

VI. Pindar, *Pythian* 2.56

D. E. GERBER

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

As is frequently the case in attempting to explain a passage in Pindar, one is beset not only with the normal difficulties of language present in Greek lyric poetry, but also with a style which is so abbreviated and concise as to render many of the thoughts and images almost unintelligible.¹ One poem for which this is particularly true is the *Second Pythian*, a poem which, in the words of C. M. Bowra, is "full of mysteries." Not least among these "mysteries" is the exact meaning and grammatical exegesis of verse 56:

τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ σὺν τύχᾳ πότμου σοφίας ἄριστον,

a short line of only eight words, yet capable of five different constructions. The line may be divided as follows²:

1. τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ | σὺν τύχᾳ πότμου σοφίας | ἄριστον.
2. τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ σοφίας | σὺν τύχᾳ πότμου | ἄριστον.
3. τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ | σὺν τύχᾳ σοφίας | πότμου ἄριστον.
4. τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ | σὺν τύχᾳ πότμου | σοφίας ἄριστον.
5. τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ | σὺν τύχᾳ | πότμου σοφίας ἄριστον.

¹ I wish to record my deep gratitude to Professor Leonard Woodbury of University College, Toronto, who very kindly consented to examine this paper and who made many valuable suggestions for its improvement.

² For the sake of convenience I shall mention in one note all those whom I have consulted with regard to this line, grouping them according to the interpretation they defend. Those in bold type are works which in future will be referred to only by name. All references to and quotations from Pindar are from Bowra's Oxford text.

In support of the first interpretation: C. M. **Bowra**, "Pindar, *Pythian* II," *Problems in Greek Poetry* (Oxford 1953) 86 f.; L. Dissen, *Pindari carmina*² 2, rev. by F. G. Schneidewin (Gotha and Erfurt 1847); I. W. Donaldson, *Pindar's Epinician or Triumphal Odes* (London 1841); C. A. M. Fennell, *Pindar: the Olympian and Pythian Odes* (Cambridge 1879); G. **Fraccaroli**, *Le Odi di Pindaro* (Verona 1894) 367, note 1; H. **Gundert**, *Pindar und sein Dichterberuf* (Frankfurt am Main 1935) 141, note 372; C. G. Heyne, *Pindari carmina et fragmenta* 1 (Oxford 1807); F. **Mezger**, *Pindars Siegeslieder* (Leipzig 1880) 57; G. Perrotta, *Saffo e Pindaro* (Bari 1935) 141; W. **Schadewaldt**, *Der Aufbau des Pindarischen Epinikion* (Halle 1928) 330, note 2; E. Schmid, *ΠΙΝΔΑΡΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΟΣ* (Wittenberg 1616); T. A. Seymour, *Selected Odes of Pindar* (Boston 1882):

Of the second: W. **Christ**, *Pindari carmina* (Leipzig 1896); L. R. **Farnell**, *The Works of Pindar* 2 (London 1932); J. H. Finley, *Pindar and Aeschylus* (Cambridge

The first construction has received the support of the majority of commentators. Many of them give no reasons for their choice, but Schadewaldt is an exception. He argues that this construction provides an interpretation which best fits the context. This, he believes, is Pindar's consideration of wealth and the lack of it, and he points to *piainomenon* immediately preceding the passage under discussion and to *amâchaniâi* (verse 54) in support of his view. This seems questionable. While it is possible that *piainomenon* suggested the idea of wealth to Pindar, the lack of wealth need not be meant by *amâchaniâi*. It may simply indicate that Archilochus was "helpless" (Lattimore) or "in distress" (Sandys and Farnell). Pindar may even have had Archilochus fr. 67a.1 (D) in mind: *Θυμέ, θύμ' ἀμηχάνοισι κήδεσιν κυκώμενε*. Here too the suggestion is one of helplessness rather than poverty.³ Pindar refuses to follow the example of Archilochus whose slanderous tongue brought him only distress and futility.⁴

Similarly in what follows Hieron is praised not only for his *kteatessi* (verse 59), but also for his *timâi* (verse 59) and *aretâi* (verse 62), and in verse 65b his *boulai* . . . *presbyterai* are mentioned. Thus the context appears to be wider than Schadewaldt believes and does not require us to accept the construction which he prefers.

