Pindar's Third Olympian Ode, under a Voegelinian Lens

The third Olympian ode of the Greek poet Pindar celebrates a victory in the chariot race at the Olympic games of 476 BC by one Theron, tyrant or dictator of Acragas (modern Agrigento) in southern Sicily .

The text of the ode in Greek is that of the Snell and Maehler's Teubner edition of 1980, with a few changes in punctuation (listed following the text).

After the text, I have provided a transcription, not phonetically exact, but close enough to give the reader an idea of how the poem sounds.

After the transcription, comes a translation given in lines accordingly to the lines of the original, as far as possible. It aspires only to being a useful trot.

Text

A

Τυνδαρίδαις τε φιλοξείνοις ἁδεῖν καλλιπλοκάμῳ θ' Ἑλένᾳ

κλεινὰν Ἀκράγαντα γεραίρων εὔχομαι,

Θήρωνος Ὀλυμπιονίκαν ὕμνον ὀρθώσαις, ἀκαμαντοπόδων

ἵππων ἄωτον. Μοῖσα δ' οὕτω ποι παρέστα μοι νεοσίγαλον εὑρόντι τρόπον

Δωρίῳ φωνὰν ἐναρμόξαι πεδίλῳ

ἀγλαόκωμον · ἐπεὶ χαίταισι μὲν ζευχθέντες ἔπι στέφανοι

πράσσοντί με τοῦτο θεόδματον χρέος,

φόρμιγγά τε ποικιλόγαρυν καὶ βοὰν αὐλῶν ἐπέων τε θέσιν

Αἰνησιδάμου παιδὶ συμμεῖξαι πρεπόντως, ἅ τε Πίσα με γεγωνεῖν, τᾶς ἄπο

θεόμοροι νίσοντ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους ἀοιδαί,

ᾧ τινι κραίνων ἐφετμὰς Ἡρακλέος προτέρας

ἀτρεκὴς Ἑλλανοδίκας γλεφάρων Αἰτωλὸς ἀνὴρ ὑψόθεν

ἀμφὶ κόμαισι βάλῃ γλαυκόχροα κόσμον ἐλαίας, τάν ποτε

Ἴστρου ἀπὸ σκιαρᾶν παγᾶν ἔνεικεν Ἀμφιτρυωνιάδας,

μνᾶμα τῶν Οὐλυμπίᾳ κάλλιστον ἀέθλων,

Δᾶμον Ὑπερβορέων πείσαις Ἀπόλλωνος θεράποντα λὸγῳ.

πιστὰ φρονέων Διὸς αἴτει πανδόκῳ

ἄλσει σκιαρόν τε φύτευμα ξυνὸν ἀνθρώποις στέφανόν τ' ἀρετᾶν.

ἤδη γὰρ αὐτῷ, πατρὶ μὲν βωμῶν ἁγισθέντων, διχόμηνις ὅλον χρυσάρματος

ἑσπέρας ὀφθαλμὸν ἀντέφλεξε Μήνα,

καὶ μεγάλων ἀέθλων ἁγνὰν κρίσιν καὶ πενταετηρίδ' ἁμᾶ

θῆκε ζαθέοις ἐπὶ κρημνοῖς Ἀλφεοῦ ·

ἀλλ' οὐ καλὰ δένδρε' ἔθαλλεν χῶρος ἐν βάσσαις Κρονίου Πέλοπος.

Τούτων ἔδοξεν γυμνὸς αὐτῷ κᾶπος ὀξείαις ὑπακουέμεν αὐγαῖς ἀελίου.

Δὴ τότ' ἐς γαῖαν πορεύεν θυμὸς ὥρμα

Ἰστρίαν νιν · ἔνθα Λατοῦς ἱπποσόα θυγάτηρ

δέξατ' ἐλθόντ' Ἀρκαδίας ἀπὸ δειρᾶν καὶ πολυγνάπτων μυχῶν,

εὖτέ νιν ἀγγελίαις Εὐρυσθέος ἔντυ' ἀνάγκα πατρόθεν

χρυσόκερων ἔλαφον θήλειαν ἄξονθ', ἅν ποτε Ταϋγέτα

ἀντιθεῖσ' Ὀρθωσίας ἔγραψεν ἱεράν.

Γ

τὰν μεθέπων ἴδε καὶ κείναν χθόνα πνοιαῖς ὄπιθεν Βορέα

ψυχροῦ · τόθι δένδρεα θάμβαινε σταθείς,

τῶν νιν γλυκὺς ἵμερος ἔσχεν δωδεκάγναπτον περὶ τέρμα δρόμου

ἵππων φυτεῦσαι. Καί νυν ἐς ταύταν ἑορτὰν ἵλαος ἀντιθέοισιν νίσεται

σὺν βαθυζώνοιο διδύμοις παισὶ Λήδας.

τοῖς γὰρ ἐπέτραπεν Οὐλυμπόνδ' ἰὼν θαητὸν ἀγῶνα νέμειν

ἀνδρῶν τ' ἀρετᾶς πέρι καὶ ῥιμφαρμάτου

διφρηλασίας. Ἐμὲ δ' ὧν πᾳ θυμὸς ὀτρύνει φάμεν Ἐμμενίδαις

Θήρωνί τ' ἐλθεῖν κῦδος εὐίππων διδόντων Τυνδαριδᾶν, ὅτι πλείσταισι βροτῶν

ξεινίαις αὐτοὺς ἐποίχονται τραπέζαις,

εὐσεβεῖ γνώμᾳ φυλάσσοντες μακάρων τελετάς.

εἰ δ' ἀρίστευει μὲν ὕδωρ, κτεάνων δὲ χρυσὸς αἰδοιέστατος,

νῦν δὲ πρὸς ἐσχατιὰν Θήρων ἀρεταῖσιν ἱκάνων ἅπτεται

οἴκοθεν Ἡρακλέος σταλᾶν, τὸ πόρσω δ' ἐστὶ σοφοῖς ἄβατον

κἀσόφοις, οὔ νιν διώξω · κεινὸς εἴη

The pointing of the text above differs from the Teubner as follows:

λὸγῳ (line 16) comma instead of colon

σταθείς (line 32) comma instead of full stop.

σταλᾶν (line 44) common instead of full stop.

κἀσόφοις (line 45) common instead of full stop.

Transcription:

A

Tydaridais te filoxeinois hadein calliplocamoi th' *Helenai*

cleinan *Acraganta* geraion euchomai

Theronos Olympionican hymnon orthosais, acamantopodon

hippon aoton. Moisa d'houto poi paresta moi neosigalon heuronti tropon

Dorioi fonan enarmoxai pediloiaglaocomon, epei chaitaisi men zeuchthentes epi stephanoi

prassonti me touto theodmaton chreos,

forminga te poicilogaryn cai boan aulon epeon te thesin

Ainesidamou paidi symmeixai prepontos, ha te *Pisa* me gegonein, tas apo

Theomoroi nisant' ep' anthropois aoidai

hoi tini crainon efetmas *Heracleos* proteras

atreces Hellanodikas glefaron *Aitolos* aner hypsothen

amphi comaisi balei glaucochroa cosmon elaias, tan pote

Istrou apo sciaran pagan eneiken *Amphitryoniadas*,

mnama ton *Oulympiai* calliston aethlon.

B

damon *Hyperboreon* peisais *Apollonos* theraponta logoi,

pista phroneon *Dios* aitei pandoko:i

alsei sciaron te phyteuma Xynon anthropois stephanon t'aretan.

Ede gar autoi patri men bomon hagisthenton, dichomenis holon chrysarmatos

hesperas ophthalmon antephlexe Mena,

kai megalon aethon hagnan crisin cai pentaeterid' hama

theke zatheois epi cremnois Alpheou,

all' ou cala dendre' ethallen choros en bassais Croniou *Pelepos*.

Touton edoxen gymnos autoi capos oxeiais hypacouemen augais aeliou.

De: tot' es gaian poreuen thymos horma

Istrian nin, entha *Latous* hipposoa thygater

Dexat' elthont' Arcadias apo deiran kai polygnapton mychon,

eute nin angeliais *Eurytheos* entu' ananca patrothen

chrysoceron elaphon theleian axonth', han pote *Taugeta*

Antitheis' *Orthosias* egrapsen hieran.

C

Tan methepon ide kai keinan khthona pnoiais opithen *Borea*

psychrou, tothi dendrea thanbaine statheis,

ton vin glycus himeros eschen dodecagnapton peri terma dromou

Hhppon phyteusai. Kai nun es tautan heortan hilaos antitheoisin nisetai

Syn bathyzonoio didymois paisi *Ledas*,

tois gar epetrapen Oulympond' ion theton agona nemein

andron t'aretas peri cai rhimpharmatou

diphrelasias. Eme d'on pai thymos otrynei phamen *Emmendidais*

Theoni t'elthein cydos euippon didonton *Tyndariadan*, hoti pleistaisi broton

xeiniais autous epoichontai trapezais,

eusebei gnomai phylassontes makaron teletas.

Ei d'aristeuei hydor, cteanon de chysos aidoiestatos,

nun de pros eschatian *Theron* arestaisin hikanon hapetai

oicathen *Heracleos* stalan, to porso d'esti sophois abaton

c'asophois, ou nin dioxo--keinos eie.

Translation:

A

That I please the hospitable Tydaridai and Helen of the lovely hair,

while honouring famous Acragas, that is my boast

when I had set up for Theron an Olympic hymn, for untiring-footed horses

the flower. I say, therefore, that the Muse stood by me, as I found out a bright new way to set the voice of shining celebration to Doric modes:

since crowns binding locks

moved me to pay this task from God

(to blend) the manyvoiced lyre, the voice of pipes and words in place

As befits the son of Ainesidamous and Pisa told me to lift my voice, Pisa from where divinely destined songs visit men

to whatever man, in obedience to good-old laws of Heracles,

the Aitolian, the strict Hellenic umpire, throws from above

around his locks the grey-blue ornament of the olive, which once

th' Amphitriades brought from the Ister's shady springs

the finest souvenir man may have from contests at Olympia

B

when he had persuaded, with speech, the servant of Apollo, the tribe of Hyperboreans.

With honest heart, he begs for God's all-welcoming grove

that plant which is for mankind common shade and crown for excellence

for already the altars had been consecrated to the Father, and in her golden chariot

The midmonth Moon with golden chariot at dusk opened to her whole round eye

And he had fixed for mighty trials a holy judgement

along with its four years festival beside the sacred banks of the River Alph

but the grove, sacred to Pelops, did not yet bloom with beautiful trees in the glens below the hill of Chronos.

The grove naked of such trees seemed helpless to the sun's full glare

Yes, to the land then his heart drove him

to Istria , where Leto's horse-driving daughter

had welcomed him as he arrived from the hills and much-winding valleys of Acadia when as Erytheus directed and his father compelled

drove him to chase the golden hind which Tayegeta

had once dedicated to Orthosia.

C

Pursuing her, he saw, yes, that land beyond the blasts of the cold north wind

and there he stood and wondered at those trees.

For which a sweet desired seized him to plant those trees along the twelve-lap turn

Of the racetrack. And now too he graciously visits this festival

along with the godlike twin sons of Leda

for he entrusted to them, when he rose to Olympus the governance of the wonderful contest

about virtues of men and the driving of swift

chariots. And my spirit moves me to say that to Emmenidai

and to Theron, glory comes as the gift of these good horsemen because more than other men

they [Theron and his clan] host them with hospitable feast

and they guard the rites of the blessed ones with pious insight.

If water is a noble thing, but gold is the most lordly of possessions

and now Theron, reaching the farthest point in virtue

from where he began grasps the pillars of Heracles and what's beyond neither wise men

nor fools may walk, I will not further chase the point I would be a fool.

Introduction

What I have to say here is toward payment of a double debt to the late Dr. Elroy Bundy of the University of California at Berkeley .

It was from Dr. Bundy, in the mid seventies, that I first received a better understanding into the nature of the works of Pindar--Dr. Bundy had, in fact, worked a kind of counterrevolution in the reputation of this poet--and I have been reading Pindar, off and on, for nearly thirty years.

It was also Dr. Bundy who introduced me to the works of Eric Voegelin, whom I had known before only from references in that louche publication *National Review*. On Dr. Bundy's advice, I began reading *Order and History*, and here we are.

These two authors, Voegelin and Pindar, each in his area, worked in me an intellectual conversion, one in my expectations of what poetry should be, and one in my expectation of philosophy. In such a case a natural desire rises to bring them together.

In this essay, therefore, I mean to look at Pindar through a "Voegelinian lens." I will use as my instance the poet's third Olympian ode, because it is fairly short, and its themes of time, distance and mortality are particularly resonant. The approach from the Voegelinian side will be through the concept of "symbolic expression of the concrete experience of reality."

Good enough so far. "So be it," says the hesitating reader, "and fall on." Yet the matter here is not as obvious as we might like, especially if we also want to proceed with method, and before we ask the question, it is often useful to understand the question.

Whenever we set out to "apply X to Y," (for example, a magnifying lens to a postage stamp) we need to be clear on a few points.

Firstly, what *is* X, in itself, in its essence? Likewise with Y. This may be obvious.

Secondly, and a more difficult issue: what is the nature of the application?

Beyond that, hides the most important crux: why are you doing it?

Is the eye of intent fixed chiefly on one term or the other? Are you, for example, glorifying X by means of Y, or vice versa? Or is the *application* the point, as it might be if one were teaching carpentry?

Or, as in this case, is the final end something past the elements and their relations, as the final end of a chair is neither wood nor shape nor the carpenter's art but ease in sitting?

Of course, any or all of these motives may be present at the same time, but it seems to me that one motive must be primary, and that motive is the one that specifies the object, as it

distinguishes one picture of a soup can as an instance of a kind of advertisment and another as a work of art.

If we are not clear on this we may end up trying to do two things at once, to our ruinous confusion.

Our object in this essay here goes back to a talk I gave several years ago in San Francisco . In that talk (unpublished. but included here as appendix A,) I argued two points.

Firstly, that the final end of poetry, as an art, leaving aside the end of any particular poem, is to present reality generally, and in particular poems particular realities,--a rose, the beloved's face, a catastrophic quarrel among military leaders-- so as to lead the auditor by induction, as opposed to explicit argument, which belongs to rhetoric, to sense, understand and affirm that Reality as a whole, or the bit of it addressed by a particular poem, is luminous for a transcendent ground.

Philosophy of course works to the same end, but its terms are explicit and conceptual, that is, abstract, and its method is argument. Poetry presses less forcefully. It holds up its subject matter and lets the listener make up her own mind. Still, there is no quarrel. If philosophy demonstrates that the universe is, so to speak, haunted, then to remind us of the fact in this or that case, is the over-all task of poetry.

Secondly, that the great philosopher whom these meetings honour was, considered from one angle, the most poetic philosopher of the twentieth century. That is a large claim, and we will have to come back to the point.

In this paper, and following from these arguments, I mean to bring Voegelin to bear on a recognized poet, and one of particular importance; to try out these claims in a particular instance.

It comes down to two questions:

First, do the insights ofVoegelin show us qualities in Pindar's third Olympian ode which we would otherwise neglect?

Secondly, do these qualities, taken together, reflect a notion of poetry as having at its core the revelation of transcendent qualities in the subject matter of the poem?

Pindar and the Epinicean

Pindar is the guest here, and needs an a longer introduction.

The poet was born in Boetia in 518 B.C. into a distinguished clan, and died around 438 B.C. Of his many works in many genres, we have fragments, but nearly the whole of four books of epinicean odes.

These epinicean odes are the libretti of elaborate musical compositions, performed during celebratory festivals to honour this or that victor in the major Greek athletic games.

The music has been lost.

The texts are written in a quantitative meter (see appendix B) elaborate and flexible [1].

The diction, that is, the words used considered as a subset of all possible words, is an artificial idiom, a complex mixture of epic, Doric and Aeolian forms. How it appeared to the intended audience it is difficult to know. It seems to have been a special occasion language; it was emphatically not colloquial.

The syntax is elaborate and formal: those reading this who have untangled Horace will understand.

The purpose of a given ode, its final end, is to praise the victor of the moment, and everything works towards that end. The poem is occasional and public.

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1 [1] The leading authority on this dry and fascinating topic is Dr. Morris West. (see bibliography).

What is actually said usually includes an invocation to the gods, the victor's name, often stated both directly and indirectly, (2 [2]) his parentage, clan and city. The event celebrated, this or that chariot race, this or that boxing match, is mentioned, but not usually described. There is much wise advice, phrased to reflect credit on the addressee.

Most strikingly, at the centre of each ode is usually extended narration, often rather allusive, of some myth or legend that bears on the present occasion, often rather obliquely. Our example in the third Olympian is in fact more straight forward than most.

