

The Gift and Society in Roman Asia: Orthodoxies and Heresies*

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The Problem of Euergetism

In the cities of Hellenistic and Roman Asia, private benefactors financed the festivals which entertained citizens and also paid for the baths, gymnasia, and stoas in which citizens bathed, exercised and gossiped. During famines, earthquakes and plagues, the benefactors distributed money or grain to citizens. In short, these private benefactors made key aspects of city-life in Asia possible. Indeed, historians have long regarded *euergetism*, or the private subsidization of public services and amenities, as one of the primary sources of the vitality and stability of Graeco-Roman city-life.¹

If historians have agreed that gift-giving was one of the primary sources of the vitality and stability of Graeco-Roman city-life, they have, however, seldom agreed about the questions of how and why these benefactors gave so much over so many centuries. Did these benefactors give their gifts as part of a Machiavelian strategy to keep the poorer citizens in place? Was euergetism a form of redistribution of wealth, designed primarily to make the vast and obvious differences in wealth within the Greek cities more acceptable? Was euergetism an attempt to de-politicize the masses in the Greek cities of Asia? Or did the benefactors give largely out of a sense of their own superiority — they gave simply because they could give.

An analysis of the scholarship on gift-giving in Asia during the Hellenistic and Roman periods reveals that contemporary ancient historians have usually employed one of three basic models to explain how and why euergetism devel-

* For Ra'anana Meridor, with good memories of our many conversations at Wolfson College Oxford.

¹ See, for instance, A.H.M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford 1940), 247f.

oped in Asia during those same periods.² In setting out these models I do not intend to suggest that the historians I am about to cite have misinterpreted the evidence. Nor am I claiming that there are not variations on each model or admixtures among the models. The point of my setting out these models is simply to identify and question some of the common assumptions about the practice of gift-giving in Hellenistic and Roman Asia which all the models seem to make. I intend to cite some evidence from the Roman province of Asia which suggests that the three basic models of euergetism are insufficient to explain the phenomenon completely, and I will venture to propose some new parameters of analysis which must be taken into account in order to understand gift-giving in Hellenistic and Roman Asia better.

Models of Euergetism

The first model ancient historians have generally used to explain gift-giving might be called the *philotimia* model. In this model, a benefactor, motivated by religious sentiment, regard for fellow citizens and the desire for posthumous prestige, bequeaths a relatively limited range of objects, usually money or income-bearing land, to a city or some sub-division of it, in exchange for the increased status or posthumous glory which the city could confer.³ This model is essentially utilitarian in its conception of social action, and, for our purposes, the key assumption of this model — encoded in historians' use of the Greek abstract noun *philotimia* to describe a whole variety of social acts — is that it was the benefactor who not only initiated the exchange but also determined the objects of the exchange and their symbolic value.

Scholars who have employed this model have usually under-emphasized the extent to which, as Mauss pointed out long ago,⁴ the city, or group of beneficiaries in such exchanges could impose obligations and values upon benefactors both through demands for certain kinds of services and amenities, as well as the act of receiving them. In few of the cases where this kind of model has been employed to describe euergetism in Asia or elsewhere (and this is probably still the dominant model) are there references to the *demoi*, or citizen assemblies, playing active roles in these gift-giving exchanges. For our purposes here, in this model, male benefactors alone usually have been assumed to be capable of creating such public benefactions.

² G.M. Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City* (London 1991), 29-30.

³ E.g., D. Johnson, "Munificence and Municipia: Bequests to Towns in Classical Roman Law", *JRS* 75 (1985), 105-25.

⁴ M. Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques", *Année* n.s. 1 (1925), 30-186; translated by I. Cunnison as *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York 1967).

In 1976 Paul Veyne challenged several of the assumptions of the utilitarian model of *euergetism* in his study of the subject,⁵ translated into English in 1990, in an abridgment under the title *Bread and Circuses*.⁶ Veyne produced an alternative model, which might be designated as the collective benefits model. Veyne's *euergetes* or benefactor was a man who helped his town or city out of his pocket, a patron of public life, who gave precisely because he felt that he was superior to the mass of people.⁷

What distinguished Veyne's model of *euergetism* from that of the utilitarian understanding, however, was not only his psychology of the *euergetes*, but also his conception both of the structure of public giving, and the reasons for the long-term success of the social phenomenon. According to Veyne, the *euergetes* provided collective benefits to all who both wanted and expected them, without discrimination.⁸ The betterment the *euergetes* brought was the same for everyone, whoever it was making the sacrifice to provide the benefits for the cities.⁹

The key assumption about the success of the institution is that the *euergetes*, or collective benefits, were undifferentiated within the cities; therefore, the benefactors did not give rise to potential divisions among the *demoi* which, within this model, were not just passive partners in an unequal exchange.

As for the institution itself, Veyne claimed that, although *euergetism* took on different forms in different contexts, the public giving of gifts by the wealthy for the sake of the poor was *the* common social phenomenon which linked together three distinct political systems in the ancient world: those of the Greek cities of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods, the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. Veyne thus has offered an interpretation of the Graeco-Roman world in terms of a definable entity, which he has simply called *le don*, the gift.

In 1985 Philippe Gauthier answered Veyne's reconstruction with a much more narrowly focused study of the Greek cities and their benefactors from the fourth through first centuries BC.¹⁰ Gauthier argued against Veyne (and others) that the title of *euergetes* was confined largely to foreigners during the Hellenistic period. These benefactors, therefore, had a very different relationship

⁵ P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque: Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris 1976).

⁶ P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses* (London 1990) translated by B. Pearce with an introduction by O. Murray. For some of the problems of the abridgment, see the review of F. Millar in the *TLS*, 23-29 March 1990, 329; most recently, the review of P. Garnsey, "The Generosity of Veyne", *JRS* 81 (1991), 164-68.

⁷ P. Veyne, 104 (above, n. 6).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ P. Gauthier, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs (IV^e-I^{er} siècle avant J.-C.)* (Paris 1985).

both to the cities and their beneficiaries, and while the number of honors and their recipients increased during the Hellenistic period, there was neither a decline in civic spirit nor a growing divorce between the cities and their leaders.

Professor Gauthier thus has analyzed the social phenomenon of euergetism largely from an institutional point of view. He has seen benefactions as part of a competition for institutionally rewarded titles and privileges, which he has conceptualized as a kind of civil service. In his conclusion Professor Gauthier argued that major changes in the institution took place in the transitional period between the fall of the Greek monarchies and the entry of Rome into the Greek East. Euergetism gradually lost its indigenous character as a kind of civil service and became a kind of system of government.

Common Assumptions

Although there are significant differences among these three models, what they share is, first, the unstated assumption that the Graeco-Roman practice of euergetism during the Hellenistic and Roman periods developed mainly in a state of cultural isolation. Second, these models assume that wealthy male benefactors largely created and sustained the institution. Third, these models take for granted that the social and legal basis of the institution was at once timocratic and oligarchic: wealthy benefactors more or less imposed their benefactions upon the citizens in the cities from above, with a minimum of consultation between the benefactors and the beneficiaries.

We can hardly overstate the importance of these assumptions about euergetism for understanding how the cities of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds actually worked. If the private subsidization of public services and amenities was one of the keys to the vitality of these cities, as many historians have argued, and wealthy male benefactors, operating originally in cultural isolation, were mainly responsible for imposing their benefactions upon the citizen bodies from above (to put the argument in its most radical form), then those same male benefactors can be seen as largely responsible for the flowering of Hellenistic and Roman city life. When they were no longer disposed to make such benefactions, classical pagan city life changed dramatically. But how valid are those assumptions about the practice of euergetism in Asia during the Roman period?

The Wider Mediterranean Context

My own previous research on a specific, if large example of euergetism from second-century AD Ephesos, the famous Salutaris foundation,¹¹ suggests that the phenomenon which has been largely attributed to Greek cities has Near Eastern parallels which may have influenced or existed side-by-side with classical

¹¹ *Op. cit.* (above, n. 2).

practice. For example, inscriptional evidence¹² indicates that some Jewish women in Syria dedicated sections of mosaics in synagogues during the later Roman Empire in terms which Tessa Rajak, although critical of the idea that the inscriptions should be taken to mean that in the Diaspora there were forms of Judaism which allowed women an active role in the life of the synagogue, nevertheless concedes show a parallelism between the honorands of the synagogue inscriptions and the larger world, where holders of municipal office were regularly honored with inscriptions.¹³

Furthermore, at Aphrodisias (and other cities in Asia Minor), there is evidence of Jews and Greeks living side-by-side, practicing their own versions of gift-giving and perhaps even living and practicing euergetism more than merely side-by-side. I refer, of course, to the well-known "God-Fearers" inscription, published by Reynolds and Tannenbaum in 1987.¹⁴ In that remarkable inscription we find the God-Fearers involved in common philanthropic activity with full Jews, and "subscribing, presumably, to the same semiprivate memorial".¹⁵

