THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF SOLON’S POETRY:
FR.3 DIEHL, 4 WEST*

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In many ways Solon is a transitional figure in Athenian, if not in Greek, history. As lawgiver and reformer he stood on the threshold of the political, social and economic development of Athens. As thinker he is considered important in the movement towards abstract thought in Greek philosophy. He also survives alone as the earliest Athenian poet, followed by Aristophanes a century later. He was, in the words of Linforth, ‘the first author who consciously mentions the Attic language as a separate unity’, and ‘the first who ever used the Attic language for literary purposes’. But he was also responsible (with Draco as an uncertain predecessor) for the first written code of law in Athens. Ostwald has argued persuasively that the transition from traditional unwritten to written took place during the years 511/10 to 464/3 BC, and that for Draco and Solon the formulation in writing of their legislation was incidental to its validity: the use of in reference to their legislation is still fluid and interchangeable. But the fact of their using writing for recording and publishing their laws makes Draco and Solon the ‘founders of Attic prose writing’. Moreover, it involves Solon in the transition from a society in which information and experience were for the most part recorded and communicated orally—and especially in poetry—to one in which writing—and prose writing at that—would increasingly fulfil this function. It is this aspect, as it is reflected in Solon’s extant poetry and the testimonia, that we shall examine in this paper.

The poetry ascribed to Solon amounts in West’s edition of Greek iambic and elegiac verse to some thirty-five numbered fragments of a line or more, with a total of just over 280 lines. This relatively large legacy is certainly due to Solon’s reputation as lawgiver and sage. The many quotations from his poetry (including the twenty-seven lines of fr.36W) in the otherwise concise are ample evidence of this esteem for his thought and ability to formulate it in verse.

Solon’s surviving poetry comprises elegiac verse (twenty-seven fragments totalling 217 lines), iambic trimeters (five fragments totalling 43 lines) and tetrameters (three fragments totalling 21 lines), and a (probably spurious) hexameter fragment of two lines. Diogenes Laertius (1,61) also mentions epodes, of which, however, nothing has survived. Diogenes attributed to Solon 5000 lines of elegiac verse alone, which some have considered too large an amount for someone who was not a full-time poet. On the other hand, however, Solon’s actual work of reform occupied only a few years of his long life of eighty years. It is evident from the extant fragments that his poetry actually accompanied his thought, experience and work at different stages of his life. Active involvement in the political and economic life of Athens did not necessarily impede, but
could—from a need to explain, justify and persuade—actually have generated the composition of verse before, during and after his official year of office. His poem on Salamis, for example, composed around 600 BC to exhort the Athenians in their rivalry with Megara to capture the island, and represented for us by only three fragments of eight lines in all, contained according to Plutarch (Sol.8,3) one hundred lines and was 'very gracefully composed' (χαράκτης πάνυ πεποιημένον).

Also, his many and long travels as merchant and tourist must have provided the necessary stimulus and leisure to compose a large amount of verse. Two episodes are recorded in the testimonia which illustrate this. When Solon visited Egypt and heard the history of Atlantis from two learned priests, he started a poem on the subject, though he did not finish it. On his visit to Cyprus, he helped king Philocyprus to improve his city AEpeia. The king renamed the city Soli in honour of Solon, and the famous lawgiver-poet composed a farewell elegy of which six lines survive (fr.19W).

His poems (as far as we can judge from the extant fragments) constantly refer to events and experiences of his life: his reforms (frs.4a, 5–7, 12, 13, 32–34, 36W); the tyranny of Peisistratus (frs.9–11W), and the meditation and gnōmata on the human condition (frs.14–18, 20–21, 22a–27, 38–40W). Plutarch (Armo. Lib.5) quotes fragments 25 and 26W as examples of poetry from Solon’s youth and old age respectively, and from Solon’s own words we learn that he composed verse well into old age, still mentally alert and inquisitive: ‘but I grow old, ever learning many things’ (γηράσκω δ’ αεί πολλά διδασκόμενος, fr.18W).

But there is evidence that for Solon himself poetry was not his main métier. Plato has the younger Critias recall the following judgment of Solon’s poetry by the elder Critias: ‘If only . . . he had not taken up poetry as a by-play (παρέργο) but had worked hard at it like others, and if he had completed the story he brought here from Egypt, instead of being forced to lay it aside owing to the seditions and all the other evils he found here on his return,—why then, I say, neither Hesiod nor Homer nor any other poet would ever have proved more famous than he’. Of course, the younger Critias, who claimed descent from Solon, had reason enough to exaggerate, but Plutarch records something similar in his survey of Solon’s poetic activity: ‘And he seems to have composed his poetry at first with no serious end in view, but amusement and diversion (παίζον . . . καὶ παράγων) in his hours of leisure. Then later, he put philosophic maxims into verse, and interwove many political teachings in his poems, not simply to record and transmit them, but because they contained justifications of his acts, and sometimes exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes to the Athenians’.

