

# Living with Purpose versus Dying for Meaning: Application to Erik Erikson's Adolescent Stage of Development

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## Abstract

This article contrasts developmental and clinical axes to the problem of the adolescent stage as developed by Erik Erikson. We contrast biblical and Graeco-Roman narratives along a two-axis approach of human development to the problem of preventing suicide and promoting life across the lifespan, (i.e., individuation-Deindividuation and attachment-detachment). The present paper applies this approach to adolescence our two-axis view, in contrast, to Erikson, suggests that each stage is entered at the dystonic position (e.g. mistrust) and must be worked through vertically to achieve syntonicity (e.g. trust) necessary to move ahead successfully to the next advanced life stage.

**Keywords:** Psychology • Adolescent • Suicide • Clinical axes

## Introduction

Successful development involves forward regression to the next life stage, (temporarily moving backward in position to move forward in stage). In contrast to this successful congruent developmental advance is potential suicidal crisis engendered by an incongruent resolution of the individuation-attachment challenge at each life stage. This is accentuated by premature pressures to force an individual ahead to a more advanced life-stage that he/she may not yet be able to cope with.

## Literature Review

### Suicides in Greek tragedy

In his highly original work, *Suicide in Greek Tragedy* [1], identifies some 16 suicides and self-mutilations among the 223 characters depicted in the 26 surviving tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides yielding a suicide rate of 7.2% (Table 1). Applying Durkheim's typology, most of Sophocles' depicted suicides are egoistic (disconnected from others), while most of the suicides depicted by Euripides' are altruistic (enmeshed with others). Several of each is anomic (confused boundaries with others).

As can be seen in Table 1 suicide in Sophocles is ordinarily an active, aggressive self-murderous act (Ajax, Oedipus, Jocasta, Haemon, Eurydice, Deianeira), an act which expresses anger toward significant others and guilt over the breakdown of the idealized self. The self-destructive behavior of Heracles and Antigone are the only exceptions and tend to be more like the suicides depicted by Euripides. For Euripides, suicide (Alcestis, Polyxena, Evadne, Macaria, Iphigenia, and Menoeceus, all women except the last) is a more passive, acquiescing, self-sacrificial act, an act in which anticipation for and anxiety regarding the future is more conspicuous than anger over loss or guilt for past deeds [1].

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Whatever their motivation, four of Sophocles' eight suicides/self-destructive acts is male and can be classified as egoistic or anomic. Seven of Euripides' eight suicides/suicide threats are women and can be classified either as altruistic or anomic. One additional suicide occurs in the plays of the third great Greek tragedian, Aeschylus (Table 1).

In summary, Faber identifies some 16 suicides and self-mutilations among the 223 characters depicted in the 26 surviving tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides yielding a suicide rate of 7.2% [1].

### Suicides in the Hebrew bible

Table 2 applies Durkheim's terminology to the much smaller number in biblical narratives: Only 6 suicides can be found in the Hebrew scriptures. Three can be classified as egoistic (Ahitophel, Zimri and Abimelech) and three are altruistic (Saul, Saul's armor bearer and Samson). The important point here is the far fewer number of suicides in Hebrew scriptures.

Some 2,855 different people (2,730 men and 1125 women) are mentioned in the 39 books of the Hebrew scriptures spanning a period of 3,330 years (see Ziffer, 2006). Only six are identified as completed suicides (Table 2), yielding an overall suicide rate of 6/2855 or 0.02%, including none by women. A huge chi-Square statistic emerges when we compare this biblical rate of 0.02 to the 7.2 % suicide rates in the 26 plays of Sophocles and Euripides (chi-Square=141.39 p<.001) (Table 2).

In addition, the Hebrew scriptures present six suicide-prevention narratives absent in Greek writing (Table 3).

### Suicide preventions in the Hebrew bible

Three (Ahitophel, Zimri and Abimelech) can be classified as egoistic, one as altruistic (Saul's armor bearer) and two as covenantal, a category we have created as an indicant of a sense of one's duty to a Higher power (Samson and Saul). Let us examine the three egoistic suicides first. Ahitophel, a counselor of King David, has joined Absalom's rebellion against the king. However, when he realizes that Absalom has been tricked into following a foolhardy plan certain to lead to defeat, Ahitophel sets his house in order and strangles himself:" referred at 2 Sam. 17:23.