[Mass.] 1955) 95; O. **Schroeder**, *Pindars Pythien* (Leipzig and Berlin 1922) 19; L. Traverso and E. Grassi, *Pindaro, Odi e frammenti* (Florence 1956); U. von **Wilamowitz-Moellendorff**, *Hieron und Pindaros* (Berlin 1901) 29:

Of the third: B. L. **Gildersleeve**, *Pindar, the Olympian and Pythian Odes*² (New York 1890); R. **Lattimore**, *The Odes of Pindar* (Chicago 1947); A. Puech, *Pindare, Pythiques*³ (Paris 1955); O. Regenbogen, quoted by Gundert; J. **Sandys**, *The Odes of Pindar* (London and Cambridge [Mass.] 1915); H. **Strohm**, *Tyche* (Stuttgart 1944) 47, note 33:

Of the fourth: A. **Boeckh**, *Pindari opera* 2, pt. 2 (Leipzig 1821); G. **Coppola**, *Introduzione a Pindaro* (Rome 1931) 143 f.; P. **Feine**, *De Aristarcho Pindari interprete* (Diss. Leipzig 1883) 290; E. Fraenkel, quoted by Schadewaldt; E. **Thummer**, *Die Religiosität Pindars* (Innsbruck 1957) 100:

Of the fifth: C. **del Grande**, *Filologia minore* (Milan and Naples 1956) 114.

³ The other examples of *amâchania* and *amâchanos* in Pindar also point to "helplessness" rather than "poverty": cf. *Olym.* 5.15, 7.25; *Pyth.* 2.19, 9.92, 11.26; *Nem.* 7.97; *Pae.* 4.23, 6.10 and 53, and 9.3.

⁴ Even if one follows the explanation suggested by E. Wyckoff, "Pindar *Pythian* 2.52-56", *CP* 41 (1946) 160-62, and understands *amâchania* as referring to Pindar rather than Archilochus, "helplessness" still seems a more appropriate meaning than "poverty." Coppola too argues that *amâchania* is not "povertà," but rather "non poesia." Pindar is saying that Archilochus, because of his virulence, is not really writing poetry, although he does not state in what way he understood his *amâchania* to be "non poesia."

Bowra defends the same construction but on a different view of the context. He holds that Pindar is avoiding the appearance of ingratitude because this might cost him his fee and cause him to meet the same fate as Archilochus, i.e. poverty. Bowra translates verse 56 by: "Wealth with the fortune of wisdom that fate gives is best," and adds that "This is the Pindaric way of saying that, rather than speak freely and suffer, he would choose his own art, *sophia*, and the wealth which his patrons give him for it."⁵ But the same arguments may be used against this view as against that of Schadewaldt, and one may add that the *sophia* of verse 56 is in all probability Hiero's, if not exclusively his.

Schadewaldt paraphrases *σὺν τύχῃ πότμου σοφίας* by *παραδόντος τοῦ πότμου τὴν σοφίαν* and compares *Pyth.* 9.39, *κρυπταὶ κλαῖδες ἐντὶ σοφᾶς Πειθοῦς ἱερᾶν φιλοτάτων*, as a parallel for the succession of genitives. Just as *Peithous* is the subjective and *philotatôn* the objective genitive here, so too *potmou* is the subjective and *sophias* the objective genitive there.⁶ This much seems possible, but I feel doubtful whether *σὺν τύχῃ πότμου σοφίας* could mean what Schadewaldt indicates by his paraphrase. It suggests that the derivation of *potmos* from *piptô* was not prominent in Pindar's mind, since he would make *sophia* both *piptein* and *tynchanein*.⁷ It is improbable that Pindar would admit this kind of overlapping. It is also a question whether *potmou* is active or passive. Schroeder seems to favor the latter, since he denies that any sense could be obtained from the phrase, if *potmou* were to be replaced by an unambiguously active word, such as *daimonos* or *theou*. But if *potmou* is passive, this will be the only case among the fifteen occurrences of the word in Pindar in which it is followed by a genitive

⁵ Cora Mason, *The Ethics of Wealth in Early Greek Thought* (unpublished diss. Radcliffe 1944) 157, note 1, agrees completely with Bowra.

