
Sophocles' *Antigone*

Philosophy of Law, *Spring 2015*

CUNY, Lehman College

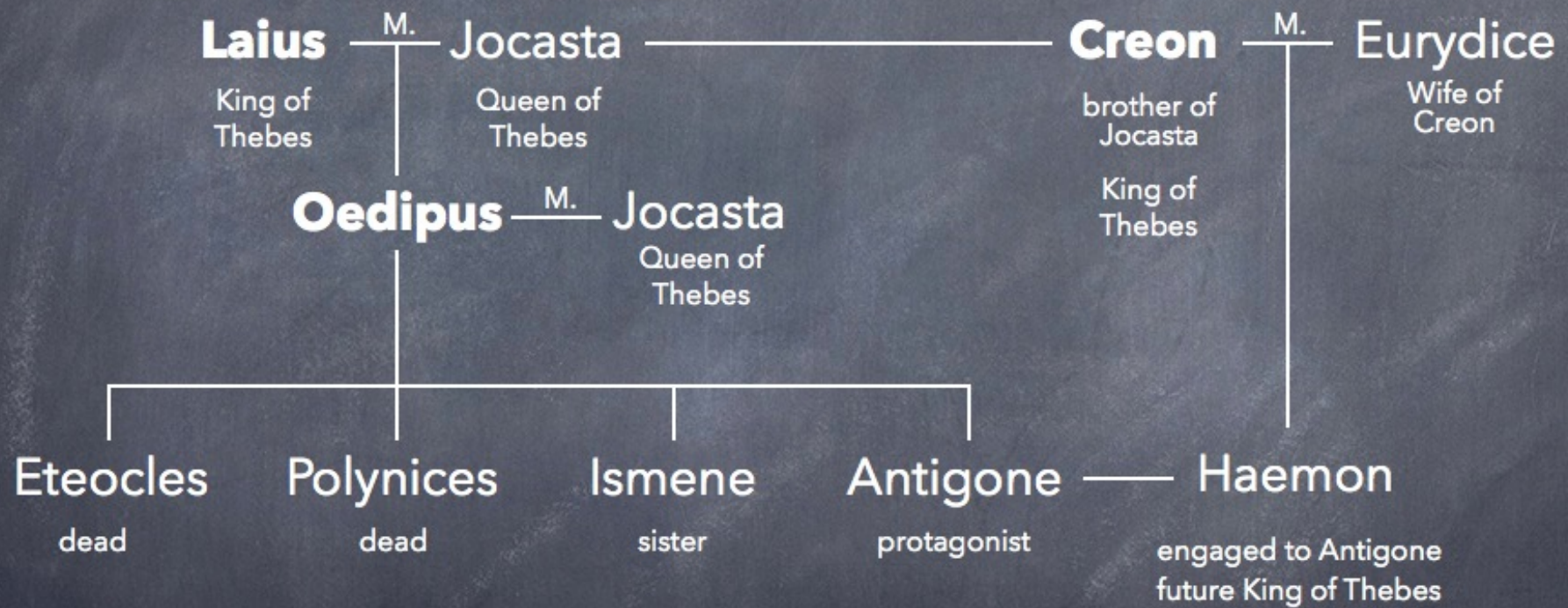
Marcello Di Bello

The Story of Oedipus

See “Comics Illustrated: Oedipus Rex”

