

Antigone Thesis

Antigone is a play about a spiritual quest for justice. A spiritual quest can be defined as a search for the divine. Antigone's search for religious justice is through her brother, Polynices. In Ancient Greece, the gods were the most prominent source of power. The gods are the ultimate creators of life and King Creon defied the laws of the gods by presenting an edict to the people of Thebes that said that Polynices cannot have a sacred burial. This thesis argues that in pursuing this edict, King Creon overstepped his role as a mortal king, attempted to enter into the realm of the gods, and threatened to destroy the natural order of Greek society. Meanwhile, Antigone's motivation throughout the tragedy is to restore the natural order of Greek culture in which the gods are on the top of the hierarchy--below these immortal creatures is mortal man. In order to demonstrate the validity of this claim, this thesis begins by recounting a traditional, accepted reading of *Antigone*. It is then divided into two parts. The first part provides evidence for the claim that the play is about Antigone's spiritual quest in restoring the divine order which Creon has destroyed through his extreme hubris. The second part reviews alternate interpretations of *Antigone* in order to indicate why they are flawed.

TRADITIONAL READING

After Oedipus went into exile, his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, battled for his Theban throne. Eteocles and Polynices end up killing each other in battle for the Kingdom of Thebes. After this, Creon, Jocasta's brother, becomes the king. Eteocles was declared the hero of the battle with Polynices and given a sacred burial. Additionally, King Creon creates an edict that says Polynices will not have a burial because he invaded Thebes and therefore is a traitor. He

also declares that anyone who buries Polynices will be put to death for breaking his law.

Antigone, Oedipus's daughter, knows that every mortal man that creates laws can be overtaken by the gods because the gods are immortal and have full power. Traditionally, all must have a sacred burial, but Creon makes a civil edict contrary to this tradition. Creon lacks wisdom, not knowledge, when he creates this civil law. In this reading, Creon's hubris and pride are what cause him to challenge the sacred, divine law.

Antigone rebels against Creon's edict and buries Polynices anyway. She is discovered breaking the law and is brought before Creon in the palace. Antigone tells Creon that she believes his edict is in conflict with divine law. In response, King Creon tells Antigone that he cannot reverse the death penalty and the law he made because if he does this, he will lose the trust of the people of Thebes. Antigone is set to marry Haemon, Creon's son, but despite this, Creon still punishes her for burying Polynices. Creon puts her in a tomb with a stone in front of it and he intends to starve her to death. Haemon tries his best to be respectful to his father, but tells him that people agree with Antigone and are too afraid to tell him because of his power. When Haemon sides with Antigone, his father calls him a girly man. Haemon is insulted by this comment and says that Creon will never see his face again. Initially, the chorus is afraid to tell Creon that they agree with Antigone as well, but they finally tell him that he should change his mind. Creon responds by saying that he never changes his mind, his fatal flaw. Towards the end of the play, Tiresias comes along. He is a prophet, a seer, and has never been wrong. Tiresias tells Creon that no one has ever done what he did, he took a live person and put her below ground. He says that Antigone will suffer a tremendous loss. Creon dismisses Tiresias even though he is always correct. Creon needs to make reparations at this point but does not listen. He believes that all power is vested in him.

Creon ends up having a change of heart, but this change is too little, too late. He goes down to the cave where he sees Haemon crying because Antigone hanged herself. Haemon is very angry at Creon and he is holding Antigone. He blames his father for her death and tries to stab him, but ends up stabbing himself. As a result of Haemon's death, Creon's wife also kills herself. Creon becomes very upset and begins to understand that he is responsible for Antigone, Haemon, and his wife's death. He was acting from pride and hubris rather than wisdom. From his terrible experience, he discovers that each is living out his or her destiny. Humans are not in control of their destinies, the gods are.

PART ONE: ANTIGONE'S SPIRITUAL QUEST OF RESTORATION

The plot of *Antigone* may seem direct and simple, but there are multiple layers to this tragedy, including themes of piety, symbolism, justice, the spiritual quest, and the damage of excessive pride. This thesis argues that the main motivation of *Antigone* is Antigone's attempts to restore the natural, divine order that has been destroyed by Creon. In this part of the thesis, I will first discuss the origin of Greece's reverence for the gods in connection with Creon and Antigone's actions, then I will discuss the pattern of destruction and restoration of the natural order of Thebes. Next, I will show how Antigone is on a spiritual quest for the restoration of Creon's destruction of the divine law, then I will discuss hubris as the downfall of King Creon, and lastly I will show that Antigone's primary motivation throughout the tragedy is divine justice.

1. GREECE'S REVERENCE FOR THE GODS

Antigone's reverence for the gods stems from long-standing cultural and spiritual Greek tradition. For Greek society, the gods are in everything. There is a god of wine, a god of the sea, a goddess of love, a god of war, a goddess of the night. Justice is a goddess and she is who shall decide the fate of Polynices. King Creon is but a mortal man. Throughout the play, Antigone takes the necessary steps to be the carrier of Greek culture and respect the Gods through her quest. Although the burial of her brother violates Creon's edict, she is aware that the divine law takes precedence. The fate of each character within the play is determined by the gods, for Creon would not have become king without Ares, the god of war. Ares is the one who made Eteocles and Polynices battle for the crown. Thanatos, the personification of death, carried Polynices and Eteocles to the underworld, making Creon eligible to take the throne. Antigone truly reveres the gods like the citizens of Greece and she understands that every mortal man that creates laws could be overtaken by the gods. Creon's actions not only destroy the cultural fabric of Thebes but are also disrespectful to all the gods because he tries to challenge the fate that they have set.

The background of the gods' creation process of humans is important because in reading *Antigone* one must realize that humans must respect the gods because they are the creators of civilization. In Creon's disrespect of the gods' rules, he is disrespecting his creators' rules. The gods are in everything because they created everything¹. One day, the gods realized that they were bored because they are immortal and their lives were filled with sameness. Because of their

¹ Because the gods created the humans, they are the ones that decide what happens to humans after death. The sacred burial is part of Greek culture and this is shown in *Antigone* because Eteocles is declared a hero, so he is buried. King Creon lets his own beliefs about good v. evil get in the way of the fate that the gods set for people. Justice is a goddess who is supposed to decide who is good and who is bad, and what the fate of the dead should be. Polynices dies and is kept above ground when he was supposed to be put underground. With this action, Creon deems Polynices undeserving of the afterlife. He does not leave the decision to the goddess, Justice, or Hades, the god of the underworld. When Antigone violates his civil edict, he puts her underground with the dead, while she is alive. Ironically, the places of the two bodies should be switched, but Creon places them unnaturally above and below the ground. The unnatural places of the bodies become restored to the natural when Antigone buries her brother against Creon's decree and when she kills herself. When she kills herself she restores natural order, because she becomes a dead person underground instead of a living person separated from civilization.

eternal boredom, the gods thought that it might be fun to populate the Earth with life. Zeus gave the job of making animal species to Prometheus and Epimetheus ended up working with him. Epimetheus made the animals while Prometheus would check over the final products. Epimetheus gave different powers to different creatures. After he finished designing the various creatures that would inhabit the Earth, he showed Prometheus to see if he was satisfied. He liked all of the work, except for the humans. This clay form was naked with no special abilities. But, this did not matter, Zeus had given the brothers a certain time limit and today was the day that these creatures would be released on Earth. The gods actually had no plans for human beings. Prometheus said, "...we'll just have to let this... *human*... fend for itself for a while"(Waterfield 13).

For the gods, goodness was defined as whether the life lived by a creature was pleasing in the eyes of the gods. If goodness is defined as whether a life lived by a creature was pleasing in the eyes of the gods, Creon definitely did not fulfill the standard of "good". On the other hand, Antigone's whole motivation throughout the play is to please the gods, so she would be considered "good" in their eyes. The gods devised life for the creatures that they had made. They were in control of everything that would happen to the humans and they would test how the creatures would respond to things like natural disasters and famine. The relationship of the gods to humans is comparable to a board game. The gods are the players and the humans are the moving pieces. This is important in considering the plot of *Antigone* because Greek society is supposed to be bound to the gods, not mortal man. When Creon enacts his civil edict, he is breaking the law of the gods. Creon reverses the board game metaphor by having the moving piece of the game control the player, instead of the player control the game. This destroys the natural order of the world in compromising the way fate works.

