Hour 20: The hero as mirror of men’s and women’s experiences.

Key word: telos ‘coming full circle, rounding out, fulfillment, completion, ending, end; successfully passing through an ordeal; ritual, rite’. To be linked with another key word, athlos (aethlos) ‘contest, ordeal; competition’; derivative word: athlētēs ‘athlete’; related concepts are ağōn ‘contest, ordeal; competition’ and ponos ‘pain’ [sharp, shooting pain] and kamatos ‘pain’ [dull, aching pain].

A) Euripides Hippolytus 73-87: For you, goddess, I bring this woven garland [stephanos] culled from a virgin meadow, where it is not fit for the shepherd to pasture his flocks, nor has iron yet come there, but unspoiled still in springtime the bees fly through this meadow. Aidōs tends it with pure river water, and those who by their nature always use moderation [sōphrosunē] in all things, instead of having learned it, they can pick flowers, but it is not lawful [themis] for the kakos. Phīlē mistress, for your golden locks accept this headband from my reverent hand. I alone among mortals have this privilege: I keep company with you and make conversation, hearing your voice although not seeing your face. So let it be that I reach the telos of my life just as I began it.

B) review Herodotus 1.31.1-5: When Solon had provoked him by saying that the affairs of Tellos were so olbios, Croesus asked who he thought was next, fully expecting to win second prize. Solon answered, “Kleobis and Biton.” They were Argive by birth, they had enough to live on, and on top of this they had great bodily strength. Both were prize-winning athletes [athlophoroi], and this story is told about them: There was a festival of Hera in Argos, and their mother absolutely had to be conveyed to the sacred precinct by a team of oxen. But their oxen had not come back from the fields in time [hōra], so the youths took the yoke upon their own shoulders under constraint of time [hōra]. They drew the wagon, with their mother riding atop it, traveling 45 stadia until they arrived at the sacred precinct. When they had done this and had been seen by the entire gathering, their lives came to the best fulfillment [ariston telos], and in their case the god made clear that for human beings it is better to be dead than to live. The Argive men stood around the youths and congratulated them on their strength; the Argive women congratulated their mother for having such children. She was overjoyed at the feat and at the praise, so she stood before the image and prayed that the goddess might grant the best thing for humanity to her children Kleobis and Biton, who had given great timē to the goddess. After this prayer they sacrificed and feasted. The youths then lay down in the sacred precinct and went to sleep, and they never got up again; they remained in the pose that they had assumed in reaching their telos. The Argives made and dedicated at Delphi statues of them, since they were aristoi.

C) Euripides Hippolytus 1423-1430: To you, poor sufferer, in recompense for these miseries, I will grant the greatest timai in the polis of Trozen: unwed girls before marriage will cut off their hair for you, and through the length of time [aōn] you will harvest the sorrows [penthos pl.] of their tears. It will be the care of the virgin girls to make songs about you, and so Phaedra’s love for you will not fade away unremembered and remain a secret.

D) Euripides Hippolytus 121-175: There is a rock which is said to drip water from the stream of Okeanos, sending forth a fixed stream for dipping water-jars. It was there that my friend [philē] was washing purple robes in the river’s stream and spreading them upon the back of a warm sunny rock. From there the rumor first came to me of my mistress, how wasting away on her sickbed she keeps herself within the
house, and a thin veil shadows her blond head. This is the third day, I hear, that her lips have not touched food, and she keeps her body pure from the grain of Demeter, eager to hide her sorrow [penthos] and to put into the cheerless harbor of death. Dear Phaedra, are you possessed either by Pan or Hekate, or do you wander because of the devoted Korybantes or the mountain mother? Have you committed an error offending Artemis of Diktynna, with her wild beasts, and are wasting for neglect of her unoffered sacrifices? For she ranges through the sea, as well as over the islands of the sea, upon the watery eddies of the brine. Or your husband, the well-born ruler of the sons of Erekhtheus, does someone in the palace cherish him in a union hidden from your bed? Or has someone sailing from Crete reached the harbor most welcome to sailors, bringing a report to the queen, and in distress over her sufferings [pathos pl.] her psukhē is tied down to her bed? In women’s difficult tuning [harmonia], a bad, wretched sort of helplessness [amēkhania] often makes its abode, arising both from birth pains and irrationality. This breeze once shot through my womb, but I called upon the heavenly helper in labor, the guardian of the arrows, Artemis, and she, much envied, always comes to me with the help of the gods. But look here, the aged Nurse before the palace doors is bringing her from the house, though on her brow the gloomy cloud deepens. My psukhē longs to know what it is, and why the queen, with changed complexion, wastes away.

E) Euripides Hippolytus 198-249

Phaedra:
Lift my body, keep my head steady; the fastenings of my limbs are unstrung. 200 Raise my shapely arms, attendants, my headdress is heavy to wear, take it away, let my hair fall over my shoulders. ... Alas! Would that from a dewy fountain I might draw a draught of pure water for myself, 210 and lying beneath the poplars in a grassy meadow I might rest. ... 215 Take me to the mountains - I will go to the woods and to the pine trees, where the beast-killing hounds tread, and where they approach the dappled deer. By the gods, I long to shout to the dogs, 220 and by my fair hair to cast a Thessalian spear, holding a barbed dart in my hand.

Nurse:
Why, my child, are you anxious for these things? Why is the hunt your concern? 225 And why do you long for the flowing spring when nearby, next to these towers, there is a watery hill, from which you might have a drink?

Phaedra:
Artemis of sea-beaten Limna, goddess of the racecourse thundering with horses’ hooves, 230 would that I were on your plains curbing Venetian steeds!

Nurse:
Why again, in madness, have you cast out this utterance? One moment you were going to the hills and set your desire for the hunt, 235 but now on the waveless sands you wish for horses. These things are worth much prophesying; which of the gods drives your from your course and strikes aside your phrenes, child?

Phaedra:
Wretched me, what have I done? 240 Where have I strayed from good sense? I have gone mad and fallen by derangement [atē] from a daimōn. Woe is me! Nurse, cover my head again; I feel shame [aidōs] for what I have said. 245 Hide me! Tears fall from my eyes, and for shame my face is turned away. Although it is painful to come to one’s senses, to be mad is evil; dying in ignorance rules.
F) Euripides *Hippolytus* 732-751: Would that I were beneath some steep cavern, where a god might make me into a bird amid the winged flocks! Away I would soar over the waves of the Adriatic sea [*pontos*] and to the waters of the river Eridanos, where the unhappy sisters in their grief for Phaethon drip into the purplish swell the amber brilliance of their tears. Then might I reach the apple-bearing shores of the singing Hesperides, where the ruler of the sea [*pontos*] no longer gives a path for sailors over the deep, dark waters, and find there the holy boundary of heaven which Atlas holds, and the ambrosial fountains which well up by the couch of Zeus, and where the sacred earth, bestower of good things, increases the happiness [*eudaimonia*] of the gods.