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Basturk, Efe

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An Arendtian Reading of Antigone: Tyranny Emerging from Righteousness

Arendtiška Antigonės interpretacija: teisumu grįsta tironija

Efe Basturk efebasturk@gmail.com

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Turquía

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7117-0734>

Abstract: The aim of this article is to investigate the tyrannical similarity between Antigone and Creon through Hannah Arendt's political philosophy. As Arendt claimed, tyranny firstly signals the end of *the political* through which men can share their natality. The very meaning of tyranny is the domination by absoluteness that ends deliberation among mortal beings. Antigone only focuses on the divine law, which is seen as absolute righteousness that precedes the law of the city, and so, she tends to ignore any other option on rightfulness. This article aims to show that not only Creon but also Antigone can be regarded as a tyrant, since Antigone tends to sublime her dedication to an infallible justice, causing her to deny any other claim on justice.

Keywords: Antigone, Creon, Tyranny, Hamartia, Phronesis.

Summary: Šio straipsnio tikslas – remiantis Hannah Arendt politine filosofija išnagrinėti Antigonės ir Kreonto panašumą tironiškumo požiūriu. Kaip teigia Arendt, tironija pirmiausia signalizuoja politiškumo, kuris įgalina žmones dalintis savo gimstamumu, pabaigą. Pati tironijos prasmė yra absoliutumo įsiviešpatavimas, užbaigiantis bet kokius mirtingų būtybių svarstymus. Antigonė žvelgia vien į dieviškąjį įstatymą ir laiko jį absoliučiu teisumu, kuris esąs pranašesnis už miesto teisę, todėl ji linkusi ignoruoti bet kokio kito teisumo galimybę. Šiuo straipsniu siekiama parodyti, kad tironu galima laikyti ne tik Kreontą, bet ir Antigonę, nes Antigonė aukština savo pasišventimą neklystamam teisingumui, taigi ji neigia bet kokią kitą teisingumo pagrindą.

Keywords: Antigonė, Kreontas, tironija, hamartija, fronezė.

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Introduction

Peter Euben starts his text named *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* by quoting Judith Shklar's words in her obituary of Hannah Arendt: "political philosophy is tragic thought" (Euben 1986: ix). In the Arendtian point of view, while men seek to perceive themselves as immortal beings, they must face the fact that they are mortal beings. Politics, according to Arendt, is therefore necessary, because through politics men can transcend their ambivalent realities. However, this is not easy, because men must have a self-knowledge that declares that no one can possess the absolute truth that enables them to command others in society. Rather, what Arendt offers is a political relationship in which men come together to constitute a reasonable judgment for the shared world.

The Arendtian context helps us to investigate one of the major tragic elements staged in the tragedies broadly. This major element is tyranny, represented as a type of character through which human mortality and immortal desires become obscure (Seaford 2003). That is why the

narrative form of tragedy is so compatible with the Arendtian context of politics, because in both, human existence is handled within its ambivalent nature. In tragedy, the hero, or the leading figure in the play, perceives his thought on justice as the only and absolute truth, and so he becomes the only representative figure of justice, to whom no one can object (Swift 2016). The leading figure in the play is therefore represented as a character who closes himself to another claim or opinion constituted by others, since he perceives and represents himself as the absolute right. In the eyes of the hero, the judgments of others do not deserve to be heard or considered as a claim on righteousness.

In the tragedies, the issue of tyranny arises when the hero begins to perceive his judgments as the absolute right. The tyrant presents himself as the possessor of the absolute truth; that is why the tyrant mostly refers to an *unchangeable* divine law, which can be separated from human law that can be changeable politically (Ahrensdorf 2009: 121). So, tyranny is argued within the context of a tendency that can be considered as an expression of an attempt by which one dares to exceed one's limits and tries to appropriate the divine law (Saxonhouse 1988: 1265). For Balot, the conceptualization of the tyrant therefore contributes significantly to political philosophy, since he is primarily an expression of a deterioration in morality (Balot 2006: 93; Plato 1991: 574d-e).

The most important reason why tyranny is seen as a moral and political issue is that it makes public openness and collective deliberation, which is the meaning of the *polis*, impossible. Tyranny, in other words, replaces persuasion, which is an indispensable element of public life, by force, which reduces multiple and different thoughts to a battle in which public consensus becomes impossible (Xenophon 2013; Aristotle 2007). For this reason, the possibility to prevent tyranny can only be provided by the mutual collaboration of individual and public virtues. The former is the temperance that is grounded in self-knowledge, which is a Socratic principle, and the latter is *phronesis*, which is the wisdom of constituting a compatible relation between the perfection of truth and imperfection of man, as an Aristotelian thought (Dottori 2009: 310).

In tragic thought, the unity of temperance and *phronesis* is discussed within the context of *hamartia*, which means one's lack of reasoning. In fact, *hamartia* emerges from one's not knowing one's limits and one's *hubris* leading one to act or judge like a god (Payne 1960). So, through *hamartia*, the audience is warned about the social consequences caused by *hubris* (Bouchard 1989: 27). *Hamartia* transforms the tragedy into a political-philosophical text, because the idea of the tragic end resembles the tyranny arising from *hubris* (Barker 2009: 3). Here, *hubris* therefore helps us to realize that the distinction between what must be done and what must not be done is so ambiguous.

The tyranny in tragedies, which is discussed within the context of the lack of practical reason and ignorance of temperance, presents an Arendtian political philosophy that can be related with tragic thought, and this can best be seen in Sophocles' *Antigone*. In the customary reading of the *Antigone*, tyranny is identified with Creon, since he represents the

governor of the city who wishes to rule by an arbitrary power. This reading reduces tyranny to a political context in which tyranny is understood only within the problem of a political regime. However, there is an alternative interpretation through which tyranny can be handled more broadly. I shall argue that this alternative paradigm can be found in Arendt's thought. As Arendt reminds us, the tyrant does not have to be a ruler; an ordinary person can also have a tyrannical tendency because of his desire to be the one whose claim must be regarded as the absolute truth. On this view, Antigone should also be counted as one who reveals a tyrannical tendency. Antigone's tyrannical tendency can be observed in her regarding her own judgment as the absolute truth over the alternative claims. Although Antigone seems very sure to argue that the divine law precedes the city's law, she is unaware that she cannot even know where and how the divine law should be processed. Since Antigone has been overcome by *hamartia* because of her unawareness of her *hubris*, she must now face her limits or inadequacy in the eyes of the gods.

1. Tragic Theatre and Arendtian Politics

According to Arendt, theatre should be regarded as a metaphor of the political space where men interact and are aware of their limits or capacities. As Vernant also argues elsewhere, there is a close connection between theatre and politics, because in both, the participants make their characters and actions visible to others (Vernant 1969: 108). For Arendt, interaction between men can be established by action, that is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, [and] corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt 1998: 184). So, the experience of sharing the world with others shows man the truth of his own existence. In Arendt's view, the world as a space is both narrative and political, because the people sharing their world together express who they are by opening their minds to others. The Arendtian formulation here refers to the etymology of the word "theatre", which comes from the Greek *theaomai* -to see and to be seen. For Arendt, the reason why we open our lives as a narration to others is because we cannot grasp the meaning of our lives (Kristeva 2020). So, the common world is created by *speech* through which one transforms to a storyteller from whom others can take lessons. For Arendt, the most suitable option for this possibility is drama (Arendt 1998: 192).

The tragic stage therefore resembles a public/political space where people can experience citizenship, including the notion of self-knowledge. So, both political life and theatre reveal that no one can appropriate the absolute truth in the city, but that they can only open their minds to others to reach a reasonable and common judgment in their mutual life. Vernant therefore problematizes the context of tragedy in this respect. For him, tragedy only shows that there can be no absolute answer for human issues; men can only question things, but never find reasonable answers for them (Vernant 1992: 35).

The non-political function of tragedy is also considered by Arendt. For Arendt, the scene in Greek culture functions by exhibiting public issues on the stage. Through tragedy, the audience can witness the critical distinctions happening in public life and at the same time, they can realize how the characters portrayed in the play can be seen in daily and public life. As Longo mentions, Athenians are not only simple spectators but also they are the witnesses of some public events through which they can realize the critical distinction between good and bad (Longo 1990: 6). However, the critical possibility of this realization depends on a public realm in which men can comprehend the actual form of political distinctions by their visibility. The distinction between good and bad is not represented in a philosophical context that is purely abstract and theoretical, but in an actual context that derives from daily human contacts.

In tragedy, the audience does not simply watch events on the stage, because tragedy is about the consequences of human failings (*hamartia*). Tragedy therefore presents an opportunity to anyone for self-criticism. The similarity of the tragic scene to the political space becomes clear when the audience can realize that the events exhibited on the stage are not only fiction but daily simple facts. For Arendt, the possibility for the audience to experience a fictive event as a daily fact depends on a simple truth: man can realize truth only through the existence of others. Men can know the absolute truth in an abstract or philosophical context, but what they cannot know is how to practice it in concrete reality.

The most important feature of tragedy is that one can never be sure of the consequences of one's judgments. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the audience is shown the blurred line between the actual and fictional context of human behaviors. Although Oedipus seems to be sure who he really is and what awaits him in the future, he becomes aware of his identity through the various dialogues that have been made with others (Sophocles 2017). And, finally, at the end of the play, when Oedipus discovers who he is, he feels an obligation to reveal the truth in front of others. What Oedipus feels is a responsibility to demonstrate himself to others, namely the public. As Euben mentions, even self-recognition needs to be considered by the citizens in the *polis* (Euben 1986: 109). Arendt refers to this approach when she frames the conception of plurality, as "one of the fundamental conditions of human life insofar as it rests on the fact of natality" (Arendt 1961: 61).

The Arendtian context of politics here points out the role of the chorus in the tragedies. The chorus in the tragedies simply aims to show human weakness by emphasizing that man cannot foresee the future, which can only be known by the gods. The chorus addresses the audience to show them that men can never be masters of their fates. For Aristotle, Sophocles has a much more privileged place than other writers, as he puts the chorus in the play just like an actor (Aristotle 2013: 1456a). Sophocles turns tragedy into a dramatic event by portraying the hero with a *hubris* trying to be master of his fate, which can only be known by the gods (Segal 1995). The encounter between the hero and the chorus means

a radical distinction between human inadequacy and the unforeseeable forces of destiny (Esposito 1996: 86). However, beside dramatic elements, Sophocles uses a *theatrical* element that is visible and concrete (Weiner 1980: 207). In other words, the audience not only learn about the tragic consequences, but they also witness the tragedy in the context of concrete events that happen to the hero.

The chorus enables us to see that one is predestined as a mortal being, and so, when one attempts to negate one's being and fate, one must inevitably face a tragic end. This is the similarity between Sophocles' plays and Arendt's political thought. Arendt, as Honig argues, handles the human being in his timeless mortality, which makes him vulnerable to the unpredicted events that occur in his destiny (Honig 2010: 8). However, the Arendtian notion of immortality does not only mean a tragic end in an ethical context, but it also means an ontological condition. As Markell reminds us, the Arendtian notion of mortality can lead one not only to ignore one's inadequacy, but also to tend to govern the tragic consequences that emerge from both ethical and ontological inadequacy (Markell 2003: 9). This should be regarded as the basis of *political tragedy*, which can lead to tyranny. This political tragedy can best be seen in the tragedy of Antigone, and the Arendtian context will help us to understand how Antigone hides a tyrannical tendency that leads her to the tragic end.

