

'Euergesia' in Herodotus and Thucydides as a Factor in Interstate Relations

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It has often been argued that though the Greeks recognized themselves as brothers in their intercity relations they did not consider themselves bound by universal laws. They failed to accept mutually binding obligations unless these obligations were explicitly stipulated in treaties. The notion of duty flowing from the nature of Man, discussed by the Greek philosophers, did not prevail in the domain of Greek interstate affairs (1). Frequent brutalities perpetrated by Greeks upon Greeks supposedly demonstrate this failure to observe mutually binding obligations. Yet a closer examination of the existing testimonia shows that there were principles originating in early Greek history which were universally recognized, although not always respected by the embattled parties. Failure to respect these principles, however, does not negate their validity, for the Greeks continued to pay tribute to such principles, especially in cases where infractions were observed. The purpose of this paper is to give only one example of such principles, the principle of *euergesia*, as it appears in Herodotus and Thucydides.

(1) F. LAURENT, quoted in C. PHILLIPSON, *The International Law and Custom of Ancient Greece and Rome*, (London, 1911) 47-48; A. MAURY, *Histoire des religions de la Grèce antique*, 3 (Paris, 1859) 401-402.

I

Herodotus

(i) 1.90: Croesus complained, after his defeat by Cyrus, that god Apollo deceived him, though he had served the god well, *ἐάσας με χαριεῖ μάλιστα τὸν θεὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων, τὸν ἐγὼ ἐτίμησα μάλιστα...*, *εἰ ἐξαπατᾶν τοὺς ἐθ' ποιεῦντας νόμος ἐστὶν οἱ*. He questioned whether it was customary for the Greek gods to be ingrates, *εἰ ἀχαρίστοισι νόμος εἶναι τοῖσι Ἑλληνικοῖσι θεοῖσι*. Delphi denied any allegations of ingratitude. On the contrary, Delphi asserted, Croesus had been doomed as a victim of a curse caused by the shedding of blood by one of his progenitors, and no one, not even a god, could save him from his fate. Despite this curse, Apollo had managed to postpone Croesus' doom for three years, and at the end Delphi saved him from being burned at the stake. Furthermore, Delphi continued, since Croesus had not interpreted correctly the oracular prophecy (Hdt. 1.91) Croesus had no basis for complaint. Obviously, Croesus had expected the intervention of Delphi on his behalf in the war against Cyrus in requital for the many gifts and services he had rendered to Delphi. When this help failed to materialize, Croesus felt he had a legitimate grievance against the god.

(ii) 3.139-44: Herodotus ascribed the capture of Samos by the Persians to the following circumstances: When Darius was in Egypt with Cambyses, he noticed a man wearing a beautiful red tunic and offered to buy it. The man was Syloson, the brother of the Samian tyrant Polycrates. Syloson, making the best out of this predicament, gave Darius the tunic as a gift. When later Darius became king of Persia, Syloson went to Susa and presented himself as Darius' benefactor, *ἔφη Δαρείου εὐεργέτης εἶναι*. Darius offered to repay Syloson in gold. But Syloson was not interested in gold at that point and countered with a plea for military aid with which he hoped to win Samos. Darius granted Syloson his request, and soon Syloson was in possession of Samos. The story may or may not be true, and may not explain the true motives of Darius in capturing Samos. The

fact that Herodotus (and probably many other Greeks) accepted it as the reason behind Otane's seizure of Samos shows how much the principle of *euergesia* counted among the Greeks and the Persians⁽²⁾.

(iii) 8.85: Herodotus cited the story of two Samians, Theomestor and Phylacus, who distinguished themselves at Salamis fighting on the side of the Persians. For their services Phylacus was recorded among the King's benefactors and was rewarded with much land, εὐεργέτης βασιλέος ἀνεγράφη καὶ χῶρον ἔδωρήθη πολλῆν, while Theomestor was made despot of Samos.

(iv) 8.136: Mardonius sent Alexander, the Macedonian king, on a diplomatic mission to Athens in the spring of 479 B.C. because Alexander was a *proxenos* and *evergetês* of the Athenians, and in this capacity he was expected to influence the Athenians in favor of the Persian proposals⁽³⁾.

(v) 5.99: In 499 B.C. the Eretrians sent five ships to assist Miletus in her rebellion against Darius. Herodotus explained that they did so because during the Lelantine War the Milesians had sent aid to the Eretrians who were fighting against Chalcis⁽⁴⁾.