<http://benjaminfrisch.me/2010/11/18/comics-illustrated-oedipus-rex/>

THE FAMILY TREE



The Riddle

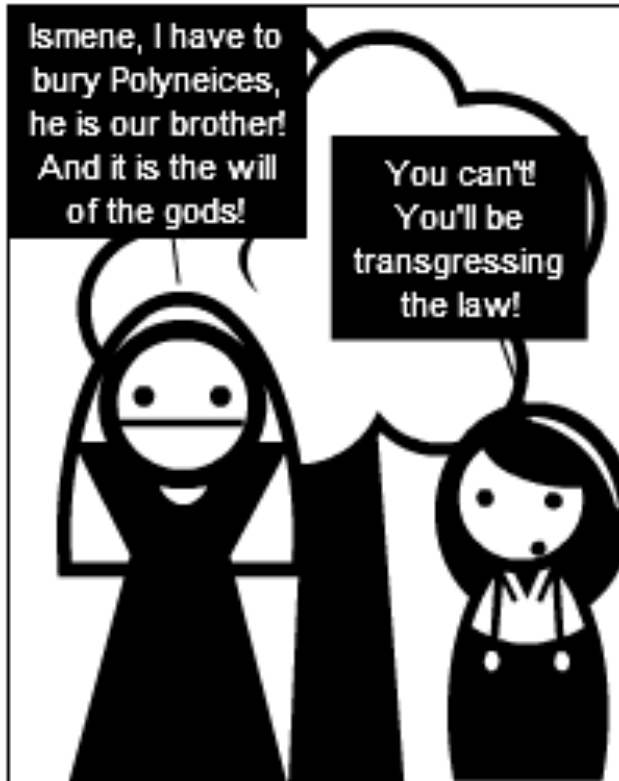
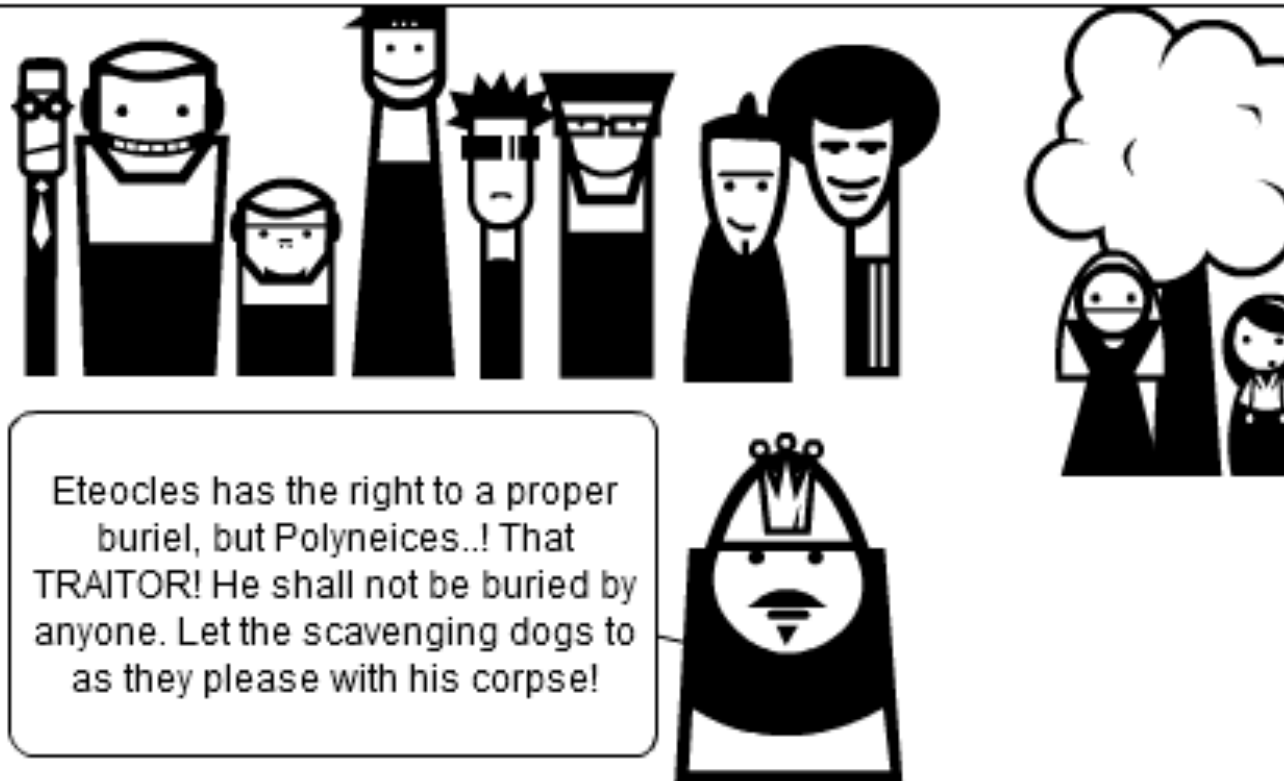
What is that thing which has
four legs in the morning, two
legs in the afternoon and three
legs in the evening?



Oedipus and the Sphinx

The Story of Antigone

what follows is from the “stripgenerator.com”



Later... Once Creon Is Informed that
Antigone Transgressed His Decree

I respect you father, but please...don't do this! Just listen to what she has to say.



