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**"Τύχη in Pindar"**

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## Τύχη in Pindar

The semantics of the word τύχη<sup>1</sup> in Pindar's poetry reveal much of the attitude of the poet and other Greeks toward causality and chance, at least in the realms of athletics and praise poetry. This word has a complicated meaning, and it is connected with other related words by processes of derivation that were transparent to Greeks of Pindar's time. The way Pindar uses τύχη and these related words in his epinician odes shows how "chance" in the modern sense has no real place as a meaning for τύχη. In Pindar's conception of causality, nothing is left to chance. In his monograph on τύχη in Pindar, Strohm defines the word by saying that it "bezeichnet die Grenzlinie, mit der das Schicksal den Menschen berührt."<sup>2</sup> I would argue that τύχη is even further away from the realm of humanity: it lies on the other side of the boundary and entirely inhabits the realm of fate. This is shown by the ways Pindar uses τύχη and its close verbal relative τυγχάνω.

The definitions given for τύχη in modern lexica show the wide range of senses that the word can have. Slater's *Lexicon to Pindar* provides all the usages of the word in the extant poetry of Pindar, but only offers one definition: "luck, (good) fortune."<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to understand Pindar's poetry with only this single sense of the word. On the other extreme, LSJ offers four major definitions of the word: the "act" of a human or a god, "an agent or cause beyond human control," "a result," and a permanent state that comes about from a result.<sup>4</sup> The true sense of the word in Pindar is probably a combination of the second and third definitions given by LSJ: "a bringing about by divine means." The complicated meanings for

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<sup>1</sup> Pindar uses this word in the form τύχα, of course, though I will employ the Attic-Ionic spelling throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Strohm (1944) 98.

<sup>3</sup> Slater (1969) s.v. τύχα.

<sup>4</sup> LSJ, s.v. τύχη.

this τύχη and its relatives are shown more clearly when their etymologies are taken into consideration.

The Proto-Indo-European origin of these words is complicated and involves many cognates in different languages with vastly different meanings. The root in question is *\*d<sup>h</sup>eug<sup>h</sup>-*, which Watkins defines as “produce something of utility.”<sup>5</sup> Aside from τύχη in Greek, other descendents of this root include Modern English *doughty* as well as the Sanskrit root *duh-*, which means “to milk.” The semantic development is already very hard to see. As the root developed into Greek, the two voiced aspirates were devoiced and the first was deaspirated via Grassmann’s Law.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the Proto-Greek form was something like *\*teuk<sup>h</sup>-*. The noun τύχη is built on the zero-grade of this stem, as is the thematic aorist ἔτυχον, which in the first instance could have meant something like “produced (an experience).” There are two present tense formations that correspond to this root. The first, τυγχάνω, is a nasal-infix present with the suffix -άνω. Cowgill states that verbs in -άνω, whether or not they also have nasal infixes, have “imperfective” or “present” characteristics, and these presents are typically derived from thematic aorists.<sup>7</sup> Chantraine states that the suffix -άνω “exprime un procès dont le terme est envisagé.”<sup>8</sup> This would mean that the primary form was the aorist ἔτυχον, and τυγχάνω was generated from this as a present tense that emphasizes the process of achievement of a goal. The other present tense formation for this aorist, τεύχω, is a thematic present formed to the full grade of the root.

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<sup>5</sup> Watkins (2000) s.v. *dheugh-*.

<sup>6</sup> See Sihler (1995) 141-144 for details of these transformations.

<sup>7</sup> Cowgill (1964) 347.

<sup>8</sup> Chantrains (2000) s.v. τυγχάνω.

The difference in meaning between these two presents is significant. Slater's *Lexicon* gives two basic meanings for τυγχάνω: "attain to, hit, experience" and "happen to be, be."<sup>9</sup> LSJ provides also the same basic two meanings.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, τεύχω developed a more concrete sense of "construct" or "fashion."<sup>11</sup> From these definitions, it is clear that the basic meanings of τυγχάνω are close to being a verbal counterpart to the noun τύχη, whereas τεύχω has little connection in meaning with these other two words. It attained a more active connotation, while the other two words remained essentially passive, though τυγχάνω is morphologically active: "I achieve something because of a force beyond my control."

The word τύχη does not occur in Pindar with overwhelming frequency, but there are enough instances of it to allow a close reader to get a relatively clear idea of the word's meanings. These meanings share the same basic sense of "a bringing about by divine means," but the specifics of the usages show different shades of this meaning. Most frequently, τύχη is used to express the cause of a success, but it is occasionally used for the event itself or even the event's result. Less frequently it has the "bleached" meaning, common in Attic authors, of "chance." It is clear, though, as Strohm states, that "Tyche neben Moira in das Gefüge des Schicksalsvorstellungen eintritt und klar als ein Gegenüber des Menschen gesehen wird."<sup>12</sup> The notion of τύχη is certainly connected with divine fate.

The first sense for τύχη is that of "divine, fated cause." While celebrating an athlete's victory or the attainment of some good thing, Pindar often attributes the success to τύχη. This sense is well established. For instance, Papadi states: "Dass der Sieg bei einem Wettkampf sehr

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<sup>9</sup> Slater (1969) s.v. τυγχάνω.

<sup>10</sup> LSJ, s.v. τυγχάνω.

<sup>11</sup> Slater (1969) s.v. τεύχω.

<sup>12</sup> Strohm (1944) 97.

oft...der “τύχα” zugeschrieben wird, steht ausser Frage.”<sup>13</sup> Sometimes this τύχη is attributed explicitly to a divine authority, or further qualified by an adjective meaning “good,” but not always.<sup>14</sup> The inherent meaning of the word includes the sense that the outcome was beyond human control, and Pindar’s poetry makes it clear that the τύχη represents something very far from chance: a preordained conclusion that grants a happy outcome to a human being. These outcomes are always good in Pindar’s poetry, a fact that may be due to the subject matter of epinician odes. Since Pindar is celebrating success, he attributes the success to τύχη, which then represents the cause of fated happiness for a human.

For instance, in the victory of Asopichos of Orchememos, Pindar recounts that the κῶμος the conditions of εὐμενῆς τύχη under which the victory occurred:

ἰδοῖσα τόνδε κῶμον ἐπ’ εὐμενεῖ τύχα κοῦφα βιβῶντα<sup>15</sup>

[Thalia], who sees this band stepping lightly in good fortune....<sup>16</sup>

The adjective εὐμενῆς here states that Asopichos’ τύχη was “good,” which in turn implies that there is (or was) an alternative to his good fortune. It is unclear, though, if the contrast would be between the actual outcome (victory for Asopichos) and a potential failure, or between Asopichos’ actual victory and the actual defeat of the other competitors. The difference here is crucial. Was another outcome possible, or does τύχη simply refer to a fated occurrence that could not have been otherwise? Also, though the concept of “bad” τύχη does not occur in Pindar, would it be similar to “bad luck,” or to having a “bad fate?” As stated above, Pindar’s genre of aristocratic praise poetry does not allow for fate to be against his *laudandus*.

<sup>13</sup> Papadi (1994) 94.

<sup>14</sup> The formula ἀγαθῆ τύχη, used to begin inscriptions, is a useful counterexample. In this case, the author(s) of the inscription are more or less requesting τύχη, and insist that it be “good.” This does imply the existence of “bad” τύχη, but perhaps this context is not an exact parallel for the myths and praise found in Pindar’s poetry.

<sup>15</sup> My translations are adapted from Race (1997).

<sup>16</sup> *Olympian* 14.16.

Therefore, *τύχη* does not represent the means by which an actual victory was obtained versus a potential defeat, but the means by which a victor won his fated victory. The athletes who were defeated do not lose because of *τύχη*: this word can only suggest a kind of divine beneficence, through which a chosen person achieves a destined goal.

It is because of this that a qualifying adjective “good” is not common with *τύχη*, and only occurs in this one instance. However, the word is frequently accompanied by a word, such as *θεός*, that makes clear the divine power behind it. When Pindar describes Alcimedon’s wrestling victory in the Olympic Games, he states:

ὃς τύχα μὲν δαίμονος, ἀνορέας δ’ οὐκ ἀμπλακῶν  
ἐν τέτρασιν παίδων ἀπεθήκατο γυίοις  
νόστον ἔχθιστον.

who, by the *τύχη* of a god, and by not failing his strength, put the worst homecoming upon the limbs of four boys.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the *τύχη* that brought about Alcimedon’s victory is attributed to the beneficence of an unnamed god. Similarly, when Pindar recounts the myth of Adrastus in *Pythian* 8, he refers to divine *τύχη*:

“τύχα θεῶν  
ἀφίξεται λαῶ σὺν ἀβλαβεῖ  
Ἄβαντος εὐρυχόρους ἀγυίας”

By the *τύχη* of the gods he arrived with his men unharmed to the wide streets of Abas.<sup>18</sup>

The hero’s return and the safety of his men—both positive outcomes—are caused by *τύχη*.

There is one final instance in which *τύχη* is attributed to an unnamed divinity. When Pindar praises the natural ability of Alcidas’ family for boxing, he declares that their prowess came about by the *τύχη* of a god:

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<sup>17</sup> *Olympian* 8.67-9.

<sup>18</sup> *Pythian* 8.53-4.

σὺν θεοῦ δὲ τύχα  
 ἕτερον οὐ τίνα οἶκον ἀπεφάνατο πυγμαχία <πλεόνων>  
 ταμίαν στεφάνων μυχῶ Ἑλλάδος ἀπάσας.

By the τύχη of a god, boxing has shown no other house as the steward of crown in the inner chamber of all Greece.<sup>19</sup>

In all of these instances, Pindar attributes the τύχη to a generic divinity: τύχη δαίμονος, τύχη θεῶν, and τύχη θεοῦ. In these cases, simply acknowledging that τύχη is beyond human control seems to be Pindar's goal. Pindar once names a deity explicitly, and the effect here is slightly different:

ῥῆμα δ' ἐργμάτων χρονιώτερον βιοτεύει,  
 ὅτι κε σὺν Χαρίτων τύχα  
 γλῶσσα φρενὸς ἐξέλοι βαθείας

The word lives for a longer time than deeds, which the tongue takes from the depths of the mind by the τύχη of the Charities.<sup>20</sup>

The attribution of τύχη to the Χάριτες is significant. Since χάρις represents the ideal interplay between Pindar and the object of his praise, and the pleasure that comes with success, as well as the concomitant celebration,<sup>21</sup> the τύχη in this instance is inextricably linked to the formal conventions of the genre of praise poetry. So here τύχη, which is said to lead to the performance of songs celebrating deeds, comes from the same divine power that imbues the entire relationship between Pindar and his *laudandus*. Τύχη in this instance is used as the cause of the χάρις of Pindar's poetry.

In one further instance, Pindar makes τύχη dependent on a divine force, though this is not a god, but fate itself:

τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ σὺν τύχα πότμου σοφίας ἄριστον.

<sup>19</sup> *Nemean* 6.24.

<sup>20</sup> *Nemean* 4.6-8.

<sup>21</sup> A Pindar seminar taught by Greg Nagy is the source of this concept.

And being rich by the τύχη of fate is the best kind of wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

This quotation is taken from one of Pindar's many gnomic statements, and it sums up the function of τύχη in an idealized situation: it grants a person the happiness (and wealth) that has been fated to him. Here, τύχη functions as the cause of a person's wisdom, much in the same way that it can be the cause of an athlete's success.

Τύχη as a divine cause of good fortune, then, is prevalent in Pindar's victory odes. In other instances when the divine link is not explicitly expressed, it is still present. The function of τύχη is that of a cause beyond human control, so when Pindar advises the young Pytheas of Aegina to remember his trainer, Menander, and he refers to Menander's τύχη, this does not mean that Menander is the direct cause of victory, as the gods were in the case of τύχη θεῶν. This genitive is not possessive; it signifies that Menander has been the recipient of τύχη in the past and this continues in Pytheas' victory:

ἴσθι, γλυκεῖάν τοι Μενάνδρου σὺν τύχῃ μόνον ἀμοιβὰν  
ἐπάυρειο

Be mindful that you indeed obtained a sweet reward for toil by the τύχη of Menander.<sup>23</sup>

The τύχη here does not belong to Menander, but is sufficiently associated with him that his name is in the genitive. And since he did not take part in the actual competition, but only in the training of the young athlete, it is clear that Menander, who is skilled in training victorious athletes, has prevailed again by the same fate that allowed him to prevail before. The τύχη Μενάνδρου, then simply brings to mind the other occasions on which Menander's pupils have themselves won through the effect of τύχη.

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<sup>22</sup> *Pythian* 2.56.

<sup>23</sup> *Nemean* 5.48-9.

This sort of τύχη as the cause of repeated victory occurs elsewhere in Pindar’s epinician odes. It is also brought up in *Nemean* 10, when Pindar declares that the numerous wins of Theaios of Argos in the wrestling competition are because of τύχη:

ἐκράτησε δὲ καὶ ποθ’ Ἑλλανα στρατὸν Πυθῶνι, τύχα τε μολῶν  
καὶ τὸν Ἴσθμοῖ καὶ Νεμέα στέφανον.

At one time he defeated the Greek host in Pytho, coming with τύχη, and he won the garland at the Isthmus and Nemea.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, τύχη is the cause of Cleander of Aegina’s multiple victories, as Pindar states when describing why Cleander should be given a garland of myrtle:

ἐπεὶ νιν Ἀλκαθόου τ’ ἀγῶν σὺν τύχα  
ἐν Ἐπιδαύρῳ τε νεότας δέκετο πρίν

Since both the competition of Alcahous and the youth in Epidaurus received him before with τύχη.<sup>25</sup>

The habitual nature of these athletes’ victories makes it clear that their successes were not due to mere chance, but were preordained by a superhuman power. And τύχη is the word Pindar uses to refer to that particular cause that allows these athletes to achieve their divinely fated victories and then receive songs of praise from him.

The sense of “divine cause” for τύχη is sometimes taken even further, to the extent that it refers to not only the cause of success but also to the success itself. Twice in Pindar, this word is used where it can only have a sense of “achievement” or “accomplishment,” and not simply “cause of achievement.” First, when Pindar asks Zeus to grant happiness to the family of Xenophon of Corinth, he writes:

Ζεῦ τέλει’, αἰδῶ δίδοι καὶ τύχαν τερπνῶν γλυκεῖαν.

Zeus accomplisher, I pray that you grant the sweet accomplishment of pleasures.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Nemean* 10.25-6.

<sup>25</sup> *Isthmian* 8.67-8.

Here τύχη does not refer to a cause of pleasure, but to the actual attainment of success that allows Xenophon and his family to be happy. Also, in a request for a blessing upon the family of Aristomenes of Aegina, Pindar says:

θεῶν δ' ὄπιν  
ἄφθονον αἰτέω, Ξέναρκες, ὑμετέραις τύχαις.

I pray for the unjealous favor of the gods, Xenarkes, for your achievements.<sup>27</sup>

Both of these instances of τύχη as “accomplishment” occur in prayers for the blessing of the gods upon the families of victors. When Pindar wishes them continued success, he considers their forthcoming successes from a point of view that is itself in the future. Therefore, Pindar can use τύχη to refer not only to the cause of the success, but to the event itself. Since success in the competition is a result of τύχη, τύχη can come to represent the victory itself.

A similar sense is also found: that of τύχη as something good that results from a victory. For instance, Pindar declares that Telesicrates brings τύχη to his personified homeland, Cyrene, as a consequence of his win:

καί νυν ἐν Πυθῶνί νιν ἀγαθέα Καρνειάδα  
υἱὸς εὐθαλεῖ συνέμειξε τύχα·  
ἔνθα νικάσσαις ἀνέφανε Κυράναν.

And now in holy Pytho, the son of Carneidas has mixed her [Cyrene] with flourishing τύχη: having won there, he magnifies Cyrene.<sup>28</sup>

The implication is that since Telesicrates' victory was due to τύχη, it will also bring τύχη to his homeland. If τύχη can only be the cause of a victory, the logic here is not the strongest. Since τύχη is beyond the control of humans, there is no way to change the successes that are preordained or for a human to give another human τύχη. But if τύχη can also represent the result of that victory (success, happiness, and a song from Pindar), then this usage proves to be

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<sup>26</sup> *Olympian* 13.115.

<sup>27</sup> *Pythian*. 8.71-2.

<sup>28</sup> *Pythian* 9.71-3.

no difficulty. In fact, this is parallel to the passage quoted above from *Nemean* 4, which makes τύχη the possession of the Χάριτες. Pindar declares that Cyrene now has τύχη, in the sense that it now has all the trappings that accompany a victory, including one of his odes.

The final meaning for τύχη in Pindar is a neutral meaning of “chance.” This meaning is rare, and in a strict sense would require that the outcome of the event is not preordained and that there is no discernible reason for the result. One possible instance of τύχη having this sense occurs in Tiresias’ prophesy to Heracles.

ὁ δέ οἱ φράζει καὶ παντὶ στρατῶ, ποίαις ὁμιλήσει τύχαις

And he [Tiresias] told him [Hercules] and all the people what kind of τύχαι he would meet with.<sup>29</sup>

In this case, however, though τύχαι refers to future events that are as yet undetermined, the context of the remark makes it seem that Tiresias is foreseeing the future, or telling Heracles his fate. Thus, τύχη in this instance has a sense of “fated outcome.” This usage of τύχη in a prophesy is the same as the use of the verb τυγχάνω in similar circumstances, as is discussed below.

There is one other instance in Pindar’s epinician odes in which τύχη may have a meaning of “chance.” This is when Pindar is discussing the myth of Ajax in *Isthmian* 4. The gnomic statement Pindar uses to introduce the myth is:

ἔστιν δ’ ἀφάνεια τύχας καὶ μαρναμένων,  
πρὶν τέλος ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι·  
τῶν τε γὰρ καὶ τῶν διδοῖ

There is an uncertainty of τύχη, even for those who work hard, before they reach the ultimate goal, for it gives some of this and some of that.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Nemean* 1.61.

<sup>30</sup> *Isthmian* 4.31-3.

This passage, and especially its final line, implies “chance” as the meaning of τύχη, which is personified here. The future is unknowable, and it is only when looking back on past events that humans can say for certain that something was fated to happen. But Pindar’s tale is told from the point of view of human beings, who cannot know what the future holds, whether good or ill. This is especially important in the story of Ajax, who is unable to reconcile his status with his deeds and therefore commits suicide, but still is elevated to the status of a cult hero in later Greek society. Nonetheless, this passage, with its semi-personified τύχη, seems to contradict the conclusion made above, that τύχη is never bad in Pindar. But as the next example helps to show, τύχη does not refer to a bad outcome simply because the outcome is unknowable. In fact, Ajax’s status as a cult hero after his death can be seen as a positive outcome, and this is the implication that arises from Pindar’s use of τύχη in this situation.

This personification of τύχη is taken further in another ode, which Pindar begins with an invocation to the goddess Τύχη:

λίσσομαι, παῖ Ζηνὸς Ἐλευθερίου,  
 Ἰμέραν εὐρυσθένε’ ἀμφιπόλει, σώτειρα Τύχα  
 τὴν γὰρ ἐν πόντῳ κυβερνῶνται θοαί  
 νᾶες, ἐν χέρσῳ τε λαιψηροὶ πόλεμοι  
 κάγοραὶ βουλαφόροι. αἶ γε μὲν ἀνδρῶν  
 πόλλ’ ἄνω, τὰ δ’ αὖ κάτω  
 ψεύδη μεταμῶνια τάμνοισαι κυλίνδοντ’ ἔλπιδες·

σύμβολον δ’ οὐ πώ τις ἐπιχθονίων  
 πίστον ἀμφὶ πράξιος ἐσσομένας εὖρεν θεόθεν,  
 τῶν δὲ μελλόντων τετύφλωνται φραδαί·  
 πολλὰ δ’ ἀνθρώροις παρὰ γνώμαν ἔπεσεν  
 ἔμπαλιν μὲν τέρψιος, οἱ δ’ ἀνιαραῖς  
 ἀντικύσαντες ζάλαις  
 ἐσλὸν βαθὺ πῆματος ἐν μικρῷ πεδάμειψαν χρόνῳ

I pray to you, Savior Τύχη, daughter of Zeus the Deliverer, guard Himera with its broad might. For swift ships on the sea are steered by you, as well as rapid battles and counsel-producing gatherings on land. The hopes of men many times roll up, and again roll down as they cut through vain falsehoods.

No one on earth has yet found a trustworthy sign of a forthcoming deed from the gods: their plans for future things are invisible: many things befall humans against their judgment, sometimes opposite their delight, but some who have encountered terrible storms have exchanged suffering for profound good in a short time.<sup>31</sup>

This invocation makes up more than half of the short poem and clearly expresses a conception of τύχη as a goddess who takes an active role in determining outcomes for humans. But though Pindar refers again to how things can go well or poorly for people and people cannot know how their lives will end up, the goddess Τύχη is not unknowing. In fact, it is simply the blindness (τυφλότης) of humans to the workings of the gods that makes them invisible (τετύφλωνται). The goddess is shown as one who assists humans: guiding ships, battles, and gatherings, and nowhere is the connection explicitly made between the goddess Τύχη and a bad outcome. A person, encountering something bad and not knowing its provenance, may curse blind chance, but the divine Τύχη is not the cause. The inscrutability of the plans of the gods does not mean that there is not divine order and causality.

As has been shown, the noun τύχη in Pindar refers to human accomplishment achieved through a fated divine plan, or to the consequences or accompaniments of that accomplishment. The successes enjoyed by Pindar's *laudandi* and the odes he composed to commemorate them have all come about because of fate, and therefore τύχη is a way to express this kind of causality that is beyond the control—and sometimes beyond the comprehension—of mortals. Pindar's poetry is focused on the concept of praise, but since the true agent behind the athletes' victories and successes was actually the τύχη of the gods, it is fitting that he reminds the victors of what was believed to be the actual driving force behind human successes and happiness.

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<sup>31</sup> *Olympian* 12.1-12a.

Since the verb τυγχάνω is closely connected to the noun τύχη, an investigation of its uses in Pindar’s epinician odes will also help to understand Pindar’s attribution of causality and divine preordination. The basic meanings of the verb τυγχάνω follow those of τύχη. Most commonly, it means “achieve” or “accomplish,” but in a few instances it also has a bleached meaning of “happen.” These instances are few, though, and the most often, the word makes it clear that a result was achieved through superhuman providence, through τύχη.

The first meaning of τυγχάνω is very common, and mirrors the most common meaning of τύχη: to “achieve” something, whether winning an athletic event or receiving praise from Pindar. This usage could be an outgrowth of the common sense of this verb in Homer: “hit a target,” when describing archery in particular.<sup>32</sup> For instance, this sense is present in the description of Laodocus’ bow in *Iliad* 4:

αὐτίκ’ ἐσύλα τόξον ἐϋξοον ἰξάλου αἰγὸς  
 ἀγρίου, ὃν ῥά ποτ’ αὐτὸς ὑπὸ στέρνοιο τυχήσας  
 πέτρης ἐκβαίνοντα δεδεγμένος ἐν προδοκῆσι  
 βεβλήκει πρὸς στήθος.

Immediately he uncovered his polished bow made from a wild ibex, which once he struck below the breast as it climbed down a rock while he waited in ambush and wounded it in the chest.<sup>33</sup>

The idea present in ὑπὸ στέρνοιο τυχήσας is repeated in βεβλήκει πρὸς στήθος, which makes it clear that τυγχάνω here means “hit a target,” which in this instance is identical to “achieve a goal,” since the goal of the shooting is to hit the target.

Pindar retains this sense of τυγχάνω but uses it metaphorically to refer to his poetry:

ἔλπομαι  
 μέγα εἰπὼν σκοποῦ ἅντα τυχεῖν ὥτ’ ἀπὸ τόξου ἰεῖς

As I praise, I hope to make an impact on the target, as if I shot from a bow.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Chantraine (2000) s.v. τυγχάνω sets out this meaning explicitly: “le mot ... indique que l’arme atteint le but visé et s’oppose à ἀρματάνω.

<sup>33</sup> *Iliad* 4.105-8.

Here, “hitting the target” is a metaphor for composing convincing and appropriate praise poetry. Pindar means to achieve his goal of fulfilling his obligations to his *laudandus* just as an archer hits his mark.

When this metaphorical sense is extended further, it can become “achieve a goal” in a more abstract sense. This then can be applied to more varied and diverse scenarios to embody the meaning of “achieve” or “accomplish,” the same meaning that Pindar can also express by using the noun *τύχη* to express the cause of a victory. Therefore, when he mentions Theron’s victory and corresponding song of praise, Pindar uses the verb *τυγχάνω* to express the causal relationship between winning an athletic event and having an epinician poem composed:

πρέπει τὸν Αἰνησιδάμου  
ἐγκωμίων τε μελέων λυρᾶν τε τυγχανέμεν

It is fitting for the son of Aenesidamus to achieve encomia and tuneful lyres.<sup>35</sup>

The sense of “fittingness” in *πρέπει* makes it clear that *τυγχάνω* refers to an accomplishment that was not due to chance or happenstance, but was, in the grand scheme of things, fated to happen. Likewise, when referring to Hippocleas’ victory in the Diaulos, Pindar says that the victory was fated, and again uses *τυγχάνω*:

ζῶων ἔτι νεαρὸν  
κατ’ αἴσαν υἷὸν ἴδη τυχόντα στεφάνων Πυθίων.

While still alive he may see his young son win Pythian crowns according to fate.<sup>36</sup>

The juxtaposition of *τυχόντα* and *κατ’ αἴσαν* here is striking. One cannot “happen upon” something according to fate unless it was preordained. Thus, Hippocleas’ victory is certainly not a chance occurrence, but was achieved as a result of the *τύχη* of a divine power.

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<sup>34</sup> *Nemean* 6.27-28a.

<sup>35</sup> *Olympian* 2.46-7.

<sup>36</sup> *Pythian* 10.25-6.

This sense of τυγχάνω is frequently employed in Pindar's many gnomic statements. It is suited to this type of statement because it has the proper semantics to emphasize Pindar's statement of "what is good" while reinforcing that humans do not come upon good things randomly, but by divine cause. For instance in *Pythian* 1, Pindar writes about what is best for seafarers:

ναυσιφορήτοις δ' ἀνδράσι πρῶτα χάρις  
 ἔς πλῶν ἀρχομένοις πομπάϊον ἐλθεῖν οὖρον· εἰκότα γάρ  
 καὶ τελευτᾶ φερτέρου νόστου τυχεῖν.

The first good tidings for seafaring men who are beginning to sail is when a favoring breeze comes, for it is likely that they will obtain a better homecoming in the end.<sup>37</sup>

The divine sign of the πομπάϊος οὖρος emphasizes that the φέρτερος νόστος is not achieved by chance, but that the seafarers obtain it as the result of τύχη. Also in *Pythian* 10 a gnomic statement involves τυγχάνω:

καὶ γάρ  
 ἑτέροις ἑτέρων ἔρωτες ἔκνιξαν φρένας·  
 τῶν δ' ἕκαστος ὀρούει,  
 τυχῶν κεν ἀρπαλέαν σχέθοι φροντίδα τὰν παρ ποδός

For surely various desires drive the minds of various people; each rushes at, and, obtaining it, may possess the longed-for nearby concern.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, obtaining happiness, whether this is represented as a φέρτερος νόστος or a ἀρπαλέα φροντίς, is expressed through the use of a form of τυγχάνω. This verb signifies the divinely-guided attainment of a happier life. Indeed, τυγχάνω sometimes seems to be the key to happiness in Pindar's conception:

φυᾶ δ' ἕκαστος διαφέρομεν βιοτὰν λαχόντες  
 ὁ μὲν τά, τὰ δ' ἄλλοι τυχεῖν δ' ἔν' ἀδύνατον  
 εὐδαιμονίαν ἅπασαν ἀνελόμενον

<sup>37</sup> *Pythian* 1.33-5.

<sup>38</sup> *Pythian* 10.59-62.

We all differ in nature by our allotted life: this for one, that for others. But it is impossible for one person to obtain all happiness by taking it up.<sup>39</sup>

Though this passage states that a person cannot obtain complete happiness, the verb used for “attain happiness” is τυγχάνω. And here happiness itself is essentially the object of τυγχάνω. The juxtaposition of τυγχάνω with λαγχάνω is also significant. The latter verb is clearly connected to concepts of divine preordination and fate (cf. Λάχαισις, one of the Fates), and its use here bolsters the connection between τυγχάνω and fate.

One obtains not only happiness via τυγχάνω, but also wisdom:

εἰ δὲ νόω τις ἔχει θνατῶν ἀλαθείας ὁδόν, χρή πρὸς μακάρων  
τυγχάνοντ' εὖ πασχέμεν.

If some mortal knows the path of truth, he must be in good stead, since he obtained [it] from the gods.<sup>40</sup>

The involvement of the gods in this passage reinforces the notion that τυγχάνω (and τύχη) are superhuman, and express the preordained conclusions to present events. The gods have power and knowledge beyond that of mortals, and if they allow τις θνατῶν to obtain something, it was certainly out of the mortal's control.

In the previous examples, the verb τυγχάνω had an object that was clearly associated with human happiness as bestowed by the gods: an athletic victory, a song of praise, wisdom, or even εὐδαιμονία itself. Sometimes, though, τυγχάνω is used absolutely, without an object. For instance, in *Olympian 2*, Pindar makes a gnomic statement about τυγχάνω:

τὸ δὲ τυχεῖν  
πειρώμενον ἀγωνίας δυσφρονᾶν παραλύει

τυχεῖν releases from distresses one who takes part in competition.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Nemean* 7.54-6.

<sup>40</sup> *Pythian* 3.103-4.

<sup>41</sup> *Olympian* 2.51.

This sentiment, in an ode in praise of Theron, is at first at odds with the sense of τυγχάνω established above. There is no explicit object for τυχεῖν; it is simply the act of “achieving” that releases one from distresses. Perhaps this could be translated more freely as “accomplishment makes competition worthwhile.” Here it is assured that τυγχάνω does not include the option of a negative outcome: when used in an unmarked way, it has positive semantics.

The abstract sense of “accomplish” without an object occurs again in Pindar:

εἰ δὲ τύχη τις ἔρδων, μελίφρον' αἰτίαν  
 ῥοαῖσι Μοισᾶν ἐνέβαλε.

If someone accomplishes [something] while putting forth effort, he casts a soul-pleasing impetus into the streams of the Muses.<sup>42</sup>

Here too the lack of an object makes the sense of τυγχάνω more general. Its use in an epinician ode certainly suggests that the object would be an athletic victory which then gives Pindar occasion to write a song. But the generality of the statement leaves the possibility open that the object may be anything that a person achieves: when people achieve fated successes, it is the duty of poets like Pindar to praise them.

Since Pindar’s poems of praise have their basis in someone else’s victory, they too ultimately spring from τύχη. Therefore, when Pindar composes his poem in praise of Melissus of Thebes, he hopes that, like an athletic victor, he will obtain via τυγχάνω a divinely favored outcome by meeting with favorable Muses:

προφρόνων Μοισᾶν τύχοιμεν, κείνον ἄψαι πυρσὸν ὕμνων.

Would that I meet with favorable Muses to kindle this fire of hymns.<sup>43</sup>

This is an instance of Pindar again employing his common analogy of creating a poem to competing in an athletic event. The verb τυγχάνω, then, is not literally appropriate, but it is

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<sup>42</sup> *Nemean* 7.11.

<sup>43</sup> *Isthmian* 4.43.

used in an extended, metaphorical sense to apply to Pindar’s “meeting with” something that is not exactly on the same semantic level as a victory or a homecoming. Nevertheless, favorable Muses are a divine good, and thus they are a proper object of τυγχάνω in the sense of “accomplish.”

Sometimes, as with τύχη, the sense of τυγχάνω becomes further bleached, so that it no longer has the strong sense of “accomplish (something good), but merely means “meet with.” A possible instance of this meaning comes in Chiron’s answer to Apollo about the nymph Cyrene:

ἔν τε θεοῖς τοῦτο κἀνθρώποις ὁμῶς  
αἰδέοντ’, ἀμφανδὸν ἀδείας τυχεῖν τὸ πρῶτον εὐνᾶς.

Among gods and humans likewise, they shy from this: openly obtaining a sweet bed for the first time.<sup>44</sup>

Here, though most male gods (and humans) would consider sharing a ἀδεία εὐνή with a nymph to be a good thing, it is something that men and gods shy away from. Thus, in this instance, τυγχάνω does not contain purely its positive sense, and allows the possibility of a negative outcome.

A similar usage occurs in *Isthmian* 8, when the gods are discussing what they should do with Thetis, who will bear a son more powerful than his father. Themis’ advice to the other gods contains a usage of τυγχάνω:

“βροτέων δὲ λεχέων τυχοῖσα  
υἶὸν εἰσιδέτω θανόντ’ ἐν πολέμῳ”

Having obtained a mortal bed, let her [Thetis] see her son die in war.<sup>45</sup>

Here the union between Peleus and Thetis cannot be viewed as an unambiguous good, but it is presented by a goddess in the style of prophesy. Achilles is fated to be born and then to die at

<sup>44</sup> *Pythian* 9.41.

<sup>45</sup> *Isthmian* 8.36.

Troy, and this occurs as a result of τυγχάνω. The divine connotations of the word are thereby shown once again, and, since the statement of Themis does in fact come to pass, this usage of τυγχάνω is similar to the use of τύχη in the prophesy of Tiresias to Heracles in *Nemean* 1.

In another ode, Pindar discusses the negative example of the φθονεροί, and how they destroy themselves by overreaching. He writes that they end up wounding themselves

πρὶν ὅσα φροντίδι μητίονται τυχεῖν.

before they meet with what they plot for in their minds.<sup>46</sup>

Here, though τυγχάνω is used to refer to things that the φθονεροί desire, the outcome is certainly not good—and it since their actions are not in step with the gods' plans, what they wish to achieve (via τυγχάνω) is not what they actually meet with. One could say that their failure is a divinely fated outcome, as in the marriage of Peleus and Thetis or the deeds of Heracles, but it is certainly not a positive fate, since their desire is against the will of the gods and they do not achieve what they desire.

In a minority of occurrences in Pindar, τυγχάνω has its more neutral sense of “happen (to be).” This is a very common usage in other authors, and it is the first to be learned by any modern student learning about the complementary use of the participle in Greek. One usage that is entirely bleached of positive or negative connotations occurs near the beginning of *Pythian* 4. When Pindar states that Apollo was currently in residence at Pytho, he uses a double negative:

οὐκ ἀποδάμου Ἀπόλλωνος τυχόντος

Apollo not happening to be out of town....<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Pythian* 2.92.

<sup>47</sup> *Pythian* 4.5.

Here τυχόντος is used with little sense other than that of a simple copula. This sense recurs one more time only, when Pindar describes the reaction of Alcmena’s nurses to the feat of the infant Heracles and the snakes:

ἐκ δ’ ἄρ’ ἄτλατον δέος  
πλάξε γυναῖκας, ὅσαι τύχον Ἄλκμήνας ἀρήγοισαι λέχει.

Unendurable fear hit the women, who happened to be helping at Alcmena’s bed.<sup>48</sup>

In these two passages, τυγχάνω has neither a sense of divine provenance nor of a good outcome. It is a purely neutral usage that is likely derived from a bleached use of the more positively-charged uses in other passages of Pindar.

Τυγχάνω as “happen,” though, does not have to be completely bleached of these meanings that have been found in the majority of the instances of this verb. For instance, in another gnomic statement, Pindar states:

τοῦτο δ’ ἀμάχανον εὐρεῖν,  
ὅ τι νῦν ἐν καὶ τελευτᾷ φέρτατον ἀνδρὶ τυχεῖν.

It is unworkable to find this out: what now and in the end is best to happen to a man.<sup>49</sup>

Here, the human is the object of the verb, rather than the subject. So instead of a person “obtaining” something, the thing itself “obtains” for a person. This usage of “obtain” in the sense of “happen” or “occur” is jargon in Modern English, but it is a legitimate sense of τυγχάνω. Pindar does not privilege this meaning, though. Since the example above discusses what is best to happen to a person, it removes all responsibility for the outcome from the person, and places culpability elsewhere. But the fact that this use of τυγχάνω occurs in an epinician ode just prior to a telling of the myth of Tleptolemus, whose successes were preceded

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<sup>48</sup> *Nemean* 1.48-9.

<sup>49</sup> *Olympian* 7.25-6.

by problems, shows how, like with τύχη, the workings of the gods may be inscrutable, but they often lead to happiness for humans.

The verb τυγχάνω seems to have a slightly wider semantic application in Pindar than does its corresponding noun τύχη. There are more bleached usages of the verb, which are not present for the noun, but overall, most instances of the verb contain the same sense of “divinely preordained attainment of happiness.” These two words, then, are key to an understanding of how Greeks of Pindar’s time conceptualized the causes behind human happiness, as well as how these conceptions were expressed in Pindar’s art. It is this divine, preordained τύχη that allows an athlete to win, a victory ode to be commissioned, and sailors to come home unscathed. For Pindar’s audience, it is reassuring and self-affirming to hear that their successes and happiness come from a beneficent force beyond their control. Though it may sound like shallow praise to modern ears, Pindar is in actuality reminding his *laudandi* that they are following the path of destiny, and that they are fulfilling what has already been decided.

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