

The Beggar and the Clod: The Mythic Notion of Property in Ancient Greece*

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SUMMARY: This paper calls attention to the need to think about Greek property based on the evidence available. While scholars note the absence of relevant legal or economic sources, I argue that certain mythic texts reveal important aspects of the ideology of property and, specifically, that property relations tended to be understood in terms of exchange relations. Being an owner meant engaging in certain kinds of exchange, and abstaining from other kinds of exchange. The myths that I consider here reveal this notion by suggesting that property is destabilized when property owners conduct exchange in the wrong way.

GREEK PROPERTY HAS BEEN AN OVERLOOKED TOPIC. SCHOLARS HAVE DEALT with the subject only in passing from the perspectives of law, economics, or political thought.¹ The Greek notion of property itself—namely, how the Greeks conceived of the tenuous link between persons and the material world as a perduring bond—has not been considered at length. The task of this paper is to call attention to the need to study more carefully the meanings of property in ancient Greece, and to show one way in which this study can proceed.

The dearth of relevant sources is frequently cited as the main obstacle to the study of Greek property. For example, although property rights and

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¹ For the law of property, see Kränzlein 1963; Todd 1993: 232–57; for economic aspects, see Davies 2007; Foxhall 2007: 21–54; for political and philosophical aspects, see Asheri 1966; Frank 2005; Miller 2005; Garnsey 2007.

the strategies for securing them were a constant concern of upper-class Athenians (cf. Davies 2002), surprisingly no oration survives that deals with property law “pure and simple,” as Harrison pointed out (1998 [1968]: 1.200). Economic historians have also been constrained by the lack of relevant evidence. Osborne’s *Demos* (1985) and *Classical Landscape with Figures* (1987) illustrate the kind of work that is possible with the extant epigraphic and prosopographic evidence. But they also illustrate the limitations of the evidence, especially compared to the more abundant relevant sources, such as petitions, registries, and tax-records available for Egypt, on which Manning 2003 drew to write his history of Ptolemaic land-tenure.

While we do not have the legal sources to satisfy the legal scholar or the documentary sources to satisfy the economic historian of classical Greece, we do have an abundance of literary sources. Scholars working in the fields of Greek law and economy have in recent years developed innovative ways of reading literary texts with an eye to how they reflect or comment on legal and economic ideas. For example, Scafuro 1997 and Allen 2000 have looked to Attic comedies and tragedies respectively to shed light on legal concepts, discourses, and practices. And Kurke 1991 and 1999 has shown how Pindar and Herodotus can be read with a view to understanding the “economic imaginary” in which they wrote. Following their lead, I propose to examine a related type of text, myth, for what light it can shed on the notion of property, which has both legal and economic aspects.

First, some comment about method is required because, generally speaking, most scholars do not view myth as an important source for Greek legal and economic thought. This has not always been the case. It used to be a common assumption that myth can reveal important aspects of cultural beliefs about economy and law. A good illustration of this kind of approach to myth is the well-known essay by Gernet, “La Notion mythique de la valeur en Grèce” (1948), to which my subtitle is meant as a nod. Gernet was a pioneer in the study of Greek law and legal texts. He was also an important precursor of the “French School” of structuralist-inspired classicists.² In this essay he argued that myths can be used as an entry-point to Greek economic notions. He showed that by being attentive to the “associations en vertu desquelles un épisode, un motif ou une image évoquent une série similaire” (1968: 100), it was possible to glimpse fundamental Greek ideas about value. Gernet saw significant similarities between disparate myths involving valuable objects, such as the Tripod of the Seven Sages, the Ring of Polycrates, and the Golden

²For an appreciation of Gernet’s approach and contributions, see Humphreys 1978: 76–106. Gernet 1968 is a collection of his essays selected by Vernant, who also wrote a preface introducing his work. The collection has been translated as Gernet 1981.

Fleece. Though the myths were very different, he thought that their common associations could tell us something about the origin of the idea of value in rituals having to do with the veneration of wealth.

Recent years have seen a sharp turn away from the approach espoused by Gernet. Scholars are increasingly averse to positing a pan-Greek cultural context, and they are also more sensitive about how political commitments can inflect the texts (see Dougherty and Kurke, eds. 2003). Von Reden 1999 has thus rightly criticized Gernet for his lack of attention to the original performative and political situations of his texts. However, I believe that Gernet's method of reading economic and legal notions out of myth can still be potentially useful—provided it is pursued cautiously and provided we adjust our expectations of what we expect to find. That is, myths will probably not help us understand Greek property in terms that either legal scholars or economic historians will find entirely satisfactory. They will not tell us about forms of land-tenure and how they changed over time. But they might be able to illuminate for us the *ideology* of property, which affects not only how claims of entitlement are framed and contested rhetorically, but also how these help conjure up a social order. Myth, understood as a vehicle for ideology, provides us with the opportunity to study property in a way that more conventional sources, like registries and records, simply do not.³

Here, I will focus on a single mythic theme—let us call it the Beggar and the Clod—and ask what it can tell us about Greek notions of property. There are important variations in the theme, as I will show in Section I, but the general idea is the following. A conqueror covets someone's land. Normally, he receives an oracle that he will conquer only if a native willingly gives him a clod of dirt. In response to this oracle, the conqueror disguises himself as a beggar and enters the land he covets. Then someone gives him a clod of dirt, which is of course precisely what he wants. The conqueror takes the clod and departs, confident that he will prevail. The myth suggests that there is a link between this exchange and the expropriation of the territory that it precedes. My goal is to understand the nature of that link, and to consider what it can tell us about Greek notions of property.

³ Vidal-Naquet is worth quoting here: "Removed from the study of social practice, the structural analysis of myth can carry out a magnificent project by putting the myths into sets, having them reflect one another, and making them display their logical relationships. But then there is also the danger of taking refuge in ... a realm in which every compartment is filled as soon as it has been outlined. On the other hand, institutional, social, and economic history ... assumes its full value ... only when it is linked with an analysis of the images that accompany and even pervade the institutions and practices of political and social activity" (1986: xx).

Scholars have focused on the clod, and have interpreted it as either the reflection of a hoary ritual of land-transfer or as a transparent attempt to legitimate conquest by making the native responsible for his own expropriation. Both interpretations are right, in part. But to draw out what the theme tells us about the notion of property, the rightful ownership of land, I will contrast the different versions carefully, some of which relate to the conquest of a territory and others of which relate to the loss of a house or a field.⁴ I will underscore two points that other scholars have overlooked. First, there is a persistent emphasis on the exchange of the clod as just that—an *exchange*. That is, the narratives explicitly or implicitly mark the clod as a gift, something that belongs most properly in what economic anthropologists call the sphere of “long-term exchange.” Second, there is a persistent emphasis on the status of the recipient. I will argue that the recipient, normally but not always a beggar, symbolically stands for a state of exclusion from the sphere of long-term exchange. The myths, I will argue, present the loss of property as arising from the failure to keep long-term valuables in their proper sphere of exchange. They allow us to see that keeping property in ancient Greece was seen as the result of maintaining proper relations of exchange.

I will discuss my application of anthropological exchange theory at greater length below, but it might be helpful to lay out some basics at the outset. Recent scholarship has applied exchange theory fruitfully to the ancient Greek evidence. I am especially indebted to the work of von Reden 2004 and Kurke 1999. These scholars have examined some of the ways in which the ancient Greeks divided exchange into what anthropologists have called the two “transactional spheres” of exchange: “a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate aim of individual—often acquisitive—activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order” (Bloch and Parry 1989: 2). In Greek terms, as von Reden and Kurke have shown, short-term exchange was considered to be based on utility, motivated by *kerdos* or “profit,” and mediated through wages (*misthos*). This type implied no necessary commitment to a long-term relationship, although it did not preclude one. Its main aim was the satisfaction of immediate needs, not the maintenance of a relationship, and it was seen as the province of merchants.⁵ On the other hand, long-term exchange was the kind of exchange seen as

⁴On the distinction between possession of land (property) and possession of territory (sovereignty) in early Greece, see Malkin 1993, although I think that Malkin presses the distinction too strictly.

⁵On a social-scientific perspective on *kerdos*, see Morris 2002. On *kerdos* in political thought, see Balot 2001. More generally, see Cozzo 1988, Ch. 3.

motivated by *kharis*, “gratitude” or “grace,” and mediated through gifts (*dōra* or *xeinia*). It implied a commitment to a long-term relationship between the transacting partners, often entailing a forbearance of profit, or even entailing a short-term loss. This type of exchange was associated with aristocratic values, and it was seen as beneficial to the community as a whole.⁶

By “exchange” I do not mean the actual exchange itself, but the *meanings* that the exchange holds for the participants and others. In this view, the spheres of exchange are less positive, empirical categories and more symbolic resources that might be used to represent contrasting notions of worth and responsibility.⁷ The specific meaning of the spheres and how they are deployed is, of course, culturally and historically contingent. However, as Bloch and Parry note, the division of exchange into two, broad categories seems to be something that is fairly widespread in human societies.

In ancient Greek thought, Aristotle seems to recognize a distinction between long-term and short-term exchange when he contrasts “market” exchange and “liberal” exchange in his discussion of friendship (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 8.13, 1162b25–33). He distinguishes friendships based on personal excellence from those based on utility. The latter he further subdivides into two categories. The first he likens to “market,” *agoraia*, exchange. This type of exchange, Aristotle argues, seeks an immediate return, “from hand to hand,” *ek cheiros eis cheira* (b26). The second he compares to “liberal” (*eleutherios*) exchange, which is marked by a characteristic delay in the return.⁸ Liberal exchange takes on the outward appearance of a gift between friends, although there is nonetheless an expectation of a return or benefit. Aristotle suggests that problems arise in these types of relationships when partners view the relationship from conflicting perspectives: when, for example, one partner considers the relationship a

⁶ The literature on *kharis* in Greek thought and literature is large. Particularly excellent is Azoulay 2004, both for review of other literature and concentration on ancient thought about *kharis*.

