Chorus
[198] Unfold the whole story and tell us upon what charge Zeus has caught you and painfully punishes you with such dishonor. Instruct us, unless, indeed, there is some harm in telling.

Prometheus
It is painful to me to tell the tale, [200] painful to keep it silent. My case is unfortunate every way.

When first the heavenly powers were moved to wrath, and mutual dissension was stirred up among them—some bent on casting Cronus from his seat so Zeus, in truth, might reign; others, eager for [205] the contrary end, that Zeus might never win mastery over the gods—it was then that I, although advising them for the best, was unable to persuade the Titans, children of Heaven and Earth; but they, disdaining counsels of craft, in the pride of their strength [210] thought to gain the mastery without a struggle and by force. Often my mother Themis, or Earth (though one form, she had many names), had foretold to me the way in which the future was fated to come to pass. That it was not by brute strength nor through violence, [215] but by guile that those who should gain the upper hand were destined to prevail. And though I argued all this to them, they did not pay any attention to my words. With all that before me, it seemed best that, joining with my mother, I should place myself, [220] a welcome volunteer, on the side of Zeus; and it is by reason of my counsel that the cavernous gloom of Tartarus now hides ancient Cronus and his allies within it. Thus I helped the tyrant of the gods [225] and with this foul payment he has responded; for it is a disease that is somehow inherent in tyranny to have no faith in friends.

However, you ask why he torments me, and this I will now make clear.

[230] As soon as he had seated himself upon his father's throne, he immediately assigned to the deities their several privileges and apportioned to them their proper powers. But of wretched mortals he took no notice, desiring to bring [235] the whole race to an end and create a new one in its place. Against this purpose none dared make stand except me— I only had the courage; I saved mortals so that they did not descend, blasted utterly, to the house of Hades. This is why I am bent by such grievous tortures, [240] painful to suffer, piteous to behold. I who gave mortals first place in my pity, I am deemed unworthy to win this pity for myself, but am in this way mercilessly disciplined, a spectacle that shames the glory of Zeus.

Chorus
I mourn your unfortunate fate, Prometheus. [400] Shedding from my eyes a coursing flood of tears I wet my tender cheeks with their moist streams. For Zeus, holding this unenviable power by self-appointed laws, [405] displays towards the gods of old an overweening spirit. Now the whole earth cries aloud in lamentation; . . . lament the greatness of the glory of your time-hallowed honor, [410] the honor that was yours and your brother's; and all mortals who make their dwelling place in holy Asia share the anguish of your most lamentable suffering; [415] And those who dwell in the land of
Colchis, the maidens fearless in fight; and the Scythian multitude that inhabits the most remote region of the earth bordering the Maeotic lake; [420] And the warlike flower of Arabia, which hold the high-cragged citadel near the Caucasus, a hostile host that roars among the sharp-pointed spears † [425] One other Titan god before this I have seen in distress, enthralled in torment by adamantine bonds—Atlas, pre-eminent in mighty strength, who moans as he supports [430] the vault of heaven on his back.†] The waves of the sea utter a cry as they fall, the deep laments, the black abyss of Hades rumbles in response, and the streams of pure-flowing rivers [435] lament your piteous pain.

Prometheus
No, do not think it is from pride or even from willfulness that I am silent. Painful thoughts devour my heart as I behold myself maltreated in this way. And yet who else but I definitely assigned [440] their prerogatives to these upstart gods? But I do not speak of this; for my tale would tell you nothing except what you know. Still, listen to the miseries that beset mankind—how they were witless before and I made them have sense and endowed them with reason. [445] I will not speak to upbraid mankind but to set forth the friendly purpose that inspired my blessing.

First of all, though they had eyes to see, they saw to no avail; they had ears, but they did not understand; but, just as shapes in dreams, throughout their length of days, [450] without purpose they wrought all things in confusion. They had neither knowledge of houses built of bricks and turned to face the sun nor yet of work in wood; but dwelt beneath the ground like swarming ants, in sunless caves. They had no sign either of winter [455] or of flowery spring or of fruitful summer, on which they could depend but managed everything without judgment, until I taught them to discern the risings of the stars and their settings, which are difficult to distinguish.

Yes, and numbers, too, chiepest of sciences, [460] I invented for them, and the combining of letters, creative mother of the Muses' arts, with which to hold all things in memory. I, too, first brought brute beasts beneath the yoke to be subject to the collar and the pack-saddle, so that they might bear in men's stead their [465] heaviest burdens; and to the chariot I harnessed horses and made them obedient to the rein, to be an image of wealth and luxury. It was I and no one else who invented the mariner's flaxen-winged car that roams the sea.

Wretched that I am—such are the arts I devised [470] for mankind, yet have myself no cunning means to rid me of my present suffering.

Chorus
You have suffered sorrow and humiliation. You have lost your wits and have gone astray; and, like an unskilled doctor, fallen ill, you lose heart and cannot [475] discover by which remedies to cure your own disease.

