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PATRONAGE & RECIPROCITY

The Social Context of Grace

People in the United States and northern Europe may be culturally conditioned to find the concept of patronage distasteful at first and not at all a suitable metaphor for talking about God's relationship to us. When we say "it's not what you know but who you know," it is usually because we sense someone has had an unfair advantage over us or over the friend whom we console with these words. It violates our conviction that everyone should have equal access to employment opportunities (being evaluated on the basis of pertinent skills rather than personal connection) or to services offered by private businesses or civic agencies.¹ Where patronage occurs (often deridingly called nepotism: channeling opportunities to relations or personal friends), it is often done "under the table" and kept as quiet as possible.²

We tend to get what we need or want by means of buying and selling, where exchange is

¹ See Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 242-44.

² John H. Elliott, "Patronage and Clientism in Early Christian Society," *Forum* 3 (1987): 40.

precisely measured out ahead of time. You do not leave a department store owing the sales person a favor, nor does the cashier at a restaurant owe me a good turn for the money I gave after dinner. When we seek employment, most often we are hired on the basis of our skills and experience by people we do not know. We prepare for employment not so much by cultivating connections (although this is still useful!) as by equipping ourselves with the knowledge and skills that, we hope, a potential employer will recognize as giving us the necessary resources to do the job well. When we fall into hard times, there is a massive public welfare system in place, access to which is offered not as a personal favor but as a bureaucratized right of the poor or unemployed. If an alien wants citizenship and the rights that go along with it, he or she applies and undergoes the same process as every other naturalized citizen—it is not a favor granted personally by an individual in power.

The world of the authors and readers of the New Testament, however, was one in which personal patronage was an essential means of acquiring access to goods, protection or opportunities for employment and advancement. Not only was it essential—it was expected and publicized! The giving and receiving of favors was, according to a first-century participant, the "practice that constitutes the chief bond of human society" (Seneca *Ben.* 1.4.2). To enter their world and hear their words more authentically, we have to leave behind our cultural norms and ways of doing things and learn a quite different way of managing resources and meeting needs.

Patronage and Friendship

For everyday needs there was the market, in which buying and selling provided access to daily necessities. For anything outside of the

ordinary, the person sought out the individual who possessed or controlled access to what the person needed and received it as a favor. The ancient world from the classical through the Roman periods was one of significantly limited access to goods. The greater part of the property, wealth and power was concentrated into the hands of the few, and access to these goods was through personal connection rather than bureaucratic channels. The kinds of benefits sought from patrons depended on the needs or desires of the petitioner. They might include plots of land or distributions of money to get started in business or to supply food after a crop failure or failed business venture. Other benefits might include protection, debt relief or an appointment to some office or position in government. “Help one person with money, another with credit, another with influence, another with advice, another with sound precepts” (Seneca *Ben.* 1.2.4, LCL). If the patron granted the petition, the petitioner would become the client of the patron and a potentially long-term relationship would begin.³ This rela-

³ Bonds of reciprocity (whether between social equals, called “friends,” or between patrons and their clients) could continue across the generations. A child inherits, as it were, his or her parents’ networks of friends and enemies. Ben Sira bears witness: “He has left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one to repay the kindness of his friends” (*Sir* 30:6), as does Isocrates: “It is fitting that a son should inherit his father’s friendships even as he inherits his estate” (*Ad Dem.* 2, LCL). See also Seneca *Ben.* 2.18.5: “I must be far more careful in selecting my creditor for a benefit than my creditor for a loan. For to the latter I shall have to return the same amount that I have received, and, when I have returned it, I have paid all my debt and am free; but to the other I must make an additional payment, and, even after I have

tionship would be marked by the mutual exchange of desired goods and services, the **patron being available for assistance in the future, the client doing everything in his or her power to enhance the fame and honor of the patron (publicizing the benefit and showing the patron respect), remaining loyal to the patron and providing services whenever the opportunity arose.**

Sometimes the most important gift a patron could give was access to (and influence with) another patron who actually had power over the benefit being sought. For the sake of clarity, a patron who provides access to another patron for his or her client has been called a “broker”⁴ (a classical term for this was *mediator*). Brokerage was commonplace and expected in public life. Sophocles (*Oed.* 771–774) provides a fictional example of this in the words of Creon, who defends himself with these words against Oedipus’ charge of conspiracy to usurp the kingship:

I am welcome everywhere; every man salutes me,
And those who want your favor seek my ear,
Since I know how to manage what they ask.

Creon enjoys high esteem and displays of public reputation on the basis of his ability to grant or withhold his primary resource: access to King Oedipus and thus to royal favors.

paid my debt of gratitude, the bond between us still holds; for, just when I have finished paying it, I am obliged to begin again, and friendship endures; and, as I would not admit an unworthy man to my friendship, so neither would I admit one who is unworthy to the most sacred privilege of benefits, from which friendship springs” (LCL).

⁴Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1974), p. 148.

Numerous examples of brokerage can be found in the letters of Cicero, Pliny the Younger and Fronto, correspondence providing windows into public policy from the late republic through the second century of the empire.⁵ Pliny's letters to the emperor Trajan (dating from A.D. 111–113, the time during which Pliny was governor of Bithynia) contain attempts by Pliny to procure imperial favors for his own friends and clients. In one such letter (*Ep.* 10.4), Pliny introduces a client of his, named Voconius Romanus, to Trajan with a view to getting Voconius a senatorial appointment. He addresses Trajan clearly as a client addressing his patron and proceeds to ask a favor for Voconius. Pliny offers his own character as a guarantee of his client's character, and Trajan's "favorable judgement" of Pliny (not Voconius, whom he does not know) would become the basis for Trajan's granting of this favor. Should the favor be granted by the emperor, Voconius would be indebted not only to Trajan but also to Pliny, who will, in turn, be indebted further to Trajan.⁶ The broker, or mediator, at the same time incurs a debt and increases his own honor through the indebtedness of his client. Brokerage—the gift of access to another, often greater patron—was in itself a highly val-

⁵ A fuller analysis of these can be found in Geoffrey E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Suffragium: From Vote to Patronage," *British Journal of Sociology* 5 (1954): 33–48.

