H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, London: Methuen, 1928, s. 205–219 (zkráceno)

Hérakleovo zrození a dětství

Mention has already been made several times of Herakles, the most famous of all Greek heroes, and the common property of the entire race. While properly associated with Tiryns, Herakles is claimed by Thebes, where, according to the usual legend, he was born.

Elektryon, king of Mycenae, had a quarrel with the sons of Pterelaos, king of the Teleboans. In the fighting, all the sons of Elektryon save one, Likymnios, and all the sons of Pterelaos except Eueres, were killed; Elektryon, as Likymnios was still a child, handed over his kingdom to Amphitryon, son of Alkaios, who was betrothed to his daughter Alkmene. But by an unfortunate accident, Amphitryon killed Elektryon, and had therefore to leave the country and take refuge in Thebes. Alkmene bore him no malice, but insisted that he should avenge the quarrel of her father and brothers before she would live with him. Amphitryon therefore asked Kreon, who was then king of Thebes, to give him an army to attack the Teleboans; Kreon consented, if Amphitryon would first rid the country of a monstrous fox, which was fated never to be caught by any pursuer. Amphitryon collected volunteers, to whom he promised a share of the booty expected from the Teleboans. One of those who responded was Kephalos of Athens, who brought with him the marvellous hound given to his wife Prokris by Minos ; this was fated to catch whatever it chased. The hunt began, and Zeus solved the riddle of the uncatchable fox pursued by the invariably successful hound by turning both into stone. Now began the campaign against the Teleboans, in which Amphitryon won and returned in triumph to Thebes.

But meanwhile, the beauty of Alkmene had attracted Zeus. Taking the form of Amphitryon, he visited her on the very night of her husband's return, which he made three times the usual length. Later in the night, the real Amphitryon came to her, and she conceived twin children. One, Amphitryon's son, Iphikles or Iphiklos, was an ordinary child, not destined to any very distinguished career; the other was Herakles. In this story we have a very widespread belief, firstly that twins are apt to be in some way remarkable, or that one of them is, and secondly that one of the two is the child of a god or spirit of some kind, not of the mother's mortal consort.

Hera, who knew to what glory her husband's bastard was destined, was furious and did everything in her power to kill or at least hamper him ; to her machinations, in the story as we have it, nearly all his misfortunes and trials are due. Before his birth, she robbed him of his true inheritance; for Zeus had meant him to be lord of the surrounding peoples. But on the day when his birth was expected, he mentioned this, and Hera tricked him into an ambiguous oath: 'Verily, he that this day is born of a woman, of the race that boasts my blood, shall be lord of all that dwell around him.' Now Menippe, the wife of Sthenelos, was seven months gone with child; as her husband was of the blood of Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danae, the conditions would be fulfilled if she that day bore a son. Hera sent the Eileithyai to delay the birth of Alkmene's children and bring Menippe's into the world before his time. She bore Eurystheus, who thus got the benefit of the oath of Zeus.

Ovid has an amusing and obviously popular tale on this subject. Eileithyia, to prevent Alkmene from being delivered, sat seven days and nights with her hands clasped on her knees, a well-known magical gesture to bind anything. But Alkmene had a clever waiting-maid, Galanthis, who noticed the attitude of the goddess and recognized her and her intentions. She ran hastily out from the house and cried to Eileithyia, 'Give my mistress your congratulations; she is safely delivered.' Eileithyia, in astonishment, sprang up and raised her hands; at once the charm was undone, and Alkmene suddenly found herself a happy mother. Galanthis, however, was seized by Eileithyia and turned into a lizard, which still runs about houses.

Hera then sent two serpents to attack Herakles and his brother in their cradle; Herakles clutched their necks in his hands and choked them to death.

Hérakleova dvě manželství

On Mt. Kithairon, at the age of eighteen, he killed a lion, which was preying not only on the herds of Amphitryon but on those of Thespios, king

and eponym of the town Thespiai. Thespios entertained him hospitably. He had fifty daughters, and was desirous that some at least of them should bear children to his mighty guest. He therefore arranged that on every one of the fifty nights which Herakles passed with him, one of them should share his couch. In another version, Herakles enjoyed the favours of all fifty in one night; or, one of the fifty would have nothing to do with him, and he therefore assigned her as a maiden priestess to his temple at Thespiai.

On the way back from his visit and from the hunt of the lion, he fell in with messengers from Erginos, king of the Minyai of Orchomenos, coming to collect the tribute from Thebes. Herakles cut off the noses and ears of the messengers, hung them around their necks, and told them they might take those to their king by way of tribute. Erginos naturally attacked Thebes at once, but Herakles, armed by Athena and backed by the Theban army, routed him and made the Orchomenians pay double tribute to the Thebans in future. Kreon rewarded Herakles by giving him his daughter Megara in marriage; his younger daughter married Iphikles, who was already the father of a son, Iolaos.

Herakles' marriage had a horrible ending. After he had lived with Megara happily for some years and several children had been born to them, Hera again began to persecute him, this time by sending on him a fit of furious homicidal madness. In this state he imagined Megara and her children to be enemies, and killed them all. As to when this terrible thing happened, authorities differ; what may perhaps be called the orthodox story, that in Apollodoros, says that it was the cause of his servitude to Eurystheus. Herakles went into voluntary exile; Thespios performed on him the formal rites of purification demanded by Greek religion for any blood-shed ; but he was not satisfied, and went to Delphoi to seek advice. The prophetess for the first time called him Herakles, – he had previously been known as Alkeides, in commemoration of his reputed father's father, – and bade him go to Tiryns, there to serve Eurystheus for twelve years. If he performed the tasks Eurystheus should set him, he would be immortal. The Euripidean version, however, puts the madness after the performance of the last of the Twelve Labours.

Herakles married again, this time Deianeira, daughter of Oineus of Kalydon; for her he had to fight the river-god Acheloos. Acheloos had the power of taking various shapes, such as those of a bull and a serpent; Herakles, however, was too much for him, and not only mastered him in wrestling but broke off one of his horns. The hero then departed, taking Deianeira with him. On the way they came to a flooded river, the Euenos, which she could not cross; a centaur, Nessos, offered to carry her, while Herakles shifted for himself. Herakles agreed, but Nessos tried to assault Deianeira, for which Herakles promptly shot him. As he lay dying, he gave her the apparently friendly advice to take some of the blood from his wound and keep it safely, for if ever Herakles became indifferent to her, she could win back his love by smearing some of the blood on a garment and giving it him to wear. She therefore kept the supposed charm in a safe place. The marriage lasted for years, and Deianeira bore Herakles several sons, the eldest being Hyllos.

Dvanáct prací

Quite early in the history of his legend some one, it is not known who, made a sort of canonical list of twelve exploits, supposed to have been performed in the service of Eurystheus, which are known as the *athloi,* a word generally rendered by *labores* in Latin, *labours* in English; but both translations are rather inadequate. We are quite in the dark as to why this number in particular was chosen. The Twelve Labours, then, in what is more or less their canonical order, are as follows.

I. Práce vykonané na Peloponnésu

1. *The Nemean Lion.* This creature was the offspring either of Orthros and Echidna, or of Selene, and was brought on the scene by Hera, for the usual reason, that she wished to trouble and endanger Herakles. It was an especially formidable beast, because it was invulnerable. Herakles therefore could of course make no impression on it with his bow or other weapons; but his club served him in better stead. Having battered the lion, he closed with it and choked it in his arms. The next business was to skin it, which according to the Theokritean account he managed at length to do by using its own claws. Henceforth its skin was his invariable wear, if we may

believe our literary sources; it is anything but certain that artists of the earlier periods knew the hero as having either lion-skin or club.

Plenty of fanciful details are to be found in various authors; Apollodoros for instance says that Eurystheus was much alarmed when Herakles returned with the lion's skin on his shoulders, and forbade him in future to enter the city. For further security, the cowardly king used to crawl into a bronze pot whenever Heracles came anywhere near with his latest capture, such as Kerberos.

2. *The Hydra.* This was a serpent, the offspring of Typhon and Echidna, and lived in the swamps of Lerna. The name means simply 'water-snake', but from quite early times the creature was represented as haying numerous heads, anywhere from five to a hundred; nine is a favourite number. Most authors add that as fast as a head was cut off, another (or two more) grew up in its place. To make matters worse, Hera sent the Hydra an ally in the shape of a great crab, which however Herakles smashed under his foot. But, as a favourite proverb had it in later times, 'even Herakles could not fight two', and as the crab had helped the Hydra he called in Iolaos to help him. The latter brought firebrands, and whenever Herakles cut off a head, Iolaos cauterized the stump, thus preventing any more growing up there. In the end the monster was lolled. Herakles dipped his arrows in its blood, thus making any wound from them deadly.' The crab *(cancer)* became the constellation so called.

3. *The Erymanthian Boar.* This is perhaps the most uninteresting of all the adventures, although sixth-century vase-painters loved to show Herakles returning with his prey, while Eurystheus cowers in his bronze jar and peeps anxiously out at the beast. It was to be caught alive; Herakles therefore frightened it out of its lair by shouting, chased it into deep snow, and there netted it and so carried it off on his shoulders.

4. *The Hind of Keryneia.* According to most accounts, thii ; was sacred to Artemis ; Euripides represents it as a dangerous creature and says that Herakles killed it, but that is apparently his own invention, certainly contrary to all other tradition. < Being sacred, it might not, of course, be hurt; but caught it j might be. Herakles pursued it for a whole year, and finally? ran it down, or came upon it while it slept, and made off with it. Then Artemis met him, escorted by Apollo, and claimed her property. Herakles threw the blame on his employer, and was allowed to carry the hind back to Argos, where he let it go.

The hind, despite her sex, contrived to have antlers, which were of gold; her hooves were of bronze, according at least to Vergil.As to where she led him in the long chase which ended in her capture, accounts differed; roughly speaking, they varied from the ends of the Peloponnesos to the ends of the earth.

5. *The Stymphalian Birds.* Stymphalos in Arkadia had a lake thickly wooded on its shores, which had become a perfect sanctuary for birds. These Herakles was commissioned to drive out. After some thought, he made a bronze rattle, or got one from Athena, of Hephaistos' manufacture, and with this frightened them out of their coverts; he is generally represented as having then shot them. As to why anyone should want them shot, answers vary widely; they were so numerous that they destroyed the crops; or they had feathers as sharp as arrows, which wounded those who came near; or, they were man-eaters.

