IV.—Solon's Prayer to the Muses[1]

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The central idea of Solon's Prayer to the Muses is that the key to the success for which he prays is wisdom, by which limits are recognized, injustice avoided, and retribution averted. The elegy is addressed to the Muses as goddesses of wisdom.

Professor Richmond Lattimore has effectively demonstrated the unity of Solon's elegy addressed to the Muses.[2] By clarifying the links that connect each successive part with what immediately precedes, he has shown that any interpretation must recognize an unbroken continuity of thought in the elegy. Lattimore himself believes, however, that it has no single subject which serves as a guiding theme. He considers the poem rather to be a series of reflections, set down as they occur to the poet, including imperfectly resolved contradictions, and controlled in their direction only by a subconscious desire for prosperity. The movement of thought as the elegy progresses seems to him to depart so widely from the initial address to the Muses that he regards as misleading the title "Solon's Prayer to the Muses," by which it has sometimes been known.

Although this title has no ancient authority, it seems nevertheless to have a descriptive accuracy which has not been recognized by commentators. The prayer to the Muses for their help in gaining success in life, with which the elegy begins, has generally been regarded as extending only through the first six verses, and it is true that there is no direct address to them thereafter. It has therefore been assumed that, although the elegy is dedicated to the Muses by the opening words, there is no precise connection between them and the reflections that follow. If, however, we regard the address to the Muses as relevant throughout the elegy, it is possible to recognize in the elegy a unity of conception which a brief summary will indicate: After the initial prayer for success there follows, in the long central part (verses 7–70), an analysis of the cause of

[1] No. 1, Diehl. Citations of Solon are in accordance with the numbering and text of Diehl.

[2] R. Lattimore, "The First Elegy of Solon," *AJPh* 68 (1947) 161–179.

failure in life — ἄτη, which Zeus sends as a punishment of injustice but which men may also bring upon themselves by unjust acts committed through sheer ignorance. At the end of this discussion it has become clear that success finally depends on the possession of wisdom, which the Muses have it in their power to grant. The concluding six verses (71–76) summarize the normal course of experience, from success through injustice to ruin, and so present the danger threatening Solon himself if he does not receive the gift of wisdom. There is thus a return in the conclusion to the need for divine aid which was expressed at the beginning in the form of a direct prayer for success. The whole central section serves to define the way in which the Muses can answer the prayer of their worshipper. The discussion which follows will develop this interpretation in detail.

In the first six verses Solon prays to the Muses for ὄλβος and δόξα, the power to make himself respected by his friends and feared by his enemies:

> Μνημοσύνης καὶ Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου ἀγλαὰ τέκνα,
> Μοῦσαι Πιερίδες, κλῦτέ μοι εὐχομένῳ·
> ὄλβον μοι πρὸς θεῶν μακάρων δότε καὶ πρὸς ἁπάντων
> ἀνθρώπων αἰεὶ δόξαν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν·
> εἶναι δὲ γλυκὺν ὧδε φίλοισ', ἐχθροῖσι δὲ πικρόν,
> τοῖσι μὲν αἰδοῖον, τοῖσι δὲ δεινὸν ἰδεῖν.

The subject of the elegy was stated too narrowly by Wilamowitz when he said, "Dem Reichtum gilt das ganze Gedicht."[3] To regard the elegy as solely concerned with wealth necessitates considering the wish αἰεὶ δόξαν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν as an incidental theme introduced momentarily and immediately dropped, and it admits one facet only of the meaning of ὄλβος. It is doubtful whether ὄλβος can ever mean simply πλοῦτος, as Wilamowitz paraphrased it. When ὄλβος is used in this restricted sense it is normally accompanied by a defining word, e.g. ὄλβῳ τε πλούτῳ τε (*Il.* 16.596; *Od.* 14.206), πλοῦτόν τε καὶ ὄλβον (Hes. *Op.* 637).[4] Certainly its normal range of meaning is wider. Here ὄλβος is a state of general well-being and δόξα ἀγαθή is the respect and honor which are its public recognition; ὄλβος comes from the gods and δόξα from men. Together they express the essentials of a successful life. The next distich (5–6) does not

[3] U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin, 1913) 264.

[4] Cf. also Herod. 8.75: χρήμασι ὄλβιον.

introduce a new element into the prayer, but rather restates the idea of success as the ability of a man to play his part in the world by helping his friends and hurting his enemies — a commonplace of early Greek social morality which we observe that Solon accepts without question. Such restatement of the same idea in fresh terms, as though it were a new idea, is a favorite method of development in archaic poetry and is a characteristic feature of this elegy.[5]

In the following distich (7–8) a slight shift in the terms of the prayer is made, and an important new theme is introduced, when Solon continues:

> χρήματα δ' ἰμείρω μὲν ἔχειν, ἀδίκως δὲ πεπᾶσθαι
> οὐκ ἐθέλω· πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη.

