

Who Fired Prometheus? The historical genesis and
ontology of super-ego and the castration complex: The
destructuralization and repair of modern personality

An essay in five parts

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Who Fired Prometheus? Part 1: Our Barbaric Mystery

As an author for this most inclusive and eclectic forum, it is my privilege to write a series of contributions which will look upon the mystery of our human condition. There is a particular psychological element that is available to observe in myth, dream and art, which once analyzed, will disclose both the nexus around which our elevated cultural achievements and human cooperative conglomeration have been cast, as well as, the single most destructive source of modern psychopathology. This barbaric unconscious relic can be traced in its formative genesis through the developmental progression of ancient law and myth, its archetypal imprint now a certain and sure part of the human phylogenetic inheritance, a masochistic degradation of all healthy potential around which the very heart of collective achievement has been centered. First I will offer up a Rubens, *Prometheus Bound*, which I encourage you to examine quite closely for the striking and horrific demonstration of this archetypal image which is embedded within. Can you unriddle the distortions and find our complex, the barbarism around which all of our society has gathered? Then, I will offer up a new and different version of the Prometheus myth I have written, which also demonstrates this archetype. How amazing to have written it at a single pass, and then, to analyze it later, and discover that although different and distorted from the original myth, the meaning, the archetypal pattern, remained unchanged! Such a beautiful piece of writing to express such an ugly wish! So dear reader, first I will offer you the mystery. Please examine the following image and text quite closely, look into the images, both written and visual, look deeply and see if you can guess the answer. Then I will reveal the correct analysis, then the history, followed by specific examples detailing the exact way this structure is created in development, and how it influences, for the worse, our ethics and our intellect. Perhaps there is an alternative which will free both mind and morality from this curse, an atavism and a new creation, our highest human hope, both new and aged, might ask and answer the question: "Who fired Prometheus?"



The Greek myth of Prometheus was originally written as a tale warning against hubris, or overbearing pride, leading to transgressions against the father. Prometheus acts against the wishes of Zeus and gives fire to the race of Man, a crime for which he is eventually punished by being chained to a rock so that his liver can be pecked out by an eagle over and over again as it eternally grows back. Zeus is not to be trifled with. In the original myth it is Hercules who rescued the ill-fated Prometheus, but... I have another idea:

Who Fired Prometheus?

And Prometheus did descend into the carpeted valley, part man, part god he climbed down into the emerald folds and lush hills, as man, to bring his godly gift of Fire. For he did trust the struggling race of Man. So did he come to them with his precious gift, to lift the veil of their misery: a forbidden warrior for a good, however mistaken, for Prometheus did love the race of Man, and in contempt of Man was Zeus, He who was as Father above all the gods, one far more evil and right than Prometheus. So the good of Prometheus was a brave and sneaking good.

As man he crept by night into their sullen camp, so dim and foreboding, darkness wrapped in huddling dim foreboding. Blind and shivering were they, or the wiser, under earthen cover or beneath sheltering dim tents of stretched hide.

"I am Prometheus, friend of the race of Man. I have something to help you... Behold! I give Fire unto thee!" And so did he present them the gift of Fire, and did trust in them to find the sanctuary within the flame, rather than be seduced by its heat. And he did caution them: "I am alone, and others far greater than I do not believe you worthy, and fear to give you this. So you must find wisdom to bind your cruel and stupid heart, and use for warmth and shelter that which is provided to you. In this you will honor me, and I may in turn be forgiven."

So did he speak unto them.... As the Father watched! Unknown as a slippery ghost is the wisdom of Zeus, who finds both ire and patience in an old spirit, wise and evil is He, waiting and lurking, sneaking, stealthy and wise.

And so, Prometheus was then beloved by all. All that was Man's was his to have, and they held him in their honor! Prometheus the god had descended unto them, and now, they too possessed a spark of liquid rising Sun, shimmering in darkness which stretched with new golden arms of warmth to embrace them into evening's hour. So did they sup and supplant their misery with meats well cooked and warmth to sustain and nourish them. So did they praise the name of Prometheus.

Oh how fickle in folly and forgetting is the hollow heart of Man! For Hate soon gripped one sure in power, and another had found, of equal measure, both his strength and resolve, now doubled with Fire's teeth. And they then did set each upon the other, one upon the next with blaze and Hate, set Ruin loose and burning, swallowing the land and scalding it bare, the burnt Earth sloughed into the sea... washed away into foam. But barren rock and crag remained, so they did starve and die, upon rock and wind did they wither, and bore up a black fist of hatred into the air, and with their last bitter squeeze of breath, did they hate him, "Oh how I hate you, Prometheus! Why have you ruined us? We wish you dead, and wish but you had never set eyes, or Hope's murderous blaze upon our wretched world, once so beautiful. Oh, how I wish you dead!" So did they curse the name of Prometheus.

And as a god weeps, did Prometheus weep, his screeching wounded cries held within

his breast, echoing through his ruined godly soul, but as a god did he suffer, and soon tire of suffering, and so did twice cast a hopeful eye upon Mankind.... Now aged a thousand years twice did he find them, starving but for want of a simple thing, a forbidden thing, which need but a few bits of knowledge, and then, from the over-spilling land, so double rich in game and spoil, they could but easily sup and live, happy and well, their lot so easily lain but for this!

So again did he descend into the double green forest and enfolded himself in the tangled damp shadows with them, again, as man did he go among them, for Prometheus did love the race of man.

