

Honor in Archaic Greek Elegy

“We should state whether, when we refer to honor, we are referring to a concept that exists in the alien culture or to a concept of our own that we are using in describing that culture.... If we are using a term that is in the material, then we must explicate it on the basis of very careful textual analysis” (Stewart 2000: 27-28).

I wish to consider the significance of τιμή and related forms in Theognis, Mimnermus and Solon (selected verses below). My chief point is that the semantic field represented by these terms is more restricted than that of the English term “honor” and its cognates (it is also narrower than the Latin *honor* and derivatives such as *honestus*, at least as Cicero interprets them). Of course, there are other words in Greek that fill out the spectrum of the senses of English “honor,” but these are not covered by τιμή. The difference, I believe, is important: Greek “honor” is not like English, and the limited range of τιμή matters for our understanding of archaic and indeed classical Greek values and ideology.

I would like to begin by indicating two broad connotations of English “honor” that are not part of the domain of τιμή. Then I will look at what τιμή does signify. First, τιμή does not designate moral integrity, as “honor” (or Latin *honestas*) may. Second, τιμή does not signify respect for others on the basis of a universal sense of human dignity, as “honor” is often taken to imply. Let me illustrate each point.

First, we may take the idea moral integrity or an internalized notion of justice or fairness, a notion that, at least in Cicero, is associated with the idea of *honestum* (which in turn renders the Greek καλόν; Greek τίμιος never acquired such connotations). Novin and Oyserman (2016: 2) state: “Honor involves individual and group-based reputation for integrity, honesty, being true to one’s principles and marking place by earning respect, not tolerating disrespect and insults, and protecting oneself and one’s family, group or clan from face loss and reputational harm.” This description, by no means exceptional, combines features that are better kept distinct. Integrity and honesty do not necessarily require a high degree of sensitivity to insult, nor does such a sensitivity necessarily depend on a notion of being true to one’s principles. Greek τιμή does not in itself embrace notions of honesty (for Latin *integritas*, see Kaster 2005).

Second, on respect: Frank Stewart, in his seminal book called *Honor* (1994), defines personal honor as “a right to respect.” Further, “the respect in question is of the kind that is due to an equal (in contrast, for instance, to the respect to which a father, in many societies, has a right from his children).” Alexander Welsh (2008: 11) quotes Stewart’s definition and adds: “In contemporary English usage, *self-respect* is the best term going for the internal sense of honor and inner persuasion that one is honorable.” Welsh notes further: “Respect in short is horizontal, irrespective of other relations — wealth or power, gender difference, birth order, and so on — that may obtain among the persons in question” (p. 12). I maintain that Greek τιμή, on the contrary, is vertical rather than horizontal, and that it depends crucially on other determinants than human dignity, understood as “an irreducibly normative rather than a socially-constituted

status” (Darwall, 2013: 16). Darwall contrasts this conception of respect predicated on human dignity with what he calls “honor respect: “*Honor respect*, on the other hand, mediates and underlies an essentially hierarchical social order of honor. It recognizes someone as having a specific social status that not just anyone can have, and it helps constitute that status in a way that is very different from the relation between the second-personal respect involved in mutual accountability and equal authority or dignity” (p. 17). Although Greek τιμή is closer to “honor respect,” it does not, I think, depend simply on a specific social status (for “respect” in Roman thought, in particular Cicero and Seneca, see Marchese 2016, with the critical review by Konstan 2017).

Did ancient Greek not have a conception of moral integrity and respect? Of course it did, though these ideas too do not necessarily correspond exactly to the English terms. Giovanni Giorgini (2017: 44) observes: “When we look for the Greek words which most closely approximate the meaning of ‘respect’, the likeliest candidates are *aidōs* and *timē*.” I agree that the verb αἰδέομαι frequently can be rendered “respect,” in the sense of recognizing another’s claim to be treated decently or according to certain norms or expectations (I suspect that there is a divergence between the uses of the noun and the verb in this regard, but I defer to Douglas on this matter). Giorgini goes on to state: “The root of respect in Greek ethics and politics lies exactly in the aristocratic recognition of the equal value of the fellow-aristocrat” (p. 46), as opposed to universal regard (see Giorgini’s detailed treatment of honor in Solon and Theognis). I doubt, however, that aristocratic equality is implicit in the notion of τιμή.

