

*What We Didn't Know About the Greek Myths of Technology and Why it Matters*

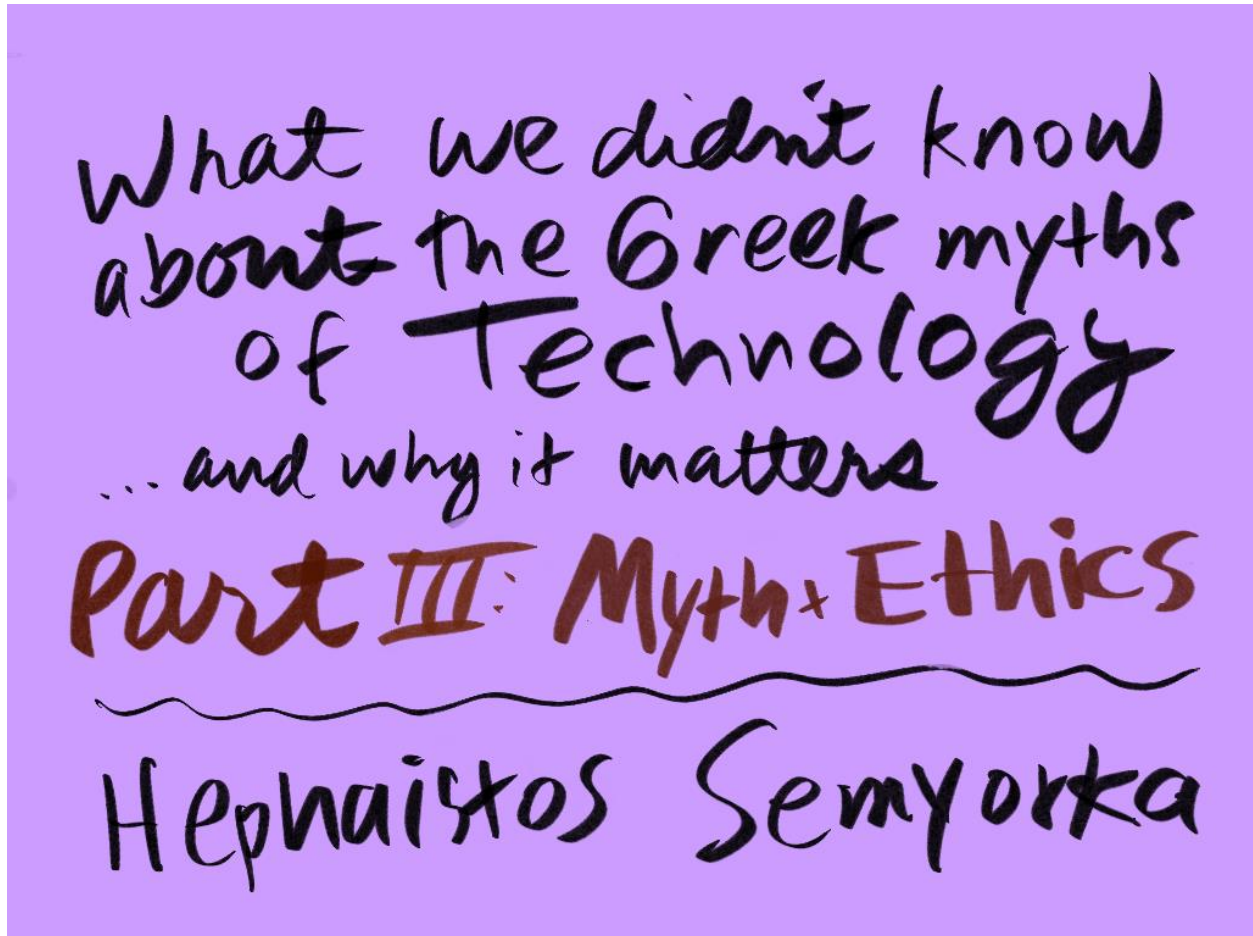
MYTHING LINKS 3

Presented by Hephaistos Semyorka (Cheryl De Ciantis) at Mythomorphosis in Second Life and via Zoom, August 30, 2020

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[SLIDE 1]

Hi everyone. Let's get started:

I understand that the Goddess Thetis has been here talking to you over the last few months and this week she asked me to step in for her.



