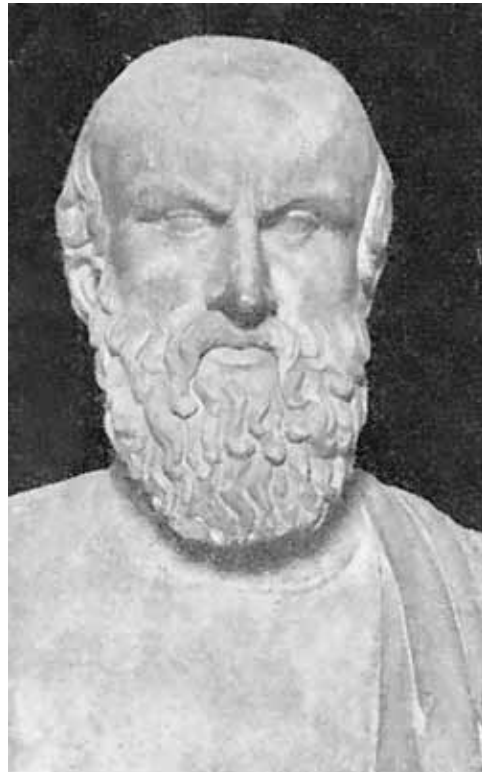


Prometheus and The War Against Empire

by Ted Andromidas

Feb. 16—Prometheus is the immortal Titan from the ancient world whose name means forethought; at the very beginning of history he created man. Then, defying Zeus, king of the gods, who despised mankind, Prometheus raised man almost to the level of the gods by giving him fire. It is therefore appropriate that the name Prometheus appears at those times when humanity is facing a species-threatening crisis.

Such crises of genocidal war and social chaos have been repeatedly caused by a small oligarchic faction of humanity whom we have come to call, as did the ancient Greeks, the “Olympians.” Today is such a moment! Russia, China, India, and other nations of Eurasia and Africa are establishing what Lyndon LaRouche has called, “... a just new world economic order.”¹ Against this move toward a better future, the “Olympians” of the British Empire and most certainly their demented puppet, Barack Obama, have “... just recklessly escalated military confrontation with Russia” and, he now “... pushes the new Cold War toward actual war, possibly even a nuclear one.”²



Bust of Aeschylus in the Capitoline Museums, Rome

Prometheus Bound

But what is the importance of the name and story of Prometheus, this Titan chained by Zeus to a rock in the Caucasus for a thousand years for having given this gift of fire to man? It was Prometheus who created man by shaping lumps of clay into small figures resembling the gods. Athena admired these figurines and breathed on them, giving them life. But Zeus, the archetypically oligarch, hated these creatures but could not uncreate them. Instead, he confined them to the Earth and denied them immortality. Prometheus, the creator and champion of man, defied Zeus, gave mankind fire, and taught it various arts and skills. When Zeus and the other Olympian gods went to war against the Titans, Prometheus sided with the gods and thus won their favor. To show their gratitude, Athena taught Pro-

metheus astronomy, mathematics, architecture, navigation, metalworking, and writing. Later, Prometheus would bestow this knowledge on mankind.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that among the earliest and most important plays of ancient Greek drama was the *Prometheia*, the Prometheus Trilogy, composed by one of the greatest playwrights produced by the human species, Aeschylus of Athens, and performed sometime around 450-445 BC. Of these three plays, the first, *Prometheus Bound*, survives, but the other two, *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer*,

1. “[The Theory of the New World Economic Order](#),” by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., *Executive Intelligence Review*, Nov. 2, 1982.

2. “War and Peace—The Obama Administration Has Just Recklessly Escalated Its Military Confrontation with Russia,” by Steven Cohen, *The Nation*, Feb. 3, 2016.

survive only in fragments. Yet, these plays would inspire the people of Athens to fight the tyranny of the Persian “Olympians” for another century and more. *Prometheus Bound* enjoyed a great measure of popularity in the Athens of antiquity, and Aeschylus’ plays continued to be very popular in the decades following his death.

A generation later other Greek playwrights, such as Euripides, would reference Aeschylus’ plays in their own dramas. Other allusions from several decades after the play’s first performance speak to the popularity of *Prometheus Bound*. That the play itself was far more important to the people of Athens than the earlier myth can be seen, for example, on vases painted over a century later. A performance of the play itself (rather than a depiction of simply the myth) appears on fragments of Greek vases dated c. 370-360 BC.³

The very fact that during times of great crisis, especially in Europe, the Prometheus myth emerges, is a testament to its enduring qualities. With the success of the American Revolution, by the early Nineteenth Century great poets and writers would come to identify with the defiant Prometheus. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote a poem on the theme, as did Lord Byron. In fact, among the greatest of English poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley, at the time of these great humanist revolutions in America and Europe, would write a play titled *Prometheus Unbound*, which incorporated material from Aeschylus’ play for his own vision.

