

# The Myths of Pindar's *Nemean 10*

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ALTHOUGH the opening triad of Pindar's *Nemean 10* has been praised by Wilamowitz as "das schönste Beispiel für Pindars 'kurzen Weg'" and has been considered exemplary of the *κατάλογος ἀρετῶν* by Schadewaldt, although the surprising climaxes of its myths have been discussed by Bowra and many other useful comments have been offered on it, its full significance for the interpretation of the rest of the ode has not yet been sufficiently appreciated.<sup>1</sup>

Its theme is apparently the communication which exists between the world of men and the world of the divine.<sup>2</sup> This proximity of man to gods is strikingly illustrated if we note the recurrence of verbs in the triad which express motion, for it is not merely a metaphorical proximity which is implied, but a physical, active encounter between the worlds: *μολών* (11), Zeus comes to Danaë and Alcmene; *ἵκετ'* (14), in a quite physical sense Amphitryon comes into kinship with Zeus;<sup>3</sup> *ἔσηλθεν* (16), Zeus again enters Amphitryon's court. Heracles' wife Hebe does not merely "live" beside her mother Hera: her proximity to an even more powerful divinity is again expressed by a verb of motion: *βαίνοισ' ἔστι* (18). Even more emphatically Hypermetra's virtue is described with a verb of motion: *οὐδ' Ὑπερμήστρα παρεπλάγχθη* (6). The surface meaning of the metaphor is obvious: Hypermetra has not wandered from the path of righteousness. But,

<sup>1</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 426; W. Schadewaldt, *Der Aufbau des pindarischen Epinikion* (Halle 1928) 338; C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 300. The triad reminds editors of the famous advice supposedly given to Pindar by Corinna: e.g. *Pindare III, Néméennes*, ed. A. Puech (Paris 1923) 132, and G. Méautis, *Pindare le Dorien* (Neuchâtel 1962) 375. The text of Pindar used here is that of B. Snell (Leipzig 1959).

<sup>2</sup> Speaking generally about the ode J. Duchemin, *Pindare, poète et prophète* (Paris 1955) 181, asserts: "... les contradictions inhérentes à la fragmentation de la vie en de multiples individualités se résolvent en une immense aspiration de fraternité humaine et divine."

<sup>3</sup> There is some disagreement about the subject *ὁ δ'* (13); schol. 24a incorrectly refers *ὁ δ'* to Zeus, but the normal idiom would make the reference to Amphitryon, and calling Zeus *ὄλβω φέρτατος* is absurd condescension: *Scholia vetera in Pindari carmina*, ed. A. B. Drachmann (Leipzig 1927) *Nem. 10, 24a*; see the note of J. B. Bury, *The Nemean Odes of Pindar* (London 1890) *ad loc.*

as this discussion will establish, there is also a further allusion; for motion in this ode in many cases will imply specifically the coming together of man and gods. We may here also think of Hypermestra as not losing her opportunity to encounter divinity, not wandering from the path by which such communication is achieved. The contrast, when we come to discuss the myth of the ode, will be clear: the Apharetidae, who *ἐκαίοντ' ἐρήμοι* (72). Their loneliness is exactly their inability to experience that physical contact with divinity which is central to this opening triad.

One aspect of this theme in the opening stanzas needs emphasis because its significance will become apparent in our later discussion of the Dioscuri myth. The movement through which the communication is achieved is in most cases in a vertical plane: Zeus *descends* to Alcmene and Danaë; Heracles *ascends* to Olympus, as we might also imagine Diomedes does (7). In the unique case of Amphiaraios the point is especially important (8–9).

*γαῖα δ' ἐν Θήβαις ὑπέδεκτο κεραυνωθεῖσα Διὸς βέλεσιν  
μάντιν Οἰκλείδαν, πολέμοιο νέφος.*

In terms of pure language the contrast of the first and last words of this sentence is curious: the cloud of war has descended and been buried in the earth. But *πολέμοιο νέφος* is also an allusion to Homer—not merely to the exact parallel of *Iliad* 17.243, but also to the more common *θανάτου νέφος*, with which the usual verb is *ἀμφικαλύπτω*.<sup>4</sup> The cloud thus becomes simultaneously the object covered by a descent into earth, and by allusion the covering object itself. Yet for our purposes what is important is that Amphiaraios, whose chthonian worship is well attested,<sup>5</sup> also achieves proximity with the divine by the physical act of moving in a vertical plane. His descent is the necessary balance to Heracles' ascent mentioned in the next stanza;

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* 16.350 and *Od.* 4.180; the expression is also lyric: Bacchyl. 13.64; for *νεφέλη* in the same context see *Il.* 20.417 (also with *ἀμφικαλύπτω*), Simon. 89.4 (Bergk), Pind. *Nem.* 9.38 and *Isthm.* 7.27. In general on the idea see *Homeric Ilias II*, ed. J. van Leeuwen (Leiden 1913) *ad* 17.243.

