

WHY THE PYTHIA DOES NOT NOW GIVE ORACLES IN VERSE

BASILOCLES - PHILINUS. I.

5 THE SPEAKERS BASILOCLES, a citizen of Delphi. PHILINUS, a friend, perhaps also of Delphi.

Bas. "You have made it late in the evening, Philinus, by escorting your guest about amongst the dedicated things: I lost all patience in waiting for you both."

10 Phil. "Yes, Basilocles, we strolled along slowly – sowing words as we went, and forthwith 'reaping words with strife', that sprung up and emerged along our path, like the crop of the Dragon's Teeth, spiteful and contentious words."

Bas. "Will it then be necessary to ask one of those who were there at the time, or are you willing yourself to oblige us and repeat your conversation? and tell us who were the speakers?"

15 Phil. "That task, it seems, is mine, for you won't find the others easily; I saw most of them going up again to the Corcium and the Lycoreia, in company with the visitor."

Bas. "How fond our visitor is of seeing the sites, and how extravagantly fond of hearing stories!"

20 Phil. "Rather, fond of history, and willing to learn; and not so much to be admired for these two qualities, as for gentleness combined with elegance of manner, and then an incredulity and a fondness for disputation – the result of intelligence – with nothing in it ill-tempered or stubborn: so that after being a little while in his company you exclaim, 'The child of a good father!' [[Plato Republic 368a](#)] You are surely acquainted with Diogenianus, that best of men?"

25 Bas. "I have not seen him; but I have met many who greatly approve of his conversation and character, and say just the same things of him as you do of the youth. But what was the occasion of this discussion of yours?"

PHILINUS NARRATES THEIR CONVERSATION. II.

30 THE SPEAKERS PHILINUS

DIOGENIANUS, a young visitor from Pergamum, son of Diogenianus. THEON, a literary friend. SERAPION, Athenian poet. BOETHUS, a geometrician, nearly a converted Epicurean. TWO GUIDES to the Temple of Delphi.

35 Phil. "The guides were going through their regular spiel, paying no heed to our entreaties that they cut short their long stories and their reading of every single inscription, whatever its interest. The appearance and artistic merit of the statues did not so much attract the notice of the visitor, who had no doubt seen many fine things of the sort elsewhere. But he admired the color of the bronze, which was not like dirt nor like verdigris, but shone with a dark blue dye, so as to contribute considerably to the effect of the statues of the admirals (for there he had begun his

40 tour), standing as they did, sea-like in color, and truly men of the ocean deep. Was there, he asked, some special mode of alloying and preparing the bronze used by the ancient artificers, like the tempering of swords, on the loss of which skill, bronze was exempted from the uses of war? For we know," he continued, "that Corinthian

45 bronze acquired its beauty of color not through any art, but through accident, when a fire consumed a house containing a little gold and silver and a great quantity of bronze; all which being mixed and melted together; and the whole thing took its name from bronze, the preponderating metal."

50 Theon broke in: "We have heard a different story, with a bit of mischief in it. A Corinthian bronze-worker found a chest containing a hoard of gold. Fearing detection, he chipped it off little by little, quietly mixing the bits with bronze; the result was a marvellous blend, which he sold at a high price, as people were delighted with its color and beauty. However, the one story is as mythical as the other; what we may

55 suppose is that some method was known of mixing and preparing, much as now they alloy gold with silver, producing a peculiar and rare, and to my mind a sickly and pallid effect, a perversion with no beauty in it."

60 III. Diog. "What then has been the cause, do you think, of the color of these bronzes?"

Theon "Here is a case in which, of the first and primal elements of Nature – namely, Fire, Earth, Air Water – none comes near to, or has to do with, bronze, except only air: clearly then, air is the agent; from its constant presence and contact the bronze gets its exceptional quality, or perhaps

65 τουτί μὲν ᾗδη πρὶν Θεογνίῳ γεγονέναι
Thus much you knew before Theognis was,

as the comic poet has it. But what you want to learn, Diogenianus, is perhaps the nature of the air, and the property in virtue of which repeated contact has thus colored the bronze?" Diogenianus said that it was; "And I too," continued Theon; "my young friend, let us continue our quest together; and first, if you will agree, ask why olive oil produces a more copious rust on the metal than other liquids. It does not, of course, actually make the deposit, because it is pure and uncontaminated when applied."

Diog. "Certainly not; the real cause appears to me to be something different; the oil is fine, pure, and transparent, so the rust when it meets it is specially evident, whereas with other liquids rust becomes invisible."

Theon "Excellent, my young friend, that is prettily put. But consider also, if you please, the cause given by Aristotle."

Diog. "I do please. Aristotle says that rust, when it comes into contact with other liquids, passes invisibly through and is dispersed, because the particles are irregular and fine; whereas in dense oil it is held together and permanently condensed. If, then, we can come to some such hypothesis ourselves, we shall not be entirely at a loss for a spell to charm away this difficulty."

IV. We encouraged him and agreed, and Theon went on to say that the air of Delphi is thick and close of texture, with a tenseness caused by reflection from the hills and their resistance, but is also fine and biting, as seems to be proved by the facts of digestion of food. The tenuity allows it to enter bronze, and to scrape up from it much solid rust, which rust again is held up and compressed, because the density of the air does not allow it a passage through; but the deposit breaks out, because it is so copious, and takes on a bright rich hue at the surface. This we applauded, but the visitor remarked that either hypothesis was sufficient for the argument.

Diog. "The fineness will be found to be in contradiction to the density you speak of, but there is no necessity to assume it. The bronze, as it ages, exhales or throws off rust by its own inherent action; the density holds together and solidifies the rust, and makes it apparent because of its quantity."

Theon broke in, "What is to prevent the same thing being both fine and dense, as silks or fine linen stuffs, of which Homer says

καιροσέων δ' ὀθονῶν ἀπολείβεται ὑγρόν ἔλαιον,

And from the close-spun weft the trickling oil will fall, [[Od. 7.107](#): *] where he indicates the minute and delicate workmanship of the fabric by the fact that the oil would not remain, but trickled or glided off, the fineness at once and the density refusing it passage. And again, the scraping up of the rust is not the only purpose served by the tenuity of the air; it also makes the color itself pleasanter to the eye and brighter, mingling lustre with the azure of the blue."

V. Here there was an interval of silence; the guides were getting back to their routine speeches. A certain oracle given in verse was mentioned – I think it was one about the reign of Aegon the Argive – when Diogenianus observed that he had often been surprised at the badness and common quality of the verse in which oracles are delivered. yet the God is Choirmaster of the Muses, and eloquent language is no less his function than beauty of ode for tune, and he should have a voice far above that of Homer and Hesiod in verse. And yet we have the greater part of the oracles a tissue of bad taste, both in diction and in metre. Then Serapion the poet of Athens, said

Serap. "Then do we really believe that these verses are the God's, yet venture to say that they fall behind Homer and Hesiod in beauty? Shall we not rather take them as the best and most beautiful in poetry, and revise our judgement of them, as prejudiced by familiarity with a bad standard?"

At this point Boethus the geometer – you know him, already well on his way into the Epicurean camp – broke in.

Boeth. "Have you ever heard the story of Pauson the painter?"

Serap. "No, I have not."

Boeth. "Well, it's certainly worth hearing. It seems that he had contracted to paint a horse rolling, and not galloping. The buyer was indignant; so Pauson laughed and turned the canvas upside down, with the result that the lower parts became the upper, and there was the horse rolling, not galloping. So it is, Bion tells us, with certain syllogisms when converted. Thus some will tell us not that the oracles are quite beautiful because they are the God's, but that they are not the God's because they are bad! That point may be left unsettled. But that the verses used in the oracles are bad poetry," he continued, "is made clear also in your judgement, my dear Serapion, isn't it so? For you write poems which are severe and philosophical in

subject, but in force, grace, and diction are more like the work of Homer and Hesiod than like the utterances of the Pythia!"

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VI. *Serap.* "Yes, we are sick, Boethus, sick in ear, and sick in eye. Luxury and softness have accustomed us to think things beautiful as they are more sweet, and call them so. Soon we shall actually be finding fault with the Pythia because she does not speak with a more thrilling voice than Glauce the singing-girl, or use costly ointments, or put on purple robes to go down into the sanctuary, or burn on her censer cassia, mastic, and frankincense, rather than her own barley and bay leaves. Do you not see," he went on, "what grace the songs of Sappho have, how they charm and soothe the hearers, while the Sibyl 'with raving mouth,' as Heraclitus says, 'utters words with no laughter, no adornment, no perfumes,' yet makes her voice carry to ten thousand years, because of the God. And Pindar tells us that Cadmus heard from the God 'right music', not sweet music, or delicate music, or twittering music. What is passionless and pure gives no admission to pleasure; she was cast out in this very place, together with pain; and the most of her has dribbled away, it seems, into the ears of men."

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VII. When Serapion had done, Theon smiled.

Theon "Serapion has paid his usual tribute to his own proclivities, making capital out of the turn which the conversation had taken about pain and pleasure! But for us, Boethus, even if these verses are inferior to Homer, let us never suppose that the God has composed them; he only gives the initial impulse according to the capacity of each prophetess. Why, suppose the answers had to be written, not spoken. I do not think we should suppose that the letters were made by God, and find fault with the calligraphy as below royal standard. The strain is not the God's, but the woman's, and so with the voice and the phrasing and the metre; he only provides the fantasies, and puts light into her soul to illuminate the future; for that is what inspiration is. To put it plainly, there is no escaping you prophets of Epicurus – yes, you too, Boethus, are drifting that way – you blame those old prophetesses because they used bad poetry, and you also blame those of today because they use no poetry, and speak the first words which come, that they may not be assailed for delivering headless, hollow, crop-tailed lines."

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Diog. "Do not jest, in Heaven's name, no! but help us to solve the problem, which interests us all. There is no one who is not in search of a rational account of the fact that the oracle has ceased to use metre and poetry."

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Theon "But right now, my young friend, we seemed to be doing a shabby turn by the guides, keeping them from their proper duties. Suffer them first to do their office; afterwards we shall discuss in peace whatever you wish."

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VIII. Our round had now brought us in front of the statue of Hiero the tyrant. Most of the stories the foreign visitor knew well, but he good-naturedly lent his ear to them. But at last, when he heard that a certain bronze pillar given by Hiero, which had been standing upright, fell of its own accord on the very day when Hiero died at Syracuse, he showed surprise. I set myself to remember similar instances, such as the notable one of Hiero the Spartan, how before his death at Leuctra the eyes fell out of his statue, and the gold stars disappeared which Lysander had dedicated after the naval battle of Aegospotami. And then the stone statue of Lysander himself broke out into such a growth of weeds and grass that the face was hidden. At the time of the Athenian disaster in Syracuse, the golden berries kept dropping off from the palm trees, and crows chipped the shield on the figure of Pallas. Again, the crown of the Cnidians, which Philomelus, tyrant of Phocis, had given to Pharsalia the dancing girl, caused her death, as she was playing near the temple of Apollo in Metapontum, after she had removed from Greece into Italy: for young men made a rush for the crown and in their struggle with one another for the gold, they tore her limb from limb. Now Aristotle used to say that Homer is the only poet who made "words which stir, because of their energy." But I would say that there have been votive offerings sent here which have movement in a high degree, and help the God's foreknowledge to signify things; that none of them is void or without feeling, but all are full of Divinity.

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Boeth. "Very good! So it is not enough to shut the God into a mortal body once every month. We will also knead him into every morsel of stone and brass, to show that we do not choose to hold Fortune, or Spontaneity, a sufficient author of such occurrences."

Phil. "Then in your opinion," I said, "each of the occurrences looks like Fortune or Spontaneity; and it seems probable to you that the atoms glided forth, and were

200 dispersed, and swerved, not sooner and not later, but at the precise moment when each of the dedicators was to fare worse or better. Epicurus helps you now by what he said or wrote three hundred years ago; but the God, unless he take and shut himself up in all things, and be mingled with all, cannot, you think, initiate movement, or cause change of condition in anything which is."

205 IX. Such was my answer to Boethus, and to the same effect about the Sibyl and her utterances. For when we stood near the rock by the Council Chamber, on which the first Sibyl is said to have been seated on her arrival from Helicon, where she had been brought up by the Muses (though others says that she came from the Maleans, and was the daughter of Lamia the daughter of Poseidon), Serapion remembered the verses
210 in which she hymned herself; how she will never cease from prophesying, even after death, but will herself go round in the moon, being turned into what we call the "bright face", while her breath is mingled with the air and borne about in rumours and voices for ever and ever; and her body within the earth is transformed, so that
215 from it spring grass and weeds, the pasture of sacred cattle, which have in their inward parts all the colours, shapes and qualities by which men obtain forecasts of future things. Here Boethus made his derision still more evident. The foreign visitor observed that, although these things have a mythical appearance, yet the prophecies are attested by many uprootings and removals of Greek cities, inroads of barbarian hordes, and the overthrow of dynasties.

220 *Diog.* "These still recent troubles at Cumae and Dicæarchia, [1](#) were they not long ago foretold in the songs of the Sibyl; so that Time was only discharging his debts in the fires which have burst out of mountains, the boiling seas, the masses of burning rocks tossed aloft by the winds, the ruin of cities many and great, so that if you visit them in broad daylight you cannot get a clear idea of the site, the ground
225 being covered with confused ruins? It is hard to believe that such things have happened at all, let alone that they were predicted long ago – unless with divine assistance."

230 X. *Boeth.* "My good Sir; what does happen in Nature which is not Time paying his debts? Of all the strange, unexpected things, by land or sea, among cities and men, is there any which some one might not foretell, and then, after it has happened, find himself right? Yet this is hardly foretelling at all; it is telling, rather it is tossing or scattering words into the infinite, with no principle in them. They wander about, and sometimes Fortune meets them and falls in with them; but it is all chance.
235 It is one thing, I think, when what has been foretold happens, and quite another when what will happen is foretold. Any statement made about things then non-existent contains intrinsic error; it has no right to await the confirmation which comes from accident; nor is it any true proof of having foretold with knowledge that the thing happened after it was foretold; for Infinity will bring all things. No, the 'good
240 guesser', whom the proverb [2](#) has announced to be the best prophet, is like a man who hunts on the tail of the future, by the help of the plausible. These Sibyls and Bacises threw into the sea, that is, into time, without having any real clue, nouns and verbs about troubles and occurrences of every description. Some of these prophecies came about, but they were lies; and what is now pronounced is a lie like
245 them, even if, later on, it should happen to turn out true."

XI. When Boethus had finished, Serapion spoke.

250 *Serap.* "The case is quite fairly put by Boethus against prophecies so indefinitely worded as those he mentions, with no basis of circumstance: 'If victory has been foretold to a general, he has conquered; If the destruction of a city, it is overthrown.' But where not only the thing which is to happen is stated, but also the how, the when, after what event, with whose help, then it is not a guess at things which will perhaps be, but a clear prediction of things which will certainly be. Here are the lines with reference to the lameness of Agesilaus: [3](#)

255 Sure though thy feet, proud Sparta, have a care,
A lame king's reign may see thee trip – Beware!
Troubles unlooked for long shall vex thy shore,
And rolling Time his tide of carnage pour.

260 "And then again those about the island [4](#) which the sea threw up off Thera and Therasia, and upon the war between Philip and the Romans:
When Trojan race the victory shall win
From Punic foe, lo! wonders shall begin;
Unearthly fires from out the sea shall flash,
Whirlwinds toss stones aloft, and thunder crash,

265 An isle unnamed, unknown, shall stand upright,
 The weak shall beat the stronger in the fight.
 "What happened within a short time – that the Romans mastered the Carthaginians, and
 brought the war with Philip to a finish, that Philip met the Aetolians and Romans in
 battle and was defeated, and lastly, that an island rose out of the depths of the
 270 sea, with much fire and boiling waves – could not all be set down to chance and
 spontaneous occurrence. Why, the order emphasizes the foreknowledge, and so does the
 time predicted to the Romans, some five hundred years before the event, as that in
 which they were to be at war with all the races at once, which meant the war with the
 slaves after their revolt. In all this nothing is unascertainable, the story is not
 275 left in dim light to be groped out with reference to Fortune 'in Infinity', it gives
 many securities, and is open to trial, it points the road which the destined event is
 to tread. For I do not think that any one will say that the agreement with the
 details as foretold was accidental. Otherwise, what prevents some one else from
 saying that Epicurus did not write his *Leading Principles* for our use, Boethus, but
 280 that the letters fell together by chance and just spontaneously, and so the book was
 finished off?"

XII. While we were talking thus, we were moving forward. In the store-house of the
 Corinthians we were looking at the golden palm tree, the only remnant of their
 285 offerings, when the frogs and water-snakes embossed round the roots caused much
 surprise to Diogenianus, and for the matter of that, to us. For the palm tree is not,
 like many others, a marshy or water-loving plant, nor have frogs anything specially
 to do with the Corinthians. Thus they must be a symbolical or canting device of that
 city, just as the men of Selinus are said to have dedicated a golden plant of parsley
 290 (σέλινον), and those of Tenedos the axe, because of the crabs found round the place
 which they call Asterium, the only ones, it appears, with the brand of an axe on the
 shell. Yet the God himself is supposed to have a partiality for crows and swans and
 wolves and hawks, for anything rather than beasts like crabs. Serapion observed that
 the artist intended a veiled hint at the sun drawing his aliment and origin from
 295 exhalations out of moist plants, whether he had it from Homer,
 ἡέλιος δ' ἀπόρουσε λιπῶν περικαλλέα λίμνην
 Leaving the beauteous lake, the great sun scaled the brazen sky
 or whether he had seen the sun painted by the Egyptians as a new-born child seated on
 a lotus. I laughed:

300 *Phil.* "Where have you got to again, my good Sir, thrusting the Stoa in here, and
 quietly slipping into our discussion their 'Conflagrations' and 'Exhalations'?
 Thessalian women fetch the sun and the moon down to us, but you are assuming that
 they are first born and then watered out of earth and its waters. Plato dubbed man a
 'heavenly plant', 5 rearing himself up from a root on high, namely his head; but you
 305 laugh down Empedocles when he tells us how the sun, having been brought into being by
 reflection of heavenly light around the earth,
 ἀνταυγεῖν πρὸς Ὀλυμπόν ἀταρβήτοισι προσώποις
 Beams back upon Olympus undismayed!

Yet, on your own showing, the sun is a creature or plant of the marshes, naturalized
 310 by you in the country of frogs or water-snakes. However, all this may be reserved for
 the Stoics and their tragedies; here we have the incidental works of the artists, and
 let us examine them incidentally. In many respects they are clever people, but they
 have not in all cases avoided coldness and elaboration. Just as the man who designed
 Apollo with the cock in his hand meant to suggest the early morning hour when dawn is
 315 coming, so here the frogs may be taken for a symbol of the spring season when the sun
 begins to have power over the air and to break up winter; always supposing that, with
 you, we are to reckon Apollo and the sun one God, not two."

Serap. "What? do you not agree? do you hold the sun to be different from Apollo?"
Phil. "As different as the moon from the sun; only she does not hide the sun often or
 320 from all the world, whereas the sun has made, we may almost say, all the world
 ignorant of Apollo, diverting thought by sensation, to the apparition from the real."

