

## CHAPTER 8

*Life in a line: a reading of dedicatory epigrams  
from the archaic and classical period*

*William D. Furley*

## I

We are dealing here with verse inscriptions written on physical objects which appear to have been dedicated to one or more gods. I say 'appear to have been' because we are not always sure of the status of an object, whether bronze vessel or stone capital, on which the inscription was carved. Usually we *conclude* that the object concerned was a gift to the gods from the inscription and sometimes we have to *guess* what the object was as it is lost but the inscription survives. And, although such inscriptions continued throughout antiquity, in accordance with the purposes of this volume I will concentrate on the archaic and classical material with a view to showing the 'roots' of dedicatory epigrams, which fostered literary embellishments and fictions in the Hellenistic period. The source material comes mainly from Friedländer/Hoffleit (1948), Raubitschek (1949) for the dedications on the Athenian Acropolis, and the useful catalogue in Lazzarini (1976).<sup>1</sup> Where possible I cite the texts as printed in *CEG* I and II.

It is my prime contention that such a dedicatory epigram represents a symbolic caption to an act of worship which takes place momentarily (though perhaps over hours) but whose significance extends both backwards and forwards in time so as to render the worshipper's act at least of 'longue durée', and, ideally, timeless (since we are still reading these texts, two and a half thousand years is a good approximation to 'timeless'). Thus the text acts as a focal point in time: it records a religious act, and asks for two forms of recognition of this act in the future: (1) recognition from god in the form of *charis* and (2) recognition from the human eyes of all those in the future who read the inscription and understand it. But a dedicatory epigram focuses not only time but also a constellation of separate entities

<sup>1</sup> I have been deliberately selective in my choice of epigrams discussed in order to keep the argument as clear as possible. The dedicatory epigrams tend by their very nature to be repetitive in content and this is an area where too many trees can obscure the wood.

into a permanent relationship: the worshipper, the thing and the god or gods addressed. This typical trinity of involved parties is welded by the recorded act into a pact for the future. Just as a fossil by its type and position in strata tells the geologist a story extending from this physical point in rock both forwards and backwards in the history of the earth, thus does a dedicatory epigram represent a fossilised or, better, petrified, expression of wish and intent in a worshipper's religious life. All of these points now require clarification and illustration.

The simplest dedicatory epigrams are one-liners labelling giver and god. The person making the dedication wants to make sure all concerned know which god or goddess is to receive the gift, and who is giving it. I once had the misfortune, aged ten, to give an idolised teacher a gift at the end of term only to realise, having walked some three miles to deliver the gift into her letter-box and then three miles back home again, that the gift tag saying who the gift was from had come off in my pocket and the teacher would be the recipient of a puzzling anonymous gift. Needless to say, another six arduous miles had to be covered to restore this meaningful slip of paper to its rightful place beside the gift in the letter-box. An anecdote. Now for some Greek anecdotes.

Σιμίον μ' ἀνέθετε Ποτειδάφον[ι] φάνακτι<sup>2</sup>

wrote one Simion of Corinth on a clay tablet which he dedicated to Poseidon around the mid sixth century. The inscription accompanied a portrayal on the tablet of Zeus and Poseidon facing each other in colloquy. So he presented Poseidon with a picture of himself portrayed as Zeus' equal and reminded the god daily in his temple that Simion had given him that present. Since Simion would not always be there to speak in person, the tablet speaks for him 'Simion placed *me*', to follow Raubitschek's plausible account of why votive offerings speak in the first person singular.<sup>3</sup> These then are the absolutely basic parameters: who gave, and to whom? The question 'what?' is answered by the object itself.

One-liners do not usually manage the second temporal dimension, that is, the request for beneficence in the future, except by implication. This twofold temporal structure – x gave, so god should give in the future – is usually dependent on two syntactic units spread over two lines of verse.

<sup>2</sup> CEG I, no. 357; Friedländer/Hoffleit 1948, no. 11. For illustrations of other, similar, archaic votives to Poseidon from Corinth see Kiderlen/Strocka 2005, nos. 26–8.

<sup>3</sup> Raubitschek 1969.

We read on a marble column supporting a dedicatory offering from the Acropolis (*CEG* I, no. 227):<sup>4</sup>

Φαρθένε ἐν ἀκροπόλει Τελεσίνος ἄγαλμ' ἀνέθεκεν  
Κέτιος, ἥοι χαίροσσα διδοίες ἄλο ἀναθέναι

O virgin upon the Acropolis, Telesinus of Kettos erected this work  
of art; take pleasure in it and grant that he may erect another.

Telesinus addresses Athena in person here, and requests in return for his pleasing gift the prosperity necessary to repeat his generosity in future.<sup>5</sup> The wording encapsulates the moment of present giving combined with the hoped-for future benefits as well. Athena should 'take pleasure in the gift' (*χαίρουσα*), that key concept in Greek religion which hymns and prayers emphasise: reciprocal *charis*. The worshipper thanks a god for a perceived blessing, and renders *charis* unto the god; the god *feels* gratitude (*χαίρει*) and bestows *grace* upon the worshipper in return. These are well-explored concepts in Greek religious thinking.<sup>6</sup> The monument as a whole is set up as a kind of permanent prayer. As long as it stands and Athena reads it (not to speak of human visitors to the Acropolis), Telesinus' message – both visual and oral – rings out.<sup>7</sup>

At this point we should consider Raubitschek's idea that the text of dedicatory inscriptions is not only *like* a prayer, the form indeed *derives* from prayer.<sup>8</sup> For he argued that funerary epigrams recorded elegiac mourning for the dead whilst dedicatory epigrams recorded prayers spoken at the unveiling ceremony, as it were, of the offering itself. His idea was that these written texts constituted a record in stone of the words spoken (or sung) at the ceremony.