What scholars have not clarified thus far is the extent to which the God-Fearers inscription from Aphrodisias can help us to understand how forms of Jewish gift-giving and Graeco-Roman gift-giving influenced each other and may have served as an institutional or social link between different ethnic communities, particularly in those cities of Asia in which large numbers of Jews lived for centuries. Obviously, this is also a key area of further investigation for those working on the development of Christian philanthropy. In my view, the prolegomenon to the study of Christian philanthropy and its role in the Roman empire must be the further exploration of both Jewish and Graeco-Roman euergetism, and the possible connections between the phenomena.

In this regard, as Tessa Rajak has pointed out,¹⁶ the scholarly journey of Julia Severa, the high priestess of Nero and Poppaea Augusta from Acmonia in Phrygia, may be instructive: once thought to be a syncretizing Jewess, she has now been identified conclusively as a great pagan lady who, for unknown reasons, contributed at least a substantial part of the building costs of the synagogue at Acmonia.¹⁷ The fact that Julia Severa could be identified as both a pagan and

¹² For examples, see B.J. Brotoen, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico 1982), 141-44, 157-61.

¹³ T. Rajak, "The Jewish Community and its Boundaries", in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians*, ed. J.A. North *et al.* (London 1992), 22-23.

¹⁴ J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias. Greek Inscriptions with Commentary* (Cambridge 1987).

¹⁵ T. Rajak (above, n. 13), 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁷ *PIR*² J 701; A. Sheppard, "Jews, Christians and Heretics in Acmonia and Eumeneia", *Anatolian Studies* 29 (1979), 170; most recently, see the valuable dis-

a Jewish benefactress indicates that we do not fully understand the relationship between Graeco-Roman and Jewish philanthropy. And thus we cannot yet reconstruct the origins of Christian euergetism. Or, to set the problem in a concrete form, we might ask: When Julia Severa helped to build the synagogue at Acmonia, into which patronal system of gift-giving did she buy her way?

Wealthy Males

Also, it is clear from evidence in Asia Minor that euergetism was not the exclusive prerogative of wealthy males. Women could and did make benefactions to their cities. They often made their benefactions within the symbolic context of family relations; but sometimes pagan and Christian women gave gifts as individuals in complete control of their own wealth.¹⁸

At Ephesos, for instance, a series of inscriptions which pertain to repairs in the Theatre, and the square in front of the Celsus Library, show that the *polis* itself could represent the building projects of a woman, Iulia Potentilla, during the third century AD, largely outside the context of family relations or priestly office.

The first of the inscriptions (which was inscribed on the south *analemma* of the Theatre, near the exit gate to the first *diazoma*) states that the *polis* repaired "the awnings and the stoa" from the revenues of Iulia Potentilla, probably after previous work done on the same awnings between AD 200 to 210.¹⁹

In another inscription, we are informed that the *polis* repaired the *pronaos* of the *Nemeseion* "from the revenues of Iulia Potentilla while M. Aurunceius Mithridates was secretary".²⁰ We know that Aurunceius Mithridates was secretary of the *demos* of Ephesos during the reign of Gordian III (AD 238 to 244);²¹ thus, at the very least, the *polis* must still have been in control of some of Iulia Potentilla's revenues by AD 238 to 244 at the latest.

An inscription which was found under a column capital, near the south Gate of the lower (*Tetragonos*) Agora,²² strongly supports the idea that the aforementioned revenues formed at least part of an estate, which Potentilla gave to the *polis*, probably during the first half of the third century. In this inscription we learn that the *polis* paved the area in front of the Auditorium and the Celsus Library "from the revenues of the inheritance of Iulia Potentilla".²³

cussion of P. Treblico, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1992), esp. 58-60.

18 See G.M. Rogers, "The Constructions of Women at Ephesos", *ZPE* 90 (1992), 215-223.

19 For the Potentilla inscription see *IE* 2041.

20 *IE* 2042.

21 *IE* 4336.8.

22 For the location of the inscription see J. Keil, *FiE* III (Vienna 1923), no. 9, p. 101.

23 *IE* 3009, line 5 ... ἐκ προ-Ι-σόδων κληρονομίας.

