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SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD AS A BACKGROUND FOR EARLY CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

ABSTRACT

The essay investigates if and how Greco-Roman theorists attempted to motivate altruistic behaviour and devise a social-welfare ethics. In comparison, it studies actual social-welfare practices on both the private and the state level. Various social-welfare tasks are touched upon – health care; care for the elderly, widows, orphans and invalids; the patron-client system as countermeasure to unemployment; distribution of land, grain, meals and money; alms, donations, foundations as well as education – with hardly any one of them being especially tailored to the poor. The enormous role of civil society – private persons, their households and associations – in holding up social-welfare functions is shown. By contrast, the state was comparatively less involved, the commonwealth of the Romans, especially in Republican times, even less than the Greek city-states. The Greek poleis often invested income such as wealthy citizens' donations in social welfare, thus brokering between wealthy private donors and less well-to-do persons. The church, living in private household structures during the first centuries, took over the social-welfare tasks of the Greco-Roman household and reviewed them in the light of Hebrew and Hellenistic-Jewish moral traditions.

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Seventy-five years ago, in 1939, the Dutch scholar Hendrik Bolkestein from Utrecht published his almost 500-page volume *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum/Charity and Poor Welfare in Pre-Christian Antiquity: A Contribution to the Problem "Ethics and Society"*.[1] His classic monograph opened up a new line of research, as nothing comparable had been undertaken before, and today quite a number of his insights still hold. This essay is but a modest homage to this Dutch scholar, who was not only learned but also courageous. In the years of German occupation immediately following the publication of his book, he bravely chaired a group of professors trying to keep the teaching and research at Utrecht University free of Nazi ideology.[2] His book is a monument, and this essay pays homage to him.

The present article has three parts, the first dedicated to motivations for altruistic behaviour that ancient theorists expounded, the second to actual practices of altruistic behaviour on the private level and the third to social welfare practices by the state.

1.   MOTIVATIONS FOR ALTRUISTIC BEHAVIOUR

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle considers it essential for a free male polis citizen, for an ἐλευθέριος, to freely donate from one's assets, with such generosity being called ἐλευθεριότης (*Nic. Eth.* 1119b, 22ff). The contents of both words, ἐλευθέριος (free) and ἐλευθεριότης (generosity), were inseparably connected. The primary objects of such generosity were equals such as friends who were capable of returning the favours. But there seems to be room even for the poor as recipients of the free men's generosity, because Aristotle later in his book elaborates:

> A (true)[3] benefactor feels friendship and agape (φιλοῦσι καὶ ἀγαπῶσι) for the recipient of his bounty even though he is not getting anything out of him and is never likely to do so (*Nic. Eth.* 1167b; similarly *Rhetor.* 1385a 17).

"It is noble to render a service not with an eye to receiving one in return" (*Nic. Eth.* 1162b). The pre-Socratic Democritus, emphasising selfless pity, raised a similarly unselfish voice;[4] so did the Stoics following the Aristotelian

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1   Reprint from the 1939 Utrecht edition in 1967.
2   Cf. preface by H. Wagenvoort in Bolkestein (1967:v).
3   Added by P.L.
4   *Fragm.* 96 (doing good without expecting a requital/ἀμοιβή); 282; 278 (contrary to the selfless care for the offspring in the animal world, many humans hope for some gain/ἐπαύρεσις from their children in return); 255 (οἰκτίρω/pity as motivation

tradition. The Stoics, probably Cleanthes himself, held that a truly beneficial act is not intended to harvest any return but gratitude (*libenter accipit beneficium reddidisse*).[5] But such rare voices should not fool the modern reader. Although Aristotle aimed at non-reciprocal altruism, the actual dominant culture was different. It was one of Bolkestein's methodological merits to have tried to clearly distinguish actual practice from daydreaming by intellectuals such as Aristotle. Those selfless noble voices simply presupposed a widespread *do-ut-des* mentality, of which they disapproved.

As for the Stoics' "noble" attitude, it does not appear that impressive after all. Epictetus of all people, a former slave, considered it a vital goal to be free from caring feelings and pity. These emotions should be superficial, not touching one's inner self. Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 16, reads like this:

> Beware that you be not carried away by the impression (φαντασία) that the (suffering) person (in front of you) is in the midst of external ills (ἐν κακοῖς ... τοῖς ἐκτός) ... Do not hesitate to sympathize with him (συμπεριφέρεσθαι; to go about with him) so far as words go, and, if occasion offers, even to groan (συνεπιστενάξαι) with him, but be careful not to groan also in the center of your being (πρόσεχε μέντοι μὴ καὶ ἔσωθεν στενάξῃς).

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for doing good to others; see also 107a and n. 29 below). For ἔλεος, see CIL I² 1212 (below), Demosthenes, *Or*. 53.7 (empathetic συνάχθομαι) and 53.8 (ἐλεέω; both times toward a friend in need) as well as Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:141-143, 172).

5   In Seneca, *de benef*. 2.31.1. In 2.31.3, Seneca took over this opinion (*beneficium cuius proprium est nihil de reditu cogitare*), arguing that otherwise doing good would not be a *beneficium* but a *creditum,* a loan that has to be paid back (4.11-12), or a *negotiatio,* a business transaction (2.31.2). Plutarch admonishes to give without expecting to receive anything in return (*praecepta gerendae reipublicae* 822ab:

> The masses (οἱ πολλοί) are more hostile to a rich man who does not give them a share of his private possessions than to a poor man who steals from the public funds, for they think the former's conduct is due to arrogance and contempt of them, but the latter's to necessity. First, then, *let the gifts be made without anything in return* (γιγνέσθωσαν οὖν αἱ μεταδόσεις πρῶτον μὲν ἀντὶ μηδενός); because in this way they surprise and overcome the recipients more completely.

The motivation for such "noble" attitude appears to be selfish power play; seemingly selfless giving reinforces the superiority of the donor over against the recipient. Also the motivation of fear – if you do not give them anything, they become "hostile" (δι' ἔχθους ἔχουσιν) – implies selfishness. Nevertheless, by Plutarch's time the "masses" have expressly become a target of giving.

Internal freedom consisted of becoming free from all passions and emotions (ἀπάθεια),[6] that is, also from caring feelings and from pity. True empathy was not part of the Stoic program.

In summary, only a few moralists such as Aristotle opposed a widespread culture of reciprocity, which did not promote selflessness. This, however, reduced the chances for the poor to receive benefactions from private persons. Beneficial acting towards others in the Greco-Roman world was for the largest part embedded in a give-and-take-system – the exact system that Luke 14:12-24 tried to unhinge by propagating altruism without returns. Matthew 5:46 sneered at the return-oriented motivation of altruistic behaviour. But these were later Christian voices, echoing the rare voices of moralists such as Democritus, Aristotle and Cleanthes probably without knowing it. Until at least the third century CE (see below), the hope of receiving something in return remained the most prominent incentive to bestow beneficial favours on others. The Greek vocabulary illustrates this mentality: ἀντευεργετεῖν (to do good in return) counterbalanced εὐεργετεῖν (to do good),[7] ὠφελεῖν (to be of service to) was balanced by ἀντωφελεῖν (to be of service in return), or θεραπεύειν (to attend to) was countered by ἀντιθεραπεύειν (to attend to in return). One "would be ashamed to take a favour ... without making a return," Xenophon writes.[8] The term χάρις denoted both a favour and the response to it by repaying it with another beneficial act and with thankfulness.[9] Stobaeus[10] in the early fifth century CE, compiling extracts from hundreds of Greek philosophers for his son, reported a threefold,

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6   Epict., *Enchir.* 16 (and 11-12); *Diss.* 2.1.21+24; 4.1.82-84.

7   Xen, *Mem.* 2.9.8: εὐεργετούμενον ὑπὸ χρηστῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀντευεργετοῦντα τοὺς μὲν τοιούτους φίλους ποιεῖσθαι.