Modern judgements on Solon’s poetry tend in essence to follow Plutarch’s assessment, but to apply it negatively, relegating the poet to an inferior position relative to the reformer, sage or statesman. In 1893 Wilamowitz, while recognizing Solon’s role as precursor of Cleisthenes and Aeschylus, judged his poetry thus: ‘ein grosser Dichter war er nicht, aber ein weiser und frommer und guter Mensch, was denn doch mehr ist’. For Lehmann-Haupt ‘what we value most in Solon’s poetry is the insight which
his verses give into his political views and their development. He is not so much the poet in the highest sense of the word, the conceiver of lofty views and of striking and picturesque metaphors, swayed by intense emotions of the heart, which find their vent in passionate and sounding verses. One can only wonder at the criteria used to judge a poet ‘in the highest sense of the word’—criteria which, even if they could be applied, would disqualify a great deal of poetry before and after the Romantic age, and, incidentally, qualify as much inferior verse.

Kathleen Freeman examined the poems as evidence for the constitutional reforms and the reformer’s personality, and, while conceding the value of the poems for an understanding of the thought behind the reforms, found no actual details of the constitutional reforms in the poetry. This hardly surprises anyone who keeps in mind that details of constitutional reform are unpromising poetical material, even for a poet in an oral culture. ‘He had no poetic imagination’, is her eventual judgement, ‘though he took pleasure in writing verses, and was devoted to Homer, Sappho, and his friend Mimnermos’.

Even the normally astute Hermann Fränkel applies dubious criteria in evaluating Solon’s poetry. ‘The songs of Alcaeus are on the whole more poetic because they are more impulsive and lively in swiftly-changing emotions and in sharp and clear pictures of momentary conditions. Multiplicity of moods, so strikingly expressed in Alcaeus, is wanting in Solon’s verses, for here the person of the speaker is wholly taken up in his subject, while the contrary is true of the Lesbian’. This just does not make sense: degrees of personal involvement on the part of Solon and Alcaeus cannot be determined; and in any case, personal involvement is not a prerequisite of a multiplicity of moods. It is no wonder that Lehmann-Haupt holds exactly the opposite view: ‘Hence the general scope and the unity of his aspirations are preserved to us in a delightful variety of momentary impressions and changing moods’. Such diametrically opposed statements, proceeding from fundamentally the same invalid critical position, amount to little more than subjective or personal opinion. Fränkel concludes: ‘Neither is he a true poet: he does not create a new world of thought and form, but through his writings as through his deeds he plays a distinguished part in the improvement of the world as it is... Solon does not transform reality into autonomous poetry, and therefore his poems have neither the pure and lucid transparency nor the fierce passion or delicate inwardness of Greek lyric’. No one would place Solon in the same category as the best lyric poets, but to use their achievement in what was strictly speaking a different poetic genre and milieu, in order to measure Solon is, to say the least, unfair criticism.

More positive, and closer to what must have been the realities of Solon’s problem of communicating with his audience, are the following judgements. Schmid remains close to Plutarch: ‘Er hat in diesen literarischen Formen wichtige Werkzeuge gefunden, um in seinem Volk für seine Gesetzgebung Bahn zu brechen, Stimmung zu machen, Verständnis zu verbreiten’. Will is suspicious of the idea that Solon only wrote in verse-form because prose had not yet developed as a
means of communicating.27 The quality of the verse, the technical skill and ease, the sound-patterns, the clarity and self-consciousness of the expression belong to a practised rather than a part-time poet. One wonders with Aly how Solon could have been Athens’ first poet if he wrote it only ἐν παρέργῳ.28 Havelock states the case most explicitly: ‘He was not a politician by profession and a poet by accident. His superior command of metrical composition gave him his efficacy as a policy-maker. His policies became inscribed on the memory of his audience so that they knew what they were and were able to carry them out.’29

Instead of value-judgements that contribute little to our understanding of Solon’s verse, we may from the same statement by Plutarch draw important information about the nature and function of Solon’s poetry in its context. We learn that in Athens in Solon’s time poetry (specifically elegy and iambus) was still the recognized means of forming, preserving and transmitting information and doctrine, for communicating with and persuading the public at large. Poetry in ancient Greece, particularly in Solon’s case, fulfilled the functions of modern-day mass media and information storage-systems. This poetry, moreover, even when composed in writing, was performed live before an audience.30 Whether one places alphabetism in Greece earlier or later on a time-scale from 1000 to 700 B.C.,31 there is little doubt that the skill of writing and reading was largely limited to those who needed it in a professional capacity (whether as poets, rhapsodists, chorus-trainers, teachers, merchants, officials, or craftsmen) and that for the general population of the polis it remained until the time of Plato at most an aid to memory rather than a complete means of recording and communication. What we read as a poetic text was—to use semiotic terminology—an orally communicated, and aurally received, encoding of reality. The visual element was the act of watching a performance, not scanning a written text.

