

Abstract:

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b) Preferred panel: 5. The Powers of Persuasion

c) Title: “The Rhetoric of Suffering in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus*”

d) Length of the paper: six pages, written in type 12, 2 spaces. Each page: 3 minutes lecture.

e) Outline of the context:

Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Colonus* contain a strong critic to the use of the persuasive speech in the socio-political context of their time - which is perhaps an echo of the rhetorical pragmatics of a period of crisis. The rhetoric of the word in both plays is strongly associated with lying, with deceiving, and it is employed by negatively portrayed characters. Odysseus and Creon are two expressive examples of this. The rhetoric of deceiving even leads to aporetic situations (*Philoctetes*), not to the overcoming of impasses. The persuasive efficacy of the language of reality, of human suffering, of actions opposes the rhetoric with an increasing power. He who learns to read that language of suffering (Neoptolemus), or he who has already learnt it previously through his experience of life (Theseus) allows himself to be persuaded by it because he is able to recognize, in the suffering of the other, who is before him, the potential of his own limitations and the value of solidarity. This learning process is closely linked to *sophrosyne* and creates ties of *philia* between men. Such ties require no words or oaths. It is in a silence full of meaning (*Colonus*) that pacts are sealed - in a silence which is dramatized before the very eyes of the spectators, as a poetical language.