

Profit in Learning: Economic and Educational Identities in Sophocles' *Antigone*
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In *Antigone*, several characters draw a repeated and curious connection between the notions of 'profit' and 'education'. Haemon, the Chorus, and Teiresias variously exhort Creon to recognize the profit (*kerdos*) or benefit in learning (*to mathein*) (e.g., 719-727, 1031-1032). However, Creon recognizes only monetary profit (*misthos, arguros*) and believes that profit "teaches" (*ekdidaskei*) mortals to commit wicked deeds (293-299). In other words, Creon's ethical thought focuses on the notions of 'money' and 'teaching', while other characters in the drama think in terms of 'profit' and 'learning'.

In this paper, I argue that these distinctions are central to the contest over the meaning of human identity in *Antigone*. Haemon, the Chorus, and Teiresias view humans as malleable and thus able to learn. The Chorus praise the capacity for humans to teach one another in the "Ode to Man" (354-356), while Haemon and Teiresias both argue for the benefit of adopting the position of a learner. Haemon and Teiresias recognize that, as Yun Lee Too (2000: 3-4) has argued, "teacher and student are the individuals who *embody* the pedagogical scene in various complex, fluid, and open-ended ways." In other words, they recognize 'teacher' and 'student' not as fixed identities, but *personae* into which individuals step at particular moments in order to gain some form of profit or knowledge. This recognition is most clearly seen in Teiresias' description of the slave from whom he 'learns' the auspices (1012-1032) and thus gains knowledge of the imminent tragedy that will befall Creon's house. Teiresias derives profit when he learns from his younger, socially inferior attendant.

In contrast, Creon's hasty identification of profit as 'monetary profit' mirrors his fundamental belief that humans are a kind of currency; this belief underlies his claim that "it is impossible to learn thoroughly/each man's character and mentality and judgment until/he is revealed, tested [by rubbing] (*entribês*) by office and laws" (175-177). In Creon's view, people are quite literally 'characters' - that is, people are coins whose true ethical value has been stamped upon them and who are, in terms suggested by Nussbaum (1986: 58), fixed rather than fluid. Since Creon can only recognize humans as fixed identities, thus causing him to confuse 'teaching' for 'ruling', he fails to recognize the profit in learning from socially inferior citizens. Creon's world-view of humans as immutable thus tragically excludes his ability to learn until his son and wife have died and he finally declares "Woe is me!/I have learned, wretched me!" (*oimoi,/ ekhô mathôn deilaios*, 1271-1272). Creon's failure to understand the profit in learning in turn contributes to repeated discussions both about the role of currency in archaic and classical Greek thought (cf. Kurke 1999, Seaford 2004) and about the viability of education in Sophoclean drama.