

THE MEANING OF THE TERMS ΣΟΦΙΣΤΗΣ AND ΣΟΦΙΣΜΑ IN THE *PROMETHEUS BOUND*

The word σοφιστής that I will discuss in this paper occurs in the *Prometheus Bound* (henceforth *PB*) twice, both times with a negative connotation. In the first case, Kratos applies it to Prometheus as he urges hesitating Hephaestus to complete his mission (61–62):

καὶ τήνδε νῦν πόρπασον ἀσφαλῶς, ἵνα
μάθῃ σοφιστῆς ὢν Διὸς νωθέστερος.

A cursory look at this passage makes perfectly clear that the reason for Prometheus' punishment is his being a σοφιστής. At the same time, we know from the very first lines of the tragedy that Prometheus is being punished for having stolen fire (7–9):

τὸ σὸν γὰρ ἄνθος, παντέχνου πυρὸς σέλας,
θνητοῖσι κλέψας ὤπασεν. τοιάσδ' εἰς τοὶ
ἀμαρτίας σφε δεῖ θεοῖς δοῦναι δίκην...

The same motif is used in Hephaestus' address to Prometheus in the play's finale, where the word σοφιστής appears for the second time (944–946):

σὲ τὸν σοφιστήν, τὸν πικρῶς ὑπέρικρον,
τὸν ἔξαμαρτόντ' εἰς θεοὺς ἐφημέροις
πορόντα τιμάς, τὸν πυρὸς κλέπτῃν λέγω·

Here, σοφιστής and πυρὸς κλέπτῃς are paralleled even syntactically. Besides, the word σοφισμα occurs three times in the *PB* in three different meanings: in 459, its meaning is close to εὔρημα (459 καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων / ἔξηϋρον αὐτοῖς); in 470, it denotes a stratagem or an ingenious solution; and finally in 1011, its negative connotations are comparable to those of the term σοφιστής (ἀτὰρ σφοδρόνῃ γ' ἀσθενεῖ σοφίσματι); in the first two cases, the word is used by Prometheus, whereas in the last case it is addressed to him by Hermes (cf. 944).

Scholars have advocated a number of different opinions on the meaning of σοφιστής in the *PB*. Since the publication of Schmid's groundbreaking monograph,¹ most studies on the authorship and date of the *PB* have taken it for granted that a certain part of the tragedy's vocabulary alludes to ideas originating from the Sophistic movement. The influence of the Sophistic terminology on the language of the play is often regarded as so securely established that the author of one of the most recent comprehensive books on the *Prometheus* seems to be simply summarizing a universally known truism: "There is no room here for a full discussion of each term and each idea; nor is it needed, as nobody would deny that the *Prometheus* is extraordinarily rich in sophistic jargon".² Needless to say, Griffith considered both σοφιστής and σοφισμα as self-evidently belonging to this jargon. In his edition of the *PB*, Griffith continued the same line of interpretation, albeit less assertively. So while admitting that both earlier meanings of σοφιστής, 'wise man' and 'skilled craftsman', are applicable to Prometheus, he nevertheless points out that "Kratos' sarcastic tone seems also to convey the sense of 'sophist', 'quibbler', which was already in circulation by the later fifth century, as at Aristoph. *Clouds* 331, 1111".³

Among the studies that appeared after Griffith's monograph, one should particularly mention a book by R. Bees, in which the use of σοφιστής in the *PB* is discussed at some length.⁴ He postulates the sense of 'wise, knowledgeable man'⁵ for all instances of σοφιστής in the *PB* and argues that they are in keeping with Herodotus' use of the word with reference to such archaic sages as Solon, Pythagoras and Melampus. Prometheus is indeed distinguished by his omniscience, which he imparts to people. Besides, he knows the future and exceeds in this respect Zeus himself, who tries to force him to reveal the fatal secret. The problem, however, is how to explain the evident negative connotations in the uses of σοφιστής in the *PB*. One would probably agree

¹ W. Schmid, *Untersuchungen zum Gefesselten Prometheus*, Tübingen Beiträge 9 (Tübingen 1929).

² M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1977) 217.

³ M. Griffith (ed.), *Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1983) 95.

⁴ R. Bees, *Zur Datierung des Prometheus Desmotes*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 38 (Stuttgart 1993) 143–147.

⁵ This interpretation is not new. For instance, H. J. Rose, *A Commentary on the Surviving Plays of Aeschylus* (Amsterdam 1957) I, 313 ad *Prom.* 944, states that "here as in supr., 62, the word has no technical meaning but signifies one who has a reputation for or makes claims to wisdom or cleverness".

with Bees that line 944 conveys the “Ausdruck der Ungehaltenheit darüber, daß die Macht des Zeus versagt gegen den wissenden Prometheus”,⁶ since it has been made perfectly clear by this moment in the play that Prometheus is an omniscient prophet. Thus one could explain the negative sense of the word here by Hermes’ anger. But in the prologue scene (62), before Prometheus has even had a chance to utter a single word, such a context has not yet been established and the spectator, who is still fully ignorant of how the drama is going to develop, knows only that Prometheus is being punished for the theft of fire (7–9). The meaning ‘wise, knowledgeable man’ applied to the silent hero has thus no support in the context, and I would hesitate to take it as a kind of semantic prolepsis referring to the future development of the play.

Finally, G. Kerferd, in his classification of the early uses of the word σοφιστής, attributed to the instances of the term in the *PB* the sense of ‘contriver’ without any explanation of the origin of this meaning (see below).⁷

Before offering my own interpretation of the meaning of σοφιστής and σοφισμα in the *PB*, I would like to take a brief look at other uses of these terms in the fifth century BC Greek literature. The instances in question, apart from the cases that imply such neutral meanings as ‘poet’ or ‘musician’, fall into two distinct categories. The first one comprises certain cases of the term’s use in a negative, ironical, or even sarcastic sense. Here I would adduce the instances in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* (331, 1111, 1309) which are usually treated as having the negative sense of ‘sophist’, ‘quibbler’ (*LSJ* s. v. σοφιστής II. 2). Though it would be impossible to prove that the negative connotations in these cases imply the technical meaning ‘sophist’⁸ (that is why it is probably more reasonable to ascribe to them the earlier meaning ‘expert, specialist in something’), it seems to be quite evident that they reflect the Athenians’ negative reaction to the ideas and methods related to the Sophistic movement. In line 1111 the meaning of σοφιστής suggests some special training in rhetoric that Pheidippides is expected to acquire at the school where Socrates himself διδάσκει λέγειν (1105–1110). The comedy is generally focused on the New Education and its consequences (1309). In line 331, the term σοφισταί denotes a whole

⁶ Bees (n. 4) 146.