6. *The Stables of Augeias.* Augeias, son of Helios and king of Elis, had, like his father, great herds of cattle. As their stables were never cleaned, the amount of dirt that had accumulated was enormous; Herakles was set to cleanse them, which he did in a single day; a common explanation of how he managed it was, that he turned the course of a river (Alpheios or some other, real or imaginary) through the stables.

II. PRÁCE VYKONANÉ MIMO PELOPONNÉSOS

7. *The Cretan Bull.* This, according to Akusilaos, was the one on which Europe arrived in the island (clearly, to him, her mount was not Zeus in disguise); most people said it was Pasiphae's bull. In any case Herakles caught it alive, showed it to Eurystheus, and then let it go; it wandered about for some time, finally taking up its quarters at Marathon.

8. *Horses of Diomedes.* This Diomedes was a son of Ares and Kyrene, and king of the Bistonians. His horses were accustomed to be fed with human flesh. Herakles gathered a volunteer force and set out to bring

them to Eurystheus; or, according to the form of the story followed by Euripides and probably older, he went alone. Diomedes was either killed in battle, or else fed to his own steeds; this latter procedure made them quite tame, and they were safely brought to Argos, where Herakles dedicated them to Hera, as some say he had the bull.

9. *Girdle of the Amazon.* Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons, had a girdle which for some reason was a very desirable object. When one considers that the Amazons probably have no relation to any real people, but are inhabitants of that fairyland which stretches away from the borders of the known world, and that the girdle, or any other article of clothing commonly worn, retains a good deal of the personal qualities of its owner, it is obvious that such an article as this was a very natural thing for Eurystheus to want. The story is connected with a relic which was shown in the temple of Hera at Argos in classical times as being the very girdle itself. Herakles set out, with or without an army, and defeated the Amazons, capturing Melanippe, their general; the girdle paid the price of her freedom. Or, Hippolyte herself fell and the girdle was taken from her dead body.

10. *Geryon.* To the classical mythologists, Geryon was a monster living somewhere towards the sunset, to reach whom Herakles had to take a very long journey. The oldest account is, that he sailed the stream of Okeanos in the golden cup of the Sun, which he got from Okeanos, or from Helios himself; in either case, he drew his bow against the god, and forced him to give up the goblet. He killed Orthros, the herdsman Eurytion, and finally Geryon himself, and put the cattle on board the cup, in which he sailed back. Later forms of the legend make his return a much harder business. Herakles, having got to the farthest west, set up a monument of his presence there, the famous Pillars of Herakles, somewhere on the Straits of Gibraltar, although the ancient geographers were not agreed as to what or where exactly they were. Now he was obliged to make his way back through Spain, France, and Italy, in constant danger from robbers, who were tempted by his booty. Finally he reached home safely.

11. *Kerberos.* Here, more plainly than in any other adventure, we find Herakles doing as many heroes do, and harrying Hell. It was the most terrible of all his tasks, and he could not have accomplished it, but that Athena and Hermes guided and befriended him. The tale, which is as old as Homer, represents him simply as going down to the nether regions and bringing Kerberos back with him. But Homer has heard of an older tale yet, in which Herakles fought with and wounded Hades in person, ‘in the Gate, among the dead’. He captured Kerberos, brought him up, showed him to Eurystheus, and then fetched him back again.

12. *The Hesperides.* Finally, Eurystheus sent Herakles to bring the golden apples of the Hesperides. We have already seen how Herakles forced Nereus to show him the way; having arrived at or near the garden, he either slew the dragon,or somehow managed to send it to sleep. Another form of the story is, that he got Atlas to pluck the apples for him, and to enable him to do this, held up the sky for him meanwhile. This led to complications, however; Atlas either would not give up the apples, or would not resume his carrying of the sky, until Herakles, by force or fraud, made him do so.

Hérakleovy hrdinské činy

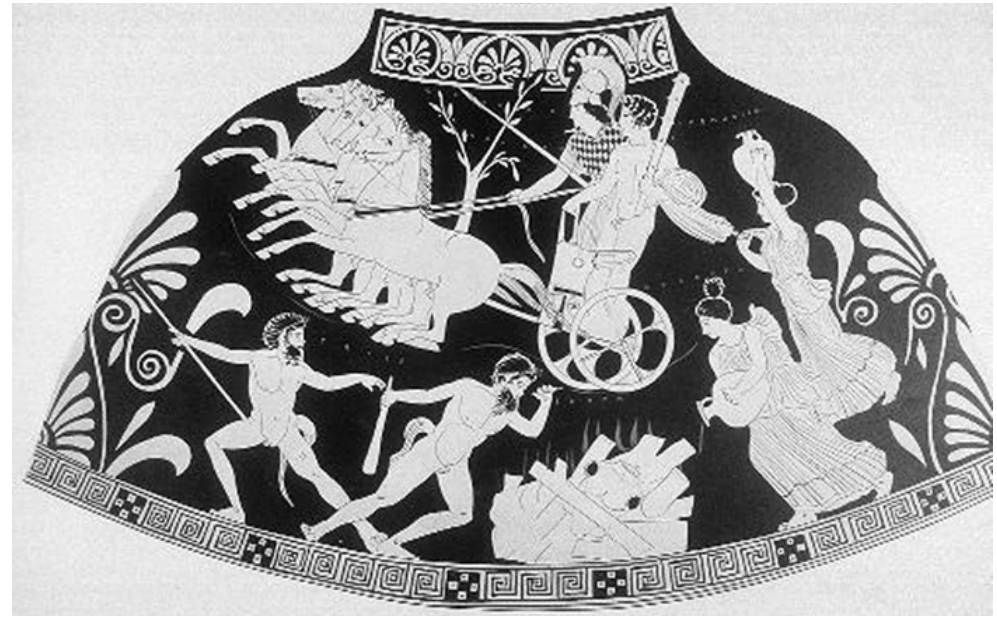
I deliberately omit a number of campaigns which Herakles is said by sundry authors to have undertaken, because they smack of rationalization, are often late in origin, and contain nothing characteristic; Herakles is represented as conquering a great part of the known world, founding numerous cities, and so forth, all stock features of the conception, especially in Hellenistic times, of how any great hero of saga must have behaved. Other adventures, however, have more flavour of real saga, and I give them briefly.

Either before or after his marriage with Deianeira, Herakles fell violently in love with Iole, daughter of Eurytos king of Oichalia. Her father and brothers, however, would not let him have her, and to make matters worse, Herakles in a fit of madness hurled one of them, Iphitos, from the walls of Tiryns, whither he had come to look for some lost cattle. He sought purification at the hands of Neleus, king of Pylos, who would not grant it him; for which reason he afterwards made an expedition against Pylos and killed Neleus and all his sons, save one, Nestor. The Delphic oracle bade him go into servitude for a year (or three years), although even this advice was not given until he had fought Apollo for his holy tripod, the fray being

stopped by Zeus casting a thunderbolt between the combatants. Hermes accordingly sold him to Omphale, queen of Lydia, who set him to do women's work. Having completed his term of serfdom, he was freed from his guilt.

Another campaign, undertaken in aid of Aigimios, king of the Dorians, against his neighbours the Lapithai, seems to represent an early effort of the Dorian race to make Herakles their peculiar hero, an attempt which has met with more success than it deserves in modern times.

Finally, he set out against and took Oichalia, and carried off Iole; with this exploit his career ended tragically, in the story as we have it now, although in all probability this is no original part of the saga. Deianeira heard of his love for Iole, and to win him back, tried Nessos' charm. But the Centaur's blood, mixed as it was with the poison of the Hydra, was deadly poison, and the robe on which she smeared it clung to Herakles' flesh and burned him unendurably. He therefore had himself conveyed to the summit of Mt. Oite, and set on a great pyre of wood; this he induced Poias, the father of Philoktetes, to light, by promising him his bow and arrows. The mortal part of him was burned away; the rest ascended to heaven, was married to Hebe, and at last was reconciled to Hera. Such, in brief and with many omissions, is the traditional life and death of this most notable of heroes, the Greek Samson.



Obr.: Athéna odváží zbožštěného Héraklea na Olymp. Dole hoří hranice, na níž byl Héraklés na hoře Oitě spálen.

Obr.: Malý Héraklés škrtí dva hady (1. stol. n. l.).

Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985 (něm. orig. 1977). Následující text je provizorní ukázkou z českého překladu připravovaného pro vydání nakladatelstvím Vyšehrad.

Héraklés

Některé postavy kultu a mýtu, zvláště vzývané jako mocní pomocníci, zasahují stejně snadno jak do hérójsko-chthonické oblasti, tak do sféry bohů, a právě to jim dává mimořádnou moc: pronikají nahoru i dolů, jsou blízko i daleko; nevyhýbají se smrti. Nejpopulárnější z nich je Héraklés.

Héraklés, nejmocnější syn Dia, jemuž vždycky patří „krásné vítězství“, je nejvýznamnější z řeckých hérόů, a přesto naprosto netypický: neexistuje jeho hrob, a tak jako jsou jeho příběhy známé všude, je i jeho kult rozšířený po celém řeckém světě a daleko mimo něj. Tak je Héraklés hérós a bůh zároveň, *hérós theos*, jak říká Pindaros; při témže svátku mu bylo obětováno nejdříve jako hrdinovi a pak jako bohu.

Hérakleova postava je utvářena v první řadě mýtem, konglomerátem lidových vyprávění, které druhotně začalo zpracovávat umělecké básnictví: v řečtině neexistuje žádná stylotvorná báseň o Hérakleovi. Později se však básníci Hérakleem velmi zabývali, přičemž je mýtus vtažen do hérójsko-tragické, lidské atmosféry, v rozporu se svou vlastní tendencí, směřující bezstarostně nad všechno lidské.

Protože Héraklés měl nejprve co dělat se zvířaty: zabíjí nejnebezpečnější, lva a hada, a chytá další, která lze jíst, aby je přinesl lidem: polapil laň rychlou jako vítr, přivleče divokého kance, ukradne lidožravé koně Thráka Dioméda, a z „rudého“ ostrova zvaného Erytheia, na druhé straně Ókeanu, přižene stáda dobytka, která hlídal trojhlavý „řvoun“ Géryoneus; vyčistí chlév slunečního dobytka, aby pak od syna Slunce Augeia dostal desetinu zvířat, a pochytá stymfalské ptáky.

