Theatre and Argument

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Ethics / Morality

- Ethics and Political Philosophy: next two weeks

- Here are some familiar ethical/moral concepts
  - moral, immoral
  - good, bad, evil
  - obligatory, forbidden, permissible
  - duty, civic duty, military duty
  - virtuous, vicious: brave, courageous, weak, cowardly, honest
  - pious, impious; holy, unholy

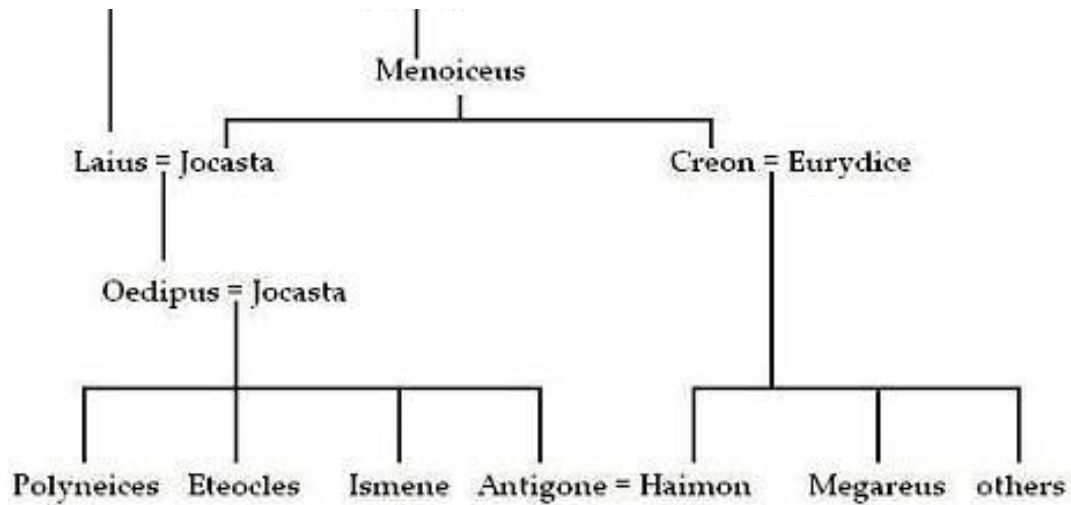- Ethical principles are not legal laws; laws are instituted because they are moral

Ethics

- Ethics studies human action

- The most fundamental ethical questions are
  - How *should* humans act?
  - Why *should* they act one way and not another?
  - What is the best sort of life?
  - What is a meaningful life?

Why Study *Antigone*?

- Our main goal is to distinguish theatre and speech-making from philosophy

- Moral issues are at the center of play

- Origin of philosophy, tragedy, and speech-making coincide in Ancient Greece

Geneological Tree of

Plot

- Because of Oedipus' exile, there was a power vacuum in Thebes

- The two sons of Oedipus fight in a civil war; they kill each other. No male left to take over the throne. So, Creon (their uncle) takes over

- Creon's Law: Eteocles shall be buried according to ritual. Polynices (and other enemies of the state) shall NOT be given proper burial.

- Antigone disobeys the law; she is caught; defiantly objects

- Creon punishment of Antigone: death

- Haemon pleads to father; his plea is rejected

- Antigone kills herself

- Not knowing of Antigone's suicide, Creon reconsiders his verdict

- Haemon kills himself after discovering Antigone

- Creon abdicates throne

Moral Issues in *Antigone*

- What should Creon do?
  - Should he have denied Polynices burial? Is this a bad or impious law?
  - What should Creon do when his law is openly criticized by a subordinate?

- What should Antigone do?
  - Should Antigone (and Ismene) disobey Creon's law?
  - What is more important: loyalty, family, city law, or God's law?
  - How should Antigone fight against Creon and his law?

- What is the message of the play on theses moral issue?

Final Words of the Play

- CHORUS LEADER (FILM): All happiness must be crowned with wisdom and reverence for divine law. The proud words of the great are paid with great disaster to teach them prudence though too late.

