

Criticising Change, from Theognis to Plato

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Abstract This paper examines how socio-political and cultural change is discussed in selected archaic and classical Greek texts (Thgn. 53-60, 287-92; Pherecr. fr. 155 K.-A.; Aristoph. *Nub.* 889-1023; Pl. *Lg.* 700a-701c). The analysis underlines the thematic, rhetorical and stylistic features and the moral preoccupations that are common to these sources. It is then argued that they all participate in an intertextual 'discourse on change'. Furthermore, the article samples how close textual readings can be enhanced by the awareness that every single passage, as an instance of this tradition of discourse, is intertextually connected to the others.

Keywords Change. Intertextuality. Morals. Paideia. Theognis.

Sommario 1 Introduction. – 2 Theognis. – 3 Pherecrates. – 4 Aristophanes. – 5 Plato. – 6 Conclusions.



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1 Introduction

In this article I offer a combined reading of selected passages from four authors: Theognis, Pherecrates, Aristophanes and Plato. In all these texts some change in social and cultural matters is described critically, by contrasting ‘before’ and ‘now’, the traditionally accepted norm with its current violation, and the earlier order of things with the subverted one. Invariably, from the speaker’s viewpoint, the change that has taken place, or is taking place, has a moral dimension: it goes together with, or brings about, the demotion of specific principles (typically δίκη and αἰδώς) and thus causes shifts in the communal value system. In the discussion, I will highlight the rhetorical and stylistic traits and the moral undertones shared by the selected texts. My analysis will establish the *Theognidea* as a source of parallels that facilitate the appreciation of such commonalities. I do not set out with the aim to investigate filiation, dependence, or deliberate allusions systematically. Rather, I engage with the sources as instances of a stereotypical discourse on change that roots back in archaic times, and of which the selected *Theognidea* are early representatives. I will start by analysing two Theognidean elegies (section 2); I will then turn to comic texts by Pherecrates and Aristophanes (sections 3 and 4), concluding with a passage of Plato’s *Laws* (section 5).

2 Theognis

Several elegies in the Theognidean corpus describe the upturning of the civic social order, and the legal and moral subversions that come with it.¹ Indeed, as Cairns has rightly stated, in the Theognidean corpus ‘moral decline cannot be sharply divorced from social change’.² Here is one of the first passages on this theme in the anthology, extracted from the elegy Thgn. 53-68:³

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1 In what follows, I conform to the conventional use of the name ‘Theognis’ to refer to the elegies attributed to this author by the manuscripts. This does not imply, on my part, an acknowledgement of the examined lines as genuinely composed by one Megarian poet named Theognis. An overview of the main questions raised by the *Theognidea* is in Gerber 1997, 117-28; for the manuscript tradition, see Selle 2008, 111-19; for a comprehensive bibliographical survey, see Colesanti 2011, 1-33.

2 Cairns 1993, 173.

3 For the question of the unity of Thgn. 53-68, contested by some scholars, see Colesanti 2011, 125-6.

Thgn. 53-60

Κύρνε, πόλις μὲν ἔθ' ἦδε πόλις, λαοὶ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι,
οἱ πρόσθ' οὔτε δίκας ἤδεσαν οὔτε νόμους,
ἀλλ' ἀμφὶ πλευραῖσι δορὰς αἰγῶν κατέτριβον, 55
ἔξω δ' ὥστ' ἔλαφοι τῆσδ' ἐνέμοντο πόλεος.
καὶ νῦν εἰς' ἀγαθοὶ Πολυπαῖδι· οἱ δὲ πρὶν ἐσθλοὶ
νῦν δειλοὶ. τίς κεν ταῦτ' ἀνέχοιτ' ἐσορῶν;
ἀλλήλους δ' ἀπατῶσιν ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι γελῶντες,
οὔτε κακῶν γνώμας εἰδότες οὔτ' ἀγαθῶν.⁴ 60

Kyrnus, this city is still a city, but the citizens are different,
they who, before, did not know laws nor customs,
but wore out goat's skins around their hips,
and grazed like deer outside this city.
And now they are noble, Polypaides; and those who were noble before
are now base. Who could bear this, seeing it?
They deceive one another and laugh at each other,
knowing no opinions on good or bad things.⁵

Thgn. 53 establishes that the reason for the change resides in the new inhabitants of the polis, who, 'before' (πρόσθ', l. 54), led a 'rustic' existence (ll. 55-6) outside the city (l. 56), living in a state of ignorance of laws and customs (l. 54). Now (νῦν, l. 57), instead, these people are the new noble (ἀγαθοί, l. 57) in the city. The adjective ἀγαθός here clearly refers to their socio-political prominence, not their moral virtue. We read indeed that 'those who were noble before' (οἱ δὲ πρὶν ἐσθλοί, l. 57), and thus notable in the city, have now (νῦν again, l. 58) become 'base' (δειλοί, l. 58).⁶ It seems likely that l. 59 describes how

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the Greek text of the *Theognidea* is quoted in the edition of West 1989². A different version of Thgn. 57-60 occurs at Thgn. 1109-14 (with ll. 57-8 echoed at ll. 1109-10, and ll. 59-60 at ll. 1113-14) Κύρν', οἱ πρόσθ' ἀγαθοὶ νῦν αὐ κακοί, οἱ δὲ κακοὶ πρὶν | νῦν ἀγαθοί. τίς κεν ταῦτ' ἀνέχοιτ' ἐσορῶν, | τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς μὲν ἀτιμότερους, κακίους δὲ λαχόντας | τιμῆς; μνηστεύει δ' ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸς ἀνὴρ· | ἀλλήλους δ' ἀπατῶντες ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι γελῶσιν, | οὔτ' ἀγαθῶν μνήμην εἰδότες οὔτε κακῶν ('Kyrnus, those who were noble before are now base, and those who were base before are now noble. Who could bear this, seeing it - the noble ones rather dishonoured, and the quite base receiving honour? A noble man seeks in marriage the daughter of a base one; deceiving one another, they laugh at each other, knowing no memory of good or bad things'). See Colesanti 2011, 124-30.

⁵ Except where otherwise stated, translations given in this article are my own. For l. 60, see below fn. 7; my translation here is literal, and I take κακῶν and ἀγαθῶν as neuter plurals.

⁶ For changes in the esteem in which they are held, cf. Thgn. 1111-12 τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς μὲν ἀτιμότερους, κακίους δὲ λαχόντας | τιμῆς; (Thgn. 1111-12 are wedged between adjusted repetitions of Thgn. 57-8 and 59-60, see fn. 4 above). In the *Theognidea* we find varied applications of the adjectives ἀγαθός, ἐσθλός, κακός and δειλός: they can have

the ‘new noble’ behave among themselves, disrespecting each other; it is said that this happens because they cannot make distinctions between what is good and what is bad (l. 60).⁷ There is a connection between l. 54 and l. 60: while they have changed their status, the ‘new noble’ are still ignorant of urban standards (cf. l. 54). Not knowing laws and customs and being unable to distinguish ‘good’ from ‘bad’ are two sides of the same coin.

This fully fledged description of civic subversion inevitably informs our reading of another passage of the *Theognidea*, Thgn. 287-92.

Thgn. 287-92

ἐν γάρ τοι πόλει ὧδε κακοψόγῳ ἀνδάνει οὐδέν·
‡ωσδετοσωσαιεῖ† πολλοὶ ἀνολβότεροι.
νῦν δὲ τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κακὰ γίνεταί ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν
ἀνδρῶν· ἡγέονται δ’ ἐκτραπέλοισι νόμοις.⁸ 290
αἰδῶς μὲν γὰρ ὄλωλεν, ἀναιδείη δὲ καὶ ὕβρις
νικήσασα δίκην γῆν κατὰ πᾶσαν ἔχει.

For in a city so given to corrupt fault-finding nothing pleases:
‡corrupt† many rather unprosperous.

But now the troubles of the good are good things for the bad
men: they are leaders in subverted customs.

For shame has perished, and shamelessness and arrogance
won over justice and occupy the whole earth.