⁷ Kurke and von Reden differ as to the social aspects of this dichotomy. Kurke is interested in the political uses of the dichotomy in the late Archaic and early Classical periods, when aristocratic power was being eclipsed by the rise of new, civic forms of organization. By contrast, von Reden is less committed to the idea that tensions in symbolic categories translate into real, political tensions. She prefers to see in the tensions a resource that could be exploited to encode various messages, depending on text and context. Hewing closer to Bloch and Parry’s perspective, she emphasizes the interdependence rather than the opposition between the spheres.

⁸ Here he seems to anticipate Bourdieu 1977: 5–6. On Aristotle as an economic thinker, see Meikle 1995. On Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship, see Pangle 2003.

“market” relationship—or “short-term,” in anthropological terms—whereas the other considers it “liberal”—or “long-term.”

In the myths, I will argue, problems also arise because the partners to an exchange place it in opposite spheres. Beggars were seen as being, by definition, excluded from long-term exchange, because the act of giving to beggars was conceived as one without ramification toward a continuing relationship of exchange. The gesture of giving to a beggar was seen as bounded by the beggar’s defining inability to reciprocate. This is not to say that beggars could not expect to receive help. The fact that people begged suggests that they expected charity. The crucial point is that any aid they did receive figured only as a short-term transaction. Thus, when in the myths the disguised beggars receive symbolic goods that belong in the long-term sphere, and are furthermore explicitly or implicitly marked as gifts, this represents a categorical error of exchange. The myths reenact, in a symbolic fashion, the stigma of failing to transmit land only through the long-term sphere. They suggest that property can be lost when people are not careful with how they conduct exchange.

My aim here is not to provide a comprehensive account of Greek property. Such an account is needed, but here I would like to make three points that I hope will contribute to that goal, the first two methodological and the last one substantive: show that it *is* possible to explore the Greek notion of property through available types of evidence—in this case, myth; suggest that the notion of property can be a fruitful site to explore the intersections of Greek legal, ethical, and economic ideas; and argue that the Greeks conceived property relations in terms of exchange relations. For the Greeks, being an owner meant being a particular kind of person, and performing one’s personality publicly by involving oneself in established forms of long-term, reciprocal exchange while being seen as abstaining from short-term, mercantile exchange.

As long as we think of property as a set of rules or facts about who gets to use and control resources under what circumstances, our sources will seem impoverished. But property, in addition to being a set of rules and facts, is also a complex amalgam of symbols and ideas about the meaning of community, and how to make it stable and enduring (see Rose 1994). Like all law it is a site of discourse (Humphreys 1985, 1988), but it is a site of discourse whose centrality to economy and politics makes it particularly porous. If we give this “open” aspect of property a central place in our analysis, then our sources will reveal their hidden richness and allow us to perceive the connections between seemingly unrelated notions that the Greeks thought deeply connected.

I

Let us begin with the myth of Aletes, whose name literally means “Vagrant.” Owing to the sources which preserve it, it is the least developed of the myths

we will consider, but it will illustrate for us the pattern in broad outline and allow us to highlight relevant details by comparing it to other versions. To judge from Pindar's address of the Corinthians as "children of Aletes" (*Ol.* 13.14), Aletes was already in the early fifth century an important figure in Corinthian mythology. The *Suda* credits him as the founder of the Corinthians' tribal system (s.v. *panta oktō*). But in the myth that interests me here Aletes appears as a conqueror. The story seems to belong to a tradition that made Aletes a Heraclid and associated him with the "Dorian Invasion" of the Peloponnese (cf. Paus. 2.4.4).⁹ One version is found in a scholion to Pindar (schol. *Nem.* 7.155a):

Ἀλήτης ἐλθὼν περὶ τῆς ἐν Κορίνθῳ βασιλείας προσῆλθε τῷ μαντείῳ τῷ ἐν Δωδώνῃ, ὃ ἐστὶ τοῦ Διός, καὶ ἔχρησεν αὐτῷ τότε κρατήσῃν, ὅτε τις δῶ βῶλον γῆς ἐπιθέσθαι δὲ ἡμέρα πολυστεφάνῳ. ἐλθὼν οὖν ἐν Κορίνθῳ ἦται τινὰ ἄρτον ἀγροῖκον ὁ Ἀλήτης, ὁ δὲ λαβὼν βῶλον ἔδωκεν. ἐτελεῖτο δὲ καὶ θυσία τοῖς νεκροῖς ἐν Κορίνθῳ, δι' ἣν τῆς πόλεως ἐν μνήμασιν οὔσης ἐπέρχεται ὁ Ἀλήτης, καὶ εὐρῶν Κρέοντος θυγατέρας περὶ συνθήκας γενομένης, ἔφησέ τε εἰς κρατήσῃ, ἔξιν τὴν νεωτέραν αὐτῶν πρὸς γάμον, καὶ πείθεται ἡ κόρη καὶ προδίδωσι τὴν πόλιν τὰς πύλας ἀνοίξασα.

Aletes went to Zeus's oracle at Dodone to inquire about the kingship of Corinth. It prophesied to him that he would conquer only when someone gave him a clod of earth; and [told him] to attack on a day of many garlands. So, Aletes came to Corinth and asked a farmer for bread, but he took a clod and gave it to him. Meanwhile, a festival for the dead was being performed, for which the entire city had gone to the cemeteries. Aletes went and found the daughters of Creon, who were there according to the terms of the truce. He said that if he conquered he would marry the youngest. The girl was persuaded and betrayed the city by opening the gates.

The scholiast seems to have fused two sources together.¹⁰ The clod is clearly an important part of the myth, as it seems to have become proverbial. The saying "Aletes accepts even a clod [*dekhetai kai bōlon Alētēs*]" was applied to

⁹ For well-founded skepticism of this association, see Robertson 1980: 4–7; Hall 1997: 57–59. Robertson sees behind the myth a ritual involving the coronation of a leader in the early Greek community. Hall interprets it as an attempt on the part of the Corinthians to implicate their traditions within Dorian mythologies prevalent in the Peloponnese.

¹⁰ Salmon 1984: 38 conjectures that the source is Eumelus's epic *Corinthiaca*. This seems unlikely. Pausanias, who drew on Eumelus extensively (e.g. 2.2.2, 2.3.10), seems unaware of this myth. At 2.4.3, he says that the two pre-Dorian kings of Corinth, Doridas and Hyanthidas, descendants of Sisyphus, surrendered their rule to Aletes in exchange for being allowed to remain when the Dorians expelled the other native Corinthians. The scholion names the one king as Creon. For further skepticism on Eumelus, see West 2002.

people who make the most of anything that is offered to them.¹¹ But in the scholion the clod is almost inconsequential. Aletes conquered Corinth by realizing that the oracle's command to "attack on a day of many garlands" meant that he should seduce the king's daughter when he found her celebrating a festival.¹²

The significance of the clod was first recognized by Nilsson 1920. He saw behind the clod a pre-legal ritual in which an owner solemnized the sale of his land by handing a clod of it to the buyer.¹³ Hypothesizing that this practice was once common in Greece but survived in the historical period only as a faint mythic memory, he suggested that in the myth's original meaning the farmer gives away ownership of the land with the clod because the clod stands for the territory, as if by magic (cf. Strosetzki 1958). This interpretation does explain the importance of the clod. However, no Greek source suggests the existence of such a ritual or practice. Nilsson's main support for his interpretation is a passage from the Roman jurist Gaius's description of the early practice of *vindicatio*, in which adversaries would take to the magistrate a clod (*gleba*) of a disputed field (4.17). The well-known demand the Persian conquerors make in Herodotus for "earth and water" as a sign of territorial submission is now generally seen as drawing on Achaemenid religion and political ideology rather than Greek notions (Kuhrt 1988; Nenci 2001). Unless we are willing to assume, with Nilsson, that Gaius's testimony for archaic Rome is valid also for early Greece, we should entertain the possibility that a different logic of property might be at work in the myth.

In a recent study Malkin considers the clod not a fossil of a ritual, as Nilsson did, but "a primary source of legitimation, in and of itself" (1994: 180). Accordingly, the myth serves to legitimate a specific territorial conquest and the creation of particular identity, in this case, Dorian Corinth. The clod gives

¹¹ [Plut.] *De proverbiis Alexandrinorum* 48 = Duris *FGrH* 76 F 84; Diogenianus, Zenobius, Hesychius s.v. Their interpretation is peculiar, for to say that Aletes would accept "even" a clod would seem to contradict the fact that a clod is what Aletes really wanted. The proverb seems to me to work better if translated "a beggar accepts even a clod," which roughly approximates the *Odyssey*'s "a small gift is dear to beggars" (6.208, 14.57–58).

¹² Perhaps the source for this was Sophocles' tragedy *Aletes* (fr. 90–100 N.), if it dealt with the Heraclid Aletes rather than Aletes the son of Aegisthus, as suggested by Post 1922: 19–20.

¹³ Gernet 1968: 116, 206 followed Nilsson, but he was somewhat inconsistent in his interpretation of the clod. In his essay on value he viewed the clod in a Maussian vein: as a symbol of ownership containing the "*mana*" of the giver. In his subsequent "Droit et prédroit en Grèce ancienne" (1951), Gernet interpreted the clod as a symbol of feudal allegiance.

Aletes ownership over the territory he covets because it stands synecdochically for the entire territory. He could not have simply picked it up himself. But since a native gave it to him willingly, albeit unwittingly, he is now justified in taking physically the territory he has already received symbolically. The clod thus inaugurates the violence of conquest, while making a native responsible for it. I agree with this interpretation, but I would highlight two elements that Malkin overlooks because he does not consider all the instances of the mythic pattern. These, as we will see, are important for understanding why in the myths the giver of the clod gives away his property *legally*, as Nilsson recognized, not just symbolically. First, there is an emphasis on status; second, there is an emphasis on exchange. Aletes did not just enter Corinthian territory and ask someone to hand him a piece of dirt. He adopted the guise and attitude of a beggar, and he received the clod in a manner which encroached on the sphere of gift-exchange.¹⁴

The myth of Aletes gives us the pattern's rough outline. To fill in the crucial details, I turn to a second version. Our source in this case, Plutarch, is quite explicit about the conqueror's disguise as a beggar. He is also quite explicit about his characterization of the clod as a "gift." This is important, because, as I will show, the beggar had a particular symbolic meaning that made engaging him in gift-exchange a symbolic threat to the secure holding of property.

