

The Twelve Labours of Hercules

Labour 1 - The Nemean Lion



Description:

Hercules' first labor was to slay the ferocious Nemean Lion and bring its head and skin to King Eurystheus. This monstrous beast caused terror with its roars, and no weapon could penetrate its invulnerable hide. Even Hercules' club was useless. Undeterred, Hercules tracked the lion in the jungle all the way to its cave, blocked one entrance, and wrestled the lion with his bare hands, ultimately choking it to death.

Explanation:

The first labor of Hercules, the slaying of the Nemean Lion, symbolizes the battle against the "lion-anger" within the seeker of truth. This inner anger, lurking in the personality like a dangerous beast in a jungle, must be identified and confronted. The jungle, with its dense trees, rocks, and flowing waters, represents the complex inner world of the subconscious, where this powerful emotion hides.

The seeker must wrestle with their anger, recognizing when it arises and how it threatens to take control. Like Hercules strangling the lion with his bare hands, the seeker must use their willpower to overcome and subdue this destructive force before it is too late. The head of the lion, which Hercules wears as a symbol, reminds the seeker to conceal their harmlessness—appearing strong but remaining calm and in control—so as not to be exploited by those who would take advantage of weakness.

In every situation, the seeker must maintain self-control, never allowing anger to surface, no matter the provocation. Instead, they should approach life with love, reason, and fairness, keeping their emotions in check while projecting inner strength.

Labour 2 - The Lernean Hydra



Description:

Hercules' second labor was to find and slay the Lernean Hydra, a massive serpent with nine venomous heads. The beast lived in a marsh near Lerna and caused destruction to herds and crops, with even its poisonous breath proving deadly. Accompanied by his nephew Iolaus, Hercules tracked the Hydra to the spring of Amymone. Hercules forced the Hydra out of the marsh with flaming arrows, but as he cut off each head, two more would grow back. With Iolaus' help, Hercules burned each wound with fiery brands to stop the regrowth. After severing all the heads, they buried the Hydra's body, marking the end of the deadly serpent.

Explanation:

The Hydra of Lerna symbolizes uncontrolled desires, with its many heads representing the various forms of desire. The marsh represents the subconscious mind, where these desires arise. Hercules, as the Soul-Ego Self, must confront and control these desires. His companion, Iolaus, symbolizes the Guardian Archangel, offering guidance and support.

The fire used to burn the Hydra's wounds represents the mind's reason, which stops new desires from emerging. Hercules' dagger is the willpower needed to sever each desire. Unless reason is applied, cutting off one desire can lead to the growth of more. By using willpower and thoughtful reflection, the seeker of truth can overcome these desires, achieving self-control and inner peace. The Hydra reminds us that desires are endless unless consciously addressed, and only through discipline and reason can they be conquered.

The seeker of the Truth, after succeeding to kill the Nemean Lion (anger) and after killing the Lernaean Hydra (desires and uncontrolled emotions), will find himself strong enough and able to carry on with the rest of the labors with success.

Labour 3 - The Erymanthian Boar



Description:

For the third labor, King Eurystheus ordered Hercules to find, capture, and bring back alive the Erymanthian Boar, which was ravaging the countryside of Arkadia and Achaia. Hercules tracked the wild, tusked boar on Mount Erymanthus, chasing it tirelessly through the forests and slopes. The boar, snorting and furious, eventually sought refuge in a dense shrub. Hercules skillfully drove the exhausted creature into deep snow, trapping it in a net. The boar, its massive form thrashing in vain, was subdued and carried back to Mycenae as commanded.

Explanation:

The wild boar of Erymanthus symbolizes the physical body of a person, often driven by unchecked impulses and desires. Like the boar, when under the influence of anger or uncontrolled cravings, the body can act recklessly and destructively. The boar must be captured, representing the need for the seeker of truth to bring the body under control. Though the body has natural needs, these should not be confused with desires. Even in fulfilling these needs, reason and discipline must always prevail. The seeker must maintain control over the body, ensuring balance and moderation.

Labour 4 - The Hind of Ceryneia



Description:

For his fourth labor, Hercules was tasked with capturing the Ceryneian Hind, a wild and cunning creature as dangerous as the Nemean Lion and the Hydra. Sacred to the goddess Artemis, the hind had golden horns and bronze hooves, making the challenge even more delicate since Hercules couldn't kill or harm it.

Hercules chased the hind for a full year across mountains and forests. With careful aim, he eventually wounded its legs with his arrows, capturing it alive. On his way back to Mycenae, he encountered Artemis, but after explaining his mission, she allowed him to continue. Hercules delivered the hind to Eurystheus as commanded.

