

## Appendix

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# Prometheus

## *The Historical Record*

by Jason Ross

Prometheus was a historical personality, who endured the wrath of the Zeus for daring to bring “fire” and science to man. The oldest direct historical knowledge of Prometheus comes from the Greek poet Hesiod in his *Theogony* and *Works and Days* and the Greek playwright Aeschylus in his play *Prometheus Bound*.<sup>1</sup> The story they relate of Prometheus the Fire-Bringer is one that finds parallels in other cultures, and may actually date back to the early part of the Bronze Age.<sup>2</sup> His story served as inspiration for works by Percy Bysshe Shelley, who wrote *Prometheus Unbound* and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who wrote a poem *Prometheus*, and had intended to compose an entire play.

According to Hesiod and Aeschylus, Prometheus was one of the Titans, the ruling group of immortals that predated the gods of Olympus. Zeus, with the help of Prometheus, overthrew Kronos, the ruler of the Titans, to become the ruler of the gods of Olympus.

Before the action related in Aeschylus’s play, Prometheus had acted to benefit mankind. First, he had established a tradition of sacrifices by a trick he played on Zeus. Cutting apart an ox, Prometheus separated out two piles: one of meat and organs, wrapped in the ox’s unsightly stomach, and another of the bones, carefully covered with shiny fat. Prometheus asked Zeus to choose which pile he would accept as a sacrifice. Zeus chose the fat-covered bones, starting the customary sacrifice of bones and fat to the gods, while keeping the meat for mankind. Zeus, enraged, refused fire to man as punishment. Prometheus saved man from this fate. He stole fire from heaven, and gave it to man. For this, he received the full wrath of Zeus (and the anger of many of the other gods).

As Aeschylus’s play opens, Prometheus is being conducted to a desolate rocky crag, where he is to be bound

as long as Zeus’s anger lasts. With a stake driven through his chest, pinning him to the rock, and his arms and legs bound, Prometheus is to suffer the endless torment of having his liver devoured every day by an eagle (a symbol of Zeus), only to have it grow back each night.

After he is bound, a Chorus of the daughters of Oceanus flies to his location, to speak to him. Aeschylus writes:

**CHORUS:** 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, painful to keep it silent. My case is unfortunate every way....

You ask why he torments me, and this I will now make clear. 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 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, 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:** Iron-hearted and made of stone, Prometheus, is he who feels no compassion at your miseries. For myself, I would not have desired to see them; and now that I see them, I am pained in my heart.

**PROMETHEUS:** Yes, to my friends indeed I am a spectacle of pity.

**CHORUS:** Did you perhaps transgress even somewhat beyond this offence?

**PROMETHEUS:** Yes, I caused mortals to cease foreseeing their doom.

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1. Hesiod was active around 700 BC, and Aeschylus flourished in the fifth century BC.

2. Sulek, Marty, “Mythographic and Linguistic Evidence for Religious Giving among Graeco-Aryans during the Chalcolithic Age,” presented at the July 2012 ISTR conference in Siena, Italy.

**CHORUS:** Of what sort was the cure that you found for this affliction?

**PROMETHEUS:** I caused unseen hopes to dwell within their breasts.

**CHORUS:** A great benefit was this you gave to mortals.

**PROMETHEUS:** In addition, I gave them fire.

**CHORUS:** What! Do creatures of a day now have flame-eyed fire?

**PROMETHEUS:** Yes, and from it they shall learn many arts.

Further on, Prometheus continues:

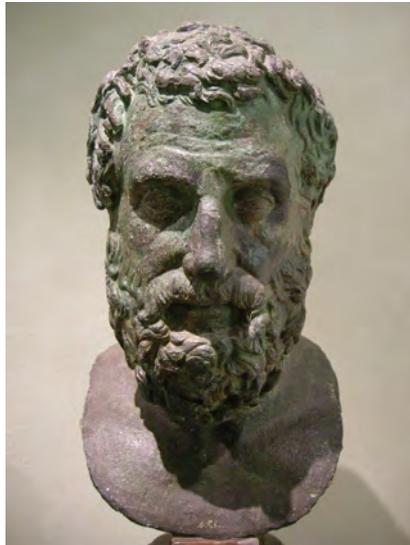
**PROMETHEUS:** Still, listen to the miseries that beset mankind—how they were witless before and I made them have sense and endowed them with reason. I will not speak to upbraid mankind but to set forth the friendly purpose that inspired my blessing.

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, 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 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, chiefest of sciences, 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 heaviest burdens; and to the chariot I harnessed horses and made them obedient to the rein.... 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 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 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



Wikimedia Commons user Sailko

*Aeschylus (fifth century BC), the Greek playwright who wrote Prometheus Bound.*

foremost: if ever man fell ill, there was no defense—no healing food, 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... 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. Hear the sum of the whole matter in the compass of one brief word—every art possessed by man comes from Prometheus.

