УДК 821.14-21.09'02 Софокл
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17721/1728-2659.2022.31.11

John D. Pappas
ORCID: 0000-0003-1852-3603
e-mail: pappas.research@gmail.com
AGM Law Firm, Athens, Greece

Demetra Asimakopoulou
ORCID: 0000-0001-9498-3885
e-mail: demetra.asimakopoulou@gmail.com
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

HERACLITIAN DYNAMICS IN THE *ANTIGONE* AND THE FALLACY OF THE *RIGHT OF THE STRONGEST*

The endless debates on Sophocles' Antigone reflect different analytical perspectives as to the multiple and concurrent dualities intertwined in the drama, like legality and legitimacy, lawfulness and morality, expediency and tradition, humans and the divine. Still, subjective perspectives notwithstanding, a conceptually and aesthetically prevalent duality in the Antigone pertains to the head-on conflict between (king Creon's) material power and (Antigone's) moral strength: Adult Creon's reasoning for enforcing his deadly kingly edict on adolescent Antigone is well founded with respect to the imperative need to maintain law and order in his dominion, as a necessary condition for reinstituting socio-political stability and ensuring the security and independence of his polis, especially in extreme conditions of civil warfare; nevertheless his aesthetically hubristic exertion of power leads the monarch's own family to self-destruction. In this mythological twist of fate, the Antigone brings to the fore artistically (and barely disputably) the limitations of the so-called right of the strongest, because the strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty.

Keywords: Sophocles' Antigone, hubris, nemesis, Peloponnesian War, illegitimate power, hegemony.

1. The spell of Atē in the *Antigone*[1]

In the ancient Greek world, hubris or ὕβρις was viewed as both insulting to the gods and violating the natural order of the cosmic universe: A hubristic action, which constitutes a substantial aberration from measure or μέτρον (in classical works) or αἶσιμα (in Homer's epics) is not in line with (or within the bounds of) the aberrant perpetrator's limitations or fate or destiny or (Homer's) αἶσα. As consequence, from an Heraclitian perspective[2], hubris sets in motion the retributive forces of Nemesis or Νέμεσις, the goddess that personifies justice and reinstitutes the balance of social and natural order by intervening violently to reinstitute the state of nature to a new equilibrium, because "*through the future, both near and distant, as through the past, shall this law prevail: nothing that is vast comes to the life of mortals without ruin*" (τό τ' ἔπειτα καὶ τὸ μέλλον καὶ τὸ πρὶν ἐπαρκέσει νόμος ὅδ', οὐδὲν ἕρπει θνατῶν βιότῳ πάμπολύ γ' ἐκτὸς ἄτας), as stated in the second stasimon of Sophocles' Antigone (*l.* 612-4). To a subject of hubris, "evil at one time or another seems good" (τὸ κακὸν δοκεῖν ποτ' ἐσθλὸν) (*l.* 622) due to the intervention of goddess Atē or Ἄτη, according to the classical dynamic scheme that involves the following intertwined concepts:

Atē (Ἄτη) ⇆ hubris (ὕβρις) ⇆
⇆Nemesis (Νέμεσις) → Tisis (Τίσις) (1)

In general, "*Atē instills confusion in the mind of every subject of hubristic behavior, and she thus personifies self-destructive syndromes like defensive avoidance, overvigilance, reactivity and denial. These are ruinous states of mind that have led many economies, armies, states, and empires to disaster or even to collapse*" [11, p. 83], i.e. to catastrophe or tisis (τίσις), as consequence of the intervention of Nemesis (Νέμεσις) after every trespassing or ὑπερβασία of a destined limit (*l.* 605-614):

> Your power, great Zeus – what human overstepping can check it? Yours is power that neither Sleep, the all-ensnaring, nor the untiring months of the gods can defeat. Unaged through time, you rule by your power and dwell thereby in the brilliant splendor of Olympus. And through the future, both near and distant, as through the past, shall this law prevail: nothing that is vast comes to the life of mortals without ruin.
>
> (Τεάν, Ζεῦ, δύνασιν τίς ἀνδρῶν ὑπερβασία κατάσχοι, τὰν οὔθ' ὕπνος αἱρεῖ ποθ' ὁ πάντ' ἀγρεύων, οὔτε θεῶν ἄκματοι μῆνες, ἀγήρῳ δὲ χρόνῳ δυνάστας κατέχεις Ὀλύμπου μαρμαρόεσσαν αἴγλαν. Τό τ' ἔπειτα καὶ τὸ μέλλον καὶ τὸ πρὶν ἐπαρκέσει νόμος ὅδ', οὐδὲν ἕρπει θνατῶν βιότῳ πάμπολύ γ' ἐκτὸς ἄτας)

In the second stasimon, this law is presented as absolute and universal, because when "*a god leads a man to ruin then only for the briefest moment such man fares free of the grasp of Atē*" (θεὸς ἄγει πρὸς ἄταν: πράσσει δ' ὀλίγιστον χρόνον ἐκτὸς ἄτας) (*l.* 624-625).

2. Atēan fallacy of strength

A historiographical example of the overwhelming spell of *Atē* on subjects of hubris is the failed attempt of Artabanus to avert the Persians from expanding their empire to Europe. Specifically, he gave the following strategic advice to Xerxes, as the latter was preparing to invade Greece:

> Do you see how God does not allow the bigger animals to become insolently visible, as it is them that He strikes with his lightning rather than the smaller ones that never insult Him? Do you also see how He throws his bolts always against the tallest buildings and the tallest trees? Because God likes to draw back anything that stands out. Likewise, even a mighty army may be discomfited by a small army, whenever God in His wrath exposes the former to fear [feelings of terror] or storm [natural disasters] through which they perish in a way unworthy of them. Because God allows no one to consider himself great, except Himself.
>
> (Ὄρᾷς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα ζῷα ὡς κεραυνοῖ ὁ θεὸς οὐδὲ ἐᾷ φαντάζεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σμικρὰ οὐδέν μιν κνίζει: ὁρᾷς δὲ ὡς ἐς οἰκήματα τὰ μέγιστα αἰεὶ καὶ δένδρεα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀποσκήπτει τὰ βέλεα: φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν. οὕτω δὲ καὶ στρατὸς πολλὸς ὑπὸ ὀλίγου διαφθείρεται κατὰ τοιόνδε: ἐπεάν σφι ὁ θεὸς φθονήσας φόβον ἐμβάλῃ ἢ βροντήν, δι' ὧν ἐφθάρησαν ἀναξίως ἑωυτῶν. Οὐ γὰρ ἐᾷ φρονέειν μέγα ὁ θεὸς ἄλλον ἢ ἑωυτόν (Herodotus, *Histories* 7.10e.))

Xerxes made the hubristic mistake of ignoring Artabanus' Heraclitean advice, because he was under the spell of *Atē*. The typical pairing of hubris and nemesis, that appears in many tragedies such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* and Euripides' *Hippolytus,* is almost always associated with the Homeric goddess *Atē* or equivalently with the *Atēan effect*, i.e. a hubristic perpetrator's distorted perception of reality, in either mythological or historical time, as stated epigrammatically by the Chorus in *the Antigone* (*l.* 622). As a matter of fact, such *Atēan* confusion in the mind of such perpetrator often maps to a chain of events in the ensuing human interaction or conflict, whose outcome is barely foreseeable.

Indicatively, as to Sophocles' sense of nemesic unpredictability, the *Parode* of the *Antigone* includes a powerful description of the ferocious battle between the attacking (stronger) Argeians and the defending (weaker) Thebans (*l.* 125–140):

> So fierce was the crash of battle swelling about his back, a match too hard to win for the rival of the dragon. For Zeus detests above all the boasts of a proud tongue. And when he saw them advancing in a swollen flood, arrogant their clanging gold, he dashed with brandished fire one who was already starting to shout victory when he had reached our ramparts. Staggered, he fell to the earth with a crash, torch in hand, a man possessed by the frenzy of the mad attack, who just now was raging against us with the blasts of his tempestuous hate. But his threats did not fare as he had hoped, and to the other enemies mighty Ares dispensed each their own dooms with hard blows, Ares, our mighty ally at the turning-point.
>
> (Τοῖος ἀμφὶ νῶτ' ἐτάθη πάταγος Ἄρεος, ἀντιπάλῳ δυσχείρωμα δράκοντος. Ζεὺς γὰρ μεγάλης γλώσσης κόμπους ὑπερεχθαίρει, καὶ σφας ἐσιδὼν πολλῷ ῥεύματι προσνισσομένους χρυσοῦ καναχῆς ὑπεροπλίαις, παλτῷ ῥιπτεῖ πυρὶ βαλβίδων ἐπ' ἄκρων ἤδη νίκην ὁρμῶντ' ἀλαλάξαι. ἀντιτύπᾳ δ' ἐπὶ γᾷ πέσε τανταλωθεὶς πυρφόρος, ὃς τότε μαινομένᾳ ξὺν ὁρμᾷ βακχεύων ἐπέπνει ῥιπαῖς ἐχθίστων ἀνέμων. εἶχε δ' ἄλλᾳ τὰ μέν, ἄλλα δ' ἐπ' ἄλλοις ἐπενώμα στυφελίζων μέγας Ἄρης δεξιόσειρος).

In lines 106–121 Sophocles gives a poetic description of the siege of Thebes by the Argeian army, which seemed to be so strong or even invincible – as it "*flew, like a screaming eagle, over into the Theban land*" (ὀξέα κλάζων ἀετὸς εἰς γᾶν ὡς ὑπερέπτα) "*in full armor*" (πανσαγίᾳ) "*with a mass of weapons and crested helmets ... with spears thirsting for blood*" (πολλῶν μεθ' ὅπλων ξύν θ' ἱπποκόμοις κορύθεσσιν... φονώσαισιν λόγχαις) – that initially caused feelings of awe and terror to besieged Thebans. Still, from an analytical perspective of deterministic causality, (primarily) the bravery of the defenders, who were fighting for their freedom and the independence of their *polis*, in combination with (secondarily) the unforeseen dynamic of the battle, turned the battle against the (stronger) attackers, whose "*threats did not fare as they had hoped*", because to those (stronger) enemy forces "*mighty Ares dispensed each their own dooms with hard blows*" (εἶχε δ' ἄλλᾳ τὰ μέν, ἄλλα δ' ἐπ' ἄλλοις ἐπενώμα στυφελίζων μέγας Ἄρης) (*l.* 138-9) at the most critical moment, "*the turning-point*"[3] or the *critical point* of the battle (*l.* 140) [4].

