

## Figures of Commonality in Sophocles' *Antigone*

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### Premise: *Incipit Tragoedia*

ὦ κοινόν αὐτάδελφον Ἰσμήνης κᾶρα. The famous incipit of Sophocles' *Antigone* presents various problems to the translator. *Κοινόν* is what is "common," "shared," and this "sharing" is repeated and reinforced in *αὐτάδελφον*, "my own sister," where *αὐτός* evokes a link of blood and flesh, a profound, archaic commonality of kinship. The invocation is directed to *Ἰσμήνης κᾶρα*, which literally means the "head of Ismene." As George Steiner points out, "to claim this head to be 'common to us both' and as 'shared in the totality of sisterhood,' is to negate, radically, the most potent, the most obvious differentiation between human presences. ... Antigone's proslution strives to compact, to 'ingest,' Ismene into herself. She demands a 'single-headed' unison."<sup>1</sup> This "totality of sisterhood" is reaffirmed four times, in the terms *κοινόν*, *αὐτός*, *ἄδελφον*, *κᾶρα*. The translator must work out a periphrastic solution – like Hugh Lloyd-Jones' "My own sister Ismene, linked to myself"<sup>2</sup> – to avoid a *monstrum*, like Hölderlin's *Gemeinsamschwesterliches*.<sup>3</sup>

As Steiner emphasizes, "a fertile duplicity"<sup>4</sup> inhabits the term *κοινόν*. On the one hand, *κοινόν* means the "ordinary," "general," what is "common" to many; on the other hand – and specifically in this context – it indicates a commonality of blood, a carnal bond, what is common within kinship. Within the incestuous stock of Labdacus though, *κοινόν* takes on much darker and

horrifying connotations. Antigone and Ismene are at the same time sisters and daughters of Oedipus, daughters and granddaughters of Jocasta, and this aberrant commonality cuts them off from the accepted norms of kinship based on the incest prohibition. This makes their sisterhood different, they are closer than other sisters, they are almost "fused."<sup>5</sup>

The invocation to Ismene is thus a request and a provocation to "fuse" in one sisterly identity, the scandal of the sanctification of an aberrant kinship against the *polis*. The new-born democratic experiment in the Athens of the fifth century B.C., based on plurality and a "modern" concept of individuality, is challenged by Antigone's archaic, perennial "collective," by her impulses towards human interfusion. The dialectic between mechanical individualism and psychic collectivism haunts the whole play. However, at the same time, in the course of the theatrical action, Antigone becomes the agent of "the most solitary, individual, anarchically egotistical" of the campaigns,<sup>6</sup> severing every bond except the one with the dead brother. Antigone summons Ismene into the play reminding her of a belonging, a sharing, and she herself moves through the whole play ambiguously confounding the limits and the definition of this sharing.

### Figures of Commonality

Following the *fil rouge* of this short interpretation of *Antigone's* first line, this article will read the play through the question of *commonality*. Antigone's ambiguity, in which "lies the bottomless irony and falsehood of Antigone's fate,"<sup>7</sup> only exemplifies a complex and articulated topic. Tragedy was, in the Athens of the fifth century B.C., a political tool whose purpose was to educate the *polis* (*πόλις*) through the presentation on stage of the dangers and problems of the life of the community; the question of commonality was thus the central topic of the tragic education or *paideia* (*παιδεία*). Sophocles' *Antigone* problematizes and deconstructs the notion of commonality under almost every possible angle: in kinship and *polis*, language and communication, love and death, nature and law. In the play every "figure of commonality" is opened up and "vivisectioned" to show its fragility and its limits, and the dangers for the *polis* when the "walls" of its democratic construction are demolished.

There are no figures of commonality in *Antigone*: all the figures represent the aberrations of the concept of commonality, which is displayed, underlined and invoked through the presentation of its absence. In the classical interpretation, Antigone as a figure of kinship represents the conflict between the order of the *polis* and the one of the family; but, as incestuous offspring of Oedipus and with her ambiguous acts and claims, she repre-

sents, in addition, the problematic and aberrations of kinship. At the same time, as a woman speaking in the public space or *agora* (*αγορά*), she also raises the question of the *polis* as a community based on the exclusion of women. Creon represents the aberration of the democratic notion of “civic friendship” and embodies a voice that silences all the other voices; but at the same time he evokes the contradictions of a politics founded more on the concept of enmity than of friendship, more on exclusion than inclusion. Both Antigone and Creon are figures of the misunderstanding of the democratic meaning of law (*νόμος*), both negating its fundamental characteristics of deliberation and conciliation. Deliberation and conciliation which are founded on another common trait, the sharing of a *logos* (*λόγος*), a common language and understanding; but all the characters of the play are segregated within a deafness which makes them figures of incommunication. *Logos* as the base of a “rational” politics fails because all the characters are figures of irrationality; but, at the same time, the notion of *logos* raises the question of an order – called, in fact, *logo-centric* – based on the exclusion of the women as deprived of *logos*. Antigone even fails in being a figure of love: the only community to which she belongs is the one of the dead. Sophocles’ *Antigone* presents on stage the complete failure of any possible kind of commonality and the political dangers represented by this failure: every character is *apolis* (*άπολις*), a figure of the negation of the political understood as a space of sharing of thoughts, words and actions.

Twenty-five centuries of history have added many interpretative layers to the surface of *Antigone*’s pedagogic intentions. The political actuality of *Antigone* is still present in the presentation of the multiform concept of commonality in the democratic *agora*; but the modern reader must add the analysis of topics to which an Athenian audience of the fifth century B.C. was uninterested, such as, for example, sexual difference and discrimination, the role of women, a new definition of *logos* etc. The modernity of Sophocles’ tragedy is that it offers many unintended opportunities for a modern discussion of the concept of commonality. The following analysis will try to compose the ancient pedagogy with new political inspirations.