XIII. Next Serapion asked the guide the real reason why they call the chamber not
 after Cypselus, the Dedicator, but after the Corinthians. When they were silent,
 325 being, as I privately believe, at a loss for reason, I laughed, and said "What can
 these men possibly know or remember, utterly dazed as they must be by our high
 celestial talk? Why, it was only just now that we heard them saying that, after the
 tyranny was overthrown, the Corinthians wished to inscribe the golden statue at Pisa,
 and also this treasure-house, with the name of the city. So the Delphians granted it
 330 as a right, and agreed; but the Corinthians passed a vote to exclude the Eleians, who

had shown jealousy of them, from the Isthmian meetings, and from that time to this there has been no competitor from Elis. The murder of the Molionidæ by Hercules near Cleonæ has nothing to do with the exclusion of the Eleians, though some think that it has. On the contrary, it would have been for them to exclude the Corinthians if that had been the cause of the conflict." Such were my remarks.

XIV. When we passed the chamber of the Acanthians and Brasidas, the guide showed us a place where iron obelisks to Rhodopis the courtesan once used to stand. Diogenianus showed annoyance.

Diog. "So it was felt to be the duty of the same state both to find a place for Rhodopis to deposit the tithes of her earnings and to put Aesop, her fellow slave, to death!"

Serap. "Bless you, friend; why so vexed at that? Carry your eyes upwards, and behold among the generals and kings the golden Mnesarete, which Crates called a standing trophy of the lewdness of the Greeks."

Diog. "Was it then about Phryne that Crates said that?"

Serap. "Yes it was; her name was Mnesarete, but she took on that of Phryne [toad] as a nickname because of her yellow skin. Many names, it would seem, are concealed by nicknames. There was Polyxena, mother of Alexander, afterwards said to have been called Myrtale and Olympias and Stratonice. Then Eumetis of Rhodes is to this day called by most people Cleobuline, after her father; and Herophile of Erythræ, when she showed a prophetic gift, was addressed as Sibylla. You will hear the grammarians telling us that Leda was named Mnesinoe, and Orestes Achæus. But how do you propose," he continued, looking hard at Theon, "to get rid of the charge as to Phryne?"

XV. Theon smiled quietly: "In this way: a counter-charge against you for raking up the pettiest of the Greek misdoings. For as Socrates, [6](#) when entertained in the house of Callias, makes war upon the ointment only, but looks on all the dancing and tumbling and kisses and buffoonery, and holds his tongue, so you, it seems to me, want to exclude from the temple a poor woman who made an unworthy use of her charms; but when you see the God encompassed by first-fruits and tithes of murder, war, and rapine, and his temple loaded with Greek spoils and booty, you show no disgust; you have no pity for the Greeks when you read on the beautiful offerings such deeply disgraceful inscriptions as 'Brasidas and the Acanthians from the Athenians', 'Athenians from Corinthians', 'Phocians from Thessalians', 'Orneatans from Sicyonians', and 'Amphictyones from Phocians'. So Praxiteles, it seems, was one person who offended Crates by finding room for his mistress to stand here, whereas Crates ought to have commended him for placing beside those golden kings a golden courtesan, a strong rebuke to wealth as having nothing wonderful or worshipful about it. It would be good if kings and rulers were to set up in the God's house offerings to Justice, to Temperance and Magnanimity, not to golden and delicate Abundance, in which even the very foulest lives have their share."

XVI. "You forget to mention," said one of our guides, "how Cræsus had sculpted a golden figure of his baker-woman and dedicated it here."

Theon "Yes; but that was not to flout the temple with his luxury of wealth, but for a good and righteous cause. The story [7](#) is that Alyattes, father of Cræsus, married a second wife and brought up a second family. This woman fomented a plot against Cræsus, giving poison to the baker and telling her to knead a loaf with it and serve it to Cræsus. The baker told Cræsus in secret and set the loaf before the second wife's children. And so, when Cræsus became king, he requited the baker-woman's service in away which made the God a witness, and moreover did a good turn to him. Hence, it is quite proper to honour and love any such offering from cities as that from the Opuntians. When the Phocian tyrants had melted up many of the gold and silver offerings and struck coined money, which they distributed among the cities, the Opuntians collected all the silver they could find, and sent a large jar to be consecrated here to the God. I commend the Myrinæans also, and the Apollonians, who sent hither sheaves of gold, and even more highly the Eretrians and Magnesians, who endowed the God with firstfruits of men, as being the giver of crops and also ancestral, the god of their fathers; racial, the creator of men; and the friend of man. Whereas I blame the Megarians, because they were almost alone in setting up the God holding a lance; this was after the battle in which they defeated and expelled the Athenians who were holding their city, after the Persian wars. Later on, however, they offered to him a golden plectrum, referring it, as it appears, to Scythinus, who says of the lyre:

ἦν ἀρμύζεταί

Ζηνὸς εὐειδῆς Ἀπόλλων, πᾶσαν ἀρχῆν καὶ τέλος
 συλλαβῶν: ἔχει δὲ παμπὸν πλῆκτρον ἡλίου φάος
 which the son of Zeus

400 Wears, the comely God Apollo, gathering first and last in one,
 And he holds a golden harp-quill flashing as the very sun.

XVII. Serapion wanted to put in some further remark on this, when the stranger said:
 405 *Dion*. "It is delightful to listen to such speeches as we have heard, but I feel
 myself obliged to claim fulfillment of the original promise, that we should hear the
 cause which has made the Pythia cease to prophesy in epic or other verse. So, if it
 be your pleasure, let us leave to another time the remainder of the sights, sit down
 where we are, and hear about that. For it is this more than anything else which
 militates against the credibility of the oracle; for it must be one of two things:
 410 either the Pythia does not get near the spot where the Divinity is, or the current is
 altogether exhausted, and the power has failed."

Accordingly we went round and seated ourselves on the southern plinth of the temple,
 in view of the temple of Earth and the spring of water, which made Boethus at once
 415 observe that the very place where the problem was raised lent itself to the
 stranger's case. For here was a temple of the Muses where the exhalation rises from
 the fountain; from which fountain they drew the water used for the lustrations, as
 Simonides has it:

ἐνθα χερίβεσσιν ἀπύνεται τὸ Μουσαῶν
 καλλικόμοων ὑπέρρθεν ἀγνὸν ὕδωρ.

420 Whence is drawn for holy washings
 Water of the Muses bright.

And again, in a rather more affected strain, the same poet addresses Clio:

ἀγνᾶν ἐπίσκοπον χερνίβων,

425 Chaste guardian of our lustrations

and goes on to say

πολύλιστον ἀρυόντεσσιν

ἀχρυσόπεπλον . . .

εὐῶδες ἀμβροσίων ἐκ μυχῶν

430 ἐρανὸν ὕδωρ λαβεῖν.

Goddess sought in many a vow

By no golden robe encumbered, hear thy servants drawing now

Water, fragrant and delightful, from ambrosial depths below.

So Eudoxus was wrong in believing those who have made out that this was called 'Water
 435 of Styx'. But they installed the Muses as guardians of prophecy and wardens of the
 place, by the fountain and the temple of Earth where the oracle used to be, some say,
 because the responses were given in metre and in lyric strains. And some say further
 that here the heroic metre was first heard:

συμφέρετε πρὲρ ἄ τ', οἴωνοις, κηρόη τε, μέλισσαι.

440 Bring in your feathers, ye birds; ye bees, bring wax at his bidding.

Later Earth became inferior to the God and lost her august position. [8](#)

XVIII. *Serapion* responded, "More reasonable, that, Boethus, and more in tune with the
 445 Muses. For we ought not to fight against the God, nor to remove, along with his
 prophecy, his Providence and Godhead also, but rather to seek fresh solutions for
 apparent contradictions, and never to surrender the reverent belief of our fathers."

Phil. "Excellent *Serapion*! you are right. We are not abandoning Philosophy, as
 cleared out of the way and done for, because once upon a time philosophers put out
 450 their dogmas and theories in verse, as *Orpheus*, *Hesiod*, *Parmenides*, *Empedocles*,
Thales, whereas later on they gave it up, and have now all given it up – except you!
 In your hands Poetry is returning home to Philosophy, and clear and noble is the
 strain in which she rallies our young people. Astronomy again: she was not lowered in
 the hands of *Aristarchus*, *Timocharis*, *Aristyllus*, *Hipparchus*, all writing in prose,
 whereas *Eudoxus*, *Hesiod*, and *Thales* used metre, if we assume that *Thales* really wrote
 455 the *Astronomy* attributed to him. And *Pindar* himself confesses that he is quite at a
 loss about the neglect of verse in his own day, and is astonished [9](#) . . . It is
 neither out of the way nor absurd for us to seek out the causes of such changes; but
 to dismiss any of the arts and sciences altogether, because there is some alteration
 or variation in their details or delivery, is totally unfair."

460 XIX. *Theon* "And yet those instances have involved really great variations and
 novelties, whereas of the oracles given here we know many in prose even in old days,

and those on no trifling matters. When the Lacedæmonians consulted the God after their war with the Athenians, as Thucydides tells us, 10 he promised them victory and mastery, and that "he himself will help them, invited or uninvited". And again, that
 465 if they did not restore Pleistonax, they should plough with a silver share. 11 When the Athenians consulted the God about their expedition in Sicily, he directed them to bring the priestess of Erythræ to Athens; now the woman's name was 'Quiet'. When Deinomenes of Sicily inquired about his sons, the answer was that all three should
 470 reign as tyrants. 'And the worse for them,' rejoined Deinomenes. 'That too,' added the God, and added it to the response. You know that Gelo had the dropsy and Hiero the stone, while they reigned; Thrasybulus, the third son, was involved in revolutions and wars and soon lost his throne. Then Procles, tyrant of Epidaurus, after putting many others to death in cruel and unlawful ways, at last killed
 475 Timarchus, who had come to him from Athens with money, after receiving him with hospitality and kindness; he thrust his body into a basket and threw it into the sea. This he did by the hands of Cleander of Aegina, and no one else knew about it. Afterwards, when he was in sore trouble, he sent his brother Cleotimus to consult the oracle secretly about his own flight and retirement to another land. The God answered
 480 that he granted exile to Procles, and retirement either to the place where he had ordered his Aeginetan friend to lodge the basket, or to where the stag sheds his horn. The tyrant understood the God to bid him fling himself into the sea, or to buy himself underground (for the stag buries his horn deep out of sight when it falls off). He waited a short time, but when his affairs became desperate he sought exile.
 485 But the friends of Timarchus caught him and slew him, casting the corpse into the sea.

"Now comes the strongest instance: the statutes by which Lycurgus regulated the Lacedæmonian constitution were given to him in prose. So Alyrius, Herodotus, Philochorus, and Ister, the men who most zealously set about collecting metrical prophecies, have written down oracular responses which were not in metre; and
 490 Theopompus, who was exceptionally interested in the oracle, administered a vigorous rebuke to those who held that the Pythia did not prophesy in metre in those days; yet, when he wanted to prove the point, he found an exceedingly small number of such answers, which shows that the others, even at that early time, were put forth in
 495 prose.

XX. "Some oracles, however, still give their answers in metre; and one of them has become famous. There is in Phocis a temple of Hercules Woman-Hater, where the practice is for the consecrated priest not to associate with a woman during his year
 500 of office. So they appoint comparatively old men to the priesthood. However, not very long ago, the office was accepted by a young man of good character, but ambitious, and in love with a young woman. At first he restrained himself and avoided her; but one day, when he was resting after wine and dancing, she burst in and he yielded. Then, in his fear and confusion, he fled to the oracle, and proceeded to ask the God
 505 about his offence, and whether it admitted of excuse or expiation. He received his reply:

ἅπαντα ἀναγκαῖα συγχωρεῖ θεός.

All needful business doth the God allow.

All the same, if it be granted that nothing is prophesied in our own day, otherwise
 510 than in metre, the difficulty will be so much greater about the ancients, who sometimes employed metre for the responses, sometimes not. There is nothing strange, my young friend, in either one or the other, so long as we hold sound, pure views about the God, and do not suppose that it is himself who formerly used to compose the verses, or who now speaks through the Pythia, giving answers as it were through a
 515 mask.

XXI. "However, it is worth our while to pursue this inquiry at greater length another time. For the present, let us remember our results, which are briefly these: Body uses many instruments, soul uses body and parts, soul has been brought into being as
 520 the instrument of God. The excellence of an instrument is to imitate most closely the power which uses it, with all its own natural power, and to reproduce the effect of his essential thought, but to exhibit it, not pure and passionless and free from error, as it was in the creative artist, but with a large admixture of foreign element. For in itself it is invisible to us, but appearing 'other' and through
 525 another medium it is saturated with the nature of that medium. I pass over wax and gold and silver and copper, and all other varieties of moulded substance, which take on one common form of impressed likeness, but add to the copy each its distinct specialty. I pass over the myriad distortions of images and reflections from a single

