of thought is that of H.D.F. Kitto: "It is not merely on religious grounds that Antigone opposes Creon: everything that she is and has is thrown into the conflict—her religious beliefs, her love for her brother, her physical revulsion against the horror, her loyalty to her family, her indignation that a comparative outsider should presume to interfere in a rite that concerns only the nearest of kin."⁹ These further developments along the basic lines of unwritten against written law (physis vs. nomos) offer us the foundation of our solution. In our preceding chapter, we noted that Creon's fault was ignorance and shortsightedness, a lack of understanding; we left its object, its specification to this part of the thesis. In

⁸Goheen, p. 95.

⁹Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher, p. 9.

keeping with the above opinions, we can see that his fault involves a lack of understanding of the laws of the gods, the laws of unchanging nature. But we can ask further, to avoid generality, which law of the gods is at stake, what is the basic law Creon has contradicted. It is in this answer that the role of Creon will appear as predominant in the Antigone. To express the conflict succinctly we can say that ultimately Creon breaks, and is punished for violating, the natural and impulsive force or law of love.¹⁰

To explain more fully this statement we should like, first, to present a synthesis of the play, then an analysis of it. The whole value of the synthesis, of course, rests on the analysis; but it seems better and more efficient as well as easier for others if the former, in the shape of a summary, precede the latter.

We have said that Antigone is concerned ultimately with the clash between the law of nature and the law of man. More pre-

¹⁰The interpretation on which our analysis is based is from a lecture (unpublished) of H. Kitto to the American Council of Learned Societies at Indiana University, January, 1958.

cisely, the struggle comes between the nature of itself and the reason of man interpreting his nature in the light of varying (social, political, etc.) circumstances. Indeed, between the natural law, or the law of the gods, and its interpretation on man's part can intervene all kinds of difficulties, such as the passion, ignorance and stubbornness of the law-giver. Hence the possibility that the formal decrees of man need not always conform with the intent and governance of nature. The law-giver can be mistaken, wilfully or not, about the meaning of nature in this or that particular situation, with the result that he fails to let the element of direction found in nature's laws guide the situation and his judgment to a happy, natural outcome.

An element or property of natural law, which gives us the opportunity for tragedy, is inexorableness.¹¹ Let us first look at formal law, or the law of man. The decrees of the legislator are, for the most part, due to his discreet judgment as regards

¹¹It is not our intention to make Sophocles seem Thomistic or Scholastic in his outlook; yet, these general statements do not seem beyond Sophocles, for certainly he realized, with others, the insufficiency of the Homeric deities, yet he recognized the basic reality for which they stood.

an interpretation of natural law or a stricture proceeding from his own, but reasonable choice. As such, his laws do not pertain to the internal constitution of the subject obeying him. Thus, in the violation of his laws, the guilty one, though incurring punishment and suffering, does not frustrate his nature. In the case of the natural law, however, the opposite prevails. Man in breaking the law of his human nature cannot dissociate himself from his own nature, the reasonable and guided development of which he is frustrating. Hence to break a law of nature is automatically to bring disaster of some kind or other to one's own nature. There is no question of being caught or not; the only question is what price will be exacted in sure punishment for the unbalance caused by the violation.

Thus, we believe that the inexorability of broken laws of nature is the source of tragedy which Creon cannot escape, but which gathers strength every moment he defies and violates them. The divisibility, however, of the term "natural laws" shows us, as we hinted before, the need of specification. In discussing the law of love (not excluding the other laws, as Professor Coheen has delineated them), we believe we have the unifying

theme of the Antigone, a theme resting securely on the long-acknowledged conflict of natural vs. human law.

It is of this law of love primarily that Creon is most unaware. Creon fails to see the value of love in the world of men and women, destined to love by their natures. He does not understand Antigone's love for her brother, a care heightened to the extremes endurable by men in her realization that husbands or children are not so completely unique as her brother Polyneices.¹² He cannot, or does not, realize the deep and faithful love of Haemon for Antigone and of Antigone for Haemon. From the words of the Haemon scene, it is true, one is concerned with Haemon's care for his father. Yet the outburst at the end of his appearance here testifies to the internal state and ultimate motivation inciting Haemon to change his father's mind. Again, Creon misunderstood the importance this crisis might have for others concerned with the young couple, for instance his wife. In understanding the power of love between Antigone and Haemon he

¹²Ant. 904-920; though these lines may be interpolations, we can make some sense out of them; however, they are not necessary.

has underestimated the serious reaction of Eurydice to its interruption. She too was to have upheld the laws of the land, though she might emotionally favor Antigone and Haemon; her solicitude for their welfare was to be smothered by allegiance to her king. Yet her love could not but naturally respond in kind to the response of Haemon for his fiancée. Love brought suffering; love expressed itself in suffering for the young couple; her mother's love would react that way, too. Last of all, but not indeed the least, comes Ismene. Though she has a small part, dramatically justified in its few lines, nonetheless she, too, falls victim to Creon's disregard for the law of nature. Though she herself is not hurt, she suffers indirectly for her love towards her wronged sister. It is her love for Antigone which gives her courage to overcome the law of her previous life "that we are too weak to oppose men; we should know our place and keep it";¹³ it is this same love, and in direct proportion to it, that makes her suffer so bitterly. Creon, though mostly insensible to Antigone's love for her brother, might have taken

¹³Ant. 61-62. ἐννοιεῖν χρῆ τοῦτο μὲν γυναῖχ' ὅτι ἔφουμεν, ὡς πρὸς ἀνδρας οὐ μαχουμένα.

notice of the love expressed all about him by Ismene, by Haemon, by the townspeople: "'no woman,' they say, 'ever merited her doom less—none ever was to die so shamefully for deeds so glorious as hers; who, when her own brother had fallen in bloody strife, would not leave him unburied, to be devoured by carrion dogs, or by any bird;...deserves not she the meed of golden honor?'"¹⁴ But it was only when love expressed itself in ultimate terms, Antigone, Haemon and Eurydice, that Creon finally gained the wisdom which "binds the realms of justice and love."

Let us recall, however, Creon's position, in order that we may see the real conflict here enacted; his cause is one of state rule, one of upholding the source of unity within an otherwise disunified body politic. Though his statements may to some appear haughty, the repetition of these ideas at most serious moments in the play attests his sincerity and sense of ultimate responsibility. Indeed, there are other motives for keeping to his censure of burial, but that of preserving union and autho-

¹⁴Ibid. 694-699. πασῶν γυναικῶν ὡς ἀναξιοτάτη κάκιστ' ἀπ' ἔργων εὐκλεεστάτων φθίνει· ἥτις τὸν αὐτῆς ἀντάδελφον ἐν φοναῖς πεπτῶτ' ἄθραπτον μῆθ' ὑπ' ὀμηστῶν κυνῶν εἶασ' ὀλέσθαι μῆθ' ὑπ' οἰωνῶν τινός...οὐχ ἦδε χρυσῆς ἀξία τιμῆς λαχεῖν;

city, we believe, is primary. The conflict is a conflict because there is no one side absolutely wrong.¹⁵ Creon, it must be remembered, has been ruler for not more than forty-eight hours.¹⁶ His character before taking the throne has not been attested to in the play (except that he has been obedient to the counsels of Teiresias, 993-995); thus it can be presumed to be correct, especially since the chorus in the beginning is rather on his side. But being a king, and indeed, a new one, demands at least some counselling from others, and kingship ripens in wisdom only by experience. This experience takes longer or shorter, both in suffering and in time, depending upon the situations encountered and the characters involved. Here, with the heroic characters in a turbulent time, in a vital misunderstanding, not just of the rite of burial, but of an interweaving of dynamic loves, the experience needed for wisdom comes to a head quickly, but disastrously. Creon, because he had a partial

¹⁵This does not mean that Antigone has any flaw, nor does it advocate the philosophically advantageous interpretation of Hegel.

¹⁶Ant. 157.

truth, could prolong the conflict and bring it to its most terrible consequences. In any other circumstances, with the amount of truth he did have, Creon might have succeeded with his decree. Or he might have come to wisdom in the same decree in a less painful way. But against Antigone, equally dynamic as himself, Creon learned the hardest of all ways, by tragic death.

Such, then, is what we have gleaned in the way of general appraisal from the text. Obviously on such a question of interpretation, there will be some disagreement. But we should note some scholars who would recognize something of what we have said as valid, as well as those who oppose the previous explanation. We have already noted R. Goheen's placement of this conflict in his general summary, as well as that of H.D.F. Kitto, which is most consonant with the description we have offered.¹⁷ Professor Kirkwood is a bit more complex. He admits "that a contrast between Antigone and Creon lies at the heart of the drama";¹⁸ that

¹⁷cf. pages 53-54.

¹⁸Kirkwood, p. 118.

the "theme of burial, furthermore, is intertwined with another theme of Antigone, that of love. Love for her brother Polyneices lies behind both burials of Antigone."¹⁹ Moreover, he states by comparison: "this insistence on the need for revenge will be her (Electra's) guiding conviction, like...Antigone's family loyalty."²⁰ Thus, he shows the basic attitude of Antigone to be loyalty, devotion and love, qualities even underlying the duty of burial. But, though he develops this idea, he shows its relative and not absolute necessity: "In all this there is no thought of the unwritten laws; up to this point Antigone has not reflected and has not formulated her instinctive idealism. She is not to be thought of as primarily a philosopher or an embodiment of the reasoned way of life."²¹ After her statement of the unwritten laws, however, Professor Kirkwood says, "In comparison with most later Greek drama, Greek tragedy as a whole is notable for the extent to which it excises or compresses all

¹⁹Ibid. p. 221.

²⁰Ibid. p. 137.

²¹Ibid. p. 120.

aspects of the story that are not strictly necessary to the theme of the play," and after summing up the appropriate sections, "the fact of romantic love is unquestionably here, though it is not of course the dramatist's prime concern."²² Thus restricting the love theme to "romantic love," Professor Kirkwood seems to reject, by silence on the subject, any other dominant play of love in *Antigone*, by which he might denominate the play. But he does agree that the struggle between the unwritten and written laws is paramount.

