

BELLARIA LXI



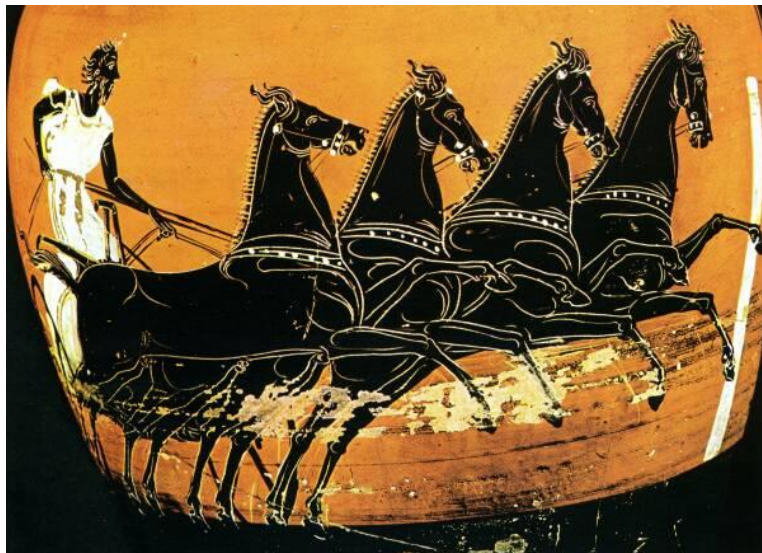
OLYMPIC INTERLUDE I

Introduction

The ancient sources are full of information about the ancient Olympics. In this and the next *Bellaria*, a selection will be offered. We start with the first European record of a chariot race (everything in Homer is the first written record of something European). As usual, there is dirty work at the cross-roads.

DOING A LEWIS HAMILTON

Homer *Iliad* 23.401-447



c. 400 BC: at the turning point

Patroclus' funeral games featured a chariot race. Here the young Antilochus' team is hot on the hooves of Menelaus's.

Antilochus shouted at his father's horses: 'Run on, you two! Give it everything, now! I'm not asking you to catch that pair ahead, **405** warlike Diomedes' horses. Athene has just given them a new turn of speed and won him the glory. But catch Menelaus' pair and don't get left behind by them. Quick! Or the horse Aethe will pour scorn all over you—and she a mare! Why are you hanging back, my fine horses?

Ἀντίλοχος δ' ἵπποισιν ἐκέκλετο πατρός ἐοῖο·
'ἔμβητον καὶ σφῶϊ· τιταίνεται ὄττι τάχιστα.
ἦτοι μὲν κείνοισιν ἐριζέμεν οὐ τι κελεύω
Τυδεΐδew ἵπποισι δαΐφρονος, οἷσιν Ἀθήνη **405**
νῦν ὤρεξε τάχος καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶ κῦδος ἔθηκεν·
ἵππους δ' Ἀτρεΐδαο κιχάνετε, μὴ δὲ λίπησθον,
καρπαλίμως, μὴ σφῶϊν ἐλεγχείην καταχεύη
Αἴθη θῆλυς ἐοῦσα· τί ἢ λείπεσθε φέριστοι;

The horses respond to Antilochus' threat

410 I tell you bluntly and I mean it—no more of Nestor's tender loving care for you! He'll slit your throats without a moment's hesitation if you take it easy and leave us with a smaller prize. So get after them! Come on! Flat out! **415** Trust me to find some way of slipping past Menelaus where the track is narrow. I shan't miss my chance.' So he spoke, and his horses, taking their master's threat to heart, put on speed for a while.

ὦδε γὰρ ἐξερέω, καὶ μὴν τετελεσμένον ἔσται· **410**
οὐ σφῶϊν κομιδὴ παρὰ Νέστορι ποιμένι λαῶν
ἔσσειται, αὐτίκα δ' ὕμμε κατακτενεῖ ὄξεϊ χαλκῶ,
αἶ κ' ἀποκηδήσαντε φερώμεθα χεῖρον ἄεθλον.
ἀλλ' ἐφομαρτεῖτον καὶ σπεύδεται ὄττι τάχιστα·
ταῦτα δ' ἐγὼν αὐτὸς τεχνήσομαι ἠδὲ νοήσω **415**
στενωπῶ ἐν ὁδῶ παραδύμεναι, οὐδέ με λήσει·
ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δὲ ἄνακτος ὑποδείσαντες ὁμοκλήν
μᾶλλον ἐπιδραμέτην ὀλίγον χρόνον ...



c. 580 BC: keen spectators

Antilochus takes a diversion

Very soon, warlike Antilochus saw a place where the sunken track grew narrow. **420** It ran through a gully: water piled up by the winter rains had carried part of it away and deepened the whole pass. Menelaus was picking a course through it, making it difficult for anyone to come alongside. But Antilochus steered off the track altogether and gave chase along a slight diversion. **425** Menelaus was alarmed and shouted at him: 'Antilochus, this is stupid driving! Slow down! The track's narrow here. There will soon be more room to pass. Watch out you don't hit my chariot and wreck us both.'

