

GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

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BACKGROUND AND AIMS The ancient Greek culture is the root of many aspects of western culture. In particular, more than 90% of medical terms have Greco-Roman origins, many of them derived from Greek mythology. We aim to review how those ancient tales inspired the daily practice of modern psychiatry

PSYCHE The personification of human soul: a beautiful princess whose beauty instigated the hatred of Aphrodite, who commissioned her son Eros to revenge her. Instead he fell in love with Psyche, visited her every night and departed before dawn, not allowing her to inquire who he was. When she disobeyed him and lit a lamp Eros deserted her. Psyche then wandered long in search of him and overcame hard labours imposed by Aphrodite. Eventually they reunited and Psyche became immortal. The terms *Psychiatry* and *Psychology* owe their etymological provenance to Psyche

EROS The son of Aphrodite and god of love, gave his name to *Erotomania*

PHOBOS Another son of Aphrodite. Although he was officially son of Hephaestus, his real father was Ares the god of war, whom he used to accompany into battle. The word *Phobia* was derived from his name ('fear' in Greek)

SATYRS Inebriated and promiscuous woodland gods, half men and half goats, gave their name to *Satyriasis*

PAN One of the satyrs that, in addition to his aptitude in playing the flute and dancing, enjoyed napping. Anyone who dared to wake him was terrified by his screeching yells, what originated the term *Panic*

HEBE The daughter of the goddess Hera and of Heracles, and personification of youth. It is the root of the term *Hebephrenic*

CONCLUSION Not only has Greek mythology made a lasting contribution to the etymology of the psychiatric vernacular (in a way that symptoms, disorders and behaviours resonate the characteristics of the figures they were named after), but also some legends disclose early concepts of medical knowledge

SOURCES [1] Loukas Athanasiadis. Greek mythology and medical and psychiatric terminology. *Psychiatric Bulletin* (1997), 21, 781-782; [2] Ioannis Karakis (2018): Neuroscience and Greek mythology, *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*; [3] Michele Fornaro, Nicoletta Clementi and Pantaleo Fornaro. Medicine and psychiatry in Western culture: Ancient Greek myths and modern prejudices