



Examining Franz Brentano's Concepts of Good and Bad in Sophocles' Antigone: Insights for Islamic Moral Consideration

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the good and bad themes of love and recognition in Sophocles' *Antigone*, which is within the framework of Franz Brentano's philosophical concepts and Islamic views. The main questions asked are: How do love and recognition help to understand good and bad actions in the narrative of "*Antigone*"? And how do these themes resonate in Islamic moral views? To answer these questions, the research uses the method of literary analysis based on historical texts, philosophical theories, and religious insights. The analysis shows that the character of *Antigone* shows the conflict between family loyalty and social rules, showing that love can lead to noble actions with tragic consequences. Meanwhile, *Creon*'s character represents the dangers of pride and blind judgment and tries to enforce human laws over divine principles. The findings highlight the complexity of ethical decisions and show that what is considered good or bad may vary based on individual perspectives and social norms. Finally, this research shows how *Antigone*'s narrative reflects the interplay of love, cognition, and ethical dilemmas and makes Brentano's thoughts on ethics reconsidered in the light of Islamic teachings. This study concludes that a deep commitment to these themes encourages a more nuanced understanding of moral ambiguity and human behavior.

Keywords: *Antigone*, Brentano, Love and Recognition, Islamic Insights.

Introduction

In the world of moral philosophy, the understanding of the concepts of 'good' and 'bad' has been a central theme studied by many philosophers,¹

¹ Bongelli, Ramona, Ilaria Riccioni, and Andrzej Zuczkowski. "Certain-uncertain, true-false, good-evil in Italian political speeches." In *International Workshop on Political Speech*,

including Franz Brentano. In his book *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*,² Brentano states that judgments of something as 'good' or 'bad' depend not only on its intrinsic qualities but also on the recognition and love associated with it.³ This concept highlights how moral actions are often influenced by individual perspectives and prevailing social norms. To explore further how this theory is applied in the context of human life, this article connects Brentano's views with the narrative of the Greek tragedy *Antigone* by Sophocles.⁴ This tragedy presents a conflict between two types of morality: familial morality and state morality, illustrating the complexity of ethical decision-making.⁵

Sophocles' *Antigone* presents a moral dilemma between actions considered good and bad, relating to the themes of love and sacrifice. The character of Antigone, who dares to defy Creon's decision not to give her brother a proper burial, represents familial love that demands great sacrifice, even at the expense of the state law. In contrast, Creon, as the ruler, adheres to the principles of state law, which he believes are superior to personal duties toward family.⁶ This conflict creates tension between social duties and personal moral obligations, illustrating the duality between good and bad,

pp. 164-180. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2010; Winnicott, Donald W. "Ego distortion in terms of true and false self." In *The person who is me*, pp. 7-22. Routledge, 2018; Lyon, Thomas D., Jodi A. Quas, and Nathalie Carrick. "Right and righteous: Children's incipient understanding and evaluation of true and false statements." *Journal of Cognition and Development* 14, no. 3 (2013): 437-454.

² Brentano, Franz. *The origin of the knowledge of right and wrong*. Archibald Constable, 1902.

³ Pleydell-Pearce, A. G. "The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong, by Franz Brentano." (1971): 96-98.

⁴ Griffith, Mark, ed. *Sophocles: antigone*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁵ Hansali, Omar. "Heidegger, Death and 'Originary-Ethics': The Finite Venture of Antigone's Heroic Act in Sophocles' Tragedy." *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies* 5, no. 3 (2023): 337-347; Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane. "Assumptions and the creation of meaning: reading Sophocles' Antigone." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 134-148; Segal, Charles. "5. Sophocles' Praise of Man and the Conflicts of the Antigone." (2019): 137-162.

⁶ Hansali, Omar. "Heidegger, Death and 'Originary-Ethics': The Finite Venture of Antigone's Heroic Act in Sophocles' Tragedy." *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies* 5, no. 3 (2023): 337-347

and how these actions can be accepted or rejected within society.

Brentano's philosophical approach to 'good' and 'bad' focuses on the relationship between love and recognition. According to him, good actions are those that deserve to be loved and appreciated, while bad actions are those that cannot receive true love or even provoke negative feelings.⁷ In the context of *Antigone*, this leads to a profound question about whether Antigone's actions, guided by love and family loyalty, can be considered right despite violating the legitimate laws of the state.⁸ Therefore, this article will explore how Brentano's concepts can be applied to the characters in *Antigone* and how this perspective relates to Islamic moral views.

