

## Cunning

πανουργία
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πανουργία (*panourgia*), craftiness, cunning; πανούργος (*panourgos*), crafty, cunning, knavish.

CL The word group derives from the two roots *pan-* (→ all) and *erg-* (→ work), giving the basic meaning “capable of all work”. Its first appearance is in Aeschylus; and from then on in secular Greek its connotation is most commonly pejorative, an unprincipled “capable of doing anything” (e.g. Aristotle, Lysias). Even as a divine attribute (in Euripides, Artemis applies it to Aphrodite) the connotation is negative. In the few instances where the word bears a positive sense, there is a hint of presumption or perhaps deceptive evaluation (Plato, Plutarch). It is possible that the positive ability implicit in the etymology of the word group never got off the ground because in Gk. thought the very idea of such ability is indicative of an arrogance which soon tinges the *panourgia* with undesirable characteristics.

OT In the LXX, the word group is significantly affected by the Heb. verb *‘ārōm* and its cognates, for which it stands seventeen times. The Heb. group can mean “crafty”, “sly” (e.g. Jos. 9:4; Job. 5:12), but in Proverbs, where it occurs most frequently, it takes on an unconditionally positive nuance, “prudent”, “clever” (1:4; 8:5; 12:16, etc.). The three other occurrences of the *panourgia* group, translating other Heb. words (Prov. 13:1; 21:1; 28:2), are likewise positive. The antithetical Hebrew formulations of ethical behaviour have invested *panourgia* with new meaning, probably due in part to the belief that the man who fears God and is blessed by him can indeed successfully accomplish any task.

Although there are positive uses in the LXX outside the Heb. canon (e.g. Ecclus. 1:6; 6:32; 21:20) nonetheless it is made explicit that *panourgia* derives from wisdom springing from divine revelation. When *panourgia* throws off this presuppositional restriction it degenerates to *panourgia* in the secular sense (Ecclus. 21:12; cf. 19:25). For both Josephus and Philo, the term is consistently negative and heads a long list of vices. The one possible exception is *Leg. All.*, 2, 106 f., where the term refers to an artisan’s “manual skill”; but the context reveals that even this “skill” is put to perverted use.

On the other hand, Qumran scrolls use the noun *‘ormâh* in a positive fashion akin to usage in Proverbs, while tying the ethical more closely to sectarian covenanting formulations (e.g. 1QHab. 7:14; CD 2:4).

NT With this background in mind it is somewhat surprising that in its half dozen NT appearances *panourgia* is used only negatively. The scribes and the chief priests are guilty of “trickery” in their question to Jesus (Lk. 20:23); but God catches the wise in their “craftiness” (1 Cor. 3:19), for man’s ability to reason cannot stand up against divine sovereignty. Opponents of the truth are accused of “treacherously perverting” the Word of God (2 Cor. 4:2; Eph. 4:14); and therefore Paul fears that the minds of the Corinthian converts may be led astray from purity of devotion to Christ, as the serpent by his “craftiness” deceived Eve (2 Cor. 11:3). The one occurrence of *panourgos* in the NT bears the added weight of irony (2 Cor. 12:16): Paul claims he is “crafty”, meaning, of course, that he is not.

*D. A. Carson*

O. Bauernfeind, *panourgia*, *TDNT* V 722–727.

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