

Heroism was not an invention of the Greeks. Yet, through the first hundreds years of their civilization, the Greek literature has already given birth to highly polished and complex long epics that revolved around heroes. These literature works gave many possibilities of definition of heroism. The Greeks illustrated heroism to obey the rules laid down by the gods and goddesses, and those who obey the rules would gain honor and fame. The Greeks regarded intelligence as one of the highest gifts that all heroes must possess. The Greeks required that all heroes must have courage. Odysseus, one of the heroes of the epic "Odyssey" stand out. He was constantly expected to be a true hero, always obey the rules laid down by the immortals, possess wisdom and courage.

The Greeks believed that all heroes must always obey the Guest/Host relationship rule-- which all guests must treat the hosts with courtesy, and the host must treat the guests properly-- laid down by the gods and goddesses. Those who did not obey the rule would be punished severely. Odysseus throughout the epic, demonstrated that he obeyed the Guest/Host relationship rule. Odysseus always following the Guest/Host relationship rule, a characteristic that all heroes must have according to the Greeks' tradition. All heroes must follow the rule because if they did not, they would be punished by the immortals, and would not be recognized as heroes. When Odysseus reach the land of the Cyclops race. Odysseus decided to pick his best men, goods offered as gifts, and headed toward a Cyclops's cave. When his men saw cheese, pens, and lamb on lying on the racks, they pleading to Odysseus, "Why not take these cheeses, get them stowed, come back, throw all the pens, and make a run for it? We'll drive the kids and lambs aboard. We say put out again on good salt water!" Odysseus dismissed the suggestion, "I wished to see the cave man, and what he had to offer." Odysseus dismissed the suggestion of his men, and choose to wait to greet the Cyclops with the gifts as in the custom of the Guest/Host relationship rule. Those actions and sayings showed that Odysseus was always following Guest/Host relationship rule, an example for his men to look up to. Odysseus's actions spoke for his character. He possess the characteristic that meets the criteria of always obeying the rules laid down by the immortal as defined in the Greek's tradition of all true heroes.

The Greeks believed that intelligence was one of the highest gifts that all heroes must possess. Intelligence was so important to the character of all heroes because intelligence would be used in novel situations where cunning would most needed. Odysseus possess intelligence as expected in the Greeks' tradition of heroes. Odysseus displayed intelligence when he went to the goddess Circe to rescue his men who were turned into swine by the goddess Circe. The goddess spoke to him, "Put up your weapon in the sheath. We two shall mingle and make love upon our bed. So mutual trust may come of play and love." He was asked to go to bed with a beautiful goddess, and yet he responded, "Circe, am I a boy, that you should make me soft and doting now? Here in this house you turned my men to swine; now it is I myself you hold, enticing into your chamber; to your dangerous bed, to take my manhood when you have me stripped. I mount no bed of loved with you upon it. Or swear to me first a great oath, if I do, you will work no more enchantment to my harm." She swore at once, outright, as I demanded, and after she had sworn, and bound herself, I entered Circe's flawless bed of love." Odysseus was asked by the goddess Circe to make love with her in order to build trust between her and Odysseus. However, Odysseus realized that the goddess wanted to go to bed with him, not to build trust, and as a result, Odysseus used his cunning to ask Circe to make a deal in which Circe had to swear to reverse her spell on his men in trade for him to make love with her "as to build trust". The goddess accepted the deal because both sides would get what they want-Circe would go to bed with Odysseus, the goddess would reverse her spell on Odysseus men. Odysseus's intelligence enable him to save his men. His actions showed the quality of a hero who possess the most important trait according to the Greek tradition-intelligence.

The Greek required that courage was a trait that all hero need. Courage was defined in the Greek tradition as to conquer fear or despair in order to save

oneself or others. Courage was vital to the characteristic of all heroes because there would be inevitable situations where courage would be needed. Odysseus possesses courage throughout the journey home. When he asked Circe about what lay ahead in his journey home, Circe replied "There lay are a pair of cliffs. One of them with its jagged peak reaches up to the spreading sky, wreathed in dark cloud that never parts. Halfway up the cliff is a murky cave, facing north-west to Erebus, and doubtless it is past this, Odysseus, that you and your men will steer your vessel. A strong man's arrow shot from a ship below not reach the recesses of that cave. Inside lives Scylla, yelping hideously; her voice is no deeper than a young puppy's, but she herself is a fearsome monster. God or man, no one could look on her in joy. Her legs-and there are twelve-are like great tentacles, unjointed, and upon her serpent necks are borne six heads like nightmares of ferocity, with triple series of rows of fangs and deep gullets of black death. No seaman ever, in any vessel can claim to have passed her without loss or grief; she takes, from every ship, one man for every gullet." Odysseus asked her again, "Only instruct me, goddess, if you will, how if possible, can I fight off Scylla when she raids my crew?" After Circe told him how horrible Scylla was, and that no ship of mortal men had ever passed Scylla unharmed, and yet Odysseus asked how to fight Scylla. Odysseus asked how to fight the monster that no one has passed it without loss and grief because this monster would bring death to his men. Odysseus wanted to save his men from horrible deaths and asked how to fight this monster. He showed courage. Those actions fit the criteria of a hero who posed unyielding courage as defined in the Greek tradition of heroism.

Throughout the epic, Odysseus was a hero. He had indeed pre-eminent qualities and much that were beyond the capacity of normal men. It was when problems came that these heroic traits emerged. When his men asked Odysseus to steal the goods from the Cyclops, which break the rule of Guest/Host relationship, he refused. He showed that he always obey the rules laid down by the immortals. When his men were turned into swine by the goddess Circe, he made Circe swear to reverse her action in trade for him to make love to her. He showed cunning. When Circe told him about Scylla and her unforgiving power, he asked how to fight Scylla to help his men avoid horrible deaths. He showed courage. We know him less from what he thought, which was seldom revealed, than by what he says and did, and his actions follow naturally from his characteristics. If the cunning of Odysseus is mentioned more than his courage, it was his courage that gets him into the scrapes from which his cunning had to deliver him. Odysseus had all the qualities that the Greek tradition required of all heroes, which were to obey the rules of gods, possess intelligence, and display courage. He was a hero.

