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## Evil [κάκη] in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*

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### Abstract

The Greek term “κάκη” complicates various meanings and concepts—evil, deformity, disaster, trouble, disease, curse and so on—all of which fashion the key issues elaborated in Sophocles’ two tragedies *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*. In a nutshell, the semantic stretch of κάκη amounts to a reflection on the motif of “σχολῆ κακοῦ.” Through analyzing the semantic complexities of the word “κάκη,” the first section of this paper is to explore the vertical linkage among drama, medicine, politics, and religion. The second section, concentrating on the chiasmic interconnectedness between prophets and profits, will cast light on how the theme of evils is correlated to the context of the fifth-century economic prosperity.

**Keywords:** Evil [κάκη], Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Antigone*

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“And now does the wretched man have any respite from pain”  
[νῦν δ’ ἔσθ’ ὁ τλήμων ἐν τίνι σχολῇ κακοῦ] (*OT* 1286)?<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Respite from Pain [σχολῇ κακοῦ]

Sophocles, in his two tragedies *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*, ingeniously explored the topic of how mortal human beings learn to release themselves from sufferings. The motif of “respite from pain” [σχολῇ κακοῦ] (*OT* 1286) recurs in the guard’s imploration: “but I am free, and have the right to be released from these troubles” [ἐγὼ δ’ ἐλεύθερος δίκαιός εἰμι τῶνδ’ ἀπηλλάχθαι κακῶν] (*Anti* 399-400). In this light, being free [ἐλεύθερος] is approximately equivalent to getting released from [ἀπηλλάχθαι] evils [κακῶν]. It should be heeded that the theme of “respite from pain” [σχολῇ κακοῦ] is not only pertaining to the release from troubles, diseases, or sufferings but also concerned with the “study” of evils—since σχολῇ has double meanings: leisure and school. On the one hand, σχολῇ is defined as “leisure, rest, ease” and has a variety of applications such as to be at leisure, to enjoy ease, to keep quiet, to give up one’s time, and to have leisure (Liddell, 1996: 1747-1748). The term σχολῇ appears in Oedipus’ counterfactual rejoinder against Tiresias: “No, I did not know that your words would be foolish; else I would hardly have summoned you to my house” [οὐ γὰρ τί σ’ ἤδη μῶρα φωνήσοντ’, ἐπεὶ σχολῇ σ’ ἄν οἴκουσ τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἐστειλάμην] (*OT* 433-434). The Greek word σχολῇ, which is rendered as “hardly” here, means an action of delaying something so as to show one’s disinclination to do it. In a similar vein, the guard whines: “For second thoughts show one’s judgment to be wrong: why, I scarcely would have thought I would come here again” [ψεύδει γὰρ ἡ πίνουα τὴν γνώμην ἐπεὶ σχολῇ ποθ’ ἤξειν δεῦρ’ ἄν ἐξήρχουν ἐγὼ ταῖς σαῖς ἀπειλαῖς αἷς ἐχειμάσθην τότε] (*Anti* 389-391). The guard vocalizes his reluctance to spend any idle time [σχολῇ] on visiting this place.

On the other hand, σχολῇ refers to “that in which leisure is employed,” “learned discussion, disputation, lecture,” and “a group to whom lectures were given, school” (Liddell, 1996: 1747-1748). In this respect, the word σχολῇ has much to do with the

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<sup>1</sup> The citations and the enumeration of lines from *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*—hereinafter abbreviated as *OT* and *Anti* respectively—are based on Sophocles (1994a) and Sophocles (1994b).

activity of thinking as the following snatches from the guard's conversation may illustrate: "As I pondered on such thoughts I made my way slowly, with delays, and so a short journey became a long one" [τοιαῦθ' ἐλίσσω ἦνυτον σχολῆ βραδύς, χοῦτως ὁδὸς βραχεῖα γίγνεται μακρά] (*Anti* 231-232). The phrase "σχολῆ βραδύς" signifies a leisurely way of thinking, which seems to freeze all actions upon entering a threshold [ὁδὸς βραχεῖα] and to extend such a brief [βραχεῖα] moment into a long [μακρά] journey.

The second word in the theme of "σχολῆ κακοῦ" is a genitive form of "kakós" [κακός], which encompasses a wide range of semantic possibilities. The adjective κακός has many meanings: mean, ugly, ill-born, ignoble, worthless, sorry, poor, unskilled, base, bad, evil, pernicious, and baneful. And the noun κάκη means evil, wickedness, badness, malice, ugliness, disorder, illness, and disaster. Moreover, its plural form "κακά" can designate plights, troubles, diseases, and sufferings and involve copious implications deduced from its synonyms and cognates. In summary, the meanings about κάκη span several different semantic fields: (1) wickedness or moral defect; (2) deformity or unsightliness; (3) troubles, harms, or disasters; (4) suffering or pain; (5) curses, reproaches or abuses; (6) diseases. The concept of evil, which is always compounded by an assessment in moral, religious, aesthetic, medical and even political terms, is never neutral. And as related terms and phrases are recurrent in Sophocles' plays, the semantic multiplicities of the word "kakē" [κάκη] are discerned; in the meanwhile, parts of the cultural, social and historical contexts—in which the conceptual diversity of evil is taking shape—are fleshed out.

Two adjectives evil and bad are generally interchangeable, but a slight difference between these two terms decidedly creates a dramatic intensity. Creon is obsessed with certain entrenched assumptions: "never be my will shall bad men exceed good men in honour" [τιμὴν προέξουσ' οἱ κακοὶ τῶν ἐνδίκων] (*Anti* 208) and "whoever is loyal to the city in death and life alike shall from me have honour" [ἀλλ' ὅστις εὔνοος τῆδε τῆ πόλει, θανῶν καὶ ζῶν ὁμοίως ἐξ γ' ἐμοῦ τιμῆσεται] (*Anti* 209-210). That bad men [οἱ κακοὶ]—actually, the evil men—are portrayed by Creon as those who are not legitimate [ἐνδίκων], those who are not loyal to the city, and those who are not worthy of honor—since Creon is habitually of the opinion that gods never honor the evil men (*Anti* 288). When the guard grumbles that "no one loves the messenger who brings bad

news” [οὐδεὶς ἄγγελον κακῶν ἐπῶν] (*Anti* 277), he merely refers to something distasteful, unpleasant, or unwelcome. But “the evil news of sorrow” implies something “caused by ill tidings” [κακάγγελτος] (*Anti* 1286-1287). And the refrain of “these cruel, cruel sufferings” [κακὰ κακὰ τελῶν] (*OT* 1330) typifies the fate awaiting Oedipus; and such an evil plight is convoluted by the cruel, harsh, or vindictive punishments dispensed by Apollo or any other gods. What is evil is bad, but tinged with a gloomy tonality of interminable misfortune, preordained destiny, and intractable future.

Evil words are commonplace in everyday conversations: “hard words were bandies between us, one guard questioning another” [λόγοι δ’ ἐν ἀλλήλοισιν ἐρρόθουν κακοί, φύλαξ ἐλέγχων φύλακα] (*Anti* 259-260). “Hard words” [λόγοι . . . κακοί] are evil words exchanged among those guards who are managing to dodge the penalty for their groundless negligence. Likewise, a derivative term “abuse” [κακοῖσιν] appears in daily jibes (*Anti* 414). But in Tiresias’ usage, evil words are directed toward a dire prediction: “I heard a strange sound among them, since they were screaming with dire, incoherent frenzy” [ἀγνώτ’ ἀκούω φθόγγον, ὀρνίθας κακῶ κλάζοντας οἴστρω καὶ βεβαρβαρωμένω] (*Anti* 1001-1002). The sound is delineated by evil [κακῶ], piercing [κλάζοντας], and barbarian [βεβαρβαρωμένω] attributes, which altogether spell out how unfavorable this augury is.

The adjective “evil” [κακός] is borrowed to mark out a person’s inadequate or limited capability. Oedipus claims himself to be a “poor” listener: “You (Creon) are a clever speaker, but I am a poor listener to you” [λέγειν σὺ δεινός, μανθάνειν δ’ ἐγὼ κακός σοῦ] (*OT* 545-546). While Oedipus ironically mocks Creon’s marvelous [δεινός] aptitude at speech, Sophocles dexterously played the pun word “poor” and “evil” [κακός] to exemplify how deficiently and spitefully Oedipus comprehends [μανθάνειν] others. To put it differently, an evil listener is prone to partial understanding and intentional distortion as well.

Evil, a notion interrelated with suffering, plight, disaster and fate, plays as a key theme in Greek tragedy. *Oedipus Tyrannus* features those undesired but unavoidable troubles [κακῶν] in Oedipus’ life and unveils a record [μνήμη] about manifold dimensions of evils [κακῶν]: “How the sting of these goads has sunk into me together with the remembrance of my troubles” [οἶον εἰσέδου μ’ ἅμα κέντρων τε τῶνδ’ οἴστρημα καὶ μνήμη κακῶν] (*OT* 1317-1318). The pain is likened to the smart of a gadfly’s sting

[οἴσθημα] caused by any sharp point [κέντρων], which is strongly reminiscent of the scenario that Oedipus is blinded by a brooch. Tiresias forewarns Oedipus of the very danger: “Creon is not your trouble, but rather you yourself” [Κρέων δέ σοι πῆμ’ οὐδέν, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς σὺ σοί] (*OT* 379). Nevertheless, Oedipus entertains the suspicion that Creon must be plotting something against him and will cause trouble [πῆμα]—which indicates suffering, calamity, woe, or bane. How Oedipus’ life is entwined with evils is orchestrated in the chorus’ lines: “if there is any evil even beyond evil, that is the portion of Oedipus” [εἰ δέ τι πρεσβύτερον ἔτι κακοῦ κακόν, τοῦτ’ ἔλαχ’ Οἰδίπους] (*OT* 1365-1366). The portion [ἔλαχ’] suggests what is given to a person by lot, by fate, or by the will of the gods; and, in this case, what Oedipus collects from his preordained portion is something “evil even beyond evil” [ἔτι κακοῦ κακόν], that is, illness worse than illness or a woe surpassing all woes. The exile of blind Oedipus is not the end of evils; alternatively, events consecutively harrying Thebes exactly conform to the inquiry launched by Creon: “what is there that is yet more evil, coming after evils” [τί δ’ ἔστιν αὖ κάκιον ἐκ κακῶν ἔτι] (*Anti* 1281)? These evils are successive and everlasting sufferings, disasters, and woes—all of which add up to sheer fragility and mortality of human beings.

The evil is under the guise of the unnoticed, unpredictable, or unknown plight. Take the guard’s sentence for example: “I could not with justice come to any harm” [οὐδ’ ἄν δικαίως ἐς κακὸν πέσοιμί τι]—κακὸν means “harm” (*Anti* 240). Besides, the evil is tightly connected with unwanted troubles: “For to have escaped oneself from trouble is most pleasant, but to bring friends into danger is painful” [τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐκ κακῶν πεφευγῆναι ἥδιστον, ἐς κακὸν δὲ τοὺς φίλους ἄγειν ἀλγεινόν] (*Anti* 437-439). Yet, when Tiresias tells Oedipus that “I shall never reveal my sorrows, not to mention yours” [ὥς ἄν εἴπω μὴ τὰ σ’, ἐκφῆνω κακά] (*OT* 329), his avowed intent is to pinpoint that all humans are ignorant of those predestined troubles [κακά] in their own life. Tiresias alerts Oedipus of an imminent hazard: “I say that you are living unawares in a shameful relationship with those closest to you, and cannot see the plight in which you are” [λεληθῆναι σε φημι σὺν τοῖς φιλτάτοις αἴσχιθ’ ὁμιλοῦντ’, οὐδ’ ὄραν ἴν’ εἴ κακοῦ] (*OT* 366-367). With an emphatic tone, Tiresias spotlights a paradox that Oedipus has sight, but cannot see what trouble [κακοῦ] he is in (*OT* 413). The blind seer formulates his conclusion upon a prediction: “And there are other troubles you do not perceive,

which shall annihilate you together with your children” [ἄλλων δὲ πλῆθος οὐκ ἐπαισθάνει κακῶν, ἅ σ’ ἐξιώσει σοὶ τε καὶ τοῖς σοῖς τέκνοις] (*OT* 423-424). What is repetitively underscored by Tiresias is that people have no perception [οὐκ ἐπαισθάνει] of these imponderable evils.

Yet the theme of averting evils is better discussed in *Antigone*. Here is a pointed remark given by the chorus: “Fortunate are they whose lifetime never tastes of evil” [εὐδαίμονες οἷσι κακῶν ἄγευστος αἰών] (*Anti* 582). This evil [οἷσι κακῶν] may be either a god-sent plight or a cursed fate. Therefore, no experience [ἄγευστος] of evils is blessed [εὐδαίμονες], that is, under a good demon’s dominance. And a specific getaway from evils is pictured: “when one is face to face with troubles, quickest is best” [βράχιστα γὰρ κράτιστα τὰν ποσὶν κακά] (*Anti* 1327). An athletic image is evincible at this point: the strongest [κράτιστα] or the best way to confront those evils lying at one’s feet [τὰν ποσὶν] is to “run quickly” to find out the shortest [βράχιστα] cut.

Both Thebes and the Cadmus family are teetering under the consecutive onslaughts of the accumulated evils. Creon is becoming aware of the dilemma: “For to yield would be terrible, but if I resist, my will may run into the fowler’s net of disaster” [τό τ’ εἰκαθεῖν γὰρ δεινόν, ἀντιστάντα δὲ Ἄτη πατάξει θυμὸν ἐν δεινῷ πάρα] (*Anti* 1096-1097). To yield [εἰκαθεῖν] or to resist [ἀντιστάντα] is the question that Creon has to respond to; both options will give rise to fearful [δεινόν] consequences. Creon gradually discerns the destructive power of these sequential evils: “I see this second disaster, miserable one” [κακὸν τόδ’ ἄλλο δεύτερον βλέπω τάλας]. The second [δεύτερον] disaster refers directly to the death of his wife Eurydice and is impressively linked with a series of ensuing sufferings [τάλας] as a consequence of his own action—all these disasters are “miserable” [κακόν], that is, evil. In addition, the messenger goes on to portray the death of Eurydice: “at the last had called down curses upon you (Creon), the killer of your son” [λοίσθιον δὲ σοὶ κακὰς πράξεις ἐφρυνήσασα τῷ παιδοκτόνῳ] (*Anti* 1304-1305). Evils [κακὰς]—in the form of curses here—become the only instrument for Eurydice to avenge her son’s death. To persuade the messenger to disclose all the truth to her, Eurydice estimates herself to be an experienced listener: “For you will have a listener not without experience of disaster” [κακῶν γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειρος οὔσ’ ἀκούσομαι] (*Anti* 1191). Eurydice can tolerate any bad news since she has ever faced disasters [κακῶν] throughout her life. Similarly, Antigone keeps mindful of

those accrued evils on her family: “You have touched on a thought most painful for me, the fate of my father, thrice renewed, and the whole of our destiny, that of the famous Labdacids” [ἔψαυσας ἀλγεινοτάτας ἐμοὶ μερίμνας πατρὸς τριπόλιστος οἴκτου τοῦ τε πρόπαντος ἀμετέρου πότμου κλεινοῖς Λαβδακίδαισιν] (*Anti* 857-861). It is understandable that what is the most painful [ἀλγεινοτάτας] for Antigone is the entire destiny [πότμου] of the Cadmus family; however, how the superlative can be tripled—if not taken as an exaggeration—is quite incomprehensible. It should be noted that the phrase “thrice renewed” is a compound word “τριπόλιστον” composed of “τρι-“ (triple or, metaphorically, numerous) and “πόλιστον” (city-founder).<sup>2</sup>