2. The Tragedy of Antigone

The theme of the *Antigone* is based on a distinction between two concepts of law. On the one hand, there is Antigone, who thinks that she is obliged to bury her brother's (Polynices) body on behalf of the divine law; on the other hand, there is Creon, (the ruler of the city) who sublimates the *nomos* (political law of the city) over any claim about justice (Sophocles 2019). While Creon (the tyrant) prioritizes the law of the city, Antigone claims that the law of the gods must be obeyed to realize justice (Maritain 1942: 78). By criticizing the law of the city, Antigone tends to identify the political with religious traditions and unwritten laws (*agraptá nomíma*). Although her brother, Polynices, betrayed his city, his behavior or crime is not important in the eyes of the gods. That is why Antigone's one and only claim is to honor the gods by burying her brother's dead body¹. However, Creon, in response to Antigone's claim, states that Polynices does not deserve a proper funeral, because of his betrayal of the city.

2.1. *Conflicting Laws*

The tragedy of Antigone reflects a disagreement between two conflicting conceptions of justice: particularity (law of the *polis*) and universality (natural law) (Aristotle 2013: 1373a-1375b). Aristotle emphasizes Antigone's demand to bury her brother's dead body. However, Antigone's intention is not to object to Creon, but rather, she obeys

the divine law that orders her to protect the family honor. Antigone claims that she will never have a brother like Polynices again, and so, her responsibility to the divine order can only be fulfilled right now (Sophocles 2019: 910). Besides, although Polynices betrayed the laws of the city while he was alive, he is now dead and therefore outside the laws of the city. The only law that can command dead bodies like Polynices is the gods' orders, which also necessitate some responsibilities in the land of the living.

Antigone does not refer only to a conception of law that is reduced to the duty or responsibility arising from the family bond. Antigone's thought on law, however, can best be seen in her attempt to re-conceptualize the context of politics. However, this re-conceptualization should be regarded as *hubris*, as the reflection of a tyrannical tendency. What Antigone does in prioritizing the divine law over the city's law is to deny the public judgment that the citizens have constituted. Antigone may be right when she defends the divine law; however, her righteousness does not give her the authority to deny the public law. Antigone so devotes herself to the divine law that she never tends to accept that there may be another claim on justice.

Therefore, the main problem in the play is not Antigone's rejection of the law of the city, but her sublimation of the divine law. Since this sublimation can be regarded as an indicator of being closed to different thoughts and negotiation, it reflects the end of politics, through which the citizens can overcome their deficiencies with deliberation. The similarity between Creon and Antigone can be seen here: each of them supposes that their belief indicates the most correct way and, more importantly, neither of them needs to make a deliberation to be convinced, because they never think that they could be wrong.

While demonstrating the tension between these two concepts of the law, Sophocles enables us to understand the characteristics of the tyrant. The tyrant is a person who identifies the authority of the law with his own might. Both Creon and Antigone tend to personalize the law they believe in with themselves. So, the problem of tyranny shows us that *hubris* should not be seen only as a psychological or a personal problem, but that it must also be understood within the context of politics. This is the distinction part of tyranny, because the tyrant appears as a person who does not know his limits and tends to be just like a god².

Returning to the text, Antigone is brought before Creon after she was caught red-handed while trying to bury her brother's dead body. Creon asks Antigone whether she is aware of his order about the burial. Antigone says she knows that what she has done is against his orders (Sophocles 2019: 443-445). Why did Antigone deliberately violate Creon's order? Because she distinguished the difference between "the order of a mortal" and "god's law" (Sophocles 2019: 450).

For Steiner, this difference revealed here is so crucial that it corresponds to a context that determines the main idea of Western thought, which focuses on the radical opposition between the law and justice (Steiner 1984: 247). By challenging politics, or "the order of mortals", with

reference to a transcendental law, Antigone implies the changeable nature of political law. The law of the city cannot be regarded as infallible truths like the order of the gods; so, accepting the secular-political law as a divine order means the biggest mistake for the human, that is, *hubris*.