Do tohoto komplexu zřejmě vstoupily orientální motivy. Zůstává otázkou, zda vůbec měli Řekové v raných dobách šanci vidět živého lva, ale šíření obrazu lva i obrazu boje se lvem je archeologicky dobře zdokumentováno. „Had se sedmi hlavami“ zabitý bohem, to je blízké ugaritské i starozákonní mytologii a objevuje se to už na sumerských pečetítkách. Kromě toho, pečetě ze 3. tisíciletí všude zobrazují hrdinu se lví kůží, lukem a kyjem, který poráží příšery, lvy, draky a dravé ptáky; obvykle je identifikován jako Ninutra, syn boha bouře Enlila. Jádro hérakleovských příběhů by tedy mohlo být ještě podstatně starší: chytání poživatelných zvířat ukazuje na dobu lovecké kultury, a vztah k onomu světu se slunečním dobytkem, rudým ostrovem a lidožrouty pravděpodobně patří k šamanské lovecké magii, s čímž patrně souvisí i jeskynní malby z mladší doby kamenné. Právě šaman je schopen vstoupit do země mrtvých i do země bohů: Héraklés vyvede z podsvětí Hádova psa Kerbera, i když jen na krátký čas, a ze zahrady bohů daleko na západě získá zlatá jablka, která lze vykládat jako plody přinášející nesmrtelnost.

Následují příběhy o bojích s bájnými bytostmi na hranici lidství: na jedné straně Kentauři, na druhé Amazonky; zde Héraklés konkuruje Théseovi, stejně jako při krocení býka. Když pak byl Héraklés vtažen do světa hrdinské epiky, přibylo mu hrdinných skutků: už jednou si podmanil Tróju a také jiné kmeny a města, zvláště Oichalii. Kolem roku 700, kde začíná naše dokumentace, je toto všechno už známé a populární: *Ílias* se zmiňuje o dobrodružství s Kerberem a o Hérakleově plenění Tróje, a k nejstarším řeckým bájným obrazům patří dobrodružství se lvy, hydrou, laní, ptáky, Kentaury a Amazonkami. Stanovení pevného cyklu dvanácti prací (*áthla)* tradice připisuje epické básni, kterou napsal jistý Peisandros z Rhodu kolem roku 600. Přibližně v této době se též prosazuje ikonografický typ Héraklea ve lví kůži, přetažené přes hlavu jako kapuce.

Velmi výrazná je Hérakleova smrt: jeho manželka Déianeira, „ničitelka mužů“, mu ze žárlivosti poslala oděv napuštěný jedem, který ho spálí, nebo mu spíš, jak příběh vysvětluje, způsobí tak strašné bolesti, že se sám nechá upálit na hranici. Tento příběh je detailně známý v hésiodovských *Katalozích*; přitom však verše, které zde i v *Odyssei* mluví o zbožštění Héraklea, antičtí kritikové odmítají jako interpolaci ze 6. století, protože *Ílias* zřejmě nechává Héraklea prostě umřít. Mýtus, který umístil Hérakleův konec do pohoří Oita nedaleko Tráchíny se v každém případě vztahuje ke skutečnému kultovnímu místu, které zde bylo objeveno; zde se každé čtyři roky konala slavnost ohně s obětmi dobytka a soutěžemi. Skrze plameny vstupuje Héraklés mezi bohy; malby na vázách ho zobrazují nad hranicí, jak jede na voze k nebi. Spojení smrti upálením a zbožštění připomíná orientální tradici, i když zůstává záhadou, jak došlo ke spojení s pohořím Oita. V Tarsu v Kilikii se každý rok

připravuje hranice bohu, který se řecky jmenuje Héraklés, místním jazykem Sandés nebo Sandón; toto jméno je známé ve staroanatolské tradici; a chetitští králové byli, jak známo, s pomocí nákladného pohřbu ohněm proměňováni v bohy. Počínaje Hérodotem také není pochyb o tom, že Héraklés je stavěn na roveň s foinickým Melqartem, proto se Melqartovým sloupům v Gadeiře-Kádizu říká „Hérakleovy sloupy“.

Zdá se, že obraz vždy silného, nikdy nepřemoženého a sexuálně mimořádně zdatného hrdiny vychází, stejně jako mnohé pohádkové motivy, z fantazie o splněných přáních. Přesto k tomu patří, kromě strašného či v každém případě ambivalentního konce, také antithese: zářivý hrdina je zároveň sluha, žena i šílenec. Diův syn není žádný „božsky ctěný král“, ale od začátku poddaný mykénskému králi Eurystheovi; ještě nad Eurystheem je Héra, bohyně Argolidy. Jako by Héraklés ve svém jménu nosil její, jako by byla Héra jeho ‚slávou“ (*kleos)*; zároveň se však stále se dovídáme, jak žárlivá Diova manželka nevlastního syna od narození až do konce pronásleduje nesmiřitelnou nenávistí. Není vyloučeno, že souznění jmen je náhodné, ale protože si ho Řekové vždycky byli vědomi, paradox zůstává. Na ostrově Kós obětoval Hérakleovi kněz v ženském oděvu a vyprávělo se, že se kdysi Héraklés v takovém přestrojení skrýval. Jeho otroctví u lýdské královny Omfalé, které mýtus vysvětluje jako pokání za vraždu, je také velmi dobře známé. Tady se role vyměňují: Omfalé mává dvojitou sekerou, zatímco Héraklés pracuje u přeslice. Příběh o tom, jak Héraklés v záchvatu šílenství zabil a spálil v Thébách svou ženu a děti, souvisí s noční slavností ohně, která vlastně patřila „synům silného“, Alkeidům, ale spojení s Hérakleem se hladce prosadilo. Extrém se musí zvrátit ve svůj opak, bezmocnost a sebezničení, aby se znovu potvrdil.

Hérakleovy kulty jsou rozšířené skoro po celém řeckém světě – jen Kréta je výjimkou. Stará a důležitá svatyně byla na ostrově Thasu. Hérakleovy svátky nejsou ani tak svátky celé *polis*, jako spíš záležitost jednotlivých kultovních společenství; tak existuje v Attice celá řada menších i větších Hérakleových svatyní. Héraklés se mimořádně hodí ke gymnasiím a efébům; je něco trvale mladistvého v hrdinovi, který stále cestuje, bojuje, nikde není pevně usazený. Hlavním rysem Hérakleových slavností jsou velké masité hostiny. V gymnasiu v athénském Kynosargu jsou Hérakleovi – když je pro něho prostřen stůl– spolustolovníky (*parasítoi*) významní Athéňané. Proto je Héraklés zobrazován jako obětník, je vzpomínán jako zakladatel oltářů a lidé si jej představovali jako nenasytného žrouta; v této roli se objevuje zvláště v komedii. Héraklés je vždycky blízký a důvěrný přítel; nezávisle na kultu je to všudypřítomný pomocník, vzývaný při každé příležitosti. Nápis nade dveřmi domu hlásá: „Zde bydlí Diův syn, krásně vítězící Héraklés. Nic zlého nesmí vejít.“ Je vnímán jako Odvratitel zla, *Alexikakos.* Z jeho obrázků se vyrábějí amulety, opět se tu prolínají orientální a řecké prvky. O obrovské Hérakleově popularitě svědčí i vázové malby, především boj se lvem se opakuje ve stovkách zobrazení; Héraklés v raných dobách vstoupil i do etruské a římské mytologie a kultu; a zvolání *mehercule!* se pro Římany stalo tak běžným, jako pro Řeky *Hérakleis*, ‚Héraklee!“.

Nejvyšší společenské prestiže se však Hérakleovi dostalo označením za praotce dórských králů. Pravděpodobně to bylo fiktivní legitimizací dórské migrace na Peloponnésos: Hyllos, eponymní hrdina jednoho dórského kmene, se stal synem Héraklea zdomácnělého v Argolidě. Zatímco dórské království v Argu brzy zaniklo, spartští králové uchovávali genealogickou tradici o to pečlivěji; a jako vládcové téhož formátu se Hérakleovými potomky stali i králové Lýdie a později též Makedonie. Na praotce královských rodů se už v archaické době přenesla egyptská královská legenda o tom, jak nejvyšší bůh, doprovázený svým služebníkem, poslem bohů, na sebe vzal podobu krále, aby se dostal do královnina lože a zplodil budoucího vládce – tento příběh vešel do světové literatury jako komedie o Amfitryónovi.

Postava Héraklea se později mohla stát vlivnou duchovní silou ze dvou důvodů. V první řadě je vzorem vládce, který díky svému božskému původu nezadržitelně působí ve prospěch lidstva a nachází své naplnění mezi bohy; proto Alexandros razí Hérakleův obraz na své mince. Za druhé pak slouží za vzor i obyčejnému člověku, který smí doufat, že po životě plném dřiny a bude právě díky této dřině smět i on vstoupit do společenství bohů. Héraklés prolomil hrůzu smrti; už v 5. století se vyprávělo, že zasvěcení v Eleusíně ho chránilo před nebezpečími podsvětí; ale Hérakleova moc převyšuje i Eleusínu. V něm bylo nablízku božství v lidské podobě, ne jako apollónský protipól lidství, ale jako strhující příklad. Héraklés měl v sobě potenciál rozbít hranice řeckého náboženství.

Heracles: The Valour and Destiny of the Hero[1]

Héraklea chci slavit svým zpěvem, Diova syna,
nejzdatnějšího z lidí, jejž v Thébách půvabných tanců
zrodila Alkméné v lůžku, když s Kronovcem splynula v lásce.
Na cestách končinami i nesmírné země i moře,
vladařen Eurystheem jsa poslán, vykonal napřed
mnoho odvážných činů sám a nad jiné slavných;
nyní již v skvělém sídle tam na božském Olympu sněžném
blažený má své místo a chotí mu půvabná Hébé.

(*Homérský hymnus na Héraklea* 1–8, př. O. Smrčka)

With eloquent brevity, the Homeric Hymn tells the fate of Heracles: a son of Zeus but nevertheless a man, the greatest, but also the most exposed to suffering; his exploits are solitary but always victorious. And finally he is integrated into the society of the gods and married to Eternal Youth.