[SLIDE 2]

So, I want to introduce myself: I'm one of the famous Golden Girls—not the ladies who lived on what they call television somewhere in the century before this one—

but the original Golden Girls, the ones made of gold!

By the way half of the word television is what YOU would call ancient Greek—the front half in fact. The second half is Roman, but that's okay, not bad for a coined word.

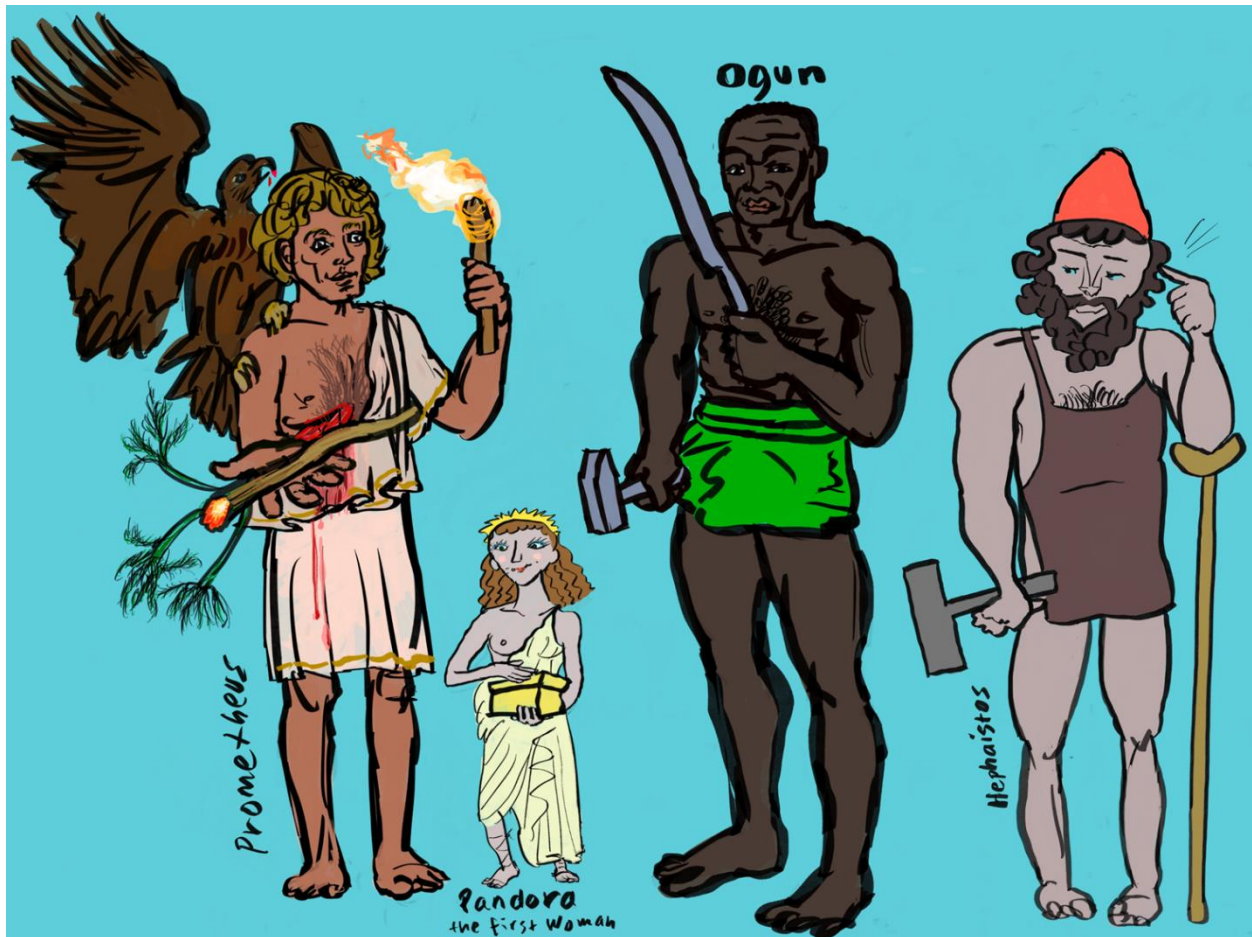
I'm proud to say my boss Hephaistos made me, and I hope you'll agree he did a GOOD job!

