

might not such a man be moved by the miseries of Philoctetes, and recognise that he had human rights which were not extinguished by his refusal to obey the summons of the Atreidae?

Again, the two plays on this subject which Sophocles found existing, both depended, for their chief dramatic interest, on the successful execution of a plan laid by the envoys. The *Odysseus* of Aeschylus, the *Odysseus* and *Diomedes* of Euripides, alike carry a stratagem to a triumphant issue.

In associating *Odysseus* with *Neoptolemus*, the youthful son of *Achilles*, Sophocles chose the person who, if any change was to be made in that respect, might most naturally be suggested by the epic version of the fable. But this new feature was no mere variation on the example of his predecessors. It prepared the way for a treatment of the whole story which was fundamentally different from theirs.

This will best be shown by a summary of the plot. The events supposed to have occurred before the commencement of the play can be told in a few words. *Achilles* having fallen, his armour had been awarded to *Odysseus*, and *Ajax* had committed suicide. Then *Helenus* had declared the oracle (as related above, § 3). *Phoenix* and *Odysseus* had gone to *Scyros*, and had brought the young *Neoptolemus* thence to *Troy*; where his father's armour was duly given to him. (In his false story to *Philoctetes*, he represents the *Atreidae* as having defrauded him of it.) Then he set out with *Odysseus* for *Lemnos*,—knowing that the object was to bring *Philoctetes*, but not that any deceit was to be used. The chiefs had told him that he himself was destined to take *Troy*; but not that the aid of *Philoctetes* was an indispensable condition.

Analysis  
of the play.  
I. Pro-  
logue:  
1—134.

§ 10. The scene is laid on the lonely north-east coast of *Lemnos*. *Odysseus* and *Neoptolemus* have just landed, and have now walked along the shore to a little distance from their ship, which is no longer visible. *Odysseus* tells his young comrade that here, long ago, he put *Philoctetes* ashore, by command of the *Atreidae*. He desires the youth to examine the rocks which rise above their heads, and to look for a cave,