Sophocles' tragedies exhibit a pattern that heroes have to bravely experience [πάθειεν] evils [κακὰ]. Oedipus keeps it in his mind that he must withstand the heroic sufferings: “But there is no human being who can bear my woes but I” [τάμὰ γὰρ κακὰ οὐδεὶς οἷός τε πλὴν ἐμοῦ φέρειν βροτῶν] (*OT* 1414-1415). A hero has to bear [φέρειν] the evils [κακὰ], which are usually beyond the ken of common mortal beings. Most common men like the chorus anticipate that “the small man fares throughout his time without disaster” [πράσσει δ' ὀλίγιστον χρόνον ἐκτὸς ἄτας] (*Anti* 625). On the flip side, heroes are supposed to go through the trials of assorted sufferings that are initiated by their heroic temper. The majority of citizens such as the guards may have their own voice: “we shut our eyes and endured the godsent affliction” [μύσαντες δ' εἶχομεν θεῖαν νόσον] (*Anti* 421). Apart from physical suffering [ἀλγήσας βαρύς] (*Anti* 767), Antigone is distressed by the suffering in mind [ταλαίφρων] (*Anti* 866). Besides, suffering is intimately related with sympathy and forgiveness: “I should forgive them for what I have suffered” [παθόντες ἄν ξυγγοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότες] (*Anti* 926). In other words, to forgive [συγγινώσκω] is to think [γινώσκω] with [συν]. Ultimately, Antigone aspires to a mutual comprehension in a manner of good regard [εὐσέβεια]: “What things I am suffering from what men, for having shown reverence for reverence” [οἷα πρὸς οἷων ἀνδρῶν πάσχω τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσασα] (*Anti* 942-943).

Paradoxically, these suffering heroes—most of whom have ever been called

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<sup>2</sup> Kamerbeek comments that “τριπόλιστον” should be “τριπόλον” (thrice-ploughed) and thus the best illustration of “τριπόλιστος οἴκτου” is “the ever-renewed misery of my father, ever renewed in the laments over it” (Kamerbeek, 1978: 154).

evil-doers—are far from impeccable. For instance, Antigone is referred to as one of the “evildoers” [κακοῖς] in Creon’s reply to Ismene: “it (sense) left you, when you chose to do evil with evildoers” [σοὶ γοῦν, ὅθ’ εἴλου σὺν κακοῖς πράσσειν κακά] (*Anti* 565). In turn, Creon is not free from being recriminated as an evil man. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Creon is suspected by Oedipus as an evil plotter; in *Antigone*, Creon, who likes to dish out orders to his underlings, is judged to be an evil ruler. Antigone takes up an equally provocative attitude toward Creon: “if they are the wrongdoers, may they not suffer worse evils than those they are unjustly inflicting upon me” [εἰ δ’ οἶδ’ ἀμαρτάνουσι, μὴ πλείω κακὰ πάθοιεν ἢ καὶ δρῶσιν ἐκδίκως ἐμέ] (*Anti* 927-928). Definitely, the issue at stake is concerned with the unforgivable blunder [ἀμαρτάνουσι] more than the antithesis between good and evil. Similar to the opposition between Antigone and Creon, Oedipus and Tiresias censure each other for being evil villains. Oedipus calls Tiresias “most villainous of villains” [ὄ κακῶν κάκιστε] (*OT* 334), in which the superlative declaration adds an emotional tint to the tag of evil-doers. However, Oedipus in the end finds himself “the most evil” [κάκιστον] (*OT* 1433); he is certainly the hero who suffers most, but ironically the man who is least forgivable.

However, a hero is supposed to grapple with the seemingly irrecoverable evils. Tiresias compels Creon to make amends after being damaged in the evils: “when a man does this, he who after getting into trouble tries to repair the damage and does not remain immovable is not foolish or miserable” [ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀμάρτη, κείνος οὐκέτ’ ἔστ’ ἀνὴρ ἄβουλος οὐδ’ ἄνολβος, ὅστις ἐς κακὸν πεσὼν ἀκῆται μὴδ’ ἀκίνητος πέλη] (*Anti* 1025-1027). Three negative adjectives are adopted here to highlight the detrimental outcomes of being remorseless: ἀκίνητος (unmoved, motionless), ἄβουλος (inconsiderate, ill-advised), and ἄνολβος (unblest, wretched, luckless). A man who makes a mistake [ἀμάρτη] falls into the snare of troubles [κακὸν]; yet the way to release oneself from troubles is to take action—rather than to be motionless [ἀκίνητος]. Here is a striking medical metaphor: to repair is to heal [ἀκῆται]. The recourse to rectify evils is utterly inaccessible: “For I think that neither Ister nor Phasis could wash clean this house” [οἶμαι γὰρ οὔτ’ ἂν Ἰστρὸν οὔτε Φᾶσιν ἂν νίψαι καθαριμῶ τήνδε τὴν στέγην] (*OT* 1227-1228). Rhetorically, the metaphor of purification stems from an image in which to wash is to snow [νίψαι]; and the roof [τὴν στέγην] functions as a synecdoche to the house. The snow comes from two rivers Ister [Ἰστρὸν] and Phasis



[Φᾶσιν]—today called the Danube and the Rioni respectively—which are geographically distant away from Athens or Thebes. The verb “φᾶσιν” means to declare or make something clear. Yet none of these avenues provides an effective catharsis. Literally, to clean the pestilence, pollution or miasma rooted in the Cadmus family simply with water or snow is futile; but metaphorically, the evils are never pardoned or alleviated. The only way conceived of by Creon to prove his innocence is time: “But in course of time you will learn this with certainty, since time alone reveals the just man but the traitor you can learn to know in a single day” [ἀλλ’ ἐν χρόνῳ γνώσει τὰδ’ ἀσφαλῶς, ἐπεὶ χρόνος δίκαιον ἄνδρα δείκνυσιν μόνος: κακὸν δὲ κἂν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ γνοίης μῆ] (*OT* 613-615). Time—a course of time, perhaps one year, one decade, one’s life or even longer—serves as the unique arbitrator to bring to light [δείκνυσιν] who is the just man [δίκαιον ἄνδρα]; however, in a brief time—just in a single day [ἐν ἡμέρᾳ. . . μῆ]—will the traitor [κακὸν] be caught. In either case, temporal durations function as the processes to learn [γινώσκω].

A close affinity between the point of view of a tragic poet and that of a physician surely matters in the case of depicting human sufferings. Nevertheless, a considerable gap<sup>3</sup> between the rational conception of disease promoted by Hippocratic physicians and the archaic notion of disease expressed in Sophocles’ works does exist, but both approaches broaden our vision concerning pathological viewpoints. The cases of plague discussed by Hippocrates and by Sophocles share a lot of ideas, although they ascribed the plague to various causes and gave two divergent meanings to the same Greek term, miasma. To be more exact, the embodiment of disease and evil in tragedy is customarily imbued with oxymoronic ambiguities. For instance, Oedipus delineates his fate in the following manner: “Ah, cloud of darkness abominable, coming over me unspeakably, irresistible, sped by an evil wind” [ὦ σκότου νέφος ἐμὸν ἀπότηρον, ἐπιπλόμενον ἄφατον, ἀδάμαπτόν τε καὶ δυσούριστον ὄν] (*OT* 1314). Oedipus’ destiny, like the cloud

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<sup>3</sup> Some of the fifth-century Athenians might keep a comparatively naturalistic attitude towards human sufferings and diseases as Hippocrates did in his practice and treatises; but others, like most patients depicted by Hippocrates, were inclined to take their physiological and psychological troubles in life as evils or as something terribly imposed on them out of evils (δαίμονες). Whereas the advanced Hippocratic medicine promoted the naturalistic concept of disease, the rooted notion of evil pathogenesis could not be completely eliminated.

of darkness, is oxymoronically “sped by an evil wind” [δυσούριστον]—in other words, driven by a too favorable wind. The paradox of such a propitious misfortune is enforced by three negative terms: unconquered or irresistible [ἀδάματόν], not uttered, nameless or unspeakable [ἄφατον], and turned away, banished or abominable [ἀπότροπον].