This sounds very foreign, but it is not so far from what we have all met: anyone who has attended a wedding reception has heard this sort of speech from the best man. The bride is named, the groom is named and the parents are mentioned, there is often praise for marriage as an institution, sometimes even religion is brought in. Almost always there is an lengthy attempt at an amusing anecdote .

The only rule, and its obedience separates a good speech from a failure, or worse, is *say nothing unless to the credit of the newlyweds*.

Sometimes such speeches ramble, but at a wedding it is no great matter: the mind of the audience is with the speaker, and they understand his point. In fact, oblique references may add to the speech, in that they flatter the audience.

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2 [2] See Watkins.

Pindar, too, rambles, or seems to: the order of his thoughts, is often, at first glance, bewildering, and most introductions to Pindar speak, with justice, of abrupt transitions, surprising metaphors and unexplained turns of thought. So in our own ode, we move rapidly from the Tyndaridai to crowns to Heracles and olive trees and then back to the Tyndaridai.

This has affected Pindar's reputation.

When the occasion of these odes had long past, and the society that provided the occasion had vanished, and societies do vanish,

> Cities and towns and powers
>
> Stand in time's eye
>
> Almost as long as the flowers
>
> Which daily die [3] [3]

what remained clear was the poet's rapidity and grandeur, founded on meter and elevated language. His sequence of thought, why he said the things he said in the way he said them, was no longer obvious.

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[3] [3] Kipling.

Yet everyone agreed that he was a great poet.

Clearly, then he spoke by divine impulse and Pindar became the type of the absolute inspirationalist, a sort of Shelley in a chiton. This became the consensus on our poet and so he appears to Horace and so he appears in English literature.

In 1962, Dr. Bundy launched the counter-revolution I have mentioned. He agreed with everyone that Pindar was a great poet. Yet even so, he argued, Pindar was sane.

It was Dr. Bundy's general thesis that the nominal purpose of the ode was, in fact, the purpose of the ode, that is, **ainen agathon**--praise the good, the particular good being, of course, the person who had commissioned the ode.

Following from this, he argued as a secondary thesis that the poems were in fact *designed*. He analyzed the poems as constructed from an elaborate set of rhetorical commonplaces rather as a Meccano model is generated from its parts. Chiefly among these was the "priamel" (Am I going to say this? Or that? No! I'm going to talk about X) and the "foil" (where you speak of one thing as an introduction and contrast to the real subject--" Jefferson was a great man, and Washington was the father of his country, but *Lincoln*). We will not here go into the details; the point to hold on to is that Pindar, however much he may have been inspired, worked with the deliberation of an engineer or Bach.

Again, *quid ad nos*?

Pindar is a fine poet in himself, and it is to our good that we should see him as he is, as far as possible. But beyond that, Pindar is the first lyric poet in the western tradition of whom we have more than shards. It is important, therefore to understand that we have as a founding father of the western lyric tradition someone rather different than we would expect amn to have someone of this sort, deliberate, rational, ethically responsible, and discrete at the baseline of our most prestigious art, (and, as Plato points out, music is intimate with law) when our current consensus is that poetry ought to be inspirational, personal, antinomian, and lewd, is a embarassment--it is not surprising that Bundy's work caused mild disquiet[4] [4] .

Voegelin [5] [5]

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4 [4] "Of course, Bundy's theories, like those of Gunkel's, have received criticism from those who dislike the idea of the great Theban poet as a creator of 'conventional' poems." Colwell, p. 63. "scholars who followed Bundy have greatly improved terminology and have expanded his rather spare description of the setting of the ode." Cowell, p. 65.

5 [5] The summary and interpretation of what Voegelin has said that follows in this paper, rises first out of the author's gradual "digestion" of reading over many years, and only secondarily from cited sources. It is one of the characteristics of Voegelin's work, in my experience, that to cut into the fabric at any point leads one with threads that stretch back through the whole of his writing. More than of other writers it is true that a sample gives one a true taste of the whole.

In what I have said in this essay, my source is the remarkable essay "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," p.115 to 133 in volume 12 of the collected works.

The theme of my essay, which is largely an attempt to get close to the Third Olympian Ode by seriously considering the experiences, as far as we can know them, that went into its creation may be said to be a reflection of the following from "Equivalences":

The language of "equivalence," thus, implies the theoretical insight that not the symbols themselves but *the constrants of engendering experience* are the true subject matter of our studies."(p1.15). [Italics added.]

The lesson I take from this might be put "if you want to understand Homer, look carefully around you, because what was going on then, is, within limits, going on now."

Later in the Voegelin's essay, one page 120, he lists some basic "propositions" (which he later qualifies) on reality. These propositions seem to me to be a basis for the formulation we haved used in our essay "the symbolic expression of concrete experience of reality." To wit

that "Man participates in the process of reality".

What ever the nature of what is going on, we share that nature.

That "Man is conscious of reality as a process, of himself as being part of reality, and of his consciousness as a mode of participation in its process."

And we know it.

That "While consciously participating, man is able to engender symbols which express his experience of reality, of himself as the experiencing agent, and of this conscious experiencing as the actions and passion of participating."

That we answer our situation with symbols

That "Man knows the symbols engendered to be part of the reality they symbolize--the symbols "consciousness," "experience," and "symbolization" denote the area where the process of reality becomes luminous to itself."

That our symbols are as provisional as reality.

As we all know, what Voegelin wrote is often difficult, although it is the difficulty of subtility combined with a relentless pressure towards precision. Moreover, he wrote a great deal, over a long time, and his focus and his concepts changed.

But beyond this, :Voegelin is the least dogmatic philosopher of the twentieth century, indeed, the most anti-dogmatic philosopher of our period, and it is this same virtue that makes him such a shining model to our greasy times, that also makes him hard to apply to particular cases.

Were we Hegelians, or Marxists, things would be simpler: We could cite this or that text as dogma, and legitimately, since it was meant as dogma, (inconsistences, for example between an early text and a later text, being explained as incomprehension).

But Voegelin affords no shorter catechism. The whole bend of his thought works against extracting "propositions" that might serve as handy proof texts.

But, alas, in this world we do not intuit, we proceed *ratione* from proposition to proposition, from point to point, like a riverboat. How then to go ahead, if not at enormous length and with a cloud of qualification?

The key is to keep in mind that an avoidance of dogma is not a dogma.

There is nothing improper in using propositions if we remember that all propositions share in the nature of metaphor, in that they are true as to what they include, false in what they exclude, and not to be pressed unreasonably. They are heuristic tools. If we keep this in mind, nothing prevents us from summarizing this or that aspect of our author, as long as, and only as long as, we do keep in mind that qualifying provisionality.

With that qualification, what I offer on here is a view of Voegelin, that bears on what we may call his "poetic core."

"Poetic," not "poetry." Voegelin writes prose, and fairly stiff prose too, and the task of prose is the explicit transmission of truth. It is instrumental and consumable. This has the odd consequence that the authors from whom one has learned most are often the ones one reads least frequently: once you have learned the algebra, the text goes back on the shelf.

Nevertheless, there is a case to be made that the Voegelinian universe is poetic, in that its intelligibility is the intelligibility of poetic thought.

The idea at the centre of focus in this view of Voegelin is the concept of the **metaxy**, the in-between-ness that pervades all that we do and are.

In this in-between situation, we operate between an upper and lower limit, below us an unsettling nothingness, above us a dimly sensed intelligibility towards which all that we see seems to stretch, and which seems to be beyond our grasp.

We are pulled both ways, and what we say and do is a response and articulation, true but qualified, to how things are. Unless we keep the why and where of what we say in mind, what we say may be fundamentally misconstrued.

Our words and our deeds, our poems and our cities, then, have the nature of a symbolic expression of the concrete experience of reality. This experience will be vertical, between chaos and what we may call transcendence, and horizonal, taking in the community of men and society.

This provisionality is at the core of the Voegelinian universe, and it is this same quality, the sense that what we experience is true, but in a limited way that points beyond itself, that we have put at the heart of poetry.

In short, the Voegelinian universe is poetic object: it is made and it is mysterious.

<u>The Third Olympian. Its structure:</u>

Let us consider then, the third Olympian as a

Symbolic expression of the concrete experience of reality.

We will first of all direct our attention to each of the terms, and ask what each term draws our attention to in the poem.

This means asking what we know of the man who wrote this poem, then the reality that he faced, then the symbolic expression itself.

Secondly, we will consider the terms together.

First, however, we should briefly look at the structure of the poem itself.

If we assume that the poem is a designed artifact, how are we to describe it?