<sup>5</sup> See E. Bethe, *RE* 1 (1894) 1886f; W. Fauth, *Der Kleine Pauly* 1 (1964) 308–310; W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford 1928) *ad* Hdt. 8.134; M. P. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley 1932) 115f. The euhemerism of L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford 1921) 58f, will not satisfy many, but he agrees that at Oropus Amphiaraios was worshipped as “a chthonian god.” For the most recent discussion see F. Bener, *Die Amphiaraoassage in der griechischen Dichtung* (diss. Zürich, 1945) 47f, 53f.

together they will exactly duplicate the alternate ascents and descents of the Dioscuri described in the last epode.

One further comment about these lines is in order: Amphiarao's reception into earth is not to be thought of as tragic or unfortunate; the earth does not merely accept, it welcomes him: *ὑπέδεκτο* (8).<sup>6</sup> His descent without a hint of disaster or punishment gloriously intervenes between the deification of Diomedes and the beautiful-haired women of Argos. The earth struck by Zeus' thunderbolt is, therefore, to be understood in an archaic sense: here the bolt is not the customary weapon which destroys the evil, but rather the sky god's instrument of deification. Zeus here uses his lightning to honor Amphiarao, not to destroy him.<sup>7</sup> The institution of his worship is a consequent result of his being struck by Zeus' lightning and his kindly reception into earth.

Yet that Zeus' thunderbolt was not always of this sort becomes clear later in the ode (71–72):

*Ζεὺς δ' ἐπ' Ἰδα πυρφόρον πλάξε ψολόεντα κεραυνόν.  
ἄμα δ' ἐκαίοντ' ἐρήμοι.*

The thunderbolt could as well be used as his means of punishment. That it intervenes here immediately after the defilement of Aphareus' tomb has been stressed by the critics.<sup>8</sup> The two instances of Amphiarao and Idas provide a striking proof of what is well-known in Greek religion, and particularly important for the understanding of Pindar: within each god's control are opposite phenomena—their implements

<sup>6</sup> See the first sense in *LSJ*; *δέχομαι* in this kindly sense becomes a *leitmotif* in *Pyth.* 9.9, 56, 73.

<sup>7</sup> What A. B. Cook calls "death by lightning as euthanasia" is well-known in mythology: Heracles, Erechtheus, Semele; it is apparently misunderstood in the cases of Kapaneus and Salmoneus. For general discussions see E. Rohde, *Psyche, Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglauben der Griechen*<sup>8</sup> I (Tübingen 1921) 320f; A. B. Cook, *Zeus, a Study in Ancient Religion* II.1 (Cambridge 1925) 23f; J. Harrison (F. M. Cornford) *Themis, a Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1927) 220f. The clearest statement from antiquity is *Artemidori Daldiani Onirocriticon*, ed. R. Pack (Leipzig 1963) II.9: *οὐδεὶς γὰρ κεραυνωθεὶς ἄτιμὸς ἐστίν, ὅπου γε καὶ ὡς θεὸς τιμᾶται*. For Amphiarao especially see also *Pind. Ol.* 6.14 and *Nem.* 9.24; in his note on the latter passage L. R. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar* II (London 1932), discusses the favorable thunderbolt and refers to *Pyth.* 4.23, 197. Speaking of Semele in *Ol.* 2.26 Rohde asserts: "Blitztod heiligt in manchen Sagen den Getroffenen und erhöht ihn zu göttlichem (ewigem) Leben." That the ground is hit by the bolt rather than Amphiarao himself is of little importance.