Prometheus
Hear the rest and you shall wonder the more at the arts and resources I devised. This first and foremost: if ever man fell ill, there was no defence—no healing food, [480] no ointment, nor any
drink—but for lack of medicine they wasted away, until I showed them how to mix soothing remedies with which they now ward off all their disorders. And I marked out many ways by which they might read the future, [485] and among dreams I first discerned which are destined to come true; and voices baffling interpretation I explained to them, and signs from chance meetings. The flight of crook-taloned birds I distinguished clearly— which by nature are auspicious, [490] which sinister—their various modes of life, their mutual feuds and loves, and their consortings; and the smoothness of their entrails, and what color the gall must have to please [495] the gods, also the speckled symmetry of the liver-lobe; and the thigh-bones, wrapped in fat, and the long chine I burned and initiated mankind into an occult art. Also I cleared their vision to discern signs from flames, which were obscure before this. [500] Enough about these arts. Now as to the benefits to men that lay concealed beneath the earth—bronze, iron, silver, and gold—who would claim to have discovered them before me? No one, I know full well, unless he likes to babble idly. [505] Hear the sum of the whole matter in the compass of one brief word—every art possessed by man comes from Prometheus.

Chorus
Do not benefit mortals beyond reason and disregard your own distress; although, I am confident that you will be freed [510] from these bonds and will have power in no way inferior to Zeus.

Prometheus
Not in this way is Fate, who brings all to fulfillment, destined to complete this course. Only when I have been bent by pangs and tortures infinite am I to escape my bondage. Skill is weaker by far than Necessity.

Chorus
[515] Who then is the helmsman of Necessity?

Prometheus
The three-shaped Fates and mindful Furies.

Chorus
Can it be that Zeus has less power than they do?

Prometheus
Yes, in that even he cannot escape what is foretold.

Chorus
Why, what is fated for Zeus except to hold eternal sway?

Prometheus
[520] This you must not learn yet; do not be over-eager.

Chorus
It is some solemn secret, surely, that you enshroud in mystery.
Prometheus
Think of some other subject, for it is not the proper time to speak of this. No matter what, this must be kept concealed; for it is by safeguarding it that I am to escape my dishonorable bonds and outrage.

Chorus
May Zeus, who apportions everything, never set his power in conflict with my will, nor may I be slow to approach the gods, with holy sacrifices of oxen slain, by the side of the ceaseless stream of Oceanus, my father; and may I not offend in speech; but may this rule abide in my heart and never fade away.

Sweet it is to pass all the length of life amid confident hopes, feeding the heart in glad festivities. But I shudder as I look on you, racked by infinite tortures. You have no fear of Zeus, Prometheus, but in self-will you reverence mortals too much.

[545] Come, my friend, how mutual was your reciprocity? Tell me, what kind of help is there in creatures of a day? What aid? Did you not see the helpless infirmity, no better than a dream, in which the blind generation of men is shackled? Never shall the counsels of mortal men transgress the ordering of Zeus.
I have learned this lesson from observing the luck, Prometheus, that has brought about your ruin. And the difference in the song stole into my thought —this song and that, which, about your bridal bed and bath, I raised to grace your marriage, when you wooed with gifts and won my sister Hesione to be your wedded wife.

Enter Io

Io
What land is this? What people? By what name am I to call the one I see exposed to the tempest in bonds of rock? What offence have you committed that as punishment you are doomed to destruction? Tell me to what region of the earth I have wandered in my wretchedness?

Oh, oh! Aah! Aah! A gad-fly, phantom of earth-born Argus is stinging me again! Keep him away, O Earth! I am fearful when I behold that myriad-eyed herdsman. He travels onward with his crafty gaze upon me; not even in death does the earth conceal him, but passing from the shades he hounds me, the forlorn one, and drives me famished along the sands of the seashore. The waxen pipe drones forth in accompaniment a clear-sounding slumberous strain. Alas, alas! Where is my far-roaming wandering course taking me? In what, O son of Cronus, in what have you found offence so that you have bound me to this yoke of misery—aah! are you harassing a wretched maiden to frenzy by this terror of the pursuing gadfly? Consume me with fire, or hide me in the earth, or give me to the monsters of the deep to devour; but do not grudge,
O Lord, the favor that I pray for. [585] My far-roaming wanderings have taught me enough, and I cannot discern how to escape my sufferings. Do you hear the voice of the horned virgin?

Prometheus
How can I fail to hear the maiden frenzied by the gadfly, the [590] daughter of Inachus? It is she who fires the heart of Zeus with passion, and now, through Hera's hate, is disciplined by force with interminable wandering.

Io
Why do you call my father's name? Tell me, the unfortunate maid, who you are, [595] unhappy wretch, that you thus correctly address the miserable maiden, and have named the heaven-sent plague that wastes and stings me with its maddening goad. Ah me! In frenzied bounds I come, [600] driven by torturing hunger, victim of Hera's vengeful purpose. Who of the company of the unfortunate endures—aah! aah!—sufferings such as mine? Oh make it clear to me [605] what misery I am fated to suffer, what remedy is there, what cure, for my affliction. Reveal it, if you have the knowledge. Oh speak, declare it to the unfortunate, wandering virgin.