8   Xen., *Mem.* 2.8.4: ὠφελοῦντα ἀντωφελεῖσθαι; 2.10.3: αἰσχύνοιτο δ᾽ ἄν, εἰ ὠφελούμενος ὑπὸ σοῦ μὴ ἀντωφελοίη σε. Xen., *Cyropaedia* 8.3.49:

> [N]othing seemed to him (Pheraulas) so pleasant or so useful as to serve (θεραπεύειν) other people. For he held humans to be the best and most grateful of all creatures, since he saw that when people are praised (ἐπαινουμένους) by any one they are very glad to praise these in turn (ἀντεπαινοῦντας); and when any one does them a favor (χαριζομένοις), they try to do one in return (ἀντιχαρίζεσθαι); when they recognise that any one is kindly disposed toward them (εὐνοϊκῶς ἔχοντας) they return these people's goodwill (ἀντ᾽ εὖ νοοῦντας); ... and he noticed especially that they strive more earnestly than any other creature to return the loving care of parents (ἀντιθεραπεύειν) both during their parents' lifetime and after their death.

Further examples of the *do-ut-des* mentality in Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:156-170).

9   For references, see, for example, Liddell-Scott (1958: *s.v.* χάρις).

10   Χάριν δὲ λέγεσθαι τριχῶς, τὴν μὲν ὑπουργίαν ὠφελίμου αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου ἕνεκα, τὴν δ᾽ ἄμειψιν ὑπουργίας ὠφελίμου, τὴν δὲ μνήμην ὑπουργίας τοιαύτης. Διὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τὰς δαίμονας τρεῖς

originally peripatetic, usage of χάρις. First, χάρις is a beneficial service rendered (ὑπουργία), then it is the return (ἄμειψις) of such beneficial service and finally the grateful commemoration (μνήμη) of such service. Similarly, the Pseudo-Platonic *Definitions* define χάρις as both a "voluntary good deed" and "the *return* of a rendered service in due measure."[11] Or, to give a last example, the Pseudo-Platonic *Definitions* characterised a "gift" as an *exchange* for a beneficial favour.[12] Menander in the *Monosticha* mocked the *do-ut-des* spiral: "Whenever you receive, give back, man, and you will receive again!" (317);[13] "love beyond measure the one who loves (you)" (322). But even tax collectors can do that, Matthew 5:46 reprimanded.

The objects of such reciprocal altruistic behaviour were people of equal or similar status or members of the own social clan, parents, children, relatives, especially brothers and friends. The Platonic *Definitions* consequently characterisd friendship as a reciprocal "partnership (κοινωνία) of doing and experiencing good."[14]

A subcategory of the *quid-pro-quo* system was "trading" beneficial acting for an honourable reputation. In societies in which honour/shame played a momentous role, this immaterial return for beneficial acts was highly valued. Especially when the object of doing good was the political community of co-citizens in which one lived, this immaterial reward played an important role. Athens repaid benefactors with distinctions such as citizenships[15] or by a commemorative stele. Demosthenes writes: "Their deeds survive … Those inscriptions … may stand as proofs to all who wish to do us service, declaring how many benefactors our city has

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    ὁ βίος κατεφήμισε. Λέγεσθαι δὲ χάριν καὶ τὴν ἐν ὄψει ἢ ἐν λόγοις, καθ᾽ ἣν τὸν μὲν εὔχαριν ὀνομάζεσθαι, τὸν δ᾽ ἐπίχαριν (Stobaeus, *Anthol.* 2.7.23.1-7).

11   εὐεργεσία ἑκούσιος· ἀπόδοσις ἀγαθοῦ ὑπουργίας ἐν καιρῷ (Ps.-Plato, *Def.* 413e).

12   Ps.-Plato, *Def.* 414a: Δωρεὰ ἀλλαγὴ χάριτος.

13   Aristotle expressed the same principle in a less nonchalant way:

     It is exchange that binds together … This is why we set up a shrine of the Graces in a public place, to remind people to return a kindness. For that is a special characteristic of grace, since it is a duty not only to repay a service, but another time to take the initiative in doing a service oneself (*Nic. Eth.* 1133a).

    In a sobering way Isocrates writes (*Or.* 15.217):

     I maintain that everyone does everything that he does for the sake of *pleasure or gain or honour*; for I observe that no desire springs up in people save for these objects.

14   Ps.-Plato, *Def.* 413a 10: κοινωνία μετ᾽ εὐνοίας· κοινωνία τοῦ εὖ ποιῆσαι καὶ παθεῖν.

15   For example, Dem., *Or.* 59, *In Neaeram* 89.

benefited in return" (ἀντ᾽ εὖ πεποίηκεν).[16] Interestingly, the term for *beneficial services* and *awards/distinctions* could be the same: δωρειαί.[17] Frederick W. Danker's (1982) discussions of benefactor inscriptions give wonderful glimpses into this public reward culture.

However, the Greeks and Romans were also aware of a third motivation to act beneficially, albeit *not* especially toward the poor. Psychologically, there is the mere joy of having property, which can be felt when being able to do something for others. There is a selfish aspect involved in being generous: you can feel good about yourself when doing it – not only because you may feel admired by others, which again would be the reputation motivation, but also because you please your social conscience or simply enjoy the power that comes with property. Being able to buy things for yourself, to compensate great losses (Isocr., *Or.* 1.28) or to cure one's physical problems (Euripides, *Electra* 428f) as well as to give to others makes you feel this power and the joy that comes with it. Aristotle writes:

> To bestow favours and assistance on friends or visitors or comrades (Aristotle does not mention the poor!) is a great *pleasure* (ἥδιστον), which can only happen if there is private property.[18]

Modern science has corroborated the Greek proverb in Acts 20:35 that it is more rewarding to give than to receive:[19] "Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness," is the title of a 2008 study in the journal *Science*.[20] Apparently sensing that such pleasure adds a selfish aspect to the altruistic

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16 ἔνιοι τῶν ἀνδρῶν οὐκέτ᾽ εἰσίν. ἀλλὰ τὰ ἔργα τὰ πραχθέντ᾽ ἔστιν ... ἐκεῖναι τοῦ τῆς πόλεως ἤθους μνημεῖον ὦσι, καὶ παραδείγμαθ᾽ ἑστῶσι τοῖς βουλομένοις τι ποιεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀγαθόν, ὅσους εὖ ποιήσαντας ἡ πόλις ἀντ᾽ εὖ πεποίηκεν (Dem., *Or.* 20, *Adv. Leptinem* 64).

17 Or also δῶρα. For example, Dem., *Or.* 19, *De falsa legatione* 330; *Or.* 20, *Adv. Leptinem* 35; *Or.* 59, *In Neaeram* 89; Aristot., *Rhet.* 1361a 37-39; 1361b 1-2.

18 Aristot., *Polit.* 1263b. Isocrates talks of the pleasure of "possessing so large an estate that I am able to assist even others" (οἰκῶν ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ καὶ τοσαύτην οὐσίαν κεκτημένος ὥστε καὶ ἑτέρους εὖ ποιεῖν δύνασθαι, *Or.* 17.56). In *Or.* 15.217, he confirms that *pleasure* (ἡδονή) represents one of the three major motivations of human behaviour (see above). Seneca emphasises the *gaudium* of *benefacere* (Sen., *de benef.* 1.6.1). The *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum,* 1446b, adds "fear" as a fourth one, focusing most probably on the fear of shame and criticism by other citizens if one is not generously giving. Cf. also Xen., *Oec.* 2.5-6 (failing to be beneficial for the common good will not be tolerated patiently but will leave one without support: οὔτε θεοὺς οὔτε ἀνθρώπους οἶμαί σε ἂν ἀνασχέσθαι ... ἔρημον συμμάχων εἶναι) as well as Plutarch, n. 5 above. Fear is the flipside of the honour motivation.