⁶ See also Richard Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 75 n. 194: "That the mediators would have received the credit and gratitude from the ultimate recipient of the favor is clear from the last sentence of Pliny *Ep.* 3.8, where Pliny secures a tribunate for Suetonius who passes it on to a relative, with the result that the relative is indebted to Suetonius who is in turn indebted to Pliny."

ued benefit. Without such connections the client would never have had access to what he desired or needed. This is especially apparent in the case of Pliny's physical therapist, Arpocras, who gains both Roman and Alexandrian citizenship by means of Pliny, who petitions Trajan on his behalf (*Ep.* 10.5–7, 10). Pliny gives this local physician access to the emperor, the fount of patronage, which he would never have enjoyed otherwise. Brokerage could even intervene in the judicial process. Both Cicero⁷ and Marcus Aurelius (*Ad M. Caes.* 3.2) use their connections of friendship with a judge to secure favorable outcomes for their clients, on whose behalf they write.

So far we have been discussing personal patronage as it occurred between people of unequal social status: someone of lesser power, honor and wealth seeks out the aid of a person of superior power, honor and wealth. The kinds of benefits exchanged between such people will be different in kind and quality, the patron providing material gifts or opportunities for advancement, the client contributing to the patron's reputation and power base. Relationships of reciprocity also occur between social equals, people of like means who can exchange like resources, neither one being seen by the other or by society as the inferior of the other. Such relationships went by the name of "friendship."⁸ The basic

⁷ *Ad Familiares* 13, cited in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire," in *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 77.

⁸ See Saller, *Personal Patronage*, pp. 8–11. Cicero provides this testimony: "Another strong bond of fellowship is effected by mutual interchange of kind services; and as long as these kindnesses are mutual and acceptable, those between whom they are interchanged are united by ties of enduring intimacy" (*De Offic.* 1.56, LCL).

ethos undergirding this relationship, however, is no different from that of the relationship of patrons and clients; the same principle of reciprocity and mutual fidelity is the bedrock of both. Moreover, because patrons were sensitive to the honor of their clients, they rarely called their clients by that name. Instead, they graciously referred to them as friends, even though they were far from social equals. Clients, on the whole, did not attempt to hide their junior status, referring to their patrons as “patrons” rather than as “friends” so as to highlight the honor and respect with which they esteemed their benefactors.⁹ Where we see people called “friends” or “partners,” therefore, we should suspect that we are still looking at relationships of reciprocity.

Patronage Among the Poor

The greater part of the ancient population has left no written legacy for us to study. Observation of modern agrarian societies leads scholars to believe that all classes participated, in their own ways, in forming relationships of reciprocity. One such cultural anthropologist, Julian Pitt-Rivers, studied the rural communities of southern France,¹⁰ noting that neighbors are always ready to help one another at harvest or sheep-shearing time, not for money or for specific returns. While the helper would even publicly deny that he or she has placed the helped party under obligation, should the latter refuse to help others, it would be remembered and become a

⁹ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, pp. 8–11; see also Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, *Families in the New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), p. 49.

¹⁰ Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Postscript: The Place of Grace in Anthropology,” in John G. Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers, *Honor and Grace in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 215–46.

blot on that farmer’s reputation as a good neighbor:

Great prestige attaches to a good reputation as a neighbor. Everyone would like to be in credit with everybody and those who show reluctance to lend a hand when they are asked to do so soon acquire a bad reputation which is commented on by innuendo. Those who fail to return the favor done to them come to be excluded from the system altogether. Those of good repute can be sure of compliance on all sides.¹¹

Even in the rural areas, there are those who do more favors than receive favors, and these become local patrons of a sort. This situation bears remarkable resemblance to the discussion of reciprocity among farmers in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, written in the sixth century B.C.¹²

Pitt-Rivers advances that another motive for helping when help is needed is as “insurance” against the time when one might need to rely on the neighbors to get through a difficult crisis, to which “a single family farm is particularly vulnerable.”¹³ Seneca had seen this as an essential aspect of the system of reciprocity two millennia before: “How else do we live in security if it is not that we help each other by an exchange of good offices? It is only through the interchange of benefits that life becomes in some measure equipped and fortified against sudden disasters. Take us singly, and what are we? The prey of all creatures” (*Ben.* 4.18.1). We may conclude then, that those who left us no direct testimony—namely, peasant farmers and local artisans—also entered into relationships of reci-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

¹² See especially lines 342–51; 401–4. These are ably discussed in Paul Millett, “Patronage and Its Avoidance in Classical Athens,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, pp. 15–48, especially pp. 19–20.

¹³ Pitt-Rivers, “Postscript,” p. 233.

procity and sought to fulfill their part of the relationship nobly as the means both to local honor and security.

Public Benefaction

Personal patronage was not the only form of beneficence in the ancient world. Most public entertainments, whether religious festivals and feasts or local celebrations of athletic competitions, were “given” to the inhabitants of the city by wealthy benefactors. Moreover, most civic improvements, whether temples or theaters, pavements or porticoes, were also the gifts either of local elites or wealthy persons abroad who wished to confer benefits on a famous city (as Herod the Great provided the money for buildings not only in Jerusalem but also Rhodes, Athens and Sparta).¹⁴ In times of crisis, wealthy benefactors would come to the aid of the public, providing, for example, famine or disaster relief. Public benefaction was an arena open to both men and women of means.¹⁵

Such public gifts did not make every recipient a client of the benefactor,¹⁶ for lines were drawn between personal patronage and public munificence, but the public as a whole was nevertheless still indebted to that benefactor.¹⁷ In general, the response of the grateful city would consist of the conferral of public honors (like crowning at a prominent public festival, special seating at games) and the provision for a permanent commemoration of the generosity of the giver in

the form of honorary inscriptions or, in special cases, statues. Inscriptions across the Mediterranean from North Africa to Greece, Asia and Egypt bear witness to the phenomenon of both personal patronage and public benefaction.¹⁸

The most powerful figures in the ancient world, namely, kings and emperors, frequently granted public benefactions to cities or even whole provinces in addition to the numerous personal benefactions by which they bound to themselves their client base. Relief from oppression, whether from an extortionate local official, from pirates on the sea or from a hostile force from outside would be a benefaction especially well-suited for an emperor to give. Pardon for crimes committed was reserved for kings and emperors to grant, who were also credited with doing the broad public a great service if peace and stability characterized their rule. The extreme form of response to benefactions from rulers was the offering of worship—those who gave gifts usually besought from the gods were judged to be worthy of the honors offered the gods. When the Athenians greeted their general, Demetrius Poliorketes, who had just freed them from foreign domination in 307 B.C., they used cultic language: “Other deities are far away, or have no ears, or are not, or have no care for us at all: but you we see here present—not shaped by wood or stone but in reality. And so to you we pray: First bring us peace, for you possess the

¹⁸ See Richard P. Saller, “Patronage and Friendship in Early Imperial Rome: Drawing the Distinction,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 54–55; especially important is the collection of fifty-one inscriptions analyzed in Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing, 1982).

¹⁴ Josephus *J.W.* 1.21.11–12.

¹⁵ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, p. 50.

¹⁶ In Seneca’s words, “There is a great difference between not excluding a man and choosing him” (*Ben.* 4.28.5). Personal patronage involves a choice and a commitment to an ongoing relationship with a client.

¹⁷ See Seneca *Ben.* 6.19.2–5.

power.”¹⁹

A similar picture emerges from the first-hand observations of Nicolaus of Damascus concerning the origin of the cult of Augustus: “All people address him [as Augustus] in accordance with their estimation of his honor, revering him with temples and sacrifices across islands and continents, organized in cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and repaying his benefactions towards them.”²⁰ The “peace of Augustus” was viewed as relief of divine proportions, and the return of thanks must be equal to the gift. Augustus thus succeeded in the East to the tradition of according divine honors to benefactors, generals and, during the Roman Republic, governors. The imperial cult also provided people in the province with a bridge of access to their ultimate patron. Provinces sought imperial aid (benefactions) through the mediation of the priests of the imperial cult, who both officiated in the province and became the official ambassadors to Rome on behalf of the province. Sending the priests of imperial cultic honors to Rome put the province in the most positive light. The priest was an image of the province’s uncompromising loyalty and gratitude, so that the province could be assured of ongoing favor.

Patronage in Greek and Roman Settings

Patronage is not strictly a Roman phenomenon, even though our richest discussions of the institution were written by Romans (Cicero in *De Offic.* and Seneca in *Ben.*). Both public benefaction and personal patronage are well-attested in both

Greek and Roman cultures. Only during the time of the Athenian democracy is there an attempt to move away from patronage as the basic model for structuring society.²¹ From before the democratic revolution of 462 B.C., we have the example of Cimon of Athens, whose provision of personal patronage to needy suppliants as well as gifts to the city in general win him the status of “first citizen” and result in his election to the generalship for seventeen consecutive years.²² Throughout the period of the democracy itself, the avoidance of open patronage applies only between citizens, whose freedom should not be compromised out of a need to gratify a potential or past benefactor. The noncitizens (called “metics,” or “resident aliens”) are *required* to have a sponsor or patron (a *prostatēs*) who would provide access to the institutions of the city for the noncitizen.²³

By the time that Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander, rise to prominence, however, personal patronage is once again openly spoken of in Athens. Demosthenes, an orator who died in 322 B.C., speaks openly both of his public benefactions (fortification of the city walls), which he deems worthy of gratitude and public honor, and his private acts of patronage to the distressed and financially challenged (*De Corona* 268–69, 299). Aristotle speaks in his *Nicomachian Ethics* (1163b1–5, 12–18) of the type of friendship in which one partner receives the larger share of honor and acclamation, and the other partner the larger share of material assistance—clearly a reference to personal patronage between people of unequal social status. By the first century A.D.,

¹⁹ Athenaeus *Deipnosophists* 6.253e–f; quoted in Danker, *Benefactor*, pp. 202–3.

²⁰ Quoted in Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 1.

²¹ See Paul Millett, “Patronage and Its Avoidance in Classical Athens,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 15–48.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 23–25.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

the attempt at Athens to restrict personal patronage is but a distant memory, an exception to an unobjectionable rule.

Greek and Latin authors from the Hellenistic and Roman periods express a shared ethos where friendship, patronage and public benefaction are concerned. Aristotle and Seneca, Dio Chrysostom and Cicero, agree concerning what guidelines the giver and recipient should follow. Moreover, as the Greek world is transformed into the provinces of the Roman Empire, Greek cities become acquainted with patronage as the means by which the whole city gets connected with the center of power and resources, namely, the emperor and Senate of Rome. A Greek statesman like Plutarch, instructing aspiring politicians, discusses the advisability of having well-placed friends who can support and advance one's political agenda (*Mor.* 814C). The main difference between personal patronage in the Greek and Roman cultures is the formalized etiquette surrounding the latter in the morning greeting of the patron by his or her clients. The *salutatio* displays the relationship of patron and clients visibly and publicly, a display that would continue throughout the day as some number of clients accompany the patron in public places, displaying the patron's prestige and power with a visible entourage at home and in the public spaces.²⁴ With this one difference (a difference that disappears as Roman customs spread throughout their empire), patronage and benefaction proceed in Greek and Roman circles with much the same ethos and expectations.

The Social Context of Grace

We have looked closely and at some length at the relationships and activities that mark the patron-

²⁴Saller, "Patronage and Friendship," pp. 57–58.

client relationship, friendship and public benefaction, because these are the social contexts in which the word *grace* (*charis*) is at home in the first century A.D. Today, *grace* is primarily a religious word, heard only in churches and Christian circles. It has progressed through millennia of theological reflection, developments and accretions (witness the multiplication of terms like "justifying grace," "sanctifying grace" and "prevenient grace" in Christian theology, systematizing the order of salvation). For the actual writers and readers of the New Testament, however, *grace* was not primarily a religious, as opposed to a secular, word. Rather, it was used to speak of reciprocity among human beings and between mortals and God (or, in pagan literature, the gods). This single word encapsulated the entire ethos of the relationships we have been describing.

First, *grace* was used to refer to the willingness of a patron to grant some benefit to another person or to a group. In this sense, it means "favor," in the sense of "favorable disposition." In Aristotle's words (*Rhetoric* 2.7.1 [1385a16–20]), "Grace [*charis*] may be defined as helpfulness toward someone in need, not in return for anything, nor for the advantage of the helper himself [or herself], but for that of the person helped."²⁵ In this sense, the word highlights the generosity and disposition of the patron, benefactor or giver. The same word carries a second sense, often being used to denote the gift itself, that is, the result of the giver's beneficent feelings.²⁶ Many honorary inscriptions mention the

²⁵ See the discussion also in Hans Conzelman and Walther Zimmerli, "χάρις κτλ," in *TDNT* 9:373–76.