It is necessary to observe that in this statement the word χρήματα does not simply repeat ὄλβος,[6] but Solon's audience would have no difficulty in following the transition from a general prayer for happiness — success in life — to the particular concern with the acquisition and retention of wealth which is evident in the rest of the elegy. Wealth is for Solon an obviously necessary element in success, as it was in Greek thought generally until the revolution in values which came with the end of the fifth century. Odysseus' return would have been a failure without the treasure given him by the Phaeacians. The Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* closes with the statement that the man whom the goddesses love is ὄλβιος and receives from them πλοῦτον, ὃς ἀνθρώποις ἄφενος θνητοῖσι δίδωσιν (*Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 486–89). Tellus of Athens, the happiest of men according to the Solon of Herodotus' story, had wealth sufficient for his needs (Herod. 1.30). A direct relationship between wealth and success in general is asserted by Hesiod: πλούτῳ δ' ἀρετὴ καὶ κῦδος

[5] H. F. Fraenkel remarks, with particular reference to this elegy: "Stille zu stehn hat die Rede noch nicht recht gelernt; so kreist sie mehrmals um ihren Gegenstand, und tritt dabei immer wieder von hier und immer wieder von dort an ihn heran. Als ob es etwas anderes, neues und weiteres wäre, werden dieselben wenigen Gedanken immer wieder aufgenommen" ("Eine Stileigenheit der Frühgriechischen Literatur," *NGG*, Phil.-Hist. Kl., 1924, 96–97).

[6] It is so interpreted by Lattimore (*op. cit.* 163), but the meaning of χρήματα, which refers to material possessions only, is much narrower than that of ὄλβος. The narrowing of the terms ὄλβος and δόξα in the rest of the elegy to terms exclusively denoting wealth (χρήματα, πλοῦτος, κέρδεα) serves to provide a more precise and concrete topic for the analytic parts of the elegy than the general terms of the opening verses would permit. Since wealth is an essential element of prosperity (in the broad sense indicated in verses 3–6) loss of wealth can imply practical failure to fulfill the goal expressed in the prayer.

ὀπηδεῖ (*Op.* 313), and implied in a fragment of the *Erechtheus* of Euripides: ἐν τῷ πένεσθαι δ' ἐστὶν ἥ τ' ἀδοξία, | κἂν ᾖ σοφός τις ἥ τ' ἀτιμία βίου (Eurip. *Frag.* 364.16–17 Nauck²). Wealth, then, is an important and necessary element of success, and is an element particularly well suited to illustrate the idea with which Solon is especially concerned throughout this elegy — the danger of sudden failure. His own experience as a merchant and the whole financial crisis of his time must have shown him that nothing is more quickly transitory than wealth.[7] His concern that success should be lasting is indicated initially by inclusion of the words αἰεὶ ἔχειν in his prayer. As becomes clear in the course of the elegy, the normal striving of men to become ever more wealthy may in the end prove self-defeating, since in this effort they are likely to transgress the limits of justice and so to incur ruin. The prayer of Solon therefore is less concerned with the acquisition of wealth than with its permanent retention.

The primary danger which threatens its permanence is the leveling process of justice, which in the long run destroys riches won unjustly. This theme is stated directly in the maxim πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη. The 24 verses which follow (9–32) expand and restate this idea. Each of the parts into which this section falls (9–16, 17–24, 25–32) seems to arise out of what immediately precedes, and the whole seems to move steadily forward, but there is no actual advance in the thought. The same point, that injustice is followed by loss of all that has been gained, is made again and again — first in terms of δίκη and ἄτη (9–16), then by the simile of a spring storm (17–24), and finally as the vengeance of Zeus (25–32). Within each of these parts there is a sense of movement and change. So ἄτη is a developing process, like the fire to which it is compared. The simile of the storm advances from the initial point, the swiftness with which the storm strikes, through its destructive action, to end with the complete calm that ensues. The vengeance of Zeus is swift, like the storm, and as the storm comes in its destructive violence only at the end of the winter, so Zeus is concerned not with each deed, but with the end;[8] when the vengeance of Zeus has struck, the earth is as free from the works of ὕβρις as the spring sky

[7] This is clear from the discussion by I. M. Linforth, *Solon the Athenian* (Berkeley, 1919), esp. pp. 36–38.

[8] Fraenkel (*op. cit.* 96, n. 1) has pointed out that ἠρινός — which is given importance by its position — must be given full weight in interpretation: the storm comes in spring, when the clouds have persisted through the long winter.

is free from the clouds of winter. Verses 25–28 thus repeat explicitly what the simile has already implied, and 29–32 repeat the idea once again in more precise detail. Despite the impression of progressive movement given by each of the forms in which Solon expresses the idea that justice finally destroys wealth which is gained unjustly, the logical content of the poem has not advanced beyond the point made in verse 8. The statement which introduces the section (*πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη*) has simply been repeated three times in different terms: *οὐ γὰρ δὴν θνητοῖσ' ὕβριος ἔργα πέλει* (16); *νεφέων οὐδὲν ἔτ' ἔστιν ἰδεῖν* (24); *πάντως δ' ἐς τέλος ἐξεφάνη* (28).

