

GIFTS OF FIRE

—

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROMETHEAN MYTH  
FOR THE LIGHT IT CASTS ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL PHILANTHROPY  
OF PROTAGORAS, SOCRATES AND PLATO;  
AND *PROLEGOMENA* TO CONSIDERATION OF THE SAME  
IN BACON AND NIETZSCHE

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## ABSTRACT

Marty James John Šulek

## GIFTS OF FIRE

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The history of Western civilisation is generally demarcated into three broad epochs: ancient, Christian and modern. These eras are usually defined in political terms, but they may also be differentiated in terms of fundamental differences in the nature of the organisations that constitute civil society in each age, how they defined the public good, and even what they consider philanthropic. In the nineteenth century, for instance, 'Scientific philanthropy' displaced 'Christian charity' as the dominant model for charitable giving; a development accompanied by a number of other secularising trends in Western civil society, generally understood as a broad cultural shift in conceptions of public good, from religious to scientific. From the fourth to the sixth century CE, by comparison, another broad cultural shift, from paganism to Christianity, also led to fundamental changes in the nature and composition of ancient civil society.

A central premise of this dissertation is that fundamental historical transformations in Western civilisation – from pagan to Christian, to modern, to post-modern – may be traced to

the influence of some of the most important philosophers in the Western philosophical tradition, among them: Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, Francis Bacon and Friedrich Nietzsche. Each of these philosophers may be seen to have promulgated their teachings in a consciously Promethean manner; as gifts of fire, understood as philosophical teachings intended to be promulgated for the wider benefit of humankind.

In Greek myth, Prometheus, whose name is traditionally thought to have literally meant 'forethought', is the one who steals fire from the gods and gives it to humans. Prometheus is also the first figure in history to be described as "philanthropic" (*Prometheus Bound*, 11 & 28). Plato, Bacon and Nietzsche all employ significant variants of the Promethean *mũthos* in their philosophical works, and may be seen to personally identify with the figure of Prometheus, as an allegorical figure depicting the situation of the wise, particularly in relation to political power. This dissertation thus closely analyses the Promethean *mũthos* in order to cast light on the philosophical *philanthrōpía* and Promethean ambitions of Protagoras, Socrates and Plato, and to provide the basis for consideration of the same in Bacon and Nietzsche.

Laurence A. Lampert, Ph.D.

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# Gifts of Fire

An Historical Analysis of the Promethean Myth  
for the Light it casts on the Philosophical Philanthropy  
of Protagoras, Socrates and Plato;  
And *Prolegomena* to consideration of the same  
In Bacon and Nietzsche



***Prometheus* (c.1933) sculpture in bronze by Paul Manship (1885-1966)**  
Image from: Wikipedia Commons

In the sunken plaza in front of #30 Rockefeller Center, New York, stands a famous statue sculpted by Paul Manship that depicts Prometheus bringing to mankind the fire he has stolen from the wheel of the Sun. On the wall behind the statue is an inscription paraphrasing a passage from *Prometheus Bound* that reads:

Prometheus, teacher in every art, brought the fire  
that hath proved to mortals a means to mighty ends. (110-1)

On the opposite side of the plaza, on a stairway landing whence the statue is best viewed, is a plaque, installed in 1962, listing the moral principles to which John D. Rockefeller, Jr. personally subscribed, and that he first expressed in 1941.<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter 1 – Thesis Statement

Historians generally order the development of Western civilisation into five principal eras: the prehistoric, the Greco-Roman or ancient, the Christian, the modern, and the post-modern. While this historical framework is generally understood and accepted in terms of describing an overall sequence of large-scale political developments – such as the fall of the Western Roman Empire – it also helps order a number of other general trends in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual history of the West. The prehistoric era occurs before the advent of written history. It is an age of great heroes and fickle gods, the stories of whom were related in myths initially transmitted by a primarily oral culture. The Greco-Roman era, by contrast, marks the initial rise of a literary culture based upon the written word, and the beginning of sustained attempts to provide purely rational accounts of nature, without recourse to divine forces. It also witnesses several efforts to provide a purely rational basis for morality in order to sustain a civil society, the ethos of which had been previously nourished by the displaced mythic culture. The Christian era is generally characterised as an age of faith, as opposed to reason. It preserved some aspects of the wisdom of the ancient world; at the same time, though, its monotheistic underpinnings also closely circumscribed the pursuit of certain types of knowledge. The modern era is marked by the rebirth of a scientific understanding of the world, as exemplified by the advent of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Scientific Revolution and the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment. The essential difference between ancient and modern approaches to scientific knowledge may be summarised in terms of the empirical methodologies employed by the latter, with the overall aim of improving the lot of humankind. And the post-modern era, finally, marks the advent of a ‘crisis of objectivity’ in terms of a declining confidence in the possibility of obtaining objective knowledge in the form of universally applicable, scientific truths.

Notwithstanding the rise of various perspectival interpretations of history, understanding of the overarching development of Western civilisation, as outlined above, remains generally intact. If it is contested, it is to dispute details within this overall narrative framework, rather than challenging the validity of the framework itself. Given its ubiquity, this historical master-narrative has left a profound imprint on the historical study of voluntary association, civil society, and even what constitutes philanthropy.<sup>1</sup> The Greco-Roman era, for example, is noted

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<sup>1</sup> On the historical evolution of the last of these subjects, what constitutes philanthropy, please refer to Sulek (On the Classical Meaning of *Philanthrôpia*, 2010; On the Modern Meaning of Philanthropy, 2010).

for the predominance of the *pólis*, or city-state, as the primary locus of civic association.<sup>2</sup> In the Christian era, this role is largely pre-empted by the Church, which promoted charity as the principal pillar of morality and community life. The modern era witnesses the rise of the nation-state, along with industrial modes of production and economic modes of distribution. These developments, in turn, both gave rise to and were spurred on by a range of institutions organised along scientific lines to promote human betterment, such as: scientific societies, medical hospitals, research institutes and philanthropic foundations. Finally, the post-modern era has witnessed concerted efforts originating in civil society – such as the environmental movement, and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century revolutions in the formerly Communist east-central Europe – to address the manifold problems that have arisen from the latent anthropocentric and totalitarian impulses of modern technological science.

While the intellectual history of the West and its impact on the development of civil society are somewhat beyond dispute, the role that philosophers and philosophy have played in spurring this development are rather more contested. More often than not, historical developments are described as having originated in various impersonal material, political, economic, social and/or cultural forces, rather than in the power of the thoughts of highly gifted and influential thinkers. What I seek to demonstrate in this dissertation is that a comprehensive understanding of the thought of some of the key figures in the intellectual history of Western philosophy can grant a privileged insight into the West's larger cultural, spiritual, moral, civic and political developments. Likewise, major transitions in the historical ages described above – from pre-historical to ancient, Christian, modern and post-modern – can be understood as originating in ideas originally expressed by key philosophers with a particularly attenuated sense of 'philosophical philanthropy' (or philanthropic philosophy). As will be illustrated below, as the gifts of these philosophers' teachings were absorbed into the larger culture, they spurred critical revaluations of previous underlying assumptions regarding the nature of the public good. In the process, the virtues and values held most dear by those cultures were transformed in such a way as to eventually alter the institutional make-up of civil society, thereby ushering in a new era in the development of human civilisation.

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<sup>2</sup> As Veyne (Bread and circuses: Historical sociology and political pluralism, 1990) argues, even after the Greek and Roman civilisations became empires, the *pólis* remained the primary locus of political life for the vast majority of Greco-Roman citizens. This view is also supported by both Plato and Aristotle's focus on the *pólis* as the primary unit of political life in their primary political works, *Politéia* and *Politiká*. The central importance of the *pólis* to the attainment of the good life is also reflected in Aristotle's other works on politics and ethics (Sulek, Civil Society Theory: Aristotle, 2010).

As indicated by the title of this dissertation, it will focus on an examination of three of the most influential philosophers in classical Greece: Protagoras (c.390-420 BCE), Socrates (469-399), Plato (428-347 BCE). As well, this investigation will provide the basis from which to properly consider the philosophical philanthropy of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900); respectively, the primary instigators of the modern and post-modern revolutions in Western thought. These philosophers have been selected for examination in particular because, to the mind of this author at least, they are the highest exemplars of philosophical philanthropy. For each has left posterity with highly novel and compelling accounts of how things are, and, in the process, have bestowed invaluable teachings that have instructed humanity how to better interpret the world in which we live. In this way, these philosophers have played pivotal roles in bringing about sea-changes in the nature of human understanding, society and civilisation. Protagoras, as a harbinger of the Greek Enlightenment, exposed Athenians to the considerable advances made by Ionian natural science. Socrates, on the other hand, turned the attention of philosophy from physical nature to investigations into human nature, and how to remedy what ails it. Picking up where Socrates left off, Plato laid the intellectual foundations of Western philosophy with metaphysical teachings on the theory of the forms, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of a transcendent divinity that is good and just. Later, these metaphysical theories were subsumed by early Christian theology, where they went on to decisively shape the theological, moral and political foundations of the West. Bacon, by comparison, bestowed a teaching on the scientific method – generally understood as the empirical method of inductivism – which, after its refinement and application by early modern and Enlightenment thinkers, decisively brought about the advent of scientific modernity. And Nietzsche, finally, bestowed a philosophical teaching that disclosed the fundamental concepts of will to power and eternal return. While this teaching has often been cited as a harbinger of post-modern relativism, perhaps bordering on nihilism, it still provides the most coherent and appropriate response to what has been described by some scholars as the contemporary ‘crisis of objectivity’.

The broad impact that the philanthropic philosophers examined in this dissertation have had on the intellectual development of the West has also resulted in them exercising a decisive influence on the creation of new forms of public-serving institutions within Western civil society. In bringing Ionian science to Athens, it will be argued, Protagoras not only ushered in the Greek Enlightenment; new festivals were initiated, such as the Prometheia torch-race, to celebrate



wisdom and create a permanent place of honour for the wise in Athens. Socrates, by contrast, turned philosophy toward the examination of human nature, seeking a cure for its perceived moral and political ailments. In the process, he transmitted his teachings to disciples, most notably Plato, who made them a central element of the curriculum of the philosophical school he established near the Academy, just outside of Athens. The Platonic teachings promulgated by the Academy, in turn, both laid the cultural groundwork for early Christian doctrine in Hellenistic society and facilitated the acceptance of Christianity among its intellectual and political elite, thereby paving the way for its later acceptance and dissemination as the official religion of the Roman Empire. Bacon's epistemological reformation of the natural sciences with the hope of relieving man's estate, on the other hand, inspired the creation of numerous scientific societies, first and most notably the Royal Society in 1660, that gave rise to both the 17<sup>th</sup> century Scientific Revolution and the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment. The realisation of the philanthropic aims of Baconian science would define the terms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century transition from Christian charity to scientific philanthropy. And Nietzsche – well, it's probably too early to know what, exactly, his ultimate impact might be upon the development of civil society or anything else. At this point, though, it is sufficient to note how the intellectual foundations of one of the very few new types of philanthropic organisation to enter the American taxonomy of tax-exempt organisations in the past one hundred years – namely, the environmental or ecology movement – closely follows Nietzsche's injunction to live according to nature.

In bestowing teachings that have transformed human existence, the philosophers examined in this dissertation may be shown to have acted in a manner highly reminiscent of the original philanthropist, the Titan Prometheus. In *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus is the Titan who gave humanity fire, a gift that went on to become its 'great resource' and 'teacher in every art' (110; cf. 460-1 & 465). Drawing such an analogy is by no means a stretch, for each of the philosophers examined here may be seen to intimately identify with the character of Prometheus. All explicitly reference the Promethean myth and employ blatantly Promethean imagery at key junctures in either their extant writings, or depictions of their thought. Plato depicts Protagoras presenting a display speech that tells a Promethean *mūthos*<sup>3</sup> in the dialogue named for the great sophist (320c-324d). In that same dialogue, Socrates declares that he takes Promethean

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<sup>3</sup> I use the transliterated Greek term *mūthos* throughout this dissertation when referring to the concept of 'myth' as the Greeks understood it, as an alternative and in many ways superior form of conveying wisdom, compared to that expressed in *lógos*. This is to distinguish it from the modern understanding of 'myth' as an untrue story.

forethought for his own life (361d, cf. *Crito* 45a). Bacon also relates a highly particular version of the Promethean myth that holds significant implications for interpreting the meaning of his writings more directly concerned with science (*Of the Wisdom of the Ancients*, ch. 26). And Nietzsche, finally, was strongly influenced as a young man by Goethe's dramatic monologue, *Prometheus*, and was even moved to composed a Prometheus poem of his own. Later in his career, Nietzsche also depicts his mythic alter-ego, Zarathustra, as an archetypically Promethean figure with direct references to Goethe's poem (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, part III, § 11).

The philosophers examined in this dissertation are also rather unique in the Western tradition of philosophy in how they express crucial aspects of their philosophy poetically, including the use of *mūthos*. This is highly unusual, given that philosophy is often defined in counter-distinction to *mūthos*, in terms of *lógos*. This raises the questions: why do these philosophers employ *mūthos*? and what does it signify in terms of understanding their larger philosophical projects? The philosophical use of *mūthos* may be seen to perform two main functions: to facilitate pedagogical instruction; and to hide or obscure certain truths. As Bacon observes:

Parables have been used in two ways, and (which is strange) for contrary purposes. For they serve to disguise and veil the meaning, and they serve also to clear and throw light upon it. . . I mean the employment of parables as a method of teaching, whereby inventions that are new and abstruse and remote from vulgar opinions may find an easier passage to the understanding.

Preface to *Of the Wisdom of the Ancients*

The political challenges under which philosophers have laboured has often dictated how they express their ideas. Because heterodox ideas, particularly those of far-reaching significance, have the potential for upsetting the existing political order, their open expression would result in persecution. For this reason, philosophers have frequently found it expedient to hide the potentially subversive 'true' meaning of their teachings behind a more apparent meaning congenial to conventional opinions held by the powers that be. At the same time, the very nature of the truths that philosophers attempt to convey often requires them to express their teachings in oblique ways that spur the students of their thought to greater exertions by making them, in a sense, co-investigators. In both cases – the need for political protection and pedagogic intent – the great philosophers have often found it congenial to express their ideas in a more indirect and obscure manner. This insight is the genesis of the essential distinction

drawn by Leo Strauss, between an exoteric teaching available to everyone, and an esoteric teaching limited to the few (Persecution and the Art of Writing, 1988). But how does one esoterically express an idea in writing? If anyone can read what is written, writing techniques must be devised and employed that make the expression of ideas obscure to those who read them without proper warrant, and yet leave them clear enough to lure the initiated into uncovering their deeper levels of meaning. One of the more significant esoteric writing techniques employed by the great philosophers, inherited from the great poets, is the art of *mūthos*.

The respective contributions made by Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, Bacon and Nietzsche to the intellectual traditions of the West are practically undeniable, as are the pivotal role these traditions have played in shaping the institutions of Western civil society. Each of these great thinkers may be said to have accomplished nothing less than ushering in a new epoch in human history. In many important respects, Protagoras ushered in a flowering of learning known as the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek Enlightenment; Plato's expression of Socratic philosophy paved the way for the monotheism of the Christian era; Bacon's philosophy spurred the development of empirical science in the early modern era; and Nietzsche's critique of modernity has brought about the advent of post-modernity. Together, these various advances in human understanding and civilisation may be said to constitute the 'philosophical philanthropy' of these three philosophers. What is most interesting, though, is that each of these thinkers (with the possible exception of Protagoras) would seem to have been entirely aware of the impact their teachings would have on future generations. Indeed, they may be seen to have extensively planned for this advent in how they went about organising and presenting their ideas, including through the use of *mūthos*. In so doing, they may be said to have acted in a highly Promethean manner; which is to say, with foresight and cunning. This approach was entirely necessary and appropriate, considering that they weren't only attempting to establish a new order; they were also attempting to overthrow an old order that had become dysfunctional in their provision of the means for human flourishing, as well as misanthropic and hostile toward divergent points of view.

Despite the significance to human history of the teachings bestowed by the great philosophers, though, the most crucial aspects of their thought remain relatively obscure to contemporary thinkers. Modern critics, accustomed to interpreting merely the surface of the text, have tended to ascribe to them a simplicity of understanding that would have made them

blush. Thus, Protagoras is credited with having introduced the pursuit of natural science to Athens, but is often dismissed as a mere sophist. Socrates and Plato are lauded for having laid the foundations of Western philosophy, but are castigated as naïve for apparently subscribing to a metaphysical theory that is not only unprovable, but is even demonstrably false. Bacon is credited with having planted the seeds of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, but is dismissed as irrelevant to the contemporary understanding of science due to the demonstrably erroneous assumptions of his inductive method. And Nietzsche, finally, is praised for his unflinching honesty in addressing the implications of certain 'dangerous truths', but is lambasted for having brought about the advent of moral relativism, if not outright nihilism, by demolishing the epistemological basis for both objective scientific knowledge and traditional religious belief, and not providing a viable alternative. Not only is the relevance of these philosophers often dismissed on the basis a superficial reading of their works, the conflicting views among them (as to what constitutes the proper foundation for knowledge, or what is best for humanity, for instance) is sometimes cited as evidence that there is no agreement even among the greatest minds on fundamental matters, and that the thoughts of even these greatest of thinkers are historically conditioned, just like everyone else. What I endeavour to show in this dissertation is: that there is a deeper level of agreement among these three great thinkers that is trans-historical; that these deeper aspects of their thought are pertinent to the problems of contemporary understanding; and that this deeper level of agreement is intimately linked to their Promethean mythologising and self-identification, and their resulting sense of philosophical philanthropy.

## Endnotes to Chapter 1

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<sup>1</sup> "I believe in the supreme worth of the individual and in his right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.  
I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.  
I believe that the law was made for man and not man for the law; that government is the servant of the people and not their master.  
I believe in the Dignity of labour, whether with head or hand; that the world owes no man a living but that it owes every man an opportunity to make a living.  
I believe that thrift is essential to well ordered living and that economy is a prime requisite of a sound financial structure, whether in government, business or personal affairs.  
I believe that truth and justice are fundamental to an enduring social order.  
I believe in the sacredness of a promise, that a man's word should be as good as his bond; that character not wealth or power or position - is of supreme worth.  
I believe that the rendering of useful service is the common duty of mankind and that only in the purifying fire of sacrifice is the dross of selfishness consumed and the greatness of the human soul set free.  
I believe in an all-wise and all-loving God, named by whatever name, and that the individuals highest fulfillment, greatest happiness, and widest usefulness are to be found in living in harmony with His Will.  
I believe that love is the greatest thing in the world; that it alone can overcome hate; that right can and will triumph over might."

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1941)

# Gifts of Fire

## Part I

### Hesiod and the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus



***The Theft of Fire* (c.1878) by Christian Griepenkerl (1839-1912)**

Image source: Hellenica website at [www.mlahanas.de](http://www.mlahanas.de)

Prometheus steals fire from Zeus, sleeping with the Trojan prince, Ganymede, by his side. Prometheus presumably lights a narthex, or giant fennel stalk. An eagle lurks in the background, both an evocation of the guise in which Zeus abducted Ganymede, and a portent of Prometheus' future punishment.

## Chapter 2 – Preliminary Issues Regarding the Archaic Prometheus

PROMETHEUS – Προμηθεύς, 'the forethinker'; all other etymologies of his name are merely fantastic;

Herbert Jennings Rose, Charles Martin Robertson, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1979)

Before examining how the Promethean myth is treated in the *Prometheia* trilogy, and analysing its significance for interpreting Plato's philosophical project, it is necessary to first closely examine the historical development of the myth prior to the classical age. This investigation is made necessary, in part, by the many errors of some of the most commonly held scholarly assumptions about the archaic Promethean myth. These include erroneous assumptions about the myth's linguistic and historical origins, the significance of some of its more eccentric variants, and the nature of the authorship of the two most important ancient Greek literary source texts containing the Promethean myth – the works of Hesiod and *Prometheus Bound* – as well as the date in which these works were composed.

Regarding the cultural and historical origins of the Promethean myth, there has been a long and troubled debate over whether or not it originates in Indo-European myth. This hypothesis was originally advanced by Roth (1855), who first drew parallels between Prometheus and Mātariśvan in Vedic mythology. The significance of this parallel was further elaborated upon by the philological analysis of Kuhn (1859), who pointed out etymological cognates to Prometheus in Sanskrit literature. Initially, Kuhn's analysis enjoyed wide support from scholars, among them Cox (1870, pp. 421 & 433, n. 2), Steinthal (1877), and Friedrich Max Müller, (1889, pp. 452-3) (1897, pp. 810-813). Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though, the philological formulations Kuhn employed were called into serious question by linguistic scholars such as Bapp (1896, p. 6) and Macdonell (1897, p. 91). The hypothesis that Prometheus was of Indo-European origin consequently fell into considerable disrepute among classical scholars, such as Sikes (1906, p. xiii) and Seymour (1907, pp. 41-2). The current scholarly consensus against the hypothesis that there was an Indo-European Proto-Prometheus is largely dismissive, and aptly reflected in the quotation that opens this chapter, by Robinson and Rose, who assert that Prometheus simply means "the forethinker," and that "all other etymologies of his name are merely fantastic;" (Prometheus, 1979 [1st publ. 1970]). So far into disrepute has the Indo-European hypothesis on the origin of the Prometheus myth fallen, in fact, that even scholars who know of it tend to avoid the subject altogether, and only very rarely and reluctantly engage it. Nevertheless, the

research conducted by Indo-European linguists over the 20<sup>th</sup> century now allows for a serious reappraisal of the validity of the hypothesis initially advanced by Roth and Kuhn: that the Promethean myth is, at root, essentially Indo-European in origin.

Determining the validity of the hypothesis positing the Indo-European origin of the Promethean myth is important to the subject of this dissertation on a number of levels. Nietzsche was strongly influenced by Kuhn as a student, and specifically adopts the Indo-European hypothesis in his own analysis of the Promethean myth in his first published book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. In section 9 of that work, Nietzsche not only asserts that the Promethean myth is of Indo-European origin, he maintains that it constitutes one of the core myths of that cultural tradition, and stands at the same level of importance to Indo-European myth as the Genesis myth of creation stands to the *Old Testament*. Nietzsche goes on to characterize the Promethean myth as essentially masculine and based on active transgression; whereas the Semitic myth of creation he characterises as essentially feminine and based on passive sin. He thus views the Promethean myth as providing nothing less than an alternative basis for a more vital form of morality, as an alternative to the predominant Christian form, which he critiques as having become sickly and degenerate. A new morality founded upon such an Indo-European mythic base would, to Nietzsche's mind, both reflect its more refined sense of the tragic aspects of life, and hold up active transgression as the decisive force in the advancement of human culture.

The Indo-European hypothesis for the origin of the Prometheus myth thus presents an important key for interpreting the philanthropic ambitions of Nietzsche's philosophical project, as well his understanding of the development of Greek myth generally. With the hypothesis of an Indo-European Proto-Prometheus having fallen into such disrepute, though, Nietzsche is sometimes criticized for having based his analysis of the Promethean myth on "philological comparisons long since discarded as specious." (Lincoln, 1987, p. 64). Lincoln even goes so far as to cite Nietzsche's endorsement of the "Aryan origins" of the Promethean myth as evidence of his latent anti-Semitism, and even proto-Nazism. In order to set the record straight, then, it is necessary to fundamentally re-examine the validity of the hypothesis that the Promethean myth is essentially Indo-European in origin. This investigation is necessary both to determine whether or not Nietzsche is justified in designating the Promethean myth as Indo-European, and, if he is, to better establish the philosophical significance of his references to the Promethean myth in his writings.



(Re-)establishing the validity of the hypothesis that the Promethean myth is Indo-European in origin also provides a powerful tool for better analysing its historical development. To begin with, it allows one to determine which elements of a particular version of the myth constitute its original, Indo-European core, and which are later accretions. This analysis provides an important tool for interpreting Bacon, who employs several obscure variants of the Promethean myth, including specifically Indo-European elements, in his rather eccentric re-telling and interpretation of it in *Of The Wisdom of the Ancients*. In Bacon's radical reformulation of the Promethean myth in that work, he employs a highly singular variant of it – Prometheus' solicitation of the chastity of Athena – in a particularly revealing and self-referential passage. This particular variant of the myth is found in only one extant source (a *scholia* to Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 2.1249) where it is attributed to Douris of Samos. As will be seen below, the task of corroborating the authenticity and significance of this highly singular fragment is greatly enhanced by a background knowledge of the Indo-European roots, both linguistic and mythological, of the Prometheus *mūthos*.

To recap, the interpretive hypothesis that the core elements of the Promethean *mūthos* are of essentially Indo-European origin, possesses several advantages over standard interpretations dominant during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These standard interpretations are articulate, for instance, by Find (1958, p. 52) and Wood (1966, p. 229), who view *Promêtheús* as an appellative constructed from an imported word, given the lack of other Greek words built on the root "*mêth*". According to this line of interpretation, the archaic Greeks imported this term, but then imbued *Promêtheús* with the meaning 'forethinker' stemming from a (false) folk etymology that saw it as cognate with *manthánô*, 'to learn'. The weakness of this interpretation, as will be seen, is that if Prometheus was applied to him as an appellative, one would think that he would better embody the quality of forethought. Instead, quite the opposite is true: through his several transgressions, Prometheus brings down divine retribution on both himself and Man. As will be seen, proceeding from the premise that *Promêtheús* is an appellative formed from an Indo-European root word, *\*math*, much more closely comports with the nature of the archaic Prometheus, as fire thief, bringer of fire, and passionate suitor of Athena.

### Chapter 3 – Hesiod and the Indo-European Prometheus

Originally, the legend of Prometheus belonged to the entire community of Aryan peoples and documented their talent for the profound and the tragic; indeed, it is not unlikely that this myth is as significant for the Aryan character as the myth of the Fall is for the Semitic character, and that the relationship between the two myths is like that between brother and sister.

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, sec.9

#### A. Introduction to the Hesiodic Prometheus

The earliest extant versions of the Promethean myth in ancient Greek literature occur in the two poems considered most likely to be among the authentic works of the archaic poet, Hesiod: *Theogony*, and *Works & Days*. Modern scholars have raised many serious doubts about the life and works of Hesiod, though, including: when he lived, his temporal relationship to Homer, the authenticity of the authorship of at least one of the two major works attributed to him, and even whether Hesiod himself was an actual person, or is merely a poetic fiction. Given the importance of these questions to consideration of the Indo-European origins of Hesiod's Promethean *mūthos*, these questions are briefly addressed here. Generally speaking, I conclude that that Hesiod lived much later, but that the source material he employs is much older, than is generally presumed.

The dates assigned to Hesiod's life widely range among ancient authors. Tzetzes (c.1110-1180) assigns his flourit to 736-3 BCE (*Chiliades* 13.649), while Herodotus assigns it to sometime around 850 BCE (*Histories* 2.53); Archemachus of Euboea, by contrast, thought Hesiod to have lived sometime during the 11<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Archemachus 424 F 3). To the degree that modern scholars accept the idea that Hesiod was an actual person, the date supplied by Herodotus usually forms the starting point for assigning a date to his life. The most definitive modern analysis of the dates for Hesiod's life and works, conducted by Martin West, estimates that he lived no earlier than 750, and no later than 650 BCE (Prolegomena, 1966). West further argues that Hesiod composed *Theogony* first, sometime between 730 and 700 BCE, and *Works & Days* sometime between 730 and 690 BCE (Ibid. pp. 45-6).

Among the works attributed to Hesiod, the only one for which his authorship is undisputed is *Works & Days*. The other major work attributed to him – *Theogony* – is sometimes thought not to be an authentic work, based on the testimony supplied by his own Boeotian countrymen, as recorded by Pausanias (9.31.4). Scholars who accept this testimony, such as White (Introduction, 2002) and Lamberton (Introduction, 1993), generally assume that *Theogony* was

written after *Works & Days*, and was later attributed to him by the cult-society of poets to which he belonged. The members of this cult-society, dedicated to the Helicon muses, regularly gathered to recite their poetry at the base of Mount Helicon, near where Hesiod describes himself as having grown up: in the town of Ascra (*Works & Days* 699-710), and close to the larger city of Thespieae, in Boeotia.

It is possible to reconcile the conflicting scholarly opinions, both regarding Hesiod's authorial authenticity and the order in which he composed the two most famous poems attributed to him, if the nature of his authorship is more closely considered. If *Theogony* is understood to be a poem that heavily borrows from source material that Hesiod originally heard recited by his fellow poets at Mount Helicon, but which he later compiled, perfected, wrote down with the newly developed tool of writing, and distributed it that way in a form similar to the version we now possess, it is possible to see how his own countrymen, who knew the original oral tradition, might have had cause to deny his authorship of the poem. The rest of Greece, on the other hand, being only familiar with the written versions of Hesiod's poems, would have naturally attributed their authorship to him. In this conception, *Works & Days* would be a later, more mature and more original work of Hesiod, in which he further develops his inherited material, but into which he inserts a more distinctive voice culled from his life experience.

In terms of Hesiod's temporal relationship with Homer, most modern scholars, maintain that he lived later than the great epic poet, for example Schmitz (1967, p. 440) and Janko (1982, p. 189). However, these assertions ignore the fact that particular material elements mentioned in the works attributed to Homer are now known not to have been developed until the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century. These include: military tactics described in *Iliad* 13.126 ff. and 16.211 ff. (Snodgrass, 1964, pp. 176-82); and Odysseus' clasp as described in *Odyssey* 19.226 ff. (Lorimer, 1950, p. 511 ff.). Also, as West convincingly argues, Homer was likely not a distinct person, but was rather invented as a personality, probably sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, with his name grammatically derived from the *Homerídai*, the poetic society that recited and preserved his works ('The Invention of Homer', 1999). As Durante observes, several ancient Greek texts refer to *Homerídai* as meaning "Place of Union" ('Il nome di Omero', 1957). West further notes the existence of a cognate word in Vedic Sanskrit – *sam-aryám* – that "is used in the context of festive gathering, and, at least in some passages, refers to the priest-poets' 'meeting' in poetic competition." (1999, p. 375) Employing the comparative method of linguistic analysis best summarised by Watkins (1995), West reconstructs the unattested archaic Greek word \**όμαρος*

or \**ὄμαρις*, signifying an assembly of all the people – an event that would have presented a natural venue for poets to recite their works – an institution that "would presumably go back to the time of Graeco-Aryan unity, sometime before 2,000 BCE." (1999, p. 475)

Given the above considerations, this dissertation operates from the following assumptions regarding Hesiod's life and works: first, that he was an actual person who lived sometime between 750 and 650; second, that he is the author of both *Theogony* and *Works & Days*, although the former borrows more heavily from the Helikonian poetic tradition to which he belonged than the latter; and finally, that he composed those two poems in that order, following the dates supplied by West. Furthermore, while the composition of some parts of *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may post-date Hesiod's *flourit*, the bulk of the material they contain was composed and assembled prior to that time by another ancient society of poets collectively known as the *Homeridai*, the existence of which may be traced back through Mycenaean Greeks to the time of Graeco-Aryan unity. The poetic tradition maintained by the *Homeridai* also contrasts in interesting ways from that maintained by the poetic society dedicated to the Helikon muses; for while the former focuses almost exclusively on the Olympian gods, the latter focuses much greater attention on their Kronian precursors, the Titans.

In analysing the historical origins of Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works & Days*, the cultural sources of myths they tell may be divided into three general categories: Indo-European, Chthonic and Semitic. Indo-European elements are those derived from the linguistic inheritance of Greek culture, dating to the split of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan sometime around 2,500 BCE. Chthonic elements, on the other hand, derive from the myths of cultures who lived in the areas into which early proto-Greeks migrated; and Semitic elements, finally, derive from the Semitic-influenced cultures of the near east. In certain cases, it is also possible to further distinguish sub-categories within each of these general categories. In the case of Indo-European sources, for instance, it is sometimes possible to differentiate between elements derived from Ionian Greeks, the ancestors of whom migrated into the Greek peninsula around 2,300 BCE to become the Mycenaean, and those later brought by Dorian Greeks, who arrived in Greece sometime after 1,100 BCE. In terms of Chthonic sources, by comparison, it may be possible to identify elements absorbed from pre-existing cultures, as opposed to spontaneously arising from Greek culture as it evolved on Greek soil. And in the case of Semitic elements, finally, it may be possible to differentiate, for instance, between elements that were absorbed from Semitic sources during the Mycenaean age (c.1,600-c.1,100 BCE), and those that were absorbed

sometime toward the end of the Greek Dark Age (c.1,200-c.800 BCE), or shortly thereafter, when communications and trade ties were re-established between Greece and the Levant region of the eastern Mediterranean.

In analysing the cultural origins of the Hesiodic Promethean myth, it is useful to divide it into constituent elements. The table below arranges these elements according to their mytho-chronological sequence, along with citations of where they occur in Hesiod's two major works:

| <b>Elements of Hesiod's Promethean <i>Mūthos</i></b>                 |                 |                       |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Mythic Element</b>  | <b>Theogony</b> | <b>Works&amp;Days</b> |
| 1. Creation & Succession Myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus                 | 116-506         |                       |
| 2. Genealogy of Prometheus   | 507-520         |                       |
| 3. Negotiation at Mekone: Initiation of Sacrifice, Deception of Zeus | 535-557         |                       |
| 4. Zeus Angered & Withholds Fire from Men                            | 558-564         | 47-50                 |
| 5. Prometheus Steals Fire Back                                       | 565-570         | 50-52                 |
| 6. Hephaestus Creates Evil of Woman / Pandora                        | 571-602         | 53-82                 |
| 7. Hermes Gives Pandora to Epimetheus                                |                 | 83-89                 |
| 8. Pandora Opens Jar, Releases Evil Fates, Retains Hope              |                 | 90-105                |
| 9. Zeus Gives Men Additional Evil of Mortality                       | 602-616         |                       |
| 10. Punishment of Prometheus   | 521-5           |                       |
| 11. Heracles Kills Bird Eating Liver                                 | 526-532         |                       |
| 12. Zeus' Anger Abates   | 533-4           |                       |

Several of the elements identified above may be seen to derive from mythic traditions that originate in Semitic sources, and even their Sumerian precursors. In positing Chaos as the primal state of existence, for instance, *Theogony's* creation myth bears remarkable resemblance to the opening of *Enûma Eliš*, the Babylonian creation myth composed sometime between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, and that also forms the basis for *Genesis*. *Theogony's* Succession Myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, by comparison, "has parallels in oriental mythology which are so striking that a connexion is incontestable." (West M. L., 1997, p. 19). In particular, the castration and stone swallowing motifs in *Theogony's* succession myth bear unmistakable resemblance to succession myths that appear in two Hittite poems, *Kumarbi* and *The Song of Ullikummi*, dating from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. These Hittite poems, in turn, were largely inherited from a still older Hurrian tradition, likely dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century, and which "clearly betrays the influence of Mesopotamian culture." (West M. L., 1997, p. 105) The Genealogy of Prometheus, finally, refers to several of his relatives, some of whose names derive from Semitic sources. His father, Iapetos, for instance, likely derives from Japheth, the youngest son of Noah.

Prometheus' brother, Atlas, by comparison, also appears in *The Phoenician History of Sanchuniathon*, the original sources for which predate the Trojan War (i.e. 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE).<sup>1</sup>

As may be seen, then, significant parts of *Theogony*, particularly the opening sequences leading to its Promethean *mūthos*, contain many significant parallels to stories of creation and succession told in mythic traditions that ultimately derived from Semitic-Sumerian sources. At the same time, though, those Semitic mythic traditions contain no strong corollary to Hesiod's Prometheus. The *Phoenician History* contains a myth on the origin of fire, as does practically every human culture in the world (Frazer, 1930); however, it lacks the vital theft/transgression and punishment elements that are such readily identifiable elements of the Hesiodic Prometheus *mūthos*. Instead, it attributes the human acquisition of fire to the three mortal sons of Genos, named "Light, and Fire, and Flame" who "discovered fire from rubbing pieces of wood together, and taught the use of it." (34d) (Eusebius, 2002, p. 39). The Babylonians also had a god named Ea (derived from the even earlier Sumerian god Enki), who acted as both a benefactor of humanity and counselor to the gods. As West observes, though: "The Hesiodic Prometheus, however, shows no features that we can definitely relate to the Babylonian god." (1997, p. 295)

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<sup>1</sup> *The Phoenician History of Sanchuniathon* was initially preserved by Herennius Philo of Byblos (64-c.140 CE). The extant fragments of this work are cited by Athenaeus (fl. late 2<sup>nd</sup>, early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) in *Deipnosophists* (126a), and Porphyry (234-c.305 CE) in *De abstinentia ab esu animalium* (2.56), and at far greater length by Eusebius (c.263-c.339 CE) in *Praeparatio Evangelica* (esp. 1.9.28-2.2.52). CE). The extant fragments of this work are cited by Athenaeus (fl. late 2<sup>nd</sup>, early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) in *Deipnosophists* (126a), and Porphyry (234-c.305 CE) in *De abstinentia ab esu animalium* (2.56), and at far greater length by Eusebius (c.263-c.339 CE) in *Praeparatio Evangelica* (esp. 1.9.28-2.2.52).

## B. Parallels to the Hesiodic Prometheus in Mātariśvan of Vedic Mythology

While the Hesiodic Prometheus has no strong parallels in the Semitic mythic tradition, it does possess very strong parallels to the figure of Mātariśvan in Vedic mythology. The oldest text in Vedic Sanskrit is the *Rig-Veda*, the composition of which is thought to date to between 1700 and 1100 BCE. None of its 1,028 hymns, or *sūktas*, are directly addressed to Mātariśvan, but he is mentioned 27 times in that text, with 18 of those instances occurring within hymns addressed to the fire-god, Agni.<sup>2</sup> In the oldest of the ten books, or *mandalas*, of the *Rig-Veda* (numbers 2-7) Mātariśvan establishes Agni, who brings new prosperity (3.2.13). In the same *mandala*, Mātariśvan kindles Agni, the oblation-bearer who lies in secret, far from the Bhrgus (3.5.9-10). By friction, Mātariśvan brings forth Agni from the Gods far away (3.9.5). In one instance, Mātariśvan is mentioned merely in association with Agni (3.26.2); in another, he brings Agni from far away as the envoy of Vivasvan (6.8.4), "the first sacrificer and, as a father of Manu, the ancestor of the human race." (West M. L., 2007, p. 273) And finally, Agni is described as a Germ Celestial, formed in his Mother [*Mātāri*] as Mātariśvan, who is born diffused in varied shape, and becomes the rapid flight of wind (3.29.11).<sup>3</sup>

Even from this extremely brief survey of the Vedic Mātariśvan, several points of correspondence may be identified with the Hesiodic Prometheus. Like Prometheus, Mātariśvan establishes fire, which brings new prosperity (cf. *Works & Days* 47-5); in this task, they both fulfill the roles of a messenger who delivers fire from the far away gods. They also both play crucial roles in initiating the ritual of sacrifice to the gods through fire and burnt offerings. Mātariśvan is also closely identified with the fire-god, Agni, as is Prometheus with Hephaestus, even to the point of being interchangeable with one another.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, there are a couple of elements of the myths told about each that do not initially seem to have corollaries in

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<sup>2</sup> 1.31.3 (addressed to Agni); 1.60.1 (to Agni); 1.71.4 (to Agni); 1.93.6 (to Agni); 1.96.4 (to Agni); 1.128.2 (to Agni); 1.141.3 (to Agni); 1.143.2 (to Agni); 1.148.1 (to Agni); 1.164.46; 1.190.2; 3.2.13; 3.5.9 (to Agni); 3.5.10 (to Agni); 3.9.5 (to Agni); 3.26.2 (to Agni); 3.29.11 (to Agni); 6.8.4 (to Agni); 8.52.2; 8.96.2; 9.67.31 (to Agni); 10.46.9 (to Agni); 10.48.2; 10.85.47; 10.88.19 (to Agni); 10.105.6; 10.109.1; 10.114.1.

<sup>3</sup> This last passage is particularly significant, as it is one of the only hymns in the Rig Veda to name Mātariśvan as the wind, albeit obliquely; probably in reference to the blown air that helps ignite fire. It may thus be seen to reflect an influential early strain of the Vedic myths relating to Mātariśvan, as he becomes primarily known as a god of wind in later Vedic literature (Organ, 1974, p. 85). Even more significant, though, is the close association in this passage between Mātariśvan and Mother [*Mātāri*], which hints at a deeper etymological relationship between the two.

<sup>4</sup> Cf: Pindar, *Olympian* 31-44, and Sophocles, *Ion* 455, where Hephaestus and Prometheus respectively split open the head of Zeus, giving birth to Athena; and Scholiasts Ab on *Iliad* 14.295 and T on *Iliad* 14.296, who both name Prometheus the son of Hera, whom Homer names the mother of Hephaestus (*Iliad* 1.578, *Odyssey* 8.312).

the other. The Promethean motifs of the theft of fire and punishment are apparently missing in the stories about Mātariśvan, for instance; while the idea that Mātariśvan obtained fire from the gods by friction is a technical aspect of the Vedic myth that would seem to hold more in common with Semitic myth of the Sons of Genos. The hypothesis that Prometheus and Mātariśvan are genetically related is thus likely true, according to the mythographic evidence; however, the hypothesis is still questionable if it relies on this evidence alone. For this reason, it is necessary to buttress the argument with linguistic analysis.

Analysing linguistic evidence for the genetic link between Prometheus and Mātariśvan is here approached from three perspectives, in terms of an examination of: 1. cognate terms for Prometheus in Vedic Sanskrit; 2. the etymological origins of Prometheus as an appellative term in archaic Greek; and 3. the etymological origins of Mātariśvan in Indo-European. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Kuhn (1859) was the first to propose the existence of a genetic linguistic relationship between the Greek words from which Prometheus' name was thought to have derived, and terms in Vedic Sanskrit. Ancient linguists long thought that Prometheus derived from the Greek root word, *manthánô*,<sup>5</sup> although some modern linguists have contested the validity of this formulation. Kuhn accepts it, and goes on to relate it to the recurring Sanskrit verbs *mathnâmi* or *manthâmi* and *mathâyati*, the standard 19<sup>th</sup> century translations of which were: to agitate, to shake, to stir, to rub, or to produce by rubbing (p. 12). Kuhn also notes the frequency with which the activities of fire-making and butter churning are described by words with the Sanskrit roots *manth*, *manthana* and *manthara* (p. 13). He further observes that, in a later Vedic text – the *Kâtîya Crauta sūtra* – the drilling stick employed by Vedic fire-priests to generate the ritual flame was called a *pramantha* (p. 15).<sup>6</sup> As a result, Kuhn also comes to associate the root *manth* with the meanings "separating, ripping apart, robbings", which he further describes as a forgone meaning of the Greek word *manthánô*, but which therefore makes it appear to be "a tearing to acquire foreign knowledge [*sich reissen, sich aneignen des fremden wissens erscheint*]." (p. 16)

Based on this linguistic relation, Kuhn further hypothesises that "Prometheus is conceived from the concept of *pramatha*, to rob, [*Prometheus aus dem begriff von pramatha, raub,*

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<sup>5</sup> Liddell & Scott (1961) provide the following definitions for *manthánô*: "I. *learn, esp. by study, but also by practice* (Simon 147). II. *acquire a habit of, and in past tenses, to be accustomed to* (Emp. 17.9). III. *perceive, remark, notice*. IV. *understand*."

<sup>6</sup> The *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* is a Vedic manual composed sometime in the mid-first millennium BCE, gives detailed instructions on how to correctly perform the ritual ceremonies described in the Vedas.



*hervorgegangen ist*"]; whereby the word designating "the predatory, the robbery loving [*der räuberische, raub liebende*]" would be rendered by an unattested Sanskrit word he reconstructs as "*Pramathyus*." He then also notes, almost as an afterthought, that *pramantha*, the stick-drill employed for generating fire, also likely influenced the formation of Prometheus as an appellative, given the existence of a "Zeus Promantheus" in Lycophron (*Alexandria*, line 537). From this evidence, Kuhn asserts that Prometheus "must certainly have been perceived to be affiliated with the subsequent Sanskrit term *pramantha* [*so muss er hier jedenfalls einen an das Sanskrit pramantha sich anschliessenden begriff bezeichnet haben*]." (p. 17) Kuhn's analysis thus rests upon two linguistic parallels: a nearly identical, hypothetically reconstructed word – \**Pramathyus* – but based on the actually attested root-word *math*; and a later attested Sanskrit word, *pramantha*, itself based on the closely related root word, *manth*.

At first, Kuhn's theory as to the etymological origins of Prometheus in Vedic Sanskrit won wide acceptance among scholars such as Cox (1870, pp. 421 & 433, n. 2)<sup>7</sup> and Steintal (1877). One of his most important supporters in this regard was the renowned Sanskrit scholar, Max Müller (1823-1900), who nonetheless pointed out the tenuousness of the connection between *pramantha* ('fire-stick') and its subsequent application to Prometheus, "the wisest of the sons of the Titans" (1889, pp. 452-3). In a later work, though, Müller presents a more extended defense of the Prometheus-Pramanthu formulation, noting their mutual connection to the Sanskrit verbs *manth* and *math* (1897, pp. 810-813). Even Müller's arch-rival, the prolific Scottish mythographer and anthropologist, Andrew Lang (1844-1912), initially hailed Kuhn's book as "epoch-making" (1887, pp. 26, n. 1). He even describes Kuhn's philological formulations with respect to the Promethean myth, including the conjecture that the formation of Prometheus was influenced by *pramantha*, as "ingenious and plausible" (Lang, Prometheus, 1892), although it's quite easy to read irony into his praise. And, indeed, when prominent Sanskrit linguists, such as Macdonell, began calling Kuhn's formulations into question, Lang was more than happy to publicize the event (1897), and did not even find it necessary to withdraw his earlier words of praise.

In his landmark work on Vedic mythology, Macdonell notes that *pramantha* first occurs in a late metrical *Smṛti* work, the *Karmapradīpa*, and argues that it has been connected with

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<sup>7</sup> Cox writes: "Thus, with the exception of Agni, all the names of the fire and the fire-god were carried away by the Western Aryans: and we have Prometheus answering to Pramantha, Phorōneus to Bhuranyu, and the Latin Vulcanus to the Skr. Ulkah, a firebrand, a word used in connection with the flames or sparks of Agni."

Prometheus only owing to a superficial resemblance. He further observes that Prometheus has "every appearance of being a purely Greek formation, which the Indian verb *math*, to twirl, is found compounded only with *nis*, never with *pra*, to express the act of producing fire by friction." (1897, p. 91) Karl Bapp arrives at a very similar conclusion (1896, p. 6). As a result, a consensus formed among classical scholars that "many of the philological 'equations' proposed by Kuhn, Max Müller and their followers," including "the equation *pramanthas* = *Prometheus*", were "based on assumed linguistic evidence." As a result, consensus moved back to thinking that Prometheus meant 'Forethinker' to the Greeks from the beginning (Sikes, 1906, p. xiii). This contemporary scholarly consensus is reflected, for instance, in the Oxford Classical Dictionary (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) entry for Prometheus, which opens with the assertion that Prometheus simply means "the forethinker," and that "all other etymologies of his name are merely fantastic;" (Robinson, 1979 [1st publ. 1970]). As a result, the question of the Indo-European origins of Prometheus has been virtually ignored by 20<sup>th</sup> century classical scholarship, and is even denied by prominent Indo-European scholars, such as Mallory (1997) and Lincoln (1987). Nevertheless, research conducted by some Greek and Sanskrit scholars over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century allows for a serious reappraisal of the hypothesis that Prometheus is, indeed, of Indo-European origin.

One of the more important studies contributing to the reevaluation of this hypothesis is contained in a monograph by Johanna Narten on the Vedic verb *ma(n)th*. This study accomplishes three tasks; first, it establishes the existence of slightly differing, but nevertheless distinct, shades of meaning imputed to words constructed from the root words *math* versus *manth*; second, it establishes the validity of assuming the existence of the formation *pra-math* in early Vedic Sanskrit; and third, it (re-)establishes a philological connection between *math* and *Mātariśvan*. In drawing a distinction between *math* and *manth*, Narten demonstrates how the latter is better understood as meaning "to whip" an object by rapidly twirling, spinning or rotating it. This rotary motion is naturally associated with the activities of churning butter and starting a fire by means of drill-sticks specifically designed for such purposes, as also noted by Kuhn. It also carries a sexual connotation, as does *math*, likely given the similarity of the movements involved: with *math* meaning to rub something with a vigorous back and forth motion, and *manth* meaning to drill into something. As the primary verb for describing the act of causing this spinning motion, *manth* thus also naturally provided the etymological base for naming the fire-making tool that made this motion, namely the *pramantha*. Regarding the meaning of *math*, on the other hand, Narten demonstrates how this word makes better sense in

many of the contexts in which it occurs in Vedic literature, often as the root of a compound word, if it is also understood as expressing the actions "to snatch away from, to lay a hold of, to rob, to steal, to rape" (Narten, 1960, pp. 121-2).

Regarding the validity of positing the existence of *pra-math* as a verbal construct in early Sanskrit, Narten identifies the earliest historical use in Vedic literature of the preposition *pra* (connoting direction of force) in combination with *math* (1960, pp. 129-130). This compound form – *pra-math* – occurs in a number of early Vedic texts, the earliest of which is the *Atharvaveda* (29.40.2). The composition of the *Atharvaveda* is variously attributed to the three main orders of Vedic fire-priests: the Atharvanas, the Angirasa, and the Bhrgu. This central Vedic text, sometimes referred to as the 'fourth Veda,'<sup>8</sup> is generally thought, based on linguistic evidence, to have been composed sometime at the very end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. This dating is strengthened by the fact that the *Atharvaveda* is the earliest Sanskrit text to mention iron [*śyāma ayas*, i.e. 'black metal']. The Indian Iron Age is thought to have begun in earnest in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE, although archeologists have found iron implements in the Indian subcontinent that date to as early as 1800 BCE. The existence of the Sanskrit word *pra-math* in this work alone effectively neutralises MacDonnell's critique of Kuhn's Indo-European Proto-Prometheus on the basis that the preposition *pra* in combination with the verb *ma(n)th* is a relatively late word formation in Sanskrit (1897, p. 91). With respect to the meaning of *pra-math*, Narten primarily defines it in terms of indicating directional movement, in the sense of "gone with oneself [*mit sich fort-*], to fore-mark [*voranreissen*], to rob away [*hinwegrauben*]" (1960, pp. 129-130).

In terms of the link between *math* and Mātariśvan, finally, Narten points out how frequently the occurrences of *math* in the *Rig-Veda* "largely have Matarisvan as a subject" (Narten, 1960, p. 132). Compound words based upon the Sanskrit word *math* occur 32 times in the *Rig-Veda*; and those based upon *manth* 17 times. None of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* are directly addressed to Mātariśvan, but of the 27 times he is mentioned in that text, he is closely associated with *math* and its various cognates six times (1.71.4, 1.93.6, 1.93.6, 1.141.3, 1.148.1, 3.9.5). As well, *math* and its various cognates also frequently occur in association with Agni (1.127.11, 3.23.1-2, 3.29.12, 8.73.4), as well as the various orders of Vedic fire-priests: the Bhrgu's (1.127.7) and the Angirases (5.11.6). One of the more prominent theories as to the origin of the name Mātariśvan

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<sup>8</sup> The other three being the Rigveda, the Yajurveda and the Samaveda, respectively the oldest texts in Vedic Sanskrit.

is that it grew out of the Sanskrit word for mother [*mātā*], and that its original literal meaning was probably "growing in his mother" (Macdonell, 1897, p. 72). Another theory argues that Mātariśvan was derived from the (reconstructed) Indo-Iranian word for fire: *\*atar* (Insler, June, 1985). As Watkins also notes, the addition of 'm' to this word may well have caused the deformation of the 't' to form the Indo-European word *\*math* (1995, p. 256).

The competing theories linking Mātariśvan to the Sanskrit words *math*, *mātā* and *\*atar* may be reconciled somewhat by supposing them all to have derived from the common Sanskrit root 'mā-', which means "to make, produce, create" (Burrow, 1980) as well as "to measure" (s.v. Mother, 1911). In this conception, Mātariśvan may be interpreted as a composite word formed from the locative Sanskrit word for 'mother' (*mātari*), itself derived from the Indo-European word *\*mā-* ('to create'), perhaps also combined with the Indo-European word for 'fire' (*\*atar*), and the addition of the root *śvi*, meaning 'to grow or swell.' Given these considerations, it is reasonable to assume that Mātariśvan and *math* are, in fact, cognate terms derived from a common Indo-European root *\*ma*. The etymological relationship between *math* and Mātariśvan is particularly significant, as Watkins points out, for it establishes "that the Mātariśvan-Prometheus myth, long assumed to be cognate and inherited in Greek and Indic (Kuhn [1859], Charpentier [1911]), agree also in the motif of the **theft** of fire." (1995, p. 256)

Regarding the etymological origins of Prometheus as an appellative in archaic Greek, significant advances have also been made by 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars. One of the first scholars to trace its development as a word in detail is Gerhard Fink, who argues that "at first *promatheús* was used as an appellative (as by Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 85ff.), from which the adjective *promêthês* evolved"; and that from this initial base the noun form, *promêtheia*, was subsequently derived (1958, p. 52). A weakness of Fink's analysis, though, is that he does not appear to have considered the evidence found in fragmentary texts. This problem was later addressed by Wood, although he still proceeds from the same basic assumption as Fink, that 'Prometheus' is an appellative of non-Indo-European origin, given the absence of attestations of the root word *\*mêth* in ancient Greek (1966, p. 229).

Henry Wood argues that the process of "grammatical paronomasia" away from Prometheus as an appellative began with the formation of the feminine form in Alcman (Fr. 64),<sup>9</sup> where the

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<sup>9</sup> Alcman's fragment 64 is cited by Plutarch in *On the Fortune of the Romans*, 4.318a, where he writes: "For Fortune is not 'inflexible', as Pindar has it, nor 'plying a double steering paddle'; rather she is Sister of Good Order (*Eunomia*) and Persuasion and daughter of Foresight [*Promathêas*], As in Alcman's account of her lineage." trans. Campbell (1991, p. 49)

"noun *Prometheia* [...] wavers between allegorical goddess and conceptual abstraction," and that it was then "used as an abstraction" by Xenophanes (Fr. 1)<sup>10</sup> and Pindar (*Isthmean Ode* 1.40 & *Nemean Ode* 11.45). The verb form, Wood argues, was an "Ionic development [...] of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, [...] and last of all the adjective was formed, probably in Athens by an early Sophist as a purely abstract formation." (1966, pp. 231-3) On the basis of this assumed pattern of development, Wood declares the occurrence of the verb form, *promêthesai*, in fragment 106 of Archilochus (c.680-c.645 BCE) "to be indisputable evidence of the inauthenticity of the fragment." (1966, p. 228) Instead, he assigns the date of composition of this fragmentary poem to the Hellenistic age, and probably no earlier than the papyrus upon which it was found, which dates to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.

The assessments of Fink and Wood are challenged by Volkmar Schmidt, though, who points to the limitations of the underlying assumption of their studies: namely, that the chronological sequence in which the grammatical forms of a word occur in extant texts provides an accurate picture of its overall historical development. Instead, Schmidt proceeds from the hypothesis that Prometheus, as an appellative, was itself formed from out of previous, unattested word formations in archaic Greek. In particular, he points to the aorist verb tense *matheĩn*, which was most likely derived from the unattested words *\*mãthos* and *\*mêthos*, given the resemblance to parallel developments in word groups with the same structure, such as: *latheĩn*, *lãthos*, *álêthês*; and *àdeĩn*, *êdos*, *áêdês* (1975, p. 186). From this and related considerations, Schmidt not only dismisses the assumption that the verb form *promêtheĩsthai* is a late word formation; he further concludes that Archilochus' use of the word actually provides indirect evidence for the existence of a pre-historical, unattested word – *\*promãthêsĩomai* – as well as its rarely attested root-word, *promãthês* (1975, p. 190).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Xenophanes' fragment 1 is quoted by Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists [Scholars at Dinner]* 11.462c, where he writes:

"Praise the man who when he has taken drink brings noble deeds to light,  
as memory and a striving for virtue bring to him.  
He deals neither with the battles of Titans nor Giants  
nor Centaurs, fictions of old,  
nor furious conflicts – for there is no use in these."

But it is good always to hold the gods in high regard [*promêtheiẽn*]." Trans. Lesher (1992, pp. 11-12)

<sup>11</sup> As far as this author is able to find, *promãthês* (from *promanthãnõ*, learn beforehand; in aorist *proũmathon*) is attested by only one ancient Greek author: Hephaestion the Astrologer (4<sup>th</sup> century CE) in *Apotelesmatica* (Fortune-telling). There, it is employed in what appears to be a stock phrase repeated three times in the work: *èpisképtou dè kai tẽn selênên pôs keĩtai ina èk pántõn tò àlêthês promãthês* 'But you see afterward how the moon places from where out of everything that truth is learned beforehand' (trans. by author), (Hephaestio, Hephaestionis Thebani Apotelesmaticorum libri tres, vol. 1, 1973, p. 278)

| <b>Schmidt's Reconstruction of the Archaic Greek words *<i>māthos</i> and *<i>mêthos</i></b> |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Word Form  | Verb (aor inf act)                            | Noun (sg neut acc, nom, voc)                 | Adjective                               |
| Words built on root ' <i>lath</i> '  | <i>latheĩn</i><br>(to escape notice)          | <i>lāthos</i><br>(an escape from detection)  | <i>álêthês</i><br>(unconcealed)         |
| Words built on root ' <i>ad</i> '  | <i>àdeĩn</i><br>(to please, delight, gratify) | <i>êdos</i><br>(delight, pleasure)           | <i>áêdês</i><br>(distasteful, nauseous) |
| Words built on root ' <i>math</i> '  | <i>matheĩn</i><br>(to learn)                  | * <i>māthos</i><br>(*that which is learned?) | * <i>mêthos</i><br>(*learnable?)        |

Schmidt's findings hold a couple of important implications for establishing a more solid etymological link between Mātariśvan and Prometheus. To begin with, he shows the Doric word 'Promatheus' to be a more archaic form than its Ionic equivalent, 'Prometheus.' The Dorian Greeks are generally thought to have migrated into and/or invaded the Greek peninsula from somewhere in east-central Europe sometime shortly after the collapse of Mycenaean civilisation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Given their relatively late arrival of in Greece proper, it is reasonable to assume that the dialect of the Dorian Greeks preserved word forms closer to the original Indo-European than that of the Ionians, whose first Indo-European ancestors migrated into Greece sometime during the 24<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Schmidt's analysis demonstrates this assumption – that Dorian Greek preserves a more archaic form of the appellative Prometheus – to be essentially correct. The fact that the Dorians preserved a more archaic Indo-European word form for Prometheus lends credence to the idea that they also transmitted the Indo-European elements of the Promethean *mūthos*. This conjecture is also supported by the utter lack of any mention of Prometheus in Homer, whose source material primarily derived from Ionian poetic traditions. It therefore seems likely that the Promethean *mūthos* as it appears in Hesiod was originally transmitted to Greece by Dorians during the Greek Dark Age (c.1200-800 BCE).

Schmidt's findings of the unattested, but plausibly reconstructed, etymological origins of Prometheus in archaic Greek also further strengthen the linguistic connection between Prometheus and related terms in Vedic Sanskrit; a point only tentatively advanced by Narten, who wrote before Schmidt's findings were published. In a footnote(!) to the conclusion of her

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(Hephaestio, Hephaestionis Thebani Apotelesmaticorum libri tres, vol. 2, 1973, pp. 123, 304). The repetition of this phrase would seem to indicate it was a ritual form, and therefore likely of greater antiquity than the date of composition of the text.

analysis of the Vedic verb *math*, Narten, invoking the work of Kuhn, cautiously reasserts the existence of a genetic linguistic relationship between Mātariśvan and Prometheus:

Perhaps in light of the striking phonic similarity of the Greek *promêtheús* with ai. (*pra-*) *math* "to rob" one could point out with great caution to the possibility, which Kuhn in *The descent of the Fire*, p. 17 (= *Mythol. Stud.*, p. 18) has already pointed to, based on his correct assessment of its meaning, that the Greek name meant perhaps originally „thief" (robber) and that this meaning was lost for obvious reasons (since there is no trace of the verb that can be found in Greek), and was attached subsequently to the more common meaning of *promêthês* as "caring for the future". (Narten, 1960, p. 135)

Narten's tentative assertion gains additional credence from Schmidt's analysis, as the archaic Doric Greek root word from which he determined Prometheus to have been derived – *promāthês* – is even closer in form to the Sanskrit word *pra-math* than the Greek word form Narten employs as the basis for her philological comparison: i.e. *promêthês/promêtheús*. The only weakness identified in this formulation is the long vowel in the second syllable of *promêtheús* (West M. L., 2007, p. 273). Durante, though, also notes the existence of a later Sanskrit noun with a long vowel – *pramātha* – meaning 'seizing, violent abduction' (1976, p. 57 f.). In any case, the Sanskrit *pramath* is already so close to the Doric Greek *promāthês* as to approach an identity. Given this evidence, plus the endorsement of West (Ibid.) and Watkins (1995, p. 256), two of the pre-eminent living authorities in the respective fields of classics and Indo-European linguistics, the existence of a genetic relationship between Mātariśvan and Prometheus becomes about as certain as any conclusion can possibly be within the field of comparative linguistics.

Positively establishing the genetic linguistic relation between Prometheus to Mātariśvan grants much greater insight into the Promethean myth than standard accounts, that see it as a purely Greek formation. The link to Vedic *mūthos* allows for plausibly positing the historical existence of a proto-Promethean Indo-European figure dating to at least 2,500 BCE, the last point of Greaco-Aryan unity. This extends the history of the Promethean *mūthos* to 1,800 years before its earliest attestation in Hesiod. The association of Prometheus with the Sanskrit word *math* also grants much greater insight into the original nature of Prometheus than etymologies that proceed from the assumption that his name is of non-Greek derivation, and/or derives from folk-etymologies that simply derived it from *manthánô* and interpreted it as 'forethought.' For if Prometheus really did originally mean 'forethought,' and this appellative is specifically applied to describe his nature, one would expect him to more clearly manifest this quality than he in fact

does in the earliest stories told about him in Hesiod. Instead, the Hesiodic Prometheus demonstrates a manifest *lack* of forethought. In the end, his schemes to trick and steal in order to subvert the will of Zeus bring about nothing less than the fall of humankind from its golden age, as well as Prometheus' own painful and interminable punishment: left ineluctably bound, with a long-winged bird daily feasting on his liver. Rather than reflecting forethought, these actions much better fit the profile of the hypothetical, Indo-European proto-Prometheus, here revealed as a clever fire-priest and a founding figure of the ritual worship of the gods, the pre-moral nature of whom may be inferred from the etymology of *pra-math-yus* in Vedic Sanskrit, as one who loves to generate things through various forms of occasionally predatory behavior: snatching, grasping, robbing, rubbing, raping, agitating, separating and/or individuating.

Establishing the etymological base of Prometheus grants much greater insight into the nature of the original Indo-European proto-Prometheus. It helps establish, for instance, the existence of correspondences between the Mātariśvan and Prometheus *mūthoi* previously thought lacking, including the important 'motifemes' of rubbing to generate fire in Vedic myth, and the theft of fire by Prometheus in Greek myth. For the very meaning of the primary root word upon which Prometheus was constructed – the Indo-European word *\*math* – itself encompassed the actions of both rubbing to generate fire, and stealing something by quickly snatching and grabbing a hold of it. *\*Math* is also likely cognate with earlier Indo-European words *\*mā* (to make) and *\*atar* (fire), both of which were likely employed to construct Mātariśvan as an epithet. Viewed in this light, Hesiod's depiction of Zeus depriving men of fire and Prometheus stealing it back may be plausibly interpreted as a mythic representation of a fundamental transition the ancient Greeks understood to have occurred in man's historical relationship with fire: from the tenuous possession of naturally occurring, god-given fire, such as that generated by lightning strikes, to the attainment of man-made fire by artificial means, such as rubbing sticks together.

Anthropologists have long divided the transitions in man's historical relationship to fire into three stages: "the knowledge of fire, the means of utilizing it, and the means of procuring it." (Broca, 1870) This transition may also be seen to have been recognised by the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE philosopher and mythographer, Epimenides of Knossos, who writes that, while some writers of myth record that Prometheus stole fire, "the truth is that he was the discoverer of those things which give forth fire and from which it may be kindled." (Diodorus, *History* 5.67.2) Epimenides' interpretation of the meaning of Prometheus' theft of fire thus illustrates the fundamental



transition in man's relationship with fire: from simply utilizing it, to discovering the means of procuring it employing artificial means. The interpretation of Epimenides also aptly evokes the Vedic Mātariśvan, who is also said to have "rubbed forth [*mathāyāti*]" fire (*Rig-Veda* 1.141.3; cf. 1.148.1, 3.9.5). Epimenides may thus be attempting to do more than simply rationalise the Promethean myth's theft of fire; he may very well be attempting to restore its original, but only dimly recalled, Indo-European features.

Thus far, then, the Indo-European provenance of the Hesiodic Prometheus has been positively established for three of its mythic elements: the Negotiation at Mekone, Zeus withholding fire from men, and Prometheus stealing it back. The next elements in the sequence – Hephaestus creating woman/Pandora, Hermes giving her to Epimetheus, and Pandora opening the Jar – do not have any obvious Indo-European antecedents. There are not many major female figures in Vedic myth; *Prthvi Mater* is one of the most important; but she, too, is still relatively minor. She is only mentioned eight times in the *Rig-Veda*, and has no *suktas* addressed to her. The etymological origin of Prometheus in the Indo-European verb *\*math*, on the other hand betrays unmistakable associations with the concepts of lust, the sexual act, and procreation. These concepts are also observable in the etymological formation of Prometheus' Vedic corollary, Mātariśvan: as the maker (*mā*) / mother (*mātari*) in whom the fire (*\*atar*) grows or swells (*śvi*). Given this linguistic background, plus the prominent role played by Prometheus / Hephaestus in delivering Athena from the head of Zeus (Pindar, *Olympian* 31-44; Sophocles, *Ion* 455), Hephaestus' creation of the 'evil of woman' likely has Indo-European antecedents.

While the Indo-European provenance of the creation of woman myth in *Theogony* remains uncertain, the Pandora elements in *Works & Days* display unmistakable chthonic influences. This myth likely originates in the cultures of Neolithic, goddess-worshipping, agrarian societies that migrated into the plains of Thessaly from the Anatolian peninsula around 6,700-6,500 BCE. Anthony conjectures that the language spoken by this cultural group may have belonged to the Afro-Asiatic super family that generated both Egyptian and Semitic in the Near East (2007, p. 147). As Harris has convincingly shown, the Pandora myth – and especially her release of the Fates from a Jar, and the retention of Hope – reflects the assimilation of non-Indo-European myths preserved by a chthonic ghost cult, most likely Pelasgian in origin, dedicated to the worship of the great goddess Ge, or mother earth (Pandora's Box, 1900). The Pelasgians were

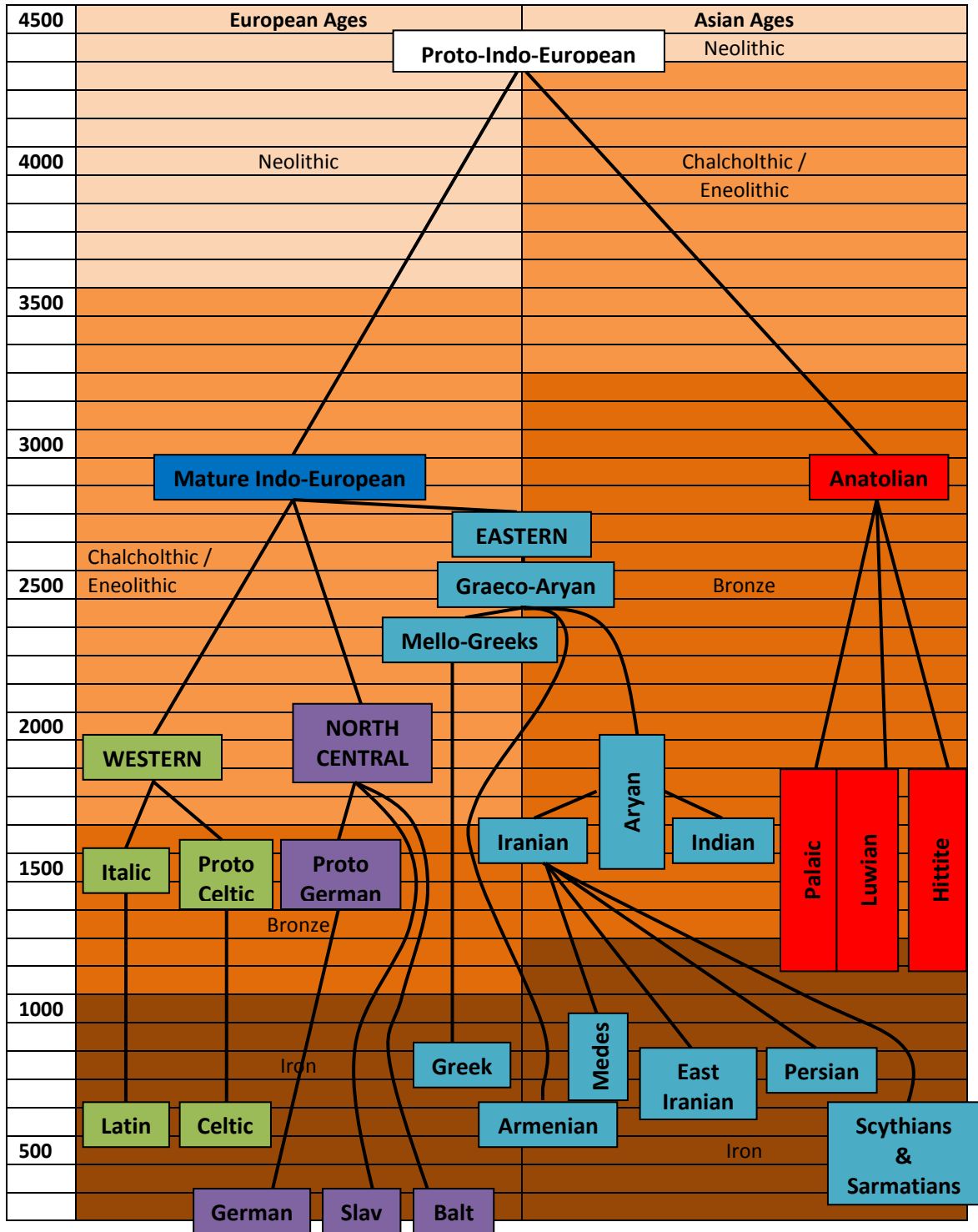
associated with the Danaïdes in Greek myth, whom Aeschylus describes in *Suppliant Maidens* as being linked to Egyptian princes by marriage.

The incorporation of the chthonic Pandora element into the Indo-European Promethean myth may have played a pivotal role in triggering what Kuhn describes as the bifurcation of the proto-Prometheus into two brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus (1859, p. 17). Epimetheus is the after-thinker who unthinkingly accepts the gift of the beautiful Pandora, the seductive evil who brings misery and hardship for men. Epimetheus' lust for Pandora has a natural corollary in Prometheus' passion for Athena, who also undergoes a bifurcation in her characterisation with the introduction of Pandora. In *Theogony*, Athena's role in assisting Hephaestus to create woman is limited to adorning her with beautiful raiment. In *Works & Days*, by contrast, Zeus tells Athena to teach Pandora the feminine crafts of embroidery and weaving, while it is the Cyprian love goddess, Aphrodite, who "spills grace" upon her head. Athena thus makes a progression from providing the trappings of outward beauty to providing instruction in the feminine crafts. Epimetheus' witless acceptance of the mortal woman, Pandora, presumably on the basis of the sexual attraction to the outward beauty bestowed by Aphrodite, would thus have a corollary in the fore-thinking Prometheus,<sup>12</sup> who desires Athena for her inward knowledge of the feminine crafts. This brings us to the subject of Prometheus' punishment and its connection to the little known story of his passion for the virgin goddess.

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<sup>12</sup> West (2007, p. 273) conjectures that the meaning of Prometheus' name evolved from 'one who loves to rob/rape' in Indo-European to 'forethought' in ancient Greek by a similar process whereby the English term 'to grasp' also came to signify the mental process of coming to understand something.

# The Indo-European Language Family Tree



### C. The Passion of Prometheus for Athena

The details of Prometheus' punishment – his being bound with ineluctable fetters and a shaft through his torso, and having a large bird daily consume his liver (*Theogony* 521-5) – first occur near beginning of the sequence of events related in *Theogony* that conclude with his being punished. This positioning, at the beginning of the myth, would seem to indicate that Prometheus' punishment is an original element of the myth; for it is more natural for a poet to open a traditional story with a shorthand review of elements already familiar to the audience, particularly before subjecting it to more novel treatment. There are no obvious parallels in Vedic myth to Prometheus' distinctive punishment of being bound and having his liver consumed by an eagle.<sup>13</sup> Other means must be employed, therefore, to identify whether or not this element of the myth is of Indo-European origin. As it happens, an ancient historian and mythographer, Douris of Samos, testifies to the existence of a particular variant of the myth (Fr. 19) that, it will be argued here, sheds considerable light on the nature of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus. Understanding the status of Douris and his unique version of the Promethean myth also helps illuminate Bacon's use of this particular variant of it in *Of The Wisdom Of The Ancients*.

Douris' particular variant of the Promethean myth occurs only once in all of classical literature: in a scholiast's comments on the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century to after 246 BCE). These comments correspond to the point at which Jason and the Argonauts, sailing along the eastern shore of the Black Sea, hear the screams of Prometheus, chained to a mountain in the Caucasus, as an eagle consumes his liver (2.1249). Commenting on this passage, the scholiast duly notes:

Hesiod says that Prometheus was bound and the eagle was let loose upon him because of his theft of fire. But Douris says that this happened because of his passion [*èrasthênai*] for Athena. For this reason those dwelling in the region of the Caucasus refuse to sacrifice to Zeus and Athena alone, because they were the cause of the punishment of Prometheus, but extravagantly worship Heracles on account of his shooting the eagle with his bow. (Okin, 1974, p. 152)

The most significant feature of this highly singular version of the Promethean myth is, of course, its somewhat unprecedented claim that Prometheus was punished for his passion [*èrasthênai*] for Athena, rather than for his theft of fire. The word the scholiast attributes to Douris'

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<sup>13</sup> There is no parallel instance in Vedic mythology such as, for instance, Mātariśvan being punished at behest of *Dyaus Pitar* (the Sanskrit cognate to both *Zeús Pater* in Greek and Jupiter in Latin) for having stolen fire.

description of the passion of Prometheus – *èrasthênai* – is cognate to *ëros* and based on the root word *ëramai*. The various constructs of *ëramai* are generally employed to describe an eager desire for something (cf. *Iliad* 2.149), and in particular the lust of a man's sexual passion (cf. *Iliad* 3.446, 16.182, 20.223).

Douris' characterisation of Prometheus as having lusted after Athena is corroborated by linguistic evidence, as one of the original shades of meaning attributed to the Indo-European root word upon which the appellative of Prometheus was formed – *\*math* – is 'to rape'. One of the attributes of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus – as derived from the meaning of Kuhn's reconstructed appellative *\*Pra-mathyus* – would, therefore, literally be: 'one who loves to rape'. But is this linguistic evidence purely circumstantial? In order to judge the veracity of this accusation against Prometheus – that he was punished for his lust for Athena rather than his love of humankind – several pieces of corroborating evidence need to be more closely examined. The first is a (re-)appraisal of the status of the writings of Douris of Samos, as scholars, both ancient and modern, have often called his veracity and reputation as an historian into question. With respect to establishing the veracity of Douris' Promethean myth, this task of re-appraisal is aided by corroborating evidence found in reports from the Hindu Kush by Alexander the Great's generals, as well as in aspects of Vedic religion and mythology. A second batch of evidence that needs to be examined is the significance of several parallels to the Promethean myth elsewhere in Greek myth, including: Hephaestus' attempted rape of Athena, and Homer's description of Zeus' punishment of Tityos. With these tasks completed, the seemingly incredible accusation made by Douris – that Prometheus was not punished for his theft of fire, but rather because he harboured a forbidden lust for Athena – may be corroborated so as to render a more just verdict.

#### D. Reputation of Douris

Douris of Samos (c.350-after 281 BCE) was an historian, mythographer, and, for a time, tyrant of Samos. He was also possibly a student of Theophrastus at Aristotle's Lyceum, along with his brother, Lynceus, who certainly was (Athenaeus 128a).<sup>14</sup> The reputation of Douris and his writings have widely fluctuated over the centuries. He is guardedly praised as "industrious" by Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* 6.1); more often than not, though, ancient authors condemn him for his exaggerated style and unreliability (Plutarch, *Lives*: Alcibiades 32, Demosthenes 23, Eumenes 1; Dionysius, *On Composition* 4; Photius, *Library* 176). Douris is also sometimes criticised as an exemplar of what is termed "tragic history" (Grant, 1970, p. 142); a scholarly style fashionable in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, whereby stories of past events were embellished with dramatic cues derived from Greek theatre so as to assist the reader's understanding, particularly with respect to arriving at the proper moral conclusion.

Some modern reappraisals of Douris, though, have been considerably more favourable toward his work. Okin, for one, finds persuasive evidence that Douris was highly rational and methodical in terms of how he went about gathering, ordering and assessing the variants of particular myths; a reflection, perhaps, of his Peripatetic training. In particular instances, in fact, Douris may be seen to have gone to considerable lengths to collect all the existing variants of a myth, and then to have closely analysed them with an eye to determining which versions were the most authentic and original (Okin, 1974, pp. 164-5). While Douris may have incorporated tragic elements into his composition of history, then, he also seems to have incorporated historical methodologies into his practice of mythography. He also seems to have held true to this rigorous methodology in his treatment of the Prometheus myth, as evinced by fragment 47, quoted above, from the scholiast's comments on Apollonius Rhodius. As Okin states: "Although Douris is our only source for this variant, it is doubtful that he invented it." (1974, p. 154) Rather, he likely examined all the source texts available to him, and then attempted to square them against the most up to date information available from other sources.

As a student at the Lyceum, Douris would have had access to its extensive library, established by Aristotle with the magnificent patronage of Alexander the Great. Even if it was only his brother who attended the Lyceum, though, as some scholars believe, this would still have provided Douris at least indirect access to the extraordinary resources of this library and

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Athenaeus 100e, and *Suida* s.v. Lynceus, where only Lynceus is mentioned as a pupil of Theophrastus.

museum. During his time as the tyrant of Samos, Douris would also have had unimpeded access to the exemplary library of that island, located off the south-east coast of Asia minor, near Miletus. The Samian library was one of the earliest great libraries of the Greek world; built by Polycrates during his magnanimous reign as tyrant (c.538 to 522 BCE), when Samos reached the historical apogee of its military power and cultural influence. Polycrates also provided support for many other aspects of the arts and sciences, and was a notable patron of the poets Anacreon and Ibycus. The Samian library would thus have been an extremely valuable scholarly resource in Douris' time, particularly for researching more archaic texts and early variants of myth. From these considerations, we may conclude that Douris was likely very conscientious in selecting the particular version of the Prometheus myth he included in his mythographical works; selecting what he believed to be the most original account from the vast array of variants that would have been available to him.

## E. Reports of Alexander's Generals

A critical factor that Douris would most certainly have taken into account in his appraisal of source texts relating the Promethean myth, were reports then filtering back to Greece regarding Alexander's military exploits in the east. In his history of Alexander's *anabasis*, or march up country, the Roman (though of Greek ethnicity) historian, Arrian of Nicomedia (c.86-after 146 CE), relays a report presented by the great Alexandrian scholar, Eratosthenes of Cyrene (c.276-c.195 BCE), on Alexander's alleged journey to the location where Prometheus was reputedly punished. Best known today as the physicist who deduced the radius of the earth to a remarkable degree of accuracy, based on the differing angles of the noon-day sun at different latitudes, Eratosthenes was also a noted scholar at The Great Library in Alexandria, who researched the descriptions that Alexander's fellow-campaigners brought back of their travels in the east. In one of these reports, they describe having been shown a cave by the Parapamisadae that, according to local legend, was:

Prometheus' cave, where he had been chained, and that it was there that the eagle used to go, to feed on Prometheus' liver, and that Heracles, arriving at this same spot, killed the eagle [*aetòn*] and released Prometheus from his chains; (Arrian, 1983, p. 5.3.2)

"Parapamisadae" was an ancient Greek name for a collection of peoples who inhabited a region of the Hindu-Kush, and that was later used as a toponym for the area itself. Paropamisus was located in what is now east-central Afghanistan, in the regions surrounding the modern-day cities of Kabul and Bagram, the latter of which was the primary city of the region in Alexander's time. After it was captured by the Macedonian army in the 320s, it was renamed 'Alexandria of the Caucasus' and formed the regional capital of his empire. Alexander's associates also reported that, upon reaching India itself, they saw cattle branded with the symbol of a club, from which they deduced that Heracles had also reached this part of the world. In relaying these reports, Arrian also notes the skeptical appraisal of them by Eratosthenes, "who says that all the Macedonians ascribe to the divine influence was magnified in this way to please Alexander." (Ibid.) Arrian, for his part, states that, as far as he's concerned, "the stories about these things must rest open." (Ibid.)

Douris is known to have written one of the definitive histories of Macedonia, documenting the period between the battle of Leuctra in 371 BCE, to the death, in 281 BCE, of Lysimachus, Alexander's successor in Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor. It is therefore a near certainty that Douris was intimately familiar with the reports of Alexander's associates of their adventures in



the east, later relayed by Eratosthenes. Indeed, it seems highly likely that Eratosthenes derived his information in this matter from Douris' work itself. Arrian/Eratosthenes' report of Alexander's army coming across a people who knew of Prometheus and dwelt in a mountain range that the Greeks then believed contiguous with the Caucasus, and another people in India who worshipped Heracles, would thus have provided Douris with corroborating evidence for the veracity of his particular variant of the Promethean myth, whereby Prometheus was punished by Zeus for attempting to violate Athena, rather than his theft of fire.

## F. Parallels in Vedic Mythology and Religion

Given the advances made by western scholars over the past two centuries in deciphering Old Sanskrit, it is now possible to seriously re-evaluate Eratosthenes' judgement as to whether the reports of Alexander's generals were specious, particularly with regard to their divine elements, which he claims were magnified either to please Alexander or preserve the memory of his deeds. In particular, it is now possible to corroborate the generals' reports of Alexander's journey to the cave of Prometheus against the source texts that largely informed the religious practices and beliefs of ancient India. The *Rig-Veda* contains significant parallels to ancient Greek religion, as well as many instructive points of departure. In particular, it contains etymological and/or symbolic parallels to all the major figures of *Theogony's* Promethean myth that are mentioned by both Douris and Arrian, including: Zeus, Heracles, Athena and Prometheus.

As previously discussed, the closest Vedic parallel to Prometheus is Mātariśvan. There is also a Vedic god – *Dyaus Pitar* – whose name bears a direct and incontestable etymological relation to *Zeús Pater*. In fact, the *Zeús / Dyaus* formulation is often held up as an exemplar for the validity of drawing etymological relations between the various deities worshipped by people who spoke a language within the Indo-European family. As Burkert notes: "Zeus is the only name of a Greek god which is entirely transparent etymologically, and which indeed has long been paraded as a model case in Indo-European philology." (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 1985, p. 125)<sup>15</sup> The similarities between *Zeús* and *Dyaus* would seem to end at their names, though, for whereas Zeus was considered the all powerful king of gods, *Dyaus Pitar* is considered a relatively minor god in Vedic mythology, with no *suktas* in the *Rig-Veda* addressed to him. He is mentioned there 34 times,<sup>16</sup> though, and appears as the elemental day-lit sky and primordial father. He is also sometimes mentioned in conjunction with the earth-mother, *Prthivi Mater* (6.50.13, 10.36.2, 10.65.7). By the time the *Rig-Veda* was being composed, though, during the Indo-Iranian period (1700-1100 BCE), *Dyaus Pitar* and *Prthivi Mater* had already been succeeded by their descendents, most notably, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni and Soma (Organ, 1974, p. 66).

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. (Müller, *Selected Essays on Language Mythology and Religion*, Vol. I, 1881, pp. 215-219) (Cox, 1870, pp. 173-4) (Müller F. M., *Natural Religion*, 1889, p. 462) (Brown, 1898, pp. 18-19) (Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, 1887, pp. 190-2) (Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon - Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*, 1995) (West M. L., *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> *Dyaus Pater* is named in the following *suktas* of the *Rig-Veda*: 1.54.3, 1.122.1, 1.129.3, 1.131.1, 1.136.6, 3.25.1, 4.1.10, 4.17.4, 4.21.1, 5.41.4, 5.58.6, 5.59.8, 6.2.4, 6.12.2, 6.20.2, 6.50.13, 7.84.2, 8.20.17, 8.34.1,2,3,4&14, 8.89.12, 10.36.2, 10.44.8, 10.45.4&8, 10.46.9, 10.61.4, 10.63.3, 10.65.7, 10.67.2&3, & 10.132.1.

With respect to Heracles, no direct linguistic parallels have been drawn to comparable figures in the Vedic mythology. However, there are so many distinctive parallels that may be drawn between the characterizations of Heracles and Indra, the single most frequently addressed god in the *Rig-Veda*, that the existence of an cognate Indo-European hero figure is a virtual certainty. Burkert, for one, has positively identified the core story of Heracles with the Neolithic hunter culture and traditions of shamanistic crossings into the netherworld (1985, pp. 208-212); these being the very same traditions from which Indra derives. In the *Rig-Veda*, though, Indra is the god of supreme power who gathers the storm cloud and wields a lightning bolt (*RV* 1.32), and is thus more often compared with the Greek figure of *Zeús*. In terms of character and deeds, though, Indra more closely fits the archetype of the heroic warrior, with all his virtues and faults; and in this respect more closely parallels the figure of Heracles. Indra is also sometimes named the son of *Dyaus* (*RV* 4.17.4, 10.120.1), for instance, just as Heracles is named the son of *Zeús*. Indra's primary weapon is the lightning bolt, called *vajra* or *vadhá* in Sanskrit, translatable as 'smasher' or 'killer,' which is compared to a club (Griffith R. T., 2008, p. 1.63.5; Rjabchikov, 2004), the iconic weapon of Heracles. Indra undertakes the performance of many heroic deeds, including slaying the dragon, *Vritra* (*RV* 6.20.2), and freeing the cattle hidden by the *Panis* (*RV* 1.32, 10.108). These actions may be compared with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> labours of Heracles: killing the Lernaean Hydra, and capturing the Cattle of Geryon (Apollodorus 2.5.1-2.5.12). Both Heracles and Indra also kill members of their family while temporarily out of his mind: Indra kills his father after drinking too much Soma (4.18.12), while Heracles kills his family after he succumbs to a madness induced by Hera.

With respect to Athena, the parallels to figures in Vedic mythology become considerably more controversial. One of Max Müller's favourite etymological parallels is one he draws between Athena and the Vedic *Ahanâ* – one of the deities representing the dawn, or *ushas* – the etymological foundations for which he argues are impeccable (cf. 1856, pp. 56-7; 1889, pp. 435-6; 1897, pp. 726-8). As one of the more prominent supporters of his *Ahanâ*/Athena formulation writes: "The name *Athênê* is practically a transliteration of the Vedic *Ahanâ*, the morning, which in a cognate form appears as *Dahanâ*, the Greek *Daphnê*." (Cox, 1870, p. 248). In addition to its allegedly impeccable etymological pedigree, this formulation also has the benefit of illuminating one of the more bizarre and mysterious stories in Greek myth; namely, Athena's birth from out of the head of Zeus, which is split open by an axe-wielding midwife who is alternatively

identified as either Hephaestus (Pindar, *Olympian* 31-44) or Prometheus (Sophocles, *Ion* 455).<sup>17</sup> It is much easier to imagine this rather bizarre scenario if Athena is understood to be a beautiful red dawn born from out of the head of Zeus, understood as the day-lit sky. Likely due to the compelling way in which Müller's formulation lent meaning to this particularly puzzling Greek myth, it was widely endorsed by scholars at the time, such as Fiske (1898, p. 20) and Brown (1878, p. 333). As Müller himself admits, though, this formulation rests on only a single occurrence of *Ahanâ* in the *Rig-Veda* (1.123.4). Because of this rather narrow etymological base, the *Ahanâ*=Athena formulation (along with several others made by Müller) was singled out for attack by his opponents, such as Lang (1887; 1897, pp. 107-8), and was eventually discredited. As Farnell notes, "many old religious etymological equations, such as *Oúranós* = Sanskrit Varuna, *'Ermês* = Saraneyās, Athena = Ahana, were uncritically made and have [since] been abandoned." (1911, p. 528)

The parallels between the relevant figures in Greek and Vedic mythology and religion lend considerable credence to Douris' variant of the Promethean myth: that "those dwelling in the region of the Caucasus refuse to sacrifice to Zeus and Athena alone, because they were the cause of the punishment of Prometheus, but extravagantly worship Heracles on account of his shooting the eagle with his bow." This observation is perfectly in line with the fact that Vedic texts emulate Indra – the closest Vedic analogue to Heracles – as the greatest of the gods, while *Dyaus Pitar* and *Ahanâ* are relegated to relatively minor status in the *Rig-Veda*.<sup>18</sup> This high degree of correspondence, between Vedic mythology and Douris' description of the religious views of those dwelling in "the Caucasus" lends additional credence to his assertion that, in the original version of the Promethean myth, Prometheus was punished, not for his theft of fire, but rather for his passion for Athena. Furthermore, Douris' singular version of this myth corresponds remarkably well with the lustful nature of the original Indo-European Proto-Prometheus, as revealed by the etymology of his name.

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<sup>17</sup> This is one of the more famous instances where Prometheus and Hephaestus appear as mere doublets of one another, being thus considered more or less co-equal in function.

<sup>18</sup> Note that this observation holds true even if Müller's Athena=Ahana formulation is assumed to be based on a 'false etymology', as the folk etymologies devised by Greeks travelling in the Caucasus would likely have arrived at similar formulations based on mere phonetic resemblance and mythological parallels.

## G. The Tityos Parallel in Homer

The motif of the long-winged eagle [*tanýpteron aietòn*] gnawing at Prometheus' liver [*êpar*] has a highly significant parallel in Homer that also points to Prometheus having been punished for his passion for Athena rather than his theft of fire. In the *Odyssey*, Zeus is



*Tityos* (1632) oil on canvas by José de Ribera (1591-1652)  
Source: Museo Nacional Del Prado [www.museodelprado.es](http://www.museodelprado.es)

described as having punished "Tityos, son of glorious Earth [*Gaiês êrikuéos*]", by having two "vultures [*gýpe*]" tear out his liver (11.576-581). Homer's description of Tityos as son of "glorious" Earth recalls Hesiod's similar description of Prometheus' brother, Menoitios, as "ultra-glorious [*hyperkýdanta*]" (*Theogony* 510). Tityos is punished for having "violated [*êlkêse*]" Leto, the honoured consort of Zeus and mother of Apollo. As Pease observes: "Most scholars agree that the punishment of Tityos is made poetically appropriate to his offence" (1925, p. 277). In other words, Zeus moulds Tityos' punishment to fit his crime, as the liver was considered the seat of lust or passion among the ancient Greeks. Pease then goes on to argue, though, that "Prometheus was surely not punished for any such passion, and the transference to him of a penalty suitable to Tityos would seem highly inappropriate." To reconcile this seeming incongruity with the nature of Prometheus, Pease constructs an elaborate theory that the Greeks originally considered the liver to be the seat of the soul, and only later as the seat of lust. Working from this assumption, he then argues that Prometheus was not punished for a crime of passion. Rather:

the crime of Prometheus lay in the misuse of that intelligence to which his very name bears witness, and the story of the torture of his liver must, I believe, have arisen at an epoch when that organ was the seat of intelligence. The Tityos story, on the other

hand, would have meant nothing at a time when the liver symbolized intelligence but everything at an age when it was held to be the seat of passion. (1925, p. 278)

From this line of reasoning, Pease concludes that Hesiod's composition of the Prometheus myth should be dated much earlier than the Tityos episode in Homer, and that Prometheus was punished for the misuse of his intelligence, not lust. Despite West's tentative endorsement of this argument (1996, pp. 313-4), Pease's claim that the liver was not considered the seat of passion until Aeschylus is unpersuasive, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the lack of adequate textual support for his theory. Furthermore, as discussed above, Hesiod's life is now thought to have been more or less contemporary with the date of 'composition' for the bulk of the Homeric poems. If it is accepted that Zeus justly crafted Tityos' punishment to fit the crime of lust, then the idea must also be entertained that the punishment of Prometheus was likewise just.



*The Rape of Leto by Tityos* (c.515 BCE)  
Amphora painted by Phintias (fl.525-510 BCE)  
Tityos abducts Leto while Apollo, to left, and Artemis, to right, move to prevent him.  
Source: Louvre Museum [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)  
via Wikimedia Commons

## H. Hephaestus' Attempted Rape of Athena

Perhaps the single most extenuating factor indicting Prometheus for his excessive passion for Athena is his close relationship to Hephaestus, the Greek god of fire, which often approaches an identity. In several instances in Greek myth, Prometheus and Hephaestus are interchangeable, in a manner similar to Mātariśvan and Agni, the Vedic god of fire. This is significant, given several accounts in Greek myth of Hephaestus' attempted rape of Athena (Apollodorus 3.188, Pausanias 3.18.13). According to the version related by



*Athena Scorning the Advances of Hephaestus* (c.1555-60)  
Oil on canvas by Paris Bordone (1500-1571)  
From University of Missouri Museum of Art and Technology:  
<http://maa.missouri.edu>

Apollodorus, Athena visited Hephaestus in his workshop to request him to make some weapons. Hephaestus was so overcome by desire for the lovely virgin, though, that he clumsily tried to seduce her. Athena successfully fended him off, but not before Hephaestus ejaculated on her leg. In disgust, she wiped the semen off with a piece of wool and threw it to the ground. There it grew inside Gaia, who subsequently gave birth to a son who was half man and half serpent. She gave him to Athena, who named him Erichthonius, which means 'troubles born of the earth'. Erichthonius later went on to expel Amphictyon from Athens and usurp the kingship of the city from him. As the new king of Athens, he instituted the Panathenaea festival, and built a temple to Athena on the acropolis. Erichthonius is also said to have adjudicated in the dispute between Athena and Poseidon over the possession of Attica, ruling in favour of his adopted mother.

All told, then, there are ample reasons for regarding Douris of Samos' particular variant of the Promethean myth, highlighting Prometheus' excessive passion for Athena, as a more

authentic, older form of the myth; and perhaps even more representative of the original Indo-European form of it. To recap: the reputation and authority of Douris as an historian and a mythographer has been rehabilitated and elevated by the recent work of scholars such as Okin. Douris likely corroborated his singular variant of the Promethean myth against reports of the religious views of people living in the 'Caucasus,' brought back by Alexander's generals who served in the Hindu Kush. Douris' description of those religious views, although using close Greek mythic parallels, aligns almost perfectly with what is now known of the Vedic mythology and religion of his time. The motif of having a bird eat one's liver as punishment for the crime of rape also has a significant parallel in Homer, in the story of Tityos, who was punished by Zeus for violating Leto. And finally, Hephaestus, who is closely associated with Prometheus in Greek myth, even to the point of identity, is described in several accounts as having attempted to rape Athena. Combine these mythographical factors with the linguistic evidence, with one inflection of '*pramathys*' in Vedic Sanskrit literally meaning 'one who loves to rape,' and the verdict has to be: guilty, guilty, guilty!



*The Birth of Erichthonios* (c.470-60 BCE)  
Gaia hands Erichthonios to Athena, while  
Hephaestus stands to the left.  
Side A of an Attic red-figure stamnos  
Source: University of Georgia  
Dept. of Classics: [www.classics.uga.edu](http://www.classics.uga.edu)



## I. Conclusion – The Indo-European Proto-Prometheus Reclaimed

This chapter has examined the Hesiodic Promethean myth primarily with an eye to answering two questions. First of all, which elements of Hesiod's Promethean myth, if any, are demonstrably Indo-European in origin? And if there are identifiably Indo-European elements to the myth, how important are they to its formation and how it evolved? As has been discerned from this investigation, the core elements of the Promethean myth – the negotiations at Mekone, the theft of fire, the creation of Woman, and the punishment of Prometheus – are, indeed, identifiably Indo-European in origin, along with a few other elements whose origins are less certain. These distinctly Indo-European elements may be further sub-divided into those associated with Doric versus Ionic sources. The essentially Doric elements of the myth are: the Negotiation at Mekone, the withholding of natural fire by Zeus, and the stealing back of fire by Prometheus. The evidence for the Doric identification and Indo-European provenance of these element, furthermore, is quite strong. The Ionic element, for which evidence of identification and provenance is also strong, is the creation of Woman and the punishment of Prometheus. Evidence is weaker for assigning an Ionic identity and Indo-European provenance to the killing of the Bird by Heracles and the abatement of Zeus' anger; at present, though, it is the only plausible scenario that suggests itself.

The evidence for the Indo-European provenance of the Doric elements of the Promethean myth is quite strong, for the initiation of the ritual of sacrifice to the gods at Mekone has close mythic parallels in the *Rig-Veda*, where Mātariśvan performs a very similar role. Anthropological analysis of the fire-stealing element, furthermore, shows how Zeus withholding fire and Prometheus stealing it in *Theogony* is likely a poetic representation of the realisation of a fundamental transition that occurred in man's historical relationship to fire: from the tenuous possession of god-given, naturally-occurring fire, to the secure possession of the knowledge of how to artificially generate it. Again, Mātariśvan performs a very similar role in the *Rig-Veda*, in terms of teaching men the technique of making fire by vigorously rubbing wood together.<sup>19</sup> The philological analysis of linguistic evidence, finally, also supports the view that Prometheus and Mātariśvan are genetically related. As was shown above, the name for Prometheus was originally constructed from the Indo-European root word *\*math*, which originally meant not only 'to rub,' but also 'to rape,' or 'to rob by snatching away.' These and other related

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<sup>19</sup> As will be seen in the next chapter, this role of being the first one to teach men how to generate fire is also performed in Doric myth by Phoroneus, the primordial founding king of Argos.

considerations definitively point to the negotiations at Mekone, the withholding of fire and its theft, as being Indo-European in origin. The fact that the Doric dialect preserves a more archaic form of the name *Promatheús*, as well as the absence of any mention of Prometheus in Homer, may also indicate that these core Indo-European elements of the Promethean myth were likely (re-) absorbed into Ionic Greek myth after the Dorian migration into Greece after the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

The punishment of Prometheus shows definite indications of being an Ionian element of Indo-European origin, given its close parallel to the Tityos episode in Homer. This assessment is also supported by the evidence of the Douris fragment, which claims that Prometheus was originally punished for his passion for Athena, rather than for his theft of fire. The Indo-European provenance of this element is corroborated, in turn, by the reports of Alexander's generals regarding the Promethean myth preserved in India, as well as the etymology of Prometheus' name, one of the inflections of the root of which, *\*math*, means to rape. Given this evidence, the creation of Woman by Hephaestus and Athena in *Theogony* may also be considered an Ionic element of Indo-European origin, which symbolised the coming-to-be of the more feminine aspects of human social existence, including the institutions of the hearth, the marriage relationship, family and household. Given the Ionian origin of the punishment of Prometheus and the lack of parallels in other mythic traditions, it is reasonable to suppose that Heracles' killing of the Eagle and the abatement of Zeus' anger are also Ionian in origin; however, no more positive proof of this connection has yet been found by this author.

While the Hesiodic Promethean myth is essentially Indo-European in origin, it also bears definite signs of later additions from sources that ultimately derived from Semitic/Sumerian and Chthonic sources. While the creation of Woman in *Theogony* is likely Indo-European in origin, for instance, elements of that myth as presented in *Works & Days*, culminating in Pandora opening the jar and releasing the evils that afflict men into the world, are distinctly chthonic. The Pandora myth likely derived from the *mythos* of a ghost-cult of Ge, or mother earth, a tradition that likely originated with the Pelasgians, who considered themselves the autochthonic population of Attica. Regarding the presence of Semitic influences, the Promethean myth in *Theogony* is prefaced by the Succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus (126-210, 453-506), which was probably absorbed into Greek myth from Hittite/Hurrian sources during the Mycenaean Age (c.1900-c.1100 BCE) and/or Phoenician sources during the Dark Age of Greece (c.1200-c.800 BCE). The adamant sickle Kronos employs to castrate Ouranos in that myth, on

the other hand, would again seem to be a reference to the Pelasgian god of agriculture, thus betraying distinct traces of chthonic influence. The Five Ages of Man that immediately follows the Promethean myth in *Works & Days* (109-201) most likely derives from Mesopotamian myth, and is thus also Semitic in origin. The genealogy of Prometheus also employs names with Semitic origins (e.g. Iapetus=Japheth of the Bible) and/or that are derived from near eastern mythic sources (e.g. Atlas=Atlas of the *Phoenician History*). Zeus giving Man the curse of mortality, in addition to that of Woman, finally, has associations with all the above traditions, so a positive determination of its origin is not possible, given our current state of knowledge of the source materials.

Having positively identified the Indo-European core of the Promethean myth, it should now be possible to plausibly advance a reasonable hypothesis as to what the original, proto-Promethean mythic figure might have looked like and when he might have arisen. This Indo-European proto-Prometheus – whose name Kuhn reconstructs as *\*Pramathyus* – would have been something of a blend of Prometheus, Hephaestus, Epimetheus and Hermes: passionate, clever, inquisitive, inventive, transgressive and occasionally somewhat hapless; a combination of ritual fire-starter, craftsman, messenger, thief and trickster; a stone-age fire-priest who lusted and sought after the beautiful red light of the crack of Dawn, and brought down upon himself the punishment of her Father, the Day-lit Sky. In terms of when this proto-Prometheus might have first arisen, given the genetic-linguistic relationship established between the Hesiodic Prometheus and the Vedic Mātariśvan, it would have to ante-date the separation of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan c.2500 BCE. This is a particularly interesting historical period, as it occurs soon after the beginning of the European Bronze Age (3000 BCE), an event likely triggered by the importation of metal alloy making techniques by Indo-European tribes migrating from their original homeland, in the steppes north of the Caucasus mountains.

The earliest conceivable date for the Indo-European proto-Prometheus, on the other hand, is limited, in one respect, by the earliest date at which humankind is known to have possessed the ability to generate fire. That advance is such an exceedingly remote event in human history, though, that it likely accounts for the ubiquity and relative consistency of fire myths in virtually all human cultures. The earliest archeological evidence for the "controlled use of fire" comes from the discovery of what are thought to have been pre-historic hearths in Gesher Benot Ya'aqov, on the shores of the Dead Sea in present day Israel, which date to nearly 790,000 years ago (Naama Goren-Inbar, 2004); i.e. 640,000 years before the advent of modern Homo Sapiens.

A much later date for the Indo-European proto-Prometheus on the other hand, may be conjectured from the fact that the Hittites lacked a future tense in their language (Anthony, 2007). Given this lack in Hittite, it may be inferred, therefore, that the Proto-Indo-European language from which Hittite derived also lacked a future tense. As a future orientation or direction is one of the primary concepts signified by the Indo-European prefix *\*pra-* (Sanskrit *pra-*, Greek *pro-*, English *fore-*), it seems reasonable to assume that this linguistic innovation post-dates the Hittite split from Proto-Indo-European c.4400 BCE. In the absence of more compelling evidence, such as the discovery of a Promethean parallel in Hittite myth, therefore, the Indo-European *Pramathyus* may also be supposed to post-date this split.

The date of the Hittite split from Proto-Indo-European is also significant, for it closely coincides with the beginning of what is alternatively known as the Chalcolithic, Eneolithic, or 'Copper' Age in the Caucasus. The Copper Age was a relatively brief period situated between the end of the Neolithic Age (late 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE), when the smelting of copper first became widespread in the Middle East and the Caucasus, but before the discovery of how to alloy copper with arsenic or tin brought about the Bronze Age in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. The period between the Copper Age (late 5<sup>th</sup> to late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE) and the separation of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan c.2500 BCE was likely the period when *Pramathyus*, the Neolithic fire priest, first bifurcated into his mythic doublets, Hephaestus and Prometheus. Hephaestus, the god of blacksmithing, would go on to become the fire god among the Ionian tribes; Prometheus, on the other hand, retained most of his original Indo-European features, and became the mythic figure most closely associated with fire among the Dorian tribes. In sum, then, the essential contours of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus – *Pramathyus* – may be surmised as having arisen sometime after the Hittite separation from Proto-Indo-European (c.4400 BCE) but before the separation of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan (c.2500 BCE).

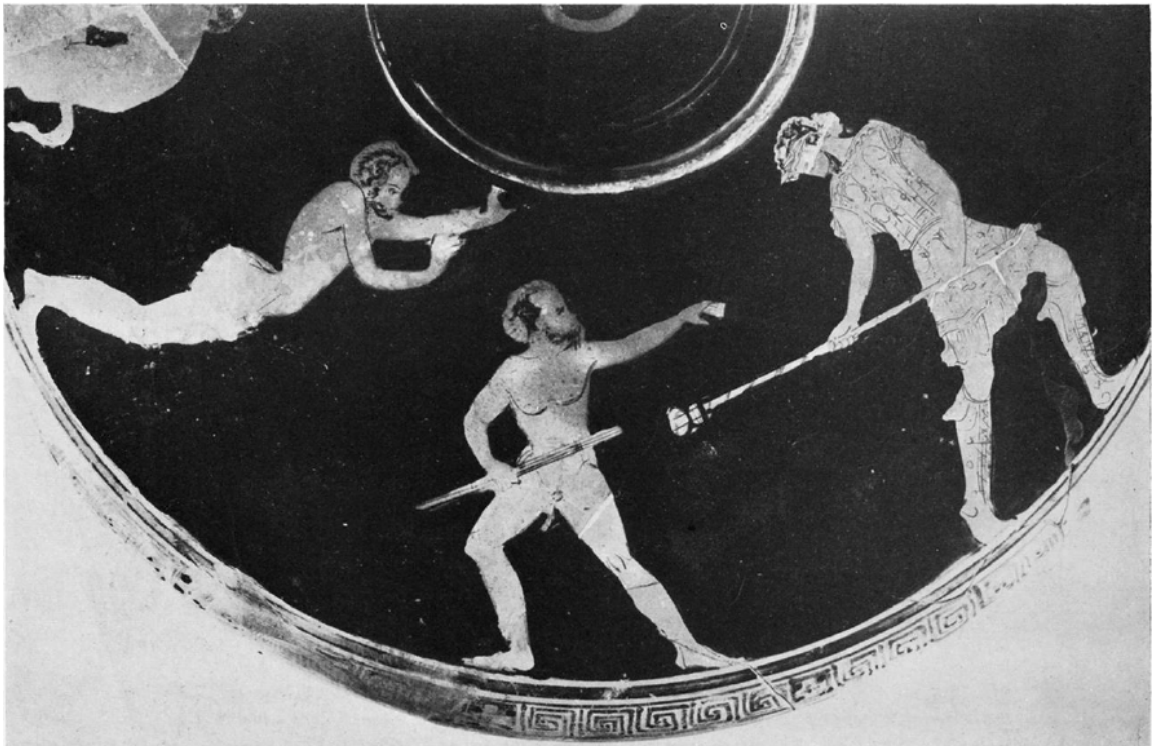
The elements of the Hesiodic Promethean myth discussed above, along with their likely cultural sources and the time-frame for their incorporation into the myth, are summarised in the following table:

| <b>Sources of the Hesiodic Promethean Myth</b>                           |                          |   |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Mythic Element</b>  | <b>Source</b>            | <b>Source Details &amp; Approximate Dates</b>   |
| 1. Prologue – Succession Myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus ( <i>Theogony</i> ) | Semitic & Chthonic       | Hittite/Hurrian (before 12 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE), Phoenician (11 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE) & Pelasgian                       |
| 2. Genealogy of Prometheus   | Semitic                  | Hittite/Hurrian (before 12 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE)   |
| 3. Negotiation at Mekone: Initiation of Sacrifice, Deception of Zeus     | Indo-Euro                | Dorian, after Hittite split (4400 BCE), but before Bronze Age (3300 BCE)  |
| 4. Zeus Angered & Withholds Fire from Men                                | Indo-Euro                | Dorian (4400-3300 BCE)  |
| 5. Prometheus Steals Fire Back   | Indo-Euro                | Dorian (4400-3300 BCE)  |
| 6. Hephaestus Creates Evil of Woman / Pandora with assistance of Athena  | Indo-Euro (?) & Chthonic | Possibly originally Ionian (c.3300 BCE), with later addition of Pelasgian Pandora after Mello-Greek migration to Greece (post 2300 BCE) |
| 7. Hermes Gives Pandora to Epimetheus                                    | Chthonic                 | Pelasgian (post 2300 BCE)   |
| 8. Pandora Opens Jar, Releases Evil Fates, Retains Hope                  | Chthonic                 | Pelasgian (post 2300 BCE)   |
| 9. Zeus Gives Men Additional Evil of Mortality                           | ?                        | ?   |
| 10. Punishment of Prometheus   | Indo-Euro                | Ionian, after Hittite split (4400 BCE), but before Bronze Age (3300 BCE)  |
| 11. Heracles Kills Bird Eating Liver                                     | Indo-Euro                | Likely Ionian (4400-3300 BCE)   |
| 12. Zeus' Anger Abates   | Indo-Euro                | Likely Ionian (4400-3300 BCE)   |
| 13. Epilogue – Five Ages of Man ( <i>Works &amp; Days</i> )              | Semitic                  | Mesopotamian (11 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE)   |

What is particularly interesting about the proto-Promethean myth, as it relates to the larger subject of this dissertation, is what it reveals of the formation of pre-historic Indo-European society. The essential elements of the Promethean myth were preserved in the oral traditions of various poetic societies that date back literally thousands of years. The composition of the primary texts preserved by the *Homeridae* and the society of poets dedicated to the Helicon Muses to which Hesiod belonged are datable to no earlier than the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. Elements of the poetic traditions preserved by these societies, as well as the societies themselves, though, may be dated back to before the era of Indo-European unity, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. This would seem to imply a high degree of continuity and stability in these societies. As well, the Promethean myth itself preserves key pre-historic accounts of the creation of fundamental social institutions, such as: marriage, the family hearth, the household, and the performance of ritual sacrifice to the gods. Enlisting social institutions to preserve a mythic tradition that tells of the creation of novel social institutions is also a pattern that will be followed in subsequent versions of the Promethean myths as related by Plato, Bacon and Nietzsche; each of whom tells highly distinctive versions of the Promethean myth that both preserve and modify elements of

its mythic tradition in order to give highly novel accounts of the creation of new social institutions and/or the dawn of a new social order.

The findings of this chapter have several other significant implications for the larger subject of this dissertation. Most importantly, Nietzsche, following Kuhn, has been shown to be fully justified in viewing the Promethean myth as essentially Indo-European in character, and even in assigning it the same importance for that cultural tradition as the myth of the Fall in Genesis has for the Semitic tradition. The Ionic origin of the punishment of Prometheus for the crime of lust also offers insight into his original, Indo-European nature, and corroborates the authenticity of Douris' claim, which Bacon adopts as a centerpiece of his Promethean myth, that Prometheus was punished, not for his theft of fire, but rather for his passion for Athena. Given the degree to which Bacon identifies with the figure of Prometheus, the recovery of the Indo-European analysis also hints at Bacon's own underlying motivations as a philosopher: as someone who lusts for the wisdom of Athena, understood as nothing less than "the force of civilization" and "the organizational wisdom which achieves this", in the words of Burkert (1985, p. 141).



Prometheus giving fire to a satyr with a ceremonial scepter. As Beazley (1939) points out, the spiral iconography on the shaft and lack of smoke or flame emanating from the end of this scepter excludes the possibility of it illustrating the Greek fire instruments usually associated with Prometheus: the stalk of a giant fennel (*nárthêx*) or a torch (*lampás*). However, the spiral iconography comports nicely with Vedic descriptions of a *pramantha*, as a shaft meant for spinning in order to produce fire.

Source: Plate XV. – Lekanis-Lid in Berlin, 2578

## Chapter 4 – The Promethean Myth from Hesiod to Sophocles

[T]he transformation of Hesiod's ambivalent petty trickster into the founder of human civilization depicted in the *Prometheus Vincetus* did not originate in the fifth century but was already familiar when the play was first produced, and resulted from the assimilation of Prometheus to a major figure of the Mesopotamian pantheon, the crafty Enki/Ea.

Stephanie West, 'Prometheus Orientalized' (1994)

### A. Introduction – The Promethean *Mūthos* Orientalised

This chapter examines the post-Hesiodic development of the Promethean myth during the archaic period of ancient Greece, down to the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This examination is made necessary by two of the underlying premises employed in Part II's analysis of the *Prometheia* trilogy: first, that the trilogy is not an authentic work of Aeschylus; and second, that its actual author was profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Protagoras of Abdera. Indeed, as will be argued in that part, the *Prometheia* trilogy as a whole is a comprehensive expression of Protagorean philosophy – rivaled only by its rather critical portrayal in Plato's *Protagoras* – and that *Prometheus Bound* constitutes nothing less than the largest single extant fragment of this philosophy, albeit expressed in mythic form. As Ira Mark points out in his analysis of Protagoras' influence on the composition of yet another masterwork of Athenian culture, the frieze on the east face of the Parthenon:

Every creative monument, ancient or modern, grows forth from a rich, distinctive play of tradition and innovation. Not even the most revolutionary art can start wholly afresh. (1984, p. 289)

Like the Parthenon frieze, the *Prometheia* trilogy also constitutes a monumental reworking of a traditional *mythos*, employing a "distinctive play of tradition and innovation" to depict the novel ideas of Protagorean philosophy. Examining the development of the Promethean myth as it existed prior to the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy, therefore, provides the insight necessary for distinguishing tradition from innovation in the play, and thereby identifying and interpreting its specifically Protagorean ideas.

This chapter, then, traces the historical development of the Promethean myth in the archaic period with an eye to providing the background necessary for more clearly identifying and interpreting the specifically Protagorean ideas in the *Prometheia* trilogy; i.e. it casts light on what the *mythos* of the play signifies for interpreting the meaning of the *logos* of Protagoras. For, as will be seen in Part II, the *Prometheia* trilogy radically recasts the traditional Promethean

myth as it existed in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and also reprises archaic elements. Examining the historical development of the myth, therefore, reveals the cultural sources for the mythic elements employed in the trilogy – whether Indo-European, chthonic or Semitic – and provides the means for assessing which aspects of the myth the author had to exclude, substantially alter, or even create out of whole cloth, in order to express the play's specifically Protagorean ideas. As will be argued in Part II, many of the more significant inclusions / exclusions and/or revisions / fabrications of the *Prometheia* trilogy were necessitated by its unique role as a dramatic vehicle for expressing revolutionary Protagorean conceptions of human history and socio-political development. All told, then, this chapter provides not only the historic background for determining the cultural origins of the mythic elements incorporated into the *Prometheia* trilogy; it also provides a mythographical basis for determining why particular mythic elements were chosen, excluded, altered or created, and what these apparently aesthetic choices signify in terms of depicting the thought of the great sophist.

Scant few extant source texts refer to the Promethean myth in the two hundred years after Hesiod is thought to have lived, from the mid-7<sup>th</sup> to the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Ganz, 1993, p. 157); and what few do exist are mostly preserved only in fragments. In piecing these fragments together, though, it is apparent that the Promethean myth formed a popular subject that was elaborated upon by an number of authors writing in a wide variety of poetic styles: lyric, dithyrambic, comic and tragic. By the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the Promethean myth also began to receive serious prose treatment at the hands of various mythographers, historians and philosophers. At the same time, the Promethean myth also became a prominent feature in popular culture, as indicated by its presence in both Aesopian fables and Attic *scolia*, or 'crooked songs', so named for the poetic metre in which they were written. Both fables and *scolia* were recited by somewhat less than original participants in the *symposia*, or drinking parties, that were such a prominent feature of Athenian social life, and that often required their participants to engage in some form of story-telling, extemporaneous or recited. From this examination, it also becomes apparent that many new mythic elements were incorporated into the Promethean myth after Hesiod, and some Hesiodic elements were either modified or retired. The remainder of this chapter, then, surveys the development of the major themes and motifs employed in the Promethean myth prior to the premiere of the *Prometheia* trilogy in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.



## B. The Genealogy of Prometheus

Following the death of Hesiod, the society of poets dedicated to the Helicon muses continued to compose poems that emulated the tradition to which they belonged, and that eventually became ascribed to the most famous member of their order. One of the more important early elaborations on Hesiodic myth was the *Catalogues of Woman and Eoiae* [Heroines], major parts of which focused on tracing the genealogy of the descendents of Prometheus. The *Catalogues* appear to have been written sometime between 560 and 520 (West M. L., *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*, 1985, p. 136), although the oral tradition from which it borrowed is likely much older, and the written composition of some parts of it may date to as early as 776 BCE. The *Catalogues* essentially appends a genealogy of humans to the genealogies of the gods presented in *Theogony*, primarily by describing the descendents of various women who mated with the gods. White interprets the presence of matrilineal genealogies in the *Catalogue* as revealing traces of a primeval "mutterrecht" that once existed in northern Greece (Introduction, 2002 [orig. publ. 1914]) that presumably predates the arrival of migrating Greek tribes. Read in this light, Zeus' many sexual conquests may be interpreted as mytho-poetic representations of the historical absorption of various chthonic, goddess worshipping cultures by newly arrived Greeks. This matriarchal presence in the *Catalogues* thus attests to the continuing influence of chthonic cultures on the poetic tradition pseudonymously attributed to Hesiod.

Despite the strong matrilineal influence on the earliest genealogies of the *Catalogues*, its fairly extensive fragmentary remains suggests that it actually began with a genealogy that traced the various descendents of Prometheus; implying that he was, in essence, the first human. This prominence likely reflects a close mythic relation between Prometheus and Phoroneus, the "first inhabitant of the land," who first gathered people in communities to become the primordial king of the Doric city of Argos (Pausanias 2.15.5). This assimilation of the two sets of myths may even represent something of a recovery of the original, Indo-European proto-Prometheus from which they likely both derived, given how Pausanias also describes Phoroneus as having discovered fire and given it to mankind (2.19.5). Fragment #1 of the *Catalogue* names Deucalion ('new wine sailor') as the son of Prometheus [*Promethéôs*] and Pronoea [*Pronoîês*]; and Hellen, the eponymous founder of the Greeks, as the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha ('fiery red'). In *Theogony*, by comparison, Hesiod names Pronoë [*Pronón*] as the 49<sup>th</sup> of the fifty daughters of Nereus and Doris, daughter of Okeanos, who were collectively known as the

Nereides. Nereides were marine nymphs associated with the waters of the Mediterranean, as opposed to Naiades and Okeanides, the respective nymphs of freshwater and the great ocean. The 48<sup>th</sup> Nereide was named Themisto ('Oracular') and the 50<sup>th</sup> was Nemertes ('Unerring') (261-2), both of which provide clues for discerning the intended meaning of the name Pronoë.