²⁶ It is in its meaning as "gift" that *grace* also referred to the qualities of "poise," "charm" or "beauty" and that the adjective *graceful* was, and is, applied to "charming,

graces (*charitas*) of the benefactor as the cause for conferring public praise, emphasizing the real and received products of the benefactor's goodwill toward a city or group.²⁷ Finally, *grace* can be used to speak of the response to a benefactor and his or her gifts, namely, "gratitude." Demosthenes provides a helpful window into this aspect in his *De Corona* as he chides his audience for not responding honorably to those who have helped them in the past: "But you are so ungrateful (*acharistos*) and wicked by nature that, having been made free out of slavery and wealthy out of poverty by these people, you do not show gratitude (*charin echeis*) toward them but rather enriched yourself by taking action against them" (*De Corona* 131).²⁸ *Grace* thus has very specific meanings for the authors and readers of the New Testament, meanings derived primarily from the use of the word in the context of the giving of

beautiful, skilled" people. In these cases *graceful* means "graced" or "gifted," that is, "having received positive endowments from God or nature."

²⁷ See the frequent occurrence of the plural *graces* ("gifts," *charitas*) in the inscriptions collected in Danker, *Benefactor* (as well as the discussion on p. 328); Conzelman and Zimmerli (*TDNT* 9:375) also cite the customary formula: "On account of the gifts, the χάριτας, of so-and-so we proclaim these honors." The Latin term *beneficium* is defined by Seneca as the equivalent of these first two meanings of *charis* (*Ben.* 2.34.5). The Latin word *gratia*, moreover, shares the three meanings wedded within the Greek *charis*.

²⁸ See, further, Conzelman and Zimmerli (*TDNT* 9:376): "In relation to the recipient of grace χάρις means 'thanks' to the benefactor." The following passages also use the expression "have grace" in the sense of "show thanks": *Luke* 17:9 and *Hebrews* 12:28; on "grace" as "thanks," see the expression "thanks (*charis*) be to God" in *Romans* 6:17; 7:25; *2 Corinthians* 8:16; 9:15.

David Arthur deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

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benefits and the requiting of favors.

The fact that one and the same word can be used to speak of a beneficent act and the response to a beneficent act suggests implicitly what many moralists from the Greek and Roman cultures stated explicitly: *grace* must be met with *grace*; *favor* must always give birth to *favor*;²⁹ *gift* must always be met with *gratitude*. An image that captured this for the ancients was the picture of three goddesses, the three "Graces," dancing hand in hand in a circle. Seneca's explanation of the image is most revealing:

Some would have it appear that there is one for bestowing a benefit, one for receiving it, and a third for returning it; others hold that there are three classes of benefactors—those who receive benefits, those who return them, those who receive and return them at the same time... Why do the sisters hand in hand dance in a ring which returns upon itself? For the reason that a benefit passing in its course from hand to hand returns nevertheless to the giver; *the beauty of the whole is destroyed if the course is anywhere broken*, and it has most beauty if it is continuous and maintains an uninterrupted succession... Their faces are cheerful, as are ordinarily the faces of those who bestow or receive benefits. They are young because the memory of benefits ought not to grow old. They are maidens because benefits are pure and holy and undefiled in the eyes of all; [their robes] are transparent because benefits desire to be seen. (*Ben.* 1.3.2-5; *LCL*, emphasis added)

From this and many other ancient witnesses, we learn that there is no such thing as an isolated act of *grace*. An act of favor and its manifestation (the gift) initiate a circle dance in which the recipients of favor and gifts must "return the favor," that is, give again to the giver (both in

²⁹ Hence the saying of Sophocles (*Ajax* 522):

"Favor (*charis*) is always giving birth to favor (*charin*)."

terms of a generous disposition and in terms of some gift, whether material or otherwise). Only a gift requited is a gift well and nobly received. To fail to return favor for favor is, in effect, to break off the dance and destroy the beauty of the gracious act.

In what follows, we will look closely at how Greek and Roman authors conceived of well-executed grace exchanges, first in relation to the giver and then in relation to the recipient.

Showing Favor (Grace)

Generosity was a highly valued characteristic in people in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Most public works, public festivals and entertainments, and private aid to individuals or groups came through the willingness of generous people of means to spend their wealth on others. Because their assistance was essential in so many ways, there were strong social sanctions against violating the expectations of gratitude (see below), violations that threatened to cut off the source of aid or redirect that aid in more promising directions.

There were also clear codes of conduct for the giver as well, guidelines that sought to preserve, in theory at least, the nobility and purity of a generous act. First, ancient ethicists spoke much of the motives that should guide the benefactor or patron. Aristotle's definition of *grace* in its first sense (the generous disposition of the giver), quoted above, also underscores the fact that a giver must act not from self-interest but in the interest of the recipient.³⁰ If the motive is

³⁰ Seneca allows the giving of a benefaction to be profitable both to the giver and the recipient, stressing that the recipient is not released from showing gratitude: "I am not so unjust as to feel under no obligation to a man who, when he was profitable to me, was also profitable

primarily self-interest, any sense of "favor" is nullified and with it the deep feelings and obligations of gratitude (Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1385a35-1385b3). The Jewish sage Yeshua Ben Sira lampoons the ungrateful giver (*Sir* 20:13-16). This character gives not out of the virtue of generosity but in anticipation of profit, and if the profit does not come immediately, he considers his gifts to be thrown away and complains aloud about the ingratitude of the human race. Seneca also speaks censoriously of this character: "He who gives benefits imitates the gods, he who seeks a return, money-lenders" (*Ben.* 3.15.4).³¹ The point is that the giver, if he or she gives nobly, never gives with an eye to what can be gained from the gift.³² The giver does not give to an elderly person so as to be remembered in a will, or to an elected official with a view to getting

to himself...nay, I am also desirous that a benefit given to me should even be more advantageous to the giver, provided that, when he gave it, he was considering us both, and meant to divide it between himself and me.... I am, not merely unjust, I am ungrateful, if I do not rejoice that, while he has benefitted me, he has also benefitted himself" (*Ben.* 6.13.1-2, LCL).

³¹ Throughout his book, Seneca stresses that benefactors and friends give "for the sake of giving" and not for the sake of any return (*Ben.* 1.2.3; 4.29.3).

³² Pitt-Rivers points out that the typical responses to thanks in English, French, Italian and German-speaking countries involve some equivalent of "it was nothing" or "it was a pleasure," sayings that, in denying that obligation has been incurred, stress the purity of the motive of the giver (without nullifying any obligation—in fact, only making that obligation felt more strongly by the recipient of favor since the motives are seen to have been pure). It is astounding that the moral ideal of giving "purely" for the sake of the recipient has persisted intact across the millennia ("Postscript," pp. 217-18).

some leverage in politics. Such people are investors, not benefactors or friends.

Gifts are not to be made with a view to having some desired object given in return, but gifts were still to be made strategically. According to Cicero, good gifts badly placed are badly given (*De Offic.* 2.62). The shared advice of Isocrates, Ben Sira, Cicero and Seneca is that the giver should scrutinize the person to whom he or she is thinking of giving a gift.³³ The recipient should be a virtuous person who will honor the generosity and kindness behind the gift, who would value more the continuing relationship with the giver than any particular gift. Especially poignant is Isocrates' advice: "Bestow your favors on the good; for a goodly treasure is a store of gratitude laid up in the heart of an honest man. If you benefit bad men, you will have the same reward as those who feed stray dogs; for these snarl alike at those who give them food and at the passing stranger; and just so base men wrong alike those who help them and those who harm them" (*Ad Dem.* 29, LCL). An important component in deciding who will be a worthy

³³ Ben Sira advises: "If you do a kindness, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds" (*Sir* 12:1), advice that was remembered in the early church (see *Didache* 1.5-6) as a good rule for giving alms (an important form of benefaction, which, though personal, did not initiate the ongoing relationship of patron and client). Cicero affirms that "our love [a common way to refer to beneficence] must be shown to the worthy," urging his reader to consider the potential recipient's "character, his regard for us, his closeness to us, his usefulness to us in former services" when weighing the decision to give or not to give (*De Offic.* 1.45). The need to select beneficiaries and clients with great care is a frequent theme in Seneca (*Ben.* 1.1.2; 3.11.1; 3.14.1; 4.8.2).

David Arthur deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

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recipient of such gifts is the person's track record of how he or she has responded to other givers in the past.³⁴ Has the person responded nobly, with gratitude? He or she will probably be worthy of more favors. A reputation for knowing how to be grateful was, in effect, the ancient equivalent of a credit rating.

Giving without advance calculation of a return and selecting one's beneficiaries carefully may appear to be contradictory principles. When Seneca writes that gifts given to the ungrateful are "thrown away" (*Ben.* 1.1.2), he may appear to intensify this contradiction. Aware of this potential misunderstanding, he writes: "I choose a person who will be grateful, not one who is likely to make a return, and it often happens that the grateful man is one who is not likely to make a return, while the ungrateful man is one who has made a return. It is to the heart that my estimate is directed" (*Ben.* 4.10.4). The noble giver evaluates his or her potential beneficiaries not in light of any actual return they might make—not in terms of the value of the gifts or services they might give in exchange in the future—but in light of the disposition of the recipient's heart toward feeling gratitude, appreciating and remembering the gift and making whatever return the person is able, given his or her means. The patron's motive must be kept pure, that is, not sowing benefits for the sake of material gains or other temporal advantages, but looking only for the grateful heart irrespective of the means possessed by the potential recipient to be of service in the future.

The benefactor's favor was not, however, to be

³⁴ Thus Isocrates: "Make no man your friend before inquiring how he has used his former friends; for you must expect him to treat you as he has treated them" (*Ad Dem.* 24, LCL).

limited by the potential beneficiary's virtue (or lack thereof). Even while advising his readers to channel their resources first toward the deserving (that is, those who have given signs of a grateful character),³⁵ Seneca urges givers to remain as free as the gods in terms of their generosity. ■ Benefaction was the initiation of the dance of grace, an action rather than a response, a perfect and self-contained act rather than an act that depended on anything beyond the virtue and goodwill of the giver. Therefore, Seneca advises his readers, the human benefactor should imitate the gods, by whose design "the sun rises also upon the wicked" and "rains" are provided for both good and bad (*Ben.* 4.26.1, 4.28.1), who follow the leading of their own generous and kind hearts in their dealings with human beings, both the grateful and the sacrilegious (*Ben.* 1.1.9).

A virtuous human patron or benefactor, then, will be willing to grant public benefactions even though he or she knows that the ingrates will also derive enjoyment from the games, the public meals, the construction of a new theater. Seneca's lofty code for givers, however, applies also to personal patronage. A generous-hearted patron may even choose a known ingrate—even someone who has previously failed to show gratitude for a previous gift granted by this same patron—to receive a favor (*Ben.* 1.10.5; 7.31.2, 4). Repeated acts of kindness, like a farmer's ongoing labor over difficult soil, may yet awaken a slow heart to show gratitude and respond nobly (*Ben.* 7.32).

Responding with Grace

As we have already seen in Seneca's allegory of the three Graces, an act of favor must give rise to a response of gratitude—grace must answer

³⁵ See Seneca *Ben.* 1.10.5.

grace, or else something beautiful will be defaced and turned into something ugly. According to Cicero, while initiating a gift was a matter of choice, gratitude was not optional for honorable people, but rather an absolute duty (*De Offic.* 1.47–48). Receiving a favor or kindness meant incurring very directly a debt or obligation to respond gratefully, a debt on which one could not default.³⁶ Seneca stresses the simultaneity of receiving a gift and an obligation: "The person who intends to be grateful, even while she or he is receiving, should turn his or her thoughts to returning the favor" (*Ben.* 2.25.3). Indeed, the virtuous person could seek to compete with the giver in terms of kindnesses and favor, trying not merely to return the favor but to return it with ■ interest like the fruitful soil that bears crops far more abundant than the seeds that were scattered on it.³⁷

Gratitude toward one's patrons (or toward public benefactors) was a prominent example in discussions of what it meant to live out the cardinal virtue of justice, a virtue defined as giving to each person his or her due. It ranked in importance next to showing the gods, those supreme

³⁶ See Seneca *Ben.* 2.35.3–4; 5.11.5; 1.4.3 (which uses the expression "debt of gratitude"). Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* 8.14.3 [1163b12–15]) also speaks of the necessity of repaying a gift, even though the kind of gifts may be vastly different (e.g., a "friend" of lesser means returns intangible goods like honor and fame for material goods received from a "friend" of greater means, i.e., a patron).