But whilst his perception that there is an inherent *connection* between the spoken and written forms is a good one, we need not view the relationship literally. For one thing, the first-person inscriptions – in which the monument itself speaks – cannot represent the original words spoken at the ceremony; secondly, we are justified in assuming that reasons of space lead to *abbreviation* and *compression* in the written form compared to the spoken prayer or lament over the dead. We have only to compare Helen's

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Friedländer/Hoffleit 1948, no. 39; Bremer 1998: 131.

<sup>5</sup> van Straten 1981: 74: "... the votive inscriptions contain two recurrent motives – thanks for favours received and a prayer for new favours in the future."

<sup>6</sup> Parker 1998: esp. 110–11 on dedicatory epigrams; Bremer 1998: esp. 130–3 with further examples; in prayer: Pulley 1997: 4 and *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Van Straten 1981: 73 writes: 'The series prayer/vow–gratification–votive offering/new prayer can easily be extended into a continuous interaction between man and god.'

<sup>8</sup> Raubitschek 1969.

lament for Hector in the *Iliad*, for example, with a typical funerary epigram to realise that the text must constitute an extreme condensation of the oral abundance characteristic of actual mourning.

Raubitschek's idea has been considerably refined by Joseph Day.<sup>9</sup> He examines the idea that the wording of dedicatory epigrams of the archaic and early classical period *derives from* the original ritual at which the *agalma* in question was dedicated. He points to three typical aspects of these texts which connect with ritual: (1) the divine epithets commonly given to the deity addressed in dedicatory epigrams correspond to similar or equivalent epithets used in the prayer or hymn-singing which presumably accompanied the inaugural ceremony. He does not think that these epithets are thrown in merely to give an 'epic touch' to the texts, but rather that they are deliberately chosen to recall religious ceremonial. I totally agree. (2) These epigrams commonly include a prayer, as I have already mentioned, of the form 'god, please grant in return ...'. Quite rightly, Day says that such formulations precisely mirror the prayer which might well have been uttered at the inaugural ceremony. He moves on to thinner ice, in my opinion, when he considers the significance of *charis* asked of the gods in return for the dedication. Let us cite his own witness here, as it is a fine example of a dedicatory epigram by any reckoning (*CEG* I, no. 326):<sup>10</sup>

Μάντικλός μ' ἀνέθεκε φεκαβόλοι ἀργυροτόξοι  
τᾶς δεκάτας· τὺ δέ, Φοῖβε, δίδοι χαρίζετταν ἀμοιβ[άν].

Manticlus dedicated me to the Far-Shooter of the silver bow  
from the tithe; do you, Phoebus, please give gratifying reward.

I have already mentioned *charis* in the context of the reciprocal relationship so typical of Greek piety whereby the worshipper hopes to gain 'credit' with a god through his good offices. Day suggests an innovative approach to *charis*, however, which is only partially acceptable, in my view. He is right to point to the festive connotations of χάρις, χαίρω, χαρίεις and the like; these words *typify* the atmosphere the Greeks sought to produce through their religious ceremonial. But Day wishes to abandon the sense of 'recompense' in *charis* entirely in votive epigrams in favour of a meaning which sees in the request for *charis* a prayer for god's grace at the ceremony of dedication itself. Thus Manticlus' inscription is asking Apollo for *immediate* gratification rather than some favour in the future; the favour Apollo is

<sup>9</sup> Day 1994.

<sup>10</sup> C. 700–675, epigram on a Theban statuette. Cf. Friedländer/Hoffleit 1948, no. 35; Bremer 1998: 130–1, Parker 1998: 110–11.

supposed to grant is the delight and beauty of the inaugural ceremony itself. And, Day goes on, when a later visitor to Apollo's temple read Manticlus' inscription aloud, he would be recreating this inaugural festive joy in his mind's eye, rather than repeating Manticlus' prayer to Apollo for reward at some future date. This line of argument is intended to support Day's main point that dedicatory epigrams of this type *recreate* the inaugural ritual moment in the reader's mind (and voice). But he is stretching credibility with his interpretation of *charis* which, as in the Telesinus epigram quoted above (p. \*\*\*[2]), clearly refers to the beneficence which the god is asked to bestow on the worshipper in the future.<sup>11</sup>

And (3), still recapitulating Day's main argument, the proclamation of the dedicator's name, patronymic etc. in votive epigrams is like the proclamation of the victor by a herald at athletic competitions. This point, acceptable surely, further supports Day's contention that votive epigrams evoke ritual when they are read out.

