

Backwards and Forwards From
Theognis 1365-1366

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A. The eighth fragment from the end of the Theognidean Sylloge is:

ὦ παίδων κάλλιστε καὶ ἡμεροέτατε πάντων
στήθ' αὐτοῦ καὶ μου παῦρ' ἐπάκουσον ἔπη.¹

To the sweetest, most beautiful boy I know:
Just sit there; hear me a bit, before you go.²

If a sociologist of scholarship plotted the amount of published scholarly attention devoted to each of the 1,389 extant lines attributed to Theognis, or to

¹Theognis verses 1365-1366 (hereafter referred to as “T” plus verse numbers) in the Loeb edition (Douglas Gerber, ed. and trans., Greek Elegaic Poetry (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999) (LCL 258)). In the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (cited as TLG) (<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>) these are numbered verses 1364-1365. The TLG verse numbering varies throughout from that of Loeb. My “T” references are all to Loeb line numbers

²All translations in this paper are my free translations, intended to support the points I make.

the 250 fragments they comprise,³ against the verses in their conventional numbered order, the trend line would descend from the maximum at the top of the axis of scholarly attention for the first 50-75 lines to the zero at the bottom for the last 50-75 lines. There might be some upticks here and there, or it might even be a straight diagonal. A great part of Theognidean studies, and almost all reference to him in other contexts, has bypassed these verses, even when referring to his homoeroticism.⁴ To retrieve verses 1365-1366 we have to reach way back down into the bottom of the barrel.

One of the reasons this particular fragment has been ignored is that it has no textual problems: it is not repeated elsewhere in the *Sylloge* (with one interesting exception⁵), there are no bits of Solon or Simonides or of any other usual suspects in it, and it reads perfectly. It is not dubious or uncertain. In other words, it is not a good object of study for a textual scholar. Yet it ought to be a fruitful object of study, because it is a sound part of a well-authorized corpus, generally accepted since the early part of the last century as not parodic or systematically comedic and by and large the work of one author (though we might never have a correct final order of the lines). For historical scholars it has been taken as rather too intimate to yield very much about Megara and the social production of the Theognis corpus. Both kinds of scholars deflate the passage, if they mind it at all. This sort of comment is typical of the dismissive or uninterested attitude: it has been stated that the phrase ὦ παῖ and its variants (as here) are attachable to the starts of lines for metrical and other mechanical

³This is my count of the number of fragments. I have not noticed a fragment account in any secondary source.

⁴The chief exception is the note by Massimo Vetta in his *Theognis Elegiarum Liber Secundus* (Rome, Athenaeus, 1980), pp. 135-137. (A group of technical questions about Vetta's work, which stands alone in the study of this aspect of Theognis, are given by G. L. Koniaris in his review of Vetta in *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 105, no. 1 (Spring, 1984), pp. 102-107.)

⁵T 1117 says that Πλοῦτε as θεῶν κάλλιστε καὶ ἡμεροέτατε πάντων. Vetta argues that there can be none but superficial comparison between address to a God and address to a boy.

purposes in poetry-making. But the line does not only call to the boy. It comments on how the boy listens to the poet. It is about listening as well as about speaking, from the plain text alone a communication from one person to a single other. This means that the vocatives are directed, attached, and significant, and not dependent on a promiscuous trochee. The combination of vocation and audition, complicated by the suggestion of deep individual feeling in a homoerotic context, raises the question of the interiority of feeling in literature heavily dependent on the thick social context present in all Theognidean verse. Therefore I decided to heed the poet's call, and to listen to these words, and to consider to the manner of interpreting them.

B. We take the auditor to be Cynrus. The introductory phrase is the opposite of perfunctory, anonymous, or universal with respect to the audience it evokes because it straightaway singles out one auditor from all other persons. The poet does not distinguish the auditor by name here but rather by the singularity of superlative adjectives, qualities that he exemplifies more than all other boys. These are two very basic, linked qualities of boys in Greek (and other) homoerotic discourse. First, he is (most) κάλλος, beautiful. This is the virtually universal descriptor of the erotically desired boy in Greek elegy. Second, he is (most) ἰμερος, desired. This is not desire in a simple sense of the root ἔρος. It is yearning, indicated by the prefix. The two concepts are linked by the homoiopoton of the four case endings in the line—the natural music of inflected languages. The second of these qualities follows from the first. But in these judgments about the object of his address the poet also invokes, in silence, emotions of his own as to the circumstances of his entire life in complex ways that the rest of the Sylloge shows. Cynrus is beautiful and desirable not because of beauty and desirability but because of all the needs of the one calling to him. These needs are universally distributed over both the adjectives and are the actual, rich content of both. The voice of the one calling to the boy governs the choice of adjectives. They express the poet's feelings, and it is to the indirectly and directly expressed mentality of the poem comprised by these that we ought to attend.