³⁷ Cicero *De Offic.* 1.48; Seneca *Ben.* 1.4.3; see also Isocrates *Ad Dem.* 26: "Consider it equally disgraceful to be outdone by your enemies in doing injury and to be surpassed by your friends in going kindness (*tais euergesiais*)" (LCL). See also Pseudo-Phocylides (*Sentences*, 80): "It is proper to surpass benefactors with still more."

benefactors, the proper honor and services.³⁸ Failure to show gratitude, however, was classed as the worst of crimes, being compared to sacrilege against the gods, since the Graces were considered goddesses.³⁹ It was censured as an injury against the human race, since ingratitude discourages the very generosity that is so crucial to public life and to personal aid. Seneca captures well the perilous nature of life in the first-century world and the need for firm tethers of friendship and patronage to secure one against mishap:

Ingratitude is something to be avoided in itself because there is nothing that so effectually disrupts and destroys the harmony of the human race as this vice. For how else do we live in security if it is not that we help each other by an exchange of good offices? It is only through the interchange of benefits that life becomes in some measure equipped and fortified against sudden disasters. Take us singly, and what are we? The prey of all creatures. (*Ben.* 4.18.1, LCL)⁴⁰

The ingrate committed a crime against the gods, humanity and ultimately himself, while the person who returned grace for grace embodied the highest virtues of piety and justice and was valued for contributing to the forward movement of the dance of grace on which so much depended.

Responding justly to one's benefactors was a behavior enforced not by written laws but rather "by unwritten customs and universal practice,"

³⁸ Thus Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.7. Ben Sira goes so far as to suggest that the requital of favors counts as an offering to God: "The one who returns a kindness (*antapodidous charin*) offers choice flour" (*Sir* 35:3).

³⁹ Seneca (*Ben.* 1.4.4) and Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 31.37) both call ingratitude an assault on the honor of the three Graces, and thus a wicked act of sacrilege.

⁴⁰ See also Cicero *De Offic.* 2.63.

with the result that a person known for gratitude would be considered praiseworthy and honorable by all, while the ingrate would be regarded as disgraceful.⁴¹ There was no law for the prosecution of the person who failed to requite a favor (with the interesting exception of classical Macedonia), but, Seneca affirmed, the punishment of shame and being hated by all good people would more than make up for the lack of official sanctions.⁴² Neglecting to return a kindness, forgetfulness of kindnesses already received in the past, and, most horrendous of all, repaying favor with insult or injury—these were courses of action to be avoided by an honorable person at all costs.⁴³ Rather, gifts were always to be remembered, commemorated first of all in the shrine of one's own mind, and always to be requited with gratitude. The social sanctions of honor and shame, therefore, were important bulwarks for the virtue of gratitude and exerted considerable pressure in this direction.

Practically speaking, responding with grati-

⁴¹ Quote from Anaximenes (frequently attributed to Aristotle), *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1421b3–1422a2. Seneca appeals to unanimity of human opinion in this regard: "What is so praiseworthy, upon what are all our minds so uniformly agreed, as the repayment of good services with gratitude?" (*Ben.* 4.16.3); "Not to return gratitude for benefits is a disgrace, and the whole world counts it as such" (*Ben.* 3.1.1).

⁴² Seneca *Ben.* 3.6.2; 3.17.1–12.

⁴³ On the shameful of forgetting benefactions, see Cicero *De Offic.* 2.63; Seneca *Ben.* 3.1.3; 3.2.1; on the even greater dangers of insulting one's benefactors, see Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.2.8 and Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31. Such courses of action do not only destroy a patron's benevolent disposition toward one—they can turn benevolence into virulent anger and the desire for revenge (see also Pitt-Rivers, "Postscript," p. 236).

tude was also reinforced by the knowledge that if an individual has needed favors in the past, he or she most assuredly will still need favors and assistance in the future. As we have seen already, a reputation for gratitude was the best credit line a person could have in the ancient world, since patrons and benefactors, when selecting beneficiaries, would seek out those who knew how to be grateful. Even though benefactors might be moved to risk giving to a person whose reputation had been marred by ingratitude, since most benefactors' resources were limited, they would seek out the worthy recipients first.⁴⁴ The person who "requites favors," then, is commended by Ben Sira for his foresight, since he will not fail to find aid when needed in the future (Sir 3:31).

An extreme yet surprisingly common example of showing gratitude with an eye to future

⁴⁴ See, again, Seneca *Ben.* 1.10.5; Isocrates *Ad Dem.* 24, 29. Wallace-Hadrill ("Patronage in Roman Society," pp. 72-73) suggests, astutely in light of the perception of limited goods that marked the ancient world, that a patron's power came not from being able to give whatever was needed to whomever asked but from the impossibility of bestowing favors on all who needed them. The finitude of beneficence made jockeying for limited resources all the more intense and enhanced the willingness of clients or would-be clients to vie with one another to attain the patron's favor through services, honors and the like: "Their success in control lay as much in their power to refuse as in their readiness to deliver the goods." This certainly played out in the scene of provinces and cities vying for a special place in the emperor's eye, so that scarce resources would be diverted one way and not another. At this point an important distinction between human patronage and God's patronage emerges, for the latter is proclaimed as the giver of boundless benefits to whomever asks (Lk 11:9-13; Jas 1:5).

favors came to expression in honorary inscriptions. Several inscriptions proclaiming honors to public benefactors contained in Danker's collection make explicit the motive behind the inscription, namely, "that all might know that we express appropriate appreciation to those who...make us the beneficiaries of their philanthropies," and that other benefactors may confer their benefits in the assurance that "they shall receive appropriate gratitude" as well.⁴⁵ Seeing that these cities or groups provided for the honor and remembrance of their benefactors, other benefactors would be encouraged to channel their resources in their direction as well (even as the honored benefactor would be positively inclined to continue his or her beneficence).⁴⁶ The opposite would also be true, namely that those who have shown ingratitude to their patrons or benefactors should expect to be excluded from future favors, both by the insulted benefactor and by other potential patrons as well. Just as no one goes back to a merchant who has been discovered to cheat customers, and as no one entrusts valuables to the safekeeping of someone who has previously lost valuables entrusted to him or her, so "those who have

⁴⁵ Five out of fifty-one inscriptions collected and translated by Danker contain these expressions or their near equivalents (see Danker, *Benefactor*, pp. 57, 77-79, 89-91, 152-53, 283-85). Cicero (*De Offic.* 2.70) also attests that showing gratitude to present patrons attracts the positive attention of potential future patrons as well.

⁴⁶ Dio Chrysostom bears witness to the truth of these dynamics: "For those who take seriously their obligations toward their benefactors and mete out just treatment to those who have loved them, all men regard as worthy of favour [*charitos axios*], and without exception each would wish to benefit them to the best of his ability" (*Or.* 31.7).

insulted their benefactors will not be thought worthy of a favor (*charitos axious*) by anyone” (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.38, 65).