Zimri is also an egoistic suicide, with no obvious redeeming qualities. King Elah of Israel passes his days drinking in his palace while his warriors battle the Philistines. Zimri, a high-ranking officer, takes advantage of this situation, assassinates Elah, and mounts the throne. His reign, however, lasts only seven days. As soon as the news of King Elah's murder reaches the army on the battlefield, they pronounce General Omri to be king and lay siege to the palace. When Zimri sees that he is unable to hold out against the siege, he

**Table 1.** Suicides in Greek tragedy.

Character	Gender	Source	Method	Type
Ajax	M	Ajax (Sophocles)	Sword	Egoistic
Deianeira	F	The Trachinae (Sophocles)	Sword	Egoistic
Eurydice	F	Antigone (Sophocles)	Knife	Egoistic
Haemon	M	Antigone (Sophocles)	Sword	Egoistic
Jocasta	F	Oedipus Rex (Sophocles)	Hanging	Egoistic
Oedipus	M	Oedipus Rex (Sophocles)	Self-blinding	Egoistic
Antigone	F	Antigone (Sophocles)	Hanging	Anomic
Heracles	M	The Trachinae (Sophocles)	Burning	Anomic
Hermione	F	Andromache (Euripides)	Suicidal threats	Anomic
Phaedra	F	(Euripides)	Hanging	Anomic
Alcestis	F	(Euripides)	Poisoned	Altruistic
Evadne	F	(Euripides)	Burning	Altruistic
Iphigenia	F	(Euripides)	Axe	Altruistic
Macaria	F	(Euripides)	Knife	Altruistic
Menoceus	F	(Euripides)	Jumped	Altruistic
Polyxena	F	(Euripides)	Sword	Altruistic

**Note:** M: Male; F: Female

**Table 2.** Suicides in Hebrew Bible.

Character	Gender	Source	Method	Type
Saul	M	1 Sam. 31:4;2 Sam. 1:6;1 Chron.10:4	Sword	Altruistic
Saul's Armor Beare	M	1 Sam. 31:5;1 Chron. 10:5	Sword	Altruistic
Ahitophel	M	2 Sam. 17:23	Strangling	Egoistic
Zimri	M	1 Kings 16:18	Burning	Egoistic
Abimelech	M	Judg. 9:54	Sword	Egoistic
Samson	M	Judg. 16:30	Crushing	Altruistic

**Note:** M: Male; F: Female

**Table 3.** Suicide Preventions in the Hebrew Bible.

Character	Gender	Source	Method
Rebecca	F	Genesis 27-28	Appropriate matchmaking
Moses	M	Numbers 11	Support and practical advice
Elijah	M	1 Kings 18-19	Protected withdrawal and nurturance
Jonah	M	Jonah	Protected withdrawal and guidance
David	M	Psalms 22	Renewal of faith in God
Job	M	Job	Renewal of relationship

**Note:** M: Male; F: Female

sets fire to the palace and perishes in the flames: "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and he died" referred at 1 Kings. 16:18.

Abimelech's suicide is also egoistic. After carving out a principality for himself in Israel by means of various brutalities, he is mortally wounded by a millstone that a woman throws from a fortress he is besieging. Realizing that he is dying, Abimelech asks his armor bearer to finish him off so that it will not be said that a woman has killed him. This act qualifies him as an egoistic suicide, and a certain woman cast an upper millstone upon Abimelech's head and broke his skull. Then he called quickly to the young man, his armor-bearer,

and said to him: "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So, his young man thrust him through, and he died referred at Judg. 9:53–57.

It is tempting to see Samson as the biblical equivalent of Sophocles' Ajax. Samson, like Ajax has fallen from his previous state of leadership. Is he, too, using suicide to restore his lost image in the eyes of others? Closer examination indicates that Samson's suicide is not egoistic like that of Ajax: He is not alienated from his society but is very much a part of the people of Israel. However, I would argue that a fuller examination of the narrative of Samson's life suggests that he be categorized as a covenantal suicide.

We must remember that he had been blinded and publicly mocked by the

Philistines. Faced with torture and death, Samson asked God for the strength to take as many Philistines with him as possible; when granted his request, he pulled down the central pillars of the temple of Dagon, killing thousands in one last blow: And Samson called to the Lord, saying, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once."... And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with all his might and the temple fell on the lords and on all the people who were in it referred at Judg. 16:28–30.

