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**PROMETHEAN MYTHOPOETICS & EVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS: A THEORETICAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE REALMS OF METAPHOR, MEDIA, AND MIND**

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**ABSTRACT**

The focus of this essay is exploring the concept of the critically acclaimed comic classic *Promethea* (2000) by Alan Moore (writer) and J. H. Williams III (artist) as an integral work of art. To that end I utilize the integral theories of cultural historian and poet Jean Gebser (1985), and theorist Ken Wilber (2000)

Having introduced the general themes and theoretical lenses, mentioned above, which are used to see *Promethea*, there is first an exploration of the earliest origins of consciousness according to the integral theories of Wilber (2000) and Gebser (1985). From there, a brief exploration of the significance of cave paintings and the movement from the archaic to the magical stage of consciousness is offered. Following a brief exploration of the mythic frame of consciousness we arrive at the mental-rational-egoic phase of consciousness, our current phase, described with a literary-theoretical exploration.

The literary-theoretical exploration begins with the ancient Greek work *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus (480/1966), and then to the nineteenth Century British Romantic works *Prometheus Unbound* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1820/1966) and *Frankenstein (or The Modern Prometheus)* by Mary Shelley (1818/2008). These works are examined and placed in context in terms of the Wilberian (2000) All Quadrants, All Levels (AQAL) approach, both for their mythic underpinnings in consciousness as well as to demonstrate the tradition from which Moore's *Promethea* emerges.

Significant time is then spent with a literary-philosophical-theoretical critique of the work of *Promethea* in terms of how it can be seen through the lens of the integral theories of Gebser (1985) and Wilber (2000), its place in the AQAL framework, and its use of the integral theory of Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot to accomplish the goal of being an integral work of art. A general conclusion follows and then a reflection upon these points.

Keywords: Promethean Mythopoetics, Evolutionary Consciousness, Jean Gebser, Ken Wilber, Alan Moore, *Promethea*, Integral Theory, Integral Art, *Prometheus*, Aeschylus, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot, AQAL

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### **Integral Art and Consciousness**

Promethea (2000), created by Alan Moore (writer) and J. H. Williams III (artist) is an award-winning and popular comic book series that came to fruition at the turn of the millennium. Put simply, it is the tale of a girl who becomes a living story. However, there is really nothing simple about that. It is about a human being who becomes an idea—an idea so powerful that it becomes manifest in the material world and beyond. In this essay I argue that Moore’s work represents an example of an integral work of art.

The topic of Moore’s Promethea and the idea of the mythological Promethean—based in the Greek myth of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods to help save human civilization—will be joined with that of integral theory. Integral theory is a philosophical framework that can be used to understand the development of human consciousness and art. The theory is primarily espoused by cultural historian and poet Jean Gebser (1985) and theorist Ken Wilber (2000). From humanity’s earliest origins and spiritual/artistic explorations in the caves of pre-historic times to the works of Aeschylus (480/1966), Shelley (1820/1966), and more, the idea of the Promethean will be linked to the works of Gebser (1985) and Wilber (2000), both of whom have presented seminal theories on the idea of the integral.

Human artistic expression is also an expression of human consciousness, and an example of the stage of consciousness in which the creator existed or exists. The modern medium of comics represents an important chapter in this continuing story. Constructed in a sequence of words and pictures, this modern sequential art form reveals much about the present condition, and past history, of human consciousness (McCloud, 1993). Having roots in humanity’s earliest artistic expressions, such as ancient cave paintings, comics can be viewed as a modern iteration of that form of art. The present work utilizes the structure of integral theory to illustrate the philosophical assertions mentioned above.

### **The Six Million Year Journey: From the Archaic to the Mythical Forms of Consciousness**

#### **Gebser, Wilber, and Proto-Consciousness**

While Gebser (1985) asserts that all previous mental mutations are contained within the current version of consciousness, it is no small task to go, even imaginatively, from earlier periods of consciousness which include shifts from the archaic, magical, and mythical, and then to the mental-rational and the integral (which may transcend but contain the consciousness of many on the planet today). Gebser is asking fellow thinkers to go on a voyage “beyond dualism” (p. 267) as they approach this psychic journey through the stages of consciousness. This trip begins with the almost preconscious, aperspectival world of the Archaic. According to Gebser:

One difficulty which to some will seem insurmountable is the difficulty of ‘representing’ the aperspectival world. This world goes beyond our conceptualization. By the same token the mental world once went beyond the experiential capability of mythical man, and yet this world of the

mind became a reality. Anyone who objects that the aperspectival world is, in spatial terms, unimaginable, incomprehensible, impalpable and unthinkable—and there will be no end to such objections—falls victim to his own limitations of comprehension and to the visual representations imposed by his world. Some will undoubtedly be irritated by the talk of the arational possibilities which are not to be confused with the irrational or pre-rational. (p. 267)

How does one represent something that is oceanic, that in Jungian (1976) terms may even be considered the whole of the collective unconscious? Gebser's (1985) original stage would seem to be an elemental, undifferentiated consciousness—the Tao itself—and the stage of consciousness which contained the seeds of all the other stages just as the integral stage contains the remnants of all the previous stages—both active and vital. It can be argued, however, that it is not possible for the rational mind to truly understand this state of consciousness and/or be able to express it using the symbolic system that is language.

While it may be possible to attain, for a short time, the feeling of the oceanic through psychogenic substances, the question nevertheless remains: what is it like to fully live in the oceanic and, perhaps more powerfully, to emerge from the oceanic into the magical stage of humanity's cave painting ancestors? What might the shift have been like? To be submerged in a cosmos of consciousness is to be within the womb of consciousness—to know no differentiation of the self and other. To emerge from such an experience—to be birthed into the land of magical thinking and into a oneness between humans and the environment (Wilber, 2002) of those who would go on to create cave art is less a mutation and more of a gradual realization of the difference between self and other that would evolve potentially over tens of thousands of years or more—yet could very likely have taken place over a single generation (Fagan, 2010). There is no way to truly know. However, it would be remiss to not explore the possibility of that which Gebser (1985) presents leading, as it does, to more recognizable states of consciousness. In this case the earliest phase of human development would be the Wilberian uroboric, after the archetypal snake that devours itself in constant cycle, and the Gebserian archaic. Wilber (2002) refers to this stage as archaic-uroboric, which was approximately three to six million years ago and ending 200,000 years ago (p. 32).

Wilber (2002) speculates that that during this period there was, in essence, no distinction between proto-humans and their environment (p. 29). They would not have the humanity versus nature outlook that has dominated so much of Western history. They would not be conscious enough to know the difference between themselves as part of the environment or of themselves as their environment. There would be no self and other in this phase of development. Indeed, Wilber says: “Dawn Man, in other words, began his career immersed in the subconscious realms of nature and body, of vegetable and animal and initially ‘experienced’ himself as indistinguishable from the world that had already evolved to that point” (p. 26).

During the archaic-uroboric period of development, the Dawn people did not have what modern humans would recognize as consciousness, and they do not distinguish themselves from each other or the environment. They were awash in a proto-consciousness rather than a transcendental consciousness—an ocean of pre-consciousness. This was the period before *Homo sapiens*, when humanity's pre-human ancestors roamed the earth without a sense of time, a sense of self, or a

sense of past or future. Humanity's ancestors existed, according to Wilber (2002) and Gebser (1985), but it would not be until the magical-typhonic phase, a Wilberian homage to the mythical Greek monster of storms, that they would exit from unity consciousness to a separate self. It was at this point that the mode of consciousness considered to be truly human would come into existence, however, even then, the evolution of consciousness had still not arrived at a place where modern humanity could understand or share such a consciousness. According to Wilber (2002) the: archaic-uroboric state, then, comes to mean many different things at once. In terms of growth stages, in terms of the emergence from the subconscious, it is the lowest state of consciousness, the crudest, the least differentiated, the one endowed with the least awareness. (p. 31)

It is worth noting that this is where pre-humans spent most of their development. Again, Wilber estimates this period to date back three to six million years, and ending only 200,000 years ago (p. 32). However, in integral theory, each structure of consciousness, each phase of evolution, is contained within the next phase so that this archaic-uroboric stage is also deeply embedded within the modern human psyche.

Wilber (2002) likens the development from the archaic-uroboric to the magical-typhonic by way of kundalini yoga and chakra points, which readers will find in the caduceus which Promethea uses as a defensive weapon. The dual intertwining snakes of the caduceus can also be seen as mirroring the seven chakra points. The chakra points include the anal, genitals, gut, heart, voice box, neo-cortex, and the brain as a whole (p. 38). Each chakra point also connects with a structure of consciousness. For instance, Wilber says that:

during the archaic-uroboric period, the kundalini potential lay at its earliest state, coiled at the spine in the region of the anus and genitals representing graphically the material, instinctual and animal functions from which, and beyond which the Kundalini evolves. (p. 38)

In the next phase of the evolution of human consciousness with early homo sapiens are more recognizable human being emerges that will take readers from the Dawn People of six million years ago to 200,000 years ago and then to the rise of civilization with the Agricultural Revolution.

Despite proto-humans having existed in an almost pre-conscious state for millions of years it would only be approximately 200,000 years ago, according to Wilber (2002), that the next great step in the evolution of consciousness would take place (p. 43). This would be the magical-typhonic phase of human existence where humans first began to distinguish themselves from the environment in which they lived (p. 43). At this stage, according to integral theory, human beings could distinguish themselves from each other and the environment, had gained a symbolic capacity—evidenced by the fact that cave art from this period (35,000 to 45,000 years ago) has been discovered—and engaged in burial rituals.

However, this magical realm of human experience did not fully represent a break in the notion of self and environment. For example, a human being of this time might make very little distinction between the drawing of the animal in the cave and the animal itself. The environment, other animals, and humans themselves, according to Wilber (2002), existed in an almost seamless

whole. These drawings heralded a further development that would reflect the beginnings of a human understanding of symbolic consciousness (Lewis-Williams, 2002)—a development that would eventually lead to integral consciousness (Gebser, 1985).

Scholars studying the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic time periods can but make informed speculation based on evidence such as art and tool-making as to what human consciousness may have been like at that time (Mithen, 1996).

But it is a vital step toward a greater understanding of these early humans and a look towards the origins of human consciousness.

But what did humanity's Paleolithic ancestors know about the self and the other? Is it possible that, in fact, their awareness of consciousness and the world around them was quite different from contemporary humans? Might they have seen themselves as an inherent part of the natural environment? Would they even be capable of having the same or similar concept of the individual as humans have today? Might the earliest cave artists have seen their drawings as actual animals, and not simply representations allowing them, perhaps, to have some mystical power over them? And what did this mean for human communities? For human relationships and reproduction?

It could be that this magical state of being, where the entire universe was alive and had magical properties, where a drawing of an animal may contain the living spirit of that animal, may be equally challenging to understand as that of the archaic-uroboric period. But it is in exactly this time period, in the Paleolithic and later the Neolithic, that human consciousness began to shift into something recognizably human. While the bulk of human history is lost forever to modern scholars, it is during the Paleolithic period that a distinct lineage can be seen that will eventually establish the origin of civilization and further shifts in consciousness.

According to Wilber (2002) “this typhonic self accomplished by focusing and centering consciousness from the naturic world and onto the individual organism” (p. 44). He continues, “At this early stage, then, although the self is distinguished from the naturic environment it remains magically intermingled with it. The cognitive processes at this stage thus confuse not only subject and object, but whole from part” (45). It is a period where, Wilber says, “self and body are not yet clearly differentiated” (46).

Scholar David Lewis-Williams (2002) explores the world of the Paleolithic and connects a combination of attributes that led human beings of the middle and upper Paleolithic transition period to engage in the process of evolutionary consciousness, creating art. Lewis-Williams notes “refined stone-tool technology . . . body adornments that conveyed information about personal and group identity, elaborate burial of the dead, fully modern language and the making of images” (p. 101) the likes of which “presupposes a kind of human consciousness that was alien to Neanderthals and permits conceptions of an ‘alternative reality’” (p. 101).

This capacity to perceive an “alternative reality,” or the reality of the imagination, marks not only a change in and evolution of perception, it is also crucial to the process of creation and human evolution itself. Likewise, R. Dale Guthrie (2005), further illustrates the evolutionary changes of early humanity that resulted in the co-evolutionary process of art and consciousness saying that

the, “emergence of art making was evidently part of extensive changes in human evolution involving, among other things, some major brain reorganization” (p. 397).

Yet, it is not only the now widely known paintings of animals which inspired ancient humans towards artistic expression, but the geometric as well— shapes and symbols which held spiritual meanings to the artists. Van James (2001) says, “Images and symbols of this kind are some of the most powerful tools of cultic practice and mystery religion. They appear before the use of letter signs and written words as they precede abstract concepts and formal ideas” (p. 128). James also posits that such images were understood by a process of “instinctual cognition and direct spiritual perception” (p. 127). Deep in meaning and significance to the artists and people of the time, such art was understood within the context of culture. From there the unrelenting pace of change in the co-evolutionary process continued.

Robert L. Solso (1993) says:

The evolution of the brain and the function a brain carries out such as thought, imagination, problem-solving, reacting to environmental forces, forming emotional attachments, interpreting sensory signals in a meaningful way, and the like, evolved to be behaviorally adapted and were designed to dodge a falling rock or to find a seductive mate for sex and pleasure. (pp. 24-25)

As such the human capacity to express itself creatively evolved concurrently with other human needs. Art was in no way peripheral to the experience of being human. Symbolic expression may be as old as human perception itself. Not only an expression of an evolving consciousness, the capacity to create may be central to the survival of the human species, as central to survival as those skills mentioned above.

Solso (1993) provides a list of seven traits and abilities central to the evolution of contemporary humans. Each are summarized below.

1. Thought/Imagination. The capacity to think—to understand what is happening in one’s environment and to be able to first respond mentally and then physically—would be a critical trait to develop for survival. Likewise, early humans would need to be able to imagine different outcomes in different situations. This would necessitate the separate mental capacity of the imagination to develop. Do I run from a dangerous animal or do I stand still? Do I stay in the cave or venture out? How might I go about hunting the saber toothed tiger in order to eat and clothe myself? These questions which proceed from thought necessitate imagination and proceed into the following section of problem solving. This represents a definite shift from the archaic-uroboric to the magical-typhonic phase.

2. Problem Solving. As the saber-toothed tiger example illustrates, early humans had to develop the capacity to think, imagine, and solve problems in order to survive. In this manner “instincts” can be seen simply as highly developed survival mechanisms that have become institutionalized, so to speak, within the human being in order to give the greatest chance of surviving—at least long enough to have offspring and care for them until they are independent.

3. Reacting to Environmental Force. Depending on where early humans found themselves they might be in a never-ending battle against the elements. In a harsh, ice age environment, for

instance, it would become critical for humans to be able to appropriately respond to their natural surroundings. They would need to be able to have sufficient shelter, as well as clothing, food supplies, and protection from enemies (be they weather, animals, or people) in order for their tribe to survive and procreate. Likewise, they would need to be able to react to a change in the environment—be it a drought or ice thawing.

4. Forming Emotional Attachments. Without the development of empathy, it would be quite unlikely that human beings would be able to work in groups in any meaningful way for any extended period of time. By way of this, in order for tribal units to work together to survive, members of the group must go beyond the simple utilitarian and care enough to sacrifice themselves so that the tribe might live. This capacity to form emotional attachments begins between sexual partners leading to procreation, and then to familial attachment and tribal attachment develops.

5. Interpreting Sensory signals in a meaningful way. One must know the difference between a wild animal charging at one and a cloud, for instance. The capacity to interpret sensory signals in a meaningful way is vital to survival. Are these tiger tracks? Do the birds coming in from the coast signify a coming storm? Does one smell a fire or hear a herd of animals coming near? All of this information can become vital.