"I am Prometheus, and I bring you a thing, a simple wooden thing crafted thus, and so you may see the rich wood yield easily its sweet bounty, and we will all enjoy life's precious spoil with less cost. But I do beg you, do use this thing for that which makes life sweet, leaves it a treasured thing, now doubly rich. For there are gods above me, who twice holy I do fear, and if you spoil yourself, I shall surely be the one to pay the cost... So do I beg you." And with this warning he gave them the bow and arrow, and they did rejoice and sup, eat and live with life rich and plentiful around and before them, and did praise the name of Prometheus.

But soon, one found his hatred too hard to grasp and so did slip his arrow into his enemy's breast, and Rage did cull what absence did before the bow, and then twice again and double still did the cost in blood exceed that ill which Prometheus had sought to slake.... now drained into the Earth from arrows pierced in blood, and with their last breath squeezed from their black lips did they scar the air with his name, borne up in blackest hate. "We hate you, Prometheus! For why, why have you done this to us? Why have you cursed us to slaughter and ruin? Oh how I wish you were dead— Oh how I wish you had never come unto us!" So did they curse the name of Prometheus.

Prometheus withdrew to a lonely wood, dark, damp and sullen, filled only with the silent ache of his godly wailing, the swallowed cry choked within his empty breast, hollowed out and sunken, ruined from his foolish love of Man.

Oh how Zeus did laugh and withhold His blows, so loving and kind, so easy and light would they be compared to the still turning torrent shifting in the broken breast of Prometheus. So Zeus did but watch and laugh, warm and sure, wise and wicked was He.

And again, Prometheus took refuge in the ages and did heal. How godly was his withered breast, again brought forth to light and foolish hope, aglow in a new knowledge which he did bestow in pieces amongst the wisest of men. Until, at last, the atom was split, and upon its unbinding came the energy to light a thousand homes, or destroy a thousand destinies, and at once Prometheus saw his folly and wept... but aloud, in horror. Prometheus had gone mad from his love of Man. Unhinged was his mind, as was to the race of Man the essence of being itself now uncoiled— In madness did Prometheus cry out and wander the hills, raving and gaunt, stammering and drunken with his deed, as a mad man did he carry his smoldering sticks, embers of wood and coal held in his hands,

tossing back and then forth, from right to left, always burning but never burning, juggling and stammering, "To Whom!—To Whom!— Who may have this?— Who?— To Whom!?" So did he rave.

At last Zeus had mercy upon him and took form as an old ragged beggar, so wise and sure in His body and spirit, He could not be mistaken for but a brittle shell of god, His wisdom a cool shawl of serenity cloaking His aged face, divine and worthy. And so Prometheus stumbled mad and ranting through the hills until at last he discovered a beggar's camp, and within it, a wise and godly beggar, alone in the hills.

"Ahhhh... To you! **To you** I may give this! Oh please take it from me, oh please... I have something only you can have, I beg you, you alone are worthy, I beg you, please... Oh please, take this from me."

And so, Zeus did accept the dim coals and relieve Prometheus of his madness, for at last He had another with whom He could share His despair and laughter, a brother who knew as He knew. For even gods need wise company, which is but a voice, a tale, told best around firelight.

Rich Norman

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

This is the second, of a 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*, included above, for a window into the unconscious, the "under-soul" of our human height and sickness.

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. This essay will also be available at *The Black Watch: The Journal of Unconscious Psychology and Self-Psychoanalysis* web site, or, www.richnorman.com, in the philosophy archive.

<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 (Freud, 1900). 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 (Freud, 1900). Many types of distortion are used, mostly, symbolic compromises between conscious censorship and unconscious wishful ideations (Freud, 1900), 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 often formed through two "counter-valent" wishes simultaneously affecting a single symbol. Freud had a great many similar insights (Freud, 1915, p. 185), but, "counter-valent" is my own term which denotes a single symbol affectively encoded with two opposite wishes from two different psychical 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 psychical 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 (Freud, 1923, p. 33). 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 super-ego 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 (Freud, 1918). 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 in Freudian psychology, 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, 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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Who Fired Prometheus? Pt. 3. The Historical Nexus: Our Fearful Phylogenetic Ethic and its Origins

In the third part of this series of articles detailing the sources and archetypal reflections of conscience/super-ego, I am left with a daunting disconnect between the elevated conscious perception of our moral facility, and its unconscious aspect. Indeed, I was so very surprised to discover the source and dynamic implications of my own conscience, that I wrote the following in my book, *The Tangible Self*:

"Although castration is big in psychology, it seems absurd to the ordinary healthy person. I never thought about it. A non-topic. Perhaps once a decade there would be talk of gelding a bull and the word would come up. No one ever spends even a single moment concerned with the idea. It seems nothing short of asinine to make so much of it as they do in psychology. Castration? Nonsense! Imagine my surprise to be presented with the contents of my unconscious and to observe thousands and thousands of scenes, so many scenes from every period of my life, and what do I see?—acres and acres of unbelievable super-energetic fantasies about or involving only one thing: Castration!" [Norman, *The Tangible Self*, pp. 77-78.]

We have seen in parts one and two of this series, the mythological imprint of this punitive aspect of human archetype and ontology.