In accord with this position is Professor Waldock. He, too, believes the theme of love is justified only as a structural help: "The last thing Sophocles wanted here is love-interest: that should have been a distraction...He declares the love between *Antigone* and *Haemon*, but establishes it only in the degree that is sufficient for his purpose. *Haemon* loves *Antigone*, we can see; but as for *Antigone's* feelings for *Haemon*, they remain merely theoretic—exactly as Sophocles wanted them to be...we cannot answer the question what *Antigone's* attitude to *Haemon*

²²Ibid. p. 63-64.

was...The theory of the matter is that she loves him—that is absolutely all that the dramatist supplies, absolutely all he wants us to think."²³ A third author who implies the same type of position says: "Nor was there any consideration of personal interests and favor, but simply of justice and hallowed law."²⁴ Something akin to this notion is expressed by Ehrenberg, "She performs the burial...because the gods demanded it, not so much because she loves her brother. The demands of kinship are not an expression of family love, but of religious tradition. Antigone's personal feeling of what is her sisterly duty is overshadowed by the general principle for which she stands."²⁵ We might add to this number of authors the many who develop the physis vs. nomos conflict to a very slight or to no degree at all.

Indeed, very few scholars wish to go as far as Professor Kitto does. However, some of them will give opposite opinions to those cited above and indicate some of the points favorable to

²³Waldock, p. 108.

²⁴D'Ooge, p. 8.

²⁵Ehrenberg, p. 31.

our earlier synopsis of the play. For instance, T. Buckley notes that "with Antigone, to have forgotten self is to have gained all things."²⁶ Also, along the same lines is T. Woolsey's comment, "The subject of this noble drama is a contest between divine and human law...and the motives of the contest are a sister's love and sense of religious obligations on the one hand..."²⁷ Thus, the laws of the gods are joined to some degree with the instinctive motivations of a loving sister. We have seen Professor Kirkwood's expression that Antigone's guiding conviction is "family loyalty."²⁸ In agreement with this statement is Sir R.C. Jebb, "Two qualities are at the basis of her character. One is an enthusiasm, at once steadfast and passionate, for the right...the other is intense tenderness, purity and depth of domestic affection."²⁹ Helpful, too, is his contrary statement that "Creon regards the family almost exclusively in one aspect..."

²⁶Buckley, p. xi.

²⁷Woolsey, p. iii.

²⁸Kirkwood, p. 137.

²⁹Jebb, p. xxvii.

it is a little state, in which a man may prove that he is fit to govern a larger one."³⁰ Looking to another part of the love theme, H.D.F. Kitto, in his more recent monograph says, "the two stanzas on Love (781-801) are not religious poetry written as an interlude by a pious dramatist; they are an important part of the real drama. Creon has already defied one part of divine law in refusing burial to a fellow human being; now he defies another of the majestic powers of the universe in brutally disregarding Haemon's love for Antigone."³¹ M. Croisset as well sees this power of love in Antigone: "Le sujet semble avoir ete suggere au poete par la derniere scene de Sept d'Aeschyle: c'est le devouement heroique d'Antigone, ensevelissant son frere Polynice malgre les ordres de Creon, et mise a mort pour cette pieuse desobeissance."³² Haemon, too, takes on new stature in the play, with the realization that, besides his function in the drama, he also has a personality of his own, that he "represents the voice

³⁰Ibid. p. xxxvii.

³¹Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher, p. 36-37.

³²Croisset, p. 253.

of Thebes as well as the cause of Antigone,"³³ that "he urges his own deep concern for his father's fair name."³⁴ With this understanding that Haemon is a dynamic, aggressive man, driven by the convictions of his feelings for Antigone and his father, we find it difficult to agree with Bates that "Haemon is a gentle youth whose love for Antigone is sincere. He wants to help her; but at the same time he is overawed by the importance of his father's official position and by dread of him. When, near the end of the play, he rushes at Creon sword in hand and then turns the weapon against himself, it is the despair of a timid soul..."³⁵ Finally we would note the helpful comments of Professor Goheen that "the devaluer of family relations (Creon) is to learn their innate value by experience if in no other way,"³⁶ and that "Antigone is identified with nature and its abiding surety, and we are to feel this with her when she says, 'it is my

³³Kirkwood, p. 123.

³⁴Tyrrell, p. 60.

³⁵Bates, p. 90-91.

³⁶Goheen, p. 90.

nature to join in loving, not in hating."³⁷ Such then are some of the representative comments on this particular aspect of Anti-gone; many of them are helpful in determining the value of our synthesis, showing the various and new inner relationships between the characters involved under this viewpoint of love.

A most helpful source for our work is the contribution of Professor Goheen in tracing the images dominant in the play. It is interesting to note his summary comment about the results of his work: "Outside the odes most of the dominant images are used by Creon, or are very closely related to attitudes displayed by him."³⁸ Besides showing the pivotal point Creon enjoys in the play, this statement signifies that most of the images will touch upon subjects or attitudes opposed to love. The main images, we note, are "military, animals and their control, money and merchandising."³⁹ These are all indications of Creon's evaluation of the people about him and the world in which he moves, so that,

³⁷Ibid. p. 81.

³⁸Ibid. p. 76.

³⁹Ibid. p. 120-121.

in briefest analysis, one can see he is a domineering military man of economic, and therefore, practical bent, judging all in the light of "money" motives, considering everyone, at best, without feeling or love. The supporting images are of the sea (expressive of the dangers in the guidance of the state, in the solution to Antigone's problem), of disease and cure (showing sickness caused by Creon, especially the evil of Teiresias' omens), and, finally, of marriage, with regard to death only, expressed concretely in approximately sixteen places and accounting for about fifty-five lines. It is easy to see how many authors would cite Creon's inability to sympathize with others, his misunderstanding and blindness in the face of the torments constantly increasing within Antigone, Haemon, Ismene and Eurydice. To counteract this subordination of sensibility, we have Antigone's anxious concern for marriage, which implies Haemon's attitude towards her, as well. Needless to say, the mere noting of images is not sufficient; the placement of them in important scenes also plays a large part in their meaning, e.g., the account of Haemon embracing Antigone in death needs only a few lines in telling, but the impact is tremendous. Thus, we believe

that the study of images provides us with some excellent points for reflection on the subject of Creon's disregard for the interior and natural propensity of a sister's love for her brother, a mother's care for her son, a sister's sollicitude for a sister, and a fiance's devotion to his espoused.

One more point should precede an analysis of the play; this consists in explaining the relationship of the burial theme to that of the love theme. We have already noted that "It is not merely on religious grounds that Antigone opposes Creon: everything she has and feels is thrown into the conflict..."⁴⁰ It seems then that the more general and more fundamental instinct is that of devotion and love, which ultimately expresses itself in concern for the welfare of loved ones even after death. The care for the deceased springs from the general attitude of devotion and love prevalent when the two persons involved loved each other during life. This understanding no doubt made it imperative that "Antigone...fulfill one of the most sacred...duties known to Greek religion; and it is a duty which could not be

⁴⁰Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher, p. 9.

delegated."⁴¹ The reason we say that the foundations of this custom rested and continued to remain on the foundations of family devotion are the comments of D.W. Lucas. He notes that "the people were easily carried away by an appeal to the powerful emotions connected with the rites of burial. But never in the literature of the time do we find a reference to any reason for this insistence on the urgency of burial, any hint that the living or the dead may suffer. It is the pious thing to do, the conventional thing; failure to act piously may awaken the divine displeasure, but no one asks why the gods are displeased."⁴² Even if the ancients of Homer's time had a religious belief, Professor Lucas, from his words above, seems to hold that such a source of piety had been lost in Sophocles' time (perhaps through the slow influence of the Sophists?), so that, dealing with the audience of the period, Sophocles had as the dominant religious concept the one described by Professor Lucas. Later, Lucas states that "as for death, most men hoped for little more than

⁴¹Jebb, p. xxv.

⁴²Lucas, p. 23.

the survival of their memory living on in the hearts of those who tended the family graves,"⁴³ and again:

Eleugis had no dogma and inculcated no way of life; but it was agreed that there were privileges after death for those who had seen the holy pageant;...yet it is strange that, though initiation was common, we hear so little of any such hopes on all occasions when men speak of death. The great hope is to be remembered, and the cult at the tomb the best means of realizing it; it is exceptional in the fifth century to find traces of a belief in any more personal form of survival. Perhaps the life of the individual was still so much bound up with the city of which he was a part, that little interest could be felt in a solitary survival in the strange, cosmopolitan world of the dead.⁴⁴

We do not deny here that Sophocles was religiously minded, nor that he had a belief in afterlife (nor do we affirm he did.). We only wish to know the attitude of general audiences and the culture for which Sophocles wrote and what the people would consider vital and important questions of their day and interest. In view of the situation in 443 B.C., we feel that a more powerful force founded and inspired the custom of burial; that the sense of duty, of sisterly devotion, was at stake in the burial of Polyneices, and that a natural right of love was being violated. We

⁴³Ibid. p. 27.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 25-26.

might note, finally, in this digression a rather strange but worthwhile analysis offered by Professor Kitto in his explanation of the meaning of theoi in the Sophoclean tragedies. He mentions: "In relation to the physical universe the theoi are not its creators but rather the controlling forces within it, those which cause things to happen, like rain or earthquakes. In relation to the human universe, events which are regular and right (not necessarily morally right) show the presence of a theos...Because Haemon's action was of this sort, Sophocles can say that a theos was at work."⁴⁵ Thus, the gods are identified with nature, and the exciting of any force of human nature which is regular and right is a stirring of the gods, the powers of nature. In such wise, the instinct of love founding the need for burial may all be associated with the theoi and result as the law of the gods, the law of nature. In this opinion, then, the gods and nature are more united than ever; though criticism may be offered by scholars, yet we feel that the essence of the statement certainly is valid and operative.

⁴⁵Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher, p. 44.