The first and last words of the second verse are the two specific requests the poet makes of the boy: an imperative to hold himself present rather than scattered (or like a frayed rope, as in T 1362), and to listen to Theognis. Just as he uses the intensive of desire in the first line, so also the poet adds an intensive prefix ἐπ- to the imperative ἀκουσον. He adds a third imperative, ἔπη (from ἔπειμι), with an assonance to the previous imperative just for good measure. The poet also link the boy to himself by καὶ, as if Cynus will be joined to Theognis by paying attention to him. The poet asks for just a little for himself—a litotes of what he wants of the Cynus, of what he will offer to Cynus, and of what this exchange and their friendship may mean. Once the poet says μου, he says παῦρ as the qualifier of what he wants if the boy stays. He understates how much he needs from Cynus’s attentive listening. The first and the last words of the line are about their staying together, as “you and me” (αὐτοῦ καὶ μου, freely) says in the middle of the line. The poet’s senses of lack and of loss are given by the first word of the distych calling to the boy and by the last word pointing to the boy’s going away. The superlatives for the boy point to the poet’s melancholy desire, and the commands to the boy point to the poet’s solitary powerlessness.

The first-person speech of this distych, like much of the rest of Theognidean verse, does not describe the world but, instead, emphatically expresses the feelings of the speaker. Using few similes or metaphors, Theognis rapidly and bluntly puts out what he wants to say and then stops. He is so articulate and concise that one feels it would have been a pleasure for the boy to stay, in fact, and listen to him, just as it is a pleasure today to read his vestigia. Most Greek homoerotic verse narrates stories of lovers and their adventures. Later, some of the verses of Simonides or Anacreon⁶ can be construed as first-person addresses (though dubiously or, or because too fragmentary only suppositiously) and it appears once or twice in Callimachus,⁷ but on the whole

⁶E.g., Anacreon 346, 360-363, 414. Simonides’s texts are too fragmentary to allow making a definitive statement on this.

⁷E.g., 24, 195.

this does not appear again until Tibullus (who likely used Callimachus and other Hellenistic revivals of earlier Greek language as model poses⁸) and Catullus.⁹ In the Marathus poems, Tibullus describes love and lovers in ways that draw attention from himself. Theognis is far more direct.

Between the philology and the historicity of the *Sylloge*, commentators have paid scant attention to the specific emotions the poet writes about.¹⁰ Certainly he promises the boy a caring and warm discussion.¹¹ This warmth stems from his yearning, his sadness, though on other matters Theognis can be as angry as a thug. But it is a good generalization that the lines with softer feeling are part of the address to Cyrnus as a personal friend and that those with harder feelings are addressed to Cyrnus as a political and class ally or to others, regardless of the order in which the fragments now stand.¹² The money and friends that were the foundation of his life having disappeared through some combination of political upheaval and business losses (the details being unclear to us) Theognis needs love, care and friendship. He always portrays these as distant goods, just about to slip away from him though he leans forward to offer

⁸R. Cairns, *Tibullus, a Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) is largely concerned with showing that Tibullus's texts are deliberately modeled on Hellenistic elegy.

⁹E.g., 12.13-5, 38, 48, etc.

¹⁰There is far more literature on the σφρηγίς of T 19 alone (among other examples) than on the whole of emotive content of "Book II" (e.g., Louise Pratt, "The Seal of Theognis, Writing, and Oral Poetry," in *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 116, no. 2 (Summer, 1995), pp. 171-184). Of course the political and economic situation of Theognis has attracted more attention, but I suggest that there are a number of reasons for this other than codicological issues.

¹¹T 1235-1238, 1279-1282, 1283ff.

¹²In the older literature all of this is dismissed, in Basil Gildersleeve's great phrase, as "literary bardashery" (in his article on "Paulus Silentiarius," in *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1917), p. 49).

himself, his wisdom and his experience, as an argument for them.

ὄλβιος ὅστις παιδὸς ἔρων οὐκ οἶδε θάλασσαν,
οὐδέ οἱ ἐν πόντῳ νύξ ἐπιούσα μέλει.

