

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 5/2

winter 1975

page

133

joseph cropsey

leo strauss: a bibliography and
memorial, 1899-1973

148

seth benardete

a reading of sophocles' *antigone*:
III

185

mark blitz

an introduction to the reading of
plato's *laches*

226

ramon m. lemos

locke's theory of property



martinus nijhoff, the hague

edited at

queens college of the city university
of new york

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 5

issue 2

editors

seth g. benardete – hilail gildin – robert horwitz – howard b. white (1912–1974)

consulting editors

john hallowell – wilhelm hennis – erich hula – arnaldo momigliano – michael oakeshott – leo strauss (1899–1973) – kenneth w. thompson

executive editor

hilail gildin

managing editor

ann mcardle

interpretation is a journal devoted to the study of political philosophy. it appears three times a year.

its editors welcome contributions from all those who take a serious interest in political philosophy regardless of their orientation.

all manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to the executive editor

interpretation

building g101 – queens college – flushing, n.y. 11367 – u.s.a.

subscription price

for institutions and libraries Guilders 42. for individuals Guilders 33.50.
forwarding expenses Guilders 9.— one guilder = \$ 0.385
subscription and correspondence in connection therewith should be sent to the publisher

martinus nijhoff

9–11 lange voorhout – p.o.b. 269 – the hague – netherlands.

A READING OF SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*: III

SETH BENARDETE

47 (883–90). 47.1.* Creon's speech consists of three parts: a rhetorical question to Antigone and the Chorus (883–4), a command to his servants (885–7^a), and, closely linked with his command, a justification of his way of dealing with Antigone (887^b–90). Only when he comes to his own justification does Creon explicitly speak of, and point to, Antigone. "This girl" is opposed to "we." Apart from that opposition Antigone does not exist (cf. 567).

47.2. Creon speaks as if he had interrupted Antigone and the Chorus before they could begin another *kommos*. He seems not to recognize Antigone's words as putting an end to any further sharing with the Chorus. He is unaware of the extent to which the Chorus have been his spokesman. He further takes it for granted that no song of grief could possibly dissuade him or anyone else. By universalizing the subject (οὐδ' ἄν εἴς) and omitting every circumstance but one (πρὸ τοῦ θανεῖν), Creon turns Antigone's death before her time (896) into the common lot of men. Her fate becomes the paradigm of mortality. Creon unconsciously makes himself out to be as inexorable as Hades, for Hades must do the work that Creon's scrupulous piety forbids him from doing. Creon must speak of Antigone's death as fated if he is to remain innocent of her execution. He therefore cannot help beginning as if he were offering a conventional piece of consolation. Were it not for πρὸ τοῦ θανεῖν ("instead of getting killed"), it would have been perfect as such: "Don't you know that dirges would never cease if one was not fated to stop saying them?" But Antigone was not singing a γόος, which strictly applies to ritual lamentation for someone already dead (cf. 427, 1247). But as Creon cannot acknowledge the right of ritual lamentation without undermining his case (cf. § 13.2), he must adopt the standpoint of the god whose will the γόοι of men do not alter. He can punish Antigone only by submitting to her terms as he himself understands them (cf. 777–80).

47.3. Creon combines a brutality of intent with a certain delicacy of expression (cf. 665). He tells his servants to imprison Antigone in her

* The text used is Pearson's OCT except where otherwise indicated. I have myself, however, not always accepted his readings wherever I am silent, for if I did not see any connection between the reading chosen and my interpretation of the passage, I have passed over my own preference.

Each line or group of lines interpreted is given a section number, with the line numbers in parentheses after it. Each paragraph of every section is numbered as well for ease of cross-reference.

grave as if they were to wrap her in a garment (περιπτύξαντες); and she is to be left alone and isolated in such a dwelling (στέγη) as if she were some sacred beast left to roam a distant pasture (ἄφετε μόνην ἐρήμον). Forced to speak piously "for form's sake," he must reject the fate that he had just invoked when cutting short the threnodies of Antigone. Antigone now has a choice. If she chooses suicide, Creon will be plainly ἄγνός. If she chooses to live, so as to keep up her burial practices underground (τυμβεύειν),¹¹⁵ Creon has only offered Antigone the means of literally fulfilling her own wishes. Creon's way of punishing Antigone, which suspends the issue of her death, duplicates the way in which Antigone herself understood the rites of burial. Creon has inadvertently discovered the most telling mockery of Antigone's life in death. It forces her at last to reassess the ground of her devotion.

47.4. Creon sees Antigone as deprived of any share in what is here above (μετοικίας τῆς ἄνω). He implies that she has been an alien in and to this world (cf. § 35.1). Antigone herself had twice sung of her status as a μέτοικος, first as an alien among the living and the dead (852), and then as an alien to her incestuous parents (868, cf. § 46.8). She saw herself as forced to be with either those with whom she cannot fully share because she is unlike them or those who, because she shares everything with them, find her abhorrent. Antigone is everywhere a metic (see § 3.4).

48 (891-928). 48.1. Antigone, in her third and last defense, gives an account of herself in a threefold way: Antigone and her family apart from Polynices (891-902^a), Antigone and Polynices (902^b-14^a), Antigone and Creon (914^b-28). Family links the first and second parts: the family she has and the family she hypothetically spurns in favor of her brother. And family again links the second and third parts: the family she has just spurned and the family she can never have because of her devotion to her brother. In design, her speech resembles her second defense, where death was the link between the gods of the first part and the pain of the third (cf. § 17.1). Oedipus, Jocasta, and Eteocles now gloss the connection between gods and law that she had there tried to establish (Phersephassa displaces Zeus and Dike); the irreplaceability of Polynices now glosses the inevitability of her death; and the punishment she hopes Creon will undergo now glosses the pain she would have had if she had not buried Polynices. That law, however, now appears only in the second part, where any trace of its connection with the gods seems to have vanished, shows how much Antigone's imminent punishment has affected her understanding of what she has done. Creon has, in a sense, managed to shatter Antigone, but only to

¹¹⁵ Morstadt's τυμφεύειν should be rejected; but τυμβεύειν should not be taken intransitively; it is too common a word to bear it; cf. T. M. Barker, *CR* 1907, 48.

reveal the core within the core of her resolve. Antigone had ended her second defense by charging Creon with folly; she now hopes that Creon will suffer no less than she has suffered.

48.2. The triple invocation with which Antigone begins characterizes the three parts of her speech. She calls the place where she is going to meet her own a grave, a bridal chamber, and a deep-dug dwelling that keeps eternal watch. What begins as a literal designation (τύμβος) of her place of punishment becomes through the metaphorical *συμφεῖον* the region where she will dwell (*οἰκησις*) forever with the rest of her family. The grave that deprives her of being with a husband allows her to be with her family, for *τύμβος*, in replacing *συμφεῖον*, replaces as well the *οἰκησις* that could not be on the earth (cf. § 9.6). To stay at home with Oedipus and Jocasta is no less impossible for Antigone than marriage. *κατασκαφῆς οἰκησις ἀείφρουρος* describes not only Creon's underground chamber but Hades, which Antigone later calls *θανόντων κατασκαφαί*, and to which she will descend while still alive (920). This fusion of grave and Hades, which Creon has forced Antigone to reenact in her own death, and which the apparent redundancy in the coupling of *ἐν νεκροῖς* and *ὀλωλότων* here exemplifies, is for Antigone indispensable, for on it rests the sanctity of burial. Antigone can no more give up her own body in death than abandon Polynices' corpse to birds. If she cannot go as herself to Hades, she cannot defend the obligation under which she has acted. The strange argument to which she now resorts arises from the need to keep Polynices' burial and her own death strictly together.

48.3. Antigone contrasts the hospitable reception (*δέδεκται*) that Persephassa has extended to her own with her own most miserable descent before her time (cf. 59). Antigone no doubt continues to ignore the mutual killing of Eteocles and Polynices; and she still must regard her own evils as outside the evils that Zeus has inflicted on her family (cf. § 2.2); but the misery that overwhelms her now was the secret burden of the *kommos*: no one will do for her what she did for her father, mother, and brothers. No one remains to wash, adorn, or pour her libations. Ismene will not risk doing for her what she would not risk doing for Polynices, for the same prudential considerations now apply even more. Antigone's greatest sacrifice consists in depriving herself of burial rites (cf. 848–9 with 80–1). She must now confront her family without the rites that were indispensable for them. She therefore can do no more than nourish the hope that they will hold her ritual devotion to them as greater than her own lack of sanctity (cf. 867). She must appeal to them over the head of Persephassa, on whom she cannot rely to be gracious. Perhaps this consideration more than any other prevented Antigone from ever asserting that burial rites alone can assure one's passage to Hades. It now prevents her in any case from plainly distinguishing between Hades and the grave.

48.4. Antigone seems to think of her family together, but she speaks of or to them separately. She will come φίλη to her father, whom she does not address, προσφιλής to her mother, whom she does, and φίλη again to Eteocles, whom she calls κασίγνητον κάρα (cf. § 1.3). She cannot bring herself to say that she will come beloved to them all (cf. 75, 89); indeed, she no longer speaks of Polynices' love (cf. 73), for whom she has not done all that she did for the others (cf. § 33.4). Only in so far as her family were corpses and the objects of her ritual devotions do they belong to one another. Antigone's performance of burial rites is the only nonsacrilegious bond her family has. Her family is not a γένος (cf. § 8.6).

48.5. Antigone now knowingly lies for the first time. She had come close to it in saying that she would heap up a tomb for Polynices (cf. § 10.1); but now she says that she laid out Polynices' body for burial. The technical verb περιστέλλω embraces even more than the three rites she has just mentioned; but whatever else she did, we know that she could not have either washed or dressed Polynices (cf. § 7.1). That she now invokes Polynices by name—the only time she does so—indicates the extent to which she depends on his good will to make up for her failings in ritual piety. The wise (and Antigone told Ismene who they were [557]) know that she honored Polynices; but to honor is not the same as to bury (cf. § 13.2): the very argument Antigone uses to confirm the honor confirms the difference. The sacral terms περιστέλλω and δέμας¹¹⁶—only here does Antigone refer to a corpse as a body—signify Antigone's attempt to adhere to piety as piety “for form's sake” despite her own living of its truth. To keep together the surface and the heart of the law is as difficult as to separate Hades from the grave.

48.6. To favor a brother over against a hypothetical husband or son seems to be absurd when it means to favor a brother already dead; but the absurdity is due to the need to compare incomparable things. It is precisely because death makes all the difference that any argument about burial must appeal to what does not suit the argument. The Chorus of Sophocles' *Electra* see in the stork the most fitting way to praise Electra for her devotion to the dead Agamemnon: “We see the wisest birds above carefully tending those from whom they grow and receive support—why is it that we do not perform these duties equal-

¹¹⁶ The sacred character of δέμας, which it shares with all neuters with the same suffix (cf. note 55), is plain in Δανάας δέμας (944–5); and that Creon is indifferent to this nuance (205) is a sign of his consistency and on a par with his use of σώμα (cf. § 20.2). For the difference between δέμας and σώμα, see Xenophanes, fr. 15, 4–5, where Xenophanes has the animals make the σώματα of the gods such as to be like their own δέμας. Greek, like English, often opposed head to body (cf. Her. 2.66.4; 3.110; 4.75.3, 103.3; 7.75.1); it is therefore significant that Antigone calls Polynices by name when she refers to his body but calls Eteocles κασίγνητον κάρα when she speaks of his loving her, and again Polynices is κασίγνητον κάρα when she speaks to him of Creon's injustice.

ly?" (1058–62; cf. § 25.3). The Chorus must ignore the absence of stork burial rites; and Antigone likewise seems to ignore the same difference, which is what makes her adaptation of Herodotus' story so damaging to her piety (Her. 3.118–9). Yet to defend Antigone in this way and hence the authenticity of the passage misses the import of her words. Intaphernes' wife was given the choice of saving her husband, her children, or her brother; Antigone has to invent choices in order to give the semblance of choice to the inevitable. The way in which she presents these choices reconfirms the lack of choice. She says that if one husband died she could have another; and if one child died she could have another from another husband. Antigone, however, seems to run the two cases together, for in ordering them chiasmatically she speaks at first of her children's life (τέκνων μήτηρ ἔφυν) but of her husband's death (πόσις κατθανὼν ἐτήκετο). She thus assumes that if her son died she would need another husband to have another son; and only one condition would make that inevitable: if her son were her husband (cf. 486–7). Antigone imagines herself to be another Jocasta. Even *ex hypothesi* she takes her family to be the model family. Even *ex hypothesi* she does not depart from the antigermination of her name: the husband of her supposition is merely a lawful husband, a πόσις and not an ἀνὴρ (cf. Tr. 550–1), and the brother that could be born were her mother and father still alive would grow (βλάστοι). Antigone, however, does not mean what she seems at first to imply, that if her mother and father were alive she would not have done what she did, for she could not then make her action depend on a contingency over which she would have no control—the birth of another brother.¹¹⁷ Lines 911–2 mean something very different: there is no growth from those who can legitimately be a family only in Hades (cf. § 27.5). Her mother and father are now concealed in Hades; they should always have been concealed there and never have seen the light. Antigone cannot wish that Oedipus and Jocasta could still supply her with a living brother. The duties to her husband would cease because she could acquire another; but the duties to her brother cannot cease because she would even wish that no one in her family had ever been born. Antigone imagines herself to be a mother for no other reason than to repudiate in advance the very possibilities she envisions. It is her way of making a retroactive wish against all generation; and such a wish allows her in turn to call an apparently special case a law.

