On the southern slopes of Mount Parnassus, in central Greece, stands an ancient shrine dedicated to the spirit of Apollo and the Oracle of Delphi. It was widely believed to represent the center of the earth; and within its sanctuary was the omphalus, a sacred stone representing the navel of the world. The shrine was initially dedicated to Gaia, mother goddess of all mankind; and the Greek word, delphus, signified the womb or uterus of all of humanity. (Uterus, a Latin term, descended from a Greek word, udrios, meaning belly.)

Apollo, in his many voyages, was believed to be carried over the seas by a fish without scales, now called the dolphin (and derived from the Greek, delphus). The oldest sons of the kings of France, and hence the heirs-apparent to the French throne, each inherited a heraldic banner adorned with two dolphins. Their title, in time, came to be “Le Daulphin,” and in more modern times, the Dauphin.

Delphic, as an adjective, has also come to mean anything pertaining to the oracle of Delphi, and in general, any prophetic announcement.

The uterine anomaly characterized by a double cavity is called didelphic meaning two uteruses. And Didelphis defines the genus of marsupials with bilocular uteri, a genus which includes the opposum.

The delphus root has assumed a broader meaning in the non-medical literature. Those nurtured within the same uterus—either simultaneously or sequentially—are said to be brotherly souls. And if those motivated by the non-violent, Quaker philosophy of William Penn (1644 – 1718) wished to form a city of brotherly love, it was inevitable that they would name it, Philadelphia (from the Greek, philos, meaning loving or interested in, as in words such as philosophy, philanthropy, philarmonic, anglophile or philology but not philippics, an invective form of oratory named after the speeches of Demosthenes denouncing Philip of Macedon, or philistine, a word from the Akkadian, palastu. This Semitic root gave rise to the current geopolitical word, Palestine.

The botanical vocabulary is enriched by a number of words derived from the Greek word, delphus, including the delphinium plant commonly called the larkspur; and adelphous, meaning a plant with many stamens. The adjective, adelphous, may also mean brotherly or fraternal. And, accordingly, a university on Long Island bears the name Adelphi.

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