

AUCA Freshman Summer Reading Assignment includes:

- 1) Plato. Book VII, *The Republic*. Plato's *Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, pp. 1132-1137.
- 2) Descartes, Rene. Meditations I, II. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Tr. by Michael Moriarty, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 13-25.
- 3) Sophocles, *The Antigone*, trans. by Ian Johnston of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia, November, May, 2005.

They're like us. Do you suppose, first of all, that these prisoners see anything of themselves and one another besides the shadows that the fire casts on the wall in front of them?

How could they, if they have to keep their heads motionless throughout life?

What about the things being carried along the wall? Isn't the same true of them?

Of course.

And if they could talk to one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?

They'd have to.

And what if their prison also had an echo from the wall facing them? Don't you think they'd believe that the shadows passing in front of them were talking whenever one of the carriers passing along the wall was doing so?

I certainly do.

This is the prisoner's world. He would in every way believe that the truth is nothing but the shadows on the wall. He would be at a loss and that he'd believe that the things he saw might be with him on a steep path, and that he'd be dazzled by the sun. He would be unable to see the things whose shadows he sees. What do you think he'd say if he were told that he was in a prison and that he was in consequence unable to turn his head? He would be able to see the things that are more correct, and is turned towards things that are more correct? Or, to put it another way, if we pointed to each of the things passing by, asked him

Book VII

514 Next, I said, compare the effect of education and of the lack of it on our nature to an experience like this: Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above

at animals,

material. And, as you'd expect, some are silent, some are talking, and strange prisoners.

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Then, if this is true of the one, won't it also be true of all numbers?

Of course.

Now, calculation and arithmetic are wholly concerned with numbers.

That's right.

b Then evidently they lead us towards truth.

Supernaturally so.

Then they belong, it seems, to the subjects we're seeking. They are compulsory for warriors because of their orderly ranks and for philosophers because they have to learn to rise up out of becoming and ~~grasp~~

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argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached the end of the visible.

Absolutely.

And what about this journey? Don't

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them to rule in your city or be responsible for the most important things while they are as irrational as incommensurable lines.

Certainly not.

Then you'll legislate that they are to give most attention to the education that will enable them to ask and answer questions most knowledgeably?

e I'll legislate it along with you.

Then do you think that we've placed dialectic at the top of the other subjects like a coping stone and that no other subject can rightly be placed above it, but that our account of the subjects that a future ruler must learn has come to an end?

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Probably so.

Then it remains for you to deal with the distribution of these subjects, with the question of to whom we'll assign them and in what way.

That's clearly next.

Do you remember what sort of people we chose in our earlier selection of rulers?

Of course I do.

In the third place, we chose the

Yes, and they deserve pity too.

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FIRST MEDITATION

least the colours which they combine to form images must be real. By the same token, even though these general things—eyes, head, hands, and so forth—might be imaginary, it must necessarily be admitted that at least some other still more simple and universal realities must exist, from which (as the painter's image is produced from real

let us grant that all this we have said of God is only a fiction; and let them suppose that it is by fate or chance or a continuous sequence of things that I have come to be what I am. Since, though, to be deceived and to err appear to be some kind of imperfection, the less powerful the source they invoke to explain my being, the more probable it will be that I am so imperfect that I am perpetually deceived. To all these arguments, indeed, I have no answer, but at length I am forced to admit that there is nothing of all those things I once thought true, of which it is not legitimate to doubt—and not out of any thoughtlessness or irresponsibility, but for sound and well-weighed reasons; and therefore that, from these things as well, no less than from what is blatantly false, I must now carefully withhold my assent if I wish to discover any thing that is certain.*

But it is not enough to have realized all this, I must take care to remember it: for my accustomed opinions continually creep back into my mind, and take possession of my belief, which has, so to speak, been enslaved to them by long experience and familiarity, for the most part against my will. Nor shall I ever break the habit of assenting to them and relying on them, as long as I go on supposing them to be such as they are in truth, that is to say, doubtful indeed in some respect, as has been shown just now, and yet nonetheless highly probable, so that it is much more rational to believe than to deny them. Hence, it seems to me, I shall not be acting unwisely if, willing myself to believe the contrary, I deceive myself, and make believe, for some considerable time, that they are altogether false and imaginary, until, once the prior judgements on each side have been evenly balanced in the scales, no evil custom can any longer twist my judgement away from the correct perception of things. For I know for sure that no danger or error will ensue as a result of this, and that

believing that I have all these;* I will obstinately cling to these thoughts, and in this way, if indeed it is not in my power to discover any truth,* yet certainly to the best of my ability and determination I will take care not to give my assent to anything false, or to allow this deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, to impose upon me in any way.

But to carry out this plan requires great effort, and there is a kind of indolence that drags me back to my customary way of life. Just as a prisoner, who was perhaps enjoying an imaginary freedom in his dreams, when he then begins to suspect that he is asleep is afraid of being woken up, and lets himself sink back into his soothing illusions; so I of my own accord slip back into my former opinions, and am scared to awake, for fear that tranquil sleep will give way to laborious hours of waking, which from now on I shall have to spend not in any kind of light, but in the unrelenting darkness of the difficulties just stirred up.

