Ode 2

Strophe 1

Let me be reverent in the ways of right,

Lowly the paths I journey on;

Let all my words and actions keep

The laws of the pure universe

From highest Heaven handed down.

For heaven is their bright nurse,

Those generations of the realm of light

Ah, never of mortal kind were they begot,

Nor are they slaves of memory, last in sleep:

Their Father is greater than Time and ages not.

Antistrophe 1

The tyrant is a child of pride

Who drinks from his great sickening cup

Recklessness and vanity

Until from his high crest headlong

He plummets to the dust of hope.

That strong man is not strong.

But let no fair ambition be denied;

May God protect the wrestler for the State

In government, in comely policy,

Who will fear God, and on His ordinance wait.

Strophe 2

Haughtiness and the high hand of disdain

Tempt and outrage God’s holy law;

And any mortal who dares hold

No immortal Power in awe

Will be caught up in a net of pain:

The price for which his levity is sold.

Let each man take due earnings, then,

And keep his hands from holy things,

And from blasphemy stand apart—

Else the crackling blast of heaven

Blows on his head, and on his desperate heart;

Though fools will honor impious men,

In their cities no tragic poet sings.

Antistrophe 2

Shall we lose faith in Delphi’s obscurities,

We who have heard the world’s core

Discredited, and the sacred wood

Of Zeus at Elis praised no more?

The deeds and the strange prophecies

Must make a pattern yet to be understood.

Zeus, if indeed you are lord of all,

Throned in light over night and day,

Mirror this in your endless mind:

Our masters call the oracle

Words on the wind, and the Delphic vision blind!

Their hearts no longer know Apollo,

And reverence for the gods has died away.