In Sophocles’ tragic plays, the notion of evils is significantly oxymoronic. For example, Creon categorizes Antigone as an evil [κακὰς] female: “an evil woman sharing your bed” [γυνὴ κακὴ ζύνευος ἐν δόμοις] (*Anti* 651). But Creon prefers an oxymoronic style, saying that “what wound could be deeper than a dear one who is evil” [γένοιτ’ ἂν ἔλκος μεῖζον ἢ φίλος κακός] (*Anti* 652). For Creon, “a dear one who is evil” [ἢ φίλος κακός] is a harmful friend, Antigone, who is said to bring the deepest wound to her fiancé Haemon due to her disobedience to the state laws. On the one side, the criterion which Creon takes up to define what is good and what is evil is the law which he imposes on others. On the other side, differing from being evil, Antigone “does not know how to bend before her troubles” [εἴκειν δ’ οὐκ ἐπίσταται κακοῖς] (*Anti* 472).

Sophocles employed abundant medical language to elucidate both the heroic sufferings and political disorder. At the first level, medical terminology is applied to individual pathological life. It dawns on Oedipus that “no sickness or other factor would have killed me; for I should never have been saved from death, but for some dreadful evil” [μήτε μ’ ἂν νόσον μήτ’ ἄλλο πέρσαι μηδέν’ οὐ γὰρ ἂν ποτε θνήσκων ἐσώθην, μὴ τί τω δεινῷ κακῷ] (*OT* 1455-1457). Oedipus is eventually expelled from Thebes; but he is becoming stronger to go through sufferings in his remaining life. The escape from death, for Oedipus, is a forever trial which is manipulated by “some dreadful evil” [τω δεινῷ κακῷ]. In this sense, Oedipus overcomes any disease [νόσον] and conquers the power of death.

At the second level, Sophocles fully and freely explored the metaphorical possibilities of disorder in a city. Creon, whose principles consist in punishing anyone who breaches the order of the state, sneeringly bombards those around him: “Is it a merit to show regard for those who cause disorder” [ἔργον γὰρ ἐστὶ τοὺς ἀκοσμοῦντας σέβειν] (*Anti* 730)? For Haemon, those who cause disorder [ἀκοσμοῦντας] are evildoers [τοὺς κακούς], but Antigone is not one of them. Nevertheless, Creon considers Antigone one of those causing disorder or one “afflicted with this malady” [τοιᾷδ’ ἐπέληπται

νόσῳ] (*Anti* 732). The disorder of a city is itself an inoperable malady [νόσῳ]. A city is evil, diseased, or wicked when it fails to function as perfectly as before, when the order is transgressed, and when everyday rhythms are disturbed. Thebes is the very place where a tussle between order and disorder is coming to the fore. The disorder of a city is the very disease which scourges all inhabitants—as what Tiresias speaks to Creon: “that is the malady from which you suffer” [ταύτης σὺ μέντοι τῆς νόσου πλήρης ἔφους] (*Anti* 1052).

Overall, abundant instances in Sophocles' two tragedies show the discursive homologies among drama, medicine, politics, and religion. In ancient Greece, alongside the customary medicine of bone setters and charlatans, a form of religious medicine was practiced in the sanctuaries of Apollo and later in those of Asclepius. In many ways, the conceptual connection between evil and disease precisely attests to the above-mentioned Greek beliefs. According to Grmek, the Hippocratic physicians used metaphors of combat when writing down the case history, but in turn, “statesmen and historians—for example, Thucydides—turned the tables, using the medical model of disease to explain political events” (Grmek, 1998: 247). In a like manner, Sophocles repeatedly resorted to the models of disease to explicate those inexorable troubles, sufferings and disasters in a *polis* as well as in human life. Yet Sophocles, like most enlightened thinkers at his time, kept a cautious way in order to avoid entering into open conflicts with the traditional belief, including general sanctuary medicine. And tragedies were always an essential part during those annual festivals, where people could enjoy displays which were a combination of public feast, religious experience and great art. Take the function of Apollo in Sophocles' plays for example. Griffith remarks that “although he never appears as a character in the play, Apollo is thoroughly present, in the sense that part of the architectural space of the theatre is demarcated as his precinct” (Griffith, 1996: 4). However, Sophocles' plays illustrate that Phoebus is sending messages, showing a direction, rather than preventing and curing diseases: “But the enquiry was the task of Phoebus who has sent the message, so that he should tell us who it is that did the deed” [τὸ δὲ ζήτημα τοῦ πέμψαντος ἦν Φοίβου τόδ' εἰπεῖν, ὅστις εἴργασται ποτε] (*OT* 278-279). In a nutshell, Apollo is saying [εἰπεῖν], not doing. When the chorus all applaud that “he whose sight is closest to that of the lord of Phoebus is the lord Tiresias” [ἄνακτ' ἄνακτι ταῦθ' ὀρῶντ' ἐπίσταμαι μάλιστα Φοίβῳ Τειρεσίαν]

(*OT* 284-285), it is vocalized that both lords [ἄνακτ' ἄνακτι] are seeing [ὀρῶντ'], predicting or saying something in advance rather than taking action.

Although Sophocles shared the belief of his contemporaries that Delphi was one of the centerpieces of their cultural heritage, the efficacy of religious medicine and the power of oracular prophesiers are not undoubted in *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*. The variations of the term evil in Sophocles' plays involve multiple complicated issues, one of which is about the practice of prophecy in the fifth-century Greece. The following section will cast light on the interplay between religious and economic areas and on the embodiment of semantic and pragmatic multiplicities of evil in such a special case.

## **2. The Chiasmic Interconnectedness between Prophets and Profits**

The metaphor of evil complicates medical and religious concepts; in addition, the changing geopolitics with certain intensifying conflicts between religion and politics may well augment the semantic stretch of the word evil. Saying that “King, Laius was once the lord of this land, before you guided it” [ἦν ἡμῖν, ὦναξ, Λαίος ποθ' ἡγεμῶν γῆς τῆσδε, πρὶν σὲ τήνδ' ἀπευθύνειν πόλιν] (*OT* 102-103), Creon conceptualizes the land [γῆς] and the state [πόλις] as counterparts. In fact, Creon is rather skeptical of the legitimacy of Oedipus' “control” [ἀπευθύνειν] of the state and the land. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Creon thinks that a “triangle structure” of the Cadmus family is composed of Oedipus, Jacasta, and himself (Creon). When disbelieved by Oedipus, Creon somehow feels perplexed: “am I not a third, equal to each of you” [οὔκουν ἰσοῦμαι σφῶν ἐγὼ δυοῖν τρίτος] (*OT* 581)? Astoundingly, Oedipus relegates Creon to a lower status and calculates that “that is where you (Creon) are shown to be a traitorous friend” [ἐνταῦθα γὰρ δὴ καὶ κακὸς φαίνει φίλος] (*OT* 582). Creon is thus placed in a rather ambivalent category of traitorous friend [κακὸς . . . φίλος]; in this case, the adjective evil [κακὸς] is used not only to describe the loss of power in politics but also to specify the dissipation of friendship.

Yet Creon, who never thinks of himself as traitorous [κακὸς], is confident in that “a mind that thinks sensibly cannot become evil” [οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο νοῦς κακὸς καλῶς

φρονῶν] (*OT* 600). The contrast between sensible [καλῶς] and evil [κακός] is not merely related to the distinction between good and evil but also to that between wisdom and falsehood. Initially, Oedipus trusts Creon, who is sent to “the Phythian halls of Phoebus” (*OT* 68-72). Once the friendly trust fades away, Oedipus labels Creon as an evil conspirator: “It is true, because I have found him out in trying to do violence against me by an evil scheme” [ξύμφομη· δρῶντα γάρ νιν, ὧ γύναι, κακῶς εἴληφα τοῦμόν σῶμα σὺν τέχνῃ κακῇ] (*OT* 642-643). The “evil scheme” [τέχνῃ κακῇ] is the wicked conspiracy, by which Creon intends to do “something bad” [κακῶς εἴληφα] to Oedipus. To be brief, Creon is presumed to be a “traitor” [κακός]—as Oedipus interrogates: “First of all, do not tell me that you are not a traitor” [τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ μὴ μοι φράζ’, ὅπως οὐκ εἶ κακός] (*OT* 548). *Oedipus Tyrannus* proves that Creon, far from an evil traitor, is faithfully subordinate to the king and the *polis*; yet, in turn, Creon, the one in power in *Antigone*, is much afraid of being subverted and contends that “there is no worse evil than insubordination” [ἀναρχίας δὲ μείζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν] (*Anti* 672). Creon hypothesizes that the superlative evil comes from “anarchy” [ἀναρχίας]—that is, lack of a leader. However, Creon’s theory is not cogent at all, since an evil leader is worse than no leader.

