

Zackary Williams

John Williams

De Colloquio Socratico

5/Nov/09

Theseus

Theseus is a very interesting man. He was born out of wedlock and because of this, not wanting to reveal who his true father was, his mother told everyone that he was a son of Poseidon. This is why in his later years he and Pirithous swore to only marry daughters of Zeus. Later when he came of age, his mother showed him a stone that his real father had put over a shield, a sword, and a pair of boots, and told him to try to lift it. Because he was able to lift it, his mother told him who his father was. When he heard this he immediately left to travel, by land, to Athens. Upon finding the people of Athens subjected to the horrific tax of one shipload of youth per year to feed a terrible monster, he got his father's permission to try and defeat the beast. He gained this permission by promising that if he survived his encounter with the monster he would raise white sails on his return voyage. Then he left. But on his return voyage he forgot and there were dire consequences.

Before Theseus learned the true identity of his father, he believed he was a son of

Poseidon. Because Theseus and Pirithous were known as sons of Poseidon and Zeus, they felt it only right that they should marry daughters of Zeus. Therefore they pledged to do so. So they kidnapped Helen for Theseus and later went to get Persephone for Pirithous. When they got to Hades, Hades pretended to be hospitable, but actually plotted against them. Hades invited them in, and asked them to sit down. But when they did they got stuck and forgot everything. Later, Hercules freed Theseus during his twelfth task, but could not free Pirithous.

After Theseus was finally freed from that evil place, and with the knowledge that his true father was Aegeus, Theseus set off for Athens, and on the eighth day of Cronius he arrived. What he found was total disorder, with the public divided into parties and factions. He also found that Medea, having fled from Corinth, was living with his father whom she had promised to make capable of having children by her art. Medea was the first to be aware of the fact that Theseus had arrived. Aegeus was still not aware that the stranger was his son, and Theseus did not think it fit to tell him at that time. Because of these and other facts, Medea was able to persuade Aegeus to kill Theseus with poison at a banquet that he would be invited to. At the banquet, seeing the meat on the table, Theseus drew his sword as if he designed to cut it. At that instant, Aegeus recognized the sword and threw down the cup of poison. Then, after questioning Theseus, Aegeus owned him publicly.

Soon after he arrived in Athens he found that King Minos of Crete had conquered

Athens and had subjected it to a tax of one shipload of youth, to be sent each year, to feed Minos' monster, the Minotaur, in a great maze known as the Labyrinth. Because of this Theseus went to Crete with the other youth so that he could try to kill the Minotaur. When they reached Crete he was the first of the to go into the Labyrinth. After many hours of searching in the Labyrinth, so many that if not for the thread that Minos' daughter had given him he would have been lost, he found the Minotaur and after a fierce struggle slew the beast. Then he used the thread to get out. On his way home there was much merriment on the ship because he had killed the Minotaur, so much in fact that Theseus forgot to switch the sails from black to white which he had promised to do if he was triumphant. Because of this Aegeus saw black sails and in his grief fell off the cliff and died. In memory of this, the sea was called the Aegean sea.

Theseus did many great things. Some were for the good of the community in which he lived, Athens, some were for the good of others, some were to make himself popular, and some were for a combination of the these reasons. A few of the things he did, whatever his reasons may be, are that he killed the Minotaur, and set Athens free of King Minos' rule, which was a very great burden to them. He also made Athens a republic, which helped them get rid of the many parties and factions that had risen before his first arrival. And He helped his friend Pirithous try to capture Persephone. Because of these and many other reasons, Athens made him there patron hero. So why did I write this paper on Theseus rather than on

someone else, or rather what did I think was so important about him that we could apply to us today even though he lived thousands of years ago? Now there could be many reasons and among them there might be that he was very loyal to his friend and that we should follow his example in that aspect. Or that he was very loyal to his family and that should try to improve on that. We could also say that he did everything in his power to improve his city-state Athens, or for us our country and try to do that. All of this is true, but what I think the most important thing we can learn from him is that he did what he knew to be right and was not afraid to do so.

Works Cited

GUERBER, H. A. *The story of the GREEKS*. Print.

Plutarchus, Lucius Mestrius. *Plutarch's Lives*. Print.

"Theseus." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Web.