

The Myth of Prometheus

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PBS Wisconsin has a good video on the Myth of Prometheus, who was Lucretius' inspiration for the passage in Book I on Epicurus raising his eyes up to the heavens to stare down the gods.

<https://pbswisconsin.org/watch/fate-fabled/why-prometheus-risked-everything-for-humans-hxztyl/>

This passage is from Stephen Fry's [Mythos](#), which I recommend for an excellent refresher on Greek mythology;

Quote

Prometheus shaded his eyes and looked up. He saw the three Cyclops standing on a great sloping wall of rock that formed one side of the tallest mountain. ‘I know you’re good at climbing up the sides of mountains,’ Zeus said with what he hoped was icy sarcasm, but which emerged even to his ears as something more like sulky muttering. ‘So climb.’ When Prometheus reached the place where the Cyclops were, they bound and fettered him and stretched him out on his back, hammering his shackles into the rock with mighty pegs of unbreakable iron. Two beautiful eagles swept down from the sky and glided close to Prometheus, blocking the sunlight. He could hear the hot wind ruffling their feathers. Zeus called up to him. ‘You will lie chained to this rock forever. There is no hope of escape or forgiveness, not in all perpetuity. Each day these eagles will come to tear out your liver, just like you tore out my heart. They will eat it in front of your eyes. Since you are immortal it will grow back every night. This torture will never end. Each day the agony will seem greater. You will have nothing but time in which to consider the enormity of your crime and the folly of your actions. You who were named ‘foresight’ showed none when you defied the King of the Gods.’ Zeus’s voice rang from the canyons and ravines. ‘Well? Have you nothing to say?’ Prometheus sighed. ‘You are wrong, Zeus,’ he said. ‘I thought my actions through with great care. I weighted my comfort against the future of the race of man. I see now that they will flourish and prosper independently of any immortals, even you. Knowing this is balm for any pain.’

Zeus stared at his formed friend for a long time before speaking. ‘You are not worth eagles,’ he said with an awful coldness. ‘Let them be vultures.’ The two eagles immediately changed into rank, ugly vultures who circled the outstretched body once before falling upon it. Their razor-sharp talons sliced open the Titan’s side and with hideous screeches of triumph they began to feast. Prometheus, mankind’s chief creator, advocate and friend, taught us, stole for us and sacrificed himself for us. We all

possess our share of Promethean fire, without it we would not be human. It is right to pity and admire him but, unlike the jealous and selfish gods he would never ask to be worshipped, praised and adored. And it might make you happy to know that, despite the eternal punishment to which he was doomed, one day a hero would arise powerful enough to defy Zeus, unbind humanity's champion and set him free.