Such, then are the introductory remarks to begin our study of the play. Let us begin our analysis with a note on the method to be employed. Though a description of the play in its highlights, supported by the subordinate parts, is valuable and quite readable, it seems better and more objective for the purpose here to go through the play in its temporal sequence, i.e., as it is put on before the audience. In this way the build-up of the tragedy is kept without having to be insisted upon and the values of the structural method of analysis are to a great degree enjoyed. The drawback of this procedure is that it entails practically a line-by-line criticism of the tragedy; yet, the price is small if objectivity is achieved.

Antigone opens the play in an interview of importance with her sister, Ismene. In this scene we learn of the edict of Creon and the reactions of Antigone and her sister, the one expressing a plan of contradiction, the other resolving to keep the law. Immediately we are caught up in the intimacy of this meeting by Antigone's affectionate "Ismene, sister, mine own dear sister,"⁴⁶

⁴⁶Ant. 1. κοινὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰσμήνης κάρα...

which hints to a member of the family. This call upon sisterhood is developed in Antigone's sollicitude: "...is it hidden from thee that our friends are threatened with the doom of our foes?"⁴⁷ To answer this, Ismene sadly reminds Antigone of the woes of their house, "No words of friends, Antigone, gladsome or painful, have come to me, since we two sisters were bereft of brothers twain..."⁴⁸ The deep affection of Ismene, reflected in Antigone, for her brothers makes the audience realize the nearness of the sorrow that has visited the body of Polyneices. Antigone, however, has come onto the stage already informed of this disgrace, and she gives vent to the love she has for her brother: "the edict Creon hath set forth for thee and for me—aye, for me!"⁴⁹ Antigone does not doubt the love of Ismene for her brother; she does not even consider it in this outburst.

⁴⁷Ibid. 9-10. ἢ σε λανθάνει πρὸς τοὺς φίλους στείχοντα τῶν ἐχθρῶν κακᾶ;

⁴⁸Ibid. 11-13. ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐδεὶς μῦθος, Ἀντιγόνη, φίλων οὐθ' ἡδὺς οὐτ' ἀλγεινὸς ἵκετ' ἐξ ὅτου δυοῖν ἀδελφοῖν ἐστερήθημεν δύο...

⁴⁹Ibid. 31-32. τοιαῦτά φασι τὸν ἀγαθὸν Κρέοντα σοὶ κάμοι, λέγω ἢ γὰρ κάμει, κηρύξαντ' ἔχειν...

Rather she, as it were, questions anyone who will listen how Creon can expect a sister to obey such a command. Realizing her purpose, Antigone puts her plan to Ismene in terms of family devotion: "whether thou art nobly bred, or the base daughter of a noble line..."⁵⁰ Upon Ismene's hesitation, Antigone bursts out, "I will do my part—and thine, if thou wilt not—to a brother,"⁵¹ showing her basic motive as love and care for her brother. Another sign of her intense feelings follows swiftly, "Nay, he hath no right to keep me from mine own."⁵² After Ismene's demur, Antigone brings before her the charge: "but if thou wilt, be guilty of dishonoring laws which the gods have established in honor."⁵³ In the keeping of the laws Antigone's great hope is crystalized: "I shall rest, with him whom I have loved, sinless

⁵⁰Ibid. 37-38; or as another translates: "whether you are a true sister, or a traitor to your family." καὶ δείξεις τάχα εἴτ' εὐγενῆς πέφυκας εἴτ' ἐσθλῶν κακῆ.

⁵¹Ibid. 45-46. τὸν γοῦν ἐμὸν καὶ τὸν σὸν, ἢν σὺ μὴ θέλῃς, ἀδελφόν...

⁵²Ibid. 48. σοὶ δ' εἰ δοκεῖ, τὸ τῶν θεῶν ἔντιμ' ἀτιμάσασ' ἔχε.

⁵³Ibid. 76-77. ἀλλ' οὐδὲν αὐτῷ τῶν ἐμῶν μ' εἶργειν μέτα.

in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living."⁵⁴ Here Antigone wants to keep the laws of religion so that she may live again with her brother, at his side as of old; this will be her boast and on this level does she wish to shame Ismene. Antigone stresses now her love for her brother, perhaps intending to incite Ismene to heroism: "I, then, will go to heap the earth above the brother whom I love."⁵⁵ Ismene tries to hold Antigone in check, but the latter answers that "I know that I please where I am most bound to please,"⁵⁶ and where she is most bound to please is where her love is most demanding and ignored. Though Ismene will not yield, yet she can understand perfectly well that her sister means nothing but the best, and she expresses both her own love for her and acknowledges Antigone's love for her brother: "though thine errand is foolish,

⁵⁴Ibid. 73-75. φίλη μετ' αὐτοῦ κείσομαι, φίλου μέτα, ὅσια πανουργήσασ'· ἐπεὶ πλείων χρόνος ὄν δειῖ μ' ἀρέσκειν τοῖς κάτω τῶν ἐνθάδε.

⁵⁵Ibid. 80-81. ἐγὼ δὲ δὴ τάφον χάσουσ' ἀδελφῶ φιλτάτῳ πορεύσομαι.

⁵⁶Ibid. 89. οἶδ' ἀρέσκουσ' οἷς μάλισθ' ἀδεῖν με χρή.

to thy dear ones thou art truly dear."⁵⁷ This completes Ismene's earlier revelation of her own sorrowful love: "Alas, unhappy one! how I fear for thee!"⁵⁸ Such, then, is the content within the first hundred lines, a content showing many references to love for brother, for sister, for each other. The tone of the play is set in this atmosphere of a family loyalty and devotion; Creon's decree is harsh and unreasonable precisely in proportion to the intensity of love in these two sisters. If all were like Ismene, and left to themselves, they would admit: "but to defy the state—I have no strength for that."⁵⁹ However, one of the citizens will not allow her natural love to be smothered by inconsiderateness and misguidance. The gods will speak through her single cry. Hence the tragedy is set.

The parados of the Chorus evidently serves mostly as a "filler" to tell in song the events leading up to the scene be-

⁵⁷Ibid. 98-99. ἄνους μὲν ἔρχη, τοῖς φίλοις δ' ὀρθῶς φίλη.

⁵⁸Ibid. 82; or as another translates: "Oh my poor sister, how I fear for you!" οἶμοι, ταλαίηνῃς ὡς ὑπερδέδοικά σου.

⁵⁹Ibid. 78-79. τὸ δὲ βίᾳ πολιτῶν δρᾶν ἔφυν ἀμήχανος.

tween Antigone and Ismene. Also, it offers the usual Greek ironic touch, in that with tragedy so imminent, the chorus thinks only of joy and its new-found freedom from suffering.

The next section, Creon's entrance and his first meeting with the guard, we have taken up in the previous chapter discussing the sincerity and personality of Creon.⁶⁰ We need only note his dominant and constant affirmation: "...and if any makes a friend of more account than his fatherland, that man hath no place in my regard."⁶¹ Thus, we feel that Creon is not purposely tyrannical; yet, his opinion is fortified by his lack of deep feeling for the sorrows of others. His devotion is admirable, but not at the expense of putting aside the loyalties demanded of others by family and conjugal love. We have seen, too, his hasty rejection of anything womanly for fear that such qualities would be disastrous to a ruler of justice.⁶² He has

⁶⁰Chapter II, pages 30-33.

⁶¹Ant. 182-183. καὶ μείζον' ὅστις ἀντὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ πατρὸς φίλον νομίζει, τοῦτον οὐδαμοῦ λέγω.

⁶²Chapter II, pages 36-38.

schooled himself for his task; he has learned to look only to one side of life, a look which leaves his judgment unbalanced. Thus, he can honestly but woefully claim that, "never, by deed of mine shall the wicked stand in honor before the just; but whose hath good will to Thebes, he shall be honored of me, in his life and in his death."⁶³ Creon has stated his case, for the time being. Clearly his outlook differs from that of the woman we met in the opening lines; both are seen to be demanding, unbending, strong-willed. As Professor Kirkwood has mentioned about this scene and the meeting of the guard: "His (Creon's) infuriated amazement at the chorus's suggestion that the gods may have had a hand in the burial is neither assumed nor unnatural. To Creon, the state is under the care of the gods and an insult to the state is an insult to the gods. He seriously believes that his exemplary 'punishment' of Polyneices' corpse is for the

⁶³Ant. 207-210. τοιόνδ' ἐμὸν φρόνημα, κούποτ' ἐκ γ' ἐμοῦ τιμῆ προέξουσ' οἱ κακοὶ τῶν ἐνδίκων. ἀλλ' ὅστις εὐνοῦς τῆδε τῆ πόλει, θανῶν καὶ ζῶν ὁμοίως ἐξ ἐμοῦ τιμῆσεται.

good of the state."⁶⁴ Creon must learn yet that an insult to nature is an insult to the gods.

In the scene with the guard we have noticed Creon's dominant qualities and reactions. We have his repetition of his basic position and of his belief that he is right. Let us look for a moment at the guard himself, for he can help clarify some points, too. First, it does not seem right that we should take the guard's fearful actions as indicative of the character of the king. It rather seems reasonable to think that the guard knew little of Creon personally, both because Creon has so recently taken over the government, with no comments provided us from anyone about his personality, and because rulers and their subjects rarely had anything in common upon which to base any close friendship. It seems more likely that the guard's actions, insofar as they are placating, result from his natural reaction when placed before a ruler, any ruler, with a charge of laziness and failure in duty chargeable to him. Thus, we find no reason for scrutinizing the actions of the guard to detect personality

⁶⁴Kirkwood, p. 123.

traits in Creon.

