

# Tracing the qualities of the zodiacal signs through the Twelve Labours of Hercules

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Course 150

*“...all the energies—zodiacal, systemic, and planetary—have a definite effect [Page 23] upon all the lives in all forms in all kingdoms of nature. Nothing can escape these radiatory and magnetic influences. The goal of evolution for humanity is to become consciously and livingly aware of the nature of these energies and begin to know them and to use them.”*  
[EA:23]

*The twelve constellations might be regarded as embodying the soul aspect and, for the present, their effect upon the individual must be regarded and should be studied in terms of consciousness and of the development of the life of the soul. This is in essence the will-to-love. [EA:28]*

Astrology, ancient myths and the rays are related. Every sign reduces a man operating in it to definite forces and provides particular qualities. The signs represent clear perception of the Soul. The Hercules Labours, the ancient myths, describe the relations of the signs and their development. Here Hercules represents the soul and in his twelve labours he is playing the part of the disciple upon the Path of Discipleship, performing each labour in one of the zodiacal signs.

The journey of Hercules around the zodiac begins from Aries for Aries is the starting point for the building up

of the spiritual body. In Aries the work begins with the lower bodies and the goal of this work is to subject the lower bodies to discipline and to make them pure channels for the energy of the soul. Here man begins to respond to the impulses coming from the world of the soul.

## ARIES

*“Aries, the downturned horns of the ram, signifying the coming into manifestation, the involutory cycle and the experience of the Cardinal Cross as it expresses the Will-to-manifest of God.” [EA:154]*

Aries is a sign of powerful impulses and efforts. Its personality ruler is Mars, strengthening the personality, the lower selfish desires and courage to fight for which a man aspires to. Aries transmits *the seventh ray* which gives organizational skills and manifesting power, and *the first ray* of will and power.

Hercules' Labour in Aries is the capture of man-eating mares.

Hercules began his task impulsively without preparing because he lacked patience. He is a warrior under the power of Mars through *ray one*, giving him power to fight for higher principle. He did not recognize the singularity of his task. He captured the mares or our subconscious feelings and thoughts, but he was asked to herd the mares by Abderis, man's lower nature. He failed in his labour. Our lower nature does not have the power to curb the “man-eating mares”.

Hercules obviously overvalued his power, he was self-admiring and under the reign of the uncontrolled mind. He behaved as a typical heady Aries who doesn't believe he may do something in a wrong way. He lacked patience and consistency and finished this task which was the test of his lower nature. But the lower nature can't help us in this work.

Aries is a mental sign, the head is under the reign of Aries. The esoteric ruler of Aries is Mercury, stimulating the intuitive understanding of imminent developments. Mercury supports the role of Aries as "the birthplace of ideas", as the 'bringer of new ideas' and as the *bridge* between the archetypal worlds and the worlds of form. All beginnings need the mental plane, so the aspirant on his way needs to acquire the ability to think.

A man in Aries has a strong need and desire to start to acquire a form - "let form again be sought" - or on the contrary a strong need to get free from the form and to achieve freedom from the chains of form. In Aries Hercules learns how to fulfill the mantram of the soul "I come forth and from the plane of mind, I rule", he learns to dominate over his impulsive nature, to finish up the task given, to be humble and patient.

## TAURUS

*"Taurus, the up-turned horns of the Bull with the circle below, depicting the push of man, the Bull of God, towards the goal of illumination and the emergence of the soul from*

*bondage with the two horns (duality) protecting the "eye of light" in the centre of the Bull's forehead..." [EA:154]*

A man in Taurus is a prisoner of passions, desire for material rules - "*Taurus is the symbol of desire in all its phases.*" [EA:371 Hercules Labour in Taurus is "The capture of the Cretan bull". Hercules enters into the labyrinth, which is the symbol of illusions. Illusions cause self-centeredness, selfishness, separations, building the walls between oneself and the others, yearning for material things. Taurian personality is conflicting and combative as the mantra says "let struggle be undismayed". Hercules enters into the labyrinth and brings the bull out. His guide was Venus, the exoteric ruler of Taurus, the purifier of the emotional life, acting through desire or love and is the source of the intelligent mind, expressing itself through intelligent desire and reaching harmony through conflict (*ray four* transmitted through Taurus).

Hercules could save the bull because he desired it. Taurus leads from desire to aspiration and love of the spiritual life, in Taurus the aspirant gets the first flash of the spiritual light.

The Souls mantra for Taurus is "I see and when the eye is open, all is light". His task is to capture his passions (the bull) and to "drive them away" to another place (mental body attains control over desires or astral body). The aspirant is building the antahkarana and his efforts are seen from "above", he will be met by 3 cyclops – the agents of the spirit, the light of the three planes – mental, buddhi and causal. He uses these

lights to celebrate matter, he transmutes the desire into aspiration and Vulcan gives the soul the power to accomplish this transmutation.

*“Taurus is the symbol of desire in all its phases. Whether the subjective man is impelled by desire, or the disciple is driven forth upon the path of return by the urge of aspiration, or whether the initiate is controlled by the will to cooperate with the Plan, he is, nevertheless, being responsive to the most potent manifestation of a little known and understood aspect of divinity, to which we give the inadequate name of the Will of God.” [EA:371]*

## GEMINI

*“Gemini.— The Light of Interplay. This is a line of light beams, revealing that which opposes or the basic duality of manifestation, the relationship of spirit and of form. It is the conscious light of that relationship.” [EA:229]*

In Gemini an aspirant passes through the period of the quest for inner vision – he wants to reach self-realization and he must act on the physical plane – to gather physical plane experience and to create objective reality. His lower self responds to the mantra - “let instability do its work” and he has to unite his lower and higher selves. Gemini is the sign of intellect, and its ruler on the personality level is Mercury.

Hercules Labour in Gemini is “The Golden Apple of the Hesperides“.

The teachers didn't offer the location of the golden apple-tree and Hercules searched from the four cardinal points (north, south, west, east). He knew that he would meet five trials, for an aspirant needs five tests to purify:

Hercules, going north, met several times Nereus, sent by the real teacher, who gave him clues, but Hercules didn't recognize the messenger sent by the Teacher. It is true, that our first contacts with our higher self are like flashes and an aspirant may get a clue from a master, but doesn't recognize this;

Hercules moves to the south, to the area of the solar plexus. It may happen that an aspirant returns to his previous state and is looking for the new experiences. He met a serpent Antaeus, ( illusions ) and fought with him – everyone must fight with the glamour of his lower nature. Hercules was a winner – he took the serpent high up to the light of buddhi and so could stop the illusions;

Hercules, turning to the west met the great deceiver Busiris, and accepted all he said; finally Hercules remembered the words of the real teacher – the truth is in you - and that made him free. The real teacher strengthens his disciples, but the wrong teacher inculcates frustration, uncertainty and despair;

Hercules unfettered Prometheus from the lower energies of Mars– a man is enchained by his desires;

The concrete purpose of Hercules was – to bring the golden apples. He saw on his way to the east Atlas bearing the

whole world on his shoulders. His compassion towards Atlas was so great that he forgot his own job and he decided to help Atlas and to take the world on his own shoulders. Atlas, free and joyful, gave Hercules the apples needed. Hercules saw he had gotten the power to help the world and that the Way is always marked by service.

In Gemini Hercules, the soul, realizes the dual aspect of his own nature and the energies of the soul and matter is united here with the aid of Venus (esoteric ruler of Gemini) bringing them together. In Gemini the aspirant unites his soul and his body according to the Soul mantra “I see my other self, and in the waning of that self, I grow and glow”. He ceases to be a non-realistic “swimmer in the air”, but his loving activity (*ray two* transmitted through Gemini) leads him to the real self-realization.

## CANCER

*“Cancer. — The Light within the form. This is the diffused light of substance itself, the ‘dark light’ of matter, referred to in The Secret Doctrine. It is the light awaiting the stimulation coming from the soul light.” [EA:329]*

Hercules’ Labour in Cancer is the Capture of the Doe. This is a very simple labour – just to find out the place of the doe (the doe of knowledge, the intuition) and to bring her to the temple. Hercules saw the doe at once – he was near the temple of the Solar God. But Hercules heard three voices, each saying that the doe only belongs to her: Artemis (the Moon goddess, symbolizing instinct), Diana (the huntress, the daughter of the sun, the Sun goddess, symbolizing intellect),

Apollo (the sun god, symbolizing intuition).

Hercules searched for the doe for a year and finally found her near the silent lake for only by the silent mind can she be found. He sent an arrow or he built the antahkarana, and hurt her leg, before he could take her; then he took the doe and declared that she belongs to him. It was a mistake again – the teachers answered that the doe belongs to the temple and nobody can claim the doe. Hercules brought the doe to the temple. His labour was done.

A man's self-consciousness develops from instinct through intellect to intuition. Instinct or the form consciousness teaches the aspirant to listen out for his heart. Hercules has to distinguish sensual from intuition. He needs intellect for this. He needs a silent mind to build up the antahkarana to reach the intuition. *Ray three* develops his intellect. Neptune as the esoteric ruler leads to the *opening of the emotional nature to the influences of love and compassion*. Intellect is a capability for intellectual perception, through which Hercules is conscious of the world of thoughts and ideas. Intuition is a capability of direct perception of reality, through which the world opens beyond the mental plane. An aspirant has to learn “to bear the Doe to the Temple of God” or to transform intellect to intuition to discover things beyond the mental plane.

The Moon is the ruler on the personality level and represents the form side of life. The Moon in Cancer compels the aspirant to build the walls around him like the personality mantram of Cancer “let isolation be the



rule and yet the crowd exists”; he may be emotional and supersensible behind his walls. “Bearing the Doe to the Temple of God” is reflecting the words of the soul mantram of Cancer “I build a lighted house and therein dwell”. The personality refines and he becomes full of positive and shining thoughts.

## LEO

*“Leo. — The Light of the Soul. A reflected point of light logic, or divine. The light diffused in Cancer focuses and reveals eventually a point.”* [EA:229]

### Hercules Labour in Leo: Slaying of the Nemean Lion

Leo is the "*birthplace of the individual*," [EA: 102]. Hercules, the soul, the symbol of the king in the story, kills the Nemean Lion. The lion symbolizes the dominating personality or personality ray, his own nature. Hercules has a lot of weapons. Deep in his heart Hercules had doubts, for he identified with his personality. He can win only if he identifies with the soul.

Personality, our lower nature, contains our fears, our passions and our personal desires and manifests as selfishness, self-contentment, self-centeredness, pride etc. responding to the personality mantra of Leo “let other forms exist, I rule”. Problems on governing the mind are known to every aspirant, so the aspirant has to slay the lion of the personality using the intellect; then the aspirant is ready to subdue his interests to

the group soul.

The Great Ones gave Hercules many weapons before the labour, but he used only his battle club or his intuition, his self-confidence, his inner guru, esoteric ruler Neptune, veiled by Sun. The gift of the Great Ones is *ray one*, the Divine Will. Personality always wants to save its status and always finds arguments to empower its way of acting, so we see, how long Hercules looked for the location of the lion. Lion or our personality was in a cave and Hercules used *ray five* power - an analytical and precise mind, rational and logical thinking – to discover the lion’s place. Hercules strangles the lion with his own hands symbolizing the purification of the throat chakra. Right speech is very important for the aspirant to develop and he must always know what to say, when to say it and to whom to say it.

In Leo identification shifts eventually from the lower self to the soul, the power of Neptune (veiled by the Sun) becomes more effective and conveys the power to experience the “solar flames” as they are focused within the Heart of the Sun. “Leo consciousness identifies with its higher Self and Hercules can say “I am That, and That Am I”.

## VIRGO

*“The blended dual Light. Two lights are seen—bright and strong, the light of form; one faint and dim, the light of God. This light is distinguished by a waxing of one and the waning*

*of the other. It differs from the light in Gemini.” [EA:329]*

Responding to the personality mantra “let matter reign” the mind in Virgo as the earth sign is responding to the matter things, his mind is analytical and critical, he is thinking in details (his ruler is Mercury conveying the ability to focus the mind analytically and reasonably). An aspirant needs love and will to go out from this circle – to save the soul from matter. The attitude of the fanatical aspirant to matter (*ray six*), to his physical body is often undervalued, even belittled. He doesn’t appreciate his physical body, he may even hate matter. He forgets that not his physical body is the cause of his bad habits. But the aspirant doesn’t have success before he corrects his attitude to matter.

Hercules Labour in Virgo: The Girdle of Hippolyte.

