The Human and the Divine in the First Stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*

Paulo Alexandre Lima
IFILNOVA/NOVA University Lisbon
plima@fcsh.unl.pt

Abstract. The first stasimon of the *Antigone* has the second antistrophe as its key moment. If read in connection with the whole of the play, the second antistrophe points in advance to a conflict between two inadequate forms of relationship between the human and the divine as the reason for the catastrophe that befalls Thebes. It represents a microcosm of the whole play, which deals with a conflict between Antigone's and Creon's inadequate forms of relating to the divine. It does not refer to just one of the protagonists but to both simultaneously. By referring to what an adequate relationship between the human and the divine is and what it is not, it establishes a decisive criterion from which not only the play's outcome but also the meaning of every human society can be assessed.

Keywords: Antigone, the human, the divine.

* The research leading to this article received financial support from FCT ("CEEC Individual", reference CEECIND/02734/2018) and IFILNOVA ("Programa Estratégico", reference UIDB/00183/2020). A word of thanks is due to D. Cairns (University of Edinburgh, UK) and J. I. Porter (University of California, Berkeley) for their helpful comments on a previous draft of the article.

1. Introduction

The first stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* (332-75)[1] is one of the most emblematic texts of all Greek tragedy and even of all ancient Greek culture.[2] With this article,

[1] The Greek text and English translation of the *Antigone* are taken from H. Lloyd-Jones (1998). The *Antigone* is cited using line numbers only. O. Taplin (1977) 49-60, 470-6 pointed out that structural terms such as "stasimon" and the like, established by Aristotle in *Poet.* 1452b14-27, are unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, as their use is widespread and they clearly designate the different parts of a Greek tragedy, I will use them here, without feeling the need to put them in inverted commas, as A. Brown does (1987, notably 12).

[2] In his exaggerated way, Heidegger even goes so far as to maintain that "the first two lines [...] of the first strophe [...] are the essential ground of [the play], and even of Soph-

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DOI:10.25205/1995-4328-2024-18-2-539-569

I would like to contribute to determining a fundamental aspect of the first stasimon which, as far as I know, has not yet been sufficiently highlighted in the secondary literature on the *Antigone*. The first stasimon has the second antistrophe (365-75) as the most decisive moment with regard to the interpretation of its overall meaning,[3] and in my view the second antistrophe, if read in its connection with the whole of the *Antigone*,[4] points in advance to a conflict between two inadequate forms of relationship between the human and the divine as the reason for the catastrophe that befalls the city of Thebes at the end of the play. This means that I consider the second antistrophe a microcosm of the whole play which, in my understanding, deals with a conflict between two inadequate forms of relationship between the human and the divine.[5]

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ocles' poetic work as a whole", and a few pages later he says that τὸ δεινόν (in his own translation *das Unheimliche* ["the uncanny"]) – the key term of those initial lines – "is a fundamental word of [the *Antigone*] and even of Greek antiquity itself" (M. Heidegger [1996] 60, 63). See also M. Heidegger (2014) 168-9: "The saying 'the human being is the uncanniest' provides the authentic *Greek* definition of humanity".

[3] See e.g. G. Ronnet (1967) 101; T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 124; E. v. N. Ditmars (1992) 48; M.-C. Leclerc (1994) 79; S. Benardete (1999) 43; C. Utzinger (2003) 63; D. Cairns (2016) 61-2. This is the dominant view on the matter. However, A. Brown (1987) 154-5 and G. Crane (1989) 106-8 are among those who claim that the focus of the stasimon lies on the first three stanzas, in which the chorus praise human inventiveness.

[4] Already Aristotle – through his famous claim that the Sophoclean chorus were actors in the drama – maintained that Sophocles' choral odes bore a close relationship to the events of the plays (see *Poet.* 1456a24-7). For a defence of this position in modern studies on the *Antigone*, see e.g. R. C. Jebb (1888) 69; R. F. Goheen (1951) 52-3; C. P. Segal (1964) 53; R. W. B. Burton (1980) 86; G. Crane (1989) 104; W. B. Tyrrell and L. J. Bennett (1998) 63; M. Griffith (1999) 180; C. Utzinger (2003) 60-72. T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 118-20 argue that the first stasimon has a connection not only with its dramatic context but also with the rest of the choral odes in the play. A. Brown (1987) 154-5 is one of the representatives of the so-called "separative interpretation" of the stasimon, i.e. the view that it is not related to the rest of the drama (on the use of this classification, see T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 118-20).

[5] For this reading of the *Antigone*, see P. A. Lima (2016) 267-87. H. Gundert (1976) considers the first stasimon the key to understanding the play and that both Antigone and Creon are related to the gods (33) but maintains that only Creon is affected by blindness (34-5). J. O'Brien (1975-6) 147 and M. Griffith (1999) 47 also point to the religious nature of the positions of the two antagonists and argue that only Creon is wrong. That only Creon is wrong is also claimed by H. Funke (1966) 42, R. Lauriola (2007) 391, 394, 405, and C. Utzinger (2003) 71-2. Following D. A. Hester (1971) 11-19 – in a classification adopted by other scholars (e.g. P. Holt [1999] 658; A. Lardinois [2012] 58-62) – an interpretation like mine would fit into "the Hegelian view". This is a view which – as opposed to what D. A.

Commentators on the *Antigone* maintain that the play has to do with a conflict between Creon and Antigone, but only one of the antagonists, namely Antigone, truly represents the divine,[6] and in this sense the conflict presented in Sophocles' play is seen as a conflict between a merely human pole and a divine one. Moreover, the first stasimon – whose second antistrophe ascribes the cause of the city's downfall to the boldness resulting from the violation of the laws of the land in their interconnection with divine justice (368-71) – is usually interpreted as having only one of the antagonists expressly in view, either Antigone or Creon.[7]

In this article, I will try to present a view of the first stasimon and – albeit in less detail and only insofar as my reading of the first stasimon requires it – of Sophocles' *Antigone* distinct from these general tendencies in Sophoclean studies. First (sections 2-3), I will try to consider the overall structure and meaning of the first stasimon, in particular the key role that the second antistrophe plays in it. Then (section 4), I will try to show how the first stasimon draws attention to a crucial aspect of the play, that of the essential imbrication between the human and the divine

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Hester calls the "orthodox" one ([1971] 11-19; see the following n.) – gives equal weight to both antagonists. However, Hegel conceives the *Antigone* as a conflict between two antagonists who are equally right in the partial points of view they represent (see the relevant passage in A. Paolucci and H. Paolucci [1962] 325). Although these general classifications are sometimes useful for identifying interpretive tendencies in scholarship, they can also be quite reductive, particularly when they distract from the subtleties of a complex play such as the *Antigone*.

[6] In a way, this is a particular instance of the orthodox view, namely that Antigone is right and Creon wrong, even though such a view does not necessarily imply that the former's position is religious in character (a good survey of studies representative of the orthodox view can be found in D. A. Hester [1971] 48-52). See W. B. Tyrrell and L. J. Bennett (1998) 63-80, for whom Antigone is a "divine portent" (δαιμόνιον τέρας) outside civilization; S. Benardete (1999) 50, who sees in Antigone "a more than human *monstrum* ['monster']"; also R. C. Jebb (1888) xxv; V. Ehrenberg (1954) 33; C. P. Segal (1964) 50-1, 52, 57, 59, 64. H. Funke (1966) 47 claims that Creon is godless and stateless; D. Carter (2012) 127 calls Creon a "religious sceptic".

[7] The idea that the first stasimon is expressly aimed at Antigone is maintained, among others, by G. Ronnet (1967) 102; R. Bodéüs (1984) 278. For the opposite view, see e.g. H. Funke (1966) 47-8. Some scholars have a more complex take on the matter, claiming that the stasimon involves different levels of signification, so that Antigone and Creon are simultaneously aimed at but on distinct planes of meaning (e.g. R. F. Goheen [1951] 56; T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 131). I agree that the stasimon has multiple layers of signification, which go beyond what the chorus intend to communicate, but I will try to explore this multiplicity to show that the stasimon refers to both antagonists as characters who establish an incorrect relationship between the human and the divine.

planes, evident in the way in which the second antistrophe establishes the relationship between the laws of the land and the justice of the gods (368-9). Finally (section 5), I will try to demonstrate that the first stasimon, especially the second antistrophe, does not refer to just one of the antagonists but to both simultaneously. Considering the events in the play, it is evident that Creon and Antigone are – in the terms of the second antistrophe – those whose intelligence leads them to evil (365-7), those who do not respect the laws of the land in their connection with divine justice (368-70) and are deprived of the city because of their boldness (370-1). In connection with this last point, I will conclude the paper with a brief reflection on the forms of relationship between the first stasimon and the *Antigone* (section 6).

2. The basic structure of the stasimon

One of the main topics of the first stasimon, evident in the first three stanzas (332-64), is the origin of civilization and what made it possible. The stasimon evokes, therefore, a series of other texts with which it has this thematic affinity, such as the myth told by Protagoras in the Platonic dialogue of the same name (Pl. *Prt.* 320c3-2d6).[8] Unlike the myth in Plato's dialogue, it does not have a clear chronological

[8] These are the so-called texts on cultural progress, which Y. Sano (2014) 33-5 divides into "Prometheus type texts" – Ps.-Aesch. *PV* 442-503, Eur. *Supp.* 201-18, Pl. *Prt.* 320c3-2d6 – and "Palamedes type texts" – Aesch. *Palamedes* fr. 181a Radt, Soph. *Nauplius* fr. 432 Radt, Eur. *Palamedes* fr. 578 Kannicht, Gorg. *Pal.* 30 (B11a Diels-Kranz) – in accordance with the mythological figure they are centred on. The content of the first stasimon seems to be directly or indirectly influenced by Protagoras' ideas on progress. In the fifth century BC, he was the most prominent advocate of such ideas, and there are strong affinities between the stasimon and the myth in Plato's *Protagoras* (see D. Cairns [2016] 59), one of the main sources for the study of the historical Protagoras' political thinking. G. Crane (1989) 109 points out that the Athenian colony of Thurii, whose laws may have been written by Protagoras (A1 Diels-Kranz), was probably founded in 443, and the *Antigone*, according to one of the possible dates, was first performed in 442. I will give preference to some points of contact between the first stasimon and the *Protagoras* as they will allow me to highlight key aspects to my argument, being aware of the importance of other texts for an adequate assessment of the ode's intertextuality. Y. Sano (2014) 36 argues that Sophocles had the Prometheus type texts in mind when he composed the stasimon, although he was also familiar with the Palamedes type texts. C. Utzinger (2003) 74 maintains that the tragedian did not have any particular text in mind but ideas that can be found in a group of texts available by the time he conceived his play. On the stasimon's intertextual links, see, in addition to the aforementioned studies, P. Friedländer (1934) 61-3; G. A. Staley (1985) 561-

intention.[9] The focus of its first three stanzas lies instead in the systematic description of how man came to dominate the various spheres of nature. What is indicated here is how man is able to dominate the sea (334-7), the goddess Earth (337-41), and the other animals (342-52); how he is capable of developing speech, thought, and propensity for social life (353-6); and how he could escape the cold, rain storms (356-8), and grave diseases (363-4).[10] One thus gets the impression that the chorus feel very optimistic and confident in man's ability to dominate the environment around him and overcome almost all difficulties that present themselves to him: man is "all-resourceful" (360: παντοπόρος), "he meets nothing in the future without resource" (360-1: ἄπορος ἐπ' οὐδὲν ἔρχεται | τὸ μέλλον); "[s]kilful beyond hope is the contrivance of his art" (365-6: σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν | τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων). When read separately from the content and tone of the second antistrophe (365-75), the first three stanzas may be interpreted as a joyful ode to man's achievements.[11] Lines 361-2 point to the only thing that he is not able to master: "only from Hades shall he apply no means of flight" (Ἅιδα μόνον | φεῦξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται),[12] and the following

70; A. Brown (1987) 154; E. v. N. Ditmars (1992) 50-3; M.-C. Leclerc (1994) 68-84; D. Cairns (2014) 3-30.

[9] See M. Griffith (1999) 181: "[...] the ode does not present a continuous evolutionary narrative, like that of 'Protagoras' at Plato, *Prt.* 320c-322d, or Prometheus at A[esch]. *Prom.* 442-506 [...]". R. Bodéüs (1984) 280-2 argues for the non-chronological nature of the chorus' description but claims that the story told in the *Protagoras* is non-chronological too.

[10] S. Benardete's is a very exhaustive treatment of the structural and semantical complexities of the first three stanzas ([1999] 40-8). For T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 121-2, man's intelligence imposes boundaries – i.e. order and separation – on the confusing powers of nature.

[11] See R. F. Goheen (1951) 53; H. Gundert (1976) 26; G. Crane (1989) 106, 115; C. Utzinger (2003) 29. C. P. Segal (1964) acknowledges that "the ode reflects much of the optimism of Sophocles' time" (53) but claims that "in the course of the play all the apparent conquests enumerated in the first stasimon prove to have a double edge" (63). In M. R. Kitzinger's view ([2008] 21), the very language of the ode calls man's power into question. Similarly, M. Griffith (1999) 181 points to "the ambiguous moral character of 'technology'" in the ode, where "culture is presented as an aggressive process of 'defeating' and 'mastering' nature". On this see also G. Ronnet (1967) 104, 105; D. Cairns (2014) 4-5; Y. Sano (2014) 37; D. Cairns (2016) 59-60.

[12] The emphasis should be placed on μόνον ("only"), as also for G. Crane (1989) 107 and C. Utzinger (2003) 29. For the opposite view that death is what should be emphasized, see M.-C. Leclerc (1994) 80; D. Cairns (2014) 4-5; D. Cairns (2016) 60. H. Gundert (1976) 30 points out that death is reduced to an exception, which is revolutionary in relation to Greek archaic poetry. However, C. Utzinger (2003) 28 n. 66, 29 argues that death is not the

indication that "he has contrived escape from desperate maladies" (363-4: νόσων δ' ἀμηχάνων φυγὰς | ξυμπέφρασθαι) suggests that in many cases man had the ability to temporarily escape even from death itself.[13]

Despite the use of δεινόν in a negative sense not long before the start of the first stasimon (323),[14] lines 332-3 – which occur at the very beginning of the stasimon

only exception to man's domination over nature, the Earth being another pole of resistance to his claim to omnipotence insofar as she requires incessant work. Other references to death and Hades in the *Antigone* are given by Y. Sano (2014) 42 nn. 50-1.

[13] See notably A. Brown (1987) 155, 157: "[…] man's failure to conquer death […] is presented as little more than a foil to his achievements in medicine, which do enable him to evade death in the short term"; R. Bodéüs (1984) 275-6; T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 123-4; G. Crane (1989) 107. C. Utzinger (2003) 29, 33 holds the same view, highlighting that the reference to death as inescapable is also weakened by the previous, more general characterization of man as παντοπόρος ("all-resourceful"). Medicine is invoked as a most significant instance of man's all-resourcefulness, which became a topos in ancient Greek texts. On the ancient Greek idea that man will be able to discover or invent virtually everything and the jingle πόροι ἐξ' ἀπόρων ("finding ways out of helpless situations"), see the citations in M. J. Carvalho (2019) 173-5, especially nn. 170, 172-3. It should be borne in mind that many culturally influential texts set limits to medicine and subscribe to a more negative view of human nature (e.g. Hom. *Od.* 18.130-7, Solon fr. 13.57-60 West, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.55-62; for more references, see M. J. Carvalho [2019] 120-1). I recognize that the first three stanzas may be alluding to this more traditional perspective, but, all things considered, the intention of celebrating man's achievements seems to prevail.

[14] The term occurs multiple times throughout the play: 96, 243, 323, 326, 332-3, 408, 690, 915, 951, 959, 1046, 1091, 1096. It therefore occurs three or four times before the first stasimon, depending on the textual variant – δειλά or δεινά – adopted in 326 (for a defence of the latter, see E. M. Craik [1978] 197). At least in these three or four passages, it bears the meaning of something "terrible" or "dangerous". As C. Utzinger (2003) 62 indicates, several terrible things happen up to the first stasimon – Polynices' betrayal, the death of many men in the liberation of Thebes, the reciprocal murder of the two brothers, the proclamation of the edict, the burial of Polynices, the political unrest in the city – in such a way that the play seems to develop under the aegis of the δεινόν. It is in this troubling sense that the term is used by the guard in 323 (see G. Ronnet [1967] 103 n. 5). In the form of a γνώμη ("maxim") – "It is δεινόν for the believer to believe what is not true" – he suggests that Creon's misjudgement of events is "dangerous". E. v. N. Ditmars (1992) claims that the end of the episode preceding the first stasimon is a "near-farce" (57), which does not deny the seriousness of the situation, since – as P. Holt (1999) points out – "the comedy is in there for a reason. It shows us what to watch for in Kreon. The Guard knows his master, and his nervousness is fully justified" (676). The proximity of 323 to the stasimon strongly suggests that in 332-3 δεινόν has a negative sense. R. Bodéüs (1984) 274 n. 15 admits that 243 might suggest that 332-3 was understood by the audience as conveying that man's nature is cause

and are supposed to set the tone for the whole song[15] – can be interpreted as having an overall positive meaning. "Many things are formidable", the chorus say, "and none more formidable than man" (332-3: πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοὐδὲν ἀν- | θρώπου δεινότερον πέλει).[16] Until the second antistrophe – and strictly from the perspective

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for alarm but maintains that ultimately the chorus are expressing their admiration for his achievements. This also applies to the connection between 323 and 332-3 (see below, n. 16).

[15] According to C. Utzinger (2003), they work as a sort of "title" (30). See also H. Gundert (1976) 24.

[16] Δεινόν is arguably one of the most ambiguous terms in the ancient Greek language (G. Ronnet [1967] 103; G. A. Staley [1985] 563, 564, where he even calls it "a Protean word"). It consists in a verbal adjective derived from words denoting fear such as δείδω ("to fear"), δέος ("a reason for being afraid"), and δεῖμα ("an object of fear"), which indicates that its primary meaning is "fearful", "terrible", or "dangerous" (J. O'Brien [1975-6] 140; C. Utzinger [2003] 30; D. Cairns [2016] 59-60). In Homer it refers to someone with authority and is applicable to heroes and gods, in which case it points to fear associated with respect (for the phrase δεινός τ' αἰδοῖος ["respectability"], see *Il.* 3.172, *Od.* 8.22, 14.234; G. Crane [1989] 104 n. 4; C. Utzinger [2003] 30). It later acquires the sense of someone "capable", "skilful", or "clever", first attested in Hdt. 5.23.2 and frequently expressed by the construction δεινός + infinitive, in particular within a rhetorical context (δεινός + λέγειν ["someone skilful in the art of speaking"]; E. Schlesinger [1936-7] 62; H. Gundert [1976] 24; E. M. Craik [1978] 197-8 n. 6; C. Utzinger [2003] 30). When it occurs at the beginning of the first stasimon, it already involves this multiplicity of meanings ranging from "fearful" to "respectful" to "skilful" (J. C. Kamerbeek [1978] 82: "in the use of δεινός here the whole gamut of meaning of the word is to be perceived: fearful, awful, dangerous; powerful, skilful; wonderful, strange"; A. Brown [1987] 155; M. Griffith [1999] 185). Δεινόν appears twice in 332-3, an emphasis through repetition that lends it great importance in the framework of the ode (R. F. Goheen [1951] 53). The chorus express themselves according to the priamel tradition, thus highlighting that man is δεινότατον (on the highlighting function of the priamel and how the first stasimon is related to its literary tradition, see M. J. Carvalho [2019] 112-17). Despite being a comparative, δεινότερον has the value of a superlative because of the double negation in the litotes construction of 333 (C. Utzinger [2003] 30). The chorus convey the idea that man is δεινότατον but, due to the equivocality of the term, it is not clear what this means. The cultural and literary traditions the stasimon belongs to add further difficulties in this respect. The allusion to Aesch. *Cho.* 585-6 in 332-3 (P. Friedländer [1934] 58-9; G. Ronnet [1967] 103; G. Crane [1989] 105; D. Cairns [2014] 7-9) and, in addition, the linguistic and semantical affinities between πολλὰ τὰ δεινά in 332 and the stock phrase πολλὰ καὶ δεινά for expressing "the terrible things that someone has done or suffered" (G. Crane [1989] 105 n. 8) suggest that δεινόν may have a negative meaning associated with fear and danger (C. Utzinger [2003] 31). On the other hand, a positive meaning of the term may be perceived, arising not only from the celebratory tone of 334-64 but also from a contrast

of the first stasimon – these lines can generally be understood as pointing to man as a being whose activity in the world brings most advantageous results for himself. However, the second antistrophe changes the whole picture. This happens mainly because a decisive shift takes place as regards the sphere of reality described and the evaluation criterion of the effects of man's action upon the world and himself. The predominant topic of man's control over nature is put aside, and the criterion for evaluating man's powers is no longer his effectiveness in dominating the natural elements. The context is now that of social life within the city, and man's actions are evaluated according to a moral and religious criterion, which is centred on his relationship to his fellow citizens and the gods.[17] This shift is clear from the chorus'