Prometheus is the one who invented the human being because he felt a connection to them. Prometheus saw the humans' potential to resemble the gods. He knew that since the human lacked any powers/skills, it would not take long for humans to be defeated and eliminated from Earth. In knowing this, Prometheus decided to invest his own essence into the human beings. The essence that Prometheus imparted happened to be intelligence. As Descartes points out, intelligence is the only human connection to divinity. Prometheus could have left the humans without any mental faculties to blindly follow the gods, but also die. In giving the humans intelligence, Prometheus gives civilization a divine quality. If the gods did not give humans intelligence, then Creon would never have become the king. The other gods did not know that this knowledge was a gift from Prometheus, but the gods were able to see that the men now feared for the future and decided to have fun with human intelligence.

Additionally, the gods invented sacrifice; men had to ask for better things rather than worse things and in doing so had to provide something valuable for the gods as they asked. When Creon breaks the divine laws, he does not even attempt to show respect to the gods through sacrificial prayer. He acts as if his civil law is the right decision for his kingdom with no consequence. If Creon asked the gods before he made his civil edict, the fate of the characters in the play could have been different. The only issue left for the humans was that they needed fire to succeed. So, Zeus gave the men fire "... and in return men were to sacrifice to the god, giving the gods the best bits of the sacrificial victim"(Waterfield 14). Zeus also added that whatever is done today will be final, for this day was the day of fire. Zeus's addition of fire to Earth shows that he has the ability to both continue and end the lives of creatures on Earth. When Creon

breaks the law of the gods in not giving Creon a sacred burial, he disrespects Zeus and all of the other gods².

The traits of human beings were given by the gods, the trait of intelligence, the warmth of fire, and even being alive are privileges given to humans by the gods. These abilities and gifts can easily be taken away. By Zeus, what happens after death is the decision of the gods. The gods made human beings and as the legend says, the gods also have the ability to sweep humans off of the Earth. Zeus has the power to punish the other gods for going against his orders, so what makes Creon think the gods will not punish him, a mere human? If Zeus will torture Prometheus for decades just for playing a trick on him, one can only imagine how he will discipline Creon for defying the divine law. In Greek culture, the people revered the gods because they had respect for the inventors of human society. Without the gods, there would be no Creon and that is what he fundamentally misunderstands. Throughout *Antigone*, Creon calls himself a “supreme” king. “In the right of kinship nearest to the dead, possess the throne and take the supreme power...”(8). King Creon shows the utmost disrespect towards the gods in thinking that he has supreme power. Because of this fundamental misunderstanding and disrespect towards the gods’ position of power, Creon feels that he has the ability to change the fate of human life. Antigone simply attempts to remind Creon that he is a mortal man, by taking action for the justice of her brother.

2. THE DESTRUCTION AND RESTORATION OF NATURAL ORDER

² Unfortunately, Prometheus decided to play a trick on Zeus with his sacrifice. Zeus is the supreme god, so all other gods report to him. He is the father of all, the supreme king and no one will dare oppose his will. If anyone opposes Zeus’s will, they will be greatly punished. Zeus was furious with this trick, making for a lesser sacrifice from the gods, so he decided to take away the humans’ fire so that they would die a slow death. The gods knew that without fire the humans would not be able to prevail. Against Zeus’s decree, Prometheus gave the humans fire himself and it was final because it was still officially the day of fire. Because of this, Prometheus was tortured for a long time.

The main theme throughout *Antigone* is the destruction and restoration of the natural order of the divine law. There is evidence of this interpretation written into the fabric of the tragedy. In Creon's attempt to manipulate Polynices's fate, he attempted to play the role of a god and messed up the divine plan³. Everyone knows and reveres the Gods, but Antigone is the one who took action in the pursuit of Justice and Piety. In going against Creon's edict and displaying civil disobedience, Antigone attempts to restore order in the divine plan - therefore being divinely obedient. First, Antigone gives Polynices his sacred burial, and then when she is confronted by Creon, she attempts to inform him of his wrongs. Creon makes the exact opposite effort as Antigone. First, he decides the fate of Polynices after death. He does not give him a sacred burial and leaves him out for the dogs to eat. He then punishes Antigone for trying to restore the natural order within Thebes by putting her underground while she is still alive and plays with fate again by trying to control everyone.

Creon sees Eteocles as the hero and Polynices as the villain for invading Thebes. In reality, they were both left Thebes from Oedipus. Eteocles and Polynices stabbed each other at the same time in battle. Creon believes that because Polynices was technically the "intruder", he has the ability to punish Polynices after death. In actuality, Justice is a goddess who resides in Hades and she will make the decision of one's fate after death. In terms of divine law, it does not make sense that Creon would decide who gets buried and who is left out for the dogs to eat. Creon decides that Eteocles will be buried and Polynices would be left above ground to be eaten.

Creon attempts to question why Antigone buried Polynices. In his eyes, he cannot decipher why someone would break his law. He believes he is the supreme king and that his laws

³ Creon's disruption of divine order is a display of symbolism. Creon creates a tension between civil law and divine law that is unnatural. Usually there is a natural hierarchy. According to Antigone, by Zeus, on the very top is Divine Law, below that is Civil Law, and below that is individual will. In this play, Creon is the symbol of the unnatural and Antigone is a symbol of the natural. Antigone is on a spiritual quest to make sure Polynices is buried and that the gods decide his fate, not Creon.

are the ones that should be followed. Because he is the king, he does not think that any law should be above his. He also believes that Polynices is a bad man for invading the kingdom. In response, Antigone says, “All the same, these rites are due to the underworld”(20). Antigone truly believes that the divine law should decide the fate of Polynices, not a mortal man like King Creon. The divine law is what guides her action to bury her brother. She does not disobey King Creon’s edict to be a rebel, but because of the divine law. In response, Creon tells Antigone that “The enemy can never be a friend, even in death”(20). Clearly, Creon believes that Polynices is the enemy.

Part of the reason that Creon does not want Polynices to be buried is that he believes that he is the enemy. John Tralau’s *philia* idea could be referenced in Creon’s scenario. Creon takes the role of Justice by deciding this. For Antigone, *philia* does not matter; it is about divine law, which says that everyone deserves a sacred burial and after that, the gods decide who deserves to be punished and who goes to heaven. Creon violates this natural order by leaving Polynices above the ground and making a law that prohibits anyone from burying him. He does this initially because Polynices apparently invaded Thebes, but he allows this decree to continue because as a king, he does not want to be proven wrong by a girl.

While talking to his son, Haemon, Creon defends his edict. “There lives no greater friend than Anarchy”(26). Creon believes that his law is “a cause of order” in Thebes because it is a law. When one thinks of what a law should imply, the word that comes to mind is order. Usually the person disrupting the law causes anarchy, except that Creon is actually the one who is disrupting the divine law. Antigone is the one trying to restore order. Creon only interprets Antigone as an anarchist because she is breaking *his* law. It is ironic that Creon makes the word anarchy feminine. It is as if Creon defines Antigone with the word, anarchy. When in reality,

Creon is the one who causes chaos in his kingdom because he does not follow the divine law and changes the fate of his whole family.

In conversation with Creon, even Haemon agrees with his supposed future wife. He says to Creon, “You desecrate by trampling on Heaven’s honour!”(28). In defense of his future wife, Haemon tells his father that he believes in the same thing as Antigone. He believes that Creon is disrespecting the laws of divinity. For this accusation, Creon accuses his son of being a “woman’s follower” and tells him that Antigone will die before her and Haemon get to marry. Another ploy that Creon uses to defend his bad decision is insulting his son about his gender. When Haemon disagrees with his father and Creon cannot think of anything to say back, he simply insults his son instead of saying something that makes sense. By calling Haemon a girl when he wishes to be identified as a man, Creon destroys the order of the world again. Creon believes that the word of a man is more powerful than the word of a woman. By relating Haemon to a woman, Creon is able to justify ignoring his son’s plea. This is clear because he has no clear rebuttal for Haemon’s statement about the Heavens.

