

Fragments

Solon



Fragment 1 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

When the Athenians grew weary of the extended and difficult war with Megara over the island Salamis, they passed a law that in future no one on pain of death was to propose in writing or speech that the city should lay claim to Salamis. Solon found the disgrace hard to bear and when he saw that many of the young men wanted to renew the war, but lacked the courage to do so themselves due to the law, he pretended to be insane and word was passed from his household to the city that he showed signs of madness. Secretly, Solon composed elegiac verses and after practising, reciting them from memory, he rushed into the marketplace, wearing a small felt cap. After a large crowd assembled, he climbed the herald's stone and recited the elegy that begins:

This poem was entitled Salamis and contains a hundred lines, a very fine composition.

Fragment 2 · Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers

A The elegiac verses which especially appealed to the Athenians were the following by Solon:

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And then:

Fragment 3 · Demosthenes, On the Embassy

Please take and read these elegiac verses of Solon, so that you, the jury, may know that he too hated such men as the defendant:

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You hear, men of Athens, what Solon says about such men and about the gods that keep our city safe.

Fragment 4 · Aristotle, Constitution of Athens

Α Α Α ...When such was the organisation of the city state and many were enslaved to the few [in c. 594 BC] , the people rose up against the prominent men. After bitter strife and prolonged opposition, they agreed to select Solon as reconciler and archon, entrusting the city to him. He composed the elegy which begins:

In this poem Solon fights and disputes with each side on behalf of the other, urging them to join in bringing an end to the contention dwelling among them...

Solon was by birth and reputation one of the leading Athenians, though by property and business dealings he was only of the middle class, as is agreed on from other sources. He himself attests in these poems, where he urges the rich not to be greedy:

And in short he always lays the blame for the conflict upon the wealthy citizens. This is why he says at the beginning of the elegy that he fears their “arrogance”, implying this was the cause of the hostility.

Fragment 5 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

Yet, Solon himself says that at first he undertook public life reluctantly and in fear of one side’s love of money and the other side’s arrogance.

Fragment 6 · Aristotle, Constitution of Athens

Α Α Yet, Solon opposed both sides and while he could have sided with whichever one he wished and become tyrant, he opted for the enmity of both by saving his homeland and legislating for the best. Everyone agrees that he acted in this way and he himself in his poetry has referred to his

acts, as follows:

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...And again showing how the citizens should be treated:

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Fragment 7 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

... AND WISHING to be completely free of these difficulties
and escape from the displeasure and calumny of the citizens —

as Solon himself said — he gave the ownership of a vessel as an excuse for travel and set sail, after requesting from the Athenians a ten-year absence abroad.

Fragment 8 · Diodorus Siculus, World History

Solon is believed to have foretold the Athenians of the coming tyranny (of Pisistratus) in these elegiac verses:

And afterwards, when Pisistratus was tyrant, Solon said:

Fragment 9 · Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers

A Storming into the assembly, armed with spear and shield,
Solon warned the members of Pisistratus' plans... And the council, comprised
of Pisistratus' supporters, countered that he was insane, which he responded
to with these verses:

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Fragment 10 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

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Fragment 11 · Stobaeus, Anthology

SOLON SAYS:

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Fragment 12 · Stobaeus, Anthology

SOLON SAYS:

Fragment 13 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

That he classified himself among the poor instead of the rich is clear from the following quotation:

Fragment 14 · Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies

Solon has written these very wise words about God:

Fragment 15 · Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies

But Hesiod in his writings agrees with what has been said...
it is reasonable then that Solon of Athens, following Hesiod, says in his elegies:

Fragment 16 · Pseudo-Plato, Lovers

A What else is philosophising than this statement of Solon:

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Fragment 17 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

Solon sailed from Egypt to Cyprus and received an exceptionally warm welcome from Philocyprus, one of the local kings, who had a small city... Solon persuaded him to move that city to the lovely plain that lay below and to make it more appealing and vast and so he took personal charge of the change... Solon mentions this in elegiac verses addressed to Philocyprus:

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Fragment 18 · Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers

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Fragment 19 · Plutarch, Comparison of Solon and Publicola

Furthermore, from what Solon said on the span of life, in opposition to Mimnermus,

Thus he makes Publicola a happy man.

Fragment 20 · Plato, Timaeus

A Now Solon was related to us and a close friend of Dropides, my great-grandfather, as he himself refers to many times in his verses.

Fragment 21 · Plato, Charmides

AA For your ancestral house (Charmides and Critias), the house of Critias son of Dropides, has been praised by Anacreon, Solon and many other poets, coming down to us in tradition as one that is distinguished for beauty, virtue and whatever is deemed happiness.

Fragment 22 · Proclus on Plato, Timaeus

Solon's family history and his kinship with Plato is as follows: Solon and Dropides were the sons of Excestides, and the son of Dropides was Critias, mentioned by Solon in his verse:

Fragment 23 · Plato, Lysis

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Fragment 24 · Stobaeus, Anthology

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Fragment 25 · Plutarch, Dialogue on Love

AA You DID well, he said, to mention Solon, and we ought to use him as an index of the erotic man:

Hence I think Solon composed those lines while still young and “full of abundant seed,” as Plato terms it, but the following when he was old:

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Fragment 26 · Philo, On the Creation of the World

Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, described the ages of life in the following verses:

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Fragment 27 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

Firstly, Solon he journeyed to Egypt and, as he himself says,
spent time

Fragment 28 · Diogenianus, Proverbs

“Obey rulers, however right or wrong.” From the elegies of Solon, hortatory.

Fragment 29 · John the Deacon on Hermogenes

Arion of Methymna introduced the first tragic drama, as Solon tells us in his elegies:

Fragment 30 · Pseudo-Plato, On Justice

But, socrates, Solon’s ancient proverb is well said, that

Fragment 31 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

And some say that Solon tried to put his laws into epic verse and publish them, giving the beginning as:

Fragment 32 · Plutarch, Life of Solon

After receiving pressure from his friends to become tyrant, Solon was never shaken from his resolve, but he is said to have told his friends that although tyranny was a lofty position, it was impossible to leave it. And writing in his poetry to Phocus, he says:

It is quite clear from this statement that Solon had a high reputation, even before giving his legislation... And concerning the derision that many have

heaped upon him for shunning tyranny, he has written:

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This is what he construed many of the common people to have said about him.

Fragment 33 · Aristotle, Constitution of Athens

A A And once more in another place Solon speaks of those that wanted a redistribution of the land:

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And again he discusses the cancellation of debts on those that were slaves before and were set free:

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And once more, rebuking both sides for their complaints, Solon said:

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For if someone else, Solon says, had obtained this office:

Fragment 34 · Athenaeus, Scholars at Dinner

A Solon claims in his iambic poetry that *gouros* is a type of cake:

Fragment 35 · Pollux, Vocabulary

They call mortar *igdis*, like Solon in his iambs:

Fragment 36 · Phrynichus, Attic Words and Phrases

Even to this day, many rightly call the pomegranate seed kokkon. In fact, Solon does so in his poetry:

Fragment 37 · Photius, Lexicon

The word (sumach), a seasoning, occurs in Solon.

Fragment 38 · Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

A We should not follow those that recommend a man have thoughts suitable to a man. Some say this maxim belongs to Theognis, others to Solon.

Fragment 39 · Choricus, Declamations

For the earth knows how to produce for its inhabitants all that the seasons provide, stretching down on its back, as in Solon's words: