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"For it is the duty of the wealthy to render service to the state"
(Demosthenes, Speech: *Against Phaenippus*, 42.22)

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Munificence in democratic and oligarchic systems of the ancient world: a comparative approach

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Η αρχαία πόλη βασίζονταν στις εθελοντικές συνεισφορές της ανώτερης τάξης για τη συντήρηση των υποδομών της, καθώς και στη χορηγία για τις πολιτιστικές και θρησκευτικές εκδηλώσεις και, σε μερικές περιπτώσεις, ακόμα και για την κάλυψη στρατιωτικών δαπανών. Οι μέθοδοι εφαρμογής αυτής της γενναιοδωρίας ορίζονταν με αυστηρότητα, έτσι ώστε οι πλουσιότεροι άνδρες να μην μονοπωλήσουν την πολιτική εξουσία. Στις ολιγαρχίες η γενναιοδωρία ήταν στενά συνδεδεμένη με την κατοχή αξιώματος, ενώ οι λειτουργίες φαίνεται να προτιμούνταν ως μοντέλο από τα δημοκρατικά καθεστώτα. Δεδομένου ότι οι λειτουργίες αποτελούσαν μία μορφή τιμητικού φόρου για τους πλούσιους, η εκπλήρωση αυτού του καθήκοντος δεν συνεπαγόταν άμεσα και πολιτική δύναμη, παρόλο που χρησιμοποιούνταν από τους πολιτικούς για την προσωπική τους ανάδειξη. Η σχέση μεταξύ των οικονομικών δαπανών και της πολιτικής δύναμης ήταν ισχυρότερη εκεί όπου η γενναιοδωρία αποτελούσε ένα επισημοποιημένο μέρος του συστήματος κατοχής αξιωμάτων, όπως συνέβαινε για παράδειγμα στην περίπτωση του Ρωμαϊκού *cursus honorum* ή του αξιώματος του αγωνοθέτη στην Αθήνα μετά την πτώση της δημοκρατίας. Το παρόν κείμενο θα διερευνήσει τους κανόνες που αφορούσαν στη γενναιοδωρία στον αρχαίο κόσμο μέσα από μία συγκριτική παρουσίαση και τη μελέτη των επιπτώσεων των διαφορετικών μοντέλων γενναιοδωρίας στα πολιτικά συστήματα.

Keywords
Munificence, community patronage, *euergetism*, liberality, gratitude, the economy of gratitude, comparative history

The Mediterranean area was, in antiquity, a vast political laboratory where Greek, Etruscan, Latin and Phoenician city-states experimented with different social and political structures in order to achieve strength abroad and harmony at home. In all these city-states we find sponsorship, or munificence, as an integral part of the system. The character of the system

(monarchic, oligarchic or democratic) decided, however, in which form this sponsorship manifested itself. Aristotle, the worlds first comparative political scientist, advised those who wanted to establish and secure an oligarchy to channel munificence through the office holding system instead of the democratic (especially Athenian) system where liturgies were distributed among all the rich (even some of the free resident aliens, the *metoikoi*), regardless of their political ambition or lack thereof:

> And furthermore the most supreme offices also, which must be retained by those within the constitution [the oligarchs], must have expensive duties attached to them, in order that the common people may be willing to be excluded from them, and may feel no resentment against the ruling class, because it pays a high price for office. And it fits in with this that they should offer splendid sacrifices and build up some public monument on entering upon office, so that the common people sharing in the festivities and seeing the city decorated both with votive offerings and with buildings may be glad to see the constitution enduring; and an additional result will be that the notables will have memorials of their outlay. [1]

Unfortunately, anything comparable to the detailed information we have about sponsorship in democratic Athens, is lacking for the many Greek oligarchies of the 5th and 4th century, but on the premise that we are dealing with modes of thought and action common across the Greco-Roman World, Republican Rome may serve as an example of the kind of oligarchy Aristotle was talking about. Even if this premise is not wholeheartedly accepted, the comparison will still throw light on how the liturgy system served the Athenian democracy better than the available alternatives in the political laboratory of the ancient Mediterranean