<sup>8</sup> F. Staehlin, "Der Dioskurenmythos in Pindars 10. nemeischer Ode," *Philologus* 62 N.F. 16 (1903) 193; K. Fehr, *Die Mythen bei Pindar* (Zürich 1936) 136; H.-G. Gerhardt, *Zeus in den pindarischen Epinikien* (Frankfurt 1959) 21.

of life can also be their implements of death. The point has recently been made about Apollo's rôle in *Pythian* 3 by Young,<sup>9</sup> but has only been partially noted by students of *Nemean* 10.<sup>10</sup> We recall other cases of Zeus' hostile bolt (against Asclepius at *Pyth.* 3.58, and the Giants at *Pyth.* 8.17), but equally to be recalled are the kindly uses of his power: a golden snow comes to Alcmene (*Isthm.* 7.5); like Amphiaraios, Semele is deified by the thunderbolt (*Ol.* 2.26).<sup>11</sup>

It appears rather to be a natural phenomenon than a moral principle that Pindar stresses in *Nemean* 10, though if we choose to emphasize the Apharetidae's defilement of their father's tomb the moral is clear enough.<sup>12</sup> Yet what is for the present to be appreciated is that the explanation of Zeus' favor and disfavor is in terms of the same principle of motion which we have seen before. Amphiaraios achieves his encounter with divinity by the physical act of descending into the welcoming earth; the Apharetidae, on the other hand, are ἐρημοί: in no-man's land, near to nothing divine. What most critics have taken to be the *Grundgedanke* of the ode is to be understood in light of this comparison: καὶ μὲν θεῶν πιστὸν γένος (54).<sup>13</sup> The gods

<sup>9</sup> D. C. Young, *Three Odes of Pindar* (Leiden 1968) 41f.

<sup>10</sup> Gerhardt (*supra* n.8) 59; A. Rivier, "Mythe et poesie," *BullBudé* n.s.9 [= *Lettres d'Humanité* 9] (1950) 84f; J. H. Finley Jr, *Pindar and Aeschylus* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1955) 130.

<sup>11</sup> Duchemin (*supra* n.2) 187: ' . . . il n'est pas rare chez Pindare, où tant de héros obtiennent la béatitude des dieux, qu'une mort, réelle ou feinte, en tout cas transitoire, joue véritablement le rôle d'un rite de passage, indispensable pour accéder à une condition supérieure.'

<sup>12</sup> This is the only clear moral statement in the myth; the "moral" tone of the ode has been greatly exaggerated, especially by those critics who choose to overemphasize the words ἀμφὶ βοσσίῳ πως (60). We may agree with F. Mezger, *Pindars Siegeslieder* (Leipzig 1880) 467: "also nicht wegen der den Apharätiden geraubten Bräute; Pindar zieht auch hier die für die Götter ehrenvollere Form der Sage vor," but Bowra, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 300, goes too far: "This helps to acquit the Dioscuri of any imputation of wrong-doing." Pindar avoids the version which tells of the rape of the Leucippides, as known from Lycoph. 546, Theoc. 22.137f, and schol. *Nem.* 10.112a; whether his version "about cattle" intends to recall the simple raid as described by Apollod. 3.11.2, or the more involved and blameworthy version of schol. Lycoph. 547 is unclear. If Staehlin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 184, and A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* II (Cambridge 1952) 383, are correct, the latter version was that of the *Cypria*, and hence known to Pindar: see Gow's note for further references. Under any circumstances to be "moral" it is necessary to do more than avoid rape, and to make an ethical interpretation of the behavior of the Dioscuri depend on three vague words in the text is absurd. G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley 1945) 56, sees "shameless injustice" in the intervention of Zeus.

<sup>13</sup> Almost everyone who has spoken on the ode agrees on the importance of this line; for the clearest statements see Mezger (*supra* n.12) 463, 469; Wilamowitz (*supra* n.1) 429; Schadewaldt (*supra* n.1) 338. It is usual to accept the maxim as an augury of Theaios' hoped for victory at Olympia: Mezger, Bury (*supra* n.3) 186, W. T. Lendrum, "The Date of Pindar's Tenth Nemean," *CR* 16 (1902) 268.

show faith to those who are by virtue of act or birth physically near to them. The necessity, stated simply, is to avoid desertion, to be among those who receive divine visitations or are permitted to travel the path which will bring them into contact with the gods.

