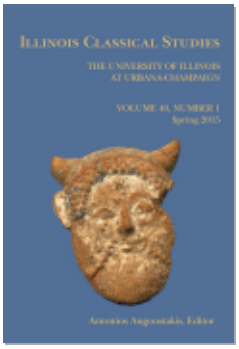
"Honor" in Rhodes: Dio Chrysostom's Thirty-First *Oration*



C. Bailey

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"Honor" in Rhodes: Dio Chrysostom's Thirty-First *Oration*

C. BAILEY

This article argues that Dio Chrysostom's thirty-first *Oration* offers a commentary on the condition of the Greek *polis* in a Roman world. Dio addresses the practice of re-using statues in order to show the role that the past plays in contemporary constructions of identity. Statues honoring past benefactors enable present citizens, and therefore Rhodes, to compete with those past benefactors and to live up to their full potential. Dio shows that it is a failure to contend with past benefactors that threatens the ability of the *polis* to be a *polis*.

Dio Chysostom's thirty-first *Oration*, the *Rhodian*, presents an image of a *polis* in danger of ruin in the first century CE.[1] Dio makes it clear, however, that the source of that danger was not the subjection of the Greek city to Roman rule, but rather the conduct of the city itself and its citizens. At the same time, Dio shows that the past continued to play an important role in the present and that the present *polis* owed a responsibility and a duty to the past and the future. The oration, then, shows that the position of the *polis* within the Roman Empire was not an irrelevant question for the Greeks of the first century CE. That is, the *Rhodian Oration* is not simply a showpiece or an encomium of the past and the *polis* but rather an assessment of the continuing relevance of the *polis* in a Roman world.[2] Although Dio focuses on Rhodes and a particular practice of the Rhodians, I will argue that Dio uses Rhodes to comment on the actual and potential conditions of the *polis* more broadly.

The premise of the speech, that new benefactors are being honored with "recycled" statues, is specific to Rhodes, but we know that such reuse was taking

1. The Greek text and translation are drawn from Cohoon's and Crosby's (1940) Loeb edition of Dio Chrysostom. I would like to express my thanks to the anonymous reviewers at *ICS* and to all those who read early versions of this article and offered comments, particularly J. Bode and T. Deline.

2. Zuiderhoek (2008) offers a brief but informative discussion of the functioning of the *polis* in the imperial period. Cf. also Gleason (2006) and Rogers (1992).

place in other Greek cities.[3] The reuse of statues in Rhodes is presented as an active destruction of the memory of the past (and of the past itself) which threatens the existence of Rhodes and of the *polis* more profoundly than Roman rule and Roman "freedom" ever could: the *polis* cannot exist without its past. Dio suggests that if Rhodes (and other *poleis*) remembers its own past by upholding the value of the commemorative statues, by using the *Pax Romana* to uphold the honorary capital of past benefactors, it can become a genuine *polis*. Certainly, Roman rule forced a self-assessment on each *polis*. The fiercely individual and isolated pursuit of Greekness on the *polis* level was no longer possible in the broader world of the Roman Empire, but Dio suggests that the citizens must initiate this reassessment keeping in mind the virtues of the *polis* represented in honorary statues. Far from castigating Roman rule and the loss of Greek independence, Dio suggests that Roman rule could allow and even encourage the continuity of the *polis* if the citizens conducted themselves appropriately. Just as Achaea could in some ways exist as a single entity only when held together by Roman power, so too did the individual *polis* need Roman rule to flourish.[4]

