

The Herodotean Solon

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IN THE NUMEROUS scholarly discussions generated by Herodotus' account of the meeting of Croesus and Solon (1.29–33) one topic of interest and importance has received surprisingly little attention: the relationship between Solon's reported speeches to the Lydian king and the extant fragments of Solon's poetry.¹ That Herodotus knew at least some of Solon's poetry is beyond doubt, for at 5.113 he alludes to verses (fr.19 West) in which Solon praises the Cypriote king Philocyprus. The conceptions of divinity and human prosperity that Solon expounds to Croesus in 1.32 have parallels elsewhere in the *Histories* and are commonly attributed to Herodotus himself. Thus it appears well worth while to inquire whether we should regard Solon's speeches as the essentially free creation of Herodotus, with little or no grounding in Solon's poetry; or as an essentially accurate representation of the Athenian's thought, which might then be acknowledged as a fundamental influence on Herodotus; or as a recognizably Herodotean adaption of Solon, in which the views of both authors are discernible. I argue here for the last-mentioned of these three possibilities. Although the fragmentary condition of the Solonian corpus is a regrettable hindrance, the Herodotean Solon's cautious appraisal of wealth as a possible source of disaster and as merely one of several factors that determine human happiness is consistent with—and plausibly rooted in—the poems themselves. By contrast Solon's emphatic and ironic assertion to Croesus that only death can secure mortal prosperity has no counterpart in the extant poetry; indeed, the amoral universe implied by that principle is characteristic not of Solon but of Herodotean thought.

¹ The one treatment of this topic known to me, K. Nawratil, "Solon bei Herodot," *WS* 60 (1942) 1–8, omits important details and is to my mind seriously mistaken in regarding Solon as the source of Herodotus' 'jealous' deity. There are brief, helpful discussions in M. Miller, "The Herodotean Croesus," *Klio* 41 (1963) 89–92, and K. von Fritz, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung I* (Berlin 1967) 217–23, esp. 217f. Although it does not speculate on the topic addressed in this paper, the fundamental study of the genesis of the Croesus/Solon episode is O. REGENBOGEN, "Die Geschichte von Solon und Krösus," *Gymnasium* 41 (1930) 1–20, reprinted in W. Marg, ed., *Herodot* (= *Wege der Forschung* 26 [Darmstadt² 1965, hereafter 'Regenbogen']) 375–403.

Much to his host's dismay, Solon is unable even after a tour of the royal treasuries to proclaim Croesus the most prosperous (ὀλβιώτατος) man he has seen in the course of his travels. In explaining how the lives of relatively obscure Greek citizens surpass the king's regal splendor, Solon effectively redefines the concept of ὄλβος. Croesus assumes that his present possession of spectacular wealth and power constitutes the ultimate in human prosperity; indeed, the usage of the early Greek poets, where ὄλβιος and ὄλβος refer primarily to material possessions,² would tend to support the king's claim. But Solon's concept of prosperity has little to do with personal riches or rank. His choice as ὀλβιώτατος was his fellow Athenian Tellus, a member of a thriving polis, the father of noble sons who sired offspring in their turn, and well-off by modest Greek (as opposed to Oriental) standards. The crowning achievement of his life, however, as his very name suggests,³ was his death—a death suffered in battle after routing the enemy, for which the Athenians honored him with public burial on the spot where he fell. Solon also deems more prosperous than Croesus the Argive brothers Cleobis and Biton, who had sufficient wealth and the strength of champion athletes. Their strength also enabled them, when no oxen were available for the task, to draw their mother by chariot to a festival at Hera's temple, a feat witnessed and applauded by their fellow citizens. At this moment of their greatest glory Cleobis and Biton were visited with a death that Herodotus describes as ἀρίστη.⁴ For the goddess answered in surprising fashion an exultant⁵ mother's prayer that her sons be granted the greatest boon that a man can receive: after sacrificing, Cleobis and Biton lay down in Hera's temple and never awoke, exemplifying the grim Greek folk wisdom that it is better to be dead than alive. The Argives acknowledged their ἀρετή by dedicating statues of the brothers at Delphi.

Solon's distinctive conception of prosperity is reflected in the features common to both stories: the merely secondary or supporting

² C. DE HEER, *Μάκαρ, εὐδαιμόνων, ὄλβιος, εὐτυχής* (Amsterdam 1969 [hereafter 'de Heer']) 8, 12–14 (Homer), 16–19 (Homeric hymns), 20f (Hesiod), 32–38 (archaic poets).

³ Tellus is either his real name or a hypocoristic variant of a full name like Telenicus, substituted to underscore the etymological connection with τέλος. See H. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland 1966) 156 and n.21.