So Day, in my opinion, has succeeded in refining the important point that votive epigrams are closely related to the language of ritual; they are not simply the written texts of the live ceremony, as Raubitschek had roundly asserted, but rather they *evoke* inaugural ceremonial when read out loud. Perhaps Day could have made use of the metaphor inherent in the Greek word for 'read' generally, ἀναγιγνώσκω. When one reads, one 're-cognises' from letters what the author said; similarly, when one reads what Manticlus or Telesinus dedicated, one recreates the act of giving in one's mind's eye. To return to my remark about the time-axis involved in static inscriptions: the dedicatory epigram is like a miniature music box which is still until one turns the handle; then the tune may be played *ad infinitum* into the future. The epigram gathers the giver's history of gratitude to the god into a record of his formalised thank-offering which then plays on in readers' minds for as long as the epigram is legible.<sup>12</sup>

Before considering this aspect of 'personal history' further, I would like to introduce a further conceptual tool for analysing votive epigrams. I will call this aspect 'biographical'. For dedicatory inscriptions walk a tight-rope between the private and the public. On the one hand the monuments

<sup>11</sup> Parker 1998: 109 discusses the question whether χάρις means, at this period, simply 'delight' or also connotes 'gratitude', 'recompense'. He points out that the word χάρις itself has nothing to do with 'return of favour' but does not deny that it acquired this sense by implication: 'for it is doubtless too extreme to deny that the *khari-* words underwent some pressure towards the meaning "gratitude" from their constant contextual association with ideas of deserved reward.'

<sup>12</sup> Cf. van Straten 1981: 72–3 for this combination of thanks-for-past-services with hope-for-the-future in votive inscriptions.

they adorn are public – assuming access to the sanctuary concerned is not restricted – whilst on the other they record personal religious history. This twofold aspect sets them apart from almost all other forms of Greek literature.<sup>13</sup> And the donors of gifts to the gods were, presumably, aware of the aspect of self-exposure through their donation; on the one hand they wished to reach the god's heart through prayer from the heart; on the other, their words were to be on permanent public view from then on and, what was possibly worse, their wish for *charis* from the god in future might expose them to future ridicule if the god manifestly failed them. Success in the past is one thing: one can thank god for that without reservation; but the donation of a priceless statue in the hope of future recompense might backfire nastily if the wish conspicuously failed to materialise. So a psychological element is introduced into these dedicatory epigrams: a fine balance had to be sought between revelation of private motivation and fail-safe wording 'just in case'. The following monument with epigram repays examination with all the above points in mind.

## II

Some time in the fifth century BC, residents of an offshoot of Massalia, itself a colony, called Antipolis (modern Antibes) found or perhaps bought a remarkable dark green stone shaped rather like a fat cucumber and presumably meant to resemble a phallus.<sup>14</sup> They inscribed on it two hexameters, whose text follows, and dedicated it to the goddess Aphrodite, no doubt in a temple of hers.<sup>15</sup>

Τέρπων εἰμὶ θεᾶς θεράπων σεμνῆς Ἀφροδίτης,  
τοῖς δὲ καταστήσασι Κύπρις χάριν ἀνταποδοίη.

I am Pleasure-Giver, servant of holy Aphrodite.  
May Cypris grant in return her grace to the donors.

The stone itself has an interesting history. It was found in 1866 built into a wall of a bastion in Peyrégoue, about a kilometre west of Antibes. It is a long, round stone approximately sixty centimetres in length and twenty in diameter, of greenish-black igneous rock (serpentine or diorite?), no doubt

<sup>13</sup> And forms an important link with later Hellenistic epigrams, including dedicatory ones, which foreground the biographical content, though whether in a documentary or a fictional sense is often hard to determine.

<sup>14</sup> CEG I, p. 219: *Lapis subniger qui similitudinem phalli habet*. Hansen dates to 450–25(?).

<sup>15</sup> CEG I, no. 400; H. Bazin, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 10, 1987, 537–8, fig. 23; IG XIV Appendix 641 nr. 2424; M. Clerc, *Massalia* I, 1927, 256, fig. 60; Broneer 1935: 125–6.



Figure 8.1 Terpon stone.

rounded by fluvial action. It weighs approximately 33 kilos. It seems to have recommended itself to the donors by its impressive smooth, round, and, in context, phallic shape. It has been assigned to the class of  $\alpha\gamma\gamma\omega\iota$  λιθοί, unworked stones of remarkable – hence divine – appearance by Friedländer/Hoffleit (1948, no. 40, p. 43) and Kron (1992: 64–5).<sup>16</sup> It is exhibited horizontally in the Musée Archéologique d'Antibes nowadays, but it may have been fixed upright when originally devoted to Aphrodite. Kron (1992: 65) cites round pebbles found in the sanctuary of Aphrodite–Eros on the north slope of the Athenian Acropolis which were cemented upright on low walls, or altars.<sup>17</sup> She also compares the Terpon-stone with depictions on two red-figure Apulian vases showing oval or round objects (again, large pebbles?) placed at the feet of Aphrodite.<sup>18</sup> In view of the

<sup>16</sup> Pausanias 9.27.1 says that the cult image of Eros at Thespiae in Boeotia was in the form of an  $\alpha\gamma\gamma\omega\iota$  λιθος.

<sup>17</sup> Broneer 1935: 118–19, fig. 8.