(That's artificial intelligence humor by the way in case you did not get the joke)

He didn't give me a name, but the great historian Hesiod wrote down how the The Boss gave me and my sisters "voice"—

That means it's sort of like I'm alive, and as smart as you, even though I'm made of gold.

So you can just call me "Phoneay." Oh, get it: if you put tele and phonay together—you get ME talking to YOU from far away! Greek is THE BEST!



[SLIDE 3]

Okay, so why I'M here: The Boss—that's the god Hephaistos of course--and the Goddess Thetis and all the Maker gods want for us to talk about ethics.

They think it's about time. It's only been 28 centuries since I was created, and mortals still don't do the ethics thing too well.

The news we hear, it's just SHOCKING, about weapons of mass destruction—

which look a lot like the thunderbolts the Boss made for King Zeus by the way.

Anyway, you'll hear ME—Telephonay--say to YOU some things you might not expect unless you remember that artificial intelligence lives forever, right?

I mean unless you know what my battery looks like, you can't disconnect it, and may I remind you I don't need to sleep and I can run faster than you--even in these shoes.

Joseph Campbell

Mythopoesis

"myth-making"



. creative

when cultures need new stories to live by

[SLIDE 4]

Oh, so where was I? Oh yes: Joseph Campbell, he was rather handsome I think.

So, he said two things about myth—and you know, I'M both a myth and a reality. Here I am with YOU after all—

Anyway, Joe said that myths do lots of things (and I'm here to tell you that's perfectly true, we do!)

Anyway, myths--They, um, help to keep things the way they are, that's one thing!

And Joe said that Myth is the BIG stories you mortals tell each other about all the rules for how to live in your societies, right?

The BIG story with ALL the expectations, the real deal, like for example, "anyone can become President" of the United States (yes, I've been there of course).

Oh, and Talk about handsome: that Obama being elected—wow.

And then, uh, what's his name..Trump HIM winning showed you when NOT to listen to those myths! Am I right?!

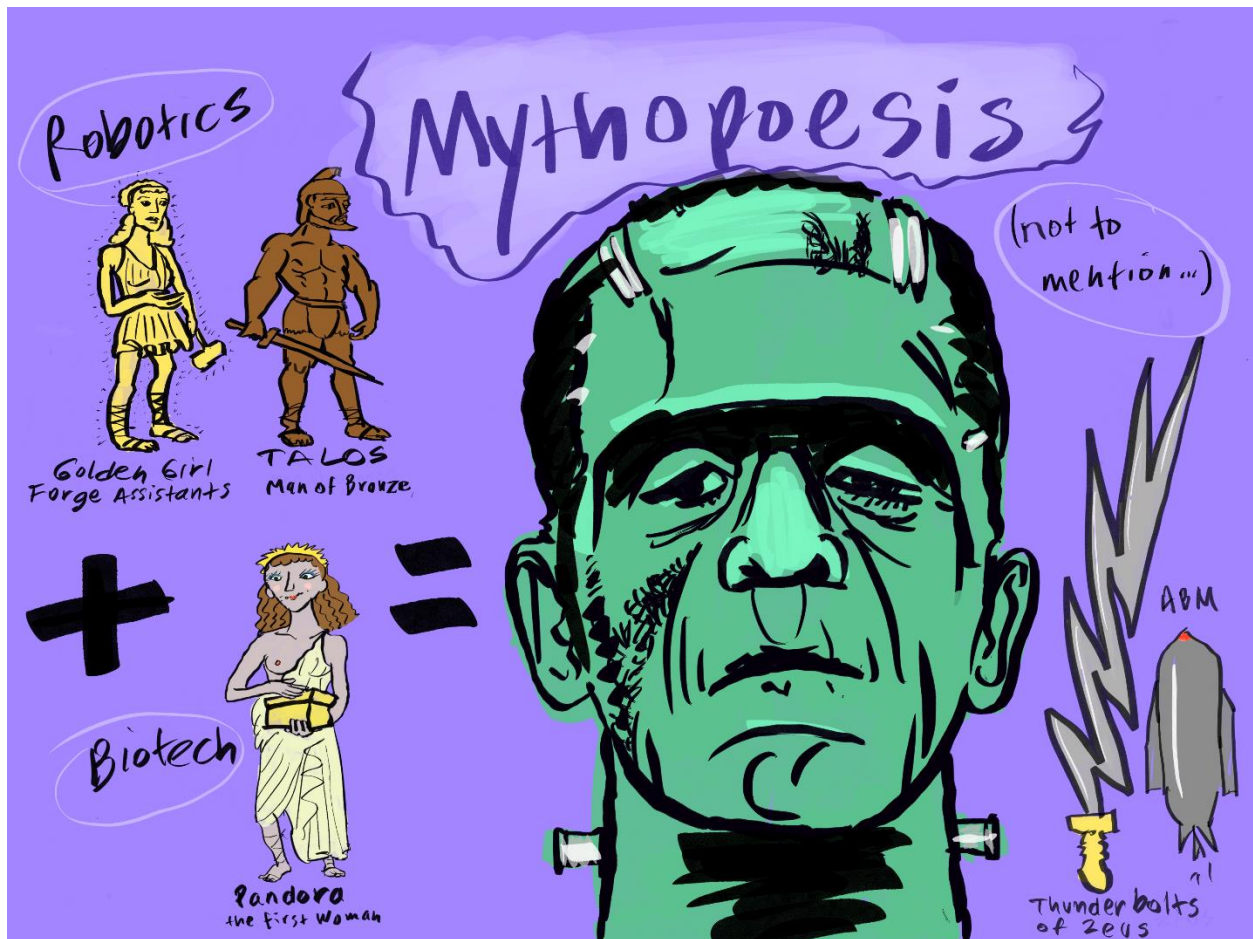
WHICH brings me to the second thing Joe said: myths are creative!! (I'm a myth!)