In the external evidence of the testimonia and in the internal evidence of the surviving poetry itself there are no surprises concerning the performance of Solon’s elegiac or iambic verse. We know that elegiac or iambic poetry were performed live with or without musical accompaniment. Elegy as ‘song’ or chant was closer to lyric in this respect, being often accompanied by pipes, while iambus was delivered almost entirely as Sprechvers, or monologue recitation. The initial and main occasions for such performance were before a gathering which ranged from the citizens in the agora or at an official ceremony to the less formal groups of peers on a battlefield or at a symposium.32

That Solon used writing in the composition of his verse goes without saying. The younger Critias claimed to have memorized in childhood and to have eventually inherited from his grandfather, the elder Critias, Solon’s written transcriptions of Egyptian names into Greek.33 Plutarch prefaced his quotation from the Salamis-elegy (fr.1W) with the statement that Solon, frustrated by the law forbidding any reference to Salamis as a bone of contention between Athens and Megara ‘in writing or speech’ (μὴ γράψῃ τινά μὴ γείσαι), feigned insanity, secretly composed (συνθέσει) some elegiac lines, rehearsed them (μελετήσας) in order to be able to say them from memory (λέγειν ἀπὸ στόματος),
went to the agora and, wearing a herald's cap and standing on the herald's stone, 'went through' (διεξῆλθε) the poem before the assembled crowd. It seems certain that συνθέεις here refers to written composition as opposed to memorization. The delivery in the guise of a herald is, if true, admittedly a special case, enforced by circumstances: Solon wanted to ensure his personal safety in addition to reaching an audience. It does not necessarily apply to the performance of his other poetry.

But his own opening words enlighten us further: 'In person as a herald have I come from lovely Salamis; / an ornament of words, a song instead of a speech have I composed' (αὐτός κήρυξ ἠλάθον ἄφο' ἵμερτῆς Σαλαμίνος, / κόσμοιν ἐπέσων ὡδὴν ἀντ' ἀγερής θέμενος, fr.1W). Solon could have made a speech, at this stage perhaps not yet a developed literary form, but certainly effective as an oral delivery, but he chose to deliver his message in the form of poetry, composed carefully with the persuasive power of rhythmic language and delivered with the impact that only a live performer can achieve. And at this level the choice of poetry as the form of communication is relevant to all his verse. Solon himself was aware of the greater effectiveness of the κόσμοιν ἐπέσων ὡδήν, a poem composed to be 'sung' in comparison with a prose speech. Solon's poems were also chanted or recited by others. Again we turn to Plato's Timaeus where Critias explains how as a child often he joined in with other boys, during the third day ('Cureotis') of the festival of the Apaturia in honour of Dionysus, in the recitation contests (ἄθλον ... ῥαψοδίας). 'So', he continues, 'while many poems of many poets were declaimed (ἐλέγον), since the poems of Solon were at that time new, many of us children chanted them (ῥείομεν'). The verb ἀρτίον normally refers to singing, but the context of recitation-contests and declamation points to chanting with or without musical accompaniment, but certainly without choreography. The same applies to the challenge, and presumably the performance, of Demosthenes when calling the attention of Aeschines to Solon's elegy on the self-destruction threatening Athens. Demosthenes uses the word λέγει to preface his quotation of what seems an all but complete poem.