In that case, should it not be said that *hubris*, which is the reason for Antigone's accusation of Creon, also exists in Antigone? Antigone does not object to the law of the city; rather, she tries to express that the idea of the Law, as the indicator of the absolute truth, cannot be reduced to the law of the city. This attitude may be interpreted as a reliance on the divine law; but does Antigone not put herself above politics with this attitude? Antigone here emphasizes the importance of brotherhood based on love and mutual obligation rather than citizenship based on coercion over the members of the city (Lane and Lane 1986: 179). The reason for emphasizing the difference between brotherhood and citizenship is important, because Antigone refers to the notion of law through which man can experience morality and responsibility. However, Antigone's responsibility does not lead her to restrict herself (self-knowledge) in her actions, but to perceive herself above politics.

However, unlike Antigone, Creon prioritizes the context of the law directly related with the city. We can clearly understand this prioritization in Creon's distinction between the two dead brothers: According to Creon, Eteocles died defending Thebes, and therefore his body deserves to be honored. On the other hand, Polynices made an alliance with a foreign city and betrayed his own country. So, Creon handles the distinction between the law and justice by referring to the distinction between the enemy and the friend. The measure of justice, then, changes according to what one has done for one's city, not who one is. Meanwhile, it must be noted that Creon thinks his judgment on the principle of justice should be regarded as righteous, because he prioritizes the common good. Creon's claim makes us question whether we can regard Creon as a tyrant in the first place. In other words, why should a statesman be regarded as a tyrant if he accepts the preservation of his country as the supreme law and announces that betrayals will be punished? Besides, is it shameful for a statesman to deny a proper burial for those who die betraying their country? For Crane, we should not miss the tyrannical tendency in Creon's speech (Crane 1989: 111). Creon speaks like an ideal statesman; however, after a while, he moves away from the open-mindedness that a statesman should have, and he continues by speaking in a more authoritarian manner. Miola thinks that Creon's tyranny should be seen in a different context. According to Miola, the reason why Creon has forbidden the burial of Polynices' dead body is not because of justice, but only to satisfy his pride (Miola 2014: 223).

So, it can be argued that the crucial motive for Creon's judgment is not to secure justice, but a wish to demonstrate himself as a mighty king in the eyes of the city. This attitude, however, is a sign of tyranny, because tyranny begins with legitimizing measureless desires that must be controlled (Plato 1991: 577d-e). On the other hand, all of this should also be valid for Antigone. Like Creon, Antigone wishes to present herself

as the defender of the “just law”, but it is unclear whether she does this to obey the law. Antigone herself declares that she opposes Creon because she prioritizes the family bond over political obligation. It seems that she limits her world only to her family. So, Antigone is exposed to *hamartia*, because she tends to perceive the world as consisting of her limited judgments. However, the truth needs to be considered with a broad perspective, and Sophocles tacitly tries to remind us of this basic reality.

2.2. *Hamartia as the Lack of Phronesis*

Antigone tries to attract her sister, Ismene, for she presumes that Ismene, like her, will accept the family honor as the supreme law by the order of the gods (Goldhill 2012: 244-246). However, Ismene is diffident and fearful; she does not want to disobey divine laws, but she is also sure that prioritizing the divine law would mean disobedience of the law of the city (Sophocles 2019: 40). Ismene separates rightness and power; she knows that the divine law is supreme, but she also knows that she has no [legitimate] power to follow the divine law by disobeying the political norm (Sophocles 2019: 50-65). Ismene, in one sense, points out the political limit of Antigone’s ethical justification³. Antigone’s demand for justice has a priority over Creon in the ethical context, because she seems “right” as she expresses the moral priority of the divine law, which is infallible compared to artificial law, or *nomos*. However, Ismene’s hesitant state is an important sign for us to grasp a critical flaw in Antigone’s demand.