A happy man loving not the seas but his boy
need never cross their darkening night.¹³

Like Zeno of Citium, Theognis was a businessman who lost his fortune in ocean transit, but socially he seems to have been stranded by disaster or necessity rather than by the Stoic's choice. He mentions the sea quite a few times as the large, elemental dark force representing deep and final loss, but also as much a place as a force, something inhuman and destructive that devours good things into the past. The ocean of memory continues to wreck the present.

παιδὸς ἔρωσ καλὸς μὲν ἔχειν, καλὸς δ' ἀποθέσθαι·
πολλὸν δ' εὐρέσθαι ῥήτερον ἢ τελέσαι.

Best to find and treasure one great guy.
Love's quick to come, quick to die.¹⁴

But there is another dynamic, beside that of the passage of past and future time, making things difficult, threatening always to drown the poet's hope. To love a boy is not to own a thing, as if sunken treasure might be recovered, but to let one's self be overcome by the beloved whom one offers one's self too. Again asking Cynrus to listen to him, Theognis calls to him as

ὦ παῖ, ἄκουσον ἐμεῦ δαμάσας φρένας....

¹³T 1375-1376.

¹⁴T 1369-1370.

Man, have you got me roped and tied, but please please listen to me....¹⁵

Our conventional thinking often tries to distract us from the real psychic or material forces shaping things. We readily believe that the external presentation of power is the whole story because it is designed to carry out its aims by lessening our resistance first of all. But much of what drives is elsewhere, behind the curtain, psychic or social, where the innocuous and feckless seem to stand. This is the nature of necessity—not quite the causality we think it is, harder to grasp and far harder to slip away from than we initially think. The greater force may be as invisible as a ghost, rather than as solid as a boulder. It is to these things that we are well advised to look for the sources of our burdens.

Αἰεὶ παιδοφίλησιν ἐπὶ ζυγὸν ἀύχενι κεταί
δύσλοφον, ἀργαλέον μνήμα φιλοξενίης.

Loving a guy adds an ox's yoke across your neck
Reminding you how very tough it is to love someone new.¹⁶

This is part of the history of the yoke of necessity in Greek and all subsequent Occidental thought. And it is also that feeling of failure over what should be the most natural of things in life which Theognis expresses. It repeats the catastrophes of his life as a citizen, and at the same time it reveals a separable inward anxiety at the strange facts of life. The man who tries to swerve Cynus toward himself by compliments is telling Cynus and us about his own acceptance of the unresolved perplexity of inward need lost in a vast watery world. In Plato's Demiurge and then in Apuleius's Lucius we will see the purest logic and the basest causal necessity rendered as the same unavoidable, omnipotent, indifferent force of chance.

¹⁵T 1235.

¹⁶T 1357-1358.

C. I have focused on the inward, or “personal,” implications of the distych cited at the head of this paper. In calling to the boy, the poet seeks to express his regret and helplessness to some purpose. Before I sketch in the content of what he told Cynrus as recorded in the Sylloge, I want to ask first what commonalities allow us to remember and to interpret such a matter—to make alive for critical thought what is in fact already dead, being past but that we need to understand in living form? Wilhelm Dilthey proposed an answer:

The feeling of a lack of nourishment is connected with a tension and a striving. Spheres of drives and of longing without an object (can be cited as) mere facts without any psychological explanation appealing to energy and pleasure. Beyond these spheres, separate structural unities are constituted....

1. The most basic structural relation consists, in this, that an actual or remembered object elicits a reaction of feeling, and this passes over into a volitional attitude. Longing, striving, desiring, wishing...

2. Then judgments emerge as determinations of the object. Possibilities of pleasurable satisfaction are weighed; the realizability of the object of satisfaction is established...

3. Approval and disapproval as a result of value-assessment become motivating grounds for action. Ethical action in the narrower sense....

Relation of these lived experiences to one another:

1. In the direction of a hierarchy of structural unities....

2. The connection of lived experiences according to the relations inherent in what is given in the willing of objects.¹⁷

Dilthey is attempting to explain how what’s inside of us gets out into the outside at the first instant of public and then of historical memory. His argument is first, that desires are our reasons for moral choice; second, that these choices

¹⁷Wilhelm Dilthey, ed. and trans. Rudolf Makreel and Frithof Rodi, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, in *Selected Works*, Vol. III, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 89-90 (I.2.II.2.4.68).

also are judgments as to the factual situations of reality (Wirklichkeit); and third, that therefore such judgments enter an historical structure. Our feelings as rememberers or as interpreter of memory also enter into this structure. They are indeed necessary if we are to remember successfully. Successful remembrance animates our biological lives. Nothing else can, in Dilthey's view, unless the object of understanding is an automaton. This also can lead to a claim that our historiography changes the structure of memory as it moves diachronically. His name for the sum of these determinations of objects, including both their fabrication and reception, hermeneutically viewed, is *wirkung*.