Creon presents his son with more broken logic as he defends his destructive actions. Creon exclaims, “It is lost labor to revere the dead”(29). This is totally antithetical to Greek belief. When Eteocles had his sacred burial, everyone revered him, so what is the difference with Polynices? Both Eteocles and Polynices died, so with Creon’s logic that it is “lost labor to revere the dead” he contradicts himself. For Creon, the difference between Eteocles and Polynices and their after-life privileges were solely his decision. He decided that Polynices was bad and Eteocles was good. In defense of his decision to disobey the divine law he claims that respecting the dead is a waste of time. Creon should clarify his statement by adding, “It is lost labor to

revere *anyone that I think is bad upon death.*” The gods made Creon and he should respect their wishes. In the eyes of the gods, it is not lost labor to revere the gods.

Creon attempts to destroy natural order again by putting Antigone underground in an enclosed area while she is still alive. Creon is very specific with his intentions in putting Antigone underground. “Wall her up in some deep catacomb as I have said; leave her alone, apart, to perish if she will; or if she live, to make her tomb her tenement. For us, we will be guiltless of this maiden’s blood; but here on earth she shall abide no more”(Sophocles 33). Creon willingly puts a living person in an underground tomb. He wants her to be apart from the living “to perish.” If she does live instead of perish, Creon wants Antigone to make the underground tomb into her home.

When first reading the tragedy, it seems like King Creon’s largest blunder is when he keeps Polynices from being buried. Many interpretations miss that Creon does the much more unnatural action of putting a living person underground so that she can no longer reside on Earth. Creon destroys the natural circle of life by basically burying Antigone alive. He again takes the authority of the gods and decides that because Antigone disagrees with his civil edict, she can no longer be part of civilization. It is as if King Creon is trying to keep Antigone from infiltrating the rest of the kingdom with her pious attitude. In defending his “Supreme throne” he decides that he has the power to prevent Antigone from living life on earth, robbing her of her wedding and future children.

Creon’s original decree said that anyone who buried Polynices would be put to death. By putting a living person underground, he reneges his word. Creon fails to understand that by changing this part of his law, he could still lose the trust of the people of Thebes because, in a way, he still did not keep his word. He did not kill the culprit who buried Polynices, he just put

her in a tomb while she was still alive. With this chain of logic, why couldn't Creon retract the whole edict? He changed part of it so that he does not have to have Antigone's blood on his hands, but this change is basically equivalent to changing the whole law. Creon goes on to say that he does not have to feel any guilt for Antigone's blood because he is not having her killed. Creon should actually feel more guilt for his actions because he did not end Antigone's misery before isolating her for the rest of her life, but instead allowed her to live a miserable life underground with the dead. Creon's movement of Antigone to an underground tomb shifted the natural order of the world even more, and as a result, he ended up breaking his own decree changing the fate of his kingdom⁴.

The outside perspective of the chorus shows the reader what the people of Thebes believe. At first the chorus is excited to have a new king, but as the play moves forward the chorus affirms Greek society's respect for the gods. The perspective of the chorus is important because they are viewing the situation at hand from the outside. While both Creon and Antigone present their views from a subjective perspective, the chorus fills the play with objectivity. After Creon sentences Antigone to her unnatural fate to live underground, the chorus interprets King Creon's actions.

“Happy the man whose cup of life is free from taste of evil! If Heaven's influence shake them, no ill but follows till it overtake them, all generations of his family; like as when before the sweep of the sea-borne Thracian blast the surge of the ocean coursing past above the cavern of the deep rolls up from the region under all the blackness of the shore, and the beaten beaches thunder answer to the roar”(Sophocles 23).

⁴ In Oedipus's madness he called down Pelops' curse upon his sons and doomed them to divide their kingdom and die at each others' hands (Waterfield 108). This curse falls upon generations to come. It is possible that Antigone's fate from the start was to fight Creon and someday fall. Creon ignored the gods and he was definitely punished for it. But ultimately I question, was fate truly played with or did Oedipus curse future generations with his madness? Although Creon tampered with fate and was the one to go against divine law, was Oedipus the one to impart this chaos on his family? Maybe Oedipus's madness spread to Creon and made him feel like he was King of the world. All in all, this would just prove even more that divine law is the supreme law and Creon's decree went against it causing more heartbreak for his family than the gods already had planned. In making the human being, the gods planned for humans to make large sacrifices to get what they want. In the end, Creon made the ultimate sacrifice by going against divine law, for he lost his whole family.

Similar to how Antigone predicts that Creon's fate will be worse than hers, the chorus also foreshadows Creon's self-induced fate. At the moment that Creon sends Antigone down to the cave, it may seem like his cup of life is free from the taste of evil, but in reality the Heavens are going to take over Creon's life and curse his family with death. For King Creon, the cup of evil is for anyone who disobeys his civil edict, but for the gods the cup of evil is for the overly prideful man who tries to decide the fate of the dead, i.e. Creon. The chorus compares the fate of Creon's family to the blast of the sea overtaking the Greek land in blackness. The chorus references the death of Oedipus in analyzing the future fate of Creon, which signals a horrible fate of loneliness.

3. ANTIGONE: ON THE QUEST FOR DIVINE JUSTICE

Antigone's primary method in restoring the order of Thebes is through her spiritual quest to bury her brother⁵, Polynices. Antigone faces death for her religious belief that the burial of her brother is justified. Despite the consequences of the burial of her brother, Antigone buries him anyway because she realizes the importance of spiritual existence of the gods in her culture. Antigone is a symbol of the divine because she knows that she will be punished by Creon - with death - and still goes through with her pursuit of justice. The play becomes a battle between divine law and civil law. One of which has to do with the spirit and the other, mankind. By page

⁵ The entirety of *Antigone* is a chain reaction all enacted by Oedipus. Analyzing the chain of events from the beginning of *Antigone*, Polynices and Eteocles kill each other, Creon becomes king and declares that Polynices will be put to death. Antigone then buries Polynices. She is not killed, but instead put underground while she is still alive. Creon realizes he was wrong for making the law that prevented the burial of Polynices. Antigone has already killed herself before Creon's realization. As a result Haemon tries to kill Creon, accidentally killing himself. Then as a result of her son's death, Creon's wife kills herself. By the end of the play, Creon is left in eternal sadness because he has lost everyone he cares about. Creon's law continued a chain of destruction that Greek society hoped would stop after the deaths of Polynices and Eteocles.

three of the play, Antigone declares what she believes about the burial of Polynices. The interaction between Ismene (Antigone's sister) and Antigone shows the contrast between their motivations.

Ismene: "For my part, I will ask pardon of those beneath, for what perforce I needs must do, but yield obedience to them that walk in power; to exceed is madness, and not wisdom."

Antigone: "Then in future I will not bid you help me; nor henceforth, though you desire, shall you, with my goodwill, share what I do. But what seems right to you; him will I bury"(Sophocles 3).

Ismene feels that the gods will allow her to follow Creon's edict because he is the one that apparently walks in power. She feels that to go against Creon's decree would be madness, so she basically calls Antigone crazy for disobeying their uncle. At this point, Antigone tries to explain her actions to her sister, Ismene. She tells Ismene that in the future she does not expect her help in any endeavor. Antigone will bury Polynices and she does not care that it is a crime on Earth, what she cares about is what the gods will think. Ismene's thought process is flawed when looking at the way the gods conceived the humans. Ismene claims that she will ask for "pardon" from those beneath so that she could abide by Creon's human law. On the contrary, when the gods allowed the humans to live they invented sacrifice. For humans to receive anything from the gods, a sacrifice that matches the value of the request must be made. What matches the value of a request to allow a human to make decisions that should be made in the heavens? In Ismene's effort to obey Creon's law she shows blatant disrespect of the gods, which Antigone wants no part of. Even if on Earth her burial is considered a "capital crime", Antigone knows that this "crime" is a pious one. She is choosing to please the gods rather than her uncle. Antigone knows that the gods will approve of her plan to bury her brother. Therefore, when she takes action and buries Polynices against Creon's edict, she acts as a figure of piety.

When Antigone explains her reasoning for burying her brother, she references the gods. Antigone will not deny that she buried Polynices, even though she realizes that her actions broke

the law. She overstepped King Creon's law, "Because it was not Zeus who ordered it, Nor Justice, dweller with the Nether Gods, Gave such a law to men; nor did I deem Your ordinance of so much binding force, As that a mortal man could overbear the unchangeable unwritten code of heaven..." (17). Antigone knows that the gods have supreme power and their orders are what matter. Zeus did not order the people of Thebes not to bury Polynices. Zeus did not pronounce Polynices a bad person. Additionally, Justice did not decide that Polynices was a bad man or that he should be punished. A mortal man cannot "overbear the unchangeable unwritten code of heaven". These words are powerful. The "unchangeable unwritten code of heaven" is the natural order set forth by the gods. This means that these rules cannot be changed. A mortal man cannot decide the fate of the dead. The code of the gods is also unwritten, meaning that everyone knows this code. Creon broke the gods' rules knowing that their code is unchangeable and therefore destroyed natural order. When Antigone buries her brother it is her following her religious calling, thus she is a spiritual quester.