To this point the elegy has been concerned with the fact that wealth acquired unjustly is not permanent: the sequence of retribution following upon injustice is insured by Zeus, who knows the end of all things and is never deceived. Solon's prayer is for success which will endure, and he has now made clear that this is incompatible with injustice.

The problem next presented is the danger inherent in man's restless effort to fulfill his hopes. This idea appears without direct indication of its relation to the initial prayer or to the intervening reflections upon the consequences of injustice. Instead it seems to arise in verse 33 simply from a point that has just been made — the sure knowledge of Zeus, which has been cited as the guarantee that injustice will certainly be punished:[9] in contrast to divine wisdom, the frail hopes of mankind are based on illusion. The connection of what follows with the earlier part of the elegy is implicit in this contrast. Solon has been concerned with the threat which retribution consequent upon excess offers to continued success. He now passes to the difficulty which the natural limitations of the human mind create even for a man who realizes the dangers of injustice and therefore will not deliberately be unjust. Such a man still faces the possibility that lack of foresight, which is characteristic of his mind in contrast to that of Zeus, will lead him unawares into injustice and misfortune. Man can pursue his effort to fulfill his hopes without danger of reversal only when aided by the divine wisdom which knows the limits allotted by fate.

[9] Cf. Lattimore, *op. cit.* 166. It seems to me, however, that verse 33 begins a section of the elegy (extending through 70) which is logically coordinate with 7–32, since it presents a discussion of the second danger threatening success. It may be noted that if verses 39–40 and 51–52 are interpolated (cf. *infra*, notes 11 and 12), the two sections are of precisely the same length. In any case they are nearly equal and are inclosed by an introduction and a conclusion each six lines long.

The new theme is introduced by contrasting the sanguine expectations of men with the suffering which often is the actual outcome, when men's hopes are proved empty:

> θνητοὶ δ' ὧδε νοεῦμεν ὁμῶς ἀγαθός τε κακός τε,
> †ενδηνην† αὐτὸς δόξαν ἕκαστος ἔχει,
> πρίν τι παθεῖν· τότε δ' αὖτις ὀδύρεται· ἄχρι δὲ τούτου
> χάσκοντες κούφαισ' ἐλπίσι τερπόμεθα.

The text of the opening word or words of verse 34 is uncertain, but the sense must be: "We mortals, good and bad alike, think in our fashion that the expectations each one of us has will be fulfilled — until we suffer."[10] Particular examples of men's hopes follow in the next verses: a man suffering from severe disease thinks that he will be well, a poor man that he will gain wealth (37–42).[11] The mention of wealth in the latter example leads to an apparent digression on the variety and intensity of labor; the general statement σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος is illustrated by a second group of examples (43–62). In the first three of these examples (43–50) emphasis lies on the hardships faced by men in their efforts to earn a livelihood: the merchant must travel over the sea at risk of his life, the farmer toils unceasingly, the artisan works with his hands. It seems that we are being drawn away from the theme of the illusory character of hope into an irrelevant discussion of labor. However the uncertainty of the outcome of labor is not completely ignored in these examples, since the merchant is not sure even of preserving his life, and emphasis changes within the series of examples, shifting again from the hardships involved in men's activities to the uncertainty of the outcome.[12] The shift of emphasis becomes ex-

[10] This meaning is adequately expressed if we emend ενδηνην to ἔρδειν ἦν as has been proposed by K. Ziegler, *NJA* 49 (1922) 203–204, and W. Jaeger, *Paideia* (Eng. trans. by G. Highet, 2d ed., New York, 1945) 1.450–451, note 47. However I should prefer εὖ δρᾶν ἦν which makes more forceful the contrast between expected success and actual failure, and which is almost as close to the manuscript reading. Lattimore proposes ἔνδον ἦν and translates the line "each man keeps himself his own inward ideas" (*op. cit.* 165, note 14); but it is the false optimism of men's hopes that concerns Solon, rather than their unique and subjective character.

[11] Verses 39–40, which offer examples of sheer delusions concerning present matters of fact, have been defended as genuine by P. Friedländer (*Hermes* 64 [1929] 381–383); but his defense is unconvincing because it does not show a relation of these examples to the general proposition of verses 33–36. Only hopes capable of future realization will illustrate the contrast between expectation and the disappointment which follows.