SECOND MEDITATION

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and place itself are all illusions. What truth then is left? Perhaps this alone, that nothing is certain.

But how do I know that there is not something different from all those things I have just listed, about which there is not the slightest room for doubt? Is there not, after all, some God, or whatever he should be called, that puts these thoughts into my mind? But why should I think that, when perhaps I myself could be the source of these thoughts? But am I at least not something, after all? But I have already denied that I have any senses or any body. Now I am at a loss, because what follows from this? Am I so bound up with my body and senses that I cannot exist without them? But I convinced myself that there was nothing at all in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Did I therefore not also convince myself that I did not exist either? No: certainly I did exist, if I convinced myself of something. — But there is some deceiver or other, supremely powerful and cunning, who is deliberately deceiving me all the time. — Beyond doubt then, I also exist, if he is deceiving me; and he can

spontaneously and by nature's prompting came to my mind beforehand, whenever I considered what I was. The first was that I have a face, hands, arms, and this whole mechanism of limbs, such as we see even in corpses; this I referred to as the body. Next, that I took nourishment, moved, perceived with my senses, and thought: these actions indeed I attributed to the soul.* What this soul was, however, either I never considered, or I imagined it as something very rarefied and subtle, like a wind, or fire, or thin air, infused into my coarser parts. But about the body itself, on the other hand, I had no doubts, but I thought I distinctly knew its nature, which, if I had attempted to describe how I conceived it in my mind, I would have explained as follows: by body I mean everything that is capable of being bounded by some shape, of existing in a definite place, of filling a space in such a way as to exclude the presence of any other body within it; of being perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell, and also of being moved in various ways, not indeed by itself, but by some other thing by which it is touched; for to have the power of moving itself, and also of perceiving by the senses or thinking, I judged could in no way belong to the nature of body; rather, I was puzzled by the fact that such capacities were found in certain bodies.

But what about now, when I am supposing that some deceiver, who is supremely powerful and, if I may venture to say so, evil, has been exerting all his efforts to delude me in every way? Can I affirm that I possess the slightest thing of all those that I have just said belong to the nature of body? I consider, I think, I go over it all in my mind: nothing comes up. It would be a waste of effort to go through the list again. But what about the attributes I used to ascribe to the soul? What about taking nourishment or moving? But since I now have no body, these also are nothing but illusions. What about sense—and I have seemed to perceive very many things when asleep that I later realized I had not perceived. What about thinking? Here I do find something: it is thought; this alone cannot be stripped from me. I am, I exist, this is certain. But for how long? Certainly only for as long as I am thinking; for perhaps if I were to cease from all thinking it might also come to pass that I might immediately cease altogether

which was previously unknown to me. I am therefore a true thing, and one that truly exists; but what kind of thing? I have said it already: one that thinks.

What comes next? I will imagine: I am not that framework of limbs that is called a human body; I am not some thin air infused into these limbs, or a wind, or a fire, or a vapour, or a breath, or whatever I can picture myself as: for I have supposed that these things do not exist. But even if I keep to this supposition, nonetheless I am still something.*—But all the same, it is perhaps still the case that these very things I am supposing to be nothing, are nevertheless not distinct from this ‘me’ that I know* [*novi*]. — Perhaps: I don’t know. But this is not the point at issue at present. I can pass judgement only on those things that are known to me. I know [*novi*

Well, indeed, there is quite a lot there, if all these things really do belong to me. But why should they not belong to me? Is it not me who currently doubts virtually everything, who nonetheless understands something, who affirms this alone to be true, and denies the rest, who wishes to know more, and wishes not to be deceived, who imagines many things, even against his will, and is aware of many things that appear to come via the senses? Is there any of these things that is not equally true as the fact that I exist—even if I am always asleep, and even if my creator is deceiving me to the best of his ability? Is there any of them that can be distinguished from my thinking? Is there any that can be said to be separate from me? For that it is I that am doubting, understanding, wishing, is so obvious that nothing further is needed in order to explain it more clearly. But indeed it is also this same I that is imagining; for although it might be the case, as I have been supposing, that none of these imagined things is true, yet the actual power of imagining certainly does exist, and is part of my thinking. And finally it is the same I that perceives by means of the senses, or who is aware of corporeal things as if by means of the senses: for example, I am seeing a light, hearing a noise, feeling heat. — But these things are false, since I am asleep! — But certainly I *seem to* be seeing, hearing, getting hot. This cannot be false. This is what is properly meant by speaking of myself as having sensations; and, understood in this precise sense, it is nothing other than thinking.

From all of this, I am indeed beginning to know [*nosse*] rather better what I in fact am. But it still seems (and Ieing, he0.1)and,

Second Meditation

touch and see; but not bodies in general, for these general perceptions are usually considerably more confused, but one body in particular. Let us, for example, take this wax: it has only just been removed from the honeycomb; it has not yet lost all the flavour of its honey; it retains some of the scent of the flowers among which it was gathered; its colour, shape, and size are clearly visible; it is hard, cold, easy to touch, and if you tap it with your knuckle, it makes a sound. In short, it has all the properties that seem to be required for a given body to be known as distinctly as possible. But wait—while I am speaking, it is brought close to the fire. The remains of its flavour evaporate; the smell fades; the colour is changed, the shape is taken away, it grows in size, becomes liquid, becomes warm, it can hardly be touched, and now, if you strike it, it will give off no sound. Does the same wax still remain? We must admit it does remain: no one would say or think it does not. So what was there in it that was so distinctly grasped? Certainly, none of those qualities I apprehended by the senses: for whatever came under taste, or smell, or sight, or touch, or hearing, has now changed: but the wax remains.

Perhaps the truth of the matter was what I now think it is: namely, that the wax itself was not in fact this sweetness of the honey, or the fragrance of the flowers, or the whiteness, shape, or sonority, but the body which not long ago appeared to me as perceptible in these modes,* but now appears in others. But what exactly is this that I am imagining in this way? Let us consider the matter, and, thinking away those things that do not belong to the wax, let us see what remains. Something extended, flexible, mutable: certainly, that is all. But in what do this flexibility and mutability consist? Is it in the fact that I can imagine this wax being changed in shape, from a circle to a square, and from a square into a triangle? That cannot be right: for I understand that it is capable of innumerable changes of this sort, yet I cannot keep track of all these by using my imagination. Therefore my understanding of these properties is not achieved by using the faculty of imagination. What about 'extended'? Surely I know something about the nature of its extension. For it is greater when the wax is melting, greater still when it is boiling, and greater still when the heat is further increased. And I would not be correctly judging what the wax is if I failed to see that it is capable of receiving more varieties, as regards extension, than I have ever grasped in my imagination. So I am left with no alternative, but to accept that I am

not at all *imagining* what this wax is, I am perceiving it with my mind alone: I say 'this wax' in particular, for the point is even clearer about wax in general. So then, what is this wax, which is only perceived by the mind? Certainly it is the same wax I see, touch, and imagine, and in short it is the same wax I judged it to be from the beginning. But yet—and this is important—the perception of it is not sight, touch, or imagination, and never was, although it seemed to be so at first: it is an inspection by the mind alone, which can be either imperfect and confused, as it was before in this case, or clear and distinct, as it now is, depending on the greater or lesser degree of attention I pay to what it consists of.

But in the meantime I am amazed by the proneness of my mind to error. For although I am considering all this in myself silently and without speech, yet I am still ensnared by words themselves, and all but deceived by the very ways in which we usually put things. For we say that we 'see' the wax itself, if it is present, not that we judge it to be there on the basis of its colour or shape. From this I would have immediately concluded that I therefore knew the wax by the sight of my eyes, not by the inspection of the mind alone—if I had not happened to glance out of the window at people walking along the street. Using the customary expression, I say that I 'see' the Tol87m4av

Second Meditation

nakedness, then, indeed, although there may still be error in my judgments, I cannot perceive it in this way except by the human mind.

But what, then, shall I say about this mind, or about myself? For I do not yet accept that there is anything in me but a mind. What, I say, am I who seem to perceive this wax so distinctly? Do I not know [*cognosco*] myself not only much more truly, much more certainly, but also much more distinctly and evidently than the wax? For, if I judge that the wax exists, for the reason that I see it, it is certainly much more evident that I myself also exist, from the very fact that I am seeing it. For it could be the case that what I am seeing is not really wax; it could be the case that I do not even have eyes with which to see anything; but it certainly cannot be the case, when I see something, or when I think I am seeing something (the difference is irrelevant for the moment), that I myself who think should not be something. By the same token, if I judge that the wax exists, for the reason that I am touching it, the same consequence follows: namely, that I exist. If I judge it exists, for the reason I am imagining it, or for any other reason, again, the same certainly applies. But what I have realized in the case of the wax, I can apply to anything that exists outside myself. Moreover, if the perception of the wax appeared more distinct after it became known to me from many sources, and not from sight or touch alone, how much more distinctly—it must be admitted—I now know [*cognosco*] myself. For there are no reasons that can enhance the perception either of the wax or of any other body at all that do not at the same time prove better to me the nature of my own mind. But there are so many things besides in the mind itself that can serve to make the knowledge [*notitia*] of it more distinct, that there seems scarcely any point in listing all the perceptions that flow into it from the body.

But I see now that, without realizing it, I have ended up back where I wanted to be. For since I have now learned that bodies themselves are perceived not, strictly speaking, by the senses or by the imaginative faculty, but by the intellect alone, and that they are not perceived because they are touched or seen, but only because they are understood, I clearly realize [*cognosco*] that nothing can be perceived by me more easily or more clearly than my own mind. But since a long-held opinion is a habit that cannot so readily be laid aside, I intend to stop here for a while, in order to fix this newly acquired knowledge more deeply in my memory by long meditation.

