Written Law Vs. Unwritten Law In Antigone Essay, Research Paper

In the play Antigone there is quite a difference in opinion to whether Antigone?s actions to go against ?Human? Law or in other words ?Governed? Law was justifiable. Is there a line we can cross when it comes to set laws? Antigone sure thought so. Or was Antigone fighting for her rights as a women to do as she pleased, or was she doing what was best for her brother, “I intend to give my brother burial. I’ll be glad to die in the attempt, -if it’s a crime, then it’s a crime that God commands” (Sophocles 4). Many believe that she was doing a little of all, not only was Antigone in a way acting out of a feminist position but was acting as a freedom fighter for her people. In the play Antigone justifies her actions, and faces the consequences put before her. By standing for her beliefs, she portrays to the reader that she is a strong women who is acting out of courage for herself and her people. As displayed in ?Antigone? she “Takes into consideration death and the reality that may be beyond death” (Hathorn 59), and feels there is a common duty owed to her brother and her people.

The concept of unwritten laws can be best described as laws set by God. The laws set forth by God involve morals and beliefs that are presented by God. The idea of unwritten or divine law is described as being the ?unwritten laws of the Gods? (Sophocles 64). Unwritten laws or divine laws are indefinitely in effect when morals, or decisions of what is right and what is wrong is apparent, it is mainly in effect when moral decisions must be made. The concept of unwritten laws are not only used in the process of making decisions but is used in everyday actions of people. Most base what is morally ?right? on the law of God, on the other hand what is morally ?wrong? is thought to be against what God?s laws state. The concept of unwritten law or moral law does not apply to everyone, because in reality not everyone believes in God. Many tend to be skeptical of moral laws or unwritten laws because there is always that question as to if they are actually upheld.

Written law is the type of law that is set up to govern the land and the community, for example the laws that Creon set up to govern his city/state. Written law is usually set by the head of a community or by the governors of the land. To uphold this type of law there are usually officers or guards that are appointed to uphold the law. When people in the communities do not follow this type of law they are usually punished .This is apparent in the play Antigone, when Creon felt Antigone had over stepped her boundaries, when she disobeys a law, a law that went against the beliefs she held towards the law of the Gods.

Undoubtedly it is very apparent that in the play Antigone, Creon and Antigone have very different views on what is ?right? and what is ?wrong?.Antigone argues throught the whole play that the actions she took were done for the right reasons, based on the fact that the adhered to the law of the Gods. On the other hand, Creon felt that the actions he had taken were the right ones, based on the fact that he strongly believed that Polyneices was a traitor to his city/state, and anyone who felt that Polyneices was to receive a proper burial would defiantly suffer the consequences. So it all boiled down to the fact that we had two people in the play who felt their actions were justified.

When Antigone was planning to give her brother a proper burial she took all the consequences she may suffer into consideration. When viewing Anigone?s actons it can be inferred that Antigone does not purposely go against Creons written laws, but her belief for unwritten laws or in other words ?Moral? laws far out weighed the laws set forth by Creon. Antigone goes up against the written laws set by Creon, by burying he brother Polyneices, know that what she would be giving up was her life. She does the brave act only because her beliefs for her ?moral? laws set up by the Gods, were very important to her, and the love for her brother was very strong. ?To me it is fine to die for such a deed. I?ll lie there, dear to him, with my dear friend, when I?ve preformed this crime of piety; for I must please those down below a longer time than those up here, since I shall lie there always. You, though, if you think it best, dishonor what honored by the gods.? (Antigone 71)

Creon on the other hand viewed the situations very differently. There was not to much Creon did ?right? if compared to unwritten or ?moral? law. Further more Creon did not justify his action to much throughout the play, and did not seem to view the sitituation from Antigone?s position, instead Creon seemed to act out of selfishness and narrow mindedness. What made the situation even worse is that Creon stoop his ground and was content with his actions.

Finally, what Antigone did would seem to any reader to be ?right?, she did what she believed in and followed her ?moral? laws. Moral Laws are not always right, it depends on the person, but in this case the action Anigone took did not harm herself or anyone around her. Therefore I believe Anitigone was undoubtedly right for the actions she took when burying her brother Polyneices. It is apparent by the end of the play Anigone is disturbed by the fact that she went against Creon?s law and buried her brother. Surprisingly, Antigone was excused for her actions but sadly was still put to death, proving this to be one of the most tragic Greek plays of all time. The over lying factor in this play was the conflict between Antigone and Creon, over what was right and what was wrong or the argument between written law and unwritten law (moral law). It is not always possible to go by a law and still satisfy your moral beliefs, written or unwritten.