Creon and Antigone converse before she is taken away to death and Antigone makes one of her strongest statements. "Am I not come through piety to be held impious? If this is approved in Heaven, why let me suffer and own that I have sinned; but if the sin belong to these- O may their punishment Be measured by the wrongfulness of mine!"(34). Antigone took pious actions only to be treated like she did something impious. Antigone's actions are approved by the gods. She has not sinned, yet she is being treated as if she committed the worst crime. Creon treated Antigone's spiritual quest as a sinful action. Because Creon is ruled by selfish intentions, for him Antigone did sin. Antigone's sin was not against the Heavens, but her "sin" hurt King Creon's pride. Antigone disobeyed a mortal man in power because she was following her path that was set by a higher power: the gods. Antigone foreshadows the end of the play by referencing

Creon's future punishment, which should be measured by the "wrongfulness" of her punishment. As Antigone was taken by the guards to her death, she says "I duly performed the dues of piety!"(35). Antigone realizes that she is going to die for her act of piety and does not regret her actions. Antigone is the symbol of piety and restoration throughout the play and only performed the duty that she thought was necessary. Piety is a universal law, one of divinity, that bears much more power than Creon's edict and he will pay that price. He is the one who has erred in his ways, not Antigone.

4. KING CREON'S PRIDE AND HUBRIS: HIS DOWNFALL

Creon's attempt to rise in position on the hierarchy is fueled by his hubris and pride. With this selfish motivation, Creon becomes the destroyer of the natural order. Creon's motivation is ironic in that hubris is excessive pride or self-confidence but he is too insecure to take advice. His hubris is the reason that he made and pursued the edict. "In the right of kinship nearest to the dead, possess the throne and take the supreme power..."(8). In taking "supreme power", Creon mimics the actions of a god. He decides that Polynices is a bad person and does not deserve a burial. When Antigone buries Polynices anyway, he declares that she should not be allowed to live along with the masses. Creon's pride and hubris gave Creon the internal power to disobey the law of the gods and try to be one. With that, he does not even identify the faults of his actions until Antigone has already died. Creon's overbearing hubris makes him truly believe that his actions as a "godly, supreme being" were allowed and correct. He did not want his people of the kingdom to think that he could not keep his word: a selfish feat, and because of this insecurity, Polynices was not given a sacred burial. Antigone was buried alive, ultimately killing herself, upon this sight, Haemon killed himself, and as a result, Creon's wife also killed herself.

Something that Creon thought would be to his benefit, actually caused him to lose everything that was important to him. Instead of having a reputation for being inconsistent, he made himself a reputation for causing his family to kill themselves. Is that any better? Creon's attempt to be consistent ultimately brought about sorrow- ending lives.

In his actions, Creon is making assumptions about what the gods want. "Or do you see Gods honouring the bad?"(12). No god has declared Polynices as "bad". King Creon made this assumption on his own. Creon suppresses the hierarchy and puts himself on the highest pedestal as mortal man. Antigone is his rude awakening, trying to humble him, reminding him that he is not a god. Creon's extreme pride infiltrates him and allows him to act like a mad man. Creon may be in a position of power on earth, but in the Heavens, Creon's actions will not be seen this way.

Creon: "And you made free to overstep my law?"

Antigone: "Because it was not Zeus who ordered it, nor Justice, dweller with the Nether Gods, gave such a law to men..."(Sophocles 17).

Creon is completely shocked when Antigone proudly admits that she disregarded Creon's law and buried Polynices anyway. Because of his hubris, he cannot conceive someone disobeying him--especially a woman. Antigone reveals who she is willing to take orders from. She is not being an anarchist in her disregard for Creon, but the opposite. Antigone tells Creon that because no god announced that Polynices could not be buried, she is not following his law. Creon's sense of shock after hearing this news reveals that he is a pompous man who does not care if there is any "supreme power" than he.

Even the chorus feels that King Creon's hubris is his downfall. The Chorus reflects what any reasonable person would think and responds to Creon's reaction to the burial of Polynices. "Wresting his country's laws to his own will, Spurning the sanctions of celestial right; High in

the city, he is made city-less, Whoso is corrupt, for his impiety... ”(15). The people of Thebes can clearly see that Creon is corrupt in the declaration of his edict. His will alone is what caused him to leave Polynices above the ground and punish him. He goes against the sanctions of the gods and decides that Polynices is a bad person and invader. The Chorus foreshadows what will happen later in the play. In the beginning, he is the almighty king, making civil decrees that are ungodly. By the end of the play, Creon has lost everything because of his actions that directly reject that of divine law.

Tiresias, the seer and prophet, is King Creon’s last hope to make him realize the mistake he has made. In Tiresias’s words, Creon has sent a “living soul unworthily to dwell within a tomb”(40). Tiresias is the closest human to divinity, for he has never steered anyone wrong. He attempts to reprimand Creon’s actions and correct him. Tiresias warns “... to take thee in the evil of thine own hands... ”(40) will bring him “wails” from his own home and “enmity” from his kingdom. Tiresias finally is able to inspire Creon to correct his mistakes. “I cannot fight at odds with destiny”(41). Although throughout the entire play, King Creon acts as if he is the supreme power, he finally acknowledges that he is not. The gods control the fate of human beings. King Creon has tampered with fate and realizes too late. Tiresias’s predictions were correct and King Creon is left in shambles.

5. ANTIGONE’S MOTIVATION: DIVINE JUSTICE

Antigone’s motivation throughout the play is to find justice for her brother, Polynices. This matters to Antigone because she reveres the divine law. The divine law says that everyone should have a sacred burial and then the goddess, Justice shall decide what happens next. It is important to note that the divine law is equivalent to the natural order because the divine law

determines the fate of the people. Antigone does not go against Creon's edict because of her relationship with Polynices. She rejects Creon's edict because it is in opposition to divine law. I believe that if any citizen was treated the way that Polynices was, Antigone would stand up for them because she wants justice in her world. Antigone states, "All the same, these rites are due to the underworld"(20). Antigone is only following the laws of the underworld in the pursuit of her actions. Her reasoning for her actions is consistent throughout the play with her references to Zeus or the underworld when justifying her actions. Her reverence for the gods is not specific to her brother, but it is a universal reverence. She does not care that she is a woman, about the lack of support from her sister, or that her actions break the civil law of King Creon. What she does care about is the supreme law of the gods.

An example from the text that supports this reading is found in a conversation between Antigone and Ismene in which Antigone first tells her sister about her plan to go against Creon's edict. Ismene is unsupportive. But Ismene's words did not affect Antigone's decision, because she felt that Ismene misunderstood the importance of Polynices's burial. Antigone explains, "Death, so met, were honour; And for that capital crime of piety, Loving and loved I will lie by his side. Far longer is there need I satisfy Those nether powers, than powers on earth; for For ever must I lie. You, if you will, Hold up to scorn what is approved of Heaven!"(3). Antigone acknowledges that her "crime" is in the name of piety. Polynices died for his kingdom and she loved him, for he is her brother. The satisfaction of the gods is more important than the satisfaction of a human king. "There need I satisfy those nether powers" means that Antigone believes that satisfying the gods is of utmost importance. She confronts Ismene and tells her, it is ok if she disapproves of Antigone's actions, but Antigone knows that what she is doing is justified in terms of the divine law.

Creon attempts to curtail Antigone's plan with his threat of death attached to his edict. Antigone's civil disobedience is in direct opposition to Creon's civil law. Antigone makes a statement where she shows the world that just because something is the law does not mean it is justice. She uses her beliefs in the gods to show that the fairness of Greek culture brings people together. Preservation of culture brings forth a consistent belief system. Humans treat humans fairly and evenly. Creon opposes this system and decides how to treat Polynices after death when it is the job of the gods to decide what happens after death. Many critics point out Antigone's civil disobedience, but what about Creon's divine disobedience? How about Creon's ability to ignore the cultural fabric of society just because he is in a position of power? Creon's ignorance becomes his hubris and defines his downfall in the play.

