**PHREN AND PLANNING: PINDAR, NEMEAN 1.27**

*Phrēn* is a prominent psychic entity in early Greek literature. The terms φρήν and φρένες occur in over three hundred passages of Homer and the *Homeric Hymns*. They are found in twenty-one passages of Hesiod. They occur also in a large number of the Greek lyric and elegiac poets as well as in Pindar and Bacchylides. This paper will discuss one instance of *phrēn* that appears in Pindar, *Nemean* 1.27. There Pindar sums up the essence of *phrēn* as “functioning in counsels” (boulaiv). How traditional is Pindar in making this claim for *phrēn*? How are we to understand the term *phrēn* in this passage?

Let us first see what can be said of *phrēn* and *phrenes* in general. Like other psychic entities they act both as agents that think, feel, and will. They designate also the thoughts, feelings, and intentions that are formed. In the largest number of passages people act in, by, or with *phrenes* to perform various psychological activities. These activities are often complex in nature, combining intellectual, emotional, and volitional aspects commonly separated out in modern terminology. But, in other instances, one or another of these aspects seems clearly to predominate. Thus *phrenes* may be connected with intellectual activities such as pondering, deliberating, devising, and knowing, or with emotional ones such as rejoicing, fearing, being angry, or being sorrowful. As we look at any reference to *phrēn* or *phrenes*, it is important to remember that aspects of both agent and function are likely to be present. In relation to intellectual activities, for example, *phrēn* is the “mind” that thinks,

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2 See my article *Phrenes in Hesiod*, “RBPh” 67, 1989, 5-17.


4 On this feature of psychic entities see Sullivan, *Psychological Activity* (note 1), Chapter One.
the “thinking” itself, and the “thought” expressed.

It is on the intellectual activities of phrenē that this paper will focus. In Homer phrenes are associated with a wide range of such activities. People in or with phrenes “ponder”5. They “deliberate” (φράζομαι)6. They “perceive” (νοεῖ)7, “contrive” (μήδομαι), “devise” (μερμηρίζοι), and “recognise” (γνώσκω)8. They “know counsels” (οἶδα μήθει) in phrenes.8 They “place” (βάλλω) things in phrenes for consideration9. We also see an intellectual aspect of phrenes when they “forget”10. This is true to when phrenes are associated with speech. They can be a source of speech11, as a location where words are to be considered12, and as an entity affected by speech itself13. In expressions with the verb o͡i diam phrenes act as a seat of a person’s moral character. Someone “knows” things “just”, “suitable”, or “fitting” in phrenes14.

We find a similar broad range of intellectual functions associated with phrenes in Hesiod, the lyric and elegiac poets, and Pindar. Hesiod tells Perseus to “consider” (φράζομαι) the advice he gives about the dangers of sailing (W.&D. 688). Similarly, in fr. 283.1, the activity of “considering” (φράζομαι) is to take place with “wise phrenes” (πευκάλμοι)15. In Theogony 488 Kronos fails to “perceive” (νοεῖ) with his phrenes that he has left Zeus alive and well. Twice Perses is urged to “place” (βάλλω) things in his phrenes for consideration (W.&D. 107, 274). Once too Hesiod mentions “knowing counsels” (οἶδα μήθει) in phrenes.

In the lyric and elegiac poets phrenes likewise are connected with intellectual activities16. Twice people are described as “thinking” (νοεῖ) certain

5 See, e.g., II. 10.4, 16.435, 17.106; Od. 5.424, 24.128; H. Mer. 66.
6 This verb, cognate with φρήν, has a broad meaning that includes observing, thinking, pondering, and planning. See II. 9.423, 15.163, 20.115, and Od. 1.294.
7 See, e.g., II. 9.600, 15.81; Od. 1.322, 3.26 (νοεῖ); II. 21.19, 23.176; Od. 3.132, 11.474 (μήδομαι); II. 5.671, 8.169; Od. 10.438, 20.41 (μερμηρίζοι); II. 1.333, 8.446; H. Apoll. 375.
8 II. 17.325; Od. 11.445. Cf. also II. 24.282, 24.674 and Od. 19.353 for “counsels” (μήθει) in phrenes.
9 See, e.g., II. 1.297, 4.39; Od. 11.454, 16.299.
10 See II. 6.252, 15.61; Od. 10.557.
11 See, e.g., II. 1.407, 7.360; Od. 2.243.
12 See, e.g., II. 2.223; Od. 15.445; H. Apoll. 544.
13 See, e.g., II. 5.493; Od. 4.77; H. Mer. 421.
14 See, e.g., II. 5.326; Od. 5.9; H. Mer. 164.
15 This adjective occurs four times with phrenes in Homer: II. 8.366, 14.165, 15.81, and 20.35.
thoughts in *phrenes* (Sem. 7.27 W., Theog. 1008). Once Theognis urges Kyrmnos to “place” (βάλλω) advice in his *thumos* and *phrenes* (1050). At 135 he tells Kyrmnos that no one “knows” (οἶδα) in *phrenes* whether work is for good or for ill. But Theognis affirms that the person who has “practical wisdom” (γνώμη) in *phrenes* is blessed (1173). In one other passage of these poets we hear of a person “pondering (ὀρμαίνω) many things in phrēn, sleepless at night”.

In Pindar we find certain instances of intellectual activity associated with *phrēn* or *phrenes*. In Pae. 9.37 Pindar says that he has been gifted to compose a song “by the counsels (μηδεα) of his *phrēn*”. Here, as in Homer and Hesiod, we find “counsels” present in *phrēn*. At Nem. 4.8 Pindar mentions a word “which a tongue draws forth from a deep *phrēn*”. At Ol. 8.24 he says that for variable situations “it is difficult to decide with an upright *phrēn*, not contrary to the fitting time”. Pindar uses here the verb διακρίνω, which suggests the activity of “discerning” or “deciding”. In fr. 61 he says that it is not possible for a person “to trace out (ἐπεγνωμά) the plans of the gods with a mortal *phrēn*”. Pindar thus suggests limits to the capacity of *phrēn* to discover what lies outside its range. At Nem. 7.60 Pindar says that Moira “does not harm the understanding (σύνεσις) of *phrenes*” in thearion. In this reference we see “intelligence” or “understanding” centred in *phrenes*.

Above we have mentioned that in Homer people “know counsels” (μηδεα) in *phrenes*. Pindar too at Pae. 9.37 mentions “counsels” (μηδεα) of *phrēn*. These references suggest in particular an association of *phrēn* and *phrenes* with planning. This connection occurs elsewhere as well. In Od. 1.444 Telemachus “plans” (βουλέω) a journey. In Od. 4.676 the suitors “plan” (βουσοδομευω) words. Likewise, Hephaestus, with the same verb, “plans” evils at Od. 8.273. So do the suitors “plan” evils against Telemachus at Od. 17.66. “Planning” also occurs in *phrenes* at Od. 4.739 where Penelope says that Laertes may “somehow weave (φαινω) a design in his *phrenes*” to prevent the suitors from doing harm.

In the lyric and elegiac poets we likewise hear of *phrēn* and *phrenes* associated with planning. At 4.2 W. Solon says of Athens: “Our city will never perish according to the dispensation of Zeus and the *phrenes* of the blessed, immortal gods”. *Phrenes* in this passage have usually been translated as

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17 Pap. Oxy. 3538, fr. 1.15 = Iby. See M.L. West, *New Fragments of Ibycus’ Love Songs*, “ZPE” 57, 1984, 23-32. This passage, in particular, recalls the picture of Agamemnon “pondering” (μεριμνηζω) in *phrenes* at night with worry (see Il. 2.1-4).
“purpose”, “will”, or “intentions”. Phrenes are clearly associated with what the gods have in mind for Athens. In another poem (33 W.) Solon associates phrēn with planning when he ironically refers to himself as an οὐκ... βουθοφρον οὐδέ βουλημείς ἀνήρ. Someone with a “deep phrēn” would also be, it appears, a person “of counsel”.

Phocylides (7 W.) describes the nature of phrēn at night: “make plans (βουλεύω) at night. At night in truth phrēn is sharper for men. Quiet is good for the person seeking excellence”. Phocylides explicitly relates the activity of “planning” with phrēn. It can carry on this activity best in a quiet setting.

Theognis at 1051-1054 mentions phrēn with planning. He tells Kyrnos: “never, being pressed upon, do evil, but with your deep phrēn and good noos take counsel (βουλεύω). For the thumos and noos of those who are maddened flutter about, but counsel (βουλή) leads even the noble noos to good”. In these lines three psychic entities appear, all involved in intellectual activity. All three are said to function better if someone makes a measured use of them. Such a use will lead to good rather than to evil actions. Kyrnos is urged, therefore, to “plan” with his phrēn and noos.

In another passage Theognis relates phrenes with planning. In lines 161-164 he suggests that people’s daimōn, whether good or bad, is more important in determining whether they do well or not than the nature of their phrenes. He contrasts people having “wretched phrenes” with those “who labour with good counsel” (βουλή). The latter probably have “good” phrenes but it matters not if daimōn is “wretched”. In these lines the activity of phrenes seems chiefly summed up in their ability to make plans.

Let us look now at Nemean 1.27. This ode, written in honour of

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Chromios, the general of Hieron, speaks first of Chromios' abilities and then of the glories of Sicily (1-18) 23. Pindar proceeds to praise Chromios as a generous host and as one who brings together good men to quench the "smoke" of detractors (19-25). Pindar, using a gnomic statement, describes how human beings can achieve excellence (25-28). He applies this gnomic statement to Chromios (29-30). At line 31, introducing another gnomic statement about the use of wealth, Pindar makes a transition to the myth of Heracles (31-33). This myth then continues to the end of the ode (72).

Lines 25-30 of this ode are as follows:

25 τέχναι δ' ετέρον ἔτεραι
χρή δ' ἐν εὐθείαις ὀδοῖς στείχοντα μέρνασθαι φιό.
πράσσει γὰρ ἔργω μὲν σθένος, 
βουλαίσι δὲ φήμι, ἐσσομένον προδεῖν 
συγγένες οἷς ἔπεται.
'Αγησιδάμου παῖ, σέο δ' ἀμφι τρόπῳ
30 τῶν τε καὶ τῶν χρήσεως.

“Different skills belong to different people. It is necessary for the person going on straight paths to strive with innate talent. For strength functions in deed, and phrēn, in counsels, for those whom an inborn ability of foreseeing the future attends. Son of Hagesidemos, by virtue of your character, you have the uses of both of them.”

Pindar says that people are endowed with different skills (τέχναι). What is required is for someone, “going on straight paths”, to exert all energy with “innate talent” (φιό). Pindar then describes two forms of this “innate talent”: physical and intellectual. The “strength” of these people manifests itself in “deed”. Their phrēn “functions in plans”. Pindar enlarges upon the description of “phrēn in counsels” by adding: “for those whom an inborn ability of foreseeing the future attends”. Part of the process of making plans involves

23 For the summary of this ode see Braswell (note 22) 29-32, Carey (note 22) 130-132, and Race (note 22).
anticipating correctly what the future may bring\textsuperscript{24}. Chromios is blessed in sharing in both these features: σθένος and φήη.

The focus of this paper is Pindar's mention of phrēn in Nem. 1.27 and his association of it with planning. Our survey of earlier and contemporary uses of phrēn and phrenes showed that this psychic entity was very often associated with intellectual activities. In some instances it was specifically connected with “planning”. We can say, therefore, that Pindar makes a ‘traditional’ reference in relating phrēn with “plans”.

Various translations of phrēn in Nem. 1.27 have been suggested. Sandy: “might of mind by counsel”\textsuperscript{25}. Lattimore: “mind in council”\textsuperscript{26}. Conway: “the mind nurtures her harvest of wise counsels”\textsuperscript{27}. Nisetich: “stratagem the way of council”\textsuperscript{28}. Braswell: “mind in counsels”\textsuperscript{29}. Race: “wisdom through the counsels of those attended by inborn ability to foresee what will happen”\textsuperscript{30}.

How can we best understand phrēn in Nem. 1.27? As suggested above, we see Pindar referring to this psychic entity in a traditional way. In this reference we may see phrēn as an agent: rightly then we would translate it as “mind”. We may see phrēn as an activity: we would correctly translate it as “thinking”. We may see phrēn as a result of activity: we would appropriately translate it as “thought” or “wisdom”. In this ode Pindar describes phrēn as a part of “innate talent” (φυά). Sthenos is one part of phua, being physical strength. Phrēn is the second part, being intellectual ability. Pindar ascribes to phrēn a crucial activity. It functions in forming plans. It is endowed with the skill of anticipating the future correctly. The person, having this phrēn, is truly fortunate. This paper has discussed the rich background of the meaning of phrēn. It is hoped that an awareness of this background may add to our understanding of Nemean 1.27.

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\textsuperscript{24} I follow here the interpretation of these lines as given in Braswell (note 22) 49-52 and in W.H. Race, Style and Rhetoric in Pindar’s Odes (Atlanta 1990) 172. Contrast Carey (note 22) 114-116, who suggests a triad of three characteristics σθένος, φήη, and μυντιαία. The μυν... δέ construction, however, suggests that two things are being praised, σθένος and φήη.

\textsuperscript{25} See J. Sandys, The Odes of Pindar (Cambridge MA 1915) 319.

\textsuperscript{26} R. Lattimore, The Odes of Pindar (Chicago 1947) 96.

\textsuperscript{27} G. Conway, The Odes of Pindar (London 1972) 171.

\textsuperscript{28} F.J. Nisetich, Pindar’s Victory Songs (Baltimore 1980) 234.

\textsuperscript{29} Braswell (note 22) 17.

\textsuperscript{30} Race (note 22) 7.