

because he forgets her promise to protect him¹; what it really indicates is his habitual reasonableness and prudence. On the whole, the Odysseus of this play much resembles the hero of the *Odyssey* (who pays a generous tribute to the sullen Ajax in the shades²); a resemblance which is mainly due to the direct and ennobling guidance of Athena.

Teucer.

§ 16. The part of Teucer has a singular pathos. He is altogether devoted to his brother Ajax, by whose side he so often fought, and is strenuously loyal to the trust reposed in him. When he arrives, his first thought is for the safety of Eurysaces. With Teucer alone it rests to defend the memory of Ajax, and to insist that he shall have burial. Firm in his good cause, he braves the threats and repels the taunts of the Atreidae. Yet he well knows the prospect that is before him. When he thinks of his return to Salamis, he can foresee the fury with which the aged Telamon will denounce him, the son of the slave-woman, as the base betrayer of his true-born brother. He will be cast off, and driven forth into exile³.

His scenes
with the
Atreidae.

The intervention of the Atreidae has already been considered in its general relation to the dominant idea of the play. Their scenes with Teucer now require consideration from a different point of view, viz., with regard to the poetical workmanship. One aim of the poet has evidently been to prolong the controversy sufficiently for a gradual tension of interest. This is especially manifest in the words of the Chorus after the exit of

this passage has been much censured, as if it defamed Odysseus; whereas that very pursuit of Ajax, in which he is engaged, sufficiently attests his courage. That is true; but we must also allow, I think, that the alarm of Odysseus is so described that it might easily raise a smile (see, e.g., v. 88 μένοιμ' ἄν· ἤθελον δ' ἄν ἐκτός ὦν τυχεῖν). There was a tendency in post-Homeric poetry to depict Odysseus, the representative of φρόνησις, as subordinating valour to discretion; (see *Introd.* to the *Philoctetes* p. xvii, xxxi;) though in Sophocles this tendency is controlled by a delicate tact. Here, the dramatic motive for the trepidation of Odysseus is to bring into stronger relief all that is terrible in the condition of Ajax.

¹ Vv. 68—70.

² *Od.* 11. 556 f.

³ Vv. 1006—1020. The reference here to the subject of the poet's Τεῦκρος is like that in the *Oedipus Coloneus* (1410 n.) to his *Antigone*, and that in the *Philoctetes* (1437 ff.) to his Φιλοκτῆτης ἐν Τροίᾳ.