48.7. Antigone would not bury a husband despite the citizens because she could have another husband; she must bury her brother because she cannot wish to have a brother. In order to prove the need to bury Polynices, Antigone must assume that "to have" or "to be with"

¹¹⁷ No more than she thinks it possible at 450 that Zeus could have told her not to bury Polynices.

primarily means "to live with" (cf. § 9.6): she could have a second husband because she would then be without (*ἡμπλακον*) the first, and she would be without a husband because he had withered away (*ἐτήκετο*). To bury a husband is second-best; to be with a husband is best simply. Antigone, then, must bury Polynices because she cannot be with him; but in burying him she dies and hence is with him. Her obedience to the law thus looks like a rationalization of her desire to die; but the spirit of the law informs that desire, for it says that to bury means to be with the buried. The rites for the dead are the means for being with the dead. They therefore compel Antigone's return to the corpse, but they cannot satisfy her (cf. § 25.4). Antigone's pain at ever being apart from her family—her desire to overcome the endless repetition of ritual—forces her beyond burial to suicide; and indeed the law of burial contains within itself the inducement to commit suicide; but that inducement can come to light only within an incestuous family, where the impossibility of ever living with one another necessarily entails being with one another in death. The truth of the law, however, destroys the heart of the law for any lawfully constituted family; and so the law becomes in practice something done "for form's sake." Only the incestuous family can fulfill the spirit of the law, for it alone must regard "the being with" that burial affords as the primary sense of "to be with." The law that enjoins burial thus seems to enjoin incest; but the law can avoid that consequence through the demand for consanguinity without generation. The law demands the reconstitution of the family in Hades; it is in perfect agreement with Antigone.

48.8. Antigone speaks three times of her nature. It is her nature not to share with her brothers in their mutual hatred but to join them through the love of her own (523; cf. § 31.1); it is her nature to have been born from incestuous parents (866; cf. § 46.8); and if her nature were to be the mother of children, she would not have defied the citizens of Thebes (905). Merely to put these three *ἔφω* together reveals that the link between the first and second is the *per impossibile* hypothesis of the third. Antigone's origin precludes her possible motherhood as it makes inevitable that the love of her own manifest itself in burial rites. And yet she cannot help but wish away the condition of her piety (cf. § 46.8). She must long to be a mother as totally as she is now the embodied denial of generation: she must regret not having been a wife (N.B. *του*, 917) and mother four lines after she has shown that she would not have done what she did for a husband's or child's sake. A mother might die to save her child's life; she would not die to give him burial. The divine law does not hold in such a case because a child is always replaceable. A mother's nature is to be the perpetual giver of life; but the *τροφή* of children does not include burial. Antigone does more than imagine herself to be like the earth itself, *παμμήτωρ* (cf.

§§ 22.9, 61.1): with her parents dead no brother could grow. Antigone has to die in order to escape from the repetition of burial ritual and guarantee her being or lying forever with her own; when she considers the alternative, she no less holds fast to eternity, the eternal succession of generations, on account of which no individual can be preferred over against the perpetuation of the race. Not only inexperience blinds Antigone to the possibility that a mother's love for a son might not stop with his death. Her family has so colored her imagination that only incest can properly express the love of one's own. She cannot think of being a mother without holding up Jocasta as a model at the same time that she longs to be a mother just to be free from the love of her own. She forgets Niobe (cf. § 46.4).

48.9. The last part of Antigone's speech turns on three triads: wrongdoing (921, 926, 927), gods (921, 922, 925), and justice (921, 925, 928). One might suppose that Antigone would see their relation as simple: Creon has done wrong in the eyes of the gods and she has done right; the gods will punish him and reward her. Antigone, however, thinks that she can only wish that such a relation hold. The execution of her punishment—to go alive to the deep-dug chambers of the dead, friendless, unmarried, and childless—follows at once on Creon's judgment of her wrongdoing; but the gods have delayed the confirmation of her justice. Antigone suggests that she has been expecting the gods to interfere all along. Her piety should have been recognized as piety and not been qualified by the Chorus and ignored by the city (cf. §§ 40.3, 46.10). The gods should have brought about a change of heart in everyone but Creon; but since they have failed to do so, Antigone might suffer still more and be forced to acknowledge her error. What error does she have in mind? Does she suspect that the law she has just promulgated does not have the gods' sanction? Or that her belief in her reward as she has imagined it is not the way of the gods? To discover that her reward will consist solely in Creon's punishment and not in any reunion with her family would be enough to break her. Antigone might be innocent of transgression against the gods' justice, yet not be deserving of recompense for her death. Antigone, however, assumes that the just and the noble (*καλόν*) coincide (cf. Pl. *Leg.* 859d2–860c3). But her action in itself might be just without being noble; she might have done what simply had to be done, and the risk she willingly ran to do it might not affect the gods' estimate of its worth, particularly if the risk entails a reward (death) that is nothing but the truth of the law itself. But in this speech Antigone never speaks of her own death; and just in this lies the difference between her second and third defense; she has replaced through her new law the gain of death with the gain of being with her family. Antigone cannot see that her justice might no more be noble than Creon's suffering for his injustice would be. In hoping that Creon

suffer as many evils as she unjustly has, Antigone counts his suffering as her own reward. She thus makes herself out to be the instrument of the gods' punishment of Creon; but as such an instrument she supposes she will obtain the other hope on which she has been nourished, to come beloved to Oedipus, Jocasta, and Eteocles. It is the tension within this double hope that makes her, if anything does, "tragic."

49 (929-43). 49.1. The Chorus do not discern any difference between the Antigone who convicted Creon of folly and the Antigone who would condemn him to suffering. The same onrush of her soul's selfsame winds still possesses her. The Chorus had spoken of *ρίπαι άνέμων* before: Capaneus in a Bacchic frenzy breathed against Thebes the onrushing winds of hatred (137). Antigone is another Capaneus, possessed as he was with hatred and impious defiance; but Capaneus was divinely inspired (*βακχεύων*), Antigone owes her possession to her own soul. The Chorus now ascribe to her soul what they had formerly ascribed to her father (cf. § 28). But the Chorus virtually identify soul and winds; and they had likened to Thracian blasts the gods, who once they have shaken a family let disasters pursue it from generation to generation (cf. § 37.3). The metaphorical use of wind would seem to be the Chorus' sole consistency (cf. 353, 1146). Gods and soul equally account for Antigone; but they are linked through Oedipus, who inherited the Labdacids' fate and passed it on. The Chorus, then, have left it dark whether *των αυτων άνέμων αυται ψυχης ρίπαι* refers to Antigone or her family. They might understand Antigone just now to have been the spokesman for her whole family. The savagery she inherited from Oedipus might have its roots in the gods.

49.2. Creon then takes up obliquely what the Chorus have said: "It is a consequence of this that those who lead her will regret their slowness." Since Antigone has not confessed her error—she did not even try to escape (557-80)—the only thing to do is to hasten her death, the slow execution of which Creon supposes has let her keep up the show of her intransigence. Creon takes out his failure to break Antigone on his servants: someone must learn through suffering, someone must cry. Creon, however, does succeed in forcing Antigone to acknowledge her own death, on which she was silent throughout her third defense (cf. § 48.9). The *οϊμοι* testifies to the collapse of that defense. It is the signal for her suicide, which is equally compounded of hope and despair—hope that she will be reunited with her family, despair that such a reunion can ever be more than parasitic on life. Out of that despair she now asks the gods, whom she thought she should no longer look to for help (922-3), to look upon her. The gods she calls on are gods of generation (cf. § 8.6), without whom she can face Hades but not death.

49.3. Antigone addresses her last words to her father's city of Thebes,

her ancestral gods, and the Chorus, whom she calls the rulers of Thebes (cf. 988). She implicitly rebukes the Chorus for letting perish the last link Thebes has to its past. She thus ends where Creon had begun. He had put forward a twofold title to rule: he was nearest in kinship to the royal house and wholly devoted to the city (cf. § 12). Antigone now adopts this argument for herself: she is last in the royal line and wholly pious. Creon failed to keep his two titles together, for he both confounded and divorced the city and its regime. Antigone, however, succeeds, for she connects the ancestral city with her piety through the gods who founded Thebes. Creon spoke of Cadmeans but never of Thebes (cf. § 30.2); and he spoke of θεοὶ ἐγγενεῖς but never of θεοὶ προγενεῖς or θεοὶ πατρῶοι (199, 838). He is unaware of the city's divine origin; his link with the Spartoi means nothing to him. His laws were as silent as Antigone's about the gods; but whereas Antigone's silence merely hid her law's ultimate reliance on the gods, Creon's reflects his partial failure to politicize the gods (cf. § 19.2). Antigone, on the other hand, remains oblivious of the political to the end: she invokes the ἄστυ, not the πόλις, of her father (cf. § 46.6).

49.4. The suicides of Haemon and Eurydice are verbally prepared. Haemon angrily makes a scarcely veiled threat to that effect, as the Chorus recognize (cf. § 43.1), and Eurydice's silent departure provokes the Chorus and the messenger to a similar foreboding. Antigone, however, ends with "by my reverent exercise of piety," and the Chorus then console her in a way that wholly fails to notice that she has resolved to kill herself. Her suicide occurs sometime during the interval that Tiresias' confrontation with Creon and the Chorus' hymn to Dionysus occupy. It is thus introduced by Antigone's avowal of her piety, and it occurs in that part of the play where the issue of the gods is most prominent. One is forced to wonder then whether piety and suicide necessarily go together.¹¹⁸ Perhaps the peculiar uniqueness of her circumstances allows Antigone to see more deeply than Tiresias into the gods (cf. § 52.4).

50 (944-87). 50.1. The fourth stasimon falls into three parts, of which the first describes the punishment of Danae, the second Lycurgus', and the third Cleopatra's and her sons'. It seems to have little to do with Antigone, whom the Chorus address twice at the beginning and once at the end (949, 987); Lycurgus as the only man seems the least relevant.¹¹⁹ The stasimon's irrelevance could be partly due to the Chorus' lack of agreement with, and compassion for, Antigone; it would show the strain they are under to prove their perfect adaptability to any situation; and the best they can do for the τέρας Antigone is

¹¹⁸ Cf. L. Strauss, *Aristophanes and Socrates*, 82-3; S. Benardete, *Herodotean Inquiries*, 49.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Wolff-Bellermann's analysis.

to cite three examples of fate. To urge Antigone's compliance with fate would seem to be the precept best suited for showing off their own moderation. Yet this explanation fails to account for Lycurgus, in whose connection the Chorus do not mention fate and abstain from drawing a moral: neither Danae nor Cleopatra, unlike Lycurgus, was guilty of any crime. Lycurgus, then, forces one to look more closely at the Chorus' intention. Even if one comprehends the three examples under the rubric "imprisonment," despite the Chorus' silence about it in Cleopatra's case,¹²⁰ one cannot extract a meaningful parallel for Antigone, for none of them died in prison. Danae's prison (τυμβήρης θάλαμος) was figuratively a grave and literally a marriage chamber; Antigone's will be just the reverse (cf. § 48.2). But this difference might indicate that the Chorus lag behind Antigone's final understanding of death (cf. § 49.2) and that deliberately or not they are more compassionate than they seem.

