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QCQ #5

Quotation:

“Because it wasn’t Zeus who pronounced these / things to me, nor did Justice, companion / of the gods below, establish such laws / for humanity. I would ever think / your pronouncements had such strength that, / being mortal, they could override the unwritten, / everlasting prescriptions of the gods…” (l.l. 460-465. Pg. 29).

Comment:

This quote comes from Antigone as she is speaking with Creon. Having just been caught practicing burial rituals on the man who Creon declared should remain unburied (meaning that his soul will forever be damned and wandering around the river of the Styx), Antigone is making her reasons for going against the authority clear. I think this brings up an interesting tension in the play which is that of the power, or perhaps rather authority of human law versus divine law. One is the law of the mortals and one is the law of the Gods (the immortal). What is so interesting to me regarding this aspect is both how it is presented as a conflict in a play which was written at a time when people did believe in the law of the gods. Antigone tells Creon that because it was not the Gods who wished Polynices to remain unburied he does not have the authority, the power, to dictate and decide what should happen. The line “nor did Justice, companion / of the gods below,” was especially intriguing because it implies a relationship between the gods and justice; a concept created by humans (though arguably one could say both the Gods and Justice were created by people as a means of control). I wonder how such a relationship could possibly relate to the things we have been discussing in class previously, namely, the justice system in the U.S. While I don’t believe in “divine power” so to speak, the notion that it is up to the person(s) who are in power to dictate what is meant by justice is relevant to many of the social justice issues that are currently happening. Though I realize that may have been a bit of a tangent, I think that the contrast between the human world and that of the divine comes close to the relationship people actually have with power and with asserting their authority over others who are presumed to be of lesser importance and or hold less power.

Question:

At what point is it “just” or “right” to rebel or go against the person(s) that is (are) in power? How do you decide?