Secondly, though the guard has a precise function in the play, he also portrays a definite personality. This character of the guard manifests itself in the second appearance, so we shall consider that section for a moment, in the hope of dispensing with the guard very shortly and completely. There is no doubt that the guard does add relief to the play as the tension mounts;⁶⁵ but, more than that, he also adds a bit of selfishness to the action. His words: "I could have vowed that I should not soon be here again—scared by thy threats, with which I had just been lashed: but—since the joy that surprises and transcends our hopes is like in fulness to no other pleasure—I have come, though 'tis in breach of my sworn oath, bringing this maiden; who was taken showing grace to the dead. This time there was no casting of lots; no, this luck hath fallen to me, and to no one else. And now, sire, take her thyself, question her, examine her, as thou wilt; but I have a right to go free and final

⁶⁵cf. Ant. 223-236, 259-275.

quittance of this trouble,"⁶⁶ and later: "...we taxed her with her past and present doings; and she stood not on denial of aught—at once to my joy and to my pain. To have escaped from a man whose illness one's self is a great joy; but 'tis painful to bring friends to ill. Howbeit, all such things are of less account to me than mine own safety";⁶⁷—these words, we feel, show a lack of deep sympathy for Antigone's capture and future punishment, and seem to indicate a friend who will be faithful till fidelity demands a price. In this respect, the guard is an amazing contradiction to the woman who will risk all for the sake of her brother. True, the guard has been saved much possible torture (though Creon did let him go free the first time, to the guard's won-

⁶⁶Ibid. 389-400. ἐπεὶ σχολῆ ποθ' ἤξειν δεῦρ' ἀν' ἐξηύχουν ἐγώ, ταῖς σαῖς ἀπειλαῖς, αἷς ἐχειμάσθην τότε. ἀλλ' ἡ γὰρ ἐκτὸς καὶ παρ' ἐλπίδας χαρὰ ἔοικεν ἄλλη μῆκος οὐδὲν ἡδονῆ, ἦκω, οἱ ὄρκων καίπερ ὧν ἀπώμοτος, κόρην ἄγων τήνδ', ἡ καθηρέθη τάφον κοσμοῦσα. κληρὸς ἐνθάδ' οὐκ ἐπάλλετο, ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἐμὸν θούρμαιον, οὐκ ἄλλου, τόδε. καὶ νῦν, ἀναξ, τήνδ' αὐτὸς, ὡς θέλεις, λαβὼν καὶ κρῖνε κάξέλεγχ'. ἐγὼ δ' ἐλεύθερος δίκαιός εἰμι τῶνδ' ἀπηλλάχθαι κακῶν.

⁶⁷Ibid. 434-440. καὶ τὰς τε πρόσθεν τὰς τε νῦν ἠλέγχομεν πράξεις· ἄπαρνος δ' οὐδενὸς καθίστατο, ἅμ' ἠδέως ἔμοιγε κάλγειν ἄμα. τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐκ κακῶν πεφευγέναι ἡδιστον, ἐς κακὸν δὲ τοὺς φίλους ἄγειν ἀλγεινόν. ἀλλὰ τὰλλα πάνθ' ἦσσω λαβεῖν ἐμοὶ πέφυκε τῆς ἐμῆς σωτηρίας.

der⁶⁸); but his insensibility sets off the love of Antigone, on the one hand, and offers a small-scale model of Creon's shortsightedness and comparative lack of feeling for others. Both men are strikingly alike in this insensibility to those about them; perhaps different motives are involved, but they still manifest the same quality.

We have to note, too, that the violence threatened on the stage and in the attitudes of the actors is rather common to Greek drama, as is evinced in the magnificent Oedipus Rex.⁶⁹ But it does show on Creon's side a further tendency towards harshness rather than sympathetic understanding.

As for the ode which precedes the entrance of Antigone, perhaps the best explanation of its meaning is given by Professor Kirkwood:

Neither the beginning nor the end of the ode has any precise reference to the act. The ode arises from the spirit of the preceding episode. The episode begins with a calm and orderly speech of Creon...Creon's attitude, on the surface, is an example of the achievement

⁶⁸Ibid. 330-331.

⁶⁹Oedipus Rex, 1158, 1166.

of man, civilized man. At the end of the episode there is anger and disturbance. The impression left by the whole is of stability and order suddenly jarred into confusion, doubt, and disorder. The ode reflects this change; its relevance to the context lies precisely in its repetition of the emotional development of the episode...Just who is the disturber of order and right, who it is that has been led 'to evil ways'—Creon or the burier of the body—is deliberately left in doubt.⁷⁰

Though we feel that such an analysis gives an adequate representation of the ode for our purposes, yet, the words of the last stanza should be noted: "when he honors the laws of the land and that justice which he has sworn by the gods to uphold, proudly stands his city; no city hath he who, for his rashness, dwells with sin. Never may he share my hearth, never think my thoughts, who doth such things!"⁷¹ Are not these sentiments repetitions of Creon's earlier words, that a friend is one who honors first the country, and by this devotion all friendship is kept? Thus, Creon's sentiment is not just his own; rather it is the ideal of the polis in ordinary situations, at least, and to be considered gravely by every citizen.

⁷⁰Kirkwood, 207.

⁷¹Ant. 369-375. νόμους περαιίνων χθονός θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν· ὑψίπολις ἀπολις ὅτω το μη καλὸν εὔνεσι τόλμας χάριν. μητ' ἔμοι γένοιτο μητ' ἴσον φρονῶν ὅς τὰδ' ἔροδοι.

Finally, we note the dominant characteristics of the two contestants, Antigone and Creon, towards each other; the one defiant and, unwittingly, insulting; the other, demanding and misunderstanding, easily angered and quick to reach a decision. Here we have the famous lines of Antigone: "for it was not Zeus that had published me that edict; not such are the laws set among men by the Justice who dwells with the gods below; nor deemed I that thy decrees were of such force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes of heaven. For their life is not of today or yesterday, but from all time, and no man knows when they were first put forth...Not through any dread of human pride could I answer to the gods for breaking these...if I had suffered my mother's son to lie in death an unburied corpse, that would have grieved me..."⁷² Here we shall not repeat what we have mentioned as introductory to our analysis; that the root instinct or sentiment of the burial custom

⁷²Ibid. 450-468. οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε, οὐδ' ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη τοιοῦσδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὤρισεν νόμους οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον φόμην τὰ σὰ κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἀγραπτα κάσφαλή θεῶν νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδράμειν...εἰ τὸν ἐξ ἐμῆς μητρὸς θανόντ' ἄθραπτον ηἰσχύμην νέκυον, κείνοισ ἀν' ἤλγουν...οὐδενὸς φρόνημα δείσασ', ἐν θεοῖσι τὴν δίκην δώσειν...

was a family love and devotion towards the deceased kin. Antigone has had time, as it were, to formulate her defense. But the basic attitude and motive with which she opened the play has not waned or disappeared; rather it has been fortified with reason and custom, in the same manner as the custom and the reasonableness of her action is fortified by the intense natural love for her brother.

Creon, incensed at her boldness and boasting, blinds himself all the more to the real reason behind her action; he shows this in his complete misunderstanding of Ismene in his judgment: "and summon her—for I saw her e'en now within—raving, and not mistress of her wits. So oft, before the deed, the mind stands self-convicted in its treason, when folks are plotting in mischief."⁷³ His own personality, so worthwhile in state affairs, has led him into this hasty misjudgment. Granted the reasonableness and, no doubt, the many instances in which Creon's observation might be true, he still has leaped too soon and will have

⁷³Ibid. 491-494. καί νιν καλεῖτ'· ἔσω γὰρ εἶδον ἀρτίως λυσσῶσαν αὐτὴν οὐδ' ἐπήβολον φρενῶν. φιλεῖ δ' ὁ θυμὸς πρόσθεν ἡρῆσθαι κλοπεύς τῶν μηδὲν ὀρθῶς ἐν σκοτῶ τεχνωμένων.

to defend a very precarious position. Creon, still operating on his first principles, insists: "No! be she sister's child, or nearer to me in blood than any that worships Zeus at the altar of our house—she shall not avoid a doom most dire..."⁷⁴ He is carrying his loyalty to the limit, without consulting the violently disturbed feelings and opinions of the others about him.

Just before the entrance of Ismene, Antigone and Creon argue in violent and quick sentences which affirm Antigone's love for her brother and Creon's lack of understanding of the individual's temperament and value. Antigone states: "And yet, for glory—whence could I have won a nobler, than by giving burial to mine own brother?"⁷⁵ This sets the tone of this final argument, with Antigone defending her right to care for her brother, Creon upholding the duty one owes first to the law of the state. Antigone's words: "there is nothing shameful in piety to a bro-

⁷⁴Ibid. 486-489. ἀλλ' εἴτ' ἀδελφῆς εἶθ' ὀμαιμονεστέρα τοῦ παντὸς ἡμῖν Ζηνὸς ἐρκείου κυρεῖ, αὐτῆ τε χῆ ξύναιμος οὐκ ἀλύξετον μόρου κακίστου.

⁷⁵Ibid. 502-504. καίτοι πόθεν κλέος γ' ἂν εὐκλεέστερον κατέσχον ἢ τὸν αὐτάδελφον ἐν τάφῳ τιθεῖσα;

ther,"⁷⁶ emphasize the word "brother" here, and after her statement: "it was his brother, not his slave, that perished,"⁷⁷ in which she emphasizes the dignity of Polynices in her mind, she ends with her famous and summary statement of her whole character and conflict: "it is not my nature to join in hating, but in loving."⁷⁸ Creon, unable to comprehend the emphasis of such a viewpoint in life, insists that "a foe is never a friend—not even in death,"⁷⁹ a statement most consonant with all his endeavors up to this point. He further exclaims: "but the good desires not a like portion with the evil."⁸⁰ Antigone can only answer, "who knows but this seems blameless in the world below?"⁸¹

⁷⁶Ibid. 511. οὐδὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τοὺς ὁμοσπλάγχνους σέβειν.

⁷⁷Ibid. 517. οὐ γὰρ τι δοῦλος, ἀλλ' ἀδελφὸς ὤλετο.

⁷⁸Ibid. 523. οὗτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν.

⁷⁹Ibid. 522. οὗτοι ποθ' οὐχθρός, οὐδ' ὅταν θάνη, φίλος.

⁸⁰Ibid. 520. ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ χρηστός τῷ κακῷ λαχεῖν ἴσον.

