But Periander's heart was set upon the youth, so he sent again to him, this time by his own daughter, the sister of Lycophron, who would, he thought, have more power to persuade him than any other person. Then she, when she reached Corcyra, spoke thus with her brother, "Do you wish the kingdom, brother, to pass into strange hands, and our father's wealth to be made a prey, rather than yourself return to enjoy it? Come back home with me, and cease to punish yourself. It is scant gain, this obstinacy. Why seek to cure evil by evil? Mercy, remember, is by many set above justice. Many, also, while pushing their mother's claims have forfeited their father's fortune. Power is a slippery thing—it has many suitors; and he is old and stricken in years let not your inheritance go to another." Thus did the sister, who had been tutored by Periander what to say, urge all the arguments most likely to have weight with her brother. He however answered, that so long as he knew his father to be still alive, he would never go back to Corinth. When the sister brought Periander this reply, he sent to his son a third time by a herald, and said he would come himself to Corcyra, and let his son take his place at Corinth as heir to his kingdom. To these terms Lycophron agreed and Periander was making ready to pass into Corcyra and his to return to Corinth, when the Corcyraeans, being informed of what was taking place, to keep Periander away, put the young man to death. For this reason it was that Periander took vengeance on the Corcyraeans.

4. THE CRISIS OF THE ARISTOCRACY AT ATHENS: SOLON

Crises did not always end with the establishment of a tyrant. Instead, a lawgiver might be appointed who was empowered to impose necessary reforms and incorporate them into a written law code—one of the earliest public uses of literacy in Greece—that would become authoritative upon the end of his term of office. The best documented example of the appointment of a lawgiver is that of Athens, where a severe crisis that had brought the city to the verge of civil war was resolved by a series of reforms carried out in 594 B.C. by the aristocratic poet and lawgiver Solon. The principal source of information for the Athenian crisis was Solon's own poetry; extensive quotations from it are preserved in Aristotle's famous Constitution of Athens, a work long thought to be lost until an ancient papyrus copy was discovered in Egypt in 1889. There is much scholarly dispute about the origins and course of the crisis, but two facts are clear. First, Solon defused the immediate problem by ending a system of sharecropping called Hectemorage and outlawing in Athens the practice of enslaving debtors who failed to repay their loans. Second, although Solon himself cannot be described as a democrat, he made an essential contribution to the development of the later Athenian democracy by substituting wealth for noble birth as the criterion for holding political office.¹⁷

2. After this event there was contention for a long time between the upper classes and the populace. Not only was the constitution at this time oligarchical in every respect, but the poorer classes, men, women, and children, were the serfs of the rich. They were known as Pelatae and also as

Hectemores, because they cultivated the lands of the rich at the rent thus indicated. The whole country was in the hands of a few persons, and if the tenants failed to pay their rent they were liable to be haled into slavery, and their children with them. All loans were secured upon the debtor’s person, a custom which prevailed until the time of Solon, who was the first to appear as the champion of the people. But the hardest and bitterest part of the constitution in the eyes of the masses was their state of servitude. Not but what they were also discontented with every other feature of their lot; for, to speak generally, they had no part nor share in anything. . . .

5. (Since) . . . the many were in slavery to the few, the people rose against the upper class. The strife was keen, and for a long time the two parties were ranged in hostile camps against one another, till at last, by common consent, they appointed Solon to be mediator and Archon, and committed the whole constitution to his hands. . . . By birth and reputation Solon was one of the foremost men of the day, but in wealth and position he was of the middle class, as is generally agreed, and is, indeed, established by his own evidence in these poems, where he exhorts the wealthy not to be grasping.

6. As soon as he was at the head of affairs, Solon liberated the people once and for all, by prohibiting all loans on the security of the debtor’s person; and in addition he made laws by which he cancelled all debts, public and private. This measure is commonly called the Seisachtheia (removal of burdens), since thereby the people had their loads removed from them.