It cannot be claimed that Potentilla's euergetism was framed within the symbolic context of family relations or values. Although we do discover that the paving of the area in front of the Celsus Library was done from an inheritance, Iulia Potentilla is not presented as the mother, wife or sister of any man in any of her building inscriptions. Rather, the *polis* advertised Iulia Potentilla's name and wealth as contributing to the maintenance of some of the most prominent and visible buildings and spaces in the city, in association with the embodiment of the corporate identity of the city, the *polis* itself.

Furthermore, the *polis* of Ephesos used Potentilla's revenues in ways which were entirely consistent with the kinds of building projects which were taking place in the city during the third century AD. During that period of diminished resources, the *polis* used inheritances such as Iulia Potentilla's, but also M. Fulvius Publicianus Nicephorus', between AD 222 to 235 or after,²⁴ to make repairs to existing buildings, or to add architectural features to extant complexes. The citizens of Ephesos who read the building inscriptions of Potentilla would have found nothing exceptional about how the *polis* used Potentilla's wealth to repair buildings or pave streets during the third century AD, how it represented her role in these projects, or where.

Another famous example from the late fourth century AD demonstrates that the Christianization of the upper class at Ephesos did not alter the possibility of women appearing as builders outside the context of male domination or the family. Scholastikia "provided the great sum of gold" for constructing the part of the baths of Varius along the *embolos* that had fallen down.²⁵ According to her building inscription, Scholastikia's wealth came from no other source than her own pocket. No male relative is mentioned.

The Scholastikia inscription also tends to fit rather well into the third-century pattern of euergetism which I sketched out above. Scholastikia did not actually build new baths; she provided funds to *repair* baths which had been originally subsidized by P. Quintilius Valens Varius in AD 100.²⁶ Scholastikia's Christianity, which the reader of her building inscription knows about only from the small cross carved into the stone just before the first word of the inscription and the description of her as *eusebous* in line 1, appears to be irrelevant, or even surprising, when we consider her benefaction. In terms of institutional practice, Scholastikia simply did what pagan women had done since at least the early third century.

What is surprising (and worth emphasizing) is that Scholastikia chose to repair a building which not only arose in a specifically pagan architectural and

²⁴ IE 3086, the *polis* built the *propylon* of the Harbour "from the inheritance of Marcus Fulvius Publicianus Nicephorus the Asiarch".

²⁵ IE 453.

²⁶ IE 500.

social context, but had been dedicated by a man whose benefactions and offices placed him squarely in the center of pagan culture in the city. Along with his wife and daughter, P. Quintilius Valens Varius had dedicated the temple (including the cult image itself) on the eastern side of the *embolos* to Hadrian, to Artemis, and to the *demos* of Ephesos,²⁷ had served as *strategos* in the city, as *gymnasiarch*, as *agoranomos*, *panegyriarchos*, and *neopoios* of the goddess Artemis herself.²⁸

Thus, when Scholastikia repaired the baths of Varius, she was following in the philanthropic footsteps of one of the great imperial pagan benefactors of Ephesos. Her gift, in fact, could have been made within a purely pagan context hundred of years before. She did not use her gold to build or repair a church, or to give to the poor, as many other Christian benefactors did elsewhere.

Thus, the case of Scholastikia once again raises the question of the development of Christian gift-giving out of a Graeco-Roman and Jewish context. Is Scholastikia's repair of Varius' baths evidence for the continuity of Graeco-Roman practice or the appropriation of that practice by Christians? As it stands, we do not have enough supporting evidence to answer that question.

Nevertheless, it is clear that at Ephesos it gradually became possible for a limited number of wealthy women such as Potentilla to make exactly the same kinds of benefactions as male benefactors, and to be represented as such in some of the most visible places in the city. Even after the Christianization of the upper class during the mid-fourth century, Ephesian women could be seen as more than the dutiful wives or daughters of male benefactors. They themselves had become urban benefactors, and any general theory of euergetism must take this development into account.

The Legal Process

In fact, the whole social and legal process of creating such benefactions, whether they were endowed by men or women, required far wider public participation than has been generally realized. At Ephesos, for example, at the beginning of the second century AD, I have shown that, although C. Vibius Salutaris had proposed his foundation as a private citizen as early as December of AD 103 and asked that the proposal be ratified by a decree of the *demos* and *boule*, the endowment did not reach its final form until at least February of AD 104,²⁹ and the

²⁷ IE 429.

²⁸ IE 712B.