Man, Hero, or God

Let us confine ourselves to the essential: Heracles is, of all the Greek heroes, the most popular – as is attested by his frequent appearance on the stage – and the only one revered by all the Greeks. He belongs not to one city, but to Greece as a whole, which he travelled in his ceaseless activity, to the point that in more than one city, national heroes yield to him: this extended even to the Athenians, usually so careful to preserve their individuality; they dedicated more sanctuaries to him than to the Athenian Theseus. What is more, the Athenians bragged that they had preceded other Greeks in honouring Heracles as a god.

Here the reader is surprised: was Heracles a man, a hero, or a god? From „the most valorous of men“ (Sophocles *Trachiniae* 811; Euripides *Heracles* 183) to hero, there is no break in continuity, since the Greeks defined a hero as a man who formerly had lived an exceptional life and whom death had consecrated. Between mortal and god, the gap seems, by contrast, impossible to bridge; it was so at least for the heroes of the Homeric epic, such as Diomedes, who was brutally reminded by Apollo that „there will always be two distinct races: that of the immortal gods and that of the men who walk the earth“ (*Iliad* 5.441–42). The paradox of Heracles is that, as the son of Zeus, he is to be a man during his lifetime, while in death he is present both in Hell, a wandering shadow that still terrifies the dead, and at the same time on Olympus, Immortal among the Immortals, enjoying the festivals (*Odyssey* 11.601–8). Heracles is considered a *hérós theos* (Pindar *Third Nemean* 22) – hero and god, or rather hero-god – not only by the poet but by the cult, both heroic and divine, that was dedicated to him in certain cities.

If the Greek hero is truly an „individual apart, exceptional, more than human,“ who „nonetheless must assume the human condition“ in his vicissitudes, tests, and limitations, even to the point of suffering and death (J.-P. Vernant, „Aspects de la personne dans la religion grecque“, pp. 89–90), Heracles is certainly the paradigm of a hero. But his human history is also written, from the very beginning, in the immobile time of the gods. This is attested by his difficult but ambiguous relationship with Hera. As protectress of legitimate marriage and the jealous wife of Zeus, the goddess has a dual basis for her hatred for a son of Zeus whom the Athenian theatre considers a bastard (Aristophanes *Birds* 1650ff.). Indeed, Zeus, by taking the form of Alkméné's husband Amfitryón in order to seduce her, tried to place this illicit union under the sign of legitimacy. Thus Hera's hatred is from the beginning set in contradiction with itself, a flagrant contradiction proclaimed by the very name of the hero: „glorious through Hera.“ Delivered by her to the will of Eurystheus and condemned by her to exploits from his cradle, Heracles obtains both his value and his name from Hera – he is „the glory (*kleos*) of Hera“ (see Diodorus 4.9.2). At the hour of his death, Sophocles' Heracles will proclaim that he is „named after the most perfect of mothers“ (*Trachiniae* 1105), and this mother is no longer the mortal Alkméné, but the wife of Zeus. Hera, the mother of Heracles? As though the goddess did not sufficiently seal her reconciliation with the hero by giving him her daughter Hébé, mythographical tradition keeps trying to make Hera the divine mother of Heracles, by stating that the wife of Zeus had inadvertently suckled the child of Alkméné or had adopted him on Olympus.

Heracles: between man and god, a hero engaged in a ceaseless battle against death. Between the powerful but vanquished Heracles, conquered by the death melancholically described by Achilles in the *Iliad* (18.115–21), and the happy husband of the flourishing Hébé, the heroic life of the son of Alkméné was totally dedicated to breaching boundaries: the boundaries of the inhabited world, where the earth ends and the inaccessible sea begins, the boundaries of the human condition.

Heracles simultaneously affirms and surpasses his own humanity when he confronts his various monsters. In the *Theogony* (270–335) there is a monstrous strain that heroes must destroy: thus Perseus conquered Medusa the Gorgon, Bellerofón the Chimera, and Oedipus the Sphinx. But for the most part, this catalogue of deadly monsters proclaims the glory of Heracles, conqueror of the three-headed Geryon and his dog Orthos, conqueror of the Nemean lion and the Hydra of Lerna, conqueror of Kerberos and the terrible serpent who guarded the golden apples. But of these five exploits, there are three which pit Heracles against the world of the dead. Geryon the herdsman has often been seen as a double of Hades, and his two-headed dog is the brother of the cruel Kerberos, whom Heracles will also confront in the infernal kingdom of Hades. In order to pick the golden apples, the hero must once again cross the boundaries of the Ocean and enter the

[1] Zkrácená a mírně upravená verze stati Nicole Loraux z *Mythologies*, vol. I., s. 478–484.

enchanted garden of the singing Hesperides, seductive but frightening creatures who rule over a mysterious Elsewhere (and they are the daughters of Night, sisters of the Moirai and the Keres). The last exploit in the catalogue of labours, the picking of the golden apples, the food of immortality given to Zeus and Hera at the solemn moment of their wedding, was sufficient, in an old version of the legend, to open the road to Olympos for Heracles. Without obstacles. Without other suffering. And perhaps without having to die the death of a mortal.

Héraklés se chystá odnést z podsvětí jeho strážce Kerbera (520–510 př. n. l.)

Thus confronting the Beyond, Heracles conquers death, and the tradition multiplies this victory infinitely, telling how the hero wounded Hades (*Iliad* 5.395ff.) and enchained Thanatos (Euripides *Alcestis* 842–53). To conquer death is also, in the heroic ideal that placed great importance on shining youth (*aglaos hébé*), to conquer old age, the terrible curse that breaks the arms and legs of the warrior: Heracles the Strong thus will triumph over old age, either by embracing Youth forever or by bringing down the sickly old Geras.

The fight against death and the quest for immortality: in the interval between the mortal and the divine that forms the career of the hero, Heracles naturally takes his place on the side of the Immortals in the great battle against the Giants. Because the gods need a human auxiliary against the Giants, he is that auxiliary: among men he wins fame as the „giant killer“.

During the classical era, however, Heracles' career ended on the pyre of Mount Oita, as if in order to enter Olympos, the hero had to understand death; as if Heracles' death negated his mortality: dying, but dying by purifying fire, on Oita where Zeus reigned (Sophocles *Trachiniae* 200.436.1191). It has often been said that the pyre of Oita was introduced into the legend late, finally taking the step into the many traditions which made immortality the reward for an exploit; there has been much questioning about the meaning of the *Trachiniae*, in which the fire of the pyre cures the hero of life (1208–9), though Sophocles does not indicate whether this was an annihilation or an apotheosis. But only the annihilation of the human Heracles permits the apotheosis of the son of Zeus, and perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the tension which constantly sends Heracles between the death of mortals and the death which immortalizes.

Beyond the Human

In this tension there is no ambiguity, however: in the tradition of the classical era, Heracles always conquers immortality. After the sufferings, the joy of the festivals of Olympus: thus the history of Heracles avoids the sad ambiguity that is the basis of the human condition. The Homeric heroes are entirely human when they choose undying glory, the companion of the good death. As Sarpedon, even though he is the son of Zeus, explains to Glaukos on the field of battle: „If escaping this war would allow us to live eternally without ageing or dying, I certainly would not be fighting in the front lines. ... But no matter what you do, the goddesses of death are there ... and no mortal can flee or escape them...,“ and Sarpedon plunges into the thick of the battle (*Iliad* 12.322–28). Man dies, but glory is eternal; the glory of the warrior never dies, but the warrior dies. This terrible ambiguity is expressed by Achilles, king among the dead, in the depths of Hades, as he dreams of being alive again, a servant in the service of a poor farmer (*Odyssey* 11.483–91), but the dead Achilles returns to the choice of the good death that the living Achilles made (*Iliad* 9.410–16; 18.89–93). From Olympus, his eternal home, Heracles, on the other hand, is ignorant of nostalgia and its contradictions.

But can Heracles understand contradiction? Does he feel the ambiguous density of introspection?

The Deviations of Force

Bié Hérakleié: the „Force of Heracles.“ This, according to Homer or Hesiod (*Odyssey* 11.601; *Theogony* 289, 314, 332, 943, 982), is the true name of the hero, as if the existence of Heracles was subsumed by his principal characteristic. This is also what the mythographers mean when they affirm that before winning the name Heracles, the son of Zeus, „illustrious offspring of the race of Alkeus“ (Pindar *Sixth Olympian* 68), was called Alkidés. For this patronymic plays on the word *alké*, one of the Greek words for force.

The force of Heracles: completely concentrated in the arm of the hero, this force is the force of the mythical warrior in his youth and courage. But force is mute, and within Heracles silence reigns when, looking for an ally, a witness, or an identity, the hero speaks to his vigorous arm, which he identifies with his very being (Euripides *Alcestis* 837). In the *Trachiniae*, similarly, devoured by an unrelenting disease which is „feeding on his deepest flesh“ (1053), the hero lists the parts of his body (1089–90): „O hands! O hands! O loins! O chest! O my arms!“ as well as his past exploits (1091–1102). The life of a hero is reduced to his exploits, and more than any other hero, Heracles lives a life in which „each moment is born of the void and returns to it“ (M. Delcourt, pp. 118–21). But, by the same token, this life is also constituted from the outside, since „the source and origin of the action . . . are found not within the hero but outside of him“ (J.-P. Vernant, p. 91).

Heracles is not tragic, because he is not ambiguous. In order to make a tragic hero of him, Euripides was forced to invent something like introspection for him.

And yet Heracles has a dimension that allows tragedy to appropriate him as one of its heroes: if the tragic is ambiguity, it is also reversal, and Heracles the Strong can find a place there, since he is entirely subject to the law of reversal. Force is ambivalent, in that it has no norm but excess. Thus Heracles oscillates continuously between the superhuman and the subhuman, violently tossed from one to the other by a force which outdoes him, without ever knowing the human dimension of an Odysseus, who knows how to avoid all the snares of excess. Before being transported by the Immortals, he knew, more than any mortal, humiliation and abjection: seen from either Olympus or Hades, his exploits were „ignominious labours“ and „a miserable fate“ (*Iliad* 19.133; *Odyssey* 11.618–19); he experienced servitude, subject to the orders of Eurystheus or the Lydian woman Omfalé, and madness: possessed by Lyssa (Madness), he killed his children whom he had saved, and the madness abandoned him only to reduce him all the more to the weakness of a child or woman (Euripides *Heracles* 1424; cf. 631 –32; 1411 –12).