Dilthey's argument describes one aspect of what he in general calls "immanent teleology," by which he means not teleology as ordinarily understood but as a re-expression of intention within the hermeneutic circle. This is necessary if *wirkung* is to have any kind of specifically human content or content specifically accessible to human sensibility. This argument, or something of the kind, is necessary not only to get feelings, as well as thoughts, from the insides of persons to the outsides but also to get them from the individual to the community of humankind. This was Dilthey's approach to the large problem of the complex nature of human life viewed in an empirical and rationalist world. He was one among many who attempted to find in historical understanding the place for the human stain. All the attempts to do this following in the wake of post-Kantianism have added up to a deep enrichment of our ideas of society and memory, but each attempt, including Dilthey's, was fatally limited as a theoretical model: always something personal and living seemed to escape each new approach to manifesting historical feeling as empirical understanding of the past. The question remains today as to what is the goo more solid than mind but less dry than bones. This was the problem the Old Historicism faced.

New Historicism faces this same problem, and this is why we see its cycles of paratactical moves: the demand for better human values by more social activism or by deepened abandonment of the structures presented by the

previously insufficiently humane theoretical models. The entire tendency is to eliminate the subject and then, finding this to be troubling, to modify or advance the theory in order to let in something like personhood without stepping into concepts or ways of thinking forbidden by the imaginarium of the theory. This means, in the end, to avoid fundamental philosophical analysis.¹⁸ Following each of Dilthey's first three points above, we spot three philosophical weaknesses in New Historicist theory as a contextualizing, materialist, and cultural theory. Very briefly stated, these are as follows.

1. The concept of heteroglossia and similar ideas of intertextuality point to the comprehensive peculiarity of every situation, writing, act, or word in history. This is ultimately a principle of individuation. Indeed, Bakhtin at times seems to have this in mind.¹⁹ But if the idea of the full special reality of each object of historical scrutiny is such a principle, then the logical consequences of this principle for the ideas of subjectivity and personhood must be investigated, because it alone does not dismiss the inwardness of the subject; it has in general in the history of philosophy had effect to the contrary, when ideas about personhood are considered in terms of logical categories, as applied to knowledge.

2. New Historicists have a tendency, if pressed, to rely on phenomenology as a way of supplying some ground of value-laden consciousness in place of unitary or basal forces such as the soul. It is merely to scratch the surface to say that this is phenomenology bought on the cheap. For example, a common trope is to claim to spatialize ontology, thereby replacing the undesirable intangible spirit-like time with engagement and conflict in space. But this is to organize time, and organized time is not time but

¹⁸In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams does this when he suddenly finds that we need for a "structure of feeling" in the midst of all the tools of Marxist literary analysis (*Marxism and Literature*, p. 133).

¹⁹Mikhail Bakhtin, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 282, 345, 359.

space—like a page of type blocked in the frame for printing. There is no reason to judge conflict to be “sited” more than to be durative. In fact, spatialized quasi-ontology has the unfortunate effect of confining events or people to their times, rather than engaging them with change. In this way, New Historical approaches can become totalizing and insufficiently diachronic.²⁰

3. The most consequential development in post-structuralist cultural studies is that cultural objects or processes are to be viewed not as reflecting humankind but as constitutive of persons and of societies. However, reflexivity and constitutivity do not form a full proper disjunction, yet the dynamics of theories without unitary ideas of personhood push these into opposition and push into finding new ways to deepen the disassembly of personhood while supporting some ground of moral judgment. The product of a completely conceived disjunction between reflexivity and constitutivity is only the exoskeleton of human beings.

D. Theognis has had the benefit of a “New Historicist” interpretation for a very long while.²¹ The verses of Book I frequently directly concern the political revolution in Megara that put into power a class of people alien to Theognis’s class and to his own temperament, and he phrases many of his personal problems as analogues to these issues. “His meaning are as plain as a pikestaff,” one scholar wrote, and in many respects this is correct. The same scholar also noted that any textual problems that would obscure analogue reading are curable by “those penultimate infirmities of academic minds, the assumption of

²⁰See the brilliant survey of New Historicist thought in English Renaissance studies plus critiqued in John Martin’s “Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe,” in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 5 (December, 1997), pp. 1309-1342.

