

so heavily upon both. Sophocles had found in human nature itself the sanction of 'the unwritten laws,' and the seal of faith in a beneficence immortal and eternal; but his personal attitude towards the 'sceptical' currents of thought in his age was never, so far as we can judge, that of admonitory protest or dogmatic reproof. It was his temperament to look around him for elements of conciliation, to evoke gentle and mediating influences, rather than to make war on the forces which he regarded as sinister:—it might be said of him, as of a person in one of his own plays, οὔτοι συνέχθειν ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφθ. But is there any reason to think that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* marks a moment when this mind—'which saw life steadily, and saw it whole'—was partly shaken in its self-centred calm by the consciousness of a spiritual anarchy around it which seemed fraught with ultimate danger to the cohesion of society, and that a note of solemn warning, addressed to Athens and to Greece, is meant to be heard throughout the drama? Our answer must depend upon the sense in which we conceive that he places Oedipus or Iocasta at issue with religion.

§ 12. As regards Oedipus, it might be said that, in this particular aspect, he is a modern character, and more especially, perhaps, a character of the nineteenth century. The instinct of reverence for the gods was originally fundamental in his nature: it appears in the first act of his manhood—the journey to Delphi. Nor did he for a moment mistrust the gods because the doom assigned to him was bitter. Then he achieved a great intellectual success, reached the most brilliant prosperity, and was ranked by his fellow-men as second to the gods alone. He is not spoiled by his good fortune. We find him, at the opening of the play, neither arrogant nor irreverent; full, rather, of tenderness for his people, full of reverence for the word of Apollo. Suddenly, however, the prophet of Apollo denounces *him*. Instantly his appeal is to the intellect. If it comes to that, what claim has any other human mind to interpose between *his* mind and Heaven? Is he not Oedipus, who silenced the Sphinx? Yes, but presently, gradually, his own mind begins to argue on the other side. No one is so acute as he, and of course