19 Μακάριόν ἐστιν μᾶλλον διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν, turning upside down the motto λαμβάνειν μᾶλλον ἢ διδόναι in Thucydides, *Hist.* 2.97.4.

20 Dunn *et al.* (2008:1687-1688).

act,[21] Epicharmos (in Plutarch, *Publicola* 15.5.7) held that taking pleasure (χαίρειν) when giving and *true* philanthropy are not the same pair of shoes (οὐ φιλάνθρωπος τύ γ' ἐσσ'· ... χαίρεις διδούς).

2. ALTRUISTIC PRACTICES ON THE PRIVATE LEVEL: CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The poor living under the subsistence minimum did not play a special role in all of this.[22] It was the Christian author Luke, not pagan Greek authors, who had particularly the poor in mind when propagating his alms-giving ethics. Greek ethical theory did not stylise alms giving as a special virtue,[23] nor was there anything comparable in the Greco-Roman culture to the Israelite concept of poor people being special to God and better followers of their religion.[24] On the private, personal level, therefore, care for the poor was not a significant issue, but rather reduced, for example, to occasional giving to beggars,[25] poor travellers or stranded sailors,[26] or to alms giving to people in need in one's community.

2.1 Giving to people in need in the community

It was not uncommon for Greek citizens to give clothes to those in need, according to a fragment by the comedy writer Philemon.[27] Furthermore,

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21 In Plutarch, n. 5 above, it surfaces in a blunt and more negative way: Pleasure comes from the power and superiority over others, which is gained when giving without getting anything in return.

22 I use "poor" and "in need" in the sense of living under the subsistence minimum. The Greek πτωχός comes the closest, not πένης, which – as ἀπορία, ἔνδεια or δεόμενοι – denote those who do not have enough capital to sustain themselves and therefore have to *work* (for example, Xen., *Mem.* 4.2.37), thus the majority of the society. By contrast, πλούσιοι were those who had enough means so that they did *not* have to work. See Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:182-184) for references.

23 This was one of Bolkestein's main insights (for example, [1939] 1967:199f.).

24 For example Prov. 3:34; 14:31; 15:25; 17:5; 19:17; 22:22; 23:10-11; 2 Sam. 12:1-5; Is. 10:1-2; 11:4; 58:7; 23:6,11; Jer. 20:13; 22:16; 29:19; Ps 9:10; 10:10, 14, 18; 68:6; 72:4; 146:9; Ex. 22:21-25; Deut. 24:12-22.

25 For references, see Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:202-214), touching also on begging priests and philosophers.

26 Heraclides Lembus, *Excerpta politiarum* 46 (provisions and money for ship-wrecked sailors). See the careful discussion in Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:179, 217, 224-231).

27 *Fragm.* 176 (ed. Kock): ἐὰν ὁρῶν πένητα γυμνὸν ἐνδύσῃς, μᾶλλον ἀπέδυσας αὐτόν, ἂν ὀνειδίσῃς. See also Eurip., *Fragm.* 21: ἃ μὴ γὰρ ἔστι τῷ πένητι πλούσιος δίδωσ'· ἃ δ' οἱ πλουτοῦντες οὐ κεκτήμεθα, τοῖσιν πένησι χρώμενοι τιμώμεθα.

in times of grain shortage and high prices, affluent citizens could help less well-to-do co-citizens (ἄποροι τῶν πολιτῶν),[28] that is, not specifically the "poor" in our sense of the word (n. 22, above). Or when older people had been stripped of their means during tyranny, several people, "out of pity for their straits, freely bestowed something from their own," Lysias recounts.[29] Seneca later admonished to give alms to poor people ("a hunch of bread or a farthing dole tossed to a beggar"), but he did not consider this a *beneficium*, because it was too trivial and often not given to "worthy" recipients (*de ben.* 4.29.2-3).[30]

At least at the grass roots, in funerary inscriptions, a person could be praised for "honouring the powerful and not disrespecting the poor" (second century CE or even later):[31] *colui poten(t)es nec dispexsi pau(peres)*, with the latter formulation counterpointing Proverbs 17:5 (*qui despicit pauperem*). In Rome at the end of the Roman Republic, an epitaph – in my opinion a Jewish inscription – claimed that a deceased merchant was "merciful and loving of the poor," thereby connecting alms giving with empathy (*misericordia* mercy and pity) and affective liking (*amor*) of the poor instead of selfish motivations, which was something new in the west.[32]

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28 Theophr., *Char.* 23.5: ἐν τῇ σιτοδείᾳ δὲ ὡς πλείω ἢ πέντε τάλαντα αὑτῷ γένοιτο τὰ ἀναλώματα διδόντι τοῖς ἀπόροις τῶν πολιτῶν.

29 Lysias, *In Philonem* 19: οἷς ἕτεροι διδόναι παρ᾽ ἑαυτῶν τι προηροῦντο διὰ τὴν ἀπορίαν οἰκτίραντες αὐτούς; cf. also 11: indulgence for the poor and physically disabled (τοῖς δὲ πένησιν ἢ ἀδυνάτοις τῷ σώματι); *Pro Mantitheo* 14: "I said that the well-to-do ought to provide what was necessary for those in needy circumstances" (τοῖς ἀπόρως διακειμένοις).

30 Cf., however, Seneca, *Ep. ad Lucil.* 95.51: "Magna scilicet laus est, si homo mansuetus homini est. Praecipiemus, ut naufrago manum porrigat, erranti viam monstret, cum esuriente panem suum dividat? ... omne hoc, quod vides, ... unum est: membra sumus corporis magni."

31 *CIL* VIII 7858 from Cirta/North Africa not before the 2nd/3rd cent. CE. See its discussion in McGuire (1946:137-138).

32 *ILS* 7602/*CIL* I² 1212/*ILLRP* 797: *misericors amans pauperis.* McGuire (1946:146) considers the deceased, a freedman, an oriental from Egypt (or Asia Minor or Syria), based on the cognomen Euhodus. Cf. a similar Christian inscription from the 4th cent. CE (*SEG* 6.119: πτωχοὺς φιλέοντα), and the exclusively Christian lemma φιλόπτωχος in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Pliny, *Ep.* 9.30.1, uses the traditional ethical scheme of being beneficiary towards your own country, your relatives, neighbours, friends, especially the poor friends (*amicis dico pauperibus*), to introduce concern for the poor in general, whom he wants to embrace with caring fellowship (*socialitas*), thus flagging a shift in ethical mentality.

2.2 Foundations and donations

Another possibility for private individuals to do something for the less well-to-do was to set up a foundation for the veneration of a deity. In honour of this deity, the foundation financed sacrifices of food, meat and other foodstuffs, which were consumed by people in cheerful feasting.[33] The invitees could be all of the inhabitants of the community where the sanctuary was located, even strangers happening to be in the neighbourhood and slaves.[34] Poor people could be among them, but the foundations were never targeted especially to them.[35]

> The same was true for the temples as institutions, apart from such private initiatives. The Church Father Ambrosius scoffed at the pagan temples for not having fed the poor: "Let them count up how many captives the temples have ransomed, what food they have contributed for the poor, to what exiles they have supplied the means of living!"[36] When looking at our sources from before the second century CE, Ambrosius had a point. Plato (*Leges* 771d) rather considered sacrificial festivals at temples a great opportunity to find a date! Nonetheless, some temples could grant refuge to debtors (at least by the first century CE) or to slaves having trouble with their

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33 For example, *IG* 7.4148: τοῖς πολίταις τὰς εὐωχίας παρέσχηται.

34 See, for example, Xen., *Anab*. 5.3.9-13 (πάντες οἱ πολῖται καὶ οἱ πρόσχωροι ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες μετεῖχον τῆς ἑορτῆς); Plut., *Nic*. 3.6-4.1. Additional examples in Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:233-235).