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with the negative view of man that seems to be serving as a cultural backdrop (on the contrast between δεινότερον in 333 and ἀκιδνότερον ["more helpless"] in Hom. *Od.* 18.130, see G. A. Staley [1985] 562-3). E. Schlesinger (1936-7) 60 and R. Bodéüs (1984) 271-2, 275 maintain that the δεινότης portrayed in the stasimon is ethically indifferent as in Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1144a23-8 (similarly S. Benardete [1999] 40, 42; C. Utzinger [2003] 31 n. 80). It remains the most widely accepted view that the multiple meanings of the term are simultaneously effective (an extreme version of this can be found in T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 129-30). I agree that δεινόν involves the multiple, sometimes contradictory meanings referred to above, but they are not all simultaneously effective, at least not always. Depending on the moment, one or more of its meaning components may prevail over the others. The context should decide (R. F. Goheen [1951] 141 n. 1) and a change of context may result in a different relation of forces between the meaning components of the term. It seems to me that the description of man's achievements in 334-64 makes 332-3 retrospectively appear in a positive light (C. Utzinger [2003] 31), something that, as we shall see, completely changes in the second antistrophe. The power of this description also suspends, at least temporarily, the effects of 323 on the meaning of 332-3. The semantic complexity of δεινόν raises difficulties at the level of translation too, where one of its meaning components tends to be emphasized while, according to T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 129, its ambiguity should be respected in its entirety. H. Lloyd-Jones' translation as "formidable" covers both the positive and negative aspects of the term. H. Gundert (1976) 28 argues that both aspects of δεινόν are effectively rendered by the German term *ungeheuer* ("monstrous"), a translation going back to Hölderlin's second version of 1804 (F. Hölderlin [2019] 331). I choose not to adopt a single translation, as it is decisive to emphasize the most prominent aspect(s) at each moment during the reading of the ode.

[17] See H. Gundert (1976) 26-7; E. v. N. Ditmars (1992) 48; M.-C. Leclerc (1994) 79; C. Utzinger (2003) 27-8, 63, 74. Some scholars point to aspects that make the changes resulting from the content of the second antistrophe appear less dramatic. J. O'Brien (1975-6) indicates that ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα in 353-5 means "moral insight" (139 n. 3, 150) and ἀστυνόμους ὀργάς in 355-6 is a "phrase that connotes the fully human disposition and social impulse drawing people into communal life" (139 n. 3). This last aspect is also stressed by C. Utz-

use of categories such as good and evil (367), their reference to law and justice (368-70) and the city's possible downfall (370-1), as well as their condemnation of bold behaviour (371) and wish to protect the household from the presence of evil men (372-5).

But despite these significant changes, a fundamental unity underlies the first stasimon as a whole. Throughout the stasimon – in its different contexts and with its different evaluation criteria – man's faculties are always in the spotlight. On the one hand, in the context of man's efforts to dominate nature and according to the evaluation criterion of effectiveness in such efforts, they have an overall positive value: they enable man to effectively control the natural elements and become a most admirable living being. On the other hand, within the context of political life and following the evaluation criterion of respect for his fellow citizens and piety towards the gods, man's powers have an ambiguous value: they can lead him either to good or evil (367) and, respectively, make him either great in the city or citiless (370). With the second antistrophe, therefore, the opening lines of the stasimon (332-3), even if read strictly within its framework, begin to appear in their ambiguity: man – his powers – is δεινότατον not only in the sense that he is "the most admirable" living being in terms of resourcefulness, but also in the sense that he is – morally and religiously speaking – "the most frightening" or "the most dangerous" being of all.[18]

To understand the structure and meaning of the stasimon more clearly, two sets of questions should now be answered. First: What kind of powers are here at stake? And are they several powers or different instances of the same fundamental one? Second: Does their ambiguous value have to do only with their effectiveness in taming the natural elements on the one hand and their dangerousness when acting within the political realm on the other? Or is there something more to it? It is evident at various moments in the stasimon that the powers in question are all relative to human intelligence. In the first three stanzas, man dominates nature by means of his ingenuity (347: περιφραδής, 348: μηχαναῖς, 353-5: ἀνεμόεν | φρόνημα, 360: παντοπόρος, 364: ξυμπέφρασται), and in the second antistrophe, he acts within

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inger (2003) 32, who argues that the latter phrase involves the existence of the fully developed polis at stake in the second antistrophe. However, none of these aspects invalidates the idea that the moral and religious dimension is not at the centre of the chorus' concerns in the first three stanzas and only becomes prominent in the second antistrophe.

[18] See R. F. Goheen (1951): "[...] in the final antistrophe the element of danger which has been suggested in the opening is caught up explicitly and shown to be a part of that ever-resourceful capacity which distinguishes man" (53); "[...] ominous undertones are present within the wonders of the first three strophes to rise and sound their note of fear and warning more dominantly in the concluding lines" (54).

the city through his moral and religious insight (365-6: σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν | τέχνας, 373: φρονῶν). The chorus do not seem to differentiate between a purely technical form of intelligence and a purely moral and religious one. On the contrary, the participial clause beginning the second antistrophe, regardless of how it is grammatically interpreted,[19] points out that the power of intelligence enabling man to conquer nature may lead him either to good or evil: σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν | τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων | τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει (365-7: "Skilful beyond hope is the contrivance of his art, and he advances sometimes to evil, at other times to good").[20] In other words, the underlying unity of the whole stasimon is man's intelligence, and it is this unity that enables the ambiguousness of the opening lines to

[19] The issue revolves around the value of the participle ἔχων, which can be concessive or causal (M. R. Kitzinger [2008] 25; M. J. Carvalho [2019] 177 n. 175). J. C. Kamerbeek (1978) 85 argues for the concessive value of the participle. For a different view, see H. Gundert (1976) 29. I tend to side with J. C. Kamerbeek, but both possibilities allow me to make the claim that the form of intelligence is the same in the first three stanzas and the second antistrophe (more on this in the following n.). The H. Lloyd-Jones translation seems to avoid the problem. Although I support the thesis of the concessive value of ἔχων, I am of the opinion that this passage should be rendered in a neutral way, leaving it to the readers to determine what the grammatical value of the participial clause is for them, as M. Griffith does in his commentary ([1999] 189: "Having this resourceful <quality> of invention <as> something clever beyond expectation, <he> proceeds sometimes <to> harm [...], other times to good"; similarly R. C. Jebb [1888] 76 and A. Brown [1987] 51).

[20] Unlike the Platonic *Protagoras*, where a purely technical wisdom about life (321d1-2, 3-4) proves to be insufficient to guarantee human survival (322a7-c1) and Zeus ends up offering human beings the two "virtues" (ἀρεταί: δίκη ["justice"] and αἰδώς ["shame"]) that allow their survival within a community (322c1-4; for the shift from the plane of τέχνη ["technical wisdom"] to that of ἀρετή in Protagoras' myth, see P. A. Lima [forthcoming in 2024]), the first stasimon does not distinguish between a purely technical intelligence, responsible for man's domination over the natural elements, and a moral and religious one, which is effective in the framework of the city. As C. Utzinger (2003) 135 maintains, at stake in the first stasimon are two components of the same intelligence and not a bipartition into two types of intelligence acquired at different moments in the history of human development (see also H. Gundert [1976] 31). I see no reason, however, to defend that man's intelligence is intrinsically technical and that this is its fundamental character at the time of the foundation of the city and afterwards (H. Gundert [1976] 26, 31; M. J. Carvalho [2019] 110 with n. 8). It seems to me that it is the nature of what his intelligence is dealing with that makes it express itself sometimes as technical sometimes as moral intelligence. If the chorus were to subscribe to a conception of intelligence as purely technical, the second antistrophe would have to exclude the moral condemnation of those who act boldly and adopt an immoral or amoral tone instead. 365-6 presents a summary of the first three stanzas (H. Gundert [1976] 26; C. Utzinger [2003] 26), which points to a continuity between

show through and acquire a concrete meaning. The same fundamental power of man, namely his intelligence, is simultaneously the most admirable and the most frightening of all things. It goes without saying that, because man is here defined by his intelligence, the ambiguousness of the latter amounts to the inherent ambiguousness of his being.

Man's ambiguousness, however, is a bit more complex than I have indicated so far, notably because his moral and religious insight is itself ambiguous: within the political realm, "he advances sometimes to evil, at other times to good" (367: τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει). This means, as I shall consider more closely, that his ambiguousness is in fact twofold. As we have seen, he is, on the one hand, enormously effective when it comes to dominate nature, but, on the other, he may be highly ineffective in terms of preserving his status in the city and the city itself, which depends on the moral and religious instantiation of his intelligence: "When he applies the laws of the earth and the justice the gods have sworn to uphold he is high in the city; outcast from the city is he with whom the ignoble consorts because of his recklessness" (368-71: νόμους παρείρων χθονὸς | θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν | ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις ὅτῳ τὸ μὴ καλὸν | ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν).[21] Man's ambiguousness

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the latter and the second antistrophe concerning the nature of intelligence. Such a continuity is reinforced by the fact that ἕρπει is a verb of spatial movement, in line with many of the verbal forms used in the first three stanzas (333: πέλει, 336: χωρεῖ, 337: περῶν, 340: ἰλλομένων, 341: πολεύων, 343: ἄγει, 360: ἔρχεται; see T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 126; Y. Sano [2014] 37 n. 31). But I do not argue – with T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 125, 128-9 – that this similarity in verb typology indicates that the aggressiveness characterizing intelligence in the first three stanzas is carried over to the second antistrophe. Although it is a spatial movement verb, ἕρπει expresses this movement in a metaphorical way and its prepositional objects (367: τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει) show that the context of its movement is not the hostility of the natural elements but the moral and religious behaviour within the polis. On the grammatical construction of σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας, according to which σοφόν τι has a predicative value in relation to τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας, see R. C. Jebb (1888) 76; J. C. Kamerbeek (1978) 85; M. Griffith (1999) 189. M. R. Kitzinger (2008) 25 maintains that the syntax of 365-6 seems somewhat disjointed and that both τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας and σοφόν τι can be direct objects of ἕρπει. W. Schmid (1903) 17 claims that τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας is a less prosaic way of saying τὴν ἐκ τῆς τέχνης εὐμηχανίαν ("the inventiveness coming from technical wisdom").

