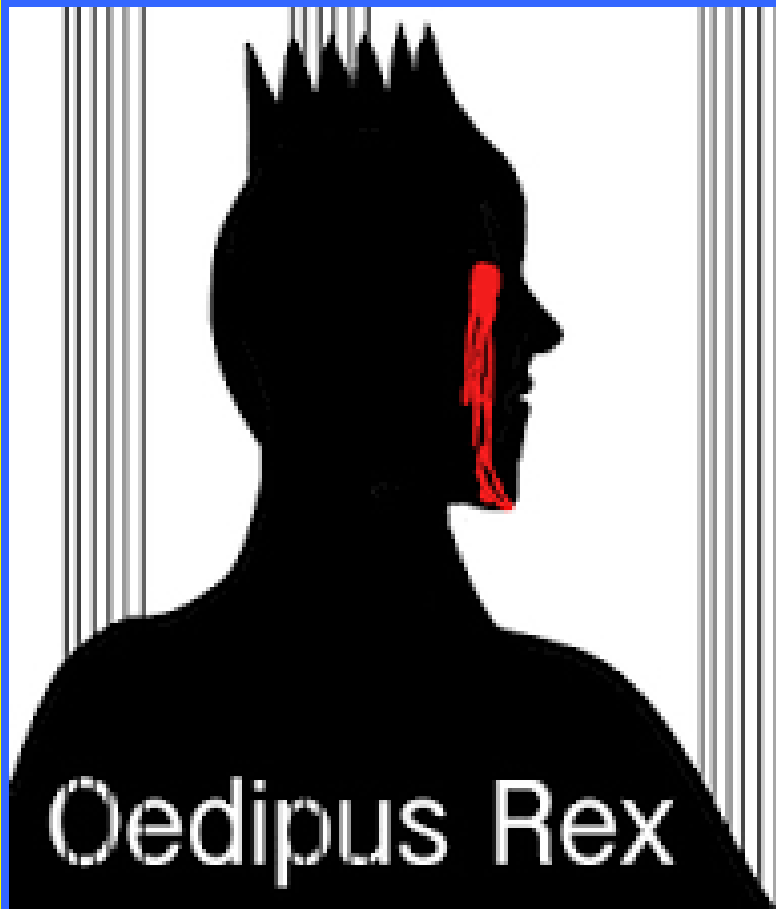


Oedipus Rex by Sophocles



**“The keenest sorrow is
to recognize ourselves
as the sole cause of all
our adversities.”**

-Sophocles

Love vs. Insanity

Studies have shown that mental scans of those in love show a striking resemblance to those with a mental illness. Love creates activity in the same area of the brain that hunger, thirst, and drug cravings create activity in.

New love, therefore, could possibly be more physical than emotional. Over time, this reaction to love mellows, and different areas of the brain are activated, primarily ones involving long-term commitments.





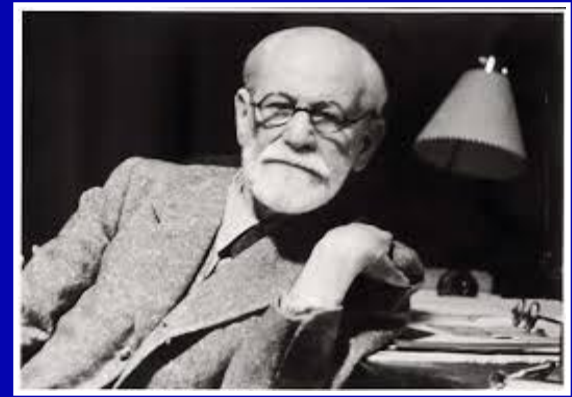
❖ **Dr. Andrew Newberg**, a neuroscientist, suggests that this reaction to love is so similar to that of drugs because without love, humanity would die out.

❖ **William Shakespeare** wrote in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that

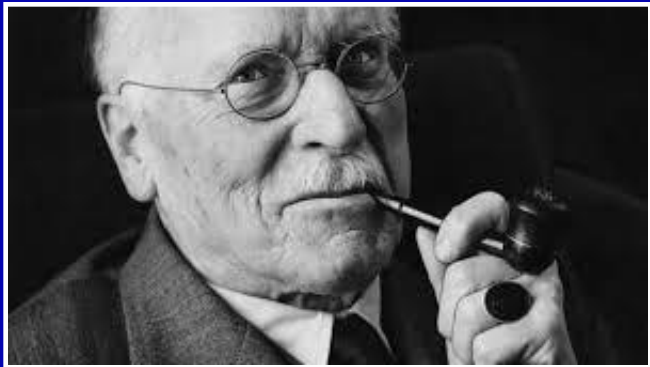
"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact."