6. Dodging falling rocks. Without the capacity to respond quickly to changes in the environment a Paleolithic individual would be dead.

7. Finding a seductive mate for sex and pleasure. Without sex there are no further generations of human beings. Without pleasure there is no compelling reason to have sex.

As human beings continued to evolve in their relationship to the environment and themselves transitions continued to take place in their consciousness and creative expression. David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce (2005) suggest that by the early Neolithic stages and, perhaps before, “access to the spirit realms was no longer through caves . . . but through structures above ground” (p. 59).

Once one is familiar with the Gebserian/Wilberian phases they become easier to recognize. For instance, the magical-typhonic mutation of consciousness is much more easily recognizable than the archaic-uroboric period. Here, the proto-human has evolved from a single-celled organism into what can be called human. Again, according to Gebser (1985), all mutations in consciousness contain the previous mutation. So, while the magical-typhonic period would contain the remnants of the archaic-uroboric there are recognizable changes that can delineate this next period as something significant in the evolution of consciousness. The magical world of the ancestors was one wherein every aspect of nature was alive and held significance. It was a world where humans had evolved to develop the survival instincts that would enable them to become the most dominant species on the planet.

The spiritual sensibilities of these Stone Age ancestors appear to have been quite intact. These cave drawings—some of which have been dated at over 30,000 years old—have significance to them. What their significance might truly be is open to debate. However, many scholars believe

they have a religio-spiritual significance based on the consistency of the evidence in various archaeological finds. But are they symbols? This is a central question as it connects deeply with the magical consciousness that Gebser (1985) would have scholars believe is a concurrent mutation within this period.

Certainly, as mythologist Joseph Campbell (1987) indicates, members of the Paleolithic era would not understand the symbolic capacity as do contemporary human beings. Their consciousness was only beginning to move in this direction. This begs the question: if the magical period was one in which everything had a magic capacity, would a human being of that era recognize a drawing as having a symbolic capacity or would they, rather, see such an artistic rendering as a magical extension of the environment? The drawing of a rhino, for example, was interpreted as a rhino itself or the spirit of a rhino. In this sense, it would be possible for the hunter-gatherers of the time period to have some control over their environment. Again, as Campbell indicates, they would not understand art in the same sense as contemporary humans and, as such, would not have seen their renderings as being artistic in a modern sense.

Steven Mithen (1996) describes this time period as a “creative explosion” (p. 151) that led to a “frenzy of activity with more innovation than in the previous 6 million years of evolution” (p. 152). Appearing on the world stage 100,000 years ago, this development took place approximately 40,000 years ago, or 60,000 years from their first appearance in the fossil record. Mithen goes on to call this time of human development a “big bang” (p. 152) that took place during the Middle/Upper Paleolithic period. He asserts that “a redesign of the mind took place” (p. 153). He adds that “Along with the pieces of art, the period between 40,000 and 30,000 years ago saw the production of items for personal decoration such as beads, pendants and perforated animal teeth” (p. 156).

But it was not necessarily an art of recreation or pleasure that prompted this big bang of consciousness. Mithen (1996) says that art of this period is “not a product of comfortable circumstances when people had time on their hands” (pp. 156-157). It is far more likely that such art was created during high stress periods, and thus it can be that shifts in consciousness also meant that the artistic creations of early humans had deeper meanings to them. Mithen suggests that the “cultural explosion” of approximately 40,000 years ago “can be explained by new connections between the domains of technical, social and natural history” (p. 162).

Mithen (1996) also says that such art was created in a social context, and that the entirety of their “landscapes were socially constructed and full of meaning” (p. 166). According to Mithen, early Humans had difficulty drawing distinctions between what “is a piece of ‘art’ and what is a ‘tool’” (p. 170). According to John Pfeiffer (1982), Lascaux, for example, is “one of more than 200 caves in Western Europe containing prehistoric art” (p. 1), and that other hominids “left nothing but their bones” (p. 8). There was something special about this time period and about Homo sapiens as a species. Something had changed. Something was different.

According to Brian Fagan (2010) “everyone man or woman, young or old, adult or child possessed a lively imagination and used it in different ways” (p. 138). Likewise, Fagan says that there were not any hunter gatherer societies that “did not possess a complex set of supernatural beliefs or consider itself living in an intensely symbolic realm. These beliefs and assumptions



have nourished small-scale societies constantly on the move, often in times of climatic change” (p. 151).

Having harnessed fire and the other basics of survival, mostly in harsh climates, these hunter-gatherers entered the depths of these caves in Western Europe in total darkness, illuminated only by the fire they brought with them, to create these drawings. It was not a simple matter of expressing themselves or art for art’s sake. Everything at this period in time had an evolutionary or survival component to it. These were not people who lived lives of excess, but lives in which every act held magical significance. The weather, clouds, animals, and environment as a whole was alive. Everything had a spirit. Thus, their cave paintings held deep significance.

However, the exact nature of the significance of this period cannot be known. These hunter-gatherers did not leave any codex from which modern scholars can decipher meaning, and it would be going too far to ascribe meaning to that which scholars are seeing through the modern rational lens. Campbell (1987) asserts:

The caves were the sites of animal magic and of the men’s rites. They are Underworld itself, the realm of the herds of the underworld, from which the herds of the upper world proceed and back to which they return. (p. 375)

Indeed, there is significance to these drawings and to their placement. According to Campbell (1987) it is likely these places held vital religio-spiritual importance since they were all nearly inaccessible. The places themselves had meaning as they were used and re-used over tens of thousands of years (p. 305). The relationship of human beings to these images was, very likely, quite different than that of contemporary humans. Indeed, according to George Nash and Christopher Chippendale (2002):

hunter-gatherers often have an intense relationship with the landscape in which they must do the right things so that the animals shall move to their proper places, the fish at their due season return up the rivers and the spirits of the land be generous to people as they should be. (p. 13)

As human beings continued to evolve in their relationship to the environment transitions continued to take place in their consciousness and creative expression.

Such a structure is detailed by Ian Holder (2006) in a work that explores the above ground Neolithic mound found, in this case, in modern Turkey, and was related to the ancient cult of the goddess. Emerging from the caves of distant human ancestors, human artistic expression was now above ground. The evolution of consciousness toward the emergence of the integral continued to progress forward, and the magical mutation was beginning to give way to the next phase of Gebserian/Wilberian consciousness: the mythic-membership phase. This is the origin of the gods and goddesses and, perhaps, many religions of ancient civilizations leading, more recognizably, to the mental-rational phase typified by the Ancient Greeks.

Indeed, a Cult of the Goddess or of the Feminine Principle also seems to have circumnavigated the globe in those distant eons. Such has been determined by the great amount of similar female goddess figurines found at many archaeological sites. Campbell (1987) suggests that the female

figurines likely represented a goddess mythology that was more in line with a planter's mythology than that of the cave dweller mythology (p. 375).

This is a transition period from the hunter-gatherer cave painters to what Campbell (1987) calls the "planters," or those who created the agricultural revolution and sparked the beginnings of known civilization. Before this, however, caves such as those in Lascaux, France were filled with this theriomorphic art, and comprised something akin to a "stone age cathedral of hunting magic" (p. 300). Campbell states that "their appearance on the walls amounted to a conjuration of the timeless principle, essence, noumenal image or idea of the herd into the sanctuary where it might be acted upon by a rite" (p. 305). He calls the cave paintings "not art, but magic" (p. 305), and that "for reasons that we now cannot guess, the necromantic pictures were thought to be effective only in certain caves and in certain parts of those caves. They were renewed there, year after year, for hundreds of centuries" (p. 305).

Gebser (1985) and Wilber (2002) present a useful theoretical device for scholars to understand and speculate about the early period of the evolution of human consciousness. This period stretches millions of years from the archaic-uroboric period of proto-consciousness to the magical-typhonic phase when all was imbued with a natural-supernatural significance; each phase contained something of the other. Through this evolution of mind, this "big bang" or "creative explosion" set off humanity's mental, spiritual, and physical fires. Humanity then embarked on a further journey from the magical into the mythical and, then, into the current rational phase of human development.

At approximately the time of the Agricultural Revolution 12,000 years ago came the mythic-membership consciousness that had been fully realized with evidence, as mentioned above, of goddess worship reaching many areas around the planet. The goddess was a figure of fertility—most appropriate for a group of humans who relied on the harvest to survive. It would be these small villages that would become city-states, and, later, civilizations heralding the current mental-rational phase exemplified by early Greek philosophers. These civilizations may in turn give way to the emerging integral phase (Combs, 2009, p. 69).

### **From Prometheus to Promethea: An Exploration of the Mythopoetics of the Promethean Archetype**

*A Brief Exploration of Myth: Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, Percy Bysshe Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (or The Modern Prometheus)*

There are strong undertones of the mythic-membership consciousness that flow throughout the world of writings based on mythology. As mentioned above in the time period after the agricultural revolution, and as the early civilizations grew, great stories emerged that explained what it meant to be born a human and live in the world. Gods, goddesses, heroes, and others populated the earth and, for a time, seemed very real. These stories still worked at a metaphorical level again calling to mind Gebser's (1985) mythical stage.

The role of myth at this time could be seen as being about bringing meaning to human life and an understanding of the world and the universe. For the sake of directness I will, in this chapter,

speak of the Gebserian (1985) mythic phase and will not directly connect it to Wilber's (2002) membership consciousness as both are representative of the same stage.

The mythic mind can be seen as the mythic imagination of the mental/rational-egoistic period (i.e. the current stage of consciousness that, as mentioned early, stretches back to the early Greek philosophers. Recall that, according to Gebser (1985), each stage contains all previous stages. Thus the mythic—and therefore mythology—can be seen as the subconscious of the mental/rational-egoic. It is the dream realm from which mythic archetypes may emerge into the mental/rational-egoic mind.

The mythic phase, acting as it does in this subconscious monde, can be seen as irrational in that it need not conform to the egoic structures of the world of rationality. Recall that, according to Gebser (1985), the foundational realm of the mythic is the magical stage of consciousness. As discussed in Chapter One it is posited by Gebser and Wilber (2002) that, out of the magical stage, there was comparatively little differentiation between humans, their minds, and the understanding of themselves being one with nature to being a separate part of nature, but during the mythic stage there was a cleaving that had become greater. In the mythic stage—where once all was imbued with magic—the seeming magic of nature could now be ascribed to goddesses and gods who inhabit the mythic imagination.

By the time that reason became the dominant form of thinking the gods may still have existed, but belief in them was considered a choice, part of a mental process, and there may have even been questioning and disbelief of those gods. But in this mental/rational-egoic phase—which is still the dominant phase today—the mythic may not be far behind informing thoughts and artistic creations such as Alan Moore's *Promethea*. But the story of *Promethea*, which I will assert bridges the rational to Gebser's (1985) emerging integral stage and beyond, has its roots in another early masterwork that can be seen as bridging the mythic and the rational stage. The playwright is named Aeschylus (480/1966) and the play is called *Prometheus Bound*.

By the time the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus (480/1966) had written *Prometheus Bound* humanity had, with increasingly rare exception, gone from the hunter-gatherers of the Paleolithic and Neolithic time periods, through the Agricultural Revolution (the mythic phase of consciousness), and into the time where villages became cities and cities became great civilizations (well into the mental-egoic phase). By the time of the writing of *Prometheus Bound* the myth of Prometheus was presumably quite well known in Greek culture. It is the story of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods to help humanity and was then punished by Zeus, king of the gods. It is a tale of hubris, agony and sacrifice.

Lesser known today is the fact that *Prometheus Bound* was originally part of a trilogy of tales called the *Promethia* (Murray, 1964). All but one of the three has been lost to humanity. However, historic accounts point to the fact that the story culminated with a play wherein Prometheus is released from bondage. The opening words of the original *Prometheus Unbound*, the second play in the series, have been found in Latin and transcribed by Cicero (Thomson, 1972, p. 132). At this point Prometheus has risen from Tartarus and longs for death. According to Thomson, "It is at this point, I believe, that Prometheus yields" (p. 137). The third play in the trilogy is believed to be called *Prometheus The Fire-Bearer* (p. 139).

Prometheus' name means "Forethought" or "Forethinker" (Hesiod, 2008). Though in mythology Prometheus was a Titan and fire bringer, in fact, as Murray (1964) states his name is, "a correct Greek derivative from the Sanskrit Pramantha which means 'fire stick'" (pp. 21-22), which could indicate his story goes much further back into history than the Greeks. However, in the Greek world.

Prometheus is found originally in the poet Hesiod's (2008) collection *Theogony and Works and Days* both estimated to date from the eighth century B.C.E.. Here Prometheus is first depicted as someone with "crooked cunning" (p. 38) who mocks Zeus' power and is then punished by the gods (p. 39). Beginning in Greece's Classical Era in the fifth Century B.C.E. and later, Prometheus would transform into a figure of political rebellion both in *Prometheus Bound* and later in the nineteenth century with works such as Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1820/1966) *Prometheus Unbound* (Lewis, 1992). Other ancient depictions of Prometheus can be found in Plato's (2005) *Protagoras* (432 B.C.E.); Aristophanes' comedy *The Birds* (414 B.C.E.), and later the Roman Ovid's (2008) *Metamorphosis* (8 C.E.).

The most significant extant cultural work from Ancient Greece concerning Prometheus, however, remains *Prometheus Bound*, where, in addition to giving human beings the gift of fire he, according to Thomson (1972), "also took away the painful burden of human beings being able to see into their own futures" (p. 125), and "for this, Zeus punished Prometheus, having him chained to a rock for what, he thought, was an eternity where each day an eagle would come to eat his liver" (p. 125). In Aeschylus' (480/1966) great work *Prometheus* says:

For giving men

God's gift I am tied down wretched in compulsion.  
For I am he who sought the stolen fount of fire,  
Stored in a stalk, which proved to be the teacher of  
All kind of craft to mortals and their great resource.  
This was the sin for which I pay punishment  
Nailed hard and fast in chains beneath the open sky. (p. 8)

In *Prometheus Bound* readers find a Prometheus undaunted by Zeus' punishment—for Prometheus can see past his punishment into a time when Zeus will lose control over the heavens and the earth. Prometheus is defiant against Zeus (who, unlike Prometheus, cannot see into the future), and takes pleasure in his helping of humanity. While Zeus intended to destroy humanity, Prometheus armed them with the fire of the gods, and the capacity to ignite the fires of civilization and human progress.

It is also clear by this point in the evolution of human civilization and consciousness that Aeschylus (480/1966) is defying Zeus—who by this period may have been considered more mythological than reality-based—thereby providing a demonstration of a change in social consciousness. Consciousness had shifted. The archaic and magical world had now become a world where, though the gods still held sway in the minds of the Greeks, a more human-based philosophy would take hold. Still, though, humans had to contend with the gods. And, likewise, so did the immortals, such as Prometheus. Zeus, from whom Prometheus saved humanity, was still a force to be reckoned with.

On the topic of Zeus, Prometheus, via Aeschylus (480/1966), relates that Zeus was determined to destroy humanity, and that, except for Prometheus himself, no one stood against Zeus saying: “I dared to stand against him and I saved mankind from being broken into pieces and sent down to Hell” (p. 12).

Despite knowing what would happen to him, Prometheus defies Zeus and gives humanity the gifts it needs in order to flourish, and in order for civilization to rise above its so-called primitive beginnings. If Aeschylus (480/1966) is to be believed, humanity has Prometheus to thank for quite a bit of the foundations which would, eventually, bring humanity into the modern era. Prometheus describes in some detail what, specifically, he had done to help humanity as Aeschylus relates how Prometheus taught humans how to build houses, understand the changing of the seasons, use letters and numbers, domesticate animals, and how to sail (p. 21). Prometheus gave mortals the gift of medicine and prophecy, and the capacity to access bronze, iron, silver, and gold in the earth (p. 22).