When the relatively stronger Argeians embarked on their military campaign, they were hubristically overconfident as to their future victory against the Thebans. Their overconfidence was *Atēan* because it was one-dimensional: The Argeians perceived their quantitative supremacy, in men and armor, as sufficient for ensuring their victory. They failed to *see* their moral inferiority vis-à-vis their adversary: They could not duly take into consideration the fact they were led in that war by a traitor, the Theban prince Polynices (Πολυνείκης), Antigone's brother. Consequently, the attacking Argeians failed to understand in time, before the battle, that the (materially weaker) Thebans were cornered to a moral dilemma between two ominous options: Either surrender and be ruled by a traitor – to the infamy of their *polis* and to the intergenerational shame of themselves – or fight to the end to defend their *polis* and their personal dignity. The Thebans opted for the second alternative. They thus made up for their deficiency in material strength by their supremacy in moral standing and thus in fighting morale. Consequently, the defending (weaker) Thebans won and the attacking (stronger) Argeians lost the battle, as frequently happens in human history.

This Sophoclean theme, i.e. victory of the materially weaker but morally stronger adversary, is in line with the collective memory of the Athenians and all Greeks in the Classical era, in the aftermath of the Persian invasion of mainland Greece in 492-479 BC, when two opposite value systems collided for the first time in history – the materialistic value system of Asia and the idealistic value system of pre-classical Greece, the former aiming at power, the latter at virtue. That conflict of values was outlined eloquently by Tigranes, son of Artabanus and Persian general in front of Mardonius, chief general of Xerxis, the hegemon of the Persian Empire at the time (480 BC):

> Good heavens, Mardonius, what kind of men are these that you have pitted us against? It is not for material gain they contend but for virtue!
>
> (παπαῖ Μαρδόνιε, κοίους ἐπ' ἄνδρας ἤγαγες μαχησομένους ἡμέας, οἳ οὐ περὶ χρημάτων τὸν ἀγῶνα ποιοῦνται ἀλλὰ περὶ ἀρετῆς (Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.26c))

Likewise, a conflict between two deviating value systems, i.e. between legality (enacted human law) and morality (perceived universal or divine law), takes center stage in the Antigone. Adult Creon is the seemingly powerful co-protagonist, the new victorious king of Thebes, whose first day of reign was gloriously marked by the great victory of his *polis* against the Argeian aggressors, right after the fratricidal elimination of Eteocles and Polynices, Antigone's brothers and contenders of the throne, who killed each other in the battle. On the contrary, Antigone is the *seemingly* powerless co-protagonist: She is adolescent and sister of an infamous traitor (Polynices). Moreover, as female, she is looked down on by Creon, as he explicitly states in his kingly and fatherly advice to prince Haemon (*l.* 677-680):

> We must defend those who respect order, and in no way can we let a woman defeat us. It is better to fall from power, if it is fated, by a man's hand, than that we be called weaker than women.
>
> (ἀμυντέ' ἐστὶ τοῖς κοσμουμένοις, κοὔτοι γυναικὸς οὐδαμῶς ἡσσητέα. κρεῖσσον γάρ, εἴπερ δεῖ, πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐκπεσεῖν, κοὐκ ἂν γυναικῶν ἥσσονες καλοίμεθ' ἄν).

As wartime king, Creon is reasonably concerned primarily with political stability that may be effected by the enforcement of relative human law (i.e. by the application of the principle of legality at a certain point in spacetime) especially in the critical period right after the end of a ferocious civil war. Antigone though is equally reasonably concerned with intertemporal (eternal) divine will or absolute moral law (perceivably applicable to all humanity in all time), both in wartime and peacetime[4].

The common denominator of the *seemingly* stronger protagonists in those dramas, mythological or historical, like the Argeian aggressors in mythological time, the Persian invaders in historical time and king Creon in the *Antigone*, is the *Atēan* (narrow-minded) *fallacy of strength*, i.e. a perceived certainty (overconfidence) that the outcome of a conflict will necessarily favor the materially (quantitatively) strongest – although relative material strength *in and by itself* is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of victory in wartime or prevalence in peacetime.

3. From reasoning to aesthetics

The *fallacy of strength* notwithstanding, the argumentation of Creon (socio-political order and independence of his *polis*) is as rationally valid as that of Antigone (natural order and reverence to the divine). Both those arguments (*l.* 450–525) are *isosthenic,* i.e. equally valid (rational) in Epicurean terms, and therefore neither can be used as a sole criterion *in and by itself* for leading the audience to a conclusive and final (undisputable) judgment as to the two protagonists, i.e. as to who was the one that deviated hubristically away from *measure* (μέτρον) under those extreme conditions in wartime[5].

Still, the Sophoclean dual-protagonist structure of the *Antigone*, where one protagonist is adult male (Creon) and

the other is adolescent female (Antigone), evokes the dramatic scenography of the conflict: *Adult* Creon and the *elders* of the Chorus, standing for all (adult male) citizens of Thebes, collude in entombing *alive* an *adolescent* female. Such horrible death is *per se* not merely unnatural (i.e. uncommon to other species on earth) but also aesthetically surreal. Moreover when the perpetrators are a group of adult males against an adolescent female, such entombing is obviously a sickening act of almost unimaginable or mythological perversion – a felony in the contemporary legal order the world over – as the Chorus implies in the fourth stasimon (*l*. 944-987).