According to Plutarch, the Ainianes were a migratory people (much like the Dorians) who struggled to found a homeland and after much wandering arrived at the Inachus River in Thessaly (*Quest. Gr.* 297b1–c6, 293f–294c). They found that land already occupied, but an oracle declared that "if [the Inachians] shared any of their land they would lose it all, and that if [the Ainianes] received any from willing givers they would conquer it" (γενομένου δὲ χρησμοῦ τοῖς μὲν ἂν μεταδῶσι τῆς χώρας ἀποβαλεῖν ἅπασαν, τοῖς δ' ἂν λάβωσι παρ' ἐκόντων καθέξειν). Thus:

Τέμων, ἀνὴρ ἐλλόγιμος τῶν Αἰνιάνων, ἀναλαβὼν ράκια καὶ πῆραν ὡς προσαιτῆς ὧν ἀφίκετο πρὸς τοὺς Ἰναχίεις· ὕβρει δὲ καὶ πρὸς γέλωτα τοῦ βασιλέως βῶλον ἐπιδόντος αὐτῷ, δεξάμενος εἰς τὴν πῆραν ἐνέβαλε καὶ ἀφανὴς ἦν ἡγαπηκῶς τὸ δῶρον· ἀπεχώρησε γὰρ εὐθύς οὐδὲν προσαιτήσας. οἱ δὲ πρεσβύτεροι θαυμάσαντες ἀνεμιμνήσκοντο τοῦ χρησμοῦ, καὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ προσιόντες ἔλεγον μὴ καταφρονῆσαι μηδὲ προέσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

¹⁴ Aside from his apt name (*alētēs* = wanderer, beggar), he asked for bread. Other sources describe him as carrying a sack (*pēra*), which is a common iconographic element of the beggar. See Diogenian. 2.38; Apostol. 5.90. Cf. *Od.* 13.437; Ar. *Plut.* 298. Also note a Melian relief in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (30.11.9; ca. 450 B.C.E.), which marks Odysseus's disguise as a beggar with rags and sack.

αἰσθόμενος οὖν ὁ Τέμων τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν ὥρμησε φεύγειν, καὶ διέφυγεν εὐξάμενος τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι καθ' ἑκατόμβης.

Temon, a prominent Ainian, put on some rags and took a sack as if he were a beggar and approached the Inachians. Arrogantly, the king gave him a clod as a joke. He accepted it and put it in his sack but did not show that he was pleased at the gift. He left right away, without begging at all. The elders were amazed, and remembered the oracle. They approached the king and told him not to underestimate the man, or to let him go. Perceiving their intention, Temon rushed to flee, and he escaped, vowing a hecatomb to Apollo.

Temon is clearly described as a beggar, and the clod he receives is clearly described as a gift. The similarities between this text and the previous one are obvious. Both feature an oracle that declares that the conquerors will prevail only when they receive a clod of earth, freely given. And both involve the conquerors assuming the guise of beggars, explicitly in this case and implicitly in the first case. An interesting difference is that in the Ainian narrative, the king gives the clod, whereas Aletes receives the clod from a Corinthian farmer.

Another interesting difference is that in the Ainian case the clod is clearly given as an insult. The king contemptuously (*hybrei*) gives the beggar dirt instead of bread. A tempting interpretation of this scene is that the king has condemned himself to lose his land by insulting a (seemingly) harmless beggar. By insulting a beggar he has offended against Zeus, the protector of strangers and suppliants, and therefore deserves to lose his land.¹⁵ This is certainly part of the story, but it is not the whole story. First, in the Aletes myth, there is no indication that the farmer gave Aletes the clod as an insult. According to the version of Duris (*FGrH* 76 F 84), the farmer takes the clod out of his own sack, suggesting that it was a gesture of compassion rather than arrogance. Other lexicographers, perhaps following Duris, suggest that the farmer gave Aletes a clod because he did not have any food to give, or that he gave it “because it belonged to Zeus [*hōs tou Dios onta*]” (Diogenian. 2.38; Apostol. 5.90), that is, it belonged to everyone and to no one. In the Ainian narrative there is also little to suggest that Hyperochus ultimately loses his land because he was unkind to a beggar. On the contrary, according to the rest of the myth, Hyperochus loses the land because of a dirty trick.

¹⁵ For a myth with clearly such a moral, compare Plutarch's account of the orphan girl Charilla, who during a famine begged the king for bread and received an insulting beating with his shoe instead (*Quaest. Graec.* 293d–f). The insult drove her to suicide. After death her spirit brought more hunger and disease to the Delphians, who had to appease her with a festival every nine years that reenacted her story.

The logic of expropriation, I suggest, has more to do with the king's attitude towards exchange than with his attitude towards the poor. The crucial error is marked by the characterization of the clod as gift. This is something we will see quite clearly when comparing two other passages. Both involve the symbolic transfer of property and highlight the long-term tenor of the exchange, suggesting that this is a crucial element in the meaning of the myth.

The first comes from Pindar's *Fourth Pythian*. Here the theme of the clod also prefigures the conquest of a territory.¹⁶ There are of course significant differences. The giver in this case is a local god.¹⁷ And the recipient of the clod, the Argonaut Euphemus, is not disguised as a beggar; instead, the donor is disguised as a mortal. Nor does Euphemus manage to hold on to the clod. Instead, it falls overboard and washes up at Thera.¹⁸ These important differences might well have to do with the specific colonial and political contexts of Pindar's ode, as Malkin suggests. The point I would like to underscore is that Pindar explicitly calls the clod a *xeinion*, a "guest-gift" (35), as does Apollonius in his version of the same myth (4.1550–62). This characterization of the clod is important, because it puts the clod squarely under the auspices of long-term exchange: *xeinia* were the gifts exchanged between guests and hosts and were meant to articulate and reproduce a long-term relationship.¹⁹ Similarly, Plutarch calls the Ainian clod a *dōron*, a gift, and stresses the act of giving and receiving: "Arrogantly, the king gave the clod as a joke, but Temon received it and put it in his sack without showing that he was pleased at the gift" (294b).

The central importance of the clod's characterization as a gift is also brought out by comparison with a scene in the *Odyssey*, which seems to exploit the same mythic associations for its own purposes. In this case the object of exchange is not a clod, but it is linked quite explicitly and at length with the sphere of long-term exchange. Telemachus has just insinuated his father, disguised as a beggar, into the suitors' feast. He has arranged him by the hall's threshold with a chair and a little table, a portion of the entrails and

¹⁶ The poem's complex imagery and structure has been analyzed by Segal 1986; its territorial agenda has been discussed by Malkin 1994: 169–91; and its use of myth has been studied at length by Calame 2003.

¹⁷ In another variant he is a king named after the god (schol. *Pyth.* 4.57).

¹⁸ From there the final conquest of Libya would launch seventeen generations later, led by Euphemus's descendant Battus, the ancestor of Cyrene's present ruler Arcesilaus IV. On the political situation at Cyrene, and Pindar's poetic intervention, see Braswell 1988.

¹⁹ The *locus classicus* is *Il.* 6.142, the interaction of Glaucus and Diomedes, on which see Donlan 1989. For the institution of guest-friendship more generally, see Herman 1987.

some wine in a golden cup (20.257–61). When the meat is ready he orders that an equal share (*moiran isēn*, 281–82) be given to Odysseus. Ctesippus, a suitor who is described as “confident in his father’s possessions” (289), cannot bear this insult. He says:

μοῖραν μὲν δὴ ξείνος ἔχει πάλαι, ὥς ἐπέοικεν,
ἴσῃν· οὐ γὰρ καλὸν ἀτέμβειν οὐδὲ δίκαιον
ξείνους Τηλεμάχου, ὅς κεν τάδε δώμαθ’ ἴκηται.
ἀλλ’ ἄγε οἱ καὶ ἐγὼ δῶ ξείνιον, ὄφρα καὶ αὐτὸς
ἦε λοετροχόῳ δώῃ γέρας ἦε τῷ ἄλλῳ
δμῶν, οἱ κατὰ δώματ’ Ὀδυσσεύος θείοιο. (294–98)

The stranger has had an equal share for a while now, as is only right. For it is not fair or just to deprive the guest-friends of Telemachus who arrive at these halls. So come, I too will give him a guest-gift, so that he can give a gift of honor to the bath-girl or to another servant in the halls of divine Odysseus!

Ctesippus is making a joke, for his “gift” is the hoof of a cow. He is responding biting to Telemachus’s elevation of a beggar to the status of symposiast. His joke attempts to put the beggar, and by extension his sponsor, back in their place, by suggesting that they would more properly engage instead in an alternative gift-economy in which beggars and maids exchange cow-hoofs. The other suitors, taking up the joke, taunt Telemachus for having beggars and mad prophets as his guest-friends (373–83). Nonetheless, the association between a beggar and a gift has been made, and it is this association, I think, that prompts Odysseus’s singular, enigmatic “sardonic smile.” Whatever such a smile looked like, here it seems to be a sign of awareness and confidence (Lateiner 1995: 194). If this moment exploits the themes we encountered in the myths of conquest considered above, as I think it does, Odysseus must read Ctesippus’s insulting gesture as the surrender of any claim to his property. Of course, Ctesippus throws not a clod but a hoof. The difference can be accounted for if we note that the central economic resource, as far as the *Odyssey* is concerned, is not land but livestock. The suitors were slaughtering and consuming Odysseus’s animals in order to assert their claims. Odysseus cannot be responsible if he then takes, physically, what the suitors have already given him symbolically.²⁰

²⁰ Malkin 1998 and Dougherty 2001 have pointed out that many “colonial” or “foundational” themes are used to good effect within the *Odyssey*. It is fitting for Odysseus to assume the role of “founding father” of Ithaca, like Aletes, Temon/Phemius, and Euphemus, as his return is designed to inaugurate a new beginning.