Aeschylus (480/1966) says humans “were like the shapes we see in dreams,” (p. 21) describing a state much akin to Gebser’s (1985) archaic mutation of consciousness that then develops into something more easily recognizable as the human consciousness of early civilization, and the prototype for a more contemporary consciousness. Indeed, the above quote can be seen to connect directly with the Gebserian archaic consciousness—a type of unity consciousness from which humanity evolved. Likewise, Aeschylus (480/1966) effectively describes the transition from Paleolithic to Neolithic and beyond as he comments on Prometheus’ intervention in human affairs indicating that before Prometheus humans “never knew houses, brick-built and warm” (p. 21). Nor did humans know “wood-work” (p. 21). In the Greek mythological sphere, it is Prometheus that brings humans out of the Stone Age and into the Agricultural Revolution. Aeschylus is summarizing tens of thousands of years of human history in a short verse of his play.

In reference to something highly relevant to the emergence of the Agricultural Revolution, Prometheus is said by Aeschylus (480/1966) to have introduced humans to the seasons, and revealed to them the rising and setting of the stars. Likewise, Prometheus also claims to have introduced human beings to domesticated animals to shoulder the hard labor of farming, or as he says “beasts to serve under yoke and saddle”(p. 21). This capacity to domesticate animals would prove crucial in the agricultural transformation that would give rise to civilization—something for which hunter-gatherer societies had no need, but was crucial to the advancement of farming communities. Prometheus is also said to have introduced humans to the “art of using numbers,” (p. 21), the “arrangement of letters” (p. 21), and “discursive memory” (p. 21). Mathematics, language, and memory would prove crucial elements not only in trade with other communities, but critical in the advancement of civilization.

According to Georg Thomson (1972), the Prometheus story is “a genuine folk-memory of the earliest and one of the most revolutionary steps in the advancement of material technique” (p. 124). Thomson states that “Prometheus, it was once said, is the patron saint of the Proletariat.” (p. 124). He was also honored at the Academy by Hephaistos and Athena, and honored with foot races. Thomson reflects that, “If Prometheus had to suffer it is because man himself had suffered

in the course of his advancement. Without suffering he would have lacked the stimulus to invention” (p. 132).

The myth of Prometheus, as presented by Aeschylus (480/1966), can be seen to mirror that of the Gebserian-Wilberian thinking from the archaic to the mental/rational-egoic stage. It is a mythological document written by a playwright in the logical stage of the development of consciousness. It can be seen as a bridge from the mythic to the rational, but not, as I contend later with *Promethea*, a document that is a bridge from the rational to the integral and beyond. *Prometheus Bound* can be seen as not only a vital link in the Promethean story-telling heritage, but an exemplar of the Gebserian-Wilberian stages of consciousness as reflected in an artistic creation.

The story of Prometheus can be seen as having only grown in relevance as civilization has become more complex. Michael Gagarin (1976) sees the plot of *Prometheus* as, primarily, a political one (p. 133). It is these undertones that may very well have inspired Percy Bysshe Shelley’s (1820/1966) own version of *Prometheus Unbound* eons later. Says Gagarin (1976):

Indeed, the major achievement of *Prometheus* is this powerful picture of a resister, a picture that reveals, among other things, that rebels in their stubborn arrogance often become quite similar to the tyrants against whom they are rebelling (a truth that Sophocles also understood as we see from his portrayal of *Antigone*). (p. 133)

While Aeschylus’ (480/1966) work is the primary epic in which the Promethean story is played out, others have picked up the strand. Notably, during the Romantic Period of nineteenth Century British Literature, both Percy Bysshe Shelley (1820/1966) and Mary Shelley (1818/2008) explored the nature of the Promethean. One explored these thematics in an epic poem. The other in the form of a novel, the story of which still exists in various incarnations in the minds of millions through various film incarnations.

Not merely a sequel to Aeschylus’ drama, Percy Bysshe Shelley’s (1820/1966) poem *Prometheus Unbound* posits a different set of circumstances than what is thought to be the line of thought of Aeschylus’ second play in the series. The main difference: in Shelley’s version there is an overthrow of the tyrant god of Olympus. According to Shelley:

The *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus...But, in truth I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. (p. 49)

It is in this sense that a political interpretation of *Prometheus* and *Prometheus Unbound* is strengthened. Shelley, feeling the revolutionary spirit of the Romantic Age, found *Prometheus* as a hero of mankind. And he found his story a powerful enough one wherein a god could be overthrown.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1820/1966) takes the world of the Aeschylus play and its lost sequel, and gives it the sensibility of a nineteenth century Romantic poet. It is a play/poem that is political and philosophical, anarchic and utopian. However, as opposed to Aeschylus' version, Shelley tells the story of the liberation of Prometheus and the end of the reign of Zeus. According to Earl R. Wasserman (1971):

Unlike man and the world, Prometheus is, at least at this point, not only immortal, but also immutable; and Shelley's insistence that only mind is eternal demands we assign Prometheus his role not in a system of allegorical abstraction, but in Shelley's idealism. (p. 255)

It is within the flow, the great stream of consciousness and, perhaps, the collective unconscious, in which the mythical can be found. In Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1820/1966) work, readers are also delving into Shelley's world, which is not purely of the mental-rational, the mythic, nor of the emerging integral. The text is in an between state. Shelley's work is still one of mythic undertones, but its broader themes of freedom from the oppression of modern civilization can be seen as calling his readers to throw off all forms of oppression, which is a core ethos of the Romantic aesthetic.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1820/1966) work can also be seen as a call to throw off the mental/rational-egoistic consciousness that helped build modern civilization. While it is not an integral work in the Gebserian (1985) sense, it can be seen as a call to the integral—a prelude to what will come next—just as Mary Shelley's (1818/2008) *Frankenstein* (or the Modern Prometheus) is a call to understand the dangers of scientific hubris. In the Romantic period consciousness was entering a state of flux, and heralded the next Gebserian mutation in consciousness that would take place in the twentieth century—the emerging integral stage. According to Ron G. Woodman (1991) in Shelley's world the mind is:

Bound to an everlasting flow of sensations that has no known or knowable source (no creator), the mind endlessly arranges and re-arranges these sensations in perpetual risk of arresting them into patterns or systems alien to the flow itself. (p. 166)

The Romantic mind can be seen as being in flux, as if preparing itself for a new era. It can be seen as calling upon civilization to awaken to a new reality that moves beyond the mental/rational-egoistic. The Romantics can, perhaps, be seen as proto-integral. Rationality and emotion were both vital elements of the Romantic era. Passion was the dynamism that moved them forward.

Regarding Prometheus Unbound, Michael Henry Scrivener (1982) says, "The extraordinary feat is not vanquishing a foe, a single set of tyrants, but conquering the very principle of oppression, tyranny itself which is the subject, of course, of Prometheus Unbound" (p. 140). According to Geoffrey Ward (1982), "Prometheus is, then, at an idealistic extreme outside the bounds of time and discrete identity" (p. 195). Shelley is writing of a Prometheus who is throwing off the shackles not just of those in which Zeus has him chained but can be seen as writing of a freedom from the oppressive mental/rational-egoistic consciousness of his day. This freedom from oppression brings Prometheus, as Ward suggests, outside of the restraints of his own myth and into a place of the proto-integral.

With reference to Percy Bysshe Shelley's work, Donald H. Reiman (1990) says, "If each man were at peace with himself and all men with one another, the natural universe would seem to them harmonious. Practically speaking, man's moral regeneration redeems the universe" (p. 68). This "moral regeneration" can be understood not just as the overthrow of tyranny, but in the expansion of their consciousness which becomes broad enough to encompass a greater view of anarchic morality connected with a persistent thought that freedom and transcendental realization are possible.

Yet, it would be another work—that of *Frankenstein* (or the Modern Prometheus) by Mary Shelley (1818/2008), author and Percy's wife, that would have enduring influence on both Prometheus and society. Shelley's work would tear to the heart of the Prometheus mythos and question it deeply. It would pose a cautionary tale that would resound throughout modern culture.

In Mary Shelley's (1818/2008) *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, first published in 1818 and then revised in 1831, the Prometheus myth is redefined. No more is there a God-like being such as Prometheus giving gifts to humanity. Now, the human being has become Prometheus in attempting to find a cure for death. The character of Victor Frankenstein, who becomes obsessed with reanimating dead human beings from various parts in an effort to forward his theories, becomes this modern Prometheus. And, like Prometheus, he is punished with the death of his loved ones when he will not make a mate for the monster he created. Victor Frankenstein is punished, not for his pursuit of science, but for disturbing the natural order of life and death. According to Anne K. Mellor (1998) *Frankenstein*:

can claim the status of a myth, so profoundly is it resonant in its implications for our comprehension of ourselves and our place in the world that it has become, at least in the barest outline, a trope of everyday life. (p. 38)

In this sense, each individual, by virtue of the modern lifestyle, has become a modern Prometheus and is creating monsters. The deep mythos captured by Mary Shelley (1818/2008) in *Frankenstein* goes even further. According to George Levine (1998):

*Frankenstein* echoes the old stories of Faust and Prometheus, exploring the limits of ambition and rebelliousness and their moral implications; but it is also the tale of a 'modern Prometheus' and as such it is a secular myth not metaphysical machinery, no gods. The creation is from mortal bodies with the assistance of electricity, not spirit, and the deaths are not pursued beyond the grave. (Levine, p. 25)

*Frankenstein* and his monster live in the "real world." There is no intervention by supernatural forces. Victor Frankenstein is responsible for the ramifications of both creating a monster, and then abandoning him, and not treating him humanely when begged to do so. Likewise, the monster is responsible for his own murderous actions. According to Donald F. Glut (1973), "Frankenstein fled. He rejected his creature in much the same way existentialists believed God rejected man. Although the created later begged his creator for love and understanding, Frankenstein continually denied happiness to his being" (pp. 16-17).



Mary Shelley's (1818/2008) *Frankenstein* has worked its way into the popular imagination. However, it is part of a continuous history of Prometheus in Western culture dating back to the Greco-Romans, and even re-appears in the middle ages, through modernity. According to Christopher Small (1973):

Mary thus associated her story with one of the most persistent, but also protean of classic legends, for Prometheus has always been able to assume new forms. How many of these in literature or plastic arts she was acquainted with is doubtful. She is unlikely, for example, about the curious and, as it were, underground existence of Prometheus as an adjunct to Christian allegory during the middle ages. (p. 48)

The myth of Prometheus is justifiably powerful and relevant to human life today just as it was to the ancient Greeks. Perhaps more so. It is a myth that flows through modern life. Just as *Frankenstein* is a cautionary tale so is the Promethean mythos. However, in Moore's *Promethea* it will be demonstrated that this ancient myth is utilized as a means of integration and liberation.

Myth and metaphor are the same. Religion, too, is a symbol—a metaphor—of human connection to the *mysterium tremendum*—the great universal mystery that is at the heart of our being. Early humans did not have much control over their environment. Modern humans would like to think they have more control—and in some cases they do—though rising sea levels, as one example, may be a reason to give them pause for thought. It was in humanity's early days—in the same mindset that evoked the myths and rituals of the “animal powers” that the earliest gods came to be—consistently evolving as human consciousness evolved to and through the points that there are written and visual records from cuneiform tablets to hieroglyphics and beyond; all emanations from the collective unconsciousness, becoming myth and metaphor fulfilling the psychic needs of a humanity otherwise lost in the cosmos.

Cro-Magnons were anatomically the same as modern humans. While the focus of much of their lives was on dealing with the immediate issues related to survival, they also had an imaginative, spiritual, and symbolic life as seen in the cave paintings of places such as Lascaux and Altamira. It stands to reason that these early humans also faced some of the same core existential issues as modern humans. Questions such as: What am I? Who am I? What are you? Who are you? These questions are simple but profound as they are at the core of humanity's understanding of itself and its place in the universe.

Prometheus is a potent metaphor that connects ages of time and still speaks to the unconscious today. The myth of the fire-bringer is also the metaphor of the fire-bringer. In what ways is this myth and metaphor so potent? Fire is something inherently important to human beings. It is linked with survival—not only warmth and comfort, but the ability to cook food, scare away predators, light up the night, and see into the depths of caves.

In this sense, Prometheus is a metaphor for the origin of humanity's grasp of fire. Notice that the fire still had to be stolen from the gods who hoarded such things to themselves. This indicates how difficult it was for early humans to attain, retain, and control fire. While Prometheus is, primarily, associated with fire, he also brought humanity all of the useful arts, also stolen from the gods—including mathematics.

Civilization, however, is not a benign entity. There are always causalities and sacrifices in an unforgiving social system. Prometheus may have helped humanity begin the march toward civilization, but society is much more akin to the myth of Pandora's Box—a story to which Prometheus is, also, peripherally associated. It is the mathematics that Prometheus gave to civilization that led to the creation of the atomic bomb thousands of years later. The mathematics upon which Prometheus gifted humanity also helped put humans on the Moon. It can be said that within every gift there is a curse and within every curse there is a gift.

Prometheus worked in secret against Zeus—who wanted humanity's destruction. After millennia Zeus relents against Prometheus's punishment and Prometheus is unbound—a suitable subject for a Romantic such as Percy Bysshe Shelley. Whether or not Prometheus goes on to interject himself again into the affairs of humanity is not known—though his legacy exists in every aspect of civilization from ancient times through today and into the future.

But when the metaphorical value of the old gods of Greece and, then Rome, ceased to resound in the lives and minds of the people of the day, there was a new God to take their place. This was the Judeo-Christian God that would transcend the old gods—mythologically and metaphorically—and, in that way, become real in the lives of the people of the day. It is possible that religions such as Christianity will one day be considered myths, and to some secular humanists, atheists, and others, they are already considered such.

Yet the Promethean myth has endured. It has endured from its origins in the Gebserian (1985) mythic stage, the distant past, into the oral tradition of Hesiod (2008) and into the writings of Aeschylus (480/1966) during the mental/rational-egoistic phase—where it can be seen to demonstrate the shifts from the archaic and magical to the mental/rational-egoistic. Throughout this stage of consciousness, largely dominated by the mental, rational, and egoistic, the myth of Prometheus has continued to endure even into the liminal period where the rational may be giving way, as Gebser (1985) indicated, to the next mutation in human consciousness—that of the integral. Such a shift is reflected in the works *Prometheus Unbound* (P. Shelley, 1996) and *Frankenstein (Or The Modern Prometheus)* (M. Shelley, 1818/2008), which transcended the page and have become known in seemingly innumerable filmic incarnations on big and small screens—a mainstay in the popular consciousness. It is from such ancient and august beginnings that *Promethea* by Alan Moore draws its heritage. This work is the subject of the following chapters.

### **The Myth of Promethea**

A thread can be seen from humanity's early origins, through the works discussed above, all seen through the lens of integral theory according to Gebser (1985) and Wilber (2002). This same lens will be used to explore the world of *Promethea* where I hope it will be demonstrated that *Promethea* is an example of an integral work bridging the rational phase of consciousness with the emergent phase of the integral and, perhaps, beyond. First, however, it will benefit the reader to have a brief synopsis of *Promethea*'s storyline, followed by a more in-depth hermeneutic exploration of the early plot as a point of reference. In the following chapter the characters come face to face with the Qabalistic Tarot—another integral system—which I utilize in order to make an argument for the integrality of the work as a whole.

### **Brief Synopsis**

The story of Promethea begins in fifth Century Alexandria where Promethea's father, a Thoth-Hermetic scholar, is about to be attacked by a Christian mob for his devotion to the old religion. Before he is attacked he sends his daughter away to be saved by the old gods. Lost in the desert, Promethea soon meets up with the gods who offer to protect her in the form of making her a living story, and thereby granting her eternal life.