1. Aristotle, *Politics* 6.4.6: ἔτι δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ταῖς κυριωτάταις, ἃς δεῖ τοὺς ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ κατέχειν, δεῖ προσκεῖσθαι λειτουργίας, ἵν᾽ ἑκὼν ὁ δῆμος μὴ μετέχῃ καὶ συγγνώμην ἔχῃ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν ὡς μισθὸν πολὺν διδοῦσι τῆς ἀρχῆς. ἁρμόττει δὲ θυσίας τε εἰσιόντας ποιεῖσθαι μεγαλοπρεπεῖς καὶ κατασκευάζειν τι τῶν κοινῶν, ἵνα τῶν περὶ τὰς ἑστιάσεις μετέχων ὁ δῆμος καὶ τὴν πόλιν ὁρῶν κοσμουμένην τὰ μὲν ἀναθήμασι τὰ δὲ οἰκοδομήμασιν ἄσμενος ὁρᾷ μένουσαν τὴν πολιτείαν: συμβήσεται δὲ καὶ τοῖς γνωρίμοις εἶναι μνημεῖα τῆς δαπάνης. See also *Politics* 5.7.11-12. Aristotle uses the term liturgy also for expenditures as part of an office-holder's duties. In the interest of clarity, I have, however, reserved this term for the well-known Atheninan liturgy-system.

world.[2] This paper will therefore compare the Roman Republic, which was a predominantly oligarchic system, to Classical Athens, which was democratic, in regards to sponsorship, munificence, big-man generosity or *euergetism*, to use a concept coined by Paul Veyne from the ancient Greek *euergesia* ("benefaction").[3]

Personally I find the term "community patronage", borrowed from the eminent M. I. Finley, to be more precise than Veyne's terminology, provided it is clearly demarcated from other forms of generosity.[4] Consequently, I will start with some definitions. The key to stability and consensus in ancient society was gratitude and liberality, what the Greeks called *kharis* and *euergesia,* and the Romans *gratia* and *liberalitas.* The giving of gifts took different forms, which can be divided into three main categories; (balanced) reciprocity or gift-exchange, personal patronage and community patronage.

Reciprocity is the exchange of goods and services between friends belonging more or less to the same social level. Over time the exchange of gifts would balance out, making the relationship a symmetrical one, based on equality. Friends provided credit and security for each other, bound together in a moral contract. The principle of gift exchange between friends, or reciprocity is pointedly summed up by the 7th century Greek poet Hesiod: *Give back with the same measure, and better if you can.*[5] A potential problem with this concept, however, is that some friends were less equal than others and could not give back with the same measure, and hence accumulated a debt of gratitude to their richer or more powerful friends.[6]

If one of the parties fell on hard times, and was permanently unable to reciprocate, this did not automatically classify him as an inferior friend. But

2. Regarding the usefulness of comparative method for the purpose of clarification, see Bloch 1992, Sewell 1967, Grew 1980 and Kocha 2003. Basically, all explanations contain comparative elements, so one might as well do it explicitly.
3. Veyne 1990, 10: "*Euergetism* means the fact that communities (cities, *collegia*) expected the rich to contribute from their wealth to the public expenses, and that this expectation was not disappointed… Their expenditure on behalf of the community was directed above all to entertainments… and more broadly to public pleasures (banquets) and the construction of public buildings, in short, to pleasures and public works…".
4. Finley 1983, 35: "that is, large-scale private expenditure, whether compulsory or voluntary, for communal purposes –temples and other public works, theatre and gladiatorial shows, festivals and feasts– in return for popular approval…".
5. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 349-351: εὖ μὲν μετρεῖσθαι παρὰ γείτονος, εὖ δ' ἀποδοῦναι, αὐτῷ τῷ μέτρῳ, καὶ λώιον, αἴ κε δύνηαι, ὡς ἂν χρηίζων καὶ ἐς ὕστερον ἄρκιον εὕρῃς.
6. Reciprocity: Van Wees 1998, 13-49; Patronage: Wallace-Hadrill 1989, 3ff.

when friendships were struck across an already existing social chasm, and the exchange could not be anything but unbalanced, we are dealing with a patron-client relationship. This relationship was still based on a moral contract rather than an economic one, since the client was never expected to balance the accounts, but it was also clearly a hierarchical relationship. The client's debt of gratitude to the patron cost him part of his personal freedom, and enhanced the social standing of the patron. A politically ambitious patron could use his clients to persuade other citizens to listen to and vote for him.