Voegelin gives us, I believe, a valuable piece of advice in one of his letters to Dr. R. Heilman:

"...the terminology of the intepretation, if not identical with the language of symbols of the source...must not be introduced from the "outside," but be developed in closest contact with the source itself for the purpose of differentiating the meanings that are apparent in the work, but too compactly symbolized as that the symbols would be used in the discursive form of rational analysis." [page 151, letter 63]

I interpret this as advising us not to use methods of analysis that the author, in our case Pindar, would have found alien or unintelligible.

Now the elaborate rhetorical machinery that Bundy described seems to me to have the flavour of a more technical age than Pindar's. Also, as Virgil noted, it is difficult to filch the club of Hercules.

Let us in this case, in the interest of experiment, use an old tool, the "divide and paraphrase" method. This is the approach used by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *In Psalmos*, and it has several advantages:

First, the simple division of parts and sub-parts flows out of artifice itself.

Secondly, the method can be flexible in degree. (During the preparation for this essay, as an experiment, I took this method of division down to a clause by clause level (the results came to about twenty pages) and can testify that it can lead to suprising insights.

In what follows, I have added some exegesis after each of the major sections.

We may say, then, that the poet divides this ode into **three parts**.

The **second part** begins where the poet says **Pista phroneon** (line 17).

The **third part** begins where the poets says **Tan methepon** (line 31).

In the **first part**, the poet speaks of the Tyndaridai, that is, Castor and Pollux, also known as the diascouri--the putative father of the heroes was Tyndareus-- of the victory of Theron, and then of the Olympic crown.

In the **second part**, the poet speaks of how Heracles obtained the olive tree from whose leaves Olympic crowns were woven.

In the **third part**, the poet speaks of both Heracles and the Tyndaridai as at the festival which occasioned the ode and applies these points to the case of Theron.

The **first part** is divided into two *sections.*

The *second section* begins where the poet says **Mousa d'outo** (line 4).

In the *first section*, the poet claims to have pleased the Tyndaridai on the occasion of celebrating the Olympic victory of Theron, in as much as the ode also praises of Acragas, the city of Theron .

In the *second section*, the poet draws inferences from what he has said, and in saying this, he says two things.

Firstly, he says that to please the Tyndaridai proves that the Muse helped him in composing the ode.

Secondly, he says that this help was proper, in as much as he acted from a holy duty and he says this beginning with the words **epei chaitais** (line 6). And he says that this duty had two sources.

The first source is the Olympic victory at issue, referred to here by metonomy as crowns **stephanoi** (line 6), and he says this in the words **epei****chreos** (line 6-7)

The second source is the glory of Olympia itself, referred to here as Pisa . It is this city, Pindar explains, where olive leaf crowns are given as prizes, according the rules set by Heracles himself, these crowns being taken from a tree brought by Heracles from the springs of the Danube, or Ister, and given by the Hyperborean people, moved by persuasion. This crown is the signal memory a man may take from Olympia .

Comment:

The victory of 476, is also celebrated in the second Olympian ode, a longer and more elaborate production. Because the third Olympian begins with a invocation to the Tyndaridai , who are at best peripheral to the Olympic games, the scholiasts state the third Olympian was performed at festival called the Theoxenia (a "welcoming of the gods," here the Tyndaridai) and is not, technically, an Olympian ode at all.

What seems to be happening is that an event nominally dedicated to one purpose is being more or less highjacked for another, as a politician might use the occasion of a graduation speech to announce a new direction in policy. Here, a festival nominally in honour of the Diascouri has been co-opted (who was going to object?) to the honour of Theron.

The **second part** of the ode, is divided into *two sections*

The *second section* begins with the words **de pot'** (line 25).

In the *first section*, the poet explains the cause of this action by Heracles, namely that the Olympic games had been established, but the grounds needed shade.

In the *second section*, the poet says that it was this lack which moved Heracles to re-visit the Hyperboreans where he had seen the olive tree previously at the end of his famous hunt for the golden hind (which rose out of his own situation and an incident between Zeus and the nymph Taygeta.)

Comment:

This passage has been a mine of enjoyable debate on several points: what was the nature of the beast Heracles pursued; did he make two trips to the Hyperboreans or only one and who was Orthosia (likely a name for Artemis) and so on.

For our purposes, we can notice the step by step movement of the narrative back in time, first to the founding of the Olympic games, then to Heracles and the golden hind, and farther still, and alluded to only briefly, the incident that marked the hind as sacred.

Note particularly, that the movement into the past has two branches.[6] [6]

The first involves Taygeta, a nymph (and a remote ancestor of Theron) who was pursued by Zeus and escaped by transforming herself into a doe and who, on her restoration to her own form, by the agency of Artemis, dedicated the golden hind to Artemis.

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[6] Kohnken describes this as "[illegible].a device well known from Homer[illegible]from a given point the author unravels a present state of affairs until he gets to the ultimate causes, and then moves forward again step by step." Kohenken, p. 52.

The second involves Heracles, who pursued the hind by order of his brother Erytheus. That Heracles had to obey his brother was the command of Zeus, his father. The compulsion in turn was a punishment for a crime that Hera, Zeus' ill-treated and vengeful wife, had driven Heracles to commit, in vengeance for Zeus' adultery.

On both sides, therefore, the narrative, then, goes back to Zeus. The duty of chasing the hind becomes a sacred task. This movement goes back to the deepest roots of the whole story, and may be seen as a mythological "search for the ground" .

The **third part** of the ode is divided into *four sections*.

The *second section* begins **Kai nun es tautan** (line 34).

The *third section* begins **Eme d'on pai** (line 38).

The *fourth section* begins **Ei d'aristeuei** (line 42)

In the first section, the poet says that it was while chasing the golden hind that Heracles first saw the olive tree, and that it was these olive trees that Heracles desired to plant around the Olympic race track.

In the second section, the poet argues that Heracles is present at the festival now in progress; the reason he is present at *this* festival is because he turned management of the Olympic chariot race over to the Tyndaridai when he ascended to Olympus .

In the third section, the poet attributes the success of Theron and his clan to the Tyndaridae.

Toward this, he points out first that the Emmenidai support the cultus of the Tyndaridai lavishly, and he says this beginning **oti pleistaisi** (line 39) and secondly that the Emmenidai are outstanding for their obedience in performing divine rites, and he says this beginning **eusebei gnomai** (line 41).

In the fourth section, the poet says that Theron has now reached the farthest point of glory allowable to man, and, things being as they are, to say more would be pointless so he will stop and he does so.

Comment:

The first section sums up the myth and returns us to the time of the founding of the Olympic games.

The second section takes us ahead into the present, and argues for Heracles' presence at the festival now in progess, through a connection between Heracles and the Tyndaridai.

The third section moves from the Tyndaridai, as the subjects of the current festival, to their relevance to Theron.

The fourth section concludes the ode with a flourish. It is a single elaborate periodic sentence, appropriate for a climax, arranged as a conditional argument with three protases ("if" clauses) and an apodosis (a "then" clause), followed by another, shorter conditional with its protasis implied. The skeleton of the sense is: now if X is so, and Y is so, then I will do Z, (since to do otherwise) would make me a fool. This sentence is a little complicated, but worth going through step by step.

ha *If,* [protasis] although water is noble, gold is the best thing you can ve.

> This amounts to universal affirmation that one element in a series can be outstandingly superior to another, although both are good. The line echoes the first lines of the first Olympian.

and *if* [protasis] [in the field of human endeavour] Theron has reached the limiting point of human achievement **[illegible]** having, as it were touched the pillars of Heracles;

> Heracles reappears, again as at the end of a long voyage.

and *if* [protasis] both to men with understanding **sofois** (line 44) (perhaps with particular reference to poets) and to those who without insight, **k'asofois** (line 45), going further is in fact forbidden

abaton (line 44) is where you shouldn't or can't go.

therefore, [Apodosis] the poet will not chase the matter further

nin (line 45) may be understood as both "the subject" or Theon himself.

[Because] [implied protasis] [if I were to do so]

[then] [apodosis] I would be making myself a fool --**keinos** (line 45).

The climax of the poem touches the highest point of praise. Note that the fact of Theron's merit is assumed, tucked away in an If-clause.

<u>The Third Olympian as a Symbolic Expression of Concrete Experience of Reality</u>.

The Man

Particular poems, and there are no other kind, articulate the experience of particular men. This is a truism, but it is often given a sort of formal acknowledgement and then quietly ignored.

It is one of the merits of EV's approach to poetics that the personality of the author must be integrated into the poem itself.