SOPHOCLES
ANTIGONE

Translated by
Ian Johnston
Vancouver Island University
Nanaimo, BC

ANTIGONE

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

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ANTIGONE

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ANTIGONE

to win him honour with the dead below. 30
But as for Polyneices, who perished
so miserably, an order has gone out
throughout the city— that's what people say.
He's to have no funeral or lament,
but to be left unburied and unwept,
a sweet treasure for the birds to look at,
for them to feed on to their heart's content. [30]
That's what people say the noble Creon
has announced to you and me— I mean to me—
and now he's coming to proclaim the fact, 40
to state it clearly to those who have not heard.
For Creon this matter's really serious.
Anyone who acts against the order
will be stoned to death before the city.
Now you know, and you'll quickly demonstrate
whether you are nobly born, or else
a girl unworthy of her splendid ancestors.

ISMENE

Oh my poor sister, if that's what's happening,
what can I say that would be any help
to ease the situation or resolve it? 50 [40]

ANTIGONE

Think whether you will work with me in this
and act together.

ISMENE

In what kind of work?
What do you mean?

ANTIGONE

Will you help these hands
take up Polyneices' corpse and bury it?

ISMENE

What? You're going to bury Polyneices,
when that's been made a crime for all in Thebes?

ANTIGONE

Yes. I'll do my duty to my brother—

ANTIGONE

and yours as well, if you're not prepared to.
I won't be caught betraying him.

ISMENE

You're too rash.

Has Creon not expressly banned that act?

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ANTIGONE

Yes. But he's no right to keep me from what's mine.

ISMENE

O dear. Think, Antigone. Consider
how our father died, hated and disgraced,
when those mistakes which his own search revealed
forced him to turn his hand against himself
and stab out both his eyes. Then that woman,
his mother and his wife—her double role—
destroyed her own life in a twisted noose.

[50]

Then there's our own two brothers, both butchered
in a single day— that ill-fated pair
with their own hands slaughtered one another
and brought about their common doom.

70

Now, the two of us are left here quite alone.
Think how we'll die far worse than

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ANTIGONE

while doing that. I'll lie there with him,
with a man I love, pure and innocent,
for all my crime. My honours for the dead
must last much longer than for those up here.
I'll lie down there forever. As for you,
well, if you wish, you can show contempt
for those laws the gods all hold in honour.

90

ISMENE

I'm not disrespecting them. But I can't act
against the state. That's not in my nature.

A

ANTIGONE

and hordes of warriors in arms,
helmets topped with horsehair crests.

CHORUS

Standing above our homes,
he ranged around our seven gates, 140
with threats to swallow us
and spears thirsting to kill.
Before his jaws had had their fill [120]
and gorged themselves on Theban blood,
before Hephaistos' pine-torch flames
had seized our towers, our fortress crown,
he went back, driven in retreat.¹
Behind him rings the din of war—
his enemy, the Theban dragon-snake,
too difficult for him to overcome. 150

CHORUS LEADER

Zeus hates an arrogant boasting tongue.
Seeing them march here in a mighty stream,
in all their clanging golden pride, [130]
he hurled his fire and struck the man,
up there, on our battlements, as he began
to scream aloud his victory.

CHORUS

The man swung down, torch still in hand,
and smashed into unyielding earth—
the one who not so long ago attacked,
who launched his furious, enraged assault, 160
to blast us, breathing raging storms.
But things turned out not as he'd hoped.
Great war god Ares assisted us—
he smashed them down and doomed them all [140]
to a very different fate.

CHORUS LEADER

Seven captains at seven gates

¹Hephaistos was god of fire.

ANTIGONE

matched against seven equal warriors
paid Zeus their full bronze tribute,
the god who turns the battle tide,
all but that pair of wretched men, 170
born of one father and one mother, too—
who set their conquering spears against each other
and then both shared a common death.

CHORUS

Now victory with her glorious name
has come, bringing joy to well-armed Thebes.
The battle's done—let's strive now to forget 150
with songs and dancing all night long,
with Bacchus leading us to make Thebes shake.

[The palace doors are thrown open and guards appear at the doors]

CHORUS LEADER

But here comes Creon, new king of our land,
son of Menoikeos. Thanks to the gods, 180
who've brought about our new good fortune.
What plan of action does he have in mind?
What's made him hold this special meeting, 160
with elders summoned by a general call?

[Enter Creon from the palace. He addresses the assembled chorus.]