Islam teaches the importance of balance between duties to God, family, and society.⁹ In this context, morality in Islam often involves a deep understanding of good and bad actions based on divine revelation and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁰ As in *Antigone*, the concept of family and love is often seen as the foundation for making moral decisions, but actions that contradict God's laws or social norms are still considered violations. This article aims to compare Brentano's ethical views with Islamic moral perspectives, to explore whether there are similarities or differences in the understanding of good and bad actions in the context of family and society.

This research focused on the philosophical theory of the German philosopher Franz Brentano, especially on a distinction between good and bad, mainly rooted in true love and recognition. It explored these ideas using

⁷ Brentano, Franz. *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*.

⁸ Burns, Tony. "Sophocles' Antigone and the history of the concept of natural law." *Political Studies* 50, no. 3 (2002): 545-557.

⁹ Rusli, Rusli. "The role of family in preventing social conflict in society from Islamic perspectives." *Hunafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 17, no. 1 (2020): 108-122; Beekun, Rafik I., and Jamal A. Badawi. "Balancing ethical responsibility among multiple organizational stakeholders: The Islamic perspective." *Journal of business ethics* 60 (2005): 131-145. Niwaz, Asaf, Umbreen Ishaq, and Atta Ullah. "Importance of Morality in Islam: Development of Moral Values through Activities by Parents and Teachers as Agents of Change." *Journal of Islamic and Religious Studies* 3, no. 1 (2018): 49-62.

¹⁰ Ali, Maulana Muhammad. *The religion of Islam*. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore USA, 2015; Koller, John M. "From the Prophet to the Present: An Historical Approach to Understanding Islam." *The Journal of Comparative Asian Development* 3, no. 1 (2004): 29-50.

the story of Antigone from Sophocles' play. According to this research, Antigone's actions illuminate the conflict between individual beliefs and social norms. In an effort to understand the subtle nature of good and bad, the researcher interweaves Islamic principles to discover the importance of love and recognition in moral decision-making. This study examined themes about moral dilemmas and human values. The goal was to clarify the moral dilemmas faced by the characters by comparing Brentano's philosophical explorations of ethics with religious frameworks.

Through a comparative analysis of Brentano's philosophy, *Antigone*, and Islamic teachings, this article aims to offer new insights into how we can understand moral dilemmas within a broader social context. It will discuss how concepts such as love, recognition, and morality shape the judgment of actions within society and religion, and provide a deeper understanding of the importance of context in making ethical decisions. Thus, this research not only enriches our understanding of ethical philosophy but also opens space for reflection on how moral values are translated into real-life practices through the lens of culture and religion.

Method

The literature for this study was selected based on its relation to Brentano's philosophy of good and bad and its use in the *Antigone* play. Through a review of the works related to the philosophy of Franz Brentano, Sophocles' *Antigone* and Islamic views were analyzed. Articles, reviews, and scientific analyses were examined to find the motivations and conflicts of characters between personal beliefs and social expectations. The methods utilized in the study were: *Literature Analysis*, Franz Brentano's philosophical conceptions provide a framework for understanding what might be regarded as good or bad. Understanding the difference between good and bad, according to Brentano, requires looking into the complicated relationships of love and recognition. The research analyzed the philosophical concepts of good and bad through the lens of Franz Brentano's moral framework and Sophocles' *Antigone*, which contains an analysis of the characters and incidents of the play through the use of Brentano's theory

on love and recognition.

Comparative Analysis,¹¹ this research looked into how love and recognition could result in positive and negative outcomes, then considered and analyzed the basic events of the story based on Islamic insights. This involves comparing Antigone's actions with Islamic beliefs to find moral dilemmas and moral considerations. *Thematic Analysis*,¹² the literature was analyzed thematically and focused on important concepts such as the duality of good and evil, human law and divine law, along with familial loyalty and societal norms. Through the use of this thematic approach, the researcher could draw connections between Brentano's theory and the events depicted in the play Antigone while stressing the interaction of Islamic moral principles.

Review of previous research,¹³ in this study, the researcher aimed to find out and demonstrate how Brentano's ideas could impact and find expression in ancient Greek tragedy by highlighting the relation of Islamic beliefs besides Brentano's philosophy with the themes presented in Antigone and by reviewing related former online research studies about Antigone's actions in the play written by the Greek author, Sophocles. Therefore, the purpose of these approaches was to analyze the moral ambiguities that Antigone's characters faced as well as to demonstrate how Brentano's concepts were reflected in an ancient Greek tragedy.

Results and Discussion

Introduction to Philosophical Concepts

Franz Brentano's philosophy declares that good and bad are determined by the relationships of love and recognition. Brentano, in his

¹¹ Gerstein, Mark B., Joel Rozowsky, Koon-Kiu Yan, Daifeng Wang, Chao Cheng, James B. Brown, Carrie A. Davis et al. "Comparative analysis of the transcriptome across distant species." *Nature* 512, no. 7515 (2014): 445-448.