⁷ G. B. Kerferd, “The First Greek Sophists”, *CR* 64 (1950) 8.

⁸ The technical sense of ‘sophist’ is not attested before Xenophon and Isocrates.

group of different specialists including diviners, doctors and dithyrambic poets.⁹ The Clouds, the deities worshipped at the school, are said to feed them, while the highest degree they award to Prodicus and Socrates is that of the most prominent μετεωροσοφισταί (359–362). On the one hand, this Aristophanic hapax quite literally pinpoints Socrates' central preoccupations in the play. On the other, it conveys a further ironical sense of 'expert in ephemeral things, exponent of unsubstantial wisdom'. It may be that the common denominator that united all these different specialists in the eyes of an average Athenian was innovation to the detriment of the tradition, innovation that was conceived as groundless and idle. What also points in the same direction is the fact that Aristophanes was not the only comic writer who ridiculed such people.¹⁰ In other words, this kind of mocking had already become a commonplace in Attic comedy at least by the last quarter of the fifth century. It seems plausible that the word σοφισταί was applied not only to traditional experts but also to the new intellectuals whose activities secured the emergence of its technical sense in the first place.¹¹ Most of them were specialists in rhetoric, who not only demonstrated their art in public but also taught it for money. On the other hand, their contemporaries could take them for successors of both sages and natural philosophers of old because most of them both claimed to possess knowledge of ἀρετή and were interested in different sciences. Thus both early meanings of σοφιστής – 'wise man' and 'expert' – could be associated with the representatives of the new movement. For the purpose of this study, it is important to see that it is primarily with reference to these people and their activities that the word eventually fell into disrepute and acquired the negative sense of 'sophist, quibbler', which the later lexicographical tradition preserved in the following way: ἀπατεών· παρὰ τὸ σοφίζεσθαι· ὃ ἔστι λόγοις ἀπατᾶν.¹²

In Euripides, there are a few cases where the use of σοφιστής reflects contemporary intellectual tendencies. Hippolytus' remark in Eur.

⁹ K. J. Dover (ed.), *Aristophanes, Clouds* (Oxford 1968) 144, points out that in Aristophanes' times the word σοφιστής could still reflect an earlier meaning that was close to that of σεσοφισμένος, 'skilled in an art'.

¹⁰ C. Carey, "Old Comedy and the Sophists", in: D. Harvey and J. Wilkins (eds.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (London 2000) 419–436.

¹¹ "Intellectuals who were coming to be called *sophistai*, our 'sophists'", – K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1972) 111.

¹² Photius, *Suda* Σ 812.

Hipp. 921 (δεινὸν σοφιστὴν εἶπας, ὅστις εἶδ' φρονεῖν / τοὺς μὴ φρονοῦντας δυνατός ἐστ' ἀναγκάσαι) is a reaction to Theseus' pessimistic conclusion that men failed to succeed in the art of thinking though they advanced in technical progress: 919–920 ἐν δ' οὐκ ἐπίστασθ' οὐδ' ἐθηράσασθέ πω, / φρονεῖν διδάσκειν οἴσιν οὐκ ἔνεστι νοῦς. Despite the possibility to conceive σοφιστής in 921 simply as a specialist of some sort, it is necessary to take into account the field of specialization, and what is implied here as such is obviously teaching.¹³ If Theseus' words point to the contemporary innovations in education, they may be understood as his personal pessimistic appraisal of the very possibility of teaching wisdom. The fact that men failed to succeed in the art of thinking does not mean that they did not try to do so. On the contrary, οὐδ' ἐθηράσασθέ πω suggests that they did pursue it, though in vain. In this case Hippolytos' remark would mean that only a great (extraordinary) Sophist could instill the right way of thinking in those who are not familiar with it – implying, of course, that such an expert does not exist, and if he did, he would certainly make the imposters pale by comparison. It seems quite likely that the expression δεινὸς σοφιστής conveys the author's veiled sarcasm caused by his distrust to the contemporary innovations in education in general as well as to those who claim to practice the art of persuasion. Euripides uses this expression once again in *Suppliants* 902–903 in the context reminiscent of the contemporary debate about the relative value of 'the words' and 'the deeds':

οὐκ ἐν λόγοις ἦν λαμπρός, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀσπίδι
δεινὸς σοφιστὴς τῶν [τ'] ἀγυμνάστων σφαγεύς.¹⁴

Tydeus, according to this passage, is not an ἐν λόγοις σοφιστής¹⁵ – a phrase that would not strike one as particularly unusual – but, interestingly enough, an ἐν ἀσπίδι δεινὸς σοφιστής.¹⁶ It is impossible to appreciate properly the positive tone of this definition, which only serves to emphasize the limited value of speeches, unless it is seen within the

¹³ W. S. Barrett (ed.), *Euripides, Hippolytos* (Oxford 1964) ad v. 921.

¹⁴ Chr. Collard (ed.), *Euripidis Supplices I* (Groningen 1975).

¹⁵ Cf. the bragging speeches of the seven, which the messenger relates to Eteocles in Aeschylus, and his emphasis on the fact that the defenders of Thebes will show their strength in action without wasting any time on words; e. g., *Sept.* 556 f.