As we consider gratitude, then, we are presented with something of a paradox. Just as the favor was freely bestowed, so the response must be free and uncoerced. Nonetheless, that response is at the same time necessary and unavoidable for an honorable person who wishes to be known as such (and hence the recipient of favor in the future). Gratitude is never a formal obligation. There is no advance calculation of or agreed on return for the gift given.⁴⁷ Nevertheless the recipient of a favor knows that he or she stands under the necessity of returning favor when favor has been received. The element of exchange must settle into the background, being dominated instead by a sense of mutual favor, of mutual goodwill and generosity.⁴⁸

Manifestations of Gratitude

“Returning a favor” could take on many forms, depending on the nature of the gift and the relative economic and political clout of the parties concerned. Cities or associations would show their gratitude for public benefactions by providing for the public recognition (honoring and increasing the fame) of the giver and often

⁴⁷ Seneca *Ben.* 3.7.2

⁴⁸ Seneca *Ben.* 6.41.1–2. Once again, Pitt-Rivers’s observations of reciprocity in the modern Mediterranean (rural) context resonate deeply with their ancient counterpart: “A gift is not a gift unless it is a free gift, i.e., involving no obligation on the part of the receiver, and yet ... it nevertheless requires to be returned” (“Postscript,” p. 233); “You cannot pay for a favor in any way or it ceases to be one, you can only thank, though on a later occasion you can demonstrate gratitude by making an equally ‘free’ gift in return” (*ibid.*, p. 231).

memorializing the gift and the honors conferred by means of a public inscription or, in exceptional cases, a statue of the giver or other monument.⁴⁹

Even in personal patronage (in which the parties are not on equal footing), however, public honor and testimony would comprise an important component of a grateful response. An early witness to this is Aristotle, who writes in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that “both parties should receive a larger share from the friendship, but not a larger share of the same thing: the superior should receive the larger share of honor, the needy one the larger share of profit; for honor is the due reward of virtue and beneficence” (*Nic. Eth.* 8.14.2 [1163b1-5]). Such a return, though of a very different kind, preserves the friendship. Seneca emphasizes the public nature of the testimony that the recipient of a patron’s gifts is to bear. Gratitude for, and pleasure at, receiving these gifts should be expressed “not merely in the hearing of the giver, but everywhere” (*Ben.* 2.22.1): “The greater the favour, the more earnestly must we express ourselves, resorting to such compliments as:...‘I shall never be able to repay you my gratitude, but, at any rate, I shall not cease from declaring everywhere that I am unable to repay it’” (*Ben.* 2.24.4). Increasing the fame of the giver is part of the proper return for a benefit, and a gift that one is ashamed to acknowledge openly in the hearing of all, one has no business accepting in the first place (*Ben.*

⁴⁹ See Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.17, 20; 51.9. The first half of Danker, *Benefactor*, consists of translations and analyses of such honorary inscriptions. In *Oration* 66, Dio Chrysostom lampoons the “glory seeker” who spends all his fortune on public benefactions just to receive crowns, special seating and public proclamations—“lures for the simpletons.”

2.23.1).

These dynamics are also at work in Jewish literature with regard to formulating a proper response to God's favors, that is, with regard to answering the psalmist's question "What shall I give back to the LORD for all his gifts to me?" (Ps 116:12, my translation). The psalmist answers his own question by enumerating the public testimonies he will give to God's fidelity and favor. Similarly, after God brings a happy ending to the many dangers and trials faced by Tobit and his family, the angel Raphael enjoins such public testimony to honor God as a fitting response: "Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you.... With fitting honor declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him.... Reveal the works of God, and with fitting honor...acknowledge him" (Tob 12:6-7).⁵⁰

A second component of gratitude that comes to expression in relationships of personal patronage or friendship is loyalty to the giver, that is, showing gratitude and owning one's association with the giver even when fortunes turn, and it becomes costly. Thus Seneca writes about gratitude that "if you wish to make a return for a favor, you must be willing to go into exile, or to pour forth your blood, or to undergo poverty, or...even to let your very innocence be stained and exposed to shameful slanders" (Ep. Mor. 81.27). Wallace-Hadrill writes that despite the fact that, in theory, clients were expected to remain loyal to their patrons, in practice, if a

⁵⁰ Aristotle regards human patronage and the favor of the gods to be of one kind, different merely in terms of degree, with the result that, in the case of the gods, an individual cannot ever repay their favors and a person "is deemed virtuous if he pays them all the regard he can" (Nic. Eth. 8.14.3-4 [1163b12-18]).

patron fell into political trouble or if his or her fortunes began to wane, the patron's entourage of clients would evaporate.⁵¹ Such practice, however, was contrary to the ideal of gratitude, according to which a person would stand by (or under) the person's patron and continue to live gratefully even if it cost the individual the future favors of others, or brought him or her into dangerous places and worked contrary to self-interest.⁵² The person who disowned or dissociated himself or herself from a patron because of self-interest was an ingrate.

It is worth noting at this point that *faith* (Lat *fides*; Gk *pistis*) is a term also very much at home in patron-client and friendship relations, and had, like *grace*, a variety of meanings as the context shifted from the patron's faith to the client's faith. In one sense, *faith* meant "dependability." The patron needed to prove reliable in providing the assistance he or she promised to grant. The client needed to "keep faith" as well, in the sense of showing loyalty and commitment to the patron and to his or her obligations of gratitude.⁵³ A second meaning is the more familiar sense of "trust": the client had to trust the goodwill and ability of the patron to whom the client entrusted his or her need, that the patron would indeed perform what he or she promised,⁵⁴ while the benefactor would also have

⁵¹ Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society," p. 82.

⁵² Seneca *Ben.* 4.20.2; 4.24.2.

⁵³ This is the sense of *faith* (*pistis*) in 4 Maccabees 13:13; 16:18-22. Seven Jewish brothers have the choice laid before them by the tyrant Antiochus IV: transgress Torah and assimilate wholly to the Greek way of life or die miserably. The brothers choose to brave the tortures, keeping "faith" with the God who gave the brothers the gift of life.

⁵⁴ See, again, 4 Maccabees 8:5-7, where King Antiochus

to trust the recipients to act nobly and make a grateful response. In Seneca's words, once a gift was given there was "no law [that can] restore you to your original estate—look only to the good faith (*fidem*) of the recipient" (*Ben.* 3.14.2).

