Loki and Prometheus: The Curse of Cunning-Intelligence
Laura Clesi
“In the intellectual world of the Greek philosopher, there is a radical dichotomy between being and becoming...”
—Kevin J. Wanner[1,1]
The “intellectual world”\[^1\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World of Being</th>
<th>World of Becoming</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Intelligent</td>
<td>- Sensible</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Unchanging</td>
<td>- Unstable</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Limited</td>
<td>- Unlimited</td>
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<tr>
<td>- True and Definite Knowledge</td>
<td>- Oblique and Changeable Opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>- “Crystallized intelligence”</td>
<td>- “Fluid intelligence”</td>
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Cunning-intelligence: the fusion of being and becoming

- Adaptability:
  - Manipulation of the situation to find the solution to a seemingly impossible problem

- Wisdom:
  - Being able to discern the best course of action without having experienced it beforehand

“...[Zeus] put her down / Into his belly, so that the goddess [Metis] could / Counsel him in both good and evil plans.”[2]
Cunning-intelligence: Loki

- Adaptability in seemingly impossible situations:
  - Besting Thor in a contest of physical feats
  - Sabotaging the Aesir’s promise of the sun, moon, and Freyja (birth of Sleipnir)
  - Death of Baldr
Cunning-Intelligence: Prometheus

- Seemingly impossible situations:
  - Deception of Zeus
  - Bringing fire to man
  - Unflattering portions of a sacrifice
Best course of action?

- Loki brings about “…the greatest misfortune ever to befall gods and men.”[3]

- Prometheus deceives the god who swallowed his own wife in order to assimilate her cunning-intelligence into himself.
Liminal Characters, not Tricksters?

- What if a character is what’s necessary in order for change to occur?

- Those who are best able to adapt and manipulate unexpected situations when thrust upon them also bring about change for the rest of us.

- Society changes course through characters that instigate unexpected events.

- Whether ethical or amoral, we see great changes come about through great, ambitious actions.
Ritual Theory Application

Prometheus
- Humans are dumb worshippers for the gods’ vanity.
- Zeus the untrickable is tricked and the weak are championed. **Sovereignty of Zeus** is questioned.
- Humans now have an elevated status, although they also inherit the negative consequences.

Loki
- Fear over the death of a beloved god.
- The attempts of the Aesir—Frigg’s oaths and bartering with Hel—were in vain. **Immortality** is questioned.
- The gods eventually resign themselves to accept past and future deaths of their own.
References

Pictures

Literature