

Daedalus and Icarus: A Typical Myth

I wonder how it would be to fly. Not just airplane flying, but the kind of flying with wings. Obviously I don't have wings so I will probably never know what it is like to fly, but I can still imagine. I imagine that while you are flying you can see the whole world, and you get this feeling deep inside of you. A sort of feeling of freedom, and that know one can bring you down. I wonder if this is how Icarus felt when his father, Daedalus, made the wings for him and his son to escape the Labyrinth. It must have been some type of feeling like that, because Icarus got carried away and flew too close to the sun, even when his father had warned him not to. Then his wings melted, and Icarus fell to his death into the sea (Pontikis "Daedalus & Icarus"). It is a sad story, but that's how a lot of the myths go, isn't it? The story of Daedalus and Icarus illustrates many common themes in the "morality" myths of the Ancient Greeks.

One of these "morality" myths is the story of Phaeton. When Phaeton learned that his father was the sun god, Helios, he traveled to his father's palace. When his father found out that he was his son he told Phaeton that he could have one wish. Phaeton knew that his father was the one that drove the sun chariot, and he thought he could impress his friends and family if he drove it. So, he asked that he might drive it for one day. The next day, he got to drive the chariot, but soon it got out of hand. He couldn't control it. He would fly too close, scorching the earth, and then too far, freezing the people. Zeus soon put a stop to it, and threw one of his mighty lightning bolts at Phaeton, and he died. This myth has many common themes with the story of Daedalus and Icarus. Notice how Phaeton wanted to *impress* others when he drove the chariot. He wanted people to look up to him, and he wanted to *feel* good. Perhaps he wanted to *feel* better or more important. He still wanted that even though after he told his father what his wish was his father *begged* him to change his wish. But he ignored what his father said, and he didn't change his wish. Icarus also got a little carried away with his *feeling* of freedom or of being great. He loved that feeling that he too ignored his father's warnings. Both, in the end, paid with their life. They are both trying to illustrate the same common theme of obedience and respect. Respect is also a thing Bellerophon learned in his life.

Many people have heard of the horse called Pegasus. But do all people know about his rider, Bellerophon? Bellerophon was a great hero that killed the Chimera while riding on top of his great steed, Pegasus. After his triumph over the chimera, Bellerophon started to think very highly of himself. He started to get ideas of going to Mount Olympus himself. The gods were furious. *Who was this man to think himself as good as a god?* One day, Bellerophon tried to ride on Pegasus all the way to Mount Olympus, but his horse was a very smart one, and kicked his rider off. After that Bellerophon started wondering around on his own, and he tried to avoid human contact for the rest of his life. In the story of Icarus you learn that you must *respect* you fathers, or your elders. Bellerophon learned the same lesson of respect. He learned that you must *respect* those who are above you, especially the gods. The theme illustrated in both of these myths is

respect, and not to get too cocky or thinking you are better than others. Bellerophon was not the only one that thought very highly of himself. Arachne also shared this same weakness.

Arachne was a girl; some say she was a princess, who absolutely loved to weave. She would weave whenever she could. Her woven materials were beautiful, and she knew it. She tried to challenge the goddess, Athena, to a weaving contest. Athena accepted, but after the contest Athena ripped up the work Arachne had done. She made Arachne feel bad about what she had done. Arachne hung herself, because she was so sorrowful of what she had done. Athena then brought her back to life, but not as a human. She brought her back as a spider, and Arachne was left to weave webs for the rest of her life. Arachne thought that she was *better* than Athena. Icarus may not have thought that he was *better* than his father, but he certainly didn't pay any attention to what his father had to say. Perhaps he thought his judgment was *better* than his father's. Again we see another common theme in both of these myths. The common theme illustrated in both the stories is not to think too highly of oneself, or in simpler terms, to have modesty.

Many themes are taught in all of these myths and stories. In the story of Phaeton it was obedience. In the story of Bellerophon it was Respect, and in the story of Arachne it was modesty. As you see, there are many common themes that the story of Daedalus and Icarus illustrate that other similar myths illustrate also. Just find another Ancient Greek myth. I am sure that you would be able to find many other common themes that it shares with the story of Daedalus and Icarus.

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