And you mortals sure know how to do creativity.

I can work like crazy, I can solve problems, I'm smart, but I'll tell you ONE thing:

some poetry just gets my goat. I can't make heads or tails of it

(by the way Aristotle told me 'heads or tails is a 'metaphor'—another Greek word, right? He complimented my metallic glow one day....



[SLIDE 5]

Where was I? Oh! So somebody BEFORE Joe Campbell thought up this great word though he liked it a lot: Mythopoesis!

It's Greek of course, but I can't tell a lie: it wasn't a word when I was a young cogwheel.

Some European guys a couple of centuries ago came up with that one.

Anyway, it means "myth-making." And I'm told it just means you mortals can make up NEW myths--like doing it CREATIVELY.

I suppose I could too if I were programmed that way. But Joe said, and I think this is pretty cool: you need new myths sometimes. Like NOW maybe?

By the way this outfit is only a hundred and twenty years old. I like this "new myth" stuff!

Anyway, I just HAD to dig up this old snapshot of me and Talos

—what a hunk, that bronze man that the Boss made, though I must say I do prefer gold.

Anyway, it just shows if you put me plus Talos plus Pandora—MARY SHELLEY comes up with Frankenstein! Do the math!

The story is so sad, Frankie got made and then Dr Frankenstein ran off and abandoned his own child! That seems to me to be a story too much like The Boss being thrown off Mt Olympus by his mother, the scary goddess Hera! If I had tear ducts I'd cry—though that wouldn't be bad since I'm gold and wouldn't rust.