As the interpreters of the celestial affairs, prophets are vulnerable to the risk of kicking off confrontations with kings and politicians. In Sophocles’ time, the oracle of Apollo at Delphi was a powerful religious body that exercised substantial political influence. But the belief that gods would tell the future was not universally held in the fifth-century B.C.E., but subject to critical examinations by philosophers and tragedians as well. Sophocles’ plays may well testify to the interrelationship between varying power structures and the emerging belief.<sup>4</sup> Oedipus and Creon, like most kings, consult the oracle of Apollo about their future and all issues aligned along their statecraft. When in need, Oedipus, like anyone else in power, is willing to condescend to the recourse of the prophets [μαντικῆς]<sup>5</sup> and to beg Tiresias: “do not grudge the use of a message from

<sup>4</sup> Historically, “the successes of the Persian wars wholly transformed the face of Athenian religion, since these not only were achieved against all odds but also contributed to the ‘radicalization of Athens’ political system” (Garland, 1992: 1).

<sup>5</sup> The title Prophet [προφήτης] is “properly used only of seers and functionaries attached to an established oracular shrine,” whereas “the unattached seer is called *mantis* [μαντικῆς] (Hornblower, 2003: 1259).

the birds or of any other road of prophecy that you possess” [σύ νυν φθονήσας μήτ’ ἀπ’ οἰωνῶν φάτιν μήτ’ εἴ τιν’ ἄλλην μαντικῆς ἔχεις ὁδόν] (*OT* 310-311). One should not be misled by Oedipus’ fake humble attitude toward the seer; Oedipus pronouncedly double-guesses that Tiresias must “bear ill-will or malice, bear a grudge, be envious or jealous” [φθονήσας]. When it reveals that Oedipus is the murderer of Laius, Oedipus immediately divulges his dislike of the prophecy and thus derides Creon for sending in “a villainous prophet” [μάντιν. . .κακοῦργον] (*OT* 705). Likewise, Creon in *Antigone* is consciously taking a higher position, daunting Tiresias: “Do you know that those whom you rebuke have power” [ἄρ’ οἴσθα ταγούς ὄντας ἂν λέγῃς λέγων] (*Anti* 1057)? After all, those in power, commanders, or chiefs [ταγούς] are those who are in an urgent need of a higher supervision. Tiresias voices his concern that all men—including Creon and Oedipus—“are liable to make mistakes” [τοῖς πᾶσι κοινόν ἐστὶ τοῦξαμαρτάνειν] (*Anti* 1024). Furthermore, Tiresias dares to defy the kings, making forthright remarks such as: “Rulers, also, are prone to be corrupt” [τὸ δ’ ἐκ τυράννων αἰσχροκέρδειαν φιλεῖ] (*Anti* 1056) and Creon will “be caught up in these same evils” [ἐν τοῖσιν αὐτοῖς τοῖσδε ληφθῆναι κακοῖς] (*Anti* 1076).

To negate one’s conviction in prophecy was then considered one of the most dangerous attempts to pit against tradition. The intellectual quandary if gods know or do not know the future or if gods are no longer in control of the universe is under scrutiny in Sophocles’ plays; what is more, the social-economic dimension of the prophecy is outstandingly elaborated in these two tragedies. A chiasmus—the profits of prophets and the prophets of profits—comes into play, mostly in the collision between Creon and Tiresias. In ancient Greek religious tradition, individual gods had their priests; but “there was no institutional framework to unite the priests into a class with interest of its own” (Parker, 2001: 312). The seers, however, were religious professionals. By definition, prophecy [μαντικῆς] is of or for a soothsayer. In practice, prophecy is of edifying effect—as Tiresias tells Creon: “You shall learn, when you hear the indications of my art” [γνώσει, τέχνης σημεῖα τῆς ἐμῆς κλύων] (*Anti* 998). Tiresias is going on to detail the way to hear [κλύων] the signs [σημεῖα]—that is, an intricate art [τέχνης] of interpreting the information from gods. Apparently, Tiresias’ art [τέχνη] depends considerably on “predicting by observing birds” [ὀρνιθοσκοπῶν] (*Anti* 999); to be more exact, it requires the procedures of observing the flight and cries of birds which are

harboring in Tiresias' observatory.<sup>6</sup> And Tiresias is learning from these observations how to “guide” [ἡγεμών] others (*Anti* 1014). By this τέχνη, a prophet grasps the divine message from any unusual flame out of the burnt sacrifice at the altar (*Anti* 1005-1111) and Tiresias concludes that “such was the ruin of the prophetic rites by which I vainly sought a sign” [τοῦδ' ἐμάνθανον πάρα, φθίνοντ' ἀσήμων ὀργίων μαντεύματα] (*Anti* 1012-1013). In this fashion, the prophetic rites [μαντεύματα] are no less than a skillful semiotic exercise. However, Creon is asked not only to see the signs but also to hear the indications: the former is to seek what to say, while the latter is to learn how to judge it or how to reach the judicious knowledge [γνώσει]. Comparing himself to an archer [τοξότης], Tiresias terms the feel of prophecy as something like “sting you will not escape” [τῶν σὺ θάλλπος οὐχ ὑπεκδραμεῖ] (*Anti* 1084-1086)—that is to say, the painful heat [θάλλπος] which keeps burning.

The craft of prophecy, albeit not always the same as “an evil scheme” [τέχνη κακῆ] (*OT* 644), is classified by Oedipus into an identical concept. More than once Oedipus badgers Tiresias: “Did the prophet in those days practice his craft” [τότ' οὖν ὁ μάντις οὗτος ἦν ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ] (*OT* 562)? Creon, instead of sympathizing with prophets, relapses into the same course of wronging Tiresias, who directly responds to Creon's perverted accusation: “you speak rudely, saying that my prophecies are false” [καὶ μὴν λέγεις, ψευδῆ με θεσπίζειν λέγων] (*Anti* 1054). Here the infinitive form of the word “to declare by oracle, prophesy, divine” [θεσπίζειν] is adopted to justify Tiresias' authority, but with an ironic tone of being discredited as false [ψευδῆ]. Any true prophecy needs to stand the test of time. Tiresias fields Oedipus' questions by a retort: “if you find me to be mistaken, you may say at once that I have no wisdom in my prophecies” [κἂν λάβης ἐψευσμένον, φάσκειν ἔμ' ἤδη μαντικῆ μηδὲν φρονεῖν] (*OT* 461-462). But Tiresias is ineluctably denied or misunderstood. What is worse, Tiresias is not simply accused of “lying” [ἐψευσμένον] or being “without wisdom” [μηδὲν φρονεῖν]; both Oedipus and Creon are convinced that there must be an evil motivation behind Tiresias' manipulation of the hermeneutic power. Consequently, the prophet is becoming untrustworthy: “you

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<sup>6</sup> According to *Description of Greece* 9.16.1, “after the sanctuary of Ammon at Thebes comes what is called the bird-observatory of Teiresias, and near it is a sanctuary of Fortune, who carries the child Wealth” (Pausanias, 1992b: 239).

are a skilful prophet, but given to dishonesty” [σοφὸς σὺ μάντις, ἀλλὰ τὰδικεῖν φιλῶν] (*Anti* 1059). Tiresias is criticized to be “given to dishonesty” or “love to do wrong” [τὰδικεῖν φιλῶν]—a charge of malpractice.

