

Now, even setting aside the fact that Æschylus' particular belief has no more right to be represented as the mainspring of the older tragedy than the religious views of Milton as the fundamental principle of the British Epic, we shall find it hard to extract any single and uniform notion of Destiny from the seven plays. In the Prometheus necessity appears as a non-moral power couched behind the new order of things and impelling them towards their destruction; though even this cannot be asserted definitely, as Prometheus' foreknowledge, which appears coextensive with these operations, is evidently not so much absolute as contingent, and so differs greatly from any thing which we understand by the term. In the Agamemnon we have two destinies, but neither of them the same as the last mentioned: the one is the destiny of a race, which though arising from a moral fault, operates by a physical law: the other is entirely moral, extending over all mankind, and constituting what I have called the Theogony of Good and Evil, as described in vv. 730 sqq.; it coincides apparently with the former, as an instrument to work out its ends, and provides that those who are doomed to suffer for their fathers' crimes shall not be without crimes of their own. From this view the Choe-phoræ does not seem to differ: but in the Eumenides there is little which can be called Destiny: the Furies, who appear in the earlier part of the piece as the old gods of the Prometheus, are disappointed of their prey, and reconciled not by any satisfaction made to their requirement of blood for blood, but by a promise that they shall receive honour from a city in no way connected with Orestes except by the ties of friendship. In the Septem contra Thebas the Destiny is the family one of the Labdacidæ: yet here it does not seem to affect the siege of the city, which is the central object of the piece. In the Persæ the necessity is moral, giving to moderation the victory over overweening rashness, which is really no necessity at all, in the sense in which the idea is opposed to that of free-will: and in the Supplices we