Antigone may be appreciated by the audience for her insistence on demanding justice. She demands to bury her brother’s dead body and she assumes that her attitude should be regarded as a defense of rightness against power⁴. However, in her confrontation with Creon, Antigone resembles Creon, from whom she tries to differentiate herself⁵. This tendency can be observed in Antigone’s attempt to declare her own decision against Creon’s judgment. The chorus therefore regards Antigone as a “maverick”, because she has dared to interpret the divine law only by referring to her own judgments (Sophocles 2019: 801-805). Antigone seems to have shown an imprudence that means an arbitrary interpretation of the law⁶. This interpretation can be seen in her ignorance; before being executed, Antigone asks the gods what law she has violated (Sophocles 2019: 920-923). By asking this question, Antigone complains about the silence of the gods. The silence here is meaningful, because the gods had left Antigone alone before, too⁷. The silence of the gods can be thought of as a sign of distrust for Antigone about justice. On the other hand, perhaps, Sophocles has probably aimed to create a quandary, or *aporia*, through which the absolute meanings of justice and righteousness become obscure, since it is Creon who buried Polynices rather than Antigone who obeyed the divine law. Here an important question arises: How has the tyrant, who openly defied the

gods' command, been able to win the favor of the gods? Or, why have the gods kept silent against Antigone? Moreover, why would burying Polynices be the fate of Creon but not of Antigone?

This *aporia* is a kind of representation that justice cannot be realized as easily as it seems. Throughout the whole text, the absolute meaning of justice cannot be identified either with the law of the city or with the divine orders to which Antigone has insistently referred. Moreover, both Antigone and Creon are faced with a tragic end (*hamartia*) because of their judgments: Antigone, who always tried to follow the divine law, was abandoned to the silence of the gods, while Creon dragged the city towards disaster even though he was sure that the law he obeyed would be the absolute truth for the city. Therefore, the problem for Sophocles is not to know whether Creon or Antigone is right or just – finally, both disappointed with their judgments. Sophocles seems to have drawn a similar fate for Antigone and Creon: Creon caused a disaster that he never intended; Antigone, on the other hand, could not fulfill her wish, which seemed like a just demand.

What might Sophocles have wanted to show here is the nature of tragedy. Tragedy is a call to face the fact that the action does not actually belong to the subject as much as is supposed (Vernant and Naquet 1990: 10). On the one hand, the action emerges from the subject's judgment, but, on the other hand, the action ends in such a way that the subject could never predict or intend. This message is skillfully hidden in one of the most famous scenes of the *Antigone*, in which the chant is sung by the chorus in the first *stasimon*. The chorus here emphasizes that man is strong but naturally weak; he can realize magnificent things, but he is helpless in his nature (Sophocles 2019: 335-355). In the first *stasimon*, the human is therefore described as a creature that cannot be predicted and lacks the ability to foresee the future as well. According to Heidegger, what is meant in this song is the *uncanny*, that establishes the relationship between man and the world (Heidegger 1959). Man, on the one hand, lives with unpredictability, but is forced to overcome this unpredictability with a power of foresight. So, what is described as the tragic end in tragedy is the *tragic*, that is both the nature and destiny of man.

However, there is another critical issue in the first *stasimon*. The chorus says that the tragic end does not have to be the destiny of man. Man would rise in the *polis* if he respected the divine justice preserved by oaths; but if he chose evil, then he would be excluded from the *polis*. It can be thought that the chorus here establishes a distinction between Eteocles, who was honored by the city, and Polynices, whom Creon wanted to be declared as *apolis*. However, the chorus wants to show that Creon and Antigone are in the same situation, because they prioritize either the law of the city (Creon) or the divine law (Antigone). In the *stasimon*, it is strongly emphasized that the law of the city and the divine law should be regarded together. This emphasis shows a fundamental deficiency in both Creon's and Antigone's judgments or their demands for justice. The idea of justice should therefore be deliberately handled within a broad perspective that must include all possible and legitimate claims.

