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Benefaction and Benevolence: The Concept of the Pure Gift and Realization of the Community in Greece*

An Anthropological Approach

The study examines diachronically the phenomenon of benefaction and benevolence in Greece, and endeavours to interpret this through prevailing theories on gift and specifically of the competitive and the pure gift, as these have been formulated by distinguished sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers. It is argued that this offering is intended to strengthen the concept of the community, in the wider sense, either as an ethnic-national group or as a group with man as reference point.

Key words: benefaction, benevolence, gift, potlatch, bequest, philanthropy, ancient liturgy (*leitourgia*), national benefactor, voluntarism, community

The problem

In recent years there has been a proliferation of studies dealing with the gift, manifested in the publication of numerous books and articles. The “total social fact” that was first presented systematically by Marcel Mauss is placed on new bases. The author’s views on the “gift” are re-examined using more modern methodological and theoretical tools, such as structuralism, hermeneutic/interpretative and symbolic anthropology, semeiology, interaction theory, etc.

In the present study I shall examine the phenomenon of benefaction and benevolence in relation to gift theory, as this began with Mauss and as it has been elabo-

* Translated by the author.

rated in recent years by sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers and even theologians (cf. Davies 2002). For it should be mentioned that this is a subject with which all specialists in the social and humanist disciplines have been involved.

The following text is more general and theoretical in character, since the ambit of the phenomenon of benefaction and benevolence extends beyond the narrow bounds of a circumscribed small community. Moreover, the term community, which I use here, has a more moral significance and refers to the group of people linked together by ties of solidarity and mutual assistance, that is the “moral community” (see Cheal 1988b: 162, 171-172).

Benefaction and benevolence yesterday and today

What do we mean by benefaction and benevolence? The first term has a wider meaning and refers mainly to the offering to our fellow men of help, material goods and even moral support. Benefaction can refer to the offering of the benefactor whilst he is still alive, in which case we can speak about benevolence (Lambridis 1880). However, the offerings may be made posthumously, in wills and testaments, in which case they are essentially bequests.

The concept of benefaction is very wide. Even participation in a philanthropist group and philanthropic work, although of a different level, can be considered benefaction, from the simple offering of material goods to people in need, to the offering/giving of time and services, etc., such as the offering of “Médecins sans frontières”, of “Médecins du Monde”, as well as other non-governmental organizations, blood donors or posthumous donors of vital organs (Tittmus 1971; Silver 1998; Papagaroufali 2002; Kasimatis 2005).

The phenomenon of benefaction in Greece has a long history reaching back to Antiquity and possibly began from earlier tribal rituals of gift-giving of potlatch type. For Antiquity I shall mention the essentially legislated liturgies, which institutionally lie between gift and public service (vocation) or potlatch and taxation of the wealthy. There has been much discussion about the issue, because the offering was not made voluntarily, while the *choregoi/leitourgoi* (sponsors/benefactors) frequently tried to avoid the economic burden.¹ Veyne, in his important book devoted to benefaction in the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, discusses in detail the significance of these (Veyne 1993: 7-27).

The same phenomenon is observed in the Byzantine Age too, but is linked more closely with the religious sentiment and is wrapped in the theological cloak of

¹ The wealthy citizens of Athens were obligated to pay the expenses of a service (liturgy), such as outfitting a warship (triereme, which is why this liturgy was called *trierarchia*), paying the costs of a theatrical performance (preparation of the chorus/*choregia*), funding the dispatching a representation outside the city (*theoria*), paying the expenses of a banquet to their tribe (*hestiasis*, in earlier times *phylarchia*) (Veyne 1993: 11-12), and so on. The rich man could refuse, on the excuse that there was someone wealthier than he. However, in this case he was obliged to exchange his property for that of the person he indicated.

Christianity, without this changing its importance. Poorhouses, “soup kitchens”, old people’s homes, orphanages, cemeteries for strangers, etc. (Constanelos 1968) attest to men’s need to help their fellow men. This tactic of public benefit foundations continues to this day, with the offering of the Church or of monasteries, many of which maintain old people’s homes or poorhouses.