7. Next Solon drew up a constitution and enacted new laws; and the ordinances of Draco ceased to be used, with the exception of those relating to murder. The laws were inscribed on the wooden stands, and set up in the King’s Porch, and all swore to obey them; and the nine Archons made oath upon the stone, declaring that they would dedicate a golden statue if they should transgress any of them. This is the origin of the oath to that effect which they take to the present day. Solon ratified his laws for 100 years; and the following was the fashion in which he organized the constitution. He divided the population according to property into four classes, just as it had been divided before, namely, Pentacosiomedimni, Knights, Zeugitae, and Thetes. The various magistracies, namely, the nine Archons, the Treasurers, the Commissioners for Public Contracts, the Eleven, and the Fiscal Clerks, he assigned to the Pentacosiomedimni, the Knights, and the Zeugitae, giving offices to each class in proportion to the value of their rateable property. To those who ranked among the Thetes he gave nothing but a place in the Assembly and in the juries. A man had to rank as a Pentacosiomedimnus if he made, from his own land, 500 measures, whether liquid or solid. Those ranked as Knights who made 300 measures, or, as some say, those who were able to maintain a horse. In support of the latter definition they adduce the name of the class, which may be supposed to be derived from this fact, and also some votive offerings of early times; for in the Acropolis there is a votive offering, a statue of Diphilus, bearing this inscription:
Anthemion, the son of Diphilos, made this dedication to the gods, when he exchanged the status of a Thete for that of a Knight (Hippheios).

And a horse stands in evidence beside the man, implying that this was what was meant by belonging to the rank of Knight. At the same time it seems reasonable to suppose that this class, like the Pentacosiomedimni, was defined by the possession of an income of a certain number of measures. Those ranked as Zeugitae who made 200 measures, liquid or solid; and the rest ranked as Thetes, and were not eligible for any office. Hence it is that even at the present day, when a candidate for any office is asked to what class he belongs, no one would think of saying that he belonged to the Thetes....

9. Such, then, was his legislation concerning the magistracies. There are three points in the constitution of Solon which appear to be its most democratic features: first and most important, the prohibition of loans on the security of the debtor's person; secondly, the right of every person who so willed to claim redress on behalf of any one to whom wrong was being done; thirdly, the institution of the appeal to the jury-courts; and it is to this last, they say, that the masses have owed their strength most of all, since, when the democracy is master of the voting-power, it is master of the constitution. Moreover, since the laws were not drawn up in simple and explicit terms (but like the one concerning inheritances and wards of state), disputes inevitably occurred, and the courts had to decide in every matter, whether public or private. Some persons in fact believe that Solon deliberately made the laws indefinite, in order that the final decision might be in the hands of the people. This, however, is not probable, and the reason no doubt was that it is impossible to attain ideal perfection when framing a law in general terms; for we must judge of his intentions, not from the actual results in the present day, but from the general tenor of the rest of his legislation....

11. When he had completed his organisation of the constitution in the manner that has been described, he found himself beset by people coming to him and harassing him concerning his laws, criticising here and questioning there, till, as he wished neither to alter what he had decided on nor yet to be an object of ill will to every one by remaining in Athens, he set off on a journey to Egypt, with the combined objects of trade and travel, giving out that he should not return for ten years. He considered that there was no call for him to expound the laws personally, but that every one should obey them just as they were written. Moreover, his position at this time was unpleasant. Many members of the upper class had been estranged from him on account of his abolition of debts, and both parties were alienated through their disappointment at the condition of things which he had created. The mass of the people had expected him to make a complete redistribution of all property, and the upper class hoped he would restore everything to its former position, or, at any rate, make but a small change. Solon, however, had resisted both classes. He might have made himself a despot by attaching himself to whichever party he chose, but he preferred, though at the
cost of incurring the enmity of both, to be the saviour of his country and the ideal lawgiver.

12. The truth of this view of Solon's policy is established alike by common consent, and by the mention he has himself made of the matter in his poems. Thus:

To the people I gave as much privilege as was proper, neither taking away from nor adding to their honor. As for those who had power and were pre-eminent in wealth, I took care that nothing shameful should happen to them. I stood firm, protecting both with my strong shield, and I allowed neither to be unjustly victorious.

