

# PUSHING THE STONE

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ANTIQUITIES. The ancient, relic, the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages.  
The great irony of great age is that it carries its own life behind it.

IN POLITICS – AFTER the Declaration of Independence, AFTER the  
Fall.

IN HISTORY – POST war, Punic WARS, of the ROSES,  
Revolutionary, Civil, Second, THE LAST TO END ALL OTHER

IN COMMERCE – FOLLOWING the Silk Road, the Phoenician fleets,  
the money lenders in the Temple, The great Depression

In the twenty-first century, we emulate the antics of the antique. We “work out” with a personal trainer, who encourages us to “hit the wall”, increase our “reps”, do ten more on our “Bongo Boards”. The language itself is amusing. Antics are clever; antics are tricks, but they are not appealing if no one is watching. Performance is the motive to succeed.

To whirl on a snowboard, to plunge down a ski course is FUN FOR ALL! Until Sochi, where antics become deadly serious, even criminal.

Consider the ancient game of curling, a Medieval Scottish contest popular in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> an Olympic sport. Curling, played entirely on a slippery ice slide, is a ridiculously antic sport. Two teams of four compete as each member carefully rolls a polished granite stone with a handle toward a faraway circle, the “Button”. Through strategy and finesse, team members strive to snuggle up to or knock away the stone from the bull’s eye. There are Biters and Hacks, and of course the Curl. Sweeper teammates run crabwise down the ice,

frantically pushing brooms in front of the stone in order to control its speed. No Martian would believe his eyes – or keep from laughing.

In the sport of Curling, all players are desirous of the same goal. There are no stars, no independent positions, no “PERSONAL BEST”. The antic goes from performance to a group goal – pushing the stone.

Players may strive for the gold medal, the prize, but this ancient game demonstrates true recreation, a game which creates a moment shared. A player once said, “I played every match for the whole season, and all I got was a ten dollar ashtray; but it was worth it!

An antiquity from the other edge of the spectrum, different in age and attitude, is the mythic Sisyphus, a king in the inner circle of Zeus himself.

That Sisyphus! He was ANTIC, a liar and a trickster and on top of it, deceitful AND clever, a powerful combination. He seduced goddesses, lied to his wife, tricked his favorite god, Tartarus, and talked Hades into chaining himself up in his own domain. Talk about the adolescent from Hell. A nuisance and then some to the august ruler of the universe.

And then, as teenagers will, he went too far. He betrayed a secret Zeus had shared with him. He revealed the location of Aegina, Zeus's current jail bait. It was all over for Sisyphus.

It wasn't the antics that got him, or even his lies. It was his hubris. Suggesting more than pride, the Greek interpretation of that word extends to the desire for ultimate power. TO DEMONSTRATE POWER, perhaps the ultimate antic.

What was Sisyphus thinking? – we ask Gary Hart.

Did he think that Zeus's rules didn't apply to him?

Is that what Bill Clinton thought?

Did he want, like Ivan Boesky, to trade from the inside to prove his cleverness exceeded even that of Zeus?

It doesn't matter now, does it? He's been punished. But not enough. A biographer of Zeus suggests that his habit was to reassert his power by making his punishments fit the crime. As a punishment for his trickery, Sisyphus is consigned to roll a huge boulder up a steep hill for eternity. Zeus has bewitched the stone so that it will, at the summit, forever roll back down the hill away from Sisyphus. So Sisyphus has gone from clever antics to a useless exercise. Damned to demonstrate his repeated, meaningless act, as he witnesses the eternal shattering of his own hubris.

He who laughs from above laughs last, and with a loud roar.

Let us consider the oldest of all antiquities – The Quest for Power. Even though pride comes before the fall, the desire to hold sway comes first.

Everywhere we see the shadow of the punished Sisyphus:

1. The politician who goes down to defeat.... Again, and again, and again, toiling against the power which has eluded him.
2. “It wasn’t the money” said a young Lehman brothers partner. “It was just the power....gone.” What is the value of a bitcoin, or a handful of beads, if everyone has enough?

Humanity has always sought “the power which surpasses all understanding.” Like Zeus’s. Where is that? Who knows?

No one knows how the hackers got the classified files.

No one knows how much gold is stacked in the safes of Switzerland.

There’s no way to uncover all the leaks and spills.

No government can guess the value of those offshore accounts in the Bahamas.

But, as Sisyphus discovered, someone always knows.

Be careful whose secrets you share.