Quadrant "(winter 1977)
Vol. X, No. 2, pp 45-56

Reflections On Oedipus

JONATHAN J. GOLDBERG

WELL BEFORE BECOMING professionally interested in psychology, I taught Sophocles' Theban plays to humanities classes. It struck me each year how strange it was that the drama of Oedipus' life, in which a young man flees the land of his supposed parents in order not to fulfill a prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother, should have lent its name to the Oedipus complex as a crucial event in the psychology of early childhood. What the thoughtful if impulsive youth who killed a stranger at a disputed crossroads—and then won a queen by delivering her city from a monster—was seen to have in common with a jealous little boy wanting to replace his father in his mother's bed seemed less than totally self-evident.

Today I find it possible to formulate more precisely with respect to the material and its interpretation. The Oedipus story is a myth, which in Jungian terms means that it is a story on the archetypal or transpersonal level and describes a fundamental psychological situation. Our individual relationship to the archetypal psyche is mediated by our complexes which is why Jung insisted that psychology is subjective. Thus, myths are seen through complexes. No one who did not have an Oedipus complex could ever have read the Oedipus myth the way Freud did. As Mullahy showed in his survey book on *Oedipus: Myth and Complex*, those who evolved psychologies substantially different from Freud's, beginning with Jung and Adler, did not see the Oedipus myth from Freud's particular angle. The complex both makes the insight possible and is itself the blind spot.

Lord Raglan, in his famous analysis of the typical hero story, finds the Oedipus material comes closest to fulfilling all twenty-two steps of the pattern—the same Oedipus who serves as a touchstone in psychopathology. Can it be that we are so caught in our reactions to Oedipus' incest and blindness, and their psychological significance, that there are aspects of his story that we fail to "detect?" I choose this word precisely because the *Oedipus* is on the first level a *detective* story, an attempt to find a criminal and bring him to justice. That the seeker after the criminal and the criminal are one and the same is of course so, for in the psychological realm, what we look for out there we inevitably find in here. Oedipus is the first to consciously accept the validity of that kind of search.

• JONATHAN J. GOLDBERG, Ph. D., is a Jungian analyst in private practice in New York City and a member of the C. G. Jung Training Center. "Reflections on Oedipus" is based on a lecture which Dr. Goldberg gave before the Analytical Psychology Club of New York, May, 1974.

To begin by placing Oedipus in his mythic context: the Oedipus story is a portion of the tale of the House of Cadmus. Cadmus the son of Agenor who came out of Egypt, is son of Poseidon—the genealogy is important because genealogy provides a psychohistory of a mythological character. Common to the successive generations of this House is a disastrous relationship to divinity resulting from an underestimation of its power. Cadmus had only one inconsequential son in his old age. Among his daughters was Semele, the mother of Dionysos, who lost her life because she demanded to see her lover, Zeus. From one standpoint this represents her disastrous inflation; from another it is a demand from the human world that the divine show itself in a form that the human can relate to—and this is a basic theme for the Oedipus story. Her demand that the godhead reveal himself serves the same function as Job's questioning of another deity; that of preparing the way for a new principle of relationship between the divine and the human by compelling the god to identify himself. The story of Oedipus, Semele's son, concerns a figure who also challenges divinity in a way disastrous to himself. Just as Semele briefly carried a new god, Dionysos, so Oedipus carries a new principle of being human, one involving the answer to the riddle that is man.

Already in the generation of Cadmus his brother Phineus is blinded for telling mankind too much about the gods, the same punishment which is inflicted on Oedipus. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, it is Cadmus' grandson—there known as Pentheus—who is destroyed by Dionysos because grandfather, mother, and grandson all were too late to acknowledge this deity. This failure is a family blindness repeated through the generations. A family is tested in terms of its ability to absorb new gods at the expense of ancient sacred cows—and there is a pun intended because it is in following the path of the sacred cow that Cadmus settles at Thebes. The affirmation of certain gods and the denial of others is an archetypal basis for discord. Here there is a special irony in that the rejected deity is himself a family member.