The story picks up again in an alternate New York in the year 1999 complete with flying cars and rampant commercialism. This is the Gebserian-Wilberian mental/rational-egoic realm. Student Sophie Bangs is writing a term paper wherein she is researching connections in the Promethea myth throughout the ages. Her situation takes a strange turn when she becomes the latest version of Promethea journeying back and forth between the material realm and the Immaterial—the realm of myth, magic, and stories. It seems that there are various Prometheas from throughout history and they all exist in the non-material realm simultaneously, and all will, eventually, help teach Sophie.

To continue her journey Sophie Bangs, the current incarnation of Promethea, travels to a place called the Immaterial. As the name suggests this is an immaterial realm that coexists with the material realm, but is no less real. First, Sophie travels through the region of Fairy Tale and Fable where she meets with the unfettered versions of some popular fables such as Little Red Riding Hood, the Big Bad Wolf, and others.

After learning more about magick and the realms of the Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot, Sophie, as Promethea, travels with her deceased friend Barbara, a prior incarnation of Promethea, through the Immaterial and up the Qabalistic Tree of Life in order re-unite Barbara with her deceased husband. During this process Sophie and Barbara travel through major realms of the Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot.

Finally, after re-uniting Barbara and her husband and achieving the highest levels of human consciousness, Sophie, as Promethea, returns to the material realm to fulfill her destiny as being the Promethea that brings about the Apocalypse. With her destiny fulfilled she returns to her life as Sophie Bangs—a changed human being in a changed world.

### **In-Depth Plot Summary and Commentary**

According to Moore (2000), the Promethea story begins in Alexandria in 411 A.D. In historical context this is nearly 1,000 years after the Classical Era of Ancient Greece and the work of Aeschylus (480/1966), and much farther from Hesiod's (2008) *Theogony and Works and Days*—not to mention Plato's (2005) *Protagoras*. At this point in time, the Promethean myth had already been well established in the ancient world. As such readers are in a Gebserian-Wilberian mythic-membership realm and will stay within such a realm of mythic overtones for the remainder of the story.

Promethea's father is being persecuted by Christian followers of the time—followers who seemingly have no interest in understanding the myth and metaphor of their own belief systems. They are fundamentalist fanatics. The father speaks to his young Egyptian daughter and says

“Well, then, there is nothing for it. They are coming for me, as they did for beautiful Hypathia. Best go now, my beloved daughter. All my love and all my gods shall be about thee as a mantle” (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1).<sup>1</sup> Hypathia is, of course, the Alexandrian scientist, humanist, and philosopher who was skinned alive by a Christian mob for her beliefs in rationality.

When the evil deed is done one Christian priest says, “Time claims him. Time and the Radiant Heavenly City” (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1). The Radiant Heavenly City is, in fact, the name of the first issue of the Promethea comic book. Readers then immediately fast forward to 1999 A.D. and a bustling, modern, and radiant city in an alternate timeline from ours complete with flying cars. Again, this is the mental-rational-egoic realm with emphasis on the right quadrant of the scientific and physical. In one such car is protagonist Sophie Bangs (a likely allusion in name to immediate enlightenment—Sophia [wisdom] Bangs [The a-ha moment similar to satori]) on her way to interview a source for her research project on Promethea.

Speaking to her friend Stacia she says, “Promethea. The same name turns up in 18th Century poems, early newspaper strips, pulp magazines and comic books.” (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1). She is researching a fictional lineage set out by Moore, but considered real in the world of the story. Sophie meets up with Barbara Shelley (potentially an allusion to Percy Bysshe Shelley) widow of the late writer of the Promethea comics in the storyline named Steve Shelley.

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the Promethea series are cited using the year, issue, and book number in light of the fact that this series does not use page numbers.

“Listen kid, you take my advice,” says Shelley. “You don’t wanna go looking for folklore. And you especially don’t want folklore to come looking for you” (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1). A short time after an enemy demon—called a “Smee”—comes after Sophie, Barbara becomes Promethea and saves Sophia—though Barbara is wounded by the enemy.

Flashback to 411 A.D. and the lonely young daughter of the father who was killed by the Christian priests is out in the desert alone and helpless until she is confronted by the old gods who offer her help. “Don’t be afraid,” they say. “You were lost, but now you are found. Now everything is well. Two gods, Thoth-Hermes have interceded in order to help her though they admit they cannot keep her safe in the material world” (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1) This is pure mythic realm material.

Our influence here is waning, our priests slain by those of the new God. A Dark Age is coming. Only in my world, the Immateria can I protect you . . . and there you would no longer be a little girl. You’d be a story . . . you would live eternally as stories do. As for coming back well . . . sometimes if a story is very special it can quite take people over. We’ll see. Come along.” (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1)

The girl asks: “Is your world very far?” “No,” say the gods “It is always in the place where you are standing. Tell me child, what is your name?” “Promethea,” she says (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1).

The first issue of Promethea (Moore, 2000, Issue 1, Book 1) is an origin story written in the grand tradition of a theogeny (a story of how a god comes to power). Vital aspects of the Promethea

story and symbols are established in the first issue of the series. First there are the old gods versus the new God, or, rather, the new God's followers. The metaphor of Christ will make an appearance much later in Sophie Bangs' journey. But, for now, a duality is being set up: old gods, new God—and the old gods are being given supremacy. They are the gods of the Immaterial. They are the gods who will protect Promethea, though their power is waning in the material plane. Moore can be seen as answering the question: where do old gods go when people stop believing in them, or start believing in something else? His answer is into the immaterial realm—the Immaterial.

Moore (2000) is also on his way to establishing the Thoth tarot deck/path as the one that will form the super-structure of the storyline later on. The story will be that of occult metaphor and Moore will be putting forward a de facto pathway to an exploration of the integral and beyond for his characters and his readers harkening back to both Wilberian (2006) and Gebserian (1985) integral theory.

Initial integral symbols include the caduceus—carried by both Promethea's father before he is killed and by Hermes—and eventually by Promethea—as well as the Ankh carried by Thoth. The caduceus is familiar to many as a symbol associated with medicine. The caduceus is a Hermetic symbol of dynamic power and balance. According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996), “this balance and polarity are the especial attributes of the cosmic stream which is represented in more general terms in the double spiral” (p. 142). Likewise they describe the ankh as, “a symbol which expresses the reconciliation of opposites and the integration of active and passive qualities” (p. 27). As noted earlier, integration is the process of becoming whole.

This world, rampant with symbols and deeper meaning, is the world with which Sophie Bangs is destined to come into contact. When Barbara Shelley is wounded while protecting her, Sophie Bangs becomes the next incarnation of Promethea following an incantation. Thus her adventure begins. It is an adventure into the power of words as symbols, and the power of symbols themselves. It is an adventure into how the material world combines, collides, and differentiates itself with the world of thought, and how the individual ego structure comes to term with the transcendental and infinite. It is an occult (meaning hidden) journey. It is a hero's journey. It is a journey from the material realm, into the immaterial, and then the apocalyptic.

As Promethea is a force for good, it is not surprising that soon after her journey begins she is faced with the forces of evil in the form of magician Benny Solomon and a cadre of demons. This takes place in the material realm which, it can be noted, is still a realm of duality in all things: good/evil, night/day, living/dead etc. In order to rescue her friend who was sucked into the Immaterial during a battle, Sophie as Promethea ventures into the first edge of the Immaterial called “Misty Magic Land”—the equivalent of the Gebserian-Wilberian magical-typhonic phase of development that, with the continuing touch of the mythic that pervades the story, is a land where fables and fairy tales such as Little Red Riding Hood come to life. Symbolic environs such as “the dark woods” exist here as archetypes. As it is on the edge of the Immaterial it is still a realm of duality. Thus, with Little Red Riding Hood also comes the Big Bad Wolf. This first venture into the Immaterial ends with the rescue of Stacia, and a return to the city and the material realm.

As the series continues Barbara Shelley is near death from her wounds after joining her fellow and previous Prometheas in the Immaterialia. Sophie Bangs continues on her journey to understand both the background of the Promethea story and what, exactly, she is becoming. Soon Sophie is introduced to magician/warlock Jack the Faust, practitioner of the Dark Arts, who will prove useful to her on the journey she will soon be making through the Immaterialia. Jack is the first to tell Promethea of her connection to the Apocalypse. Sophie/Promethea will be making a 'Faustian' bargain with Jack who will provide her with a much needed magical education if she is to confront the evil that is pursuing her. Thus the double entendre of character names continues throughout the Promethea series.

But first, in order to begin her education, Sophie/Promethea returns to the Immaterialia. Her first guide at this point in the story is the Margaret/Promethea who tells her that she is in the realm of THE imagination. This is the Promethea from the World War I era of which more will be discussed below.

"You make it sound like there's only one of them," says Sophie;

"There is. There's a material world and there's an immaterial world, both worlds exist, but in different ways. For example chairs exist. So do the ideas of chairs," (Moore, 2000, Issue 5, Book 1) Margaret/Promethea replies. This quote is reminiscent of the well-known discussion of Platonic ideals and further connects Promethea with Plato (2005), and by further extension the mention of Prometheus in the Protagoras.

"Promethea makes people more aware of this vast immaterial realm. Maybe tempts them to explore it," says Margaret/Promethea. She continues:

Imagine if too many people followed where she led? It would be like the Great Devonian Leap, from Sea to Land. Humanity slithering up the beach, from one element into another. From matter to mind. We have many names for this event. We call it 'the rapture'. We call it 'the opening of the 32nd Path'. We call it the Awakening or the Revelation, or the Apocalypse. But, 'end of the world' will do. (Moore, 2000, Issue 5, Book 1)

Margaret, who was the Promethea of World War I and helped dying young men in the trenches, then discusses how Promethea is imagination, and how all war and conflict is a "failure of the imagination" (Moore, 2000, Issue 5, Book 1). While the Apocalypse which Promethea is destined to bring about may represent the next step in human evolution, Margaret tells Sophie that there are those who have a:

vested interest in keeping the world as it is because that's the world they have power over. You see in the Immaterialia there's no rent, no tax, no property. There's no real estate, no boundary fences . . . no limits. (Moore, 2000, Issue 5, Book 1)

The above can be considered as an indictment by Moore of all current economic systems. He is describing a reality that is beyond the material and is, in effect, limitless. This may be alluring to someone who seeks to know the limits of human possibility or, perhaps, the unlimited possibilities of human potential. But for those who have an interest in maintaining power over the status quo it can represent a threatening new reality in which they would have no power at all.

Promethea as a work can be seen as much more than a hero's journey—it can also be seen as an integral philosophical treatise about the nature of the universe presented in the language and corresponding imagery of comics. Moore explores key areas of human consciousness and human potential. He is aligning himself with occult mystery traditions and not with mainstream cosmologies. He is at once part of the Hermetic tradition, the Theosophical Tradition, the integral tradition, and more. Promethea can be seen as a not-so-coded message to spiritual aspirants and mystics of all stripes. It calls on readers to take the journey through—and with—the characters they are reading about.

To apply and expand upon the concepts that Moore (2000) is putting forth in the first volume of the Promethea series people, generally speaking, find themselves in the world of the material. They have imaginations. They dream. However, they do not realize the power of either of these. There are forces at work that try, with great success, to keep people in check, to keep people from discovering their higher, spiritual, transcendental, or integral nature.

As all of the great wisdom traditions of all time have before him, Moore (2000) is presenting readers with a certain path to liberation. And why should the comic book not be a means to spiritual liberation as much as The Bible, the Tao Te Ching, the Torah, the Koran, or other spiritual treatises? Lest it be forgotten that the images on the ancient caves of humanity's paleolithic ancestors likely resounded to them with great and deep spiritual meaning, lest it be forgotten that mythology began as oral tradition passed down from generation to generation before the origin of written language, lest it be forgotten that comics, as the saying goes, are just words and pictures. Why should these words and pictures not present a path to liberation from a purely materialistic, reductionist view of the universe? Or even a spiritual text? This seems to be an unspoken part of Moore's project.

Promethea as a story is largely didactic in nature. While Sophie Bangs is learning the ins and outs of the Immateria, the reading audience is learning with her, and at the same time digesting Moore's particular hybrid of integral spirituality and the corresponding art of J. H. Williams III. Sophie Bangs becomes the "every person" on the journey. Not only does the shift from "Prometheus" to "Promethea" signal the integration of the male and female duality of Neolithic goddess cults, through to the patriarchal cults and religions synonymous with civilization; but, moreover, Moore makes every reader—be they male, female, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or intersex—into a Promethea—a vessel of learning and discovery on the journey towards and through Apocalypse. The journey is not simply one from the material to the immaterial. If that were so it would just be recreating another dualism— Mind/Body or Good/Evil. As Margaret in her foreshadowing soliloquy indicates the journey is toward "transhuman realms absolute and universal" (Moore, 2000, Issue 5, Book 1).

While the philosophical stance espoused by Moore (2000) in this foreshadowing of the rest of Promethea's plot may not, indeed does not, fit in with the narrow, reductionist worldview of scientific materialism or Scientism, it does fit into the Wilberian (2006) approach of Integral Methodological Pluralism and the Gebserian (1985) integral. As Sophie's conversation with Promethea/Bill, yet another Promethea incarnation, takes place Bill says:

But remember you're not the first to try touching the mortal clay with the flame of the immortal soul. You're not the first fire bringer. Did you ever wonder why our heroine's father chose that particular name for his only daughter? (Moore, 2001, Issue 7, Book 2)

"Promethea?" Sophie asks. "I looked it up. All I found was it's the name of this species the Promethea moth" (Moore, 2001, Issue 7, Book 2). "And the feminized name of another great story-book figure who tried bringing heavenly fire to illuminate mankind's dark earth," Bill continues. "All I'm saying is Sophie my child, please be careful, be careful . . . and be warned" (Moore, 2001, Issue 7, Book 2). And that is when Moore and Williams III reveal an image of Prometheus chained to a rock, his liver being eaten by the carrion bird. Myths are true, Moore explains, and since they last longer, they are more true than the "real world." While myths may be true in Moore's sense, they are remembered and forgotten, they evolve over time, they change form depending on culture.

After a demonic battle, during which Sophie must invoke a sampling of the other Prometheas, Barbara Shelley dies. Sophie turns to Jack Faust to learn magick. The price? Sex with Promethea. Fighting her disgust Sophie, eventually, accepts. With that her true journey along the path—not only of helping her recently deceased friend find the spirit of her dead husband—but to the full realization of her powers begins.

Sophie Bangs as Promethea continues to undergo a transcendental initiation into the great mysteries of existence. These come in various forms. First, of course, comes her encounter with the Promethean mythos during her research of Promethea before she meets with Barbara Shelley. This is an excellent example of the saying that "when the student is ready the teacher will appear." Sophie has been on her quest to find out more about Promethea when, who does she come into contact with, but the most recent incarnation of Promethea. This is her journey away from the familiar and into the hero's journey. Yet soon, before she is a little more on her journey with her new teacher, Sophie herself has to become the living incarnation of Promethea.

The next phase of Sophie's education, into the great mysteries of existence as Promethea, come through her initial journey into the Immateria. There she comes to be guided by other former incarnations of Promethea, and learns more about the mystical symbolism and metaphor that govern the realm. She learns that the material and the immaterial are, on the surface, separate realms, but are also intimately connected. She also begins to learn more about the nature of tarot, yoga, and magick—the coin of the realm, so to speak, of the Immateria. Sophie learns that Promethea is an apocalyptic figure feared by those who would maintain the status quo in the material and immaterial realm. She must fight demons sent to destroy her by an aging Christian sect called The Temple whom she quickly defeats simply by enlightening their younger generation as to her true nature as a being of light—similar to Jesus Christ.