[12] Verses 51–52 are probably to be rejected as interpolated because (1) this example alone lacks a verb, (2) neither the theme of the intensity of labor nor that of the uncer-

plicit when the example of the seer is offered (54–55):

ἔγνω δ' ἀνδρὶ κακὸν τηλόθεν ἐρχόμενον,
ᾧ συνομαρτήσωσι θεοί·

and it is stated that his vision is clear only if the gods attend him. Without the help of the gods the seer is as ignorant of the end as is the physician, who is as likely to cure a man suffering from severe disease by the mere touch of his hand as by the use of all his drugs. With the mention of disease and the uncertainty of its cure we have returned to the example with which the first series began. The words νούσοισι ἀργαλέῃσι, which first appeared in the initial example (37), are now repeated and are a formal indication that the ring of examples is closed.[13]

The effect of introducing the topic of labor into the discussion of the limitations of the human mind is worth inquiring into, since it has been thought to be the real subject of this part of the elegy.[14] The question of the means for achieving success, with which this elegy is concerned, had already been discussed by Hesiod. In the *Works and Days*, after discussing the inevitable triumph of justice, Hesiod warned that a foolish man learns the danger of violating justice only by suffering the penalty (217–218):

δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἴσχει
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα· παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω.

Hesiod's solution was that men should choose to recognize and to follow the ways of justice (280–281):

εἰ γάρ τις κ' ἐθέλῃ τὰ δίκαι' ἀγορεῦσαι
γιγνώσκων, τῷ μέν τ' ὄλβον διδοῖ εὐρύοπα Ζεύς.

and work unceasingly (381–382):

σοὶ δ' εἰ πλούτου θυμὸς ἐέλδεται ἐν φρεσὶν ἧσιν,
ὧδ' ἔρδειν, καὶ ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ ἐργάζεσθαι.

tainty of its outcome is illustrated, (3) apparently the poet is the example intended, but in view of the function of the Muses in this elegy the language is actually ambiguous. I suspect that the distich is the addition of a later writer who was disturbed by the omission of poets from what he regarded as a catalogue of all the major professions.

[13] Verses 53–56 have been transposed to follow 62 by J. M. Edmonds, *Elegy and Iambus*, 1 (1944) 130; but such transposition ignores this circular technique of composition.

[14] Cf. K. Reinhardt, "Solons Elegie εἰς ἑαυτόν," *RhM* 71 (1916) 128–135.

The inadequacy of this solution is shown by Solon's treatment of the various forms of human endeavor. The apparently casual introduction of the theme *σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος* into the discussion of the vanity of human hope reveals that even if a man tries to act justly and labors unceasingly, work alone is not sufficient without knowledge of the end, which belongs to Zeus, not to men. The fallacy of the doctrine of the salutary power of labor, as it is found in Hesiod, appears when we consider the uncertain outcome of all forms of labor, if it is carried on in ignorance of the consequences to which it may lead.[15]

The two series of examples (37–42, 43–62) have thus served primarily to illustrate and, by repetition, to emphasize the uncertainty of man's hopes; they have also, almost incidentally, shown the futility of his own efforts unless given direction by the gods. The latter aspect of the examples is insisted on in verses 63–70, which complete the section of the elegy that began at verse 33: regardless of his efforts, man falls the victim of *ἄτη* unless the gods grant him release from his ignorance of the gifts allotted him by Fate:

Μοῖρα δέ τοι θνητοῖσι κακὸν φέρει ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν,
δῶρα δ' ἄφυκτα θεῶν γίγνεται ἀθανάτων.
πᾶσι δέ τοι κίνδυνος ἐπ' ἔργμασιν, οὐ δέ τις οἶδεν
ᾗ μέλλει σχήσειν χρήματος ἀρχομένου·
ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν εὖ ἔρδειν πειρώμενος οὐ προνοήσας
ἐς μεγάλην ἄτην καὶ χαλεπὴν ἔπεσεν,
τῷ δὲ κακῶς ἔρδοντι θεὸς περὶ πάντα δίδωσιν
συντυχίην ἀγαθήν, ἔκλυσιν ἀφροσύνης.

The principle first stated in 33–35 — that men cannot foresee the final outcome of their undertakings — is now restated in 65–66; and 67–70 take up and expand the *ἀγαθός τε κακός τε* of 33. At the beginning of the section we were told that all men, competent and incompetent alike, are confident that they will fulfill their expectations, and all are likely to fail. Now we have learned that the uncertainty of men's hopes is a consequence of their lack of foresight; only a god-given release from his ignorance can assure man of a happy outcome. Just as *ἄτη* is caused by injustice, it can be avoided by the removal of *ἀφροσύνη*. The decisive words *ἔκλυσιν*

[15] The absence in Solon of the Hesiodic doctrine of labor has been noted by F. Solmsen, "Hesiod and Aeschylus," *Cornell Studies in Class. Philol.* 30 (Ithaca, New York, 1949) 109.

ἀφροσύνης, which are the theme of this section of the elegy as δίκη was of the preceding section, are postponed to the end and mark the conclusion of this part of the prayer. The contrast between divine and human intelligence has led to a realization of mortal dependence on the gods: unless they grant a release from the normal limitations of human wisdom no man can be confident of success.