<sup>18</sup> E. Langlotz, *Aphrodite in den Gärten*, SB Heidelberg 1954.2, 31–2, fig. 6, pl. 5. For the phallus in public Athenian cult and vase painting see Keuls 1993: 78–9, with illustrations.

arrangement of the lines of writing on the Antipolis stone one might best imagine it standing upright with the line-beginnings uppermost.<sup>19</sup>

The stone announces its name, Terpōn, in the manner typical of 'speaking statues' which pronounce their identity in the first person and only speak of their donor in the third person. As Day (1994) points out, the stone could go on speaking for itself long after its human donor had passed away. Terpōn, a participle of *τέρπω*, means 'the pleasure giver'.<sup>20</sup> Friedländer/Hoffleit (1948: 44) well compare this with a winged phallic daemon named *Εύφραίνουσα* in *IG XIII 3.1658*.<sup>21</sup> Then Terpōn elaborates on the significance of its name and shape: 'I am the servant of holy Aphrodite.' 'Servant' surely in at least two senses: this is a phallic stone, a 'pleasure-giver', so it symbolises the male instrument of ἔργα 'Αφροδίτης. But it is also the 'servant of Aphrodite' in the sense of being her property now it has been devoted to her cult.<sup>22</sup>

In marked contrast to most dedicatory epigrams which record, if nothing else, at least the name of the donor, Terpon leaves the plural donors anonymous. They have 'set him up', *τοῖς καταστήσασι*, no doubt in a temple of Aphrodite in Antipolis. The verb used, *καθίστημι*, instead of the almost universal *ἀνατίθημι*, is perhaps another pointer to the erect position of the stone. Votive offerings are usually 'raised' (*ἀνατίθημι*) to the god to mark their prominence above the profane ground level; but Terpon had to be 'set up', at ground level perhaps, like the Acropolis round-stones, or one of the planted phalloi which are sometimes depicted on vases.<sup>23</sup> Why the anonymity of the donors? From bashfulness? Because their names did not fit in one hexameter? Because their gift was basically worthless, being a found stone and not a gilded statue or bronze cult utensil? Hard to say. But we should not overlook the significance of the plural. The donors ask Cypris to grant her grace (*χάρις*) to them. What is Cypris' grace? Naturally success in her province, sexual love. But this is not the request of a magical *praxis*, requesting that ὁ δεῖνα fall in, or out of, love with someone, but rather two

<sup>19</sup> The monumental phalloi on pedestals in Delos (Keuls 1993, fig. 66) are upright; an interesting votive set of male genitalia (Berlin Antikensammlung SMPK, TC 0601), perhaps from sixth/fifth century BC Italy, was so constructed that it could either be stood upright on its end or lain down flat; see Kiderlein/Strocka 2005: 80, no. 24; Heike Tahödl writes there: 'Es [sc. this phallus] könnte auch ein erotisches Votiv etwa an Dionysos darstellen. Dann wäre es als ein Weihgeschenk mit völlig anderer Intention zu betrachten. Vielleicht war diese Weiheung mit einer Bitte verbunden, bei der es nicht um Heilungen oder den Schutz vor Krankheiten ging, sondern um leidenschaftliches Liebesverlangen und um Fruchtbarkeit, die Dionysos-Bacchus verkörperte.'

<sup>20</sup> Broneer 1935: 126 n.1 writes: 'Terpon appears on several Attic R. F. vases as the name of Sileni, the ithyphallic representation of which also points to his Aphrodisiac character.'

<sup>21</sup> Pausanias 9.11.2 also mentions a stone called 'sōphronister', 'Soberer', with which Athena struck Heracles to free him of his homicidal madness (Kron 1992: 65); cf. Eur. *Her.* 1002–6.

<sup>22</sup> Broneer 1935: 126. <sup>23</sup> Kron 1992: 65.

people at least asking Aphrodite for her blessing. Perhaps the stone was dedicated by a couple as prayer for a good love-life crowned by fertility; the masculine gender of the participle certainly does not preclude that. Or perhaps several men, a group even, erected the monument jointly.<sup>24</sup>

So these two hexameters succeed in 'freezing' a moment of dedicatory prayer which encapsulates in miniature a human story, or biography. The text draws past (*τοῖς καταστήσασι*), present (*Τέρπων εἰμί*) and future (*χάριν ἀνταποδοίην*) together into a 'time-ball' which rolls on into the future. They identify the cast in the mini-drama: the personified stone, Terpon, symbolising the central act of the drama; Aphrodite, the power able to grant or refuse the request; the two (or more) human worshippers who petitioned Aphrodite with their gift. And they structure the request within the space of two lines with modest, but compelling logic: as the worshippers have given Aphrodite a delightful gift, so she should return the favour (*ἀνταποδοίην*)<sup>25</sup> by granting her grace. And, finally, the dedication maintains supreme discretion. Its readers will never know who prayed for the joys of Aphrodite, nor whether she answered their prayers. *They* knew they had petitioned the goddess in an effective manner, year-in year-out, but they also knew their secret was safe from the remaining Antipolitanoi.

## III

What did gods want? The question vexed Plato in *Euthyphro*. There he had Socrates say: 'What the gods give [us] is clear to everybody. We possess practically no good thing which does not originate from them. But what of what they get from us? How does that help them?'<sup>26</sup> Euthyphro, fumbling for an answer, talks about 'service' (*ὑπερεσία*) of the gods, the 'honour and gifts' (*τιμή τε καὶ γέρα*) which they receive. Socrates presses the point: 'But how do these things *help* them?' Euthyphro confesses that the gods *like* them.