Thus, as we see, nearly all the texts considered so far associate the object of exchange, whether a clod or a hoof, with long-term exchange; they are marked, implicitly or explicitly, as gifts. Nearly all the texts also involve a beggar. In the next section, I want to consider the figure of the beggar a little more carefully. My aim is to understand how the beggar fits into Greek thinking about long-term and short-term exchange.

II

If, as the Gospels put it, we always have the poor with us (Mk 14:7, Mt 26:11, Jn 12:8), the meaning of the poor is not fixed. Instead, ideas about the poor reflect a culture's understandings of need, personal responsibility, and communal obligation.²¹ Furthermore, attitudes toward the poor and indigent can shift over time, with economic and social factors playing a part. For instance, Veyne 1990 and Brown 2002 have called attention to a seemingly tectonic shift that occurred in late antiquity in how the poor, and more particularly the act of giving to the poor, came to be viewed. Giving to the poor began to be seen as a gesture that would be reciprocated in a life to come. To use the terms I have been employing, the poor were incorporated into a long-term order of exchange between God and the faithful that extended beyond death. As Max Weber put it, "the gist of this notion was that god would all the more certainly render compensation for the giver of alms in the world beyond, since it was impossible for the poor to return the generosity" (1978 [1921–22]: 581).²²

By contrast, in classical Greece charity towards the poor was generally not a publicly significant form of spending. Classical Greeks conceived of beggars differently. For example, Aristotle ruled out giving to beggars as an appropriately conspicuous form of expense for the "magnificent" (*megaloprepēs*) man (*Eth. Nic.* 4.2, 1122a27). Instead, he thought the paragon of magnificent expenditure would lavish dedications on the gods and "liturgies" (*leitourgiai*) on the city, such as the funding of ships, choruses, and feasts (1122b20). These expenses were seen as benefitting the entire community rather than a particularly needy part of it.²³ The emphasis on these kinds of expenses was on the explicit expectation of reciprocity from the community in the form of support in legal or political action, or prestige.

²¹ Also important are the forms and meaning of ritual begging; see Robertson 1983.

²² I cite Weber's "economic" view of charity not because it exhausts all the possible meanings of charitable gift-giving, but because its emphasis on the "this-worldly" allows me to connect the gifts to beggars in the myths to the theory of exchange. I do not include Judaic notions of beggars and almsgiving, which present their own complexities.

²³ See Bolkestein 1939: 150–2; Dover 1994 [1974]: 177.

The absence of a distinct register of charitable gift-giving to the poor does not mean that residents of the classical polis should be imagined as being particularly *uncharitable* or callous towards the needy.²⁴ After all, it was believed that Zeus protected beggars (*Od.* 14.56–58). What I wish to suggest is that the Greeks' lack of a specific concept for the act of gift-giving to the poor means that in our myths the figure of the beggar had somewhat different symbolic connotations from what we might expect. For the most part, the beggar was not conceived as someone to whom one had an obligation to give with a view to the long-term consequences of the exchange, whether recognition from the community or spiritual rewards, or both.²⁵ In fact, he was conceived as someone who was by definition *excluded* from relationships of long-term exchange, because he was unable to give anything back, now or in the future, in return for what he received. It was common to give something to a beggar, but it was problematic to consider it a gift.²⁶ A gift to a beggar was symbolically problematic because beggars and gifts represented different, mutually exclusive, spheres of exchange. Gifts were seen as gestures expecting reciprocity, whereas beggars were defined as incapable of it.²⁷

Theognis expresses this conception of the beggar quite clearly in the following passage:

παῖδας ἐπεὶ θρέψαιο καὶ ἄρμενα πάντα παράσχοις,
 χρήματα δ' ἐγκαταθῆις πόλλ' ἀνιηρὰ παθῶν,
 τὸν πατέρ' ἐχθαίρουσι, καταρῶνται δ' ἀπολέσθαι
 καὶ στυγέουσ' ὥσπερ πτωχὸν ἐσερχόμενον. (275–8 W.)

When you've raised your children and given them all that is fitting,
 and spent your money for them, enduring many grievances,
 they hate their father and curse him to die,
 and feel disgust as if he were a beggar coming their way.

Here Theognis compares the reaction caused by the sight of a beggar to the reaction of ungrateful children to the sight of their aged father. Children's obli-

²⁴ See Fuks 1979/80 and, more recently, Parkin 2006.

²⁵ That is not to say that different attitudes did not exist: e.g., *Od.* 17.420–21 (πολλάκι δόσκον ἀλήτη τοίω, / ὅποιος ἔοι καὶ ὅτεν κεχρημένος ἔλθοι), although there is some irony in the fact that this obiter dictum comes from the mouth of Odysseus's beggar-persona.

²⁶ It is interesting that speakers in the *Odyssey* describe charity to the poor as a *dosis* (6.208, 14.58), not as a *xeinion* or *dōron*, which are the usual terms for objects traded in long-term exchange.

²⁷ Altruistic motives clearly existed. On the question of altruism in Greek ethics, see Konstan 2000.

gation to their parents could be seen as a kind of long-term debt: the expenses of the parents for raising their children could be seen as “gifts” demanding *kharis* (Hes. *Op.* 187–89; Xen. *Mem.* 2.2.3–5; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1165a21; [Arist.] *Oec.* 1343b20). In Theognis’s fragment, however, the ungrateful children see their father as someone to whom they owe nothing because he has nothing to give them. When these children see their father approaching they see him as a beggar and feel *stygos*, disgust. They do not acknowledge the long-term obligation they have incurred towards him, forgetting that their father has nothing to give them precisely because he has already given them everything he owns! The important point is that Theognis’s passage characterizes a beggar, in comparison to a father who has spent his fortune on his children, as someone to whom one owes nothing, because he is unable to give anything in return.²⁸ As Hesiod puts it, “People give to a giver, but no one gives to a non-giver” (δῶτη μὲν τις ἔδωκεν, ἀδῶτη δ’ οὐ τις ἔδωκεν, *Op.* 355; cf. 400–3).

²⁸ A similar use of the figure of the beggar is found in a fragment of Tyrtaeus. Here, the image is used to describe not merely a state of exclusion from the reciprocal bonds of kinship, as with Theognis, but to describe a state of total exclusion from the bonds of community:

τὴν δ’ αὐτοῦ προλιπόντα πόλιν καὶ πίνοντας ἀγροὺς
πτωχεύειν πάντων ἔστ’ ἀνιηρότατον,
πλαζόμενον σὺν μητρὶ φίλῃ καὶ πατρὶ γέροντι
παισὶ τε σὺν μικροῖς κουριδίῃ τ’ ἀλόχῳ.
ἐχθρὸς μὲν γὰρ τοῖσι μετέσσεται οὓς κεν ἴκηται,
χρησιμοσύνη τ’ εἰκῶν καὶ συγγερῇ πενίῃ,
αἰσχύνει τε γένος, κατὰ δ’ ἀγλαὸν εἶδος ἐλέγχει,
πᾶσα δ’ ἀτίμη καὶ κακότης ἔπεται. (10.3–10 W.)

To abandon one’s city and fertile fields
and to go begging is the most grievous thing of all,
to wander with his dear mother and old father,
his little children and wedded wife.
He’ll be hateful to those he approaches,
surrendering to need and disgusting poverty.
He’ll shame his lineage, and belie his dignified appearance.
Complete dishonor and baseness are inevitable.

To lose one’s property, Tyrtaeus suggests, is to lose one’s place in the social networks of obligation. The landowner’s lineage and beautiful appearance will be extinguished as those to whom he approaches turn their backs on him, considering him “hateful” (*ekhthros*). Beggary here represents “complete dishonor.” The beggar in his exclusion from reciprocal bonds of long-term obligation figures as the polar opposite of the landowner. He figures as someone whom no one has obligation to support, because he no longer has the ability to reciprocate in the long-term order of exchange. This exclusion from the community’s networks of exchange also excludes him from the community itself.

The children in Theognis's passage treat a giver like a non-giver when they view their father as a beggar.

The myths of the beggars and the clods suggest that conducting exchange with someone who cannot be a giver represents a danger to the secure holding of property. Interestingly, we find a similar, but even more explicit, suggestion in a passage from Artemidorus's second-century treatise on the interpretation of dreams, the *Oneirocritica*. In this passage (3.53), Artemidorus reads a dream in which one sees oneself engaging a beggar in exchange. He suggests that in such a case the dreamer should expect his property to be disputed. His explanation of the logic behind the link is particularly interesting:

λαβόντες δέ τι νόμισμα βλάβην μεγάλην καὶ ἐπικίνδυνον προαγορεύουσι, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ θάνατον αὐτῷ τῷ ἐπιδιδόντι ἢ τινι τῶν περὶ αὐτόν· εἰκόασι γὰρ θανάτῳ, ἐπειδὴ μόνοι ἀνθρώπων ὥσπερ ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν λαβόντες ἀποδιδόασι. μεταίται δὲ εἰς οἰκίαν εἰσερχόμενοι τῆς οἰκίας ἀμφισβητῆσαι τινι σημαίνουσι, καὶ ἔάν τι λάβωσιν ἢ αὐτοὶ βίᾳ χρησάμενοι ἢ παρέχοντός τινος, βλάβην ὑπερβάλλουσάν τινα σημαίνουσι. τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ εἰς χωρίον εἰσιόντες σημαίνουσι.