²⁹ Although the foundation was formally dated to January of AD 104 (as is made clear by the consular dating in lines 134-36), it is certain that Salutaris had made his proposal by December of 103, since the letter of the proconsul, dated to Poseideon as well, refers to the proposal in lines 327-30. We are also informed (at lines 447f.) that the addendum to the foundation (which was ratified by the *boule* and *demos* at line 568) was dated to February of AD 104. Thus the minimum time period be-

boule, the *demos* and other groups of beneficiaries helped to shape the final form of the endowment.

Indeed, we are explicitly told at line 22 of the Salutaris foundation, that after initial negotiations were completed, Salutaris actually came into the assembly, *proposed* his foundation as a private citizen and asked that it be ratified by a decree (*psephisma*) of the *boule* and *demos*.³⁰

We also know that at least two groups of beneficiaries of the Salutaris foundation (the *Chrysophoroi* and Sacred Victors) were not included among the original list of participants in Salutaris' procession of statues.³¹ Their participation in the procession of statues through the streets of the city (which took place once every few weeks throughout the year after AD 104) was the direct result of some sort of negotiation between the founder and the beneficiaries.³²

Elsewhere I have made a similar argument about the foundation of Demosthenes of Oenoanda which was promised on 25 July of AD 124. In the case of the Demosthenes foundation, we have explicit testimony that the assembly ultimately decided whether any, or all, of the terms of the foundation should be accepted.

In lines 100-101 of the Demosthenes foundation it was explicitly stated that a proposal concerning all of the matters which had been decreed should be put to the assembly *so that it might be confirmed by it*.³³ The simplicity of this legal formulation seems designed to make it clear to even the most obtuse reader who had the ultimate legal say about the acceptance of the foundation at Oenoanda: it was the assembly which might, or might not, confirm the proposal.

To sum up: many large benefactions at least were subject to discussion, compromise, and ultimately ratification by various councils and assemblies of the cities. The models of euergetism which we employ to explain the phenomena should reflect the fact that the *boulai* and the *demoi* and the other beneficiaries helped to shape what was originally proposed by wealthy benefactors. If this is the case, our models should also take into account the inevitable conclusion that the structures of local and international power which the foundations represent were reified and celebrated, not only by the benefactors, but by the *poleis* themselves.

tween initial proposal and acceptance of the foundation in its final form was something over two months.

³⁰ At line 22 we are told that Salutaris actually came into the assembly, which must have taken place in the theater. The private nature of Salutaris' proposal is emphasized at line 74.

³¹ *IE* 27.413-30, 431-46.

³² Lines 431ff.

³³ Lines 100-101, ... προσανεχθηνα[ι] τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐψηφισμένων, ὅπως καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς κυρωθῆ.

The Language of Gift-giving

Those structures of power were deeply rooted in the system of traditional religious belief and its rhetoric at Ephesos.

The Salutaris foundation, for instance, was proposed, ratified, sanctioned, and propagated according to legislative procedures which can be paralleled in similar foundations at Ephesos and elsewhere in Asia Minor during the imperial period. Less noticed than these parallels (but perhaps more important) is the sacred language employed to describe every step of that legislative process. From proposal to publication of the text of the endowment, the language of the process of gift-giving at Ephesos belonged to the semantic context of dedications and sacred law: in other words, to the sphere of the divine. The *demos* of Ephesos set the terms of the Salutaris foundation within the sphere of the divine in an attempt to invest the terms of the foundation with a sacred authority which might help to ensure that the provisions of the foundation were actually carried out.

How, when and from which source Christian benefactors appropriated the rhetoric of sacralized gift-giving at Ephesos, we cannot say. But that Christian benefactors such as Scholastikia did so, is not in doubt. Scholastikia, for example, took care to remind the strangers who might read her inscription that she not only was rich and wise; she was also *eusebous* or pious. For both pagans and Christians at Ephesos, the language of giving was the language of the divine, because the language of the divine was the language of power.