⁴ 31.3: τελευτὴ τοῦ βίου ἀρίστη ἐπεγένετο; cf. (of Tellus) 30.4: τελευτὴ τοῦ βίου λαμπροτάτη ἐπεγένετο.

⁵ περιχαρής, 31.4. In Herodotus the adjective is always ominous; its usage here is uniquely subtle, suggesting a bereaved mother's sorrow in a context that represents the death of her sons as an unsurpassed benefit. See C. Chiasson, "An Ominous Word in Herodotus," *Hermes* 111 (1983) 115–18.

rôle of personal wealth, a concomitant emphasis on the rewards of participating in the communities of the family and the *polis*, and the importance, above all, of a glorious death and posthumous honors from one's fellow citizens. The first and last of these features receive special emphasis in the theoretical discussion (1.32) that follows and supplements the stories of Tellus and Cleobis and Biton. Solon's speech has three parts, each of which ends with the admonition to 'observe the outcome', since no man can be called ὄλβιος until he is dead.⁶ In the first part (32.1–5) this conclusion emerges from the observations that the deity is "utterly resentful and troublesome" (τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχώδες), and that mankind is "utterly (subject to) chance" (πᾶν ἐστὶ ἄνθρωπος συμφορῆ). Since man's fate is unpredictable from one day to the next—and, it seems to be suggested or understood, because what heaven resents and disturbs is human success—Croesus' enjoyment until death of his present wealth and power is by no means guaranteed. In the second part of his speech (32.5–7) Solon claims that the moderately wealthy man blessed with good luck (εὐτυχῆς) has several advantages over the very rich man who is not so blessed. By contrast the two advantages of extraordinary wealth unattended by τύχη—superior ability to carry out one's desire and to bear great disaster—appear to be illusory, since the good fortune of the moderately wealthy protects them from ἄτη and ἐπιθυμῖη in the first place.⁷ Solon makes no effort to explain why misfortune regularly befalls the very rich; it is apparently the manifestation of divine jealousy.⁸ At any rate, even the εὐτυχῆς does not deserve to be pronounced ὄλβιος until he has ended his life well. The third part of Solon's speech (32.8f) alludes to a recurrent issue in political discussions of the late fifth century: just as no land is completely self-sufficient,⁹ so too no man enjoys every advantage; but whoever maintains possession of many benefits and dies a fortunate death deserves to be called ὄλβιος. In ending his speech Solon confirms and clarifies his initial description of the deity as resentful and troublesome: one must beware the outcome of everything, he cautions (32.9), πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε. Note that the noun ὄλβος, used both here and again at

⁶ Immerwahr (*supra* n.3) 157f.

⁷ As noted in the commentary of H. Stein⁶ I (Berlin 1901) *ad loc.*, and by F. Hellmann, *Herodots Kroisos-Logos* (Berlin 1934) 50; I have found the latter's discussion (46–51) especially helpful.

⁸ As emphasized by Nawratil (*supra* n.1) 4f.

⁹ Cf. Thuc. 1.37, 2.36; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.6f, 11f. For further citations and discussion see Regenbogen 393f with n.11.

1.86.5 to describe Solon's shrewd assessment of Croesus' prosperity, does not share the connotation of permanence that Solon has taken pains to establish for the related adjective ὄλβιος.¹⁰

Solon's exempla and exegesis of happiness may be said to have a broad thematic unity, with primary emphases on the relative unimportance, if not peril, of great material wealth and the necessity of waiting until a man's life is over before proclaiming him ὄλβιος. Nonetheless, it is impossible to overlook one striking and significant inconsistency in Solon's argument. For the moral of Cleobis and Biton's story, that man is better off dead than alive, contradicts both the primacy of Tellus and a basic assumption of Solon's theoretical discussion. Why, after all, does Solon think Tellus happier still than Cleobis and Biton? We are given no explicit answer, but surely one is implied in Solon's subsequent assertion that seventy years is the natural limit of a man's life. By this standard the brothers' death is distressingly premature, rather than the greatest gift possible; we may conclude that Tellus takes first place for the very reason that he lives a longer, fuller life than the brothers.

As we shall see, Solon's inconsistency in this regard results from Herodotus' combination of material from different sources, one of which is certainly the poetry of Solon. For in advocating a human life span of seventy years (32.2: ἐς γὰρ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτεα οὖρον τῆς ζόης ἀνθρώπῳ προτίθημι), the Herodotean Solon clearly refers to the poem (27) in which the historical Solon discusses the activities proper to each of the ten seven-year periods of a man's life,¹¹ ending with the couplet (17f),

τὴν δεκάτην δ' εἴ τις τελέσας κατὰ μέτρον ἵκοιτο,
οὐκ ἂν ἄωρος ἐὼν μοῖραν ἔχοι θανάτου.

