

Solon and his *πόλις*: The Afterlife of an Archaic Personage in Late Democratic Athens

This paper investigates the afterlife of archaic literary legacy in political discourses of fourth-century Athens. It does so through juxtaposition of two literary traditions concerning Solon: Solonian fragments, and the courtroom speeches of Demosthenes and Aeschines.

This paper argues that in Sol. 4, Solon perceives the populace as a threat to the *πόλις* and its constitution: both the elites and the general public are sources of moral corruption that puts the polis in danger, and both suffer the consequences of civil strife when Dike enacts the divine revenge. The word choices of Sol. 4 form parallels between the fate of the commoners and that of the elites, while the dichotomy between the *πόλις* and its populace is established through the scenes such as the private citizens plundering public property and the divine revenge entering the private household (Irwin, 2006; Noussia-Fantuzzi, 2010).

Next, this paper discusses the implications of this reading of Sol. 4. First, I point out that the overlap of the divine and the mortal forms the political hub of the Solonian *Weltanschauung*: the people live in the physical space of *πόλις*; the gods maintain their presence with their sanctuary and ensure the survival of the *πόλις* with Dike's revenge as a deterrent. This answers the long-debated question of whether the political realm in Sol. 4 is secular or supernatural (Anhalt, 1993; Blaise, 2006). I also argue that the dichotomy between the *πόλις* and its populace undermines the legitimacy of "the people" (Ober, 2018). Therefore, the hostility between the *πόλις* and its people needs to be resolved for Solon to become the icon for democracy.

In the third part, the paper demonstrates 4th century authors' attempts to resolve such a dichotomy by centering their Solonian legal tradition around a concentric moral structure (Westwood, 2013). For "Solon" in Demosthenes and Aeschines, the individual citizen is the moral center of the *πόλις*. While Solonian fragments put little emphasis on private morals,

“Solon” in fourth-century Athenian courtroom legislates extensively on the regulation of personal life. This “Solon”, according to Demosthenes and Aeschines, further extended the same principle of private morality to household management and public affairs. Thus regulated by the same moral principle, the *πόλις* and the citizens are no longer hostile against one another, but share common interests in achieving good politics.

The merits of this research are in three ways. First, my research aims to construct the internal and structural drive within the transition of Solon’s image, building up and furthering the insights of several important scholars who have written on this issue (Anhalt, 1993; Irwin, 2005; Henderson, 2006; Irwin, 2006; Stehle, 2006; Blaise, 2006; Noussia-Fantuzzi, 2010; Allan, 2018). Secondly, the juxtaposition of two political philosophy of two “Solons” allows us to rethink key elements in democratic politics, such as the community, the people, and the individual. Last but not least, this new reading of Sol. 4 generates a fresh look on Solon’s political philosophy. One possible way to push this research forward is to test this Solonian *Weltanschauung* on more Solonian fragments.

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