530 form in mirrors, plane, hollow, or convex. For nothing seems better to reproduce the type, no instrument more obediently to use its own nature, than the moon. Yet taking from the sun his bright and fiery rays, she does not transmit them so to us: mingled with herself they change colour and also take on a different power; the heat wholly disappeared, and the light fails from weakness before it reaches us. I think you know the saying found in Heraclitus, that 'the sovereign whose seat is at Delphi, speaks not, nor conceals, but signifies'. Take and add then to what is here so well said, 535 the conception that the God of this place employs the Pythia for the hearing as the sun employs the moon for the seeing. He shows and reveals his own thoughts, but shows them mingled in their passage through a mortal body, and a soul which cannot remain at rest or present itself to the exciting power unexcited and inwardly composed, but 540 which boils and surges and is involved in the stirrings and troublesome passions from within. As whirlpools do not keep a steady hold on bodies borne round and round, and also downwards, since an outer force carries them round, but they sink down of their own nature, so that there is a compound spiral movement, of a confused and distorted kind, even so what we call inspiration seems to be a mixture of two impulses, and the 545 soul is stirred by two forces, one of which it is a passive recipient, one form its own nature. We see that inanimate and stationary bodies cannot be used or forced contrary to their own nature, that a cylinder cannot be moved as if it were a sphere or a cube, that a lyre cannot be played like a flute or a trumpet like a harp, but that the artistic use of a thing is no other than the natural use. Is it possible, 550 then, that the animate and self-moving, which has both impulse and reason, can be treated in any other way than is agreeable to the habit, force or natural condition which is already existent within it? Can an unmusical mind be excited like a musical, or an unlettered mind be moved by literature, a mind untrained in reasoning, whether speculative or disciplinary, by logic? It is not to be spoken of.

555 XXII. "Again, Homer is my witness: he assumes [12](#) that nothing, so to speak, is brought about without a God; he does not, however, describe the God as using all things for all ends, but according to the art or faculty which each possesses. For do you not see, dear Diogenianus, that Athena, when she wants to persuade the Achæans, 560 calls in Odysseus; [13](#) when to wreck th truce, she looks for Pandarus; [14](#) when to rout the Trojans, she approaches Diomedes? [15](#) Why? because Diomedes is a sturdy man and a fighter, Pandarus an archer and a food, Odysseus a clever speaker and a sensible man. For Homer was not of the same mind as Pindar, [16](#) if it was Pindar who wrote Sail on a crate, if God so choose 'twill swim. 565 He knew that different faculties and natural gifts are appointed for different ends; each is moved in its own way, even if the moving force be one for all. As then the force cannot move that which walks so as to make it fly, nor that which lisps to speak clearly, nor the thin voice to be melodious – why, Battus himself was sent as colonist of Libya to get his voice, because he lisped and had a thin voice, but 570 withal was a kingly, statesmanlike, prudent man – even so, it is impossible for one who has no letters and knows no verse to talk like a poet. And so she who now serves the God has been born as respectably as any man here, and has lived as good and orderly a life; but having been reared in the house of small farmer folk, she brings nothing with her from art or from practice or faculty whatsoever, as she goes down 575 into the sanctuary. As Xenophon thinks that the bride should step into her husband's home having seen as little as may be, and heard as little, so she, ignorant and untried in almost all things, and a true virgin in soul, is associated with the God. Yet we, who think that the God, when he 'signifies', uses the cries of herons and wrens and ravens, and never ask that they, as the messengers and heralds of the God, 580 should put things into clear rational phrases, do nevertheless ask that the Pythia should use a voice and style as though from the Thymele, not unembellished and plain, but with metre and elevation, and trills, and verbal metaphors, and a flute accompaniment!

585 XXIII. "What shall we say then about her older predecessors? Not one thing, I think, but several. In the first place, as has been already said, they, too, for the most part, used to give the responses in prose. In the second place, those times produced temperaments and natural conditions which offered an easy and convenient channel for the stream of poetry, to which were at once superadded, in one and another, an 590 eagerness, an impulse, a preparation of soul, all resulting in a readiness which needed but a slight initial movement from without to give the imagination a turn. So it was that not only were astronomers and philosophers drawn, as Philinus says, in their several directions, but also, when men were mellow with wine and sentiment, some undercurrent of pity or joy would come, and they would glide into a song-like

- 595 voice; drinking parties were filled with amorous strains and songs, books with poems
in writing. When Euripides wrote [17](#):
ποιητῆν ἄρα
Ἐρως διδάσκει, κἄν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρίν
Love can teach, he makes
- 600 A poet of a stranger to the Muse.
he did not mean that Love implants a faculty for poetry or music; the faculty is
there already, but Love stirs and warms what was latent and idle. Or are we to say,
Sir Stranger, that no one now loves, that Love has gone by the heels, because there
is no who, to quote Pindar, [18](#)
- 605 ῥίμφα παιδείους
τοξεύει μελιγάρυας ὕμνους
Scatters with easy grace
The vocal shafts of love and joy?
- 610 That is absurd. Loves there are and many of them, and they master men; but when they
associate with souls which have no natural turn for music, they drop the flute and
the lyre, yet are vocal still and fiery through and through, as much as of old. It is
an unhallowed thing to say, and an unfair, that the Academy was loveless, or the
choir of Socrates and Plato; yet, while we have their love dialogues to read, they
615 have left no poems. Why not declare at once that Sappho was the only woman who ever
loved, if you are to say that Sibylla alone had the gift of prophecy, or Aristonica,
and the others who delivered themselves in verse? As Chæremon used to say,
ὁ μὲν γὰρ οἶνος τοῖς τρόποις κεράννυται
Wine mingles with the moods of them that drink,
- 620 and the prophetic inspiration, like that of love, uses the faculty which is subjected
to it, and stirs its recipients according to the nature of each.
- XXIV. "Not but that, if we look also into the subject of the God and his
foreknowledge, we shall see that the change has taken place for the better. For the
625 use of language is like exchange in coined money. Here also it is familiarity which
gives currency, the purchasing power varies with the times. There was a day when
metres, tunes, odes were the coins of language in us; all History and Philosophy, in
a word, every feeling and action which called for a more solemn utterance, were drawn
to poetry and music. It is not only that now but few understand, and they with
630 effort, whereas then all the world were listeners, and all felt pleasure in what was
sung,
μηλοβόται τ' ἄρόται τ' ὄρνιχολόχοι τε
who feds his flock
Who ploughs the soil, who snares the winged game,
- 635 as Pindar [19](#) has it. More than that, there was an aptitude for poetry, most men used
the lyre and the ode to rebuke, to encourage, to frame myths and proverbs; also hymns
to the Gods, prayers, thanksgivings, were composed in metre and song, as genius or
practice enabled them to do. And so it was with prophecy; the God did not grudge it
ornament and grace, or drive from hence into disgrace the honoured Muse of the
640 tripod; he rather led her on, awakening and welcoming poetic natures; he gave them
visions from himself, he lent his aid to draw out pomp and eloquence as being fitting
and admirable things. Then there was a change in human life, affecting men both in
fortune and in genius. Expediency banished what was superfluous, top-knots of gold
were dropped, rich robes discarded; probably too clustering curls were shorn off, and
645 the buskin discontinued. It was not a bad training, to set the beauty of frugality
against that of profusion, to account what was plain and simple, a better ornament
than the pompous and elaborate. So it was with language: it changed with the times,
and shared the general break-up. History got down from its coach, and dropped metre.
Truth was best sifted out from Myth in prose; Philosophy welcomed clearness, and
650 found it better to instruct than to astonish, so she pursued her inquiry in plain
language. The God made the Pythia leave off calling her own fellow townsmen 'fire-
burners', the Spartans 'serpent-eaters', men 'mountaineers', rivers 'mountain-
drainers'. He cleared the oracle of epic verses, unusual words, circumlocutions, and
vagueness, and so prepared the way to converse with his consultants just as law
655 converse with states, as kings address subjects, as disciples hear their masters
speak, so framing language as to be intelligible and convincing.
- XXV. "For it should be clearly understood that the God is, in the words of Sophocles,
σοφοῖς μὲν αἰνικτῆρα θεσφάτων ἀεί,
660 σκαιοῖς δὲ φαῦλον κἄν βραχεῖ διδάσκαλον

Unto the wise a riddling prophet aye,
to silly souls a teacher plain and brief.

665 The same turn of things which brought clearness brought also a new standard of
belief; it shared the general change. Whereas of old that which was not familiar or
common, but, in plain words, contorted and over-phrased, was ascribed by the many to
an implied Divinity, and received with awe and reverence; in later times men were
content to learn things clearly and easily with no pomp or artifice; they began to
670 find fault with the poetical setting of the oracles, not only as a hindrance to the
perception of truth, because it mingled indistinctions and shadow with the meaning,
but also because by this time they were getting to mistrust metaphors, riddles, and
ambiguities, as so many holes or hiding-places provided for him who should trip in
his prophecy, that he might step into them and secure his retreat. You might have
675 heard it told by many, how certain persons with a turn for poetry still sit about the
place of oracles, waiting to catch the utterances, and then weaving verses, metres,
rhythms, according to occasion, as a sort of vehicle. As to your Onomacrituses, and
Herodotuses, and Cinæthons, and the censures which they brought upon the oracles, by
importing tragedy and pomp where they were out of place, I let the charge pass and
680 won't join in the attack on them. Most, however, of the discredit which attached so
copiously to poetry came from the gang of soothsayers and scamps who strolled around
the ceremonies of the Great Mother and of Serapis, with their mummeries and tricks,
turning verses out of their own heads, or taking them at random from handbooks, for
servant boys and silly girls, and such as are best attracted by metre and a poetic
685 cast of words; from all which causes poetry seemed to put herself at the service of
cheats and jugglers and lying prophets, and was lost to truth and to the tripod.

XXVI. "Thus I should not be surprised to find that the old people sometimes required
a certain ambiguity, circumlocution, indistinctness. For it was not then a case of
690 'A' approaching the oracle with a question, if you please, about the purchase of a
slave, or 'B' about business; powerful states, haughty kings and tyrants would
consult the God on public affairs, men whom it did not answer the officials of his
temple to vex and provoke by letting them hear what they did not wish to hear. For
the God does not obey Euripides, [20](#) who sets up as a lawgiver with
Φοῖβον ἀνθρώποις μόνον
695 χρῆν θεσπιφδεῖν
Phoebus, none but he,
May give men prophecies.

He uses mortal men as ministers and prophets, whom it is his duty to make his care,
and to protect, lest they perish at the hands of the bad while serving him. He does
700 not then choose to conceal the truth; what he used to do was to give a twist to its
manifestation, which, like a beam of light, is refracted more than once in its
passage, and is parted into many rays as it becomes poetry, and so to remove whatever
in it was harsh and hard. Tyrants might thus be left in ignorance, and enemies not
forewarned. For them he threw a veil in the innuendoes and ambiguities which hid the
705 meaning from others, but he did not elude the intelligence of the actual consultants
who gave their whole mind to the answers. Hence, now that things have changed, it is
sheer folly to criticize and find fault with the God because he thinks right to give
his aid no longer in the same manner but in another.

710 "Another thing is this: Language receives no greater advantage from a poetical form
than this, that a meaning which is wrapped and bound in metre is more easily
remembered and grasped. Now in those days much memory was required. Many things used
to be explained orally; local indications, the times when things were to be done,
rites of Gods across the seas, secret burying-places of heroes, hard to be discovered
715 by those setting off for lands far from Greece. You know about Chius and Cretinus,
and Nesichus, and Phalanthus, and many other leaders of expeditions, how many clues
they needed to find the proper place appointed to each for settlement, while some of
them missed the way, as did Battus. [21](#) He thought that he would be turned out, not
understanding what the place was to which he had been sent; then he came a second
720 time loudly complaining. Then the God answered:
αἶ τὸ ἐμεῦ Λιβύαν μαλοτρόφον οἴσθας ἀρειον,
μὴ ἐλθῶν ἐλθόντιος, ἀγαν ἀγαμαι σοφίην σευ
Thou that hast never been there, if thou know'st Libya the sheepland
Better than I that have been, then wonderful wise is they wisdom.
725 And thus he sent him out again.
Then Lysander [22](#) entirely failed to make out the hill Orchalides, otherwise called