¹² Clarke, Victoria, and Virginia Braun. "Thematic analysis." *The journal of positive psychology* 12, no. 3 (2017): 297-298.

¹³ Hadenfeldt, Jan Christoph, Xiufeng Liu, and Knut Neumann. "Framing students' progression in understanding matter: a review of previous research." *Studies in Science Education* 50, no. 2 (2014): 181-208.

book "The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong," says that something is true when the recognition associated with it is precise enough.¹⁴ When the love associated with something is true, we refer to it as good. In the most comprehensive description of the word, good is anything that is deserving of love and capable of receiving true love. Conversely, bad is identified as that which does not evoke true love or which elicits negative feelings.¹⁵ While Brentano provides a basic understanding of good and bad, Montague gives a critical perspective that reveals the possible weakness of this viewpoint.

Montague (2020) stated that not everything we believe to be true is true on this account, and there are times when our decisions are totally irrational, so although Brentano believes that what has become commonly accepted can be true, it may also be untrue because the confirming belief lacks any feature that could give it the appearance of being right. Montague's theory believes that not everything we consider to be true is true, and it means our decisions can often be completely irrational, regardless of whether or not they are generally agreed upon.¹⁶

Here are more examples and perspectives from other researchers to develop this theory: First, an example of Creon's judgment in "Antigone: Creon, the king of Thebes, believed it was right to forbid Polynices a proper burial to maintain order in the city and to show the result of disloyalty to the king. But as his decision came from his pride, it led to his failure and disastrous results, like the loss of his son and wife.¹⁷ Second, philosophical relativism: The concept of relativism says that a specific action that is regarded as ethically right in one society may be wrong in another¹⁸

¹⁴ G. E. Moore, "The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong. Franz Brentano," *International Journal of Ethics* 14, no. 1 (October 1, 1903): 115–123, <https://doi.org/10.1086/intejethi.14.1.2376027>.

¹⁵ "The Project Gutenberg eBook of the Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong, by Franz Brentano.," <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/49228/49228-h/49228-h.htm>.

¹⁶ Michelle Montague, "Franz Brentano," in *Routledge eBooks*, 2020, 41–52, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315180786-3>.

¹⁷ Derek Murphy, "Antigone: A Tale of Loyalty and Defiance," *Urban Epics*, last modified September 2, 2023.

¹⁸ "Relativism Definition in Philosophy - 2023 Words | Research Paper Example,"

Analysis of Antigone through Brentano's Philosophy

Creon and Antigone's different perspectives on duty are at the very basis of Antigone's main conflict. As the king of Thebes, Creon values human rules over divine laws. For this reason, he sees his edict prohibiting Polynices' burial as essential to maintaining the city's authority and order.¹⁹ Because he considers Polynices a traitor and believes that by preventing a proper burial, he shows the people the consequences of treason and fulfills his duty as a ruler. Creon's rigid adherence to human laws shows his arrogance and belief that he has the ultimate power to define right and wrong and does not need divine power because he knows exactly what is necessary for Thebes.²⁰ In contrast, Antigone feels an inherent duty to her family and the divine laws governing burial practices.

For her, honoring her brother with a proper burial is a sacred duty that supersedes Creon's orders. In her opinion, divine laws are preferable to human laws. Antigone's actions are motivated by her deep love and loyalty to her family, as well as her religious beliefs. According to her beliefs, the dead must be buried to enter heaven. These beliefs forced her to disobey Creon's orders, and loyalty to her religious beliefs and family was above the king's law.

Antigone embodies the notion that love is a guiding principle for moral behavior, as expressed by Brentano, who believes that good deeds spring from true love. In her view, recognizing her brother's right to a dignified burial is a moral [and religious] obligation that transcends Creon's imposed laws [human changeable laws]. Her refusal to follow Creon's orders shows the tension between personal morality and collective social norms.²¹ In addition, Antigone's adherence to family duties shows her appreciation for her responsibilities to the family, which are highly valued

IvyPanda, last modified April 21, 2019.

¹⁹ Avery Gordon and Ashley Bishop, "Creon Vs. Antigone in Antigone by Sophocles Conflict & Analysis," *Study.Com*, last modified 2024.

²⁰ Avery Gordon and Laura Foist, "King Creon in Antigone | Traits, Quotes & Analysis," *Study.Com*, last modified 2024.