In Antigone's terminal mourning (Kommos or Κομμός), Sophocles highlights the aesthetics of the drama, by explicitly presenting Antigone, in her own words, as an adolescent "*unwept, unfriended, without marriage-song*" (ἄκλαυτος, ἄφιλος, ἀνυμέναιος) (*l*. 876) doomed to meet her destiny all alone in her "*tomb*" (τύμβος), which she desperately and symbolically perceives as a distorted "*bridal-chamber*" (νυμφεῖον) (*l*. 891). All alone, she speaks in awe and despair (In Antigone's Kommos, she is speaking to her tomb addressing it as her "*bridal chamber*"" (*l*. 891–892): "*Oh tomb! Oh bridal-chamber! Oh deep-dug eternal prison...* " (ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφὴς οἴκησις ἀείφρουρος...). Sophocles has Antigone repeat that exclamation emphatically, three times on the same line, for a reason: to convey to the audience her awe and ultimate desperation as she turns to speak to her grave, just a few moments before she is led to the eternal darkness of her tomb and her horrible death. Such awe is conveyed adequately when that long-vowel exclamation (ὦ) is pronounced with Hellenistic pronunciation, i.e. as "ooo" in high pitch, where every "**o**" is pronounced as in "v**o**lative" [1, p. 17, 20]: video clip of Antigone's Kommos in Ancient Greek at 1:30 with English subtitles here, with Ancient-Greek subtitles here].) *to* her tomb, and through the tomb to her dead brother, because nobody else in her *polis* wants to listen to her anymore.

In the aesthetic context of entombing an adolescent female alive, Sophocles, defines king Creon's transgression (hubris) explicitly in the Antigone through seer Tiresias[6], who characterizes Creon as "violator" of the divine will or (universal) moral law: "*In the dead you have no part, nor do the gods above, but in this you do them violence*" (ὧν οὔτε σοὶ μέτεστιν οὔτε τοῖς ἄνω θεοῖσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ σοῦ βιάζονται τάδε) (*l*. 1072-1073).

Sophocles' emphasis on such scenographical aesthetics of the tragedy paves the way to a partial resolution to endlessly irresolvable debates as to who of the two protagonists is "right". More specifically, in light of the "*indeterminacy in the concept of measure*" [11, p. 94], Sophocles offers his audience a complementary and enlightening criterion for subjective judgment as to the two protagonists: the *aesthetics* of the drama. Because *measure* and *beauty* are intertwined concepts (as manifested in the architecture of the Parthenon) while *hubris* and *ugliness* are also intertwined (as in the concentration camps of the Holocaust).

A basic problem in this respect, as far as the audience is concerned, is that not all humans are capable of aesthetically appreciating, or even *seeing*, (*measured*) beauty and its difference from (*hubristic*) ugliness in all situations and under all circumstances:

> It is the human balance in which strength has reason to give way to weakness, and weakness has resources to find strength. It is the human mean that can live only within a community. The best human life is a topic that demands philosophic reflection, but such reflection would not be possible if one could not, in the first place, simply see its form [13, p. 22][7].

In fact, the form of *measure* is not always visible to all humans all the time, for an evolutionary reason: The divine apportions natural boundaries to innately hybrid humans, i.e. to finite entities in an infinite evolutionary environment of continuous change per Heraclitus[8]. As such, humans are all potentially aberrant from measure, as reflected by the duality of the divine and the human perspectives in the *Antigone*, which tend to diverge rather than converge:

> Nature and man have their boundaries apportioned to them. But the finite beings are unable to stay within these boundaries. They can only exist if they continue to partake of the power which has engendered them, if they keep sharing in the deinotes which has brought them into existence. But then power is doubled: on the one hand it is divine, apportioning power, on the other hand it manifests itself in finite entities. It is this duality that engenders the tragic conflict. The power concentrated in finite entities prevents them from accepting the boundaries set them. They are 'hybrid'. . . . From the perspective of the entities themselves, they have to stay within their boundaries, but they have to transcend them as well. It is both necessary and impossible to avoid transgression. Because entities need strength in order to exist, they are unable to distinguish between the exercise of power inside and that outside their limits. . . In the Antigone the cosmic order is revealed in its duality. It is part of this order that finite beings transgress their limits and are destroyed. Divine order is also disorder" [10, p. 203].

By nature, it is difficult for humans to see the *form* of measure and thus reach self-awareness as to their own personal limitations and predestined boundaries; but even if they do, it is still difficult for them as mortals to remain conscientiously within such boundaries.

Consequently, the aesthetics of the drama might be conducive to the resolution of *some* but *not all* of the endless debates on the *Antigone*, as to the basic dualities of the plot, like legality and legitimacy, lawfulness and morality, locality and universality, order and change, society and family, individuality and personality, expediency and tradition, humans and the divine, as well as a gender gap and a generation gap, that are all quite apparent in the *Antigone*.

4. The fallacy of *the right of the strongest*

Sophocles wrote the *Antigone* probably in 438 B.C. [6, p. 35-50], just 7 years before the Peloponnesian War broke out, which was hubristically waged for nearly three decades (431–404 BC) to the infamy of Periclean Athens and to the self-destruction of classical Athens. The fatal fate of both the *house of the Labdacids* – the royal dynasty whose *last* male descendants were Eteocles and Polynices – and king Creon's family (*l*. 593) in the *Antigone* was to a certain degree similar to that of Athens. With a clairvoyant poet's foresight, Sophocles pefigures the catastrophic (nemesic) effects of the Athenians' imperial folly symbolically and prophetically[9]. In the Classical era, the Athenians set out to expand their victorious *polis* of moral virtue (ἀρετή) to an empire of "*vast*" (πάμπολύ) power (*l*. 614), in hubristic (distorted and imitative) application of the hegemonic paradigm of the defeated Persian Empire. From an aesthetic perspective, the Sophoclean dual-protagonist structure of the *Antigone* might reflect a specific political symbolism: Metaphorically, adult Creon might be viewed as standing for the hegemonists (politically "mature") of Periclean Athens, while adolescent Antigone as standing for the early unspoiled spirit of idealists (politically "adolescent") of pre-classical Athens a few decades earlier, when the latter, in defense of their *polis* and freedom, fought as the idealist "*vanguard of all Hellenes*" (Ἑλλήνων προμαχοῦντες) and defeated all invading forces of the materialist "*gold-bearing Persians*" (χρυσοφόρων Μήδων) (Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates*, 1.109; also [8, p. 150]).