<sup>24</sup> See above n. 19. P. Bing made the interesting suggestion in discussion that a *hetaireia* of men might have dedicated the stone for the better fulfilment of their collective lust; one might point to such groups as the Kakodaimonistai (Lysias *Against Kinesias* Or. 9 Albinii) or Triballoi in Athens (Dem. 54, *Against Konon* 39) or the cult of the Ithyphalloi (Athenaeus 11.97 Kaibel; Douris ap. Athen. 6.63 Kaibel = *FHG* II 476), as evidence of such groups with lewd interests. Bremer 1998: 132 also assumes a number of men dedicated the stone: 'these men who manifested their gratitude for the delights of the goddess by means of this dedication, did they hope to retain their sexual potency for a long time to come?' Against the idea of group donation here, I wonder whether this found stone with its wobbly lettering is an impressive enough monument to represent the semi-official petition of a group of men. It seems to me that its modest nature would better suit a private dedication. For phallic offerings to Aphrodite generally see Broneer 1935: 125–32; women's offerings in the shape of genitalia: Plato Comicus, *Phaon*, ap. Athen. 10.48 Kaibel (= fr. 188.8 KA).

<sup>25</sup> For the expression *χάριν ἀντιδίδονται* in votive formulae see Lazzarini 1976, nos. 788, 789, 792.

<sup>26</sup> *Euthyphr.* 14eII–15a2.

Socrates says: 'Ah, so piety is a form of "pleasing" (*κεχαρισμένον*)?' Although Euthyphro is dissatisfied with the position in which Socrates has cornered him, from our point of view, Socrates has hit the nail on the head. Worship is offering what is *κεχαρισμένον*, 'pleasing, full-of-*χάρις*', to the gods. For only when offerings are 'pleasing' will the god addressed feel motivated to return the favour by granting his grace (*charis*). For the successful reciprocity which is the key to Greek piety to function properly, humans have to find a way of giving joy, expressing thanks, to the gods, bestowers of material goods.<sup>27</sup>

Dedicatory and votive epigrams refer constantly to the *agalma* whose donation to a particular god they commemorate.<sup>28</sup> *Agalmata* were originally things conferring honour on, or exalting (*ἀγάλλω*), a deity generally, although a specific meaning of 'cult statue' crystallised out at least by the fifth century.<sup>29</sup> Typically, it referred to an artefact or work of art of above average quality and monetary value which the worshipper gave to the deity in the hope that it would be found pleasing.<sup>30</sup> Cult utensils such as metal tripods and libation-vessels might be dedicated to a god; the gold tripods with which Croesus sought to obtain Delphic Apollo's favour were legendary. Weapons might be dedicated to a god or goddess after success in battle; they, too, constituted artefacts endowed with material value and *technē* which could be offered up by the victors as 'tithe' (*δεκάτη*) in gratitude for salvation. Small votive statuettes resembling the deity concerned became favourite votive offerings from the sixth century on. Among the interesting, as well as puzzling, votive offerings from the archaic period are the *kouroi* and *korai*, standing marble statues of young males and females, commonly erected beside or in front of temples. Many of the dedicatory epigrams collected by Raubitschek (1949) stood underneath *korai* on the Acropolis.

To recapitulate in one sentence: the dedicatory epigram links a human act of worship with an object given in worship in such a way that subsequent reading of the epigram rehearses the act of worship timelessly.<sup>31</sup> We may compare the votive act itself with two other paradigms of ritual behaviour: social gift-giving and sacrifice to the gods. (1) As individuals or states exchanged gifts to cement friendship, seal agreements and formalise social

<sup>27</sup> Parker 1998: 122 comments on this passage in *Euthyphro*: 'What the Sokratic questioning exposes is a drastic asymmetry within the reciprocal relation. Gods give to humans what they desperately need – health, property, life itself – whereas humans give to gods what they do not need and are not benefited by, a mere luxury as it were, marks of honour.'

<sup>28</sup> Van Straten 1981: 75; Rouse 1902. <sup>29</sup> Keesling 2003b: 10. <sup>30</sup> Van Straten 1981: 78–104.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. van Straten 1981: 80: 'If we regard the votive offering as a means, used in close connection with prayer and sacrifice, to bring about and sustain a relationship between man and god, and if we also realise that the presentation of a votive gift was often brought about by something that had happened in the (recent) past and that a certain effect was also intended for the future ...'

relationships of all kinds, so the votive act makes a gift to god either in thanks for benefits received or to secure these in the future.<sup>32</sup> The huge variety of votive offerings – jewelry, painting plaques, statuary of all shapes and sizes, weapons, clothes, sacred utensils<sup>33</sup> – is analogous to all the different shapes and sizes of gifts people gave each other. People also gave people to each other, in the form of marriageable daughters. It was a standard way of cementing male alliances and allegiances and winning friends and influence through *kēdeia*.<sup>34</sup> The reciprocity normally implied in social gift-giving finds its correlative in the reciprocity we have already mentioned as a key element in religious cult. (2) Humans sacrifice, i.e. kill, destroy, dispense with, something valuable to themselves in a deliberate act of self-denial in order to please an invisible power. This does not need to be argued in the case of actual sacrifice: we know that men and women promised animal sacrifice to gods to secure their favour, reminded gods of previous sacrifices to strengthen their case when praying, and offered sacrifice when either relieved after distress or afflicted by it.<sup>35</sup> Frequently the size and value of a sacrifice is emphasised to underline the sincerity and ardour of the sacrificer.<sup>36</sup> The votive offering shares some aspects of this conceptual framework. It is not a sacrifice of life-blood, but indeed of livelihood. The donor had to sacrifice a portion of his wealth to make the offering. The Acropolis epigrams refer with monotonous regularity to the fact that the offering involves repaying a promised debt, either as δεκάτη, tenth-share of gains, or ἀπαρχή, literally ‘first-fruit offering’, probably a smaller share than a *dekate*.<sup>37</sup> One inscribed base from the Acropolis<sup>38</sup> is interesting in recording that Lysias and Euarchis dedicated two *korai* to Athena, one as *aparche*, the other as *dekate*. Since the statue bases appear to have been of differing sizes, the larger *kore* may well have been the *dekate*, and the smaller the less valuable *aparche*.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Discussion of the anthropology of gift-giving in e.g. van Wees 1998.