In fact Solon seems to have had second thoughts on this matter, possibly when his seventieth year had passed or was fast approaching. For elsewhere (20) he presumes to correct the Ionian elegist Mimnermus, who in his fear of old age prayed for death at the age of sixty:

καὶ μεταποιήσον Λιγαστάδῃ, ὧδε δ' ἄειδε·
ὀγδωκονταέτη μοῖρα κίχοι θανάτου.

¹⁰ de Heer 72 notes the "secondary component of impermanence" in these, the only two instances of the noun ὄλβος in Herodotus.

¹¹ The reference is acknowledged even by the generally skeptical M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Poets* (Baltimore 1981) 45: "Only one of the speeches Herodotus puts in Solon's mouth refers to an extant poem, the verses that give the upper limit of man's life as seventy."

What is truly significant is not the ten-year discrepancy in Solon's reckoning,¹² but the implication of both poems that old age is no less worth living than youth—a remarkable attitude in the context of archaic thought, which is obsessed with the passage of time and the horrors of old age and death.¹³ The same attitude is manifested in the proud claim of the aging Solon that he is still engaged in intellectual activity, *γηράσκω δ' αἰεὶ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος* (18). Finally, it is noteworthy that Solon envisions his own death, presumably at an advanced age, as an occasion of misery and grief for his loved ones (21):

*μηδέ μοι ἄκλαντος θάνατος μόλοι, ἀλλὰ φίλοισι
καλλίπομι θανῶν ἄλγεα καὶ στοναχάς.*

In marked contrast the old man of Mimnermus' elegies is typically poor, sick, and above all unloved, bereft of φίλοι.¹⁴ We must not exaggerate Solon's consistency in this regard. Once, in a sympotic setting (where the *carpe diem* theme is a commonplace), he does refer to the onset of "evil" old age;¹⁵ another fragment, in the spirit of the story of Cleobis and Biton but without a context, acknowledges the wretchedness of mankind and the blessed state of divinity.¹⁶ Nonetheless, what appears to distinguish his poetry in the gloomy context of archaic thought is the strong impression of a positive attitude to life in general and old age in particular. If this view is correct, Solon's optimism is apparently irreconcilable with the traditional Greek wisdom that finds cause for celebration in the death of Cleobis and Biton. The story as transmitted by Herodotus seems not, therefore, to be the legacy of the historical Solon; but its sources are not far to seek, as Regenbogen has observed (384–89). The setting suggests an ultimate origin in Argos, and Herodotus himself is likely to have heard the story in Delphi: this would explain his mention of the statues of the brothers dedicated there, as well as the Delphic cast of the moral of the story, which emphasizes the immense gulf separating lowly man-

¹² A. W. Adkins, *Poetic Craft in the Early Greek Elegists* (Chicago/London 1985) 131, suggests that "in 27W Solon may be using someone else's scheme of ten hebdomads as a framework for his thought." Alternatively, a reader notes the possibility that *ὄγδωκονταέτη* (20.2) is a deliberate, playful exaggeration for the sake of surprise: one expects 'not sixty but seventy' and finds 'not sixty but eighty'!

¹³ See W. Schadewaldt, "Lebenszeit und Greisenalter im frühen Griechentum," *Die Antike* 9 (1933) 282–302, reprinted in the author's *Hellas und Hesperien* (Zürich/Stuttgart 1950) 41–59; cited in the latter edition.

¹⁴ For Mimnermus' view of the horrors of old age see 1.5–10, 2.9–16, 3, 4, 5.5–8.

¹⁵ 24.10: *κακὸν γῆρας ἐπερχόμενον* (see 255 *infra* for the poem in its entirety).

¹⁶ 14: *οὐδέ μάκαρ οὐδεὶς πέλεται βροτός, ἀλλὰ πονηροὶ / πάντες ὅσους θνητοὺς ἥλιος καθορᾷ*. Solon uses *μάκαρ* as a divine epithet that be applied to mortals (*βροτός, θνητοῦς*): see de Heer 28f.

kind from the Olympian gods (*cf.* the similar implications of the Delphic motto, *γνώθι σαυτόν* and *θνητὰ φρόνει*).