Personal patronage is found in democratic Athens[7] as well as in oligarchic Rome, but its particular function and the rates of exchange between patrons and clients were different, due to differences in the two states' respective political, judicial and social systems.[8] Likewise, community patronage, the act of being generous to the whole community instead of just to individuals, had a different flavour in democratic and oligarchic systems. The ancient city, no matter its political character, depended on community patronage, contributions from the elite for the maintenance of its infrastructure, sponsorship of cultural, religious and sports events and in some cases, even military expenses. A "big-man" (to borrow another concept, this time from the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins) gives from his surplus to the community at large in the expectation of honours in return.[9] This generosity did not, however, establish a personal relationship with the recipients and by the same logic, the "big-man" or benefactor could not outright demand honours in return. But he could expect some form of public recognition in return; the more so if the giving of the gift was voluntary rather than a formal duty.

It is community patronage, clearly distinguished from personal patronage, which will be the main subject of this paper. The venues for community patronage were strictly regulated in democratic Athens, so that the richest men could not monopolize political power. The liturgies were a kind of honorary tax on the rich, where the liturgist was supposed to finance a choir for the theatre, oil for the gymnasium, a religious sacrifice, a banquet during a festival, games and processions, or even equip and maintain a battleship.[10]

7. Zelnick-Abramovitz 2000. Her findings disprove Paul Millet's (1989, 15-44) thesis that patronage was "avoided" in classical Athens.
8. Maehle (forthcoming).
9. Sahlins 1963.
10. Wilson 2003, 4.

If the liturgist spent just the bare minimum necessary for such tasks, he was not considered to be exercising community patronage. But if he did a little bit more, he could claim to be the people's benefactor and draw from that prestige later in life. There was no direct translation of this gratitude into political power, although it was used for personal aggrandizement by ambitious liturgists. To be a choir-leader entailed privilege and prestige during the festivals, whereas the trierarchy also gave the liturgist military command of the battleship itself, if he did not hire a substitute.[11]

Liturgies, being a politically safe way to tap into the aristocratic generosity, were consequently the preferred model in democratic regimes.[12] It is noteworthy that the polis-wide sacrifices, with distribution of meat to the citizens, seem to have been financed by the state and were never a liturgy.[13] Based on a careful analysis of all the available evidence, Rosivach hypothesises that sacrifices financed by private generosity existed below the polis level, and points out that from the last third of the 4th century inscriptions praising individuals for their *philotimia* in subsidising public sacrifices are all erected by tribes, demes and even smaller units.[14] In the later Hellenistic quasi-democracies, the liturgical class and the political class became identical, and the people reduced to being judges between competing claims from the *euergetes*.[15] This development was caused by the loss of political independence, and the increased importance of the private funding of public life. Although the *agonethes* who replaced the *choregoi* continued to spend lavishly, it was as an office-holder and leading politician, monopolising the honour and gratitude which were formerly dispersed to a number of rich citizens, some who were active politicians and others who were not.[16]

The early beginnings of this can be seen in the mid-4th century BC, when a shortage of revenues from the loss of their empire forced the Athenian democracy to appoint wealthy curators, like Demosthenes, to fix the city walls, and to call for voluntary gifts of money to the city treasury.[17]

11. Wilson 2003, 2; Gabrielsen 1994, 39.
12. Gabrielsen 1994, 49.
13. Rosivach 1994, 107-115.
14. Rosivach 1994, 130-131.
15. Veyne 1990, 42-43, 103-105.
16. Wilson 2003, 271; Makres 88-89.
17. Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 110-119; Aescines, *Against Ctesiphon* 17-31. Cf. Veyne 1990, 91-92.