PART II: VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS IN CONNECTION AND CONTRAST WITH ANTIGONE'S SPIRITUAL QUEST OF RESTORATION

The sources in this part provide implicit analyses of the play that, while interesting and worthy of reflection, are not written in the fabric of the piece. Hegel takes the tragic hero and makes the tragic collision. Molly Farneth analyzes the role of women within Greek society and decides that their social roles are what repress them. John Tralau attempts to assign *philos* to Antigone and Creon as their motives for their actions. While, from a psychoanalytic perspective, Antigone is a self-willed victim who echoes herself throughout the play. Given the reading in part one, I maintain that each of the views in part two misses an essential piece of Antigone: reverence for the divine law. In this part of the thesis, I will first discuss the Hegelian interpretation of *Antigone*, then I will discuss the feminist interpretation of the Hegelian

perspective. Next, I will consider the interpretation that defines the characters of *Antigone* by their Philos, then I will discuss the psychoanalytic interpretation of *Antigone*.

1. THE TRADITIONAL HEGELIAN PERSPECTIVE

Francisco J. Gonzalez's text highlights the Hegelian view of *Antigone*. According to him, it is a "tragic collision" between two characters, Antigone and Creon, who each embody some sort of good. Both Antigone and Creon have different views, but each view has validity in Hegel's eyes. Hegel's position of tragic collision conflicts with Aristotle's interpretation of Creon as the tragic hero. Gonzalez's interpretation of Hegel's *Antigone* is in contrast to the interpretation of part one in that Hegel considers both Antigone and Creon "good". But, it falls short because if both Creon and Antigone are good, then there is no point in what Antigone is doing and the play itself does not make sense.

Antigone is not about individual characters, but the message that is sent to Greek society.⁶ It makes the reader question what justice actually is, what being pious means, and realize the theme of destruction and restoration of justice. Antigone is a symbol in that she is the bearer of culture, of the divine law.⁷ Hegel believes that *Antigone* is a play about good v. good. I believe that Hegel's view is unsupported in the play. Only one character's view can be right and that is Antigone. If this were not true, then why would all of Creon's family end up dead? And why would he end up admitting his mistake? Creon blatantly disobeys the laws of the gods and that is why he is fundamentally incorrect in his edict.

⁶ Gonzalez begins by deconstructing the Aristotelian tragic hero. According to Gonzalez, if Creon is to be called the "tragic hero" within this play, shouldn't it be named after him? I believe that this comment is flawed in that the tragic hero's importance is in their fatal mistake. Just because someone is the tragic hero, does not mean that they should be the title of the play.

⁷ The tragic hero implies that there is a good side and an evil side, when in reality Hegel sees two good sides.

Hegel believes that human law is grounded in divine law and divine law only becomes “aware of itself” within human law. This is ironic because the two types of laws completely contrast each other, but need one another to survive. Each good is blind to the other. As argued in part one, it is true that human law needs the divine law in order to survive, but divine law does not need human law. This point is essential in deconstructing Hegel’s argument. Gonzalez and Hegel are incorrect in stating that divine law only becomes aware of itself in human law. Divine law is enacted within the gods. The divine law is the code that the gods live by and expect humans to follow, but it does not die without human participation. The divine law stands alone in its enactment because it is for the gods. Therefore, the laws are in no way equal. Human law needs divine law and divine law is its own entity. The “goods” are not blind to each other because Antigone is good and Creon is bad. Divine law and human law are unequal.

Gonzalez continues to state that Antigone does not see how what Creon is doing is good and Creon does not see how Antigone is doing something good. “The tragedy is that in the conflict between right and right, each right becomes a wrong without ceasing to be right”(Gonzalez). In Gonzalez’s piece, he observes the line from the play, “Sooner or later, foul is fair, fair is foul to the man the gods will ruin” (696-698; Fagles trans.). He argues that Hegel’s reading pays justice to this line because it applies to both Creon and Antigone. Both Creon and Antigone fall to horrible fates. Antigone kills herself and Creon loses his family. But part one establishes a different interpretation. The quote above ends with, “the man the gods will ruin.” In opposition to Gonzalez’s interpretation, this line is actually completely aligned with the argument that divinity is superior to human law because the gods do ruin, but it is not Antigone who is ruined, it is Creon. Antigone dies by Creon’s destruction of the natural fate that the gods have set forth. The gods ruin Creon because he admits he is wrong (being inconsistent with his

enactment of the law), loses his entire family, and he has defied the law of divinity. Creon learns that the divine laws are fair and this is foul to him because he loses everything he cares about.

The alternate interpretation from part one to those like Gonzalez's is that Creon's defiance of the gods and his hubris get him into trouble. By defying the divine law he is attempting to be like a Greek god; thus he is not good. Creon gives us further evidence of this while talking to his son, Haemon, when he says, "And what worse sore can plague us, than a loved one's worthlessness? Better to spurn this maiden as a foe! Leave her to wed some bridegroom in the grave! For, having caught her in the act, alone of the whole city disobeying me, I will not publicly bely myself, but to kill her"(Sophocles 25). Creon would rather see his niece die than admit his wrongs. He is willing to sacrifice his son's bride to make himself look better. In making his civil edict, he declares anyone who disobeys it worthless, so he sentences his son's bride and niece to death so that King Creon may continue his reign as a "god." Some may argue that Antigone is also very arrogant in her stance, and therefore not good in the same way as Creon, but she is trying her best to stand up for what she believes in. In a way, Creon also attempts to stand up for what he believes in, but does he really believe that the civil law is superior to the divine law? The civil law does not have as much standing as the divine law and this is what Antigone is trying to defend.

Hegel's view is that although Antigone and Creon both have an aspect of good, they still destroy each other in their quest to be right. But part one maintained that Antigone is a symbol of piety and Creon is a symbol of hubris. Antigone's motive only has standing if she is good and Creon is not. Antigone would have no reason to break Creon's civil law if Creon's view was equally as "good" as Antigone's. Contrary to Hegel's view, they do not destroy each other; rather, Creon destroys everything while Antigone only tries to fix what Creon has damaged.

2. FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF HEGEL'S *ANTIGONE*

Molly Farneth presents a unique, feminist interpretation of the Hegelian reading of *Antigone*. While she agrees with Gonzalez that both Creon and Antigone are good, she believes that gender is what undoes the relationship between them. More specifically, she says that the difference between human law and divine law can be interpreted as a difference between male law and female law. This interpretation is interesting because it solely depends on the gender of the main characters, but it misses the mark because the thematic structure and plot of *Antigone* depends on more than gender differences.

The author cites Hegel's interpretation in that *Antigone* is about characterizations of groups according to their gender, and their relationship to the world. Hegel attempts to give a complete picture of Greek *Sittlichkeit* in *Antigone*. *Sittlichkeit* means how the Greeks obtain social order within the ethics of their society. Hegel begins by highlighting the harmony within the Greek society, specifically within *Antigone*. The opposition between Antigone and Creon is simply a clash of two, gendered sides who both think they are correct because their gender binds them to the laws differently. Pursuing one of these laws causes a conflict for the other⁸.

Many critics have a problem with the fact that Hegel distinguishes Oedipus from *Antigone*, making his crime excusable (because he didn't expect it) and her crime inexcusable because she buried Polynices knowing that her action would break civil law. *Antigone* is proud of herself for standing up for what is justified in divine law: the burial of Polynices. Farneth acknowledges that there is no real reconciliation between Creon and *Antigone*. She states, "The confessions of *Antigone* and Creon fall on deaf ears"(659). In other words, *Antigone* never faults

⁸ The rules about gender conflict do not apply within the family structure. Hegel puts forth that within the family, the brother and sister have a relationship where desire is not a factor. But, in the brother-sister relationship, the sister is able to achieve "self-hood", whereas in a desirous male-female relationship, there will always be a fundamental inequality of roles. Apparently, "nature assigns the human law to men and the divine law to women"(651). Hegel believes that this is not because of nature, but because of the ethical norms of society. This is where the term "character" comes to play. Character for Hegel is a one-sided and unreflective form of identity that is immediate.

herself, and everyone (that matters) that Creon would confess his wrongness to has died. Once he realizes what he has done, it is too late to save Antigone. As a result of Antigone's death, Creon's son dies, and then his wife dies. Additionally, Hegel categorizes women as the "internal enemy". Hegel believes that the community thrives by suppressing the women within it. The gender roles within the community are what repress women, not women in themselves. The prevailing culture assigns women to certain roles. As a woman, when Antigone appeals to Creon about the wrongfulness of his actions, he does not listen. One reason is because of his hubris and excessive pride as "supreme king". The other reason is because Antigone is a woman. In Ancient Greece, it was not common for a woman to be right.