If τιμή is not due to a person on the basis of inherent dignity or virtues such as honesty and integrity, what is it that elicits such regard? The answer, I suggest, is that the basis for τιμή was vague and flexible. Broadly speaking,, those worthy of τιμή might be described by terms such as ἀγαθός, ἐσθλός, καλός, ἐπιεικής, δίκαιος, etc., but these words in turn could be variously applied. Thus, τιμή might be inspired by inherited noble status, but also by beauty, wealth, civic status, or other attributes. It was thus an ideal concept for contestation, not only as to who is to be honored but on what grounds; and this is indeed the way it is frequently deployed, as it proves adaptable to different ideologies, whether democratic or aristocratic.

I have suggested that τιμή is vertical rather than horizontal: one must be exceptional in some way to merit it. But within the peer group too there is competition for such regard. As Glaucus affirms to Diomedes (*Iliad* 6.208), his father instructed him αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων (so too Peleus to Achilles at 11.784). As Novin and Oyserman write (2016: 2): “In ‘honor’ societies, what others think matters and vigilant attention to the possibility of losing face or losing respect is necessary.... In ‘dignity’ societies, others are de-emphasized and what matters is one’s own norms, values, and beliefs.” So too, Halvor Moxnes (1996: 20) states:

Honor is fundamentally the *public* recognition of one’s social standing. It comes in one of two ways. One’s basic honor level, usually termed *ascribed* honor, is inherited from the family at birth. Each child takes on the general honor status that the family possesses in the eyes of the larger group, and therefore ascribed honor comes directly from family membership. It is not based on something the individual has done. By contrast, honor conferred on the basis of virtuous deeds is called *acquired* honor. By its very nature

acquired honor may be either gained or lost in the perpetual struggle for public recognition.... In Mediterranean societies interaction between people is always characterized by competition with others for recognition. Everyone must be constantly alert to defend individual or family honor. Such social interaction often takes the form of challenge and riposte, most often verbally, but also with symbolic gestures and even with the use of physical force.

This competitive aspect of τιμή is not always evident; it depends on whether the focus is on rivalry among enemies of one's own class or the defense of one's own class against others. It is one point for discussion at our session.

In sum, I suggest that we focus in the first instance on the features of the Greek τιμή, and not attempt to create a composite picture based on other Greek terms and values to construct a complex notion of ancient Greek "honor." The very narrowness, as I conceive it, of τιμή tells us something significant about early Greek society.

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Selected Passages
(Texts may need updating)

Theognis

43-52

οὐδεμίαν πω, Κύρν', ἀγαθοὶ πόλιν ὄλεσαν ἄνδρες:
ἀλλ' ὅταν ὑβρίζειν τοῖσι κακοῖσιν ἄδη
δῆμόν τε φθείρωσι δίκας τ' ἀδίκοισι διδῶσιν
οἰκείων κερδέων εἵνεκα καὶ κράτεος,
ἔλπεο μὴ δηρὸν κείνην πόλιν ἀτρεμεῖσθαι
μηδ' εἰ νῦν κεῖται πολλῇ ἐν ἡσυχίῃ,
εὗτ' ἂν τοῖσι κακοῖσι φίλ' ἀνδράσι ταῦτα γένηται
κέρδεα δημοσίῳ σὺν κακῶ ἐρχόμενα.
ἐκ τῶν γὰρ στάσιές τε καὶ ἔμφυλοι φόνοι ἀνδρῶν
μύναρχοί θ': ἅ πόλει μήποτε τῆδε ἄδοι.

83-86

τούτων οὐχ εὖροις διζήμενος, οὐδ' ἐπὶ πάντας
ἀνθρώπους, οὓς ναῦς μὴ μία πάντας ἄγοι,
οἷσιν ἐπὶ γλώσση τε καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἔπεστιν
αἰδῶς, οὐδ' αἰσχρὸν χρῆμ' ἐπὶ κέρδος ἄγει.