²¹L. E. Woodbury reviews this story of Theognis scholarship in “The Riddle of Theognis: The Latest Answer,” in *Phoenix*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring, 1951), pp. 1-10.

lacunae in the text.”²² We know that Megara had grown rich, and that the oligarchical families that had the wealth were replaced by new oligarches by skillful demagoguery. A messy democracy followed, turning to civil disorder, and of course it was settled by a counter-revolution shortly after 550 B.C.E. that incorporated some distribution of wealth with re-founded oligarchic government.²³ If, as Theognis’s friend Simonides is reported to have said, “the city makes the man,”²⁴ Theocritus is a perfect candidate for a reading in which the social and the individual are joined in historical process, or the latter is reduced to the former. The author tries to heal the breach between his disastrous present society and a better community, past or present; his speech is not to himself or to Cynus but to others at the symposiasts’ table.²⁵ He lost his faith, it seems, believing in bloody vengeance alone.²⁶ He’s mad at everyone, sometimes including Cynus though “it is possible that Cynus had done nothing specific,” leaving us a heap of tirades so mixing up the personal and the political that posterity has had to suffer dealing with their “strange fate,” since being unclear and mixed up might have been “one of the norms of the Archaic Age,” especially for those suffering from “begrudging bitterness and vengeful pique.”²⁷ Theognis was a bitter, vicious loser, really unpleasant and sour. However that

²²J. A. Davison, “Theognis 257-66” in *The Classical Review* (New Series), vol. 9, no. 1 (March, 1959), p. 2.

²³See Steward Irvin Oost, “The Megara of Theagenes and Theognis,” in *Classical Philology*, vol. 68, no. 3 (July, 1973), pp. 186-196.

²⁴E. Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1949), fr. 53.

²⁵See Gregory Nagy, “Transmission of Archaic Greek Symptotic Songs: From Lesbos to Alexandria,” in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Autumn, 2004) (pp. 26-48), pp. 29-30 and 44.

²⁶According to Robert D. Murray, these poems reveal “a cruel and twisted mind” who “transmuted the base materials of vicious and agonized self-pity into high art.” “Theognis 341-50,” in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 96, (1965), pp. 281.

²⁷T. A. Tarkow, “Theognis 237-254: A Reexamination,” in *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, no. 26 (1977), pp. 99-114, esp. pp. 101, 102, 110, and 112.

might be, there is no doubt that he believed the concept of personal nobility and good he grew up with had been subverted by bad people, who then lied about what is good while cheating and robbing; that he ceased to expect justice from the gods; that he supported the interests of his own class against classes, themselves equally plutocratic, striving against it, whether noble or peasant; and that he believed, among other things, that a noble man should not trade or lie²⁸ but stay rich, be a rock-steady friend to his friends, breed horses, keep dogs, love a boy, and care for a wife.²⁹

Just as his view of things defended the interests of the dominant society of Megara that he was born into, so also he lived at the period of the greatest production of homoerotic images in Athenian black-figure pottery.³⁰ The poet's same-sex interests are part of the power-relations that shaped his personality, even if the interests of society were sometimes in conflict with these interests.³¹ On all fronts he seems to lose, yet Theognis has little conception of compassion. There is never what detective-story writers called a "squinkie" that saves him in the end. Political and commercial adventurers are the winners. Had Theognis not felt so helpless against them, one doubts he would have given us such a clear-eyed view—if entirely a self-centered view—of some of the power-relations he observed at home in Megara and in exile in Sicily.³²

²⁸Retail trade is deceit, as per Leslie Kurke, "Kaphleia and Deceit: Theognis 59-60," in *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 110, no. 4 (Winter, 1989), pp. 540ff.

²⁹T 1225-1226 and 1255-1256.

³⁰See H. A. Shapiro, "Courtship Scenes in Attic Vase-Painting," in *The American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 85, no. 2 (April, 1981), pp. 133-145, esp. p. 135.

³¹See John J. Winkler, *Laying Down the Law: the oversight of men's sexual behavior in classical Athens*, in David Halperin, et al., ed., *Before Sexuality: the construction of erotic experience in the ancient Greek world* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 182, 193, 195.