This is not to suggest, however, that Dio's response to the realities of Roman rule was entirely positive. Like Plutarch and Aristides, Dio was very much aware of the weight of Rome.[5] At the same time, and again like Plutarch and Aristides, Dio was also aware that the relationship between *polis* and empire, between Greece and Rome, was far from straightforward. Roman rule necessitated changes in the conception of the *polis*, but so did the conduct of the citizens themselves.[6] Peter Perry has noted that Dio's *Olympian Oration* created a parallel between the Greece and Rome of his day and Laertes and the suitors in Homer's *Odyssey.* Like Laertes, Greece has become a "shabby, neglected slave" so that Rome, like the suitors, can live in luxury.[7] The parallel, however, is not precise: whereas Laertes' rehabilitation is impossible with the continued presence of the suitors, Greece's rehabilitation is possible and can even be supported by the continued presence of Rome if the citizens recognize the true value and role of the Classical past. In addition, it is not simply a matter of Greece having "become" shabby. Dio suggests that Greece has *made* herself a

3. Cf. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 37.40 (Favorinus), Paus. 2.17.3, Cic. *Att.* 6.1.26, Philo *Leg.* 20; Plin. *Nat.* 35.24, Plut. *Ant.* 60, Dio Cass. 59.28 and 63.11, *IKEph* 25.5–28.

4. Cf. Whitmarsh (2001) 23, Wiater (2011) 85, Borg (2011) 234.

5. E.g., Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12, 17, 21, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43; Plut. *Prae. ger. reip*. 813E; Aristid. *Or*. 26. Cf., also, De Blois (2004) and Pernot (2008). Desideri (1978) 111–13 has noted a critical tone towards Rome in this and other speeches, but also that "della decadenza non viene attribuita la responsabilità ai Romani: la crisi è sempre una crisi interna."

6. Desideri (1978) 115.

7. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 12; Perry (2007) 482–84.

"shabby, neglected slave." The same may be said of the *Rhodian*: the citizens bear as much responsibility for the changed condition of their *polis* as Rome does.[8] The citizens encourage the decline of the *polis* by confusing civic power with civic virtue, by identifying the greatness of their city with the quantity of contemporary benefactors. Dio advises the Rhodians in this confused state that civic virtue and the *polis* itself may be recovered by recalling the virtues of the past, preserved by the honorary statues of past citizens and benefactors. So long as the statues remain as testimonies to the virtue of the past *polis*, the city can remain a *polis*. The *Pax Romana* permits the continuity of the *polis*, provided that the *polis* retains a memory of the virtues of its past self and its past citizens.

Dio warns that honoring contemporary benefactors with reused statues and inscriptions—i.e., reusing the monuments of ancient benefactors to expeditiously "honor" contemporary benefactors—threatens the integrity and the existence of the *polis* in a number of related ways. The *polis* undermines itself, endangering its status as a *polis* in the present and in the future, besides inculcating servility in place of democracy.[9] Perhaps most importantly, the reuse of statues also undermines and even negates energetic competition among the elite. While a benefactor could expect an immediate return on his investment in the form of civic honors and increased personal status, this honor ultimately accrued to his family. He established himself as a model for his contemporaries to emulate, as many inscriptions indicate, but he also became a model for his own descendants to contend with, rival, and surpass. A central element of this competition is that it is a continuous activity, connecting past, present, and future in an ongoing process of creation, accumulation, and demonstration of familial status and honor, parallel to Karl Hölkeskamp's model of honorary capital among Roman aristocrats in the third and second centuries BCE.[10] In both cases, equaling and emulating past citizens alone is not enough: if the *polis* is to succeed as a *polis*, it must attempt to surpass the past. While the medium of the competition in republican Rome and first century Rhodes is obviously distinct—warfare and military glory in republican Rome, civic beneficence in Dio's Rhodes—their purposes and scopes are virtually identical. The competition benefits the state as well as the individual benefactor and his or her family. The nominal phrase "Alexander of Aphrodisias" does serve to distinguish between Alexanders, and in the same way Opramoas of Rhodiapolis or Herodes Atticus ensure that we

8. Desideri (1978) 110–16 offers a brief interpretation of the discourse, with emphasis on the role of the privileged classes in the practice of reusing statues (e.g., 116). It will become clear in what follows that the lower classes, particularly the Assembly, also bear some responsibility.