### ***Philia* I**

*Wenn Antigone kommt, die schwesterlichste der Seelen*  
Goethe

The ancient Greek term *philia* (*φιλία*), when referred to the household,

covers the semantic area that embraces the fact of belonging to a stock, a family, a kinship. It is what Antigone calls “my own.”<sup>8</sup> It presents nevertheless an important differentiation in its use: when referred to the household, *philia* evokes the world of female “care”; when referred to the *agora*, the public space, *philia* is a political, i.e., masculine virtue. The Athenian democracy was founded on the division of these two spaces: the household constituted the prepolitical condition that enabled the existence of the *polis*, as Judith Butler writes, “without ever entering into it.”<sup>9</sup> The liberation from the necessities of the physical, bare life was the prepolitical condition for the political freedom in the *polis*; it was the work of women and slaves that enabled men to be free in the public arena.<sup>10</sup> The care of the dead was part of women’s duty: Antigone’s claim falls thus entirely within the traditional and prepolitical role reserved to women. Her claim’s scandal consists in the modalities of her act, which invades the public realm.<sup>11</sup> Since Hegel, Antigone has been considered “not as a political figure, one whose defiant speech has political implications, but rather as one who articulates a prepolitical opposition to politics.”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, in *Antigone* the picture is more complex: *philia* refers here not much to the realm of *δῶμος* (house) or *οικία* (household), but to the one of birth or *genos* (γένος), a relation of blood, the incestuous blood of Oedipus. As Adriana Cavarero argues, the commonality of *philia* is here “radicalized in the endogamic model of a generation which has as unique source the maternal incest.”<sup>13</sup> In Oedipus’ family, the individual identity seems to be only secondary to a “pre-egotical” community of blood, in which the singularity, due to its aberrant incestuous origins, is in symbiotical immanent union with the *genos*. Antigone’s *philia* goes over the divisions of time and politics, and binds her with Oedipus and Eteocles, but with Polynices as well. The conflict between *polis* and *genos* is the conflict between the temporality of the human events and the atemporality of “the womb as time of the ‘ever’ which death conserves.”<sup>14</sup>

In this context, in spite – or maybe because – of the morbidity of the attachment to her brother, Antigone has been often identified as “the most sisterly of souls” (Goethe). Is that really so? Antigone seems to forget that Ismene is now, after the death of the two brothers, her last and only kin. Ismene is twice harshly repudiated and, in the end, Antigone rejects any commonality with her. Even from a grammatical point of view, Antigone departs from the *philia* of kinship towards an egotistical solitude: from the dual person of the first lines, after Ismene’s refusal to join in her pious act, Antigone switches to the singular, “which yells the suffering of her uprooted solitude.”<sup>15</sup> Besides, as Butler points out, in the context of her incestuous family, Antigone’s love for her brother is coloured with suspicious tones of

obsession and madness.<sup>16</sup> However, the most scandalous utterance against kinship's *philia* is Antigone's infamous declaration in the final *kommos*, where she affirms that she would not do for a husband or a son what she did for her brother.<sup>17</sup>

What kind of *philia* does Antigone then represent? Does she really stand for "the sanctity of kinship"? If the ancient Athenian saw in Antigone a figure of the conflict between the orders of kinship and the *polis*, for a modern reader she cannot be a figure of the commonality of kinship anymore, but rather problematizes the same notion of *philia*, exposing its limits, its conflicts, its aberrations.<sup>18</sup>

## ***Philia II***

*War [πόλεμος] is the father and ruler of all things*  
Heraclitus

When it is used in the *agora*, the term *philia* means "civic friendship," which is the principal political virtue: *philia* no longer intended as a commonality of blood, but as the pure social bond, which is the determinant criterion for inclusion in, or exclusion from, the *polis*. This criterion excludes women from the public space, segregates them in the house and confines them to the *philia* of kinship.<sup>19</sup> For Creon, Antigone's sin is "insubordination" (*αναρχία*, 672); however, the real scandal of her claim is that she dares to enter the political space, reserved to men, and speak the language of politics and sovereignty. Her claim concerns "womanly" things, but she pursues them in an "unwomanly" way.<sup>20</sup> Her entry into the male space is a threat to men, who feel "unmanned."<sup>21</sup>

Antigone forces into the political arena a pre-political – for the *phallogocentric* idea of politics – issue. As Arendt emphasizes, "the human capacity for political organization is not only different from, but stands in direct opposition to, that natural association whose centre is the home (*οικία*) and the family."<sup>22</sup> This opposition is confirmed by Creon: "and him who rates a dear one higher than his native land, him I put nowhere" (182-3). Civic *philia* needs the destruction of the family bond, of the blood relation, of the feminine *philia*. The *philia* Antigone tries to force into the public space is a prepolitical commonality of blood; civic *philia* persists in an excluding opposition to it. The two spaces present opposite features: the household is the space of force and violence, where the head of the family governs through discipline, and freedom does not exist.<sup>23</sup> The role of women is to obey, and

there is no worse insult for Creon than to be compared to a woman.<sup>24</sup> Erroneously Creon thinks he can apply the discipline, which reigns in the family, to the public space, which is the space of freedom.<sup>25</sup> The public space is a space shared by "equals," and discipline cannot be a political means.

Thus, Creon misunderstands the democratic articulation of civic *philia* and uses it exclusively as criterion of inclusion/exclusion for the *polis*. The dialectic friend/enemy is for Creon, as for Carl Schmitt, the political category *par excellence*<sup>26</sup>: friend is Eteocles, "who died fighting for this city" (194-5); Polynices,

who came back from exile meaning to burn to the ground his native city and the gods of his race, and meaning to drink the people's blood and to enslave its people, (198-203)

is the enemy, the stranger, the Other, "something different and alien,"<sup>27</sup> capable of "drinking the people's blood." Not even death can overcome his otherness and exclusion.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis here is much more on Polynices than on Eteocles. For Creon, then – as for a great part of patriarchal political theory – what defines the inclusion in the community is what is excluded: in the dialectic friend/enemy the stress is always on the second term, and war becomes the activity which ultimately defines the identity of the community.<sup>29</sup> In Greece, "warrior and citizen coincide in a sole and homogeneous concept – and the meaning of 'friend' ends up taking in the system an entirely secondary place."<sup>30</sup>

However, the inclusion/exclusion criteria of friend/enemy do not work for *Antigone*. She is not "the other," the one who comes from outside to conquer the city. She is an insider, the internal enemy. That is why, unlike Polynices, she does not fit into the category of *πολέμιος*, the public enemy.<sup>31</sup> The Greek language presents a difference between *εχθρός* and *πολέμιος*, preserved in the Latin *inimicus* and *hostis*, the internal enemy and external enemy. *Antigone* is the "apolitical," "prepolitical" internal dissident. And when the opposition is internal, among "citizens" and not against "the Other," the conflict is more dramatic, "more tragic": the opposition *φίλος/εχθρός* in *Antigone* emphasizes, as Cavarero writes, "the sense of a horizon of incestuous blood. A horizon which confers to the concept of *εχθρός* all that was radically corporeal in the concept of *φίλος*, and makes so the enemy consanguineous, as it wanted the friend of consanguineous origin."<sup>32</sup>

In *Antigone's* Thebes, no social bond keeps the citizens together: civic *philia* is misrepresented and problematized in every character's rejection of the basic political sense of commonality. At the same time, *Antigone* confounds and deconstructs the notion of this *philia*, based on exclusion much

more than inclusion, on enmity and opposition much more than commonality.