⁶ Gildersleeve says that the two genitives in *Pyth.* 9.39 are simply possessive; but while that is possible, it seems less probable.

⁷ That Pindar believed *potmos* was derived from *piptô* is clear from *Nem.* 5.40. Here he mentions that *potmos* determines all events and in the next sentence adds that Eurymenes "fell" (*pitnôn*) into the arms of Victory. Strohm believes that *Pyth.* 8.21 is another example of this etymology. Pindar, in his description of Aegina, says of it: *ἔπεσε δ' οὐ χαρίτων ἑκάς*. If Strohm is right, the relation is somewhat tenuous, since no mention is made of *potmos*, but the passage may provide an example of the idea from which *potmos* is derived. G. Norwood, *Pindar*² (Berkeley 1956) 147 ff., suggests, however, that a captive bird is the symbol of Aegina in this ode and that Pindar "half unconsciously sets down a word dictated by the symbol." Aeschylus, in the most explicit terms, also indicates that he follows this etymology (fr. 159):

οὐμός δὲ πότμος οὐρανῷ κυρῶν ἄνω ἔραζε πίπτει.

of a word for an abstraction. The only genitive found after *potmos* is *tōnde* of *Olym.* 2.36, where the reference is to the Emmenidae. Whether *potmou* is active or passive is of little importance as far as *tychāi* is concerned, since we have examples of *tychāi* with both active and passive nouns, although the former are more numerous.⁸

Schadewaldt adduces *Pyth.* 5.1–4 as a parallel to support his interpretation of *Pyth.* 2.56:

ὁ πλοῦτος εὐρυσθενής,
 ὅταν τις ἀρετᾶ κεκραμένον καθαρᾶ
 βροτήσιος ἀνὴρ πότμου παραδόντος αὐτὸν ἀνάγῃ
 πολύφιλον ἐπέταν.

The parallel is impressive, for wealth is praised when it is given to a man by *potmos* together with *aretē*. However, it is not verbally exact, since *potmos* is not said to give *sophia*, as Schadewaldt's paraphrase, *παραδόντος τοῦ πότμου τὴν σοφίαν*, requires. In *Pyth.* 5.1–4 *potmos* gives not *sophia* but *ploutos* combined with *aretē*.

Gundert argues that in *syn* there is an "ursächliches Mitwirken," and that *τὸ πλουτεῖν σὺν τύχῃ πότμου* means "wealth through (or caused by) a gift of fate." Thummer on the other hand emphasizes that *syn* may also be taken in its more usual comitative sense. But regardless of which meaning is attributed to the preposition, it is not going to influence the ultimate explanation of the sentence.

Finally Farnell states that *sophia* could not be a "mere gift of fortune"; but if *potmos* can bring wealth (*Pyth.* 5.1–4) and *aretē* (*Nem.* 4.41 f.), it can surely bring wisdom as well.

Thus, in view of the objections which we have raised, the first interpretation seems unlikely.

The second is usually rejected for one of two reasons, or for both. The first is that *sophias* is too far removed from the infinitive to depend on it; the second that the concept of "wealth of wisdom" is impossible for Pindar. It is extremely difficult to argue dogmatically about the word order. Boeckh says that he can find no parallel passages and adds that those which have been adduced (*Olym.* 1.93–95 and *Pyth.* 4.292 f.) are not comparable because no ambiguity is involved. Farnell, however, maintains that the

⁸ The passages with *tychē* and an active noun are *Nem.* 5. 48, *Μενάνδρου σὺν τύχῃ*; *Nem.* 4.7, *σὺν Χαρίτων τύχῃ*; *Olym.* 8.67, *τύχῃ μὲν δαίμονος*; and *Nem.* 6.24, *σὺν θεοῦ δὲ τύχῃ*; with a passive noun, *Olym.* 13.115, *τύχαν τερπνῶν*.

voice could indicate that *sophias* was to be taken with *ploutein*. My own feeling is that the word order is not impossible but should be defended only if the sense demands it.