- Alopecus, and the river Hoplites,
 γῆς τε δράκονθ' ὑῖόν δόλιον κατόπισθεν ἰόντα
 Also the dragon, earthborn, in craftiness coming behind thee.
- 730 and was defeated in battle and slain in those very spots by Neochorus, a man of Haliartus, who bore on his shield the device of a serpent. There are many such answers given to the old people, all hard to grasp and remember, which I need not give you at length, since you know them.
- 735 XXVIII. "Our present settled condition, out of which the questions now put to the God arise, I welcome and accept. There is great peace and tranquility, war has been made to cease, there are no wanderings in exile, no revolutions, no tyrannies, no other plagues or ills in Greece asking for potent and extraordinary remedies. But when
- 740 there is nothing complicated or mysterious, or dangerous, only questions on petty popular matters, like school themes, 'whether I should marry', 'whether I should sail', 'whether I should lend', and the most serious responses given to states concern harvests and cattle-breeding and public health; in such circumstances, to clothe the answers in metre, or to devise circumlocutions, to introduce strange words on questions calling for a plain, concise answer, is what an ambitious sophist might
- 745 do, bedizening the oracle for his glory. But the Pythia is a lady in herself, and when she descends thither and is in the presence of the God, she cares for truth rather than for glory, or for the praise or blame of men.
- XXIX. "So perhaps ought we too to feel. As it is, in a sort of agony of fear, lest
- 750 the place should lose its reputation of three thousand years, and a few persons should think lightly of it and cease to visit the oracle, for all the world as if it were a sophist's school, we apologize, and make up reasons and theories about things which we neither know now ought to know. We smooth the critic down, and try to persuade him, whereas we ought to bid him be gone –
- 755 αὐτῷ γάρ οἱ πρῶτον ἀνιηρότερον ἔσται
 He shall first suffer in a loss not light [23](#) –
 if that is the view which he takes of the God; for if we welcome and admire what the Wise Men of old days have written up: 'Know Thyself' and 'Nothing too much', not least because of the brevity which includes in a small compass a close hammer-beaten
- 760 sense, we cannot blame the oracles because they mostly use concise, plain, direct phrases. It is with sayings like those of the Wise Men as with streams compressed into a narrow channel; there is no distinctness or transparency to the eye of the mind, but if you look into what has been written or said about them ;by those who have wished to learn the full meaning of each, you will not easily find longer
- 765 treaties elsewhere. The language of the Pythia illustrates what mathematicians mean by calling a straight line the shortest between the same points; it makes no bending, or curve, or doubling or ambiguity; it lies straight towards truth; it takes risks, its good faith is open to examination, and it has never yet been found wrong; it has filled the shrine with offerings from Barbarians and Greeks, and has beautified it
- 770 with noble buildings and Amphictyonic fittings. Why, you see for yourselves many buildings added which were not here formerly, many restored which were ruinous or destroyed. As new trees spring up by the side of those in vigorous bearing, so the Pylæa flourishes together with Delphi and is fed upon the same meat; the plenty of the one causes the other to take on shapeliness and figure and a beauty of temples,
- 775 and halls of meeting and fountains of water, such as it never had in the thousand years before. Now those who dwell about Galaxius in Boeotia felt the manifest presence of the God in the abundance and more than abundance of milk:
 προβάτων γάρ ἐκ πάντων κελάρυξεν,
 ὡς ἀπὸ κρηνᾶν φέριστατον ὕδωρ,
 780 θηλᾶν γάλα· τοὶ δ' ἐπίμπλεν ἑσσύμενοι πίθους·
 ἀσκὸς δ' οὐδέ τις ἀμφορεύς ἐλίνυεν δόμοις,
 πέλλαι γὰρ ξύλιναι πίθοι τε πλήσθεν ἀπαντες·
 From all the kine and every flock,
 Plenteous as water from the rock,
 785 Came welling, gurgling on its way
 The milk that day.
 Hot foot they hied them to the task,
 To fill the pail, to fill the cask;
 No pot or pan had holiday;
- 790 Wine-skin or flagon, none might stay
 Within, that day.
 But to us he gives tokens bright and stronger and more evident than these, in having,

795 after the days of drought, of desertion and poverty, brought us plenty, splendour,
and reputation. True, I am well pleased with myself for anything which my own zeal or
service may have contributed to this result in support of Polycrates and Petraeus,
well pleased too with him who has been our leader in this policy, to whose thought
and planning most of the improvements are due; but it is wholly impossible that so
great, so vast a change could have been effected in this short time by merely human
care, with no God present here or lending his Divinity to the place of the oracle.

800 XXX. "But as in those days there were some who found fault with the responses for
obliquity and want of clearness, so now there are those who criticize them as too
simple, which is childishness indeed and rank stupidity! For as children show more
glee and satisfaction at the sight of rainbows or haloes or comets than in that of
805 the sun or of the moon, so do these people regret the riddles, allegories, and
metaphors which are so many modes of refraction of prophetic art in a mortal and
fanciful medium. And if they do not fully inquire into the cause of the change, they
go away having passed judgement against the God, rather than against ourselves or
themselves, for having a power of thought which is too feeble to attain to his
810 counsels."

NOTES

815 * Note that the English translation of this passage at Perseus is misnumbered; the translation
of line 107 in fact occurs on the *previous* page and not on the page that says it begins with
1. 107.

1. Alluding to the eruption of Vesuvius in 79. "Dicæarchia" = Puteoli.
2. Euripides; as quoted by Plutarch himself in "De defectu oraculorum", μόνιτις δ' ἀριστος
ὅστις εἰκάζει καλῶς
3. Quoted also in *Life of Agesilaus*, c.3 (597c).
- 820 4. Palæa Kaumene, a volcanic island ejected in 196 B.C.
5. Tim. 90.
6. Xen. Sympos. c.2.3.
7. Herod. 1.51.
8. This passage from the Loeb edition. The text is defective at this point; Prickard reads
825 "The God was in need, and dignity was waived"; King ". . . [On its] becoming necessary to the
god to cast away his gravity."
9. The text is defective at this point, and we unfortunately do not know the cause of Pindar's
astonishment.
10. Thucydides I, 118.
- 830 11. Ibid. V, 16 (from which words have been supplied in the defective text of Plutarch, which
additionally reads "Pausanias" for "Pleistonax"). "Silver share" turned out to mean that their
crops would be inadequate and they would have to buy grain.
12. Od. 2.372.
13. Il. 2.169.
- 835 14. Il. 4.86.
15. Il. 5.1.
16. The MSS. have "Pandarus". Plutarch probably did not suppose Pindar was the author of the
line. It is quoted by Aristophanes, *Peace* 699, in connexion with the stinginess of Sophocles
or Simonides, and the scholiast quotes from Pindar a censure of that vice in poets; so some
840 confusion is possible.
17. In the *Stheneboea*.
18. *Isthm.* 2.3.
19. *Isthm.* 1.69.
20. *Phoen.* 958.
- 845 21. Herod. 4.155; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.
22. See *Lysander* 450B-C
23. Od. 2.190.

850 Note on the text: This text follows the translation of Prickard (1918) with occasional
departures where I felt his English was too quirky or ugly or where it departs substantially
from other translations I felt to be more acceptable. (You may judge from what is left exactly
how quirky and ugly his translation is at times.) The text covers pages 394d to 409e; page
numbers are accessible via local links in the html (for instance, "plutarchVerses.html#395f"
will take you [approximately] to the appropriate passage). Chapter numbers I-XXX are similarly
linked (e.g., "plutarchVerses.html#XXV"). The Greek, where supplied, is mostly from the Loeb
855 edition.