Héraklés v ženských šatech otročí u lýdské královny Omfalé, jež drží v ruce jeho kyj (římská mozaika ze 2. stol. n. l.).

The hero’s death is exemplary in this regard; his polarity shows clearly. We know how Heracles married Déianeira after saving her from a monstrous suitor; how he killed the centaur Néssos, who attempted to rape the young woman; how he had with Déianeira a son, Hyllos. But Heracles is not a hero of marriage: a life without respite, „when he returned home, sent him away again soon, in service to another“ (*Trachiniae* 34–35), until, in love with the beautiful Iolé, daughter of the king of Oichalia, he conquered her by force, taking her city and killing her father. Heracles left Oichalia in flames. Then, when the hero returned, events happened quickly. To regain the love of her husband, the too-credulous Déianeira sends him a love charm, which turns out to be fatal: the tunic that she has dipped into the blood and sperm of Néssos. The outcome is the devouring fire of the poison, the annihilation of Heracles when he is conquered by savage pain, the suicide of Déianeira, and the pyre of Oita. Sophocles has superbly staged the reversal, which makes the „most noble of all humans“ into an object of opprobrium; the killer of monsters is no more than a howling monster, a victim of the savagery that he once conquered and that now rebounds on him. Before finally acquiescing to the divine fire, the hero presents to those who are with him the horrible face of the Beast: a beast caught in the net of death and devoured by a bestial disease.

The most significant reversal, however, is still the one that makes Déianeira into a man and Heracles into a woman. In Sophocles’ version, Déianeira stabs herself, like a hero, like Ajax, instead of hanging herself, the feminine death to which tradition condemned her, while Heracles „cries and weeps like a girl,“ the strong one, the male who „under such a blow reveals himself to be a simple woman“ (*Trachiniae* 1071–75). But among the exploits of Heracles, there are surprising instances of sexual prowess: capable of deflowering fifty virgins in a single night (Pausanias 9.27.6–7; Diodorus 4.29.3; Apollodorus 2.4.10 more generously gave him fifty consecutive nights for this high deed) and having a son by each of them – Heracles, it must be remembered, has only sons: the male cannot father anything but a male (see Apollodorus 2.7.8, which gives a long and edifying list of these sons) – the hero affirms a virility which has no equal but that of the Supermale of Jarry. And „it is a woman“ who fells him, „without even a knife“ (*Trachiniae* 1062–63). The sad Déianeira had, it is true, a prophetic name: *Déi-aneira*, „killer of men.“ Our project is certainly not to undertake, like Philip E. Slater, a psychoanalysis of Heracles: perhaps the hero symbolizes a „vigorous denial of weakness in the face of the maternal hostility“ of Hera; perhaps Déianeira is a figure of the bad mother (Slater, *The Glory of Hera*, pp. 339 and 352); but the essential point lies elsewhere, in the violent reversal which makes the weakness of a woman the only force capable of bringing death to the hero who has successfully combated it so many times before, and who identifies himself with virile force.

Heracles, or force caught in its own trap. Heracles, or time without memory, conquered by memory and vengeance. But, just as the story of the hero does not end on the pyre of Oita, his mythological career does not end there either.

Edifying Figures

The most startling paradox of Heracles is the number of speeches which have been grafted onto his silent strength. Surprising both in the multiplicity of roles he assumes in the philosophical Logos and in the propensity of sages and intellectuals, from the Pythagoreans to the Stoics, as well as the Sophists, to annex to their own use the figure of the hero. As if silence called forth allegory. As if brute force offered a virgin territory to the development of the *exemplar virtutis*. Because the hero-slave became a god, the moralists see his destiny as a symbol of the human condition – the very incarnation of the efficacy of suffering. One step further and, endowed with outstanding deliberative ability, Heracles is deemed to have chosen his life of labours: the choice of a life is substituted for the coercion of the labours. Another step, and the man of *fysis* (nature) becomes the champion of *nomos* (law).

Heracles of the crossroads, Heracles the hero of effort and „the labouring righteous“: before the Sophists borrowed these figures, Pythagorean hagiography had already transformed the myth into an edifying paradigm.

It remained to the Sophist Prodicus, however, to give this paradigm its most elaborate form, in the famous apology quoted by Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 2.1.21–33). Seated in a solitary place, the adolescent Heracles weighs the respective advantages and disadvantages of the path of virtue (*areté*) and the path of vice (*kakiá*). Two women appear to him, or two goddesses: they are named Arete and Kakia, and they plead their causes before the young man. Kakia speaks against the effort that Arete exalts. Unheeding of Kakia's seductions and of the name of Eudaimonia (Felicity), which her devotees gave her, Heracles chooses the road of pain.

This apology introduced many themes alien to what had been the legend of Heracles until the fifth century. In the allusion to the two paths, one can recognize a reference to Hesiod who, in *Works and Days*, already put the path of the soft life (*kakotés*) in opposition to the path of merit (*areté*) and labour (*Works and Days* 287–92). The essential remains: Heracles is subject to the polarity that rules over his existence. Between the two enemy poles of pain and pleasure, Heracles chooses. He chooses what the myth imposes on him: a life of labours. But in the Pythagorean school, in reinterpreting the exploits of the hero in a moral perspective that placed all value in effort, Prodicus himself made a choice – the choice of an edifying Heracles, against all the amoral images of the hero.

The mythical ambivalence of the son of Zeus was striking. The duality of the two varieties of Heracles remains irreconcilable: the Prodicus type, philosophical, the ancestor of all the virtuous varieties of Heracles, and the comic theatre type, greedy, and somewhat limited (for example, Aristophanes *Birds* 1574–1692).

At the end of this course, Heracles had become wise and chaste: a model of virtue. Olympus has receded, and the hero-god is no more than „the best of men“. But Heracles will have been „the best of men“ constantly, all through the tradition, from the *Homeric Hymn* to the Stoics: only the meaning of the phrase has changed, while the notion of *areté* has also changed. Originally designating the valour of the warrior, it became more and more charged with introspection, until it finally meant something like „virtue.“ The history of the historic destiny of Heracles is partly linked to that of *areté*, from which the hero gains good manners that Homer and Hesiod would never have recognized in him.

In the fourth century a subtle shift made the warrior hero into a universal helper, invoked by everyone during the vicissitudes of existence. Heracles is still the protector, but the warrior has softened into a benefactor. The destroyer of monsters and the „most just of murderers“ becomes a civilizing hero who, throughout his wanderings, devotes himself to irrigation works and the founding of cities. The Hellenistic era will even establish him – a surprise – as a legislator and will make him a model of philanthrdpia (delivering Prometheus from the shackles which the wrath of Zeus put on him, the hero thereafter acts on his own initiative and not on the orders of his divine father; his goal is no longer glory but philanthropy).

Many pictorial representations follow this movement, and, on vases as well as on the metopes of temples, the warrior hero gives way to the reconciled hero, and sweat and blood are replaced by the beatitude of the blessed. The armour of the hoplite gives way to the lion skin and the club, in anticipation of the time when only the heroic nudity and athletic musculature of his body will indicate the identity of the hero. In art, as in thought or religion, the process of interiorization seems irreversible.

Héraklés v novějším provedení na atické nádobě z roku 430 př. n. l.: Pobyt v zahradě Hesperidek získává dimenze příjemné kratochvíle.

to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccentual.

The practical consequence is that the oppositions pursued by ideological analysis may be opposed meanings of a single word or symbol, rather than the separate but opposed terms of structural analysis. These opposed meanings, as Vernant also insisted (Section 5.7), must be pursued well beyond the text or any group of texts, to the social discourse of opposed groups, and to their concrete life-experience and material interests.

History

We noted that the current theories of ideology and models of ideological analysis are based on societies and cultural artifacts of the modern era. If poststructuralism has taken little interest in myth (in the traditional sense), it is doubtless because the models of analysis were developed for complex and highly voluble societies, like our own. Many myths, however, derive, or are thought to derive, from simple "cold cultures" which maintain the same social structure indefinitely, until absorbed by a more advanced culture. Classic structuralism is perhaps more likely to capture the ideology of Bororo myths than any of the theories and procedures for ideological analysis discussed in this chapter. Just how "hot" or historically active a culture needs to be for this kind of ideological analysis is a matter for debate. It would be an ideological delusion to suppose that ideology works in precisely the same way in all eras and all societies. Certainly, myths do not have the same function or character everywhere and at all times.

There is even a (much exaggerated) basis to the claim that ideology, at least in its classic function of social legitimation, is dead. There is generally little discussion of the changing character of ideology. Habermas, exceptionally, has identified different historical stages in ideology's function of social legitimation. As summarized by Geuss (1981: 67–8), they are:

(a) an archaic stage in which agents use particular myths to give a narrative account of their social world and institutions;
(b) a "traditional" stage in which agents use unified mythic, religious, or metaphysical world-pictures or views about reality as a whole to legitimize their social institutions. Although these world-pictures are not just sequences of narratives, but are "argumentatively structured," they are not themselves ever called into question and need not ever prove their own validity as sources of legitimation;

(c) a "modern" stage characterized by the appearance of "ideologies" in the narrow sense. These ideologies claim to be "scientific," i.e., to be able to give a full argumentative account of themselves and legitimate the social order by appeal to universal norms and principles, universalizable interests, and interpretations of the "good life."
(d) (purportedly) "postideological" forms of social legitimation which claim to justify the social order by exclusive reference to its technical efficiency and which reject any appeal to moral principles, norms or ideals of the "good life" as "ideological" in the pejorative sense.

This last stage is most apparent in the claims by contemporary governments that they have no choice in the globalized world but to follow policy dictated by industry or else face dire economic consequences. Right-wing governments are especially prone to justifying policy through cost or convenience. In Canada, for example, the Alberta government resisted the federal government's decision to sign the Kyoto Protocol, upon which the survival of life on earth arguably hangs, purely on the grounds that it was too expensive to implement.