Nonetheless, the terms benefaction and benevolence are more immediately associated mentally with the offerings of expatriate Greeks who made great fortunes in foreign lands, and who while still alive or after death, offered gifts, without vested interest, to their birthplace, their village, province, island or country. We speak always about private persons and not about politicians or other office-holders or collective bodies (for political gifts, see Veyne 1993: 5, 69).

There is a rich bibliography on this subject. The first scholar to refer to the issue was the researcher on Epirus, Yannis Lambridis, in the late nineteenth century. It is no coincidence that most of the earliest national benefactors were Epirotes. Forced to abandon their rugged and barren but beloved homeland, they emigrated to eastern Europe (Romania, Russia), Egypt and elsewhere, in order to make a living, applying themselves to business (trade, etc.). At some point in their twilight years, they decided to offer part of their fortune to the land of their birth. They began from their village, building schools, bridges and churches, providing scholarships, etc. (see Lambridis 1880; cf. Kamilakis 2003). But they offered primarily to the fatherland, to the Greek State. In any case, the concept of national benefactors can only be understood in relation to the existence and the function of the nation state (Papageorgiou 1997: 24). However, this relates also to the community infrastructure organization of their place and society of origin.²

I refer to Sinas, Zappas, Tositsas, Arsakis, the Zosimas brothers, the Rizaris brothers and many others. They are invariably men, since men owned the capital and

² Some scholars, who have little knowledge of Greek rural society, have expressed the view that the concept of the “pure gift” is not encountered there (see Papagaroufali 2002: 92ff., 121). The facts refute this contention. I shall cite a few instances from my personal ethnographic fieldwork: How could be considered the offering spontaneously and gladly of e.g. a bag of walnuts to a passing traveller by an elderly woman who was picking walnuts on her land? How could be considered the offering to an unknown person of a pie or a helping of food, *klotsotyri* (omelette with butter and sour milk), and the like, by an old woman, or the offering of a meal and hospitality by a villager? The examples could be multiplied. The long-term reciprocation in these cases is impossible (see in relation Testart 1998), while there is no increase of the donor’s symbolic capital, since most times no one else knows about this. Because another precondition of the “pure gift” is the non-publicizing of the gift, according to the Christian maxim “let the left hand not know what the right hand doeth”. Moreover, the anonymity of donor and beneficiary is a basic term and quite often characterizes gifts in modern society. These are gifts offered to the “communities of strangers” as some researchers have successfully dubbed them (Tittmus 1971; Silber 1998: 135, 138, 139), which could also be seen as acts of “negotiation of community” or inclusion in the community. Certainly the offering of food falls within the *par excellence* gift that is subject to special rules. E.g. in traditional and tribal societies food is very rarely bought and sold, it can therefore be offered frequently as a “pure gift” to strangers too (cf. the approach to food and gift by Sahlins 1974: 215-210).

the real-estate properties.³ Were it not for these national benefactors, we would not have today the splendid foundations of the capital and many other cities: Metsovion Polytechnion (National Technical University of Athens), Academy of Athens, National Library, Arsakeion Schools, Marasleion School, etc.

However, they also made benefactions to other sectors, such as national defence. Ships for the critical struggles of the nation, such as the battleship *Averoff*, were purchased with money from national benefactors (Michalopoulos 1997). Later donations to reinforce the Greek Airforce, etc., belong in the same category. I note that until very recently notaries were obliged to ask persons drafting their will, if they were going to leave any property for the benefit of the Greek Navy.

However, it is not only the Epirots who were great national benefactors. There are also the so-called local benefactors. And from other regions too, that is sons of Greece who made donations for the building of schools and foundations. E.g. at Karystos on Evvia, the primary school and the town hall were built with donations from the Kotsikas brothers, expatriate Karystians. They donated a corresponding megaron in Chalkida. Likewise, on Cephalonia there is the Corgialenian Bequest, donation of Marinos Corgialenios, on Spetses the Anargyreios School, in Mytilene the Komminakeion, etc. The examples are countless.

