POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVIZATION: Purposive Pain and Contemporaneity

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Discussions and debates in the domain of the poststructural attenuated the universalist, rationalist variety of humanism, but a different version stressing the feature of finitude that is common to all humans is in vogue at the moment. It emphasizes our responsiveness to pain and suffering (cf. Michel 1961; Foucault 1984; Butler 2004). This phenomenon is allied to what is known as “the ethical turn” (cf. Garber et al. 2000; Davis et al. 2001; Ranciere 2006; Myers 2008). It is said that reminiscing over the fact of mortality renders us responsive to the existence and space of the other. We are then amenable to the ethical imperatives and tend to marshal conceptual resources for our profoundly political and deeply conflictual times. It is another matter that this variant of humanism is also involved in political schisms. Furthermore, how adequate a replacement is an ethic of pain and finitude for the phenomenon of the posthuman, remains to be seen.

It has been for a long time that humanism’s votaries have revelled in the genre of tragedy, especially of the Percilean Athens. This may sound rather paradoxical that the humanists illustrate their ideal from a sense where “everything humanistically worthwhile is blighted, then irretrievably cracked; men are made mad, and then destroyed” (Michel 634). Here, Michel’s may be a secularist hermeneutic but there are others manifesting the providential, because, they feel that this genre reveals the clarity of the human spirit. It demonstrates human inclination for self-destruction or sacrifice in the name of a principle (cf. Krook 1969). However, Terry Eagleton disagrees, opining that Greek tragedy, in particular, stresses not on characters but on events: “Characters for Aristotle, in what not so long ago might have been dubbed ‘theoretical antihumanism’, are a kind of ethical colouring on the action rather than its nub” (Eagleton 2002, 77). But Dorothea Krook says that protagonists in this genre, in particular, dignify and humanize suffering. According to humanists characters in a tragedy make the necessary condition of suffering not only intelligible, but also reconcile

There is a certain promise in identification with suffering. Tragedy portrays suffering on all sides of a conflict with sympathy that efficaciously furthers a predicament common to all human beings, Tragedy’s treatment of stark life is in line with Giorgio Agamben’s marked achievement of the theoretics of bare life. The depiction is of a human being shorn of civilizational politics and applauded by humanists, a sort of a decivilized being. A cry of suffering probes deeper than the surface of a language to appeal to common humanity. Similarly, a tragedy tears politics asunder to penetrate into the very core of
the human to exemplify agony highlighting the elemental human. Butler while alluding to Emanuel Levinas’s concept of “face” explains the cry of the tragic suffering as “the sound of language evacuating the sense, the sonorous substratum of vocalization that precedes and limits the delivery of any semantic sense” (Butler 2004, 134). Ranciere explains: “…..precedes and limits the delivery of any semantic sense [as] …..excess of/in language, sounds that language delegitimizes as mere noise while promoting others as …..poetic, musical and more…..” (Ranciere 2004, 108). Ranciere’s critique borrows its sap and force from Ludwig Wittgenstein, for whom cries of torment are an inalienable part of “the language game of pain” (Wittgenstein 2001, 86). It is in the context of insights afforded by Wittgenstein and Ranciere that we have to revisit Sophoclean Antigone, and read specifically those parts of the play where Creon’s proclamation has apportioned different eschatological destinies for Eteocles and Polynices. While Eteocles “who fell fighting in defence of the city” of Thebes “is to be honoured with burial/and with all the rites due to the noble dead”, the other “is to have no grave, no burial,/no mourning from anyone,” and “to be left….. to be eaten/By dogs and vultures, a horror for all to see” (Sophocles 131). Antigone keens over the mauled corpse of Polynices and humanists read it as a profound experience and presentation of human grief. Lacanians see it as indicating dehumanization, and as an animalistic monstrosity. The question that arises is that whether we understand this lamentation and grief as profound suffering or a death-driven monster-like animality. There can be another version of humanism and of reading this Sophoclean classic. The way to it is pointed by the theoretics of Wittgenstein and Ranciere. Here, Antigonean keening is to be viewed as “sonorous emissions”, which are an inalienable part of this new variant. This humanism possesses agon as its defining trait and feature. Its universality is centred on lamentation, suffering, keening and the sense of finitude. All these features are varied in their diverse signification. This version of humanism also takes into account other features like nativity and birth, congenital inheritance, power, pleasure and desire. It propounds politics that exceeds the sense of mortality and finitude. Antigone points this variant through linguistic elements like mimicry (of the Theban king’s proclamation), parodying the Creonian “forbidden” through defiance, and by citing tradition and the citizens’ duties and responsibilities towards the dead and the departed. The binaristic paradigm of different destinies for the two dead is repudiated by the tragic heroine, and in its place the oppositional and agonistic politics are brought to the fore to establish a platform from which to present her case and be heard both by the chorus and the discerning reader.

