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The Uses of Literature in the Exploration of Public Administration Ethics: The Example of Antigone

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What can public administrators learn from studying Sophocles' Antigone? A great deal, argues Frank Marini, who regards the ancient Greek play as a fruitful source of opportunities to reflect upon the ethical challenges facing modern public administrators. The play is often used in schools to generate discussions about civil disobedience and the implications of challenges to authority. Marini points to dilemmas facing other roles in Antigone, each facing issues from ethically "right positions." This is especially true of King Creon, who is challenged to meet his obligation to uphold and enforce the law despite family ties and personal considerations. In this and other ways, Antigone and other works are useful for highlighting and focusing discussions about the challenges of public ethics.

A variety of approaches to teaching, encouraging, and inculcating public administration ethics has been suggested during the public administration ethics boom of the last two decades or so. I have argued elsewhere that public administration ethics can be usefully approached through literature (Marini, 1991; forthcoming). Significant among the literary works which I have mentioned as useful for exploring issues of public administration ethics is Sophocles' Antigone. I wish here to offer an example of such usefulness by discussing Antigone from the point of view of public administration ethics. It seems to me that this play is acutely appropriate for today's public administration audience because it raises many issues of relevance to contemporary public ethics; because it is available in many languages and familiar within many national cultures; and because its themes are important to, and capable of appreciation within, many different political and administrative systems.

The Play Recalled

Antigone—which has been considered at times the most perfect work of human art—was first presented about 440 B.C. It is useful to remember that the audience in Ancient Greece would have been thoroughly familiar with the "story"; thus the interpretation of principals, motives, and dilemmas (the "meaning" or "message" rather than simply the "tale") took on special importance.

Antigone, her sister Ismene, and her brothers Polynices and Eteocles, were the children of Oedipus, King of Thebes, and of Jocasta (whom Oedipus married while unaware of the fact that she was his mother). When Oedipus discovered the fact of his incest, and also the fact that a stranger he killed was actually his unknown biological father, he blinded himself and abandoned his kingdom. His sons quarreled and Eteocles banished Polynices and reigned as king. Polynices returned with a foreign army and, in the ensuing battle, the brothers killed one another. Creon (the brother of Oedipus' wife/mother and thus the uncle both of Oedipus and Oedipus' children; and, as first cousin of Oedipus' father, a member of the royal blood line in his own right), as the closest male, ascended to the throne. Creon decreed that Eteocles be given a hero's burial; that Polynices, as punishment for the treason of attacking Thebes with his foreign army, be denied burial; and that anyone providing burial rites for Polynices be put to death by stoning. The play begins at this point.
The principal protagonists are Antigone and Creon. Antigone is described by the Chorus as "the violent daughter of a violent father,... [who] cannot bend before a storm of evils," and by Creon as stubborn, self-willed, boasting, exulting in insolent defiance of the law, who "caught red-handed, glorifies the crime," and who knowingly and freely chooses a path of damnation (430-451, 764-765). Creon is depicted as a lonely ruler beset upon from every quarter who is unbending, prideful, self-willed, stubborn, rigid, unchanging, and almost impervious to advice (650-672, 950-976, 991, 1025-1027).

Antigone is determined to perform the rites of burial for her brother even though the sentence for doing so is death. She asserts that divine law, tradition, and familial duty demand this of her. She covertly performs the burial ritual, is discovered, and is sentenced to death. Though Creon hears arguments from several quarters, and though Antigone is his niece and is engaged to his son, he adamantly insists that since Antigone knowingly violated the law she must pay the penalty. Neither Antigone nor Creon will budge an inch in their fervor, righteousness, and position. As Antigone is being walled up in a cave to starve to death, Creon hears terrible predictions and finally fearfully yields. His change of mind is too late, though: Antigone has hanged herself; Creon's son kills himself in grief; and Creon's wife, after hearing of this, kills herself while cursing Creon with her last breath.

The play is probably most commonly used to demonstrate to undergraduate students a striking ancient example of civil disobedience and to introduce them to the possibility and value of standing against all the world's authority on behalf of what one knows in one's heart or conscience to be right. Such a perspective is truly valuable and worth serious consideration. But from a public administration perspective, some aspects of this view can seem problematic and worth pondering from the vantage point of various responsibilities and societal needs. And while the undergraduates are probably taught the point of the play most frequently from the position of Antigone herself (roughly the ethic of personal conscience; of fealty to tradition and religion and resistance to authority which runs counter to these; of loyalty to family and familial duty; and of following one's own heart, convictions, and feelings), it seems necessary for public administration to at least reflect on the question of whether there is anything to be said for Creon's side of the issue.

