



### III Written answer (30 marks):

Answer **one** of the following questions in essay format, using specific examples from myths we have covered. Include major mythological themes or motifs and any pertinent ancient sources in your answer.

1. Discuss the major motif of dragon combat citing specific examples from classical myth and explore the deeper meanings and connotations associated with this motif as it relates to heroic myth and ancient society.

#### The Epic Of Gilgamesh: Exemplar of Heroes

The motif of dragon combat within Classical Mythology is without a doubt the most important motif to the heroes portrayal. Most effectively demonstrated with how to the ancient Greeks the word likely meant protector.<sup>1</sup> For most people in modern day we likely all go through the point of wondering how we ever evolved past animals. Well how we did was through these heroes overcoming nature for us. In their stories how they overcame these beasts was often through the direct help of a god. Interestingly nowadays we see that certain mental disorders could possibly have been helping people hunt. ADHD for example is the current forerunner, these people are impulsive-quick to anger, risk takers and have an explorative mind.<sup>2</sup> These factors can help explain their personality, while their extra capabilities can help explain how they were

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<sup>1</sup> B. Powell, *Introduction to Heroic Myth*

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Williams, Eric Taylor, *the Evolution of Hyperactivity*

able to overcome some physical and mental challenges. Back then they had none of this information, we are still now just scraping the surface. Would could be asked is why they would push themselves to the extreme. Answer being in how heroes stand out. We see a few times where a hero would rather die than not be as good as he is. They definitely have an ego problem. Likely the fastest people to break free from their collective unconscious that Carl Jung describes and their persona means everything to them. It's likely that this is another factor that pushes them both to protecting others but why others are so fond of them. Everyone wants to break free from the collective unconscious and it's clear that the gods and heroes have. Unfortunately for society around heroes their personal identity relies much on the opinion of others, another reason they enjoy being the protectors. But what is much more powerful is their sexual desire. We see them taking women home from their raids to have sex with despite their wives home. This is showing it's not just an emotional and physical act that they bask in with love, but something they must do to show how powerful they are. Heroes still have a collective unconscious but also can abuse the collective unconscious. A huge milestone value that we talk about today is losing our sexual virginity. Gilgamesh is the original hero who would instill law allowing him to take every woman's virginity before marriage. Most importantly this shows how their own self image still matters over all. Being able to conquer nature in ancient times gave you all the rights you could want. Then they were eventually able to go to war simply to feed their ego, this is seen with

Agamenmon who sacrificed his daughter to go to the Trojan War and come home with a trophy.<sup>3</sup> Nothing was more important than the hero's image.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the oldest stories of heroic myth known. Gilgamesh was an actual king who once ruled on Earth thousands of years ago.<sup>4</sup> His story has one major recurring theme, and that is the man over nature element. He did have his own dragon in the form of Humbaba. Resembling most of a lion but many animals mixed to one. One of the traits of ADHD is hyperfocus that creates a tunnel vision when they engage in something. This is the common argument surrounding their likely abnormal hunting capabilities. They may not even be aware of this natural feature in their brain- and other people certainly couldn't see it. First put in with Gilgamesh is receiving help from the gods, he received enchanted equipment. I'm willing to say that this was simply because they were better with them and when people treated them as a God they simply enjoyed it too much to deny. An impulsive person with the capability to have all urges fed. This in turn of course fed their desire to truly be a god. Gilgamesh went through his own struggles in attempting to overcome death. Although he did not physically people would argue that he has become immortal. His name and legend still talked about thousands years later, his memory never forgotten. This immortality was desired so much because it was the ultimate stepping out, as we know Hercules was the only hero to ascend to Mount Olympus to be a god. Later

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<sup>3</sup> B. Natali - *Classical Myth: Agamenmon*.

<sup>4</sup> B. Powell - *The Mesopotamian Legend of Gilgamesh*

psychologist Eric Neumann came out and said that the dragon combat motif is the representation of our will to break away from the collective. This is important as this is the reason other men put up with divine heroes. They too want to be them. And all divine heroes want to be like Hercules, god of the heroes, or Zeus, God of the gods.