[21] I agree with Y. Sano on the meaning of ὑψίπολις and ἄπολις: "[Ὑ]ψίπολις can be translated as 'one who stands high in the polis' or 'one who makes the polis prosper'. [Ἄ]πολις can be translated as 'one who loses the polis' or 'one who makes the polis perish'" ([2014] 31 n. 1). The rationale behind my position is given by M. Griffith: "We may understand both (i) '... his city is high; but his city is nothing, if ...' [...], and (ii) 'He is high in his city; but he is outcast if ...' [...]. [...] [T]he Elders see the interests of citizen, ruler and *polis* as identical"

therefore has to do, first of all, with the contrast between his effectiveness when confronting nature and the risk of ineffectiveness as regards the preservation of the polis and its grandeur. However, man shows his ambiguousness also on a moral and religious level. He is admirable if he can preserve the city but dangerous and frightening if he is not able to do this. That is to say, he bears an ambiguous value also by virtue of a contrast between the effectiveness and the ineffectiveness of his intelligence as regards life in the polis. This point allows for a better understanding of man's complex ambiguousness as defined in the first stasimon. If we take into account the two levels of their ambiguousness, man and his intelligence are δεινότατα because they are "superlatively admirable" – superlatively effective – in their confrontation with nature as described in the first three stanzas and, at the same time, either "superlatively admirable" or "superlatively dangerous and frightening" – either superlatively effective or superlatively ineffective – within the moral and religious framework of the polis as presented in the second antistrophe.

3. Reading backwards

So far I have conducted a unidirectional interpretation of the first stasimon, by following the sequence of the text and how its meaning progressively unfolds. I will now try to interpret it backwards, in order to identify a few decisive effects of the content of the second antistrophe on the meaning of the first three stanzas.[22] Just

([1999] 189-90). M. R. Kitzinger (2008) 27 admits both possibilities of translation for ὑψίπολις. T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 124 point out that ἄπολις refers not only to someone who becomes an exile but also to someone who destroys the city, citing Hes. *Op.* 219-37 in their support: "[...] whoever fails to separate justice from injustice will be an outcast, but his city itself is then endangered as well, especially if the evildoer should be high in the city, i.e. one of its leaders" (see also R. C. Jebb [1888] 77; G. Ronnet [1967] 100; A. Brown [1987] 157). But in the case of ὑψίπολις these three scholars argue that it concerns the reputation of the city and not that of the citizens, and in J. C. Kamerbeek's view ἄπολις exclusively designates someone who is outcast from his city ([1978] 86).

[22] A few scholars strongly object to this reading strategy. In P. Holt's view, it "interpret[s] the early scenes out of our advance knowledge of how things will turn out and magnif[ies] small hints in those early scenes accordingly"; his "main objectives [in the article] will be to read the play forwards, without retrojecting our knowledge of the outcome into the earlier scenes, and to estimate how a fifth-century Athenian audience [...] would respond to developments" ([1999] 672). See also e.g. A. S. McDevitt (1972) 160; C. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 135-6. This interpretive stance raises, however, significant problems. First of all, it is

as in the myth of Plato's *Protagoras* (322c1-d5), so also in the first stasimon the foundation of the polis seems to correspond to the highest stage of the civilizational process, and accordingly the way in which man behaves in the political context may best testify to the superiority of his intelligence vis-à-vis nature and the other mortal living beings.[23] Because it focuses on man's life in the polis and the two fundamental modes of his moral-religious behaviour – to pursue good or evil (367) and to behave piously or boldly (368-71) – the second antistrophe is the key moment in the stasimon. Indeed, the ultimate meaning of the latter as a whole – and a fortiori that of the first three stanzas – depends on whether or not man behaves justly and piously within the polis. But in addition to the parallel with the *Protagoras*, the action of the *Antigone* itself shows that the second antistrophe plays the most decisive role in the overall meaning of the stasimon and in the way the latter communicates with the rest of the drama.[24] As with most Greek tragedies,

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not easy to determine what is meant by "a fifth-century Athenian audience". P. Holt recognizes this difficulty and is somewhat cautious in his approach: "The thoughts and feelings of a long dead people are ultimately unrecoverable, and there is no reason to believe that all 16,000 spectators in the Theater of Dionysos would react in the same way [...]. Still, we can estimate tendencies and argue that the text is especially apt to encourage certain responses in rather a lot of the audience. This is basically what attempting to read the play through Greek eyes means" ([1999] 672 n. 44). Furthermore, the idea that the true meaning of the *Antigone* is provided by the audience is problematic. One thus underestimates the poet's talent – as C. Utzinger (2003) 31 n. 79 points out – which should also be considered when one "attempt[s] to read the play through Greek eyes". In fact, Sophocles may have introduced right from the beginning of the *Antigone* important clues concerning its unfolding, which may go unnoticed by those who watch the play for the first time, so that recurrent viewings and readings of it should become an essential part of the interpretive process. This last point makes the history of the reception of the *Antigone* key to understanding what the play may have meant in the period when it was composed and not just to determining how it was conceived over time within different contexts and from different assumptions.

[23] On the invention of the polis as the peak of man's superiority over nature, see C. P. Segal (1964) 53; M. Griffith (1999) 179; C. Utzinger (2003) 32, 66 (against it R. Bodéüs [1984] 281). For the resemblance to the *Protagoras* in this respect, see E. v. N. Ditmars (1992) 52; C. Utzinger (2003) 121 n. 151, 134, 136; M. J. Carvalho (2019) 179. Unlike the *Antigone* and the *Protagoras*, Ps.-Aesch. *PV* 442-503 does not mention any civic virtue. Some scholars claim that the civic virtues are delivered by Zeus in the final sequel of the trilogy (references can be found in M. J. Carvalho [2019] 180 n. 183). If so, the trilogy presents a two-phase model like the aforementioned works by Sophocles and Plato.

[24] See especially M. Griffith (1999) 180; D. Cairns (2016) 61-2: "It is [The Ode to Man's] closing emphasis on the limits and ambivalence of human ingenuity that contextualize it,

the events in the *Antigone* take place within the context of the polis and – as we shall see better in sections 4-5 – have to do with the alternative between the two fundamental modes of human behaviour referred to in the second antistrophe.[25]

Let us take a closer look at how the meaning of the first three stanzas is determined by the content of the second antistrophe, that is, by the moral and religious alternative presented in the latter. Man's domination over nature through his intelligence, as described in the first three stanzas, represents an essential part of the realization of the civilizational process, in other terms, of the process by which man, in order to guarantee his survival in the face of the hostility of the natural elements, overcomes the power of the latter and develops, by his own means, a world distinct from the natural one and a way of life different from that of other living beings.[26] But the preservation of the polis is what can give meaning to such

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within its immediate context, within the play in general, and within wider traditions of Greek thought".

[25] M.-C. Leclerc (1994) 81 draws attention to a decisive aspect: although the scenic space of the *Antigone* is civic – which is not the case with Pseudo-Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* – the places where the scandal of the burial of Polynices occurs and Antigone is imprisoned are located outside the city walls in a desert and wild region (see 411, 419-20, 773-4, 885-6, 887, 1197, 1204-5, 1216).

[26] The first stasimon is "one of the earliest extant examples of the growing Greek interest in the evolution of human societies" (M. Griffith [1999] 181), in stark contrast to the Hesiodic perspective in *Op.* 106-201 (A. Brown [1987] 154; D. Cairns [2014] 3 with n. 3; D. Cairns [2016] 59), and "goes beyond all the other sources in its rationalism and humanism", in the sense that "man himself is responsible for civilisation" (A. Brown [1987] 154; see also M.-C. Leclerc [1994] 78). Although the gods are present in the first three stanzas (338, 361), they do not have an active participation there (T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 123; Y. Sano [2014] 36), allowing man to build civilization on his own. No religious practices are referred to (E. v. N. Ditmars [1992] 52; Y. Sano [2014] 36), as is the case in Pl. *Prt.* 322a3-5, nor is there any explicit mention of divination (A. Brown [1987] 154; Y. Sano [2014] 36; but M.-C. Leclerc [1994] 75 draws attention to the association between medicine and divination in Ps.-Aesch. *PV* 477-99). There is no benefactor or philanthropist god, like Prometheus in the *Prometheus Bound* and Prometheus and Zeus in the *Protagoras*, nor a πρῶτος εὑρετής or "first inventor" (E. v. N. Ditmars [1992] 52), such as the figure of Palamedes in Y. Sano's "Palamedes type texts" (see n. 8 above). The idea that it is a god who bestows knowledge on men is archaic (M.-C. Leclerc [1994] 71; see Hes. *Th.* 46, 111, 633 for the poetic formula θεοὶ δωτῆρες ἐάων ["the gods givers of good things"]). It is the achievements of the human species and not those of an exemplary human being that are celebrated. The absence of any reference to a primitive stage, as in Ps.-Aesch. *PV* 443, Pl. *Prt.* 321b6-c6, and Eur. *Supp.* 201-2 (Y. Sano [2014] 37-8), shows that the emphasis is placed on the celebration of man's achievements, so that a description of his weaknesses is absent

an essential part of the aforementioned process. On the one hand, human domination over nature is justified if the polis is preserved through good and moderate action. On the other, it will be unjustified if political harmony is destroyed by bold and evil behaviour. Human control over the natural elements, which lines 334-64 describe in an overall positive and celebratory tone, is retrospectively overshadowed by the possibility that it is achieved in vain, and it really seems to mean very little if harmony in the polis is destroyed.[27]