35 Private people also could invite others to a single meal of sacrificial meat at a temple; the guests usually were friends and only very rarely poor people. A case involving the Cynic Diogenes (Diog. Laert., *Vitae phil*. 6.64) may be one of these exceptions. Diogenes was fed filthy (ῥυπαρός) bread usually eaten by the lower classes (cf. Artemidoros, *Onir*. 1.69: by the πένης):

> When he was dining in a temple, and in the course of the meal loaves not free from dirt were put on the table, he took them up and threw them away, declaring that nothing unclean ought to enter a temple.

According to Xen., *Mem*. 2.9.4-5, Criton invited the excellent speaker Archedemus, who only had limited means (πένης), to join his sacrificial meals at sanctuaries and often donated food to him. But Archedemus was not a "poor" man in the sense of n. 22 (above). As Criton's friend and rhetor he worked as his lawyer. Plutarch, however, later advised private individuals also to donate "customary contributions which the donors can feel proud of" (νενομισμένα φιλοτιμήματα) to the poor for free (ἀντὶ μηδενός), i.e., alms, in the context of temple festivals, because then the "masses" (οἱ πολλοί) can admire the donors' piety (*praecepta gerendae reipublicae;* 822ab).

36 *Ep.* 18.16: *Numerent quos redemerint templa captivos, quae contulerint alimenta pauperibus, quibus exsulibus vivendi subsidia ministraverint.*

masters, although temple asylums especially for poor people were
not granted.[37]

Thanks to such private donations, however, by the second century CE,
an Asia Minor temple institution offered public banquets and distributed
gifts to both free persons and slaves. The Carian sanctuary of the
philanthropic Zeus in Panamara[38] invited all inhabitants of the area, free
persons as well as slaves, expressly also enslaved women, as well as
strangers living close-by,[39] to be hosted at tables twice a day throughout
the entire year, with the temple priests distributing food, presents and
money to their guests. The funds for this generosity came from individuals,
who also donated the building for the public banquets.[40] Their private
contributions made it possible for a temple, as an institution, to now
provide banquets for the populace, although this had been a function of
the state before (see below).

On the whole, after Seneca and older moralists had emphasised non-
reciprocal giving and Plutarch had made the "masses" a special subject
when discussing non-reciprocal generosity (see above), in the ethics of
the second century CE, the poor became more valued, with Lucianus
(*Mortuorum Dialogi* 1.4) making the point that in the afterlife rich and poor
will be equal. In *Menippus*, Lucianus is "highly delighted to see that" the
rich are even worse off in the afterlife than the poor (11-12, 14, 17), thereby
drawing a remote parallel to Luke's rich man and the poor Lazarus.

In the west of the Roman Empire, private donations providing for
distributions of food for the people in town also had become increasingly
popular. Ambitious Romans used their *largitiones* (generous gifts) to
please the citizen populace, hoping to be elected into higher offices later.[41]

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37 See the references in Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:246-248).
38 See *SEG* 4.289-344 (2nd cent. CE); especially 4.300-320; 4.301 (under Marcus
    Aurelius).
39 *SEG* 4.303-304.
40 Among many donors, there also existed an association of contributing members
    (τὸ κοινὸν τῶν ἐρανιστῶν) around a certain Hermias son of Artemidoros (for this
    inscription, see Robert 1937:513-515).
41 Contrary to Greece, where a large part of private donations (ἐπιδόσεις) were
    first given to the state before the latter distributed them to the people (see
    below), Roman benefactors directly spent money on occasional meals and
    entertainments for the populace, often in search for personal gain. Cicero,
    de officiis 2.55-56, talks about generous, lavish banquets given by private
    persons, "squandering their money on public banquets, distributions of meat
    among the people, gladiatorial shows, magnificent games, and wild-beast
    fights ... to win the favour of the populace." Cicero, *pro Murena* 77:

Many candidates wanting to be elected even attempted to buy the votes of less well-to-do Roman citizens. Numerous laws trying to prevent this practice show how popular it was. *Divisores* acted as brokers between the candidates and the sellers; at times, tables were set up in public places where such bribery money was paid out to less well-to-do, or even poor, *citizens* – not to everybody.[42]

2.3 Associations

Returning to classical Greece, friends could gather together to give a loan, an ἔρανος, to one of their friends, which had to be repaid without interest and therefore was considered a beneficial act.[43] Their gathering was not an established club yet. The term ἐρανισταί, however, did denote clubs,[44] viewed critically by the emperors of the Roman Empire because of fear of political unrest. However, in a letter to Pliny (*Ep.* 10.93), Trajan legitimised one of them as an exception because it used its funds for the relief of hardships that members with little means had to face (*concessum est eranum habere ... ad sustinendam tenuiorum inopiam utuntur*).[45] In the Roman world, since Augustus, the *collegia tenuiorum,* associations of persons of lesser means, can be compared.[46] Contrary to a popular misconception, they were not specialised on providing for funerals of their members. They rather celebrated religious rituals with convivial meals and for this purpose collected a monthly contribution from everyone. From these funds also hardships of individual members were relieved

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> Those enjoyments of games, and gladiators, and banquets ... are not to be taken away from the Roman people, nor ought candidates to be forbidden the exercise of that kindness which is liberality rather than bribery.

Especially *aediles*, being charged with the supervision of the games, generously donated games, money, food and banquets to the people to win their favour and further their career; a lucrative governorship in one of the provinces paid off the earlier expenditures easily. Cicero, *de officiis* 2.56: Other generous individuals "ransom captives from brigands, or assume their friends' debts or help in providing dowries for their daughters, or assist them in acquiring property or increasing what they have."

42   See Kroll (1933:52-54).

43   For example, Antiphon, *Tetral.* 2.2.9; Dem., *Or.* 18, *de corona* 312; *Or.* 53, *contra Nicost.* 8-9; Theophr., *Char.* 17.9 (in a metaphorical sense Aristot., *Pol.* 1332b 40). For further references, see Liddell-Scott (1958: *s.v.* ἔρανος A II).

44   Aristot., *Eth. Nic.* 1160a 19-25 (θιασωτῶν καὶ ἐρανιστῶν): they exist for religious and social reasons, with meals following sacrifices.

45   Pliny, *Ep.* 10.93.

46   Trajan indeed did make this parallel by using the term *tenuiores*.

and decent burials of members financed.[47] However, the members were not "poor" in our sense of the word, because they were able to afford an entrance fee to the club and make a monthly contribution.[48] They belonged to the working populace that did not have enough means to afford *not* to work (see n. 22, above).

A special case was the association of the Pythagoreans from the late sixth to at least the end of the fourth century BCE, which was revived in the first century BCE. The members often lived far apart, but helped each other when one of them was in need. The benefactor did not even need to be personally acquainted with the recipient.[49] The Pythagoreans foreshadowed the later agape-oriented solidarity that connected the Christians across cities and provinces.

In summary, individual, private acts of charity existed, but the sources do not abound with them, let alone with a special ethics of individual almsgiving. Technical terms for alms, charity or giving to the poor did not exist in classical Greece or classical Rome. It was not until oriental and particularly Jewish influence on the Greek language kicked in that the term ἐλεημοσύνη was coined and finally elevated to a virtue.[50]

2.4 Private households and patron-client relationships

We still need to probe deeper into the societal structures to be able to discover a more significant factor in privately provided social welfare – privately in the sense of independently from state institutions. Geza Alföldy[51] and others have pointed out the importance of vertical alliances in the Greco-Roman society, which were far more important than horizontal social strata; the latter represent a category applicable to modern societies but only with difficulty to the ancient Greco-Roman world. Aristocratic or

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47   *CIL* XIV 2112; Marcian in *Dig* 47.22.4.1. Also an Egyptian religious association of the 2nd cent. BCE obliged its members to help another member in need and to subsidise funerals of a poor member (*P. Cairo* 31179). Cf. further Downs (2008:107-109); Bendlin (2011:207-295).