One can read of the purpose of these images, and how they serve to form the super-ego, which is inheritor of our Oedipal complex:

". . .we can tell what lies hidden behind the ego's dread of the super-ego, its fear of conscience. The higher being which later becomes the ego-ideal once threatened the ego with castration, and this dread of castration is probably the kernel round which the subsequent fear of conscience has gathered; it is this dread that persists as the fear of conscience." [Sigmund Freud, "*The Ego and the Id*" in *A General Selection From The Works of Sigmund Freud*, p. 233.]

And we can identify the masochistic/passive /feminine implications revealed in the analysis of *Prometheus Bound* offered in part two of this series:

" . . .the castration complex always operates in the sense implied in its subject-matter: it inhibits and limits masculinity and encourages femininity." [Sigmund Freud, "*Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes*," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* (vol. 19), p. 256.]

So the question presents itself, from whence comes this ugly dread, this internalized punitive barbarism with which we are all threatened, and how did it come to find

purchase within each of us? The answer is to be found in the record of human history, and the trail of laws and myths which follow in its train. This image is now a part of our inherited phylogenetic and instinctual template: Its aspect now a ripe possibility waiting to be brought to ontological fruition, a masochism as ripe fruit, swollen and turgid, an ugly fruit in need of but a tender breeze to fall to earth and disperse its poison. In his most worthy book, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, E. R. Dodds, a superb Greek scholar and philologist par excellence, draws the strings of history and psychology together for us. This ugly imprint has been nurtured over thousands and thousands of years. Its exact source is clear to discern with Dodds's careful examination of the historical record.

"The head of the household is its king . . . and his position is described by Aristotle as analogous to that of a king. Over his children his authority is in early times unlimited: he is free to expose them in infancy, and in manhood to expel an erring or rebellious son from the community . . . as Zeus himself cast out Hephaestos from Olympus for siding with his mother." [Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 45-46.]

However, as early as the 6th century BC, the situation had begun to change, and as social conditions began to improve, and the father's authority became less and less *absolute* in the face of these new social conditions leading to increased personal freedom, the strict authoritarian structure of family life began to loosen. Now, what was a *shame* based dynamic, one based on *external* threat from the father, becomes a *guilt* based dynamism, one based on an internalized threat, an *internalized* moral structure in the true modern sense of the word emerges: super-ego. This is demonstrated by the need for laws introduced by Solon, and later, by Plato, to safeguard the now threatened patriarchal family structure. [Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 46.]

Super-ego uses severe repressions to create by *internal* means, what were behaviors, inhibitions and restrictions previously brought about by *external* patriarchal threat. Dodds fleshes the idea out as follows:

"The peculiar horror with which Greeks viewed offenses against a father, and the peculiar religious sanctions to which the offender was thought to be exposed, are in themselves suggestive of strong repressions. So are the many stories in which a father's curse produces terrible consequences—stories like those of Phoenix, of Hippolytus, of Pelops and his sons, of Oedipus and his sons—all of them, it would seem, products of a relatively late period where the position of the father was no longer entirely secure. Suggestive in a different way, is the barbarous tale of Kronos and Ouranos . . . the mythological projection of unconscious desires is surely transparent—as Plato perhaps felt when he declared that this story was fit to be communicated only to a very few . . . and should at all costs be kept from the young." [Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 46-47.]

Here is a synopsis of that myth. Please note the Oedipal and castration themes.

From, <http://www.deathreference.com/Ke-Ma/Kronos.html>:

"According to the Greek poet Hesiod, in his *Theogony* (c. 750 B.C.E.), Ouranos ("Sky") mated nightly with Gaia ("Earth"). When their children were born, Ouranos hid them in Gaia's inward places. Painfully swollen with offspring, she wrought a huge sickle and asked her children, six brothers and six sisters (the Titans), to punish Ouranos. Only her youngest son, Kronos, agreed. Giving him the sickle, she told him where to hide. When Ouranos next lay on Gaia, Kronos grasped him with his left hand, the sickle in his right, and cut off his genitals. From the drops of blood that shed on her, Gaia conceived among others the Giants, and from the severed genitals, which fell into the sea, a white foam arose from which was born the love goddess Aphrodite.

Now followed the rule of Kronos. He married his sister Rhea, who bore him three daughters and three sons: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus (the Olympian gods). But Gaia and Ouranos had foretold that Kronos would be overthrown by a son, so he swallowed his children as each emerged from the womb. About to bear her sixth child, Zeus, Rhea asked her parents how to save him. They sent her to Crete, where she hid him in a cave on Mount Aegaeon. She presented Kronos instead with a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes, which he thrust in his belly. Zeus grew apace and in time forced Kronos to yield up his children. Once reborn, the gods waged war on the Titans, whom they overthrew, and Zeus replaced Kronos as ruler."

(Please note also, that some versions of the myth repeat the reversed wishful castration theme, and Zeus also castrates his father in turn).

Now from the Dodds:

"And when Plato wants to illustrate what happens when rational controls are not functioning, his typical example is the Oedipus dream. . . it seems not unreasonable to argue from identical symptoms to some similarity in the cause, and conclude that the family situation in ancient Greece, like the family situation today, gave rise to infantile conflicts whose echoes lingered in the unconscious mind of the adult." [Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 47.]