In the myth of the Dioscuri which fills the final triads of the ode we find a stress on the same themes which we found in the opening triad: verbs expressing motion, particularly vertical motion, are again prominent. In many cases they will be found to illustrate a quite physical coming together of the divine and mortal. So, for instance, *ἐλθόντος* (49) implies what we may take to be the descent of the Dioscuri to Pamphaës, who thus gains for his descendants the right of communication with divinity.<sup>14</sup> The next stanza, which structurally preempts the climax of the myth, presents a parallel case: again vertical motion is stressed in the travels of the Dioscuri, and again proximity is of prime importance. As is logical, considering the ambiguous position of the Dioscuri between mortality and divinity, this proximity is both that of the brothers to Zeus (*παρὰ πατρὶ φίλω | Διὶ νέμονται*, 55f) and that of the brothers to each other: the word order of line 59 (*εἴλετ' αἰῶνα φθιμένου Πολυδεύκης Κάστορος ἐν πολέμῳ*) seems purposely contrived to show the closeness of the two brothers. There can be no doubt that those critics are correct who insist that the Dioscuri migrate together, not separately.<sup>15</sup>

The next two stanzas present a variation on the theme: the same emphasis on motion is found (*ἐξικέσθαι, ἦλθε, διώκων, ἐφορμαθείς*), but the scene is now earthbound, and so the motion is on the ground rather than from Olympus to earth. There is a violent rushing, particularly by the Apharetidae, in this passage: *λαυσηροῖς, ἄφαρ, ὠκέως, ἀντίκα, θοῶ*. Bury has properly stressed the pun on the name Aphareus, which Pindar seems to have connected with *ἄφαρ*.<sup>16</sup> Yet

<sup>14</sup> Méautis, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 381f, discusses parallels to the motif of a god or hero receiving hospitality at the home of a mortal; for the Dioscuri see especially Hdt. 6.127 and the well-known story of Simonides and Scopas (fr.510 Page). Bury, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 190, stresses the structural parallel: "Pamphaes entertaining the divine brothers seems to hold parley, across the interspace, with Amphitryon, whose house was visited by Zeus."

<sup>15</sup> The last lines of *Pyth.* 11 are clear on this point, and it is assumed that Pindar follows the same version in *Nem.* 10: "Ambo simul in caelo sunt, simul in sepulcro Therapnae. Si altero in sepulcro versante alter apud caelestes fuisset, semper fuissent separati, nec unquam Pollux degisset cum Castore, quod tamen expetierat," L. Dissen *apud Pindari Opera* II.2, ed. A. Boeckh (Leipzig 1821) 471 *ad* 55; for a full discussion see Duchemin (*supra* n.2) 182f.

<sup>16</sup> Bury (*supra* n.3) *ad* 63.

it is the total vanity of this rushing which must be appreciated. For all their speed the Apharetidae are deserted, and Idas is stopped dead in his tracks by Zeus' bolt; equal to the suddenness of the action is the suddenness with which the action is stopped. The point is made in what has been acknowledged to be one of Pindar's most forceful lines—*ἄμα δ' ἐκαίοντ' ἐρήμοι* (72).<sup>17</sup> It is not so much the justice or injustice of their action as it is precisely their desertion by divinity and mankind which separates the Apharetidae from the Dioscuri, Heracles, Amphiarao and the other heroes of the opening triad. And as if that were not enough, Pindar drives the point home in a maxim the full irony of which has not been sufficiently appreciated, although Norwood<sup>18</sup> has caught the tone: *χαλεπὰ δ' ἔρις ἀνθρώποις ὀμιλεῖν κρεσσόνων* (72). *ὀμιλεῖν* again expresses the idea of the encounter,<sup>19</sup> but contact with divinity has in this one instance in the ode proved disastrous and has left the Apharetidae paradoxically deserted.

In the next strophe Polydeuces returns to the body of his brother and appeals to Zeus: *οἴχεται τιμὰ φίλων τατωμένω φωτί* (78). We find here the human equivalent to the divine principle: as a hero needs an encounter with divinity, so a man's honor demands proximity of friends. The disaster of the Apharetidae is once again clear, while to the Dioscuri, as he did to Danaë and Alcmene and as they did to Pamphaës, Zeus *ἀντίος ἦλυθε* (79). Even the birth of Castor seems to be twisted into the pattern: *ματρὶ τεῶν πελάσσις* (81). And in the final stanza we are left with the twins moving eternally on their vertical path, showing their closeness to each other and to Olympus: half the time *γαίας ὑπένερθεν* (87) in a clear echo of Amphiarao, whom *γαῖα ὑπέδεκτο* (8); half the time *ἐν χρυσεῖσι δόμοισιν* (88) with Heracles and Diomedes. The point has been simply made by Rivier: Polydeuces' speech shows "le refus d'être seul."<sup>20</sup>

The echo of line 8 which was just observed in line 87 leads to yet a further point; to the two cases, however, must be added a third and a fourth: *γαῖα δὲ καθείσα πυρί* (35), Pindar's description of the Pana-

<sup>17</sup> Norwood, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 70, describes the line as "that rare achievement, grandeur evoked by the plainest phrase." Similarly Puech (*supra* n.1) *ad* 72.