### **Nomos**

*The people [δῆμος] must fight for its law as for its walls.*  
Heraclitus

*Antigone* is a tragedy about the law: Antigone's *unwritten laws* (ἀγραπτα νόμιμα, 454-45) are opposed to Creon's edict (κήρυγμα, 8). Or: primordial, natural laws are opposed to the human and temporal norm. For Hegel the conflict of the "universal" public law and the divine (unwritten) law is "a conflict of self-conscious Spirit with what is unconscious."<sup>33</sup> Butler notes that the unwritten law "appears only by way of an active trace"<sup>34</sup>: it is a law with no traceable origin, no form, no communicability and no translatability into written language. It is not fully knowable, but, "as the unconscious of public law, it is that which public law cannot do without, which it must, in fact, oppose and retain with a certain necessary hostility."<sup>35</sup> Besides, this is a law with "but one instance of application"<sup>36</sup>: it would not apply to a husband or a son, but it does to the brother because he is "irreproducible." This means that "the conditions under which the law becomes applicable are not reproducible."<sup>37</sup> This law, therefore, is not conceptualizable as law; it undermines the universality of public law and "destroys the basis of justice in community."<sup>38</sup>

It should be noted that Antigone uses the term *nomima* (νόμιμα), customs, ordinances, and not *nomos*, which was always a human creation (ποίησις) and therefore opposite to nature or *physis* (φύσις). The real meaning of the term *nomos* is "convention," "human rule," something absolutely human and independent from the nature of things.<sup>39</sup> Law was considered as equivalent to the wall around the *polis*, the limit and the condition of possibility of the political space: there can be no community without the wall-like law, and law is the prepolitical founding instrument of the political community.<sup>40</sup> Constitutively emendable and correctable, the law was reformulated and negotiated through deliberation, like the boundary line.

Deliberation is precisely what is lacking in *Antigone*. Hegel already had noted how Antigone and Creon exclude and oppose one another, becoming in the end mirror-images.<sup>41</sup> No composition is ever possible between their opposed fanaticisms. Exposing this lack, the tragedy exposes the sin and the danger that undermines any human community: "devotion to one's own personal sense of justice" and "mutually exclusive commitments to

righteousness."<sup>42</sup> Only through deliberation and conciliation can a community survive: "this," writes Zak, "is a collective responsibility and wisdom Creon and Antigone will not heed or consider. ... In the isolated, self-restricted, and finally self satisfied kingdom of the spirit each insist on commanding, both rule their respective deserts beautifully alone."<sup>43</sup> Many commentators have underlined how the real sin of both Antigone and Creon is to "declare themselves *autonomos*, a law unto themselves"<sup>44</sup>: on the one hand, Antigone, in her autistic exile, excludes herself from the community; on the other, Creon transforms his claim for a general justice in a rule of force and violence. Outside the democratic system of conciliation, the sovereignty of the law becomes indistinct from violence.<sup>45</sup>

As Stathis Gourgouris points out, in ancient Athens law had a constitutive differential and agonistic character, "encompassing a range of significations from the explicitly religious (say, the justice of Zeus) to the most historically institutional, from the widest possible meaning of sacred *dike* to the most brutal defiance of the law in the name of responsibility to justice."<sup>46</sup> In *Antigone* the term is used with opposite connotations by the different characters and almost all the possible meanings are presented. However, each and every position remains segregated in its ivory tower, the laws of the polis do not interweave with divine justice, no real community is ever created and sustained by these mutually excluding laws.

### **Logos I**

In the "Ode to Man" the chorus establishes the foundation of political commonality: men learned (and thus share) speech and thought, which are the conditions and the components which rule cities.<sup>47</sup> The sharing of the same language is what makes possible the constitution of a community: "speech and wind-swift thought" enable men to distinguish good and bad, right and wrong, a community is based on shared moral perceptions and on the capacity of judgement (*κρίσις*).<sup>48</sup> What differentiates the political animal (*ζῶον πολιτικόν*) from the other animals is the fact of sharing a capacity to communicate and decide together; Aristotle's famous definition acquires its full meaning only when completed with his other definition of the "human": *ζῶον λόγον ἔχον*, a living being capable of speech.<sup>49</sup> Antigone adds an important feature. She cries to Ismene: "Tell them all! I shall hate you far more if you remain silent, and do not proclaim this to all" (86-7). Action needs to be publicized in order to have political valence, and public speech is the real political action.<sup>50</sup> Aristotle's *βίος πολιτικός* (the political) consisted of *πράξις* (action) and *λέξις* (speech): the Athenian *polis* was the space where words and speeches acted as the political medium. Politics is

not force, not violence, but speech, understanding, confrontation and agreement.<sup>51</sup>

Creon's will to command rather than persuade, his incapacity to listen to the other, represents the opposition to, and the negation of, this conception of the political. Creon transfers into the political space the prepolitical ways of violence and force characteristic to the household. He insists on the necessity of discipline and obedience (*πειθαρχία*, 676), and on the dangers of insubordination (*αναρχία*, 672), contradicting the very notion of discursive politics itself.<sup>52</sup> Creon's discourse is appropriate to an army, not to the *polis*: he refuses to listen to the others' opinions<sup>53</sup> and, writes Euben, relegates the others' voices to "whispers (the people of Thebes) or caves and houses (Antigone and Ismene)."<sup>54</sup>

However, it is not just Creon who represents the negation of the political. Rather, as it has been noted, in *Antigone* language is paradoxically what divides and separates: every character retires into a code not understandable to the others; they use the same words, but confer to these words different connotations, so that what they enact is "a *dialogue des sourds*. No meaningful communication takes place. Creon's questions and Antigone's answers are so inward to the two speakers, so absolute to their respective semantic codes and visions of reality, that there is no exchange."<sup>55</sup> This is what George Steiner calls the paradox of "divisive facsimile": "the discovery that living beings using the 'same language' can mean entirely different, indeed irreconcilable, things."<sup>56</sup> This paradox is a problem of the language in general and "is present in all speech and speech-acts,"<sup>57</sup> but in Sophocles' *Antigone* it is taken to such extremes that forbid any kind of communication, in any kind of dialogue. Euben thus concludes: "the exchange between Creon and Haemon suggests that sameness and interchangeability can mask different features ... more specifically, that repetition of terms can obscure incompatible principles and interests. What seems to be or should be a firm basis for deliberation, shared language and culture, turns out to be divisive."<sup>58</sup>

