



King Minos

Ancient Archetype
Reemerging in the U.S.
Psyche

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Objectives

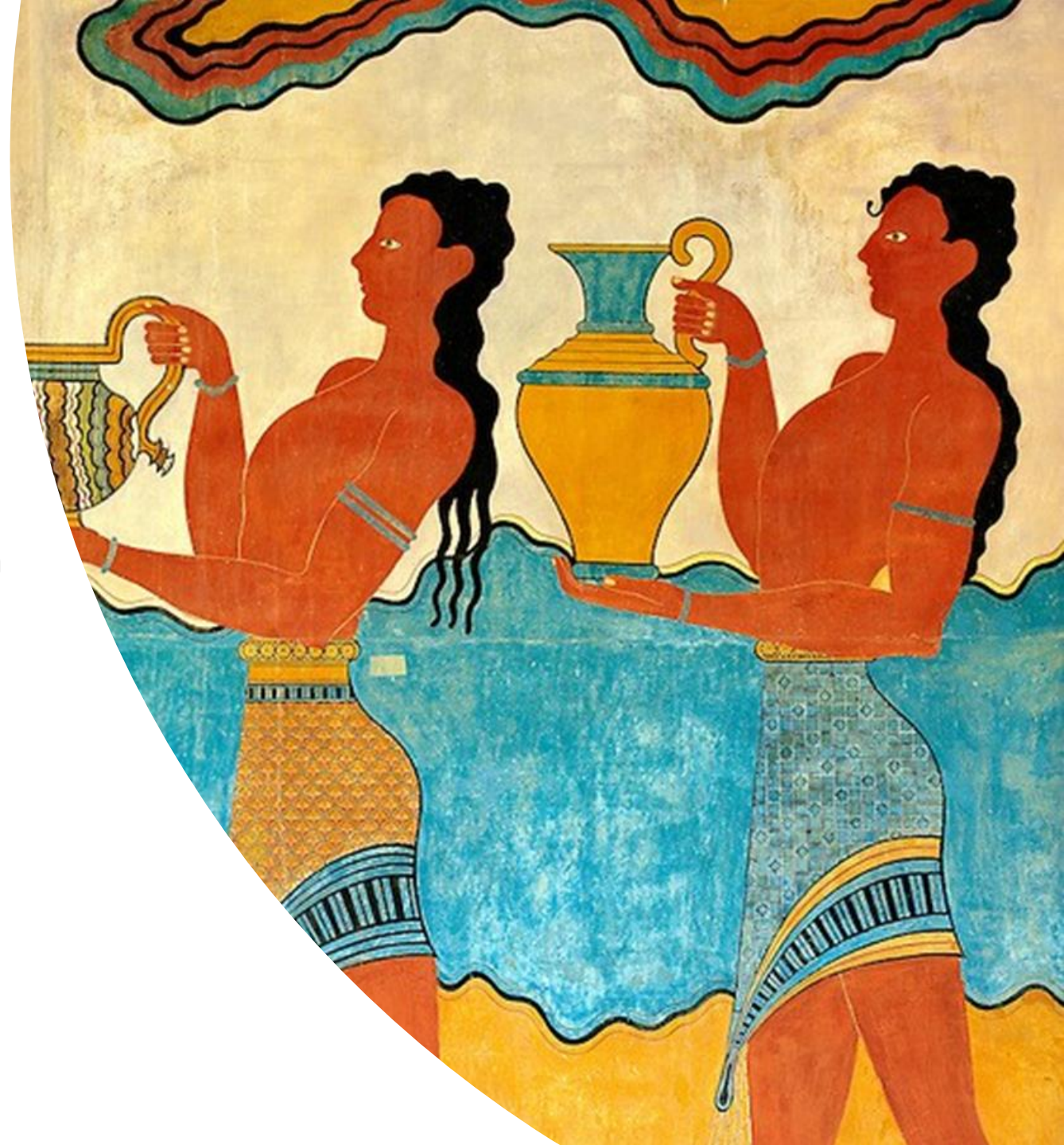
- Review the mythic character of King Minos
- Identify the results of his “refusal of the call to adventure” in Campbell’s monomyth, including substitution in the rituals of sacrifice and regicide
- Investigate other characters related to the King and his story
- Observe the archetypal energy of the story and where it might appear in our political environment today





Crete

- The Minoan culture located on what is now known as the Island of Crete, was one of art and beauty.
- During 3,000 – 1,500 BCE there were populated and rich palace-centered communities.
- There is archeological evidence of a goddess centered religion valuing such characteristics as floral decoration, music, dance and cyclic rituals.
- The character of King Minos appeared from outside the culture, in later stories from the Greeks that lent a more masculine element, including battles, heroes, monster-slaying and vast merchant navies.
- Various historians such as Apollodorus and Plutarch, referred to Minos as a King of Crete and he was later portrayed as such in classical art, theater and poetry.





Europa: mother of Minos

- Princess Europa was the daughter of the Phoenician king, Agenor.
- She was seduced by Zeus in the form of a snow white bull and brought across the sea to the island of Crete. *Ovid's Metamorphoses Book 2, 846-875.*
- Here we are introduced to the divine symbol of the snow white bull, beautiful enough to seduce a young woman, and the fragile beauty of the princess succumbing.
- Once deposited in Crete, Europa had three sons by Zeus, including Minos, who were raised by their step-father, Asterion (the name later given to the *minotaur*).
- The beginning of Minos' insecurity as son of a mythical bull.



Minos: insecure, boastful

- When Asterion died, it was unclear who should ascend to power. Minos, whose name in Cretan actually means king, was fated to be king in the myths.
- Homer described Minos as the intimate friend of Zeus (*Odyssey 19, 178-179*) and Hesiod called him the most kingly of mortal kings, who ruled justly over most subjects and held his scepter from Zeus.
- The Athenians described him as ruthless and violent, ruling in a proud and cruel manner (*Plutarch's Lives, Theseus*) whereas others called him just and a law-giver.
- Even though fated to serve as King, his ascension to power was a difficult journey because he imagined a sibling rivalry.
- He claimed he had the support and authority from the gods to rule, and boasted that he could prove it by praying for whatever he wanted and the gods would make it so.



Merchant's Substitution

- One day while sacrificing to Poseidon, he prayed that a bull would appear from the depths of the sea. Minos vowed that he would sacrifice the bull to Poseidon once it appeared.
- Poseidon then produced a magnificent snow white bull from the sea. Minos' claim for power was validated for no one dared to defy the favor of the gods, let alone the mighty Poseidon who ruled over all of the seas.
- As a result of winning the throne, Minos banished his brothers from Crete.
- Rather than sacrifice the bull as promised, Minos substituted the best of the fine bulls from his own herd and kept the bull from the sea.
- Though his kingdom prospered, wealthy merchants across the seas, the majestic bull became his downfall.



Diverted sacrifice: diverted role

- Minos had converted a public event (the prayer, the sign, the substituted sacrifice) into personal gain.
- The return of the bull to the god was to be a symbol of Minos' elevation from being a mere private person and his selfless submission to the functions of the role of king.
- The king's sacrifice would have divested him of his private character and clothed him in the mantle of his vocation.
- Retaining the bull/symbol represented an impulse to egocentric aggrandizement, directing him instead to the role of the tyrant.
- Substituting the sacrifice was a "refusal of the call;" converting the grand adventure of kingship to a negative, a wasteland, a battle against one's self. (Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*)

Consequences: (different perspectives)

- Angered by King Minos' disrespect, Poseidon plotted to punish him for his arrogance and hubris.
- In some versions of the myth, it is Poseidon who punishes Minos by instilling a passion within the king's wife, Pasiphae, for the bull that came from the sea (much like Europa's passion).
- However, according to the Roman author Hyginus, it is Venus (Aphrodite) who curses Pasiphae, because the Queen had not shown proper piety to the goddess for some time. The goddess punished her by sending a salacious passion for the majestic bull from the sea (an attempt to redirect the blame to the succumbing queen).
- Another version tells how Poseidon, angered by Minos, went to Aphrodite for her help in the matter and she cursed Pasiphae as a favor to Poseidon (merging archetypal divinities).





Monster is conceived: aided by science (with no regard for moral outcomes)

- Queen Pasiphaë, plagued by her divinely inflicted desires, sought the help of the engineer, Daedalus and his son, Icarus.
- Daedalus constructed a wooden cow coated with a real cow hide and placed it upon wheels. He put the Queen inside the structure and wheeled her into the meadow where her beloved bull was grazing.
- She met and laid with the bull, and from this union the Minotaur (half bull, half human) was born. (Ovid)

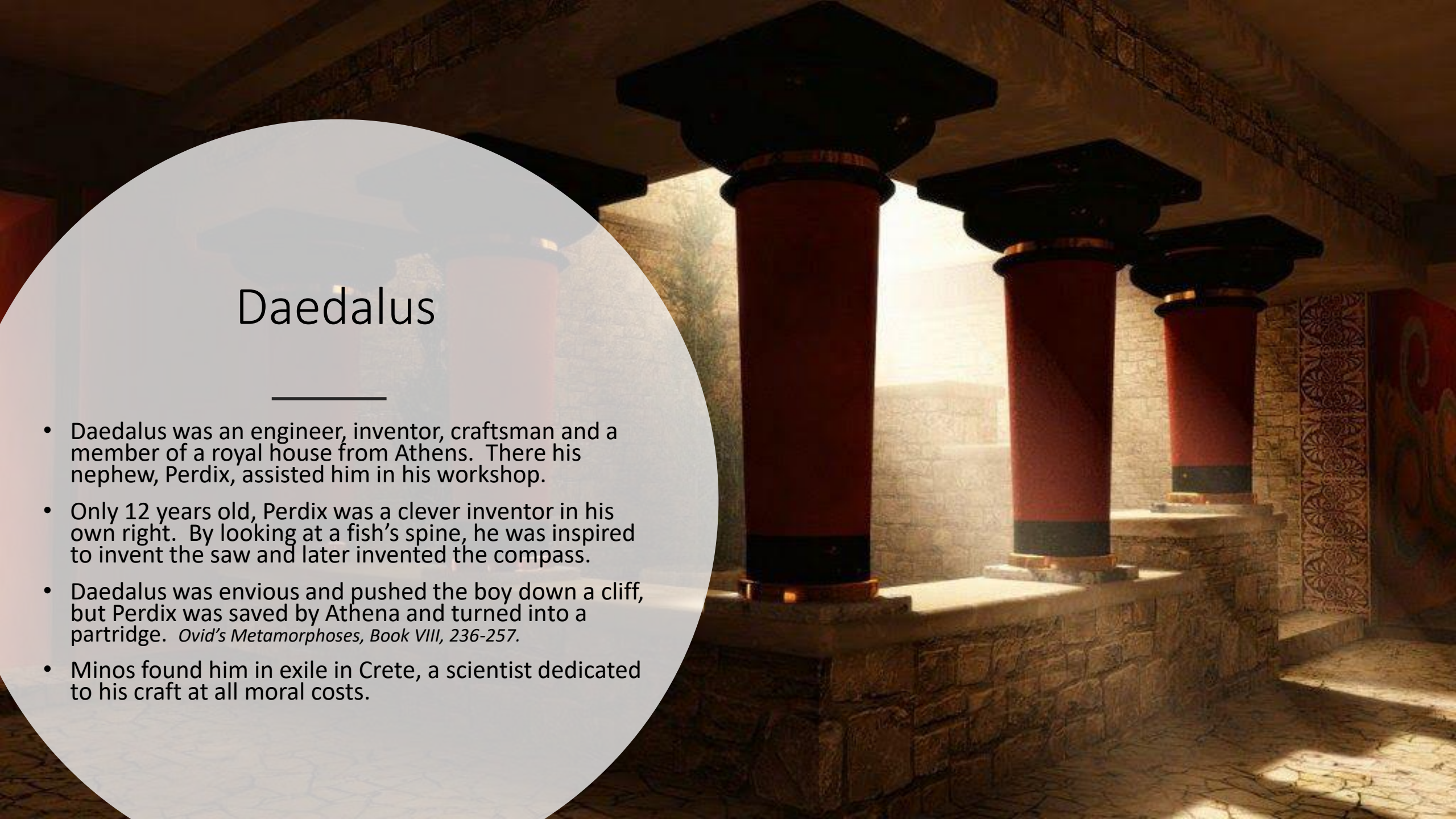
Not my child?

- The queen named the beast Asterion (after King Minos' stepfather), which the Cretan people knew to be the Minotaur's true name.
- Upon seeing the infant, King Minos discovered his wife's bestial affair and as punishment, Minos enslaved Daedalus and Icarus for their parts in the affair, leaving Pasiphae untouched. (was Minos hashing out his own conception?)
- Pasiphae cared for Asterion and was able to nourish him while he was a bull calf. After the monster started eating people, King Minos commanded Daedalus and Icarus to build a grand Labyrinth to imprison and hide away the monster.



Daedalus

- Daedalus was an engineer, inventor, craftsman and a member of a royal house from Athens. There his nephew, Perdix, assisted him in his workshop.
- Only 12 years old, Perdix was a clever inventor in his own right. By looking at a fish's spine, he was inspired to invent the saw and later invented the compass.
- Daedalus was envious and pushed the boy down a cliff, but Perdix was saved by Athena and turned into a partridge. *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book VIII, 236-257.*
- Minos found him in exile in Crete, a scientist dedicated to his craft at all moral costs.



Flowering
world
becomes a
wasteland



- While the construction of the Labyrinth was underway, King Minos discovered that his only human son (with Pasiphae), Androgeos, had been killed.
- Some sources say that he was killed by the Athenians out of jealousy for his skill in the Panathenic Games.
- King Minos blamed the Athenians for the death of his only human son and for the destruction of his family line. He sailed against the Athenians and harassed them until they agreed to pay the price for his son's death.
- Minos demanded that Athens pay a tribute to Crete of seven maidens and seven youths from the best families every nine years or suffer a long and devastating war. King Aegeus of Athens agreed to the tribute.

Regicide: substitution

- In Greece, the king's fate hung in the balance every 8 years. The king's sacrifice (by stepping down or even with his own life) would insure a **hieratic** state wherein every person enacts his role.
- Minos substituted his personal sacrifice as king for Athen's sacrifice of their own children, creating instead a **merchant** state where everyone is out for himself.
- The youth were sent to Crete and thrown into the prison of the labyrinth to subdue the monster within.
- The king's refusal of the call to give up his own interests in favor of the role, resulted in Minos preferring what he thought to be his own economic advantage to that of submission (death of the old).
- The divinities became his terror rather than his shelter and sources of support.



Tyrant/monster

- The tyrant is the hoarder of the general benefit, avid for the greedy rights of “my and mine.”
- He wreaks havoc throughout his domain, becoming a blight to the lives of those he touches even in friendship and assistance. [Even Daedalus sought to escape with his son, Icarus but Icarus fell to his death and the partridge (Perdix) hovered over Daedalus as a reminder of his crime. Daedalus made it to Sicily.]
- The tyrant is self terrorized, fear haunted, alert at every hand to meet and battle back the anticipated aggressions of his environment, which are primarily the reflections of his own uncontrollable impulses to acquire.
- Minos himself is locked in the labyrinth of his own disoriented psyche while the Minotaur suffers a similar fate.





Death of the Monster

- Theseus, son of King Aegeus, was said to have volunteered for the third tribute of youths from Athens to be sacrificed.
- Upon reaching Crete, the daughters of King Minos, Ariadne and Phaedra, fell in love with Theseus. Ariadne went to Daedalus to learn how one could escape from his Labyrinth. She then raced to tell Theseus before he entered the Labyrinth.
- Minos may have entertained humane intentions but his own self-achieved independence [compared to the hero's voluntary submission] became the world's messenger of disaster. The cry for liberation extended to his own family.
- Theseus slayed the Minotaur. And, years later, Minos was boiled alive by the daughters of King Cocalus of Sicily with the help of their harbored exile, Daedalus.

Archetype Re-emerges

- Son of an immigrant mother, but detests immigrants (self-hatred)
- Fated to be president –refusal of the call to the servant role (insecure, selfish)
- Engages “substitution” rather than sacrifice (boastful, misplaced values)
- Uncontrollable impulses to acquire
- Seeks to overturn the previous administration’s culture of service
- Haunted by the tyrant/monster locked in the labyrinth (pentagon)
- Campbell quote – saved by the thread of human imagination?





“We have not even to risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.”

Answer to the Archetype
Campbell: The Hero with a Thousand Faces