³²Gregory Nagy, "Theognis and Megara: a poet's vision of his city," in Thomas J. Figuera and Gregory Nagy, ed., *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis* (Baltimore: Johns

One of the reasons I have emphasized the personal side of the Theognidean fragments is important in this connection. The poet was deeply concerned with being inspected—with his vulnerability in the eyes and acts of others as part of his struggles with societal events. This is a great part of what he wants to discuss with Cynus. A young man will soon have to deal with life on life's terms.³³ This requires a great deal of cunning, as to which Theognis presents to Cynus one of the great themes of ancient Greece:

πουλύπου ὀργὴν ἴσχε πολυπλόκου, ὃς ποτὶ πέτρῃ,
 τῇ προσομιλήσῃ, τοίος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη.
 νῦν μὲν τῆδ' ἐφέπου, τοτὲ δ' ἄλλοῖος χροῶ γίνου.
 κρέσσων τοι σοφίη γίνεται ἀτροπίης.³⁴

Hide your feelings like an octopus camouflaged in its rock.
 Make your way by such masks and tricks.
 Govern yourself by manipulating your manner.
 Be smart: charm counts for more than right or wrong.

Although he offers a lot of advice about being honest, fair, and upright, the poet shares the view of the civilization that loved Odysseus for his μῆτις. The cuttlefish is one of the great symbols of this trait. Jean-Paul Vernant tells the story of this idea and this image with his usual delicious genius.³⁵ Reversals of power bring inspection of one's position and actual moral and material strengths, which serve one better than ideals. Although Theognis is concerned with the

Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 22-81.

³³T 1353-1356

³⁴T 215-218.

³⁵J.-P. Vernant and Marcel Detienne, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1978), pp. 9-26, 131-174. Cf. J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 92, 106-25.

good, events have so changed his outlook that it is not right to say, as Bowra, that his chief concern is δικη.³⁶ The poet's position in the *Sylloge* is very far from that of Anaximander, for whom the machinery of the universe brought all things within the bounds of compensatory justice in time; and there is no hint among these verses of any sense of moral order in the material cosmos.³⁷ The poet regards the ocean rather in the manner in which Schopenhauer conceived of the Will in a world in which the True is not the same as the Good.

Both Theognis and Cynrus are vulnerable to inspection, exposure, and loss of place and fortune,³⁸ for Theognis shows that he regards Cynrus as a man, a part of society, rather than as a protected catamite, by endeavoring to have an earnest talk with him. One's desires result in circumstances to which one must adapt, in the most intimate sphere as well as in the public sphere:

Χαιρήσεις τῇ πρόσθε παροιχομένη φιλότητι,
τῆς δὲ παρερχομένης οὐκέτ' ἔση ταμίης.

You might like that affair after it's done,
but nothing gives you choice of the next one.³⁹

The sense of the reversal of values within one's own mind clearly is related to the reversal of Megara's fortunes, of Theognis's fortunes, and beyond even

³⁶C. M. Bowra, *Early Greek Elegists* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), pp. 137-170.

³⁷Cf. Robert Brumbaugh, *Ancient Greek Gadgets and Machines* (New York: Crowell, 1966), pp. 30ff. Unhappily now neglected, Brumbaugh was one of the first to examine Greek technology and philosophy in light of one another.

³⁸Kurke discusses the social vulnerability specific to Cynrus or to any boy in such a relationship, because of "the conflict between erotic mystification of the boy's position and his unequal or uncertain position in the sympotic world of men." L. Kurke, "Inventing the 'Hetaira': Sex, Politics, and Discursive Conflict in Archaic Greece," in *Classical Antiquity* vol. 16, no. 1 (April, 1997), (pp. 106-150), pp. 144-145, n. 115.

³⁹T 1241-1242.

these to the entire system of exchange and debt on which societies run—to wit, Megara’s “Palintokia,” a system of exchange of debts, a re-valuation of loans connected to ideas of goodness and justice.⁴⁰ But it is persons who are vulnerable to such tides, and their best defense is agile manoeuvre the desires and forces of other persons.