The division of these lines into separate elegies is debated. West considered Thgn. 287-92 as a single elegy (and so I have printed it);⁹ Young, instead, regarded the couplet 287-8 as the end of the previous elegy (thus Thgn. 283-8) and printed ll. 289-92 as a four-liner.¹⁰ We cannot even rule out that ll. 287-8 are an isolated couplet, as many

a moral connotation (‘the virtuous’/‘the bad ones’) or a socio-political connotation (‘the notable ones’/‘the base’) – and sometimes both. This semantic overlapping stems from the socio-ethical assumption that one’s social peers are the only virtuous individuals in the community, and therefore the legitimate holders of social and political prominence. See Cerri 1968, Cairns 1993, 169-70.

⁷ For the several interpretations of l. 60, see van Groningen 1966, 33-4, and Kurke 1989, esp. 535 fn. 2 (with further bibliography) and 541-2.

⁸ At Thgn. 290, I print Bekker’s reading (ἀνδρῶν· ἡγέονται, Bekker 1827², 14), the closest one to the text of manuscript A (Par. suppl. gr. 388, ἀνδρῶν ἡγέονται). The other manuscripts read ἀνδρῶν γίνονται. West 1989², 188 amends in ἀνδρῶν· γαίονται.

⁹ West 1989², 188.

¹⁰ Young 1971², 20. To be sure, the civic dimension of Thgn. 283-6 (cf. ἀστῶν, l. 283) would be continued in Thgn. 287-8 (cf. ἐν ... πόλει, l. 287), but Thgn. 283-6 appear quite compact in their handling of the citizens’ untrustworthiness.

others in the *Theognidea*.¹¹ Yet, while this is possible, the thematic compatibility of ll. 289-90 and 291-2 justifies the traditional choice to treat them as belonging to a single poem.¹² In what follows, I shall first consider Thgn. 289-92, and I will come back to ll. 288-7 later.

Thgn. 289 is a holodactylic hexameter, in which a full description of the contemporary subversion is compressed. Whereas the sentence, in fact, continues into l. 290 with the word ἀνδρῶν, the latter is not necessary to the sense,¹³ and seems there merely to produce an enjambement and thus underline the hurried, anxious tone. The words νῦν δέ open l. 289, with δέ extending its oppositive force to the time adverb νῦν: the present is not merely ‘now’, but a changed state; no ‘before’ is mentioned, yet the past is strongly evoked. The rest of l. 289 (τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κακὰ γίνεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν) bears a repeated opposition of antonyms, in a syntactic chiasmus. From the poem we infer that the ‘bad’ are prominent enough to make their subverted customs (l. 290) and their amorality (l. 291) a remarkable, objectionable issue for other citizens (*in primis* of course the speaker). Moreover, if we read ἡγέονται at l. 290,¹⁴ a role of leadership (however negatively connotated) is explicitly attributed to them. The ‘good ones’, by contrast, appear in a position of disadvantage, if their troubles benefit the ‘bad ones’. From the speaker’s viewpoint, the ‘good’ are those who were and should be socially and politically prominent in the city. In this instance, therefore, the designations ‘good’ and ‘bad’ have a moral connotation.

In Thgn. 289, the inversion of social positions and fortunes is expressed by way of conceptual and syntactical contrasts; in l. 290 this upturning is further defined with the adjective ἐκτρέπελος, which has a visual dimension to it. As a derivative of the compound verb ἐκτρέπω, the adjective bears the idea of ‘diversion’ from a natural course.¹⁵ Here it is the customs that formerly regulated city life that are qualified as ‘perverted’, and the *kakoi* are said to ‘lead’ in the application of such changed ways of life.¹⁶

11 Thus van Groningen 1966, 115-17. In fact, Condello suggests that 287-8, 289-90 and 291-2 are all stand-alone distichs (Condello 2003, 10-11, followed by Colesanti 2011, 185).

12 The *crux* at l. 288 makes speculations possibly more complex, as we do not know what is being said of the ‘rather unprosperous’. For the emendations proposed over the years, see the apparatus at Young 1971², 20 and West 1989², 188.

13 See van Groningen 1966, 118.

14 See fn. 8 above.

15 The adjective occurs again in Pherecr. fr. 155.23 K.-A. and Aristoph. *Nub.* 1003, analysed in sections 3 and 4; see in part. fnn. 34 and 50 below.

16 Or to ‘rejoice’ in them, if one instead accepts West’s emendation γαίονται at Thgn. 290 (see fn. 8 above).

Finally, the picture of moral upturning is expanded on a global scale in the final couplet, which continues the oppositions. The concept of αἰδώς is opposed to its contrary, ἀναιδείη, and to another opposed concept, ὕβρις.¹⁷ Indeed, shamelessness and arrogance are now in control of the whole Earth, since they have defeated justice (δίκη). The three key moral concepts brought in here (sense of shame, arrogance and justice) call to mind the Hesiodic description of the iron race end-phase, described in *Works and Days*. Hesiod anticipates the irreversible moral decadence of humanity, which will bring it to destruction:

Hes. *Op.* 191-4

... μάλλον δὲ κακῶν ῥεκτῆρα καὶ ὕβριν
ἀνέρα τιμήσουσι· δίκη δ' ἐν χερσὶ, καὶ αἰδῶς
οὐκ ἔσται· βλάψει δ' ὁ κακὸς τὸν ἀρεῖονα φῶτα
μῦθοισι σκολιοῖς ἐνέπων ...¹⁸

And they will revere more the doer of evil and the violent man; justice will be in their hands, and there will be no shame; the bad will damage the better man speaking with crooked discourses.

This Hesiodic passage might well lurk behind the assessment of universal moral decay at Thgn. 291-2, and, in any case, the parallel reading certainly accentuates the apocalyptic tinge of the Theognidean couplet.¹⁹

Let us now turn back to Thgn. 287-8, and to the possibility that the couplet is the *incipit* of the poem ending at l. 292. In l. 287, the city is called κακόψογος, 'given to corrupt/malicious faultfinding'.²⁰

¹⁷ The term αἰδώς is conventionally translated 'sense of shame' or 'reverence'. For αἰδώς in the *Theognidea*, see Cairns 1993, 167-75, who defines it as the most important aristocratic quality, 'a disposition towards proper behaviour' (174), 'central to a remarkably coherent moral ideology centred on one particular aristocratic institution', i.e. the symposium (175); see esp. 172 for Thgn. 291-2.

¹⁸ I quote *Works and Days* from the edition of Most 2018². Compare also Hes. *Op.* 197-201, and esp. 323-4 εὐτ' ἂν δὴ κέρδος νόον ἔξαπατήσῃ | ἀνθρώπων, Αἰδῶ δέ τ' Ἀναιδείη κατοπάζῃ ('when profit beguiles the mind of humans, and Shamelessness runs after Shame') where αἰδώς and its contrary ἀναιδείη, personified, are mentioned together.

¹⁹ On the iron race (Hes. *Op.* 174-96), cf. Arrighetti 1998, 387-8, Zanker 2013. For classical echoes of this passage, see the description of *stasis* at Thuc. 3.82-3 with Edmunds 1975; for Plato's appropriation of the myth of the races in the *Republic*, see Van Noordden 2010 (esp. 186-7 on the echo of Hes. *Op.* 190-2 in Pl. *R.* 560e, where the term ὕβρις occurs in Socrates' description of the democratic soul).