The version of fragment #1 of the *Catalogues* referred to above (recovered from a Scholion on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 3.1086) is significant for containing one of the very few classical references to Pronoea as the wife of Prometheus. As *prónoia* literally means 'foresight,' the mythical marriage of Prometheus and Pronoea would seem to indicate an intention to strengthen the association between Prometheus and the concept of 'forethought,' thereby continuing a trend originally begun in archaic Greek folk-etymology and mythology with the creation of Epimetheus, and continued in a similar vein by the allegorical genealogy provided by Alkman.<sup>20</sup> However, the *Catalogues'* identification of Pronoea as the wife of Prometheus was challenged very early on by Acousilaus of Argos, a late 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE logographer and mythographer, who is also reckoned by some as one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece (Smith, 1867, p. 18). In a *scholion* on Homer's *Odyssey* (10.2), the scholiast mentions that, while Hesiod names the wife of Prometheus as Pronoea (*Pronóês*), Acousilas names Hesione (*Hesiônês*), the daughter of Okeanos, as the wife of Prometheus. This genealogical shift is particularly significant, as it is the one that would later be adopted by the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, who also names Hesione the wife of Prometheus (*Prometheus Bound* 560). A close contemporary of the *Prometheia* poet, Herodotus (c.484-c.425 BCE), by comparison, asserts that the name of Prometheus' wife was Asia (*History* 4.45.3).

The question of Prometheus' marriage to Pronoea has considerable bearing on the larger question of his relationship with Athena; for Pronaea [*Pronaía*] was one of the surnames of the virgin goddess (Schmitz, Pronaea, 1867), under which appellative she even had a chapel specifically dedicated to her at Delphi, located in front of the temple of Apollo (Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 21; Herodotus 1.92; Pausanias 9.10.2; *Suida*, s.v. *Pronoia Athêna*). One factor that may have driven the change in the name of the wife of Prometheus, therefore, was that Pronoea cast aspersions upon the virgin (*parthénos*) goddess to which the Parthenon, the

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<sup>20</sup> Alkman's fragment 64 is cited by Plutarch in *On the Fortune of the Romans*, 4.318a, where he writes: "For Fortune is not 'inflexible', as Pindar has it, nor 'plying a double steering paddle'; rather she is Sister of Good Order (*Eunomia*) and Persuasion and daughter of Foresight [*Promathêas*], As in Alcman's account of her lineage." trans. Campbell (1991, p. 49)

supreme architectural symbol of Athenian political sovereignty, was dedicated. As Robert Graves observes:

The Athenians were at pains to deny that their goddess took Prometheus as her lover, which suggests that he had been locally identified with Hephaestus, another fire-god and inventor, of whom the same story was told [...] because he shared a temple with Athene on the Acropolis. (1992, p. 149)

In other words, the Athenians were motivated to substitute Pronoea with the name of another goddess, stemming from a desire to safeguard the virginal reputation of their patron goddess, the very symbol of their political supremacy. Unfortunately, Graves does not identify the source text from which he derives the assertion that the "Athenians were at pains to deny that their goddess took Prometheus as her lover," and the research conducted for this dissertation has not been able to bring it to light. Perhaps they doth protest too much, though, thereby verifying the truth of the accusation. Interestingly, though, at least one other version of fragment #1 cited by a different scholiast substitutes "Pandora [*Pandôras*]" for Pronoea; and in another fragment of the *Catalogues* (F 4 West), her name is given as Pryneie [*Pryneîês*] or Prynœ [*Prynôês*], all three of which West dubs "doubtless corrupt" (1985, p. 50). This general pattern of altering the name away from Pronoea would seem to arise from more than simple errors inadvertently made in the process of transcribing manuscripts; rather, they seem to indicate a persistent reluctance among later mythic scholars to give credence to Prometheus' marriage to a Nereide whose name so closely resembled a well-known epithet of the virgin goddess, Athena. In this light, Douris' reference to Prometheus' passion for Athena may also be interpreted as somewhat of a poke in the eye directed toward Athenians; a gesture perhaps arising from his experience of being exiled from Samos by Athens as a boy, along with his family, between 352 and 324 BCE.

The descendents of Prometheus are traced in several subsequent fragments of the *Catalogues*. Fragment #2 purports to document the early ancestry of the Latins and Greeks from the eponymous brothers Latinus and Graecus. This fragment is recorded by Ioannes Lydus of Byzantium (490-570 CE) who cites Hesiod as having said that Pandora, the daughter of Deucalion, was "joined in love with father Zeus," resulting in the birth of "Graecus, staunch in battle." (trans. White) Fragment #3, by comparison, traces the early ancestry of the inhabitants of Macedonia and Magnesia. It is recorded by the Byzantine scholar, Constantine VII (905-959 CE), who cites Hesiod as having written that Deucalion's daughter, Thyia, conceived two sons by Zeus: Magnes and Macedon. Fragment #4, finally, describes the sons of the "war-loving king"

Hellen: Dorus, Xuthus and Aeolus. As recorded by Plutarch (c.46-120 CE)(*Moralia*, p. 747), these brothers fathered the major branches of the Greek race: Dorus, the Dorians; Xuthus, the Ionians and Achaeans; and Aeolus, who delighted in horses, the Aeolians. The sons of Aeolus, in turn, became "kings dealing justice," although some apparently performed this task better than others, given the appellatives applied to some of their names: Cretheus, Athamas, "clever [*aiólómetis*]" Sisyphus, "wicked [*ädikos*]" Salmoneus, and "overbold [*hýpérthymos*]" Perieres. These genealogies generally parallel the historic development of linguistic communities within ancient Greek, and point to a sophisticated, if occasionally distorted, ancient Greek understanding of the genealogical relations of their language, myths, and political history.

Fragment #5 provides little genealogical information, aside from stating that: "Those who were descended from Deucalion used to rule over Thessaly." (trans. White) However, the Scholiast citing the passage (on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.266) attributes it to both Hesiod and Hecataeus. Hecataeus of Miletus (fl. 500, died c.476 BCE) was one of the earliest composers of Greek history and geography in prose. In another fragment attributed to him, Hecateus also describes Deucalion as the father of Orestheus, who moved to Asia Minor, where he discovered cultivation of the grape-vine (*FGrH* 1 F 15). Fragment #68 of the *Catalogues* also names another illustrious son of Deucalion: Idomeneus, one of the suitors of Argive Helen and leader of the Cretans at the siege of Troy, who was also the grandson of Minos, the king of Crete. This would seem to imply that Pyrrha originally hailed from Crete. On the other hand, it may simply represent a transposition of Prometheus' genealogy to a Cretan setting, as Diodorus Siculus (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE) citing the authority of earlier historians, writes that Deucalion was the son of Minos and father of Idomeneus (5.79.4).

Fragment #82 of the *Catalogue* relates a myth about the origin of the Lelegian people, whom Zeus is said to have given to Deucalion in the form of "stones gathered out of the earth. So out of stones mortal men were made, and they were called people." (trans. White) The Leleges were considered one of the aboriginal peoples of southwest Anatolia, as indicated by Homer's mention of them in association with the Carians, Paeonians, Caucones, and Pelasgi (*Iliad* 10.429). The myth of Zeus generating children from stones for Deucalion and Pyrrha thus represents a further assimilation of chthonic elements into the genealogy of Prometheus. Another iteration of the myth of a people generated from stones is told by Pindar (518-466 BCE), who was born in the Doric city of Thebes. Pindar employs this motif in *Olympian Ode* #9,

written in 468 to honour the victory of Epharmostos of Opous for the remarkable achievement of becoming a *periodonikēs*, or victor in all four 'crown' games. In this ode, Pindar tells how:

Pyrrha and Deukalion came down from Parnassos  
And first established their home, and, without coupling,  
Founded one fold, an offspring of stone:  
And they were called people.

(lines 43-6, trans. Race)

Pindar then proceeds to sketch a genealogy for the stone-derived offspring of Pyrrha and Deucalion, as follows:

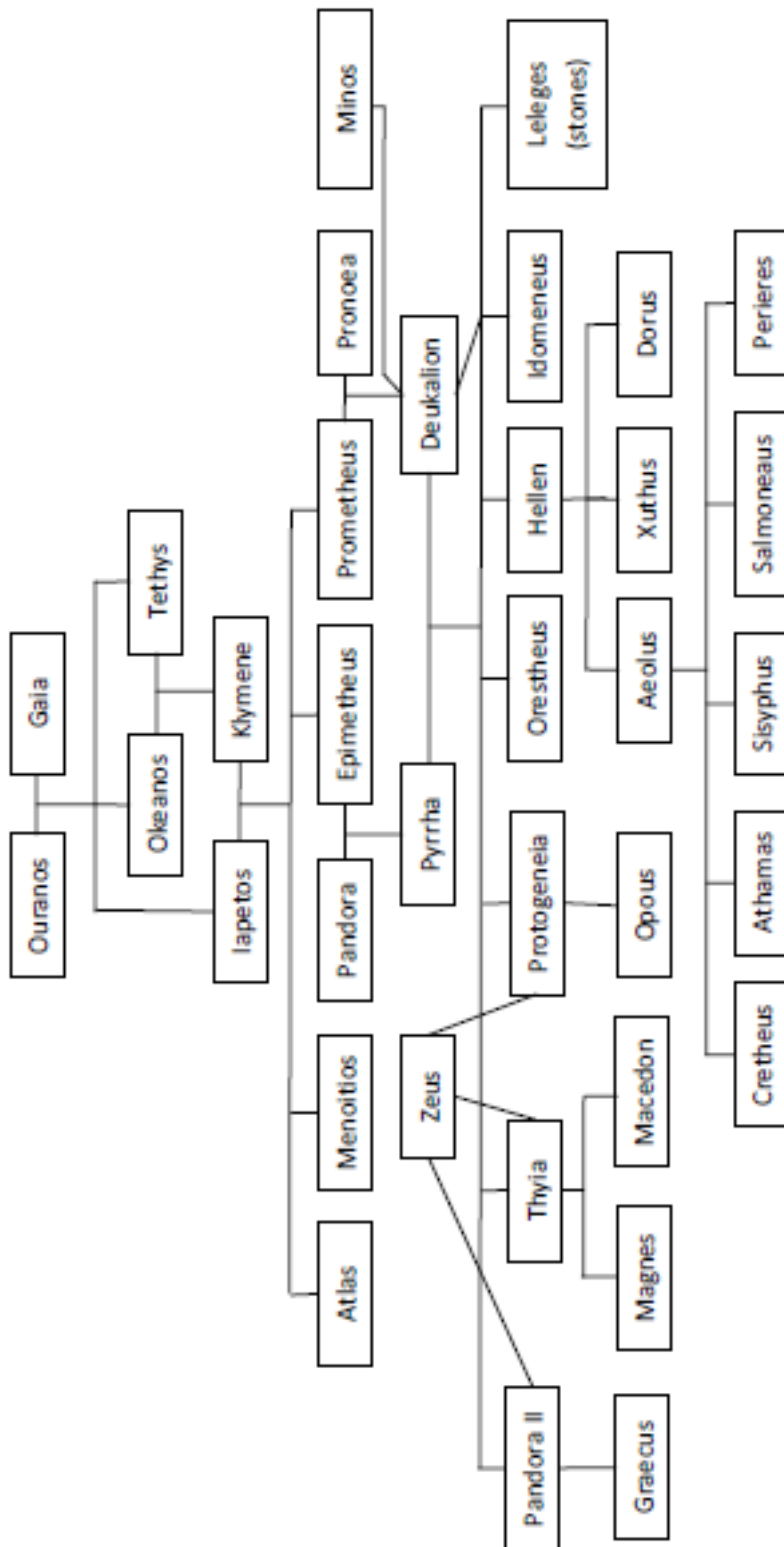
From them came  
your ancestors of the bronze shields  
in the beginning, sons from the daughters of Iapetos'  
race and from the mightiest sons of Kronos,  
    being always a native line of kings,  
until the lord of Olympos  
carried off the daughter of Opous  
    from the land of the Epeians and quietly  
lay with her in the Mainalian glens, and brought her  
to Lokros, lest time destroy him and impose a destiny  
with no children.

(Ibid. lines 52-61)

The genealogy Pindar presents in this passage requires some scrutiny to interpret. Its central subject is Protogenia ('first-born'), whom Pindar describes as "the daughter of Opous". Opous was the chief city of the Locrians, who lived in central Greece and are thought to have spoken a Dorian dialect. Protogenia was considered the mythical mother of Opous, the people of which Pindar describes as having descended from the "sons from the daughters of Iapetos' race and from the mightiest sons of Kronos". The most obvious identity of "the daughters of Iapetos' race" (i.e. the race of Titans) is the Okeanides, the three thousand nymph daughters of Okeanos and Tethys, described in *Theogony* as haunting the earth and deep waters, and dwelling near rivers (lines 351-67). One of these Okeanides, Klymene, had four sons with Iapetos: Atlas, Meniotios, Prometheus and Epimetheus (*Theogony* 509-511). The "mightiest sons of Kronos," on the other hand, are the Olympian gods, led by Zeus, who overthrew the king of the Titans. Pindar thus magnifies the glory of the greatest sons of Opous by having Protogenia, a native descendent of the Titans, couple with Zeus, "the lord of Olympos". This 'marriage' between Zeus and Protogenia may thus be interpreted as a mytho-poetic depiction of the historical

integration of Indo-European and chthonic cultures in central Greece. Through his son Deucalion, Prometheus thus came to be considered the ancestor of the entire human race.

## Hesiodic Genealogy of Prometheus



### C. The Creation of Man

Related to the genealogies of Prometheus positing him as the ancestor of the human race are descriptions of him as the actual creator of mankind; a theme that may be seen to build upon a parallel to Hephaestus' creation of women / Pandora. Gantz claims that the earliest surviving references to Prometheus having created mankind date from the fourth century (1993, p. 843). The validity of this assessment is challenged, though, by the existence of a fragment attributed to Sappho, and two fables attributed to Aesop. Sappho was a lyric poetess from Eresus on Lesbos, who was born sometime between 630 and 612 BCE, and died around 570. In Servius' commentary on Virgil, (early 5<sup>th</sup> cent. AD) he makes a reference to the Promethean myth:

After creating men Prometheus is said to have stolen fire and revealed it to men. The gods were angered by this and sent two evils on the earth, women and disease; such is the account given by Sappho and Hesiod. (Sappho, Fragment 206, trans. Campbell)

Servius most likely attributes the mythic element of Prometheus "creating men [*factos a se homines*]" to Sappho alone, as it is nowhere mentioned in even the pseudonymous works



*Prometheus Creating Man* (1589) (Image censored by order of the University Graduate Office.)  
Engraving after drawings by Hendrik Goltzius (1558-1617) illustrating Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.  
Image Source: Spaightwood Galleries [www.spaightwoodgalleries.com](http://www.spaightwoodgalleries.com)



ascribed to Hesiod, such as the *Catalogues*. Rather, Hesiod explicitly names Kronos as the creator of man in his golden age (*Works & Days* 110), and Zeus and the Olympians as having both made and done away with several generations of man in his subsequent ages: silver, bronze, heroic and iron (*Works & Days* 128-182). If Servius' citation of Sappho is an authentic expression of her poetry, it would be the earliest explicit reference to Prometheus creating (*factos*) men, as opposed to being merely their progenitor.

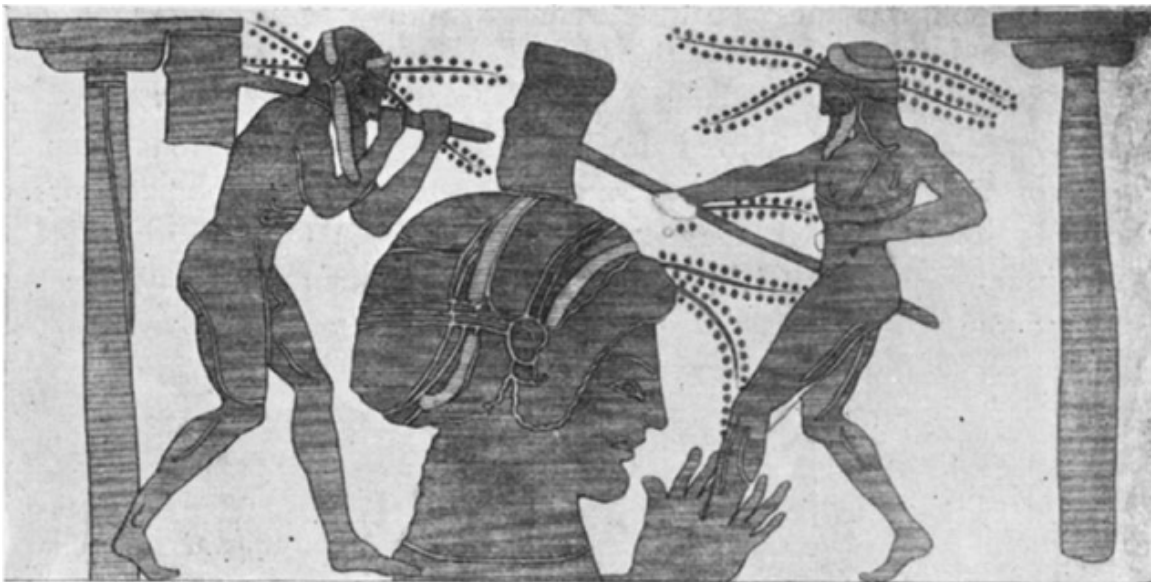
Of the fables attributed to Aesop (c.620-564[?] BCE), two of them (#124 'Zeus, Prometheus, Athena and Momos', and #322 'Prometheus and Men', ed. Temple) specifically designate Prometheus as the creator of man, particularly with respect to the faculties of his mind (cf. Athenaeus, 15.694d-e; Eustathius, 1574.18). Many doubts have been expressed as to the authorial authenticity of Aesop's fables, many of which are justified. Fables #124 and #322 are likely among the authentic ones, though, based upon two critical factors: both fables employ divine rather than naturalistic characters; and the epilogues of both refer to them as *logos* ('a story') rather than *mythos* ('a fable'). Both of these features tend to be associated with earlier, authentic elements of the Aesopian corpus (Robert K.G. Temple, 1998, pp. xiii-xiv).

A particularly interesting linguistic parallel to *Prometheus Bound*, with respect to the shaping of human intellect, occurs in one of the earliest plays of Sophocles (c.497/6 - winter 406/5 BCE). In *Triptolemus*, which premiered in 468 BCE, and was reputedly the first play Sophocles produced,<sup>21</sup> Demeter describes to Triptolemus – yet another archetype of primordial man – the journey he will undertake to spread the knowledge she's given him, of the blessings of agriculture (Sophocles, Vol. III - Fragments, 2003, p. 300). She prefaces this prophecy with the following phrase: "And place my words in the tablets [*déltoisí*] of your mind [*phrenòs*]!" (fr. 597, trans. Lloyd-Jones) As it happens, almost this exact same phrase is enunciated by Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*, where he describes to Io the long journey that lays ahead of her, and instructs her to: "engrave it on the recording tablets [*déltois*] of your mind [*phrenôn*]." (line 790, trans. Smyth) This close verbal parallel thus provides linguistic evidence for Sophocles' influence on the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy.

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<sup>21</sup> Pliny, *Natural History* 18.12.1

Sophocles is also known to have produced a satyr play, entitled *Pandora or The Hammerers*, for which the date of production is unknown. One of the fragments from this play may contain a highly significant reference to Prometheus in his role as creator of men, with parallels to Protagoras' version of the Promethean myth, as related in Plato's *Protagoras*. The title of the play would seem to indicate that its chorus was composed of satyrs engaged in hammering (Sophocles, Vol. III - Fragments, 2003, pp. 250-1). Perhaps they were working for Hephaestus in this capacity; a role they are known to have performed in other dramas. Perhaps they were even helping him fashion Pandora, as he does in Hesiod (Cf. *Theogony* 571-602, *Works & Days* 60-82). On the other hand, a vase dating from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE also depicts a group of satyrs with hammers pounding a giant head representing Ge as she rises out of the earth (Harrison, *Pandora's Box*, 1900, p. 106). This is likely a reference to the ancient agricultural practice of breaking up earth-clods with hammers after tilling in order to prepare the soil for cultivation.



Satyrs pound Ge/Pandora's head with hammers as she rises from the Earth  
Image Source: Harrison (1900, p. 106).

Only two fragmentary lines are preserved from *Pandora or The Hammerers*. In fragment 482 of Sophocles, preserved in the *Medical Lexicon* of Erotian (fr. 10), one of the play's characters instructs another to:

first begin to mould [*órgázein*] the clay [*pêlòn*] with your hands [*cheroîn*].  
(trans. Lloyd-Jones)

Referencing the authority of Hemsterhuis (Pollux, 1706), Lloyd-Jones (Sophocles, Vol. III - Fragments, 2003, pp. 250-1) maintains that it is Athena who instructs Prometheus how to mould men in this passage. However, this interpretation is plausibly challenged by several scholars. Pearson (Sophocles, Pearson, Jebb, & Headlam, 1917, p. 136), by contrast, argues that Athena instructs Hephaestus, who is moulding Pandora, paralleling the description of Hesiod (op. cit.). Roberts (Pandora, 1914), finally, argues that the fragment refers not to the moulding of Pandora, but rather to the moulding of Woman by Prometheus under her direction. As the question of which of these versions is correct has direct bearing on the issue of the elevation and apotheosis of Prometheus in the *Prometheia* trilogy, as discussed in Part II, it will be briefly addressed here.

On the surface, fragment 482 would seem to be a fairly straightforward allusion to the dual role that Prometheus is well-known to have played, as both the creator of humans and patron god of potters. However, the particular motif of Prometheus creating men by moulding them from clay is not otherwise found in the Promethean myth prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>i</sup> In fact, the only author prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE who even remotely associates Prometheus with creating humans by moulding them from clay is Protagoras, in the Promethean myth he tells in the dialogue of Plato named for him, where he describes "the gods" as having moulded all mortal creatures from earth and fire (Plato, *Protagoras* 320d). If the interpretation of Hemsterhuis and Lloyd-Jones is correct, *Pandora Or The Hammerers* would have contained by far the earliest extant reference to Prometheus having moulded man, even allowing for doubt as to what point in Sophocles' career he wrote it. For this reason, I am more strongly inclined to believe the interpretation of Pearson, that fr. 482 contains the words of instruction Athena offers Hephaestus as he moulds Pandora.

In the other surviving fragment of *Pandora*, finally, someone describes how a woman will massage an old man's penis after getting him drunk off a golden horn of wine (fr. 483). This fragment is, perhaps, a reference to how Pandora will charm witless Epimetheus into accepting her as a gift from Zeus, thus bringing about all the other evils that infect the world. It might also be read as a clever allusion and counterpoint to the moulding of Pandora from clay in fragment 482; the woman, Pandora, moulding the penis of Epimetheus in order to create the race of Man and Woman.

#### D. Deucalion and the Flood Myth

Another significant post-Hesiodic addition to the Promethean corpus is a flood myth that became associated with Deucalion. The earliest extant reference to Deucalion in the context of a flood myth is authored by Epicharmus (c.540 to 450 or 443 BCE) who appears to have made it the primary subject of a comedy titled *Prometheus or Pyrrha*. Epicharmus was "the chief comic poet among the Dorians" (Smith, 1867, p. 29), and lived in Sicily from 484 or 483 until his death, under the patronage of Hieron, the tyrant of Syracuse. During this time, Epicharmus also became associated with Deinolochus (fl. 488 BCE), another comic poet who also wrote in the Doric dialect. Aelian also mentions that Deinolochus employs an Ass and Snake element (see below) in his comedy on the Promethean myth. During his time on Sicily, Epicharmus would also have undoubtedly come in contact with Aeschylus, who spent time there once or twice during the 470s as a guest of Hieron, and returned to the island in 458, where he died in 456 or 455. At around this same time Pindar also spent time in Sicily at the invitation of Hieron, arriving there in about 473 and remaining for no more than four years (Smith, 1867, p. 368).

Given that Aeschylus' satyr play, *Promêtheús Pyrkaeus*, premiered in 472, along with the *Persae* trilogy, it is tempting to conjecture that Aeschylus might have been influenced by the Dorian conceptions of the Promethean myth, as related by Epicharmus, Deinolochus and Pindar. This influence might also help explain Aeschylus' rather unique use of a Doric cognate of Prometheus in *Suppliant Women* (463 BCE), where the Danaids, the fifty daughters of Danaus, warn Pelasgus, the King of Argos:

May the people who control the state  
guard its privileges free from fear—  
a prudent government [*promathis*] counseling wisely for the public prosperity  
[*eúkoinómêtis árchá*].

lines 698-700, trans. Smyth

This undeniably Doric etymological influence may also point to a Doric influence on Aeschylus' overall conception of the Promethean myth. As will be seen below, where *Promêtheús Pyrkaeus* is more closely considered, Aeschylus focuses upon particular elements – the theft and gift of fire – that were identified in chapter 3, on the Hesiodic Prometheus, as most likely being of Doric origin. Deinolochus and Epicharmus, by contrast, seem to have been unsatisfied with (re-)telling what must have been a traditional Doric myth, and instead innovate upon it by incorporating more novel Semitic elements, as will be seen below.

Returning to Epicharmus, the contents of *Prometheus or Pyrrha* are known only from papyri fragments recovered by archaeologists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from an ancient garbage dump at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. While a few of these fragments are large enough to convey the meaning of the passages preserved, most are so small as to be indecipherable. Given its title, the action of *Prometheus or Pyrrha* likely revolved around a decision that Deucalion had to make pitting his wife, Pyrrha, against his father, Prometheus. Pyrrha presumably inherited all the charms of her mother, Pandora; in Ovid's description of the loves of mythical characters, he describes Deucalion as having jumped into the sea to resolve his mad passion for her (*Heroides* 15.167-70). Unfortunately, Pyrrha must also have inherited all the manifest flaws of her mother *and* father, given the evidence provided by the content of the two most legible fragments of *Prometheus or Pyrrha*.

Fragment #1 of Epicharmus (ed. Austin) relates what appears to be an on-stage discussion between Prometheus, Deucalion and Pyrrha. Deucalion asks a series of questions about the construction of an ark, to which Prometheus provides answers. Pyrrha interjects with her suspicions that Prometheus intends to steal it for himself, to which Prometheus retorts that she has a nasty mind (Webster, 1962, p. 88). In a second large fragment of the play (#27), someone describes "as a thing of the past the difficulty of cooking by sunlight and taking a bath without a fire." (Pickard-Cambridge, 1966, p. 267) Pickard-Cambridge conjectures that this reference to the benefits brought about by Prometheus' gift of fire is given in answer to a complaint made about the disastrous flood that was brought about by the divine debt incurred by his theft of fire.

At around the same time that Epicharmus wrote his Promethean comedy, Pindar also employed the motif of a flood of divine origin. In *Olympian Ode #9*, written in 468, he uses the Deucalion myth to preface his story about the Lelegian people generated from stones, writing:

Indeed they tell that  
mighty waters had flooded over  
the dark earth, but,  
through Zeus' contriving, an ebb tide suddenly  
drained the floodwater.

Pindar, *Olympian 9*, lines 43-6, trans. Race

Rather than considering Pyrrha and Deucalion to have been the aboriginal humans from whom all others descended, then, Pindar instead designates them as the sole survivors of a great flood,

who then go on to repopulate the world, likely following the story he encountered during his time in Sicily.

From these earliest mentions by Epicharmus and Pindar, Deucalion is consistently associated with the flood myth by later mythographers, who describe him and Pyrrha as the sole survivors of a great flood brought about by Zeus, stemming from his anger at the crimes committed by men (cf. Apollodorus, *The Library*, 1.7.2; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.18.7-8, 1.39.1, 5.7.1, 10.6.2). In those later accounts, it is said that, before Zeus brought about the flood, Prometheus warned Deucalion to build a boat for himself and Pyrrha. After Zeus caused the waters to subside, in Pindar's version, they grounded at Mount Parnassus, a few miles north of Delphi. In later versions, by comparison, they land at Mount Othrys in Thessaly (Hellanicus of Lesbos), or on Mount Etna in Sicily (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 153), or Mount Athos in Chalkidiki (Servius' commentary on Virgil's *Bucolics*, 6.41). In these accounts, they are advised by an oracle to throw their mother's bones over their shoulder, which they correctly interpret to mean the stones of 'mother' earth; those thrown thus by Deucalion became men, and those by Pyrrha, women.

Robert Graves argues that the myth of Deucalion's flood "has the same origin as the Biblical legend of Noah" (1992, p. 141); a view unqualifiedly endorsed by West (1985, p. 56). West supports his judgement by pointing to the existence of many parallels to the flood myth contained in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE Akkadian epic, *Atrahasis*, the origins of which can be traced back even further to Sumerian myth. In *Atrahasis*, Enki frustrates Enlil's attempts to destroy humankind by means of several different methods, the last time by floods. He does so by advising a human, Atrahasis ('extremely wise') of Shuruppak, to construct a boat to escape the coming flood. Epicharmus' and Pindar's incorporation of the flood myth into the Deucalion element of the Promethean myth thus assimilates one of the central stories of the Semitic mythic tradition – on the 'second creation' of a new generation of man after a great flood of divine origin – to a traditional Indo-European myth of human origins. Given the ubiquity of the flood story in Semitic myth, it is difficult to say for certain from where it might have been transmitted into Greek myth. The geographic proximity of Sicily to Carthage, though, would seem to point to the likelihood of Phoenician origins.

## E. Thetis and the Mortality of Zeus

The issue of Zeus' mortality is first raised in the extant sources in fragments attributed to Epimenides of Knossos (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Crete was home to a large population of Dorians, and in a lost poem of Epimenides, entitled *Cretica*, Zeus' son, Minos, recites a panegyric in which he calls all Cretans liars for maintaining that Zeus was mortal:

They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one –  
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!  
But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever;  
For in thee we live and move and have our being. (trans. Bruce)

This fragment was first discovered by J. Rendel Harris (1907) in the Syriac *Gannat Busamé* or Garden of Delights, a commentary on the scriptures by Isho'dad, a 9<sup>th</sup> century church father, who probably learned it through the writings of Theodore of Antioch (c.350-428 CE), Bishop of Mopsuestia from 392-428. The authenticity of this fragment has been questioned by some (Powell, 1916) and endorsed by others (Nicklen, 1916) (Bruce, 1954), but at the very least, the second and fourth lines are known to be quoted directly in the *New Testament*: in *Acts of the Apostles* 17.28 and *Epistle to Titus* 1.12; the first of which is attributed to Epimenides by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, 14). As mentioned above, Diodorus Siculus also likely cites the authority of Epimenides in naming Deucalion as the son of Minos and father of Idomoneus (*History* 5.79.4). Pindar also questions the immortality of Zeus, or at least points to his fear of mortality, where he writes that Zeus "lay with" Protogenia in order to guarantee himself an heir, "lest time destroy him and impose a destiny [*pótmōn*] with no children." (*Olympian* 9, lines 59-61) From a very early stage, then, the issue of Zeus' mortality is consistently associated with the Dorian Prometheus, which may have derived from a much older Proto-Indo-European myth preserved by the Dorians, and cognate with, for example, the Norse myth of *Ragnarök*, which tells of the twilight or death of the gods in a final battle (J. P. Mallory, 1997, pp. 180-182).

The doubtful status of Zeus' mortality later becomes a key plot device in the *Prometheia* trilogy, forming the catalyst for reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus. In *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus' mortal fears are aroused by a prophecy told by Prometheus that he heard from his mother, Gaia: that Zeus will be overthrown by a son born of a future union he will perpetrate (764, 768, 910-8). As is revealed in the last play of the trilogy, *Prometheus Bound*, the union that will give rise to this more powerful son is with Thetis, whose name translates as 'disposer' or 'placer,' pointing to an archaic political role. Burkert argues that Thetis is a transformed doublet

of Tethys (Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, 1992, pp. 92-3) the Titaness daughter of Ouranos and Gaia, and both the sister and wife of Okeanos. In the authentic works of Hesiod, though, Thetis is a relatively minor Nereid. In *Theogony*, she is named as the fifth daughter of Nereus and Doris (244); later in the same work, she is described as having been mastered by Peleus, and given birth to Achilles (1006-7). Fragment #57 of the *Catalogues*, by comparison, quotes the author of the *Cypria* (most likely Stasinus of Cyprus) as having written, "that Thetis avoided wedlock with Zeus to please Hera; but that Zeus was angry and swore that she should mate with a mortal." (trans. White).

Thetis plays a considerably more elevated role in Homer, where she intercedes in an Olympian civil war on Zeus' behalf. At the beginning of the *Iliad*, Thetis convinces Zeus to intervene in the Trojan war on the side of the Trojans, at the behest of her son, Achilles. The source of her apparently considerable leverage with Zeus in this regard stems from a rather mysterious passage with no other parallels in early classical literature. In convincing his mother to petition Zeus on his behalf, Achilles recalls a claim he says he often heard her make, that she alone among the immortals:

beat aside shameful destruction from Kronos' son the dark-misted,  
that time when all the other Olympians sought to bind him,  
Hera and Poseidon and Pallas Athene. (*Iliad*, 1.398-400, trans. Lattimore)

When this happened, Thetis alone went forth and freed Zeus from his shackles, and then summoned Briareus, the hundred handed god, to fight on his side. Seeing this, the rebellious gods "were frightened and gave up binding him." This episode supports the conjecture that Thetis once played a much more central and powerful political role in archaic Greek mythology. It also points to Zeus' fear of being overthrown, a curse inherited from his father's father, Ouranos, who cursed Kronos for having castrated and overthrown him, "a monstrous deed for which vengeance later would surely be exacted." (*Theogony* 209-210, trans. Lombardo)

Elsewhere in the *Iliad*, Hephaestus also describes how Thetis and Eurynome, daughter of Ocean, "caught and held" him after his "great fall" (18.395-8). This 'fall' is presumably the same one mentioned earlier in the *Iliad* (1.591-4), where Hephaestus describes how he once attempted to intercede with Zeus on behalf of his mother, Hera. In response, Zeus caught him by the foot and threw him from Olympus. After falling all day long, Hephaestus finally landed on Lemnos, with not much life left in him. There, he was taken care of by the Sintians, a Thracian tribe who dwelt



on the island. In both cases in the *Iliad*, then, Thetis decisively acts to save two gods – Zeus and Hephaestus – from total oblivion.

The already decisive role played by Thetis in Homer expands even further in the classical age, when she becomes the means for Prometheus' deliverance from his ineluctable bonds. The first mention of Thetis in connection with Prometheus is made in a fragment attributed to the dithyrambic poet, Melanippides of Melos (fl. 480 BCE). *Mêlos* (Doric *Malos*) is an island in the southern Aegean that was home to a Dorian population until the Athenian genocide of the population in 416 BCE. In fragment #7 (ed. Edmonds), the Scholiast on *Iliad* 13.350 writes:

but only would he honour Thetis and her strong-heart son

The Scholiast then goes on to explain that:

Hence Melanippides declares that Thetis was with child by Zeus when she was given in marriage to Peleus, her marriage being due to the taunts of Prometheus or Themis.  
(trans. Edmonds)

This version of the Thetis episode differs in several important respects to the one that would later appear in the *Prometheia* trilogy. In the reconciliation that results in the release of Prometheus in *Prometheus Luómenos*, he is said to have warned Zeus against mating with Thetis, as his union with her would result in the birth of a son who would cast him from power. Taking heed of this warning, Zeus gives her in marriage to Peleus instead, with whom she becomes the mother of Achilles. In an *Isthmian Ode* of Pindar written in 478 BCE, by comparison, both Zeus and Poseidon contend for marriage with Thetis, but consent to having her wed the mortal Peleus after Themis reveals that it is fated that she will give birth to a son stronger than his father (*Isthmian* 8.28-40).

## F. The Ass & and the Snake

The story of the Ass and the Snake is particularly important to the subject of this dissertation, as it forms such a key component of Bacon's radical reworking of the Promethean myth in *Of the Wisdom of the Ancients*. The Ass and Snake element appears to have been an early post-Hesiodic addition to the Promethean myth; however, it is only preserved in references to it by two later authors: Nicander of Colophon (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and Aelian (c.170 – c.235 AD), a Roman teacher of rhetoric who wrote in Greek. In both Nicander's *Theriaca* (lines 343-59), a poem 'On Poisonous Animals', and Aelian's *On The Characteristics of Animals* (6.51), a highly poisonous snake is described named the Dipsas ('thirst-provoker') whose bite causes its victims to burn with thirst before they die. After listing the physical characteristics of the snake, both Nicander and Aelian tell closely related versions of the Ass and Snake story in relation to the Promethean myth; both saying that, after Prometheus stole fire, some humans denounced him to Zeus. Zeus became angered at Prometheus, and honoured his human informers by bestowing upon them either "Youth" (Nicander) or a "drug to ward off old age." (Aelian) Being imprudent and tired, though, the foolish mortals loaded Zeus' gift on an ass to transport it home. On its journey homeward, the ass developed a terrible thirst. It came across a spring guarded by a snake, who offered to exchange its burden for a drink of water, to which the ass readily agreed. As a consequence, the snake obtained immortality, sloughing off its skin each year instead of aging; but also took on the ass' thirst, an affliction it thereafter passed on to those it bit. In this way, humans are said to have lost Zeus' gift of immortality, and are thus attended by the ills of old age.

The ass is a perennial butt of popular Greek comedy, often symbolising stubborn foolishness, as demonstrated by its frequent appearance in Aesop's fables. Its presence in the Ass and Snake story thus points to a comic treatment of this particular element of the Promethean myth. The snake and its association with the human loss of immortality, on the other hand, would seem to be of Semitic origin. The snake plays a key role, of course, in having Adam and Eve ejected from the Garden of Eden. An even closer parallel to the story in Aelian and Nicander, though, occurs in the eleventh tablet of the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where Utnapishtim, the survivor of the great flood, tells Gilgamesh of a plant that will give him immortal life. After retrieving this plant from the bottom of the ocean, Gilgamesh embarks toward home, but stops at a pond to bathe. While he bathes, a snake steals the plant and sheds its skin almost at once. No ass is referred to in this story, but the detailed parallels to the snake

motif in the stories related by Nicander and Aelian are so close as to make the connection between them practically undeniable (West M. L., 1997, p. 118).

A particularly informative aspect of Aelian's Ass and Snake story is his citation of the various authors from whom he says he derived it: "Sophocles the tragedy-writer, Deinolochus the rival of Epicharmus, Ibycus of Rhegium, and Aristeas and Apollophanes the writers of comedy." (Edmonds, 1958, p. 97) Aristeas of Proconnesus was a traveler and poet, who probably lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Howatson, 1989, p. 54). Proconnesus was an island in the Propontis settled by Ionian Greeks; however, Aristeas' choice and treatment of mythic subjects was also likely influenced by his extensive travels in the countries north and east of the Euxine Sea (Smith, 1867). Ibycus of Rhegium, on the other hand, was a lyric poet who is known to have flourished between 536-533 BCE. Rhegium was a city on the southern toe of the Italian peninsula, across the strait of Messina from Sicily. It was settled by settlers from Chalcis and Messenia in 720 BCE, but appears to have adopted the Doric dialect and cult practices (Atkinson, 1971, p. 276). While Ibycus was born in Rhegium, and wrote his poetry in a mixture of Doric and Aeolic dialects, though, he lived the better part of his life in the Ionian city of Samos, as a poet in the court of Polycrates (Smith, 1867).

Little is known of Deinolochus other than that he lived around 488 BCE and wrote fourteen plays in the Doric dialect. He is variously described as the son, disciple (Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology, 1849, p. 952) or rival (Aelian, *Natural History*, 6.51) of Epicharmus (c.540-c.450 BCE), who is also known to have imported Semitic elements into his version of the Promethean myth (i.e. the flood myth) as noted above. Apollophanus of Athens was a poet of old Attic comedy, who lived sometime during the late 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. And the "tragedy-writer" to whom Aelian refers is, of course, none other than *the* Sophocles (c.496-406/5 BCE). From a didascalical notice, Sophocles is known to have produced a satyr play as early as the 460s entitled: *Kôphoi* ('*The Dumb Ones*') (Sophocles, Vol. III - Fragments, 2003, pp. 194-6); and from a *scholia* on Colophon's *Theriaca* (Crugnola, 1971, pp. 149-50), it is also known that *Kôphoi* contained the Ass and Snake story. Thus, a consistent strand of the Ass and Snake element can be traced back in the post-Hesiodic Promethean myth to as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and down through to the classical age of Athens.

## G. Aeschylus and the Release of Prometheus

As noted in chapter 2, this dissertation operates from the assumption that Aeschylus is not the author of the trilogy generally known as the *Prometheia*, which is traditionally thought to have consisted of *Prometheus Fire-carrier* [Promêtheús Purphóros], *Prometheus Bound* [Promêtheús Desmôtês], and *Prometheus Unbound* [Promêtheús Luómenos]. This assumption is based on the extensive analysis of Griffith (1977; 1984) and West (1979; 1990, pp. 51-72). Even allowing for Aeschylus not being the author of the *Promethean Trilogy*, though, he is still the undisputed author of at least one play specifically about Prometheus, and another that contained implicit references to Promethean myth; namely, the satyr plays: *Prometheus Fire-kindler* [Promêtheús Purkaeús], and *Sphinx*.

*Prometheus Fire-Kindler* [Promêtheús Purkaeús] was the satyr play that followed the *Persae* trilogy, which premiered in 472 BCE. Interestingly, the *choregia* for *Persae* was none other than the young Pericles (c.495-429 BCE), who used his sponsorship of the production as a springboard for launching his political career. The other plays of the *Persae* trilogy were: *Persians*, *Phineus*, and *Glaucus Potnieus*; the first of which is the earliest surviving tragic play. Several fragments are attributed to "Pyrkaeus" by a variety of authors (fragments 115, 116, 117, 156 & 278); as well, Athenaeus makes several references to what he terms a "satyric Prometheus" (fragments 169, 170, 171 & 172), by which he most likely means Pyrkaeus. Most of the fragments attributed to Pyrkaeus seem to have various aspects of Prometheus' gift of fire as their primary subject. Fragment 115, cited from the *Vocabulary* of Julius Pollux (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), would seem to refer to some of the basic elements needed to make fire: "And linen-lint and long bands of raw flax" (trans. Smyth). Fragments 116 & 117, on the other hand, respectively cited by Galen (129-199/217 CE) and Plutarch (c.46-120 CE), seem to consist of warnings issued to various characters regarding the dangers posed by fire:

And do guard thee well lest a blast strike thy face;  
for it is sharp, and deadly-scorching its hot breaths. (fr. 116, trans. Smyth)

Like the goat, you'll mourn for your beard, you will. (fr. 117, trans. Smyth)

Fragment 156, which is cited in the works of Aelian, Zenobius and the *Suidas*, seems to consist of the reflections of a mortal character on his or her fear of death:

Verily I do fear the stupid death of the moth. (fr. 156, trans. Smyth)

Fragment 278, recovered from various papyri, constitutes the largest single text attributed to Pylaios. Its seventeen lines are likely spoken by the chorus, composed of satyrs, although Prometheus himself could possibly be the speaker. The fragment tells of how one of the Naiads – nymphs of the spring, rivers and lakes – will pursue the speaker after he tells the tale of how fire was obtained: pursuing him "by the blaze within the hearth." The speaker then tells how the nymphs will dance in honour of "Prometheus' gift [*Promêthéos dôron*]"; and the song they will sing in honour of the giver will be sweet: "telling how Prometheus is the bringer of sustenance and the eager giver of gifts to men." (fr. 278, trans. Smyth)

Most of the fragments from Pylaios quoted by Athenaeus in the *Deipnosophista*, by comparison, consist of instructions on the use of fire in various cooking techniques. The exception is fragment 172, which mentions the daughters of Atlas as bewailing "their sire's supremest labour of sustaining heaven, where as wingless Peleides they have the form of phantoms of the night." (trans. Smyth) From this textual evidence, the primary subject of Pylaios thus appears to be Prometheus' theft of fire and his giving of it to satyrs, who generally represent the status of primitive man in Greek myth. As well, Pylaios would also seem to have traced out some of the consequences that flowed from Prometheus' theft and gift of fire, including: the union of nymphs and satyrs, the creation of the hearth and household, man's realisation of his mortal nature, and the punishment of the sons of Iapetus.

The only other (authentic) play of Aeschylus to explicitly mention Prometheus is *Sphinx*, the satyr play that followed his *Oedipus* trilogy, which premiered in 467 BCE. The other three plays of this trilogy were: *Laius*, *Oedipus*, and *Seven Against Thebes*, only the last play of which is extant. One of the two fragments preserved from *Sphinx* is again recorded by Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae* 15.674e), who cites the following passage:

And to the guest a wreath, the ancient mode of wreathing;  
the best of bonds, according to Prometheus's reasoning.

Aeschylus fr. 128, trans. Gulick

It is unclear whether these words are spoken by Prometheus, or are attributed to him by someone in the play. Earlier in *Deipnosophistae*, though, Athenaeus quotes Menodotus of Samos (fl. 200 BCE?) who in his work, *Register of Notable Things in Samos*, explained that the custom of wreathing arose from the manner in which the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus was resolved:

this penance [the wearing of a wreath] Zeus had in early times laid upon Prometheus for stealing fire after he had loosed him from his cruel bonds; and when Prometheus consented to make the requital, involving no pain to himself, we are told that the chief of all the gods ordained he should undergo this. And so, from that circumstance, the wreath revealed to Prometheus soon came to prevail also amongst human beings, who had profited by his gift of fire.

*Deipnosophistae* 15.672e-f, trans. Gulick

Just before Athenaeus quotes the passage from *Sphinx*, he also quotes a related passage from *Luómenos*: "that we place the wreath on the head in honour of Prometheus, in requital for his bonds;" (15.674d-e). Clearly, then, the passage from Aeschylus' *Sphinx*, by directly referring to the punishment Prometheus voluntarily took upon himself, also indirectly refers to Zeus' release of Prometheus. This passage is highly significant, then, as it is the earliest mention in the extant literature that Prometheus was actually freed from the ineluctable bonds Zeus imposed on him as punishment for his theft of fire. Furthermore, this fragment would also seem to imply that it was Prometheus himself who came up with the symbolic punishment of wearing a wreath, "the best of bonds," in his words, in order to atone for his theft.

## H. Conclusion – An Old Aryan Mythic Form for New Semitic Content

As may be seen from the survey presented in this chapter, the Hesiodic Promethean myth continued to be elaborated upon by a variety of authors writing in a number of poetic and prose genres from the mid-7<sup>th</sup> to the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Generally speaking, these authors reiterated various elements of the Promethean myth as it appears in Hesiod, including: the Indo-European myth of the theft and gift of fire, and the punishment of Prometheus; the chthonic myth of Pandora; and the Semitic myths of divine succession and the ages of man. At the same time, though, these authors also weave in a variety of elements novel to the Promethean myth as it appears in Hesiod. Some of these novel elements may be traced to Indo-European sources, such as naming Prometheus the ancestor of all humans; a reflection, perhaps, of a connection with the myth of Phoroneus, the Doric founder of Argos and "first inhabitant of the land". Other novel elements incorporated to the post-Hesiodic Promethean myth can be traced to chthonic and Semitic sources. Chthonic elements became incorporated into the myth primarily through genealogies, such as those tracing the lineages of the various descendents of Deucalion, or the ancestry of Protogenia. Among the Semitic elements imported into the Promethean myth, by comparison, are stories telling of the snake's theft of immortality, and a great flood of divine origin.

In weaving these various novel elements into the Promethean myth, post-Hesiodic authors may be seen to have continued trends already well underway in the works of Hesiod, in terms of incorporating chthonic and Semitic elements. These post-Hesiodic innovations go still further, though, by revising crucial aspects of the myth's essentially Indo-European core with chthonic and Semitic elements. Hesiod incorporates Semitic elements in his telling of the Promethean myth, too, of course, but these elements are appended to the exterior of the myth, rather than modifying its essential core. The Indo-European core of the Promethean myth – the negotiation and sacrifice, the theft and gift of fire, and the punishment of Prometheus – is book-ended by two important Semitic myths; it being preceded by the succession myth in *Theogony*, and followed by the myth of the five ages of man in *Works & Days*. Of the non-Indo-European elements of Hesiod's Prometheus, only the chthonic Pandora myth is absorbed into its Indo-European core, becoming an interpolation on the additional evils Zeus gave men – women and mortality – in order to balance the good they received from fire.

In the post-Hesiodic period, by contrast, both chthonic and Semitic elements become more fully absorbed into the core Indo-European elements of the Promethean myth. Chthonic

elements were incorporated largely through genealogies that describe the descendents of Prometheus' son, Deucalion, who became the ancestors of various tribes, both Indo-European and chthonic. Indeed, Pindar even goes as far as having Deucalion's descendents represent the chthonic peoples who inhabited the land prior to the arrival of Zeus-worshipping Indo-Europeans. Semitic elements such as the myth of a great flood, and the snake's theft of immortality, on the other hand, are absorbed into the Indo-European core of the Promethean myth by becoming part of Zeus' reaction to Prometheus' theft of fire. In this revision, the great flood that wipes out all humanity except for a man and a woman, is depicted as another aspect of Zeus' retribution for Prometheus' theft of fire. The snake's theft of immortality, on the other hand, steals away Zeus' reward to the humans who informed him of Prometheus' theft.

As important as the elements derived from chthonic and Semitic sources are to the revision of the Indo-European core of Hesiod's Promethean myth, though, one of the most radical innovations to that myth – the freeing of Prometheus from his bonds – likely derives from an Indo-European source. The depiction of Thetis as holding the key for winning the release of Prometheus, through Zeus' fear of his regime's mortality, likely originates from a Cretan myth of Doric origin relating to the death of Zeus. Indeed, it is interesting to note how many of the authors dealing with the post-Hesiodic Promethean myth between the mid-7<sup>th</sup> and mid-5<sup>th</sup> BCE hail from Doric cities, including: Alcman, Epimenides, Akousilaos, Ibycus, Mellanipides, Pindar, Epicharmus, Deinolochus and Herodotus. As well, two of the more influential revisionists of the post-Hesiodic Promethean myth – Sappho and Aeschylus – spent considerable amounts of time in Doric cities in Sicily, while respectively in exile and visiting.

The strong association between Doric authors and archaic versions of the Promethean myth extant points to the likelihood of a predominantly Doric origin for the Indo-European Prometheus. In this way, it also supports an argument advanced in chapter 3, that the core of the Promethean myth contains many identifiably Doric elements, including: the negotiation at Mekone, the initiation of sacrifice, and the theft and gift of fire to man. The punishment of Prometheus, on the other hand, is more likely Ionic in origin, given the Tityos parallel in Homer, and may or may not have been part of the original Indo-European myth of proto-Prometheus. The mythic revision that sees Prometheus freed from his bonds, on the other hand, likely originates from Doric mythic traditions; a hypothesis supported by the fact that the first (but admittedly oblique) references to the release of Prometheus occur in a Dorian author,



Melanippides (Fr. 9), and Aeschylus (*Sphinx* Fr. 128) an Ionian author likely influenced by Doric sources with regards to his conception of the Promethean myth.

## Endnotes to Part I

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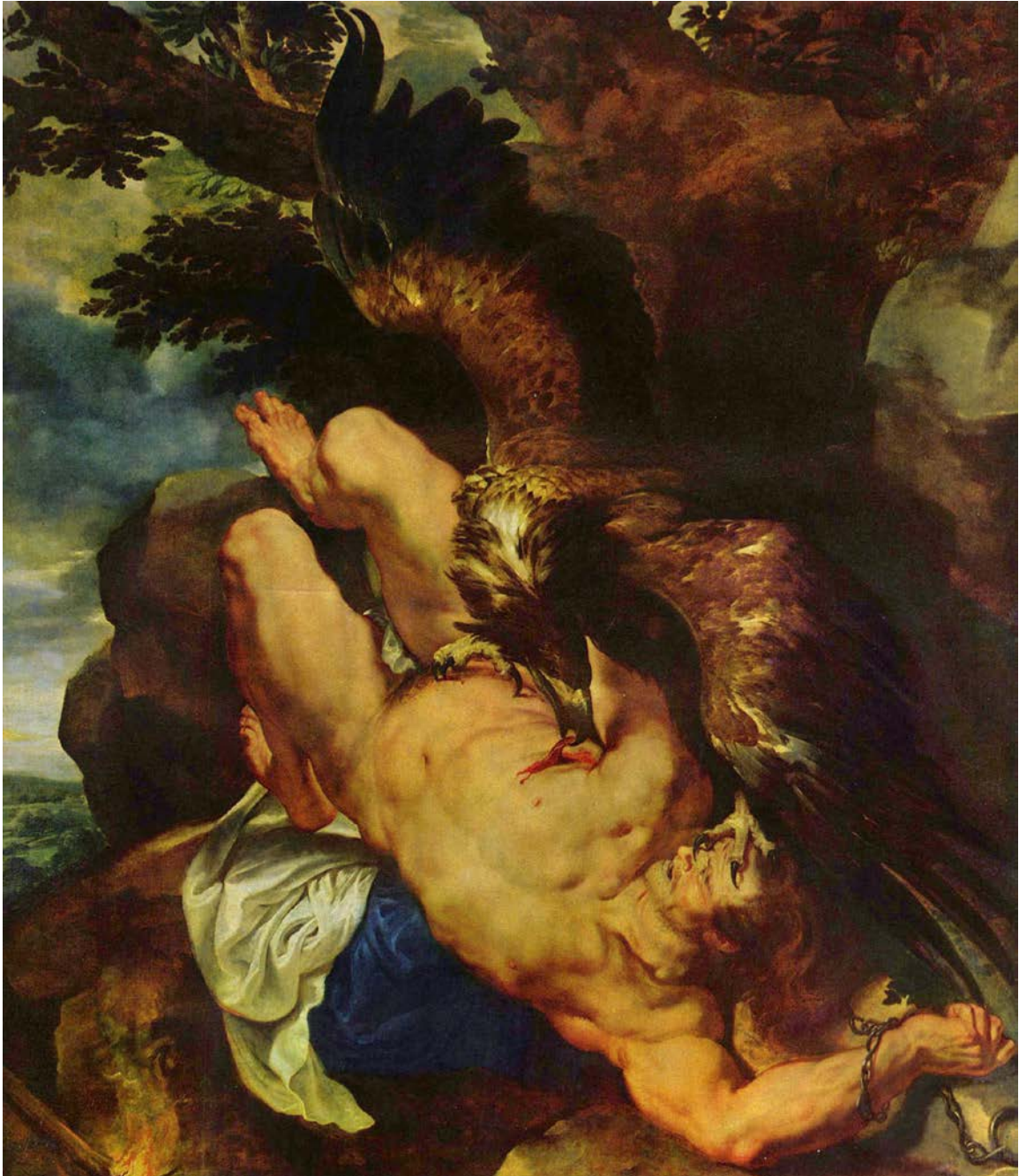
<sup>i</sup> From the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE on, a number of ancient authors mention Prometheus as having created humans by moulding them from clay, a detail likely derived from his prominent role as the patron god of potters in Athens, and paralleling Hephaestus' role as the patron god of metal smiths. Prior to this, we have references to Prometheus as creator of humans (Sappho fr. 207) and references to humans as moulded from clay (Aristophanes *Birds* 686). The following is a comprehensive inventory of the relevant references:

- Authors that refer to Prometheus as having created humans, but that don't mention him having moulded them from clay:
  - Sappho (b. c.630 to 612, d. c.570 BCE) fr. 207
  - Heraclides Ponticus (c.390-c.310 BCE) fragments 39a (quoted in a Scholia on Germanicus' *Aratea*) & 39b, (quoted in Hyginus *Astronomy* 2.42.1) (Heraclides & Schüttrumpf, 2008, pp. 105-7)
- Authors that refer to humans as having been moulded from clay, but without specifically naming Prometheus as their creator:
  - Aristophanes (446-c.386 BCE) *Birds* 686 (premiered, 414 BCE)
  - Plato (428/7-348-7 BCE) *Protagoras* 320d, from the Promethean *mūthos* of Protagoras' Great Speech, set in 433 BCE.
  - Herondas (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE) *Mime* 2 'The Brothel-Keeper' line 28
- Authors that refer to Prometheus as having created humans specifically by moulding him from clay:
  - Philemon (c.362-c.262 BCE) in Stobaeus, fr. 89K (alt. fr. 93 [Bremmer])
  - Menander (c.342-291 BCE) fr. 508
  - Callimachus (310/305-240 BCE) fr. 493 (133) ed. Pfeiffer
  - Pausanias (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) describes two clay-coloured stones in Panopeus, a town located in Phokis, that smelled like the skin of a man, and that were said to be the remains of the clay from out of which Prometheus fashioned the whole race of man (*Description of Greece* 10.4.4).
  - Horace (65-27 BCE) *Carmina* 1.16.13-16
  - Propertius (50-45 BCE – after 15 BCE) *Elegies* 3.5
  - Ovid (43 BCE – 17 or 18 CE) *Metamorphoses* 1.82
  - (pseudo-) Apollodorus (after 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE) *Library* 1.7
  - Juvenal (late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) *Satires* 14.35
  - *Poetae Comici Graecae* – Adespota, fr. 1047

# Gifts of Fire

## Part II

### Protagoras and the *Prometheia* Trilogy



***Prometheus Bound* (1611-12) by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) & Frans Snyders (1579-1657)**

Image Source: Wikipedia Commons

A bird-of-prey consumes the liver of Prometheus, riveted to a rock with adamantine chains, allegedly part of his punishment for stealing fire.

## Chapter 5 – Protagorean Thought and the Authorship of the *Prometheia* Trilogy

The Greek culture of the Sophists had developed out of all the Greek instincts; it belongs to the culture of the Periclean age as necessarily as Plato does not: it has its predecessors in Heraclitus, in Democritus, in the scientific types of the old philosophy; it finds expression in, e.g., the high culture of Thucydides. And – it has ultimately shown itself to be right: every advance in epistemological and moral knowledge has reinstated the Sophists – Our contemporary way of thinking is to a great extent Heraclitean, Democritean, and Protagorean: it suffices to say it is Protagorean, because Protagoras represented a synthesis of Heraclitus and Democritus.

Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 2.428

### A. The *Prometheia* Trilogy as a Protagorean Text

Classical scholars have long recognised the radical departure the *Prometheia* trilogy represents relative to the mythic tradition that preceded it. Gullick (1899), for instance, dubs *Prometheus Bound* "The Attic Prometheus" in recognition of its numerous unparalleled depictions of the myth, relative to prior, traditional accounts. Even when alerted to the unprecedented nature of its depiction, though, it is easy to lose sight of the degree to which the *Prometheia* trilogy does, indeed, depart from earlier versions of the myth. For, as the single most extensive surviving account of the Promethean myth, *Prometheus Bound* tends to overshadow all previous versions of the myth, and is thus often accepted as its most definitive version. As is argued in Part II of this dissertation, though, not only does the *Prometheia* trilogy substantially deviate from the mythic tradition that preceded it; but further, that much of its novelty stems precisely from the primary role it was intended to perform, to provide a mytho-dramatic vehicle for presenting the revolutionary ideas of Protagoras.

In essence, Part II of this dissertation argues that the *Prometheia* trilogy re-presents Protagorean *lógos* in the form of a *mūthos*; a feat it accomplishes by both substantially altering traditional elements of the Promethean myth as it was known prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, as well as incorporating novel elements foreign to both the original myth and, in important cases, Greek myth as a whole. The working hypothesis of Part II, then, is that a close analysis of the mythic elements employed in *Prometheus Bound* and the remaining fragments of the other two plays of the *Prometheia* trilogy shed considerable light on the philosophy of Protagoras, particularly if done with a close familiarity with the traditional Promethean *mūthos* as it existed up to the mid the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The fruits of this analysis are potentially significant, as the thought of Protagoras, the first and greatest of the sophists, is only otherwise known from a few scant fragments, and Plato's somewhat critical portrayal of him in *Protagoras*. The analysis of

the *Prometheia* trilogy for its Protagorean content in Part II thus also forms a necessary prelude to Part III, which primarily analyses the Promethean *mūthos* Protagoras tells in the Socratic dialogue named for him.

Before the *lógos* of Protagoras can be traced in the *mūthos* of the *Prometheia* trilogy, though, a few related sets of questions need to be briefly addressed. First of all, who was Protagoras and what, exactly, is known of his philosophy? Second, who was the actual author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, if not Aeschylus, and how did Protagoras come to exercise such a decisive influence over him? Third, what was the date of the premiere of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and thereby, what formed the cultural context it represents? With these questions answered, it becomes plausible to hypothesise the presence of Protagorean ideas in the *Prometheia* trilogy, and to interpret its significance as an expression of his political philosophy.

## B. The Thought of Protagoras

Protagoras (c.490-420 BCE) hailed from Abdêra, an Ionian *pólis* in Thrace, on the northern shore of the Aegean Sea. Abdêra was initially founded in 654 BCE by settlers from Klazomenai led by Timesius, but they were later largely driven out by Thracians. Subsequently, Abdêra was re-founded c.540 BCE by refugees from Teos, who had fled their native *polis* in Ionia after it fell to the Persians (Herodotus 1.168). Due to Abdêra's close colonial connections with Klazomenai and Teos, both Ionian *poleis* on the western shore of the Aegean in Asia Minor, its people would likely have had early exposure to Ionian philosophy. Ionian philosophy was, in turn, deeply influenced by near eastern philosophy, particularly after the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great (c.600 or 576-530) expanded into Asia Minor. In 513, the king of Persia, Darius the Great (550-486) conquered eastern Thrace, including Abdêra, as a part of a larger campaign against the Scythians. In 492, Darius again conquered Abdêra, this time in preparation for a planned march on the European Greek mainland; a campaign that culminated in the Persian defeat at the Battle of Marathon in 490. Abdêra was occupied by the Persians again in 483, when Darius' son, Xerxes (519-465), began preparations in Thrace for a second invasion of the Greek mainland, culminating in the Persian defeats at the Battles of Salamis and Plataea, respectively in 480 and 479.

One of the stories about Protagoras that circulated in antiquity was that his father, Maeandrius, showed hospitality to Xerxes while he was invading Greece; and that, in return, the Persian king ordered his Magi – members of the priestly class that followed the teachings of Zoroaster – to educate Protagoras (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.10.1). While this story is likely apocryphal, as Protagoras would only have been a child of about 7-11 years of age at the time of Xerxes occupation, this story nonetheless points to a greater truth regarding the likely influence of Persian religion and philosophy in the educational culture of Abdêra generally during the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE; and, as a result, its influence on Protagoras himself.

Another apocryphal story told about Protagoras names him as a student of Democritus (Diogenes Laertius 9.34). While it is true that Democritus was also a citizen of Abdêra, the dates for his life (c.460-c.370 BCE) render this scenario nearly impossible. Again, though, while this tale is false, strictly speaking, it may also be seen to point to a larger truth, in terms of highlighting fundamental similarities in the outlooks of Protagoras and Democritus. This may also be seen in how the *Suida*, for instance, cites sources claiming Democritus was a pupil of Anaxagoras of Klazomenai and the Persian magi (s.v. Democritus). Democritus is also reputed to

have been a student of Leucippus of Abdêra, the famed founder of atomic theory, about whom little else is known. In any event, Protagoras, Leucippus and Democritus may all be seen to the products of an Abdêrean political culture steeped in the values of scientific realism, and that prized rational inquiry over more traditional pieties; traits it likely shared with its mother *pólis*, Klazomenai. Whereas Leucippus and Democritus are better known for having employed rational principles to construct scientific theories of nature in general, though, Protagoras is best known for having turned the methods of rational scientific inquiry specifically toward the study of *human* nature. As Laurence Lampert observes:

Protagoras was the first to systematically apply the principles of rational or scientific investigation to the natural phenomena of human nature and human culture. (2010, p. 20)

As will be seen, Protagoras and the Ionian philosophers of Abdêra and Klazomenai likely derived much of the precedence for their revolutionary ideas and scientific modes of investigation from eastern sources via Persian intermediaries, as reflected in the many identifiably Persian and Semitic origins of the more novel mythic elements incorporated into the *Prometheia* trilogy.

Protagoras began his public career around 460, and first arrived in Athens sometime in the late 450s or early 440s (West M. L., 1979, p. 147). Upon his arrival, Protagoras must have quickly become part of Pericles' inner circle of trusted friends and advisors. At that time, the intellectual elite of this circle would have included such stellar figures as Herodotus of Halicarnassus (c.484-c.425 BCE) and Anaxagoras of Klazomenai (500-428 BCE). Anaxagoras first came to Athens sometime between 464-1, when Athens was in its political ascendancy, following the retreat of the Persians after their crushing defeats at Salamis and Plataea. As a result, Athens was rapidly becoming the undisputed center of Greek intellectual culture. Herodotus, by comparison, hailed from a Dorian city in Asia Minor, and moved to Athens in about 447 (Rawlinson, 1875, p. 15), thus arriving at about the same time as Protagoras.<sup>1</sup>

The very same year that Herodotus arrived in Athens, Pericles was engaged in a military expedition to expel the barbarians from the Thracian Chersonese and establish Athenian colonies in the region. Plutarch describes this expedition as having been "held in most loving

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<sup>1</sup> The exact date of Herodotus' first stay in Athens is uncertain. Kirchoff provides an alternative dating, as follows: "Herodotus twice resided in Athens for a considerable period; his first residence extended from about 445 to at least the beginning of 443 B.C. and perhaps somewhat longer; his second from the autumn of 431 to at least the end of 428 B.C. The ten years between the two periods he spent partly at Thurii, and partly in travel through lower Italy and Sicily." (Kirchoff, 1878, p. 26)

remembrance, since it proved the salvation of the Hellenes who dwelt there." (Plutarch, *Pericles* 19.1, trans. Perrin). It is thus plausible to conjecture that Protagoras' association with Pericles might have stemmed from these events, and that he made his way to Athens shortly after this time. A few years later, in 444 BCE, Protagoras was commissioned by Pericles to write the laws for the newly founded pan-Hellenic colony at Thurii. He remained stationed in this strategically important *polis*, located on the tip of the Italian peninsula across from Sicily, until his return to Athens in 433, as depicted in Plato's *Protagoras*. Herodotus is also known to have emigrated to Thurii in 443 or shortly thereafter, pointing to the likelihood of an association, and possibly even a degree of collaboration, between the famed historian and the now infamous sophist.

The only things known for certain about the philosophy of Protagoras are derived from just five authentic fragments. Of these five, two are taken from what are thought to be the opening sentences of two of his books, and three are extracts of what were thought to have been essential features of his philosophy. The three fragments describing essential elements of Protagorean philosophy all deal with the problematic nature of the relationship between *logos* and perceived reality. Citing a version of what Edward Schiappa terms "the two *logoi*" fragment (2003, pp. 89-101), Diogenes Laertius writes that Protagoras "was the first to maintain that there are two sides to every question, opposed to each other," (9.51, trans. Hicks) Clearly, this fragment reflects the philosophical relativism usually ascribed to Protagoras. It's also clearly related to another fragment that Schiappa terms the "stronger and weaker *logoi*" (2003, pp. 103-115). In *Rhetoric* (1402a), Aristotle writes that Protagoras promised to teach how "to make the weaker argument stronger." (trans. Schiappa) In making such claims, Protagoras may thus be seen to have posed fundamental challenges to traditional arrangements of the "relationship of stronger and weaker between conflicting *logoi*." (Schiappa, 2003, p. 107) This challenge to tradition is satirised to great effect by Aristophanes in *Clouds*, where the character of Socrates, I would maintain, essentially represents the views of Protagoras. In that play, the philosopher turns a son, Pheidippides, over to personifications of the Just and Unjust Speeches for his education in the stronger and weaker speeches. The modestly dressed Just Speech represents traditional values, while the modishly dressed Unjust Speech shamelessly and decisively overturns those hard won pieties with various clever and evasive sophisms (*Clouds* 882-1104).

The third Protagorean fragment on *logos* states that "it is impossible to contradict [*antilegein*]." This phrase is cited by a number of ancient authors without attribution; however, Schiappa demonstrates that "the best available evidence points to Protagoras" as its originator



(2003, p. 134). The exact meaning of this fragment is difficult to ascertain, as it is quoted out of context in a kind of shorthand, but some scholars have conjectured that it challenged what eventually became expressed as Aristotle's Law of Non-contradiction, whereby: "It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation." (*Metaphysics* 1005b19-20, trans. Tredennick) To which Protagoras would likely have retorted: it is not only possible, but necessary that any subject possess different and even contrary attributes, especially when it is perceived by more than one observer and/or more than once. In this regard, there is a high degree of alignment between the views of Protagoras on *logos* and some of the logical paradoxes employed by another Ionian philosopher, Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.535-c.475 BCE), who also asserts that one and the same thing can both be and not be in relation to the same thing (cf. fragments 36, 57, 59, ed. Bywater). Tellingly, too, Aristotle references Heraclitus in *Metaphysics* immediately after the passage he attributes to Protagoras. This Heraclitean stance, allowing for the existence of multiple, and even contradictory, truths within the same reality would have placed Protagoras squarely at odds with the other great Ionian philosopher of the time, Parmenides of Elea (fl. Early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), who adopted the view that the only thing that can be persuasively argued as being absolutely True is that that which is, is, and that which is not, is not (fragment 2, ed. Austin). In this sense, Protagoras may be said to have represented the Heraclitean doctrine of the sovereignty of becoming, as opposed to the Parmenidean doctrine of the sovereignty of being.

Another critique of Parmenidean philosophical doctrine may be discerned in the single most famous statement attributed to Protagoras, that: "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not." (Diels-Kranz 80 B1, trans. Hicks) This statement is thought to have formed the opening sentence to Protagoras' book entitled *Truth*, and is likely the single most succinct expression of the humanistic outlook of the Greek Enlightenment, which Protagoras is acknowledged as having played a pivotal role in bringing to Athens (Schiappa, 2003, pp. 14-5). This same passage from *Truth* is cited by Socrates as evidence of Protagoras' philosophical relativism, which stated that each person's view of the world is true to them as they perceive it, and that "knowledge is nothing but perception." (Plato, *Theaetetus* 151e; cf. *Cratylus* 385d). Shortly after citing this passage, Socrates goes on to argue that all the major Greek philosophers and poets – Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Epicharmus and Homer – agree that everything is in the process of becoming, the sole exception being Parmenides (ibid. 152d-e). Schiappa likewise maintains that the Man is the Measure

statement is a response to Parmenides' argument that a single unchanging being exists apart from our varying perceptions of it (2003, pp. 121-5). This humanistic outlook is also reflected in the views of his countryman, Democritus (c.460-c.370 BCE), a fragment of whose reads: "I say the following about the whole . . . Man is that we all know." (fr. 165, trans. Freeman) Not incidentally, the humanistic and relativistic outlook of the Protagorean fragments examined thus far also possess a high degree of alignment with the democratic politics of Pericles and his circle.

Protagoras opened another of his books, entitled *On the Gods*, with another famous statement: "As to the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or that they do not exist. For many are the obstacles that impede knowledge, both the obscurity of the question and the shortness of human life." (fr. 4, trans. Hicks) This statement was cited in later antiquity as evidence of Protagoras' alleged atheism (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists* 9.50), and likely provided the basis for later claims that Protagoras was expelled from Athens and had his books burned in the marketplace (Diogenes Laertius 9.51-2; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.23.6). This alleged prosecution of Protagoras is most likely spurious, though, as it is contradicted by the more reliable statement of Plato, that Protagoras maintained a consistently high reputation throughout his long life of 70 years (Plato, *Meno* 91e). More recent modern scholarship has also reappraised the exact meaning of Protagoras' opening statement from *On the Gods*, reading it as expressing an agnostic, rather than atheistic, viewpoint. In the interpretation of Werner Jaeger (1968), the opening statement of *On The Gods* does not deny the existence of the gods so much as it clears the way for a discussion of what can be rationally said about the gods. In short, Protagoras advocates an anthropocentric and humanistic treatment of the subject of religion that does not claim to know the gods, but rather to know "the good things the gods bring." (Lampert, 2010, p. 60) And among the good things that belief in the gods can bring is a greater degree of political justice and social cohesion. Another related consideration that naturally arises from the phenomenological study of belief in the gods, is how the existence of such belief gives the one who knows how to properly speak about the gods the ability to rule, and even to impose new forms of social and political order by changing what is said and believed about the gods.

### C. The Date and Authorship of the *Prometheia* Trilogy

With the preceding background on the life and thought of Protagoras, we are now in a better position to consider the questions of the authorship and date of the premier of the *Prometheia* trilogy. Since at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, *Prometheus Bound* and the trilogy to which it belonged, have been ascribed to Aeschylus (525-456 BCE). More recent scholarship, though, has cast the great tragedian's authorship of this play into considerable doubt. These doubts were first expressed by Westphal (1869), who noticed several peculiarities in the text of *Desmôtês* that sharply contrasted with the other plays of Aeschylus, particularly in terms of its lyric meters and spoken trimeters. At the time, he simply chalked up these differences to revision at the hands of later writers. As time wore on, though, other scholars began to notice that the peculiarities identified by Westphal pervaded the entire play; so that if one accepted his arguments for the particular passages he identified, one had to also accept the conclusion that the entire play was spurious. The first to do so outright was Gercke (1911), although he was opposed at the time by Willamowitz (1914) and Körte (1920), and thus his arguments won few adherents. One of the few scholars to come out in support of Gercke's arguments at the time was Schmid (1929), who also noted the presence of unmistakably sophistic influences on the play, as well as religious views highly incompatible with those of Aeschylus.

More recent scholarship has corroborated the non-Aeschylean authorship of *Prometheus Bound* and the trilogy to which it belonged. Through exhaustive analysis of the play's language, metre and poetic style, Griffith (1977) conclusively demonstrates how it far more closely resembles that of Sophocles, and to a lesser degree Euripides, than that of Aeschylus. West (1979) corroborates Griffith's analysis with an examination of historical evidence external to the text of the play, and arrives at the conclusion that it was likely composed by a later, lesser author sometime between 440 and 435. At the same time, though, as even West concedes, the play does still, nevertheless, contain a number of undeniably Aeschylean features, as Herrington (1970, 1979) ably points out. As a result, consensus has not been forthcoming on this issue, and scholars continue to express skepticism toward the hypothesis that the *Prometheia* trilogy was not by Aeschylus (Conacher, 1980, pp. 141-174).

Addressing the nagging Aeschylean presence in *Prometheus Bound*, despite its radical stylistic differences from the other six plays attributed to Aeschylus, West advances the highly elegant and plausible theory that his son, Euphorion, was the actual author of the *Prometheia* trilogy (1990, pp. 68-71). West bases this assessment, in part, on an entry in the *Suida* (s.v.

Euphorion), which states that Euphorion was a tragic poet who wrote his own plays, and that he is also reputed to have won four victories by staging plays that his father had completed but had not yet staged at the time of his death. West further hypothesises that the four plays staged by Euphorion that he credited to his father were probably actually written by Euphorion, but that he attributed them to his father, perhaps in order to secure the coveted grant of a chorus so as to get the production staged. This theory has the double benefit, then, of both explaining how the play's language and ideas so strongly reflect the poetic style and sophistic speculations of Periclean Athens, and yet retain distinct vestigial traces of what Herington terms its "late Aeschylean" language and style (1970). Positing Euphorion as the actual author of the *Prometheia* trilogy also has the additional merit, from the perspective of this dissertation, of explaining how the poet might have come to be so decisively influenced by Protagoras during the relatively short time (likely no more than five years) that the great sophist resided in Athens during his first visit to the new imperial *pólis*, in the early to mid 440s.

If the range of possible dates advanced by West is correct, the *Prometheia* trilogy would have premiered at precisely the period during which Protagoras exercised his greatest influence over Athenian cultural and political life. The earliest possible staging of the *Prometheia* trilogy, according to West's analysis, is only a few years after Protagoras' first stay in Athens, sometime in the 440s. Its latest possible staging, by comparison, occurs only a couple years before the great sophist's return to Athens in 433 BCE, as depicted in Plato's *Protagoras*. Not incidentally, Protagoras relates his own version of the Promethean *mūthos* in that dialogue, at least in part to explain how it is possible that he is able to teach political virtue. Protagoras' Promethean *mūthos* represents by far the closest parallel to the radically reworked version of the one found in the *Prometheia* trilogy. Given the presence of sophistic ideas noted by Schmid, plus the new dating for the play advanced by Griffith and West, the hypothesis naturally arises that Protagoras was the sophist who exercised such a decisive influence on the *Prometheia* trilogy's radical reformulation of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos*; so utterly transforming it with the incorporation of distinctly eastern mythic influences, in fact, that scholars have previously dubbed it the 'Attic' Prometheus (Gulick, 1899). Indeed, when placed in its proper historical and cultural context, and with its missing parts reconstructed and properly arranged, the *Prometheia* trilogy may be best understood as a mytho-poetic expression of Protagorean political philosophy, and as significant to the expression of that philosophy as Mark (1984) claims for the Parthenon friezes.

West's theory of Euphorion as the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy also helps explain how Protagoras might have so quickly come to exercise such a strong influence over its author. Aeschylus is known to have played a crucial role in launching the political career of Pericles; the young politician having acted as the *choregia*, or private sponsor, of the *Persae* trilogy in 472. As the son of Aeschylus, Euphorion would most certainly have also become an intimate of Pericles and his eminent inner circle. Euphorion was also likely very close to the same age as Protagoras, who was approximately 35 years younger than Aeschylus; 35 being the average age at which Greek males married. Given these facts, it's almost unimaginable that they did not know one another. It may also be inferred from Protagoras' stated interest in the phenomena of religion that he would have possessed a keen interest in and knowledge of mythology. This interest would have meshed well with the extensive store of myth that Euphorion likely inherited from his father. This would have included a close familiarity with the traditional, Indo-European tales of Prometheus as a fire-stealer and giver, as depicted in Aeschylus' *Pyraeus*. It would also have included Aeschylus' novel twist of referring to Prometheus as having been released; in *Sphinx*, the satyr play that accompanied his *Oedipus* trilogy, which premiered in 467. Euphorion would also have been aware of how chthonic elements were incorporated into the Promethean *mūthos*, given that his father is thought to have likely been an initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

As the son of Aeschylus, Euphorion would also have been made aware of the several Semitic innovations incorporated into the Promethean myth by Doric authors such as Epicharmus, Deinolochus and Pindar. Aeschylus most certainly knew the works of these poets, and even likely personally encountered at least the first two of them during the time he spent in Sicily in the 470s, right around the same time that his son was entering adulthood. As a young man, Euphorion would also likely have witnessed the premieres of the early plays of Sophocles depicting chthonic elements of the Promethean myth: *Triptolemus*, and *Pandora or The Hammers*. As a privileged member of Pericles' inner circle in the early to mid-440s, finally, Euphorion, by then likely in his mid-40s, would also have invariably become acquainted with the towering figure of Protagoras, whose revolutionary views on the history of human civilisation and the nature of belief in the gods would have resonated with the *mūthos* of Prometheus, as the one who first initiated the ritual of sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings. Euphorion thus would have had ample opportunity to weave all this, and more, into what eventually became known as the single most definitive rendition of the Promethean *mūthos*.

Proceeding from the interpretive hypothesis that Euphorion composed the *Prometheia* trilogy sometime between 440 and 435, we are now in a better position to consider the cultural context that informed its composition. As Vaclav Havel, the consummate playwright and politician, notes: "The best theatre is and always has been political." (Politics and the Theatre, 1967; quoted in: Sutherland & Geshkovitch, 1990) Furthermore, "theatre, of all the artistic genres, is the most closely tied to a particular time and place." (Havel & Vladislav, 1986, p. xiv) These same axioms also apply to both the conception and interpretation of classical Greek theatre. Greek dramas were not simply a dry recitation of ancient myths disconnected from current events; rather, they were compelling and often trenchant commentaries, albeit at times oblique, on the most salient social and political issues and events of their day. As Meier (1993, pp. 84-136) convincingly demonstrates, for instance, Aeschylus' *Suppliants* and the *Oresteia* trilogy are best understood as a reflection of the events of a *stásis*, or period of civil unrest, in Athens led by Ephialtes in the late 460s, that culminated in the Assembly's curtailment of the powers of the aristocratic council of the Aeropagus.

Davison (1949) also makes a sustained attempt to associate the *Prometheia* trilogy with the events of that period of *stásis*, with the aristocratic forces led by Cimon represented by the vanquished Kronos and his Titans representing the ascendent democratic forces led by Ephialtes and Pericles represented by Zeus. Following in the steps of Schmidt's analysis, who found the *Prometheus Bound* to bear many marks of sophistic influence (1929, pp. 93-6), Davison further argues that Prometheus is an allegorical figure representing none other than Protagoras himself (1949, pp. 73-7). Despite declaring himself at the outset to have objectively considered Schmidt's thesis, that the play was not by Aeschylus, Davison remains wedded to the idea that he is the author of the trilogy, as it supports his larger thesis, that the play represents the events of the Athenian *stásis* of the late 460s. In order to accommodate his idea that the *Prometheia* trilogy is Aeschylus' portrayal of Protagoras' role in the Athenian *stásis* of the late 460s, though, Davison is compelled to practically invent an earlier visit of Protagoras to Athens in the 460s. This earlier visit is unattested in the literature; however, Davison argues that references in later antiquity to Protagoras having been ostracised from Athens for his atheism (Diogenes Laertius 9.51-2; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.23.6), refer to the great sophist's ostracism during this period. This hypothesis is contradicted by the more reliable testimony of Plato, though, as noted above (p. 86): that Protagoras maintained a consistently high reputation throughout his long life of 70 years (Plato, *Meno* 91e).

To recap, then, the central interpretive hypothesis of this part of the dissertation is that the *Prometheia* trilogy was composed sometime between 440 and 435, and that its author was decisively influenced by Protagoras. This hypothesis enjoys several advantages over the more orthodox understanding of the provenance of the play, as a late work of Aeschylus. To begin with, it explains the radically differing language, metre and poetic style of *Prometheus Bound* relative to the six plays of Aeschylus whose authenticity is unquestioned. Second, it better explains the presence of distinctly sophistic ideas without having to resort to inventing an unattested and implausible visit by Protagoras to Athens in the late 460s, before the death of Aeschylus. At the same time, assuming the trilogy to have been composed by Euphorion also accounts for the distinctly Aeschylean features of *Prometheus Bound* identified by Herington and others. Having reviewed the major doubts expressed as to authorship of the *Prometheia* trilogy, therefore, I have chosen to adopt these interpretive assumptions in my analysis: first, that Euphorion, the son of Aeschylus, was its actual author; second, that he composed the play sometime between 440 and 435; and third, that he was profoundly influenced in his depiction by both his father and Protagoras, as well as other members of Pericles' circle, such as Herodotus and Sophocles. This hypothesis enjoys the benefits, I would argue, of plausibly reconciling the trilogy's mid-5<sup>th</sup> century language, ideas and poetic style with the definite presence of Aeschylean features; it has been endorsed by Martin West (1990, pp. 68-72), a classical scholar of impeccable credentials. The hypothesis that Euphorion is the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy also offers one of the best ways to account for the presence of Protagorean ideas in it, as well as its many other sharp divergences from the traditional, archaic Promethean *mūthos* prompted by this sophistic presence.

Before delving into the *Prometheia* trilogy, it is also necessary to review the conflicting arguments over the ordering of its three plays. The weight of the scholarly tradition, as reflected by Westphal (1869, p. 206 f.) and Yu (1971), has generally maintained that *Prometheus Bound* was the first in the series. This conjecture is primarily based on the fact that most of the things known to have previously occurred in the Promethean myth are recounted within *Prometheus Bound*. This interpretation does not factor in, however, the degree to which the author repeats himself, even within the few remaining fragments of the two other plays of the trilogy. It is widely accepted that *Prometheus Bound* is followed by *Prometheus Unbound*. Aside from the obvious evidence contained in the sequence of events described by the titles, this assumption is based on both the comments of a Scholiast on line 511 of *Prometheus Bound*, that

"Prometheus is released in the following play", and its concordance with what is known to have happened in *Prometheus Unbound* from the fairly extensive fragmentary evidence. The position of *Prometheus Fire-carrier*, on the other hand, is much more hotly debated. Scholars have traditionally followed the interpretation of Westphal (1869, p. 206 ff), who argued that it was the last play in the trilogy. More recent scholars such as Fitton-Brown (1959, p. 52) and West (1979, p. 131), though, have adopted the interpretation of Pohlenz (1930), who maintains it was the first. The nub of the disagreement between these two camps would seem to revolve around the interpretation of a verb tense, and the precise meaning of *purphóros*. This subject will be explored in greater detail below, in the section on *Prometheus Fire-carrier*.

Nor does the controversy over the ordering of the Promethean trilogy end there. Since the authorship of *Prometheus Bound* is doubtful, the authorship of the other two plays is equally a matter of doubt; it's even doubted by some that the three plays of the '*Prometheia* trilogy' were written by the same author. Some have even argued that there is no reason to believe that there was a *Prometheia* trilogy at all, as opposed to three separate, independent plays about Prometheus (Taplin, 1975). There is no apparent dramatic need for *Prometheus Bound* to have a prequel or sequel, at least for an audience even vaguely familiar with the Promethean myth; for it functions well enough as an independent work in its own right, given its fairly comprehensive recounting of past events, and extensive prophecy of future ones. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that these three plays couldn't have cohered as a trilogy, even if each of them were written by different authors. Different authors certainly had earlier plays in mind when they wrote their own particular contribution to the Promethean saga. In an only slightly different vein, Sophocles' 'Theban' plays demonstrate how a series of plays could be both composed over a number of years, or even decades, and still come to form a coherent 'trilogy'. There is no reason for believing this same process couldn't have occurred among different authors. It may even have been the case that the three plays of the Promethean trilogy were written with Aeschylus' *Prometheus Fire-Kindler* [Prometheus Pyrkaeus] in mind as the concluding satyr play, to compose a tetralogy.

My second major interpretive assumption in this part is that the three plays traditionally assigned to the *Prometheia* trilogy do, in fact, form a coherent trilogy, and that they appeared in the following order:

1. *Prometheus Fire-carrier* (Promêtheús Purphóros, hereafter 'Purphóros')
2. *Prometheus Bound* (Promêtheús Desmôtês, hereafter 'Desmôtês')



3. *Prometheus Unbound* (Promêtheús Luómenos, hereafter 'Luómenos')

This assessment is based primarily upon what is known of the action of the Promethean myth as a whole, and how this story would best have fit within the structure of the trilogy form. From the only fully extant trilogy in existence – Aeschylus' *Oresteia* – the general format for a trilogy that formed a coherent whole would seem to fit the following pattern:

1. A crime or transgression is committed (e.g. Klytemnestra kills Agamemnon);
2. Suffering, retribution or punishment occurs (e.g. Orestes kills Klytemnestra and Aegisthus); and
3. A learning experience or reconciliation is effected (e.g. Orestes is judged and released by Athena).

This structure of the trilogy form is noted by a number of scholars. Yu (1971, p. 20), for instance, cites the authority of Bury (1885) in describing the three stages of the trilogy in the following terms: (1) an *ergma* (crime) is committed, for which the transgressor must endure (2) *pathos* (suffering), out of which (3) *mathos* (a learning experience) is attained. Fitton-Brown (1959, p. 56), citing the authority of Pohlenz (1930, p. 77f), describes the trilogy cycle in terms of: "transgression, punishment, reconciliation." A similar structure is outlined by West (1979, p. 131), who describes the trilogy cycle in terms of "Crime-Punishment-Reconciliation". As it happens, this general pattern nicely fits with what is known about the plot-line of the *Prometheia* trilogy, namely:

1. Prometheus steals fire and gives it to men (transgression);
2. Prometheus is bound by Zeus (punishment); and,
3. Prometheus is freed by Herakles after he strikes a compromise with Zeus (reconciliation).

Given this pattern, it seems highly unlikely that the *Prometheia* trilogy would begin with the binding of Prometheus; a punishment that occurs very near the end of the traditional versions of the myth. Even allowing for the extensive recitation of previous events within Desmôtês, this ordering simply does not fit with what little is known of the overall dramatic structure of the trilogy form.

## Chapter 6 – *Prometheus Fire-Carrier (Purphóros)* The Need for Guarded Speech

Protagoras: "Rightly, Socrates, are you forethoughtful [*promêthê*] on my behalf, for when a foreign man visits great cities, and in those [cities] persuades the best of their youths to forsake meeting with others, whether of family or outsiders, old or young, and to be together with him, through this meeting with [him] to become better, the one doing these things must take precautions. For no little envy [and/or, 'jealousy'] arises about him, and other ill will and even plots."

Plato, *Protagoras* 316c-d, trans. Craig

The *Prometheia* trilogy presents a substantial elevation of Prometheus relative to prior depictions by Pre-Socratic poets. This elevation may be seen from the very outset of the trilogy, in terms of Prometheus' designation as *púrphoros* in its opening play. This is a substantial elevation in his status relative to, for example, his depiction in Aeschylus' satyr play, *Prometheús Purkaeús*. The Greek word *purkaiein* signifies 'fire-kindler,' pointing to Prometheus' primary role in that play: teaching satyrs, understood as representations of primitive man, fire-making techniques. *Púrphoros*, on the other hand, would seem to specifically indicate fire-carrier, a role with a much more solemn and exalted religious status. As Thomson points out:

As an epithet of inanimate objects, the word is used to describe the thunderbolt of Zeus. Applied to persons, it is used, like *δαδοῦχος*, in allusion to the torches carried by Demeter and Persephone or their votaries at the Mysteries of Eleusis. (1932, p. 33)<sup>2</sup>

Ancient authors make many illuminating references to the rituals performed by *purphóroi*.

Pausanias notes that the duties of this office originated from a very ancient Greek custom:

of transmitting a new and holy fire from a hearth or altar where it had been kindled, to other hearths or altars where the old, polluted fire had been extinguished as a preparation for receiving the new and pure one; (1898, p. 392)

In his *Heroika*, by comparison, Philostratus of Lemnos (born c.220 CE) describes a similar ritual annually observed on Lemnos, performed to atone for the murder of a group of men by their wives. Once a year the island was purified of this pollution by putting out all the fires on the island for nine days. During this time a sacred ship was sent to Delos to bring back fire, most likely lit from the altar of Apollo, from which the fires of Lemnos were rekindled (Farnell, 1909, p. 384).

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<sup>2</sup> Thomson also references several instances of usage in these contexts from the 5th century BCE: Pindar, *Nemean Ode* 10.71; Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 200-1, *Oedipus Colonus* 1658-9, *Philoctetes* 1198; Aristophanes, *Birds* 1749; Euripides, *Suppliants* 260, *Phoenician Women* 687-8.

Plutarch describes a very similar fire-centred purification ritual performed by the Greeks after their route of the Persian army at the battle of Plataea in 479 BCE. At the command of the oracle at Delphi, all fires were extinguished in the lands of Greece that had been occupied and polluted by the barbarians. They were then all rekindled from fire lit from the pure flame that continually burned in the public hearth at Delphi (Plutarch, *Lives 'Aristides'* 20).<sup>3</sup> The relay of sacred fire from Delphi thus also provides the model for the torch-carrying ceremony preceding each modern Olympic games. Herodotus also mentions, in passing, the office of *púrphoros* in the Greek army, the duty of which was to carry and tend the sacred fire, which was always kept alight for the sacrifices of the army. As a sign of the sanctity of this office, the person performing this duty was considered inviolable (Herodotus 8.6). Xenophon also notes the existence of an identical office in the Spartan army (*Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* 13.2). The transportation of fire by the *púrphoros* was thus both an exalted and ubiquitous office for the Greeks, as befits a religious culture centred around the ritual sacrifice of burnt offerings to the gods.

Prometheus is the primary mythical embodiment of the ancient Greek religious ceremonies centred on burnt sacrificial offerings, as shown by his central role in the founding of this ritual at the negotiations with Zeus at Mekone in Hesiod (*Theogony* 537-559). Given his role in stealing fire from Zeus (*Theogony* 567-572, *Works & Days* 60-70), Prometheus may also be seen to have provided the primary model for the *púrphoros*. Given the presence of very similar motifs regarding the generation and transportation of holy fire in the *Rig Veda* and the *Avesta*, as well as the genetic relation of Prometheus and Mātariśvan established in chapter 3 of this dissertation, Greek fire-ritual traditions may also be confidently dated at least as far back as the period of Greco-Aryan unity, sometime prior to 2500 BCE. While Prometheus may have provided the original archetype for the *púrphoros*, though, by the archaic age of Greece this office had become dissociated from him. As will be argued at the end of chapter 8, in the section on the *Lampadêphoría*, while there were torch-race festivals in honour of Hephaestus and Athena dating back well into the archaic age, there were none celebrated in honour of Prometheus until the classical age. Indeed, as will be argued there in much greater detail, the *Prometheia* trilogy likely marked the very inception of the Prometheia torch-race festival in

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<sup>3</sup> Euchidas acted as the *púrphoros* and brought the flame from Delphi to Plataea with all conceivable speed. He ran the thousand furlongs there and back in a single day, and expired shortly after.

Athens, the only place it is known to have been celebrated, and thus signifying both the elevation of Prometheus to *púrphoros* and his apotheosis to godhood.

Surprisingly little is known for certain of the dramatic content of *Púrphoros*; indeed, its very existence is known from only a very few sources. The Medicean Codex, the original version of which was probably written sometime around 1000 CE, mentions only the title of the play. The Scholiast on Desmôtês 94, on the other hand, states that, "in the *Purphóros*, Prometheus declared that he had been bound (*dedésthai*) thirty thousand years" (fr. 341 Mette, trans. Smyth). This assertion is confirmed by Hyginus, who, while not naming the play, also writes that Prometheus was bound "for thirty-thousand years, as Aeschylus, writer of tragedies, says." (*Astronomy* 2.15 'Arrow', trans. Grant; cf. Hyginus *Fabulae* 54 'Thetis'). These two citations, in the Scholiast and Hyginus, have provided the primary basis for the assertion that *Púrphoros* is the final play of the *Prometheia* trilogy, as they both refer to Prometheus speaking of his punishment in the past tense. Scholars making this assertion generally do so with the understanding that *Púrphoros* means 'fire-possessor'; and that *Púrphoros* thereby recounted the celebration of Prometheus' possession of fire on behalf of mankind at the end of the trilogy (Thomson, 1932, pp. 32-8). Those who maintain that *Púrphoros* was the first play of the trilogy, on the other hand, generally argue that *Púrphoros* signifies 'fire-carrier', and that '*Prometheus Fire-Carrier*' recounted the earlier stages of the Promethean myth, where Prometheus steals fire, carries it down from heaven, and bestows it upon humans (West M. L., 1979).

While the textual evidence for considering *Púrphoros* the last play of the *Prometheia* trilogy may appear to be overwhelming, there remain compelling reasons for considering it the first. West, for instance, points out how Hyginus, who wrote in Latin, mistranslates a passage from the Greek, converting it from future to past tense. In a fragment of Luómenos preserved by Strabo (*Geography* 4.1.7) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Roman Antiquities* 1.41), Prometheus prophesizes to Herakles that: "Thou shalt come to the dauntless host of the Ligurians," (fr. 112, trans Smyth).<sup>4</sup> Hyginus, by comparison, writes that Aeschylus says, in *Prometheus Luómenos*, that Herakles fought the Ligurians while driving away the cattle of the Geryon (*Astronomy* 2.6 'The Kneeler'), thereby describing the same prophecy, but in the past tense, prior to the events of the play. From this, West concludes that Prometheus' alleged declaration in *Púrphoros*, that he has "been bound thirty thousand years", may also have originally been a prophecy, stated in the future tense, that was also corrupted into the past tense by Hyginus in the process of

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<sup>4</sup> = fr. 199 Nauck = fr. 326 Mette

translation (1979, p. 131). Instead, the 30,000 years Prometheus describes likely refers to the length of time he anticipates being bound in the future, no doubt as punishment for stealing fire and giving it to humans.

From another prophecy that Prometheus pronounces in *Desmôtês* (774, 851-876), and that is confirmed by the genealogy supplied in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Maidens* (292-320), it is also known that he is freed by a descendent of Io (Herakles) after only thirteen generations; i.e. within just four hundred years<sup>5</sup> after being cast into a chasm in the earth at the end of *Desmôtês*. Given this countervailing evidence, plus the dramatic structure of the trilogy, as discussed in the previous chapter, it seems more than reasonable to affirm that *Púrphoros* is, indeed, the first play of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and that it recounts Prometheus' theft of fire, his carrying of it from heaven to earth, and his giving of it to human beings. That having been said, though, it still remains to be explained why Prometheus would prophesy that he would be bound for 30,000 years in *Luómenos*, only for this time-frame to be revised downward to under 400 years later in the trilogy. Was the author's intention, perhaps, to point to limitations in Prometheus' power of prophecy? a power for which he depends, after all, on the periodic utterances of his mother, Gaia (cf. *Desmôtês* 211-3; 874-5). In the absence of any better explanation, I would like to suggest that, given its outlandish time-scale from the perspective of human history, perhaps Prometheus' prophecy that he will be bound for 30,000 years is meant to evoke the similarly grandiose Zoroastrian concept of a "great world cycle" of 12,000 years, as referred to in the *Bundahish* (34.7 West = 36.7 Anklesaria), a collection of Zoroastrian cosmogony. In this Persian account of world history, Zoroaster is said to have appeared at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> millennium of the world (Jackson, 1896, p. 3). As will be seen in the following chapter, on *Prometheús Desmôtês*, the conjecture of a Zoroastrian connection with the outlandish time-frame Prometheus gives for the projected duration of his punishment is strengthened by the central role that Zoroastrian tenets perform in defining the nature of Prometheus' gift of fire.

It is not known for certain who filled the role of the chorus in *Púrphoros*. West (1979, p. 132) conjectures that it may have consisted of the Meliai, primarily based on the supposition that these ash-tree nymphs would nicely parallel the Okeanides, the nymphs of streams and groves, who compose the chorus of *Desmôtês*. There are at least two other good reasons for believing that the Meliai formed the chorus of *Púrphoros*, connected with the provenance and

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<sup>5</sup> 13 generations x 30 years = 390 years

progeny of these particular nymphs. In Hesiod, the Meliai are said to have grown from the drops of blood spilled when Kronos castrated Uranus (*Theogony* 187). As such, they are the younger, gentler sisters of the Furies, who were also born from the blood of Kronos (*Theogony* 185), and who play such a key role in *Desmôtês*, and also likely in *Luómenos*, in terms of administering the fate of Zeus in accordance with the dictates of necessity. In other myths, Melia is also the name of a nymph daughter of Okeanus, who marries Inachus, a river god and king of Argos, with whom she conceives Phoroneus and Io. Phoroneus becomes the mythic Argive figure who was said to have discovered fire rather than Prometheus (Pausanias 2.19.5). Io, on the other hand, will come to play a key role in the third *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês*, and will eventually become the ancestor, after thirteen generations, of Herakles, who liberates Prometheus in *Luómenos*. All in all, then, there are compelling reasons for believing that the Meliai formed the chorus of *Púrphoros*, though no direct textual evidence.

With regard to the dramatic setting of *Púrphoros*, one possibility that suggests itself is the Academia, a sacred grove north-west of Athens, in which stood altars dedicated to Prometheus, Hephaestus and Athena. There was also a sacred grove near Colonus, just to the north-east of the Academy, where the locals believed Prometheus was buried (Sophocles, *Oedipus Colonus* 54-6). West, however, conjectures that a more likely location for the play is the island of Lemnos, where Hephaestus first fell to earth after being cast out of the heavens by Zeus as punishment for coming to the defense of his mother, Hera (*Iliad* 1.590). There, Hephaestus was found, barely alive, by Thetis and Eurynome, daughter of Okeanus, who took him to their hollow cave on the island and nursed him back to health (*Iliad* 18.395-405). West primarily bases his argument for Lemnos as the setting for *Púrphoros* on the testimony of Cicero, who, in *Tusculan Disputations* (23), references the drama *Philoctetes* by Accius (170-c.86 BCE) in which Ulysses points out the landmarks of Lemnos,<sup>6</sup> including "the shrine of Hephaestus on the mountain where fire first came from heaven, and the grove where Prometheus shared it secretly with mortals." (West, 1979, p. 135)

West surmises that *Púrphoros* likely did not cover the entire sequence of events in the Promethean myth prior to the binding of Prometheus. Instead, he thinks it more likely "began with Zeus already in power, the Titans already in Tartarus, and mortal men floundering in misery, deprived of the easy life they had enjoyed in the reign of Kronos and unequipped for the realities of the new world." (West, 1979, p. 133) He derives support for this conjecture from the

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<sup>6</sup> Lemnos also provides the dramatic setting for exile in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.

fact that some of the earlier sequences of the Promethean myth are specifically recounted in Desmôtês, while others are not, which must be regarded as the surest guide for what the other plays might have contained. The Titanomachy and Prometheus' theft of fire, for instance, are both mentioned in Desmôtês; while the negotiations at Mekone – where Prometheus initiates the ritual division of sacrifice between men and gods – and the creation and presentation of woman/Pandora to man, by contrast, are not. As will be seen, the plot structure proposed by West – opening with humans floundering in darkness and misery – is also better suited to expressing Protagorean theories of human history, which viewed human beings as having originated from primitive conditions and progressed to its present high state of civilisation.

Aside from the passing references made by Hyginus and the Scholiast, quoted above, there is only one Aeschylean fragment that has won wide acceptance among scholars as being an authentic passage from Púrphoros. It is quoted by Gellius (c.103-c.180 CE) in a collection of essays (*Attic Nights* 13.19.4) where he cites Aeschylus as having written:

Both silent, when there is need, and speaking in season

Aeschylus fr. 118, Trans. Smyth

The significance of this passage may be appraised by comparing it to similar passages in the works of Aeschylus.<sup>7</sup> In *Seven Against Thebes*, for example, Eteocles speaks of the doom that awaits both him and his brother should they meet each other in battle, if the prophecies (*thesphátiosi*) of Loxias should bear fruit. Loxias ('the obscure') is derived from the word *loxá* ('ambiguous') and is one of the surnames for Apollo, the god of prophecy who interprets the will of Zeus. Referring to Loxias, Eteocles states:

he is wont either to keep silent or to speak what the hour demands.

*Seven Against Thebes* 619, trans. Smyth

In this instance, then, Aeschylus points to how the ideal prophet speaks with circumspection. In *Libation Bearers*, by comparison, Orestes relates his plan to kill his mother, Klytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus, again inspired by the decree (*éphêmisēn*) of the unerring seer (*mántis*) Loxias: that those who slay by craft a man of high estate will likewise perish in the self-same

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<sup>7</sup> Not that these parallels should be taken as a indication that Purphóros is an authentic play of Aeschylus; only that the Prometheus poet, whether or not he was Euphorion, was well acquainted with, and even sought to emulate the great tragedian.

snare. After relating his plan to Elektra in the presence of the Chorus, Orestes then warns the slave women present:

You had best keep a discreet tongue – to be silent when there is need and to speak only what occasion bids. (*Libation Bearers* 582, trans. Smyth)

The common feature of all three of these passages, then, is their common counsel on the critical need for silence and speaking at the right time. As well, the two passages cited from Aeschylus share a common reference to the seer, Loxias, who embodies the very powers of forethought implied by the folk-etymology that grew around Prometheus' name. From the close associations between these three passages, it may be surmised that fragment 118 from *Púrphoros* also makes reference to Prometheus in some manner. Perhaps a character closely associated with him counsels silence with regard to Prometheus' plot to steal fire and give it to humans. On the other hand, fr. 118 may have been a reference to the secret that Prometheus harbors: that Zeus, too, is subject to necessity, and is fated to be cast down from power by a marriage that will result in the birth of a son more powerful than his father. As will be seen in part three of this dissertation, on Promethean imagery in Plato, the issue of secrecy, particularly by the wise, also forms the central issue of Plato's *Protagoras*; in particular, the need to have the forethought to know how to speak and when to keep silent with respect to transgressions against the established gods.

The theme of circumspection with respect to the gods may also form part of the context to fr. 118, stemming from parallels to *Púrphoros* in Aristophanes. As Herington convincingly argues (*A Study in the Prometheia*, Part II: *Birds* and *Prometheia*, 1963), Prometheus' theft of fire in *Púrphoros* is closely paralleled by the Prometheus episode in Aristophanes' *Birds*.<sup>8</sup> In that comedy, which premiered in 414 BCE, the main protagonist, Pisthetairos, flees the city of humans to escape his debts and other obligations. Later, though, he convinces the birds to found a city in the sky with him as their leader, enticing them with the prospect of lording it over men, and even the gods, by blockading the exchange of sacrifices and divine dispensations between humans and Olympians. In response to the threat posed by this blockade, Zeus sends a delegation consisting of Poseidon, Herakles and a barbarian god, Traballus, to negotiate with the birds. Before Pisthetairos receives this delegation, though, "Prometheus appears veiled and

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<sup>8</sup> Herington further argues that the wedding scene at the end of *Birds* also likely parodies the celebration that is thought to have occurred at the end of *Lymenos*, but does so on the (erroneous) assumption that *Purphóros* is the last play of the trilogy. However, there is nothing to prevent this scene being interpreted as a parody of a similar scene at the end of *Luómenos*.



furtive, afraid of being seen by Zeus, in a situation where no fires are burning on mortal altars." (West, 1979, p. 132) Prometheus then informs Pisthetairos that that "Zeus is finished!" (*Birds* 1513) and advises him not to ratify a treaty until the king of the gods agrees to return his scepter to the birds. Prometheus further counsels Pisthetairos to demand that Zeus betroth to him as a bride the Princess who holds his thunderbolt and looks after everything (*Birds*, 1534-6). If this scene – with Prometheus advising Pisthetairos to demand nothing less than all the trappings of the powers of Zeus – is accepted as an accurate parody of the *Prometheia* trilogy, it may also be surmised that, in addition to depicting Prometheus' theft of fire, Púrphoros also entailed Prometheus counseling men on negotiating how powers are to be allotted to gods and men. The most appropriate time for offering this kind of counsel would be in anticipation of the negotiations between the gods and men at Mekone, as depicted by Hesiod, at which Prometheus attempts to trick Zeus into accepting the poorer portion of the slaughtered cow as his portion of the sacrifice (cf. *Theogony* 537-559, *Works & Days* 65-7).

The parallels noted above between Púrphoros and *Birds* have profound philosophical significance, given the additional parallels between Pisthetairos in *Birds* and Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. In the opening of *Clouds* (which premiered in 423) Socrates descends from the sky in a basket (225-238). A little further into the play, he declares to a father, Pheidippides, that "we don't credit gods"(248), and "Zeus doesn't even exist!"(367) He further argues that, rather than believing in a non-existent god, Pheidippides' son, Strepsiades, should instead "believe in no god but ours" (423). As Socrates himself observes in, the Socrates of *Clouds* is not a representation of Socrates so much as he is a representation of the sophists (cf. Plato, *Apology* 18b, 19e). As some scholars have also noted, the Socrates of *Clouds* is "a composite of a reasoner – a man who subjects the natural world and the human political world to *logos*, rational analysis." (Plato, Arieti, & Barrus, 2010) As such, the Socrates depicted in *Clouds* is actually better understood as a personification of the sophists, famous for their rational investigations of both physical and human nature, than Socrates, who by his own description abandoned his investigations into natural philosophy very early in his career (Plato, *Phaedo* 96a). The Socrates of *Clouds* is, therefore, actually much more closely akin to Protagoras, the first and greatest of the sophists, than to what is known of the historical Socrates.

Given the strong kinship between the historical Protagoras and the 'Socrates' depicted in *Clouds*, as well as the close parallels between that Aristophanic Socrates and Pisthetairos in

*Birds*, the Prometheus of Púrphoros may also be understood as an archetypically Protagorean figure. In *Clouds*, Socrates discounts the existence of Zeus, and advocates belief in his own god; in *Birds*, by comparison, Prometheus advises Pisthetairos in his negotiations with the gods to assume rulership over the gods and men by assuming the trappings of Zeus' power. Prometheus' advice to Pisthetairos in *Birds* may thus very well reflect Protagorean counsel on the gods vis-a-vis men; namely, that in order to better rule over men, it is best to rule over the gods. If this parallel between Púrphoros and the Prometheus scene of *Birds* holds true, it grants great insight into the lost content of the former play. It also strengthens the view that Púrphoros depicted how Prometheus stole and furtively carried fire from heaven and gave fire to men. Given the parallels to *Birds*, it might also be conjectured that Púrphoros included Prometheus attempt to trick Zeus at negotiations between gods and men, which provides one of the more plausible contexts for the sole extant fragment of Púrphoros, on the need for silence and speaking in season. Prometheus furthermore divulges a closely guarded secret in *Birds*: that the one who gains possession of Zeus' scepter and marries the princess who looks after his things (who can only be none other than Athena) can rule over humans as though he were the king of the gods. Regarding the conclusion of Púrphoros, West argues that it likely ended with Prometheus being charged by Hermes with the theft of fire (1979, p. 134); a conjecture based, in part, on the fact that Hyginus describes Mercury, not Vulcan, as the one who binds Prometheus to a rock (*Fabulae* 144) – a likely case of the Latin mythographer having mistakenly transposed the end of Púrphoros onto the beginning of Desmôtês.

## Chapter 7 – *Prometheus Bound* (Desmôtês) The Clash of Power and Wisdom

Protagoras: "I believe that they [who practiced the sophistic art in ancient times] failed to accomplish what they wished. For they did not pass undetected by those humans who have power [*dynamenous*] in the cities, and for whose sake they put up facades (after all, the many [*hoi polloi*] perceive, so to speak, nothing, but merely repeat whatever these leaders proclaim).

Plato, *Protagoras* 317a-b, trans. Craig

### A. Criteria for Determining Protagorean Influence in Desmôtês

Viewed as a primary document of Protagorean philosophy, Desmôtês is best understood as a depiction of the very moment after power and wisdom first clash. This clash becomes inevitable when the policy of secrecy adopted by Prometheus in Púrphoros fails, just as Protagoras argues that secrecy among the wise must also inevitably fail (Plato, *Protagoras* 317a). Not even Prometheus, the epitome of wisdom and forethought, can avoid coming into conflict with Zeus, the epitome of power, who is omniscient with regard to the present. Given the degree to which Desmôtês as a whole is an expression of Protagorean philosophy, a line-by-line examination of the play would be fully justified as a prelude to the analysis of the Promethean myth in Plato's *Protagoras*. Given the constraints of time and space, though, this section's analysis of Desmôtês will focus on analysing elements of the play that can be positively traced to the influence of Protagoras, with the aim of both determining the degree to which they were influenced by Protagoras, and, to the degree they do have a Protagorean provenance, what they can tell us about the philosophy of Protagoras.

The analysis of the elements of Desmôtês in this section employs several interrelated methodologies to determine Protagorean influence. First, the Promethean myth as depicted in Desmôtês is examined in light of the significant alterations it makes to the traditional Promethean myth, on the interpretive assumption that these alterations were most likely made in order to better accommodate the intended philosophical message of the play. Second, particular passages of Desmôtês are subjected to close mythographical, philological and philosophical analysis, to identify parallels with the ideas of Protagoras. Given the lack of original source texts attributable to Protagoras, these passages are also analysed with an eye to identifying parallels with authors who are known to have influenced Protagoras, or whom he is known to have influenced. The overall aim of this analysis is to establish the Protagorean provenance of the *Prometheia* trilogy as a whole, and, by extension what the *mũthos* of the trilogy reveals of the public expression of Protagorean *logos* in Periclean Athens.

The following outline summarises the sections of *Promêtheús Desmôtês*, as they will be referred to in this chapter:

1. Prologos (1-126) – Enter Hephaestus, Kratos, Bia and Prometheus
2. Parados (127-195) – Enter Chorus of Okeanides
3. Èpeísodos 1 (196-398) – Okeanos Episode
4. Stasimon 1 (399-435) – Chorus Laments Prometheus' Fate
5. Èpeísodos 2 (436-525) – Prometheus' Account of what all he did for Humans
6. Stasimon 2 (526-560) – Chorus Laments the severity of Zeus' rule
7. Èpeísodos 3 (561-886) – Io Episode
8. Stasimon 3 (887-907) – Chorus Laments Io's Fate
9. Exodos (908-1094) – Enter Hermes

All line number references in this chapter are taken from the Greek edition of *Prometheus Bound* edited by Smyth (2001).

The *prologos* of *Desmôtês* opens with Prometheus being dragged on stage by the gods Kratos ('Power') and Bia ('Strength' or 'Force'), followed by Hephaestus, the god of fire, craft and metal smiths. Kratos describes their location as the "remotest regions of earth, / The haunt of Scythians, a wilderness without footprint." (1-2). This would seem to imply a location on "the northern edge of Scythia, near the ocean." (Allen, 1892, p. 51) This description comports fairly well with Prometheus' later description of Io's future travels, which would seem to imply that he is bound somewhere north of the Black Sea and west of where the Scythians are known to have dwelt (707-721). Only in later versions of the myth, the earliest and most notable of which is Cicero's paraphrasing of a scene from Luómenos (*Tusculan Disputations* 2.10.25), is the location of Prometheus' binding described as being in the Caucasus. The dramatic setting of *Desmôtês* is interesting, as the plains of the Scythians conforms to what is now known, on the basis of archeological evidence, to have been the ancestral homeland of the Indo-European tribes (Anthony, 2007), and therefore also the place where the Promethean myth originated; although it's unclear the degree to which the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy would have been aware of this fact.

The expressed purpose of Krato, Bia and Hephaestus in the *prologos* is to punish Prometheus for defying Zeus, by chaining and impaling him to a rocky mountainside. From the very outset, then, the theme of the play – the clash between power and wisdom – is firmly established. Kratos and Bia are the henchmen of Zeus, whose more usual consorts in Greek

myth are Nike ('Victory') and Dike ('Justice'). The severity of Prometheus' punishment points to the absence of Dike, and only very recent acquisition of Nike by Zeus, as the newness of his regime is mentioned several times in *Desmôtês* (cf. lines 35, 96, 148-9, 405). Given the explicitly stated short span of time between Zeus' overthrow of Kronos and the binding of Prometheus, the intervening events of the Promethean myth – the negotiation at Mekone, the theft of fire, etc. – must have been conceived by the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy as having unfolded with great rapidity. The extreme speed with which Prometheus went from being Zeus' closest advisor in overthrowing Kronos (220-1), to being his political prisoner once he was in power, also highlights the essential nature of the conflict between power and wisdom. As the conclusion of the trilogy in *Luómenos* will show, though, in a remarkable concordance with the views of Protagoras, this conflict is not necessarily inevitable.

The theme of power in its different gradients, and the seemingly irreconcilable nature of differing points of view is elaborated upon at several other points in the play. In the *parados*, for instance, Prometheus describes how he tried to offer his best advice to the Titans, but failed:

"They despised cunning [*tékna*]; in their pride of strength [*karteroîn*]  
They foresaw [*phronêmasin*] easy victory and the rule [*despósein*] of might [*bían*]."

205-208, trans. Vellacott

Prometheus then describes how his mother, Themis or Earth, had foretold [*proutethespíkei*]:

that not brute strength [*ischùn*],  
Not violence [*karteròn*], but cunning [*dólô*] must give victory  
To the rulers of the future [*húperschóntas krateîn*].

213-5, trans. Vellacott

In the prophecy of Earth and the advice that Prometheus tried to give the Titans, then, the differing gradients of power between physical might and intellectual cunning are accentuated. The word translated as "cunning [*dólô*]" derives from the word for a bait [*dolôî*], which strongly links its meaning to the concept of deception. Interestingly, too, *dólôn* is the very same word Hesiod employs to describe Pandora, the "irresistible bait," in *Works & Days* (83). As Prometheus makes clear, it is this feminine quality of deceptive cunning, born of physical weakness, that is nevertheless fated to triumph over mere brute force.

## B. Genealogy of Prometheus

Desmôtês presents a radical re-working of the genealogy of Prometheus that points to a substantial elevation in his mythic status, relative to his portrayal in the archaic age. In the prologue, Hephaestus names Prometheus' mother as Themis (19), a relation confirmed by Prometheus (874), and whom he also identifies as another name for Earth (*Gaïa*) (211-2). In Hesiod, by contrast, the mother of Prometheus is Klymene, daughter of Ocean (*Theogony* 507-8). Prometheus' father is not explicitly named in Desmôtês, but if his mother is Earth, this would seem to imply that his father is Ouranos, a conjecture supported by his lament to sky (*aithêr*) in the *exodos* of the play (1090). This conjecture is also supported by the Chorus' description of Prometheus as a "Titan god [*Titāna (...)theón*]" along with his brother, Atlas (427-8). This is the first time in Greek literature that Prometheus is explicitly called a Titan, as opposed to being named the son of a Titan, Iapetos, as depicted in Hesiod. Finally, Prometheus is described as having married Hesione, the daughter of Okeanos (560), following the genealogy provided by Acousilas (scholion on *Odyssey* 10.2), rather than Pronoea, as described by pseudo-Hesiod (*Catalogues of Women*, fr. 1). The purpose of these alterations to the genealogy of Prometheus would seem to be two-fold. The first is to elevate his status, making Prometheus the uncle of Zeus, rather than his cousin, as in Hesiod. This elevation in status may also have included his alteration from mortal to god. The divine status of Prometheus is highly ambiguous in the mythic tradition of archaic Greece, where he is consistently associated with mortal humans. In Desmôtês, by contrast, his divine status is unequivocal, a change that tends to support Westphal's theory, that the *Prometheia* trilogy celebrated the apotheosis of Prometheus into the Pantheon of gods worshipped in Athens (1869, pp. 218-9).

Another likely reason for altering the genealogy of Prometheus is to bring him in closer association with Gaia, who tells him several prophecies, as well as giving him the power of prophecy. As has been previously noted, Prometheus' name did not originally mean 'forethought' in its Indo-European precursor, but rather 'he who loves to snatch (etc.)'. By Hesiod's time, though, folk-etymologies had already begun the process of altering the meaning of Prometheus to indicate forethought, as reflected by the related names given to his brother and wife, Epimetheus and Pronoea. In Desmôtês, this transition in meaning is complete. After Hephaestus finishes binding Prometheus, Kratos openly mocks him for needing to better live up to the meaning of his name: "Forethought [*promêthéôs*]!" (86) Soon afterward, Prometheus affirms the association of his name with the concept of forethought with the following words: "I

know exactly everything / That is to be [*prouzepístamai*]; no torment will come unforeseen." (101-2) Later in the play, the Chorus also use the present infinitive tense of this word, *prouzepístasthai* ('to know beforehand'), to describe the full knowledge of future events that one possesses after having been told a true prophecy (698-9). To recap, Prometheus is definitively elevated by his genealogy in Desmôtês, relative to the mythic tradition, from an anthropomorphic fire-thief to the god of forethought.

### C. *Philanthrôpía*

Desmôtês is notable for containing the two earliest extant occurrences of the word *philanthrôpía* in ancient Greek literature (DeRuiter, 1931, p. 272).<sup>9</sup> I wish to argue here that the concept of *philanthrôpía*, as expressed in Desmôtês, is essentially Protagorean in origin, and that it formed an integral part of the expression of his humanistic philosophy. This argument is primarily based on the close alignment between the classical Greek concept of *philanthrôpía* and the anthropocentric precepts of what little is known of Protagorean philosophy. This alignment is seen most clearly in Protagoras' maxim, that 'Man is the measure of all things' (fr. 1). It may also be seen in his enunciation of the antithesis of *philanthrôpía* in Plato's *Protagoras* (327d), where Protagoras describes the *misánthrôpoi* in Pherecrates' comedy, the *'Agrioi*. In the following analysis of this section, the genesis of *philanthrôpía* will be explored in greater depth within its proper historical context, in Periclean Athens of the early 430s BCE. The aim of this investigation is two-fold: first, to more positively establish the connection between the concept of *philanthrôpía* and Protagorean philosophy, thereby bringing to light another way in which Protagoras decisively influenced the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy; and second, to determine what, exactly, *philanthrôpía* signifies within the context of *Protagorean* philosophy and, thereby, the *Prometheia* trilogy as a whole.