These gifts of Prometheus have been the subject of this report. Aeschylus's play continues with Zeus sending Hermes to demand that Prometheus repent for his actions and share his secret:

**HERMES:** Bend your will, perverse fool, oh bend your will at last to wisdom in face of your present sufferings.

**PROMETHEUS:** In vain you trouble me, as though it were a wave you try to persuade. Never think that, through terror at the will of Zeus, I shall become womanish and, with hands upturned, aping woman's ways, shall importune my greatly hated enemy to release me from these bonds. I am far, far from that.

Prometheus refuses, and in Zeus's rage, is swallowed in lightning, earthquake, tempest, and storm. So ends Aeschylus's first play of the Prometheus trilogy.

The other two plays, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer*, are lost, yet some aspects of the plot to come are known. *Prometheus Unbound* includes Heracles killing the eagle that has fed on Prometheus's liver, and freeing him from his chains. Zeus frees the other Titans he has imprisoned. And in *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer*, Prometheus reconciles with Zeus, informing him of what was to have been his downfall.

## Modern Prometheus

While the title of "modern Prometheus" is applied to Benjamin Franklin, whose work on electricity garnered him almost as much early renown as his later work on American independence, several notable modern treatments of Prometheus differ from that of Aeschylus.

Goethe's Prometheus shows nothing but contempt and scorn for Zeus. It is man's own actions that bring him advancement, not plaintive wishes to the uncaring heavens. "I know nothing shabbier under the sun than

ye gods!" he exclaims, asking "I revere thee? What for?"

Goethe's Prometheus concludes: "Here I sit, forming humans / In my own image, / It will be a race like me, / For suffering, weeping, / Enjoying and rejoicing, and shall / Pay thee no attention, / Like me!"

Percy Bysshe Shelley similarly allows for no reconciliation between the worst of tyrants and the greatest of benefactors. He writes in the preface to his play *Prometheus Unbound*:

The *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter [Zeus] with his victim. . . . Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus. . . . But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary.

There can be no compromise with tyranny. Shelley presents us, in Act I, with Prometheus's captivity, his curse upon Zeus, the attempts of Hermes to persuade him to reconcile himself with Zeus's power, and Zeus's

anger when he absolutely refuses. Shelley concludes the play with an epilogue addressing Prometheus (the "Titan" referenced below):

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

We must not falter as we expand the gifts of Prometheus, and eliminate the oligarchical forces that have prevented man from being fully Promethean. As we consider the stunning developments made in physical chemistry, we must not forget that these advancements have been hated and opposed by Zeusians along the entire history of the human species, most recently through the Anglo-Dutch empire, the depopulation intention of Queen Elizabeth and her cohorts, and the plague of anti-humanism masquerading as concern for the environment.

Today's Zeusians would rather have global thermonuclear war than cede their control to Promethean economic development. The reign of Zeus must come to an end.

## Lyndon LaRouche on Prometheus

In his "Mind Over Your Matter," Lyndon LaRouche contrasts the Zeusian and Promethean outlooks:<sup>1</sup>

Zeus forbid "fire's use" by mankind; Prometheus demanded the use of fire by mankind (which is the distinction of man from ape)... What Prometheus intended, and there was only one particular error-of-omission in this matter on his part: is what modern science knows under the caption of modern "chemistry:" which, in turn, is, in-fact-of-practice, best exemplified by mankind's successive increase in the energy-flux-density of the upward course of the evolution of chemistry: as that lies under the essential inclusion of the leading factor of human progress centered in the use of "fire:" increasing leaps in the quality of "fire," per-capita, and per-leap in the application of increasingly concentrated energy-flux-densities.

Later, he quotes himself from his February 7, 2014 webcast event, giving a beautiful, guiding concept of being Promethean:

1. "Mind Over Your Matter," Feb 8, 2014, <http://larouchepac.com/node/29786>

Actually, creativity is located within the ability of the individual to make a discovery of a principle of nature, and that's chemistry. Mankind operates on the basis of chemistry! It's called fire! It's the Promethean force of fire! [I.e., energy-flux density.] And, by fire, you rise to higher and higher powers of chemistry. And, many chemists get confused on this, because they get so trapped up with [what] they can do, they forget about discovery [of principles]. But, everything that was done in chemistry came about as a discovery! A creation of the human mind, of the human imagination! And, the ability to criticize your imagination, the human imagination! And, the ability to criticize your own imagination, and to determine, by testing, whether this thing you call a principle, is true, or not: you test it.

Now, many chemists don't do it properly; but, the intention in the system of chemistry, is there. Mankind is the fire-bringer! He's the Promethean, the fire-bringer! And, what he's doing is discovering new, higher forms of fire: like the application of helium-3 to the process of creating a superpower for mankind, per capita, from the Moon, on Earth!