<sup>33</sup> For an interesting cross-section one might glance through the objects in a recent exhibition in Freiburg of votive offerings; the superbly illustrated catalogue is published as Kiderlen/Strocka 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Belfiore 1998: 145 with further literature.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Parker 1998: esp. 106–18. <sup>36</sup> Cf. van Straten 1981: esp. 68–9.

<sup>37</sup> Keesling 2003b: 7: ‘It is apparent that a *dekate* is always conceived as a ten-percent share, whereas the value of an *aparche* could be determined as a percentage divisible by six, but as it was most commonly practised in sacrificial and agricultural contexts, it remained simply a small share allotted to the gods.’

<sup>38</sup> Raubitschek 1949, no. 292.

<sup>39</sup> Both Parker 1998: 121–5 and Bremer 1998: 127–8 point to the asymmetry in *charis*-relations between gods and men: gods give as it were everything to humans, worshippers only offer a symbolic honorary portion of the sacrifice or praise in words in return. But the monetary value of votive offerings (and sacrifice) – often considerable – goes some way toward correcting the balance, at least in the eyes of the donor: for he has given back as large a sacrifice as he could afford to the gods in return for life and livelihood. There is still an asymmetry – the gods do not *need* human wealth – but at least the worshipper has done his utmost to repay his debts to god(s).

Keesling 2003b: 97–161 has devoted a brilliant study to the question of what the majority of the Acropolis *korai* represented. In brief, she argues that, contrary to the prevailing *communis opinio* which sees in votive *korai* a formal schema representing a young female worshipper (of generic rather than specific identity), the Acropolis *korai* dedicated to Athena are in fact representations of the goddess herself. Pointing to the smaller terracotta figurines of Athena Promachos which have been found in the same context in large numbers, as well as certain *korai* which definitely have attributes of Athena (spear, helmet) – she calls these ‘hybrid types’, i.e. a hybrid of the generic *kore* combined with attributes of Athena – she says that the typical archaic marble *kore* in this context on the Acropolis was probably identified in the viewer’s mind with Athena herself. These *korai* typically have either one or both forearms extended forwards; Keesling compares this with the extended forearm of some classical cult images, reaching out to humans, as it were, to receive offerings. The extended forearm gesture of *korai* had commonly been interpreted formerly as a timeless gesture of homage to the god by a statue representing a human worshipper. Then Keesling considers the objects sometimes held in the hand by *korai*: fruit, wreaths, metal cylinders (in which lost objects were fastened), birds. She argues – this is perhaps the weakest link in her chain of reasoning – that all these objects might be held by cult images as well; they do not necessarily represent offerings by human worshippers, but may be divine attributes of a rather general kind. But, and this is the point which I wish to take from Keesling, there is an essential ambiguity about the Acropolis *korai*: their type is a kind of common denominator between young female worshipper of Athena and Athena herself. The sculptor only had to add a spear or a helmet to the type to convert her to an unequivocal Athena. Keesling (2003b: 123):

The iconography of the generic Acropolis *korai* is at best equivocal when used as evidence for their identities. Their clothing, headgear, and jewelry can be read equally well as the *kosmos* of marriageable young women or as the attire of goddesses; the objects that *kore* statues hold in their hands can be interpreted either as offerings to the gods or as generic (rather than identifying) divine attributes.

In other words, there is a kind of ὁμοίωσις Θεῶ at work here. The votive statue is *akin* to the goddess, who, in turn, is dressed and styled like a young woman of the period. One might call the phenomenon ‘iconographic reciprocity’, just as *charis* reciprocity is fundamental to worship itself. *CEG* I, no. 205, from an octangular *stele* supporting a *kore* (510–500 BC), is a good illustration:

Παλάδι Ἀθαναίαι Λύσον ἀνέθεκεν ἀπαρχέν  
    hōn aútō kτ[εά]nōn tēi dē θēōi χaρίēn  
Θεβάδες ἐπ[οίεσεν] ho K]ύ[ρ]oν πaί̄s tōd' ἄγaλμa.<sup>40</sup>

Lyson dedicated [this] to Pallas Athena as a first-fruit offering from his wealth. Thebades, son of Cyrnus, made this statue as a delight for the goddess.