With Laius, father of Oedipus, comes an attempt to break the family pattern of catastrophe. To him it is prophesied that a son will be born to kill him, so he avoids his marriage bed. This is the story concerning the threat of the next generation which is so familiar in tales about the gods. In man, of course, it is not a question of a threat; sooner or later one generation does overthrow the other. That is why Laius' scheme to remain childless is doomed and Oedipus is born; that is also why in the prophecy about the mortal danger the child represents, there is actually concealed the wish not to have the child. Laius is also the abductor and lover of Chrysippos, bastard half-brother of Atreus and Thyestes; as a result the myths of Oedipus and Orestes intersect.

Laius' connection to Chrysippos is crucial to the unfolding of the story because Hera sends the sphinx as a punishment for this love, the

sphinx whose riddle is the door to Oedipus' kingship. Laius must transgress in order to be cursed; his place in the sequence of curses is only implied in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* but is made explicit in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*. It needs to be remembered that the material of the Oedipus mythology includes a great deal that is not in Sophocles' version. Apart from the perspectives of other dramatizations, there are important individual details in the mythology such as the identification of Helios as an alternative father to Laius.

Helios has characteristics of a regressive father who may at any time choose to withdraw the light he gives; as another father of Oedipus, he illuminates that aspect of Laius. Our focus so often centers on the psychology of the son *vis à vis* the father that we may incompletely read that of the father *vis à vis* the son. Sometimes there is the father's wish not to have the son born; sometimes, as in the myth of Phaethon, there is the death of the son striving to equal the father—a myth very different depending upon whether it is read as the son's premature effort to ride his father's chariot, or as the means available to the father to rid himself of the son. There is an essential parallel to the Phaethon myth in the Laius-Chrysippos material, for the relationship is said to have developed while Laius was Chrysippos' chariot teacher. Note the contrast in the two chariot situations: in one it is either/or father or son; in the other it is both/and, a will to share the power.

The ancestor in the Orestes story, Tantalus, was an intimate of Zeus, and in some versions it is he rather than Zeus who seduces and abducts Ganymede. Among his children is Pelops, usually regarded as a bastard. Because Zeus invited Tantalus to Olympian banquets, he was able to divulge the secrets of the gods afterwards. Later at a banquet of his own, he cut up Pelops and served him to the Olympians, thus ensuring his eternal punishment. When Pelops was restored to life by Zeus, he was so beautiful that Poseidon fell in love with him on the spot. When Pelops later wants to marry Hippodameia, he must first win a chariot race against her father, the world's greatest charioteer. Pelops wins because his lover, Poseidon, bestows an immortal chariot on him. Poseidon is here in Helios' place; Pelops, in Phaethon's; but the outcome is different since the father-son pattern is different.

To the father the son can be rival or successor or even potential love object. Here stories like the *Bacchae* where Cadmus yields his throne to his grandson, and *Alcestis* where Pheres abdicates in favor of Admetes come to mind. Lévi-Strauss suggests that Chrysippos is, in fact, Oedipus in disguise, which in turn suggests the link between him, Ganymede, and Pelops. So long as the son kills other fathers, his own father can rest secure. For example, in the Orestes mythologem, Thyestes, cheated of the throne by his brother Atreus and having his children served to him as dinner in the family tradition, is advised to beget a son on his own daughter, which he secretly does. The daughter then marries Atreus who thinks the

child is his. The conflict that develops permits the biological father, Thyestes, to escape death at his son's hands by directing the son's impulses against his apparent father. This parallels somewhat the dual father theme in the Oedipus drama where Laius and Polybus are the fathers and Oedipus is cast off so that he cannot kill his father, casts himself off later to avoid killing his apparent father, only to be free to kill his real father.