The next phase of her education—her initiation—into the world of the transcendental comes by way of Jack Faust who becomes her magickal teacher, and helps to arm her with a greater understanding not only of the universe, but of herself within the order of the Cosmos. It is not surprising that the seemingly sleazy, old magician Jack Faust wants sex in return for his lessons in magick. However, it is soon revealed that it is Promethea with whom Jack would like magickal sex, and not Sophie. It is through this sex that Jack begins his lessons in kundalini tantric yoga



with this newest incarnation of Promethea. Continuing in his didactic mode, as he does throughout the series, Moore (2001) has Jack Faust speak at length about the nature of his teachings. Jack Faust begins by invoking the ancient myth of Inanna, the Sumerian Queen of Heaven. He couches it in the form of a story about a bit of a strip tease. Faust says:

To enter the underworld Inanna must be ‘brought naked and bowed low.’ At its gates she’s gradually relieved of everything: her pride, her dignity, her identity . . . and all the clothing that represents those things. All worldly ideas must be stripped away before she can go naked into the underworld. It’s the same when we enter any underworld, any great mystery whether it’s magic . . . or sex. (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2)

Promethea comments that all of this sounds like “rather lofty symbolism when you only want to undress me” (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2), but Faust is serious, and his lesson continues culminating in a transcendental sexual experience for both Promethea and himself. It all begins with the clothes that Promethea is wearing. Clothes are the outward garb of society. They are not the inner garb of the mystic. Today, in American society for instance, clothes represent various fashion trends fueled by the fashion industry, and are based on what certain designers and others believe to be attractive. They are not intended to be garbs of mystical enchantment. However, according to Moore (2001), via Faust, that is exactly what they are. In order to enter into the underworld of sex, for instance, one must be disrobed of all the things that come with society and with station in society.

The story of Inanna is a powerful one. The Sumerian Queen of Heaven needs to bow down, and be disrobed of all the things represented by her place in the Cosmos in order to enter the underworld. Faust says this includes “her pride, her dignity, her identity and all the clothing that represents those things” (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2). If the Sumerian Queen of Heaven must undergo such a ritual, how much more must the rest of us? But this is part of Moore’s point through the epic of Promethea: we are all part of the gods and the gods are all part of us—everything they must go through we must go through. Everything that we have gone through they have gone through on a journey to wholeness, oneness, and transcendence—whether it be Inanna, the Sumerian Queen of Heaven, or Sophie Bangs the co-ed next store.

But, of course, it is Sophie Bangs in the visage of Promethea who is having sex with Jack Faust. And it is further commentary on the nature of how we must all be bowed low in order to undergo initiation into the underworld that the goddess or demi-goddess Promethea who must, too, undergo such ritual before and with Jack Faust. In fact they undergo the ritual together. Jack Faust takes her on a symbolic journey through her clothing much as Inanna was taken on her journey on her way into the underworld. Soon enough the journey up the Kundalini, that symbolic spiritual snake that not only forms the caduceus but goes from the human genitals up through the spine and up through the top of the head into the universe, begins.

The shifting of awareness continues through the spine and then “this blissful thousand petalled lotus above the crown of the head, that pure white diamond brilliance where we can step out of time or just as easily back in” (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2). Then they move “towards the godhead of the Shashrana Chakra.” As Faust continues, “This chakra is the abyss beyond existence. This is the chasm, the crack, where knowledge enters, where the holy information

leaks” (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2). And then the Ajna Chakrah “We’re moving up beyond the highest male and female principles where roles and identities turn inside out” (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2). Then the two climax spiritually, magickally, and sexually.

This is not simply an education for Promethea, but for readers as well. Recall that Sophie Bangs/Promethea is acting, in terms of the story arc, as the proxy initiate for everyone who reads Promethea so that, in terms of this sexual adventure and education, the readers are being initiated into it just as Promethea is. In America’s pornographic society sex and sexuality are things that have in many ways become debased and desacralized. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with taking great pleasure in the female or male form, or that homosexual, bisexual, queer, and transgender forms of sexuality are unacceptable, it means that in the American society sexuality, like everything else (including spirituality) has become commodified.

While the mystic may be able to look at a pornographic film and find the stuff of spirituality, the actors within such entertainment seem purely focused on the physical—the basest, most material level of the chakrah and the kundalini. It is as if large swaths of modern industrialized culture are caught at the very base of the kundalini, and through their own ignorance do not realize that anything else is possible or desirable above it. But this materialism—not just speaking of buying and selling here—but the materialism of society is so “viscous,” as Moore (2001) says, it is as if to many the immaterial realms do not exist and are not of any relevance or pertinence to explore.

It is the modern Christian worldview that is often seen as being “anti-sex,” but nowhere in the Bible does Jesus Christ discuss sexuality. Jesus does, however, discuss how material riches make it difficult to get into the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus’s follower Mary Magdalene who is often—though not always—viewed as a prostitute, has her own apocryphal Gnostic Gospel, and is not only accepted closely as one of Christ’s Apostles but is, in fact, perhaps the most highly coveted among them by Christ himself. It is Mary Magdalene who is the first to come to know the resurrection of Christ three days after his death on the cross. She is favored among his disciples.

Thus, there is no basis—except in the Old Testament—for commentaries upon sexuality. Of course there is commentary in the Old Testament Bible that can justify just about every form of behavior imaginable, which is why understanding myth, metaphor, and history when approaching religions is even more important. One should tread carefully when applying a 4,000 year old document authored half a world away to a post-industrial, space-faring society—especially when done so with a literal interpretation. Fundamentalism is the death cry of thought. Myth and metaphor are calls to understanding.

Can sex be sacred? As demonstrated in Promethea certainly. And this portion of the epic should not simply be interpreted as sex between a man and a woman, but the idea of sexual energies in general. Moore (2001) is presenting sexuality as transcending the material realm, and even the psychological realm. Sex activates the chakras, and through proper understanding and practice—through the learned art of magick—it is through sex that one’s path to realization can be bound. Such is the case in this portion of the text between Promethea and Jack Faust. Physicality, the material world, and time cease to have any concrete meaning. Everything becomes, if only for the moment of climax, one.

The physical and the viscous are the realms of every day material existence, but they are the realm in which human beings spend only around half their time. The rest of the time is spent, for all intents and purposes, in the realm of the dreams. Neurologists and Hindus may disagree about the level to which a human dreams. I am referring here to the idea of the dream, dreamless sleep, and rapid eye movement. Dreaming is a separate realm of consciousness, and, for the purposes of this modest entry into the world of discussions of the immaterial, any journey into sleep is also a journey into the immaterial realm of the dream.

But which is the realm to which humans owe their allegiance? Do humans define themselves in terms of their waking or dreaming lives? Their material or immaterial lives? Which have more consequence? In a material culture such as that of Western Civilization, and the United States of America in particular, it is of course the material realm that is given precedence. However, in previous cultures, in eastern mystical cultures, such was not always the case.

One only need to remember the folktale of Taoist master Chuang-tzu and the butterfly to see that Moore is closer than one might think to his analysis of the material and immaterial realms being philosophically one. The popular tale, in brief, is as follows. Chuang-tzu dreams he is a butterfly. He then wakes up and recalls his dream. However, he ponders the following: how does he know that he is Chuang-tzu dreaming he is a butterfly instead of a butterfly dreaming it is Chuang-tzu? A materialist would answer the question one way, and someone open to the integral aspects of existence would likely answer the questions another way. But materialism and the integral are not dualities. The material and the immaterial or non-material are dualities. The Integral contains everything. It integrates what was once analyzed and broken into component parts while also incorporating analysis and intellect into its matrix.

Once the beginning of her kundalini education is complete, Promethea, who has transformed back into Sophie Bangs for the time being, is surprised to learn that this taste of bliss is not the entirety of her magical education. Faust reminds her that there are a “few thousand years of books to read” (Moore, 2001, Issue 10, Book 2), and starts her out with a few by magician Aleister Crowley. Sophie has acquired a taste for magick and realization, and understands them as metaphorical tools to be used as the initiation and quest continue. The next aspect of her education, however, is in the closely related realm of Tarot.

Indeed, when Sophie/Promethea re-enters the Immaterial again she is introduced more fully to the world of Tarot—specifically the Hermetic-Qabalistic tradition that came forward from the Italian Renaissance and emerged in the Thoth Deck of Aleister Crowley. Here Moore (2001) is directly citing Crowley’s (1944/2010) enigmatic exploration *The Book of Thoth: Egyptian Tarot*. The cards to which she is introduced include the Fool, the Magus, the High Priestess, the Empress, the Emperor, the Hierophant, the Lovers, the Chariot, Adjustment, the Hermit, Fortune, Lust, The Hanged Man, Death, Art, the Devil, the Tower, the Star, the Moon, the Sun, the Aeon, and the Universe (some to be referred to later in order to explain Promethea’s journey further). Each card represents a different point along the path to universal transcendence. Crowley writes, “the Tarot was actually a pictorial form of the Qabalistic Tree of life which is the basis of the whole Qabalah” (p. 5). He continues saying, “Obviously these are not plain, straightforward symbolic

representations of the signs, elements and planets concerned. They are rather hieroglyphs of the particular mysteries concerned with each” (p. 22).

Beyond these universal symbols Sophie’s journey will focus more and more specifically on the Qabalistic Tarot and its path. Promethea and her friend Stacia discuss the path. Says Promethea:

It’s the structure of things whether that’s the universe or each individual human soul. It’s an old Hebrew knowledge system called Kaballah. It’s intended to encode all human existence into a single glyph. Each of these ten spheres is called a Sefira. Sefira is just a Hebrew word for number. The twenty-two paths connecting them are the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. So, it’s as simple as one, two, three or A-B-C. (Moore, 2002, Issue 13, Book 3)

This is Sophie/Promethea’s way of beginning to break the news to her best friend Stacia, also sometimes called Stace, that, following her education in Magick and Tarot from Jack Faust, she will be leaving the outer-layers of Misty Magic Land and the rest of the Immateria. She will venture deeper than ever before in order to help her deceased friend Barbara Shelley not travel the path alone. However, this also means greater peril than Promethea has ever faced before. She will have to leave everything she knows behind and proceed along the path of the Kaballah—of which she only has an intellectual understanding. She is, however, motivated by compassion, friendship, and love, which are good allies for her throughout her journey.

While Stace and the other Prometheas try to warn her off, she feels her training has been sufficient and that she is up to the task. However, even though she is not leaving everything that she intellectually knows behind, she is leaving everything she has experienced behind. She is venturing from the familiar grid of Promethean experience into an entirely new realm. In order to do this, Sophie, the latest incarnation of Promethea, is going to have to do something only one other Promethea, Barbara Shelley, has done before her—leave the land of the living and proceed along the path of the Kaballah into the land of the dead from which there is no guarantee that she will ever return.

In order to evolve further, Sophie Bangs needs to transform into Promethea. She needs to become something more evolved along the metaphysical plane of existence, and becomes the latest iteration of Promethea. At this point she has a decision in front of her. She could stay and protect others and take on the “mantle” of being Promethea, of being a goddess and, in essence, a superhero and rest on her laurels, or she could do something more.

In order to do something more, however, she not only has to put all of her knowledge and experience to the task, but she has to venture beyond everything she has ever experienced. This is the true hero’s journey. In Promethea’s case, it’s not as simple as going out on an adventure and slaughtering a dragon. She must put all her experience and knowledge to going beyond life itself. She must cross over into death—not knowing whether or not she will return to the land of the living, or if her quest to help her friend will ever be complete.

None of the other Prometheas will be there to help her or guide her. Her material or “tangible,” as the other Prometheas call her, friend Stace cannot be of any further help or counsel either. Even her teacher and mentor in magick and tarot Jack Faust can no longer be of assistance. At this

point in the heroic journey the hero must venture forth without a guide and hope that her training and skills will be enough to face the inevitable and unexpected challenges ahead.

As such the journey into death will be a journey into a new and different kind of life. It will be a universe transformed and filled with new characters, new challenges, and new opportunities for understanding. Possibly, if the heroic journey plays itself out as it has done countless times in myth, it will also be a chance for the heroic return with the boon of new understanding and realization.

### **The Qabalistic Tree of Life and the Promethean Integral**

Following a brief synopsis and in-depth summary of the myth of Promethea, its connections to the world of Gebserian-Wilberian integral theory and beyond can be discussed. The framework for this discussion will be the Qabalistic Tarot—a journey that Sophie/Promethea and Barbara will take up the Tree of Life all the way beyond the level of integral to the nondual. Each section of the Tree of Life that the two visit is discussed, and a web of connectivity is shown between Gebser (1985), Integral Methodological Pluralism, and Qabalistic Tarot which, in the end, is simply another integral tradition. This portion of the study will utilize Robert Wang's (2004) seminal descriptions of the Qabalistic states to bring the reader as much detail as possible.

And so the story of Promethea continues. After finding Barbara Shelley cavorting with the shade of her late husband—among other greats of fact and fiction such as Sherlock Holmes and Napoleon—Sophie/Promethea and Barbara decide to venture further. This time their starting point is the lunar Foundational realm of Yesod where they travel forward via train. Here they discover that the train's station map is that of the Tree of Life. "Yesod," says Moore, means "Foundation" (Moore, 2002, Issue 14, Book 3). On the journey through the Qabalistic Tarot one must start at the foundation. It is key to any type of initiation process that one must start at the beginning. One cannot start as an adept.

However, Sophie's education with Jack Faust has armed her with enough information, combined with her own insight, to begin this journey knowing, at least intellectually and theoretically, what will be ahead of her. But presented with the map of the Tree of Life there are many possible routes. The route which Sophie and Barbara must travel, however, is the route that will bring them closest to meeting the truest astral form of Barbara's deceased husband. For Sophie it is a journey of friendship. For Barbara it is a journey of necessity. For both, it is a journey of love.

Before proceeding into an exploration of Yesod—the foundational level of the astral realm—it is beneficial to have a brief discussion, one that will continue to be interwoven at various levels, of Malkuth, the earthly material realm, from which Sophie began her journey into the Tree of Life, and which connects with the other realms in an important way. This is the gross material realm. It is the realm of that which is not integrated. On the AQAL map it would be pure upper-right quadrant.

According to Wang (2004), "In Yesod are those energies, directly underlying the material world which are manipulated in various forms of meditation in what is called 'magic'" (p. 108). Notes Wang, "Each individual has an etheric body (which leaves the physical body in sleep, or is

consciously projected by the adept), formed of the Astral Light. Thus the Yesod is termed the Foundation” (p. 109). He goes on to say that “The energy of the Astral Light is, in the East, called Kundalini (the Serpent) and it is declared by Qabalists that ‘Kundalini is coiled in Yesod’” (p. 109). Notes Wang:

As the lowest level of the Astral World, Yesod is the realm of images cast off by mankind, bright and dark. It contains the Akashic Record, which is both the history of races and of each individual mental act of man. (p. 110)

As such Sophie is traversing back and forth from the material realm to Yesod, which rises past the concept of integral and into the astral—such as depicted on the Wilber-Combs Lattice (Combs, 2009) mentioned earlier.

Human beings proceed from the material realm, or Malkuth, as it is referred to in the Hermetic Qabalistic tradition into the realm of Yesod. Malkuth is the grossest of the realms, or the most “viscous” as Moore (2001) previously noted. It would be incorrect to say that one is “higher” than another—when something is transcendental and integral one comes to the realization that higher or lower are, ultimately, just perceptions. However, in using the Tree of Life as a metaphor there is certainly indications that there is a spiritual hierarchy and that the physical realm, Malkuth, is at the bottom of it. Once the individual leaves Malkuth on their psychological, astral, or spiritual journey they are set to begin from Yesod—a higher level foundation than the gross material.

In Yesod the astral images that are, as Wang (2004) notes, released by humanity of all types find their way into becoming part of the fabric of the lowest astral level. It also contains the entire history of thought and spirit of all individuals and groups. The attainment of Yesod is no small feat, but it is still just the beginning of the journey for those who follow the path, and, certainly, for the characters of Sophie/Promethea and Barbara Shelley.