Comparative Perspectives

Outside the context of the study of classical euergetism, interpretations of gift-giving which examine such appropriations of rhetoric and take into account more dynamic relationships between benefactors and beneficiaries are relatively common. In trying to understand how and why Graeco-Roman euergetism developed, persisted and was appropriated by others at Ephesos and elsewhere, it may be helpful for us to consider how historians of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and early Modern Europe, for example, have studied comparable institutions. One study of benefactions to youth associations in *quattrocento* Florence, for example, has revealed how lay benefactors often controlled the public rituals of confraternities of adolescent youth through their financial support.³⁴

Or, in the case of an Islamic legal institution, the charitable endowment known to us as the *waqf*, Robert McChesney has shown brilliantly how the endowment of a shrine in a village a few miles to the east of Balkh in northern Afghanistan in the 1480s came about through a complex set of motives which

³⁴ R. Trexler, "Ritual in Florence: Adolescence and Salvation in the Renaissance", in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (Leiden 1974), 200-264.

included the charitable, the political, the reverential and the social; once established, the *waqf* endowment at Khwajah Khayran became a formidable economic force in the region, particularly during those times when its sacred character and tax privileges provided its managers relative security in comparison with others who lived in the area without such advantages.³⁵ Those managers, in turn, especially in the course of the 17th century, became dependent upon changing philanthropic tastes both of rich and poor donors.

Studies of such religious endowment and welfare institutions in other pre-industrial societies may suggest ways in which we might understand the complex relationships that developed between benefactors and beneficiaries. At the same time, anthropological and sociological studies of philanthropy, voluntarism, and altruism in the wake of Mauss' seminal study of the gift,³⁶ may also help us to construct more flexible models of ancient euergetism.³⁷

Conclusions

Substantial internal and parallel evidence suggests that élites did not just impose large foundations upon passive, apolitical masses from above. Large benefactions especially were discussed, and their terms negotiated, and ratified by various *boulai* and *demoi*. Too often the interpretations of such foundations have ignored the substantive contributions of the *boulai* and *demoi* to the creation of these benefactions.

Next, we should reconsider whether collective benefits can really account for the success and persistence of this varied social phenomenon — first of all, because no foundation or group of foundations of any type or scale I know could provide truly collective benefits in practice. Do we have *any* examples of any gifts which were made to every single person in any one *polis* in exactly the same proportion? I have shown elsewhere, in the case of the Salutaris foundation, that the benefits were anything but collective, anything but equal.³⁸ If we lay aside the impossible idea of collective benefits, and, at the same time give due recognition to the role of the *boulai* and *demoi* in the shaping of the benefactions, we may achieve an analytical breakthrough: the *boulai* and *demoi* stood behind, indeed consecrated and memorialized, the deeply *differential* benefits of foundations such as Salutaris' and Demosthenes'. In fact, it was their highly stratified views of the past and the present that the foundations reflected, and

³⁵ R. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia* (Princeton 1991), ix.

³⁶ M. Mauss (above, n. 4).

³⁷ Important examples of such studies include C. Jencks, "The Social Basis of Unselfishness", in *On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Riesman*, ed. H.J. Gans (Philadelphia 1979), 63-86; A. Pifer, "Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Changing Times", *Daedalus* 16 (1987), 119-131.

³⁸ G.M. Rogers (above, n. 2), chs. 2 and 3.

dramatized for everyone to see. These views were so highly stratified, I believe, because those stratified views were a source of tangible, accessible power within the Roman world. This conclusion would at least help to explain why Christians such as Scholastikia, even during the late Empire, appropriated the pagan vocabulary of gift-giving at Ephesos: to use such vocabulary was to tap into a conversation about power in the *polis* which pagans, Jews and Christians had been having for centuries.

If we interpret euergetism in Hellenistic and Roman Asia from this perspective, we may see that, whatever gift-giving has to tell us about the past and present, euergetism reveals it from the point of view, not only of the benefactors, but the beneficiaries as well. Furthermore, if euergetism in Asia is understandable only within a wider Mediterranean context, in which some women, as well as popular assemblies, could and did make vital contributions to the well-being of their cities, then the sources of the strength of classical civilization are far more socially integrative and politically pluralistic than has been previously credited.

The reconstruction of a larger Mediterranean urban civilization which may have depended upon a wider proportion of its population for the essential health of its cities than has been previously thought, also speaks directly to us. Whichever interpretive model we adopt to explain how and why private benefactors in the Roman province of Asia gave their gifts to their cities, why so many gave for so long, and how to describe the process, that model may also serve as a starting point for a critical contemporary discussion. Both as heirs to that ancient civilization and as active participants in a global urban civilization, we also are confronted by the critical question first posed during the nineteenth century in the American political context by Alexis de Tocqueville in Chapter VIII of his classic *Democracy in America*: what precisely is the relationship between gift-giving and the vitality of a society.

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