⁸¹Ibid. 521. τίς οἶδεν εἰ κάτωθεν εὐαγῆ τάδε;

Such an attitude cannot run a government; hence, the antagonists speak on two different levels, and prolong and fortify their individual anguish and tragedy.

At this point enters Ismene, at the order of Creon; she is now an Ismene with courage and boldness. Her purpose seems to be, at least in part, to diffuse the tension and the restricted nature of the angry quarrel between Antigone and Creon. Not that the audience loses the emotion built up in the earlier scenes; rather, their close attention is now given wider range and their sympathy is offered a new object. Moreover, the cause of the natural power and drive of love is promoted as Ismene's sorrow is increased in direct proportion to the only motive bringing her back to face Creon and Antigone, the deep and sincere love which caused her previous "ravings" in the house and which is now tearing at her heart. The chorus sadly introduces Ismene: "Lo, yonder Ismene comes forth, shedding such tears as fond sisters weep..."⁸² She accepts the charge of being Antigone's accomplice

⁸²Ibid. 526-527. καὶ μὴν πρὸ πυλῶν ἦδ' Ἰομήνη, φιλάδελφα κάτω δάκρυ' εἰβομένη...

in the burial scene because of her love for her sister: "and what life is dear to me, bereft of thee?"⁸³ All through, her motive is clearly love: "I am not ashamed to sail the sea of trouble at thy side,"⁸⁴ "...let me die with thee..."⁸⁵ "tell me, how can I serve thee, even now?"⁸⁶ The final affirmations of Ismene show the grief Creon will bring because of his shortsightedness: "Ah, woe is me! And shall I have no share in thy fate?...What life could I endure without her presence?"⁸⁷ The character of Ismene, in the light of her motivation infusing meaning into the play, and, at the same time, drawing power and support from the rest of the types of love and devotion shown throughout, makes her part much more significant in itself and

⁸³Ibid. 548. καὶ τίς βίος μοι σοῦ λελειμμένη φίλος;

⁸⁴Ibid. 540-541. ἀλλ' ἐν κακοῖς τοῖς σοῖσιν οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι
ξυμπλουν ἑμαυτὴν τοῦ πάθους ποιουμένη.

⁸⁵Ibid. 544-545. μήτοι, κασιγνήτη, μ' ἀτιμάσης τὸ μὴ οὐ
θανεῖν τε σὺν σοὶ τὸν θανόντα θ' ἀγνίσαι.

⁸⁶Ibid. 552. τί δῆτ' ἂν ἄλλα νῦν σ' ἐτ' ὠφελοῖμ' ἐγώ;

⁸⁷Ibid. 554, 566. οἴμοι τάλαινα, κάμπλάκω τοῦ σοῦ μόρου;...
τί γὰρ μόνη μοι τῆσδ' ἄτερ βιώσιμον;

more tightly bound to the tragedy as a whole—a result, we believe, of the thematic interpretation based on the idea of love. Creon has devastated another soul, but as yet does not see the importance of Ismene's motivation. No doubt, during the words between Antigone and Ismene, he realizes once more the foolishness of women and affirms again his position of the man of practical affairs who, in fact, leaning away from such emotional attitudes, keeps the state healthy for such sisters. He is in no way convinced that he is wrong, nor would anybody with his strong habits and determined convictions think he were so.

At this point the chorus enters with an ode, for which we have two valuable interpretations, neither of which is decisive but which are good explanations of the movement of the tragedy at this point. Professor Kirkwood tends to a criticism much like the one he offered on the earlier ode about the greatness of man:

Of its two lyrical systems, the first is a lament for the house of Labdacus, springing very naturally from the unhappy events of the scene before; the second is a deeply religious warning against the false hopes and transgressions of mankind. Again the chorus speaks in earnest, but it is hard to settle on the object of their warning...we must conclude that the ambiguity is intended. The chorus, having heard the quarrel between Antigone and Creon, are convinced that someone is going against the will of heaven; but in their

lyrical musing on the problem they do not point directly at the sinner, because they do not know precisely who the sinner is...the ambiguity is...dramatically valuable. It maintains and expands a feeling of impending calamity for wrongdoing without constituting a direct moral indictment which would weaken the tension of the plot.⁸⁸

The "power which neither sleep...nor the untiring months of the gods can master"⁸⁹ can well refer also to the natural driving constituent of love in Antigone and Ismene which is impelling them headlong against sovereignty.

Though Professor Kirkwood gives a valuable summary, we feel that Professor Kitto shows better the pivotal position played by Creon: "It is also true that time after time in this play the chorus says things which are true, but are said about the wrong person—as when in the second ode they speak of the wicked law-breaker, and in the third ode about evil seeming good to the one whom the god is minded to destroy; in each case they are thinking of Creon's adversary, but in each case it is Creon himself whom

⁸⁸Kirkwood, p. 207-208.

⁸⁹Ant. 608-609. δύνασιν...τὰν οὐθ' ὕπνου αἰρεῖ ποθ' ὁ παντογῆρως οὐτ' ἄκαματοι θεῶν μῆνες...

the words *cit.*"⁹⁰ Thus far it is clear, at least, that both contestants, in the mind of the chorus, have the gods on their sides.

The ode, however, is but a short interlude before the grinding wheels of tragedy once more turn at the will of a new figure, Haemon, the son of Creon and bride-groom of Antigone. His entrance is foreshadowed in the words of Antigone and Ismene, when Ismene called upon Creon: "but wilt thou slay the betrothed of thine own son?"⁹¹ In speaking so, Ismene awakened in Antigone the realization of another source of grief, one of which she had not been conscious till now because of the intense struggle for her brother, but which begins (and will flourish to an extreme) to prey upon her mind and heart. Thus, after Ismene's reply to Creon that "there can never be such love as bound him to her,"⁹² Antigone cries aloud, "Haemon, beloved!

⁹⁰*Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher*, p. 36-37.

⁹¹*Ant.* 568. ἀλλὰ κτενεῖς νυμφεῖα τοῦ σουτοῦ τέκνου;

⁹²*Ibid.* 570. οὐχ ὡς γ' ἐκείνω τῆδε τ' ἦν ἡρμοσμένα.

How thy father wrongs thee!"⁹³ Antigone's sorrow now is doubled with her remembrance of Haemon; here begins the imagery of marriage with death, the alternative to the now lost hope of marriage with Haemon. Both her loves are now shattered; but her devotion to Haemon and the sorrow she expresses give us an understanding that, though Haemon pleads with his father under the motive of parental respect and love, nonetheless, there is a great love for Antigone burning within him, a love which flares out only at the end, but the traces of which we, and Creon himself, are quick to apprehend.

The chorus sets up the immediate reference to Haemon, announcing him as "the last of thy sons,"⁹⁴ a hint to us of the depth of future grief for Creon and, indeed, for Eurydice. At once the chorus expects Haemon to come "grieving for the doom of his promised bride, Antigone, and bitter for the baffled hope of

⁹³Ibid. 572; cf. Jebb, for attribution of this verse to Antigone, p. 110. ὦ φίλταθ' Αἴμον, ὡς σ' ἀτιμάζει πατήρ.

⁹⁴Ibid. 626-627. ὄδε μὴν Αἴμων, παίδων τῶν σῶν νεάτων γέννημ' ...

his marriage."⁹⁵ The same expectation is voiced by Creon in his greeting: "My son, hearing the fixed doom of thy betrothed, art thou come in rage against thy father?"⁹⁶ Thus, the new strain which flows through Haemon's speech, the sincere attempt to change his father's mind for Creon's sake, comes unexpectedly. Yet, we can see that Haemon has another and real interest, that of the welfare of his father. His words, "Father, I am thine,"⁹⁷ seem to ring, after our expectations were roused by the chorus and Creon, either of falseness or of cowardice, until we listen to him more at length, see the path he is advocating with wisdom and prudence, hear him give sensible and courageous counsel, "Nay, forego thy wrath; permit thyself to change,"⁹⁸ and see his sincerity in his statements: "at least, it is my natural office to watch, on thy behalf, all that men say or do, or find to

⁹⁵Ibid. 627-630. ἀχνόμενος τάλιδος ἦκει μόρον Ἀντιγόνης, ἀπάτης λεχέων ὑπεραλγῶν...

⁹⁶Ibid. 632-633. ὦ παῖ, τελείαν ψῆφον ἄρα μὴ κλύων τῆς μελλονύμφου πατρὶ λυσοαίνων πάρει;

⁹⁷Ibid. 635. πάτερ, σὸς εἶμι'...

⁹⁸Ibid. 718. ἀλλ' εἶχε θυμοῦ καὶ μετὰστασιν δίδου.

blame...For me, my father, no treasure is so precious as thy welfare. What, indeed, is a nobler ornament for children than a prospering sire's fair fame, or for sire than son's?"⁹⁹ Creon, however, realizes Haemon's other commitment and accuses him of brashness and surrender to his love for Antigone. He accuses Haemon, in fact, of just the fault he himself wishes to avoid: "O dastard nature, yielding place to woman!"¹⁰⁰ His son, he thinks has fallen into the trap of love and has lost the powers of unflinching justice and right order, of insensible punishment of traitors and stabilization of the state, qualities which the king holds as of the highest importance. Haemon insists: "indeed, my care is for thee...(all my words) plead for thee, and for the gods below."¹⁰¹ But Creon's quick judgment, the judgment of the ruler of men, never changes once it is expressed. Creon has no realization, no belief that his son could act on

⁹⁹Ibid. 688-689, 701-704. οὐ δ' οὐ πέφυκας πάντα προσκοπεῖν ὅσα λέγει τις ἢ πράσσει τις ἢ ψέγειν ἔχει... ἐμοὶ δὲ σοῦ πράσσοντος εὐτυχῶς οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν κτῆμα τιμιώτερον. τί πατρὸς θάλλοντος εὐκλείας τέκνοις ἀγαλμα μείζον, ἢ τί πρὸς παίδων πατρί;

¹⁰⁰Ibid. 746. ὦ μιαρὸν ἦθος καὶ γυναικὸς ὕστερον.

¹⁰¹Ibid. 749. καὶ σοῦ γε κάμοῦ, καὶ θεῶν τῶ νερτέρων.