The use of such curators to maintain infrastructure is found in abundance in oligarchic Rome, together with a hierarchy of expensive offices to be climbed. Rome's roads, aqueducts, temples, festivals and public banquets were partly and sometimes even fully financed by elected magistrates, curators or through occasional gifts in connection with triumphs or funerals. The link between economic spending and political power was much stronger where munificence was a formalized part of the office holding system, as was the case, for example, with the Roman *cursus honorum* and the Hellenistic regimes of notables.

The main difference is between obligatory and voluntary giving. The more the giving is voluntary, the more prestige and gratitude will result from it. By forcing all the rich to contribute whether or not they had political ambitions, the Athenian democracy reduced the oligarchical threat that community patronage could entail. A tax would have achieved this goal even better, but that would have required a larger administrative apparatus and would have removed the incentive to give.[18] Taxes, like the *eisphora* in Athens and *tributum* in Rome, were for wars. The liturgies weighed heavily enough, and the total obligations of a rich gentleman were considerable, if we are to believe Xenophon's version of Socrates:

> "… in the first place," explained Socrates, "I notice that you are bound to offer many large sacrifices; else, I fancy, you would get into trouble with gods and men alike. Secondly, it is your duty to entertain many strangers, on a way befitting a great man. Thirdly, you have to give dinners to the citizens, or you lose your following. Moreover, I observe that already the state is exacting heavy contributions from you: you must keep horses, pay for choruses and gymnastic competitions, and accept presidencies; and if war breaks out, I know they will require you to maintain a ship and pay taxes that will nearly crush you. Whenever you seem to fall short of what is expected of you, the Athenians will certainly punish you as though they had caught you robbing them".[19]

18. Gabrielsen 1994, 50.
19. Xenophon, *Economics* 2.5-7: ὅτι πρῶτον μὲν ὁρῶ σοι ἀνάγκην οὖσαν θύειν πολλά τε καὶ μεγάλα, ἢ οὔτε θεοὺς οὔτε ἀνθρώπους οἶμαί σε ἂν ἀνασχέσθαι: ἔπειτα ξένους προσήκει σοι πολλοὺς δέχεσθαι, καὶ τούτους μεγαλοπρεπῶς: ἔπειτα δὲ πολίτας δειπνίζειν καὶ εὖ ποιεῖν, ἢ ἔρημον συμμάχων εἶναι. ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὴν πόλιν αἰσθάνομαι τὰ μὲν ἤδη σοι προστάττουσαν μεγάλα τελεῖν, ἱπποτροφίας τε καὶ χορηγίας καὶ γυμνασιαρχίας καὶ προστατείας, ἂν δὲ δὴ πόλεμος γένηται, οἶδ᾽ ὅτι καὶ τριηραρχίας

Indeed, the burden of the trierarchy, equipping a war ship, was so heavy that the responsibility for each ship was increasingly, from the 4th century, divided between two or more syntriarchs.[20] But fulfilling, or better, over-fulfilling one's obligations could also be a source of pride. We hear that Socrates's interlocutor was concerned that he should retain his following, and in the corpus of Attic forensic oratory, the performance of both personal and community patronage looms large. For symmetry, let me first give an example from Demosthenes's self-justification of personal patronage, something too long considered a foreign element in democratic Athens:

> In private life, if any of you are not aware that I have been generous and courteous, and helpful to the distressed, I do not mention it. I will never say a word, or tender any evidence about such matters as the captives I have ransomed, or the dowries I have helped to provide, or any such acts of charity. It is a matter of principle with me. My view is that the recipient of a benefit ought to remember it all his life, but that the benefactor ought to put it out of his mind at once, if the one is to behave decently, and the other with magnanimity. To remind a man of the good turns you have done him is very much like a reproach. Nothing shall induce me to do anything of the sort; but whatever be my reputation in that respect, I am content.[21]

He claims he will never say a word, but only mentions that he could very well name the beneficiaries. Earlier in the same speech, Demosthenes compares his own circumstances with those of his enemy Aeschines, which gave them unequal opportunities to be community patrons and render useful political services to the state:

[μισθοὺς] καὶ εἰσφορὰς τοσαύτας σοι προστάξουσιν ὅσας σὺ οὐ ῥᾳδίως ὑποίσεις. ὅπου δ' ἂν ἐνδεῶς δόξῃς τι τούτων ποιεῖν, οἶδ' ὅτι σε τιμωρήσονται Ἀθηναῖοι οὐδὲν ἧττον ἢ εἰ τὰ αὑτῶν λάβοιεν κλέπτοντα.