Aeschylus, Prometheus, and the Battle Against Empire

The story of Prometheus, as told by Aeschylus, would inspire future generations of poets, philoso-



The naval battle of Salamis (480 BC) in a painting by Wilhelm von Kaulbach, 1868. The Greeks defeated the Persian Empire in this battle fought in the straits near Athens, between the Greek mainland and the island of Salamis.

Maximilianeum, Munich

phers, and revolutionaries in their wars against empire. For Aeschylus, the story of Prometheus was the best metaphor for Athens’ war against the Persian Empire. Certainly the young Socrates or Plato would have been very familiar with the works of Aeschylus; Aeschylus himself was famous as a hero, having fought against the Persians both at Marathon and Salamis.⁴

Athens, in the Fifth to Fourth Century BC, had an extraordinary system of government, whereby all male citizens had equal political rights, freedom of speech, and the opportunity to participate directly in the political arena. Further, not only did citizens participate in a direct democracy, but they also actively served in, and helped to control and direct the institutions that governed them. Other city-states had, at one time or another, systems of democracy, notably Argos, Syracuse, Rhodes, and Erythrai. But it was Athenian democracy, from 460 BC to 320 BC, involving all male citizens, that was the most developed. And it was Aeschylus who would inspire the citizens of Athens, men like Socrates

3. K. DeVries, “The *Prometheus* in Vase Painting and on Stage.” In: *Nomodeiktēs: Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald*. R.M. Rosen and J. Farrell, eds. (Ann Arbor, 1993), 517-23.

4. The defeat of the Persian army and navy by the Greek city-states at the battles of Marathon and Salamis in 490 and 480 BC ended Persia’s attempt to conquer southeastern Europe, and with it the direct influence of Asia in the early development of European culture. Both battles and their surrounding actions, including the legendary stand of 300 Greek hoplites at Thermopylae and the final battle on the plain at Plataea, stopped the Persian Empire’s expansion into Europe.

and Plato, to greatness in the continuing war against empire. The words of this great playwright, who understood the ongoing war against the Olympians and their empires like few others, would inspire men of good will for millennia to come.

During his presidential campaign, when notified of the assassination of Martin Luther King, then Senator Robert Kennedy was warned not to attend a Chicago campaign event due to fears of rioting by the mostly African-American crowd. Kennedy insisted on attending and gave an impromptu address. Acknowledging the audience's emotions, Kennedy referred to his own grief at the murder of his brother, President John F. Kennedy, and quoted from Aeschylus' play *Agamemnon*:

My favorite poet was Aeschylus. And he once wrote: "Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."... Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.

The quotation from Aeschylus was later inscribed on a memorial at the gravesite of Robert Kennedy following his own assassination.

Prometheus and the War against Empire

He seized the lightning from Heaven and the scepter from the Tyrant.

Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1778)

Over two thousand years later, the name of Prometheus would once again inspire men to fight against the Gods of Olympus and harness fire. And no man deserved the title "The modern Prometheus" more than one of the great leaders of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin. This title was bestowed on Franklin by Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, a French economist and sometime supporter of the American Revolution. Franklin's role in the success of the American Revolution and the establishment of an American constitutional republic is legendary. So was his demonstration that lightning was another form of electricity. But Franklin himself is exemplary of the gifts of Prometheus.



Philadelphia Museum of Art

The American Prometheus: Benjamin West's painting, "Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky," ca. 1816.

Not only was the American Prometheus well known for his investigations of electricity, he was also one of only two contemporary scientists to support Christian Huygens' wave theory of light. Franklin also carried out major investigations of Atlantic Ocean currents, meteorology, and temperature's effect on electrical conductivity. His scientific investigations even included population studies.

In the 1730s and 1740s, Franklin began studies of population growth, finding that the American population had the fastest growth rates on Earth. Eventually, in 1751, he drafted *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of the Earth*, in which he optimistically forecast that the population of the colonies of North America would surpass that of England in less than a century. This forecast so terrified the "Olympians" of the British Empire, that they almost immediately began a counter-campaign, through the writings of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus, to create the con-

cept of “overpopulation,” to counter Franklin’s conclusions.

In the Spring of 1818, harried by creditors, ill-health and, most importantly, the hatred of the British oligarchy, one of humanity’s greatest poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley, left England permanently for Italy. Despite great personal hardship, the twelve months from the Summer of 1819 to 1820 witnessed some of Shelley’s most extraordinary and profound poetry. Besides penning such great works as *Ode to the West Wind* and *The Masque of Anarchy*, he also completed *Prometheus Unbound*.

