

***Promêtheia* ('Forethought') until Plato**  
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## I. Introduction

For Plato's Socrates, *promêtheia* (προμήθεια),<sup>1</sup> conventionally translated "forethought," is the quality that identifies the right principles on which to act. In *Republic* 4, Socrates suggests that the soul's rational part should rule because it "is wise and has *promêtheia* on behalf of the entire soul" (σοφῶ ὄντι καὶ ἔχοντι τὴν ὑπὲρ ἀπάσης τῆς ψυχῆς προμήθειαν, 441e4).<sup>2</sup> That is, it watches over, guards, deliberates, uses knowledge for, and coordinates the other parts. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates praises *technai* over *empeiria* because the former "have some *promêtheia* about what is best" (αἱ μὲν τεχνικαί, προμήθειάν τινα ἔχουσαι τοῦ βελτίστου, 501b4). At the close of the *Protagoras*, encouraging Protagoras to share in his investigation of virtue, Socrates says that he "exercises *promêtheia* over the whole of my life (προμηθοῦμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἐμαντοῦ παντός, 361d4). Socrates sets this term at the center of constituting oneself as a unified, thoughtful, and responsible person.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the importance of this term for Plato's epistemology and ethics, modern scholars have given προμήθεια little attention. The word-group did give out quite early; we do not see it in the extant works of Aristotle,<sup>4</sup> Xenophon, the Athenian orators, or many Hellenistic writers, really not again until Philo.<sup>5</sup> This is a strange phenomenon, but not one to be explained here. The question motivating this article is about the earliest meanings of this morally and epistemically provocative term. I investigate whether the term always had the connotations Plato ascribed to it, or whether Plato radically innovated, or, in some middle way, whether the term become increasingly intellectualized before Plato and Plato simply brought out its latent significance.

Lexica do not answer these questions. The LSJ and recent linguists have given προμήθεια, in the early centuries of its use (probably since Archilochus), a pair of equivalences: foresight, forethought, or providence, on the one hand; (to hold in great) consideration, or taking care, on the other.<sup>6</sup> The first we might call the "temporal" reading, referring either to insight or to calculation about the future. The second we might call the "due regard" reading, referring to taking a broad view of a situation. Scholars have not explained the origins of these two sets of meanings, the relationship between them, or the way they signified the highest activities of the

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<sup>1</sup> And its cognates: the noun is also spelled προμάθεια (Doric), προμηθή (Ionic), προμηθία (tragedy); the verb is προμηθοῦμαι, the adjective προμηθής, the adverb προμηθικῶς. I often refer to the word-family with the Attic noun alone, and always transliterate as *promêtheia*.

<sup>2</sup> All translations unless noted are the author's; Plato's text and pagination from the OCT.

<sup>3</sup> I discuss below the *Protagoras* passage at this article's end. I discuss in another work Plato's other uses: those mentioned above, and *Lach.* 185a9, 188b4, 197b9, 198e3; *Cr.* 44e2, 45a4; *Le.* 730a; *Minos* 318e, *Alc. II* 138b.

<sup>4</sup> The collection of Aristotle fragments by Rose does include under the heading of Aristotle's *Symposium* "On Drunkenness" the following maxim: "speed without *promêtheia* is harmful, but judgment with good hope is beneficial" (οὐ προμηθὲς μὲν γὰρ τάχος βλαβερόν, βραβευτής δὲ μετ' εὐελπιστίας ὠφέλιμον: 1.16.102.31), but it is a paraphrase, and a purely conjectural attribution, by Philo, *Plantat. Noe.* 161.7 (§39). In the very slight case it were from an Aristotelian dialogue, its form suggests a preexisting bromide; but the fact that Philo uses προμήθεια-group words frequently (42 times per TLG), and Aristotle nowhere else appears to have used one, tells even more strongly against attribution.

<sup>5</sup> Significant exceptions: Polybius 3.76.3.1; Aristophanes *Gramm.*, *Hist. Anim.* 2.228.6; Arius Didymus, 100.1.9; Nicolaus *Hist.* 96.9, 101.674,

<sup>6</sup> Frisk 1954: "Vorsicht, Fürsorge," Chantraine 2009: "prévoyant, précautionneux," Beekes 2010: "forethinking, premeditative" and "cautious, careful."

soul, of *technai*, or of Socratic reflection. Nor have they explained what they mean by “forethought,” the commonest translation of προμήθεια.

Questions about the meaning of προμήθεια are made difficult for two main reasons. One reason is its remarkable orthographic similarity to προμανθάνω (“to learn before hand, gradually, by rote”)<sup>7</sup> and to προμαντεύομαι (“to foretell, prophesy”), and its apparent morphosemantic similarity to verbs like προγιγνώσκω (“to give a prognosis”), προνοέω (“to have foresight”), προσημαίνω (“to foretell”), and προείδον (“to foreknow”).<sup>8</sup>

Second, the word has an uncertain etymology. Προμήθεια comes from either (i) the appellation Προμηθεύς (“Prometheus”), in which case the meaning of προμήθεια depends on the meaning of the god’s name, or (ii) some independent origin, and the noun may or may not itself have given rise to the god’s name.<sup>9</sup>

(i) Rudolph Roth argued for the Indo-European origins of the appellation “Prometheus.” He claimed that it came from Sanskrit *pramâtha* (“theft,” i.e., of fire) and *pramantha* (“twirler,” i.e., to kindle fire), and refers to a version of the Vedic god Mâtarisvan.<sup>10</sup> But three decades ago Kuiper overturned any easy equation between these two gods. While Prometheus stole fire *from* the gods, Mâtarisvan stole Agni (fire) “*for* the gods.”<sup>11</sup> Thus the superficial resemblance between the verb used in the Vedic myth, *pari math-*, and the Greek god Προμηθεύς, has wrongly been taken to be etymologically significant. Even were Prometheus’ name explicable in terms of Vedic roots, it is hard to see how that origin would explain the meaning of προμήθεια, whether it has temporal import or the implication of broad attention.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the appeal of the temporal reading of προμήθεια seems to have come about late, from Hesiod’s descriptions of Prometheus and frequent punning on his name.<sup>13</sup> Hesiod contrasts

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<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Pindar *O.*8.59-61: ...τὸ διδάξασθαι δέ τοι | εἰδότεν ὀσπερον· ἄγνωμον δὲ τὸ μὴ προμαθεῖν· | κουφότεροι γὰρ ἀπειράτων φρένες (“...to teach is easier for one who knows: not having learned beforehand is senseless: for the minds of the inexperienced are weaker”).

<sup>8</sup> On these verbs, see Lloyd 1987, 34-49, Apfel 2011, 145-150, 158. There is further large προ- prefixed vocabulary concerned with reporting one’s prognoses: προαγορεύω, προλέγω, προὐρήματα.

<sup>9</sup> On the derivation of the god’s name from some form of προμήθεια: e.g., Sikes 1906, OCD 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (“Προμηθεύς, ‘the forethinker’; all other etymologies of his name are merely fantastic”), Beekes 2010 s.v.

<sup>10</sup> Roth’s 1855 remarks were accepted in Kuhn 1859, 12-16, who conjectured the name \**Parmathyus*, “the robbery-loving,” and then by many other scholars. See Kuiper 1971, 85-86, 91-92, and Sulek 2011, 13-28, for a detailed history of the debate. Narten 1960 distinguishes between Vedic math- (“snatch, steal”) and manth- (“stir”).

<sup>11</sup> Kuiper 1971, 95-98, argues that “the whole theory of an Indian Prometheus is based *exclusively* on Roth’s interpretation of the form *devébhyah* as an ablative in III.9.5,” and shows that Roth’s is the wrong interpretation.

<sup>12</sup> Sulek 2011, 13, 28, observes that Prometheus seems to lack forethought, and to be instead a clever fire-priest, the founding figure of the worship of gods, a sexual predator, and pre-moral; but he supports the Vedic roots of the appellation Prometheus (seeming not to know of Kuiper 1971). West 2007, 273, by contrast, conjectures a transfer from “one who loves to rob/rape” to “forethought” on analogy with the English transfer from “to grasp” to “to understand.”

<sup>13</sup> Epicharmus fr. 12 K-A: ὁ προμαθεύς... προμαθευόμενος (“Prometheus... being forethoughtful”); [Aesch.] *PB* 85-7 and perhaps 506, discussed below; Aristophanes, *Birds*: εὖ γ’ ἐπενόησας αὐτὸ καὶ προμηθικῶς (Pisthetairos addressing a badly-disguised Prometheus upon learning his scheme both to avoid being caught by Zeus and to report on the status of heaven: “you have contrived this well and *prometheically*,” 1511; see Dunbar 1994, 693-4 for discussion); Eu. *Ion* 448, 455. There is a possible pun in Plato *Comicus*: Προμηθία γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀνθρώποις ὁ νοῦς (“for humankind, the mind is *promêthia*” 136 K). Storey 2011 estimates the play is from the 410s. Syncellus, from whom we have the fragment, introduces the remark as: “Prometheus is said to have molded men from out of ignorance and irrationality leading them over to learning, per Plato, the old comedian, in *Sophistais*, for...” (p. 174.22 Mosshammer = 149f282 Dindorf). Textual uncertainties, discussed in greatest detail by Pirota 2009, 288-90, make the direction of the pun hard to establish: where Syncellus has Προμηθία, a scholiast has Προμηθεύς, and some MSS have Προμηθεία (Edmonds 1957 prints Προμηθίος).

the αιολόμητιν (“quick-scheming,” *Th.* 511) Prometheus with his ἀπαρτίνοον (“mistaken-minded,” 511) brother Epimetheus.<sup>14</sup> Prometheus is ποικίλόβουλον (“shifting-planning,” 521); ἀγκυλομήτης (“crooked-counseled,” 546); δολοφρονέων (“plotting deception,” 550); and ἐρίζετο βουλάς (“contended in planning,” 523). Zeus speaks of Prometheus as πάντων πέρι μήδεα εἰδώς (“knowing counsels beyond all others,” 559). From Hesiod, it looks like the word compounds προ-, “fore-,” “ahead,” and -μηδεα (“counsels”) or -μήτις (“schemes”). But this is simply a just-so story.<sup>15</sup>

(ii) Thus a relation between προμηθεία and a lost form of some relevant Greek verb is more likely. The challenge in this view is explaining the long vowel in -μηθ-, which root otherwise does not exist in Greek.<sup>16</sup> Schmidt conjectured \*μᾶθος and \*μηθος as lost forms of μανθάνω (“learn by inquiry, understand, perceive”) on an analogy with -ληθής/-λανθάνω and -ηδης-/ἄδειν.<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, with Klingenschmitt we might understand -μηθ- as reflecting a verbal stem \*meh<sub>2</sub>-d<sup>h</sup>- which stands in relation to Lithuanian *matýti* “see” (denominative to \*mh<sub>2</sub>-to-) just as λανθάνω stands to Latin *lateō* (IE \*leh<sub>2</sub>-d<sup>h</sup>- : \*lh<sub>2</sub>-to-).<sup>18</sup>

The etymology is thus uncertain. Probably προμηθείς, the adjective, began by meaning a kind of thinking, learning, or seeing prior to, or on behalf of, something else. I say “prior to” and “on behalf of” because προ- has two meanings.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the two meanings of προ- explain the two definitions given by lexicographers: the temporal προ- accounting for the “temporal” reading of προμήθεια, the instrumental προ- for the “due regard” meaning. But we know too little about the early meaning of the conjectured -μήθ- root or the effect of prefixes on it, under either reading, to give a more specific definition on the basis of its morphemes. So I turn to the history of its use in poetry and prose before Plato.