The content of the second antistrophe also has a decisive effect on the meaning of the first two lines of the stasimon. These lines take their full meaning from what is said in 365-75, and therefore it is in 365-75 that the ambiguousness of man's δεινότης – both his admirableness on the one hand and his frightfulness and self-destructiveness on the other – can be fully perceived. As we have seen in the previous section, strictly from the point of view of its effectiveness in the natural

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except for the inevitability of death (361-2) and the need to incessantly till the land (338-40). From a textual point of view, ἐδιδάξατο (356) – an aorist form meaning "[man] taught himself" or "[men] taught each other" and the only occurrence of the reflexive middle voice of διδάσκειν ("to teach") in ancient Greek literature (R. C. Jebb [1888] 74: "ἐδιδάξατο here = simply αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐδίδαξε"; J. C. Kamerbeek [1978] 84; M. Griffith [1999] 188) – is the expression par excellence of the autonomy of human learning. The verb involves the idea of original acquisition, i.e. "the move from a stage where a skill was not known to one where that skill has been acquired" (Y. Sano [2014] 32; see also schol. on Soph. *Ant.* 360, 362; M. J. Carvalho [2019] 155). Some tensions between the stasimon and further developments in the drama are worth noting. First, the key role played by divination (998-1022; M.-C. Leclerc [1994] 77; Y. Sano [2014] 40) contrasts with its absence in the ode. Second, man's exposure to divine power (584-5, 593-603, 622-5; Y. Sano [2014] 40) contrasts with his independence from the gods during the civilizing process. Finally, the gnomic aorist ἐδίδαξαν (1353) is the very last word of the play. Its sense of learning too late through experience or suffering caused by the gods (M. Griffith [1999] 355; see Aesch. *Ag.* 176 for a classic example of the tragic topos πάθει μάθος ["learning by suffering"]) contrasts with man's autodidacticism.

[27] There is agreement among some interpreters on the dependence of the success of the human enterprise as a whole on that of community life (T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 124; M. J. Carvalho [1999] 180): the latter's failure will amount to a regression to "the primitive stage of human existence which preceded the creation of the πόλις" (B. Knox [1982] 31) or to chaos (M.-C. Leclerc [1994] 84). But what should also be stressed is the importance of considering this dependence for determining the fundamental ambiguousness of human δεινότης. Creon refers to the city's ruin in 189-90, in a passage reminiscent of Pericles' speech in Thuc. 2.60 (see E. v. N. Ditmars [1992] 48). If ruin means the descent into an uncivilized condition, these two passages express the same idea that seems to me to be present in the stasimon.

realm, man's intelligence is admirable, because it subdues the various natural powers. However, from the perspective of what gives man's control over nature its ultimate justification, which is the preservation of the polis, the effectiveness of human intelligence in relation to nature is meaningful – and in this sense admirable – only if the polis is preserved, but it is meaningless – and accordingly frightening for its absurdity – if the polis is destroyed. By virtue of its key role in the first stasimon, the second antistrophe spreads the moral and religious ambiguousness expressed in it to the entire stasimon, so that even the first three stanzas, which celebrate man's admirableness, become ambiguous as to the real value of human achievements in the natural domain. The very same intelligence that lines 334-64 feature as the great dominator of nature appears in 365-75 as something that may or may not be able to preserve the polis through proper moral and religious insight. Precisely because of its potential inability to preserve the polis, its conquests over nature become ambiguous. Whether it is admirable or frightening can only be determined by the events in the play.

4. The human and the divine

I have argued in section 2 that what is at stake in the second antistrophe is man's intellectual ability to grasp the moral-religious principles he needs to follow to keep the city away from internal conflict. It is important to consider how, according to the first stasimon, this moral-religious intelligence relates to the divine. The key passage to understanding this is 368-70, where the chorus say: "When [man] applies the laws of the earth and the justice the gods have sworn to uphold he is high in the city" (νόμους παρείρων χθονὸς | θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν | ὑψίπολις). The particle τ' ("and") closely unites the two objects of παρείρων, the version of the manuscripts rather weakly rendered by H. Lloyd-Jones as "applying" but which could be more accurately translated as "weaving together".[28] The chorus are therefore referring to an intrinsic connection between "the laws of the earth" (νόμους…χθονὸς) and

[28] As C. Utzinger (2003) 18 indicates, this is certainly the most controversial textual problem in the entire ode. Most editors and commentators prefer J. J. Reiske's emendation to γεραίρων ("honouring"; see e.g. R. C. Jebb [1888] 76; G. Ronnet [1967] 100; A. Brown [1987] 157; M. Griffith [1999] 189), as παρείρων is poorly documented (occurring only five times in Greek literature: Aesch. fr. 210d Radt, Xen. *Symp.* 6.2, Polyb. 18.18.13, Dydimus on Dem. 13.13.17, Ath. 5.16.4 Kaibel; see C. Utzinger [2003] 18 with n. 9) and offers difficulties in terms of grammatical construction. Some scholars, however, retain the version of the mss. (E. Tournier [1877] 35; R. F. Goheen [1951] 54, 141 n. 3; J. O'Brien [1975-6] 140-1 with n. 7, 150; G. Paduano [1982] 112; H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson [1990] 124; H. Lloyd-Jones [1998] 36;

"the justice the gods have sworn to uphold" (θεῶν…ἔνορκον δίκαν), that is, to the fact that human laws and customs are divinely sanctioned.[29] By thus weaving together

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S. Benardete [1999] 48 with n. 54; M. R. Kitzinger [2008] 26-7 with n. 33; F. G. Giannacchini [2011] 44). For the translation of παρείρων as "weaving together", see J. O'Brien (1975-6) 150; and R. F. Goheen (1951) 54, especially 141 n. 3: "This reading of the major manuscripts […] includes a forcing of the verb to govern two parallel accusatives and so mean 'weave together'. […] The image of weaving seems an appropriate continuation of the preceding pictures of man's clever handiwork, and the tension in the straining of the term is appropriate for the tenor of the passage". If to R. F. Goheen's arguments one adds C. Utzinger's remarks – the version of the mss. is clearly transmitted, the verbal form occurs in Greek tragedy, and the meaning of the passage is understandable ([2003] 18) – one has good reasons to maintain παρείρων. R. Coleman (1972) 9 n. 1 is right in saying that no matter what the result of this discussion the meaning of the passage will not be seriously affected (M. Griffith [1999] 189, immediately after claiming that γεραίρων "is the most likely correction of the MS παρείρων", adds the following comment: "The Elders assume that the [human] 'laws of the land' and the 'justice of the gods' go hand in hand"), but παρείρων reinforces the idea – also conveyed by the particle τ' – that νόμους χθονός and θεῶν ἔνορκον δίκαν are inextricably connected.

[29] See C. P. Segal (1964) 48; H. Funke (1966) 44 with n. 65; D. A. Hester (1971) 27; J. O'Brien (1975-6) 145; T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 128; C. Utzinger (2003) 36 (differently A. Brown [1987] 157; M. R. Kitzinger [2008] 27). Lines 368-9 can be understood as a hendiadys (G. Kaibel [1897] 27; E. v. N. Ditmars [1992] 55; M. J. Carvalho [2019] 183; other examples of hendiadys used in a moral context can be found in Hes. *Op.* 200 [Αἰδὼς καὶ Νέμεσις: "Shame and Retribution"] and Pl. *Prt.* 322c3 [αἰδῶ τε καὶ δίκην: "shame and justice"]). What is at stake is the idea that human laws and customs in the public and the private sphere derive their legitimacy from the oaths men take before the gods (W. Rösler [1983] 115; C. Utzinger [2003] 36). Νόμους χθονός can mean the law of the city, for instance Creon's edict (C. Utzinger [2003] 35 with n. 104; in 187 and 1162 χθών designates the country or the land) and the custom of respecting the dead, for example by giving them burial as Antigone does to his brother (C. Utzinger [2003] 35 with n. 105; M. J. Carvalho [2019] 183 with n. 191; in 24, 65, and Soph. *OC* 1546 χθών refers to the earth as a place belonging to the gods of the underworld and where the dead are buried). Θεῶν ἔνορκον δίκαν is the "[j]ustice, which men swear to observe, taking oaths by the gods" (R. C. Jebb [1888] 77; see also M. Ostwald [1986] 157, 160; C. Utzinger [2019] 35 n. 109, 36 n. 112; in Soph. *OT* 647 ὅρκον θεῶν is an oath taken before the gods). If these oaths are violated, the gods may react with punishments (T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 125 n. 10; C. Utzinger [2003] 36). The idea that human laws and customs have a divine origin is pervasive in ancient Greek texts: e.g. Hes. *Th.* 96, 901-3; Heraclitus B114 Diels-Kranz; Aesch. *Pers.* 762-4, *Eum.* 482-4, 681-4; Pind. *Ol.* 13.5-8; Pl. *Leg.* 624a1-6; Ps.-Pl. *Minos* 319c5-7; Ephorus *FGrH* 70F147 (H. Funke [1966] 44 with n. 65; J. O'Brien [1975-6] 145). I will frequently speak of human

in the city the human and the divine, man is ὑψίπολις ("high in the city"). The question here is whether man is ὑψίπολις whenever the laws and customs of the city on the one hand and divine justice on the other are woven together. For this is not always the case: there are times when this weaving-together makes him an ἄπολις ("outcast from the city"). As I read them, lines 370-1 – "outcast from the city is he with whom the ignoble consorts because of his recklessness" (ἄπολις ὅτῳ τὸ μὴ καλὸν | ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν) – point to an inadequate or incorrect understanding of how divine justice should be respected by human laws and customs. This interpretation seems appropriate in light of the events in the rest of the play. Antigone – through her decision to bury her brother Polynices – and Creon – with the proclamation of his edict forbidding the burial of Polynices as an enemy of the state – think of themselves as representatives of divinely sanctioned laws and customs (72-6, 89, 450-60, 519, 521, 542 [Antigone], 184-90, 280-9, 304-5, 450-5 [Creon]).[30] The conflict staged in the play results from their reckless or daring action against each other (473-83, 914-15 [Antigone], 705-23, 735, 745 [Creon]),[31] which ultimately

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laws and customs and divine justice, to underline the two inseparable dimensions – i.e. the human and the divine one – involved in νόμοι as they are conceived of in 368-9.