On the one hand, prophets are held in high esteem. Despite the supposed inadequacy of prophecy, the chorus leader—on behalf of the anonymous public—expresses his full confidence in Tiresias: “I know that since this hair, once black, now white, has clothed my head, he has never spoken a falsehood to the city” [ἐπιστάμεσθα δ’, ἐξ ὅτου λευκὴν ἐγὼ τήνδ’ ἐκ μελαίνης ἀμφιβάλλομαι τρίχα, μὴ πῶ ποτ’ αὐτὸν ψεῦδος ἐς πόλιν λακεῖν] (*Anti* 1092-1094). Actually, the word “I know” [ἐπιστάμεσθα] specifies an epistemic ground for what they believe; that is, it involves the knowledge accumulated in experience from young age to old age, which is conveyed by a synecdoche of black hair and that of white hair respectively. What is stressed in episteme is “no falsehood” [μὴ. . . ψεῦδος]. In the chorus’ opinion, Tiresias is akin to Apollo: “he whose sight is closest to that of the lord of Phoebus is the lord Tiresias” [ἄνακτ’ ἄνακτι ταῦθ’ ὀρῶντ’ ἐπίσταμαι μάλιστα Φοίβῳ Τειρεσίαν] (*OT* 284-285). Oedipus, when not yet being named to be responsible for the plague, courteously venerates Tiresias: “Tiresias, you who dispose all things, those that can be explained and those unspeakable, things in heaven and things that move on earth” [ὦ πάντα νομῶν Τειρεσία, διδακτὰ τε ἄρρητὰ τ’, οὐράνιά τε καὶ χθονοστιβῆ] (*OT* 300-302). Tiresias is expected to be omniscient, but neither omnipotent nor omnipresent; in a word, Tiresias is entitled to a semi-god.

On the other hand, prophets are no more than mouthpieces in the service for immortal gods. Iocaste cautiously distinguishes Apollo from prophets: “An oracle once came to Laius, I will not say from Phoebus himself, but from his servants” [χρησμὸς γὰρ ἦλθε Λαίῳ ποτ’, οὐκ ἐρῶ Φοίβου γ’ ἅπ’ αὐτοῦ, τῶν δ’ ὑπηρετῶν ἅπο] (*OT* 711-712). Iocaste, presuming that the old prophecy about Oedipus’ patricide and incest failed to fulfill, remarks that “nothing that is mortal is possessed of the prophetic art” [οὐνεκ’ ἐστὶ σοι βρότειον οὐδὲν μαντικῆς ἔχον τέχνης] (*OT* 708-709). The messenger is equally sensitive to the unreliability of prophecy: “no prophet can tell mortals what is ordained” [καὶ μάντις οὐδεὶς τῶν καθεστῶτων βροτοῖς] (*Anti* 1160). It is believed that poor mortals should be empowered to create their own life; yet the nub of matter hinges on a demarcation between mortals and immortals, which cannot be bridged simply by



the art of prophecy. Iocaste accordingly frames her conclusion: “Thus did the voices of prophecy outline the future; pay them no regard, for when the god needs a thing and looks for it, they will easily reveal it by himself” [τοιαῦτα φῆμαι μαντικάι διώρισαν ὧν ἐντρέπου σὺ μηδέν· ὧν γὰρ ἂν θεὸς χρεῖαν ἐρευνᾷ, ῥαδίως αὐτὸς φανεῖ] (*OT* 723-725). To predict is to outline the future [διώρισαν] or to say something that is hard to prove so far. Actually, what a prophet augurs from his observation is what has already happened—but it is unnoticed, unbearable or unacceptable. Creon’s revilement—“What is the matter, aged Tiresias?” [τί δ’ ἔστιν, ὦ γεραῖέ Τειρεσία, νέον] (*Anti* 991)—is pregnant with oxymoronic senses: aged [γεραῖέ] news [νέον], new ancient voice, and renewed past. The messenger, who remembers what happened in the past, feels an analogous smart of prophecy, especially when he is asked to re-open the old case under a new condition. It is why the messenger complains: “O my unhappy self, am I a prophet? Am I travelling on the saddest path of all the ways I have come in the past” [ὦ τάλας ἐγὼ ἄρ’ εἰμὶ μάντις; ἄρα δυστυχεστάτην κέλευθον ἔρω τῶν παρελθουσῶν ὁδῶν] (*Anti* 1211-1213).

Reluctantly admitting the function of prophecy, Creon quibbles: “I am not unscathed by your prophetic art” [κούδὲ μαντικῆς ἄπρακτος ὑμῖν εἰμι] (*Anti* 1034-1035). The word ἄπρακτος means ineffective and unprofitable. And the double negation “not unscathed” [κούδὲ. . . ἄπρακτος] shows that Creon intends to demonstrate the erosion of prophetic vocation as a result of improper takings. What is troubling Creon is that he might have “been sold and exported” [ἐξημπολόημαι κάμπεφόρτισμαί πάλαι] (*Anti* 1036) by prophets. The word κάμπεφόρτισμαί is the perfect conjugate form of the compound verb ἐν-φορτίζω, meaning to ship away; and the other term ἐξημπολόημαι originates from ἐξεμπολάω, in which the verb form ἐμπολάω means to make money via trading. Creon applies plentiful of pecuniary vocabulary to delineate his world and his relationship with family, friends, citizens and subordinates as well. In an impetuous reply to Tiresias, Creon vents his anger: “And even men who are clever at many things fall shamefully, aged Tiresias, when they skillfully speak shameful words in the pursuit of gain” [πίπτουσι δ’, ὦ γεραῖέ Τειρεσία, βροτῶν χοῖ πολλὰ δεινοὶ πτώματ’ αἴσχυρ’, ὅταν λόγους αἰσχροὺς καλῶς λέγωσι τοῦ κέρδους χάριν] (*Anti* 1045-1047). A skillful prophet, like other mortals [βροτῶν], may outrage his conscience due to the allurements of benefits, advantages or gains [κέρδους]; in this aspect, the shameful and the skillful

are almost synonymous. What is implied in Creon's lines adumbrates one real façade of the social prosperity in the fifth-century Greece: as consumers showered more sacrifices and offerings on temples, prophecy was turning into a truly profitable occupation.

Indecent materiality is the main ingredient in Creon's scolding of greed. Creon rails against the seer vehemently: "all you prophets are an avaricious race" [τὸ μαντικὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος] (*Anti* 1055). Creon, yet unaware of his own mistake, boldly upbraids the seer for being bribed, not merely attacking Tiresias personally but also reviling the entire "race" [γένος] of prophets—in the charge of being avaricious [φιλάργυρον] or loving money [φιλά-ἀργυρον]. Creon, suspecting that his subordinates might do anything illegal merely for money's sake, rants: "there is no institution so ruinous for men as money" [οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν οἶον ἄργυρος κακὸν νόμισμα ἔβλασται] (*Anti* 295-296). And silver [ἄργυρος] is supposed to be a distinct institution [νόμισμα], which has triple senses: first, "anything sanctioned by current or established usage or custom;" second, "current coin, money;" and third, "full legal measure" (Liddell, 1996: 1179). The long ode (*Anti* 280-314) given by Creon, deliberately addressed to the guard, is on the topic of money with a purport to persuade his audience "not grow used to making money out of everything" [οὐκ ἐξ ἅπαντος δεῖ τὸ κερδαίνειν φιλεῖν] (*Anti* 312) or not to be driven by the love of profits [κερδαίνειν φιλεῖν]. Money, in Creon's mindset, is the very evil: "money sacks cities, money drives men from their homes" [τοῦτο καὶ πόλεις πορθεῖ, τόδ' ἄνδρας ἐξανίστησιν δόμων] (*Anti* 296-297), and "money by its teaching perverts men's good minds so that they take to evil actions" [τόδ' ἐκδιδάσκει καὶ παραλλάσσει φρένας χρηστὰς πρὸς αἰσχροὶ πράγματ' ἴστασθαι βροτῶν] (*Anti* 298-299). In most cases, Creon is singularly worried about a social impediment that profit-seeking leads to a growing moral malady in society.

Tiresias suggests that Creon had better reconsider if the seer is bribed as the impending disasters strike Creon's own family. The word "bribed" [κατηργυρωμένος] consists of two parts—covered with [κατηρ-] and white metal or silver [αργυρ-]; it literally denotes a man blinded by silver, i.e., money. It is not infrequent that Creon casts doubt on others—including the guard and Tiresias—under the charge of taking bribes. For example, Creon shows his groundless suspicion: "I know well that these people have been bribed by those men to do this thing" [ἐκ τῶνδε τούτους ἐξεπίσταμαι καλῶς παρηγμένους μισθοῖσιν εἰργάσθαι τάδε] (*Anti* 293-294). "To have been bribed"

means to be led or controlled by wage or payment [μισθός]. Creon reiterates, but with a more categorical tone: “You did, because you gave your life for money” [καὶ ταῦτ’ ἐπ’ ἀργύρω γε τὴν ψυχὴν προδούς] (*Anti* 322). To put it differently, Creon arraigns the guard of selling their soul [ψυχὴν] for some silver [ἀργύρω], that is, shameful gain [αἰσχρῶν λημμάτων] (*Anti* 313-314). Creon attempts to cast light on the trying situation that at the root of profits is a malicious wish, an insatiable desire, or a degraded disposition.