²⁰ The adjective is attested only here. 'Given to malicious faultfinding' is the translation of Gerber 1999, 215. It could be interpreted also as meaning 'finding fault with

Some emphasis is put on this feature (cf. ὤδε) and its consequences are negative: in such a city, ‘nothing pleases’ (ἀνδάνει οὐδέν). It is not said what such tastes concern, nor can we infer it from the context.²¹ Though only tentatively, I conjecture that in l. 287 the speaker is referring to the unfavourable reception of his poetry in the city. The use of the verb ἀνδάνω and the reference to the city recall Thgn. 22-6 (from the ‘seal’ section),²² and especially the elegy Thgn. 367-70, where we also find the idea of blame. In both such instances, the speaker (in the first case declaredly Theognis, cf. l. 22) affirms his inability to please the citizens. In Thgn. 22-6, this statement follows the anticipation of the speaker’s future poetic fame: he will be known to all men (l. 23), yet he cannot please all citizens. He seems thus to imply that it is his poetry that cannot please them.²³ In Thgn. 367-70, instead, the persona scornfully recognises that he cannot know the ‘mind’ of the citizens; hence, he does not please them, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ alike, neither when ‘doing well’ nor when ‘doing badly’. What this ‘doing’ entails is not made explicit, but l. 370 refers to imitation and *sophia*, thus conjuring up poetic activity: many may blame him (μωμεῦνται δέ με πολλοί, l. 369) but no one can imitate him, if they are ‘unwise’/‘unskilled’ (μιμεῖσθαι δ’ οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀσόφων δύναται, l. 370).²⁴ If, in light of these parallels, we were to hypothesise that l. 287 entails such a reference to the speaker’s poetic activity,²⁵ the politi-

what is bad’ (see van Groningen 1966, 116), but in this context it has the first, pejorative meaning. For representations of excessive ψόγος in Pindar and Bacchylides, see Nagy 1999, 225-6, and 222-5 for the function of ψόγος in archaic poetry in general.

21 As stated (see fn. 10), Young 1971², 20 considered Thgn. 283-8 as one elegy. In fact, the charge of ‘malignant censorship/faultfinding’ (l. 287) does not easily follow from that of untrustworthiness (ll. 283-6), while the latter does not help us gloss the ‘difficult tastes’ of the citizens.

22 There is in fact no agreement on the division of Thgn. 19-38 (which include the ‘seal’ lines, with the word σφρηγίς at Thgn. 19); see Condello 2009-10, 68 fn. 11, Cole-santi 2011, 242.

23 On Thgn. 24 see van Groningen 1966, 21: «l’antithèse avec le vers précédent n’implique pas nécessairement que les Mégariens contestent le talent poétique de l’auteur. Ce qui leur déplait peut être le contenu de ses œuvres, maximes morales ou convictions politiques».

24 In Thgn. 370 we might even sense an echo of Theognis’ seal (ll. 19-21), where ‘skilled’ (σοφισομένω, l. 19) is said of the speaker himself, and where it is said that his words will not go unnoticed when stolen and changed for the worse (ll. 20-1). For the debated semantics of σοφισομένω ... ἐμοί, see Condello 2009-10, 71-7. As for the unity of Thgn. 367-70, which I consider one poem, contrast Colesanti 2001, 470-1, according to whom they are capping couplets. Note that already West 1989², 188 recognised the affinity between Thgn. 287 and 367-8, as he suggested that ‘287-92 praecessit sententia qualis est 367-8’.

25 While here I attempt to ‘explain Theognis from Theognis’, I am not implying that these elegies must have been authored by one and the same individual. The pressure to demonstrate one’s fit within the sympotic group informed the performance. Hence, the preoccupation of being aesthetically pleasing and thematically relevant (within one’s

cal and moral picture painted in ll. 289-92 would take its cue from a frustrated statement about the cool reception of the speaker's verses, dependent on changes in the social fabric of the city.

This is, however, only a speculative scenario, and while it would enrich the logical progression of the elegy, complicating the involvement of the speaker *qua* poetic creator, it does not change the terms of the description at Thgn. 289-92. Ultimately, the analysis of Thgn. 53-60 and 289-92 was meant to highlight the thematic and stylistic features of these (selected) archaic descriptions of change.²⁶ In this way, we have established a frame of reference against which we can now compare later literary sources that account for change as a socio-cultural process with inevitable moral consequences.

3 Pherecrates

Pherecrates fr. 155 K.-A., from the play *Chiron*, is probably the most famous instance of comic critique of the late fifth-century 'New Music revolution' in Greek *melos*.²⁷ In the fragment, the personification of music tells the allegory of justice about the sexual abuses she suffered at the hands of well-known dithyrambists. Such abuses stand allegorically for the musical innovations introduced by these musicians. To describe the violence she endured, Music uses musical jargon,²⁸ as well as imagery with socio-political and moral undertones. In particular, Music repeatedly states that she has been 'bent', i.e. modulated, to the excess. As LeVen wrote, such modulations, characteristic of New Music, oppose 'the "straight" moral and ethical standard associated with the good citizen' and typically expressed in archaic texts such as Thgn. 535-6 (keeping one's head 'straight' is distinctive of free men) and Sol. fr. 4.36 W.² (εὐνομίη,

hetaireia, but possibly also in others) is not out of place in sympotic elegy and might well have been a recurring motif. More generally, the concern about 'pleasing everybody' (not necessarily aesthetically/poetically) is a *topos* that recurs abundantly outside Theognis as well, cf. Condello 2009-10, 94-5.

26 There are other similar instances in the Theognidean corpus, cf. e.g. Thgn. 39-52, 635-6, 647-8, 667-82.

27 In antiquity, the authorship of the play was debated (cf. Ath. 8.364a, 9.368a-b, 388f, 14.653e-f, *schol. ad Aristoph. Ran.* 1308b ed. Chantry 1999). Instead, several modern scholars (whom I follow here) recognise Pherecrates' authorship, and date the play to the 410s; for full references see Franchini 2020, 240-1. In general, for the vast bibliography on Pherecr. fr. 155, see Napolitano in Franchini 2020, 246. On the critique of, and the 'myths' about, New Music, see LeVen 2014, 71-86; on the phrase 'New Music', see also Csapo 1999-2000, 401.

28 See the pioneering study of Restani 1983; see LeVen 2014, 75-6.

‘good order’, straightens ‘crooked judgements’).²⁹ This is in keeping with the ‘*ēthos* theories’ of music, and with the ensuing conservative view that musical innovations bring about changes for the worse in the social and political order.³⁰

LeVen has lingered on ‘the vocabulary of the *kaloskagathos*’ used in Pherecrates’ description of the dithyrambist Timotheus. In particular, she has pointed at the adverbial αἴσχιστα (Pherecr. fr. 155.20) and the adjective ἐκτραπέλους (l. 23), noticing the Theognidean parallel for the latter (Thgn. 290, see section 1).³¹ This is Pherecrates’ passage on Timotheus:

Pherecr. fr. 155.19-25 K.-A.

(Μουσική) ὁ δὲ Τιμόθεός μ', ὦ φιλάτη, κατορώρυχε
καὶ διακέκναικ' αἴσχιστα. (Δικαιοσύνη) ποῖος οὐτοσί 20
<ὁ> Τιμόθεος; (Μουσική) Μιλήσιός τις πυρρίας,
κακά μοι παρέσχεν οὔτος, ἅπαντας οὖς λέγω
παρελήλυθεν, ἄγων ἐκτραπέλους μυρμηκιάς.
κἂν ἐντύχη πού μοι βαδιζούσῃ μόνη,
ἀπέδυσσε κἀνέλυσε χορδαῖς δώδεκα. 25

(Music) Then, my dearest, Timotheus has buried me,
and has worn me out in the most shameful way. (Justice) Who would
this Timotheus be? (Music) A redhead from Miletus,
he caused me troubles: he has outdone all those I mention
by taking me to perverted ant-paths.
And if he came across me when I was walking alone,
he stripped (my robes) off and undid me with twelve strings.

²⁹ The quote is from LeVen 2014, 78, where cf. fn. 23 for the archaic parallels. On the critique of New Music’s modulations as opposed to ὀρθότης, musical ‘straightness’, see also Hadjimichael 2019, esp. 290-2.

³⁰ For ‘*ēthos* theories’ of music (according to which music can affect one’s feelings and attitudes), see West 1992, 246-53; for the 5th c. BCE, see also Wallace (2015, 23-32), with an emphasis on the musical theorist Damon. To Damon is also attributed the idea that changes in music lead to political change, see Pl. *R.* 424c εἶδος γὰρ καινὸν μουσικῆς μεταβάλλειν εὐλαβητέον ὡς ἐν ὄλῳ κινδυνεύοντα· οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ κινουῦνται μουσικῆς τρόποι ἄνευ πολιτικῶν νόμων τῶν μεγίστων, ὡς φησὶ τε Δάμων καὶ ἐγὼ πείθομαι (‘for a change to a new type of music is something to beware of as altogether dangerous. For styles of music are never changed without changing the most fundamental rules of the city, as Damon says and I am convinced’, transl. Wallace 2015, 25; Greek text from the edition of Slings 2003), with Csapo 2004, 235-6, Wallace 2004, 263-4 and 2015, 73-5. For the conservative critique to musical innovations, see below section 5, with fn. 63.