As demonstrated by the various characters that Sophie and Barbara come across, it can be easy to get caught up in any one of the realms. Beings can be caught in Misty Magic Land, the lands before crossing over from the mortal plane, or the higher realms throughout the Tree of Life. Different beings, or characters in the case of the story of Promethea, inhabit various areas of the Tree of Life at various points of the Kabbalah based on their level of spiritual or existential attainment. Different versions of the same beings can be found further down the road on the journey as the Tree of Life can contain infinite aspects of being. The search continues for the “true” version of Barbara’s late husband, Steve Shelley. In the parlance of Promethea and of the Tree of Life it could be said that she is looking for his “highest” and most authentic form.

“There’s three possible routes,” says Promethea. “We can take the art line to the solar sphere, the Star line to the emotional Venusian sphere or the sun line to Hod, the intellectual, mercurial sphere of writers and musicians” (Moore, 2002, Issue 14, Book 3). The two decide to take the solar route to Hod in order to find Barbara’s deceased husband, Steve Shelley, in a more authentic form than that of a shade.

It is in Hod that Moore (2002) reveals the name of this realm means “splendor,” and that it is the “mercurial realm of language, magic and intellect” (Moore, 2002, Issue 15, Book 3). It is the

land, notably, of all forms of human communication—from spoken language to mathematics. The emphasis here is on how ideas move from one person to another. “Well,” says Promethea, “I suppose communication is how minds reveal themselves. Language gives a shape to the splendor of the intellect” (Moore, 2002, Issue 15, Book 3).

While the two are walking through this land of language and communication, Promethea notices the many Egyptian hieroglyphs depicting gods and goddesses. “I guess that telling stories with pictures is the first kind of written language,” says Promethea; “Heh,” says Barbara. “That’s why Prometheas mostly appeared in comic books this last century. Gods used to be in tapestries. But now they’re in strips” (Moore, 2002, Issue 15, Book 3).

Soon enough the women come into contact with Hermes who first met or “created” Promethea in the fifth century. He leads them on a brief digression into the nature of ideas and language—from fiction to mathematics, and even introduces them to Aleister Crowley who asks Promethea if she would “mind terribly” if he kissed her behind (Moore, 2002, Issue 15, Book 3).

According to Wang (2004), “Hod is the concrete mind. It is the sphere of Mercury, and to it are attributed all that is intellectually systematized, such as the magical arts, literature, science and commerce” (p. 103). He notes, “Thoth (Egyptian), Hermes (Greek) and Mercury (Roman) are different names of the same God. Each is a messenger; patron of learning and teacher of the Mysteries. All language (a carrier of messages) relates to Hod” (p. 104).

But, the “concrete mind”—this realm of the intellect—is only one discrete sphere of human existence. People cannot exist simply on logic. The world of human existence—Malkuth as it is called in Qabalistic Tarot—does not exist function simply on logic. There’s much more to it than that—emotion for instance. Pure thought may help create nuclear weapons, but only leave them in the abstract sense of objects. It is human emotions—such as compassion, a Wilberian (2006) left quadrant experience—combined with the intellect of the right quadrant that help determine whether or not such weapons should be used.

Intellect without emotion is a barren, golden, desert of the mind. The intellect is necessary, communication is necessary—all the elements of Hod are necessary and are part of the Promethean Qabalistic journey; but they are, at the same time, only one element of the equation. With only the intellect, there is no fulfillment of the totality of human existence and experience, and that is why Sophie and Barbara must continue on their journey. It’s not that they just don’t find the spirit of Barbara’s husband there but anyone, be it a human being on a spiritual quest to realize the totality of their being or these characters who cannot be fulfilled by pure intellect out of context with human emotion and the rest of the human experience. The fusion of the Wilberian (2006) left and right quadrants is taking place here.

The women then venture into the realm of Netzach, or “Victory.” This is a land of a sea of emotion—literal-metaphorical water where both Sophie and Barbara learn to surrender to love. But it is soon that the two have to face another transcendental moment through a familiar figure of myth: the Grim Reaper.

“Before progressing to the solar sphere, the highest self, it’s like our lower personality, the thing we think of as us . . . has to die,” (Moore, 2002, Issue 16, Book 3) says Promethea when faced with the Grim Reaper. “It’s all our earthly attachments, all our worldly views and petty emotions that are killed, so that we can change and move on. Change is like death. It’s scary, but it’s natural” (Moore, 2002, Issue 16, Vol. 3)

According to Wang (2004):

Netzach cannot be considered without Hod, it’s balance and opposite. For as Netzach represents instincts and emotions, Hod represents the intellect. Feelings unchecked by reason, and reason unchecked by feelings, can be very destructive. It is through the proper balance of feeling and reason that one is able to rise . . . to the higher consciousness. (98)

Hod and Netzach form a polarity—intellect and emotion. It is a dualism that, at least to the mind, seems simple to understand until one realizes that human beings do not live dualistically unless they have suffered some type of psychogenic fugue. Reason and emotion may be separate in a realm of pure states, such as on the Qabalistic Tarot’s Tree of Life, but in the human realm they exist alongside each other. While a human being’s personality may tend more towards the intellect or emotion, both are there simultaneously. Both inform each other. Both influence each other.

To separate Hod and Netzach metaphorically on the Tree of Life is one thing since it is more straightforward to discuss them as discrete realms. Hod has been discussed above. Netzach, however, is its opposite. It is the heart of emotion which contrasts the cold mask of reason. An important part of the human equation is missing when one proceeds exclusively in terms of the intellect because, as mentioned previously, human beings are not simply beings of intellect. It is similar to governing a state or country. A state or country—which are made of human beings—is not simply a series of line items that can be cut or added to. A civilization exists along the Tree of Life just as human beings do. This grand metaphor of integration permeates all aspects of the human experience. The saying “As above, so below” certainly applies here.

In a realm of pure emotion, such as the realm of Netzach, intellect does not matter. As happens to Sophie and Barbara, in this realm beings are given over entirely to emotion; they are given over entirely to feeling unrestrained by reason. Feeling unrestrained, or untempered, by reason can be, as indicated above, a destructive force—just as unbridled intellect can be.

When a human being acts totally out of emotion it can be of any emotion; it can be love or hate, compassion or destruction. It can be what takes the atomic bomb that the intellect has created, and decides to use it indiscriminately. In Netzach human consciousness is overwhelmed because as integration is, ultimately, the evolution toward a dynamic balance, Netzach sends beings such as Sophie so deep into the sea of the irrational that it may seem as if they may never come out on the other side again. And yet the journey is necessary.

For Sophie and Barbara it is, ultimately, a journey of love and toward greater loving understanding. As they emerge from this sea of emotion they experience a fusion of intellect and emotion. They have transcended duality. As such, the two are further along on their journey to the



integral as they proceed upwards on the Tree of Life. Yet before the characters can transcend reason and emotion, and proceed to a higher plane, they must face what is, in essence, another death.

Recall that to get to the point in the story where they proceeded from Malkuth to Yesod they already had to cross the river Styx. While Barbara Shelley has died, Sophie as Promethea has given up her physical life in order to proceed on this quest with Barbara. This concept of transcending Malkuth to move forward to a higher plane of existence is beyond the conscious experience of most people except, perhaps, through their own deaths. However, in the context of this mythic epic, Sophie is able to move beyond Malkuth, the world of flesh and bone, into the realm of death and what lies beyond death, into the realm of the Qabalistic Tree of Life, through Yesod—that place of decisions—into Hod and then Netzach. Now, she is about to experience a different kind of death.

To paraphrase what Promethea says above about the meeting with this new Grim Reaper, this metaphorical, symbolic death is the leaving behind of the conceptual perception of who Sophie and Barbara are as human beings. It is a taste of the Gebserian-Wilberian archaic-uroboric—that place of origins. Recall that every state exists along with every other toward and beyond the integral within the IMP/AQAL framework. The journey is not simply one of unchecked progression. It is growth in the energy of consciousness.

While the physical self has already been left behind and pure realms have already been traversed—the duality of intellect and emotion transcended—now the basic psychic concept of the self, the project of the physical, the last of what has proceeded now in Astral form from the realm of Malkuth must be discarded. Not, in this case, as one might discard an old sweater or a pair of socks, but suddenly, shockingly, and violently by the work of the Grim Reaper himself. This metaphorical death is violent and painful if only for the moment before the characters are reconstituted—having transcended their so-called lower selves or at least their perceptions of their lower selves.

Once the final perceptions of their lower selves have been destroyed by the Reaper, Sophie and Barbara are free to move forward on their metaphorical/astral path. They are one major step closer from the archaic-uroboric to achieving the integral and transcendental and, yes, the Apocalyptic. From there, the characters in this epic metaphor for humanity's grand meeting with the integral find themselves touching the first step of the higher realms—that of Tiphareth, which equates to beauty and harmony.

According to Wang (2004):

The initiation of Tiphareth is the first of the greater initiations into the meaning of the Self. Here the individual encounters his or her own Higher Self, and sacrifices the Personality, that which was hitherto believed to be the true self. (p. 89)

He notes that this initiation “is literally a losing of what one has known to be life, a sacrifice of that life for a greater reality” (p. 89). Says Wang, “The vision of the Tiphareth is of the Universal Harmony, a vision also linked to its nature as a healing center where all is brought into

harmonious inner working” (p. 89). It is the center, he says, of the Tree of Life (p. 89). This realm is beyond the psychological developmental stages that a human would achieve in Malkuth, and the lower realms and can be considered a higher spiritual stage. It is a realm of integral experience.

The “greater reality” in the case of Sophie and Barbara is the reality of getting them a step closer to finding Barbara’s husband. However, this entire hero’s journey is simultaneously the evolution of Sophie’s spirit toward the integral. The epic also serves as a Hermetic Qabalistic guide map to the reader of the text. The reader, journeying with Sophie/Promethea, though a step removed, is also being initiated into this spiritual, evolutionary process toward the integral. In that sense, Promethea can be seen not only as a heroic epic, but an integral and spiritual work as well. It is a guide not only to the hero’s journey, but to the integral and the Qabalistic Tree of Life. In the guise of an adventure story, Moore is initiating his readers into the metaphorical realms of the evolutionary human spirit. When he reaches the point of the Tiphareth in the story he has taken his characters and his readers directly into the middle of the Tree of Life.

It is in this place, that of the Tiphareth, that Wang (2004) states that the Higher Self is encountered. Moore (2002) follows this pattern as Barbara meets her younger, idealistic, and more knowing self. In this case, this is her Higher Self. There should not be an overgeneralization here that someone’s younger self is their higher self, only that this is the case in terms of Barbara’s character. Barbara’s younger self will serve as an angelic guide to both Barbara and Sophie as their journey continues through the Tiphareth.

Wang (2004) states that “Tiphareth is the light of the soul, on which the life of the soul depends. In the same way, the physical manifestation of the Tiphareth, the Sun, provides the light and life support for the earth” (p. 89). It is also “the realm of the sacrificed Gods, Christ, Buddha, Osiris and others. So we understand that the Prince must die in order that the Universal Cycle be renewed” (p. 91).

The center of the Tree of Life, the Tiphareth, is the metaphorical place where humanity and God meet. According to Moore (2002), it is the highest point for humanity and the lowest point for God. This central realm is also a transitional realm. From this point forward Sophie and Barbara will no longer be in the realm of the human. Having already crossed over into and through death, first physically and then symbolically, they have touched their highest selves (in Barbara’s case her younger self, in Sophie’s case that of being Promethea). The human realms behind them, they will be in the realms of the Divine from this point on. This brings them closer to the transcendental, the integral, and to the apocalypse. Likewise, the readers, as they journey through this metaphorical realm, are leaving the world of the human and into that of God. They are proceeding forward to a higher plane of the Tree of Life through the guide map that Moore is providing in the tradition of Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot.

It is important to note, however, that for the characters in the book, who can be seen as representatives, in a symbolic sense, of human beings, on this spiritual journey that they do not simply begin their journey in the center of the Tree of Life. These characters must be initiated in order to arrive at the center; they must be put through trials. In order to arrive at the center of the Tree of Life one must be prepared. According to Wang (2004):

To deal with the mysteries of the Tiphareth, one must first have undergone the initiations of Earth, Air, Water and Fire (Malkuth, Yesod, Hod and Netzach, respectively). No matter how a religious or esoteric cultus, whether Christianity, Buddhism or Qabalism, may describe the various component parts of the personality, or the initiation of the four lower Sephiroth, an integration must be undergone before the descent of light which is God the Son. This integration is personal “atonement” for the Fall. The Tiphareth is the Redemption. (p. 90)

For Sophie, and for others journeying along this particular path toward integration, the journey begins in Malkuth. Moore (2002) then takes Sophie and Barbara through Yesod, Hod, and Netzach—the realms that are, according to Wang (2004), the equivalent of earth, air, water, and fire. In this sense, Moore is taking his characters and, therefore, his readers on what could be interpreted as a fairly traditional Qabalistic Tarot path. But to dismiss Promethea as simply a Qabalistic Tarot adventure story would diminish its profundity as a modern spiritual epic and guide for those seeking the integral in their own lives.

Both the characters and readers are traversing and transcending metaphorical realms, each of which increase the understanding of the human being as an integral creature—as a creature capable of becoming integral or, rather, as a being who is already integral but does not yet realize it. In fact, in the Buddhist sense human beings are already enlightened, they simply do not yet realize it. Similarly, through this journey on the Tree of Life, Moore’s characters are proceeding toward what is a predictable, though necessary, destination for the hero’s journey to reach its conclusion as an epic. The storyline also works as a spiritual epic in the tradition of the Upanishads and others while simultaneously serving as a map for those readers interested in pursuing a truly integrated life, and taking their own journey through the Tree of Life.

While Moore is not presenting an in-depth look at the intensively esoteric nature of Qabalistic Tarot, he is providing the main guideposts so that a reader for whom the epic of Promethea resonates can use it as a starting point to entering the *Mysterium Tremendum*. They can enter into the great metaphorical realm of their spiritual/integral nature. Each of the areas that Moore discusses are points along the Tree of Life, reflected in Qabalistic Tarot, and can be accessed by any reader through first a basic and then a thorough knowledge of the Thoth Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot deck as developed by Aleister Crowley (1944/2010) during his time with the Order of the Golden Dawn. The cards themselves serve as the tools which can be used to facilitate transformation along with the path of the Tree of Life—from Malkuth to Yesod, to Hod to Netzach and, then, onward to the center of the Tree of Life, the Tiphareth.

“That’s what Tiphareth means: beauty, harmony. It’s like the sun. It’s the point of balance all the other spheres revolve around,” (Moore, 2002, Issue 17, Book 3) says Promethea. It is, notes Moore, the “highest point in the human Kabalistic system” and that it is “man’s highest point and God’s lowest point where the two connect” (Moore, 2002, Issue 17, Book 3).

In this context the highest aspect of humanity is the lowest aspect of God. This indicates that no matter how high humanity evolves, while in human form, there is a limit to the realm of the human. Sophie and Barbara are in another liminal space: humanity’s highest point and God’s lowest point. They have reached the peak of that which humanity is capable, and yet they are on the Tree of Life and they are still touching God. They are touching the eternal, transcendental,

and integral. But they are touching it only insofar as they are at the beginning of a realm so far beyond that which is human as it is almost impossible to imagine. This is the importance and power of the idea of the Tree of Life as a metaphor for the infinite and the integral. Humanity can evolve, in this context, with the Tree of Life as a guide. Sophie and Barbara are touching the beginning of God in an almost human context. The most profound moment of the text comes when Sophie and Barbara come face to face with the crucified Christ in this land of the fallen God, this land of renewal, and the beginning of rebirth and higher realms of the spirit.

“Our highest point. The best in us. The gold,” says Young Barbara. “And it’s nailed writhing on the cross of the world” (Moore, 2002, Issue 17, Book 3). With the lights of the Tree of Life flashing in the background, the image of a shadowy Christ on the cross is in stark contrast to the Gold that the women have been experiencing. Tiphareth is more than the center of the Tree of Life; it is the crossroads of their journey toward the integral and the apocalyptic. In this context Christ represents the idea of the highest being sacrificed for the good of others, and the spiritual development of all. As God he touched the lives of humanity, and was then executed in the realm of Malkuth. And in the realm of the Tiphareth and metaphor is the quintessential resurrection God.