Indicatively, Sophocles' implicit reference to the fragile and fateful (short-lived) *Athenian Alliance* – "*where all the*

cities are stirred up in hostility" (ἐχθραὶ δὲ πᾶσαι συνταράσσονται πόλεις) (*l.* 1080) – alludes to the enmity of most Greek *poleis* against the imperial transgressions of hegemonic Athens. That allusion, however metaphorical or indirect, was rather bold politically, given that Pericles himself might be sitting literally by Sophocles' side amidst the audience in performances of the *Antigone* at the time. Indeed, the allusion is stressed by seer Tiresias' harsh or even contemptuous words against king Creon, as if Sophocles were addressing through Tiresias the Athenians or even Pericles himself: "*There, now, are arrows for your heart ... launched at you, archer-like ... They fly true – you cannot run from their burning sting*" (τοιαῦτά σου, λυπεῖς γάρ, ὥστε τοξότης ἀφῆκα θυμῷ, καρδίας τοξεύματα βέβαια, τῶν σὺ θάλπος οὐχ ὑπεκδραμεῖ) (*l.* 1084–1086). At the time, it might have been obvious to Sophocles, as to the other Great Tragedians, that Greece had been going hubristically far beyond *measure* as soon as the independent city-states formed confederations and expansionary alliances that battled one another over a hubristically unrealistic prize, i.e. politico-economic dominance all over Greece and even beyond, in emulation of the Asian paradigm.

Indeed, the Athenian hubris of disproportionate imperialistic expansion, entangled them to a vicious circle of self-destruction in the Peloponnesian War, wherein their glorious *polis* lost its moral and cultural stature by committing crimes against humanity, like the Athenian Massacre of Melos (416 BC) or even the execution of Socrates (399 BC). In specific, the Athenians considered the Massacre of Melos as a reasonably justifiable act of strategic pragmatism. They stated epigrammatically (and quite unscrupulously) to the Melians the so-called *right of the strongest* (Thucydides, *Histories* 5.89): *"right, as the world perceives it, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must"* (δίκαια μὲν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν). The implied meaning of this excerpt may be duly comprehended only if it is analyzed within the wider context of *Histories:* A widespread fallacy is that through this excerpt Thucydides states his own point of view that the *right of the strongest* is a fundamental determinant in human interaction and international relations. This fallacy though overlooks two basic facts: (a) the hegemonist Athenians, not Thucydides the historian, proclaimed the *right of the strongest*, and (b) the entire masterpiece of *Histories* is virtually a thesis about the catastrophic repercussions of that perverted hegemonic (hubristic) concept[10] upon their own glorious *polis,* their short-lived Athenian Alliance, and ultimately all Classical Greece.

Obviously, the novice imperialist Athenians had become incapable of *viewing* their hubristic crime as an act of genocidal barbarism, i.e. as a horrendous crime that would bring upon them the retribution of cosmic Justice (Nemesis) in the form of their devastating defeat in the Peloponnesian War and ultimately the downfall of their *polis* as an independent city-state thereafter, as prescribed by Heraclitus, as prefigured by Sophocles in the *Antigone*, and as described analytically by Thucydides in his *Histories*. At the time, under the spell of *Atē*, the Athenians, perceived those crimes as rationally justifiable on the grounds of (perceived) political expediency, i.e. projection of imperialist power through the annihilation of Melos. Soon thereafter, they committed another crime, the execution of Socrates, to their eternal infamy, on the grounds of intended sociopolitical cohesion of their *polis*, which assumedly was threatened by Socrates' criticism of both democrats and oligarchs in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War [5, p. 92–94] – the latter grounds being similar to those of king Creon's reasoning in the *Antigone*, i.e. the perceived imperative need for applying the principle of *legality* absolutely (akin to Roman ***dūra lēx, sed lēx***) for ensuring social cohesion and political stability.

Like the mythological Argeians and king Creon in the *Antigone*, the historical Athenians had become unable to *see* the ugliness of their crimes and *sense* or *perceive* their loss of proportion[11]. As nemesic consequence of their hubristic aberration from *measure* (μέτρον), their *polis* lost its independence just a few decades thereafter once and for all, while the Athenians themselves – like the Theban royal *house of the Labdacids* as well as king Creon's own family[12] in the *Antigone* – were genetically annihilated in the following centuries[13]. At least, no Athenian in the Classical era could blame Sophocles that he did not forewarn them, albeit to no effect, as to the unsustainability of the Athenian Alliance and the long-term (γήρᾳ or *in old age*) repercussions of their hubristic hegemonic transgressions (*l.* 1347–1352):

> "Thinking prudently[14] is a prime precondition of prosperity, and our dealings with the gods must be in no way unholy, not even once. And the great words, having repaid arrogant men with great blows, have taught them how to think prudently in their old age".
>
> (πολλῷ τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας πρῶτον ὑπάρχει. χρὴ δὲ τά γ' εἰς θεοὺς μηδὲν ἀσεπτεῖν. μεγάλοι δὲ λόγοι μεγάλας πληγὰς τῶν ὑπεραύχων ἀποτίσαντες γήρᾳ τὸ φρονεῖν ἐδίδαξαν).