The nature of the father-son relationship as such has certain essential components which require more systematic description. Greek mythology has three early versions of the endangered father motif: Uranus, born to Gaia so that she will have someone to mate with, who dispossesses his children until the Titans under Cronos overthrow him; Cronos who swallows his sons until he is tricked into ingesting a stone substitute for Zeus, and Zeus the cup-bearer supplants him. Then it is Zeus's turn but he, instead of swallowing the children, swallows his first wife, Metis; their only child Athena becomes his child only. When Zeus falls in love later, he is always extremely careful to check out prophecies about prospective sons, and he and Poseidon gladly yield Thetis for that reason, declining the honor of fathering Achilles. While brother-sister incests are common, (Cronos-Rhea, Zeus-Hera, etc.) mother-son incest occurs only once, at the beginning, when the mother creates the son who will be the father of their children. The next time this occurs is in the Oedipus story: mother creates the son who becomes the father of their children. Thus the Oedipus story is a repetition of the creation story—this time on the human level.

We are then dealing with a creation myth in the psychic sphere. The Oedipus who meets and defeats the sphinx—a figure who is also the offspring of a mother-son incest—being the daughter of Echinda the woman-serpent and her dog-son Orthos—is in the process of creating himself. An explanation of Oedipus' psychology from this standpoint is offered in the work of Otto Rank. Rank shows how Oedipus, in striving to become the father of his own siblings, seeks to become his own father at the same time as being his own son, and hereby secure the immortality of being, like Zeus, the son who became the father. Oedipus is caught in the dilemma that, having seen how his father's effort to remain childless proved unworkable, he also knows that having a son is breeding a murderer, for that is his own destiny.

This leaves "having himself" as the only apparent way out which is what union with mother is all about. Standing outside the father-son dyad is the self who wants to be neither father nor son but himself only. That is why, Rank concludes, the son experiences the initial preference for his mother and the father for his daughter: attachment to the mother is an attempt to allay the anxiety associated with the potential for becoming a father; attachment to the daughter is an attempt to dull the consciousness

of having a son. This motif is visible in Oedipus' life as his curse on his sons, sentencing them to mutual slaughter, and his enduring devoted relationship with Antigone.

Both the Oedipus and the Orestes narratives are father-son tales: however, the primacy of this element is somewhat obscured by the specific purposes of the 5th century Athenian playwrights. That is why Oedipus has another wife in saga and why in earlier accounts it is Apollo's insistence that Orestes avenge his slain father, meaning that he kill Aegisthus, while his mother, Clytemnestra, is quite secondary; (this relative down-grading of the mother role survives in the *Oresteian Trilogy* where, although Orestes is hounded by the Furies for being a matricide, he is freed by Athena on the grounds that the woman is but the carrier of the man's child.) Oedipus' slaying of his biological father—done unknowingly, unconsciously—is a first step towards his instituting a different principle of fatherhood as he does in *Oedipus at Colonus* where, having disposed of his sons, he "adopts" a new son, Theseus, to whom alone he reveals the saving secret of his burial place and with it the principle that Theseus too in his turn shall pass it on to a chosen one of his. Thus a biological and social principle of continuity gives way to a purely personal one.

However the mother side is crucial as far as the tragedy in the Oedipus story is concerned. It is remarkable, as Dirlmeier describes it in his study of the myth, how fairy-tale like elements—the heroic task which leads to the winning of the princess for the successful hero—here conjoin in so different a way because the princess-queen is the mother. This is the twist that makes tragedy of triumph. When Oedipus solves the riddle of the sphinx—herself begotten as already stated, through a mother-son incest—he not only answers the question whose answer is 'man,' but he accepts the destiny of man, affirms the stages of life. Because Oedipus is a psychological hero, he perceives the identity of the mother who gives in birth and receives in death, that he can enter out of whom he emerged as he will again rest in her when his life is done. This all belongs to the terror-wonder of being man.