Creon’s hypersensitivity to the evil of money provides a faithful reflection of the social economy in Athens and the history of money in ancient times as well. Ryan K. Balot pointed out that “classical Athens—opens itself to the criticism that, through its own excessive desires (e.g. its imperialism), it has taught its individual citizens to be greedy from the start” (Balot, 2001: 14). The economy which depended chiefly on the monetized institution must have taken centuries to develop. The Greeks, according to Martin, “began to mint coins in the sixth century B.C.E., a technology they learned from the Lydians of Anatolia, who had invented coinage in the seventh century” (Martin, 1996: 58) and in the fifth century B.C.E., the silver mines<sup>7</sup> in Athenian territory—together with the substantial public revenues from harbor fees, sales taxes, and the tribute<sup>8</sup> of the allies—gave an income that made possible the exceptional prosperity of Athens’ Golden Age. By the end of the fifth century B.C.E., Athens was the leading trade center in Greece. And the financial security of the city-state of Athens did occasion the promotion of Greek tragedy: during and after the Peloponnesian War, the outstanding loss of incomes from the state’s silver mines resulted in the reduction of the finance for the annual dramatic festivals. In fact, trade was a crucial ingredient in the Athenian economy and, accordingly, the system of miscellaneous loans, profit sharing and insurance were designed for promoting and guaranteeing the trade activities.

The classical Athenians generally regarded themselves as individuals,

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<sup>7</sup> “A rich strike of silver had been made in Attica in 483 B.C.E.” (Martin, 1996: 104).

<sup>8</sup> Gomme noted that “the great series of quota-lists—the documents giving year by year the quota paid by every tribute paying member of the Delian league to the treasury of Athena, one-sixtieth of the sum paid as tribute” (Gomme, 1945: 33).

simultaneously in a *polis* and in an international or inter-polis community. The ancient numismatics conveyed in *Antigone* can be illustrative of a synthesis of a local economy expansion and a global currency flow. In a striking instance where Creon blames on Tiresias, it can be discerned that the exchange of currency among countries or even between Asia and Europe did exist: “Make your profits, import electrum from Sardis if you wish, and gold from India” [κερδαίνεται, ἐμπολᾶτε τὰπὸ Σάρδεων ἤλεκτρον, εἰ βούλεσθε, καὶ τὸν Ἰνδικὸν χρυσόν] (*Anti* 1037-1039). Electrum [ἤλεκτρον] in ancient usage may refer to amber or a specific alloy;<sup>9</sup> and the latter sense is adopted in Sophocles’s play. Jebb annotates these lines as follows: “Croesus dedicated at Delphi a lion of refined gold [χρυσὸς ἄπεφοδος], standing on a pedestal formed by 117 half-plinths, or ingots, of gold—four being of refined gold, and the rest of this electron, or ‘white gold’ [λευκὸς χρυσός]” (Jebb, 2002: 185).<sup>10</sup> Sardis, the capital city of ancient Lydia, was once a major commercial center linking the Asian kingdoms of the east with the coastal Greek cities of Ionia.

It merits a sober consideration that two distinct phases of the development of coinage are articulated in this play: one is the archaic period of the electrum minted in Lydia and East Greece, and the other is the later adaptation of silver currency circulated around the mainland Greek states. Herodotus in *The Histories* mentioned that Lydia was relatively less attractive than other countries, except the gold dust carried down from Mt. Tmolus. The electrum coin was minted around 600 B.C.E. in Lydia, Asia Minor (current-day Turkey). The electrum lion coins of ancient Lydia are considered to be the world’s first state-issued coins,<sup>11</sup> which were produced in quantity and with a

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<sup>9</sup> Pausanias in *Description of Greece* 5.12.7 pointed out two senses of ἤλεκτρον: “This amber of which the statue of Augustus is made, when found native in the sand of the Eridanus, is very rare and precious to men for many reasons; the other ‘amber’ is an alloy of gold and silver” (Pausanias, 1992b: 335).

<sup>10</sup> See Herodotus I. 50 and I.93.

<sup>11</sup> The electron coins were popular in “the states of Lydia and Phocaea” and “the kings of Sardis were also the first to coin pure gold and silver” (Glotz, 1926: 67-68). If the Lydian electrum was the world’s first coin is yet unsettled. The definition of the term coin varies; simply put, not all money is in the form of coinage. Yet since new archeological and numismatic evidence may possibly alter any given theory of the first coins, the Lydian coins are at most one type of the

consistent type. The earliest coins were made neither of gold nor of silver, but of electrum, a unique kind of gold-silver alloy. According to Gustave Glozt, in ancient times only the precious metals were coined and “the oldest pieces are of electron, a pale gold which was yielded in abundance by the Lydian washings and contained an average of 30% of silver” (Glozt, 1926: 67). Yet Jebb drew a source from Pliny to show “electron both as a natural blend of metals, and as an artificial product” (Jebb, 2002: 185). The electrum coins—largely with variable gold contents—were circulated as a means for the state to deceive the public and make a profit. Therefore, Sophocles may apply such an unreliable quality to characterize some barefaced mendacious prophets.

The phrases such as “import electrum from Sardis” [ἐμπολᾶτε τὰπὸ Σάρδεων ἤλεκτρον] and “(import) gold from India” [τὸν Ἰνδικὸν χρυσόν] showcase a significant moment in the history of international currency circulation. To say “import electrum from Sardis if you wish, and gold from India” [ἐμπολᾶτε τὰπὸ Σάρδεων ἤλεκτρον, εἰ βούλεσθε, καὶ τὸν Ἰνδικὸν χρυσόν] (*Anti* 1037-1039) does not simply to refer to a common way of coin exchange; instead, it at least implies two other behaviors: gift-exchange and tribute. According to Rhodes, Aristotle's *Politics*, I.1257 a23-b2<sup>12</sup> propounds that “coinage had been invented for purpose of trade,” but “the earliest coins were mostly of large denominations, unsuitable for retail trade, and the original purpose of coinage was probably to facilitate payments to and from the state, collection of taxes, stipends for mercenary soldiers and the like” (Rhodes, 2007: 38). Kurke espouses the estimation that the earliest electrum ‘coins’—not functioning for pure exchange—could

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earliest coins. Rhodes pointed out that the Greeks, having learned from the Lydians, progressed “from bullion to coins, pieces of precious metal of a standard weight, with a standard design stamped on them to guarantee their authenticity” (Rhodes, 2007: 37) and further argued that “the earliest surviving coins are of electrum, a natural alloy of gold and silver, and were found in a deposit underneath the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, to whose rebuilding the Lydian king Croesus (c. 560-546) contributed: it is now usually believed that they are to be dated c. 600-560, and that the first silver coins were issued by the Greeks and the Lydians c. 570-550; if that is right, several texts which imply that there were coins in Greece appreciably earlier must be wrong” (Rhodes, 2007: 37-38).

<sup>12</sup> “The other form of exchange grew. . . . When the inhabitants of one country became more dependent on those of another, and they imported what they needed, and exported what they had too much of, money came into use. . . .” (Aristotle, 1984: 1994-1995).

have been “more akin to gifts or medals, issued by states, monarchs, and even private individuals as bonus payments” (Kurke, 1999: 10). Creon may describe the phenomenon that a greedy prophet—although who is confined in the temple—is apt to conduct international trade and to introduce coins from Sardis. But it will be more plausible that Creon expresses his abhorrence of those insatiable prophets who are bribed by the gifts of electrum. Both cases substantially evidence the widespread circulation of Sardis coins in Greek cities such as Athens and Thebes.<sup>13</sup> However, it is often neglected that coins, which usually carried a state blazon for identification and as guarantee, might function as political, diplomatic, or religious emblems for a state or a city. As long as specific symbolic figures were minted on the reverse of coins and whenever the coins were circulated for local exchange and for inter-state use, the coins would automatically assume the role of ambassadors of the issuing city.