And lastly Dodds assembles the entire picture for us in these words:

"The psychologists have taught us, how potent a source of guilt feelings is the pressure of unacknowledged desires. . . the human father had from the earliest times his heavenly counterpart: *Zeus pater*. . . Zeus appears as a Supernatural Head of the Household. . . it was natural to project onto the heavenly Father those curious mixed feelings about the human one the child dare not acknowledge. . . that would explain very nicely why the Archaic Age Zeus appears by turns to be the inscrutable source of good and evil gifts alike. . . as the awful judge. . . who punishes inexorably the capitol sin of self-assertion, the sin of *hubris*. (This last

aspect corresponds to that phase in the development of family relations when the authority of the father is felt to need the support of a moral sanction; when "You will do it because I say so" gives place to "You will do it because it is right.") [Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 48.]

Here in this historical transition from an external shame based ethical structure, to an internalized guilt based structure, in this *internalization* of the patriarchal threat (introjection), we see the creation of our modern ethic, our conscience, our masochistic capitulation: our super-ego. This historical basis for our phylogenetic inheritance can be brought to light and assessed as to its healthy or pathogenic contribution by way of economic analysis, and clinical example.

I will provide that analysis in the next installment of this series. Once we clearly see the way the phylogenetic impression is brought to bear and made to resonate by current situational developments in upbringing, and, a precise account of the economic effects of this ugly historical precipitate are made manifest in specific example, the dismal, current picture of modern personality and ethical structure will be complete. Then, it will be my happy task to reveal the healthy alternative, the wondrous answer! For "the thing" can be removed, do be sure of that! Particular formative impressions can be brought up from under repression so as to disband, weaken and eliminate super-ego... permanently! Then, other healthy structures can be energized and used in a new and novel way, to free our energies and allow even the worst of Life's abuses to be reclaimed, and those energies used to healthy result, unbound from fixation. Ethics are a function of Empathy. Ethical structure, real ethics, are not a function of threat! We will soon see how much intelligence and happiness has been ruined, how much of ourselves and our potential has been maligned and wasted for this barbaric abuse, which we have so foolishly inculcated into our very being, and in the height of sheer idiocy, proclaimed in our ignorance, not to be sadism and waste, but, to be none other than the very height of human achievement, as if capitulation before a tyrant were the essence of truth, as if obedience before this ugly lie were in fact: virtue.

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Who Fired Prometheus? Pt. 4. Economic Analysis: The Ontology of Submission— The Formative Mechanisms of Super-Ego

". . . to "improve" men: this above all was called morality. . . To call the taming of an animal its "improvement" sounds almost like a joke to our ears. Who ever knows what goes on in menageries doubts that the beasts are "improved" there. They are weakened, they are made less harmful, and through the depressive effect of fear, through pain, through wounds, and through hunger they become sickly beasts. It is no different with the tame man..." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*.

What is the precise interactive dynamic which yields the developmental result of conscience, of super-ego, and, how are we to interpret this result as to its pathogenic and healthful consequences?

Now that we have traversed the unpleasant and often disturbing unconscious representations of this punitive moral structure, and seen how it has been derived from the threat of the father compounded throughout history, we can properly look into the dynamic implications which result, and then make these theoretical matters plain to observe and understand with a specific example. Before we examine the interactions in specific, our inquiry will be greatly aided to sharpen our theoretical focus so as to make the result clearly intelligible.

So let us explore the result. The theory is interesting in that it predicts that the strength of our super-ego in its punitive aspect, is not entirely determined by the force of the punishments which have aroused its formation. Rather, as it is a masochistic structure invoked to control our aggression (amongst other instincts in my view), its force is a function of our own feelings of aggression and resentment toward parental discipline, quite independent of any moral implications drawn from the act for which parental reprimand has been drawn. This means that conscience, our sense of personal and social justice, is created as an interactive phylogenetic/ontological function of masochistic and aggressive economy within a social context, not as a function of any moral pretext. Our morality, is by the nature of its very construction: immoral.

Here are a few sections from the Freud which clarify and support this unusual notion:

"The first requisite of civilization, therefore, is that of justice—that is, the assurance that a law once made will not be broken in favor of an individual. This implies nothing as to the ethical value of such a law" (Freud, 1930, p. 95).

"The tension between the harsh super-ego, and the ego which is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city" (Freud, 1930, pp. 123-124).

And as to the effect of super-ego in equating wish and act, and, the resultant loss of mental economy and functioning:

"Here, instinctual renunciation is not enough, for the wish persists and can not be concealed from the super-ego. Thus, in spite of the renunciation that has been made, a sense of guilt comes about. This constitutes a great economic disadvantage in the erection of a super-ego, or, as we may put it, in the formation of a conscience. Instinctual renunciation now no longer has a completely liberating effect; virtuous continence is no longer rewarded with the assurance of love. A threatened external unhappiness—loss of love and punishment on the part of the external authority—has been exchanged for a permanent internal unhappiness, for the tension of the sense of guilt" (Freud, 1930, pp. 127-128).

"...the original severity of the super-ego does not—or does not so much—represent the severity which one has experienced from it [the object], or which one attributes to it; it represents rather one's own aggressiveness towards it. If this is correct, we may assert truly that in the beginning conscience arises through the suppression of an aggressive impulse, and that it is subsequently reinforced by fresh suppressions of the same kind" (Freud, 1930, pp. 129-130).

And as to the role of the phylogenetic in contributing to this outcome:

"It can also be asserted that when a child reacts to his first great instinctual frustrations with excessively strong aggressiveness and with a correspondingly severe super-ego, he is following a phylogenetic model and is going beyond the response that would be currently justified; for the father of prehistoric times was undoubtedly terrible, and an extreme amount of aggressiveness may be attributed to him" (Freud, 1930, p. 131).