It is in the last four decades or so that Sophoclean Antigone has come to enjoy enhanced popularity (cf. Griffith). Part of the reason could be the rise of Feminist Critical Theory and Gynocriticism’s increasing subtlety and sophistication. Even otherwise the classic has always found favour with the celebrated theoreticians. G.W.F. Hegel formulated his theory and chose the play as the aptest illustration for his theoretics. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche propounded his thesis concerning both the “birth” and “death” of the genre with the help of this text in particular and the Oedipodean myth in general. Lacan conducted his much acclaimed seminar based on Sophoclean Antigone. Critics enumerate another reason for the play holding the centre stage of literary hermeneutics. When liberal humanism held sway, Oedipus was said to be its representative, exemplary figure, but in the times of post-liberal humanism of mortality and
lamentation, the persona of Antigone is the ideal instance. She is the critiquing, agonistic figure, keening and resisting the sovereign’s despotic decree by demanding death rites for the slain sibling. Victoria Wohl explains that instead of “the universality fathered by Oedipus…. there might be a different humanist tradition mothered by Antigone….. that exposes the limits and limitations of the masculine universal” (Wohl 158). Antigone’s humanism is characterized first and foremost by the element of critique. The focus of this variant is on mortality, finitude and lasting lamentation.

There is a slightly different case made by Ranciere. He accepts that the focus has shifted in the contemporary from the action oriented, resourceful and puzzle-solving Oedipus to Antigone but Ranciere considers it of little significance. Nevertheless, his comments are helpful to an extent. He says:

Under Oedipus’s reign the trauma was the forgotten events whose reactivation could cure the wound. When Antigone replaces Oedipus in the Lacanian theorization, a new form of secret is established… beyond… any saving knowledge.

The trauma that is summarized in Antigone is without beginning or end (Ranciere 2006, 05).

Ranciere through his last sentence seems to be saying that this condition of the suffering humans is everlasting, thus possessed with a compelling universality of its own, existing from the prelapsarian genesis to the postlapsarian doom of the Judgement Day, and inclusive of the entire terrain of the eschatological.

According to Nicole Loraux this perception of the idea of our mortality enables us to comprehend the significance of the genre of tragedy, as the world is “convulsed” by conflicts, where tragedy facilitates “meditation on… aporias adumbrated by reason and philosophy (Loraux 2002, 3). Gloria Fisk explains that it is in the fitness of things that modernity is sandwiched on either side by the prevalence of this genre. She says:

    It makes sense that tragedy works during the periods before and after modernity because our age resembles the ancients’ to the degree that the limits of our political communities are in a flux (Fisk 895).