## Logos II

"Good sense [*φρονεῖν*] is by far the chief part of happiness" (1348-9). With these words the chorus concludes the tragedy, emphasizing that "good sense," *φρονεῖν*, is precisely what is lacking in the play. There is much talking about reasoning, knowledge, deliberation, but every character is guided by the irrational: the voice of reason conceals always a passion. Especially Creon insists on the rightfulness of his reasoning, whereas the others are supposed to be mad, irrational, without sense or judgement:

ἀνοῦς. In the end, every character is dominated by the conviction to be “right” and that the others are “wrong”; none of the characters is ready to acknowledge his or her mistake. Reason is questioned and problematized.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, reason fails in the play. However, reason does not fail merely in its “correct use”; it fails also in its pretension of universality. When Creon insults Haemon calling him a “contemptible character, inferior to a woman!” (746), he is implicitly calling him ἀνοῦς, irrational, lacking of correct reasoning. Φρονεῖν, the “right thinking,” as well as “thinking” in general, have in fact traditionally been male attributes: women, emotional and passionate, are not fit for the “reasonable” public space and are to be sequestered and silenced in the darkness of the household. Creon’s exasperated misogyny in this respect only mirrors the situation of women in ancient Athens.

Women are considered not “reasonable” because they are deeply rooted in the carnality and materiality of the body, and cannot rise to the heights of reason. As Cavarero writes, body and corporeity are considered as the “mere material support of the human faculties of speech and thought,”<sup>60</sup> thus distinct and separated from them. The political order built on this distinction and exclusion has been called *logocentric* and *phallogocratic*, and thus *phallogocentric*: it is based on the exclusion from the higher political realm, on the one hand, of the corporeal, and, on the other, of women as inevitably rooted in this corporality.<sup>61</sup> *Logos* is what separates and redeems men from the animal condition; but at the same time, it separates the “human” from its corporality and relegates women into it.

By raising her voice, Antigone confuses and violates the “logical” order, which relegates her to silence. She speaks in public, and to do so she has no other means than to utilize that same logical order which wants her silent. Antigone speaks in that language which is not “hers,” the language of a hyper-masculinized *logos* that wants her silent, the language of politics and sovereignty that sequesters her in the house. This is the “only” language, the sharing of which is what constitutes her as “human,” but that at the same time excludes her as not fully so.<sup>62</sup> Antigone as a woman is excluded from the realm of *logos*, politics and higher “humanity”; she lacks a “reason” and a language of her own, and must make her political claim using the logocentric tools that exclude her. On the other hand, her claim is considered non-political because she inhabits a region outside the realm of *logos*. The failure of reason is thus complete: reason fails because every one in the play lacks reason (is ἀνοῦς), and even “reasonable” actions are prompted by passions; but reason fails also as the founding element of identity for the *animal rationale*, because it becomes a pretext for exclusion and reclusion.

## **Eros**

*Deny thy father and refuse thy name,  
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.  
Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet*

Women, expelled from the (public) space of *logos*, are relegated within the realm of passion: *eros* (ἔρως). In the Athenian *polis*, though, *eros* had an institutionalized status: it was simultaneously the pedagogic tool of the *paideia*, and, in the symposia (συμπόσιον) and the gymnasia (γυμνάσιον), the glue which reinforced the social bonds. It was thus a constructive and civil force. Nevertheless, that was an exclusively masculine and homosexual *eros*; the *Eros*, “invincible in battle,”<sup>63</sup> of whom *Antigone*’s chorus speaks, is a maddening force opposed to *logos* and to the *polis*. It is therefore a feminine force. As Claude Calame writes, “tragedy leads the reader away from masculine love and back to the *Eros* who assails women.”<sup>64</sup>

The chorus’ ode to *eros* follows the clash between Creon and Haemon and illustrates the latter’s “mad” behaviour. *Eros* has “stirred up this quarrel between men of the same blood” and has broken the family bond; *eros* wrenches “just men’s mind aside from justice, doing them violence.” Its irresistible force severs the individual from the community and throws him or her back into a pre-communal wilderness. Love’s folly is a jump out of the realm of *logos* and out of the *polis*: love’s power unsettles any social relationship, in order to build an improbable “community of lovers,” it breaks all their other links to justice, *logos*, and society. In the end, the community of lovers is a new, different community opposed to the *polis*; *eros* is not just an *a*-social force, but rather an *anti*-social one, one that dangerously undermines the structures of society itself.

As Steiner notes, the presence of *Eros* evokes an archaic, a-logical, or better, pre-logical world, a world that precedes *logos* and *polis*: an archaic, pre-Olympian, omnipotent force, which masters over humans and immortals as well.<sup>65</sup> The hypothesis therefore seems plausible that the maddening force the chorus’ ode evokes is not *Eros*, or the “irresistible” goddess Aphrodite, but Dionysus; and that the ode to love and the invocation to Dionysus at the tragedy’s *acme* are strongly connected. It must be remembered that the tragic representation used to take place on occasion of the Dionysia, celebrations in honour of Dionysus, and one of the functions of the tragedy was to “represent ... the extremes of madness into which the onslaught of erotic desires drives us, along with all its dire consequences.”<sup>66</sup>

The feminine *eros* thus is destructive and dangerous for the *polis*: it stands in opposition to it and as such is primarily tragic. It is strange, then, that the figure that represents *Eros* in the play is not a woman, but Haemon. Women in *Antigone* are victims of passions, but not of *eros*; Antigone, who should be Haemon's counterpart in the representation of love, is instead lost in the passion for her brother: Steiner remarks that "if Antigone loves anyone, then it is her brother."<sup>67</sup> Again roles, limits and boundaries are confused. The tragic topos forbids the constitution of a "community of lovers" and interweaves love and death; Antigone's bridal chamber is a tomb and Haemon enacts the bloody wedding and a symbolic defloration at the threshold of death.<sup>68</sup>

### ***Thanatos***

Even before her suicide and the bloody nuptial rites with Haemon, Antigone dwells in a sort of limbo between life and death: "my life has long been dead, so as to help the dead" (559-60). Almost every member of her family is now in Hades, with the exception of Creon, her enemy, and Ismene, who lets her down. The familial bonds drag her into a commonality with the dead that conditions her life. Antigone's "own" is in death, no longer in the *polis* and in the community of citizens: "it's honourable for me to do this and die. I am his own and I shall lie with him who is my own" (72-4). Antigone's "love for the impossible" is a love for the dead and for death; as Creon maintains his enmity even with the dead,<sup>69</sup> so does Antigone with her love.