E. As an object of historical understanding, Theognis has had another fate from the turn of the eighteenth century onward. This other part of the story is an historicist story too but in a different direction. Several German scholars of the early nineteenth century (including Karl Dilthey, Wilhelm Dilthey’s younger brother) were busy disassembling or de-authorizing the *Sylloge*—an activity continued in this century but perhaps given a happy end by Martin West⁴¹—often with a disapproving eye upon the homoeroticism.⁴² This was one of the first applications of philology to re-considering authorship in antiquity—the kind of project for which Valla inaugurated the discipline in his work on the “Donation of Constantine” at the turn of the sixteenth century. Friedrich Nietzsche advanced the attack on the integrity of the *Sylloge* by trying to prove the corruption of the authorship as an attack on Theognis’s character. In a sense, he wanted to believe that a person of Theognis type could exist, and he became quickly absorbed in the themes of suffering nobility, resentment, and individual dislocation that he found in the poetry. Nietzsche had a deep interest in archaic Greek and pre-Socratic thought in those youthful years in which, as he put it, “Suddenly I was a philologist.” Although he proposed a

⁴⁰See Thomas J. Figueira, “The Theognidea and Megarian Society,” in Thomas J. Figueira and Gregory Nagy, ed., *Op. cit.*, p. 148, par 52.

⁴¹Martin West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambs* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974), pp. 40-71.

⁴²For example: Robin Fox, “Theognis: An Alternative to Democracy,” in Roger Brock and Stephen Hodkinson, ed., *Alternatives to Athens: Varieties of Political Organization and Community in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 40, where he finds it “delicious” to think the Greek homoeroticism is actually incest.

system for integrating the fragments of Theognis that was not workable, it seems likely that his interest in the matter was to show that one man could as a whole man feel the renewal of values⁴³ amidst lost faith and in an on overwhelming natural world and world of social pressures. This was the beginning of his struggle with the conflict between masking one's self as a craft to do what one wanted and masking one's self as a killing conformity.⁴⁴ He write this in high school in Latin at the age of 17, in 1864; two years later it was published, revised and in German, in *Die Rheinsche Museum für Philologie*, his first appearance in print.⁴⁵ On the strength of this sole paper, Alois Ritschl immediately recommend his appointment to which is the closest thing to the position of high priest in classical studies, the chair at Basel founded for Erasmus by Veit Amerbach.

Oscar Wilde, like Nietzsche, began his career as the most brilliant of young classicists.⁴⁶ Theognis was not well regarded in the world of English classicized homosexuality: John Addington Symonds hardly had a good word to say about him in either *Studies in the Greek Poets*⁴⁷ or in *A Problem in Greek*

⁴³Gf. T 57-58, 1109-1114, and 1117-1118.

⁴⁴Derek Collins, "The Aesthetics of Deceiving Self in Nietzsche, Pindar & Theognis," in *Nietzsche-Studien*, no. 26, (1997), pp. 276-299. This is an excellent and suggestive article, unfortunately ignored in the principal English book on the subject, James Porter's *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁵William Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 8-11 and 200. Nietzsche's early texts will be found in the Metta-Schlechta ed., *Werke* (Munich: Hanser, 1954-1856) 3.21-76 and 151-206. Note that in his journals he immediately followed these studies with notes on further study of Theognis and on his major life plans.

⁴⁶ Daniel Mendelsohn's fine article, "Oscar Wilde, Classics Scholar," in *The New York Review of Books* for November 11, 2010, surveys the influence on Wilde of his classical studies.

⁴⁷Symonds discusses Theognis on pp. 82-93 of the 1873 edition (London: Smith, Elder, and Co.).

Ethics.⁴⁸ More importantly, neither did John Pentland Mahaffy, Wilde's great teacher of Greek at Trinity College, Dublin.⁴⁹ But Mahaffy defended Athenian homoerotic practice.⁵⁰ But Wilde's studies in Aeschylus and later development of his thought led him in a direction that only recently has been seen as close in spirit to Nietzsche's.⁵¹ Thomas Mann seems to have been the first to link them⁵² but the issue has begun to go much deeper, not only as a matter of stylistics but of philosophy.⁵³ In the matter of personal moral freedom Theognis has had a

⁴⁸Symonds mentions Theognis in passing on pp. 22-24 of the 1908 "Privately Printed" edition.

⁴⁹J. P. Mahaffy, *A History of Classical Greek Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 1.1.209ff.: "The literary value of the collection is small...."

⁵⁰J. P. Mahaffy, *Social Life in Greece From Homer to Menander* (London: Macmillan, 1890), pp. 326-30, where he says homoeroticism served to supplement love with the feminine sex; he also defended the custom of *ephebes* in Athens.

⁵¹Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 99-100: "This, it seems, is Nietzsche's solution. We transform ourself (sic) from weighty thinkers into intellectual and spiritual 'lightweights' from the deep and gloomy Schopenhauer to the 'gay, 'staged,' 'frivolous, 'divinely artificial' Oscar Wilde. The point is developed at greater length in the inexpert, though not necessarily wrong, article by James Sloan Allen, "Nietzsche and Wilde: An Ethics of Style," in *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 114, no. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 386-402.