This emphasis upon the need for divine aid has raised a question whether Solon's thought in this elegy is consistent. Previously (verses 12–13) he had stated that ἄτη arises out of acts of injustice, but now it is seen to strike even a man who tries to do well. Professor Jaeger has suggested that Solon recognized two kinds of ἄτη, one fostered by injustice and violence, the other irrational and beyond man's power to foresee or prevent; misfortune of the first kind can be avoided by just conduct but misfortune of the other kind cannot be averted. Jaeger therefore believes that, in the operation of the second ἄτη: "Moira, Fate, makes all human effort fundamentally insecure. . . . She strikes good and bad men without distinction. The relation of our success to the acts which we will is entirely irrational."[16] It is, however, doubtful that such a distinction between kinds of ἄτη was intended by Solon. In the concluding verses of the elegy all ἄτη is characterized as τεισομένη without reference to the manner in which it is incurred. If ἄτη is always a punishment for acts of injustice, the meaning of verses 67–68 must be that the man who, lacking foresight, falls upon ἄτη has been guilty of injustice even though not aware of it. It is not necessary to assume that the difference between the man trying to do well (εὖ ἔρδειν) and the man doing badly (κακῶς ἔρδοντι) is one of conscious moral intent;[17] these phrases can also signify merely success or failure in an action.[18] If they are used in the latter sense, Solon does not say that the gods bring failure to a good man and success to a bad man, but rather repeats in fresh terms his contention that work alone does not insure success: it is an observed fact that the final outcome of an undertaking is not necessarily determined either by the strenuousness of a man's efforts or by temporary failure. The new point made in these verses (63–70),

[16] *Op. cit.* 145.

[17] They are so interpreted by W. C. Greene, who states: "Unexplained, and perhaps unexplainable, is the affliction with ἄτη of even him who is striving to do nobly; here is the stubborn residuum of evil that every philosophy finds it difficult to justify on moral grounds" (*Moira* [Cambridge, Mass., 1944] 37).

[18] E. Römisch, *Studien zur älteren griechischen Elegie* (Frankfurt, 1933) 19–24.

then, is simply that success can be insured only by the possession of wisdom, and this is a gift of the gods.

The way in which the gifts of the gods are bestowed is evidently a matter of particular importance for an understanding of the kind of aid Solon hopes to receive from the Muses. It is clear in verses 67–68 that ἄτη befalls the man who lacks foresight (οὐ προνοήσας); lack of foresight is the cause, ἄτη the consequence. In 69–70 there is an ambiguity of syntax which can hardly be without significance: the gods give συντυχίην ἀγαθήν, ἔκλυσιν ἀφροσύνης. The distinction which was made in the previous distich between cause and consequence is deliberately obscured by the appositional construction of the two accusatives as objects of δίδωσι. It can be argued that the natural contrast between lack of foresight and release from ignorance suggests ἔκλυσιν ἀφροσύνης as the means by which συντυχίην ἀγαθήν is achieved:[19] the "release from folly" which makes success possible is a release from the kind of ignorance described in the examples of verses 33–62; so the man who receives this gift will be able to foresee the consequences of an act before he has, by excess and injustice, incurred retribution. However, the balanced construction of verse 70 implies a more complete identity than that of means and end. Success in the conduct of life is equated with escape from the normal ἀφροσύνη of mankind, that is, with wisdom — the opposite of ἀφροσύνη. It is this identification of success with insight into the causes of failure which determines the course of ideas in the elegy. In the development of his prayer for success Solon has shown that success is dependent upon both justice and understanding. We have been prepared for the idea that wisdom is a divine gift necessary to success by verses 33–62. The limitations of man's mind, which cannot foresee the outcome of his endeavors, can only be overcome by the gift of understanding which comes to the man ᾧ συνομαρτήσωσι θεοί. This gift brings a change of fortune for one who has hitherto been doing badly, just as its absence may cause the eventual ruin of a temporarily successful man.

This insistence on the power of the gods and the helplessness of men without their aid might seem to be a denial of the responsibility of man for the outcome of his actions — an attitude which is hard to reconcile with the insistence earlier in the elegy that ruin is the direct consequence of injustice. But if we recall that the

[19] *Ibid.* 23–24.

opening lines marked the elegy as a prayer, we need not feel that any real contradiction exists. The act of prayer implies a conviction that the divinity addressed has power to grant the request made, and that is precisely what Solon does here. The elegy began with Solon's address to the Muses, and his prayer that he might receive from the gods success and from men respect, and continue to enjoy these throughout his life. We have now seen that this end can be achieved only by one who avoids acts of deliberate injustice and also receives from the gods the measure of judgment that will prevent his bringing ruin upon himself unawares. The two long, apparently independent digressions have thus led back to the starting point, the relation between the man who prays for success and the gods who have it in their power to help him. He is not relieved of responsibility, since he must make every effort to avoid injustice. But good will is not in itself sufficient; man must also have more than ordinary human wisdom, and in this sense success can only be achieved *πρὸς θεῶν μακάρων*.