A second covenantal suicide is that of King Saul. Rabbinic literature has regarded King Saul as a man of great stature, the anointed of the Lord. Yet, his reign was marked by series of mistakes, ending with his own suicide during a losing battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. Saul has seen three of his sons and many of his fighters slain, and he himself is severely wounded. Surrounded by enemies and not wishing to be taken prisoner and exposed to the mockery and brutality of the Philistines, King Saul entreats his armor-bearer to kill him. The latter refuses, and Saul falls on his own sword: "Then Saul said to his armor-bearer: 'Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.' But his armor-bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore, Saul took a sword, and fell on it" referred at 1 Sam. 31:4.

The suicide of Saul's armor-bearer can be classified as altruistic because of his seeming lack of differentiation from Saul: "And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him" referred at 1 Sam. 31:5. The biblical passage tells us that the armor-bearer first refuses to kill Saul and then falls on his own sword in response to Saul's suicide. In a related narrative, an Amalekite comes to David and reports that he has assisted in Saul's suicide; for this, David orders him killed which is referred at 2 Sam. 1:9-10, 13-16. Commentaries have seen David as behaving correctly in condemning the Amalekite to death, even though the Amalekite was simply following Saul's orders in assisting the latter to die referred at Ralbag on 2 Sam. 1:14.

There is no example of Durkheim's anomic suicide in the Hebrew Bible; the six suicides seem to be egoistic, altruistic, or covenantal. The most sympathetic rabbinic treatment is given to the altruistic (or perhaps covenantal) suicides (Samson and Saul). The harshest judgments are applied to suicides that seem clearly egoistic (Ahitophel, Zimri, and Abimelech). The important point here is the far fewer number of suicides in the Hebrew Scriptures. Whatever their motivation, it is important to emphasize the 16 suicides in the 26 surviving plays of Sophocles and Euripides (or 17 if we include the 7 surviving plays of Aeschylus) in comparison to the much smaller number of 6 occurring in biblical narratives.

**Seven Graeco-Romans versus biblical narratives facing a common stressor: The Greeks die and the Jews live**

We then matched seven Graeco-Roman suicide narratives with seven Biblical suicide prevention narratives around a common stressor"

- Feeling isolated and ignored
- Feeling one's life is without purpose
- Feeling exiled from one's home or homeland (feeling as a refugee or an outcast)
- Feeling unable to be oneself with others

- Feeling one is alone in one's life mission
- Feeling abandoned by one's child "empty-nest syndrome"
- Feeling doomed by a dysfunctional family of origin

We contrasted biblical and Greek narratives regarding each of these factors respectively:

- Elijah against Ajax
- Job against Zeno
- David against Coriolanus
- Jonah against Narcissus
- Moses against Oedipus
- Rebecca against Phaedra, and finally
- Ruth against Antigone.

These biblical figures thrive across risk factors while their Greek and Roman counterparts kill or mutilate themselves or provoke others to do the job. Let us briefly discuss these in greater detail tabular form.

**Seven comparisons across seven risk factors**

All these contrasts should demonstrate to psychotherapists, counselors, and clergy alike as to how Greek narratives lead to self-destructive behaviors while biblical narratives provide a hopeful positive psychology, and a constructive way out these dilemmas. My colleagues (Matthew Schwartz, Paul Cantz and Moriah Markus-Kaplan) call for a biblical psychotherapy for positive psychology, suicide prevention, and indeed life promotion. Where hope is locked up in Pandora's urn after all she has released all the evils unto the world, it is symbolized in the sky as a bow after Noah and his family and all the creatures on the ark disembark to land after the receding of the flood.

We compare the Greek suicide story of Ajax with the biblical suicide-prevention story of Elijah with regard to the suicidal implications of being isolated (Table 4).

Feeling one's life is without underlying purpose treating the Zeno Syndrome with the Job Intervention (Table 5).

Feeling exiled from one's home or homeland (as a refugee or outcast): Treating the Coriolanus Syndrome with the David Intervention (Table 6).

Feeling one is unable to be oneself with others: treating the Narcissus Syndrome with the Jonah intervention (Table 7).

Being Unable to Seek or Accept Help from Anyone (Table 8).

Feeling abandoned by one's child leaving the family nest and building his/ her own life: Treating the Phaedra Syndrome with the Rebecca Intervention (Table 9).

Feeling doomed by a dysfunctional family of origin: Treating the Antigone Syndrome with the Ruth Intervention (Table 10).