9. Cf. Desideri (1978) 111.

10. Hölkeskamp (1993).

know about which individual we are speaking. But, even as Opramoas won honor and repute for himself, he also enhanced the fame, prominence, and success of Rhodiapolis and Lycia. The status of the individual enhances or diminishes the status of the *polis*. Thus, the reuse of older statues may well save the *polis* in terms of immediate financial expense, but it costs the individual honorand his reputation, it denies his family's ancestral reputation, and it strips the *polis* itself of its famous citizens of the past. If the *polis* is the citizens,[11] the *polis* then denies itself its own existence.

Benefactions, properly made, are lasting and continual reminders to the *polis* of the euergetist's status and generosity; their statues become tangible representations of the thriving of the *polis*, ensuring that the family as well as other citizens have a model to emulate and surpass.[12] The commemoration of past benefactors and the continuation of the memory of those same benefactors in the present indicate a *polis* that is thriving as the memories become tangible, lasting representations of the positive and successful competition among local and regional aristocrats and benefactors.[13] The statues and inscriptions which portray the survival of the *polis* of the past testify to the virtue of the *polis* in the present, so that their preservation is necessary, alongside honors for current benefactors, if the *polis* is to continue to thrive or even simply to continue.

To return to Rhodes specifically, Dio suggests, not without some familiar exaggeration, that that city alone remains as an example of a genuine *polis* of high standing in the Greek world, and that others (particularly Athens, Sparta, and Corinth) have disgraced "themselves by doing the sort of things of which you hear and in every way blotting out their ancient glory."[14] Their erasures of their own past have come about through a practice similar to that in which the Rhodians are currently engaged. In these cities, too, un-inscribed statues have been reused to honor contemporary benefactors and there has been a general failure to emulate worthy objects of competition in the past.[15] At first glance, Dio suggests, perhaps catering to the ego of his audience, that this foreign practice is actually worse than re-inscribing statues. An un-inscribed statue suggests a benefactor or hero so well known that there was no need to identify him; such a statue would have been immediately recognizable as a god or

11. Thuc. 7.77.7; Arist. [*Oec.*] 1343a10; Hansen (1993) 8–9; (2006) 56–61; Millar (1993) 246–247.

12. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.14, 71, 74–77, 94.

13. Cf. Flower (2006) 116, where the creation of memory space is seen as a Romano-centric activity, spreading outward from Rome.

14. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.158 makes reference to the reuse of statues and implicit reference to gladiatorial games. Cf. *Or.* 31.50, 62–64, 101–107, as well as Borg (2011) 224–26.

15. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.92.

hero. The honorand's generosity toward the *polis* in question had been so great that public memory immediately associated the statue with him. Only after the reason for the statue has been forgotten is the evidence overwritten. A benefactor's honor, like that of his family, is eroded over time and is recognized only by his contemporaries, the immediate beneficiaries; it holds no value beyond the benefactor's own lifetime, despite the supposed permanence of the statues and honors.[16] Because the un-inscribed statues honor gods and heroes, founders and patrons on a massive scale, reusing these statues strikes at the very origins of the *polis*.

Dio does suggest that Rhodes is somewhat better for not using un-inscribed statues, but this sop to Rhodian ego is short-lived. While Athens reuses a statue when its honorand has been forgotten, Rhodes is actively destroying the memory of the honorand, denying the reputation and status that were seen as well deserved: the Rhodians destroy the inscription so that the identity may be forgotten. The reuse of statues thus undermines the philotimaic nature of euergetism by denying any permanent value to public generosity. All benefactions, be they the suspect cash distributions or the more acceptable building constructions, become equal as they are valued and recognized only for a moment, but not *es aei*.[17] Such statues might as well be clay, since stone statues are no longer guarantors of lasting status.[18] Moreover, the practice of reusing statues suggests that citizens of the past were mistaken in offering permanent honors to the original recipient. Rhodes then destroys all models of competition in the past and denies any possible value of the past. It also destroys the reputation of the citizens of the past.