(vi) 3.47: The Lacedaemonians equipped and dispatched an army to aid the Samian exiles ousted by Polycrates the tyrant. The exiles had requested this aid on the basis of their earlier assistance to Sparta when the Spartans were fighting against the

(2) R.W. MACAN, *Herodotus*, bk. 8, pp. 492 and 573; W.W. HOW and J. WELLS, *Comm. on Hdt.*, 2 (Oxford, 1912) 264; TÖLLE-KASTENBEIN, R., *Herodotus und Samos* (Bochum, 1976).

(3) J.W. COLE, AC, 47 (1978) 40-41, 43; R.W. MACAN, bk. 8, 573.

(4) Polyb. 13.3.4; Strabo 10.1.2 (448C); Thuc. 1.15.3; GOMME, HCT 1, 126; W.G. FORREST, *Historia*, 6 (1957) 163-64; J. BOARDMAN, BSA, 52 (1957) 27-29; A.R. BURN, *The Lyric Age of Greece* (London, 1960) 90-93; H. BENTSON, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums* (Munich, 1975) No. 102; C.W. FORNARA, *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977) No. 7; Plut. *Moralia* 153F; 760 E-761A; Proclus on Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 662; Aristl. *Pol.* 1289b; R.J. MACAN, Hdt. bk. 5, 249-50; Busolt, G.G. 1² 456.

Messenians, ὡς μὲν Σάμιοι λέγουσι, εὐεργεσίας ἐκτίνοντες, ὅτι σφι πρῶτεροι αὐτοὶ νηυσὶ ἐβοήθησαν ἐπὶ Μεσσηνίου.

(vii) 5.63: As in the case of Samos, the Lacedaemonians proffered their help to the Athenians against the Peisistratid tyrants when Pythia suggested it. Later, however, they learned that Cleisthenes had connived with Pythia to secure Spartan help against the Peisistratids, and they felt embarrassed. Their embarrassment was three-fold. They felt they had been duped to support the wrong horse; they had also turned against the Peisistratids who had been their friends; and in the end they received no gratitude for their help from the Athenian people, χάρις οὐδεμία ἐφαίνετο πρὸς Ἀθηναίων, Hdt. 5.90. They finally apologized for aiding in the expulsion of friends and for helping a thankless people, δήμῳ ἀχαρίστῳ παρεδώκαμεν τὴν πόλιν Hdt. 5.91 (5).

(viii, ix) 9.27: Two cases of *euergesia* are described here. The first deals with the protection and aid conferred by the Athenians upon the sons of Heracles. The second mentions the concern of the Athenians for those who fell before the Cadmeia. In the first case the Athenians sheltered the persecuted Heracleids against great odds, while in the second they sent an army against the Thebans to recover the dead fallen before the Cadmeia, and when they recovered the dead, they buried them in Eleusis. Both of these *euergesiai* had become *topoi* in Athenian history. Since the Spartans were considered descendants of Heracles, the tragedians and orators in the fifth and fourth centuries repeatedly used these *topoi* to point out the ingratitude of the Spartans toward Athens (6).

(5) In this case the real reason was political, but the earlier statement of Hdt. 5.63, τὰ γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ πρεσβύτερα ἐποιεῦντο ἢ τὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν shows that Greek actions in interstate affairs were not always stemming from expediency.

(6) Aesch. *Seven Against Thebes*; Soph. *Antigone*; Eur. *Phoen. Women*; *Suppliants*; Isocr. *Paneg.* 57-58; 61; *To Philip* 33-34; *Panath.* 168-69; 170; 194; *Lys. Fun. Orat.* 7-9; *Plat. Menex.* 239B; *Dem. Fun. Orat.* 8; *Peri Stephanou* 186; *Xen. Mem.* 3.5.10; *Arist. Rhet.* 1396a; *Plut. Theb.* 29; *Paus.* 1.39.2.

(x) 6.137: Herodotus cited Hecataeus, who accused the Athenians of ingratitude toward the Pelasgians. The Athenians had given the Pelasgians the land below Hymettus as a reward for the construction of the Pelasgian wall. But when the Athenians noticed that the Pelasgians had converted the worthless land into beautiful farm-land, they drove the Pelasgians out (7). The Athenians denied the charge and claimed that the Pelasgians were responsible for this expulsion because they wandered from their Hymettus territory and harassed the Athenian boys and girls going for water to the Enneacrunos. Moreover, the Athenians said, the Pelasgians plotted to attack Athens herself.

The above instances in Herodotus demonstrate that the traditional principle of *euergesia* was recognized by the Greeks (even the Persians) as a fundamental principle in their interstate affairs. Regardless of the true motives behind the capture of Samos by the Persians, Herodotus, at least, did not find anything extraordinary in the story of *euergesia* as the motive for Darius' interest in Samos. This clearly manifests that the ancients took the *euergesia* obligation very seriously, so seriously indeed that Herodotus did not suspect imperialist motives behind the conquest of Samos, and if he did, he did not mention them. In the Spartan intervention of Athens, whatever the intentions behind their intervention might have been, the Spartans complained of Athenian ungratefulness, because the infringement of the *euergesia* principle would be the most effective piece of propaganda. On the other hand, the Athenians constantly reminded the Greek world of their unselfish services to the heroes of old, obviously because this type of service must have impressed the Greek world. Finally, Hecataeus wanted to embarrass the Athenians by pointing to their ingratitude, omitting the Athenian justification for their action. Whether the story is historical or not does not matter. What matters here is Greek belief in *euergesia* or *acharistia* and Hecataeus' effort to embarrass the Athenians. In a world where such principles like *euergesia* were non-operative, Hecataeus' effort would have been absurd.

(7) Thuc. 2.15.5; Paus. 1.14.1; R.W. MACAN, bk. 6, 392-93; E. MEYER, *Forschungen zur Alten Geschichte*, 1 (Halle, 1892-99) 6-7.

II

Thucydides

Several of the above examples (i, ii, iii, iv, vii) entail interpersonal as well as interstate relations. In this they reflect somewhat the Homeric world where the territory is represented by the ruling nobility⁽⁸⁾. The existence of the value of *euergesia* in the Homeric world demonstrated that its origins were to be found in the aristocratic code of the Mycenaean times. In the work of Thucydides the two levels, interpersonal and interstate, are more clearly drawn. The presence of Homeric principles in the classical times showed that the aristocratic values had been adopted and integrated into the city-state life.

(i) 1.32.1: The Corcyraeans admit that they rendered no services to Athens in the past. They had tried to keep themselves free from alliance thus far, but now, threatened by Corinth and feeling isolated, they decide to seek the alliance of Athens. Since they had not rendered any services to Athens in the past, they recognized that they were at a disadvantage, μήτε εὐεργεσίας μεγάλης μήτε ξυμμαχίας προουφειλομένης. In their effort to sway the Athenians in favor of an alliance with Corcyra, the Corcyraeans pointed out that if Athens helped them in this emergency, she would win their future gratitude. This was such a key idea in their argument that they returned to it repeatedly. This repetition signifies the importance of *euergesia* in the Greek world: καὶ τὴν χάριν βέβαιον ἔξουσιν Thuc. 1.32.1; ὡς ἂν μάλιστα μετ' ἀεμνήστου μαρτυρίου τὴν χάριν καταθήσεσθε Thuc. 1.33.1;

(8) *Od.* 16.418-33, Penelope chides Antinous for devising the death of Telemachus. She calls him wicked (κακομήχανον) and madman (μάργον) and reminds him that Odysseus had saved his father from the Thesprotians, who wanted to kill him. How does Antinous repay that service? By consuming Odysseus' property, wooing his wife, and plotting to slay Odysseus' son. Similarly, Achilles becomes furious with Agamemnon who wants to deprive him of his prize, and vows not to risk his life again for that ungrateful king, *Il.* 1.148.171. In this case the key word is not εὐεργεσία but τιμή.

εἰ ἦν ὑμεῖς ἄν πρὸ πολλῶν χρημάτων καὶ χάριτος ἐτιμήσασθε δύναμιν
Thuc. 1.33.2; οἷς δὲ ἐπαμυνεῖτε χάριν Thuc. 1.33.2.

(ii) 1.40.5: The Corinthians who desired to avert an alliance between Athens and Corcyra argued against it with their cardinal argument the principle of *euergesia*. They reminded the Athenians that they had loaned them twenty ships when the Athenians were fighting the Aeginetans (before the Persian War, but whether before Marathon or after it is not clear) and that in the Samian War (440/39 B.C.) the Corinthians voted against the proposal to send aid to Samos when other members of the Peloponnesian League favored the idea. Now they demanded that the Athenians return the benefaction by not allying themselves with Corcyra. Corinthian past services, they said, were adequate according to Greek convention, ἰκανὰ κατὰ τοὺς Ἑλλήνων νόμους, to prevent the Athenians from an alliance with Corcyra (9). The first day the Athenians voted against an alliance with Corcyra, and there cannot be doubt that the absence of any past services on the part of Corcyra and the *euergesia* of the Corinthians must have affected their decision. The next day, however, the Athenians changed their mind. This switch did not invalidate the significance of *euergesia*, for Thuc. 1.44.2 explained that the decision was due entirely to expediency (10).

(iii) 1.136.1: The Corcyraean emphasis upon *euergesia* stands in stark contrast to the selfish refusal of the Corcyraeans to lend a helping hand to the rest of the Greeks during the Persian

(9) Thuc. 1.41.1-2; Hdt. 6.89; 92; GOMME, HCT 1.174-75; A. ANDREWES, BSA, 37 (1936-37) 1-7. As GOMME remarked, the Corinthians said nothing of their service to Athens when they dissuaded the Lacedaemonians from restoring Hippias, especially since that act helped Cleisthenes, Hdt. 5.91-93.

(10) This debate in the Athenian *ecclesia* bears some similarity to the Mytilenaeen debate. Unfortunately, Thuc. does not say here who the main speakers were, whereas in the Mytilenaeen debate he does. Who caused the Athenians to have a change of mind remains a mystery. Naturally, Pericles was the dominant figure during this period, but the possibility of Cleon as the champion of a Corcyraean alliance cannot be excluded. He could not have been against such an alliance.

Wars and equally so to their stand toward Themistocles. Fleeing for his life (probably in the latter part of the 470's B.C.) Themistocles escaped to Corcyra, whose *euergētēs* he was. Themistocles probably relied on the right of *asylia* which undoubtedly had been decreed to him as their benefactor. But this special honor availed him of nothing. The Corcyraeans, fearing that they might incur the displeasure of the Athenians, bade him to leave their land. Thucydides, who evidently did not like the Corcyraeans, contrasts in the next chapter the Corcyraean attitude to that of the Molossian Admetus (Thuc. 1.137.1), who was asked by the Athenians to deliver Themistocles to them but refused⁽¹¹⁾. With Admetus' aid, Themistocles ended up in Persia where he made claims of *euergesia* from Artaxerxes for kindnesses rendered to Xerxes, καί μοι εὐεργεσία ὀφείλεται, Thuc. 1.137.4⁽¹²⁾. Unlike the Corcyraeans, Artaxerxes offered Themistocles hospitality and protection.

(iv) 2.40.4: Pericles boasted in the *Funeral Oration* that the Athenians stood far above the rest of the Greeks in respect to *euergesia* since they acquired friends not by receiving kindnesses but by conferring them upon others, οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὖ, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες κτώμεθα τοὺς φίλους. For he who confers a favor is a firmer friend, he said, whereas he who owes it, owes a debt, βεβαιότερος δὲ ὁ δράσας τὴν χάριν ... ὁ δὲ ἀντοφείλων ἀμβλύτερος, εἰδὼς οὐκ ἔς χάριν, ἀλλ' ἐς ὀφείλημα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀποδώσων 2.40.4.

(v) 3.47.3: When the Athenians, moved ὑπ' ὀργῆς, decided to put the Mytilenaeans to the sword, Diodotus argued against this bloody (ᾠμόν) decree. An essential theme in his argument was that the destruction of the Mytilenaeans would be tanta-

(11) For some of the problems connected with this passage see Diod. 11.56; C. Nepos, *Them.* 8.4; *Schol. in Thuc.* 1.136.2; *Schol. Aelius Arist.* 4.233.17; GOMME, HCT 1, 438-439; R.J. LENARDON, *The Saga of Themistocles* (London, 1978) 126-31; LENARDON, *Historia*, 8 (1959) 36 n. 68; A.J. POLNIECKI, *The Life of Themistocles* (McGill-Queens University Press, 1975) 38, 40, 42.

(12) For the nature of kindness Hdt. 8.75; 108-110; Plut. *Them.* 28.1-2; Diod. 11.56.8; FGH 70, F 190-91; Plut. *Arist.* 9.5-6; C. Nepos, *Them.* 5.1-2; 9.3; Diod. 11.19.5; Justin, 2.13.3-7.

mount to the destruction of their *euergetas*, an atrocious act in the eyes of the Greeks. The Mytilenaeen *demos*, according to Diodotus, had helped the Athenians in the revolt, and to be put to the sword now would constitute an unjust act, εἰ δὲ διαφθερεῖτε τὸν δῆμον τὸν Μυτιληναίων, ὃς ... παρέδωκεν [ὑμῖν] τὴν πόλιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀδικήσετε τοὺς εὐεργέτας κτείνοντες. Moreover, Diodotus embraced the Periclean ideal by stating that it would be better for the Athenians to suffer an injustice rather than inflict a cruel penalty, however justly, upon others (Thuc. 3.47.5).