In the final analysis, however, it is the internal evidence of the poems themselves that must be examined to determine their nature and function. 'Solon is a writer of verse which still invites memorization', writes Havelock. Certain elements in such orally communicated and transmitted verses have been identified. The awareness of a listening and watching audience that must be persuaded and informed and presented with an encoding of knowledge and experience which will be conveniently and faithfully memorized for transmission to future generations, generates what we identify as patterns, tendencies or elements of thought in such a code or 'text'. Acoustic effects such as alliteration and assonance aid memorization; concrete rather than abstract argument and illustration are more easily grasped and retained by a live audience at the normally one and only performance; paratactic and asyndetic statements, repetitions, parallel versions of the same idea or theme, associative linking and summarizing ring-composition all clarify and reinforce the message; and the whole is emphasized...
by the personal appearance of a performer, usually the poet himself.42

Such elements have been found in Solon’s poetry. Discussing fr.1D (13W), Lesky pointed out the multitude of ideas in associative linking, repetition or multiplication of examples without any elaborately planned structure.43 Wilamowitz had already described the parts of the poem as the ‘Glieder einer Kette’.44 Lattimore felt that ‘we are watching Solon think’ and that the poem was ‘written forward, as if the writer were speaking’.45 and D’Agostino speaks of ‘un certo ondeggiamento di pensieri, che però non deve stupire negli scrittori antichi, meno abituati al nostro ‘rigore logico’’.46 Havelock considers the poem as a composite consisting of self-contained aphorisms worked into a continuous argument and largely coinciding with the couplet-division. He concedes that Solon has introduced a higher level of reflection into the Hesiodic technique of excerpting and reworking of such aphorisms. Though he avoids the narrative mode, Solon’s use of present tense verbs, associative linking and formulaic vocabulary from epic indicate a general debt to an oral reservoir.47

Fragment 13W begins with an invocation and appeal to the Muses as the daughters of Mnemosyne. The nature of the appeal and its relation to the poem as a whole have been much debated.48 What is relevant to our discussion is the importance of the initial word of the poem: Ἄνθρωπος. The Muses are here identified as the daughters of Mnemosyne, goddess of memory. The identification may be purely conventional, but it is no less rooted in the mnemonic nature and function of early Greek poetry.49 Solon asks the Muses for ὀλίβος, which comes from the gods, and for δοξα, which is bestowed by men. In Solon’s society such δοξα was carried by word of mouth, so that Mnemosyne is the relevant goddess to whom to direct the request. Elsewhere Solon is concerned with the reputation he might have among men: αὔν ἄν φάτις ἓν ἀνθρώπωσι γένοιτο (fr.2.3W; cf. 32, 1–4). In Plato’s Timaeus, the stories Critias tells of Solon depend on his recollection and the influence or aid of Mnemosyne.50

We turn now to fr.4W, one of the three near-complete surviving poems and a crucial text in Solon’s legacy, in order to examine Solon’s use of traditional, mainly Homeric poetic diction, the structuring of the thought, and the purpose of the poetry in the context of the society or audience for which it was created.

Solon shared with other Greek poets a pool of poetic diction provided by Homer. It is worth recalling that it is in Solon’s time, and specifically under the rule of Peisistratus, that tradition records the recension of the Homeric poems,51 and Plutarch (Sol. 10) relates how Solon added two lines to Homer’s catalogue of ships (Il. 2, 557) to sanction Athenian claims to Salamis. Solon’s contact with the Homeric poems could thus have been via the general ‘oral reservoir’ which formed the basis of Greek paideia52 as well as the more specific contact with a written version of Homer. At any rate, given the importance of the traditional poetic diction, it is not surprising to find many Homeric borrowings and echoes in Solon’s work.

Fragment 4 opens with an accumulation of Homeric words and phrases with
which Solon informs the Athenians that ‘our city’ (ἡμετέρη πόλις, 1) will not be destroyed by Zeus’ decree (κατώ Δίως ... αἶσσαν, 1–2) or the will of the blessed, immortal gods (μακάρων θεῶν ἁθανάτων, 2), because Pallas Athena, great-hearted guardian and daughter of a mighty father (μεγάθυμος ἐπίσκοπος ὀβρομοπάτηρ, 3), stretches forth her hands in protection (χεῖρας ὑπερθεῖν ἔχει, 4). It is impossible to be sure how these Homeric echoes struck Solon’s audience. Perhaps there was immediate recognition, a sense of pride in ‘our city’ and a delight in the dignity and sonority of the poetic language. If so, Solon soon disappointed them, for after the assurances of the opening lines (1–4), the theme and tone change to analysis of the unhealthy state of Athens and rebuke of her citizens. After the epic colouring there follows Solon’s personal diagnosis of the ills affecting the ‘great city’ (μεγάλην πόλιν, 5) which is being destroyed by its own citizens (5–6). Homeric echoes all but vanish to make way for the poet’s own personal statement and diction.

The malpractices of the people (ἀστοί, 6) and their leaders (ἡγεμόνοι, 7) are then listed: the former are guilty of rashness or folly (ὁφροδίησιν, 5) and of being motivated by possessions (χρήματι πειθόμενοι, 6), the latter of unjust attitude (ἄδικος νόος, 7) and hybris (ὕβρις ἐκ μεγάλης, 8).