On Kythera too the phenomenon is observed on large scale, with donations from Kytherans of the diaspora (Leontsinis 2004). I mention names such as Triphyllis, Kasimatis, Stais, Manolesis, Patrikios: each one of them made donations from the fortune he had made abroad. So there are today on Kythera the Farm School, the Kasimateion Hospital, the Triphylleion Old People's Home, and other premises that the Triphylleion Foundation manages and supports financially (Michalakakis 2004a, 2004b).

All these benefactors very often made offerings also to the local ethnic communities in the new homelands, in which they had settled: money to build churches, libraries, schools, and premises for the associations and brotherhoods. These offerings to their place of birth as well as to their place of domicile and activity bring to mind the free offerings of Maecenas in Antiquity (cf. Veyne 1993: 27, 31, 284-285).

³ The concept of the gender of the gift exists. Women can offer what they have. In a patriarchal society in which they are denied significant monetary or immoveable property, they usually offer foodstuffs, handiwork and services. They are rarely able to offer money and real estate property (see Alexakis 2006). In the urban domain, the female offering is mainly in philanthropic and voluntary works, etc. (Theodorou 2003: 172-175). In our case of benefaction, women, mainly wives of benefactors, appear only rarely as continuers of the husband's work or executors of his will. An interesting case is that of the benefactress Eleni, wife of Michael Tositsas (see Atsave 1997: 57-61). Nonetheless, in the Ottoman period the phenomenon of many Turkish women, wives of officials, paying the expenses of building bridges in Greece is observed (Kamilakis 2003).

The concept of the pure gift in the social sciences

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, philosophers too have been concerned with the gift. I should like to emphasize that both ancient and modern philosophers, such as Aristotle, Nietzsche, Derrida, Levinas, and others, have been involved with this institution (cf. Bernasconi 1997).

The point of juxtaposition of the various researchers on the gift is the classification of its various forms and its genealogy. Is, as Lévi-Strauss argues, the simple gift the earliest form of competitive gift, which is known as potlatch? Are there societies that have the one or the other form of gift, or both forms simultaneously? What is the relationship between the gift and trade? Is the gift an earlier form of trading exchanges, as it used to be maintained? (cf. Cheal 1988).

When Mauss wrote his essay on the gift, important anthropological studies based on years of ethnographic fieldwork had preceded, such as the *kula* (ceremonial gift exchanges) in the Trobriand Islands, which had been described analytically by Bronislaw Malinowski (1922), and the studies on the potlatch (the anthropologists' "curio") in northwest America, by Franz Boas and others. There was also abundant material gathered from other researchers, travellers and so on (Mauss 1925; 1969). Mauss made the significant distinction, separating gifts into simple exchanges, in which a donor offers the gift to someone who is obliged to receive it. He, in turn in the long term, is obliged to give another gift to the first. The second gift cannot be given at the same time, because then it falls within the category of barter, a primitive form of trade, in which other factors also intrude, such as analogous value of the good, etc.

However, Mauss focused his interest more on another form of gift, in which the offering, usually from a chief or a rich or big man of the tribe, has to be balanced by a larger counter-gift from the recipient of the first gift. This is potlatch. That is, in this type of gift there is a rivalry or even an enmity (Schwartz 1973: 180), covert or overt, which takes the form of what has been called a "property war". The specific offering is very often declared metaphorically as the "killing" of the property (Carsenti 1978: 44-45, 47). This offering, however, can be made to an individual or to a group, such as the tribe, the community, or it can come from a group, a tribe or a community, usually via a representative of it, e.g. sacrifices, festivals, food, etc. (Rubel and Rosman 1971). The side that offers the most gifts is considered hierarchically superior (cf. also the comparable prestige relations in tenders and conspicuous spending). As Pierre Bourdieu says, its symbolic capital increases and can be transformed into political authority, into economic or social capital (Bourdieu 1977: 194-195, 235, n. 60).