αἶψα δ' ἔπειτα

στεῖνος ὁδοῦ κοίλης ἴδεν Ἀντίλοχος μενεχάρμης.
ῥωχμὸς ἔην γαίης, ἧ χειμέριον ἄλὲν ὕδωρ **420**
ἐξέρρηξεν ὁδοῖο, βάθυνε δὲ χῶρον ἅπαντα·
τῆ ρ' εἶχεν Μενέλαος ἀματροχιάς ἀλεείνων.
Ἀντίλοχος δὲ παρατρέψας ἔχε μώνυχας ἵππους
ἐκτὸς ὁδοῦ, ὀλίγον δὲ παρακλίνας ἐδίωκεν.
Ἄτρεΐδης δ' ἔδεισε καὶ Ἀντιλόχῳ ἐγεγώνει· **425**
'Ἀντίλοχ' ἀφραδέως ἱππάζεις, ἀλλ' ἄνεχ' ἵππους·
στεινωπὸς γὰρ ὁδός, τάχα δ' εὐρυτέρη παρελάσσει·
μή πως ἀμφοτέρους δηλήσει ἄρματι κύρσας.'



Hot pursuit

Menelaus gives way

So he spoke, but Antilochus drove them on faster than ever, **430** hurrying them on with the whip and pretending he had not heard him. They both ran on for about the distance a discus will carry when a young man releases it with a swing of the arm to test his strength. Then Menelaus' pair gave way and fell back. He eased the pace himself on purpose, **435** fearing the horses might collide on the track and tip over the light chariots, in which case their masters, through their eagerness to win, would find themselves rolling about in the dust.

ὡς ἔφατ', Ἀντίλοχος δ' ἔτι καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἔλαυνε
κέντρῳ ἐπισπέρχων ὡς οὐκ αἶοντι ἐοικώς. **430**
ὅσσα δὲ δίσκου οὖρα κατωμαδίιο πέλονται,
ὄν τ' αἰζηὸς ἀφῆκεν ἀνὴρ πειρώμενος ἥβης,
τόσσον ἐπιδραμέτην· αἱ δ' ἠρώησαν ὀπίσσω
Ἄτρεΐδεω· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐκὼν μεθέηκεν ἐλαύνειν

μή πως συγκύρσειαν ὁδῶ ἔνι μώνυχες ἵπποι, 435
δίφρους τ' ἀνστρέψειαν ἐϋπλεκέας, κατὰ δ' αὐτοὶ
ἐν κονίησι πέσοιεν ἐπειγόμενοι περὶ νίκης.

Menelaus curses Antilochus and urges his horses on

Auburn-haired Menelaus shouted abuse at him and said: 'Antilochus, you're the most appalling driver in the world! 440 Go to hell! We Greeks were mistaken to think you had any sense. You won't carry off the prize till you've answered on oath for this affair.' With these words Menelaus called out to his horses: 'No holding back! Don't stand there feeling sorry for yourselves! That pair ahead of you will tire in the leg far sooner 445 than you. They are neither of them as young as they were.' So he spoke, and his horses, taking their master's orders to heart, ran on more strongly and soon closed the gap on the other pair.

τὸν καὶ νεικείων προσέφη ξανθὸς Μενέλαος·
'Ἀντίλοχ', οὐ τις σεῖο βροτῶν ὀλωότερος ἄλλος·
ἔρρ', ἐπεὶ οὐ σ' ἔτυμόν γε φάμεν πεπνῦσθαι Ἀχαιοί. 440
ἀλλ' οὐ μὰν οὐδ' ὥς ἄτερ ὄρκου οἴση ἄεθλον.'
ὥς εἰπὼν ἵπποισιν ἐκέκλετο φώνησέν τε·
'μή μοι ἐρύκεσθον μὴ δ' ἔστατον ἀχνυμένω κῆρ.
φθήσονται τούτοισι πόδες καὶ γοῦνα καμόντα
ἢ ὑμῖν· ἄμφω γὰρ ἀτέμβονται νεότητος.' 445
ὥς ἔφαθ', οἱ δὲ ἄνακτος ὑποδείσαντες ὁμοκλήν
μᾶλλον ἐπιδραμέτην, τάχα δέ σφισιν ἄγχι γένοντο.

ENDURING THE OLYMPICS

Epictetus *Discourses* 1.6.23-28

Olympia had no facilities for spectators at all. They just camped out in the surroundings. The stoic Epictetus draws a lesson from the discomfort.



