

“Herodorus of Heraclea Pontica fr. 30: A Historical and Rationalising Exegesis of  
the Promethean Myth”

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a) Sch. A.R. 2.1248-50a

Cf. A.R. 2.1248-50a: τόθι γυῖα περί στυφελοῖσι πάγοισιν / ἰλλόμενος χαλκήσιν ἀλυκτοπέδησι  
Προμηθεὺς / αἰετὸν ἦπατι φέρβε παλιμπετὲς αἰσσοντα.

Sch. A.R. 2.1248-50a (Wendel)

ὁ Προμηθεὺς ἐδέδετο ἐν τῷ Καυκάσῳ, καὶ ὁ ἀετὸς τὸ ἦπαρ αὐτοῦ κατήσθιεν. Ἀγροίτας  
δὲ ἐν τῇ γ' τῶν Λιβυκῶν δαπανᾶσθαι φησι τὸ ἦπαρ Προμηθέως δόξαι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀετοῦ  
διὰ τὸ τὴν κρατίστην τοῦ Προμηθέως χώραν τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν καλούμενον Ἄετὸν  
φθεῖρειν, ἦπαρ δὲ παρὰ πολλοῖς, ὥσπερ καὶ οὐθαρ τὴν εὐκαρπον λέγεσθαι γῆν.  
5 Ἡρακλέους δὲ ἐξοχετεύσαντος διώρυξι τὸν ποταμὸν, τὸν τε ἀετὸν δόξαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ  
κεχωρῖσθαι καὶ τὸν Προμηθεῖα λελύσθαι τῶν δεσμῶν. Θεόφραστος δὲ τὸν Προμηθεῖα  
φησὶ σοφὸν γενόμενον μεταδοῦναι πρῶτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις φιλοσοφίας, ὅθεν καὶ  
διαδοθῆναι τὸν μῦθον, ὡς ἄρα πυρὸς μεταδοίη. καὶ Ἡρόδωρος ξένως περὶ τῶν δεσμῶν  
τοῦ Προμηθέως ταῦτα· εἶναι γὰρ αὐτὸν Σκυθῶν βασιλέα φησὶ, καὶ μὴ δυνάμενον  
10 παρέχειν τοῖς ὑπηκόοις τὰ ἐπιτήδεια διὰ τὸ τὸν καλούμενον Ἄετὸν ποταμὸν  
ἐπικλύζειν τὰ πεδία, δεθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν Σκυθῶν, ἐπιφανέντα δὲ Ἡρακλέα τὸν μὲν  
ποταμὸν ἀποστρέψαι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μεμυθεῦσθαι ἀνηρηκέναι τὸν  
ἀετὸν Ἡρακλέα), τὸν δὲ Προμηθεῖα λῦσαι τῶν δεσμῶν. Φερεκύδης δὲ ἐν β' Τυφῶνος  
καὶ Ἐχίδνης τῆς Φόρκυνός φησι τὸν ἀετὸν τὸν ἐπιπεμφθέντα Προμηθεῖ. ὅτι δὲ ὁ ἀετὸς  
15 ἦσθιεν τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ ἦπατος, τὸ λειπόμενον ἠὔξετο τῆς νυκτός καὶ ἐγίνετο ἴσον.

Agroetas historicus fr. 4 Jacoby; Thphr. fr. 50 Wimmer; Pherecyd. fr. 7 Fowler (= fr. 7 Pàmias)

2 γ' γ dub. Keil : γ Müller; Λιβυκῶν] Σκυθικῶν fr; δαπανᾶσθαι] δειπνεῖσθαι Wendel || 4 ἦπαρ  
L : οὐθαρ καὶ ἦπαρ P; πολλοῖς] ποιηταῖς Wellauer e P (οἱ ποιηταὶ καλεῖν εἰώθασιν); ὥσπερ καὶ  
οὐθαρ Jacoby : om. L, Wendel || 5 διώρυξι Keil : διόρυξι F : διορύξαι L : διορυξαῖς P || 6  
κεχωρῖσθαι] κεχειρωσθαι dub. Keil || 14 ὅτι Pàmias : ὅ, τι Wendel : ὅτι codd.

Prometheus had been tied to the Caucasus, and the eagle was devouring his liver. Agroetas, in the thirteenth book of *Libyca*, says that it seemed the liver of Prometheus was eaten by the Eagle because the river called ‘Eagle’ destroyed the best land of Prometheus; many call that land ‘liver’, as they call ‘udder’ the fertile land. Heracles, because he drained off the river with canals, thus seemed to have driven off the eagle and freed Prometheus from his bonds. Theophrastus says that Prometheus, having

become a sage, was the first to share philosophy with human beings; hence the myth that he shared the fire. Herodorus as well, in an unusual way, says the following about the chains of Prometheus: that he was a king of the Scythians and that, not being able to provide the necessary resources for his subjects because a river called 'Eagle' had flooded the plains, he was bound by the Scythians. But Heracles appeared and diverted the river to the sea –and for this reason the myth explains that Heracles destroyed the eagle– and loosened Prometheus from his chains. Pherecydes in the second book says that the eagle sent against Prometheus was the daughter of Typhon and Echidna, daughter of Forcys. And the part of the liver that the eagle ate during the day grew back during the night and became the same size again.