20. Gabrielsen 1994, 178.

21. Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 268-269: ἐν μὲν τοίνυν τοῖς πρὸς τὴν πόλιν τοιοῦτος: ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἰδίοις εἰ μὴ πάντες ἴσθ' ὅτι κοινὸς καὶ φιλάνθρωπος καὶ τοῖς δεομένοις ἐπαρκῶν, σιωπῶ καὶ οὐδὲν ἂν εἴποιμι οὐδὲ παρασχοίμην περὶ τούτων οὐδεμίαν μαρτυρίαν, οὔτ' εἴ τινας ἐκ τῶν πολεμίων ἐλυσάμην, οὔτ' εἴ τισιν θυγατέρας συνεξέδωκα, οὔτε τῶν τοιούτων οὐδέν. καὶ γὰρ οὕτω πως ὑπείληφα. ἐγὼ νομίζω τὸν μὲν εὖ παθόντα δεῖν μεμνῆσθαι πάντα τὸν χρόνον, τὸν δὲ ποιήσαντ' εὐθὺς ἐπιλελῆσθαι, εἰ δεῖ τὸν μὲν χρηστοῦ, τὸν δὲ μὴ μικροψύχου ποιεῖν ἔργον ἀνθρώπου. τὸ δὲ τὰς ἰδίας εὐεργεσίας ὑπομιμνήσκειν καὶ λέγειν μικροῦ δεῖν ὅμοιόν ἐστι τῷ ὀνειδίζειν. οὐ δὴ ποιήσω τοιοῦτον οὐδέν, οὐδὲ προαχθήσομαι, ἀλλ' ὅπως ποθ' ὑπείλημμαι περὶ τούτων, ἀρκεῖ μοι.

> In my boyhood, Aeschines, I had the advantage of attending respectable schools: and my means were sufficient for one who was not to be driven by poverty into disreputable occupations. When I had come of age, my circumstances were in accordance with my upbringing. I was in a position to provide a chorus, to pay for a war-galley, and to be assessed to property-tax. I renounced no honourable ambition either in public or in private life: and rendered good service both to the state and to my own friends. When I decided to take part in public affairs, the political services I chose were such that I was repeatedly decorated both by my own country and by many other Grecian cities and even my enemies, such as you, never ventured to say that my choice was other than honourable.[22]

Whereas Demosthenes's community patronage was never rewarded with any office, the situation was quite the opposite for Cicero, climbing the *cursus honorum* in Rome. Success without heavy spending was exceptional:

> To be sure, Lucius Philippus, the son of Quintus, a man of great ability and unusual renown, used to make it his boast that without giving any entertainments he had risen to all the positions looked upon as the highest within the gift of the state. Cotta could say the same, and Curio. I, too, may make this boast my own –to a certain extent; for in comparison with the eminence of the offices to which I was unanimously elected at the earliest legal age –and this was not the good fortune of any one of those just mentioned– the outlay in my aedileship was very inconsiderable. Again, the expenditure of money is better justified when it is made for walls, docks, harbours, aqueducts, and all those works which are of service to the community. There is, to be sure, more of present satisfaction in what is handed out, like cash down; nevertheless public improvements win us greater gratitude with posterity. Out of respect for Pompey's

22. Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 257: ἐμοὶ μὲν τοίνυν ὑπῆρξεν, Αἰσχίνη, παιδὶ μὲν ὄντι φοιτᾶν εἰς τὰ προσήκοντα διδασκαλεῖα, καὶ ἔχειν ὅσα χρὴ τὸν μηδὲν αἰσχρὸν ποιήσοντα δι᾽ ἔνδειαν, ἐξελθόντι δ᾽ ἐκ παίδων ἀκόλουθα τούτοις πράττειν, χορηγεῖν, τριηραρχεῖν, εἰσφέρειν, μηδεμιᾶς φιλοτιμίας μήτ᾽ ἰδίας μήτε δημοσίας ἀπολείπεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ πόλει καὶ τοῖς φίλοις χρήσιμον εἶναι, ἐπειδὴ δὲ πρὸς τὰ κοινὰ προσελθεῖν ἔδοξέ μοι, τοιαῦτα πολιτεύμαθ᾽ ἑλέσθαι ὥστε καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς πατρίδος καὶ ὑπ᾽ ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων πολλῶν πολλάκις ἐστεφανῶσθαι, καὶ μηδὲ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμᾶς, ὡς οὐ καλά γ᾽ ἦν ἃ προειλόμην, ἐπιχειρεῖν λέγειν.