ANTIGONE

killing each other with their own two hands,
a double slaughter, stained with brother's blood. [170]
And so I have the throne, all royal power,
for I'm the one most closely linked by blood
to those who have been killed. It's impossible
to really know a man, to know his soul,
his mind and will, before one witnesses 200
his skill in governing and making laws.
For me, a man who rules the entire state
and does not take the best advice there is,
but through fear keeps his mouth forever shut, [180]
such a man is the very worst of men—
and always will be. And a man who thinks
more highly of a friend than of his country,
well, he means nothing to me. Let Zeus know,
the god who always watches everything,
I would not stay silent if I saw disaster 210
moving here against the citizens,
a threat to their security. For anyone
who acts against the state, its enemy,
I'd never make my friend. For I know well
our country is a ship which keeps us safe,
and only when it sails its proper course [190]
do we make friends. These are the principles
I'll use in order to protect our state.
That's why I've announced to all citizens
my orders for the sons of Oedipus— 220
Eteocles, who perished in the fight
to save our city, the best and bravest
of our spearmen, will have his burial,
with all those purifying rituals
which accompany the noblest corpses,
as they move below. As for his brother—
that Polyneices, who returned from exile,
eager to wipe out in all-consuming fire [200]
his ancestral city and its native gods,
keen to seize upon his family's blood 230
and lead men into slavery—for him,
the proclamation in the state declares

ANTIGONE

he'll have no burial mound, no funeral rites,
and no lament. He'll be left unburied,
his body there for birds and dogs to eat,
a clear reminder of his shameful fate.
That's my decision. For I'll never act

ANTIGONE

CREON

What are you saying? What man would dare this?

ANTIGONE

CHORUS LEADER

ANTIGONE

then death for you will never be enough.

ANTIGONE

CREON: Well, enjoy your sophisticated views.

But if you don't reveal to me who did this,
you'll just confirm how much your treasonous gains
have made you suffer.

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[Exit Creon back into the palace. The doors close behind him]

GUARD

Well, I hope he's found.

That would be best. But whether caught or not—
and that's something sheer chance will bring about—
you won't see me coming here again.

This time, against all hope and expectation,
I'm still unhurt. I owe the gods great thanks.

[330]

[Exit the Guard away from the palace]

ANTIGONE

That's man—so resourceful in all he does.
There's no event his skill cannot confront—
other than death—that alone he cannot shun,
although for many baffling sicknesses
he has discovered his own remedies.

410 [360]

The qualities of his inventive skills
bring arts beyond his dreams and lead him on,
sometimes to evil and sometimes to good612 reW6t32.630.000005901 0 396 612re

ANTIGONE

GUARD

My lord,

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

[Exit attendants into the palace to fetch Ismene]

When people hatch their mischief in the dark
their minds often convict them in advance,
betraying their treachery. How I despise
a person caught committing evil acts
who then desires to glorify the crime. 560

ANTIGONE

Take me and kill me—what more do you want?

CREON

Me? Nothing. With that I have everything.

ANTIGONE

Then why delay? There's nothing in your words
that I enjoy—may that always be the case!
And what I say displeases you as much. [500]
But where could I gain greater glory
than setting my own brother in his grave? 570
All those here would confirm this pleases them
if their lips weren't sealed by fear—being king,
which offers all sorts of various benefits,
means you can talk and act just as you wish.

CREON

In all of Thebes, you're the only one
who looks at things that way.

ANTIGONE

They share my views,
but they keep their mouths shut just for you.

CREON

These views of yours—so different from the rest—
don't they bring you any sense of shame? 580 [510]

ANTIGONE

No—there's nothing shameful in honouring
my mother's children.

CREON

You had a brother
killed fighting for the other side.

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

Yes—from the same mother and father, too.

CREON

Why then give tributes which insult his name?

ANTIGONE

But his dead corpse won't back up what you say.

CREON

Yes, he will, if you give equal honours
to a wicked man.

ANTIGONE

But the one who died
was not some slave—it was his own brother.

CREON

Who was destroying this land—the other one
went to his death defending it.

590

ANTIGONE

That may be,
but Hades still desires equal rites for both.¹

CREON

A good man does not wish what we give him
to be the same an evil man receives.

[520]

ANTIGONE

Who knows? In the world below perhaps
such actions are no crime.

CREON

An enemy
can never be a friend, not even in death.

ANTIGONE

But my nature is to love. I cannot hate.

¹Hades, a brother of Zeus, was god of the underworld, lord of the dead.

ANTIGONE

ISMENE

You're my sister. Don't dishonour me.

Let me respect the dead and die with you.

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

Be brave. You're alive. But my spirit died
some time ago so I might help the dead

640 [560]

CREON

A

ANTIGONE

CHORUS LEADER

Unless we're being deceived by our old age,
what you've just said seems reasonable to us.

HAEMON

Father, the gods instill good sense in men—
the greatest of all the things which we possess.
I could not find your words somehow not right—
I hope that's something I never learn to do.
But other words might be good, as well.

780

ANTIGONE

root and branch. In the same way, those sailors 810
who keep their sails stretched tight, never easing off,
make their ship capsize—and from that point on
sail with their rowing benches all submerged.
So end your anger. Permit yourself to change.
For if I, as a younger man, may state
my views, I'd say it would be for the best 720]
if men by nature understood all things—
if not, and that is usually the case,
when men speak well, it good to learn from them.

CHORUS LEADER

My lord, if what he's said is relevant, 820
it seems appropriate to learn from him,
and you too, Haemon, listen to the king.
The things which you both said were excellent.

CREON

And men my age—are we then going to school
to learn what's wise from men as young as him?

HAEMON

There's nothing wrong in that. And if I'm young,
don't think about my age—look at what I do.

CREON

And what you do—does that include this, 730]
honouring those who act against our laws?

HAEMON

I would not encourage anyone 830
to show respect to evil men.

CREON

And her—
is she not suffering from the same disease?

HAEMON

The people here in Thebes all say the same—
they deny she is.

ANTIGONE

CREON

So the city now
will instruct me how I am to govern?

HAEMON

Now you're talking like someone far too young.
Don't you see that?

CREON

Am I to rule this land
at someone else's whim or by myself?

HAEMON

A city which belongs to just one man
is no true city.

CREON

According to our laws,
does not the ruler own the city?

840

HAEMON

By yourself you'd make an excellent king
but in a desert.

CREON

It seems as if this boy
is fighting on the woman's side.

[740]

HAEMON

That's true—
if you're the woman. I'm concerned for you.

CREON

You're the worst there is— you set your judgment up
against your f0insman

ANTIGONE

CREON

You'll regret parading what you think like this—
you—a person with an empty brain!

HAEMON

If you were not my father, I might say
you were not thinking straight.

CREON

ANTIGONE

CHORUS LEADER

How do you plan to kill Antigone?

CREON

I'll take her on a path no people use,
and hide her in a cavern in the rocks,
while still alive. I'll set out provisions,
as much as piety requires, to make sure
the city is not totally corrupted.¹

Then she can speak her prayers to Hades,
the only god she worships, for success
avoiding death—or else, at least, she'll learn,
although too late, how it's a waste of time
to work to honour those whom Hades holds.

890

[780]

CHORUS

O Eros, the conqueror in every fight,
Eros, who squanders all men's wealth,

A

ANTIGONE

as she laments. Below her weeping eyes
her neck is wet with tears. God brings me
to a final rest which most resembles hers.

940

CHORUS

But Niobe was a goddess, born divine—
and we are human beings, a race which dies.

ANTIGONE

perhaps your agonies are paying back
some compensation for your father.¹

ANTIGONE

Now there you touch on my most painful thought—

ANTIGONE

if that would help? Take her and shut her up, 990
as I have ordered, in her tomb's embrace.
And get it done as quickly as you can.
Then leave her there alone, all by herself—
she can sort out whether she wants suicide
or remains alive, buried in a place like that.
As far as she's concerned, we bear no guilt.
But she's lost her place living here with us.¹ [890]

ANTIGONE

O my tomb and bridal chamber—
my eternal hollow dwelling place,
where I go to join my people. Most of them 1000
have perished— Persephone has welcomed them
among the dead.² I'm the last one, dying here
the most evil death by far, as I move down
before the time allotted for my life is done.
But I go nourishing the vital hope
my father will be pleased to see me come,
and you, too, my mother, will welcome me,
as well as you, my own dear brother.
When you died, with my own hands I washed you. [900]
I arranged your corpse and at the grave mound 1010
poured out libations. But now, Polyneices,
this is my reward for covering your corpse.³
However, for wise people I was right
to honour you. I'd never have done it

¹Creon's logic seems to suggest that because he is not executing Antigone directly and is leaving her a choice between committing suicide and slowly starving to death in the cave, he has no moral responsibility for what happens.

²Persephone is the wife of Hades and thus goddess of the underworld.

³In these lines Antigone seems to be talking about both her brothers, first claiming she washed and dressed the body of Eteocles and then covered Polyneices. However, the pronoun references in the Greek are confusing. Lines 904 to 920 in the Greek text have prompted a great deal of critical debate, since they seem incompatible with Antigone's earlier motivation and do not make much sense in context (in addition most of them appear closely derived from Herodotus 3.119). Hence, some editors insist that the lines (or most of them) be removed. Brown provides a useful short summary of the arguments and some editorial options (199-200).

ANTIGONE

for children of my own, not as their mother,
nor for a dead husband lying in decay—
no, not in defiance of the citizens.
What law do I appeal to, claiming this?
If my husband died, there'd be another one,
and if I were to lose a child of mine
I'd have another with some other man.
But since my father and my mother, too,
are hidden away in Hades' house,
I'll never have another living brother.
That was the law I used to honour you.
But Creon thought that I was in the wrong
and acting recklessly for you, my brother.

1020

[910]

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

slowly withered, and he came to know
the god who in his frenzy he had mocked
with his own tongue. For he had tried
to hold in check women in that frenzy
inspired by the god, the Bacchanalian fire.
More than that—he'd made the Muses angry,
challenging the gods who love the flute.¹

Beside the black rocks where the twin seas meet,
by Thracian Salmydessos at the Bosphorus,

1080

ANTIGONE

TEIRESIAS

Lords of Thebes, we two have walked a common path,
one person's vision serving both of us.
The blind require a guide to find their way.

1100 [990]

CREON

What news do you have, old Teiresias?

TEIRESIAS

I'll tell you—and you obey the prophet.

CREON

I've not rejected your advice before.

TEIRESIAS

That's the reason why you've steered the city
on its proper course.

CREON

From my experience
I can confirm the help you give.

TEIRESIAS

Then know this—
your luck is once more on fate's razor edge.

CREON

What? What you've just said makes me nervous.

TEIRESIAS

You'll know—once you hear the tokens of my art.
As I was sitting in my ancient place
receiving omens from the flights of birds
who all come there where I can hear them,
I note among those birds an unknown cry—
evil, unintelligible, angry screaming.
I knew that they were tearing at each other
with murderous claws. The noisy wings
revealed that all too well. I was afraid.
So right away up on the blazing altar
I set up burnt offerings. But Hephaestus
failed to shine out from the sacrifice—
dark slime poured out onto the embers,

1110

[1000]

1120

ANTIGONE

oozing from the thighs, which smoked and spat,
bile was sprayed high up into the air, [1010]
and the melting thighs lost all the fat
which they'd been wrapped in. The rites had failed—
there was no prophecy revealed in them.
I learned that from this boy, who is my guide,
as I guide other men.¹ Our state is sick—
your policies have done this. In the city
our altars and our hearths have been defiled, 1130
all of them, with rotting flesh brought there
by birds and dogs from Oedipus' son,
who lies there miserably dead. The gods
no longer will accept our sacrifice,
our prayers, our thigh bones burned in fire. [1020]
No bird will shriek out a clear sign to us,
for they have gorged themselves on fat and blood
from a man who's dead. Consider this, my son.
All men make mistakes— that's not uncommon.
But when they do, they're no longer foolish 1140
or subject to bad luck if they try to fix
the evil into which they've fallen,
once they give up their intransigence.
Men who put their stubbornness on show
invite accusations of stupidity.
Make concessions to the dead— don't ever stab
a man who's just been killed. What's the glory
in killing a dead person one more time? [1030]
I've been concerned for you. It's good advice.
Learning can be pleasant when a man speaks well, 1150
especially when he seeks your benefit.

CREON

Old man, you're all like archers shooting at me!
For you all I've now become your target—
even prophets have been aiming at me.

¹Tiresias' offering failed to catch fire. His interpretation is that it has been rejected by the gods, a very unfavourable omen.

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

CREON

The tribes of prophets—
all of them—are fond of money

1180

TEIRESIAS

And kings?
Their tribe loves to benefit dishonestly.

CREON

You know you're speaking of the man who rules you.

TEIRESIAS

I know— thanks to me you saved the city
and now are in control.¹

CREON

You're a wise prophet,
but you love doing wrong.

TEIRESIAS

You will force me
to speak of secrets locked inside my heart.

[1060]

CREON

Do it—just don't speak to benefit yourself.

TEIRESIAS

I do not think that I'll be doing that—
not as far as you're concerned.

CREON

You can be sure
you won't change my mind to make yourself more rich.

1190

TEIRESIAS

Then understand this well—you will not see

ANTIGONE

from up above—in your arrogance
you've moved a living soul into a grave,
leaving here a body owned by gods below— [1070]
unburied, dispossessed, unsanctified. 1200
That's no concern of yours or gods above.
In this you violate the ones below.
And so destroying avengers wait for you,
Furies of Hades and the gods, who'll see
you caught up in this very wickedness.
Now see if I speak as someone who's been bribed.
It won't be long before in your own house
the men and women all cry out in sorrow,
and cities rise in hate against you— all those [1080]
whose mangled soldiers have had burial rites 1210
from dogs, wild animals, or flying birds
who carry the unholy stench back home,
to every city hearth.¹ Like an archer,
I shoot these arrows now into your heart
because you have provoked me. I'm angry—
so my aim is good. You'll not escape their pain.
Boy, lead us home so he can vent his rage
on younger men and keep a quieter tongue
and a more temperate mind than he has now. [1090]

[Exit Teiresias, led by the young boy]

CHORUS LEADER

My lord, my lord, such dreadful prophecies— 1220
and now he's gone. Since my hair changed colour
from black to white, I know here in the city
he's never uttered a false prophecy.

CREON

I know that, too—and it disturbs my mind.
It's dreadful to give way, but to resist

¹Teiresias here is apparently accusing Creon of refusing burial to the dead allied soldiers Polyneices brought with him from other cities. There is no mention of this anywhere else in the play, although the detail is present in other versions of the story.

