

## 23. Prometheus Unbound<sup>1</sup>: Ancient Myth Reforged in the Crucible of Modern Sci-Fi<sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract

This article examines the intricate relationship between the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus and Ridley Scott's 2012 science fiction film *Prometheus*. Through a comprehensive comparative mythological analysis, the article explores how the film reimagines and modernizes the classical myth, drawing parallels between the mythological figures and the characters in the film. The study ponders the film's portrayal of the 'Engineers' as contemporary analogues to the Greek gods, and how this interpretation challenges traditional notions of creation, divinity, and the human condition. Key themes such as the pursuit of knowledge, the consequences of hubris, and the nature of sacrifice are explored in both the mythological and cinematic contexts. The article also investigates the film's treatment of technology as a double-edged sword, mirroring the gift of fire in the original myth. By analysing the black goo as a modern representation of Promethean fire, the paper highlights how the film updates ancient themes to address contemporary anxieties about technological advancement and its potential ramifications. Furthermore, the study explores how *Prometheus* grapples with existential questions about humanity's origins and purpose, reflecting enduring philosophical inquiries central to the original myth. Ultimately, this article demonstrates how Scott's *Prometheus* serves as a powerful vehicle for re-examining timeless themes through a contemporary lens, underscoring the continued relevance of ancient myths in helping us navigate modern existential dilemmas and ethical challenges posed by scientific progress.

**Keywords:** Prometheus myth, Modern Sci-Fi, Technological hubris, Creation narratives, Existential exploration, Comparative mythological analysis

<sup>1</sup> Inspired from *Prometheus Unbound* by Percy Bysshe Shelley

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## Prometheus Unbound: Modern Bilimkurgu Pota'sında Yeniden Şekillenen Antik Mit<sup>4</sup>

### Öz

Bu makale, antik Yunan mitolojisindeki Promete efsanesi ile Ridley Scott'ın 2012 yapımı bilim kurgu filmi *Prometheus* arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Kapsamlı bir karşılaştırmalı mitolojik analiz aracılığıyla, filmin klasik miti nasıl yeniden hayal ettiğini ve modernleştirdiğini, mitolojik figürler ile filmdeki karakterler arasında paralellikler kurarak keşfetmektedir. Çalışma, filmin 'Mühendisler'i Yunan tanrılarının çağdaş benzerleri olarak tasvir etmesini ve bu yorumlamanın yaratılış, tanrısallık ve insan durumu hakkındaki geleneksel fikirlere nasıl meydan okuduğunu derinlemesine incelemektedir. Bilgi arayışı, kibrin sonuçları ve fedakarlığın doğası gibi temel temalar hem mitolojik hem de sinematik bağlamlarda ele alınmaktadır. Makale ayrıca filmin teknolojiyi iki uçlu bir kılıç olarak ele almasını, orijinal mitteki ateş hediyesini yansıtarak incelemektedir. Kara sıvıyı 'Promethean' ateşinin modern bir temsili olarak analiz ederek, makale filmin antik temaları nasıl güncellediğini ve teknolojik ilerleme ve potansiyel sonuçları hakkındaki çağdaş endişeleri nasıl ele aldığını vurgulamaktadır. Dahası, bu çalışma Prometheus'un insanlığın kökeni ve amacı hakkındaki varoluşsal sorularla nasıl mücadele ettiğini, orijinal mitin merkezindeki kalıcı felsefi sorgulamaları yansıtarak araştırmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu analiz Scott'ın *Prometheus*'unun zamansız temaları çağdaş bir mercekle aracılığıyla yeniden incelemek için nasıl güçlü bir araç olarak hizmet ettiğini gösterirken, antik mitlerin modern varoluşsal ikilemleri ve bilimsel ilerlemenin ortaya çıkardığı etik zorlukları anlamlandırmamıza yardımcı olmada da devam eden önemini vurgulamaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Promete miti, Modern Bilim Kurgu, Teknolojik kibir, Yaratılış anlatıları, Varoluşsal keşif, Karşılaştırmalı mitolojik analiz