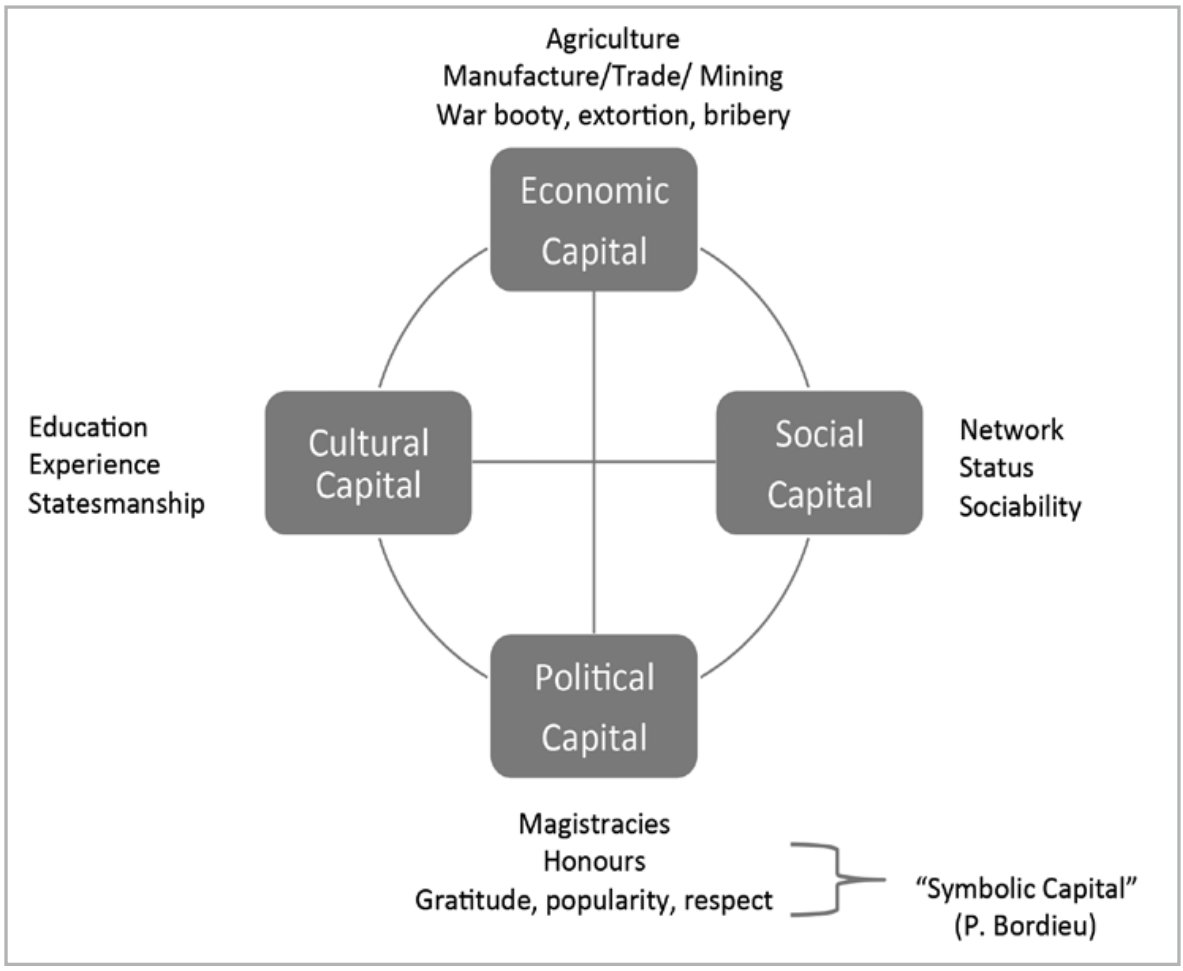

Table 1: Forms of capital used in the political competition in the ancient city-states.