In the above phrase μηδὲν ἀσεπτεῖν ("*in no way* unholy, *not even once*"), μηδὲν is translated in English in an augmented 6-word descriptive double phrase ("*in no way . . . not even once*") to point out Sophocles' *zero tolerance* of irreverence to the divine or equivalently of violations of the moral law, given that μηδὲν – etym. μηδὲ (meaning "not even") + ἕν (meaning "one") – is neutral-gender form of the masculine-gender word μηδείς ("not even one"). In general, the Sophoclean *zero tolerance* of irreverence or injustice is in line with the Aristotelean *zero tolerance* of *any* act of injustice[15].

In conclusion though, both mythological king Creon and the historical Athenians were mentally carried away by their *past* triumphs and failed to pay due attention to legitimacy, adherence to morality, and reverence to divine order (universal norms) in their own *present* time. They consequently failed to avoid disasters in their near or foreseeable future and ultimately Atē led them all to their pathetic self-destruction, effected by invincible Nemesis. Because from a Sophoclean perspective, implied in the Antigone, the triptych *justice, morality and reverence* – the latter also known as the Roman virtue *pietas* – is a necessary condition of sustainability, i.e. these virtues in combination may enable individuals, states or Great Powers to think prudently (φρονεῖν) and thus ensure their prosperity (εὐδαιμονία).

Acknowledgement: The authors are indebted to Svitlana Grytsenko, Olesia Lazer-Pankiv, Igor Korolyov, Olena Materynska of the *Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Literary Studies. Linguistics. Folklore Studies*, for their meticulous bibliographical and overall editing and layout of the article, as well as for the accurate translation of the title and abstract in Ukrainian.

Notes

[1]In this monograph, all original text of the *Antigone*, in Ancient Greek, has been copied from F. Storr's [14] first volume of two-volume *Sophocles*, as it appears in digital form in the Perseus Digital Library of Tufts University. All Greek words herein are hyperlinked to the Liddell-Scott Greek-English online lexicon in that library.

[2]The concept *hubris* or *hybris* (ὕβρις) was introduced into modern academic literature by Friedrich Nietzsche as of 1873 by his incomplete treatise *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. He explicitly connects this classical concept with Heraclitus [9, p. 61]:

"*That dangerous word hybris is indeed the touchstone for every Heraclitan. Here he must show whether he has understood or failed to recognize his master*". In English, the term *hubris* means excessive pride, insolent self-confidence, or haughtiness.

[3]The descriptive translation of "δεξιόσειρος" – which means literally the "leading" horse, the first one in the *right row* (δεξιά σειρά) of the horses of a chariot – into "*our mighty ally at the turning-point*" enables the English-speaking reader to understand that Ares, the god of war, did not wage the battle by himself, all alone, for the Thebans, but instead the Theban army fought bravely and won the war in "alliance" with "*mighty*" Ares, who stands for the unpredictable dynamic of the battle.

[4]Antigone's adherence to the norms of intertemporal (eternal) divine will or absolute moral law is stated by herself conscientiously and knowledgeably in her heated apologetic conversation with king Creon (*l*. 450-459):

> Since it was not Zeus that published me that edict, and since not of that kind are the laws which Justice who dwells with the gods below established among men. Nor did I think that your decrees were of such force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes given us by the gods. For their life is not of today or yesterday, but for all time, and no man knows when they were first put forth. Not for fear of any man's pride was I about to owe a penalty to the gods for breaking these.
>
> (οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε, οὐδ' ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη τοιούσδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισεν νόμους. οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ κηρύγματ', ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν. οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη. τούτων ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔμελλον, ἀνδρὸς οὐδενὸς φρόνημα δείσασ', ἐν θεοῖσι τὴν δίκην δώσειν).

[5]From a certain perspective, it might seem that Creon is a rightful defender of the law and social order, while Antigone is a (hubristic) violator of the law or even a (traitorous) rebel in wartime [7, p. 4–15; 2, p. 504–516].

[6]Seer Tiresias was an omnipresent transgenerational figure in mythological Thebes: His long life spanned seven generations, starting from Cadmus, founder of the royal house of Thebes. As a wise clairvoyant adhering to common sense and natural order, he mediates between the future and the past, the living and the dead, this world and the underworld, humans and the gods, logic and intuition, the earthly and the transcendental, the seeing and the blind, male and female. In his young age, he became a priestess of Hera, when that goddess transformed him to a woman for seven years. In sum, Tiresias is an Apollonian figure that wanders around mythological Thebes and evolves amidst an intertemporal Dionysiac *processus* of unpredictable chain of events in human affairs.

[7]Obviously – notwithstanding the issue of whether most humans really have a sense of measure so that they can "*simply see its form*" – that important (aesthetical) aspect of the conflict between the two protagonists (an adult male versus an adolescent female) may be lost aesthetically on stage to a considerable degree in performances where Antigone is impersonated by an *adult* actor.

[8]According to Plato, "*Heraclitus says, somewhere, that 'all things move and nothing remains still,' and he likens the universe to the current of a river, saying that 'you cannot step twice into the same river'* " (λέγει που Ἡράκλειτος ὅτι 'πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει,' καὶ ποταμοῦ ῥοῇ ἀπεικάζων τὰ ὄντα λέγει ὡς 'δὶς ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης') (Plato, *Cratylus* 402a).

[9]Antigone's monologue in *Kommos* has some common characteristics with the Passions of Christ: For example, her words of desperation "*Why should I look to the gods anymore?*" (τί χρή με τὴν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἔτι βλέπειν;) (*l*. 922) is akin to Jesus' words on the Cross "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Θεέ μου θεέ μου, ἵνα τί με ἐγκατέλιπες;) (Matthew 27.46); her statement "*by my reverence I have earned a name for irreverence*" (τὴν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦσα ἐκτησάμην) (*l*. 924) could be an epigrammatic epitome of the Holy Passions (τὴν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβῶν ἐκτήσατο); and so on. Still, Antigone is barely forgiving to all those guilty of her horrible death. Her last words "*I could wish for them no greater evils than they inflict unjustly on me*" (μὴ πλείω κακὰ πάθοιεν ἢ καὶ δρῶσιν ἐκδίκως ἐμέ) (*l*. 929) fall short the (transcendental) saying of Jesus' "*Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing*" (ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν) (Luke 23.34). Antigone's wish connotes the fundamental judicial principle of *proportional reciprocity* (not Jesus' unconditional forgiveness) that was later propounded and elaborated by Aristotle. More specifically, Antigone's last words barely reflect the principle of *lex talionis* (legal equivalence, as in "equivalent r*etaliation*"), which traces its origins to the Babylonian code (enacted in 1772 BC by Hammurabi, the sixth king of Babylon) and to the Biblical scripture "*an eye for an eye*" or "עין תחת עין" (Leviticus 24:20; Exodus 21:24; Deuteronomy 19:21): She does not wish those guilty of her death a punishment that would be *as great as* hers, but instead one that would be "*no greater than*" hers (μὴ πλείω), alluding to *proportional reciprocity*, which takes into consideration extenuating circumstances, e.g. the *fragile* state of affairs in her *polis* right after the end of the civil war as well as the *extinction* of the royal name of her father ever since. According to Aristotle, *proportionate reciprocity* with qualification that takes account of circumstances, is the sort of justice that safeguards social cohesion and the sustainability of the city-state (*polis*): "*This sort of justice does hold men together: reciprocity in accordance with a proportion and not on the basis of precisely equal return. For it is by proportionate requital that the city-state holds together*" (Συνέχει τὸ τοιοῦτον δίκαιον, τὸ ἀντιπεπονθὸς κατ' ἀναλογίαν καὶ μὴ κατ' ἰσότητα. Τῷ ἀντιποιεῖν γὰρ ἀνάλογον συμμένει ἡ πόλις.) (Aristotle, *Ethics* 1132b: 33–35).

[10]Twenty-two (22) centuries after Sophocles and Thucydides, Rousseau [12] characterized the Athenian concept of the *right of the strongest* as irrational "*nonsense*" and rejected it altogether explicitly in *The Social Contract* (book I, ch. III): *The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty . . . Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will – at the most, an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a duty?. . . If force creates right, the effect changes with the cause: every force that is greater than the first succeeds to its right. As soon as it is possible to disobey with impunity, disobedience is legitimate; and, the strongest being always in the right, the only thing that matters is to act so as to become the strongest. But what kind of right is that which perishes when force fails? . . . Clearly, the word "right" adds nothing to force: in this connection, it means absolutely nothing…Let us then admit that force does not create right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers.*

[11]The classical concept of *measure* or sense of *proportion*, which is the implied thematic cornerstone of the *Antigone*, has geopolitical significance and applicability. For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States (1933–1945), attempted to avert the Greek Civil War (1944–1949) by sending, through Winston S. Churchill, then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in wartime, a Presidential message (18 April 1944) to the political and military leaders of the warring Greek factions, in which he stated, albeit to no effect [3, p. 484–485]: "*I hope that Greeks everywhere will set aside pettiness and regain their* ***sense of proportion****. Let every Greek think of their glorious past and show personal unselfishness which is so necessary now*".

[12]At the end of the drama, king Creon reaches self-awareness and rushes belatedly to Antigone's tomb to save her life, alas to no avail (*l*. 1204–1225): Upon his arrival in her tomb, he finds Antigone dead and nearly witnesses his son, prince Haemon, committing suicide by the side of his beloved Antigone, soon to be followed by Creon's wife, Queen Eurydice, who also committed suicide in despair over her son's death.

[13]Indicatively, at the time of the destruction of the Parthenon (1687 AD), the ultimate symbol of the Athenian democracy, no descendant of ancient Athenians existed in their *polis* – which has been a historical and tragic city of great accomplishments, hubristic crimes and nemesic self-destruction.

[14]In this stanza (*l*. 1347–1352), Sophocles lays stress on "τὸ φρονεῖν" which means "*thinking prudently*". The Chorus members repeat it twice in the closing stanza of the *Antigone* (*l*. 1347, 1352) in gerund form: (article) τὸ **+** (infinitive) φρονεῖν. Specifically, φρονέω is the verbal form of φρόνησις, which means "*prudence*", as in the sentence "*Strength combined with prudence is indeed an advantage, but without prudence it harms more than it helps its possessors*". (ῥώμη δὲ μετὰ μὲν φρονήσεως ὠφέλησεν, ἄνευ δὲ ταύτης πλείω τοὺς ἔχοντας ἔβλαψε) (Isocrates, *to Demonicus* 1.6). Sophocles uses gerund (τὸ φρονεῖν), instead of noun (φρόνησις), in order to connote that wisdom (σοφία) is an attribute only of those who think prudently not merely sometimes but *all the time*, continuously.