The principal of loyalty meant that clients or friends would have to take care not to become entangled in webs of crossed loyalties. Although a person could have multiple patrons,⁵⁵ to have as patrons two people who were enemies or rivals of one another would place one in a dangerous position, since ultimately the client would have to prove loyal and grateful to one but disloyal and ungrateful to the other. "No one can serve two masters" honorably in the context of these masters being at odds with one another, but if the masters are "friends" or bound to each other by some other means, the client should be safe in receiving favors from both.

Finally, the grateful person would look for an occasion to bestow timely gifts or services. If we have shown forth our gratitude in the hearing of the patron and borne witness to the patron's virtue and generosity in the public halls, we have "repaid favor [the generous disposition of the giver] with favor [an equally gracious reception of the gift]," but for the actual gift one still owes an actual gift (*Seneca Ben.* 2.35.1). Once again, people of similar authority and wealth ("friends") can exchange gifts similar in kind and value. Clients, on the other hand, can offer services when called on to do so or when they see the opportunity arise. Seneca especially seeks to cultivate a certain watchfulness on the part of

urges the young Jewish brothers to trust, or have faith in, him for their future well-being and advancement, abandoning their current alliances and associations in favor of a new attachment to him.

⁵⁵See Saller, "Patronage and Friendship," pp. 53–56.

the person who has been indebted, urging him or her not to try to return the favor at the first possible moment (as if the debt weighed uncomfortably on the person's shoulders), but to return the favor in the best possible moment, the moment in which the opportunity will be real and not manufactured (*Ben.* 6.41.1–2). The point of the gift was not, after all, to obtain a return but to create a bond that "binds two people together."

The Dance of Grace

The careful reader may already have observed some apparent contradictions in the codes of grace. Rather than make the system fall apart, these contrary principles result in a creative tension between the mindset that must guide the giver and the mindset that should direct the recipient of favor. As a pair of dancers must sometimes move in contrary directions for the dance to be beautiful (and to avoid crashing into one another), so the patron and client are each given his or her own chart of steps to follow in the dance of grace. Sometimes they move together, sometimes in contrary ways, all for the sake of preserving the freedom and nobility of the practice of giving and receiving benefits. Seneca is especially fond of bringing contrasting rules of conduct together, only to tell each party to forget that it knows, in effect, what the other party is thinking. Clients are advised to think one way, patrons another—and if these mindsets get mixed up or crossed, the beauty of reciprocity, the gracefulness of grace, becomes irreparably marred.

Speaking to the giver, Seneca says that "the book-keeping is simple—so much is paid out; if anything comes back, it is gain, if nothing comes back, there is no loss. I made the gift for the sake of giving" (*Ben.* 1.2.3). While the giver is to train his or her mind to give no thought to the return

and never to think a gift lost, the recipient is never allowed to forget his or her obligation and the absolute necessity of making a return (*Ben.* 2.25.3; 3.1.1). The point is that the giver should wholly be concerned with giving for the sake of the other, while the recipient should be concerned wholly with showing gratitude to the giver. If the recipient should say to himself, “She gave it for the sake of giving; I owe nothing,” then the dance has turned sour, and one partner has trampled the other’s toes.

Many other examples of this double set of rules exist. The giver is told “to make no record of the amount,” but the recipient is “to feel indebted for more than the amount” (Seneca *Ben.* 1.4.3); the giver should forget that the gift was given, the recipient should always remember that the gift was received (*Ben.* 2.10.4; see Demosthenes *De Corona* 269); the giver is not to mention the gift again, while the recipient is to publicize it as broadly as possible (*Ben.* 2.11.2). In cases where a recipient has taken great pains to try to return a benefit, being watchful and thoughtful for the opportunity but simply not finding a way to help one who is far greater than himself, “the one should consider that he has received the return of his benefit, while the other should know that he has not returned it; the one should release the other, while the other should feel himself bound; the one should say, ‘I have received,’ the other, ‘I still owe’ ” (*Ben.* 7.16.1–2).

The most dramatic contradiction exists between the denial that the ingrate can again hope to receive favors (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.38, 65) and the exhortation of patrons to imitate the gods and give even to the unworthy and ungrateful (Seneca *Ben.* 1.10.5; 7.31.2, 4; 7.32). What accounts for the contradiction? Simply, the different audience and situation. Seneca speaks to patrons in these passages, discoursing about the

loftiest ideals for generosity. Dio speaks to recipients of favor, urging them to cease a specific practice that shows ingratitude toward their benefactors. The recipients of favor should not dwell too long on the possibility (perhaps even the obligation) of benefactors giving even to the ingrate, lest this lead them to excuse themselves from showing gratitude (especially when costly) and to presume on the favor of the giver, favor that is never to be taken for granted. The patron should not, on the other hand, dwell too long on the impossibility of restoring the ingrate to favor, for different considerations are to guide him or her, namely generosity even to the undeserving.

Such mutually contradictory rules (forgetting and remembering, being silent and bearing witness, and the like) are constructed so as to keep the giver’s mind wholly on what is noble about patronage (generosity, acting in the interest of others) and the recipient’s mind wholly on what is noble for the client (namely making a full and rich return of gratitude for favors conferred). They are devised in order to sustain both parties’ commitment to acting nobly within the system of reciprocity. The ultimate goal for these ancient ethicists, after all, was not perfect systematization but virtuous conduct.

Grace, then, held two parties together in a bond of reciprocal exchanges, a bond in which each party committed to provide what he or she (or they) could to serve the needs or desires of the other. Public benefactions were frequent, particularly as a means by which local elites reaffirmed or increased their stature in the public eye. Such graces did not form long-lasting bonds of mutual commitment, but friendship relations and personal patronage did. In the case of social equals, this amounted to an exchange of like goods and services, always within the con-

text of mutual loyalty and commitment. Between a social or political superior and his or her juniors, goods and opportunities were channeled down from above, and respect, public praise and loyal service were returned from below, again within the context of mutual commitment. Giving was to be done for the sake of generosity and bringing another benefit, and not with a view to material profit from returns. Receiving, however, was always to be accompanied by the desire and commitment to return grace for grace. Though often profitably compared to a dance that had to be kept “grace-full” in a circle of giving and receiving, these relationships were far more than ornamental or recreational (as dances are). They formed the bedrock of society, a person’s principal assurance of aid and support in an uncertain and insecure world.