A desire for expediency and, perhaps, a misunderstanding of efficiency have brought all of this about, not to mention the personal desire for more honors, statues, and gifts.[19] The reciprocal relationship between the *polis* and the elite has been sacrificed in the name of immediate recognition of even the slightest benefaction. Public honors are thus devalued, as citizens hasten to honor benefactors quickly and cheaply in the hopes of encouraging other benefactors to demonstrate their generosity. The quality of the benefactions has consequently declined, as each member of the elite has been and continues to be compelled to provide a stream of gifts that are of only immediate value to the commons.[20] The aristocratic competition, which should strengthen the *polis*, becomes a competition for immediate

16. Cf. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.9, 27, 44, 78, 52–53.
17. Cf. Plut. *Prae. ger. reip.* 821F; *IKEph* 1491.14–18.
18. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.151–52.
19. Cf. Borg (2011) 224–26.
20. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.41, 6–65, 75, 93–94, 105–8, 138.

praise, a destructive rather than a constructive competition. The benefactors gain at best a temporary recognition, and the poor "some kind of *dianome*,"[21] but the *polis* as a whole gains nothing. The euergetic institution, which supports a flourishing *polis*, is collapsing as individual, immediate interests take precedence over all other concerns. Rhodes then risks becoming simply a city, Aristotle's collection of people living together, rather than a *polis*.[22] Collectively, Rhodes has forgotten the advice of the Lycian Hippolytus to his son Glaucus: that an aristocrat should always be the best and bring honor to his ancestors.[23] When the competition for first place fails on a local level, Dio suggests, it also fails on an inter-*polis* level: Rhodes cannot now claim prominence among even the Greeks of the first century, let alone Athens and Sparta in the fifth century BCE, or Rhodes itself in the second century BCE. For, like Homer's men of modern times, two of whom could not lift Hector's boulder, Dio's modern "Greeks" are not worthy comparisons.[24] Indeed, they cannot be, since they have turned away from their ancestors. Rhodes, then, can no longer be Rhodes.

If Rhodes, or any other *polis* wishes to maintain a preeminent Greek position, it can do so only through competition with the past. Just as Diomedes is consistently concerned to rival and surpass Tydeus,[25] so too must Rhodes compete with the Athens of Miltiades and Cimon, and, even more effectively, with the Rhodes which opposed Mithridates, or the Rhodes which refused a general cancellation of debts in 30 BCE.[26] This is still possible, but only through a cultivation of appropriate competition. The present enthusiasm for ignoring and destroying the past threatens such a productive rivalry. Indeed, Rhodes has

21. Plin. *Ep*. 10.116–17.

22. Arist. *Pol*. 1261a24–27, 1280a34-b12.

23. Hom. *Il*. 6.208–9, 444–46. Cf. Zuiderhoek (2009) 123–24; Kokkinia (2000) 28 VB 4–10: αὐτός τε Ὀπραμόας ἐκ πρώ|της ἡλικίας ζηλωτὴς τῶν [κ]α[λ]λίστων | ἐπιτηδευμάτων γενόμενο̣[ς] κ̣αὶ σωφρο|σύνην καὶ παιδείαν καὶ πᾶσαν [ἀ]ρ̣ετὴν | ἀσκήσας, τοῖς προγονικοῖς ἀγα[θοῖ]ς ἀ|μιλλᾶται καὶ τῇ μὲν πατρίδι πο̣λ̣[λ]ὰ̣ς | καὶ διηνεκεῖς εὐεργεσίας ἐπιδέδ[εικ]τα[ι] ("Opramos himself, pursuing from the earliest stage of his life the best habits, and cultivating *sophrosyne* and *paideia* and every virtue, contends with his noble ancestors and displays much continuous euergetism to his fatherland").