¹⁶ Collard (n. 14) II, ad loc., points out that “σοφιστής has here an untypically neutral or even favorable sense”, and contrasts this passage with *Hipp.* 921.

context of the fifth century's rhetoric with its fascination with proving mutually exclusive statements – a skill practiced already by Protagoras. This passage gives us an opportunity to see an interplay between the two different senses of σοφιστής that can be conceived along the lines of the λόγῳι / ἔργῳι dichotomy. On the one hand, the wording that the author uses here, ἐν λόγοις λαμπρὸς (σοφιστής), clearly places this opposition within the central intellectual concerns of the Sophistic era. On the other, it is quite symptomatic that it comprises a more concrete meaning of the term ('expert in some skill') and is applied here to the art of the warrior, which, as I will show below, is of great relevance in this context.

The examples belonging to this category demonstrate that the term σοφιστής by the last few decades of the fifth century had already acquired the negative connotations which afterwards came to be associated with its technical sense ('sophist'). For the purpose of this study, it is important to stress that this semantic development had an external reason (the activities of exponents of the new 'sophistic' ideas and their teaching methods) and that it took place within chronological limits that can be determined with a fair amount of certainty.

The second category includes usages that cannot be plausibly linked to the Sophists. Semantic variations within this group comprise such meanings as 'creator, demiurge' used with ironic overtones (Plat. *Rep.* 596 d), and 'originator, cause' (Eur. *Heraclid.* 993 σοφιστής πημάτων). The meaning of some instances of σόφισμα are close to 'invention' (Pind. *Ol.* 13. 17, *TrGF* adesp. fr. 470 Nauck² = Aesch. fr. 181 Radt), 'stratagem' (Eur. *Ph.* 1407 Θεσσαλὸν σόφισμα) as well as 'ruse' or 'cunning' (Soph. *Phil.* 14, cf. also the verb σοφίζομαι in line 77 used in the related sense 'to scheme, to contrive'). In the latter case, the meaning of σόφισμα and σοφίζομαι seems to display a high degree of ambivalence: depending on one's perspective, it can mean either 'ingenuity' or 'harmful scheme'. Consider, for instance, the following two passages from Sophocles' *Philoctetes*:

13–14 μὴ καὶ μάθημι μ' ἤκοντα, κάκχέω τὸ πᾶν
σόφισμ' τῷ νιν αὐτίχ' αἰρήσειν δοκῶ.

77–78 ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο δεῖ σοφισθῆναι, κλοπεὺς
ὅπως γενήσῃ τῶν ἀνικῆτων ὅπλων.

Here the word σόφισμα (a fraudulent trick that Odysseus contrived in order to enable Neoptolemus to take possession of Philoctetes' arms)

does not have any negative connotations. On the contrary, it seems to be evaluated positively as something that has to be done in order to secure the victory over the Trojans. The same ambiguity is characteristic of the two instances of σόφισμα in the *PB* (470 ‘means to find a way out’ – 1011 ‘crafty deceit’) as will be argued below. On the other hand, if Philoctetes were to apply this term to Odysseus, it would certainly sound like a curse, much in the same way as it does in the *PB* when used by Kratos and Hermes.

Obviously, the meaning of σοφιστής and σόφισμα in these passages could not be explained by the influence of some external factors, as in the first category. Here, we are most likely dealing with a natural semantic development that took place before the term σοφιστής was associated with the new school.

There is no common opinion as to what the word σοφιστής had meant in the earlier period. According to the broadly accepted view, that is followed in particular by *LSJ*, there were three stages in semantic development of the term: 1) master of one’s craft, adept, expert; 2) wise, prudent or statesmanlike person; 3) a sophist, one who gave lessons for money. This division is primarily based on the obvious assumption that the semantic range of σοφιστής overlapped with that of the etymologically related abstract noun σοφία and adjective σοφός, and presupposes a direct correspondence between the original meaning of σοφιστής and those of σοφός / σοφία.

It is well known that the earliest occurrence of the word σοφία in the *Iliad* designates carpentry, or rather, shipbuilding (*Il.* 15. 412 f.):

τέκτονος..., ὅς ῥά τε πάσης
εἶδει σοφίης ὑποθημοσύνησιν Ἀθήνης.

Other early examples conclusively demonstrate that the epithet σοφός can be applied to those who possess any kind of practical skills:

Margites 2. 2 Allen:

τὸν δ’ οὐτ’ ἄρ’ σκαπτῆρα θεοὶ θέσαν οὐτ’ ἀροτῆρα
οὐτ’ ἄλλως τι σοφόν. πάσης δ’ ἡμάρτανε τέχνης.

Alcm. 2. IV. 5–7 Page – Davies:

...Κά[στωρ τε πῶλων
ὠκέων] δματῆ[ρε]ς [ἰ]ππότα[ι σοφοί καὶ Πωλυ-
δεύκης] κυδρός.

Theogn. 901–902 West:

ἔστιν ὁ μὲν χείρων, ὁ δ' ἀμείνων· ἔργον ἐκάστου·
οὐδεὶς δ' ἀνθρώπων αὐτὸς ἅπαντα σοφός.

Thus the original meaning of σοφία seems to be equivalent to ‘being versed in any kind of τέχνη’, including music and poetry (*Hymn. Herm.* 483 τέχνηι καὶ σοφίηι δεδαημένος, Sol. 13. 52 West). The expansion of the semantic range of σοφία from (1) ‘being skilled in a particular craft’, to (2) ‘wisdom concerning more general issues, especially politics’, and further to (3) ‘theoretical and philosophical wisdom’, did not involve a consecutive succession of three distinct stages but ultimately resulted in a rich polysemy within which all these meanings could easily coexist. Both literary and epigraphical sources from the fifth century BC unequivocally reveal that the words σοφία and σοφός continue, like in Homer, to be applied to different kinds of skills and crafts, such as, for instance, that of a charioteer (Pind. *Pyth.* V, 115), a helmsman (Aesch. *Supp.* 770), a sculptor (Friedländer 47, 58, 169), or a tailor (*ibid.*, 152):¹⁷

Πραξιδικὴ μὲν ἔρξεν, ἐβούλευσεν δὲ Δύσηρις
εἶμα τόδε· ξυνή δ' ἀμφοτέρων σοφίη.