50.2. "Fate" and "high birth" put together Danae and Cleopatra, "imprisonment" Danae and Lycurgus, and "Thrace" Lycurgus and Cleopatra, but nothing seems to put all three together. The stasimon's coherence therefore might be thought to lie in its very incoherence. Since the Chorus point the moral in the first strophe (the second antistrophe merely repeats it), and all things considered Danae does seem to fit Antigone better than the other two, the Chorus during the rest of the stasimon, one could argue, are induced despite themselves to sing of the irrelevant Lycurgus and the distracting addition of Cleopatra's sons. They then are caught in the grip of something like inspiration, which carries them outside the limits they had set for themselves (cf. 801-2). The second strophe, at any rate, is more ornately "poetic" than anything the Chorus have sung before. The Chorus would thus experience for an instance an equivalent to the "gusts of her soul's self-same winds" that always possess Antigone and we should get to know Antigone's peculiar inspiration through our hearing a more conventional Muse. Through the Chorus' adoption of a voice not their own we should begin to sense what it must entail for Antigone to live a divine law. It would be as well a fitting punishment for the Chorus: they would never recognize that they had been possessed.

50.3. Such an explanation, however, ignores the stasimon's apparent continuity. It begins at least as a reply to Antigone's last words; but it does not reply to everything she said. The ancestral city, their own ruling, and Antigone's piety find no echo in the Chorus. They are rather struck by Antigone's royal descent and her kinship with the gods (cf. § 46.5). They directly link Antigone to Danae, not through imprisonment or fate's dread power, but because Danae was of high birth too and the treasurer of Zeus' son. Lycurgus, on the other hand,

¹²⁰ See Pearson on Sophocles' *Phineus*, 311, n. 1.

denied the divine birth of Dionysus, while Cleopatra was the offspring of the gods. That the gods generate with mortals is the theme of the stasimon, in which Danae represents its promise for the future, Lycurgus its denial in the present (the only verb in the present tense occurs in the first antistrophe), and Cleopatra its claim from the past. The Chorus' inspiration is not in the poetry or the moral but in this theme, of which, I think, they are wholly unaware, for otherwise they would have reserved the phrase *ματρὸς ἔχοντες ἀνύμφευτον γονάν* (980) for Oedipus and his children (cf. *OT* 1214-5, 1403-8) and much of *ἀρατὸν ἔλκος . . . κερκίδων ἀκμαῖσιν* (972-6) for his own self-blinding (cf. 51-2, *OT* 1276). The Chorus stick as always to the immediate likeness, which they then poetically elaborate before drawing the moral. All the choral odes suffer to some degree from the tension between the moral, which lends itself to poetry, and the theme, which does not (they thereby imitate the tension between the law as it is practiced "for form's sake" and the law as it is lived); and the fourth stasimon, as the Chorus' confession of bafflement before Antigone, necessarily suffers from it the most. For its theme, but not for its moral, Lycurgus is central. Antigone angers the Muses as much as Lycurgus did (cf. §§ 32.1, 37.3). Her crime is his. As Lycurgus tried in speech to disrupt the continuity of divine generation, so Antigone disrupts in fact the continuity of human generation. As antigeration she embodies the denial of Eros' divinity (cf. § 44.2). Aphrodite and Dionysus are in her lineage but not in her future. She has no right to appeal to *θεοὶ προγενεῖς* if she forgets Ismene (cf. § 8.1).

51 (988-97). 51.1. Tiresias is the only character with a proper name whose arrival the Chorus do not announce (cf. 155, 376, 386, 526, 626, 801, 1180, 1257). He shares with the watchman and the two later messengers the role of reporter; and like the watchman he neither did nor saw what he speaks of (238-9, 1012), though Creon believes in the complicity of them both and for the same reason; and again like the watchman on his first entrance, he takes the Chorus and Creon by surprise. The Chorus had concluded just before the watchman's entrance that no one would disobey Creon's decree because plainly no one is in love with death; and they now advise Antigone to resign herself to fate just before the knower of fate, Tiresias, enters. He, however, begins by offering hope, but he ends by confirming the fatefulness that the Chorus had divined. The two scenes are the joints on which the play's action hinges. The first dealt with the soul, the second deals with the gods; and gods and soul are united in the question of burial (cf. § 19.4). The watchman needed three speeches and eighteen lines to protest his innocence and quiet his own fears (cf. 237) before he described the signs, or rather the lack of them, attendant on Polynices' burial; Tiresias needs three speeches of a line each to remind Creon of his own infallibility and arouse Creon's fears (cf. 997) before he

describes the signs he heard and heard about at his place of augury (cf. 257, 990, 252, 1004, 1013). When the watchman left, he gave thanks to the gods for his unhoped-for salvation ($\sigma\omega\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$); when Creon now leaves, he fears that it be best throughout one's life to keep safe ($\sigma\phi\zeta\omicron\nu\nu\alpha$) the established laws (1113-4). Creon gave the watchman a second chance; the gods give Creon none at all. Creon learns too late the difference between a decree and a law.

51.2. The lords of Thebes, whom Tiresias addresses, seem to be the Chorus; but since Tiresias does not object to Creon's answering for them, he apparently regards Creon as the Chorus' spokesman. They would in that case be as guilty as Creon (cf. 577). That they are in no way punished would underline how indispensable Antigone is in order that Creon be punished (cf. § 17.5). Tiresias, at any rate, says nothing to terrify the Chorus (cf. *OT* 316-8). He talks to them as if they knew as little about his blindness in particular as about blindness in general; and this despite their having just sung of the blinding of Cleopatra's sons and their long acquaintance with Tiresias (1092-3). Tiresias, however, might not know any of this; he might know nothing of the Chorus and their political position. His boy-servant, then, would have said to him as they approached something like, "Tiresias, the lords of Thebes are gathered here," and Tiresias simply repeated what he was told. The error in the address, if it is an error, suggests that a part of the city agrees with Antigone and holds the Chorus to be the active partisans of Creon (cf. § 46.6). But this may not be the full or the only possible explanation of Tiresias' words. He might address the Chorus proleptically (cf. 1155; *OT* 631, 911, 1223). Creon would already be finished, and Tiresias would then proceed to give him advice he could not act upon. If Tiresias thus toys with Creon, he warns the Chorus, as the future rulers of Thebes, that they can never even once afford to act without him (cf. 1058). He must therefore speak to them as if they were ignorant of him in order to charge them with forgetfulness (cf. *OT* 297-9). They had in the first stasimon been silent about divination (cf. § 22.5). Without any risk to themselves, they could have suggested to Creon, as soon as they heard the decree, that Tiresias be consulted. That they suspected Creon's prudence but not his competence to act as he did shows the degree to which the sacred not only has decayed but, in light of Antigone, must always be in decay. Her appeal to the divine law did not impress the Chorus.

51.3. On 993-5 see § 38.1. Tiresias tells Creon that he stands on the razor's edge; and he surely speaks as if Creon had a choice. Unless Creon was fated to reply as he does, his immediate acquiescence at line 1033 would apparently have canceled his fate. The opportunity has passed seventy-two lines later (1105). Whether that interval would have been enough to stay Antigone's suicide is not an altogether idle question; perhaps her reprieve, we should suppose, would have so

altered her that she would then have been content to bury Polynices and no longer be with him and her family. But Creon, even if he had at once acquiesced, might still not have gone unpunished; and all perhaps he would have gained might have been his ignorance of his fate (cf. § 54.1). Tiresias, at any rate, does not connect the signs of his art from which he infers that the city is polluted with his foreknowledge of Creon's fate (cf. § 55). He might have come to save the city and not Creon. We, however, could not perhaps have borne the city's redemption if Creon had not railed against Tiresias; for it is Creon's distrust of Tiresias' public-spiritedness that seems to justify his punishment (cf. § 61.2). Creon in this scene never mentions the city (cf. §§ 30.2, 56.1).

52 (998–1032). 52.1. The first seventeen lines of Tiresias' speech deal with the signs of his art (998–1014), the last seventeen with the conclusions Tiresias draws from those signs (1016–32). What links them is *καὶ ταῦτα τῆς σῆς ἐκ φρενὸς νοσεῖ πόλις* (1015). The first and second parts are each in two sections: (1) the sounds Tiresias heard himself (999–1004), (2) the sights he heard about from his servant (1005–14), (3) his interpretation of the signs (1016–22), (4) his counsel (1023–32). So the whole speech consists of three parts: signs, their interpretation, and advice. That the speech allows a twofold analysis of its plan points directly to the apparent misalignment between Tiresias' art and Tiresias' advice, of which one is couched in the most exact and particular language and the other mostly consists of non-specific generalities. Tiresias disregards the unholiness of Creon's deed—he returns to it when he foretells Creon's punishment (1068–73, 1080–3)—and stresses instead its meanness: "Why kill once more the dead?" Tiresias argues that Creon has made a mistake—every human being makes mistakes—and not that he has committed sacrilege. He needs his art to convict Creon of error; but he does not use it to condemn him. The signs are inauspicious but corrigible; Tiresias is silent as to whether the single crime for which they stand—Creon's failure to bury Polynices, not his burial of Antigone—admits of correction. He thus veils Creon's future punishment behind the possibility of Creon's future happiness; but the happiness lies in Creon's service to his country—the restoration of favorable communication between the city and the gods. Tiresias demands of Creon a sacrifice as unrewarding for himself as Megareus' was in light of Creon's own failure to memorialize his son (cf. § 38.1). Creon is to benefit the city without recompense. If he abandons at once the position in which he has so much invested, he will be acting justly but not nobly.

52.2. At his place of augury Tiresias heard the unintelligible and barbaric cries of birds, and he knew at once that they were murderously clawing at one another. Tiresias' art primarily consists in his knowledge of a language not known to other Greeks (cf. 1094); when bird

cries are as dark to him as they always are to everyone else, he knows that something is amiss. But he does not know what those cries signify before he "tastes" burnt offerings at the altar. The "dying oracles from non-prophetic rites" tell him that the fault lies in birds and dogs infecting public and private altars with Polynices' flesh. But for all his exactness of description Tiresias does not explain how birds and dogs infect the city. He talks as if Polynices were a sacrificial victim whose flesh refused to burn properly; yet that could literally hold true only if birds and dogs, having eaten Polynices, were themselves sacrificed. Tiresias could have avoided this difficulty if he had argued as follows. He cannot understand the birds because the corruption of a dead man's fat has rebarbarized their voices. In order to keep them "hellenized," the gods must on each occasion accept the sacrifices they are offered; and that these now fail to burn proves that the gods have withdrawn this favor. But Tiresias does not go directly from line 1015 to line 1019. He inserts between them a conclusion that universalizes his own experience (N.B. ἡμῖν, ἡμῶν, 1016, 1020), as if each citizen at his own altar could understand the cries of birds. The infection of the city and its altars therefore seems to be symbolic. Not until Tiresias predicts Creon's downfall does he suggest that an unholy smell in the mouths of birds interferes with the smell of sacrifice (1080-3). He now omits that key to his account because he wants to join as closely as possible two different aspects of himself, soothsayer and citizen. He thus minimizes his own importance while implying that the city depends entirely on him. His speech, accordingly, suffers from the strain of arguing for Polynices' burial on both a universal and a particular ground. The particular ground is Tiresias' own art, which cannot work unless birds of omen do not contaminate the messages they convey. The universal ground, on the other hand, holds good regardless of whether anyone understands the cries of birds. The universal ground says that every city must prevent carrion from polluting its sacrifices, for otherwise the gods do not welcome the sacrificial prayers of its citizens; the particular ground says that Thebes must prevent its birds from lapsing into savagery, for otherwise the gods do not inform Tiresias of their plans and wishes. Yet Tiresias cannot help but imply that even in the general case birds take precedence over dogs and wild beasts. They "hallow" the corpse they mangle, but only birds pollute the city with all its hearths (cf. § 53.1).¹²¹

52.3. Antigone's bestiality was evident to the Chorus (cf. § 28), but they did not connect it with her devotion to a law of the gods, gods who, as Tiresias now explains, are the mainstay of civility. The gods forbid human sacrifice in any form, for they reject carrion for them-

¹²¹ Perhaps ἐστίουχος πόλις should be taken as a case of transferred epithet, i.e., as ἐστίαι πολιοῦχοι; cf. the easier Aesch. fr. 343 Mette (= Pap. Oxy. 2245, col. ii, line 5): παρ' ἐστίουχον σέλας = παρ' ἐστίαν σέλας ἔχουσαν.

selves and for their messengers (cf. 1081). Antigone, however, could not have resorted to an argument that so entirely disregards the law's injunction to bury one's own. On the basis of what Tiresias says, Antigone should have defied Creon even if Polynices had not been her brother and had been besides most hateful to her (cf. 10). She would then have been acting on behalf of Tiresias and Thebes; but Antigone would never have done what she did unless the law had not only supported but been grounded in the love of her own, which made what offended the gods and barbarized the birds, the consumption and the stench of Polynices' corpse, something innocuous, and more than innocuous, to herself. Tiresias, however, mentions neither the law nor Antigone's devotion to it. He is silent about the blood relation between the "soul" Creon buries and the "corpse" he does not (1069-71). He shares with Antigone nothing but her conviction that Creon is in error. Yet his intervention has the effect of restoring to "the established laws"—"law" does not recur after Creon uses that phrase (1113)—the obligation to obey them. He succeeds, against Creon, in making that obligation political; and he succeeds, against Antigone, in keeping it unqualified. He makes the obligation political through the city's need of his art; and he keeps it unqualified through the suppression of the soul (cf. § 9.8). Burial no longer engages the soul of the living—Antigone's ἡ δ' ἐμὴ ψυχὴ πάλαι τέθνηκε is now impossible—or involves the issue of body and soul of the dead, for the benefits of burial are wholly in this world (cf. § 55).