³¹ LeVen 2014, 78.

We can elaborate further on the elements that the comic fragment shares with Thgn. 289-92. First, Music refers to her ‘troubles’ (κακά) several times (Pherecr. fr. 155.3, 7, 22). Each new musician did something nastier to her, yet none of their abuses equated the ‘present troubles’ (τὰ νῦν κακά, l. 7), which, we eventually understand, are owed to Timotheus’ unprecedented brutality. Such dismissals of the earlier mistreatments only highlight the climactic progression of violence; still, Music does establish a contrast between the ruinous ‘now’ and the earlier stages of her abuse. Most importantly, however, Music implies that all the troubles she incurred are exceptional, and says that they were initiated by the dithyrambist Melanippides (l. 3). They are thus novelties, a ‘changed state’. Secondly, Music, by using perfects, repeatedly states that most of her abusers have caused her permanent ruin (<μ> ... ἀπολώλεχ’ οὔτως, ll. 8-10; ὄλην διέφθορεν, l. 15; μ’ ... κατορώρυχε | καὶ διακέκναικ’ αἰσχιστα, ll. 19-20). However common exclamations expressing one’s ruin (already incurred, or imminent) are in drama, we are here reminded of the Theognidean disparaged affirmation that αἰδῶς μὲν γὰρ ὄλωλεν (Thgn. 291): Music’s ruin, after all, is the consequence of the lack of αἰδῶς of all the dithyrambists she cites. Finally, musical subversion is described with a reference to the confusion of basic opposite concepts, ‘right’ and ‘left’, now mixed up and indistinguishable (l. 12).

The excess and immorality of the treatments reserved to Music are expressed by means of some compound adjectives, which are technical musical terms. The first is ἐξαρμόνιος, ‘discordant’ (ἐξαρμονίους καμπάς, l. 9); it occurs a second time in accumulation with ὑπερβολαῖος, ‘additional’, ‘higher’, and ἀνοσίος, ‘impious’ (ἐξαρμονίους ὑπερβολαίους τ’ ἀνοσίους, l. 26), and they are all referred to a lost noun (possibly καμπαί again).³² Another such adjective is ἐκτράπελος: Music says that Timotheus has led her off the beaten track, onto ‘diverted ant-paths’ (ἐκτραπέλους μυρμηκιάς, l. 23), thus alluding to the complex modulations that are typical of New Music and pervert traditional tunes.³³ It is a curious coincidence that the adjective ἐκτράπελος, which in Thgn. 290 qualifies the noun νόμοι, ‘customs’, ‘standards’, is used by Pherecrates to designate the musical acrobatics of Timotheus – who was famous for his citharodic νόμοι, ‘nomes’, and for how they deviated from accepted musical (and moral) standards.³⁴ Such deviation is described in the pseudo-Plutar-

³² Napolitano in Franchini 2020, 264-72, 292-3.

³³ See Restani 1983, 178-9; LeVen 2014, 101-5; Napolitano in Franchini 2020, 284-8.

³⁴ The adjective is found again enshrined in a comic compound in Aristoph. *Nub.* 1003 (τριβουλευκτραπέλ, ‘pungent perverted arguments’; see below section 4, with fn. 50). In all three occurrences, the term is used to describe polemically some cultural and intellectual innovations, qualifying them as anomalous and beyond proper (cf. *schol. ad* Aristoph. *Nub.* 1003b-c, ed. Holwerda 1977). There are no other extant pre-Hellenistic

chean *On Music* precisely by using a denominative verb from νόμος: Timotheus' is said to compose his nomos 'going against the laws (παρανομῶν) of ancient music'.³⁵ The occurrence of ἐκτράπελος in Pherecrates looks much more like a lexical coincidence than a deliberate allusion to Theognis. Still, added to the parallels already identified, this lexical detail shows us rather compellingly that a parallel reading with Thgn. 287-92 can enrich our understanding of Pherecr. fr. 155 - if we take both the elegy and the comic fragment as two instances of poetic discourse on social and moral change. We can add a layer to Music's description, expanding its implications: we can perceive in the comic text a foreboding of the moral consequences of the new democratic musical trends for the entire civic community - and perhaps for all humankind (see the 'global' climax at Thgn. 291-2).³⁶ In a conservative, traditional perspective, as Music is being destroyed, so is αἰδώς (cf. Thgn. 291).

It is useful to refer here to another fragment of the *Chiron*, Pherecr. fr. 162 K.-A., in which corrupt morals are correlated with the clever subversion of traditional *paideia*. In the fragment, at ll. 11-12, we find an unattributed quotation of two lines later found in the *Theognidea*. Inhospitable sympotic behaviours are indeed justified by quoting Thgn. 467 and part of 469 - aptly decontextualised. In fact, in the context of the elegy from which they are extracted, these lines would chastise the behaviour of the man who, in the fragment, quotes them.³⁷ He thus deftly abridges the elegiacs to serve his rhetorical ends. The fragment samples how archaic poetry, a medium of generally acknowledged ethics, can be used to endorse the very subversion

occurrences. Cf. however Pind. *Pyth.* 4.105 ἐντράπελον with Heyne's alternative reading ἐκτράπελον (cf. *schol. ad Pind. Pyth.* 4.186a, ed. Drachmann 1910; see the apparatus of Snell, Maehler 1987⁹); for the cognate compound ἐντράπελος cf. Thgn. 400, and Pind. *Pyth.* 1.92 in a part of the manuscript tradition.

35 [Plu.] *De Mus.* 1132d-e τοὺς γοῦν πρώτους νόμους ἐν ἔπαισι διαμινγύων διθυραμβικὴν λέξιν ἦδεν, ὅπως μὴ εὐθύς φανῆ παρανομῶν εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν μουσικὴν ('for [Timotheus] sang the beginning of his nomos in hexameters while mixing dithyrambic style, so that it did not immediately show that he was acting against the laws of ancient music'; translation adapted from LeVen 2014, 90). In Plato's *Laws* we will find the noun παρανομία (see below, § 5).

36 See Hadjimichael 2019 for how New Music innovations were conceived as a threat to the community.

37 In Pherecr. fr. 162 it is said that, when the host of a symposium is not pleased with one of his friends showing up, he drives the guest away by looking at him with hostility; the unwanted friend decides to leave, and when another guest tries to hold him, the host flaunts a liberal disposition by quoting Thgn. 467 and part of 469 (at Pherecr. fr. 162.11-12): μηδένα μήτ' ἀέκοντα μένειν κατέρυκε παρ' ἡμῖν | μήθ' εὔδοντ' ἐπέγειρε, Σιμωνίδῃ ('and do not hold with us anyone who is unwilling to stay, and do not, Simonides, wake up the one who sleeps'). The pentameter that is conveniently skipped, Thgn. 468, actually reads μηδε θύραζε κέλευ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντ' ἰέναι ('and do not order out one who does not want to go'). For a full analysis of Pherecr. fr. 162, see Franchini 2020, 308-17, De Martin 2022.

of traditional socio-moral standards. It is finally worth noticing that in Pherecr. fr. 162 this state of corruption (depicted at ll. 4-13) is presented as being in contrast with traditional moral standards, which are sampled at ll. 1-3. The opening of l. 4 (ἡμῶν δ' ἦν τινά τις) underlines such fracture and frames the subversion described in the lines that follow as the contemporary reality of the speaker.

Ultimately, Pherecr. fr. 155 and 162 show that the play *Chiron* thematised some cultural upturning in the climate of the late fifth-century intellectual ferment, namely developments in music, but also in rhetorical practices, and in the common perception of traditional *paideia*.³⁸ What is more, both fragments hint at the moral consequences of such innovations. In particular, the parallel reading with Theognis has corroborated our understanding of the archaic socio-political resonances of the imagery and moral vocabulary used in Pherecr. fr. 155. Such resonances pinpoint the traditional horizon against which at least a part of the audience evaluated the illustrated developments in musical practice and aesthetics, and how they conceived of their ruinous effects on morals.