I've heard enough from her. She disobeyed my laws and I won't have that. Don't let a woman alter your mind son!



Perhaps he is right my king



He is not right Choragus! That woman shall not have her actions forgotten.



Creon, a good man realizes his mistakes and turns them to good. Obey the gods and do what you should have done in the beginning. If you choose not to...there will be consequences.



No Teiresias. I know what I want to do.



Noo! Antigone! My love!



Haemon spits in Creon's face.



No Haemon!



Haemon kills himself and then a messenger tells Creon his wife is dead.

Creon, enough. Build a tomb for Polyneices and bury Antigone. You must!

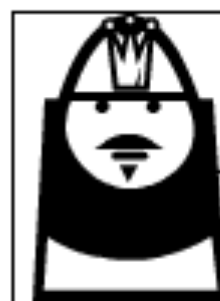


I will.



Eileen Iniguez
Ms. Kleinberg
English 10H (1)
10-29-12

I have nothing now...let death take me. I have caused all of this. I have killed my son and my wife. Let death come quickly and be kind to me.



Fin.

Antigone and Ismene

SCENE: *In front of the royal palace of Thebes. Double doors on the stage are the entrance to the palace. One entrance, on the left side of the stage, represents the road to the site of the battle outside the city, and to Polyneices' body. The entrance on the right side of the stage is the direction of the city of Thebes.*

TIME: *The day after the end of the civil war between Eteocles and Polyneices, Oedipus' two sons. Polyneices had led a foreign force from the city of Argos to attack Thebes. The attackers were defeated, and in the fighting the brothers killed each other.*

(Enter ANTIGONE, followed by ISMENE, from the double doors of the palace.)

ANTIGONE
Ismene my true sister, born from the same mother,
is there any torment Oedipus suffered
which Zeus will not impose on us?
There is nothing—neither grief nor violence,
shame nor dishonor—no evil 5
you and I have not endured already.
And what is this new edict
the general has decreed to every citizen?
Do you know about it—or haven't you noticed
that the fate of enemies is now to be imposed on our friends? 10

ISMENE
I have heard nothing about friends, Antigone,
neither good nor bad news since
in one day we two were robbed of two brothers,
both dying together, by each other's hand.
And since the Argive army withdrew— 15
only last night—I do not even know
if my future is fortunate or doomed.

ANTIGONE
That's what I thought—that's why I brought you
outside the courtyard gates, so no one else will hear.

ISMENE
Hear what? I can see you are deeply troubled. 20

ANTIGONE
That there will be no tomb—our brothers—
Creon ordains—the thought drives me mad!—
honor for one, dishonor for the other.
Eteocles, so they say, he has treated with justice and customary law,
laid him in earth, to be honored by the dead below. 25
As for the battered corpse of Polyneices—
they say it is proclaimed to all the city—
no one is allowed to mourn or entomb,
but must leave it unburied and unwept, like carrion,
sweet pickings for the birds' pleasure. 30
Rumor says that this is what the noble Creon decrees
even for you and me—even for me!—
and he is coming to make it absolutely clear
to everyone that he does not view
the matter lightly, but for whoever does these things, 35
death by public stoning is the punishment.
This is how it stands, and you soon must show
if you are noble in yourself, or base—though noble born.

ISMENE
What can I do, my poor sister,
to ease the knot of your tormented thoughts? 40

ANTIGONE
Decide if you will share the labor and do it with me.

ISMENE
What labor? What do you plan to do?

ANTIGONE
Will your hands help mine to raise the body?

ISMENE
Is that what you intend—to bury him—even though it is forbidden?

ANTIGONE
Indeed I do—he is still my brother—and yours, 45
whatever you might prefer. I will not betray my duty to him.

ISMENE

O willful one—to go against Creon's command!

ANTIGONE

He has no right to keep me from my own.

ISMENE

No, sister—stop and consider
how our father died hated and despised 50
because of sins he himself exposed,
how he blinded himself, crushing his own eyeballs
and how our mother—his mother /wife, that dreadful double word—
ended her life with a plaited rope;
and thirdly, how our two brothers, in one day 55
slaughtered each other—their wretched fate
to end their lives at each other's hand.
Now we two alone remain—and think
how even worse our fates would be if, in defiance
of law, we disobey the decree of powerful rulers. 60
Do not forget that we are women—
it is not in our nature to oppose men
but to be ruled by their power. We must submit,
whatever they order, no matter how awful.
I shall implore those beneath the earth to understand 65
that I am forced to do these things, and pardon me.
I must obey the reigning power.
It would be mad not to do so.

ANTIGONE

Nor would I try to persuade you—nor welcome
your help later, if you should change your mind. 70
Do what seems best for you. I will bury him.
It will be a noble act, even if it leads to my death.
Loving and loved, I shall lie with him—
a pious criminal. There will be more time
for me to lie among those in the world below 75
than the longest life allows. But do as you please—
though dishonoring what the gods honor.

ISMENE

I do not wish to dishonor him,
but it is against my nature to defy the city's will.

ANTIGONE

Whatever you say, 80
I shall build a tomb for my beloved brother.

ISMENE

You go too far, I fear for you.

ANTIGONE

Don't worry about me—put your own fate right.

ISMENE

At least don't tell anyone what you intend
but keep silent—and I will do the same. 85

ANTIGONE

No—tell everyone. I insist. You will be more hated
for silence than if you shout it from the city walls.

ISMENE

You burn for deeds that chill my blood.

ANTIGONE

I know they will please the ones I most want to please.

ISMENE

If you succeed. But you crave the impossible. 90

ANTIGONE

When I have no more strength, only then I'll stop.

ISMENE

In any case, it is not right to chase the impossible.

ANTIGONE

I'll hate you if you say such things—
and the dead also will hate you, and with justice.
But whatever end comes from my rash act 95

or bad advice, could not be worse for me
than to die without honor.

ISMENE

If that is what you want, then go ahead. And always know,
in spite of your foolishness, that your dearest friends dearly love you.

(Exit ANTIGONE to the left toward the outskirts of the city and

POLYNEICES' body. ISMENE exits into the palace.)

Creon's Decree

(Enter CREON from the direction of the battlefield, stage left, with ATTENDANTS.)

CREON

Honored men! The gods have put us back on course,
after the great storm that almost wrecked the city.

I have summoned you here,
apart from the others, knowing how loyally
you acknowledged the kingship of Laius,
and of Oedipus, when he came to rescue the city
and later, after his death,
stayed faithful to his children. 165

Now those two are gone in one day—
a double doom, killed by each other's polluted hand—
being of the same race and family,
the power and the throne become mine. 170

It is impossible to know a man,
his character and mind, until
he proves himself in action,
through rule and customary law. 175
I say that whoever governs the city
and does not accept the best advice
but keeps silent through fear
will always be unworthy—
and if he favors friends
over his own country, is utterly worthless. 180

I would never keep silent
if I saw danger approaching the people—
and Zeus, who sees everything, knows this—
nor ever make a friend or ally
of any man who threatened
the straight course or the safety
of our ship of state. 185 190

My laws will make the city great,
and now, in accord with them, I proclaim to every citizen
my edict concerning the children of Oedipus.
Eteocles, though the best of our spearmen,
perished fighting for his city. 195
Him we shall bury with every ceremony
and libation for the honored dead.
That other of the same blood—I mean Polyneices,
who came out of exile, back to his fatherland
and gods, with a sacrilegious lust to burn 200

the temples and the city down, rooftop to cellar,
slaughter his family and lead the people to slavery—
it has been decreed that no one
may mourn him, nor honor him with burial;
his body must be left exposed, in shame, 205
food for dogs and birds of prey.

Such is my decree—never will I allow
evil men to be honored like the just.
But those who wish the city well,
both living and dead, will be honored by me. 210

CHORUS

This is your desire, Creon, son of Menoeceus,
concerning the enemy and the friend of the city.
We must agree that it is in your power to determine the laws
for the dead as well as for us, the living.

CREON

Make sure my commandments are kept. 215

CHORUS

Younger men could bear the burden better.

CREON

That's not what I mean—the guards for the corpse are already
assigned.

CHORUS

What then do you want us to do?

CREON

Not to side with those who disobey my orders.

CHORUS

No one is foolish enough to choose to die. 220

CREON

That would be the price of disobedience. But the hope of gain
often leads to destruction.

(Enter GUARD from direction of battlefield, stage left.)

GUARD

My lord, I cannot claim to be breathless
from hurrying on my way—
anxious thoughts often made me hesitate, 225
half-turning back. My mind
was divided—one side saying
“Fool, why go where you will only be punished?”
the other: “Wretch, while you dally, someone else
will tell Creon first—then how you’ll regret it.” 230

Brooding on these things I made slow progress
and a short road became long.
Finally, though, the side that said, “Go forward,” won.
Even if my words do me no good, I will speak.
I know that whatever happens, 235
my fate is already ordained.

CREON

What troubles you so much?

GUARD

First, I’ll speak for myself:
I did not do the deed, nor see the one who did—
you cannot put the blame on me. 240

CREON

You defend yourself well—
which makes quite clear that what you have to tell will shock.

GUARD

Yes, it’s bad—that’s why I hesitate.

CREON

Get on with it, speak out—then you can go.

GUARD

Well, here’s the story. Someone came 245
and did what’s necessary for burial—
sprinkled dry dust on the corpse, and all the proper rites.

Creon and Antigone

CREON

This one you bring here—where and how did you find her?

GUARD

Burying the man; now you know the whole story.

CREON

Are you really sure of what you say?

GUARD

I saw her covering the corpse—
doing what you had forbidden. Is that said clear enough? 405

CREON

How was she seen—and how taken?

GUARD

This is what happened. After we got there,
still brooding on your terrible threats,
and brushed away the dust that cloaked the corpse
to expose the putrefying object, 410
we went to the top of the hill, out of the wind,
to escape the contagion of its stink—
each man taunting those who did not look alert
but seemed to doze or slacken.

And so the time passed, 415
until the round lamp of the sun
with its burning heat stood high above our heads.
Then suddenly, a whirlwind rose
like a curse on the plain, tormenting the forest trees,
and all the air was clogged with dust. We bent low, 420
closed our eyes against this affliction from the gods, and endured.
It took a long time to end—and when it cleared
we saw the girl, bitterly wailing
the sharp cry of a mother bird

who grieves to see the nest empty of her young. 425
That was how she cried when she saw
the bare corpse—grief-stricken lamentation,
and evil curses on the ones who had done this.

At once she sprinkled the body with thirsty dust from the dry ground,
and lifting up a fine bronze pitcher of water, 430
honored the corpse with three libations.
Seeing this, all of us moved forward
to hold her there—which did not seem to surprise her—
and accuse her of this unlawful deed
done now and before, and she denied nothing. 435

In the same moment, I was torn
between joy and grief. It is good to escape
from trouble, but to lead a friend to punishment
is woeful. Yet I must confess that
my own safety is the most important. 440

CREON

And you, with your head bent to the ground,
do you admit or deny what you did?

ANTIGONE

I admit it—I do not deny anything.

CREON (*to the GUARD*)

You may go where you will,
no accusation against you. 445
(GUARD *exits stage left.*)
(*to ANTIGONE*)
But you—tell me, but briefly—
did you know it had been forbidden?

ANTIGONE

Of course I knew it. Everyone knew.

CREON

Yet you dared ignore those laws?

ANTIGONE

Zeus did not command these things, 450
nor did Justice, who dwells with the gods below,
ordain such laws for men.

Neither do I believe that your decrees,
or those of any other mortal, are strong enough to overrule
the ancient, unwritten, immutable laws of the gods, 455
which are not for the present alone, but have always
been—and no one knows when they began.
I would not risk the punishment of the gods
in fear of any man.

I already knew I was going to die—how could it be otherwise, 460
even if not at your command?

And if I die before my time—to me it seems a gain.

How can a person who lives as I do,
amid so many evils, not welcome death?
I do not fear that fate: it is the common lot, no special woe. 465
But if I should allow the corpse of my brother,
my mother's son, to lie unburied,
that would grieve me; nothing else.
And if it seems to you my acts are foolish,
Well—perhaps it is a fool who thinks so. 470

CHORUS

Like father, like daughter—a wild girl.
She has not learned to bend before the storm.

CREON

Do not forget that the most stubborn
are the first to fail, and sometimes
the iron bar longest-forged in the fire 475
is the one that shatters.

I have seen the bravest, most noble horse
tamed by the smallest curb. A slave
cannot afford proud thoughts when near his master.

She has already shown her arrogance 480
and flouted established law.

And now this second challenge—to do it again
and laughing, boast of her deed.

She will be the man, not I,
if she can go victorious and unpunished! 485

Whether she is my sister's child or even closer kin
than any who worship Zeus at our household altar,
neither she nor her sister will escape
an evil fate. I'm sure that the two of them
plotted this burial together. 490

(to his ATTENDANTS)

Go call the other—I saw her just now inside,
raving and out of her mind.
Even before they act, the minds of plotters
are overwhelmed by guilty thoughts!
But I hate even worse the ones who try to glorify 495
their lawless acts when caught.

ANTIGONE

What more do you want, now that you've caught me, than to kill me?

CREON

Nothing more. Because now I have everything.

ANTIGONE

Then what are you waiting for? Nothing you say
pleases me, nor could it ever— 500
no more than my words can please you.

And yet what could bring me more glory and fame
than to bury my own brother?
Everyone would rejoice in this
if fear did not shackle their tongues. 505

But tyranny who has so much of everything
can do and say whatever it wish.

CREON

You are the only Cadmean who takes this view.

ANTIGONE

They all see it as I do—but keep their mouths shut.

CREON

Aren't you ashamed to think differently from all the others? 510

ANTIGONE

There's nothing shameful in honoring one's own flesh and blood.

CREON

Can you deny it was also your own brother who died opposing him?

ANTIGONE

A brother, of the same blood and by the same mother and father.

CREON

Then how can you honor his enemy?

ANTIGONE

He is dead, and will never serve as a witness for your actions. 515

CREON

He will, if you insist on honoring them both equally.

ANTIGONE

It was not a slave who died, but a brother.

CREON

Died attacking this land, while the other defended it.

ANTIGONE

Nevertheless, Hades demands the customary rites.

CREON

But good and bad do not deserve them equally. 520

ANTIGONE

Who knows how these things are judged below?

CREON

An enemy is never a friend, even when dead.

ANTIGONE

My nature is drawn to love; I cannot hate either.

Creon and His Son Haemon

(Enter Haemon from the city, stage right. The CHORUS continues.)

Here is Haemon, your youngest and last-born.
Does he come grieving
for the fate of Antigone
and because he will be cheated
of his marriage bed and bride?

630

CREON

We'll know soon enough—with no need for seers.
Tell me, child, now you've heard my final judgment on her,
have you come in anger against your father,
or will you accept my decision, and still love me?

HAEMON

Father, I am your son, and what you say is good.
Your advice will keep me on the right path
and I shall heed it. No marriage
could be more important than your guidance.

635

CREON

Yes, son, it is best that you want
to follow your father in everything.

640

This is what men pray for: to have a household
of obedient, loyal children
who will defend their father against all enemies
and respect his friends.

The man who begets worthless children—what can you say
except that he has made a stick for his own back,
become a laughing stock to all the world? 645

And never, my boy, be deceived by the pleasure
a woman can give; that fire
soon dies down, and nothing is worse
than sharing your bed with someone who hates you.

650

A false lover is worse than a festering sore.
Spit her out like an enemy, like a piece of rotten food—
let this girl find her true husband in Hades.

I caught her openly disobeying—
the only person in the city who dared to do so—
and shall not go back on my word to the people.

655

I will execute her. Let her implore Zeus, the god of kinship,
as much as she likes; if I allow my own family
to flout my orders, everyone would do the same.

660

The man who rules his household justly
will also be a righteous citizen.

But the one who tries to overstep the rule of law
or impose his will on the leaders,
gets no applause from me.

665

It is essential to obey in both small and great matters
the man the city appoints, whether his demands are just,
or quite the opposite. I am confident
that he would command or serve equally well,
would stand his ground in the front line,
brave comrade and defender.

670

There is no greater evil than anarchy,
which destroys cities, ruins houses,
breaks ranks, and leads to rout and retreat.

In the final analysis, 675

it is obedience which saves most men,
and thus we must preserve the proper order of things.
And there is no way we can allow a woman to triumph.

Better to be defeated by any sort of man
than seen as weaker than a woman. 680

CHORUS
Unless old age has robbed us of our wits,
it seems to us that what you say makes sense.