However, there is another important matter that should be considered here. The reason for the deficiency in Creon's demand for justice does not emerge from his wrongfulness. Creon, as the chorus associated with the oldest people belonging to the city accepts, does have a right and authority to judge that Polynices should not be buried with a proper funeral (Sophocles 2019: 211). What Creon is not entitled to is his attempt to extend his judgment about Polynices beyond the borders of Thebes. This, as the oracle said, shows that Creon has dared to hide Polynices' body from the gods (Sophocles 2019: 1074). The oracle has affirmed Creon's political authority but implies that this authority is only limited to Thebes. What echoes in the oracle's words is Creon's intemperance: Creon has made a huge mistake by supposing that he can use his authority anytime and anywhere.

What can be seen in Creon's attitude is *hamartia*, which means a lack of practical reason (*phronesis*) and refers to the narrow-mindedness that could cause one to make a wrong decision (Lebow 2003: 363). The subject, in other words, has judged deficiently because he has interpreted the facts from a one-sided perspective (Young 2013: 37). However, this deficient judgment does not only affect the subject himself, because the misjudgment does also have an impact on others. The tragic end therefore refers to a political problem rather than a psychological issue that is limited to the subject's own decisions. This can also be clearly seen in the case of Antigone, who because of her deficient judgment, has not only been exposed to the silence of the gods, but has also caused her tragedy, which may be a precedent for the *polis*.

Perhaps Antigone may have thought that Creon could not take the risk of executing her. Still, the case of Antigone should be called a *hamartia*, because Antigone does not have complete knowledge of what she is sure to be absolutely true. According to Nussbaum, what causes *hamartia* in Antigone's action is the deficiency of practical reason (*phronesis*) (Nussbaum 1986: 54-63). In fact, this is not the only scene in which the deficiency of practical reason can be observed. While Antigone glorifies the law of fraternity emerging from an unconditional love that is separated from the coercive law of the city, she tries to impose this on her sister, Ismene, as if it is like a divine order (Sophocles 2019: 75). This can be considered as an indication that Antigone now identifies the divine law with the political law that she previously externalized. However, as Sophocles may have attempted to show, the tragedy of *Antigone* results from the lack of reasoning as to how the theoretical distinction between two concepts of the law (the divine law and the law of the city) can be harmonized in practical reality. As Aristotle observed, a theory that cannot be actualized by men is not possible (Aristotle 2020: 1138). *Phronesis*, therefore, does not aim for man to have perfect knowledge, but is rather the wisdom of searching for the possibility of how philosophical knowledge can be applied to man's world.

What should be seen through *phronesis* is that having perfect knowledge is not adequate to make decisions. Rather, all that is required for judgment is common sense, that is, an exhaustive reasoning for

adapting theoretical knowledge to practical reality. It can therefore be asserted that both Creon and Antigone are lacking in common sense, because both of them have assumed that the moral principle guiding their actions is the only truth, and so, they do not hesitate to decide by referring to their own criteria. However, man is not such a creature that can make the right decision without any hesitation. Returning to Arendt, we can grasp the meaning of politics here: politics consists of a deliberative process that is necessary for organizing a moral life, which cannot be achieved by a man on his own. Man is of course a creature that can reason, but broad reasoning, which is the basic condition of politics, can be provided only by a deliberation through which different arguments can communicate with each other. In other words, no single reasoning can ever be adequate to judge, because it can only interpret a situation within its own limited context.

Therefore, since judgment requires a broad reasoning that exceeds all limited contexts, it should never be left to the authority of a single person, but rather, it must be opened to a broad deliberation. In the absence of negotiation and persuasion among different opinions or claims, what possibly emerges is the domination of one single truth, which can also be noted as a sign of tyranny. Although Creon and Antigone have different opinions, they have a tyrannical similarity, because each of them tries to oblige the other one to accept his/her claim. This common similarity, therefore, reflects the *hubris* that leads the subject to regard his/her own opinions as the absolute truth. Sophocles' play is very important, since it demonstrates the tyrannical similarity between two opposite characters.