Cleobis and Biton aside, the major issues addressed by Solon at the Lydian court are found to be recurrent topics in Solon's extant poetry: wealth, its outcome or *τέλος*, and its relationship to *ἀρετή* and *ὄλβος*. While wealth and its (often disastrous) effects also interested Hesiod before him, Solon's fascination with the subject¹⁷ is largely the result of historical circumstance: he lived at a time of grave economic crisis in Athens and was chosen by his fellow citizens to resolve the deadly struggle between rich and poor.¹⁸ It was Solon's view that most of the blame for the crisis lay with the aristocratic leaders of the *demos*, who were guilty of folly, injustice, and above all an insatiable desire for wealth.¹⁹ In early Greek society, dominated by landowners, wealth was of course considered an indispensable element of *ἀρετή*. For his part Solon boldly announces the divorce of the two and the superiority of *ἀρετή* (15):

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

Solon numbers himself among the *ἀγαθοί* who are poor:²⁰ since he is especially proud of having benefited Athens without seizing wealth or tyrannical power for himself,²¹ public service is presumably central to Solon's concept of *ἀρετή*. He considers *ἀρετή* to be internal, essential, and constant; wealth, by contrast, is beyond human control, incidental, and short-lived. By no means does Solon consider wealth in itself undesirable; still, in his judgment it is not the most valuable of a man's possessions. His attitude towards private wealth and public responsibility appears to be reflected most directly in the life of the *ὀλβιώτατος* Tellus, whose personal fortune is a blessing oversha-

¹⁷ F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949) 109, notes that while Hesiod had established a relationship between *hybris*, wealth, the punishment of Zeus, and *ate* that was canonical by Solon's time, "Much more definitely than Hesiod does [Solon] identify *hybris* with the unjust desire for wealth."

¹⁸ For a recent discussion of the historical aspects of Solon's poetry see A. J. Podlecki, *The Early Greek Poets and Their Times* (Vancouver 1984) 117–43.

¹⁹ The aristocrats are so described at fr.4.5–14; see also 4c, 9.3f, 13.71–73. Solon has harsh words for the *demos* as well in fr.11, 34, 37.1–3; he is proud of having restrained the *demos*, as another man in his position would not have done (36.20–22, 37.6f).

²⁰ In fr.4c Solon identifies with those victimized by the rapacity of the rich. Most often he stands aloof, placing himself in neither camp: see fr.5, 11, 36.22–27, 37.9f.

²¹ See fr.32, 33, 36.20–22, 37.6–8.

dowed by his family and, above all, by the honors that he won while fighting on behalf of his city, without regard for his own well-being. Similarly, the sufficient wealth of Cleobis and Biton is subordinated to their great act of filial piety, which also earns the admiration of their fellow-citizens.

The Herodotean Croesus was greatly disturbed that Solon deemed his regal splendor inferior to the lot of private Greek citizens (32.1). The Greek disparagement of Asiatic wealth is at least as old as Archilochus,²² and achieves the status of national folk wisdom in Solon's admonition of Croesus and similar stories of the so-called Seven Sages, representatives of Hellenic spirit and custom in the barbarian world.²³ The motif also has a striking Solonian parallel—free, however, of explicit national associations—in a poem that equates the riches of a king or tyrant with less extravagant pleasures (24.1–10):

ἰσὸν τοι πλουτέουσιν, ὅτῳ πολὺς ἄργυρός ἐστι
καὶ χρυσὸς καὶ γῆς πυροφόρου πεδία
ἵπποι θ' ἡμίονοί τε, καὶ ὧ μόνῃ ταῦτα πάρεστι,
γαστρί τε καὶ πλευραῖς καὶ ποσὶν ἄβρᾶ παθεῖν,
παιδός τ' ἠδὲ γυναικός, ἐπὴν καὶ ταῦτ' ἀφίκηται,
ᾧρη, σὺν δ' ἡβῆ γίνεται ἀρμοδίη.
ταῦτ' ἄφενος θνητοῖσι· τὰ γὰρ περιώσια πάντα
χρήματ' ἔχων οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται εἰς Ἄϊδεω,
οὐδ' ἂν ἄποινα διδοὺς θάνατον φύγοι, οὐδὲ βαρείας
νούσους, οὐδὲ κακὸν γῆρας ἐπερχόμενον.

H. Fränkel perceptively suggests that the setting of the poem is a symposium: the diners “are comfortably fed, clothed and shod, and the enjoyment of a youthful body is in prospect.”²⁴ It is important to recognize that the adjective ἄβρᾶ (line 4) implies a certain level of luxury.²⁵ The poles of possession compared in the poem are not wealth and poverty, as in 15, but extraordinary wealth and merely sufficient wealth—in the personal terms employed by the Herodotean Solon, ὁ μέγας πλούσιος and ὁ ἐπ' ἡμέρην ἔχων, οἱ ζάπλουτοι and οἱ

²² Archil. 19.1fW.: οὐ μοι τὰ Γύγωω τοῦ πολυχρύσου μέλει / οὐδ' εἰλέ πῶ με ζῆλος. Gyges gradually cedes to Croesus his place in Greek popular tradition as the typically powerful and wealthy Eastern monarch: see Regenbogen 378f, 399f.

²³ The common characteristics of such ‘wisdom’ literature are described by Regenbogen 395–401; B. Snell, *Leben und Meinungen der Sieben Weisen*⁴ (Munich 1971) 44f.