Antigone is, of course, a much richer play than a short discussion such as this can convey. Indeed, the fact that it is in such robust survival over 24 centuries after it was written suggests that it has issues and wisdom for various situations and times.

Public Administration Ethics and Antigone

I believe Antigone would serve well on every public administrator's short shelf of essential reading and in every public administration curriculum.

The play's conflict may be seen as fundamentally over the separate ethics and responsibilities of various public roles and positions—in short as over public ethics. At the center of the play are the ethics stipulated by divine law and gods; the ethics of a society's laws, traditions, customs, institutions, mores, and values; the ethics of conscience; the ethics of oaths and positions of responsibility; the ethics of loyalty, family and friends; the values of "democracy" or the role of popular opinion; the role of emotion, dispassionate approaches, and wisdom; and other forms and conflicts of ethics and authority. The play is preeminently about civic and personal ethics in relation to authority.

The Ethics and Burden of Office

It is worth noting that Creon's dilemma is essentially one of administrative action and discretion; i.e., his actions which provide the basis for the play are not so much questions of " reigning" or of "politics" as they are of "administering" a public policy and its repercussions. Creon makes his sense of the responsibilities of office clear upon his first appearance:

Elders of Thebes, our city has been tossed
By a tempestuous ocean, but the gods
Have steadied it once more and made it safe.
You, out of all the citizens, I have summoned,
Because I knew that you once revered
The sovereignty of Laius, and that later,
When Oedipus was King and when he perished,
Your steadfast loyalty upheld his children.
And now his sons have fallen, each one stained
By his brother's blood, killed by his brother's hand,
So that sovereignty devolves on me,
Since I by birth am nearest to the dead.
Certainly no man can be fully known,
Known in his soul, his will, his intellect,
Until he is tested and has proved himself
In statesmanship. Because a city's ruler,
Instead of following the wisest counsel,
May through some fear keep silent. Such a man
I think contemptible. And one whose friend
Has stronger claims upon him than his country,
Him I consider worthless. As for me,
I swear by Zeus, forever all-beholding,
That I would not keep silence, if I saw
Ruin instead of safety drawing near us;
Nor would I think an enemy of the state
Could be my friend. For I remember this:
Our country bears us all securely onward,
And only while it sails a steady course
Is friendship possible. Such are the laws
By which I guard the greatness of the city.
For never shall the wicked
Be given more approval than the just,
If I have power to stop it. But whoever
Feels in his heart affection for his city
Shall be rewarded both in life and death (136-187).
His sense of the public ethics and authority of office is commensurate with this view: those who hold offices of supreme responsibility must be obeyed; neither blood ties nor friendship should obscure this duty to obey duly-appointed authority; duly-appointed rulers must be obeyed “in everything, little or great, just or unjust”; happiness and safety is found in loyalty and obedience to such authority; “disobedience is the worst of evils,” and it ruins cities, “makes homes desolate,” breaks up military alliances, and threatens peace, happiness, and safety (580-623).

Nor is Creon’s sense of his authority a delusion. That he, as king, legitimately exercises personal authority is made clear throughout the play (47, 503, 816), as is the fact that his decrees and edicts have the force of law (7-8, 26-27, 31-32, 703). As the chorus says at one point: “you may give commands to all of us, [i]f the living and the dead. Your will is law” (190-192). It may be wondered, though, as has frequently been noted, whether he sometimes sees the authority as too much his personally rather than belonging to the role of king. It can be legitimately asked whether he has come to see himself as above the law, or even as the law itself.

Public administrators constantly face the need and difficulty of keeping the authority of their official role separate from inappropriate aspects of their personality and personal circumstances. The value statement which Creon supplies in his speech to the Elders certainly rings as do most oaths of office—from a public administration point of view—the course Creon travels from these values to his edict, and to the remorseless implementation of the edict, is rich with questions to ponder.

**Ethics, Law, and Higher Law**

As indicated, the drama has to do with the interplay between various kinds of law, authority, and ethics. If Creon sometimes seems to see himself as above certain notions of law and mores (i.e., as above divine law, customs, traditions, and traditional obligations), certainly Antigone seems also to see herself as above certain notions of law (i.e., as above law or decree promulgated by a ruler when she has reason to believe such is wrong). If Creon feels that he can, should, or must set aside some usual norms because of certain exigencies and in order to protect a system of order, Antigone feels she must set aside such exigencies and order because of higher and more important obligations. The question is not only whether Creon has prudently, inappropriately, and stubbornly set himself above all that is decent, but also whether Antigone has prudently, inappropriately, and stubbornly set herself above duly-constituted authority and the need for order.