52.4. The only god Tiresias names is Hephaestus. The god of fire, who is fire, guarantees that the smoldering sacrifices are significant. If fire were under man's control, Tiresias could not have inferred from the sacrifices' failure to burn the displeasure of the gods.¹²² In this light, Polynices' attempt to have "piney Hephaestus" fire Thebes was in itself impious (123); and it in turn must have determined the Chorus' choice of depicting the fire-bearing Capaneus, whom Zeus destroyed with a cast of fire (cf. § 11.4). In the first stasimon, however, the Chorus were silent about fire (none of the nine examples of man's δεινότης entailed man's possession of it; cf. 373); in the second stasimon they made use of a proverb like "once burnt twice shy" to illustrate hope as "the deceitfulness of light-witted desires" (cf. 265; *El.* 619); in the fourth stasimon they counted Lycurgus' prohibition of "Dionysian fire" as one of his three crimes (964); and finally in the hyporchema they call on Dionysus as the choral leader of the fire-breathing stars (1146-7; cf. 1126). Fire runs an underground course through the play

¹²² Cf. Eur. *IA* 1602. Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, in order to answer the Chorus' question as to who of messengers could come so quickly from Troy, was forced to say Hephaestus (*Ag.* 281): φρυκτός (282) or the like would not have sufficed; indeed, not until 293 sq. does she mention human beings and have them kindle the light.

only to emerge in Tiresias' tasting of the *ἐμπύρα*; but the reason for its unnoticed presence has to wait for the play's greatest shock: Creon's servants burn Polynices' remains (1202). Nowhere else is cremation even hinted at. To bury has always meant heretofore to bury a body in the earth (cf. §§ 4.1, 16.2). Antigone talked of how she prepared the bodies of her family for burial, and she once boasted that she would heap up a tomb for Polynices (cf. § 10.1); but she seems to have been indifferent to, or rather wholly unaware of, the alternative to interment. Cremation is equally compatible with the law but not with Antigone's devotion to it. Interment allowed, if it did not promote, Antigone's blurring of the distinction between body and soul, Hades and the grave; but it no less diminished, if it did not prevent, the possibility of Antigone's arguing that only the burial of Polynices' body could grant his soul access to Hades.¹²³ The structure of the play is doubly gracious to Antigone. She does not hear Tiresias propose an interpretation of the gods that undercuts her understanding of the law; and she does not live to learn that Polynices is burnt before he is buried. The two favors are related, for the smell of carrion but not of burning flesh offends the gods and barbarizes their messengers. The burnt and the raw are polarized in the way that the holy and the unholy are. The first pair is the marker for the second; and the Chorus called Antigone and her father raw right after she had cited the divine law as her defense. Antigone is in the strictest sense pre-Promethean (cf. § 23.1). She antedates the prohibition against cannibalism, which ancient authors often associate with the eating of raw flesh (cf. Her. 3.99; Arist. *EN* 1148^b 19–24); indeed, it can only be the discovery of fire that makes Plato's Athenian Stranger head a list of the arts with the prohibition against cannibalism: the second art he mentions is the making of bread (*Epin.* 975a5–b2).¹²⁴ By standing outside the arts Antigone had threatened the link between the holy and civility (cf. § 28.1); through burnt sacrifices Tiresias restores it. But all that Antigone stood for cannot survive its restoration.

52.5. Creon must be astonished that Tiresias does not differ from Haemon in the moral he draws from completely different premises (cf. § 40). The sameness of the moral, however, does not extend to the language in which it is expressed. Haemon's was so vivid that it concealed the political threat it contained; Tiresias' is flat because he

¹²³ Cremation is rarely mentioned in early grave epigrams. How inconceivable it would be for Antigone is shown by this late fifth-century distich: *σάρκας μὲν πῦρ δμματ' ἀφείλετο τῆδε Ὀνησοῦς, / ὁστέα δ' ἀνθεμύεις χῶρος ὕδ' ἀμφίς ἔχει* (*IG* II/III: 1237=58 Peek).

¹²⁴ Cf. Juvenal 15. 78–87:

ast illum in plurima sectum / frusta et particulas, ut multis mortuus unus / sufficeret, totum corrosis ossibus edit / victrix turba, nec ardenti decoxit aeno / aut veribus; longum usque adeo tardumque putavit / expectare focos, contenta cadavere crudo. / hic gaudere libet, quod non violaverit ignem, quem summa caeli raptum de parte Prometheus / donavit terris. elemento gratulor et te / exultare roer.

conceals the threat from the gods behind a proverbial wisdom. Creon, Tiresias says, is wilfully in error; but he can change, and the change will profit him. Even the change itself will be pleasant, for he will not have to learn through suffering. Haemon had told Creon that it was as noble to learn from good speakers as to be naturally wise oneself. He did not put it in terms of pleasure, for the prosperity or glory he promised Creon if he relented would be no more Creon's than his own. He urged Creon to give in to the people's judgment; Tiresias urges him to give in to the dead Polynices. The people had judged Antigone's deed most glorious because she tried to stop Polynices from utterly perishing. They could not have argued as Tiresias does now that Creon's efforts to rekill the dead are unworthy of him.¹²⁵ The flesh-eating dogs horrify them more than the birds. They do not imagine that Creon's crime is sacrilege and has infected themselves (1015); that it has deprived them of the fruits of the victory he had brought about; and that as long as Polynices remains unburied the celebration at the temples of the gods, which the Chorus had proposed in the parodos, cannot take place. Not until Hephaestus lights the sacrifices once more can Dionysus answer the Chorus' request that he lead Thebes in night-long dances.

53 (1033-47). 53.1. Creon addresses Tiresias as respectfully now as he had on his entrance (991, 1033, 1045). Tiresias is corrupt, but Creon cannot help deferring to him (cf. 1053). Tiresias could not except wilfully make an error; and his error is so gross that it betrays the profiteering behind it. Tiresias is in the pay of Creon's political enemies; but no matter how far his avarice will induce him to lie, Creon will not cravenly submit, even if, he implies, Tiresias succeeds in hoodwinking the rest of the city (cf. 178-81). The most extravagant lie Creon can imagine Tiresias asserting would be that the eagles of Zeus have brought Polynices' flesh to the seat of Zeus; but since no human being in any form can pollute the gods, Creon sees no reason for taking seriously Tiresias' much weaker interpretation. Creon's silence about Tiresias' own art points to the difference between the soothsayer's interest in keeping the birds uncontaminated and the citizen's interest in having the gods accept his sacrifices. His silence further suggests that he does not think that Tiresias' wisdom, which he never doubts, depends on the cries of birds. Tiresias, in any case, does not refer to that point again. Creon limits the issue to the mechanics of pollution, which Tiresias had left obscure. If birds, Creon argues, have brought Polynices' flesh to the

¹²⁵ Tiresias' ἀλκή, the refusal to yield in combat before one's enemy, is the opposite of his εἶχε (cf. E. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions i-e*, vol. 2, 72-4). For the difference between τῷ φανόντι and ὀλωλότα (1029) see Th. 7.75.3: οἱ ζῶντες καταλειπόμενοι ... πολλὸ τῶν τεθνεώτων τοῖς ζῶσιν λυπηρότεροι ἦσαν καὶ τῶν ἀπολωλότων ἀθλιώτεροι.

altars and thus polluted them, then, according to Tiresias, eagles should be able to pollute Zeus himself. The sacred cannot be susceptible to what the gods are not (cf. § 46.10). Creon points somewhat obliquely to the weakness in Tiresias' account. Why should any beast have to link the stench of carrion with its interference with the city's sacrifices? It is not the beasts themselves that make such a stench unholy. Even if Polynices' corpse had remained as undefiled as Hector's was, Creon would still have committed sacrilege (cf. 1070–73). Tiresias ignores both the horror the city felt at Polynices' annihilation by dogs and the tenderness with which Antigone regarded Polynices' corpse, so that even its consumption by birds was something precious to her. If the birds whose cries Tiresias can no longer interpret had not touched Polynices, Tiresias could still have argued that the gods are depriving the city of his art because a divine law has been violated, which would equally follow from the failure of the sacrifices to burn without dogs and birds having polluted the altars. But Tiresias does not appeal to the divine law; he replaces its violation with the pollution of altars, to which, however, he needlessly adds the notion of their pollution through beasts. The birds and dogs he invokes vivify his account, but they essentially belong to Antigone's devotion to Polynices and the city's recognition of it; they are not indispensable for Tiresias' understanding of the gods. To make them indispensable would have required Tiresias to integrate the divine law as Antigone lives it into his own account. Such an integration seems to be impossible. That birds have consumed Polynices' fat, as the blind Tiresias declares, is plausible but false; dogs alone mangled it (1198).

53.2. Creon denounces Tiresias' avarice as hyperbolically as he disproves Tiresias' divination; but nothing else seems to connect the two main parts of his speech. He does not, however, harp on avarice now just because, though he loathes it, it is the only thing he understands and therefore sees everywhere. The drift of his speech suggests not only that Tiresias trades on the gods but that he trades with the gods. Sacrifice and omens are established currency (cf. § 19.4), and piety is a kind of commerce between gods and men (cf. Pl. *Euthyphro* 14e6–8). Creon surely misunderstands Tiresias, but Tiresias is partly to blame. Instead of simply citing the divine law, the obedience to which would be automatic, he chose to replace its authority with his own knowledge; and his knowledge could only replace the holy with the ledger. He spoke of Creon's profit but not of his repentance. Tiresias tried at first to rationalize the holy; later he tries to do it justice; but he then cannot offer Creon any choice. The divine seems to admit of choice when it is speciously rational; when it is holy, it is inexorable.

54 (1048–63). 54.1. Creon's speech prompts Tiresias to a general reflection, which Creon interrupts before he can complete it, as if he

knew that it would be as trivial as the last part of Tiresias' previous speech. And it is trivial in content, but paradoxical in phrasing: who does not know that prudence is the best of possessions (cf. § 40.2)? Tiresias, however, means by prudence a certain kind of prudence, the submission to his own authority. Creon cannot accuse Tiresias of false divination without convicting himself of an inborn imprudence. Tiresias, it seems, had intended more to remind Creon of his wisdom than once again to prove it. If Creon cannot take a friendly reminder for what it is, he should not be spared foreknowledge of his fate. The profitable and most pleasant learning Tiresias held out to Creon was ignorance. He would not terrify Creon and thus delude him with hope if Creon were only willing to reacknowledge his subservience. Tiresias anticipates the gods' punishment with his own. It is as though he suspected that the gods' punishment would not be sufficient punishment for Creon (cf. § 38.1).

54.2. Creon, in order to justify his abuse of Tiresias, explains that the abuse was directed against all soothsayers indiscriminately (cf. 1035). Love of money is their class characteristic; and as nothing Creon heard from Tiresias differed at all from what any soothsayer would have said, he concluded that Tiresias had betrayed himself in adopting the usual patter of his class. Tiresias' attempt at reasonableness backfires. Creon needs to hear something that reveals Tiresias' special position before he will consider his advice. If, then, Tiresias' first speech really offered Creon the chance to alter his fate, not just to save the city (cf. §§ 51.3, 52.1), the reason would be that Creon's immediate submission to Tiresias would have shown his regard for the sacred in its everydayness. The reasonable—why rekill the dead?—and the sacred in its everydayness are hardly distinguishable. The civil and the decent cover them both. To Creon's charge that he is the typical soothsayer, Tiresias replies that he is the typical tyrant: he loves base gain. Tiresias here tries to convince Creon of his unreasonableness and warn him of his impiety. To prohibit Polynices' burial is a form of base gain, for it is an attempt to profit from either what is profitless or what should not be turned to profit. If Creon refuses to understand the first point and has to be instructed in the second—why burial in itself is mandatory, apart from the consequences for the citizens' sacrifices and Tiresias' art if it is not done—Creon is past saving. Creon cannot learn the divine ground of the holy without learning at the same time of his divine punishment. He would be punished not so much for his being unmovable (*ἀκίνητος*, 1027) as for his prying into the unmovable (*τᾶκίνητα*, 1060).