Let us now apply this analysis to the problem of adolescence as developed by Erik Erikson. We will apply Durkheim's distinction between altruistic, egoistic and anomic styles discussed above. Erikson's very important adolescent stage (approximately ages 12 to 22). It is initiated by the fifth life event in Erikson's (LE 5) of social identity demands that forwardly regresses the syntonically

**Table 4.** Elijah against Ajax.

Stage	Ajax	Elijah
1.PrecipitatingStressor	Ajax is humiliated by both Agamemnon and Athena	Elijah is overwhelmed and exhausted from his harassment by Queen Jezebel
2. Reaction	Ajax says he wants to die	Elijah says he wants to die
3. Response of Others	Ajax is allowed to leave his tent alone.	Elijah is sent an angel who brings him food, drink and companionship and lets him rest.
4. Effect	Ajax kills himself by falling on his sword	Elijah recovers his strength and continues his mission in Horeb and is given the younger Elisha to help him.

**Table 5.** Job against Zeno.

Stage	Zeno	Job
1. Precipitating stressor	Zeno the Stoic trips and stubs/breaks a toe on the way back from giving a lecture at the Stoa.	Job suddenly and unexpectedly loses his property, his children and his health
2. Reaction	Zeno interprets this as a sign from the gods he should depart.	Though Job complains, he maintains his innocence faith in God despite his misfortunes.
3. Response of others	No mention made of reaction of others	Job's friends tell him that he must be guilty, and his wife tells him to curse God and die.
4. Effect	Zeno immediately holds his breath until he dies.	Job steadfastly maintains his faith in God while proclaiming his innocence and he is restored.

**Table 6.** David against Coriolanus.

Stage	Coriolanus	David
1. Precipitating stressor	Coriolanus, a Roman military hero, antagonizes his countrymen and is exiled from Rome.	David, a military hero in Israel, flees from Israel to escape Saul's murderous jealousy and wrath
2. Reaction	Coriolanus joins the Volsci, the enemy of Rome, in order to wreak vengeance against Rome.	David joins the Philistines, the enemy of Israel, but maintains his love of Israel.
3. Response of others	The Romans fear Coriolanus will lead the Volsci in battle against Rome, yet he is still not trusted by the Volsci and ultimately does not attack Rome.	David avoids fighting against his beloved Israelites, attacking instead common enemies of Israel and the Philistines.
4. Effect	Coriolanus withdraws the Volsci from attacking Rome but remains condescending and insulting to the Volsci who murder him.	David is spared fighting against the Israelites and is thus able to be loyal both to King Achish of the Philistines and to Israel. David subsequently becomes King of Israel

**Table 7.** Jonah against Narcissus.

Stage	Narcissus	Jonah
1. Precipitating stressor	Narcissus born of a rape of his mother. Prophesied to have a long-life if	God asks Jonah to go and warn the wicked people of Nineveh to repent lest they avoid great punishment. Jonah does not want to go and runs away to Tarshish to avoid the conflict.
2. Reaction	The beautiful Narcissus heartlessly exhibits hubris by rejecting would be lovers of both genders.	God sends a great storm when Jonah is on a ship. When his identity as a Hebrew is discovered, he tells his shipmates that he is the reason for the storm and asks his shipmates to throw him overboard. However, rather than let Jonah drown, God sends a big fish to swallow him, thus allowing him to recover his strength.
3. Response of others	Narcissus is brought down by Nemesis and becomes completely infatuated with a face he encounters in a brook.	After the fish vomits out the restored Jonah unto dry land, God again asks him to go to Nineveh to warn its inhabitants to repent and change their ways.
4. Effect	Narcissus realizes the face in the brook is his, and thus unobtainable. He commits suicide, either in a passive (pining away) or active (stabbing himself) manner, depending on the source.	Jonah warns the people of Nineveh but becomes suicidal again and sits outside the city walls under a hot sun. God again protects Jonah through shielding him from the sun with a large gourd. Ultimately God removes the gourd, and in addressing Jonah's complaint, teaches him the lesson of mercy and compassion-that he need not lose himself in reaching out to others.

**Table 8.** Moses against Oedipus.

Stage	Oedipus	Moses
1. Precipitating stressor	Oedipus's mother sends the infant Oedipus away to be exposed on mountain top and die.	Moses's mother sends the infant Moses away to save him from being killed by Pharaoh.
2. Reaction	Oedipus is rescued and raised by the king of a neighboring state, Corinth	Moses is rescued and raised by the daughter of Pharaoh
3. Response of others	Oedipus's identity is questioned, and he has no one to talk to. He attempts unsuccessfully to gain usable information from the Oracle of Delphi, who speaks in riddles and entraps Oedipus into patricide and incest.	Moses sees an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite and kills him with a rock. He flees Egypt, but God appears to Moses and chooses him to lead the Israelites against Egypt and give him necessary help (Aaron, a Sanhedrin).
4. Effect	Oedipus attempts to save Thebes from a plague but is undone by misinformation and riddles from others, resulting in Oedipus's self-blinding as well as many killings and suicides.	Moses is able to carry out his mission in leading the Israelites to freedom.