Conclusion

In the popular but unilateral reading of Antigone, we are forced to see Creon as wrong, so the tyrannical one, and Antigone as right, so the noble one. Sophocles, of course, does not support Creon, but he also does not sublime Antigone or her attitude against political authority. Rather, he tries to show that neither the political law nor the divine law, which is asserted by humans, is enough to embrace the truth. In a thorough reading of the play, we can see that Sophocles aims to blur the radical distinction between right and wrong, because he thinks that the concept of right and wrong cannot be easily determined in the judgment of the people.

In Sophoclean drama, the characters finally find themselves in an unexpected situation in which they can no longer realize the absolute standards of the values through which they determine their choices and acts. While the divine law gives Antigone an unconditional right to bury her brother's body, the law of the city gives Creon the right to blame and punish her. Sophocles aims to argue that both are legitimate, because the only thing that they can do is obey the law that they consider as the righteous way for themselves. However, what Sophocles really seeks to show is not to discuss which law is more just than the other, but to reveal that no one can determine what the righteous law is. The reason why Sophocles puts the chorus forward is to show that this debate cannot be

resolved; to solve this problem needs a broader approach that exceeds the human inadequacy of men.

This critical approach can be found in Hannah Arendt, who allows us to re-read tragedy within a broader and more unconventional perspective. In my opinion, the tragedy of Antigone can be related with an Arendtian context, because the Arendtian reading of tragedy shows that the world is based on difference and plurality, and that no value or judgment can be the absolute ruler in this plurality. The world as shared among men expects them to be aware of their inadequacy; so, what men should do is to open themselves to a deliberation through which they can understand that the idea of the absolute is impossible among themselves. The possibility to share and create the world together depends on the speech performed in political space. Arendt therefore argues that political space must be isolated from the violence that can lead the collective and participatory relationship among men to absolutism. So, as this article has aimed to discuss, Antigone herself should be re-considered within this unconventional Arendtian approach that handles tyranny as a desire for absolutism and a tendency to ignore otherness. The context of tyranny should therefore not only be reduced to political authority, but also to a human tendency that can emerge from *hubris*. For Arendt, this tendency should be defined as the end of politics.

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Notes

- 1 Rohde emphasized the cultural and political importance of burial in Ancient Greece. According to him, the proper burial ensures the continuity of the divine connection between the world of the living and Hades (Rohde 1925: 9).
- 2 According to Vernant, the tragedies of Sophocles focus on both the ambiguity of the human condition and the results created by this ambiguity. Moreover, he also claims that we can best see in Sophocles' plays that man is not a consistent or predictable being (Vernant and Naquet 1990: 26-28).
- 3 Griffith tries to reveal an inconsistency here. For him, there is an ambivalent situation in Antigone's talk with Creon and Ismene. While Antigone represents herself as open-minded in talking to Creon, she is rather harsh and sectarian when talking to Ismene (Griffith 2010: 112).
- 4 Knox challenges the popular view about Antigone by claiming that Antigone apparently did the right thing, but for completely the wrong reasons. For Knox, Antigone does not refer to a divine law (*nomoi*) that has been commonly agreed upon, but only to values that are traditionally accepted. For this reason, Antigone only refers to a ritual that must be performed, but not to the truth about the event (Knox 1983: 97).
- 5 Butler approaches this issue through the Hegelian notion of "recognition". According to Butler, what is implicit in Antigone's reaction is the demand to be taken seriously by the power (Butler 2000: 13-14).
- 6 Mader argues that Antigone tries to compensate for the lawlessness of the family bond based on incest with her devotion to Polynices. Mader therefore points out that since the family bond supported by Antigone is based on a deadly sin, her persistent emphasis on the family bond can be interpreted within the context of a political purpose (Mader 2012).
- 7 Antigone had previously attempted to bury her brother, but she had failed in all attempts.