While Antigone freely admits to Creon that she has knowingly disobeyed the edict against burying her brother, she contends that the ruler’s edicts do not have the power of the gods’ laws:

**Creon:** Answer this question. Make your answer brief. You knew there was a law forbidding this?

**Antigone:** Of course I knew it. Why not? It was public.

**Creon:** And you have dared to disobey the law?

As the chorus says at one point: “you may give commands to all of us, [if] the living and the dead. Your will is law” (190-192). It may be wondered, though, as has frequently been noted, whether he sometimes sees the authority as too much his personally rather than belonging to the role of king. It can be legitimately asked whether he has come to see himself as above the law, or even as the law itself.

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**Antigone:** Yes. For this law was not proclaimed by Zeus, Or by the gods who rule the world below. I do not think your edicts have such power That they can override the laws of heaven, Unwritten and unfailling, laws whose life Belongs not to today or yesterday But to time everlasting; and no man Knows the first moment that they had their being. If I transgressed these laws because I feared The arrogance of man, how to the gods Could I make satisfaction? (403-417, compare also 853)

It is not only divine law which Antigone cites. She refers also to ancient law, custom, tradition, and commonly understood decency. The conflict over authority involves contention over the status of various forms of law. Antigone admits knowingly breaking the law (42-75, 401-406). When she explains to her sister, Ismene, that she plans to violate the prohibition against burying Polyneices, the following exchange takes place:

**Ismene:** Antigone! Think!....

...think how in turn we perish,
If, in defiance of the law, we brave The power of the commandment of a king. And so I pray the dead to pardon me If I obey our rulers, since I must.

To be too bold in what we do is madness.

**Antigone:** My crime is innocence, for I owe the dead Longer allegiance than I owe the living. With the dead I lie forever. Live, if you choose, Dishonoring the laws the gods have allowed.

**Ismene:** No, I dishonor nothing. But to challenge Authority—I have not strength enough.

**Antigone:** But leave me... To undergo the worst that can befall me. I shall not suffer an ignoble death (49-96).

Antigone firmly argues that divine law is on her side. She asks, “What is the law of heaven that I have broken?” (853), and she states that the doom that has come upon her is solely “Because to the laws of heaven I held fast” (876). She states her view of the status, timelessness, and authority of divine law and expresses her view that the king’s edicts cannot override divine law (407-417). Yet, at one point, the Chorus indicates to Antigone that piety is one thing, but the exigencies of rule are another: “A pious action may of praise be sure,/But he who rules a land cannot endure/An act of disobedience to his rule/Your own self-will you have not learned in school” (803-806).

The dilemmas introduced by law, higher law, divine guidance, etc. are not new to public administrators. Some of our
Obviously, for U.S. public administrators, the notion of the Constitution as “higher law” and as having its basis in “higher law” adds a special dimension to such reflections. Antigone provides an excellent starting point for such reflections.

Ethics and Conscience

Closely related to such questions are the questions of ethics of personal conscience. The whole play, of course, can be (and frequently is) read as a paean to independent conscience. An easy answer can be (and frequently is) given to Antigone’s problem: follow conscience, do what you know is right, do not comply with governmental acts you know to be wrong. This answer is, in important respects, too easy, as reflection upon individuals deciding separately which act to obey and which to disobey will soon suggest.

Before embracing the simplistic notion that personal conscience, if but consulted, will provide a trusty beacon and rallying point against institutional, governmental, and societal demands and expectations (which seems often to be the message attributed to Antigone), one should reflect on the extent to which conscience is a result of socialization (Marini, 1991, forthcoming).

Clearly there is much to be learned about conscience in the play. One can easily be misled by the centrality of the act of conscience on Antigone’s part to overlook Creon’s acts of conscience. Creon is acutely aware of his official responsibilities. He outlines the responsibilities of office as he sees them upon the implications of the Nuremberg trials and contemporary public policy and administration issues such as debates over abortion. In assessing the ethics of public responsibility, we should look critically at postures which hold that “natural” and perhaps even infallible guidance is easily come by (in the sense of “natural law” or in the sense argued at Nuremberg by “our side” that humanity itself proves in one’s heart of hearts that certain things are inhuman and unjust regardless of the social or governmental context).