Both instances of the use of *philanthrôpía* in Desmôtês occur in its *prologos*, in direct reference to Prometheus. In the very opening lines of the play, Kratos ('Power') reiterates why Hephaestus is compelled to obey Zeus' command to bind Prometheus:

It was your treasure that he stole, the flowery splendor  
Of all-fashioning fire, and gave to men - an offence  
Intolerable to the gods, for which he now must suffer,  
Till he be taught to accept the sovereignty of Zeus  
[ὄς ἀν' διδάχθῃ τῆν Διὸς τυραννίδα]  
And cease acting as champion of the human race  
[στέργειν, philanthrôpou δὲ παύεσθαι τρόπου].

lines 7-11, trans. Vellacott

Hephaestus, for his part, expresses grave reservations at the prospect of punishing a "god of my own race" (13-4), noting how 'strangely strong' (*deinòn*) are his ties of 'birth' (*suggenés*) and 'comradeship' (*òmilía*) with Prometheus (39). This allusion is somewhat odd, as Prometheus and Hephaestus are nowhere even remotely related in any of the genealogies of traditional Greek

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, *philanthrôpía* occurs only one other time as a composite word in an authentic work from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE: in Aristophanes' *Peace* (394), which premiered in 421 BCE (Sulek, 2010, p. 389).



myth. Hephaestus is the son of Hera, who bore him without a husband in retaliation for Zeus having given birth to Athena without a wife. Prometheus, by contrast, is the son of Iapetus and Clymene in his traditional Hesiodic genealogy. In the *Prometheia* trilogy, by comparison, he names himself as the son of Gaia, otherwise known as Themis, and presumably also Sky, as noted above. In neither his traditional nor his revised genealogy, then, is Prometheus in any way related to Hephaestus. Prometheus is also primarily a Doric mythic figure, while Hephaestus is primarily an Ionic one. In this passage, then, the author may be alluding to an awareness of the close genetic relation of Hephaestus and Prometheus, who evolved from out of the very same Indo-European proto-Promethean mythic figure, as discussed in chapter 3. On a more dramatic level, though, Hephaestus is forced into punishing a close relative whom he regards with affection, but whose motives he does not fully appreciate.

While Hephaestus and Prometheus are in many ways identical, and were often considered little more than doublets of one another in Greek myth, the single most significant difference between them in Desmôtês would seem to reside precisely in their respective *philanthrôpía*, or lack thereof. This essential difference is highlighted by the words Hephaestus employs to condemn Prometheus and reiterate why he is compelled to carry out Zeus' order to bind him fast:

Your kindness to the human race has earned you this  
 [toiaūt' èpêúrô tou philanthrôpou trôpou].  
 A god who would not bow to the gods' anger – you,  
 [theòs theôn gàr ouch úpoptêssôn chólou]  
 Transgressing right, gave privileges to mortal men  
 [brotoĩsi timàs ôpasas péra díkês].

lines 28-30, trans. Vellacott

In justifying the deed he is about to perform, then, Hephaestus closely echoes Kratos' denigration of Prometheus for his 'philanthropic way', as manifested by how he granted the privilege of divine fire to mortal humans. Interestingly, though, Hephaestus does not even deign to mention the theft of fire in his indictment of Prometheus, even though he was the very god from whom it was allegedly stolen. Hephaestus also subtly distorts Kratos' appraisal of the sovereign legitimacy of the tyranny of Zeus (*Diòs turannída*); pointing instead to how, in transgressing right (*péra díkês*), Prometheus did not properly regard (*theôn*) and bow down to (*úpoptêssôn*) the anger (*chólou*) of god (*theòs*).

In the two passages cited above, then, two Olympian gods, Kratos and Hephaestus, highlight the philanthropic way (*philanthrôpou trôpou*) of Prometheus, and how it led him to give (*ôpasas*) the privilege (*timas*) of fire (*pûros*) to mortal men (*brotoisi*). In so doing, not only did Prometheus transgress against right (*pera dikês*); he failed to submit to the anger of god, and to remain loyal (*stérgein*) to the tyranny (or, less pejoratively, the 'rule') of the Divine (*tên Diôs tyrannída*).<sup>10</sup> As a close comparison of these two condemnations make clear, then, Prometheus is not being punished for stealing fire so much as for allowing his philanthropic way to lead him into defying Zeus, by giving mortal humans the privilege of fire. In a soliloquy delivered at the end of the *prologos*, after his tormentors exit, Prometheus also strongly self-identifies with their accusations of his *philanthrôpia*, declaring his "overmuch love of mortals [*lían philótêta brotôn*]." (122) The realisation of his immoderate friendship toward humans also results in a broad recognition among humans of the great benefits Prometheus has brought them. The only human character in *Desmôtês*, Io, upon first entering the stage, addresses him as "O bringer-to-light (*phaneís*) of universal benefit to mortals" (613).<sup>11</sup> The incorrigible philanthropy of Prometheus not only leads him to befriend and benefit humans, though; it also leads him to hate and defy gods who do not share his particular love. In the *exodos* of *Desmôtês*, near the end of the play, for instance, Prometheus declares to Hermes: "I detest all gods [*pántas êchthairô theóús*] who could repay / My benefits with such outrageous infamy." (975-6) Prometheus is thus defined not only by his friendship toward humans, but also by a reciprocal enmity toward misanthropic gods.

Prometheus' reciprocal sentiments of man-loving and god-hating, as depicted in *Desmôtês*, are illuminated by close parallels in Aristophanes' *Birds*. In the Prometheus episode near the end of that comedy, which premiered in 414, Prometheus declares to the protagonist, Pisthetairos: "I've always been a friend to humanity [*ânthrôpois gàr eünous*]." (line 1545) Pisthetairos, for his part, responds by expressing the reciprocal sentiment to Prometheus: "Yes,

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<sup>10</sup> A little later, in the *Okeanos êpeísodos*, Prometheus also describes the earth-destroying giant, Typhos, as challenging the tyranny of the Divine (*tên Diôs tyrannída*) (*Desmôtês* 357). Herington (1963, pp. 236-7) notes the extreme rarity of this "revolutionary phrase" in ancient Greek literature, noting that, other than the two references in *Desmôtês*, it appears only in Aristophanes' *Ploutos* (124), a fragment thought to belong to a lost play of Sophocles (*Colchides*, Fr. 320 Nauck, 345 Pearson), and a somewhat vaguer reference in a fragment of Cratinus' *Ploutoi* (Fr. 162 A Edmonds).

<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the philanthropic way of Prometheus is what he later describes to Io as "the warlike race of Amazons, Haters of men [*stugánor*]." (722-3) Prometheus goes on to tell her that, because she's a woman, they will grant her safe passage. The Amazons as described by Herodotus, by contrast, are an exceedingly barbaric race, overtly hostile to all strangers.

you've always been on hateful terms with the gods [*theomisês*], an absolute Timon." (lines 1548-9) Timon was, of course, the proverbial 'misanthrope' of Athens; a close contemporary of Socrates, whom Aristophanes also mentions elsewhere as hating men, but still loving women (*Lysistrata* 806-820). More vivid and complete portraits of Timon may also be found in Lucian (*Timon, or the Misanthrope*) and Plutarch (*Antony* 70). Menander also provides a portrait of the misanthrope in the character of Kmemnon in *Dyskolos*. Of these portrayals, Lucian draws the strongest parallel between Prometheus and Timon, particularly where he has Hermes describe him as having been:

ruined by kind-heartedness and *philanthrôpía* ('philanthropy') and compassion on all those who were in want; but in reality it was senseless and folly and lack of discrimination in regard to his friends. He did not perceive that he was showing kindness to ravens and wolves, and while so many birds of prey were tearing his liver, the unhappy man thought they were his friends and sworn brothers, who enjoyed their rations only on account of the good-will they bore him.

Lucian, *Timon* 8, trans. Harmon

Timon is thus ruined by his excessive philanthropy, which causes him to become a misanthrope. This dynamic of excessive philanthropy resulting in misanthropy is corroborated by Socrates, where he describes misanthropy as arising from artlessly trusting people to excess, and then having that trust repeatedly betrayed by those whom one considers one's closest friends (Plato, *Phaedo* 89d-e).

The big difference between Timon and Prometheus, of course, is that while the former is human, the latter is a god. Just as Timon hates his former friends for having repeatedly betrayed his trust, so, too, does Prometheus hate the gods for having repeatedly betrayed him. In the Titans' struggle with Zeus Prometheus first offered them the valuable advice: that the reigning powers would fall by guile, not strength. They spurned his advice, though, deeming it "unworthy of even a glance." (Desmôtês 215, trans. Thomson) And later, after Prometheus sided with Zeus and acted as his close advisor in successfully overthrowing Kronos, he was rewarded by the new tyrant with cruel punishments (216-225). Prometheus thus has plenty of good reasons for having become a god-hater, an antipathy confirmed by Aristophanes' portrayal. After Prometheus declares his friendship toward humanity in *Birds*, he goes on to declare: "I hate all the gods [*misô d' äpantas toûs theoûs*]" (line 1557).<sup>12</sup> Given this background,

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<sup>12</sup> Herington notes these several verbal parallels between *Birds* and Desmôtês as a part of his larger contention that at least two major scenes of the former closely parody scenes from the two lost plays of

Prometheus may be conjectured to have initially been a god-lover, but who fell victim to indiscriminately trusting gods to excess, and afterward declares his hatred toward gods who could repay his benefits with such infamy (975-6). Again, Prometheus' conjectured former god-loving status fits with his portrayal in archaic Greek and Indo-European myth, as the one who first instituted the worship of the gods.

The reciprocal relationship between *philanthrôpia* and *misanthrôpia* provides an important link between the philanthropic way of Prometheus, as depicted in Desmôtês, and the philosophy of Protagoras; for misanthropy plays a key role in the great sophist's own expression of his ideas. The relation between these two concepts may be viewed as a particular manifestation of the Heraclitean conception of the unity of opposites; or, alternatively, the Protagorean conception of "the two *logoi*", whereby "there are two sides to every question, opposed to each other" (Diogenes Laertius 9.51, trans. Hicks). Near the beginning of Plato's *Protagoras*, after Protagoras relates his own version of the Promethean myth, he further illustrates one of the key points of that myth – that all civilised men have a share in justice – with the example of the misanthropes in Pherecrates' comedy, *'Agrioi*. He states that this play premiered the previous year (in 434 BCE) at the Lenaea, a dramatic festival primarily staged for comedies (*Protagoras* 327d).<sup>13</sup> *'Agrioi* were 'wild folk' literally 'living in the fields', who, in one sense, represent the antithesis of civilised humanity. This antithesis is also illustrated by the chorus of *'Agrioi*, composed of a group of misanthropes (*misánthrôpoi*) who, disgusted by the injustice they experience in the city, flee to the countryside. Once there, though, they become even further shocked by the outlandish behaviour of *'agrïoi*, savage humans who make even the most wicked city-dwellers seem just by comparison. Given the timing of his reference, it would

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the *Prometheia* trilogy. In particular, he argues that the Prometheus episode of *Birds* parodies Prometheus' theft of fire in Purphóros, and that the wedding scene at the end of *Birds* parodies the wedding of Thetis and Peleus in the *exodos* of Luómenos (Herington C. , *A Study in the Prometheia*, Part II: *Birds and Prometheia*, 1963).

<sup>13</sup> Protagoras' mention of Pherecrates' play has presented one of the major impediments to positively determining the dramatic date of Plato's *Protagoras*. However, the primary ancient source for dating the premiere of *'Agrïoi* is Athenaeus (fl. late 2<sup>nd</sup> early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), who states that it was staged during the archonship of Aristion (5.218d-e), i.e. in 421/0 BCE. In making this assessment, Athenaeus likely relied upon a *didasclalia*, a official public record of a play's performance. However, he also lived more than 6 centuries after the facts he describes in this case, and thus his assessments need to be treated with caution. From other sources, it is also known that Pherecrates gained his first victory during the archonship of Theodorus, i.e. 438 BCE (Anonymous, *On Comedy*, p. 29). Given that Aristophanes is known to have revised *Clouds* after it was first produced, in 423, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that Pherecrates could have premiered *'Agrïoi* in 434, but revised and restaged it in 421/0, when he won his victory with it.

seem that Pherecrates' comedy, *'Agrioi*, was one of the first in a series of comedies that parodied the *Prometheia* trilogy; other notable instances of which included Cratinus' *Ploutoi* (429 BCE) and Aristophanes' *Birds* (414 BCE).

Protagoras' reference to *misánthrôpoi* is somewhat anomalous in the context of 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens. Plato is the first Greek writer to employ this neologism in his extant works,<sup>14</sup> and Protagoras' utterance of it represents the earliest use of the word within the dramatic frame of Plato's dialogues. Given the novelty and prominence of *philanthrôpía* in describing the nature of Prometheus in *Desmôtês*, and of *misanthrôpía* in Protagoras' exposition of his political philosophy, these terms may be viewed as related concepts specifically created to express the humanistic ideals of Protagorean philosophy and his novel conceptions of human civilisation. The anthropocentric world-view of Protagorean philosophy has already been noted, as expressed in his maxim that 'man is the measure of all things' (fr. 1). A similarly anthropocentric outlook is also apparent in the fragments attributed to another prominent philosopher of Abdêra, Democritus, who writes: "Man is a universe in miniature." (fr. 34) and: "I say the following about the Whole ... Man is that which we all know." (fr. 165) In both Protagoras and Democritus, then, a similarly anthropocentric philosophy is enunciated in which Man is the standard by which all things are judged, for Man is the consummate perceiver.<sup>15</sup> Man is even a sufficient standard for judging what he perceives, for he is a microcosm, complete unto himself. As the only form of knowledge that everyone holds in common, knowledge of the human provides the only suitable basis for the establishment of a universal world-view. Love of the human provides the most suitable ideal for such an anthropocentric outlook, for the love of that which everyone knows in common provides a suitably universal ideal upon which to base a morality of humanism. As will be seen, the ultimate goal of Protagorean humanism is to render Man more civilised through the cultivation of the arts, and thereby the further development of his mental and social faculties.

A reciprocal impulse of *philanthrôpía*, on the other hand, is a hatred of gods; in particular, a hatred of precisely those gods who fail to appreciate the human-loving way of Prometheus and the benefits he has brought human beings, and who even unjustly punish him for it. This was

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<sup>14</sup> The next writer to employ the word *misanthropy* in his extant works is Isocrates, who uses the word a couple of times in a later speech (Speech 15, *Antidosis* 131, 135) written in 354 and 353, only 4 or 5 years before Plato's death.

<sup>15</sup> Reflecting the Greek belief in humans as the consummate perceivers is Euthyphro's etymology for the Greek word for human (*anthrôpos*), which he (mistakenly) believes derived from the phrase *anathrôn ha opôpe*, which translates as "one who observes closely what he has seen" (Plato, *Cratylus* 399d).

likely a theme dealt with at length in Protagoras' controversial work, *On the Gods*, which opens by dismissing consideration of the existence of the gods themselves, most likely as a prelude to closer consideration of the phenomenon of human belief in the gods (Jaeger, 1968). This inquiry would likely have considered the baneful effects of belief in misanthropic gods or, at the very least, gods who are indifferent to human existence. This would have indicted most of the gods contained in the traditional Greek pantheon, most of which were originally inherited from the Indo-European tradition, and the oldest of which originally derived from anthropomorphised explanations of natural phenomenon, e.g. earth (Gaia) and sky (Ouranos). A comprehensive inquiry into the phenomenology of human worship of gods such as Protagoras would have undertaken, though, would also have taken into account the benefits that accrue from belief in a god who cares for human things. The expression of just such a consideration may be seen, in fact, in the writings of Critias, who was known to have associated with Protagoras, as indicated by his presence as a character in Plato's *Protagoras*. In a fragment thought to have derived from his play *Sisyphus*, a character praises as wise the man who first invented belief in a god who concerns himself with human justice, as a means of making people voluntarily adhere to the ordinances of human laws, even when they weren't directly observed by other people (Critias fr. 25).<sup>16</sup>

Protagoras' interest in religious reform is further illuminated by the Prometheus episode in *Birds*, where Prometheus acts as an advisor to the leader of the bird-city, Pisthetairos, in his upcoming negotiations with the gods. Prometheus instructs Pisthetairos in no uncertain terms, to demand that Zeus return his scepter to the birds, and to give him his Princess as a bride (1535-6). The bird-city is an ideal city in the sky, Pisthetairos is its wise leader, and the scepter symbolises the divine power of Zeus. The Princess, finally, is described in terms that make her something of a composite figure of Athena and Thetis. When Pisthetairos asks: "Who is this Princess?" he receives the answer:

Prometheus: "A most beautiful maiden, who looks after Zeus' thunderbolt and everything else too: good counsel, law and order decency, shipyards, mudslinging, paymasters, three-obol fees

Pisthetairos: "You mean she looks after everything for him?"

Prometheus: "That's right: win her from him and you'll have it all. That's why I came here, to let you in on this. I've always been a friend to humanity [*ànthrôpois gàr eûnous*]." (1537-45, trans. Henderson)

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<sup>16</sup> Fragment 25 of Critias will be examined in greater detail below, in the subsection on Prometheus' gift of fire.

Again, Prometheus' good-will toward humans leads him to betray the gods. Armed with his advice Pishetairos sets down unequivocal demands to the delegation sent by Zeus to negotiate with the bird city – consisting of Poseidon, Herakles and a Triballian (Thracian) God – in the face of which they are manifestly impotent. *Birds* thus ends with a wedding ceremony between Pishetairos and the Princess; a marriage that would presumably be expected to result in the birth of a man-made divinity, conceived in wisdom, so to speak, who would go on to become more powerful than his father.

The philanthropic way (*philanthrôpou trôpou*) of Prometheus thus marks him as an archetypical Protagorean figure: branded as a seditious trouble-maker by those in power, but who brings great benefits to human beings through his theft and gift of fire. As important as this gift is, though, it is still insufficient, in and of itself, to fully realise human potential. As will be seen, Prometheus must give further divine gifts to humans in order to complete the philanthropic project begun with his gift of fire.

#### D. Orientation toward Hope

A highly unique aspect of *Desmôtês* is its positive portrayal of Hope (*Èlpís*), which is depicted as nothing less than Prometheus' second gift to humankind. This positive portrayal is unprecedented in traditional accounts of the Promethean myth; and, indeed, it runs completely counter to the Hesiodic depiction, where Hope is implicitly depicted as the evil retained by Pandora (*Works & Days* 90-105). In this regard, *Desmôtês* may also be shown to run counter to almost the entire tradition of Greek wisdom. As will be seen below, this almost unprecedented depiction of hope as a human good also allows for this doctrine to be indirectly linked to the influence of Protagoras.

The theme of hope is first raised in *Desmôtês* by Prometheus, at the beginning of the first *èpeísodos*, where, at the urging of the Chorus of Okeanides, he recites the reasons Zeus had him bound. The severity of his punishment, though, prompts the Okeanides to ask: did his offence, perhaps, go further than he has said? That somewhat pointed question brings about the following exchange:

Prometheus: "Yes: I caused men no longer to foresee [*prodérkesthai*] their death [*móron*]"  
Chorus: "What cure [*phármakon*] did you discover for their misery?"  
Prometheus: "I planted firmly in their hearts blind [*tuphlás*] hopefulness [*èlpídas*]."  
Chorus: "Your gift brought them great blessing [*ôphélêma*]."

250-3, trans. Vellacott

This passage is the first of four references to hope in *Desmôtês*. Shortly after the exchange quoted above, the Okeanides rhetorically ask Prometheus: "What hope [*èlpís*] is there" of his release? (261) Later, in the second *èpeísodos*, after Prometheus elaborates upon the manifold nature of his gift of fire, the Chorus declares: "I have hopes [*eüelpís*] / That you will yet be freed and rival Zeus in power." (509-10) A little further on, in the second *stasimon*, finally, the Okeanides also ruminate:

It is a pleasant thing to spend the length of life  
In confidence and hope [*èlpísi*],  
And to nourish the soul in light and cheerfulness. (537-9)

As can be seen from these four references, a highly positive attitude is expressed toward the concept of hope, with Prometheus even claiming to have given this "great blessing" to humans in order to supplement the great benefits of his gift of fire.



As mentioned above, the positive assessment of Hope in Desmôtês runs counter, not only to the archaic depictions of Prometheus, but to practically the entire tradition of Greek wisdom. In Hesiod, Pandora inadvertently 'gives' mankind Hope, as a by-product of releasing the evils that afflict men into the world. In Desmôtês, by contrast, Pandora is nowhere mentioned, most likely due to exactly these negative connotations. Instead, the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy recasts Hope as the further blessing Prometheus gives humans to cure them of the misery caused by foreknowledge of their mortality. In this way, the chthonic ghost cult of Ge, upon which Hesiod's Pandora myth is primarily based, has been fully assimilated into the Promethean myth in Desmôtês, becoming an integral element to the actions of Prometheus himself. At the same time, though, Hope continues to retain a somewhat ambiguous quality in Desmôtês, in terms of Prometheus' description of it as "blind [*tuphlás*]". Overall, though, Hope is considered a net good in the play, as Prometheus himself boasts of planting it in the hearts of mortal men (*brotoĩs*), and the Chorus describes the benefit (*ôphélêma*) of what Prometheus presented (*èdôrésô*) them.

As both Schmid (1929, pp. 95-6) and Herington (1963, p. 191) observe, the positive portrayal of *èlpís* in Desmôtês is out of step with the thinking of the generation that followed Aeschylus. As a wider survey of attitudes toward *èlpís* in archaic and early classical Greece reveals, though, it is not only out of step with the generation to which Aeschylus' son, Euphorion, belonged; it is out of step with practically the entire tradition of Greek thought, with only a few significant exceptions. Hesiod portrays Hope in a highly negative light by situating it in the same jar in which *Kêras*, the goddess of death, placed the evils of hard toil and sickness (*Works & Days*, 92-96). Hope is only mentioned once in Homer, near the end of the *Odyssey*,<sup>17</sup> where Odysseus, home at last but still disguised as a beggar, is abused by Malantho, one of his household servants. He then warns the woman, who does not yet recognise her returned master, to cease berating him with the following words:

beware lest thou too some day lose all the glory  
 whereby thou now hast excellence among the handmaids;  
 lest perchance thy mistress wax wroth and be angry with thee, or Odysseus come home;  
 for there is yet room for hope [*èlpídos*].

*Odyssey* 19.82-4, trans. Murray

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<sup>17</sup> This very same phrase: "for there is yet room for hope [*èti gàr kai èlpídos aisa*]" does also occur at *Odyssey* 16.101; however, some scholars have pointed out that it appears to be an "anacoluthon" in the context of the sentence in which it occurs, thereby interfering with its meaning (Homer, 1886). It was thus likely inserted into the text at a later date.

This seemingly positive portrayal of hope is thus highly ironic in nature, notwithstanding Dauenhauer's assertion that, in the *Odyssey*, "hope is presented as a comfort for a man in a difficult present." (1985, p. 457) For Malanthe (whose name derives from *melas*, meaning 'black') does not in any way hope for, nor even expect, the return of Odysseus, which would only spell her demise. It is only her ignorance that prevents her from realising that Odysseus has already returned, and thus that her doom has already arrived. Homer's ambivalent attitude towards hope is also reflected in the name given to a member of Odysseus' crew: *Elpênôr* ('the hopeful one'). A hapless young man, Elpenor accidentally dies from a fall shortly after he is released by the sorceress Circe, along with his crew mates (*Odyssey* 10.552-560). Shortly thereafter, Odysseus meets him during his journey to the underworld, where he bemoans his fate (*Odyssey* 11.51-83). As may be seen from these examples, hope is cast in a highly negative light in Hesiod, and a not very positive light in Homer.

The generally sceptical attitude toward hope found in Hesiod and Homer is consistently maintained by a series of authors from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>i</sup> In tracing the possible influences from which the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy might have derived his unprecedented depiction of Hope – as the second great blessing bestowed by Prometheus after fire – a natural place to start, assuming the author to have been Euphorion, would have to be his father, Aeschylus. Euphorion's somewhat exceptional attitude toward Hope may have reflected his initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, which are said to have taught "the holy rite which inspires in those who partake of it sweeter hopes [*èlpídas*] regarding both the end of life and of all eternity" (Isocrates, *Speech* 4.28-9, trans. Norlan & Hook). Euphorion's father, Aeschylus, was born in Eleusis, the Attic town 18 km north-west of Athens that was home to this cult association. He is also known to have been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, based on several ancient testimonies dating from the classical period (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1111a8-9; Aristophanes, *Frogs* 884). Given his father's membership in the cult association dedicated to the Eleusinian Mysteries, it is plausible to assume that Euphorion, too, would have been an initiate, and was therefore exposed to its teachings on the blessings of sweeter hopes in an afterlife. While Aeschylus was undoubtedly a member of the Eleusinian cult, his attitude toward the concept of hope is somewhat difficult to discern from his writings, as he never speaks for himself, but only through the voices of characters, whose opinions he does not necessarily share. Nevertheless, a comprehensive inventory of references to *èpís* in the plays of Aeschylus reveals almost uniformly negative connotations toward the concept.<sup>ii</sup>

A wide range of attitudes toward hope are expressed by Euphorion's contemporaries, ranging from neutral to negative. One of the most important of these is Sophocles (c.497/6-winter 407/6), who makes numerous references to hope throughout his works. Not only does Sophocles frequently mention hope, his attitudes toward it may be seen to have undergone a significant degree of transformation over the course of his long career as a playwright. Given that the establishment of the Eleusinian Mysteries was likely a primary subject of *Triptolemus*, Sophocles' first play, produced in 468 BCE,<sup>18</sup> it is safe to assume that hope in an afterlife was also a subject addressed in that play. This initial interest in hope, for both the future of humankind and the existence of an afterlife, also becomes an important theme of Sophocles' later, mature plays.<sup>iii</sup> The most significant references to hope in the Sophoclean corpus occur in *Antigone*, produced shortly before 441. There, the Chorus states that man's achievements have been beyond all hope and expectation (*èlpíd'*); this optimistic assessment is then qualified, though, with the trenchant observation that these achievements have been both for good and evil (366-7). As she enters an underground tomb at the end of the play, Antigone also expresses strong hopes (*èlpísin*) in seeing her family in Hades after she dies (897).

In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which was produced sometime in the 420s, by comparison, the Chorus, in terror, beseeches the Delphic Oracle, daughter of "golden Hope", to reveal what debt she will exact (156-7). In *Oedipus at Colonus*, finally, there is an almost complete absence of hope, as well as a profound expression of philosophical pessimism with respect to the state of man. This final development is, perhaps, a reflection of current affairs at the end of Sophocles' life (406), when Athens' impending defeat at the hands of the Spartan alliance would already have been obvious to all. For a brief moment early in his career, though, and at the apex of Periclean Athens, Sophocles may be seen to have entertained more optimistic views on the nature and fate of human existence. This included a more positive disposition toward the concept of hope that Euphorion, in *Desmôtês*, would more fully develop into the second gift of Prometheus. As will be further argued later in this chapter, Protagoras may be implicated as the most likely common source of much of this novel new orientation toward hope. In order to establish this connection, though, it is necessary to examine some further evidence contained in the writings of his contemporaries.

Herodotus (c.484-c.425) makes numerous references to hope, although he does not directly comment on hope in-and-of-itself. Rather, he makes frequent reference to foolish people

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<sup>18</sup> Pliny, *Natural History* 18.12.1

whose vain hopes are disappointed (1.80.5, 2.13.3, 3.112.2, 5.36.3, 6.5.1, 8.77.1) or wiser people whose justified hopes are fulfilled (3.119.2, 5.30.6, 5.35.4, 6.11.3, 9.61.3, 9.106.2). Antiphon the sophist (480–411 BC) gives a similar assessment of the bad hopes of the foolish versus the good hopes of the wise in a fragment attributed to him by Stobaeus (late 5<sup>th</sup> century CE):

Whoever thinks he will illtreat his neighbours and not suffer himself is unwise. Hopes [ἐλπίδες] are not altogether a good thing; such hopes [ἐλπίδες] have flung down many into intolerable disaster, and what they thought to inflict on their neighbours, they have suffered themselves for all to see.

fr. 58, trans. Freeman

For both Herodotus and Antiphon, then, hope is neither a good or bad thing in and of itself. Rather, its goodness or badness is determined by the foolishness or wisdom with which a person hopes.

In terms of the generation after Euphorion, by comparison, Thucydides (c.460-c.395) maintains a rather ambivalent attitude toward hope in the more than 60 times he employs various cognates of ἐλπίς in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. For the most part, he follows the differentiation established by Herodotus and Antiphon, between the justifiable hopes of the wise and the foolish hopes of the ignorant and uneducated.<sup>iv</sup> Aside from describing various people whose expressed hopes turned out to be justified, or not, Thucydides also relates an interesting meditation on the nature of hope itself, enunciated by the Athenian embassies sent to negotiate the surrender of Melos in 416/5.<sup>v</sup> Within this outlook, Athenians as a whole, and Thucydides in particular, may be seen to have viewed hope as little more than a delusional distraction from reality. Far preferable, from Thucydides' realpolitik perspective, would have been to rely solely on sound judgement, unclouded by considerations other than a sober assessment of the facts of the situation, even if such judgements proved disheartening.

One of the more comprehensive philosophical assessments of hope in the generation after Euphorion is found among the fragments attributed to Democritus (c.460-c.370). Much like Herodotus, Antiphon and Thucydides, several of the opinions Democritus expresses on the subject of hope draw a sharp distinction between the attainable and worthwhile hopes of the intelligent and well-educated, versus the impossible and senseless hopes of the unintelligent and ignorant (cf. Fragments 58, 185, 292). One of his more philosophically significant

ruminations on the nature of hope, though, touches directly on its relation to the scientific study of nature. It occurs in a fragment cited by Stobaeus (2.9.5), where Democritus writes:

Chance [*túchê*] is generous but unreliable. Nature [*phúsis*], however, is self-sufficient. Therefore it is victorious, by means of its smaller but reliable (power) over the greater promise [*èlpídos*] of hope. (Fr. 176, trans. Freeman)

Here, Democritus draws a distinction between chance and nature, as well as an association between chance and hope. Chance, or fortune, is generous but unreliable; nature, by contrast, is more niggardly, but certain. Over the long term, then, the greater certainty of nature wins out over the greater hope of chance. The man of forethought, therefore, will study nature rather than basing their hopes on the vicissitudes of chance. Or, as Dauenhauer puts it: "For Democritus, *elpis* should not rely on chance, which by definition precludes foresight. It should rather be restricted to that which can be expected on the basis of scientific investigation of *phusis*." (1985, p. 457) However, the hope of the many, as they lack foresight, will always be drawn toward the greater hopes promised by chance.

As can be seen from this survey of Pre-Socratic poets and philosophers, *èlpís*, in the archaic period, is generally held to be, if not an outright evil, then, at the very least, a serious distraction from correctly assessing the reality of a situation, as can be seen in the works of Hesiod, Homer, Semonides, Solon, Simonides and Theognis. Not even Aeschylus, a known initiate into the Eleusinian Mysteries – one of the main precepts of which called for hope in an afterlife – can be said to have given an unequivocal endorsement of hope in his surviving works. At the same time, though, a more positive popular assessment of hope begins to appear in the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century, as demonstrated by references in Aesop and pseudo-Theognis. A glimmer of a more positive assessment of hope may also be discerned in Pindar, who writes that the only beneficial hopes are those given by the gods. The most important figure in this respect, though, is Heraclitus, who points to the epistemological importance of *èlpís* in terms of the further advancement of knowledge.

Among those in Euphorion's generation, by comparison, a certain degree of ambivalence continues to be expressed toward *èlpís*. Both Antiphon the sophist and Herodotus condemn foolish hopes, but laud wise ones. The most interesting speculations on hope among Euphorion's contemporaries, though, are found in Sophocles. While generally dismissive of hope in his early works as something vain, empty and blind, Sophocles has a single positive thing to say about it in *Antigone*.<sup>vi</sup> In the generation immediately following Euphorion, finally,

Thucydides dismisses hope as delusional distraction from reality. Democritus also exhibits an ambivalent attitude toward hope, such as is found in Antiphon and Herodotus. However, he also follows Thucydides in dismissing the hopes offered by the prospects of fortune as a distraction from the proper study of nature.

Among fifth century writers, then, Heraclitus is the only one to portray hope in a positive, albeit ambiguous, light; Herodotus, Antiphon and Democritus also regard it with a degree of ambivalence; and Thucydides dismisses it outright as deluded and harmful. Sophocles' attitude toward hope evolves over his career. He tentatively endorses hope near the beginning of his career, but becomes ever more trenchant in his criticism of it as his career progresses, and as the fortunes of Athens decline, concluding with the profound expression of philosophical pessimism, that the best one can hope for is to pass quickly and painlessly from this world. Protagoras' connection with almost all the writers with a positive, albeit often ambivalent, attitude toward hope is likely more than coincidence. The influence of Heraclitus on Protagoras is well-known; as Nietzsche notes: "Protagoras represented a synthesis of Heraclitus and Democritus." (1968, p. 233) Although the flourish for Democritus is too late for him to have directly influenced Protagoras or Euphorion, he nevertheless hailed from the same *polis* as Protagoras – Abdêra – and was likely educated and influenced by many of the same cultural forces.

The biographical information available on Antiphon the sophist is too scanty to make an educated guess as to the degree to which he might have been influenced by Protagoras, or might have influenced Euphorion. In the case of Sophocles, though, the fact that the playwright was one of the generals appointed to lead the expedition against Samos in 441, along with Pericles, indicates that he was also likely a member of his inner circle, and would thus have had plenty of exposure to the ideas of Protagoras, and opportunities to influence Euphorion. Herodotus, by comparison, likely spent extensive time with Protagoras, both as a member of Pericles' inner-circle, and as a co-traveler during his time in Thurii. In elevating Hope to the status of Prometheus' other great gift to man, therefore, Euphorion may have been influenced by any of the authors mentioned above who portray hope in a positive light, including: Heraclitus, Sophocles, Herodotus. The common connection of all of these figures to Protagoras, though, along with the many other acknowledged sophistic influences on the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, strongly suggest the great sophist as the most likely source for the innovation of Prometheus' gift of hope in Desmôtês.

The hypothesis that Protagoras is the source of the innovation making hope Prometheus' second gift after fire, is somewhat strengthened by the only explicit reference he makes to hope in Plato's *Protagoras*. There, at the conclusion of his Promethean *mythos*, Protagoras presents a supplementary *logos* to demonstrate how virtue is both teachable, and deemed to be so by Athenians. At the close of this argument, Protagoras then concludes that "there is still hope [*èlpídes*]" for Paralus and Xanthippus, two of the young men present, that they might yet turn out well in respect to virtue (*Protagoras* 328d-e). Socrates had earlier held up these two sons of Pericles as examples in support of his thesis that virtue is not teachable, as they had been provided the advantage of all the best teachers in this regard, but to no avail. Both Paralus and Xanthippus later died of the plague in the early years of the Peloponnesian War, so the expressed hope of Protagoras was never realised, if ever it could have been. His expressed hope in their prospects for educational reform, though, speaks to his willingness to strategically invoke hope, both as a salve for assuaging the fears of the unwise many, and garnering the affections of the young.

In light of the fact that Protagoras, Heraclitus and Democritus were all said to have been educated by the Magi, a strong possibility also presents itself that their relatively positive assessments of toward hope, and thereby the positive depiction of it in *Desmôtês*, are ultimately of Persian and Zoroastrian origin. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the close examination of Prometheus' first gift to man of fire as depicted in *Desmôtês*, the nature of which, as will be seen below, also bears many markings of having been of eastern origin.

## E. The Gift of Fire

Given how integral the theft and gift of fire to humanity is in the Indo-European origins of the Promethean myth, it might initially seem odd to maintain that Desmôtês substantially innovates with respect to the motif of fire, and even more paradoxical to argue that it was influenced by cultures foreign to the Greek's Indo-European inheritance. A more thorough examination of how Prometheus' gift of fire is portrayed in Desmôtês, though, reveals the unmistakable stamp of near eastern influences. As Schmidt (1929, pp. 93-6) notes, the wide-ranging significance given to Prometheus' gift of fire in the central *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês closely aligns it with the new humanism promulgated by the sophists, most famously expressed in the 'Ode to Man' in the first *stásimon* of Sophocles' *Antigone*. For Prometheus' extensive elaboration on the nature of his gift, in the second *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês, simultaneously displays aspects of Ionian philosophy, Persian natural science, Zoroastrian religious beliefs, and Babylonian and Sumerian mythic traditions. As will be argued below, the cumulative presence of these various eastern influences again points to the decisive role that Protagoras must have exercised over the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy. Before examining these near eastern influences, though, it is useful to first review how, exactly, Prometheus' theft and gift of fire is portrayed in Desmôtês.

Prometheus' theft of fire from the gods and his giving of it to mortal humans, as depicted in Desmôtês, are the primary actions resulting from his 'philanthropic way' (*philanthrôpou trôpou*) (11, 28). Initially, Kratos and Hephaestus describe Prometheus as having simply stolen 'all-fashioning fire' (*pan téchnou puròs*) and given it to 'mortals' (*thnêtoîsi*) (7-8). This initial description of the pan-technical nature of fire is elaborated upon in ever greater detail and length over the course of the play. At his soliloquy at the end of the *prologos*, for instance, Prometheus details how he hunted out the source of fire, stole it, and then "packed it in a pith of dry fennel stalk [*narthêkplêrôton*]." (109) In these descriptions, Prometheus' gift of fire is practically indistinguishable from its depiction in Hesiod and subsequent archaic Greek poets. Immediately after describing how he stole fire, Prometheus then remarks how "fire has proved / For men a teacher [*didáskalos*] in every art [*téchnês*], their grand resource [*mégas póros*]." (110-1) Yet, even this description of Prometheus' gift is not so far out of line with the Greek and Indo-European precedents, given the description of the technical aspects of generating and transporting fire in the Argive myth of Phoroneus, and the Vedic myths of Mātariśvan. Prometheus' description of fire as having been a teacher in every art, though, begins a



transformation in the understanding of the nature of fire, and thereby of the nature of Prometheus' gift, that reaches its culmination in the second *èpeísodos* of the play.

In the first *èpeísodos*, Oceanus attempts to convince Prometheus to plea to Zeus for mercy. Prometheus refuses, as he knows it would be futile, and Oceanus exits the stage in frustration. At the beginning of the *stasimon* that follows, the Chorus of Okeanides sing a choral ode in which they express their sympathy for the plight of Prometheus, telling him how all humans on Earth mourn for him and his Titan race. In response, Prometheus presents the single most elaborate version of what all his gift of fire has taught humans. In this section, on the gift of fire, I wish to argue that this description is nothing less than a detailed account of the pre-historical development of human beings, and a history of the rise of human civilisation, with only the barest covering of a poetic veil. As I argue below, this description is likely a highly faithful transcription from prose into poetry of a passage from the writings of Protagoras; more than likely, from a book of his mentioned by Diogenes Laertius titled: *perì tês èn àrchê katastáseôs* (*Lives*, 9.55). Hicks translates the title of this book as *Of the Ancient Order of Things* (Laertius & Hicks, 2000, p. 467), but Guthrie (1971, pp. 63-4) alternatively titles it *On the Original State of Man*, given Protagoras' primary interest in humanity. Guthrie's conjectured translation is also supported by the presence of parallel wording in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE tragic poet, Moschion, who also describes how: "human life began and was established (*àrchên broteíou kai katástasin bíou*)" (fr. 6.2, Nauck, trans. Guthrie).

Succinctly put, Prometheus' extended account of what all he did for human beings, in the central *epeidosis* of *Desmôtês*, is utterly unprecedented in archaic and classical Greek literature prior to the *Prometheia* trilogy. Given the central importance of this passage to the subject of this dissertation, it is cited in full in the accompanying endnote.<sup>vii</sup> In this account, Prometheus may be seen to list eleven distinct human capabilities and arts; eight of which are described prior to the interjection of the Chorus, and three afterward. A close examination of the nature of these capabilities, as well as the manner and order in which they're bestowed, grants considerable insight into the meaning of the *logos* behind the *mythos* of the passage. Further comparative analysis also reveals the purpose this *logos* likely performed in the Protagorean philosophy from which it was imitated: namely, to describe the historical evolution of human beings, from primitive to civilised existence; a development stemming from innate and uniquely human capacities, but which was greatly augmented by the subsequent development of the arts and sciences. This analysis also sheds considerable light on the cultural and historical origins of

this account. As will be argued at length below, Protagoras' views, as expressed in the central *epeidosis* of Desmôtês, most likely reflect teachings he learned from the Persian Magi, either directly or indirectly.

Significantly, Prometheus opens his most comprehensive account of what all he did for man, not by describing how he gave them fire, but rather by saying: "At first mindless, I gave them mind and reason." (444) The word translated here as 'mindless' is *nêpious*, which is often translated as 'foolish', and which is generally used in reference to the understanding of a child, and sometimes animals, in the sense of being simple, without foresight and/or blind. The word translated as 'gave' is *êthêka*, which might be better understood as 'put' or 'placed.' "Mind", on the other hand, translates *ënnous*, which means 'thoughtful, intelligent, sensible,' and is derived from the root word *nóos*, meaning mind, understanding or thought. The word translated as "reason", finally, is *phrenôn*, from the root word *phrenóô*, which means 'to make wise, instruct, inform, teach', but which also encompasses a much wider range of meanings (Liddell, 1990). Given its etymology, it seems likely that *phrenóô* originally derived from *phrên*, which designates the physical midriff of a person; an original shade of meaning that the author of Desmôtês himself employs later in the play.<sup>19</sup> As the meaning of the word evolved, I would speculate, it gradually came to encompass a range of thoughts and emotions that people viscerally feel in their midriff: the gut, the seat of the instincts; and the liver, the seat of the passions (for the ancient Greeks). Gradually, the conception of these feelings would have migrated to include the heart, the seat of honour, and the head, the seat of the mental faculties – thought and reason – where they would also have come to indicate a sense of purpose and will. Instead of giving men fire, then, Prometheus places in them the capacities they previously lacked for thoughtfulness and reasonableness. In short, mind and reason displace fire as Prometheus' primary gift to humans.

Closely following the acquisition of mind and reason comes the ability to correctly interpret the meaning of sense perceptions so as to produce durable knowledge. Prometheus frames this second group of human capabilities in terms of fulfilling what mortal humans lacked: previously they could see, but did not observe; they could hear, but did not listen: "all their length of life / They passed like shapes in dreams, confused and purposeless." (lines 448-9) Before Prometheus placed mind and reason in them, humans (if they could truly be called human at that stage) experienced sensory perceptions, but lacked the ability to properly interpret what they signified,

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<sup>19</sup> At line 881, where Io cries: "My heart beats wildly in my body; [*kradia de phobôi phrena laktizei*]".

apart from the most basic levels of cognition supplied by raw instinct. They lacked the ability to organise and interpret the perceptions of their senses so as to produce a durable, working knowledge of things. This rendered them ephemeral creatures, constantly dwelling in confusion, unaware of their place in the world. With the advent of the human acquisition of mind and reason, people became better able to interpret sensory data so as to produce useful knowledge of the world. An historical process is thus described, whereby an initial set of divinely dispensed attributes – mind and reason – leads, by necessity, to the more correct interpretation of the meanings of sensory perception. Indeed, these capabilities in many ways defined what it meant to be human for the classical Greeks. This is reflected, for instance, in the fact that they believed their very word for human – *ánthrôpos* – to have been derived from the phrase *anathrôn ha opôpe*, which translates as "one who closely observes what he has seen" (Plato, *Cratylus* 399d, trans. Reeve).

In describing the next stage of human achievement brought about by mind and reason, Prometheus focuses on more practical minded and concrete achievements, pointing to the development of the knowledge of construction. Again, this knowledge is determined by necessity, in terms of providing people that which they previously lacked. Before people learned how to build their own dwellings they lived like "ants [*muchoĩs*]" deep in "sunless caverns [*ànêlíois ántrôn*]." (line 453) As West observes, Prometheus' description of the primitive domestic conditions of early humanity evokes the sophistic speculations of Protagoras, as well as earlier Babylonian and Sumerian traditions:

In telling the tale of his benefits to humankind, Prometheus says that formerly they lived in sunless caves like ants. The idea that humans initially lived like animals in the wild appears as a standard feature of the accounts of the development of civilization from the second half of the fifth century. These are usually regarded as echoing sophistic speculations, or more specifically that of Protagoras. There is, however, evidence for such a conception of primitive man in much earlier Sumerian and Babylonian tradition. (West, 1997, p. 581)

In fact, the parallels between the sophistic thought of Protagoras, the mythic traditions of Babylonian and Sumerian myth, and Prometheus' extended description of his gifts are even more extensive than those described by West. However, these parallels can only be properly considered after a full exegesis of the remainder of Prometheus' extended account of what he did for humans.

In describing the fourth aspect of what he did for humans, Prometheus remarks how they knew no certain way to mark off the seasons. To meet this need, therefore, he showed (*ēdeiza*) them how the sun and stars (*āstrôn*) rise and set, which he describes as "a difficult art [*duskritous*]." (458) The technical requirements of astronomy also necessitated the development of mathematics or "Number [*āarithmôn*], the primary science [*ēzochon sophismátôn*]," which Prometheus says "I discovered myself [*ēzēũron aũtoĩs*]" (line 460). Closely connected to mathematics by the abstract symbols it employs is the art of writing [*grammátôn*], which Prometheus describes as "the all remembering skill, mother [*mousomētor*] of many arts." (lines 460-1) In his seventh and eighth sets of gifts to mortals, Prometheus again becomes more concrete and practical, describing himself as having been the first (*prôtos*) to domesticate animals (462-6), as well as the first to find (*ēũre*) the arts of seafaring and navigation (467-8). In summarising the knowledge he gave men up to this point, Prometheus declares: "Such tools and skill [*mēchanēmat*] I found [*ēzeurôn*] for men" (lines 469-470). At the same time, though, he laments the fact that he lacks even one invention (*sóphism*) at present to free himself from his agony.

At this point, the Chorus interjects to criticise Prometheus, comparing him to a "bad doctor fallen ill", who despairs of finding drugs to cure himself. Prometheus responds by telling them to hear the rest of "what crafts [*téchnas*], what methods [*pórous*] I devised [*ēmēsámēn*]." (477) While the first set of "tools and skill" discovered by Prometheus may be associated with Hephaestus by its immediate utility, the second set is composed of subtler forms of knowledge, more intimately connected to the nature of Prometheus himself. Given the critique of the Chorus, the first art Prometheus describes himself as having devised is medicine. Before the advent of this knowledge, he says, people had no "remedy [*ālézēm*]," "ointment [*christón*]," or "liquid medicine [*pistón*]," but for lack of "drugs [*pharmákôn*]" they wasted away. To protect them against all maladies, therefore, Prometheus "showed [*ēdeiza*] them how to mix mild remedies [*ēpíôn ākesmátôn*]" (479-483). Showing humans the means of healing sicknesses provided them a great boon in the face of their mortality. As Sophocles writes in his Ode to Man: "while Man can call on no means of escape from death, he has found escape from previously hopeless diseases in the depths of his mind." (*Antigone* 396-9)

The hope provided by medicine in the face of mortality also evokes the *phármakon* that Prometheus said he gave humans to cure them of their despair over their mortality – blind hopefulness (251-2) – but which he notably fails to mention in this latest and most

comprehensive inventory of his gifts. The most likely reason for this omission, which strains even the internal consistency of the play, is that the author of *Desmôtês* is reciting a pre-existing epistimogony, rather than presenting an original creation of his own. The remedies (*àkesmátôn*) to treat sickness, and the *phármakon* of blind hopefulness to alleviate despair over mortality, are also the only hints provided in *Desmôtês* of Prometheus' culpability, as depicted in Hesiod, in releasing sickness and death from out of Pandora's jar in the first place, through his initial provocation of Zeus at the negotiations at Mekone and his theft of fire. These vastly different accounts of Prometheus' relation to disease and death – from indirectly causing them to have been brought them into the world, to providing the *pharmákôn* to cure or alleviate them – provides one of the more revealing measures of just how far the Prometheus of *Desmôtês* has evolved from the Hesiodic version.

The second art Prometheus describes, after the interjection of the Chorus, is prophecy. Prometheus says he arranged (*èstoíchisa*) the various modes of prophecy (*mantikês*), and was the first to distinguish (*käkrina*) from dreams (*òneisáôn*) what 'reality need become' (*chrê üpar genésthai*). (484-6) Prophecy is thus closely associated with the mental faculties that Prometheus first placed in people – mind (*ënnous*) and reason (*phrenôn*) – and that allowed them to better interpret the necessity of reality by more properly ordering their sense perceptions. As the art of forethought, prophecy is even more closely aligned to the nature of Prometheus than medicine and, by that count, may also be distinguished from the more technical arts associated with Hephaestus. Another interesting feature of Prometheus' arrangement of the modes of prophecy are the associated techniques he describes as having been cultivated by this art. Prometheus says he 'exactly defined' (*skthrôs diôris*) the various flights of 'crooked-clawed birds' (*oiônôn*) (488-9); a matter for which Prometheus has a particular interest, given the savage eagle (*aìetós*) that Hermes later informs him will one day come to gnaw on his liver (1022).

Closely observing the habits of birds for prophetic signs may be seen to hint at a more comprehensive art of interpreting nature, in terms of how each species keeps its "mode of life [*díaitan*];" (490) as well as what preserves "feuds [*ëchthraî*], loyalties [*stérgêthra*]," and "associations of kind with kind [*sunedríai*]" (492). Besides providing techniques for practicing the prophetic arts, then, interpreting the meaning of the social habits of birds would also seem to provide the basis for a natural science of biology. It may also be seen to hint at a nascent political science, insofar as human behaviour is also rooted in biology, and human social

behaviours are defined in terms of what preserves feuds, loyalties and associations of kind with kind. Tellingly, though, Prometheus makes no explicit mention of having instilled, discovered, taught or otherwise bestowed the knowledge of a political art or justice in human beings. As will be seen in the following chapter, the giving to humans of the gift of justice is likely a privilege reserved for Zeus at the end of Luómenos.

The second aspect of prophecy described by Prometheus is the art of "how to interpret signs in sacrifice". He says he burnt the thigh-bones wrapped in fat, 'leading men the right way' (*ôdôsa*) in an "occult art [*dustékmarton ès téchnên*];" and that he "made plain [*èzômmátôsa*]" the signs from flames (497-9). In this particular aspect of his description of the art of prophecy, then, Prometheus returns to his Indo-European origins, as the first to initiate the ritual of religious sacrifice by fire. It will also be recalled that, in Hesiod, it was Prometheus' botched attempt to deceive Zeus with the first sacrificial offering, at the negotiations between gods and men at Mekone, that initiated their disastrous conflict in the first place (*Theogony* 535-557). Even though Zeus 'allowed' himself to be deceived, and thereby accepted the less useful thigh-bones wrapped in fat as his portion of the offering, Prometheus' failed deception gave him the pretence for feigning anger, which he then demonstrated by hiding fire from humanity. The subsequent escalating exchange – Prometheus stealing fire, Zeus sending Pandora to release the evils of sickness and death on humanity, and the crucifixion of Prometheus – constitutes, in Hesiod, nothing less than the origin of all human misery, or at the very least hard work. And now, Prometheus says he led men the right way by making plain the proper techniques for sacrificing to the gods. This description of the art of sacrifice thus highlights the degree to which the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy whitewashes the Hesiodic Prometheus, elevating him from trickster to saviour of humanity.

The final form of knowledge that Prometheus claims he was the first to discover (*èzeureîn*) (503) is that of the treasures hidden beneath the earth: copper (*chalkón*), iron (*sídêron*), silver (*ärguron*), and gold (*chrusón*) (502). By claiming to have discovered, in essence, the art of mining, Prometheus again returns to a technical form of knowledge more closely associated with his doublet, Hephaestus, who is identified as the god of blacksmithing in Homer. Significantly, though, Prometheus never specifically mentions the art of blacksmithing, or even pottery, as one of the arts he discovered, despite the traditionally close association of these crafts with Hephaestus and Prometheus respectively. These omissions provide yet another indication that Prometheus' description of what he has done for humanity is much better

understood as a pre-existing *logos* on the historical development of human civilisation in relation to the development of knowledge, rather than as a faithful recounting of the traditional Promethean *mythos*. Prometheus' account of how he developed all human arts is a virtually transparent poetically rendered *mythos* that barely covers a Protagorean *logos* of how the development of the arts transformed human history.

While Prometheus' claim to have discovered the treasures beneath the earth makes a symbolic nod to the craft of Hephaestus, the actual description he gives of it is evocative of the metal-based description of the historical ages of man. This theory of history is perhaps best known from its mythical portrayal in Hesiod, where the transgressions of Prometheus help trigger the gradual degeneration of humankind from its golden age, through its silver, bronze and heroic ages, and ending with the iron age, the most debased age of them all (*Works & Days* 109-180). Hesiod laments having not died before the iron age, or being born after it, given the seemingly inverse relations between human technical advance and moral development. West traces the origins of the metallic ages theory of human history to Semitic and Zoroastrian Persian sources (1996, pp. 174-5). This theory of history is also implicitly endorsed by Herodotus in his historical conceptions (Benardete, 1999, pp. 27-9). Whereas Hesiod describes humans as originating in a primitive but idyllic golden age, and having descended through the ever more corrupted silver, bronze and iron ages, though, a much different approach is taken in *Desmôtês*. There, Prometheus lists copper and iron first, and silver and gold last, implying a much more optimistic view of the cumulative progress of human knowledge and civilisation, ending in a golden age.

Prometheus concludes his extended account of what he did for humans with the following assessment: "All human [*brotoĩsin*] arts [*téchnai*] come from Prometheus." (506, trans. Grene) The adjective Prometheus uses to describe the "human" *téchnai* he has given is *brotoĩsin*, from *broτός*, meaning 'mortal.' This particular word is employed a total of twelve times in *Desmôtês* by gods as an epithet for humans. It used, for instance, by Hephaestus (21, 30) Prometheus (111, 123, 233, 238, 442, 470, 506, 612, 841) and the Chorus (253), to emphasise the particularly mortal nature of human beings. After Prometheus describes how he caused mortals (*thnêtoús*) to no longer see their death (*móron*) by placing blind hopes in them, for instance, the Chorus replies: "That was a useful thing [*ôphélêma*] you gave [*èdôsêsô*] mortals [*brotoĩs*]." (253) *Broτός* seems to have been originally derived from *mrotós* (Sanskrit *mrtás*, Latin *morior*), from which the English word mortal is also derived. Together, *mrotós* and *broτός* also provide the antonym

for *ämbrotos*, which refers to the immortal or divine. By defining the arts that came from Prometheus as "*téchnai brotoĩsin*", therefore, the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy may be seen to highlight their temporal aspect. The arts he describes as having discovered manifest themselves in the historical realm of becoming, particularly with respect to the more Hephaestian forms of *téchnê*, and as opposed to the more Promethean capacities of mind, reason and proper interpretation.

Summarising what all Prometheus says he did for human to humanity: he may be seen to itemise eleven distinct facets of human knowledge that may be organized into two groups, eight before and three after the interjection of the Chorus. These various facets of knowledge are summarised in the table below, arranged in the order in which Prometheus presents them, associated with the manner in which Prometheus describes himself as having given them, and identified with the god with whom they are most strongly associated:

| <b>Prometheus' account of the knowledge he gave humans (Desmôtês 447-506)</b>  |   |                    |
|--|---|--------------------|
| <b>Nature of the knowledge given</b>   | <b>Manner of the gift</b>                         | <b>Association</b> |
| 1. Mind and reason   | Placed ( <i>ëthêka</i> )                          | Prometheus         |
| 2. Interpretation of sights & sounds   | Arising from need                                 | Prometheus         |
| 3. Construction  | Arising from need                                 | Hephaestus         |
| 4. Astronomy   | Showed ( <i>ëdeiza</i> )                          | Hephaestus         |
| 5. Mathematics   | Discovered ( <i>ëzëũron</i> )                     | Hephaestus         |
| 6. Writing   | Discovered ( <i>ëzëũron</i> )                     | Hephaestus         |
| 7. Domestication of animals  | 1 <sup>st</sup> ( <i>prôtos</i> ) to yoke         | Hephaestus         |
| 8. Seafaring and navigation  | Find ( <i>ëũre</i> )                              | Hephaestus         |
| "Such tools and skill ( <i>mëchanêmat'</i> ) I found out ( <i>ëzeurôn</i> ) for men"<br>(Interjection by the Chorus)<br>"Hear what crafts ( <i>téchnas</i> ) and methods ( <i>pórous</i> ) I devised ( <i>ëmêsámên</i> ):" |   |                    |
| 9. Medicine  | Showed ( <i>ëdeiza</i> )                          | Prometheus         |
| 10. Prophecy, incl. interpretation of:   | Arranged ( <i>ëstoíchisa</i> )                    | Prometheus         |
| - dreams   | 1 <sup>st</sup> to Distinguish ( <i>käkrina</i> ) | Prometheus         |
| - flights of birds   | Defined exactly ( <i>skthrôs diôris</i> )         | Prometheus         |
| - signs in sacrifice   | "   | Prometheus         |
| - occult art   | Leading by the right way ( <i>ôdôsa</i> )         | Prometheus         |
| - signs from flames  | Made plain ( <i>ëzômmátôsa</i> )                  | Prometheus         |
| 11. Mining the treasures of the earth  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Found ( <i>ëzeureĩn</i> )         | Hephaestus         |
| "All mortal ( <i>brotoĩsin</i> ) arts ( <i>téchnai</i> ) come from Prometheus"   |   |                    |



This list constitutes the single most extensive description of Prometheus' gifts and their human impact in Desmôtês. Interestingly, though, Prometheus makes several notable omissions in this otherwise exhaustive inventory of the benefits he has provided humanity. To begin with, nowhere does he mention his gift of fire; rather, he seems to have substituted it with having placed the capacities for mind and reason in human beings. Nor does he see fit to include the gift of "blind hopefulness" that he had mentioned earlier to the Chorus. The only hint of his bestowal of this benign form of ignorance occurs where he mentions the lack of drugs [*pharmakôn*] humans that previously had to heal their maladies. Given the parallel in Sophocles' Ode to Man, the medical knowledge Prometheus devises may be seen as another form of this blind hopefulness; holding out the aspiration that, someday, through the application of *techne*, cures might be found to treat all the maladies that afflict mortal humans. Another major omission in Prometheus' inventory of the arts he has invented or discovered is the art of blacksmithing and pottery, which is particularly odd, given the traditionally close identification of these two crafts with Hephaestus and Prometheus.

The many omissions in Prometheus' account of what he did for humans may be best accounted for by understanding it as a mythological representation of an epistemology; or, better yet, an epistemogony – an account of how human knowledge came into existence. Particularly in those passages that refer to the interpretation of sensory data by the human mind, a sophisticated understanding is demonstrated with regard to the subtle differences between perception and knowledge; between the objective world and our subjective interpretations of it. There also seems to be an acute understanding of the evolutionary nature of the human intellect, and of how mental capacities gave rise to progressively more complex and subtle forms of technical knowledge. There was once a time when people sensed the world around them, but had no understanding of what they perceived. After their mental faculties allowed them to better interpret the world, human needs moved them to devise practical solutions to the problems they faced. People once lived in sunless caves, but now live in masterfully constructed houses that let in the light. Attempting to understand the motions of the night sky and the progression of the seasons, on the other hand, gave rise to mathematics, "the primary science," and writing, the "mother of many arts." Human history is a story of slow and steady progress eked out over aeons, with the acquisition of one form of knowledge helping give rise to further generation, albeit with occasional setbacks. At the very beginning of that ascent, though, are the god-given human capacities of mind and reason.

Protagoras is frequently credited by classical scholars with having introduced Ionian philosophical speculation and natural science to Athens (Plato & Cornford, 1957, p. 34 ff.; Guthrie, 1971, p. 184 ff.). Since Griffith's (1977) reappraisal of the authorship of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and West's (1979) refinement of its likely date of composition, the decisive influence that Protagoras must have exercised over the author of this play is also gradually coming to be recognised. As West notes, the single closest parallel to Prometheus' account of what all he did for humans in Desmôtês is found in the Promethean myth Protagoras tells in Plato's *Protagoras*:

The poet's picture of the evolution of human civilization, with the gift of fire by Prometheus leading to the growth of arts and crafts (PV 110, 254, 442 ff.) is most closely paralleled in the myth that Plato puts in the mouth of Protagoras (Prot. 320c ff., 321d), which is generally agreed to follow the lines of Protagoras' own work *περι της ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως*. Accounts of man's progress from a beastlike condition and of his development of technical skills appear in several tragedians and other writers from the second half of the fifth century and nowhere earlier. It is likely that this conception originated in a particular sophist's account - Protagoras'. (West M. L., *The Prometheus Trilogy*, 1979, p. 147)

In the myth that Plato has Protagoras tell, the great sophist describes Prometheus as having stolen and given "artful wisdom [*ēntechnon sophian*] together with fire" to mankind; he further states that this technical knowledge cannot "be acquired or used except by fire" (321d). As a result of these gifts, that allow humans a share of the divine, they came to believe in the gods and build alters to them. They also invented articulate speech, constructed permanent dwellings, clothed and shod themselves and cultivated the earth. Because they lacked a political art, though, they were unable to form cities to more adequately defend themselves against wild animals. After they became threatened with extinction from such attacks, therefore, Zeus bestowed upon humans the additional gifts of shame (*aidô*) and justice (*dikên*); acquired but innate qualities that allowed humans to develop political skill (*politikên technên*). With this new form of knowledge, humans became able to establish more permanent cities, leading to the development of a more civilised manner of social life.

In Plato, Protagoras explicitly refers to his Prometheus *mūthos* as having a corresponding *lógos*. His ordering of the gifts of Prometheus and Zeus may thus be seen as a mythologised version of a rational account of the progressive nature of human history that subsequently provided the primary model for the many other such accounts in classical Greece. Guthrie (1971, pp. 79-84) notes several ancient Greek accounts of man's historical progress, from a beastlike condition to civilised existence through the development and application of technical

skills, as contained in the writings of tragedians, physicians, orators and historians from the second half of the fifth century on.<sup>20</sup> These passages are examined in detail in the endnote appended to this sentence, with an eye to demonstrating their common origin in Protagoras' lost work, *On the Original State of Man*.<sup>viii</sup> As this survey reveals, Protagoras is the first Greek thinker on record to have explicitly enunciated the idea of progress in human history, from savage to civilised existence, stemming from the development and application of the various arts; and Prometheus' account of what he did for humans in the central epeidosis of Desmôtês is the single largest surviving fragment of this novel Protagorean account, albeit in a mythological format.

If Protagoras is acknowledged as the originator of the progressive account of human history, an additional question must be asked: is this account original to Protagoras, or did he derive it from another source? This question can be answered to a large degree by comparing Prometheus' historical ordering of the forms of knowledge he discovered for mortal humans points to similar accounts in Babylonian and Persian sources.<sup>21</sup> This careful ordering of the historical development of the various forms of human knowledge belies the influence of Semitic and Persian historical frameworks. These narratives would have relied, in turn, on prior Sumerian accounts, for which the working of various metals was, indeed, preceded by the development of the other arts named above, most significantly, writing.

The ultimately Sumerian origin of the list of human knowledge recited by Prometheus may be discerned from an historical analysis of the development of Sumerian civilisation. The very earliest stage of the Bronze Age in the ancient near east began sometime around 3300 BCE, by which time Sumerian civilisation was already more than two millennia old. The oldest known Sumerian city, Eridu, was first settled around 5400 BCE. Intensive, year-round agriculture was developed soon afterward, in about 5300 BCE. Mathematics, astronomy and sailing were first

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<sup>20</sup> These include: Sophocles, *Antigone* 332-71; Euripides, *Suppliants* 201-13; Critias, Fr. 25.1-8 (ed. Diels-Kratz, likely from his play, *Sisyphus*); Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 28 ff.; a Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine* 3 (l, 574-8 L.); Moschion, Fr. 6 (ed. Nauck); and Diodorus, 1.8.1-7.

<sup>21</sup> To review: Prometheus says he initially placed in the capacities of mind and reason in humans, thereby allowing them to better interpret the world around them so as to produce durable knowledge of it. This gave rise, in turn, to the development of a number of pragmatic, 'Hephaestean' forms of technical knowledge that are presented in the following order: house building, astronomy, mathematics, writing, the domestication of animals, and navigation. More 'Promethean' forms of interpretive knowledge again assert themselves at a later stage in the history of human intellectual development, though, with the development of the more subtle arts of medicine, augury and religious sacrifice. The last *technê* listed, finally, – the Hephaestean craft of mining – points to the late development of metallurgy relative to the overall history of human civilisation.

developed by the Sumerians sometime during the 4<sup>th</sup> millennia BCE. A 'proto-cuneiform' type of writing also appeared as early as 3500 BCE, with a more developed cuneiform writing system having arisen by 3000 BCE. As the most technologically advanced civilisation in the world in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennia BCE, the Sumerians were the only one to have developed astronomy, mathematics, writing and seafaring prior to the beginning of the Bronze Age. As such, theirs is the only cultural-historical perspective for which it would have made sense to order those arts prior to the development of mining and metallurgy in an historical account. A lot depends, of course, on the original compiler of the list of arts enumerated by Prometheus in *Desmôtês* having arranged them with some degree of historical awareness. As I hope has been demonstrated in the above analysis, though, whoever composed that list was highly meticulous in terms of drawing out an historical pattern of cause and effect in terms of the gradual acquisition and accumulation of human knowledge.

Additional evidence corroborating the Sumerian origins of Prometheus' account of what all he did for humans is found in the mythographical evidence. As Stephanie West points out, many of the eccentricities of the depiction of Prometheus in *Desmôtês*, relative to prior depictions in the archaic age, strongly suggest his assimilation with the Sumerian / Babylonian god Enki / Ea (*Prometheus Orientalized*, 1994). Enki was originally the patron god of Eridu, which is named "the city of first kings" in the Sumerian king list. This paramount position would make Eridu not only the oldest Sumerian city but, arguably, the first city in human history period. Many eminent Assyrologists, among them Sir Henry Rawlison, have also argued that Eridu was identical with the Biblical Garden of Eden (Giovino, 2007, pp. 18-19). In Sumerian myth, the patron god of Eridu is Enki, the god of wisdom, who is in charge of all the arts and divine decrees fundamental to civilisation. He is also said to dwell in a watery abyss, called the *Abzu*, derived from the Sumerian *ab* 'ocean' and *zu* 'wisdom' (Lennart Warring, 2001, p. 300).

Kramer (1962) has published several fragments of Sumerian tablets that he interprets as depicting Enki's presentation of the arts of civilisation to his daughter, Inanna, the goddess of sexual love, fertility and warfare, and patron deity of the city of Erech (alt. Uruk). In them, Inanna is described as wishing to increase the welfare and prosperity of her city. In order to do so, she travels to Eridu to entreat Enki to give her the arts and decrees of civilisation. During a banquet with her, Enki becomes intoxicated and presents Inanna with these arts. Among the divine decrees he presents her are those referring to:

lordship, godship, the exalted and enduring crown, the throne of kingship, the exalted scepter, the exalted shrine, shepherdship, kingship, the numerous priestly offices, truth, descent into the nether world and ascent from it, the 'standard,' the flood, sexual intercourse and prostitution, the legal tongue and the libelous tongue, art, the holy cult chambers, the 'hierodule of heaven,' music, eldership, heroship and power, enmity, straightforwardness, the destruction of cities and lamentation, rejoicing of the heart, falsehood, the rebel land, goodness and justice, the craft of the carpenter, metal worker, scribe, smith, leather worker, mason, and basket weaver, wisdom and understanding, purification, fear and outcry, the kindling flame and the consuming flame, weariness, the shout of victory, counsel, the troubled heart, judgment and decision, exuberance, musical instruments. (Kramer, 1962, pp. 96-7)

In all, Enki presents Inanna with over one hundred divine decrees that established the cultural patterns that formed the essence of Sumerian civilisation. These decrees are organised into clusters of six or seven arts, each arranged according to general subject area; three of the clusters, for instance, contain decrees relating to divine, political and technical knowledge respectively. After Enki sobers up, he attempts to reclaim his gifts from Inanna, but she refuses to return them, and is ultimately successful in transporting them back to Erech in her 'boat of heaven,' though only after defeating several sea monsters sent by Enki to intercept her. The myth of Enki's gifts to Inanna was inscribed as early as 2000 BCE, and may be readily interpreted as a fairly transparent mythical allegory of the historical transfer of knowledge of the civilisational arts from Eridu to its colony city of Uruk.<sup>ix</sup>

With the rise of the Akkadian Empire (2300-2200 BCE), many elements of Sumerian myth were subsequently absorbed wholesale into Semitic culture. In the process, Enki's attributes were largely assimilated by the Semitic god Ea. Ea's name means "the house of water" in Sumerian; while in West-Semitic it is interpreted as meaning "running water", as from a spring (Kramer & Maier, 1989). Ea was said to inhabit the sweet waters and was considered lord of the deep. These attributes may relate him to the Babylonian god, Oannes, who is said to have been half fish and half man. In a history written by the Hellenistic Babylonian historian, Berossus (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), Oannes is said to have emerged from the sea and to have given men "insight into letters and sciences, and arts of every kind. He taught them to construct houses, to found temples, to compile laws, and explained to them the principles of geometrical knowledge." (Smith G. , 1880, p. 33) Ea, by comparison, is said to have been the god of wisdom and knowledge, and is also described as the "maker of fate" (Smith G. , 1880, p. 47). In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, by comparison, Ea is known as a "patron of the arts and one of the creators of mankind" (Sandars, 1972, p. 121). In terms of genealogy, Ea is thought to have been a son of

Anu, the god of the sky (Sandars, 1972, p. 26); he is also named as the father of Merodach (alt. Marduk), the lord of Babylon, whose name means 'the glory of the sun'. Ea is said to have created mankind, or to have assisted the Mother Goddess with his expertise in its creation. He is also said to have saved mankind several times from the wrath of Enlil, the ruler of the cosmos (George, 1999, p. 223). One of the last and greatest disasters from which Ea saved mankind was the great flood (*Epic of Gilgamesh*, 11.20-47, 11.179-198, ed. George).

The parallels between Ea in Babylonian myth and Prometheus in the *Prometheia* trilogy are both numerous and readily identifiable. The single most notable parallel, and the single most significant alteration of the traditional Promethean myth in order to accommodate aspects of Ea, is the unprecedented transformation of Prometheus' gift of fire to encompass "all mortal arts [*brotoĩsin téchnai*]." (506) This alteration of the Promethean myth to encompass aspects of Ea may also be seen in the trilogy's radical reworking of Prometheus' genealogy: from him being the son of Iapetos and Klymene in Hesiod; to being the son of Ge, or Mother Earth, and Ouranos, or Father Sky, in Desmôtês. The watery associations of Enki / Oannes / Ea also likely forms at least part of the reason for changing Prometheus' wife, from Pronoea in the *Catalogue of Women*, to the water-nymph Hesione in Desmôtês (560); thereby making Okeanus, the god of the waters of the deep, the father-in-law of Prometheus. Only one source antedating the *Prometheia* trilogy mentions the marriage of Prometheus to Hesione: a fragment attributed to Akousilaos of Argos (#34), the late 6<sup>th</sup> century mythographer, recorded by a scholiast to *Odyssey* 10.2. In any case, given these many strong parallels, Stephanie West's hypothesis, that the Prometheus of the *Prometheia* trilogy assimilates many aspects of Ea from Babylonian myth, is further supported by mythographic evidence she does not take into account.

Acknowledging the presence of Sumerian and Semitic elements in the depiction of Prometheus in Desmôtês raises the question of what their paths of transmission might have been. To answer this question, it is necessary to consider the possibility of Persian intermediaries, as the Persian empire was the dominant political and cultural force in the near east during the classical age of Greece. The Persian role in transmitting Semitic elements of the Promethean myth of Desmôtês may be discerned in terms of the presence of Zoroastrian aspects to its treatment of the metaphor of fire. Measuring the degree of Persian influence in this regard is illuminated by first examining Greek philosophical conceptions of fire. Among the archaic Greeks, fire was considered one of the natural elements, closely associated with the Sun, as described in an Orphic tablet uncovered in Thurii (Orpheus Fr. 21). The idea of fire as one of

natural the elements is followed by many Greek philosophers and poets in the classical age (cf. Gorgias of Leontini, Fr. 5; Antiphon the Sophist, Fr. 26). Often, fire is mentioned by philosophers in association with several other elements, such as earth, water and air (cf. Empedocles of Acragas, Fragments 17, 37, 51, 52, 54, 62, 71, 84, 85, 109; Diogenes of Apollonia, Fr. 2), as well as iron and gold (Melissus of Samos, Fr. 8.2;), and even the space that contains matter (Philolaus of Tarentum, Fr. 12).

During the late archaic age, fire also comes to be employed to describe a range of more subtle and dynamic processes in nature.<sup>x</sup> The single most significant use of fire as a metaphor among the Pre-Socratic philosophers, as it relates to the subject of this chapter, is made by Epicharmus (c.540-c.450). Epicharmus follows the archaic Greek tradition referring to fire as one of the divine elements, along with winds, water, earth, sun and stars (fr. 8). In a fragment preserved in Latin by the Greek born Roman grammarian, Priscian (fl. 500 AD), though, he is also quoted as having written that: "The body is earth [*terra corpus est*], but the mind is fire [*at mentis ignis est*]." (Fr. 48, trans. Freeman). It would be interesting to learn the original Greek word that Priscian translates as *mentis* in this passage. *Mentis* is the nominative singular form of *mens*, which generally refers to: "The intellectual faculties, the mind, understanding, intellect, reason, judgment, discernment, consideration, reflection, etc." (Andrews, 1990) It is likely, then, that the original Greek word that Epicharmus employed for 'mind' in this phrase was a cognate of *nóos*, meaning "mind, as employed in perceiving and thinking," and "feeling and deciding" (Liddell, 1990) For not only is *nóos* the root of the word that Prometheus essentially substitutes for fire at the beginning of his account of what he's done for humans (Desmôtês 444); it is also the term Anaxagoras consistently employs to describe the active and ordering principle of the universe (cf. Fragments 11, 12, 13, 14; Plato, *Phaedo* 97c; Diogenes Laertius 1.4).

As it happens, the strong equivalences drawn between the concepts of fire and mind by Epicharmus and the author of Desmôtês are highly evocative of some of the basic precepts of Zoroastrian religion, founded by the Persian prophet, Zarathustra, whom the Greeks called Zôroaster.<sup>22</sup> The dates for Zarathustra's life vary widely in ancient sources, of which Jackson (On the date of Zoroaster, 1896) provides a comprehensive inventory.<sup>23</sup> Among modern scholars,

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<sup>22</sup> The earliest extant mention of Zoroaster in ancient Greek texts is found in Plato (*Alcibiades* I, 122a).

<sup>23</sup> The Iranian tradition, transmitted by sources from the early Islamic period (8<sup>th</sup> century CE), date his life to 300 years before Alexander's victory over Darius III, King of the Persian Empire (lived c.380-330, reigned 336-330 BCE); an estimate that would date Zarathustra's life to approximately 630 BCE. Diogenes Laertius (3<sup>rd</sup> century CE), by contrast, cites Hermodorus the Platonist (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) as having reckoned that the

the date of Zarathustra's flourit is alternatively estimated at 588 BCE (Gershevitch, 1995, pp. 6-15) and 1080 BCE (Humbach, 1991, pp. 25-6).<sup>24</sup> The oldest Zoroastrian texts, the *Gāthās*, which form approximately two-fifths of the what has survived as the *Avesta*, the Holy Scriptures of the Zoroastrians. The *Gāthās* are written in Old Avestan, a language very similar to the Old Sanskrit of the *Rig-Veda*, the composition of which dates to between 1700 and 1100 BCE. It is thought that Iranian Avestan and Indian Sanskrit split from a common Aryan root language that existed sometime in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE (West M. L., 2007, p. 9). While Old Avestan and Old Sanskrit are very similar linguistically, sharing many nearly identical words and grammatical structures, the two oldest religious texts with which these ancient languages are respectively associated – the *Gāthās* and the *Rig-Veda* – are worlds apart in their theological outlook. While the *Rig-Veda* is unabashedly polytheistic in its conception of the gods, the *Gāthās* are monotheistic, or at the very least henotheistic, in outlook; which is to say that, while it expresses a belief in only one God, it also acknowledges the existence of other gods, albeit as false and deceptive deities.

Given the evidence found in the *Gāthās*,<sup>xi</sup> I would like to advance an hypothesis that the Zoroastrian concept of fire decisive influenced the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and his depiction of Prometheus' account in Desmôtês of what all he did for humans. For, while the parallels between this account and the deeds of Enki, Ea and Oannes in Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian myth are readily apparent, it is also clear that Prometheus' initial gift of mind (*ēnnous*) and reason (*phrenôn*) stands out as a distinct contribution among the many other technical crafts he subsequently mentions, and which has no ready equivalent in his Semitic counterparts. Even when considered within the overall structure of Prometheus' account of what he did for humans, mind and reason are singular in terms of them being the only capacities Prometheus describes himself as having actually 'given' to humans, as opposed to having 'discovered' or 'taught' or 'found' them.

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"date of the Magians, beginning with Zarathustra, was 5000 years before the fall of Troy". Diogenes also cites the Greek historian, Xanthos of Lydia (fl. mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), as having written that Zarathustra lived approximately 6000 years before Xerxes crossed the Hellespont (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.2).<sup>24</sup> Citing an alternative manuscript of Diogenes ('P' verses 'F'), Humbach (1984, pp. 6-7; 1991, pp. 25-6) reads Xanthos as having written that Zarathustra lived 600 years before Xerxes' crossing. This alternate reading would date Zarathustra's life to around 1080 BCE; a date that Humbolt argues is in better agreement with the linguistic evidence (1994, p. 11). Gershevitch, however, strongly challenges Humbolt's analysis, and argues in detail and at length for a date centred around 588 BCE (1995, pp. 6-15).



Mind is the master gift that makes the development of all the other forms of knowledge possible in Prometheus' account. Protagoras also points out that the artful wisdom stolen by Prometheus from Athena cannot be acquired or used without the fire stolen from Hephaestus (Plato, *Protagoras* 321d). Elsewhere in *Desmôtês*, Prometheus also describes his gift of fire as "a teacher [*didáskalos*] in every art [*téchnês*]" and man's "great resource [*mégas póros*]" (110-1). The central role of fire, and its close association with the capabilities of mind and reason placed in humans by Prometheus, raises the distinct possibility that this metaphor reflects the presence of Zoroastrian principles. Prometheus' account of what he did for humans is derived from the Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian myths of Enki, Ea and Oannes; as mediated, however, through Zoroastrian henotheism via the Persian Magi. This hypothesis is supported by the above survey of Pre-Socratic attitudes toward the concept of fire. As was seen in that survey, the pre-Socratic philosophers traditionally considered fire to be simply one of the basic physical elements of the universe. With Parmenides, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Epicharmus, though, the status of fire is considerably elevated by its metaphorical use to describe the metaphysical realities of mind and soul. Given the already acknowledged eastern influences on these thinkers, the most likely explanation for the decisive shift in the status of fire in their writings is Zoroastrian influences transmitted by the Persian Magi.

Scholars of many different stripes have noted the impact of Zoroastrian and/or the Persian Magi on all four of the philosophers named above, based upon various criteria. Martin Henn, for instance, notes the influence of Zoroastrianism on the dualism of Parmenides (Parmenides & Henn, 2003, p. 40 ff.). Heraclitus, in the other hand, lived under Persian rule (Ephesus having become part of the Persian Empire in 547) and is the first Greek to explicitly refer to the Magi (Heraclitus & Robinson, 1987, p. 85), albeit somewhat disparagingly (Fr. 14). Jenny Rose, among many others, also notes the presence of Zoroastrian influences on the thought of Heraclitus (Rose J. , 2000). In a treatise entitled *On Poets*, Aristotle is said to have written that Empedocles wrote a book on Xerxes' invasion of Greece (Diogenes Laertius 8.57); Diogenes further cites Satyrus (the Peripatetic, late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE) as having written in his *Lives* that Gorgias of Leontini (c.485-c.380) said that he was present when Empedocles "performed magical feats [*goêteúonti*]." (*Lives* 8.59, trans. Hicks) Satyrus is then said to have quoted a poem of Empedocles in which he claims to know of drugs "that are a defense to ward off ills and old age" (*ibid.*). Aristotle also cites another passage of Empedocles (in *Meteorologica* 381b31-382a2) that David Sider argues comes from an otherwise lost work entitled *Persika* (Sider, 1982), which

was presumably a work on Persian science. Empedocles would thus seem to have been well versed in Persian history and the natural sciences practiced by the Magi. Persian influences on Epicharmus, finally, may be seen in how he explicitly equates mind with fire (Fr. 48) and the fire of the soul with the sun (Fr. 50). This influence may also be discerned in his revisions of the Promethean myth with Semitic mythic elements, including humanity's loss of immortality to a snake (Fr. 1) and the great flood (*Pyrrha or Prometheus*).

As can be seen from this analysis, the accumulated wisdom of the Persian Magi, including both Zoroastrian religious principles and elements of Babylonian myth and science, had penetrated deep and wide into Greek culture and philosophy by the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In light of this fact, the claim made by Philostratus, that Protagoras was educated by the Magi during Xerxes' expedition against Greece (*Lives of the Sophists* 1.10.1) has less the appearance of an apocryphal story than the observation of a practically undeniable fact. This explicitly acknowledged Magian influence on Protagoras makes him a strong candidate for having been the primary conduit for the transmission of a Zoroastrian-influenced, Babylonian account of what Prometheus did for humans. The lack of surviving texts of Protagoras makes it somewhat more difficult to discern the exact degree of Zoroastrian influences in his thought. However, philological evidence is not completely lacking. The 'two-logoi' fragment of Protagoras, for instance, besides reflecting a Heraclitean influence, as Schiappa argues (2003, p. 89 ff.), could also be interpreted as flowing from a Zoroastrian dualism that influenced both philosophers. The fact that one of Protagoras' books is known to have been titled *Truth*, which is one of the absolutely central concepts of Zoroastrianism, further strengthens this hypothesis.

Protagoras isn't the only potential transmitter of Babylonian and Zoroastrian influence on the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy and Prometheus' account in Desmôtês of what he did for man. Scholars have noted, for instance, the Zoroastrian influences on Anaxagoras and many of his contemporaries and associates (Afnan, 1969). Among these associates in the Democratic party of Pericles was Herodotus, who wrote the earliest extant Greek history of Persia and Babylonia. Sophocles, another member of Pericles' circle, also betrays a familiarity with Babylonian source material in his use of the Ass and Snake story in his satyr play, *Dumb Ones* (Kôphoi), produced sometime in the 460s. Assuming the *Prometheia* trilogy to have been composed by Euphorion, he also would have been exposed to Persian influences transmitted by his father, Aeschylus, who was likely exposed to them through his acquaintance with Epicharmus and Dienolochus during his time in Sicily. However, even taking these other

influential figures into consideration, Protagoras stands out as the leading candidate for having influenced the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, particularly with respect to Prometheus' account of what he did for humans through his gift of fire/mind, which is likely little more than a poetically rendered extract from the great sophist's book, *On the Original State of Man*. Protagoras is also one of the only major pre-Socratic philosophers known to have explicitly employed the Promethean myth to express his teachings, as related in Plato's *Protagoras*, which must be considered a substantial reproduction of the great sophist's own views.

In conclusion, the evidence seems to show that Protagoras had a profound influence on classical Greek conceptions of history; more specifically, on the idea of human progress stemming from the application of mind. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the influence of Protagorean ideas of history on classical Greek society rivals the impact that Darwin's theory of evolution had on 19<sup>th</sup> century Western society. At the same time, though, the deep debts Protagoras owed to eastern wisdom must also be acknowledged. It is clear, from the analysis presented in this chapter thus far, that he most likely derived his novel conception of the progressive nature of human history, stemming from the development of the arts, from Babylonian sources. At the same time, though, these Babylonian sources may be seen to have been decisively mediated by the interpretation of Persian Zoroastrians, who added their own unique perspective in terms of the critical role of mind in the historical development of humankind. There are other possible conduits for the transmission of this knowledge, but, all told, Protagoras had more than sufficient means (knowledge of near eastern religion, philosophy, history and science), motive (the desire to establish himself as the wisest among the Greeks) and opportunity (an association with Euphorion through their mutual friendship with Pericles) to have exercised a seminal influence on the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy. And the clearest manifestation of this influence is Prometheus' detailed account in Desmôtês of what he did for humans, which is likely little more than a mythologised and poeticised transcription of a crucial passage from Protagoras' book, *On the Original State of Man*.

## F. Necessity, Fate and the Furies

If Prometheus' account of what he did for humans is understood to be a mythic rendition of Protagoras' account of the original state of Man, and the gradual rise of human civilisation through the development and application of the civilising arts, then the passage that immediately follows it – on the sovereign status of Necessity, the Fates and the Furies over the gods, and even Zeus himself – is also likely of Protagorean origin. As was seen in the previous section's analysis of Prometheus' account of what he did for humans, the driving force behind the human rise from savagery to a civilised state was mind faced with need. Stating this account in non-mythical terms: human beings originally led a bestial existence in which they lacked even the most basic of necessities. They did, however, possess a 'god-given' mind and capacity for reason, which they applied, according to the dictates of necessity, toward meeting the many challenges posed by their mortal existence; and within this dynamic of innovation, humans gradually developed the whole range of civilised arts.

The author of *Desmôtês* may be seen to have been building up to the moment when Prometheus reveals Zeus' subjugation to Necessity, at the end of the central *èpeísodos*, since the very beginning of the play. At the end of the *prologos*, after Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus exit the stage, Prometheus presents a soliloquy that lays out several themes that he expands upon in ever greater detail as the play progresses. One of the more important of these regards the sovereign status of Fate and Necessity, which points to a critical advantage that Prometheus, even in his bound state, still possesses over Zeus. After reflecting on his full knowledge of the future and the many torments it holds for him, Prometheus resigns himself to his fate with the following words:

My appointed fate [*áisan*] I must endure as best I can,  
Knowing the power [*sthénos*] of Necessity [*ánágkês*] is irresistible [*àdêsiton*].

104-5, trans. Vellacott

The subject of Fate and Necessity is again raised, along with the Furies, at the conclusion of Prometheus' account of what he did for humans, in the second *èpeísodos*. At that point, the Chorus of Okeanides declares themselves "hopeful [*eüelpís*]" that Prometheus "will yet be freed and rival Zeus in power [*ischúsein*]." To which he replies: "Fate [*Moĩrá*] fulfills all in time;" and "Cunning [*téchnê*] is feebleness beside Necessity [*ánágkês*]." (509-514). This reply gives rise, in turn, to the following exchange between Prometheus and the Chorus:

Chorus: And whose hand on the helm controls [*oìakostróphos*] Necessity [*ànágkês*]?  
 Prometheus: "The three Fates [*Moĩrai*]; and the Furies [*Erinúes*], who forget nothing."  
 Chorus: "Is Zeus weaker than they?"  
 Prometheus: "He cannot flee what is given."  
 Chorus: "What is given to Zeus, but everlasting power [*krateĩn*]?"  
 Prometheus: "This is a thing you may not know; so do not ask."  
 Chorus: "It is some holy truth you cloak in mystery." (515-521)

This dense series of references to the relations between the three Fates and the Furies who forget nothing, and their hand in steering Necessity, thus concludes by pointing to a "holy truth" cloaked in mystery that hints at both the limits of Zeus' power, as well as the secret capable of winning Prometheus' release. Prometheus, too, is subject to Fate and Necessity, of course, but as the Titan who foresees what Fate has in store, he possesses a decisive advantage over Zeus, whose omniscience seems to be limited to the here and now.

The depiction of Zeus in *Desmôtês*, as subject to the forces of Necessity, the Fates and the Furies, is a rather novel conception of him in the context of the mythic tradition of archaic Greece.<sup>xii</sup> While a fairly broad consensus may be discerned regarding the supremacy of Zeus in archaic Greek literature, though, the issue of the power that Necessity and the Fates hold over the gods is increasingly raised in the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>xiii</sup> The author of the *Prometheia* trilogy may well have incorporated this novelty into *Desmôtês* to better balance the respective strengths and weaknesses of Zeus and Prometheus in his portrayal of their struggle. For, while Prometheus is also subject to Fate and Necessity, his full knowledge of the future gives him a decisive edge in his struggle with Zeus over the longer term. On the other hand, depicting the Fates and the Furies as being more powerful than Zeus also aptly fits the conjectured theology of Protagoras, for whom the gods would have been just as subject to Necessity as any other human creation.

The depictions of the three Fates and the Furies in *Desmôtês*, as controlling the helm that steers Necessity, belie the influence of Ionian philosophy. Classical scholars have noted, for example, linguistic parallels between certain relevant passages and the extant fragments of Heraclitus' book, *On Nature* (Gladigow, 1962). One of these parallels occurs with regard to their use of the word for helm (*oĩaz*), cognates of which occur a couple of times in *Desmôtês*. In the *parados*, for instance, the Chorus declares, with respect to the tyrannical rule of Zeus:

A new master holds the helm [*oìakonómoi*] of Olympus (148-9).

In the second *èpeísodos*, by comparison, the Chorus asks:

whose hand on the helm [*oìakostróphos*] controls Necessity? (515)

As it happens, these two passages are closely paralleled by a similarly worded fragment of Heraclitus, preserved by Hippolytus of Rome (c.170-c.236 CE) in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (9.10.7), in which he writes:

And thunderbolt steers [*oìakízei*] the totality of things [*tà dè pánta*].

Fr. 64, trans. Robinson

As Herington observes, Heraclitus is alone among the Pre-Socratic philosophers in his "use of compounds of *oĩaz* in describing the guidance of the universe," (1963, p. 191; cf. Gladigow, 1962). On the basis of this unique linguistic marker, a plausible hypothesis may thus be advanced that the idea behind the question posed by the Chorus in *Desmôtês*, as to whose hand on the helm controls Necessity, originates in the philosophy and writings of Heraclitus.

The parallels between *Desmôtês* and Heraclitus continue with respect to the supreme status assigned to the Furies (*Erinúes*), as the executors of what is decreed by the three Fates (Thomson, 1932, p. 160). This idea is paralleled in a fragment of Heraclitus, preserved by Plutarch in *De exilio* (604a), in which he writes:

The sun <god> will not overstep <his> measures. Otherwise <the> avenging Furies [*Erinúes*], ministers of Justice, will find him out.

Fr. 94, trans. Robinson

As the ministers of cosmic justice, then, the authority of the Furies exceeds even that of the glorious sun, which cannot overstep its bounds. The sovereign rule the Furies exercise over existence in Heraclitus, then, strongly correlates with their role in *Desmôtês*, as one of the hands controlling the helm that steers Necessity, along with the three Fates. Heraclitus' depiction of the Furies as ministers of justice also has a significant parallel at the conclusion of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. In that case, though, the Furies are subject to the judgement of Athena, the daughter of Zeus. In the *exodos* of that play, Clytemnestra sends the chorus of Furies from Hades to exact vengeance for her murder. In the court of the Aeropagus in Athens they demand retribution against her son, Orestes. Athena acquits Orestes, though, and then buys the quiescence of the Furies by offering them a permanent place to dwell in Athens. In this way, the terrible Furies are transformed into the more politically beneficial Eumenides, the name of which signifies "well-meaning" or "the soothed goddesses" (Smith, 1867).

Significant parallels to the depiction of Necessity in *Desmôtês* are also found among other Ionian philosophers. In the sole surviving fragment of Anaximander of Miletus (c.610-c.546), preserved by Simplicius (c.490-c.560 CE), he writes:

it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some different, boundless nature, from which all the heavens arise and the *kósmoi* within them; out of those things whence is the generation for existing things, into these again does their destruction take place, according to what must needs be [*chreôn*]; for they make amends and give reparation to one another for their offense, according to the ordinance of time. (Anaximander, trans. Kahn)

In this rationalised conception of the cosmos, then, nature is understood to operate "according to what must needs be [*chreôn*];" In adhering to the precepts of what is necessary, nature may also be said to operate in a lawful manner, an idea that, as Ring states, is "not a piece of science, but is rather a presupposition of scientific thought." (1987, p. 34) In other words, Anaximander's conception of nature and the cosmos as obeying natural laws marks very the inception of Greek science. Anaximander was one of the founding figures of the Milesian school of philosophy, other prominent members of which were Thales (c.624/5-c.547/6) and Anaximenes (fl. 585, d. 528). These thinkers are generally considered the first Greek natural philosophers, as they were the first to attempt to explain the nature of the cosmos according to strictly rational principles, without resorting to divine or mythological concepts. As translated into the dramatic setting of *Desmôtês*, this scientific epistemological stance would naturally subject Zeus, no less than the sun god, to Necessity.

Another linguistic parallel between *Desmôtês* and Heraclitus occurs with respect to the wisdom of accepting guidance and from whom. In the first *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês*, Okeanos advises Prometheus to attempt a reconciliation with Zeus. He then urges him to accept this advice with the following words:

Come now, accept my guidance [*chrômenos didaskálô*] (324)

A nearly identical phrase for expressing the idea of accepting guidance is also employed in a fragment of Heraclitus, preserved by Proclus (*In Alicibiadem I*, p. 117 Westerink), in which he writes:

What discernment or intelligence, [he says] do they possess? They place their trust in popular bards, and take [the] throng for their teacher [*didaskálô chreíôntai òmílô*], not realizing that 'the majority [are] bad, and [only] few [are] good.'

Fr. 104, trans. Robinson

Both these passages, then, revolve around acceptance of the need for a teacher or guide. Both *chrômenos* and *chreiôntai* derive from the root *chrâô*, which generally indicates 'to furnish what is needful'; *didaskâlô*, on the other hand, usually signifies 'teacher or master' (Scott, 1955). Herington notes the unique wording employed in these two phrases from Heraclitus and Desmôtês, remarking that "this collocation does not recur in the Pre-Socratics or in tragedy, or indeed elsewhere, so far as I can discover." (1963, p. 191) They thus share a unique linguistic marker that provides additional evidence supporting the hypothesis that the author of Desmôtês was influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the writings of Heraclitus. This link also allows for a more significant interpretation of the role of Okeanos in Desmôtês than he is usually accorded in the scholarly literature. In traditional interpretations, Okeanos is simply an appeaser willing to acquiesce to the injustice of the new tyrant for the sake of peace (Grene, 1940, p. 28; Yu A. C., 1971, pp. 25-8). In the re-interpretation revealed by the linguistic link to Heraclitus, though, Okeanos also represents those who allow themselves to be influenced by popular bards and the shortsighted throng, who know not what is good. This attitude stands in sharp contrast to the forethoughtful Prometheus, who already knows that his attempts to appease Zeus would be utterly futile.

From the several verbal parallels noted above, it seems likely that the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy was decisively influenced by the thought of Heraclitus and the Ionian philosophers. This Ionian influence is particularly notable with respect to the idea of Fate and the Furies steering the helm of Necessity, and thereby exercising sovereignty over the gods, and even Zeus. As with Prometheus' account of what all he did for humans, the most likely path of transmission for these Heraclitean / Ionian ideas is again Protagoras, whose philosophical outlook Nietzsche understands as a synthesis of Democritean atomic materialism and Heraclitean ideas of existence as energy (i.e. fire) in a constant state of flux. As with the Heraclitean concept of fire, these larger ideas regarding Necessity and Fate also likely stemmed from Persian influences. Assuming the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy to be Euphorion, though, the role of Aeschylus in transmitting at least some of these aspects of Ionian philosophy cannot be ruled out, given his depiction of the Furies in *Eumenides*. All things considered, though, Protagoras would seem to be the most likely source for the insight into the sovereignty of Necessity in defining the nature of things, including the gods, thereby pointing to the existence of a "holy truth" cloaked in "mystery": namely, the mortal nature of Zeus. This brings us to the secret that Prometheus holds that will eventually help win his release.



## G. The Secret of Zeus' Downfall

The secret that Prometheus holds, of how Zeus will eventually be cast down from power, is hinted at from the very earliest stages of the play. In the soliloquy Prometheus delivers at the end of the *prologos*, he rhetorically asks: where shall he see rise the star of his deliverance? He then answers his own question: that he knows exactly everything that is to be, and that he must thus endure his appointed fate [*aĩsan*] as best he can, "knowing the power of Necessity [*ànágkês*] is irresistible [*àdêsiton*]." (101-5) Shortly thereafter, at the beginning of the *parados*, the Chorus of Okeanides enters the stage on a winged ship, having been drawn to Prometheus' location by "the echo of ringing steel" that emanated from Hephaestus' binding of him. The Okeanides question Prometheus about his plight, and in the answers he supplies the audience hears the first hints of the secret he holds capable of winning his release from Zeus:

I swear to you that I, humiliated as I am,  
Bound hand and foot in these strong straps,  
Shall yet be needed by the lord of immortals  
To disclose the new design, tell him who it is  
Shall rob him of his power and his glory.  
The honied spells of his persuasive tongue shall not enchant me,  
Nor shall I cower under his fierce threats, or tell this secret,  
Until he free me from these brutal bonds  
And consent to compensate me for his outrage.

lines 168-179, trans. Vellacott

In this first reference to the secret he holds, then, Prometheus points to his essential role as an advisor to Zeus, who requires his counsel to be kept apprised of new designs to rob him of his power. A little later, Prometheus also describes how he was an advisor to Zeus in the past, in overthrowing Kronos (220-4).<sup>25</sup> But now, the new tyrant of heaven is manifestly ungrateful for his past services in helping him gain power (975-6). Prometheus thus prophesies that only the anticipation of future loss of power will eventually calm Zeus' anger, render him mild, and make him seek a pact of friendship (190-4).

The specifics of the secret Prometheus holds that is capable of winning his release are only slowly leaked over the course of the play, it being one of the very few elements of the story in

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<sup>25</sup> Prometheus' description of himself as a counselor to Zeus is nowhere a feature of the traditional Promethean myth. It is, however, a prominent role played by Enki in Akkadian myth. Protagoras also describes himself as teaching good counsel (*euboulia*) in Plato's *Protagoras* (318e). Again, this situation points to both the assimilation of Prometheus and Enki in the *Prometheia* trilogy, as well as the Protagorean influence on this assimilation.

Desmôtês capable of sustaining a degree of dramatic tension. It is next referred to in the second *èpeísodos*, at the end of Prometheus' account of what he did for humans, with his suggestion that Zeus is weaker than Necessity. This secret is further elaborated upon in the third *èpeísodos*, where Prometheus informs Io that her suffering will continue until Zeus is "deposed from sovereignty." In hopeful reply, she asks: "Is it possible that Zeus should be deposed?" To which Prometheus answers that what he says is both true and shall be so, and that his downfall will be brought about "By his own foolish purposes." (762) Those foolish purposes, he goes on to say, involve a forced sexual union that will result in the birth of a son who will become even mightier than his father. Furthermore, there is no way Zeus can escape this fate until Prometheus is delivered from his bonds by a descendent of Io after thirteen generations (752-775). The one who will one day free Prometheus from his bonds was revealed to him in an oracle recounted by his mother, the Titanian Themis, to be "a fearless hero / Famed as an archer" (873-4). This hero is, of course, Herakles, who is mentioned in *Theogony* as the one who kills the eagle that comes to eat Prometheus' liver (526-532). Hesiod never mentions Herakles freeing him, though, and actually implies that Prometheus remained bound (*Theogony* 615-6).

Prometheus next mentions the secret he holds over Zeus at the beginning of the *exodos*, after Io is driven off-stage by the stinging gad-fly that has returned to torment her.<sup>26</sup> Having witnessed Io's experience, the Okeanides expresses their wish in a choral ode in the third *stasimon*, to never be joined in marriage with Zeus, or any other god for that matter. At the same time, though, they admit that they can see no way to escape his designs. In response to this song, Prometheus remarks:

I swear that Zeus, for all his obstinacy, shall yet  
 Be humbled, so disastrous shall this marriage prove  
 Which he proposes – a marriage that shall hurl him out  
 Of throne and sovereignty into oblivion.  
 And then the curse his father Cronos cursed him with,  
 The day he lost his ancient throne, shall all come true.

910-5 trans. Vellacott

The curse with which Prometheus says Kronos cursed Zeus the day he lost his throne – that he, too, will one day be hurled from his throne – would seem to be a reference to a similar curse

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<sup>26</sup> Hera had previously turned Io into a cow, out of jealousy for the passion Zeus possessed for her, and assigned Argus, the hundred eyed herder, to watch her. Hera then sent the gadfly to torment Io after Hermes killed after Hermes killed him at the behest of Zeus.

spoken in the succession myth in *Theogony*. Except that there, it is Ouranos who, after having been castrated and deposed by his son, Kronos, curses him and the other Titans for having "over-reached themselves and done a monstrous deed / For which vengeance later would surely be exacted." (209-210, trans. Lombardo). The reference to this curse in Desmôtês would seem to be more than a matter of the Prometheus poet having misconstrued who enunciated it in *Theogony*. Rather, it would seem to be an indication that any god who is generated, of which Zeus is one, is inevitably doomed to one day be cast from power. The curse of Kronos is actually the curse of *chronos*; the curse of time that makes it the fate of every being generated within the realm of becoming to eventually come to an end. The only way for Zeus to avoid this necessary fate, is to free Prometheus from his bonds, compensate him, and accept his counsel regarding new designs to rob him of his power and glory.

## H. The Sophist

The Protagorean influence on the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy is further corroborated by the particular usage of the Greek word for sophist (*sophistês*) and its cognates in *Desmôtês*.<sup>27</sup> Protagoras was, by his own account, the first person in all of Greece to openly "admit to being a sophist [*sophistês*] and to educate human beings" (Plato, *Protagoras* 317b). As will be seen below, Protagoras' use of the term *sophistês*, to describe a wise educator, represents a rather novel form of its usage in the context of the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Greece. *Desmôtês* follows a Protagorean usage of *sophistês*, as opposed to its predominant usage inherited from the archaic age, providing yet another point on which the play manifests its Protagorean influence.

*Sophistês* is a noun derived from *sophízesthai*, the present infinitive verb tense of the root noun form, *sophía* (Guthrie, 1971, p. 28). The earliest extant use of this specific word form – *sophistês* – is found in an ode written by Pindar in 478, where he employs the term specifically to describe "skilled poets" (*Isthmian* 5.28). Aeschylus, by comparison, in a fragment (314 Nauck, 174 Smyth) quoted by Athenaeus (632c), is said to have used the word in a very similar sense, to describe the *sophistês* who plays the lyre with skill. As a preface to his citation of this fragment, Athenaeus also writes that, in archaic times, all who dedicated themselves to the study of music were called *sophistês*; however, no evidence for this usage exists in source texts that predate Pindar's Ode and the passage of Aeschylus cited by Athenaeus. However, the comic poet, Cratinus (519-422), in a fragment (2K) cited by Diogenes Laertius (1.12) is also said to have praised Homer and Hesiod in his comic play *Archilochoi* (c.448) by giving them the title of sophist (*sophistai*). Euripides, too, praises a musician as *sophistê* in *Rhesus* (924); however, the authorial authenticity and date of this play is in considerable doubt. These four passages from Pindar, Aeschylus, Cratinus and possibly Euripides, are the only verifiable extant instances of the use of *sophistês* as a word that occur prior to Protagoras' arrival in Athens in the early to mid-440s, and before becoming the first to openly declare himself a *sophistês*, as he claims in Plato's *Protagoras*, which has a dramatic date of 433. In every one of these pre-Protagorean instances of the usage of *sophistês*, then, it is exclusively employed as a term of praise in reference to the technical skill of poets and musicians, who were, for all intents and purposes, considered one and the same thing in classical Greece.

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<sup>27</sup> For a more in depth analysis of *sophistês* and its cognates in ancient Greek, see: Kerferd (The First Greek Sophists, 1950), Freeman (1948, pp. 341-2), and Guthrie (1971, pp. 27-34).

Herodotus presents an interesting transition in the usage of *sophistês* in his *History*. He is thought to have begun composing it sometime during 450-444, at which time it is thought that he might have written its first few books (Lattimore, 1958, p. 19; cf. Abbott, 1886; Kirchoff, 1878). The later books were likely completed after 443, when Herodotus left Athens for Thurii and travelled southern Italy. The last datable event of the *History* is the seizure and execution of Aristetas and other ambassadors in 430 (7.137.3; cf. Thucydides 2.67). In book one of his *History*, Herodotus writes that all the 'teachers' (*sophistai*) of Greece who lived during the reign of the Lydian king, Croesus (lived 595-c.54?, ruled 560-546) came to visit his capital, Sardis, including the great Athenian statesman, Solon (c.638-558) (1.29.1). In book two, by comparison, Herodotus describes how Melampus, a "clever and prophetic man [*ändra sophòn mantikên*]," introduced the worship of Dionysus, although later 'teachers' (*sophistai*) doubtless added to his teaching (2.49.1). And in book four, finally, Herodotus relates how Zalmoxis consorted with Pythagoras, one of the greatest 'teachers' (*sophistê*) of Greece (4.95.2).

Admittedly, Herodotus' use of *sophistês* is not far removed from previous instances of its usage in Pindar, Aeschylus and Cratinus, to describe the skill of poets and musicians. Solon, for instance, was widely known and admired for his poetic compositions; as were most of the wise-men of his day, this being the primary medium for instruction in an oral culture. Melampus' early establishment of the worship of Dionysus, by comparison, would also likely have entailed knowledge of the composition and recital of choral dithyrambs; and Pythagoras, finally, is known to have had an affinity for music. Nevertheless, Herodotus' usage of *sophistês* does not describe the particular skill of a poet-musician so much as it describes their success in teaching the particular form of wisdom they possessed, whether as statesmen, religious reformers or philosophers. In this subtle shift in usage, Herodotus may well have been influenced by Protagoras, with whom he likely had close relations.

After Protagoras' arrival in Athens, *sophistês* continues to be employed as a term to specifically describe poets and musicians who are skillful practitioners of their art (cf. Eupolis [c.446-411] fr. 447 K; Plato Comicus [fl. 428-389] fr. 140 K; Phrynichus Comicus [fl. 429-405] fr. 69 K; Iophon [fl. 428-405] fr. 1 N<sup>2</sup>). Protagoras even follows this predominant usage, in Plato's depiction, in terms of his description of the "ancient art" of the whole musical-poetic tradition of ancient Greece (Plato, *Protagoras* 316d). At the same time, though, the expanded usage of *sophistês* by Herodotus and Protagoras, to describe a teacher and/or innovator who successfully transmits his wisdom, is widened still further by Euripides and Aristophanes, to describe a skillful

practitioner of any particular art, for better or worse. In *Children of Herakles*, produced in 330, for example, Euripides has Eurystheus, the rival of Herakles and the author of that hero's punishment in devising his twelve labours, describe himself as the inventor (*sophistês*) of much grief (993). In *Clouds*, produced in 414, by comparison, Aristophanes has the character of Socrates describe the following people as *sophistás*: diviners from Thuii (*Thouriománteis*), physicians, composers, and other men of high-flown pretension (*Clouds* 331-3).

The word *sophistês* occurs twice in *Desmôtês*, once near the very beginning of the play, and again near the very end. The first instance occurs in the *prologos*, where Kratos orders Hephaestus to securely rivet Prometheus to his rock, and then sneeringly adds: so he might learn (*máthê*) that a *sophistês* is a dullard compared to Zeus (62). In this passage, then, the author not only has Kratos directly call Prometheus a sophist; he also indicates his knowledge of the true etymology of Prometheus' name, as based upon the root word *máthê*. The author's knowledge of the etymological roots of Prometheus is further elaborated upon slightly later, where Kratos mocks his name as a misnomer, given how he would seem to precisely lack the 'forethought' (*promêthéôs*) by which he might have avoided being crucified (85-7). The second and last reference to *sophistês* in *Desmôtês* occurs at the beginning of the *exodos*. There, Hermes, upon entering the stage, addresses Prometheus with the following words:

I speak to you – the master-mind [*sophistês*], with heart more sour  
Than sourness; you who honoured creatures of a day  
And sinned against immortals; you, the thief of fire:  
The Father bids you tell him what this marriage is  
Through which you boast that he shall fall from power.

944-8, trans. Vellacott

In both cases in *Desmôtês*, then, the word *sophistês* is specifically employed in reference to Prometheus and his learned qualities, albeit in an ironic manner. In particular, it is mockingly employed by henchmen of Zeus to ridicule Prometheus for his need to better learn his inferior status relative to the king of heaven, and as a preface for enumerating the transgressions he has committed against him: honouring mortal humans, stealing fire, and withholding information concerning the marriage that shall cast Zeus from power. In short, Zeus' cronies criticise Prometheus, the *sophistês*, for his manifest lack of *sophós*. At the same time, though, Hermes also calls Prometheus a sophist to preface his request for the knowledge he possesses of the marriage that will lead to his master's fall from power.

The word *sophós* occurs four times in *Desmôtês*. The first two instances occur in the third *stasimon*, after Io exits the stage, fleeing the gadfly that has returned to torment her. Having witnessed Io's torments first hand, the Chorus twice praise as wise [*sophós*] the man who articulated this truth: that it is far better to marry within one's own rank (887-883). In these first two instances, then, wisdom is associated, in a sense, with the art of midwifery, in terms of making a proper match within a class. The third mention of *sophós* occurs near the beginning of the *exodos*, where Prometheus reveals his knowledge of a secret – a holy truth shrouded in mystery – of the marriage that will result in the birth of a son more powerful than his father, and who will one day cast Zeus down from power. At first, the Chorus dismisses his claim as merely giving voice to his wishes; but Prometheus quickly retorts that he not only speaks what he wishes, but also what shall be proven true. In response, the Chorus warns him:

A wise man [*sophoî*] will speak humbly, and fear Nemesis [*Àdrásteian*].

line 936, trans. Vellacott

The Chorus thus argues that those who are truly "wise [*sophoî*]", will make themselves appear humble by how they speak, and will fear *Adrasteia*, the mention of whom is fabulously pregnant with meaning in the context of *Desmôtês*. *Adrasteia* was the Cretan nymph charged by Rhea with secretly nurturing the infant Zeus, in the Dictaeon cave on Crete, in order to protect him from his father, Kronos (Apollodorus 1.1.6). Some scholars theorise that *Adrasteia*'s name derives from the verb *didráskein*, by which it would signify "the goddess from whom none can escape." (Schmitz, 1867) *Adrasteia* is also sometimes employed as an epithet for *Nemesis*, the goddess who exacts retribution from those who succumb to hubris and display arrogance towards the gods. The connection between *Adrasteia* and *Nemesis* may also have derived from *Adrastus*, a mythical king of Argos, who is said to have built the first temple to *Nemesis* on the river *Aïsêpos* (Strabo 13.14). Hesiod also mentions *Nemesis* as being a daughter of *Night*, born immediately after her elder sisters: the Fates (*Moíras*) and *Kêras*, the goddess of death (*Theogony* 217-223).

The word *sophós* occurs two more times slightly later in *Desmôtês*, after the entry of *Hermes* in the *exodos*. Zeus' messenger comes to discover the secret of the marriage that will result in his master's fall from power. Prometheus remains defiant, though, and unequivocally states that, until his bonds are loosened, no amount of persuasion or torture can persuade him to reveal by whose hand it is necessary (*chreôn*) that Zeus will be hurled from his tyranny (995-

996). Given Prometheus' continued defiance, Hermes warns him of the additional punishments that Zeus has said will be in store for him if he refuses to submit. First, he will be entombed beneath the ground, still clamped to a rock. After a long age, he will re-emerge into the light, only to have a savage eagle (*aìetós*) come to daily feast upon his liver. Furthermore, Prometheus will not be released from his bonds until a seemingly impossible condition is met – that some god is found who is willing to take on his pains and descend into sunless Hades and the black depths of Tartarus. What is more, Hermes declares, everything he has said will inevitably come to pass, just as he has described, for Zeus cannot lie. Hermes then concludes his warning with the observation that "good counsel [*eùboulías*]" is always worth more than stubbornness. With the conclusion of Hermes' dire warning, the Chorus interjects. They affirm the sensibleness of his advice, to stop resisting and seek wise (*sophên*) good counsel (*eùboulían*). They then declare:

a wise [*sophô*] man's folly forfeits dignity.

line 1039, trans. Vellacott

In these last two instances of the occurrence of *sophós*, then, the Chorus link *sophên* with good counsel, and rebuke Prometheus for appearing particularly shameful (*aìschròn*) as someone who is reputedly wise, but who nevertheless refuses to take good counsel.

In the five instances in which the word *sophós* appears in *Desmôtês*, then, it is spoken by the Chorus with respect to: the man who conceived of the benefits of confining marriage to those of similar rank; appearing humble and fearing the goddess from whom there's no escape, who nursed Zeus in his infancy, and who punishes arrogance directed against the gods; and the particular shame, finally, experienced by the wise who refuse to follow good counsel. In sum, the first reference to *sophós* praises a man for articulating a truth, while the latter references are explicitly framed as warnings to the wise: to appear humble and fear retribution taken on behalf of the gods, and to accept good counsel or be thought a fool. Needless to say, Prometheus, the sophist, ignores this advice, and is thus cast into a chasm by Zeus at the end of the play. In this way, the conclusion of *Desmôtês* neatly parallels Antigone's sentence at the end of Sophocles' *Antigone*: except that whereas Antigone, the pious maiden, is buried alive for threatening the stability of Creon's political order with her expression of piety; Prometheus, the sophist, is buried for threatening the stability of Zeus' divine order by impiously helping humans



and withholding his knowledge of the marriage that will generate an offspring who will overthrow that order.

## I. Desmôtês, the largest extant fragment of Protagorean Wisdom

The general objective of this section has been to determine the degree of Protagoras' influence on the composition of Desmôtês. As stated at the beginning of the section, three general methods have been employed to determine Protagorean influence. The first was to examine the ways in which Desmôtês significantly alters the traditional Promethean myth, the assumption being that such alterations were most likely made in order to better accommodate its expression of Protagorean philosophy. A second method has been to draw parallels between particular elements in Desmôtês and what is known of Protagorean philosophy. Given the lack of extant source texts directly attributable to Protagoras, another method has also been employed, whereby parallels are drawn between elements present in both Desmôtês and those authors known to have influenced on Protagoras, or whom he is known to have influenced.

In analysing Desmôtês for the presence of Protagorean influences, I believe I have established beyond a reasonable doubt that the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy was, indeed, fundamentally influenced by the philosophy of Protagoras; and, indeed, that Desmôtês, and the trilogy as a whole, is best understood as an elaborate expression of a Protagorean *logos* in the form of a *mythos*. This connection has been demonstrated through a close philological analysis of several elements of Desmôtês in light of what is known about the philosophy of Protagoras. The overarching theme of the play has been defined in terms of the clash between power and wisdom, with power represented by Zeus, whose very henchmen are named Power (Kratos) and Strength (Bia). Wisdom, on the other hand, is represented by Prometheus, whose name both the archaic and classical Greeks understood to literally mean forethought, and who is explicitly referred to as a sophist by both Kratos and Hermes. This theme of power versus wisdom is aptly reflected in Plato's *Protagoras*, the major overarching theme of which also revolves around the question of the relation between power and wisdom (Lampert 2010).

In analysing the Protagorean content of Desmôtês, seven distinct but interrelated themes have been examined: the genealogy of Prometheus; the concept of *philanthrôpía*; the orientation toward hope; the gift of fire; the status of Necessity, Fate and the Furies; the secret of Zeus' downfall; and the identification of the sophist with Prometheus.

With regard to the genealogy of Prometheus, he is elevated from being the son of Iapetus and Clymene in Hesiod (*Theogony* 507-8), to being in Desmôtês the son of Themis (19, 874), otherwise known as Earth (*Gaïa*) (211-2), and presumably also sky (*aithêr*) (1090). In the process, Prometheus is also elevated from being a representative of humans in Hesiod, to being

named a Titan god (*Titāna [...] theón*) (Desmôtês 427-8) for the very first time in ancient Greek literature. This alteration was likely made both to elevate the status of Prometheus relative to Zeus, and to better balance the two in their struggle. It was probably also made with an eye to better accommodating the assimilation of Prometheus to the figures of Enki, Ea and Oannes, who give humanity the arts and decrees of civilisation in Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian myth. While this elevation does not necessarily establish the possible influence of Protagoras, it does point to the presence of a radical alteration to the traditional Promethean myth that becomes all the more significant in light of the identification of Prometheus with the sophist, and his apotheosis at the end of Luómenos.

Regarding the concept of *philanthrôpía*, it was noted that Desmôtês contains the earliest extant occurrence of the word in ancient Greek literature. Given the rarity of this signal word in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, otherwise only appearing in Aristophanes' *Peace* (395), it may very well have been a neologism specifically created to describe the particularly philanthropic way (*philanthrôpou trôpou*) of Prometheus in Desmôtês (11, 28). Several factors point to the concept of *philanthrôpía* as having formed a key ideal of Protagoras' humanistic philosophy. The pronounced anthropocentrism of Abderian philosophy (cf. Protagoras, fr. 1; Democritus, frs. 34, 165), and Protagoras' reference to the misanthropes (*misánthrôpoi*) in Pherecrates' comedy, *Agrioi* (Plato, *Protagoras* 327d). Together, these references point to the likelihood that *philanthrôpía*, understood as effecting the greater realisation of human potential through the development and application of knowledge, was a vital aspect of the philosophy of Protagoras. In particular, the concept of *philanthrôpía* is also in close accord with the essential humanism of Protagoras' thought, and likely represented his articulation of a universal ideal within the framework of his humanistic philosophy.

The positive, albeit somewhat ambiguous, elevation of Hope (*Èlpís*) in Desmôtês is utterly unprecedented in the Promethean myth as it was known up to the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This portrayal is particularly at odds with the most comprehensive archaic account of the Promethean myth, in Hesiod, where it is depicted as nothing less than the dregs retained by Pandora of the evils she released into the world (*Works & Days* 94-6). In Desmôtês, by contrast hope becomes nothing less than the second gift of Prometheus after fire, that likewise saves humans from extinction (252). In the archaic age, the only positive assessments of the idea of hope are found in a couple of popular works (Aesop, 'Zeus and the Jar of Good Things'; Anonymous Theognidea, 1135-46). In the early to mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, more tentative

endorsements of hope are articulated by more august thinkers. Heraclitus regards it in a more positive, yet still ambiguous, light (frs. 18, 122). Sophocles, too, presents an ambiguous portrayal of hope in perhaps his greatest early work (*Antigone* 366-7, 888). Given that Heraclitus is known to have influenced Protagoras, and that Protagoras is known to have influenced Sophocles, particularly with respect to the composition of the Ode to Man in *Antigone* (332-375), it seems reasonable to conjecture that a positive, albeit guarded, reassessment of hope likely played a key role in the Protagorean philosophy of religion. Whether or not Protagoras endorsed the idea of sweet hopes in an afterlife, though, his progressive conception of human history undeniably points to a philosophical optimism that leaves ample room for hope in the future of humanity. It also seems likely, therefore, that Protagoras influenced the *Prometheia* author's elevation of hope to nothing less than Prometheus' second gift to humans, after fire, which is otherwise unprecedented in prior accounts of the Promethean myth.