It is true that gender roles are what repress women in *Antigone* but Antigone's gender is not the main cause of her problems. In contrast to both Gonzalez and Farneth, the central issue is the choice of following Creon's edict or the laws of divinity; there is no mutual destruction between Antigone and Creon. I believe that the destruction of everyone is due to Creon's hubris and inability to change his ways for the divine law. If the Greeks worshipped the gods as much as I have learned, wouldn't Creon's decree be wrong within the universal law of piety? If so, the destruction of Creon's community is due to Creon himself. Gender does play a role in the dynamic of the tragedy, but ultimately the conflict in the play comes down to one's belief. If Antigone was a man and buried Polynices, it would not change her fate. The way Creon reacted toward his son shows that he still would not have admitted the wrongfulness of his ways. If the main plot changed in the play and Haemon buried Polynices, according to Antigone's motivation of following the divine law, nothing would change in the plot. I believe that Sophocles was intentional with his choice of making Antigone a woman. But, I think that the point of this choice was to make a statement: the divine law prevails no matter what gender one is.

3. JOHN TRALAU'S PHILIAN PERSPECTIVE

The ideas above are fully Hegelian, whereas the other views presented will stray from the interpretation of *Antigone* as a tragedy of mutual destruction. Johan Tralau concentrates on the idea of Philia in an attempt to save the Hegelian interpretation and make it less subjective, but the lack of textual evidence for his view makes it hard to accept.

The Hegelian perspective could be interpreted as subjective because it is about the characters themselves. While the Philian interpretation takes the entirety of the tragedy into consideration citing the different communities within it. This interpretation is interesting because it deals with the loyalty of Creon and Antigone to different parts of their communities. But, the Philian interpretation is deficient in evidentiary support. The claim that Creon acts in a certain way because of his loyalty could be interpreted as true because of his selfish motive and hubris. On the other hand, Antigone definitely did not act as she did because of loyalty to her family, but instead loyalty to the divine law.

The idea of Philia is different from the Hegelian interpretation because it deals with the loyalty of Antigone and Creon to the environments around them. He believes that both Creon and Antigone are unattached to the communities they strive to protect and that Antigone is self-destructive by arguing for divine laws. Supposedly, both Antigone and King Creon strive to protect the Greek community, but they have different motivations in doing so. Tralau puts forth that both Creon and Antigone are unattached to the Theban community. The author uses the word "Philia" as the guiding principle in his theory. Antigone has her own meaning of who is Philos. Both Creon and Antigone's Philos are not the Greek community. For Creon, an enemy of the city, could never be Philos, hence Antigone. The author points out that Creon's words could

be used against him. Tralau's analysis of Creon's Philos is inconsistent because it seems that not every enemy of the city is left out of Creon's Philos. Creon's own son (Haemon) disagrees with Creon's decree yet he is still Philos.

Polynices is Philos to Antigone, so therefore must be buried. Tralau points out that because Polynices is Antigone's philos, they could have an incestuous relationship. Tralau does address the lack of evidence for the incest view by pointing out that Antigone's mother and father are also Philos. The loyalty and family issues that Tralau mentions are not for the gods to decide, so therefore are not the central issue of this play. The author says that Antigone overlooks the state, but this is because the gods matter over the state. Tralau makes the central issue Antigone's loyalty, when in reality the central issue is the law. Creon is a power-hungry man, while Antigone is trying to do right by the divine law.

Antigone's definition of philia is complicated because it is about blood relation. "...Antigone's understanding of kinship seems to be very narrow: Philia is about being of the same blood or, rather 'of the same womb'"(Tralau 390). This may seem arbitrary but it is not because Tralau puts forth that if Haemon was in the same position as Polynices, she may not have acted in the same way. If Haemon was not given a sacred burial, Antigone may not have fought Creon for him because Haemon is only her fiance, he was not born from the same womb as Antigone. Tralau claims that this definition of Philia is inconsistent because there is no place for her parents. As argued in the section, "Antigone's Motivation: Divine Justice", this point is not valid because if Antigone's motivation is divine law, she would have buried anyone, it would not matter if there was any blood relation.

The author's interpretation of Antigone and Ismene's relationship puts them in opposition to each other. Tralau believes that Antigone disrespects Ismene by denying her the right to die

with her. While in my reading, Ismene wants to protect Antigone by keeping quiet. Antigone does not strive to be protected, she wants Creon to know what she has done. I would not misconstrue this notion by saying that Ismene is the enemy of Antigone. When Antigone does not want Ismene to die with her it shows another way that Antigone protects her sister. She loves Ismene and does not want her to die for a cause that she does not care about. Thus, Antigone exhibits *philia* toward Ismene by saving her from death.

Tralau's theory of *philia* within *Antigone* has several flaws. First, if Antigone's motivation were *philia*, why wouldn't it include Haemon? There is no solid proof within *Antigone* that she would not do the same for Haemon as she did for Polynices. Antigone believes in the divine law and that is why she acted in the way that she did throughout the play⁹. There is no textual proof within the play that says Antigone buried Polynices because he is her brother. On the other hand, there is textual evidence that Antigone gave a sacred burial to Polynices because she was following the laws of the Heavens. For example Antigone states, "As that a mortal man could overbear the unchangeable unwritten code of heaven..." (Sophocles 17). Antigone acknowledges that man cannot overstep the divine laws that are already in place. This is a general statement that Antigone puts forth in defending her actions and proving the wrongfulness of Creon's decree. The unwritten code of Heaven is that everyone gets a secret burial, so Antigone is simply asserting that she values the validity of the laws of the gods over Creon's law.

4. THE PSYCHOANALYTIC ANALYSIS OF *ANTIGONE*

⁹ Polynices was her brother, but the only reason this could be significant is because he is within the direct bloodline of Oedipus. If Oedipus really did call upon Pelop's curse, then it was fate that Eteocles and Polynices died a gruesome death at each others' hands.

The psychoanalytic interpretation of *Antigone* is the most subjective interpretation of the play in relation to the others, for one is forced to look at a play through a completely contrasting lens. When reading the play with the other views in mind, one does not have to shift his perspective. The play reads as if any of the views could be easily conceived. Whereas Miriam Leonard's psychoanalytic interpretation has to be searched for in the tragedy. This interpretation is interesting because it is so creative, but it misses the mark because there is not enough evidence to support it. Additionally, the psychoanalytic perspective overlooks the laws of divinity, which play an essential role in the tragedy.

Miriam Leonard asks the question: what if *Antigone* was at the forefront of psychoanalysis instead of *Oedipus*? Miriam Leonard poses that *Antigone* could actually be at the forefront of psychoanalytical theory because the play raises important issues about feminist and political issues (Leonard 135). The Hegelian views and philiian view place *Antigone* and *Creon* at odds with each other, while this psychoanalytic view concentrates solely on *Antigone*. Further, the figure of *Antigone* herself has become central to feminist and political theory.

Miriam Leonard explores the strengths and weaknesses of Lacan's analysis of *Antigone*. For Lacan, *Creon* does not matter at all. *Antigone* is about *Antigone* herself; she is the central figure. Lacan moves away from a pious analysis by rejecting Hegel and focusing solely on *Antigone*'s desire. In Lacan's view, *Antigone*'s desire (to bury *Polynices*) makes her look like a disturbing, intimidating, self-willed victim. Loraux and Leonard agree that for Lacan to focus solely on *Antigone*, a third of the drama would have to be thrown away, hence all of *Creon*'s monologues. Lacan believes that *Antigone*'s pure desire does not have to do with politics, but that her choice is one of beauty and purity. Because Lacan paints *Antigone* out as a figure of innocence, Lacan believes that for *Antigone*, the burial of *Polynices* is a matter of ethics. Lacan

feels that Antigone's motivation is one with no motive, which makes it an ethical decision. "... it can be seen that Antigone's position represents the radical limit that affirms the unique value of his being without reference to any content, to whatever good or evil Polynices may have done, or whatever he may be subjected to"(Leonard 142). Lacan's blatant rejection of Creon and the emphasis placed on language within *Antigone*, makes it as if Antigone is echoing herself throughout the play. Antigone's language and her actions reflect back to her. Antigone sacrifices herself for her brother and death follows. Antigone attempts to place her brother below the ground and she is placed below the ground. Lacan attempts to disassociate Antigone from the political, but his ideas leave room for some interpretation by Leonard.