4 Aristophanes

We have seen how a parallel reading with Theognis can amplify our insights into Pherecrates' representation of current developments in musical trends. There is yet another fifth-century comic passage that calls for a comparison with Theognis: it is the tirade of Better Discourse (Κρείττων Λόγος) in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (Aristoph. *Nub.* 889-1023). Better Discourse tries to demonstrate his superiority in the face of his opponent Worse Discourse (Ἥττων Λόγος) to win over young Pheidippides as a pupil. In the assessment of Better Discourse, changes in culture and rhetoric, brought about by the 'new' education of Worse Discourse, come together with a moral upturning.³⁹ Better Discourse openly condemns such developments while

38 According to Stamatopoulou 2017, 191-2, Pherecr. fr. 156 K.-A. (also from the *Chiron*) deals with the theme of education too, and challenges traditional instruction and its value. In fact, we do not know what are the 'affairs' (πράγματα), Pherecr. fr. 156.5) that the speaker discusses, and whether they are related to educational practices.

39 'Old' and 'new' education are the focus of the debate, cf. the chorus at Aristoph. *Nub.* 935-7b ἀλλ' ἐπίδειξαι | σύ τε τοὺς προτέρους ἄτ' ἐδίδασκες, | σύ τε τὴν καινὴν | παιδευσιν ('but you, show us what you taught to the previous generations, and you, explain the new education'). Mentions of the ἀρχαία παιδεία, in the spirit of which the generation that fought at Marathon was brought up, are also at Aristoph. *Nub.* 961 and 985-6. For the handling of the 'new' in Aristophanes (esp. in *Clouds*), and in general for Athens' 'innovationist turn', see D'Angour 2011, 211-24.

defending traditional ethical, aesthetic and intellectual standards.⁴⁰ Most scholars agree that Better Discourse and Worse Discourse are the personifications of different ways of arguing and of two different cultural climates.⁴¹ Interestingly, Casanova has instead argued that the agon of the Discourses (Aristoph. *Nub.* 889-1112) is staged by two members of the Thinkery: far from being an objective description of the old *paideia*, Better Discourse's nostalgic speech would be a distorting mockery, strategically exaggerated so that the new rhetoric, practised in the Thinkery, can easily prevail over it.⁴² I aim to show that, whether deliberately parodic or not, the tirade of Better Discourse deploys stylistic devices and thematic motifs that make this text a crucial chain link in the tradition of the discourse on change between Theognis and Plato.

In the very names of the Discourses we can sense an echo of the Theognidean descriptions of capsizing morals and changing fortunes (cf. Thgn. 53-60). The names disclose the complexity of the ideological systems embodied by the Discourses, while ironically problematising their appeal and effectivity, as well as moral relativism. The adjective κρείττων has a moral nuance to it, but also expresses dominance and authority.⁴³ Thus, Better Discourse should be morally and argumentatively better, at least from the viewpoint of the traditional system of values. Similarly, ἥττων is the comparative of κακός, but also of μικρός ('small') and ὀλίγος ('small', 'weak').⁴⁴ In the same world-view, therefore, Worse Discourse is morally worse and should be the weaker one in disputes. Yet, he has the upper hand: he is said to overturn Better Discourse (ἀνατρέπει, Aristoph. *Nub.* 884) and ultimately wins the agon and is chosen as the teacher of Pheidippides (ll. 1105-12). 'Worse/weaker discourse' is thus only a denomination sticking from the past, but reality has now changed: he is the one who is truly κρείττων. As a matter of fact, Worse Discourse's inglorious past is recalled by Better Discourse: before his current success, Worse Discourse was only a beggar (ll. 921-4) – a remark that reminds us of the formerly uncivilised existence of the new powerful as evoked in Thgn. 54-6.

40 Better Discourse is characterised as an old man (see the insulting apostrophes pronounced by Worse Discourse at Aristoph. *Nub.* 908, 915, 929, 984, 1070).

41 See esp. Newiger 1957, 134-55. A partial critical survey of scholarly views on the agon is in Casanova 2007, 83-6. For rhetorical analyses of the speeches, and especially of the strategies applied by Worse Discourse, see e.g. Nieddu 2000; Mirto 2020; Panebianco 2020. Aristophanes' debts to earlier rhetorical texts, especially to Prodicus' allegory of Virtue and Vice, have also been highlighted, see e.g. Newiger 1957, 141-3; Papageorgiou 2004.

42 Casanova 2007.

43 For κρείσσων denoting moral or political prevalence and dominance, see Benveniste 1969, 80-1.

44 Cf. LSJ⁹ s.v. "ἥσσων". Cf. also Dover 1968, lvii-lviii.

The abstract concepts of justice (δίκη) and sense of shame (αἰδώς), central to the description of corruption in Thgn. 291-2, are mentioned also in *Clouds*, where they appear to be disavowed by Worse Discourse and the education he upholds. Worse Discourse's first rhetorical provocation is that 'Justice does not exist' (l. 902). As for αἰδώς, Better Discourse says that, by following him, young Pheidippides will learn to 'be ashamed of what is shameful' (τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι, l. 992), so as not to defile the 'statue of Αἰδώς' (l. 995).⁴⁵ He thus implies that, by contrast, the followers of the new education typically ignore the value of αἰδώς. The adjective αἰσχρός is a keyword in the passage; cf. in particular ll. 1020-1, καὶ σ' ἀναπέσει τὸ μὲν αἰσχρὸν ἅπαν | καλὸν ἡγεῖσθαι, τὸ καλὸν δ' αἰσχρὸν ('and he will persuade you to regard every shameful act as good, and what is good as shameful').⁴⁶ Worse Discourse's moral relativism fuels his persuasive ability, which can invert one's conceptions of good and bad. This statement, which concludes the tirade of Better Discourse, is very much evocative of the chiasmus of opposites in Thgn. 289.

Aristoph. *Nub.* 990-9 is worth a close stylistic examination. It opens with Better Discourse exhorting Pheidippides to choose him over Worse Discourse:

Aristoph. *Nub.* 990-9

πρὸς ταῦτ', ὦ μειράκιον, θαρρῶν ἐμὲ τὸν κρείττω λόγον αἰροῦ. 990
κάπιστήσει μισεῖν ἀγορὰν καὶ βαλανείων ἀπέχεσθαι,
καὶ τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι κἂν σκώπητι τίς σε φλέγεσθαι,
καὶ τῶν θάκων τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ὑπανίστασθαι προσιοῦσιν,
καὶ μὴ περὶ τοὺς σαυτοῦ γονέας σκαιουργεῖν, ἄλλο τε μηδὲν 995
αἰσχρὸν ποιεῖν ὅτι τῆς Αἰδοῦς μέλλεις τᾶγα μ' ἀναπλήσειν.⁴⁷
μηδ' εἰς ὄρχηστρίδος εἰσάττειν, ἵνα μὴ πρὸς ταῦτα κεχηνῶς
μήλω βληθεῖς ὑπὸ πορνιδίου τῆς εὐκλείας ἀποθραυσθῆς,
μηδ' ἀντειπεῖν τῷ πατρὶ μηδὲν μηδ' Ἰαπετὸν καλέσαντα
μνησικακῆσαι τὴν ἡλικίαν ἐξ ἧς ἐνεοττοτροφήθης.

⁴⁵ For the old-fashion nuance carried by the term αἰδώς in Aristophanes, see Cairns 1993, 301 fn. 131. I quote *Clouds* from Dover 1968, except where differently noted.

⁴⁶ As, in fact, Worse Discourse tries to do later on: Aristoph. *Nub.* 1078 νόμιζε μηδὲν αἰσχρὸν ('do not regard anything as shameful').

⁴⁷ The reading ἀναπλήσειν, corrupt according to Dover 1968, 219-20, is accepted by Olson 2021, 188.