Antigone's behalf till Haemon says, "then she must die, and in death, destroy another."¹⁰² Still incredulous and insensible, stung to the depths of his soul and in great rage at having been tried so long and opposed from all sides so fiercely, Creon cries out: "Now, by the heaven above us—be sure of it—thou shalt smart for taunting me in this opprobrious strain. Bring forth that hated thing, that she may die forthwith in his presence—before his very eyes—at her bridegroom's side!"¹⁰³ A cruel punishment we realize, knowing the meaning of love and devotion more than Creon does; yet, Creon has the anger of passion, and he shows his unwillingness to be balked in any way at all. Thus, we realize that the breaking of Creon will be fearsome, he being overcome only at the greatest cost to himself and his dear ones. Then, there comes a repetition of the action with the guard, in the sense that Creon again lets his antagonist go, not pressing

¹⁰²Ibid. 751. ἡ δ' οὖν θανεῖται καὶ θανοῦσ' ὀλεῖ τινά.

¹⁰³Ibid. 758-761. ἀλλ' οὐ, τόνδ' Ὀλυμπόν, ἴσθ' ὅτι, χαίρων ἐπὶ ψόγοισι δειννάσεις ἔμε. ἄγετε τὸ μῖσος, ὡς κατ' ὄμματ' αὐτίκα παρόντι θνήσκη πλησία τῷ νυμφίῳ.

his charge.¹⁰⁴

Still convinced of his position, Creon tells the chorus that the death of Antigone will be carried out "as piety prescribes, that the city may avoid a public stain."¹⁰⁵ Certainly, he still thinks that he and the gods are in accord, that he is right and Antigone is wrong; thus, he does not want to incur the wrath of the gods by committing any mistake in their regard. Once more, he repeats, in a different way, the confirmatory speech he offered Haemon, affirming his position as the only right one in the face of such anarchy as, he thinks, is represented by the maiden. "She stands away from the city, she alone..."¹⁰⁶ and Creon cannot imagine her being approved by others; hence, he cannot let her go free, else he will betray his duty to his people and the justice of the law in every case, "I will not make

¹⁰⁴Ibid. 766; cf. 331. ἀνὴρ, ἀναξ, βέβηκεν ἐξ ὀργῆς ταχὺς...

¹⁰⁵Ibid. 775-776. φορβῆς τοσοῦτον ὡς ἄγος μόνον προθείς, ὅπως μίασμα πᾶσ' ὑπεκφύγη πόλις.

¹⁰⁶Ibid. 656. πόλεως ἀπιστήσασαν ἐκ πάσης μόνην...

myself a liar to my people."¹⁰⁷ "What could strike deeper than a false friend," Creon says, for "he who does his duty in his own household will be found righteous in the state also."¹⁰⁸ Creon repeats that he believes this principle of life, and his principle is unconditional. Haemon, in a worried voice, tells his father, "I see thee offending against justice,"¹⁰⁹ only to hear Creon's expression of incredulity: "Do I offend, when I respect mine own prerogatives?"¹¹⁰ Creon is firm in his position and cannot, as yet, see his way to yielding at all to the claims mad on him by his son.

Up to this point, then, Creon has defied the sentiments and anxious desires of all those about him, Antigone, Haemon and Ismene. He has had time to present his case, to learn its value from convergent and opposing opinions. The various facets of his

¹⁰⁷Ibid. 657. ψευδῆ γ' ἑμαυτὸν οὐ καταστήσω πόλει,...

¹⁰⁸Ibid. 661-662. ἐν τοῖς γὰρ οἰκείοισιν ὅστις ἔστ' ἀνὴρ χρηστός, φανεῖται κἀν πόλει δίκαιος ὢν.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. 743. οὐ γὰρ δίκαιά σ' ἐξαμαρτάνονθ' ὀρῶ.

¹¹⁰Ibid. 744. ἀμαρτάνω γὰρ τὰς ἐμὰς ἀρχὰς σέβων;

character have been exposed through his reactions to those in-
subordinate to him. At this juncture, the chorus offers its
summary statement of the last, dynamic scene in which the cause
of Antigone was exemplified in the intercession of Haemon. As
noted before, Professor Kitto remarks: "the two stanzas on Love
are not religious poetry written as an interlude by a pious
dramatist; they are important parts of the real drama. Creon has
already defied one part of the divine law in refusing burial to a
fellow human being; now he defies another of the majestic powers
of the universe in brutally disregarding Haemon's love for Anti-
gone."¹¹¹ Thus, we call upon "Love, unconquered in the fight,"
an indication of the Chorus' understanding of the motive which
has driven Haemon to make his claims.¹¹² Its universality is
expressed in that "no immortal can escape thee, nor any among men
whose life is for a day."¹¹³ Its place among the gods is certi-

¹¹¹Kitto, Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher, p. 36-37.

¹¹²Ant. 781. Ἔρως, ἀνίκατε μάχαν...

¹¹³Ibid. 787-790. οὐτ' ἀθανάτων φύξιμος οὐδείς οὔθ' ἀμερίαν
γ' ἀνθρώπων...

fied: "it is a power enthroned in sway beside the eternal laws; for there the goddess Aphrodite is working her unconquerable will."¹¹⁴ And though the chorus speaks ill of love, "The just themselves have their minds warped by thee to wrong, for their ruin,"¹¹⁵ nonetheless, they admit, as Antigone enters, "but now I also am carried beyond the bounds of loyalty, and can no more keep back the streaming tears."¹¹⁶ As Jebb says: "the pathos of the maiden's fate is heightened by this plea of her lover. When she is led in by the guards, on her way to death, the Chorus avow that pity works with them even as love with Haemon."¹¹⁷ Here all souls are laid bare and the most sympathetic and generous feelings called upon. The chorus reflects the main theme of the play, as it leaves the realms of what must be done in justice for

¹¹⁴Ibid. 797-801. τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς θεσμῶν· ἄμαχος γὰρ ἐμπαίζει θεὸς Ἀφροδίτα.

¹¹⁵Ibid. 791-792. οὐ καὶ δικαίων ἀδίκους φρένας παρασπᾶς ἐπὶ λῶβᾶ.

¹¹⁶Ibid. 802-804. νῦν δ' ἤδη ἄγὼ καὶ τοῦ θεσμῶν ἔξω φέρομαι τὰδ' ὀρῶν, ἴσχειν δ' οὐκέτι πηγᾶς δύναμαι δακρῶν...

¹¹⁷Jebb, p. 145.

that truly human and equally real and valuable kingdom of love. All now have been affected, all, that is, but Creon, who still persists in his refusal to allow such a passion to reign over his sensible and god-pleasing commands.¹¹⁸ Only one answer remains; the wisdom and authority of Teiresias must speak. At the name of "Aphrodite" Antigone is led forth; now we hear once again of her desire for marriage, the source of her suffering in great part, and acting as a second wave washing over and blending with the already spent rage of Haemon. Antigone comes before us, with all the thoughts of the past and future on her mind.

She acknowledges at once her most grievous sorrow: "Hades who gives sleep to all leads me living to Acheron's shore; who have had no portion in the chant that brings the bride, nor hath any song been mine for the crowning of bridals; whom the lord of the Dark Lake shall wed."¹¹⁹ From the beginning of her last

¹¹⁸All this time, during Antigone's lament and the choral songs, Creon is on the stage, as the emotional effect heightens; Kirkwood, pages 95-96.

¹¹⁹Ant. 810-816. ἀλλά μοι ὁ παγκοίτας Ἄιδας ζῶσαν ἄγει τὴν Ἀχέρωντος ἀκτάν, οὐθ' ὑμεναίων ἐγκληρον, οὐτ' ἐπὶ νύμφειοῖς πῶ μὲ τις ὕμνος ὕμνησεν, ἀλλ' Ἀχέρωντι νυμφεύσω.

hymn, we begin to realize more concretely the price Creon is demanding, and more, the side of his personality most at fault. He lacks the understanding of an experienced ruler, and he fails to balance the rights of justice against sorrow such as Antigone sings of in her last lament. The pitiable chant is continued by the chorus who, having yielded to their sympathy, now assure Antigone of fame and good name. Antigone seems not to care for such cold comfort: "Ah, I am mocked! In the name of our fathers' gods, can ye not wait till I am gone...Ah, fount of Dirce and thou holy ground of Thebes...ye, at least, will bear me witness, in what sort unwept of friends, and by what laws I pass to the rock-enclosed prison of my strange tomb, ah me unhappy! who have no home on the earth or in the shades!"¹²⁰ Then, the chorus offers two sources of her present sorrow, first, the sin of Oedipus, then, the heroine's own self-willed temper.¹²¹ But Antigone's final answer shows her deepest sentiments and heart-

¹²⁰Ibid. 839-852. οἴμοι γελῶμαι. τί με, πρὸς θεῶν πατρώων, οὐκ οἴχομεν ὑβρίζεις... ἰὼ Διρκαίαι κρήναι Ἐθβας τ' εὐαρματοῦ ἀλ-
 ἔμπας ξυμμάρτυρας ὑμῶν ἐπικτῶμαι, οἷα φίλων ἀκλαυτος, οἷοις νόμοις
 πρὸς ἔργμα... οὐ θανοῦσιν.

¹²¹Ibid. 853-856.

felt desires, summing up the very passions which drove her to defy Creon: "Unwept, unfriended, without marriage-song...for my fate no tear is shed, no friend makes moan."¹²²

The final highlighting of the clash between love and its opposite is Creon's hasty, typically practical interruption: "Know ye not that songs and wailings before death would never cease, if it profited to utter them? Away with her—away!"¹²³ Antigone's final expression, indeed her longest sustained speech, of her breaking heart and her frustrated love, we should cite, so that we may see the motive of her action and the real grief which Creon's misunderstanding has caused:

Tomb, bridal chamber, eternal prison in the caverned rock, whither I go to find mine own, those many who have perished, and whom Persephone hath received among the dead!...I cherish good hope that my coming will be welcome to my father, and pleasant to thee, my mother, and welcome, brother, to thee; for when ye died, with mine own hands I washed and dressed you, and poured drink-offerings at your graves; and now, Polyneices, 'tis for tending thy corpse that I win such recompense as this.