Though they have reached the center of the Tree of Life—the symbolic center of existence still, though, Sophie and Barbara—now accompanied by Young Barbara as her highest self from the realm of the Tiphareth—having come in touch with the highest human realms must continue their journey next into the realm of Geburah. They have just passed through a realm with especially strong mythic-membership resonance in the form of the archetype of Christ.

“The fifth sphere’s called Geburah,” says Young Barbara. “That means strength and judgment” (Moore, 2002, Issue 17, Vol. 3). It corresponds to the Adjustment or Judgment card on the Thoth deck. It is of vital importance on their continued journey as it will further test their spirits. Throughout all of these levels Sophie is within the Gebserian (1985) integral and beyond. Her storyline can be seen as being within the integral—the highest Gebserian realm—and moving beyond it to even more nuanced, realms as discussed throughout this chapter. Similarly, all of this matches up to an integrated view of the AQAL chart—though emphasis must be put toward the left quadrant as it is a psycho-spiritual journey, and not merely physical.

Writing about the realm of Geburah Wang (2004) states:

The fifth Sefira, called Strength, is often considered the most difficult Sefira to approach because its lessons may be so overwhelming and devastating. It offers a necessary corrective in our lives by tearing away all that is useless, undesirable or outdated. We see the action of the Geburah in the fire sweeping a blighted and dried forest, in a war which tears down a diseased society or in any situation in our lives where we are forced by circumstance to begin anew. (p. 83)

For Sophie/Promethea and Barbara, Geburah becomes a place of reckoning. While it is associated with Mars, the Roman God of War, it is important to remember that this is not simply a place of punishment. This is a non-human realm where judgment is given without sentiment and strength is gained. The key, according to Moore’s (2002) interpretation of his characters actions in this realm, is not to give into a righteous anger that may come from within. The power of each realm,

whether it is Hod or Geburah, comes to permeate the temporary inhabitants of the realm, which in this case are Sophie and Barbara. Both begin to take on aspects of the realms' major thematic or soul. Again, Sophie is within and beyond the integral. She is traversing to ever higher and more developed realms toward union with God and achieving the Wilberian (2006) Supermind or Nondual realm—defined by going beyond definitions and everything being as one.

The strength that comes from divine judgment is, again, on the level of a god and difficult for a human being—or the astral project of a human being—to embody. Sophie/Promethea and Barbara find this out when they inadvertently fall into the Qlippoleth, the shadow side of the realm, and have to come face to face with the demon Asmodeus.

“Like Gods or Angels . . . or humans for that matter, demons have many identities,” says Asmodeus.

We are legion. The Qlippoths are generally understood as Hells, although the word means husks or shells. It's what remains once the sacred energy in things has departed. The sacred energy is meaning. When meaning in a thing moves on that thing has become a husk. Beauty without meaning becomes hollow pride. Stern judgment without the judgment becomes empty rage. Becomes a husk, a shell, a Qlippoth. Becomes me. (Moore, 2002, Issue 18, Book 3)

Having reached a greater understanding of the nature of judgment, Qlippoth, and Asmodeus—the concept of the demon as not necessarily evil but as the absence of good along the Tree of Life—the three women are able to free themselves from the realm. “It ain't that the universe is cruel or unkind,” says the Young Barbara.

It's just that it can't afford to get sentimental. That's why judgment has to be stern. The energies at work in everythin' they got to be pure. Nothin' unworthy. No crap. Geburah is where the world gets the @#\*& beaten out of it. (Moore, 2002, Issue 18, Book 3)

The realm of Geburah is judgment unfiltered. It is judgment on a cosmic scale. But it is also about judgment on every scale. “Adjustment” is the word Crowley (1944/2010) used for the card in the Thoth deck. In fact, Adjustment may be closer to the point. The Tree of Life and Qabalistic Tarot, in general, are both about cosmic balance. This is why they lead to the integral. One cannot reach the integral without balance or while being out of balance. Each of the elements—earth, air, fire, and water—has a tempering influence on the others. In the same way, the realms of Malkuth, Yesod, Hod, Netzach, and others have a balancing, tempering effect on each other. They are the elements of the integral working together.

The Tree of Life is put forward as a metaphor of perfect, dynamic balance. While the initiate may feel out of balance or a range of emotions, as can be seen by Sophie/Promethea and Barbara Shelley as they continue traversing each realm on their hero's journey, they are not only gaining more experience, but there is an internal alchemical process taking place. They are becoming more integrated, and more balanced with each of their experiences in the realms as they climb the Tree of Life. Their spiritual adjustment takes place in the realm of judgment where there is a cosmic function of achieving balance, not without remorse per se, but without, to paraphrase Moore (2002), sentiment.

The realm of Chesed, which is the next stop for the characters along the Tree of Life, continues this idea of balance. Geburah is the realm of strength and judgment. Chesed is that of mercy. According to Wang (2004):

Chesed is Mercy. Geburah is Strength. They are the two arms of the man, one which gives and the other which takes away . . . Chesed, related to Jupiter is a Mighty King. He is a kindly and benevolent ruler. Geburah, related to Mars, is also a king, but he sits in a chariot armed for battle. (p. 79)

Chesed is the realm of the archetypal father as manifested in the Mighty King, the merciful ruler. It is here that Promethea is reunited with her father, and that, stripped of Promethea's essence for a time, Sophie is reunited with the father whom she never knew.

The journey into Chesed provides a period of healing for both Promethea and Sophie, but no sooner does the visit to the realm of Chesed conclude than the heroes come to the edge of the Abyss. It will not be until after Sophie and Barbara jump into and cross it that Sophie will be reunited with the essence of Promethea. The Abyss is also a place where one is stripped of the Higher Self. The idea of purgation—of purgatory—and initiation permeate the Tree of Life. So, in boldness, Sophie and Barbara leave the comforting realm of Chesed and take the leap of faith into the Abyss.

Following their leap into the Abyss, Sophie and Barbara arrive at what is, essentially, a crack in the Tree of Life and, therefore, in the universe. They must traverse this area that is off the grid in every manner of speaking in order to get to the realm of Binah. The Abyss is most closely related with the realm of Daath.

Daath, which is called Knowledge, is considered an almost invisible place on the Tree of Life because it does not have any actual representation anywhere on the tree (Wang, 2004, p. 77). Traveling through Daath is traveling through, “the potential and the actual” (p. 77). The idea here is that this is the realm where the potential energy of the universe eventually becomes actualized or manifest. It is the realm of the unmanifest, and the manifest and the unmanifest becoming manifest. It can be equated to the universe's subconscious, or nearing the archaic-uroboric phase yet again.

According to Wang (2004),

It is said that the level of Daath is as far as the Higher self can rise, which requires a definition of terms. Students of the mystical arts often describe a simple dichotomy between the Personality in Incarnation and the Higher Self which controls and directs its personality projections through various incarnations. (p. 77)

Wang goes on to describe a more complex four-part version of the Higher Self that actually can transcend the realm of the Abyss. Again, the idea that the Abyss is “as far as the Higher Self can rise” is a metaphor for further initiation along the Tree of Life. “To pass through Daath and the Abyss,” Wang says “means to willfully relinquish the powers of adepthood which one has earned, an experience which has been described as a more overwhelming and solitary one than human imagination can conceive” (p. 78). Wang notes that there is no direct path between Chesed and

Binah. “The adept, aspiring to the union with the Divine,” he says “must leap across it fearlessly and unaided, creating for himself the transition of Daath” (p. 78). Again, the characters are in the realm of potentiality—a realm that has strong resonance with the potentiality of the archaic-uroboric. This leap takes place before the characters reach the other side, and are once again on their journey. Their shifts in consciousness continue.

The path of the Tree of Life in the tradition of Qabalistic Tarot is, primarily, traveled by those on a spiritual journey who consider themselves magicians. It is not simply a path for realization and union with the Divine. There is a power element to it—as with the pursuit of all magic. This is why talk of adepts should not come as a surprise. With each initiation and transition throughout the Tree of Life knowledge and insight are acquired and, as such, so is power. But if the adept, magician, or spiritual seeker truly aspires to union with the Divine, and their intentions are pure of heart, they must be willing to let go of all of the power they have accrued.

The impetus of Sophie’s journey with Barbara is somewhat different than that of the typical aspirant. In fact, Sophie starts out with intellectual curiosity, not with spiritual aspirations, or aspirations toward power of any kind. She is befriended by Barbara, and then, out of love for her friend, she accompanies Barbara on this journey through the Tree of Life in order to help Barbara become reunited with her deceased husband. While it is a journey through the Tree of Life, it is not a journey made with the attention of accruing power, as is the case with magicians and spiritual adepts. While the intentions of these others do not require scrutiny in this document, the comparison is used to underscore the difference of what the two sets of people will face when crossing the Abyss and the realm of Daath.

Though Sophie has been accruing knowledge and spiritual insight along the way, as a character, she is not interested in power or in acquiring power. Her essence is that of love and devotion to her friend. This changes what would normally be a solitary experience—the leap into and crossing of the Abyss and Daath—into a shared experience. In fact, it changes the entire journey across the Tree of Life into a quest of love, rather than a quest of power. It is not even Sophie’s intention to be united with the Divine, but if she must travel the realms throughout the Tree of Life in order to help her friend, then that is what she will do. This is also a way in which the epic of Promethea is more than a didactic tale about the nature of magick and Qabalistic Tarot. It is a hero’s journey that, in the best tradition, is one also of friendship that leads, eventually, to realization and integration of the Self.

After their descent into the Abyss and into Daath, Sophie and Barbara find themselves in the realm of Binah, or “Understanding.” This is also the realm of the Goddess or the Great Mother. They have connected the realms of Daath (Knowledge), with Binah (Understanding) for knowledge is nothing without understanding. This is another integration taking place—a making whole. They have also bridged the gap between Chesed, the realm of the Father God, and Binah, the realm of the Mother God. By connecting both they have transcended the duality inherent in the gendered representation. Wholeness. This is the Wilberian (2006) holon made manifest: wholes within wholes.

Wang (2004) says that this realm contains “the energy from which all life emerges” (p. 69). While these male and female centered realms may, at first, appear to be traditionally gendered,

Wang states that at a deeper level the “ultimate bisexuality” (p. 69) of the soul is to be understood in the traversing of these realms. According to Wang, Binah “is called the ‘Parent of Faith,’ rather than faith itself which is belief. Binah is the discipline of organization behind faith” (p. 71).

While in the realm of Binah Sophie is once again united with the essence of Promethea, who has been spending time with her own father in the realm of Chesed. Sophie/Promethea and Barbara come face to face with the female goddess who inhabits Binah. As depicted her essence is both profane and sacred.

She is the so-called “Whore of Babylon” and she is Mary “Queen of Heaven” (Moore, 2003, Issue 21, Book 4). Both aspects are said to represent, and transcend, the total essence of the Goddess—her severity and her love.

While the Goddess is the Whore of Babylon she says:

Know me. Worship me, swollen with passion, where are the saints grown mad upon the sweet foam of my bosom. Scorn me, for the end of things is as stern fire about my loins that glisten, damp with sacrifice. Enter me wantonly when I am like the dreg of Brothels. Be consumed in me. Burn in me. (Moore, 2003, Issue 21, Book 4)

It is in this sense that Moore is depicting the profane side of the Goddess before he depicts her in her sacred sense. Though, in terms of integration, both sides may be thought of, ultimately, as sacred.

When the Whore of Babylon has turned into the Queen of Heaven she says:

That understanding is poured out like unto blood from me. Like noble wine, Mine essence runneth down into the earth and therein is degraded and made bitter. Mother am I, that sways dark the cradle of night. Then am I Isis, am I Hecate, am I Selene, black am I, like to the hidden moon or as a womb. I taketh in and I receive. Virgin am I to they that know me not and Whore am I to they that know me. (Moore, 2003, Issue 21, Book 4)

Describing the Apocalypse the Queen of Heaven says:

A burning Moonfoam then shall this True Blood, this Sangreal be carried down upon a mighty chariot. In its red Vintage is distilled the moment of my dreadful understanding, unexpressed that cometh privately in dark and silence. That is called Apocalypse. Then is ignited my affection and made hot. Then am I strength that straddles lions and drunken on the juices of mine own flames. Am I the Concubine of Revelation, known and mounted with her beast whose number is a man. Revealed to Man, then is that strikes fire in the heart. And is that fire become a blaze where, in they time, man’s world will be consumed. (Moore, 2003, Issue 21, Book 4)

The Queen of Heaven then reveals that Sophie is the Promethea who will preside over the Apocalypse. She says, “Named for the moth of Saturn, where I am exalted, is she called Promethea. From Understanding spilled as Wisdom she is called Sophia. And this is the vision of compassion” (Moore, 2003, Issue 21, Book 4).



The Apocalypse, which is to take place in the realm of Malkuth, the gross physical realm, is, in this context, deemed to be considered the approach of a beneficial experience. Promethea has fused with Wisdom in order to bring about a new reality. At this point, however, Sophie/Promethea sees herself residing over, as Moore (2003) calls it, “the end of everything” (Moore, 2003, Issue 21, Book 4). But it is not the end of the Tree of Life or of the upper realms of existence. It is only the end of the current incarnation of the physical realm of existence which has become corrupted with illusion. While Sophie/Promethea initially sees the Apocalypse as an event which she will preside over—the end of physical existence in Malkuth—it would be more exact to say that she will be presiding over the creation of a new reality. Such a reading comes out of the tradition of looking at the word “Apocalypse” as meaning change rather than the destruction of everything.

Sophie/Promethea and Barbara are then prepared to move beyond the realm of Binah. Barbara has joined with the essence of her highest self (her younger archetypal self noted previously and reached a higher essence), much as Sophie was rejoined with the essence of Promethea. Following passage through the realm of Binah, Sophie/Promethea and Barbara make their way to Chokmah, which means Wisdom. Once again, their path makes good sense. They travel through the realms of Knowledge and Understanding. This leads to the realm of Wisdom. Without Knowledge and Understanding there can be no Wisdom.

According to Wang (2004):

The male generative organ (The phallus, or lingam) is the key symbol of Chokmah, and the first differentiation of the One. It is the primary quality of maleness at the most abstract level, and representative of the Supernal Father emanating from the Godhead. From Chokmah emerges Binah, the Supernal mother. (p. 61)

While Wang admits that sexuality as understood by humans does not exist in the realm of the Tree of Life, “Chokmah is the idea of maleness and Binah is the idea of femaleness” (p. 61). He goes on to say that, “Maleness is described as a vital outpouring energy, which is organized, i.e., limited or formalized, by the qualities of femaleness” (p. 61).

This vital outpouring of energy which is then organized is the energy of existence itself. Sophie/Promethea and Barbara are getting ever closer to the so-called Godhead. They are nearing the source of existence itself. They have traveled from the gross physical realm of Malkuth, beyond that of the physical, throughout the realms of the Tree of Life, and are now reaching the source of the energy of all existence. But the vital outpouring of energy must, of necessity, be paired with the organizing principle. Without both the universe, indeed all of existence, would be without form. Sophie/Promethea is at the energetic source of life and existence which is then given form. Metaphorically speaking, in terms of the Tree of Life, it is the archetypal male and female energies combining that give form to the universe. This gendered interpretation, while falling short of the contemporary understanding of gendered identities, meets a metaphorical understanding of the alchemy of vital energies in the creation of the universe on the Qabalistic Tree of Life.