The **Oedipus Complex** in **Freudian psychoanalysis** refers to a stage of psychosexual development in childhood where children of both sexes regard their father as an adversary and competitor for the exclusive love of their mother. The name derives from the Greek myth of Oedipus.



In **Jungian thought**, the Oedipus complex tends to refer only to the experience of male children, with female children experiencing an **Electra Complex** in which they regard their mothers as a competitor for the exclusive love of their fathers.





★ Delphi

★ Thebes

★ Athens

★ Sikyon

★ Corinth

★ Mycynae

★ Argos

★ Olympia

★ Sparta

Southern Part
Of Ancient
Greece

Review: First Dramatists

- **Thespis** = (thespian), father of drama, introduced first actor (separate from chorus)
- **Aeschylus** = elevated drama to what it is today by introducing a second actor, diminishing the size of the chorus
- **Euripides** = one of the three great Greek tragedians
- **Sophocles** = added a third actor and defeated Aeschylus in **dramatic competition** (held during the Festival of Dionysus in which dramatists presented a tetralogy of three tragedies and one comedy)
 - Famous for his Oedipus Trilogy: *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*

Review: Sophocles and Greek Drama

■ How was Greek drama born?

- It developed from ancient rituals honoring Dionysus. The celebrations became a yearly occurrence held in Athens.

■ Difference between tragedies and satyr plays?

- Tragedies are serious plays about religious or mythic questions.
- Satyr plays are humorous plays about religious or mythic questions.

Review: Sophocles and Greek Drama

- Describe the theater of Dionysus.
 - Semicircle
 - Seats carved out of stone on a hillside
 - Performance area in two parts: orchestra and skene



Review: Sophocles and Greek Drama

- Sophocles surprised Athenians by:
 - Winning first prize for tragedy at the festival of Dionysus, beating Aeschylus.
- Who was Aeschylus?
 - The leading playwright of the time (think Steven Spielberg)
- How many tragedies did Sophocles write?
 - He wrote more than **120** tragedies... only **7** still survive today.

Review: Sophocles and Greek Drama

- What was Sophocles concerned about?
 - He was concerned with the individual's need to find his/her place in the world within the existing moral/cosmic order.
 - Moral lessons against too much pride and religious indifference.
 - **Catharsis**-- beneficial effect the tragedy has on the audience.

Greek Theatre



Common in Greek Tragedy:

- **Dramatic Irony:** When the audience knows something that the characters don't know
- **Fall of Hubris:** Hubris is excessive pride. Many tragedies deal with human pride leading to arrogant behaviors that anger the gods. Thus, man must be punished.
- **Fate vs. Destiny:** Many tragedies feature characters who try to escape unfavorable prophecies. This is futile, however, as man does not often have the power or luck to change his/her fate as determined by cosmic forces or gods/goddesses.

Characteristics of a Tragic Hero

- Must have a **fall from greatness** (either power, wealth, or social standing)
- Must be an extraordinary person, yet have a **tragic flaw**
- **Hamartia or Tragic Flaw**: often a **positive character trait** that, when **taken to the extreme**, causes tragedy
- Must experience a **moment of realization** that he/she has erred
- Must **suffer greatly** due to his/her actions or flaw (often, but not always, this means death)

Terms to Know

- **Rhetoric**— in speech, an argument; bombastic statement
- **Character Foil**— a character who emphasizes opposite traits in another character
- **Aphorism**— a brief statement which expresses an observation intended to be wise
- **Understatement**— a statement which lessens or minimizes the importance of what is meant
- **Hyperbole**— figure of speech in which an overstatement or exaggeration occurs

More Terms to Know

- **In Medias Res** – beginning a story in the middle
- **Epiphany** – a sudden, intuitive perception or insight into the reality or meaning of something – usually initiated by a simple experience
- **Euphemism** – a substitute or mild expression for one thought to be offensive or harsh

Background on *Oedipus*

- a tragedy written in 442 BC by Sophocles
- chronologically the second of the three Theban plays
 - *Oedipus the King*
 - *Oedipus at Colonus*
 - *Antigone*



Why study *Oedipus*?

- Ancient Greek Drama is the basis for all modern drama and film
- The story gives many important clues to the Ancient Greek culture and character
- Tragedies still contain the basic elements of their original forms



Essential Questions

Is it more important to be right than to be
happy?

What price should a person be willing to pay
if he/she breaks an unjust law?

Can a leader show uncertainty and maintain
leadership?

How It All Began

The destiny of Oedipus was fixed before he even came into the world. His father, Laius, was burdened with a dreadful curse. Welcomed as a guest by Pelops, king of Pisa, he had behaved so vilely towards his handsome son Chrysippus that the young man killed himself for shame. Wild with grief that could not be consoled, his father had cried out:

“Son of Labdacus, it is you who killed my boy, and so I give you both my wish and my curse, too. My wish is that you never bear a son to know the pain of losing him – but if you do, may you be cursed to meet death at your own son’s hand!”

