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# ARTICLES ET MÉLANGES ARTIKELN EN MENGELINGEN

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## *Psychē* in Pindar, *Nemean* 9.32 and 69

Shirley Darcus Sullivan

Perhaps the most important psychic term in early Greek literature is *psychē*. This term comes, by the end of the fifth century BCE, to designate the chief psychological agent with living person. It then functions in human beings as a principal seat of intellect, emotion and will. Such was hardly the case, however, in Homer where it is not concerned with consciousness or with any psychological functions in the living person. In this paper I wish to focus on two instances in *psychē* in an ode of Pindar, namely *Nemean* 9.32 and 39. First, the paper will present an overview of the meaning of *psychē* in poets earlier than and contemporary with Pindar. Second, it will discuss the meaning of *psychē* in these two passages of Pindar, *Nemean* 9.

### I. Overview of *Psychē*

Let us look at *psychē* in Homer, the *Homeric Hymns*, and Hesiod where *psychē* occurs 92 times <sup>(1)</sup>. In Homer a person pays attention to *psychē* only at one time, when death approaches. The *psychē* then seems about to flee away and the individual must strive to prevent this flight. *Psychē* alone survives after death, being a pale image of the person in whom it lived. As it dwells in Hades, it is still recognisably the person but now it is simply a shade having

(1) On *psychē* in these authors see my article, "A Multi-Faceted Term: *Psychē* in Homer, the *Homeric Hymns*, and Hesiod", *SIFC* 6 (1988), 151-180 and my book, *Psychological and Ethical Ideas, What Early Greeks Say*, Leiden 1995, *Mnem. Suppl.* 144, 76-122. See also J. BREMMER, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, Princeton, 1983; D.B. CLAUS, *Toward the Soul*, New Haven and London 1981; R. GARLAND, "The Causation of Death in the *Iliad*", *BICS* 28 (1981), 43-60; *The Greek Way of Death*, London, 1985; J.M. REDFIELD, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, Chicago 1995; E. ROHDE, *Psyche*<sup>8</sup>, trans. W.B. Hillis, London 1925; J. WARDEN, "in Homeric Death-Descriptions," *Phoenix* 25 (1971), 95-103.

almost no powers at all. If, however, it is given blood, it acquires for a brief time an extended range of activities such as the individual enjoyed when alive. For the most part *psychai* in the underworld simply float about making shrill noises like those of bats (*Il.* 23.100; *Od.* 24.9).

What specifically is said about *psychē* in Homer, the *Homeric Hymns* and Hesiod? First, *psychē* is the shade of the dead. We hear different things about this shade, depending on its state. A shade that has come from a body not yet buried has a limited range of activities. It can move about <sup>(2)</sup>, speak (*Il.* 23.65, 100; *Od.* 24.120), and give orders (*Il.* 23.106). Once the body is buried, *psychai* can easily roam around Hades <sup>(3)</sup>. In one instance we hear of Ajax being angry (*Od.* 11.543). Once shades have had a chance to drink blood, they acquire a range of activities. They can speak (*Od.* 11.150, 471), grieve, (*Od.* 11.471, 541), and recognise someone (*Od.* 11.471).

What is said of *psychē* while still in the living person? It can leave in a swoon (*Il.* 5.696). It is vulnerable to the action of others who can "take it away" or "rob" someone of it <sup>(4)</sup>. *Psychē* is something that can be "staked" in fighting or "hazarded" in saling (*Il.* 9.322; *Od.* 3.74). At death *psychē* "utters a shrill cry" (*Il.* 23.100; *Od.* 24.9), "flies off," and "leaves" the body <sup>(5)</sup>. Death is described as a "loosenin" (*Il.* 5.296), "destruction" (*Il.* 22.325) or "perishing" (Hes., fr. 204.100) of *psychē*. It passes out of the body through "the barrier of the teeth" (*Il.* 9.408).