It very often happens, of course, that the life and times of the author are not known at all. But in these cases, we cannot merely go on to the next point, rather we should recognize that our engagement with the poem is necessarily incomplete, and this should set a limit to our expectations.

In most cases, the deficiency is not a great loss.

In this case, however, an ode written for a specific time and place, and to please a certain group, and to please one man above all, the circumstances are not only relevant but material. Here, if there is little we know, then we must know that we start with limited expectations.

We need the nicest balance.

Pindar the man is long gone. We do not know his personality, his temper, his exact age, his marital status or whether he was literate. To pretend otherwise is dangerous.

But, on the other hand, we do not know *nothing* about him, and if we allow ourselves to fall into into the heresy of positivism and accept nothing outside the text, like a proper new critic, we may lose valid insights.

The essential point is to be clear on the sort of answers we are willing to accept. We will not get anything that would pass on a grand jury. But that does not preclude truth. On the other hand, we do not want to act like novelists.

There is a middle road, however. If we ask only for reasonably probabilities as answers, and acknowledge them as such, I believe we can reach truth without falling into fantasy and strike a path beween G. A. Henty and A.J. Ayer.

How is this possible? Pindar is gone, but we have all met people who are of the same type.

Consider the following.

We know that Pindar was a man from an aristocratic background, trained in a traditional poetic art.

A man from a strong family background, and who belongs to a demanding trade may be expected to live in the tension between two loyalties--those of his class and those of his profession. The more established the family background, and the narrower and more absorbing the profession, the sharper the tension is likely to be.

In Pindar's case, the formal social differences were sharper than our own, when the government has assumed so many duties and obediences once proper to kin, and we may reasonably guess that the weight of tradition pressed harder on people of that day than it does on us, as our great grandfathers felt it more sharply a hundred years ago.

Novelty was not then the official social and cultural default.

Both of these points are reflected in this ode and explain qualities surprising to our own time.

First, the tone of the ode is neither sycophantic nor revolutionary.

Pindar writes from within the circle of the people-who-run-things, the right sort of people, *our crowd*. No formal aristocracy of this sort has existed in Anglo North America for a long time--but we understand, or can put ourselves into the mind of a man in a situation where it is to whom you are related and who you know that largely decide how you will get along. And yet we know too, in a class of peers, wherever it occurs, membership cuts both ways. It demands loyalty but discourages brazen grovelling. The Big Man, in this case Theron, is a reality as *primus*, but only (everyone agrees) *inter pares*, and this must be maintained by all concerned, at least formally.

Without law, only a myth of equality protects the members from tyranny. Arrogance on the part of the ruler is a signal of hubris and an invitation to proactive conspiracy.

Such a dynamic presents a delicate problem for a poet. He must praise the good, yet too lavish praise invites first envy and then nemesis.

Those who come to this ode, therefore, with memories of Soviet poetry of the thirties, may note with surprise that **there is no direct praise of Theron**--direct, that is in the "all hail the glorious helmsman of the people" style familiar to us from the last century.

The Olympian victory is mentioned obliquely in line 3, as something already accomplished. Further, that the first mention of Theron **Theronos** (line 3) is in the oblique case. In line 9, the victory is mentioned by his patronymic **ainesidamou paidi** a nd in the conclusion of the ode, Theron is mentioned first as a member of his clan, **Emmenidais // Theroni t' (line 38-39)** and again in the oblique case. The direct name is delayed until line 43. The effective praise at this point is indeed couched high, (he has reached the pillars of Heracles in virtue) but, as I mentioned earlier, syntactically, the praise is set into a conditional sentence, as a premise, not a conclusion. In fact it is assumed, not asserted. (this is one of the best ways to assert something outrageous as it by-passes argument) The conclusion is "I can't say any more and to say any more would be stupid, so I'll stop &#65533;"

As for Pindar the professional bard, again, there are things we would like to know, and cannot, for example to what extent did Pindar belong to a "professional guild?" The recitors of Homer were a distinct group. What about lyric poets? Was he paid, and if so openly and by agreement, or was the honorarium expected?

However Pindar managed his accounts, he was practicing a traditional art. Both of these terms "traditional' and "art," have consequences that affect our appreciation of the poem.

"Traditional" implies both history and obedience in the sense that what one writes today is modelled, more or less freely, on what was done in the past.

Further, the poet expected to obey the canons of the art he had received, and to be praised for doing so, and the audience more or less understood and appreciated the same canons.

The consequence is that we ought not to fall into considering this poem as if it were a "stand-alone" instance. It is as much a member of a species as it is an individual, and it may be more so. This is not so strange: film enthusiasts will desire first of all a particular kind of film, something *noir* for example, and only after that demand something new within the genre. The third Olympian is only understood fully as one of a long line in the species, and the species is as important as the instance. Unless the pressure of the species is recognized, we will misevaluate the poem itself.

Further, an art is an art by being a mediation between science and common sense. A traditional art is an art received, and an art received, whether poetry or French cooking, is an art that can be taught, and nothing can be taught unless it is to a strong degree rational. If inspiration were all, there would be nothing to teach, and no possibility of an art. We cannot expect non-reason here, as we might in a modern poem, where it is meant to symbolize freedom from frozen patterns of thought. The poet is speaking on behalf of how things are.

Reality

As we do, Pindar faced man, including himself, society, gods and nature. His world is our world, almost, and it is the almost that we need to keep in mind.

If we hope to experience the third Olympian as closely as we can to the way that Pindar intended, on each of these points, we need to make an adjustment in our expectations.

About the physical world, the realm of flowers and sharp stones, there is of course little new to say. The world it is the old world yet. Still, two points are worth remembering.

One, it was a radically uncertain world. When we face nature and lose, the unspoken assumption is that the fault is on our part. We are supposed to be the masters.

Secondly that it was a world of distances, with twenty miles a day on foot a solid accomplishment. I have heard that this was still the state of things in the time of Washington , and there may be some reading this who remember when a trip to the west coast was not done in an afternoon.

This must be remembered if the pathos of distance in the third Olympian, as it appears in the journey of Heracles and the symbolic journey of Theron, is to have its full value. By the way, we

should remember that this travel was at ground level. **Polygnapton muxon** (line 27) hints at the reality of being lost in a maze of hills without a map.

Over these distances was spread a patchy quilt of human society.

Here again, we need balance. If we give our imagination loose rein, we may imagine ourselves beside Pindar in a brightly lit island of Greek society surrounded on all side by zones of increasing barbarism and darkness. In reality, we may suspect that the world was reasonably well known on a practical level. There were Greeks in Spain , there were Greeks in India , and probably more than a few in China . Trade had been going on ito northern Europe for centuries, and it seems likely that Theron, and Pindar, had a rough idea of what was going on along the Danube .

But few people had this knowledge, it was unsystematic and it was subject only to limited verification. It was, in short, a muddle, and no one thought it could be otherwise (or would be otherwise in the future).

This bears on our poem, for such a world allows for both business and fantasy. The parts we need to know about, we know sufficiently well. But who knows what is in the unmapped areas?

This is not our world. The wiser youngsters of today know that King Solomon's mines are a fiction; they have surveyed the ground on Google. I suspect H. Ryder Haggard knew this as well (even without Google) and so did most of his readership. But in his day there was enough

unknown ground to give the fiction a slight flavour of plausibility, which is all a good writer needs.

For the physical fabric of society, the walls and streets, cups and saucers of Greek society, we ask archeology, and the classical historians give us the the outlines of history. The topicalities of Theron's court are unknown. But we are not entirely ignorant either. What we reasonably guess about Theron, we know from men in similar positions, those who hold power in a community, and especially those whose power is based on cunning, force and personality, rather than constitutionality. They turn up in parliaments and library staff-rooms. Some are carefully affable, others not so. Many are touchy and untrusting: They love praise, but are wary of those offering it. Often they are cynical or disillusioned and angry.

Every society feels the pressure of the past. The cultural memory of the Greeks extended back about a thousand years; their horizon of formal documentation was considerable closer. Five hundred years takes us back to 1506, a period that is tolerably well documented (Christopher Columbus died that year). Five hundred years recession from 476 BC takes one to 976 BC and the realm of legend. For the purposes of the third Olympian, then, we may suspect reasonably that Greek legends pressed much more immediately on the present than our own do on our society. If someone among us said the parliamentary committee system had been established by King Arthur, we would probably not accept this. In the Greek context, it would have been as good or better than any other account. The legends of Heracles press strongly on the occasion. Heracles establishes and guards the Olympic laws by which Theron has won an authentic victory. His presence is felt now, through the medium of the Tyndaridai, and he is the model for the epic virtues of Theron.