129-130

μήτ' ἀρετὴν εὖχου, Πολυπαῖδη, ἔξοχος εἶναι,
μήτ' ἄφενος: μῶνον δ' ἀνδρὶ γένοιτο τύχη.

131-132

οὐδὲν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς ἄμεινον
ἔπλετο τοῖς ὀσίῃ, Κύρνε, μέμηλε δίκη.

133-142

οὐδεὶς, Κύρν', ἄτης καὶ κέρδεος αἴτιος αὐτός,
ἀλλὰ θεοὶ τούτων δώτορες ἀμφοτέρων:
οὐδέ τις ἀνθρώπων ἐργάζεται ἐν φρεσὶν εἰδῶς
ἐς τέλος εἶτ' ἀγαθὸν κίνυται εἴτε κακόν.
πολλάκι γὰρ δοκέων θήσειν κακὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔθηκεν
καί τε δοκῶν θήσειν ἐσθλὸν ἔθηκε κακόν.
οὐδέ τῳ ἀνθρώπων παραγίνεται ὅσσα θέλησιν:
ἴσχει γὰρ χαλεπῆς πείρατ' ἀμηχανίης.
ἄνθρωποι δὲ μάταια νομίζομεν, εἰδοτες οὐδέν:
θεοὶ δὲ κατὰ σφέτερον πάντα τελοῦσι νόον.

145-148

βούλεο δ' εὐσεβέων ὀλίγοις σὺν χρήμασιν οἰκεῖν
ἢ πλουτεῖν ἀδίκως χρήματα πασάμενος.
ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνη συλλήβδην πᾶσ' ἀρετὴ 'στι,
πᾶς δέ τ' ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός, Κύρνε, δίκαιος ἐών.

193-196

αὐτὸς ὁ τοιαύτην εἰδῶς κακόπατριν ἐοῦσαν
εἰς οἴκους ἄγεται χρήμασι πείθομενος,
εὐδοξος κακόδοξον, ἐπεὶ κρατερὴ μιν ἀνάγκη
ἐντύει, ἦτ' ἀνδρὸς τλήμονα θῆκε νόον.

197-208

χρῆμα δ' ὁ μὲν Διόθεν καὶ σὺν δίκη ἀνδρὶ γένηται
καὶ καθαρῶς, αἰεὶ παρμόνιμον τελέθει:
εἰ δ' ἀδίκως παρὰ καιρὸν ἀνὴρ φιλοκερδέϊ θυμῷ
κτῆσεται, εἴθ' ὄρκῳ παρ τὸ δίκαιον ἐλών,
αὐτίκα μὲν τι φέρειν κέρδος δοκεῖ, ἐς δὲ τελευτὴν
αὔθις ἔγεντο κακόν, θεῶν δ' ὑπερέσχε νόος.
ἀλλὰ τὰδ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπατᾶ νόον: οὐ γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ
τίνονται μάκαρες πρήγματος ἀμπλακίας:
ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν αὐτὸς ἔτεισε κακὸν χρέος, οὐδὲ φίλοισιν
ἄτην ἐξοπίσω παισὶν ἐπεκρέμασεν:
ἄλλον δ' οὐ κατέμαρψε δίκη: θάνατος γὰρ ἀναιδῆς
πρόσθεν ἐπὶ βλεφάροις ἔζετο κῆρα φέρων.

233-234

ἀκρόπολις καὶ πύργος ἐὼν κενεόφροني δῆμῳ,
Κύρν', ὀλίγης τιμῆς ἔμμορεν ἐσθλὸς ἀνὴρ.

283-292

ἀστῶν μηδενὶ πιστὸς ἐὼν πόδα τῶνδε πρόβαινε,
μήθ' ὄρκῳ πίσυνος μήτε φιλημοσύνη,
μηδ' εἰ Ζῆν' ἐθέλη παρέχειν βασιλῆα μέγιστον
ἔγγυον ἀθανάτων πιστὰ τιθεῖν ἐθέλων.
οὐ γὰρ τοι πόλει ᾧδε καλοψόγῳ ἀνδάνει οὐδὲν
ὡς δὶ' ὅτι ζῶεν πολλοὶ ἀνολβότερον:
νῦν δὲ τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κακὰ γίνεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν
ἀνδράσιν: ἠγέονται δ' ἐκτραπέλοισι νόμοις:
αἰδῶς μὲν γὰρ ὄλωλεν, ἀναιδείη δὲ καὶ ὕβρις
νικήσασα δίκην γῆν κατὰ πᾶσαν ἔχει.

335-336

335μηδὲν ἄγαν σπεύδειν: πάντων μέσ' ἄριστα: καὶ οὕτως,
Κύρν', ἔξεις ἀρετὴν, ἦντε λαβεῖν χαλεπὸν.

373-392

†Ζεῦ φίλε, θαυμάζω σε: σὺ γὰρ πάντεσσιν ἀνάσσεις
τιμὴν αὐτὸς ἔχων καὶ μεγάλην δύναμιν,
ἀνθρώπων δ' εὖ οἶσθα νόον καὶ θυμὸν ἐκάστου,
σὸν δὲ κράτος πάντων ἔσθ' ὕπατον, βασιλεῦ:
πῶς δὴ σευ, Κρονίδη, τολμᾶ νόος ἄνδρας ἀλιτροῦς
ἐν ταύτῃ μοίρῃ τόν τε δίκαιον ἔχειν,
ἦν τ' ἐπὶ σωφροσύνην τρεφθῆ νόος, ἦν τε πρὸς ὕβριν
ἀνθρώπων ἀδίκους ἔργμασι πειθομένων;
οὐδέ τι κεκριμένον πρὸς δαίμονός ἐστι βροτοῖσιν,
οὐδ' ὁδὸς ἦν τις ἰὼν ἀθανάτοισιν ἄδοι.
ἔμπης δ' ὄλβον ἔχουσιν ἀπήμονα: τοὶ δ' ἀπὸ δειλῶν
ἔργων ἴσχοντες θυμὸν ὅμως πενίην
μητέρ' ἀμηχανίης ἔλαβον, τὰ δίκαια φιλεῦντες,
ἦτ' ἀνδρὸς παράγει θυμὸν ἐς ἀμπλακίην,
βλάπτουσ' ἐν στήθεσσι φρένας κρατερῆς ὑπ' ἀνάγκης:
τολμᾶ δ' οὐκ ἐθέλων αἴσχρα πολλὰ φέρειν,
χρημοσύνη εἴκων, ἦ δὴ κακὰ πάντα διδάσκει,
ψεύδεά τ' ἐξαπάτας τ' οὐλομένας τ' ἔριδας
ἄνδρα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντα, κακὸν δέ οἱ οὐδὲν ἔοικεν:
ἦ γὰρ καὶ χαλεπὴν τίκτει ἀμηχανίην.

523-524

οὗ σε μάτην, ὦ Πλοῦτε, βροτοὶ τιμῶσι μάλιστα:
ἦ γὰρ ῥηϊδίως τὴν κακότητα φέρεις.

647-648

ἦδη νῦν αἰδῶς μὲν ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὄλωλεν,
αὐτὰρ ἀναιδείῃ γαῖαν ἐπιστρέφεται.

659-666

†οὐδ' ὁμόσαι χρὴ τοῦθ', ὅτι μήποτε πρῆγμα τόδ' ἔσται:
θεοὶ γάρ τοι νεμεσῶσ', οἷσιν ἔπεστι τέλος:
καὶ πρῆξαι μέντοι τι. καὶ ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸν ἔγεντο,
καὶ κακὸν ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ: καί τε πενιχρὸς ἀνήρ
αἶψα μάλ' ἐπλούτησε: καὶ ὃς μάλα πολλὰ πέπαται,
ἐξαπίνης πάντ' οὖν ὄλεσε νυκτὶ μιῇ:
καὶ σῶφρων ἤμαρτε καὶ ἄφροني πολλάκι δόξα
ἔσπετο, καὶ τιμῆς καὶ κακὸς ὦν ἔλαχεν.

821-822

οἷ κ' ἀπογηράσκοντας ἀτιμάζωσι τοκῆας,
τούτων τοι χώρα, Κύρν', ὀλίγη τελέθει.

933-938

παύροις ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὴ καὶ κάλλος ὀπηδεῖ:
ὄλβιος, ὃς τούτων ἀμφοτέρων ἔλαχεν.
πάντες μιν τιμῶσιν: ὁμῶς νέοι οἱ τε κατ' αὐτὸν
χώρης εἴκουσιν τοῖ τε παλαιότεροι:
γηράσκων δ' ἀστοῖσι μεταπρέπει, οὐδέ τις αὐτὸν
βλάπτειν οὔτ' αἰδοῦς οὔτε δίκης ἐθέλει.

971-972

τίς δ' ἀρετὴ πίνοντ' ἐπιόινιον ἄθλον ἐλέσθαι;
πολλάκι τοι νικᾷ καὶ κακὸς ἄνδρ' ἀγαθόν.

1017-1022

αὐτίκα μοι κατὰ μὲν χροίην ῥέει ἄσπετος ἰδρῶς,
πτοιῶμαι δ' ἐσορῶν ἄνθος ὀμηλικῆς
τερπνὸν ὁμῶς καὶ καλόν, ἐπεὶ πλέον ὄφελεν εἶναι:
ἀλλ' ὀλιγοχρόνιος γίνεται ὥσπερ ὄναρ
ἦβη τιμήεσσα, τὸ δ' οὐλόμενον καὶ ἄμορφον
αὐτίχ' ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς γῆρας ὑπερκρέματα.

1109-1114

Κύρν', οἱ πρόσθ' ἀγαθοὶ νῦν αὖ κακοί, οἱ δὲ κακοὶ πρὶν
νῦν ἀγαθοί. τίς κεν ταῦτ' ἀνέχοιτ' ἐσορῶν,
τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς μὲν ἀτιμοτέρους, κακίους δὲ λαχόντας
τιμῆς; μνηστεύει δ' ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸς ἀνήρ:
ἀλλήλους δ' ἀπατῶντες ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι γελῶσιν,
οὔτ' ἀγαθῶν μνήμην εἰδότες οὔτε κακῶν.

1386-1389

Κυπρογενὲς Κυθήρεια δολοπλόκε, σοί τι περισσὸν
Ζεὺς τόδε τιμήσας δῶρον ἔδωκεν ἔχειν:
δαμνᾶς ἀνθρώπων πυκινὰς φρένας, οὐδέ τις ἐστίν
οὔτως ἴφθιμος καὶ σοφὸς ὥστε φυγεῖν.

Mimnermus

τίς δὲ βίος, τί δὲ τερπνὸν ἄτερ χρυσέης Ἀφροδίτης;
τεθναίην, ὅτε μοι μηκέτι ταῦτα μέλοι,
κρυπταδὴ φιλότης καὶ μείλιχα δῶρα καὶ εὐνή,
οἷ ἦβης ἄνθεα γίνεται ἀρπαλέα
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξίν· ἐπεὶ δ' ὀδυνηρὸν ἐπέλθη
γῆρας, ὃ τ' αἰσχρὸν ὅμως καὶ καλὸν ἄνδρα τιθεῖ,
αἰεὶ μιν φρένας ἀμφὶ κακαὶ τείρουσι μέριμναι,
οὐδ' αὐγὰς προσορέων τέρπεται ἡελίου,
ἀλλ' ἐχθρὸς μὲν παισίν, ἀτίμαστος δὲ γυναιξίν·
οὔτως ἀργαλέον γῆρας ἔθηκε θεός.

Stob. Fl. 33: “ψόγος γήρωσ: Μιμνέρμου Ναννοῦς:

[αὐτίκα μοι κατὰ μὲν χροίην ῥέει ἄσπετος ἰδρώς,
πτοιῶμαι δ' ἐσορῶν ἄνθος ὀμηλικῆς
τερπνὸν ὁμῶς καὶ καλόν, ἐπεὶ πλέον ὄφελεν εἶναι:]
ἀλλ' ὀλιγοχρόνιος γίγνεται ὥσπερ ὄναρ
ἦβη τιμήεσσα: τὸ δ' ἀργαλέον καὶ ἄμορφον
γῆρας ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτίχ' ὑπερκρέματα
ἐχθρὸν ὁμῶς καὶ ἄτιμον, ὃ τ' ἄγνωστον τιθεῖ ἄνδρα,
βλάπτει δ' ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ νόον ἀμφιχυθέν

“Μίμνερμος δὲ Ναννοῖ ἐν εὐνῇ φησι χρυσοῦ κατεσκευασμένη πρὸς τὴν χρεῖαν ταύτην ὑπὸ
Ἥφαιστου τὸν ἥλιον καθεύδοντα περαιουῖσθαι πρὸς τὰς ἀνατολάς, αἰνισσόμενος τὸ κοῖλον τοῦ
ποτηρίου. λέγει δ' οὕτως:

ἥελιος μὲν γὰρ πόνον ἔλλαχεν ἦματα πάντα
οὐδέ κοτ' ἄμπαυσις γίγνεται οὐδεμία
ἵπποισιν τε καὶ αὐτῷ, ἐπεὶ ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως
ὠκεανὸν προλιποῖσ' οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβῆ:
τὸν μὲν γὰρ διὰ κῦμα φέρει πολυήρατος εὐνή
κοῖλλη, Ἥφαιστου χερσὶν ἐληλαμένη
χρυσοῦ τιμήεντος, ὑπόπτερος, ἄκρον ἐφ' ὕδωρ
εὐδονθ' ἀρπαλέως χώρου ἀφ' Ἐσπερίδων
γαῖαν ἐς Αἰθιοπῶν, ἵνα οἱ θεὸν ἄρμα καὶ ἵπποι
ἐστᾶσ', ὄφρ' Ἥως ἠριγένεια μόλη:
ἐνθ' ἐπεβήσεθ' ἐὼν ὀχέων Ὑπερίονος υἱός.

Solon

ταῦτα δ' ὅτι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἔσχεν, οἳ τ' ἄλλοι συμφωνοῦσι πάντες καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει
μέμνηται περὶ αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖσδε:

δήμῳ μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας ὅσσον ἀπαρκεῖ
τιμῆς οὐτ' ἀφελῶν οὐτ' ἐπορεζάμενος:
οἳ δ' εἶχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἦσαν ἀγῆτοί,
καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἀεικέες ἔχειν:
ἔστην δ' ἀμφιβαλὼν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροισι,
νικᾶν δ' οὐκ εἶασ' οὐδετέρους ἀδίκως.

πολλοὶ γὰρ πλουτοῦσι κακοί, ἀγαθοὶ δὲ πένονται:
ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς τούτοις οὐ διαμειψόμεθα
τῆς ἀρετῆς τὸν πλοῦτον, ἐπεὶ τὸ μὲν ἔμπεδον αἰεὶ,
χρήματα δ' ἀνθρώπων ἄλλοτε ἄλλος ἔχει.

νῦν δὲ σὺ μὲν Σολίοισι πολὺν χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἀνάσσω
τήνδε πόλιν ναίοις καὶ γένος ὑμέτερον:

αὐτὰρ ἐμὲ ξὺν νηϊ̄ θοῆ̄ κλεινῆς ἀπὸ νήσου
ἀσκηθῆ̄ πέμποι Κύπρις ἰοστέφανος,
οἰκισμῶ̄ δ' ἐπὶ τῶ̄δε χάριν καὶ κῦδος ὀπάζοι
ἔσθλὸν καὶ νόστον πατρίδ' ἐς ἡμετέραν.

πρῶτα μὲν εὐχόμεσθα Διὶ Κρονίδῃ βασιλῆϊ
θεσμοῖς τοῖσδε τύχην ἀγαθὴν καὶ κῦδος ὀπάσσαι.