²⁴ *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (tr. M. Hadas and J. Willis [Oxford 1973]) 230f.

²⁵ ἄβρός, with its derivatives and compounds, is commonly used to describe (and often disparage) the luxurious lifestyle of Asiatics: e.g. Hdt. 1.71.4, 4.104; Aes. Ag. 690 (anticipating Helen's Trojan sojourn, as do the Ionic rhythms of 689–95); Xen. Cyr. 8.8.15.

μετρίως ἔχοντες βίου. The poet Solon's paradoxical assertion that these two groups are equally wealthy (*ἴσον πλουτέουσιν*) comprises the apodosis of a conditional sentence in the *Histories* (1.32.5):

οὐ γάρ τι ὁ μέγα πλούσιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ἐπ' ἡμέρην ἔχοντος ὀλβι-
ώτερος ἐστί, εἰ μὴ οἱ τύχη ἐπίσποιτο πάντα καλὰ ἔχοντα εὖ
τελευτῆσαι τὸν βίον.

The protasis, however, acknowledges the remote possibility (indicated by the optative *ἐπίσποιτο*) that the advantages of great wealth might be ratified and secured by a fortunate death; and this function of death reflects, as I shall argue further below, an important difference of perspective between Solon and Herodotus. For the present, let us observe the limitations of riches outlined by Solon in the last two distichs of 24.

The Herodotean Solon remarks, as we have seen, that great wealth often disappears during a man's lifetime, and indeed seems to provoke the attentions of a jealous deity. For the poet Solon, by contrast, great wealth is not dangerous, merely wasted (*περιώσια*, line 7). As described in 7–10, excess wealth (apparently signifying more money than is necessary to enjoy the pleasures of the banquet) lasts readily enough until death, but fails to survive death itself; great wealth, moreover, is powerless to prevent the horrors of death, disease, and old age.

In addition to its intrinsic interest, 24 also provides a context for Solon's definition of the *ὄλβιος* (fr.23):²⁶

ὄλβιος, ᾧ παῖδες τε φίλοι καὶ μώνυχες ἵπποι
καὶ κύνες ἀγρευταὶ καὶ ξένος ἀλλοδαπός.

The happy man is the man of moderate wealth.²⁷ He does *not* possess royal silver, gold, or wheatfields (*cf.* 24.1f); the horses that he owns

²⁶ To judge from its appearance in Hesiod (*Theog.* 96f, 954f), the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (480, 486f), and Alcman (*Parth.* 37), *ὄλβιος ὅς/ὄστις* (the relative may be oblique, as in Solon 23) is already by Solon's day a formulaic phrase for defining human happiness. Solon's definition does not share the religious associations of those in Hesiod and the hymn to Demeter, but his inclusion of material possessions and pleasures is quite common. For the frequent use of formulae of *μακαρισμός* to describe initiates of the Eleusinian and other mystery-cults see the remarks of N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford 1974) 313f.

²⁷ A. D. Skiadas, "Bemerkungen zu Solons Fr. 13 D.," *Hermes* 94 (1966) 373–76, proposes a radical re-interpretation of the fragment, with ᾧ as a dative of association after φίλοι, which is understood as a predicate with all four subjects of the relative clause. Thus interpreted, the fragment reads, "Happy the man who loves . . ." But both 24 and the Herodotean portrait of Solon suggest that what is at issue is the relationship between happiness and material possessions; the possessive force of the relative appears to be indispensable.

(24.3), like the hunting dogs, are characteristic of the Greek aristocracy. Significantly, the first and last items in the catalogue denote people rather than possessions: the comforts of family²⁸ and friendship supplement the thrill of the hunt and mitigate the materialism of prosperity as defined by Solon. While this definition of the ὄλβιος appears to be of fundamental importance for Herodotus' portrait of Solon, however, we also note the absence of a crucial Herodotean element: namely, the death that secures a man from further mishap and thus turns his mere good fortune into true, permanent prosperity. Neither here nor elsewhere in Solon's poetry do we find any evidence for the distinction drawn by the Herodotean Solon (1.32.7) between the εὐτυχής (fortunate but still alive and hence vulnerable to disaster) and the ὄλβιος (fortunate in death as well as life); indeed, the poet Solon's uses of the noun ὄλβος suggest strongly that the happiness described in 23 is by no means a permanent condition.²⁹

If the fine philological distinction between εὐτυχής and ὄλβιος has no precedent in Solon's poetry, it is nonetheless clear that Solon recognizes the frequency with which prosperity disappears during a man's lifetime. For Solon's views on the τέλος of wealth and of human aspirations generally we must turn to his longest surviving poem (13), in which he himself asks the Muses for ὄλβος (which includes, but is not restricted to, material wealth).³⁰ Elsewhere (15.3f,