Therefore, young man, without fear, choose me, the better
[argument.
You will learn to hate the marketplace and keep away from the
[bathhouses,
and to be ashamed of what is shameful and to inflame if one
[mocks you,
and to rise up from the chairs for the elders when they approach,
and not to behave amiss towards your parents, and to do
[nothing else shameful
by which you are likely to defile the statue of Aidos;
and not to rush to a dancing girl, so that, as a consequence,
struck with an apple by a little prostitute while you stand all
agape, you do not lose your good name;
and not to talk back to your father at all, and not to call him
[Iapetos
and throw back at him his age – years since which you were
[reared like a nestling.

Ll. 991-9 consist in a series of infinitives, all depending on the opening $\kappa\alpha\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota$ (l. 991) and listing what Pheidippides would learn from Better Discourse. Ll. 991-3 are self-contained, whilst 994, 996 and 998 continue into the following one (at the end of which there is always a syntactical pause). The paratactic connectors $\kappa\alpha\iota$ and $\mu\eta\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ are repeated several times; in particular, we note the anaphora of $\kappa\alpha\iota$ at ll. 992, 993 and 994 and of $\mu\eta\delta'$ at ll. 996 and 998.⁴⁸

This syntactical accumulation of short statements recalls the prescriptive style of Hes. *Op.* 695-764, a section made up almost exclusively of negative instructions to Perses in the format $\mu\eta\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ +infinitive, sometimes complemented by explications and symmetrical positive exhortations. The same style is found in the *Theognidea*, for instance in Thgn. 467-72, which consist in a succession of four instructions to a certain Simonides;⁴⁹ each command begins with the conjunction $\mu\eta\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ or the pronoun $\mu\eta\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, and a gnomic line, Thgn. 472, seals the series by stating the general truth that motivates the prescriptions.

In *Clouds*, the authoritative posture assumed by Better Discourse furthers the similarities with these archaic texts. After a brief intervention of Worse Discourse (ll. 1000-1), Better Discourse continues his anticipation of Pheidippides' future (ll. 1002-8). Here we find again the adjective $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\rho\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, merged with the noun $\tau\rho\acute{\iota}\beta\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ (designating

⁴⁸ Besides the anaphors, there are other phonetic contributions to the accumulation effect: note how the three $\kappa\alpha\iota$ at the beginning of ll. 992-4 echo the first syllable of l. 991; instead, the letters μ and η occur also in the opening syllables of ll. 997 and 999.

⁴⁹ The two lines quoted in Pherecr. fr. 162 (Thgn. 467+469 part., see above section 3) come from this section.

different prickly plants) in the inventive compound *τριβολεκτράπελα*. These are the ‘pungent perverted arguments’ that people now babble in the *agora*, which Pheidippides will instead avoid.⁵⁰ Better Discourse then sums up the physical benefits that Pheidippides will gain (ll. 1011-14), introducing this summary with the protasis ‘if you do these things that I point out, and think about them...’ (ἴν ταῦτα ποιῆς ἄγὼ φράζω | καὶ πρὸς τούτοις προσέχης τὸν νοῦν, ll. 1009-10). Better Discourse thus foregrounds himself in the role of wise mediator of moral teachings, while casting Pheidippides in the position of listener and underlining his young age and inexperience (cf. ὦ μειράκιον, ll. 990, 1000). Better Discourse thus assumes the authoritative posture that is typical of the speaker in didactic and paraenetic poetry, and which frames the ‘speaker-addressee’ dynamics as a relationship of power.⁵¹ Some notable archaic antecedents for this fashioning of the persona are found indeed in Hesiod and Theognis.⁵²

Overall, Aristoph. *Nub.* 991-1014 appear to engage with the syntactical and pragmatic features that define the paraenetic style typically occurring in *Works and Days* and in the *Theognidea*. This is all the more important as we have reasons to believe that Hesiod and Theognis had a prominent position in Athens as mediators of commonly acknowledged morals, and more generally as representatives of traditional *paideia*.⁵³ In fact, in Aristoph. *Nub.* 991-1014 we do not find a series of prescriptions, rather a description of what will happen if Pheidippides chooses Better Discourse. Still, the sec-

50 Aristoph. *Nub.* 1003 οὐ στωμύλλων κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν τριβολεκτράπελ, οἷαπερ οἱ νῦν (‘without babbling pungent, perverted arguments, as people do today’). From the compound it transpires that such arguments are considered pernicky *minutiae* (see Taillardat 1965, 295). Cf. also *schol. ad Aristoph. Nub.* 1003b-c; the scholia glosses *τριβολεκτράπελα* as ὀπαιδευτα and ἀνόμαλα (*schol. ad Aristoph. Nub.* 1003b, ed. Holwerda 1977). They also define *ἐκτράπελα* as ‘undignified’ arguments, or ‘changed beyond proper’ (*schol. ad Aristoph. Nub.* 1003c *τριβολεκτράπελ* δίκην *τριβόλων* κεντούντα, πικρά· καὶ ἐκτράπελα, ἄσμενα ἦτοι ἕξω τοῦ δέοντος τετραμμένα, ed. Holwerda 1977). See also fn. 34 above.

51 See O’Rourke 2019.

52 Cf. e.g. Hes. *Op.* 10 ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρση ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην (‘I will proclaim truth to Perses’), 27 ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα τεῶ ἐνικάτθεο θυμῷ (‘Perses, store this up in your spirit’), 367 (similarly 403, 687); Thgn. 99-100 σὺ δέ μοι φίλε ταῦτ’ ἐνὶ θυμῷ | φράξω, καὶ ποτὲ μου μνήσεται ἔξοπίσω (‘please, consider these things in your heart, my friend, and some day in the future you will remember me’), 1049-50 σοὶ δ’ ἐγὼ οἷά τε παιδι πατὴρ ὑποθήσομαι αὐτὸς | ἐσθλά· σὺ δ’ ἐν θυμῷ καὶ φρεσὶ ταῦτα βάλει (‘to you I shall give good advice myself, as a father to a son; put this in your heart and mind’); cf. also Thgn. 27, 31.

53 Cf. e.g. Isoc. 2.43 (Hesiod, Theognis and Phocylides are mentioned as authors of useful poetry and thus as ‘the best counsellors for human conduct’, ἀρίστους ... συμβούλους τῷ βίῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων), Pl. *R.* 377c-d (Hesiod and Homer are cited as sources of the stories that mothers and nurses tell to children), and Aeschin. 3.134-5 (where the speaker refers to the habit of committing to memory poetic *gnomai* during one’s childhood, and then recites Hes. *Op.* 240-3 and 246-7). For Theognis as a staple reference in the Socratic circles, see De Martin 2020, 112-23; see also Stella 2021.

tion samples the essence of ancient education: the values it upholds, but also the form in which they were passed on and the traditional intellectual relation (advisor-pupil) in which the communication ought to be framed.

In section 3, we have read Pherecr. fr. 155 together with Theognis to consider what the allegorised musical innovations might imply in the landscape of the city. By contrast, in Aristophanes' *Clouds* the socio-cultural revolution clearly appears to unfold against the backdrop of city politics (cf. ll. 926-8). In this case, the parallel reading with Theognis is useful to shed further light on the traditional tinge of Better Discourse's tirade. First, change is discussed with some means found already in Theognis: besides referring to the decadence of δίκη and αἰδώς, Aristophanes resorts to other thematical and rhetorical *topoi*, such as the use of antonyms in chiasmic disposition and the reference to the contemptible earlier existence of the speaker's opponent. Secondly, Better Discourse deploys the archaic paraenetic style too, to mediate the traditional essence of his teachings and to argue that moral values should be imparted in the frame of a conventional didactic relationship. Ultimately, Theognis' elegies are significant parallels for this passage not only as early instances of the discourse on change, but also as an epitome of traditional *paideia*. By reading Aristoph. *Nub.* 889-1023 against them, we realise that traditional *paideia* is here inspiring stylistically and rhetorically its own defence, and the critique of the novelties brought forth by cultural change.

What if, with Casanova, one would want to interpret Better Discourse's speech as a parody of senile nostalgia, aimed at mocking the traditional world-view? In such a case, the engagement with the discourse on change would be all the more striking as a deliberate rhetorical device that makes Better Discourse's conservatism hyperbolically antiquated.