The assumption that the original meanings of the neologisms σοφίζεσθαι, σοφιστής and σόφισμα correspond to the semantic range of σοφία seems almost inevitable. What we deal with here is but a structural expansion of the original lexical cluster which leads to a series of new morphological formations allowing one to convey meanings that previously could only be expressed periphrastically. Σοφίζομαι means ‘I practice the skill denoted by the noun σοφία’, σοφιστής is a person whose activity can be denoted by the verb σοφίζομαι, whereas σόφισμα is the result of the activity described by that verb. Quite logically, the noun σοφιστής has to function as a synonym to σοφός. Indeed, there is a lexicographical tradition that points to the synonymy of σοφιστής and ὁ σοφός.¹⁸ Since the meaning implied here seems to be closer to ‘wise man, philosopher’ than to the original

¹⁷ P. Friedländer (ed.), *Epigrammata: Greek Inscriptions in Verse* (Berkeley 1948).

¹⁸ Phot. Σ 528: τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν σοφιστῆς ὁ σοφός ἐκαλεῖτο, cf. Suda Σ 812.

archaic sense of the word,¹⁹ the synonymy demonstrated by this evidence reflects a more advanced stage of semantic development. On the other hand, another tradition drawn from the same sources states that σοφιστής means πᾶς τεχνίτης.²⁰ This would correspond to the primary sense of σοφία / σοφός.

However, the main problem here is that the evidence for the applicability of σοφιστής to the sphere of professional craftsmanship is much more limited than for its cognates σοφία and σοφός. In the earliest attested instances, the word invariably means either a poet or a musician rather than πᾶς τεχνίτης.

This fact, as well as some uses of the term in relation to the famous wise men and Pre-Socratic philosophers (none of the extant examples is, however, earlier than Herodotus), served as a foundation for an alternative view on the early history of the term offered by Kerferd.²¹ He claims that, in distinction to σοφία and σοφός that could be used to designate a skill of any sort, the *nomen agentis* σοφιστής developed as a synonym of the more elevated meaning of σοφός as a wise man, or a keeper of abstract knowledge. Kerferd bases this conclusion on a careful analysis of the term's usage both in archaic and classical Greek literature up to the mid-fifth century BC, as well as in later sources that seem to reflect its 'pre-Sophistic' semantics. The instances that he has collected fall into the following categories: (1) poets, including Homer and Hesiod, (2) musicians and rhapsodes, (3) seers, (4) the seven sages, (5) other ancient wise men, (6) Pre-Socratic philosophers, and finally (7) "contrivers, often with suggestion of mysterious power". The great majority of the evidence that he adduces derives from later authors, and only four of the instances cited by him belong to the earliest directly attested stage of the word's history, all of them used in relation to poets and musicians. This fact alone should warn us that sweeping generalizations about the semantic evolution of a word are often made extremely precarious by the vagaries of transmission.

¹⁹ This tradition most likely goes back to Diogenes Laertius, 1. 12: οἱ δὲ σοφοὶ καὶ σοφισταὶ ἐκαλοῦντο· καὶ οὐ μόνον <οἷτοι>, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ σοφισταί. Both the substantival use of the term and the opposition between οἱ σοφοί as a definite group and the poets suggest that the term points here to sages or philosophers.

²⁰ Phot. Σ 528; Suda Σ 813. Hesych. Σ 1371 πᾶσαν τέχνην σοφίαν ἔλεγον, *ibid.*, 1367 σοφία: πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ ἐπιστήμη.

²¹ Kerferd (n. 7) 8–10.

Kerferd's construct has a few more serious flaws. (1) He ignores the evidence of the lexicographical tradition that σοφιστής could mean πᾶς τεχνίτης, as well as a number of later instances in which σοφιστής is used as a synonym of σοφός in its primary archaic meaning ('craftsman', 'expert'). For instance, οἶδε τὴν ἰππεΐαν σοφισταί (Ael. *NA* 13. 9) can be juxtaposed with ἰπ[π]οσύναν τε σοφῶι (Friedländer 74) or with ἰππόται σοφοί (Alcm. fr. 2. IV. 5–6 Page–Davies). According to Alexis (fr. 153. 14 K.–A.), even a cook could be called σοφιστής. In the same manner, the skill of a tailor could be described as σοφία (see above). In Eur. *Supp.* 902–903, the warrior is called σοφιστής, while the expression Θεσσαλὸν σόφισμα (Eur. *Ph.* 1407 f.), 'Thessalian stratagem', comes from sports²² and thus reveals one more profession or skill that the word can denote. (2) Contrary to Kerferd's claim, the instances that he has collected are far from corresponding to a single unifying concept ('a sage, or a keeper of knowledge in the early society'). Whereas poets from Homer to the fifth century were firmly associated in Greek thought with the idea of wisdom, one would probably hesitate to attribute the same kind of wisdom to musicians. The same is true of diviners. It is quite significant that the word τέχνη, which was regularly applied to both musicians and diviners, does not seem to have been used with reference to poets. The last group of examples that comprises such senses as 'creator' (in Plat. *Rep.* 596 d, σοφιστής is used ironically; however, the irony in this context seems to indicate that the word could be used in this sense quite neutrally too), 'cause' (of misfortunes, Eur. *Heraclid.* 993), and finally 'liar', Aesch. *PB* 62, 944. Obviously, one cannot deduce any of these meanings from the idea of abstract wisdom. (3) Kerferd leaves out of consideration the noun σόφισμα, whose meaning in Pindar as well as in *PB* 459 and *TrGF* adesp. fr. 470 Nauck² (see below) is close to εὔρημα. Besides, the meaning of the verb σοφίζομαι, attested four times in literature before 480 BC, is not as uniform as Kerferd presents it. Only two of the attested instances refer to the poetic art (Ibycus, S 151. 23 Page–Davies, Theogn. 19 West), while the other two, in my opinion, do not corroborate Kerferd's conclusions.