Prometheus' gift of fire is the single most revealing facet of the Protagorean influence on the *Prometheia* trilogy. As was shown above, the depiction of the gift of fire in Desmôtês presents a radical departure from the traditional Promethean myth as it was known prior to the trilogy. Rather than simply giving fire to humans, as in those traditional accounts, Prometheus places mind and reason in them, and then goes on to discover a range of arts that form the basis for civilised human existence. As was shown, the nature of the arts Prometheus gives closely correspond to the arts given to humans by the Sumerian god Ea, and the Akkadian god, Enki, and the Babylonian god, Oannes. The order in which Prometheus discovers those arts also assumes an essentially Sumerian historical perspective. The metaphor implied by substituting mind and reason for fire in Prometheus' most comprehensive account of what he did for humans, on the other hand, would seem to reflect the presence of Zoroastrian religious principles.

The progressive nature of history assumed in Prometheus' account of what he did for humans runs completely counter to archaic Greek conceptions. However, this very same progressive sense of human history is also present in the Promethean myth told by Protagoras in Plato's *Protagoras* (320d-324e), where humans come into existence "naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed" (321c) until Prometheus gives them "artful wisdom and fire," (321d) and Zeus later gives shame and a sense of justice (322c). This progressive sense of human history is also implied in the title of one of the major works attributed to Protagoras – *On the*

*Original State of Man.* The idea that human history is propelled by a combination of a natural human mental endowment coupled with the development and application of the arts, is also accepted as fact in the works of many prominent Athenian intellectuals soon after the arrival of Protagoras in Athens. Given the coincidence of these Protagorean views along with the radical alteration in Athenian cultural perspective soon after his arrival in Athens, it is reasonable to assume that Protagoras was the primary transmitter, if not the actual originator, of the idea of the essentially progressive nature of human history. In this way, Protagoras' impact on the intellectual landscape of 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece may be seen to parallel that of Charles Darwin and the impact of his theory of evolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whose scientific theory on the origin of the species also discredited and displaced a traditional mytho-religious account of Man's fall from a golden age of divine grace.

With regard to the exalted status of Necessity, Fate and the Furies, the author of *Desmôtês* again adopts a stance that runs counter to the archaic tradition, positing that even Zeus, the king of the gods, is subject to them. The only other authors known to express this idea in the 5<sup>th</sup> century or earlier are Simonides (542.21), Anaximander (fr. 1), Heraclitus (fr. 94), and Herodotus (1.91.1). The notion of that the gods are subject to Necessity may be seen to reflect the influence of the Ionian philosophers, in terms of enunciating the principle metaphysical presuppositions of Greek scientific thought, that things within the realm of becoming act in accordance with natural laws. In addition, linguistic evidence also indicates a positive link between Heraclitus and the author *Desmôtês* on this subject. Protagoras, too, is also known to have been familiar with Simonides, based on his prominent reference to an ode of the archaic poet (fr. 37.1) in Plato's *Protagoras* (339a). Protagoras is also known to have been influenced by Heraclitus and the Ionian natural philosophers. The association and likely collaboration between Protagoras and Herodotus has also been noted above. Given these many connections, it is reasonable to assume that Protagoras was one of the primary influences on the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, in terms of depicting Zeus as subject to Necessity.

A natural extension of the idea that Zeus is subject to Necessity, and thereby also Fate, is the prophecy of Prometheus that he will one day be cast down from power by a son born of a sexual union he will illicitly consummate (*Desmôtês*). Zeus is not only subject to Necessity, then, he is also subject to the rules that govern the processes of becoming, as symbolised by procreation and succession. In short, while Prometheus is elevated to the status of a god in *Desmôtês*, Zeus is correspondingly made mortal. In order to preserve his power, therefore, Zeus

is compelled to effect a reconciliation with the sophist, Prometheus. The designation of Prometheus as a sophist (*sophistês*) in *Desmôtês* (62, 944) also constitutes a novel form of usage of the term in the context of 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Greece. In late archaic and early classical Greek literature, up to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, *sophistês* is employed exclusively to describe the skill of poets. The only exceptions to this usage are found in Protagoras' reference to himself in Plato's *Protagoras* (317b), in Aristophanes' parody of the sophists, *Clouds*, and in Herodotus, who describes the skill of various kinds of educators in passing on their knowledge (1.29.1, 2.49.1, 4.95.2). The theme of Zeus' mortality and the novel usage of the term *sophistês* in reference to Prometheus, to indicate a wise teacher as opposed to a skilled musician, thus also likely reflects the influence of Protagoras.

From the close analysis of the combined philological, philosophical and mythographical evidence presented above it becomes ever more likely that *Desmôtês* fundamentally reflects Protagorean ideas. Particularly with respect to the concepts of *philanthrôpía*, Hope (*Èlpís*), Necessity, Fates and the Furies, the secret of Zeus' downfall, and the usage of sophist as a word, the parallels with either Protagoras, those known to have influenced him, or those he is known to have influenced, is unmistakable. Scholars have long identified the sophistic (Schmid, 1929) and Protagorean (Davison, 1949) influences on *Desmôtês*. Guthrie (1971, pp. 63-4) and West (1979, p. 147; 1990, pp. 65-6) further argue that Prometheus' account of what he did for humans (*Desmôtês* 447-506) "follow the lines" of Protagoras' lost book, *On the Original State of Man*. From the analysis of *Desmôtês* presented in this chapter, I wish to advance the hypothesis that, not only Prometheus' account of what he did for humans, but the entire play, and, indeed, the whole *Prometheia* trilogy, is best understood as a mythological reflection of quintessentially Protagorean ideas.

## Chapter 8 – *Prometheus Unbound* (Luómenos) The Reconciliation of Power and Wisdom

Protagoras: "Thus, I have taken the completely opposite course from [those who practiced the sophistic art in ancient times], and [openly] admit to being a sophist and to educate [*paideúein*] humans, thinking this a better precaution than theirs: to admit to it [openly], rather than to deny it. And in addition to this I have taken other [precautions] which, to speak with god, ensure that I suffer nothing terrible [*deinon*] from my admission that I am a sophist."

Plato, *Protagoras* 317b-c, trans. Craig

### A. *Prologos* – Prometheus Re-emerged

Unlike Púrphoros – the first play of the *Prometheia* trilogy – a relatively large number of fragments have been preserved from the third play of the trilogy, Luómenos. Enough is preserved of this lost work, in fact, to even hazard an educated guess as to what its overall dramatic structure and content might have been. The following section offers a conjectured reconstruction of Luómenos, primarily based upon the work of West (1979), along with Thomson's reconstruction of the trilogy (1932), parallels identified by Herington (1963), and additional insights drawn from several other scholars. The reconstruction and interpretation of Luómenos presented below also incorporates the insights gleaned from the previous section on Desmôtês, which decisively identified the presence of a Protagorean influence on the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy as a whole. Within this interpretive framework, Luómenos is viewed as the depiction of the reconciliation of power and wisdom, as represented by Zeus and Prometheus, as well as the terms of that reconciliation.

The *prologos* of Luómenos likely opened with Prometheus alone, still bound to his rock, having re-emerged to the surface of the earth after having spent approximately four hundred years in Tartarus; i.e. thirteen generations after Io, as Prometheus foretells in Desmôtês (774). His skin is darkened from prolonged exposure to the sun, and he has a wound in his side from the eagle that comes to devour his liver every third day. Prometheus most likely delivered a monologue in the *prologos* to establish the scene and reintroduce his character and present situation, in a manner reminiscent of his speech at the end of the *prologos* of Desmôtês (88-126). This might have included recounting his past deeds and the reasons for his continued imprisonment. Except that whereas in Desmôtês he laments his fate and the punishment he must endure, in Luómenos he recites his sufferings past and present, and possibly hints at the possibility of them soon coming to an end.

## B. *Parados* – The Return of the Titans

With the audience properly oriented to the current situation of Prometheus, the Chorus, composed of the Titans recently released from Tartarus by Zeus, enter the stage in the *parados*. In a fragment cited by Arrian and the Anonymous Historian (loc. cit.), the Titans lament their kinsman's continued sufferings:

We have come to look upon these thy ordeals, Prometheus, and the affliction of thy bonds.

Aeschylus fr. 104 (190) trans. Smyth

This must have been a fairly famous scene, for a very similar passage is found in Cratinus' *Ploutoi*, likely written sometime around 429. In this comedy, the Chorus "describe themselves as Titans who, now that their bondage is over and the tyrant Zeus overborne by the Demos," have come hither to their brother, now old in years, who has become desiccated and decayed in this place (PSI 1212 = fr. 73 Austin). Interestingly, West interprets this passage, with its depiction of a tyrant overcome by the will of the people, as a "clear allusion to Pericles' deposition from the *strategia*." (West M. L., 1979, p. 141) The *strategia* was the council of generals that directed Athenian military policy. Pericles was deposed from this council in 430, after the ravages of the plague in Athens had led to declining morale and popular opposition to the war. This interpretation of *Ploutoi* considerably strengthens the idea that the Prometheia trilogy, too, is better understood as a commentary on contemporary Athenian politics, as opposed to being a faithful recounting of a traditional myth.

After being released from Tartarus, the Titans embarked upon an extended journey to the place where Prometheus is bound. In a passage cited from Luómenos by Strabo (*Geography*, I, 2, 27), they likely describe part of the long travels they undertook to arrive at the site of Prometheus' punishment, at the very ends of the Earth, in the Scythian plains near the northern Ocean:

[Leaving] the Erythraean Sea's sacred stream red of floor, and the mere by Oceanus, the mere of the Ethiopians . . . that giveth nourishment unto all, where the all-seeing Sun doth ever, in warm outpourings of soft water, refresh his undying body and his wearied steeds.

Aeschylus, Fragment 105 (192) trans. Smyth

The Erythraean Sea is identified by the ancient Greeks with the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. In a fragment of Luómenos cited by Arrian (*Voyage in the Euxine* 99.22) and an



anonymous historian cited in Müller (1878, p. 5.184), by comparison, the Titans describe a later leg of their journey, outlining the geographical features of the landscape of the remote regions north of the Caucasus mountains:

Here Phasis, the mighty common boundary of the land of Europe and Asia.

Aeschylus Fr. 106 (191) trans. Smyth

Phasis was a river that flowed into the Black Sea north of the Caucasus (or, by some other counts, in the Crimea) and that marked the border between Europe and Asia for the Greeks (Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.45). Some Greeks also thought (mistakenly) the Phasis drained into the modern day Sea of Azov. West conjectures that the Titans began their journey in the Isles of the Blest, located somewhere across the Ocean in the far west (1979, p. 141). In this description of their travels, through Aethiopia (i.e. Africa) and the Erythraean Sea, to the Caucasus, the Chorus of Titans may be seen to somewhat parallel Io's journeys, as described in *Desmôtês*, though in reverse; another indication of the trilogy author's love of symmetry.

With the close of the Chorus' opening song, Prometheus likely greeted the Titans. This situation likely provided the setting for the following passage from *Luómenos*, which is cited at length and most famously by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* (2.10.23-5):<sup>28</sup>

Ye race of Titans, offspring of Uranus, blood-kinsmen mine! Behold me fettered, clamped to these rough rocks, even as a ship is moored fast by timid sailors, fearful of night because of the roaring sea. Thus hath Zeus, the son of Cronus, fastened me, and to the will of Zeus hath Hephaestus lent his hand. With cruel art hath he riven my limbs by driving in these bolts. Ah, unhappy that I am! By his skill transfixed, I tenant this stronghold of the Furies. And now, each third woeful day, with dreadful swoop, the minister of Zeus with his hooked talons rends me asunder by his cruel repast. Then, crammed and glutted to the full on my fat liver, he utters a prodigious scream, soaring aloft, with winged tail fawns upon my gore. But when my gnawed liver swells, renewed in growth, greedily doth he return anew to his fell repast. Thus do I feed this guardian of my awful torture, who mutilates me living with never-ending pain. For fettered, as ye see, by the bonds of Zeus, I have no power to drive from my vitals the accursed bird. Thus, robbed of self-defence, I endure woes fraught with torment: longing for my death, I look around for an ending of my misery; but by the doom of Zeus I am thrust far from death. And this my ancient dolorous agony, intensified by the dreadful centuries, is fastened upon my body, from which there fall, melted by the blazing sun, drops that unceasingly pour upon the rocks of Caucasus.

Aeschylus, Fragment 107 (193) trans. Smyth

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<sup>28</sup> Also cited by Nonius Marcellus, *Compendiosa Doctrina*, 17, 9 M, lines 14-15 (*sublime-sanguinem*)

This account of Prometheus sufferings is significant for the extensive details it provides about the bird that regularly comes to consume his liver. This aspect of Prometheus' punishment is mentioned only in passing by Hesiod (*Theogony*, lines 525-530), and only briefly by Hermes at the end of *Desmôtês* (1021-5). Fragment 107 thus constitutes the single most extensive description among the various versions of the Promethean myth of the large, liver-consuming bird. It may thus be read as pointing to one of the primary focal points of the action of *Luómenos* – the killing of the bird by Herakles in the first *epeisodon* to follow.

### C. *Èpeísodos 1 - The Disputed Presence of Gaïa*

There is a long running dispute as to which characters appear in Luómenos, *Gaïa* in particular, arising from conflicting interpretations of the Medicean manuscript of *Desmôtês*. Prefixed to that manuscript is a list of the characters that appear in that play, among whom are *Gaïa* and *Heraklês*. Since Herakles does not appear in *Desmôtês*, but is known to appear in Luómenos from existing fragments, classical scholars have argued that his inclusion in the *dramatis personae* of *Desmôtês* results from the error of a copyist, who accidentally included characters who actually appeared in Luómenos. From this line of argument, scholars have come to infer that *Gaïa* must also appear there as well (Thomson, 1932, p. 20), although some have expressed dissatisfaction with this solution (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 1914, p. 128). Martin West advances a novel solution to this problem, arguing that the inclusion of *Gaïa* and *Heraklês* actually stems from a copyist's misreading of a gloss of *Desmôtês*. In support of this argument, he notes that, in the Medicean cast list of *Desmôtês*, *Gaïa* and *Heraklês* appear after *Io* and before *Hermes*. As it happens, references are made in *Desmôtês* to "a man of daring, renowned with the bow," and "Titan Themis," (871-4) that occur between the entry of *Io* in the third *èpeísodos* and *Hermes* in the *exodos*. West raises the possibility that a copyist marked *Gaïa* and *Heraklês* in the margin as a gloss, and that a later copyist, compiling the list of characters in *Desmôtês*, saw these references in the margins, and mistakenly thought them to appear in the play (1979, pp. 141-2).

With the above discussion as a background, I would like to advance another theory on the merit of including *Gê*, also alternatively named *Themis*, in the cast of Luómenos. This theory is based, in part, upon observations made about the writing style of the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy: first, that his style reflects a high degree of structure and symmetry (Thomson, 1932, pp. 13-7); and second, less flatteringly, that it is repetitious (West M. L., 1979, p. 138). Given the high degree of symmetry observed by Thomson in the composition of *Desmôtês*, it is reasonable to assume that similar degree of symmetry followed in Luómenos. As is already well known, *Desmôtês* follows a standard format for tragedy, opening with a *prologos*, followed by a *parados* where the Chorus enters. This introductory section is then followed by a sequence of three episodes, each followed by a choral standing song. The play then concludes with a final *exodos*. In *Desmôtês*, *Okeanos* was the character introduced in the first *èpeísodos*, *Prometheus* delivered his Protagorean-derived account of what he did for humans in the second *èpeísodos*, and *Io* was the character introduced the third *èpeísodos*.

If the structural format of *Desmôtês* is transferred to that of *Luómenos*, another character is needed, in addition to the ones known with greater certainty from the extant fragments and secondary references, in order to fill out the structure of the play. Assuming that *Luómenos* employs the same structural symmetry as *Desmôtês*, it may be expected that Prometheus would give another account of what all he did for humans in the second *èpeísodos* of *Luómenos*, and that Herakles kills the eagle in its third *èpeísodos*. That leaves open to question who the additional character is that would occupy the action of the first *èpeísodos*. Again, taking the structure of *Desmôtês* as a guide, *Gaĩa* or Themis ("one person, though of various names" [*Desmôtês* 211-2]) should be the character introduced in the first *èpeísodos* of *Luómenos*; for *Gê* is the mother of the Chorus of Titans, as Okeanos is the father of the Chorus of Okeanides.

| <b>Comparison of the Dramatic Structure of <i>Desmôtês</i> and the Reconstructed <i>Luómenos</i></b> |  |                              |
|--|--|------------------------------|
|  | <b>Desmôtês</b>                            | <b>Luómenos</b>              |
| <b>Prologos</b>  | Enter Prometheus, Kratos, Bia & Hephaestus | Enter Prometheus             |
| <b>Parodos</b>   | Enter Chorus of Okeanides                  | Enter Chorus of Titans       |
| <b>Èpeísodos 1</b>   | Enter Okeanos                              | Enter <i>Gê</i> / Themis (?) |
| <b>Èpeísodos 2</b>   | Prometheus' account                        | Prometheus' account          |
| <b>Èpeísodos 3</b>   | Enter Io                                   | Enter Herakles               |
| <b>Exodos</b>  | Enter Hermes                               | Enter Thetis                 |

As it happens, other indirect evidence exists for positing *Gaĩa* as one of the characters appearing in *Luómenos* in the form of pottery art. The decorative painting on a particular Apulian calyx-krater (mixing bowl), dating from sometime in the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, includes a scene based on *Luómenos*. Depicted on this krater is a featureless female figure, to the right of the bound Prometheus, whom Trendall identifies as *Gaĩa* (1971, p. 61); however, West challenges this identification as arbitrary (1979, p. 141).<sup>29</sup> Supposing that *Gaĩa* does make an appearance in *Luómenos*, though, what might her dramatic function have been? If we interpret her presence as a corollary to Okeanos, we can draw out several probable conclusions. In *Desmôtês*, Okeanos advises Prometheus to effect a reconciliation with Zeus. As noted in the previous chapter, though, he does so out of a desire for peace at any price, and based on the opinions of the *hoi polloi*, who are easily seduced by popular bards, and know not what is good. *Gaĩa*, on the other hand, not only does not depend on the deluded masses for her opinions of what is good; she also knows what is best. She is, in fact, the one who has told Prometheus the

<sup>29</sup> A picture of this krater may be found on p. 164, below.

various prophecies in *Desmôtês* and earlier that has guided his actions: that cunning, not brute strength, would give victory to the rulers of the future (211-5); and that Herakles is the one who would free him from his bonds (871-4).

As has also been seen from the previous plays of the *Prometheia* trilogy, not only does Prometheus depend on Gê to supply his prophecies; her prophecies need to occasionally be updated to reflect changing circumstances. According to West's correction of the tense of the *scholia* to *Desmôtês* 94, for instance, Prometheus prophesies in *Púrphoros* that he will be bound for thirty thousand years, likely while contemplating the punishment he will suffer for giving fire to humans. As is known from subsequent events depicted in *Desmôtês* and *Luómenos*, though, Prometheus is freed only thirteen generations after Io, or about 400 years. I conjecture that the reason for the appearance of *Gaĩa* in *Luómenos* was to advise Prometheus to effect a reconciliation with Zeus. In contrast to the similar advice given by Okeanos in *Desmôtês*, though, the advice of *Gaĩa* in this matter is informed by a knowledge that Zeus' nature has fundamentally changed. He is no longer a lustful tyrant. Rather, Zeus has grown gentle, as Prometheus predicted to Io (*Desmôtês* 848-9). Moreover, he is now accompanied by *Díkê*; the rule of Zeus has grown just, to the benefit of men, and overtures of reconciliation made by Prometheus will no longer be spurned.

#### D. *Èpeísodos* 2 – Prometheus Recounts what he did for Humans

After singing a choral ode celebrating the good news brought by *Gaïa*, the Chorus of Titans likely inquired into what, exactly, Prometheus did to merit the severity of his punishment, and why he remains harnessed in his torturing clamp, while they have been freed. This would have prompted Prometheus to again recount the many useful things he gave humans, thus paralleling his response to the Chorus of Okeanides in the second *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês*. A part of this account from Luómenos is preserved in a passage cited by both Plutarch (*On Fortune*, 3.98c) and Porphyry (*On Abstinence*, 3.18):

Giving to them stallions – horses and asses – and the race of bulls to serve them as slaves and the relieve them of their toil.

Aeschylus Fragment 108 (194), trans. Smyth

This passage thus closely echoes part of Prometheus' Protagorean influenced account of what all he did for humans in the second *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês*. In particular, it closely reproduces the gist of the passage in which Prometheus describes himself as being "the first to harness beasts under a yoke / With trace or saddle as man's slaves, to take man's place / Under the heaviest of burdens;" (462-4, trans. Vellacott). With the review of the crimes and punishments of Prometheus now complete, the Titans likely sang another choral ode celebrating the deeds of their brother, and praying for his quick release from bondage. The stage is now set for the entry of his deliverer, Herakles.

### E. *Èpeísodos 3 – Herakles Kills the Eagle*

When Herakles enters the stage, most likely in the third *èpeísodos* of Luómenos, he has already traveled north through the Caucasus in his search for either the cattle of the Geryones (labour #10) and/or the Golden Apples of the Hesperides (labour #11). He happens upon the spot where Prometheus is bound, likely in a manner reminiscent of Io's entry in third *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês. In this hypothetical scenario, Prometheus hails Herakles as his destined liberator. The great hero then asks him who he is. Prometheus tells him, and Herakles praises him as the universal benefactor of humankind, and then inquires as to why he is bound. Forewarned by *Gaïa* that Herakles is his destined liberator, Prometheus tells him everything. Herakles thereby learns of his predicament, as well as the danger posed to his father.

There are several minor challenges to reconstructing the sequence of events in Luómenos leading to the killing of the bird that consumes Prometheus' liver, his release from his bonds, and his revelation of the secret of the marriage that would result in the downfall of Zeus. None of these challenges are insurmountable, in terms of preserving the dramatic integrity of the play, particularly given the plasticity of the mythic form. The greater difficulty comes, though, in reconciling the conflicting accounts of the sequence of events depicted in Luómenos, as recounted by ancient authors. Hyginus, for example, writes that Prometheus agreed to reveal his secret if Jupiter released him; Jupiter promised to do so, Prometheus spoke, and Thetis was given to Peleus. Herakles was then sent to kill the eagle, after which Prometheus was released (Hyginus, *Fabulae* #54, Thetis). Probus (late 1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD), by comparison, in a commentary on Virgil's *Eclogues* (vi, 42), recounts a similar version of the myth that is based in outline on the *Prometheia* trilogy, but that departs from it in some significant details. In it, he "says that Herakles killed the vulture [sic] but was afraid to free Prometheus," lest he offend his father (West, 1979, p. 142). Apollodorus, finally, writes that Herakles first killed the eagle, then released Prometheus, and then presented Chiron to Zeus (2.5.11).

Hyginus, Probus and Apollodorus are thus at odds with one another on the exact sequence of events surrounding Herakles' killing of the large bird / eagle / vulture, his release of Prometheus from his bonds, and the revelation of the secret of the marriage that will lead to the downfall of Zeus. There are solid grounds for supposing, then, that one or more of these authors have confused the sequence of events surrounding the release of Prometheus. Strictly on a dramatic level, it would have been awkward to have Herakles to seek out and obtain the permission of his father, Zeus, before killing the eagle and releasing Prometheus, as Probus

implies. It is also hard to believe that Prometheus would simply surrender his secret to Zeus in exchange for his release, on terms he could already have obtained in Desmôtês, as Hyginus indicates. It is also difficult to imagine, finally, the scenario Hyginus presents, whereby Herakles first releases Prometheus and then still having to kill the bird that torments him. Given these and other considerations, both Hyginus and Probus are most likely simply mistaken, and the sequence of events follows something closer to what is given in Apollodorus. This version, with Herakles killing the bird, releasing Prometheus, and then present Zeus with Chiron, will be the sequence employed in the reconstruction of this episode below.

Having described to Herakles why he is bound, Prometheus then also mentions the large taloned bird that is due to arrive and consume his liver, and from which he cannot escape until a seemingly impossible condition is met – set by none other than Zeus, "who cannot lie," – that he can hope for no release from this torment, "until some god appear to take upon himself [his] woes and of his own free will descend into the sunless realm of Death and the dark deeps of Tartarus." (Desmôtês 1026-9) Herakles then interjects that he happens to know of just such a god: Chiron, the centaur, whom he accidentally wounded earlier at the drinking party of another centaur, Pholos. During the third of his twelve labours, Herakles had been pursuing the Erymanthian Boar in Arcadia. While searching for the Boar, he was entertained by Pholos, to whom he gave some wine. Some other centaurs were lured to Pholos' cave by the smell of the fermented drink, got drunk, and attacked Herakles. He killed many of them in the course of defending himself. Pholos himself died after the fight while inspecting one of Herakles' arrows; killed by its poison after inadvertently dropping it on his foot (Howatson & Harvey, 1989, p. 437). One of the centaurs wounded during this altercation was Chiron, who was accidentally scratched by one of Herakles' arrows and sustained a painful wound from its poison.<sup>xiv</sup>

Soon after Herakles discloses Chiron's willingness to take on Prometheus' sufferings and descend into Hades, the large, taloned bird appears in the sky, coming to feast on his liver. In the original production of the *Prometheia* trilogy, this bird was probably suspended from the same crane that previously enabled Okeanos and the Chorus of Okeanides to fly in Desmôtês. With Zeus' condition for the release of Prometheus from this torment now met, Herakles unhesitatingly draws an arrow from his quiver, and enunciates a prayer cited by Plutarch (*On Love*, 14, 757 E) as he bends his bow to the task:



May Hunter Apollo speed my arrow straight!

Aeschylus, Fragment 113 (200)<sup>30</sup>

Herakles then shoots his arrow and kills the eagle in a dramatic scene that, as West describes, would have been unique in the genre of ancient tragedy; it being the only killing in ancient tragedy to occur on stage, in full view of the audience (1979, p. 142). With his tormentor finally vanquished, Prometheus, in a fragment cited by Plutarch (*Life of Pompey*, 1), praises Herakles as the author of his deliverance:

Of his sire, mine enemy, this dearest son

Aeschylus, Fragment 114 (205)

As this passage tellingly reveals, while Prometheus reveres Herakles, he has yet to come to terms with his father, Zeus. With the eagle dead, Herakles expresses his desire to release Prometheus from his bonds, but also expresses reservations at countermanding the punishment laid down by his father. Prometheus then likely informs him of the prophecy told to him by Themis, how a descendent of Io, "a fearless hero / Famed as an archer," shall free him from his bonds (Desmôtês 872-3). Having learned that he is the one destined to free Prometheus, Herakles, after extracting a promise from Prometheus to save Zeus, mounts the rock and smashes his shackles with three resounding blows of his club (punctuated by trimeters) after which they fall away (West, 1979, p. 143).

In gratitude for killing the eagle that tormented him, Prometheus provides Herakles an extensive account of his future travels to aid him in his journey to the Geryones and/or the Hesperides. Again, this account was likely quite similar in form to the description he provided to Io of her future travels in the second *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês.<sup>xv</sup> With the release of Prometheus, it would be tempting to think that the Herakles scene marks the end of Luómenos; however, Prometheus and Zeus are not yet reconciled, the secret of the marriage that will lead to the downfall of Zeus has not yet been revealed, and Prometheus still has not been granted the compensation he demanded as a price for revealing that secret. As mentioned above, some ancient accounts, such as that of Hyginus, assume that Prometheus was released only after telling Zeus the secret of the marriage that would lead to his downfall. It is difficult to reconcile this version with what is known of Prometheus from Desmôtês, though. Why would the

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<sup>30</sup> This fragment is ascribed to Luómenos by Schütz, as the prayer of Herakles as he bends his bow against the eagle that rends Prometheus.

crucified Titan so stubbornly preserve his secret for so many centuries, and through so many agonies, and then go spill his guts now, before he has even reconciled with Zeus and received fitting concessions from him? Regarding the exact manner in which Prometheus likely revealed his secret, Fitton-Brown aptly notes:

I should find it deeply satisfying dramatically if in the end the secret outlived its usefulness, and the welfare of Prometheus and of mankind depended on its willing surrender. (Fitton-Brown, 1959, p. 59)

It is absolutely essential to the nature of the conflict between Prometheus and Zeus that the Titan *voluntarily* surrender his secret. Not only is this formulation more dramatically satisfying and consistent with what Prometheus prophesies in *Desmôtês*, it also better preserves the dignity and autonomy of Prometheus. Rather than simply having Prometheus exchange his secret for his release, then, a more likely scenario would have him keep it until after Herakles leaves, saving it for a culminating scene involving Thetis herself.

## F. *Exodos* – The Apotheosis of Prometheus

There is no reliable, direct fragmentary evidence for the *exodos* of Luómenos; however there are many different accounts in other mythic sources of the events it is thought to have depicted. By integrating these sources into the events that flow from the preceding *èpeíodos*, the *exodus* may thus be fairly plausibly reconstructed. In this reconstruction, Thetis enters the stage in a scene reminiscent of Io's entry in the third *epeíodos* of Desmôtês, where the daughter of Inachus loudly complains of Zeus' unwanted attentions. In Luómenos, by comparison, Thetis similarly laments that Zeus seeks to consummate a union with her, and supplicates herself to Prometheus, asking how she might avert this fate. After a suitable interval for Thetis to explain her predicament to Prometheus, Hermes appears on stage and demands the sea-nymph for his master. As West points out (1979, p. 144), there is ample dramatic precedent for this reconstruction in the scene near the end of Aeschylus' *Suppliant Maidens* (lines 826-951) where the Egyptian herald storms on-stage demanding the daughters of Danaus for his master. The Prometheus author has already relied on Aeschylus' *Suppliant Maidens* to provide the future genealogy of Io, which ultimately results in the birth of Prometheus' liberator, Herakles; he may thus be assumed to have been intimately familiar with the plot devices of that play.

With Thetis now in imminent danger and supplicating herself to him, Prometheus is given sufficient cause for volunteering his secret to Zeus and saving him from being cast from power – to prevent the lustful king of the gods from raping his in-law. In Hesiod, Thetis is a Nereid sea-nymph, the daughter of Nereus and Doris. Doris, in turn, is the daughter of Okeanos (*Theogony* 240-5). Prometheus' marriage to the Okeanid, Hesione (Desmôtês 560) would therefore make Thetis his niece. An even more compelling consideration motivating Prometheus to surrender his secret at this precise moment, though, is his philanthropic way, which motivates him to act before receiving just compensation. Since Prometheus first clashed with Zeus over the fate of the human race, the king of the gods has also become better disposed toward humanity. For him to be cast down from power now, therefore, would be detrimental to human beings. This dilemma in Prometheus' relationship with Zeus also fits, in a way, with what we know of Protagoras' disposition toward the gods – that the existence of the gods cannot be known; but that belief in a god who cares for human justice was beneficial to humans, for it rendered them more voluntarily just toward one another, thereby allowing for the greater development of civilised human existence. A final factor pushing Prometheus to surrender his secret and

preserve Zeus' power is that the god who champions justice will also possess *aretê* and *charis*, and will appropriately reciprocate and reward a magnanimous gesture of voluntarily rendered service.

Prometheus informs Hermes that Thetis is the very marriage that will one day cause Zeus to be hurled down from power. Hermes exits the stage to report to his master, in a manner reminiscent of his exit at the end of *Desmôtês*. Except that this time, rather than cataclysmic thunder and lightning, the exit of Hermes is followed by a choral song in which the Titans pray for Zeus' favour on behalf of Prometheus. This final choral song is then followed by a closing scene in which two things most likely happened: Thetis is given in marriage to Peleus; and Prometheus receives compensation in the form of honours.

In Herington's analysis of the parallelisms between the *Prometheia* trilogy and Aristophanes' *Birds*, he argues that the marriage scene in the *exodos* of *Birds* is a parody of, or fantasy based upon, the wedding ceremony of Thetis and Peleus in the *exodos* of *Púrphoros*, which he (mistakenly) thinks was the last play in the trilogy (Herington, *A Study in the Prometheia*, Part II: *Birds and Prometheia*, 1963, p. 241). His larger thesis is that the last two episodes and *exodos* of *Birds* represent a parody of the *Prometheia* trilogy as a whole. If there is a parallel between the marriage ceremony in *Birds* and the one in *Luómenos*, it is interesting to note the points on which they both concur and diverge. The final episode of *Birds* ends with the utter surrender of Zeus' scepter to the human ruler of the bird-city, Pisthetairos, and the betrothal to him of Zeus' Princess, who looks after his thunderbolt, as well as good counsel, law and order, decency, and shipyards, among other things (Aristophanes, *Birds* 1538-41). The *exodus* consists of their marriage ceremony, along with the Chorus' declaration of Pisthetairos as the "new master of Zeus' estate and of the Princess, attendant of Zeus' throne." (Aristophanes, *Birds* 1753) Transferring this framework to the *exodos* of *Luómenos*, the obvious parallel would be the betrothal of Thetis to Peleus and, presumably also their marriage. However, this scenario doesn't fit very well with what is known of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis.

Peleus was the son of Aeacus, the pious king of Aegina, and Endeis, an Oread mountain nymph from Mount Pelion in Thessaly, and daughter of Chiron the centaur. There are a number of slightly conflicting accounts of the life of Peleus, most of which revolve around him both inflicting injustice and suffering from its consequences. One of the more comprehensive and authoritative accounts of Peleus is provided by Apollodorus (3.12.6-3.13.7), who describes him and his brother, Telamon, as having killed their half-brother, Phocus, out of jealousy over his

athletic prowess. After they are found out, Peleus flees to Phthia, where he is purified of the murder by king Eurytion, and marries his daughter, Antigone. While hunting the Calydonian boar with his new father-in-law, though, Peleus accidentally kills him with a dart. He thus flees once again, this time to Iolcus, where he is again purified of the death, this time by king Acastus. The wife of Acastus, Astrydameia, falls in love with Peleus, but he scorns her advances. Out of spite, therefore, she sends a message to Peleus' wife, informing her that he is to marry Acastus' daughter, and Antigone hangs herself in despair. Astrydameia also tells her husband that Peleus tried to rape her, so Acastus takes him on a hunting trip, hides his magic sword, and then abandons him when they are attacked by a group of centaurs. Chiron returns the sword to Peleus, though, which allows him to escape. Only after these tumultuous events, did Peleus come to marry Thetis.

In mythical accounts, Thetis expressed extreme hostility toward her marriage to the mortal Peleus. Her attitude is an amplified version of the reluctance the Danaides express toward their fiancés in Aeschylus' *Supplikes*. Unlike the Danaides, though, Thetis possessed the ability to escape her suitors by changing into any form she wished. Apollodorus writes that Chiron advised Peleus on how best to seize Thetis and hold onto her fast despite her shape-shifting (3.13.5).<sup>31</sup> According to other sources, Thetis variously transformed into fire, water, wind, a tree, a bird, a tiger, a lion, a serpent, and a cuttle-fish before Peleus was finally able to seize her and hold her fast (Tzetzes, *Scholiast on Lycophron*, 175, 178). Obviously, the consummation of this famous courtship, resulting in a marriage and wedding ceremony, would have been impossible to portray on stage. What likely happened in Luómenos is that Hermes simply led Thetis away to rendezvous with her future husband off stage. There, Peleus will conquer elemental nature, as embodied by Thetis and promised by Zeus. In the meantime, though, we are left with the problem of what, if anything, in the *exodos* of Luómenos is paralleled by the marriage ceremony depicted in *Birds*. As I hope to demonstrate, this scene is actually more closely paralleled in the wreathing ceremony of Prometheus.

Before exiting the stage with Thetis, Hermes informs Prometheus that Zeus will amply compensate him with honours, but only after he proposes an alternative punishment that he would be willing to take upon himself in order to expiate his past transgression. In response, Prometheus asks that he be crowned with a wreath made of withy, willow or bay branches; a

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<sup>31</sup> Ovid, by comparison, names Proteus, the shape-shifter Menolaus catches in the *Odyssey* (4.354 sqq.), as the one who advises Peleus how to catch and hold Thetis (*Metamorphosis* 11.219-274).

symbolic binding he devises, and to which he voluntarily submits, according to a fragment from Aeschylus' *Sphinx* cited by Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae*, 15.674d-e). In a depiction of Luómenos on an Apulian calyx-krater (a photo of which is included at the end of this section), Athena bears the wreath that she also presumably places on the head of Prometheus. Perhaps this wreath was related to the one twined with myrtle, thirty feet across, that Athenaeus describes as being carried by processions in the Athena Hellota festival, and in which were carried the bones of Europa (15.278z-b).



III.1, 27 (Berlin). Aeschylus, *Prometheus Lyomenos*

Apulian calyx-krater depicting Promêtheús Luómenos, dating to the third quarter of the 4th century BCE. Prometheus, still bound, occupies centre-stage. To the immediate left of Prometheus, Herakles examines his bonds, while to the far left, Athena approaches bearing the wreath with which she will crown Prometheus. Trendall identifies the figure to the immediate right of Prometheus as "probably" *Gaïa* (1971, p. 61); West, however, challenges this identification as arbitrary (1979, p. 141). Another likely candidate might be Thetis. To her right is Apollo, whom Herakles addresses his prayer before shooting the eagle. The characters along the bottom, from left to right, Trendall identifies as: Demeter, who taught men the craft of agriculture; the eagle, now vanguished, who ate Prometheus' liver; Persephone, holding a cross-bow torch with which the Prometheia torch race will be initiated; and a Fury, who rules over Zeus by necessity.

The ceremonial binding of Prometheus may also have involved him donning an iron ring with a rock set in it, as another symbol of his bondage; however, the ancient sources that mention this aspect of Prometheus' voluntary expiation – Probus on Virgil *Eclogue* 6.42, Hyginus (*Poetica Astronomica* 2.15) and Pliny (33.8, 37.2) – do not ascribe it "to 'Aeschylus', and Hyginus implies that his authority for the ring did not mention the crown." (West, 1979, p. 144) In either case, though, a significant moment occurs, very reminiscent of the rituals of a wedding ceremony, in which Athena places a wreath on the head of Prometheus, and also possibly a ring on his finger. As Prometheus bows down his head to accept the wreath, perhaps he steals a glimpse of the virgin goddess beneath her *péplos*, but without the consequence of being blinded like Terisius. It is this ceremony, celebrating the union of power and wisdom that, I would maintain, Aristophanes actually parodies in *Birds*: the symbolic binding of Prometheus to Zeus' Olympian family, and being granted privileged access to his daughter, the virginal goddess of wisdom.

With Prometheus having devised and voluntarily accepted his symbolic binding to the will of Zeus, he is granted full compensation for the outrage of having had to suffer being forcibly bound (Desmôtês 178-9). This compensation would have come, as West argues, "in the form of honours to be paid to him in future by men, in particular at Athens, where regular torch-races will commemorate his bringing of fire." (1979, p. 144) In advancing the hypothesis that the institution of a torch-race was the compensation Zeus offered to Prometheus, West references a passage from Hyginus in which he describes a torch-race that commemorates Prometheus' theft of fire: "In the rivalry of the games they also make it a practice for the runners to run, shaking torches after the manner of Prometheus." (*Astronomica* 2.15) West also references Farnell (1909, p. 5.378 ff.), Willamowitz (1914, pp. 142-4), Deubner (1956, p. 211 f.), and Krauss (1984, p. 23.654 f.) in support of his claim that the torch-race in honour of Prometheus described by Hyginus was commemorated at the end of Luómenos. West's hypothesis that Luómenos ends with a torch-race in honour of Prometheus would thus seem to be somewhat beyond contention.

In the following analysis, I wish to push West's hypothesis a step further, though, and argue that not only did Luómenos end with a torch-race in honour of Prometheus; but that it may also have marked the official inception of the *Promêtheia* as one of the public festival celebrated in Athens. This is an important point to establish, for if it can be demonstrated that the torch-race initiated at the end of Luómenos coincides with the first celebration of the *Promêtheia*, it would

lend considerable credence to another theory, first advanced by Westphal but long since neglected, that the conclusion of *Luómenos* marked the apotheosis of Prometheus; which is to say, that it celebrated his ascension to godhood and official acceptance into the pantheon of gods worshipped by the Greeks (Westphal, 1869, pp. 215-6). This is an key point to establish for the purposes of this dissertation, as the acceptance of Prometheus the sophist into the Athenian pantheon may be interpreted, according to the guiding thesis of this chapter, as a very public sign of the acceptance of Protagorean philosophy by the rulers of Athens. To this end, I offer the following examination of ceremonial torch-races in ancient Greece. This examination strengthens the hypotheses of both West and Westphal, with respect to the presence of a torch-race and the apotheosis of Prometheus at the end of *Luómenos*. Also strengthened by this examination is my own hypothesis, that the *Prometheia* trilogy also celebrates the initiation of the *Prometheia* torch-race festival.



### G. *Lampadêphoría* – The Initiation of the *Prometheia* Torch-Race Festival

Commemorative torch races – variously known as *Lampadêphoría*, *Lampadêdromía*, *Lampadoũchos*, or even just simply *Lampáda* or *Lampás* – grew out of the very ancient tradition of the *púrphoros*, or fire bearer, in ancient Greek religion, outlined above.<sup>32</sup> Torch-races are not mentioned in Greek texts prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE; however, they become increasingly common and important during the course of that most remarkable century.<sup>33</sup> By the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, there were at least five major ceremonial torch-races and/or processions celebrated in Athens that commemorated the gods Hephaestus, Athena, Pan, Prometheus, and Bendis, plus a host of smaller ones.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the lampardarchy in charge of the torch-races had become the single "most important and expensive kind of gymnasiarchy." (Boeckh & Lamb, 1857, p. 603) The gymnasiarchy, in turn, was among the most important of the *leitourgía* – public services performed by private citizens at their personal expense. In this respect, the gymnasiarchy was ranked among the most expensive and prestigious liturgies in classical Athens: along with that of the *chorêgía*, in charge of supplying a chorus for the tragedy competitions; and the *trierarchía*, in charge of equipping a trireme for the navy.



Torch used in the race.  
(Coin in Mionnet, pl.  
49, fig. 6.)

Source: Smith (1890) s.v. *Lampadedromia*

<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of chapter 6, on Promêtheús Púrphoros.

<sup>33</sup> Outside of Athens, torch races were also run in Corinth (Scholia on Pindar, *Olympian* 13), Byzantium (*Corpus Inscriptionum Graeca* 2034), Ceos (*Corpus Inscriptionum Graeca* 2360), Syros in honour of Demeter, Amphipolis in honour of Artemis (Diodorus Siculus 18.4) (Livy 44.44), and Germaniceia (*Corpus inscriptionum Atticarum* 3.1096). Alexander also celebrated a torch-race at Susa (Arrian 3.16).

<sup>34</sup> There were a number of smaller torch-races run in Athens. Frazer, in his commentary on Pausanias, mentions three, presumably relatively minor, torch-races that occurred in Athens, the evidence for the existence of which is derived solely from inscriptions (Pausanias, 1898, pp. 391-2). These three lesser races were run at the Hermaia, the festival of Hermes (C.I.A. 2, No. 1223), the Theseia, the festival of Theseus (C.I.A. 3, Nos. 107, 108), and the Epitaphia, the festival in honour of the dead (C.I.A. 3, Nos. 106, 108, 110). Ross (1846, p. 55) also records a votive offering (No. 29) dated by Boeckh (1857, p. 604) to the later periods of the Roman Empire, that mentions the gymnasiarchs for the lampadephoría at the celebration of the Anthesteria, one of four Athenian festivals in honour of Dionysus.



'Plan of the Environs of Athens' (1798) map by J.D. Barbié Du Bocage From: *The Travels of Anacharsis* (Barthélemy, 1825, pp. vol II, p. 81)

The earliest direct reference to the torch-races in ancient Greek literature is found in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, produced in 458 BCE. Near the beginning of that play, Clytaemnestra declares:

Such are the torch-bearers [*lampadêphórôn*] I have arranged, completing the course in succession one to the other; and the victor is he who ran both first and last.

312-4, trans. Smyth

The Queen of Mycenea thereby compares the competitors in a relay torch-race to the network of beacons she has arranged across the islands of the Aegean sea, that rapidly signal home news of the Achaean army's victory over Troy. Weckler thought the *Lampadêphoría* was initially instituted by *kerameîs*, the potters resident in the Kerameikos district of Athens (1824, p. 121). Following a similar line of reasoning, Liddell contends that torch-race celebrations originated in the worship of Prometheus (*Lampadedromia*, 1890). However, the historical evidence would rather seem to favour Hephaestus as the first god commemorated by means of a ceremonial torch-race, at least in Attica.

The evidence for the torch-race at the Hephaestaea being the earliest torch-race celebrated by the Athenians is partly based on the testimony of Photius (s.v. *lampádos*), who states that the Athenians first celebrated a torch-race in remembrance of Hephaestus (1823, p. 177). This claim is corroborated by the *Suida* (s.v. *lampádos*), which states that the Athenians first held a first torch-race "when sacrificing to Hephaistos, to commemorate him who grasped the use of fire and taught it to others." (trans. Whitehead) The earliest extant reference to the torch-race celebrated specifically in honour of Hephaestus is found in the *History* of Herodotus. In describing the Persians, he compares the relay torch-race of the Hephaestaea to the Persian riding-post, called the angereion, that was composed of a relay of horse riders that transmitted messages across the Persian empire at great speed (8.98). The torch-race of the Hephaestaea was also closely connected with the celebration of the Apaturia, an important Ionian political gathering of the Attic phratries (*phrateríai*), i.e. 'Brotherhoods'. The torch-race at this festival is attested by Harpocration (s.v. *Lampás*), who writes that that the Athenians used to dress splendidly at the Apaturia, kindle torches on the altar of Hephaestus, and sacrifice and sing in honour of him (1991, p. 11).

The Apaturia festival was celebrated in Athens on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> days of the month of Pyanepsion (mid-October to mid-November). The scholiast on Aristophanes *Acharnians* (146) writes that the Apaturia was initiated in 1100 BCE to honour the single combat fought between

Melanthus, representing king Thymoetes of Attica, and king Xanthus of Boeotia. This date is likely apocryphal, though, as the institution of the phratry – essentially an archaic Greek fraternal order – only came into being among Ionian aristocrats sometime in the late 9<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Andrewes, 1961, p. 140). In classical times, the name of the Apaturia was thought to derive from *àpatân*, "to deceive," as Melanthus employed deception in slaying Xanthus (Apaturia, 1910). Modern scholars, though, have deemed this a false etymology. Some argue that the name for the Apaturia actually derived from *äma*, "together," and *patória*, "father" (Welcker, 1824, p. 288; Müller, George Cornewall Lewis, & Tufnell, 1839). Others contend that the name is a slightly modified form of the related words: *àpatória*, "without father," *ámapatória*, "together with father," and *òmopatória*, the festival of "common relationship" (Apaturia, 1910).

One of the key celebrations of the Apaturia involved enrolling youths who had entered adulthood during the past year into the *phrateríai*, a ceremony that may have provided the occasion for the torch-race of the Hephaestaea. In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger compares the handing off of a torch [*lampáda*] in the torch-race relay to the handing on of life from one generation to the next (776b). This description also fits well the *gamêlia*, a communal wedding ceremony also performed during the Apaturia, and that is known to have included a torch-race, based on the testimony of the Patmos scholiast on Demosthenes:

some say that the *gamêlia* was a sacrifice performed on behalf of those who were going to marry . . . and these organized the feast known as a torch-race in honour of Prometheus, Hephaistos, and Pan, in this fashion: the young men, having been trained by the gymnasiarch, were wont to run in turn and kindle the altar, and he who first kindled it was victorious as well as the tribe to which he belonged. (Farnell, 1909, p. 380)

Schmitz states that the torch-race in honour of Hephaestus was run on the second day of the Apaturia (Apaturia, 1870); Liddell, on the other hand, maintains that it was run on the evening of the day after the festival (Lampadedromia, 1890). There is no record of when the Hephaestaea might have been first incorporated into the celebrations of the Apaturia, or whether it was an original part of that festival. As mentioned above, though, the Apaturia itself is an very ancient festival, dating to the late 9<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, when *phrateríai* are thought to have first arose to prominence as a unit of social organisation among the Ionian Greeks.

Athena was commemorated with a ceremonial torch-race during the Panathenaea, although it's not known for certain if it was run at the greater or lesser version of the festival, or both. Libanius (c.314-c.394 CE), in his *Hypotheses to the Orations of Demosthenes*, remarks that the torch-race occurred during the Great Panathenaea, the single most important festival of the Athenian calendar, held only once every four years, and one of the grandest celebrations in all Greece. An inscription of the tribe Acamantis (Beilage XXI) also celebrates a torch-race victor in the great Panathenaea (Boeckh & Lamb, 1857, p. 606). Other authors, though, refer to the torch-race as part of the Panathenaea in general, without the epithet *magála* (cf. Photius, *Lexicon*, s.v. *lampádos*). Schmitz reads this as sufficient evidence to assert that the torch-race was common to both festivals (1870, p. 856). Torch-races in honour of Athena were also celebrated in many Greek cities other than Athens. A *scholia* to Pindar's *Olympian Ode 13* (line 56) mentions the Athena Hellota, "a festival with a torch race celebrated at Corinth in honour of Athena as a goddess of fire." (Smith W. , 1870, p. 455)<sup>35</sup> According to legend, both the worship of Athena and the Panathenaea festival were first instituted by Erichthonius, an early mythical king of Athens who had been adopted by the goddess under somewhat less than auspicious circumstances (Apollodorus 3.14.1).<sup>36</sup> There is no indication as to when the torch-race in honour of Athena might have become incorporated into the Panathenaea. Peisistratus, though, is known to have extensively reorganised this festival sometime during the 66 Olympiad (556 BCE), at which time the Greater Panathenaea was likely initiated, including its additional athletic competitions.

In contrast to the rather vague references to the torch-races of the Hephasteia and Panathenaea, there is excellent documentation on how the torch-race in honour of Pan was first initiated. Herodotus writes that it was founded to commemorate Philippides, the Athenian long-distance runner who carried messages between Athens and Sparta in the days leading up to the battle of Marathon. Upon returning to Athens by foot from one of these cross-country sojourns, Philippides described how, while on the Parthenian mountain above Tegea, he encountered Pan, who called out his "name and bade him ask the Athenians why they paid him no attention, though he was of goodwill to the Athenians, had often been of service to them,

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<sup>35</sup> In line 56 of *Olympian Ode 13*, written in 464 BCE, Pindar describes how the Corinthians battled before the walls of Dardanus.

<sup>36</sup> Erichthonius, it will be recalled, was born from the semen that Athena scraped off her thigh with a pad of wool and threw to the earth in disgust after Hephaestus attempted to rape her. According to Hyginus (*Astronomica* 2.13), Minerva had previously refused his offer of marriage, but due to her love of Vulcan, she hid in a place called the Hephaestius, where he followed her and made his attempt.

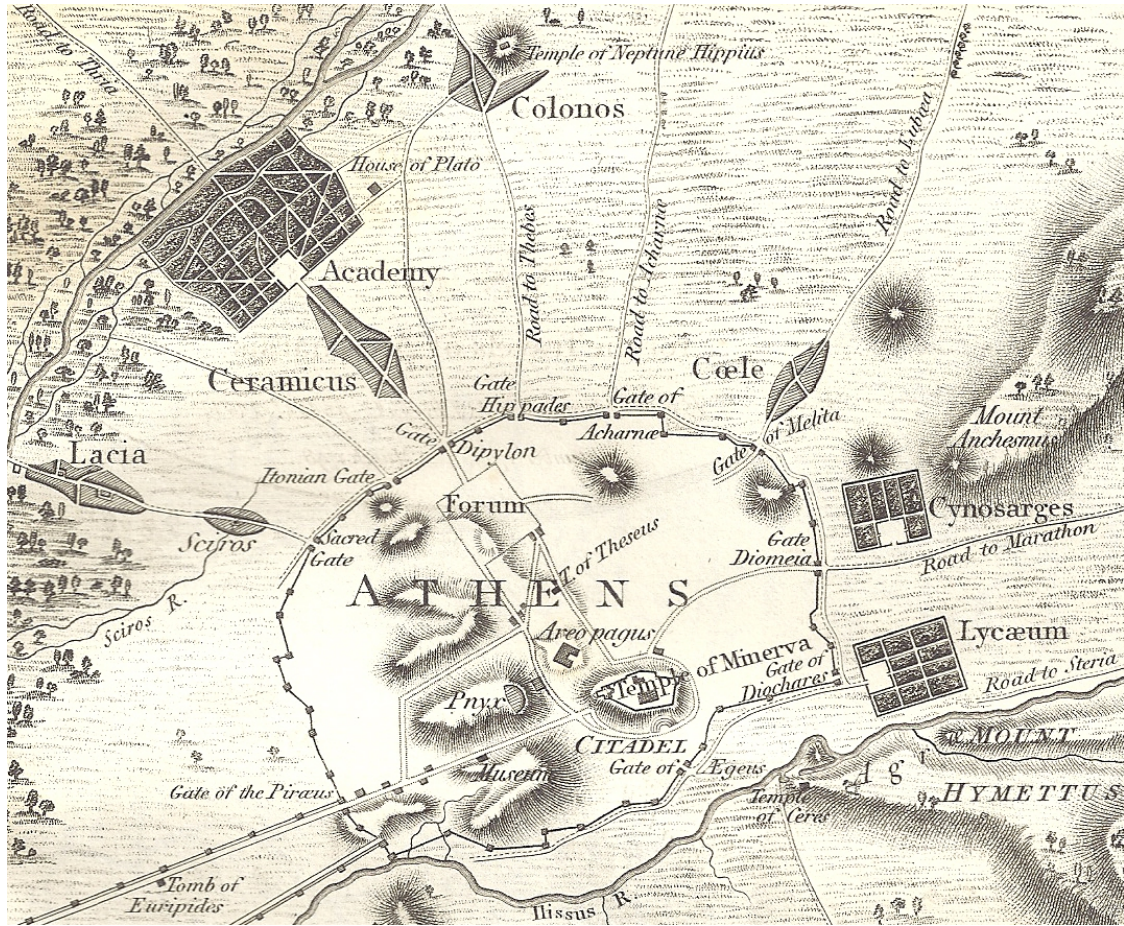
and would be in the future." Crediting Philippides' account, the Athenians established a sacred precinct of Pan beneath the Acropolis (mentioned by Pausanias 8.54.6), and ever since receiving "that message they propitiate him with annual sacrifices and a torch races [*lampádi*]."

(Herodotus 6.105.2, trans. Godley, 1920) Given the timing of these events, the inauguration of the *Lampádi* in honour of Pan may be confidently dated to sometime shortly after the Battle of Marathon, in 490 BCE. The torch-race in honour of Pan was likely run during the Panathenaea, given that, in ancient references to the *lampádi*, they are mentioned interchangeably.<sup>37</sup>

The date of the initiation of the torch-race in honour of Bendis, also known as Thracian Artemis, is also known to a high degree of precision, stemming from evidence from inscriptions (*IG I<sub>3</sub> 136*, *IG II<sub>2</sub> 1283*), and the depiction of this festival's inception in Plato's *Republic* (1.328a). Examining this highly significant literary reference in light of the information found in inscriptions, Planeaux concludes that the first Bendideia festival was initiated in the earliest days of June, 429 BCE (2001, p. 167). The torch-race of the Bendideia was highly unique in that it was conducted on horseback. The celebrations of this festival also included solemn processions, at least one of which departed from the hearth of the Prytaneion (*IG II<sub>2</sub> 1283*), and an extraordinarily sumptuous feast. Planeaux observes, though, that what "made the *Bendídeia* a genuine spectacle was the glorious offering of a true hecatomb." (2001, p. 176) A hecatomb consisted of the ceremonial sacrifice of 100 head of cattle, the meat of which was then distributed in a public feast, much of it subsequently taken home by guests. Relatively detailed accounts of the Bendideia are preserved in commemorative inscriptions, at least in part due to the extraordinarily large expenses incurred in the course of assembling and hosting such a large public gathering. In addition, the Bendideia had the added consideration of being sponsored by an association of foreigners (*koinón* of *òrgeônes*, in Planeaux's words) composed of Thracians resident in Athens. This foreign association had to ask for, and received, unprecedented political approval for "the privilege of acquiring land and founding a temple" (*IG II<sub>2</sub> 1283*, trans. Planeaux, 2001) dedicated to Bendis in the Piraeus, where the ceremonies of the Bendideia presumably concluded.

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<sup>37</sup> In reference to the major torch-race festivals celebrated in Athens, the Patmos Scholiast on Demosthenes (*Against Euboulides* 43) mentions those in honour of Prometheus, Hephaistos and Pan. Similar references in the Scholiast on Aristophanes (*Frogs* 1087 & *Wasps* 1203), the *Suida* (s.v. *lampádos*), Harpocration (s.v. *lampás*), and Photius, *Lexicon* (s.v. *lampádos*), by contrast, mention the Panathenaea, the Hephaestia and the Prometheia.



Detail from 'Plan of the Environs of Athens' (September 1785 - March 1798) by Du Bocage, illustrating ancient Athens' physical features as they relate to the courses run by the major torch-races: starting in the Academy, running along the boulevard through the Ceramicius, the Dipylon Gate, the 'Forum' (Agora) and to the 'Citadel' (Parthenon).

There are numerous literary and epigraphic references to the Prometheia festival; however, no indications are given as to when it might have been first inaugurated. In *Frogs* (127-131), first produced in 405, Aristophanes describes a torch-race [*lampád'*] in which the competitors run through the Kerameikos, a district in the north-west corner of Athens, where the pottery industry was centred. A *scholia* on *Frogs* 131 names the torch race described as a Prometheia. The same scholiast also indicates that it was run with a number of persons starting at the same time, suggesting a competitive race. Pausanias also describes an altar to Prometheus in the Academy that formed the starting point for at least some of the torch-races:

and from it they run to the city carrying burning torches. The contest is while running to keep the torch still alight; if the torch of the first runner goes out, he has no longer any

claim to victory, but the second runner has. If his torch also goes out, then the third man is the victor. If all the torches go out, no one is left to be winner.

Pausanias 1.30.2, trans. Jones

From these sources, we may assume that the Prometheia started at the altar to Prometheus in the Academy, that it was a competitive race, and that it consisted of teams of runners who ran in relay. Given what is now known of Indo-European fire rituals dating from the period of the Greco-Aryan unity, it may be conjectured that the race likely began with a fire-lighting ceremony conducted in the traditional sanctified manner, with a *pramantha* shaft of ash-wood spun by ropes, that drilled into a base of softer wood where the pure new flame was ignited.

In addition to the altar to Prometheus, Pausanias also mentions altars that stood in the Academy dedicated to the Muses, Hermes, Athena and Herakles (1.30.2). An anonymous Greek historian (*FGrHist* 244 F 120) mentions a common altar at the Academy shared by Prometheus and Hephaestus, while a Scholiast on Sophocles (*Oedipus Colonus* 56) mentions that "in the Academy at Athens there was an *old building (palaiòn idruma)* with an altar, where Prometheus, Hephaistos, and Athene were all worshipped in common." (Sterrett, 1901, p. 397) It may be assumed that the torch-races of the Hephaestaea, Panathenaea and Prometheia each began at the altar dedicated to its respective patron god. The torch-race in honour of Pan, on the other hand, may well have begun at the altar to Eros, situated at the main entrance of the Academy, as Plutarch (*Lives*, Solon 1.4) describes the "statue of Love in the Academy, where the runners in the sacred torch race light their torches." (trans. Perrin)<sup>38</sup> The Bendideia, by contrast, occurred in the Piraeus, the port city of Athens. Runners in the torch-races starting at the Academy would have exited out its main gate, on the south-east side. They then would have run down a large ceremonial boulevard, 30 metres wide and about 1.5 km long, that ran straight from the front gate of the Academy to the Dipylon Gate, located on the northwest face of the wall surrounding urban Athens.<sup>39</sup> Along either side of this boulevard were the magnificent funerary monuments of distinguished Athenians, plus the State Mausoleum honouring those who had fallen in battle for the city. Two temples were also located along this boulevard, one dedicated to Artemis, the other to Dionysus Eleuthereus. Behind the funerary monuments were garden plots, on which small houses could also be built, and which seemed to have served as the suburban residences of prosperous Athenians (Baltes, 1993, p. 6).

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<sup>38</sup> The statue/altar of Eros in the Academy was dedicated in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE by either Peisistratus (Plutarch, *Lives*, Solon 1.4) or Charmus, the lover of Hippias (Athenaeus 609 D).

<sup>39</sup> This ancient boulevard corresponds to Lenorman Avenue in modern Athens.





The west face of the Hephaesteum, the best preserved ancient Greek temple, with the Agora in the background, photo by Sailko (2008).  
Image source: Wikimedia Commons

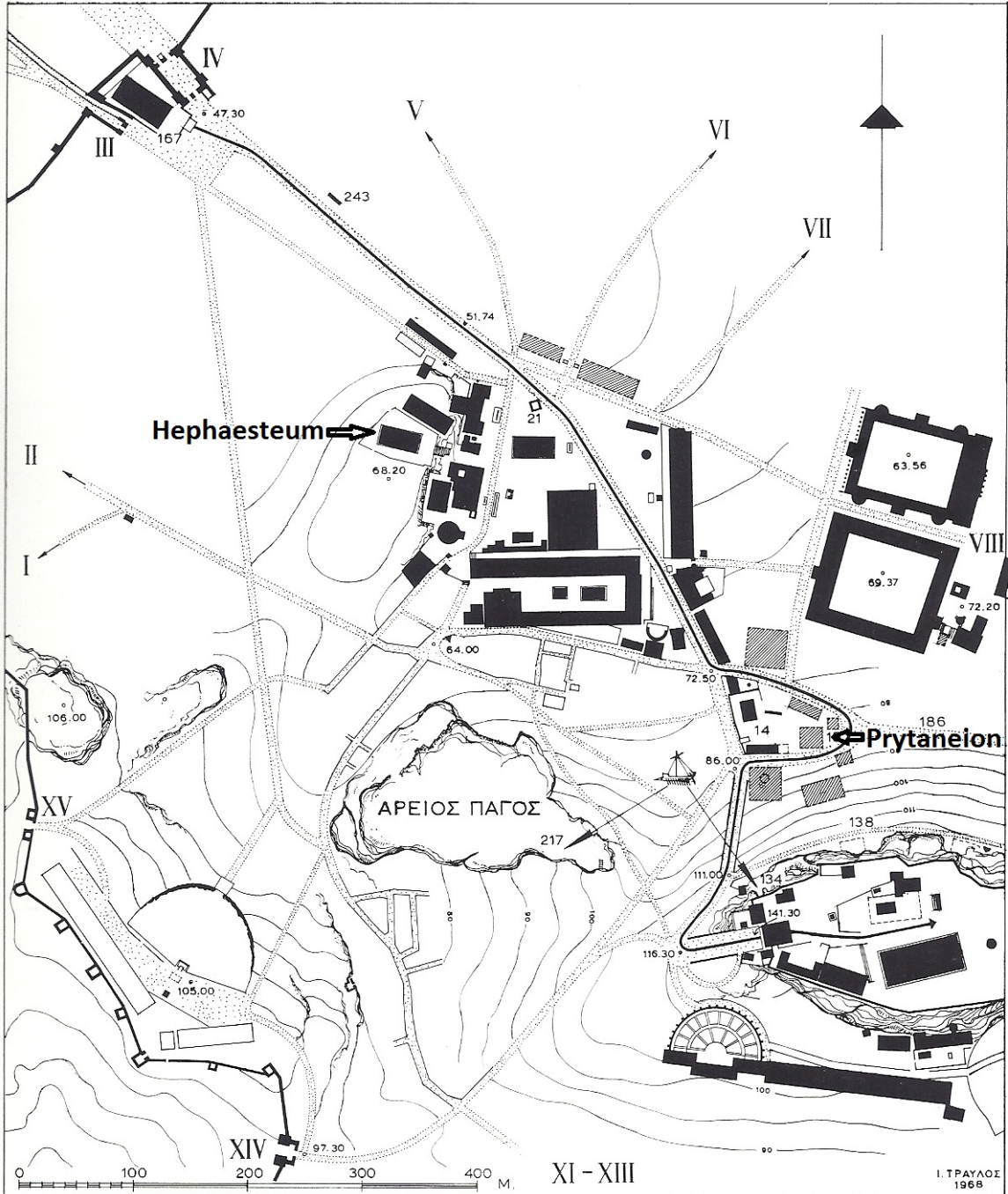
Once inside the Dipylon gate, torch-racers would most certainly have run along the Panathenaic Way, the traditional route followed by the Panathenaic procession during Panathenaea festival. This ceremonial route ran east-southeast from the Dipylon gate, parallel to the Eridanus river, through the Agora, around the Pryteneion, and up to the Akropolis, situated at the very centre of Athens. As the torch-race runners entered the northwest corner of the Agora, they would have passed a small hill on the right, overlooking the marketplace, that became the site of a magnificent temple of Hephaestus. Construction of the Hephaesteum began in 449 BCE, its western frieze was completed between 445 and 440, and its eastern frieze and western pediment are dated to 435-430. West conjectures that the completion of a major component of the Hephaesteum in 440 BCE likely presented an occasion for a dedication ceremony, at which fire was kindled on its altar for the first time. He also conjectures that this ceremony would have presented a fitting occasion for the staging of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and that it may even have been specifically commissioned for that event (1979, p. 148). The

Hephaesteum was said to have housed bronze statues of both Athena and Hephaestus;<sup>40</sup> Pausanias, though, says only that the statue of Athena stood near the temple (1.14.6). At this point, one or more of the torch-races might have turned right, climbed the hill and entered the Hephaesteum, either as a way station or final destination. Not enough is known about the final destinations of the torch-races to be able to say for certain. It may be reasonably assumed, though, that each race ended at an altar sacred to the patron god to which it was dedicated.

The Hephesteia torch-race likely concluded at the Hephaesteum, at least after that temple was largely completed, around 440. The other torch-races originating in the Academy likely went on to other destinations in the city centre. The torch-races in honour of Athena and Pan likely finished at their respective altars on the Acropolis. The Atheneia likely concluded at the Altar of Athena Polias, at least until the Parthenon was largely completed, in 438, and which housed the Athena Parthenos, a magnificent statue of Athena sculpted by Phidias. The Paneia, on the other hand, likely concluded at the sacred precinct of Pan mentioned by Herodotus (6.105.2), located in a grotto on the northwestern slope of the Acropolis (Sterrett, 1901, p. 400). The torch-race in honour of Prometheus, has at least three likely destinations. One is the Parthenon on the Acropolis, the seat of Athenian political sovereignty. A second is the Kerameikos, the district northwest of Athens between the city walls and the Academy, that housed the potters, for whom Prometheus was their patron god. A more likely destination, though, for reasons discussed below, would have been the altar to Hestia in the Prytaneum, located just to the northeast of the Acropolis. The Prytaneum served as both the ceremonial and communal hearth of Athens, from which citizens traditionally obtained purified flame for their home hearth. After the construction of the Hephaesteum the Prometheia torch-race may have supplanted the role played by the Hephasteia in conveying sacred fire to the Prytaneum. This discussion of the possible destinations for the torch-races is pure speculation, though, as there is no corroborating textual evidence.

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<sup>40</sup> The joint worship of Hephaestus and Athena was very ancient in Attica. Critias describes them as of a like nature and born from the same father (Plato, *Critias* 109 c). The temple they shared in common is also mentioned by Augustine, who alludes to it in his discussion of the circumstances of their parentage of Erichonius (*City of God* 18.12).



Panathenaic Way, Map by John Travlos (1971, p. 423), illustrating the route followed by the Panathenaic procession, as well as the likely route for at least four of the five major torch-races held in Athens. Also highlighted are the most likely destinations for the Hephaesteia and the Prometheia: the Hephaesteum and the Prytaneion.

Unlike the festivals celebrating Pan and Bendis, there are no direct references in classical Greek source texts as to when the festival in honour of Prometheus might have been inaugurated. However, an inscription and two orations presented in the Athenian law courts dating from the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE do directly mention the Prometheia by name, and with specific reference to the considerable expenses involved in staging it. The earliest historical mention of the Prometheia occurs in a speech of Lysias presented to the Athenian law court in 402 BCE, entitled 'Defense Against a Charge of Taking Bribes.' In it, the plaintiff describes the many costly liturgies (*leitourgía*) he has undertaken; which is to say, the heavy expenses he has incurred while fulfilling the duties that came with holding various high public offices in Athens. In particular, he specifically mentions: having acted as a *chorêgós*, responsible for paying the expenses of training a chorus and staging the production of a tragedy; and serving as a *triêrarchós*, responsible for paying for the expenses of equipping a trireme. The plaintiff then also mentions how,

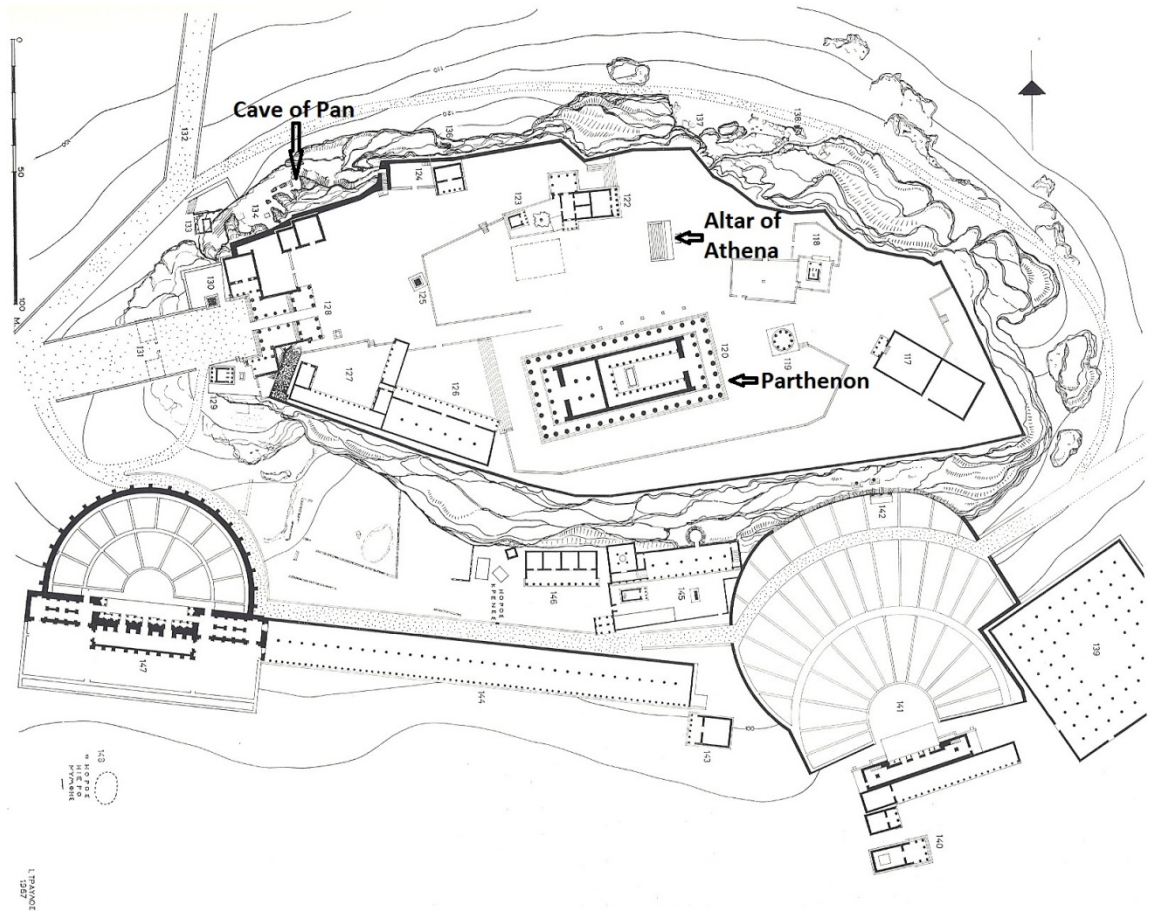
in the archonship of Alexias [405-404 BCE], I was producing games for the *Promêtheia*, and won a victory after spending twelve minae. (Lysias 21.3)

This testimony is corroborated by an inscription of the Pandionis tribe of Athens (*C.I.Gr.* No. 325) dating to immediately after the end of the rule of the thirty tyrants (403 BCE), that "mentions the victors in the gymnasiarchy for the celebration of the Prometheia and Hephaestea" together with the victory of a chorus at the Thargelia and Dionysia, implying that the honors of these victories were of equal rank (Boeckh & Lamb, 1857, p. 605). In a slightly later oration by Isaeus, that Edwards dates to 354 BCE (2007, p. 118), the plaintiff also mentions the services he has rendered as a *triêrarchós* and *chorêgós*, and then goes on to describe the lavish support he has provided the Prometheia as the gymnasiarch responsible:

I have acted as gymnasiarch [*gegumnasiárchêka*] at the *Promêtheia* in the present year with a liberality [*philotímôs*] which all my fellow-tribesmen acknowledge."

Isaeus, *Apollodorus* 7.36, trans. based on Forster

These three references to the Prometheia, while somewhat scant, nevertheless shed considerable light on what all this festival might have entailed and when it might have been initiated.



The Acropolis c. 2nd century CE, Map by John Travlos (1971, p. 71), illustrating likely destinations for the torch-races run in honour of Athena and Pan. The Atheneia likely concluded at the Altar of Athena, at least until the Parthenon was largely completed, in 438. In the bottom right corner is the Theatre of Dionysos where the *Prometheia* trilogy premiered, likely between 440 and 435 BCE.

The mention of the *Prometheia* in associate with the liturgies of the *chorêgia* and/or the *triêrarchia* by Lysias, the Pandionis inscription, and Isaeus is telling. The *chorêgia* was one of the most expensive regular or encyclical liturgies in Athens, and acting as a *chorêgós* entailed covering large expenses that usually ranged between 20 and 50 minae (Mason, 1870, p. 277). The office of the *triêrarchia*, by comparison, was one of the most expensive of the extraordinary wartime liturgies, and serving as a *triêrarchós* entailed covering even larger expenses that usually ranged from 40 to 60 minae (Whiston, 1870). Due to the heavy expenses involved in carrying out these liturgical duties, eligibility to serve in these offices was restricted to members of 'the three hundred' (*triakosiois*), an association of the very wealthiest Athenian citizens. The mention of the *chorêgia* and *triêrarchia* in close association with the duty of the *gymnasiarchos* responsible for hosting the *Prometheia*, thus lends credence to the notion that it, too, was one

of the most expensive torch-race festivals in Athens; and also, too, that it was the single most expensive aspect of fulfilling the office of the gymnasiarchia, the other duties of which would have included the not inconsiderable expenses of maintaining the gymnasium and palestra, the single greatest ongoing expense of which entailed supplying its public baths with oil.

There were three main gymnasiums in Athens: the Lyceum, the Cynosarge, and the Academia; each named for the large groves of trees in which they were located. Of these, the Academy was the largest and most advantageously situated, and the only one known to have formed the starting point for the Athenian torch-races. This situation might at least partially explain the hostility Aristotle expresses toward the torch-races as a waste of money (*Politics* 5.8), as his philosophical school was housed in the Lyceum. In any case, the Prometheia ranked among the most expensive and prestigious public liturgies in classical Athens. The twelve minae that Lysias mentions it having cost him to stage the Prometheia works out to approximately \$30,000 worth of purchasing power in current US dollars (Sterrett, 1901, p. 417), though precise equivalents to modern currency are, of course, difficult to make.<sup>41</sup> In any event, it is clear that staging the Prometheia festival entailed considerable expenditure, and was likely one of the most costly and elaborate of the torch-race festivals, rivaled in this regard only by the Bendideia. More than likely, the extraordinary expenses associated with these two festivals stemmed from similar causes – namely, the cost of hosting a large public feast – as twelve minae would have been far more than was needed to feed, equip and train runners for the event. The remainder likely provided for the purchase of cattle for performing the ritual sacrifice – perhaps even a true hecatomb, as with the Bendideia – and for the provision of a public feast, these being the necessary elements for reenacting the essential role of Prometheus as depicted in Hesiod. Boecke (1857, p. 607) estimates the cost of feasting a tribe with two thousand guests at seven minae, assuming a conservative cost of 2 oboli apiece.

The heavy expenses associated with the gymnasiarchies responsible for staging festivals involving torch-races are also acknowledged by several other writers. In Pseudo-Andocides, the speaker (likely Phaeax) mentions the victories he gained in sponsoring a torch race (*lampádi*) in combination with those he won in the tragic and athletic competitions (*Against Alcibiades*, 42). The events referred to in this oration occur sometime around 415 BCE; however, it is also thought to be a literary oration, the composition of which dates to sometime in the early 4<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Twelve minae of silver, for instance, would have weighed 5.190 kg, which is worth the modern equivalent of approximately USD \$4,152.00, given its current price of approximately USD \$800.00 per kg. Greek rowers on triremes earned one drachma (1/100 minae), or 4.325 g of silver per day.

century BCE (Antiphon, Andocides, & Maidment, 1982 (1st publ. 1941), pp. 534-9). As a result of the author's temporal remoteness from the events he depicts, certain aspects of the speech, such as its portrayal of the legal procedures of ostracism, are inaccurate. Its reference to Phaeax's sponsorship of a torch-race, therefore, must also be regarded with some suspicion. In an oration of Isaeus that Edwards dates to 365/4 or 364/3 (Edwards, 2007, p. 100), by comparison, the speaker mentions a certain Chaerestratus, who is counted among the three hundred, and has been a trierarch and a choregus, as well as a gymnasiarch for the torch-races (Philoctemon 6.60). Aristotle, for his part, condemns the extraordinarily high expenses incurred by at least the last two of these liturgies, writing that "it is better to prevent men from undertaking costly but useless public services like equipping choruses and torch-races [*lampadarchias*] and all other similar services, even if they wish to;" (*Politics* 5.8, trans. Rackham). The high cost of staging a torch-race is thus corroborated in all three of these authors, although they make no mention of to which torch-race they are referring in particular. Given that the Prometheia and the Bendideia are the only torch-races specifically described as entailing heavy expenditure, and that the costs of staging the Bendideia were largely covered by Thracians resident in Athens, the several references by Pseudo-Andocides, Isaeus and Aristotle to the high cost of staging torch-race festivals may be reasonably assumed to refer to the Prometheia.

Given the evidence presented above, an educated guess may be hazarded regarding the nature of the Prometheia and the relation of this festival to the *Prometheia* trilogy. Given the extraordinary expenses that is acknowledged were involved in staging this festival, it seems likely that it was initiated not long before the events it is first mentioned in association with, by Lysais (21.3) in 405/4 and in *Against Alcibiades* (42) set in 415 BCE. These dates do nothing to contradict the hypothesis that the inauguration of the Prometheia festival was marked by the premiere of the *Prometheia* trilogy, sometime between 440 and 435 BCE; and, in fact, they lend considerable support to this conjecture. This evidence also lends credence to the hypothesis of Westphal, that the *Prometheia* trilogy celebrated the apotheosis of Prometheus and his acceptance into the pantheon of the gods worshipped by the Athenians (1869, pp. 218-9). This hypothesis is further corroborated by the survey conducted in part one, which found that Prometheus is never portrayed as a god in archaic Greek myth, but is rather consistently portrayed as the first priest and/or the first man.

The *Prometheia* trilogy is also the first work to explicitly name Prometheus as a Titan god (Desmôtês 427), as opposed to being a son of a Titan, Iapetus, as in Hesiod (*Theogony* 507-510). Aside from Hesiod, virtually all archaic depictions of Prometheus are made by Doric authors, or authors known to have been exposed to Dorian influences, such as Sappho and Aeschylus. Prometheus is utterly absent, by contrast, in the quintessential Ionic author, Homer, where Hephaestus primarily represents the cultural inheritance of the proto-Promethean Indo-European fire-god. These factors strongly point to the Doric provenance of the Promethean myth; a theory is further supported by the fact that the Doric spelling of Prometheus – *Promatheús* – (demonstrated in chapter 3, on the Hesiodic Prometheus) most closely represents the original, archaic Indo-European form of his name (\*Pramathys). Taken together, all these factors lend a cumulative credence to the idea that the *Prometheia* trilogy in general, and Lyomenos in particular, marks the definitive elevation of Prometheus to divine status, and his acceptance into the pantheon of gods to be worshipped by the Athenians. Even more important, though, for the purposes of this chapter, Prometheus' acceptance into the pantheon of the Athenians is really a mythologised representation of the acceptance of Protagorean philosophy as the dominant ideology of Periclean Athens.



## Chapter 9 – The Recovery of Protagorean Wisdom from the *Prometheia* Trilogy

Protagoras: "[W]hich of two ways shall I present my demonstration [*èpideíxô*] to you: as an elder to younger [men], by telling a story [*mũthon*], or shall I expound an argument [*lógô*]?"

Plato, *Protagoras* 320c, trans. Craig

The single most significant finding of part two of this dissertation is that the *Prometheia* trilogy enshrines Protagorean ideas in mythic form. The most apparent manifestation of this Protagorean influence is found in *the* central *èpeísodos* of the trilogy, in the definitive account of what Prometheus did for humans (Desmôtês 447-506). This account relates the central role of mind and reason in the historical development of civilized human existence through the development and application of a wide array of technical knowledge. Prometheus' gift of fire is thereby transformed into having placed mind and reason in humans, and discovered all human skill and science. As both Guthrie (1971) and West (1979, p. 147) note, this extended account of what Prometheus did for humans likely derives from Protagoras' lost book, *On the Original State of Man*. Stephanie West (1994) furthermore demonstrates the pervasive presence of oriental influences, as found in Semitic myth, in Desmôtês.

What the analysis of this part has further revealed is twofold: first, that the elevation of Prometheus' gift of fire, to having placed mind and reason in humans, also points to the presence of Zoroastrian religious influences; and second, that Protagoras' influence on the *Prometheia* trilogy is not limited to Prometheus' account of what he did for humans in the central *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês, but rather suffuses the entire structure and action of the trilogy. This is particularly true of the overall structure of the trilogy, which graphically depicts the seemingly unequal conflict between Power and Wisdom, as well as the process of their subsequent reconciliation. Due to the lack of authenticated texts known to have been authored by Protagoras, much of the philological evidence for his influence on the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy as a whole has had to be inferred from parallels to thinkers known to have influenced the great sophist, such as Heraclitus and other Ionian philosophers, or from parallels in authors whom he is known to have influenced, such as Sophocles and other Attic dramatists.

In order to more positively establish the degree of Protagorean influence on the *Prometheia* trilogy, chapter 7 examined the mythographical, philological and philosophical evidence of the following elements of Desmôtês: the genealogical elevation of Prometheus to godhood; the philanthropic way of Prometheus; the elevation of Hope to Prometheus' second gift to humans;

the subjugation of Zeus to Necessity, Fate and the Furies; the secret of Zeus' downfall; and the designation of Prometheus as a sophist. Each of these elements has been closely analysed with an eye to establishing parallels to the thought of Protagoras, based on what we know of him from his writings, his portrayals in ancient literature, his cultural influences, and authors he is known to have influenced. Considered in isolation, each of these parallels would not seem to present a sufficient criterion for determining the influence of Protagoras. Taken together, though, the many coincidences outlined above may be seen to cumulatively point to the decisive influence his ideas exercised on the composition of the trilogy as a whole, particularly with regard to the mortality of Zeus and the pivotal role that Prometheus the philanthropic sophist performs in preserving his power.

In closing, no small amount of admiration must be expressed for the *Prometheia* poet for adapting a traditional Indo-European mythic figure and seamlessly blending it with such a wide range of source material, including: chthonic Athenian myths, Semitic myth, Sumerian history, Persian religious precepts, and Ionian natural science. As West observes:

The poet was something of a polymath, with an interest in mythology of the synoptic kind as represented by Hesiodic poetry and the logographers, and in geography, ethnography, and the history of culture. (1979, pp. 146-7)

In light of the findings of this part, though, one is left gaping in astonishment, not only at the pervasive influence Protagoras exercised on the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy, but at his unqualified success in inscribing his philosophy upon the public consciousness of Athens.

Not only did Protagoras quickly become a member of Pericles' trusted advisors upon his arrival in Athens in the early 440s; he also furnished the political theory that framed the democratic ideology of Periclean Athens, by persuasively arguing how all civilised men partake in justice. Not only did Protagoras serve as a primary conduit for transmitting the scientific ideals of Ionian philosophy; he also conveyed the progressive notion of human history, embedded in Zoroastrian religion and Semitic myth and a Sumerian historical framework, that constituted the official ideology of the Persian empire. Not only did Pericles commission Protagoras to write the laws for the Pan-Hellenic colony at Thurii; he also commissioned Phidias to have the great sophist's ideas on the origins of the gods and civilised society carved into the very stone of the East Frieze of the Parthenon, as demonstrated by Mark (1984). Not only did Protagoras reform Athenian understanding of the gods; his concept of a beneficent god who cares for humans, as personified by Prometheus, became the enlightened standard for

considerations of god, period, among both poets (Euripides, *Suppliants* 201-13) and philosophers (cf. Plato, *Republic* 379a). Not only did Protagoras have his ideas dramatised in one of the greatest stage spectacles of his day, with strong associations to Aeschylus; he also managed to have those ideas perpetually celebrated through the inauguration of a major annual public festival in Athens, the Prometheia. This festival not only entailed a spectacular torch-race, likely run from the Academy to the Prytaneum, symbolising the creation and transmission of human knowledge; it was also likely followed by a sumptuous feast that celebrated the bounty that came in the wake of Prometheus' gift, as expressed in *Desmôtês*. And finally, not only did Protagoras establish Prometheus as the epitome of the sophist; he also managed to have the old Doric fire-thief and trickster elevated to the status of godhood and inducted into the Pantheon of gods worshipped by the Athenians.

Taken together, the *Prometheia* trilogy graphically depicts the inherent conflict between power and wisdom, as well as the possibility of a resolution of that conflict. Despite the attempts of Wisdom to conduct its business in secret, it runs afoul of Power and is bound in punishment. In the long run, though, Power requires Wisdom in order to preserve itself against the forces of Necessity. After Wisdom is freed through heroic struggle, it graciously saves Power from the processes of becoming. As a reward, Power elevates the status of Wisdom and creates a permanent place of honour for it in the *polis*. Translating this framework onto the action of the trilogy: Prometheus the sophist, the transmitter of wisdom, is moved by his philanthropic way and the deplorable state of primitive humanity to secretly steal fire from the wheel of the sun, likely with the secret assistance of Athena, and to give it to humans. This brings him into inexorable conflict with the tyranny of Zeus, whose misanthropy and love of the gods lead him to desire the extermination of humanity so as to establish a new, divine race of his own making in its place. Prometheus is bound in punishment, but is released after legally fulfilling the absolute condition laid down by Zeus, who cannot lie: that a god be found willing to give up his immortality and descend into Hades. Despite this seemingly impossible condition, Prometheus does eventually win his lawful release through the actions of Zeus' heroic son, Herakles. After his release, though, Prometheus demonstrates consummate grace toward his erstwhile antagonist by informing Zeus that his impending union with Thetis will result in the birth of a son who will cast him down from power. Prometheus is thereafter honoured by the Olympians, though only after expiating his previous defiance of Zeus by voluntarily taking on a symbolic punishment that Prometheus himself proposes: to wear a wreath of withy, ostensibly for three

interrelated reasons: to expiate his sin of defying Zeus, to commemorate his past bondage, and as to pledge his future fealty to the king of heaven. In reality, though, this wreath of submission is a crown of victory, for Athena's wreathing of Prometheus at the end of Luómenos symbolises nothing less than a solemn covenant between Power and Wisdom; a union thereafter annually celebrated in Athens with the elaborate staging of a torch-race festival.

## Endnotes to Part II

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<sup>i</sup> On the subject of hope, Semonides of Amorgos (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century) writes:

everybody feeds on hope [èlpis] and trust  
throughout his vain endeavours. (fr. 1.6-7, trans. West)

Solon (c.638-558), by comparison, also reflects this negative assessment of hope where he writes:

Whether of low or high degree, we mortals think  
our various vanities are running well  
until some blow falls; then we moan. But up to then  
we take fond pleasure in our empty hopes [èlpisi]. (fr. 13.33-6, trans. West)

Solon gives a similarly disparaging assessment of hope in fragment 34. Theognis of Megara (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century), too, disparagingly writes about hope:

Don't help an exile, Cynus, hoping [èlpídi] for reward.  
Even back home he's not the man he was. (333-4, trans. West)

A host of other poetic passages pseudonymously attributed to Theognis also mention hope, mostly in disparaging terms (cf. 637, 639, 823). This negative assessment is continued into the early 5<sup>th</sup> century by Simonides of Ceos (c.556-468), who writes:

Therefore I will not waste my allotted span  
of life in vain and insubstantial hope [èlpída],  
trying to find what is not possible,  
a perfect human soul, of all  
of us who cull the broad earth's fruits –  
I'll tell you if I do.

(542.13-8, trans. West)

Significantly, Plato has Protagoras quote two slightly earlier passages from this same poem. In the first, he quotes Simonides as saying: "Whereas a good man truly it is hard to become, In hands and feet and mind foursquare, fashioned without blame" (339b). In the second, he quotes Simonides' citation of a saying of Pittacus (c.640-568), one of the Seven Sages of Greece: "that being good was *difficult*." (*Protagoras* 339c, trans. Craig) Simonides then concludes that, since it is truly hard to become good, and that only a god can be good, that he will not waste his time trying to find a perfectly good man. Simonides criticism of hope is thus primarily directed at the unrealistically high expectations that often accompany it.

Pindar (c.522-443) refers to èlpis several times in his writings, where he portrays hope as being bound to disappointment (*Nemean* 1.32), and expectation as being too hesitant when the circumstance warrants it (*Nemean* 11.22). Only the hopes granted by the gods does Pindar deem worthwhile (*Pythian* 2.49, 3.111). One of Pindar's more disparaging critiques of hope occurs in a *Nemean Ode* where he contrasts hope with forethought:

And thus the race of mortal men is led by Fate [moira].  
But no clear sign comes to mortals from Zeus.  
Nevertheless we embark on bold endeavors, longing for many deeds,  
for our limbs are bound by shameless hope [èlpídi],  
while the streams of foresight [promatheias] lie far away.

*Nemean Ode* 11, 42-6, trans. Race

Not only does Pindar consider hope shameless, then, he also views it "as reckless and dangerous, as opposed to foresight" (Dauenhauer, 1985, p. 457). Hope can spur one to action, but it also tends to

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distract from rational consideration of future prospects. It is thus the very antithesis of forethought, which Pindar renders with the characteristically Dorian word form, *promatheías*. In each of the authors cited above from the 7<sup>th</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, then, a consistently negative assessment is given of *èlpis*. In Homer and Hesiod, hope is deluded, hapless and closely associated with the evils that afflict men. In Semonides, Solon, Theognis, Simonides and Pindar, by comparison, hope is portrayed as a vain, empty, insubstantial and shameless thing that only serves to distract one from facing up to the hard realities of life and coming to a better understanding of one's fate.

While overall attitudes toward Hope are almost uniformly negative among archaic Greece poets, a few more favourable attitudes also begin to emerge sometime in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these more positive reassessments are found in more popular works composed for recitation at *symposia*. Among the anonymous *Theognidea*, for instance, is a lyric poem that praises Hope as a beneficial god in the following terms:

Hope [*Èlpis*] is the only good god now among mankind:  
the rest have left us and gone off to heaven.  
The mighty goddess Trust [*Pístis*] is gone, Restraint [*Sôphrosúnê*] is gone,  
and Charity's [*Chárités*] departed from the earth.  
No longer can you trust in men's judicial oaths,  
and nobody respects the immortal gods;  
the moral man's a vanished breed; morality  
and ancient law are recognized no more.  
But while a man still lives and sees the sun still shine,  
if he's religious, let him look to Hope [*èlpída*].  
Let him pray to the gods and burn his offerings  
honouring Hope [*Èlpídi*] in first place and in last.  
(1135-46, trans West)

The anonymous *Theognidea* is a collection of 1,400 verses spuriously attributed to the elegiac poet, Theognis of Megara (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE), that accounts for more than half of the extant elegiac poetry of Greece composed before the Alexandrian period (Highbarger, 1927, p. 170). As a whole, this pseudonymous collection "may be taken as a representative cross-section of the elegiac poetry written for sympotic and other social settings in the sixth and early fifth century." (West, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, 1993, p. xv)

Another more positive early 5<sup>th</sup> century re-assessment of Hope is found in a fable attributed to Aesop (c.620-564 BCE), titled 'Zeus and the Jar of Good Things'. In it, Zeus is said to have put "all good things" in a huge wine jar [*píthos*] and given it to men. Being overly curious, men open the lid and all the good things fly up to the gods, leaving only hope (*èlpis*) behind. The 'moral' at the end of the fable then relates how, "*hope [èlpis] alone remains with men, and promises them the good things which have fled.*" (trans. Temple) Given its allusion to the wine jar, this fable is an obvious counterpoint to Hesiod's overtly negative depiction of hope. If it is authentic, or contemporary to Aesop, as seems likely, its existence lends credence to the hypothesis that a wider cultural reappraisal of the more positive attributes of Hope was beginning to emerge in Greece in the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. On the other hand, though, this somewhat faint praise may be ironic, as there is nothing to indicate that hope ever delivers on its promise of the good things.

At the same time, Hope also receives a more positive assessment from one of the most influential of the Pre-Socratic philosophers, Heraclitus (c.535-c.475). In a fragment preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 2.17.4), Heraclitus writes:

Whoever does not hope for the unexpected, will discover nothing, for the known way is an impasse  
[*èàn mê èlpétai ànélpiston, ouk èzeurêsei, ànezereúnêton èòn kai*].

(trans. by author based on Robinson (Heraclitus & Robinson, *Fragments - A Text and Translation with a Commentary*, 1987) Fr. 18, Haxton (Heraclitus, 2001) Fr. 7, and Freeman (1948) Fr. 18)

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In this passage, then, Heraclitus takes the highly unusual approach of portraying expectation, or hope, in a highly positive epistemological light; as being the critical factor for opening new ways of knowing not yet even imagined, expected or hoped for, and without which the further advance of inquiry is blocked. In another fragment, also quoted by Clement (*Stromata* 4.144.3), Heraclitus also refers to Hope in terms of its relation to expectations of death:

There await people when they die things they neither hope for nor <even> imagine.  
[*ânthroôpous ménei àpothanóntas ässa oukè èlpontai ouðè dokéousin*].

(trans. by author based on Robinson (Heraclitus & Robinson, *Fragments - A Text and Translation with a Commentary*, 1987) Fr. 27, and Haxton (Heraclitus, 2001) Fr. 122)

This fragment is somewhat more ambiguous in its wording and tone, but overall it may be seen to sound a positive note in terms of holding out the hope for an afterlife previously un hoped for. In this sense, then, Heraclitus comes much closer in his usage of *èlpís* than even pseudo-Theognis or Aesop to the context of its use in Desmôtês, to describe the hope Prometheus gives to men to cure them of the illness of their expectations of death.

<sup>ii</sup> In *Persians* (produced in 472) Darius speaks of the vain hopes [*kenaîsin èlpísin*] of attempting to maintain the Persian army in Greece after the battle of Salamis (804). In *Seven Against Thebes* (produced in 467), by comparison, the Chorus of Theban Maidens, in a passage laced with irony, speak of the expectation [*èlpís*] of young women taken captive in war (367). In this particular instance, then, the aspect of *elpis* as simply meaning 'expectation,' rather than 'hope,' is especially clear. And near the beginning of *Suppliant Women* (produced in 463), the Chorus of Danaïdes speak of how Zeus hurls mankind from its "high-towering hopes [*èlpídôn àph' úpsipúrgôn*]" to utter destruction (96-7).

By far the most frequent references to *èlpís* among Aeschylus' surviving plays occur in *Agamemnon*, the first play of the last trilogy he wrote, the *Oresteia*, produced in 458. Near the beginning of the play, the Chorus of Argive Elders remark to Klytemnestra that, "hope [*èlpís*], shining with kindly light from the sacrifices, wards off the biting care of the sorrow that gnaws my heart." (101-2, trans. Smyth) Soon after, the Chorus asks her for news of the Achaean army, noting how she makes "sacrifice with hopes [*èlpísin*] that herald gladness," (262) to which she replies: "You shall hear joyful news surpassing all your hopes [*èlpídos*] – the Argives have taken Priam's town." (265-6, trans. Smyth) Later, a Herald from one of the remnants of the returning Achaean army arrives and announces to the Argive Elders: "Many hopes [*èlpídôn*] have shattered," and the only one he has seen fulfilled is that he will die in Argos with proper burial rites (505). A little further on, the Herald also comments that "there is some hope [*èlpís*]" that Menelaus will return home (679).

After *Agamemnon* finally arrives home, he describes to the Argive Elders how, when the gods cast ballots over the fate of Ilium, Hope [*èlpís*] alone drew near the urn of acquittal (817). A little further on, Klytemnestra duplicitously hails the newly arrived *Agamemnon*, comparing him to "land glimpsed at by men at sea beyond their hope [*èlpída*]" (899). Seeing foreboding signs of what's about to happen, the Chorus Leader of Argive Elders remarks that his soul "cannot wholly win its customary confidence of hope [*èlpídos*]" (994) and prays that his "expectation [*èlpídos*]" turns out false (999). After she kills *Agamemnon*, Klytemnestra tells the Elders that, having avenged her husband for the death of her child, hope [*èlpís*] does not tread the halls of fear for her (1434). And Aegisthus, finally, in reference to Orestes, tells the Chorus that "exiles feed on hope [*èlpídas*]." (1668) In *Agamemnon*, then, many characters with little reason to hope describe shattered hopes, hold out hope as a deception, or are beguiled by false hopes.

In the second play of the *Oresteia* trilogy, *Libation Bearers*, *èlpís* is mentioned only twice. In the first episode, Electra, laments the exile of her brother, Orestes, and despairs of his return with the words: "Ah no, hope [*èlpídos*] but flatters me." (194) Her disparagement of hope is unjustified in this instance, though, for moments later, Orestes does appear. In the second episode, by comparison, the Chorus of Slave-Women tell the Nurse who raised Orestes that changes are afoot, to which she responds: "But how can that be? Orestes, the hope [*èlpís*] of our house, is gone." (776) In *Libation Bearers*, then, Electra

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disparages hope for deceiving her, even though it is justified; and the Nurse interprets the absence of Orestes as the absence of hope, even though it is unjustified. Overall, then, Aeschylus may be seen to have been highly ambivalent toward the concept of hope. In his earlier plays, various characters lament hope as vain, bitter and hubristic. In *Agamemnon*, by comparison, many characters are deluded by hope, have their hopes dashed, or have hopeful expectations where none are warranted. And in *Libation Bearers*, finally, characters dismiss hopes that later turn out to be justified. As may be seen from this survey of the concept of hope in Aeschylus, then, it is unlikely that Euphorion derived precedents for his depiction of Hope in *Desmôtês* from models found in the works of his father. In order to find where Euphorion derived his precedent for his conception of hope, we must look elsewhere.

<sup>iii</sup> *Antigone*, *Ajax* and *Women of Trachis* are thought to be among the earliest of Sophocles' extant plays. In *Ajax*, the great warrior, Ajax, second only to Achilles for prowess in battle, repudiates the "glow of empty hopes [*èlpísin*]," (478) preferring instead to live or die with honour, after Agamemnon awards the armor of Achilles to Odysseus. Later in the play, the Chorus of Salaminian Sailors express their "anxious expectation [*èlpíd'*]" of making the "journey to Hades the abhorred, the unseen." (606) Near the end of the play, after Ajax kills himself in despondency, Odysseus asks and receives Agamemnon's permission to bury the great warrior's body with full honorary rites. To this, Ajax's half-brother, Teucer, remarks that Odysseus has greatly belied his expectations [*èlpídos*] (1382).

In *Trachiníea*, by comparison, the Chorus of the Women of Trachis address Deianeira, the wife of Herakles, who's away fighting a battle. They advise her not to: "wear away fair hope [*èlpída*]" (125), and to always regard his safety with "hope [*èlpísin*]; for who has seen Zeus so lacking in counsel for his children?" (136) Later, Deianeira, from fear of losing Herakles, attempts to charm him with a cloak made from the blood of the centaur, Nessus. After sending him the cloak, though, she remarks: "I have a foreboding that I'll be shown to have done great harm when I hoped [*èlpídos*] to do good." (667) Shortly thereafter, the Chorus remarks "When the plans themselves are bad, there can be no expectations [*èlpís*] that leave any place for courage." (726) Having heard that Herakles is dying from the ill effects of the cloak, finally, Deianeira kills herself; to which the Chorus remarks that, while they can see her in the house, they still await the dying Herakles in "expectation [*èlpísin*]" (951).

Among Sophocles' earliest extant plays, *Antigone* is the only one for which the date of its premiere is known to any degree of certainty. Both Grene (1991, p. 1) and Fagles (1984, p. 35) agree that it was first produced in 441 BCE or slightly before, when Sophocles was probably fifty-four. These conjectured dates are based on the ancient testimony of an anonymous biographer, that Sophocles was appointed as one of the generals in charge of an expedition to put down a revolt in Samos in 441, shortly after the premiere of the play (Smith, 1867, p. 867). *Antigone* is set in the immediate aftermath of the deadly Theban civil war fought between the sons of Oedipus: Eteocles and Polyneices. Attempting to bring order to this chaotic situation, the new king, Creon, remarks on how the hope [*èlpídon*] of gain has ruined men (221). Shortly after, a Guard delivers disturbing news: contrary to Creon's command, someone has administered burial rites on the body of the rebel prince, Polyneices. Expecting to be punished for being the bearer of bad news, the Guard remarks that he clutches one hope [*èlpídos*]: that he will suffer nothing except what is fated [*mórsimon*] (235-6). After Creon leaves without punishing him, the Guard further remarks: "I never hoped [*èlpídos*] to escape, never thought I could," (330, trans. Grene). Up to this point, then, Sophocles references to hope in *Antigone* follow a familiar pattern found in his other early plays, as well as among most of his contemporaries, where hope is considered either empty, vain and ill-informed, or a fearful expectation.

While Sophocles follows familiar patterns of usage for *èlpís* in the opening segments of *Antigone*, a much different attitude emerges in the first *stasimon* of the play, where the Chorus of Theban Elders presents the much celebrated 'Ode to Man'. Toward the end of this remarkable passage, the Elders describe the ingenuity of humans as being beyond all hope or expectation:

He [mankind] has a way against everything  
and he faces nothing that is to come  
without any contrivance.



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Only against death [Hades]  
can he call on no means of escape;  
but escape from hopeless [*àmêchánôn*] diseases  
he has found in the depth of his mind [*sophón*].  
With some sort of cunning [*mêchanóen*], inventive [*téchnas*]  
beyond all expectation [*èlpíd'*]  
he reaches sometimes evil, and sometimes good. (359-367, trans. Grene)

This reference to hope is highly significant, for a couple of related reasons. To begin with, it is one of the only instances in the early plays of Sophocles where he has a character refer to hope in something other than a pejorative or neutral sense. Admittedly, in having the Chorus declare that man sometimes achieves evil as well as good, beyond all expectation, Sophocles does somewhat qualify this relatively optimistic reappraisal of hope. However, the very location of this reappraisal, at the conclusion of the Ode to Man, is significant in its own right. For reasons spelled out below, where Prometheus' speech on what he did for humans is examined, Sophocles' Ode to Man has Protagorean fingerprints all over it.

Hope is mentioned two more times in *Antigone*. After Antigone, the pious daughter of Oedipus, is discovered to have been the one performing burial rites on Polyneices, she is sentenced to die by being buried alive in a tomb beneath the earth. In this way, her fate may be seen to parallel that of Prometheus at the end of *Desmôtês*, where he is also buried beneath the Earth, cast into a chasm leading to Tartarus by the tyrant Zeus. Haines has noticed the presence of this and numerous other parallels between *Antigone* and *Desmôtês*; noting, for instance that "Creon and Antigone correspond in conception closely with Zeus and Prometheus." (Haines, 1915, p. 9) The motif of Zeus hurling Prometheus into Tartarus is also completely unprecedented in the traditional archaic accounts of the Promethean myth. With respect to the action of *Antigone*, just before Creon's servants seal her tomb, Antigone laments:

Tomb, bridal chamber, prison forever  
dug in rock, it is to you I am going  
to join my people, that great number that have died,  
whom in the death Persephone received.  
I am the last of them and I go down  
in the worst death of all – for I have not lived  
the due term of my life. But when I come  
to that other world my hope [*èlpísín*] is strong  
that my coming will be welcome to my father,  
and dear to you, my mother, and dear to you,  
my brother deeply loved. (891-9, trans. Grene)

Antigone's expression of strong hope [*èlpísín*] that she will soon join her family in Hades is rather unusual in the context early Greek literature. It is also one of the very few references to the expression of hope in the blessings of an afterlife in Greek literature contemporary to the *Prometheia* trilogy. This coincidence raises the possibility of a common influence on Sophocles and Euphorion in terms of the blessings that hope in an afterlife brings to those doomed to die. Near the end of *Antigone*, finally, the Chorus of Theban Elders say they are inclined to hope [*èlpísín*] that the Queen, Eurydice, will keep private the lamentations for her son, Haemon, who kills himself after discovering his beloved Antigone dead.

So intrigued was Sophocles by the themes raised in *Antigone* that he subsequently composed two more 'Theban' plays over the course of his long career. *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus Colonos* are the first and second plays, respectively, in the dramatic chronology of the 'Theban trilogy'. *Tyrannus* was composed some 14 or 15 years after the premiere of *Antigone* (Grene, 1991, p. 1); i.e. in the early 420s, during the earliest stages of the Peloponnesian War, making it the only play extant from Sophocles' middle period. In the opening of *Tyrannus*, a plague afflicts Thebes, a situation that closely paralleled current events in Athens at that time. Oedipus, the king of Thebes, who won his crown by solving the riddle of the Sphinx, receives his brother-in-law, Creon, who's just returned from Delphi where he asked the Oracle: what is causing the plague to linger in their city? He reports that the god told him that the

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plague was caused by the pollution of the unpunished murder of the previous king of Thebes, Laius. Creon further reports that only one witness of this crime survives, and he recalls only one thing clearly. To which Oedipus interjects:

What was it?  
If we could even find a slim beginning  
in which to hope [ἐλπίδος], we might discover much. (120-1, trans. Grene)

Oedipus declares his intention to solve the crime, shortly after which the Chorus of Old Men sing the praises of Pytho in the *parados*. Still in fear of what doom might come to pass, they ask what debt the "Delian Healer" will extract, beseeching her: "Speak to me, immortal voice, child of golden Hope [Ἐλπίδος]." (156-7) In thus personifying Hope as the mother of the Delphic Oracle, Sophocles may be seen to hearken to its origins of the Pythian priestesses in the chthonic cult of Earth-worshippers, the prophetic rituals of which usually included a descent into the earth via a cave or tomb, and re-emergence with the prophecy told to them by mother Earth. As was seen in chapter three, this motif is also referenced by Hesiod, who depicts Hope as emerging from a large earthenware storage jar [πίθος] (*Works & Days* 96) that his audience would have understood to have been buried in the earth. In Desmôtês, by comparison, Prometheus also attributes his power of prophecy to his mother, *Ge* (cf. 212-3, 873-4).

In the first episode of *Tyrannus*, the blind seer, Teiresias, appears and informs Oedipus that he himself is the very murderer he seeks. Teiresias is in many ways the epitome of the seer or prophet (*mántis*) in Greek myth. A few slightly varying stories tell of how Teiresias was blinded. In one version, he is said to have been "blinded by the gods because he revealed their secrets to men." (Apollodorus 3.6.7, trans. Frazer) (Pseudo-) Apollodorus also cites Pherecydes (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) as having said that Teiresias was blinded by Athena after he saw her bathing naked. This story is told at greater length by Callimachus (310/305-240 BCE), also likely following Pherecydes, who has Athena explain that the laws of the gods inflict the penalty of blindness on anyone who beholds an immortal without his or her consent (*Baths of Pallas* 57-133). Teiresias is also the seer that Odysseus consults in Hades (*Odyssey* 11.90-137). A more earthly portrayal of the seer in his political role occurs in Homer's description of Kalchas, "who knew all the things that were, the things to come and the things past" (*Iliad* 1.70) Naturally, this comprehensive knowledge of things – how they were, are and will be – inexorably comes into conflict with political power. When king Agamemnon consults Kalchas to determine the cause of the plague afflicting the Achaean army, the seer must first garner the support of Achilles before offering his correct diagnoses: namely, Agamemnon's unjust treatment of Chryses, the priest of Apollo, in refusing to return his daughter, Chryseis, captured in war.

Returning to *Tyrannus*, the seer Teiresias and king Oedipus quarrel over his complicity in the murder of the previous king. After they exit the stage, the Chorus sings of how they are flustered in their foreboding [ἐλπίσιν], seeing neither the present nor the future clearly (486). After further investigation, Oedipus finds that Teiresias' diagnosis of the situation is, indeed, correct, and informs his wife, Jocasta. As it begins to dawn on Oedipus that Jocasta is also his mother, though, he says he will not keep what disquiets himself from her, since his "forebodings [ἐλπίδῶν] have advanced so far." (771) After Oedipus tells Jocasta his suspicion, they await the herdsman who witnessed the murder of king Laius. While they wait, the Chorus attempts to comfort Oedipus; saying that they, too, fear these things: "But until you see this man face to face and hear his story, hope [ἐλπίδα]." (835) To which Oedipus replies: "Yes, I have just this much of hope [ἐλπίδα] – to wait until the herdsman comes." (836) After the herdsman arrives and Oedipus' fears are confirmed – that he did, indeed murder his father and take his mother as a wife – he receives a conciliatory Creon, who states that he does not wish to kill him, as commanded by the oracle. Oedipus tells him that, since he's torn him from his "dreadful expectations [ἐλπίδος]," (1432) he should drive him out of the city and never allow his return.

The last of Sophocles' Theban plays, *Oedipus at Colonus*, was first produced in 401, 5 or 6 years after Sophocles' death, by his grandson, also named Sophocles. It is especially relevant to the subject of this dissertation, as it is the only one of Sophocles' extant plays that explicitly mentions Prometheus.<sup>iii</sup> Near the beginning of the play, Oedipus and Antigone rest in a grove outside Colonus, a town a mile northwest of Athens where Sophocles was born, and near the grove of the Academy. As they rest, they are

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approached by an Athenian Stranger who tells them to leave, as the ground they are on is sacred, it being possessed by the Eumenides, goddesses most dreadful, and daughters of Earth and Darkness. Upon hearing this, Oedipus declares that he will never leave this place (45); for, as he later discloses, Apollo once revealed to him that he would die at a place sacred to the "Dread Goddesses". Having arrived at his final resting place, then, Oedipus begs the Athenian Stranger to tell him, what exactly *is* this place upon which he has set foot? To which the Athenian Stranger replies: it is sacred ground held by Poseidon, and in which "dwells Prometheus the Titan, fire-bearing god." (56) The mythical setting of *Colonus* would thus seem to be some time after Poseidon contested Athena for the possession of Attica and lost (cf. Herodotus 8.55, Apollodorus 3.15.1, Pausanias 1.24.3, Hyginus *Fabulae* 164), and after Prometheus is cast into Tartarus at the end of Desmôtês, but before his re-emergence to the surface of the Earth. The grove at Colonus, sacred to the avenging Furies, thus constitutes both the consolation prize and burial ground of two vanquished gods.

Later in *Colonus*, Oedipus' other daughter, Ismene, arrives with news that Eteocles has seized the throne of Thebes from his elder brother, Polyneices, who is now gathering support from Argos to stage an attack on the city. After reporting these "terrible deeds [*êrga deiná*]", Ismene says to her father that she cannot "learn [*matheîn*]" at what point the gods will lament his tribulations; to which Oedipus rhetorically asks:

Did you really hope [*êlpíd'*] the gods would take any heed  
of me, enough some day to rescue me? (385-6, trans. Grene)

Near the end of the play, finally, a fierce thunderstorm erupts, which Oedipus interprets as a sign from Zeus of his impending death, and he wanders out into the storm to embrace his fate. Soon after, a messenger brings news of his death, which was directly witnessed only by Theseus, king of Athens. In Oedipus' final moment, he says,

[...] some messenger  
sent by the gods, or some power of the dead  
split open the fundament of the earth, with good will [*eünoun*],  
to give him painless entry. (1660-2, trans. Grene)

The parallels of this scene to the ending of Desmôtês are striking, with a chasm opening up in the Earth to swallow Oedipus, and even on the very hallowed ground in which Prometheus was reputedly buried. Near the very close of the play, finally, Antigone asks

Where shall we go, O Zeus?  
To what of hope [*êlpídôn*] now  
does the daemon drive us? (1748-1750)

The play then ends with Antigone and Ismene departing for Thebes in an attempt to prevent their brothers from killing one another; a task the audience already knows to be hopeless.

Sophocles makes reference to hope numerous times in his later works: *Philoctetes* (867, 882, 1091), first produced in 409, and *Electra* (306, 810, 834, 952, 958, 963, 1127, 1460). For the sake of economy, these works will not be examined in detail here. Suffice it to say, that *Colonus* is sufficiently representative of Sophocles' later, highly pessimistic views on hope, which generally lack the transcendent expression of the comforting hope in an afterlife, as found in *Antigone*. In stark contrast to Antigone's optimistic expression of hope that she will meet her family in Hades, the Chorus of the Elders of Colonus enunciates the most profoundly pessimistic philosophical appraisal of human existence in the face of Death in Doom:

Not to be born is best of all;  
when life is there, the second best  
to go hence where you came,  
with the best speed you may. (1125-9, trans. Grene)

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This remarkable statement is an obvious precursor of the more famous expression of pessimism in Aristotle's lost dialogue, *Eudemus*, preserved by Plutarch. In that work, King Midas captures the satyr Silenus and compels him to reveal what is best for man, to which he replies:

Thou seed of an evil genius and precarious offspring of hard fortune, whose life is but for a day, why dost thou compel me to tell thee those things it is better thou wert ignorant of? For those live the least disturbed who know not their misfortunes; but for men, the best for them is not to be born at all, nor to be made partakers of the most excellent nature; not to be is best for both sexes. This should have the first place in our choice; and the next to this is, when we are born, to die as soon as we can. (*Moralia*, 'Consolation to Apollonius', 115b-e, trans. Goodwin)

Oedipus is the wisest man in the world, the one who solved the intractable riddle of the Sphinx. And yet, even his superlative wisdom counted for nothing in the face of his inextricable fate. The best that mortal humans can hope for, having already been born, is to die a quick and painless death, as Oedipus was blessed enough to do. This strikingly pessimistic account is all the more jarring, given the relatively optimistic, albeit ambiguous, account of hope in *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

<sup>iv</sup> An ill-prepared Athenian naval expedition to the Peloponnese in 430, for instance, is frustrated in its hopes (*èlpída*) of taking the town of Epidaurus by assault (2.56.4). Thucydides also often depicts petitioners who express the hope that their pleas will be heard with favour. In 432, for instance, Sparta's allies express hope (*èlpídes*) that their criticism of its inaction in the face of Athenian aggression will be interpreted as the remonstrance of a friend, rather than the hostility of an enemy (1.69.5). The Mytilenians, by comparison, ask the Spartans in 428 not to frustrate the hopes (*èlpídas*) that the Hellenes have placed upon them, but rather to be their allies (3.14.1). After they surrender to the Spartans in 427, the Plataeans plead for their city to be spared, admitting that they are "reduced to doubt the stability of our only hope [*èlpís*], yourselves." (3.57.4) The Spartans raze the city, though, after it is determined that the Plataeans provided no aid to Sparta in the war. The Spartan commander in Sicily in 413, Gylippus, is also described as having been in hope (*èlpídi*) of "taking the Athenians by storm, after the result of the affair on Epipolae." (7.46) A hope that turned out to be entirely justified.

<sup>v</sup> After presenting the Melian rulers with an ultimatum to surrender, the Athenian delegates warn them against holding out any hopes that they can resist the Athenian army:

Hope [*èlpís*] danger's comforter, may be indulged in by those who have abundant resources, if not without loss at all events without ruin; but its nature is to be extravagant, and those who go so far as to put their all upon the venture see it in its true colors only when they are ruined; but so long as the discovery would enable them to guard against it, it is never found wanting. Let not this be the case with you, who are weak and hang on a single turn of the scale; nor be like the vulgar, who, abandoning such security as human means may still afford, when visible hopes [*èlpídas*] fail them in extremity, turn to invisible, to prophecies and oracles, and other such inventions that delude men with hopes [*èlpídôn*] to their destruction. (5.103, trans. Dent)

In this instance, then, the Athenian delegation does not just warn against foolish hope. Rather, they condemn all hope as a foolishness that only those with abundant resources can afford to indulge, and that inevitably reveals its true nature only in hindsight, after the people it has seduced are already ruined. And when visible hopes fail, some delude themselves even further with hopes fueled by superstitions that prevent them from taking the correct course of action, and thus usher them even more quickly to their destruction. The Melians reject the Athenian ultimatum, and, after their city is captured, its 500 male citizens are executed, and its women and children sold into slavery. This event, as bad as it was for the Melians, also had the effect of dashing Athenian hopes as it turned out, though; for the very brutality of the Athenian actions against Melos signaled the beginning of its imperial decline. The negative assessment of hope enunciated by the Athenian delegation may be seen to fit well with the somewhat hubristic outlook of Athenian leadership at the time, then at the height of their power.

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<sup>vi</sup> In the celebrated Ode to Man: that man has been successful beyond all hope in his cunning and inventiveness, although sometimes for good, and other times for evil (*Antigone* 366-7). Antigone's expressed hope in the face of her imminent death, that she will soon meet up with her family in Hades, is also highly unusual in the context of Sophocles' plays; particularly in his late works, such as the other two Theban plays, where a profound philosophical pessimism prevails that sees hope as deluded and giving birth to dread. The primary lesson of *Oedipus Tyrannus* would seem to be that the best one can possibly hope for in this life is to die a quick and painless death.

<sup>vii</sup> In Prometheus' extended account of what he did for humans in the second *èpeisodos*, he addresses the Chorus of Okeanides as follows:

What I did

For mortals in their misery, hear now. At first  
Mindless, I gave them mind and reason. – What I say  
Is not in censure of mankind, but showing you  
How all my gifts to them were guided by goodwill. –  
In those days they had eyes, but sight was meaningless;  
Heard sounds, but could not listen; all their length of life  
They passed like shapes in dreams, confused and purposeless.  
Of brick-built, sun-warmed houses, or of carpentry,  
They had no notion; live in holes, like swarms of ants,  
Or deep in sunless caverns; knew no certain way  
To mark off winter, or flowery spring, or fruitful summer;  
Their every act was without knowledge, till I came.  
I taught them to determine when stars rise or set –  
A difficult art. Number, the primary science, I  
Invented for them, and how to set down words in writing –  
The all-remembering skill, mother of many arts.  
I was the first to harness beasts under a yoke  
With trace or saddle as man's slaves, to take man's place  
Under the heaviest burdens; put the horse to the chariot,  
Made him obey the rein, and be an ornament  
To wealth and greatness. No one before me discovered  
The sailor's wagon – flax-winged craft that roam the seas.  
Such tools and skill I found for men: myself, poor wretch,  
Lack even one trick to free me from this agony.

