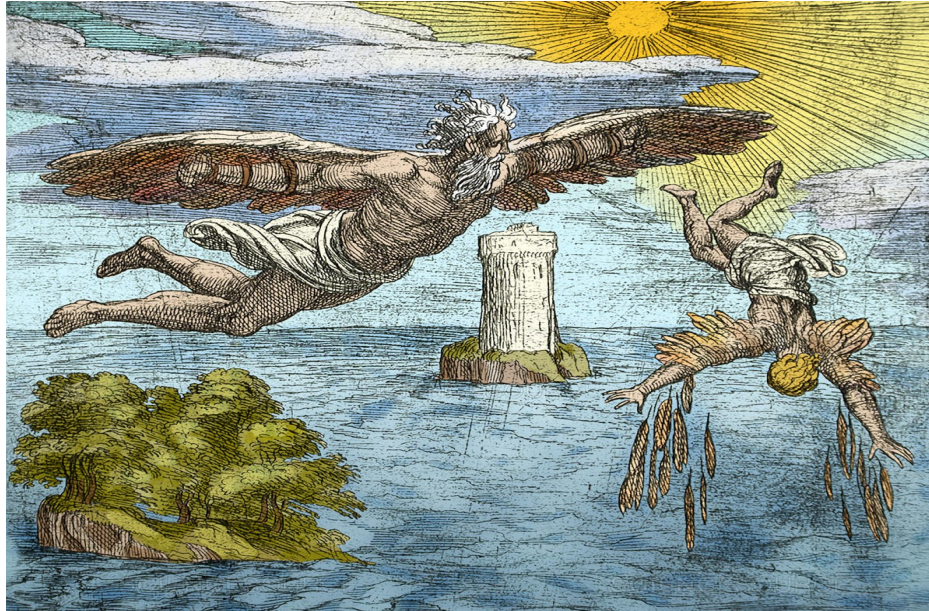


The Daedalus Dilemma

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As many of us probably remember, Daedalus was the Greek inventor who designed the Labyrinth: an inescapable maze within which King Minos imprisoned the half man, half bull creature, the Minotaur. Aside from grammar school Greek mythology, what could we possibly learn from this story that relates to motorcycling? As it turns out—a lot.

Not surprisingly, Daedalus was a first class craftsman—renowned not just for his architectural abilities, but his abilities to design, among other things, armor. In short—he was constantly creating, evaluating, and redesigning his work. As a skilled craftsman, he also knew his limits, as is classically related in the story of his and his son Icarus's escape from their imprisonment by King Minos. After fastening feathers together with wax to create wings, both he and his son strapped them on to fly away to freedom. Knowing all things in life have limits, he warned his son neither to stray too close to the sun, lest the wax melt, and he fall--nor too close to the sea, lest the sea soak the feathers, and he drown. As the story goes, Icarus, in youthful exuberance or sheer impulsiveness, soared too close to the sun, and plummeted to his death.

We, as motorcyclists, are craftsmen (craftswomen too!). Constantly building and refining our skills. Perhaps we should know the limits of our equipment? Our motorcycles have finite traction, braking and acceleration rates. Within the equipment lies the dilemma? Actually, no. What Daedalus realized is, the true dilemma is not in the equipment, but in ourselves--recognizing that we can only know our own limitations, never others. Daedalus, the mature and wizened designer, knew not only the limits of his equipment, but his ability to judge and live within those limits. He could never know even his own son's limitations and ability to live within them. So that was, in short, his dilemma. We all have our suns and seas; the fixed limits of our own abilities. If we stray too close to either extreme, we burn, or we drown. Daedalus's dilemma was at once knowing his limits, yet, in spite of his warning and knowledge of both his son and the wings, being unable to know his son's limits. Providing the equipment, the warning and the example, Daedalus had to accept the ambiguity of not knowing Icarus's

limits. What to do?

In motorcycling, we must frequently deal with this dilemma. After introducing many others to this passion—I too have offered them wings to escape from their prisons (jobs, boredom, predictability). In doing so, not only have I offered them freedom to live, but the freedom to not. Who will fly high, and crash spectacularly? Who will fly low, and sink under their mistakes? I know my limits—I've keenly worked on my skills to keep them sharp. But how am I to know what others' limits are? Or if they can ever truly know them at all? This is the dilemma: by showing them the wings, I can only admonish them, like Daedalus, on the objective risks—not the subjective ones. I have yet to lose anyone to sun or sea (occasional sunburns excepted), but strive to show, through my actions, like Daedalus, that finding your limits is by far one of the greatest tools a motorcycling craftsman can possess.