[Beggars] receiving a coin predict a great and dangerous harm, often even death to the one who gave or to one close to him. [Beggars] prefigure death because they alone among men, like death, do not give anything in return for what they receive. Beggars who enter the house signify that the house will be contested by someone, and if they take something by using force, or someone gives something to them, they signify an extreme harm. They signify the same thing if they enter someone's field.

Artemidorus suggests that conducting exchange with beggars (whether “they take something ... or someone gives something to them”) is a threat to property. The reason behind this symbolism, Artemidorus explains, is that beggars are the only people who do not give something in exchange for what they receive. They are analogous to death, because they take and do not give anything back in return. Because by definition beggars exist beyond exchange, Artemidorus starkly suggests, to engage them in exchange can signify a threat to the secure holding of property.

Relative to the bulk of our texts Artemidorus is rather late (2nd century c.e.). Nonetheless, I would give his testimony weight because his conception of the beggar as someone who “gives nothing in return” seems to predate the tectonic shift in late antiquity, when, as was mentioned above, a new long-term order of exchange began to be conceptualized around “the poor.” Rather than seeing a gift to a beggar as a gesture of charity that is ultimately also good for

the giver, Artemidorus shares Theognis's conception of beggars as people who are excluded from long-term relationships of exchange and obligation.²⁹

Why does Artemidorus, like the myths, relate exchanging with someone who cannot reciprocate to losing your property? I think we can illuminate the implicit connection that he and the myths make by considering one final version of the mythic pattern we have been studying. This myth features some instructive differences which will permit us to see what is most essential. In this myth, as in the others, an exchange of a symbolic object marked as a gift, implicitly or explicitly, also signals the loss of property. But the recipient of the object here is not a beggar; he is a wage-earner. This myth is interesting because it makes the paradoxical suggestion that, in terms of exchange, beggars and wage-earners were seen as analogous. It also shows how adaptable the general pattern is to local elaboration, because the exchanged object here is not a clod of earth but dirt outlined in a particular pattern of sunlight.

According to Herodotus, Macedon was founded by three brothers, descendants of the Heraclid Temenus. They fled Argos into northern Greece and reached a place called Lebaia, where they accepted employment as herdsmen. The oldest tended the horses, the middle one tended the oxen, and the youngest, Perdiccas, tended the sheep. One day the queen realized that the loaves of bread she intended for the youngest would always rise higher than the others' loaves in her oven. She told her husband this, and he was troubled. As a precaution he decided to banish the "hirelings" (*thētai*) from his land. But they refused to leave until they were paid their "wage" (*misthos*). Then the following occurs:

ἐνθαῦτα ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ μισθοῦ πέρι ἀκούσας, ἦν γὰρ κατὰ τὴν καπνοδόκην ἐς τὸν οἶκον ἐσέχων ὁ ἥλιος, εἶπε θεοβλαβῆς γενόμενος· μισθὸν δὲ ὑμῖν ἐγὼ ὑμέων ἄξιον τόνδε ἀποδίδωμι, δείξας τὸν ἥλιον. ὁ μὲν δὴ Γαυάνης τε καὶ ὁ Ἀέροπος οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἔστασαν ἐκπεπληγμένοι, ὡς ἤκουσαν ταῦτα· ὁ δὲ παῖς, ἐτύγχανε γὰρ ἔχων μάχαιραν, εἶπας τάδε· δεκόμεθα, ὦ βασιλεῦ, τὰ

²⁹ Mauss 1990 [1925] famously argued that "archaic societies" did not recognize "free" or disinterested gifts, because gifts express fundamental social values of cohesion and solidarity. This argument is sometimes—wrongly—criticized as suggesting that Mauss thought that members of "primitive" societies were incapable of acts of selfless generosity. We can instead take Mauss's point as suggesting that ancient Greeks conceived of the category of the gift as a gesture meant to establish a long-term relationships between the transacting partners. A "no-strings-attached" gift is accordingly a contradiction in terms not because Greeks were incapable of selfless generosity, but because "gifts"—as opposed to mere handouts—were seen as meant to bind people together in long-term relationships of give-and-take.

διδοῖς· περιγράφει τῇ μαχαίρῃ ἐς τὸ ἔδαφος τοῦ οἴκου τὸν ἥλιον, περιγράψας δέ, ἐς τὸν κόλπον τρίς ἀρυσάμενος τοῦ ἡλίου, ἀπαλλάσσετο αὐτός τε καὶ οἱ μετ' ἐκείνου. οἱ μὲν δὴ ἀπήισαν, τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ σημαίνει τῶν τις παρέδρων οἶόν τι χρῆμα ποιήσῃ [ὁ παῖς] καὶ ὡς σὺν νόφ κείνων ὁ νεώτατος λάβοι τὰ διδόμενα. (8. 137.4–138.1)

As soon as the king heard about a wage, he said in a moment of divine madness, pointing to the sun (the sun was shining into the house through the smoke-stack), “I give you this wage that you’re worth!” Gauanes and Aeropos, the older brothers, stood in shock. But the boy, who had a knife with him, said this: “We accept, king, what you give.” And he outlined the sun on the floor of the house with his knife. When he had outlined it, he scooped the sun into his lap three times. Then he and his brothers left. When they had gone, someone who was sitting nearby explained to the king exactly what he [i.e., the king] had just done, and how he [the boy], the youngest among them, had intelligently accepted what was given.

The emphasis on the gestures of giving and receiving activates the sphere of gift-exchange. The brothers’ ambiguous status, however, makes the exchange problematic. From the king’s perspective, the brothers are worthless. He gives them wages that are “worthy” of them: the sun and earth, that is, nothing fungible, and thus nothing valuable to the worthless (from his perspective) brothers. If Perdiccas were indeed a worthless wage-worker, then the king’s gift would also be meaningless as a wage. But Perdiccas was destined for greater things, as the portentous loaves in the queen’s oven had already indicated. Thus the king’s gesture has another meaning: it becomes a pledge of the territory. Perdiccas sees the opportunity in the moment and literally grabs it, while turning the occasion of his unpaid dismissal into a solemn gift-exchange. In the sequel, he slowly conquers the land, and establishes a dynasty whose emblem was to be the symbol of the gift which he received from the native king.³⁰

Now, Perdiccas is not disguised as a beggar when he receives the gift from the king, as the other conquerors were. Instead, he is a laborer (*thēs*). Herodotus, apparently somewhat puzzled by the Temenids’ humble occupation in the myth, explains, “dynasties [*tyrannides*] in those days were poor, not just the people” (137.2). However, I would argue that the marked status of Perdiccas is a crucial part of the exchange. Is he the founder of Macedon’s line of rulers, or is he a laborer? Is the object that the king offers something that is earned in exchange for labor, a wage, or is it something that is given and received, a gift? If he were merely a wage-worker, Perdiccas would have no place in the

³⁰ See Greenwalt 1994.

long-term sphere of hospitality and gift-exchange on which he encroaches. Furthermore, the discussion was explicitly about wages, which are the short-term counterparts of gifts, since they do not create a future obligation as they are earned in exchange for services already rendered. Thanks to Perdiccas's intrinsic worth, however, the king unwittingly entered the sphere of gift-exchange; note Perdiccas's locution emphasizing the corresponding gestures of the exchange, "we *accept* what you *give*." The anonymous bystander who explains the exchange to the befuddled king uses the same language.

The problem in the mythic pattern is not that the beggars (or the laborer, in the last instance) receive something, but that they receive objects that, as I have been suggesting, are implicitly or explicitly *marked* as gifts, that is, as objects traded through long-term exchange. In each case the giver intends his gesture to be ironic, since he shares his culture's preconceptions of the beggar. It is inconceivable to him that a beggar has any place in long-term exchange. However, the fact that the beggar is not really a beggar gives his gesture an unintended meaning. He gives a piece of dirt to the beggar as a "gift," but does not realize he has *actually* given him a gift. He means to underscore the beggar's exclusion from long-term exchange. But because the beggar is not really a beggar, but is someone more important, he ends up conducting an exchange whose implications he does not comprehend.

More generally, the mythic pattern hinges on a contrast between long-term and short-term exchange. The wage-worker could be seen as analogous to the beggar because both were seen as excluded from long-term relationships of exchange. People who receive a wage for their labor do not allow for the delay that is required to activate long-term exchange. Like beggars, they are seen as interested only in the immediate. The symbolic meaning of the last myth is similar to the previous ones, I would suggest, because the myths involve the collapse of categories that ideally should be mutually exclusive: a long-term sphere concerned with the reproduction of community and a short-term sphere concerned with the satisfaction of present needs. The myths reveal a persistent worry about keeping short-term exchange and long-term exchange carefully distinct. They warn that the secure holding of property can be endangered when owners are careless in conducting their exchanges. They warn against conducting, even in jest, short-term exchange with valuables that should only be traded through the long-term sphere.

I still have to explain in what sense the collapse of the spheres of exchange contributes to or justifies the expropriation of land. After all, isn't an owner who is careless in his exchanges still an owner? In the next section I will consider how Greeks viewed the place of land in relationships of exchange. Land had a specific place in exchange which related it quite closely to the

maintenance and reproduction of personal identities and relationships, whereby the improper exchange of land could be seen as a special threat to one's place in the community.

III

The scholarship on Greek practices and ideas about exchange is quite substantial.³¹ I have already mentioned von Reden's and Kurke's use of Bloch and Parry's concept of "transactional orders" to show that the Greeks conceived of exchange in terms of two opposing categories, a long-term and a short-term sphere of exchange.³² Kurke's and von Reden's work has been especially concerned with how Greeks conceived of money in these terms, and how they used money and other objects of exchange to represent and contest value in and through literary texts. Indeed, nearly all the scholarship on Greek notions of exchange has focused on the representations of objects that were meant to be given, such as precious objects or coins.³³ But in order to grasp more clearly how the spheres of long-term and short-term exchange also relate to Greek thought about property, I would like to introduce a slightly different anthropological perspective on exchange theory. This approach starts not from the objects that are meant to be given but from the objects that do their symbolic work by being *kept*.