(447-471, trans. Vellacott)

At this point, Prometheus' narrative is interrupted by the daughters of Okeanos, who meditate on his fate. They compare him to "a bad doctor [*kakos d' iatros*] fallen ill" who now despairs "of finding drugs [*pharmakois*] to cure [*iasimos*]" himself (474-5). In this way, the daughters both criticise and praise Prometheus: they criticise him for being somewhat worse in treating his own present woes, but also praise him by implicitly alluding to the effective drug – blind hopefulness – that cured humans of their despair in the face of their mortality. Picking up on the Daughters' reference to his role as a physician, Prometheus resumes his account of the many benefits his gift of fire has taught humanity, beginning with medicine:

Now hear the rest of what I have to tell, what crafts,  
What methods I devised – and you will wonder more.  
First in importance: if a man fell ill, he had  
No remedy, solid or liquid medicine,  
Or ointment, but for lack of drugs they pined away;  
Until I showed them how to mix mild healing herbs

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And so protect themselves against all maladies.  
Then I distinguished various modes of prophecy,  
And was the first to tell from dreams what Fate ordained  
Should come about; interpreted the hidden sense  
Of voices, sounds, sights met by chance upon the road.  
The various flights of crook-clawed vultures I defined  
Exactly, those by nature favourable, and those  
Sinister; how each species keeps its mode of life;  
What feuds, friendships, associations kind with kind  
Preserves; how to interpret signs in sacrifice,  
Smoothness of heart and lights, what colours please the gods  
In each, the mottled shapeliness of liver-lobes.  
The thigh-bones wrapped in fat, and the long chine, I burnt,  
Leading men on the highway of an occult art;  
And signs from flames, obscure before, I now made plain.

So much for prophecy. Next the treasures of the earth,  
The bronze, iron, silver, gold hidden deep down – who else  
But I can claim to have found them first? No one, unless  
He talks like a fool. So, here's the whole truth in one word:  
All human skill and science was Prometheus's gift.

(*Prometheus Bound*, 476-506, trans. Vellacott)

<sup>viii</sup> One of the most important parallels to the Protagorean account of the progressive nature of human history is contained the Ode to Man from Sophocles' *Antigone* (333-375). The supreme importance of this parallel primarily stems from its date of composition (c.441) which pre-dates West's conjectured dating of Desmôtês (c.440-c.435), but post-dates Protagoras' first stay in Athens, thereby more definitively pointing to a Protagorean influence. The Ode to Man has already been touched upon above in reference to its relatively novel conception of hope (*èlpís*), but its parallels to the novel Protagorean account of the progressive nature of human history stemming from the acquisition of knowledge go much further. In the Ode, the Chorus opens its praise by singing of how wonderful/terrible (*deinóteron*) Man is for having successfully met the many challenges posed by life through the mastery of various arts. The specific arts mentioned, in order they are presented, are: seafaring, agriculture, the domestication of animals, hunting, "speech [*phthégma*] and windswift thought [*ànemóen phrónêma*]", the impulse to "protect the city [*âstunómous*]", and building construction. The Chorus concludes this initial list of the technical arts with praise for the ingenuity of Man, saying: "He has a way against everything, and he faces nothing that is to come without contrivance." This is quickly followed by the admission that humans still have no means of escaping death, although they have managed to find, in the depths of their minds, an escape from diseases over which they had previously despaired. At this point, the Chorus speaks of how humans, "wise [*sophón*]" with "ingenious skill [*mêchanóen téchnas*] beyond all expectation [*èlpíd*]," attain sometimes good and sometimes evil (365-6). In the last stanza of the Ode, finally, the Chorus sings of how, if humans honour both the laws of the earth and the justice of the gods, their cities will thrive and be honoured.

The Protagorean influence on Sophocles' Ode to Man has long been recognized by scholars. Crane (1989, p. 109), for instance, remarks: "Clearly Protagoras, or at least Protagorean thinking, lies behind this 'Ode to Man.' The emphasis on man and lack of emphasis on the gods, the sense of human progress, and the stress on political skill all point to Protagoras." cf. (Morrison, 1941, pp. 13-14) (Burton, 1980, pp. 100-101) Scholars have also noted several parallels, as well as some contrasts, between the Ode to Man in *Antigone* and Prometheus' account of what he did for humankind in Desmôtês (White, 2001, pp. 113-4). Given the acknowledged influence of Protagoras on Sophocles' Ode to Man, as well as both the parallels and contrasts between the Ode to Man and Prometheus' account of what all he did for Man in Desmôtês,

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it would seem reasonable to assume that Protagoras was the common influence on both Sophocles and the *Prometheia* poet. Until recently, though, misconceptions and uncertainty over the dating and authorship of the *Prometheia* trilogy have prevented serious consideration of this possibility. (One of the main exceptions to the scholarly neglect of consideration of the influence of Protagoras on the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy is authored by Davison (1949), who builds upon the analysis of Schmid (1929), who notes the presence of distinctively sophistic influences in *Desmôtês*. Unfortunately, Davison, in his analysis, continues to operate from the premise that Aeschylus was the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and reconciles the anachronistic influence of Protagoras by positing an unattested scenario whereby the great sophist first visits Athens in the 460s.) Instead, the many close parallels between *Desmôtês* and *Antigone* have usually been resolved by positing that Aeschylus must have influenced Sophocles (Haines, 1915). With the Aeschylean authorship of *Desmôtês* having since been disproven by Griffin (1977) and its revised dating by West (1979) to between 440 and 435 BCE, though, it is now apparent that either the *Prometheia* poet was influenced by Sophocles, or that both were mutually influenced by Protagoras.

Ira Mark (1984) has also convincingly identified the decisive influence that Protagorean ideas exercised over the sculptor, Phidias (c.480-430 BCE), in his composition of the East Frieze of the Parthenon. Construction on the Parthenon commenced in 447, and it was largely completed in 438, by which time the East Frieze was also completed, although construction continued until 432. On the Frieze, fourteen gods are depicted, arranged in "divine groups that mirror the essential institutions of civilized society." (Mark, 1984, p. 312) The first of these groups depict Aphrodite as the mother of Eros, supported by Artemis, who collectively represent "the Olympians as protectors of the bearing and raising children" (302). The second group depicts Hera as bride and Zeus as consort with Nike, representing "the victory of marital union [and] the Olympians as the models for and protectors of marriage" (312). The third group depicts Hermes, Dionysos, and Demeter, patrons of the rural *technai* of animal husbandry, viticulture, and agriculture; Aries is linked with Demeter as war arises from and defends the appropriation of land. A fourth group depicts Athena and Hephaestus, patrons of the urban *technai* and metallurgy. A fifth group depicts Apollo, the patron of political *technê*, and Poseidon, the avenging punisher, which Mark interprets as the sole representative of an earlier, more primitive stage of human development, now aged and worn, given his depiction as an old man. Only here does Lampert challenge Mark's interpretation, arguing that, given the link with Apollo, Poseidon more likely represents "the other aspect of political *technê*, the justice of rational punishment attested by Protagoras himself in explaining" his Promethean mythos (2010, p. 62). While it is difficult to portray the idea of a society's historical evolution in a static sculpture, the grouping and contrast of these figures clearly point to just such an interpretation.

Similar parallels to the Protagorean conception of human progress are found in Euripides play, *Supplices*, first staged in 423. Near the beginning of the play, Adrastus, king of Argos, supplicates Theseus, king of Athens, on behalf of Argive mothers whose sons joined Polyneices' failed attempt to wrest control of Thebes by force from his brother, Eteocles,. These sons now lay unburied outside Thebes, as per Creon's orders; and now their mother's have come to beg for Athens' assistance in retrieving them for proper burial. The action of *Supplices* thus revolves around exactly the same issue as *Antigone*; namely, the conflict between political order and expressions of piety toward the gods, as illuminated by the issue of performing proper burial rites, even for those labeled traitors to the city. Upon hearing Adrastus' plea, Theseus opens his reply by noting that, while some people think "that mortals have more of bad than good", he holds the exact opposite view: "that mortals enjoy more good things than bad." (196-9, trans. Kovacs) In this respect, then, Theseus may be seen to express the philosophical optimism implicit in the progressive account of human history promulgated by Protagoras.

A further parallel to Prometheus' account of what all he did for humans is found in the subsequent praise Theseus gives to an un-named god (*theôn*) who, he says, "set our life in order [*diestathmêsato*], rescuing it from its confused [*pephurménou*] and brutish [*thêriôdous*] state." (202) Theseus goes on to explain that first this god put (*êntheis*) reason (*súnesin*) in us, and then "gave us a tongue to utter words, so we can understand speech [*lógôn*]" (298-9). He then explains how this god "gave us too the fruit of the ground as nourishment", which may be read as an allusion to agriculture; and furthermore provided "protection against the winter cold" and "the sun god's blazing heat," which may be read as an allusion to

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building construction. From there, Theseus describes how matters that are unclear, and for which we have no reliable knowledge, are foretold by seers (*manteis*) who "examine fire, the folds of entrails, or the flights of birds." (211-3) In these passages, then, Euripides follows the general ordering of what all Prometheus said he did for man in *Desmôtês*, beginning with a god who puts reason in humans, followed by the development of speech, building construction, agriculture, and prophecy, including many details of the prophetic art: examining fire, entrails and the flights of birds.

References to the idea of human progress are also contained in a fragment of a satyr play titled *Sisyphus* preserved by Sextus Empiricus (c.160-210 CE) (*Adversus Mathematicos* 9.54), who attributes it to Critias (c.460-403). This authorship was accepted by traditional scholarship (Diels, 1907, p. 620), but more recent studies have attributed it to Euripides (Dihle, 1977) (Kahn, 1997). As Critias expresses very similar views regarding the human origins of god's pronouncements in Plato's *Charmides* (164d-e), though, his authorship of the fragment is assumed here. In *Sisyphus*, an unknown speaker describes how there once was a time "when the life of men was unordered [*âtaktos*], bestial [*thêriôdês*] and the slave of force, when there was no reward for the virtuous and no punishment for the wicked." In response, "men devised retributory laws, in order that Justice might be dictator and have arrogance as its slave, and if anyone sinned, he was punished." (fr. 25, trans. Freeman) Even after the laws forbade them to commit crimes openly, though, some men continued doing so in secret. For this reason, a wise and clever man (*sophôs gnômên ânêr*) invented fear of the gods, so that the wicked might still be frightened of committing wrong, even if they thought it or did so without anyone noticing. This, the speaker concludes, forms the origin of the notion that there is an immortal and omniscient God, who hears and sees everything with his mind, and who cares for human justice. As a result of the veneration of this God in the heavens, the speaker concludes, men now live in a state where lawlessness has been largely extinguished, relatively speaking, by divine ordinances. Critias' conception of human progress, then, begins with the idea of men living and unordered and bestial existence, which is then improved by the creation of laws in the service of Justice. The lot of humans is then further enhanced by a clever and wise man who invents the idea of god and religion, in order to create an innate fear in men of breaking the laws dictated by Justice.

Isocrates (436-338) makes reference to a progressive sense of human history in his *Panegyricus*, a 'festival oration' first presented at the Panhellenic gathering at Olympia in 380 BCE. In this speech, he relates a myth of how "the first necessity [*êdeêthê*] of man's nature [*phûsis*] was provided" by Athens (28, trans. Norlin). After Demeter wandered the land, following the rape of her daughter, the maiden Korê, she was moved to kindness (*eûmenôs*) toward the Athenians for services they provided her, and gave them the two greatest gifts in the world: "the fruits of the earth, which have enabled us to rise above the life of beasts [*thêriôdôs*], and the holy rite which inspires in those who partake of it sweeter hopes [*êlpidas*] regarding both the end of life and all eternity" (Ibid.). Athens, in turn, was not only so beloved of the gods (*theophilôs*) but also so philanthropic (*philanthrôpôs*) that she did not begrudge these gifts to the rest of the world, but shared what she received with all men (Ibid. 29). Isocrates thus employs a familiar refrain in terms of describing the beastlike state of primitive man, and identifying agriculture as one of the first needs that raised human nature from out of its original condition. Isocrates' unique contribution to the catalogue of the civilising arts, though, is his barely veiled reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries, the holy rite that inspires sweeter hopes regarding the end of life and all eternity. Isocrates' description of Athenians as *philanthrôpôs* for openly sharing the teachings of Demeter with others marks the first time he employs a cognate of *philanthrôpia* in his speeches. This word usage thus supports the attribution of Isocrates' conception of human history to the Protagorean-inspired *Prometheia* trilogy, as *philanthrôpia* makes its first appearance as a word in *Desmôtês*, as a neologism specifically coined to describe the "philanthropic way [*philanthrôpou trôpus*]" of Prometheus.

There are at least two close parallels to Isocrates' account of how the Athenians transformed men from a beastlike state to civilised existence via the acquisition and sharing of the agricultural arts and the mysteries. Diodorus Siculus, for instance, refers to a speech given in 413 BCE by Nicolaus of Syracuse, in which he recommends clemency for Athenian captives, because their ancestors shared the knowledge of agriculture given to them by the gods, and invented the laws through which Greeks were transformed



from a savage to a civilised and just society (13.26.3). A little further on, Isocrates also mentions how it was the Athenians who initiated the Greeks into the Mysteries (13.27.1). In a Hippocratic treatise dating from the late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century (Lloyd, 1963, p. 125), titled *On Ancient Medicine*, the writer describes human development in terms of the gradual evolution of diet, from raw and unmixed foods, to the cultivation and refinement of wheat and other foodstuffs better adapted "to the constitution and power of man [*ἀνθρώπου φύσιν τε καὶ δύναμιν*]" (3.43-4, trans. Jones). A Delphic inscription from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE containing a proposal to honour Athenian theatrical artists, by comparison, states that Athenians brought men from a 'beastlike' state to civilization," by initiating them into the mysteries, and giving them agriculture and laws (Guthrie, 1971, p. 84). In all three of these instances, then – in the speech of Isocrates, the history of Diodorus, the Hippocratic treatise, and the Delphic inscription – the development of the agricultural arts, laws, and the mysteries form an essential trio in the transformation of man, from a beast-like existence to civilised status.

A fragment attributed to Moschion, a tragic playwright from the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, contains yet another account of the ascent of humans from bestial to civilised status, with striking parallels to Protagoras and Desmôtês. In a fragment of one of his plays (Fr. 6) preserved by Stobaeus (*Ēklogai* 1.8.38), an unknown speaker opens his remarks by saying: "There was once a time [*ἐν γάρ ποτ' αἰὼν*] when the life of men [*βροτέιου*] resembled beasts [*κατάσταςιν*]." (6.2) As Guthrie (1971, p. 82) remarks, the initial wording of this phrase closely matches that of the opening line to the Promethean myth that Protagoras tells in Plato's *Protagoras*: "There was once a time [*ἐν γάρ ποτε χρόνος*]" (320c). Moschion's unknown speaker then goes on to describe how, at this time, there was no knowledge of construction, agriculture or law. Time eventually wrought a change in mortal life, though – "whether by the solicitude of Prometheus, or from necessity [*ἀνάγκην*], or by long experience, offering nature itself as teacher" (6.20-1) – whereby "Demeter's gift," the agricultural arts, were first discovered. From that initial beginning, animals were domesticated, cities arose, buildings were constructed, and men gradually turned from leading savage (*ἐγριόμηνον*) to civilised (*ἐμερον*) ways of life; a situation that also gave rise to burial rites for the dead. In this description, then, parallels may be seen not only to Protagoras and Desmôtês, but also with Isocrates' related description of the gifts of Demeter.

Diodorus Siculus presents a progressive account of human history that has also been linked to the scientific tradition to which Protagoras belonged. As a preface to his attempt at presenting a universal history, Diodorus first presents a natural history of the world, followed by an account of pre-historical human existence. In Book One (8.1-9), he describes humans as having originally led an "undisciplined [*ἀτάκτῳ*] and bestial life [*θηριόδει βίῳ*]," living alone and feeding off only the tenderest of herbs and the fruits of wild trees. As they were often attacked by wild animals, though, these early humans came to each other's aid, being instructed by expediency (*σὺμφέροντος*), and their fear caused them to congregate with others of their species. Over time, the unintelligible and indistinct sounds they made gradually became language, as they came to assign them symbolic significance according to mutually agreed upon conventions, thus giving rise to speech. After the development of language, human needs further drove them to seek shelter in caves and store away fruits for the winter. Diodorus goes on to say that, after they became acquainted with fire and other useful things, early humans gradually discovered the arts [*τέχνας*] and whatever else capable of furthering "human social life [*κοινὸν βίον*]." He concludes this short outline of the pre-history of humankind with the comment that, in general, it was "need itself [*χρεῖαν αὐτῆν*]" that instructed humans in everything, appropriately introducing knowledge of each thing to an animal naturally well endowed for every purpose with its hands (*χεῖρας*), its reason (*λόγον*) and its keenness of thought (*ψυχῆς ἀγχίνοϊαν*).

The parallels between Diodorus' account of human pre-history and Prometheus' account in Desmôtês of what he did for humans are unmistakable. In particular, Diodorus' positing of human reason (*λόγον*) and keenness of thought (*ψυχῆς ἀγχίνοϊαν*) as the key factor in the successful adaptation of human beings to their environment through technical innovation, strongly evokes the intelligence (*ἐννοῦς*) and reason (*φρηνὸν*) that Prometheus says he initially gave humans (Desmôtês 444). The parallels between these two passages are further observable in terms of the overall ordering of the technical advances made by humans as a result of their natural endowments: beginning with language and abstract thought,

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progressing through the technical arts, and concluding with the conventions of civilised social life; with each advance sequentially arising in accordance with the principle of necessity. Diodorus' reference to the "undisciplined and bestial life[*âtáktô kai thêriôdei bíô*]" of men also closely matches the wording of the Sisyphus fragment traditionally attributed to Critias: *âtaktos ànthrôpôn bíos kai thêriôdês* (Fr. 25.1-2), as noted above. Busolt argues that Diodorus' description of human pre-history most likely derives from an Epicurean source (1889, p. 297 ff.). Barnes, on the other hand, mentions that this passage "is generally thought to reflect Democritean ideas (even though it does not explicitly mention Democritus)." (2001, p. 221.) Given the many demonstrable parallels between Diodorus' account of human pre-history and the relevant passages of *Antigone* and *Desmôtês*, though, both of which predate the *flourit* for both Democritus (c.460-c.370) and Epicurus (341-c.270), it would make much more sense to attribute Diodorus' account to Protagoras, the founder of the Greek scientific tradition to which they belonged, particularly as he recounts a similarly progressive conception of human history in Plato's *Protagoras*, albeit in a mythologised form.

From this survey, it is clear that the idea that the historical progress human, from savage to civilised existence, stemming from the acquisition of knowledge made possible by an initial natural endowment, was pervasive among the intellectual elite of Greece, beginning in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Both mythological and rational renderings of this novel conception of human history are to be found in the writings of Sophocles, the Prometheus poet, Euripides, Critias, the Hippocratic corpus, Isocrates, Moschion and Diodorus Siculus, as well as in Delphic inscriptions. In *Protagoras*, Plato also puts a similar mythologised progressive account of human history in the mouth of Protagoras, which must, in light of the evidence presented above, be considered an authentic portrayal of the sophist's own views, and that most likely substantially reproduces his book, *On the Original State of Man* (Guthrie, 1971, pp. 63-4). Given that Protagoras is the very earliest Greek thinker to whom the idea of human progress can be attributed, it must be concluded that he is the originator of this idea. In this respect, then, Protagoras' influence on Greek intellectual life and society is comparable in its scope and ramifications to nothing less than the profound impact Darwin's theory of evolution had in Western society during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. For both thinkers portray humans as arising from an originally bestial existence; and both utterly overturned a previously dominant mytho-poetic-religious tradition that viewed humans as originally divinely created in an ideal state that was subsequently corrupted, and that had a pessimistic outlook on human history as fundamentally degenerative or regressive in nature.

<sup>ix</sup> Eridu, the first urban settlement in history, was founded in approximately 5400 BCE. By c.2900 BCE it was a substantial Bronze Age city covering 8-10 ha (20-25 acres). It went into serious decline in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, though, with little evidence of occupation after c.2050. Uruk, the famed city of Gilgamesh, on the other hand, was founded c.4000 BCE, and reached the apex of its power and influence c.2900 BCE, during which time it eclipsed its parent city to become the most important city in Sumer. The Eanna District of Uruk, dedicated to the city's patron goddess Ianna, was composed of several buildings that housed workshops, and was walled off from the rest of the city (Beaulieu, 2003, pp. 111-5). Uruk lost its prime importance c.2000 BCE, as the result of a power struggle between Babylonia and the Elamite Empire, which ultimately resulted in the conquest of Ur, another important Sumerian city, in 1940 BCE. Uruk went into steep decline until c.850 BCE, when it was annexed as a provincial capital by the Neo-Assyrians. Under the Neo-Assyrian Empire (934-608 BCE), and later the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BCE), Uruk regained much of its former glory, and remained continuously inhabited throughout antiquity. The city site of Uruk was partially abandoned in 300 CE, at least in part because of a shift in the Euphrates River, and was completely abandoned by c.700 CE, shortly before the Islamic conquest of Mesopotamia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>x</sup> Heraclitus (c.535-475) consistently employs fire as a central metaphor for illustrating the idea that all existence is in a state of flux and bound up with the processes of becoming (Fragments 30, 31, 64, 76, 90). Parmenides (fl. 475), by comparison, posits fire as the antithesis of dark night (Fr. 7/8), and also relates it to the processes of procreation (Fr. 12). Empedocles (c.490-430), finally, frequently refers to fire

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as one of the basic elements (Fragments 37, 51, 52, 54), but also describes how "Fire and Water and Earth and the boundless height of Air, and also execrable Hate [...] and Love" emerge from out of "the single One" and are gradually absorbed back into it (Fr. 17), strongly evoking the imagery of fire employed by Heraclitus. In other fragments, Empedocles also employs fire as a metaphor for illustrating biological processes, and consistently associates it with the life force of nature (Fragments 62, 71, 84, 85).

<sup>xi</sup> Throughout the *Gāthās*, the prophet Zarathustra praises Ahura Mazda as the supreme god representing the principle of Truth (*Aša*). Concurrently, he also criticises the *Daēvas*, the ancient Aryan gods, as false demons stemming from a religion of deceit. The very oldest parts of the *Gāthās*, based on linguistic evidence, consist of two *manthras* and a prayer, which are thought to have been likely composed by Zarathustra himself (Humbach, 1991, p. 14). In the first of these, the *manthra* entitled *Yathā Ahū Vairiyō*, Zarathustra declares that:

Since He is (the One) to be chosen by the world  
therefore the judgment emanating from truth itself [*ašātcīrē*]  
(to be passed) on the deeds of good [*vanhēuš*] thought [*mananhō*] of the world,  
as well as the power, is committed to Mazda Ahura whom (people) assign  
as a shepherd to the poor. (*Yasna* 27.13, trans. Humbach)

In the second *manthra* directly attributed to Zarathustra, entitled *Ašem Vohū*, he further declares:

Truth [*Ašem*] is best (of all that is) good [*Vohū*].  
As desired, what is being desired  
is truth for Him/him who (represents) best truth. (*Yasna* 27.14, trans. Humbach)

In these two *manthras*, then, the essential tenets of Zoroastrianism are articulated, namely: recognition of Mazda Ahura as the one true god, as manifested by reverence for truth and good thought. These essential principles of Zoroastrianism would remain relatively unchanged down to the classical period, as observed by Herodotus, the first historian to record them. While Herodotus never mentions Zarathustra or Zoroastrians by name, he does record many observations of Persian rituals and beliefs that accord with Zoroastrianism; noting, for instance, how the Persians do not set up images to gods (1.131) and "consider telling lies more disgraceful than anything else" (1.138).

The second oldest part of the *Gāthās* is the *Yasna Haptanghāti*, a prose text of six chapters (*Yasnas* 35-41). In *Yasna* 36 of that collection, a group of worshippers of Mazda Ahura identify themselves as "the community of this fire" (36.1, trans. Humbach). They invite the "fire [*ātare*] of Mazda Ahura" to share in delight and reverence (36.2), and then announce: "You are indeed the fire [*ātarš*] of Mazda Ahura." (36.3) After announcing that they approach for worship with "good thought [*mananhā vohū*]" (36.4), the *Yasna* ends with them attributing to Mazda Ahura "these lights here", meaning the sacrificial fire, as well as the yonder light of the sun (36.6). In the last *Yasna* of this group, finally, worshippers declare themselves "praisers and manthra-keepers [*maθranascā*]" of Ahura Mazda, and willing to take their ritual position at the sacrifice (41.5). From this textual evidence, it seems highly likely that Zarathustra's immediate successors, if not also Zarathustra himself, were Indo-Aryan fire priests. This identity becomes even clearer in later Zoroastrian texts written in Younger Avestan, such as the various *Yašts* written as hymns in praise of various Zoroastrian divinities or concepts.

The single oldest and longest collection of *Yašts*, the *Fravaši Yašt*, is thought to have been written not long after the Zoroastrian calendar reform of the Persian Empire, c.441 (Malandra, 1971, p. 4). *Fravaši* was a powerful supernatural being who, at an early stage of Zoroastrianism, became blended with the concept of *urvan*, or the human soul (Boyce, 2000). Of particular interest to the subject of this dissertation are two verses of the *Fravaši Yašt* that acclaim Zarathustra as the "first priest" (*paoiryāi athaurune*) (13.88) (*paoiryō āthrava*) (13.99). Zarathustra's followers thus refer to him as an *āthravan*, the Avestan name for a priest, originally derived from *ātar*, the word for 'fire'. *Āthravan* is also cognate with the Sanskrit *atharvan*, the fire-priest of the Indo-Iranian period (Dhalla, 1963, p. 129). The priestly caste to which Zarathustra belonged is thus genetically related, both linguistically and in terms of the

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rituals it preserved and transmitted, to the three main orders of fire priests mentioned in the *Rig-Veda*: the Atharvanas, the Angirasa, and the Bhrgu. As such, Zarathustra is a direct descendent of the same caste of Neolithic Indo-European fire-priests that gave rise to the figure of Prometheus in archaic Greek mythology.

Zarathustra was the first great religious reformer of the Indo-European mythic tradition, transforming its unabashed polytheism into a henotheism centred upon the worship of Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda is the god who gives good thought (Gāthās 31.21); the giver of the good things (38.4); the maker of all good things (39.4); and grants existence to good thought (46.13). Naturally, this fundamental theological reform must also have resulted in changes to traditional ritual practices. Herodotus, although he never specifically mentions Zoroastrianism, describes how the Persians built no alters and kindled no fire when they sacrificed. He does go on to mention, though, that instead of worshipping anthropomorphised gods, such as those worshipped by the Greeks, the Persians worshipped fire, along with earth, water and winds, as well as the sun and moon (1.131). Humbach also lists Fire (*Ātar*) as one of the *Ahuras*, spiritual entities that personify the primary Ahurian principles and concepts that were thought to pervade both the material and spiritual world. Among the other major *Ahuras* Humbach lists are truth (*Asha*) and good thought (*Vohu Manah*) (1994, pp. 12-3). The point I wish to establish by this extended digression examining the precepts of Zoroastrianism, is to illustrate how natural it would have been for Zoroastrians, as members of a reformed religion administered by the heirs of Indo-Aryan fire-priests, to employ fire as a spiritual metaphor for their central religious concepts of good thought, or mind.

Zoroastrianism is the primary religion associated with the Great Kings of the Achaemenid dynasty of the Persian Empire (c.550-330 BCE) founded by Cyrus II ('the Great'; lived 600 or 576-530; reigned 559-530). The degree to which the Achaemenian Kings were Zoroastrian remains a subject of scholarly dispute, with Widengren presenting a summary of scholarly positions pro and con (1965, p. 142 ff.). Darius I ('the Great'; lived 570-486; reigned 521-486) was allegedly the first to declare himself King "by the favor of Ahuramazda" (Inscription DNa 30-47) (Kent, 1953, p. 138). Gershevitch (1959, pp. 13-6) further theorises that Darius learned of Zarathustra and his religion, centred on the worship of Ahura Mazda, based upon reports brought back from the East during the campaign of Cyrus against the Massagetae (530 BCE); during which he would have had to cross ancient Chorasmia (alt. Khwaresmia), the probable home of the prophet (Henning, 1951, pp. 42-3). Malandra also conjectures that, soon after securing the throne, Darius imposed his Mazdaism upon the Magian priesthood. The Magi were in a politically weak position at that that time, as a member of their order, Gaumata, had unsuccessfully attempted to usurp the Persian throne by pretending to be Darius' brother, Bardiya. The Magi thus likely adopted the worship of Ahura Mazda, presumably under some duress, "as a mere addition to their motly pantheon" (Gershevitch, 1959, p. 17); a practice that, in any case, would have been consistent with the heterogeneity of Magian religion generally (Malandra, 1971, p. 4).

Zoroastrianism is thought to have been subsequently established as the official religion of the Persian Empire by Artaxerxes I, who reigned as Great King from 465-424. This conjectured establishment is largely based on a fundamental change that occurred in the official calendar employed by the Persian Empire, c.441 BCE, to a new and distinctly Zoroastrian version, in which the names of deities appearing in the religious texts of the 'Younger Avesta' are used to name the months and days (Taqizadeh, 1938). As the religion of the ruling regime of the Persian empire after Darius, Zoroastrianism would have been the ascendant religion of the near east during the late archaic age of Greece; and as the official religion of the Persian Empire as a whole after Artaxerxes, it would have been the dominant religion of the whole near east during the classical age of Greece. As such, Zoroastrianism would have provided the primary cultural medium through which near eastern ideas would have flowed from the Persian Empire into classical Greece during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

<sup>xii</sup> In the earliest archaic sources, Zeus appears to have been master of the Fates. In the *Iliad*, for instance, Agamemnon describes Zeus as having worked in league with Fate [*Moira*] and the Furies [*Erinús*], by deceiving him with the delusion that he could strip Achilles of his prize with impunity (19.87). Originally, the Greek word for fate (*moira*) meant the allotted distribution, portion or share of a whole; from which

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the more abstract sense of it evolved, as signifying destiny. In the *Odyssey*, Helen tells Menalaus and Telemachos that "divine Zeus sometimes gives out good, or sometimes evil; he can do anything." (4.236-7, trans. Lattimore; cf. 5.188-9)

Hesiod describes the Furies (*'Erínús*) as born of Earth, inseminated by the blood that drips from the severed genitals of Ouranos after his castration by Kronos (*Theogony* 185). Fate (*Móron*), on the other hand, is born of Night, along with "Death and Sleep and the brood of Dreams." (*Theogony* 213-4, trans. Lombardo) Night also gives birth to *Kêras*, the goddess of death, and the three avenging Fates (*Moiras*): *Klôthô* ('spinster'), *Láchesis* ('she who alots'), and *'Atropon* ('intractable'). Between them, these three Fates are said to dispense good and evil to mortals at birth, and to "prosecute transgressions of mortals and gods." (*Theogony*, 217-220) While Hesiod writes of the power the Fates hold to punish even the gods, later in *Theogony*, he also tells how Zeus gave the Fates (*Moiras*) "honor supreme" (*Theogony* 905); a dispensation that would seem to imply that he held some power over them. This view is confirmed in Homer, where Achilles describes Zeus as dispensing good and evil to men from two great jars (*Iliad* 24.527-533), thereby performing a task integral to the Fates. Zeus' power over the dispensations of fate is also referred to by Hesiod's near contemporary, Semonides (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE), who writes:

Loud-thundering Zeus controls the outcome, lad,  
in everything, and makes it how he wants. (Fr. 1.1-2, trans. West)

These implicit archaic claims of Zeus as master of the Fates are made more explicit by Pausanias, who notes the existence of several depictions and inscriptions that describe Zeus as *'Moiragetes'*, the Guide or Leader of Fate, at several temples in Olympia (5.15.5), Arcadia (8.37.1), and Delphi (10.24.4). A fragmentary inscription from 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Athens also mentions a "*Diî Moiragétéê*" (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1873, p. I.93).

<sup>xiii</sup> Simonides (c.556-468), quoting Pittacus (c.640-568 BCE), writes: "even the gods [*theoî*] can't fight necessity [*ànágka*]." (542.21). Herodotus, by comparison, tells of how Croesus (595-c.547?) sent a Lydian delegation to Delphi to inquire as to why the god deceived him into initiating war with Persia, to the ruin of his kingdom. To which the Pythian priestess replied: "No one may escape his lot [*moĩran*], not even a god [*theô*]." (1.91.1, trans. Godley) Other than the passage cited above from Hesiod (*Theogony* 220), these ruminations by Simonides and Herodotus are the only references to the gods being subject to the Fates or Necessity that pre-date the composition of the *Prometheia* trilogy. The author of the *Prometheia* takes this idea yet a step further, though, by making not just the gods, but Zeus himself, also subject to Fate and Necessity. He likely drew precedence for this depiction from Cretan stories about the mortality of Zeus (Epimenedes, Fr. 1), as well as Pindar's reference to his fear of mortality (*pótmon*) (*Olympian* 9.60), as discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>xiv</sup> Chiron was the son of Kronos and Philyra, a daughter of Okeanos and Tethys. The union of these two divinities produced a centaur because Kronos changed himself and Philyra into horses to evade his jealous wife, Rhea, after she found them together. Because of Chiron's divine providence, he was quite different from other centaurs. Not only was he immortal, he was also reputed for wisdom and kindness, and is even named in some myths as the king of the Centaurs. He received instruction from Apollo and Artemis, and became skilled in medicine, music, hunting, and the art of prophecy. By some accounts, he went on to become the tutor of some of the most famous Greek heroes, including: Asclepius, Jason and Achilles (Howatson & Harvey, 1989, p. 125). In some myths, Chiron asks Zeus to allow him to take on Prometheus' sufferings and die after he is accidentally wounded by Herakles. The pain from this wound "was so great that Zeus granted his request to be allowed to end his immortal life and go down to Hades." (Velllacott, 2003, p. 154) Graves, by contrast, cites somewhat different reasons as to why the king of the centaurs opted for death, explaining "that Cheiron chose death not so much because of the pain he suffered as because he had grown weary of his long life." (Graves, 1992, p. 475) Whatever the cause, Chiron's willingness to voluntarily surrender his immortality and descend into Hades clears the hurdle standing in the way of killing the bird that torments Prometheus.

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<sup>xv</sup> Prometheus likely began by giving Herakles directions through the lands north of the Euxine (Black) Sea, as recounted in a fragment cited by Strabo (*Geography* 7. 3. 7). This northern route is indicated by Prometheus' reference to the nomadic, horse-riding Scythians who dwelt on its steppes:

But the well-ordered Scythians that feed on mares' milk cheese. (Aeschylus, Fragment 111 (198))

Prometheus might then have followed this description of the Scythians with further directions concerning Herakles' course through the land of the people in the farthest north, as indicated in another fragment cited by Galen (*Commentary on Hippocrates' Epidemics*, 6.17. 1):

Follow this straight road; and, first of all, thou shalt come to the north winds, where do thou beware the roaring hurricane, lest unawares it twist thee up and snatch thee away in wintry whirlwind. (Aeschylus, Fragment 109 (195))

In a fragment cited by Stephen of Byzantium (*Lexicon* 7.5 on *Iliad* N 6) Prometheus then describes how Herakles would arrive in the land of the Gabians:

Thereafter thou shalt come unto a people of all mortals most just and most hospitable, even unto the Gabians; where nor plough nor mattock, that cleaves the ground, parteth the earth, but where the fields, self-sown, bring forth bounteous sustenance for mortals. (Aeschylus, Fragment 110 (196))

The only ancient reference to Gabians (that this author has been able to find, at least) relates to a tribe that dwelt in the area of Tuscany, in northern Italy, during the early days of the Roman Republic (Livy, *History of Rome* 3.8). From there, Herakles would presumably have journeyed to the north-west.

According to another account provided by Strabo (*Geography* 4.1.7) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, (*Early History of Rome* 1.41.1-3), Prometheus tells Herakles of the many perils he will encounter on his journey from the Caucasus to the Hesperides, in the farthest west:

Thou shalt come to the dauntless host of the Ligurians, where, full well I know, thou shalt not be eager for battle, impetuous though thou art; for it is fated that even thy arrows shall fail thee there; and thou shalt not be able to take from the ground any stone, because the whole place is smooth. But the Father, beholding thy helplessness, shall pity thee, and, holding above thee a cloud, shall overshadow the land with a shower of round stones. Hurling these, thou shalt easily drive back the Ligurian host. (Aeschylus, Fragment 112 (199))

Strabo states that this place, known by the name of Stony Plain, was situated between present day Marseilles and the outlets of the Rhone, about a hundred *stades* distant from the sea. It is now identified with "la plaine de la Crau" near Arles (Aeschylus, 1999, p. 453). From here, Prometheus likely described Herakles' journey over the ocean to kill Geryon and round up his cattle and/or gather the golden apples of the Hesperides. Herakles' travels thus close the geographic circle begun by the Titans, who began their journey in the far West and traveled through Aethiopia along the southern shores of the ocean.

# Gifts of Fire

## Part III

### Plato's use of Promethean Imagery and the Realisation of his Philosophical Philanthropy



*Prometheus Freed by Heracles* (c.1878) by Christian Griepenkerl (1839-1912)

Image source: Hellenica website at <http://www.mlhanas.de>

Heracles greets Prometheus after slaying the bird-of-prey that daily consumed his liver.

## Chapter 10 – Introduction to Part III

But even those myths in Plato (in the *Republic*, that of Hero [sic] the Armenian; and in *Gorgias*, that of Aeacus and Rhadamanthus; and in the *Phaedo*, that of Tartarus; and in the *Protagoras*, that of Prometheus and Epimetheus; and besides these, that of the war between the Atlantini and the Athenians in the Atlanticum) are to be expounded allegorically, not absolutely in all their expressions, but in those which express the general sense. And these we shall find indicated by symbols under the veil of allegory.

Clement of Alexander, *Stromata* 5.9, trans. Wilson

This third part of the dissertation has two broad sets of objectives and approaches. The first objective is to demonstrate how Socrates, as depicted in Plato's writings, consciously self-identifies with a Promethean *persona*, and to draw out the implications for what this self-identification signifies in terms of understanding Socratic philosophy. The primary approach of this analysis is closely examining Plato's extensive use of Promethean imagery in his works, including many highly significant references Socrates makes about himself. These self-references include, for instance, Socrates' assertion at both the very beginning and end of his public career, that he continually thinks and acts in a 'promethean' manner (*Protagoras* 361d, *Crito* 45a), as well as his prominent declaration of his intrinsic *philanthrôpia* (*Euthyphro* 3d). The second major objective of this part is to gauge Plato's influence on significant transformations in conceptions of the public good, both in Athens during the late Classical and early Hellenistic ages, as well as in later antiquity, during the Greco-Roman period. This analysis documents the historical influence of Plato and Platonic philosophy on the emergence of novel conceptions of the public good in ancient civil society (*politikê koinônia*); an influence most readily seen in the creation of novel forms of civic institutions, both educational and religious, that served aims that Socrates explicitly advocates in Plato's writings.

By far the most extensive and significant use of the Promethean myth in the entire Platonic corpus occurs in the 'Great Speech' of Protagoras, which is spoken in the Socratic dialogue named for the great sophist. A detailed exegesis of Plato's *Protagoras* in chapter 10 thus forms the starting point for the subsequent examination of Promethean imagery in his works as a whole, in chapter 11. In *Protagoras*, Socrates debates the eminent sophist, Protagoras, on the nature of virtue. In the process, he may be seen to appropriate for his own purposes the Promethean *persona* initially developed by Protagoras to describe both the plight of the wise in relation to the powerful, as well as his own successful marriage of wisdom and power. Needless to say, in adopting this Protagorean-Promethean *persona*, Socrates also significantly alters it to



suit his own particular philosophical purposes. Chapter 12 then examines the use of Promethean imagery in the remainder of Plato's works so as to provide greater insight into the nature of those purposes. A primary aim of this examination is to illuminate Socrates' expressed efforts to realise duties he saw arising from the same philanthropic impulse that caused him to identify with Prometheus in the first place: to educate others toward virtue through discourse, and to reform what is said and taught about the gods, so as to promote the greater attainment of virtue. As this examination reveals, Socrates strongly identifies with the figure of Prometheus throughout his life in relation to his educational aims, from his earliest appearance as a philosopher of renown, as depicted in *Protagoras*, to literally his dying day, as depicted in *Phaedo*.

Having established Socrates' identification with Prometheus, and illuminated the nature of his *philanthrôpía* – understood as a love desiring to bring about the greater realisation of human potential by promoting the intellectual development of the soul – chapters 12 and 13 then briefly examines Plato's own personal efforts to realise this Promethean ambition, as well as his influence on others' subsequent attempts to do so in antiquity. These include Plato's concrete efforts to enact his ideals of *paideía* by founding the first permanent institution of higher education in the ancient world. Located near the Academy, a sacred grove outside Athens and traditional starting point of its ceremonial torch-races, most notably the Prometheia, 'Plato's Academy' went on to become the most famous philosophical school in antiquity. As will be argued, Plato's Academy constituted a highly novel form of private, public-serving higher-education institution in the context of classical Greece. Up until the end of the classical age, the Greeks viewed education, and especially more advanced forms of philosophical study, as a strictly private good, provided solely through the private instruction offered by the sophists. With the founding of the Academy, though, Plato established an institutional model that was soon imitated by his disciples, admirers and even rivals, including Aristotle's Lyceum and The Garden of Epicurus. Through Plato's establishment of the first major philosophical school in history, then, dominant conceptions of the public good were gradually transformed in Athenian and Greco-Roman civil society to include the provision of higher learning, albeit initially through privately organised and funded institutions that were constituted, it is thought, in the form of religious societies, thereby operating with tacit public consent.

The third part of this dissertation concludes with chapter 13, which examines the other major redefinition of the public good in antiquity inspired by the Promethean ambition of the

philosophy of Socrates and Plato, and that resulted in a fundamental change in the institutional life of Greco-Roman civil society. This redefinition concerns fundamental reforms in theological thought in later antiquity, that helped give rise to a new form of religious institution in the latter Greco-Roman era that embraced and enacted these novel Platonic conceptions of divinity. In particular, Socrates' attempts, as expressed in Plato, to reform the Homeric polytheistic tradition in favour of a monotheistic conception of god as a transcendent being who loves and cares for humans, may be seen to have exercised a decisive influence on the formation of the theological underpinnings of early Christianity. Already present in Macabean Judaism, these Platonically inspired theological formulations were reinforced by early Church fathers who also identified with Platonism, and who shared with Socrates and Plato the quintessentially Promethean ambition of innovating what is said and taught about the gods, with an eye to promoting a form of belief in the divine best suited for realising the full potential of humans as social and political beings.

Before proceeding further, something must also be said about some of the basic interpretive assumptions employed here in the analysis of Plato's dialogues. For the most part, I assume that Plato's presentation of Socrates and the various other thinkers in his dialogues is historically accurate; and furthermore, that Plato orders his dialogues in a chronological sequence that may be identified in their discernable dramatic dates. The assumption of historical accuracy is particularly important in terms of the close comparative analysis of the Promethean *mūthos* of Protagoras' 'Great Speech' in chapter 11. The assumption of historical accuracy, in this case, is grounded in the likelihood that people in Plato's day would still have had ready access to the many books by the famous Protagoras, including the one that most likely formed the basis for his Promethean 'display speech', namely: *On the Original State of Man*. Thus, even if Plato wished to portray Protagoras in an overtly negative light, it would only have worked against his case to inaccurately represent the most important speech of the most important sophist, and that would have been widely-known to his contemporaries, both orally and in print. In faithfully reproducing Protagoras' display speech, Plato would also have been following a practice widespread among ancient authors, who often cited other authors verbatim and at length in their own works, both with and without attribution. Indeed, a large part of one of Plato's dialogues, *Theatetus*, has all the appearance of being the presentation of a dialogue actually written by Euclides of Megara (435-c.365). To recap, then, there are ample grounds for assuming that Plato strived for historical accuracy in his dialogues, while still allowing for a

soupçon of suspicion regarding the veracity of his portrayals. This interpretive assumption has a distinct advantage over assuming that Plato primarily or exclusively presents his own views in his dialogues; for it explains why he seems to contradict himself in them on even the most fundamental philosophical matters, as Cherniss (1962) observes.

Regarding the related interpretive assumption there is a chronological sequence to Plato's dialogues, on the other hand, there is ample evidence that he went to extreme pains to provide an historical context for nearly all of his dialogues. The work of Christopher Planeaux (2011) has been particularly instructive in this regard. In fact, one of the only authentic dialogues of Plato that is utterly lacking in dramatic clues as to its historical setting is *Philebus*. Ironically, *Protagoras* is often pointed to as a prime example of Plato's lack of historical consistency in his dialogues. Those so doing often point to Protagoras' reference to Pherecrates' *Agrioi* (*Protagoras* 327d) which is thought to have premeired in 421/0 BCE, according to the didaskalic records, which conflicts with other evidence situating the dialogue prior to the Peloponnesian War. As the analysis below (pp. 464-5) demonstrates, though, there are ample grounds for thinking, based upon the evidence of inscriptions, that Pherecrates did actually premiere the play in the mid-430s, just prior to the setting of *Protagoras*. Elsewhere, I have also found another famous instance of Plato's alleged lack of historical sense in his dialogues – namely, Aristophanes' seemingly anachronistic reference to the Spartan dispersal of the Arcadians in *Symposium* (193a) – to similarly fail to stand up to critical scrutiny. Assuming Plato's dialogues to be historically consistant has an interpretive advantage over assuming them to be merely ahistorical presentation of Plato's own ideas; for again, it better accounts for the several contradictions expressed in Plato's dialogues as a whole, even by a single character such as Socrates. In conclusion, then, assuming an historical diminsion to the dialogues allows us to posit an historical development in Plato's presentation of the views of Socrates, rather than thinking that Plato simply contradicts himself in his writings.

## Chapter 11 – Plato's *Protagoras*

Socrates: "Prometheus in your story [*múthô*] was more gratifying to me than Epimetheus. For I, making use of him and [thus] taking forethought [*promêthoúmenos*] for my entire life, am myself occupied with all these things."

Plato, *Protagoras* 361d, trans. Craig

### A. Introduction

*Protagoras* occupies a highly privileged place among Plato's dialogues. Set in 433 BCE (Lampert, 2010, pp. 141-4), it contains the earliest dramatic frame of any of Plato's dialogues, although the main action of *Protagoras* is antedated by elements contained in a few other dialogues. The dramatic date for the main action of *Parmenides*, for instance, is earlier still (450 BCE), while its dramatic frame is set much later (c.384 BCE). As well, the dramatic date of *Protagoras* is antedated by particular scenes (e.g. the Diotima scene in *Symposium*) or significant allusions to past events (e.g. Socrates' mention of his 'turn' in *Apology*, or of his 'second sailing' in *Phaedo*) in other dialogues. *Protagoras* and *Parmenides* stand out, though, for having the earliest dramatic dates for the main action among the Platonic dialogues as a whole. This arrangement is highly fitting, as these two dialogues respectively portray the essential doctrines of the two major opposing schools of Pre-Socratic philosophy: *Parmenides* portrays the Eleatic school, which held that all being was essentially one; *Protagoras*, by contrast, primarily portrays the Heraclitean school, which held that being was composed of many different things in a constant state of becoming. The *Protagoras* thus portrays Socrates' critique of Heraclitean doctrine of becoming, as represented by its most successful practitioner, Protagoras.

The Promethean myth in *Protagoras* is told by Protagoras himself, in his 'Great Speech', which is situated near the beginning of the main action of the dialogue (320c-324d). However, Promethean imagery is present right from the outset, in the dramatic frame of the dialogue. It is even present, in fact, in the very opening words of the dialogue, spoken to Socrates by a "Comrade [*Hetaĩros*]" of his, who comments:

From where are you appearing [*phainê*]? Or isn't it plain that it is from the hunt for the bloom of Alcibiades? And he certainly did appear [*êphaineto*] to me still a beautiful man when I saw him the day before yesterday; (309a, trans. Craig)

The word Craig<sup>1</sup> translates as "appearing" – from *phainô*, 'make to appear' – could be more literally translated as 'coming to light,' deriving as it does from the root word *pháos*, for light. The very opening words of *Protagoras* may thus be seen to make an oblique reference to Prometheus as the bringer of fire, which casts the light by which things are made to appear. From the very outset, in the dramatic frame of *Protagoras*, then, Plato employs an essentially Promethean motif to highlight the nature of Socrates' first appearance; a motif subsequently repeated many more times in the dialogue.<sup>2</sup>

Socrates evades the initial question of his comrade: "From where has he come to light?" with another question: "What of it?" Not dissuaded, his comrade poses his question once again, replete with the appearance / light motif: "Are you indeed just appearing [*phainêi*] from him?" (ibid.) As it turns out, Socrates has, indeed, just returned from being with Alcibiades;<sup>3</sup> he therefore first comes to light shortly after seeing the object of his eros. Socrates diverts attention away from this fact, though, by telling his comrade that, while Alcibiades was present, he did not pay him any mind, as his attention was focused on a foreigner. His comrade expresses amazement: how could Socrates have found a foreigner so beautiful that he appeared (*phanênai*) more beautiful than Alcibiades? Socrates replies by asking: "how could the greatest wisdom [*sophôtaton*] not appear [*phanêsthai*] more beautiful?" (309c) His comrade further inquires if it was some "wise one [*sophô*]" whom he happened to meet? Socrates is slightly demur in his answer, though, saying only: "The wisest of any living – if, that is, it seems to you that Protagoras is the wisest." (309d) It does, and this matters, because Socrates is thus depicted presenting his victory over Protagoras to a comrade who thinks the great sophist to be the wisest.

Socrates explains to his comrade that he initially went to see Protagoras at the behest of a younger companion, Hippocrates, who had awoken him in his home before dawn to ask for his assistance in convincing the sophist to accept him as a student. While they waited for the light (*phôs*) of day, Socrates expressed serious concerns regarding the possible effects of Protagoras' sophistic teachings upon the soul of Hippocrates. He asked him what, exactly, he expected to learn from Protagoras? and with the aim of becoming what? As Protagoras is a sophist,

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<sup>1</sup> All English citations from *Protagoras* in this dissertation are taken from Dr. Leon Craig's translation, in manuscript, which he graciously provided me.

<sup>2</sup> In total, cognates of the word *phainô* appear 42 times in *Protagoras*.

<sup>3</sup> As Lampert (2010, pp. 141-4) convincingly shows, the dramatic date of Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades I*, where Socrates is depicted engaging in his first conversation with Alcibiades alone, is precisely situated between the main action and the dramatic frame of *Protagoras*.

Hippocrates concluded (with the aid of some leading questions on the part of Socrates) that the aim of his instruction must be to teach him to become a sophist. Seeing him blush at this admission, for by then it was already dawn, Socrates then asked: "Wouldn't you be ashamed to present yourself to the Greeks as a sophist?" To which Hippocrates answered in the affirmative (312b). Socrates saved him from further ignominy, though, by observing that, "perhaps it is not this kind of learning [*máthêsin*] which you expect from Protagoras, but rather such as you received from your writing-teacher or harp-teacher or athletic trainer?" (312a) Socrates further elaborated that such skills are taught, not as a means to becoming a craftsman over some particular art (*téchnê*), but rather with a view to obtaining an education (*paideía*) befitting a free individual. To which Hippocrates readily replied: "It is certainly seems to me that learning [*máthêsis*] from Protagoras is of that sort" (312b).

While Socrates and Hippocrates thus determined the aim of Protagoras' instruction – education befitting a free man – they still had not yet figured out what, exactly, he taught. Hippocrates conjectured that he knows how to make one clever (*deinon*), but that still left open the question: clever at what? (313a) Hippocrates finally conceded that he has no idea what it is that a sophist teaches. Seeing his companion sinking into perplexity, Socrates posed another question: is the sophist, perhaps, a merchant who sells "wares by which the soul is nourished?" This caused Hippocrates to wonder, "by what is a soul nourished"? To which Socrates replied, "By learnables [*mathêmasin*] presumably." (313c) He then went on to warn that, just as a buyer must beware of merchants, as the seller does not necessarily understand, or even care, what is best for his customers; so, too, must one be wary of "those who hawk their learnables [*mathêmata*]" (313d). Given this situation, Socrates concluded, "if you happen to know which of these learnables [*mathêmata*] are useful for the soul," you may safely purchase them (313e). However, "where the purchase of learnables (*mathêmatôn*) is concerned, the danger is much greater than in the purchase of food." (314a) For in the case of food, what is bought can be later inspected by an expert before eating. "Learnables [*mathêmata*], however cannot be taken away in another vessel," but rather, of necessity, "one takes the learnable [*máthêma*] into one's soul," before it can be determined whether it's harmful or beneficial (314b).

Plato's repeated use of various cognates of the root word *máthê* – such as *máthêsis* (the getting of knowledge) and *máthêma* (that which is learnt) – in this extended exchange between Socrates and Hippocrates is significant; for it both describes the nature of what Protagoras teaches, as well as being highly evocative of the figure of Prometheus. The ancient Greeks, it

will be recalled, believed that Prometheus' name derived from *manthánô*, meaning "learn, come to know" (Liddell, 1990). As was argued in chapter 3, this assessment was essentially correct; for as Wood (1975, p. 186) demonstrates, Prometheus was indeed likely cognate with the root word *máthê*, given the linguistic evidence of parallels to the formation of the aorist infinitive verb tense, *matheîn*, 'to learn, to come to know'. By describing what Protagoras teaches in terms of *máthêsis* and *máthêma*, therefore, Socrates describes what the sophist teaches with a cognate of the root-word employed to construct the name of Prometheus. Protagoras also employs this very same terminology in defining the nature of what he teaches. In differentiating what he teaches from the technical subjects taught by Hippias, for instance, Protagoras says that Hippocrates will learn (*máthêma*) from him only the learnable (*máthêma*) of good counsel (*eùboulía*) regarding his own affairs and that of the city (318e). Socrates, by comparison, points out how, when Athenians deliberate about managing the city, no one heckles a person, regardless of his background, on the basis that he has not learned (*mathôn*) about such matters anywhere (319d).

Protagoras continues to employ various cognates of *máthê* in telling his Promethean myth. There, he describes how people admonish others if they lack certain things, such as civic virtue (*politikês àretês*), that "can be acquired by care [*èpimeleías*] and learning [*mathêseôs*]." (324a) After concluding his myth, Protagoras also asserts: "Learn [*máthe*] this as well"; that virtue (*àretês*) is as teachable as any other 'learnable subject' (*mathêmátôn*) (326e-327a). Given the inherently learnable nature of virtue, in fact, Protagoras declares that, if he is unable to help Hippocrates become more noble (*kalòn*) and good (*àgathòn*), he can simply pay "what he believes to be the value of my instruction [*mathêmata*]" (328c). The final two instances of Plato's use of cognates of the root *máthê* in *Protagoras* occur considerably later in the dialogue, where Socrates differentiates between being good and becoming good. In this context, he poses a rhetorical question to the effect: what is doing good at letters and what makes a man good at letters? To which he then supplies the answer: "Plainly, the learning [*máthêsis*] of these matters." Likewise, the 'doing well' of a doctor that makes him a good doctor is "the learning [*máthêsis*] whereby he treats the sick." (345a) In this way, Socrates treats learning (*máthêsis*) as the essential link between being and becoming, as it constitutes the essential activity of *becoming* good at something that eventually makes one *be* good at something. In these several instances, then, Plato employs various cognates of *máthê* to linguistically establish an identity

between Prometheus, the nature of learnables, what Protagoras purportedly teaches, and the activity of learning virtue that generates the good.

In order to obtain an audience with Protagoras, Socrates and Hippocrates went to the home of Callias, where the great sophist was staying as a guest. Callias was a great patron of sophists and son of Hipponicus, the richest man in Athens; many other sophists and students were also thus present. Upon meeting Protagoras, therefore, Socrates petitions him to take Hippocrates as a student, but also extends him the courtesy of asking if he would rather discuss the subject of this young man's instruction alone or in front of the others present. Protagoras expresses appreciation for Socrates discretion, responding: "Rightly, Socrates, are you forethoughtful [*promêthê*] on my behalf," (316c, trans Craig); for, as he goes on to say, suspicion soon falls upon foreign men who seek to instruct the best youths of great cities. This first allusion to Promethean forethoughtfulness in *Protagoras* therefore occurs in direct connection with Protagoras' expression of the precautions that the foreign wise must take in teaching the offspring of the powerful.<sup>4</sup> Because of the suspicion with which the powerful invariably perceive the wise, Protagoras goes on to explain, practitioners of the ancient profession of being a sophist have always previously disguised the fact that they were teaching a form of wisdom; presenting themselves, instead, as mere poets, musicians or physical trainers (316d-e).

Despite the cleverness of their disguises, Protagoras goes on to argue, the policy of secrecy adopted by the wise inevitably fails (317a). This remark provides a striking parallel to what little is known of the plotline of Purphóros, where someone, likely either Prometheus or a close ally, counsels secrecy, likely in regard to the theft of fire and the giving of it to humans (fr. 118). As Protagoras observes, though, the powerful in a city invariably see straight through the disguises adopted by the wise, just as Zeus saw straight through Prometheus' attempted deception at Mekone (*Theogony* 535-7). Protagoras has formulated a novel solution to this problem, though: rather than trying to disguise what he does, Protagoras instead openly describes himself as a sophist. At the same time, though, he assures Socrates, he does take other precautions: "which, to speak with god, ensure that I suffer nothing terrible from my admission that I'm a sophist." (317c) As Lampert observes, one of the precautions taken by Protagoras, as exemplified by his

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<sup>4</sup> Cognates of the word *promêthéomai* – to use forethought, to take care - appear only one other time as a non-appellative in *Protagoras*, although in very close proximity to mentions of Epimetheus and Prometheus. At the conclusion of the dialogue, Socrates remarks to Protagoras on their discussion: "Prometheus in your story [*muthô*] was more gratifying to me than Epimetheus. For I, making use of him and [thus] taking forethought [*promêthoumenos*] for my entire life, am myself occupied with all these things." (361d)



invocation of god in this passage, "is his mastery at feigning a kind of piety in speech." (2010, p. 41) As soon becomes clear, another of the precautions taken by Protagoras, depending on the nature of his audience, involves presenting his teachings in mythic form. Given the confidence he places in these security measures, Protagoras concludes that he would be more pleased to conduct his discourse in front of others. As a result, the two other sophists present, Hippias and Prodicus, along with their students, all gather to hear Protagoras' discourse with Socrates, on what he would teach Hippocrates and what effect it would have on him.

After the other sophists and students assemble, Socrates again asks Protagoras: what will result if Hippocrates becomes his student? To which the venerable sophist replies: he will improve him for the better. Unsatisfied with the vagueness of this answer, Socrates presses him for greater detail: in what way will Hippocrates become better; toward what and about what? (318d) In reply, Protagoras explains that, unlike some other sophists (with a nod to Hippias, who had earlier been conducting a discourse on the mechanics of astronomy), he will not be teaching (*didáskontes*) him technical subjects (*téchnas*), such as astronomy, geometry and music. Rather, Protagoras goes on to say, the only learnable (*máthêmá*) that Hippocrates will learn (*mathêsetai*) from him is good counsel (*eùboullía*) regarding the affairs of one's household and city so as to be most powerful in word and deed (318e). Again, Protagoras' repeated use of words built on the root *math* to describe both the learnable he teaches – good counsel – and how Hippocrates will learn it, points to Protagoras' own identification with Prometheus in what he teaches as a sophist.

Socrates challenges Protagoras' claim to teach good counsel, asserting that it is simply not possible to teach a political art (*politikên téchnên*) and make men good citizens (*àgathòus polítas*). To illustrate the broad agreement that exists on the unteachability of civic virtue, Socrates points to how the Athenians, who are generally considered wise (*sophoús*), conduct the business of the *pólis* in the Assembly. If the subject under consideration is technical in nature, they only ever take the advice of a craftsman who is known to be an expert in that subject. If the subject relates to the affairs of the *pólis*, though, everyone has an equal say in the matter. From this, Socrates concludes that a consensus exists that good counsel cannot be taught. He finds further evidence in support of this consensus in the fact that, even in private, some of the wisest and best citizens are manifestly unable to pass on their civic virtue to others. Socrates even has the temerity to point out how Pericles, the greatest living Athenian statesman, has been manifestly unable to pass on his particular virtue to his sons, who are present there at the

house of Callias. From this, Socrates concludes that virtue cannot be taught, but requests Protagoras, if he is able to demonstrate (*èpideĩzai*) that it can, to not grudge them that demonstration (*èpídeizon*).

## B. The 'Great Speech' of Protagoras

Protagoras must have experienced considerable delight at the prospect of fulfilling Socrates' request, that he give a demonstration speech on the teach-ability of civic virtue. Indeed, in many ways he would have found the request well nigh irresistible. As Lampert notes,

Protagoras cannot but be grateful for the rare opportunity Socrates' invitation affords him to address the now collected company of all the young Athenians plus his younger rivals and give the speech that most serves his purpose in coming to Athens. (Lampert, 2010, p. 45)

Socrates' request for a demonstration not only serves Protagoras' purpose of displaying his learning to prospective students among the young of the powerful in Athens; it also plays into his hands, insofar as he may be well expected to have already composed a speech on just such a subject, and to have had it ready to recite. A standard practice of the ancient sophists was to compose display speeches on various subjects beforehand, and to have them memorised and ready to present on short notice. Ideally, such pre-rehearsed speeches would also be composed with a level of generality that would allow their content to be adapted to particular situations. In asking Protagoras to present a demonstration (*èpideizon*) of how virtue is teachable, though, Socrates makes him a particularly attractive offer: the opportunity to present an exhibition speech to a gathering of prospective students on the subject of the teach-ability of civic virtue; a subject for which he may be expected to have already had a speech specifically prepared, given that his main claim to fame as a teacher is his ability to teach civic virtue.

The teach-ability of civic virtue was likely a subject addressed in Protagoras' book, *On the Original State of Man*, given that its primary subject was how originally barbaric humans gradually learned to become civilised. Protagoras disguises his delight at Socrates' request by asking the assembled company in what form they would like to hear his demonstration: "as an elder to younger [men], by telling a story [*mũthon*], or shall I expound an argument [*lógô*]?" (320c) By presenting two different speech formats from which to choose, Protagoras not only provides a further display of his virtuosity; he also hints at his own preference by how he frames the question, as he is old enough to be the father of anyone in attendance (317c). When the assembled company tells him to present whichever of the two forms of demonstration he wishes, he chooses therefore to present what is widely termed his 'Great Speech' in the form of a myth. The *mũthos* that Protagoras tells in this Great Speech is, of course his particular version of the Promethean myth. Given the parallels established in chapter 5, between Protagoras'

book, *On the Original State of Man*, and the *Prometheia* trilogy, the Promethean *mūthos* Protagoras tells in his Great Speech may be supposed to correspond to the *lógos* of that book. As will be seen in the exegesis of Protagoras' Great Speech, this supposition is amply supported by linguistic evidence.

Protagoras could probably have adapted any number of other display speeches to fit the particular subject matter he is called upon to expound in his Great Speech. However, if the basic hypothesis of chapter 5 is true – that the *Prometheia* trilogy most likely premiered sometime between 440 and 435 BCE, and that it is essentially the presentation of a Protagorean *lógos* in the form of a *mūthos* – then there is yet another added motivation for Protagoras wanting to tell that particular story. By employing a Promethean *mūthos* to illustrate his demonstration, Protagoras may not only be seen to be alluding to his already well-known and reasoned *lógos* of how men learned to become civilised; he may also be seen to be providing his audience with a potent reminder of the vast influence he's come to exercise on the cultural and political life of Athens. So vast is his influence, in fact, that his ideas were recently immortalised in one of the most technically challenging and spectacular dramas ever mounted on the Athenian stage; a drama composed by no less than the literal heir to the father of tragedy (assuming the play to have been written by Euphorion, the son of Aeschylus).

Given these cumulative circumstances – a widely cited book by Protagoras, made the subject of the *Prometheia* trilogy, one of the most spectacular dramatic productions to yet appear on the Athenian stage – one might plausibly ask: how Protagoras could possibly resist bringing up the subject of Prometheus? That having been said, Protagoras' Promethean *mūthos* could probably have been adapted to illustrate virtually any aspect of his humanistic philosophy, as needed, as the Promethean *mūthos* generally depicts not only how humans came to be civilised, but how they came to be essentially human, period. Even with this high degree of alignment between the Promethean *mūthos* and the subject matter Socrates asks Protagoras to address, though, Protagoras will still be compelled to adapt the myth somewhat to fit the particular questions Socrates raises on the teachability of virtue. But even with these improvisations, the Promethean *mūthos* told by Protagoras will still fall somewhat short of fully addressing its intended subject, as will be seen.

Because of the close relations that may be supposed to exist between the *Prometheia* trilogy, Protagoras' book *On The Original State Of Man*, and his Great Speech in Plato's *Protagoras*, a close examination of how and why Protagoras modifies his Promethean *mūthos* in

that speech, in relation to the trilogy, holds great potential for unlocking the esoteric meaning of its underlying *lógos*, which may be supposed to correspond fairly closely with the content of his book. In this sense, *On The Original State of Man* may be viewed as the common source *lógos*, upon which the *mũthos* of the *Prometheia* trilogy and Protagoras' Great Speech are mutually based. Systematically comparing the Promethean *mũthos* Protagoras tells in his Great Speech with that of the *Prometheia* trilogy holds the potential for providing a perspective from which to better understanding the *lógos* underlying that speech, as well as the *lógos* of his book *On The Original State Of Man*. Keeping the traditional Promethean myth in mind, particularly as told by Hesiod, also provides instructive points of comparison. Because a good, recent, literal and intelligible English translation of Plato's *Protagoras* is difficult to find, a translation of its Promethean myth is included as appendix A of this dissertation, reproduced with the permission of the translator, Dr. Leon Craig.

### C. The Promethean *Mũthos* of Protagoras' Great Speech

Protagoras opens his Promethean *mũthos* with a rather remarkable declaration:

There once was a time [*ên gár pote chrónos*] when there were gods [*theoi*], but no mortal species [*thnêtà*]. (320c)

As was mentioned in chapter 7, these first words are closely paralleled in a fragment from a play on the subject of the progress of human civilization, written by the tragic playwright, Moschion, whose flourit dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. In that play, a character declares that he will go back and unfold in speech how human life began and was established. He then proceeds to say:

There was once a time [*ên gár pot' aìôn*] when the life of men [*broteíou*] resembled that of beasts [*katástasin*]. (Moschion, Fr. 6.2, trans. Guthrie)

As Guthrie (1971, p. 82) notes, Moschion likely borrowed this phrase from Protagoras' book, *On the Original State of Man*. Assuming this conjecture to be correct, the *mũthos* Protagoras tells in his Great Speech may be seen, right from the outset, to closely parallel the *lógos* of his book. The existence of this parallel at the very opening of Protagoras' Great Speech also provides corroborating evidence for the primary interpretive hypothesis of this chapter: namely, that Protagoras' Promethean *mũthos* as a whole closely parallels the *lógos* of his written works; and in particular, his book *On the Original State of Man*.

On the surface, the opening words of Protagoras' Great Speech – that, in the beginning, there were gods but no mortal species – might appear to contradict the *lógos* contained in his writings. In the opening sentence of his book *On The Gods*, for instance, he gives what appears to be a somewhat sceptical appraisal of the existence of the gods, saying that he has no means of knowing whether or not they exist, due to both the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life (Protagoras, fr. 4). The opening words of his Great Speech would also appear to contradict some of the identifiably Protagorean views expressed by some of those who associated with Protagoras. In a fragment from the tragedy, *Sisyphus*, for instance, Critias has a character declare that a wise man created belief in gods to better ensure adherence to conventions of justice (Critias, fr. 25). The opening of Protagoras' Great Speech even substantially departs from its closest parallel, in the *mũthos* of the *Prometheia* trilogy. The opening play of the trilogy, *Purphóros*, seems to have begun with gods and humans in existence together, although with the latter in a primitive state. Finally, the opening of Protagoras' Great Speech differs from the Hesiodic version of genesis, in which the cosmos is said to have

originated in a primordial *Cháos*, from out of which the gods were generated, beginning with Earth (*Theogony* 116-7). Instead, Protagoras merely asserts that as yet undifferentiated gods preceded the existence of mortal creatures.

The parallel between fragment 6.2 of Moschion and the opening of *On The Original State Of Man* offers an alternative means of interpreting the opening words of Protagoras' Promethean *mũthos* in terms of *lógos*. If the openings of Moschion's fragment and the Protagoras' Great Speech are both accepted as having essentially derived their wording from the opening of *On the Original State of Man*, then systematically comparing them provides a fairly straightforward method for interpolating the esoteric *lógos* behind the exoteric opening words of Protagoras' Promethean *mũthos*. Protagoras says that there once was a time when there were gods, but no mortal species. Moschion, by comparison, likely imitating Protagoras' *lógos* in *On The Original State of Man*, writes that there once was a time when the life of men resembled beasts. Juxtaposing these two passages, Protagoras would seem to be drawing an equivalence in his Great Speech between gods and the life of men, on the one hand, and the resemblance of mortal species to beasts, on the other. Reading into this parallel, which Protagoras must be assumed to be consciously posing, we might say that there once was a time in the life of men in which they were equivalent to gods. The static nature of early humans, arising from the bare necessities of their environment, rendered them virtually identical from one generation to the next. This initial state of continuity, combined with a lack of conscious awareness of their mortal nature, rendered these early humans essentially immortal and god-like.

Speaking to the second half of Protagoras' juxtaposition of mortal species and beasts, we might suppose his book to have argued that, subsequent to their early, divine-like state, humans eventually came into conscious self-realisation of themselves as a mortal species, like the beasts; but also as a species distinct from the beasts, uniquely endowed with the powers of mind, reason and speech. Early humans came to a realisation of themselves as sharing attributes of both gods and beasts, thus resembling the a-political man described by Aristotle, who is either a beast or a god.<sup>5</sup> While Protagoras appears to be making a pious statement in the opening words of his Great Speech, acknowledging the supreme status of the gods, he may, in fact, be seen alluding to the opening of his book, *On The Original State Of Man*, in which he impiously describes a time before humans had become essentially human; which is to say,

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<sup>5</sup> "[...] a man who is incapable of entering into partnership, or who is so self-sufficing that he has no need to do so, is no part of a state, so that he must be either a lower animal [*thêrion*] or a god [*theós*]." (Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a, trans. Rackham)

before they acquired the capacity for abstract thought and became consciously aware of their mortal nature. As will be seen, this is the first in a series of equivalences Protagoras draws in his Great Speech between different orders of existence – divine versus mortal, men versus beasts – in order to illustrate an underlying unity of his humanistic philosophy. Plato thus depicts Protagoras presenting a pious *mũthos* of genesis that only indirectly alludes to his impious *lógos*, stemming from his desire to shelter the more impressionable members of his audience from the impiety of blurring the distinctions between gods, humans and beasts.

Protagoras opens his Great Speech describing the initial state of the cosmos, saying it contained gods but not yet mortals. He then goes on to describe the role gods played in creating mortal creatures:

And when the destined [*eímarménos*] time arrived for them to come into being also, gods [*theoi*] moulded [*pupoĩsin*] them within the earth, compounding them of earth and fire, and of everything which is mixed with fire and earth. (320d)

The primordial gods Protagoras describes share essential features of the nature of divinity expressed in the *Prometheia* trilogy. These gods perform their anointed task of creating mortal creatures, but only at the "destined [*eímarménos*] time". In this regard, they are thus "subservient to destiny, which ordains the time fit for the birth of each race." (Coby, 1987, p. 53). The primordial gods Protagoras describes thus appear to have been cast from the same mould as the Zeus of Desmôtês, who is also depicted as subject to necessity, the Fates and the Furies. Protagoras' description of these primal gods as creators also imbues them with quintessentially Promethean characteristics. He describes them as having moulded (*pupoĩsin*) mortal creatures from earth mixed with fire; a fairly straightforward allusion to the infusion of a life principle, symbolised by fire, into inert matter, symbolised by earth. The particular metaphor of creating by moulding within the earth, and compounding earth and fire, also strongly evokes the craft of the potter, who moulds the earthen clay, and then fires it in a kiln to fix its shape.

The potter's craft as a metaphor for the divine creation of humans has an exceptionally long tradition in ancient Greek poetry. Most notably, Hesiod makes several references to Hephaestus moulding Woman/Pandora from earth and water. In *Theogony*, Zeus wills Hephaestus to 'mould earth' (*gaiês súmplasse*) into the likeness of a 'shy maiden' (*parthénô aidoín*) (571-2), from whom came womankind. In *Works & Days*, by comparison, Zeus asks Hephaestus to 'mix earth and water' (*gaĩa üdei phúsein*) and 'shape it like a fair maiden'



(*parthenikês kalòn eîdos*) (61-3); Hephaestus then 'moulds the earth' (*gaiês plássen*) into the 'likeness of a shy maiden' (*parthénô aidoiê*) (70-1), who becomes Pandora. As was mentioned in chapter 4, Sophocles likely employs a very similar metaphor in his satyr play, *Pandora or the Hammerers*. In a fragment of that play preserved by Erotian (*Medical Lexicon*, fr. 10), an unidentified character instructs someone: "first begin to mould [*órgázein*] the clay [*pêlòn*] with your hands." (fr. 482, trans. Lloyd-Jones). Prometheus was prominently known among the Athenians as the patron god of the potters; however, explicit references to him having created humans by moulding them from clay do not appear before the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>6</sup> There is a tradition naming Prometheus as the creator of Man that can be traced back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, in Sappho (Fr. 206). This identification may simply be a metaphor, though, for describing Prometheus as the first Man, and thereby the progenitor of the human race. Prometheus as the divine creator of humans is not otherwise attested before the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

Immediately after describing the creation of mortal creatures by the gods, Protagoras introduces Prometheus and Epimetheus:

And when they [the gods] were ready to lead them [mortal beings] to the light [*phôs*], they charged [*prosétazan*] Prometheus and Epimetheus to furnish [*kosmêsai*] and distribute [*neîmai*] powers to each as fitting. (Ibid.)

In this way, Prometheus and Epimetheus become the first gods Protagoras specifically names in his Great Speech, as the divinities specifically charged with allotting powers to mortal creatures. By introducing them immediately after the gods mould mortal creatures from earth and fire, Protagoras would thus appear to be the first person to employ the particular metaphor of the potter as the creator of Man in association with Prometheus. Protagoras ostensibly presents a theogony in the opening of his Great Speech, in the tradition of Hesiod, describing the genesis of the gods and mortals. However, even from what little is known of his written corpus – *On The Gods* and *On The Original State Of Man*, in particular – Protagoras appears to be inviting those of his audience who are 'in the know' to interpret his myth non-mythically, as a rational cosmology on the origins of all living things. If Protagoras' Great Speech is to be read as something more than simply an enchanting story, then, an attempt must be made to make sense of the particular prominence it gives to Prometheus and Epimetheus.

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<sup>6</sup> For specific references to Prometheus having created humans by moulding them from clay, see Chapter 4, section C.

The *lógos* behind Protagoras' *mũthos* is partially revealed by a comparison with its closest model, in Hesiod's *Theogony*. There, the universe begins in a formless state of chaos, from out of which the gods are generated, beginning with Earth (*Gaĩa*) and Eros. Earth then gives birth to Heaven (*Oũranòs*), and out of the union of Earth and Heaven is born Kronos, whom the Greeks interpreted as a metaphor for Time, at least as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE (cf. Pherecydes of Syros, fr. 65, 66). In the theogony of Protagoras, by contrast, the universe begins with the gods already in existence, albeit in undifferentiated form. These gods mould mortal creatures within the earth in what would come to be known as a distinctly Promethean manner. Before these gods bring their creations to light, though, they charge Prometheus and Epimetheus, the embodiments of forethought and hindsight, with distributing powers to them in a fitting manner. Given Protagoras' Zoroastrian connections, it is fairly safe to assume that his description of the gods bringing mortal creatures into the light is a metaphor for the coming into being of conscious existence. Protagoras thus assigns Prometheus and Epimetheus a highly privileged status in his Great Speech, as the allotters of fate to mortal creatures; a role that traditionally belonged to Zeus *Moiragetes*, the Guide or Leader of Fate. In so doing, Protagoras would seem to be making two points: first, that in the earliest manifestation of conscious existence in mortal creatures, a fundamental distinction was instituted in terms of time, or *chronos*, between past and future, forethought and afterthought.<sup>7</sup> The second major point Protagoras would seem to be making is that once conscious existence comes into being, with its awareness of past and future, it became the decisive determiner of fate for mortal creatures.

The mutual agreement at which Prometheus and Epimetheus arrive in Protagoras' Great Speech, as to how they will execute their allotted duty of distributing the various powers to mortal creatures, is utterly unprecedented in all prior depictions of the Promethean myth, including the *Prometheia* trilogy. As such, it readily invites non-mythic interpretation. Epimetheus begged Prometheus: "Let me distribute [*neimantos*]; you inspect [*èpískepsai*]." (320d) Amazingly, Prometheus readily accepts this division of their collective task, even though his nature should have forewarned him of the obvious fact: that his forethought would make

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<sup>7</sup> A more contemporary expression of this idea in terms of *lógos* may be found in Hume, who argues that a fundamental limitation to human understanding is that it derives all knowledge of present and future states of being from the observation of, and extrapolation from, past events:

We have said that all argument concerning existence are founded on the relation of cause and effect, that our knowledge of that relation is derived entirely from experience, and that all our experimental conclusions proceed upon the supposition that the future will be conformable with the past. (Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* 4.2, p. 49, ed. Hendl)

him a far better distributor, and that the hindsight of Epimetheus is far better suited to having him inspect (*èpioképtomai*) a distribution already made. This situation prompts the question: why would Protagoras want his audience to call the competency of Prometheus into question? Perhaps Protagoras is inviting his audience to consider the possibility that Prometheus knew his brother will botch the distribution. Perhaps he has Prometheus act in a deliberate and intentional manner to botch the distribution of powers to mortal creatures, in order to provide a pretext for stealing the gifts he really wanted to provide humans for the better means of their survival. Indeed, it is rather difficult to meaningfully interpret the agreement reached between Prometheus and Epimetheus in any other way, at least if they are to be understood as living up to their intrinsic natures, as signified by their names.

Prometheus' deliberate botching of the distribution of powers to mortal creatures, by surrendering responsibility to his witless brother Epimetheus, would seem to reflect an aspect of the identity Protagoras draws between himself, Prometheus, Epimetheus and other sophists. As Coby perceptively notes: "It might be said of the sophists that they engineer a crisis similar to the one precipitated by Epimetheus. By publicizing the nature/convention dichotomy, sophistry challenges the truthfulness of law-bound opinions." (1987, p. 176) The corrosive effects of the sophists' teachings on political order justifiably arouse the fear of the powerful, who are in no way deceived by their disguises. Sophists have been Epimethean in their thinking, Protagoras would argue, regretting their resulting persecution by the powerful in hindsight. Protagoras, however, has been able to exploit this situation in a suitably Promethean manner, by employing a superior form of deception. He openly declares that he is a sophist, thereby earning the trust and respect granted by candour. At the same time, though, he also takes other precautions, such as disguising his teachings in mythic forms that seem to pay homage to traditional pieties, and that teach the offspring of the powerful how to preserve their power from unfortuitous marriages and alliances. Like Prometheus, Protagoras must compensate for the folly of the sophists who preceded him; in the long run, though, he remains confident that his superior wisdom, by ushering in the Greek Enlightenment, will ultimately be borne out.

The order in which Epimetheus distributes the various powers to mortal creatures in Protagoras' Promethean *mūthos* bears considerable scrutiny, as aspects of its ordering significantly parallel that in which humans later develop the arts in the wake of Prometheus' gifts, pointing to an underlying unity between the two. Epimetheus first distributes strength without speed, while for those creatures that remained weak, he gave speed. Some he armed,

while others he left unarmed, but provided some other power for their safety. For those he kept the smallest, he distributed either a winged escape or a dwelling in the earth. At the dawn of creation, then, all creatures were initially weak, slow, defenceless and small. After providing them with an assortment of powers including strength, speed, armament or size, Epimetheus then additionally provided them with comforts: clothing in the form of thick fur or tough hide, which also provided a natural bedding; shodding in the form of hooves and a tough and bloodless hide; nourishment in the form of plants of the earth and meat of animals; and, finally, fewness and abundance of progeny. The notion that Epimetheus is ill-fitted to the task he took upon himself soon becomes apparent, though, for while he distributed all the various powers to the various mortal creatures for their safety and survival, by the time he got to humans, he had already exhausted all the available powers on the 'dumb animals' (i.e. those 'without speech' – *ta aloga*). The differentiation Protagoras draws in his *mūthos*, between dumb animals and humans, may perhaps be read as an indication that he believed that humans possessed an innate capacity for speech, albeit primitive, even at the earliest stages of their existence. Of course, this capacity would have still lacked the features of abstract thought that constitute the "articulate speech" that later developed in the wake of Prometheus' gifts (322a).

At this point in the story, Prometheus returns to examine his brother's distribution and finds that, while all the other animals were carefully provided for, mankind remained "naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed." (321c) Protagoras' overall point would seem to be that the Epimethean forces of nature that initially shaped human existence were, in a sense, "niggardly and blind" (Lampert, 2010, p. 52). Not only are they blind and niggardly, though, they even favoured the dumb animals over humans. The forethinking capabilities of Prometheus, to predict future states based on extrapolations from past event, are initially weak and even absent in nature. Their presence, though, allows humans to compensate for the parsimony of nature, which has left them physically weak and defenceless, and unable to ensure their survival. This very lack, though, also renders humans particularly open to receiving the aid Prometheus is able to provide, in accordance with the dictates of need.

In describing the hopeless state of human beings at the dawn of creation, Protagoras arrives at the central part of his Promethean myth, as well as the part that most closely follows more traditional accounts, although still with significant deviations. As the destined day (*eíasméné êméra*) was about to arrive in which mortal creatures must come out of the earth and into the light (which is to say, into conscious existence) and seeing the helpless state of humans,

Prometheus found himself perplexed (*àporía*) as to what kind of 'preservation' or 'deliverance' (*sôtêrian*) he could find for them (321c).<sup>8</sup> In desperation, therefore:

Prometheus steals from Hephaestus and Athena artful wisdom [*ēntechnon sophían*] together with fire [*purí*] – for by no means can this [artful wisdom] be acquired or used except by fire - and he bestows [*dôreĩtai*] them upon mankind. (321d)

Just as humans were about to come into conscious existence, then, they came into the possession of fire and artful wisdom. However, even with these gifts, they still lacked political skill (*politikên*), for it was with Zeus (*Dií*) where he dwelt in his citadel (*àkrópolin*), and his guards were fearsome. So instead, Prometheus came in stealth to the common habitation (*oikêna tò koinón*) of Hephaestus and Athena, where they practised their arts (*èphilotechneítên*). There,

stealing the fiery art of Hephaestus and the rest belonging to Athena, he gave them to mankind, so that from this mankind had abundant means [*eùporía*] for life [*bíou*]. (321e)

Protagoras concludes this central part of his Promethean myth by noting that Prometheus paid the penalty for this theft, "as it is told, because of Epimetheus." (322a) This is a rather odd reference, because in the Promethean myth "as it is told," in Hesiod, Prometheus is punished because of his theft of fire. In a later iteration of the myth involving the ass and snake, by comparison, he is punished because humans inform Zeus that Prometheus was the one who stole fire and gave it to them. In *Protagoras*, by contrast, Prometheus is said to have been punished because he was compelled to compensate for the incompetence of his brother, Epimetheus, who distributed all the powers that preserve mortal creatures to the dumb animals, leaving none for humans.

This central part of the Promethean *mũthos* told by Protagoras displays a number of features that point to its underlying *lógos*, more than likely derived from his books *On the Gods* and *On The Original State Of Man*. One of these features is the subtle shift from past to present tense when Protagoras begins to describe the deeds of Prometheus.<sup>9</sup> Protagoras describes the actions of Epimetheus in the past tense: he is said to have begged (*papaitēĩtai*) Prometheus and distributed (*némeĩ*) the various powers to mortal creatures. Prometheus, by contrast, Protagoras describes in the present tense: he comes (*ërchetai*), sees (*órã*) the state of humans,

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<sup>8</sup> Protagoras' description of Prometheus as seeking a deliverance (*sôtêria*) for humans is also in accord with the *New Testament's* description of God and Christ as saviour (*sôtêr*) of humanity (*Deuteronomy* 32.15, *Titus* 1.1, *Luke* 2.11, et. al.).

<sup>9</sup> A highly significant grammatical detail lamentably obscured by most translations of Plato's *Protagoras*.

steals (*kléptei*) fire and artful wisdom, and gives (*dôréomai*) them to humans. As Lampert notes, Protagoras' emphatic use of the present tense in describing the actions of Prometheus:

suggests that the inventive actions necessary for new technical skills are something humans will always have to receive as gifts in fending for themselves against a nature that the myth allows to be seen as niggardly and blind; there is, the present tense suggests, continuous technological progress available to humanity. (Lampert, 2010, p. 52)

Protagoras alter the grammatical tense in a charming and familiar story to reference a much larger point. The tense of the story changes at precisely the moment that Prometheus re-enters the scene to indicate that, while the Epimethean distribution of natural powers to mortal creatures occurred in the past, Prometheus continues to bestow his gifts in the present, and hopefully also the future. The Promethean gifts of artful wisdom, and the fire necessary for its acquisition and use, through which humans acquire wisdom (*sophían*) about living (*bíon*), continue to reveal new forms of knowledge. At the same time, though, the past oversight of Epimetheus still plays an essential role in shaping human nature, such that it is essentially defined by what it *lacks* and *needs* (clothing, shodding, shelter, the means of obtaining food, etc). As Coby observes, the accidental outcome of the human acquisition of rationality in the myth of Protagoras' Great Speech, stemming from Prometheus' improvised efforts to compensate for the shortcomings of his brother's distribution, also "coincides with modern evolutionary theory, which likewise attributes the phenomenon of man to chance." (1987, p. 55)

Protagoras subtly varies the gifts of Prometheus in his Great Speech, in relation to both traditional accounts, as well as its most closely related depiction in the central *èpeíodos* of Desmôtês. In traditional accounts, as found in Hesiod and elsewhere, Prometheus simply steals fire, presumably from Zeus, and gives it to humans. In the account of the *Prometheia* trilogy, by contrast, Prometheus steals fire from Hephaestus and gives it to humans, along with blind hope. In the central *èpeíodos* of Desmôtês, furthermore, Prometheus' gift of fire becomes an attenuated metaphor for placing mind and reason in humans. Prometheus then goes on to discover a series of technical skills, in an historically determined process that gradually raises them above the condition of brutes (Desmôtês 447-506). And in *Protagoras*, finally, Protagoras describes Prometheus as stealing both fire and artful wisdom from Hephaestus and Athena, and giving them to humans, with the caveat that artful wisdom cannot be acquired or used without fire. Protagoras' description of the loot and gifts of Prometheus, with fire serving as a metaphor for the mental capacity necessary to acquire and use artful wisdom, thus closely parallels the

version presented in Desmôtês, where a nearly identical, essential differentiation is made between the mind and reason that Prometheus initially places in humans, and the various arts he later goes on to discover on their behalf. Even within the arts Prometheus says he discovers, there are ones more closely identifiable with Prometheus himself, in terms of their close association with correct interpretation, while the more technical crafts are more readily identifiable with Hephaestus.

A comparison of the sources from which Prometheus steals fire, from Hesiod on down, further confirms the kinship between the version of the myth Protagoras tells, and the one told in the *Prometheia* trilogy. Prometheus steals fire from Zeus in Hesiod, from Hephaestus in the *Prometheia* trilogy, and Hephaestus and Athena in *Protagoras*. The distinctly Hephaestean and Promethean forms of knowledge described in Desmôtês (447-506) has a close corollary in the differentiation Protagoras draws between the respective kinds of wisdom possessed by Hephaestus and Athena. Coby (1987, p. 54) maintains that Protagoras here associates Hephaestus with fire, and Athena with artful wisdom.<sup>10</sup> However, this association is somewhat ambiguously worded by Protagoras. He says that Prometheus steals from "Hephaestus and Athena artful wisdom together with fire," (321d) and slightly later says that he steals the "fiery art of Hephaestus and the rest belonging to Athena" (321e). He could have been more explicit in associating Hephaestus with fire and Athena with artful wisdom, but he isn't. Rather, Protagoras only ever explicitly associates Hephaestus with his "fiery art [*ëmpuron téchnên*]" (i.e. blacksmithing) and Athena with "all the rest". The novelty of including Athena among the gods from whom Prometheus steals, plus the ambiguity with regard to just what he steals and from whom, raises the question of what, exactly, Athena signifies in Protagoras' Promethean myth. Which gift does Protagoras associate with Athena – fire or artful wisdom? – and just what does her particular brand of wisdom signify for his conception of Prometheus as an illustration of the human condition?

According to some interpretations, Athena has extremely deep roots in Indo-European myth. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Max Müller advanced the hypothesis that Athena was cognate with *Ahanâ*, a particularly rare and beautiful goddess of the dawn in Vedic mythology (*Rig-Veda*

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<sup>10</sup> I will take issue here with several points of Coby's analysis of the Promethean myth told in the "Great Speech" of Protagoras. On the whole, though, I have found Coby's analysis extremely helpful, as he is one of the few scholars to seriously consider the philosophical value of its Promethean myth. Unfortunately, his analysis is hobbled by not having realised the Protagorean provenance of the *Prometheia* trilogy, and the insight this realisation grants in interpreting Protagoras' Great Speech.

1.123.4), likely in reference to a red dawn. Müller's etymological formulation is somewhat supported by mythographic evidence, in terms of providing an elegant explanation for the otherwise puzzling story of Athena being born fully armoured from the head of her father, Zeus,<sup>11</sup> with either Prometheus (Sophocles, *Ion* 455) or Hephaestus (Pindar, *Olympian* 7, 31-44) having served as the midwife. The validity of Müller's Athena-*Ahanâ* formulation was bitterly contested in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was finally dismissed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, primarily on the grounds that it lacked a sufficient base of linguistic evidence.<sup>i</sup> Given the existence of a Doric form *Athānā*, though, plus the discovery of Mycenaen tablets in the 1960s that make reference to 'Atana' (Burkert, 1985, pp. 43, 139), there would seem to be sufficient cause for re-opening serious consideration of this formulation. Given the Luwian word for sun, *astanus*, Atana was likely a sun goddess. Luwian belongs to the Anatolian language group, that also includes Hittite, and that split from Proto-Indo-European sometime around 4400 BCE. As mentioned in chapter 8, Athena was also a fire god celebrated by a torch-race in the Athena Hellota, a civic festival with archaic origins. There would thus seem to be ample evidence for re-evaluating Müller's Ahana-Athena equation, and its implications for positing the existence of an Proto-Indo-European proto-Athena; however, this subject lies somewhat beyond the scope of the present enquiry.

In Hesiod, Athena assists Hephaestus in moulding Woman/Pandora, teaching her the womanly crafts of embroidery and weaving (*Works & Days* 64). Elsewhere, she is also mentioned as the goddess of horses, who helps to first bridle the horse (Pindar, *Olympian* 13.65; Pausanias 2.4.1), and is the first to use a chariot (*Suidas s.v. Hippeía Athênā*). She is also referred to as a goddess of carpenters, who advises how to build the first ship, the Argo (Apollodorus 1.9.16; Apollonius Rhodius 1.19; *Iliad* 15.412). The olive tree and its cultivation were said to be sacred to Athena, stemming from her creation of it in a competition with Poseidon over the possession of Attica (Plutarch, *de Iside et Osiride* 3; Pausanias 6.26.2, 1.24.3; Hyginus, *Fabulae*. 164). In Homer, Athena is the goddess of wisdom and strategy in battle, assisting in the construction of the Trojan horse (*Odyssey* 8.493). As Burkert aptly points out:

What unites these divergent spheres of competence is not an elemental force, but the force of civilization: the just division of roles among women, craftsmen, and warriors and the organizational wisdom which achieves this. (Burkert, 1985, p. 141)

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<sup>11</sup> *Patêr Zeús* being cognate in Sanskrit with *Dyaús Pitar*, god of the daylight sky and father of the gods.



While Athena is credited with the invention and practice of many crafts, then, her primary role for which she was known, particularly in Athens, was as the goddess of wisdom combined with power: namely, the organisational wisdom to justly assigning roles, such as to become "the force of civilization". Given her association with wisdom, then, it would seem to make more sense to associate Athena with fire, particularly as it is employed in the *Prometheia* trilogy and by Protagoras, as a metaphor for mind and reason, and as the essential catalyst for the further rise and advancement of human civilisation.

Athena's gradual development in Greek myth, from the archaic to the classical ages, is accompanied by a corresponding shift in the nature of her relationship with Prometheus. This shift is only dimly understood from what little survives of the contents of Luómenos; but it is discernable there, nonetheless, in terms of Athena's ceremonial crowning of Prometheus with a wreath of withy at the end of the play, symbolising the marriage of power and wisdom. In his Great Speech, Protagoras alludes to the close relationship between Athena and Prometheus in two ways: first, by having Prometheus visit the common habitation of both Hephaestus and Athena – the Hephaisteion – in order to steal both fire and artful wisdom. Protagoras then subtly associates Athena with fire, understood as mind and reason, by referencing the imagery of the *Prometheia* trilogy, which would have loomed large in the mind of his audience, it having premiered only a few years before the dramatic date of *Protagoras*. Prometheus steals fire from Athena, the fire goddess symbolising the union of power and wisdom. However, the degree to which she was an unwilling victim or willing accomplice is somewhat unclear.

The relationship between Athena and Prometheus is not often mentioned in archaic and classical sources, and those references that do exist tend to be rather vague or merely implicit. Given the pairing of Pandora and Epimetheus in *Works & Days*, Athena would appear to be the female corollary of Prometheus. The Hesiodic reference to Pronoea as the wife of Prometheus (*Catalogue of Women*, fr. 1), would also seem to be an allusion to his marriage with Athena, given that Pronoea was one of her well-known epithets. The problematic nature of the relationship between Prometheus and Athena is referred to in only a few sources. The most notable of these is Douris of Samos (fr. 19), who says that Prometheus was punished for his passion for Athena, rather than his theft of fire. His punishment of having his liver daily eaten by an eagle would also seem to be specifically designed to punish the crime of lust, given the Tityos parallel in Homer (*Odyssey* 11.576-581); though in the case of Prometheus in Desmôtês, this crime is sublimated into lust for wisdom. As well, there is the matter of the attempted rape

of Athena by Hephaestus (Apollodorus 3.188) (Pausanias 3.18.13), who is often considered a doublet of Prometheus. Another factor to consider is the lusty nature of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus, discernable from the linguistic evidence for the Indo-European root word *\*math*, from which the appellative Prometheus was constructed, and one of the inflections of the meaning of which was 'one who loves to rape'. And finally, there's Athena's likely Indo-European origins, as a goddess of the dawn, and thereby closely associated with the divine fire of the sun.

Protagoras would seem to be acutely aware of the complicated back-story of Prometheus, Athena and Hephaestus, and its potential for imparting added layers of meaning to his *mūthos*. Given the extremely checkered history of this troika of fire-gods and their Indo-European antecedents, it is even worth wondering whether Athena's virginity remained intact during Prometheus' furtive visit to her common habitation with Hephaestus. Indeed, it is even tempting to wonder what resistance, if any, she might have offered him; or whether, indeed, she actively assisted him in committing his crimes. This last conjecture is supported by Servius, who, in his Commentary on Virgil's *Ecloques* (6.42), describes Athena as an accomplice of Prometheus, helping him light a torch by stealth at the wheel of the Sun's fire.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, the relationship between Athena and Prometheus is much more complicated than is commonly assumed.<sup>13</sup> Because the chastity of Athena was considered the epitome of Athenian sovereignty, as well as for the sake of her feminine modesty, explicit allusions to it were rarely, if ever, made. Protagoras' off-hand reference to this complicated relationship would seem to indicate that Prometheus was highly successful in wooing Athena. Protagoras himself was also able to penetrate the highest echelons of power in Athens, and won broad-based acceptance of his world-view among the ruling class. Protagoras' mention of the '*\*math*' of Athena by Prometheus would also seem to be a tacit admission that the sophist, whose achievements are symbolised by the crimes of Prometheus, is also driven by a secret passion rooted in primal lust, albeit for power and wisdom.

Protagoras carefully moulds his Promethean myth to fit the particular circumstances of the time and place in which he presents it. His description of the common habitation of Athena and

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<sup>12</sup> "*Prometheus, Iapeti et Clymenes filius, post factos a se hominibus dicitur auxilio Minervae caelum ascendisse et adhibita facula ad rotam Solis ignem furatus, quem hominibus indicavit.*" (Servii Grammatici *Commentarii Bucolica* 62.1)

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the nature of the relationship between Athena and Prometheus is one of the most under considered questions, relative to its importance, in the scholarly study of ancient Greek mythology.

Hephaestus, and the citadel of Zeus, have close corollaries in the urban landscape of classical Athens, in the Hephaisteion to the west of the Agora and the Parthenon on the Akropolis. As was noted in chapter 8, construction on the Hephaisteion was begun in 449 BCE and was largely completed sometime between 435 and 430, contemporaneous with the dramatic setting of *Protagoras*, in 433. The Hephaisteion is also known to have contained statues of both Hephaestus and Athena, although some sources locate the one of Athena outside the temple, on its grounds. The Akropolis, by comparison, was the seat of supreme political power in Athens, and contained an important civic sanctuary dedicated to Zeus Polieus (city-protector) dedicated sometime around 500 BCE. The single most famous and prominent architectural work on the Akropolis, though, is undoubtedly the Parthenon, dedicated to Athena and completed in 438. Protagoras thus skilfully adapts his Promethean myth to exploit prominent features of the urban geography of Athens in order to more clearly illustrate his meaning, and more persuasively communicate this message to his audience. And just what message is it that Protagoras is trying to communicate? It would seem to centre on distinguishing the nature of the wisdom he teaches from that of his chief rivals present, at least as he currently perceives them.

The distinctions Protagoras draws between the artful wisdom of Hephaestus, the fiery wisdom of Athena, and the political skill of Zeus, are closely paralleled by the professed expertise of the eminent sophists staying as guests at the house of Callias: Hippias, Prodicus and Protagoras. The artful wisdom of Hephaestus, for instance, is neatly paralleled by the "technical subjects [*téchnas*]" that Protagoras describes Hippias as teaching (318e). The fiery wisdom of Athena, with her organisational ability, on the other hand, would seem to more closely match the subject matter taught by Prodicus. What, exactly, Prodicus teaches is somewhat obscurely described by Socrates in *Protagoras*. Near the beginning of dialogue, as he and Hippocrates enter the home of Critias, Socrates remarks that he couldn't make out what Prodicus was saying, as his voice was so deep that it reverberated in the room in which he conversed with his students. This seemingly off-hand observation may be interpreted, on a deeper level, as hinting that Prodicus had a hidden, esoteric teaching accessible to his students, but not outsiders. Socrates also expresses considerable admiration for Prodicus, saying he seems to be a very wise man and divine (315e). In other parts of the Platonic corpus, Socrates expresses admiration for Prodicus, albeit occasionally tinged by irony, for his insistence on the precise definition of terminology employed in discourse (cf. *Charmides* 163d, *Cratylus* 384b, *Euthydemus* 277e,

*Laches* 197d). Given these collected references, it is not much of a stretch to view Prodicus as an epitome for the wisdom of Athena, who orders the just division of roles between the craftsmen of the city. That leaves the political skill of Zeus which, of course, correlates with what Protagoras claims to teach: the good counsel in running the affairs of one's household and city. In this aspect of Protagoras' Promethean myth, then, he distinguishes the superiority of the political wisdom he teaches from the more technical forms of wisdom taught by Hippias and Prodicus, for their wisdom can only be perfected in a political community.

Before further delving into what, exactly, the political skill of Zeus consists, Protagoras first describes the effects that Prometheus' gifts had on humans. Because humans alone among the animals partook of a divine portion (*moiras*), thereby establishing a kinship with the God, humans are also the only ones to have "believed in gods and built altars and images of gods." (322a) From that earliest stage of technical development, humans quickly went on to invent by art "articulate speech and names, dwellings and clothing and shoes, beddings, and nourishment from the earth." (322a) In this ordering of the discovery of the various arts, Protagoras roughly follows the one presented in the central *èpeisodos* of *Desmôtês*. There, it will be recalled, Prometheus' gift of mind and reason is followed by: the interpretation of sights and sounds, construction, astronomy, mathematics, writing, domestication of animals, seafaring and navigation, medicine, prophecy, and mining (453-506).

The single most glaring divergence in Protagoras' reordering of the inventions of Prometheus is that he places religious innovations – belief in the gods, and the construction of altars and images of gods – before, rather than after, the development of articulate speech, as well as the more utilitarian aspects of knowledge that provide shelter, clothing and food. In *Desmôtês*, by contrast, the skills relating to the worship of the gods – prophecy, the interpretation of signs, and sacrifice – are listed after the development of the more technical crafts, such as house construction and the domestication of animals. Critias, a student of Protagoras who alludes to his ideas regarding the development of civilisation in his play, *Sisyphus*, also puts the development of religion after that of the political art (Fr. 25.1-8). We are thus confronted with a small conundrum: either Protagoras does not present the development of the arts in any particular order; or he does so in a way that contradicts the definitive public presentation of his views in the *Prometheia* trilogy, as was argued in part II.

Plato has Protagoras present the development of the arts subsequent to Prometheus' gifts in a very deliberate order that contrasts in interesting ways with the comparable ordering in

Desmôtês in order to illustrate particular points. Protagoras presents his ordering of the development of human knowledge in the form of a *mũthos*. The *Prometheia* trilogy is also ostensibly presented as a *mũthos*; however, the most readily identifiable Protagorean element of the trilogy – Prometheus' account of what he did for humans in the central *èpeisodos* of Desmôtês – is, in fact, presented more after the manner of a *lógos*, with a degree of literalness rarely found in poetry, classical or otherwise. So literal is the rendering of Protagorean *lógos* in Desmôtês, in fact, that Prometheus is named a sophist, and describes mind and reason as his primary gift to humans, without even mentioning its mythic metaphor, fire, in his most comprehensive account of his gifts in the central *èpeisodos* of the play. As was argued in chapter 7, that account essentially reproduces a crucial section of Protagoras' book, *On The Original State Of Man*, where he presumably presented an historical account of human progress, from barbarism to civilisation, with an emphasis on the central role the development of the various arts played in this process. Juxtaposing the order of the development of human capabilities and crafts, as depicted in Desmôtês and Protagoras' Great Speech, thus holds the potential for laying bare the *lógos* behind the Promethean *mũthos* Protagoras tells. This analysis also makes it possible to draw much more firmly grounded hypotheses as to the precise content of some of his prose works: in particular, *On The Original State Of Man*, and *On The Gods*.

After Prometheus' gifts of fire and artful wisdom, Protagoras describes the first crafts to have arisen in explicitly religious terms. Because humans have a portion (*moíras*) of the divine, due to the gifts of Prometheus, they alone among the animals, "through their kinship with the God, believed in gods and built altars and images of gods." (322a) From that initial beginning, humans then "quickly invented by art articulate speech and names, dwelling and clothing and shoes, beddings and nourishment from the earth." (Protagoras 322a) In the central *èpeisodos* of Desmôtês, by comparison, after Prometheus places mind and reason in humans, humans become able to more correctly interpret the meaning of their sense perceptions so as to produce durable knowledge (448-9). From there, humans then develop the arts of building construction, astronomy, mathematics, writing, the domestication of animals and seafaring and navigation (453-468). The improved ability of humans to interpret sensory data in Desmôtês, then, is thus paired in *Protagoras* with human belief in gods and building altars and images of gods. Seen in this light, Protagoras' description of the early advent of human religion may be interpreted as a mythic reference to an early stage in the development of human cognition, as described in Desmôtês, in which people began constructing the conceptual categories of

thought – the mind's altars and images of gods – belief in which allowed them to better order and interpret their sense perceptions.

What Protagoras calls belief in gods, and the construction of altars and images of gods, may be viewed as a rough conceptual equivalent of what Bacon describes as "idols of the mind" (*Novum Organum* 1.23-44).<sup>14</sup> The idols Protagoras describes, in this reading, are falsified images that the mind constructs as categories of thought, in order to provide a ready framework for ordering and interpreting sense perception, thereby rendering the world more readily comprehensible. However, the static nature of these categories also stands in the way of developing a truer understanding of nature, which is fundamentally characterised by processes of becoming. Protagoras draws an equivalence between belief in gods, and the interpretation of sense perception, both to highlight the origin of human belief in the gods, as well as the nature of human understanding. Human understanding is fundamentally dependent upon the mind's ability to construct and believe in the abstract categories of thought that inhere in language and culture, and that are instilled in us from birth, such that we have no choice but to believe in them as our most fundamental assumptions about the world. When interpreted in light of similar subject matter in *Desmôtês*, then, Protagoras' particular ordering of the inventions of men not only reveals core concepts likely expounded upon in *On The Original State Of Man*, in terms of describing the early development of human understanding; it may also be seen to illuminate the likely content of *On The Gods*, in terms of locating the origins of the gods, or at least of those gods worshipped by men, in the human mind's attempts to construct conceptual categories of thought for better interpreting sense perceptions, and coming to a better understanding of the nature of the world, such as to ensure human survival.

Immediately following on building altars and images of gods, and inventing articulate speech and names, Protagoras describes how humans then went on to invent "dwellings and clothing and shoes, beddings, and nourishment from the earth." (322a) This ordering exactly parallels the ordering in which he described Epimetheus as having dispensed his gifts to the dumb animals: dwellings, clothing, bedding, shodding and nourishment (320d-321b). Protagoras thus draws a parallel between the Epimethean distribution to the dumb animals and the Promethean

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<sup>14</sup> Particularly instructive, in terms of the correlation between belief in gods and the worship of images of gods at altars, on the one hand, and the interpretation of sense perception, is aphorism 23 of Bacon's *Novum Organum*, which reads: "There is a great difference between the Idols of the human mind and the Ideas of the divine. That is to say, between certain empty dogmas, and the true signatures and marks set upon the works of creation as they are found in nature."

development of human capabilities. The existence of this parallel points to the possibilities of other parallels between earlier and later stages of the myth. In particular, Epimetheus and Prometheus, as the first gods to emerge from the undifferentiated gods, could be read to signify that hindsight and forethought were first conceptual categories of mind to emerge from conscious existence, although the fore-thinking element remained initially latent, until the human mind gained the capacity to generate mental concepts by which to order its interpretation of sensory perception. This would correspond with a fundamental distinction in the nature of human understanding, most emphatically expressed by Hume, who observed that everything people think they know is fundamentally derived by inferences drawn from past events, from which they extrapolate to posit future conditions (cf. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*). Again, though, this form of knowing is fundamentally flawed, as Hume observes, for it assumes a degree of continuity in nature between past and future that there is no good reason to believe exists.

Being thus equipped with the gifts of Prometheus, Protagoras goes on to relate, humans were able to provide for their sustenance. However, these gifts were still insufficient to adequately protect them in their war with the beasts. As humans were "scattered in the beginning, and there were no cities," they were destroyed by the "wild beasts" (*thêsíôn*) (322a), as they were "weaker in all respects." (322b) Interestingly, Protagoras makes no mention of the threat posed by other humans, although the word he uses to identify the beasts, *thêsíon*, is also employed as a term of reproach for a human being; elsewhere, Plato employs the same term to describe a flatterer (*Phaedrus* 240d), and Aristophanes uses it to describe a coward (*Plutus* 439). The primary problem for humans, at this stage of their existence, was that they lacked a skill of war (*polemikê*), a component of the political art (*politikên téchnên*). They eventually came to found cities for their mutual safety, but as they still lacked the political art, every time they gathered together, they were unjust to one another and again dispersed, and thus continued to be destroyed by the beasts (322b). This situation – technically proficient humans who nevertheless lack the ability to form a lasting political association – would have been understood as more than a theoretical abstraction; for Greek myth is literally littered with stories of people who shamelessly inflict injustice upon one another, leading to the tragic disintegration of political, social and even familial ties.

It is at this point, with humankind teetering on the edge of extinction, stemming from their inability to form lasting political associations, that Protagoras introduces the third and final part

of the divine dispensations depicted his Promethean myth. The first dispensation of this myth was Epimetheus' distribution of the natural abilities to the dumb animals; the second was Prometheus' distribution of artful wisdom and fire (i.e. the capacity for mind and reason) to human beings. This third dispensation to humans, finally, consists of Zeus sending Hermes, who brings them the gifts of Shame (*aidô*) and Justice (*dikên*) (322c). While Zeus, who cannot tell a lie, and his messenger, Hermes, the god of thieves, are the last gods named in the Promethean myth told by Protagoras, they nonetheless retain a position of supremacy, particularly in terms of the relative value of the gifts they bestow upon humans. As Aristotle notes, the one responsible (*aítios*) for having first united people in the partnership of the city was the greatest of benefactors (*megístôn àgathôn*) (*Politics* 1253a). Despite his late entrance in the Promethean myth of Protagoras, then, Zeus still retains his supreme status, as the most important of the gods, even from a strictly human perspective, for he is the god who makes stable political association possible, as well as the great benefits that such lasting civil peace can bring.

Zeus' gifts of Shame and Justice to humans are nowhere mentioned in *Desmôtês* and the fragmentary remains of the *Prometheia* trilogy. In *Desmôtês*, Prometheus scrupulously avoids mentioning a political art among the many other arts he does describe himself as having discovered on behalf of men. The only hint of a political knowledge comes in his description of the discovery of prophecy, rooted in the observation and interpretation of nature, the social behaviour of birds in particular. As well, the Prometheus of *Desmôtês* gives another gift after fire, blind hopefulness, that he also describes as saving human beings from extinction. While no explicit reference is made to a political art in *Desmôtês*, though, the bestowal of a political art may be dimly perceived in what little is known of the conclusion of *Luómenos*. There, Heracles kills the eagle tormenting Prometheus and releases him from his bonds. Still unreconciled with Zeus, but spurred by sympathy for his sister-in-law, Thetis, Prometheus graciously informs the king of the gods of the marriage that will lead to his downfall. Zeus, in turn, generously reciprocates this gesture of loyalty by restoring to Prometheus all his due honours, the sole condition being that he name a symbolic punishment to which he would be willing to voluntarily submit, in order to expiate the sin of his defiance of the sovereignty of the godhead. Prometheus names his punishment as wearing a wreath of withy, a symbol of his previous bondage, but also a symbol of the union of wisdom and power, given how he is crowned by Athena herself in a ceremony evocative of a marriage. This bond ensures the continuing political stability of the Olympian regime under Zeus, now become just. It also considerably



elevates the status of Prometheus, providing him privileged and sanctioned access to Athena – the epitome of the union of power and wisdom, the force of civilisation, and the organisational ability to bring it about – all of which Prometheus desires with an intensity surpassing physical lust, stemming from his intrinsic forethought and *philanthrôpia*. Most importantly, this union results in Zeus' divine gift of justice to men, as symbolised by his gift of Thetis in marriage to Peleus. The name of the goddess, Thetis, means 'disposer' or 'placer', and derives from *títhêmi*, 'to set up, establish', suggesting her early political role as a founder and dispenser of justice. Peleus, on the other hand, was a man who both inflicted and suffered great injustice, but who went on to become a just king and father the great warrior, Achilles. Zeus' gift of Thetis in marriage to Peleus in Luómenos, therefore, may be read as a symbol of his gift of justice to humans.

The gifts Zeus gives humans to spur the development of a political art bear considerable scrutiny. He gives humans Shame (*aidôs*) and Justice (*dikê*) in order to render their cities more politically stable. A salient point that jumps out about Protagoras' description of these gifts is: Why does he have Zeus give a rather ignoble sounding gift, shame, when he could just as easily have had him give a closely related and more desirable sounding gift, such as honour, that would have achieved the same result? Part of the answer may be found in the parallels between the gifts of Zeus and the gifts of Prometheus. Like Prometheus' gifts of fire and artful wisdom, Zeus' gifts consist of an innate capacity, shame, that gives rise to a learned ability, justice. This parallel would seem to indicate that Protagoras saw human technical and political achievements as fundamentally rooted in the evolution of human physical and mental capacities that give rise, in turn, to certain technical and social capabilities. It would also seem to indicate an awareness that 'innate' human capacities continue to evolve, as the ramifications of learned abilities manifest themselves.

Protagoras illustrates his understanding of the evolution of human mental capacities, and the resulting technical and social capabilities, by the sequence in which the various order of gods arrive and bestow their gifts. Epimetheus, reflecting the niggardliness of nature, causes human nature to be primarily defined by eros, longing for what it lacks, which is essentially all the necessities of life. Prometheus, in turn, instils mental faculties in human nature, symbolised by fire, which makes possible the abilities for abstract thought, language and technical knowledge that allow humans to better fulfil their needs. Interestingly, the order in which humans develop technical knowledge – dwellings, clothing, shodding, bedding and nourishment

from the earth (322a) – almost exactly parallels the order in which Epimetheus provides animals the necessities of life – winged escape or dwelling under the earth, clothing, bedding, shodding, and varied nourishment from the earth (321a-b). This conscious parallel between nature's dispensations to animals and the mind's dispensation to humans invites a comparison that may best be summed up with a nod to fragment 34 of Democritus: with the gifts of Prometheus, humans become a microcosm of nature as a whole. As valuable as the gifts of Prometheus are for providing comforts to humans, though, they remain insufficient for preserving them in their war against the beasts (*thésíôn*) (322b). As Hermes also observes, artful wisdom is unevenly distributed to specialists among the population (322c); it can therefore only be fully realised in a human community. A much different divine dispensation is necessary, therefore, in order to preserve the political life of human beings.

Before humans can live in communities larger than a family unit, another fundamental alteration must be made to human nature; a capacity for Shame (*aidô*) must be instilled that leads, in turn, to the development of an added ability to develop a sense of Justice (*díkên*). But these gifts must also be given in a much different manner than Prometheus gave. Zeus has Hermes deliver these gifts to humans, "so that there be order [*kósmoi*] in cities and aggregating [*sunagôgoi*] bonds [*desmoi*] of friendship [*philías*]." (322c) Before giving them, though, Hermes asks how he should distribute them. Should he do it like the arts are distributed: namely, with their possession restricted to the few craftsmen skilled in their practice? To which Zeus replies: no, let all have a share, "for there could be no cities if but a few shared in them, as it is with the other arts." (322d) Zeus concludes his instructions to Hermes by asking him to also lay down a law whereby "he who is not able to share in Shame and Justice is to be killed as a pestilence to a city." (322d) The ubiquity of Zeus' gift in combination with the severity of the penalty he lays down to those who fail to receive it illustrates the importance to the *pólis* that all its citizens possess a capacity for shame and a sense of justice, the evolutionary emergence of which must be hastened by the implementation of a kind of social eugenics.

At this point (322d), Protagoras concludes the strictly mythical part of his demonstration speech, his *èpideizon*, although he won't declare an official end to his *mūthon* until a little further on (324d). He declares that the story he has just told demonstrates an observation Socrates made about the political opinions of the Athenians to have been correct. Socrates had asserted that it wasn't possible to teach a political art and to make men good citizens, not necessarily because *he* thought so, but because the Athenians democratically considered

everyone's opinions to be valid when debating the affairs of the city. He concluded, therefore, "they don't believe that such can be taught." (319d) Protagoras affirms this view with the declaration:

So it is [*oútô*], Socrates, for these [reasons] that both others and the Athenians hold the view that when the argument [*lógos*] concerns the virtue of carpentry or some other sort of craftsmanship [*àretês tektoikês*], only a few should contribute advice, and they refuse to tolerate advising from anyone outside that few, as you say (and reasonably [*eikotôs*] so, I would say). Whereas, when their deliberations involve political virtue [*politikês àretês*], and must be conducted entirely on the basis of [or, 'through,' 'by means of'; *dia*] justice and moderation, they quite reasonably tolerate every man as if it's fitting that all partake of this virtue, since otherwise there could be no cities. That is the cause [*aitía*] for this, Socrates. (322d-323a)

Protagoras thus validates the democratic views of the Athenians, that everyone has a share, however nominal, in political virtue. However, his story that Zeus simply decreed to Hermes that his political gifts be distributed to all still falls considerably short of a reasonable demonstration. At the conclusion of his *mũthos*, though, Protagoras adds a crucial proviso in terms of *lógos*: that "the cause [*aitía*]" of citizens considering all other citizens in their city to have a share in political virtue is that otherwise "there could be no cities" (322d). What Zeus does is thus alternatively expressed by Protagoras, albeit briefly and at the very end of the story, in terms of the fulfilment of a teleological necessity. In order to achieve the aim of ensuring their city's future existence, all the citizens of a *pólis* must come to a mutual agreement whereby they consider all their fellow citizens to partake in political virtue, however nominally. Protagoras' justification for the Athenian belief that all partake in political virtue may thus be seen to stem from the ambitions of a fore-thinking statesman who wishes to instil the necessary conditions for the continued existence of the democratic *pólis*; however, this rationale for this justification may also be seen to rest more on hope than a sceptical consideration of past evidence.

Protagoras brief *lógos* at the end of the Promethean *mũthos* of his Great Speech is evocative of Aristotle's consideration of the origins of political association (*politikê koinônía*) and the city-state (*pólis*), pointing to a possible kinship between the two. In *Politics*, Aristotle argues that the partnership that forms the city exists by nature because it better fulfils the primary end pursued by the other forms of human association, such as, for example, marriage: namely, to attain the good life (1252b-3a). Aristotle then goes on to observe that the impulse to form a political partnership:

is present in all men by nature; but the man who first united people in such a partnership was the greatest of benefactors [*àgathôn aítios*]. For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, he is the worst of all when sundered from law [*nó mou*] and justice [*díkês*]. (1253a, trans. Rackham)

Aristotle describes the first legislator to form a political association as the cause (*aítios*) of the greatest good, for only within such a partnership can the full potential of human nature be realised. The first man to unite people in a political partnership, as described by Aristotle, shares salient features with the figure of Zeus described by Protagoras. Zeus is motivated by fear (*deídô*) for the extinction of humans in their battle with the beasts. He thus instils shame and a sense of justice in order to predispose human nature to political association.

Melding the mythic account of Protagoras' Great Speech on the origins of political association with that of Aristotle provides a remarkably coherent hypothetical scenario. Aristotle's first legislator, also likely operating from out of a fear of human extinction, harnessed the latent potential newly evolved in human nature to form the first political partnership. In the process, this first legislator becomes a quintessentially Promethean figure, establishing the necessary condition – living in a civil society – for the further development of the technical, interpretive and political arts. The first legislator thus becomes humankind's greatest benefactor, allowing them to better reach their full potential. The way in which the *lógos* of Aristotle and the *mũthos* of Protagoras work together tend to support a primary interpretive hypothesis of this chapter, that the *mũthos* of his Great Speech on the origins of political association reflect ideas he presented in terms of *lógos* in his published works, especially *On The Original State Of Man*. What Protagoras wrote in that book about the origins of cities and justice in terms of *lógos* is, therefore, likely recoverable, I would argue, by a close interpretation of what, exactly, Protagoras says on the subject in the Promethean *mũthos* he tells in Plato.

