

see little even of this shadow of Schlegel's "unfathomable power." It is scarcely necessary to proceed to Sophocles and show that in his plays the so-called essential principle is not more uniformly displayed, sometimes as in the whole *Œdipodean* story, wearing the twofold form which it wears in the present play, sometimes, as in the *Ajax*, exerting a purely moral power, while in the *Philoctetes* the picture of a brave man struggling with misfortune, if indeed it constitute the essence of the drama, is in no way peculiarly Greek. The conclusion then to which we come is that though the religious belief of the Grecian poets undoubtedly influenced their plays, and caused them frequently to introduce some power, beyond that of man, as working out the catastrophe, it is by no means sufficiently uniform and consistent in its phases to deserve being crystallized as *Destiny*, and exhibited as the presiding genius of the national dramatic literature.

Schlegel's account of the *Agamemnon* is pleasingly and gracefully written, but cannot be pronounced satisfactory: though drawn out to some length, it leaves several striking features unnoticed, and altogether never rises above the ordinary height of contemplation. "It was the intention of *Æschylus*," he says, "in the *Agamemnon* to exhibit to us a sudden fall from the highest pinnacle of prosperity and renown into the abyss of ruin:" and so it was, but it was a great deal besides. He does not bring out the idea of *Nemesis*, which pervades the whole play, *Agamemnon* suffering not only for the crimes of his ancestors, nor yet for the death of *Iphigenia*, which is *Clytæmnestra's* part of the plea, but for the blood he has caused to be spilt, as is developed in the second choral ode, the prevailing notion of which is the retribution of Heaven on wealth and conquest, already executed in the case of *Troy*, and apparently demanding another victim. Indeed the whole character of the *Chorus*, set on by an irresistible impulse to prophesy against their will, if not unconsciously, and continually