In this sign Venus has descended to matter ( Venus is in its fall in Virgo ) to promote matter for the Girdle of Hippolyte is a present from Venus. Hippolyte herself offered the girdle, the symbol of unity and love, to Hercules and there was no need for fighting. But Hercules just killed Hippolyte for Mars demands fighting – he is the ruler of the lower powers in the world of illusions. Hercules had again made a mistake. The aspirant must learn to rule these lower energies. Hercules is inflexible and he fights although he could get the girdle through comprehension and good words.

But there is another half of the labour – Hercules saved Hensione from the stomach of the sea serpent using

the loving power of the *ray two*. He redeemed himself, for the bad karma can always be neutralized through loving service; the two have united again and the form has acquired value. A man in Virgo has to make a choice – here he has a possibility to make a first step towards spirituality, to the unity of spirit and matter. He must learn compassion and tolerance. The esoteric ruler the Moon represents its potential for purification to embody the Christ Principle, *to convey the ability to restore the threefold lunar form to its divinely intended purity*. With the positive attitude of life the ruling idea of Virgo is “Christ in you the hope of glory” for he has fulfilled the form with spirit.

## LIBRA

*“Libra – The Light that moves to rest. This is the light that oscillates until a point of balance is achieved. It is the light which is distinguished by a moving up and down.”* [EA: 329]

The Libra man tries to balance his dualities, his soul sways through the extremes by the words “let choice be made”.

Hercules Labour in Libra: Capture of the Erymanthian Boar.

Hercules took only his battle club (intuition) and left his bow, for in his last labour, he had killed in vain. He didn't take into consideration his teacher's advises about eating. When he met centaurs they sat together to drink and enjoy wine, not belonging to them. Hercules had forgotten his exercise, he couldn't distinguish lust

and soul delights and Venus (the exoteric ruler of Libra) gives his energy to pleasures. And again he made a mistake – he killed two centaurs; Uranus (the esoteric ruler of Libra) which may cause misunderstanding and even brawls. Hercules got away as a Libra man sometimes does for he doesn't believe he had killed. To kill the passions is not possible on the lower levels, so Hercules climbs up to the top of mountain (Capricorn experience of the blended light of the personality and soul – Venus and Saturn relate Libra to Capricorn) to get the wider understanding.

He captured the boar *“and drove it down the mountain by the hind legs, much to the amusement of onlookers“* Ray three energies are implicated as he drove the boar by the hind legs, for it is good if there is some light and joy in our work.

Here we see how in giving to the temptation of personal desire and in consuming of that what belonged to the group brought tragedy to Hercules. He already had killed in vain a few times and the teachers had asked him to think about these cases, but he didn't believe that this could happen to him again. He thought that there weren't any traps on his way, but he was caught by enjoyment. The personality evinced again.

Hercules chastened the boar and attained equilibrium:

*“In Libra, the point of balance or equilibrium is attained between material personal desire and intelligent spiritual love, for the two qualities of cosmic desire are brought to the fore in the consciousness in Libra and balanced one against the other.”* [EA: 245]

The Libra lesson is the balancing of desire. If a man can behave through the words of the soul mantram of Libra “I choose the way which lies between the two great lines of force” he attains control of his emotional body.

## SCORPIO

*“Scorpio carries the test right down into the physical plane life, and then, when it is faced and handled there, the life of the man is carried up into heaven, and the problem which the test involved is solved by the use of the reasoning mind.”*  
[EA:204]

Hercules Labour in Scorpio: Destroying the Lernaean Hydra.

The nine-headed hydra or the serpent of desire (our sensations, desires), lives in a quagmire, a place of black water. It is the deep hidden corners of the cave of our senses. Our soul is a prisoner of our illusions like the words of the personality mantram of Scorpio “let maya flourish and let deception rule”. It is not easy to discover one’s own hydra; Hercules used the burning arrows or the fire of aspiration. The hydra had nine heads, the symbols of the physical, emotional and mental vices. Who will win in this battle between the personality and the soul, between the higher and the lower self? If Hercules cuts off one of the heads, two new heads re-grow at once. Is it possible at all to coordinate the physical, emotional and mental bodies? Hercules remembered the advice of the Great Ones –