Now the pieces are in place which will allow us to interpret a specific instance of the formation of super-ego. As conditions and considerations of privacy and disclosure limit my choices of subject matter, I will reveal the primary formative impression around which conscience has formed *in my own case*. In fact, this conscious revelation of these formative impressions is the very key to undoing the damage caused by super-ego. Super-ego is destroyed and disbanded by exposing the repressions for which it is responsible, and it is in this bringing to consciousness of repressed unconscious material, that the structure of super-ego and its severe pathological effects, can be permanently removed. Please examine this example of the formation of super-ego, and take careful note of the relationship, or lack there of, between any morally reprehensible action, and the guilty destructive result: masochism. A series of specific reaction formations is key to the masochistic structural formation—

My step-father is in a poor mood. I am young, age three to four. I hear the antacid tablet clink on the plate as he removes it from his mouth to shout at me. I am berated for no reason whatsoever. Although I have done nothing, and was most careful to avoid any such reproach, an accusation of chewing improperly with my mouth open is made at a

shout, and I burst into tears and run from the table into my room. Now the formation of super-ego begins:

1. I am weeping uncontrollably, and need my mother to comfort me. I am choking and gasping and can not stop crying. I repeatedly shout, "Mommy, mommy, I need you."
2. She does not come to my aid. The feelings of abandonment and loss of love are overwhelming and must be answered and quelled. As no help is forthcoming, the following reactions are set into play:
3. The feelings which are reacted are:
 - a. Mother, I need you.
 - b. Mother, I am hurt.
4. To stop the intolerable anguish, the passive emotional states are reacted into active ones:
 - a. Mother I need you becomes, mother I am dominating you.
 - b. Mother I am hurt, becomes, mother I am hurting you.
5. Once the passive suffering is transformed into active fantasy, and the hurt I was experiencing becomes a fantasy of hurting, of sadism, the tears stop. Now I am fantasizing about hurting my mother, who did not comfort me, and allowed my step-father to abuse me, and, the suffering and weeping stop, now replaced by thoughts of sadism and hate.
6. It is the *economic* factor, the *quantitative* factor which is key (Freud, 1915, p. 181), and once the sadistic thoughts become *hyper-energetic*, they create a new cognitive dissonance: guilt. A dissonance which would be tolerated asymptotically at a low energy level, becomes pathological once the intensity is increased past a point. The phylogenetic factor enters into play here. When we feel hatred, intense hatred for a loved object, the result of this ambivalence, so very peaked and reactive in its oppositional feelings, is guilt. When we strongly hate that which we love, we become guilty! To add this guilt to the sadistic stream, masochism is then formed. Sadism + Guilt = Masochism (Freud, 1919, pp. 193-194; Norman, 2011, p.116).
7. Here is the imagery symbolizing the guilt: I am howling in agony, my arms sloughing their skin like melt wax, my back hollow but for a necrotic pudding of feces and meat stirred with bones protruding as a crown of lamb sprung from the sunken hollow of my back, guilt and the knowledge that I am not loved, and am evil, and should suffer to know this, just as I am suffering, and so, I should know it: I am evil and unloved.
8. Now the result is the knowledge that I am a rotten person, so very bad, and of so little worth! I am so very sorry, so sorry, so sorry! This child wants but one thing: To accept the guilty definition of himself, he wants but one thing: To be punished. In this, we see conscience for what it is: a masochism.

Please remember that no guilty act whatsoever caused this unhealthy conflagration of events, which were born out as a phylogenetic resonance, a preordained masochistic reaction as ripe fruit, a masochism waiting to be harvested, sown long ago by an abusive patriarch, now plucked from the branch to sicken, all as a function of the quantitative excess of feeling, not borne upon any real guilty action!

Now we can see the complete economic implications of conscience with but one more bit of information. All thought, all intellectual and affective experience and accomplishment is fueled by undifferentiated libido, by unbound "sexual" energy, libidinal energy in the broadest sense. This energy is what provides, in the language of neuro-psychoanalysis and cognitive-neuroscience, "cortical tone" maintained via the ascending activating system (Kaplan-Solms & Solms, 2002, p. 267). This energy powers all of experience and intellect, our aggressive ideations and our sexual inclinations and intellectual efforts alike, all draw their power from this same well (Norman, 2011). The amount of this energy is finite. As one reclaims an aggressive ideation which was unconscious, or, a fixated unconscious ideation of any other sort, no matter whether the thought is *sadistic or sexual*, hateful or erotic, in every case without exception, undifferentiated libido, this *limited fuel for all thought and feeling* is reclaimed.

So the dire economic implications of super-ego are at last clear: The very structure which is to create our morality, is deeply and tragically immoral—to us! The bearer of super-ego is the sad inheritor of a guilty weight, a weight created so as to sicken his mind and spirit, now so very guilty, but not for any real crime, oh no, only for an innocent thought! And the result of this blind cheat, our immoral morality, is to reduce us, to make us, in a word: stupid! Now we are modern, with our energies, so very limited and precious, bound into repressed sexuality and repressed hate, now so "moral," these unconscious requirements of the super-ego, our drives swept under into the unconscious and our energies thusly separated, spinning away in hidden fantasies, fantasies which create illness and claim our energies, leaving us compliant, and so very unintelligent! How could it be otherwise? The very energy needed to think and feel, our highest promise and hope is no longer available, our height now but a guilty wish! No wonder the ancient Greeks were so very superior to us creatively, Sophocles and his like creating hundreds of pieces of work rather than tens! How could it be otherwise, as our energies are now so foolishly wasted compared to our Greek counterparts, who were free from the masochistic degradation of our "morality!"