²¹ *The Routledge Handbook of Franz Brentano and the Brentano School*, Routledge eBooks, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315776460>.

according to Islamic standards. The value of a family is first and foremost based on the love and friendship between its members. The members have been kept together by mutual rights, and if this flow continues based on friendship, understanding, and removing egos, it will lead to the expected human perfection.

According to the Qur'an, family is a school of love and friendship. In sharp contrast to Creon, who prioritizes state law and considers Polynices a traitor, Antigone's love makes her act of resistance a moral attitude against oppressors. According to Islam, one of the most important goals of the prophets' missions has been to fight oppression, as Muslims are ordered to stand up against oppressors in the Quran. God says in verse 75 of Surah An-Nisa:

"Why don't you fight in the way of God and the oppressed people, the people who say, "Take us out of the city where the people are oppressors, and appoint for us guards and appoint for us helpers from your side"

This conflict emphasizes the tragic consequences of her choices, as her love leads to her downfall, and shows that the path of love and family duty can have dire consequences when it goes against society's expectations.

Integration of Islamic Ethical Perspectives

Islamic perspectives on morality and the family emphasize the value of moral obligations and family ties that are essential to understanding Antigone's choices and actions in the play. Islam considers the family as the basis of society and mutual rights, love, and respect as the basis of all relationships. The importance of family responsibilities has been emphasized in the Qur'an, promoting the creation of harmony and moral behavior among family members.²² These ideals are exemplified by Antigone, who puts the burial of her brother Polynices ahead of other obligations because she feels that respect for the dead and kinship are more

²² Taufiq Tuah, "The Importance of Family in Islam: Strengthening Bonds and Values," *The Noor*, last modified August 3, 2023, <https://thenoor.co/blog/the-importance-of-family-in-islam-strengthening-bonds-and-values/>.

binding than Creon's social rules. Her willingness to risk her life for her brother is a reflection of how much Islamic beliefs value family responsibilities.²³

Moreover, Antigone's actions reflect a moral framework consistent with Islamic principles, particularly her adherence to justice and respect for burial customs. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of honoring the deceased and emphasize the need to treat them respectfully. Antigone disobeys Creon's order because she feels that honoring her brother is a divine law.²⁴ This is a moral option that is in line with the Islamic principles of honoring family duties and fighting oppression.

According to Antigone's religious beliefs, a person will not be allowed into paradise if they are not properly buried.²⁵ The old tradition of the burial goes back to the myth of the crow digging the soil at God's order to instruct Cain how to bury his brother, Abel. When Abel became aware of this, he decided that the dead body should be concealed under the ground, so he dug his brother's grave and buried him. This occasion is depicted within the thirty-first verse of Surah Al-Ma'idah of the Sacred Quran, as follows: At that point, Allah sent a crow to instruct him on how to conceal his brother's disgrace. He cried out, "Gracious, shame on me!" Has this raven done better at concealing my brother's corpse than I have?" And he began to feel regret" (Quran, p. 112).

Besides, Antigone's decisions clearly contrast with Ismene's decision to obey Creon, showing the difficulties of balancing the demands of society with family responsibilities. For Ismene, her own survival and obedience to authority are more than devotion to the family, which goes against Islamic principles. This comparison reveals the importance of family responsibilities in Antigone's decisions and shows how her moral thinking is shaped by

²³ Paulo Alexandre Lima, "Religious Conflict in Sophocles' Antigone," *Cultura*, no. vol. 35 (December 1, 2016): 267–287, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cultura.2620>.

²⁴ "The Importance of Beliefs in Antigone," *Bartleby*, <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Importance-Of-Beliefs-In-Antigone-PCMWMN966>.

²⁵ K. W. Meiklejohn, "The Burial of Polynices," *The Classical Review* 46, no. 1 (October 27, 2009): 4–5, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0009840x00057450>.

Islamic perspectives on the family.²⁶

Antigone's deep commitment to her brother and the decisions she makes are driven by family loyalty, moral duty, and religion. Her actions are in line with the principles of honor, respect, and justice, which are the basis of her Islamic beliefs and ethics, but at the end of the story, the conflict between her religious and moral beliefs with social laws and society's values causes her tragic flaw.²⁷ All of Antigone's efforts are for her family, that is, her brother, and also for fighting against the oppressor, that is, her uncle Creon, which both are considered good in Islam.