The thought of this section advances by antithesis (1–4: safety under the gods, destruction by the citizens) and a balancing parallelism (6–7: citizens’ folly and greed, leaders’ injustice and arrogance) which Fränkel has labelled ‘pendulum’ (‘Pendeln’) structure, and which is typical of archaic and orally communicated thought.

The following section (9–14) expands on the unjust behaviour of the leaders in another such typical thought-pattern, associative linking. The leaders cannot limit their excessive wealth (κατέχειν κόρον, 9) or inhibit the enjoyment offered at their banquets (πάρουσις/εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαιτός, 9f.) they enrich themselves unjustly (πλουτεύομεν δ’ἄδικος ἐγγυμασι πειθόμενοι, 11), show no respect for sacred or profane property and steal left and right (12f.), and do not preserve the ‘reverend foundations of Justice’ (κατέχειν κόρον, 9).

The items of the aristocrats’ behaviour are concrete and situational elaborations of a central idea, the accumulation of wealth by unjust means. There is no linear progression in time, nor any causal subordination. Also, the items are included to persuade by their emotional or affective value: the aristocracy is guilty of a lack of sophrosyné and decorum, of committing injustice, sacrilege and theft, and of hybris. The whole exhibits the synchronicity of archaic thought in the use of present tense verbs of action to build up a graphic ‘reality’ in the present, and to sway a live audience.

With the appearance of the personified Dike, who silently knows present and past (τὰ γιγνόμενα πρὸ τ’ἔοντα, 15 – ‘a kind of Mnemosyne’) and eventually appears for retribution (16), the poem reaches a turning-point. The action of Dike is also seen as present before the mind’s eye: the use of the gnomic aorist ἦθος indicates a timelessness which, together with the present participle συγγένε, the verb σύνοιτος and the adverb πάντως, presents before the listener a graphic,
ever-present view of Justice. For the Greek audience the Homeric phrase τὰ
γινόμενα πρὸ τ’όντα, with τὸ χρόνον and ἀποτελεσμένη did not state a
historical time-sequence of past, present and future, but rather brought past and
future action into relation with the present, here σιγώσα σύνοιδε. ‘Archaic time’,
says Prier, ‘is the time of the present’. 65

The next section (17–29) creates the image of the progressive destruction of
the entire polis down to each individual. Like an inescapable sore (ἄφυκτον, 17),
this corruption leads to the enslavement of the city (δουλοσύνην, 18), fraternal conflict (στάσιν ἐμφύλον, 19) and war (πόλεμον, 19), which destroys
the flower of the country’s youth (ὁς . . . ἔρατην ἀλέσεν ἡλικίην, 20), for soon at
the hands of its internal enemies the city wastes away in the associations of the
unjust (21f.). 66 From the consequences for the city (ταῦτα μὲν ἐν δῆμῳ στρέφεται
κακά, 23), the poem concentrates down to the lot awaiting each individual (23–
25): exile and bondage. 67

The personification built up in ἔρχεται (17), ἡλυθε (18), ἐπεγείρει (19) and
στρέφεται (23), and suggesting some kind of animal, 68 is continued. The common
evil enters (ἔρχεται again, 26) each house; outside doors are to no avail (27); it
leaps over high hedging, seeks out its prey, even into the privacy of the
bedchamber (28f.).

This section (17–29) exhibits in its thought-structure a cohesion which, seen as
a cause-effect relation, led Jaeger and others to explain the nature and working of
Dikē as that of an immanent, cosmic moral force in nature and human existence. 69
Dikē, personified already in Hesiod as the sister of Eunomia and Eirēnē, children
of Zeus and Themis, 70 is interpreted as ‘due share’ (Jaeger), 71 or ‘lawful
procedure’ (Gagarin). 72 Eunomia, the cure Solon proposes for Athens (32–39),
is also interpreted as an inherent order in society. 73 This view of Dikē and
Eunomia has been challenged by Treu, Ostwald, Masaracchia, Gagarin and
Havelock. 74 They reject the idea of Dikē and Eunomia as universal, cosmic moral
forces in Solon’s thought, arguing instead for a concrete and specific interpreta-
tion in the context of especially economic and legal transactions and procedure.

Certainly a ‘causality’ or ‘logic’ is evident in the progression from wound to
war, and from entire city to individual inhabitant. But the vision is concrete: the
stages of the degeneration are seen as a sequence of actions carried out by the
same agent. The personification of Dikē (15f.) and the animation of the
corruption that threatens the polis and its people dominate, and there is no sign in
the language of the abstraction of Dikē into an immanent moral principle or law.