David Scott opines that the most appropriate sensibility for today is the tragic sensibility. He reasons that “The hopes for futures that inspired and gave shape to the expectations of the coming emancipation are now themselves to ruin; ….they are futures past. And this is why a tragic sensibility is a timely one” (Scott 201). Rita Felski cites Dennis Schmidt to inform us that in the contemporary times the “growing self-doubt of philosophy and the questioning of reason, analytical method, and conceptual knowledge” is an invitation to
tragedy to be the presiding deity of the times (Felski 01). Schmidt rightly says that tragedy efficaciously demonstrates that “thinking can endure rather than shirk the most extreme contradiction, namely the contradiction between freedom and necessity” (Schmidt 76). Tragedy alone deals with conflicts that are irresolvable, and in a manner that epitomizes the ways of our world. Loraux is of the opinion that contemporary crises and intense self-doubt of the mortals are exemplified by tragedy through the sub-genre of oratorio,\(^3\) to the accompaniment of dirge, song and dance (Loraux 2002, 74). According to him tragedy does not merely probe, but penetrates to go beyond politics, to the “antipolitics” of suffering. Antigone is the representative figure of this predicament, although Loraux opts for Cassandra, in whom she finds “tragic configuration of the mingling of voices” (Loraux 2002, 75). But Nietzsche thinks that both Antigone and Cassandra appropriately instance the phenomenon, as “the Dionysian and the Apollonian, in new births ever following and mutually augmenting one another, controlled the Hellenic genius …the child of this long combat or this union…. is…. at once Antigone and Cassandra” (Neitzsche 08).

Loraux explains that tragedy with its Antigonean keening and lamentation takes us “from semantics to phonology,” which is to say it moves from coherence of language to rhythmic sound (Loraux 2002, 40). The theatre is an institution that appeals to spectators as human beings, and their fact of being mortals. Loraux explains that this was important, since this “experience abolished the boundaries so carefully drawn in ancient Greece to define the communal and the individual spheres” (Loraux 2002, 88-89). She envisioned her study of Periclean tragedy as contrary to Aristotelian theoretics, but their twin paths seem to gradually merge into each other. Regarding Aristotle’s plan Charles Segal offers helpful comments that elucidate the aim of Loraux also. He says:

Aristotle shifts his emphasis from the civic solidarity
expressed by Athenian tragedy as an intensely politi-
cal and of communal form to its universality as a
dramatization of the suffering and uncertainties
in the lives of all of us as fellow-mortals who share
a common humanity (23).

Aristotle was witness to “large scale export of Athenian drama from its intensely local setting in the Preiclean theatre in Athens to the rest of Greece.” Segal says that gradually it did not remain as merely “Athenian tragedy” but became “Hellenic tragedy” and then “Greek tragedy” (24). This happened because of the expansion of the audience, alongwith a different mode of interpretation of the genre and a changed horizon of expectations.

A recent study by Stephen K. White on ancient Greece also concludes with the espousal of a humanism centred on the ideas of finitude and mortality. He alludes to the tale of Priam visiting Achilles as detailed in the \textit{Iliad}, for the body of Hector, and the two enemies unite in grief. They weep together, followed
by the partaking of drink and victuals. They are enabled into doing so by the feeling of shared finitude. White dwells on their mourning in unison since he seeks to focus on the minimalistic base from which ethical conduct emerges. Thus, ontologically speaking, finitude is a more minimalist condition than others like individualism or autonomy. Butler also discerns humanism in “violence”, vulnerability and mourning… in search for… more general conception of the human… in which we are, from the start, given over to the other…. to some set of primary others” (Butler 2004, 31). Depending on others demonstrates vulnerability, specifying options from “the eradication of our being at one end, …to… the physical support for our lives at the other.” Butlerian features for the human find affinities with Hannah Arendt’s list of possibilities for the human condition. Human beings are ruled by finitude and its chronological and temporal limits, and entitled to labour. Next is the way we are engrossed in projects and processes that seem to detach us momentarily from the fact of mortality which Arendt christens as work. The third vital ingredient of our life is action that proceeds through worldly interrelationships. Butler, in her text alluded to this third possibility (mentioned, a little earlier) when she listed “mortality, vulnerability, agency” as the characteristics of what she termed as “precarious life” (2004, 26). However, Arendt’s third element, namely action points beyond humanism of finitude to immortality and timelessness. It is an attractive idea that we should persist in Antigonean grief to forge communities expressing suffering in the contemporary times, since nations and democracies tend to suppress politically inconvenient expression of grief and unhappiness, especially if such demonstrations of lamentation embarrass majorities or the ruling classes. Butler focuses on the problematics of public expression of grief since such expressions carry different meanings and take on varied political hues at different times.