²⁸ Scholars dispute whether Solon's παῖδες φίλοι denote a man's sons or his adolescent lovers. Advocates of the erotic reading include Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin 1913) 188; Schadewaldt (*supra* n.13) 55; de Heer 33; Skiadas (*supra* n.27) 373–75. Advocates of the filial reading include I. M. Linforth, *Solon the Athenian* (Berkeley 1919) 176f; Fränkel (*supra* n.24) 230; Podlecki (*supra* n.18) 133. Solon's delight in the charms of young boys is beyond question: witness his inclusion of homosexual love among the pleasures of the banquet (fr.24.5f and the more graphic 25). Still, fr.23 need not share the sympotic setting that largely determines the content of 24, and we should (I believe) not be influenced by definitions of the ὄλβιος in the Theognidean corpus that include possession of boys as love objects (1335f, 1375f; cf. 1255f). Homer recognizes the begetting of sons as an element of ὄλβος (*Il.* 25.543–46, *Od.* 7.148–50), and the fifth hebdomad of Solon's ideal 70-year life is time for a man to be mindful of marriage καὶ παίδων ζητεῖν εἰσοπίσω γενεήν (27.10).

²⁹ The adjective ὄλβιος is a Solonian *hapax* at 23.1; neither εὐτυχής nor εὐτυχίη occurs in the extant poetry. The noun ὄλβος is used at 6.3 of wealth bound to be temporary: it leads to ὕβρις, which Zeus always punishes sooner or later (cf. 13.7–32). The ὄλβος that Solon seeks from the gods (13.3) endures under the right circumstances only (*i.e.*, just acquisition from heaven); despite de Heer 33f, who ignores the evidence of 6.3, nothing inherent in the word itself need imply permanence (so too at 32.2). Cf. the description of 23 by Skiadas (*supra* n.27) 375 n.2 as “die Feststellung eines Glückzustandes—auf keinen Fall aber eines dauernden und höchsten Glücks.” For the Herodotean inconsistency between the adjective ὄλβιος (implying permanence, at least as defined by Solon) and the noun ὄλβος (with no such connotation) see *supra* 251f with n.10.

³⁰ A. Allen, “Solon's Prayer to the Muses,” *TAPA* 80 (1949) 51, correctly defines ὄλβον (13.3) as “a state of general well-being.” The terms χρήματα (7) and πλοῦτον

supra) Solon contrasts the steadfastness of ἀρετή with the transience of wealth; his own request for riches, however, occasions a crucial distinction (13.7–13):

χρήματα δ' ἰμείρω μὲν ἔχειν, ἀδίκως δὲ πεπᾶσθαι
οὐκ ἐθέλω· πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη.
πλοῦτον δ' ὄν μὲν δῶσι θεοί, παραγίγνεται ἀνδρὶ
ἔμπεδος ἐκ νεάτου πυθμένος ἐς κορυφήν·
ὄν δ' ἄνδρες τιμῶσιν ὑφ' ὕβριος, οὐ κατὰ κόσμον
ἔρχεται, ἀλλ' ἀδίκους ἔργμασι πειθόμενος
οὐκ ἐθέλων ἔπεται, ταχέως δ' ἀναμίσγεται ἄτη.

God-given wealth, then, is secure and abides with a man, while riches won through ὕβρις and unjust deeds quickly bring ruin (ἄτη) in their wake. Subsequently Solon modifies this statement³¹ (lines 25–32) and allows that the judgment of Zeus is not always immediate, but in the end (ἐς τέλος, 28) always punishes the sinner or his descendants, who, though personally innocent, are guilty by familial association. Zeus oversees the outcome of all things (Ζεὺς πάντων ἐφορᾷ τέλος, 17), in striking contrast to the inability of mortals to foresee or control the τέλος. They deceive themselves with groundless optimism for the present and the future (33–42), they pursue livelihoods with no guarantee of success (43–62); of the doctors, last in Solon's catalog of occupations, it is said καὶ τοῖς οὐδὲν ἔπεστι τέλος (58), "These too (*i.e.*, like all the others) have no control over the outcome." No mortal knows how an undertaking will turn out at its inception (65f), and only heaven can free a man from his ignorance by granting him good fortune. The poem ends (71–76) as Solon returns to the topic of wealth pursued beyond proper measure and its inevitable outcome, ἄτη sent by Zeus.³²

(9) are not synonymous references to ὄλβον, as R. Lattimore, "The First Elegy of Solon," *AJP* 68 (1947) 163, asserts, but represent a narrowing of focus.

³¹ The procedure is typical of Solon's technique in this poem, a "series of progressive thoughts" in which later ideas often contradict or correct earlier ones: so Lattimore (*supra* n.30) 170–74.

