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On a fragment falsely ascribed to Archilochus

By Henry Wood, Brooklyn, N.Y.

The eight fragmentary verses found on British Museum pap. 2652 A, of the middle of the third century B.C., are ascribed, apparently without exception in all editions, to Archilochus (fr. 56 A Diehl; 104 Lasserre; Page, Grk. Lit. Pap. I 374), on grounds of meter (trochaic tetrameter, like Archilochus fr. 56 D., of which, according to Körte, Arch. f. Pap.-F. 10 [1932] 43, they are a continuation), subject (as much as can be discerned from the mutilated state of the text), and dialect. Plausible as the ascription seems on these grounds, there are certain reasons for rejecting it, of which some (the essentially hypothetical nature of all such ascriptions, the seeming incoherency and clumsiness of the syntax, and the very peculiar use of *μεμνεώμεθα* in v. 4, a use we consider impossible in the archaic period for the meaning suggested and paralleled most closely only by such late (Hellenistic) usage as Callimachus fr. 263, 4 Pf.), are perhaps impossible either to prove or to disprove, but another, namely the occurrence of the verb *προμηθεσαι* in v. 7, we believe to be indisputable evidence of the inauthenticity of the fragment.

As Diehl notes in his app. crit., the verb is "adhuc inauditum", not found before this passage in Archilochus (taking the fragment for the moment as genuine), nor indeed after it for almost two centuries until Herodotus (and perhaps Hippocrates, though as it is difficult to determine the age of most works of the Hippocratican corpus, we are obliged to exclude them from consideration). The verb offers no particular difficulties of formation, being a denominative of a fairly common type¹. But it is precisely in its derivation from a substantival or adjectival stem that we find ourselves enmeshed by difficulties of a historico-linguistic order. Körte asserts that the verb "belongs to the old adjective *προμηθής*", but the adjective is itself a denominative, like *σαφής*, *ψευδής*, *ἄφανής*, *εὐγενής*, and there is some question as to just how "old" this adjective is. The difficulty, stated in its most general form, is two-fold: first, what is the stem of the paronyms beginning in *προμηθ-*; and secondly, how old can these derivations be, and to what period of the language may we assign their formation?

To begin with the second difficulty, and admitting in advance that our fragmentary knowledge of archaic Greek, both literary and colloquial, does not permit peremptory assertions as to the relative age of a specific word, we must remark that as far as our knowledge goes *προμηθής* is hardly to be considered an old adjective (viz., an archaic Ionic adjective, as Körte implies), for it is not found

¹ For formation and morphology, see P. Maas, KZ 60 (1932) 286; A. Körte, op. cit.; Wackernagel, Mus. Helv. 1 (1944) 229.

before Sophocles (El. 1078) and Thucydides (3, 82, etc.); that with the exception of Alcman fr. 64 P. (to be discussed below), *προμηθεΐα* is not found until the end of the Sixth or more likely beginning of the Fifth Century (Xenophanes, fr. 1 D. and Pindar I. 1, 40, etc.); and that the verb *προμηθεόμαι* is found first in Herodotus and perhaps contemporaneously in Hippocrates (if we except the supposed fragment of Archilochus). In fact, the only paronym of this group which is found earlier than Alcman and the early Fifth Century poets, is the mythological name Prometheus, from Hesiod on, itself apparently another denominative formation. In brief, the verb and adjective are historically the most recent formations from the stem (see below for more extended consideration of the word's history).

The question of what stem these words derive from brings us now to the heart of the problem, for the obvious reply, from *pro-mêth-, viz., *mêth-, is wrong. No such root exists in the Greek language. (To recur to a necessarily hypothetical IE. stem, represented only by these words in Greek, is simply an explanation of remotum per remotius.) The fact is, that all these denominative derivations are paronyms of the proper name, Prometheus, and that this name has no Greek etymon or stem, *except that ascribed to it by the context of the Prometheus myth in Hesiod*. For we can take the name morphologically as one of three things: either a real denominative form from an (otherwise unattested) root, like *ἰερεΰς*, *ἱππεΰς*, and such mythological names or cult epithets as Aidoneus, Bouleus, Eubouleus, Polieus, Aguius, Dorieus, Leneus, Antheus, etc.; or as a pseudo-denominative on the model of Toxeus (Hes. fr. 110, 4 Rz, a nonce-name for an obscure and no doubt apocryphal mythological person); or thirdly as another of the frequent non-Greek (and usually non-IE.) mythological names with termination in -eus, such as Idomeneus, Typhoeus, Eurystheus, Theseus (?), Perseus (?), Odysseus (?), Cretheus, Neleus, Peleus, Achilleus, Lynkeus, and Salmoneus. (We except Nereus from the list, as it is a back-formation, on the pattern of the other names, from *Nereides*: see H. Frisk, GEW s.v.) As such names as Nereus, Toxeus, and perhaps Aidoneus (the expanded form of Aides found in epic and poetical diction) show, the -eus termination is both a regular masculine denominative ending, and a convenient ending for a name of god or hero made up or formed by the mythological or mythologizing poet.

Because of the lack of a stem *mêth- in Greek, we can safely conclude that Prometheus was originally a name of the third sort, and that the Titan himself existed in Greek myth before Hesiod. But what his nature was before being taken up by the poet, it is impossible to say. The few later-attested non-hesiodic myths of Prometheus, as creator of man and father of Deucalion (this latter perhaps a later development, combining the Greek myth of a universal deluge and the new generation of men begotten by the only survivor, with the creation of mankind by Prometheus and Deucalion: see Apollod. 1, 7; Paus. 1, 30, 2. The two versions of the Deucalion story, according to the one of which he begets a new race of men, and to the other that he creates them miraculously from stones, are, as has often

been remarked, incompatible), are all too vague and undefined for us to determine with any assurance the outlines of the pre-hesiodic myth. As we have it from Hesiod, it is evidently an adaption of certain 'traditional' features and details, in a story which as told is designed only to impart Hesiod's own peculiar sense. This sense to a great extent hinges on Hesiod's etymon of the name Prometheus, as 'Forethought' ('care for', 'Vorsorge'), an etymon balanced and confirmed by the name of Prometheus' brother Epimetheus (whom we take to be an invention of Hesiod himself). The etymon of the name is to be analyzed as follows: its sense is complete in the element *προ-* (balanced and opposed by *ἐπι-* in Epimetheus). The second element is the non-existent **mêth-*, as if a hybrid of the roots *μητ-* and *ἔ-μαθ-* (for a similar double derivation of a non-Greek word from Greek stems essentially affecting the presentation of a myth, compare Hesiod's etymon of Titan, Th. 207–210), and this second element is actually no more than a correlative one, i.e., contingent on and supplementing the first part of the compositum, as in, e.g., the name Aphrodite (Th. 195–198) from *ἀφρός* and **ditê*, as if *-δυτή, δύνω*.

Prometheus' name in Hesiod is explained by his myth. He is one who cares for, provides for, protects, takes care of, mankind (as against Zeus who appears in the story as a sort of destroyer without regard for man). The sense 'fore-see' (viz., see into the future) is secondary to that of 'providing', though it is implicitly expressed in the contrast between Prometheus and Epimetheus. For even Epimetheus is not necessarily one who only 'understands too late' (*ὀπίσθοος*, Pindar, P. 5, 28) or 'afterwards', which sense is better expressed by *μετάνοια* (where however the idea of changing one's mind is perhaps what is primarily implied by the preposition), but also one whose understanding is 'contingent on' (*ἐπί*) the deed, who understands only on the basis of something already achieved and not to be undone. But to be Prometheus is to take care or make preparations against, which necessarily implies thinking about the future, but not foreseeing (foreknowing) it in a temporal sense (neither in Hesiod nor in Aeschylus does Prometheus know the future, except from inference on present knowledge, or as informed of it by another person—the secret of whom Zeus should not marry is told Prometheus by his mother in Aeschylus).

Prometheus then is he who takes care for the existence of mankind, in Hesiod by seeing to it that mankind is allotted the edible portions of the sacrificial animal and by stealing fire from heaven, and in Aeschylus by saving men from destruction and giving them civilization and its tools. His character as such is deduced from the *story* Hesiod tells of him, so that the *name* Prometheus is defined, a fortiori, by this story, and could therefore be used to designate the abstract quality so implied.

On the basis of these considerations, it is possible to posit the following historical development of the word. From, originally, a traditional mythological name of non-Greek origin, Prometheus verged, through Hesiod's telling of the myth, on

a semi-abstraction designating a quality. At this point the regular tendency in Greek towards denominative derivation, supported by the apparent denominative termination *-eus* in the name, took over, viz., the name could now be treated as a real denominative and other paronyms constructed on the apparent stem. The process can be traced in some detail. The feminine denominative in *-eia* corresponding to Prometheus was formed (like *ιερεύς / ιέρεια*, *ἄνδρῆς / ἄνθεια*, *βασιλεύς / βασίλεια*—the most pertinent parallel) to cover the more purely abstract (conceptual) meaning, and is first found in Alcman fr. 64: Tyche is the “sister of Eunomia and Peitho, and the daughter of Prometheia” (the father is of course Zeus)—the evident allegorization of which needs no comment. It is a sort of revision on Alcman’s part of a thought in Hesiod (Th. 901–902, Themis the mother of Eunomie, Dike, and Eirene), in a more egalitarian style, as befitted the poet of the Spartans, that community of *ἴσμοιοι* (Xen. Lac. 13, 1; Ar. Pol. 1306 b 30). “Success in (political, viz., social and civil) life is the result of Forethought (care and planning, prudence) and closely, indeed indissolubly, linked to Observance of Law and Obedience.” (For violence in a society of – admittedly exclusive – equals is by definition excluded.) The noun Prometheia here wavers between allegorical goddess and conceptual abstraction, a condition obtaining also with the goddesses in the Hesiod passage to which Alcman refers, and in general with most of Hesiod’s gods. For “many words, which were later taken as abstracts, were originally (in mythological poetry) proper names”². The formation in *-eia* of course parallels that of such Hesiodic divinities (all real denominatives from pre-existing Greek stems) as Thaleia, Antheia, Pontoporeia, Laomedea, etc., which exist side by side with certain non-Greek names of goddesses in *-eia*, as Rheia and Galateia.

The ambiguity as between proper name and abstract can now be directed back to the name Prometheus itself, and so we find it used by Aeschylus as an appellative, both noun (Prom. 86) and adjective (Suppl. 700: on the meaning, see below), while in Pindar both Prometheus and Prometheia are used, with a single conceptual sense, varying only in level of style (mythic or gnomic), not meaning: O. 7, 44: Aidos as daughter of Prometheus (cf. P. 5, 27: Delay as daughter of Epimetheus), N. 11, 45–46 *δέδεται γὰρ . . . ἐλπίδι γυνῆα προμαθείας δ’ ἀπόκεινται ῥοαί*, and I. 1, 40 *ὁ πονήσας δὲ νόω καὶ προμάθειαν φέρει*. The original reference of the word to the Prometheus of Hesiod’s myth begins to be lost sight of (that is, developed) in these examples, and after further prose abstraction of the noun away from the poetical myth, returns again only in the comic or colloquial paronym in Arist. Birds 1511 *προμηθικῶς*.

Prometheia is a quality pertaining only to man (Gorgias opposes *ἀνθρωπίνῃ προμήθειᾳ* to *θεοῦ προθυμίᾳ*, D-K⁵ II 289, 24), and from Alcman on we find it in an especially political connotation, being one of the essential qualities for good

² B. Snell, *Entdeckung d. Geistes* (Hamburg 1955, 3rd ed.) 303: see the entire passage for an illuminating discussion of the historical linguistic process from (mythological) name to designation of abstract qualities.

polity or the wise citizen (or ruler)—somewhat like prudence. This is the sense in Aeschylus, Suppl. 698ff., *φυλάσσοι . . . τιμὰς / τὸ δάμιον, τὸ πτόλιον κρατύνει / προμαθεὺς εὐκοινομήτις ἀρχά*³. To this quality conducive to good government Aeschylus opposes, in the same play the “strife that comes to a city *ἐξ ἀέλιπτων κἀπρομηθήτων*” (Suppl. 357 f.). One of the first occurrences of the adjective *προμηθής* (Thuc. 3, 82, 5) refers to the same quality of civil prudence (*μέλλησις προμηθής*), discredited in the stasis at Corcyra; and in the same author is also found a use of the neuter adjective with article as an abstract equivalent to the feminine (4, 92, 2), in the sense found, e.g., in Herodotus 3, 36 (advice to a reckless ruler, *ἀγαθὸν τοι πρόνοον εἶναι, σοφὸν δὲ ἢ προμηθίην*). The sense verges over to that of ‘prudence’, viz., ‘caution’ (Thuc. 4, 62, Hdt. loc. cit.), which is the meaning from which the sense of the verb *προμηθέομαι* goes out; so (in its earliest attested occurrences) Hdt. 3, 78, 5, and so to the sense of ‘respect’, Hdt. 2, 172, 5; 9, 108, 1. This in turn gives the new meaning to the feminine noun, ‘respect’ (Hdt. 1, 88, cf. Soph. OC. 332. 1048). In this latest development, the original sense of ‘caring for’, ‘taking thought for’, again emerges, so that the basic sense of the stem spirals back to its Hesiodic etymon.

To the history of the word, as we have traced it, the objection can be brought that for such a development of an abstract conceptual denominative from a mythological proper name no parallel can be found in Greek, and this we readily admit (for Themis, Metis, Mnemosyne, etc., are quite different, while the seemingly similar uses of *Μοῦσα* and *Σειρήν* always remained and were understood as semi-poetic metaphors or even synecdoche. Nor is the common phenomenon in modern languages, of things called by their place of origin [as damask, china, etc.] at all similar. It is possible however that the case for a similar development can be made for such words as Zephyrus, Boreas, and the like). But we see no other theory that will account for the historically attested development of the words in *promêth-.

Let us recapitulate this development as we have traced it. The name of the traditional mythological figure Prometheus, being of non-Greek origin, was by Hesiod’s telling of the myth transformed into a semi-abstract designation of quality. As such, it was taken to be a denominative, so that the process of grammatical paronomasia began, first with the formation of the feminine in -eia in Alcman, still as the name of a divinity there, but by the beginning of the Fifth Century used as an abstraction (Xenophanes, Pindar) side by side with the appellative use of Prometheus in Aeschylus and Pindar. The verb was an Ionic formation (half poetic, half scientific perhaps, like the Ionic development of *ἱστορήν / ἱστορέω*), of the Fifth Century, with development of meaning from ‘fore-thought’, ‘prudence’, to ‘care’, ‘take care’, ‘respect’; and last of all the adjective

³ Hermann’s conj. *προμαθίς*, accepted by Murray in his Oxford Text, is to be rejected, as much on account of the resultant cacophony of the repeated -is as because it is unnecessary grammatically and a hapax morphologically.

was formed, probably in Athens by an early sophist as a purely abstract formation. (Thus Körte's assertion that the verb is derived from the 'old' adjective is disproved at once by the fact that of all the paronyms of the stem, it is the adjective that was formed last.)

If this is right, as we think it is, then it is highly unlikely that the verb form *προμήθεσαι* could have been used in the Seventh Century by Archilochus. Add to this the almost impossible meaning which the context, as far as it can be made out, demands ('take heed', according to Page, *op. cit.*, but perhaps 'take care' of us, 'save' us, or 'see to it ...'⁴), and the conclusion is unavoidable that the fragment cannot be attributed to Archilochus or to any other poet of the early archaic period. Most likely (if we must venture to assign a time for the fragment's composition) it is part of a Hellenistic poem, and does not antedate the papyrus itself by many years, if at all.

⁴ See the commentary of Bonnard in the Budé text, who takes vv. 5ff. as addressed to a god.