Philosophers have a different view as to whether those goods that are subject to exchanges or the offerings that are subject to any kind of giving in return constitute a true gift. Mauss stresses that the ideal gift or potlatch is that which is not returned or that cannot be returned, while Derrida wonders whether a true gift can exist, when the gift itself creates the obligation to reciprocate (Derrida 1997, cf. also Jenkins 1998, as well as the critique on the obligation or not of reciprocation by Testart 1998).

It emerges from the aforesaid that benefaction and benevolence fall within the category of the potlatch. But in this case, is it a true gift? If the donors/benefactors, still alive, earn symbolic capital, and perhaps also political authority, then do the goods they offer lead to their recognition by the community, in the wider sense, and abrogate or cancel the concept of the true or pure gift?

Problems raised by this issue have concerned researchers on many levels. For example, can charity be included in this category? Likewise, is philanthropy a true gift? Specialists have dealt with all these aspects of offerings/gifts, but have not reached agreement and the debate continues. There are different views and interpretations of the phenomenon of philanthropy, sometimes even left-wing politicized, depending on the historical period, such as that it is: a) a means of controlling the lower social strata; b) a means of keeping and displaying socio-economic distance and superiority, etc.; c) a means of inclusion or socialization of the poor classes (see Theodorou 2003, with bibliography; cf. also Petronoti 1997). However, in many cases its indirect or invisible functions are construed as principal or overt (cf. Merton 1968). Nonetheless, Greek benefaction, as I have described it, is of another level than philanthropy and the philanthropic organizations, the greater or lesser development of which is inversely proportionate to the decrease or increase in the social welfare of the State, standing in for some of its functions (Silber 1998: 140, 146).

I should mention that Aristotle had noted the question and argued that gifts are exchanged between friends, or at least persons of equal rank and that true circular exchanges cannot exist between persons of different rank. Some researchers suggest that the ancient Greeks possibly had a special form of offerings/donations, in which the circulation of the goods exchanged was interrupted at some point. The gifts were not returned or could not be returned and the giving did not take the form of cyclical exchange (heliocentric) (Gasché 1997; cf. also for the present period: Rausing 1998). The fact is that in hierarchical/stratified societies the circulation of goods is not always successful between ranked persons. However, this could be due to more than one reason, for example persons of lower rank are unable to reciprocate them. Persons of higher rank or considered to be superior (donations are also related to the identity of the subject) intentionally do not give or do not reciprocate gifts to inferiors, desiring to transform the giving of these into “tribute” or “tax”, and in this way frequently reinforcing or creating inversely hierarchy as well as indirectly hostility (cf. Sykes 2005: 113 and Montant 1998, Schwarz 1972: 174, 184, 185).

We come once again to benefaction and benevolence, as these are presented in the last one hundred and fifty years in Greece, where these offerings are relieved of the religious obligation, and so have nothing to do with philanthropy and charity, while they are at the same time voluntary and free.⁴ If we examine these gifts more carefully, we shall ascertain that most have been made posthumously with wills and

⁴ There are opposite examples too. Characteristic is the case of a certain Bishop Troilus in Egypt, who is mentioned by Leontios. Although he was very wealthy, when the famous Patriarch of Alexandria and saint of the Orthodox Church, St John the Eleemon, obliged him to give money to the “Caesarean” Poor House, after “offering” the money he fell ill from his sorrow at parting with it (Hadjiphotis 1997: 31).

essentially constitute bequests, while quite often the benefactors had no close relatives (children, etc.) or had never married,⁵ without this in any way diminishing the offering, because many fortunes left by the rich to distant relatives have vanished into thin air, without any benefit. These are what were known in Antiquity as “posthumous foundations” (Veyne 1993: 58, 128). That is, they take the form of a gift-inheritance, but always without the compulsory terms that wills impose on inheritors or successor relatives (alms-giving, arranging the funeral and the memorial services, etc.). Can the testator or “post-mortem benefactor” in this way gain symbolic or social capital? This cannot be answered positively, unless the testator transfers it to members of his family. Can we therefore class these donations in the category of the true or pure gift? The main characteristic of the pure gift is the impossibility of its long-term return/reciprocation, in other words, the unstable reciprocity, due to the vagueness of the obligation for giving in return (see Sahlins 1974: 194; cf. also Rausing 1998).⁶

The subject requires special analysis. Certainly most times the community, in the wider sense, that accepts the donation decides, on doing so, to make certain moves in return and this without any commitment imposed by the donor/benefactor. Lambridis, who was the first to deal with Greek bequests, mentions among them: a) Inscribing in gold letters the name of the donor/benefactor on the public welfare foundation; b) Erecting a portrait statue of the benefactor on the foundation’s premises; c) Placing a wreath on the benefactor’s portrait statue, memorial services, etc. (Lambridis 1880, vol. 1: 6). All these moves are highly reminiscent of the effort to preserve the memory of the dead and the cult of heroes in Antiquity (cf. Veyne 1993: 126-131).

Can what I have mentioned be considered reciprocation and as refuting the meaning of the pure gift? The question now falls within the sphere of philosophy and ontology. Is this offering to the dead, at least the great dead, a reciprocation? Can the dead continue the cycle of exchanges/donations? Personally, I think not. In any case,

⁵ Efstathios Lambridis writes characteristically of the Rizaris brothers, and this holds in general: “They lived most thriftily and died without heirs, bequeathed to their compatriots and to the Nation the means of humanization, marrying as they said the homeland, offering instead of children this enormous donation” (Lambridis 1973: 12). Cf. also for Antiquity the meals in memory of the childless wealthy: Veyne 1993: 78-79.

⁶ In Anthropology the discussion about the pure or free gift began very early, with Malinowski’s works on the Trobriand islanders, regardless of whether this view of his corresponds or not to reality. In this matrilineal society, in which the father is considered a stranger, he offered gifts to his children without expecting any reciprocation, the so-called *mapula* (Malinowski 1972: 178-179, 182-183; cf. also Sykes 2005: 63-64, 69, 146). Sahlins calls the offerings of a true gift “generalized reciprocity” or “extreme solidarity”. In his view these are of altruistic character and are the ideal type of Malinowski’s “true gift”. Other names are “sharing with someone”, “hospitality”, “free gift”, “generosity”, etc. (Sahlins 1974: 193, 194). According to Sykes, Sahlins’s approach to the “pure gift” as “altruism shows that anthropologists can interpret erroneously a noble response to the historical accident, given human nature (Sykes 2005: 196). The concept of altruism is of course problematical in this context, because it is not related to human nature but is rather a social function (cf. also Theodorou 2003: 173, 181, 183). For altruism in relation to the theory of interaction and of strategies (games theory) from the viewpoint of Sociobiology, see also Layton 1997: 147-148, 158.

both charity or offering, without the confirmed long-term reciprocation by the beneficiary, is presented as an offering for the souls of the donor's dead relatives or of the soul of the donor himself, and in popular conception refers to reciprocation at the supernatural or metaphysical level, that is the reciprocation from God, etc. Thus, this should be considered a pure gift.⁷

The concept of the community as idea and as praxis in Greece

What relation theoretically does the offering of a “pure gift” have to the community? The concept of the community has concerned social scientists from the outset and continues to do so (cf. Cohen 1989). Their interest focuses on whether we are able to differentiate a form of social organization in which we discern particular characteristics that are not based on the family or on kinship, even if they derive from these, but on other principles which lead, however, to the cohesion, the solidarity, the mutual assistance of its constituent members.⁸

Tönnies's book is a classic as far as the two basic concepts and practices of community and of society are concerned, since he tries to give a definition of these two concepts and their principal characteristics. Always starting from the moral concept for the community, which is encountered in villages and small towns. Indeed, for distinction the Latin term *communitas* is used, which can be translated in other ways too, e.g. communion (Tönnies n.d.), which refers us by analogy to certain social scientists' interpretative schemes for philanthropy, concerning socialization and inclusion (see Theodorou 2003: 174, 180).