But not only does the past press on us, so does the future, and our view of the future largely shapes how we assess the present and interpret the past, as a young woman looking forward to

her wedding will see the event prefigured in her memories of high school. The future of a nation or a city is undetermined, although one end may be more likely than another. The future of a man, and this is a poem focused on a man, has in it one sure thing. The weight of this fact on the poem cannot be totally discounted. We do not know if Theron, who died about four years after this victory, already had death in his face. There is no explicit *momento mori*. But Heracles had been a mortal man, (although his father was Zeus) who had been translated to heaven, and of the two Tyndaridai, one was wholly mortal, yet shared in the immortality of his brother. If we see these heroes as in part models of immortality, this is not to read into the poem things that are not there, but it is to understand the factual conditions on which the poem rests and to which the poem responds. We can ignore this. But if we do not factor it into our understanding, then the effort to read Pindar, and it is an effort, is not being rewarded, and we are cheating ourselves.

Again, Pindar found himself in a world of gods, and a world of rites, although not in a world of religion.

Among Greek poets, Pindar is known for his piety, and the skeptism that was eroding the schema of the classical Greek gods is not much in evidence in his poems.

Yet official piety does not preclude mysteries, especially if they are the reserved for the right sort of people. The Second Olympian ode contains a a famous passage on the underworld and the presence of mystery cults in Sicily seems probable. This may be reflected in the end of the third Olympian.

Again, in trying to judge the reality of religion in Pindar's time, as part of the whole reality whose response is the poem at hand, we need to adjust for bias.

First, we must allow for the renaissance, which established the classical gods as a machinery for rhetoric and moralizing. No one is afraid of Zeus, now.

Secondly, we divide state from temple because we have come to recognize and assimilate the radical division between all that is created and its Cause. For Pindar, on the other hand, the gods were civic; the state was holy. In fact all four aspects of reality, man, society, gods and nature were co-substantial. In our poem, the field of influences is equally united. Theron participates in divinity through his public roles and the Tyndaridai are as much civic as divine.

The adjustment is simple, but for us difficult: we have to take the gods seriously. If we cannot, we have to remember we cannot.

Symbolism

We have defined the Voegelinian approach as a "Symbolic response to the concrete experience of reality", but "Symbolic" is a word with many sides, and what Pindar meant by it may not accord totally with our usage.

What a man experiences can be shared to a large degree with other men; our answer to these experiences rises out of our minds, and the mind, as it is the area of greatest freedom, is the area of greatest variation, and allows the opportunity for the subtlest misunderstandings.

Voegelin's concept of compactness is our thread through these ambiguities, yet this notion of compactness--that a symbol may be meaningful on several levels without being an amalgamation of ideas or an ambiguity, is for us in certain regards difficult for our society has been many generations in the Lyceum, and we are dyed in the wool conceptualists.

For us, to think is to analyze. On this basis, given a poetic image, our impulse is to map it to a concept ⇒ Heracles is heroic virtue--or, if we are more explicit, Heracles is an instantiation of heroic virtue, the olive tree is mapped to the concept "victory," the hind stands for this or that.

If we decide that an image (or symbol or figure) has several possible "values", we declare it to be *polyvalent,* a wonderful word and a great comfort.

It may be pointed out that we have symbols that seem compact--flags come to mind. What is the meaning of a flag? Certainly, it has many meanings, few of them explicit, but at the foundation it is designed as a signal with legal import.

For truly compact symbols in our own society we must refer to things that are first of all themselves, and after that meaningful. Great women and men, places where dreadful events have occurred, are symbols, without explicit meanings, yet they are not ambiguous. Their meaning is rather pre-conceptual. They are luminous realities.

A symbol that is ambiguous is ambiguous because it may signal one or more of several distinct concepts. But a symbol that is compact, is not a bundle of concepts like rods, it is a reality

charged with a significance. Particular significance depends on the particular circumstances because each person establishes an understanding that is based on the relationship between him and the object.

It is in this way, I would like to suggest, that we should understand the symbols of the third Olympian.

Such a use of symbols used in this way offers advantages

They are vivid, being real, and nothing is more mysterious than clarity.

They are discrete, in as far as the point of a symbol may be left to the insight of the audience. This avoids the unliberal exactness that puts the audience in *statu pupilari*.

Further, the effort of understanding also serves to draw the audience into participation of the act of performance, which is the foundation for a successful entertainment.

Yet how does one use such symbols with deliberation? We need ideas and concepts to think at all, for thought is the viewpoint that allows us to scan all possibilities together. And certainly, Pindar seems to be in command of his material, as our structural analysis evidences, and this suggests rational deliberation.

It is at this point that I must to crawl to the end of a long branch .

I do not think that these symbols, strictly speaking, were "used" by Pindar at all, at least not instrumentally.

Rather, they are there because they are possibilities in the situation of the poem as a whole, that is, the celebration of Theron's victory.

I have called these symbols luminous realities, and so they are, but they are not there primarily as luminous realities, like pepper in stew. They are there because they are part of the luminosity of the poem itself. They reveal the luminosity of the poem.

This is not the way we do things today.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, and perhaps as far back as Poe, what the strongest poets, such as Mallarm&#xfffd; and Pound, have been after is to evoke an emotion and the choice of imagery is determined by that end.

As so often happens, what begins in the avant-garde is taken up by the advertising agency.

We have all seen on television some fast montage of emotionally charged images--usually there are children, parents, puppies, and sometimes benign older adults, and while we still have our

hearts in our throats comes a touching slogan and the name of an insurance company, and on to the program.

It is done this way because, done with skill, it is a very powerful technique--it by-passes reason and thus alsol morality, the daughter of reason (both impede the impulse to buy) --but it is not the technique of Pindar.

Heracles and the Hyperboreans are in the third Olympian because they are part of the ongoing business at hand. Pindar acted at the service of these images, not as their master, but with the freedom of an agent, not that of a slave, and his usage was governed by the occasion, good manners, and the facts of the case, mentioned or omitted as seemed reasonable. The poem has numinosity because the facts of the case are numinous, and because the poem is a response to a numinous occasion, a formal celebration of a victory whose roots run back into the divine, through the victor himself, by way of his ancestory, and through the establishment of the Olympic games by Heracles.

The Voegelinian lens

In the past pages, we have looked, briefly, at the four areas to whichVoegelin directs our attention: man, society, nature, the gods, that comprise reality, and to the nature of the symbolism which replies to and articulates that reality, even as it becomes part of it, and we have asked what consideration of these brings to our attention when applied to the third Olympian.

Beyond this, however, it is the central insight of Voegelin that these elements form a unity.

What the Voegelinian "lens" picks up that other instruments ignore is that in understanding this poem we must keep all of these aspects in mind and at the same time, because each of them is decisive in determining the substance of the poem.

The poem may not be divorced from its author, and we must be clear in our own minds what we can affirm as fact and what we can affirm as likelihood.

The poem may not be understood without acknowledging the pressure of its encompassing reality and the role that reality plays in the substance of the poem. To a vital degree the times and circumstances create any poem and to an outstanding degree in an occasional poem such as the third Olympian. The third Olympian is an occasional poem is nothing anyone denies. But neither is it usually front and centre to our understanding. Yet it is not an interesting fact that 'deepens" our knowledge, but the frame we need to understand it at all. We cannot say "yes, yes" and go on from there.

To understand the third Olympian, we must read into it all the factors that created it.

We must remember that politics come into the heart of why the poem is as it is, as Louis XIV is decisive in making Racine Racine.

Likewise, we need to take the gods seriously, or recognize the gap in interpretation, if we cannot.

The poem cannot be understood unless we approach the mind of the poet, at least in part. We cannot do this entirely, or expect to. We will forever be in the position of a foreigner who does not 'get' the jokes of the nationals. But we should not forget the fact either. Otherwise we will mistake a photograph for reality.

Finally, as there are symbols within the poem, so the poem itself exists as a symbolic response and an artifact. It can be interpreted, but interpretation is only one aspect of its being: we need to address it, as well, as a substance and it seems to me that if we want to get as close as possible to this poem, we must try to get as close as we can to the physicality of the text. We may have to learn Greek and sound out the meter and try thinking in Greek, a piquant experience, especially for speakers of English.

If we work to the third Olympian along this approach, we will find something that is new to us and rather strange.