48   *CIL* XIV 2112 in Lanuvium quantifies the entrance fee to the *cultures Dianae et Antinoi* at 100 sesterces and an amphora of quality wine; recently freed persons only paid the amphora. The monthly fee was 5 asses.

49   For example, Diod. Sic., *Bibl. Hist.* 10.3.4-10.4.6; Jambl., *de vita Pyth.* 33.237-239.

50   Correspondingly, the term ἔρανος did not denote alms (instead of a loan) until imperial times, at first in Philo, *de virt.* 86.3 (cf. Philo, *Hypoth.* 194.30: ἐρανίζω now denotes "begging") and Plutarch, *Comp. Arist. et Cat.* 3.5.7.

51   For his pyramid model of the society of the Roman Empire, see Alföldy (1984:125).

other socially advanced families led vertically oriented social blocks of various sizes, some huge as the emperor's or senatorial households, some much smaller such as the household of a free, but modest, craftsman who might have just possessed two enslaved workers. Within these households of various sizes, a plethora of people lived who were economically and legally dependent on the master at the top of each household: free family members, freed persons with various tasks and different levels of affluence, slaves and clients, who all were expected to be loyal to their masters.[52] Their households took care of all of these dependents. Menander writes: "How much better it is to have a good master than to live as a free person in distasteful humiliation."[53] However, numerous masters provided their care not so much for philanthropic as for economic reasons, making sure the workforce within the wheelworks of the household stayed healthy.

As far as the *clientes* were concerned, the patrons' special relationships to them represented an important social-welfare factor with regard to the unemployed. Surprisingly, Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:201) paid almost no attention to the patron-client institution, categorising the famous case of the Athenian Kimon, for example, as simple charity acts of a generous man, although it represented an early case of patron-client relationship. The simplest report of this case is given by Aristotle,[54] although tainted by Aristotle's ideal of shared usufruct of private property (*usus fructus*).[55] Aristotle recounts that Kimon let many inhabitants of his village come to his house every day and receive a modest meal, which was an early form of the client situation, and everybody could pluck fruit on his lands if needed, thus participating in the *usus fructus*.

A *cliens*[56] usually was a freeborn person who voluntarily[57] entered a relationship of dependency with a more influential patron without, however,

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52   The vertical units of different sizes constituting society prevented the development of horizontal class-consciousness below the ranks of the nobility, precluding the lower population from developing homogeneous interests. Neither the slaves, nor the freed persons nor the clients formed a "class." For a definition of "class," see Alföldy (1984:126-127).

53   *Fragm.* 1093 (ed. Kock): ὡς κρεῖττόν ἐστι δεσπότου χρηστοῦ τυχεῖν ἢ ζῆν ταπεινῶς καὶ κακῶς ἐλεύθερον. A free person did not automatically have a higher social position than a slave. Often a domestic slave was better off than a free poor person. Any concept of horizontal social borderlines between these legally defined groups would be misleading.

54   Ἀθηναίων Πολιτεία 27.3.

55   For this ideal, see especially *Polit.* 1263a.

56   For the following paragraphs on *clientes*, cf. Lampe (2003:488-523).

57   The voluntary submission of a client looking for protection was called *applicatio ad patronum* (Cicero, *De or.* 1.177). It implied that the clients could choose on

losing his or her personal freedom or legal capacity.[58] The two made an agreement based on mutual trust and loyalty (*fides*). This meant that the client was expected to show respect and gratitude to the patron, to render certain services to him (*operae* and *obsequium*),[59] and to support his political, economic and social goals. In return, the more influential patron protected the client's economic, social and legal interests by letting the client profit from his social connections and by allowing him access to his resources.[60] "To put the matter briefly," the patron was expected to secure

their own to whose power (*potestas*), protection and loyalty (*fides*) they wanted to submit themselves. The entirely private contract between client and patron was based on mutual consent. Inheritable but always-revocable land utilisation (*precarium*) could be part of the contract without being a prerequisite. Cf. Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.9.2 (one could choose a patron one wanted); 2.10.4; Terence, *Eun.* 885; 1039; Gellius 5.13.2 (*clientes ... sese ... in fidem patrociniumque nostrum dediderunt*); 20.1.40 (*clientem in fidem susceptum*). There also existed involuntary patron-client relationships. Often settlers in conquered populations were given the land they had previously owned. The involuntary submission of defeated or conquered persons was not part of a private contract but a matter of public law; the submission under the power of a conqueror and the latter's vow to loyalty (*fides*, which was under the protection of the gods to whom the patron vowed) were rooted in international law that regulated the relations between citizens and non-citizens. Contrary to the voluntary clientage, this submission could imply serious limitations to the legal capacity of the clients. By way of example, they had to accept the *nomen gentile* of the patron, could not marry whomever they wanted, and the patron often inherited their estates after their death. Such limitations did not confront voluntary clients. See Von Premerstein (1901:28-30, 33, 38f., 41ff., 51).

58 For the personal freedom of the clients, see, for example, Proculus, *Dig.* 49.15.7 § 1: *clientes nostros intellegimus liberos esse, etiamsi neque auctoritate neque dignitate neque viribus nobis pares sunt.*

59 *Obsequium* denotes obedience and subordination. The literal translation of *cliens* is "the obedient" (participle of *cluere*). Plutarch, *Romulus* 13.7, and others translated *cliens* into πελάτης, which denotes a person who seeks protection and becomes dependent. For typical duties of both clients and patrons, see especially Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.9-10. For financial contributions to the patron, see Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.2; 13.5.1; Livy 5.32.8; cf. 38.60.9. These payments helped to cover extraordinary expenses of the patron. Apart from this, financial gifts to the patron were frowned upon, although they could occur (Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.4; Plutarch, *Rom.* 13; Gellius 20.1.40; Livy 34.4.9. The *lex Cincia de donis,* probably from 204 BCE, had ruled that only very small presents to the patron were allowed; see Lintott (1997:32). For even military service for the patron until the 2nd century BCE, see Von Premerstein (1901:37).

60 The loyalty extended as far as allowing the patron to testify in favour of a client even against a blood-related person (Gellius 5.13.4; cf. 20.1.40). Neither patron nor client could sue the other in court or testify against the other (Dionysius

for the clients "both in private and in public affairs all that tranquillity of which they particularly stood in need," Dionysius wrote in a somewhat idealising way.[61]

Patron-client relationships had existed for a long time in a number of places in the ancient Mediterranean world.[62] Early Rome, however, was unique in that it tried to clearly define the rights and duties of clients and protected their status in relation to the patron. Already the Law of the Twelve Tables (8.21) in the fifth century BCE made an effort in this direction: "If a patron shall defraud his client, he must be solemnly forfeited." In early Roman times, the patron-client contract frequently involved the lending of a small parcel of land, a *precarium*, to people of no means. In this way, Italian patricians established personal dependency relationships. They lent the land for an indefinite period, but maintained the right to revoke the agreement at any time. Only with increasing urbanisation did agricultural land become less important in patron-client relations.

By virtue of the system of vertical economic dependency relationships between patrons and clients on the one hand, and patrons and freed persons, let alone slaves, on the other, large portions of the society were tied to a few influential families during the Roman Republic: not only the masses of slaves and freed persons, but also numerous freeborn persons, sometimes even entire communities in Italy. Powerful and wealthy Roman families secured their societal and political influence through droves[63] of clients in Italy and the provinces. In fact, during the Roman Republic, political power to a large extent was based on the number of supporting clients.