Bernard Knox concludes his book on Sophocles' play as follows:

> The *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles combines two apparently irreconcilable themes, the greatness of the gods and the greatness of man, and the combination of these themes is inevitably tragic, for the greatness of the gods is most clearly and powerfully demonstrated by man's defeat. . . . Unlike the gods, he exists in time. The beauty and power of his physical frame is subject to sickness, death, and corruption; the beauty and power of his intellectual, artistic, and social achievement to decline, overthrow, and oblivion. His greatness and beauty arouse in us a pride in their magnificence which is inseparable from and increased by our sorrow over their immanent and imminent death. Oedipus is symbolic of all human achievement: his hard-won magnificence, unlike the everlasting magnificence of the divine, cannot last, and while it lives shines all the more brilliant against the somber background of its impermanency. Sophocles' tragedy presents us with a terrible affirmation of man's subordinate

> position in the universe, and at the same time with a heroic vision of man's victory in defeat. Man is not equated to the gods, but man at his greatest, as in Oedipus, is capable of some thing which the gods, by definition, cannot experience; the proud tragic view of Sophocles sees in the fragility and inevitable defeat of human greatness the possibility of a purely human heroism to which the gods can never attain, for the condition of their existence is everlasting victory.

Now closer inquiry is needed as to the justification for calling Oedipus "magnificent and victorious." A recapitulation of certain details in his background reveals Agenor, who put up opposition to Zeus by sending his sons in pursuit of their sister; Semele, who demanded that Zeus display himself in his full glory and who at least partially gave birth to a new principle of divinity; Phineus and Tantalus who dared to disclose divine secrets; Laius, who became enamored of a youth, a form of infatuation that had previously been known only to the gods. Clearly, there is in the mythological background of the tale of Oedipus a common thread of challenges to the gods' prerogatives. Through these challenges the realm of human responsibilities, i.e., what men are able to respond to, is extended and the range of what falls within the human domain rather than being left to the gods is widened.

Why is it prophesied of Oedipus that he will kill his father and marry his mother? The oracle does not cause his action; rather, it makes predictions based on a foreknowledge of the capacities and frailities of a man's character. A basic formula is that an oracle will be misread whenever an individual overestimates his ego capacities and harbors an inflated self image, like the would-be conqueror told of by Herodotus who, having heard that if he waged war a great empire would be destroyed, marched securely to his own destruction, never even considering the ambiguity in the reference of these words.

When Oedipus gets confirmation from the oracle about the fate that threatens him, he takes flight from Corinth; he does not blind himself to the meaning of the oracle's words. Flight from the fear of something is a complex psychological phenomenon. On the surface it appears to be a realistic effort to put distance between oneself and what is feared, but underneath it is also a flight to or into the psyche, where the road from the external leads. To the degree that it puts the danger back where it belongs, flight is a solution or the first step towards one. The flight hurls Oedipus headlong into the danger, as it moves him towards his father, the sphinx, and Thebes.

The sphinx's riddle—the sphinx too is an oracle—has man as the answer because it is the definition of what makes man which Oedipus must supply and which the sphinx's many victims have failed to provide. Traditionally, the sphinx's question: "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three in the evening?" is taken to refer to the path of the life curve, from crawling in childhood, to standing erect

in adulthood, to leaning on a cane in old age. But reading the riddle psychologically permits an additional interpretation. The four legs can be taken as the standpoint of childhood, bound to instinctual forces like the movement of an animal; the two legs as the standpoint of adulthood, where one makes one's way on one's own two feet; and the third leg as the stance of objectivity, which allows one to see one's true place and how one has come there. Read in this light, the life curve becomes one of increasingly greater consciousness. The myths, of course, do not tell us, but one may speculate that the many before Oedipus who could not guess the riddle foundered on their insufficient consciousness of the necessary connection between being fully human and attaining to an objective standpoint.

Oedipus is thus destined to take psychological responsibility for himself, but he does not know that until quite late in his life, nor does he make his discoveries without the greatest opposition. In Sophocles' play his two great antagonists are Tiresias and Jocasta: he having a knowledge he does not want to yield, she not wanting to allow for any kind of pattern for past events. Tiresias' reluctance represents the unwillingness of the unconscious to yield its secrets, though he cannot withstand Oedipus' ego's relentless pressure. Philip Vellacott in his book on *Sophocles and Oedipus* emphasizes that Tiresias as a priest of Apollo represents the divine world in the play. The gods, he shows, have no wish to share their knowledge because they are indifferent to human suffering, so Oedipus is really demanding compassion from the gods when he forces Tiresias to speak. Jocasta, to follow Vellacott again, does not want her false faith in chance exposed. She wants to cling to the notion that everything was just chance. Once the pattern is exposed, suicide is the only course for her, as her ridiculing of oracles means her life rested on false premises. The irony of Oedipus' discovery is that there was nothing to discover but what was there all along, just as when Oedipus' ancestors discovered the divinity of Dionysos they were only finding their own unacknowledged kinsman. This is a paradigm of psychological discovery, for the discovery of what has been waiting to be revealed always comes when the person is ready to receive it and not until then. It is not new data that are discovered but a new perspective.

Everyone around Oedipus wants him to be different: less proud, less curious, less independent. But he refuses to cooperate. When Oedipus blinds himself after the truth is out, the prime significance is that *he blinds himself*, that there is an act of will involved. By his action he sentences himself to half a life of dependence and subservience to balance his half life of independence and power. He adopts an attitude towards his life. He does not give the gods any room to impose their decision. He frees himself from their rule, inasmuch as he makes himself the agent of their law.

By contrast, the story of Tiresias' blinding is worth a short digression because he owed his state to the curse of the gods. The blind prophet lost his sight in one version for seeing Athena in her bath; she consoled him with the gift of prophetic wisdom. In another the blinding comes because he offended Hera by defending Zeus' infidelities on the grounds that when Zeus did sleep with her she as the woman got the greater pleasure. Tiresias was chosen to arbitrate the question of the relative pleasure of man and woman in sex because, having been sentenced by Hera to live for a time as a woman, he becomes the man who has known what it feels like from the inside to be both man and woman. For this reason, he alone in the *Odyssey* can see in the underworld, just as he functions in "The Waste Land," the preeminent poem of modern consciousness, as the one whose standpoint represents true vision. The combination of blindness, inward sight, and a bisexual consciousness produces a standpoint that embraces the consciousness of both sexes and therefore leads to the detachment which yields insight into the riddle of man. Thus, the special relationship between Oedipus and Tiresias comes to be symbolized by the shared blindness. It is Oedipus' active will that differentiates him from Tiresias.

Oedipus attains the ability to affirm consciously what he has lived unconsciously. He understands the issue was not, as he had first thought when fleeing Thebes, whether his fate was going to be realized but whether it would be accepted or rejected. The choice is about how the destiny is to be viewed. Dreams often seek to convey to the dreamer the uselessness of revolting against what is. A young woman dreamed:

> I am lying in a coffin-like thing and talking about how I took (or was given) a drug, and the end effect was that my left side died and how terrible it is that I cannot seem either to go insane or die—somehow the rest of me is too healthy and strong so that I just have to lie here and suffer my paralysis.

In order for the life-giving aspect of the unconscious side to be tapped, the dreamer must bear with what life has sent; if you suffer your paralysis you may transform it.

Sterility and plague, the conditions prevailing as the Oedipus drama begins, reflect a psychic situation in which rejection rules: they are removed as soon as there is acceptance of the real situation. The challenge to a man is to be able to keep living after he has failed to make his life the thing he wanted it to be. Oedipus does so by affirming his suffering, as he puts it in *Oedipus at Colonus*, "My strength has been in suffering, not in doing." The image of the psychological hero is the image of the sufferer. Among the deities, Prometheus comes to mind, entitled to make men conscious because he can stand whatever suffering Zeus sends. Swollen-footed Oedipus has important links with another wounded-footed hero, Philoctetes. As Oedipus' injury is traceable to Hera's anger at Laius, so Hera's wrath at Heracles accounts for Philoctetes' wound. She could

not forgive him for lighting Heracles' funeral pyre. Therefore she arranges for his tortuous snakebite.