In general, we hear that each person has one *psychē* (*Il.* 21.569). *Psychē* can signify the "soul" in a person that gives life or, sometimes, it is the "life" itself. Thus, Hector and Achilles "ran for the *psychē* of Hector" (*Il.* 22.161) and the suitors "fight for their *psychai*".<sup>(6)</sup>

In the fragments of the lyric and elegiac poets <sup>(7)</sup> we find *psychē* mentioned only 18 times <sup>(8)</sup>. It can be the "shade of the dead" (THEOG. 710). More often it is the "soul" or "life" of a person <sup>(9)</sup>. In some passages we find a wider range of function of *psychē* in the living person. It can be a seat of pain (XEN. 7 a; THEOG. 910). It is associated with love (ANAC. 360). We find traits of character there. Thus we hear of a "much enduring *psychē*" (HIPPOCR. 39). Theognis claims that there is "nothing slavish" in his *psychē* (530). Simonides speaks of the "bold spirit" of *psychē* (15P). In these poets, therefore, *psychē* in the living person begins to act like other psychic entities such

(2) *Il.* 23.65, 100-101, 106; *Od.* 11.51, 24.5, 9, 13.

(3) *Il.* 23.72; *Od.* 10.530, 11.36-37, 84, 222, 387-388.

(4) See *Il.* 16.505, 22.257, 24.754; *Od.* 9.523-524, 22.444.

(5) *Il.* 16.856; *Od.* 11.222 ("flies"); *Il.* 7.330, 16.453; *Od.* 14.134, 18.91 ("leaves").

(6) Cf. also *Il.* 9.401; *Od.* 9.423, 22.338; HES., *W & D* 686: fr. 76.7.

(7) For texts of these poets see *Poetae Melici Graecae*, ed. D.L. PAGE, Oxford 1962; *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis*, ed. D.L. PAGE, Oxford 1974; *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, ed. M.L. WEST, Oxford, vol. 1<sup>2</sup> 1989, vol. 2 1971; *Sappho et Alcaeus Fragmenta*, ed. E.-M. VOIGT, Amsterdam 1971; *Epigrammata Graeca*, ed. D.L. PAGE, Oxford 1975 = (P).

(8) On *psychē* in the lyric and elegiac poets see my article "The Extended Use of *Psychē* in the Greek Lyric and Elegiac Poets (excluding Pindar and Bacchylides)," *Parola del Passato* 144 (1989), 241-262.

(9) ARCH. 213; TYR. 10.14, 11.5, 12.18; SOL. 13; THEOG. 568, 730; SIM. 553, 12 P, 15 P, 70 P.

as *phrēn*, *noos*, or *thumos*. It functions as a seat of emotion and certain traits of character.

In Pindar and Bacchylides <sup>(10)</sup> we find 24 references to *psychē* <sup>(11)</sup>. Once again *psychē* can signify the “shade” of the dead <sup>(12)</sup>. It is also the “soul” and “life” that is lost at death. <sup>(13)</sup> Just as in the lyric and elegiac poets *psychē* has come to have a certain range of activities within the living person. It is associated with emotion, acting as a seat of endurance (*Pyth.* 1.48, 3.41) and joy (*Pyth.* 4.122). It is connected with traits of character. One can be “unflinching” in *psychē* (*Is.* 4.53b) or have “girlish” *psychē* (BACCH. 11.48). One can also keep *psychē* from injustice (*Ol.* 2.70).

## II. Pindar, *Nemean* 9.32 and 39

*Psychē* appears twice in *Nemean* 9. <sup>(14)</sup> This ode was for Chromios, the commander of Hieron <sup>(15)</sup>. It is not an ode that celebrates a victory in the Nemean games, but rather in the Sikyonian games; this victory was probably won in 474 BCE. The place of performance is Aitna; the victory was in the chariot race. The ode opens with a summons to the Muses to celebrate the victory of Chromios. Their song is to honour Leto and her twins, Apollo and Artemis (1-5). The chariot race was founded at Sikyon by Adrastus (6-12). Pindar then tells the story of Amphiaros and Adrastus that ended with the ill-fated expedition against Thebes (13-27). At this point in the ode Pindar prays that there may be no encounter with a Carthaginian host and that Aitna may enjoy good rule (28-30). He praises the citizens of Aitna (31-34). He tells of Chromios’ victories in battles and, in a gnomic statement, says that few know

(10) For texts of Pindar and Bacchylides, see *Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis*, post B. SNELL, ed. H. MAEHLER, Leipzig 1987, repr. 1997; *Bacchylides Carmina cum Fragmentis*, post B. SNELL, ed. H. MAEHLER, Leipzig 1970; *Die Lieder des Bakchylides*, ed. H. MAEHLER, Leiden 1982, Parts 1 and 2. Translations of Pindar are my own.