Myth, as the term is traditionally understood, belongs to the first and second of Habermas's stages of social legitimation, and, in principle, to societies that are less complex and less "hot," and which enjoy a generally greater probability of success in managing their differences with a cohesive general ideology. Myth in this sense is likely to be more constrained by the general ideology than art and literature in modern society, which, as we saw, might be more openly oppositional. (This may also be partly by definition, as we saw in Section 5.5, since tales which take a narrower subgroup perspective are likely to be classed as folktales or fables.) But traditional myths are also normally subject to greater institutional pressure for conformity than the art or literature of the modern period. The latter can be more narrowly targeted to specific social subgroups, and, as physical objects, are more likely to survive with a narrower base of transmission than required by the primarily oral tales of traditional societies.

6.4 AN IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MYTH OF HERACLES

"Freedom" in Archaic and Classical Greece

Myth is one of the most important media for ideological work. Most ancient myths survive because they operate at the highest ideological level: they participate in the creation of a unifying general ideology. In doing so they must address the society as a whole, and cannot exclusively adopt

the position of a single subgroup. In appealing to the interests of opposed groups, a myth will incorporate within its structure the contradictions that arise from the opposed interests of the larger subgroups. In myth these contradictions may appear in many forms: among them are logical contradictions in the narrative, ambiguities and ambivalences in the motives or ethical character of the actions, and the proliferation within the narrative of redundant and mutually exclusive motives. We will find that all of these appear in the myth of Heracles.

The most important ideological medium is language, and it is often the case that a myth elaborates the ideological charge inherent in certain value terms. (I stress the word "elaborates," which is not to be taken as passive "reflection," but as an active refinement and "clarification" of the world some social group or subgroup would like to see reflected in language.) We can begin our analysis of Heracles by examining the connotations of the word "freedom" in Archaic and Classical Greece (*c.*700–323 BC). A highly charged term in almost any language, freedom *(eleutheria)* was enormously important to the general ideological discourse of Greece, especially in the slaveholding and democratic cities of the Classical period. At the general level it was freedom which divided the citizen classes from the slaves. The general ideology therefore held that freedom makes a man truly human; forced labor makes a man little better than a beast. Freedom allows a man to develop virtues like reason, self-control, courage, generosity, high-mindedness. Slaves exercise no mental or spiritual faculties at all and so are irrational, undisciplined, wild, cowardly, selfish, pusillanimous. In fact, some ancient theorists, like Aristotle, went so far as to claim that good and bad character are not the result of freedom and slavery, but the cause of it, reasoning that a society governed by people with reason, discipline, courage, and so on, will never be conquered and enslaved. Those who are slaves by culture are so precisely because they were slaves by nature. Such an ideology makes it seem natural and right that those who are free *should* govern those who are not. It is to everyone's benefit, especially the slaves'.

So far there is an inversion of reality, a confusion of culture for nature, but no internal contradiction as such. This is because slaves have no power and no say and their viewpoint, subsequently, has little impact upon the general cultural ideology. The contradiction comes from the attempt by the citizen subclasses to utilize this general notion of "freedom" to promote their own subclass interests. The citizen class in Archaic and Classical Greece was composed of powerful aristocrats and a much larger nonaristocratic class composed of peasants, merchants, tradespeople, and wage-laborers. To a purely aristocratic ideology a man who must work for monetary gain is little better than a slave: merchant, wage-laborer,

and slave all work under compulsion and differ only by degree. So, they reason, there is no difference in kind, but only degree, between the lust for gain that drives the merchant, the pangs of hunger that drive the laborer, and the fear of the whip that drives the slave. "Free" in the aristocratic sociolect meant having the leisure for education, physical training, and the pursuit of various forms of status-competition. Though in the common language the word *eleutheros*, "free," designated anyone who was not a slave, the term is often used by aristocrats to refer to those who do not have to work for a living. The word *aneleutheros*, "unfree," is applied still more often to working-class citizens, even though they are legally "free" citizens, and the word *eleutherios*, literally "like a free man," was particularly cultivated by members of the elite to refer exclusively to one who could attain their own leisure-class ideals, much like its Latin counterpart, the word *liberalis*, whose basic flavor still survives in the term "liberal arts," or "liberal education."

Aristocrats pictured their social and economic activities as something utterly different in kind from those undertaken by merchants, craftsmen, peasants, and slaves. They conceived of their activity as a form of self-cultivation, undertaken for honor and not for material benefit, even when these activities really conferred money, or what ultimately could be converted to the same coin, status, and power. Moreover, Greek aristocrats liked to think that what they did, they did, not subject to any form of compulsion, but always as a matter of free choice. To the eyes of the working classes aristocratic activity and "freedom" could be, and indeed was, sooner viewed as a sort of social parasitism, even a destructive parasitism. Aristocratic activities, gala parties, sports and games, were regarded as wasteful indulgence, potlatches, and wanton orgies of conspicuous consumption. They were indeed extravagances which to a man who works and knows the value of money threatened to reduce a man to poverty and servitude. The merchant, tradesman, or farmer was more likely to connect honor with the virtues of industry, patience, and enterprise, by which the more successful of their class acquired wealth and social freedom. What to the aristocrat is the expression of freedom, to the merchant appears an expression of moral degeneracy. The two rival ideologies defined their perspectives in polar opposition: to one, work for material gain is a form of slavery, to the other, the means of acquiring and preserving freedom; to one, sports and games are the expression of freedom, to the other, a wasteful means of losing it. Each might view the pursuits of the other as pointless and distasteful.

Though both classes agree in opposing their freedom to the constraints of slavery, they differ in viewing other kinds of labor as equally constrained, if in a different way and to a lesser degree. For a myth to be acceptable

to both classes, it must remain fairly ambivalent about how it defines freedom or how it values different forms of labor. At the same time, however, it is argued that myth, literature, or art will normally reveal a preference for one class perspective over another. This preference cannot be very obtrusive, or it will be rejected by the groups whose interest it opposes, and thereby will be likely to be deselected by the tradition. If it is unobtrusive, it will be most effective, in urging a partisan ideological perspective upon the society at large.

Heracles

It is interesting to note that so shrewd a student of social ideologies as Nicole Loraux denied that the Heracles myth was susceptible to political interpretation. Heracles is above politics, she claimed, because the myth was so popular that "no city was able to appropriate him definitively"; the site of what she calls the "process of reevaluation" of the myth was not "the political field, with its multiple identifications and inevitable distortions, but rather within the logic that presides over the Greek concept of the powerful hero" (1990: 23). One sees the influence of structuralism in this turn away from social context to internal logic. The Marxist critic Peter Rose faults Loraux for speaking as if only states generated ideologies, as if the internationalism of myth takes it out of the reach of political interests (just as historical stagnation for Lévi-Strauss took myth out of time, with the result that in both cases one is allowed to bracket off the enunciation context altogether and look for a rigorous and systematic "logic" immanent in the myth). Loraux conspicuously excludes class ideologies from her concept of politics. Rose does not himself offer a counter-interpretation, except to say that "Heracles celebrates inherited excellence – the claim of ruling class males to have by birth an innate superiority ultimately derived from divine ancestry" (1993: 219–20). But this interpretation brings the myth entirely within aristocratic ideology and reveals none of the ambiguities and contradictions that ought to appear in the myth, given that Heracles, far from being merely an aristocratic hero, was the most popular mythical hero of antiquity.

The Heracles myth, as we have it, was mostly assembled during the Archaic and Classical periods. These periods were marked by the transition from a social system dominated by a landed aristocracy to a form of democracy dominated by a largely urban class of merchants, tradesmen, and laborers. Like other aristocracies, the Greek aristocracy was an exclusive competition group. They had a very strong sense of class solidarity, but they did not aspire to be a society of equals. On the contrary,

aristocrats worked very hard to establish themselves at the upper end of a fiercely contested pecking-order. The position of an aristocratic family depended on its past and present performance in specified forms of ritual competition with other aristocratic families. In the earliest period it was through military rituals: leading one's retainers and serfs out to raid another aristocrat's cattle or crops, or in extreme cases to destroy their cities. But once the subject classes began to acquire power through industry and trade, and once the lower classes managed to impose more efficient military science based on cooperative group tactics, the aristocracy had to give up such internecine feuds. More peaceful means of prestige competition emerged to structure the aristocracy's internal hierarchy. The most important of these was athletic games. The great Panhellenic games were instituted in the eighth to sixth century BC (the traditional dates for the institution of the Olympic games is 776 BC, for the Pythian and Isthmian games 582 BC, and for the Nemean 573 BC). This was a time of an enormous expansion in trade and industry which created the economic conditions for the rise of the Greek polis. There is an interesting parallel here with developments in the late medieval period. With the rise of mercantilism in fourteenth-century Europe, Barbara Tuchman notes that "tournaments proliferated as the nobles' primary occupation [war] dwindled" (1978: 65).

Like jousting, Olympic events, from chariot racing to wrestling, were for a long time pretty exclusively aristocratic, since no one else had the resources or the leisure for the equipment and training. There is a good reflection of the aristocrat's view of sports and trade in the Phaecian game in Book 8 of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus has been washed up on the island, and is still an anonymous castaway, but though he is received as an aristocrat by the royal family, his real status is in doubt. He is invited by the prince Laodamas to participate in some sporting competitions, since "through all a man's lifetime, there is nothing that brings him greater glory than what he achieves by speed of foot and by strength of arms" (147–8). But Odysseus declines, since he is too depressed about his troubles. At this point, an uppity young lord, Euryalus, starts heaping ridicule upon Odysseus (159–64): "Yes truly, stranger, you do not look like a man much practiced in any known sports. You look more like the kind of man who plies about in some big ship, leading a crew of merchant sailors, always anxious over the cargo out, watchful over the cargo home in expectation of greedy gains; there is nothing of the athlete in you."