Instead the actions are cast graphically in the present: ἔρχεται (17, 26), ἐπεγείρει
(19), τρίχεται (22), στρέφεται (23), ἰκνέονται (24), ἐθέλουσι (27), with more
gnomic aorists: ἡλυθε (18), ἀλέσεν (20), ὑπέρθορεν (28) and εὗρε . . . πάνως (28).
The events in lines 24f. are arranged ὡστέρον πρῶτερον. 75 The scene is synchronic,
of the delightful city – exile of the poor – pursuit of the individual into his θάλαμος
lies, not on the level of abstract causality as we see it (i.e. one event following
inherently upon the previous one), but of affective and emotional images and the
concreteness of actual situation (i.e. a concrete vignette in which the phases of degeneration are recalled as a composite drawn from actual case-histories). The audience is not persuaded by the ‘logical chain’ of inevitability, but by the truth of the total picture in which any one of the elements or phases implies the others.

This applies more clearly to Eunomia whose actions are listed in the final section of the poem (32–39). She brings order and perfection (32), places bonds on the unjust (33)—in contrast with the enslavement of the city (18) and its poor citizens (23–25)—, smooths the uneven (34), restrains excess (34), weakens arrogance (34), withers the flowers of ruin (35), straightens crooked judgements (36), softens high-minded actions (36f.), puts an end to the actions of discord (37) and the wrath of painful strife (38), making all perfect and wise (38f.). Apart from the personification and the cataloguing, other elements of archaic verse composition are apparent: repetition and echoing, asyndeton, chiasmus and ring-composition. Words hark back to earlier occurrences in the poem as the threads are gathered together: εὐκόσμα (32; cf. κοσμεῖν, 10), ἀδίκοστά (33; cf. ἀδίκος, 7; ἀδίκος, 11), κόρον/ὕβριν (34: cf. ὑβρίς, 8; κόρον, 9), δίκες σκολιώμε (36; cf. σκυμα Λίκτης, 14), ὑπερήφανα τ' ἔργα (36, 37; cf. ἑρμησί, 11), διχοστασίας (37; cf. στάσις, 19), and ἀρτία (32, 39). Clauses are run together without connectives but with chiasitic linking to effect emphasis (34), while chiasmus is used in antithetical balancing (31f.) or in balancing similar units for emphasis (36f.). Verbs with rhyming endings begin their clauses (34, 35, 36, 37, 38), and alliteration and assonance add to the acoustic effects (especially on εὖ-, α- and -α-). The whole section concerning Eunomia is framed in word and sense by εὐκόσμα καὶ ἀρτία πάντα... ἀρτία καὶ πινυμα. The presence of these elements induced Jaeger to suggest cultic influence in these lines. Such cultic material shared in the oral tradition. But again it is the present tense and concrete language that bring the image and function of Eunomia before the audience’s imagination. The ‘order’ and ‘perfection’ are presented in terms of real, particular situations without any necessary causal connection or sequence joining them.

Although Solon’s analysis of the maladies of Athens dominates the poem, there is a basic personal concern for the city and its citizens discernible throughout. The intial ἡμετέρη ἔ δὲ πόλει strikes this note, which surfaces in μεγάλην πόλιν (5), ἀστοί and ἄστυ (6, 21), ὄμω, δημοσίων, δήμῳ, and δημοσίων (7, 12, 23, 26), πάση πόλει... δουλουσύνην (17f.), πολλά (20) and τῶν ἐν πενίχρων... πολλοί (23f.). It has been pointed out by several scholars that Solon’s view of the world and events is Athens-centric. Athens and Attica are always referred to with a warm pride and patriotism, even in a Homeric cliché like γῆ μέλαινα (fr.36.5; 38.4f.). In fr.4 appears the clearest expression of what lay behind this feeling: τούτο διδάξαμεν θυμός Ἀθηναίων με κελεύει (30). Solon’s audience was the Athenian citizen-body, in all probability assembled in the agora. He saw himself as their teacher, and used poetry as the medium for his teaching, a function which it had always performed in Greek society. Jaeger considered this educational role, rather than his historical influence, as the basis of Solon’s claim to our
continued interest. Havelock interprets this ‘overt didacticism’ as a typical sign of oral poetry, but describes didactic verse as ‘A literature of clichés..., serving as a transmission line for the consolidation of those common proprieties, embedded in epic, which had guided Greek culture in the oral period of its development’. Though he concedes a greater sophistication, an increased reflective and logical character to Solon vis-à-vis Hesied, his view that Solon’s poetry is composed of a series of aphorisms, more or less logically linked together, is a misconception of the way in which Greek poets used traditional diction and material. Individual creativity and conscious artistry, rather than mechanical and automatic borrowing, characterize poet after poet, and Solon is no exception. Solon’s verse is in nature and function closely connected with the milieu from and for which it was created. And that was an Athens emerging on the political, economic and literary scene, and advancing into a more fully literate culture.