55 (1064–90). 55.1. Tiresias' second speech is harder to understand than his first (the dispute about lines 1080–3, both as to their meaning and authenticity, proves it), but they do resemble one another. A

central line here too divides the speech into two equal parts, each of thirteen lines. The first part deals with three things—Creon's punishment (1064–7), Creon's crime (1068–73), and the divine aspects of his punishment (1074–6); the second part also deals with three things—the domestic consequences of Creon's crime (1078^b–9), its political consequences (1080–3), and Tiresias as the human agent of his punishment (1084–90). The first part is inspired; the second seems to be its prosaic translation: οὐ μακροῦ χρόνου τριβή replaces μὴ πολλοὺς ἔτι . . . τελεῶν (cf. fr. 664P). The first part explains the penalty Creon must pay and the reasons for it; the second explains the suffering he causes—*κωκύματα* (1079), *ἔχθρα* (1080), *λυπεῖς* (1084)—and now undergoes himself. The first part concerns the relation of gods to men and one another, the second with the relation of men to themselves. The bond between them is the unholy; but in the first part it is the unholy corpse (1071), in the second its unholy smell (1083).

55.2. The symmetry between the two parts of Tiresias' speech is plain; but how deep it goes or what it means is not as evident. The one who came from Creon's flesh and blood¹²⁶ to be his payment for corpses will provoke the ritual lamentation of men and women in his house; but do these ritual lamentations include those on behalf of Eurydice? Does Tiresias know of her suicide? The balance of payments would be more nearly equal if Haemon pays for Polynices and Eurydice for Antigone; but Tiresias presents Haemon alone (*ἔνα*) as paying for both of Creon's crimes. To conclude from this, however, that Tiresias knows nothing of Eurydice is not warranted. He might suppress his knowledge, not to spare Creon, but to gloss over his own contribution to her death. Eurydice curses Creon for the death of both her sons, Megareus and Haemon (1302–5, 1312–3); but Tiresias could not have accused Creon of Megareus' death without condemning himself (cf. § 38.1). Tiresias recognized in Megareus' suicide a sacred necessity; he does not recognize it in Antigone's. Haemon's death looks very different if only in the eyes of men but not in the eyes of the gods it is in payment for Antigone's. Tiresias, then, might have been closer to the truth when he held Creon's only crime, or rather error, to be his failure to bury Polynices (cf. § 52.1). His art might better inform him about the sacred than his inspiration.

55.3. Tiresias predicts that within not many circuits of the sun Creon will be punished; and he calls the Furies *ὑστεροφθόροι* and says that no

¹²⁶ In light of the hieratic tone of Tiresias' prophecy, nothing perhaps should be made of *σπλάγχνα*; but since *σπλάγχνα* are technically the parts of a sacrificial victim eaten by men as opposed to the thigh bones reserved for the gods, Tiresias could mean that Creon will pay for the gods' rejection of thigh bones with what otherwise would be his. The *ἀντίδοσις* would be superficially an exchange of human corpse for human corpses, but essentially an exchange of human corpse for bestial sacrifice.

long time will pass before lamentations fill Creon's house. Tiresias thrice deludes Creon (and the Chorus) into believing that his fate is not yet foreclosed; he still has time to make amends (cf. 1103-4). Since the events prove otherwise, we are again forced to think about Tiresias' knowledge. If he did not know that Creon would be punished before the day was out, his ignorance would explain the hopefulness of his first speech. If the city's loss cannot frighten Creon into correcting his error, the threatened loss of his son might; and the second speech too would be meant to be hopeful. Tiresias, on the other hand, could have concealed his more exact knowledge: Creon was not to know that the gods are unforgiving and repentance unrewarded. The delusion of hope would be a divine favor. Creon could come to believe that had he just reversed himself sooner, he would have saved his son. But that would only be Creon's consolation; the truth would be that Creon through his crime alone and not through his obduracy merited punishment. If, however, all men err, as Tiresias says, the punishment would have then seemed to men excessive. Perhaps Tiresias out of compassion spared us all the truth about sacrilege: the reasonable and the sacred in its everydayness are not as alike as Tiresias had pretended. Creon rejected their equation only to learn his fate; but his fate was phrased in such a way as to keep him in ignorance about the gods. To sustain Creon's hope, moreover, in order that he never learn that an act of sacrilege is not the same as an act of imprudence, would not be incompatible with sustaining it for a different reason. To cast Creon into total despair would delay what Tiresias and the city most need—the immediate burial of Polyneices.

55.4. Creon's crimes are (1) to have cast below someone who belongs with those above, for he has ruthlessly settled a life (*ψυχή*) in a grave, and (2) to have kept here (above) a corpse that belongs to the gods below, for he has prevented it from receiving due burial rites. Tiresias then explains still further the second crime: neither Creon nor the gods above have any share in corpses. Tiresias thinks it unnecessary to give a fuller explanation of Creon's other crime. Could he have said that neither he nor the gods below have any share in souls? Or that Creon has forcibly deprived the gods above of Antigone? To have asserted the former would have entailed the denial that there are souls in Hades; to have asserted the latter would have implied some confusion between the region of *οἱ ἄνω* and the region of *οἱ ἄνω θεοί*. We are above in relation to the gods below, but where are we in relation to the gods above? The living cannot belong to the gods above because they alone are alive, any more than the dead can belong to the gods below because they too are dead. This difficulty cannot be separated from another: does the *κάτω* of 1068 mean the same as *ἐν τάφῳ κατώκισσας* (1069) and the *κάτωθεν* of 1070? If they mean the same, Tiresias shares with Antigone a confusion of Hades with the grave. If, on the other hand, Tiresias means that Creon has put Antigone in a kind of limbo,

Creon's crime consists, not in his killing of Antigone, but in the way he killed her, the very way Creon had chosen in order to avoid pollution for the entire city (cf. § 43.1). Creon would have committed the same crime twice—*ἄμοιρος*, *ἀκτίριστος*, *ἀνόσιος* apply equally to Polynices and Antigone (cf. 1207)—and therefore would have to pay only once. The parallelism Tiresias draws between Polynices and Antigone—he calls them both corpses (1067)—conceals his denigration of Antigone. He cannot recall Creon to his original crime, which Creon had almost forgotten in the face of Antigone's defiance (cf. § 41.2), without making what Antigone stands for of little or no importance. And if Tiresias cannot do Antigone justice, the reason must lie in a link between the gods and men above that excludes her: they alone share in generation (cf. § 50.3). Creon's own flesh and blood must pay for his crime of exposing the dead in the region of the life-renewing sun.

55.5. Tiresias' prophecy strictly ends at 1076; what follows from 1078^b up to 1083 translates the prophecy into human suffering and at the same time replies to Creon's argument at 1040–4. The translation and the reply are in a sense the same: the signs of Tiresias' art forebode human suffering, not divine pollution. Tiresias begins with the ritual lamentations in Creon's own house. The asyndeton of *ἀνδρῶν γυναικῶν* shows that, though *κωκύματα* are strictly a woman's way of grieving, the rites of burial are not, as Creon had supposed, female (cf. 1206, 1227; § 42.4). *σοῖς δόμοις*, in turn, points back to *σῶν σπλάγγων* and the difference between Creon the father and Creon the master. Creon's payment for his crime is his son, but the experience and expression of his crime are sexually undifferentiable. These ritual lamentations, moreover, recall the barbaric cries of birds: Plato calls a kind of dirge the "Carian Muse" (*Legs.* 800c2–3; § 25.3).¹²⁷ Tiresias would thus be deepening his original interpretation in light of his prophecy: his own failure to understand the cries of birds merely anticipates the unintelligible cries of mourning in Creon's house. His apparently self-interested argument turns out to be in the interest of Creon. Tiresias then goes further in playing down his own importance when he reargues the second sign. What is now at issue is not the fact of pollution but the belief in pollution. The mangled bits of corpses that dogs, beasts, or birds hallow stir up hatred in every city.¹²⁸ The human effect of a crime like Creon's against all the gods is manifest in the universal loathing of all cities. Regardless of what Creon himself thinks of pollution, it would be to his self-interest to avoid such hatred in Thebes. The city, no less than the gods, can punish when every citizen thinks himself threatened at his own hearth (cf. § 22.14). The city is its

¹²⁷ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Griechische Verskunst*, 28–9.

¹²⁸ Böckh (275–6) rightly denies that Tiresias could be referring to the second expedition against Thebes, but he wrongly keeps *ἐχθραί* (sc. *τοῖς θεοῖς*); only Reiske's *ἐχθρα* gives coherence to Tiresias' speech.

hearths: the *ἔσχαραι* count more than the *βωμοί* (1016). Nothing, according to Tiresias' prophecy, mediates between *οἱ ἄνω* and *οἱ ἄνω θεοί*; but, according to his translation, sacrifices mediate between the city and the gods. The unholy corpse does not belong to those above, its unholy smell does not belong at the city's hearths. The city seems not altogether to belong to those above. It has a share in the nether gods as well (§ 22.9).¹²⁹

55.6. Tiresias ends his speech with somewhat the same triad as Haemon had used (cf. § 40.4). Creon should express his anger (*θυμός*) at those younger than Tiresias (i.e., those ignorant of his fate), learn to cherish a quieter tongue (*γλῶσσα*), and have a mind (*νοῦς*) better than his present wits (*φρένες*). Haemon said that whoever thinks he alone is sensible (*φρονεῖν*) and has a tongue (*γλῶσσα*) and soul (*ψυχή*) superior to any other is empty within. Haemon's triad recalled the triad of speech (*φθέγμα*), thought (*φρόνημα*), and civility (*ἀστυνόμοι ὄργαι*) that the Chorus had ascribed to man's *δεινότης* (cf. § 22.11); and that triad, in turn, pointed back to Creon's own triad, soul (*ψυχή*), resolve (*φρόνημα*), and judgment (*γνώμη*), which Creon held to be evident only in a ruler (cf. § 12.4). Tiresias now tells Creon that he proposed the wrong test. It is not what one loves that is decisive, let alone the degree to which one is devoted to it, but civility. Civility would at least have spared him the anguish of foreknowledge (*καρδίας τοῦζέματα βέβαια*), and perhaps have even checked him from issuing his decree (cf. 1113-4). Tiresias' message has nothing to do with Antigone.

56 (1091-1114). 56.1. The Chorus and Creon equally realize that Tiresias has never yet prophesied falsely to the city. Neither can see a reason as to why he should do so now (cf. § 61.4), yet neither thinks Creon's fate to be unavoidable: prudence (*εὐβουλία*) can put everything right. Do they think, then, that prudence could have saved Oedipus or Megareus, and therefore condemn retroactively the one for his persistence in uncovering the truth or the other for patriotism? As the Chorus' patriotism cannot be in doubt, whatever one may think of Creon's, the parallel must be with Oedipus. But when should Oedipus have stopped his search? If he had not been public-spirited, he could have failed to consult the oracle or at least kept silent about it (cf. *OT* 93-4); and if he had not thought that Jocasta despised him for his origins, he could have stopped when she begged him to. In the first case, the plague would have continued until the city banished him for his lack of concern (cf. *OT* 47-50); and in the second, he would have gained no more than a respite, until he learned of Jocasta's suicide. Oedipus, then, could have shown his patriotism without discovering his origins only if he had never summoned Tiresias but relied solely on the testimony

¹²⁹ Note the syntax of *σπαράγματα*, whose antecedent is strictly *πόλεις*.

of the one survivor from Laius' retinue. He would then have been a regicide and nothing else. Does Tiresias have a similar role in mind for Creon? If Tiresias had stayed away and sent his servant, or even if a nameless citizen had come to report the failure of the sacrifices to burn, Creon could perhaps have avoided his fate. Such a report by itself, without any of Tiresias' authority behind it, should have been enough to tell Creon that he had gone against the practices of custom. Creon comes to fear that this indeed was the case (1113-4). The Chorus, however, seem to delude him into believing that he can outrun the swift-footed mischief of the gods (cf. 951-4). They advise him to release Antigone and bury Polynices; but Creon first buries Polynices and then goes to Antigone's prison. Is this, then, Creon's mistake and what the Chorus mean by prudence? If Creon's fate depends on the timeliness of his actions, Creon's very patriotism, which makes him release the city from pollution before he attends to his own, destroys him (cf. § 51.3). But the Chorus seem to have misunderstood Tiresias, for Tiresias spoke of Antigone as already a corpse (1067) and only put Haemon's death in the future; but since he also referred to Antigone as a soul, the Chorus took him to mean that she was still alive, whereas he really meant that Creon had killed her in an impious way (cf. § 55.4). As Antigone's death seems to make Haemon's inevitable, there would seem to be no room for prudence. Not until one learns more about Haemon's suicide can one say whether or not the Chorus were simply wrong (cf. §§ 61.5, 7).