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## Introduction

This article explores the complex connection between Ridley Scott's 2012 science fiction film *Prometheus* and ancient Greek mythology, namely the myth of Prometheus. Using comparative mythological analysis, this paper examines the symbolic and thematic relationships between Scott's film and the ancient Prometheus myth. It also makes use of pertinent literary and cinematic theories. Thus, the essay aims to examine how the film reinterprets and refreshes traditional myths, establishing connections between legendary figures and the characters in the film using a thorough examination. The exploration of fundamental concepts such as creation, excessive pride, the quest for knowledge, and the essence of sacrifice is analysed in both mythical and cinematic settings. Through the analysis of these linkages, the objective is to illustrate how *Prometheus* functions as an influential medium for re-evaluating enduring issues from a modern perspective. In his *Comparative Mythology*, Puhvel states that “[w]hile ‘mythology’ is the study of myth, a look at the history of mythology is a study of the study of myth, thus a sort of ‘metamythology’ not unlike the history of science or the history of any other branch of scholarly endeavor” (Puhvel, 1987, p.7). According to this viewpoint, it is more accurate to see the contemporary film adaptation of the Prometheus myth as two distinct analyses of the same myth from antiquity and the present day. The film *Prometheus* by Ridley Scott expertly reinterprets the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus for the modern era. That is, “Scott’s Prometheus recontextualizes the Greek myth for the space age, transforming the theft of fire into a quest for knowledge about human origins” (Garcia, 2020, p. 112). The film employs science fiction as a lens to explore timeless themes of creation, hubris, and the human drive for knowledge, while simultaneously addressing contemporary anxieties about technology and existence. As Johnson states, “*Prometheus* explores the human desire to understand our origins and the potential consequences of this knowledge” (Johnson, 2018, p. 45). Consequently, the film demonstrates the enduring power of mythology to assist the audience in addressing fundamental questions about our place in the universe. Upon its release, the 2012 science fiction film *Prometheus*, directed by Ridley Scott, has generated controversy. Although the discussions mostly focus on the film’s computer-generated imagery (CGI) and narrative structure, a more thorough examination uncovers fascinating correlations between the way the film depicts the ‘Engineers’ and Greek mythology. This comparison provides vital insights into the basic concepts of the film. The name ‘Engineers’ might be regarded as a reinterpretation of the Greek gods, however with notable distinctions. In contrast to the intricate and uncertain nature of the Olympians, the Engineers are depicted as a remarkably sophisticated yet fundamentally uncomplicated group of ‘extraterrestrial overlords.’ Nevertheless, the rudimentary illustrations unearthed by Dr. Holloway and Dr. Shaw in the opening scenes of the film suggest the presence of celestial entities descending from the heavens, reminiscent of the Greek deities’ abode on Mount Olympus. This correspondence offers thought-provoking enquiries regarding the film’s association with genesis myths. *Prometheus* questions the comprehension of creation and the correlation between makers and their creations –in that case humans- by establishing similarities between the acts of the Engineers and Greek creation stories. The use of *Prometheus* as the film’s title is deliberate and purposeful.

## Methodology

The main methodological approach used in this study is comparative mythological analysis. According to Puhvel (1987), comparative mythology is the methodical comparing of myths from many civilisations in order to find recurring themes, structures, and motifs (pp.12-18). In this study, this methodology is employed to investigate the similarities between Ridley Scott’s 2012 film *Prometheus* and the story of Prometheus from ancient Greece. Joseph Campbell’s monomyth theory, which holds that many

legendary narratives have a common structure, provides additional context for our investigation (Campbell, 2008, pp. 1-7). Using these frameworks, it is aimed to reveal how the film modernises and reinterprets the traditional tale while entering the themes of technological hubris, creation, and the state of humanity in both stories. With the help of this comparative method, the development of mythological elements from their prehistoric beginnings to their modern cinematic portrayal can be followed. Such analysis may provide insights into the myth's enduring force and applicability to contemporary existential issues.

