Greek mythology has provided the art of psychoanalysis with a multitude of metaphorical tales and immortal characters; and certainly the myths of Oedipus, Eros and Psyche must be preeminent amongst these wondrous stories.

The ruler of Thebes, Laius, and his wife, Iocaste, were childless. And so Laius sought guidance from the Delphic Oracle, who warned him that any son born to Iocaste would ultimately slay him. Iocaste then caused Laius to be inebriated, Laius, in inebriated confusion, caused Iocaste to become pregnant. A son was born nine months hence and Laius had the infant abandoned on a mountainside but first Laius had the infant’s feet pierced with nails. A shepherd found the helpless infant; and because of his injured and swollen feet, named him Oedipus [Greek for swollen, as in the word oedema; feet, as in pedal.]

The adult Oedipus killed Laius in a roadside encounter, not knowing that the victim was his father; nor did Laius know his biological relationship to his slayer. Oedipus then married the widow of Laius, Iocaste, thus fulfilling the morbid incest prophesy of the Oracle, and, in passing, provided a core theme of modern psychiatry with a fitting mythic icon.

The other crucial terms in narrative psychiatry pale in vitality to Oedipus. The word, anxiety, is from the Latin, anxietas, meaning variously anguish or solicitude. Etymologists trace it further to the Latin, angere, meaning to press together, to throttle, and ultimately, the source of the English words, anger and angina. Depression descends from the Latin, depressare, meaning to press down, to plant deeply; and earlier, from the Latin premere, to squeeze, to weigh heavily upon.

Psyche, a maiden in Greek mythology was loved by Eros and became the earthly personification of the human soul. A psychiatrist, hence, is a healer of the soul. The Greek root, iatros, means physician [as in pediatrician, geriatrician and iatrogenic.]

Eros—while undeniably the Greek god of love—was never considered powerful enough to be amongst the twelve Olympian Board of Directors; still he was not to be denied a legitimate role in the creation of new English words such as erotic, erogenous and erotomania, and in the male name, Erasmus, meaning a loved one. The word, erosion, however, is derived from the Latin, erodere, meaning to gnaw or consume.

– STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD

The Couched Words of Psychoanalysis

Physician’s Lexicon

The guilty finding is overturned on internal DOJ appeal.¹

Medical organizations also should educate their members about their ethical responsibilities and the consequences of ignoring them.

The argument that doctors who participate in torture are absolved of their ethical responsibilities and therefore do not deserve to suffer consequences, because the government declared these actions legal, is not valid.

REFERENCES


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