> memory I am rather diffident about expressing any criticism of theatres, colonnades, and new temples...[23]

Despite elaborate measures to separate economic and political power during its democratic heyday, Athens was still very much a typical city-state of the ancient world. There was no attempt to equalize economic

23. Cicero, *On Duties* 2. 59-60: L. quidem Philippus Q. f., magno vir ingenio in primisque clarus, gloriari solebat se sine ullo munere adeptum esse omnia, quae haberentur amplissima. Dicebat idem Cotta, Curio. Nobis quoque licet in hoc quodam modo gloriari; nam pro amplitudine honorum, quos cunctis suffragiis adepti sumus nostro quidem anno, quod contigit eorum nemini, quos modo nominavi, sane exiguus sumptus aedilitatis fuit. Atque etiam illae impensae meliores, muri, navalia, portus, aquarum ductus omniaque, quae ad usum rei publicae pertinent. Quamquam, quod praesens tamquam in manum datur, iucundius est; tamen haec in posterum gratiora. Theatra, porticus, nova templa verecundius reprehendo propter Pompeium…

capital, and consequently the rich formed the cultural and social elites, which dominated proceedings in the people's assembly and were elected to high office (see Table 1). What we can call political capital, (avoiding Bordieu's confusing symbolic capital) could also be accumulated by spending one's economic capital, as we have already seen. But how, more exactly, did democratic Athens differ from oligarchic Rome in this respect?

Community patronage was played out through the role of "community patron", but with rules and rates of exchange particular to each system. The Athenian system maximized the output from the elite and minimized their input, while the Roman republican system, pursuing the opposite course, finally collapsed under the accumulated political capital of a few magnates. Whereas none of the political offices in democratic Athens entailed expenses for the office-holder, this was the rule in Rome; from *aedile* upwards to *praetor* and *consul*, the incumbent was supposed to use more money than the state set aside for the maintenance of the infrastructure and the organization of festivals. Expenses incurred on one step of the ladder were supposed to bring electoral success at the next stage. In democratic Athens community patronage of this kind was instead channelled through liturgies and born by all citizens who were rich enough. The expenditures exceeding the minimum for completing a liturgy would fall under the heading of a voluntary gift (community patronage), and would therefore entitle the liturgist to respect and gratitude. The numerous ways the Athenian elite could hide their wealth from this form of taxation, however, meant that just paying one's dues in itself brought goodwill, having, as it did, an element of voluntarism in it.[24]

By contrast, with magistracies it would be what one spent in addition to what was provided through the state budget that would be the measure of generosity, but since holding magistracies was completely voluntary, the munificent magistrate got more out of his spending than the munificent liturgist. The curatorship, however, is a kind of magistracy, admittedly limited, but clearly halfway towards the oligarchic model, and providing a bridge to the later Hellenistic system.

In addition to this regular munificence, the cities occasionally received gifts from the so-called public men, either solicited when the city treasury was low on funds or given unexpectedly, like a windfall. As far as we know this mostly happened in oligarchic Rome when a commander returned with

24. Gabrielsen 1994, 53-59, contra Veyne (1990, 76) who sees liturgists as ordinary tax-payers.

booty from a military campaign and consecrated it to the gods and the city, but it could also happen without such external resources, as in the case of Claudius The Blind, who as censor paid for both the Appian Way and the Appian Aquaduct, to his name's eternal glory. In Athens, however, the commanders did not have so much discretion over the division of spoils, and their gifts were primarily financed from private wealth.

