

Ages of mankind

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Humankind has not always been as it is now. According to mythology, there were a fair number of races before we came about.

Each of them had their distinct qualities, different from one another in many ways. First came the noble race of the golds, those that dwelt during the reign of Kronos and his Queen Rhea. They lived peacefully with one another, and were loved by the gods. The men of gold never lost their youth, forever full of life and strength. Their muscles and skin are never warped by old age, and they were beautiful even after death. They were mortal while they lived their long, fruitful lives, and but were said to have transformed into minor Theoi who walked the Earth as justice-bringers and gift-givers.

They were the original humans, however, the next race was introduced long after them. During their run, there were no women, and thus came from the mother of all, Earth herself. After they had all gone from the world and Kronos had been imprisoned in Tartaros, Zeus decided that he would like to fill the Earth with creatures of all types. He told the other Olympians to shape the animals they wished to make out of clay, and directed Prometheus to fill them with power and life. Prometheus was bright and creative, and very well-qualified to complete the task.

His brother, the lesser in this field, Epimetheus, wanted to finally prove himself and asked for the job. After promising that Prometheus would ultimately be the one to approve his work and to look over everything, his brother agreed to let him do it. Epimetheus gave each animal a strength to defeat its weakness, and did well. Some animals were small, and could not defend themselves as well as the big animals, but were quick and swift. The

largest of beasts had a massive amount of protection, but could not speed through their environment to catch their food.

When Prometheus came to examine Epimetheus' product, he was very proud of his brother. He was glad he could trust him, and walked through each species happily. Everything seemed done well enough, and was ready to be placed where it belonged, until Prometheus reached one last being. He knew his brother had neglected it by accident, and his heart sunk. It was a human being, and had no protection, no advantage over its neighbours.

Epimetheus wept and was afraid that his forgotten man would die as soon as it was attacked. Prometheus calmed his brother and set to work planning on what they should do. They had run out of power and there was nothing they could do before Zeus swept the animals down to Earth. At first, the humans wandered alone, were attacked, and didn't do much to help themselves. Without anything to protect them, they had a hard time advancing.

The food they found could be dangerous, poisonous, and they had nothing to cook meat so that it was ingestible. Other animals could eat the raw flesh of one another, or instinctively choose edible fruits. The humans eventually met together in caves and to keep warm and go looking for food. Prometheus pondered each and every day, desperate to find a way to bring the humans to succeed. He finally came up with a temporary solution, and gifted them with his own intelligence.

The age of the silver men was about to dawn at last. The humans suddenly understood. They began communicating with one another, naming objects,

and developing civil societies. Soon they created systems to gather food and expand their horizons. The human race was on its way to blossoming.

The gods soon looked to the Earth for pleasure, and tested the humans particularly. As a group with the ability to comprehend, they were often provoked to see how good they were. They created rules to govern themselves, and the gods were pleased with the virtues they exhibited. The Theoi had no idea that these humans had a special gift from Prometheus, and merely assumed it was what had been given to them at the time of their creation. It seemed to be a small thing compared to the other animals, but they accepted it.

After a while, the new race of man began to fear the future. There was no guarantee of a continuation, and there were still no women as of yet. They wanted to ensure their safety and success, but didn't know how. The Olympians saw this and decided to help the humans in return for worship and praise. It seemed fitting since they had given them life and their entire world.

They enjoyed interacting with them, and this gave them more to do with the humans. It had been previously exhibited by Prometheus that once could grow to love them. Soon the Olympians invented sacrifice, a way for the humans to give them offerings in return for whatever they prayed for. They settled on using fire, and to accept these offerings that produced pillars of smoke that billowed to the heavens. They had no real obligation to accept offerings, neither did they have to listen to prayers, but they did so.

They wanted to be given something that the offerer treasured, and it had to be given willingly. The only obstacle this new system faced was that the humans still didn't have fire. Prometheus advocated for the humans he loved so much, knowing that it was a vital piece of their survival. They could cook food, be kept warm, and a number of other basic things could be created with it. They duly received it on the Day of Fire.

For the first sacrifice made by the humans, a bull was called. It was perfect, flawless in every way. Zeus told Prometheus to divide it for the humans to set an example, and he did. Prometheus wanted the humans to have the best and most nourishing bits of the cow. After all, he reasoned, the gods do not eat the meat, they just enjoy the smoke and scent which is given from the fire. So the good meat was hidden away in the stomach of the cow to look unappetizing, and the fat and bones were covered with hide to look appealing.