Now the ugly situation has been plainly spelled out, and but one thing remains: it must be answered! We have seen that super-ego can be removed by way of exposing it to the repressions which it has fostered, and although it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide the precise information needed to accomplish this, the hopeful answer does await! Those of you who count yourselves amongst the brave and the foolish may contact me directly and be placed on a waiting list for my next book, which will contain this more sensitive information. However, there is a route to ethics which is not wasteful, stupefying, immoral and masochistic. There is little wonder that an inherited moral structure created to serve a sadist, is neither healthy or conducive to intellectual development. To understand this fact is hope itself, for it need not be so! We need not

be a masochistic victim to a dissociated, immoral morality. A completely new, healthy, more efficient and deeply ethical construction of personality, an *amoral* alternative is available. The human equation can at last be rightly summed! Our energies need not be wasted and used as a noose to choke us all to stupidity and unquestioning obedience before an immoral authority. What was hate and harm can be reclaimed and redefined, our stupid heart of dull hatred and unthinking submission may cease its backward beating, and our blood may again flow, *forward*, proud and free, light and easy is the stroke and measure of our unbound soul, so very bright, so easy is the day to have found: Our Lost Heart of Light.

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Who Fired Prometheus? Pt. 5. Our Lost Heart of Light—The Deconstruction and Repair of Modern Personality

Last summer the process euphemistically known as "renewable resource management" was in its final phase, and the helicopter came in low for a nearly perfect pass, spraying poison in a smooth carpet over the denuded hillside, earth now packed hard as black and brown concrete, crushed and scraped clean from the heavy equipment used to "harvest" the timber, then burned, and now, sprayed with poison. The once living and beautiful land now a wound, and I can hardly look upon it. The people who do this harm, are good people, and skilled workers. Something is missing, something has become cut off... dissociated. A piece of our human puzzle, which once dislodged, leaves us thinking exploitation is a right, and harm, a human privilege and pleasure. I believe I have found it, found the element which is part of each of us, and, in its influence has formed many higher notions and ideas throughout the diversity of historical and spiritual tradition. Likewise, its dissociation leads down another pathway. I will share a piece of psychology I have recently discovered, a bit of psychology which is responsible for what the pretense and paradoxical murk of eastern thought has called "enlightenment," and I will simply call health, and balance. So from whence come optimism, connection, empathy, caring, kindness, health and happiness in our view of the world as a pleasure, a glowing and healthy part of ourselves, rather than a thing to hurt and exploit to carelessly fill our empty need? Is there an alternative to the dissociated moral structure which has us do "what we must," and in this act of moral obedience, to find ourselves unfeeling, obedient, and so... immoral? Is there a truly ethical alternative to the modern moral dilemma, our "conscience," this phylogenetic relic of a barbarous patriarch, this masochism which has us all becoming less and less intelligent, less and less ethical, less and less healthy and productive, this masochism which is choking us dry, leaving the worthy with a single question on our lips: is there "a-moral" here? Indeed there is! And within it, an answer to the question, "Who Fired Prometheus?"

There is a little known psychologist named Wilfred Bion, who in the most mistaken and painful philosophical tradition, insists on using obscure language to describe simple concepts. His most brilliant and profound idea is the notion of "alpha function." Although assigned a seemingly arbitrary Greek alphanumeric designation, we can gain a clue as to the foundational importance of this idea from the fact that alpha is the very first letter of the Greek alphabet. In turn, alpha function is the foundation upon which much of the evolution of healthy personality is based. As the child grows, he is entirely dependent upon the mother, and the mother is all but literally, his whole world. Her face, fills his vision to become his world, and she looks upon him and sees his needs and moods, and in turn, her face responds and she answers, anticipates, looks and provides, and so a circuit, a round is formed, a circle between the child's world, his mother's face and her action, and himself. *In this, the boundaries between the child's external world and his internal self blur, and a connection is formed between the world, and the child, whereby the child's impression is one of the world being a loving extension of one's self, a responsive and integrated extension of his internal world, both nurturing and caring, and, indivisible from himself.* It has been demonstrated that these early interactions are

fundamental and foundational for social development, and encourage neuro-endocrine changes resulting in deep innervations connecting the limbic, orbitofrontal and other areas of the brain, initiating the maturation of the dopaminergic "sympathetic ventral tegmental limbic" circuit, and also, the noradrenergic "parasympathetic lateral limbic" circuit, which act in tandem to opposite effects (Schore, as cited in Kaplan-Solms & Solms, 2002, pp. 234-235, 237).

I propose that this series of circuits in the brain, in their development or lack thereof, correspond to the potential empathetic capacities of the individual. In the affective dynamic of these two circuits we see the essence of ethical development, which is not borne upon the back of threat, *which is a dissociative factor*, but is created here, in the structures which are responsible for empathetic dynamism: The sympathetic circuit allowing what is surely a reward of pleasure and libido as self is experienced integrated into the world, this circuit using a dopaminergic neuromodulator, and the parasympathetic circuit which uses noradrenergic neuro-modulation, a response to shut off our pleasure as a feedback mechanism sensitive to social conditions of rebuke and reproach (shame). Between the two circuits, we see the orbitofrontal cortex connected to the limbic system, the OFC operating in its familiar role as a mediator of social cues and response. In this dynamic opposition we may even see, on the most fundamental level, the functions of libido and repression—anxiety serving its psychoanalytic role as a repressive agent, brought on by an increase in noradrenergic modulation of the "parasympathetic lateral limbic" circuit to repress our pleasurable drives, when they conflict with the feedback we receive from the world and others. I propose: These two circuits working in tandem are the neural substrate upon which empathy, and so, ethical conduct and sentiment are founded.