(vi) 2.27.2; 4.56.2: The Lacedaemonians also acted motivated by the sense of *euergesia*, while at other times they were criticized for violating it. Just prior to the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans settled the Aeginetans (expelled by the Athenians) in the territory of Thyrea. They did so not only because the Aeginetans were their friends, but also because the Aeginetans had helped them at the time of the earthquake (in 464 B.C.) and the subsequent revolt of the helots, ὅτι σφῶν εὐεργέται ἦσαν... — διὰ τὰς... εὐεργεσίας...

(vii) 3.55.3: At the capitulation of Plataea in 427 B.C. the Plataeans argued in vain in defense of the principle of *euergesia*. They reminded the Spartans that it was the Spartans themselves who had suggested a Plataean alliance with Athens. Since the Athenians were kind enough to receive them when the Spartans rejected them, it would not be just to abandon the Athenian alliance, especially when they had profited from it, εὔπαθόν τις. Furthermore, the Plataeans dwelt repeatedly on their many *euergeσίας* to Sparta. They had helped the Spartans and the rest of the Greeks during the Persian Wars, and they had also sent aid to Sparta at the time of the earthquake (Thuc. 3.54.5; 3.56.4-5; 3.57.1). Therefore, they concluded, they were entitled to a requital and appealed to the Lacedaemonians to spare them

(13) There is a great deal of literature on the question of the *demos'* guilt or innocence. See one of the latest papers by H.D. WESTLAKE, *Historia*, 25 (1976) 429-440. I will deal with this question in a forthcoming paper.

in the name of these past benefactions (Thuc. 3.58.1; 3.58.3; 3.59.1).

(viii) 3.63.3: The Thebans argued against mercy for the Plataeans, but they did not dispute the validity of the principle of *euergesia*. They simply criticized the Plataeans for the violation of other, equally important, commonly recognized panhellenic usages (Thuc. 3.63.4).

(ix) 4.11.4: Brasidas urged the Spartan allies at Pylos not to spare their ships but to run them aground, if necessary, in order to get ashore and get possession of Pylos. The allies ought to sacrifice their ships, he said, in return for the many favors they had received from Sparta in the past, ἀντὶ μεγάλων εὐεργεσιῶν.

(x) 7.86.1: Gylippus wanted to save Nicias, at the collapse of the Sicilian expedition, because Nicias had been friendly to Sparta and had also proposed the release of the Spartans captured at Pylos (5.16.1).

It is evident from the above references to *euergesia* that the Greeks considered it an important concept in their interstate contacts. Thucydides himself espoused the principle of *euergesia*. A reason for his dislike of the Corcyraeans was their cowardly attitude toward Themistocles, whom Thucydides praises highly (Thuc. 1.138.3). Furthermore, Thucydides was in agreement with the Periclean ideals as expressed in the *Funeral Oration*, while in the Mytilenaeon debate he favored the position of Diodotus. Finally, in Nicias' case Thucydides does not seem to think that Gylippus' concern for Nicias was hypocritical.

(14) Another reason must have been political. Thyrea, after all, is the border country between Argolis and Laconia, and the Spartans certainly tried to kill several birds with one stone by placing the Aeginetans between Argos and Laconia. Whatever the reasons, however, they do not negate the principle which even Thuc. accepts. See also GOMME, HCT, 2, 87-88.

(15) For πολιτείας μετέλαβεν Dem. 59.104-06; Isocr. 12.94; Lys. 23.2; GOMME, HCT 2, 339-40.

III

This quick survey of the use of the concept of *euergesia* by Herodotus and Thucydides demonstrates that there were traditional assumptions which were expected to affect the conduct of the Greek city-states in their mutual relations. It goes without saying that these assumptions were not always acted on, but occasional infractions do not detract from the validity of the principles. Even in cases where the Greeks failed to respect the principle of *euergesia*, they sought to justify their disregard of it by invoking other, equally weighty, moral reasons. The attitude of the Greeks in the Fifth Century toward the principle of *euergesia* is indicative of the importance the Greeks attached to their traditional values. Furthermore, whenever infractions of *euergesia* were observed, the Greeks criticized the violators, regardless of the cause of the infractions.