(11) On *psychē* in Pindar and Bacchylides, see my article, “The Wider Meaning of *Psychē* in Pindar and Bacchylides”, *SIFC* 9 (1991), 165-183.

(12) See *Pyth.* 4.159, 11.21; *Nem.* 8.44; P., fr. 133.3; BACCH. 5.64, 83, 133, 151, 171.

(13) *Pyth* 3.102; *Is.* 1.68; P., fr. 123; BACCH; 5.133, 151.

(14) On *Nemean* 9 see the following: B.K. BRASWELL, *A Commentary on Pindar, Nemean Nine*, Berlin 1998; J.B. BURY, *The Nemean Odes of Pindar*, London 1890; J.S. CLAY, “Pindar’s Sympotic *Epinicia*”, *QUCC* 62 (1999), 31-34; L.R. FARNELL, *Critical Commentary to the Works of Pindar, II*, London 1932, repr. Amsterdam 1961; T.K. HUBBARD, “Remaking Myth and Rewriting History: Cult Tradition in Pindar’s Ninth Nemean”, *HSCPh* 94 (1992), 77-111; F. MEZGER, *Pindars Siegeslieder*, Leipzig 1880; L. PEARSON, “The Dynamics of Pindar’s Music: Ninth Nemean and Third Olympian”, *ICS* 2 (1977), 54-69; W.H. RACE, *Pindar*, Boston 1986; *Style and Rhetoric in Pindar’s Odes*, Atlanta, GA 1990: “Forms and Functions of Prayers”, 128-129; R.F. RENEHAN, “Conscious Ambiguities in Pindar and Bacchylides”, *GRBS* 10 (1969), 223-224; W.J. SLATER, “*Nemean One*: The Victor’s Return in Poetry and Politics” in *Greek Poetry and Philosophy, Studies Woodbury*, ed. D.E. GERBER, Chico, CA 1984, 241-264; R. STONEMAN, “Pindar and the Mythological Tradition”, *Philologus* 125 (1981), 44-63.

(15) For the summary of this ode see BRASWELL (note 14), 42-44; BURY (note 14), 159-168; RACE, *Pindar*, 83-85.

how to win over the enemy (35-39). Chromios' life has been marked by success given by the gods (40-47). Pindar concludes his poem by calling for wine to fill the silver cups that Chromios has won at Sikyon (48-53).

In this ode we encounter *psychē* twice. First, it appears in the description of the citizens of Aitna:

ἐντί τοι φίλιπποί τ' αὐτόθι καὶ κτεάνων  
 ψυχὰς ἔχοντες κρέσσονας  
 ἄνδρες. ἄπιστον ἔειπ'.  
 αἰδῶς γὰρ ὑπὸ κρύφα κέρδει κλέπτεται,  
 ἃ φέρει δόξαν.

In truth they are lovers of horses here and they have *psychai* stronger than their possession. I say that which it is hard to believe. For the sense of honour <sup>(16)</sup> which brings fame is secretly stolen away by love of gain.

In these Pindar bestows high praise on the men of Aitna. Their *psychai* are such that they are not overcome "secretly" by love of gain. Instead, their *psychai* rise above "possessions". They use these generously to "win glory" led by their "sense of honour". <sup>(17)</sup> Pindar says that it is "unbelievable" that this should be so: that is how rare this characteristic is.

In this passage of *Nemean* 9 we see *psychē* having a meaning quite different from that in Homer. It has come to signify the seat of particular traits of character or dispositions. We can find this reference to *psychē* emotional, intellectual, and volitional aspects. *Psychē* has become a seat of positive traits of character within the person.

Earlier, in Homer, we find Achilles saying that all the wealth of Troy and Pytho "are not worth his *psychē*" (*Il.* 9.401). Clearly he valued his "soul" or "life" above all possessions. He speaks, however, in a context of his own survival, not of generosity to others. Hesiod (*W & D* 686) calls "wretched" (δειλοί) those men who "by heedlessness of *noos*" sail in the spring: for their "possessions" (χρήματα) are *psychē*. For these individuals "life" and "possessions" are equal. They are very different from the people whom Pindar praises <sup>(18)</sup>. These individuals freely spend their wealth.