We find, first of all, a poem written from the affirmative stance, that is a point of view that on the whole accepts the cosmos, and the range of human society, and likes the fact that they exist. . This alone is enough to distinguish it from most modern poetry.

More than that, we find a poem that is a a radically metaxic. Into the poem run lines of tension from politics, religion and time, and the poem is a mediation of opposite pulls in each of these fields.

There is an opposition of Theron and the city he governs, visible in the turning of a theoxenic festival to Theron's political purposes.

There is a tension between the formal cult, and the hints of mystery.

There is an opposition between the deep past of legend, and the looming future.

As a mediation of these tensions, I believe that the third Olympian ode qualifies as a true poem by the definition we promoted at the start of this paper. It deals with reality. It brings out the transcendent aspects of that reality. It brings these out by presenting those parts of the reality with transcendent or luminous qualities, not by arguing dogma, that is, itt brings that luminosity to the audience by inference.

What the Voegelinian lens brings us to, therefore, is a recognition of this ode as a true poem.

Epilogue

No-one can give laws to the Muse, but, if the third Olympian is an example of true poetry, I would like to hazard some possible implications for poetic composition.

It is dangerous to lose hold of particulars.

If a poem is a meditation on reality, and reality comes to us first of all in concrete particulars--this time, this place, these events and not those, the farther we move in what we say from the circumstances, the thinner the ice.

If you want to put Little Giddings on poetic trial then, if I cannot be reasonably expected to know all about Little Giddings you had better tell me, unless you address only your desk drawer.

Don't forget your reader.

The reality which the poem addresses includes those who are to hear or read the poem.

Pindar had a patron and the patron had, no doubt, guests. The poet was not writing for the ages, but he wrote well, and the ages were kind to him. Our own case, where a man or woman in a study writes for someone else, whom the he or she does not know, and does not expect to know, is more difficult. But the least we can do is to try to assist the reading and to please while doing it.

What pleases? What pleased then: Vividness, intelligibility, ethical soundness.

Vividness, by careful pointing and depiction of the reality we are dealing with.

Intelligibility, in that we provide insight as a reward for the reader's diligence.

Ethical soundness, in that the author does not take a moral position that militates against the good which the author and his reader are assumed to share.

Keep it moving.

The poem needs something to move the reader through the act of reading, or hearing the poem at a reasonable pace, preventing stalls and boredom.

This rises out of the particular nature of a poem, which is, as we have said, an artifact (like a chair) but an artifact that is an action, meant to be taken in sequence from the first point to the last, and with each part "disappearing" as the next part comes into being. The poem on the page is a truth, but a partial truth, and one that tends to deceive.

Popular authors are praised for being "page turners." It is a praise we should not deprecate. Those who do not provide simple pleasures, as Chesterton remarks somewhere, are unlikely to provide any others as well. There may be a variety of ways to do this, but I suspect the first and best is meter. Only meter, and as strong as may be, connects the audience to the text physically.

Beware Chaos.

The poem is a symbolic response; it is also a made thing. Some principle of construction, a formality of a sort appropriate for the artifact's purpose, has to be present.

This has at least two consequences.

First: You cannot safely describe or evoke chaos, whether spiritual or historical, by a chaos in what you write.

Second: the farther your principle of organization, assuming you have one, is from the easy apprehension of your reader, the more danger you are in of losing the reader, for whom you are labouring.

Don't sermonize.

Prose, as Valery pointed out, is meant to convey understanding and then be discarded, as an engineer no long needs his elementary texts. Good poetry keeps its own shape, because its message is carried by the object as a whole. It's existence is its most important message. Where possible, avoid preaching.

If roses, doves, or secret gardens come into the poem, let them be there as actors in argument, as Heracles contributes to the argument in the third Olympian.

Don't sell what you haven't got.

This is in the nature of a personal comment.

The thesis I have been promoting through this essay is that the subject of poetry as a whole is the "'strangeness", or, if you will, the "luminosity" of the universe as a whole, and the message of any particular poem, as a poem, leaving aside the intent of the discourse within the poem, is the strangeness of some particular slice of that general reality.

If it is conveyed properly, the reader, a rational creature by nature, will not lose the reality about which you are versifying, but see it in a brighter and richer sense. If you are very, very good, the hair may stand up on the back of his neck.

But it must be remembered, first, last, and all the way through, that what we are after is illumination, not the frisson..

We do not exist in the compact and unreflexively charged world of Pindar. The differentiation of philosophy has occurred and has set us in a larger horizon. If we go back to the world of myth, we go back as tourists, with a return fare in our pockets. Nevertheless, why the world exists, and why it is as it is, are questions that press on us as on the Greeks.

But, if we do not happen to find the universe luminously numinous, perhaps it is wiser not write poetry suggesting that it is, on the hope that such a procedure will evoke poetic emotion. That is

the tao of sophistry and advertising, and it does not accord with personal honour, respect for the muse, or the spirit of charity that is our sole valid excuse for writing poetry or anything else whatsoever.

Appendix A:

THE POETIC CORE OF ERIC VOEGELIN

What use might Voegelin be to poets, and vice versa?

It is a difficult question. Voegelin is a subtle author and poetry is difficult even to define. Moreover, poetry and politics are apt to arouse extraordinary rancor.

What follows, therefore, is suggestion, not dogma, certainly not ideology.

The simplest tack, of course, might be to write poetry on Voegelinian themes, rather as Lucretius did for Epicurus. One might compose an ode on the Metaxy or a sonnet sequence on the failings of Martin Luther.

This would be a very bad idea.

Sermons in verse are deadly to write, and worse to read.

Also, by the consensus of our society (not something to be ignored lightly), we communicate information in prose and mathematics, not poetic numbers. And finally, and most importantly, such an approach would only bear on the subject of this or that poem, not on poetry as a whole.

How then to find a deeper connection?

Memory, like a sieve, not only discards but selects. From what I had read of Voegelin, five themes, stood out in my memory: transcendence, response, tension, symbolism, and luminosity.

These terms are not items of information but indices to experience [7] [7] . Further, none of them may be correctly understood without the others. There is no response without transcendence, no tension without response, no symbolism without the recognition of tension.

The experience to which this nest of terms points is familiar. John, Mary, Socrates, confront a universe and recognize themselves as individuals and the universe as a mystery. They articulate the experience with language symbols, such as "mystery," "zetesis," "tension," and "myth." The language symbols thus created are liable to various deformations.

A similar pattern occurs, I believe, when we compose and read poetic imagery.

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[7] [7] "The truth of symbols is not informative; it is evocative...Their meaning can be said to be understood only if they have evoked in the listener or the reader the corresponding moment of participatory consciousness." Eric Voegelin, "Wisdom and magic of the extreme," Published Essays 1966-1985 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1990), p. 344.

A very simple example:

O, my Luve is like a red, red rose[8] [8]

Consider this line from a Voegelinian point of view.

The poet speaks in response to an unsettling and mysterious reality, in this case, the lady in question. Anyone who has taken up a new field of study, whether another person, the Latin Language, or the income tax code, knows that it is only at this point that one learns how far one stands from the new object of passion.

Burns articulates the experience by the creation of two poles. The woman becomes the "Luve" and the poet by implication, the lover.

Note that these terms are understood as provisional and partial. No one believes or is expected to believe that the parties involved are defined by such language.

[8] [8] Robert Burns, "A Red, Red Rose," l.1

The tension between these poles, between the mystery and the respondent, is bridged with the image of the rose.

So far, so good.

But the line cannot work by itself.

To communicate truth, it needs, firstly, the rest of the poem (which we will not go into), and secondly, from the reader, a balanced response.

If the poet is lucky, the reader will understand the line for what it is; that is, in its formal capacity, as an element of an entire poem, and as an example of a large class of imagery: and the reader will also understand it for what it is not; for example, a doctoral thesis. The reader, if the poet is lucky, will use this line as a help to understanding the poet's reality, and thus, as far as that reality may match the reader's experience, his or her own situation.

Often, of course, the poet is not lucky.

The poet's writing may be simply clumsy. The author may misjudge the audience, as in the example quoted by D.L. Sayers[9] [9] :

[9] [9] Dorothy L. Sayers, The Mind of the Maker (London: Methuen, 1941), p.144

The [something] torrent, leaping in the air,

left the astounded river's bottom bare;

More sinister errors arise from the audience's side.

A valid image may become a cliche through overuse. No "I see what you mean," is evoked from the audience. Many of our most familiar political terms, such as "democracy," "fascism," and "human rights," have suffered this fate.