56.2. Creon has some difficulty in adjusting to Tiresias' prophecy, the Chorus have none at all. Creon's mind and heart are in turmoil,¹³⁰ the Chorus have never invested much in any position. The hopeful construction they put on Tiresias' prophecy agrees with their politic lack of policy; and Creon readily believes that he too can drift with the necessity of circumstance. As soon as the Chorus repeat Tiresias' word "prudence," he hands himself over to them. He ceases to be his own master even before they remind him of the swiftness of divine punishment. His conversion seems precipitate only if one accepts his words (*καρδίας ἐξίσταμαι τὸ δρᾶν*) as implying that his principles were deeply rooted in his heart. His principles have long since eroded (cf. § 42.1). He obeys the Chorus rather than Tiresias because Tiresias' loyalty has always been to the city (994, 1058) and the Chorus' loyalty (he does not doubt) to him. The confusion inherent in Creon's principles comes home to him (cf. § 12.4).

56.3. The Chorus tell Creon not to entrust the freeing of Antigone and the burying of Polynices to anyone else; but Creon does not take them

¹³⁰ Brunck's *δειλόν* is, I think, right, and Jackson's *ἀτη* 'μπαλάξει τοῦμόν ἐν δειν κάρᾳ' (1097) near the mark, but I should prefer *κέρᾳ* (cf. *Ai.* 686, *Tr.* 629, 1246, *OC* 655, but fr. 210, 45 P).

literally. He assumes that they mean he should supervise the work of his servants, to whom he assigns the whole task of burying Polynices while apparently reserving for himself that of freeing Antigone. He cannot, however, be taken literally either; he is present on both occasions and does no work himself. Creon could not have perhaps removed by himself the stones that block Antigone's prison; that Haemon does it proves nothing for Creon or, one might add, for Antigone (1216). But why should he think that his servants must bury Polynices? *αὐτός τ' ἔδησα καὶ παρῶν ἐκλύσσομαι*, after all, applies as much to Polynices, if less literally, as to Antigone (cf. 40). Why, more precisely, does Creon think at once of cremation and a barrow? Neither Tiresias nor the Chorus even hint that a simple interment would not suffice; and it would have sufficed if the city's pollution by dogs and birds were the issue (cf. § 53.1). Creon seems to believe that Polynices is due rites almost as elaborate as those he gave Eteocles—the high mound he has raised would be conspicuous in the plain (1203)—but not that he should do them himself. The Chorus, however, might have meant that it was here and nowhere else that Creon's salvation lay: only if he were to handle the stinking, rotting, and mangled Polynices with his own hands could he find forgiveness from the gods (cf. 900). Only such an act would imply remorse (cf. Diodor. I. 77.7). But not only do the Chorus say nothing about remorse, Tiresias said nothing about it either (cf. § 53.2). What genuine piety involves, rather than just piety "for form's sake," disappears from the play as soon as Antigone leaves. Creon never thinks of his crimes as impious; he continues to the end to talk of his unfortunate imprudence (1261, 1265, 1269).

57 (1115–54). 57.1. The Chorus now accept Creon's understanding of the priorities, but they go even further: since Tiresias never spoke of Antigone's death as politically relevant, the burial of Polynices, as far as the city is concerned, alone counts. The Chorus abandon Creon to his fate as soon as he is out of earshot; he can take care of his own without the help of Dionysus; but if the Thebans are to have Dionysus lead their dances, he must cleanse the city of the pollution that now violently grips it (cf. § 52.5). The Chorus thus hark back to the end of the parodos (cf. 152–3, 1153–4), as if all that had happened between then and now were of no importance. What we have witnessed are the last traces of the war that the Chorus wanted Dionysus to help them forget. Dionysus now takes hold of them completely. The shaft of sunlight that the Chorus had greeted as their savior in the parodos yields to Iakchos the choral-master of the fire-breathing stars; *μεγαλώνυμος Nike* becomes *πολυώνυμος Bakchos*; and the frenzied Capaneus is forgotten in the hoped-for presence of the frenzied Thyiads (cf. § 11.3). Dionysus is to wipe clean the Chorus' memory; and he succeeds. The moral they draw at the end almost repeats the moral they had put in the center of the parodos (127–8, 1348, 1353).

57.2. The hyporchema is the antithesis of the first stasimon.¹³¹ That was almost wholly general, this is almost wholly particular; that had no proper names except Earth and Hades, this has seventeen, eight of which are place names; that called Earth, whom man wears away, the highest of the gods, this says Dionysus honors autochthonous Thebes most highly of all cities and presides with Demeter over Eleusis; that held man to be the conqueror of earth and sea, this begs Dionysus to come now over Parnassus or the Euripus; that presented man as the hunter of wild beasts, this traces the origin of Thebes back to a wild dragon; that spoke of man's taming of the mountain bull, this has the ivy-clad Nysaeon mountains escort Dionysus to Thebes; that spoke of man's self-taught speech and thought, this hails Dionysus as master of nighttime voices and madness; and that said man contrives a cure for impossible diseases, this relies on Dionysus to cleanse the city of a violent disease. But despite these antitheses, the stasimon and hyporchema do share one thing in common: what is under the earth is as close to Dionysus as to man. Hades is not alone in closing it to man; man has no fire to mine the earth (cf. § 52.4). He has no fire because it is divine and Dionysus is its master. Dionysus is the offspring of Zeus βαρυβρεμέτης, who cares for Thebes with his mother κεραινία, is seen by the smoky flame of torches above Delphi, and leads the fire-breathing stars in dance. Fire comes down to earth only for sacred purposes: sacrifices, ordeals (264–5), festivals, or cremation. Sacrifices and festivals unite the city with the gods, and with none more closely than Dionysus; and cremation dissolves the Antigonean conflict between civility and holiness. Dionysus rightly represents their Tiresian solution, for he sponsors a frenzy in speech and mind different from Antigone's (603), and he has nothing to do with Hades (cf. § 50.3).

58 (1155–71). 58.1. Antigone's entrance upset the moral of the first stasimon; the messenger reports nothing that does not harmonize with the hyporchema: the Chorus did not ask for Creon's safety. Once they have confirmation of Tiresias' prophecy they are not interested in Creon; and only the appearance of Eurydice distracts them from planning for the future, as the messenger advised (cf. *Ai.* 904, 981–2). The messenger resembles the watchman on his first entrance: both are reluctant to act as messengers. The watchman delayed his report until he had proved his innocence; the messenger delays just as long in

¹³¹ Rhetorically, it is built up to a great extent out of triads. The first strophe consists of an opening invocation of three elements (πολυώνυμε, ἄγαλμα, γένος), followed by three verbal phrases (ἀμφέπεις, μέδεις, ναιετών), the last of which is expanded into a threefold description of Thebes. The first antistrophe, on the other hand, is held together by three nouns, the first two of which (λιγνός, νᾶμα) share the same verb, while to the last is added another noun and two participial phrases. The sequence of places in the first strophic pair is: Thebes, Italy (Κασταλίας confirms Ἴταλιαν), Eleusis, Thebes, Delphi, Euboea, Thebes. The second antistrophe begins with a threefold invocation: χοράγε, ἐπίσκοπε, γένεθλον.

order to show first how Creon exemplifies his own understanding of human life. From his understanding one could draw the moral that resignation is best; but whereas the watchman, though equally holding to resignation as his final hope, was resigned to his fate (cf. § 15.2), the messenger has no hope, for there is nothing but chance. Chance replaces the gods (cf. 162–3, 1158–60). This is, in fact, the only scene in the play (1155–79) in which the gods are not mentioned either individually by name or collectively.¹³² The messenger's standard for happiness is pleasure (cf. § 24.2), his standard for misery is to be a corpse.

58.2. The messenger does not address the Chorus, as Tiresias had, as the rulers of Thebes (cf. § 51.2); he calls them the neighbors of Cadmus' and Amphion's house. Cadmus founded Thebes, Amphion built its walls; but after the hyporchema the name of Thebes does not recur. The invocation of Dionysus succeeds in making the city as an issue disappear (cf. 1094, 1247). The city and the regime are replaced by the land and the earth (1162–64, 1203). The enjoyment of what is one's own, whether it be victory over the land's enemies, kingship (cf. 178), or children, alone counts: Amphion was the husband of Niobe. The messenger, of course, does not know what else Creon will lose, but his wife's death would be a redundant proof of chance's power: Eurydice learns of her son's death by chance (cf. 1182). The messenger seems to know nothing of Tiresias' prophecy (cf. 1212); and it seems to be Creon's inopportune presence, in his account, that occasions Haemon's suicide. The messenger's speech has three parts: chance (1156–60), Creon (1161–5^a), pleasure (1165^b–71). Creon supplies the link, one would suppose, because the messenger assumes that the loss of Haemon wipes out Creon's pleasure; but he needlessly refers to Creon's noble sons, and Creon never takes any notice of Megareus. The messenger, moreover, conceals Creon's loss of Haemon, which he does not mention, by holding Creon's victory over Argos and his kingship to be elements of his enviable life, one of which Creon cannot and the other Creon does not lose in any literal sense. The messenger therefore must shift from Creon's downfall, for which his thoughts on chance have presumably prepared us, to Creon's pleasures now that his son is dead. In order, however, to extract a moral from the death of Haemon, the messenger must put himself in Creon's place, for he is not certain that Creon experiences the moral he wishes to illustrate. He lets his imagination stretch beyond Creon's good fortune, where he sees great wealth and the pomp of tyranny—the tyrant's private wealth replacing Creon's victory over his country's enemies (cf. Th. 1.17)—and then declares such magnificence to be deficient if the man who has them

¹³² There are nineteen scenes in the play, the central one of which is the Chorus' song to Eros. The guard initiates the fourth scene from the beginning, the messenger the fourth scene from the end.

takes no pleasure in them. Pleasure, then, comes entirely from one's children; everything else is hollow without them. The messenger does not think, as Creon had, that children are good only if they support their father in his friendships and enmities (cf. § 39.2). He does not praise the fortunate just because their fortune might change, but because there is no good fortune without children (cf. Th. 2.44.2); nor does he find the unfortunate not to be unfortunate just because their fortune too might change, but because even in the absence of good fortune one can delight in one's children. The instability of one's own life is not in itself a matter of regret; it is the impossibility of fixing the life of others on whom one depends.¹³³ The messenger rejects both the life lived for the city and the life lived against the city, for, if Creon is any model, either involves the loss of a son, Megareus or Haemon. This twofold rejection forces him into a paradox: one cannot divine what is established for mortals. Creon feared that the preservation of the established laws is the best policy throughout one's life; the messenger makes us fear that the truth lies in the literal meaning of Creon's words: it is best in preserving the established laws to end one's life. The messenger inadvertently vindicates Antigone. He vindicates, over against the ensouled corpse Creon, the dead soul Antigone (cf. § 35.1).

59 (1172-9). 59.1. The Chorus have to ask the messenger three questions before they learn what he should have told them at once. Consistent with his first speech he is more interested in Creon than in Haemon; but he does not explain how he reconciles Creon's guilt with the moral of his first speech, which Creon exemplified precisely because chance showed its power in his case. Guilt seems to be as incompatible with chance as with necessity; and the messenger has to admit that Creon's hand was not raised against his son. Is Creon guilty, then, in the way that Oedipus was the cause of Jocasta's suicide? Or did chance just give Creon the opportunity to be guilty? There was no necessity that Haemon love Antigone. Antigone, however, seems to be furthest from anyone's thoughts. The Chorus ask about the grief of kings; and we might suppose that they include Antigone in the royal circle, even as the messenger's answer (*τεθνῶσιν*) suggests that more than one has died; but since he also makes Creon into a plural, and the Chorus' next two questions are in the singular, it would seem that Antigone's suicide, which the messenger now calls murder, does not count among the royal griefs. Creon, at any rate, never holds himself responsible for her suicide. That he failed to save her must look like chance to him (cf. § 61.3).¹³⁴

¹³³ For this meaning of chance see Arist. *EN* 1135^b18-9; Eur. *Hipp.* 258-60; and for Creon to be an *ἐμψυχός νεκρός* as the result of Haemon's death see *Antiphon Tetr.* 11.β.10: *ἐπὶ τῇ ἑμαυτοῦ ἀπαιδίᾳ ζῶν ἐτι κατορυχθήσομαι.*

¹³⁴ Cf. Müller, 253.