Once more he speaks of the abolition of debts and of those who before were in servitude, but were released owing to the Seisachtheia:

Which of those tasks for which I collected together the people did I give up before completing. In the judgement of time let my best witness to these matters be black earth, great mother of the Olympian deities. I pulled up from her the boundary markers that had been planted in her everywhere. The earth that was formerly enslaved is now free. Many Athenians, who had been sold—some unjustly, some justly—I brought back to their divinely founded fatherland. Men who had fled into exile under the compulsion of debt and no longer spoke the Attic tongue because of their many wanderings, and men who endured bitter slavery here, trembling in fear at their master's whims, these men I made free. I used my power to do these things, uniting force and justice, and I accomplished what I had promised. I wrote laws equally for the bad and the good, accommodating straight justice to each. Had someone else, an evil-minded and ambitious man, taken up the goad as I did, he would not have held the people back. For if I had then done what they desired for their enemies, or what their opponents planned for them, this city would have been bereft of many men. For this reason I set up a firm defense on all sides, turning like a wolf in the midst of a pack of dogs.
ELEGIAC POETRY

3 Periget Diogenes

And then:

Let us go to Salamis to fight for a lovely island and clear away bitter disgrace.

SOLON

4 Demosthenes, On the Embassy

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

Our state will never perish through the dispensation of Zeus or the intentions of the blessed immortal gods; for such a stout-hearted guardian, Pallas Athena, born of a mighty father, holds her hands over it. But it is the citizens themselves who by their acts of foolishness and subservience to money are willing to destroy a great city, and the mind of the people’s leaders is unjust; they are certain to suffer much pain as a result of their great arrogance. For they do not know how to restrain excess or to conduct in an orderly and peaceful manner the festivities of the banquet that are at hand . . . they grow wealthy, yielding to unjust deeds . . . sparing neither
ELEGIAC POETRY

οδ dequeue κτειάνους οὗτε τι δημοσίων
φειδόμενοι κλέπτουσιν ἀφαρσαγη ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος,
οὐδὲ φυλάσσονται σεμνὰ Δίκης θέμεθα,
15 ἥ συγγόνα σύνοιδε τὰ γεγονόμενα πρὸ τ' ἐόντα,
τῷ δὲ χρόνῳ πάντως ἦλθ' ἀποτελεσμένην,
tοιτ' ἦδη πάση πόλει ἔρχεται ἐλκος ἀφικτον,
ἐς δὲ κακην ταχεὼν ἠλυθε δουλοσύνην,
ἡ στάσιν ἐμψυχὸν πόλεμον θ' εὐδοτ' ἐπεγείρει,
20 ὅς πολλῶν ἐρατὴν ἀλεσαν ἥλικην
ἐκ γὰρ δυσμενῶν ταχεῶν πολνήματαν ἀντι τρύχεται ἐν συνόδοις τοὺς ἀδικεῖσθαι φίλαις.
tαῦτα μὲν ἐν δήμῳ στρέφεται κακά τῶν δὲ πενεχρῶν
ικνέονται πολλοὶ γαϊῶν ἐς Ἀλλοδαπῆν πραθέντες δεισομοῖ τ' ἀεικέλιουσι δεθέντες
25 σωματικεῖς πολλῶν ἀκαίρως ἐκαστην,
αὖθεν δ' εἴτ' ἔχειν οὐκ ἐθέλουσι θύραι,
υἱηλον δ' ὑπὲρ ἥκος ὑπέρθοτεν, εὑρέ δὲ πάντως,
eι καὶ τις φεύγων ἐν μυχῶ ηθαλάμῳ.
ταῦτα διδάσαν θυμὸτ 'Αθηναίοις με κελεύει,
20 τὰς κακὰ πλείστα πόλει δυσνομίης παρέχει,
Εὐνομίῃ δ' εὐκοσμα καὶ ἄρτα πάντες ἀποφαίνει,
καὶ θαμα τοῖς ἀδίκοις ἀφικνιθησεί πέδαις
τραχέα λειάνει, παῖνε κόρον, ὑδραν ἀμαυροί,
ἀναίνει δ' ἀτῆς ἀνθεα φυόμενα,
Solon

flowers of ruin, straightens out crooked judgments, tames deeds of pride, and puts an end to acts of sedition and to the anger of grievous strife. Under her all things among men are fitting and rational.