In her book *Inalienable Possessions* (1992), the anthropologist Annette Weiner sets out to "reconfigure exchange theory." She argues that other anthropologists have concentrated too much on the concept of a "norm of reciprocity," the idea, in short, that especially in non-Western societies every gift demands a return which creates obligation and hierarchy. Instead, she calls attention to the strategic moves which all human exchangers (not merely non-Western ones) employ to try to maintain identity and hierarchy over time despite of, and because of, the inevitability of loss. To understand the reason and effect of these moves she proposes to concentrate not on the objects that are exchanged, namely gifts and commodities, but on those that are meant to be held back from exchange, which she calls "inalienable pos-

³¹ See, for example, Finley 1978 [1965]; Donlan 1982 and 1989; van Wees 1992 (on Homeric exchange); Millett 1991 (exchange more generally); Kallet 1993; Seaford 1994; Wohl 1998; Kallet 2001; Lyons 2003 (exchange in literary texts). On the topic of reciprocity more generally, see the essays collected in Gill, Postlethwaite, and Seaford, eds. 1998.

³² See further von Reden 1997, 1998, 1999, 2002; Kurke 1991, 1992, 1998, 2002. See also Morris 1994: 357–60.

³³ On the use of anthropological exchange theory in the study of ancient Greece, see Beidelman 1989; van Wees 2002.

sessions.” Although these are seldom exchanged, their presence bestows on their owners an aura of potency that “radiates” to their every other exchange. As she puts it: “It is ... not the hoary idea of a return gift that generates the thrust of exchange, but the radiating power of keeping inalienable possessions out of exchange” (150).

The kind of inalienable possessions she has in mind range from the particularly fine shell armbands and necklaces that the Trobriand islanders treasure above all others, to Western art objects and heirlooms. These are objects that members of a society define as “priceless.” Fraught with meaning and provenance, inalienable possessions are exchanged only under special circumstances. That is not to say that inalienable possessions do not circulate. They can and do, both as gifts and by sale. But they circulate at a much slower rate than more ordinary possessions. The reason for their slower rate of circulation, which can make them appear stationary, is because to hold on to them and treasure them over time marks the ability to resist loss and decay. The family or the individual that holds on to treasured possessions and obtains the treasured possessions of others is one whose identity is assured over time and even enhanced through the give-and-take of exchange. Inalienable objects are, for Weiner, the basis for the construction of both identity and difference. An inalienable possession is the “representation of how social identities are reconstituted” (11). As it is transmitted it helps affix a person in geographical space and genealogical time. But it also establishes difference because it “not only authenticates the authority of its owner, but affects all other transactions even if it is not being exchanged. For the possession exists in another person’s mind as a possible future claim and potential source of power” (10).

Weiner’s work highlights how property and personal identity are indelibly linked, and how both are constituted through exchange. One’s place in the property regime is established and maintained by preserving the appropriate distinctions in the exchange of important valuables with others. By contrast, the inappropriate exchange of such valuables can mark the disintegration of one’s property and of one’s identity. In the Greek evidence, we see a hint of this very notion in a passage from Homer, in which Hector equates the destruction of Troy with the transmission of its “inalienable treasures” (*keimēlia*) through the short-term sphere:

πρὶν μὲν γὰρ Πριάμοιο πόλιν μέροπες ἄνθρωποι
πάντες μυθέσκοντο πολύχρυσον πολύχαλκον·
νῦν δὲ δὴ ἐξαπόλωλε δόμων κειμήλια καλά,
πολλὰ δὲ δὴ Φρυγίην καὶ Μηρόνιην ἔρατεινήν
κτῆματα περναμέν’ ἵκει, ἔπει μέγας ὠδύσατο Ζεύς. (Il. 18.288–92)

Before all mortal men called the city of Priam rich in gold, rich in bronze. Now the beautiful treasures [*keimēlia*] of the house are gone. Our possessions have been sold off to Phrygia, or lovely Maeonia, since Zeus became angry.

Making gifts of treasures is par for the course. “The twin uses of treasure were in possessing it and in giving it away,” as Finley (1978 [1965]: 61) notes. A sign of affection and trust, gifting treasure creates bonds that represent a long-term social investment that outlasts the individuals (cf. *Il.* 6.119–236; *Od.* 15.111–29). Their loss can still be a gain. But to *sell* treasure outright, as Hector suggests, is particularly meaningful because it collapses categories that should be kept distinct. Transmitting treasures through the short-term sphere of exchange by selling them portends the disintegration of both one’s identity and one’s property. That is why the fact that his treasures have been sold occurs to Hector as an apt symbol for the imminent destruction of his community.

In the myths which we considered above, I would argue, we also saw the loss of property represented as the consequence of attempting to transmit through the short-term sphere—albeit in jest—what should only be transmitted through the long-term sphere. While metallic objects are the primary form of inalienable possessions in Homer, the kind of good that most Greeks would have associated with inalienable value was land. Like Homeric treasures, land could “preserve its identity over generations in a way that more liquid assets do not” (Todd 1993: 245). Also like Homeric treasures, which as they circulated “created the image of a continuous exchange of life for immortality in a supra-individual order and asserted the continuity of society beyond the span of an individual life” (von Reden 2003: 24), land bore the imprint of its exchanges and transmitted over time both the identity and the authority of its owners. This is why selling land, like selling Homeric treasure, was an act that could be seen as an abdication of one’s identity.

Philosophical texts attest to the tensions inherent in transmitting land through the short-term order of exchange by means of sale when they suggest that “in the old days,” or in states of strong communal traditions like oligarchic Sparta or Plato’s Magnesia, land was something that would remain firmly in the sphere of long-term exchange, never sold or even mortgaged. Aristotle is quite explicit about this: “In the old days many cities passed laws forbidding the sale of initial allotments; then there is the so-called Law of Oxylus, which is similar. It forbids anyone from mortgaging even a portion of one’s land” (ἦν δὲ τό γε ἀρχαῖον ἐν πολλαῖς πόλεσι νενομοθετημένον μηδὲ πωλεῖν ἐξεῖναι τοὺς πρῶτους κλήρους· ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὃν λέγουσιν Ὀξύλου νόμον εἶναι τοιοῦτόν τι δυνάμενος, τὸ μὴ δανείζειν εἰς τι μέρος τῆς ὑπαρχούσης ἐκάστῳ γῆς, *Pol.*

1319a10–14). According to Aristotle, the Locrians also had a law forbidding the sale of their property unless they could prove dire necessity; and the Leucadians similarly for a time were not allowed to sell their so-called *palaioi klēroi*, “original allotments” (*Pol.* 1266b20). Most famously, such prohibition of selling land was characteristic of the property regime attributed to Sparta, where it was “considered shameful to sell land, but it was not permitted to sell the ‘ancient portion’ [*arkhaia moira*] at all.”³⁴

Plato also did not want his Magnesians to sell their land. In his view, the correct attitude toward property was the “cornerstone” (*krēpis*) of any successful state (*Leg.* 736e), and the simple act of making land inalienable by sale would help ensure a stable society that reproduces itself faithfully and consistently without creating destabilizing inequalities. In order to make doubly sure that no one would be tempted to sell land, he also forbade his citizens from accumulating gold and silver (*Leg.* 740b–742a). This is of course utopian fantasy, but that is what makes his point worth taking seriously: he is telling us something real about the ideology of land. Plato suggests that in order to create a truly stable community, a community that reproduces itself without changing, the most important thing is to illegalize the selling of land, which, in our terms, means making it intransmittable via short-term exchange.³⁵

³⁴ Heraclides Lembus fr. 12 Dilts; Plut. *Mor.* 238e. I say “attributed” because, as Hodkinson 2000 has convincingly argued, the peculiar nature of Spartan land-tenure was probably an invention of ancient moralists and critics of democracy.

³⁵ For a time, scholars took these statements about the inalienability of land literally, as evidence that originally Greeks were not allowed to sell their land, but had to bequeath it within the family (see, representatively, Guiraud 1893: 46–63; Fine 1951: 177–82; Peçirka 1963). It now appears that selling land was explicitly forbidden only as a special measure, usually when a state was felt to be particularly vulnerable or fragile (Cassola 1965; Finley 1968). For example, at the third-century settlement at Corcyra Melaena a small plot of land was to be “permanent,” *katamomon*, for each of the original settlers (*SIG*³ 141.8). The inscription mentions fortifications repeatedly (4–5), suggesting that the settlers might have been anticipating conflict (Lombardo 1993 suggests that the settlement was a military outpost). In the third-century decree admitting Orchomenus into the Achaean League the land is not declared “permanent” outright, as at Corcyra Melaena, but rather its owners are forbidden to sell it for a period of 20 years (*SIG*³ 490.12–3). Conflict is evident here also behind the mention of a property dispute (13–17). A Hellenistic decree from Miletus, conferring citizenship and land to a group of Cretans, also stipulates a 20-year term of inalienability (*Milet* I 3, 33e.6–7). It has been suggested that these were mercenaries. The inalienability provision accordingly might have served as an incentive to incorporate the newcomers into Milesian society. It might also be expressing a fear that mercenaries, men who by definition work for wages, would need such an incentive in the first place. However, this does not mean that land was generally conceived as a commodity.

The great virtue of inheriting land is that it reproduces personal identities and relationships alongside property relationships. The problem with selling land is that it disconnects property from personal relationships. Selling land one had inherited was especially problematic, because it amounted to taking something one had received in the long-term sphere and passing it on through the short-term sphere. Like the loss of treasures that Hector bewailed, the loss of inherited land signified the failure to maintain one's exchanges in the proper order and thus signaled the disintegration of identity, conceived relationally, and property. The act of selling off one's inherited land was seen as either an act of desperation, or of willful self-destruction.