¹²²Ibid. 876-882. ἄκλαυτος, ἀφίλος, ἀνυμέναιος...τὸν δ' ἔμην πότμον ἀδάκρυτον οὐδεὶς φίλων στενάζει.

¹²³Ibid. 883-885. ἄρ' ἴστ' αἰοιδὰς καὶ γόους πρὸ τοῦ θανεῖν ὡς οὐδ' ἂν εἰς παύσαιτ' ἂν, εἰ χρεῖη, λεγῶν; οὐκ ἄξεθ' ὡς τάχιστα...

And yet, I honored thee, as the wise will deem rightly. Never, had I been a mother of children, or if a husband had been mouldering in death would I have taken this task upon me in the city's despite. What law, ye ask, is my warrant for that word? The husband lost, another might be found, and child from another, to replace the first-born; but, father and mother hidden with Hades, no brother's life could ever bloom for me again. Such was the law whereby I held thee first in honor; but Creon deemed me guilty of a horrible error therein, and of outrage, ah brother mine! And now he leads me thus, a captive in his hands; no bridal bed, no bridal song hath been mine, no joy of marriage, no portion in the nurture of children; but thus, forlorn of friends, unhappy one, I go living to the vaults of death.¹²⁴

Thus, Antigone admits: "such was the law whereby I held thee in honor first," and Creon could not understand it. Her courage had been feeding itself, sustaining itself on her love. Now both the love of the past, for Polyneices, and the love of the future, for Haemon are forever and irreconcilably spent. We have only one

¹²⁴Ibid. 891-920. ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφῆς οἴκησις οἱ πορεύομαι πρὸς τοὺς ἑμαυτῆς, ὧν ἀριθμὸν ἐν νεκροῖς πλεῖστον δέδεκται φερσέφασσ' ὀλωλότων... ἐλθοῦσα μέντοι κάρτ' ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω φίλη μὲν ἤξειν πατρί, προσφιλῆς δὲ σοί, μήτηρ, φίλη δὲ σοί, κασίγνητον χάρα. ἐπαί θανόντας αὐτόχερρ ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ἔλουσα κάκωσμησα κάπιτυμβίους χόας ἔδωκα· νῦν δὲ, Πολύνεικες, τὸ σὸν δέμας περι-στέλλουσα τοιάδ' ἄρνυμαι. καίτοι σ' ἐγὼ τίμησα τοῖς φρόνουσιν εὖ. οὐ γάρ ποτ' οὐτ' ἀν εἰ τέκνων μήτηρ ἔφυν οὐτ' εἰ πόσις μοι κατθανῶν ἐτίηκετο, βία πολιτῶν τόνδ' ἀν ἠρόμην κόνον. τίνος νόμου δὴ ταῦτα πρὸς χάριν λέγω; πόσις μὲν ἀν μοι κατθανόντος ἄλλος ἦν, καὶ παῖς ἀπ' ἄλλου φωτός, εἰ τοῦδ' ἠμπλακον, μητρὸς δ' ἐν Αἴδου καὶ πατρός κεκευθότιν οὐκ ἔστ' ἀδελφός ὅστις ἀν βλάστοι ποτέ. τοιῶδε μέντοι σ' ἐκπροσιμήσασ' ἐγὼ κόμφ, κρέοντι ταῦτ' ἔδοξ' ἀμαρτάνειν καὶ τολμᾶν, ὦ κασίγνητον χάρα... ἀλλ' ὡδ' ἔρημος πρὸς φίλων ἢ δύσμορος ζῶσ' ἐς θανόντων ἔρχομαι κατασκαφᾶς...

cry of parting from Antigone and she leaves us forever. Here we have the lyrical comments of the chorus, harkening back to former situations much like this one. As Professor Kirkwood says:

Here, as generally, the contribution of the ode is very simple: instead of moral pronouncement we have a poetic elaboration, very moving and vivid, of the single theme of imprisonment, forming a kind of lyrical finale to the foregoing scene. It is the emotion of the chorus, and the imaginative reach of their song, not their intellectual prowess, that counts here...the ode is a transformation of the pathos of events into lyrical terms that fulfill and give respite from the tragic action. Then the plot is renewed with the Teiresias scene.¹²⁵

In the scene with Teiresias we need only note a few things which will help fill out the present picture, for most of the interesting material is in Creon's character which we have been discussing throughout the thesis. Here Creon can recognize wisdom and authority when he sees it; hence, his obedience to the seer. Teiresias, on the other hand, claiming that Creon is the source of all this trouble, "and 'tis thy counsel that hath brought this sickness on our state,"¹²⁶ shows implicitly that Creon is the center of all the tragedies that have taken place

¹²⁵Ibid. Kirkwood, p. 211.

¹²⁶Ant. 1015. καὶ ταῦτα τῆς σῆς ἐκ φρενὸς νοσεῖ πόλις.

and will happen before our eyes; the king is the cause of each individual sorrow of the play; now he must learn and pay in return for his shortsightedness. Creon, having taken refuge in a sophistic argument already in the play, "(Antigone) will learn, though late, that it is lost labor to revere the dead,"¹²⁷ now expresses a similar notion, that "...well I know that no mortal can defile the gods."¹²⁸ Not so much is Creon anti-religious as anti-mythological. Yet, Teiresias is here to show him that the gods are still very real in the rites of burial: "you have done violence to the gods above."¹²⁹ In this heavy, weighty sentence of Teiresias Creon has at last felt the sting of certitude, for he can no longer doubt his fault in the presence of such a representative of knowledge and experience, as is expressed in the discussion:

Cho: And, since the hair on this head, once dark, hath

¹²⁷Ibid. 779-780. ...γνώσεται γοῦν ἀλλὰ τηνικαῦθ' ὅτι πόνος περισσοῦς ἐστὶ τάν "Αἰδοῦ σέβειν.

¹²⁸Ibid. 1043-1044. εὖ γὰρ οἶδ' ὅτι θεοῦς μαιίνειν οὔτις ἀνθρώπων σθένει.

¹²⁹Ibid. 1073. ἀλλ' ἐκ σοῦ βιάζονται [θεοὶ] τάδε.

been white, I know that he hath never been a false prophet to our city.

Cre: I, too, know it well, and am troubled in soul.¹³⁰

We must note, though, that this pensiveness, this fear is caused only by reason of the validity of Teiresias' past performances,¹³¹ not because of a fresh and innate sense of what will be appropriate in the future.

From this point the play moves rapidly, contradicting everything Creon has held precious and valuable. He finds it most difficult to yield, but he finally does.¹³² Indeed, his surrender brings with it a rather unexpected result: he will go to loose Antigone, just as he has bound her. But even this recantation is too late; the messengers breathlessly relate the particular details, admitting about Creon: "the living are guilty for the dead,"¹³³ indicating once again the pivotal point of

¹³⁰Ibid. 1092-1095. ἐπιστάμεθα δ', ἐξ ὅτου λευκὴν ἐγὼ τήνδ' ἐκ μελαίνης ἀμφιβάλλομαι, τρίχα, μή πῶ ποτ' αὐτὸν ψεῦδος ἐς πόλιν λακεῖν...Κρ. ἔγνωκα καὐτὸς καὶ ταρασσομαι φρένας...

¹³¹Ibid. 993, 995.

¹³²Ibid. 1099, 1105-1106.

¹³³Ibid. 1173. τεθνᾶσιν. οἱ δὲ ζῶντες αἴτιοι θανεῖν.

Creon that has affected so many lives and dear ones.

But the story of Creon's torturous sorrow is quickly supplanted by another, and perhaps, unexpected personality, the queen Eurydice. She is intensely quiet and reserved, serving mainly as an imitation also a personality in herself, another example of love incarnated, bleeding and hurt; "the message of a household woe smote mine ear; I sank back, terror-stricken, into the arms of my handmaids, and my senses fled."¹³⁴ Thus, Eurydice sums up her innermost apprehensions, evolving for us, in her limited time on stage, another character in the train of broken natures left by Creon's ignorance and stubbornness. She listens passively, unflinchingly to the grief of her son and niece: "corpse enfolding corpse he lies; he hath won his nuptial rites, poor youth, not here, yet in the halls of death,"¹³⁵ and she winces under the accusation of her husband: "what man-

¹³⁴Ibid. 1187-1189. με φθόγγος οίκειου κακοῦ βάλλει δι' ὠτων· ὑπτία δὲ κλίνομαι δείσασα πρὸς δμωαῖσι κάποπλήσσομαι.

¹³⁵Ibid. 1240-1241. κείται δὲ νεκρὸς περὶ νεκρῶ, τὰ νυμφικὰ τέλη λαχὼν δείλαιος εἶν "Αἶδου δόμοις...

ner of mischance hath marred thy reason?...and he hath witnessed to mankind, that, of all curses which cleave to man, ill counsel is the sovereign curse."¹³⁶ Then, turning she enters the empty house; the magnificent understatement of the poet leaves our emotions and imagination full play as the Messenger rather uneasily says: "I will enter the house, and learn whether indeed she is not hiding some repressed purpose in the depths of a passionate heart."¹³⁷ She, too, under the impulse of her natural love, as was Haemon in his rush upon his father, will be overrun and trampled by the terrible fierceness of a glorious power, the power of sympathy and love.

Finally upon the stage for the last time walks Creon, so different, interiorly as well as exteriorly, from the king we met some twelve-hundred lines ago. There is only time for the mainstems and intensity of the king's towering grief; but we

¹³⁶Ibid. 1229, 1242-1243. τίνα νοῦν ἔσχεσ...δείξας ἐν ἀνθρώποισι τὴν ἀβουλίαν ὅσῳ μέγιστον ἀνδρὶ πρόσκειται κακόν.

