

Who Fired Prometheus? Pt. 2. Analysis: The Archetypal Mutilation—our Masochistic Inheritance

This is the second, of what promises to be a four or five part series of articles, outlining in general terms, the historical development and ontological genesis of the castration complex, super-ego and conscience, and, a hopeful new discovery. This redesigned construction of personality, will yield greater intelligence, enhanced ethical and creative functioning, as well as increased affective stability, by way of replacing certain existing unconscious structures which are endemic to modern personality. Before I offer up the happy alternative, we must first look most carefully at the current state of affairs. What forms our conscience, our super-ego? Please examine the Rubens, *Prometheus Bound*, posted below, for a window into the unconscious, the "under-soul" of our human height and sickness. To fully understand this article I will direct the reader to the first in this series, which can be accessed at:

<http://blog.theultranet.com/2013/06/who-fired-prometheus-part-1-our-barbaric-mystery.html>

These topics are unpleasant and seldom discussed, but their imprint is omnipresent. Psychoanalysis is the tool best suited to uncover, plainly discuss and understand these issues, as psychoanalysis has always rightly enjoyed a bad reputation, the hallmark of honesty which never curries favor with its audience, and shuns all attempts to modify a pungent truth with our pretty lie: good taste. So, dear reader, brace yourself for an unvarnished truth most dyspeptic, our height and human cooperative conglomeration perched upon a savage mutilation, a penalty utterly barbaric. After this piece of analysis, I will then detail the history of the phylogenetic impressions forming our masochistic cooperative, and offer up a specific ontological example of the economic psychodynamics involved, and at last, we will then return to the shining surface and reveal the answer! So be brave and read, for the antidote most cheerful awaits one who can look plainly upon what follows.

Analysis of Rubens: *Prometheus Bound*.

First, I will direct the reader to the following link for a discussion of the relationship between unconscious content, repression, and the creative process.

<http://blog.theultranet.com/2013/05/a-novel-idea-from-symptom-to-sublimation.html>

Please note that artistic creation is a function of the wish for reunification with unconscious content. Indeed, Rubens is a supreme example of the proposition, a profound artist whose relation to unconscious content is all but a direct one. As one approaches undistorted unconscious content more and more closely, said content strengthens its energetic cathexis by way of symbolic multiplication and redundant thematic "over-determination," as it is known in Freudian psychology. Here, on the surface, we see a quadruple redundancy representing a particular complex: the castration complex. This punitive complex provides the threat around which conscience, super-ego,

is formed. Before I detail exactly what I mean by that statement, and justify it in terms of direct observation of unconscious content and psychoanalytic theory, I will outline this redundant surface symbolic architecture.

1. Prometheus is bound in chains. (Binding is a well known and common symbolic representation of castration).
2. Prometheus has no genitals.
3. As is typical in dreams and hysterical symptomatology, Prometheus shows a distorted displacement of the active element, as a wound representing the female genital, and hence castration, is displaced onto his side.
4. Lastly, and of no small interest, the bisexual nature of unconscious content and human disposition is represented, and the act of castration extended and further embedded into the image, as we see a clear example of *female castration* being carried out upon the analogous organ, the clitoris, which is being removed by the representation of the father, Zeus's eagle.

Now we need but ask and answer a single question, to reveal the wishes and fears which are contained within the image. I have found a simple formula which has provided great aid in interpreting neurotic symptoms, and as you know, a dream, an artwork, and a neurotic symptom are all constructed via the same mechanism: the return of the repressed, and hence, can be understood using precisely the same methods of analysis. Neurosis hides its energetic unconscious sources with a sort of disguise, a distortion of its core energetic unconscious components is used to conceal those pathogenic elements which are active in its formation. Many types of distortion are used, mostly, symbolic compromises between conscious censorship and unconscious wishful ideations, but I have a particular distortion in mind: the reversal of cause and effect in manifest presentation. The result appears as an unhappy effect, a catastrophe or accident most unintended, but that is the distortion. The effect in a neurotic symptom is the wish! This reasoning applies perfectly to the Prometheus myth:

All knew of Zeus. He was the most severe, powerful and intolerant of all the gods, so very stern and potent in his discipline! His wishes are known: Fire is of the gods, not of man! His temper and punishments are known and feared by all! Why did Prometheus disobey such a sure and stern patriarch, so powerful and so sure, so very certain to find him out? Only one reason can be deduced: Prometheus *wished* to be punished! Prometheus is a masochist. Now we can interpret the image as a masochistic/hysterical symptom: Hysterical symptomatology is formed by two "counter-valent" wishes simultaneously affecting a single symbol. "Counter-valent" is my own term which denotes a single symbol affectively encoded with two opposite wishes from two different psychological systems. In this case, the *horror of the image* is one wish, the *disobedient guilty wish for punishment*, which originates in the super-ego, and the other wish, the opposite wish finding its source in the unconscious id, is the wish to *submit* to the father and **be loved** by him, as symbolized by the eagle plunging into the wound, the primary *submissive* masochistic wish par excellence! The symptom then, is a product of the tension between the two counter-valent wishes, one a wish to be **punished** by the father sourced in one psychological agency, the super-ego, the other to be **loved** by him, sourced

from the unconscious id. Indeed, psychoanalysis has rightly understood (in the male subject), precisely these two aspects, the fear of castration and the wish for love of the father, to be part of every human mind in the form of the negative Oedipal complex. All people, men and women, have two Oedipal complexes, the negative and the positive, which in their simultaneous affective strength and balance result in the fundamental structure which determines the healthy or unhealthy outcome for each of us. Here we see the two aspects which form the male negative Oedipal complex: the fear of castration, a requisite mutilation and horror (and I contend also, a guilty masochistic *wish for punishment*), which must precede the completion of the second wish, the wish to "submit" to the father and be loved by him. It is this core compound masochistic-homosexual wish, the horror, the tension and horror between these two wishes, the guilty horrifying wish to be *punished* by castration, and the wish to sexually submit to the father and be *loved* by him, the structure of the negative Oedipal complex itself, which carries the core threat around which conscience is formed. ***Conscience is a masochism.*** Just as with all masochists, Prometheus acts so as to *encourage* his father to punish him. The resulting image is so very potent and powerful in its punitive force, that virtually all our drives have in some part been subject to repression into the unconscious as a result of this patriarchal threat! *Our conscience is but an ugly punitive relic of the threat of castration, conscience, a pathogenic guilty structure, formed as an ugly relic from an abusive father.* I will spell this idea out in detail with reference to specific texts and clinical examples in the next installment of this series.

You will also please note how the outcome of the new version of the Prometheus tale I had written in the first part of this series, so very different in its form, has at its core the exact same result! Although in my version, Zeus does not punish, and it is Man who rejects Prometheus, my attempt to redefine the meaning failed utterly! Archetypal material asserts its form by way of unconscious sources! The coals being tossed from hand to hand are a clear symbolic reference to masturbation, which phylogenetically, is invariably punished by castration carried out by the father. Prometheus submits to Zeus in substitution for the brotherhood of man! The exact same outcome!

This notion is not so far-fetched as it may seem, and next time, I will spell out the fact by way of reference to specific psychoanalytic texts, ancient law, clinical example, and history. Perhaps there is another way to create moral structure and ethical sentiment? Once the historical development of super-ego has been articulated, I will provide a specific ontological example, so we may see *exactly* how conscience is formed in the case of the individual, and after a study of its economic, ethical, and psychopathological implications, we may well find that a healthy alternative is presently at hand.

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