HAEMON
Father, it is the gods who give to men
the highest gift, the power of reason.
I do not know how—and find it hard—to say 685
that you are not always right, and
there might be other ways to understand this matter.
It is my duty to observe and listen
to what the people talk about and blame you for.
Dread of your icy glance stops every citizen 690
from any comment which might displease you.
But in the darkness, I hear them, their murmurings,
the city weeping with pity for her—
the girl who least deserves to perish
for such a glorious deed—she, 695
who when her own brother fell in bloody battle
would not leave him lie unburied, to the mercies
of feral dogs and carrion birds.
Is she not worthy of honor, and a crown of gold?
Such are the muffled rumors that spread. 700

For me, father, there is nothing
more precious than your prosperity.
What greater glory for children than their father's renown,
or what for a father than the fame of his children?
But, father—do not maintain one fixed opinion, 705
insisting that it and no other is right;
for whoever believes that he knows best
and no one else can equal him in word or deed,
such men are exposed as empty vessels.
It is no shame for a wise man 710
to be flexible and learn from others.

You've seen how trees on the banks of a stream
swollen with winter rain, which bend to its force, survive,

but those that fight the storm die uprooted.
It's the same if the captain does not adjust his sails 715
to a sudden wind—his ship is overturned,
his decks are swamped, and his keel goes upwards.
You too, should calm your anger and consider.
I know I am only young, but
let me give my opinion. Of course 720
it would be wonderful if men were born wise—
but that's not what usually happens.
The best thing is to listen to good advice.

CHORUS
It is right, Lord, if his words seem just, that you should learn from him
as much as he from you. What you both say makes sense. 725

CREON (*to CHORUS*)
Is someone of our age to be taught about
the laws of human nature by such a stripling?

HAEMON
I do not speak of anything unrighteous. And though I am young,
judge me, please, by my actions, not my years.

CREON
Such as honoring those who cause disruption? 730

HAEMON
I do not say you should honor anyone evil.

CREON
But is she not infected by that sickness?

HAEMON
Her fellow citizens of Thebes deny it.

CREON
Is the city to tell me how to govern?

HAEMON
Now you sound like someone even younger than me! 735

CREON			CREON	
Am I to rule this land as I wish or according to others?			Do not think that while she lives you'll marry her.	750
HAEMON			HAEMON	
The city does not belong to one man alone.			Her death will lead to another.	
CREON			CREON	
Does not the city belong to he who rules?			Are you arrogant enough to threaten me?	
HAEMON			HAEMON	
You would be the perfect ruler for an empty desert.			How can I make threats against such empty nonsense?	
CREON (<i>to the CHORUS</i>)			CREON	
He might be fighting as a woman's ally!	740		Your empty so-called wisdom will end in tears.	
HAEMON			HAEMON	
Are you a woman?—because it's your side I'm on.			If you were not my father, I'd say you can't think straight.	755
CREON			CREON	
How? By attacking your father? You are vicious!			What arrogance, you woman's lackey!	
HAEMON			HAEMON	
I see it's not just matters of law that you're wrong about.			You want to speak, but will not listen.	
CREON			CREON	
Wrong—to protect my god-given authority?			Is that so? Listen, I swear by the gods of Olympus that you'll gain nothing by reviling and opposing me.	
HAEMON			(<i>to his ATTENDANTS</i>)	
You do not protect it when you flout the gods' laws.	745		Bring her out, that hateful wretch—and let her die here, before her bridegroom's eyes, at once.	760
CREON			(<i>ATTENDANTS exit through the double doors into the palace.</i>)	
O vile creature—even lower than a woman!			HAEMON	
HAEMON			Don't think you can do it in my presence or that you'll have the pleasure of seeing me watch it—nor ever see me again. Do what you want with your mad friends—if you have any friends left.	765
CREON			(<i>He rushes off toward the plain, stage left.</i>)	
But everything you say is in defense of her.				
HAEMON				
—and in defense of you, and me, and the gods below.				

CHORUS

He's gone. Young men's anger is swift and fierce,
and their grief almost too heavy to bear.

CREON

Let him go. He can do—or dream—the act of a brave man,
but nothing will save the two girls from their fate.

CHORUS

Surely you will not kill them both? 770

CREON

No, you're right. Not the one who did nothing.

CHORUS

And what fate do you intend for the other?

CREON

I will lead her on desolate paths
into a hidden rocky cave and leave her there alive
with the least food the law requires, 775
so that the city can escape pollution.

And there, praying to Hades, the god of the Underworld,
the only god she honors, perhaps
she'll manage to survive—or else will finally learn
how futile it was to put her trust in Hades. 780