NOTES

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1. However one evaluates Solon’s political, social and economic reforms, the judgement of e.g. Wilamowitz still contains an essential element of truth: ‘Und doch hat er in der Tat die Demokratie Athen, wenn auch nur als Vorläufer des Kleisthenes... begründet’ (Aristotle and Athens, Berlin 1893, II, 66); cf. also G. Vlastos, ‘Solonian Justice’, CPh 41 (1946) 65–83; C. Hignett, A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century BC, Oxford 1952, 89ff., 108f., 156f.


3. Solon’s brother Dropides was also a poet: Suda s.v. Πλάτων. Cf. W. Schmidt, Griechische Literaturgeschichte, 1, 1, 364 n.1. In the main, Solon’s predecessors or contemporaries in lyric were Terpander, Sappho and Alcaeus (Lesbos), Eumelus (Corinth), Alkman (Sparta) and Stesichorus (Himera), and in elegy and iambus Archilochus (Paros), Callinus (Epheus), Mimnermus (Smyrna), Semonides (Amorgos) and Tyrtaeus (Sparta). Cf. V. Agostino, ‘Saggio sui frammenti poetici di Solone’, RSC 7 (1939) 138–139.


11. Fr.31W, quoted by Plut. Sol. 3,5 (cf.31); cf. W. Aly, RE III A 1, col. 952; Linforth, op. cit. 214, who makes the valid point that if Solon had written only the opening, it would have been destroyed, and if he had verified his entire code, more would have survived. On the other hand, however, it was quite a natural desire on the part of Solon to want to preserve his laws in a traditional form such as epic, whether he actually achieved such a feat or not.


13. Diog. Laert. 1.62: schol. ad Plut. Repm. 599E (= Martina, op. cit. 4 no. 5). Lucian’s figure of 100 years (Macr. 18) can be rejected.


18. Plut. Tim. 20E.


27. TAPlA 89 (1958) 301ff.


32. Cf. D.A. Campbell, ‘Flutes and Eleiaic Couplets’, AHS 1961, 63–68; M. West, Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus. Berlin-New York 1974, 2, 10–14, 35ff. Plato (Phd. 278B–C) distinguishes between prose writers such as Lysias, whose poetry was accompanied by music or simply chanted (e.g. Homer), and others like Solon who created laws. Athenaeus (14, 632D) mentions that Xenophanes, Solon, Theognis, Phocylides and the Corinthian eleiaic poet Periander did not add melodies to their poetry. Plato refers only to Solon’s written laws: the poetry would fall under the group of chanted or recited verse. Athenaeus’ statement means that Solon did not compose music for his verse, i.e. it was chanted or recited.

33. Plut. Tim. 113A, B.

34. Plut. Sol. 8; cf. Diog. Laert. 1.2.2, who places a garland on Solon’s head, and has a herald deliver the poem. R. Flaceliere, ‘Le bonnet de Solon’, REA 49 (1947) 235–247, argues that the pilion is not a herald’s cap but a nightcap or invalid’s cap worn to enforce the appearance of madness. It is difficult to see, however, what such a disguise could contribute to the effectiveness of Solon’s oral performance, with the role of a herald. A. Masaracchia, Solon, Florence 1958, 243, attributes the story of the feigned madness to later invention.

35. Cf. LSI s.v. μανία 19; evroukéma II 3.

36. Cf. Linforth, op. cit. 10, 6; ποσεύω refers to speech already in Hom. II. 2, 788. Solon rebukes the Athenians in fr.11, 9–14W for having been persuaded by speeches rather than by actions in allowing tyranny.

37. Wijnamowicz, Aristocles and Athenr, II. 35f. n.2, pointed out that in the delivery Solon would have

Cl. Linforth, op. cit. 215ff.; Masaracchia, op. cit. 245ff.


39. Solon uses ὠς only once, in his exhortation to Mimnermus (fr. 20, 3W), where the word also implies no more than 'say'. Compared with the frequency of the word among lyric poets, the occurrence in elegiac and iambic verse is relatively restricted: it occurs only in Theognis (4, 16, 243, 533, 825, 939, 943, 993, 1065), Archilochus (fr. 58. 12W; 117W), Simonides (fr. 17, 1–2W), and Echekel. Cf. G. Fataurus, Index Verborum zu frührömischen Lyrik, Heidelberg 1966; West, Ιάμβι καὶ Ελεγί, 'Index Verborum'; Studies, 11ff., 13.