Various translations of this reference to *psychē* in *Nemean* 9 have been offered: <sup>(19)</sup> "souls superior to wealth" (SANDYS, 409); "souls greater than their possessions" (LATTIMORE, 122); "hearts that reckon not of possessions"

(16) For this translation of *aidōs* see W.H. RACE, *Pindar, Nemean Odes, Isthmian Odes, Fragments*, Cambridge MA 1997, 101 with note 3 on *aidōs*. For a different view of *aidōs* as a "sense of shame", see BRASWELL (note 14), 109.

(17) On the meaning of this line see BRASWELL (note 14), 107; BURY (note 14), 178; MEZGER, 118, RACE, *Pindar* (note 14), 84-85.

(18) Cf. also *Pyth.* 8.92 where Pindar again praises people whose "thought (μέμνηνα) is superior to wealth."

(19) Translations are from the following (in chronological order): Sir J. SANDYS, *The Odes of Pindar*, Cambridge, MA 1915; G.S. CONWAY, *The Odes of Pindar*, London 1972, F.J. NISSEICH, *Pindar's Victory Songs*, Baltimore 1980; RACE (note 16); BRASWELL (note 14).

(CONWAY, 218); “with hearts above the lure of gain” (NISETICH, 278); “souls superior to possessions” (RACE, 101, BRASWELL, 21). We see *psychai* translated as “souls” and “hearts”. Both translations point to the broad meaning of *psychē* in this passage. Here *psychē* includes important traits of personality. This reference to *psychē* suggests the judgement that the citizens of Aitna have and also their feelings about wealth. It suggests also aspects of will in that they choose to spend their wealth in order to achieve glory <sup>(20)</sup>.

*Psychē* occurs in *Nemean* 9 also at line 39. It appears in a gnomic statement:

37                    παῦροι δὲ βουλευῆσαι φόνου  
                       παρποδίου νεφέλαν  
                       τρέψαι ποπὶ δυσμενέων ἀνδρῶν στίχας  
 39                    χερσὶ καὶ ψυχῇ δυνατοί.

Few people are powerful to counsel how, with hands and *psychē*, to turn the cloud of carnage at their feet towards the ranks of the enemy.

In these lines again we encounter a broad use of *psychē*. It functions as a seat of courage that allows daring in fighting. It is connected also with “counselling” that apparently permits some form of calm behaviour either before or during a battle. In the expression “with hands and *psychē*”, it appears that *psychē* stands for the whole personality of the person. We find a similar expression in Simonides 542.2: “for a man to be truly good, fashioned without fault in hands, feet and *noos*, four-square, is difficult.” <sup>(21)</sup> In this poem *noos* appears to be the location of someone’s moral character. In *Nemean* 9 *psychē* likewise sums up the psychological aspects of a person: intellect, emotion, and will. <sup>(22)</sup>

Various translations of *psychē* in line 39 have been given: <sup>(23)</sup> “with hand and soul” (SANDYS, 409); “with heart and hand” (LATTIMORE, 122); “strength of hand or heart” (CONWAY, 218); “presence of mind and strength” (NISETICH, 278); “with hands and soul” (RACE, 103; BRASWELL, 23).

We encounter here for *psychē* “soul”, “heart”, and “mind”. All three translations suggest the range of meaning of the term in this passage. *Psychē* is associated with intellectual, emotional, and volitional activity. Its function within allows a person to be successful in battle.

In *Nemean* 9.32 and 39 we find two mentions of *psychē*. An overview of how this term is used in earlier and contemporary poets allows us to appreciate its meaning in this ode of Pindar. In both passages *psychē* functions far differently than it did in Homer. There it was primarily the shade of the dead.

(20) BRASWELL (note 14), 107 notes the connection here of *psychē* with “will”.

(21) On this poem see my article, “A Study of the Psychic Term *Noos* in the Greek Lyric Poets (excluding Pindar and Bacchylides)”, *Emerita* 57 (1989), 151-152.

(22) BRASWELL (note 14), 107 suggests that intellectual aspects of *psychē* are prominent in line 39.

(23) See references in note 19.

In the living person we heard of it only when dead was pending. In this ode of Pindar, in contrast, *psychē* functions in the living person as an important seat of traits of character. At 32 it is associated with good judgement, generosity, and noble endeavour. At 39 it is connected with courage and intelligence in fighting. The psychic term *psychē*, therefore, has a rich range of meaning in *Nemean* 9.