Explanation:

The Ceryneian Hind symbolizes the human personality, often driven by wild and unreasonable egoism. Like the hind, egoism cannot be destroyed outright but must be carefully controlled and transformed. The seeker of truth, symbolized by Hercules, must dis-energize the harmful aspects of egoism—represented by the hind's dangerous nature—without killing it. The good elements within the ego should be preserved and transmuted into the true self, allowing the Soul-Ego to take control and guide the personality toward balance and harmony.

Labour 5 - The Stymphalian Birds



Description:

For his fifth labor, Hercules was ordered to kill the dangerous Stymphalian Birds that had overrun the marshes of Stymphalos in Arkadia. These birds were not ordinary creatures; they had wings, beaks, and claws of iron, and were notorious for feeding on human flesh. Their sharp, metal features made them nearly invulnerable to attack, and they posed a significant threat to the people of the region.

Hercules, unsure of how to deal with the massive flock, received help from the goddess Athena, who gifted him a pair of brass cymbals, specially crafted by the god Vulcan. These enchanted cymbals would help him flush the birds out of their marshy hiding places. Climbing a nearby hill, Hercules clashed the cymbals together, creating a loud, reverberating sound that echoed across the landscape. The birds, startled by the noise, rose into the air in a chaotic frenzy.

As the Stymphalian Birds took flight, their iron wings cutting through the air, Hercules readied his bow and arrows. With precise aim, he shot them down one by one, striking the deadly creatures as they attempted to escape. By the end of the hunt, Hercules had wiped out the entire flock, clearing the marshes of the dangerous birds and successfully completing his labor.

Explanation:

The Stymphalian Birds symbolize a class of evil Elementals born from uncontrolled violent desires and emotions. Just as the birds fed on human flesh, these desire-Elementals feed on a person's etheric vitality, draining energy and influencing behavior. The seeker of truth must confront and identify these harmful Elementals in the subconscious, where they reside, and dis-energize them one by one, rendering them inactive.

Using well-directed thoughts—symbolized by Hercules' arrows—the seeker must neutralize these destructive forces. The subconscious acts as both a storehouse of energy and a realm where all Elementals, good and bad, live, feeding off the individual's etheric vitality. Controlling and purifying this space is essential for spiritual growth and mastery.

Labour 6 - The Cleaning of the Augean Stables



Description:

For his sixth labor, Hercules was ordered to clean the stables of King Augeas of Elis. Augeas owned vast herds of cattle, including twelve sacred white bulls belonging to Apollo, the Sun-God. These bulls, lived in stables that had accumulated years of foul manure.

Hercules, tasked by King Eurystheus, promised Augeas to clean the stables in a single day in exchange for a portion of the cattle. To accomplish this enormous task, Hercules ingeniously diverted the courses of the rivers Alpheus and Pineius. He dug trenches and redirected the rivers' flow through the stables, sweeping away the years of accumulated filth in a powerful rush of water.

Although Hercules successfully cleaned the stables, Augeas refused to reward him when he learned that Hercules acted under Eurystheus' orders. Despite the dispute, Hercules had completed the labor, but Eurystheus declared it didn't count, as Hercules had tried to receive payment.

Explanation:

The filthy stables of King Augeas symbolize the subconscious mind of a person, a hidden space where unresolved and unchecked desires, emotions, and energies (the "bad Elementals") accumulate over time. The stables, filled with years of waste, represent the clutter in the subconscious that must be cleaned to achieve spiritual clarity. The animals housed there, including the twelve sacred white bulls of Apollo, symbolize various elemental forces and energies, with the bulls specifically representing the pure etheric vitality given by the sun throughout the twelve months of the year.

Hercules' task of cleaning the stables by redirecting the two rivers, Alpheus and Pineius, signifies the use of the two etheric energy currents that flow through the body, known in Hindu teachings as Ida and Pingala. These currents are essential for sweeping away the negative energy stored in the subconscious. They are also

symbolized by the intertwined serpents on the caduceus of Hermes, showing how these energies must be carefully balanced and directed to cleanse the body's energy centers, or "sheds," in a safe and controlled manner.

The seeker of truth must learn to control and harness these etheric currents to cleanse the subconscious and remove the remnants of harmful desires, just as Hercules used the rivers to cleanse the stables. The seeker must be cautious and receive proper guidance to avoid the dangers of uncontrolled energy flow.