But [you may say] 'There are some things disagreeable and troublesome in life.' And are there none in Olympia? Are you not scorched? Are you not pressed by a crowd? Are you not without comfortable means of bathing? Are you not wet when it rains? Have you not abundance of noise, clamour, and other disagreeable things? But I

suppose that setting all these things off against the magnificence of the spectacle, you bear and endure.

— ἀλλὰ γίνεται τινα ἀηδῆ καὶ χαλεπὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ. — ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ δ' οὐ γίνεται; οὐ καυματίζεσθε; οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε; οὐ κακῶς λούεσθε; οὐ καταβρέχεσθε, ὅταν βρέχη; θορύβου δὲ καὶ βοῆς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων χαλεπῶν οὐκ ἀπολαύετε; ἀλλ' οἶμαι ὅτι ταῦτα πάντα ἀντιτιθέντες πρὸς τὸ ἀξιόλογον τῆς θέας φέρετε καὶ ἀνέχεσθε.

WHY GREEKS COMPETED NAKED

Pausanias 1.44.1



Naked runners

This explains why athletes competed naked (others say a Spartan was responsible).

Near Coroebus is buried Orsippus [from Megara] who won the footrace at Olympia by running naked when all his competitors wore loinclothes according to ancient custom. They say also that Orsippus when general afterwards annexed some of the neighbouring territory. My own opinion is that at Olympia he intentionally let the loincloth slip off him, realizing that a naked man can run more easily than one so encumbered.

Κοροΐβου δὲ τέθαπται πλησίον Ὀρσιππος, ὃς περιεζωσμένων ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι κατὰ δὴ παλαιὸν ἔθος τῶν ἀθλητῶν Ὀλύμπια ἐνίκα στάδιον δραμῶν γυμνός. φασὶ δὲ καὶ στρατηγοῦντα ὕστερον τὸν Ὀρσιππον ἀποτεμέσθαι χώραν τῶν προσοίκων· δοκῶ δὲ οἱ καὶ ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ τὸ περίζωμα ἐκόντι περιρρυῆναι, γνόντι ὡς ἀνδρὸς περιεζωσμένου δραμεῖν ῥάων ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ γυμνός.

THE DEBATE BETWEEN ANACHARSIS AND SOLON

Lucian *Anacharsis* 9-14

The satirist Lucian here invents a debate about the Games between the (probably) invented Scythian philosopher Anacharsis and the Athenian political reformer Solon. Anacharsis is bewildered that the Athenians enjoy watching their young kicking lumps out of each other and awarding prizes for it.



Crowning glory

9 An. Ah, and what are the prizes, now?

So. At Olympia a wreath of wild olive, at the Isthmus one of pine, at Nemea of celery, at Pytho some of the God's sacred apples, and at our Panathenaea oil pressed from the temple olives. What are you laughing at, Anacharsis? Are the prizes too small?

An. Oh dear no; your prize-list is most imposing; the givers may well plume themselves on their munificence, and the competitors be monstrous keen on winning. Who would not go through this amount of preparatory toil, and take his chance of a choking or a dislocation, for apples or celery? It is obviously impossible for any one who has a fancy to a supply of apples, or a wreath of celery or pine, to get them without a mud plaster on his face, or a kick in the stomach from his competitor.

Ἀνάχαρσις

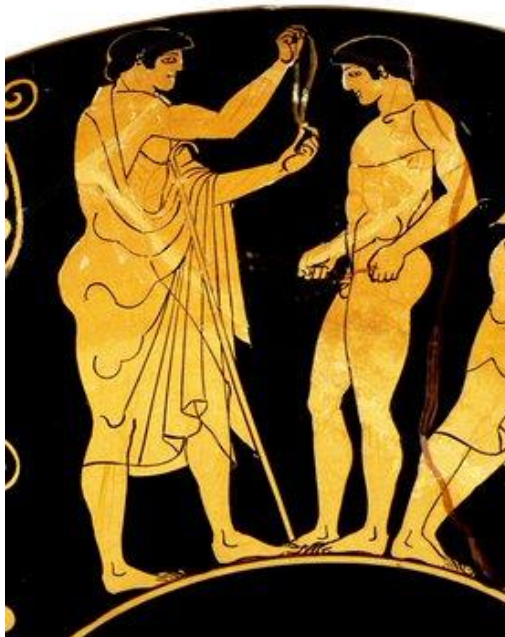
9 τὰ δὲ ἄθλα τίνα ὑμῖν ταῦτά ἐστιν;

Σόλων

Ὀλυμπίασι μὲν στέφανος ἐκ κοτίνου, Ἴσθμοὶ δὲ ἐκ πίτυος, ἐν Νεμέᾳ δὲ σελίνων πεπλεγμένος, Πυθοῖ δὲ μήλα τῶν ἱερῶν τοῦ θεοῦ, παρ' ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς Παναθηναίοις τὸ ἔλαιον τὸ ἐκ τῆς μορίας. τί ἐγέλασας, ὦ Ἀνάχαρσι; ἢ διότι μικρά σοι εἶναι ταῦτα δοκεῖ;

Ἀνάχαρσις

οὐκ, ἀλλὰ πάνσεμνα, ὦ Σόλων, κατέλεξας τὰ ἄθλα καὶ ἄξια τοῖς τε διαθεῖσιν αὐτὰ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἐπὶ τῇ μεγαλοδωρεᾷ καὶ τοῖς ἀγωνισταῖς αὐτοῖς ὑπερεσπουδακῆναι περὶ τὴν ἀναίρεσιν τῶν τηλικούτων, ὥστε μήλων ἕνεκα καὶ σελίνων τοσαῦτα προπονεῖν καὶ κινδυνεύειν ἀγχομένους πρὸς ἀλλήλων καὶ κατακλωμένους, ὡς οὐκ ἔνδον ἀπραγμόνως εὐπορῆσαι μήλων ὄτῳ ἐπιθυμία ἢ σελίνῳ ἔστεφανῶσθαι ἢ πίτυϊ μήτε πηλῷ καταχριόμενον τὸ πρόσωπον μήτε λακτιζόμενον εἰς τὴν γαστέρα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνταγωνιστῶν.



Crowning glory

10 So. My dear sir, it is not the things' intrinsic value that we look at. They are the symbols of victory, labels of the winners; it is the fame attaching to them that is worth any price to their holders; that is why the man whose quest of honour leads through toil is content to take his kicks. No toil, no honour; he who covets that must start with enduring hardship; when he has done that, he may begin to look for the pleasure and profit his labours are to bring.

An. Which pleasure and profit consists in their being seen in their wreaths by every one, and congratulated on their victory by those who before commiserated their pain; their happiness lies in their exchange of apples and celery for toil.

So. Ah, you certainly do not understand our ways yet. You will revise your opinions before long, when you go to the great festivals and see the crowds gathering to look on, the stands filling up, the competitors receiving their ovations, and the victor being idolized.

Σόλων

10 ἀλλ', ὦ ἄριστε, οὐκ εἰς ψιλὰ τὰ διδόμενα ἡμεῖς ἀποβλέπομεν. ταῦτα μὲν γάρ ἐστι σημεῖα τῆς νίκης καὶ γνωρίσματα οἷτινες οἱ κρατήσαντες. ἡ δὲ παρακολουθοῦσα τούτοις δόξα τοῦ παντὸς ἀξία τοῖς νενικηκόσιν, ὑπὲρ ἧς καὶ λακτίζεσθαι καλῶς ἔχει τοῖς θηρωμένοις τὴν εὐκλειαν ἐκ τῶν πόνων. οὐ γὰρ ἀπονητὶ προσγένετο ἂν αὕτη, ἀλλὰ χρὴ τὸν ὀρεγόμενον αὐτῆς πολλὰ τὰ δυσχερῆ ἀνασχόμενον ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ τότ' ἤδη τὸ λυσιτελὲς καὶ ἡδὺ τέλος ἐκ τῶν καμάτων περιμένειν.

Ἀνάχαρσις

τοῦτο φῆς, ὦ Σόλων, τὸ τέλος ἡδὺ καὶ λυσιτελὲς, ὅτι πάντες αὐτοὺς ὄψονται ἐστεφανωμένους καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ νίκῃ ἐπαινέσονται πολὺ πρότερον οἰκτείραντες ἐπὶ ταῖς πληγαῖς, οἱ δὲ εὐδαιμονήσουσιν ἀντὶ τῶν πόνων μῆλα καὶ σέλινά ἔχοντες.

Σόλων

ἄπειρος εἶ, φημί, τῶν ἡμετέρων ἔτι: μετὰ μικρὸν δὲ ἄλλα σοι δόξει περὶ αὐτῶν, ἐπειδὴν εἰς τὰς πανηγύρεις ἀπιὼν ὄρας τοσοῦτο πλῆθος ἀνθρώπων συλλεγόμενον ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν τῶν τοιούτων καὶ θέατρα μυριάνδρα συμπληρούμενα καὶ τοὺς ἀγωνιστὰς ἐπαινουμένους, τὸν δὲ καὶ νικήσαντα αὐτῶν ἰσόθεον νομιζόμενον.



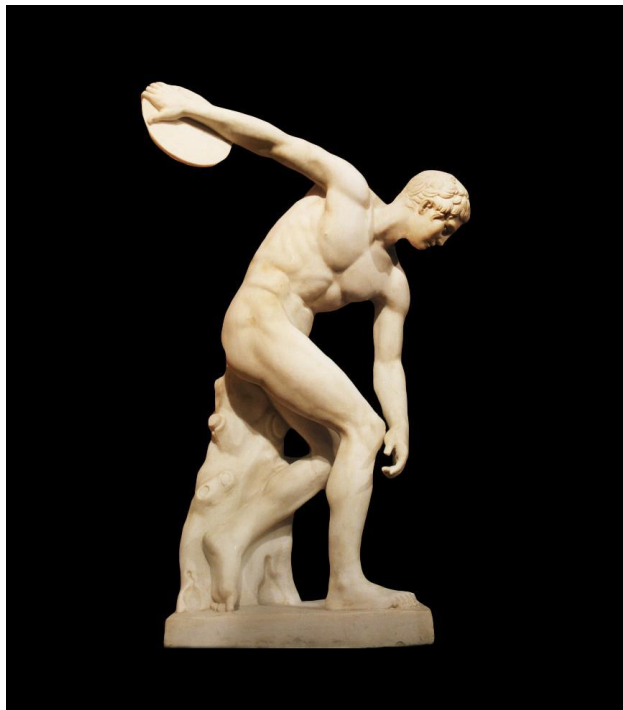
Raising the finger signals surrender

Anacharsis wonders why spectators enjoy it

11 An. Why, Solon, that is just where the humiliation comes in; they are treated like this not in something like privacy, but with all these spectators to watch the affronts they endure—who, I am to believe, count them happy when they see them dripping with blood or being throttled; for such are the happy concomitants of victory. In my country, if a man strikes a citizen, knocks him down, or tears his clothes, our elders punish him severely, even though there were only one or two witnesses, not like your vast Olympic or Isthmian gatherings. However, though I cannot help pitying the competitors, I am still more astonished at the spectators; you tell me the chief people from all over Greece attend; how can they leave their serious concerns and waste time on such things? How they can like it passes my comprehension—to look on at people being struck and knocked about, dashed to the ground and pounded by one another.

Ἀνάχαρσις

11 αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὦ Σόλων, καὶ τὸ οἴκτιστόν ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ ἐπ' ὀλίγων ταῦτα πάσχουσιν, ἀλλὰ ἐν τοσοῦτοις θεαταῖς καὶ μάρτυσι τῆς ὕβρεως, οἱ δηλαδὴ εὐδαιμονίζουσιν αὐτοὺς αἵματι ῥαινομένους ὀρῶντες ἢ ἀγχομένους ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντιπάλων ταῦτα γὰρ τὰ εὐδαιμονέστατα πρόσεστι τῇ νίκη αὐτῶν. παρ' ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς Σκύθαις ἦν τις, ὦ Σόλων, ἢ πατάξῃ τινὰ τῶν πολιτῶν ἢ ἀνατρέψῃ προσπεσῶν ἢ θοιμάτια περιρρήξῃ, μεγάλας οἱ πρεσβῦται τὰς ζημίας ἐπάγουσι, κἂν ἐπ' ὀλίγων μαρτύρων τοῦτο πάθῃ τις, οὔτι γε ἐν τηλικούτοις θεάτροις, οἷα σὺ διηγῇ τὸ Ἴσθμοῖ καὶ τὸ ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν ἀγωνιστὰς οἴκτειρειν μοι ἔπεισιν ὧν πάσχουσιν, τῶν δὲ θεατῶν οὐς φῆς ἀπανταχόθεν τοὺς ἀρίστους παραγίγνεσθαι εἰς τὰς πανηγύρεις καὶ πάνυ θαυμάζω, εἰ τἀναγκαῖα παρέντες σχολάζουσιν ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐκεῖνό πω δύναμαι κατανοῆσαι ὅ τι τὸ τερπνὸν αὐτοῖς, ὄρᾶν παιομένους τε καὶ διαπληκτιζομένους ἀνθρώπους καὶ πρὸς τὴν γῆν ἀραττομένους καὶ συντριβομένους ὑπ' ἀλλήλων.



Discobolos

Solon praises the athletes' beauty, skill and spirit

12 So. If the Olympia, Isthmia, or Panathenaea were only on now, those object-lessons might have been enough to convince you that our keenness is not thrown away. I cannot make you apprehend the delights of them by description; you should be there sitting in the middle of the spectators, looking at the men's courage and physical beauty, their marvellous condition, effective skill and invincible strength, their enterprise, their emulation, their unconquerable spirit, and their unwearied pursuit of victory. Oh, I know very well, you would never have been tired of talking about your favourites, backing them with voice and hand.

Σόλων

12 εἰ καιρὸς ἦν, ὧ Ἀνάχαρσι, Ὀλυμπίων ἢ Ἰσθμίων ἢ Παναθηναίων, αὐτὸ ἂν σε τὸ γιγνόμενον ἐδίδαξεν ὡς οὐ μάτην ἐσπουδάκαμεν ἐπὶ τούτοις. οὐ γὰρ οὕτω λέγων ἂν τις προσβιβάσειέν σε τῇ ἡδονῇ τῶν ἐκεῖ δρωμένων, ὡς εἰ καθεζόμενος αὐτὸς ἐν μέσοις τοῖς θεαταῖς βλέποις ἀρετὰς ἀνδρῶν καὶ κάλλη σωμάτων καὶ εὐεξίας θαυμαστὰς καὶ ἐμπειρίας δεινὰς καὶ ἰσχὺν ἄμαχον καὶ τόλμαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν καὶ γνῶμας ἀηττήτους καὶ σπουδὴν ἄλεκτον ὑπὲρ τῆς νίκης. εὖ γὰρ δὴ οἶδα ὡς οὐκ ἂν ἐπαύσω ἐπαινῶν καὶ ἐπιβοῶν καὶ ἐπικροτῶν.



Boxing

Anacharsis replies that the exercise is pointless

13 An. I dare say, and with laugh and mockery too. All the fine things in your list, your courages and conditions, your beauties and enterprises, I see you wasting in no high cause; your country is not in danger, your land not being ravaged, your friends or relations not being haled away. The more ridiculous that such patterns of perfection as you make them out should endure the misery all for nothing, and spoil their beauty and their fine figures with sand and black eyes, just for the triumphant possession of an apple or a sprig of wild olive. Oh, how I love to think of those prizes! By the way, do all who enter get them?

So. No, indeed. There is only one winner.

An. And do you mean to say such a number can be found to toil for a remote uncertainty of success, knowing that the winner cannot be more than one, and the failures must be many, with their bruises, or their wounds very likely, for sole reward?

Ἀνάχαρσις

13 νῆ Δί', ὦ Σόλων, καὶ ἐπιγελῶν γε προσέτι καὶ ἐπιχλευάζων ἅπαντα γὰρ ὅποσα κατηριθμήσω ἐκεῖνα, τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰς εὐεξίας καὶ τὰ κάλλη καὶ τόλμαν, ὁρῶ οὐδενὸς μεγάλου ἔνεκα παραπολλυμένας ὑμῖν, οὔτε πατρίδος κινδυνευούσης οὔτε χώρας πορθουμένης οὔτε φίλων ἢ οἰκείων πρὸς ὕβριν ἀπαγομένων. ὥστε τοσοῦτω γελοιώτεροι ἂν εἶεν, ἄριστοι μὲν, ὡς φῆς, ὄντες, μάτην δὲ τοσαῦτα πάσχοντες καὶ ταλαιπωρούμενοι καὶ αἰσχύνοντες τὰ κάλλη καὶ τὰ μεγέθη τῆ ψάμμω καὶ τοῖς ὑπωπίοις, ὡς μήλου καὶ κοτίνου ἐγκρατεῖς γένοιτο νικήσαντες. ἡδὺ γάρ μοι ἀεὶ μεμῆσθαι τῶν ἄθλων τοιούτων ὄντων. ἀτὰρ εἶπέ μοι, πάντες αὐτὰ λαμβάνουσιν οἱ ἀγωνισταί;

Σόλων

οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλὰ εἷς ἐξ ἀπάντων, ὁ κρατήσας αὐτῶν.

Ἀνάχαρσις

εἶτα, ὦ Σόλων, ἐπὶ τῷ ἀδήλω καὶ ἀμφιβόλω τῆς νίκης τοσοῦτοι πονοῦσι, καὶ ταῦτ' εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ μὲν νικῶν εἷς ἔσται πάντως, οἱ δὲ ἠττώμενοι πάμπολλοι, μάτην ἄθλιοι πληγὰς, οἱ δὲ καὶ τραύματα λαβόντες;

Solon says that it is all part of what it means to be Athenian

14 So. Dear me; you have no idea yet of what is a good political constitution, or you would never depreciate the best of our customs. If you ever take the trouble to inquire how a State may best be organized, and its citizens best developed, you will find yourself commending these practices and the earnestness with which we cultivate them; then you will realize what good effects are inseparable from those toils which seem for the moment to tax our energies to no purpose.

Σόλων

[14] ἔοικας, ὦ Ἀνάχαρσι, μηδέπω ἐννενοηκέναι πολιτείας ὀρθῆς πέρι μηδὲν οὐ γὰρ ἂν τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ἐθῶν ἐν ψόγῳ ἐτίθεσο. ἦν δέ σοι μελήσῃ ποτὲ εἰδέναί ὅπως ἂν τὰ κάλλιστα οἰκηθεῖ πόλις καὶ ὅπως ἂν ἄριστοι γένοιτο οἱ πολῖται αὐτῆς, ἐπαινέσῃ τότε καὶ τὰς ἀσκήσεις ταύτας καὶ τὴν φιλοτιμίαν ἣν φιλοτιμούμεθα περὶ αὐτάς, καὶ εἶσῃ ὅτι πολὺ τὸ χρήσιμον ἔχουσιν ἐγκαταμεμιγμένον τοῖς πόνοις, εἰ καὶ νῦν μάτην σπουδάζεσθαι δοκοῦσιν.

Solon goes on to explain how such Games are all central to Athenian culture.

THE MARATHON AND OTHER LONG DISTANCE FEATS

Pliny the Elder 7.20

Philippides' feat is so famous that Pliny does not have to attach it to the battle of Marathon. Other distances covered are equally impressive.

Note: a stade is 210 yards



Long distance runners

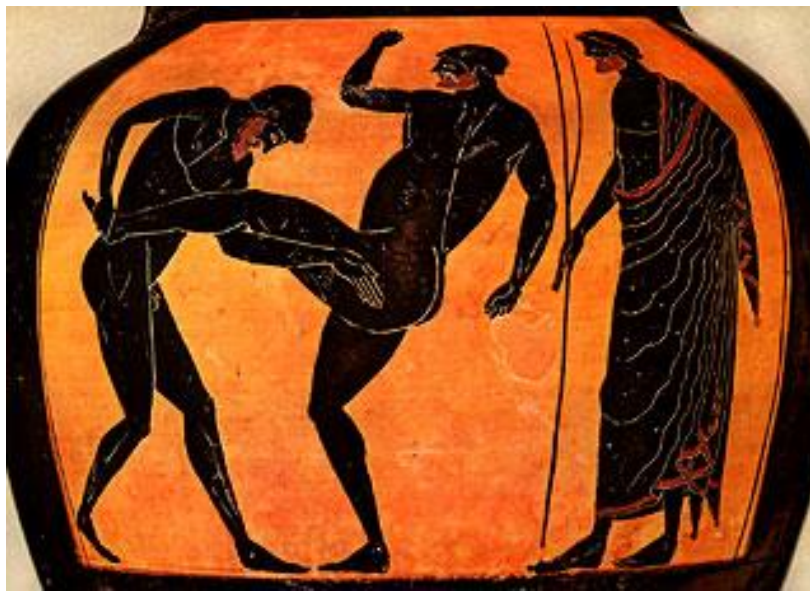
It was considered a very great thing for Philippides to run one thousand one hundred and sixty stadia (140 miles), the distance between Athens and Lacedaemon, in two days, until Amystis, the Lacedaemonian courier, and Philonides, the courier of Alexander the Great, ran from Sicyon to Elis in one day, a distance of thirteen hundred and five stadia (155 miles). In our own times, too, we are fully aware that there are men in the Circus, who are able to keep on running for a distance of one hundred and sixty miles; and that lately, in the consulship of Fonteius and Vipstanus, there was a child eight years of age, who, between morning and evening, ran a distance of seventy-five miles. We become all the more sensible of these wonderful instances of swiftness, upon reflecting that Tiberius Nero, when he made all possible haste to reach his brother Drusus, who was then sick in Germany, reached him in three stages, travelling day and night on the road; the distance of each stage was two hundred miles.

cucurrisse MCXL stadia ab Athenis Lacedaemonem biduo Philippidem magnum erat, donec Amystis cursor Lacedaemonius et Philonides Alexandri Magni a Sicyone Elis uno die MCCCV cucurrerunt. nunc quidem in circo quosdam CLX passuum tolerare non ignoramus nuperque Fonteio et Vipstano cos. annos VIII genitum a meridie ad vesperam LXXV passuum cucurrisse. cuius rei admiratio ita demum solida perveniat, si quis cogitet nocte ac die longissimum iter vehiculis Tib. Neronem emensum festinantem ad Drusum fratrem aegrotum in Germaniam. ea fuerunt CC passuum.

Arrhachion

Pausanias 8.40.1-2

There are stories of prize-winning deaths at the Games.



Pankration

Arrhachion's statue

1. The Phigalians have on their market-place a statue of the pancratiast Arrhachion; it is archaic, especially in its posture. The feet are close together, and the arms hang down by the side as far as the hips. The statue is made of stone, and it is said that an inscription was written upon it. This has disappeared with time, but Arrhachion won two Olympic victories at Festivals before the fifty-fourth, while at this Festival he won one due partly to the fairness of the umpires and partly to his own manhood.

1. Φιγαλεῦσι δὲ ἀνδριάς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς Ἀρραχίωνος τοῦ παγκρατιαστοῦ, τὰ τε ἄλλα ἀρχαῖος καὶ οὐχ ἤκιστα ἐπὶ τῷ σχήματι· οὐ διεστᾶσι μὲν πολὺ οἱ πόδες, καθεῖνται δὲ παρὰ πλευρὰν αἱ χεῖρες ἄχρι τῶν γλουτῶν. πεποιήται μὲν δὴ ἡ εἰκὼν λίθου, λέγουσι δὲ καὶ ἐπίγραμμα ἐπ' αὐτὴν γραφῆναι· καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ἠφάνιστο ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου, τῷ δὲ Ἀρραχίῳ ἐγένοντο Ὀλυμπικαὶ νῖκαι δύο μὲν Ὀλυμπιάσι ταῖς πρὸ τῆς τετάρτης καὶ πεντηκοστῆς, ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ σὺν δικαίῳ τε ἐκ τῶν Ἑλλανοδικῶν καὶ Ἀρραχίωνος αὐτοῦ τῆ ἀρετῇ.

Victory in death

2. For when he was contending for the wild olive with the last remaining competitor, whoever he was, the latter got a grip first, and held Arrhachion, hugging him with his legs, and at the same time he squeezed his neck with his hands. Arrhachion dislocated his opponent's toe, but expired owing to suffocation; but he who suffocated Arrhachion was forced to give in at the same time because of the pain in his toe. The Eleans crowned and proclaimed victor the corpse of Arrhachion.

2. ὡς γὰρ δὴ πρὸς τὸν καταλειπόμενον ἔτι τῶν ἀνταγωνιστῶν ἐμάχετο ὑπὲρ τοῦ κοτίνου, ὁ μὲν προέλαβεν ὅστις δὴ ὁ ἀνταγωνιζόμενος καὶ τοῖς ποσὶ τὸν Ἀρραχίωνα εἶχεν ἐζωκῶς καὶ τὸν τράχηλον ἐπίεζεν ἅμα αὐτοῦ ταῖς χερσίν· ὁ δὲ Ἀρραχίων ἐκκλᾶ τῶν ἐν τῷ ποδὶ τοῦ ἀνταγωνιζομένου δάκτυλον, καὶ Ἀρραχίων τε τὴν ψυχὴν ἀφήσιν ἀγχόμενος καὶ ὁ ἄγχων τὸν Ἀρραχίωνα ὑπὸ τοῦ δακτύλου τῆς ὀδύνης κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἀπαγορεύει τὸν αὐτόν. Ἥλειοι δὲ ἐστεφάνωσάν τε καὶ ἀνηγόρευσαν νικῶντα τοῦ Ἀρραχίωνος τὸν νεκρόν.

Athletic fines
Pausanias 5.21.2-3

The Olympics seem to have been the fairest of the assorted Games that sprang up in imitation of them. Cheats did not prosper. The men from nearby Elis provided the judges for the Games.



A judge flogs eye-gougers

2. On the way to the racing—track from the Mother’s sanctuary, on the left at the edge of Mount Kronion, there is a stone platform against the mount itself, with steps that go up through the platform; bronze statues of Zeus have been dedicated against this platform, made from the money paid in penalties by athletes fined for dishonouring the games; the local people call them ZANES.

2. ἰόντι γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸ στάδιον τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ Μητρώου, ἔστιν ἐν ἀριστερᾷ κατὰ τὸ πέρασ τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ Κρονίου λίθου τε πρὸς αὐτῷ τῷ ὄρει κρηπίς καὶ ἀναβασμοὶ δι’ αὐτῆς· πρὸς δὲ τῇ κρηπίδι ἀγάλματα Διὸς ἀνάκειται χαλκᾷ. ταῦτα ἐποιήθη μὲν ἀπὸ χρημάτων ἐπιβληθείσης ἀθληταῖς ζημίας ὑβρίσασιν ἐς τὸν ἀγῶνα, καλοῦνται δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων Ζᾶνες.

3. The first six were set up at the ninety-eighth Olympics, when Eupolos of Thessaly bribed the boxers who entered, Agetor of Arkadia and Prytanis of Kyzikos, and also Phormion of Halikarnassos, who won the boxing at the previous Olympics. This is said to have been the first crime that athletes ever committed in the games, and Eupolos and the men he bribed were the first to be fined by Elis.

3. πρῶτοι δὲ ἀριθμὸν ἕξ ἐπὶ τῆς ὀγδόης ἔστησαν καὶ ἐνενηκοστῆς Ὀλυμπιάδος· Εὐπόλος γὰρ Θεσσαλὸς χρήμασι διέφθειρε τοὺς ἐλθόντας τῶν πυκτῶν, Ἀγήτορα Ἀρκάδα καὶ Πρύτανιν Κυζικηνόν, σὺν δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ Φορμίωνα Ἀλικαρνασσέα μὲν γένος, Ὀλυμπιάδι δὲ τῇ πρὸ ταύτης κρατήσαντα. τοῦτο ἕξ ἀθλητῶν ἀδίκημα ἐς τὸν ἀγῶνα πρῶτον γενέσθαι λέγουσι, καὶ πρῶτοι χρήμασιν ἐζημιώθησαν ὑπὸ Ἡλείων Εὐπόλος καὶ οἱ δεξάμενοι δῶρα παρὰ Εὐπόλου.

Next week: From great winners to total losers.