In imperial times, the political influence of the noble families faded. Consequently, clientage became less a political factor but remained a social and economic institution. In addition, as both parties to the voluntary patron-client contract could be Roman citizens and the client retained legal

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Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.3). Providing free legal advice and representation as a patron was called *patrocinium*. Cf., for example, Cicero, *De or.* 1.177; 3.33; Livy 34.4.9; Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.5; *Dial.* 3; Horace, *Ep.* 2.1.104; Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.1; Gellius 5.13.6. The legal representation of clients by patrons, however, became less and less important the more complicated law and trials became. Already in the late Republic, professional upper class lawyers often were consulted, and during a trial a temporary patron-client relationship was established between the professional attorney and the litigant (cf. Cicero, *Att.* 15.14.3). The patrons' loss of legal competence contributed to the loosening of the ties between clients and patrons already in Republican times.

61   Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.1.
62   Cf. Dionysius Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.9.2.
63   Cf., for example, Livy 5.32.8; Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 9.41.5; Plautus, *Men.* 574ff.

freedom and responsibility, the aspect of patronal *potestas* (power) over inferior clients faded over time, whereas the moral aspect of reciprocal loyalty (*fides*) increased.[64]

Unlike the freed persons who were tied to their patrons by clearly defined legal relations, the clients' bond to their patrons was a *loose* moral, social and economic dependency. Juridical implications were negligible.[65] Although the relationship usually was hereditary,[66] it was not cut out for eternity but could be dissolved. Often one client spread his allegiance to several patrons simultaneously.[67]

Conversely, patrons frequently strived to have numerous clients as a symbol of their capacity to provide for social inferiors. Dionysius of Halicarnassus put it this way:

> It was a matter of great praise to men of illustrious families to have as many clients as possible and not only to preserve the succession of hereditary patronages but also to acquire others by their own merit.[68]

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64 Fittingly, since Republican times a patron and a client could marry one another. Cf., for example, Gellius 13.20.8; Plutarch, *Cat. Maj.* 24; Pliny, *Nat.* 7.61. The reciprocity between patron and client was idealised by Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.4:

> It is incredible how great the contest of goodwill was between the patrons and clients, as each side strove not to be outdone by the other in kindness, the clients feeling that they should render all possible services to their patrons and the patrons wishing by all means not to create any trouble to their clients.

Although talking about earliest Roman times here, Dionysius insists that the patron-client relations described in 2.10 "long continued among the Romans." Satirical authors such as Martial (see n. 71, below) counterbalanced this idealised picture.

65 Neither the *ius civile* proper nor the public law regulated the clientage. The only meagre legal protection of the private patron-client relationships was provided by the criminal law, which punished the *fraus patroni*, the patron's violation of loyalty (cf. Servius, *Aen.* 6.609; Von Premerstein 1901:39-40,46). Legally not enforceable, the obligations of these relationships were merely governed by custom and reverence for the gods who protected mutual loyalty (*fides*). Cf. Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.9.3: θέμις (custom and not legal statutes) as well as ὅσιον (divine law) established the basis.

66 Cf. Dionys. Halic., *Ant. rom.* 2.10.4; 4.23.6; 11.36; Plutarch, *Mar.* 5.

67 Cf., for example, Von Premerstein (1901:38, 52-53). Even freed persons could choose a patron in addition to their former slave master to whom they also owed loyalty (cf., for example, Cicero, *Sex. Rosc.* 19; *Att.* 1.12.2).

68 *Ant. rom.* 2.10.4.

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In the first century CE, under the Julio-Claudian emperors, the influential families still were eager to increase their prestige through their clientele.[69] The clients were a glamorous retinue for a rich patron.[70]

The patrons in return saved the clients from unemployment and starvation. In the mornings, the clients presented themselves in the atrium of the patron's house and made their obeisance. In Rome, they were required to dress up in a toga for this occasion. During the day, they surrounded the patron as

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The patrons in return saved the clients from unemployment and starvation. In the mornings, the clients presented themselves in the atrium of the patron's house and made their obeisance. In Rome, they were required to dress up in a toga for this occasion. During the day, they surrounded the patron as his entourage, accompanied him to the Forum, to the bath, or to his visits, joined him for his travels, clapped for his public speeches, whether boring or not, and walked behind his sedan chair.[71] They addressed him as *dominus* ("sir") or even *rex* ("king") and sometimes honoured him with a statue.[72] In Pompeii, some actively supported their patrons' election campaigns for city offices.[73] These were time-consuming services. And most often clients were not enthusiastic about their "job". In foul weather, they cursed the early morning walks across the city to the patron's house. They frowned when they were ranked lower than other clients at the patron's receptions. They deplored cases of lacking *fides* (loyalty). Martial, Juvenal, Lucian and Epictetus continually reported these complaints.[74] However, for their services, the clients were paid a *sportula* each day that they arrived at the patron's house. Originally, the *sportula* had been "a little basket," as the word translates literally, containing food. In imperial times, the *sportula* mostly was pocket money. At the time of Martial, at the end of the first century CE, it usually amounted to 25 *asses,* for which one could buy, for instance, twelve and a half loaves of bread or six liters of good wine.[75] That got a client through the day!

In addition to the *sportula*, the patrons occasionally invited the clients to dinner. This was especially done at the festival of the *Saturnalia.* Now and then the clients were given a piece of clothing or some extra money.

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69 Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.55.2; *Hist.* 1.4.
70 Even less wealthy patrons aimed for a large entourage, with some getting into debt to be able to finance this status symbol (Martial, *Ep.* 2.74).
71 For Roman clients and their often unpleasant life, see, for example, Martial, *Ep.* 12.68.1-2; 9.100.2; 6.88; 4.40.1; 3.38.11; 3.36; 2.74; 2.18; 1.108; 1.59; 1.55.5-6; Seneca, *de benef.* 6.33.4-6.34.5; Livy 38.51.6; Juvenal 1.95ff.; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 2.2.
72 See, for example, Horace, *Ep.* 1.7.37. For a statue: *CIL* VI 1390; cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 34.17.
73 *CIL* IV 593; 822; 933; 1011; 1016.
74 See n. 71, above, and Friedländer (1979:227f.).
75 For prices, see Lampe (1989:163). For 25 *asses,* cf. Martial, *Ep.* 1.59. Martial (*Ep.* 9.100.2) also knows of a *sportula* of 3 *denarii* (= 48-54 *asses*).

Sometimes they were offered a loan or a surety. Very rarely did they receive a whole farm as a gift or were granted free lodging.[76]

In summary, the urban private households notably contributed to social welfare. They provided support for *clients*, offering a low-paid "job" to those among them who otherwise faced unemployment. In addition, they provided sustenance, a place to stay and, if necessary, training in a trade for *domestic slaves*. Furthermore, they usually remained loyal to their *freed slaves* who could expect some protection and occasional support from their former masters. Thus, private households precluded thousands of people from sliding into the category of "poor." That this social-welfare contribution of the private households involved the labour of legally enslaved people represents the paradoxical backside of the system.

3. SOCIAL WELFARE PRACTICES BY THE STATE

Having focused on the behavioural motivations, morals and practices of *private* individuals, their households and voluntary associations, the social welfare measures of the political communities still need to be looked at, albeit only from a bird's eye view again.

The theorist Aristotle (*Polit.* 1320ab) recommended that the city collect sufficient assets from the affluent citizens to be able to distribute enough money to the citizens with no or little means so that they can buy some kind of small business to support themselves. Aristotle also claims that the affluent citizens of Tarentum allowed their less well-to-do, but working, co-citizens (κοινὰ ποιοῦντες τὰ κτήματα τοῖς ἀπόροις ἐπὶ τὴν χρῆσιν εὔνουν, 1320b), thus not specifically the "poor," to be co-users of their private properties.[77] This transfer of the friendship ideal to the state level sounds similar to the social-utopist πάντα-κοινά ideal of the Greek-Hellenistic tradition that Luke alludes to in Acts 2:44 and 4:32 ("to have everything in common"). For Aristotle, the motivation for such social measures, however, was not the wellbeing of the majority of the populace, but securing the position of the richer ones by keeping the masses (τὸ πλῆθος) happy and democracy stable (1320ab).