With her whole family in Hades, Ismene wants to join Antigone in her punishment and share her destiny of death. However, Antigone contemptuously rejects her, at the same time rejecting any commonality and severing any link with the living, and reaffirming her belonging to the dead.<sup>70</sup> Antigone in the *kommos* laments her death "without the bridal that was my due"; she will be "the bride of Acheron" (810-6). The bridal with Acheron, the marriage with death, is nevertheless the completion of a life lived "neither among the shades, neither with the living nor with the dead!" (850-2). She is going to join "her own" in Hades: "to them I go, to live with them, accursed, unmarried!" (866-9). The famous invocation to the tomb as bridal chamber evokes the final reunion with her family.<sup>71</sup>

"Those below" are anyhow an inescapable presence throughout the whole play: almost every character evokes their presence, only Creon boasts indifference toward "things in Hades." However, his sin is not only his boasting: Creon's unforgivable impiety consists in his disrespect for the limits and boundaries between the world "below" and the world "here." He

denies burial to a corpse and buries a living being<sup>72</sup> and his impiety sets in motion *Dike's* nemesis – the just or divinely ordained justice – that will re-establish the balance of life and death. As Hegel already recognized, “the dead, whose right is denied, knows therefore how to find instruments of vengeance, which are equally effective and powerful as the power which has injured it.”<sup>73</sup> Contrary to Creon’s initial belief, the dead exercise a constant influence on the action of the play. The dead, the gods (but they are always the gods “below”), “prompt” the actions of the humans, as recognized by the Chorus: “King, my anxious thought has long been advising me that this action may have been prompted by the gods” (278-9). The dead stations at the border of Hades and hangs over the living guiding their movements. Steiner recognizes that “hardly any notable utterance or action by the living does not occur under pressure of the dead. ... Starting with Antigone’s first speech, the dead are made animate both in their place of darkness and at the uncertain frontiers of life.”<sup>74</sup> Death conquers this way the world of humans in its “tidal advance ... on the dissolving society of the living.”<sup>75</sup>

### ***Polis***

Man has learned “how to escape the exposure of the inhospitable hills and the sharp arrows of the rain, all resourceful” (356-60). The “exposure” is the fact that man is “thrown out” into the world, and at the same time is separated from it. It is a distance from the natural world that constitutes human essence. Man is all-resourceful (*παντοπόρος*, 360): the one who has many ways, many routes, and thus many resources. For Heidegger, the *polis* is the crossroads of all these routes, the place of human historicity, the “where” and the “how” of human distancing from nature and being-in-the-world.<sup>76</sup> However, what defines this “crossroads” as a political space, as a *polis*, is less the exclusion of the natural world than the inclusion of the conditions for *freedom*. This freedom is guaranteed by plurality, by the fact that no one rules over the others: the common space of the *polis* is the space of appearance where people share words and deeds. *Polis*, properly speaking, is therefore not so much a physical location, a “crossroads,” but rather, argues Arendt, “the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together.”<sup>77</sup> This space is constituted by “words and deeds” and so “it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being.”<sup>78</sup> The *polis* is actualized each and every time words and deeds are “political,” that is, “where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities.”<sup>79</sup>

That is why in *Antigone* there is no *polis*. There is no sense of what Gourgouris calls “differential autonomous plurality”,<sup>80</sup> there is no plurality at all because Creon’s rage silences any other voice.<sup>81</sup> “There is no city that belongs to a single man,” cries Heamon to Creon; and: “you would be a fine ruler over a deserted city!” *Antigone*’s Thebes is that “deserted city” over which the tyrant rules: where no sharing of words and deeds creates the political space there is no *polis*, but a political desert.<sup>82</sup> However, as Zak points out, it is not just Creon’s folly that erases politics from Thebes; but a diffuse individualism stops the very emerging of the political. Warning us against the *apolis*, the enemy of the *polis*, the chorus seems to forget that the enemy is an insider (*Antigone*); the treason is from within. And for Zak this treason is general: “all the Thebans but Teiresias and Ismene have determined to ‘make their own way’ apart from one another.”<sup>83</sup> Thebans are excluded from the *polis* and the political by their own individualism. From this point of view, it is interesting to consider Froma Zeitlin’s hypothesis that Thebes “provides the negative model to Athens’s manifest image of itself with regard to its notion of the proper management of city, society and self.”<sup>84</sup> Thebes is an image used to represent in dramatic form the conflicts of the *polis* at their extremes: its definition, its essence, and the limits and risks of its existence. Thebes is in the theatre the anti-Athens, the “other” place, where Athens acts out questions crucial to the *polis*: there, the primal question of the *polis*, the one regarding the sense and the existence of the community, is problematized in the representation of its absence.

### ***Apolis***

The notion of *apolis* (*ἀπολις*) is thus the central issue of *Antigone*. Nevertheless, the concept has multiple and even potentially contradictory meanings: “outcast from the city” is the law-breaker and the evildoer, but also the one who is refused and excluded by the city, or who excludes him- or herself. Therefore, the question about the identity of that *apolis* the chorus is talking about cannot have a single answer.

*Apolis* is bound with the notion of “perversion.” And the possibility of perversion is constitutive of the human being, as the chorus acknowledges: man “advances sometimes to evil, and other times to good” (367). The possibility of being *apolis*, outside the community, is intrinsic to the notion of humanity itself. This is because, unlike other creatures, human beings are *unnatural*: being human signifies a rupture with the natural world, the violent and exclusively human act of creating a *polis*, an artificial space. This violence constitutes the “human.” In Heidegger’s interpretation this is why man is *το δεινότατον*, “the most terrible,” “the strangest,” or – in his

translation – “the uncanniest,” “the most unhomey” of the living beings. Man is constitutively *apolis*, not at home in the homely.<sup>85</sup>

The tragic hero is always alone, beyond established limits, separated from the community, *apolis*. Antigone is the mask of solitude and her isolation is so absolute that she proclaims herself the sole surviving offspring of the Labdacidae, “the last of the royal house” (941), forgetting and annulling Ismene. Antigone, however, is *apolis* not only because she opposes Creon’s edict, thereby placing herself outside the city and in opposition to it. But, as a woman, she is *apolis* “by definition.”<sup>86</sup> As noted above, the distancing from the natural word, which constitutes the political figure of and for “humanity,” is a male paradigm: Antigone as a woman is not fully a citizen of the *polis*, not a political subject, and thus not fully human. In the coincidence of “human” and “political” is inscribed the figure of the exclusion of women, linked to the body and thus to the “natural” and unpolitical.