Fighting Injustice

o How to Fight Injustice: Some views

- o Violence (fight a war)

- o Speak truth to power (Antigone)

- o Non-violent protest, self-exile and harm to self (Haemon)

- o Non-violent protest only (Martin Luther King)

o What does the play tell us in favor of any one of these views? It is hard to say. The interpretation is highly open ended, even if Antigone is the protagonist

Morality in Theatre and Film

- At the center of *Antigone*, there are several moral issues

- Moral issues play are at the forefront of many other Greek tragedies, modern films and political speeches

- Wallstreet (1987)

- Obama speech prior to election

Wallstreet (1987)

Obama's Speeches

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFPwDe22CoY

Speeches and Persuasion

- *Antigone* depicts different ways of persuasion

- Sophists
  - Professional (paid) Teachers
  - Taught speakers the art of persuasion or giving speeches
  - Sometimes where paid to give speeches on someone's behalf
  - Could be political speeches, or speeches in law courts

- Antigone (defiant; speaking truth to power)

- Haemon (subordinate; nuanced, gentle persuasion)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suN2Pq6qoKE [40:00]

Criticism of Theatre and Speech-Giving

- Theatre, Film and speech-giving are influential means of changing the minds of viewers

- **Criticism 1**: Interpretation
  - Many different interpretation of *Antigone* over the ages
  - Some understand Antigone to be a heroine of feminism
  - Others take understand here to be a paradigm of insubordination

- **Criticism 2**: Little reasoning given

- **Criticism 3**: No direct engagement with audience and their criticisms

Philosophical Methodology

Argumentation

Components of Philosophical Method

- Argumentation (reasoning)

- Definitions
  - see *Euthyphro* (next class)

Argument Form

1. ......   [← Premise

2. .....   [← Premise

3. Therefore, ...   [← Conclusion

Arguments in Informal Language

- We express arguments (reasoning) in informal language in an often obscure way; identifying the steps in the reasoning is one way to get clear about what the argument is supposed to be.

- Example:
  - Neither a borrower nor lender be
    For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
    And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry. (Hamlet)

- In Proper Argument form:
  1. A loan oft loses both itself and friend
  2. Borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry
  3. Therefore, neither a borrower nor a lender be

Kinds of Arguments

- Deductive Arguments (often used in mathematics)

- Inductive Arguments (often used in science)

Inductive Arguments

Example

1. A pinch of salt dissolved in water at time t_1

2. Another pinch of salt dissolved in water at time t_2

3. ….

4. Another pinch of salt dissolved in water at time t_{100}

5. Therefore, any pinch of salt will dissolve in water at t

- Note: the conclusion could be false given that the premises are true

- Note: inductive arguments establish only a probable conclusion; probably any pinch of salt will dissolve in water

Deductive Arguments

1. All men are mortal

2. <u>Socrates is a man</u>

3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal

- Note: Deductive arguments establish certain conclusion assuming that the premises are true

- An *inductive argument* =df assuming that the premises are true, the conclusion is **probably (not certainly) true**

- An *deductive* or *valid* argument =$_{df}$ assuming that the premises are true, the conclusion ***must necessarily (certainly)*** be true.

- An argument is *sound* =df a valid argument with true premises

- We want sound arguments: arguments that are valid and have true premises

Unsound Arguments

- Three ways that an argument can fail to be sound

- 1: argument is valid but premise(s) are not true
  - All humans are four-legged
  - All four-legged things are blue
  - So, all humans are blue

- 2: premise(s) are true but argument invalid
  - Gainesville is in Florida
  - The Gators are Gainesville's football team
  - Therefore, Gators are National champions in 2007.

- 3: both invalid argument and premises not true

Arguments Gone Wrong

- We want sound arguments

- There are several basic ways that an argument can fail to be sound
  - Problem 1: argument is valid but premise(s) are not true
    - All humans are four-legged
    - All four-legged things are blue
    - So, all humans are blue
  - Problem 2: premise(s) are true but argument invalid
    - Gainesville is in Florida
    - The Gators are Gainesville's football team
    - Therefore, Gators are National champions in 2007.
  - Problem 3: both invalid argument and premises not true

Fallacy 1: Begging the Question

- Theist: God exists.

- Skeptic: Why?

- Theist: The bible tells us so.

- Skeptic: Why should we believe what the bible tells us?

- Theist: Because it is the word of God.

Explicit Argument(?):

1. The Bible is the word of God

2. The Bible says that God exists

3. So, God exists

Greek Festivals

- Greeks wrestling questions of cycle of revenge (often generational), question about moral conflict or moral disagreement – and what do about it

- Festivals were ways of dealing with these: