

## Pindar: Isthmian 2

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This ode was written for Thrasyboulos, in honor of the victories of his deceased father, Xenocrates. So while still an ode of praise, it is not strictly speaking an epinician. It was apparently included in the epinicians because of the Isthmian victory mentioned in line 13. The meter is dactylo-epitrite – using the notation of Maas (as modified by West):

Anti/strophe	Epode
1. –D ∘ E	1. D – D ∘ e
2. E e – D	2. D – e –
3. E ∘ D –	3. E –
4. D ∘ e –	4. E ∘ – ∘ ∘ –
5. E – e –	5. e – D
	6. – ∘ ∘ – e –

For the text I have used Bowra's 1935 OCT *Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis*, Snell and Maehler's 1987 Teubner and Sandys' 1937 *The Odes of Pindar including the Principal Fragments with an Introduction and an English Translation* via Perseus.

I have dwelt on literary and interpretive questions a bit more than is usual for Aoidoi commentaries. Misunderstanding seemed very likely, especially for the opening lines, without some additional comments. For that I have relied heavily on the work of both W.J. Verdenius and Leonard Woodbury,<sup>1</sup> though they are perhaps uneasy company.

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<sup>1</sup>Works cited: Albert Rijksbaron, *The Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek*, 3rd. ed., 2002. Sicking & van Ophuijsen, *Two Studies in Attic Particle Usage*, Mnemosyne Supplement 129, Brill 1993. W.J. Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar*, Vol. 2., 1988. Leonard Woodbury, *Pindar and the Mercenary Muse: Isthm. 2.1-13*, Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, Vol. 99 (1968), 527–542. And of course Smyth's *Greek Grammar*, Harvard, 1984.

- στρ. οἱ μὲν πάλαι, ὧ̄ Θρασύβουλε, φῶτες, οἷ̄ χρυσαμπύκων  
 ἐς δίφρον Μοισᾶν ἔβαινον κλυτᾶ φόρμιγγι συναντόμενοι,  
 ῥίμφα παιδείους ἐτόξευον μελιγάρυας ὕμνους,  
 ὅστις ἐὼν καλὸς εἶχεν Ἀφροδίτας  
 5 εὐθρόνου μνάστειραν ἀδίσταν ὀπώραν.
- άντ. ἅ Μοῖσα γὰρ οὐ φιλοκερδῆς πω τότ' ἦν οὐδ' ἐργάτις  
 οὐδ' ἐπέρναντο γλυκεῖαι μελιφθόγγου ποτὶ Τερψιχόρας  
 ἀργυρωθεῖσαι πρόσωπα μαλθακόφωνοι ἀοιδαί.  
 νῦν δ' ἐφίητι <τὸ> τώργειου φυλάξαι  
 10 ῥῆμ' ἀλαθείας <ἐτάς> ἄγχιστα βαῖνον,

8. **ἀργυρωθεῖσαι πρόσωπα**: Critics have let their imaginations run free interpreting this phrase. Cosmetics or jewelry signifying a prostitute are commonly read into it, but the basic sense appears simply to be “paid for, bought.” Verdenius observes that πρόσωπα can also mean the façade of a building, which dovetails neatly with a common Pindaric trope comparing an ode to a building. || 9. **τώργειου**: A scholium says “The Argive (man)” is Aristodemus, a Spartan.

<sup>1</sup> οἱ μὲν in contrast with νῦν δ' in l.9. πάλαι in/since ancient times. φῶς φωτός ὁ man; οἱ πάλαι φῶτες the men (i.e., poets) of old. χρυσάμπυξ ὕκος ὁ/ῆ having golden headbands.

<sup>2</sup> δίφρος ὁ chariot-board, where the driver and fighter stood on a chariot. Μοισᾶν gen.pl. Μοῖσαι, Aeolic for Μοῦσαι, Muses. βαίνω here mount, step (upon). κλυτός ἢ ὄν famous, glorious; splendid. φόρμιγγι ἰγγος ἡ lyre. συν-άντομαι meet; be accompanied by + dat.

<sup>3</sup> ῥίμφα swiftly, lightly. παιδείους ὄν off/for youths. τοξεύω shoot with a bow. μελίγηρυς υὸς ὁ/ῆ sweet-voiced. ὕμνος ὁ hymn, ode, song.

<sup>4</sup> ὅστις = παῖς, as though the adjective παιδείους were a genitive noun, an occasional license in poetic syntax. ἐὼν pres.part. εἰμί. καλός ἢ ὄν good, noble, brave, beautiful, handsome. ἔχω impf. have. Ἀφροδίτας g.sg. (of) Aphrodite.