industrious school age child into an initial dystonic position of normal identity confusion (B5). A child may well present clinically with an adjustment reaction. The social radius (SR5) of adolescence is peer groups and out groups. The life task is to find what groups to join and what groups to avoid. The adolescent may experience a sense of narcissistic grandiosity with the resultant lack of ability to commit to any particular group. This stage has been studied at length by Marcia (1966, 1980) and by Bourne (1978a, 1978b) among others and describes the process by which an adolescent matures to the point of

being able to achieve a social identity allowing him to make a realistic social commitment.

### Healthy developmental integration

The core strength for Erikson at Stage 5 is fidelity, which is realized through the integrated achievement of both individuation (Marcia's exploration) and attachment (Marcia's commitment). A successful integrated progression along the developmental B->E->D axis with regard to both of these life issues leads to a syntonic position of identity achievement (D5) which for Marcia involves



**Table 9.** Rebecca against Phaedra.

Stage	Phaedra	Rebecca
1. Precipitating stressor	Phaedra falls passionately in love with her stepson Hippolytus, wanting him for herself.	Rebecca is concerned that her son Jacob will marry a totally unsuitable Hittite woman
2. Reaction	Phaedra attempts to resist her passion but becomes very depressed.	Rebecca tells her husband Isaac that "her life will not be worth living" if Jacob marries a Hittite woman, like his brother Esau did.
3. Response of others	Phaedra's servant betrays the secret of her infatuation to Hippolytus.	Isaac sends Jacob away to marry a daughter of Rebecca's brother Laban.
4. Effect	Phaedra hangs herself and leaves a note to her husband Theseus falsely accusing Hippolytus of raping her, leading to his death.	Rebecca is satisfied and does not speak of suicide again.

**Table 10.** Ruth against Antigone.

Stage	Antigone	Ruth
1. Precipitating stressor	Antigone is direct product of an unintentional incestuous relationship between Oedipus and his mother Jocasta.	Ruth is a descendant of an intentional incestuous relationship on the part of Lot's eldest daughter with her father, albeit conducted for a positive reason.
2. Reaction	Though raised in a seemingly secure home, Antigone does not seem to be able to separate from her family of origin	Though Ruth is widowed at an early age and away from her native land, she does not seem to be enmeshed and indeed is able to bond to her also widowed mother-in-law Naomi
3. Response of others	Antigone over-identified with her family of origin and winds up being buried alive because she will not leave her brother fighting against Thebes to remain unburied.	Naomi accepts Ruth as her daughter and brings Ruth back with her to Judah and facilitates Ruth's marriage to Boaz, the kinsman of Naomi.
4. Effect	Antigone hangs herself, rejecting her wood is lover. Antigone means in Greek against generativity (semen).	Ruth thrives and becomes a mother of Obed, and ancestress of King David and the Davidic line. Integrates Naomi into her family in a beautiful way.

an individual who has undergone exploration and made commitments. A number of studies have shown that such individuals do well on a number of achievement and interpersonal indicators [2-6] A child showing D5 identity behaviors is ready to face the Stage 6 life event of young adulthood (LE6)-appropriate personal identity demands. The therapist should try to facilitate this process. The adolescent will forwardly regress as a function of meeting these demands to the B6 stage of normal isolation characteristic of the early part of adolescence.

### Potentially suicidal disintegration

The core pathology at this stage has been described by Erikson as repudiation, which can lead to fixation and oscillation on the clinical AC axis expressed either in what Stierlin has called "expelling" (adolescents pushed by their families into premature autonomy) or "binding" (adolescents infantilized by their families) [7] Such adolescents may present with a ICD9 classification of either as an A5 Separation Anxiety Disorder (309.21) or a Cs Avoidant Disorder of Childhood or Adolescence (313.21). The A5 position corresponds to Durkheim's altruistic position. The adolescent in this position is insufficiently differentiated from others in his social environment. The C5 position corresponds to Durkheim's egoistic position. The adolescent in this position is insufficiently differentiated from others in his social environment.

