Hello Antigone Essay, Research Paper

In Ancient Greece, new ideals surfaced as answers to life?s complicated questions. These new beliefs were centered around the expanding field of science. Man was focused on more than the Gods or heavenly concerns. A government that was ruled by the people was suggested as opposed to a monarchy that had existed for many years. Freedom of religion was encouraged to be exercised in city-states. These new ideals, though good in intentions, often conflicted with each other creating complex moral dilemmas. Such was the case in Antigone a play written by Sophocles during this era of change. In the play, Antigone and Creon battle a philosophical war dealing with the controversy of the Greek ideals. They both based their actions on their beliefs of what is right and wrong. The conflict arose when the ideals that backed up their actions clashed with each other, making it contradiction between morals. Antigone?s side of the conflict held a much more heavenly approach, as opposed to the mundane road that Creon chose to follow. Antigone feels that Creon is disregarding the laws of heaven through his edict. After she is captured and brought to Creon, she tells him ?I do not think your edicts strong enough to overrule the unwritten unalterable laws of God and heaven, you being only a man.? Antigone?s staunch opinion is one that supports the Gods and the laws of heaven. Her reasoning is set by her belief that if someone is not given a proper burial, that person would not be accepted into heaven. Antigone was a very religious person, and acceptance of her brother by the Gods was very important to her. She felt that ?It is against you and me he has made this order. Yes, against me.? Creon?s order was personal to Antigone. His edict invaded her family life as well as the Gods?. An important ideal in Ancient Greece was the belief that the government was to have no control in matters concerning religious beliefs. In Antigone?s eyes, Creon betrayed that ideal by not allowing her to properly bury her brother, Polynices. She believed that the burial was a religious ceremony, and Creon did not have the power to deny Polynices that right. Antigone?s strong beliefs eventually led her to her death by the hand of Creon. Never, though, did she stop defending what she thought was right. As Creon ordered her to her death, Antigone exclaimed, ?I go, his prisoner, because I honoured those things in which honour truly belongs.? She is directly humiliating Creon by calling his opinions and decisions weak and unjust. She also emphasizes ?his prisoner,? which tells us that Creon?s decision to capture Antigone was his own, and was not backed up by the majority of the people. She feels that Creon is abusing his power as king and dealing with her task to a personal level. Creon?s actions are guided by the ideal that states ?Man is the measure of all things.? The chorus emphasizes this point during the play by stating that ?There is nothing beyond (man?s) power.? Creon believes that the good of man comes before the gods. Setting the example using Polynices? body left unburied is a symbol of Creon?s belief. ?No man who is his country?s enemy shall call himself my friend.? This quote shows that leaving the body unburied is done to show respect for Thebes. After all, how could the ruler of a city-state honor a man who attempted to invade and conquer his city. From that perspective, Creon?s actions are completely just and supported by the ideals. Though most of Creon?s reasonings coincide with the Greek ideals, one ideal strongly contradicts his actions. The ideal states that the population would be granted freedom from political oppression and that freedom of religion would be carried out. Creon defied both of these. First, Antigone was ?his prisoner?, not necessarily the publics. In fact, the general population supported Antigone, though they were too scared to say anything. Haemon, the son of Creon, knew of this, and told Creon, ?Has she not rather earned a crown of gold?- Such is the secret talk of the town.? This proves that Creon was exercising complete domination of political power, which is strictly forbidden in the new ideals. Also, not allowing Antigone perform her religious ceremony of burying her brother is interfering with religious affairs. This denies Antigone freedom of religion, hence, contempt for this ideal. The contradictions between the beliefs of Creon and Antigone are strong throughout the play. Both have well-structured arguments, but neither completely dominates the other. Antigone is motivated by her strong religious feelings while Creon is out to make good for his city-state. The chorus? opinion is the determining factor, as in the end, they convince Creon to set Antigone free. Creon had to weigh each factor carefully, and in the end, he had to decide between ideals. His mind was torn in two. ?It is hard to give way, and hard to stand and abide the coming of the curse. Both ways are hard.? The contradiction of ideals was what led to Antigone?s, Haemon?s, and Megareus? death. Both sides were just, all beliefs were supported. Creon was forced to decide the unanswerable, decipher the encoded, complete the impossible, and determine right from wrong when there was no clear answer.