There is considerable support for this idea within current neuroscience. This support comes from two avenues: 1. Studies of people with brain lesions and damage to the orbitofrontal areas, and, 2. Studies on "Antisocial Personality Disorder," or APD. Studies detailing the physiological changes and characteristics endemic to APD, a condition estimated to affect 65 to 80 percent of the prison population (Gazzaniga, et al., 2009, p. 629), indicate a volumetric reduction in the prefrontal grey matter, and reduced glucose metabolism in the orbitofrontal cortex of the subjects as revealed in PET (Raine, 2002). This condition is demonstrated by Raine, to be a product of not only genetic, but also environmental factors. In studies involving patients with damage to the orbitofrontal cortex, the patient is unable to properly monitor and assess the responses of others, and so, the patient with OFC damage will believe they have done well, and be quite proud of their interactions in social situations, even though those interactions were inappropriate (Beer, et al., 2006; Gazzaniga, et al., 2009, p. 605). Ergo: The proper development and function of the neural circuitry connecting the emotional (limbic), and orbitofrontal regions, and those prefrontal regions themselves which are volumetrically altered as a function of environmental and genetic factors, are crucial for proper affective functioning and reality testing. Plainly: If the "alpha function" circuitry is faulty, and the OFC is not doing its job, ethical development and social function are impaired.

This allows a specific neurological/psychological prediction: In those cases where a

reliable personality inventory or other trustworthy test indicates the heightened presence of Empathy as a fundamental constituent of personality, a positive correlation will be demonstrated between the character trait of Empathy, and the robust innervations and demonstrable structural development and functional activity of both the dopaminergic "sympathetic ventral tegmental limbic" circuit, and also, the noradrenergic "parasympathetic lateral limbic" circuit.

Now we must remember that all of our experience of the world is subjective, colored and defined not by the particular experience itself, but in how we interpret that experience or perception. Think of how one person will find beauty in a desolate desert landscape, and another, an empty and barren view most uninviting. Perhaps here, we have found a non-genetic developmental clue as to the mystery of optimism and pessimism, the expectation that the world will or will not be a welcoming place, whether it will be responsive to our needs, or cold and refusing of them. Here we may have a piece of the puzzle shrouding the source of ethics and morality as well, for throughout history laws and rules, many most pungent and barbaric, have attempted to enforce and create ethical sentiment and behavior as a function of external threat, to poor result. Think of the Twelve Tables of Rome, with its code of mutilation, so deeply symbolic of castration and the threat of the father, casually proclaiming how much a creditor may cut from the debtor's body: "si plus minusve secuerunt, ne fraude esto" [If they have secured more or less, let that be no crime] (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 64), or our own capitol punishment—both so deeply ineffective! It seems that ethical sentiment and behavior are not born under threat, but instead the entire of ethical law is but manifestation of a single simple principle: *Empathy*. Perhaps we have found the source of empathetic feeling and hence, ethical action as well, might both be born in this golden moment, here where the world is the self and the self the world, and so, we can dispense with any external "golden rule" or "categorical imperative" proclaiming our actions must be reducible to a moral maxim, or equal to what we ourselves would desire. How could one desire to hurt or exploit the world, once connected to, and inseparable from it? How could one consider such a thing, to harm the world is to harm ourselves! The canon of ethics: threat and rule are ineffective because the truth which foster them is no longer available to *feel*. It is clear that morality and ethical conduct are not a function of threat, but of internal security, healthy connection and balance...ethics are never created as a function of threat and rule, they are born from within. Ethics are a manifestation of health, a function of happiness. It is conscience itself, our modern "morality," super-ego itself, functioning as a masochistic, punitive and threatening agency which has caused the dissociation around which we have all become so deeply unethical, so very..."moral." Empathy is ethical, and so—Empathy is amoral. Our modern ethic is an ethic of obedience, an internal structure crystalized around the threat of castration, forming an immoral, and deeply unhealthy dissociation.

I believe this dissociation can be repaired, and that the source impressions of "alpha function" can be used in a new way to accomplish this end. (Of course, in those cases where alpha function itself is lacking or underdeveloped, the model of "the intersubjective processes" is a better therapeutic choice, and this method is ill advised). As you will recall, in part four of this series we have seen how super-ego can be

disbanded, weakened, and in fact, permanently removed. To accomplish this, one exposes super-ego to the formative repressions around which it has been created. This process is too involved to specify within the limits of this forum, but those who wish to pursue the topic can contact me directly, at: rich@richnorman.com, so as to be put on a waiting list for the book, which will contain this sensitive information. Once these formative impressions have been brought to consciousness, a very great deal of repressed libido will become available, reversing to some extent, the process of infantile amnesia, and, altering entirely, the modern structure of personality. Neurosis itself can be removed, super-ego can have its economic effects on our happiness and intelligence reversed, and this modern crippling of the soul—undone.