While many of Lacan's ideas are sympathetic to the interpretation in part one, Leonard's focus on incest moves us in a direction opposed to part one. Leonard's main thesis is that Lacan does not pay enough attention to the cycle of incest apparent in *Antigone*. Antigone buries her brother and accepts death, which can be seen as a rejection of patriarchal culture. She stands up to King Creon and her death denies "generational continuity" to Haemon. Although Lacan rejects the Hegelian interpretation of Antigone, his ideas continue to reflect Hegel, for both ignored how odd Antigone's relationship to Polynices is. Lacan's idea of incest is different than others in that he believes that the root of Antigone's desire is for her mother. The mother is the root of creation and destruction... giving birth and death to her children (145). Antigone's drive to save her brother parallels Jocasta's original sin of incest (with Oedipus). Jocasta's husband dies by the hand of Oedipus and she marries Oedipus. Antigone's brother kills her other brother and she breaks King Creon's law and buries Polynices against his decree. Because of her actions, she is buried alive leaving her future husband ultimately dead. In both scenarios Jocasta and

Antigone choose another family member over their husband. They choose someone with their blood.

In relation to my theory of Antigone as the restorer, I find Lacan's theory of Antigone's desire to be insular. Although, I ultimately disagree with Lacan's view because he makes Antigone's burial of Polynices into something avoidable, like a choice she didn't need to make. Lacan's view takes away the legitimacy of the divine law. Antigone does not simply bury Polynices because she desires to, for it is not her ethics that makes her do so. It is the divine law that forces Antigone to bury Polynices. This is not a choice on Antigone's own accord, but a rule to be followed that shows her reverence for the gods. Additionally, I disagree with Leonard's interpretation of the missed aspect of incest. Like I pointed out in Tralau's *philia* interpretation, there is no proof that Antigone is in love with her brother. Antigone is a follower of the divine law no matter who it concerns¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interpretation of *Antigone* in part one is the most evidence based perspective. Antigone's reverence for the gods is written into the fabric of the play. Not only does Antigone cite the divine law in her defense of her actions several times, but it is a known fact that all of Greece reveres the gods as part of traditional culture. *Antigone* is a play about the restoration of human destruction. The motivations for the destruction and restoration of Thebes is what moves the play forward. Antigone is on a spiritual quest to follow the divine law of the gods, while King Creon wants to prove his worth to his kingdom by making a civil edict that goes against the law of the gods and becomes entrapped by his hubris. While alternate

¹⁰ *Antigone* does not mention Jocasta at all. Oedipus is mentioned by the chorus, but the idea that Antigone imitates Jocata's actions is conceived from thin air. The family of Oedipus does experience bad luck, but this is because of Pelop's Curse and Creon's destructive actions.

interpretations make us reflect on the play in fruitful ways, they are not central to the fabric of the play.

Annotated Bibliography

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Atkinson’s piece presents Antigone from the viewpoint of the chorus. The usual readings of the play inscribe a binary issue between Creon and Antigone. Atkinson believes that both Antigone and Creon are apolitical while the chorus presents the political perspective. Many authors have turned to minor characters like Haemon and Ismene for their readings. Atkinson’s attention to the chorus (and any other attention to minor characters) restores “a multivocal texture to the tragic universe”(221). One of the unique aspects of the chorus is the unity that the voices bring to the text. There is a dynamic that allows subjectivity to the reader in deciding if at certain points the chorus is supposed to be interpreted as a singular person or if the chorus should be interpreted as many, but it is kind of both at the same time. The chorus is committed to providing the reader with insight into another perspective of judgment. The chorus is seen as a council of old men in the reader’s first encounter. They demonstrate a desire for change after the tragedy of Eteocles and Polynices. They hope that Creon will be a new, different type of leader. But Creon does not demonstrate the type of change the chorus was yearning for. Instead, Creon presents a decree that goes against the divine law. It is like Creon forgot that Oediseus’s thrown was for both Eteocles and Polynices when he makes his decree about Polynices not being buried. Creon is repeating “the cycle of pain” that Thebes has experienced prior by ensuing vengeance on Polynices. For Creon, the chorus’s role has been diminished, for his hubris does not allow him to accept any other opinions than his own. They are no longer advisors and this marginalizes them. The chorus tries to intervene in the play, but Creon does not listen. The chorus

acknowledges that they are bound to the laws of the gods. “Their law balances together respect for ‘laws of the earth and the justice, to which one is bound by oath, of the gods’”(225).

Atkinson shows that the Chorus knows that legislation is a process. The power of the individual can be destructive to the collective Chorus. The only time that Creon listens to the Chorus is in their plea for Ismene not to be punished along with Antigone. This text also acknowledges Antigone’s decision to align with the dead rather than with the living. Unfortunately, the Chorus ends up disapproving of Antigone’s actions. Only after Antigone is dead, does the Chorus commend her for her courageous act. Additionally, the Chorus tries to persuade King Creon to listen when in Tiresias’s presence. Ultimately, although the Chorus may have supported Antigone in the burial of Polynices, they did not support the way she went about it. The Chorus was careful in choosing when to share their opinions with King Creon knowing that he would not take people’s advice. The chorus revives the voice of the people within the drama of *Antigone*. Atkinson is right in saying that as the reader, one often only concentrates on the two main characters (Antigone and Creon). The Chorus is a window into what society as a whole believed. This article helped me to understand the purpose of several passages within *Antigone*. It is very valuable to confirm that the prevailing belief was that divinity was the higher power within Greek culture.

Farneth, Molly. “GENDER AND THE ETHICAL GIVEN: Human and Divine Law in Hegel's Reading of the ‘Antigone.’” *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2013, pp. 643–667., www.jstor.org/stable/24586153. Accessed 5 Oct. 2020.

Farneth suggests that Hegel’s interpretation of *Antigone* poses a challenge to religious ethics. The difference between human law and divine law can be interpreted as a difference

between men and women. The author cites Hegel's interpretation in that *Antigone* is about characterizations of a certain group and their relationship to the world. Hegel attempts to give a complete picture of Greek Sittlichkeit in *Antigone*. I take this to mean how the Greeks within *Antigone* obtain social order within the ethics of their society. Hegel begins by highlighting the harmony within the Greek society, specifically *Antigone*. Hegel puts forth that within the family, the brother and sister have a relationship where desire is not a factor. Apparently, "nature assigns the human law to men and the divine law to women"(651). Hegel believes that this is not because of nature, but because of the ethical norms of society. This is where the term "character" comes to play. Character for Hegel is a one-sided and unreflective form of identity that is immediate. Bringing this back to the topic of *Antigone* and Creon, their opposition is simply a clash of two sides who both think they are correct for different reasons. Pursuing one of these laws causes a conflict for the other. Many critics have a problem with the fact that Hegel distinguishes Oedipus from *Antigone*, making his crime excusable (because he didn't expect it) and her crime inexcusable because she knowingly buried Polynices knowing it would break human law. The author writes about how *Antigone* acknowledges her guilt. But I disagree. I do not think that *Antigone* is that guilty. I think that she is proud of herself for standing up for what is justified in divine law: the burial of Polynices. Farneth agrees with me about the fact that there is no real reconciliation between Creon and *Antigone*. She states, "The confessions of *Antigone* and Creon fall on deaf ears"(659). In the next section of Hegel's writing, he categorizes women as the "internal enemy". Basically, Hegel believes that the community thrives by suppressing the women within it. Hegel reads *Antigone* as a mutual destruction of characters. One objection that Farneth puts forth is that Hegel contradicts himself because he naturalizes gender in his later work. The gender roles within the community are what repress women, not women in

themselves. This article has advanced my understanding of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Antigone* within it. I disagree with what Hegel and Farneth have focused on. For I do not think that there is mutual destruction. I think that the destruction of everyone is due to Creon's hubris and inability to change his ways for the divine law. If the Greeks worshipped the gods as much as I have learned, wouldn't Creon's decree be wrong within the universal law of piety? If so, the destruction of Creon's community is due to Creon himself.