In mastering the proper use of etheric energy, the seeker of Truth can eventually free themselves from the material body through conscious exosomatosis, gaining control over both the psychical and noetical bodies. This process involves several stages:

- 1. Unconscious exosomatosis happens during sleep, where most people unconsciously leave their body and experience the psychical world through dreams.**
- 2. Subconscious exosomatosis occurs when a person believes they've had a vivid dream, which is actually an experience in the psychical world through the subconscious mind.**
- 3. Conscious exosomatosis involves the seeker leaving the material body at will, gaining full control over their psychical body. This requires long training and allows conscious exploration of the psychical and physical worlds.**
- 4. Self-conscious exosomatosis allows the seeker to consciously exist in various locations on Earth or in other dimensions. At this level, the seeker becomes the Soul-Ego Self, mastering the material and mental planes.**
- 5. Self-superconscious exosomatosis is the highest level, where the seeker can exist in multiple places at once, even materializing bodies in different worlds. At this stage, the seeker transcends the illusions of time and space, nearing ultimate Truth.**

Achieving this state takes centuries of training, and only a few seekers reach it while still in a material body. These rare individuals play crucial roles in the Divine Plan. Full understanding of this level cannot be conveyed through words, but it represents the return of the "Prodigal Son" to their true nature—the real Self.

Labour 7 - The Cretan Bull



Description:

For his seventh labor, Hercules was tasked with capturing the Cretan Bull, a fearsome beast sent by the sea-god Poseidon to King Minos of Crete. This was not the Minotaur, the bull-headed man trapped in the Labyrinth, but the bull that Poseidon had gifted to Minos for sacrifice. However, Minos, captivated by the bull's beauty, refused to sacrifice it, enraging Poseidon. In his fury, Poseidon drove the bull mad, causing it to rampage across Crete and terrorize its people.

At Minos' request, Hercules set out to capture the wild bull. After a fierce chase through the island, Hercules wrestled the bull to the ground, using his immense strength to subdue the maddened creature. He then brought the bull back to Mycenae, presenting it to King Eurystheus. Rather than keeping it, Eurystheus let the bull loose, allowing it to continue its terror across Greece. The bull eventually reached Marathon, where the Athenian hero Theseus later killed it, ending its reign of terror.

Explanation:

This labor symbolizes the seeker's journey toward mastering their material body and egoism, represented by the mad Cretan bull. The bull, driven mad by Poseidon's wrath, reflects a personality in confusion, ruled by uncontrolled desires and emotions. By this stage, the seeker of Truth is expected to have subdued these inner forces, much like Hercules capturing the mad bull.

In this myth, King Minos and King Eurystheus represent the force-principles governing material existence. Poseidon, the sea-god, symbolizes both the element of water and the solid, emotional, and mental substance that often overwhelms the personality. The seeker who has conquered their anger, controlled their desires, and mastered their egoism is the one who has successfully captured the mad bull—bringing their undisciplined personality under control.

Labour 8 - The Mares of Diomedes



Description:

For his eighth labor, Hercules was sent to Thrace to capture the man-eating mares of Diomedes, son of the war-god Ares. Diomedes, the brutal king of the Bistones, had been feeding his fierce mares on human flesh, making them deadly and uncontrollable.

Hercules, accompanied by a few loyal companions, sailed across the Aegean to Thrace. Upon arriving, they overpowered the grooms tending the mares and seized the vicious horses. However, the Bistones, alerted to the theft, quickly gathered their forces and launched an attack. A fierce battle ensued, with Hercules fighting off the warriors as his companions struggled to keep the dangerous mares in check.

In the midst of the fight, Hercules overpowered Diomedes and fed the king to his own man-eating mares. The savage horses devoured Diomedes. With their leader defeated and the Bistones scattered, Hercules and his companions captured the mares and brought them back to Mycenae.

Explanation:

For the seeker of Truth, Diomedes symbolizes evil and egoism, while Hercules represents the Soul-Ego Self striving for spiritual mastery. The friends of Hercules are the good and constructive Elementals, while the Bistones symbolize the bad and destructive Elementals within the subconscious mind. The man-eating mares of Diomedes represent groups of negative Elementals, which are sustained by a person's etheric vitality—symbolized by the human flesh they devour.

Hercules' battle against Diomedes reflects the inner struggle of the Soul-Ego Self to overcome and transform egoism into a positive force. In the myth, Hercules feeding Diomedes to his own mares symbolizes how evil, left unchecked, consumes itself. The Bistones, representing harmful Elementals, are ultimately defeated by Hercules and his allies, the good Elementals. For the seeker of Truth, this story shows that good always prevails. Evil may fight against both good and other evil forces, but such conflict weakens both sides. In contrast, good nourishes and strengthens itself, always emerging victorious in the end.