*“...and overcomes the nine-headed Hydra or serpent of desire by being forced to his knees and from that position of humility lifts up the serpent into the air, and then deliverance comes.” [EA:144]*

In Scorpio the aspirant learns through losses and forsaking (*ray four* harmony through conflict) humility, patience and ability to distinguish. Hercules affirmed the existence of the hydra and looked for him for a long time and then destroyed him using the teachers’ advice. He finds a new perspective by lifting the hydra up to the light of wisdom (the buddhic level, where the home of the intuition or pure reason is). He used his mind in a right way. Now he behaved like the words of the soul mantram of Scorpio “warrior I am, and from the battle I emerge triumphant” say. He has won over illusions and now his personality works as a divine channel. Pluto, the special or spiritual ruler of Scorpio works as the founder of the more perfect life where the soul influences rule the personality.

*In Scorpio “...the disciple undergoes those tests which will enable him to take the second initiation and demonstrate that the desire nature is subdued and conquered and that the lower nature is (by being lifted up in the air, i.e. into heaven) capable of reaching the goal for this world period...” [EA:143]*

## SAGITTARIUS

*“Sagittarius—Here the ordinary man begins to demonstrate a tendency to become more focused and ...concentrated*

*upon the attainment of that which is desired. The man demonstrates one-pointed selfish instincts and though he may be, for instance, friendly and kind, it is through a desire for popularity. This is a good expression of the individual Sagittarian subject and shows also the tendency of the soul to turn all evil eventually into good.” [EA:118]*

Hercules Labour in Sagittarius: Killing the Stymphalian Birds.

The birds in this [quagmire](#) or on the mental level are illusions. If Jupiter as the exoteric ruler is widening the energy channels of a selfish man, then the area of the [quagmire](#) widens and area of illusions is increasing like the words of the personality mantram of Sagittarius “let food again be sought”. The aspirant ensnares birds within the light and then can govern them – the illusions. First Hercules tried with his battle club, after that with arrows, but without success. Maya, glamour and illusions distort the Truth and capture the soul. We can’t win over the illusions using only the mind for the illusions are part of the mind. Hercules remembered the wise words of his teacher and found the right way to frighten birds off. Only sensibility and intuition can free us from illusions. Approach to the [quagmire](#) of illusions is readiness of self-purifications (influence of Earth as the hierarchical ruler of Sagittarius).

Now Hercules, the archer is heading directly for his purpose. In Sagittarius he meets the same problems as in Aries, but now his approach is through the one pointed directed effort and he can manage the situation. The weapons of the aspirant are words and



thoughts. In Sagittarius the aspirant learns to govern his speech, emotions and thoughts, he learns to speak the truth and use his will; right thought and right speech and harmlessness lead to freedom. He knows that Sagittarius is a sign of silence and of vision and he understands that his own truth is only a part of the Whole Truth.

Sagittarius has his bow and harp –Sagittarius transmits *rays four, five and six* – a man attains harmony through arts.

Hercules stops for a moment to understand the flame or the fire of intuition –the illumined mind of the Sagittarian disciple becomes sensitive to intuitive perception. The ever expanding vision of a disciple is reflected in the soul mantram of Sagittarius “I see the goal, I reach the goal, and then I see another”.

## CAPRICORN

*“Capricorn. – The Light of Initiation. This is the light which clears the way to the mountain top, and produces transfiguration, thus revealing the rising sun.” [EA:330]*

Hercules Labour in Capricorn. Slaying Cerberus, Guardian of Hades.

In the sign Capricorn there is a gate into the spiritual kingdom, where an initiate identifies with spirit, not with matter. Hercules descends from the higher mental plane to gate number ten represented by the

sign Capricorn which transmits the *rays one, three and seven* giving him a strong will (*ray one*). Now he is on the physical plane (*ray three and seven*) and his breaths are heavy for he is coming from the higher planes. Hercules is now *the ray one* monad for descending to hell a strong will is needed. Hercules is intelligent, *ray three and ray seven* gives him the organizational skills.

Before descending into hell he had to purify himself and only then was he initiated into the secrets.