As Sophie/Promethea says:

There's a name of God, IHVH pronounced YOD-HE-VAU-HE, that expresses the meaning of the whole of the Tree of Life. This place, Chokmah, is represented by the first syllable Yod. It's male. It's fire. It's wands. It's spirit. The second, female syllable, He, is all the Queens at Binah. Vau are the princes, at Tiphareth and the final He is princesses at Malkuth. The structure of being, it's just so . . . splendid. (Moore, 2003, Issue 22, Book 4)

Here Moore is expressing the great balance inherent in the hermetic interpretation of the Qabalistic Tree of Life. Everything is in balance. All states of being are inherent in all other states of being. All are equal. All have opposites, but at the same time transcend opposites or duality. Everything is integrated. Everything is integral. They have come to the source of all being. They have reached the Sublime transcendental realm from which all being emanates. The beginning of existence and the end of existence. As Sophie/Promethea says, "It's always still going on. Spacetime. The beginning. The end. All the time. All at once" (Moore, 2003, Issue 22, Book 4).

Soon after, the heroes meet up with another manifestation of Aleister Crowley sitting at the bottom of a staircase. He explains to them that Barbara's husband had traveled up the staircase at the top of which one can "behold the vision of God face to face" (Moore, 2003, Issue 22, Book 4), but he instructs them not to "look at it for too long or you'll never look away" (Moore, 2003, Issue 22, Book 4). By traveling up the stairs Sophie/Promethea and Barbara will finally reach the Crown of the Tree of Life—the pinnacle of their journey. But there is still danger. Perhaps it is the greatest danger they have yet faced. Says Sophie/Promethea:

It's the highest sphere, sphere one. The Crown. You can be annihilated in it. You can fuse with it . . . The white light. The pure, perfect experience of God. Some souls just dissolve into it forever. Some souls go into it and don't come back. But, then . . . why would you? (Moore, 2003, Issue 22, Book 4)

And so it is that Sophie/Promethea and Barbara Shelley finally reach the highest point on the Tree of Life. They have ascended through the realms. They have reached the realm of Kether known as the Crown and also known as God.

According to Wang (2004):

The Point is complete unto itself, without dimensions or external definitions. It represents the total unity. It is the seed from which the universe grows. Ultimately, all is Kether, and each of the Sephiroth emanating successively from Kether are crystallizations of the latent aspects of the One. The journey of manifestation begins and ends with Kether. It is the Kether of Atziluth to which we aspire, and into which the manifest universe will eventually withdraw. (p. 54)

Sophie/Promethea and Barbara are immersed in the brilliance of the white light of oneness. They are beginning to merge not only with the essence of God, but with God itself. They have reached the pinnacle of existence beyond existence. They have transcended. They have become integral. As Sophie/Promethea says, "All one. All God. All Kether. One perfect moment, when everything happens. Always like this. The white brilliance" (Moore, 2003, Issue 23, Book 4).

Everything that has happened is taking place in the same moment. The good and the bad. The sacred and the profane. All dualisms, all dreams, all non-duality. All actions in the material

world. All birth, life, and death are all taking place at once. Everything is God. Everything is Kether. This is the moment in Promethea's journey where not only has she achieved the Gebserian (1985) integral where all has become "whole," but she has gone even further into the Wilberian (2006) nondual realm where all is one.

It is here at the Godhead that Barbara's deceased husband, Steve Shelley, comes out of the brilliant white light and the two are reunited. Their love is such that they do not want to be apart again, even as all is God. Says Steve Shelley, "I don't want to be God without you love" (Moore, 2003, Issue 23, Book 4).

It is here, too, that the characters have the very real opportunity to merge completely with God, to become God, to merge with the white light, to become Kether. To merge with Divinity would mean the end of them. It would mean the end of self—even as different versions of themselves would co-exist at different levels of the Tree of Life. Their highest selves, their true selves, would merge with God and be dissolved into Kether, but the epic of the hero's journey, despite having achieved the Gebserian (1985) integral and even going further to the Wilberian (2006) nondual realm, does not end by merging with the divine.

The hero must return to reality with a new understanding. For Sophie/Promethea this means using her understanding of the Tree of Life to bring about the Apocalypse, and a new realization and understanding about the nature of life and reality. As this is a heroic, spiritual epic the choice to return is almost obvious. Steve Shelley, who has spent more time at the Godhead, explains the nature of what will come next. He says:

When we climb up the tree winding from sphere to sphere then we're serpents. The serpent is the will to climb and rise. The will to live. But when we choose to descend from this sacred purity back into the turmoil and suffering of the world, then we're doves. The dove is the will to sacrifice and descend. The will to die. The will to die to this glorious world of spirit, and live again in matter . . . the will to take a little more light back down into the world where it needs it. Back down there. (Moore, 2003, Issue 23, Book 4)

It is at this moment that they reach the edge of Kether and look down from the top of the Tree of Life. Every realm they have passed through is below them. There is no other way back than to take the leap from God back into the realm of form without quite knowing what will happen. It is another, perhaps the ultimate, leap of faith—to be united with God, only to choose the realm of form is a sacred choice in and of itself. They take the leap off the edge of Kether into space. The entire Tree of Life rushes past them. During their descent back into the realm of form Barbara and Steve Shelley dissolve and are reborn as twins. Sophie lands back in Malkuth in a daze.

Coming to, Sophie sees an old woman who comments on how beautiful the day is. "It's beautiful," Sophie replies. "And everything's just what it is without having to mean something. Like you . . . you're not a sphinx or anything" (Moore, 2003, Issue 23, Book 4). Sophie has completed her heroic journey up the Tree of Life and successfully helped her friend. Now she has returned to the world of form, but her journey is far from over. While she has been climbing the Tree of Life all hell has broken loose in Malkuth, and there's still an apocalypse to attend to.

Following her return to Malkuth (Earth), the material realm, much of Sophie/Promethea's journey is over. After coming into conflict with an earlier version of Promethea who merged with Sophie's best friend Stacia a brief legal trial takes place that determines Sophie is, indeed, the rightful Promethea to preside over the Apocalypse. Though Sophie goes into hiding to prevent this from happening, she cannot fight fate.

The Apocalypse itself comes in the form of a revelation to the people of the earth. While elements of the 32 paths of the Tree of Life begin to merge with the realm of Malkuth, time and space begin to have no meaning, and the dead and the living exist side by side. Promethea presides over the Apocalypse, but it is more of a change in the nature of reality than any type of destructive Armageddon. Eventually Malkuth emerges from the Apocalypse transformed—many having come to new, integral realizations, and changed lives. Everyone experiences the Apocalypse in a different way, and each has a realization of his or her own. There is some chaos, but there is also cosmos. Her hero's journey completed, the essence of Promethea leaves Sophie. Sophie returns to college and completes the paper she initially began to write at the beginning of Moore's (2000) narrative on the examples of Promethea through the ages, and Malkuth has fused with the entire 32 paths of the Tree of Life. Universal integration of consciousness has been achieved; coexistence of all the realms has come to pass. Wilberian (2006) and Gebserian (1985) theories have been realized in the physical realm of the comic.

### **The Promethean Integration of Being**

The history of the twentieth century is replete with Promethean moments—from the atom bomb to the first man on the moon. In art Picasso stole fire from the gods and created new visions while Albert Einstein did so in physics. In literature Hemingway found a truly modern style of self-expression in writing. New vaccines were discovered, and new technology was created in peace and at war. Prometheus unleashed the full genius and madness of humanity—a spark that for the first time could destroy all human life on earth or lift civilization to its greatest heights. Climate change and an unsustainable civilization—whether in the context of food, water, oil, and more are also a result of this Promethean flame—a fire that without being properly tended to could destroy all human life on earth. Promethean moments may be beneficial or destructive to humanity. Having stolen fire from the gods and given humans the potential to chart their own destiny, Prometheus also gave humans the tools to create paths to their own destruction.

In saving humanity from Zeus' wrath did Prometheus know what he had unleashed upon the globe? If to steal the fire of the gods and create civilization is Promethean, then it is indeed Promethean to suffer the wrath of the gods. Each day Prometheus, chained to a rock, would have his liver eaten by a carrion bird—only to have his organ grow back and be eaten again the following day and the day after that and so on. A gruesome concept, but might not the flipside of the Promethean ethos—call it Prometheanism—be similar? Civilization chained to a rock of its own ignorance being eaten alive by its near-sighted foolishness.

The myth is not neutral and neither is the fire which Prometheus steals. It is similar to the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve eating the forbidden apple of the tree of knowledge. Yahweh punishes them by exile from Eden lest they eat the fruit of the tree of eternal

life and become gods. In one story the fire bringer is punished, in another human discoverers of the “fire”—in this case the fruit of the tree—are punished.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ are all Promethean figures. In the Book of Exodus Moses leads the Israelites away from slavery in Egypt and into the desert. On Mt. Sinai, Yahweh appears to him in the form of a burning bush. Once again the fire motif is present. Here Moses receives the 10 Commandments which, if followed, will honor Yahweh and maintain the Israelite social order. John the Baptist’s preaching foretells the coming of the Christ—the world redeemer. Like Prometheus, he is punished for bringing this new knowledge into the world as it threatens to destabilize the current social order and is beheaded.

Jesus Christ is by far the most Promethean of these Judeo-Christian figures. He is known as the light of the world. He is the flame itself—transcending Zeus, Prometheus, and the rest. God, in this case, is punished by a humanity that then becomes redeemed through the sacrifice, resurrection, and forgiveness of God. Christ is the bringer of fire, the fire itself, he is Prometheus suffering, and in his resurrection from the dead he transcends Prometheus and liberates humanity. The importance of this story is not in the historicity of it, but in the fact that it resounds with people at a deep archetypal, mythic level. It is a story for which people are willing to die and to live.

Contemporary people may not realize the myths they are living because of the very fact that they are living them—like a person breathing air or a fish swimming in the ocean—but there are many contemporary mythologies. Comic books (or comics) are a particularly trenchant medium in which mythologies abound. Ancient myths may be found in hieroglyphs or scrolls. Today’s myths are played out on the film and television screen, in music and, of course, on the pages of comic books. Coming from the depths of consciousness myths emerge onto the pages of comics in words and pictures.

While Prometheus has appeared in numerous incarnations through the centuries he is, often, seen as a friend to humanity, but there is also a danger in Prometheus. The same knowledge that can be used for the good of civilization can also be used to the detriment or destruction of civilization, as indicated earlier. Though Prometheus can rightly be seen as a hero to humankind, he may also be seen as bequeathing on humanity tools for which it cannot understand the full potential.

Are the gifts of civilization which Prometheus gives humanity positive, negative, or neutral? While Prometheus is deemed a hero to humanity and a bringer of fire it is not until Western Civilization reaches Mary Shelley’s (1818/2008) *Frankenstein* or *The Modern Prometheus* that a questioning of the danger of the Promethean Ethos began to emerge. Fire can bring light to warm as much as it can burn and destroy. And just as harnessing fire was a critical step in the evolution of human culture the questioning, in this case metaphorical science of so-called progress is just as vital.

The idea of the integration of consciousness is not new. It is, in essence, an idea that builds on concepts in developmental psychology and learning theory. If a human being’s intelligence evolves in the developmental stages over a lifetime then it stands to reason that a human being’s consciousness or spirit can also evolve over a lifetime or lifetimes. If a human being’s spirit or

consciousness can evolve over a lifetime or lifetimes it stands to reason that this could be true for the entire human race. This evolution might not occur simply through random mutations, but could be accomplished through the conscious effort of human beings. This type of thinking gives rise to the idea of “conscious evolution”—not of the human body, but of the human spirit.

Cultural historian and poet Jean Gebser (1985) looked over the evolution of human consciousness and posited stages of development, culminating with the integral—a stage where the highest elements of what can be currently understood by the dominant rationally minded consciousness would be transcended and achieved. Likewise, theorist Ken Wilber (2006), the primary philosopher responsible for the current incarnation of Integral Theory, has created a matrix of human physical and psychic endeavor which culminates with the integral.

The idea of Prometheus is central to that of the advance of human civilization. The myth of Prometheus is also one of trespass and disobedience. His actions to save human beings, and arm them with the core concepts of civilization, are done at the peril of the torture and punishment he accepts. Following the concept that Prometheus betrayed Zeus in order to save humans and human civilization therefore can be interpreted to mean that human civilization and its advances here and there throughout history are spit in the faces of the gods. Humans must fight the destructive desires of the vengeful gods such as Zeus in order to survive and flourish. The idea of civilization is the idea of advancement of a society despite the often destructive forces of nature that can be seen metaphorically as gods or literally as gods if one so chooses.

Human beings climbed out of the primordial muck and have since evolved. Of course, in that primal ooze they were not yet human beings, not even proto-human beings. As elementary biology tells us, life on earth evolved from single celled organisms to those of a more complex nature. Many scientists who follow the faith of Scientism believe that all of this evolution was due to random mutation. More forward thinking life scientists now consider the idea of self-organization—that instead of chaos there is actually complexity at work, not only in the functioning of the universe and life, but in its continued evolution as well. Randomness giving way to a somewhat more mysterious and compelling idea that life is truly alive, that the universe itself may be conscious in some way as yet undiscovered by conventional science, that life may be much closer to that which the mystics of old knew than the reductionist interpretations of what lay beneath the microscopes in the 20th and early 21st Centuries told scientists who were not looking beyond merely what was in front of them.

From single celled organisms—over eons—the animals that would become modern humans evolved into primate/mammals that would become possessed of what modern science considers the most mysteriously complex object in the known universe: the human brain. While cognitive neuroscientists see the brain itself as the origin of consciousness, others believe that consciousness cannot be limited to the merely physical and that the results of cognitive neuroscience do not completely account for the many and varied experiences—mystical, creative and otherwise—that human beings have had throughout the millennia.

Our prehistoric cave dwelling ancestors began expressing themselves creatively through paintings—invoking animal spirits and detailing the early human experience as the fires of human

consciousness began to burn. They emerged from Gebser's (1985) Archaic period—that of oceanic psychic existence, an almost pre-awareness into the early mythic realms.

As human beings continued to branch off from a primarily hunter-gatherer existence to living in small villages, then cities, and then civilizations the Promethean gifts, of language, science, mathematics, and the arts flourished. Likewise, human consciousness continued to evolve.

When the myth of Prometheus was realized in Classical Greece, and I say realized in the sense that Carl Jung (1976) believed all myths come from the Collective Consciousness and were not simply created consciously by human beings as stories, the Greeks had gained a new way to explain the origin, idea, and evolution of civilization, and its place in human life. Human beings continued evolving, according to Gebser (1985), into the rational phase of civilization—even ancient religious truths turned into myths and new religious truths emerged to take the place of the old. But the Promethean myth remained, and would co-evolve as a motif in Western Civilization just as many in Western Civilization began bringing forth the idea of evolving consciously toward the integral. The advance of the Promethean ideal, I argue, co-evolves with that of the movement toward integration of human consciousness, and as human consciousness moves toward the integral, human civilization will inevitably follow.

Notable modern depictions of both the promise and peril of the Promethean have been explored such as Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1820/1966) *Prometheus Unbound* and Mary Shelley's (1818/2008) *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*. However, it is the creation of Alan Moore and J. H. Williams III's creation of the comic book epic *Promethea* that presents readers not only with a heroic myth but a spiritual blueprint to transcendental integration. It is the modern cave painting made manifest—a reflection of the conscious human evolution toward the integral, and, in that, is an example of the integral in writing and art. It utilizes mytho-spiritual motifs, the hero's journey, and the integral system of Hermetic Qabalistic Tarot leading to an integral Apocalypse to demonstrate its powerful transcendental intent. *Promethea*—the incarnation of not only the Promethean ideal, but of the Creative ideal made manifest—brings about an Apocalypse which, in this case, is a shift toward integral consciousness thereby realizing both the Gebserian (1985) and the Wilberian (2006) integral and stands as an incomparable example of integral art that hints at the human potential that is taking place now, and will continue to take place into the future.

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