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Ethics and Emotions

The Chorus (which, admittedly, fluctuates in views—frequently depending upon which argument the most recent speaker has articulated) also chastises Antigone for having “rushed forward with audacious feet/And dashed yourself against the law’s high seat” (789-790). The Chorus on occasion interprets Antigone’s actions and fate as tied to the civic consequences of doing so?

Antigone allows the pursuit of such questions, not only from the vantage point of Antigone herself (certainly the most traditional, and probably the most powerful, vantage point), but also from the perspectives of Creon, Haemon, the Chorus, and perhaps the Theban citizenry and even, as leitmotif, Ismene, Polyneices, Eteocles, Eurydice, the seer Tiresias, and the guards.

Ethics and Emotions

The Chorus (which, admittedly, fluctuates in views—frequently depending upon which argument the most recent speaker has articulated) also chastises Antigone for having “rushed forward with audacious feet/And dashed yourself against the law’s high seat” (789-790). The Chorus on occasion interprets Antigone’s actions and fate as tied to the tragedy of her father, Oedipus, and to the fact that she is unbending and stubborn as he was. At one point Creon responds to the Chorus that

She was well schooled already
In insolence, when she defied the law,
And now look at her! Boasting, insolent,
Exulting in what she did. And if she triumphs
And goes unpunished, I am no man—she is.8
If she were more than niece, if she were closer
Than anyone who worships at my altar,
She would not even then escape her doom,
A dreadful death (436-444).

The role of love, emotion, loyalty, and reason in offering ethical guidance is, of course, continually present in this drama. The Chorus—in characterizing love as bringing an irresistible madness which twists minds, and turns the just to unrighteous ways—breaks down in its own emotions and admits, "But now I too am moved./I cannot keep/Within the bounds of loyalty./I weep/When I behold Antigone, the bride./ Nearing the room where all at last abide" (i.e., the grave) (732-751). Not only love, but also suffering, as Ismene observes (517-518), gets in the way of the clear use of reason, and "confuses us and clouds our minds."

Another aspect of the dilemmas provided by emotions involves questions of the values of family and friendship (though these could have as readily been dealt with under "higher law," custom, and mores). Antigone appeals over and over again to familial values, and at one point says that she would have set herself against the city for none less than a brother (45, 821-860), and she indicates that to conform to bounds of loyalty./I weep/When I behold Antigone, the bride./ Nearing the room where all at last abide" (i.e., the grave) (732-751). Not only love, but also suffering, as Ismene observes (517-518), gets in the way of the clear use of reason, and "confuses us and clouds our minds."

In public administration ethics, we may give too slight a treatment to issues such as these. Admittedly, we do speak about "nepotism" (though our position and our society's position seems to fluctuate over time on the issues involved). Probably, we assume that the implications of professional ethics for emotion, passion, familial relationship, and friendship are clear enough to obviate deep or professionally conscious exploration. Perhaps, though, these issues are more critical and conflictual than we assume. Antigone, again, can be useful in pondering points such as these.

**Ethics, Corruption, and Bribery**

Aside from the factors of passion, affection, etc. as aspects which may dim the ethical path, one can lose the way also through intentional corruption, bribery, and the like. Creon is eloquent, though perhaps some would say paranoid, about corruption. He feels that "men! Have often been destroyed by hope of gain" and he suspects virtually everyone of having been bribed to betray their public duty (195-199, 272-290, 960-991). He continually insists that his integrity cannot be bought or coerced.

Corruption and bribery do seem to be elements to which public administration has continuously paid attention and even elements upon which our position seems to have been consistent over time.

**Ethics and Consent or Popular Opinion**

When told by his son Haemon that the whole city is unanimous in the belief that Antigone has done no wrong (683), this exchange between Creon and Haemon ensues:

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Creon: Does Thebes give orders for the way I rule?
Am I to govern by another's judgment?
Haemon: A city that is one man's is no city.
Creon: A city is the king's. That much is sure.
Haemon: You would rule well in a deserted country.
Creon: To quarrel with your father does not shame you?
Haemon: Not when I see you failing to do justice.
Creon: Am I unjust when I respect my crown?
Haemon: Respect it! When you trample down religion?
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Haemon has here reiterated the position about the gods' law superseding the ruler's edicts, and he has endorsed also the notion that overwhelming popular opinion ought to have authority over a ruler's inclinations. Elsewhere, he tells Creon that, though citizens are frightened to tell him, they say among themselves that Antigone has done no wrong, but rather the honorable thing (633-646, 683-684).