## The Myth

The initial dreams and fantasies undoubtedly emerged in the minds of humanity as they pondered existence. In their philosophical pursuits, they sought to elucidate natural phenomena—those appearances—through the lens of imagination and fantasy. For instance, when an earthquake transpires, linking it to the wrath of Hades, or when storms arise, ascribing them to the displeasure of Zeus, reflects the methodologies employed by early societies to comprehend their surroundings. Nevertheless, particularly with the advent of the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, humanity assumed a central position in the cosmology of the Ancient Hellenistic period, specifically in Ancient Greece. Hamilton suggests that the Greeks conceived their deities reflecting their own likeness. This was a concept that had not previously occupied the human intellect. Prior to this, the depictions of the deities had not achieved such a level of realism (Hamilton, 2012, pp. 6-11). This undoubtedly represents one of the most logical approaches to humanity's quest for self-understanding prior to the advent of contemporary religions. Nevertheless, given that the foundation of cognition is inherently human, each thought develops intrinsically, and this evolution has persisted alongside a belief system wherein individuals endeavoured to comprehend their surroundings in antiquity, ultimately leading to the creation of ancient myths that endure to this day. In this context, a mythological approach seems to be one of the most direct and organic ways of establishing a connection between the present and the past, and even antiquity, when examined from an intertextual perspective when examining literary works. The fact that myths often repeat is actually the human source reappearing in different forms when similar situations occur again. This is why a theory called 'monomyth', shaped by Joseph Campbell, has emerged. According to Campbell, "since works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature" (Campbell, 2008, p.1), heroes are also the continuation of each other, produced from previous works. Prometheus the Titan has been widely acknowledged in Greek mythology as the ultimate rescuer of humanity. Naturally the myth of Prometheus has been examined in numerous works throughout different time periods. Thus, when we see Prometheus before us as a Titan who has given humanity his modern form by his sacrifice, we can perceive comparable imagery in real and fictional characters such as Hercules, Jesus Christ, and King Arthur. Put another way, when we look back, these heroes who give their lives in defence of humanity resemble the Prometheus myth. This is consistent with Campbell's interpretation of the monomyth, and given the similarity in how the hero is understood, a comparative myth juxtaposition makes sense. However, as we shall see, Scott has created this 'hero' Prometheus emblem in a way that is highly intriguing in light of contemporary thinking. In a traditional way, Campbell states that "...a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (2008, p. 23). As can be understood, the hero, as described by Campbell, emerges as a force that sets out to achieve victory, has peculiar characteristics, and struggles with unjust authority and ultimately saves humanity or struggles to save it. Similarly, Mary Shelley purposefully selected the subtitle '*The Modern Prometheus*' for her novel *Frankenstein*. By the same token, Percy

Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* serves as a potent metaphor of revolutionary resistance against unjust authority. Conversely, Lord Byron's *Prometheus* is a briefer poem that presents a conventional understanding of the narrative, emphasising Prometheus's agony and rebellion against Zeus. On the other hand, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* is the earliest known theatrical portrayal of the myth, establishing Prometheus as a tragic hero and offering a fundamental perspective. Undoubtedly, going through a comprehensive analysis of the literary and artistic creations influenced by the Prometheus myth would be a captivating topic for a meticulous investigation. Therefore, by embracing this term, the film takes an odyssey through a deep reservoir of cultural and literary heritage, encouraging audiences to contemplate timeless enquiries on creation, rebellion, and the repercussions of excessive ambition. As Peter Weyland states in the film, "There's nothing in the desert and no man needs nothing" (Scott, 2012, 24:38). To fully appreciate the film's themes, it's crucial to understand the original myth of Prometheus, the fire starter:

Prometheus, with the help of Athena, fashioned humans out of clay and infused them with life. He also gave them fire, which he stole from the gods. This angered Zeus, who punished Prometheus by chaining him to a rock and sending an eagle to eat his liver every day (Apollodorus, *The Library*, 1.7.1) "[f]or when the gods and mortal men had a dispute at Mecone, even then Prometheus was forward to cut up a great ox and set portions before them, trying to befool the mind of Zeus" (Hesiod, ca. 700 B.C.E./1914). Regarding the same myth, Edith Hamilton portrays Prometheus as a multifaceted and versatile character in her influential *Mythology* (2012) emphasising his crucial role in the Greek mythical interpretation of human life. Hamilton highlights Prometheus's rebellion against the deities as a crucial catalyst for human progress. Through the act of stealing fire, he not only bestowed upon people a vital instrument for their existence but also lit the flame of human creativity and resourcefulness. Prometheus's empathy towards humanity is apparent in his readiness to face the fury of the deities for the progression of humans. This myth emphasises the fragile position of mankind in the cosmic order, portraying humans as susceptible and reliant on divine intervention or safeguarding. The notion of creation holds great significance in both Greek mythology and Scott's *Prometheus*. Within Greek mythology, there are multiple narratives that explain the origins of humanity, each providing distinct perspectives on the dynamic between deities and humans. According to one account Hamilton conveys, the gods created a series of human races, each linked to a distinct type of metal (Hamilton, 2012, pp.76-86). It is stated that the deities themselves were responsible for the creation of human beings. Initially, they created a race formed of pure gold. These inhabitants, despite being mortal, lived in a manner resembling that of gods, free from any sadness or distress, and far removed from any labour or suffering. The cornfields yielded a bountiful harvest on their own. Additionally, they possessed abundant livestock and were highly favoured by the gods. Upon being buried, they transformed into ethereal beings, characterised by their benevolence, assuming the role of protectors for humanity. In this narrative of the creation, the gods appeared to be determined to conduct experiments with different metals, and curiously enough, they proceeded in a descending order from the superior to the satisfactory to the inferior, and so forth. After experimenting with gold, they transitioned to silver. The second silver race was far inferior to the first. Due to their limited cognitive abilities, they were unable to refrain from causing harm to one another. They also died, but unlike the gold race, their souls did not continue to exist after their death. The subsequent race was made of brass. These individuals were formidable individuals, with great physical strength, and their intense passion for battle and bloodshed ultimately led to their own demise. Fortunately, this was advantageous, as they were succeeded by an exceptional lineage of extraordinary heroes who engaged in magnificent battles and embarked on remarkable quests that have been recounted and celebrated by mankind throughout the centuries. They ultimately journeyed to the isles of the blessed, where they resided in eternal and complete happiness. The current