1. Hes. *Op.* 649:

οὔτε τι ναυτιλίας σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν

²² E. K. Borthwick, "Two Scenes of Combat in Euripides", *JHS* 90 (1970) 17–21.

Kerferd postulates that the verb σοφίζομαι here refers to specialized knowledge rather than to a particular skill. If we were to agree with this assumption, we would have to suppose that in Hesiod's lifetime the theory and the practice of seafaring constituted two separate subjects. This, however, is hardly the case even nowadays. Hesiod clarifies this point himself. The verse that I have just quoted occurs at the beginning of the passage in which the poet tells about the laws of the sea in the following context (648–651):

δείξω δὴ τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,
οὔτε τι ναυτιλίας σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν.
οὐ γάρ πώ ποτε νηὶ γ' ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον,
εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὐβοίαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος...

The phrasing of v. 650 clearly shows that the main reason why Hesiod does not consider himself versed in the art of seafaring (σεσοφισμένος ναυτιλίας) is that he has no experience in it. Σεσοφισμένος ναυτιλίας is thus comparable to a κυβερνήτης σοφός (Archil. 211. 1 West, Aesch. *Supp.* 770). In order to become one, all one needs is special knowledge based primarily on experience, whereas seasonal changes of the sea are easily available to a non-professional observer, such as the poet himself.

2. IG I³ 766 = I² 678 = Friedländer 134:

[ἐσθλὸν] τοῖσι σοφοῖσι σο[φ]ί[ζε]σθ[αι] κ[α]τ[ὰ] τέχνην[·]
[ὅς γάρ] ἔχει τέχνην, λώ[ι]ο[ν] ἔχ[ει] βίοτον[·].

[it is well] for the skilled craftsmen to show their cunning according to their craft, for who possesses a craft possesses a better [life].

According to Kerferd, the verb σοφίζομαι may refer in this case to the art of a poet or a sage. The following arguments can be used to undermine this interpretation. First of all, this inscription accompanied a material offering to a deity. As Friedländer aptly remarks, the pedestal on which the quoted text is inscribed could have supported a specimen of the dedicator's craft.²³ To a certain extent, this circumstance explains the reason why the word τέχνη is not specified here, as would normally

²³ The inscription on the front of the stone states: [- - ἀνέθεκε]ε Ἀθηναῖαι δεκάτ[εν].

be the case: the particular kind of the craft practiced by the dedicator might have been made clear by the very character of his offering. Furthermore, βίον here can only mean material wealth, which is directly linked to practicing a certain craft. A close analogy to this kind of interrelation between craft and wellbeing can be found in Solon (13. 49–52 West):

ἄλλος Ἀθηναίης τε καὶ Ἡφαίστου πολυτέχνεω
 ἔργα δαεὶς χειροῖν ξυλλέγεται βίον,
 ἄλλος Ὀλυμπιάδων Μουσέων πάρα δῶρα διδαχθεὶς,
 ἡμερτῆς σοφίης μέτρον ἐπιστάμενος...

It seems to be highly symptomatic that Solon here clearly separates those who earn their living by manual labor from a poet, whom he describes as “knowing the measure of desirable wisdom”. Thus, whether or not we agree with Friedländer’s hypothesis that the dedicator of this inscription was a sculptor, it is fairly obvious that he belonged to those who earned their living by a handicraft.

If we now reconsider Kerferd’s concept, we will immediately realize that two of the four earliest instances of σοφίζομαι do not fit into the categories into which he subdivides the semantic development of the word. On the contrary, they clearly indicate that both this verb and its derivatives had the same concrete meaning as σοφός / σοφία, namely ‘to practice a specific skill or craft’. Another early example of this meaning that has so far been largely ignored can be found in Pindar. In *Ol.* 13. 17 (464 BC) he mentions ἀρχαῖα σοφίσματα of Corinth, which include the invention of such diverse things as the dithyramb (18–19), the bridle (20) and the adornment of the temple with a double pediment (21–22). Achievements in poetry and music are clearly juxtaposed here with achievements in more practical areas such as horse-grooming (cf. Friedländer 74 ἰπ[π]οσύναν τε σοφῶι) and glyptic (on the epithet σοφός used in epigraphical texts with regard to sculptors, see above). Obviously, these instances are perfectly in keeping with the original sense of σοφός / σοφία. That Pindar uses σοφίσματα as a synonym of εὐρήματα is made absolutely clear by the text (16–17 S.–M.):

πολλὰ δ’ ἐν καρδίαις ἀνδρῶν ἔβαλον
 ἾΩραι πολυάνθεμοι ἀρ-
 χαῖα σοφίσμαθ’. ἅπαν δ’ εὐρόντος ἔργον.

Thus σοφίσμα as a product of a particular craft can become εὐρημα – an invention marking a progress in a certain area. The word σοφιστής

used in this meaning would become close to εὔρετής (πρῶτος εὔρετής) and to δημιουργός, as it is used in Plato (*Rep.* 596 c–d).²⁴

Let us now turn to the use of σοφισμα in the *PB*. In verse 459, among Prometheus' inventions that are said to have improved the life of the humans, that of the number is mentioned:

καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων,
ἔξηϋρον αὐτοῖς...

This sentence occurs in the catalogue of Prometheus' gifts to the humans (457–506), which is summed up in 506: πᾶσαι τέχναι βροτοῖσιν ἐκ Προμηθέως. This list includes various achievements of civilization, from domestication of wild animals to healing, astronomy, and the art of prophecy, all of which are described by synonymously used terms μηχανήματα (469), τέχναι and πόροι (477). As we have seen, Pindar uses the word σοφίσματα in the same meaning. For this reason, the mention of σοφίσματα in 459 allows to understand it here as another close synonym of εὔρηματα, along with μηχανήματα, τέχναι and πόροι. As an aside, I would like to point out the fact that the expression ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων with regard to the number is reproduced verbatim in the unplaced fragment which is often attributed to Aeschylus' *Palamedes* (*TrGF* adesp. fr. 470 Nauck² = Aesch. fr. 181 Radt). Finally, the word σοφίσματα is used as a synonym of εὔρηματα in *Ar. Plu.* 160 f. (τέχναι δὲ πᾶσαι διὰ σὲ καὶ σοφίσματα / ἐν τοῖσιν ἀνθρώποισιν ἐσθ' ἠύρημένα), in a passage that could be regarded as a parodic echo of the *Prometheus* catalogue.

In the catalogue of Prometheus' beneficent deeds, the word σοφισμα occurs once more, this time with a slightly different meaning, which gives us a rare opportunity to trace the mechanism of the term's gradual semantic transformation (469–471):

τοιαῦτα μηχανήματ' ἔξευρὼν τάλας
βροτοῖσιν αὐτὸς οὐκ ἔχω σοφισμ' ὅτῳ
τῆς νῦν παρούσης πημονῆς ἀπαλλαγῶ.

²⁴ ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ οὗτος χειροτέχνης οὐ μόνον πάντα οἶός τε σκεύη ποιῆσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐκ τῆς γῆς φυόμενα ἅπαντα ποιεῖ καὶ ζῶα πάντα ἐργάζεται, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ ἑαυτὸν, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτοις γῆν καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν οὐρανῶι καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἄιδου ὑπὸ γῆς ἅπαντα ἐργάζεται. – Πάνυ θαυμαστόν, ἔφη, λέγεις σοφιστήν.

Having invented various ways of improving human life, Prometheus cannot escape his own fate. Here we are dealing with a different meaning of *σόφισμα*, ‘cunning stratagem, solution’. For the sake of convenience, we could call this meaning ‘subjective’, and the meaning that we discussed above (‘useful invention or discovery’) ‘objective’. The bitter irony of the quoted passage is that the ‘objective’ meaning of *σόφισμα* becomes invalid subjectively – for Prometheus himself. What follows is that this ‘subjective’ connotation can be considered an integral part of the word’s semantics. The ‘subjective’ meaning of *σόφισμα* (‘a solution, a means of solving a problem, and hence, a cunning stratagem’) can be determined only by the context, which enables the author to express subtle irony based on a play with the term’s different senses. The same is true of various synonyms of *σόφισμα* used in the *PB*.

objective meaning	subjective meaning
πόρος	
477 οἶας ... πόρους ἐμησάμην	59 δεινὸς γὰρ εὐρεῖν κάξ ἀμηχάνων πόρον
μηχάνημα	
469 τοιαῦτα μηχανήματ' ἐξευρών	989 f. οὐκ ἔστιν αἴκισμ' οὐδὲ μηχανήμ', ὅτωι προτρέπεται με Ζεὺς γεγωνήσαι τάδε
τέχνη	
477 οἶας τέχνας ... ἐμησάμην	87 ὅτωι τρόπωι τῆσδ' ἐκκυλισθήσῃ τέχνης. 514 τέχνη δ' ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῶι ²⁵

²⁵ The obvious meaning of this gnome is that ingenuity in finding a way out of every conceivable impasse, which even Prometheus’ executioner attributes to him (59 δεινὸς γὰρ εὐρεῖν κάξ ἀμηχάνων πόρον), is much less powerful than necessity. According to Griffith ([n. 3] 179 f.), however, Prometheus’ intelligence is opposed here to Zeus’ violence. The following verses can serve to invalidate this assumption:

515–516 Χο. τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστροφός;

Πρ. Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἑρινύες.

Here ἀνάγκη is a synonym of *πεπρωμένη*, and even Zeus is absolutely powerless before its might:

517–518 Χο. τούτων ἄρα Ζεὺς ἐστὶν ἀσθενέστερος;

Πρ. οὐκ οὖν ἄν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην.

Prometheus knows that a long torture awaits him and that any attempts to change the state of affairs by cunning are pointless. G. Italie, *Index Aeschyleus* (Leiden ²1964) 20, who also interprets ἀνάγκη as *fatum*, ascribes to τέχνη the general sense of *peritia*, *scientia*. However, even a brief look at how the word τέχνη is normally used demonstrates conclusively that in the objective sense of ‘skill, art’ it is always specified by the context what kind of skill or art is implied, whereas in the meaning of ‘cunning, deceit’ it is used without its formulaic epithet *δολίη* from a fairly early point on.

All these words have a double meaning: (1) an ‘objective’ one – either a means of achieving an objectively useful result (τέχνη, πόρος) or this result itself (σόφισμα, μηχανήμα), and (2) a ‘subjective’ one – a solution of a daunting impasse, or a stratagem required to find such a solution. The second meaning can easily acquire a negative overtone close to ‘a malicious scheme’, or ‘a trap set up against someone in one’s own interest’. As a typical illustration of this meaning one can adduce the use of σόφισμα and σοφίζομαι in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*. The word σόφισμα is used with the same meaning in the *PB* 1011:

ἀτὰρ σφοδρύνηι γ’ ἀσθενεῖ σοφίσματι.

This is what Hermes says to Prometheus, who refuses to unveil the secret of Zeus’ fatal marriage. According to Hermes, and hence according to Zeus too, Prometheus’ σόφισμα is a cunning scheme that he is employing to liberate himself. It consists in his claim that he can reveal the secret of Zeus’ future fall, which he supposedly knows, only upon his liberation.