In discerning the *lógos* behind Protagoras' Promethean *mũthos*, a first point to consider is the essentially Promethean characteristics of Zeus. Because he fears the extinction of human beings, Zeus is moved to provide a means of deliverance to ensure their survival. This role is thus highly evocative of Prometheus in Desmôtês, who is also moved to give humans the gift of blind hopefulness in order to save them from extinction (235-253). In Protagoras' Great Speech, then, Zeus thus becomes, in a very real sense, the latest iteration of Prometheus: the saviour of humans, who saves human beings from extinction with the gifts of shame and a sense of justice, thereby providing the conditions for them forming more stable political associations. This portrayal is all the more striking, given how it runs counter to his portrayal in Desmôtês (*ibid.*),

where Prometheus says Zeus expressed his desire to exterminate humans. This misanthropic version of Zeus is present in the *Prometheia* trilogy, as well as in sources materials that author likely imitated, including: Epicharmus (*Prometheus or Pandora*) and the Babylonian Flood myth. Clearly, Protagoras must have had compelling reasons for characterising Zeus as philanthropic in his Promethean *mūthos*. Perhaps his philanthropic Zeus is an expression of Protagoras' philosophical optimism in the face of more pessimistic accounts, as found in both Greek and Semitic myth, that saw human beings as essentially fallen from a primordial state of divine perfection. Protagoras' confidence in an optimistic interpretation, by contrast, would have been supported by Babylonian historical records,<sup>15</sup> which preserved ample evidence of the dramatic advance of human civilisation throughout the ages. This record, going back thousands of years to the very beginnings of civilised existence in cities, documented the seemingly infinite inventiveness of human beings, albeit for both good and evil, but which has brought about such great advances in the arts and material culture. Given this conclusive historical evidence, Protagoras might have argued, human beings must be supposed to live in the in the best of all possible worlds, where the inventiveness of the human mind is able to provide all that niggardly nature withheld at creation. At the very least, Protagoras would reject the idea that we live in a fallen state.

On another level, though, perhaps Protagoras' portrayal of a philanthropic Zeus is a reflection of his own career, as a Prometheus who has effected an accommodation between power and wisdom, and thus now sees Zeus as a philanthropic ally. The philanthropic Zeus Protagoras portrays in his Promethean *mūthos* may be seen to closely reflect the nature of the political wisdom he claims to teach as a sophist. That wisdom is symbolised in the *Prometheia* trilogy by the marriage in the *exodos* of Luómenos. Ostensibly, this marriage is between the protean goddess, Thetis, betrothed by Zeus to king Peleus, a man who had both inflicted and suffered great injustice, and who tames the protean goddess to father a great hero, Achilles. The real marriage of the play, though, occurs between wisdom and power, subtly alluded to by Athena's wreathing of Prometheus. This marriage is one of both convenience and gratitude for Zeus. It allows him to co-opt a formidable and implacable enemy, making him a trusted advisor once more. It also allows Zeus to express his gratitude toward Prometheus by restoring the honours due to him, and more, in exchange for a symbolic token of the Titan's binding himself

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<sup>15</sup> Of which Protagoras may be assumed to have been familiar, assuming his education by the Persian Magi.

to his will. For Prometheus, on the other hand, this partnership is primarily one of advantage, for it both allows him to further his philanthropic aims, and grants him privileged access to the object of his passion – Athena – the divine embodiment of the union of power and wisdom. In this partnership between power and wisdom, then, the wisdom of the wise helps preserve power of the powerful by warning them away from fateful associations that will generate more powerful rivals. The powerful, in return, shelter the wise by granting them a permanent place of honour in the *pólis*, as well as providing them an avenue through which to sate their lust, probing the mysteries of power. A lasting political association is thus formed between Zeus and Prometheus that both preserves the power of the powerful, and advances the wisdom of the wise.

Yet another aspect of Protagoras' portrayal of Zeus that points to an underlying *lógos*, concerns the nature of the gifts he gives. Like Prometheus, Zeus gives two very distinct gifts to humans: Prometheus gave them fire and artful wisdom, and Zeus gives them shame and a sense of justice. Both these gods thus instil a natural capacity – mind and shame – that enables humans to develop a learned ability – artful wisdom and a sense of justice. The near universal capacity for shame among men is aptly illustrated by two significant junctures in *Protagoras*. Near the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates asks Hippocrates: what he is going to Protagoras with a view to becoming? He answers with a blush (*èruthriásas*) that, if his case follows the previous examples provided by Socrates, it must plainly be with a view to becoming a sophist (312a). Hippocrates' sense of shame thus dissuades him from at least appearing to want to become associated with a profession, such as that of the sophist, with a well-known reputation for injustice.<sup>16</sup> Later in the dialogue, Protagoras himself also becomes ashamed (*aîschuntheís*) after Alcibiades condemns him for his lack of nobility in refusing to engage Socrates in dialectic discourse (348c). In fact, the only thing that compels Protagoras to justly live up to the agreement he made with Socrates, to engage in a discourse limited to short answers to questions, is the sense of shame he experiences when he attempts to renege on the agreement, standing before the others present. The involuntary feelings of shame experienced by both Hippocrates and Protagoras, the former with regard to not wanting to appear unjust, the latter with regard to wanting to appear noble, illustrate just how wide the range and capacity for shame is among people, both ignorant and wise alike.

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<sup>16</sup> At the very least, sophists were accused of not giving due regard to conventional norms of justice (cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*), which essentially amounts to the same thing.

If the gifts of Zeus are supposed to reflect ideas Protagoras expresses in terms of *lógos* in his written works, he may be assumed to have written something to the effect that human nature has evolved in tandem with the development and application of knowledge. This interpretation is supported by the severe social eugenics policy Zeus orders Hermes to institute: that all who prove incapable of sharing in shame and justice be killed as a pestilence to the city. This divinely ordained policy, of executing the openly and indelibly shameless and unjust among the population, in a manner evocative of culling the diseased animals among a herd of domesticated cattle, is a measure calculated to fundamentally transform the nature of the city's population over time. As the sick animals of the herd are culled, the feeling of shame, and the sense of the justice to which it helps give rise, becomes ever more an innate characteristic of the population, as opposed to something merely learned through acculturation. In this way, Zeus' gifts transform the original configuration of human nature, the development of which continues unabated into the present.

Zeus' gifts of shame and justice are further illuminated by parallels to the respective natures of Epimetheus and Prometheus. In a sense, Shame stands in the same relation to Justice as Epimetheus stands in relation to Prometheus. For just as knowledge of the future events is fundamentally limited to extrapolation from past ones, as Hume argued, so, too, justice may be seen to largely arise from the fore-thoughtful avoidance of shame. In the early stages of human political association, people conformed to standards of justice to escape punishment. As people adapted to the condition of living within political association, the fear of punishment was gradually supplemented by a feeling of shame that one experienced when one's transgressions were discovered. People then learned a sense of justice in order to forethoughtfully anticipate and avoid feelings of shame arising from the transgression of community standards of justice. A further innovation in this regard would have been the invention of gods that observe human behaviour and care for human justice. In this way, political association becomes gradually more ingrained in human nature, such that even the most unjust city dweller seems just when compared with people who've not benefitted from living in cities over many generations (327d). While the Promethean *mũthos* of Protagoras' Great Speech may be interpreted in many ways to illuminate its underlying, esoteric *lógos*, the main point of his story is to demonstrate the supremacy of the political art, and to position himself as the exemplar of its teaching.

Protagoras concludes the Promethean *mũthos* of his Great Speech with the declaration that he has shown why the Athenians are correct in their democratic belief: that all their fellow

citizens have a share in civic virtue. However, he has still left unanswered the primary challenge posed by Socrates: whether or not such virtue is teachable. The gap between this primary question and what the *mũthos* of Protagoras does explain is, perhaps, a measure of the limits to what can be explained in mythic form. *Mũthos* is better suited to presenting an aetiology – describing why things came to be the way they are – whereas *lógos* is more adept at describing how things are in the present. Despite the conceptual deficiencies of the mythic form, Protagoras was eager to tell his Promethean *mũthos*; it being both the counterpart to his book, *On The Original State of Man*, as well as the source of inspiration for the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, the spectacular premiere of which would still have been fresh in the mind of his audience. As the most successful practitioner of the philosophy that sees the cosmos in a constant state of becoming, it is imperative to Protagoras to demonstrate to his audience, each one of whom is a prospective paying customer, the current relevance of the wisdom he teaches, as demonstrated by how it is prominently referenced by his contemporaries among the poets. This hypothesis is further supported by Protagoras' reference to Pherecrates' comedy, *Agrioi*, the full implications of which are considered in more detail in the exegesis below, corresponding to where Protagoras employs the reference in his *lógos*. In order to finish answering Socrates' second question, as to how it is that virtue is teachable, though, Protagoras will resort to *lógos*.



#### D. The *Lógos* of Protagoras' Great Speech

In his Promethean *mũthos*, Protagoras explained how it is that everyone came to have a share in civic virtue, through Zeus' gift of a sense of shame and justice. Expressing this *mũthos* in terms of *lógos*, everyone came to possess civic virtue out of necessity, for otherwise political associations could not last. In demonstrating how it is that civic virtue is teachable, on the other hand, Protagoras proposes to leave off telling a story (*mũthón*), and instead give an argument (*lógon*) (324d). Protagoras' argument continues to have much in common with his story, though; at least insofar as it, too, aims, in the final analysis, to establish as fact what the majority of people believe to be true. Protagoras asks Socrates to first consider whether or not there is something in which the citizens must necessarily partake if there is to be a city. If there is such a thing, then it must be something akin to "justice [*dikaíosúnê*], moderation [*sôphrosúnê*], and the pious [*to hösion*]," or what, on the whole, Protagoras calls "manly virtue [*àndròs àretên*]" (324e-25). The manifold nature of civic virtue, in Protagoras' description, will become a major point of contention between him and Socrates later in the dialogue. Protagoras' naming of pious as one of the aspects of manly virtue also constitutes the first mention of this particular virtue in the dialogue. Perhaps Protagoras has not deigned to mention piety before now because his previous *mũthos* was deeply impious, radically changing what is said about the gods in order to communicate his underlying *lógos*, while still conveying an apparent piety, that our virtues are the gifts of the gods. Now that his *mũthos* and the dominant ideology of democratic Athens have been brought into alignment, though, Protagoras (re-)introduces the pious as a virtue that preserves a teaching about the gods that reinforces that political association. Expressing this idea in a slightly different way, Lampert observes that: "by adding *the pious*," Protagoras' speech "adds to what Zeus gave the belief that Zeus gave it." (Lampert, 2010, p. 63)

While Protagoras switches to employing a *lógos* in his Great Speech, his argument is nevertheless still fundamentally rooted in what the many believe to be true, although with a particular emphasis on what the rich and powerful believe. Civic virtue must be teachable, he explains, for many people expend much effort throughout their lives attempting to teach the various aspects of virtue, both to themselves and others around them. In earliest childhood, for instance, parents continually admonish their children as to what is just, noble, pious, and their opposites; and if the child does not obey, "then like a warped and twisted plank they straighten him with threats and blows." (325d) (cf. Bacon, *Essays*, #13) The especially rich and powerful

even send their children, as they get older, to teachers in order for them to learn to read and write, to memorise the poems of good poets (325e), to play music (326a) and to perform gymnastics (326b). Protagoras thus cites the traditional triumvirate of classical Greek *paideía*, which focused upon instruction in poetry, music and gymnastics. After children have completed their schooling, furthermore, the city also requires them to live their lives according to the model set in the laws, which Protagoras describes as the 'inventions' or 'discoveries' (*eúrêmata*) "of good lawgivers of olden times" (326d).

The wording of Protagoras' description of the laws invented or discovered by good lawgivers recalls Prometheus' description of his many 'discoveries' on behalf of humans in the central *epiesodos* of *Desmôtês* (441-506).<sup>17</sup> This reference highlights Protagoras' belief in Promethean inspired political reform; a theme notably absent in *Desmôtês*, but which likely formed a primary theme of the conclusion of *Luómenos*, with the reconciliation of Zeus and Prometheus. Protagoras concludes his first proof of the teachability of virtue with a rhetorical flourish, pointing to its obviousness:

Given, then, that so much care is taken regarding virtue, both in private and in public, are you really surprised and perplexed over whether it is teachable, Socrates? There is no need for surprise; it would be far more so if it were not teachable. (326e)

In the final analysis, then, Protagoras' first proof of the teachability of virtue rests in part on an observation, and in part on an assumption. Because almost all people, but especially the rich and powerful, attempt to instil various forms of virtue in themselves and others, it must be teachable. Protagoras furthermore assumes that the 'civic' or 'manly' form of virtue that he claims to teach is as teachable as the various technical forms of virtue he describes: literacy and gymnastics, as well as following the laws set down by good lawgivers.

Having presented his proof of the teachability of virtue, Protagoras then addresses a second point that Socrates had made to support his contention that virtue is not teachable. Socrates had pointed out how Pericles, a man widely considered to possess political virtue in the highest degree, was manifestly unable to educate his sons to such virtue. Given this situation, Protagoras rhetorically asks:

Now why is it, then, that many sons of good fathers are paltry? Learn [*máthe*] this as well. For this is nothing surprising, if there's truth in what I said before, concerning this thing – virtue [*àretês*] – that no one must be a layman if a city is to exist at all. For if it is

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<sup>17</sup> Especially Prometheus' description of how he invented (*êüre*, from *eúriskô* – to find) seafaring and navigation (*Desmôtês* 468)

as I say – as it most assuredly is – consider any other pursuits or learnables [*mathêmátôn*] you choose. (326e-27a)

As mentioned above, Protagoras' use of cognates of *manthánô* points to the root word upon which Prometheus was originally constructed. And in this case, Protagoras employs it in both the imperative and noun forms. He tells Socrates: 'learn' (*máthe*) how it is that good fathers often produce bad sons; and then names the most general set of what all may be learned as 'learnables' (*mathêmátôn*). Protagoras' proof for why virtue belongs in the set of learnables is based upon his observation of learning behaviours. With any given learnable, there are people who are naturally talented, as well as those who lack any native ability; and it is unreasonable to imagine that someone utterly lacking in, for instance, flute-playing ability would be able to learn to play the flute to a high degree of proficiency, even with a highly talented practitioner as a teacher. The sons of gifted flute players are not necessarily more gifted flute-players than the average person. At the same time, though, if everyone in a city was compelled to learn the flute, even the most untalented laymen would be more talented than someone who never received such instruction.

At this point, Protagoras makes a highly significant reference to a comedy by Pherecrates in order to underline his point. He first argues that, as with the example of flute-playing, even the most unjust human raised among laws and humans would seem to be just, and even to be a craftsmen of justice, when compared to humans who had neither education, nor law-courts, nor laws. To help his audience imagine such humans, lacking any compulsion to care for virtue, Protagoras points to the savages (*agrioi* – literally, people 'living in fields') such as those the poet Pherecrates presented last year at the Lenaia. Surely, Protagoras rhetorically asks, if Socrates found himself "among such humans as the misanthropes [*misánthrôpoi*] in that chorus," he would soon long for the company of even the most unjust and vicious city dweller (327d). The play of Pherecrates to which Protagoras refers was titled *Agrioi*, according to the testimony of Athenaeus, who also states that it was staged during the archonship of Aristion (5.218d), which would date the play to sometime in 421/0 BCE. This reference has thus been condemned, both by Athenaeus, as well as most modern scholars, among them Guthrie (Plato, 1956, p. 27), as an incidental anachronism of the dialogue. Given the importance of this play's relation to the *Prometheia* trilogy, though, the evidence for its anachronistic reference must be briefly reviewed.

As mentioned above, the main evidence for assigning 421/0 BCE as the date for the premiere of *Agrioi* is a reference provided by Athenaeus, who says the play was staged during the archonship of Aristion (327d). However, Athenaeus lived and wrote in Egypt during the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, and likely relied upon *didaskalía* (compilations of the winners of dramatic performances) likely compiled during the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. From an anonymous ancient treatise (*On Comedy*, p. 28), though, Pherecrates is known to have won his first dramatic competition in 438 BCE. From the evidence of inscriptions, he is also known to have been victorious in the City Dionysia festival in the mid-440s (IG II<sup>2</sup> 2325. 56), and twice at the Lenaia festival, the first time in the mid to late 430s (IG II<sup>2</sup> 2325. 122). It is tempting to conclude that this latter inscription records Pherecrates' victory at the Lenaia with *Agrioi*, as the mid to late 430s exactly matches the date Plato provides in *Protagoras*, 434 BCE being the year before the dramatic date of the dialogue. It should also be kept in mind that Greek playwrights are known to have revised and restaged their works. After the death of Aeschylus in 456 BCE, for instance, a decree was passed allowing his plays to be re-staged by anyone willing to assume the expense of the *choregia*, with provisions made for a protagonist being provided at state expense. Aristophanes, on the other hand, premiered *Clouds* in 423 BCE, but revised the manuscript for the play between 420 and 417, apparently with the intention of restaging it. Also, beginning in "386 BCE, it was officially permitted to produce an earlier tragedy and from 339 BCE an earlier comedy." (Harvey, 1990, p. 576)

From the evidence provided above, a number of points emerge. The first is that Plato should be considered a more reliable source for the dating of the premiere of *Agrioi* than Athenaeus; for Plato personally knew and/or was related to many of the people he depicts in *Protagoras*, as opposed to Athenaeus, who had to rely on 500 year-old *didaskalía*. Second, even if the documents upon which Athenaeus relied were substantially correct – that *Agrioi* was staged in 421/0 – that fact does not preclude the possibility that it also won first prize for Pherecrates at its premiere, at the Lenaia in 434, and that Pherecrates substantially revised and restaged it in 421/0. Another piece of evidence to consider in dating the premiere of *Agrioi* concerns its dramatic content. As Philip Smith notes: "The play seems to have been a satire on the social corruptions of Athens," centring on "the feelings excited at the view of [...] men who are uncivilized [...] and enemies to the civilized part of mankind." (Smith, 1867, p. 258) As such, *Agrioi* would seem to have been a reciprocal commentary on the primary theme of the *Prometheia* trilogy. Whereas the *Prometheia* described how the philanthropic Prometheus

civilised human beings through his gifts, *Agrioi* described how the chorus, composed of misanthropes, take civilised existence for granted and abandon it, but then find themselves among savages who make them regret their decision in hindsight, after the manner of Epimetheus. As such, *Agrioi* would seem to have been the first in a series of prominent 5<sup>th</sup> century comedies that satirised significant elements of the *Prometheia* trilogy, including: Cratinus' *Ploutoi* (429 BCE) and Aristophanes' *Birds* (414 BCE).<sup>18</sup>

Protagoras' reference to Pherecrates' *Agrioi* would seem to indicate that play's link to the *Prometheia* trilogy, and thereby to his philosophy. If the wording of his description of the chorus is considered historically accurate, and there are good reasons to believe it is, it would constitute the earliest recorded use of the word *misanthrôpoi* in all of Greek literature. As it stands, the three instances in which Plato employs the various cognates of *misanthrôpia* in his dialogues (*Phaedo* 89d, *Protagoras* 327d, *Laws* 7.791d) constitute the first extant instances of the occurrence of the word in all of Greek literature.<sup>19</sup> *Philanthrôpia*, too, is an extremely rare word in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE; the only extant instance of its use outside of Desmôtês during that century occurs in Aristophanes' *Peace*, where Hermes is praised as 'most philanthropic' (394).<sup>20</sup> Plato is likely only the third author to employ *philanthrôpia* in his extant works, in *Euthyphro* (3d), which was likely composed sometime in the 390s.<sup>21</sup> Given the extreme rarity of the occurrence of both *philanthrôpia* and *misanthrôpia* as words in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it seems likely that Pherecrates' *Agrioi* was yet another portrayal of Protagoras' humanistic philosophy on the Athenian stage, albeit this time in comic form. In particular, *philanthrôpia* and *misanthrôpia* may be understood as the opposing *lógoi* of Protagorean humanistic philosophy, describing the opposing human drives toward civilisation and savagery.

The main lesson Protagoras would seem to want to impart by his reference to Pherecrates' *Agrioi* is that the perception of civic virtue by people living in a *pólis* is distorted by their perspective. Because they've usually only ever have experience of others who have also been

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<sup>18</sup> Aristophanes also closely imitates particular wording in Desmôtês in other plays, including: *Acharnians* 704, in reference to the Scythian wilderness (*Skuthôn êrêmía*) (cf. Desmôtês 2); and *Peace* 394, in reference to the "most philanthropic" Hermes (cf. Desmôtês 11, 28).

<sup>19</sup> The next extant occurrence of *misanthrôpia* as a word occurs in a speech of Isocrates (*Antidosis* 131, 315) dating from 354/3, or only four or five years before Plato's death.

<sup>20</sup> Aristophanes also declares Eros to be the most philanthropic of the gods in Plato's *Symposium* (189d), demonstrating the verisimilitude of Plato's depiction of the terminology employed by the characters in his dialogues.

<sup>21</sup> The next occurrence of *philanthrôpia* as a word after Plato's use of it in *Euthyphro* is found in Alcidas (On the Sophists 16) which was most likely written sometime between 391 and 380 (Van Hook, 1919).

acculturated to civilised behaviour, they have little or no idea just how unvirtuous people can truly be. Protagoras thus declares Socrates spoiled:

because all are teachers of virtue so far as each is able, it appears to you that no one is. Just as if you were to seek some teacher of Greek, none would be apparent; (327e)

The equivalence Protagoras draws, between learning a language and becoming acculturated to virtue, is interesting, as it points to his belief in the origins of virtue in the common cultural inheritance of a people, rather than in specific teachers. Even among craftsmen who follow their father's trade, though, it's not always clear where, exactly, they learned their skills, whether from their fathers or others in the same trade; although it would still be easy to identify teachers for the inexperienced, Protagoras hastens to add. In the same way, he goes on to argue, even though it is difficult to identify from whom people have learned whatever virtue they do possess, it is still possible to identify teachers of virtue. And if it turns out that there is someone who excels at advancing others closer to virtue, Protagoras concludes, we should be glad.

Protagoras believes himself to be one of the teachers of virtue he describes. So confident is he in his teaching abilities in this regard, in fact, that he has "fashioned a special payment scheme" whereby any student may either pay his teaching fee in cash, or, as Protagoras says:

he can go to a temple [*íerón*], make a sworn declaration of what he believes to be the value of my instruction [*mathêmata*], and deposit that much. (328c)

In his final summation of what he teaches, then, Protagoras once again identifies the nature of his instruction, as *mathêmata*, with Prometheus. As has been seen, though, Protagoras' own conception of his wisdom as being the marriage of wisdom and power makes his wisdom more akin to Zeus, who, for all his power, can only tell the truth, and only has knowledge of only the here and now. With the foregoing story (*mũthon*) and argument (*lógon*), Protagoras concludes that he has demonstrated that virtue can be taught, that the Athenians believe it to be so, and that it is no surprise that good fathers turn out sons who are paltry, and good sons result from paltry fathers. As evidence of this last assertion, he points to the sons of Polycleitus, the talented sculptor, who bear no comparison to their father. On this basis, and in direct reference to Paralus and Xanthippus, the sons of Pericles, Protagoras declares: "there is still hope [*èlpídes*] for them, for they are young." (328d) This comment may be read, perhaps, as a token of his graciousness, and his desire to ingratiate himself with prospective students. At the same time,

though, it also reflects Protagoras' Promethean self-identification, at least insofar as he holds out hope for the further development of human potential, even in the face of inapt students.

With the conclusion of Protagoras' Great Speech, Socrates says that he and the others gathered there sat for a long time in silence, enchanted. And little wonder, given the stunning magnitude of what all he had just finished saying. Even taken strictly on its merits as a response to Socrates' challenge, Protagoras accomplishes a daunting feat in his Great Speech. Socrates had asked him to demonstrate how it is that virtue can be taught, even in the face of the opinion of the many, as reflect in what the "wise" Athenians believe, that all have a share in civic virtue, and good fathers are manifestly unable to teach their sons. Protagoras does so by pointing to the role that necessity played, mythically portrayed by the dispensation of Zeus, in shaping human nature to include shame and a sense of justice, allowing for the advent of the greater power of lasting political associations. The magnitude of Protagoras' feat in his Great Speech is amplified all the more when one realises the degree to which its Promethean *mūthos* illuminates the *lógos* of his philosophy. When juxtaposed with elements of the *Prometheia* trilogy, plus other related references in authors strongly influenced by Protagoras, such as Critias and Moschion, a fairly clear picture begins to emerge of Protagorean philosophy. What this picture shows is that Protagoras' Promethean *mūthos* is not an off-hand, extemporaneous story, but rather a carefully crafted reference to his written corpus, in particular as contained in his books, *On The Original State Of Man*, and *On The Gods*. For the uninitiated, Protagoras told a charming story that weaves traditional mythic elements in novel and often inexplicable ways; but for those familiar with his written works – including, no doubt, Socrates – Protagoras has also presented a highly comprehensive, albeit esoterically rendered, summary exposition on the very genesis of human nature and civilisation.

### E. Socrates' Challenge to Protagoras and Pre-emption of His Promethean Identity

A detailed exegesis of the *Protagoras* in its entirety is somewhat beyond the scope of this dissertation. What I do wish to do in the remainder of this chapter, though, is briefly summarise three major challenges that Socrates and Protagoras respectively pose to one another in what is best understood as a contest between the two great schools of Pre-Socratic philosophy: Heraclitean and Parmenidean. Given Protagoras' description of the manifold nature of virtue in his Great Speech, Socrates asks him whether virtue is one or many (329d). He then demonstrates how his answer – that virtue is many – is contradictory or, at the very least, dangerous. Later, Protagoras also poses a challenge to Socrates, asking how he can consider a poem of Simonides, on being and becoming good, to be beautiful and correct when it seems to contradict itself (339b-d). In this way, the Heraclitean and Parmenidean themes as to whether the cosmos essentially consists of one or many, being or becoming, are alluded to in light of their logical and political consequences. From there, I wish to demonstrate how Socrates adopts Protagoras' carefully cultivated Promethean identity as his own, though expunged of the Protagorean delusion that a permanent marriage can be effected between wisdom and power that still leaves the integrity of wisdom intact.<sup>22</sup> Instead, Socrates advances an audacious, multitropic teaching that posits an identity between pleasure, the good and knowledge. In this, Socrates' chronologically first appearance in the Platonic dialogues, he thus pre-empts Protagoras' claim to be the philanthropic Prometheus by providing a new teaching for the benefit of both the many humans and the few wise. As will then be seen in the subsequent chapter, this Promethean identity then becomes a primary image for how Socrates and Plato impart teachings necessary to safeguard, transmit and further realise the philosophical gains of the Greek Enlightenment.

The first challenge Socrates poses to Protagoras is to ask: is virtue is one or many? In his Promethean *mũthos*, Protagoras had stated that Zeus sent justice and shame to humans; and at other points had made reference to several forms of virtue, including justice (*dikaíosúnê*), moderation (*sôphrosúnê*), piety (*hósiótês*) (329c). What Socrates wants to know, though, is: does Protagoras consider these various forms of virtue to be many, in the sense that the face has many different parts, each with its own particular function; or one, in the sense that a lump of gold has parts that are essentially indistinguishable from one another? Protagoras argues

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<sup>22</sup> Socrates' reservations in this regard are expressed most clearly in *Republic*, where his call for the rule of philosopher-kings is tempered by his awareness of the remote possibilities of this coincidence of wisdom and power ever coming to pass.



that virtue is manifold and composed of different parts, consistent with the Heraclitean perspective on the cosmos, as being constituted of many things in a constant state of becoming. Socrates, on the other hand, representing the Parmenidean perspective, challenges this assessment, asking: how could any one of the virtues, as a virtue, possibly contradict the others? How could the just contradict the pious, for instance, except perhaps in initial appearance? (331b) For Protagoras, the hypothesis that there's an essential difference between the pious and the just is manifestly obvious, and is supported by the entire tradition of Greek wisdom. It even constitutes one of the essential assumptions of Greek tragedy: that there are fundamentally insoluble conflicts between different goods and virtues. In fact, the notion that there's a fundamental disjunction between piety and justice is the central theme of the most successful tragedy of the Periclean age: Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which the piety of Antigone comes into irresolvable conflict with the justice of Creon. Not incidentally, *Antigone* also contains the most poetic expression of Protagorean philosophy, in its celebrated Ode to Man.

Socrates backs Protagoras into a corner, though, when he asks if there is a fundamental difference between wisdom and moderation. Protagoras replies, "I should be ashamed [*aichuniímên*] to agree to this, but many humans say so." (333c) Protagoras, stemming from his sense of shame, not to mention the caution he must exercise as a foreigner who openly declares himself a sophist, thus attempts to hide behind the opinion of the many in his answer. But Socrates insists that Protagoras answer in terms of what he thinks. He then asks: "Do some who commit injustice seem to you sensible (*sôphrsoneĩn*)?" To which Protagoras demurely replies, "Let it be so." Socrates continues to press the point, asking: "And when you say 'sensible,' you mean that they 'think well' [*eu phroneĩn*] with respect to doing injustices?" To which Protagoras assents. Socrates then asks: "And when you say 'think well,' you mean that they 'deliberate well' [*eu bouleúesthai*] with respect to their doing injustices?" To which Protagoras replies, "Let it be so." Socrates then has Protagoras clarify that people deliberate well if they do well (*eu*) by their injustice (333d). He then asks him, "do you say some things are good?" To which Protagoras replies, "I do say." Socrates then asks, "Do you mean those things are good, which are beneficial to humans?" To which Protagoras replies, "Yes, by Zeus, but even if they are not beneficial to humans, I for my part still call them good." (333e)

At this point, Socrates makes an observation to his frame audience, that Protagoras seemed to be getting riled up and contentious; and little wonder: Socrates has backed him into a serious corner with his line of questioning by pointing to a disjuncture in Protagorean thought between

wisdom and justice. Rather than closing this trap, though, Socrates instead tells his frame audience that he "continued with caution and gently asked" Protagoras to clarify which of two propositions he meant in calling things 'good' (*àgathà*) that are not beneficial: "that which is beneficial [*ôphélimá*] to not even one human, or that which is not beneficial at all?" (334a) With Socrates thus loosening the trap, Protagoras is allowed to escape. He then delivers an extended speech on the relativity of the good that likely derived from one of his stock demonstration speeches, a safe fallback geared to make his audience forget the primary issue raised by Socrates. But what does Socrates' cautious and gentle questioning hide? What might he have asked Protagoras if he had proceeded *incautiously* and asked an *ungentle* question? In his perceptive analysis of the *Protagoras*, Lampert brings this unstated question out into the open. Following his earlier line of questioning, Socrates would seem to have been building toward the following question:

Injustice, then, Protagoras, when well counselled, is the good thing beneficial to those few your good counsel counsels while not being beneficial to men in general – and it's sensible for those few to act unjustly while concealing it from the just Many? (Lampert, 2010, p. 78)

Little wonder that Protagoras had begun feeling defensive; Socrates was about to blow his cover, revealing something that he, as a foreign sophist, must necessarily keep hidden: that he is "a teacher of the sensibleness of injustice." (Ibid.) As Protagoras himself had earlier argued, anyone who openly declares themselves to be unjust is rightly regarded as insane (323a-b). In one of the great dramatic moments of the dialogue, therefore, Socrates stops just short of bringing the injustice of Protagoras into the open, thereby sparing him the embarrassment of having to declare, however implicitly, what he himself argues only a madman would declare. So rather than having to defend the indefensible, Protagoras is instead allowed to launch into an extended little speech on the relativity of the good, a subject for which he would be expected to have had a readily prepared speech, thereby diverting attention away from the real issue.

Sparing Protagoras the embarrassment of being revealed as a teacher of injustice raises an additional question, though: namely, why does Socrates choose to do so? On the brink of a certain kind of victory, he allows his almost vanquished rival to escape relatively unharmed, and even alerts him to his line of attack. Simply put, Socrates spares Protagoras out of consideration for their kinship as wise men; a theme reflected in their mutual associations with Prometheus. Throughout the dialogue, Plato depicts both Socrates and Protagoras as essentially Promethean

figures, though in very different ways. Protagoras says his students will learn (*mathêsetai*) good counsel (*euboulia*) from him so as to be most powerful (318e); a learnable (*máthêmá*) that Socrates later discretely reveals to teach the sons of the powerful the sensibleness of injustice. (Cf. Desmôtês 216-223,<sup>ii</sup> where Prometheus describes the counsels [*boulaîs*] he provided Zeus in overthrowing his father, Kronos, and how, through his services [*ôphelêménos*], Zeus became tyrant of the gods [*theôn túrrans*]). Socrates, on the other hand, pursues the primary object of his passion, rational inquiry, in association with his pursuit of Alcibiades; in the same way, Prometheus possesses a passion for Athena (Douris fr. 19), the goddess of both wisdom and power. Protagoras also thanks Socrates for being forethoughtful (*promêthê*) on his behalf (*Protagoras* 316c).<sup>23</sup> As will be seen at the conclusion of the dialogue, Socrates also declares Prometheus in Protagoras' story to have been gratifying to him, and that he, himself, takes forethought (*promêthoumenos*) for his entire life (361d). Despite these significant divergences in how they manifest their Promethean identities, though, both Socrates and Protagoras share the common trait of being:

Both silent, when there is need, and speaking in season.

Purphóros (Aeschylus fr. 118) trans. Smyth

Socrates allows his questioning on what, exactly, Protagoras teaches to dwindle to silence, for exposing the wise Protagoras as a teacher of injustice in front of those gathered at the house of Critias would only invite the vengeance of the Many against the community of the wise. In short, both Socrates and Protagoras share a community of interest, as the wise and reputed wise; a relationship reflected in their mutual Promethean identities that counsels them to a serviceable silence. So instead of closing the trap to which his line of questioning leads, Socrates pulls back and gives Protagoras breathing room he needs to divert the attention of the audience to other matters. Protagoras does so by giving a stock demonstration speech on the relativity of the good, the success of which is demonstrated by the applause given at the end of his speech by the gathered Many (334a-c).

Shortly following Protagoras' short speech on the relativity of the good, though, a small crisis occurs; Protagoras, seeing Socrates' devastating use of dialectical discourse to trap his opponent, refuses to provide concise answers to his questions; preferring instead to give long speeches that leave his audience awestruck and unable to recall where the conversation was

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<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere in Plato, Socrates is accused of impiety (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*; cf. Prometheus' deceptive offering to Zeus at Mekone).

previously headed. Socrates, in response, threatens to leave. The subtle mechanics of this crisis are well described by Lampert (2010, pp. 79-85), and do not need to be presented in detail here. Essentially, though, Socrates feigns to concede Protagoras' superiority in giving long speeches, but chides him for being unwilling to adopt a manner of speaking suited to the both of them (335c). What does finally compel Protagoras to submit to Socrates' preferred format is the shame he experiences at the prospect of flouting the terms of the debate established by those gathered; a shame similar to that which he later more explicitly feels (348c). After Protagoras regroups and reaffirms the terms of their discussion as a dialectical discourse, therefore, he attempts to trap and embarrass Socrates by posing a challenge. As the bait, Protagoras first cites a couple of lines from a poem of Simonides:

Whereas a good [*àgathòn*] man truly it is hard to become [*genésthai*],  
 In hands and feet and mind foursquare, fashioned  
 without blame... (339b, fr. 542.1-3 West)

He then asks Socrates if he considers this poem to be beautifully and correctly composed, to which Socrates replies: "Very much so, and correctly, too." Protagoras then cites a later part of the poem where Simonides goes on to write:

Nor do I deem harmonious the word of Pittacus,  
 Albeit spoken by a wise mortal: 'Hard,'  
 he said, 'it is to be [*êmmenai*] goodly [*èsthòn*].' (339c, fr. 542.4-6 West)

Simonides would thus appear to say both that it is hard to become good, and that it is incorrect to assert that it is hard to be goodly. Protagoras therefore asks Socrates how he can possibly say this ode of Simonides is beautiful and correct when it so blatantly contradicts itself?

Socrates initially expresses dismay to his frame audience at the trap Protagoras sprang on him, though more for dramatic effect than anything else. Whatever dismay Socrates felt, though, he soon rallies himself to offer a spirited response. Again, an examination of the many paralogisms and absurdities Socrates employs in his exegesis of the passage of Simonides cited by Protagoras, has already been ably conducted by Lampert (2010, pp. 85-98), and does not need to be reproduced here. The nub of Socrates' response from the perspective of this dissertation, though, is that the two statements of Simonides and Pittacus may be resolved if the meaning of the copula verbs relating to the 'good' in each phrase are more closely considered. In particular, whereas Simonides says it is difficult for a man to 'become' (*genésthai*) good, he criticises Pittacus for saying that 'being' (*êmmenai*) good is difficult. This

point would not have been entirely obvious to the casual listener; even modern translators, in attempting to capture the spirit of the meaning of Simonides' poem, often translate *genésthai*, as it occurs in this passage, as 'to be'.<sup>iii</sup> In arguing for his somewhat more eccentric interpretation, though, Socrates invokes the authority of Prodicus, whose "divine wisdom" he describes as "ancient, originating in the time of Simonides, or perhaps in an even more ancient [time]." (341a) Just how ancient the divine wisdom of Prodicus is may be discerned from a comparative etymological analysis of *genésthai* and *êmmenai*.

The verb form that Simonides employs to describe the process of becoming good – *genésthai* – is an aorist infinitive tense one of two main verb forms usually employed in ancient Greek to tell a story. *Genésthai* is formed from the root verb *gígnomai*, which in the abstract means 'come into being' (Liddell, 1990), and also forms the basis for *génésis*, the Greek word for generation. *Genésthai* is also cognate with *genus* in Latin, 'kin' in English (Dnghu Association, 2009, p. 65), *kunds* and *kind* in Old German, *jánas* in Sanskrit (=sex), and *zētb* in Old Church Slavonic. From this and other similar evidence, linguists have reconstructed the Indo-European word *\*genos*, which is thought to have held a meaning similar to the English 'kin' (Proto-Indo-European Etymologies, 2009). In Greek, *genésthai* often refers to the existence of things that have come into being through generation; it is thus often considered synonymous with 'to be' by English translators. Given its etymology, though, the strong association of *genésthai* with the concept 'to become' is also readily apparent.

*Êmmenai*, on the other hand, is the present infinitive verb form 'to be', the first person singular of which, *eimí*, is cognate with the copula verbs in a number of other Indo-European languages.<sup>24</sup> The existence of cognate terms similar to *eimí* in both Hittite and Sanskrit also point to an extremely ancient relation, dating back at least 6,400 years, to the Anatolian language group's split from Proto-Indo-European in approximately 4400 BCE (West, 2007, p. 11). Socrates thus resolves the nub of the seeming contradiction contained in the poem by Simonides by referencing the divine wisdom of Prodicus, which recognised a fundamental difference deeply embedded in the etymological structure of ancient Greek between the closely related, but nevertheless significantly differing words for expressing the concept of being, simply put, and the being of things that have previously come-to-be. Socrates then exploits this

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<sup>24</sup> Cognates of the Greek *eimí* are widespread among Indo-European languages including: the English 'am', before 900 CE: Middle and Old English *eam*, *eom*; cognate with: Gothic *im*, Old Norse and Armenian *em*, Old Irish *am*, Hittite and early Lithuanian *esmi*, Old Church Slavonic *yesmŭ*, Albanian *jam*, Sanskrit *asmi*, Indo-European *\*Hes + \*-m 1<sup>st</sup> person singular + \*-i now* (Dictionary.com, s.v. 'am').

subtle difference to deftly escape the trap of Protagoras, concluding that Simonides is entirely correct to criticise Pittacus, whose Aeolic dialect Prodicus previously disparaged as barbaric (341c). For Pittacus had said that it is hard to be good; Socrates, on the other hand, employing a subtle distinction in meaning borrowed from Prodicus, argues that while it is, indeed, hard to *become* good, it is not hard to *be* good, once one has become so.

In devising his escape from Protagoras' trap, Socrates does more than just render Simonides' poem logically consistent, though; he saves the tradition of Ionian Greek wisdom to which Simonides belonged from Protagoras' assault against it. He accomplishes this feat by effecting a synthesis of the fundamental thesis and antithesis of pre-Socratic philosophy: between the Parmenidean concept of being and the Heraclitean concept of becoming as constituting the essential nature of the *kósmos*. Socrates does this by more closely defining Simonides' terminology for the concepts of being and becoming, citing a later line in the same poem:

For when doing well, every man is good,  
But bad if doing badly. (344e, fr. 542.10-11 West)

He then argues that what Simonides means by "doing well [*práxas eũ*]" is becoming good, which is what makes a man *be* good. He buttresses this argument with the example of learning letters and practicing medicine, rhetorically asking:

what is doing [*prázis*] good at letters, and what makes [*poieĩ*] a man good at letters?  
Plainly, the learning [*máthêsis*] of these matters. Or what sort of 'doing well' [*eũpragía*]  
makes [*poieĩ*] a doctor good? Plainly, the learning [*máthêsis*] whereby he treats the sick.  
(345a)

The act of learning (*máthêsis*), then, is the essential element that transforms someone from doing well to being good. This essential bridge between becoming and being thus directly relates to Socrates' lifelong mission of spurring the process of learning toward a better understanding of the nature of virtue; a mission for which *Protagoras*, as a dialogue on the very nature of virtue, stands out as an archetype. At the same time, Socrates' description of this learning process as *máthêsis* also points to his essentially Promethean identification, rooted as it is in the Indo-European word *\*math* which, as discussed in chapter 3, provided the etymological basis for the original formation of Prometheus as an appellative.

Socrates further defends the tradition of Greek wisdom from the accusations of Protagoras by quoting the remaining lines of Simonides' poem:

Therefore never shall I,  
for that which cannot possibly come into being [*genésthai*],  
Cast away on an impractical hope [*èlpída*] my mortal [*aiònos*] lot [*moĩran*], seeking  
For a wholly blameless human among us who consume the fruit  
Of the broad earth;  
If I find such I will report it to you.

345c; Simonides, fr. 542.13-18, trans. West

Again, this passage refers to the concept of coming into being (*genésthai*), albeit in a negative sense, describing that which cannot come to be: namely, a perfect human soul. In this way, Socrates maintains, Simonides inveighs against a saying of Pittacus:

I praise and love all  
Willingly, whoever does  
Nothing shameful [*aischron*];  
but against necessity [*ànágkê*] not even the gods [*theoi*] fight.

345d; Simonides, fr. 542.19-21 West

Simonides thus criticises Pittacus, Socrates goes on to argue, for assuming that people willingly do shameful things; something that no wise man should countenance. These two passages are thus particularly interesting, from the perspective of this dissertation, for critiquing several concepts that Protagoras developed earlier in the dialogue, as well as those concepts in Desmôtês specifically identified in chapter 7 as likely being of Protagorean origin. These include: hope, fate, love of humans, or at the very least love of those who possess a sense of shame, and the subordination of the gods to necessity. Simonides' critique of Pittacus on these subjects may thus also be read as Socrates' indirect critique of several essential tenets of Protagorean philosophy.

Regarding hope, in Desmôtês Prometheus says that he gave blind hopefulness to mortals in order to save them from the despair caused by knowledge of their fated death (248-250). Simonides, by contrast, says he will not waste his mortal fate on the vain and insubstantial hope of finding a perfect human soul. The Protagorean willingness to employ unfounded hope as a salve for assuaging human fears is thereby rebuked by Simonides, who reconciles himself to the more realistic and beneficial expectation, that no one is wholly good or bad. Socrates expresses a very similar outlook elsewhere, in his discussion of how to avoid becoming a misanthrope (*Phaedo* 89d-e). With regard to philanthropy, on the other hand, Pittacus praises and loves everyone who at least tries to avoid shameful behaviour. His philanthropy is thus directed toward the near universal human capacity for shame – the gift of Zeus, as described by

Protagoras – that allows even the crooked timber of humanity to be shaped by a sense of justice into a stable civil society. Even this near universal civilising capacity reaches its limits, though, when people are forced by necessity to do shameful things. Socrates, by contrast, contends that wise men never think people willingly do shameful or bad things; and that when they do shameful things, it is simply out of ignorance of what is noble and good. The *philanthrôpia* of both Protagoras and Socrates thus grows of a sense of gratitude for the innate human capacity for shame. But whereas Protagoras thinks that people willingly do shameful things in the face of necessity, Socrates maintains that they can never knowingly do so, as that would be tantamount to willing something bad for oneself. As discussed in endnotes xii & xiii to Part 2, finally, Pittacus' claim that the gods, too, are subject to necessity is a highly singular assertion in the context of archaic and early classical Greek poetry. Nevertheless, the idea that even Zeus is subject to necessity forms the keystone to the action of Desmôtês and the *Prometheia* trilogy, and is likely a reflection of Protagorean influenced ideas of divinity. This is an idea that Socrates will actively inveigh against throughout the rest of his life in his efforts to reform what is taught and said about the nature of God. In this way, Protagoras and Socrates combat each other's opposing philosophical positions through their discussion of Greek poets, albeit with their commonly shared sense of *philanthrôpia*.

With Socrates' spectacular escape from Protagoras' trap, and his implicit refutation of the sophist's challenge to the tradition of Greek wisdom, Socrates proposes leaving off their discussion of poetry and turning instead to a direct examination of their arguments. Protagoras initially resists, but is finally shamed into doing so by Alcibiades (348c). At this, Socrates returns to a consideration of whether the virtues – now understood as wisdom, moderation, courage, justice and piety – are one or many, again reflecting a Parmenidean-Heraclitean opposition, in terms of the kosmos being composed of one unchanging being, or many thing in the process of becoming. Protagoras not only maintains that the virtues are many, but also that courage is distinct from the rest. Socrates counters, though, that, as skilled warriors are bolder than unskilled, that wisdom must also be a form of courage. Protagoras points to the absurdity of this argument, though, demonstrating how, by employing the very same proofs, but substituting different terms, it could be argued that, because those who are knowledgeable about wrestling are more powerful than those without such knowledge, that wisdom (*sophía*) is strength (*ischús*). Protagoras does not agree with this proposition, nor does he agree that the powerful are the strong, but only that the strong are powerful. Power (*dunatoûs*) and strength



(*ischuroùs*) are not the same thing, he argues, for while power can come-to-be (*gígnesthai*) from knowledge (*èpistêmês*), it can also do so from madness (*manías*) or spirit (*thumoũ*); "whereas strength comes from nature and well-nurturing of the body." (351a) Protagoras thus demonstrates Socrates' initially persuasive-sounding argument, that wisdom is courage, to rest on false premises. As Lampert observes, though, "Socrates' argument is more than a logical exercise: it is an uncanny mirror of his judgment against Protagoras's practice." (2010, p. 105) Socrates employs sophistry in order to bring Protagoras to condemn the techniques of sophistry; bringing him out in the open in preparation for his condemnation of Protagoras' sophistic practices, which have rashly placed the tradition of Greek wisdom in danger.

In their discussion of the relationships between power, strength, courage, knowledge and wisdom, Socrates and Protagoras reflect remarkably similar considerations in Desmôtês. There, Prometheus describes a prophecy told to him by his mother, Themis, who foretold (*proutethespikei*):

that not brute strength [*ischùn*],  
Not violence [*karterón*], but cunning [*dólô*] must give victory  
To the rulers of the future [*krateĩn*]. (214-5)

Assuming Prometheus to essentially represent the views of Protagoras – the primary interpretive assumption of Part 2 of this dissertation – and cross-referencing them with the views Protagoras expresses to Socrates, the sophist may be seen to have advocated the employment of cunning, spiritedness and even a degree of madness in order to obtain ruling power. One of the brands of madness Protagoras explicitly expresses to this end is his willingness to tell the truth about his wisdom; i.e. that it is sometimes at odds with the other virtues, particularly when in the service of his lust for power. Socrates attempts to temper how Protagoras speaks of wisdom and the wise, arguing that it is equivalent to courage, thereby bringing it into alignment with a Parmenidean conception in which all the virtues are one, thereby buttressing the notion that wisdom could therefore never be, for example, immoderate. Socrates likely shares similar views with Protagoras on the divergent nature of the virtues, particularly in terms of his own lust for wisdom; however, he strenuously disagrees with his willingness to make that fact public. Despite this objection, Protagoras persists in openly declaring a disjunction between wisdom and the other virtues; so Socrates abruptly moves on to another example to better illustrate his meaning.

In this, his second approach at instructing Protagoras on how the wise should speak about wisdom to the many, Socrates broaches the controversial topic of hedonism; a subject he has been preparing to address since the beginning of the dialogue. Socrates first asks if Protagoras considers pleasant things to be good and distressing things to be bad (351c). He initially hesitates to endorse this proposition outright, perhaps from fear of the shame of sounding uncouth, and instead defers to the safer opinion held by the many, that "some of the things that are pleasant are not good" (351d). Socrates presses the point, though, asking whether or not pleasant things are good in and of themselves, a proposition Protagoras demurely accepts as the premise of their discussion. Socrates eventually wins his wholehearted acceptance of this agreement, though, by demonstrating a superior understanding of what the many think, and by which the famous wise can come to play an instrumental role in establishing wise rule over the many. In so doing, of course, Socrates reveals himself, in the end, to have acted in a quintessentially Promethean manner, by establishing the teaching of an enlightened form of hedonism, rooted in a superior understanding of human nature, and with the philanthropic goal of benefitting people by teaching them "to believe in the power of knowledge to rule their passions." (Lampert L. , 2010, p. 113)

Socrates first observes how most humans (*ànthrôpois*) do not consider knowledge (*èpistêmês*) to be a strong (*ischurôn*), guiding (*êgemonikôn*) or ruling (*àrchikôn*) thing (352b). Protagoras responds that, indeed, "mere humans" (*anthrôpos*) say many things that are incorrect. Socrates then invites him to join in an attempt to persuade and teach these mere humans what their experience of good and bad, pain and pleasure, really is. In response, Protagoras asks why they should even bother to consider the opinions of the many humans, who say whatever happens to occur to them? Undaunted, Socrates invites Protagoras to join him in an attempt to persuade and teach mere humans what their experience of good and bad, pain and pleasure, really is. If Protagoras is unwilling to engage in such an investigation, though, Socrates says he'll bid farewell; a gentle threat to enforce a demand to which Protagoras readily acquiesces (353b). Proceeding from the premise, then, that all most people really care about is obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain, broadly speaking, Socrates argues that people already feel an acute need for an art of measure capable of properly weighing current pleasures and pains against the future pleasures and pains they cause (353d-354b). People are generally anxious with regard to future expectations and, given their correspondingly hopeful nature, can be easily lured into believing that just such a foreknowledge exists. At the same time, though,

Socrates asserts, a strict identity must be maintained between pleasure and the good, and pain and the bad, if only to rob the many of the argument that people are made to do what is bad when overcome by pleasures or pains; for it would be considered absurd to argue that one was overcome by a good that caused one's situation to worsen (355c-355e).

Socrates concludes that most humans would agree that just such a "skilled measuring [*metrêtikên*] is the art [*téchnên*] that saves [*sôzein*] us"; a proposition to which Protagoras readily agrees (356e); and little wonder, given its close affinity to his own doctrine of man as the measure of all things. At the same time, the other sophists assembled around Protagoras also see that they are well poised to position themselves as the doctors best qualified to administer this new political art (357e). The philanthropy of this teaching is that it does not even matter that the many are unwise, for even if someone simply *believes* that doing something is better for obtaining what they regard as good, and that doing it is within his power, then he will naturally choose to do that thing, even if he simply understands the good as pleasure (358b-c). From this, Socrates also concludes that nobody ever does what is shameful and bad through anything other than not knowing and ignorance (360b). In this way, the wise Socrates seeks to benefit humans in the manner of a truly Promethean saviour: by introducing a new teaching – a *téchnê* of skilled measuring to be practiced by the famous wise so as to bring about political virtue – capable of saving humans from the vicissitudes of their passions, that prevent them from being what they know to be good. A teaching that promotes political virtue by providing people

a new interpretation of their characteristic moral anxiety, their felt vulnerability to anger, pleasure, pain, eros, and fear, powerful forces that overpower their desire to do the good they know to be good – for they know what gods and forefathers gave them of justice, moderation, and piety. (Lampert L. , 2010, pp. 111-2)

In this way, Socrates' provides a novel teaching of an enlightened form of hedonism that is quintessentially Promethean, based as it is on his investigations into the opinions of the unwise many, and transmitted to the wise few, and intended for the benefit of all humans. Socrates thus simultaneously directs this philanthropic teaching toward two distinct audiences: the many humans to whom it is to be taught, and the famous wise whom Socrates enlists to teach it to them. Socrates thus effects his own union of wisdom and power, exercising wise rule by enlisting the famous wise to transmit his teaching.

Having won the assent of the famous wise to the benefits of his new teaching, Socrates returns to a point that Protagoras had refused to concede earlier in the dialogue. He asks him if he is still of the same opinion that he expressed at the beginning of their investigation: "that there are some humans who are very ignorant yet very courageous?" (360e) Hidden in this question is a pointed accusation. Protagoras had previously drawn a distinction between courage and wisdom, in part to maintain his thesis that the virtues are many and differentiated. In drawing this distinction, though, Protagoras had also pointed to himself, as the first wise man courageous enough to declare himself a sophist, as opposed to the cowardly wise who had previously disguised their wisdom behind masks. Socrates takes aim at this pretention, winning agreement from Protagoras that a courageous man would never knowingly go toward what is terrible, and that, therefore, courage must be a form of knowledge. Hidden in this argument, though, is condemnation of the practice of Protagoras: for not only has he demonstrated his ignorance of the opinions of most humans, he has also demonstrated his cowardice by going toward what is terrible and exposing the tradition of Greek wisdom to the dangers posed by the many. Protagoras retorts that Socrates seems to love winning (*pilonikein*), but gratifies him by assenting to his proposition: that it seems impossible that the very ignorant could be very courageous. Better to concede defeat on this outward argument than to allow Socrates' larger, hidden accusation of his ignorance and cowardice to come to light.

Having won Protagoras' assent, Socrates proceeds to offer an explanation for what moves him to ask such questions:

I am asking all these things for the sake of nothing other than my wishing to investigate the things pertaining to virtue, and what on earth [virtue] itself is. (360e)

For, Socrates goes on to say, he knows that their investigation into the nature of virtue will eventually make it plain as to whether or not it is teachable. For as things stand now that a human (*anthrôpos*) listening to their discussion would laughingly accuse them of being rather odd. For, while Socrates had at first argued that virtue is not teachable and Protagoras argued that it was; by the end of their discussion, Socrates was arguing that it was teachable, if virtue was understood as knowledge of how to obtain the good, properly understood as pleasure; while Protagoras was arguing that virtue was not teachable, as courage, the most exemplary of the virtues, was distinct from knowledge (361b). Seeing these issues so terribly (*deinôds*) confused, Socrates declares that he has every eagerness for them to become thoroughly clear,

and would wish to first consider what, exactly, virtue is, and only then to consider whether or not it is teachable. For without such a prior investigation, he says,

that well-known Epimetheus of yours may baffle us with deceptions in our investigation, just as he neglected us in his distribution, as you say. (361c-d)

Socrates' invocation of Epimetheus at the conclusion of his discourse would seem to contain yet another oblique critique of Protagorean wisdom. In the Promethean *mũthos* of Protagoras, Epimetheus had allotted the natural talents to mortal creatures, but carelessly overlooked humans in his distribution. In Hesiod, by comparison, Epimetheus is the archetype of the man possessed of *hámartia*, who accepts Zeus' gift of Pandora/Woman against his brother's advice, overcome by the pleasures offered by this sheer deception; a choice he comes to regret in hindsight, after she releases the evils into the world that afflict humans. Socrates would thus seem to be drawing a subtle equivalence between Epimetheus and Protagoras, who, motivated by the present pleasures of power, taught his wisdom without due regard to humans; a situation that threatens to release evils that he and the community of the wise will come to lament.

In contrast to the reckless choices made by Protagoras/Epimetheus, Socrates has acted in an eminently promethean manner throughout the dialogue. He has done so by counselling Protagoras to adopt a new set of assumptions in his public discourse, regarding the knowable unity underlying all virtues and goods, that both promotes the pursuit of public virtue, and shelters the wise from unreasoned criticism. Protagoras had violated these principles by insisting upon the divergent nature of the virtues, thereby revealing the tension between the private virtues of wisdom and courage, and the public virtues of justice and piety. Socrates fittingly concludes his discussion on the nature of virtue with Protagoras by counselling moderation in his public discourse. In doing so, Socrates explicitly and fittingly identifies himself with the figure of Prometheus:

Prometheus in your story [*mũthõ*] was more gratifying to me than Epimetheus. For I, making use of him and [thus] taking forethought [*promẽthoũmenos*] for my entire life, am myself occupied with all these things. (361d)

Socrates invokes the figure of Prometheus at a significant moment, after he's finally come to a hard won agreement with his brother in learning, Protagoras, on how best to conduct their public discourse. This agreement entails obscuring Heraclitean premises of Protagoras' wisdom, which views the cosmos as composed of many different things, often conflicting, and in a

constant state of becoming. Instead, Socrates and Protagoras agree in their public discourse to adopt Parmenidean premises, which sees all things as participating in one underlying and unchanging being. This agreement does not preclude consideration of the alternatives in private; and, indeed, at the end of the dialogue, Protagoras extends Socrates an invitation to consider these matters in private some other time (361e). The idea of all being as one is even questioned by the disciple of Parmenides, Zeno, who once admitted, under Socrates' cross-examination, that the primary strength of this Parmenidean claim is how it is less prone to contradiction and absurdity than the contrary thesis – that all is many (Plato, *Parmenides* 128d). This lesser vulnerability to contradiction and absurdity falls somewhat short of a truth claim, though, for what *is* also seems absurd at times. However, the Parmenidean premise does at least possess greater logical consistency; more importantly, for Socrates' purposes, though, it presents a more edifying public face for the wisdom espoused by the wise.

Socrates employs the advantages of Parmenidean wisdom both tactically and strategically. He deploys it tactically, to defeat Protagoras in debate, by revealing the hidden premises of his wisdom, and threatening to reveal them as unjust, even though they conform to the truth of how things are. Socrates also deploys Parmenidean wisdom strategically, using it to more closely align wisdom with the other virtues, and pleasure with the good, particularly in public discourse, although not limited to that sphere. The strategic aspect of Socrates' promethean forethought thus comes in two forms: one directed at the few wise, the other at the unwise many. With regard to the wise, Socrates demonstrates to them the utility of aligning wisdom with the other virtues, now to be understood as ostensibly different, but ultimately knowable. This strategy is adopted, on the one hand, so as to better shelter the wise from the unjust accusations of the many: in particular that they are immoderate, unjust and/or impious in their pursuit of wisdom, and hence criminal. With regard to the many to whom Socrates narrates the *Protagoras*, on the other hand, he unifies the virtues and aligns pleasure with the good, with the quintessentially Promethean aim of benefitting to humans; motivating the many, who care only about pleasure, to better educate themselves in the practice of virtue, now understood as a teachable form of knowledge, by bringing them believe it to be a form of pleasure.

## Chapter 12 – Promethean Imagery Elsewhere in Plato

Socrates: "Perhaps *you* seem to make yourself available only infrequently and not to be willing to teach [*didáskein*] your wisdom [*sophían*]. But I fear that, because of my *philanthrôpias*, I seem [*dokô*] to profusely pour out [*èkkechuménôs*] whatever I possess [*èkô*] to every man, not only without pay, but even with pleasure if anyone is willing to listen to me."

Plato, *Euthyphro* 3d-e, trans. by author

### A. Introduction to Promethean Imagery in Plato

Plato's use of the Promethean myth and imagery in the *Protagoras* sets the stage for the rest of his corpus. He has several characters in his dialogues employ variants of the Promethean myth in an aetiological manner, for instance, to illustrate why it is that things are the way they are, though with significant variations that point to a critique of Protagorean wisdom. Plato also has several characters in his dialogues discuss key aspects of Protagorean wisdom employing wording with unmistakably Promethean overtones, such as: *promêtheia* as signifying forethought, *philanthrôpia* and *misanthrôpia*, and *Adrasteia*. Finally, Plato also maintains Socrates' strong self-identification with a Promethean ideal, particularly in those dialogues depicting him at the very end of his life. This section provides a comprehensive inventory of these overt references to Prometheus and employment of Promethean imagery, with an eye to illuminating Plato's larger critique of Protagorean wisdom, both in terms of its *mũthos* and *logós*, as well as Socrates' own self-identification with his reformed conception of what it means to be Promethean.

## B. Laws

Prometheus is not directly mentioned in *Laws*; however, this dialogue does contain a single reference to the concept of promethean forethought (*promêtheia*) (5.730a), as well as several other instances of Promethean imagery, including: a reference to ceremonial torch-races (6.776b), and the use of the words: *pronoía*,<sup>25</sup> *philanthrôpia* (4.713d) and *misanthrôpia* (7.791d). Scholars have traditionally thought Plato composed *Laws* a few years before the end of his life, in 348/7 BCE (Plato, Hamilton, & Cairns, 1961, p. 1125), after having failed in his attempts to philosophically guide the tyrannical rule of first Dionysius I (c.432-367) and then his son, Dionysius II (c.397-343), both of Syracuse. However, the dating of the composition of Plato's dialogues rests on very scanty textual evidence; furthermore, there is evidence that he considerably revised the dialogues throughout his life. The dramatic date of *Laws* is similarly contestable. Strauss (1975, p. 2) and Pangle (Plato & Pangle, 1980, p. 379), following Aristotle (*Politics*), date it to sometime after the death of Socrates, supposing *Laws* to be Plato's depiction of what Socrates would have said and done if he had accepted Critias' offer to escape his death sentence by fleeing Athens. Zuckert (2009, p. 8 & 11), on the other hand, dates the dramatic action of *Laws* to sometime between 460 and 450 BCE, based on the fact that it contains many references to the Persian Wars (which formally ended in 449 BCE, with the Peace of Callias), but no references to the Peloponnesian War (which began in 331 BCE). Accepting Zuckert's interpretation, then, *Laws* would purport to be an account of Pre-Socratic political philosophy, just prior to the first arrival of Protagoras in Athens, sometime during the early 440s.

*Laws* opens with an Athenian Visitor (*Zénos*) asking two old men whether their laws were laid down by a god or some human being; to which one of them, Klinias, answers: "A god - to say what is at any rate the most just thing." (1.624a, trans. Pangle) The two old men with whom the Athenian Visitor converses – a Cretan named Klinias, and a Spartan named Megillus – hail from *poliás* with the oldest political constitutions in all of ancient Greece. Given this background, they readily concur that it is more just (though perhaps less true) to say that the laws of a *pólis* are the work of gods rather than men. Later, it transpires that the Athenian Guest has joined them in a religious pilgrimage to the cave and temple of Zeus on Crete (1.625b). This would be the same Dictaeon cave where Rhea was said to have hid her newly born son, Zeus, in order to protect him from his father, Kronos, and where the young god was secretly nursed by the

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<sup>25</sup> At *Laws* 4.721c, 8.838e, 9.871a, 9.873a, 9.874e, 9.877b&c, 11.932e,



nymph, Adrasteia (Apollodorus 1.1.6). A pilgrimage to the place where the new king of the gods was nurtured thus forms the dramatic setting for *Laws*. At the end of Book 3, Klinias also announces that he has been appointed to a Cretan commission to found a new *pólis*, and draft a new code of laws for it (3.702c). Drafting the new laws for this city thus forms the primary impetus for the remainder of the discussion in *Laws*.

In Book 4, the Athenian Visitor begins their discussion of the laws of their new *pólis* by asking: which political regime would best suit it? And if the regime of a city should be named for the authority who rules it, the Visitor argues, then they "must use the name of the god who truly rules as a despot over those who possess intellect." He then asks: "Who is this god?" (4.713a) To answer this question, the Athenian Stranger proposes to employ a *mũthos*, referring to a "very happy rule and arrangement" that came into being under Kronos (4.713b). The rule of Kronos was a golden age for human beings, he goes on to argue, because:

Kronos understood that, as we have explained, human nature is not at all capable of regulating the human things, without becoming swollen with insolence and injustice. So, reflecting on these things, he set up at that time kings and rulers within our cities – not human beings, but demons [*daímonas*], members of a more divine and better species. He did just what we do now with sheep and the other tame herd animals. We don't make cattle themselves rulers of cattle, or goats rulers of goats; instead, we exercise despotic dominion over them, because our species is better than theirs. The same was done by the god, who was a friend of humanity [*philánthrōpos*]: he set over us the better species of demons [*daimónôn*], who supervised us in a way that provided much ease for them and for us. (4.713c-d, trans. Pangle)

In sending down daemons to rule over humans, as people rule over domesticated animals, Kronos provided humans a great benefit; and for this very reason, he is philanthropic in the mould of Prometheus. Except that the Visitor's account of Kronos represents an almost complete inversion of the Protagorean influenced account in the *Prometheia* trilogy. Rather than portraying human myth-history as a gradual ascent from a primitive and brutish state, stemming from the divine gift of fire and the development of various arts, the Athenian Visitor depicts human myth-history as a fall from an original state of divine grace. As such, he may be seen to emulate Hesiod's Promethean *mũthos* of human origins, where Prometheus and Epimetheus trigger the fall of humankind from a golden age, characterised as a life of ease (*Works & Days* 110-120), to the present iron age of fearsome weapons and debased morals (*Works & Days* 176-201, cf. *Theogony* 585-616).

While the Athenian Visitor may seem to hearken back to pre-Protagorean, Hesiodic models in framing the founding *mũthos* for the laws of their *pólis*, his political philosophy may, in fact, be better understood as a reaction to Protagorean political philosophy. After relating his *mũthos* of Kronos, who is to be the eponymous founder of their *pólis*, the Athenian Visitor then states that "there can be no escape [*ánáphuzis*] from evils [*kakôn*] and toils [*pónôn*] for those cities [*póleôn*] in which some mortal rules rather than a god." (*Laws* 4.713e) In making this seemingly pious statement, though, the Athenian Visitor evokes a very similar sentiment to the one that Socrates expresses in *Republic*, where he says there will be no rest (*paũla*) from ills (*kakôn*) for the cities (*pólesi*) until philosophers become kings, or kings well and truly philosophise (*Republic* 5.473d). The philanthropic rule of Kronos in the myth told by the Athenian Visitor in *Laws* thus forms a mythic corollary to the rule of the philosopher-ruler described by Socrates in *Republic*. The Athenian Visitor concludes that, in framing the laws of their new *pólis*, they must imitate the way of life that existed under Kronos (*Laws* 4.714a-b). In so doing, the critical role of the philosopher in this creation of the laws is covered up by the *mũthos* of the divine. This stands in sharp counter distinction to Protagoras, who discarded such disguises for the wise, arguing that, in any case, they did not fool the powerful in the *pólis*. The Athenian Visitor, by contrast, sees how the many, who are also powerful, believe that it is just that the gods create the laws of the *pólis*, and that they may be made to believe disguises that mask the role of the wise in the creation of those laws, to the benefit of the *pólis*.

The single mention of *misanthrôpia* in *Laws* occurs in Book 7, where the Athenian Visitor discusses early childhood education. There, he refers to a dogma (*dógma*) he says is accepted among them, that:

luxury makes the dispositions of the young ill humored, irascible, and easily moved by minor matters, while the opposite – extreme, savage enslavement – by making them humble, illiberal, and misanthropic [*misanthrôpous*], renders them unsuited for living with others. (*Laws* 7.791d, trans. Pangle)

In *Laws*, then, misanthropy is a condition arising from the youthful experience or perception of excessively suffering injustice, leading to the impairment of their ability to live with others. The Athenian Visitor's reference to misanthropy evokes Protagoras' reference to Pherecrates' *Agrioi* (c.434 BCE). In that comic play, it will be recalled, a group of jaded misanthropists (*misanthrôpoi*) renounced their *pólis* in disgust at the injustice committed by its people, only to find themselves in the countryside among savages (*agrioi*) that made even the most unjust city-

dwellers seem like paragons of justice by comparison (*Protagoras* 327d). The subject of misanthropy arises again in *Phaedo*, where Socrates compares it to misology, which he describes as the greatest evil that can befall a person.<sup>26</sup>

In the Athenian Visitor's reference to *misanthrôpia* in *Laws*, then, he argues that, in order to preserve the social cohesion of the *pólis* they are founding, its youth must be educated in the mean between luxury and enslavement, to avoid them becoming morose and irascible, on the one hand, and illiberal (*àneleuthérous*) and misanthropic (*misanthrôpous*) on the other. As such, the Visitor may be seen to be taking an important cue from the liberal educational philosophy of Protagoras, who also taught his wisdom as something befitting a free man. Just as with his reference to *philanthrôpia*, which he couched in a *mũthos* of Kronos already believed by his two interlocutors, the Athenian Visitor also refers to how to educate youth so as to avoid them becoming misanthropic in the context of a "dogma" they already believe, while at the same time referring to novel Protagorean ideas with regard to education. In his references to the quintessentially Protagorean concepts of *philanthrôpia* and *misanthrôpia*, though, the Athenian Visitor disguises the novel Protagorean origin of the ideas they express by couching them within familiar myths and dogmas, so as to more easily win their acceptance.

In Book 6, the Visitor makes a passing reference to the ceremonial torch-races, or *lampáda*, run in honour of several fire gods in ancient Greece. This is one of only two such references to ceremonial torch-races in the entire Platonic corpus, the other occurring in *Republic* (1.328a) in reference to the newly inaugurated race in honour of Bendis in Athens. In *Laws*, by comparison, the Visitor discusses how, when young couples are first married, they should move away from their parents and, like colonists living abroad:

see them only on visits or when receiving them as visitors at home, where they are bearing and raising children, as if passing the lamp of life [*lampáda tôn bíon*] on from one generation to the next, always devoted to the lawful gods. (6.776d, trans. Pangle)

This mention of torch-races in conjunction with the bearing and raising of children specifically evokes the *lampáda* run in honour of Hephaestus, a race held in Athens on the third day of the Apaturia festival. There, the young were introduced to the other citizens of the *pólis*, and those youth passing into manhood were inducted into the *phráterías*, or fraternal brotherhoods,

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<sup>26</sup> This instance is discussed in greater depth below, in the section on *Phaedo*. In short, Socrates says that both misanthropy and misology arise in the same way: from artlessly trusting a person or argument that is unsound, and later finding it not to be true, and having that experience repeated many times (*Phaedo* 89d-e).

membership in which conferred citizenship in the *polías* of ancient Greece. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the Apaturia festival celebrated an Ionian hero, Melanthus, who employed deception to win in single combat against King Xanthus of Boeotia (Scholiast on Aristophanes' *Acharnians* 146). This subject will be explored in greater depth below, in the section on Timaeus, where Critias also mentions the Apaturia festival.

Plato has several of the characters he portrays in his dialogues employ cognates of the word *promêtheía* to signify the concept of forethought, in addition to the three instances already cited above in *Protagoras* (316c, 361d, 501b). These other instances of use occur in: *Laws*, *Republic*, *Laches*, *Gorgias* and *Crito*. The concept of forethought is also expressed via cognates of *promêtheia* in *Alcibiades II* (138b), and *Minos* (16c); however, since these two dialogues are generally thought to have not been written by Plato, they are not considered here. A fundamental assumption of this chapter's analysis is the hypothesis that Plato employs specific terms to signify forethought, as opposed to many other suitable alternative words available to him,<sup>27</sup> in order to highlight particular points in relation to the Promethean *mũthos*, particularly in light of its dominant role in the classical age, as a vehicle for conveying Protagorean wisdom. Plato also employs *pronoia* a number of times in his works,<sup>28</sup> his usage of which is examined in more detail below.

The only instance of the occurrence of *promêtheía* in *Laws* occurs near the beginning of Book 5, as part of the Athenian Visitor's admonition to not do wrong to strangers. After discussing the nature of relations with one's self, as well as one's parents, city, friends and family, the Visitor goes on to describe the special status of the stranger. He begins by noting that contracts with and among strangers must be considered especially hallowed; for almost all the wrongs committed against them are more closely linked to an avenging god (*timôròn theòn*) than those committed against fellow citizens. This is because the stranger, being bereft of comrades, is considered more pitiable (*èleeinóteros*) by both human beings and gods. Those with the power to avenge him, therefore, have a spirit all the more eager to do so. Especially powerful in this regard are the *daímôn* and god (*theòs*) of the visitor (*zéníô*), who follow Zeus (*Diî*), god of hospitality (*theòs tô Zenios*) (729e-730a). For this reason, the Athenian Visitor concludes:

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<sup>27</sup> Such as, for instance, *prodéskomai*, which Plato doesn't use, or *prooráo* (Timaeus 73a), which he does.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Phaedrus* 241e, 254e; *Timaeus* 30c, 44c, 45b; *Laws* 4.721c, 8.838e, 9.871a, 9.873a, 9.874e, 9.877b, 9.877c, 11.932e.

anyone with even a little forethought [*promêtheías*] will take great care to complete his life's journey without having done any wrong to strangers [*zénous*]. (5.730a, trans. Pangle)

The Athenian Visitor then goes on to say that, among the gravest wrongs done to strangers, as well as to native inhabitants, are those committed against a suppliant (*ikétas*); for the god who bore witness to the agreement the suppliant obtained becomes a special guardian of the one who suffers, so his suffering never goes unavenged (*àtimôrêtos*) (Ibid.). In the singular occurrence of a word cognate to Prometheus in *Laws*, then, the Athenian Visitor mentions forethought in connection with an admonition to avoid wrongdoings against strangers or guests, but particularly suppliants, so as to not invite retribution, particularly from the god. This divine law protecting strangers receives sanction from the most powerful god; however, it is a somewhat self-interested law laid down by a wise law-maker who is himself a stranger. Protagoras emphatically speaks of the dangers posed to the foreign wise; and while it is true that not all strangers are wise, the wise are nearly always strangers to the *polías*. In order for the foreign wise to continue to have an influence on framing just laws for the *pólis*, the sanctified class to which they belong needs to be accorded special protections.

The word *pronoía* occurs eight times in *Laws*, where it is generally employed to signify the concept of intention. Given its root in *nóos*, understood as mind employed in perceiving and thinking (Liddell, 1990), *pronoía* may be literally translated as 'foresight'. However, it is also frequently employed to indicate intentionality, willingness or voluntariness, in terms of pursuing a course of action with full awareness of its consequences or outcome. In all the instances in which *pronoía* occurs as a word in *Laws*, it is consistently associated with the behaviour of people who intentionally transgress against moral<sup>iv</sup> or legal<sup>v</sup> codes, and the additional sanctions that must therefore be implemented against them, as opposed to people who unwittingly break the law. The theme of voluntary versus involuntary injustice is also touched upon by Protagoras, where he argues that one of the reasons for assuming that people believe virtue can be taught is that they take the trouble to punish those who commit injustice. Those who are reasonably punished, he goes on to argue, are not punished because of their past injustice, but rather "for the sake of future [*méllontos*]: to deter either the perpetrator or someone else who sees the punishing." (*Protagoras* 324a-b) As in *Laws*, then, the foresight with which one commits an injustice is a factor in determining the punishment. One of Protagoras' more notorious followers, Critias III (460-403 BCE), also writes in his play, *Sisyphus*, of the wisdom of

the man who first invented worship of the gods in order to make people living in the *pólis* voluntarily submit to its laws, out of fear of angering a god (Critias fr. 25).

Summarising Plato's use of Promethean imagery in *Laws*, the Athenian Visitor consistently employs it in references to *philanthrôpía* and *misanthrôpía*, the *lampáda*, or ceremonial torch-races, and the concepts of forethought and intention. In these instances, the Visitor touches upon several key Protagorean concepts, such as the idea of a beneficent divinity, the benefits of a liberal education in socialising the young, the need to sanctify the status of strangers, and the importance of encouraging voluntary adherence to the laws of the *pólis*. At the same time, though, the Visitor also employs the very same imagery to disguise the role of the wise in the framing of just laws for the *pólis*; even going so far as to attribute many of the radical reforms he introduces to the gods or traditional dogma. In other words, the Athenian Visitor purposely disguises his distinctly Protagorean reforms in Pre-Protagorean myths and dogma, particularly regarding the political power exercised by the wise in establishing just laws for the *pólis*. While the *Laws* thus appears to be set in a time-frame that pre-dates the arrival of Protagoras in Athens, this may be seen as yet another level of deception that Plato employs in *Laws* to help ensure acceptance of his reforms to Protagorean political philosophy, particularly in terms of giving it a more overtly pious public face.

### C. *Philebus*

Besides the *Protagoras*, which contains the single most extensive account of the Promethean myth in the entire Platonic corpus, Plato has two characters – Socrates and the Eleatic Visitor – explicitly refer to Prometheus in a mythic setting in three other dialogues: *Philebus*, *Gorgias* and *Statesman*. In *Philebus*, a dialogue with no discernable dramatic date, Socrates converses with two young men – Philebus ('love of the young') and Protarchus ('first principle or ruler') – on the relative value of pleasure and knowledge. In this discussion, Socrates directly refers to the mythic Prometheus, and subsequently employs Promethean imagery in describing the art of dialectical discourse and its relation to the two major schools of Pre-Socratic philosophy: Heraclitean and Parmenidean. Near the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates discusses the dangers of teaching discourse (*lógôn*) to the young (15b). He begins by stating that everything in every field of art that has ever been discovered (*ànêuréthê*) has come to light (*phanerà gégone*) because of dialectical discourse:

It is a gift of the gods to men, or so it seems to me, hurled down from heaven by some Prometheus along with a most dazzling fire. And the people of old, superior to us and living in closer proximity to the gods, have bequeathed us this tale, that whatever is said to be consists of one and many, having in its nature limit and unlimitedness. (*Philebus* 16c, trans. Frede)

Given the essential structure of all things – that whatever is said to be consists of one and many – Socrates describes the method of dialectical discourse as first positing (*theménous*) the assumption that there is 'one form' (*mían idéan*) for everything (*pantòs*) and then searching (*zêteîn*) for it. Once we have 'taken a share' (*metalábômen*) in this form, he goes on to say, we must look (*skopáô*) for other potential unities within it, and in the same way, until it is established that not only is the original unit one, but also that it is many, and exactly how many kinds it contains within it (16d). Socrates then goes on to distinguish (*diakéchôristai*), though, between what he terms dialectic (*dialektikôs*) and eristic (*èristikôs*) methods of discourse (*lógous*) (17a); for while the former thoroughly considers all the intermediaries between the one and the many, the latter method is haphazardly employed by clever humans (*ànthrôpôn sophoi*) who go straight from the one to the other, thereby arriving at premature conclusions (16e).

Socrates' reference to Prometheus' gift of fire as dialectical discourse, strongly evokes Prometheus' account, in the central *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês*, of how he placed mind and reason in humans (445); a divine gift that enabled humans to better interpret sights and sounds, allowing them to construct more durable knowledge of perceived reality (447-458), thus

forming the foundation for the development of the crafts (459-506).<sup>29</sup> Later in the dialogue, Socrates arrives at a tentative conclusion, that Philebus' goddess, Aphrodite or Pleasure, cannot be considered the same as the good (22c). Pressed on the point by Protarchus, Socrates proposes beginning their investigation anew by dividing everything that now exists in the universe into two or three. Protarchus protests, though, asking him to explain: "on what principle?" Socrates answers by appealing to what was previously said:

We agreed earlier that the god [*theòn*] had revealed a division of what is into the unlimited and the limit. (23c, trans. Frede)

The god to which Socrates refers is, of course, Prometheus. Now, however, Socrates' Prometheus has been transformed by the discussion into the god of mind who is the opposite, or corollary, to Philebus' Aphrodite or the goddess of pleasure. In this way, Prometheus receives his true apotheosis by Socrates. At the end of the *Prometheia* trilogy, in the *exodos* of Luómenos, Prometheus is apotheosized and accepted into the pantheon of the gods worshipped by the Athenians. Socrates, by contrast, equates Prometheus, the one who gave humans mind and reason, with the concept of god period. This claim is justified by subsequent discussion in the dialogue dealt with below.

Later in the discussion, Socrates assigns pleasure and pain to the category of limitless things. He then asks how they can avoid blasphemy (*àseboĩmen*) in assigning intelligence (*phrónēsín*), knowledge (*èpistēmên*) and reason (*noũn*) to one of the aforesaid categories: limited, limitless or mixed? To which Philebus replies:

Really now, you are extolling your own god, Socrates. (28b, trans. Frede)

To which Socrates replies: just as Philebus extols his own goddess, pleasure. Socrates goes on to say that all the wise (*sophoĩ*) agree that reason (*noũs*) is king (*basileús*) of heaven and earth. To clarify this position, he rhetorically asks whether the whole (*ölon*) is ruled by unreason and

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<sup>29</sup> Socrates' description, on the other hand, of an ancient wisdom on the nature of being – that whatever is said to be consists of both one and many – not only alludes to the philosophies of Parmenides and Heraclitus; his description of the method of dialectical discourse as a means of reconciling these conflicting views of reality is also evocative of the two *logoi* fragment of Protagoras, which states that there are two opposing sides to every question. Socrates' description of dialectical discourse also has important ramifications for modern philosophy; for it closely approximates Schopenhauer's description of the process of individuation (*principium individuationis*), whereby people differentiate individual entities from an undifferentiated whole, and then (re-) integrate these differentiated entities back into stable wholes (*The World as Will and Representation* 2.23, et. al.). Nietzsche also prominently refers to the *principium individuationis* (*Birth of Tragedy* §1, et. al.) as a prelude to his own analysis of the opposing Dionysian and Apollonian drives of the human intellect toward disintegration and unification.



irregularity, as chance would have it, or whether they are not rather, as our forebears taught us, governed by reason and by the order of a wonderful intelligence? Philebus replies that Socrates' suggestion, that the universe is subject to unreason and irregularity, is impious (*oûdè õsion*); and furthermore, that the only account that can do justice to the wonderful spectacle presented by the *kósmou*, is that mind (*noûn*) puts it in order (*diakosmeîn*) (28e).

That having been said, they agree to conform with the view of earlier thinkers who professed this as the truth. The earlier thinker that come mostly strongly to mind, in this instance, is Anaximander of Miletus (c.610-c.546), who, in the sole surviving fragment attributed to him, posits the pre-scientific presupposition that made science possible: that nature operates in a lawful and ordered manner. Socrates then tells his interlocutors that, given the presupposition of order in the universe, they must face up to the consequences of this position. We somehow discern, Socrates says, that what makes up the bodies of all animals – fire, water, air and earth – are part of their composition (29a). He then illustrates his meaning with the example of fire, saying:

There is something called fire that belongs to us, and then again there is fire in the universe (*pantí*). (29b, trans. Frede)

Socrates then asks if the fire in the universe is generated, nourished and ruled by the fire within each of us, or whether the fire within each living creature is likewise owes all this to the cosmic fire? Protarchus provides a somewhat ambiguous answer to this question, simply stating: "It is not even worth answering that question." His intended meaning, one is left to suppose, is that that our inner fire is determined by the cosmic fire. Socrates is somewhat reticent in drawing out and affirming Protarchus' exact meaning, though, preferring instead to allow him to persist in that belief undisturbed.

Near the end of *Philebus*, Socrates draws their discussion to a close by reviewing the truths it has brought to light. The primary truth he enunciates in this regard relates to the superiority of reason in its struggle with pleasure, namely:

that reason [*noûs*] is far superior [*béltiõn*] to pleasure [*êdonês*] and more beneficial [*ãmeinon*] to human life. (66e, trans. Frede)

This claim of the superiority of reason over pleasure is closely related subject Socrates brings up in *Protagoras*. There, he instructs the great sophist on how the many should be taught to conceive an identity between pleasure and the good (*Protagoras* 355c-355e). In the company of Philebus and Protarchus, though, Socrates alters his view of pleasure's relationship to virtue.

Given the pedagogical needs of the 'love of the young' and the 'first principle or ruler', Socrates strongly advocates for the superiority of 'reason' (*noûs*) over pleasure. In this context, it will be recalled that, in the *Prometheia* trilogy, Prometheus placed 'mind' (*ēnnous*) and 'reason' (*phrenóô*) in humans, the two of which together are metaphorically associated with his gift of fire (Desmôtês 444). Socrates thus reveals his Promethean *persona* in advocating a ruling principle: that reason be instilled in youth by teaching them it is far superior to pleasure.

In *Philebus*, then, Socrates invokes the mythic figure of Prometheus to illuminate prominent aspects of Greek wisdom, exemplified by the rival ontological theories of: on the one hand, Parmenides, who argued that everything that *is* is composed of one being; and on the other hand, Heraclitus, who argued that the cosmos is composed of many different things in a constant process of becoming. Socrates also employs the epistemological and historical insights of Protagoras, with respect to the dual *lógos* of dialectical discourse, and its capacity to illuminate the nature of things in the process of becoming. However, Socrates also incorporates an innovation of his own devising – the theory of forms, the positing of the existence of essential unities behind the multiplicity of things we perceive. Socrates' theory of forms provides the integrating function for the process of dialectical discourse, providing the mediating concept between being and becoming. The Eleatic Stranger in *Statesman* employs a very similar process of dialectical discourse to arrive at the conclusion that the quintessential skill of the statesman and good legislator involves fitting together (*sunarmosamênê*) the eternal (*àeigenès*) part of the souls of those ruled with a divine bond (*theíô desmô*) to the true opinion (*àlêthê dózan*) concerning the essential unity of what is noble, just and good (*Statesman* 309c-d). In establishing the pedagogical principle of the superiority of reason over pleasure, by comparison, Socrates reveals the quintessentially Promethean nature of how the philosopher participates in the ruling craft.

#### D. Republic

The dramatic setting of Plato's *Republic*, in 429 BCE (Planeaux, 2000), for instance, coincides with the initiation of a torch-race (*lampàs*) newly instituted in honour of Bendis (1.328a). In the *Republic* as a whole, Socrates constructs, through dialectical discourse, a perfectly just city in speech. He then correlates the ruling regime of this *pólis* to the soul of a perfectly just man, rhetorically asking his interlocutors:

Isn't it proper for the calculating part [*logistikô*] to rule [*ärchein*], since it is wise [*sophô*] and has forethought [*promêtheian*] about all of the soul, and for the spirited part to be obedient to it and its ally? (*Republic* 441e, trans. Bloom)

Socrates thus argues that the rational element is best fit to rule the soul, as it is both wise and possesses forethought about all the soul. In this way, Socrates mentions promethean forethought in specific reference to a quintessentially Protagorean consideration: on the just relationship between wisdom and ruling power.

Shortly after outlining the ruling regime of the perfectly just *pólis*, Socrates tackles a series of three major issues that still stand in the way of the possibility, as opposed to the desirability, of its realisation. These issues begin with a consideration of the question of the role of women and children in the city, and culminate in his declaration that:

Unless the philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide[...] there is no rest from ills for the cities (*Republic* 5.473d-e, trans. Bloom)

Before embarking on this highly charged discussion, though, Socrates, in a highly dramatic gesture, declares himself to be prostrating before Adrasteia (*Republic* 451a). As far as I have been able to find, Socrates' invocation of Adrasteia is the only explicit reference to the specific content of the *Prometheia* trilogy in the entire Platonic corpus. By so naming this goddess of retribution, from whom none can escape, Socrates specifically refers to the advice the Chorus gives Prometheus in the *exodos* of *Desmôtês*:

A wise man [*sophoî*] will speak humbly, and fear Nemesis [*Àdrásteian*].  
(line 936, trans. Vellacott)

Aware of the extreme danger involved in discussing the relationship between wisdom and power, Socrates professes to adhere to the advice offered by the Okeanides: to speak humbly and be wary of retribution. In this way, though, Socrates also again alerts his listeners to the possibility that what he is about to say is crafted to placate Adrasteia, rather than reveal

unvarnished truth. Alternatively, Socrates' prostration before Adraesteia may also be interpreted as him prostrating himself before dreaded Necessity, as he has no way of knowing whether or not what he will now be introducing to his audience will be beneficial to his friends (Lampert L. , 2010). Socrates is compelled to leave the consequences of his word in the hands of this goddess.

### **E. *Laches***

A series of references to promethean forethought occur in *Laches*, set in 424 BCE. In this dialogue, Socrates converses with two famous generals, Nicias (c.470-413) and Laches (c.475-418), along with two fathers, Lysimachus II (480s-before or on 423) and Melesias II (on or after 475-before 403). Lysimachus and Melesias are, by their own admission, the undistinguished sons of distinguished fathers,<sup>30</sup> but are now looking to educate their own young sons with the hope of doing better. In this way, one of the primary pieces of evidence Socrates cited in *Protagoras* as proof of the unteachability of virtue – namely, the inability of fathers to pass on their virtue to their sons – becomes the primary issue propelling the discussion in *Laches*. This Protagorean link is reinforced by Socrates' remarks on the importance of consulting experts on the subject of educating one's sons. For upon this question, he says, depends nothing less than whether or not sons turn out well, so as to better manage their father's estate. Given the great importance of this issue, Socrates goes on to say:

we ought to exercise great forethought [*promêthían*] in the matter. (*Laches* 185a, trans. Sprague)

Allusions to Promethean forethought come up again a little further on in the dialogue, where Nicias tells Lysimachus that he should allow himself to be tested by Socrates' questioning; for the one who does not run away from such treatment, he says:

must of necessity [*ànágkê*] take more forethought [*promêthésteron*] for the rest of one's life, if one does not fly from his words but is willing [*èthélonta*], as Solon said: 'I grow old learning [*manthánein*] ever more and more;' and zealous to learn as long as one lives, and does not expect to get good sense by the mere arrival of old age. (*Laches* 188b, trans. by author based on Lamb)

On the testimony of the eminent general Nicias, then, Socrates is able to instil, by necessity, promethean forethought in those willing to learn (*manthánô*) from his words. This ringing endorsement of Nicias thus forms the prologue for a discussion, with Socrates presiding as the acknowledged expert how best to educate young men, and in what.

Given the military background of the interlocutors Plato depicts in *Laches*, their discussion naturally begins with a consideration of the benefits and drawbacks of military training. With the presence of Socrates, though, this discussion inexorably gravitates to the question: what is

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<sup>30</sup> The father of Lysimachus was Aristides I (on or after 520-c.467 BCE), a military and political leader; the father of Melesias was Thucydides I (on or after 508-before 425), a politician and early opponent of Pericles.

courage? This question also played a key role in the discussion of virtue in *Protagoras*, as noted above. There, Protagoras asserts that the boldness of courage is what fundamentally differentiates it from the other virtues (*Protagoras* 349e, 359b), in support of his essential thesis: that the virtues are many and different, rather than one and the same. Nicias, by contrast, differentiates between courage and boldness precisely by the degree to which they are associated with forethought, or the lack of such. As he says:

In my opinion very few people are endowed with courage and forethought [*promêthias*], while rashness, boldness, and fearlessness, with no forethought [*âpromêthias*] to guide it, are found in a great number of men, women, children, and animals. (*Laches* 197b, trans. Lamb)

Given this intrinsic alignment between forethought and courage, Nicias concludes that fear is the expectation (*prosdokian*) of future evil (198b), while courage is the knowledge (*èpistêmê*) of these things (198c). Socrates challenges this definition of courage, though, asking whether there are really different forms of knowledge (*èpistêmê*) for things past, present and future; or if, rather, the knowledge employed in each case for the same subject is one and the same (198d)? In the case of a general, for instance, Socrates goes on to say:

the art of generalship is that which best foresees the future [*promêtheĩtai*] and the other times – nor does this art consider it necessary to be ruled by the art of the seer [*mantikê*], but to rule it, as being better acquainted with both present and future in the affairs of war. (198e-199a, trans. Sprague)

Socrates further notes how, by law, it is the general who commands the seer in affairs of war. Appealing to the martial instincts of Nicias, Socrates thus wins approval for the proposition that "the same knowledge [*èpistêmên*] has understanding of the same things, whether future, present, or past" (199a). He takes it yet another step further, stating that such a knowledge: "would be the knowledge of practically all goods and evils put together." (199d) Winning the assent of Nicias on this point as well, Socrates concludes that the knowledge of which they are now speaking is no longer only a definition of courage, though, but rather "virtue entire [*súmpasa àretê*]." (199d-e)

Socrates, the wise philosopher, handily wins the approval of Nicias, the powerful general, for all the major propositions he advances in *Laches*: that courage is an integral component of virtue, that all the virtues are essentially one, and that all virtue essentially consists of a knowledge of good and evil. As in *Protagoras*, though, Socrates achieves his victory, to a considerable degree, by resorting to outright sophistry; which is to say, by employing clever, but

not necessarily valid arguments in order to win agreement to his propositions. He argues that the virtues and their associated forms of knowledge are essentially one, for instance, on the basis that there can be only one commander of an army. Be that as it may, even a cursory examination of Greek wisdom readily demonstrates the folly of the general who disregards the counsel of his seer, even in matters of war. This essential conflict between power and wisdom is most prominently illustrated at the very opening of the *Iliad*, where king Agamemnon's lust for the girl, Chryseis, accrues to the detriment of the Greek army; a situation that is corrected only after he grudgingly gives her up, following the counsel offered by his seer, Calchas, with the backing of the great hero, Achilles.<sup>vi</sup> The conflict between power and wisdom also forms the central theme of the *Prometheia* trilogy, of course, though with a much happier final outcome. In *Luómenos*, Zeus comes close to being cast down from power, stemming from his lust for Thetis, and is saved only by the counsel willingly offered by Prometheus, after he is freed by the great hero, Heracles. The tradition of Greek wisdom thus recognises that the lust associated with power invariably brings it into conflict with wisdom, which possesses greater forethought about the consequences of that lust.

Socrates employs a number of somewhat dubious premises in extolling the art of generalship in *Laches*. He argues, for instance, that there is no essential difference between things past, present and future in order to lend support to his moral assertion of the essential unity and knowability of the virtues. This assertion assumes a degree of continuity between past and future, though, that flies in the face of lived experience. It also contradicts one of the major premises of ancient Greek wisdom, as was seen above in *Philebus*: "that whatever is said to be consists of one and many." (*Philebus* 16c, trans. Frede) This wisdom tradition is also reflected in Heraclitus' insight into the cosmos as fundamentally underwritten by the process of becoming, as well as the wisdom of Protagoras, as preserved in his two *logoi* argument – "that there are two sides to every question, opposed to each other" (Diogenes Laertius 9.51, trans. Hicks). The existence of fundamentally irreconcilable goods and ways of knowing is also reflected in the polytheistic conceptions of Greek mythology, which depicts many conflicts between opposing gods and heroes. This same ancient wisdom later formed the underlying assumptions of Greek tragedy, which also posited the existence of essentially irreconcilable conflicts between various conceptions of gods, virtues and/or ways of knowing.

The essential formula of tragedy is most successfully executed, in some interpretations, by the Protagorean-influenced *Antigone*. There, the exemplary piety of Antigone, "who honours

the bond of kinship, and the gods of the underworld," is pitted against the necessary justice of Creon, who "honours Zeus alone, the dominating power over public life and social welfare." (Hegel, 1975, p. 1213) In his subtle depiction of this conflict, Sophocles calibrates the two competing claims so carefully that it's literally impossible to resolve without violating one principle or the other. This essential formula is also employed in the *Prometheia* trilogy, with the seemingly irresolvable conflict between the power of Zeus, the misanthropic tyrant, and the wisdom of Prometheus, the philanthropic sophist. However, the conclusion of the *Prometheia* trilogy also appears to have substantially deviated from this essential tragic formula by effecting a definitive reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus, with no apparent loss of integrity on either side. This clean resolution stands in stark contrast to the rendition of Hesiod, in whose version Prometheus remains bound to a stone indefinitely, his only relief coming from Heracles eventually killing the bird that consumes his liver. The *Prometheia* trilogy's deviation from the formula for a successful tragedy also likely accounts for the relative low regard in which Aristotle held it (*Poetics* 1456a). It also points, too, to the influence of what Nietzsche describes in *The Birth of Tragedy* as "Socratism" – which is to say, the impulse of the theoretical man to resolve conflicting ideas through rational analysis – and which he also diagnoses as marking the beginning of the end of the world-view that produced Greek tragedy.



## F. *Timaeus*

Neither Prometheus nor the concept of promethean forethought is directly mentioned in the *Timaeus*; however, the characters depicted in the dialogue do mention a number of closely related mythic figures and concepts. The *Timaeus* depicts a discussion involving four men: Socrates, Timaeus of Locri, a pythagorean philosopher from the Dorian *pólis* of Locri (Lampert & Planeaux, 1998, p. 92), Critias III (c.520-after 421 BCE),<sup>31</sup> and Hermocrates, a famous general from Syracuse. This discussion occurs during the Panathenaic Festival in Athens (21a), and can be confidently dated to 421 BCE (Lampert & Planeaux, 1998, p. 93). The dialogue begins the day after Socrates have given an account of "the kind of political structure cities should have and the kind of men who should make it up so as to be the best possible." (17c) From the summary Socrates provides of this account (17d-19a), it would appear to be almost identical to the account he gave of the perfectly just *pólis* in *Republic*, though only extending to book 5 of that work, where the especially contentious issues of the rule of women (5.451c-457c) and raising of children in common (5.457d-471e) are raised. The day before the action depicted in *Timaeus*, then, Socrates broke off his account of the perfectly just *pólis* shortly after the point in *Republic* at which he prostrated to Adrasteia (451a), but just before addressing what he describes as the 'third wave' that threatens to sink their discussion; namely, the need, if there is to be rest from ills in the *poliás*, for "the philosophers to rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs to genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide" (473c-d, trans. Bloom). In the account Socrates gave the day before the action depicted in *Timaeus*, by contrast, he concluded with rearing of children (19a), and the expression of his desire to see his account complemented by another depicting this ideal *pólis* at war with another great *pólis* (19b-e).

Critias obliges Socrates by offering to tell a myth of Atlantis that he says he first heard told by his grandfather, Critias II (c.600-after 510 BCE), during the Apaturia, when the children were presented, and the fathers staged a recitation contest (21b). This presentation ceremony occurred on the third day of the festival, the same day in which a torch-race in honour of Hephaestus would also have been run. The Apaturia was a festival that celebrated the victory of the Athenian hero, Melanthus, who prevailed over Xanthus, king of Boeotia, in single combat. The exact nature of that victory has many implications for interpreting the significance of the *mūthoi* told by both Timaeus and Critias. Melanthus answered a challenge that Xanthus

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<sup>31</sup> Critias III is also the grandfather of Critias IV (after 460-403 BCE), who appears in *Protagoras*.

originally issued to Thymotes, king of Athens, with which Boeotia was at war. Thymotes declined the challenge, on the grounds of age and infirmity, but Melanthus accepted it on his behalf, with the agreement that he would gain the throne if he won. Melanthus was said to have gained his victory by deception, successfully throwing Xanthus off guard by crying that a man in a black goat's skin was helping him (Scholiast on Aristophanes' *Acharensians* 146). Critias thus allegedly first heard the *mūthos* of Atlantis at a festival celebrating a hero who ascended to the Athenian throne by employing deception in single combat. This is a theme that will resonate throughout the *mūthoi* told by Timaeus and Critias, who also seek to supplant an old mythic tradition by means of deception.

Critias says he was about ten when, while his grandfather was about ninety, when he heard him tell the *mūthos* of Atlantis (21b), which would situate the date of the event to c.510 BCE. Critias further claims this *mūthos* was originally told to his great-grandfather, Dropides II,<sup>32</sup> by Solon (b.630-25, d. 559 BCE), who said he heard it during his journey to Egypt. While there, Solon said he visited Sáis, a *pólis* situated in the Nile delta that claimed an ancient common ancestry with Athens, and whose patron god, Neith, goddess of war and hunting, they claimed was Athena (21e). There, Solon conversed with Egyptian priests who were also scholars of antiquity. In an attempt to lead them into a discussion of such matters, he broached the subject of antiquity by telling them the oldest Greek myth he knew, the Dorian myth of Phoroneus:

He started talking about Phoroneus - the first human being, it is said - and about Niobe, and then he told the story of how Deukalion and Pyrrha survived the flood. (22a-b, trans. Zeyl)

These references to the myths of Phoroneus, Deukalion and Pyrrha point to the inauthenticity of the *mūthos* Timaeus tells. Phoroneus was the mythical first inhabitant of the land, the discoverer of how to make fire, and the founder and first king of Argos (Pausanias 2.15.5, 2.19.5). As such, Phoroneus is sometimes referred to as the 'Doric Prometheus'. Deukalion, on the other hand, is described by (pseudo-) Hesiod as the son of Prometheus and Pronea (fr. 1), while Pyrrha is described in later sources as the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora.<sup>33</sup> While Deukalion and Pyrrha are associated with Prometheus from archaic times, though, their association with a great flood is not attested before Epicharmus' treatment of the subject in his comic play *Prometheus or Pyrrha*, the production of which dates to sometime early in the 5<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Possibly an eponymous archon in 593/2 (Nails, 2002, p. 336).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Apollodorus 1.46, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.390, Hyginus *Fabulae* 142 & 155, Strabo 9.5.23.

century BCE. Given the eminently Doric origins of both the Phoroneus *mūthos* and Epicharmus (who lived and worked in the Doric *pólis* of Syracuse), it is highly unlikely that Solon, from the eminently Ionic *pólis* of Athens, would have cited these myths as the oldest Greek myths he knew. A far more likely scenario that presents itself, given the personalities involved in the dialogue, is that old Critias III was briefed on how to present his *mūthos* of Atlantis by Timaeus and or Hermokrates, both of whom hale from Doric *pólias* (Locri and Syracuse respectively).

In any case, Solon then traced the lines of descent of the posterity of Deukalion and Pyrrha, and calculated the number of generations in an attempt to date these events. He was interrupted at this point by one of the priests, though, who remarked how the Greeks are ever children, devoid of beliefs about antiquity handed down by a truly ancient tradition. He then told Solon of records they have preserved of Athens as it was before the great flood, the memories of which had been obliterated among the Greeks by various catastrophes. In response, Solon begged the Egyptian priest to give this account of pre-historical Athens, to which he obliged. According to the account of the priest, Athens was originally founded 9000 years ago (i.e. 9500 BCE), a thousand years before the founding of Sáis.<sup>34</sup> At that time, the priest said, Athena received from Earth and Hephaestus the seed from which the people of Athens came (23e). This would seem to be a thinly veiled reference to Hephaestus' attempted rape of Athena, who scraped his semen off her leg with a scrap of wool and, in disgust, tossed it to the earth, resulting in the birth of Erichthonius, a mythological early king of Athens (Apollodorus 3.14.6). The priest also mentioned that, in the study of the world order by the priesthood to which he belongs, they have traced all their discoveries, including prophecy, medicine and all the other disciplines, from their divine realities to human level of existence (24b-c); thereby evoking Prometheus' account of what he did for humans in the central *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês (455-522).

Critias first tells a concise version of the *mūthos* of Atlantis that he alleges the Egyptian priest told to Solon, and then offers to relate a more detailed version. Socrates, though, requests that Timaeus first perform the task allotted to him the previous day, of giving an account of the origin of the universe and the human species (27d ff.). As Lampert and Planeaux (1998, p. 99) point out, this plot construction means that "Timaeus's cosmology is framed by

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<sup>34</sup> The cult of Neith is attested as early as the early 32nd century BCE (Nicholson, 1995, p. 250), so such claims to extreme antiquity, while likely somewhat exaggerated, are not entire bereft of historical grounds. It also seems likely that this Athenian connection with Sáis provided at least part of the basis for the myth of Io, and her journey from Greece to Egypt.

Kritias' Athens-Atlantis tale." This positioning would seem to indicate that Timaeus does not give a strictly rational account of how the order of the universe came to be; rather, he presents a mythical cosmogony specifically moulded to provide a cosmological basis for Critias' account of the war between Atlantis and Athens. Critias' *mūthos* of Atlantis, in turn, is moulded to provide an historical basis for identifying Athens with the ideal *pólis*, as described by Socrates in *Republic*. Rather than providing a strictly rational cosmology and history, then, both Timaeus and Critias provide mythologised accounts that serve the overriding political need of constituting the perfectly just *pólis*; inscribing not just its possibility, but its very necessity, on the cosmological and historical order of the universe. That having been said, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the cosmogony presented in *Timaeus* to the history of Western philosophy, particularly in the Christian West, as a translation of the dialogue by Calcidus in 321 CE made it the only work of Plato available to Latin readers during the early Middle Ages.

Timaeus employs *prónoia* three times as a word in his cosmogony. He begins by first distinguishing between that which always is and does not become, and that which becomes but never really is (27d-28a), reflecting Parmenidean ideas on the nature of being. He then explains how, the divine craftsman (*dêmiourgós*) that caused the universe (*pan*) to come into being must also be considered good and the most excellent of causes, as the *kósmos* is the most beautiful of all the things that have come to be. And if the *kósmos* is beautiful and its divine craftsman good, Critias maintains, then he must have looked to the eternal form (*àidion*) (29a). Being good, the *dêmiourgós* naturally desired that everything he created to be good like himself; and to this end took over all that is visible and brought it from disorder to order (29e-30a). Timaeus concludes this initial summary of his cosmology with the observation that god (*theoũ*) brought the universe (*kósmos*) into existence as a truly living thing endowed with soul and foresight (*prónoian*) (30b-c). In this way, the *dêmiourgós* described by Critias closely conforms with the reforms that Socrates calls for in the *Republic* to the tales told about the gods by Homer and Hesiod (2.377d-78a). Among the foremost "noble lies" that Socrates argues must be told in their place, in order to realise and maintain the just *pólis* he describes, are tales that speak of god as good (Ibid. 2.379b), and as only the cause of good things (Ibid. 2.380c).

Later in *Timaeus*, attention is turned to how the human body and its various members were generated, and how the soul was created. Timaeus begins this account by first asking: what providence, plan or foresight (*pronoías*) of the gods (*theôn*) caused these things to come to be

(*gégone*)? (44c) He then describes how the head serves as a vessel (*kútos*) of the soul, and how the gods "bound organs [*örgana ènédêsan*] inside it" to minister in all things to the foresight (*pronoía*) of the soul (45b). Timaeus then describes how the pure fire in each of us, as human beings endowed with a soul, flows through the eyes and interacts with light from external fire to produce visual perception (45b-46c). Timaeus praises visual perception for making possible the development of astronomy, the invention of number, "has given us the idea of time, and opened the path into inquiry into the nature of the universe." These pursuits, in turn, have "given us philosophy, a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value neither has been nor ever will be surpassed." (47a-b) In these passages, then, Timaeus describes the pronoian foresight of three things: the living and visible universe, the human soul, and the good and divine craftsman (*dêmiourgós*) who created them by employing the divine form as a model.

As may be seen from this survey of *Timeaus*, the characters Plato depicts in that dialogue make several significant mythic and etymological references highly evocative of Prometheus, although Prometheus himself is never directly mentioned. Solon mentions Phoroneus, the Dorian variant of the Promethean myth, who was the first man, the first to teach the technique for making fire, and the founding king of Argos. Solon also traces the descendents of the survivors the Great Flood, Deukalion and Pyrrha, whom pseudo-Hesiod respectively names the son of Prometheus and Pronoea, and the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora (*Catalogue of Women*, Fr. 1). As was noted in chapter 3, the flood myth was an innovation to the Promethean myth, likely first incorporated by Dorian poets who, in turn, imported it from Semitic sources, likely Phoenician. The Egyptian priest, on the other hand, mentions the relationship between Athena by Hephaestus, and the resulting birth of Erichthoneus, a founding king of Athens. In each of these three instances, then, mythic doublets or close relations of Prometheus are mentioned several times, although never Prometheus himself.

In the cosmogony told by Timaeus, on the other hand, the Pythagorean philosopher describes a divine craftsman (*dêmiourgós*) who both possesses foresight and is benevolently disposed toward humans. This good god, who is only ever the cause of what is good, endows both the cosmos and human beings with foresight. In the case of humans, this creative god instills foresight in humans by placing a soul inside the body, causing an internal fire that makes possible the faculty of perception. Again, the idea of a god who facilitates the faculties of perception by placing fire in the human soul is highly evocative of Prometheus; particularly the opening of his account in the central *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês, where he describes how he placed

mind and reason, the metaphor of fire, in humans, thereby giving them the capability to better interpret their sense perceptions (447-450). The god to whom Timaeus refers is thus highly evocative of the Protagorean Prometheus: he is divine, he is good, he possesses foresight, and he places a soul in human beings, the inner fire of which gives them perception. The central role of the god described by Timaeus in the creation of human beings also closely associates him with Prometheus as he came to be conceived, beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

## G. Critias

The *Critias* picks up where the *Timaeus* leaves off. In the dialogue, Critias presents a more elaborate version of the truncated *mũthos* of Atlantis he told in *Timaeus*. The cosmogony of *Timaeus* is thus framed by the mythology of Critias. Like the shorter version told in *Timeaus*, the expanded version of the Atlantean myth told in *Critias* includes many significant Promethean allusions. Critias opens his *mũthos* with the line: At one time, each of the gods received their allotted portions of the Earth without strife (109b). This opening contrasts in interesting ways with the Promethean *mũthos* in the Great Speech of Protagoras, which opens with the gods moulding mortal creature in the Earth, and appointing Prometheus and Epimetheus to allot them various talents to ensure their survival (*Protagoras* 320d).<sup>35</sup> In Critias' version, by contrast, the gods received their distribution on Earth, and then raised humans upon their allotted region as their own chattel and livestock, as shepherds do their sheep (109c). This motif, of gods caring for humans as shepherds do their livestock, evokes the Athenian Visitor's description, in *Laws*, of the philanthropic manner in which Kronos ruled via *daemons* over humans in their golden age, benefitting them in much the same way husbandmen benefit herd animals (*Laws* 4.713c).<sup>36</sup>

Critias next describes how each of these gods directed the humans under their charge from the stern (*prũmnês*), as it were; i.e. steering their soul by means of the helm (*oĩaki*) of Persuasion (*peithoĩ*), just as helmsmen steer (*èkubérnôn*) ships (109c). His employment of the motif of the helm is evocative of similar wording found in Heraclitus and in Desmôtês, the use of which Herington (1963, p. 191) identifies in the former as being unique among the Pre-Socratic philosophers.<sup>37</sup> The particular wording Critias employs in his *mũthos* thus supplies linguistic evidence, albeit circumstantial, of a Protagorean influence. That being said, Critias also makes important modifications to Protagorean models, such as again recasting human myth-history as fall from an original divine state of grace, as in Hesiod, and repositioning the gods at the helm of at least Persuasion, if not Necessity.

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<sup>35</sup> This opening - "At one time [*pote katá tous*] the gods [...]" is somewhat reminiscent of the opening of the Promethean myth of Protagoras' Great Speech "There once was a time [*èn gár pote chrónos*] when there were gods, but no mortal creatures." (*Protagoras* 320c) However, the divergence in wording does not evince a direct etymological link.

<sup>36</sup> It is also evocative, of course, of the equivalence drawn between the shepherd and the ruler by Socrates and Thrasymachus in the first book of the *Republic*.

<sup>37</sup> By comparison Heraclitus writes: "And thunderbolt steers [*oĩakízei*] the totality of things [*tà de pánta*]." (Fr. 64, trans. Robinson)

In Desmôtês, by comparison, the Chorus declares, with respect to the tyranny of Zeus: "A new master holds the helm [*oĩakonómoi*] of Olympus" (148-9). Later, the Chorus asks Prometheus: "whose hand on the helm [*oĩakostróphos*] controls Necessity?" (515, trans. Robinson)

Critias goes on to state that, because Athena and Hephaestus possessed a common nature, in terms of their love of wisdom and the arts, they both received Attica as their allotment of land (109c). The reason Critias cites for their common nature is that Athena was the sister of Hephaestus by the same father, presumably Zeus. This account is somewhat at odds with the archaic Greek mythic tradition, though. Hesiod describes Zeus as giving birth to Athena from his own head (*Theogony* 924), after putting Metis ('thought') in his belly, out of fear that she might give birth to a son stronger than his thunderbolt. Hera, on the other hand gives birth to Hephaestus without union with Zeus (*Ibid.* 925-7), presumably out of anger for his giving birth to Athena, though other sources simply mention a quarrel (*eris*) (Hesiod fr. 343, ed. West). The details of the parentage of Hephaestus are a little more ambiguous in Homer. There, Hephaestus addresses Zeus as 'father' (cf. *Odyssey* 8.312: *Zeũ páter*; *Iliad* 1.578: *patrì*), though he may only be doing so in an honourific sense, as do many other gods who address Zeus in Homer. Zeus also refers to Hephaestus as 'son' in Homer (*Odyssey* 14.338); however, he may simply be referring to him as Hera's son. Less ambiguously, Hephaestus reproaches his "two parents", who would seem to be Zeus and Hera (*Odyssey* 8.312) (Gantz, 1993, p. 74).

Less ambiguous genealogies for Hephaestus more in line with Hesiod are provided by later Greek mythographers. Pseudo-Apollodorus (1.3.5) and Hyginus (*Fabulae*, Preface), for instance, both state that Hera parthenogenetically gave birth to Hephaestus. While these versions were recorded much later, in the Greco-Roman era, they may actually preserve more archaic versions of the myth portraying Hera as autonomous to Zeus, as most clearly reflected in Hesiod. Adding to the confusion inherent to the plasticity of *mũthos*, Hephaestus is sometimes named as the midwife attendant at the birth of Athena (Pindar, *Olympian* 7.31-44), at other times Prometheus (Euripides, *Ion* 454-5). The genealogy Critias assigns Hephaestus and Athena is thus out of sync with archaic versions, most clearly reflected in Hesiod. On the other hand, his novel genealogy for Athena and Hephaestus well aligns with the Promethean myth Protagoras tells in his Great Speech, where they are described as possessing fire and wisdom in the arts, and sharing the same dwelling (*Protagoras* 321d), identified in chapter 8 as the Hephaisteion in Athens.

A little further into his expanded version of the myth of Atlantis, Critias mentions the flood of Deukalion in describing how one such destructive flood washed away the topsoil that used to cover the acropolis (112a). Up until that time, he says, a class of warriors lived there, around the sanctuary of Athena and Hephaestus (112b), while artisans and farmers dwelled below its slopes. The *pólis* Critias describes thus shares many of the features of the city described by



Socrates the previous day, with a farmer/artisan class ruled by an austere warrior/guardian class that held all property in common. Conspicuous by its absence, though, is any mention of philosopher-kings who rule over the guardians, and who were also notably absent in the account Socrates gave the previous day. The philosopher-kings are thus both absent and present in Critias' description of Socrates' city in speech, just as Prometheus is both unmentioned and yet omnipresent in the imagery of *Timaeus* and *Critias* as a whole. The role of philosophy in both the creation of *mūthos* told by Critias, and the cosmogony told by Timeaus that it frames, is covered up by omission.

Having introduced a mythologised, primordial version of Athens that imitates Socrates' ideal *pólis* in speech, Critias introduces Atlantis, which forms its worthy opponent. The most notable feature of Atlantis, at least from the perspective of the presence of Promethean imagery, is that it is named for Atlas. In Hesiod, Atlas is named as the fourth brother of Prometheus, after Epimetheus and Menotios (*Theogony* 510-1, 517). There is also an Atlas attested in Phoenician myth, as the fourth son of Uranus and Ge (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.10.36b-c).<sup>38</sup> In the myth of Atlantis told by Critias, by comparison, Atlas is the eldest brother of five sets of twin sons born to Poseidon and Clito. He therefore becomes king and Atlantis is named for him.

A few points jump out about Plato's use of Promethean imagery in *Timaeus* and *Critias*. Timeaus presents a cosmogony with a divine creator that is highly reminiscent of Prometheus, both in terms of his foresight and his benevolent disposition toward humans and all creation. This divine craftsman (*dēmiourgós*) looks to eternal forms as models in his creation of things in realm of becoming: like Prometheus, then, he takes from the gods in order to better equip mortal humans; and like the philosopher Socrates describes in *Republic*, he looks to eternal forms of being to better interpret reality in the realm of becoming. The truth claim of the cosmogony told by Critias, though, is conditioned by its context of being crafted to reinforce the mythology that frames it; a myth-history depicting a primordial Athens founded by Athena and Hephaestus, in battle with Atlantis, named for its first king, Atlas. Critis thus portrays a confederacy of *poliás* renowned for their technological superiority battling Socrates' perfectly just *pólis*, which prevails due to the superior virtue of its citizens, before an earthquake and floods sink Atlantis beneath the waves (*Timaeus* 25d).

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<sup>38</sup> As was noted in chapter 2, Atlas also appears in the fragments of *The Phoenician History of Sanchuniathon* preserved by Philo of Byblos and Eusebius of Caesarea.

## H. *Phaedrus*

The *Phaedrus* is one of two great Platonic dialogues on the subject of love, the other being the *Symposium*, both of which contain significant Promethean references. Set in 418 BCE, *Phaedrus* depicts Socrates and Phaedrus conversing in the countryside, at a beautiful grove by a stream "dedicated to Achelous and some of the Nymphs" (230b). Phaedrus is a beautiful young man, then in his mid-twenties, who is also present in *Protagoras* and *Symposium*. In *Phaedrus*, he compels Socrates, a self-described 'lover of speeches' (*philológō*) (236e), to respond to a speech recently composed by Lysias. In that speech, of which Phaedrus foresightedly brings a written copy, Lysias had argued that the beloved should prefer the non-lover over the lover, as the latter is more often a source of harm to the beloved. Socrates largely agrees with this condemnation of the lover, concluding his own initial speech on the subject with the observation that "the friendship of the lover arises without any good will at all." (241c) Rather, it arises for the sole purpose of sating the hunger of the lover; the lover loving the beloved as the wolf loves a lamb.

Having presented his critique of the lover, Socrates declares his speech complete; but Phaedrus complains that he still hasn't addressed the second part of Lysias' speech, praising the non-lover. Socrates responds that he has already passed from lyric to epic poetry in criticising the lover, so what does Phaedrus suppose will happen if he begins to praise its opposite? Does he not realise that:

the Nymphs to who you so purposely [*pronoías*] exposed me will take complete possession of me? (241e, trans. Fowler)

Socrates thus praises Phaedrus for his foresight (*pronoías*) in luring him to a grove dedicated to Nymphs who inspire his speech-making. He then says, though, that just as he was "about to cross the river" in terms of formulating his praise of the non-lover, his divine sign (*daimóniôn*) came to him and forbade him to leave before he had made atonement for some offense against the gods (242b-c). Socrates says that he is, in effect, a seer (*mántis*); and, while not very good at it, he is good enough for his own purposes (242c). The soul, he goes on to say, is itself a sort of seer (*mantikón*) (242c). And in this case, he clearly recognises (*manthánô*) his offence (242d).

From the very beginning of his speech condemning the lover, Socrates says he was disturbed by the uneasy feeling that he was offending the gods in order to win the honour of men (242d). For Love is a god, and as such, in Socrates view, cannot be bad in any way (242d-e). To atone for his earlier speech, therefore, Socrates is inspired to deliver an *impromptu* speech in

praise of the lover, in which he memorably describes the soul as a chariot pulled by two horses representing opposing passions: one good, that he associates with the love of honour; the other bad, which he associates with the love of pleasure. Socrates then describes these two horses as being ideally directed by a driver, who represents the rational part of the soul. In order to assert control over the chariot, he says, this charioteer must form an alliance with the good horse against the bad horse. Socrates' depiction of the soul thus closely matches the political regime of the ideal *pólis* he describes in *Republic*. The charioteer must also severely punish the bad horse when it misbehaves, until it becomes humble enough to follow his warnings (*pronoía*) (254e). Again, then, foresight is here closely associated with the ruling impulse of the rational part of the soul, particularly in terms of its efforts to overcome and tame the desiring part of the soul.