Aristocratic ideology likens sports to trade (or farming), insofar as they are a kind of labor, but with the all-important difference, that sports are a specifically aristocratic form of labor, labor freely undertaken for the sake of glory, not for gain (or by necessity). If commerce is beneath

contempt, agricultural labor is still lower (we saw some of the attitudes to agricultural labor expressed by Hesiod in section 5.7). Different forms of class labor might be represented on a descending scale of value and liberty, as follows:

Class	aristocracy	merchants/tradesmen	farm laborers
Activity	sports	trade	agriculture
Object	glory	money	food
Motive	free choice	greed	necessity

Heracles' aristocratic labors

Given this social context, one can easily see Rose's point. Heracles appears very much the aristocratic hero, especially in his close association with athletic competitions in both myth and cult. Mark Golden enumerates the principal connections (I paraphrase from Golden 1986: 151–2). Heracles is credited with having instituted many Panhellenic games, among them the most prestigious, the Olympic and Nemean games. He is depicted in art as a pankratiast and wrestler. He is said to have invented the pankration. We know the names of his teachers in chariot racing and wrestling. Boxing and horse and chariot racing are shown on his shield. His statues were erected in gymnasia and wrestling grounds; sport facilities were attached to his shrines, and so were athletic competitions. He was emulated by individual athletes: the famous wrestler Milo of Croton is reputed to have worn a lion skin and brandished a club when he led an army against Sybaris in 510. Athletes who won both the wrestling and pankration competitions on the same day at Olympia called themselves "successors of Heracles." His name was adopted by the professional associations of athletes, who called themselves "those involved with Heracles" or "synod of Heracles." The insights of Golden's essay (rehabilitated in 1998: 146–57) are the inspiration (and often the substance) of the following analysis.

Ambivalence

True to this aristocratic image of Heracles, even the deeds which have little or no connection with sports are categorized, if not described, as if they were sporting events. Heracles' deeds are called *athloi*. The Greek word means "contests." *Athloi* is normally used of the panhellenic contests which played such an important role in aristocratic status-competition. *Athlos* specifically refers to contests for prizes, prizes which in theory at least were mere symbols of glory, and of no intrinsic value. Diodorus reports that Heracles introduced the first games at Olympia for "only a crown since he himself had conferred benefits on the race of men without receiving any pay" (4.14.1–2).

It is thus easy to read the myth of Heracles as a paradigm for the pursuit of pure glory through deeds of exceptional strength and endurance, and, as such, a paradigm for any athlete. For this reason, many of his deeds are assimilated in myth to athletic competitions: he wrestles the Nemean lion, Antaeus, Thanatos, Polygonus, Telegonus, Menoetes; Eryx he defeats in three falls in succession, the number needed for an Olympic victory. At Delphi he even wrestles Apollo for his tripod. Epinician poetry regularly draws an analogy between winning the panhellenic games and conquering death. The myth of Heracles does more than any other to sustain the illusion that the successful athlete in some way surpasses the condition of ordinary mortality. Heracles' deeds not only bring him undying fame, but literally confer immortality. Artistic representations of his ascent to Olympus adopt the *schema* of the homecoming of an athletic victor. Heracles is usually seen crowned, in a winged chariot, driven by Athena, or by Nike, the personification of victory itself, up to the house of his father Zeus and the assembled gods who eagerly await him. Diodorus describes Heracles' immortality as the "contest prize" *(epathlon)* of his labors. He is the god of victory, the proverbial champion *(kallinikos)*.

All this makes Heracles appear very aristocratic. And it is not surprising to find that Heracles, in addition to being famed for his glorious exploits, is famed for his freedom. In cult he is known as the "liberator." Prodicus made his decision to undertake his labors a paradigm of free will, giving it the character of an informed choice by a noble spirit of the hard road of virtue in preference to the way of luxury and ease. In Plato's *Gorgias* Callikles is able to speak of Heracles breaking free even from the bonds of convention (484b).

And yet the myth of Heracles is very different from other hero myths. Despite the aristocratic glamor lent to Heracles' deeds or the ethical coloring of free choice, the myth offers us another very different view of Heracles' deeds and the conditions of their performance. Greek literature regularly speaks of Heracles' "travails" *(ponoi)* and Latin literature of *Herculis labores*, whence our expression the "Labors of Heracles," which connotes a very different form of activity from *athloi*, but this translation is not altogether arbitrary. Heracles has a special relationship with labor. It was his travails *(ponoi)* which won him undying virtue *(athanatos arete)*, as he himself says in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (1419–20), and he consoles Philoctetes by saying his travails will bring him fame too. From this it is

apparent that Heracles is thinking not just of his "labors" but of something that goes well beyond glorious combats. Indeed, Loraux notes that *ponos* in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* refers not just to Heracles' exploits (21, 170, 825), but to his sufferings (680, 985) and also to his servitude (70, 356), i.e., the passive suffering and effort expended under necessity. And for this kind of *ponos* Heracles was just as famous as for his exploits. In antiquity he was proverbially associated with "laboring uselessly" (*allos ponein*), and "laboring for others" (*allois ponein*). *Ponos* can embrace all heroic exploits as well as suffering and drudgery. But less ambivalent language is also used. Aristotle refers to Heracles as a "serf" (*Eth. Eud.* 1245b39); *Trachiniae's* Dianeira characterizes him as a lackey, always "at someone's service" (*latreuonta toi*) and Aeschylus refers to him as a "slave" (*Ag.* 1040–41). There is even an ancient etymology of Heracles' name from the word *era*, meaning "service." The conditions under which Heracles performed his deeds is a matter of some consequence. As Austin and Vidal-Naquet say, for the ancients work in itself had no intrinsic value (1977: 15):

> What mattered as much or more were the conditions under which work was carried out. In the modern world a man's labour has become distinct from his person: it is a saleable commodity which he can sell to others without this implying, in theory, any subjection on his part. In the Greek world, by contrast, this distinction was unknown: to work for someone else meant to subject oneself to one's employer and [quoting Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1376a32] "the condition of the free man is that he does not live for the benefit of another."

There is more in the Heracles myth than just a portrait of an aristocratic superhero. Even the myth of the Athenian hero Theseus fits the aristocratic model much more comfortably. According to Plutarch, after Aethra tells Theseus to go to Athens to find his father, he decides to walk in order to offer proof of his noble birth by performing equally noble exploits; he is said to pursue the Marathon bull, because he is "eager for action"; he goes to Crete with the Athenian victims, not because the lot falls upon him, but because he rises to the challenge to undertake a great exploit and liberate his people (Plut. *Theseus* 7, 14, 17). Heracles, by contrast, is a paradoxical figure. He wins his glory mainly by exploits which he undertakes under various forms of compulsion. Moreover, though some of Heracles' labors may seem to be modeled after athletic contests, others are definitely not. Among them we find the most degrading forms of agricultural labor, including shoveling dung from Augeas's stables. And finally, the characterization of the labors as in themselves pointless, despite the

final reward of immortality, is hard to reconcile with the aristocratic model of Heracles' labors as undertaken purely for the glory of the achievement.

The myth constantly accesses and confuses the ideological categories of labor as well as the kinds of constraint under which the different varieties of labor are performed and the ends to which they are directed. Even at the start of the narrative the motives for undertaking the labors are heavily overdetermined, a curious mix of servitude, penance, and thirst for glory: The labors are imposed upon Heracles in penance for the murder of his children, but they also performed as part of Heracles' servitude to Eurystheus, and at the same time the Pythia offers immortality as a reward for their successful completion. This confusion stretches right through the saga of Heracles: again and again he labors as an athlete, as a penitent, as a slave or bondsman, as a wage-laborer, "for love" (or rather for or out of "gratitude" = Greek *charis*), and usually in several capacities and for several motives at one and the same time.

Penance

Several labors are undertaken with a self-imposed compulsion, or at least imposed with Heracles' acquiescence. In penance for killing Linus, his music teacher, Heracles goes to Cithaeron, where he kills his first lion while tending the herds. In penance for killing his children, he is constrained to serve Eurystheus (in the canonical version), and performs his twelve labors. In penance for killing his guest-friend Iphitus, he sells himself to Omphale and deals with various local ogres. In some versions his selling himself into slavery is also in penance for his attempt to steal the Delphic tripod, or in penance for Iphitus and the tripod-debacle together.

Slavery

Slavery is insisted upon by the labors imposed by Eurystheus, which are sometimes humiliating, especially shoveling dung in the Augean stables, or gratifying Omphale's kinky sexuality. In this latter episode he is debased to the point of wearing women's clothing and doing women's work, while Omphale struts about with Heracles' club and lion skin. The effeminization of Heracles here is complete when, in one account, he and Omphale make love in a cave, wearing each other's clothes, while Pan gropes his way into the cave and sexually assaults Heracles in the dark, thinking him Omphale. The condition of slavery is also insisted upon in the episode of the Cerynian hind. When Artemis confronts him with stealing her hind,

he pleads "necessity" and gets off. He insists, in other words, that his labor was entirely unfree. But notice the ambivalence. These are all self-imposed necessities. The affair with Omphale is also confused with merchandizing for profit, insofar as Heracles sells something, namely himself, and also with paying a debt, since he owes Eurytus the blood-price for his son Iphitus.

There are two other occasions on which Heracles is forced into servitude of the worst sort, namely to do backbreaking agricultural labor. One is the episode of Syleus, an ogre who intercepted passersby and forced them to work in his vineyard, and then, in some versions, killed them. He forced Heracles to work for him, but Heracles tore up his vineyard and killed him. The other episode is that of Lityerses, who, like Syleus, forced passersby to engage in a plowing contest, and after defeating them, killed them. But Heracles won, and killed him instead. Notice the ambivalence here. The plowing is both slave labor and a contest like an athletic game.

Wage labor

Heracles' bondage directly contradicts the notion that Heracles undertook his "contests" for glory, but it also frequently happens in the myth that Heracles undertakes his labors, not for glory, or expiation, but for material rewards. When Eurystheus commands him to clean the Augean stables, he contracts with Augeas to do the work for a tenth of the cattle. When he passes by Troy in his ninth labor, he contracts with Laomedon to free his daughter from a sea monster in return for some mares. When he goes to Oechalia he enters an archery contest, not for glory, or a merely symbolic prize, but for a material reward. He is said to go specifically because he wants Iole, Eurytus's daughter, for his wife. When he goes to Calydon he has a wrestling match with Achelous, but the purpose is to possess Dianeira, who is more than a token, since he went to Calydon expressly to marry her. The profit-motive in these episodes contradicts the image of Heracles struggling only for glory.