This duality is no doubt inherent in the original semantics of the entire lexical group that we have been discussing here: words that denote an activity directed towards achieving a useful result can simultaneously mean something like ‘deceitful machination’ or ‘resourceful sneakiness’. This duality particularly comes to the fore in epic poetry. The verb μηχανάομαι is attested with an ‘objective’ meaning only once (‘to construct’ – *Il.* 8. 177 τείχεα μηχανόωντο), whereas there are innumerable cases where its meaning is clearly ‘subjective’ (‘to plan’, ‘to design’, especially in formulaic collocations with ἀτάσθαλα (*Il.* 11. 659, Hes. *Op.* 241), κακά (*Od.* 3. 213), ἀείκεα (*Od.* 20. 394). The same meaning (‘cunning’, ‘inventiveness’) is attested in Odysseus’ standard epithet πολυμήχανος – ‘of many devices’, ‘of many resources’. The word μηχανή first occurs in Hesiod, where it also means ‘a cunning trick’ (*Th.* 146, ἰσχὺς δ’ ἠδὲ βίη καὶ μηχαναὶ ἦσαν ἐπ’ ἔργοις). The ‘objective’ meaning (‘device’, ‘contraption’) in extant literature is first attested in Aeschylus (*Pers.* 114 λαοπόροις τε μηχαναῖς, 722 μηχαναῖς ἔξευξεν Ἑλλης πορθμόν), which by no means implies that it had not been used this way before. It is quite obvious that the ‘subjective’ meaning is secondary. The situation is slightly different for τέχνη, although the ‘objective’ meanings generally predominate here as well. ‘Objectively’, τέχνη can mean a skill of any kind – a smith’s (*Od.* 3. 433, 8. 327, 11. 613; Hes. *Th.* 863, cf. the standard epithet of Hephaestus

κλυτοτέχνης, *Il.* 1. 571), a carpenter's (*Il.* 3. 61), or a musician's. The 'subjective' meaning is attested not only in the epic formula δολίη τέχνη (*Od.* 4. 455, 529; *Hes. Th.* 160, 540, 547, 560; *Hymn. Herm.* 76) but also in cases where the word is used independently (*Hes. Th.* 496; *Hymn. Herm.* 317; *Batrach.* 116 and in subsequent tradition).

To sum up, our analysis of the scanty evidence for the early history of σοφίζομαι – σοφιστής – σόφισμα has shown that these terms do possess 'objective' meanings determined by the original semantics of σοφία: 'to practice a certain craft', 'a skillful craftsman', 'a product of a craft'. Apparently, it can be any conceivable skill: the evidence at our disposal points to musicians, poets, sculptors, helmsmen, warriors, charioteers, physicians, and cooks. At the same time, the fact that σόφισμα could mean 'a cunning trick' and σοφιστής 'a deceitful schemer' allows us to postulate for these terms an inherent semantic duality, similar to the one attested for the earliest usages of μηχανή (μηχανάομαι) and τέχνη. This duality is a result of an inherent semantic development. The subjective meanings could therefore appear at the earliest stages of the words' use. I would remind that the earliest instance of μηχανή in the objective sense is found in Aeschylus, while its subjective uses are known from Homer on.

After adding a few necessary correctives to the material pertaining to the earliest history of the word σοφιστής collected by Kerferd, one can divide it into two major categories that broadly correspond to the first two of the three hypothetical stages of the term's development (above p. 33): (1) a skillful craftsman; (2) wise, prudent or statesmanlike man. Photius' evidence that the word σοφιστής could refer to any craftsman, as well as usages that point to practitioners of particular crafts (musicians, rhapsodes, poets, seers, warriors, cooks, charioteers, and physicians), would belong to the first category. Some of the subcategories could be further illustrated by the early instances of the verb σοφίζομαι used with regard to a helmsman and a sculptor, as well as by those of the noun σόφισμα, which point to an additional line of the term's semantic development ('innovator, inventor, creator'). Finally, 'subjective' meanings of σοφιστής would also fall in this category.

I would like to make some observations about the interrelation between different stages of the term's semantic development. It appears to me quite likely that the first two stages delineated above coexisted up to a certain point in time, as is also the case with the adjective σοφός, where the specialization in accordance to particular τέχνηαι was always determined by the context. For this reason, it would be more advisable

to speak of categories rather than of consecutive stages. The word began to be applied to the new ‘sophistic’ intellectuals during the second half of the fifth century BC mainly because most of them were recognized as experts in rhetoric. On the other hand, the members of the new movement claimed to be knowledgeable in all manner of things, including virtue, and this connected them directly with archaic sages. Thus it is quite likely that both of the earlier meanings of the word σοφιστής contributed to the formation of its technical meaning, which was probably not completed until the very end of the century. The reason why the word acquired the negative connotations of verbal acrobatics devoid of meaningful content and, generally, ‘sophistry’ has to do with the character of the Sophists’ teaching as well as with their emphatic interest in rhetoric. It inevitably affected the use of the term outside the strictly technical ‘sophistic’ context. This explains why after a certain point it was so rarely applied to philosophers. The Sophists’ bad reputation seems to have exerted some influence on the word’s use in other senses too. It appears to me quite symptomatic that there is not a single instance in the fourth century Greek literature where the word σοφιστής would refer to a poet or a musician, as it customarily did before – from Ibycus to Euripides. On the whole, there seems to be only one instance of the ‘objective’ meaning of the word in literature that survives from the fourth century (Alex. 153. 14 b K.–A.). However, the use of σοφιστής in this sense in later sources indicates that in colloquial language it continued to be used despite the fact that in literature it might have been avoided or even, as it were, tabooed.

Turning back to the use of σοφιστής in the *PB*, I am now in a position to corroborate my initial, rather intuitive, understanding of the passages in which it occurs. Prometheus, whom Hermes calls τὸν σοφιστήν, τὸν ἑξαμαρτόντ’ εἰς θεούς, τὸν πυρὸς κλέπτην (944–946), is punished for a particular crime against the gods, namely for his clever use of stealing fire from them. In this respect, Prometheus is virtually indistinguishable from his Hesiodic prototype. It is also worth pointing out that the reason for the second punishment inflicted on Prometheus is not his lengthy tirades, in which he expresses opposition to Zeus throughout the entire play, but his refusal to give away the secret that could have fatal consequences for Zeus’ absolute power, that is to say, the cunning trick by means of which Prometheus, in Zeus’ opinion, was trying to blackmail him in order to achieve his liberation. Prometheus the σοφιστής is much closer to ancient epic schemers, particularly to his Hesiodic prototype, than to such characters as the Odysseus of Sophocles’

Philoctetes: whereas Odysseus relies on deceitful speeches in order to achieve his goal, Prometheus' trick is, as it were, a pure 'sleight of hand' (109 ναρθηκοπλήρωτον δὲ θηρῶμαι πυρὸς / πηγὴν κλοπαίαν, as in Hesiod, *Th.* 566 κλέψας ἀκαμάτοιο πυρὸς τηλέσκοπον ἀυγὴν / ἐν κοίλωι νάρθηκι).