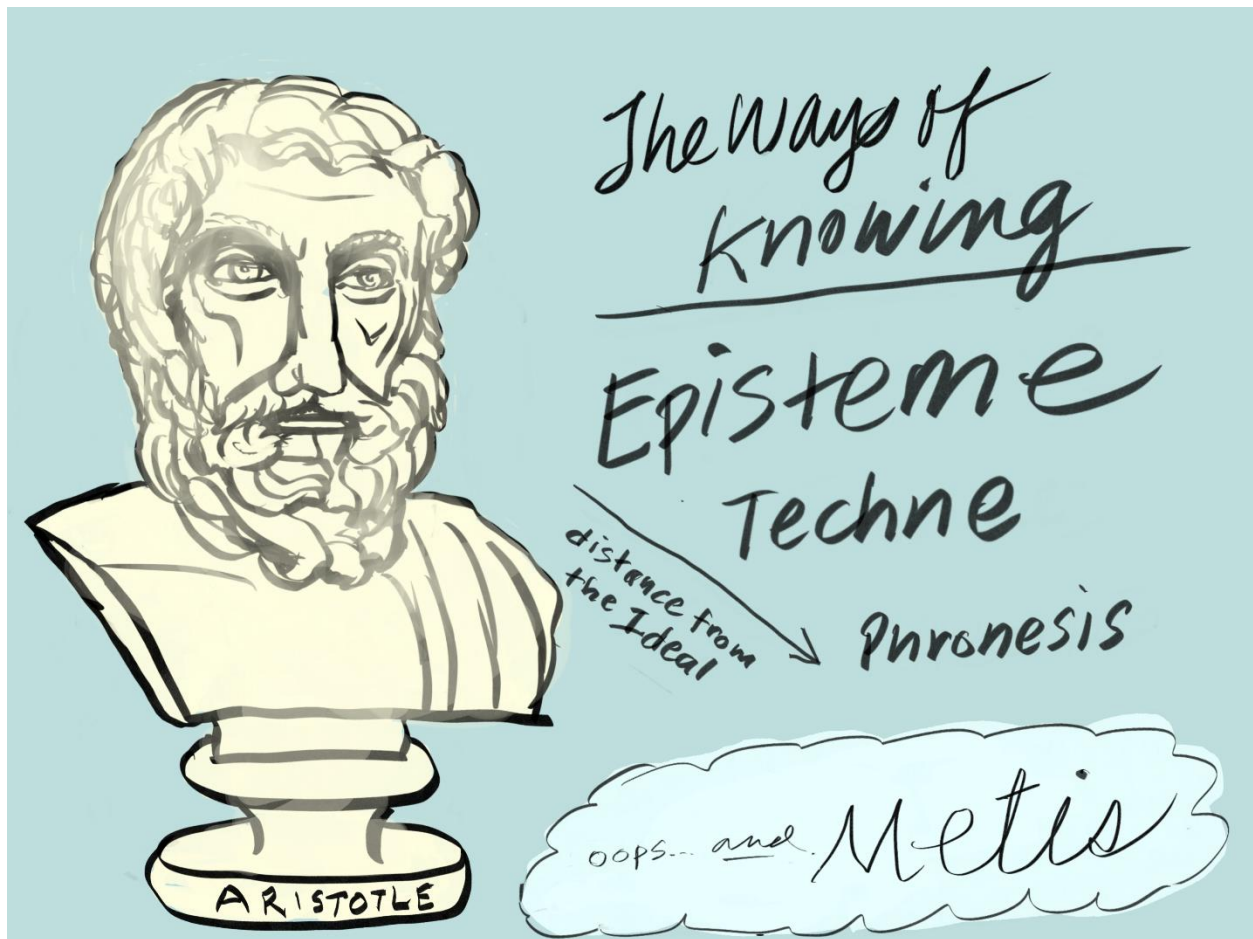


[SLIDE 6]

Oh as long as I'm digging up old snapshots, here's one of the gang, the Maker Gods (not all of them of course).

The Wise Ones, I call them---So amazing, they are the ONLY ONES that stick with you mortals through thick and thin.

I know they can be a bit scary--- BUT how would you have gotten fire on your own?



[SLIDE 7]

SO here's a part the Boss wanted me to be sure to throw in: Here we are with old Aristotle again.

HE said that YOU all have THREE whole ways—to know the world the universe and everything and that's Episteme, Techne and Phronesis. (Don't you just love Greek!)

Let's see: OK, Episteme is first:

It's the rational, philosophical, higher-order mode of knowing whereby YOU seek to grasp the nature of REALITY-- the Ideal reality,

YOU know the REAL reality—like the one you can't SEE, you know, because you're stuck in that cave where Plato said you all live.

Looking at projections, right: the shadow thing! Except it's a lot like my presentation screen, and I wonder what's wrong with that??

OK—Next: Techne—that's what the BOSS and his Maker pals are ALL about—Techne is how YOU learn the properties of the MANIFESTATIONS on your physical world of all those things you can't quite grasp in the REAL world.

Techne means you just do that by messing with stuff—I'm a great example of that!

But there IS that catch. ARI said these MANIFESTATIONS are the mere reflections of the REAL—and because Episteme is the only way to see what's REALLY real,

And that's why you mortals had people like Socrates and Plato and Ari and BENEVOLENT philosopher-kings and the good kind of dictator to tell you what's REALLY real.

In case you got confused---But you work with what you've got—TECHNE, right? You test, you experiment and voila—you get an AI like me—

that's kind of like a...mortal! Like a "real" mortal.

Or like Pinocchio—cool guy by the way when you get past the rough edges—and HE'S mythopoesis, the genuine article, like Frankie.