ANTIGONE

and let destruction hammer down my spirit—

ANTIGONE

CHORUS

O you with many names,
you glory of that Theban bride,
and child of thundering Zeus, 1250
you who cherish famous Italy,
and rule the welcoming valley lands
of Eleusianian Deo—

O Bacchus—you who dwell
in the bacchant's mother city Thebes,
beside Ismenus' flowing streams,
on land sown with the teeth
of that fierce dragon.¹

Above the double mountain peaks,
the torches flashing through the murky smoke 1260
have seen you where Corcyian nymphs

A

ANTIGONE

MESENTER

They're dead—
and those alive bear the responsibility
for those who've died.

CHORUS LEADER

Who did the killing?
Who's lying dead? Tell us.

MESENTER

Haemon has been killed.
No stranger shed his blood.

CHORUS LEADER

At his father's hand?
Or did he kill himself?

MESENTER

By his own hand—
angry at his father for the murder.

1310

CHORUS LEADER

Teiresias, how your words have proven true!

MESENTER

That's how things stand. Consider what comes next.

CHORUS LEADER

I see Creon's wife, poor Eurydice—
she's coming from the house—either by chance,
or else she's heard there's news about her son.

[1180]

[Enter Eurydice from the palace with some attendants]

EURYDICE

Citizens of Thebes, I heard you talking,
as I was walking out, going off to pray,
to ask for help from goddess Pallas.
While I was unfastening the gate,
I heard someone speaking of bad news
about my family. I was terrified.

1320

I collapsed, fainting back into the arms
of my attendants. So tell the news again—
I'll listen. I'm no stranger to misfortune.

[1190]

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE

in sorrow for the loss of his own bride,
now among the dead, his father's work,
and for his horrifying marriage bed.

Creon saw him, let out a fearful groan,
then went inside and called out anxiously,

"You unhappy boy, what have you done?

What are you thinking? Have you lost your mind?

Come out, my child—I'm begging you—please come."

1370

[1230]

But the boy just stared at him with savage eyes,
spat in his face and, without saying a word,
drew his two-edged sword. Creon moved away,
so the boy's blow failed to strike his father.

Angry at himself, the ill-fated lad

right then and there leaned into his own sword,
driving half the blade between his ribs.

While still conscious he embraced the girl

in his weak arms, and, as he breathed his last,

he coughed up streams of blood on her fair cheek.

1380

Now he lies there, corpse on corpse, his marriage
has been fulfilled in chambers of the dead.

[1240]

The unfortunate boy has shown all men

how, of all the evils which afflict mankind,

the most disastrous one is thoughtlessness.

[Eurydice turns and slowly returns into the palace]

CHORUS LEADER

ANTIGONE

CHORUS LEADER

I'm not sure of that.
to me her staying silent was extreme—
it seems to point to something ominous,
just like a vain excess of grief.

MESSENGER

I'll go in.
We'll find out if she's hiding something secret,
deep within her passionate heart. You're right—
excessive silence can be dangerous.

1400

[The Messenger goes up the stairs into the palace. Enter Creon from the side, with attendants. Creon is holding the body of Haemon]

CHORUS LEADER

Here comes the king in person—carrying
in his arms, if it's right to speak of this,
a clear reminder that this evil comes
not from some stranger, but his own mistakes.

[1260]

CREON

Aaiii—mistakes made by a foolish mind,
cruel mistakes that bring on death.
You see us here, all in one family—
the killer and the killed.
Oh the profanity of what I planned.
Alas, my son, you died so young—
a death before your time.
Aaiii . . . aaiii . . . you're dead . . . gone—
not your own foolishness but mine.

1410

CHORUS LEADER

Alas, it seems you've learned to see what's right—
but far too late.

[1270]

CREON

Aaiiii . . . I've learned it in my pain.
Some god clutching a great weight struck my head,
then hurled me onto pathways in the wilderness,
throwing down and casting underfoot
what brought me joy.

1420

A

ANTIGONE

is wisdom— not to act impiously
towards the gods, for boasts of arrogant men
bring on great blows of punishment—
so in old age men can discover wisdom.

[1350]

ANTIGONE

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATOR

Ian Johnston is a retired instructor (now a Research Associate) at Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.

Aeschylus, *Oresteia*
Aristophanes, *Birds*
Aristophanes, *Clouds*
Aristophanes, *Frogs*
Aristophanes, *Knights*
Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*
Aristophanes, *Peace*
Cuvier, *Discourse on Revolutionary Upheavals on the Surface of the Earth*
Descartes, *Discourse on Method*
Euripides, *Bacchae*
Euripides, *Medea*
Euripides, *Orestes*
Homer, *Iliad* (Complete and Abridged)
Homer, *Odyssey* (Complete and Abridged)
Kant, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*
Kant, *On Perpetual Peace*
Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*
Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*
Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*
Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*
Nietzsche, *Uses and Abuses of History*
Sophocles, *Ajax*
Sophocles, *Antigone*
Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*
Sophocles, *Philoctetes*

A number of these translations have been published by Richer Resources Publications, and some of these titles are available as recordings from Naxos Audiobooks.

Ian Johnston maintains a website at the following address:

records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/index.htm.

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