The link between Oedipus and Philoctetes is made explicit in Voltaire's *Oedipus*; there Philoctetes both as the one who loved and was loved by Jocasta, a love which could not be consummated because of her forced marriage to Laius, and as the one who stands in the same relationship to Oedipus as Heracles did to him, as he to Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, and as Oedipus to Theseus. As Philoctetes says in the play, "I have lived, lived to fulfill the fate allotted to me; have passed my sacred word to Oedipus." The hero's freedom to die—be he Heracles, Philoctetes or Oedipus—depends on his having found a successor, a disciple rather than a son. It is Philoctetes, it will be remembered, who alone had the ability to bring down Paris and Troy, thanks to Heracles' bow, where Odysseus and the other unwounded heroes were powerless to bring the war to an end. Thus the birth mark, or the unhealable wound, can bring a healing not attainable otherwise. The unhealable wound is consciousness and the coming to self-consciousness. Philoctetes' story tells something about the principle of psychic affinity rather than consanguinity, the key he has passed on to Oedipus.

Thus, *Oedipus Rex* tells the story of a fate that is being sought even as it is seemingly being avoided; the action of Sophocles' play re-enacts the pattern of Oedipus' life: a moving towards himself by moving, he thinks, away from himself. At the epiphany he suddenly sees that each outward step in his past has obeyed an unseen inner logic. The blinders of psychopathology would compel the categorization of Oedipus' self-blinding as a possession in a moment of compensatory negative inflation. However clinically satisfying such a formulation, it misses the basic point, namely, that the one who bears a special fate and is to be the bearer of a new consciousness must both suffer and discover the meaning of his suffering. In this light, yet another perspective is offered on the connection between the riddle whose answer is man and the answerer of the riddle, a man who has a special fate. For killing the father and marrying the mother represent the recurrent basic psychological tasks of replacing the conscious dominant that has outlived its time and of entering the unconscious from which everything new must arise.

The two best modern dramatizations of Oedipus, Gide's *Oedipus* and Hoffmansthal's *Oedipus and the Sphinx* offer magnificent illustrations of how Oedipus discovers self-recognition. Gide's Oedipus is guilty of being happy. His moment of liberation came when he found that he was not the son of Polybus and therefore could think himself a bastard (compare Pelops and Chrysippos). He voiced a bastard's psychology: "I had gushed from the unknown, no longer any past, no longer any father's example, nothing to lean on anymore; everything to be built up anew—country, forefathers—all to be invented, all to be discovered. Nobody to

take after but myself. . . . To know nothing of one's parents is a summons to excel."

Bertrand Russell spoke similarly when he connected being left without parents at a very young age to his unorthodox life and opinions. Of course, there is an illusion in the idea of being parentless, or there would be no play. But because Oedipus has learned to put total trust in his own authority, he decides his punishment here in the context of a modern individualism for parricide and incest—blindness so that Tiresias may no longer contrast his superiority in blindness with Oedipus' pride. Oedipus equals Tiresias to prove how much he excels him.

After Oedipus' solution of the sphinx riddle, the world of sphinxes and riddles becomes psychological; the monsters assume their inner places. To quote the *Oedipus* of Gide:

> It was I and I alone who understood that the only password, if one didn't want to be eaten alive by the sphinx, was man. No doubt it took a certain courage to bring out that word. But I had it ready even before I heard the riddle; and my strength was that I would admit of no other answer, no matter what the question might be. . . . Yes, there was only this one same answer to those many and various questions; and this one answer is Man, and this one man, for each and all of us, is oneself.

The discovery of one's own particular destiny becomes identified with understanding the basic human mystery. Nietzsche's comment on Oedipus fits well here:

> Oedipus, his father's murderer, his mother's lover, solver of the sphinx's riddle! What is the meaning of this triple fate? An ancient popular belief, especially strong in Persia, holds that a wise *magus* must be incestuously begotten. If we examine Oedipus, the solver of riddles and the liberator of his mother, in the light of this Parses belief, we may conclude that whatever soothsaying and magical powers have broken the spell of present and future, the rigid law of individuation, the magic circle of nature, extreme unnaturalness—in this case incest—is the necessary antecedent; for how should man force nature to yield up her secrets but by successfully resisting her, that is to say, by unnatural acts? This is the recognition I find expressed in the terrible triad of the Oedipean fates: the same man who solved the riddle of nature (the ambiguous sphinx) must also, as murderer of his father and husband of his mother, break the consecrated table of the natural order.