5 Plato

The allegorical vignette in Pherecr. fr. 155 revolves around changes in musical practice and aesthetics. A reference to the new musical trends is found also in *Clouds*, as Better Discourse criticises the complex modulations of New Music contrasting them with 'the harmony that the fathers handed over' (cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 968-72).⁵⁴ The new musical aesthetics feature also in the third book of Plato's *Laws* – not as one of many present-day degenerations, but as the primary cause

⁵⁴ Better Discourse mentions the dithyrambist Phrynīs, named also at Pherecr. fr. 155.14 (see Napolitano in Franchini 2020, 274-81).

of the current socio-political corruption (Pl. *Lg.* 700a-701c). I shall conclude my survey by showing how this well-known passage pulls together several tropes encountered in the sources analysed so far.

In the *Laws*, Plato elaborates on the conviction, expressed already in the *Republic*, that innovations in music bring about social and political change.⁵⁵ Once again, the key concept of ‘laws’ or ‘standards’ and that of the ‘reverence’ (αἰδώς) due to them are central to the passage. According to the Athenian, the people of Athens formerly lived in a state of total submission to the ancient νόμοι, which they feared and revered (Pl. *Lg.* 699c). The Athenian focuses especially on the laws of music (700a). Famously, he lists the ancient genres of song (700a-b), stressing that they were neatly categorised and could not be mixed up (700b-c).⁵⁶ Guarding these standards were neither the musicians nor the crowd of spectators, but ‘those in control of education’ (τοῖς μὲν γεγονόσι περὶ παιδείουσιν, 700c).⁵⁷ The subversion started when both musical and social categories were challenged. As time passed, poets began ‘mixing everything into everything’ (πάντα εἰς πάντα συνάγοντες, 700d). There is no conceptual opposition nor a chiasmus in this expression, yet it recalls the Theognidean description of mixed-up moral viewpoints (vῦν δὲ τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κακὰ γίνεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν, Thgn. 289), especially in light of what follows: the poets who ‘mix’ are said to become leaders in ‘the unmusical transgression of laws’ (ἄρχοντες μὲν τῆς ἀμούσου παρανομίας, 700d), whereas in Theognis the *kakoi* are said to ‘lead in subverted customs’ (ἡγέονται δ’ ἐκτραπέλοισι νόμοις, Thgn. 290).⁵⁸

The poets are said to have acted in this way because they were ignorant of the standards of music: cf. esp. 700d ἀγνώμονες δὲ περὶ τὸ δίκαιον τῆς Μούσης καὶ τὸ νόμιμον (‘unknowing of what was just and customary in Music’) and 700e μουσικῆς ἄκοντες ὑπ’ ἀνοίας καταψευδόμενοι ὡς ὀρθότητα μὲν οὐκ ἔχοι οὐδ’ ἠντιοῦν μουσική (‘unwittingly telling lies about music, because of their lack of sense, as if music had no standard of correctness’).⁵⁹ These formulations remind us of Theognis’ statement on the ignorance of the ‘uncivilised’ who later become prominent in the city (οἱ πρόσθ’ οὔτε δίκας ἤδεσαν οὔτε νόμους, Thgn. 54), but also of how Better Discourse refers to Worse Discourse’s pupils as ἀνόητοι (Aristoph. *Nub.* 898, 919).

⁵⁵ Cf. Pl. *R.* 424c, for which see above fn. 30. See Schöpsdau 1994, 506-8.

⁵⁶ See Schöpsdau 1994, 508-10.

⁵⁷ I quote the *Laws* from the edition of Burnet 1907.

⁵⁸ See Hadjimichael 2019 for the centrality of ‘musicopoetic’ παρανομία in critiques against the New Musicians.

⁵⁹ The confusion about music’s ‘correctness’/‘straightness’ recalls the ‘bending’ of Music at the hands of the new dithyrambists, as described in Pherecr. fr. 155, see above fn. 29.

The Athenian adds that, by transgressing the rules of music, however unwittingly, these poets instilled this same transgressive tendency (παρανομίαν εἰς τὴν μουσικὴν, 700e) into ‘the many’, who started supposing that they were able to judge music (700e). This assumption of knowledge extended to other spheres of human activity; it triggered a self-confidence that liberated men from the fear of laws, facilitating the establishment of the self-rule of the *demos*:⁶⁰

Pl. *Lg.* 700e-701b

ὅθεν δὴ τὰ (701a) θέατρα ἐξ ἀφώνων φωνήεντ’ ἐγένοντο, ὡς ἐπαύοντα ἐν μούσαις τό τε καλὸν καὶ μή, καὶ ἀντὶ ἀριστοκρατίας ἐν αὐτῇ θεατροκρατία τις πονηρὰ γέγονεν. εἰ γὰρ δὴ καὶ δημοκρατία ἐν αὐτῇ τις μόνον ἐγένετο ἑλευθέρων ἀνδρῶν, οὐδὲν ἂν πάνυ γε δεινὸν ἦν τὸ γεγονός· νῦν δὲ ἤρξε μὲν ἡμῖν ἐκ μουσικῆς ἢ πάντων εἰς πάντα σοφίας δόξα καὶ παρανομία, συνεφέσπετο δὲ ἑλευθερία. ἀφοβοὶ γὰρ ἐγίγνοντο ὡς εἰδότες, ἢ δὲ ἄδεια ἀναισχυντίαν ἐνέτεκεν· τὸ γὰρ τὴν τοῦ βελτίονος (701b) δόξαν μὴ φοβεῖσθαι διὰ θράσος, τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ ἐστὶν σχεδὸν ἢ πονηρὰ ἀναισχυντία, διὰ δὴ τινος ἑλευθερίας λίαν ἀποτετολμημένης.

Hence, theatregoers, from silent, became loud, as if they had knowledge of what was good in songs and what was not and, in place of the aristocratic rule, a base teatrocracy arose in music. For, if a democracy of free men had sprung up in this area only, certainly the fact would have been nothing terrible. Yet, as things stand, everybody’s conceit of expertise in everything and the tendency to transgress laws originated in music, and freedom followed suit. For they became fearless, as though they had knowledge, and lack of fear generated shamelessness. For not fearing the opinion of the better man because of one’s over-boldness, this very thing is, I dare say, base shamelessness, brought about by a liberty that is too presumptuous.

As the Athenian repeats, people only *think* they can tell the good from the bad in music, and in all other areas (cf. ὡς ἐπαύοντα and ὡς εἰδότες, 701a) while in truth they do not have such an understanding. This calls to mind Thgn. 60 (οὔτε κακῶν γνῶμας εἰδότες οὔτ’ ἀγαθῶν), since, as in Thgn. 53-60, cognition and intellectual disposition of the agents of change are included in the *Laws*’ critique of reality.

⁶⁰ For the clash of aristocracy and teatrocracy, the concept of a ‘democracy of free men’ (701a), and Plato’s critique of Athenian political history, see Schöpsdau 1994, 512-13, Folch 2015, 50-7.

In Pl. *Lg.* 701a-b, therefore, the assessment of the Athenian reaches a pinnacle, both in terms of the abstractness of the concepts cited, as well as of the scale of the described phenomenon. Aesthetic and intellectual conceit, extended to all spheres of life, translates into the transgression of laws (παρανομία), while lack of fear (ἄδεια) brings about shamelessness (ἀναισχυντία), audacity (θράσος) and excessive liberty. The passage parallels the climax at Thgn. 290-2 (ἡγγέονται δ' ἐκτραπέλοισι νόμοις· αἰδῶς μὲν γὰρ ὄλωλεν, ἀναιδείη δὲ καὶ ὕβρις | νικήσασα δίκην γῆν κατὰ πᾶσαν ἔχει), where we find similar concepts: the perversion of laws goes together with the destruction of decency and with the victory of shamelessness and arrogance over justice.⁶¹

The archaic imprint of the concepts and vocabulary deployed by the Athenian in his conservative critique is apparent. Like Theognis, the Athenian speaks bitterly of the demotion of the 'better' ones: 'not fearing the opinion of the better man' is an aspect of the excessive liberty of the *demos* (701a-b). It is interesting how the adjective βελτίων, besides its usual moral and social nuance, has here also an intellectual significance: opposite to the general populace, who only feign knowledge, are those who do know and are able to make aesthetic evaluations.⁶² They should be the authorities, in every aspect of life, like in the past they oversaw education and the administration of the laws of music.⁶³ Again, in the Athenian's discussion, the individual's intellectual dimension has a crucial role as a potential catalyst of moral transgression that would end up involving the entire civic community.

All in all, seen against the sources examined above, this passage of the *Laws* exhibits a sharp politicisation of the recurrent motifs of the discourse on change. It considers democracy as the result of almost inadvertent formal transgressions in the realm of music. The latter, as an essential component of Athenian *paideia*, is central to the definition of the citizen's self and thus of his moral and political

⁶¹ Pl. *Prt.* 322c-d (the final section of the myth of Prometheus) is another Platonic passage in which both αἰδῶς and δίκη are prominent: humans live in strife as they know no 'political art'; Zeus then distributes αἰδῶς and δίκη as principles of social and civic order, and establishes a νόμος according to which those who cannot partake in αἰδῶς and δίκη will be put to death 'as a plague for the city' (ὡς νόσον πόλεως, 322d); see Bonazzi 2012 and 2022.

⁶² See Folch 2015, 125, 131-6. For a full analysis of literary criticism in Plato's *Laws*, see Folch 2013 and 2015, 113-51.

⁶³ This passage of the *Laws* is only one example of the elitist critique of New Music. As Csapo puts it, 'musical theorists considered New Music a product of democratic mob culture and vulgar tastes', and 'the critics belonged to a conservative elite, which, deprived of political control, continued to pride itself on its cultural superiority' (Csapo 1999-2000, 404). See also Csapo 2004, 229-45; LeVen 2014, 78-81; Hadjimichael 2019, 287 with fn. 8 (with further bibliography).

disposition.⁶⁴ We saw how Theognis, while speaking of the ‘good’ and ‘bad ones’ swapping places in the social order, underlines that the moral categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, while ignored by the base, do exist. Aristophanes considers this moral dilemma against fifth-century new educational practices, in which moral categories are openly challenged by the new rhetoric. Pherecrates thematises the developments of *paideia* and, by deploying the language of ‘straightness’, hints at their consequences on morals. As if in a mission to deepen these takes, with his application of the discourse on change Plato’s Athenian explicitly establishes a link of causality between *paideia* as a factor of identity and the moral and socio-political order of the city, still highlighting the individual’s intellectual responsibility in the global picture.

6 Conclusions

To what extent is there a traditional intertext underlying the analysed instantiations of the critical ‘discourse on change’? Are they, instead, independent manifestations of a conservative annoyance with socio-cultural change? Answering by drawing neat lines is impossible – nor is it necessary: traditional interconnections and independence can be different facets of the intertextual relationships among these texts.⁶⁵

Theognis’ descriptions of change focus on developments in the social fabric of the city, and on the unstable power dynamics at play in the archaic polis. From my analysis, they emerge as passages that showcase particularly well various rhetorical, stylistic and thematic

⁶⁴ For the musical foundations of *paideia*, and especially for the centrality of *choreia*, cf. esp. Pl. *Lg.* 653a-654b, 672e, with Calame 2013; Kurke 2013; Prauscello 2014, 105-91. For further bibliography on music in the *Laws*, see Folch 2013, 559 fn. 9.

⁶⁵ Intertextuality (a concept first coined by Kristeva 1969, 143) as intended here is a broad spectrum of phenomena in which a text shows affinity (linguistic, stylistic, thematic) with one or more others. This affinity does not have to be deliberately sought by the author of the text in question, but it depends on the familiarity of authors and receivers with a textual system (which is not necessarily a literary system); see Fowler 1997, 13-17, Hinds 1998, esp. 17-51. Accordingly, I espouse Hinds’ concept of ‘allusion’, which is different from that of ‘intertextuality’, see Hinds 1998, 25: ‘an allusion is meaningful as an allusion only when the author knows exactly what it is that he is concealing and revealing’ (we can compare the distinction between ‘allusione’ and ‘reminiscentza’ in Pasquali 1968 [1942]). A different critical viewpoint in Classical scholarship sees intertextuality as a study of literary and intentional allusions and as an approach that facilitates philological critique; see esp. Bonanno 2018 and 1995, and also Edmunds 1995, 3-4, with the other studies collected in *Lexis*, 13 (1995). Contrast e.g. Conte 1986, 27-31. A common feature of the different approaches, however, is the acknowledgement of the receiver’s/reader’s role in the recognition of the intertextuality. For a helpful orientation see Baraz, van den Berg 2013, 1-3.

motifs that keep being deployed to speak of change critically – as is well documented in texts describing the cultural developments that started taking place in fifth-century Athens. Theognis thus allows us to root this way of speaking of change in archaic times. I do not exclude the possibility that the authors of our fifth and fourth-century sources knew the examined Theognidean instances of the discourse on change. For instance, the occurrence of the rare adjective ἐκτράπελος in Pherecrates and Aristophanes, in contexts that polemise against novelties, may temptingly suggest such a conclusion. However, while we cannot establish whether these are intentional allusions to the Theognidean text, all examined passages are still intertextually connected to it – not because they are ‘about it’, but because they all come together ‘in their conflict over shared issues and terms’.⁶⁶ Rather than interacting with each other, these literary products are on the same ideological plane and speak of a common problem in common terms – linguistically, stylistically, thematically.

However, bringing together these literary sources does not merely allow us readers to become aware of the collective means deployed to discuss change. A parallel analysis in light of these commonalities can add to our interpretations in a variety of ways, as I have tried to show in this article. In the case of Pherecrates, a parallel reading with Theognis allows us to spotlight the socio-moral undertones of the allegorical references to New Music, and especially to forebode the ethical consequences of this phenomenon for the community. The engagement with a traditional intertext can be deliberate as well, as is the case with Aristophanes. To deprecate moral decadence, Better Discourse resorts to the tropes of the conservative discourse on change. Interestingly, it backs them up with the paraenetic style of traditional *paideia*, which upholds precisely the morals whose decline is typically lamented in the discourse on change. An entire ideological system thus appears at stake; yet, in an entertaining and agonistic genre such as comedy, we can rarely be sure whether such handlings conceal a political leaning, and whether they were targeted at specific socio-political groups within the theatre audience. In Plato’s *Laws*, instead, the engagement with the discourse on change shows unequivocally its political colour. While putting the spotlight on changes in cultural experiences, the Athenian shows that they lead to the subversion of morals and social roles in the community, and highlights the moral and intellectual superiority of the now demoted ‘better’ ones.

66 Nicholson 2013, 15. See also the helpful concept of ‘textual collective’ as formulated by LeVen 2013, 32 (discussing imagery and witticism employed in *chreiai*): ‘studying the relationship between texts relying on the same *gnomē* or between characters using the same witticism would not tell us much about the mutual relationship of the two “texts” but does help us map individual passages’ connections to a textual collective’.

According to the linguistic model on which intertextuality is theorised, ‘all meaning, including poetic meaning, is achieved through an utterance’s relation to the history of utterances as a whole’.⁶⁷ This is exemplified in this article, where, inevitably, each of my readings is cumulatively informed by my previous observations: my considerations on Plato are necessarily influenced by my analysis of Theognis, Pherecrates and Aristophanes. Therefore, while adopting a text-oriented approach and searching for textual indicators of the engagement with the traditional discourse on change, this paper recognises at the same time the implication of the reader in the detection of the parallelisms.⁶⁸ The discourse of change emerges as a patterned way of speaking of reality, shaped by, and read in light of, the author’s or reader’s exposure to its instances, literary or non-literary.

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⁶⁷ Nicholson 2013, 10, building on Bakhtin 1986 and Briggs, Bauman 1992.

⁶⁸ For discussions of reader-oriented intertextual criticism à vis author-oriented criticism, see Hinds 1998, 17-51, Farrell 2005.

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