59.2. The pun on Haemon's name (*αἱμάσσεται*) would seem to preclude any misunderstanding of the messenger's reply ("he made himself bloody with his own hand"); but the Chorus suggest that the verb might be passive and *αὐτόχειρ* not have its literal meaning. To ask whether the messenger could possibly mean that Creon killed Haemon is a grammarian's question;¹³⁵ but the Chorus are impelled to ask it for several reasons. First, the messenger did imply that Creon was guilty, and the Chorus perhaps only recognize the guilt of deeds. They had urged Creon to release Ismene on the grounds that she had not handled Polynices' corpse (cf. § 34.1); and just as Creon thought his way of killing Antigone absolved the whole city, so they surely do not see themselves as involved in Creon's guilt. Second, Creon had implied that he had the right to kill his own sons if they disobeyed him (cf. § 39.3), and they cannot be certain that Creon on second thoughts had not gone back on his word. Third, they did not dispute Creon's assertion that it would be more than human for Haemon to carry out his threat of suicide (cf. § 43.1). And finally, Tiresias predicted Haemon's death in such a way (*αὐτὸς . . . ἀντιδούς ἔσθῃ*) as to be at least as compatible with murder as with suicide. They took, at any rate, Tiresias' prophecy—*ἀνὴρ, ἄναξ, βέβηκε δεινὰ θεσπίσας* (1091)—more seriously than their own understanding of Haemon's anger—*ἀνὴρ, ἄναξ βέβηκεν ἐξ ὀργῆς ταχύς* (766)—for they now exclaim at the rightness of Tiresias' prediction despite Tiresias' silence about Haemon's suicide and its cause and the messenger's confirmation of their own understanding on both counts. Not even the Chorus trust their own wisdom. For the messenger now to invite them to deliberate is unwittingly ironic.

60 (1180–91). 60.1. The entrance of Eurydice lets the Chorus avoid deliberation. They call her *τάλαινα* as they had called Antigone *δύστηνος* on her entrance (379). Once Antigone, however, had spoken in her defense, she never elicited from them again another expression of condolence. Eurydice, on the other hand, now says nothing to deprive her of their sympathy; but when they later learn that she cursed Creon for the death of Megareus and hence implicitly condemned Thebes for its self-defense, they do not hold Creon responsible, despite his self-accusation, for her suicide (cf. § 64.1). Eurydice's death was not included in Tiresias' prophecy (cf. § 55.2); and the Chorus cannot discern in it, as they do in Haemon's, its justice (cf. 1270). For the Chorus she is an unaccountable intrusion. There is no one to tell them what to think. Creon could convince them of Antigone's injustice, and Tiresias of Creon's; but neither prepared them for Eurydice, whose silent suffering lies outside their experience and immune to their advice. Without the mean vanity of Creon or the holy madness of

¹³⁵ Cf. schol. 1176: τὸ χ ὅτι ἐρωτᾷ πότῃρα κτλ. ἀκούσας ἤδη ὅτι αὐτόχειρ ἀπέθανεν.

Antigone she reminds us of a suffering that the city as such inflicts and no theodicy comprehends. Tiresias preferred to remain silent rather than try to explain why Eurydice justly had to suffer Creon's punishment.

60.2. The messenger had addressed the Chorus as house-dwellers; Eurydice addresses the Chorus and the messenger together as townspeople. The difference between citizen and servant means nothing to her. Even the messenger is more aware of the city than she is. He later hopes that her silence is due to her shame of expressing her private grief (πένθος οικεῖον) openly, ἐς πόλιν (1246–1249). She says that she overheard the messenger's report while leaving the palace in order to pray to Pallas Athena, from whom she intended, we can suppose, to ask what the Chorus had failed to ask for from Dionysus, the life of her son. She wanted the virgin goddess to save Haemon from the effects of Eros. She began, however, much too late: Athena's ability to defeat Eros the undefeatable is not put to the test. Chance, or perhaps more than chance, intervenes before one learns whether Eros is a god subject to other gods. Sophocles allows there to be no refutation in deed of the Chorus' unprincipled wisdom.

61 (1192–1243). 61.1. Eurydice could not have fainted before 1173 or much after 1177. She might know that either one of her own is dead or Haemon killed himself. She might therefore want the messenger either to repeat no more than what he has already told the Chorus or to explain the exact degree to which Creon is the cause of Haemon's suicide. The messenger assumes that she wants a full report, as if she doubted his charge against Creon. Eurydice is entitled to the truth, no matter how painful, neither because her recovery from a swoon has shown that she can take it nor because her experience of evils has steeled her to listen, but because any softened version that the messenger now might tell would be later proved false. The messenger believes that the truth can never be unjustified; but Eurydice's departure in silence forces him to hope that to be versed in evils (κακῶν γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειρος, 1191) is the same as to be versed in judgment (γνώμης γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειρος, 1250). He believes so firmly in the decency of his mistress that he forgets his own speech, in which he counted Creon a living corpse for losing the enjoyment of what Eurydice also loses; and Eurydice has no political pleasures to fall back upon (cf. § 58.2). The messenger spoke for himself when he made pleasure the standard; he makes decency the standard when he speaks for his masters. He thus draws back from the conclusion that the lack of certain pleasures entails suicide. Chance, after all, could restore one to good fortune. One wonders whether he would have counseled Eurydice, in an argument like Antigone's, to have more children (cf. Th. 2.44.3). The second messenger calls her *παμμήτωρ* (cf. § 48.8).

61.2. For νηλεές (1197), see § 45.1; for κυνοσπάρρακτον (1198), § 53.1; for σῶμα (1198), § 48.5; for συγκατήθομεν (1202), § 52.4; for χθονός (1203), § 22.9. The messenger frames his true account in such a way that the burial of Polynices—three aorist participles articulate its description (αἰτήσαντες, λούσαντες, χώσαντες)¹³⁶—seems to be nothing but a slight incident on the way to the rescue of Antigone. However important his burial is for the city, it is of no interest to Eurydice. Creon's servants prayed that Hecate, the goddess of roads,¹³⁷ and Pluton check their wrath and turn gracious. They seemed to have been afraid that the chthonic gods were not pleased with their uncovering of Polynices' body, which they had done on their own without the excuse of such a command from Creon (cf. § 25.4). They did not pray to the gods above, who according to Tiresias were equally angry. But Tiresias had not suggested how Creon should propitiate the gods; indeed, he had not even indicated what rites should be accorded Polynices. Creon on his own decided that only the most elaborate rites were now appropriate: Polynices is buried in a conspicuous tomb of native earth. Piety would have been satisfied and patriotism maintained if he had been buried outside of Theban territory (cf. § 12.7). Creon gave up his patriotism to save his son. He believed that Polynices had to be buried on the spot if he were to outrun the Furies. He thereby gave up his pleasure in his victory over Argos (cf. § 58.2) and admitted that the conquest of Thebes was unjustly thwarted (cf. § 42.1). Creon compensated for his crime against the gods by committing another crime against the city. He was tested in office and found wanting. His punishment could thus be due as much to his betrayal of his own principles as to his rejection of Antigone's (cf. § 51.3).

61.3. The messenger, like Antigone herself, speaks of Antigone's prison as a bridal chamber (cf. § 46.2); but he amplifies this aspect still more (λιθόστρωτον, παστάδα). It is, however, the presence of Haemon, who by embracing Antigone obtains his marriage rites in Hades (1224, 1240-1), rather than Antigone's marriage to Acheron (816), that dictates his choice of words. That Antigone has now rejoined her family, with all the horror that implies (cf. § 46.8), means nothing to him. He calls Haemon but not Antigone miserable (1234, 1241; cf. 1272, 1310-1). Her suicide, like Polynices' burial, is just an incident in his account. No one ever regrets that they came too late to save her. Neither the Chorus nor Creon, on the other hand, had thought of stopping Haemon from entering her tomb. Creon had so confidently spoken against the possibility of Haemon's suicide that this precaution, which even on the ground that Haemon might try to free Antigone would have been sensible, eluded them. Creon must have expected her suicide as soon as

¹³⁶ The change in construction (τὸν μὲν . . . αὐθις) calls our attention to the shift from σῶμα Πολυνείκους (1198) to τὸν (1199) and δὲ δὴ (1202).

¹³⁷ Fire is the constant attribute of Hecate; cf. fr. 535 P.

he had listened to her (cf. 567); and he must have changed the way of punishing her, not out of a scrupulous piety, nor even out of fear that the city would not stone her to death, but in the knowledge that Antigone would do his work for him (cf. § 43.1). The Chorus understood Antigone less well than Creon did; but it was because of their advice that he had to pretend that he still had a chance to save her. He must have known what Tiresias meant when he called her a corpse (cf. § 56.1) and for that reason put the burial of Polynices before the rescue of Antigone.

61.4. A servant told Creon that he had just heard from afar the shrill cries of ritual lamentation near the tomb; but Creon did not act on this report before he had heard them for himself and seen the stones of the tomb's entrance wrenched apart. He then divined (ἄρ' εἰμι μάντις) their source while they were still indistinct (ἄσημα); but, unlike Tiresias, to whom a servant reported ἄσημα ὄργια, Creon was not sure of their interpretation (cf. § 52). He wondered whether the gods were deluding him; but for what purpose he did not say. Could Creon have come to believe that Tiresias had deluded him with prophecy and that all Tiresias had wanted to do was put a scare into him? Tiresias could surely have relied on his former infallibility to put across so salutary a lie (cf. § 55.3); and, despite the Chorus' exclamation at the rightness of his prophecy, nothing Tiresias said argues for a more than human source for its truth (cf. § 59.2); indeed, he never mentioned Apollo.¹³⁸ Had Tiresias foretold the death of Eurydice, or given the circumstances of Haemon's suicide, he would have confirmed his inspiration as divine; but he would then have deprived Creon of hope, hope that concealed the severity of divine punishment and the difference between sacrilege and error (cf. § 55.3).

61.5. Creon seemed to have been bent on self-punishment. He overheard Haemon's bewailing Antigone's death, his father's deeds, and his own marriage; and thinking perhaps that all was forgiven if Haemon could regret the cause no less than its effects, he tried to plead with Haemon without repenting any of his crimes. His speech would have been the same even if he had not revoked his decree. Creon did not ask Haemon for forgiveness but rather asked three questions calculated to enrage him—what deed he had done, what he intended to do, and what circumstance distracted his wits. Since Creon saw what his servants did, Haemon embracing Antigone around her waist as she hung from a noose, and then asked him what he had done, what could Haemon have thought except that Creon now dared to charge him with Antigone's murder?¹³⁹ It would hardly have occurred to him that Creon might

¹³⁸ It is perhaps because Tiresias fails to remind them of Apollo that the Chorus do not ask Apollo, the god of purification *par excellence*, to purify the city.

¹³⁹ Cf. S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright*, 57–8.

have meant his forcible entry into the tomb; and if he had had the sense to understand him so, what could he have made of Creon's third question? ἐν τῷ συμφορᾶς διεφθάρης is not a question that a guilty man asks. Creon simply bungled his self-appointed task of dissuading Haemon. Anyone—why not Eurydice?—could have pleaded his case better than he did. Instead of giving Haemon time for his sorrow to abate, he opposed it at its flood. To face Haemon, after Haemon had promised that Creon would never see him again (763-4), could only have intensified Haemon's anger and frustration. Creon's imprudence, then, in word and deed was the proximate cause of Haemon's suicide. He is too heartless to be wise.