You hear, men of Athens, what Solon has to say about such men and about the gods who, he says, keep our city safe.

1 It is unclear what 'this' refers to. Perhaps it is to the punishment of Justice.
2 Probably a reference to tyranny.
3 On these two personifications see M. Ostwald, Nomos and the Beginnings of Athenian Democracy (Oxford 1969) 64-69: "They are 'poetic persons' which symbolize, respectively, the orderly and disorderly state of affairs in the city" (p. 66).
4 Or "infatuation."
5 Except for lacunae of indeterminate length, the poem may be complete.

4a Aristotle, Constitution of Athens

When such was the organization of the state and many were enslaved to the few, the people rose up against the men of note. After bitter strife and protracted opposition to one another, they agreed to choose Solon as reconciler and archon [594/3], and they entrusted the state to him. He had composed the elegy which begins:

I know (and pain lies within my heart), as I look on the eldest land of Ionia, tottering, that . . .

ELEGIAE POETRY

evdyivei de dieis skolias, uperfhania t' erga
parne, paien d' erga dikeostasias,
paien d' arghalengos eridos xolon, esti d' up' autheis
panta kai anthropous arxia kai pinyta.

akouet', o andreis 'Athenaios, per i ton touniwn anthropoi-
wn oia Solon ligei kai peri ton theon, ois fhi ti tis
polin stigei.

1 hemera codd., corr. Camerarius 11 ploutoudon
 codd., corr. Fick 13 ef' arpsyai codd. recs.
16 apotaimenai B p.c., ameis cett., corr. Hiller
22 adikoi codd., corr. West: adikous Richards filous F
 p.c. (retin. West), filous cett., filous Bergk 24 ikonoitai
codd., corr. Fick 29 8 balamp codd., corr. Schneidewin
Bergk

4a Arist. Ath. Pol. 5

touaithes de tis tateos oisfai en tis politeia, kai twn
polidon soulenoitwn tois oligous, anteste tois gnori-
mousi 8i dimosi. 8ugnav kai tis stateous oisfai kai
polin chrion anaktathemenos alhlos elwv kou ni
dialevthri kai arxonta Solwv, kai tis politeian
epetepeis autou, poignant tis xleugian 8i estin
arxhi

xynostik, kai mou frenox evnothen xleugia keita,
presbupatn 8esow gaiav [1]adoihe klinomein
In this poem he fights and disputes with each side on behalf of each side, and afterwards he urges them to join in bringing an end to the contention dwelling among them.

1 Athens claimed to be the mother city of all Ionians.
2 My translation assumes that the sentence is incomplete, but if it is complete I would translate as follows: "I realize that I am looking on the eldest land of Ionia tottering, and pain lies within my heart."

4c Aristotle continues
Solon was by birth and reputation one of the leading citizens, but by property and business dealings one of the middle class, as is agreed on from other sources and as he himself attests in these poems, where he urges the rich not to be greedy:

You who had more than your fill of many good things, calm the stern heart within your breast and moderate your ambition; for we shall not comply nor will these things be fitting for you.

4b Aristotle continues
And in short he always lays the blame for the strife on the rich. That is why he says at the beginning of the elegy that he fears their... and their arrogance, suggesting that this was the cause of the hostility.
Plutarch, Life of Solon

But 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.

1 On the basis of Plutarch many see a pentameter lurking here, τὴν φιλοχρηματίαν (vel sim.) τὴν θ' ὑπερηφανίαν, and some suggest that δέδουξα ended the previous hexameter. “I fear their love of money and their arrogance.” West agrees that the general thought was present in the poem, but not in this form.

5 Aristotle, Constitution of Athens

But Solon opposed both sides, and while he could have joined with whichever side he wished and become tyrant, he chose to incur the enmity of both by saving his homeland and legislating for the best. Everyone else agrees that he acted in this way and he himself in his poetry has made mention of this, as follows:

I have given the masses as much privilege as is sufficient, neither taking away from their honour nor adding to it. And as for those who had power and were envied for their wealth, I saw to it that they too should suffer no indignity. I stood with a mighty shield cast round both sides and did not allow either to have an unjust victory.