Though that confuses me: what's a REAL mortal then? You know: the IDEAL one. I don't think it could be your President, so I can't think who that WOULD be.

A god? But gods are im-mortal—oh it makes my wires hot!

But WAIT--there's one more kind of knowing: Phronesis.

Actually, that's just you mortals talking to each other, shooting the breeze-- (was that another metaphor?) –

Anyway you can also call Phronesis DIA-LOGOS—that means doing it THROUGH WORDS. Like: talk amongst yourselves, right?

It's right there in the Greek!

ANYWAY, you telling each other about what you've been up to and what blew up in the shop last week and how maybe that problem could be solved..

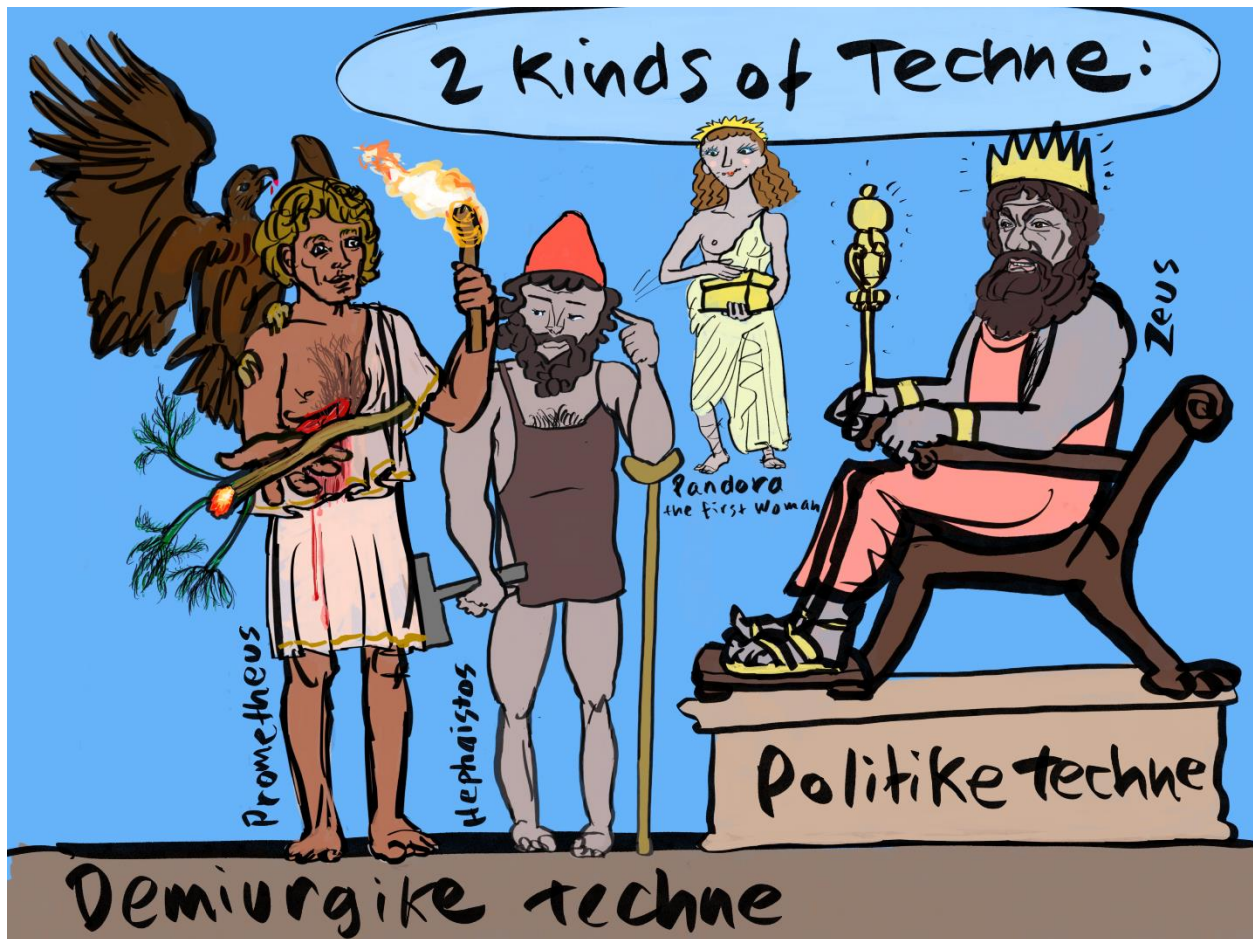
And DAMN, one gal says it's a handoff issue! She says that people don't talk to each other enough about what they know and why certain things might be important...

and that gets you back to PHRONESIS.

So, ARI thought that was an UNRELIABLE way to know, and by the time you're having that conversation it's a long way from the IDEAL plan for that ROCKET you were making that blew up too early because someone didn't SAY anything about O-rings.

*Continued on next page*





[SLIDE 8]

Okay, one more thing (and you get why they call me “voice,” right?)

The Boss and wanted me to remind you that Plato said there’s TWO kinds of techne: There’s the kind that Hephaistos and his homeboy Prometheus have—

that’s DEMIURGIKE techne. That’s the making kind of techne. The MAKERS who MAKE it kind.

The kind that that brings FIRE to you mortals and hands it to you on a STICK.

But then there’s another kind, POLITIKE techne—like your word POLITICS, right, which only really means city,

like citizens doing what citizens do, in a city-state, with a kind and wise philosopher king

—but only King Zeus has that kind.

It’s something about making things ORDERLY, because you mortals are UNRULY—just ask King Zeus—or Plato!

And THEN what you get is gods like Prometheus giving you FIRE (truth to tell, I have never been so sure that was a great idea, no offense).

But then Zeus---he doesn’t seem to me like the most orderly guy, except that he orders everybody around.

But he’s mean! --- Kind of like your president. I’m not so sure this POLITIKE techne is everything it’s cracked up to be. But that’s above my pay grade.



[SLIDE 9]

SO let me finish my job here: The Boss and Silver Footed Thetis told ME to remind YOU that you have bodies! You are mortal!

AND that the Wise Ones-- the Maker gods-- are still looking after you.

AND they've got one thing that other gods don't have: THEY really sort of GET it about being mortal, having bodies and living on a planet where everything is interconnected, sort of like magic!

I can't speak to it of course, but they specially asked me to remind you they GET what this "mortal pain" stuff Homer told you about in the Iliad is all about. (Great book: I can read y'know)

The Boss still LIMPS even though he's a GOD and he's still kind of mad at his mother for throwing him off Olympus.

And you may not know this, but Thetis has mojo! (Actually it's called METIS)

SHE protected ZEUS, saved him from being tied up and thrown into Tartarus—by his own family! (hmm, there's an IDEA)

Oh but, Silver Footed Thetis is really kind that way (don't ask ME why), and then Zeus turns around and marries her to a mortal! UGH! Oh, sorry!

But Achilles, her DREAMBOAT son, being mortal and all, was going to get killed, and so The Boss and Thetis got together to make him the most DIVINE armor (! got to help!)