³² Taken out of context, with αὐτῶν (75) understood to refer back to κέρδεα (74), the last three lines of the poem might appear to suggest (much as Herodotus does) that ἄτη is the outcome of all riches, however acquired:

κέρδεα τοι θνητοῖς ὅπασαν ἀθάνατοι,
ἄτη δ' ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀναφαίνεται, ἣν ὅποτε Ζεὺς
πέμψη τεισομένην, ἄλλοτε ἄλλος ἔχει.

This understanding of the line is mistaken, however, whatever the referent of αὐτῶν may be (both θνητοῖς and ἀθάνατοι also have their advocates): for if all riches end in ἄτη, Solon's request for them is nonsensical; moreover, the lines quoted follow a description (71–73) of the limitless greed of the already wealthy for still greater

The similarities and differences between this poem and Solon's Herodotean wisdom are equally noteworthy. The fundamental thematic affinity is unmistakable: Croesus, who cannot foresee the loss of his position and possessions, is a paradigm of human ignorance of the final outcome. It also appears, however, that Herodotus has given a distinct new emphasis to Solon's insight by focusing on a meaning of the word *τέλος* that is not prominent in the poem to the Muses: *τέλος* as the end of human life. The traditional Greek view of death is a grim one, best summed up by Achilles' well-known remark to Odysseus (*Od.* 11.189–91) that he would rather be slave to a poor master on earth than king of the shades in the underworld. The Herodotean Solon views death from a novel perspective as the last best safeguard against misfortune, especially for those (like Croesus) whose outstanding success appears to make them the primary targets of a jealous heaven. Now the poet Solon believes that only ill-gotten gain is short-lived, destroyed by the judgment of Zeus, the ultimate moral arbiter; the wealth that heaven gives a just man is secure. But justice is not an issue for the Herodotean Solon: he has nothing to say about how the rich became rich or their moral qualities in general. Indeed, the survival of great wealth until death is explicitly said to be a matter of *τύχη* (1.32.5):

οὐ γάρ τι ὁ μέγα πλούσιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ἐπ' ἡμέρην ἔχοντος ὀλβιώ-
τερος ἐστὶ, εἰ μὴ οἱ τύχη ἐπίσποιτο πάντα καλὰ ἔχοντα εὖ τελευ-
τῆσαι τὸν βίον.

Herodotus, therefore, has de-moralized or a-moralized Solon's views on the transience of wealth: Zeus the god of righteousness has given way to a nameless deity (*ὁ θεός*, 1.32.9) or divine essence (*τὸ θεῖον*, 32.1)³³ that destroys mortal wealth not to uphold justice as human beings understand it but to uphold its own position of pre-eminence in the universe. This conception of deity bears a striking resemblance to the conduct of the tyrant, who must cut down the leading citizens in order to eliminate competition for the leadership of his state.³⁴

riches. The rhetorical question *τίς ἂν κορέσειεν ἅπαντας*; (73) is born of outrage: the noun *κόρος* in Solon (at 4.9, 34; 4c.2; 6.3) always appears in the context of injustice, *hybris*, and failure to observe due measure. See Lattimore (*supra* n.30) 178f.

³³ Cf. (in contexts of divine *φθόνος*) *τὸ θεῖον*, 3.40.2; *ὁ θεός*, 7.10ε (*quater*), 7.46.4; *θεοί τε καὶ ἥρωες*, 8.109.3. See also 4.205, *πρὸς θεῶν*, quoted *infra*. For Herodotus' use of these various designations of deity see W. Pötscher, "Götter und Gottheit bei Herodotus," *WS* 71 (1958) 5–29.

³⁴ So Thrasybulus advises Periander to conduct his tyranny (5.92ζ–η). Note the similarity between the tyrant's task *τοὺς ὑπερόχους τῶν ἀστῶν φονεύειν* (5.92η) and Artabanus' warning to Xerxes that *φιλέει ὁ θεός τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολοῦειν*

Similar passages in the *Histories* suggest that the re-orientation of Solon's view reflects Herodotus' own fundamentally amoral conviction that prosperity exceeding appropriate human limits inevitably brings defeat and destruction in its wake. The story of Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, offers verbal as well as thematic parallels to Croesus' fall: the Egyptian king Amasis, describing himself as τὸ θεῖον ἐπιστάμενῳ ὡς ἔστι φθονερόν (3.40.2), cautions Polycrates in a letter that he has never heard of any man ὅστις ἐς τέλος οὐ κακῶς ἐτελεύτησε πρόρριζος, εὐτυχέων τὰ πάντα (40.3).³⁵ Some scholars have denied that the divine φθόνος spoken of by Solon, Amasis, and other Herodotean characters³⁶ can be attributed to the historian himself,³⁷ but an observation in Herodotus' own voice at the end of Book Four appears to refute this view.³⁸ After Pheretime, the queen of Cyrene, had taken gruesome vengeance on the citizens of Barca for killing her son, she herself died an equally awful death, ὡς ἄρα ἀνθρώποισι αἰλίην ἰσχυραὶ τιμωρίαι πρὸς θεῶν ἐπίφθονοι γίνονται, "since overly violent acts of human vengeance incur divine resentment" (4.205). Now, in all other cases of φθόνος θεῶν the gods are said to resent human achievement that in their eyes approaches and threatens divine privilege. In the present instance the gods may consider that inflicting such harsh punishments is a divine prerogative: this is perhaps the point of the emphatically-positioned ἀνθρώποισι. At any rate, even if the boundary between mortal and immortal is not jeopardized, the gods remain concerned to enforce a standard of human behavior violated by Pheretime's action, as the adverb λίην indicates.