While this was political theory, on the de-facto level the *Greek* polis states acted as catalysing distributors of private donations by wealthy citizens.

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76 Cf. *Dig.* 7.8.2 §1, 3; 9.3.5 §1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.22 (Thrasea takes time for the private businesses of his clients); further Friedländer (1979:227).
77 Cf. again also *Polit.* 1263a where Aristotle recommends that *ownership* of property should be private but all citizens allowed to *use* some of this property. The state legislature ought to provide for such a system, he advises.

The well-to-do – most often voluntarily and generously – gave out of their means (ἐπιδόσεις) so that the state could deal out this public income to the people, for example, by buying and distributing grain. Besides revenues such as income from land that the state owned or tributes from dependent states, the assets of rich citizens filled the polis state's coffer. Thus, the measures of the state that had social-political effects were an *indirect* way of how well-to-do private individuals in the Greek world acted in a beneficiary manner.[78] The Greek polis state's financial burdens rested on the shoulders of a minority of wealthy citizens, while all citizens enjoyed the *usus fructus* of the state's assets – not in the *ideal* way that Aristotle had in mind but in the following realistic ways.

3.1 Grain distributions

The Greek city-states made sure there was enough food, especially grain, on the market by regulating the merchants' imports of grain and also buying it on its own. Demosthenes, for example, was made an officer buying grain,[79] apparently ad hoc when the Macedonian army was approaching Athens. Soon this function became a regular state office in the poleis, the σιτῶναι ("public buyers of grain") being elected by the people. Alternatively, the city-states could give funds to private businessmen commissioning them with the purchase.

The city-state regulated the food prices on the market, making sure that food remained affordable. Moreover, the polis distributed grain, usually for free. The recipients of the monthly distributions, however, were not the poor, but all free male citizens. Regardless of their families' sizes and their wealth, they all were given the same amount, provided they were in town and reported to the officials. Of course, some citizens might have been poor. But other people without citizenship living in poverty were left to fend for themselves.

In Rome, the citizens had experienced occasional distributions of cheap grain already before Gaius Gracchus. But it was at his initiative that rules almost identical to the Greek ones were established, making the distributions a regular institution. One of the differences was that the

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78   Another way of being a beneficiary as a well-to-do citizen was to serve in one of the polis state's offices where there was plenty of opportunity to spend one's own assets for the public good. In Rome the *aediles*, for instance, generously spent money for the people, hoping to be elected to higher positions. For the following state measures, see the still valuable discussions of literary and epigraphic evidence by Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:252-286, 349-379). Most recently, cf. for example, Bresson (2016).

79   Cf., for example, Bresson (2016:333f.) with references and further examples.

citizens for the monthly grain portion had to pay a modest price below the market value; only later, in 58 BCE, one of the *Leges Clodiae* made the distributions free of charge. Another difference was that the funds for such distributions were not supplied by donating wealthy citizens but by conquered provinces paying tributes. In this way, the Roman state distributed generous donations of its own wealthy citizens to a much lesser degree than the Greek city-states did. Furthermore, when Caesar reduced the number of grain recipients to allegedly 150,000,[80] this capping probably did not intend to give preference to the poor among the citizens, but to discourage impoverished citizens without land from drifting from the countryside into the capital city. Nevertheless, at least the poor with citizenship who already resided in Rome profited from this capping, as much as they appreciated the *aediles* controlling the food prices.

3.2 Money and meal distributions

Returning to the Greek world, at the regular public festivals the polis states distributed money or free seats, again only to the citizens. At the sacrificial meals of these festivals, provided by the city-state,[81] the free male citizens, and often the resident aliens (μέτοικοι) as well, were hosted for free, with also meat being served. The poor outside these social groups, however, remained on the sidelines. How little these state benefactions were especially tailored to the poor could be seen when respected persons sometimes received greater meal portions than the co-citizens.[82]

Augustus, however, with his more or less regular money distributions to the people, ranging up to 100 denars per person, also made children (*pueros*) recipients.[83] Nerva and his successors later would develop this practice into *alimenta* programs for needy children.[84] After Augustus, distributions of money and gifts became customary for newly installed emperors. The

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80 For example, Suet., *Caes.* 41.3; Cassius Dio 43.21.4.
81 By contrast, the Roman *sacra publica* only seldom entailed feedings of the people. See Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:378).
82 Nonetheless, a Greek village community usually provided a λέσχη for travellers, including beggars, to sleep at night: a roofed room open to everybody, where at daytime the village gossip was exchanged. Cf. already Hom., *Od.* 18.329; Hes., *Op.* 493; 501; also Ps-Herodot., *Vit. Hom.* 12.
83 Suet., *Aug* 41; Cassius Dio 51.21.3.
84 See the study by Fitzgerald in this volume (pp. 29-48). In the private sector, individuals set up such foundations for children as well. Pliny (*Ep.* 1.8.10,12), for example, established a foundation for freeborn children in his hometown of Comum probably already at the end of the first cent. CE. See also *ILS* 977 and the alimentary foundation *CIL* X 6328; furthermore Hands (1968:108, 114, 184, 197); Garnsey (1989:67).

emperors stylised themselves as protectors of the poor, now associating the traditional food and money distributions with their own persons.[85] The new focus on the poor in social politics can be seen when Antoninus Pius' wife Faustina, for example, donated an allowance of 3000 modii of grain expressly to the "poor" (πτωχοῖς) of a city.[86]

Another social measure in the Greek, but not Roman, world was wages paid to citizens for attending the meetings of the δῆμος or serving jury duty. The latter affected quite a number of Athenian citizens, as each of their numerous trials required 200 to 500 jurors. Small craftsmen or workers with citizenship could profit from this. The Greek poor without citizenship, however, were again not reached by this measure.

3.3 Land distributions

Athens at times sent economically weaker free citizens, members of the two lowest of four census classes, to foreign parts controlled by classical Athens, such as the Thracian Brea, and allotted land to them to own and farm.[87] Needless to say that Rome following its later huge expansions applied this measure on a much larger scale, giving vast parts of the conquered territories to Roman citizens for free to own and cultivate.[88] There is no indication, however, that only low class or poor citizens were chosen for such ownerships. On the contrary, the state did not provide for any loans that less well-to-do citizens would have needed to establish a new farm.[89] It was not until Nerva and Trajan that such loans were given;

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85   See, for example, Pliny, *Paneg.* 25.3-26.7. Numismatic evidence in Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:469).

86   *S. Abercii Vita* 65 (ed. Nissen, p. 46.17-18): σιτηρέσιον τοῖς πτωχοῖς τῆς πόλεως αὐτοῦ τρισχιλίους μοδίους σίτου.

87   For example, Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:248-251).

88   The settlers obtained an *ager colonicus* with the expectation to also defend it, or an *ager viritanus*, usually in already pacified regions without the need for defence. These two differed from the *ager occuparius,* which was received from the populus Romanus without becoming private property; the state could reclaim it any time. Cf., for example, Pennitz (1998:124f.).

89   Tiberius Gracchus tried to correct this but was opposed by the senate. Plut., *Tib. Gracchus* 14:

> Tiberius courted popular favour by bringing in a bill which provided that the money of King Attalus, when brought to Rome, should be given to the citizens who received a parcel of the public land, to aid them in stocking and tilling their farms.