A number of decrees survive from Greek cities, and also from Athens, in periods where imperial revenue could not feed the city, honouring private individuals for providing corn at a below market price (though not necessarily with much of a loss) during food-shortages.[25] In Rome we know of only one instance, when a rich plebeian knight was put to death for handing out corn free of charge to keep the people from starving during the famine of 440-439 BC, the pretext being that he aspired to kingship.[26] Even providing corn from the treasury was seen by the most conservative members of the senate as an attempt to set up a tyranny, but the oligarchy gradually excepted that the state should provide subsidized corn for its citizens, to keep the growing population of Rome from revolting. Likewise it was only senators or senators' sons who provided city-wide banquets and entertainment in Rome, whereas this was considered a normal and civil thing in Athens, with no penalties involved.

Munificence was strictly regulated and monopolized by the Roman senators in order for them to control access to political power,[27] whereas it was in the interest of stability and social peace in Athens to encourage all the rich, regardless of political ambitions, to indulge in such liberality. The reason for this was simply that political office and community patronage in an oligarchy were usually institutionally intertwined, just as Aristotle advised (although he complained that the oligarchs of his day cheated the people out of this munificence).

For a democracy to work, however, political office and community patronage must, as far as possible, be institutionally separated. Although Alcibiades used the splendour of his generosity as an argument for electing him general (*strategos)*,[28] he was not without military accomplishment, and Athens was as a rule fortunate in its selection of capable generals. Apart from the increasingly important financial office as chief of the Theoric

25. Gallant 1991, 182-196; Garnsey 1988, 154-156, 163.
26. Livy, *The History of Rome,* 4.13-14.
27. For an analysis of how generosity and political power went hand in hand in the Roman republic, see Yakobson 1992.
28. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesean War* 6.163.

Fund, general was the only office one could be elected to. Most generals and speakers were also liturgists, since the cultural and social capital necessary to perform their functions required economic capital, but so were many others, and neither influence nor electoral support could be bought in quite the same way as in Rome. Politicians were sometimes generals, but in the 4th century more often just speakers, *rhetores*, relying on no other power than the force of their knowledge and arguments. Expenses in Rome were part of the electoral climbing competition through the hierarchy of offices, whereas being a community patron in Athens gained one a standing among peers, but not necessarily any tangible political power.

Lastly, political capital in democracies could not normally translate into economic capital. The community patron in Athens therefore had to finance his munificence from his own resources, and unless he let himself be bribed by foreign powers, which some politicians obviously were, a political career was not lucrative. In Rome, on the contrary, the winners in the electoral competitions could recuperate their spent fortune from the use and abuse of political office and at the expense of the subject, non-Roman peoples living in the Roman Empire. As provincial governor, it was said, one had to extort

Community patronage	
Roman Republic	**Democratic Athens**
• Magistracies with expensive duties	• Liturgies (exceeding minimum)
• Curatorships	• Curatorships
• Gifts to the city from booty	• Gifts to the city from private wealth
• Subsidised corn from the treasury	• Subsidised corn from private sources
• Only senators provide banquets and entertainment	• The rich and ambitious provide banquets and entertainment
• Munificence strictly regulated and monopolised by the senators	• Munificence encouraged from all the rich, regardless of ambitions
• Political office and community patronage institutionally intertwined	• Political office and community patronage institutionally divorced
• Electoral expenses to climb a hierarchy of offices	• Expenses to gain a standing in the community
• Expenses can be recuperated from the empire	• Expenses must be financed from the givers own resources.

Table 2: Community patronage in the Roman Republic and Democratic Athens.

three fortunes. One to pay back the debt incurred during the campaigns for office, one to bribe the jurors when hauled before the extortion court upon return from the provinces, and one fortune to live happily ever after and finance one's son elevation to the same status. No wonder that the system broke down, considering all those desperate competitors who spent a fortune and lost. For people like Catilina and Caesar, the choice was between winning and revolution. Bankruptcy and exile were unthinkable solutions.

The differences between democratic Athens and oligarchic Rome in regard to community patronage are summarised in Table 2.

This short investigation has shown that it makes a substantial difference whether community patronage is played out within the liturgy system or the office-holding system. Just as Aristotle claimed, the elite input in the form of respect, gratitude and support (political capital), was more substantial if the output was not forced upon the giver, but voluntarily taken up along with the other burdens of office. We have also seen the dangers inherent in the office-holding system when political office can be used to increase the incumbents' wealth, transforming the political competition to a race towards monopolisation of power.

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