(7.10ε). The φθόνος of the tyrant is discussed in the context of the Persian constitutional debate (3.80.3f).

³⁵ With 3.40.2 cf. Solon's self-description (1.32.1) as ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες; moreover, the rare Herodotean word πρόρριζος (also 6.86δ) appears in Solon's last words of warning to Croesus, πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε (1.32.9).

³⁶ Artabanus in warnings to Xerxes about the peril of his expedition against Greece (7.10ε, 7.46.4), Themistocles in explaining the Greek victory at Salamis (8.109.3).

³⁷ Hellman (*supra* n.7) 43–45 attempts (wrongly, to my mind) to distinguish between Solon's narrow perspective, whereby a jealous and troublesome divinity manifests itself in the unpredictable course of a single lifetime, and Herodotus' own broader vision of a deity ordering the κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπῆϊων πηρηγμάτων (1.207.2) over the course of generations, even centuries. Among more recent critics, M. Lang, *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1984) 61f, considers divine jealousy a popular maxim that is a valuable rhetorical device but "has no merit for Herodotus as an expression of historical causation."

³⁸ Lang (*supra* n.37) 162 n.18 dismisses this passage as irrelevant "partly because the compound form of the adjective involves more resentment than jealousy and partly because Herodotus certainly does not imply that Pheretime was assuming divine prerogatives." I find neither reason compelling.

Despite the negative associations of the term *φθόνος*, we must remember that the resentment of Herodotus' deity always serves to maintain order, to preserve natural boundaries or balance.³⁹ Croesus' great power and wealth, together with his belief that these place him above all other men as *ὀλβιώτατος*, constitute a threat to divine pre-eminence, *i.e.*, to the natural order of things; heaven responds, as Herodotus believes, with a visitation of *νέμεσις* (1.34.1), literally a 'meting out' of what is due. The death of his son Atys and his defeat at the hands of Cyrus force Croesus to acknowledge his human status and vulnerability.

To sum up: in assessing the relationship between Solon's poetry and the advice given Croesus by the Herodotean Solon we may begin with the latter's statement that seventy years is the limit of human life. In this detail, at least, a clear reference to Solon's reflections on the ages of man (27), Herodotus consciously and explicitly evokes the memory of Solon's verse. Otherwise, although Solon's speeches contain no compelling verbal echoes of the poetry, the conceptual affinities between them are sufficiently striking to suggest that Herodotus knew Solon's poetry well and attempted, with remarkable historical conscientiousness, to incorporate its most prominent themes into the speeches he composed for the Athenian. In both the poetry and the advice to Croesus we observe Solon's fascination with wealth, especially its limitations. The stories of Tellus and Cleobis and Biton embody Solon's view (23, 24) that wealth is only one of several elements that comprise true prosperity; the other Herodotean factors with Solonian precedent include offspring and contribution to the welfare of one's *polis* (essential to Solon's concept of *ἀρετή*: *supra* 254). Solon's theoretical analysis of happiness in the *Histories* (1.32) betrays the influence of the poet's conviction (24) that moderate wealth gives mortals as much satisfaction as the ostentatious opulence of monarchs. Moreover, the Athenian's insistent but unheeded admonition that Croesus "observe the outcome" reflects the human short-sightedness that is a recurrent theme of Solon's longest surviving poem (13). Among the discrepancies between Solon's poetry and Solon's Herodotean wisdom, the dour perception of human existence underlying the story of Cleobis and Biton bears a strong Delphic imprint; but the suggestion that extraordinary wealth, however acquired, is inherently dangerous for mortals indicates a distinctly Herodotean conception of deity. In the world of Solon's poetry Zeus the god of righteousness punishes only those who have amassed great

³⁹ Immerwahr (*supra* n.3) 312–14.

wealth unjustly; for Herodotus' jealous divinity the very acquisition of riches by mortals represents a kind of injustice: an encroachment upon divine prerogative and a threat to the universal order that the deity is bound to maintain.⁴⁰

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