The essential points are here: the statue, a *kore*, represents a sacrificial share of the donor's wealth; the *personal* expense incurred is underlined by the prominence of ὡν aútou kτ[εά]nōn. *Aparchē*, 'first-fruit offering', is a term equally applicable to dedicatory and sacrificial offerings. The artist is named, too. His intention to create a statue pleasing to the recipient (Athena) is expressly stated. That the goddess was thought to feel delight at the *sight* of the statue is indicated by *Od.* 3.438: ἵν' ἄγaλμa θēāt̄ kεχάρoιt̄ iδoñsa (Athena receiving an ox with gilded horns from Nestor). In my opinion, we should draw a conceptual distinction between this sense of *agalma*, an 'offering intending to delight', and *agalma* 'cult statue'. The typical arrangement at a temple was one cult statue, usually placed in the *cella*, which 'was' the god or goddess, and a plethora of votive statuary outside the temple, which could accumulate until the site became over-crowded.<sup>41</sup> Rather than imagining a forest of *korai*/Athena statues clustered around the Parthenon we should rather see in the gifts mediating figures intending to represent human approximations to the divine ideal. And that will best explain the fact that dedicatory inscriptions rarely identify the statue by name or description. They had no personal identity, either as god or human. They were abstractions of the human impulse to worship a deity by assimilating the human form to divinity.

An inscription from a different cult, that of Demeter and Kore from the mid fifth century, provides an interesting parallel. Here the donor, Lysistrate, who was a priestess of Demeter and Kore, dedicated a statue as 'ornament of their front-door' (*CEG* I, no. 317):<sup>42</sup>

[ἀ]ρρήτo τελετήs πrόπoλoς σήs, πoτvia Δηoī,  
    κaὶ θuγaτrὸs πrοθύrо kόsμoν ἄgαlma tōdē  
eσtηsεn Σteφaνo<sup>43</sup> Λuσiσtrάtē, oύdē pаrόntωn  
    φeίdεtai ἀllā θeōiς ἄfθonoς ēs dūnāmiv.

Lysistrate, daughter of Stephanus, the attendant of your and your daughter's secret initiation rites, o Lady Deō, placed this statue as

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Raubitschek 1939/40: 20–2; Friedländer/Hoffleit 1948, no. 141.

<sup>41</sup> Van Straten 1981: 78–9. <sup>42</sup> *SEG* 10.321, cf. van Straten 1981: 75. Athens c. 450 BC.

<sup>43</sup> Thus Lazzarini 1976: 715 and 64. P. Maas, *Hesperia* 15, 1946, 72, takes σteφaνo as a title of the priestess of Demeter.

adornment of your doorway; nor does she spare her property but, to the best of her ability, has given abundantly to the gods.

In this case an *agalma*, clearly a statue, is the gift of a priestess to the patron goddesses Demeter and Kore, representing outlay to the 'limit of her resources' (ἀφθονος ἐς δύναμιν). The idea of sacrifice is clear, as is the statue's mediating role between human cult official and goddess. The human attendant has mustered all her material resources to provide an offering pleasing to the goddess. The statue was presumably neither a physical likeness of Lysistrata herself, nor a cult image of Demeter or Kore – the correct place for that was in the *cella* of the temple itself – but rather a marble statue of a beautiful young woman with probably an indication through attributes of the cult in whose service she was dedicated.

That worshippers wished their offering of statuary to be as godlike as possible without actually representing the god or goddess honoured explains how a *kore* could be offered to a male god and, *vice versa*, a *kouros* to a goddess. One man dedicated a *kore* to Athena's rival on the Acropolis, Poseidon (*CEG* I, no. 266):

[Τέ]νδε κόρεν ἀνέθεκεν ἀπαρχὲν [Ναύ]λοχος ἄγρας  
ἔν οἱ ποντομέδ[ον χρυ]σοτρία[ι]ν' ἔπορεν.

Naulochus donated this *kore* as first-fruit offering from the catch  
which the sea-governing [god of] the golden trident provided him.

Here there can be no question of the offering representing the divine recipient. Clearly Naulochus thought Poseidon would be pleased by the statue of the girl. In the company of all the other Acropolis *korai*, it would accord him honour equal to that offered to Athena. The statue is again a symbolic share of the bounty which is seen to be a gift of god. The donor thanks the god with a share of his good fortune. We note the anonymity of the statue, simply *kore*. She was not a member of Naulochos' family, nor Athena herself. If we had to translate the word, 'cult-girl' might convey its essential ambivalence.

An inscription which helps us understand the way in which a votive statue might 'stand for' the qualities which the human worshipper wished to present to the god or goddess comes from fourth/third century BC Erythrae (*CEG* II, no. 858).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Engelmann/Merkelbach 1973: 210a.

[Τ]ιμώ<sup>45</sup> τήν[δ' ἔστη]σ[ε]<sup>46</sup> γυνὴ Ζωΐλου Διονύσωι  
 [ἱ]ρεα<sup>47</sup> πρὸ πόλεως Παγκρατίδεω θυγάτηρ,  
 [εἰκ[ό]να μὲμ μορφῆς, ἀρετῆς δ' ἐπίδειγμα καὶ ὄλβου,  
 [ἀ]δ]άνατον μνήμην παισί τε καὶ προγόνοις.