Although, at the end of the story, Antigone commits an unforgivable sin by committing suicide; that is, instead of trying to survive, unlike before, she gives up very easily and commits suicide, which is in conflict with Antigone's religious character as suicide is a great sin in Islam, which will result in hell in another world.²⁸ From an Islamic viewpoint, Antigone's suicide shows serious moral implications and contrasts sharply with her initial intentions of honoring her brother and fulfilling familial responsibility. In Islam, committing suicide and taking the life that God has given to man is considered a grave sin, and it is believed that those who take their own lives will be denied entry into heaven.²⁹ God states in verse 29 of Surah An-Nisa about suicide: "And do not kill each other, nor yourselves." "Allah is, without any shadow of doubt, most compassionate to mankind" (Quran, p. 83).

This is in direct contrast to Antigone's initial goal of ensuring her brother's proper burial, which she believed was crucial to his peace in the

²⁶ Ashok Karra, "Antigone and Ismene Outside the Gates," *Encouragement*, last modified September 8, 2021,

²⁷ "Beliefs and Morals in Antigone," *Edubirdie*, last modified June 16, 2022, <https://edubirdie.com/examples/beliefs-and-morals-in-antigone/>.

²⁸ Stejskalová, Tereza. "Žižek's act and the literary example." *Moravian Journal of Literature and Film* 2, no. 2 (2011): 55-74.

²⁹Shoib, Sheikh, Aishatu Yusha'U. Armiya'u, Mahsa Nahidi, Nigar Arif, and Fahimeh Saeed. "Suicide in Muslim world and way forward." *Health science reports* 5, no. 4 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.665>.

afterlife.³⁰ At first, Antigone's actions are motivated by love, recognition, and commitment to religious and familial obligations—characteristics highly valued in Islam. Her refusal to obey Creon's orders shows how determined she is to defend these principles and is willing to risk her life to do so. But when she is faced with the despair of detention and the possibility of death, she decides to take her own life, undermining her goals of pursuing justice and obeying divine law. By committing suicide, Antigone changes from a heroic figure who advocates family and divine order to one whose actions seem to disregard the sanctity of life, a basic tenet of Islam. In summary, the implications of Antigone's suicide from an Islamic perspective reveal a significant contrast between her noble intentions and her tragic end, which emphasizes the importance of loyalty to the principles of life and patience during hardship.

Discussion

Brentano's ideas help us to understand the moral judgments in *Antigone*, but the findings of this study show that these ideas also have limitations when dealing with complex moral situations. The conflict that existed in this story between individual beliefs and social rules shows that moral reasoning must also consider various factors such as personal values and cultural context, echoing Islamic principles that prioritize divine oversight over human authority. This study stressed the significance of love and recognition in Antigone's decisions.

Antigone's respect for her family and the divine law causes her to stand against the king's commands not to bury Polynices. Her decisions show that love can lead to real moral choices, as she believes it is her duty to honor her dead brother by burying him. However, Creon, who views Polynices as a traitor to Thebes, believes that it is right to refuse to bury him due to state laws and social norms. This conflict shows how different perspectives might lead to various perceptions of good and bad. From the Islamic viewpoint, love for the family and the divine law is a crucial factor.

³⁰ Braunstein, Néstor. "The return of Antigone: Burial rites in pandemic times." In *Coronavirus, psychoanalysis, and philosophy*, pp. 66-75. Routledge, 2021.

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of fulfilling familial responsibilities and following God's laws, similar to Antigone's firm commitment to her brother, Polynices. But Antigone's suicide at the end of the story reflected themes of individual conscience versus state law, as shown in the context of Greek tragedy. In Islam, suicide is considered a grave sin since life is valued as a gift from God to man, and suicide is an act that disrupts the divine order.

This demonstrates the complexities of moral decisions, where intentions might be good but actions could lead to negative results. Findings suggested that both love and recognition are crucial to understanding moral dilemmas, while also emphasizing the importance of context and cultural norms. Readers are encouraged to think about their own ethical views and the complexities surrounding good and bad actions, such as the struggles encountered by Antigone and Creon. In general, this study revealed the depth of human moral experiences and the challenges of defining right and wrong in different frameworks, including Brentano and Islamic ethics.

Conclusion

In summary, this review of Antigone by Sophocles emphasized the moral struggle between good and bad as presented by the actions of Antigone and Creon. Antigone disobeys Creon's orders because of her strong belief in religion and strong loyalty to her brother, showing the conflict between individual morality and societal norms. The complexity of moral decisions and how love and recognition may affect how we distinguish between right and wrong are highlighted by this study. This review is important because it looks at how these ideas are present in Brentano's teachings as well as Islamic philosophy and encourages readers to think about their own moral beliefs. Future studies may examine how these issues relate to existing ethical issues and how other cultural perspectives manage comparable tensions between personal ideals and societal expectations. Ultimately, the study of Antigone not only develops our comprehension of ethical conflicts but also encourages a broader examination of how we explain good and bad in our lives.

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