This brings us to the second objection. Schadewaldt argues that *eleutherâi phreni* (verse 57) proves that *ploutein* must denote material wealth, not wealth of wisdom. But it is difficult to see how *eleutherâi phreni* proves that the meaning of *ploutein* is either literal or metaphorical. Strohm maintains that *ploutos* in Pindar is concrete and therefore could not be understood metaphorically as "wealth of wisdom." This is true, although we must remember that *ploutos*, particularly to the aristocratic Pindar, may be considerably more than wealth in its purely economic, or even in its social, sense. It may also be the sign of breeding and divine favour.⁹ *Ploutos*, however, always includes material prosperity and is never used metaphorically of a mental state. Consequently in verse 56 *sophias* cannot be construed with the infinitive.

We should also consider whether the idea of "wealth of wisdom" suits the present context. Schroeder and Farnell in particular seem to feel that it does. Schroeder defends this interpretation of the line by saying that Pindar considers Archilochus as one who has misused his *sophia*, like the Telchines (*Olym.* 7.53), Asclepius (*Pyth.* 3.54) and Homer (*Nem.* 7.23). Pindar will not follow Archilochus' example because he has a "wealth of wisdom," i.e. he knows how to use his *sophia* correctly. In view of this, *ploutein* cannot denote material prosperity. Schroeder attempts to demonstrate the connection of verse 56 with what follows by adding that *sophias* refers also to Hiero. Pindar will show through his poetry, Hiero through his acts as a prince, that wealth of wisdom together with divine favor is best.¹⁰ This interpretation, however, is not supported by the subsequent verses. In verses 57-67 Pindar speaks not of wealth of wisdom, but wealth, fame and wisdom.

Farnell states that this explanation of the line is "satisfying and Pindaric: wealth combined with *aretê* (of which *sophia* is a chief component) is the most effective means, material and spiritual, for attaining high and happy life." The phrase, to *ploutein*

⁹ Cf. *Olym.* 2.53 and *Pyth.* 5.1 f. where *ploutos* is combined with *aretê*. Wealth is "lordly" (*Olym.* 1.2 and *Pyth.* 10.18) and is an indication of nobility (*Isth.* 3.17 f.).

¹⁰ Wilamowitz on the other hand understands wealth of wisdom to refer to Pindar and actual wealth to Hiero.

sophias, however, cannot mean “wealth combined with *areté* or *sophia*,” but “wealth of *sophia*.”

The second interpretation, therefore, cannot be defended.

The third is defended by Gildersleeve who cites Aristarchus in support of his view: *εὐποτμότατός ἐστιν ὁ πλουτῶν καὶ σοφίας ἅμα τυγχάνων*. Gildersleeve has, I think, correctly understood the paraphrase, although it is interesting to note that Mezger¹¹ uses Aristarchus to support the first interpretation and Feine¹² to support the fourth. The authority of Aristarchus by itself, however, is not sufficient to enable us to reach a final decision.

Strohm too prefers to understand the verse in this way: “Macht und Reichthum, wobei Sophia den rechten Treff verleiht, das ist der beste Potmos.” He then compares *Olym.* 2.53 f.:

ὁ μὲν πλοῦτος ἀρεταῖς δεδαιδαλμένος
φέρει τῶν τε καὶ τῶν
καιρόν, βαθεῖαν ὑπέχων μέριμναν ἀγροτέρων.

Strohm argues that *kairos* and *tyché* are similar, and that may be right, but the passage is not completely parallel. The phrase, *φέρει τῶν τε καὶ τῶν/καιρόν*, is scarcely analogous to *potmou ariston*.

The final objection, and in my mind the most important, is the word order. Gildersleeve admits “the position is bold,” but he maintains that it is “not incredible.” Neither he nor anyone else, however, is able to find an example in Pindar of such an interlacing word order, and I feel that one must agree with Fraccaroli who says that this word order would be possible only if the words, as they are, did not give another clearer sense.

Therefore, in view of the lack of parallel passages to support the word order and the sense, this interpretation too must be rejected.