[30] Most orthodox interpreters hold that Antigone's attitude has religious grounds (n. 6 above). The idea that Creon's edict is sanctioned by the gods is defended e.g. by L. A. MacKay (1962) 166; C. P. Segal (1964) 49; B. Knox (1982) 14-15; R. Bodéüs (1984) 278; C. Utzinger (2003) 52 n. 87. In my view, both antagonists lay claim to divine legitimacy (similarly J. O'Brien [1975-6] 147; H. Gundert [1976] 33; M. Griffith [1999] 32, 47 with n. 139; A. Lardinois [2012] 60; P. A. Lima [2016] 269-74). Antigone's invocation in 454-5 of ἄγραπτα νόμιμα ("unwritten rules") is the dramatic climax in terms of her affirmation of her behaviour's divine character. According to V. Ehrenberg (1954) 38, 43 and J. O'Brien (1975-6) 145, Sophocles gives this phrase a religious meaning that it does not have when put in Pericles' mouth by Thucydides (2.37.3).

[31] See J. O'Brien (1975-6) 147; M. Griffith (1999) 34 ("The action of *Ant.* results from the clash between two dogmatic and inflexible individuals"), 39. As D. Carter (2012) 126 points out, "[o]ne thing Antigone has in common with Creon is a tendency to make a stark division between friends and enemies". Our modern sensibility tends to consider Antigone's position as reasonable (nn. 5-6 above; more on this in the following sec.). However, some readers have drawn attention to the fact that her actions are extreme and break the behaviour pattern expected of her in fifth-century Athens. The gods do not reward Antigone for her deed and nobody in the play says that she acted well except the Thebans according to Haemon's report in 692-700 (J. O'Brien [1975-6] 147; A. Brown [1987] 8, 9). The latter scholar indicates that Antigone's choice of dying for the sake of the underworld gods does not fit well with the type of moderate behaviour pursued by a Greek of her time: "The 'ordinary Greek' was not a religious fanatic [...]. [...] [The gods] would hardly [...] have so transcended common sense as to demand that the living should sacrifice themselves for

leads to the downfall of Thebes and its royal family (593-7, 1192-243, 1257-69, 1271-6, 1282-92, 1348-53). This illustrates how the condition of the citiless may be a consequence of daringly seeking to weave together human νόμοι ("laws and customs") and divine justice. In other words, the opposition between ὑψίπολις and ἄπολις seems to reflect a contrast between a moderate and an excessive way of connecting these two aspects involved in social and political rules of conduct. Such contrasting ways express, respectively, the success or failure of man's intelligence in making this connection. The latter possibility is well illustrated in the course of the *Antigone*. It is the failure of the antagonists' moral and religious insight that unleashes their conflict and causes the city's downfall (561-2, 777-80, 921, 925-6 [Antigone], 450-5, 469-70, 615-25, 1261-9, 1259-60, 1347-53 [Creon]).[32]

the dead" ([1987] 8). C. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 139-40 stresses that Antigone acts βίᾳ πολιτῶν (907: "in defiance of the citizens"), and that her family duty is to obey Creon, the one who is responsible for burying Polyneices.

[32] The question concerning the human understanding of the divine is central to the *Antigone*. Sophocles' play enacts a basic principle of ancient Greek religion: "the belief that human knowledge about the divine and about the right way of behaving towards it is limited" (C. Sourvinou-Inwood [1989] 137; for the idea that true wisdom belongs to the gods, see notably Soph. *Aj.* 13, 23). Antigone's and Creon's actions are marked by such limitations and it is the latter that generate the tragic conflict – which is one over which φρονεῖν ("understanding", "intelligence") is correct (C. Utzinger [2003] 48 n. 62, 67-8, 72, equating μὴ φρονεῖν ["lack of understanding"] with ἀσέβεια ["impiety"]) – and result in their downfall (M. Griffith [1999] 39-40; A. Lardinois [2012] 63). C. P. Segal recognizes the importance of intelligence as a form of human relation to the gods, although he argues for the orthodox claim that only Antigone understands what piety is ([1964] 49, 50-1). R. Lauriola (2007) 389-405 makes a remarkable effort to map the terminology of wisdom and foolishness in the *Antigone*. I disagree with her claim that "Creon's wisdom is foolishness; Antigone's foolishness is supreme wisdom" (394). She maintains (403, 405) that the terms associated with foolishness designate obstinacy and irreverence towards the gods when applied to Creon but mean disobedience to the Theban king when referring to Antigone. However, disobedience to Creon's divinely sanctioned edict is a politically and religiously condemnable act (C. Sourvinou-Inwood [1989] 144) and can hardly be taken as a sign of wisdom. Furthermore, it is important to note that neither Tiresias (D. A. Hester [1971] 39) nor the gods (L. A. MacKay [1962] 167) speak favourably of Antigone's course of action. Even if the outcome of the latter pleases the gods, they do not necessarily approve her act itself (C. Sourvinou-Inwood [1989] 143). When speaking of Antigone's and Creon's forms of understanding the divine as inadequate, I do not mean to suggest that there would be a way fully controllable by either of them for their conceptions to be correct, such that the tragic conflict could be avoided. Though the moral of the tragedy is that common sense and moderation should prevail in the sphere of human action (604-5, 613-14, 625, 1347-53), the world of the *Antigone* does not seem to be one where human beings can by themselves alone

The two opposing possibilities of relationship between the human and the divine just presented are the core around which the meaning of the second antistrophe and that of the first stasimon as a whole revolve. Not only the alternative between becoming ὑψίπολις or ἄπολις (370) but also the equivalent one between choosing the good or the bad (367) – to which one could add the opposition between the noble and "the ignoble" (370: τὸ μὴ καλὸν), as well as that between moderateness and immoderateness (371) – point to such contrasting possibilities of behaviour and the corresponding modes of human understanding of the divine. According to the first stasimon, therefore, man and his intelligence have an ambiguous character – that is, they are δεινότατα (the most admirable and, at the same time, the most fearsome beings) – because, first of all, they may or may not be able to grasp the proper way of connecting the human and the divine – namely, in the form of human laws and customs – and, secondly, because the ultimate meaning of their domination over nature depends on this ability.

5. Antigone or Creon?

It is now time to ask which of the two antagonists of the *Antigone* is being alluded to in the first stasimon. Answering this question is key to understanding how it is that the stasimon reflects the events in the play by announcing the conflict between Antigone and Creon as one between two improper modes of human relationship with the divine. Does the stasimon refer to any one of the antagonists in the play, or does it merely present an abstract picture – and ultimately a moral assessment – of man's path towards civilization? Both things are true. On the one hand, in the same spirit as other choral odes in Greek tragedy, it offers us a more or less abstract view on its particular subject.[33] On the other, it alludes to both antagonists by somehow predicting what happens later in the play between Antigone and Creon.[34] It is the connection between its abstract and concrete dimensions

avoid their misfortunes, which are caused by a mental blindness inflicted by a god (278-9, 594-603, 1271-5, 1345-6; J. O'Brien [1975-6] 148 with n. 19; C. Utzinger [2003] 53; P. A. Lima [2016] 283-6; a god may lead a human being to perform an immoral act: see Soph. *El.* 1425, fr. 247 Pearson; D. A. Hester [1971] 46). On the meaning of ἄτη ("blindness", "ruin") and its importance in the *Antigone*, see D. Cairns (2014) 9-27; D. Cairns (2016) 63-4.

[33] On the abstract and generalizing character of the stasimon, see R. W. B. Burton (1980) 85; W. B. Tyrrell and L. J. Bennett (1998) 64; M. Griffith (1999) 11, 179; A. Lardinois (2012) 66.

[34] As M. Griffith (1999) 180 puts it, "[...] we may read the ode [...] from a double perspective, both as an attempt by this group of old Thebans to make sense of what they have

that allows us to interpret the first stasimon as establishing an important criterion for evaluating the drama's outcome.

The dialogue between Creon and the guard, which immediately precedes the first stasimon, suggests that the stasimon has Creon in view. In 323 the guard uses the term δεινόν to refer to the king of Thebes' reaction to his announcement that Polynices has been buried: "It is dangerous for the believer to believe what is not true" (ἦ δεινόν, ᾧ δοκεῖ γε, καὶ ψευδῆ δοκεῖν). Creon believes that the guard has received money as a reward for collaborating in a political conspiracy against him (221-2, 289-314, 322, 326).[35] Δεινόν has a clearly negative meaning in this passage as if foreshadowing some sort of calamity for Creon and the city of Thebes – the term is applied to the king later in the play (1096) – and it also reflects the guard's fear of an impending violent reaction against him by Creon (327-31). This occurrence of the term strongly suggests that Creon is the δεινότατον depicted in the first stasimon. Furthermore, the markedly positive and celebratory tone of the description of man's achievements in 334-64 is closely associated with Creon's confidence and determination when proclaiming the edict forbidding the burial of Polynices (162-210).[36] In his speech Creon presents himself as a ruler who has no φόβος ("fear") of "set[ting] his hand to the best counsels" (178-81). Such a fearlessness is characteristic of man's δεινότης according to the first stasimon, which depicts him as most fearless in his confrontation with the natural elements.[37] Creon's self-image as a

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just seen and heard, and as a complex and open-ended verbal structure in which S[ophocles] allows us to explore larger themes arising out of this particular situation". See also M. J. Carvalho (2019) 109.

[35] For political conspiracies in Athens, see P. Holt (1999) 678-9. R. P. Winnington-Ingram (1980) 171 n. 58 argues for a connection between the possibility of the bribe and the ode, in the sense that the chorus sing of how amazing it is what men can do for the sake of money. However, the bribe is never referred to as δεινόν. In addition, this would mean that a most important ode is triggered by a minor detail with no consequences for the plot of the play and no correspondence in reality. The audience and the readers may guess from the prologue (41-99) that it was Antigone who performed the burial and that she acted alone.