Tiberius Gr. also pushed for a committee that was supposed to enforce among other things the legal provision that nobody should get more than about 125 ha

Nerva also granted land to numerous poor individuals.[90] But earlier, during the Roman expansions, a major part of the agricultural land went to large landowners with capital, while the numbers of free little farmers dwindled. Tiberius Gracchus in the second century BCE somewhat foreshadowed the Jesus logion of Matt 8:20, describing the proletarians' lives:

> The wild beasts that roam over Italy have every one of them a cave or lair to lurk in (τὰ μὲν θηρία τὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν νεμόμενα καὶ φωλεὸν ἔχει καὶ κοιταῖόν ἐστιν αὐτῶν ἑκάστῳ καὶ καταδύσεις), but the (military and veteran) men who fight and die for Italy (only) enjoy the common air and light ... houseless and homeless they wander about with their wives and children ... they fight and die to support others in wealth and luxury, and though they are styled masters of the world, they have not a single clod of earth that is their own.[91]

It was only after the army reform by Gaius Marius at the end of the same century that veterans received special consideration when conquered land was distributed; many of them had never owned land before.

3.4 Education

Unlike Rome, Greek city-states often took the education of their youth into the own hands, from the fourth century BCE onward establishing militarily-oriented *ephebeias* to prepare young men for citizenship.[92] In Hellenistic times, several Asia Minor cities provided for public elementary school education for freeborn children, at times possibly even for daughters.[93]

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of the *ager publicus* (Livy 6.35.4-5). After his death, the committee stopped working effectively. A later agrarian legislation plan by the tribune Rullus failed to obtain a majority, with Cicero torpedoing it. In 59 BCE under Caesar, however, this attempt was renewed: Money that had come in from Pompeius' conquests was used to buy private land for distribution, and a second *lex agraria* ruled that the *ager Campanus* was also opened up for *coloni* (veterans or fathers of three children; Suet., *Jul.* 20; Cass. Dio 38.7.3). Citizens without land thus got the chance to build up a farming existence that sustained them lastingly. For discussions of the Roman agrarian policy, see, for example, Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:349-364; 467); Schubert (1980); Walter (2013).

90 See, for example, *ILS* 6509; 6675; Yavetz (1987:147f.); Grainger (2004:57-60).
91 Plutarch, *Tib. Gracchus* 9.4-5.
92 Cf., for example, Kennell (2006); Reinmuth (1971); Wiemer (2011).
93 See, for example, the evidence discussed in Ziebarth (1914:32, 37-42). However, whether *OGIS* 309.9-12 (cf. also *CIG* 3185.20) proves that "the supervisor of education" (παιδονόμος) not only schooled boys but also unmarried girls (παρθένοι) at Teos in western Asia Minor may be questionable: In a cultic context on a religious holiday in the 160s BCE, not only the free-born boys had to sing an altar hymn but "also the girls selected by the supervisor of education" were

3.5 Medical care and care for invalids

Unlike Rome, which did not hire public doctors until late imperial times,[94] Greek city-states employed medical doctors elected by the people (δῆμος). Slaves, poor and rich free persons could consult them for free.[95]

Unlike Rome, Athens also supported its invalids, de facto mostly military veterans, if their possessions remained below a relatively low exemption amount. In other words, finally a social measure especially tailored to poor (invalid) citizens can be observed. The invalids' inability to work was compensated by public assets, usually furnished by rich citizens. The poor, however, who were able to work but made their living as beggars were sanctioned by polis legislations.[96]

3.6 Orphans, widows and the elderly

Unlike the Roman state, which left care of these groups entirely to the private sector, Greek city-states ruled that an orphan together with his or her assets had to be put under the tutelage of several guardians with citizenship. They had to take care of the child's subsistence, education and legal matters and were intended to control one another. In addition, the city-state put an official (ἄρχων/leader) above the orphans to check on their treatment. At times even an additional control committee was established. All of this was set up to protect the interests especially of wealthy orphans, whose assets were attractive to greedy relatives. But the ἄρχων also listened to accusations about an orphan being otherwise mistreated, either by third parties or guardians. Moreover, the state supervised that female orphans without assets and brothers got a dowry from the next closest family

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supposed to "perform a dance and sing a hymn." That the education supervisor picked these girls may show that he instructed their dancing and singing and possibly taught some religious content, but not necessarily that he schooled boys and girls together in other matters. The girls were "selected" from among the other girls in town, implying that only those especially suited for cultic processions and choir music were picked.

94   *Cod. Theod.* 13.3.8/Cod. Just. 10.53.9 regulated the salaries of the physicians in 370 CE.

95   For example, Herod., *Hist.* 3.131; Aristoph., *Acharn.* 1030-1032 (δημοσιεύω: to practise as public physician like Pittalos); 1222; *Vesp.* 1432; Plato, *Politicus* 259a; *Gorg.* 455b; Xen., *Cyropaed.* 1.6.15; Diodor. Sic., *Bib. hist.* 12.13.4 (δημοσίῳ μισθῷ τοὺς νοσοῦντας τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ὑπὸ ἰατρῶν θεραπεύεσθαι); furthermore Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:274f.).

96   Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:273f.). For laws against begging, cf. Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:282-286). For the following paragraph on orphans, the elderly and widows, cf. the evidence in Bolkestein ([1939] 1967:275-282).

member; its amount was proportionate to the assets of this relative. The polis state finally took care of both the children and parents of fallen troops.

But otherwise elderly people, also widows, were not of particular concern for the Greek city-state. It expected the families, especially the children, to take care of their elderly. When candidates for public office were interviewed, they were questioned, among other things, about their care for the parents.[97]

Thus, we are referred back to the private households as the main provider of social welfare. The early Christians, when using the *oikos* as the centre of all church activities, hardly had any choice but to take over these traditional social tasks of the pagan private household and make them church functions.[98]

The bird's eye view of the present essay remains highly selective and, with limited space, depth of field is lacking for fine-tuned differentiation among the six centuries at stake, or between the western and eastern shades of the Greco-Roman world. The purpose was more modest, that is, phenomenological, to show what was possible at all in Greek and Roman social-welfare morals and practices before Christianity, thus trying to pave the way for investigating Christian social-welfare ethics in their continuity and contrast to the Greco-Roman environment. The ancient material shows the enormous role of civil society – private persons, their households and associations – in holding up social-welfare functions. By contrast, the state was comparatively less involved, the commonwealth of the Romans, especially in Republican times, even less than the Greek city-states. The Greek poleis often invested income such as wealthy citizens' donations in social welfare, thus brokering between wealthy private donors

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97   For example, Xen., *Mem*. 2.2.13:

> The state ... inflicts penalties on the man who is ill-mannered to his parents and rejects him as unworthy of office, holding that it would be a sin for him to offer sacrifices on behalf of the state and that he is unlikely to do anything else honourably ... If one fails to honour his parents' graves, the state inquires into that too when examining the candidates for office.

Cf. also Aristot., *Athen. pol.* 55.3 (ἔπειτα γονέας εἰ εὖ ποιεῖ); Aeschin., *Timar*. 28:

> Under the heading "Scrutiny of public men" (the lawgiver) says, "If any one attempts to speak before the people who beats his father or mother, or fails to support them or provide a home for them," such a man he forbids to speak (in the public assemblies) ... if a man is mean toward those whom he ought to honour ... how will such a man treat the members of another household and the whole city?

Cf. also Demosth., *In Aristog.* I 65-67. *Ibid.* 24 and Hyperides, *Fragm.* 160.5: In addition to office holders, no one should treat their parents badly (κάκωσις γονέων).

98   For this, see further Lampe (1993:18-38).

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Alimenta	Alimenta
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Education	Opvoeding
Elderly	Bejaardes
Empathy	Empatie
Foundations	Stigtings
Freed persons	Vry mense
Grain distributions	Graanverspreiding
Health care	Gesondheidsorg
Invalids	Invalides
Land distributions	Grondverdeling

Loans	Lenings
Meal distributions	Voedselverspreiding
Money distributions	Verspreiding van geld
Orphans	Weeskinders
Patron	Beskermheer
Physicians	Geneeshere
Poor	Armes
Selflessness	Onbaatsugtigheid
Slaves	Slawe
Social welfare	Sosiale welsyn
Widows	Weduwees
Women	Vroue