In his “Author’s Preface” to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley writes:

In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

Once again, the Titan Prometheus emerges as the symbol of war against the gods of Olympus. Ironically, the revolutionary Shelley was born into a family of English gentry and attended Eton, the boarding school, and University College, Oxford. Originally, Eton was founded by King Henry VII as a charity school to provide free education to 70 poor boys who would then go on to King’s College, Cambridge. Eventually, however, Eton became a training ground for Britain’s upper classes. At Eton, Shelley met Dr. James Lind, a friend and correspondent of Benjamin Franklin and an opponent of the king. It was under the tutelage of Dr. Lind that the revolutionary poet began to develop. Shelley studied the works of Plato, among other philosophers, and became familiar with much of the writings of Franklin and Franklin’s experimental work. In fact, Lind would at one point say that Shelley “swore” to the ideas of Benjamin Franklin.



National Portrait Gallery, London, PD-1923

Portrait of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) by Alfred Clint

And, above all, Shelley was a Promethean revolutionary. In the *Ode to the West Wind* it is clear that Shelley is calling for revolution. The ode is to the force of revolution, with Shelley speaking directly to the wind, asking for its power, to lift him “...like a leaf” in the wind and take his thoughts throughout the world. Shelley writes, “Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere; / Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!”

Prometheus in the Modern World

On Oct. 12, 1988, Democratic Presidential candidate and leading economist Lyndon LaRouche made the following forecast in a press conference at

Berlin’s Kempinski Hotel Bristol:

I am here today, to report to you on the subject of U.S. policy for the prospects of reunification of Germany. What I present to you now, will be a featured topic in a half-hour U.S. television broadcast, nationwide, prior to next month’s presidential election. I could think of no more appropriate place to unveil this new proposal, than here in Berlin. ... Therefore, I can assure you that what I present to you now, on the subject of prospects for the reunification of Germany, is a proposal which will be studied most seriously among the relevant establishment circles inside the United States.

Under the proper conditions, many today will agree, that the time has come for early steps toward the re-unification of Germany, with the obvious prospect that Berlin might resume its role as the capital.⁵

What has made LaRouche an enemy of today’s

5. “[United States Policy on the Reunification of Germany](#),” Statement by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., Berlin, West Germany, October 12, 1988. *Executive Intelligence Review*, Oct. 21, 1988.

Olympians? It has been this uncanny ability of foresight:

The ability to adduce a truly universal physical principle ... to present a current forecast of *what must be also a quality of that true foresight which goes intrinsically into a true sense of an actual future which actually exists only beyond the alleged “powers” of mere sense-perception, but, which, rather, exists only within the actual process of generating a future!*⁶

Just days before being imprisoned unjustly by the current gods of Olympus, political leader and economist Lyndon LaRouche wrote:

There can be nothing more precious to you, not even your mortal life, than saving mankind from this evil and freeing society from overlordship of an Establishment which has set itself up in the image of pagan gods of Olympus, and permits such evils to be unleashed upon mankind.

At an April 16, 1992 conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, at an international science festival, Oxford University professor of biology Richard Dawkins told the assembled academics that belief in God was a disorder of the brain analogous explicitly to a transmittable “computer virus.” Dawkins had included the formulation: “These are arbitrary, hereditary beliefs which people are told at a critical age, passed on from your parents rather like a virus.”⁷ He had added: “that ‘evolutionary theory’ has removed any scientific basis for

6. “Man’s true intention!: How the Future Builds its Past,” by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., Aug. 10, 2013. *EIR*, Aug. 23, 2013.

7. The quoted passage is from the April 16, 1992 wire-dispatch summary by *EIR News Service*. Dawkins’ references to “order” and “beauty,” appear to be a direct slap against the 1961 “informal proof of God” by the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study’s Professor Kurt Gödel; that appearance is buttressed, two-foldly, by the fact that Dawkins’ radical-positivist argument is virtually plagiarized intact from “linguistics” co-founder Rudolf Carnap’s 1941 arguments against Gödel.



EIRNS/Dean Andromidas

Lyndon LaRouche spoke at the Kempinski Hotel Bristol, West Berlin, on Oct. 12, 1988.

arguing the existence of God, and that people who believe in a God who is responsible for the order and beauty of the universe are ‘stupid.’”⁸

From prison, in response to this, LaRouche wrote “On the Subject of God.” In the concluding paragraph of that work, LaRouche once again brought forth that champion of humanity, Prometheus, and the great Greek playwright from two millennia past, Aeschylus. LaRouche wrote:

Let us turn our imagination to the Prometheus of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*. Prometheus warns the immortal, Olympian “blobs” by the ears of Zeus’s message-bearing lackey, that there is a real god who will work justice upon both Olympian pretenders and on behalf of mankind. I am certain that Aeschylus’ Prometheus is a true prophet; we shall have an end of Olympus’ tyranny soon, and that by aid of God’s own agent, the *imago viva Dei* acting within men and women.⁹

8. *Ibid.*

9. “On the Subject of God,” by Lyndon LaRouche, *Fidelio Magazine*, Spring 1993.