The fourth explanation of this verse has perhaps been defended less than any of the three already discussed, but I hope to show that it is the most probable. Fraccaroli raised two objections to this view of the line, and most commentators have adopted one or both of these. He maintains that *syn tychai potmou* has no meaning

¹¹ Mezger translates: “. . . reich zu sein (d.h. die Fülle zu haben), indem einem zugleich das Loos der Weisheit zu Theil wird, ist das Beste.”

¹² Feine translates: “Optimum ait quod sapientiae obtingere potest est id, ut iuvante fortuna opes accedant.” He adds, “namque Aristarchum verba *syn tychai potmou* coniunxisse ex eius paraphrasi cerni censeo”.

("non vuol dir nulla") and the statement that wealth is the best of wisdom is ridiculous ("un aforismo scherzoso"). The first objection seems scarcely tenable. As much meaning can be found in *syn tychâi potmou* as, for example, in *syn theou de tychâi* (*Nem.* 6.24). Strohm also takes exception to the phrase *syn tychâi potmou*, but chiefly because of the inadequate sense which he feels is thereby given to *tyché*: ". . . aber die glatte Übersetzung 'Schicksalsgeschenk' verwischt ja offensichtlich die überall sonst so bestimmte Prägung *tyché*, die nun eben nicht schlichthin Huld, Gewährung (hier in Hinsicht auf den Zustand des 'Reichseins') auszudrücken vermag." But once again one wonders how this can differ from the example quoted above.

The second objection is also voiced by Farnell. He states that, if the verse is taken to mean "wealth combined with good fortune is the crown of wisdom," we have "a parody of Pindar's usual teaching" and it "implies bad Greek." Let us examine first the statement that this view "implies bad Greek." I assume he means that the phrase *sophias ariston* is "bad Greek," since it would be difficult to find anything wrong with the grammar of the rest of the line. It is true that no one has produced a parallel passage in Pindar with the genitive depending on a superlative in this way, but examples are not lacking in other authors. A similar passage is Bacchylides 3.21 f. (Snell):

θεόν, θ[εό]ν τις
ἀγλαΐζέθω γὰρ ἄριστος ὄλβων.

Other examples as well are noted by Headlam,¹³ who compares Bacchylides 3.51 f.:

ὁ γὰρ προφανὴς θνα-
τοῖσιν ἔχθιστος φόνων,

3.83 f.:

τοῦτο γὰρ
κερδέων ὑπέρτατον,

and Euripides fr. 153 (Nauck²):

τῶν γὰρ πλούτων ὄδ' ἄριστος, γενναῖον λέχος εὐρεῖν.

Thus the grammar of *sophias ariston* is satisfactory.¹⁴

¹³ W. Headlam, "Bacchylides, ed. Blass, 1898," *CR* 14 (1900) 11.

¹⁴ C. A. M. Fennell, *Pindar: the Nemean and Isthmian Odes* (Cambridge 1899), in his note on *Nem.* 6.25 gives an improbable translation of *sophias ariston* ". . . to be

The other objection, that we have a "parody of Pindar's usual teaching," is overcome by a comparison with *Pyth.* 8.71–78:

θεῶν δ' ὅπιν
ἄφθονον αἰτέω, Ξέναρκες, ὕμετέραις τύχαις.
εἰ γάρ τις ἐσλὰ πέπαται μὴ σὺν μακρῷ πόνῳ,
πολλοῖς σοφὸς δοκεῖ πεδ' ἀφρόνων
βίον κορυσσέμεν ὀρθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς·
τὰ δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνδράσι κέϊται· δαίμων δὲ παρίσχει,
ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὑπερθε βάλλων, ἄλλον δ' ὑπὸ χειρῶν.
μέτρῳ κατάβαιν'.