41. Justice, 262.


44. Sappho und Simonides, Berlin 1913, repr. 1966, 265.


46. RSC 7 (1959) 142.

47. Justice, 256–258.


53. The phrase combines νοοέσθαι (II, 3,59) and Δώσις ἀλήθεια (II, 9,608), ὑπὸ Δώσις ἀλήθεια (II, 17,321) and Δώσις ἀλήθεια (Od. 9,52). Cf. Masaracchia, op. cit. 248ff., on Solon's different conception νοοέσθαι νοθεί.

54. Cf. θεοί μάκρας ἄθαντοι (II, 4,127); θεοὶ μάκρας (Od. 18,134), and also μάκρας θεοὶ (Hes. Theog. 881).

55. μεγάθυμος is used of Athena in Od. 8,520 and 13,121; ἑκάστοκος is applied to the gods as a group (Aesch. Sept. 272) or to tutelary individuals, mortal or divine (Diđ.: Plat. Leg. 872E; Chio: Simon. fr.72(b)p; the Charites: Pind. O. 14,3; Bacchus: Soph. Ant. 1148; Hector: II. 24,729); and ἀλήθεια ἀλήθεια appears with Athena in II. 5,747 and Od. 8,520, and Hes. Theog. 587. Again Solon has synthesized.

56. Cf. ὑπέροχον χάριν, II. 4,249; ζῷον / θεών / . . . ἐξαράσσεται, II. 9,419ff., 686ff.

57. The idea of the gods enlisting the co-operation of mortals appears also in Homer (Od. 1,32–34); cf. Linforth, op. cit. 195; Jaeger, in Antike Lyrik, 15ff., who points out that, instead of the usual divine messenger, Solon himself plays the role of the admonisher (19ff.); Fränkel, op. cit. 221 n.6.; TAPhA 89 (1958) 308–310.

58. ἐμπληκωσάμενοι (5): II. 5,649, Od. 10,27; τά γεγονόματα πρὸ τόν θάνατον (15): II. 1,70 (of Chalkas). In πόλεμον ὀλίγον ἐπισκεύασα (19) Solon has made explicit the 'slumbering' war; cf. the image in II. 20,31 (πάλαμον), 5,496 (πάλαμον), 2,440 (Ἀρμόν) and 13,788 (μάχης).


63. Cf. Fränkel, op. cit. 519f. (Index A, 3.3–4; 4.1); Prier, op. cit. 2ff.

64. B. Snell, Poetry and Society. The Role of Poetry in Ancient Greece, Bloomington 1961, 39. In the light of Lesky's warning (op. cit. 102) against the use of 'personification' in connection with Dikē in Hesiod, I use the term to mean 'embodiment'. On the transformation of such concepts as Themis, Dikē, Euxomia, Eirēnē, Aïdōs and Horkos into deities, cf. Ehrenberg, op. cit. 3n.1, 64–69. He makes the important point that this transformation is the first step to abstraction: these deities are a mixture of abstract and concrete, and played no role in cult (3n.1, 68n.4).

65. Prier, op. cit. 151; cf. 13ff. Also, only one verb is not in the indicative (30); cf. Masaracchia, op. cit. 271.


68. στράτευμα is used of animals at bay in Hom. Il. 12,42 and Sol. fr.36,27W; cf. Campbell, op. cit. 243.


73. Jaeger, Paideia, 142; Fränkel, op. cit. 222.


75. Cf. Masaracchia, op. cit. 263f.

76. Cf. Masaracchia, op. cit. 262.


79. Masaracchia, op. cit. 269.

80. Often noted: cf. e.g. Aly, RE III A1, col.955; Rudberg, SO 29 (1952) 1–7; Lesky, op. cit. 122–128; Fränkel, op. cit. 220; Havelock, Justice, 259, 358 n.17. Cf. also Linforth's remark on 36,4ff.W `'Here, as elsewhere, Ge is not thought of as the personality of the whole round earth, but is the earth as conceived by a resident of Attica' (op. cit. 185). Cf. γῆν κάτω πυροσφόρον (13, 20), κατὰ πόλιν γυπατιν (13, 23) and γῆν ... πολιορκήν (13, 47).

81. Cf. West, Studies, 12.

82. Paideia, 136–149; cf. Fränkel, op. cit. 219; Masaracchia, op. cit. 201, 266f.

83. Justice, 261.
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