race on Earth, known as the iron race, reside in a period characterised by malevolence, and their inherent disposition also possesses a significant amount of malevolence, resulting in a perpetual state of labour and grief. With the passage of time, each successive generation deteriorates, with sons consistently being of lesser quality than their dads. There will be a future point when their wickedness reaches such an extent that people will idolise power, when strength will be considered justifiable, and respect for goodness will no longer exist. Eventually, when individuals no longer harbour anger towards wrongdoing or experience guilt in the face of the unfortunate, Zeus will also eradicate them. However, even under that situation, there is still a possibility for action, if only the general populace would rise up and overthrow oppressive leaders (Hamilton et al., 2012, p. 75). Yet, another account attributes the creation of humanity to Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus, Titans who sided with Zeus against the other Titans. Epimetheus -afterthought- rashly distributed all positive attributes to animals, leaving nothing for humans. Prometheus -forethought, the wiser brother, shaped humans in a nobler form and stole fire from the gods to give humanity an advantage. This myth emphasizes human vulnerability and the crucial role of divine intervention in human progress. At this point, everything was prepared for the arrival of humanity. The destinations for both the righteous and the wicked after death had been predetermined. The moment had arrived for the inception of mankind. Multiple explanations exist regarding how that occurred. According to some accounts, the responsibility for this task was assigned by the gods to Prometheus, the Titan who supported Zeus in the conflict against the Titans, and his brother, Epimetheus. Prometheus, derived from the word 'forethought' as stated previously, possessed exceptional wisdom, surpassing even that of the gods. In contrast, Epimetheus, meaning 'afterthought,' was characterised by his scatterbrained nature, consistently succumbing to his first impulses and then altering his decisions. Thus, he acted accordingly in this particular situation. Prior to creating mankind, he bestowed upon the animals all the finest attributes, such as power, speed, bravery, and cleverness, as well as various physical features like fur, feathers, wings, and shells. Consequently, there were no desirable qualities remaining for humans, neither a means of protection nor any characteristics that would enable them to compete with the animals. Regrettably, as per his usual pattern, he realised his mistake too late and sought assistance from his brother. Subsequently, Prometheus assumed responsibility for the act of creation and devised a method to elevate mankind's status. He moulded them into a more dignified form than the animals, standing erect like the gods. Then, he ascended to the heavens, to the sun, where he ignited a torch and brought down fire, a superior safeguard for humans compared to any other attribute, whether it fur, feathers, strength, or swiftness (Hamilton et al., 2012, p. 75). With this in mind, understanding the creation of humanity, including the role of Prometheus in Greek mythology, is crucial for grasping the nuances of the film *Prometheus*. While it may not explicitly centre around mythology, it's not far-fetched to suggest that the Engineers function similarly to Greek gods. Ultimately, these Engineers, who created humanity, seem to have developed a sense of responsibility towards their creation. However, for some reason, they appear to have decided to annihilate the humans they brought into existence in a similar essence with what Byron says in the following lines: "Thy Godlike crime was to be kind, / To render with thy precepts less / The sum of human wretchedness, / And strengthen Man with his own mind" (Byron, 1816/2000, p. 15). In this context, it appears that the Engineers bestowed upon their human creations advanced technology, intellect, and physical prowess. They did it by essentially sharing their own attributes, even though the divine decree from the heavens seems to have been thwarted before reaching humanity, thus leading to the Engineers' own demise. Although there is no specific character named Epimetheus or with a very direct reference to him, the characters Elizabeth Shaw and Peter Weyland can be interpreted as counterparts to the mythological figures Prometheus and Epimetheus, respectively. Elizabeth Shaw is frequently regarded as a manifestation of scientific inquisitiveness and a longing to comprehend the