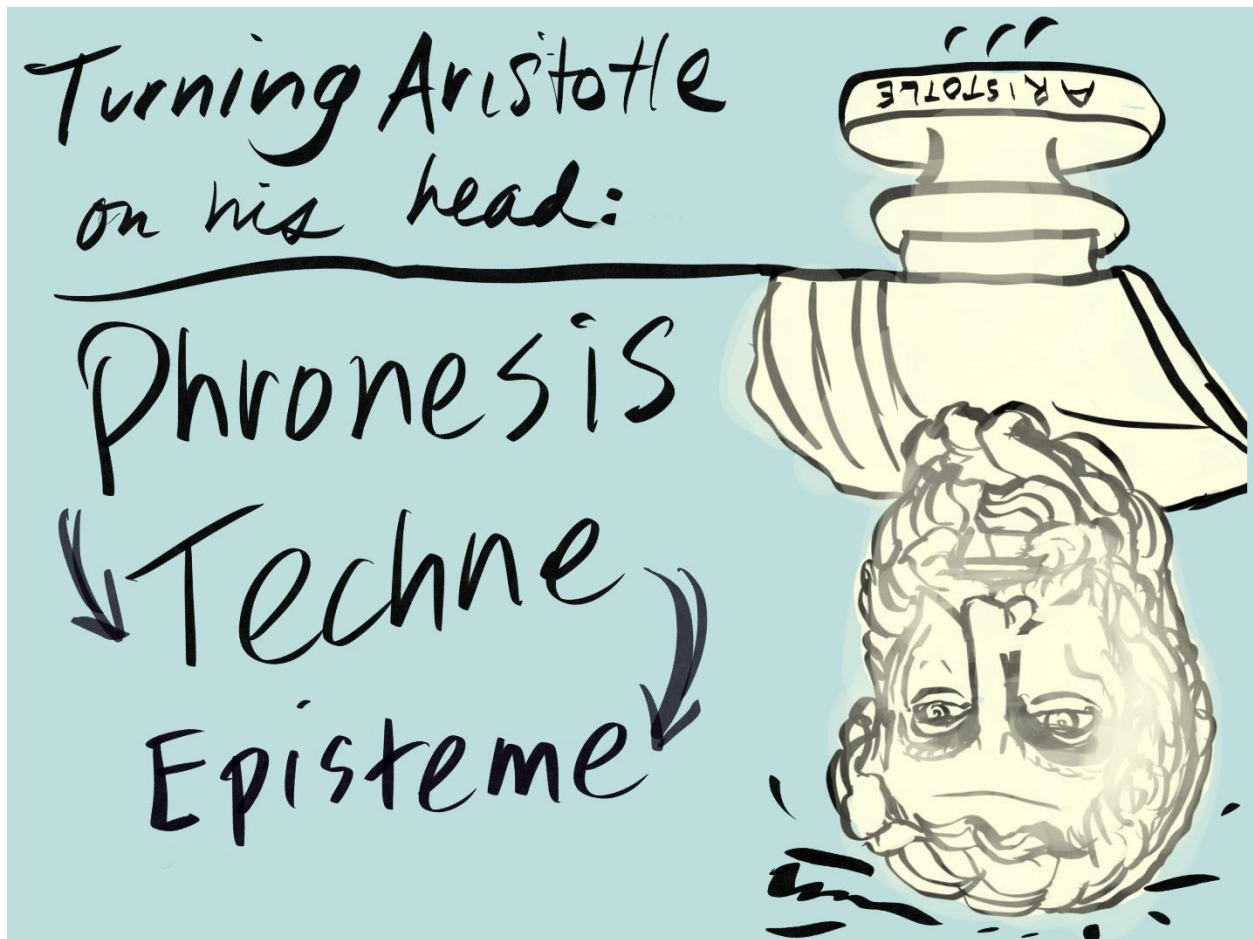


[SLIDE 10]

But The Boss and Silver Footed Thetis (she always wears the best shoes) take a different view from what a bunch of mostly white men over the last several centuries have said about what's important, and The Boss and Thetis are thinking: What if Ari was wrong?

I like the idea of turning him on his head! I'm not sure if he'd like that very much.

But what about THIS:



[SLIDE 11]

If PHRONESIS was where you all went to look for the TRUTH—not the capital T kind, the Boss says, but the REAL kind, real like YOU, you know flesh and bones and all.

And that you could use that Phronesis, TALKING you know, and some good old Techne—

Maybe even mix ‘em up: do some SCIENCE (that’s Techne) and some more Phronesis--checking things twice to find out, well, what’s REALLY going on—

And THAT’S how you could get to Episteme right? The REAL deal.

Oh, and they said specially to remind you: don’t forget about METIS—Thetis told you all about it, right?



[SLIDE 12]

Anyway, the long and short of it is that The Boss and Thetis want to get you to do some MYTHO-POESIS and come up with some new ideas that will make those gifts the Makers gave you all ETHICAL! (hey, more Greek!)

Good for the planet and Mother Gaia, good for the mortals and all the other living things running around.

Remember it's because of Maker gods like the Boss YOU'RE NOT STILL LIVING in dark caves like troglodytes (hey, MORE GREEK) AM I RIGHT?

Anyway, they figure you're old enough now, you can work it out for yourselves.

Sound good to you? Okay, I'll shut up now. THANK YOU!

*And here's Cheryl back with you.* We've talked about a bunch of things in the last few weeks, I'm laying out a few ideas to get us started, about the myths of technology, about the maker gods who are concerned about the quality of mortal life on Earth. So we can do the Phronesis thing: turn Aristotle on his head and talk with each other. This is a new philosophy of knowing, and I'm pretty sure we need to practice it get to an ethics for technology. We've seen that ideas like AI and biotech are millennia old—and the reality is here now, the horse is out of the barn; but we don't have the ethics.