The story this tells is a fascinating one. We find a word whose few extant uses point to its frequent employment in ideological and political language and its always charged employment in critical ethical discussion. It is closely related to key virtue terms like *aidōs* and *sôphrosunê*, and is contrasted with acting impulsively, heedlessly, and hubristically. It is the virtue appropriate in contexts of ignorance about the future, and involves acting on a determination about what is important. This suggests that Plato may have innovated little when he used the word to mean, in effect, “rational reflection.”

## II. The pre-Platonic history of προμήθεια words

We see προμήθεια words earliest in the mid-seventh century. For the first several centuries, the “temporal” reading is at once too narrow, the “due regard” reading too broad. The uses imply, rather, an acknowledgement of one’s effect on others, and an appreciation for the significance of such effect in deciding what to do. This is “conscientiousness” or “consideration,” cognizance of how the things over which we have control might turn out, and their relative importance to us.

<sup>14</sup> Translations from Most 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Wood 1966; West 1966, 305-8 ad 510-11, following Bapp 1896 and Fink 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Wood 1966 makes this criticism and thus posits a (unrecoverable) non-IE origin to *promêtheia*.

<sup>17</sup> Schmidt 1975. The most recent discussion, Beekes 2010, 1237 s.v. προμηθης, largely follows Schmidt 1975, Frisk 1954, and Chaintraine 2009, comparing μενθήρη (= φροντίς, “thought, care”), qualifiedly conjecturing ablaut on analogy with μήδομαι and μήτις.

<sup>18</sup> Klingenschmitt 2004, 239-40. I am especially grateful to an anonymous referee for numerous corrections and elaborations on the account in the last four paragraphs.

<sup>19</sup> Griffith 1983, 2n5, observes that προ- means both “before” and “on behalf of,” citing LSJ s.v. A.I.3.

### **Archilochus**

The earliest extant use of the term is as a verb, προμήθεσαι (second person singular) in a fragment attributed to Archilochus:<sup>20</sup>

...]νται νῆες ἐν πόντῳ θοαί | ...]πολλὸν δ' ἰστίων ὑφώμεθα | ... λύσαν]τες ὄπλα  
νηός· οὐρίην δ' ἔχε | ...]ρους, ὄφρα σεο μεμνεώμεθα | ...] ἄπισχε, μηδὲ τοῦτον  
ἐμβάλῃς | ...]ν ἴσταται κυκώμενον | ...]χης· ἀλλὰ σὺ προμήθεσαι | ...]υμος

...our lightweight ships on the sea | ..let us slacken the great... of the sails | ..loosen the  
ships' cables. Bear fair winds | ..., so that we remember you. | ...hold back... and do not  
hurl upon us [e.g., a destructive storm?]. | ... [the surf] is high and churned up | ... but  
you: consider us | ... (106 West)

In the first three lines of the poem the narrator looks to give technical instructions to a ship's captain, and in the remaining five lines he changes addressee, presumably to whatever divine agent controls the weather.<sup>21</sup> In the fragment's last discernable word the narrator seems to pray that this god act *considerately* toward the ship. This request summarizes the earlier requests made to the divine agent that he bring good fortune and forbear from meting out disaster. The ship has not yet sunk, and so admittedly any disaster would occur in the future. But the narrator need not be telling the god to turn his attention (contrary to inclination?) to the future, either to the possibility of sinking or the chance of sailor death such sinking would cause. All actions concern future results, and yet not all reflection on one's actions is called προμήθεια. The narrator appears to be asking the god to be moved by the value of the sailors and to be sympathetic to their plight.<sup>22</sup>

### **Alcman**

Later in the seventh century, Alcman innovated on Hesiod's genealogy of moral terms, possibly for the purpose of political propaganda or more simply for reflection on political order.<sup>23</sup> A fragment from his work preserved by Plutarch provides the earliest instance of the noun, in the genitive.<sup>24</sup> "Fortune" (Τύχα), Alcman explains (γενεαλογεῖ), is:

Εὐνομίας <τε> καὶ Πειθῶς ἀδελφὰ  
καὶ Προμαθήας θυγάτηρ

*Sister of Good Order and Persuasion,*

<sup>20</sup> Wood 1966, contrary to Adrados 1955 (who follows Croenert's original attribution), denies that the poem can be by Archilochus on the grounds of its use of προμήθεσαι, which he argues cannot be from the seventh century; Boserup 1969 says we cannot determine the poem's authenticity, and discusses προμήθεσαι at 32-33; García López 1972 takes a more optimistic view of authenticity, arguing that the hapax status of the verb does not tell against the poem's authenticity. A discovery that this passage is not seventh century would not undermine my argument.

<sup>21</sup> Diehl 56a conjectures σάου θ' ἑταί]ρους; West 1980, 47, wonders whether Ζεῦ πάτερ preceded that.

<sup>22</sup> Lasserre 2002, fr. 104 translates *promêthesai* "garde-nous," and reconstructs the final line εὐὼν]υμος, "et ton nom nous restera propice" ("and your name will remain favorable to us").

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Tigerstedt 1965, 381-2, Wood 1966, 231-2, Bowra 1967, 72, Buxton 1981, 41-2 (expressing uncertainty about the significance of *promêtheia*), Calame 1983, 500-1 (observing that we cannot suppose an archaic cult of *Tuchê* in Sparta), Irwin 2005, 191.

<sup>24</sup> *De fort. Rom.* 4.318a, asserting that fortune is neither unpersuadable (ἀπειθής) nor a double steering-paddle.

*and daughter of Promêtheia*<sup>25</sup> (fr. 64 Davies = 105 Calame)

Alcman must be speaking about fortune for a city, given its connection with *eunomia* (in contrast to violence or stasis) and *peitho* (in contrast to force or anarchy).<sup>26</sup> He says that this sort of civic fortune comes from προμαθήα. It would be an unduly narrow understanding of good fortune to think it comes from prediction, calculation, or some other generic future-orientation alone.<sup>27</sup> Nor, even were Alcman especially conservative, ought we to think that fortune derives from cautious hesitation alone. Presumably Alcman has something like “prudence” in mind.

### *Xenophanes*

About a century later, Xenophanes concludes his instructions for holding a righteous symposium with the following pious recommendation:

θεῶν <δὲ> προμηθείην αἰὲν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν<sup>28</sup> (fr. 1.24 West)

*but to hold the gods in good promêtheia always.*

With the noun προμηθείην, Xenophanes epitomizes the second half of his increasingly didactic moralizing fragment. His narrator has already told the revelers to hymn the gods with well-spoken words and pure language (εὐφήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις, 14); to pray for the power to do justice (εὐξαμένους τὰ δίκαια δύνασθαι πρήσσειν, 16-17); to drink only while one has self-control (17-18); to praise him who, drinking, tells great deeds of striving toward virtue (19-20); and to ignore the useless tales that imagine gods fighting among themselves (21-23).<sup>29</sup> Should προμήθεια summarize this, it must have adequate weight to express a thick moral recognition of the gods in particular and the cardinal virtues in general. Here the “temporal” reading seems unapt, and the “due regard” reading must be heard with profundity.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas for Archilochus the god was to be considerate of the sailors, here the human symposiasts are to feel reverent consideration for the gods. This reciprocity entails that while having προμήθεια means acting well toward those vulnerable to one’s actions, it also means

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<sup>25</sup> A scholion on Pindar, *Py.* 5.28 supposed that *promêtheia* (personified) was the daughter of Prometheus; see Calame 1983, 500.

<sup>26</sup> On *eunomia* as a civic virtue, see Andrewes 1938, Ehrenberg 1946, 70-93, Myres 1947, Ostwald 1969, 62-95.

<sup>27</sup> Contra Bowra 1967, 72, who surmises that *promêtheia* refers to the Spartan proclivity to plan ahead and carry out tasks as intended. Calame 1983, 500-1, translates “prévoyance” (forethought, thinking ahead), noting that in Pindar it is put in relation with “destiny” (αἴσα, μοῖρα), and appears as a means of exercising a certain control over it.

<sup>28</sup> Leshner 2001, accepting ἀγαθόν (with Diels-Kranz 1966 and others), translates it “but it is good always to hold the gods in high regard,” taking ἀγαθόν as a predicate of the infinitive rather than as a modifier of προμηθείην, and arguing that Xenophanes would be making a worthwhile claim if he said that one should *always* honor the gods but not if he said that it is always good to honor them. Gentili 1988, following Athenaeus 462C and Ziegler 1921, 108, argues for ἀγαθήν generally on grounds of overall poetic structure and in parallel with Solon 1.4 (ἄνθρωπον αἰεὶ δόξαν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν). I would take προμηθείην ... ἀγαθήν to emphasize not its contrast with a (non-existent?) bad variety of *promêtheia* but its moral (and not merely cognitive) significance.

<sup>29</sup> Leshner 2001, 51-54, refers to the “progressive elevation of sentiment,” the “demands of moral seriousness,” and the poem’s theme: “even on occasions of great conviviality men must be mindful of the gods and do what is right.”

<sup>30</sup> Diels-Kranz 1966 translates: “aber der Götter allzeit fürsorglich zu gedenken, das ist edel,” emphasizing “caring.” An unusual translation of 1.24 is found in Janko 2006, 52, who takes Xenophanes as promoting allegorical interpretation of the Homeric battles between gods: “but ([we should] say) that God eternally has excellent foresight” rather than that Titans or Giants fight.

acting well toward those to whom one is vulnerable. These two meanings share the sense of acknowledging the degree to which something should matter to one's decisions. It is possible to express this sentiment without implying either that one should predict or foresee the way in which impious activities would yield bad results (via some egoistic calculus) or that one must be hesitant and cautious around the gods.

### *Pindar*

Pindar uses προμάθεια-group words three times in his extant victory songs and once in a paean. The first three uses are in gnomes; this fact itself emphasizes the rhetorical and moral significance of the term.<sup>31</sup>

#### Isthmian 1.40

As part of his praise of his fellow-Theban Herodotus, Pindar remarks on the recovery of the career of the charioteer's father after some downturn.

ὁ πονήσας δὲ νόω καὶ προμάθειαν φέρει (*I.* 1.40 Race)

*And the one having suffered brings even promêtheia, with respect to mind*

We know nothing about the career of Herodotus' father, Asopodorus. He or his goods may have suffered a literal shipwreck, from which (financial?) disaster he only gradually recovered, perhaps through dogged pursuit of success. Or the shipwreck may have been metaphorical, a name for exile due to political unrest or for fighting on the side of the Persians at Plataia, an exile he outlasted.<sup>32</sup> The suffering or toil (πονήσας) would refer either to bearing (patiently?) under the disaster—being pressed hard (ἐρειδόμενον) and being in “icy misfortune” (ἐν κρουέσσα... συντυχία)—or the effortful return from disaster to “fair weather” (εὐαμερίας).<sup>33</sup> The gnome implies that whatever πόνος is at issue, it ferries the προμάθειαν.

The breadth of meaning of πονήσας may be intentional, so that it includes not only Asopodorus in business, and anyone like him, but also his son in sport, and thus too athletes in general.<sup>34</sup> Pindar turns to this other individual and group immediately after the gnome. They deserve glory, he says, who make a wholehearted commitment to virtue through the outlay of expenses and toil (δαπάναις τε καὶ πόνοις, 42). Pindar glosses this outlay as “labors of all kinds” (μόχθων παντοδαπῶν, 46), “work” (ἐργασίαν, 47), and “straining” (τέταται, 49). He has Herodotus' athletic preparations in mind. Those preparations could be physical training, since Herodotus has in fact, and exceptionally, piloted his own chariot (15); but they could also be his making or saving money to pay for the chariot, horses, and trainers (cf. πλοῦτον, 67).

This background still leaves uncertain the meaning of the gnome; it does not articulate what exactly the prize, προμαθεία, is. A scholiast cites Alcman in explanation: πῆρά τοι μαθήσιος ἀρχά (“trial is the beginning of learning,” fr. 125 Page). Alcman recommends, or vindicates, experience; without it, presumably, we learn nothing. This is a variant of the

<sup>31</sup> At least in the view of Bundy 1986, 47-53.

<sup>32</sup> Race 1997, 139n3. Slater 1969, s.v. ναυαγία, expresses uncertainty about the shipwreck's metaphoricity here.

<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Pindar only says that the *Potmos* of his family has brought him back to success; we do not know how. On Pindar's vagueness here and elsewhere, see Norwood 1945, 59-60. On the likely meaning of πονεῖν see Thummer 1969, 40.

<sup>34</sup> Thummer 1968, 131, and 1969, 40, argues for this simultaneously retrospective and prospective relevance.

observation that one learns through suffering (πάθει μάθος). Unfortunately, the scholiast's gloss only goes so far to help us; whatever προμαθία is, it is not identical to some μαθήματα. So the efficacy of experience or suffering to bring about learning or knowledge does not speak directly to its efficacy in bringing about προμαθία.<sup>35</sup>

The dative νόω might help limit the possible meanings of προμαθία here, but its grammatical role is difficult to determine. It could a dative of advantage, instrument, or respect and modify either φέρει or πονήσας.<sup>36</sup> Many take it in the first way, as the “mind” gaining the προμαθία.<sup>37</sup> This is sensible, and φέρει could use an indirect object. But this specification might also seem otiose: no other body-part would readily gain προμαθία.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Pindar might simply be marking the intriguing contrast between physical exertion (traveling for Aposodorus, training or working for Herodotus) and mental gain.<sup>39</sup> But Richard Lattimore, translating “the man who has had labor of mind wins forethought also,” thinks that the relevant exertion was itself mental.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps it was clever dealings for the father, and concentration and doggedness by the son. Those who take the νόω instrumentally also think mentality plays at least a role in generating προμαθία. Woodbury, for instance, argues that hard experience alone would bring only hindsight, disappointment in what one has done. Only mindful reflection on that experience would bring any improved intellectual competence.<sup>41</sup>

This syntactical ambiguity limits what we can say about προμαθία.<sup>42</sup> But we might at least rule out Instone's (qualified) gloss, “enlighten[ed]... with regard to the future.” Suppose προμαθία meant predictive foresight. The aptness of the gnome would imply that the father met disaster, presumably his first and only, because he lacked προμαθία. At least this would be the implication were the meaning “*only* he who has suffers gains προμαθία.” That the disaster depended on his lack of foreknowledge is possible though not necessary; the misfortune may have been unavoidable. But the gnome would further imply that suffering and effort would instill one with προμαθία. And yet I cannot see that such experiences would improve one's ability to predict or see into the future. Even more, following Thummer's persuasive claim that the gnome should apply equally to the son, it is very difficult to imagine how training or preparing for chariot-races would issue in, or be benefited from, predictive foresight.

We might also have to qualify any meaning connected to a “hesitant caution.” The father could conceivably have overextended himself before his fall, and only suffering and effort would teach a proper diffidence. But Pindar does not attribute the father's great recovery to meekness or modesty. Further, if the champion himself, Herodotus, is to win προμαθία from his own efforts, it is difficult to see on what grounds Pindar would be recommending any sort of

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<sup>35</sup> Werner 1967 avoids addressing just what experience brings when he translates “bringt als Frucht Erfahrung ein.”

<sup>36</sup> A scholiast's gloss, ὁ παθὼν καὶ τῷ νῶ προμηθῆς γίγνεται (“the sufferer becomes forethoughtful with (?) mind”), followed by Bundy 1986, 52n44, does not really help.

<sup>37</sup> Thummer 1968, 1.163 (“erwirbt seinem Geist auch Voraussicht”), Nisetich 1980 (“and suffering brings the sufferer's mind foreknowledge”), Race 1997, 139 (“also gains foresight for his mind”). Svarlien 1990 is locative with approximately the same meaning (“And he who has suffered toils gains foresight in his mind”).

<sup>38</sup> Thummer 1969, 41, observes that this would appear pleonastic.

<sup>39</sup> Thummer 1969, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Lattimore 1947.

<sup>41</sup> Woodbury 1981, 242-244 (paraphrasing: “Though he has gone through troubles, if a man have the guidance of understanding, he can produce even forethought”); also Werner 1967 (“wer die Not zwang mit Verstand...”), Instone 1996, 182-3 (“toil in the past can bring you positive consequences, if you are wise”), and Verity 2007 (“The man who has toiled with understanding also wins foresight”).

<sup>42</sup> Rumpel 1883, 394, defines all uses of the noun and related verb in Pindar as “providentia, prudentia,” and Slater 1969, s.v., gives “foresight.”

reluctance. Granted, “caution” need not be glossed solely as diffidence, meekness, modesty, or hesitation. The poem does not rule out that “caution” could have a more intellectual, deliberative flavor. But our usual use of “caution” does not itself capture the sense of προμάθεια.

Our best clue to the meaning of προμάθεια in the *First Isthmian* may come from the song’s repeated emphasis on the right discernment and employment of one’s assets, skills, and efforts (to the above add 6, 18, 45, 47, 62). Such discernment requires understanding what really matters (41-6, 50-2, 67-8). It is not implausible that toils, suffering, and effort would instill a sensitivity to what matters. The reference to νόω in the gnome could mean either that the sensitivity is mental, and thus deliberative, or that it comes about only with reflection on such experiences. In this light, προμάθεια could be glossed as precaution, but with an especially deliberative aspect, where one must determine what actions are important before deciding what to do. Such a determination, Pindar might be saying, is hardly possible for those whose lives have heretofore been only peaceful, anxiety-free, and simple; in such ease, there is no cause to learn to be able to make hard decisions.

#### Olympian 7.44

In the seventh *Olympian*, in a gnome, Pindar relates αιδώς—reverence, shame, even self-consciousness—to προμαθής, the adjective related to προμάθεια:

... ἐν δ’ ἀρετὰν  
ἔβαλεν καὶ χάσματ’ ἀνθρώποισι προμαθέος αιδώς (O. 7.44)

*the aidôs of promathês shoots excellence and joy into men.*

The song, which celebrates Diagoras, includes a sequence of serendipitous mistakes in the history of Rhodes.<sup>43</sup> This gnome introduces a passage that notes a particular sacrificial mistake of the early Rhodians. Helios instructed his sons to erect an altar to Athena. Unfortunately, on the way to their work, an unheralded cloud of forgetfulness came over them, pulling their minds from the correct path of action (ἐπὶ μὲν βαίνει τε καὶ λάθας ἀτέκμαρτα νέφος, | καὶ παρέλκει πραγμάτων ὀρθὰν ὁδὸν | ἔξω φρενῶν, 45-47), and they neglected to bring fire. Fortunately, their oversight was made good by both Zeus and Athena (49, 51). This story explains the origins both of fireless sacrifices (ἱερὰ ἄπυρα, cf. Σ<sup>A</sup> ad 86b) of the Rhodian Athena and of Rhodian prowess in various visual arts.

The question then concerns the way the gnome and προμαθέος αιδώς fit into this progression of thought. Pindar has just sung about the ability to concentrate unfailingly on one’s duty (“confusions of mind lead astray even a wise person,” αἰ δὲ φρενῶν ταραχαὶ παρέπλαγξαν καὶ σοφόν, 33), but then has just gone on to say that Helios’ sons are “to ensure that they will fulfill a coming duty” (μέλλον ἔντειλεν φυλάξασθαι χρέος, 39-40). Boeckh-Dissen explains the gnome by saying that “he has αιδῶ of Προμαθέος who does not neglect foresight, as fickle men do, but who especially takes the effort to be respectful. Indeed the Rhodians do not reject this; they however have been forgetful, as is common even in the presence of prudence.”<sup>44</sup> But this does not specify the sort of genitive that προμαθέος is, and thereby what the relationship between it and αιδώς is. I canvass several possibilities.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> On the unity of the myths in the poem, see Young 1968, 78-89.

<sup>44</sup> 1811, vol. 2, part 2, p. 171, ad loc.

<sup>45</sup> Further bibliography may be found at Farnell 1932, 54, Fernandez Llorenz 1956, 370n21, and Young 1968, 85n2.



First is the genitive of origin. As with Alcman’s genealogy, the genitive could stand for parenthood: αἰδώς, daughter of προμαθής, with or without deifying capitalization.<sup>46</sup> Evidence for this genitive of offspring is the great frequency with which Pindar includes genealogies in his poems.<sup>47</sup> On the genealogical interpretation, αἰδώς could help one keep on one’s path because it is the offspring of προμαθής. Accordingly, *promêtheia* would help people stay focused on what’s important well enough that they come to share in virtue and happiness; and it would help people do this better or more notably than αἰδώς would, though αἰδώς would still have to have some of this anti-straying property.<sup>48</sup> But there are two arguments against the genealogical interpretation. First, there is no explicit word for offspring, and other relations besides offspring-parent are possible. Second, this interpretation focuses on αἰδώς even when the important quality is or is found in προμαθής. It is hard to justify talking about the child when the parent is doing the explanatory work.<sup>49</sup>

Next is the objective or subjective genitive, which are syntactically ambiguous. Here it would be the αἰδώς felt toward a προμαθής (objective) person or thing or the αἰδώς felt by the προμαθής person or thing.<sup>50</sup> In the objective case, presumably Boeckh-Dissen’s reading, the gnome says that the correct (reverential, respectful, self-applying) attitude toward being προμαθής brings great goods. This presumably means that it is being προμαθής that Pindar thinks is important. In the subjective case, it is the fact that the προμαθής person expresses αἰδώς that brings great goods. This could imply the importance of the simultaneous expression of two (quasi-)virtues—being προμαθής and feeling αἰδώς—or it could imply that the προμαθής person has αἰδώς as a central part of that nature. Perhaps the latter of these is more likely.

A subset of this objective-subjective genitive case involves taking προμαθής to refer to Prometheus.<sup>51</sup> This reading is encouraged by Pindar’s mention of fire-stealing, of Zeus’ dominance, and of the dissemination of human *technai*, all of which earlier myths connect with Prometheus. Against this tantalizing view, the poem does not seem to address how αἰδώς of (reverence toward, shame before) Prometheus (objective), or Prometheus’ reverence or shame (subjective) would bring great goods to men. So it must be the character-trait and not the personage that is meant here.

<sup>46</sup> This approach is found in Gildersleeve 1885 (“Reverence... daughter of Wisdom”), Nisetich 1980 (“Care born of forethought”), Svarlien 1990, Verity 2007; cf. Lehnus 2004, 110.

<sup>47</sup> Most relevantly, *P.5.278*: τὰν Ἐπιμαθίως... θυγατέρα Πρόφασιν (“Excuse, daughter of Afterthought”), noted in Gildersleeve 1885 ad loc. and Verdenius 1972 ad loc; see also *O.11.3*, *N.4.3*, *O.2.17*, *O.7.70*, *O.2.32*, cited by Willcock 1995, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Lehnus 2004, 109, seems to turn this reasoning around when he translates it as “la cautela del preveggente” (“the caution of the prescient”): for him, it is the *aidôs* aspect of *promathês* that is responsible for those goods, rather than the *promathês* aspect of *aidôs*. But this suggests that (i) *promathês* is the main virtue at play, but (ii) only the *aidôs* elements of it contribute to excellence. In this case, it is hard to explain (a) why not mention *aidôs* alone, and (b) what parts of *promathês* are irrelevant.

<sup>49</sup> Willcock 1995, 124-5, accepts these two arguments.

<sup>50</sup> Willcock 1995, 124-5, glosses the objective sense as either “a sense of respect for the person who has shown foreknowledge” or “respect for forethought [itself],” and the subjective sense as “the sense of respect felt by the person who has been forewarned.” Lattimore 1947 translates with the second option, but Lehnus 2004, 109, thinks it is redundant (because one could just say “forethought”).

<sup>51</sup> A possibility first proposed by Ribezzo 1925, 92, cited with mixed judgment by Young 1968, 85n2 (who otherwise calls the gnome “rather obscure” and says the “problems of vv. 43f are great”).

A final possibility follows Σ<sup>A</sup> ad 79c and Wilamowitz, reading ΑΙΔΩΣ as the genitive αἰδῶς.<sup>52</sup> In this case προμαθέος would modify αἰδῶς; and taking χάριματa as nominative rather than accusative, we would have something like “the joy of a precautionary reverence shoots excellence into men.” This blends the qualities of being προμαθής and αἰδῶς. Yet it blends those qualities in just about the same way as the other (non-Prometheus) interpretations of ΑΙΔΩΣ do. So for all the debate about the syntax and correct reading of ΑΙΔΩΣ, we probably do not need to determine the precise relationship between the two terms.

In his book on αἰδῶς, Cairns gives a clear analysis of this blending, arguing that αἰδῶς depends on being προμαθής:

The link with foresight and clear-sightedness... corresponds to the traditional association of *aidōs* and “good sense,” and indicates that *aidōs*, since it involves an evaluative response, must proceed from an accurate perception of the given situation, and that, as a prospective, inhibitory response, it must involve an appreciation of the possible consequences of one’s actions, an anticipation that a given action is unacceptable or disgraceful.<sup>53</sup>

Cairns assumes that being προμαθής means understanding the outcome of one’s actions, and that one can be *aidōs* only with that understanding.

But another avenue of interpretation makes being προμαθής less dependent on a clear view of the future. Consider the song’s earlier gnome: “uncountably many faults drape the minds of men: and this is inconceivable to discern, toward what now—and in the end—it is best for men to aim.”<sup>54</sup> The faults (ἀμπλακίαι) may be the inclinations to act as momentary whim impels (cf. 31); their appeal, even to wise people, preempts the more deliberate choices of action.<sup>55</sup> They make it terribly difficult to determine and pursue one’s more important goals. Perhaps being προμαθής means being able to discover what is best for oneself despite the distracting haze of immediate desire-satisfaction. If so, αἰδῶς is the commitment to being προμαθής, a disposition to plan and stick to duty and what’s important.

### Nemean 11.46

Near the end of the eleventh *Nemean*, Pindar notes that in nature, good fortune is inconstant: sometimes it comes, sometimes it does not (37-42). The same applies to humankind (42-3). He explains: we receive no sign about what comes from Zeus (τὸ δ’ ἐκ Διὸς ἀνθρώποις σαφὲς οὐχ ἔπεται | τέκμαρ, 43-4). In this we hear echoes of the seventh *Olympian*, the line immediately following the gnome there: the cloud of forgetfulness approaches without a sign (ἀτέκμαρτα, *O.7.45*). Despite Zeus’ silence, humans embark haughtily on their desired great projects. This is for three reasons: because our limbs are bound to shameless or irreverent hope (ἀναιδεῖ ἐλπίδι, 45-6); because the madness of unattainable desire is so keen (48); and because

προμαθείας δ’ ἀπόκεινται ῥοαί

<sup>52</sup> Wilamowitz 1922, 366n1.

<sup>53</sup> Cairns 1993, 176n107,

<sup>54</sup> ἀμφὶ δ’ ἀνθρώπων φρασὶν ἀμπλακίαι | ἀναρίθμητοι κρέμανται· τοῦτο δ’ ἀμάχανον εὔρειν, | ὅ τι νῦν ἐν καὶ τελευτᾷ φέρτατον ἀνδρὶ τυχεῖν. (24-6)

<sup>55</sup> Young 1968, 81-2: “the sentence clearly makes an important general statement about the human inability to foresee outcomes; ... Verses 24-31... form a clear statement about man’s lack of prescience”; cf. 85.

*the streams of promêtheia lie far off* (N. 11.46).

As in the seventh *Olympian*, we humans act willfully despite our bouts of ignorance and our failure to exercise αἰδώς or προμάθεια. Pindar seems not to be treating προμάθεια as the knowledge of the future. He speaks of the obscurity of the future—our lack of prescience—by saying that Zeus’ actions are unprecedented by signs. He then speaks to our unmitigated, even overzealous ambition, unqualified by the least αἰδώς or προμάθεια. Given the other song, presumably these are the recognitions of what is appropriate and best. Indeed, Pindar goes on to recommend seeking gains in a measured way (κερδέων δὲ χρῆ μέτρον θηρευέμεν, 47).<sup>56</sup>

Paeon B3 Rutherford (= VIIIa)

\* \* \* | ...]ν ταχὺ[ς | ...]ν πνευσ[... | σπεύδοντ', ἔκλαγξέ <θ'> ἰερ[... |  
δαιμόνιον κέαρ ὀλοαί- | σι στοναχαις ἄφαρ, | καὶ τοιαῦδε κορυφᾶ σά- | μαινεν  
λόγων· ὦ παναπ .[... εὐ- | ρ[ύ]οπα Κρονίων τελεῖς σ[... | πεπωμέναν πάθαν ἄ- |  
ώικα Δαρδανίδαῖς Ἐκάβ[... | ...] ποτ' εἶδεν ὑπὸ σπλάγγ[νοῖς | φέροισα τόνδ' ἀνέρ'.  
ἔδοξ[ε γὰρ | τεκεῖν πυρφόρον ἐρι[ | Ἐκατόγχερια, σκληρᾶ[ | Ἴλιον πάσαν νιν ἐπὶ  
π[έδον | κατερεῖψαι· ἔειπε δὲ .[... | ~3 ]' .[... ]αι τέρας ὑπνα[λέον | ~5 ]λε προμάθεια

... fast...breathed...[seeing Paris] hastening forth, at once...her inspired heart cried aloud with grievous moanings and uttered this culmination of words: ‘O infinite, o far-seeing son of Cronos, surely now you will fulfill the doom that was destined long ago, when Hekabe [told] the Trojans [the vision] which she saw, when she carried this man in her womb. She seemed to bear a fire-carrying strong-... Hundred-hander, who with his stern [strength] hurled all Ilium to the ground; and... told the marvel of her slumber. ... προμάθεια ...<sup>57</sup>

A scholion (at Π<sup>26</sup> fr. 29.9-13) suggests that the song begins with the tale of Paris’ expedition to the oracle at Delphi.<sup>58</sup> Then the narrator speaks of a woman who “cried” (ἔκλαγξέ) and “uttered” (σάμαινεν), both terms often—though not necessarily—associated with prophecy.<sup>59</sup> This woman is likely Cassandra, who figures in the story elsewhere. Cassandra, if it is she, reports on the murky but prophetic dream that once came to Hekabe. Hekabe saw that she would give birth to a monster who would grow up to overturn Ilium. The ἔειπε δέ (“and he/she said”) in the antepenultimate line could be taken in three ways. Cassandra could continue reporting what Hekabe was saying. Or Cassandra’s direct speech could have come to an end, and the narrator might continue in paraphrase about Cassandra’s remarks, here about the dream monster. Some

<sup>56</sup> Contrast Cairns 1993, 177, who also draws out the similarity between this passage and the seventh *Olympian*: “The intelligence... which enables one to foresee the consequences of one’s actions and properly to characterize one’s own conduct is... indispensable to *aidôs* in its prospective sense.”

<sup>57</sup> Text and translation from Rutherford 2001, 233-4, modified in eliding the lone ν· in the first recoverable line, replacing Rutherford’s “forethought” with “*promêtheia*,” deleting the conjectured remainder, and adding uniform ellipses before or after each bracket in all cases except the last two lines.

<sup>58</sup> Rutherford 2001 notes two other paeans that begin with invocations to Delphic prophecy: B2 Rutherford = VIII, D6 Rutherford = VI.

<sup>59</sup> Rutherford 2001, 235n3, citing Aesch. *Ag.* 156, 201, *Cho.* 535; Sim. *PMG* 511 fr. 1(a) 4; Heraclitus B 93 DK; Pindar A1.13 Rutherford.

versions of the myth have Cassandra herself giving the warning to kill baby Paris (e.g., Eur. *Andr.* 293-300). Or Cassandra continues in direct speech, with a report about someone else's interpretation of the monster (i.e., his or her having spoken about a τέρας).<sup>60</sup> This last possibility is made somewhat likely by the story that Aisakos studied the dream and judged it to be about Paris, and recommended exposing him.<sup>61</sup>

The final legible line speaks of προμάθεια as subject. When Grenfell and Hunt 1898 published the poem, they conjectured "(?) ἔσφα]λε προμάθεια," reasoning that on Aisakos' "recommendation the child was exposed, but ineffectually."<sup>62</sup> We might translate their conjecture as "[the] προμάθεια baffled," where προμάθεια refers to Aisakos' warning or advice.<sup>63</sup> Herodotus uses σφάλλω when a certain interpretation of an oracle (here, about building ships in response to the charge to build "wooden walls," 7.142) seems blocked by other pieces of evidence. Perhaps then the warning could not be understood adequately, and thus it had to be ignored or taken not seriously enough. Alternatively, we might translate the same conjecture "[the] προμάθεια ruined [sc. the Trojans]."<sup>64</sup> This would make sense on the grounds that Aisakos recommended exposing Paris, who survived the attempted infanticide and came back, eventually to bring doom to his city. Werner conjectured the opposite of Grenfell and Hunt, οὐδ' ἔσφα]λε προμάθεια, taking σφάλλω as "deceive" (trügen), perhaps an elaboration of "baffle," thus reading "and it did not deceive, what she foresaw."<sup>65</sup> Σφάλλω as "deceive" seems poorly evidenced for the classical period; an alternative translation would be "but [the] προμάθεια didn't even stop [sc. them, her, it]"<sup>66</sup>—that is, Paris still grew to adulthood—and so the προμήθεια was ineffective.

Whatever the plausibility of Grenfell and Hunt's original conjecture and later developments, we might step back and reflect on the possible referents of προμάθεια, and thus on the word's meaning. There are three: Hekabe's dream; the interpreter's interpretation (whether Cassandra's or somebody else's); or Cassandra's cry to Zeus reported in this stanza of the paean. (i) Hekabe's dream is a promonitory vision. It is literally false, since Hekabe did not give birth to a monster. It is also purely descriptive, apparently not itself giving advice or explanation. Προμάθεια would then be a illustrative vision—either true or false—of the future. (ii) Aisakos' or another seer's interpretation involved an account of the future, and a warning or advice: let the child die. Here, προμάθεια would not be the vision itself; it would not be giving new information about the future. The information came encoded in the dream. So it would be either the understanding of the dream (which is about the future), a prediction on that basis about what might happen in the future should certain actions not be taken, and advice about the actions

<sup>60</sup> Race 1997, 281, translates "And she said... the dream-omen," the first possibility; Rutherford 2001, 236, suggests the second possibility.

<sup>61</sup> Apollodorus 3.12.5, Lycophron *Alex.* 224-8, Hyginus, *Fab.* 91 (name of seer not mentioned), Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.21.42 (citing an earlier poem; seer is Apollo).

<sup>62</sup> Similarly Bowra 1964, and ἀλλ' ἔσφα]λε προμάθεια in Sitzler 1911.

<sup>63</sup> For σφάλλω as "baffle," see LSJ s.v. A.III

<sup>64</sup> For σφάλλω as "overtake" or "destroy," see Pindar *I.* 4.35, *P.* 8.15, *O.* 2.81, and Slater 1969 s.v., where Pindar, as with all classical authors, uses the term transitively (LSJ s.v. A). Rutherford 2001, 234, translates: "[Nor was her] forethought [mistaken]" (his brackets); but if he thinks Pindar wrote σφάλλω, he would seem to need it to be instead in the middle-passive.

<sup>65</sup> Werner 1967, reconstructing: ἔειπε δὲ μ[άντις | σὺν δίκ]α τέρας ὑπνα[λέον· οὐδ' | ἔσφα]λε προμάθεια ("— (Die Seherin) sprach (mit Recht) vom Schreckbild des Schlafs; (und es trog Nicht,) was sie voraussah").

<sup>66</sup> Werner 1967. In support of this reading, compare Soph. *Aj.* 452 (Athena "halted" Ajax as he was about to attack) and Eur. *Alc.* 28 (Death says that Apollo "prevented" the death of Alcestis by tricking Fate).

to be taken; or it could be some combination of these. (iii) Cassandra's cry announces that Zeus will bring about (τελείς) the fated suffering (πεπρωμέναν πάθαν).<sup>67</sup> She seems to see that the interpretation of Hekabe's dream remains true. Because she appears to be crying this as Paris leaves, she may not be giving any advice. She may believe, as she is saying, that the Trojans' fate is quite terribly (ὀλοαῖσι) sealed. In this final possible referent for προμάθεια, προμάθεια would be a warning about what is to come, perhaps grounded in Hekabe's dream, the vindicating interpretations, and Cassandra's own prophetic powers.

Without the accompanying verb, negative or intensifier, object, or even subject, we can hardly know which referent to take. But Pindar does not elsewhere use προμάθεια to mean "premonition." He generally uses it to mean "consideration about what to do in challenging circumstances." Hekabe and her family are confronted with an awful decision: whether to kill or otherwise abandon their son. The interpretation of the dream says that Paris must be killed, despite the unpleasantness of the deed, and the indirectness of the evidence. So I suspect that we should take προμάθεια as referring to some or all of those items listed in (ii) above: an interpretation, prediction, and advice.

### ***Herodotus***

Several decades later in the earliest prose instances of our family of words, Herodotus uses the term προμηθία mostly to refer to the social attitudes of "conscientiousness," "cognizance of another's needs," or "consideration of," what we might call active evaluation of another person's needs. Cyrus "kept a close eye on" Croesus (though Herodotus does not say by doing what, 1.88.1); Darius "worried" that he might accidentally stab Gobryas (3.78.4-5); and "out of consideration" for his brother, Xerxes would not force himself upon his sister-in-law even though he had fallen in love with her (9.108.1). One instance emphasizes the active valuation encountered in the texts of Xenophanes and Archilochus: Amasis tells the Egyptians over whom he has placed himself "to honor and show respect for him" (καὶ τιμᾶν τε καὶ προμηθέσθαι ἐωυτοῦ ἐκέλευε, 2.172.5).

Just as these uses pick up the high-evaluation sense of the term, one Herodotean use highlights a focal point for moral reflection as Alcman's and Pindar's uses did. Herodotus reports that Croesus chides Cambyses, who is plainly out of control, with a jingly maxim: "Do not sacrifice everything to youth and temper, but restrain and control yourself: it is a good thing to be provident, but προμηθία is something wise" (ἀλλ' ἴσχε καὶ καταλάμβανε σεωυτόν· ἀγαθόν τι πρόνοον εἶναι, σοφὸν δὲ ἢ προμηθία, 3.36.1). Croesus contrasts *pronoia* and προμηθία: it is an unalloyed good to have a real vision of what will happen, but it is unrealistic to expect to have it. Thus one must exercise προμηθία, the self-management or judgment necessary under such conditions of ignorance. In the same chapter, Herodotus has Croesus warn Cambyses that his actions may very well lead to Persian revolt, and has Cambyses' servants recognize that Cambyses hardly knows who he wants killed. So for those who lack foreknowledge (*pronoia*), only προμηθία will control their actions. It is notable that Croesus links προμηθία with wisdom, which means general competence in living, an ability dependent on making priorities, evaluating one's goals, and responding correctly to situations, generally

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<sup>67</sup> The papyrus was corrected from τελείς to τέλει (the imperative "bring about!") but Grenfell and Hunt 1908, Race 1997, and Rutherford 2001 print τελείς, in accordance with the scholion's implication and on the assumption that Cassandra would not want Zeus to bring down her family and city. This is perhaps not an incontrovertible assumption, given her ὀλοαῖσι (also "murderous?") groanings.

without reliance on foreknowledge.<sup>68</sup> So προμηθία allows consideration, when the future is unclear, about what it would be best to do; for Cambyses, it is not to kill so indiscriminately and with such an assuredness of impunity.

### *Thucydides*

Thucydides uses προμηθία group words four times, two of which deserve close attention. In his meditation on the linguistic strain civil revolution causes, he writes that men came to disdain actions that used to be celebrated, and vice versa. Τόλμα ... ἀλόγιστος (“heedless boldness”) became ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος (“comradely courage”); μέλλησις... προμηθίας becomes δειλία εὐπρεπής (“nice-seeming cowardice”); τὸ... σῶφρον (“sound-mindedness”) became τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα (“the excuse of an unmanly person”); and τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν (“breadth of wisdom”) became ἐπὶ πάν ἀργόν (“ineffectual in all fields”) (3.82.4).

The fact that προμηθίας modifies “delay” suggests that the typical feature of προμηθία is not launching oneself into action. The fact that being προμηθίας is called εὐπρεπής, “nice-seeming,” suggests that it has a respected, even venerable aura. And the fact that μέλλησις... προμηθίας is grouped with sound-mindedness, breadth of wisdom, and the lack of heedless boldness, suggests that it has a cognitively and morally richer, and less temporal, sense than “farsighted delay.”<sup>69</sup> It seems to mean something like “deliberateness” or “reflective patience,” not thrusting oneself blindly into action.<sup>70</sup> Cowardice probably results from feeling that the value of one’s life outweighs the value of the goals its sacrifice could advance. If the exercise of προμηθία appears to cynics as cowardice, then it must look like a way of deciding what has the greatest value; in the case of cowardice, one’s life. So the morally-exemplary exercise of προμηθία must involve surveying the values one could potentially promote and discriminating between them. Such exercise could appear a mode of hesitation or caution only to the extent that one does not yet know whether to protect oneself or not.<sup>71</sup>

This sense of προμηθία emphasizing “deliberation” or “circumspection” rather than “seeing into the future” is specifically thematized in the following book of the *Peloponnesian War*. Προμηθία is precisely the needful thing when we cannot see into the future. Reflecting on the considerations to fight the Athenians, the speaker explains that it is

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<sup>68</sup> σοφία characterizes Solon in his advice to Croesus about the uncertainty of the future (so wait till you are dead!, 1.30), Anacharsis (4.76), Themistocles (8.124), Athens (1.60), and Hellas (7.102); see Bischoff 1932 on the trope of the sage advising the powerful against rash actions. Lichas, an elder, solved a Delphic riddle with wisdom (1.67-68); Babylonian customs concerned with overall social benefit (a marriage market, crowd-sourced medicine) are thought wise (1.197); Darius observes that “where wisdom is called for there is no need for force” (Ἐνθα γὰρ σοφίης δεῖ, βίης ἔργον οὐδέν, 3.127).

<sup>69</sup> Hornblower 1997, who also argues that while “delay” is a key word, it is not a Spartan code word, contra some recent speculation. Compare “prudent hesitation” (Rhodes, using “forethoughtful”); “provident deliberation” (Hobbes).

<sup>70</sup> This is the sense Pagondas the Boeotian gives it when saying that those invaded have little chance for careful reflection: οὐ γὰρ τὸ προμηθές, οἷς ἂν ἄλλος ἐπίη, περὶ τῆς σφετέρως ὁμοίως ἐνδέχεται λογισμὸν καὶ ὅστις τὰ μὲν ἑαυτοῦ ἔχει, τοῦ πλείονος δὲ ὀρεγόμενος ἐκὼν τινὶ ἐπέρχεται (“the same prudence in calculation is not allowable in the way it is for those who are invading others by their own choice, secure in what they hold and grasping for more,” 4.92.2 tr. Lattimore), in contrast with the person who deliberates before deciding to invade someone else, thinking whether acting on his greed is worth it. See Hornblower 1997 ad loc. for parallel passages.

<sup>71</sup> Thucydides later mentions actual hesitation: ἀσφαλεία δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὐλόγος (“prolonged deliberation with a view to avoiding mistakes was thought to be just a plausible excuse for avoiding any kind of action” 3.82.5, tr. Hornblower).

ἐξ ἴσου ... δεδιότες προμηθία μάλλον ἐπ' ἀλλήλους ἐρχόμεθα

*from fear [i.e. of the uncertain future]<sup>72</sup> that we all alike are circumspect about going at one another (4.62.4.5, tr. Lattimore).*

This speaker suggests that because we do not know how things will turn out, humans must engage in various nuanced judgments about what we most ought to seek. This use emphasizes the term's human, rational quality, what we are left with when we *lack* prophecy. Having προμήθεια is the human virtue for acting under conditions of ignorance.<sup>73</sup>

### **Gorgias**

Gorgias' use of προμήθεια in the "Helen" corroborates Thucydides' usage. He explains why we should hold god responsible for the seizing of Helen, should it have been by divine fiat:

θεοῦ γὰρ προθυμίαν ἀνθρωπίνῃ προμηθία ἀδύνατον κωλύειν

*it is impossible through human προμήθεια to resist divine caprice (6)*

The word-choice here of προθυμίαν ("caprice," "eagerness," "will," "zeal") and προμηθία is obviously influenced by the orator's concern for alliteration; this may suggest that Gorgias is not putting too fine a point on it.<sup>74</sup> But in fact the sentence reveals an important point about προμήθεια. It cannot mean knowledge of or insight into the future, since neither would hinder a god's desires. Further, Gorgias uses πρόνοιαν (11) when he is speaking about memory, awareness, and the acquisition of perfect knowledge about the future, a skill glossed as μαντεύσασθαι ("to predict the future"). Nor can προμήθεια simply be the passive or quiet virtues of "care" or "caution," since these would not raise even a *prima facie* hope for triumphing against a god's will. So προμήθεια must be something more active: an intention, choice, or considered plan, in this case what Helen could think it best to do. Gorgias characterizes it negatively, as weak, in contrast to our other authors, who have valorized it as the virtue to be practiced in the absence of absolute knowledge. All the same, he seems to imply that human προμήθεια is morally praiseworthy, something we would wish to win out.

### **Antiphon**

One of Antiphon's moots plays on the strength of προμήθεια, if it is fact the word Antiphon uses:

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<sup>72</sup> τὸ δὲ ἀστάθμητον τοῦ μέλλοντος

<sup>73</sup> See also Thuc. 6.80.1: "and in your *promêtheia* do not consider, to be equitable to us and safe to you, to help neither given we are allied with both" (καὶ μὴ ἐκείνην τὴν προμηθίαν δοκεῖν τῷ ἡμῖν μὲν ἴσῃ εἶναι, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλῆ, τὸ μηδετέρους δὴ ὡς καὶ ἀμφοτέρων ὄντας ξυμμάχους βοηθεῖν.) The meaning of προμηθίαν has been open to some controversy and uncertainty: "caution" (Marchant) and "that prudent course" (Charles F. Smith) but "the common sense" (Lattimore) and "your purpose" (Hobbes).

<sup>74</sup> George Kennedy's concern for clever translation, "for god's predetermination cannot be hindered by human premeditation," in Sprague 1972, favors the temporal reading. Cf. Thuc. 6.80.1 for a similar collocation.

τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ὁ τε φόβος ἢ τε ἀδικία ἰκανὴ ἦν παύσαι τῆς προμηθείας [προθυμίας AN],<sup>75</sup> τοῖς δὲ ὁ τε κίνδυνος ἢ τε αἰσχύνη μείζων οὖσα τῆς διαφορᾶς, εἰ καὶ διανοήθησαν ταῦτα πράξαι, ἀρκούσα ἦν σωφρονίσει τὸ θυμούμενον τῆς γνώμης. (2.3.3)

*For the latter, fear and the great wrong they had suffered overcame their caution; whereas for the former, the danger and disgrace of the crime outweighed their dispute and moderated the vehemence of their spirit.* (tr. Gagarin and MacDowell 1998)

If Bekker had good grounds for swapping the words that Gorgias used in antithesis, Antiphon implies that προμήθεια can have more power than fear and the desire for injustice. He goes on to gloss it as cognizance of risk (κίνδυνος), the sense of shame (αἰσχύνη), and something that does the work of *sôphrosunê*. We have seen similar glosses above. It is clear that the term would not simply mean “calculation about the future.”

### *Hippocratic*

Certain Hippocratic authors use the verbal form, meaning “to take care” not to miss a step or do something rashly, often in the formula Ἀλλὰ χρὴ προμηθέεσθαι (“but one must take care to”).<sup>76</sup> It seems to have become a formula with little meaning beyond emphasizing what follows.

### *Athenian Tragedy*

The works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides considered together contain the largest selection of προμήθεια words. All support the claim that such words mean something like rational consideration.

Aeschylus uses the noun twice. The first time is in the *Prometheus Bound* (if he is the author), a play in which intelligence and Prometheus’ powers are thematized.<sup>77</sup> Kratos excoriates Prometheus for hubris and taking the gods’ prerogatives, and makes a pun:

ψευδωνύμως σε δαίμονες Προμηθέα  
καλοῦσιν· αὐτὸν γὰρ σε δεῖ προμηθείας,<sup>78</sup>  
ὅτῳ τρόπῳ τῆσδ’ ἐκκυλισθήσῃ τέχνης.

*falsely the gods call you Prometheus:  
for you yourself need promêtheia*

<sup>75</sup> προμηθείας] Bekker, understanding the sentence to demand it, and relying on Valckenaer 1755, 496-7 (on Euripides *Phoenissae* 1475) and Heindorf 1802, 15 (on Plato *Lysis* 207e4), who discuss the frequent scribal transpositions between *promêth-* and *prothum-*; accepted by Gagarin 1997, Gernet 2002, Dillon and Gergel 2003.

<sup>76</sup> *De diaeta*: 72.7; 73.8, 74.12, 76.8, 77.5, 79.7, 81.7, 82.7, 89.90; *De articulis* 11.45, 13.6, 14.5, 47.54, 69.16, 69.23; *De natura hominis* 9.44; *De fracturis* 20.13, 26.40; *De mulierum affectibus* 69.8; *De diaeta in morbis acutis* 4.33. A similar imperative construction is in Chares: πλοῦτος προμηθείας, “exercise forethought” (fr. 1.21, reconstruction from Young 1971, citing [Plato] *Minos* 318e, πολλήν προμήθειαν ποιείσθαι).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Griffith 1983, esp. 167, 177-8; Saïd 1985.

<sup>78</sup> While on line 86 all the MSS have προμηθέως (i.e., a person with *promêtheia*), most modern editors since Elmsley have προμηθείας (i.e., the attribute itself); the interpretative question is whether Prometheus needs a “forethoughtful” person or only “forethought” itself. Griffith 1983 supports the MSS reading by pointing to a parallel play on Prometheus’ name at 506: πάσαι τέχναι βροτοῖσιν ἐκ προμηθέως. The scholiasts gloss the line ὁ προορώων τὰ μῆδεα (καὶ τὰ βουλευμάτα, add others), or προογνώστης; Herington 1972, scholia 85a-c; but the context does not recommend rendering the word these ways.



*to find a way to roll free of skilled handiwork like this*  
(PB 85-87 West, tr. Collard modif.)

Kratos’ treats the word as “cleverness” or “ability to scheme.” Since this is a snide joke, we cannot derive much about the word’s meaning from it. For the joke to go through, however, its pretended meaning must be compatible with its actual meaning. Prometheus will need to think skillfully about his situation—including his strengths—before acting.

Aeschylus’ other use of the noun is preceded by Danaos telling his children to be thoughtful and saying that he himself already has been thoughtful (φρονεῖν χρη· ξὺν φρονοῦντι, *Supp.* 176). He now asserts that he will here “take προμήθεια” (προμηθία λαβών, 178),<sup>79</sup> and charges the children to listen carefully to what he will say. He infers what may have happened: messengers likely saw them land on this unknown land, and so they may send others to accost them. He does not pretend to know precisely what will transpire (εἴτ’ ἀπήμων εἶτε καὶ τεθηγμένος ὠμῆ ξὺν ὀργῆ, 186), however, and so he advises his daughters to act well (ἄμεινόν ἐστι παντὸς οὔνεκ’, 188) irrespective of eventualities. The Chorus deems this advice “thoughtful” (φρονούντως πρὸς φρονούντας, 204), echoing the doubling in line 176. Exercising προμήθεια means acting appropriately—as virtuously as possible (190-204)—exactly because one realizes that one lacks important information.

The Sophoclean and Euripidean uses evoke both this sense of mental investigation into the relative unknown and the sense of considering another’s needs and practicing the kind of rational reflection that is more virtuous than acting on impulse.<sup>80</sup> In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Ismene explains that she has come to see her father out of concern for him (σῆ, πάτερ, προμηθία, 332), a concern discharged by telling him some news. In his retort, Oedipus wonders whether Ismene also comes from another motivation: longing or affection. This contrast in motivations requires distinguishing Ismene’s thoughtfulness from Oedipus’ family feeling and thus from mere sentiment or good-natured impulse. This does not leave only ratiocination of the sort tacticians perform. But it suggests something more reflective than the natural desire of familiars to be close to one another. Sophocles uses the term again later in the play when Oedipus thanks Theseus for his “nobility and righteous προμήθεια” (ὄναιο, Θησεῦ, τοῦ τε γενναίου χάριν | καὶ τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐνδίκου προμηθίας, 1042-3). This again suggests a conscientiousness more flexible than inborn desire.<sup>81</sup>

The term προμήθεια shows up, most interestingly, in the *Electra*. Once it means simply “thinking about someone’s best interests,” when Orestes observes that Electra had exercised forethought in sending the infant Orestes away with the Pedagogue (1350).<sup>82</sup> Two other times

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<sup>79</sup> M has προμηθειαν (with a *ī* above the *iota*) λαβεῖν

<sup>80</sup> Text of all Sophocles from Lloyd-Jones.

<sup>81</sup> Similarly, as part of his scheme with Odysseus to capture Philoctetes, Sophocles’ Neoptolomus thanks the Trader for telling him about the Greek designs on him, and continues: “but the graciousness of your promêtheia, stranger, will, unless I am corrupted, remain in my friendly thoughts” (ἀλλ’ ἡ χάρις μὲν τῆς προμηθίας, ξένε, | εἰ μὴ κακὸς πέφυκα, προσφιλῆς μενεῖ, *Phil.* 557). Προμήθεια’s consonance and metrical parallel with προσφιλῆς draw their meanings together; the sentence’s structure suggests that the latter reciprocates the former. The Trader’s *promêtheia* involves him thinking about Neoptolomus’ vulnerabilities and acting charitably toward him. Neoptolomus’ friendly feelings would include respect, concern, and thoughtfulness for the Trader. Both the *promêtheia*-involving care and the friendliness are ways to serve the good of others. That such a virtue is at play is clear from the qualification that Neoptolomus be a good person (i.e., not corrupted).

<sup>82</sup> οὐ τὸ Φωκέων πέδον | ὑπεξεπέμφθην σῆ προμηθία χερσῖν.

Sophocles goes some way toward defining the term as the disposition to think how things might turn out for others and oneself. The Chorus and Chrysothemis exchange these words:

ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐστὶν ἡ προμηθία  
καὶ τῷ λέγοντι καὶ κλύοντι σύμμαχος.

καὶ πρὶν γε φωνεῖν, ὦ γυναῖκες, εἰ φρενῶν  
ἐτύγχαν' αὕτη μὴ κακῶν, ἐσώζετ' ἂν  
τὴν εὐλάβειαν, ὥσπερ οὐχὶ σώζεται.

*CHORUS: In such a thing as this, promêtheia is  
both to speakers and to listeners an ally.*

*CHRYSOTHEMIS: And so, women, before she [sc. Electra] spoke, if she'd had  
an uncorrupted mind, she'd have preserved  
caution, even as she does not preserve it now. (990-4)*

Chrysothemis glosses the Chorus' προμήθεια in terms of a sound mind (φρενῶν) and the preservation (ἐσώζετ') of caution (εὐλάβειαν). Over the next twenty lines, Chrysothemis excoriates her sister for wanting to kill Aegisthus, appeals to a range of considerations about the future, admonishes Electra's rashness (θράσος, 995), and encourages her to become mindful (νοῦν σχέξ, 1013). Electra does not think beyond her narrow rage. We see a direct contrast between προμήθεια, *eulabeia*, *sôphrosunê*, etc., and *thrasos*, the contrasts we saw in Thucydides. Chrysothemis later defends her charges against Electra, saying that they do not dishonor her but provide instead *promêtheia* (ἀτιμίας μὲν οὐ, προμηθείας δὲ σοῦ, 1036) for what is best for her.<sup>83</sup> In the fourth use of the word in this play, the Chorus says that Electra “gives no weight” to death (οὔτε τι τοῦ θανεῖν προμηθής, 1078).

One Sophoclean fragment, recorded in Stobaeus (*Anthology* 4, 50 III), draws a link between προμήθεια and profit.<sup>84</sup>

οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τῶν σοφῶν, ἐν οἷς ὁ νοῦς  
θειὰ ξύνεστιν ἡμερὰ τεθραμμένος·  
προμηθία γὰρ κέρδος ἀνθρώποις μέγα

*old age does not come to the wise, who live with an intelligence  
nurtured by the daylight of the gods  
for promêtheia is great profit to humans (fr. 950 Radt, tr. Lloyd-Jones)<sup>85</sup>*

The passage expresses the importance of προμήθεια to living a bountiful human life.<sup>86</sup> Another Sophoclean fragment suggests that the lost *Hipponous* might have made the same link:

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Van Hook 1918.

<sup>84</sup> Stobaeus introduces this passage with the following: “It is intelligence which relieves old age of its burdens and makes it worthy of much reverence” (ὅτι τὸ γῆρας ἀνεπαχθὲς καὶ πολλῆς αἰδοῦς ἄχιον ἢ σύνεσις ἀπεργάζεται, tr. Pearson).

<sup>85</sup> Pearson 1917 translates: “There is no old age for the wisdom in which the mind has been nurtured ere it reaches length of days.” There are many conjectures about the text and meaning of θειὰ... ἡμερὰ.

σωτηρίας γὰρ φάρμακ' οὐχὶ πανταχοῦ  
βλέψαι πάρεστιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ προμηθείᾳ...