Depression (represents the clearest example of A5 behavior and is the most common pathological symptom of suicidal individuals of all ages [8, 9]. The depressed adolescent who has suicidal thoughts is greatly at risk for suicide [10-13.] Again, this corresponds to Durkheim's altruistic suicide. The work of Shaffer highlights the prevalence of depressive symptoms among adolescent suicide attempters and adolescent suicide completers [14] report a positive correlation between level of depression and lethality of suicide attempts among 505 adolescents admitted to a hospital emergency room for suicide attempts.

The importance of depression in adolescent suicide attempts has also emerged in the findings of [15-17]. The C5 polarity may also be a factor in suicidal behavior, whether expressed in pathological social isolation or antisocial behaviors.

Both Hawton and Seiden have pointed to the role of social isolation in adolescent suicide [18,19]. This corresponds to Durkheim's egoistic suicide. Contributing to this sense of social isolation is the pervasiveness of high degree of family mobility. In the past, the highest degree of suicide occurs in the Western region of the United States which also represented the highest

degree of family relocation. The lowest incidence of suicide occurred in the Northwest which has the lowest degree of family relocation. Topol, et al. has pointed to the role of social isolation in youth suicide. They observe that many adolescent suicides have had a history of difficulty in relating to peers [20]. They rarely have close friends and are "non joiners" who are often invisible to peers and teachers. Apter, et al. and Recklitis, et al. have reported a significant number of suicidal adolescents that were not depressed but presented with either a conduct disorder (312.89) or anti-social personality disorder (301.7), both representative of a C5 position [21,22].

A child exhibiting these A-C depressive-aggressive behaviors is not ready for the precipitating Life Event (LE) of young adulthood-appropriate personal identity demands, and the therapist should consider attempting to delay this event to protect the child from it as much as possible. If he fails, the premature demands of social identity may well trigger an A/C suicidal crisis. Here the (A/C) 5 borderline child may show signs of both depression and aggression in an attempt to simulate a pseudo identity and may even be at greater risk for suicide than before. Indeed, this is exactly the finding emerging from the previously cited work of Borst, et al. who report that the majority of suicidal adolescents in their study were diagnosed with a mixed (A/C) 5 conduct-affective disorders [17]. This confused, indeed conflictual, disorder corresponds to the most lethal suicide in Durkheim's typology, the anomic suicide. This describes an adolescent with confused and even contradictory needs.

The conduct disorders in their sample have a much lower incidence of suicide than do the affective disorders, leading Borst, Noam and Bartok to warn against the suicidal risk inherent in premature development. They suggest that "the self-protective and externalizing qualities of the earlier developmental positions put a person at greater risk for impulsivity, acting-out, or delinquency but may shield the adolescent from directing the aggression against the self, as the problem is viewed as mainly externally located". This squares with findings of Brent, et al. indicating that completed adolescent suicides were more likely to evidence a bipolar disorder or a major affective disorder with comorbidity than adolescents hospitalized with suicidal behavior [23-30].

### The role of hope

Nothing is more critical in the above comparisons is the presence or absence of hope in Greek and biblical writings In the Greek account, Zeus sends Pandora, the first woman, to man (Epimetheus) as punishment for his half-brother Prometheus stealing fire and thus gaining some autonomy [31-40]. One day, Pandora decides to open the box that Zeus had sent along with

her. The box contained all the evils in the world, which fly out. Pandora closes the lid as quickly as she could, but too late; only hope remains locked in the box, and unavailable to people [41-50].

Hebrew scriptures portray a very different picture. In contrast to the Greek portrayal of Zeus as withholding fire from man, rabbinic sages portray the biblical God as teaching Adam after his expulsion from Eden how to exist in the dark world by making fire by rubbing together two flints God is portrayed as doing this because He is portrayed as having compassion for man referred at Babylonian Talmud, Midrash Genesis Rabbah 11:2) [51-60]. There is of course the biblical story of God sending a great flood in response to human wickedness. However, at the same time, the biblical God gives Noah a blueprint to build a saving ark [61-70]. After the great flood ceases albeit in response to man's wicked behavior, all living creatures, male and female come out from the ark built by Noah and repopulate the earth through their sexual union. God places a rainbow in the heavens as a sign of His covenant with man that he will not send another flood referred at Genesis 9: 13. The bow becomes the very symbol of hope [71-75].

## Conclusion

Nowhere is this contrast more relevant than in the prevention of suicide. Biblical narratives provide a stopper to suicidal crises unavailable in the tragic Greek myths so ingrained in psycho-logical thinking. We had better be careful which humanities and humanians we pine for. In the biblical narratives, you can't lose for winning, while in classical narratives you can't win for losing... And lives are on the line! Ultimately our lives and those near and dear to us.

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