<sup>18</sup> Norwood (*supra* n.12) 56: "He first broadly hints that Castor and Polydeuces (whom Zeus aided) were in the wrong, but after the god has thrown omnipotence into the scale we find only this comment: 'whoso striveth with his betters will regret the meeting'." Rivier, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 84, rightly mentions that this maxim is the reverse of the better known line 54. Editors note the similarity to *Ol.* 10.39 and the echo in *Theoc.* 22.212.

<sup>19</sup> Bowra (*supra* n.1) 226.

<sup>20</sup> Rivier (*supra* n.10) 87.

thenaic amphora; and *ὑπὸ κεύθεισι γαίας* (56), the Dioscuri's half-life in Therapne. In each case it appears to be the lower half of the vertical spectrum which is singled out for especial comment: the glory of Amphiaraios is in his fiery reception into earth; the willing descent of Polydeuces, though it implies the parallel ascent of Castor, is yet verbally and thematically the more impressive statement of the theme of non-desertion. So also the brightest object in the ode is the mundane amphora, made of fired earth which recalls the death of Amphiaraios (35f):

*γαία δὲ καυθείσα πυρὶ καρπὸς ἐλαίας  
ἔμολεν Ἥρας τὸν εὐάνορα λαὸν ἐν ἀγγέων  
ἔρκεσιν παμποικίλοις.*

Wilamowitz has complained of these bizarre lines,<sup>21</sup> but, though they may be excessive, their import is clear: they epitomize the illumination of earthly things in the ode. An even more striking case is Pamphaës, to whom the Dioscuri descend and whose name is a bright epithet of the sun.<sup>22</sup> Communication between the worlds becomes the source of that physical brightness which is a keynote of the Pindaric vision, and this ode makes it clear that that illumination is a result of a purposeful willingness of the gods to descend to man, and of man to descend into earth, as Amphiaraios and Polydeuces do. So it is that the emphatic brightness in the ode is on the earth: the Danaides are *ἀγλαοθρόνων* (1), the city of Argos *φλέγεται* (2), the amphora is *παμποικίλοις* (36), the family of Theaios is *ἀργυρωθέντες* (43), the ancestor is *Παμφάη* (49). What Finley has called the accessibility of the gods in this ode<sup>23</sup> is seen to be a result of the willingness of the gods to descend to man, and the splendor of earth is the result of that descent.

But if it is this willingness to approach man which is basic to the *πίστις* of the gods, as Pindar suggests in the maxim quoted earlier (54), there is still another side to the coin, as is clear from the later echo of that maxim (78f):<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Wilamowitz (*supra* n.1) 427: "den Zwang, den Raum zu füllen." So also Bowra (*supra* n.1) 210.

<sup>22</sup> *Od.* 13.29, cf. *Eur. Med.* 1251; the verbal form is used of stars at *Il.* 5.6 and *Hes. Op.* 567.

<sup>23</sup> Finley (*supra* n.10) 130.

<sup>24</sup> The echo is noted and discussed by Mezger (*supra* n.12) 469; for a reason best known to himself C. A. M. Fennell, *Pindar, the Nemean and Isthmian Odes* (Cambridge 1883) ad 79, calls the echo "mere coincidence."

*παῦροι δ' ἐν πόνῳ πιστοὶ βροτῶν  
καμάτου μεταλαμβάνειν.*

The *πίστις* which gods can offer men involves for them merely the physical act of descent; the demonstration of *πίστις* in man, however, involves a *πόνος* and a *κάματος* not necessary to the gods, for man's ascents and descents are accompanied by pain and toil. This is implied in the *σπέρμ' ἀδείμαντον* (17) of Heracles and the echoing *σπέρμα θνατόν* (81) of Castor, in the death of Amphiaraios, and, most clearly, in the choice of Polydeuces. There may be brightness in the earth as a result of the motion of the gods, but, as Bury has stressed, the brightness is brazen rather than golden.<sup>25</sup> For the single mention of gold in the poem we must turn back to Olympus and again appreciate that those "golden homes" (88) are accessible to man only after the descent of Polydeuces with the pain and toil it entailed.

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<sup>25</sup> Bury (*supra* n.3) 188.