*for a saving remedy is not to be caught sight of  
anywhere; but in promêtheia... (fr. 302 Radt, tr. after Jebb)*

Προμήθεια is treated as the way for humans to deal with hard and uncertain conditions.<sup>87</sup>

Euripides uses προμήθεια terms to express himself in a similarly gnomic way, speaking of its value to happiness. In the *Andromache*, Menelaus, having just denigrated quick-temper (ὄξυθυμῆ, 689) and having praised wisdom (σοφοί, 645), self-control (ἔσωφρόνουν, 686), and thoughtfulness (εὖ φρονῶν, 688), closes his great speech of cynical consideration with the conclusion that προμήθεια, presumably some sort of consolidation of those intellectual virtues, yields himself profit (ἐμοὶ δὲ κέρδος ἢ προμηθεία, 690).<sup>88</sup> Almost the same formula—elaborate speech of advice about what is really best to do, charged with terminology of wisdom (*Supp.* 504, 506, 509), timeliness (καιρῶ, 509), and the claim that all men really know what is good and what is bad (586-7), concluding with a gnomic summary that προμήθεια is part of courage (τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ τάνδρειον, ἢ προμηθεία, 510)—is found in the *Suppliant Women*. The reasoning for the relationship between προμήθεια and courage must be akin to that reconstructed in our discussion of Thucydides 3.82.4.

Euripides' uses of προμήθεια in general express a range of attitudes connected with rational reflection, consideration, and care of others. Polynestor vindicates his killing by saying that his action was done with προμήθεια and wisdom (σοφῆ, *Hec.* 1137), all things considered. Ion says that one should not hasten toward pleasures before having προμήθεια (*Ion* 448);<sup>89</sup> Iphigenia says that it is consistent with piety and justice (*IT* 1202);<sup>90</sup> Creon's messenger observes that it prepares one for all eventualities (*Phoenicians* 1466); and Hecuba notes that it is general concern for others (*Hecuba* 795). These usages show that προμήθεια is much more connected to moral decision-making than planning for the future (which it infrequently connotes) or hesitation about the present.

### **Promêtheia before Plato**

In its least complicated uses, προμήθεια means recognizing the most relevant or valuable bases for action, looking beyond whatever is momentarily appealing. Sometimes

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<sup>86</sup> Pearson 1917 explains: "wisdom is not something drawn from without, but a natural indwelling force which increases with length of time and depends for its permanence upon the co-operation of the human intelligence with the divine capacity which is inherited at birth. ... The wise, whose mind has been reared in habitual converse with inspired vitality, never come to a useless old age; for their foresight is a great boon to their fellows." Lloyd-Jones 1996 thinks the third line is an intrusion.

<sup>87</sup> There is sometimes explicit concern with the temporal shading of this idea: In the *Electra*, the Chorus summarizes Chrysothemis' advice: "Nothing yields more profit to humans than the gain from foresight and a wise mind. (προνοίας οὐδὲν ἀνθρώποις ἔφν | κέρδος λαβεῖν ἄμεινον οὐδὲ νοῦ σοφοῦ, 1015-16)

<sup>88</sup> Lloyd 1994: "Menelaus appropriates the political catchword προμηθεία, which connected cautious and rational conservatism." Lloyd connects the term to εὐλάβεια.

<sup>89</sup> Burnett 1970: "this is the quality which above all, Ion asks of his god."

<sup>90</sup> Kyriakou 2006: "Iphigenia's forethought is motivated by, and demonstrates, her piety. ... Thaos may imply that a less diligent priestess would take care only of the most urgent need, the purification of the victims for the sacrifice, and put off the purification of the statue, which would potentially create problems for the community later."

manifesting προμήθεια means directing one's attention outward, toward people whose wellbeing or respect is important. Sometimes it means reflecting on what would actually rather than seemingly promote one's wellbeing. The meaning of προμήθεια becomes especially clear in conditions of ignorance about the future, as does the feeling of its exercise. When the future is fairly certain and the sky is clear, the actions needed to secure pleasure, ease, or some other goal will be obvious, and these are thereby performed without reflection. This clarity does not justify any one goal rather than another, but the path to any particular goal is well lit, and so it is easy to go down that path without doubt or anxiety. When the future is foggy or stormy, however, it becomes unclear how to pursue any particular goal, and so no obvious path beckons. One must instead decide on a goal, and approach it by dead reckoning. If all paths are equally treacherous, the only reason to take one rather than another is that the one could lead to a better end. The practice of προμήθεια involves deciding on this better end. In doing so, it may end up considering future results, since the better end may amount to good future effects on oneself and others. But it may end up not considering future results, if the better end amounts to following a law, or working on oneself, or something else whose importance in the present matters most.

I am inclined to say, on the basis of this analysis, that προμήθεια is a proper part of rational agency. Harry Frankfurt, for example, treats personhood as the result of a reflective judgment on one's desires, and a decision about which desire to try to put forward as one's will: that is, which one to commit wholeheartedly to.<sup>91</sup> David Velleman, similarly, treats agency as the ability to choose to act on those desires that makes sense of or in one's life so far.<sup>92</sup> Προμήθεια seems to be this selection among one's given desires for the decisive or reason-giving desire, the one that a person judges most appropriate for leading her into action. If this decisive or reason-giving desire is, like Hume thought, the cool and long-lasting one, then always acting on its basis provides some unity to one's actions and character. It means setting otherwise intense, powerful, appealing, and often will o' the wisp impulses in the background, and pushing forward the ones that after sustained rational consideration seem best. The προ- of προμήθεια has both temporal and adjunctive meanings, as we have seen; this reflects the fact that one engages in rational reflection before entering a difficult moment, or one engages in rational reflection in addition to making a practical decision.

I turn now to the Platonic dialogue where the history of the term προμήθεια has greatest play; indeed, Socrates makes a pun on it.

### III. Plato's *Protagoras*

The *Protagoras* contains two uses of προμήθεια. Early in the *Protagoras*, Protagoras thanks Socrates for his προμήθεια about him that he showed in asking about the best way for them to talk (ὀρθῶς... προμήθη... ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, 316c5). Protagoras worried that he faced suspicion among Athenians as a visiting foreign sophist. Some would suspect his retiring into private colloquy, others might disdain his public appearances. Socrates exercised what we might call "discretion," reflecting on the broader ramifications of whatever kind of conversation they might have.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Frankfurt 2004.

<sup>92</sup> Velleman 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Gagarin 1969, 140, 161, drawing attention to this early comparison between Socrates and Prometheus, observes that Protagoras is also showing foresight for Socrates, in keeping the conversation public.

The second use was quoted in the Introduction. It is worth discussing in some detail. At the end of the *Protagoras*, having refuted Protagoras but still eager to continue the conversation, Socrates says (361d3-5):

ἤρεσεν οὖν μοι καὶ ἐν τῷ μύθῳ ὁ Προμηθεὺς μᾶλλον τοῦ Ἐπιμηθέως· ᾧ χρῶμενος ἐγὼ καὶ προμηθεύμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἑμαυτοῦ παντὸς πάντα ταῦτα πραγματεύομαι, καὶ εἰ σὺ ἐθέλοις, ὅπερ καὶ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἔλεγον, μετὰ σοῦ ἂν ἥδιστα ταῦτα συνδιασκοποίην.

The Prometheus in your myth pleased me more than the Epimetheus: making use of the former and *prometheizing* over the whole of my life I busy myself with all this [sc. questions about the nature and teachability of virtue, 360e7-361c2], and if you should wish it, just as I was saying from the beginning, I should like to scrutinize this jointly with you.

We see a grammatical structure very similar to the one at 316c5: προμηθεύμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἑμαυτοῦ. Socrates makes two points here. First, he *uses* Prometheus, presumably as a model or an ideal. Second, his efforts concerning virtue and his desire to investigate it with Protagoras share as explanatory background his *prometheizing*.

This remark is Socrates' most explicit autobiographical claim in the dialogue. It shows what Socrates believes differentiates himself most from Protagoras, who parts ways with him shortly after this remark. Despite some scholarly attention to the figure of Prometheus in the dialogue, and mention of the pun and its back-reference to Protagoras' Great Speech,<sup>94</sup> there has been little satisfactory attention to the meaning of Socrates' self-revelation with the vocabulary of *προμήθεια*.

Socrates' self-proclaimed use of Prometheus is initially hard to square with the Socrates we know. Protagoras' Prometheus leaves questions of virtue to Zeus (321d5-8, 322c1-d4), but in this very passage Socrates says he wants to take them up (360e8-361c8).<sup>95</sup> Prometheus seriously errs in allowing his brother Epimetheus to foul up the distribution of powers to the species (320e1, 321c4-7, 322a2-3), but Socrates endeavors to prevent Hippocrates from hiring Protagoras without due diligence (313e3-314b9, 316b8-c2, 318a1-4, d1). Nothing in Protagoras' story suggests that Prometheus engages in abstract conversation or joint inquiry into moral concepts and civic pedagogy—indeed, he seems instead to go headlong into things—but Socrates' constant refrain is his commitment to both (e.g., 348c7-349a5). Given these apparent differences, we should look more closely at Socrates' claim.

Some commentators take the verb *προμηθεύμενος*, which they translate “using forethought,” to mean thinking about the future. Thorpe's dissertation on this passage concludes that Socrates' skill “is providential or promethean... [in that it is] nothing but a science of looking ahead to outcomes, of taking the long view of one's actions.”<sup>96</sup> Lampert's recent study states that Socrates out-prometheized Protagoras because he

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Adam and Adam 1893, Denyer 2008. Taylor 1976 treats the passage only as a reference to 321b6-c7.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Beresford 2013. Lloyd-Jones 1983 argues that Prometheus leaves matters of virtue up to Zeus not just in the *Protagoras* but probably also in the Aeschylean trilogy that starts with *Prometheus Bound*; he conjectures that the trilogy may have Prometheus and Zeus compromising in a way that involves Zeus granting *dikē* to humans (95-103).

<sup>96</sup> Thorpe 1989, 126. The dissertation as a whole discusses how Socrates' self-revelation at 361c notes the superiority of his forethought to all significant persons in the dialogue: Epimetheus, Hippocrates, Hippocrates'

came [to Callias' house] well briefed, having worked out in forethought just what he was compelled to say to the founder of sophism at a meeting with young Athenians. He could direct the conversation as he did, he could rule it, because through forethought he knew what he would have to convey. A more strategic claim is also implied in Socrates' assertion that he is Prometheus: *he* is the teacher of virtue who had the forethought to think through the whole nature of virtue and the manner in which to teach it.<sup>97</sup>

These two authors take the word to mean thinking about the consequences of one's actions and in this way looking forward in order to decide about now. They, with others,<sup>98</sup> treat προμηθεύμαι as generally synonymous with Greek's προ-prefixed verbs of prognostication. Taking προμηθεύμαι as a species of this class of thinking-ahead activities, Socrates implies that he thinks about the consequences of his actions or forecasts the situations he will find himself in. He states that he *prometheizes* to highlight his temporal sensitivity.

But the temporal reading lacks compelling evidence. As we have seen, no earlier author uses προμήθεια-group words to mean prediction, divination, or forecasting. Socrates' proposal about a method of measurement in the same dialogue (356d1-357b10) is concerned less with knowing what will come (such as long-term pleasures) than with deploying a present-tense *metrêtikê technê* meant to achieve the good in the face of noisy appearances (e.g., 352b1, c7, 354cd, 356b1). The local context of the remark also makes the "temporal" reading implausible. Socrates says that his *prometheizing* is the background for his having talked about the nature and teachability of virtue and for his desiring to continue the investigation. But the conversation has not concerned the ways by which present decisions inform future outcomes, and Socrates does not say that he wants his future investigations to cover this. It is conceivable that knowing more about virtue and its teachability would help one predict the outcomes of choices one makes. But for a person really worried about seeing how the future might go, the conversation Socrates just had with Protagoras—about the unity of virtue, the best mode of intellectual debate, and Simonides' poem—seems, at least on the surface, highly roundabout. That he cares to "look ahead" over his entire life would not be a transparent explanation for his wanting to continue joint investigation with Protagoras.<sup>99</sup> We should therefore consider an alternative understanding of Socrates' *prometheizing*.