So the question lays before us, we who have this golden feeling, and have lost it: The psychologist would ask, "How might we repair the dissociation, and again define our world and perceptions through this distant memory?" This question is no easy thing to answer, and each case has had the strings cut in various places, one made distant from the memory, ruined by super-ego because they are "a Man," and men never accept, they never feel or accept love—or another is blocked from the memory because they have learned not to trust, and refuse the feeling because they feel vulnerable and afraid. Weakness always masquerades as strength. I can not help with this work, a battle which each must enjoin on their own. Unearthing the formative memories and impressions responsible for the structuring of the super-ego so as to create these unfortunate results, is a task which is beyond the scope of this discourse. I can however, point the way, and give you a hint, a splash, a scent of the imagining, so that you may find your way, and have this blessed thing alongside me. The memory of the formation of the sympathetic circuit, of this aspect of alpha function and empathy, will likely not be available to find, as its genesis stems from so early in development, but, its symbolic resonance is an easy thing to create. We can find this together, as a dream, a dream of a time, a time before our fall into "morality" and obedience:

Can you picture it? The sun pouring down upon your face, shining and warm, golden and loving is this light, a light you are folded into, and have created, shining, pouring back up into the arch of heaven, spilling from your glad face, and again down to fill you, the trees nodding as you dream them, the sky golden and warm as you have poured it—and back around—for it has dreamt you...now as the world, of the world, nourished and warmed, our circle complete, a circuit of golden warmth and light spilling the world into being and returning again, unto you, and again, you unto it...and all the world is eternal, safe, now and again nourished and nourishing, the earth and life, now and again, but a single warmth, a round, a circuit, a circle of happiness, pouring down and returning, warm and sweet, the world now glad and warm, complete, born out and eternal, the human circle glowing, as life spilled round into warmth—and golden light.

As a psychologist I must point out the potential therapeutic meaning: Here we see the end of neurosis and modern personality! Once super-ego has been disbanded and its pathogenic influence removed, we can replace it with an intentional invigoration of the source impressions of alpha function. The structure of the sympathetic alpha function source impressions are both active and passive, the sun pouring down upon one, the

mother looking, and you returning this gaze, the sun poured back into heaven...both active and passive. This allows attachment points for many disturbing wishes and pieces of unconscious content, from passive wishes held under repression as a remainder from defensive processes during rape, or as general passive unconscious fantasy, or, sadistic wishes, both active and passive pathological content can have their energies released from fixation to power the image! The quantitative factor must be carefully attended. The more energetic contents must be brought up from under repression one by one, so as to remove most of the energy before the process can begin asymptotically, but, the less severe contents can be used to power the ideational structure, even without being consciously recognized! In this way, fixated unconscious content can be unbound from the cathexis which with it has been invested, and that energy used for healthy purposes. The source alpha function ideational structure may be seen analogously in this capacity to that of an oxygen scrubber on a spacecraft, which converts toxic gasses into usable oxygenated atmosphere. Here, the source alpha function impressions are analogously converting the cathexis invested in pathogenic fixated ideational content into unbound undifferentiated libido for use in any healthy capacity. The passive and active attachment points permit all sorts of fixated content to power the structure, and in so doing, reclaim the fixated libido for healthy use, while the economic disaster which is super-ego, the isometric self-extinction of our internalized masochism, has been extinguished by way of conscious exposure to the source impressions repressed in its formation. As the wealth of libido is reclaimed, much from the period of infantile amnesia, and much from later repressions, the system has been redefined as a more efficient and healthy structuralization of mental processes—both economically, and ethically.

Can you imagine?— Today the helicopter is prepped and loaded as before, filled with poison to spray upon the tender earth, and sicken her. But the pilot has changed, his mind and heart have again found a place within himself he had lost, but now, his glad heart is brimming over with warmth, and all his pain is free, now nourishing him and fueling the golden vision, this ancient place now alive within him, his ache and angry hurt now a warmth, and a gratitude to fill him up and return to life. The helicopter rises, and once aloft the pilot looks down and sees the glad emerald forest, her feathered fingers of shade and light stirring the distant breeze seem to call to him, at once known and new, familiar, aged and tender are the new hues and shades of this forest, and her heart of love and light so gladly spilled out before him, fill him with caring and happiness. He looks and wonders of this place with new eyes: Perhaps he has created this land, created her in this instant...just to look, or she him? A funny thought, and now, he is over the drop site, the ugly brown and black tear in the land, and he can not do it. How can he drop a cloud of thick poison upon her? The thought is as an insult, a pain, a sad and mistaken insult to the very heart of every good and caring thing. No, he can not, he will not. Tomorrow he will find another job, and today, he will treasure the earth rather than sicken her. Yes, this is best. How splendid is the day! Her golden heart of love and heat spilling down upon him from the arching horizon, sparkling with new hope and life, and he slips the stick forward and glides smoothly along the hills, over the ridge of folded green shade and life, light and silver light spilling over the pools of liquid and earth below, shimmering and glad is this new day, a perfect day in a perfect world, new and sultry is this day—just as he has imagined her!

So I will again state: Ethics are never created as a function of threat and rule, they are born from within. Ethics are a manifestation of health, a function of happiness.

And I hope you will gladly agree, to have met him, and unmasked him, so very ill and obedient before his father, chained, just as he desires and wishes, chained in voluptuous abandon to his rock, that we must refuse Prometheus, and now may gladly ask, and answer the question aloud and in turn: Who Has Fired Prometheus?—And then, to proudly proclaim the result: *It was us.*

Rich Norman

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