Labour 9 - The Belt of Hippolyte



Description:

For his ninth labor, Hercules was tasked with retrieving the girdle of Hippolyte, the powerful queen of the Amazons, and bringing it to King Eurystheus as a gift for his daughter, Admete. The girdle, a magnificent ornament, had been given to Hippolyte by Ares, the god of war, as a symbol of her authority over the fierce, battle-hardened Amazon women who lived in Cappadocia.

Knowing he would face formidable opponents, Hercules enlisted the help of his friends, including the heroes Theseus, Telamon, and Peleus. They sailed together to the land of the Amazons, prepared for battle. When they arrived, Hippolyte, charmed by Hercules and impressed by his strength, initially agreed to give him the girdle without a fight.

However, Hera, the wife of Zeus and a constant enemy of Hercules, was enraged by this peaceful resolution. Disguising herself as an Amazon, she spread false rumors among the warriors, claiming that Hercules had come to abduct their queen. The Amazons, deceived by Hera's lies, armed themselves and attacked Hercules and his companions.

Caught in the sudden conflict, Hercules had no choice but to defend himself. In the fierce battle that followed, Hercules fought the Amazons and, in the end, killed Hippolyte. With her death, he took the prized girdle and sailed back to Mycenae, presenting the girdle to King Eurystheus as a gift for his daughter, fulfilling his ninth labor.

Explanation:

Hippolyte symbolizes the present-day personality, while the Amazons represent the Elementals surrounding the personality, often manifesting as unreasonable and combative attitudes. The girdle of Hippolyte symbolizes the vital energy or etheric vitality stored in the Solar Plexus of the human body. Admete, the daughter of Eurystheus, represents the ignorant, undeveloped personality that can never truly control or possess this vital energy. Though Hercules was tasked with retrieving the girdle for Admete, he did not give it to her, as the vital energy cannot be controlled by the principle of gross material authority (symbolized by Eurystheus). Only the seeker of Truth, as the Soul-Ego Self, can rightfully possess and use the etheric vitality from the Solar Plexus. The warlike personality (Hippolyte) cannot hold onto this energy; it must be handed over to the higher self. Neither the material authority nor the ignorant personality can control the etheric energy—it belongs to the Soul-Ego Self, which can channel it through spiritual mastery.

Labour 10 - Cattle of Geryon



Description:

For his tenth labor, Hercules was ordered to retrieve the cattle of Geryon, a monstrous being with three bodies joined at the waist. Geryon owned a herd of magnificent red oxen, which Eurystheus wanted brought back to Mycenae. Hercules set out on a long journey to Erythia, the distant island where Geryon kept his cattle.

Upon arriving, Hercules was immediately confronted by Orthrus, a fierce two-headed dog guarding the herd. With a single strike of his club, Hercules killed Orthrus. Next, the herdsman Eurytion rushed to defend the cattle, but he too was swiftly defeated by Hercules.

Geryon, alerted to the attack, appeared to fight Hercules as he began driving the herd away. A fierce battle ensued, but Hercules, with his unmatched strength and skill, shot Geryon dead with his arrows. Victorious, he rounded up the cattle and began the arduous journey back to Mycenae.

Despite many challenges along the way, including attacks by thieves and scattered cattle, Hercules successfully brought the herd to King Eurystheus. In honor of the completion of the labor, Eurystheus sacrificed the red oxen to the goddess Hera, as the final tribute from this legendary task.

Explanation:

Geryon, the triple-bodied and triple-headed monster, represents the egoism that dominates the present-day personality, ruling over the three bodies of a human: the physical body, the psychical (emotional) body, and the noetical (mental) body. In the myth, Hercules, symbolizing the Soul-Ego Self, defeats Geryon. This act of killing Geryon symbolizes the Soul-Ego Self's conquest over the egoism embedded in these three bodies.

By overcoming this egoism, the Soul-Ego Self gains mastery over the physical, emotional, and mental aspects of the personality. With this triumph, the purified personality can advance toward true Self-realization. The first nine labors of Hercules represent challenges that all spiritual aspirants must face. However, the tenth labor signifies the victory of the seeker of Truth, who becomes master of their three bodies and their destiny. At this stage, the seeker begins to experience life not as a mere phenomenon but as Life itself, gaining access to the three worlds of existence—first with conscious awareness, and later, through continued effort, with superconscious mastery.