genesis of mankind, which aligns her with the character of Prometheus. Elizabeth Shaw's persistent quest for answers, even after the disastrous encounter with the Engineer, mirrors Prometheus's unyielding determination in the face of Zeus's punishment. She is the individual who leads the expedition, actively pursuing knowledge and truth, even in the face of significant danger or what seems to be the end of the quest as she says: "I choose to believe that this is not the end" (Scott, 2012). Similar to Prometheus, she defies the existing hierarchy (namely, Weyland's corporate agenda) in her relentless pursuit of her objectives. However, Peter Weyland, the affluent industrialist, embodies a character more akin to Epimetheus. Although he possesses intelligence and ambition, his behaviour tends to be spontaneous and motivated by self-interest rather than careful planning. The individual's desire to encounter their creator, similar to the ancient tale of Prometheus fashioning mankind, is eventually driven by self-centred motives.

### Creation Narratives

In the original narrative, the gods, under the leadership of Zeus, symbolise an all-powerful and frequently unpredictable force. They possess the ability to both create and destroy, and their actions have significant effects on human existence. In the film *Prometheus*, the Engineers serve a comparable function. They are depicted as ancient, exceptionally sophisticated entities who orchestrated the creation of life throughout the galaxy. Their technology, remarkably the black ooze, bears a resemblance to a divine force something exceptionally depicted in Greek myths like ambrosia and nectar with a different form and function. They possess creative abilities; however, their motives remain unclear, indicating a level of intricacy that resembles the deities of Olympus. Both the Olympian gods and the Engineers are portrayed as creators. Deities created human beings from clay, whilst the Engineers employed the black goo to initiate the development of life. The deities in Greek mythology frequently display moral complexity, showcasing both beneficent and malignant characteristics. On the other hand, human arrogance is a prominent motif in both the myth and the film that reminds of the words of the monster in Shelley's *Frankenstein*: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me Man, did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?" (Shelley, 1818/2017, p.3). Prometheus's pilfering of fire constituted a deliberate act of rebellion against the supreme power of the gods, serving as a direct affront to their dominion. In *Prometheus*, the characters Weyland and his crew portray a comparable ambition characterised by excessive striving and ambition. Their objective is to uncover the Engineers, the beings responsible for their creation, in a pursuit of knowledge and authority that finally results in catastrophic outcomes. Through its analysis of the Engineers as a contemporary portrayal of the deities, the film presents a novel viewpoint on the Prometheus legend. The text tackles with the timeless subjects of human inquisitiveness, the perils of unbridled ambition, and the intricate bond between innovators and their inventions. An exemplary figure of sacrifice in the ancient tale, Prometheus's agony is a manifestation of detriment. He is perpetually bound to a boulder and subjected to relentless pain by an eagle as a consequence of his rebellion and his contribution to mankind. The persistent suffering he experiences is a sacrifice made for the progress of humanity. The Engineers in *Prometheus* offer a more intricate understanding of sacrifice. In the film's opening sequence, an Engineer selflessly sacrifices himself to initiate the creation of life. Though this beginning scene seems somewhat trivial prior to the life spread on the earth, as David states "[b]ig things have small beginnings" (Scott, 2012, 51:55). This concept is exemplified in the scene where David, the android, interacts with the Engineer's technology, demonstrating both the power and danger of this knowledge. One can interpret the words as analogous to the numerous instances of sacrifice commonly found in mythology. Moreover, "[t]hrough the character of David, *Prometheus* interrogates the ethical implications of creating artificial life, mirroring the Engineers' creation of humanity" (Smith & Brown, 2019, p. 78). However, in contrast to the altruistic

act of Prometheus, the intentions of the Engineers remain unclear. It could be an act of loving creation or a frantic endeavour to eliminate a failed experiment from the universe that reminds the lines from Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*: "To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite; / To forgive wrongs darker than death or night; / To defy Power, which seems omnipotent; / To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates" (Shelley, 1820/2011, p.269). The film also presents the notion of cyclical sacrifice. The Engineers have a track record of both generating and annihilating life, indicating a recurring cycle of creation and destruction that mirrors the cyclic nature found in numerous mythologies in a chaotic manner. In a similar conduct, the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid commences with a dramatic depiction of Chaos, the original and formless state of the cosmos. Chaos is shown as a shapeless, bewildered mass in which all elements coexist in a disorganised and disorderly manner. Ovid chronicles the development of the world as we know it from its original state of disarray. Ovid skilfully incorporates a multitude of oppositions in his epic poem, resulting in a dynamic interplay of contrasting forces. The core conflict between 'Order' and 'Chaos' is a major concept that resonates with the initial creation story and appears repeatedly throughout the book. The *Metamorphoses* also examines the notable contrast between the divine and human domains. Ovid's narratives often centre on the interplay and clashes between deities and humans, emphasising the dynamics of power and the repercussions of these engagements. The dichotomy between 'Nature' and 'Culture' constitutes another significant contradiction in the piece. Ovid frequently juxtaposes the unrefined and uncontrollable powers of the natural world with the organised structure of human society, delving into the limits and connections between these domains. The core of the concept of metamorphosis revolves upon the contrast between permanence and change. Ovid's exploration of transition in his tales highlights the fluidity of identity and form. Finally, the contrast between 'Love' and 'Violence' is a recurring theme in the *Metamorphoses*. The poem depicts various transformations that arise from either act of love or desire, or from violence or punishment, thus establishing a clear contrast in the underlying impulses driving these changes. The presence of these different oppositions serves to generate tension and propel storylines. Moreover, it enables to establish a structure for Ovid to focus on profound themes of authority, longing, and the fundamental essence of being.

Before land was and sea-before air and sky  
Arched over all, all Nature was all Chaos,  
The rounded body of all things in one,  
The living elements at war with lifelessness;  
No God, no Titan shone from sky or sea,  
No Moon, no Phoebe outgrew slanted horns  
And walked the might, nor was Earth poised in air. (Ovid & Gregory, 1960, p.3)

As can be seen from the lines by Ovidius, creation arose from nothing to everything which is similar to what *Prometheus* presents in the beginning of the film as the Engineer sacrifices himself. Likewise, the crew of the Prometheus, driven by their quest for knowledge, finally assume the role of sacrificial figures. Their demises, albeit sorrowful, contribute to the progression of the storyline and emphasise the perils of uncontrolled human aspiration. Their act of sacrifice can be viewed as a contemporary portrayal of the tragic hero archetype, akin to Prometheus and his enduring torment. To summarise, the concept of sacrifice plays a major role in both the myth of Prometheus and the film *Prometheus*.

## Technological Hubris and The Existential Exploration

Although the nature and intentions of these sacrifices may vary, they both aim to examine the intricate connection between creation, destruction, and the human predicament. Another element in the film to be scrutinized is technology. The film *Prometheus* depicts technology as a dualistic tool. The Engineers possess highly sophisticated technology that enables them to generate life and traverse galaxies, however this very technology in the end leads to their doom. Their overdependence on technology obscures their awareness of the possible hazards posed by their inventions, eventually resulting in their downfall. The film might be interpreted as a warning narrative regarding humanity's intricate connection with technology. As Williams notes, "[t]he tragic fate of the Prometheus crew serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked scientific ambition, echoing the hubris of the mythological Prometheus" (Williams, 2021, p. 56). While the concept of existence and sacrifice play a crucial role in both the myth and the film, the nature of hubris in *Prometheus* offers another intriguing parallel to explore. As one progresses in the advancement of more complex technology, it is essential to carefully contemplate the ethical ramifications and possible outcomes. The Engineers in *Prometheus*, in their hubristic pursuit of technological advancement, mirror the tragic figure of Icarus. Just as Icarus's wax wings, a symbol of his father's ingenious engineering, proved to be his downfall, so too did the engineers' advanced technology become their undoing. The film thus offers a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked ambition and the consequences of playing God. By creating a technology capable of destroying humanity, the Engineers inadvertently signed their own death warrant, echoing the Gothic horror trope of the creator being destroyed by their creation as in the case of Dr. Frankenstein's downfall. This parallels the myth of Prometheus, who, in his desire to bestow fire upon humanity, incurred the wrath of the gods. Elizabeth Shaw's observation that the existence of a higher creator is not negated by the engineers' role as humanity's creators adds a layer of philosophical complexity to the film, inviting us to ponder the nature of creation and the limits of human understanding. Likewise, Lee states that "*Prometheus* grapples with fundamental questions of existence, using the search for humanity's creators as a vehicle to explore the meaning of life itself" (Lee, 2017, p. 23). The divergent creation tales depicted in *Prometheus* and the Greek myth prompt enquiries into the existential significance of humanity within the cosmos. Whether we exist just as products of more sophisticated entities, or we possess the capacity to shape our own fate question can find some resonate in the lines of Aeschylus: "Fastened in these ills, thou shalt learn to know thine insolence to the Gods" (Aeschylus, ca. 430 B.C.E./1926, p.57). The Engineers perceive mankind as an unsuccessful trial, whereas Prometheus empowers humanity by equipping them with the means to be self-reliant. The film presents an unresolved inquiry on the purpose of humanity, encouraging the audience to reflect on their own position in the universe. *Prometheus* symbolises modern society's concerns regarding artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and the possibility of technology surpassing human control by replacing mythology with technology.

In the film *Prometheus*, the black goo, which is created by the Engineer, serves as a means of punishment, resembling Zeus's act of revenge towards Prometheus. Both Prometheus and the Engineers, in their respective roles, can be viewed as exceeding their limits. Prometheus challenges the power of the gods by taking fire for the benefit of mankind, while the Engineers, maybe due to an error in judgement or a planned act of malevolence, release a devastating power that affects the entire universe. The dark substance, originally designed to stimulate the development of life, transforms into a powerful agent of devastation and genetic alteration. This reflects the recurring motif of creation and destruction commonly found in mythological foundations. Zeus, although revered as a deity responsible for creation, is equally notorious for his vengeful and devastating inclinations. The crew of the *Prometheus* experiences significant suffering and loss due to their deeds and their relentless search for

knowledge, mirroring the plight of Prometheus himself. Their downfall and the gruesome metamorphoses induced by the black substance parallel the anguish imposed on Prometheus by Zeus. Although the details of the punishment may vary, the fundamental concept of divine punishment for excessive pride is apparent in both stories. The Engineers, in their role as creators and manipulators of life, ultimately bring about their own destruction, similar to the fate of Prometheus. Prometheus's act of stealing fire in the myth symbolises a pursuit of knowledge that surpasses the limits of human capability as depicted in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Unbound* through Prometheus's words: "By giving men blind hopes I stopped their eyes from seeing death" (Aeschylus, ca. 430 B.C.E./1926, p. 75). Although the acquisition of this knowledge contributes to progress for humans, it also provokes the anger of the deities, resulting in misery and retribution. The film exemplifies this subject by portraying Elizabeth Shaw, a scientist motivated by an unquenchable curiosity regarding the genesis of mankind. Driven by her thirst for knowledge, she embarks on a journey to a remote planet, where she and her team come face-to-face with the Engineers and the perilous black substance. When Shaw's motivation is juxtaposed with Campbell's depiction of the hero's journey, such comparison adds a valuable framework for analysing both the ancient Prometheus myth and Scott's film. In the classical myth, Prometheus embodies several stages of the hero's journey: his decision to steal fire for humanity represents the 'call to adventure,' while his punishment by Zeus can be seen as the 'ordeal.' In Scott's *Prometheus*, we see a similar structure applied to multiple characters. Elizabeth Shaw's quest for humanity's origins mirrors the 'call to adventure,' while the crew's encounters with the Engineers represent the 'tests' and 'ordeal' stages of Campbell's model. The film's conclusion, with Shaw continuing her search, echoes the 'return' stage, albeit with a modern, open-ended interpretation. By applying Campbell's framework, we can see how Scott's film not only adapts the Prometheus myth but also adheres to broader patterns of mythic storytelling, demonstrating the enduring relevance of these narrative structures in contemporary science fiction.