I note that there is a glut of definitions for the concept of the community. I do not refer to the administrative community, which is very often created arbitrarily, nor exclusively to the small homogeneous local community, which is made up of people who meet almost daily, that is to the community per se which is a “face-to-face” group (Cohen 1989). Anyway, the concept of the community as a moral value begins from this starting point (Tönnies n.d.).

That is, the term community has a wider use. Godelier considers it a group in which there is mutual assistance and solidarity, which can begin from the family, include the clan and reach the tribe or the ethnic group (Godelier 2003: 12; Cheal 1988b: 172; cf. also Layton 2004: 182-188), even if Veyne considers that as far as the

⁷ In Greek folk culture the beneficiary of non-obligatory donation – large or small – and to the degree that he is unable to reciprocate it, prays that “God forgive the souls of the dead” of the donor. This is why offerings, mainly of meals and foodstuffs to the poor, are observed most frequently during the period of Carnival, which is considered a period of the dead (cf. *Soul Saturdays*, etc.). This does not rule out also the desire for forgiveness of the donor himself after death, as the cases of the so-called *psychika* (alms/charity for God's forgiveness of the soul) in both the wills and the inscriptions that are sometimes carved on donations in the form of buildings, e.g. fountains, bridges, etc. (see Kamilakis 2003). For an anthropological approach to offering to the dead in relation to the “pure gifts” *mapula*, see also Sykes 2005:69-70; Cf. also for Antiquity: Veyne 1993: 126ff.

⁸ It is not fortuitous that the social scientists and the historians who study the multi-nuclear family, *zadruga* and others, call it “domestic community” (cf. Sicard 1976).

larger groups are concerned (e.g. the nation), this can happen only occasionally and momentarily (Veyne 1993: 118-119), e.g. with the offering of life in time of war. The large ensembles, however, function necessarily at the level of the imaginary.

A few years ago, Anderson published his important book on the “imaginary communities”, taking as starting point that the concept of the community also exists in larger groups, beyond the local “face-to-face” community, meaning the nation as well the religious communities (Anderson 1997). In the same period, Cornelius Castoriadis published his equally important book on the “imaginary institution of society“, in which the concept of community/society as idea and as praxis is realized through its imaginary institution (Castoriadis 1978).

I note that the community as value and ideology influenced politically many researchers as well as intellectuals. In the twentieth century, the “communalism movement” was formed from this idea, leading exponent of which in Greece was Constantinos Karavidas (see Damianakos 1990; Kazakos 1990).

Marx himself had recognized a “community mode of production”, which historically pre-existed the “Asiatic mode of production”. However, the more recent idea or ideology of communalism, which is very often reduced to the level of the economy on the basis of collaboration in production and the common ownership of property, is somewhat misleading or utopian. This mode of production presupposes also a communal mode of property ownership, which is rarely observed in the organization of the village and small towns, where differentiation exists with regard to wealth and property, as well as to the modes of production.

Even so, the idea of the community continues to exist. The community is now realized in practice symbolically, in the distribution and the redistribution of goods and of the surplus or part of the surplus, with the various rituals, the religious feasts, the weddings and other rites of passage. That is, this “redistribution” does not aim at the distribution of all the goods, possibly with some exceptions, in order to create an egalitarian society, as Veyne rightly says (Veyne 1993: 71, 76), but in my view, in order to create the sense of the community or of communion (*communitas*), which also includes the donors (see for the relation of individualism/collectivity in ritual donations: Cheal 1988a, 1988b: 106ff., 153, 205, with reference to Turner’s idea of *communitas*, Turner 1974: 82, 91, 95).

I note that in the Greek language certain basic concepts that are linked with the community have multiple meanings, e.g. the concept *oikogeneia-family* can be extended to the concept of *lineage, clan*, the concept *fara-patrilateral kindred* can cover the concept of *lineage, clan* and *tribe* in the political/cultural sense. The concept of *genos-clan* is moreover used metaphorically as identical in meaning to the concept of *ethnos-nation*, that is the Greek *genos* equals the Greek *ethnos*. Does this mean that in Greece even today, in the twenty-first century, the concept of solidarity and of mutual assistance between people belonging to one nationality is alive? Consequently, Modern Greek society retains many elements from the concept of the community. The question is, to what degree is this concept extended also towards mankind as a whole?