Nevertheless, Antigone’s solitude is mirrored in Thebes by everyone else’s individualism: everyone is *apolis*, deprived of the community. Gourgouris emphasizes that being *apolis* means not only to be excluded from the walls of the city; it means primarily to be “singular, deprived of plurality, of communal action, unintegrated (hence, partial): alone and deprived of the city’s mind (*monos phronein*) – in essence, deprived of politics.”<sup>87</sup> In Antigone’s Thebes, everyone is victim of an individualism which is the real plague infesting the city. This plague, “the negation of the political,”<sup>88</sup> is what Gourgouris calls *monos phronein*, the incapacity of sharing a space of words and thoughts that is the essence of the political. *Apolis* is whoever thinks and acts alone.<sup>89</sup> Antigone is in love with the impossible, cries Ismene (*αμηκάνων εράς*, 90): being in love with the impossible is being in love with one’s own “self-willed passion” (*αυτόγνωτος οργά*, 875), which excludes one from the political space. That is why, in the political context of the *polis*, “it is wrong to hunt for what is impossible” (92). Like Antigone, all other characters are lost within the impossibility of their “self-willed passion,” and are thus *apolis*.

### **Coda: Antigone’s Community**

Tragedy was part of the political pedagogy of the *polis*: its task was to dramatize conflicts, divisions, oppositions, limits and boundaries. The spectators watched the dramatic presentation of the dangers that undermine the basis of the community, in a tension between “proximity and distance”<sup>90</sup> which should awake – through pity and fear, or maybe through compassion, reflection, thought – their political consciousness. There are, therefore, no figures for commonality in Sophocles’ *Antigone*. The notion of

commonality is problematized under almost every possible angle, and its aberrations are laid open in front of the audience. *Antigone's* "community" is made up, instead, of figures of *conflict*: conflict within the family, between the family and the state, between states, between the sexes and the generations, between law and justice, within language, speech, action. And the modern reader may add to the traditional reading further conflicts proper to our time.

There are no figures of *philia* in *Antigone*. The notion of *philia* intended as the belonging to a stock, a birth relation or *genos*, is deconstructed by the tragedy of Oedipus' incestuous family; Antigone's mad – since the question of whether it is incestuous endures – love for her brother makes her renounce any commonality of *philia*. Nor are there any figures of a civic *philia* in *Antigone's* Thebes, where Creon erases any space of freedom with his claims for a military discipline. Besides, the patriarchal notion of civic friendship as the basis of the political is shown to be founded more on the concept of the enemy rather than the friend, more on exclusion than inclusion. In *Antigone* there are no figures of *nomos*, the law based on negotiation and deliberation that constituted the foundation of the Athenian democracy: every character declares him- or herself *auto-nomos*, a law unto themselves, erasing the prime condition of a democratic community. There are no figures of *logos*, no commonality based on a shared language and understanding, nor a common "rationality" as base of a presumed humanity. There is no freedom of speech under Creon's tyranny; furthermore, the shared language in the tragedy is not a means of communication but an obstacle and a vehicle of misunderstanding. As for "rationality," everyone in the play acts irrationally; but reason itself fails in its pretension of universality because, in a phallogocentric horizon, it is a male prerogative and a pretext for women's exclusion and reclusion. Even *eros* cannot build a community in the tragedy: the feminine *eros* is a destructive and antisocial force, opposed to the *polis*; but not even a community of lovers takes place in *Antigone*, as Antigone's only love is for her brother and her nuptials with Haemon are enacted with his suicide. The only commonality in the tragedy seems to be the one of Antigone with the dead: she refuses any link with life and *polis* and embraces her destiny of death. Death as the only possible commonality devours every community in the play. Thus there is no *polis* in *Antigone*, no sense of community, of plurality, of democracy: everyone is *apolis*, secluded from the *polis* for their individualism, egoism or gender. *Antigone's* community is a figure of absence.

Sophocles' *Antigone* gives no answer and proposes no solution to the problems of the community. Tragedy's "message" in general, writes Castoriadis, was a "constant remainder of self-limitation";<sup>91</sup> and *Antigone's*

“message” in particular may be “the demonstration that contrary reasons can coexist ... and that it is not in obstinately persisting in one’s own reasons (*monos phronein*) that it becomes possible to solve the grave problems that may be encountered in collective life.”<sup>92</sup> However, there is no resolution of the dilemma of the community, no answer to the questions of commonality. As Gourgouris puts it: “Unlike philosophy (and certainly, unlike theology), tragedy is a *techne* of espousing, not resolving, the differential equations of the law – in the last instance, a *techne* wrought of enigma and contradiction for the sake of contradiction and self-interrogation.”<sup>93</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> George Steiner, *Antigones: How the Antigone Legend has Endured in Western Literature, Art, and Thought* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> In the following discussion I will always refer to Hugh Lloyd-Jones *Antigone’s* edition and translation in Sophocles, *Antigone, The Women of Thrachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1994). All references are given parenthetically by line number.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. D.E. Sattler, Bremer Ausgabe, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 10: 162.

<sup>4</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 208.

<sup>5</sup> See Steiner, *Antigones*, pp. 208-9.

<sup>6</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 213.

<sup>7</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> In the first dialogue with Ismene, Antigone insists on using the possessive *τόν ἐμόν*, “my own”: “I will bury *my* [ἐμόν] brother, and yours [σόν], if you will not” (45); “But he has no right to keep me from *my own!* [τῶν ἐμῶν]” (48). As Paul Ludwig notes, “of etymological importance is the fact that in earlier Greek the adjective form, *φίλος*, also denoted ‘one’s own.’” Paul W. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), pp. 212-3.

<sup>9</sup> Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> For a clear presentation of this theory on the historical situation see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> See J. Peter Euben, *Corrupting Youth: Political Education, Democratic Culture, and Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997), p. 167.