*Prometheus* might be seen as depicting the Engineers' act of creating life as an expression of excessive pride or arrogance. Like Prometheus the titan, who challenged the gods to give fire to mankind, the Engineers can be viewed as exceeding a universal limit. Their act of creating life, although portrayed as a magnificent display of cosmic engineering, nevertheless implies a feeling of excessive divine ambition. By creating life, the Engineers assume a god-like role. *Prometheus* explores the dangerous implications of engineers assuming a god-like role, reducing humanity to a subservient species. The film rightfully questions the origins of these engineers, asking, 'Who created them?' This suggests that while the engineers may seem superior, they themselves are in the end the creations of a higher power, be it another advanced civilization or a divine entity. Thus, the act of creation, albeit remarkable, possesses an underlying sense of hubris. The film implies that the Engineers may have deliberately created life as a means of experimentation or manipulation, rather than out of genuine compassion. Their subsequent inaction in the face of the possible hazards of their invention suggests a lack of concern for the repercussions of their activities. Although the film does not expressly categorise the Engineers as hubristic, their actions and the subsequent narrative strongly imply this assessment. Their portrayal in the narrative parallels the mythological character of Prometheus, emphasising the perils of unrestrained authority and the inadvertent outcomes of assuming divine authority. Last but not least, *Prometheus* presents a modern re-examination of the conventional Greek dichotomy between humans and deities, inquiries into the concepts of life and death, eternal existence, and the repercussions of attempting to bridge this barrier. According to classical Greek mythology, gods are immortal entities that are fundamentally different from humans in terms of their essence and longevity. Nevertheless, *Prometheus* contradicts this idea by introducing the Engineers, entities that possess god-like qualities but are ultimately subject to death. This inversion of the hierarchical relationship between the divine and human

beings prompts enquiries into the essence of being and the possible vulnerability of even the most sophisticated societies. The film further enters the timeless human longing for immortality, a concept that has its origins deeply embedded in Greek mythology. Characters such as Peter Weyland embody this aspiration, striving to prolong life or attain immortality through technical progress. This journey reflects the ambitious goals of legendary heroes such as Heracles, who sought to surpass the constraints of humanity.

In the final analysis, both Prometheus and the protagonists in the film endeavour to close the divide between humans and deities, resulting in catastrophic outcomes. Prometheus challenges the gods by illicitly acquiring fire, which symbolises their divine authority, while the humans in *Prometheus* endeavour to establish communication with and comprehend their creators, the Engineers. The excessive ambition results in agony and destruction, highlighting the inherent risks of defying the cosmic order as Prometheus himself confesses in *Prometheus Unbound*: “I knew when I transgressed nor will deny it. In helping man I brought my troubles on me” (Aeschylus, ca. 430 B.C.E./1926, p. 86). Ultimately, *Prometheus* presents a contemporary viewpoint on the traditional Greek concepts of death, immortality, and the distinction between gods and humans. The film questions conventional beliefs by introducing god-like characters who are mortal, and delves into humanity’s unwavering quest for transcendence. It also emphasises the possible repercussions of blurring the boundaries between mortals and gods. By reimagining Prometheus’s fire as the enigmatic black goo, the film updates the ancient myth for the modern era, exploring contemporary anxieties about technology and its potential consequences.

### **Conclusion: Bridging Myth and Modern Sci-Fi**

Finally, a comparative mythological study of Scott’s *Prometheus* and the story of Prometheus shows how timeless ancient stories are when it comes to tackling modern issues. From the theft of fire to the pursuit of cutting-edge technology, from divine punishment to the fallout from scientific hubris, we can follow the evolution of mythic elements to see how Scott’s film not only reinterprets the classic myth but also uses it as a lens to explore contemporary existential questions. In that essence, Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus* serves as a compelling modern reinterpretation of the Prometheus myth, skilfully weaving ancient themes into a contemporary narrative. By reimagining the Greek gods as the enigmatic Engineers and the stolen fire as advanced alien technology, the film invites viewers to reconsider timeless questions about human origins, the nature of creation, and the consequences of unbridled ambition. The film’s exploration of sacrifice, the double-edged nature of technology, and the blurring of lines between creator and creation resonates with both the original myth and contemporary concerns. It challenges us to reflect on our own relationship with technology and the ethical implications of scientific advancement. Moreover, *Prometheus* taps into the enduring human fascination with our origins and our place in the universe. By presenting a scenario where our creators are themselves created beings, the film adds layers of complexity to the age-old questions of existence and purpose. Ultimately, *Prometheus* demonstrates the continued relevance of ancient myths in helping us grapple with modern existential questions. It serves as a testament to the power of storytelling in exploring the human condition, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary science fiction. This analysis not only deepens the clarity of the film *Prometheus*, but also underscores the lasting significance of Greek mythology in modern storytelling. By establishing these connections, it can be observed how old myths persist in offering a structure for examining contemporary concerns like technology, existence, and human aspirations. The convergence of classical mythology and modern science fiction exemplifies the enduring essence of these fundamental enquiries of humanity and the potency of narrative in tackling

them across the ages.

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