In Hoffmansthal's play, the one realized part of what was planned as a trilogy, the action deals with past events: the killing of Laius, the sphinx, and union with Jocasta. The central theme is Oedipus' pride and the overcoming of it, pride not in the sense of the ever-secure figure loathed by Tiresias in Sophocles and Gide, but the pride in his assumed ability to avert destiny. Pride in the other sense is distributed among the chief characters and particularly given to Laius; Oedipus is doomed to meet his destiny fully and fatefully because his father made light of his own. This is a familiar psychological fact met regularly in analytic practice: one member of a family, often after generations of psychological

blindness, may have to assume the destiny task for all the others. He or she then carries not only the individual burden, but the whole inherited one, which is the family curse. Once someone understands as Oedipus comes to do, the sphinx is no longer needed; that is, the projection can be withdrawn, the inner task undertaken, the city of the psyche entered.

Therewith a new differentiation between what is man's and what is god's comes into being; once man accepts the psychological dimension, he abandons the innocence by which he remained unconscious through projecting everything. Meanwhile the gods, beginning with the enthronement of Zeus, no longer change; after Zeus there is no next generation ruler. This means that at a certain point the god image becomes static and further evolution belongs to human consciousness. The myths present this development in their language as the difference between Zeus' non-fathering of Achilles (the static god image) and Laius' failed non-fathering of Oedipus (the changing human image).

With the birth of Oedipus the gods recede into the background. What Freud rediscovered when he returned the attention of the twentieth-century mind to Oedipus is that Oedipus' search is the prototype for the mission of sorting out. Sorting out the complexities that, to follow Jung, are our complexes. Sorting out, not for therapeutic relief, but in order to be in touch. In this sense the image of the old wise Oedipus touching the daughter who leads him is a simple yet complete image of being led by the inner light, of knowing from within.

Are there a few generalizations which this loosely-connected material allows? In the first place, there seems strong reason to view Oedipus as the hero through whom the philosophy and psychology of creation move at last into the human world and become the task of man's self creation, the psychological task, the *opus contra naturam*. Oedipus is heir to the tradition of feared sons. The solution is to father the sons, become their father, his father as surviving husband-son of his mother, and then at the end of his life pass on a different father-son relationship, not on a biological level through blood, but on a personal level through choice to another who understands this new law of self-creation. That he is "tried" and punished is to enable him to become conscious of the destiny he has fulfilled and has ahead. So, though not just for Freud's original reasons, he is central to the image of analysis, of the discovery of the pattern the psyche has been following.

The mythological underpinnings to the events in Oedipus' life shares a recurrent motif of challenging the gods rights to their secrets. The most striking single instance is the god-man Dionysos who insists on his divinity —and woe to whoever is dubious. It is exactly that which Oedipus does; he is the prophet of man's divinity parallel and contrast to Tiersias who remains always the prophet of god's divinity and man's servitude. Oedipus proclaims that he waits neither for the gods to send him knowledge nor to

send him punishment; he can do both for himself. He becomes Tiresias, but at a new level of conscious integration.

Thinking about Oedipus leads finally to Jung's words on the positive mother-complex in the man which seems to describe Oedipus well:

> In the same way, what in its negative aspect is Don Juanism can appear positively as bold and resolute manliness; ambition striving after the highest goals; opposition to all stupidity, narrow-mindedness, injustice and laziness; willingness to make sacrifices for what is regarded as right; sometimes bordering on heroism, perseverance, inflexibility and toughness of will; a curiosity which does not shrink even from the riddle of the universe; and finally a revolutionary spirit which strives to put a new face upon the world.