[36] See G. Crane (1989) 112-13, 115.

[37] The crossing of the sea (334-7) is what most clearly reveals this fearlessness of man. The sea is fathomless (Aesch. *Supp.* 470; T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 126 with n. 16) and dangerous (Hom. *Od.* 5.100-1; Hes. *Op.* 618-23, 687 [δεινὸν δ' ἐστὶ θανεῖν μετὰ κύμασιν: "it is terrible to die among the waves"], 691 [δεινὸν γὰρ πόντου μετὰ κύμασι πήματι κύρσαι: "it is terrible to encounter grief among the waves of the sea"]; Semon. fr. 1.15-17 West; Solon fr. 13.43-6 West; Lucr. 5.1006; C. Utzinger [2003] 28 with n. 63), as well as a divine place whose crossing constitutes a sacrilege and the breaking of a taboo (Hes. *Op.* 682-6; Catull. 64.6; Hor. *Carm.* 3.23-4; Sen. *Med.* 301-79, 579-69; T. C. W. Oudemans and

strong and courageous ruler also anticipates the description in the second antistrophe of the morally and religiously appropriate behaviour in the city. With his edict, apparently sanctioned by Zeus (156-7, 184), he intends to make the city great (191: τοιοῖσδ' ἐγὼ νόμοισι τήνδ' αὔξω πόλιν), which would identify him with the ὑψίπολις of line 370.[38]

Right after the first stasimon, there is a reference to Antigone which is key to understanding that what the chorus said in the stasimon may be applied to her too. Lines 376-7 express their astonishment and incredulity towards the δαιμόνιον τέρας ("godsent portent") which suddenly appears before them.[39] Due to its proximity to the stasimon, this phrase is clearly related to the content of the latter. Indeed, astonishment is what the chorus feel while singing of man as δεινότατον, in other words, as a being who is impressive and awe-inspiring in every one of the meanings involved in his ambiguousness.[40] Not long before the stasimon, there is another passage important for assessing the allusions to Antigone in it, where the guard justifies his hesitation in telling Creon that his edict has been violated by saying: "serious matters make one very nervous" (243: τὰ δεινὰ γάρ τοι προστίθησ' ὄκνον πολύν). "Serious matters" is H. Lloyd-Jones' translation of τὰ δεινά, which I prefer to

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A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 126-7 with n. 17). C. Utzinger (2003) 28 n. 63 draws attention to the predominance of π- and χ-sounds in 334-7, which are meant to represent a storm.

[38] This association is also made by M. Griffith (1999) 181 and Y. Sano (2014) 42-3.

[39] The astonishment is first of all related to Antigone's divine appearance (according to S. Benardete [1999] 50 n. 57, δαιμόνιον τέρας refers to the monstrous union between the human and the divine; see also Bacchyl. 16.35 Snell for this phrase). This is consistent with the chorus' previous statement in 278-9 that the burial may have a divine origin (on this and other connections between Antigone and the divine, see W. B. Tyrrell and L. J. Bennett [1998] 64-6). But the elders' astonishment is also due to the fact that the law is broken by a (young) woman (378: παῖδ' Ἀντιγόνην, "the young Antigone"). In the stasimon, it is man who is presented as the protagonist of civilization (332-3: ἀνθρώπου, 347: ἀνήρ; J. O'Brien [1975-6] 141 claims that in Sophocles' Athens ἄνθρωπος would scarcely suggest that it is a woman), which is why it is usually called "Ode on Man" (and why I tend to speak of "man" instead of "human being" throughout the article). For better or worse, man is always the one who acts, hence the law breaker is expected to be a man. When Creon speaks of the unknown person who buried Polynices, he uses ἀνήρ ("man", "male": 248, 290; see P. Holt [1999] 677 n. 56), for it is not a woman's business to defy the edict of a legitimate king (A. Brown [1987] 8). The amazement at this being done by a woman is clearly reflected in 384-5, where Antigone is emphatically announced by the guard with six feminine grammatical forms (see also the exchange between Creon and the guard in 401-6).

[40] T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois (1987) 130 make an explicit connection between the concept of τέρας and man's δεινότης: at the beginning of the stasimon "man is introduced in the neuter, as if dehumanized, as a portent, a τέρας or *monstrum*".

render as "frightening matters". The phrase refers to the frightening and fearless act of burying Polynices, which was carried out by Antigone. Both before and after the stasimon, therefore, decisive indications occur which clearly point out that its content, especially that of the second antistrophe, may be applied to Antigone. Δαιμόνιον τέρας in 376 and τὰ δεινά in 243 are associated with the dangerous and frightening side of the δεινότατον as depicted in the stasimon, which means that the chorus may be pointing to Antigone when they sing of the reckless behaviour within the city. But Antigone seems to be alluded to in the framework of the first three stanzas as well, when the chorus refer to man's inescapability from death, more precisely, from Hades, the god of the underworld (361-2). As is known from the rest of the play, Antigone is devoted to this god, and her devotion is one of the key motives for her deeds in the drama (71-2, 74-5, 519, 521, 542), the other main reason being her familial love for her brother (73-4, 523).[41] By referring to death as inescapable, the chorus point ahead to Antigone's fate. Even before she dies by suicide (1220-1, 1224), she somehow joins Hades in the underworld by being buried alive in a rocky cave beneath the earth (773-4, 885-6, 891-4, 1068-9, 1204-5).[42]

According to what we have just seen, the first stasimon alludes to each one of the antagonists, but at different moments and in distinct ways, which reflect the peculiarity of the values they represent and the actions they carry out in the drama. However, it is now important to return to the crucial passage in the second antistrophe and the stasimon as a whole (365-71), where both antagonists are simultaneously targeted and which presents an important key to interpreting the meaning of the whole play, by suggesting that it is the inappropriate realization of divine justice in human νόμοι ("laws and customs") that leads to evil (367) and the downfall of the city (370-1).

To anyone watching or reading the *Antigone* without knowledge of the play's outcome – and without paying attention to a few telling details concerning Creon's action up to the first stasimon[43] – the reference to evil and boldness in 365-71 would

[41] See P. A. Lima (2016) 271-2.

[42] On the oddness of Antigone's imprisonment compared to ancient Greek standards, see M.-C. Leclerc (1994) 82, who also draws a useful parallel with Prometheus' imprisonment as depicted in the *Prometheus Bound*. For the consequences of Antigone's imprisonment for the meaning of the play, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 148.

[43] Up to the first stasimon, there are at least a few "warning signals" (R. P. Winnington-Ingram [1980] 123) of what Creon's attitude will be throughout the play (H. Funke [1966] 35-8 likens it to a typical tyrannical behaviour as later described in Plato's works; see also D. Carter [2012] 122-3), although at this point they tend to be read as expressing the confidence and determination of a ruler: e.g. when proclaiming the edict, Creon speaks predominantly in the first person (especially 178, 191, 207, 210), which suggests that forbidding

seem to point exclusively to the as yet unknown criminal who buried Polynices in violation of a recently proclaimed law of the city. Moreover, an Athenian attending the first performance of the play could possibly understand the chorus' references to good action (367) and divinely sanctioned human νόμοι (368-70) as pointing to Creon's proclamation of his edict. In other words, the original audience of the *Antigone* could possibly look at the Theban king as someone acting reasonably when fulfilling through his edict the ancient Greek custom of not burying the enemies of the state, and in their eyes Creon's angriness towards the chorus (280-8) and the guard (304-14, 316, 324-6) could possibly be justified by the fact that the burial announced by the latter constitutes a massive attack on the laws of the state and its legitimate king's divinely sanctioned authority.[44] Furthermore, sympathy for Antigone as an individual whose freedom defies state authority stems from a modern sensibility not shared by the ancient Greeks.[45] The question, however, is whether one should take the audience's point of view during the first performance of the *Antigone* as the normative perspective from which the play should be interpreted in each one of its moments. In doing so, one is reducing the meaning of a play as

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the burial may be much more a personal matter than an effort to protect the state's interest; the chorus accept his edict, possibly fearing the consequences of a disagreement with their king (211-14, 220); Creon gets excessively angry with the Theban elders when they say that the burial may have been prompted by the gods (280-3). For a more extensive analysis of these telling signals, see R. P. Winnington-Ingram (1980) 123-5; P. Holt (1999) 675-6.

[44] Dem. 19.247 is often cited to show that Creon's edict became an ancient Greek model of leadership (e.g. B. Knox [1982] 13; G. Crane [1989] 112 with n. 39). The ancient Greeks were aware of the need to respect legitimate authority, so that disrespect for this authority may have been a reason for a shocked disapproval (see the so-called prosopopoeia of the laws in Pl. *Cri.* 50a1-4c5; D. A. Hester [1971] 22; A. Brown [1987] 8). Creon's refusal to bury Polyneices, an enemy of the state, is not improper by Sophocles' time (see Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.22; G. Crane [1989] 112; C. Sourvinou-Inwood [1989] 137; P. Holt [1999] 663-7; M. J. Carvalho [2019] 182 n. 186). According to V. J. Rosivach (1983) 198-9, 209, the denial of burial to enemies is comprehensible to an audience familiar with the literary tradition since Homer, but as a practice it would no longer be acceptable in the fifth century (see Eur. *Supp.* 301-13, 378-80, 524-7, 531-48, 558-63, 669-72). However, C. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 143 claims that the testimony of Eur. *Supp.* merely indicates that the idea that the gods are offended when corpses lie unburied became established through the *Antigone*.