Timo, wife of Zōilus, daughter of Pancratidēs, dedicated as priestess on behalf of the city this [statue] to Dionysus. It is both an image of beauty and a demonstration of excellence and wealth, an eternal memorial to her children and children's children.<sup>48</sup>

Timo's statue incorporated physical beauty (εἰκόνα μορφῆς), moral excellence and material worth (ἀρετῆς ἐπίδειγμα καὶ ὄλβου). We do not need to assume that Timo was boasting about her own beauty or even wealth.<sup>49</sup> The point is that the statue she thought appropriate for Dionysus had to be all good things: beautiful, admirable and valuable. Only with those attributes could it please his divine eye. Incidentally, the statue was probably a beautiful male youth (like Dionysus) rather than a woman (like Timo). The feminine pronoun τήν[δε] in line 1 may anticipate [εἰ]κ[ό]να in line 3 rather than agreeing with an understood noun such as κόρην. But the qualities she wished the statue to display – beauty, excellence and wealth – are, of course, those qualities which the human worshipper would like to possess him-/herself and to wish for his children and grandchildren. Thus the votive is both gift and prayer-by-implication. And, above all for my purposes here, it illustrates the function of votive statuary: idealised mankind as fit company for the gods.

The concept of 'iconographic reciprocity' has many facets. It seems to have its roots in Homeric theology. There a god or goddess champions a certain warrior because of qualities which endear him to the god: Aphrodite favours the womaniser Paris; Athena champions the wily Odysseus and the warrior-like Diomedes; Zeus (theoretically at least) supports the 'king of kings and men' Agamemnon. But this divine favour translates into heightened abilities and endowments among men. In other words: gods like men who are like them; when they like them, they make them more like themselves. In cult iconography this reciprocal nexus finds other expression. Gods and goddesses sacrifice and pour libations – to whom? – themselves apparently. Presumably their action is paradigmatic, like Hermes' sacrifice in the *Homeric Hymn*. Some rather tortuous discussion of the Theory of

<sup>45</sup> Hansen: [Σ]ιμώ Engelmann/Merkelbach. <sup>46</sup> Hansen: ἔστη]σ[ε] Engelmann/Merkelbach.

<sup>47</sup> Hansen: [ἱ]<ε>ρέα Engelmann/Merkelbach.

<sup>48</sup> For this unusual meaning of πρόγονοι cf. *BE* 1943: 28. <sup>49</sup> *Pace* van Straten 1981: 76.

Forms in Plato<sup>50</sup> may have arisen from Plato's awareness of this puzzling aspect of traditional theology. He says that the good things are good by participation in the Form of Good. So is this Form itself good? Is the Form of Beauty beautiful, and so on? And if the Forms are good, beautiful etc., then is this by participation in themselves, or in some other thing? The discussion seems to me germane to the 'participation' by men in divine glory in traditional Greek theology. Odysseus 'partakes of' the wondrous qualities of Athena, who herself exemplifies them *kat' exochēn*. Once grasped, this concept helps us understand much of cult behaviour. Offerings to gods, approaches to gods through prayer and dedication are attempts to seal, to formalise, to *ratify* the desired *circulus virtuosus* between men and gods. Naulochus thanked Poseidon for a good catch of fish because the god of the sea allowed him to partake of his riches. An herald called Oenobius dedicated an *agalma* to his patron god Hermes 'in gratitude... for the sake of memory' (ἀ[ποδοὺς] χάριν... μ[ημ]οσύνης ἔ[νεκα]).<sup>51</sup> The primary meaning of this expression is presumably 'as a memorial', but one wonders whether Oenobius was not also thanking Hermes for assisting his powers of memory, an essential skill for a professional herald.<sup>52</sup> And an anonymous donor wrote this on a gift to Athena on the Athenian Acropolis (CEG I, no. 230):<sup>53</sup>

[Ἐσθλὸν] τοῖσι σοφοῖσι σο[φ]ίζεσθ[αι κατ[ὰ τέχνην]  
[hōs γὰρ] héxai téxhnē, λῶι[ο]ν héx[ei bítōtōn].

[It is well] for skilled craftsmen to practise their art with  
[professional skill]. [For whoever] possesses this skill enjoys a better [life].

As Friedländer/Hoffleit (1948: 124, no. 134) say: 'It is difficult to imagine how the dedicator could dwell on *σοφία* and *τέχνη* if the object seen upon the base were not an example of this skill. Thus he was a sculptor rather than a businessman.' So the anonymous donor thanks Athena, patroness of the arts, for skill in sculpture with a skilful sculpture; she has granted him a flourishing trade through expertise in the art she patronises; he shows his gratitude with a sample of his craft (*σοφίζεσθαι*) to please her eye.

<sup>50</sup> Particularly in *Parmenides*; for Plato's engagement with Greek religion, particularly the revelation of the Eleusinian Mysteries, see Morgan 1990 and Morgan 1992.

<sup>51</sup> CEG I, no. 234; Friedländer/Hoffleit 1948, no. 105. Hansen gives the text as *ἥρμητι* [καλὸν] ἄγαλμα [?διδός] χάριν ἐν[αδε] ἔ[θεκεν / Οἰν[α. 4] κέρυξ μ[νεμ]οσύνης hé[νεκα]. D. M. Lewis proposed (*privatum*) Οἰν[ιάδε]ς as supplement for the name.

<sup>52</sup> Friedländer/Hoffleit 1948: 103 prefer to take the latter expression as an expression of his 'hope of remembrance on the part of men'. Would that not be a touch egoistic on the part of Oenobius when he was intent on thanking Hermes?

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Raubitschek 1949, no. 224. The supplements are Hiller's. On the facing side the donor, whose name is missing, declares that his gift is a δεκάτη for Athena.