Antigone consistently makes the point that the city's elders unanimously recognize and, except for fear, would publicly admit that she had done no wrong:

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...Yet how could I
Have won more splendid honor than by giving
Due burial to my brother? All men here
Would grant me their approval, if their lips
Were not sealed up in fear. (456-460)
...all wise men will approve my act (835).
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Yet Creon comments that of all Thebans, only Antigone has been openly rebellious (597-598). He resists, until the bitter end, putting aside his edict in deference to popular opinion or the views of those who have access to him. It is a misconception, I think, to say that he does this solely or primarily because of his personal will. He claims throughout to have promulgated the edict in an act of appropriate public responsibility and out of a concern for appropriate public considerations. He also consistently holds that the authoritative decree should not be set aside for personal concerns or because of unpopularity, and that open defiance of duly promulgated rules cannot be ignored. Any public administrator who has ever asked whether it was better or necessary to be right rather than popular, and who has tried to reflect upon how democracy or consent may differ from popularity, will probably see the relevance of the issues raised by Antigone.

**Administrative Ethics**

Antigone allows the exploration of ethics in various ways and also provides the opportunity to explore some of the aspects of order and the role of administrators and administrative responsibilities. It is especially useful in this connection to consider carefully Creon's speech upon his first appearance where he identifies his responsibilities as he sees them and the values he believes he is expected to defend (see above). It is useful to reflect upon Creon's determinations (or stubbornness); there are ample reasons and pressures which might incline another to wash his hands of the dilemma and compromise; why does not Creon simply give in?
We should not overlook what can be learned from Creon's position.... He seems agonized over living with the consequences of his decree. Yet he is determined that the rule and penalty should apply to his family as evenly as it would to others.

It is possible to answer this question by simply concluding that Creon is an incorrigibly authoritarian personality who cares only about his own political vanity and his own personal power. Yet, for our purposes, this is far too simple an answer. Considerations of questions of public ethics must surely look beyond this. Creon's own words, it is true, are of insecurity over his authority, perhaps his masculinity, and certainly his status relative to women and other "lesser beings." But he speaks also of the need to keep the ship of state afloat, of his sense that all rights and personal considerations are dependent upon predictable public order, and of the fact that relatives and friends should come under the same law and administration as other citizens. In assessing the play—as in assessing public ethics—it is useful to view the issue of personal conscience not only in isolation, but also with regard to the conscience of the responsibilities of institutional roles.

We should not overlook what can be learned from Creon's position. It is not as though Creon is oblivious to ethical considerations. He seems agonized over living with the consequences of his decree. Yet he is determined that the rule and penalty should apply to his family as evenly as it would to others, and that he will not flinch from the implementation of penalties against knowing violation of a governmental decree duly promulgated.

Creon had reasons for the decree, of course: show that treason will not be countenanced; by example, preserve from threat the ship of state upon which so much depends; and symbolically endorse patriotism while damning treachery by showing that traitors and heroes will not be accorded like treatment.

Of course, Antigone does not give him an easy way out: she will not claim ignorance of the law, but pridefully (Creon says arrogantly) insists that she knowingly violated the law and that it was proper to do so, and she repeatedly states that she willingly accepts the consequences (though this willingness wavers at times through fear and rage at the perceived injustice of her death sentence).

It appears that Creon's edict of death for anyone who delivered burial rites to Polynices was an extreme and regrettable act. At least Creon himself comes finally to view it so. The play's closing line implies guidance to be wise and to be wise sooner rather than later. By further implication: Creon should have been wise enough not to prohibit action demanded by custom, tradition, religion, and ideas of honor. Creon finally (too late) yields, recants, tries unsuccessfully to undo his deed, and bemoans his lot (1025-1043, 1120-1175, 1193-1200), but as the Chorus indicates, "Sir, you have come to learn the right too late" (1201).

Earlier in the play, a messenger emphasized that "(Of all the evils/Afflicting man, the worst is lack of wisdom" [1174-1175], and the Chorus emphasizes this in the closing lines of the play: "The crown of happiness is to be wise,/Honor the gods, and the gods' edicts prize./They strike down boastful men and men grown bold./Wisdom we learn at last, when we are old." The guidance public administrators can gain from this (be wise, do not make mistakes) may be salutary, but does not seem likely to be particularly helpful.

There is another related message: when you have made a mistake, reverse field, cut losses, change your mind. That may be well and good. But—once Creon has made his mistake, what are the administrative ethics of dealing with willful disobedience to duly promulgated acts of duly authorized actors? Of course, a very interesting question from the public administration point of view is how to deal with implementation of a decision which has unpleasant (or worse) qualities as it is applied. It cannot be claimed that Antigone provides answers, but the play does provide grist for the mill of those who work with and worry about such questions.

Conclusion

Sophocles' play Antigone allows us to see ethical postures in conflict when various actors, significantly in disagreement about important matters, apparently all appear to be acting upon some firmly held and defensible ethical principles. It allows us a view of the special responsibilities of public office as well as the special responsibilities sometimes felt by dissidents. It allows us to consider different kinds of authority and their commensurate ethical dimensions. It allows reflection upon the need of society for reliable order and a process creating and sustaining such order, as well as questions of the role and status of a variety of "higher laws." It permits us to see ethical questions affected by passion, emotion, personality differences, loyalty, and considerations of family and friendship. It offers opportunity to reflect upon the role of democratic values in ethics and to reflect upon conscience from a variety of vantage points. The interplay of personal conscience, social mores, and authority which permeate the play can be a steady source of opportunities to reflect upon public administration ethics.

The usefulness of the play for pondering public administration ethics, it seems to me, is not the usual focus upon the righteousness of conscientious disobedience. It is rather that the play displays various "right positions" and shows dilemmas of public ethics in the murky, intractable ways in which they tend to come in real life.

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Notes

1. I draw upon these earlier works when presenting a reuse of their arguments (obviously) and elsewhere in the present discussion. It should be acknowledged that others have called attention to the uses to which literature could be put in understanding aspects of public administration—for example: Egger (1944, 1959); Holzer, et al. (1979); Kroll (1965, 1981); McCurdy (1973, 1987); and Waldo (1956, 1960)—but these do not seem to have focused centrally upon public administration ethics.

2. The translation used here is that of Banks (1956) and the numbers in parenthesis in my text are citations of lines in this version. Any version of Antigone may be consulted, although translations differ and the numbering of lines will not necessarily be consistent with citations here.

3. For an account of the importance of Antigone over time, see Steiner (1984); the Athenians presented Sophocles with the government of Samos in appreciation of the first presentation of the play; as Steiner observes, it would take a substantial book simply to list the bibliography of monographic treatments of the play.

4. While I believe it is proper and important to emphasize the contemporary or timeless importance of ancient works, it is important to remember that such treatment does not give the same emphasis as the first audience graphic treatments of the play. Antigone may be consulted, although translations differ and the number of possible interest from a feminist position appears. (see, for example, lines 6-67, 77-78, 480, 531-534, 622-624, 706, and 774-780). I say that the "feminine issue" is at least a leitmotif because (as with so many other issues of Antigone) the degree of centrality of the motif depends upon the perception of the reader or audience. Compare Elshlaim (1982, 1989) and the works cited there.

5. As Steiner (1984, p. 39) observes: "If Creon was only or essentially a tyrant, he would not be worthy of Antigone's challenge, he would not, in Heidegger's transcription, be authentically 'questionable'. ... if he did not incarner an ethical principle, his defeat would possess neither tragic quality nor constructive sense." See also Steiner (1986, p. 37).

6. There is irony in the situation of Antigone's death. Creon does flinch from the death penalty stipulated by his edict. Rather than having her stoned as stipulated in the edict, he has a stone moved to seal her into a cave with scant water and food. This seems an attempt on Creon's part to wash his hands of any guilt which might accompany Antigone's death by claiming to leave her death in the hands of the gods. (He says, in effect, that her life or death will be in the hands of the gods—or rather in the hands of Hades, the god of the underworld, whom he assests is the only god Antigone worships.) Antigone, of course, does not die passively by stoning at the hands of others nor by starving due to the nonintervention of deities, but actively (perhaps some would say proactively) by hanging herself. This suicide, combined with that of Creon's wife and son on the same day, seems to inflict Creon with threefold the guilt he finally sought to evade.

References


antigen Sentence Examples. Second, I can duplicate the DNA with some time in my lab and isolate the antigen, meaning I can make someone immune to our enemies' powers. The molecules which lead to the production of anti-substances are usually known as antigens, and each antigen has a specific combining affinity for its corresponding anti-substance, fitting it as a lock does a key. In the first group, the anti-substance simply combines with the antigen, without, so far as we know, producing any change in it. In the second group, the anti-substance, in addition to combining with the antigen,