Gonzalez, Francisco J. "2005 Summer Reading The Burial at Thebes Hegel on the Antigone."

Skidmore College, www.skidmore.edu/fye/summer_reading/2005/themes/hegel.php.

Gonzalez's text highlights the Hegelian view of Antigone. The "tragic collision" is between two characters who each embody some sort of good. Both Antigone and Creon have different views, but each view has validity to Hegel. This position of the tragic collision conflicts Aristotle's interpretation of Creon as the tragic hero. If Creon is to be called the "tragic hero" within this play, shouldn't it be named after him? If there is a tragic hero, it implies that there is a good side and an evil side, when in reality Hegel sees two good sides. He calls Antigone a "noble defender of human rights", which I completely disagree with. Hegel thinks that *Antigone* is a play about good v. good. Human law is grounded in divine law. Divine law only becomes "aware of itself" within human law. This is ironic because the two types of laws completely contrast each other, but need one another to survive. Each good is blind to the other. Antigone does not see how what Creon is doing is good and Creon does not see how Antigone is doing something good. "The tragedy is that in the conflict between right and right, each right becomes a wrong without ceasing to be right"(Gonzalez). In Gonzalez's piece, he observes the line from the play, "Sooner or later, foul is fair, fair is foul to the man the gods will ruin" (696-698; Fagles trans.)

He argues that Hegel's reading pays justice to this line because it applies to both Creon and Antigone. Both Creon and Antigone fall to horrible fates. Antigone kills herself and Creon loses his family. For Hegel, this conflict of tragedy is only a step along the way for absolute spirit. This piece will be very useful to me in my thesis because it is endorsing a view that I completely disagree with. There is an evil within this play and it is Creon: trying to be God. The civil law does not have as much standing as the divine law and this is what Antigone is trying to defend. Hegel's view completely contradicts my view with Antigone as the defender of piety.

Honig, Bonnie. *Antigone, Interrupted*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=545637&site=eds-live.

Honig puts forth that Antigone is a figure of conspiracy. Apparently, Antigone communicates in a way that makes her look like she does things secretly. According to Honig, the things that Antigone says to Creon go over his head. The author believes that Antigone is a brave figure for having an open secret. Honig proceeds to point out several scenes in which Antigone is interrupted. The author believes that these interruptions are an important part of the play, but are never paid attention to. When Antigone buries Polynices, she is interrupted by Creon. When she tells Creon what she did, she is taken to a cave. Antigone's suicide is another interruption, but this time of her life and her marriage. Honig sees Antigone as a multidimensional figure. She puts forth that she is not only political, or a defender of the family, or a creature of desire, but a combination of everything, a heroic but not isolated Antigone. She conspires using language in an unconventional way. When looking back at the play, I realize that Creon really does not process a lot of what Antigone says, which kind of makes what Antigone what is saying like a secret. No one is listening to her. Honig acknowledges that this is an

unusual way of seeing Antigone. She highlights Antigone's background and references the idea of kinship as a reading. Honig paints Creon as a totally political figure, which he is as a king. There are many views set forth in this play. This multidimensional analysis of a conspirator contradicts my analysis of Antigone as a religious figure. I believe that none of the details Honig puts forth are relevant to a religious interpretation.

LEONARD, MIRIAM. "ANTIGONE, THE POLITICAL AND THE ETHICS OF

PSYCHOANALYSIS." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, no. 49, 2003, pp. 130–154. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44696793. Accessed 4 Oct. 2020.

Leonard poses the question: what if Antigone was at the forefront of psychoanalysis? The author references Lacan and Irigaray and their different interpretations. The figure of Antigone has become central to feminist and political theory. For Lacan, Creon does not matter at all. *Antigone* is about Antigone herself. Loreaux commends Lacan for moving away from a pious analysis, which is the opposite of my goal. Lacan focuses on Antigone's desire and how it makes her look like a disturbing, intimidating self-willed victim. Lacan believes that Antigone's pure desire does not have to do with politics. Although, Leonard argues that in *Antigone* rejecting normative standards, she is taking a stand against patriarchy. Psychoanalytical ideas come to fruition when Lacan brings forth that Antigone picks her brother over her husband implying incest. Is Antigone's pure desire incestuous? The author points out that this makes Lacan sound Hegelian because prioritization of her brother, Polynices. Lacanian's idea incest is different than Hegel's in that he believes that the root of Antigone's desire is for her mother. The mother is the root of creation and destruction... giving birth and death to her children (145). Antigone's drive to save her brother parallels Jocasta's original sin of incest (with Oedipus). In Irigaray's view,

Antigone wants to govern as much as possible as a woman. According to her, Hegel removes Antigone from the symbolic order and this takes away her opportunity to be part of the political world. The author puts forth that by having an anti-political analysis of Antigone, one is removing Antigone from the political scene. These psychoanalytic interpretations are very interesting because they offer a new way of looking at *Antigone*, promoting a different understanding. They will allow me to refute them easily with my view of Antigone as the religious hero. The point that interests me most here is Lacanian's interpretation Antigone's incestuous relationship with Polynices that is modeled by Jocasta.

Tralau, Johan. "TRAGEDY AS POLITICAL THEORY: THE SELF-DESTRUCTION OF ANTIGONE'S LAWS." *History of Political Thought*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2005, pp. 377–396. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26221709. Accessed 4 Oct. 2020.

Tralau concentrates on the idea of *philia*, which is a very interesting perspective. This source is useful to me because, in my opinion, it is an incorrect interpretation. In my thesis, I will be able to use Tralau's piece as an example of an erroneous interpretation of Antigone, which does not give attention to the central issue. Tralau believes that both Creon and Antigone are unattached to the communities they strive to protect. He thinks that Antigone is self-destructive by arguing for divine laws. John Tralau attempts to save the Hegelian interpretation and make it less subjective. The author uses the word "*philia*" as the guiding principle in his theory. Antigone has her own meaning of who is *philos*. For Creon, an enemy of the city could never be *philos*, hence Antigone. The author points out that Creon's words could be used against him. Polyneices is *philos* to Antigone, so therefore must be buried. This text interprets Creon as simple and Antigone as a complicated character. I would argue the very opposite. The loyalty

and family issues that this author mentions are not for the gods to necessarily decide, so therefore are not the central issue of this play. The author says that Antigone overlooks the state, but this is because the gods matter over the state. Loyalty is the issue here. Creon is a power-hungry man, while Antigone is trying to do right by both of her brothers. I do not like the author's interpretation of Antigone and Ismene's relationship. I think he takes the notion too seriously, missing the point of the play. In my reading, Ismene wants to protect Antigone by keeping quiet. Antigone does not strive to be protected, she wants Creon to know what she has done. I would not misconstrue this notion by saying that Ismene is the enemy of Antigone. When Antigone does not want Ismene to die with her it shows another way that Antigone protects her sister. She loves Ismene and does not want her to die for a cause that she does not care about. Thus, Antigone exhibits philia toward Ismene.

Waterfield, Robin, and Kathryn Waterfield. *The Greek Myths: Stories of the Greek Gods and Heroes Vividly Retold*. Quercus, 2012.

The background of the gods' creation process of humans is important because in reading *Antigone* one must realize that humans must respect the gods because they are the creators of civilization. In Creon's disrespect of the gods' rules, he is disrespecting his creators' rules. The gods are in everything because they created everything. One day, the gods realized that they were bored because they are immortal and their lives were filled with sameness. Because of their eternal boredom, the gods thought that it might be fun to populate the Earth with life. Zeus gave the job of making animal species to Prometheus and Epimetheus ended up working with him. Epimetheus made the animals while Prometheus would check over the final products. Epimetheus gave different powers to different creatures. After he finished designing the various

creatures that would inhabit the Earth, he showed Prometheus to see if he was satisfied. He liked all of the work, except for the humans. This clay form was naked with no special abilities. But, this did not matter, Zeus had given the brothers a certain time limit and today was the day that these creatures would be released on Earth. The gods actually had no plans for human beings. Prometheus said, "...we'll just have to let this... *human*... fend for itself for a while"(Waterfield 13).