Socrates goes on to say that he *prometheizes* on behalf of the whole of his life. As we saw in the *Republic* 4 passage glossed in the Introduction, as well as at *Prot.* 316c5, προμήθεια may take the entirety of one's life or soul as its object; Plato wants to emphasize the appropriateness of this wide scope. This whole-life attitude tells us that when I *prometheize* I consider how best to live, given the many things I would like now to do that may conflict with one another.

Socrates ends his remark saying that it is his *prometheizing* on behalf of the whole of his life that explains why he busies himself with questions of virtue and why he would like to

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family-members, Protagoras and even Prometheus himself. Thorpe brings to the front forethought's connection to courage, and ends with an intriguing thought that if courage is in an important respect ignorant (per the *Laches*) but also a kind of wisdom, then courage, like Socrates, combines ignorance and wisdom (130). She also shows how the dialogue thematizes "thinking ahead."

<sup>97</sup> Lampert 2010, 122, cf. 38, 54, 68, treating *promêtheia* as thinking ahead, predicting what will happen, planning for long-term goals, and foresight at 37-8, 42, 47, 48, 61.

<sup>98</sup> Detienne and Vernant, in their 1991 study of μήτις, equate προνοία with προμηθεία (3, 18), as does Kesters 1930, 49, both without evidence.

<sup>99</sup> The joint investigation is important to Socrates: see 348d1-349b2.

continue a joint investigation into those questions with Protagoras. Coby suggests that getting knowledge of virtue prepares one to know, for example, about its teachability:

Having forgotten to define the nature of virtue, [Protagoras and Socrates] set out blindly to decide whether virtue is teachable. Socrates compares this procedure to that Epimethean misstep which delivered men into the world ill-prepared for survival. As a consequence of Afterthought's taking precedence over Forethought, primordial men found themselves without an adequate defense for their lives. Socrates suggests that the human soul is similarly hazarded when men endeavor to expound on the attributes of virtue without first knowing what virtue is. This, too, is an example of afterthought's supplanting forethought.<sup>100</sup>

Socrates is surely concerned about acting without adequate preparation. But Coby's view confronts two interpretative difficulties. Unless Socrates is constantly seeking to know about virtue with the goal of making statements about the features of virtue, his previous concern with virtue would not be instances of "forethought" about virtue. He says that he exercises *προμήθεια* over his "entire life"; the importance of *προμήθεια* for him seems not, then, to be in getting knowledge that is logically prior to some other knowledge, but rather to be living in a virtuous way. The second and related difficulty is that for Coby forethought is like a set of beliefs one might possess; but the history of the word's usage presents it as being more like an ability than some information. Naas realizes that *προμήθεια* cannot be simply a sort of preliminary thought or a kind of knowledge. He denies that Socratic *προμήθεια* is

mere calculation of future gains or losses based on past experiences, but an openness—perhaps even a skepticism—with regard to the future... a sort of knowledge of what is to be dreaded—a knowledge of what is not to be done.... more a cautionary voice than an advisory one... an attempt to envision and determine such ultimate questions as the nature of the Good and the relationship between human life and Necessity, human life and death.<sup>101</sup>

This account, that *προμήθεια* registers what is important and what is prohibited, rings truer with the history of the word. Of course, Naas' account is too abstract as well.

Socrates helps his friends largely through presenting them with their own views until they see that they are conflicted. He then has them decide which views seem to them most worth saving. If they cannot yet decide, he recommends further conversation. The *Protagoras* depicts Socrates taking this attitude toward both Hippocrates and Protagoras. He makes them see that they should not go forward with their intentions until they have reflected on the demands of

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<sup>100</sup> Coby 1987, 175-6. "To be epimethean in this dialogue is to be chronically afterthinking, not occasionally so [as Socrates was, at the dialogue's beginning, in thinking virtue is not teachable]." This explains how Socrates can be Promethean, for even though Prometheus too made an error, he does not *always* err, and is able to salvage the situation in the end. "Socratic philosophy is promethean because it responds to a crisis (for which it may be partially responsible, as was also Prometheus) that is brought about by epimethean sophistry."

<sup>101</sup> Naas 1995, 134-5. Naas observes further that in the *Gorgias*, Zeus had Prometheus strip people of their "foreknowledge (*προειδότης*) of their death" (*Grg.* 523d, cf. *PB* 250-253) so that people could not, in their wish to meet their final judgment well, calculate their good and evil deeds; they would have instead to act well throughout their lives. In this spirit, the forethoughtful conversationalist would look forward not to a particular ending of his discussion but to *aporia*; he would be eager to meet new challenges and be optimistic in confronting them (135-6).

goodness. This reflection—whether to study with Protagoras or not, or with what critical eye; whether to treat virtue as teachable, and as a single thing to be taught or not, and with what qualifications—is necessary for treating oneself and others as rational human beings. Socrates appears to believe in the *Protagoras* that one grows in conscientiousness through conversation. We have good reason to think that Socratic *prometheizing* is trying to be thoughtful in this broad and plausible and familiar and civically- and socially-relevant way, and that Socrates takes his overall task—in relation to but in some departure from Protagoras’—to be to encourage such conversational conscientiousness among his fellow citizens.

Understanding προμήθεια helps us understand the pun on Prometheus’ name. Protagoras’ Great Speech contrasts Prometheus with Epimetheus (320d4-322a2). This contrast does not reiterate Hesiod’s contrast between “Forethought” versus “Afterthought,”<sup>102</sup> and indeed says nothing about any purported ability to look into the future. In the Speech, Prometheus accedes to Epimetheus’ request that he be allowed to distribute the abilities to the new-formed animals. (That Epimetheus ultimately fails means that this Prometheus lacks clairvoyance, and even lacks the presumption of having it.) Epimetheus goes about the distribution. “To some he assigned strength without quickness; the weaker ones he made quick. ... And so on down the line, balancing his distribution (ἐπανισῶν ἔνεμεν), making adjustments (ἐμηχανάτο), and taking precautions (εὐλάβειαν) against the possible extinction of any of the races” (320e1-321a6, tr. Lombardo and Bell).<sup>103</sup> Epimetheus seems to have done so with reasoning and process, and indeed with εὐλάβειαν, which we saw connected to though not identified with προμήθεια at Soph. *El.* 994.<sup>104</sup> Yet Protagoras says that Epimetheus was “not very wise” (οὐ πάνυ τι σοφός) and “forgot himself” (ἔλαθεν αὐτόν) and “didn’t know what to do” (ἠπόρει ὅτι χρῆσαιτο) when he ran out of powers to distribute. But this lack of wisdom is not a lack of calculative ability. Protagoras is not judging his thinking ability: nobody criticizes the allotment among the animals. What Epimetheus fails to do is retain any abilities to distribute to the humans, the species he arrives at last (321c1-2). In time Epimetheus notices this. Prometheus does so as well, and realizing that the humans were about to be exposed to the world and its elements, decides to steal from the gods fire and “skillful wisdom” or “life-wisdom” (ἔντεχνον σοφίαν, 321d1, immediately glossed as τὸν βίον σοφίαν, 321d4). He is later punished for this transgression.

The story may seem to show the value of considering all of one’s needs before acting on any of them. But it has a more important lesson. The story admits that while many agents, like the good-natured, eager, and methodical Epimetheus, are thoughtful and capable of both complex instrumental reasoning and decent execution, they still lack a key trait.<sup>105</sup> This

<sup>102</sup> Cf. West 1966, 305-8.

<sup>103</sup> τοῖς μὲν ἰσχὸν ἄνευ τάχους προσήπεν, τοὺς δ’ ἀσθενεστέρους τάχει ἐκόσμηε... καὶ τὰλλα οὕτως ἐπανισῶν ἔνεμεν. ταῦτα δὲ ἐμηχανάτο εὐλάβειαν ἔχων μή τι γένος αἰστωθείη.

<sup>104</sup> Contrast Thorpe 1989, 60-66, who after acknowledging that Epimetheus is often read as working “deliberately and self-consciously, adapting means and ends towards a perfect conclusion,” failing exclusively in forgetting to deal with the humans, claims that Epimetheus failed from the start. He neglected to compare the number of species and powers he had to distribute; “he simply doled out willy-nilly what appears only in hindsight to be a thoughtful balance of powers” in a process that was nothing more than “a continual process of self-correction.” In giving out one power at a time, moving on to the next power only once he ran out of the first, Epimetheus showed he reacted only to the immediate circumstance. Using no calculation or paradigm he failed to exercise προμήθεια.

<sup>105</sup> Contrast this view with Beresford 2013, 144, who argues that “Epimetheus is the god who blunders and learns from his mistakes,” and that Prometheus (i.e., our cleverness) cannot deliver ethical wisdom and is the god of deliberation and reasoning; but deliberation is about means, not ends.



additional quality is concern for humans. We need to explain not the general fact that Epimetheus failed to distribute powers to every species, but the specific one that the only species he neglected was the humans. (Protagoras gives no reason given for his leaving them for last.)

Aeschylus calls Prometheus φιλανθρώπου (*PB* 11, 28); Plato has Socrates say he acts from φιλανθρωπίας (*Euthyp.* 3d7).<sup>106</sup> Prometheus throughout Plato models those skills appropriate for specifically human flourishing. In the *Philebus*, Prometheus' gift, which Socrates says he will try to practice (18b), is the ability to “lead the good human life,” as it happens, through a comprehensive practice of talking and reflecting.<sup>107</sup> In the *Statesman*, the same Promethean gift is associated with “teaching and education” and the capacity for self-sufficiency (269a-274d).

In saying that he uses Prometheus and that he *prometheizes*, then, Socrates seems not merely to be punning on Prometheus' name, making a joke at the expense of Protagoras' mythic speech. The Prometheus that Protagoras depicts strikes us as remarkably similar to Socrates, the man who worries over and cares most about people (ἀπορία οὖν ἐχόμενος... ἦντινα σωτηρίαν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ εὔροι, 321c6-d1), the one willing to go to trial and sacrifice himself for the good of the people (δίκη μετήλθεν, 322a1-3). Protagoras might, in contrast, seem rather more like Epimetheus, eager to distribute goods to all (cf. 317c10), inadequately thoughtful about the needs and capacities of humans. Socrates models himself on Prometheus by caring less to develop his skills of instrumental reasoning than his sensitivity to others, Protagoras included, and in this way taking as decisive to his actions the most important consideration: human wellbeing and integrity, others and much as his own.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Naas 1995, 121-2 with n3, who adds that neither wish to prostrate themselves before their judges and both hear the *gnothi seauton*. Kofman 1986, 27, points out that both acted as midwives, the former in the *Theaetetus* and the latter helping Zeus birth Athena daughter of Metis (Apollod. i. 3. §6), and like Prometheus Socrates too “frees men” and “invents *poroi* to get them out of *aporia* and lead them from darkness to light, encouraging them to liken themselves to the gods”; cf. Levine 1998, 97.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas 2006; that talking includes doing division and collection; the study of nature, mathematics, and all the *technai*; and the imagination and creation of harmony, unity, and goodness. Cf. Kofman 1986, 29-34.

<sup>108</sup> I am most grateful for the Promethean interest in and the extensive comments on this article from several anonymous referees; its inadequacies remain despite their best efforts and intentions.

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