How It All Began

Laius paid little heed to Pelops' bitter words. He went back home to Thebes and in time inherited the throne of his father, Labdacus. Yet a day would come when he would pay a heavy price for having abused that hospitality so foully. Not only would he pay in person, but all the clan of Labdacus in their turn, and the innocent Oedipus most dearly of them all.

Later On...

Laius, ruler of Thebes, is told by an oracle that his son will, in fact, kill him. With agreement of his wife, **Jocasta**, after the baby is born the baby's feet are pinioned together and it's given to a slave to be "exposed" on nearby **Mt. Cithaeron**.

The slave, a shepherd of Laius' flocks, takes pity on the baby, and instead of leaving it to die, gives the boy to a fellow-shepherd from Corinth. The Corinthian shepherd presents the baby to the childless **King of Corinth, Polybus**, who brings him up as his own, presumably giving him the name "**Oedipus**" (**Swollen Foot**) because of his deformity.

Eighteen years (or so) later...

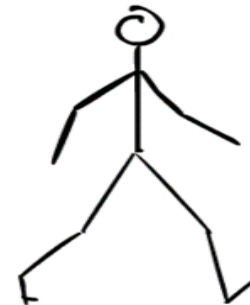
Someone at a party tells **Oedipus** that the parents he knows are not his biological parents— an insult that rattles his fundamental beliefs. He leaves **Corinth** for **Delphi**, to confirm his parentage at the oracle of Apollo. The oracle gives him a horrific prediction:

He will kill his father and marry his mother!

Oedipus sets off in the opposite direction of **Corinth**, and heads toward **Thebes**.

The Place Where Three Roads Meet

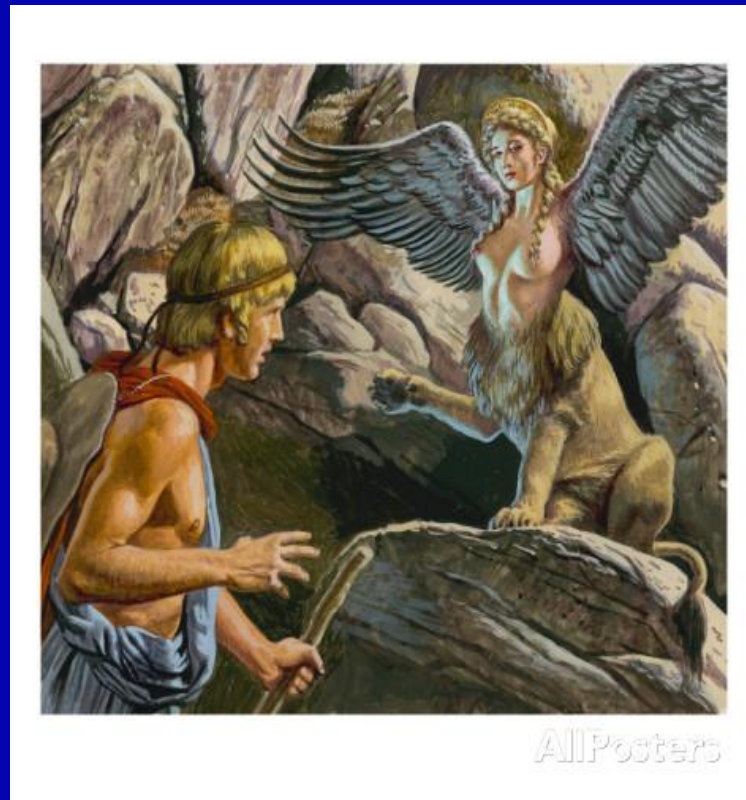
While running away **Oedipus** meets an old man driving a wagon with a retinue of slaves. The man is rude, refuses to move out of the way, and orders **Oedipus** off the road. **Oedipus** sees red (an early instance of road rage?) and kills the man. He continues to **Thebes**.



The Riddle

- During his travels, Oedipus comes upon **Thebes**, which is being terrorized by **the Sphinx**
- The Sphinx will leave the city if someone can **solve her riddle**:

“What walks on **four legs** in the morning, **two legs** at noon, and **three legs** in the evening?”



Oedipus answers, “**Man**”. The sphinx drowns herself in defeat.

Thebes is saved!

Oedipus: King of Thebes



- Oedipus becomes the king and marries **Jocasta**, the queen
- Oedipus is told that the former Theban king, **Laius**, was murdered by an unknown assailant.
- As the play opens, Thebes is suffering a **terrible plague** because Laius' death has **not been avenged**

