

Thucydides and Herodotus. And besides the influence of earlier poetry there is also in the tragic dialect a vernacular element, which can be only very imperfectly verified—probably not the speech of the Athenian agora so much as that of other members of the Ionic race. Italian scholars are said by wandering in Tuscany to have met with living idioms that threw light upon expressions in Dante. To obtain corresponding light for Sophocles we must have had the power of wandering amongst the cities of the Delian confederacy. When we speak of the language of Sophocles then, we include the conversational parlance of his time. But to resume:—

In the Epic dialect the 'Speech-consciousness' appears as a universally acknowledged *Themis* which no one thinks of breaking; in the age of Pericles, it is an unwritten institute, a νόμιμον, which, like other νόμιμα, is found by experience to be more various and elastic than had been imagined, and to give scope for the exercise of subtlety and individual freedom. Then came the Sophists with their indispensable work, clearing the way before philosophy, and partially formulating language, before the Socratic school had formulated thought. If to the Sophists and the Socratic school combined Dr. Kennedy would ascribe the rhetorical fluency which marks the prose writers of the following century, it is not less true to say that these same teachers themselves were the exponents of a 'grammatical consciousness becoming more precise.'

It is perhaps not superfluous to remark that the object of my Essay was chiefly exegetical; viz. to account for difficulties in Sophocles by calling attention to the medium in which he worked, and to protest against the repeated attempt to make him conform to canons and external rules which are of another age. If this object is not perceived, one of two wrong impressions is apt to be formed; either that I am blaming Sophocles as a careless writer, or that I attribute to him a degree of subtlety passing into eccentricity. To do either would be of course ridiculous.