esla pepatai is parallel to *ploutein*; *hymeterais tychais* and *daimôn de parischei* to *syn tychâi potmou*; *sophos* and *orthobouloisi machanais* to *sophias*; and *korussemen* to *ariston*. A man is deemed *sophos*, or to have reached the pinnacle of *sophia*, if he has *ploutos* (wealth, success) along with the aid of some power beyond man (*potmos*, *daimôn*).¹⁵ This is, I feel, the most satisfactory interpretation of the passage. We have a parallel to the sense and an attractive chiasmic word order.¹⁶

wealthy with the kindly aid of fate is far better than cleverness." He seems to be pressing the construction of a superlative with a genitive which, as Smyth mentions in his *Greek Grammar*, § 1434, may be both partitive and ablative: "The best of wisdom," i.e. "better than other examples of wisdom." "Better than cleverness," however, is not the same thing as "better than other examples of cleverness" or "wisdom." In his book on the *Olympian* and *Pythian Odes* he supports the first interpretation.

¹⁵ A somewhat less elaborate parallel is quoted by Coppola who compares *Pyth.* 5.12 f.:

σοφοὶ δέ τοι κάλλιον
φέροντι καὶ τὰν θεόδοτον δύναμιν.

He argues that *theosdoton dynamin* is analogous to *τὸ πλουτεῖν σὺν τύχῃ πότμου* and *sophoi . . . kallion pheronti* to *sophias ariston*.

A similar idea, though in more general terms, is also expressed in *Olym.* 4.6–7:

ξείνων δ' εὖ πρᾶσσόντων ἔσαναν αὐτίκ' ἀγγελίαν
ποτὶ γλυκεῖαν ἐσλοῖ.

and in *Olym.* 5.18:

εὖ δὲ τυχόντες σοφοὶ καὶ πολίταις ἔδοξαν ἔμμεν.

Both passages point to the response which is called forth by *eu tynchanein* or *prattein*. This response is made by the *esloi* (not by malicious slanderers like Archilochus) and takes the form of calling the prosperous *sophoi* and doing them honor (*esanan*).

¹⁶ A. Croiset, "Un vers de Pindare à corriger," *Annuaire de l'assoc. pour l'encouragement des études grec. en France* 12 (1878) 63–67, is unable to extract a satisfactory meaning out of the verse as it stands. He, therefore, inserts *t'* before *ariston* and translates: "... être riche par la faveur du sort et par l'aide de sa propre sagesse est la destinée la plus heureuse." Croiset mentions the even more drastic remedy proposed by M. M. Schmidt, *Pindar's olympische Siegesgesänge Gr. und Deutsch* (Jena 1869) 101–102. He emended *potmou* to *promou*.

The fifth does not differ much in meaning from the fourth, but it is less attractive. C. del Grande, the only one I have found to defend this view, compares *Olym.* 2.53 f. which we have discussed in connection with the third interpretation. The same arguments may be used now as then. This passage provides no analogy to *potmou* or *ariston*. But apart from the lack of a parallel, it is stylistically much harsher to take *potmou* with *sophias* than with *tychâi*, and in addition the chiasmus is destroyed.

Finally we should examine the connection which this verse, following the interpretation we have suggested, has with what precedes and what follows. The reference to Archilochus is inserted in order to provide an example of one who writes with a slanderous tongue and who because of his abusiveness is, as Gildersleeve so colorfully puts it, "a fat and venomous toad that lives upon the vapor of a dungeon." Slander is a mistake, because it implies criticism of the divine order and therefore ends in helplessness and futility. Consequently Pindar praises that wealth which heaven has established as the mark and foundation of god-given wisdom. This god-given wealth and wisdom Pindar attributes to Hiero. The wealth and power which Pindar recognizes as legitimate must be given by god and must imply a similarly god-given wisdom in those who enjoy them. To find fault with such men is to go against the divine ordering of things and to risk the loss of those very goods which it alone can confer. The myth of Ixion's ingratitude and the reference to Archilochus' slander are examples which Pindar states he must avoid. Instead he will praise Hiero, and in his customary abrupt and elliptical fashion he uses verse 56 as a transition from the one idea to the other.¹⁷

¹⁷ According to this view *sophias* refers only to Hiero and not to Pindar's ability as a poet also. The *nin* of verse 57, τὸ δὲ σάφα νιν ἔχεις, refers to the whole of verse 56, not simply to *to ploutein*; and it is the combination of wealth, fame and wisdom which is praised in verses 57-67.