The concluding verses are a summary of the themes of the elegy:[20]

πλούτου δ' οὐδὲν τέρμα πεφασμένον ἀνδράσι κεῖται·
οἳ γὰρ νῦν ἡμέων πλεῖστον ἔχουσι βίον,
διπλασίως σπεύδουσι· τίς ἂν κορέσειεν ἅπαντας;
κέρδεά τοι θνητοῖσ' ὤπασαν ἀθάνατοι,
ἄτη δ' ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀναφαίνεται, ἣν ὁπότε Ζεύς
πέμψῃ τεισομένην, ἄλλοτε ἄλλος ἔχει.

71–73 state that the limit established for each man's wealth is invisible, yet men strive unceasingly for greater wealth (the theme of 33–70); 74–76 state that ruin arises out of wealth, and when ruin is sent by Zeus wealth passes into other hands (the theme of 7–32).[21] The connection between the two statements lies in the

[20] Lattimore (*op. cit.* 169) remarks that the link between 70 and 71 is the least obvious in the elegy, and regards *πλούτου* as simply a narrowing of *συντυχίην ἀγαθήν*, but it may be noted that *πλούτου* provides a link which carries back almost to the beginning of the elegy, to the *πλοῦτον* of verse 9. As noted at that point, wealth illustrates in a striking manner the vicissitudes to which happiness is subject. The themes of injustice and ignorance have now been developed as the chief causes of catastrophe, and each has been illustrated in terms of wealth. Now *πλούτου*, in the same initial position in the distich, echoes the *πλοῦτον* of verse 9, and recalls attention to the beginning of the discussion.

[21] Taking *αὐτῶν* (75) as referring to *κέρδεα* (74). This is not a contradiction of the earlier statement that wealth given by the gods is permanent and only wealth gained

question of verse 73, which implies the familiar doctrine of κόρος, ὕβρις and ἄτη. Since the limit of wealth (i.e., wealth that can be acquired without infringing on what fate and the gods have allotted to others) is not visible to men, they are in constant danger that unceasing effort will lead them to surpass the limit permitted them, and to infringe on what rightly belongs to others. But infringing on the rights of others is ὕβρις and so must lead to ἄτη, which regards only the fact of transgression, not the causal circumstances. It does not matter whether the limit is transgressed through conscious injustice or through ignorance, and the ruin which Zeus sends is always an act of retribution; divine justice is everywhere operative.[22] Since ignorance may be no less harmful than deliberate injustice, we are left with the inescapable implication that a man can avoid ruin only through the wisdom which enables him to recognize his allotted limits.

These final six lines thus provide a real conclusion to the elegy. We might have expected Solon to close with a repetition of his opening request, as is done, for example, by Sappho in her prayer to Aphrodite (frag. 1, Diehl). In Sappho, as in Solon, an initial request is followed by an apparently wayward lingering over peripheral details, while in fact the full meaning of the request, the precedents for its fulfillment, the power of the divinity, and the need of the mortal are all steadily receiving expression. In Sappho the return of the prayer to its starting point is marked by explicit repetition of the summons to Aphrodite: ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθε (5) . . . ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν (25). Instead of such explicit restatement, Solon simply expresses the precise nature of his need as a suppliant of the Muses: unless they grant him release from his human ignorance, he faces the catastrophe whose normal course he indicates in these final lines. By citing the examples of successful men whose very success leads them to disaster, he reminds us that he is not simply

ὑφ' ὕβριος leads to ἄτη. ἄτη arises out of wealth given by the gods when men try to increase it beyond their allotted limit (cf. Linforth, *op. cit.* 241 *ad loc.*). Verses 74–76 can be brief because the point had been developed at length in 7–32.

[22] For the theodicy implied cf. Fraenkel, *op. cit.* 97, note 1. The unqualified statement that the ἄτη which Zeus sends is τεισομένη seems to answer Solmsen's view that the operation of Moira conflicts with that of Divine Justice (*op. cit.* 111). Moira establishes limits; the justice of Zeus brings retribution whenever those limits are exceeded. The mind of Zeus therefore recognizes just retribution even where the human mind can perceive only uncertainty.

composing abstract reflections on justice and the fate of man, but that the gift for which he prays is a practical necessity for him.[23]

It is evident that Solon found the critical distinction between success and failure to be an ability to recognize the limit which is fixed as each man's share in the good things of life. The intellectual nature of this ability is stressed also in frag. 16:

> γνωμοσύνης δ' ἀφανὲς χαλεπώτατόν ἐστι νοῆσαι
> μέτρον, ὃ δὴ πάντων πείρατα μοῦνον ἔχει.