Labour 11 - The Golden Apples of Hesperides



Description:

For his eleventh labor, Hercules was tasked with retrieving the golden apples of the Hesperides, a challenge far beyond the scope of ordinary mortals. These golden apples, symbolic of the planets and solar systems, were gifts from Hera to Zeus, kept in a sacred garden guarded by the hundred-headed dragon Ladon and the Hesperides, daughters of the titan Atlas. Hercules embarked on a journey that took him across the world, encountering numerous trials. Along the way, he wrestled with the shape-shifting sea god Nereus to learn the location of the garden and defeated various adversaries like Antaeus, whose strength came from the earth itself. Eventually, Hercules reached Mount Caucasus and freed Prometheus, who revealed that only Atlas could retrieve the apples for him.

Hercules approached Atlas and agreed to temporarily take the burden of holding up the sky in exchange for fetching the golden apples. Relieved of his burden, Atlas returned with the apples but attempted to leave Hercules to carry the weight forever. Using his cleverness, Hercules tricked Atlas into resuming the load, escaping with the apples in hand. However, Hercules did not offer these sacred apples to Eurystheus, as they represented something far greater than a mere prize for kings. Instead, he presented them to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, symbolizing that the golden apples—representing the vast celestial spheres and spiritual mastery—belonged to higher realms of wisdom and divinity, far beyond the reach of mortal authority.

Explanation:

The eleventh labor of Hercules, retrieving the golden apples of the Hesperides, represents a divine task, not for the ordinary seeker of Truth in the material world. This labor is symbolic of a higher spiritual undertaking, one reserved for the Spirit-Soul Ego Self, now elevated to the level of a Man-God. The golden apples themselves symbolize the planets and solar systems—vast cosmic elements that signify mastery over universal truths and divine realms. Hercules, as the Master of the golden apples, does not deliver them to Eurystheus, who represents material authority. Instead, he offers them to Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, symbolizing that the ultimate fruits of spiritual attainment—cosmic knowledge and power—belong to wisdom and higher consciousness, not to earthly or material forces. This labor highlights the transcendence from human existence to divine realization, where the true seeker becomes one with the higher order of the universe.

Labour 12 - Cerberus



Description:

For his twelfth and final labor, Hercules was given the most dangerous task of all: to descend into the Underworld and bring back Cerberus, the fearsome three-headed guard dog of Hades. Eurystheus, sure this impossible feat would be Hercules' downfall, sent him on the perilous mission. The Underworld, ruled by Hades and his queen, Persephone, was a realm where the souls of the dead dwelled for eternity. Guarding its gates was Cerberus, a monstrous creature with three ferocious dog heads, a dragon's tail, and snakes covering his back. Cerberus' job was to prevent the living from entering the world of the dead and to stop souls from escaping.

Before setting out, Hercules was initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries for protection in the afterlife. He entered the Underworld through a cave at Taenarum and eventually found Hades. The god agreed to let Hercules take Cerberus, but only if he left his weapons and could subdue the beast with his bare hands. Weaponless, Hercules made his way to the gates of Acheron, one of the Underworld's rivers, where Cerberus stood guard. The massive beast, with its three snarling heads, prepared to attack. Undaunted, Hercules charged forward, throwing his powerful arms around the beast and wrestling it to the ground. The dragon in Cerberus' tail lashed out, biting Hercules, but the hero's strength overpowered the beast. After a fierce struggle, Cerberus submitted to Hercules' might.

With Cerberus subdued, Hercules carried the snarling creature to Eurystheus. Shocked but terrified, Eurystheus quickly ordered Hercules to return Cerberus to Hades. Obeying the command, Hercules returned the proud guardian of the Underworld back to his post, where Cerberus resumed his eternal duty of guarding the gates to the realm of the dead.

Explanation:

The twelfth labor of Hercules, descending into the Underworld to capture Cerberus, symbolizes the seeker's journey beyond the material world into the deeper realms of existence—the psychical and noetical worlds. Cerberus, the three-headed guardian, represents the "ring pass-not," or the boundary of cosmic order that protects these higher dimensions from the unprepared. For humans, the material world is the physical surface of Earth, existing within three dimensions. Beyond it lie the ethereal, psychical (four-dimensional), and noetical (five-dimensional) worlds, each governed by different laws and conditions. Taming Cerberus signifies

mastering these realms by understanding and overcoming their unique laws. This requires extensive study, discipline, and preparation, as these higher dimensions are not easily accessed or navigated by those unready for their truths.