Butlerian texts Gender Trouble and Bodies that Matter deliberated on the distinction between sex and gender, where sex is the unambiguous and univocal basis for gender which is pluralistic and constructed in cultural terms. Antigonean instance may be perspectivized similarly. Deconstruction of the binaries of death and burial is universal and univocal, but the rites of burial and the associated eschatological rituals are culturally constructed and demarcated.

Butler and Loraux discuss Arendt’s third term, namely action through the fact of human finitude, in terms of shared human action which is a hallmark of democrats. Their theoretics lay stress on human pleasure which is also an imperative of human mortality. Commonalities may be generated orienting moralist humanism to tie natal with mortal, and stressing humanism more boldly than mortality happens to do it. Sophoclean text in particular and Greek tragedy in general demarcate desired space to indulgence in pleasure and revelry, apart from the expressions of suffering and lamentation. This can be readily instanced from a stanza of the fifth stasimon by the Chorus in the Sophoclean text:

Where torches on the crested mountains gleam,

And by Castalia’s stream

The nymph-train in thy dance rejoices,
When from the ivy-tangled glens
   Of Nysa and from Vine-clad plains
   Thou comest to Thebes where the immortal voices
   Sing thy glad strains (156)

This is the post-war time, when strife and lamentation are still present at Thebes and the Chorus holds a way out of this by inviting the Thebans to join in dancing and revelry and feasting in honour of their God Dionysus. None of the Thebans obliges the Chorus by accepting it, nevertheless, it is held up as a viable alternative for the moralist humanists that instead of digging deeper in grief or perverting lamentation as Creon does by banning the burial of Polynices, the way out is to bring pleasure to the Theban society that has been enclosed for sometime now by sorrow and war. This can effectively, further supplement solidarity and bring much desired relief and cheer, but Creon misses the point, which leads to the precipitation of tragedy and the consequent loss of Haemon and Antigone. Sigmund Freud has deliberated upon the concept of pleasure as a way to outwit grief, in his much acclaimed essay “Mourning and Melancholia”. The said essay is often cited as an instance of a guide to the process of appropriate mourning and lamentation, but it is also helpful in comprehending ways to counter sorrow. According to Freud, the mourner remains stuck with melancholia, when he continues to completely identify self with loss or the lost object. There is a lack of proper perspectivization on the part of the sufferer, as Hamlet continues to remain affected with the loss of his father and remains dressed in black. Other characters, like his mother and uncle explain to him that losing father is part of growing up, but he remains stuck with remorse and loss. The mourner Hamlet continues to overidentify with his lost parent. Freud explains that such grief is unending per se and can only be countered by interrupting sorrow and remorse with a turn towards some pleasurable activity, which can be food, physical intimacy with the opposite gender or some such diverting activity. Freud says that sorrow starts when the ego wants to remain with the lost object and if that object is no more than ego also wants to indulge in self-annihilation. The self-identification leading to self-annihilation can be prevented only by diverting its attention to some other enticing activity leading to gratification and delight or as Freud says ego has to be “persuaded by the sum of narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished” (242). Freud has juxtaposed or substituted “narcissistic satisfactions” for lamentation and sorrow. There can, of course, be a view different from Freud’s, when one argues that “narcissistic satisfactions” are gained from lamentation itself, or that indulgence in mourning is its own gratification. However, Butler in Precarious Lives : The Powers of Mourning and Violence (2004) seems to be less susceptible to Freud’s view. She is not impressed when mourning is dealt with by way of substituting pleasure to counter it or through libidinal reinvestment. She opines that the mourner is not reinvesting, and in fact he is deeply moved and transformed by the loss that has taken place. Butler seems to be right, but Freud is discussing a stage of prolonged mourning sliding into melancholia, which can be countered by turning to physical appetites and the claims of the body corporeal. It is not as Butler suggested and contradicted that the melancholic subject chooses a libidinal investment to exchange for the earlier one which
is, even otherwise, hardly possible (Butler 21). Thus, the Chorus’s call to the Thebans to feast and dance in honour of God Dionysus may be seen in the light of Freud’s invitation to “narcissistic satisfactions”. It is an attempt by the Theban elders to prevent the impending tragedy in Thebes and to while away Antigone from her dirge and Creon from his decree for the heroine’s immurement. Of course, Chorus’s call remains unheeded. Antigone can not stop mourning for her dead brothers, especially Polynices. She has to be interrupted from indulging in incessant grief and it is Creon who does so, but it is not interrupting mourning by pleasure. It is the Theban King’s insisting on his sovereign decree and power. The potentate forbids mourning over Polynices in public and even prohibits the rites of burial due to the dead.

Antigone’s threnody in her final appearance in the play is in the form of a long drawn out speech. Earlier on she had claimed that all the dead are equal and we owe them proper rites, but now she provides a different and new reason for going against the state by burying Polynices. She says:

O but I would not have done the forbidden thing
For any husband or any son.
For why? I could have had another husband
And by him other sons, if one were lost;
But, father and mother lost, where would I get
Another brother? For thus preferring you,
My brother, Creon condemns me and hales me away,
Never a bride, never a mother, unfriended,
Condemned alive to solitary death.

(Sophocles 150)

This argument of preferring brother over all the other relations contradicts her earlier opinion that all the dead should be treated equally. Earlier on she said: “It was not a slave, but his brother, that died with him” (140). This shows that she permits equality of status in life and death to a small group of citizens that excludes, at least, the slaves. Some critics have termed Antigone’s final speech as not authentic. Scholars like H.D.F. Kitto and R.C. Jebb term the lines of her last speech as not Sophocles’s writing, but a later interpolation. Of course, when we read Antigone’s speech historically it appears less contradicting and also politically quite effective. She is being led out to be incarcerated alive and she appeals to the state, the citizens and the Chorus of Theban elders regarding this unjust punishment being meted out to her. It is her death sentence, where she regards her action of the burying of Polynices’s body that was being desecrated by bird and beast as no crime, but a duty, an obligation to the dead person’s corpse. She herself questions, rather rhetorically: “What law of heaven have I transgressed?”, and her “devotion is deemed sacrilege”
When Antigone recounted her impending suffering, on the verge of being entombed alive, saying that she will never be married and have children, Creon mocked at her heroism: “Weeping and wailing at the door of death! There’d be no end of it, if it had force / To buy death off” (149-50). Creon presents her as a coward, as an ordinary human fearing death, but she soon contradicts his opinion through her suicide, not waiting for a lingering, slow demise to which she was sentenced by the Theban king. She is not a coward. Her threnody is cut short by the entry of Creon, who orders the guard to take her away “at once… or they too suffer” (150,151). Antigone in her preference for her brother’s burial has revealed inconsistency in her thinking. She ranks her family member higher, and contradicts her own commitment to the equality of the dead human beings. Miriam Leonard has presented a detailed account of the varied interpretations that have arisen concerning this inconsistency. Antigone appears to embrace two laws at the same time. She seems to have two agonistic commitments to democracy. On the one hand, she advocates equality for all, and on the other hand, in her threnody, the final speech, she pronounces singularity and preference for a select group of royalty, namely, her own family. According to Arendt it is a combining of equality and singularity that she terms as “plurality” (sections II, V, VI). Otherwise, it is an inconsistency in Antigone, and offends those who expect consistency of character on her part. It arises in her agon with Creon and the presentation of the field of interpretation by which she will be judged, both by the Theban society and the spectators in the theatre. A close look at Antigone’s threnody reveals that she indulges in retrospection before she is led to be entombed. Remembering parricide and incestuous marriage of her father, she also recalls polynices’ marriage to Argive Agastro’s daughter that enabled him to cobbled up an army to attack Thebes. Antigone comprehends her being caught in the outcome of two marriages. First was the marriage of her parents, which was as Helene Foley explained the extreme of endogamy whereby Antigone had “implicitly foregone marital bonds for those with blood relations” (175) and its consequence of barrenness for both the daughters, Ismene and Antigone, and then her own death. Second was the marriage by Polynices to the Argive princess, which is extreme of exogamy, and its consequence is treason, war, barrenness and death. She herself says:

My father—the thought that sears my soul—

The unending burden of the house of Labdacus.

Monstrous marriage of mother and son…

My father… my parents… O hideous shame!

Whom now I follow, unwed, curse-ridden,

Doomed to this death by the ill-starred marriage

That marred my brother’s life (149).
Antigone is lamenting that she is marching to her doom, unwed and friendless that Creon enters and interrupts, mocking at her “weeping and wailing”. She resumes her talk of conjugal family problematics and difficulties related to her birth, but now in a subtler manner. It is then that Antigone mentions that she has defied Creon’s edict only for her brother and would not have done it for any other relation. Herein lies an oblique allusion to a story by the Greek historian Herodotus detailed in The Histories. Herodotus tells the story of a woman, named only as Intaphrenes’ wife, who provides reasons similar to Antigone’s concerning the choosing of brother over everybody else. The woman’s husband, children and brother were in the custody of King Darius, who told her to choose only one out of those to be set free, and all others were to be put to death, as a punishment for suspected treason. She chose her brother to be set free, explaining like Antigone that she could never have another brother, since the parents were dead. King Darius was impressed by her reasoning, just as we the readers are impressed by Antigone’s reasoning. King Darius set her brother free and also released her eldest son as a reward for her sound argumentation, which was so objective that it transcended the safety and life of her immediate family, consisting of her children and husband.

Of course allusion to Herodotus’ Histories by Sophocles is tied to the date of writing of the play Antigone. According to Griffith, Herodotus’ work belongs to 420s (233-37), and Lewis dates Antigone to early 430s. Carolyn Dewald and Rachel Kitzinger quite meaningfully compare the story in Herodotus with the situation of Sophoclean Antigone. They go on to analyse the different reactions of King Darius and King Creon to women’s lamentations. King Darius is moved to pity and makes part amends, but King Creon has no pity for Antigone. He instead issues threats and then pronounces the decree of entombment, a slow death for the woman with prolonged lamentation. In the case of Darius it is in the predictable classical parable fashion where the suppliant’s keening finds favour with the king, but this parable archetype is broken in the case of Antigone by Creon who instead of providing solace to the suppliant pronounces a long drawn out lonely death. In the case of Herodotus’s story it is replacement of lamentation by reasoning and logos, in the case of Sophocles also it is lamentation replaced by reasoning with Creon by Antigone, but it is too late, the king has already pronounced the punishment for the offender, and so there is no scope for solace or alleviation of the grim situation. Creon in fact orders her to stop speaking and giving reasons, but Antigone’s allusion to the story in Herodotus shifts the focus from Antigone to Creon. The king is on trial then, especially in comparison with Darius. Darius felt pity, Creon deals out violence. He is no king, like King Darius of old. This proclaims the Theban King’s failure to cope up with the standard of governance set by King Darius.

Incidentally, Antigone’s threnody, her speech at her final appearance on stage has afforded different interpretations. It has been seen as a threat to state politics, since it defies the royal ordinance; a hindrance to governance, upsetting discipline expected of the citizenry. All that threatens status quo is unwelcome to the state expecting conformity from its subjects. Of course, it attempts to retrieve the space of the other usurped by the state’s self. Here, the attempt at retrieval is being made at the cost of life itself, exhibiting heroics to willingly embrace even death. According to Hegel, Antigone’s speech is dangerously destabilizing but appreciative because of extreme sisterly devotion. Lacan saw it is an utterance of monstrous desire, disrupting all economic modes and outside of politics. Slavoj Zizek interpreted it as symbolization of
an absolute, comprehending it is a total ‘no’ to king Creon’s political power. Primarily Antigone is cherished because she is antipolitical. She has repudiated politics for lamentation for brother. Her act focuses on the fact of finitude that defines and represents us all and ethical equality is established on this concept of mortality. Thus all see Antigone as away from politics. So Mary Dietz’s claim that Antigone acted politically which she made while criticizing Jean Bethke Elshtain’s reading of maternalism in the text has not been seconded by later critics. Antigone’s speech during her last appearance on stage is also partly prompted by her concern for her legacy and how her actions would be viewed by succeeding generations. She attempts to provide a perspective to her act of defiance. Lacan views Antigone’s act as a “conscious death”, where she is not concerned with posterity. Her death, says Lacan, is like Oedipus’s death. Lacan says : “Oedipus doesn’t die like everybody else, that is to say accidentally; he dies from a true death in which he erases his own being.[He takes himself away] from the order of the world. It’s a beautiful attitude and, as the madrigal⁴ says, it’s twice as beautiful, because, according to Lacan, it leaves no trace. However, Jean Pierre Vernant praises the death for precisely opposite reasons. According to Vernant, who catalogues death of Homeric heroes, Antigone’s death is noteworthy because it leaves a mark, a trace, like an epic story that inspires others in the succeeding generations [Vernant 1991]. Lacan terms the death beautiful because, according to him, it reiterates the concept of the lack of redemption. He explains the eschatological aspect in the case of Oedipus. When Oedipus dies at Colonus, one version of the myth goes that the corpse disappears, the place of burial is not marked or distinguished, and the two daughters, Ismene and Antigone are filled with sorrow that in the absence of the dead body and its burial place they are not able to properly grieve over the death of their father. The disappearance of Oedipus’s body is for Lacan a part of the patriarch’s mortal perfection. The corpse and its burial enable the grieving relatives to avoid the meaninglessness of the mystery of death. Disappearance of the body is an authentication of the fact of mortality and finitude, and hence the ideal circumstance for consequent lamentation over the loss of the relation.

Thus, the instance of Antigone through its historical and political specificity helps us evade the temptations of the anachronistic timeless and mourning centered universalist humanism. The tragedy provides resources for our deeply political and conflictual times by urging us on to the terrain of extrapital ethics of mortalist humanism with the twin facets of agon and critique.

ENDNOTES
1. **Posthumanism**: Broadly speaking, humanism is concerning the human and the humane. An early version was entitled liberal humanism that was based on the idea of universality and timelessness in the domain of art and values. It was later critiqued as ailing from totalizing tendencies. It evinced an integrated view of existing realities. Then Contingency surfaced in theory and thought. Postmodern theory that also contained the metatheoretical contested timeless universality behind art and writing about art, often organized around the concept of representation and its relation to subjectivity. Intrusion of historical consciousness in humanistic studies rendered the dimension of finiteness more convincing. cf. Agamben 1998; Ranciere 2007; Loraux 2002; Schmidt 2001.

2. The idea of “a language game” in Ludwig Wittgenstein cannot be reduced to any semantic code. It also includes noises, movement of the body, and other such (non) meaning elements. They exceed the general narrow definition of language as commonly expressed. Hence cry of pain or pain itself is a language game and not merely one of the language games.

3. Oratorio – a semi-dramatic work for orchestra and voices, especially on a sacred theme, performed without costume, scenery, or action.

4. Madrigal – a short love poem, or a (usually 16th Century or 17th Century) part song for several voices, arranged in elaborate counterpoint and without instrumental accompaniment.


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