⁵²Mann's remark is noted by J. E. Chamberlain, "Oscar Wilde and the Importance of Doing Nothing" in *The Hudson Review*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Summer, 1972), (pp. 194-218) on p. 195.

⁵³ Other articles that have started to explore the Nietzsche-Wilde parallel include: Frédéric Monneyron, "Une Lecture nietzschéenne de Dorian Gray," in *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens: Revue du Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Victoriennes et Edouardiennes de l'Université Paul Valéry*, no. 16 (1982), pp. 139-145; and Pascal Aquien, "Entre Dionysos et Appollon: Pour une lecture Nietzschéenne de Wilde," in *Etudes Anglaises: Grande-Bretagne, Etats-Unis*, vol. 49, no.2 (April-June, 1996), pp. 168-79; and Constantine Theoharis, "Will to Power, Poetic Justice, and Mimesis in 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'," in George Sandulescu, ed., *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross, UK: Smythe, 1994), pp. 397-404.

greater influence than in any other respect, for no other aspect of the poetry ascribed to this man has struck so deep a vein of thought as the re-thinking of personhood in its ontological, social, and moral bases of which Nietzsche was the single most consequential proximate founder. Though it took about two and a half millennia, contextualizing historical study had successes in understanding Theognis, but one result is the continuing perplexity of the nature of personhood rather than its intertextual funeral.

F. Consider the Syllloge as a museum. Some curators are old-fashioned.⁵⁴ Other curators try to prepare the ground for a more competent material culture studies and to show the objects in the collection in ways that stimulated new thinking about humankind and our world. Material culture studies, founded on a conviction of the importance of the material transmission of human activity to our understanding of that activity—is a successful part of the New Historicism, though it has many roots. It need not require a materialist ontology, however, and may well better flourish upon another constituent philosophical basis. With regard to its further requirements of focus upon the analysis of sites conflict and of the constituent role of power in the determinate and complete life of persons in connection with authority, it confronts in Theognis a paradoxical situation, in which something independent in the inward and personal actor interacts with a world of ideas over a long time and in complex and unpredictable ways. Museums sometimes hide bits of history from their public,⁵⁵ even though they often save history for future generations to

⁵⁴The most famous lines of Theognis in English are due to such an effort. John Hookham Frere's arrangement of the verse so as to produce a biography and character sketch of the poet. His translation of verses 183-192 were used by Darwin at the beginning of *The Descent of Man*—another example of the role that Theognis's awareness of nature's power to sweep away the oldest of her arrangements, human personality not excepted, played in the early debate on evolution.

⁵⁵A good recent case is the Metropolitan Museum's ignoring homoerotic images in the display of its collection of Greek vases, q.v., Jonathan Katz, "Erasing History at the Met,"

understand, as we can surely say the Sylloge was conserved as a museum collection until times when it had significant impact in movements of culture neither its author(s) nor its previous curators foresaw. It might yet have other surprises. The Sylloge and museums in general are alike in that they have been the occasions of strong theoretical conflict in philosophy and cultural theory.

Perhaps the greatest image of the question of history, an elegiac science of the dead, in which we try to make something so sufficiently clear and true out of what is dead that it might live for us—the synoptic question of how men understand the world they experience in memory—the greatest metaphor, until Walter Benjamin wrote about Klee’s *Angelus Novus*, is in *Theognis*:

δη γάρ με κέκληκε θαλάσσιος οἴκαδε νεκρός,
τεθνηκῶς ζῶι ἰ φθεγγόμενος στόματι.

It, a corpse, sea-soaked, chatters at me to go back to my homeland,
Murdered, breath mumbling through its fleshed cheeks.⁵⁶

In looking at this as a literary matter we might consider Roland Barthes’s commendation, at the beginning of *A Lover’s Discourse*, of that “extreme solitude” of the lover’s discourse,

severed not only from authority but from the mechanisms of authority...driven into the backwater of the “unreal,” ...has no recourse but to become the site, however exiguous, of an affirmation.⁵⁷

Barthes’s first *topoi* in the text are *s’âbimer*, affirmation, absence....

online at http://bandofthebes.typepad.com/bandofthebes/2007/04/love_lost_at_th.html.

⁵⁶T 1229-1230.

⁵⁷Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard, *A Lover’s Discourse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978, pp. 1ff.