IV

In a manner of speaking, the gift of a clod to a beggar in the myths stands for the act of giving one's land through the short-term sphere. By giving the symbol of land, which should only be transferred in the long-term sphere, to someone who has no part in it, the givers provide a definitive sign of their unworthiness of being owners. The myths thus reenact symbolically an argument frequently used in Attic oratory by speakers engaged in property disputes. These utilize the contrast between long-term and short-term exchange in order to draw a sharp distinction between the legitimate owner and the illegitimate one, defining the former as someone who abstains from short-term exchange and the latter as someone who engages in it without concern for his obligations to the community. A brief glance at this rhetorical topos can give us a sense of how the notion of property implied by the myths could be mobilized in order to frame and contest claims of entitlement in a legal setting.

The historian of Athenian law A. R. W. Harrison lamented that no surviving Attic oration deals with property "pure and simple" (1998 [1968]: 1.200). However, a good number of them deal indirectly with property disputes. None quotes a law of property, which the legal historians would like to recover, but they can give us a glimpse of the kinds of arguments that Athenians used to frame and contest their property claims. And these in turn can tell us something about the ideology of property, and how it was put to rhetorical use. Interestingly, one argument in particular seems to iterate the myths' representation of dispossession as a consequence of conducting exchange

Because ownership was the nearly exclusive privilege of the citizen, land remained the primary vehicle for the transmission of citizen identity. The distinction between land one had inherited and land one had purchased was therefore quite powerful, even in Athens, where citizenship was notably unlinked to the ownership of land (Harrison 1998 [1968]: 1.125; Todd 1993: 245–46).

inappropriately. This argument paints the speaker's opponent as eager to *sell* land he *inherited*, that is, in our terms, to transmit via short-term exchange land that he acquired via long-term exchange. For example, Aeschines depicts his enemy Timarchus as an uncontrollable force of self-destruction who is as unhesitant to sell his inheritance as he is to sell himself, for the sake of immediate pleasure (1.95–105; cf. Davidson 1997: 207–10). Aeschines' portrait of Timarchus is consciously overdrawn, but the accusation of selling one's inheritance is frequently used in order to draw a sharp contrast between the legitimate owner as someone firmly committed to the long-term order of exchange and the illegitimate owner as someone interested only in short-term exchange. The legitimate owner was characterized by his self-control, by his care (*epimeleia*) toward his property, and by his willingness to spend it primarily in the long-term sphere of reciprocity and public benefit. The illegitimate owner was characterized by his selfishness and eagerness to convert his property through the short-term sphere into immediate, private benefit.

The most important appropriate long-term use for property, in the Attic orators, involves "liturgies," specific forms of expenditure undertaken ideally on a volunteer basis, such as outfitting a ship or paying for a chorus or for an embassy. These, the extension of the gift into the civic sphere, were thought to benefit the entire community (cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1122b19–23). Davies 1981: 92 helpfully suggests that it is appropriate to think of liturgical expenditure as an "investment" expecting a material or symbolic "return" in the long term. Reminding the jurors of one's liturgical munificence, and implicitly or explicitly expecting *kharis* (gratitude) in return, was a commonplace of Athenian oratory (e.g., *Lys.* 21.23).³⁶ Speakers might use their willingness or their opponent's unwillingness to spend liturgically as evidence of past and future action in many kinds of cases (e.g., *Antiph.* 5.77; *Lys.* 3.47; *Dem.* 19.281). However, as D. Cohen 1995: 172–73 and Johnstone 1999: 98 observe, the topic of liturgies comes especially to the fore when property is under dispute.

Liturgical expenditure in such cases becomes an explicit argument for why one deserves to have one's property claim validated or denied by the community. The argument is not sufficient on its own. No one says, "Yes, my opponent is the legitimate heir, but he doesn't deserve it because he wants to deprive you of its liturgical potential!" Instead, I would suggest that the expenditure argument adds some crucial strokes to the portrait of one's opponent as someone who is unwilling to participate in the community's networks of

³⁶ See Davies 1981: 92–105; Ober 1989: 226–30; Millett 1991: 123–26. This is not to say that everyone was as eager to spend liturgically as all the speakers portray themselves as being; see Christ 1990.

long-term exchange and is bent only on immediate, personal profit. It is an important component of the portrait of the illegitimate owner. It associates him to the givers of the clods in the myths, who, I argued, negated their property unwittingly by conducting exchange in an incorrect way. Isaeus, all of whose surviving speeches deal with issues arising from property disputes, is especially fond of the strategy of playing long-term exchange off of short-term exchange in order to draw a contrast between legitimate and illegitimate ownership (4.27–31; 5.38–43; 10.25). He exploits it at length in his speech *On the Estate of Philoctemon*.

The speech stems from a property dispute between collateral relatives. The case is ostensibly one of false-witnessing, but the real aim is to further the claim of the anonymous speaker's associate, Chaerestratus, who claims Philoctemon's estate as his nephew and adopted son.³⁷ His claim is against two unnamed men who claim to be Philoctemon's paternal half-brothers (more precisely, the speech is against a man who has born witness to their identity). I would like to call attention to how the speaker characterizes each side by their attitude towards exchange. He presents Philoctemon and his father Euctemon as ideal land-owners. Their attitude towards their property is signaled by their approach to liturgies, on which they spent lavishly, but not irresponsibly (38). His opponents' attitude towards the property and towards exchange is characterized very differently.

The opponents' attitude towards the property in question became clear when Philoctemon died, and his now heir-less father Euctemon fell under the spell of an alleged prostitute (the mother of the speaker's opponents) "maybe because of drugs, or a disease, or who knows what" (19–21). She and her accomplices convinced a senile Euctemon to mortgage or sell off his estate piece by piece (33). This was illegal, for Athenian law only allowed a man to dispose of his property as he saw fit if he was in his right mind and not under the influence of a woman (9; cf. [Dem.] 46.14). Then, as he was bed-ridden, they tried to liquidate the rest of his property. They pretended that he had died and tried to formally introduce the "prostitute's" children as his adopted sons. If some bystanders who knew the truth had not been there to denounce the attempt, the conspirators would have leased out all his property as if it belonged to orphaned heirs (36). Finally, when he did die they

³⁷ Suits over false-witnessing seem to have been particularly common in property disputes. Theopompus cites a "law" (Isae. 11.46): κελύει δ' ὁ νόμος, ἐὰν ἀλῶ τις τῶν ψευδομαρτυρίων, πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἶναι περὶ αὐτῶν τὰς λήξεις ("The law commands that if someone is convicted of false-witnessing the relevant inheritance dispute must start from the beginning").

barricaded the house so that no one could enter or leave.³⁸ They wanted to keep his death secret, to prevent the rightful heirs from claiming the property. Like common burglars, they dug a hole in the wall and through it carried out all of Euctemon's belongings. Two days later, when his relatives managed to break through the barricade, they found Euctemon dead and the house completely plundered (39–41).

The speaker's narrative offers his audience a vivid contrast. On the one side are the children of the "prostitute." As someone who trades in a sexual short-term sphere, she is analogous to the beggar or the laborer in the myths we considered above.³⁹ On the other side is the rightful heir, Chaerestratus, the adopted son of Euctemon's true son Philoctemon. Like his natural father, Phanostratus, he shows every indication of being an upstanding, community-minded owner, very much in the mold of Philoctemon and Euctemon. His natural brother also shows every indication of following their footsteps. The speaker draws a stark contrast between the two sides' styles of ownership in the following passage:

τῆς δὲ τούτων οὐσίας, ὧ ἄνδρες, εἰς τὴν πόλιν πλείω ἀναλίσκεται ἢ εἰς αὐτοὺς τούτους. καὶ Φανόστρατος μὲν τετριηράρχηκεν ἑπτάκις ἤδη, τὰς δὲ λητουργίας ἀπάσας λελητούργηκε καὶ τὰς πλείστας νίκας νενίκηκεν· οὐτοσί δὲ Χαιρέστρατος τηλικούτος ὢν τετριηράρχηκε, κεχορήγηκε δὲ τραγῳδοῖς, γεγυμνασιάρχηκε δὲ λαμπάδι· καὶ τὰς εἰσφοράς εἰσενηνόχασιν ἀμφοτέροι οὐτοσί χορηγεῖ μὲν τραγῳδοῖς, εἰς δὲ τοὺς τριακοσίους ἐγγέγραπται καὶ εἰσφέρει τὰς εἰσφοράς. ὥστ' οὐ φθονεῖσθαί εἰσιν ἄξιοι, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον, νῆ τὸν Δία καὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω, οὗτοι, εἰ λήψονται ἃ μὴ προσήκει αὐτοῖς. τοῦ γάρ Φιλοκτήμονος κλήρου ἂν μὲν ἐπιδικάσῃται ὅδε, ὑμῖν αὐτὸν ταμιεύσει, τὰ προσταττόμενα λητουργῶν ὥσπερ καὶ νῦν καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον· ἂν δ' οὗτοι λάβωσι, διαφορήσαντες ἑτέροις ἐπιβουλεύσουσι. (60–61)

More of their property is being spent on the city than on themselves. Phanostratus has already funded a warship seven times. He has performed all the other liturgies, and won distinction in most of them. Chaerestratus, at his age, has also funded a warship, a tragic chorus, and a torch-race. Both have paid the special war-tax to which the 300 are liable. Before it was only the two of them. But now the youngest son also has funded a tragic chorus. And he has

³⁸ Their neglect of the dead man's funerary rites was a further indication of their illegitimacy. Proper performance of the deceased owner's burial often figures as evidence for one's rightful claim to his property (see especially Isae. 8. 21–6).

³⁹ On the prostitute's trade as short-term exchange, see von Reden 2003: 121. On the contrast with the hetaira, see Kurke 1999: 175–219.

enlisted himself among the 300 and pays the special war-tax. Thus, you should not resent them, but instead you should resent our opponents—by Zeus and Apollo!—if they get their hands on what does not belong to them. If you adjudge the estate to Phanostratus he will manage it for you, funding the liturgies you command, just like now but even more so. If they get it, they will squander it and plot against other estates.

The speaker's opponents have shown in no uncertain terms how they intend to treat the property. The verb the speaker uses to describe their intention, *diaphorein*, is an interesting choice. In medical use, it can refer to dissipation or dispersion. In the context of war, it can mean the plunder of enemy territory (LSJ s.v.). The speaker's opponents were doing *both* to Euctemon's property. Chaerestratus, on the other hand, is the kind of person who will treat his property with the attitude of a manager (*tamias*) for the community rather than that of an owner.⁴⁰ Like Euctemon before he became senile and fell under the influence of the "prostitute," his adopted son shows every indication that he is naturally inclined to spend the property generously on liturgies for the long-term benefit of the community, while preserving it and even increasing it for his descendants.

Of course, most landowners could not afford to pay for such liturgies as Chaerestratus lavished on the polis. As Davies 1981: 9 notes, "Even the cheapest liturgy cost nearly as much as a contemporary skilled workman was paid in a year." Nonetheless, all landowners were expected to engage in similarly articulated local practices of neighborly gift-exchange. We get a hint of these in Hesiod's advice to his brother to set up a long-term store of gratitude with his neighbors by being generous now, "so that when you need something later you will find more of it" (*Op.* 349–51; Millett 1991: 35). Hesiod, a non-Athenian, non-elite source, suggests that neighbors are a storehouse of gratitude just as a jar is a storehouse of grain (361–63): the more you put in, the more you will have to draw out when you need it most. A similar ideology of reciproc-

⁴⁰ Cf. Lys. 21.13–14, another case involving disputed property: ὥστ' ἄξιον ταύτην ἡγεῖσθαι πρόσδοτον βεβαιωτάτην τῇ πόλει, τὰς οὐσίας τῶν ἐθελόντων λητουργεῖν. ἐὰν οὖν εὖ βουλευσῇσθε, οὐδὲν ἤττον ἐπιμελήσεσθε τῶν ἡμετέρων χρημάτων ἢ τῶν ἰδίων τῶν ὑμετέρων αὐτῶν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἔξετε πᾶσι χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἡμετέροις ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον. οἶμαι δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐπίστασθαι ὅτι τῶν ἐμῶν ἐγὼ πολὺ βελτίων ὑμῖν ἔσομαι ταμίας τῶν τὰ τῆς πόλεως ὑμῖν ταμιεύοντων ("It is appropriate to consider the property of those willing to pay for liturgies as the most secure source of revenue for the city. If you deliberate correctly, you will take care of my wealth no less than your own, knowing that you will be able to use mine like before. I think you all know that I will be a much better manager of my property than those who manage the city's property").

ity implicated the wealthy Athenian landowner in a network of reciprocal, long-term obligation as implicated Hesiod's "peasant" farmer. In both cases the giver, of a liturgy in the one instance or of a loan in kind in the other, expected to be able to call in the favor at some point in the future when he needed it most. Whether the product that made generosity possible was the result of one's hands or of the hands of one's slaves did not make a crucial difference in these terms. Conversely, the owner who engaged in reciprocal, long-term exchange with his neighbors also expected them to recognize his property as legitimate.⁴¹

The orators deploy the flip-side of this ideology, which linked long-term expenditure with property ownership. They portray legitimate ownership as the symbolic function of keeping one's property away from the sphere of short-term exchange and of engaging in long-term exchange in socially appropriate ways. Selling and leasing property are conflated with illegitimate property-holding, while paying for liturgies is treated as representative of legitimate property-holding. The legitimate owner becomes someone who is firmly committed to the long-term order of exchange. His exchanges are marked by restraint. His interests are bound to the interests of the community. As another speaker in a property dispute argued, "The most onerous liturgy is to go through life with dignity and self-control, and not to yield to pleasure nor be carried away by profit" (ταύτην εἶναι λητουργίαν τὴν ἐπιπονωτάτην, διὰ τέλους τὸν πάντα χρόνον κόσμιον εἶναι καὶ σώφρονα καὶ μὴ θ' ὕφ' ἡδονῆς ἡττηθῆναι μὴ θ' ὑπὸ κέρδους ἐπαρθῆναι, *Lys.* 21.19; cf. *Xen. Oec.* 7.15). The illegitimate owner, by contrast, is eager to sell the property and consume it in suspiciously private ways (cf. *Isae.* 10.25; *Aeschin.* 1.95–105).

This contrast works because the orators' audience shared the notion that we saw at work in the myths of the beggars and the clods. Like the orators'

⁴¹ Theophrastus (fr. 21.2 Sz.-M.) records a practice at Thurii in which a new owner's acquisition of a property was publicized by means of an exchange with his new neighbors. The exchange appears to be marked by a separation from the marketplace: οἱ δὲ Θουριακοὶ τὰ μὲν τοιαῦτα πάντα ἀφαιροῦσιν οὐδ' ἐν ἀγορᾷ πράττουσι ὥσπερ τὰλλα, διδόναι δὲ κελεύουσι κοινῇ τῶν γειτόνων τῶν ἐγγυτάτῳ τρισὶ νόμισμά τι βραχὺ μνήμης ἔνεκα καὶ μαρτυρίας ("The Thuriens dispense with all such practices, and do not perform [exchange] in the marketplace, as in the other cases. Instead they require that the purchaser publicly give to the three nearest neighbors a small coin for the sake of memory and witnessing"). Presumably, this act marked the new owner as the sort of person who kept his distance from short-term exchange. By accepting the "small coin," the neighbors signaled their willingness to defend the new owner's claim to the property, should it ever be called into question. This was a foreseeable danger, as the property situation at Thurii was notoriously unstable (*Arist. Pol.* 1303a31–33; 1307a26–33).

illegitimate owner, who spends in the short-term sphere what he should be spending only in the long-term sphere, the givers of the clods give the symbol of something that should be transmitted ideally only in long-term exchange to someone who is excluded from it; or rather, to someone who they *believe* is excluded from it. The myths reproduce on a figurative level the stigma, evoked by the orators, involved in selling what one had inherited. In brief, the myths make the victim ethically responsible for his own dispossession by marking his economic carelessness.

Modern western thought conceives property as, in Blackstone's famous definition, "that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe" (179 [1765–69]: 2.2). This definition is concise but it represents a panoply of ideas about the extraction of resources and its legitimation that is eminently suited to present structures and circumstances. The Greek notion, as we have gleaned it from our sources, was quite different, but it was equally linked to a comprehensive ideology of expenditure, communal belonging, and the use and transmission of land. It was a notion of property that tied keeping land with keeping it away from short-term exchange, whereby the proper owner figured as the sort of person who would participate in the community's network of long-term exchanges while abstaining from the temptations of short-term exchange. Self-control in exchange was seen as an important part of one's personality and identity as an owner.⁴² It was accordingly important to be seen to adhere to traditionally

⁴² It is a hotly debated question to what extent this prejudice against transmitting land through the short-term sphere affected economic decisions, but this has not been my concern here. Further investigation at this point would run into the question of the "wall," as Finley characterized it, between land and money in ancient Greece (Finley 1953; Millett 1991: 241–49). To what extent did the marked division between long-term exchange and short-term exchange influence economic behavior? Finley thought the answer was, a great deal. In his view, the wall was "insurmountable." It prohibited the accumulation of wealth because wealth was geared towards reproducing and augmenting status rather than towards maximizing production and profit. More recent work has tended to dismiss the wall as a mere façade (e.g., E. Cohen 1992). But while Finley might have overstated his point, I also think that it is a mistake to dismiss the "wall." Because property remained profoundly informal, property rights remained, as Douglass North (1990) would put it, "costly." Property claims had to be built from the ground up every time one's property was transferred or challenged (cf. Isae. 10.24; Harris 1988). This means that one's hold on property was uncertain. The uncertainty of property made reliance on communal networks of support all the more imperative (cf. Christ 1998). The myths I have studied here, and the rhetorical topos of liturgies that I have touched upon, suggest

sanctioned forms of expense which were marked as long-term. In the case of wealthy Athenian landowners, a prime example of such expenses were the liturgies.

The Attic orators, as we saw, exploited this notion. In an argument that they commonly employed in property disputes, they attempt to paint the legitimate owner as someone marked by self-control and by a willingness to spend in long-term exchange, and the illegitimate owner as someone concerned only with short-term exchange and his own immediate profit. Their argument implies that the illegitimate owner can be easily discerned by his attitude towards exchange.

The myths also present situations where individuals fail to maintain their exchanges in the proper order. Albeit inadvertently, they treat a long-term good as they would a short-term commodity, by giving a symbolic gift of land to someone who (from their vantage-point) has no place in long-term relationships of exchange. They mean the gift to be a meaningless jest, as it would be if the recipient were in fact just a beggar or a wage-worker. But, thanks to the recipient's true worth, their gesture has a very different meaning. The donor gives the clod of earth as a joke, but the disguised beggar receives it in earnest. Thus, the owners in the myths become partners in their own expropriation by showing an inappropriate attitude towards their "inalienable" treasure, their land. Because the preservation of property and the maintenance of proper exchange relations were seen as tightly bound together, they cause themselves to lose the "aura of potency" which they should have preserved by keeping their inalienable goods away from exchange. When the conquerors take the territory by force they are taking land whose owners have proven themselves unworthy of being owners.

The methodological argument I have tried to make is that it is possible to investigate ancient Greek notions of property with the sources that we possess. These probably will not lead us any closer to a positive account of the Greek law of property or of the shape of land-tenure, but they might help us formulate better questions and ultimately perhaps help us see the place of ideas in the shape of institutions. Here I have only scratched the surface. But if I have called attention to the need to think about Greek property more carefully, this paper will have done its job.

that there was a real cost to be paid in neglecting the community's long-term order of exchange. This suggests that the "wall" not only hindered the outright commodification of land, it might actually have been the very foundation on which the Greeks built their notions of property.

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