We must wonder why the heroes are able to be so much more advanced than their peers. The likely truth is again in their curious brains. Sociologist Max Weber explains how society functions in what he called the iron cage theory. This idea was that everyone is born into iron cages with metal bars all around. Now we think that we are trapped, he likely used the jail comparison to showcase how freedoms are gone. But what it did was claim that only the most curious of people would fully examine their cages instead of accepting their imprisonment. They eventually find the door to their cage and are able to explore around freely.<sup>5</sup> What this imprisonment was a metaphor towards was how people are trapped in the institution's rules set in more modern society. What must be imagined as Gilgamesh was king, he essentially was the institution for his people. This would go for all divine heroes. So what this would do is allow them to create their own rules. How far they pushed their control over people often would get them in grave trouble.

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<sup>5</sup> L. Henderson - *Founding Fathers of Sociology: Max Weber*

Zeus was a symbol of fertility. Although married through mythology he has over 100 offspring with too many to count lovers. Throughout Classical Mythology being Zeus' son means quite a lot. Through this is especially through two means, one his protection over them, and also through divine parentage. We know that Augustus formed Rome's section of mythology as propaganda, and that calls to question how much of mythology is purely to indoctrinate. Having all people bow down to Zeus as a god of fertility made all respect him. We see in myth where women willingly have children with Zeus simply because he is Zeus. Seen as an honour. We see wives call him for favours to help them in dire need. Why this was put in was likely propaganda for heroes. They relied on their ego, and it was too dangerous to have them unsatisfied. Instilled through myth over countless generations was the idea of divine parentage being good. These respected lines were developed to have people, especially women more willing to be sexual objects. Especially for a day without birth control, likely common to get pregnant. Now the collective unconscious would have argument points to allow heroes to do their deed. Although many women were raped, we have to wonder how a plentiful amount of heroes didn't die sleeping next to their wife. Despite how horrible these practices were for women this collective thought that having a child of the divine is an honour or opportunity allowed for regular and open affairs involving heroes.

What we see from the dragon combat motif is the catalyst capability of being a hero. These abilities are unseen and unknown to all. What the hero's see themselves as

at a young age is someone who is above the curve. They often do something impressive at such a young age as well to showboat their potential. What eventually is discovered is that the hero's motivations come directly from the people. The only acceptable place in his mind is constantly proving he is above the ordinary man. Although many are like this only one's with certain mental traits are able to overcome challenges others can't, because of these differences in their brains. Unfortunately these differences also make them extremely impulsive, this frequently hurts their public image. Thankfully what we see with Hercules is that anyone can overcome the gravest crimes. Hercules, killed his wife and children and still managed to ascend as a god.<sup>6</sup> They achieve this often through what the gods tell them. What the gods say influences everything, and this is why real people in ancient times would connect their lineage to a God. This is done by both Caesar and Augustus likely most notably.<sup>7</sup> Augustus is even named to be compared to Jupiter (Zeus) in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As we also learn from Augustus interaction with myth is confirmation that the stories were propaganda. The biggest one put in place was the control of women. Sexual desire is simply too strong, and why humans are best off monogamous in a society. Because men were the only ones capable of bringing us out of nature they were able to put in the rules first. They glorified their worst aspects of character in order to keep people at bay. The story of the gods was created to give the rest of humans reason to endure. Logical lies. Indoctrination is a very common topic today with the advanced media. Can we trust anything said by those in power today? The evil at the top always protects their power

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<sup>6</sup> B. Natali - *Classical Mythology: Hercules and Heroic Myth*

<sup>7</sup> B. Natali - *Classical Mythology: Rome*

over all. Some find it extremely interesting that as China lost its dominant economic position to the USA another dangerous-spreadable virus came out from their authoritarian government. Now who has “no more” covid-19 cases and who is worried about their economy collapsing?