- <sup>12</sup> Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, p. 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Adriana Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure: Filosofia E Politica Della Corporeità* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1995), p. 32.
- <sup>14</sup> Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*, p. 57.
- <sup>15</sup> Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure* p. 35.
- <sup>16</sup> For a discussion on the taboo about Antigone's possible incestuous love for her brother see Butler, *Antigone's Claim*. The incest taboo constitutes, even before psychoanalysis or Lévi-Strauss, the condition of social intelligibility. For Hegel the stability of kinship is based on blood relations, which make desire impossible. These conditions here are confused in an unstable incestuous web of blood and desire.
- <sup>17</sup> Antigone says: "for never, had children of whom I was the mother or had my husband perished and been mouldering there, would I have taken on myself this task, in defiance of the citizens. In virtue of what law do I say this? If my husband had died, I could have had another, and a child from another man, if I had lost the first, but with my mother and my father in Hades below, I could never have another brother" (904-12).
- <sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this point see Butler, *Antigone's Claim*.
- <sup>19</sup> Cavarero notes: "So Creon and Polynices ... although enemies, stay on the same side of that patriarchal symbolic order which assign women to domestic circle and men to a humanly progressive and higher political sphere," *Corpo in Figure*, p. 50.
- <sup>20</sup> See Euben, *Corrupting Youth*, p. 166.
- <sup>21</sup> Like Creon, who in fact cries: "indeed, now I am no man, but she is a man, if she is to enjoy such power as this with impunity" (484-9).
- <sup>22</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 24.
- <sup>23</sup> This is Arendt's position. Using Plato and Aristotle, Ludwig gives a different interpretation of civic *philia* as extension to the city of the *philia* that reigned in the family. See Ludwig, *Eros and Polis*, p. 340.
- <sup>24</sup> He says: "in this way we have to protect discipline, and we must never allow a woman to vanquish us. If we must perish, it is better to do so by the hand of a man, and then we cannot be called inferior to women" (677-80). And to Haemon he cries: "Contemptible character, inferior to a woman!" (746).
- <sup>25</sup> Creon says: "if those of my own family whom I keep are to show no discipline, how much more will those outside my family! The man who acts rightly in family matters will be seen to be righteous in the city also" (659-62).
- <sup>26</sup> See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1976).
- <sup>27</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 26-7.
- <sup>28</sup> As Creon says, "an enemy is never a friend, even when he is dead" (522).
- <sup>29</sup> Schmitt writes: "War as the most extreme political means discloses the possibility which underlies every political idea, namely, the distinction of friend and enemy," *The Concept of the Political*, p. 35.

- <sup>30</sup> Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*, p. 52. Cavarero – together with a good part of feminist critique – attacks the binary paradigm of friend/enemy which is the basis of patriarchal political theory and which emphasizes uniquely the category of enemy. In opposition to this, Antigone releases *philia* from its contrary, from enmity: οὔτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν (523), “I have no enemies by birth, but I have friends by birth,” or “I wasn’t born to share enmity, but to share love.” Antigone represents “an unpolitical *philia*, inscribed in maternal generation, which doesn’t contemplate and doesn’t know its contrary,” Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*, p. 52.
- <sup>31</sup> As Schmitt emphasizes, “an enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. The enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus* in the broader sense; πολέμιος, not ἐχθρός,” *The Concept of the Political*, p. 28.
- <sup>32</sup> Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*, p. 56.
- <sup>33</sup> For Hegel, as unconscious of the public law, the unwritten law is “the law of weakness and darkness” and it is where the universality of the public law is rooted: “The publicly manifest Spirit has the root of its power in the nether world.” Public law has to “consume” and “absorb” into itself and its universality the unconscious power of the unwritten law. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), p. 286-7.
- <sup>34</sup> Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, p. 38.
- <sup>35</sup> Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, p. 38.
- <sup>36</sup> Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, p. 10.
- <sup>37</sup> Butler notes that “this is a law of the instant and, hence, a law with no generality and no transposability, one mired in the very circumstances to which it is applied, a law formulated precisely through the singular instance of its application and, therefore, no law at all in any ordinary, generalizable sense,” *Antigone’s Claim*, p. 10.
- <sup>38</sup> Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, p. 52.
- <sup>39</sup> Castoriadis writes: “Φύσις: the push, the endogenous and spontaneous growth of things that nevertheless is also generative of an order. Νόμος: the word, usually translated as ‘law,’ originally signified the law of sharing [*la loi du partage*], therefore institution, therefore usage (ways and customs), therefore a convention, and, at the limit, convention pure and simple. That something pertains to νόμος and not to φύσις signified, for the ancient Greeks, that that something depends on human conventions and not on the nature of beings. ... Νόμος is our creative imaginary institution by means of which we make ourselves qua human beings.” Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, trans. David Ames Curtis (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), pp. 331-2.
- <sup>40</sup> Arendt writes: “The laws, like the wall around the city, were not results of action but products of making. Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the πόλις and its structure the law; legislator and

architect belonged to the same category. But these tangible entities themselves were not the content of politics (not Athens, but the Athenians, were the *πόλις*)," *The Human Condition*, pp. 194-5.

<sup>41</sup> See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 280.

<sup>42</sup> William F. Zak, *The Polis and the Divine Order: The Oresteia, Sophocles, and the Defence of Democracy* (London: Associated UP, 1995), p. 90.

<sup>43</sup> Zak, *The Polis and the Divine Order*, p. 90.

<sup>44</sup> Zak, *The Polis and the Divine Order*, p. 113. Zak proposes the hypothesis of a fundamental death-drive contained in and sustaining this *autonomist* folly, and transposes to Antigone and Creon the term Ismene uses to describe Eteocles and Polynices: *αυτοκτονούντε* (56), "an ambiguous term at once denoting mutual destruction and self-slaughter. ... Refusing all conciliatory communication with one another, they turn their fury upon themselves when they find the blows they would deliver to their enemies fail of their intended mark," *The Polis and the Divine Order*, p. 113.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion about law, violence and sovereignty, see the section *Nomos Basileus* in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> Stathis Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003), p. 126.

<sup>47</sup> "And he has learned speech (*φθέγγμα*) and wind-swift thought (*φρόνημα*) and the temper that rules cities" (354-6). Steiner notes that "lines 354-5 ... entail almost a political theory of speech," *Antigones*, p. 254.

<sup>48</sup> See David Cohen, *Law, Violence, and Community in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 36ff.

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion on the centrality of speech in the polis see Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

<sup>50</sup> Arendt writes: "Without the accompaniment of speech ... action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject. ... Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words," *The Human Condition*, p. 178-9.