¹³⁷Ibid. 1253-1255. φλλ' εἰσόμεσθα, μή τι καὶ κατάσχετον κρυφῆ καλύπτει καρδίῳ θυμουμένῃ, δούμους παραστείχοντες...

learn in that time the complete change that has taken place within him. The chorus introduces him with another of those remarks indicating his central position in the lives of those suffering about him: "the king draws near, bearing that which tells too clear a tale,—the work of no stranger's madness—if we may say it—but of his own misdeeds."¹³⁸ We need only note amidst the sorrow of Creon his own final admission: "Woe for the sins of a darkened soul, stubborn sins...ah ye' behold us, the sire who hath slain, the son who hath perished! Woe is me, for the wretchedness of my counsels!...thy spirit hath fled...not by thy folly but by my own."¹³⁹ Creon here also begins to soften towards others: "Alas, alas, unhappy mother, alas, my child!"¹⁴⁰ and again, to the lowly messenger, "what sayest thou my son? what

¹³⁸Ibid. 1257-1260. καὶ μὴν ὄδ' ἄναξ αὐτὸς ἀφήκει μνημ' ἐπίσημον διὰ χειρὸς ἔχων, εἰ θέμις εἶπειν, οὐκ ἄλλοτριαν αἴτην, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἁμαρτῶν.

¹³⁹Ibid. 1261-1269. ἰὼ...ῶμοι ἐμῶν ἀνολβα βουλευμάτων... ἔθανες, ἀπελύθης, ἐμαῖς οὐδὲ σαῖσι δυσβουλίαις. (φρενῶν δυσφρόνων ἁμαρτήματα στερεά)

¹⁴⁰Ibid. 1300. φεῦ, φεῦ μάτερ ἀθλία, φεῦ τέκνον.

is this new message that thou bringest?"¹⁴¹ He has become much reversed in his procedure with inferiors such as messengers and guards. Creon then hears of the sorrowful love of his wife, an accusation, in a way, against his conduct: "her own hand struck her to the heart, when she had learned her son's sorely lamented fate."¹⁴² "Ah me, this guilt can never be fixed on any other of mortal kind, for my acquittal! I, even I, was the slayer, wretched though I am—I own the truth!"¹⁴³ is the reply of Creon to this sad news. His humiliation is complete: "I have but now raised my son in my arms—and there again, I see a corpse before me!"¹⁴⁴ His final words: "Lead me away, I pray you; a rash,

¹⁴¹Ibid. 1289; comparable only to his call to Haemon: "Come forth my child! I pray thee..." 1230. τί φής, ὦ παῖ, τίνα λέγεις μοι νέον;...ἔξελθε, τέκνον, ἰκέσιός σε λίσσομαι.

¹⁴²Ibid. 1315-1316. παῖσας' ὑφ' ἧπαρ αὐτόχειρ αὐτήν, ὅπως παιδὸς τοῦ ἥσθητ' ὀξύκωκυτον πάθος.

¹⁴³Ibid. 1317-1320. ὦμοι μοι, τὰδ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἄλλον βροτῶν ἐμᾶς ἀρμόσει ποτ' ἐξ αἰτίας. ἐγὼ γάρ σ' ἐγὼ 'κανον, ἰὼ μέλεος, ἐγὼ, φάμ' ἔτυμον.

¹⁴⁴Ibid. 1297-1298. ἔχω μὲν ἐν χεῖρεσσιν ἀρτίως τέκνον, τάλας, τὸν δ' ἔναντα προσβλέπω νεκρόν.

foolish man; who have slain thee, ah my son, unwittingly, and thee, too, my wife—unhappy that I am! I know not which way I should turn my gaze, or where I should seek support; for all is amiss with that which is in my hands...¹⁴⁵—these words are only a vivid anticipation of the choral ending which tells us that no one has the right to boast of kingship equal to the gods; that the gods must be revered, both in their claims and in the interior laws within men underlying those laws. Otherwise, those laws will be retributive and chastizing, teaching that they are to be honored in all situations as truly and really existing decrees of the gods.

Such, then, is the account of the play in the light of Professor Kitto's guiding lecture. The brevity of treatment given to structural analysis is regrettable, but obviously necessary. However, the reality of the power of love (in all its various manifestations) and the frustration of love's power, causing sorrow and ultimate catastrophe, stands firm in the play in any

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.* 1339-1345. ἄγοιτ' ἂν μάταιον ἄνδρ' ἐκποδῶν, ὅς, ὦ παῖ, σέ τ' οὐκ ἔχων κατέκανον σέ τ' αὖ τάνδ', ὧμοι μέλεος, οὐδ' ἔχω πρὸς πότερον ἴδω, πᾶ χλιθῶ πάντα γὰρ λέχρια τάν χεροῖν, τὰ δ' ἐπὶ κρατὶ μοι πότμος δυσκόμιστος εἰσῆλατο.

consideration. Creon, the central figure, the single cause of so many single tragedies, develops as the action presses on. Each figure rushes by its nature against the hardness of his short-sightedness and authority; Creon is no weak king, but regally dynamic. His personality, filled with determination to preserve the state, calls forth the greatest punishments for its complete and adequate chastisement. His sorrow is total, overwhelming; he is dazed, stunned. But we see no reason for saying that he has given up the desire to live; there is not enough time at the end of the play, nor enough matter, for such an induction. Rather, he is finally convinced, as expressed by the complete change of face from the Creon of the first three acts, by the most serious destruction of what he held dearest, of the love and devotion others, too, felt and nature demanded to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been our intention throughout the thesis not to wander from, but to keep rigidly to the two questions with which we began, whether Creon could be a protagonist, and whether he actually is the protagonist of Antigone. Ostensibly we took no sides; yet, in fact, we felt that the most could be achieved in the least amount of time if we tried "for the limit" with Creon, if we could first compare him to Aristotle's norms for protagonist, and then evaluate his personality as he functions in the play.

Aristotle, succinctly, asks of a good protagonist two qualities: he must be "better than average" and have some fault or hamartia. We felt that if we could find these two aspects in the personality of Creon we would surely fulfill the requirements as to Creon's ability to be a protagonist of tragedy. As was obvious from the few citations offered, many dispute Creon's moral or noble stature, indicating he is weak, irresolute and tyrannical; these objections had to be answered. As it happily

eventuated, the answers to many of these objections also had a second value in emphasizing Creon's nobility. Particularly were we interested in his sincerity and objective justification. The latter we sustained by showing that his command to leave Polyneices unburied was not so averse to the Greeks, so "unprecedented" as many would tend to think. With this setting, we proceeded to show that Creon's anger, hastiness and those qualities which many interpret as tyrannical belonged to a personality which is vital, dynamic, practical and quick to action and judgment, the personality of a forceful and successful ruler. Within this framework we explained how Creon's reactions to the hesitance of the guard, the self-assertiveness and powerful character of a young girl, and the premature suggestions of an inexperienced Haemon are both understandable and, given that personality, even to be expected. Creon's main motive is devotion to the life which he would not yield to a woman reflect more his determination to preserve justice and cool thinking in contrast to the emotionalism and "intuition" of a young girl, rather than his fear of being scoffed at because of personal defeat at the hands of his niece. Most of all, though, our attempt to show Creon's

sincerity finds its expression in his strange adherence to the belief that he had the blessing of the gods with him in his governance, that they would not withdraw from the font of present government, the king. To balance this sign of sincerity we noted his complete astonishment and amazement, coupled with humiliation and self-accusation, in his final kommos. He is not here completely hopeless; rather he is stunned, and understandably so, at the great cost he has had to pay for his ignorance. In this explanation of sincerity, then, resting within a character of action and dynamism—with some precedents to vouch for his action—in this combination do we base our belief that Creon has measured up to the first Aristotelian norm, a "better than average" man.

With regard to Creon's hamartia, we first outlined its general character as one of intellect and will, in the balance of will following a misguided, hasty judgment, practiced in seeing situations in black and white, confident in decisions once made. But then we specified this ignorant impulsiveness, in Creon's lack of understanding of the eternal laws, most especially that law of love which is found in the hearts of all, which drives, as

a rule, to its complete fulfillment or destroys all in its wake. The more powerful the lovers, the more dynamic their opponent, the more suffering and sorrow will there be. Thus, now only Haemon and Antigone suffer, but Ismene and Eurydice, even Teiresias, reel in the destructive onslaught of this opposed love. Everyone Creon faces suffers out of love. He is the source, the pivot of all the grief about him; but he learns it only at the cost of his dear ones. There is no doubting his sincerity; rather this insensibility flows understandably from his practical, virile nature which refuses to yield to immaturity and womanliness. Creon has had to learn the lesson of love early in his political domination. No one can rule men just as entities; rather wisdom is the virtue of the ruler, a wisdom based not only on knowledge of and fierce devotion to the laws of the land, but also on a gentle and understanding familiarity with the human nature upon which, after all, the laws of the land are founded. This was Creon's lesson in Antigone, as well as his function and purpose.

As a final note to this summary, we might only make reference to the mechanical difficulties of the play (the number of

lines given Creon and Antigone, Creon's predominance in the latter half of the play, etc.) which are solved by our analysis, as well as to the heightened position given the personalities of Haemon and Ismene, even to the purposefulness of Eurydice. These advances seem to point towards the analysis we have suggested.

Summarily, then, we may say that perhaps we have shown a new facet of Antigone, that we have in a sense discovered the unity of the play and have given it more pointed meaning. May we not conclude that Creon can and should play the role of protagonist? Whatever be one's opinion in the light of our arguments, perhaps Professor Kitto gives the soundest argument of all when he notes: "the older criticism...assumed that of course the play was about Antigone, and then set about explaining away the last scenes. The most satisfactory proof is performance. Creon can dominate the play; in the Glasgow he did, easily and naturally."¹ And he adds as a footnote: "This was interesting (the production of the play); It was produced in a large circus; the ring became the orchestra and a narrow stage was erected at the back...It ran for a

¹Kitto, Greek Tragedy, p. 124.

week; on the first two nights the audience was all high-brow and paper; on the last two the populace was fighting to get in."²

²Ibid.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by John J. Kilgallen, S.J.,

has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Classics.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 12, 1960
Date

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