The imagery of silver, electrum and gold coins is embedded in a larger picture, on which a ritual largesse is in a stark contrast with widespread public sufferings. The gold tribute from Indians is recorded in Herodotus’ *The Histories*: “The Moschi, Tibareni, Macrones, Mossynoeci, and Mares—300 talents” and “the Indians, the most populous nation in the known world, paid the largest sum: 360 talents<sup>14</sup> of gold-dust” (III.94). In fact, the theme of tribute is not unusual in Sophocles’ plays. For instance, in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the priest is telling Oedipus how the Thebans were once plagued by Sphinx: “For it was you who came to the city of Cadmus and released us from the tribute we were paying, the tribute of the cruel singer” [ὅς γ’ ἐξέλυσας ἄστν Καδμεῖον μολῶν σκληρᾶς ἀοιδῶ δασμὸν ὃν παρείχομεν] (*OT* 35-36). The tribute [δασμὸν] is literally a division, distribution, or sharing of spoil and metaphorically reveals the taxation which Sphinx gravely exerted on Thebans. In other words, the tribute means the victims demanded by the monster Sphinx.

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<sup>13</sup> Later in the fourth century B.C.E., the Boeotian coins, which were commonly minted in Thebes, had a distinctive shield on the obverse and a variety of designs about some legends on the reverse.

<sup>14</sup> A talent [τάλαντον] is a balance and may have other meanings: “pair of scales which Zeus weighed the fortunes of men,” “the scales of justice,” “tax paid for the use of the public scales,” “anything weighed,” “a definite weight talent of gold” (Liddell, 1996: 1753). Here a talent was “the sum of money represented by the corresponding weight of gold or silver” (Liddell, 1996: 1754).

Nevertheless, the numismatic imagery, albeit with overriding negative connotations, always carries its positive obverse. Gold<sup>15</sup> in many contexts symbolizes glory, wealth, and prosperity. From Solon's speech we find that at that time "a rich man was likely to have gold and silver plate amongst his possessions, and gold and silver bullion could be used as a medium for payment" (Rhodes, 2007: 37). In *Antigone*, Zeus is eulogized as follows: "and had the keeping of the seed of Zeus that flowed in gold" [καὶ Ζηνὸς ταμειέεσκε γονὰς χρυσορύτους] (*Anti* 950). Creon expressly differentiates the notion of profit [κέρδος] from that of reward [μισθός]: "that is the reward of (disobedience); but hope has often caused the love of gain to ruin men" [καὶ μὴν ὁ μισθός γ', οὗτος· ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἐλπίδων ἄνδρας τὸ κέρδος πολλακίς διώλεσεν] (*Anti* 221-222). For Creon, profit [κέρδος] is primarily associated with something negative, but reward [μισθός] is neutral and means what is given for an action—good or evil. However, the same commercial metaphor of profit [κέρδος] renders positive in Tiresias' diction: "my advice is good; and it is a pleasure to learn from a good adviser, if his advice brings profit" [τὸ μανθάνειν δ' ἥδιστον εὔ λέγοντος, εἰ κέρδος λέγοι] (*Anti* 1031-1032).

The art of prophecy, like other types of arts [τέχνας] in human civilizations, complicates two sides: "Skilful beyond hope is the contrivance of his art, and he advances sometimes to evil, at other times to good" [σοφὸν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἔρπει] (*Anti* 365-366). The ingenious [μηχανόεν] technology is for both evil [κακόν] and good [ἐσθλόν] purposes. The remarks out of the chorus are: "Your (Creon's) counsel is good, if there is any good among troubles" [κέρδη παραινεῖς, εἴ τι κέρδος ἐν κακοῖς] (*Anti* 1326). The good is not necessarily in contrast to the bad [κακος] and the bad is from time to time nothing more than the flipside of the good. In fact, the good, particularly when a pragmatic concern is overemphasized by Creon, is paradoxically the unfavorable gain [κέρδος]; yet, what is more ironical is that Creon profits nothing from the suffering [κακοῖς] along with the loss of the bad. In the process, Creon turns down good advice [κέρδη παραινεῖς] many times and thus misses the chances of obtaining advantages from disadvantages.

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<sup>15</sup> And the relatively uncommon gold coins, generally along with silver coins, were said to be used for paying war expenses and rarely for daily commodity.

Alternatively, Antigone views family love—rather than profit—as an imperative in her life and eventually even the loss of everything comes to be a blessed gain for her. While being misunderstood by Creon as an evildoer, Antigone is living under the worst conditions: “For does not whoever lives among many troubles as I do, gain by death” [ὅστις γὰρ ἐν πολλοῖσιν ὡς ἐγὼ κακοῖς ζῆ, πῶς ὄδ’ Οὐχὶ κατθανῶν κέρδος φέρει] (*Anti* 463-464)? Unexpectedly, even death or the bereavement of everything brings about a kind of freedom from troubles [κακοῖς] and the best profit [κέρδος] for Antigone.

Due to Creon’s aversion to accepting advice from others, one death after another takes place in the Cadmus house—especially in Creon’s own family; and thus the messenger reckons that Creon’s fate ultimately proves that “how much the worst evil among mortals is bad counsel” [τὴν ἀβουλίαν ὄσῳ μέγιστον ἀνδρὶ πρόσκειται κακόν] (*Anti* 1242-1243). A bit differing from being an evil-doer, Creon is said to “be in want of counsel” [ἀβουλίαν], which is regarded as “the worst evil” [μέγιστον. . . κακόν]. What is prophesied by Tiresias is corroborated: “Prophet, how true, then, was your word” [ὦ μάντι, τοῦπος ὡς ἄρ’ ὀρθὸν ἤνυσας] (*Anti* 1178)! In the long run, Creon must admit his misunderstanding of profits and prophets. In the reversal of fortune—step by step caused by his own actions, which give rise to the opposite of what is intended—Creon cannot but acknowledge that mortality and fallibility are conditions shared by all human beings. After all, Creon is neither an evil traitor nor an evil ruler. The problem is that Creon never backs unfortunate Oedipus completely; neither does he support the deprived sisters Antigone and Ismene. Creon even doesn’t know how to love his own wife and son when they are in trouble. It is Ismene who avows her true love to Antigone: “in your time of trouble I am not ashamed to make myself a fellow voyager in your suffering” [ἐν κακοῖς τοῖς σοῖσιν οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι ξύμπλουν ἐμαυτὴν τοῦ πάθους ποιουμένη] (*Anti* 540-541). Not ashamed [οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι] to stand beside whom she loves, Ismene is willing to sail with [αἰσχύνομαι] her sister Antigone and to share all the sufferings [πάθους]. Regrettably, Creon, who pays much attention to the interconnectedness between profits and prophets, never sails together with his citizens, his relatives, and his family; and he is neither able to get the hang of σχολῆ κακοῦ nor willing to help people out of their pains.



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## 索弗克里斯《伊底帕斯王》 及《安蒂岡妮》中的惡[κάκη]

張玉燕\*

### 摘 要

依古希臘文原文，惡[κάκη]一詞指涉多重意義：邪惡、扭曲、災難、疾病與詛咒等；而這些概念正是索弗克里斯的兩齣悲劇《伊底帕斯王》及《安蒂岡妮》探討的重要課題——人如何學會並脫離苦難(σχολῆ κακοῦ)。本文第一部分爬梳並比較惡[κάκη]在兩劇本中的相關用法，旨於闡釋此字的應用，實則點出戲劇、醫學、政治與宗教息息相關的面向。第二部分重點分析一特殊例子：先知(prophets)被指控收取利益(profits)；並說明索弗克里斯筆下惡[κάκη]的描繪，如何勾勒出西元前五世紀經濟繁榮之景象。

**關鍵詞：**惡[κάκη]、索弗克里斯、《伊底帕斯王》、《安蒂岡妮》

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