These lines suggest a close relation between verses 70 and 71 of the elegy to the Muses. Verse 71 states that the limit of wealth (πλούτου τέρμα) is not visible to men; frag. 16 explains that only wisdom (γνωμοσύνη), which is most difficult to understand, recognizes the limits of all things (πάντων πείρατα).[24] Here γνωμοσύνη is a positive expression of the ἔκλυσις ἀφροσύνης which we have interpreted as a permanent intellectual capacity for recognizing the limits of accomplishment which an individual is capable of achieving. The decisive importance which Solon ascribed to intellectual understanding as providing the only escape from the danger that prosperity will lead to excess appears also in frag. 5.9–10:

> τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὕβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἕπηται
> ἀνθρώποισιν ὅσοις μὴ νόος ἄρτιος ᾖ.

In each case it is an intellectual capacity — νόος ἄρτιος, γνωμοσύνη, or ἔκλυσις ἀφροσύνης — which enables a man to recognize his limits and so to escape ruin.

The assumption which evidently underlies Solon's thought is that each thing has its proper limits, which cannot be exceeded without the subsequent exaction of a penalty. This was for him a

[23] The elegy is thus an example of the kind of prayer (τὰ δίκαια δύνασθαι πρήσσειν) that Xenophanes prescribed as the proper preliminary to a symposium (frag. 1.15–16).

[24] Frag. 16 is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, who states that Solon is speaking of the wisdom of God (an assertion which is questioned by Römisch, *op. cit.* 32–33). Linforth (*op. cit.* 159) translates ὃ δὴ πάντων πείρατα μοῦνον ἔχει as "within which alone abideth the power to bring all things to fulfillment." However Theog. 1172 (γνώμη πείρατα παντὸς ἔχει) shows that for Theognis γνώμη (apparently not different in meaning from γνωμοσύνη) is a knowledge of limits, and the means by which one rises superior to the dangers of excess. I have therefore interpreted the γνωμοσύνη of Solon in a way applicable either to divine or to human wisdom. G. Vlastos ("Solonian Justice," *CPh* 41 [1946] 68, note 32) apparently regards the statement of Solon as relating to human wisdom, since he remarks that "Theognis' parallel throws further light on the sense of γνωμοσύνη in Solon's frag. 16; it is 'practical' knowledge; through it one keeps clear of ὕβρις and κόρος."

fact of experience. Justice is the observance of limits, the maintenance of an established equilibrium, so that the motionless sea undisturbed by winds appears in frag. 11 as a symbol of perfect justice:

> ἐξ ἀνέμων δὲ θάλασσα ταράσσεται· ἢν δέ τις αὐτὴν
> μὴ κινῇ, πάντων ἐστὶ δικαιοτάτη.

The gods guarantee the operation of this principle of justice; it is the vengeance of Zeus which re-establishes equilibrium when injustice has disturbed it.[25] Wisdom is an understanding of the limits which must be observed if injustice is to be avoided, and so becomes the most valuable gift for which it is possible to pray.

When we recognize wisdom as the necessary key to success, the connection between the substance of Solon's prayer and the Muses becomes clear. The difficulty commonly felt has been stated by Professor C. M. Bowra: "It is remarkable that Solon should ask as much as he does from the Muses, who hardly had it in their power to grant all this."[26] Römisch comes to the similar conclusion, "dass am griechischen Gebetsstil gemessen hier kein Gebet im eigentlichen Sinn vorliegt, indem die angerufene Gottheit zur Erfüllung der Bitte selbst nicht fähig ist."[27] These objections result from the assumption that the first six verses are a complete statement of

[25] With this principle that justice is an equilibrium maintained through the observance of absolutely fixed limits Solon's doctrines both of public and private justice seem in complete accord. That the context of frag. 11 is a discussion of civic justice can be inferred with reasonable certainty from frag. 10, as Vlastos has remarked (*op. cit.* 66). In frag. 10 the actions of leading men who bring disaster upon a city are compared to snow, hail, and lightning: they are the storm which destroys the calm of a well-balanced city; ignorance leads a people into slavery (ἐς δὲ μονάρχου / δῆμος ἀιδρείῃ δουλοσύνην ἔπεσεν), which only intelligent thought can prevent (χρὴ περὶ πάντα νοεῖν). From this it appears that civic well-being, like individual prosperity, depends on wisdom. As Solmsen remarks concerning the relation between Solon's religious faith and his political ideas, "while his religion . . . inspires his political creed, his political 'empiricism' gives force and substance to his religious ideas" (*op. cit.* 117). It seems to me that Vlastos is mistaken in assuming a fundamental difference between Solon's conception of justice as it operates in society and as it operates in the individual. Both frag. 3 ("Eunomia"), which is concerned with political justice, and the Prayer to the Muses express the same conviction that injustice inevitably brings retribution in its train. The different occasions of the two elegies explain why emphasis lies in the one case on the suffering of the individual, in the other on that of the whole community. In both elegies retribution is described in equivalent terms as both a natural process and a divine act, and in both wisdom and moderation are regarded as the way of safety.