<sup>51</sup> As Arendt remarks, the *polis* "not without justification has been called the most talkative of all bodies politic," *The Human Condition*, p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> Creon cries: "But there is no worse evil than insubordination! This it is that ruins cities, this it is that destroys houses, this it is that shatters and puts to flight the warriors on its own side! But what saves the lives of most of those that go straight is obedience! In this way we have to protect discipline and we must never allow a woman to vanquish us" (672-8).

<sup>53</sup> Haemon reproaches him: "Do you wish to speak but not to listen to him you speak to?" (757).

<sup>54</sup> Euben, *Corrupting Youth*, p. 160.

<sup>55</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 247.

- <sup>56</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 234.
- <sup>57</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 234.
- <sup>58</sup> Euben, *Corrupting Youth*, p. 162.
- <sup>59</sup> Euben formulates it this way: “does *Antigone* provide us with a view of reason as defective, or does it provide us with a case of pride and stubbornness ‘masquerading’ as and perverting reason? Is what we see not ‘true’ reason but a ‘semblance’ of it? Or do the very terms of this distinction beg the question?”, *Corrupting Youth*, p. 148.
- <sup>60</sup> Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*, p. 20.
- <sup>61</sup> Cavarero illustrates this clash between *polis* and (female) body, using Sophocles’ *Antigone* as an extremely representative example and, at the same time, as an atypical case where the body is loaded with an unusual importance for the centrality of the corpse and of an incestuous sexuality. See Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*.
- <sup>62</sup> Judith Butler evidences this paradox in *Antigone*’s claim: “Her words, understood as deeds, are chiasmically related to the vernacular of sovereign power, speaking in and against it, delivering and defying imperatives at the same time, inhabiting the language of sovereignty at the very moment in which she opposes sovereign power and is excluded from its terms,” *Antigone’s Claim*, p. 28.
- <sup>63</sup> The chorus invocation is full of awe: “None among the immortals can escape you, nor any among mortal men, and *he who has you is mad*. You wrench just men’s mind aside from justice, doing them violence; it is you who have stirred up this quarrel between men of the same blood. Victory goes to the visible desire that comes from the eyes of the beautiful bride, desire that has its throne beside those of the mighty laws; for irresistible in her sporting is the goddess Aphrodite” (781-805).
- <sup>64</sup> Claude Calame, *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), p. 141.
- <sup>65</sup> See Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 256ff.
- <sup>66</sup> Calame, *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece*, pp. 149-50.
- <sup>67</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 158.
- <sup>68</sup> The description of the macabre nuptial rites reads: “Still living, he clasped the maiden in the bend of his feeble arm, and pouring forth a sharp jet of blood, he stained her white cheek. He lay, a corpse holding a corpse, having achieved his marriage rites, poor fellow, in the house of Hades” (1238-43).
- <sup>69</sup> Creon says: “An enemy is never a friend, even when is dead” (522).
- <sup>70</sup> *Antigone* says to *Ismene*: “Do not try to share my death, and do not claim as your own something you never put a hand to! My death will be enough!” (534-47). *Ismene* replies: “Ah me, am I to miss sharing your death? *Antigone*: Yes, you chose life, I chose death” (554-5).
- <sup>71</sup> The invocation reads: “O tomb, O bridal chamber, O deep-dug home, to be guarded for ever, where I go to join those who are my own, of whom *Persephassa* has already received a great number, dead, among the shades! Of these I am the last and my descent will be the saddest of all, before the term of my life has come.

But when I come there I am confident that I shall come dear to my father, dear to you, my mother, and dear to you, my own brother" (891-9).

<sup>72</sup> In the words of Tiresias: "in return for having hurled below one of those above, blasphemously lodging a living person in a tomb, and you have kept here something belonging to the gods below, a corpse deprived, unburied, unholy. Neither you nor the gods above have any part in this, but you have inflicted it upon them!" (1068-73).

<sup>73</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 287.

<sup>74</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 263.

<sup>75</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 265.

<sup>76</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000), pp. 156 ff.

<sup>77</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 198.

<sup>78</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>79</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>80</sup> Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think?*, p. 141.

<sup>81</sup> The dialogue (*des sourdes*) between Haemon and Creon, accelerated and made so more dramatic, effective and captivating in the *stichomythia*, expresses exemplarily the anti-political situation of Thebes:

HAEMON: This people of Thebes that shares our city does not say so.

CREON: Is the city to tell me what orders I shall give? ...

CREON: Must I rule this land for another and not for myself?

HAEMON: Yes, there is no city that belongs to a single man.

CREON: Is not the city thought to belong to its ruler?

HAEMON: You would be a fine ruler over a deserted city! (733-9)

<sup>82</sup> Tyranny, Arendt explains, means isolation: "isolation of the tyrant from his subjects and the isolation of the subjects from each other through mutual fear and suspicion – and hence ... tyranny was not one form of government among others but contradicted the essential human condition of plurality, the acting and speaking together, which is the condition of all forms of political organization," *The Human Condition*, p. 202.

<sup>83</sup> Zak, *The Polis and the Divine Order*, p. 127

<sup>84</sup> Froma Zeitlin, "Thebes, Theatre of the Self and Society in Athenian Drama", in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, ed. J. Peter Euben (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), p. 102. It is, of course, a very old interpretation to see *Antigone* as pitting Athens against Thebes, although the terms of contrast may differ. Cf. Richard Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments: Part III, Antigone* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1900), pp. ix-x.

<sup>85</sup> See Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 159.

<sup>86</sup> Cavarero, *Corpo in Figure*, p. 44.

<sup>87</sup> Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think?*, pp. 141-2.

<sup>88</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 70.

- <sup>89</sup> As Haemon asserts: “For whoever think that they themselves alone have sense, or have a power of speech or an intelligence that no other has, these people when they are laid open are found to be empty” (707-9). Thus Gourgouris concludes: “The two sides of the law (human/divine, State/family, etc.) are not as mutually exclusive as they appear at first glance since they can be interwoven, and it is precisely in the sense that Kreon and Antigone resist this interweaving (*pareirein*) and pursue each other to destruction by following the law of *monos phronein* that they become *apoleis*. To think and act alone in a democratic polis is plainly self-destructive, as well as an affront to the polis,” *Does Literature Think?*, pp. 140-1.
- <sup>90</sup> Euben writes: “Proximity because what the audience saw and heard on stage resonated with recognizable contemporary events, characters, and situations; distance because, though elements of the excesses on stage were present in Athenian life, they did not define it,” *Corrupting Youth*, p. 176.
- <sup>91</sup> Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, pp. 93-4.
- <sup>92</sup> Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, pp. 93-4.
- <sup>93</sup> Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think?*, p. 155.