Zeus chose the latter, feeling that it would be the most satisfying sacrifice, and was tricked into receiving it. Since this took place on the Day of Fire, it could not be undone, and the gods were ployed into forever receiving this sacrifice forevermore. Zeus flew into a rage, angry that Prometheus had played a trick on him when he felt he had been kind and just to the humans. He took back the fire he had given them, and thought he had doomed them to die out. He went back to his palace on Olympos, followed by Prometheus and the others.

Quickly and quietly, the light-bringing Prometheus stole a flame from Hephaistos' forge through a fennel stalk, and gave it to the humans. They

rejoiced and feasted, happy to be warmed by its flame. They held a grand feast, but Prometheus felt the resounding effects of his deeds as soon as Zeus had seen what was done. Stretched across a great mountain and shackled by adamantine chains, Prometheus was punished by an eagle. It would peck at his liver each day, and when the liver was gone, it would generate only to be picked to pieces once more.

Herakles, on one of his adventures, released the titan eventually, and he was saved from an eternal torment. The silver race was not the last of them. They were immature, and remained young and foolish for one-hundred years. When women came about, and the boys had mothers, they were spoiled for a very long time. They never heeded warnings, were reckless, and died soon after reaching manhood.

Soon they became impious and would not praise the gods or offer them sacrifices. Zeus removed them from the world and they became daimons who wandered the world maliciously. The next race, the age of the Bronze, was not better. These men were savage, cruel, and bloodthirsty. They still benefitted from Prometheus' fire, but mainly used it to forge weapons and armour made of bronze. They devoured animals carnivorously, rarely working the fields of Earth for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Stubbornly, they refused to give up even after sealing their fates, and died quickly. Zeus wished to test these bronze men. He questioned whether they were worth saving and teaching. To conduct this test, Zeus went to visit the cruel King, Lycaon. When Zeus arrived at the palace, he was disguised as a very poor man on a voyage to a sacred place.

When he was given the remains of a child, he made his decision. These people were not worthy of Earth, nor were they healable, and he left. Zeus blocked up all of the winds inside of a cave and let the South wind rule the skies. They carried heavy rain over the Earth. He directed this wind to flood the world, and called upon Poseidon to aid him. Poseidon filled each river and lake, spilling their contents upon the once-dry ground.

Soon every piece of Earth was covered with water, no plants visible among the waves. Any survivors soon starved, all except Pyrrha and Deucalion. Prometheus had told his son to build a boat, and to store food inside for him and his wife. Deucalion did as he was told, and promptly boarded the boat with his wife on this fateful day. After ten relentless days of sailing, they reached a peak of Mount Parnassus.

Only a small amount of two peaks were visible, and stuck out as the only place to land. Climbing up to the top, Deucalion discovered a sanctuary of Themis, his grandmother. Both himself and Pyrrha cried for help and for the humans to repopulate the Earth once more. They feared they had been stranded with no hope for future generations to surpass them. Still teary-eyed, they heard Themis tell them to veil themselves and to throw the bones of their mother behind them as they left her sacred place.

Both humans were confused and distraught. They were certain Themis didn't wish them to dig up their mother's bones and toss them so disrespectfully, but they weren't sure what to do. Soon it came to them: Themis meant for them to throw stones from Gaia behind their backs as they walked away. They brightened and did as they were directed. Women sprang from the

rocks Pyrrha threw, and men from Deucalion's rocks. Soon men and women of all shapes and sizes formed from these stones, taking shape and walking around.

When they finished, and the great flood waters had receded, animals sprung from the mud. So the Earth was replenished with a new race, one which led to the demigods and the heroes. While demigods were born and heroes fulfilled quests, wars raged on. Violence was still vivid and caused struggles, but it was less primal than before. There were wonderful cities and societies, art was made and adored, and the Gods were honoured. They walked among mortals hopefully, believing in the good of the world at long last.

Many great things were produced during this time, however, many things have been lost as well. The people of Iron were the next, and some say the last, race. They were remarked upon by Hesiod as corrupt and troubled, full of strife and hate. He said the men of iron were brutish and hopeless, but I believe there was still good in his day. The Gods still held love in their hearts for us, and who could call a race like that completely dismantled? Finishing with a personal note, are we not the soon-to-be age of Technology? Are we not a beautiful thing which treasures the Theoi, even if it is only through their stories? Take Note: Arcane spellings suggest their less latinized versions, ex: ' Tartaros' opposed to ' Tartarus'. ' Theos' mean god or goddess, and ' Theoi' means the gods and goddess in general.

' Hellas' is the preferred term for ' Greece', thus ' Hellenic' means ' Greek'.

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