For love and from obligation (Charis and Philia)

Since Heracles is a culture hero, we would expect him to act for charity or love of his fellow humans, like Prometheus, when he founds cultural institutions, or defeats monsters. Diodorus (4.1.6) celebrates Heracles for

"having conferred the greatest benefactions upon the human race." Such, for example, is the liberation of Thebes from Erginus, which Diodorus tells us Heracles did "returning to his homeland the gratitude *(charitas)* he owed it" (4.10.4). The same motive is ascribed to incidental deeds, such as the cleansing of Crete of wild animals (undertaken, according to Diodorus, in the course of his tenth labor, "wishing to show his gratitude [*charisasthai*] to the Cretans" for honoring him; 4.17.3). But, in general, Heracles is rarely motivated either by social ties (*philia*) or by gratitude for past favors (*charis*). Indeed, these categories are conspicuous for their absence. So, for example, we know the names of Heracles' teachers in many different arts. Students are normally thought to owe their teachers a debt of *charis*. Instead, Heracles ends up killing a surprising number of them, and usually by the instrumentality of their own benefice. The lyre teacher, Linus, is killed, when Heracles hits him with his own lyre; Eurytus, the archery teacher, is killed by Heracles' bow; Chiron taught Heracles hunting and medicine only to be shot by one of Heracles' arrows while he was fighting centaurs, and though shooting Chiron was an accident, Chiron incurred a wound which could not be cured even by the medicine he taught Heracles. Similarly, Heracles usually fails to pay back the proper respect to hosts and guests. Pholus the centaur proves himself the perfect host to Heracles, but Heracles repays him by willfully breaking open a pithos of wine, despite Pholus's protests, and starting a drunken riot which leads to the death of Pholus by one of Heracles' arrows. Similarly, though he is the guest of Eurytus, he starts a fight, steals Eurytus's horses, and later ends up sacking Eurytus's kingdom and killing all his sons. He twice kills the sons or relatives of his hosts while they are serving him, for trivial offenses, like accidentally splashing one of them with water while offering him a basin to wash his hands (Athen. 410f–411a; Schol. AR 1.1212.). Heracles' reputation for being a bad guest lived on in comedy and even tragedy. His role in the story of Alcestis is a unique example of a positive repayment of gratitude to his hosts, but in Euripides' play, despite it, he is still an unseemly guest. He fares no better as a host. He kills his guest Iphitus, the son of Eurytus, when he comes to look for the missing mares, even though Iphitus, in some versions, staunchly defended Heracles against accusation of theft. If Heracles does not repay kindnesses *(charis)* well, he is no better at performing acts governed by the broader and less defined obligation of the relationship of family or friendship *(philia)*. None of Heracles' marriages ends happily; all his wives, along with their children, are discarded, or passed on to someone else, if they are not killed by Heracles. Ironically, his own death comes through the agency of a "love gift."

Heracles and frustration

We noted earlier that "To labor like Heracles" became proverbial in antiquity for laboring uselessly. Is this not odd, given that the myth, at least on the surface, rewards Heracles' efforts with the greatest possible prizes, namely immortality, deification, eternal youth (symbolized by his marriage with Hebe whose name in Greek means "youth")? And yet, it is true that the motif of frustrated labor recurs throughout the myth. One can of course see the element of frustration as complementary to the quest for glory. Making Heracles a kind of pagan Job, who is rewarded in the end for his patience (in fact, Greek philosophers from the Pythagoreans to the Stoics received Heracles as a symbol, if not the "patron saint," of patient endurance). The more seemingly hopeless, the more heroic the effort. Without doubt, it is this tension that gives the story much of its narrative efficacy. But nonetheless, the theme of frustration does not *simply* complement a narrative about immense rewards for extraordinary virtue.

Frustration is there from the beginning. Even Zeus is frustrated in his desire to make his son king. Even Hera is frustrated in her effort to destroy him. We have seen that anyone who attempts to enter into a civilized relationship with Heracles is frustrated. But, most of all, it is Heracles' labor that is frustrated. The very monsters he confronts often symbolize frustration: hydras that grow twice as many heads when you decapitate them; animals with impenetrable skin; ogres like Antaeus and Alcyoneus, who jump up with doubly renewed vigor each time they are knocked to the ground.

But the theme of frustrated labor is most evident in the labor that Heracles undertakes for gain. Every time Heracles works for wages, the wages are withheld, and the value of wage-labor is undermined. In his fifth labor Eurystheus commands him to clean the Augean stables. But Heracles also contracts with Augeas to clean them for a portion of the cattle. When he succeeds, Augeas refuses to pay. And not only is he cheated of his wage by Augeas, but Eurystheus refuses to count the labor because Heracles did it for wages. So Heracles is doubly cheated. The motif is redoubled in the course of his ninth labor when, at Troy, he undertakes to rescue King Laomedon's daughter, Hesione, from a sea monster in exchange for an immortal horse. But when he kills the monster, neither honor nor gratitude can make Laomedon fulfill his bargain. In this case Heracles is cheated by a double cheater, since Laomedon had previously refused to pay Apollo and Poseidon their wages for building the walls of Troy. This episode has a close counterpart in the case of Iole. Heracles participates in an archery

contest to win her hand, but when he wins the contest, Eurytus refuses to give him Iole. In every case Heracles is cheated of his bargain.

One can look at just about all the motives for Heracles' labors and find this theme of frustrated or wasted effort, whether Heracles is formally motivated by profit, wages, penance, servile necessity, gratitude, or debt. For example, his most conspicuous commercial transaction is slave dealing, but it brings him no profit, as it is himself that he sells into slavery, and in any case the proceeds go directly to Eurytus as blood-price for the murder of Iphitus. When Heracles liberates his homeland Thebes, he receives, as a token of gratitude, the king's daughter, Megara, with whom he brings up children, but ends up losing everything when he kills her and her children and is expelled from Thebes.

Heracles' life is a life of useless struggle, except in one important respect, and this is where we find the decisively aristocratic spin in the tale. The aristocratic work he does pays off: insofar as he worked "for glory," he gets in the end his just reward in the form of everlasting fame and real immortality. Even his losses are made up, though only according to the aristocratic code: he revisits those who cheated or dishonored him and recovers his honor by avenging all those who treated him with contempt: he sacks the cities of Laomedon, Augeas, and Eurytus (not to mention others who slighted him, like Neleus and Hippokoon). His labors are only frustrated insofar as all the rewards, apart from honor and glory, fail to materialize, and all losses, apart from honor and glory, generally prove irrecoverable, or are recovered (like Iole) at a greater cost than they are worth.

The aristocratic spin

Heracles embodies a social contradiction in that he labors in the modes and for the motives of all social classes: not just as aristocratic hero, but as merchant, laborer, bondsman, and slave. This social confusion is coupled with narrative ambiguities, insofar as most of Heracles' toils are undertaken for several, normally incompatible motives at once. Indeed these ambiguities lead to outright logical contradiction when we see Heracles laboring at one and the same time out of free will and under constraint. The Heracles myth does not therefore simply reflect aristocratic ideals, but the ideological fragmentation of a society in which different forms of economic activity define the man, and in which the value of different types of economic activity are hotly contested. Heracles is the mythical laborer par excellence, and as such he addresses the activities, concerns, and aspirations of all classes. His Protean character allows him to represent all work,

work in the abstract, whether for rewards or for freedom. Heracles was the "warder-off of evil" *(alexikakos)*, the archetypal liberator, and this aspect of the god doubtless had some appeal even in the realm of work. For this reason Burkert can explain "the influential spiritual force" of the figure of Heracles by calling him "a model for the common man who may hope that after a life of drudgery, and through that very life, he too may enter into the company of the gods" (1985: 211). But Heracles' appeal is not only afterworldly, since the confusions in his tale allow some small glamor of heroic effort to attach to even the most squalid toil.

Yet for all the universality of appeal in the myth's treatment of labor, the aristocratic perspective remains dominant, if largely hidden within the tangle of ambivalence, ambiguities, and contradictions. The myth treats the work of a slave, a day-laborer, a tradesman, and a merchant as all alike. They bring only frustration. Above all the myth stresses the way such labour is dependent upon others, who can cheat, and upon circumstances that can change. This kind of work is put in conspicuous opposition to the performance of great deeds which depend only upon the prowess of the individual, and, once achieved, stand outside time, and cannot fail to bring immortal glory. The successful deeds are those most persistently assimilated to the typical aristocratic pursuit of sporting competition where performance is voluntary, solitary, and independent, pitting the individual and his personal resources against formidable odds. In this way the character, style, and values associated with aristocratic labor are shown to be supreme, uniquely valuable, and uniquely effective.

In a structural sense, Heracles might be said to mediate between the polarities of the contradictory views in Greek society about just where one draws the line between free and unfree. But if Heracles is a mediator because he moves freely between sociological categories, he is also a seductive enticement to other social classes to accept, even unwittingly, an aristocratic view of labor. The aristocratic perspective is urged not only by the outcome of the events as they unfold in the myth but by the very categories of the motives and modes of labor which the myth assumes. The myth presents, as if an exhaustive "grammar of actions," a set of motives and modes which are products of an unmistakably aristocratic logic. The various forms of labor which come into play in the myth are determined by two intersecting oppositions: one of motive, whether action is undertaken for gain or for glory and goodwill; and one of modality, whether action is freely chosen or imposed by some necessity. It should be clear from the chart below that the myth's logical ("paradigmatic") structure urges the same evaluation of labor we find argued by the outcome of the myth's actions ("syntagmatic structure"): namely, that labor for gain is unfree and labor for glory and goodwill is free.

The motives

Gain

	unfree	free
work for self	profit *(kerdos)*	glory *(kleos)*
work for others	wages *(misthos)*	gratitude *(charis)*

No gain

	unfree	free
work for self	debt *(chreos)*	penance *(poine)*
work for others	slavery *(doulia)*	obligation *(philia)*

The modes

Mode of necessity

	gain	no gain
work for self	profit *(kerdos)*	debt *(chreos)*
work for others	wages *(misthos)*	slavery *(doulia)*

Mode of freedom

	gain	no gain
work for self	glory *(kleos)*	penance *(poine)*
work for others	gratitude *(charis)*	obligation *(philia)*

One cannot accept the motives without accepting the modes. Once internalized, this seemingly exhaustive selection of the motives and modes of labor serves to imprint or urge subgroup values and perspectives upon the minds of an audience to which these values and perspectives may be alien or even contrary to their best interests.