[26] C. M. Bowra, *Early Greek Elegists* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938) 90–91.

[27] *Op. cit.* 45.

Solon's prayer; but if the goals of ὄλβος and δόξα depend upon the exercise of intellectual gifts the grounds of objection are removed. The Muses could of course bring success to the professional poet through their familiar function of inspiring poetry; but Solon's request to the Muses is not the usual request for poetic inspiration. He was not a professional poet and did not look to the Muses for the material of his verse; his own θυμός was the only authority he claimed: ταῦτα διδάξαι θυμὸς Ἀθηναίους με κελεύει (frag 3.30).

The power of the Muses, however, is not limited to the inspiration of poets.[28] This is their best known function, but it is only one aspect of their wider competence as possessors of all knowledge. The full extent of their power is asserted in the invocation preceding the Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.485):

ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε, πάρεστέ τε, ἴστε τε πάντα.

It may be thought that the knowledge ascribed to the Muses by Homer is restricted to the particular historical facts needed by the poet, but Hesiod certainly does not restrict their activity so narrowly when he joins kings with poets as the favored recipients of the Muses' gifts: the king who has received their favor wins the admiration of men both by the soundness of his judgments and the persuasiveness of his speech (*Theog.* 80–97).[29] In a fragment of Pindar the Muses are declared to share omniscience with Zeus and Mnemosyne (*Paean* 6.54–57):

ἀλλὰ παρθένοι γὰρ ἴστε γε Μοῖσαι
πάντα, κελαινεφεῖ σὺν
πατρὶ Μναμοσύνᾳ τε
τοῦτον ἔσχετε τεθμόν.

[28] A close connection between the development of philosophy and the worship of the Muses is argued by P. Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs* (Paris, 1937). Boyancé holds that the importance of the Muses for Plato had its origin in Pythagorean thought, and that the primary significance of the Muses lay in the purificatory effect of "music" in the widest sense. J. A. Notopoulos, also citing Pythagorean influence, connects the Muses in Plato particularly with their mother Mnemosyne and with the importance of oral memory in philosophy (*TAPhA* 69 [1938] 465–93).

[29] Cf. Solmsen, *op. cit.* 42: "They manifest themselves not only in the grief-destroying power of song but also in the persuasion and the 'intellectual' achievement of the king who succeeds in talking the parties of a lawsuit into a peaceful settlement of their conflicting claims." It is interesting to note that this linking of kings with poets as recipients of the Muses' gifts occurs also in Horace, *Odes* 3.4. In the first part of the ode, Horace calls to the Muses for inspiration (1–2: Descende caelo et dic age tibia |

The aspect of the Muses' activity which is most familiar is their relation to poetry and music, but the wider extent of their power is not forgotten. So Plato can speak of a philosophic Muse (*Phlb.* 67B) and say that his ideal state will be realized when this Muse wins control of a city (*Rep.* 6.499D). It has been thought that the Muses first became patrons of knowledge beyond the scope of poetry in the Hellenistic period,[30] but the wide range of knowledge already ascribed to them by Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and Plato suggests that this view reverses the actual historical development. The later assignment of particular Muses to special branches of knowledge, as that of Urania to astronomy, is perhaps not an extension of the Muses' authority but simply a specialization. As long as the range of poetry included all forms of knowledge it fully corresponded to the range of the Muses' authority. The eventual narrowing of the range of poetry had the consequence that the scope of the Muses came to be wider than the normal scope of poetry. It seems reasonable to assume that Solon, when he invoked the aid of the Muses, was addressing them not simply as goddesses of poetry but rather as divinities who have it in their power to reveal to men the full wisdom they share with Zeus.

If this understanding of the relation between the Muses and Solon's prayer is correct, it is apparent that the prayer of the first six verses is not complete in itself; in order to understand it we must have all the rest of the elegy and realize that the key to the success Solon desires is finally presented only in verse 70, where good fortune is revealed as having its foundation in wisdom. The elegy is then seen to be a closely knit unity; all of its parts are necessarily related to each other and to its expressed purpose, the initial plea for success. So regarded, the elegy is a prayer throughout and the relation of suppliant and divinity is as fully present at the end as at the beginning. Solon addressed his prayer for success to the Muses because the wisdom they symbolize is the only sure means of achieving success.

regina longum Calliope melos) and depicts the Muses as protectresses of the poet; in the second half the Muses are givers of the wisdom which shows itself in moderate conduct (41: vos lene consilium datis), and it is Caesar to whom they give their protection.

[30] So M. Meyer in *RE* s.v. "Musai" (col. 685) states that only in the Hellenistic period "werden die Musen nunmehr insgemein Protektorinnen der Wissenschaft überhaupt."