According to the Classics, as implied above, thinking *sometimes* prudently might be *taught* through education as an (externally pre-defined) learning process, but wisdom (σοφία) is a mental state or personality attribute (ἀρετὴ or virtue) that could only be *achieved* through thinking *all the time* prudently, which is preconditioned on open-mindedness and self-discipline.

[15]Aristotle's *zero* (μηδέν) *tolerance* of acts of injustice (ἀδικεῖσθαι) is epigrammatically stated as "***to commit not even one act of injustice***" or "ἀδικεῖσθαι μηδέν" (Aristotle, *Politics* 5.1315a: 34–35): "*And whereas politically organized societies (poleis) consist of two classes, the people with no economic resources and those in control of such resources, it is most important for both to think they owe their safety to the government and to* ***commit not even one act of injustice*** *against each other*" (ἐπεί δ᾽αἱ πόλεις ἐκ δύο συνεστήκασι μορίων, ἔκ τε τῶν ἀπόρων ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν εὐπόρων, μάλιστα μὲν ἀμφοτέρους ὑπολαμβάνειν δεῖ σῴζεσθαι διὰ τὴν ἀρχήν, καὶ τοὺς ἑτέρους ὑπὸ τῶν ἑτέρων **ἀδικεῖσθαι μηδέν**).

References

1. Asimakopoulou, Demetra (2017), *Sophocles' Antigone: Hyperlinked compendium for ancient-drama immersion of English-speaking students in Ancient Greek - ABRIDGED version* (published under the auspices of UNESCO and the Greek Ministry of Education and under license of Tufts University / the Perseus Digital Library) pp. 17, 20.
2. Charen, Hannes (2011). "The Purity of Her Crime - Hegel Reading *Antigone*", *Monatshefte*, 103.4: 504–516.
3. Churchill, Winston L. S. *Sir* (1951). *The Second World War* (New York), vol. 5 (Closing the Ring), Book II (Teheran to Rome), ch. XIII (The Greek Torment) 484–485.
4. Collins, Randall (2007). "Turning Points, Bottlenecks and the Fallacies of Counterfactual History", *Sociological Forum*, 22.3: 247–249.
5. *Guthrie, William Keith Chambers* (1969). *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK) 3.*2:* 92-94.
6. Lewis, R. G. (1988), "An Alternative Date for Sophocles' Antigone", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 29.1: 35–50.
7. Lines, Patricia M. (1999). "Antigone's Flaw", *Humanitas*, 12.1: 4–15.
8. Molyneux, John H. (1992). *Simonides: A historical study* (Wauconda, Illinois) 150.
9. Nietzsche, Friedrich (1873). *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, (Washington, D.C.: 1962) 61.
10. Oudemans, Th. C. W. and André P. M. H. Lardinois (1987). *Tragic Ambiguity – Anthropology, Philosophy and Sophocles' Antigone* (Netherlands) 159, 203.
11. Pappas, John D (2014). "The Concept of Measure and the Criterion of Sustainability", *The St. John's Review*, 56.1: 83, 94.
12. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1762). *Du Contrat Social; ou, Principes du Droit Politique* (M.M. Rey: Geneva 1762) I.III, pp. 10–12; English trans. in: *On The Social Contract & Discources* (Dent: London 1913) book I, ch. III.
13. Sachs, Joe (2002). "Measure, Moderation, and the Mean", *The St. John's Review,* 46.2: 22.
14. Storr, Francis (1912). *Sophocles* (Heinemann: New York), vol. 1 (Oedipus the king; Oedipus at Colonus; Antigone).

Надійшла до редколегії 23.04.22

Джон Д. Паппас
ORCID: 0000-0003-1852-3603
e-mail: pappas.research@gmail.com
AGM Law Firm, Афіни, Греція

Деметра Асимакопулу
ORCID: 0000-0001-9498-3885
e-mail: demetra.asimakopoulou@gmail.com
Афінський національний університет імені Каподистрії, Афіни, Греція

ГЕРАКЛІТІВСЬКА ДИНАМІКА В "*АНТІГОНІ*" Й ОМАНЛИВІСТЬ *ПРАВА НАЙСИЛЬНІШОГО*

Нескінченні дебати про "Антігону" Софокла відображають різні аналітичні точки зору щодо переплетених у драмі множинних і паралельних дихотомій, серед яких легальність і легітимність, законність і мораль, доцільність і традиція, людське і божественне. І все ж, незважаючи на суб'єктивні точки зору, концептуально та естетично домінантна дихотомія в "Антігоні" стосується прямого конфлікту між матеріальною владою (царя Креонта) і моральною силою (Антігони). У цьому контексті міркування дорослого Креонта щодо виконання свого царського наказу про смертний вирок юній Антігоні є цілком обґрунтованими. Насамперед йдеться про нагальну потребу підтримувати правопорядок у своєму володінні як необхідну умову відновлення соціально-політичної стабільності та забезпечення безпеки і незалежності його полісу, особливо в екстремальних умовах громадянської війни. Водночас естетично гібристичний прояв влади Креонта призводить власну родину правителя до самознищення. У цьому міфологічному повороті долі Антігона вправно (і беззаперечно) висуває на перший план проблему обмеження так званого права найсильнішого, адже найсильніший ніколи не буває достатньо сильним, щоб завжди бути господарем, хіба що він перетворює силу на право, а послух – на обов'язок.

Ключові слова: "Антігона" Софокла, гібрис (зарозумілість), немезида, Пелопоннеська війна, нелегітимна влада, гегемонія.