It used to be maintained that the period of the great benefactors had passed never to return. And this was believed to be the case. Nonetheless, the facts negate this view. It is negated by benefactions such as the Onassis Foundation, whether as Cardiology Hospital or as Scholarship Fund, as well as by other related foundations. The examples can be multiplied, since the bequests continue to be left by wealthy and other economic magnates of Greek origin, e.g. the Niarchos Foundation, the Varvaressos Foundation at Vatika (Neapolis Voioi in Lakonia), and so on. There is also the wide diffusion of the institution of sponsors, regardless of other ramifications (reduced taxation, publicity, advertising etc.). In these donations/sponsorships each case should be examined on its own merits, in order to assess whether it is a pure gift (cf. Hadjiphotis 1997: 32; Silber 1998: 140-141).

Why are these offerings made? We can rationalize them and maintain that they are made for the donors' promotion or for posthumous fame, as has been argued (Veyne 1993: 61). But this interpretation does not suffice. These donations are linked mainly with the "common belonging", whether this is reduced to the national origin or, more rarely to the common human fate. It is a moral/social obligation. We have to accept that in addition to *Homo economicus* there is also *Homo communitarius*.⁹

The expressions *noblesse oblige* and *richesse oblige* tell us a great deal in relation to the community (cf. Veyne's gift of honour, Veyne 1993: 143; see also Sahllins 1974: 194, 199, 272). The offering is linked basically with the high rank of the donors. The wealth that was acquired possibly by hard work and thrift, sometimes by usury or systematic exploitation of workers, must in large proportion be returned and returns to the community in the narrow or the wide sense, whether we construe it as an idea or as an actual group of people who are mutually supportive. This is the disposal of "the accursed share" in the ritual gift-giving of potlatch, according to Bataille's expression (1999). So we should add to Mauss's three processes/obligations (to give, to accept, to reciprocate) a fourth, the "right" to the gift (Silber 1998: 145).

What can these offer us for understanding the concepts of the pure gift and of Greek benefaction? Behind the offering there is the idea of the totality. Just as when we speak of negative reciprocity we mean robbery and their derivatives which are observed between different groups/tribes, etc., that is different communities (cf. Sahllins 1974: 195, 199), by contrast, the offering or donation leads us to reinforce the concept of "common belonging" and consequently to the concept of "common having" or "possessing".

In closing, it is not fortuitous that in the First Cemetery of Athens, on the monument to the great benefactor Ioannis Bagas, who made over his entire fortune to the Greek State and died poor, is inscribed the epigram: "Having considered your own things common to all, worthy man, farewell?" (Evangelidou 1997: 15). What is the difference in expression from the corresponding epigram from Roman Antiquity: "Whatever Gellias owned was the common property of all", which is considered to

⁹ On the basis of this reasoning, Veyne remarks that since the state is one large family, it will sometimes resemble the domestic economy, it will resemble a house (Veyne 1993: 21).

have many parallels in the decrees honouring benefactors in the Hellenistic period (Veyne 1993: 317-318, n. 70).

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Елефтхериос Алексакис

Добročинство и добротворност: концепт поклона и реализација заједнице у Грчкој

Антрополошки приступ

Кључне речи: добročинство, добротворност, поклон, потлатцх, наслеђе, филантропија, литургија, национални добročинитељ, волонтаризам, заједница

Овај рад дијахроно истражује феномен добročинства и добротворности у Грчкој; интерпретација се базира на важећим теоријама постављеним од стране истакнутих социолога, антрополога и филозофа. Предложено је такође да поклон/понуа служи да ојача концепт заједнице као такве, као етничко-националне групе или групе где је човек постављен у средиште.