


3.6 Greed and Injustice in Attica

Solon 13, lines 1–25, 71–76

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- Glorious children of Memory and Olympian Zeus,
Pierian Muses, listen to my prayer;
Give me prosperity at the hands of the blessed gods, and
At the hands of all men let me have always good repute;
5 Make me very dear to my friends, and bitter to my enemies,
Reverenced by those, and to these dreadful to behold.
I desire to possess money, but to have acquired it unjustly
I do not choose; for justice always comes afterwards.
Wealth which the gods give stays with a man
10 Lastingly from the lowest foundation to the peak;
While that which man values from presumption (hybris), comes not
By right, but, persuaded by unjust deeds,
Follows unwillingly, and soon is mixed with ruin;
Which from a small beginning grows like fire,
15 Trivial at first, but grievous in the end;
For the presumptuous deeds done by mortals do not last,
But Zeus watches over the end of everything, and, suddenly,
Just as a wind has quickly scattered clouds
In spring, and has stirred the unharvested many-waved ocean
20 To its depths, and throughout the wheat-bearing land
Laid waste the good lands, reaching the high seat of the gods,
Heaven, and again has made the æther clear to view,
And the strength of the sun shines down on land rich and
Fair, but not a single cloud is still to be seen —
25 Such is the vengeance of Zeus;
For men there is no limit apparently laid down as to wealth;
For those of us who now have greatest means,
Are eager for twice as much; who could satisfy everyone?
The immortals have granted men gains,
75 But these produce ruin, which when sent by Zeus
As retribution, is possessed now by this man and then that one.

3.12 Solon's View of his Achievements

[Aristotle] *Athenaion Politeia* 12.3–5 (Solon 34, 36, 37)



12.3 Again he speaks elsewhere concerning those who wanted the land to be redistributed (F34):

‘Those who came for plunder had rich hope,
Each of them expecting to find great prosperity,
And that, despite smooth words, I would show an intransigent mind.
Then they contrived vainly, and angry with me
5 All looked at me askance as at an enemy.
It is not right. For what I said, I achieved with the gods' help,
But did nothing in vain, nor with the force of tyranny
Did I choose to act, nor that the rich earth
Of our native land should equally be shared by base and good.’

3.14 Land as the Source of Political Power

Aristotle *Politics* 1266b14–24 (II, vii)



Accordingly the equality of property has some effect on the political community, and some men of former times seem to have discerned this, such as Solon in his legislation, while other places have a law which prevents people obtaining as much land as they wish, and similarly laws prevent the sale of property, like that at Locri forbidding you to sell property unless you can show that an obvious misfortune has taken place, as well as those which preserve ancient estates (this was repealed at Leukas and made their constitution over democratic; for it was no longer possible to appoint officials from the specified property-classes).

- All exert themselves in different ways: one wanders the fishy sea
 Desiring in his ships to bring home gain
 45 Tossed by dreadful winds,
 Quite unsparing of his life;
 Another ploughs the land abounding in trees every year
 And works for hire, his care the curved ploughs;
 One who has learnt the works of Athena and Hephaistos skilled in many crafts
 50 Brings in his livelihood with his hands,
 Another through being taught the gifts of the Olympian Muses,
 And who knows full measure of lovely wisdom;
 Another person Lord Apollo the Far-shooter has made a seer,
 He knows the evil that comes to a man from afar,
 55 For on him the gods attend; but what is destined
 No bird (omen) or sacrifices will in any way ward off.
 Others have the work of Paian (the gods' healer), who knows many drugs,
 Doctors: but they have no efficacy;
 For often from a small ache comes great pain,
 60 And no one can relieve it by giving soothing drugs;
 Although he can touch a man disordered by dreadful diseases
 And with his hands suddenly make him well.
 Fate brings both evil and good to mortal men,
 And the gifts of the immortal gods can not be avoided.
 65 There is danger in all forms of work, nor does one know
 Where a matter once begun will end.

EPILOGUE

13.93 The Ten Ages of Man

Solon 27

- The youthful boy loses the first row of teeth
 He grew while a baby in seven years;
 When god has completed the next seven years for him
 He †shows† the signs that his youthful prime is on its way;
 5 In the third seven, while his limbs are still growing
 His chin grows downy with the bloom of changing skin.
 In the fourth seven every man is at his best
 In strength, when men give proof of valour.
 In the fifth it is time for a man to think of marriage,
 10 And seek a family of children to come after him.
 In the sixth a man's mind is now disciplined in everything,
 And he no longer wishes to do reckless deeds.
 In the seventh he is now at his best in mind and tongue,
 And in the eighth, that is fourteen years in total.
 15 In the ninth he is still able, but less powerful than before
 In both his speech and wisdom in matters of great prowess.
 And if anyone comes to complete the tenth in full measure,
 He will not meet the fate of death unseasonably.