<sup>5</sup> εὐθρόνος ὄν having a beautiful throne. μνήστειρα (fem. adj.) mindful of, reminding of + gen. ἡδύς εἶα ὕ sweet, lovely, dear; ἀδίσταν = ἡδίστην, superlative. ὀπώρᾳ ἡ late summer, here metaphorical for the prime of youthful life; the word can also mean ripe fruit.

<sup>6</sup> ἅ = ἡ. φιλοκερδῆς ἐς loving gain, greedy. οὐ ... πω τότε not yet then. ἐργάτις ἡ working for hire.

<sup>7</sup> πέρνημι 3.pl.pass.impf. to sell. γλυκὺς εἶα ὕ sweet, lovely, kind. Agrees with l.8 ἀοιδαί. μελίφθογγος ὄν honey-voiced; agrees with Τερψιχόρας. ποτὶ = πρός, here with gen. at the hands of, by. Τερψιχόρη gen.sg. Terpsichore, the Muse of dance.

<sup>8</sup> ἀργυρώ aor.pass.part. nom.pl.f. cover with silver. πρόσωπον τό face; likeness, look, appearance; acc. of respect, “with silvered appearance.” μαλθακόφωνος ὄν soft-voiced. ἀοιδῆ ἡ song.

<sup>9</sup> ἐφ-ίημι Dor. pres.act. 3sg. send to; give up; give a command or request. The subject is Terpsichore. τὸ τοῦ Ἀργείου ῥῆμα φυλάξαι τώργειου = τοῦ Ἀργείου. Ἀργεῖος α ὄν from Argos, Argive. φυλάσσω φυλάξω ἐφύλαξα aor.act.inf. keep watch over; pay attention to.

<sup>10</sup> ῥῆμα ματος τό word; saying. ἀλήθεια ἡ truth. ἐτεός ἅ ὄν true, genuine, here contracted gen.sg.f. ἄγχιστος ὄν (sup. of ἄγχι) + gen. nearest. βαῖνον pres.act.part. acc.sg.neut. of βαίνω. ... ῥῆμα βαῖνον ἄγχιστα <ἐτάς> ἀληθείας

- ἐπ. “χρήματα, ἰρήματ’ ἀνήρ,” ὅς φᾶ κτεάνων θ’ ἅμα λειφθεὶς καὶ φίλων.  
 ἐσσί γὰρ ὦν σοφός, οὐκ ἄγνωτ’ αἰίδω  
 Ἴσθμίαν ἵπποισι νίκαν,  
 τὰν Ξενοκράτει Ποσειδάων ὀπάσαις,  
 15 Δωρίων αὐτῷ στεφάνωμα κόμα  
 πέμπεν ἀναδεῖσθαι σελίνων,

11. **χρήματα, ἰρήματ’ ἀνήρ**: “Money! Money makes the man.” ὅς: could either be relative, where the prose order would be φᾶ ὅς, or a demonstrative (Smyth §338b). || 12. **ἐσσί γὰρ ὦν σοφός**: In dialog, when answering a question a speaker may start off with γὰρ to give the reason for the answer, leaving the actual answer implied. In this line Pindar is implying something like, “but I’ll say no more of this, since...” **σοφός**: “Wise” is the usual translation of this but in Pindar it signifies both poetic skill and sophisticated appreciation of that skill. Pindar is flattering Thrasyboulos’ good taste.

- στρ. εὐάρματον ἄνδρα γεραίρων, Ἀκραγαντίνων φάος.  
 ἐν Κρίσᾳ δ’ εὐρυσθενῆς εἶδ’ Ἀπόλλων νιν πόρε τ’ ἀγλαΐαν  
 καὶ τόθι κλειναῖς <τ’> Ἐρεχθειδᾶν χαρίτεσσιν ἀραρῶς  
 20 ταῖς λιπαραῖς ἐν Ἀθάναις, οὐκ ἐμέμφθη

<sup>12</sup> ἄγνωτ’ Bowra, Snell : ἀγνωτ’ mss.

<sup>11</sup> **χρήματα τά** money. **φᾶ** = ἔφη (he) said. **κτεάνων τό** possession. **ἅμα** together. **λείπω** aor.pass. **εἰλίφθην** leave, abandon, here with gen. of separation (Smyth §1392). **φίλος ὁ** friend.

<sup>12</sup> **ἐσσί** = εἶ 2sg.pres. εἰμί to be. **ὦν** = οὖν. **ἄγνωτος ὄν** unknown, acc.pl.n. agreeing not with l.13 νίκαν, but anticipating the several victories to be mentioned (Verdenius); one could also take it adverbially. **αἰίδω** to sing, to hymn.

<sup>13</sup> **Ἴσθμιος (α) ὄν** Isthmian. **ἵππος ὁ/ῆ** horse, mare; dat. of means. **νίκη ἡ (ῆ)** acc.sg. victory.

<sup>14</sup> **τάν** = τήν, here relative. **Ξενοκράτης οὖς** Xenocrates, Thrasyboulos’ father. **Ποσειδάων ὄνος (ᾶ)** Poseidon. **ὀπάζω** aor.act.part. nom.sg.m. grant, bestow esp. of gods.

<sup>15</sup> **Δωρίος (α) ὄν** Dorian; with l.16 σελίνων. **στεφάνωμα τό** crown, wreath. **κόμη ἡ** dat.sg. hair; locative dative (Smyth §1531).

<sup>16</sup> **πέμπεν** unaug. impf.act.3sg. **πέμπω** send. Here an *immediative impf.*, indicating that the action follows immediately upon another action (Rijksbaron §6.2.3). **ἀνα-δέω** pres.mid.inf. bind; tie up; mid. esp. tie up one’s hair, wreath oneself; inf. of purpose (Smyth §2009). **σελίνον τό** wild parsley – possibly celery – used to make victory wreaths for the Isthmian games; gen. of material.

<sup>17</sup> **εὐάρματος ὄν** having a good chariot. **γεραίρω γεράρῳ ἐγέρηρα** honor, reward. **Ἀκραγαντίνος** a citizen of Akragas. **φάος τό** light; help, safety; acc. in apposition to ἄνδρα.

<sup>18</sup> **Κρίσα ἡ** Crisa, city near Delphi. **εὐρυσθενῆς ἐς** mighty. **ὀράω**, aor. **εἶδον** aor.act.3sg. see. **νιν** = μιν = αὐτόν. **ἔπορον** (aor. only) 3sg. unaug., to give. **ἀγλαΐα ἡ** splendor; triumph, glory.

<sup>19</sup> **τόθι** there. **κλεινός ἡ ὄν** famous. **Ἐρεχθεῖδαι οἱ** children of Erechtheus, i.e., the Athenians. **χαρίς ιτος ἡ** epic dat.pl. grace, favor. **ἀραρίσκω** perf.part. be fixed; be endowed with + dat.

<sup>20</sup> **λιπαρός ᾶ ὄν** rich, fertile; splendid. **Ἀθῆναι αἰ** Athens. **μέμφομαι** aor.pass.3sg. (active sense) blame, find fault with.

- ῥυσίδιφρον χεῖρα ἡπλαξίπποιο φωτός,
- άντ. τὰν Νικόμαχος κατὰ καιρὸν νεῖμ' ἀπάσαις ἀνίαις·  
ὄν τε καὶ κάρυκες ὠρᾶν ἀνέγγνον, σπονδοφόροι Κρονίδα  
Ζηνὸς Ἀλειοί, παθόντες πού τι φιλόξενον ἔργον·
- 25 ἀδύπνω τέ νιν ἀσπάζοντο φωνᾶ  
χρυσέας ἐν γούνασιν πίτνοντα Νίκας
- ἐπ. γαῖαν ἀνά σφετέραν, τὰν δὴ καλέοισιν Ὀλυμπίου Διὸς  
ἄλσος· ἴν' ἀθανάτοις Αἰνησιδάμου  
παῖδες ἐν τιμαῖς ἔμιχθεν.
- 30 καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀγνώτες ὑμῖν ἐντὶ δόμοι  
οὔτε κώμων, ὧ Ἰθρασύβουλ', ἐρατῶν,  
οὔτε μελίκόμπων ἀοιδᾶν.
- στρ. οὐ γὰρ πάγος, οὐδὲ ἰπροσάντης ἀ κέλευθος γίνεται,

<sup>21</sup> ῥυσίδιφρος ον chariot-preserving. χεῖρ χειρός ἢ hand; arm. ἡπλαξίππος ον gen.sg.m. horse-driving. φώς φωτός ὁ man.

<sup>22</sup> τάν = τήν, here relative (l.21 χεῖρα). Νικόμαχος Xenokrates' charioteer. καιρός ὁ due measure; critical time; κατὰ καιρὸν "in proper measure" or "at the right time." νέμω νεμῶ ἔνειμα aor.act.3sg. unaug. deal out; manage. ἅπᾶς ἅπᾶσα ἅπᾶν all, the whole of. ἡνία ἢ reins.

<sup>23</sup> κήρυξ ὕκεις ὁ herald, messenger. Here, those who announced the general truce in Greece during the Olympic games. ὦρα ἢ gen.pl. time, period; season; right time. ἀνα-γιγνώσκω doric aor.3pl. know certainly; recognize. σπονδοφόρος ὁ truce-bearer. Κρονίδης ὁ doric gen.sg. son of Kronos.

<sup>24</sup> Ἠλεῖοι Eleian. πάσχω πείσομαι ἔπαθον suffer, experience. που I suppose, no doubt, here acknowledging the lack of specificity (Sicking & van Ophuijsen, p.57). φιλόξενος ον hospitable. ἔργον τό work, deed.

<sup>25</sup> ἡδύπνοος ον sweet-breathing; fragrant; Verdenius, kindly disposed. ἀσπάζομαι impf.3pl. welcome gladly, greet; immediative impf. (cf. l.16). φωνή ἢ voice; sound.

<sup>26</sup> χρύσεος α ον (ῆ) gen.sg.f. golden. γόνυ γούνατος τό dat.pl. knee. πίτνω pres.act.part. acc.sg.m. fall, agreeing with l.25 viv. Take the participle temporally, "when."

<sup>27</sup> γαῖα ἢ earth, land. σφέτερος α ον their (own). τάν again relative τήν. δὴ naming a thing after it is defined (Sicking & van Ophuijsen, p.142). καλέω aeolic pres.act.3sg. call, name. Ὀλύμπιος ον Olympian.

<sup>28</sup> ἄλσος εὐος τό (sacred) grove. ἴνα there. ἀθάνατος (ἦ) ον immortal. Αἰνησιδάμος ον Xenocrates' father.

<sup>30</sup> καὶ γὰρ and in fact. ἀγνώς ὠτος unknown; ignorant (of) + gen.; usu. negated. ὑμῖν dat. of interest, nearly possessive. ἐντὶ = εἰσι (they) are. δόμος ὁ house; family.

<sup>31</sup> οὔτε... οὔτε neither... nor, continuing, not canceling, l.30 οὐκ, so here "either... or." κῶμος ὁ victory procession/party. ἐρατός ἢ ὄν lovely, pleasing.

<sup>32</sup> μελίκόμπος ον sweet-sounding. ἀοιδᾶν gen.pl. ἀοιδή ἢ song.

<sup>33</sup> πάγος ὁ hill, mountain peak. ἰπροσάντης εἰς steep, arduous; predicate. κέλευθος ἢ path, way, voyage γί(γ)νομαι here, "turns out to be."

- εἵ τις εὐδόξων ἐς ἀνδρῶν ἄγοι τιμὰς Ἑλικωνιάδων.  
 35 μακρὰ δισκήσαις ἀκοντίσσαιμι τοσοῦθ', ὅσον ὄργαν  
 Ξεινοκράτης ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων γλυκεῖαν  
 ἔσχεν. αἰδοῖος μὲν ἦν ἀστοῖς ὀμιλεῖν,  
 ἀντ. ἵπποτροφίας τε νομίζων ἐν Πανελλάνων νόμῳ·  
 καὶ θεῶν δαίτας προσέπτυκτο πάσας· οὐδέ ποτε ξενίαν  
 40 οὔρος ἐμπνεύσαις ὑπέστειλ' ἰστίον ἀμφὶ τράπεζαν·  
 ἀλλ' ἐπέρα ποτὶ μὲν Φᾶσιν θερείαις,  
 ἐν δὲ χειμῶνι πλέων Νείλου πρὸς ἄκτάς.

39–42. Pindar often uses nautical metaphor. Here he says that Xenocrates' hospitality (ἰστίον) was never drawn in (οὐδέ ποτε... ὑπέστειλ') even when many guests (οὔρος) arrived. Various interpretations are offered for sailing to Phasis in summer and the Nile in winter. Within the nautical metaphor Pindar has constructed a merism — defining a totality by naming contrasting parts — with these distant locations and opposite seasons. It seems safest simply to take lines 41–42 to mean that his hospitality was granted “at all times and in all circumstances”

ἐπ. μή νυν, ὅτι φθονεραὶ θνατῶν φρένας ἀμφικρέμανται ἐλπίδες,

<sup>34</sup> εὐδοξος *on* glorious, famous. ἐς + gen., “into the house of..” ἄγω *lead; drive*, perhaps picking up chariot motif from l.2. The optative is unexpected — perhaps a blend of past and present general conditions. τιμή ἢ *honor; value*. Ἑλικωνιάδες αἰ *dwellers on Helicon*, i.e., the Muses.

<sup>35</sup> μακρός ἄ ὄν *long, high, far*, here adv. δισκέω aor.act.part. nom.sg.m. *throw a discus*. ἀκοντίζω *throw a javelin, hurl*, opt. of wish. τοσ-οὔτος -αὐτή -οὔτο *so large, so much*, here adv. modifying μακρά. ὅσος ἢ *on* as great (as), as much (as). ὄργῃ ἢ *disposition, temper, nature*.

<sup>36</sup> ὑπέρ + gen. *on behalf of; for the prosperity or safety of*. γλυκὺς εἶα ὑ *acc.sg.f. sweet, lovely, kind*, with l.35 ὄργαν.

<sup>37</sup> ἔχω ἔξω ἔσχον *to have, to hold*. αἰδοῖος ἢ *on* worthy of respect or honor; reverent. μὲν here in asseverative, affirming sense — there is no contrasting δέ. ἀστός ὁ *(fellow) citizen; townsman*. ὀμιλέω *keep company with* + dat. The infinitive limits the scope of αἰδοῖος (Smyth §2000, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> ἵπποτροφία ἢ *horse breeding*. νομίζω *practice; consider as, believe; take part* as a noun with l.37 ἦν, “one who practices.” Πανελλήνηες οἱ *all the Greeks*. νόμος ὁ *tradition, custom, law*.

<sup>39</sup> δαίς δαιτός ἢ *feast, meal*. προσ-πτύσσω plpf.mid.3sg. *embrace, welcome warmly*. ξένιος ἢ *on* hospitable; with l.40 τράπεζαν.

<sup>40</sup> οὔρος ὁ *oncoming wind, fair or rough*. ἐμ-πνέω pres.act.part. nom.sg.m. *blow in, upon*. ὑποστέλλω aor.act.3sg. *draw in, furl*. ἰστίον τό *sail*. ἀμφί + acc. *about, around; near*. τράπεζα ἢ *(dining) table*.

<sup>41</sup> περάω impf.act.3sg. *pass through, cross*, esp. over water. ποτί = πρὸς. Φᾶσις ἰος ἢ *Phasis*, a river in Colchis (near the Black Sea). θερείος ἢ *on* off/in summer; ἢ *θερεία (ῥα) summer*.

<sup>42</sup> χειμῶν ὠνος ὁ *winter; winter storm*. πλέω *sail*. Νείλος ὁ *The Nile*. ἀκτὴ ἢ *headland, promontory; bank (of a river)*.

<sup>43</sup> φθονερός ἄ ὄν *envious, jealous*. θνητός ἢ ὄν *mortal*, as noun, mortal person. φρήν φρενός ἢ *diaphragm* but usually metaphorical for *heart, soul, mind*. ἀμφι-κρέμαμαι *hang round*. ἐλπίς ἢ *expectation, hope*.

μήτ' ἀρετάν ποτε σιγάτω πατρώαν,  
45 μηδὲ τούσδ' ὕμνους· ἐπεὶ τοι  
οὐκ ἐλινύσοντας αὐτοὺς εἰργασάμαν.  
ταῦτα, Νικάσιππ', ἀπόνειμον, ὅταν  
ξεῖνον ἐμὸν ἠθαῖον ἔλθῃς.

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<sup>44</sup> **μήτε** continuing, not cancelling, l.43 μή. **ἀρετή ἢ** *excellence, virtue*. **σιγάω** pres.act.imp. 3sg. *be silent; keep silent*; based on πατρώαν, the subject of the 3rd person imperative is taken to be “the son” or the like. **πατρῶος ἢ ον** *of one’s father; hereditary*.

<sup>45</sup> **τοι** as so often, could either be a particle or the 2sg. dative, “for you.”

<sup>46</sup> **ἐλινύω** fut.act.part. acc.pl.m. *take a holiday, rest, stand idle*; fut.part. indicating purpose. **ἐργάζομαι ἐργάσομαι εἰργασάμην** aor.mid.1sg. *work, make, do*.

<sup>47</sup> **ταῦτα** i.e., the words of this ode. **Νικάσιππος** unknown person who evidently delivered the poem to Thrasyboulos, perhaps also supervising the performance. **ἀπο-νέμω** aor.act.imp. 2sg. *assign, impart*.

<sup>48</sup> **ξεῖνος ὁ** *a guest-friend*. **ἠθαῖος α ον** *trusted, honored*; Verdenius believes the word also contains the suggestion of affection. **ἔλθῃς** aor.act.subj. 2sg. here *reach* with acc.