The Teacher touches Hercules' forehead or his Ajna centre, ruled by Venus. In Capricorn Venus as his highest ruler stands for spiritual love and attainment of the highest goals with real wisdom. Saturn as the exoteric and esoteric ruler knows the right time and place and provides Hercules with the sense of responsibility and duty to accomplish his tasks. Hercules didn't pay for his boat crossing over the river Styx ( a river that the souls of the deceased must cross) for he is free from karma. On the other side there is the kingdom of Pluto (the kingdom of Hades or the underworld) where Hercules descended to free the suffering Prometheus. The path to the underworld is guarded by the three-headed dog Cerberus who represents the Dweller on the Threshold. The disciple/initiate has created his Dweller over many lifetimes and it represents the sum total of his desires, motives and thoughts. The initiate has to destroy this powerful self-created Dweller or personality as Hercules had to destroy the three-headed dog Cerberus and emerge as a free initiate to return back into the world and serve humanity as is

reflected in the soul mantram of *“Lost am I in light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back.”* This mantram refers to the third initiation where the personality has been completely integrated and represents no more problems to the initiate. With his consciousness oriented towards the monad/spirit he now turns his whole attention to the service of the world.

## AQUARIUS

*“Aquarius. – The Light that shines on Earth, across the sea. This is the light which ever shines within the dark and cleansing with its healing rays that which must be purified until the dark has gone.”* [EA:330]

*Aquarius* leads from personal desire to world service motivated by love.

Hercules Labour in Aquarius: Cleansing the Augean Stables.

His labour in Aquarius is the purification of the world directing the waters of life to thirsty men. He works not for his own purposes but he sees that the world needs help. Hercules broke down two walls as barriers on the way of Light and directed the waters of the rivers from the accustomed river beds through the stables (using *ray five* of concrete mind). Humanity is not ready for breaking all the barriers (he broke only two, the other two stayed on). His ruler Saturn has taught him discipline and opened for him new possibilities and now the labour is completed and well done. He used the flashes of the light of intuition from Uranus

(the exoteric ruler of Aquarius).

Hercules is a World server and functions as the soul responding to the words of the soul mantram of Aquarius “water of life am I, poured forth for thirsty men” focused unto the kingdom of spirit. His personality is only a tool which is used if it is needed, he has transmuted the personality level mantra of Aquarius “let desire in form be ruler”, and his consciousness is united with all that exists. He has focused wholly on the problems of the world and self-sacrifice is now his life-style thus fulfilling the hallmarks of the initiate: unselfish service, group work and self-sacrifice.

Aquarius leads from personal desire to world service motivated by love.

## PISCES

*“Pisces—The Light of the World. This is the light, revealing the light of life itself. It ends for ever the darkness of matter.”*  
[EA:330]

Hercules Labour in Pisces. Capture of the Red Cattle of Geryon.

Hercules might be regarded here as the World Saviour. His task is submission to the Will of God, forsaking his selfish will. He has to go to Erytheia, the place of the Great Illusion. Geryon, the king of this place, was three-headed, three-bodied and six-handed and he had a two-headed dog. Geryon, the Great Illusion, is a symbol of the monster governing humanity with its lower bodies – physical, emotional and lower mental.

Hercules was advised to invoke the aid of Helios, the god of fire in the sun.

Before he got down with the labour, Hercules meditated for seven days, one for every ray. He descended through the seven level of consciousness and accepted advice from the higher levels. Now he was ready to fulfill the challenge of the world.

He had received a golden cup, *ray two*, the aid from the buddhic level, and he used it to cross over the hurling sea or the astral world. He killed the two-headed dog, but saved the herder's (the mind) life – for he might need to guard the herd later. (The mind is needed as the interpreter of the inner reality). He was attacked by Geryon, who didn't want that Humanity would be freed. Geryon as the Dweller on the Threshold always attacks when a being is meeting the Truth. Hercules penetrates three worlds by his arrow – maya, glamour and illusions - at once. His defender is the causal body. *Ray two* of Love-Wisdom and *ray six* of Devotion both bear the idea of love and in Pisces express love and compassion to humanity.

Hercules is now the World Saver. The words of the soul mantram of Pisces "I leave my Father's house, and turning back, I save" show that the World Saviour can refuse the entry into Shamballa, and stay with Humanity as did the Buddha who loved Humanity so much that He refused to leave. The Father's House represents the Monad (our source) or Shamballa The words of the personality mantram of Pisces "go forth into matter" don't express the stage of Hercules' life now.