[45] Many critics warn against the risk of considering Antigone as a Christian martyr whose conduct is defined by courage and self-sacrifice (A. Brown [1987] 9; C. Utzinger [2003] 73 n. 1; D. A. Hester [1971] 13 gives an exhaustive survey of studies interpreting the *Antigone* as a martyr-play) or as a (post-)Romantic character symbolizing the individual's rebellion against the state (T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 3; C. Sourvinou-Inwood [1989] 135; M. Griffith [1999] 35 n. 105; P. Holt [1999] 658-9, 662).

rich as the *Antigone* to a very particular perspective on it, on the basis of a way of understanding the principle of historical authenticity which, on closer inspection, ignores other ways of being true to this principle. So long as one avoids projecting modern representations onto what is a fifth-century BC play, one should be allowed to explore the richness of the *Antigone* from any perspective, be it that of the play's original audience, that of the author's intention in composing it, or that of the text itself in terms of meaning reverberations which possibly only a recurrent reader is able to notice.[46]

Although the original audience was probably not aware of the outcome of the *Antigone* when the chorus sang the first stasimon,[47] Sophocles would have already determined this outcome at least before his final revision of the stasimon, and anyone who watches or reads the *Antigone* more than once, be it an ancient Greek or someone living sometime between Antiquity and the present, reads or listens to the stasimon knowing how the drama ends and why it ends as it does. In view of the meaning of the play as a whole, lines 365-71 may be interpreted as referring to Antigone and Creon in exactly the same terms. I am not denying that the chorus may intend to convey the idea that only Antigone is acting evilly (367), ignobly (370), and recklessly (371).[48] By virtue of tragic irony, however, the chorus do not have full control over the meaning of their words, so much so that the words they sing in the stasimon may have connotations that go beyond what they consciously

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[46] As M. Griffith (1999) 26 claims, the *Antigone* can and should be many things. On the topic of how to read this play, see also n. 22 above.

[47] Most of the story of the royal family of Thebes was known by the original audience (A. Brown [1987] 4), except perhaps the denial of burial to Polynices and Antigone's disobedience to it (though Paus. 9.25.2 seems to point to a pre-Sophoclean Theban tradition regarding the latter's burial of her brother). The only extant pre-Sophoclean text referring to this episode, the ending of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (1005-78), is considered by many scholars as an addition by a later author in response to Sophocles' play (see M. Griffith [1999] 7 n. 26 for references), which means that the story of the *Antigone* is probably a Sophoclean invention (A. Brown [1987] 5; D. Carter [2012] 119 n. 27; A. Lardinois [2012] 56). This would make the original audience less able to predict what happens in the play (A. Brown [1987] 5). On the background of the Antigone story, see e.g. A. Brown (1987) 3-4; M. Griffith (1999) 4-12 (with a detailed account of Sophocles' innovations).

[48] For this view, see G. Ronnet (1967) 102; R. Bodéüs (1984) 278. In 371 the chorus employ τόλμα ("recklessness"), the concept used by Creon in 248 (τολμήσας) to condemn the unknown performer of the burial and in 449 (ἐτόλμας) to reproach Antigone for doing it. Y. Sano (2014) 39 with n. 41 points out that the same concept is applied to women in Aesch. *Cho.* 594 (ὑπέρτολμον) and 597 (τλαμόνων, παντόλμους).

intend to communicate to the audience.[49] As was briefly indicated in the previous section, both antagonists try to honour divine justice in the laws they proclaim and the customs they follow, so that the clash between them is one between two ways of endeavouring to ground the laws and customs of the city in divine justice. This clash is not one between a correct way of carrying out such a grounding and an incorrect one, but rather a clash between two incorrect ways of doing it. Although in 365-71 the chorus may intend to establish an opposition between a correct (367, 368-70) and an incorrect (367, 370-1) way of basing human νόμοι on the justice of the gods, the subsequent events in the drama clearly indicate that it is 370-1 that points in advance to what is the shared meaning of the actions carried out by Creon and Antigone. It is the behaviour of both, especially against each other but also against the other characters in the tragedy, which is evil, ignoble, and reckless, leading to the downfall of Thebes and making them outcasts from the city (370).[50] Regardless of what the chorus intend to communicate in 372-5 – "May he who does such things never sit by my hearth or share my thoughts" (μήτ' ἐμοὶ παρέστιος | γένοιτο μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν | ὃς τάδ' ἔρδοι) – the unfolding of the tragic action tells us that their words allude to the two main antagonists in the play.[51]

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[49] The term "tragic irony" was coined to describe a characteristic of Sophocles' dramatic technique, whereby the full significance of a phrase, scene or song is made to go beyond the primary meaning intended by the speakers (M. Griffith [1999] 18, 20). This concept is appropriate for grasping what is going on in Sophocles' choral songs, where multiple elements of meaning are compressed into a small compass (R. F. Goheen [1951] 52). One should not necessarily favour some of these elements in detriment of others, for sometimes – as is the case in 365-71 – it is more fruitful to explore the ambiguities of certain passages (see T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 131 on the doubtful interpretive move of separating a supposedly merely apparent primary meaning from a true, secondary one). It is in a similar spirit that C. Utzinger (2003) 73 claims that the first stasimon refers to both Creon and Antigone in the form of an enigma. M. F. Fresco (1994) 307 n. 25 believes that tragic irony is only possible when the audience knows the play's outcome, but this is not necessarily so (apart from the point that the audience should not be considered the criterion for determining the meaning of a play [already addressed above]). In the present case, the audience is able to perceive that the Theban elders' words have a wider reach than they are aware of. As we have seen in this sec., the term δεινόν was applied in a negative sense to both Antigone (243) and Creon (323) not long before the stasimon began, so that the audience is given the conditions to suspect that evil, ignoble, and reckless actions may be (or are already being) carried out by Creon too.

[50] For Creon and Antigone as ἀπολεῖς ("outcasts from the city"), see C. Utzinger (2003) 72 with n. 222. J. Pinsent (1983) 3-4 maintains that the passage also refers to Polynices.

[51] Together with the *Ajax* and the *Trachiniae*, the *Antigone* is one of Sophocles' diptych plays (D. Carter [2012] 115), which have two protagonists or heroes (C. P. Segal [1964] 46;

These lines, which end the first stasimon, point to another important connection between the words of the chorus and the two antagonists. The key phrase is ἴσον φρονῶν, which means here "having the same way of thinking", briefly, "like-mindedness".[52] The chorus, therefore, wishes to have "neither domestic nor political association"[53] with someone who does not correctly understand how divine justice should be respected in human νόμοι, that is, with Antigone and Creon. In this sense, 372-5 is key to reinforcing the link between the second antistrophe and the first three stanzas and connecting the overall meaning of the stasimon with the rest of the drama. Φρονῶν is the present participle of φρονεῖν, a verb whose meaning relates these lines to the unifying topic of the entire stasimon, man's intelligence or understanding. The φρονεῖν referred to in 373 is the same human power that is said in 332-64 to dominate nature and in 365-71 to be able to lead to evil or good and to glorify or destroy the city.[54] In 373, however, human intelligence appears within the framework of the city, thus acquiring a preponderantly moral and religious meaning, and it represents only one side of the moral and religious ambiguousness that the stasimon attributes to man's intelligence in the second antistrophe, namely its dangerous and frightening side. In this light, the φρονεῖν of 373 points to the possibility that man's mode of existence as a whole is in vain, despite the success and admirableness of his conquests over nature. What the outcome of the conflict between Antigone and Creon shows is that – at least in the fictional world where the drama takes place, at least for those belonging to the house of the Labdacids – this is not merely a possibility but a reality.

A. Brown [1987] 5-6) with their own individual tragedies (D. Carter [2012] 114). The ancient Greeks sometimes associated bad company with ἄτη ("ruin"): e.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 599-600, Diod. 12.12.3 (see T. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois [1987] 124 with n. 9; also n. 32 above for the significance of ἄτη in the *Antigone*). According to the latter scholars, the prayer in 372-5 "may [...] indicate [...] also the horror which man experiences before himself, as the most awesome of all beings" ([1987] 128).

[52] For this translation, see R. C. Jebb (1888) 77 (pointing to Hom. *Il.* 15.50 and Ar. *Av.* 634 as parallel passages).

[53] M. Griffith (1999) 190.

[54] As D. A. Hester (1971) 40 puts it, "[t]he theme of τὸ φρονεῖν has [...] been on everybody's lips throughout the play" (the claim is followed by an extensive list of passages where the concept is used); see also C. P. Segal (1964) 49. On the meaning of φρονεῖν and its role in the *Antigone*, see R. Lauriola (2007) 396-9 (with n. 32 above). M. Griffith (1999) 42 with n. 126 distinguishes between female and male forms of intelligence in the play.

6. A concluding word

This last remark brings me to my final point, which has to do with the two different but complementary forms of connection between the first stasimon and the action of the *Antigone*. One of these forms is the one I have been considering, which concerns the fact that the stasimon is equivalent to a kind of microcosm that reflects in advance the fundamental events in the play and whose meaning should also be interpreted in the light of such events.[55] The other form concerns the fact that the stasimon allows the action to be framed in its general view of human existence.[56] According to the stasimon, man is faced with an alternative: to give meaning to his existence by glorifying the city or to make his existence meaningless by causing the downfall of the city. Within this framework, the *Antigone* exemplifies how man can make his existence meaningless, despite all his supremacy over nature. It shows how Thebes, through the actions of its royal family, is unable to give meaning to its existence as a community. Sophocles tells us that, if we consider the example of Theban society, man is δεινότατον in the sense of "the most dangerous and frightening being", above all for himself and the survival of his community. However, he gives the example of a single human community and does not seem to propose a hopelessly negative or pessimistic view of man as such.[57] Although the outcome of the tragedy may represent a warning from Sophocles on the effective possibility that human existence will prove to be in vain, the stasimon points to the alternative between glorifying the city or destroying it as something undecided, which is at stake in the existence of any human community. The undecidedness of the alternative is what makes man an intrinsically ambiguous being. The stasimon therefore establishes a criterion by which the meaning of every human existence can be evaluated. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the stasimon has become such an admired and influential text in Western intellectual history.[58]

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[55] C. Utzinger (2003) 63-72 shows how key concepts of the stasimon play a decisive role in the course of the drama. On the idea that the stasimon and the events of the tragedy illuminate each other reciprocally, see H. Gundert (1976) 34.

[56] See M. Griffith (1999) 24, for whom the characters in the play "exemplify [...] the imaginative explorations" of the chorus. For a different view, see M. R. Kitzinger (2008) 23.

[57] On Sophocles' reputation for pessimism, see M. Griffith (1999) 44 with n. 129. He maintains that "the sense of closure" in Sophocles' plays is co-responsible for such a reputation.

[58] For the reception history of the *Antigone*, see e.g. G. Steiner (1984); E. B. Mee and H. P. Foley (2011); D. Cairns (2016) 115-54.

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