One can interpret *PB* 61 f. (ἵνα) μάθη σοφιστῆς ὢν Διὸς νωθέσ-τερος along the same lines too. Griffith proposes to understand σοφισ-τῆς as referring only to Prometheus and to connect the participle ὢν with both σοφιστῆς and νωθέστερος (he may learn, sophist that he is, that he is more stupid than Zeus).²⁶ However, it is more plausible to see in this passage a comparison between Prometheus and Zeus in their capacity as σοφισταί.²⁷ If we assume that σοφιστῆς is used here in the same sense as in the previous case ('a schemer, deceiver, stealer of fire'), Kratos' words will simply confirm the fact that Prometheus failed to fool Zeus. The meaning of verses 61 f. will be then as follows: "(in order that he may know) that he is a more stupid (i. e., less skillful) deceiver than Zeus". This would perfectly correspond to the moral of Hesiod's version of the story, which stresses the utter impossibility for anyone – even Prometheus – to deceive Zeus (*Th.* 613–616):

ὣς οὐκ ἔστι Διὸς κλέψαι νόον οὐδὲ παρελθεῖν.
οὐδὲ γὰρ Ἰαπετιονίδης ἀκάκητα Προμηθεὺς
τοῖό γ' ὑπεξήλυξε βαρὺν χόλον, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης
καὶ πολὺδριν ἐόντα μέγας κατὰ δεσμὸς ἐρύκει.

This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that Prometheus is absolutely silent when Kratos addresses these words to him and that the only reason for his punishment is the theft of fire, which is explicitly mentioned at the very beginning of the prologue and which the spectator would know from the traditional myth anyway.

Taking into account all that I have said above concerning the semantic development of the word σοφιστῆς, I would like to stress that there seems to be no compelling reason to project the negative connotations that the term acquired as a reaction to the Sophistic movement in the second half of the fifth century BC onto its meaning in the *PB*. On the contrary, the archaic character of the contexts in which the word is

²⁶ Griffith (n. 3) 95.

²⁷ Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge 1971) 33: "the duller sophist than Zeus".

used in the *PB*, as well as the similarity between the central actions performed by Prometheus in the play (the stealing of fire and the refusal to unveil the fatal secret, both of which are severely punished by the gods) and those of cunning schemers in epic, seems to be quite appropriate to Aeschylus' epoch. There is one more nuance that can serve to support my claim. I argued above that the bad reputation enjoyed by the Sophists had to exert some influence on the use of the related terms in the sense belonging to the first category. As a consequence of this influence, one apparently tried to avoid using 'marked' terms. For instance, Sophocles in his *Philoctetes* (410 BC), while using σοφίζομαι and σόφισμα, really seems to go out of his way to avoid the word σοφιστής with regard to Odysseus. The author of the *Prometheus*, on the contrary, seems to be absolutely free from such self-imposed limitations.*

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В науке сложились два основных подхода к интерпретации слова σοφιστής в *Прометее Прикованном* (62, 944). Часть исследователей придерживается толкования 'мудрец, знающий' (Розе, Гладигов, Беес). Более радикальная интерпретация приписывает этому слову в *Прометее* коннотации 'софист, болтун', которые напрямую связаны с закреплением за ним технического значения 'платный учитель мудрости' (Вильг. Шмид, Гриффит). Поскольку появление у σοφιστής технического значения и его отрицательных коннотаций связано с движением софистов, примеры для σοφιστής и σόφισμα в *Прометее* (62, 944, 459, 470, 1011) используются в числе других аргументов как свидетельство поздней даты трагедии. Оба указанных подхода представляются нам неудовлетворительными. В частности, весьма далекими от σοφιστής при обеих интерпретациях остаются случаи употребления σόφισμα (459, 470). В связи с этим в статье предпринята попытка прояснить значение σοφιστής и σόφισμα в контексте ранней истории этих слов. Предполагается, что первоначальное значение этих слов, связанное с конкретной практической деятельностью (объективное значение), допускало внутреннее семантическое развитие, результатом которого в случае σόφισμα было появление субъективных значений 'выход из положения', 'хитрость или обман'. Результатом этого развития яв-

* I am grateful to Alexander Verlinsky for a useful discussion of some points of this study during my work on this paper.

ляется двойственность объективного и субъективного значений (практический результат – хитрость), подобная той, которая наблюдается для слов μηχανή (μηχανάομαι) и τέχνη уже в эпическом языке. С учетом этих выводов для σοφιστής в *Прометее Прикованном* предлагается значение ‘обманщик’, которое наиболее естественно объясняет употребление слова в ст. 62, в то время как интерпретация ‘мудрец, знающий’ (Беес) и ‘софист, болтун’ (Гриффит) наталкиваются на труднопреодолимое препятствие, состоящее в том, что в сцене пролога Прометей молчит, и зритель совершенно неподготовлен к его дальнейшей роли всезнающего и много-речивого пророка. Слову σοφισμα также лучше всего подходит значение ‘хитрость’, причем в одном случае, для Прометея, это ‘хитрость как выход из положения’ (470), а в другом, с точки зрения Гермеса (Зевса), – ‘хитрость как коварство’, состоящее в претензиях Прометея на знание роковой тайны, которое поможет ему освободиться (1011). Таким образом, употребление слов σοφιστής и σοφισμα в *Прометее* не может использоваться как аргумент в пользу поздней датировки трагедии. Напротив, свобода, с которой автор *Прометея* использует слово σοφιστής в пейоративном значении, указывает на время до середины V в. до н. э., когда специфические отрицательные коннотации, связанные с техническим значением слова, в языке еще не сложились.