61.6. When Creon had finished speaking, Haemon wildly glared at him, spat in his face, and in silence drew his sword; but when Creon had succeeded in evading his attack, he grew angry at himself and slew himself. Haemon's suicide seemed to have arisen from a compound of regret, remorse, vengeance, and love—regret for having missed Creon, remorse for having contemplated patricide, vengeance for Creon's crime, and love for Antigone (cf. 1177). The remorse that Creon never shows for his transgression of one sacred law was shown by Haemon for his intention to transgress another; but this intention would never have brought Haemon to punish himself if he had not also wanted to punish Creon and join Antigone in death. Nothing could illustrate better the peculiar character pious remorse and divine punishment have in common than Creon's evasion of death and Haemon's suicide. Creon's death—did Tiresias know that Haemon would fail?—would have deprived him of the chance to atone through suffering, and the compound cause of Haemon's suicide suggests the difficulty of atoning for sacrilege. Oedipus rejected suicide on the ground that he could not bear looking upon his mother and father in Hades; and he chose self-blinding on the ground that he could not bear looking upon either his children or Thebes (cf. *OT* 1369-86). Oedipus' vain attempt to isolate himself from everyone and everything haunted Antigone (cf. *OT* 1349-56, 1386-90, 1409-15, 1466-70), whose own piety entailed a remorse for which she could never atone. Haemon, on the other hand, could satisfy his original desire to punish Creon while making amends for his unholy impulse. Punishment and self-punishment make him doubly just, but they could not make him noble (cf. § 48.9).

61.7. No one would have faulted the messenger's truthfulness if he had spared Eurydice the details of Haemon's suicide and said no more about it than the second messenger will say about Eurydice's (1315); instead, he dwells on Haemon's still-living embrace of the virgin Antigone and the gush of blood on her cheek. The passage reads like a grim mockery of a sexual embrace; and the words τὰ νυμφικὰ τέλη λαχῶν make it almost certain that the messenger wanted to insinuate it. Forced to choose between two equally distasteful endings, a thwarted marriage

or a thwarted patricide (their juxtaposition recalls Oedipus), the messenger preferred the ending to which he could more readily attach a moral: no greater evil than imprudence belongs to man. The moral, however, bears a peculiar message when applied. Since the context forbids its application to Creon's impiety, with which, in any case, the messenger never charges him, Creon can be reproached only for not having yielded at once to Haemon's love of Antigone (cf. § 36.1). Creon should have let the love of his own override his sense of righteousness. If he had wanted to prevent their cold embrace, Haemon's pleasure should have guided him (cf. 648–50). It would have been prudent to be fond.

62 (1244–56). 62.1. The Chorus are bewildered by Eurydice's silent departure, and they are forced to ask the messenger about it; but they are not satisfied with his explanation (cf. § 61.1). They either doubt that any grief (or at least Eurydice's) is publicly inexpressible (cf. Her. 3.14–5) or think Eurydice incapable of such restraint. They rightly suspect that her silence is ominous, but not that she might want to say something not fit for them to hear. They forget Megareus, upon whose death Eurydice might look differently from the city. Eurydice's silence, moreover, is no more distressing to the Chorus than if she had indulged in an excess of lamentation. A few words of sorrow would have allayed their suspicion. A moderate utterance, they imply, is incompatible with an extreme resolution, for the mean in speech is consonant only with the mean in deed. They thought Antigone's defense of the law a proof of her savagery, but her last words (τὴν εὐσέβειαν σεβίσασα) were so devoid of paradox and excess—unlike, for example, ὄσια πανουργήσασα (cf. 924)—that they never suspected that she had resolved to kill herself (cf. § 49.4). The Chorus always measure the deed by the speech and therefore fail to see the extreme that sometimes lurks within the mean. This failure sets the limit to their wisdom (cf. § 65.1).

63 (1257–1300). 63.1. The Chorus still regard Creon as their lord despite Tiresias' address to them (cf. § 51.2); and so they hesitate to lay Haemon's death to his error. Their εἰ θεῆμις εἰπεῖν allows Creon the chance of pleading not guilty; but he obliges them with a confession.¹⁴⁰ They behold the killer and the killed (Haemon is in his arms), the consequence of his imprudence, but not, we must supply, of his impiety (*φρενῶν δυσσεβῶν). His ill-conceived plans have led to his own unhappiness and the early death of his son. That he blasted his son's happiness as well does not occur to him, for Antigone's death is not one of his errors. The justice he sees too late are the miserable toils of

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Andocides II.5–7, 15 for the way in which Creon expresses his regret for his crimes.

mortals, which, as his own overturned and trampled joy illustrates, the gods savagely inflict. Creon admits his guilt without accepting his punishment, for he had unwillingly killed Haemon and Eurydice (1340), and even Tiresias argued that error was common to all men. He does not suggest what punishment would have been fitting; and once he learns of Eurydice's death, he thinks fate, not a god—he never names any god but the unappeasable Hades—caused his suffering (1345–6). Creon bewails the unwilling effects of his impiety but not their willed cause. He must be silent about Antigone and piety if he is to take part in a kommos, for he cannot lament what he does not understand.

63.2. Creon mentions something that is almost as surprising as was the cremation of Polynices. He says to Haemon that in his death he was released (*ἀπελύθης*), and as if to confirm that his choice of words is not casual, he later asks the second messenger how Eurydice was slain and released (1314).¹⁴¹ Perhaps Creon means no more than that they have “passed away”; but since the verb is unknown this early as a euphemism, and a euphemism joined with *ἔθανες* in Haemon's case and with *ἐν φοναῖς* in Eurydice's hardly qualifies as such, one wonders whether Creon, holding the corpse of his son and confronted with that of his wife, does not mean that their souls are now separated from their bodies. Creon would thus be opposed to Antigone to the end, for whom the separation of body and soul in death would have made her devotion to the law impossible. Creon, on the other hand, has to be reminded of his duty to bury the dead (1334–5; cf. 1101). The restoration of the established laws, to which Antigone contributed nothing (cf. § 17.5), can only lead once more to their being forgotten (cf. § 26.1).

63.3. Sophocles allows Creon just one strophe to grieve over Haemon alone: but this is not because Creon feels more deeply about Eurydice than about Haemon; indeed, he never calls her his wife or himself her husband (cf. §§ 1196, 1282). She is in his eyes a wretched mother and nothing else. Yet the unexpected shock of her suicide does force Creon to drop all thought of his deficient counsel and the miserable toil of mortals (cf. § 1317).¹⁴² Tiresias had asked Creon what proof it was of his courage to rekill the dead (*τίς ἀλκὴ τὸν θανόντ' ἐπικτανεῖν*, 1030); and Creon now tells the messenger that with this news he has reexecuted a dead man (*ὀλωλότ' ἄνδρ' ἐπεξεργάσω*). Creon speaks of himself as a

¹⁴¹ Read *ἀπελύσατ'*; see Müller.

¹⁴² The frequency with which the same sounds occupy the same place in strophe and antistrophe, accompanied as it is by slight dislocations of the same word and by contrasting words or phrases in the same place, alerts us to the shift Creon undergoes (cf. § 46.8): *δυσφρόνων* (1261)—*δυσκάθαρτος* (1284); (1262)—(1285); *ὡ παῖ* (1266)—*τὶ φῆς, ὦ παῖ* (1289; see § 38.1); *νέος νέφ* (1266)—*νέον* (1289); *ἀπελύθης* (1268)—*ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ* (1291); (1273)—(1296); *ἔπαισεν ἐν* (1274)—*μὲν ἐν* (1297); *ἀντρέπων χάραν* (1275)—*ἐναντα προσβλέπω νεκρόν* (1299); (1276)—(1300). See also Müller. For an example of a shift in thought accompanying close symmetry between strophe and antistrophe, see Aesch. *Eum.* 155–68.

second Polynices (cf. 1077): the crime that he mistakenly thought in Polynices' case could never be atoned for would be his own. Creon thought, however, that his crime was the death of Haemon, not the prohibition of Polynices' burial; and he does not now admit his guilt on either count when he envisions his unending suffering. He does not put together φρενῶν δυσφρονῶν ἀμαρτήματα with ἰὼ δυακάδαρτος "Αἰδου λιμήν, let alone his re-killling of Polynices with Hades' re-killling of himself. Mistaken as to his crime, Creon cannot see his suffering as his punishment, for even on his mistaken view, in terms of which his crime should double as his punishment, Creon still attributes his suffering to either a god or fate, but never to himself. As agent he is guilty, as patient he is innocent (cf. *OC* 266–7).

64 (1301–46). 64.1. The messenger answers Creon's question of 1296, though Creon perhaps did not expect that anyone could answer it. Eurydice prayed at the altar of the house just before her suicide for the ill-success of Creon.¹⁴³ She did not think that Haemon's death, let alone Megareus', would adequately punish Creon. Not the ὄξυκώκυτον πάθος (1316) of her son, which brought on her own death, but only κακαὶ πράξεις in the future can affect him. Eurydice seemed to have understood Creon's incapacity for the punishment of suffering. He now, at any rate, becomes terrified and for the only time speaks of his pain (cf. § 27.2). The fear of punishment takes the place of remorse and prompts Creon to ask for his death (cf. §§ 15.2, 29.1). Fear, which should be part of his punishment, makes him want to escape from it, for he seems to have no fear, as Antigone had, that he will be judged in Hades (459–60, 925–6), and he hardly thinks he will meet his wife and sons there. His immediate death would be the most beautiful of fates, for he then would not have to undergo another day of fear. Creon's fear, however, alternates with his guilt, and his guilt suggests to him another way. To the messenger's report that Eurydice held him guilty for both Megareus' and Haemon's deaths he responds with a question about the manner of her suicide. Creon thus avoids extending his guilt to include the death of Megareus, for he senses that it would ill become him to protest in the name of the city Eurydice's blanket condemnation. He prefers instead to admit his guilt for Eurydice's death, even though no one charges him with it and he himself is aware of the extravagance of his admission (φάμ' ἔτυμον). He wants his servants to take him out of the way now that he is not even as much as a no-one. He is too empty to suffer any more. He is unable to atone. Creon is in his life less than the dead Polynices, for he has no one to pity him; but he does not complain, as Antigone did, of his lack of friends. He has too much

¹⁴³ Nothing seems certain in 1301 except βωμία; but I should be inclined to accept Seyffert's reading at 1303 because of 424–5.

self-pity to miss them;¹⁴⁴ and he seems to believe that if he is out of sight his guilt is out of mind. So little does his crime against the city mean to him that he does not think of exile or any other public punishment. The Chorus, therefore, are not ready to comfort Creon: the sooner his misfortunes are out of the way the greater is their own gain. They want to forget Creon in his troubles as they must have once forgotten Oedipus in his; and they renounce their loyalty to Creon in words that could equally have served against Oedipus. Indeed, their advice to Creon, not to pray for anything since the future does not properly concern mortals who must stick to what is before them, suits Oedipus far more exactly than Creon, whose fate scarcely deserves the name of desting (cf. *OT* 1518–20).

65 (1347–53). 65.1. The Chorus draw a conclusion that they apparently did not need the play to learn (cf. § 57.1). Man, according to the first stasimon, taught himself speech, thought, and civility, all three of which are morally neutral; but if, they now say, thought is good it is wisdom, if speech is bad it is boasting, and if civility is good it is piety (cf. § 52.3–4). Yet there seem to be two kinds of wisdom. Wisdom consists solely in not acting impiously against the gods, and this non-Antigonean piety is the chief ingredient in happiness; and wisdom comes in old age solely through suffering, and happiness is thus impossible, for Creon can now be called wise but not happy (cf. § 52.5). The Chorus, however, see no difficulty, for the precept that the wisdom of innocence trusts in from the start is the same as that which the wisdom of suffering learns late, and to the Chorus nothing matters but the precept, however learnt: Creon must do τὰ προκειμένα and disregard τὰν ποσὶν κακά. They never understand that civility is not self-taught but piety already in decay, the piety of precept. That one could live the precept, so that *χρὴ τὰ γ' ἐς θεοῦς μηδὲν ἀσεπτεῖν* be transformed into Antigone's *ὄσια πανουργήσασσα*, is wholly beyond them. They therefore can only regret that Creon, who had he followed the precept would have kept clear of trouble, forced them to confront the *τέρας* Antigone.

Corrigendum: in Part II of this article (vol. 5/1, p. 42, line 10), for "city. Justice must be grounded . . ." etc., read "city as the issue. Creon calls Haemon totally bad in separating, as he"

¹⁴⁴ Cf. 34.2.1. Antigone never calls herself *μελέα* or *δειλαία*, each of which Creon uses thrice (977, 1319, 1341; 1272, 1310–1). The one trait they have in common is tearlessness; but in Antigone's case it comes from her greatness of soul, in Creon's from his emptiness. Antigone is *ταλαίφρων*, not Creon.