Very often, in political and philosophic language, a cliche ossifies into dogma. There is not much danger to Burn's line, unless we were to debate learnedly whether, as a rose, the beloved should be pruned or covered with compost. But the dogmatization of poetic language in the Bible, and in other scriptures, is still with us.

Worse, we may mistake the poetic process itself.

Someone may assert, perhaps someone has, that Burns did not, could not, concern himself with the woman he speaks of in her own reality. On this view, no one operates except from appetite; our image is therefore an instrument of seduction, or domination (he is reducing her to a plant!). In this case, the lady is understood as real only as reflection of the poet himself. She has, in fact, been immanitized.

Even worse would be to adopt the error as a tool. This takes us into the realm of verbal magic, sophistic rhetoric, and advertising.

Is this similarity in pattern accidental?

I believe not. Rather, I would like to suggest, with great diffidence, that Voegelin and metaphor, (and metaphor is the heart of poetry) may work from a similar deep principle.

Whatever else a poem is, it is an artifact, like a chair. It is, further, an artifact made of words. It has to be made, and made of words to be a poem. This has necessary consequences.

Like a chair, a poem is meant to maintain its own shape and form. In this it differs from prose, whose words, as Valry notes[10] [10], are meant to be dissolved into understanding; or bread whose point is to perish into nourishment.

A poem's purpose therefore, whatever that purpose is, is in its form and not its elements. If the purpose cannot be inherent in all its elements, it cannot be in any single element.

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[10] [10] "Poetry can be recognized by this remarkable fact, which could serve as its definition: it tends to reproduce itself in its own form, it stimulates our minds to reconstruct it as it is." Paul Valry The Art of Poetry (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 209. Originally said in 1939.

The purpose of a poem, while it does concern the subject material (whether a lady or the foundation of Rome) cannot be limited to that subject material. Like a chair, a poem is designed to fit an exterior end.

Further, since words are necessary then whatever words are meant to do must be taken into that final poetic purpose.

The base purpose of words is communication of truth, of some sort, about reality, in some aspect.

Thus, if a poem is all it should be, then whatever the subject material of the particular poem in question, the message of that poem is an unspoken truth about that particular subject material.

Further, since poetry is one as a genus, it ought to have a generic message.

I submit that the only message that transcends all subjects in this way, and yet is true in every particular subject is the message of transcendence itself. I have to conclude, with hesitation, that the message of poetry, as a genus, is that reality as a whole and every part of it, is charged with significance beyond itself.

Whatever is, is strange.

Now here is the point of this neo-scholastic rambling. The same attitude to reality, the poetic core, as it were, works, I suggest, in the vision of Eric Voegelin.

In the Voegelinian universe, we operate between an upper and lower limit. Below us is an unsettling sense that we are not quite as real as we would like to be. We have names for this fearsome possibility, such as death.

Above us, described in the two famous questions of Leibnitz, is a horizon of mystery.

In the altogether tense middle ground we describe as life and reality, our political and philosophical terms are responses, true but qualified, to our situation, and are meant to be understood as such.

Clearly, Voegelin is not composing poetry. He works in prose and that prose aims to formulate insight as explicitly as words will allow[11] [11] . But his central insight is that the phenomena of politics and philosophy are poetic, that is, symbolic, potentially luminous for transcendence, and working by persuasion.

This insight is, I believe, part of Voegelin's essential flavour. It may explain why he appeals so intensely to a limited audience, and is so widely and thoroughly ignored. That the universe may

[11] [11] Prose, like a magic circle, cuts a subject from the web of its connections, in order to reduce it to an object, and subject it to the concentration of our will.

mean more than itself, that it has a symbolic, not to say sacramental core, is a most disquieting thought.

What does this say for politics and political science?

Poetry, according to our consensus, is personal, private, allusive, and non-judgemental (in a nice way). Politics is, or ought to be, realistic, that is, founded on money or force majeur. Actually, as Chesterton pointed out years ago[12] [12], a politics founded on money or force is almost wildly un-realistic. He is quite right, it is unrealistic, and it is unrealistic because it is unpoetic. It is unpoetic because it has been made so. The great theme of the History of Political Ideas is the more-or-less deliberate "thinning" of the poetic, that is, the transcendent, dimension from our civic affairs. The unspoken theme of Order and History is the re-discovery of this dimension.

What can Voegelin do for the poets? In our society, for the most part, we keep poetry and politics apart. Many poets are rabid partisans (usually on the left), but little is written on the political process itself. The Muse, it seems, is not interested in the committee meeting or the sewer bill.

Voegelin's insight, and his decades of acute analysis, restore the whole range of politics as an object of poetic contemplation. It may provide a road to authentic public poetry. After all, if the universe is mysterious, so is everything in it. The luminosity that shines through our great

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[12] [12] "There is something we all know, which can only be rendered, in an appropriate language, as realpolitik. As a matter of fact, its is an almost insanely unreal politik. it is always stubbornly and stupidly repeating that men fight for material ends, without every reflecting for a moment that material ends are hardly ever material to the men who fight." G.K. Chesterton The Everlasting Man (New York: Image Books, 1955), p. 140.

political symbols-- Rome , Jerusalem , Tienamin , Washington --continues through the whole fabric, down to the county clerk's office.

Clearly, we are not looking for propaganda. The job of poets is to communicate wonder, not state policy. We do not need any more late Horatian odes.

However, if we remember the insights of Eric Voegelin in this matter, we will remember too, and bear more closely in mind, Plato's insight[13] [13] that the state is the best of dramas, and it may be that in doing so, both in politics and poetry we will do all right.

[13] [13] Plato, Laws 817b.

Appendix B: The Meter of the Third Olympian

Greek meter is quantitative, that is, based on distinguishing syllables by the time that they take in pronunciation. Our classic English meters, on the other hand, are based on stress.

Vowels in Greek were either long or short. This is distinction that applies to how long the vowel was sustained.

In English we distinguish vowels by quality. For example, we contrast the "a" of "fat" with the "long a" of "father." If we were to pronounce "fat" with a drawl, it would count as a variation in pronunciation of the same vowel.

The Greeks, on the other hand, would contrasted the vowel of "fat" (counting it as short) with the more sustained vowel sound of "Jazz, " and each of these counts as a different vowel.

A syllable is counted as "long" if it is "open" (that is, not concluded with a consonant) and contains a "long" vowel, or if the syllable is closed, and followed by another consonant..

For an authoritative treatment see W.L. West's *Greek Meter*, a book of awesome learning.

The lines of Pindar's odes, with a few exceptions, are arranged in a triadic pattern.

The strophe is a metrical pattern extended over a number of lines, each pattern being unique to the individual poem. There are several species of meter; that of the third Olympian being called the dactyloepitrite.

The meter is repeated, more or less exactly in the Antistrophe. English experience may be misleading here: it is not the case of one pentameter matched by another petameter, but the exact pattern, as a particular pentameter is realised. What we seem to have is syllable patterns arranged to fit a tune.

Then follows a separate group of lines, not necessarily the same number of lines, in a similar, but not identical meter, called The epode.

The strophe, the antistrophe and the epode comprise a triad, or system, in an A A B pattern, which we may think of as two stanzas and a chorus, and this is repeated from two to five times over the length of the poem.

Dactyloepitrite meters, are usually regarded as being made of combinations of dactyls (long-short-short), usually in sets of two together -- l s s l s s l --and epitrites (long-short-long-short or long-long-short-long). Between these units "bridge syllables" are scattered as the poet sees fit.

I find it simpler to analyse the results as combinations of dactylic units and choriambs (long-short-long long). In the schema below, I have underlined the units. Bridge syllables are left without underlining.

Strophe (and Antistrophe)

l s s l s s l l l s l l l s s l s s l

l l s s l s s l l l s l

l l s s l s s l l l s l l l s s l s s l

l l s l l l s l l l s l l l s s l s s l l l s l

l s l l l s l l l s l l

epode

l s l l l s l l l s s l s s l

l s l l l s s l s s l l l s l l l s l

l s s l s s l l l s s l s s l l l s l

l s s l s s l l l s s l s s l

l s l l l s l l l s l l

It seems likely that each syllable was given uniform time (as if one were to count steadily one-two-three-four) and the lengths of the syllables provided a resonant rhythm over this count. If the reader will set a waterglass of good crystal beside a less expensive glass and tap (gently) with a knifeblade on each in alternation, she may see how the better resonance of the crystal hangs in the ear for a little longer than that of its mate and establishes a rhythm.

The quantitative system is foreign to the English ear, as, it appears, it was to the Romans. It has some of the allure and unreachability of Garbo.

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