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## Scylla and Charybdis

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In his extraordinary journey from the city of Troy back to his beloved homeland, that great figure of Greek mythology – Odysseus – faced many trials. However, none was more testing than that which he confronted towards the end of his long voyage.

For as his ship sailed on into a very narrow stretch of water, it confronted a double threat. On one side of the straits lived a horrifying monster, Charybdis, a huge ship-devouring whirlpool. But on the other were a group of sharp rocks guarded by Scylla a six-headed monster, equally awful and just as deadly. Sail too close to those rocks in order to avoid the giant whirlpool and one was doomed. But edge too near to the whirlpool in order to keep away from the rocks and one's fate was sealed.

In the end of course Odysseus passed this test – as he had all the others before- and after further adventures was finally reunited with the love of his life, the beautiful and faithful Penelope.

The Odyssey is a terrific story of course. But unlike most Greek stories (the ones that happened in real life!) this one had a happy ending. Unfortunately, the story with its

reassuring outcome is a myth.

Admittedly a nice myth. However, a myth nonetheless. If only real life had been quite so kind to the Greeks. But as anybody with even a passing knowledge of the nation's past knows only too well, the history of the country has been less than kind to its people. Indeed, Greek history has been littered with disaster, from its conquest by the Turks in the 15th century through to two terrible wars followed by civil war in the 20th. Little wonder tragedy as an art form has for so long been associated with Greece. And for good reason. Greece invented it.

One must also wonder whether the current Greek government – which has been on an odyssey all of its own over the past few months – will be able to navigate its way through the dangerous narrow straits in which it now finds itself. For right now it clearly stands between a very sharp rock and a very hard place. Naturally, it could accept what is on offer by its creditors. But if it were to do so, then the economy would deteriorate even further and its people continue to suffer, the elderly and the poor most directly. However, if it were to refuse the deal now on the table then it would mean 'Grexit' – in other words full-scale economic collapse.

Time is running out for Greece. Last Sunday the government took a calculated risk hoping that a big No vote – which it got – would strengthen its hand. In truth, it is finding the opposite is true across Europe where many are now openly trying to push Greece out of the Eurozone, and in effect out of the EU too. 'It's time for Greece to go' opined the political editor of the influential weekly newspaper 'Die Zeit' just the other day. "Neither the eurozone nor Europe is best served by holding on to Greece" he went on. "An orderly exit by Greece from the euro is now a matter of urgency."

Tragically for the Greeks, an increasing number of Europeans happen to agree with him.

Life, it seems was so much easier for the Ancients.



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