The final piece of Promethean imagery employed in Phaedrus concerns a *mūthos* that Socrates tells near the end of the dialogue, where he makes a transition from discussing the artfulness of speechmaking to discussing what makes writing good. Socrates begins by describing how, among the ancient gods of Naucratis, a Greek trading colony in Egypt, there was one to whom the ibis was sacred:

The name of that divinity (*daímoni*) was Theuth, who first discovered [*prōton* (...) *eúreĩn*] number [*àrithmón*] and calculation [*logismòn*], geometry [*geômetrían*] and astronomy [*àstronomían*], as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing [*grámmata*]. (274c-d, trans. Nehemas & Woodruff)

Socrates goes on to say that Theuth once came and exhibited his arts (*téchnas*) to Thamus, king of Egyptian Thebes, whom the Greeks called the god (*theòn*) Ammon. Theuth urged Thamus to disseminate these arts among his people. Thamus asked him, though, to first describe the usefulness (*ôphelían*) of each art, and he would critique it (274d-e). When Theuth came to writing, he described it as something that, once learned (*máthêma*), would make the Egyptians wiser (*sophôtérous*) and improve their memory (*mnêmonikôtérous*), for he had "discovered [*êúréthê*] a potion [*phármakon*] for memory [*mnêmês*] and wisdom [*sophías*]." (274e) Thamus replied, though, that while one man can give birth to the elements of an art, it takes another to judge if they can benefit (*ôphelías*) or harm (*blábês*) those who will use them. He then said that it's far more likely that, if men put their trust in writing, it will cause them to forget, as they will not practice using their memory. As a result, "they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so." (274e-275b) At this stage, Phaedrus remarks of Socrates, that he's very good at

making up stories from Egypt, or wherever he wants; to which Socrates replies that it's not so important who is saying something or where it comes from, but rather the truth of what is said.

The *mũthos* that Socrates tells of Theuth bears many resemblances to the Protagorean Prometheus of the *Prometheia* trilogy. The Greeks identified the god associated with king Thamus, Ammon, the with Zeus (Schmitz, 1867). Theuth, on the other hand, the Greeks tended to identify with Hermes (Plato, Cooper, & Hutchinson, 1997, p. 551). The identification of Theuth with Hermes likely stemmed from his role as messenger, transmitting the arts to Thamus. Theuth's role was not limited to simply delivering knowledge of the arts in the *mũthos* of Socrates, though, for he also describes him as being the one who first discovered (*prōton eúreĩn*) number, calculation, geometry, astronomy, various games, and writing (274c-d). In this regard, then, Socrates thereby evokes Prometheus' description, in the central *epēisodos* of *Desmôtēs*, of how he 'discovered' (*èzēũron*) astronomy, mathematics and writing (458-460). This connection is further underlined by Socrates' use of a word cognate with Prometheus, where he has Theuth describe how, once learned (*máthēma*), the art of writing will make the Egyptians wiser and improve their memory. At the same time, though, Socrates' Theuth *mũthos* carries an implicit critique of the Protogorean wisdom, as contained in the *Prometheia* trilogy. In that trilogy, the development of the arts brings about the advance human civilisation. In Socrates' Theuth *mũthos*, by contrast, the arts also introduce retrograde elements, as well as benefits, in terms of their ultimate impact upon human well-being. In this regard, Theuth is more aligned with the traditional Hesiodic *mũthos*, where Prometheus' gift of fire triggers the fall of man, from a golden age, to the current iron age (*Works & Days* 109ff.).

In the passages cited above from *Phaedrus*, then, Socrates both alludes to and strongly identifies with a number of Promethean elements in several contexts. After praising Phaedrus for his foresight (*pronoías*), Socrates cites his own divine sign (*daimóniōn*) as evidence that he is a seer, or prophet (*mántis*), with the ability to learn (*manthánō*) when he is about to do something wrong. Socrates thus draws a direct relationship between his divine sign and activities closely related, both conceptually and etymologically, to the forethought embodied by Prometheus. Socrates also employs several words cognate to Prometheus that are derived from the Indo-European root word, *\*ma(n)th*. He describes himself as a seer (*mántis*), and as learning (*manthánō*). He also has Theuth describe how, once learned (*máthēma*), the art of writing will bring many benefits. Socrates refers to the soul as a seer (*mantikón*), and later attributes foresight (*pronoía*) to the metaphorical chariot driver, who represents the rational

part of the soul. In so doing, he reiterates an important element of the mythic cosmogony told by Timaeus, who describes the divine maker of the universe as having implanted foresight in the soul (*Timaeus* 45b). In his *mũthos* of Theuth, finally, Socrates alludes to both the Hesiodic Prometheus and the Protagorean Prometheus of the *Prometheia* trilogy. While Prometheus is never explicitly mentioned in *Phaedrus*, then, he is omnipresent in the themes discussed in the dialogue.

## I. *Symposium*

The theme of the nature of *èros* is addressed again in the *Symposium*, or "The Drinking Party", the main dramatic action of which takes place in 416 BCE, shortly before the Athenian naval expedition to Sicily that effectively ended the Peace of Nicias. Traditionally assigned to Plato's 'middle period', *Symposium* depicts several banqueters prominent in Athenian intellectual circles, including Aristophanes and Socrates. In the dialogue, Phaedrus laments that no one has yet adequately eulogised Eros, as ancient and powerful as he is, and challenges the other banqueters to an *impromptu* competition to see who can best extemporaneously eulogize the god Eros. Phaedrus then initiates the contest by giving his own eulogy, pointing out how, in Hesiod, Eros is named as one of the most ancient of gods (*Theogony* 120); and citing the philosophical authority of Acusilaus and Parmenides (fr. B 1) to this effect (178b).

Promethean elements are notably absent in the first three speeches depicted in *Symposium*, given by Phaedrus and the next two banqueters: Pausanias and Eryximachus. In *the* central speech of the dialogue, though, Aristophanes opens his speech of praise with an unmistakable Promethean allusion, describing Eros as the 'most philanthropic' of the gods, as follows:

Human beings, in my opinion, have been entirely unaware of the power of Eros, since if they were aware of it, they would have provided the greatest sanctuaries and altars for him, and would be making him the greatest sacrifices, and not act as they do now when none of this happens to him, though it most certainly should. For Eros is the most philanthropic [*philanthrôpôtatos*] of gods, a helper of human beings as well as a physician dealing with an illness the healing of which would result in the greatest happiness for the human race. (189c-d, trans. Benardete)

In describing Eros as the most philanthropic of the gods, Aristophanes obviously references the Prometheus of the *Prometheia* trilogy, whom both Kratos and Hephaestus deride for his philanthropic way (Desmôtês 11, 28). Aristophanes, as depicted in Plato's *Symposium*, also echoes the actual words of the playwright himself, who, five years earlier, in 421 BCE, had the chorus of his play, *Peace*, praise Hermes as the most philanthropic (*philanthrôpôtate*) and bountiful of divinities (*daimónôn*) (395-6). These two instances of the use of *philanthrôpia*, from Desmôtês and *Peace*, constitute the earliest extant occurrences of the word, and the only two that date from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Sulek, 2010, pp. 387-9). The verisimilitude in the language of Plato's portrayal thus provides confirming evidence of the care he took to authentically portray the speeches and ideas enunciated by the characters depicted in his dialogues. In both *Symposium* and *Peace*, Aristophanes employs a superlative adjective form of *philanthrôpia* to

describe daemonic divinities with the potential to benefit humans: Hermes, by allowing humans to attain Peace; and Eros, by holding out the hope of curing a congenital illness from which humans suffer.

Aristophanes praises Eros as the most philanthropic of gods for treating an illness, the healing of which would result in the greatest happiness for the human race. However, Aristophanes actually presents himself as fitting the mould of a Promethean philanthropist, by giving the gift of a new teaching to heal humankind of what ails it, and commissioning his audience to carry forth his message to everyone else (189d). Aristophanes elaborates upon the nature of the illness humans suffer by telling a *mũthos* in which Zeus slices primordial humans in half, like fish filets, as punishment for exhibiting hubris toward the gods. These previously self-sufficient humans thus became alienated from the other half of their being, resulting in a persistent longing for reunion with it; and it is this longing that causes our attraction to others, impelled by the hope of finding our missing half to 'complete' us and make us feel whole once more. In Aristophanes's view, then, *Eros* is the persistent sense of incompleteness we feel as human beings that results in our reaching out to embrace others in brotherhood and love. We thus live in a state of both fear and hope: fear that Zeus will further dividing us into quarters, and hope that Hephaestus will one day fuse us into a complete whole once more. In this way, Aristophanes provides a philanthropic teaching on the erotic nature of the human condition that he hopes will direct our passions in a manner that is both socially responsible and leads to decency among those who hear it (Lampert, Class notes - Socratic Origins, 2001).

Aristophanes' *mũthos* describing Eros as a sense of incompleteness is itself incomplete insofar as it lacks an adequate *lógos*. This aspect of alogos is reflected in several features of Aristophanes' speech.<sup>vii</sup> However, an important element of his *mũthos* is later picked up by Socrates, who appropriates and further elaborates upon it in terms of *logos* in his subsequent eulogy. In that account, he also defines Eros as being a desire for that which one lacks (200e); an ontological account that Lampert describes as the "deep structure of eros," (2001). Love is a fundamentally a longing for that we feel to be lacking, the gift of Epimetheus in the *mũthos* of Protagoras; and it is this precisely the feeling of something lacking that causes us to strive for it, moving us to give birth in beauty. The problem, as Socrates sees it, though, is when the lover actually succeeds in securing possession of his or her beloved. Not only is the sublime power of *eros* in the lover ended, terminating his striving in satiety, but the good of the beloved is

endangered besides, as demonstrated by the speech of Lysias recited by Phaedrus in the dialogue named for him (231a-234c).

In his eulogy, therefore, Socrates extracts the divine power of *eros* from its potential unseemliness by sublimating desire up a 'ladder of love', whereby the practitioner of a perfected form of erotics is gradually turned: away from the love of bodies and toward the love of souls; away from the love of particular instances and toward the love of universals; away from the possession of knowledge, *per se*, and toward a love of the wisdom that reveals the causes of the growth of the love of knowledge in the beloved. In this way, Socrates concludes, the true lover permanently turns "to the vast open sea of the beautiful," beholding it and giving birth—in ungrudging philosophy—"to many beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts; until, there strengthened and increased, he may discern a certain philosophical science," (Plato, 2001, 210a-211b) an *episteme* of erotics that renders the lover predisposed to love nothing more than observing and promoting the love of wisdom in the beloved. The perfected lover, for which Socrates is the obvious model, thus imitates the philanthropic way of Prometheus, stealing from the heavenly realm of universals in order to instill the love of wisdom in the beloved.



## J. *Gorgias*

The dramatic date of *Gorgias* is 405 BCE, shortly after the execution of Pericles II (Planeaux, 2011).<sup>39</sup> In that dialogue, Socrates makes a passing reference to Prometheus in a *mũthos* on divine judgement that he relates to a young politician named Callicles. Socrates prefaces this myth (*mũthon*), concerning reforms implemented by Zeus on how divine judgement was to be rendered on people upon their death, presenting it as an account (*lógon*) that he will tell as truth (*àlêthê*) (523a). In the time of Kronos, Socrates goes on to say, as well as in the early stages of Zeus' tenure of sovereignty, men were judged on the day they were to die, while they were still alive. This situation was leading to bad judgements, though, as people invariably arrived for their hearing dressed in their best clothes, and were appraised on the basis of deceptive physical appearance, rather than by the presence of virtue in their souls. In reforming the process of divine judgement, therefore, Zeus decreed that people be judged only after they die, and as naked souls. The first thing to be done, though, Zeus asserted, is to stop people from knowing the time of their death ahead of time. He then observes:

Now they do have that knowledge. This is something that Prometheus has already been told to put a stop to. (523d-e, trans. Zeyl)

Zeus then appoints three of his sons as divine judges, "two from Asia, Minos and Rhadamanthus, and one from Europe, Aeacus." (523e-524a) Aeacus was the son of Zeus and Europa, and was renowned in all of Greece for his justice and piety (Pausanias 1.39.5, Pindar *Isthmian Ode* 8.48).<sup>40</sup>

In the "true myth" Socrates tells in *Gorgias*, then, Prometheus is depicted as a god who, in the age of Kronos and the early reign of Zeus, gave people foreknowledge of when they would die. Several of the motifs Socrates employs in this "true myth" appear in other extant versions

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<sup>39</sup> Planeaux maintains that the dialogue occurs shortly after the execution of Pericles II (c.445-406) the son of the famous Athenian politician, Pericles I (c495-429 BCE). Pericles II was one of the generals executed by Athens, following the Arginusae trial of 406. This verdict passed over the protests of Socrates, who participated in the trial as a *prũtanis*, a public magistrate who served on the 50 member Prytanes, a committee selected from citizens by lot, that administered the trial (Nails, 2002, pp. 79-82). In his own trial for impiety and corrupting the youth, Socrates specifically mentions his civic service in the Arginusea trial, and how his contrary stance placed him at great personal risk (Plato, *Apology* 32b-e). The Arginusae trial coincided with the Apaturia festival, which took place on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> days of the month Pyanepsion (mid-October to mid-November), so *Gorgias* likely occurs in early 405 BCE.

<sup>40</sup> As it happens, Socrates also mentions these three apotheosised jurymen plus Triptolemus, the Eleusianian prince who received the gift of agriculture from Demeter, at the end of his speech in *Apology* (41a). There, in his remarks to the jury after having being sentence to death, Socrates that he looks forward to the possibility of facing these "true jurymen".

of the Promethean myth, at least some of which likely predate the dramatic date of *Gorgias*. In a Promethean fable attributed to Aesop, for instance, men are said to hide their wickedness inside their hearts (Fable 124; cf. Scholion 6, Eustathius 1574.18). The idea of reforming the manner in which divine judgement is rendered on people at death, on the other hand, points to another myth that Socrates tells at the end of *Republic* (10.614b-621b) to very similar purposes. There, in the myth of Er, Socrates provides an example of the kind of reformed *mūthos* that must be told in the perfectly just *pólis* – with a just god rendering proper judgement on human souls after the death of their bodies – in order to inculcate greater regard for justice among its citizens. The naked souls that Socrates describes in *Gorgias* thus echo his reformed conceptions of divinity in *Republic*; advocating belief in an omniscient god sitting in judgement of our souls, made fully porous to the divine gaze, in order to promote greater justice. In this sense, Socrates is highly reminiscent of the wise man described by a character in Critias' play, *Sisyphus* (fr. 25), who also invents belief in god who concerns himself with human affairs, in order to make people voluntarily uphold justice through fear of divine as well as legal punishment.

The only extant parallel to the particular Promethean motif that Socrates employs in *Gorgias*, of having Prometheus inform people of the day of their death, is found in the *Prometheia* trilogy, indicating a likely Protagorean influence, although it is only hinted at there. In Desmôtês, Prometheus says he implanted blind hopefulness (*tuphlàs èlpídas*) in the hearts of men in order to cure them of the despair caused by foreknowledge (*prodéskesthai*) of their mortal fate (*móron*) (248-50), although he does not claim to be the one who imparted this foreknowledge to humans in the first place. However, several factors would seem to implicate Prometheus as the most likely culprit for having revealed this deadly form of foreknowledge to humans; to begin with, the forethinking character of 'Prometheus' himself. As well, the action of the play would seem to imply that people obtained foreknowledge of their mortality after the gift of fire, also pointing to a Promethean origin for this knowledge. And finally, there is the pivotal role that Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus, plays in Hesiod, accepting the deceptive gift of Zeus, in the beautiful evil of Pandora, that bring about all the evils that afflict men, most notably death, as well as expectation or hope (*èlpís*) (*Works & Days* 103-110).

The role of Prometheus in Socrates' myth – giving people foreknowledge of the day of their death – thus reflects several archaic versions of the Promethean myth, as demonstrated in similar versions attributable to Hesiod and Aesop. However, Socrates may also be seen to laud a particular aspect of the wisdom of Prometheus found only in the *Prometheia* trilogy, where

Prometheus claims to have "caused mortals to cease foreseeing [*prodéskesthai*] their fate [*móron*]." When the Okeanides ask him what cure (*phármakon*) he found for his affliction, he replies: "I caused blind hopes [*tuphlás èlpídas*] to dwell within their breasts." (Desmôtês 250-2) Prometheus thus plays a somewhat incidental, yet highly significant role in the "true myth" that Socrates tells Callicles in *Gorgias*, for it alludes to his larger efforts to reform what is taught and said about the gods; in particular, how the gods render divine judgement on people's souls in an afterlife. As will be seen below, in the analysis of Promethean imagery in *Phaedo*, one of the medicines (*phármakon*) Socrates prescribes in this regard is a teaching on the immortality of the soul.

In addition to employing Prometheus as a character in a true myth, Socrates also employs the word *promêtheía* in *Gorgias*, to signify the concept of forethought. This reference occurs at the point where Socrates differentiates between a "knack [*èmpoiría*]" and a "craft [*téchnê*]." Whereas a knack, such as pastry baking, serves only the pleasure of the one who consumes the pastry, Socrates elaborates, a craft, such as medicine, investigates "both the nature of the object it serves and the cause of the things it does, and is able to give an account of each of these." (501a, trans. Zeyl) And just as there are both knacks and crafts that serve the body; so, too, there are similar preoccupations for the soul. There are knacks that consider only the pleasure of the soul, and that merely preserve the memory of what is customarily done. However, there are also crafts that "possess forethought [*promêtheián*] about what is best for the soul," including which pleasures are better or worse (501b).

The differentiation Socrates makes between a knack and a craft in *Gorgias* recalls a related argument he made at the end of *Protagoras*. There, he had argued that most people are only ever interested in what causes them pleasure, which they define as good. Rather than rejecting this premise as false, Socrates instead employs it as an underpinning of his public teaching, if only to rob people of the notion that the reason they do bad things is because they overcome by pleasures or pains (*Protagoras* 355c-355e). In *Gorgias*, by contrast, Socrates differentiates between a knack that only considers the pleasure of its object, and a craft that considers what is best for it. In this way, Socrates positions himself as a practitioner of the forethinking craft that investigates the nature of the soul, and is able to give an account of it, as opposed to merely possessing a knack for what pleasures the soul.

## **K. *Euthyphro***

Socrates' self-identification with Prometheus and the concept of promethean forethought at the beginning of his public career, as depicted in *Protagoras* (361d), is mirrored by a series of similar associations he makes in four dialogues set at the very end of his life, in *Euthyphro*, *Statesman*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*. In *Euthyphro*, Socrates makes a direct reference to the nature of his *philanthrôpia*. In *Statesman*, the Eleatic Visitor refers to the mythic figure of Prometheus in a cosmogony he tells Socrates. In *Crito*, Socrates refers to how he exercises promethean forethought for his friends, the laws of the *pólis*, and the life of philosophy. And in *Phaedo*, finally, Socrates refers to misanthropy and misanthropists in the context of describing misology.

The *Euthyphro* is one of four dialogues (the other three being *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*) set immediately prior to Socrates' trial and conviction, in May or June of 399 BCE, on charges of impiety and corrupting the youth, and occurs later the same day as *Theaetetus* (cf. *Theaetetus* 142c, *Euthyphro* 2c). The *Euthyphro* also holds a highly privileged place among Plato's dialogues in the arrangement of the definitive ancient edition of his collected works, as published by Thrasyllus (fl. 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, d. 36 CE). Thrasyllus situates *Euthyphro* at the very beginning of the first tetralogy of dialogues depicting the last days of Socrates, the other three being: *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*. On the basis of this positioning, some scholars have argued that the tetralogy to which *Euthyphro* belongs contains among the earliest dialogues composed by Plato. While this interpretation is justifiably viewed with considerable scepticism, particularly given evidence that Plato revised his dialogues throughout his lifetime, it is supported by the relative simplicity and vividness with which Socrates is portrayed in these dialogues. Whatever the value of Thrasyllus' ordering of Plato's dialogues in terms of deriving a chronology for their authorship, though, it is undeniably significant in terms of demonstrating the degree to which the tetralogy depicting the last days of Socrates, and in particular the *Euthyphro* as its opening dialogue, was the most publically exposed and accessible face of Socratic philosophy in antiquity. The opening scene of *Euthyphro* thus formed, for the ancients, the essential introduction to the Platonic corpus as a whole.

*Euthyphro* opens with Socrates on the steps of the archon's palace, where state trials in Athens were held. There he encounters Euthyphro, a priest who worships the traditional Greek gods. Euthyphro expresses surprise at seeing Socrates at the law courts, and inquires into what business has brought him there. Socrates replies that he is accused by a fellow named Meletus of impiety and corrupting the youth. He then goes on to ironically praise Meletus for at least

beginning the right way, taking "care of the young men first, to make them as good as possible, just as a good husbandman" takes care of young plants first (2d). Euthyphro further inquires: what does Meletus say Socrates does to corrupt the young? To which Socrates replies, that he says:

I am a maker of gods; and because I make new gods and do not believe in the old ones he indicted me for the sake of these old ones (3b, trans. Fowler).

In this sense, the charges levelled at Socrates have a certain justification to them, for he has been a great innovator of the traditional polytheistic Greek gods in favour of monotheistic conceptions of a beneficent god, modelled in many ways on Prometheus, who is a cause only of good and cares for human justice. Euthyphro, though, expresses empathy for Socrates' predicament, which he sees as having been brought about by the divine sign (*daimónion*) that Socrates says keeps coming to him. Euthyphro goes on to say that he, too, is laughed at and called crazy when he says anything in the assembly (*èkklêsía*) about divine things (*theíôn*) and foretells the future (*prolégôn*); this, despite the fact that not one of the things he has foretold (*proeĩpon*) is not true (*oûk àlêthès*) (3c).

Responding to Euthyphro's complaint of the Athenians' public ridicule, Socrates dismisses it as likely being of no great consequence. What really makes them angry, though, he goes on to say, is when they think a man is clever (*deinòn*) at teaching (*didaskalikòn*) his wisdom (*sophías*) (3c-d). Socrates then differentiates his own willingness and ability to impart his wisdom from that of Euthyphro in the following terms:

Perhaps *you* seem to make yourself available only infrequently and not to be willing to teach [*didáskein*] your wisdom [*sophían*]. But I fear that, because of my *philanthrôpias*, I seem [*dokô*] to profusely pour out [*èkkechuménôs*] whatever I possess [*èkô*] to every man, not only without pay, but even with pleasure if anyone is willing to listen to me. (3d-e, trans. by author)

If an early date of composition for Euthyphro is assumed – say sometime in the 390s – then this passage would constitute only the fourth extant occurrence of *philanthrôpia* as a word in ancient Greek (Sulek, 2010, p. 391).<sup>41</sup> It is also the first instance in which *philanthrôpia* is employed in a noun form, and in reference to a human being, as opposed to a god. Socrates' reference to his *philanthrôpia* as what makes him seem to pour out what he knows to every man invites the listener to conjecture as to what Socrates is really doing, as opposed to what he

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<sup>41</sup> As noted in previous chapters, *philanthrôpia* first appears as a word twice in Desmôtês (11, 28) in reference to Prometheus, and in Aristophanes' *Peace* (394) in reference to Hermes.

*seems* to be pouring out; thus only barely hinting at an esoteric knowledge that lies behind the exoteric public teaching. How Socrates goes about sharing his wisdom stands in marked contrast to Euthyphro, whose pronouncements on the gods in the public assembly only ever inspire ridicule, despite the fact that he's an acknowledged expert on such matters (cf. *Cratylus*). This seeming unavailability and unwillingness of Euthyphro to teach his wisdom would seem to hint at his *misanthrôpía*, a conjecture that is confirmed by his business in court.

Euthyphro says he is going to court to bring charges against his father for murdering one of his slaves. When Socrates expresses surprise at such a seemingly impious action, Euthyphro responds that his behaviour is fully justified by the actions of Zeus, the god of justice, who is said to have bound his father and cast him into Tartarus. As Socrates' subsequent questioning reveals, though, the circumstances of this 'murder' are highly ambiguous. Euthyphro is apparently only pursuing the charges several years after the actual event of the murder. The death was accidental. The slave who died had murdered another slave, and Euthyphro's father had bound him and left him in a ditch until he heard back from a priest on what to do (4b-e). Despite all these ambiguities in the case, though, Euthyphro remains cocksure in the piety of his case, secure in its analogy to one the most famous episodes in Greek myth – the overthrow of Kronos by Zeus, as depicted in Hesiod (*Theogony* 495-506).<sup>42</sup> The traditional Greek *mũthos* of both Hesiod and the sophists thus provides Euthyphro with pious abstractions that he unthinkingly applies to the highly questionable prosecution of his father. Socrates wonders if this is exactly the reason he is being prosecuted: because when people give such accounts (*légê*) about the gods, he receives it with annoyance (6a). In the remainder of the dialogue, therefore, Socrates and Euthyphro get into an extended discussion of the meaning of piety (*hōsion*); a discussion that comes to an inconclusive end when Euthyphro tires of Socrates' questioning and abruptly leaves. Euthyphro's unreasoned prosecution of his father points to his misanthropy, while his premature departure from the discussion points to his misology.

In the opening scene of *Euthyphro*, which also forms the opening episode of the Platonic corpus in Thrasyllus' arrangement, Socrates thus makes reference to a series of issues that initially arise in the *Protagoras*, and that Socrates reforms and adapts for his own purposes. These indelibly Protagorean issues concern: problems associated with the care and education of the young (including the danger to teachers of being accused of corrupting the youth), the dangers the powerful pose to those with a willingness and ability to teach their wisdom (the

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<sup>42</sup> Both of whom Prometheus says he advised, as related in the *Prometheia* trilogy (Desmôtês 215-241).

very definition of a sophist), and the creation of novel gods not yet revered by the *pólis* (such as the idea of a philanthropic and beneficent godhead). Socrates also revealingly points out how his *philanthrôpía* makes him seem to freely pour out what he possesses to anyone who will listen, but at the same time hints that this exoteric teaching conceals an esoteric wisdom he is unable or unwilling to share with the uninitiated, again pointing to his Promethean identity. Euthyphro, on the other hand, seems unwilling and unable to share his wisdom, reflecting both his misanthropy and misology, although he has little compunction invoking the example of Zeus to justify his arguments in the assembly and the law courts. Socrates' reformed conceptions of divinity, on the other hand, are precisely aimed at curbing just such impulses.

## L. *Statesman*

The dramatic action of *Statesman* is set later the same day as *Sophist*, both of which occur the day after the conversations depicted in *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro*, and after Socrates' subsequent arraignment on charges of impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens. In *Statesman*, a Visitor (*Zénos*) from Elea, the centre of the Parmenidean school of philosophy, tells a mythical cosmogony to 'Young Socrates,' in the presence of the older Socrates, the philosopher. In this cosmogony, the Eleatic Visitor directly references Prometheus in a manner reminiscent of both the *Prometheia* trilogy and the Promethean *mūthos* Protagoras tells in his Great Speech, although with several significant points of departure. The Visitor opens his *mūthos* with a description of how, at an early stage of the cosmos, the steersman (*kubernêtês*) let go of its helm (*pêdaliôn oïakos*), leaving it subject to "its allotted and innate desire [*èpithumía*]" (272e). As was noted in chapter 7, this particular metaphor, describing the cosmos or 'totality of things' as being steered by a helm, is strongly associated with the thought of Heraclitus, the only Pre-Socratic philosopher to employ it in his extant works (fr. 64). As was also noted in that chapter, Protagoras is a likely source for the transmission of this particular motif to the author of the *Prometheia* trilogy, leading to its highly unorthodox depiction of Zeus as being subject to Necessity, the helmsmen of which are the three Fates and the Furies (*Desmôtês* 515-6).

Returning to the cosmogony the Visitor tells in *Statesman*, he goes on to describe how, after the steersman of the universe let go of the helm, he left the cosmos to be directed by its own allotted desire. The Visitor then goes on to describe how the cosmos, remembering and practising the teachings of its creator (*dêmiourgoû*) and father (*patròs*), reared living things within itself in the company of this steersman (*kubernêtou*) (273c). Through many changes, humans were eventually created; but they, too, were then also deprived of the immediate presence of the god who initially possessed and pastured them (274b), leaving them to fend for themselves in the face of great hardship. The Visitor then remarks:

This is why the gifts from the gods, of which we have ancient reports, have been given to us, along with an indispensable requirement for teaching and education: fire from Prometheus, crafts from Hephaestus and his fellow craftworker [*téchnai*], seed and plants from others. Everything that has helped to establish human life has come about from these things, once care from the gods, as has just been said, ceased to be available to human beings, and they had to live their lives through their own resources and take care for themselves, just like the cosmos as a whole, which we imitate and follow for all



time, now living and growing in this way, now in the way we did then. (274c-d, trans. Rowe)

In the Visitor's conception, then, humans once benefitted from a more direct relationship with the gods. As with the cosmos as a whole, though, that divine relationship was eventually severed, leaving both the cosmos and humans subject to their own allotted and innate attractions and desires. This description of early humanity, as initially living under the direct care of the gods, is thus highly reminiscent of the myth of humanity golden age told in *Laws*. There, it will be recalled, the Athenian Visitor describes a "golden age" of humanity, when *philánthrôpos* Kronos sent daemons down to earth to directly rule over humans; greatly benefitting them in much the same manner that husbandmen benefit domesticated animals under their care (4.713d).<sup>43</sup> In *Statesman*, by comparison, the Eleatic Visitor emphasises the severance of the initial relationship between mortal and divine; and how humans came to rely, instead, on the periodic gifts of various daemonic gods to ensure their survival: fire from Prometheus, the crafts from Hephaestus and Athena, grain seeds from Demeter, and the vine from Dionysus.

The cosmogony the Eleatic Visitor tells in *Statesman* also closely follows several elements of the Promethean *mũthos* Protagoras tells in his Great Speech, pointing to at least a partial derivation from that source. This connection may be seen, for instance, in how it differentiates between the gifts of various gods, and how it assigns Prometheus the pivotal role, as both the first divine giver and as the giver of fire, the master-craft. The Visitor's *mũthos* also reflects an awareness of Protagorean *lógos* on the progressive conceptions of human history, as reflected in both the central *èpeísodos* of Desmôtês and the Promethean *mũthos* in Protagoras' Great Speech. This common progressive conception of human history includes the daunting challenges initially posed to the survival of the human species in its infancy, and the large degree of human advance from those primitive conditions, stemming from the development of the civilised arts by the wise. At the same time, though, the Eleatic Visitor in *Statesman* (as well as the Athenian Visitor in *Laws*) also consciously inverts the philosophical optimism and progressive view of human history embedded in the Protagorean Promethean *mũthos*, with

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<sup>43</sup> The Athenian Visitor does not mention Prometheus, but he does refer to the concept of promethean forethought; noting that, given the protection Zeus *Zenîô* extends visitors:

anyone with even a little foresight [*promêtheías*] will take great care to complete his life's journey without having done any wrong to strangers [*zénous*]. (5.730a)

humans having arisen to a civilised state from the initial condition of primitive brutes. Instead, both Visitors again recast human myth-history in terms of a fall from an original state of divine grace, thereby emulating the models employed in the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* (cf. *Theogony* 523-620, *Works & Days* 58-125).<sup>44</sup>

The fundamental recasting of human myth-history by both the Eleatic and Athenian Visitors – depicting humans as having fallen from an original state of divine grace, rather than as having arisen from an original state of primitive barbarism – may be read as a veiled critique of at least the explicitly progressive conceptions of human history propounded by Protagoras. Socrates and Plato likely deemed such conceptions demoralising, with the potential to distract from the overriding priority of pursuing virtue. This impulse is particularly strong among the many, who are tempted to complacency or despair in the face of the magnitude of human progress through history, simply giving themselves over to the pursuit of pleasure. Given the realities of human nature, Socrates might argue, it would be far more advantageous, at least from a pedagogical perspective, to portray the myth-history of human origins in terms of a fall from divine grace. Not only does this conception hold out a stronger hope for regaining this divine state of being, precisely because it is thereby an original aspect of human nature; it also holds out the corrective fear of suffering divine punishment for further transgression.

Protagoras' unvarnished depiction of humans as having arisen from originally primitive conditions, by contrast, tends to instil both complacency and despair in the many. Complacency arises from viewing the broad sweep of the rise of human civilisation, and concluding that we, situated at the end of history, are superior to what has come previous; and that, therefore, there is no need for further sacrifice for the sake of the future. Despair, on the other hand, arises from the seeming impossibility of realising any meaningful change in the human condition in one's own lifetime, given the long and slow historical record of human progress. In short, then, the Eleatic Visitor, in his mythic cosmology in *Statesman*, adopts Protagorean insights into the structure of human history, depicting the challenges initially posed to human survival in their original state, and their rise through the development of the arts. At the same time, though, he also substantially revises this perspective, couching it within an overarching *mūthos*

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<sup>44</sup> As was noted in chapter 3, the motif Hesiod employs in *Works & Days*, of man having fallen from a golden age, likely derived from a mythic tradition originally transmitted to Greece via the Hittites, who in turn received it from the Semitic Hurrians, the traditions of which may ultimately be traced back to Akkadian and Sumerian *mūthoi*.

of divine creation and separation, presumably in order to better serve overriding moral purposes of educating the next generation.

### **M. *Crito***

The *Crito* is set the day before Socrates' execution, the sentence handed down by the jury after his conviction on charges of impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens. In this dialogue, Socrates is visited at sunrise by his old friend, Crito, who has come to offer him a means of escape. Guards have been bribed and arrangements have been made to spirit Socrates away from Athens; all he has to do is consent to these arrangements and he can be free. In this context, then, Crito asks Socrates if his forethought for his friends prevents him from accepting their offer to help him escape:

are you anticipating [*promêthê*] that I and your other friends would have trouble with the informers if you escape from here, as having stolen you away, and that we should be compelled to lose all our property or pay heavy fines and suffer other punishment besides? (44e, trans. Grube)

To which Socrates immediately replies:

I do have these things in mind [*promêthoũmai*], Crito, and also many others. (45a, trans. Grube)

Socrates declines Crito's offer to help him escape punishment, and in so doing exercises forethought on his friends behalf, although not for the reasons proffered by Crito. For while Socrates does, indeed, have the welfare of his friends in mind, his decision to not to try and escape punishment has very little to do with whether or not they might be condemned and punished for having assisted him.

As Socrates soon makes clear to Crito, his decision to voluntarily submit to the laws of Athens is based, at least in part, in his desire to prevent those laws from being harmed. Escaping prison to avoid his lawfully proscribed, albeit unjust, punishment would not only harm the laws, though, it would also harm philosophy by providing additional ammunition to the many who believe it is inimical to the justice of the *pólis*. Furthermore, Socrates' escape would expose the arguments he'd been making all his life, particularly concerning the unity and knowability of the virtues, as an ignoble lie. In choosing not to escape, therefore, Socrates exercises forethought, not only for his friends, in terms of depriving them of a friend or exposing them to legal action for helping him escape; but more importantly, in terms of carrying forward his life-long mission of preserving and strengthening both philosophy and the political order upon which it depends. Socrates voluntarily submits himself to the laws of Athens in much the same way that Prometheus dons a wreath as a symbol of his voluntarily submission to Zeus in

the *èxodos* of *Luómenos*, thereby attaining his apotheosis and winning acceptance into the Pantheon of gods worshipped in Athens. Chief among the 'many other things' for which Socrates exercises Promethean forethought, then, is the creation of a place in the *pólis* for the veneration of philosophy, and the benefits it accrues to human existence. This theme becomes even more explicit and prominent in *Phaedo*, the next and concluding dialogue in the tetralogy depicting the last days of Socrates, in which Socrates describes the twin evils of misology and misanthropy.

## N. *Phaedo*

The main dramatic action of *Phaedo* opens with Socrates' jailers releasing (*lúouai*) him from his chains (59e), and his friends finding him released from his fetters (*Ieluménon*) (60a). By focusing in the opening of *Phaedo* on the release of Socrates from his bonds, Plato thereby evokes the release of Prometheus from his fetters in *Lúomenos*. Given the circumstances under which Socrates' friends come to visit him, shortly before he is to be executed, two of the younger men among them, Simmias and Cebes, express concern for the fate of his soul after his death. Their discussion thus naturally gravitates toward consideration of the Pythagorean doctrine of the soul's immortality, in which Simmias and Cebes had been schooled, as indicated by Socrates' mention of them as having "spent time with" Philolaus (61c), a Pythagorean philosopher. After making several unsuccessful attempts to conclusively prove the immortality of the soul, though, they find themselves in a state of perplexity (*aporia*). Seeing his friends sinking into despair over his fate, therefore, Socrates warns them to be on guard against the

danger of becoming misologists [*misólogoí*], as people become misanthropists [*misánthrôpoi*]; for no worse evil [*kakòn*] can happen to someone than to hate reasonable discourse [*lógous misêsas*]. (89d, trans. by author based on Brann, Kalkavage, Salem)

Socrates' mention of misologists in conjunction with misanthropists brings to mind his own descriptions of himself as a 'lover of speeches' (*philológô*) (*Phaedrus* 236e) and his *philanthropía* (*Euthyphro* 3d). Clearly, misanthropy and misology are issues close to Socrates' heart, for each respectively speaks to the social and intellectual dimensions of what it means to be fully human.

Having established misology as the worst fate that can befall a man, a fate even worse than death, Socrates then goes on to describe how both misology (*misología*) and misanthropy (*misanthrôpía*) come to be in the same way:

Hatred of human beings [*misanthrôpía*] arises from artlessly trusting somebody to excess, and believing that human being to be in every way true and sound and trustworthy, and then a little later discovering that this person is wicked and untrustworthy – and then having this experience again with another. And whenever somebody experiences this many times, and especially at the hands of just those he might regard as his most intimate friends and comrades, he then ends up taking offense all the time and hates all human beings and believes there's nothing at all sound in anybody. (89d-89e, trans. Brann, Kalkavage, Salem)

In the same way, then, people who artlessly trust arguments (*lógoi*), believing them to be true and sound, and who later have them disproven, and who experiences this many times, become

misologists. Misology thus initially arises from an excessively trusting and artless philology. It's not that there is anything wrong with the arguments, per se, rather, the problem lies with the expectation we have for the arguments, and our disappointment we experience when they don't provide the solutions we want. Simmias and Cebes had hoped to conclusively prove the immortality of the soul, not only out of concern for Socrates' fate, but also their own; and it is precisely the seeming impotence of their arguments in the face of their fear of mortality that, given their overriding desire to believe in the immortality of their souls, puts them in danger of becoming misologists.

In the end, Socrates is finally executed, much to the dismay of his friends, who strongly identify with his fate. By warning and girding them in his discourse against the twin evils of misology and misanthropy, though, Socrates simultaneously shields them from despair in the face of their mortality. Socrates' not only saves his friends from the greatest evil that can befall a person, though, he also keeps alive the flame of philosophy, the very opposite of misology, this being the single most significant manifestation of his *philanthropia*. For through this highly Promethean self-sacrifice, voluntarily submitting to his execution by the laws of Athens, Socrates would become apotheosised as the epitome of the philosopher. This would contribute, in turn, to a political climate during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE that would allow for the creation of a permanent place of honour in Athens for the worship of philosophy; a theme that will be dealt with in more detail in the following section.

## O. Conclusion to Promethean Imagery in Plato

In this section, the presence of Promethean imagery has been examined in Plato's dialogues, beyond its seminal use in *Protagoras*. This imagery has been identified in a number of forms, the most obvious one being explicit references to Prometheus and/or mythic figures closely related to him. However, Promethean imagery also includes references to people or divinities who share primary traits of Prometheus, such as philanthropy, forethought or foresight. It also includes those who participate in actions closely associated with Prometheus, such as stealing from the gods, giving gifts of knowledge to human beings, and/or instituting novel forms of divine worship. Given this range of imagery, this section has exhaustively examined Plato's non-appellative use of the words *promêtheia* (forethought) and *pronoía* (foresight), as well as the words *philanthrôpía* and *misanthrôpía*. This section has also exhaustively examined references in Plato's dialogues to the ceremonial torch-races (*lampás*) run to celebrate various fire-gods.

Generally speaking, then, Plato accomplishes three broad objectives by the use of Promethean imagery in his dialogues: the first is to allude to the main ideas of Protagorean wisdom; the second, to present a philosophical critique of those ideas from Pythagorean, Eleatic and Socratic perspectives; and the third, finally, to demonstrate Socrates' self-identification with his reformed sense of what it means to be Promethean. Plato achieves this first task by elaborating upon some of the central ideas of Protagorean wisdom, as they have been brought to light in this dissertation. These include the ideas: that the processes of becoming best characterise the nature of reality; that the gods, as human creations, are subject to necessity; that human beings and civil society originate in primitive barbarism; that citizens, particularly the young, must be educated and acculturated in order to better live together in a civil society; and finally, that wisdom and political power must be brought into alignment. Plato does not present these Protagorean ideas uncritically or unvarnished, though; rather he has a number of characters refer to them, often only obliquely, while at the same time offering an alternative and opposing *mũthos* and *lógos*.

In contrast to Protagoras' Heraclitean doctrine of the sovereignty of becoming, for instance, Socrates presents dialectical discourse as a fire given by Prometheus that reveals whatever is said to be (*Philebus* 16c, 23c). Timaeus, by comparison, distinguishes between that which is and does not change, and that which becomes but never really is (*Timaeus* 27d-28a). In contrast to the Protagorean doctrine of the gods, as created by humans and thereby situated within the realm of becoming, Timaeus emphatically situates his divine craftsman (*dêmiourgós*) outside the



visible universe; and instead has this daemonic creator look to a divine and eternal form as a model for his creations within that realm of becoming (*Timaeus* 29a). Critias, by comparison, describes how the gods (*theoús*) steer the souls of humans from the stern, as it were, by means of persuasion (*Critias* 109c). The Eleatic Stranger also describes how a divine Steersman (*kubernêtês*) let go of the helm of the cosmos, leaving it to its own allotted and innate desire (*Statesman* 272e). In each of these cases, then, the gods are described in Protagorean terms, but are repositioned in such a way as to make them the masters of necessity once again.

The Protagorean doctrine on the origins of humans and civil society, with primitive humans created by a blind and niggardly nature, initially bereft of the means of survival, is similarly inverted by Plato through the employment of Promethean imagery. In contrast to Protagoras' depiction, the Athenian Visitor describes the first humans as having lived in a golden age under the philanthropic rule of their divine creator, Kronos (*Laws* 4.713c-d). Timeaus, by comparison, describes humans as having been created by a foresightful divinity who put a divine fire in human the human soul (*Timaeus* 44c-45c); a situation culminating in the gods' gift of philosophy, "whose value has never been, nor never will, be surpassed." (47b) The Eleatic Stranger also tells how humans were created by the cosmos, in the company of a divine Steersman, but then tells how they were then separated from this creator and faced great hardship, until Prometheus, Hephaestus and other gods gave them the gifts of fire and the various arts (*Statesman* 274b). Socrates, finally, has a Promethean-like Theuth attempt to give humans the civilising arts, but has a Zeus-like Ammon call the ultimate benefits of these gifts into radical question (*Phaedrus* 274c-275b). In these cases, then, Plato has the characters in his dialogues depict humans as having been created by a philanthropic and foresightful god, having initially lived in an ideal state under the tutelage of that deity, and having later fallen from that divine state of grace, at least in part due, in Socrates' account, to the inimical effects of the 'civilising' arts on the development of the human soul.

Plato similarly has Socrates employ Promethean imagery to critique Protagorean notions of how citizens must be educated and acculturated, particularly while they're young, in order to enable them to better live together in a civil society. Protagoras states that the learnable (*máthêmá*) he teaches is good counsel (*eùboulía*) regarding one's own affairs such as to best manage his personal estate and be the most powerful (*dunatôtatos*) in the *pólis* (*Protagoras* 318e-319a). As Socrates subsequently demonstrates, though, Protagoras' stated belief in the manifold nature of the virtues leaves him open to the accusation of being a teacher of how to

commit injustice, thereby breaching his own good counsel, to make one's self at least *appear* to be just, so as to avoid the retribution of others (*Protagoras* 323b). Socrates, by contrast, argues for the prudence of maintaining an understanding of the virtues as being an essential unity. In *Republic*, set on the day of the initiation of a torch-race in honour of Bendis, Socrates further argues for the alignment between the good of the soul, the justice of the *pólis*, and a transcendent good rooted in absolute being. This teaching is then encased by Critias in the *mũthos* of Atlantis, that he heard as a boy on the third day of Apaturia festival, when the ceremonial torch-race in honour of Hephaestus was run. This *mũthos*, in turn, is encased by the cosmology of Timaeus, who describes the universe as having been created by a foresightful divine craftsman. In this way, Plato has Socrates arrange for his central theological, ontological and epistemological teachings, as most concisely enunciated in *Republic*, to be encased, and even partially obscured, within the cosmological and mythological accounts of Timaeus and Critias. In this way, Socrates encloses his teachings within cosmological and mythical accounts so as to allow them to be better incorporated into a teaching, a *paideía*, that will act as a torch of life (*lampáda tôn bíon*) to be passed on to the young (*Laws* 6.776d).

Socrates counsels exercising forethought (*promêthían*) in considering the education of young men (*Laches* 185), and elsewhere describes forethought (*promêtheián*) as what enables an art (*technikaí*) to look to the good of the soul, as opposed to what merely gives it pleasure (*Gorgias* 501b). In these ways, Plato has Protagoras employ Promethean imagery to describing his somewhat amoral education goals. At the same time, he also has a forethoughtful and philanthropic Socrates employ Promethean imagery to both challenge those goals, and to present his own alternative vision of *paideía* in which the virtues are both a unity and a form of knowledge.

Finally, Plato has several characters in his dialogues employ Promethean imagery to critique the views of Protagoras on the nature of the relationship between wisdom and power. Protagoras declares the many disguises the wise have previous employed, in order to shield themselves from the powerful, to be a failure. Instead, he openly declares himself a sophist, signalling the beginning of a newly open and productive relationship between power and wisdom, as reflected by his own close relationship with Pericles. The relationship between wisdom and power also formed the crux of the Protagorean influence *Prometheia* trilogy, as was seen in the reconstruction presented in this dissertation, which ended with their reconciliation. Socrates similarly maintains the right of the rational part (*logistikô*) to rule, as it is wise (*sophô*)

and exercises forethought (*promêtheian*) on behalf of the soul as a whole (*Republic* 4.441e, *Phaedrus* 254e). This desire to bring wisdom and power into alignment is also obliquely expressed by the Athenian Visitor in his *mũthos* of the philanthropic rule of Kronos in *Laws*. This *mũthos* of the alignment of power and wisdom is expressed in terms of *lógos* by Socrates in *Republic*, where he states that there will be no rest from ills in the *pólies* until philosophers rule, or kings well and truly philosophize; a *lógos* subsequently obscured in its representations within the cosmological and mythological accounts of Timaeus and Critias. Like Protagoras, then, Socrates and his colleagues also advocate a marriage between wisdom and power; once again, however, they advocate hiding this raw fact behind a more pious sounding Promethean *mũthos*, in which power is exercised by a forethoughtful and philanthropic god. In this, they may be seen to follow the advice Socrates states in *Republic*, echoing that of the chorus in *Desmôtês* (936), that a wise man will speak humbly and prostrate himself before Adrasteia, the goddess of retribution (*Republic* 5.473d-e).

In short, then, Plato has Protagoras, Socrates and several other characters in his dialogues employ Promethean imagery to present, critique, and revise several major aspects of Protagorean wisdom, including the great sophist's assertions regarding: the sovereignty of becoming, the gods as subject to necessity, the primitive origins of human beings and civil society, the need for education and acculturation of citizenry, and the need for concordance between wisdom and power. In critiquing and revising these Protagorean ideas, Socrates and his colleagues act Prometheanly, to shield Athenian society from what Nietzsche terms "deadly truths". In an essay he wrote when he was still in his twenties, Nietzsche identifies three doctrines that he considers true, but deadly:

the doctrines of the sovereignty of becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and kinds, of the lack of any cardinal difference between man and the animal (Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, §9, trans. Preuss)

As Lampert says of these doctrines: "This list of three is anything but casual: it states what is ultimately true ontologically, epistemologically, and anthropologically and claims that each is deadly." (Lampert, 2005, p. 586) Nietzsche then goes on to say of these doctrines, that if they

are flung at the people for one more lifetime in the current mania for education, then let no one be surprised if that people perishes of pettiness and misery, of ossification and selfishness, that is, if to begin with it disintegrates and ceases to be a people: it may then perhaps be replaced in the arena of the future by systems of individual egoism, creations of utilitarian vulgarity. (Ibid.)

Not incidentally, these deadly truths have a high degree of alignment with doctrines Protagoras is known to have openly propounded. Plato, through the characters he portrays in his dialogues, and Socrates in particular, would also seem to be aware of the deadly nature of these truths, and may be seen attempting to provide them with a more widely acceptable and less damaging public face. In general, then, Plato employs Promethean imagery in his dialogues to further his own sense of philosophical philanthropy: to depict Socrates' reform and representation of the advance represented by Protagorean doctrines, in order to provide a more prudent public teaching that simultaneously advances the Greek Enlightenment, promotes public virtue, and shelters the wise from retribution stemming from accusations of impiety and injustice by the many.

## Chapter 13 – Plato's Promethean Ambitions as Realised in the Academy

We should not be ungrateful towards dogmatism, but it must nonetheless be said that the worst, most prolonged, and most dangerous of all errors to this day was a dogmatist's error, namely Plato's invention of pure spirit and the Good in itself.

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface, trans. Norman

### A. Introduction to Plato's Academy

In addition to portraying a Promethean Socrates, who attempts to reform what is known and how it is taught in order to benefit civil society, Plato may be seen to have made several attempts to enact his own Promethean vision, and exercised a decisive influence on subsequent attempts to do so. In general, these Promethean actions and influences may be arranged into three broad categories: Plato's attempts to implement political reform during his lifetime; Plato's founding of the Academy; and Plato's influence on the theological and epistemological underpinnings of the early Christian Church. This chapter will explore Plato's founding of the Academy, and the subsequent influence of his school on the philosophical outlook of Greco-Roman society.

There is a vast amount of biographical literature on Plato's dating from antiquity (Rigninos, 1976). However, the vast majority of this information is notoriously unreliable, so attempts to assess Plato's activities during his lifetime are fraught with difficulty. The earliest and most prominent source texts for information on his life are thirteen letters purportedly written by Plato. All of these, though, with the possible exception of Letter VII, are thought to be forgeries, likely composed by members of Plato's Academy sometime within one hundred and fifty years of his death, when they were first mentioned in other sources (Plato, Cooper, & Hutchinson, 1997, pp. 1634-5). While the letters may be unreliable in terms of providing precise and accurate details of Plato's life, though, they are more than likely accurate an accurate reflection of Plato's general views and some of the main actions taken by the great philosopher during his lifetime.

It is in this light, as an authentic reflection of Plato's life, that the Promethean content of Letter II may thus be viewed. This letter is addressed to Dionysius II (c.397-343 BCE), the tyrant of Syracuse from 367/6 to 357, and again from 346 to 344. In it, 'Plato' writes of a "general truth" that:



'Plan of the Academy and its Environs' (May 1784 - March 1798) map by J.D. Barbié Du Bogage  
From: *The Travels of Anacharsis* (Barthélemy, 1825, pp. vol II, p. 93)

It is a law of nature that wisdom and great power go together; they exert a mutual attraction and are forever seeking to be one. (*Letter II* 310e, trans Morrow)

In order to demonstrate this quintessentially Protagorean theme, Plato then refers to several examples from Greek history and mythology in which a powerful ruler and an wise man are celebrated together, including Pericles and Anaxagoras. He then concludes by saying:

And our early ancestors, if I am not mistaken, linked Prometheus with Zeus in much the same manner. (*Letter II* 311b, trans. Morrow)

Plato then goes on to write how, when his reputation was high among philosophers, he came to Syracuse to win over Dionysius, "so that philosophy might gain favor with the multitude." (311e-312a) This would seem to indicate the letter is set after Plato's second visit to Syracuse, in 366 or 367, but before his second visit in 363 or 362.

Plato first visited Syracuse in about 387 at the invitation of Dionysius I (c.432-367), who then ruled as tyrant. During this time Plato became close with his son-in-law, Dion (408-354), with whom he shared his ideals of government, as expressed in *Republic*. During his stay, however, Plato had a serious falling out with his host. Diodorus Siculus maintains that Dionysius was offended by some of Plato's statements, and sold him into slavery for twenty minas (History 15.7). Plato was then shipped to Cyrene, in modern day Libya, where he was almost put to death. According to Diogenes Laertius, Plato was ransomed there by Anniceris for twenty or thirty minae, and was thence returned to Athens. Upon his return, Plato's friends immediately remitted the money to Anniceris, but he reputedly declined it, saying "that the Athenians were not the only people worthy of the privilege of providing for Plato." On the other hand, Diogenes also points out that: "Others assert that Dion sent the money and that Anniceris would not take it, but bought for Plato the little garden which is in the Academy." (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 3.20, trans. Hicks) Plutarch corroborates at least the cost of the plot of ground purchased near the Academy, where Plato established his philosophical school, saying it was bought for three thousand drachmas (*On Exile* 10).<sup>45</sup> In any case, there is a fairly broad consensus in the scholarly literature, that Plato founded his philosophical school at the Academy sometime shortly after his return to Athens in 387 BCE (Guthrie W. K., 1978, pp. 19-20).

In *Letter VII*, addressed to Dion, Plato discusses his ideals of government, which strongly resemble those expressed in *Republic*, particularly regarding the end of the ills of the human race that would result from the rule of the philosopher-kings (cf. *Letter VII* 326b, *Republic*

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<sup>45</sup> 1 minae = 100 drachmas.

5.473c-d). In the same letter, Plato also mentions Dion's invitation to return to Syracuse and tutor Dionysius II, who became tyrant following the death of his father in 367 (Letter VII 327d-e). Plato did subsequently return to Syracuse in 367 or 366, with the intent of bringing about the rule of a philosopher-king through the instruction of Dionysius II. Like his father before him, though, the young tyrant proved a less than apt pupil. Within four months of his tutor's arrival, he had banished Dion, fearing him as a political rival, and Plato, after being held a short time against his will, returned once again to Athens (*Letter VII* 329b-330b). Letter II would thus appear to have been composed sometime between 366 and 363; which is to say, after his second visit to Syracuse, but before his third visit four years later, in 363 or 362. Plato returned this third time at the urging of Dionysius II, at least in part in attempt to restore Dion to the tyrant's good graces, but once again failed. He returned to his school by the Academy in Athens, where he remained for the rest of his life, dying in 348/7. Dion, on the other hand, later led a successful expedition to take Syracuse and depose Dionysius, in 357. He was murdered in 354, though, a casualty of the factional infighting that subsequently ensued (Plutarch, *Life of Dion*).

Three issues remain contentious regarding the historical understanding of Plato's Academy, these being: the precise nature of its legal status; what activities, exactly, occurred within it; whether or not it remained in continuous operation throughout antiquity; and whether or not it was closed in 429 AD by an edict of the Roman Emperor, Justinian I (483-565, ruled 527-565).



## B. Legal Status of the Academy and Other Philosophical Schools at Athens

With regard to the legal status of the Academy, the work of Wilamowitz has been highly influential. In his book, *Antigonos von Karystos*, he includes an excursus on the legal status of the Athenian philosophical schools in which he argues that they were organised, as "*theasos Mousôn*" – religious brotherhoods dedicated to the muses (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 1881, pp. 263-291). This thesis, that the philosophical schools were legally incorporated religious fraternities, or *thíasoi*, has been largely adopted by most modern scholars writing on the subject; cf. (Power, 1964, p. 156) (Marrou, 1982, pp. 67-8) (Dillon, 1983, p. 55). Perhaps the most influential scholar in this regard has been Guthrie, who maintains that:

To form a society owning its own land and premises, as Plato did, it appears to have been a legal requirement that it be registered as a *thiasos*, that is, a cult-association dedicated to the service of some divinity, who would be the nominal owner of the property. Plato's choice was the Muses, patrons of education, not so much, perhaps, because he believed that 'philosophy was the highest "music"' (*Phaedo* 61a), as because a Mouseion or chapel of the Muses was a regular feature of the schools of the day. (1986, pp. 19-20)

In the face of this wide consensus on the subject of the legal status of Plato's Academy, however, some scholars have called into question the thesis that it was a legally constituted *thíasos*. Most notably, Lynch, in a comprehensive refutation of Wilamowitz's thesis, points out that:

Despite Wilamowitz's repeated use of the phrase *thiasos Mousôn*, the philosophical schools are never called *thiasoi* in ancient sources, not even in legal documents such as the wills of the scholarchs, where precision in terminology would be expected. (1972, p. 109)

Lynch's critique of Wilamowitz is further endorsed by Glucker, who, in his definitive study of the Early Academy, points out that "the philosophical schools are never depicted in the sources as *thíasoi* or their members as *òrgeônes*" (Glucker, 1978, p. 336). Lynch goes even further in his critique of Wilamowitz, though, arguing that, even if the philosophical schools were constituted as *thíasoi*, that there is no reason to believe that the Greeks had developed "a concept of the corporate person, and there is good evidence for thinking they did not." (Lynch, 1972, p. 124) For this reason, he concludes, the Lyceum and the Academy were organised along collective, rather than corporate, lines; and that the property of these schools was essentially considered the personal property of the *scholarch* in charge of the school.

The legal status of the philosophical schools is further illuminated by how the properties with which they were associated in Athens were owned. The private nature of this ownership is likely best reflected in the provisions Epicurus made for his school in his will. In it, he bequeaths his garden (which also likely included a villa) to Amynomachus and Timocrates, who were likely relatives. He makes this bequest, though:

on condition that they shall place the garden and all that pertains to it at the disposal of Hermarchus [the successor scholar to Epicurus' school], and the members of his [philosophical] society [*sumphilosophoũsin*], and those whom Hermarchus may leave as his successors, to live and study in. (Diogenes Laertius 10.17, trans. Hicks)

Similar accommodations were likely made by Plato for his school near the Academy, although they are not explicitly attested in his extant will. In it, Plato describes a parcel of land that he bequeathed to a relative, Adeimantos, located in "Eiresidae" and bordered on its western side by the "Kephisus" (Diogenes Laertius 3.42), a river that flowed along the northwest edge of the *Academia* precinct proper. Plato also named his designated successor, Speusippus, as one of the executors of his will (ibid 3.43), thereby granting the new scholar considerable influence over the disposition of property associated with his school.

Elsewhere in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes also describes Plato studying in a "garden facing Kolonus [*kêpô tô parà tôn Kolônón*]" (ibid. 3.5). This property may well have been the same private garden bought for Plato with the unremitted ransom of Anniceris or Dion (Lynch, 1972, p. 126). If this garden is the same plot of land that Plato describes in his will as being



Detail from 'Plan of the Academy and its Environs', by Du Bocage (1798) showing 'the House and Garden of Plato' near the Academy, as well as the 'Tower of Timon the Misanthrope' to the north. Du Bocage's map accurately places Plato's house east of the Academy, but further away from the Kephisus River (to the northwest) than is warranted, assuming his garden to be the same parcel of land he bequeathed to his nephew, Adeimantos, as described in his will.

bordered on the north side by the Kephisus River, then it would have to have been situated just beyond the north-east of the northern corner of the Academy, on a hillside facing the Colonus, a *dême* (village) that lay a little further to the northwest. As it happens, this location has a very strong Promethean provenance. The Academy was the starting point for several ceremonial torch-races run in honour of various fire-gods, including Prometheus. Plato, more than most, would have appreciated the symbolism of lighting a fire in the Academy, and then having it carried down to the city to light the sacred flames at the Hephaisteion, the Prytaneum, and the temple of Athena Parthenos. Colonus, on the other hand, is named by Sophocles as the sacred place where Prometheus was buried (*Oedipus at Colonus* 54-6), and where king Oedipus finally met his doom.

As with Epicurus, then, Plato may also have bequeathed his *kêpos* north of the Academy to a family member, but with the understanding that it was to be held in trust for the use of the members of his philosophical school. This garden was close to the Academy proper, but was not contiguous with it. Plato's school became closely identified with the Academy, though, given both its close geographical proximity to his garden, and the fact that at least some of the teaching activities of the school occurred on the grounds of the *gumnásion* in the Academy, based on the testimony of Epicrates (fr. 11). Gucker conjectures that Plato's *kêpos* likely passed out of the hands of the members of his philosophical school toward the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, following the tenure of the sixth scholarch of the Academy, Arcesilaus (316/5-241/0 BCE, scholarch c.264-241/0), who left all his property to his brother. This situation may also explain why, Arcesilaus' successor, Lacydes (who headed the Academy from 241 to c.215 BCE) is said to have founded a "new Academy" (Diogenes Laertius 4.59-60). This is sometimes interpreted as meaning that he founded the sceptical school of thought that eschewed the possibility of attaining absolute knowledge of things, and is associated with the 'Middle Academy'; however, the development of this brand philosophical scepticism is usually attributed to Arcesilaus. Gucker offers an alternative explanation, that Lacydes is described as the founder of a new Academy for having bought a new garden, eponymously named the Lacydeum, to house the activities of the Academy (Gucker, 1978, pp. 233-4).

Further evidence of the private nature of the philosophical schools, at least with regard to the ownership of the property associated with them, is seen in the disposition of Aristotle's library at the Lyceum. In his will, he bequeathed this library to his successor, Theophrastus, who continued to make it available for common use by the peripatetic school (Diogenes Laertius

5.52). Theophrastus, in turn, bequeathed it to Neleus, who then transported it to Scepsis, in Asia minor, where it disappeared until being rediscovered by Apellicon in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Strabo 13.1.54, Plutarch *Sulla* 26). Aristotle makes no mention of the property his school owned by the Lyceum, which was likely quite substantial. According to some accounts, Aristotle's most prominent pupil, Alexander the Great, donated some 800 talents to outfit Aristotle's school with a large library and a natural history museum (Aelian, *Varia Historia* 4.19, Athenaeus 9.398e). The lack of provisions in Aristotle's will regarding the disposition of real estate associated with his school likely stems from the fact that he was a citizen of Stageiria, and thus could not own real property in Athens as a resident alien. It is likely, then, that Aristotle's school was located on an estate owned by an Athenian citizen, who held it in trust for the use of the Peripatetic school.

From the available evidence, it would appear that the philosophical schools were never incorporated entities. Rather, they were run as collective endeavours, with the property associated with their operations held privately – albeit in trust, either by family members, friends of the founder, and/or the scholar and his successors – and made available for common use by members of their philosophical societies. The best theoretical support for this mode of private ownership and public use comes from Aristotle himself. In *Politics*, he criticises at length Socrates' arguments for abolishing private property among the ruling elite of the perfectly just *pólis*, as depicted in Plato's *Republic*. Aristotle counters this claim by arguing that, while laws that make provision for the common possession of property might be thought to be *philánthrôpos*, in fact, "it is better for possessions to be privately owned, but to make them common property in use." (2.1263a-b) This would appear to be the approach employed by the major philosophers in Athens, too, in determining the disposition of assets used by their philosophical schools: keeping them privately owned, in the hands of family members, friends and/or colleagues, but making them available, in trust, for common use by the members of their philosophical school.

Besides the privately owned gardens associated with them, at least three of the major philosophical schools in Athens – those founded by Plato, Aristotle and Zeno – also benefitted from close proximity to several large public green spaces that contained public educational facilities. On the testimony of Epicrates (Fr. 11), for instance, Plato is known to have conducted lectures on the grounds of the *gumnásion* located in the Academy. The Academia was one of three large sacred precincts around Athens consecrated to various gods – the other two being

the Lyceum and the Cynosarges – that housed the primary public educational and training facilities of Athens: the *palaístra*, where wrestling was taught, and the *gymnasía*, where young men (*èphêboi*) engaged in athletic training, both for competition and military service. Each of these public precincts eventually became closely identified with the prestigious philosophical schools that were situated near them, and even conferred their name upon the Academics and the Cynics. Aristotle, on the other hand, was well known for conducting his lectures while strolling along the shaded walkways (*perípatos*) that ran among the groves of the Lyceum, leading to the members of his school being called Peripatetics.

### C. Activities of the Academy

Very little is known for certain of the teaching and learning activities that occurred within the early Academy. Baltes draws a vivid picture of Plato's *kêpos*, the nearby Academy, and the activities that may well have occurred within the two (Baltes, 1993). However, nearly all of his descriptions rely upon later sources, the reliability of which is justifiably suspect, given the overriding desire in later antiquity to construct a romantic ideal of Plato's school. The only testimonies by Plato's contemporaries of the teaching activities in the Academy come from Epicrates (fl. 376-348 BCE) and Aristoxenus (fl. 335 BCE). Epicrates was a comic poet of the 'Middle Comedy', a fragment of whose (#11) is cited by Athenaeus, in which a character describes how, "during the Panathenaic festival, I saw a herd of young men in the exercising grounds of the Academy" (*Deipnosophists* 2.59d). There, he listened to "unspeakably strange discussions" in natural history, concerning how to define and categorise various plants and animals, the particular example employed being that of the gourd (ibid. e-f). This emphasis on division and classification fits well with Plato's description of the Promethean nature of Socratic philosophy, as dialectical discourse (cf. *Philebus* 16c-17a). Epicrates' description is also significant, though, for his description of where the teaching activities of Plato's philosophical school occurred, on the exercising grounds of the Academy.

Aristoxenus was Peripatetic philosopher who, in his *Harmonics* (30-1), describes an anecdote that his teacher, Aristotle, used to recount in order to demonstrate the importance of providing a prefatory outline for one's lecture ahead of time. According to Aristotle's story, his own teacher, Plato, once announced that he would be offering a lecture on 'the Good' that was open to the public. As a result, though:

most of the audience which attended Plato's lecture on the Good had come with the expectation of hearing about some one of the recognized human goods, such as wealth health, strength, or some marvellous happiness; and when Plato's remarks turned out to be concerned with mathematics, numbers, geometry, astronomy, and finally the unity of goodness, some treated the affair with disparagement and others with censure. (Cherniss, 1962, p. 1)

While this description comes in the form of an anecdote, its depiction of Plato's emphasis on the mathematical arts does bear a remarkable resemblance to the education program Socrates outlines in Book VII of *Republic* (7.522c-528e), after the establishment of the rule of the philosopher-kings. As well, Plato's assertion of the unity of goodness reflects a theme that Socrates consistently expounded upon from the very beginning of his public career, as depicted

in Plato's *Protagoras*. While lectures on mathematics and the unity of the good may well have been provided at the Academy for public consumption, though, I am more inclined to think that the activities of its members were more focused on political matters. This conjecture flows from what is known of Plato's extensive political engagement with Dionysius I & II while he was still alive. It is also reflected in the extensive political engagements in which members of the Academy are known to have participated, as demonstrated by Chroust (Plato's Academy: The First Organized School of Political Science in Antiquity, 1967). This emphasis on politics also corroborates the central importance of the Protagorean Promethean *mūthos* to Plato, in terms of working to bring about a lasting marriage between wisdom and power.

Given the background provided above on Plato's philosophical school near the Academy, it is instructive to compare what little is known of this school's organisational structure to modern conceptions of public-serving organisations. Using Salamon's defining characteristics of non-profit organisations – that they are formal, private, non-profit-distributing, self-governing and voluntary (Salamon, 1992, pp. 6-7). Given this framework, the following observations might be made of Plato's philosophical school by the Academy, at least in its earliest form. This school was likely a relatively informal association, in the sense of not being incorporated; at the same time, though, it was sufficiently formal for its institutional form to last for centuries. Plato's school was private, with no ties to government, and was likely housed on private property held in trust for the use of the school. The legal form of the school likely resembled a sole proprietorship of the scholar, so it cannot be strictly considered non-profit-distributing; as has been seen, though, the scholar likely operated the school in more in the manner of a public trust. The school was self-governing; and the fact that it was allowed to operate as freely as it did, given the likely political activism of its members, is a testament to the freedom of association enjoyed by Athenians. Membership in Plato's school was, of course, voluntary; and, in fact, it was likely highly selective in choosing those allowed to become students. Regarding the issue of public benefit, finally, the philosophical schools were widely recognised for the great educational benefits and glory they brought to both Athens (Isocrates *Panegyrikos* 47-9) and Greece as a whole (Ibid. *Antidosis* 295, 299).

#### D. Duration of the Old Academy

Regarding the duration and continuity of Plato's Academy as an institution, scholars have traditionally thought it operated continually from the time of its founding, in 387 BCE, to its closing by the Emperor Justinian in 529 CE. This belief largely flowed from an influential essay by Karl Gottlob Zumpt (1792-1849) in which he reconstructs an unbroken line of succession in the scholarchs of Plato's Academy, from Plato to Damascius (c.458-after 538 CE) (1843). Interestingly, Nietzsche, then a young scholar of philology, was one of the first to call Zumpt's historical reconstruction into question. He argued, primarily based on evidence from Seneca and Diogenes Laertius, that the succession of scholarchs in all the schools, except perhaps the Epicurean, ended around the time of Augustus (Nietzsche, 1868, p. 641). For this impertinence, Nietzsche was upbraided by Diels, who pointed him to the authority of Zumpt's essay on the subject (Diels, 1879, p. 245). Be that as it may, Nietzsche's contention has been subsequently taken up by more contemporary scholars. In Glucker's exhaustive study of the early Academy, he concludes "that there occurred not merely a break in the successions, but an end to most of the Classic successions about the age of Antiochus [c.125-c.68 BCE] and his contemporaries." (Glucker, 1978, pp. 336-7)

Two events generally precipitated the end of the Academy as an institution: the first being a schism between two of its scholarchs, Antiochus and Philo; the second being the physical destruction of the precinct of the Academy during the First Mithridatic War (89-85 BCE). Philo of Larissa (154/3-84-3 BCE) succeeded Clitomachus (187/6-110/9 BCE) as scholarch of the Academy around 127/6 BCE, and taught Antiochus (c.125-c.68 BCE), who succeeded him as scholarch of the Academy. However, Antiochus rejected his teacher's philosophical scepticism in favour of an eclectic mix of Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines characteristic of Middle Platonism. This split occurred just before the onset of the Mithridatic War, during which time Antiochus left Athens to reside in Alexandria. In 86 BCE, the Roman general, Sulla, laid siege to Athens and conquered it, causing much destruction. In order to construct siege weapons he needed, Sulla "laid hands upon the sacred groves, and ravaged the Academy, which was the most wooded of the city's suburbs, as well as the Lyceum." (Plutarch *Sulla* 12) When Antiochus returned to Athens from Alexandria, c.84 BCE, he resumed teaching, but not at the Academy. Cicero, who studied under Antiochus in 79/8 BCE, describes attending a lecture he gave in the "*gymnasio* of Ptolemy" and later taking an afternoon stroll in the Academy, which was deserted at that hour of the day (*On Ends* 5.1).



From the first century BCE until late antiquity, then, Plato's Academy ceased to exist as an organised school, with teachers, a curriculum and physical plant. As Sedley notes:

It was not until the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, with Plutarch of Athens, Proclus and their successors, that a Platonist *scholê* was recreated in Athens, and even that had no connexion with the Academy or, in all probability, with any property that had once been Plato's. (Sedley, 1981, p. 68)

In the intervening period, though, Platonic philosophy continued to be carried on, not in a formal school, but as an association between like-minded philosophers strongly influenced by Plato's writings. As Dillon writes:

One must see here, instead of an institutional link, simply an intellectual one. The Golden Chain is a reality, but a spiritual reality only. The chain of master and pupil did not break, but it was a personal relationship, not certified by official status or degrees. (Dillon J. , 1981)

The torch of Platonic philosophy did continue to be passed along from generation to generation, it is true. However, the lack of an institutional base likely affected the way in which Plato's writings were ultimately understood, leading to more heterodox modes of interpretation. It was in this state that Platonic philosophy first encountered early Christianity.

As can be seen from this survey of the history of Plato's Academy, it exercised a profound impact on the organisation and delivery of higher education during the Hellenistic era, marking a general shift from private to public provision. Up until the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, higher education in Greece was provided almost exclusively by private tutors, such as Protagoras. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, though, a panoply of philosophical schools had arisen. As Marrou notes:

In the Hellenistic era, education stopped being a matter of private initiative and became, generally speaking, subject to official control. (Marrou, 1982, p. 103)

That these early philosophical schools were subject to official control should not obscure the fact that they were privately owned, as the lack of the concept of corporate person in classical Greek law prevented the creation of a more formalised institutional structure. These limitations did not prevent the schools from providing a public good, though, both real and perceived. The fact that these schools frequently held real property associated with their operations, and that their members were intimately involved in political activities, both domestic and foreign, meant that, at a minimum, the schools were dependent on the good will and protection of the state; a situation that would eventually evolve into the public provision of higher education by the Greco-Roman era.

## Chapter 14 – Platonic Influence on Early Christianity

Christianity is Platonism for the 'people'

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface, trans. Norman

### A. The Hellenisation of Judaism

Plato may be seen to have exercised a decisive influence on the philosophical and theological outlook of Hellenistic civilisation, both through his writings and by the educational activities that occurred in his house and garden near the Academy. Plato's writings enshrined a set of teachings, or at the very least a method of approaching questions, that provided the philosophical doctrines that guided inquiry in his school. The Academy, in turn, provided the primary model for the creation of several other philosophical schools in Athens and beyond, most notably in Alexandria, and became the single most influential among those schools in antiquity. Through his philanthropy, as reflected in his writings and the establishment of the Academy, then, Plato achieved his Promethean ambition of reforming both the public presentation of philosophy, and what was to be believed about the gods.

That Platonism has also exercised a decisive influence on the development of Christian thought, from its earliest days to the present, is also a matter somewhat beyond dispute (O'Meara, 1982). That some of the earliest and most influential Church fathers – Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine – were Platonists is also a matter beyond dispute (Cross, 1961, p. 1083). What is generally disputed, though, is just how far back the Platonic influence on Christianity extends, and where, exactly, it begins. What I wish to briefly do in this chapter is present preliminary arguments for a slightly more controversial view: that Jewish culture was already deeply steeped in Platonic ideas long before the birth of Christ, and that Jesus himself was deeply influence by these ideas. As will be seen, these ideas are often communicated, appropriately enough, through the use of Promethean imagery, reflecting their origins in the writings and thought of Plato.

Hellenistic civilization came to exercise a decisive influence on Judaism, following Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire between 334 and 330 BCE. The degree to which Jewish culture became Hellenised is, perhaps, best reflected by the translation of its holy books, as contained in the Hebrew Bible, into *koine* Greek of the Septuagint Bible. This massive translation project began in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and was completed before 132 BCE, by which time Greek had become the primary scholarly language of the Jewish priesthood. Platonic

influence may be detected in the apocalyptic, wisdom, pseudepigraphic and testimonial literature of the Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical Books of the *Old Testament* (Ehrlich, 2001). All these books were composed after Alexander's conquest of the Near East, many of them were originally composed in Greek, and some of them contain ideas that are identifiably Platonic.

Likely the earliest Jewish religious text to betray the presence of Platonic influences is the *First Book of Enoch*, an 'apocalyptic' work influential among the earliest followers of Jesus. Initially written in Aramaic, or possibly Hebrew, by several different authors, *First Enoch* is now only fully extant in Ethiopic. There is some debate as to when, exactly, it was written: some maintain it was composed between 150 and 50 BCE (Ehrlich, 2001, p. 152); others assert that its earliest sections, such as the 'Book of Watchers', date from about 300 BCE, and that its latest part, the 'Book of Parables', was likely composed around the end of the first century BCE (Charlesworth, 2005, p. 411). Several distinctly Platonic features may be identified in *First Enoch* that later became important Christian concepts. In the Book of Watchers, for instance, the author describes holy angels who watch over the world and "Tartarus" (the Greek word for the underworld), and one angel in particular, Michael, who is set over the best part of mankind (*1 Enoch* 20). As Ehrlich notes of this text:

The most obvious Platonic influence is the authors' acceptance of a transcendental world filled with eternal beings who are created by the Most High Lord of the Spirits, who praise him and gladly do his will, and have earthly responsibilities--especially in aiding and being guardians to mankind. (Ehrlich, 2001, p. 154)

In the epistle that concludes the *First Enoch*, by comparison, the author describes the terrors of the day of judgement, and how the souls of the righteous will initially descend to Sheol (the grave), but will then ultimately ascend to live and rejoice with god (*1 Enoch*, 102-3). This is likely the earliest extant reference in a Jewish religious text to human souls dwelling with god in an afterlife. This mūthos of life after death is not paralleled in the Hebrew *Old Testament*; however, it is prominently featured in various *mūthoi* found in Plato (cf. the *mūthos* of Rhadamanthus in *Gorgias* 523e-524a; and of Er in *Republic* 10.614b-618b).

Scholars have long recognised the influence of Platonic ideas on the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* (Cross, 1961, p. 1083), which was most likely composed sometime between c.30 BCE and 50 CE. This entire book essentially consists of an extended eulogy of Wisdom (6.12), understood as a reflection of the goodness of God (7.26), and who later emerges in her full power as *Lógos* (18.15). Throughout the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the author also describes the

immortality of the soul, once it's liberated by wisdom from the perishable and corrupted body (2.22-3.5; 5.15; 9.15). In this regard, it discredits the Mosaic and prophetic views that a man dies with his body (2.1-3; cf. *Ecclesiastes* 9.1-6). At the same time, though, the *Wisdom of Solomon* is in close accord with Socrates' elaborate accounts of the immortality of the soul, most notably expressed in Plato's *Republic* and *Phaedo*. The *Wisdom of Solomon* also makes reference to the soul pre-existing the body (8.19), which is the earliest attestation of this teaching in Jewish literature (Meeks, 1993, p. 1498).

The *Fourth Book of Maccabees* was written in the mid-first century and early second century CE, and gives a good picture of Jewish religious thought as it existed in the time of Jesus. In the opening of this book, the author outlines his subject as follows:

The subject that I am about to discuss is most philosophical, that is, whether devout reason is sovereign over the emotions. So it is right for me to advise you to pay earnest attention to philosophy. (1.1, eds. Meeks & Bassler, 1993)

The author then goes on to argue how the sovereignty of reason allows one to master those emotions that hinder the pursuit of justice, courage, temperance and wisdom (1.1-35). The specific reference to these four classical virtues in 4 *Maccabees* is most closely matches Plato's enumeration of the virtues (cf. *Republic* 4.427e), and is particularly notable for not including piety among them (*Protagoras* 329c-e). 4 *Maccabees* also makes frequent reference to the immortality of the soul (9.22, 14.5, 15.3, 16.13, 17.12, 18.23), divine reward in the afterlife for those who live godly lives (5.37; 9.8, 15.3; 17.12) and divine retribution for those who don't (4.10-12; 9.9, 32; 10.11, 15, 21; 11.3, 12.12, 18; 18.5, 22). Again, these are teachings that have far more in common with Platonism than with traditional Jewish faith, as enunciated in the *Old Testament*.

In addition to the presence of Platonic teachings in the Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical Books of the *Old Testament*, there is also a considerable degree of Promethean imagery in these books, much of which may be also traced to the influence of Plato. In the last part of 1 *Enoch* to be composed, the Book of Parables, which gives the names and functions of the fallen angels, the author tells a *mūthos* of Pênêmûe, who taught men all the secrets of wisdom, and instructed them in writing with ink and paper (1 *Enoch* 69.8). This story thus closely parallels features of the Promethean influenced *mūthos* Socrates tells of the Egyptian god, Theuth, who gives the various arts to men, including the art of writing (*Phaedrus* 274c-275b). The other notably Promethean feature of the Apocrypha, closely connected with the idea of god as a beneficent

being, is how its books frequently describe the "providence" (*pronoía*) of God (*Wisdom of Solomon* 14.3, 17.2; *1 Esdras* 6.5; *3 Maccabees* 4.21, 5.30; *4 Maccabees* 13.19).<sup>46</sup> By contrast, *pronoía* does not appear as a word in the Septuagint Bible;<sup>47</sup> however, as was seen above, Plato has Timaeus employ it twice to describe the foresight of the gods in providing for the soul (*Timaeus* 44c, 45b). In addition to being acutely aware of Plato's writings and/or teachings on the nature of the divine, then, the Hellenised Jews of Palestine were also likely familiar with Platonic references to the Promethean *mūthos*.

Long before the birth of Christ, then, the Jewish world was already thoroughly Hellenised, and its contemporary holy books had fully absorbed Plato's key exoteric teachings on the nature of god and his relation to the world and humans. As Ehrlich<sup>48</sup> observes:

The Jewish world of Jesus was a Hellenized one, even its sacred scriptures, and Plato was the chief Hellenizer, as it was his theological and philosophical view that defined the very terms in which such thoughts took place. (Ehrlich, 2001, p. 151)

The fact that the Jewish population of the Roman province of Palestine was thoroughly Hellenised, and that their religious texts were imbued with Platonic ideas, naturally leads one to suppose that Jesus himself must also have been influenced, even if only indirectly, by those ideas.

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<sup>46</sup> *Pronoía* also appears once in the Apocrypha in reference to the providence of the ancestors of the Jews (*4 Maccabees* 9.24).

<sup>47</sup> Only one word closely related to *pronoía* appears in the Septuagint Bible: *prónoos*, which is employed in an admonition to be prudent [*pronoou*] so as to find favour with God and men (*Proverbs* 3.3).

<sup>48</sup> From what Ehrlich describes, his views on the Platonic origins of many of the key ideas of early Christian thought are currently shared by a minority, albeit it a growing one, of Biblical scholars (Ehrlich, 2001).

## **B. Platonism in the *New Testament***

That Jesus was a Hellenised Jew is a matter of some dispute, with more traditional Biblical scholars maintaining that Jesus only spoke Aramaic, and that the earliest stories about him circulated in Aramaic; however, these claims are made in the complete absence of any textual evidence (Ehrlich, 2001, p. 204). As Ehrlich further points out, though, the indirect evidence overwhelmingly supports the hypothesis that Jesus was a fully Hellenised Jew. The Herodian Dynasty of the Roman province in which Jesus lived was the most Hellenised dynasty to rule ancient Palestine. Of the 62 people named in the four Gospels, only 26 are un-Hellenised Hebrew names, while the remaining 36 are either Hellenised Hebrew, Greek or Latin. Jesus name is itself a Hellenised form of the Aramaic name Joshua or Jeshua, which it replaced after 200 BCE. Jesus also preached in a wide number of settings, and spoke on several occasions with educated foreigners; activities that would have precluded him doing so in Aramaic. Only three Aramaic expressions in the New Testament are attributed to Jesus (Mark 5.41, 7.34, 15.34; Matthew 27.46); everything else he said was recorded in Greek." (Ehrlich, 2001, p. 203) Jesus also converses with several authority figures, such as Nicodemus (*John* 3.1-21) and Pontius Pilate (*Mark* 15.2), with whom he must be assumed to have spoken in Greek. On balance, then, it is more than reasonable to assume that Jesus understood and spoke Greek, and was just as Hellenised as virtually all his fellow countrymen.

### 1. The Q Source

Not only was Jesus Hellenised, but the content of his teachings and his teaching methods betray a distinctly Platonic influence from the earliest evidence Gospel writings. The earliest Gospel writings are found in the hypothesised and reconstructed "Q" text from which both Matthew and Luke derive a substantial portion of their own accounts of the life of Jesus, and which can be dated to c.50 CE. In this reconstructed text, Jesus draws a distinction, most famously advocated in the writings of Plato, between body and soul, and the immortality of the latter (*Matthew* 10.28; *Luke* 12.4-5; cf. Plato, *Republic*, *Phaedo*). The Jesus of Q also maintains the existence of eternal life in heaven, where there is no decay (*Luke* 12.33-4, *Matthew* 6.19-20; cf. *Timaeus* 28a-39, *Republic* 608c-d, *Phaedo* 110a, 114-115). Jesus also refers to the "Wisdom of God" (*Luke* 11.49-51, *Matthew* 23.34); a view reminiscent of both the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and a view enunciated by Socrates, that only God is wise (*Apology* 23a) and that true wisdom is properly attributed only to a god (*Phaedrus* 278d). The oldest strata of teachings attributed to

Jesus, then – the Q texts – enunciate several core Platonic teachings regarding the separation of body and soul, the immortality of the soul, the eternal rewards of the soul in heaven, and the idea that only God is truly wise.

## 2. Mark

The second oldest strata in the presentation of Jesus' teachings occurs in the Gospel of Mark, which is thought to have been composed sometime in the late 60s CE. The chief Platonic idea in Mark is the universal scope of his presentation of the Gospel. Jesus' teachings are meant for all human beings, and the chosen people are all believers in those teachings, not just the Jews. This idea is reflected in several passages in Mark. When Jesus goes into the temple at Jerusalem, for instance, he declares: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (*Mark* 11.17, trans. NRSV). As he comes out of the temple, he tells his disciples that "the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations." (13.10) A little later, he then prophesies that, when the Son of Man comes, he will gather his elect "from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heaven." (13.27) The idea that the Gospel of Jesus is meant for all human beings – and not just the Jews, God's chosen people – is an apt reflection of the universal scope of Platonism.

## 3. The Synoptic Gospels

The third oldest strata of Jesus' teachings is found in those stories shared by the three Synoptic Gospels (*Matthew, Mark and Luke*), thought to have been composed between 65 and 95 CE. Four distinctly Platonic ideas are enunciated by Jesus in the stories shared by these three Gospels: God as the father of Mankind; that God is the only being who is good and who is the source of all good in the world; that there exists a transcendent world of perfection in which life may be eternally lived; and the existence of absolute and eternal standards for virtue. In Matthew's rendition of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus names God as the Father sixteen times;<sup>49</sup> and also describes peacemakers as the children of God (*Matthew* 5.9). Elsewhere, Matthew also has Jesus tell the Pharisees that they only "have one Father – the one in heaven." (*Matthew* 23.9) This represents somewhat of a departure from the lexicon of the *Old Testament*, which refers to God as the Father only twice (Isaiah 63.16, 64.8) and names Israel as the Son of God twice (Exodus 4.22, Hosea 11.1). While the concept of God as the Father is very infrequently employed in the *Old Testament*, then, it plays an crucially important role in

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<sup>49</sup> 5.14, 5.43, 5.48, 6.1, 6.4, 6.6 (x2), 6.7, 6.9, 6.14, 6.15, 6.18 (x2), 6.25, 6.32, 7.11.

Platonism, particularly as expressed in Plato's *Timaeus*. There, in the cosmology told by the Pythagorean philosopher, Timaeus, he describes the Father and creator (*poiêtên kai patéra*) of the universe as a good craftsman (*dêmiourgos àgathós*) (*Timaeus* 28c-29a, cf. 37c-d). Yet another aspect of Timaeus' cosmology may be seen in Matthew's depiction of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus describes the eye as "the lamp of the body" that nourishes its inner light (*Matthew* 6.22-3); a metaphor evocative of Timaeus' description of the eyes as a conduit fashioned by the gods through which the light of the fire of our souls interacts with the external fire to produce perception (*Timaeus* 45b-46c).

Another key aspect of Platonism in the Synoptic Gospels is best seen in Matthew's conception of eternal life in a transcendent realm in heaven. Matthew records the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven " 33 times.<sup>50</sup> In his rendition of the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, Jesus declares: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' [*dikaiousúnês*] sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven [*basileía tôn ouronôn*]." (*Matthew* 5.10) In the same sermon, Jesus also advises his audience not to store up treasures here on earth, where thieves break in and steal them; but rather, to store up their treasures in heaven. In Plato, by comparison, Socrates describes a transcendent world of perfect forms discernable only by the soul, where beauty, justice and the good exist in-and-of-themselves, eternal and unchanging (*Republic* 608c-d, *Phaedo* 110a, 114-5). The righteous are those who dwell in this realm, and through their association with these perfect forms, their souls become immortal. Timaeus also references this teaching at the opening of his cosmology, where he describes that which always is, but does not become, and that which becomes, but never is (*Timaeus* 27e-28a). Plato's theory of eternal and unchanging forms thus seems to have provided the primary metaphysical basis for the description of the kingdom of heaven contained in the Gospels.

Connected with the concepts of a Heavenly Father / divine craftsman, and the Kingdom of Heaven / realm of perfect forms, is the idea that there are absolute and eternal standards of the good that can be discerned and employed as a guide to virtuous conduct. The idea that the good and virtue are absolute and a form of knowledge is a pervasive theme in Plato's dialogues, beginning with the chronologically first dialogue, *Protagoras*, and most comprehensively

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<sup>50</sup> 3.2, 4.17, 5.3 (x2), 5.19 (x2), 5.20, 7.021, 8.11, 10.7, 11.11, 11.12, 13.11, 13.24, 13.31, 13.33, 13.44, 13.45, 13.47, 13.52, 16.19, 18.1, 18.3, 18.4, 18.23, 19.14, 19.23, 20.1, 22.2, 23.13, 25.1, 25.14.



expressed in his definitive political work, the *Republic*.<sup>51</sup> The idea that one must be guided by absolute standard beyond one's self is most clearly demonstrated, though, in Socrates' principled refusal to flee Athens at the end of his life, even though staying means he will be executed, because, as he states, "the most important thing is not life, but the good life." (*Crito* 48b) Likewise, Jesus admonishes his followers to go beyond simply obeying the law, and to instead to aim for a higher standard of behaviour: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (*Matthew* 5.48). Jesus on the cross also prays for those who crucify him: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." His executioners are also deserving of forgiveness, Jesus says, for they do not know what they are doing. Virtue is knowledge, but the conception of this knowledge is of a much higher order than simply knowing conventional laws and obeying them.

#### 4. John

Platonic teachings are prominently featured by the generation of authors writing immediately after the composition of the Synoptic authors. As O'Meara observes: "The use made of Stoic, Cynic, and Platonic conceptions in Saint John and Saint Paul is well known." (O'Meara, 1982, p. ix) Platonic ideas are particularly prominent in the *Gospel of John*, anonymously authored near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. In the opening description of *John*, the author describes God as *lógos* and the "true light, which enlightens" (1.1-9), and how *lógos* became flesh in Jesus Christ (1.14-17). This emphasis on God as *lógos* is evocative of the Platonic conception of *lógos*, as the key for discerning the divine order in the things of the world. In particular, it brings to mind Socrates' description of dialectical discourse as a fire hurled down from heaven by Prometheus (Plato, *Philebus* 16c-17a). Later in *John*, the author also declares:

For God so loved [*êgápêsen*] the world [*kósmos*] that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (3.16)

In this passage, then there are not only the universalist aspirations and focus on eternal life found in the earlier Gospel writers, but an emphasis on a god who is not only good, but also loving. This idea of God as a loving being stands in contrast to *Old Testament* conceptions of God as vengeful and jealous, and only concerned with the fate of the Jews, his chosen people.

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<sup>51</sup> Naturally, there is a significant difference in how Platonic ideas are presented in Plato's writings, versus how they are presented in the *New Testament*, with the latter naming these ideas as absolute simply because they are commandments of God.

On the other hand, the idea of a loving god is evocative of the gods described as philanthropic in the classical era: Prometheus (Desmôtês 11, 28), Kronos (*Laws* 4.713d), and Eros (*Symposium* 189d). Later in John, the Samaritans also declare Jesus "the Saviour [sôtêr] of the world [kósmou]." (John 4.42) This is the only time in John that Jesus is described as sôtêr; however, this appellative occurs in numerous other places in both the *Old* and *New Testaments* (cf. *Deuteronomy* 32.15, *Titus* 1.1, *Luke* 2.11, etc.). The description of Jesus as saviour also calls to mind the Protagorean Promethean *mũthos*, as expressed in both Desmôtês and Plato's *Protagoras*. In Desmôtês, Prometheus describes himself as the one who "delivered" (*éselusámên*) mortals from death (238) by causing them to "cease foreseeing their doom" and "implanting "blind hopes" in their hearts (250-2). In Plato, by comparison, Protagoras describes Epimetheus and Prometheus as providing the means of deliverance (*sôtêría*) to the creatures of the world (*Protagoras* 320e, 321b, 321c). Not only does the god described in the Gospel of John possess identifiably Platonic features, then, but distinctly Promethean and Protagorean ones besides.

## 5. Paul

Markus notes how early Christian thinkers, and the apostle Paul in particular, experienced little difficulty finding a scriptural basis for taking advantage philosophical ideas to express and justify their faith (Markus, 1964, pp. 135-158). Little wonder, given that the Gospels already contained many latent Platonic ideas. Paul readily adopts these ideas, such as the idea that the soul is immortal, but also modifies them to better serve his purpose of spreading the Gospels. He declares, for instance, the reality of not just an immortal soul, but of a resurrected body besides. It was Paul's genius to masterfully weave together various traditions, prominently including Platonism, so as to better appeal, on the basis of universal human desire for eternal life, to the great mass of people then living disenfranchised under Roman rule. Paul is also remarkable for translating the universalist ambitions expressed by the Gospel writers into practice by consciously spreading the Gospel among Gentiles. Paul's conscious recruitment of Greek-speaking Gentiles into his ministry naturally lead to an even greater degree of Hellenisation, Platonisation and even Prometheanisation of Christian conceptions of a good God as the loving saviour of humankind. It is notable, for instance, that the first appearance of the word *philanthrôpia* in the *New Testament* occurs in Acts of the Apostles (27.3, 28.2). Most

significantly, in the *Letter of Paul to Titus*, the pseudonymous author describes "the goodness and loving kindness [*philanthrôpía*] of God our Saviour [*sôtêros*]" (*Titus* 3.4).

The degree to which Paul himself was Hellenised should not be underestimated either. Winter, for instance, demonstrates Paul intimate familiarity with the techniques and practices of the sophistic tradition in Greece (Philo and Paul among the sophists, 1997). This familiarity is demonstrated, for instance, in Paul's mission to evangelise the Greeks in Corinth, then a hot-bed of sophistic activity. In the very opening of his first address to the Corinthians, Paul employs sophistic devices to, ironically, decry the Greek claims to wisdom. To this end, he argues that, while the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, to those who are being saved (*sôzoménois*) it is the power of God (*dúnamis theou*). In this manner, then, Paul employs the two *lógoi* technique of Protagoras, who understood that for every thesis, such as that the wise are wise, there exists an equally valid antithesis, that demonstrates the wise to be foolish.

To support further support his point, that the wisdom of the wise is foolishness to God, Paul quotes the *Old Testament*, where it is written:

I will destroy the wisdom [*sophían*] of the wise [*sophôn*],  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.

*1 Corinthians* 1.19; cf. *Isaiah* 1.19

While Paul quotes Hebrew scripture, though, he does so with the keen awareness of the cultural background of his audience. His description of God's wisdom making the wisdom of the world look foolish, for instance, has a corollary in the Pre-Socratic philosopher, Heraclitus, where he writes:

To a god the wisdom of the wisest man sounds apish.

Heraclitus, fr. 98, trans. Haxton

Furthermore, for an educated Greek living in the Greco-Roman era, references to the power of God destroying the wisdom of the wise in the context of a god crucified (*èstaurôthê*),<sup>52</sup> would naturally recall the effortless victory of powerful Zeus over the clever (*poikilóboulon*) Prometheus, whom he had bound (*desmoîs*) (*Theogony* 521-2). Paul thus masterfully employs the tradition of Greek wisdom to show the Greeks a wise way that lies beyond wisdom. For, as Heraclitus wrote 600 years earlier:

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<sup>52</sup> From the root word, *staurôô*.

Whoever cannot seek the unforeseen sees nothing, for the known way is an impasse.  
Heraclitus, fr. 7, trans. Haxton

In this spirit, then, Paul wished to show the Greek a previously unknown way that made it possible to hope for the un hoped for: eternal life with a resurrected body living in the presence of God.

Understanding the degree to which Paul was Hellenised is somewhat obscured by his adherence to the Biblical canon in the writings attributed to him. However, the degree to which Paul, as a highly educated and Hellenised Jew living in the Seleucid Greek empire, would have been familiar with the tradition of Greek wisdom may be seen from the writings of another highly educated and exact contemporary of his, Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE). Philo lived in the Ptolemaic Greek empire, and employs extensive allegory in his efforts to harmonise Greek philosophy with Jewish religious traditions. He describes Plato in the most favourable terms: as the "sweetest of all writers," who says that wisdom "never closes its school, but is continually open to receive all who thirst for salutary doctrines" (Philo, *Every Good Man is Free*, 2.13, trans. Yonge). He also quotes approvingly from *Timaeus* on the question of whether the world is better characterised as being or becoming (*On The Eternity of the World* 4.13, 6.27, 7.38).

With regard to Protagorean wisdom, on the other hand, Philo condemns it outright, describing it in his work, *The Prosperity and Exile of Cain*, as a descendent of the folly of Cain. However, Philo's precise wording of the 'Man is the measure' fragment demonstrates his close familiarity with Protagorean doctrine and its relation to the *Prometheia* trilogy. In Philo, by comparison, the fragment is rendered as follows:

that the human mind [*noûn*] is the measure of all things;  
*The Posterity and Exile of Cain*, 10.35, trans. Yonge

Philo's insertion of "mind [*noûn*]" does not occur in the other preserved versions of Protagoras' 'Man is the measure' fragment (cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians* 7.60; Plato, *Theaetetus* 151e). In Philo's particular rendition of the chief representative of Protagorean wisdom, therefore, he conflates it with an important aspect of the *Prometheia* trilogy; Prometheus' sublimation of his gift of fire into having placed mind (*ënnous*) and reason in humans (Desmôtês 444). Philo nowhere directly mentions the mythic figure of Prometheus in his works; however, his not infrequent use of the various cognates of *promêtheia* and *pronoia*

throughout his works,<sup>53</sup> reveals at the very least his close familiarity with the concept of Promethean forethought. And Philo's conflation of the most important fragment of Protagorean wisdom with the Prometheia trilogy's single most significant alteration to the Promethean *mūthos* points to his awareness of their connection. Given these indications, it is reasonable to assume that Paul and the other Gospel writers would also have been familiar with the Promethean *mūthos*.

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<sup>53</sup> *On the Creation* 61.171-2; *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 5.27, 37.121; *The Worse Attacks the Better* 16.56; *On the Unchangableness of God* 6.29, 15.72; *The Confusion of Tongues* 31.159; *On Flight and Finding* 29.162; *On the Change of Names* 7.56; *On Providence* (Fr. II) 1, 36, 46, 54; *On the Embassy to Gaius* 15.109, 31.208, 33.245, 34.259, 39.310.

### C. Parallels Between Jesus, Socrates and Prometheus

Scholars have long noted the many parallels between the lives and persons of Socrates and Jesus. These parallels include, for example, critiques of what natural science is able to know, and inquiries into the state and salvation of the souls of both themselves and others. These two figures also share similarities in their occupation as teachers: for example, neither charged a fee for their teaching, neither wrote anything (that is known to survive, at least), and both had disciples who posthumously spread their teachings. The parallels between Socrates and Jesus also include similarities in the teaching methods they employed: for example, their use of the dialectical technique of question and answer, and their employment of *mūthos*. These parallels also extend to the content of their teachings: for example, that God is one and the cause of only good. Both also professed obedience to God, Socrates to his *daimônion*, and Jesus to his heavenly Father. And finally, there are many similarities in their trials and deaths, with both Socrates and Jesus prosecuted on the basis of trumped-up charges, and executed by the state with the consent of the popular will.

Given the many similarities between the life and death of Socrates and Jesus, it is likely that these parallels are more than simply a coincidence. Rather, they would seem to stem from a conscious effort to mould the biography of Jesus so as to more closely fit that of Socrates. As Erhlich observes:

the extensive similarities of Jesus' life with that of Socrates was not due to some literary genre of writing, but a planned comparison of the two men that is much more a 'typology' of prophecy than the comparison of Jesus with any other earlier human figure, including those of the Hebrew Scriptures. (Ehrlich, 2001, p. 259)

Given the strong parallels Plato draws between Socrates and Prometheus, as noted above, and given the Gospel writers' employment of Plato's depiction Socrates as a model for their biography of Jesus, it should, perhaps, come as no surprise to find close parallels, too, between the figures of Jesus and Prometheus.

Perhaps the single strongest Promethean image in the Gospels employed in association with Jesus occurs in Luke, where Jesus tells his disciples:

I came to bring fire [*pŭr*] to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled [*ànáptô*]!  
*Luke 12.49*

Jesus then tells them goes on to assert that he has not come to bring peace to the earth, but rather division (12.50-3). This latter statement also occurs in *Matthew* (10.34-6) but not in

*Mark*, and may thus be considered to have derived from the Q text. Jesus' claim that he has come to bring fire to earth does not occur in *Matthew*, though, so it's unclear if it, too, was derived from Q. In the *Old Testament*, fire is primarily employed as a metaphor for purification, along with water (*Numbers* 31.23). The *Old Testament* also contains a parallel to Jesus' declaration that he is bringing fire to earth: where the man of God, Elijah brings fire down on the soldiers sent by king Ahaziah of Samaria (*2 Kings* 1.11-2). Bringing fire to earth is also an essential element of the Indo-European Promethean imagery of Greek *mūthos*, including the idea of *employing* fire in a destructive manner as an instrument of justice. This image occurs, for instance, in Euripides, where a messenger describes to Jocasta, the wife and mother of Oedipus, how a soldier named Tydeus fought for her son, Polyneices, when he lay siege to Thebes to oust his brother, Eteocles, who had unjustly seized the throne. The messenger describes Tydeus as a "Titan Prometheus" bearing a torch (*lampáda*) with which to set the *pólis* on fire, in retribution for its having upheld the injustice of its usurper (*Phoenician Women* 1121-2). Gospel writers would naturally have delighted in the existence and exploitation of such parallels between Greek mythology and Hebrew scripture in their creation of the syncretic figure of Jesus.

The parallels between Prometheus and Jesus also extend to their role as saviour of humankind. As was noted above, the frequent description of Jesus in the *New Testament* as the saviour (*sôtêr*) of humanity (*Deuteronomy* 32.15, *Titus* 1.1, *Luke* 2.11, et. al.), calls to mind Protagoras' description of Prometheus as having providing the means of deliverance (*sôtêria*) for humans (*Protagoras* 321c). The crucifixion of Jesus, nailed to a cross, is also reminiscent of Prometheus' punishment, bound to a stone. Their modes of punishment even share the detail of both having a shaft driven through their torso. The death and resurrection of Jesus also parallels significant details of the punishment and redemption of Prometheus, who is also initially entombed beneath the earth, only to later re-emerge and sit at the right hand of *Zeus Pater* almighty. In this context, it is also worth noting that the Gospel writers most often refer to Jesus' initial followers as 'disciples' (*mathêtaí*) (Glucker, 1978, p. 447);<sup>54</sup> the Greek word for 'learners' constructed upon the same root word – *math* – that forms the etymological basis for Prometheus.

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Matthew* 5.1, 13.10, 13.36, 14.15, 14.26, 15.12, 15.23, 16.13, 16.21, 18.1, 19.25, 21.20, 24.3, 26.17; *Luke* 8.45; *Mark* 3.51.

It is safe to assume that the Jews of Palestine were familiar with the Promethean *mūthos*. One of the most brilliant treatments of the Promethean *mūthos* in the Greco-Roman era – the satire, *Prometheus* – was penned by a Syrian Jew, Lucian of Samosata (117-after 180 CE), whom Gibbon describes as the sole genius of the Antonine age (Gibbon, 1909, p. 1.62).<sup>55</sup> Lucian's treatment of the Promethean *mūthos* also indicates a keen awareness among the Jews of the middle east of the equivalence between the punishment of Prometheus and crucifixion. In the *New Testament* Gospels, Jesus is described as having been 'crucified' (*staúróō*) (cf. *Matthew* 27.35, *Luke* 23.33, *Mark* 15.25, *John* 19.18). In the traditional Promethean *mūthoi*, by contrast, Prometheus is said to have been 'bound' ("*desmōĩs*" *Theogony* 522; "*désmê*" *Desmôtês* 6). Lucian also describes the 'fetters' (*desmà*) of Prometheus (*The Lover of Lies* 2); however, he also describes Prometheus as having been 'crucified' (*ànestaúrósen*) (*On Sacrifices* 6, cf. *Zeus Catechized* 8). Lucian also quotes a passage from a play by Menander (c.342-291), a poet of New Comedy in Athens, who describes Prometheus as having been 'nailed fast' (*prospepattaleuménon*) to rocks (Menander fr. 718). Given the evidence contained in Lucian, then, the punishments of Prometheus and Jesus would thus have been considered somewhat synonymous by Jewish writers.

Another prominent Jewish author in the early Christian era who evinces a keen awareness of the Promethean *mūthos*, particularly as it relates to conceptions of the God of all creation, is Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE). Philo was a contemporary of Jesus, and extensively employs philosophical allegory to harmonise Greek philosophy with Jewish religious traditions. He makes several references, for instance, to the 'providence' (*promêtheía*) of God the 'Saviour' (*Sôtêros*) of all men (cf. *On The Confusion of Tongues* 31.159, *On Flight and Finding* 29.162, *On the Change of Names* 7.56). In another work, he also describes God as dwelling in pure light, seeing into the innermost recesses of the soul, and possessed of his own particular attributes of 'prescience' (*promêtheía*) and 'providence' (*pronoía*) (*On The Unchangeableness of God* 6.29). The nature of God foresees (*promethouménê*) everything (ibid. 15.72). Elsewhere, Philo describes God's particular affiliation with the power of reason:

God, who is the father of all rational understanding, takes care of all those beings who are endowed with reason, and exercises a providential (*promêtheĩtai*) power for the protection even of those who are living in a blameable manner,

*On Providence*, fr. 2.6, trans. Yonge

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<sup>55</sup> The first volume of Gibbon's history was first published in 1776.



In the same work, Philo even goes so far as to explain God's "providence" in causing natural disasters, writing that He often employs ministers and inflicts disasters, "on account of his care [*promêtheian*] for the preservation of virtue." (*On Providence*, fr. 2, 41, trans. Yonge) For Philo, as for Socrates, then, it is quite simply impossible for a virtuous man to suffer from evil, as long as he continues to preserve virtue in his soul.

Given this broad awareness of the concept of promethean forethought and the Promethean *mũthos* among the educated elite of Jewish society under the Romans, then, it is highly likely that the Gospel writers were similarly aware, and that they incorporated essential features of Prometheus, the saviour of humankind, in their depiction of Jesus. Certainly, among the earliest gentile Christians, there was an awareness of the Promethean provenance of Christian god. Tertullian (c.160-c.220 CE), for instance, in his consideration of the Christian God who created the universe and man, writes that:

He [god] is the true Prometheus who gave order to the world by arranging the seasons and their course. (*Apology* 18, eds. Roberts & Donaldson)

Of course, other early Christians were much more hesitant in drawing such parallels, given the pains to which they go to present Christianity as a clean break with pagan beliefs. The relation between Prometheus, the reformed Jewish conception of God, and the conception of Jesus by the Gospel writers remains identifiable, though, in terms of their providential nature, their love of the world and philanthropy, and their crucifixion for providing the means of humankind's deliverance from what ails it.

#### D. Clement of Alexandria and Christian Platonism

Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215 CE) was a prominent Christian theologian and an early head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria (founded in c.190 CE by St. Pantaenus), the first formally organised Christian institution for religious higher education. Clement is a pivotal figure in the early history of the Christian Church, generally credited with having rendered Christianity intellectually acceptable to the ruling elite of Greco-Roman society. Interestingly, he accomplished this feat largely by forging an identity between the teachings of the Gospels and the central doctrines of Platonism, the single most successful of the ancient philosophical schools, as well as the one that gave great consideration to the political value of religious belief. As head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, Clement exercised a seminal influence over the formation of early Christian doctrine. Among his more notable students at the Catechetical School were: Origen (c.185-254), a distinguished theologian in his own right who was largely responsible for the coalescence of Christian writings that became the *New Testament*; and Alexander (d.251), the first Bishop of Cappadocia, in central Asia minor, and later a prominent Bishop of Jerusalem.

Clement is generally credited with having been the first Church father to fuse early Christian doctrine with Platonism, particularly as related to the essential unity, supremacy and goodness of God. As may be seen from this chapter's analysis of the presence of Platonic ideas in both the Old Testament and the Gospels, though, a more accurate description of Clement's achievement might be to say that he was one the first major Christian theologian to explicitly acknowledge an allegiance to Platonic doctrines. Given this pre-existing alignment between Apostolic Christianity and the theological principles of Platonism, as discussed above, Clement's success in achieving a synthesis of the two was, perhaps, thus not overly difficult.

In his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement attacks the conceptions of God promulgated by the Greek philosophers who belonged to the tradition of Ionian natural science. He specifically condemns Epicurus, in particular, as pre-eminent in impiety (*àsebôn*) for thinking, "that God has no care [*mélein*] for the world [*pántôn*]." (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 6, p. 65, trans. Butterworth) Plato, by contrast, Clement says has "hit the truth" with his conception of God as "Father and Maker of this universe" (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 6.59; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 28c).<sup>56</sup> Clement never directly mentions Prometheus in *Exhortation*, as his primary purpose in this work is to

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<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere, Clement also praises Plato as "truth-loving" and "divinely inspired" (*Stromata* 1.7) for having Socrates declare himself to be a man who obeys nothing but "the word [*lógô*]" (i.e. reasoning) which, upon consideration, appears best to him (*Crito* 46b).

debunk the gods of Greek mythology. However, he does condemn Epicurus and endorse Plato primarily to the degree to which their conception of God fits the mould of Prometheus – which is to say, as a father and creator of humanity, and who cares for the world – following the lead supplied by both Christian Scripture and Plato. The Platonic inspiration for Clement's Promethean conception of God is readily apparent in his writings. Later in *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement describes God as "the eternal giver of good things [*tōv àgathōv àídios dotēr*]." (10.83, trans. Butterworth) He also specifically refers to the "*philanthrōpía*" of God eleven times in the same work (1.5, 1.6 [x2], 1.8, 9.68, 9.69, 9.71, 9.72, 10.82 [x3]), as well as the *philanthrōpía* of his Word (2.23). At the same time, Clement condemns the gods of Hellenistic religion, which he calls "daemons", as "misanthropists" (3.36), as "misanthropic" (3.37), and as "not philanthropic" (3.38); only ever offering ironic praise of them as "philanthropic" (3.37).

Clement concludes his *Exhortation to the Greeks* with a telling description his sense of his own *philanthrōpía* that draws a significant parallel to Socrates. In the opening of Plato's *Euthyphro* (3b), Socrates begins to strongly distinguish his relationship to his divine sign (*daimónion*) from that of Euthyphro. Significantly, he proceeds to draw this differentiation primarily in terms of his *philanthrōpía* versus the implicit misanthropy of the Homeric priest. Perhaps the citizens of Athens think Euthyphro is unwilling to teach (*didáskein*) his wisdom (*sophían*), Socrates says:

But I fear that *I*, because of my philanthropy [*mê úpò philanthrōpías*] seem to them to profusely pour out [*èkkechuménōs*] whatever I possess to every man (*Euthyphro* 3d, trans. by author).

As it happens, this wording is closely paralleled by Clement at the very conclusion of *Exhortation to the Greeks*. There, he describes how,

moved by philanthropy [*úpò philanthrōpías*] I have [perhaps] run on too long in pouring out [*èkchéôn*]" what I have recieved from God, as is natural when one is inviting men to the greatest of good things - salvation [*sôtêrian*]. (12.95, trans. Butterworth)

Given the close parallels between these two passages – in which philanthropy causes (*úpò*) a pouring out of wisdom – Clement would seem to be specifically referencing Socrates' philanthropy to describe his own. In pointing to how his philanthropy moves him to pour out what he has recieved from God, Clement conciously evokes both Socrates' sense of the divine and his philanthropy, which also seemed to cause him to pour out his wisdom in the service of a

fundamentally Promethean task: to bring about the means of human salvation, in large part by attempting to reform what was taught and believed about the gods.

Clement was intimately familiar with the various versions of the Promethean myth, quoting several of them in his writings.<sup>57</sup> While Clement explicitly endorses the Promethean aspects of Socrates' philanthropy and Plato's conception of the one true God, he implicitly expresses ambivalence toward their Protagorean roots. Clement likens the Word of God to a light in the "mind of humans" (*noûs ò èn ànthrôpô*) (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 10.79), for instance; a wording that follows the formulation of what Prometheus did for humans in the central epeisodos of *Desmôtês*. In his critique of what the philosophers say about the gods, though, Clement claims that: "God [is] the measure of the truth of all existence [*métron*]." (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 6.60) In this way, Clement may be seen to challenge the central doctrine of Protagorean humanism – namely, that: "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not." (fr. 80 B1 Diels-Kranz) Later in his *Exhortation*, Clement also writes that neither "the Avengers [*èrinûs*], nor the Fates [*moîrai*], nor destiny [*eimarménê*] are gods;" (10.81) In denying the divinity of the Furies and the Fates, Clement thus counters a crucial passage from the *Prometheia* trilogy, where Prometheus describes Zeus as subject to Necessity, steered by "The three Fates [*Moîrai*]; and the Furies [*Erinúes*], who forget nothing." (*Desmôtês* 514) As was noted in chapter 7, section F, this passage is likely Protagorean in origin, given the occurrence of very similar ideas, and even specific wording, in fragments attributed to Ionian natural philosophers with whom Protagoras was certainly familiar, most notably Anaximander (fr. 1) and Heraclitus (frs. 64 & 94). In designating God rather than Man as the measure of all things, and denying the divinity of the Furies and the Fates, Clement thus re-establishes God as the supreme steersman of fate of the cosmos.

Clement also refers to what are essentially Promethean features of the Christian God in *Stromata*, his most comprehensive synthesis of Christian faith and Greek philosophy, from which is derived many of the extant fragments of the Pre-Socratic philosophers.<sup>58</sup> In that work, Clement emphatically refers to "the philanthropy and goodness of God," (7.14) likely paying homage to (pseudo-) Paul's conception of God (*Titus* 3.4), but also emulating the Platonic ideal

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Stromata* 5.9 (quoting Protagoras' Promethean *mûthos* in Plato), 5.14 (quoting Callimachus and Hesiod), 6.2, 7.6 (quoting Hesiod).

<sup>58</sup> It is to Clement we owe, for example, our knowledge that the reference to the Cretans always being liars in *Paul's Letter to Titus* (1.12-13), is a direct quote from Epimenides of Crete (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

of a philanthropic god who loves and cares for humankind (cf. *Laws* 4.713d, *Symposium* 189d) and is only ever the cause of good in the world (cf. *Republic* 2.379c). Clement had little difficulty drawing corollaries between the tenets of the Christian faith and those of Platonic philosophy, which he sees as having stolen from the former. As he explains with an unabashed reference to Prometheus:

There is in philosophy, though stolen as the fire by Prometheus, a slender spark, capable of being fanned into flame, a trace of wisdom and an impulse from God. (*Stromata* 1.17, eds. Roberts & Donaldson)

Clement goes on to assert that the real "thieves and robbers" were the Greek philosophers, who received fragments of the truth from the Hebrew prophets before the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Later in the same work, Clement even goes so far as to ask: "For what is Plato, but Moses speaking in Attic Greek?" (*Stromata* 1.22). Clement also invokes the authority of Scripture in justifying the Hebrew origins of Greek philosophy, as having "called the Greek pilferers of the Barbarian [i.e. Hebrew] philosophy" (*Stromata* 2.1, trans. Roberts & Donaldson).

Clement was the first theologian to explicitly synthesise the principles of Platonism and Christianity. However, his time at the Catechetical School in Alexandria also marks a crucial point at which philosophy became "captured" and "ruled" by the newly revealed Christian religion, cf. (Lampert, 1993, p. 315; Lampert, 1996, p. 90). In a now infamous chapter in *Stromata*, in which Clement succinctly summarises what he sees as the essential relationship between philosophy and religion, he memorably describes philosophy as "the handmaid of Theology" (1.5). Henceforth, philosophy would be tolerated, and even valued, within the Christian Church, but only to the degree to which it provided metaphysical supports for its theological doctrine of revelation. Stated mythically, Prometheus, as the symbol of philosophy, surrendered his sovereignty and submitted to the reign of Zeus, now understood as revealed religion rather than political power. Clement would seem to have been well aware of the esoteric traditions of Greek philosophy, as most artfully practiced by Plato. In *Stromata*, again, he remarks:

those who instituted the mysteries, being philosophers, buried their doctrines in myths, so as not to be obvious to all. (Clement, *Stromata* 9.5, eds. Roberts & Donaldson)

There are reasonable grounds for thinking, therefore, that Clement was well aware of the deeper philosophical truths behind the doctrines of Platonism, rooted as they were in the Promethean critiques of both Socrates and Plato, and their reformation of the Greek

Enlightenment, as revealed by Protagoras. Plato portrays the need for esotericism and noble lies in his writings with candour; in Montaigne's description, "Plato treats this mystery [of religious belief] with his cards pretty much on the table." (Montaigne & Frame, 1958, p. 379) Clement, by contrast, plays with his cards very close to his chest, never revealing a shade of doubt he might have held regarding in the existence of his one true love, the philanthropic and beneficent god worshipped by the Christian Church.

## E. Neo-Platonism and the Closing of the New Academy

Prominent Platonists, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Alexander of Jerusalem, played a pivotal role in defining the Platonic features of early Christian religious dogma, and spreading it throughout the Roman Empire in its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries of existence. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, though, a new school of Neo-Platonism arose, beginning with Plotinus (205-270) whose disciple, Porphyry (232-305), developed his philosophical system in conscious opposition to ascending Christianity (Cross, 1961, p. 1083). It appears that the Academy was re-established in Athens sometime in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century CE (c.410) by a circle of leading Neo-Platonist lead by Plutarch of Athens (c.350-430 CE). Plutarch's main pedagogical principle was that the study of Aristotle (natural philosophy) must precede that of Plato (moral philosophy), and that the student should be taught to realise the points of agreement between them. Imagining these points of agreement is considerably eased when one understands the esoteric nature of Plato's published writings, and that most of what is preserved of Aristotle's writings comes in the form of class notes intended only for initiates of his school at the Lyceum.<sup>59</sup>

It appears that, when Plutarch founded the New Academy, not only did he invent a tradition that touted the new school's institutional continuity with the Old Academy that ended with Antiochus, he must also have done so with an extremely large commitment of financial resources, which also adopted an aire of continuity with Plato's school, that point to the existence of a more formal institutional base than the original Academy. The *Suida* describes Plato as having "possessed only the garden in the Academy, which was a very small part of the property of the succeeding heads of the Academy;" (s.v. *Plátôn*) For, while Plato's original garden brought in close to three gold coins, presumably from the harvest of olives that grew in it, the "revenue of the latter was nearly a thousand or even a little more." (Ibid.) The author of the entry then goes on to write that the endowment of the Academy "increased in later times as devoted and learned men died at one time or another and in their wills left to those practicing philosophy a resource for the philosophic life of leisure and calm." (Ibid.)

Since at least the late 18th century, it has been generally assumed that the New Academy was closed in 529 by an edict of the Emperor, Justinian (Gibbon, 1909, vol. 4, p. 283). More recent scholarship, though, has found that that edict "represented more a curtailment of its teaching activity, and that important scholarly work continued there (Sedley, 1981, p. 68).

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<sup>59</sup> Which by nomeans precludes the possibility of these writings also being exoteric; see, for example, Cairns Lord (1984) in the introduction to his translation of Aristotle's *Politics*.

While there was a general downgrading of the philosophical schools in Athens in 529, the Academy continued to operate for at least a couple more years, due at least in part to the extraordinarily large size of its endowment, held in the form of real estate. As Cameron notes:

the Academy, alone among comparable institutions at this period, was self-supporting, and able to pay its scholarch (and no doubt his assistants too) from its own funds. (1969, p. 8)

Cameron goes on to argue that the confiscation of Academy property probably likely required special provisions in law. In any case, though, the Academy was closed by 432, and its last scholarch, Damascius (d. 540), found refuge, along with his disciples, in Ctesiphon under the patronage of the Sassanid king, Khosrau I (r. 531-579) (Agathias, *Histories* 2.31).