**b) Sch. Hes. *Th.* 527 (Di Gregorio = 521 Fach)**

καθ' ἱστορίαν δὲ ἦπαρ λέγεται παρὰ πολλοῖς ἢ εὐκαρπος γῆ, ἀετὸς δὲ ποταμὸς χώρας τινός, ἧς ἐβασίλευσε Προμηθεὺς τις. ὃς δὴ ποταμὸς ὀξέως κατιῶν ἦρπαζε τὴν γῆν πᾶσαν Προμηθέως καὶ ἐδαπάνη. τοῦτον τὸν ποταμὸν Ἡρακλῆς ποτε διορύξας δι' ἐτέρων τόπων ἐξωχέτευσεν. ὅθεν ἐμυθολογήθη τὸ τοιοῦτον.

According to the explanation, the fertile land is called by many 'liver', whilst 'Eagle' is called the river of a certain territory of which Prometheus was king. And this river, swooping down all of a sudden, was forcibly taking away all the earth of Prometheus and consuming it. Heracles then, after digging ditches, channelled this river through other places. Ever since, the events have been told in the form of a myth.

**c) E Gen s.v. Ἀλυκτοπέδησι**

5 ἰστέον, ὅτι ἦπαρ λέγεται παρὰ πολλοῖς ἢ εὐκαρπος γῆ. Ἀετὸς δὲ ποταμὸς τῆς χώρας Προμηθέως, ὃς ὀξέως κατιῶν ἄφνω ἦρπαζε τὴν γῆν πᾶσαν τῶν ἀγρῶν Προμηθέως καὶ ἐδαπάνη. τοῦτον ποτε Ἡρακλῆς τὸν ποταμὸν διορύξας δι' ἐτέρων τόπων ἐξωχέτευσεν καὶ ἀπέτρεψεν· καὶ ἔμεινεν ὁ μῦθος, ὡς Ἡρακλῆς τὸν ἀετὸν ἐκώλυσεν τοξεύσας τοῦ τὸ ἦπαρ ἐσθίειν Προμηθέως.

One must know that the fertile land is called by many 'liver'. 'Eagle', in turn, is the name of a river of Prometheus' region which, swooping down all of a sudden, was forcibly taking away all the earth of Prometheus' fields and consuming it. Then Heracles, after digging ditches, channelled it through other places and diverted it. And the myth remained that Heracles, by shooting arrows against the eagle, prevented it from devouring Prometheus' liver.

**d) Sch. Theoc. 7.76-77h (Wendel)**

Καύκασον: Ἀετὸν φασιν εἶναι ποταμόν, περὶ τοὺς τόπους τοῦ Καυκάσου λάβρως φερόμενον, τὴν χώραν Προμηθέως λυμαινόμενον, ὃν ἀπέστρεψεν Ἡρακλῆς· ἐξ οὗ, φασίν, ὁ μῦθος <...>.

Caucasus: They say that 'Eagle' was a river that ran violently through the Caucasus region, destroying Prometheus' territory; this river was diverted by Heracles. Ever since, they say, the myth (...).

e) D.S. I.19.1-4

Τούτων δ' ὄντων περι ταῦτα, τὸν Νεῖλόν φασι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ σειρίου ἄστρου ἐπιτολήν, ἐν ᾧ καιρῷ μάλιστα εἴωθε πληροῦσθαι, ῥαγέντα κατακλύσαι πολλὴν τῆς Αἰγύπτου, καὶ μάλιστα τοῦτο τὸ μέρος ἐπελθεῖν οὐ Προμηθεὺς εἶχε τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν· διαφθαρέντων δὲ σχεδὸν ἀπάντων τῶν κατὰ ταύτην τὴν χώραν τὸν Προμηθεῖα διὰ τὴν λύπην  
5 κινδυνεύειν ἐκλιπεῖν τὸν βίον ἐκουσίως. διὰ δὲ τὴν ὀξύτητα καὶ τὴν βίαν τοῦ κατενεχθέντος ῥεύματος τὸν μὲν ποταμὸν Ἄετὸν ὀνομασθῆναι, τὸν δ' Ἡρακλέα, μεγαλεπίβολον ὄντα καὶ τὴν ἀνδρείαν ἐζηλωκότα, τό τε γενόμενον ἔκρηγμα ταχέως ἐμφράξαι καὶ τὸν ποταμὸν ἐπὶ τὴν προὔπαρξασαν ῥύσιν ἀποστρέψαι. διὸ καὶ τῶν παρ'  
10 Ἑλλήσι ποιητῶν τινὰς εἰς μῦθον ἀγαγεῖν τὸ πραχθέν, ὡς Ἡρακλέους τὸν ἄετὸν ἀνηρηκότος τὸν τὸ τοῦ Προμηθεῖως ἦπαρ ἐσθίοντα.

While Osiris and his army were thus employed, the Nile, they say, at the time of the rising of Sirius, which is the season when the river is usually at flood, breaking out of its banks inundated a large section of Egypt and covered especially that part where Prometheus was governor; and since practically everything in this district was destroyed, Prometheus was so grieved that he was on the point of quitting life wilfully. Because its water sweeps down so swiftly and with such violence the river was given the name 'Eagle'; but Heracles, being ever intent upon great enterprises and eager for the reputation of a manly spirit, speedily stopped the flood at its breach and turned the river back into its former course. Consequently certain of the Greek poets worked the incident into a myth, to the effect that Heracles had killed the eagle which was devouring the liver of Prometheus.