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# THE REVOLUTIONARY BREAKTHROUGH OR THE POLITICS OF SMALL STEPS?

## INCREMENTALISM AND DEMOCRACY

*Is incremental change a betrayal of revolutionary ideals, or their most demanding form? The line between compromise and complicity is a thin one, and the answer is never simple.*



# INCREMENTALISM AND DEMOCRACY

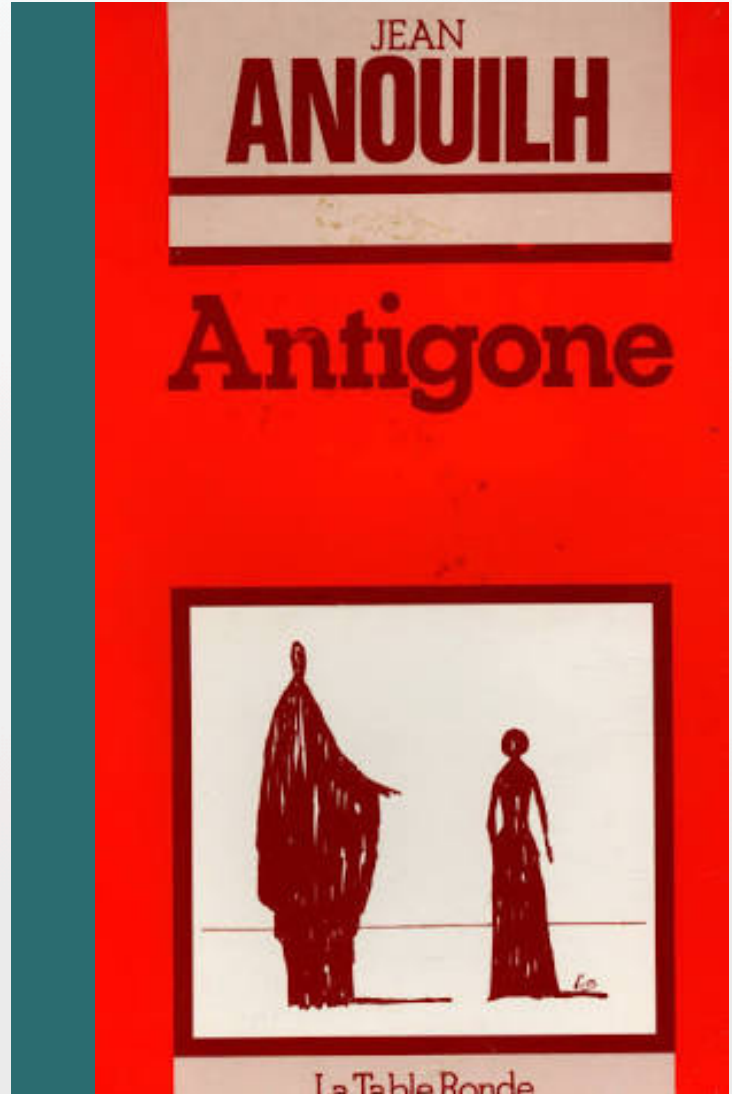
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The debate is not new: should one aim for the Revolutionary Breakthrough, or move forward in small steps? The social sciences have coined a word to think about it: incrementalism. But it fits poorly with the particular situation of citizens struggling against an authoritarian regime. For them, the question is concrete and brutal.

***Should one sit at the negotiating table, or overturn it? Take part in a “government of national unity,” shake the stained, often red, hand of the enemy? In short, make compromises with a guilty, sometimes criminal, power? The line between compromise and complicity is a thin one.***

Uncompromising radicalism then seems easier, like any position of principle, and more glorious, since one does not dirty one’s hands. But, in Anouilh’s *Antigone*, Creon reminds us: *“And yet there must be those who say yes. There must be those who steer the boat. (...) To say yes, one must sweat and roll up one’s sleeves, seize life with both hands and get it up to the elbows.”*

***Trying, therefore, to change the system from within. This requires accepting small victories, being radical only in nuance, if only to exhaust all avenues of appeal and make the struggle gain legitimacy before turning to more radical means.***



Building in stages: freedom of the press, then freedom of association, then freedom of assembly, then the sincerity of elections. And if, in the end, activists discover that the dice were loaded, there will always be time to take back their chips and return to the fight.

There is therefore no line to prescribe here, but issues to understand: in order to decide on a case-by-case basis, with conscience rather than through improvisation.