The closing of the Athenian philosophical schools in 529 CE is often cited as one of the bell-weather events marking the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Dark Ages. Some historians, though, also stress the degree of continuity present in the provision of higher education between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century; although they do still note the shift in the seat of educational authority, from the state to the church, and accompanying changes in the emphasis of curricula (Patterson, 1997, pp. 29-30). However, with the utter collapse of the state, at least in the Western Roman Empire during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the collapse of higher education institutions dependent on state patronage was somewhat inevitable. As Marrou points out, as "the whole system of classical education, had gradually passed out of private hands and into the sphere of public service," and as "they had come to depend more and more on the State and the local public authorities for money and organization; their fate was bound up with the political structure of the Empire." (Marrou, 1982, p. 344) With the passing of the Western Roman Empire, then, the philosophical schools that had formed the capstone of the classical system of higher education, passed into oblivion, and were gradually supplanted by Church sponsored institutions with much different sets of priorities. The last scholarch of the NeoPlatonic Academy, Damascius (c.458-after 538), was persecuted by the Emperor Justinian I, and is said to have sought refuge for a time in the Persian court of Khosrau I, along with several other prominent Neo-Platonist, before eventually returning to Alexandria. Institutionally speaking, though, Neo-Platonism simply ceased to exist after the 6<sup>th</sup> century, not to be revived again until Charlemagne's establishment of a "Palace Academy" in Aachen during the late 8<sup>th</sup> / early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the "Platonic Academy" established by Cosimo de' Medici in Florence in 1439. The many academies of the Italian Renaissance that followed the Medician original, in turn,



provided the inspiration for Bacon's vision of establishing a society of natural philosophers who would employ and disseminate the empirical methodology and philanthropic aims of his reformed science.

## **F. The Academy and Church as Institutional Outgrowths of Platonism**

From the survey conducted in this chapter, two points have, I hope, become clear. First of all, I have endeavoured to show that Platonism was not simply a fruit grafted late to the tree of Christianity, such as by Clement of Alexander and the Greek and Roman Christian theologians who followed in his wake. Rather, as has been shown, the entire root, trunk and branch of Christianity, from the time of Jesus onward, embodied core Platonic teachings. Furthermore, Jesus himself was rooted in a Jewish soil that had already been thoroughly Hellenised and saturated with Platonic ideas by the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

Concrete examples of the presence of essentially Platonic ideas in the teachings of Jesus include his conceptions of the goodness of God, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of transcendent beings that provide absolute standards for justice and virtue; all of which stand in marked contrast to more traditional Hebraic conceptions (Ehrlich, 2001, pp. 190-266). The idea that god is a cause only of good in the world is a distinctly Platonic idea; most succinctly and convincingly advanced in Plato's corpus by Socrates in *Republic* (2.380c). The Jewish god of the *Old Testament*, Yahweh, by contrast, is the source of both good and evil in the world (*Isaiah* 45.7). In this respect, then, Yahweh has far more in common with archaic Greek conceptions of Zeus, who also dispenses both good and evil to men (*Iliad* 10.71, 17.632; *Odyssey* 4.237, 6.188, 9.552), than he does with the Platonised god Jesus preaches about; for this "Father in Heaven" is highly reminiscent of Timaeus' description of the father/creator in the dialogue of Plato named for him. Indeed, even some early Christian theologians note the parallels between the Christian God and Prometheus as the creator of humans (Tertullian, *Apology* 18).

Plato's hope of continuing to have the fire of philosophy passed along from generation to generation by means of an organised school faded somewhat with the closing of his Academy in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Even shortly after its closing, though, the role performed by Plato's Academy was quickly filled in by other institutions with similar missions, such as the gymnasium called 'Ptolemy' at which Antiochus taught and attended by Cicero (*De Finibus* 5). Plato's Academy also continued to provide inspiration for many subsequent efforts to establish a permanent place of honour in the city for a community of the wise working in association with political power. These include the NeoPlatonic Academy, the earliest attestation of which dates to the early the early 430s, when Proclus (412-485) first arrived there (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 12), and which was closed by the Emperor Justinian sometime after 529. These efforts also include the establishment of several 'Academies' in major European courts during the Middle Ages,

leading to a renaissance of learning and a revival of the humanistic philosophy of the Greek Enlightenment. Charles the Great (742-814), the first Holy Roman Emperor (800-814), maintained a "Palace Academy" at his court in Aachen in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, under the direction of Alcuin of York (730s or 740s - 804), one of the primary architects of the "Carolingian Renaissance". Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464), by comparison, established a "Platonic Academy" in Florence in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, appointing Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) as its head; in this capacity, Ficino published the first translation of Plato's works into Latin in 1484, which became an important contribution to the advent of the Italian Renaissance.

At the same time, many of the higher educational functions performed by Plato's Academy also became filled by educational institutions founded by the Christian church and/or by Christianised states. The Catechetical School in Alexandria founded in c.190 by Saint Pantaeus (d. c.200), and at which Clement taught, is one of the earliest examples of the Christian Church sponsoring a school of higher education to provide religious instruction. The Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II also established a state-sponsored institution of higher learning in 425, the *Pandidaktêrion tês Magnáuras*, that provided instruction in medicine, philosophy and law for future personnel of the church and state. The *Pandidaktêrion* then later provided an institutional base for the 9<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine Renaissance and one of its leading lights, Photius (c.820-891), the Patriarch of Constantinople (858-867, 877-886). The higher educational needs for the personnel of both church and state also prompted the founding of the first university in Bologna, in 1088. The single most enduring legacy of Platonism, though, remains the Christian Church, understood as an explicit embodiment of Plato's moral, theological and eschatological teachings on: the unity of the virtues (*Protagoras*); the existence of a supreme Father and maker in Heaven (*Timaeus*); the oneness, goodness and philanthropy of a loving god (*Republic, Laws, Symposium*), who sits in judgement of immortal human souls in an afterlife (*Republic, Gorgias, Phaedo*). And it is through the teachings of the Christian church, and associated monotheistic faiths that have followed in its wake, that the exoteric philosophical and religious doctrines of Plato – themselves the product of this great philosopher's philanthropic aims and Promethean ambition – have continued to exercise a decisive influence over dominant conceptions of God in the West, even down to the modern age.

## Endnotes to Part III

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<sup>i</sup> The parallels between Athena and the Vedic *Ahanâ*, one of the deities representing the dawn, or *ushas*, led to one of the favourite, if controversial, formulations drawn by Max Müller (Müller M. F., 1856, pp. 56-7) (Müller F. M., 1889, pp. 435-6) (Müller F. M., Contributions to the Science of Mythology, vol. II, 1897, pp. 726-8). Müller argues that the etymological foundations for the *Ahanâ*-Athena formulation are impeccable. As one of the more prominent supporters of this formulation writes: "The name *Athênê* is practically a transliteration of the Vedic *Ahanâ*, the morning, which in a cognate form appears as *Dahanâ*, the Greek *Daphnê*." (Cox, 1870, p. 248). In addition to its allegedly impeccable etymological foundations, this formulation also has the benefit of illuminating one of the more bizarre and mysterious stories in Greek myth; namely, Athena's birth from out of the head of Zeus, which is split open by an axe-wielding midwife who is alternatively identified as either Hephaestus (Pindar, Olympian 7, 31-44) or Prometheus (Sophocles, *Ion* 455).<sup>i</sup> It is much easier to imagine this rather bizarre scenario when Athena is thought of as the dawn born from out of the head of Zeus understood as the day-lit sky. Likely due to the compelling way in which Müller's formulation lent meaning to this puzzling Greek myth, it was widely endorsed by scholars at the time (Fiske, 1898, p. 20) (Brown, The Great Dionysiac Myth, Vol. II, 1878, p. 333). As Müller himself admits, though, his formulation rests on only a single occurrence of *Ahanâ* in the *Rig Veda* (1.123.4). Because of this rather narrow etymological basis, the *Ahanâ*=Athena formulation (along with several others made by Müller) was singled out for attack and discredited by his opponents (Lang, 1897, pp. 107-8) (Lang, 1887). Summing up Müller's fall into disfavour after his death in 1900, Farnell succinctly notes, "many old religious etymological equations, such as *Oúranós* = Sanskrit Varuna, '*Ermês* = Saraneyās, Athena = Ahana, were uncritically made and have been abandoned." (1911, p. 528)

<sup>ii</sup> Prometheus:

And then, it seemed, my best remaining choice  
Was, with my mother's aid, to take my stand  
Where help was welcome, at the side of Zeus;  
And through my counsels [*boulaīs*] in the nether gloom  
Of Tartarus ancestral Cronos lies  
With all his comrades. Such are the services  
I rendered to the tyrant of the gods,  
And these cruel penalties are my reward.

Desmôtês 232-9, trans. Thomson

<sup>iii</sup> West, for instance, translates the passages cited by Protagoras from Simonides in a manner that well captures their poetic feel, as follows:

For a man to be [*genésthai*] truly good [*àgathòn*] is difficult,  
Fashioned foursquare in hands and feet and mind  
without a blemish...  
Nor does the saying of Pittacus ring true  
to me, although a wise man was its source:  
he said that being [*êmmenai*] good was difficult.

(339c, fr. 542.1-6, trans West)

<sup>iv</sup> In the first instance of Plato's use of *pronoía* in *Laws*, the Athenian Visitor says that it is never pious for anyone to 'voluntarily' (*pronoías* - i.e. 'with foresight') deprive themselves of the generation and rearing of children (4.721c); for this, along with fame, partakes in immortality by means of the process of coming-into-being. Much later, the Athenian Stranger refers to an art he possesses that would promote the natural use of sexual intercourse for the production of children: by abstaining, on the one hand, from homosexual intercourse, the 'deliberate' (*pronoías* 'with foresight') killing of humans (presumably a

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reference to the practice of abortion), and the wasting of sperm on non-reproductive activities; and on the other hand, by abstaining from intercourse with females with whom you would not wish to have a child (8.838e). This law thus bears no small relation to the practice of conception and eugenics in the perfect *pólis* described by Socrates in *Republic* (5.457b-461e).

<sup>v</sup> In Book 9, the Athenian Stranger makes a number of references to *pronoía* in considering the legal ramifications of people who kill or harm people in deliberate defiance of the law. He argues that a law should be put in writing that: "He who with forethought [*pronoías*], unjustly, and with his own hands kills any of his fellow tribesmen" must stay away from the usually proscribed places so they are not polluted by the crime (9.871a). A little further on, he also outlines how the mortal lawgiver must severely legislate against those who "dare voluntarily [*ékousiôs*], with forethought [*pronoías*], to take the soul from the body of father, mother, brothers, or children" (9.873a). In considering laws against wounding another person, the Athenian Visitor also distinguishes between injuries "that occur because of spirited anger, those that occur because of fear, and those that occur voluntarily [*ékouúsia*] out of forethought [*pronoías*]." (9.874e) He also says that, if "a child should wound his parents from forethought (*pronoías*), or a slave his master, death is to be the penalty." (9.877b) Furthermore, if someone should be convicted of wounding a sibling from forethought (*pronoías*), death should be the penalty (9.877c). And in Book 11, finally, the Athenian Visitor considers the injuries that someone effects wilfully (*ékôn*) and with foresight (*pronoías*) (11.932e).

<sup>vi</sup> At the opening of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek army, disregards the pious advice of his men, to ransom his captive, Chryseis, back to her father, Chryses, a priest of Apollo. Moved by lust for the girl, Agamemnon keeps her for himself and, as a consequence, brings down the arrows of Apollo upon the Greek army, a metaphor for plague. With the situation of the army deteriorating, Agamemnon finally summons his counsellors, including Calchas, "who knew [*édê*] the things that were, the things to come and the things past" (1.69-70, trans. Lattimore). Calchas, in league with Achilles, counsels Agamemnon to surrender Chryseis. Agamemnon does so, thereby saving his army, but only after he takes Achilles' prize, Briseis, as recompense, thus creating the conditions for the conflict that forms the main theme of the *Iliad*.

<sup>vii</sup> Despite the philanthropic ambitions of Aristophanes' teaching on the nature of Eros, it is not without its problems. Not the least of these relates to his fundamentally self-centred definition of what constitutes Eros. Aristophanes defines it primarily as a manifestation of self-love, albeit the love of another 'self' that is mythically alienated from one; rather than, for instance, defining love as an "authentic otherness" that is essentially dissimilar to or beyond one's self (Grant, 1986, p. 38). Aristophanes' idea of Eros as the love of the self-similar is also reinforced by his stated preference for homosexual love. A second, more serious problem with Aristophanes' teaching, though, is how he views Eros as merely the means of consummating the embrace of the beloved in permanent union. The relentless pursuit and conflict spurred by Eros is highly problematic for him. The only way Aristophanes can see to safeguard human happiness via Eros is to have it consummated, and thereby extinguished, in a permanent fusion with one's beloved other half. The accomplishment of this task he assigns to the technical knower, in the mythical persona of Hephaestus. If the essence of Eros does reside in consummation rather than pursuit, though, the role of speech or *logos* is correspondingly diminished.

Consummation, or permanent embrace, is the antithesis of living speech, for once final union is achieved the communicative and seductive powers of *logos* are no longer required. The diminished role of *logos* in Aristophanes' eulogy of Eros is also reflected in the lack of dialogue between the lovers he depicts: they never speak; rather, there is only a mute longing between them to embrace the body of their severed half. As Benardete points out: "Since the ultimate goal [of his definition of Eros] is dissolution of our fragmentary selves, there is no speaking to one another in Aristophanes." Benardete in (Plato, 2001, p. 187) The only beings who do speak in his speech, in fact, are gods: Zeus and Hephaestus. This lack of human speaking within Aristophanes' speech points to other instances of his speechlessness in

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the dialogue. Initially prevented from speaking in his turn by hiccups, Aristophanes is later prevented from rebutting Socrates' critique of his speech by the unexpected and noisy entry of Alcibiades.

An element of *alogos* also permeates Aristophanes' eulogy of Eros. The speechless lovers he describes, combine with his own speechlessness at several critical junctures, pointing to critical shortcomings in Aristophanes' account of Eros, as the love of one's own focused on satisfaction by consummation and termination. Aristophanes offers a seductive and compelling *mythos* of Eros, but his *logos* of how it relates to human happiness is flawed. Aristophanes gives expression to a philosophical pessimism, which posits that it would somehow be better if human beings were something essentially other than what they are. Socrates' speech thus acts as a corrective to both Aristophanes' lack of *logos*, and his essentially pessimistic outlook on the human condition. Socrates presents a speech that embraces humans as they are, as selfishly erotic beings; but then harnesses humanity's passionate hopes in the service of wisdom, channeling them up a 'ladder of eros' to a greater cultivation of the pursuit of knowledge.

# Gifts of Fire

## Part IV

### Conclusion, Appendices and Rear Matter



*Deucalion and Pyrrha* (c.1635) by Giovanni Maria Bottalla (1613-1644)

Image source: Hellenica website at <http://www.mlahanas.de>

After the Great Flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha toss stones, in obedience to the Oracle who told them to throw their mother's bones over their shoulder, that transform into the men and women who repopulated the earth.

## Chapter 15 – Conclusion: Prometheus as the Philosopher's Allegorical Representation of Political Philosophy

There will come a time when one will wisely refrain from all constructions of the world process or of the history of mankind, a time when one no longer considers the masses at all but once again the individuals who constitute a kind of bridge across the wild stream of becoming.

Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, §9, trans. Preuss

The research and analysis of this dissertation has arrived at several findings regarding the history of the Promethean *mūthos*, and its significance for better understanding the philanthropic philosophies expressed by Protagoras, Socrates and Plato. These findings also cast considerable light on significant questions with regard to the interpretation of the significance of Promethean imagery in the writings of Francis Bacon and Friedrich Nietzsche.

The first finding of this dissertation is a validation of the hypothesis positing the existence of an Indo-European proto-Prometheus. This hypothesis, based in part on numerous parallels between Prometheus in Greek mythology and Mātariśvan in Vedic mythology, was first proposed by Roth (1855) and further backed with linguistic evidence by Kuhn (1859). This hypothesis was most famously adopted by Nietzsche, who, in his first published book, describes the Promethean myth as belonging to the common heritage of Aryan peoples, and as being as significant to the character of their culture as the myth of the Fall is to Semitic culture (*The Birth of Tragedy* §9). Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kuhn's hypothesis positing the Indo-European provenance of Prometheus was discredited by Lang (1892, 1897), relying on the linguistic critiques of MacDonnell (1897). So far has the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus fallen, in fact, that Nietzsche has since been accused of relying on "false etymologies" and even of expressing proto-Nazi sympathies in his references to it (Lincoln, 1999, p. 64). As was shown in chapter 3, though, the linguistic criticisms Macdonell levels at Kuhn's hypothesis have been themselves debunked by the subsequent work of 20th century linguistic scholars, most notably Narten (1960); such that it is now possible to plausibly re-assert the existence of an Indo-European proto-Prometheus, the existence of which would have to date back to at least before the initial separation of Graeco-Aryan into the proto-Greek and Aryan language groups, beginning around 2,500 BCE. This is a major finding, dating the Promethean myth back at least 1,800 years earlier than its earliest attested versions, in Hesiod, composed sometime around 700 BCE.

In addition to dating the Promethean *mūthos* back almost two millennia earlier than was previously thought, understanding its Indo-European provenance also grants considerable



insight in appraising the significance of its many extant variants in ancient Greek mythology. In particular, an awareness of the Greco-Aryan roots of the *mūthos* casts a revealing light on the singular fragment preserved by Douris of Samos (fr. 19), the only account that describes Prometheus as having been punished, not for his theft of fire, but rather, because of his passion for Athena. In particular, the salient features of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus, including his propensity for lust, support the claim that Douris' version of the *mūthos* more accurately preserves its original, archaic features. This finding is also significant to interpreting Bacon's mythical expression of his philosophy, as he prominently employs this singular variant of the Promethean *mūthos* in *Of the Wisdom of the Ancients* (chapter 26, 'Prometheus, or the State of Man'), his seminal interpretation of the philosophical significance of ancient Greek mythology. In this way, the findings of this dissertation not only shed considerable light on the meaning of the Promethean *mūthos* as it was understood by Protagoras, Socrates and Plato; they also form an essential *prolegomena* to a more comprehensive consideration of its expression in the philosophical works of Francis Bacon, one of the primary intellectual architects of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Scientific Revolution and 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the intellectual father of Post-Modernism. Even more importantly, for the primary subject of this dissertation, knowing the Indo-European provenance of the Promethean *mūthos* allows for a more detailed construction of the history of its development, highlighting the introduction of novel elements.

The second major finding of this dissertation, stemming directly from the first, is that the *Prometheia* trilogy, traditionally but mistakenly ascribed to Aeschylus, is actually best understood as a mythological representation of Protagorean wisdom. This insight has been made possible by the cumulative work of several 20th century literary, philosophical and classical scholars. Schmidt (1929) was the first to outright declare that Aeschylus was not the author of *Desmôtês*; an assessment based in large part on the distinctly sophistic ideas expressed in the central *èpeísodos* of the play (pp. 93-6), where Prometheus describes what he did for humans. Davison (1949) drew several parallels between Protagoras and the Prometheus of *Desmôtês*, but continued to maintain that Aeschylus was its author; an anachronism he resolved by hypothesising that Protagoras first visited Athens in the early 450s, approximately 10 to 15 years earlier than what is attested in source texts. Guthrie (1971) hypothesised that, given the humanism of Protagoras' philosophy, his book, *On the Original State of Man*, likely dealt with the idea of human progress in history (pp. 60-8). Guthrie also referenced the central

*èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês* and the Ode to Man from *Antigone* as the two earliest extant treatments of this subject in all of Greek literature (pp. 79-80). On the basis of exhaustive linguistic, metrical and stylistic analysis, Griffith (1977) definitively established that the author of *Desmôtês* was more than likely a contemporary of Sophocles and Euripides. And West (1979), finally, buttressed Griffith's linguistic analysis with historical evidence external to the play that further narrowed its date of composition to sometime between 440-435 BCE. West argued that the central *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês* most likely originated in the account given by Protagoras in *On the Original State of Man* (1979, p. 147), and furthermore that the play was likely authored by Aeschylus' son, Euphorion (1990). With this scholarly groundwork, it became possible to plausibly advance a central hypothesis of this dissertation: that not only the central *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês* derived from Protagoras' book, *On the Original State of Man*; but that the entire *Prometheia* trilogy is best understood as a mythological portrayal or expression of Protagorean wisdom.

Given that virtually nothing of what Protagoras wrote has been preserved, this dissertation's analysis of the *Prometheia* trilogy for evidence of its Protagorean provenance was presented with a near insurmountable difficulty. This challenge was addressed by comparing the highly novel ideas presented in the trilogy with the few extant fragments of Protagoras, buttressed by the examination of similar ideas expressed by thinkers both known to have influenced Protagoras, and whom he is known to have influenced. As well, this analysis largely corroborated Plato's portrayal of the great sophist in *Protagoras*, the veracity of which has sometimes regarded as suspect. What the analysis of this dissertation demonstrates is a high degree of alignment between ideas associated with Protagoras, both directly and indirectly, and the principal ideas presented in the *Prometheia* trilogy. Protagorean ideas are expressed from the very outset of the trilogy, in its first play, *Purphóros*. There, in the only fragment preserved from that play, a character counsels the need for silence and speaking in season, more than likely in regard to Prometheus' plot to steal fire from Hephaestus and give it to humans. Very similar counsel is expressed in Plato's *Protagoras*, with respect to the need for the wise to be discreet in teaching their wisdom, for fear of retribution by the powerful. Protagorean ideas expressed in *Desmôtês*, by comparison, include, but are not limited to: *philanthrôpia* as the philosophical basis for a universal system of human values; the human need for hope; that the gods, including Zeus, are also subject to Necessity; and that Zeus, as a being who was once born, is also in mortal danger of one day ceasing to be. Most tellingly, though, Prometheus himself is

directly called a sophist twice in *Desmôtês* (62, 944). And at the conclusion of the trilogy in *Luómenos*, finally, a definitive resolution of the conflict between wisdom and power is reached, resulting in the restoration of honours to Prometheus, and the initiation of the *Prometheia* torch-race festival, thereafter annually celebrated in Athens, thereby creating a permanent place of honour for the wise in the city.

Perhaps the single most significant piece of Protagorean wisdom recovered by this dissertation's analysis of the *Prometheia* trilogy, though, concerns its portrayal of Prometheus' gift of fire in the central *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês*. What this analysis shows is that that play's depiction of Prometheus' gift of fire – as having placed mind and reason in human beings, and discovered all the various civilising arts for them – likely derived from a synthesis of Ionian natural science, Zoroastrian religious principles, and Semitic mythology rooted ultimately in the historical traditions of Sumerian civilisation. The presence of this syncretism demonstrates that Protagoras likely was, indeed, a student of the Persian Magi, and that a large number of his seemingly novel, sophistic ideas likely derived from that wisdom tradition. What the dissertation's analysis also shows is that singly the closest parallel to the central *èpeísodos* of *Desmôtês* is found in Plato's portrayal of the Promethean *mũthos* that Protagoras tells in his Great Speech (*Protagoras* 320c-322d). The numerous parallels between these two Protagorean inspired Promethean *mũthoi* lends support, in turn, to the hypothesis that Plato's portrayal of Protagoras' Great Speech is, indeed, highly accurate. This insight, in turn, makes it plausible to more closely consider the esoteric meanings of these two Promethean *mũthoi*, as reflections of Protagorean wisdom expressed in terms of *lógos* in his books, *On the Original State of Man*, and *On the Gods*. By further comparing the *Prometheia* trilogy with other depictions of Protagorean wisdom, such as those found in fragments attributed to Critias (fr. 25) and Moschion (fr. 6), a picture gradually emerges of remarkably modern sounding set of ideas regarding the origins of the cosmos, human beings, the gods, and civilisation. In short: the cosmos, including the life processes contained within it, arose from processes of physical necessity acting according to rationally understandable laws. Human beings originally lived in a brutish state that resembled that of other animals; but, with the aid of their god-given (i.e. natural) endowments of mind, and the development of the technical arts, they gradually evolved into a more civilised state. Human nature and civilisation remained unperfected, though, until the development of the political arts of association, buttressed by the religious arts of god creation and worship, sacrifice and prophecy, and telling *mũthoi* capable of sustaining the hope of people.

Socrates and Plato may be seen to have profoundly admired the many insights of Protagorean wisdom; nevertheless, they remained concerned for its potentially negative moral implications. The Protagorean insight that political institutions are conventional agreements, albeit subject to natural law, for instance, and that the gods are human inventions, the religious belief in which was first inculcated by a wise man for the purpose of promoting voluntary adherence to political law, while strictly speaking true, tended to undermine most conventional measures of political legitimacy and religious belief. The nature of Protagorean wisdom is nicely evoked by what Nietzsche describes as "dangerous truths", these being:

the doctrines of the sovereignty of becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and kinds, and of the lack of any cardinal difference between man and the animal (Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, §9, trans. Preuss)

Given the dangers posed by the dangerous truths of Protagorean wisdom, both Socrates and Plato felt obliged, out of a Promethean sense of *philanthrôpía* and forethought, to mount a concerted offensive against it. They did so by advancing a closely related, but contrasting, set of teachings: an ontological teaching that posited being, rather than becoming, as constituting the essential nature of the cosmos; a moral teaching that understood virtue as a unity and a form of knowledge; and a theological teaching of the oneness, goodness and philanthropy of God, sitting in divine judgement of human souls in an afterlife. In so portraying Socrates, Plato has him both consciously preempt the Promethean persona of Protagoras, while at the same time reforming at least the public presentation of Protagorean wisdom.

Both Socrates and Plato adopted a Promethean approach to knowledge, disseminating it in the form of teachings, or *máthêma*, they radically differed in how they went about disseminating those teachings. Socrates spread his teachings purely by word of mouth and never wrote anything, at least in part because he did not think wisdom could be properly communicated via the written word (cf. *Phaedrus*). Plato, on the other hand, took a very different tact. Not only did he leave an essential written corpus that elaborated upon his teachings (albeit in a dialogue form), he also founded a philosophical school in 387 BCE. Popularly known as Plato's Academy, this philosophical school became the first privately institution of higher-education in history. This school likely employed Plato's writings as part of its curriculum, and preserved and spread those writings and Platonic doctrines throughout the ancient world for nearly 300 years. This philosophical school was more or less formal in structure, likely similar in legal form to a charitable trust, and operated primarily from out of Plato's house and garden, located near the

public educational facilities Academy. In so organising his school as a permanent corporate entity, Plato also founded the first school of advanced education that continued to exist beyond the death of its founding patron. In this, Plato also radically departed from the practice of the sophists, whose 'schools' were dependent upon their usually itinerant principal, and that did not survive their death.<sup>1</sup> Plato's Academy also provided an institutional model that became widely imitated by other philosophical schools in Athens, including the Peripatetics, the Stoics and the Epicureans. Even after the Old Academy was closed early in the first century BCE, it continued to inspire the creation of similar institutions, including: the New Academy founded by Neo-Platonists led by Plutarch of Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, as well as the Palace Academy at the court of Charlemagne during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the city-states of Italy beginning in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, each of which played an essential role in spurring a renaissance of learning in its respective time and place. The Academies of the Italian Renaissance, in turn, inspired Bacon's plan for a community of scientists who would pursue the empirical methodologies of his reformed approach to science, and that would form the inspiration for the creation of the Royal Society and the Paris Academy.

While Plato's Academy provided the inspiration for many subsequent historical attempts to create formalised associations of the wise, undoubtedly the single most widely successful institution in spreading Platonic teachings to the broad mass of people is the Christian Church, as well as other monotheistic faiths that grew up in its wake, that teach of the oneness goodness and philanthropy of God, and of the reality of his divine judgment of immortal human souls in an afterlife. As was seen in this dissertation's analysis of Plato's influence on early Christianity, this influence even likely pre-dates those early Church Fathers who first explicitly declared their allegiance to Platonism, such as Clement of Alexandria or Augustine of Hippo; although Platonism's subsequent influence on Christianity was no doubt greatly augmented by their endorsement. Rather, Platonism was already part and parcel of the highly Hellenised Jewish culture in which Christ and his disciples grew up, and formed the essential background to the formation of their teachings in the earliest manifestations of the Christian Church, while it was still little more than a Jewish sect.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the few exceptions to the general mortality of the sophistic schools seems to have been the one founded by Gorgias (c.485-c.380 BCE), which was taken over after his death by Alcidamas (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

Through his dialogues, then, Plato both critiqued the polytheistic traditions of Greek religion, and fundamentally reformed those traditions by advancing a moral teaching underwritten by the existence of god as a transcendent being. In so doing, Plato established the essential features of what would define the Christian god: a philanthropic and father-like creator of human beings, in many ways modeled after Prometheus, who cares for human beings and is only ever the cause of good in the world. Plato's teachings thus provided the essential cosmological, theological and eschatological doctrines of the Christian Church, one of the most successful and longest lasting public-serving institutions in Western civil society. In this way, Plato, through his own Promethean ambition and forethought, ushered in a new age in human existence, marking the end of the ancient world and the beginning of Christian civilisation.

**Appendix A**

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**The Promethean *Mũthos* of Protagoras' 'Great Speech'**

**From Plato, *Protagoras* 320c-324d**

**Plato, Protagoras 320c-324d,**

[320ξ] ἦν γάρ ποτε χρόνος ὅτε θεοὶ μὲν ἦσαν, θνητὰ δὲ γένη

[320δ] οὐκ ἦν. ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ τούτοις χρόνος ἦλθεν εἰμαρμένος γενέσεως, τυποῦσιν αὐτὰ θεοὶ γῆς ἔνδον ἐκ γῆς καὶ πυρὸς μείζαντες καὶ τῶν ὅσα πυρὶ καὶ γῆ κεράννυται. ἐπειδὴ δ' ἄγειν αὐτὰ πρὸς φῶς ἔμελλον, προσέταξαν Προμηθεῖ καὶ Ἐπιμηθεῖ κοσμησαί τε καὶ νεῖμαι δυνάμεις ἐκάστοις ὡς πρέπει. Προμηθεὶα δὲ παραιτεῖται Ἐπιμηθεὺς αὐτὸς νεῖμαι, “νεῖμαντος δέ μου,” ἔφη, “ἐπίσκεψαι:” καὶ οὕτω πείσας νέμει. νέμων δὲ τοῖς μὲν ἰσχύον ἄνευ τάχους προσήπτεν,

[320ε] τοὺς δ' ἀσθενεστέρους τάχει ἐκόσμηι: τοὺς δὲ ὤπλιζε, τοῖς δ' ἄοπλον διδοὺς φύσιν ἄλλην τιν' αὐτοῖς ἐμηχανᾶτο δύναμιν εἰς σωτηρίαν. ἃ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν σμικρότητι ἤμπισχεν, πτηνὸν φυγῆν ἢ κατάγειον οἴκησιν ἔνεμεν: ἃ δὲ ἠὔξε μεγέθει, τῷδε

[321α] αὐτῷ αὐτὰ ἔσωζεν: καὶ τᾶλλα οὕτως ἐπανισῶν ἔνεμεν. ταῦτα δὲ ἐμηχανᾶτο εὐλάβειαν ἔχων μὴ τι γένος αἰστωθεῖη: ἐπειδὴ δὲ αὐτοῖς ἀλληλοφθοριῶν διαφυγὰς ἐπήρκεσε, πρὸς τὰς ἐκ Διὸς ὥρας εὐμάρειαν ἐμηχανᾶτο ἀμφιεννὺς αὐτὰ πυκναῖς τε θριξίν καὶ στερεοῖς δέρμασιν, ἱκανοῖς μὲν ἀμῦναι χειμῶνα, δυνατοῖς δὲ καὶ καύματα, καὶ εἰς εὐνάς ἰοῦσιν ὅπως ὑπάρχοι τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα στρωμνὴ οἰκεία τε καὶ αὐτοφυῆς ἐκάστω: καὶ

[321β] ὑποδῶν τὰ μὲν ὀπλαῖς, τὰ δὲ [θριξίν καὶ] δέρμασιν στερεοῖς καὶ ἀναίμοις. τούντεϋθεν τροφὰς ἄλλοις ἄλλας ἐξεπόριζεν, τοῖς μὲν ἐκ γῆς βοτάνην, ἄλλοις δὲ δένδρων καρπούς, τοῖς δὲ ρίζας: ἔστι δ' οἷς ἔδωκεν εἶναι τροφήν ζῶων ἄλλων βοράν: καὶ τοῖς μὲν ὀλιγογονίαν προσήψε, τοῖς δ' ἀναλίσκομένοις ὑπὸ τούτων πολυγονίαν, σωτηρίαν τῷ γένει πορίζων. ἄτε δὴ οὖν οὐ πάνυ τι σοφὸς ὢν ὁ Ἐπιμηθεὺς ἔλαθεν αὐτὸν

[321ξ] καταναλώσας τὰς δυνάμεις εἰς τὰ ἄλογα: λοιπὸν δὴ ἀκόσμητον ἔτι αὐτῷ ἦν τὸ ἀνθρώπων γένος, καὶ ἠπόρει ὅτι χρήσαιτο. ἀποροῦντι δὲ αὐτῷ ἔρχεται Προμηθεὺς ἐπισκεψόμενος τὴν νομὴν, καὶ ὄρᾳ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ζῶα ἐμμελῶς πάντων ἔχοντα, τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον γυμνὸν τε καὶ ἀνυπόδητον καὶ ἄστρωτον καὶ ἄοπλον: ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ εἰμαρμένη ἡμέρα παρῆν, ἐν ἧ ἔδει καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἐξείναι ἐκ γῆς εἰς φῶς. ἀπορία οὖν σχόμενος ὁ Προμηθεὺς ἦντινα σωτηρίαν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ εὔροι,

[321δ] κλέπτει Ἡφαίστου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρὶ—ἀμήχανον γὰρ ἦν ἄνευ πυρὸς αὐτὴν κτητὴν τῷ ἢ χρησίμην γενέσθαι—καὶ οὕτω δὴ δωρεῖται ἀνθρώπῳ. τὴν μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸν βίον σοφίαν ἄνθρωπος ταύτη ἔσχεν, τὴν δὲ πολιτικὴν οὐκ εἶχεν: ἦν γὰρ παρὰ τῷ Δί. τῷ δὲ Προμηθεῖ εἰς μὲν τὴν ἀκρόπολιν τὴν τοῦ Διὸς οἴκησιν οὐκέτι ἐνεχώρει εἰσελθεῖν—πρὸς δὲ καὶ αἱ Διὸς φυλακαὶ φοβεραὶ ἦσαν—εἰς δὲ τὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ Ἡφαίστου οἴκημα τὸ κοινόν, ἐν ᾧ

[321ε] ἐφιλοτεχνεῖτην, λαθῶν εἰσέρχεται, καὶ κλέψας τὴν τε ἔμπυρον τέχνην τὴν τοῦ Ἡφαίστου καὶ τὴν ἄλλην τὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς δίδωσιν ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ ἐκ τούτου εὐπορία μὲν ἀνθρώπῳ τοῦ



**Plato, *Protagoras* 320c-324d, trans. Leon Craig; reproduced with permission of the translator.**

“There once was a time when there were gods, but no mortal species. <320d> And when the destined time arrived for them to come into being also, gods moulded them within the earth, compounding them of earth and of fire, and of everything which is mixed with fire and earth. And when they were ready to lead them towards the light, they charged Prometheus [lit., 'Forethought'] and Epimetheus [lit., 'Afterthought'] to furnish and distribute powers [*dynameis*] to each as fitting. But Epimetheus begged Prometheus that he might himself make the distribution, saying 'Let me distribute; you inspect.' And thus persuading, he made the distribution. To some in his distribution, he assigned strength without speed, while the weaker he furnished with swiftness. <320e> And some he armed, while to others he gave an unarmed nature, devising for them instead some other power [*dynamis*] for their safety. For of those which he kept smallest, he distributed a winged escape or a dwelling under the earth. But those he made bigger, <321a> by that he kept them safe. And so he distributed to all on a par, devising these things as a precaution lest any species might become extinct.

“But once he had prepared a refuge for each against destruction by the others, he next devised comfort against the seasons sent by Zeus, clothing them about with thick fur and tough hide sufficient to keep out the winter, yet also able [*dynatois*] to resist the heat; and so also that when they took themselves to their rest, these things might supply to each its own natural bedding for the night. <321b> And some he shod with hooves, and others with tough and bloodless hide. Next he supplied for them varied nourishment: to some the plants of the earth, to others the fruit of trees, and to others roots. But to those who he gave the meat of other animals [*zöön*] to be their food, he attached fewness of progeny [*oligogonian*], whereas to those that were fed upon by these [he attached] abundance of progeny [*polygonian*], [thereby] supplying safety [or, 'preservation'] to their species.

“But because Epimetheus was not very wise, without noticing it he exhausted all the powers [*dynameis*] upon the dumb things [i.e., the dumb animals; *ta aloga*]. <321c> Yet still the species of humans was left unfurnished, so that he was perplexed what he should do. And while he was thus perplexed, there came to him Prometheus to examine his distribution. And he saw the other animals carefully provided for, but mankind naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed. And already the destined day was at hand in which mankind must come out of the earth into the light. Being thus perplexed as to what preservation he should find for mankind, <321d> Prometheus stole from Hephaestus and Athena artful wisdom [*entechnon sophian*] together with fire – for by no means can this [artful wisdom] be acquired or used except by fire – and he bestowed them upon mankind. In this way mankind acquired wisdom about living. But they did not have the political skill [*politikēn*]. For it lay with Zeus. Nor was there long enough time to permit Prometheus to approach the citadel where Zeus had his habitation; and moreover the guards of Zeus were fearsome. <321e> But he came in stealth to the common habitation of Hephaestus and Athena in which they practiced their arts, and, stealing the fiery art of Hephaestus and the rest belonging to Athena, he gave them to mankind, so that from this mankind had abundant means [*euporia*] for life.

[322α] βίου γίνεται, Προμηθέα δὲ δι' Ἐπιμηθέα ὕστερον, ἧπερ λέγεται, κλοπῆς δίκη μετῆλθεν.

ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ζῶων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν, καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἰδρῦεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν: ἔπειτα φωνὴν καὶ ὀνόματα ταχὺ διηρθρώσατο τῇ τέχνῃ, καὶ οἰκῆσεις καὶ ἐσθῆτας καὶ ὑποδέσεις καὶ στρωμνὰς καὶ τὰς ἐκ γῆς τροφὰς ἠϋρετο. οὕτω δὲ παρεσκευασμένοι κατ' ἀρχὰς

[322β] ἄνθρωποι ᾤκουν σποράδην, πόλεις δὲ οὐκ ἦσαν: ἀπώλλυντο οὖν ὑπὸ τῶν θηρίων διὰ τὸ πανταχῆ αὐτῶν ἀσθενέστεροι εἶναι, καὶ ἡ δημιουργικὴ τέχνη αὐτοῖς πρὸς μὲν τροφήν ἱκανὴ βοηθὸς ἦν, πρὸς δὲ τὸν τῶν θηρίων πόλεμον ἐνδεής —πολιτικὴν γὰρ τέχνην οὐπω εἶχον, ἧς μέρος πολεμική— ἐζήτουν δὲ ἀθροίζεσθαι καὶ σώζεσθαι κτίζοντες πόλεις: ὅτ' οὖν ἀθροισθεῖεν, ἠδίκουν ἀλλήλους ἅτε οὐκ ἔχοντες τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην, ὥστε πάλιν σκεδαννύμενοι διεφθείροντο.

[322ξ] Ζεὺς οὖν δείσας περὶ τῷ γένει ἡμῶν μὴ ἀπόλοιτο πᾶν, Ἑρμῆν πέμπει ἄγοντα εἰς ἀνθρώπους αἰδῶ τε καὶ δίκην, ἵν' εἶεν πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί. ἐρωτᾷ οὖν Ἑρμῆς Δία τίνα οὖν τρόπον δοίη δίκην καὶ αἰδῶ ἀνθρώποις: “πότερον ὡς αἱ τέχναι νενέμηνται, οὕτω καὶ ταύτας νείμω; νενέμηνται δὲ ᾧδε: εἷς ἔχων ἰατρικὴν πολλοῖς ἱκανὸς ἰδιώταις, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι δημιουργοί: καὶ δίκην δὲ καὶ αἰδῶ

[322δ] οὕτω θῶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἢ ἐπὶ πάντας νείμω;” “ἐπὶ πάντας,” ἔφη ὁ Ζεὺς, “καὶ πάντες μετεχόντων: οὐ γὰρ ἂν γένοιτο πόλεις, εἰ ὀλίγοι αὐτῶν μετέχοιεν ὥσπερ ἄλλων τεχνῶν: καὶ νόμον γε θεὸς παρ' ἐμοῦ τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον αἰδοῦς καὶ δίκης μετέχειν κτείνειν ὡς νόσον πόλεως.” οὕτω δὲ, ᾧ Σώκρατες, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα οἷ τε ἄλλοι καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι, ὅταν μὲν περὶ ἀρετῆς τεκτονικῆς ἦ λόγος ἢ ἄλλης τινὸς δημιουργικῆς, ὀλίγοις οἴονται μετεῖναι συμβουλῆς, καὶ ἐάν

[322ε] τις ἐκτὸς ὦν τῶν ὀλίγων συμβουλεύῃ, οὐκ ἀνέχονται, ὡς σὺ φῆς—εἰκότως, ὡς ἐγὼ φημι—ὅταν δὲ εἰς συμβουλὴν πολιτικῆς

[323α] ἀρετῆς ἴωσιν, ἦν δεῖ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πᾶσαν ἰέναι καὶ σωφροσύνης, εἰκότως ἅπαντος ἀνδρὸς ἀνέχονται, ὡς παντὶ προσῆκον ταύτης γε μετέχειν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἢ μὴ εἶναι πόλεις. αὕτη, ᾧ Σώκρατες, τούτου αἰτία.

ἵνα δὲ μὴ οἷη ἀπατᾶσθαι ὡς τῷ ὄντι ἠγοῦνται πάντες ἄνθρωποι πάντα ἄνδρα μετέχειν δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς, τόδε αὖ λαβὲ τεκμήριον. ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀρεταῖς, ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις, ἐάν τις φῆ ἀγαθὸς ἀυλητῆς εἶναι, ἢ ἄλλην ἠντινοῦν τέχνην ἦν μὴ ἐστίν, ἢ καταγελῶσιν

<322a> Afterward, Prometheus paid the penalty for theft, as it is told, because of Epimetheus.

“But since mankind partakes of a divine destiny [or, 'fate,' lit., 'portion'; *moiras*], in the first place it alone of animals, through kinship with the God, believed in gods and built altars and images of gods. And they quickly invented by art articulate speech and names, dwellings and clothing and shoes, beddings, and nourishment from the earth. Being thus equipped, humans were scattered at the beginning, and there were no cities, <322b> so that they were destroyed by the wild beasts because they were weaker in all respects. And though their craftsmanship of art was sufficient help for their sustenance, for war against the wild beasts it was inadequate. For they did not yet have a political art [*politikēn technēn*], of which the skill of war [*polemikē*] is a part. They sought, indeed, to gather together and to provide for their safety by founding cities. But whenever they gathered together, they were unjust to one another, not having the political art; so that they once again dispersed and began to be destroyed [or, 'be ruined'; *diephtheironto*].<sup>2</sup> <322c>

“Whereupon Zeus, being afraid concerning our species that it might perish utterly, sent Hermes unto humans bringing Shame [*aidō*] and Right [*dikēn*], so that there be order in cities and aggregating bonds of friendship. Now then, Hermes asked Zeus in what manner he ought to give Right and Shame to humans, saying: 'Which of the two ways am I to distribute these: even as the arts have been distributed? For they have been distributed such that one skilled in medicine is sufficient unto many laymen [*idiōtais*], and so with other craftsmen. Am I in like manner also to distribute Right and Shame among humans? <322d> Or am I to distribute among all?' 'Among all,' Zeus replied, 'and let all have a share. For there could be no cities if but a few shared in them, as it is with the other arts. And lay down this law from me: he who is not able [*dynamenon*] to share in Shame and Right is to be killed as a pestilence to a city.'

“So it is, Socrates, for these [reasons] that both others and the Athenians hold the view that when the argument [*logos*] concerns the virtue of carpentry or some other sort of craftsmanship, only a few should contribute advice, <322e> and they refuse to tolerate advising from anyone outside that few, as you say (and reasonably [*eikotös*] so, I would say). Whereas, when their deliberations involve political virtue, <323a> and must be conducted entirely on the basis of [or, 'through,' 'by means of'; *dia*] justice and moderation, they quite reasonably tolerate every man as if it's fitting that all partake of this virtue, since otherwise there could be no cities. That is the cause for this, Socrates.

“And in order that you not suppose yourself deceived when I say that all humans really do believe that justice and the rest of political virtue is something in which every man shares, here is a further proof. In the case of the other virtues, just as you say, if someone claims to be good at flute-playing or any other art when in fact he isn't, people treat him with derision or annoyance,

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<sup>2</sup> This is the term that in moral contexts usually means 'to corrupt,' or 'lead astray' (cf. *Apology* 24b-d).

[323β] ἢ χαλεπαίνουσιν, καὶ οἱ οἰκεῖοι προσιόντες νουθετοῦσιν ὡς μαινόμενον: ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἐν τῇ ἄλλῃ πολιτικῇ ἀρετῇ, ἐάν τινα καὶ εἰδῶσιν ὅτι ἄδικός ἐστιν, ἐάν οὗτος αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτοῦ τάληθῆ λέγῃ ἐναντίον πολλῶν, ὃ ἐκεῖ σωφροσύνην ἠγοῦντο εἶναι, τάληθῆ λέγειν, ἐνταῦθα μανίαν, καὶ φασιν πάντας δεῖν φάναι εἶναι δικαίους, ἐάντε ὧσιν ἐάντε μὴ, ἢ μαίνεσθαι τὸν μὴ προσποιούμενον [δικαιοσύνην]: ὡς ἀναγκαῖον

[323ξ] οὐδένα ὄντιν' οὐχὶ ἀμῶς γέ πως μετέχειν αὐτῆς, ἢ μὴ εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώποις. ὅτι μὲν οὖν πάντ' ἄνδρα εἰκότως ἀποδέχονται περὶ ταύτης τῆς ἀρετῆς σύμβουλον διὰ τὸ ἠγεῖσθαι παντὶ μετεῖναι αὐτῆς, ταῦτα λέγω: ὅτι δὲ αὐτὴν οὐ φύσει ἠγοῦνται εἶναι οὐδ' ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, ἀλλὰ διδακτόν τε καὶ ἐξ ἐπιμελείας παραγίνεσθαι ὧ ἂν παραγίγηται, τοῦτό σοι μετὰ τοῦτο πειράσομαι ἀποδείξαι. ὅσα γὰρ ἠγοῦνται ἀλλήλους κακὰ ἔχειν ἄνθρωποι

[323δ] φύσει ἢ τύχῃ, οὐδεὶς θυμοῦται οὐδὲ νουθετεῖ οὐδὲ διδάσκει οὐδὲ κολάζει τοὺς ταῦτα ἔχοντας, ἵνα μὴ τοιοῦτοι ὧσιν, ἀλλ' ἐλεοῦσιν: οἷον τοὺς αἰσχροὺς ἢ σμικροὺς ἢ ἀσθενεῖς τίς οὕτως ἀνόητος ὥστε τι τούτων ἐπιχειρεῖν ποιεῖν; ταῦτα μὲν γὰρ οἶμαι ἴσασιν ὅτι φύσει τε καὶ τύχῃ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις γίνεται, τὰ καλὰ καὶ τάναντία τούτοις: ὅσα δὲ ἐξ ἐπιμελείας καὶ ἀσκήσεως καὶ διδαχῆς οἶονται γίνεσθαι ἀγαθὰ ἀνθρώποις,

[323ε] ἐάν τις ταῦτα μὴ ἔχῃ, ἀλλὰ τάναντία τούτων κακὰ, ἐπὶ τούτοις που οἶτε θυμοὶ γίνονται καὶ αἱ κολάσεις καὶ αἱ νουθετήσεις. ὧν ἐστὶν ἐν καὶ ἡ ἀδικία καὶ ἡ ἀσέβεια καὶ

[324α] συλλήβδην πᾶν τὸ ἐναντίον τῆς πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς: ἔνθα δὴ πᾶς παντὶ θυμοῦται καὶ νουθετεῖ, δῆλον ὅτι ὡς ἐξ ἐπιμελείας καὶ μαθήσεως κτητῆς οὔσης. εἰ γὰρ ἐθέλεις ἐννοῆσαι τὸ κολάζειν, ὧ Σώκρατες, τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας τί ποτε δύναται, αὐτὸ σε διδάξει ὅτι οἶτε ἄνθρωποι ἠγοῦνται παρασκευαστὸν εἶναι ἀρετῆν. οὐδεὶς γὰρ κολάζει τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας πρὸς τούτῳ τὸν νοῦν ἔχων καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα, ὅτι ἠδίκησεν, ὅστις

[324β] μὴ ὥσπερ θηρίον ἀλογίστως τιμωρεῖται: ὃ δὲ μετὰ λόγου ἐπιχειρῶν κολάζειν οὐ τοῦ παρεληλυθότος ἕνεκα ἀδικήματος τιμωρεῖται—οὐ γὰρ ἂν τό γε πραχθὲν ἀγένητον θείῃ—ἀλλὰ τοῦ μέλλοντος χάριν, ἵνα μὴ αὐθις ἀδικήσῃ μῆτε αὐτὸς οὗτος μῆτε ἄλλος ὁ τοῦτον ἰδὼν κολασθέντα. καὶ τοιαύτην διάνοιαν ἔχων διανοεῖται παιδευτὴν εἶναι ἀρετῆν: ἀποτροπῆς γοῦν ἕνεκα κολάζει. ταύτην οὖν τὴν δόξαν πάντες ἔχουσιν ὅσοιπερ

<323b> while his kin take him aside and warn him that he is mad. But where justice and the rest of political virtue is concerned, even if one is known to be unjust, should one tell many [people] the truth about oneself, then that very truthfulness, which in the former case was regarded as sensibleness [or, 'moderation'; *söphrosynēn*], in this case they treat as madness, and say that everyone must claim to be just, whether he is or not, and that the one who doesn't put up some show of being just is mad, as of necessity no one can fail to partake in justice somehow, else not remain among humans. <323c> Thus, to establish that it is reasonable [*eikotös*] for them to accept every man as an advisor [on matters] related to this virtue, in consequence of their belief that all have a share in it, I say these things.

“Now, that they consider it not to be by nature nor to arise spontaneously [*tou automatou*], but rather a teachable thing that comes into being by care in that person in whom it does come into being, I shall try next to demonstrate. <323d> Where a human's badnesses [or, 'defects'; *kaka*] are thought to be by nature or chance, no one gets spirited [*thumoutai*]<sup>3</sup> nor admonishes nor teaches nor punishes those so affected, to make them change; but instead pities [them]. Who, for example, would be so mindless as to attempt any such thing with the ugly [*aischrous*]<sup>4</sup> or small or weak? For they know, I suppose, that such things as the beauties [*ta kala*] and their opposites come to humans either by nature or by chance. But as for those good things that they suppose come to humans through care and exercise and teaching, <323e> if someone lacks these and has the opposite badnesses [or, 'vices'; *kaka*], then it is that they become spirited, and punish and admonish; and among these are injustice, irreverence [*asebia*], and, <324a> taken together, the complete opposite of the political virtue. Where everyone becomes thoroughly spirited and admonishes, plainly they do so as being something which can be acquired by care and learning.

“For consider punishment, if you will, Socrates, what power [*dynatai*] it has over those who commit injustice; that itself will teach you that humans regard virtue as something which can be acquired. For no one, unless he is irrationally [*alogistös*] avenging like a wild beast, <324b> punishes the unjust [simply] to do so and having this in mind: that the person has committed an injustice. He who sets out to punish with reason [*logou*] does not inflict vengeance because of the past injustice – for what has been done cannot be undone – but for the sake of the future: to deter from further injustice either the perpetrator or someone else who sees the punishing. And since he has this thought, it follows that he thinks that virtue is educable; it is for the sake of deterrence, after all, that he punishes. This, then, is the opinion of all those who inflict retribution, whether in private or in public;

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<sup>3</sup> In the context, 'becoming spirited' essentially means 'getting angry.'

<sup>4</sup> This term (*aischros*) is the antonym of *kalos*, and partakes of the same ambiguity (see note 3). It sometimes means, as here, ugly or deformed; but in other contexts, it means base, ignoble, vulgar, shameful, disgraceful, or vicious. It and its cognates (*aidös*, 'shame'; *aischunomai*, 'be ashamed,' cf. 312a) will always be transliterated in square brackets.

[324ξ] τιμωροῦνται καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ. τιμωροῦνται δὲ καὶ κολάζονται οἳ τε ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι οὓς ἂν οἴωνται ἀδικεῖν, καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα Ἀθηναῖοι οἱ σοὶ πολῖται: ὥστε κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον καὶ Ἀθηναῖοί εἰσι τῶν ἡγουμένων παρασκευαστὸν εἶναι καὶ διδακτὸν ἀρετῆν. ὡς μὲν οὖν εἰκότως ἀποδέχονται οἱ σοὶ πολῖται καὶ χαλκῆως καὶ σκυτοτόμου συμβουλευόντος τὰ πολιτικά, καὶ ὅτι διδακτὸν καὶ παρασκευαστὸν ἡγοῦνται ἀρετῆν, ἀποδέδεικται σοι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἰκανῶς, ὡς γέ μοι

[324δ] φαίνεται.

ἔτι δὴ λοιπὴ ἀπορία ἐστίν, ἣν ἀπορεῖς περὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τῶν ἀγαθῶν, τί δήποτε οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ ἀγαθοὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα τοὺς αὐτῶν ὑεῖς διδάσκουσιν ἅ διδασκάλων ἔχεται καὶ σοφοὺς ποιοῦσιν, ἣν δὲ αὐτοὶ ἀρετῆν ἀγαθοὶ οὐδενὸς βελτίους ποιοῦσιν. τούτου δὴ πέρι, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκέτι μῦθόν σοι ἐρῶ ἀλλὰ λόγον. ὧδε γὰρ ἐννόησον: πότερον ἐστὶν τι ἐν ἢ οὐκ ἐστὶν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον πάντας τοὺς πολῖτας μετέχειν,

<324c> retribution and punishment are in fact imposed by all other humans, and not the least the Athenians, your [fellow] citizens, upon those they believe guilty of injustice. It follows from this argument, therefore, that the Athenians are also among those who believe that virtue is something which can be acquired and taught. So, Socrates, I have sufficiently demonstrated, as it appears to me, that it is reasonable [*eikotös*] for your [fellow] citizens to recognize both smith and cobbler as advisers on political matters, and that they take the view that virtue can be taught and acquired. <324d>

“There is a remaining perplexity: you are perplexed about the men, the *good* ones, as to why certain men, the good ones, have their own sons taught the other things, for which there are teachers, making them [therein] wise, while in that virtue in which they themselves are good, they make them no better than anyone else. About this, I shall leave off telling you a story [*mython*], Socrates, but [give] an argument [*logon*]. <324e>





**Appendix B**

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**'Prometheus, or the State of man'**

**Chapter 26**

**from**

***Of The Wisdom of the Ancients***

**By Francis Bacon**

## Francis Bacon, *De Sapientia Veterum*

### 26.

#### *PROMETHEUS, sive Status hominis.*

Tradunt Antiqui Hominem fuisse opus *PROMETHEI*, atque ex Luto factum, nisi quod *PROMETHEUS* particulas ex diversis Animalibus Massae admiscuerit.

Ille autem cum opus suum beneficio suo tueri vellet, neque Conditor solum generis humani videri, verum etiam Amplificator, [90]

ad Coelum ascendit furtim, fascis secum portans ex Ferula, quibus ad currum Solis admotis, & accensis, Ignem ad terram detulit, atque cum hominibus communicavit.

Ob tantum *PROMETHEI* meritum memorant homines parum gratos fuisse.

Quinetiam conspiratione facta, & *Prometheum* & inventum eius apud *Iovem* accusarunt.

Ea res non perinde accepta, atque aequum videri possit.

Nam ipsa accusatio *Iovi*, & Superis admodum cordi fuit.

Itaque delectati non solum ignis usum Hominibus indulserunt, verum & novum Munus omnium maxime amabile & optabile (perpetuam nimirum luventam) homines donarunt.

Illi gestientes & inepti, donum Deorum Asello imposuerunt.

Inter redeundum autem laborabat Asellus siti gravi, & vehementi; cumque ad fontem quendam pervenisset, serpens fonti custos additus, eum a potu prohibuit, nisi illud quodcunque esset, quod in dorso portaret pacisci vellet:

Asellus miser conditionem accepit, atque hoc modo instauratio luventutis, in pretium [91] haustus pusillae aquae, ab hominibus ad Serpentes transmissa est.

Verum *Prometheus* a Malitia sua non abscedens atque hominibus post praemium illud eorum frustratum, reconciliatus, animo vero erga *Iovem* exulcerato, dolos etiam ad Sacrificium adhibere veritus non est.

Atque duos aliquando tauros *Iovi* dicitur immolasse, ita tamen ut in alterius pelle carnes & adipem amborum incluserit, alteram pellem ossibus tantummodo suffarcinarit;

## Francis Bacon, *On The Wisdom of the Ancients*

translated by Dr. Heidi Studer

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### 26.

#### *PROMETHEUS, or the State of man*

The Ancients hand down that Man was the work of *PROMETHEUS*, and made from Clay, except for the particles which *PROMETHEUS* mixed into the Mass from diverse Animals.

He, moreover wished to protect(maintain) his work as their benefactor, not only to be seen as the Founder of the human race, but in truth also the Enlarger, [90]

so he stealthily climbed to Heaven, carrying with him a bundle of Reeds which he applied to and kindled at the chariot of the Sun, and drew Fire down to earth and communicated it to man.

Despite his being so deserving, men are remembered for being too little grateful to *PROMETHEUS*.

Indeed, with conspiratorial action, they accused both *Prometheus* and his discovery to *Jupiter*.

This thing was not accepted in a way that seemed to be fair.

The accusation itself was taken to heart by *Jupiter* and the higher (gods).

Therefore delighted, they indulged Men not only with the use of fire, but in truth they gave to men also a new Present, of all the most lovable and desirable (nothing less than perpetual Youth).

They, being delighted and inept, placed the gift of the Gods on an Ass.

While returning, however, the Ass labored under a grave and vehement thirst: & when he came upon a fountain, the serpent who was guardian of the fountain prohibited him from drinking unless he would promise to him whatever he carried upon his back.

The Ass accepted this miserable condition, & in this manner the restoration of Youth, was transferred [91] from men to Serpents for the prize of a small draught of water.

Truly, *Prometheus*, though reconciled to men after they were frustrated of that advantage of theirs, did not withdraw his malice from *Jupiter*, his soul in truth exasperated, he turned to a crafty device regarding the Sacrifices, not a true one.

And he is said to have slain two bulls for *Jupiter*, yet nevertheless in one skin he included the flesh and the fat of both, the other skin he filled with the bones, and in that manner burned them,

atque deinde religiosus scilicet, & benignus *Iovi* optionem concessit.

*Iupiter* vafriciem, & malam fidem eius detestatus, sed nactus occasionem ultionis, Ludibrium illud tauri elegit;

atque ad vindictam conversus, cum se insolentiam *Promethei* reprimere non posse animadverteret, nisi hominum genus (quo opere ille immensum turgebat, & efferebatur) afflisset,

*Vulcano* imperavit, ut foeminam componeret pulchram & venustam, cui etiam Dii singuli dotes suas impertierunt, quae idcirco Pandora vocata est.

Huic foeminae inter manus vasculum elegans posuerunt, [92] in quo omnia mala, & arumnus incluserant; subsidebat autem in imo vase Spes.

Illa cum vasculo suo ad *Prometheum*, primo se contulit, eum captans, si forte ille vas accipere vellet, & aperire; quod ille cautus & astutus rejecit.

Itaque ad *Epimetheum Promethei* fratrem, (sed diversa admodum indolis) spreta deflexit.

Ille nihil cunctatus, vas temere aperuit; cumque mala illa omnigena evolare cerneret, sero sapiens, magna contentione, & festinatione vasi operculum suum rursus indere conatus est, vix tamen ultimam, & in fundo residentem Spem servare potuit.

Postremo *Prometheo Iupiter* plurima & gravia imputans, quod ignis olim furtum fecisset, quod *Iovis* maiestatem in sacrificio illo doloso ludibrio habuisset, quod donum eius aspernatus esset, novo etiam addito crimine, quod *Palladem* vitiare tentasset, eum in vincula coniecit, & ad perpetuos cruciatus damnavit.

Erat enim iussu *Iovis* adductus ad montem Caucasum, atque ibi Columna alligatus, ut nullo pacto se monere posset; aderat [93] autem Aquila, quae jecur eius inter diu rostro tundeat atque consumeat, noctu autem quantum comesum erat, renascebatur, ut nunquam doloris materia deficeret.

Memorant tamen hoc supplicium aliquando finem habuisse:

Hercules enim in Poculo quod a Sole acceperat, navigato Oceano, ad Caucasum pervenit, atque *Prometheum* liberavit, Aquila Sagittis confixa.

Instituta autem sunt, in honorem *Promethei* apud nonnullos populos Lampadiferorum certamina,

in quibus decurrentes accensas faces ferebant, quas si extinguere contigisset,

victoriam sequentibus cedebant, & se subducebant, atque is demum palmam accepit, qui primus facem accensam ad metam usque detulisset.

Fabula contemplationes plurimas veras atque graves & prae se fert & premit.

and seeming religious, surely, and benign, he concealed it from *Jupiter*.

*Jupiter*, detesting his slyness and bad faith, but having obtained an occasion for vengeance, chose the Mock bull;

then, turning to revenge, since he noticed it was not possible to reprimand the insolence of *Prometheus* except by afflicting the race of man (of which work he was immensely swollen and proud),

commanded *Vulcan* to compose a beautiful and lusty woman, whom each of the Gods would share in endowing, and who, because of that was called Pandora.

An elegant vessel was placed into the hands of this woman, [92] in which all evils and hardships were included; subsiding in the bottom of the vase, however, was Hope.

She first took herself to *Prometheus* with her vessel; seeking if perhaps he wished to accept the vase and open it: which he cautiously and astutely rejected.

Upon being scorned, she turned to *Epimetheus*, the brother of *Prometheus* (but of a very different disposition).

He with no hesitation rashly opened the vase; and when he discerned all types of evil flying out, becoming wise too late, with great effort and haste he undertook to put them back in under the cover of the vase, he was scarcely able to save Hope, the last, residing in the bottom.

Lastly, *Jupiter* imputed to *Prometheus* many and grave charges, that he had long ago stealthily made off with fire, that he had mocked the majesty of *Jupiter* in that deceitful sacrifice, that he had disdained his gift, and even added a new crime, that he had attempted to despoil *Pallas*, and he threw him into fetters and damned him to perpetual tortures.

He was by *Jupiter's* order led to Mount Caucasus and there bound to a Column, so that by no pact was he able to move himself; an Eagle, [93] moreover, was present, who by daytime attacked and consumed his liver with his beak, by night, however, as much as was consumed was reborn, so that there was never a deficiency of matter for pain.

They remember, nevertheless, that there was an end to all this punishment:

Hercules, indeed, sailed the Ocean in a cup which he took from the sun, came to Caucasus and freed *Prometheus*, killing the Eagle with an Arrow.

Instituted in honor of *Prometheus*, by some peoples, were contests of Torches,

in which, the one whose torch happened to be extinguished,

would concede victory to those who followed, and draw himself away, and at last he who took the palm was he who first carried the burning torch to the goal post.

The fable has many true and weighty contemplations both on the surface and underneath.

Nonnulla enim in ea iampridem recte notata, alia plane intacta sunt.

*Prometheus* Providentiam liquido & diserte significat:

Atque in rerum universitate sola desumpta & delecta est ab Antiquis Hominis fabrica & constitutio, quae providentiae attribuitur [94] tanquam opus proprium.

Huius rei non solum illud in causa esse videtur, quod Hominis natura Mentem suscipit, atque Intellectum Providentiae sedem,

atque durum quodammodo videtur, & incredibile ex Principiis brutis, & surdis excitare, & educere Rationem et Mentem,

ut fere necessario concludatur providentia Animae humanae indita esse, non sine exemplari & intentione, & Authoramento Providentiae maioris:

Verum et hoc praecipue proponitur, quod Homo veluti Centrum Mundi sit, quatenus ad causas finales;

adeo ut sublato e rebus Homine, reliqua vagari sine proposito videantur, & fluctuari, atque quod aiunt scopae dissolutae esse, nec finem petere.

Omnia enim subserviunt homini, isque usum & fructum ex singulis elicit & capit.

Etenim Astrorum conversiones, & Periodi, & ad distinctiones temporum, & ad Plagarum Mundi distributionem faciunt.

Et Meteora ad praesagia tempestatum, & ventitum ad navigandum, tum ad Molas, & Machinas, & Plantae atque Animalia cuiuscunque generis aut [95] ad domicilia Hominis & latebras, aut ad vestes, aut ad victum, aut ad Medicinam, aut ad levandos labores, aut denique ad delectationem & solatium referuntur; adeo ut omnia prorsus non suam rem agere videantur, sed Hominis.

Neque temere additum est, in Massa illa & Plasmate, particulas ex diversis animantibus desumptas, atque cum luto illo temperatas & confusas fuisse;

quia verissimum est, omnium rerum quas universum complectitur, Hominem rem maxime compositam esse, & decompositam, ut non immerito ab Antiquis Mundus Minor vocatus sit.

Quamvis enim verbi Microcosmi Elegantiam, Chymici nimis putide, & ad literam acceperint, & detorserint, dum in Homine Omnem Mineram, Omne vegetabile & reliqua, aut aliquid eis proportionatum subesse volunt;

Manet tamen illud solidum & sanum quod diximus; Corpus Hominis omnium Entium & maxime mistum, & maxime organicum reperiri, quo magis admirandas virtutes & facultates suscipit & nanciscitur:

Some things in it have long been rightly noted, others are plainly untouched.

*Prometheus* clearly and fluidly signifies Providence.

And in the universe of things the only thing derived and chosen by the Ancients to be attributed to [94] Providence as its own work, was the fabrication and constitution of Man.

The cause of this seems not only to be that the nature of Man admits of Mind and Understanding, the seat of Providence,

and since it would be somewhat harsh and incredible to raise and educe Reason and Mind from brute and deaf Principles;

it concludes almost necessarily that the human Soul was endued with providence not without the example and attention and Authority of a greater Providence:

Truly this was also propounded, that Man is like the Center of the World, as far as final causes;

so that were Man lofted above things, the rest would rove and fluctuate without seeming to have purpose, and would be like an untied broom, serving no end.

For all is subservient to man, and from each thing he elicits and takes use and fruit.

Even the conversions and Periods of the Stars make for distinctions of times and distributions of the Zones of the World.

And Meteors for presaging storms; and winds for sailing and then for Mills and Machines; and Plants and Animals of all classes, whether [95] referred to homes and hiding places for Man, or for clothes, or for food, or for Medicine, or for lightening labors, or finally to delight and solace; so that all things utterly seem to lead not to their own affairs, but to Man.

Nor is it rashly added, that they were derived from particles of diverse living things and that these were confused and tempered with the clay in that mass and lump,

because it is most true that of all things which are completed in the universe, Man is the thing most composite and decomposite, so that not undeservedly was he called by the Ancients *Little World*.

However Elegant the word *Microcosm*, the Alchemists too grossly and literally accepted and distorted it when claim there to be some proportion in Man of All Minerals, of All vegetables and the rest;

that which we are told about the Body of Man still remains solid and sane: that of all Entities, it is found to be the most mixed and the most organic, which holds and obtains the more admirable virtues and faculties.

Simplicium enim [96] Corporum vires paucae sunt, licet certae & rapidae, quia minime per Mixturam refractae, & comminutae, & librata existunt;

virtutis autem Copia & excellentia in Mistura & compositione habitat.

Atque nihilominus Homo in originibus suis videtur esse res inermis & nuda, & tarda in luvamentum sui, denique quae plurimis rebus indigeat.

Itaque festinavit *Prometheus* ad inventionem ignis, qui omnibus fere humanis necessitatibus & usibus suppeditat & ministrat levamenta et auxilia:

ut si forma formarum Anima, si instrumentum instrumentorum Manus, Etiam Auxilium auxiliorum, sive Opus Opium Ignis dici mereatur.

Hinc enim omnis industria, Hinc Artes Mechanicae, Hinc scientiae ipsae infinitis modis adiuvantur.

Modus autem furti Ignis apte describitur, atque ex natura rei.

Is fuisse perhibetur per virgam ex ferula ad Currum Solis admotam.

Ferula enim ad percussorem et plagas adhibetur, ut luculenter significetur Ignis generationem per corporum violentas percussiones et collisiones [97] fieri, ex quibus attenuantur Materiae, & in motu ponuntur, & ad calorem Coelestium suscipiendum praeparantur, ignemque veluti ex curru Solis modis clandestinis, ac quasi furtim decerpunt & rapiunt.

Sequitur Parabolae pars insignis.

Homines loco gratulationis & gratiarum actionis, ad indignationem, & expostulationem versos esse, atque accusationem & *Promethei* & Ignis apud *Iovem* instituisse; eamque rem *Iovi* acceptissimam fuisse, adeo ut hominum commoda ob hoc nova munificentia cumulaverit.

Quorsum enim ista criminis ingrati erga Authorem suum animi (quod vitium omnia fere complectitur) approbatio & remuneratio ?

Res alio spectare videtur.

Hoc enim vult Allegoria; Incusationem & Naturae suae, & Artis per homines factam, ex optimo Mentis statu proficisci, atque in bonum cedere; contrarium Diis invisum, & infaustum esse.

Qui enim Naturam humanam vel Artes receptas in immensum extollunt, & effusi sunt in admirationem earum rerum, quas habent, & possident, [98] & Scientias quas profitentur, aut colunt, perfectas prorsus censi volunt; illi primo adversus divinam naturam minus reverentes sunt, cuius perfectioni sua fere aequiparant; Deinde iidem erga homines magis sunt infructuosi, cum se ad fastigium rerum iam pervenisse putent, & tanquam perfuncti ulteriora non quaerant.



For Simple [96] Bodies have little strength, though they are certain and rapid since they are least refracted and diminished by Mixture, and are balanced:

Abundance and excellence of virtue, however, lives in Mixture and composition.

And nonetheless, Man in his origins seems to be a thing unarmed and naked and slow in helping himself, and finally in want of many things.

Therefore Prometheus hastened to the discovery of fire, which in almost all human necessities and uses, supplies and serves to lighten and to help:

so that if the Soul is the form of forms, if the Hand is the instrument of instruments, then Fire deserves to be called the Help of helps, or the Work of Works.

Hence, indeed, the mechanical arts themselves help most operations and knowledge in an infinity of modes.

The mode, however, of the stealing of Fire is aptly described, and out of the nature of the thing.

It was adduced to be from a branch of reeds, carried to the very Chariot of the Sun.

For Rods are summoned for beating and hitting, that lucidly signifies that the generation of Fire is by violent hitting and collisions of bodies, [97] from which the matter is weakened and set in Motion, and prepared to take the heat of the Heavens, and fire, like from the chariot of the Sun, is trapped and snatched by clandestine modes and as it were by stealth.

There follows a significant part of the Parable.

Men, in place of rejoicing and favoring the action, turned to indignation and complaining, and instituted an accusation of both *Prometheus* and the Fire before *Jupiter*; and that was a thing most acceptable to *Jupiter*, so he heaped upon men commodities of new munificence.

For with respect to that crime of ingratitude toward the Author of their souls (which crime embraces almost all vices) what kind of approbation and remuneration should there be?

Something else seems to be observed.

This is the face of the Allegory; the Accusation made by men of both their Nature and their Art, proceeded from the best state of Mind, and issues in good; the contrary is hated by the Gods and unpropitious.

For those who greatly extol human Nature and the Arts as received, and are effusive in their admiration of the things they have and possess, [98] and who wish to assess Knowledge which is professed and cultivated as utterly perfect; they first, are less than reverent towards divine nature, to which perfection they are almost comparing themselves; and next, in respect to men they are more unfruitful, since they consider themselves to have come to heights of things, and, as though they are discharged, they do not seek further.

Contra qui Naturam & Artes deferunt, & accusant, & querimoniarum pleni sunt, illi vere & magis modestum animi sensum retinent, & perpetuo ad novam industriam, & nova Inventa extimulantur.

Quo mihi magis mirari libet Hominum inscitiam, & malum Genium, qui paucorum arrogantiae servuli, istam Peripateticorum Philosophiam, portionem Graecae sapientiae, nec eam magnam, in tanta veneratione habent, ut omnem eius incusationem non solum inutilem, sed suspectam & fere periculosam reddiderint.

Atque magis probandus est, & *Empedocles*, qui tanquam furens, & *Democritus* qui magna cum verecundia, queruntur, Omnia abstrusa esse, nihil nos scire, nil [99] cernere, veritatem in profundis puteis immersam, veris falsa miris modis adiuncta, atque intorta esse;

(nam Academia nova modum prorsus excessit) quam *Aristotelis* schola fidens & Pronunciatrix.

Itaque monendi sunt Homines, delationem Naturae & Artis Diis cordi esse, & novas Eleemosynas, & donaria a divina benignitate impetrare, & incusationem *Promethei* licet Authoris et Magistri, eamque acrem et vehementem, magis sanam et utilem, quam gratulationem effusam esse;

denique opinionem Copiae inter maximas causas Inopiae reponi.

Quod vero attinet ad Doni genus, quod homines in praemium accusationis dicuntur accepisse (flore[m] luventutis videlicet non deciduum) eiusmodi est, ut videantur antiqui de Modis et Medicinis ad senectutis retardationem, et vitae prolongationem facientibus, non desperasse;

sed illa utique numerasse potius inter ea, quae per Hominum inertiam, et incuriam licet semel accepta perire, aut frustrata sunt; quam inter ea quae plane negata et nunquam [100] concessa fuerint.

Significant enim, & innuunt, ex ignis vero usu, atque ex artis erroribus bene & strenue accusatis, & convictis, munificentiam divinam ad huiusmodi dona hominibus non defuisse; ipsos sibi deesse, cum hoc Deorum munus Asello imposuerint lento & tardigrado;

Ea videtur esse Experimentiaries stupida & plena morae, ex cuius gradu tardo & testudineo antiqua illa querimonia de *Vita brevi*, & *Arte longa* nata est.

Atque certe nos in ea sumus opinione, facultates illas duas, *Dogmaticam* & *Empiricam*, adhuc non bene coniunctas & copulatas fuisse,

sed nova Deorum munera, aut Philosophiis abstractis tanquam levi Volucris; aut lentae, & tardae experientiae tanquam Asello imposita esse.

On the contrary, those who take down & accuse Nature and the Arts and who are filled with complaints, they, truly, and with more modesty of soul retain sense, and are perpetually stimulated to new industry and new Discoveries.

Which it pleases me to wonder more at the awkward and evil Character of Men who, serving the arrogance of a few, hold that Philosophy of the Peripatetics, a portion of Greek wisdom and not a great one, in so much veneration, that all accusation of it is not only useless, but renounced as suspect and almost dangerous.

And more approvable is both *Empedocles* who like a fury, and *Democritus* who with more moderation, complaining that All is abstruse, that we know nothing, discern [99] nothing, that truth is submerged in deep wells, that the true and the false are in a wonderful mode joined and twisted

(for the new Academy exceeded the mode utterly), than the faithful and Pronouncing school of *Aristotle*.

Therefore let Men be warned, that the denunciation of Nature and the Arts is heartening to the Gods, and procures new blessings and gifts from divine benignity; and the accusation of *Prometheus*, though he be our Author and Magistrate, and that a harsh and vehement one, is more sane and useful than pouring forth congratulations;

since opinion of Plenty is reckoned (*reponi*) among the chief causes of want.

What truly attains to that class of Gift which men are said to have accepted in their chief accusation (plainly, the unfading flower of Youth), is of such a mode as to seem to show that the ancients did not despair of making the Modes & Medicines for the retardation of aging and the prolongation of life,

but they were numbered rather among those things which, though once accepted, either perished or were frustrated by men's sloth and carelessness, than among those which were plainly denied and never [100] conceded.

It is significant indeed, they implied, that from the true use of fire, and from the good & strenuous accusation and conviction of the errors of the arts, divine munificence would not be absent for such gifts to men: it itself was not absent to them, since they had placed this present of the Gods on a slow and tardy Ass;

that seems to be Experience, a thing stupid and full of delays, from whose tardy and turtle-like degrees, that ancient complaint about *Life is short* and *Art is long* was born.

And certainly, we are of that opinion that those two faculties the *Dogmatical* and the *Empirical*, to this point are not well conjoined and coupled;

but that new presents from the Gods have either been assigned to abstract Philosophies like to light Winged birds, or to slow and tardy experience like to an Ass.

In quo tamen se Asello illo non male ominandum est, nisi interveniat illud accident viae & sitis.

Existimamus enim si quis experientiae, veluti certa lege & Methodo constanter militet, neque inter viam experimenta, qua vel ad Lucrum faciunt, vel ad ostentationem, sitiatur: ut ad ea comparanda onus suum deponat [101] & distrahat;

eum munificentiae divinae auctae & novae Bajulum non inutilem fore.

Quod vero donum illud ad Serpentes transierit, ea videtur adiectio ad Fabulam ornatus fere gratia, nisi forte illud inseruerint, ut Homines pudeat, se cum igne illo suo, & tot artibus ea in se transferre non posse, quae Natura ipsa compluribus aliis animalibus largita est.

Etiam illa subita Hominum cum *Prometheo* reconciliatio postquam spe sua decidissent, monitum habet utile & prudens.

Notat enim Hominum levitatem & temeritatem in experimentis novis.

Ea enim si statim non succedant, & ad vota respondeant, praepopera festinatione, homines incepta deserunt, & praecipites ad vetera recurrunt, iisque reconciliantur.

Descripto statu hominis, quoad Artes & intellectualia, Parabola transit ad Religionem; culturam enim Artium, cultus Divinorum comitatus est; quem statim Hypocrisis occupavit & polluit.

Itaque sub duplici illo sacrificio, eleganter repraesentatur persona vere Religiosi & Hypocritae.

Alteri enim inest [102] adeps, Dei nimirum portio, ob inflammationem, & suffitum, per quod affectus & zelus ad gloriam Dei incensus, atque alta petens significatur; Insunt viscera charitatis, insunt carnes bona, & utiles.

In altero nihil praeter ossa arida, & nuda reperiuntur, quae nihilominus pellem farciunt, & hostiam pulcherrimam & magnificam imitantur; per quae recte notantur externi, & inanes ritus & Ceremoniae ieiunae, quibus homines cultum divinum onerant & inflant, res ad ostentationem potius compositae, quam ad pietatem facientes.

Neque satis est hominibus huiusmodi ludibria Deo offerre, nisi ea etiam illi imponant & impudent, acsi ipse illa elegerit, & praescripserit.

Certe Propheta sub Dei persona de hac optione expostulat: *Num tandem hoc est illud ieiunium, quod ELEGI, ut homo animam suam in diem unum affligat, & caput instar iuncae demittat?*

In which nevertheless the Ass itself is not a bad omen, except for the intervention of that accident of the way and thirst.

For we estimate, if one were to constantly militate experience, like by a certain law and Method, and not be corrupted along the way by thirsting for drink of experiments, either for the making of Profits or for ostentation, so that he is prepared to deposit his burden [101] and draw away;

he would not be a useless Porter of new and augmented divine munificence.

Truly, that the gift was transferred to the Serpents, that seems thrown onto the Fable almost gratuitously for ornament; unless perchance it was inserted to shame man, who with that fire of theirs and all those arts cannot transfer to themselves what Nature has herself lavished on many other animals.

Even that sudden reconciliation of Men with *Prometheus* after their hope was cut off, holds a useful and prudent warning.

Indeed, it Notes Men's levity and rashness in new experiments.

For if it does not immediately succeed and respond to their prayers, men are far too hasty to desert it at the beginning, and race back precipitously to the ancient things and so be reconciled to them.

Being until now the description of the state of man in respect to Arts and Intellectual things, the Parable transfers now to Religion; for the culture of the Arts was accompanied by the cultivation of Divinities; which was at once occupied and polluted with Hypocrisy.

Accordingly, under that double sacrifice are elegantly represented the persons of the truly Religious & of the Hypocrite.

For in the one is [102] the fat, which is doubtless the portion of God, by the flame and the scent burning and striving upward is signified the affection and zeal for the glory of God; the entrails of charity are in him, good and useful flesh are in him.

In the other nothing is to be found besides dry and naked bones, which nonetheless stuff the skin, and it imitates a beautiful and magnificent host; by which are rightly noted the external and empty rites and feasting Ceremonies, by which men burden and inflate the cultivation of divine things, things rather composed for ostentation than making for piety.

Nor is it enough that men offer such mockeries to God, except they also impose and impute them to him as if he himself chose and prescribed them.

Certainly the Prophet under God's person expostulated about such opinions: *For is this such a feast that I HAVE CHOSEN, that man should afflict his soul in one day and bow his head like rushes?*

Post statum Religionis, Parabola se vertit ad mores, & humanae vitae conditiones.

Atque pervulgatum est illud, & tamen recte positum, per *Pandoram* [103] significari Voluptatem, et Libidinem, quae post vitae civilis artes & cultum, & luxum, veluti ex dono ignis & ipsa incensa est;

Itaque *Vulcano* qui similiter ignem repraesentat, opificium voluptatis deputatur.

Ab illa autem infinita mala, & in animos & in corpora, & fortunas hominum una cum sera poenitentia fluxerunt; neque tantum in status singulorum, verum etiam in regna & respub.

Ab eodem enim fonte bella & tumultus, & Tyrannides ortum traxere.

Verum operae pretium est animadvertere, quam belle & eleganter fabula duas humanae vitae conditiones, & veluti Tabulas sive Exempla sub personis *Promethei* & *Epimethei* depinxerit.

Qui enim sectam *Epimethei* sequuntur, illi improvidi, neque in longum consulentes, quae in praesentia suavia sunt, prima habent, atque multis sane propter hoc angustiis & difficultatibus, & calamitatibus premuntur, & perpetuo fere cum illis conflictantur;

interim tamen genium suum placant, atque insuper ab rerum imperitiam multas inanes spes intra [104] animum volvunt, quibus tamen veluti suavibus insomniis se delectant, atque miserias vitae suae condiunt.

*Promethei* autem schola, homines nimirum prudentes, & in futurum prospicientes, multa scilicet mala, & infortunia caute submovent & reiiciunt;

verum cum hoc bono illud coniunctum est, ut multis voluptatibus, & varia rerum incunditate se privent, & Genium suum fraudent, atque quod multo peius est, curis et sollicitudine et timoribus intestinis se crucient, et conficiant.

Alligati enim Necessitatis columnae, innumeris cogitationibus (quae, quia volucres admodum sunt, per *Aquilam* significantur) iisque pungentibus, et iecur mordentibus, et corrodentibus vexantur;

nisi forte aliquando veluti noctu exiguam quampiam animi remissionem, et quietem nanciscantur; ita tamen ut statim subinde redeant nova anxietates, et formidines.

Itaque paucis admodum utriusque sortis beneficium contigit, ut providentiae commoda retinuerint, sollicitudinis, et perturbationis, malis se liberarint:

neque id [105] quisquam assequi potest, nisi per *Herculem*, id est, Fortitudinem, et animi constantiam, quae in omnem eventum parata, et cuicumque sorti aequa, prospicit sine metu, fruitur sine fastidio, et tolerat sine impatientia.

After the state of Religion, the Parable turns itself to manners, & the conditions of human life.

And it is common,\* and still rightly posited that by *Pandora* [103] is signified Pleasure and Lust, which after the civil arts and culture and luxury of life, are themselves inflamed, like from the gift of fire.

Accordingly, to *Vulcan*, who likewise represents fire, is imputed the workings of pleasure.

And from her, infinite evils have flowed, in the souls and the bodies and the fortunes of men, with repentance when it is too late; not only in the state of individuals, but truly even in kingdoms and republics.

Indeed from the same fountain wars & tumults, & Tyrannies draw their source.

Truly it is worthwhile\* to consider how prettily & elegantly the fable & like Pictures or Examples depicts the two conditions of human life, under the persons of *Prometheus* & *Epimetheus*.

For those who follow the sect of *Epimetheus*, they are improvident, and do not consult into the distance, they hold first for what are present charms, and they soundly fear many things because of this: anxieties and difficulties, and calamities and are almost perpetually in conflict with them;

yet meanwhile they soothe their wits, and being unsurpassed for their lack of skill in things, have many empty hopes [104] flying about their souls, with which they delight themselves, like in attractive dreams, and they sweeten the miseries of their lives.

The school of *Prometheus*, however, men doubtlessly prudent and forward looking, surely remove and reject many evils and misfortunes by their caution;

in truth with that good this is conjoined:\* that they deprive themselves of many pleasures and entertaining varieties of things, and cheat their Wits, and what is much worse, they torture and kill themselves with cares and solitudes and intestinal fears.

For, bound to the column of Necessity, vexed with innumerable thoughts (which because of their very flightiness are signified by the Eagle) they prick and bring death and corrosion to the liver;

and if perchance sometimes like by night they are driven out and the soul obtains remission and quiet; yet nevertheless, immediately new anxieties and fears return into it.

Therefore there are very few to whom both sorts of benefits touch, that retaining the commodiousness of providence, they can free themselves from the solitudes and perturbations of evil:

nor is it [105] possible for anyone to take both, unless by *Hercules*, that is by Courage and constancy of soul, which prepares for all events and is equal to any sort of thing, foresees without fear, is fruitful without fastidiousness, and tolerates without impatience.

Atque illud notatu dignum est, virtutem hanc *PROMETHEO* non innatam, sed adventitiam fuisse, atque ex ope aliena.

Nulla enim ingenita, et naturalis Fortitudo tantae rei par esse possit.

Sed haec virtus ab ultimo Oceano, atque a Sole accepta et advecta est;

Praestatur enim a Sapientia, tanquam a Sole, et a meditatione inconstantiae, ac veluti undarum humanae vitae tanquam a navigatione Oceani; quae duo *Virgilius* bene coniunxit.

*Foelix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,  
Quique metus omnes, & inexorabile fatum  
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.*

Elegantissime autem additur ad Hominum animos consolandos, & confirmandos, *Heroem* istum ingentem in Poculo sive Urceo navigasse;

ne forte natura sua angustias, & fragilitatem nimium pertimescant, aut causentur; ac [106] si huiusmodi fortitudinis & constantiae capax omnino non esset;

de quo ipso *Seneca* bene ominatus est cum dicat;

*Magnum est habere simul fragilitatem hominis, & Securitatem Dei.*

Sed iam retrocedendum est ad illud, quod consulto praeterivimus, ne ea quae inter se connexa sunt abrumperemus:

Hoc est, de novissimo illo *Promethei* crimine, quod pudicitiam *Minervae* sollicitasset.

Nam & ob hoc Delictum gravissimum certe, & maximum, illam poenam laniationis viscerum subiit.

Illud non aliud esse videtur, quam quod homines artibus, & Scientia multa inflati, etiam Sapientiam divinam sensibus & rationi subjicere saepius tentent;

ex quo certissime sequitur mentis laceratio & stimulatio perpetua & irrequieta.

Itaque mente sobria & submissa distinguenda sunt humana & divina; atque oracula sensus, & fidei;

nisi forte & religio haeretica, & philosophia commentitia hominibus cordi sit.

Restat ultimum illud de ludis *Promethei* cum tedis ardentibus.

Hoc rursus ad Artes & Scientias pertinet, sicut Ignis ille ad [107] cuius memoriam & celebrationem huiusmodi Ludi instituti sunt;



And it is worth noting, that this virtue is not innate to *PROMETHEUS*, but adventitious, and the work of a stranger.

For it is nothing which an inborn and natural Courage is much able to do.

But this virtue is taken and imported from the ends of the Ocean and from the Sun;

and stands out as coming from Wisdom, like the Sun, and meditation on the inconstancy and, as it were, the waves of human life, like by sailing on the Ocean; which two things *Virgil* conjoined (married) well:

Happy is he who knows the causes of things,  
and who subjects all fear and inexorable fate,  
and the din of the birds of Acheron, to his foot.

Most elegantly is added, moreover, for the consolation and assurance of the souls of Men, that the enormous *Hero* sailed in a Cup or Pitcher;

lest perhaps they be frightened by the narrowness and fragility of their nature, or (give that) as a cause, as [106] if they have altogether no capacity for such courage and constancy;

about which *Seneca* himself prophesied (omened) well when he said

*Great it is to have simultaneously the fragility of man and the Security of God.*

But now to return to that which we went past consulting, lest we break connection with those things in between:

that part about the newest crime of *Prometheus*, that he solicited the chastity of *Minerva*.

For it is for this Offense, the gravest and certainly the greatest, that he underwent the penalty of the laceration of the entrails.

That seems to be nothing other than that because men are so much inflated with their arts and Knowledge, they often attempt to subject even divine Wisdom to sense and reason;

from which most certainly follows the perpetual and restless laceration and stimulation of the mind.

Therefore, the mind soberly and submittingly must distinguish the human and the divine, and oracles of sense and of faith;

lest perhaps men take to heart both an heretical religion and a pretended philosophy.

Left to last is that about the games of *Prometheus* with burning torches.

This in turn pertains to Arts and Knowledge, as that Fire to [107] whose memory and celebration such Games were instituted;

atque continet in se monitum idque prudentissimum; ut perfectio Scientiarum a successione, non ab unius alicuius pernicitate, aut facultate expectetur.

Etenim qui ad cursum & contentionem velocissimi & validissimi sunt, ii ad facem suam accensam servandam fortasse minus sunt habiles, cum a cursu rapido, aequae ac nimis tardo, periculum extinctionis immineat.

Isti autem Luminum cursus & certamina iam pridem intermissa videntur, cum Scientiae in primis quibusque authoribus, *Aristotele, Galeno, Euclide, Ptolomaeo*, maxime florere cernantur;

atque successio nil magni effecerit, aut fere tentaverit.

Atque optandum esset, ut isti Ludi in honorem *Promethei* sive Humanae Naturae instaurarentur, atque Res certamen & aemulationem & bonam fortunam reciperet, neque ex unius cuiuspiam face tremula atque agitata penderet.

Itaque homines monendi sunt, ut se ipsi exuscitent, & vires atque etiam vices suas experiantur, neque in paucorum hominum [108] animulis & cerebellis omnia ponant.

Haec sunt illa, quae in Fabula ista vulgari, & decantata nobis adumbrari videtur:

neque tamen inficiamur, illi subesse haud pauca, quae ad Christianae fidei mysteria miro consensu innuant;

ante omnia Navigatio illa *Herculis* in Urceo ad liberandum *Prometheum*, Imaginem Dei Verbi in carne tanquam fragili vasculo ad redemptionem humani properantis prae se ferre videtur.

Verum nos omnem in hoc genere licentiam nobis ipse interdiciamus, ne forte Igne Extraneo ad Altare Domini utamur.

and contain in themselves a warning and a most prudent one; that perfection in Knowledge is to be expected by a succession, not from the perseverance or faculties of some one individual.

For those who in the race and contention are swiftest and strongest are perhaps less suited to serving to keep the torches burning, since the danger of extinguishing it looms as much by racing too rapidly, as too slowly.

It seems as though these races and contests of Light have long been intermitted, since Knowledge is discerned to have flourished most in those first authors, *Aristotle, Galen, Euclid, Ptolemy*;

and by their successors, nothing great was effected, or almost attempted.

And it is to be wished that these Games in honor of *Prometheus*, or of Human Nature be restored, and Things would received through the contest and emulation and good fortune, and not depending on the wavering and unsteady torch of one.

Therefore let men be warned to rouse themselves, and experience their own strength and even their own changes (vices), and not place all into the [108] souls and brains of a few men.

These are those [things], which seem to us to be shadowed out in this commonly known, & sung about Fable:

nor are we infected, if underneath, a few things imply some wonderful consent to the mysteries of the Christian faith;

before all, it seems on the surface that *Hercules* sailing in a Pitcher to free *Prometheus*, is the Image of the Word of God, in the flesh, like in a fragile vessel, prepared for the redemption of the human race.

But truly we interdict in ourselves all license of this type, lest perchance we carry Strange Fire to the Altar of the Lord.



**Appendix C**

—

**Prometheus. Drama in one Act.**

**By Friedrich Nietzsche**

## Nietzsche – Nachgelassene Aufzeichnungen

From: *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausg.* 1. Abt., 2. Bd., (2000) pp. 36-47.

Und wer dies nun mal lieset  
Gedenke der Parthie;  
Nicht dass sie uns verdrieset  
Und wir den Weg wohl nie  
Nun wider machen werden –  
Nein! muehvoll ist die Erden –  
Und morgen – wandern wir!

### 6 [2]

Prometheus.  
Drama in einem Act.

Scene I.

Iapetos. 1. Mein Sohn, die Stunde ist gekommen,  
Das Opfer harrt, um unser Buendniss  
Auf ewig mit den himmlischen Gewalten  
Zu schliesen.

Prometheus. 2. Wie? Was spricht's du, Vater.  
Nein, niemals moege dies geschehen.  
Nicht will ich mich in solche Fesseln schliesen  
Frei will ich sein und Herrsecher jener Menschen,  
Den ich das Dasein ja gegeben habe.  
Mein stolz Gemueth ertraegt nicht, dass die Goetter,  
Die doch wie wir von einem Stamm entsprossen,  
Das Scepter fuehren! – (Kleine Pause)

Doch sag, welches Buendniss  
Soll da geschlossen werden? Gleiche Herrschaft  
Wenn's nun nicht anders ist, sei die Bedingung!

Iapetos. O Sohn, was muss ich dir verkuenden?  
Zuerne nicht deinem Vater, der das Beste wollte;  
Du weisst wohl dass, die Goetter Maechtger sind –

Prometheus. Als wir?  
Das, Vater, suche mir nur zu beweisen.  
Hast du vergessen, dass einst jener Zeus  
Den du einst ueber uns Titanen setztest,

Pg. 37

Durch meine Huelfe nur den Thron bestieg  
**Nietzsche – Posthumous Notes**

**Translated by Marty Sulek**

And whoever reads this now  
Think of the contest;  
Not that they sadden us  
And we will never  
Pass this way again –  
No! labourious is the earthen –  
And tomorrow – We will wander!

## **6 [2]**

**Prometheus.**  
**Drama in one Act.**

**Scene I.**

**Iapetos.** My Son, the hour has come,  
The sacrifice awaits, to eternally conclude  
Our alliance with  
The heavenly power.

**Prometheus.** How? What are you saying, Father.  
No, may this never occur.  
I will not fasten myself in bonds of that ilk  
I will be free and ruler of those people,  
To whom I gave existence.  
My haughty mind suffers not, that the gods,  
Who like we arose from one clan,  
Control the scepter! – (small pause)

Do tell, which alliance  
Ought to be closed? The same power  
If it isn't different now, that shall be the condition!

**Iapetos.** O Son, what must I announce to you?  
Be not angry with your father, who wanted the best;  
You probably know that, the gods are more powerful –

**Prometheus.** Than we?  
That, father, seek only to prove to me.  
Have you forgotten, that once yonder Zeus  
Whom you once set over us Titans

Through my help ascended the throne  
Und seinen Vater in den Orkus stuerzte.  
Mir ziemt der Ruhm der ungeheuren That;  
Durch mich empfinden ja die neuen Goetter  
Ihr Amt und Stellung und nun soll ich  
Der ich sie erst erhob, vor ihnen mich  
Demuethigen und ihre Macht gar groesser  
Als meine nennen? Vater, welche Thorheit.

Iapetos: Hoer mich nur an. Ich wollte ja die Menschen  
Recht gluecklich machen, dass nicht ihrer Herren  
Bestaendger Streit ihr eignes Glueck zerstoere.

Prometheus: Was soll das Vater?

Iapetos: Drum da ich fest glaube  
Dass unsre Wesen jene Himmlischen  
Verachten wie wir sie –

Prometheus: Ein eigenes Verachten,  
Wenn du die Macht derselben ueber unsre setzt.  
Dies du, ich nie.

Iapetos: – auch ihren Zorn  
Gar fuerchterlich erfahren moechten.

Prometheus: Nie  
Wuerd ich dies leiden, immer Sorge tragen  
Dass sie ihr Leben frei von Anfechtungen  
In unsrer Herrschaft ruhig enden koennen.

Iapetos: Ich sehe schon, dass du, was ich beschlossen  
Misbilligen wirst u. meinen Zorn erregen.

Prometheus: So sprich doch, Vater, Mir ahnt's schrecklich  
schon!  
Ich fuerchte dass du durch dies Schreckensbuendniss  
Auf ewig meine Freiheit, meine Freude  
Und meinen Stolz verpfaendet hast.

Iapetos: So hoere kurz. Den Goettern hab ich diese Menschen  
Als Schutzempholene anvertraut,  
Und jenes Buendniss soll das Wort besiegeln.  
Doch still, sie nahen!  
(Beide gehen schnell ab.)

**Pg. 38**



And cast his father into Hades.  
To me it behooves the glory of this monstrous act,  
Through me the new gods received  
Their office and rank and now ought I  
That I they first uplifted, abase myself  
Before them and call their power even greater  
Than mine? Father, what folly.

**Iapetos:** Just listen to me. Yes, I wanted to make  
People well contented, that their gentlemen not  
Annihilate their own happiness by constantly quarrelling.

**Prometheus.** What ought to be father?

**Iapetos:** Therefore as I firmly believe  
That those in heaven condemn our nature  
As we do them –

**Prometheus:** A condemnation of one's own,  
When you set the same power over us.  
That I shall never do.

**Iapetos:** – also their anger  
Appalling to experience would be done.

**Prometheus:** Never  
Ever care I, to bear this affliction  
That within our calm authority their life  
Might cease to be free of challenge.

**Iapetos:** I already see that, [whatever] I decide,  
You will condemn and arouse my anger.

**Prometheus:** So speak, father, I already terribly anticipate!  
I fear that you have been eternally pledged  
By this terrible-alliance to my freedom,  
My delight and my pride.

**Iapetos:** So listen for a moment. To the gods I had entrusted  
these people to asylum,  
And this bond shall seal the word.

Be still, they approach!  
(Both quickly exit.)

Zweite Scene.  
Monolog des Prometheus.

O das muss ich erfahren! Ach wohl ahnt ich  
Dass einen solchen Plan der Vater laengst schon  
Im Herzen hege und nur zoegerte  
Ihn mir zu offenbaren. Wehe, wehe!  
Mein Gluek is nun vorueber, unabhaengig  
Bin ich nicht mehr und bald muss ich  
In strenge Fesseln mein so stolz Gemueth  
Das nichts bisher als Herrscher hat gedultet.  
Auf ewig schliesen. Und ich kann doch nimmer  
Die achten, deren Wandel selbst nicht rein  
Und frei von Lastern ist und die nun jenen armen  
Geschoepfen Muster fuer ihr Leben seien sollen.  
Kann ich nicht jene stuerzen, wie ich sie  
Erhob und ihnen Macht und Ansehn gab?

(Ein Gewitter zieht heran.)

Wie still ist um mich, auch kein Lueftchen rege,  
Die Baeume neigen demuthsvoll ihr Haupt  
Und warten ihres Herrschers. Soll auch ich  
Die Knie vor dem Allgewaltgen beugen.

(Es donnert dumpf)

Er naht! Er naht! Der Sturmwind rauscht vor ihm  
Und kuendet seine Macht. Wie! zuerst du, Zeus,  
Dass ich mit dir um Macht und Herrschaft streite?  
So sende deiner Blitze Gluth und stuerze  
Mich nieder in den Staub; sieh zu, ob du's vermagst.

(Es blitzt)

Er naht! Der Blitz verkuendet seine Schritte  
Ich hoere schon sein Rauschen in den Lueften,  
Das Opfer harrt – mit List und Kunst bereitet –  
Schon steigt die Flamme! Fasse Muth o Herz  
Denn ein Betrug muss sich jetzt offenbaren  
Ob er der Herrscher ist, ob nur ein Scheinbild  
Dann wuerd ich ihn von seinem Throne stuerzen  
Und seine Krone sollte mein Haupt zieren  
Sein Scepter ewig meine Rechte Fuehren.

(Ab)

Dritte Scene.

Zeus: Ihr Himmlischen! Ihr wisst, zu welchem Zweke  
Wir jetzt zu den Iapetos und unsern Sohn Prometheus  
Unsre Schritte <w>enden.

Ein Buendniss dass nur unsre Macht vergroessern  
Und unsern Ruhm erhoehn kann, ist's warum

Pg. 39

## Second Scene

Monologue of Prometheus.

O I must experience that! Oh well I anticipate  
That Father already bore long ago  
Such a plan in his heart  
But hesitated to disclose it to me. Woe, woe!  
My happiness is now past, I am independent  
No more, and soon I must tolerate  
In strict bonds my so haughty mind  
That until now had not a ruler.  
Bound for eternity. And still I can never  
Heed those, whose self-change is not absolute  
And free of vices, and now this shall be the model  
For the life of those poor creatures.  
Can I not overthrow those, as I  
Elevated and gave them power and importance?

(A thunderstorm approaches.)

Such calm is about me, also no breeze stirs,  
The trees humbly bend their head  
And await their ruler. Should I also  
Bend a knee for the all-powerful.

(It dully thunders)

He approaches! He approaches! The stormwind rushes before him  
And announces his power. How! Are you angry, Zeus,  
That I contend over power and authority with thyself?  
So send your lightening fervor and overthrow  
Me in the dust; try, if you can.

(It lightnings)

He approaches! The lightning announces his footsteps  
I already hear his hissing in the air[s],  
The sacrifice awaits – with craftiness and skill prepares –  
Already the flame rises! Seize courage oh heart  
For a deceit must now disclose itself  
If he is the ruler, if he is a simulacrum  
Then I would cast him from his Throne  
And his Crown should adorn my head  
His Scepter my power to eternally control.

(Exeunt)

## Third Scene.

**Zeus.** Your Heavenliness! You know, to what purposes  
We now shift our footsteps  
To Iapetos and our son Prometheus.  
An alliance that can only increase our power  
And augment our glory, is the reason



We come. Ought this dynasty  
Still belong to that authority?

**Pluto:** Of course to mine!  
For are not those also slaves of death  
As all earthly [things are]. Therefore it is clear  
That my Scepter is to bend their knee! –

**Zeus:** Not so, o brother! Are not the fields  
Of the Earth, where the new beings dwell  
Underling to me and call me their sovereign?

**Poseidon:** I have hereunto arguably the greatest claim  
As those yet composed from my cloth.

**Athene:** O Father, may I be the arbitrator  
So the people, thyself and Poseidon are alive  
Subordinate in death to dark Hades.  
How will you Pluto rule over life  
As you up to now exercise but rule of the dead?

**Zeus:** I am not displeased with the judgement

**Pluto:** I also allow the condition to apply

**Poseidon:** I am  
Not dissatisfied.

**Zeus:** But my little daughter?  
What do you desire for yourself as reward for this judgement?

**Athene:** Thus give me the power o Father that  
I might make their mind teachable and  
Open to the arts.

**Zeus:** Yes, so be it Daughter!  
So come now all to the Titans!  
Your winds drive ahead and announce my power  
Thou thunderbolt boom near and fill their hearts  
With anxious horror. Lightening flash bright!  
So move the Olympians through the air! - - -

## 6 [3]

IV.

Pro<metheus>

Hier sind die Opfer, um das Buendniss  
Zu schliesen, das Iapetos ersann. Komm, Vater!  
(Iapetos u. die Goetter kommen)  
Zeus, ruhmwuerdig und hehr vor den ewig-  
waltenden Goetter  
Waehl aus diesen das Theil, wie des Herzens  
Drang dir gebietet!

Pau<s>e

Zeus:

Betrug, Betrug, ein schaendlicher Betrug!  
Entlarvt sind die Betruerger. Ewge Rache  
Schwoer ich euch zu, ja furchtbar sollt ihrs  
buesen.  
War das das Buendniss? Das war wohl der Dank  
Dass wir den Erdensoehnen Schutz zuschworen?

Pro<metheus>

Wie wird mir! Ach, sie sind allwissend  
Ach, ein Betrug ist offenbar geworden!  
Was ist das? Wie mir grausst? Soll ich nun ihre  
Macht  
Erkennen? Ach ich muss! Verzweifl und  
Erfasst mich! Wie der Himmel schwarz wird!  
Wie es donnert  
Wo flieh ich hin? Ha welche Schreckgebilde  
Umringen mich! Ach, der Erynienschaar!  
Wie flattern ihre Haare! Ihre Schlangen zischen?  
Ach koennt ich fliehn! Ich kann nicht. Wehe,  
wehe!  
Verlasst mich, Schatten; schwindet! Hin in Orkus  
Reich!

Er sinkt nieder.

## 6 [3]

### IV.

**Pro<metheus>** Here are the offerings, that Iapetos contrived  
To conclude the alliance. Come, Father!  
*(Iapetos and the gods appear)*  
Zeus, fame-worthy and noble before the eternally-  
ruling gods  
Choose from these portions,  
as your heart commands!

Pause

**Zeus:** Deception, deception, a shameful deception!  
Expose the imposters. Eternal revenge  
I swear to you, yes they shall abominably  
suffer.  
Was that the alliance? Was that the thanks  
That we swore to protect the Sons-of-earth?

**Pro<metheus>** As I will be! Alas, they are omniscient  
Alas, a deception is become apparent!  
What is this? How I dread? Ought I now  
Recognise  
Their power? Alas I must! Despair  
Grips me! As the heaven becomes black!  
As it thunders  
To where do I flee? Ha which fear-image  
Surrounding me! Alas, the Erynien-horde!  
As their hair flutters! Their snakes are hissing?  
Alas if I could escape! I can not. Woe,  
woe!  
Abandon me, shadow; recede! Lost in Hades'  
Realm!

He sinks down.

Chor der Menschen.

Es ertoent folgendes Lied unter Donnern u. Blitzen.

- a) Ueber jene Maechte  
Die auf des Olympos  
Steilen hohen thronen  
Reichet keine Macht  
Alles ist vergaenglich  
Sie allein sind ewig  
Ueber Zeit und Sterben  
Weit erhaben.

Keiner sei vermessen  
Kuehn und uebermuetig  
**Pg. 42** Jener Himmelsmaechten  
Seine Stirn zu bieten  
Hin zu Staub und Erde  
Sinkt er, wenn er jene  
Fesseln, die ihn binden  
Von sich abwirft.

Wie des Stromes Wellen  
Rauscht sein Leben nieder  
Unbestaendig zu des  
Orkus finstern Maechten.  
Voll von Demuth falle  
Er zu Boden, flehe  
Jene Maechte an um  
Schutz u. Hilfe.

- b) Rein und schuldlos ist die  
Gottheit die uns leitet  
Dass wir fest in Stuermen  
Fest in Leiden stehn  
Und nach deren Vorbild  
Wall'n wir duch das Leben  
Bis der Genius die  
Fakel senket.

Aber sehe jenen  
Deren Gotter selbst nicht  
Frei von Schuld und Fehle,  
Ohne Laster sind.  
Wie das Rohr, so sinken  
Sie zum Orkus nieder  
Wenn des Todes Stuerme  
Sie umbrausen.



### Chorus of People.

The following song resounds under rumbling and lightning.

- a) Over those powers  
That at Olympus  
Steep high enthroned  
Lasts no power  
All is transient  
They alone are eternal  
Over time and death  
Vastly superior.

Nobody be presumptuous  
Bold and high-spirited  
Those heavenly-powers  
Should be stood up against, boldly  
Lost to dust and earth  
Sinks he, when those  
Bonds, that tie him  
Will be discharged by him.

Like the stream waves  
Rush down his life  
Changing to that of  
Hades dark powers.  
Full of humility he falls  
To ground, begs  
Those powers for  
Asylum and help.

- b) Absolute and blameless is the  
Divinity who rules us  
That we stand firm in storms  
Firm in suffering  
And after whose model  
We flew through life  
Until the genius  
Lowers the torch.

But see those  
Whose gods themselves not  
Free of blame and faults,  
Are without vice.  
As the pipeline, so they sink  
They down to Hades  
When they are blown over  
by deadly storms,

c) Ihnen scheint das Sterben  
Nur ein graesslich Scheiden  
Von des Lebens Freuden  
Von der Erde Lust.  
Und der Tod ist ja doch  
Se<|>bst die Gottheit die uns  
Freundlich zu dem ewgen  
Ziel leitet!

d) Wehe wer gefallen  
Und mit ewgen Thraenen  
Tiefer Reu und Buse  
Seine Schuld abwaescht  
Wehe wer der Gottheit  
Zorn erfahren und nun  
Nur mit Furcht und Schrecken  
Zu ihr aufblickt.

Doch nicht ewig zuernen  
Jene Himmelsmaechte  
Wenn sich auch der Suender  
Ganz verlassen glaubt.  
Und niemals Vergebung  
Seines Fehltritts hoffet  
Nahen sie voll Trostes  
Voll Verzeihung

e) Und gelaeutert steht der  
Suender vor der Gottheit  
Und in Lethes Fluthes  
Taucht er seine Schuld.  
Aus der Suende Finster  
Aus der Reue Daemmrung  
**Pg. 44** Steigt er wie des Himmels  
Strahlenaue.  
Zeus mit den Goettern entschwindet.  
Er ist allwissend.

Chor.  
Ich seh den Waldbach toben  
Bange Stille deket  
Vorbilder.

c) To them death appears  
As only a ghastly parting  
From the joys of life  
From the lust of the earth.  
And death is yes still  
The divine power that happily leads  
Us to the eternal goal  
Aim to rule!

d) Woe anybody fallen  
Who with eternal tears  
Lower sorrow and penance  
Washes his guilt away  
Woe anybody who experienced  
The anger of the deity and now  
Look up to it but with  
fear and horror.

Still those Heavenly-powers  
Are not eternally angry  
Even when the sinner believes  
He is abandoned.  
And never forgiveness  
His misconduct hopes  
To approach them full of solace  
Full of forgiveness

e) And purified stands the  
Sinner before the deity  
And in Lethes floods  
He drowns his guilt.  
From the sin darkness  
From the repentance dawn  
Ascends he as the celestial  
Radiant-eyed.  
Zeus vanishes with the gods.  
He is omniscient.

**Chorus:**

I see the creek in the woods romping  
Anxious calm covers  
Idols.

## 6 [4]

b)

Prometheus: (mit Fragezeichen)

I.a) Ueber jene Maechte  
Die auf des Olympos  
Steilen Hoehen thronen  
Reichet keine Macht  
Alles is vergaenglich.  
Sie allein sind ewig  
Ueber Zeit und Leben  
Weit erhaben. –

β) Keiner wage, dass er  
Voll von Stolz und Frechheit  
Seine Stirne biete  
Jener Himmelsmacht.  
Hin zu Staub u. Erde  
Sinkt er wenn er jene  
Fesseln die ihn binden  
Von sich abwirft. –

**Pg. 45** Wie des Stromes Wellen  
Rauscht sein Leben nieder  
Unbestaendig zu des  
Orkus finstrer Macht  
Voll von Demuth falle  
Er zu Boden, flehe  
Jene Maechte an um  
Schutz u. Huelfe. –

geschr. d. 19/4 59. v.

F. W. Nietzsche.

## 6 [4]

b)

### Prometheus: (with question mark)

I.a) Over those powers  
That are enthroned  
On Olympus' steep height  
Lasts no power  
All is transient.  
They alone are eternal  
Over time and life  
Vastly superior. –

β) None dare, that he  
Full of pride and brashness  
To stand up boldly to  
Those heavenly-powers.  
To dust and earth  
Does he sink when he  
Shrugs off the fetters  
That bind him. –

As the stream's waves  
His life is rushing down  
Inconsistent with  
Hades' darker power  
Full of lowliness falls  
He to the ground, pleads  
To those powers for  
Asylum and help. –

Written April 19, 1859.

F. W. Nietzsche.

## 6 [5]

2. Rein und schuldlos ist die  
Gottheit die uns leitet  
Dass wir fest in Sturmen  
Fest in Leiden stehn  
Und nach ihrem Vorbild  
Wall'n wir durch das Leben  
Bis der Genius die  
Fakel senket.

Aber wehe jenen  
Deren Goetter selbst nicht  
Frei von Schuld u. Fehle  
Frei von Lastern sind  
Wie das Rohr so sinken  
Sie zum Orkus nieder  
Wenn des Todesstuerme  
Sie umbrausen.

Ihnen scheint das Sterben  
Nur ein graesslich Scheiden  
**Pg. 46** Von des Lebens Wonne  
Von der Erde Lust.  
Und der Tod ist ja doch  
Nur die Gottheit, die uns  
Freudig zu dem ewgen  
Ziele leitet. –

geschr. d. 20/4 59.

## 6 [5]

2. Absolute and blameless is the  
Deity who leads us  
That we stand firm in storm  
Firm in suffering  
And after its model  
We flow through life  
Until the Genius  
    Lowers the torch.

But woe to those  
Whose gods themselves not  
Free of blame and fault  
Are free of vices  
As the conduit so sink  
They down to Hades  
When the deathly-storms  
Blow around them.

To them death seems  
But a ghastly parting  
From the delight of life  
From the lust of the earth.  
Yes and death is still  
But the deity, of ourselves  
Joyful to the eternal  
Aim to rule. –

Written April 20, 1859

## 6 [6]

3. Wehe, wer gefallen  
Und mit ewgen Thraenen  
Tiefer Reu und Buse  
Seine Schuld abwaescht.  
Wehe wer der Gottheit  
Zorn erfahren und nun  
Nur mit Furcht u. Zittern  
Zu ihr aufbliket.

Doch nicht ewig zuernen  
Jene Himmelsmaechte.  
Wenn sich auch der Suender  
Ganz verlassen glaubt,  
Und niemals Vergebung  
Seines Fehltritts hoffet,  
Nahen sie voll Trostes  
Voll Verzeihung.

Und gelaeutert steht der  
Suender vor der Gottheit  
Und in Lethes Fluthen  
Taucht er seine Schuld.

- Pg. 47** Aus der Suende Dunkel  
Aus der Reue Daemrung  
Steigt er wie des Himmels  
Strahlensauge. –

geschr. d. 20/4 59.



## 6 [6]

3. Woe, anybody fallen  
And with eternal tears  
Lower sorrow and penance  
His guilt [perhaps] washes away.  
Woe anybody who experienced  
The anger of the deity and now  
Look up to it but with  
fear and trepidation.

Still those Heavenly-powers  
Are not eternally angry.  
Even when the sinner believes  
He is abandoned.  
And never forgiveness  
His misconduct hopes  
To approach them full of solace  
Full of forgiveness.

And purified stands the  
Sinner before the deity  
And in Lethes floods  
He drowns his guilt.  
From the sin mystery  
From the repentance dawn  
Ascends he as the celestial  
Radiant-eyed. –

Written April 20, 1859

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## PUBLICATIONS

### Academic Publications:

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- 'On the Classical Meaning of *Philanthrôpía*', *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (June 2010) pp. 385-408, eds. Bielefeld & Burlingame, Sage Publications.
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- 'Civil Society Theory: Aristotle', *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* (December, 2009) eds. Anheier, List & Toepler, Springer Science & Business Media.
- 'On the Meaning and Usage of the Word "*Philanthrôpía*"', (edited translation of a previously published scholarly article: 'De Vocis Quae Est ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΑ Significatione Atque Usu', by De Ruiters, 1933), *Philanthropy in America: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia – Vol. III, Documents in Philanthropy* (2004) pp. 824-839, ed. Burlingame, ABC-CLIO.
- *Philosophía and Philanthrôpía – A Cultural History of the Interrelations between Philosophy and Philanthropy, from the Pre-Socratics to the Post-Moderns*; Master's Thesis, Indiana University, © 2004.
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- *Green Links: Connecting Ecosystem Fragments in the City*; co-authored with Dr. Valentin Schaefer; Douglas College Institute of Urban Ecology, ©1997.

### **Selected Major Professional Publications:**

- *Tending the Vine* – Earlham School of Religion Case for Support; prepared in 2005 for Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.
- *Setting the Stage for the Future* – A Comprehensive Case for Support; prepared in 1996 for Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- A Fundraising Feasibility & Planning Study, Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Kaluanui; prepared in 1992 in collaboration with Grant Morey for the Hui No'eau Visual Arts Center, Makawao, Hawaii.

### **CONFERENCE PAPERS PRESENTED**

#### **Academic Conferences:**

- 'Altruism, Will & Philanthropic Governance', as part of a colloquium panel discussion: 'The Underbelly of Governance – a generative discussion on the philosophical and psychological ground of board governance'; presented at the 2008 ARNOVA Conference (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 'The Last Romantic War – The Genesis of Modern Wartime Humanitarian Relief in the Crimean War of 1854-6'; presented at the 2007 ARNOVA Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 'The Language of Beneficence in Ancient Greece', presented at: the 2007 ARNOVA Conference in Atlanta, Georgia; and the 2007 Symposium on Graeco-Roman Philanthropy and Christian Charity at DePauw University, in Greencastle, Indiana.
- 'Meanings of Philanthropy, Philosophical and Historical'; presented at the 2006 ARNOVA Conference in Chicago, Illinois.
- 'The Theme of Justice in Plato's Republic', as part of a colloquium panel discussion: 'Curing Inspiration Deficit Disorder ("IDD") – Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Plato's *Republic*'; presented at the 2006 ARNOVA Conference in Chicago, Illinois.
- 'On the Benefits of a Multidisciplinary Approach to Philanthropic Studies', as part of a panel discussion; presented at the 2006 Benchmark III Conference on Nonprofit & Philanthropic Studies, hosted by Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
- 'Proposed Curriculum for a Course on The History of the Concept of Civil Society' as part of a panel discussion on 'An Undergraduate Curriculum in Philanthropic Studies'; presented at the 2006 Benchmark III Conference, hosted by the University of Arizona, Tempe, Arizona.
- 'Philanthropy as a basis for Medical Ethics', as part of a panel session: 'Perspectives on Philanthropy and Health Care'; presented at the 1999 ARNOVA Conference, in Arlington, Virginia.

#### **Non-Academic Conferences:**

- 'Small IS Better – Rehabilitation Partnership'; co-presented with Larry Francer, President of Historic Farmland USA, at the 2003 National Town Meeting on Main Street, organised by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and held in Cincinnati, Ohio.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CONTINUING EDUCATION**

- 'Mission Mentoring Program' at St.Vincent Hospital Mission Services, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2000 to 2001.
- 'Planned Giving: Getting the Proper Start' & 'Contemporary Issues Facing Foundation & Endowment Executives & Trustees' at the Indiana University Center On Philanthropy's Fundraising School, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2001.
- 'Non-Profit Management' at the Banff Center for Management, Banff, Alberta, 1996.
- 'Business Communication' at the Banff Center for Continuing Education, Banff, Alberta, 1993.
- 'Grant Writing' & 'Researching Grant Sources' at Maui Community College, Kahului, Hawaii, 1992.
- One semester of full-time study of Czech at Charles University's Institute of Language Studies, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1991.
- 'Management, Leadership & Decision Making' as part of the Canadian Institute for Philanthropy's Certificate Program in Volunteer and Non-Profit Sector Management at Mount Royal College, Calgary, Alberta, 1991.

## **CURRENT VOLUNTEER POSITIONS**

- Coordinator (since 2010) Workshops In Multi-disciplinary Philanthropic Studies (WIMPS), The Center On Philanthropy at Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- Board Member (since 2010) The YMCA of Randolph County, Winchester, Indiana.
- Board Member (since 2005) Historic Farmland USA, Farmland, Indiana.
- Chairman of the Board of Trustees (since 2003), Trustee (since 2000), First Presbyterian Church of Winchester, Winchester, Indiana.