24. Hom. *Il*. 7.263–72; Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.19–20, 41, 50.

25. Hom. *Il*. 4.364–18.

26. Rhodian support for Rome: Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.113; cf. also App. *Syr*. 22 and 25, *Mith*. 24–26 and 61, *B. Ciu.* 4.60–61 and 65–74, in addition to Rhodes' involvement in Rome's Macedonian Wars. Rhodes' refusal of Octavian's cancellation of debts: Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.66–68. Although Dio does not specifically dismiss competition in military successes, we should keep in mind Plutarch's advice that reminding the commons of and encouraging them to emulate Marathon, Thermopylae, or Salamis is inadvisable and dangerous (Plut. *Prae. ger. reip*. 814A).

actively undermined its chances in this competition by pillaging itself because the citizens fail to realize that the past is a part of the present.[27] Since the competition for preeminence among *poleis*, as among individual aristocrats, is one among contemporary *poleis* and *poleis* of the past, the physical, public memory, the testimonia of benefactors, the honorary capital of their families, must be visible and tangible in order to provide something to emulate. Until recently, those testimonia had remained in Rhodes: the island and *polis* had been untouched by Roman art collectors, who relocated statues (and larger monuments) from most *poleis* to Rome, depriving the original *poleis* of the civic memories contained therein. Even under Nero, Dio notes, Rhodes had remained free of the worst of these depredations; Rhodes retained the public memories that would enable a productive competition, even as other cities saw their public memories and works of art relocated to Rome. Rhodes alone survived Nero's pillaging.[28] Now, however, Rhodes is pillaging itself, destroying ancient testimonia in order to provide immediate "honors" for lesser "benefactors," denying the opportunities that Rome has left it. In doing so, the city emulates the past, insofar as it dedicates statues, but it does not compete with the past. The city exercises its ability to decree honors, but does not encourage the civic virtues that should be embodied in those honors. The past of the *polis* is thereby destroyed, threatening the present and future by undermining the eternal nature of honors for benefactors. "Honors" are deprived of any real meaning, leaving the elite to a degraded (and degrading) scramble for immediate recognition from which there can be virtually no escape. By destroying their own competitors of the past, the Rhodians are also threatening the chances of later Rhodians who will themselves lack testimonia of the great achievements of the past and true benefactors. They will have only the lesser benefactors of Dio's Rhodes to emulate, and Rhodes will be lost.

Eternal honors were voted to benefactors precisely to encourage others to emulate them. As statues are reused for the sake of expediency, the value of the honor represented in the statues declines; even the honor of a new statue declines. Drawing on athletic agonistic competitions, perhaps the most applicable comparison for euergetists, Dio argues that debasement of the statues must lead to a decline in the value of the euergetic culture of the *polis*, and a corresponding

27. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.148–52.

28. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 151. Cf. Plin. *HN* 34.62 and 35.105, 127, 131, 132, 136, 139, 144, where Pliny describes paintings relocated to Rome, and *HN* 33.155 and 34.37, 63, 140–41, where he notes works of art still in Rhodes. Tac. *Ann.* 16.23 notes the attempted theft of statues from Pergamum by Nero's freedman Acratus.

decline of the *polis* itself. The crowns and inscriptions that mark the victors in the Panhellenic games encourage long and dedicated training, and even death. The loss of either would result in a decline of the games and in the quality of the competitors: as the crown becomes less valuable, the readiness of competitors to endure extensive training necessarily declines as well. In the same way, the loss of statues and inscriptions, or rather their eternity, will result in a decline of the *polis* and in the quality of its benefactors.[29] The ephemeral honor of an expeditiously erected statue will only encourage lesser gifts, as the honorary capital of a true benefactor is momentarily increased, but actually decreases over time. The devaluation of the statues, in other words, will result in devalued gifts.[30] Benefactors will expend their resources on spectacles that will be more visibly and more properly rewarded, but which will not support or encourage civic values. The provision of gladiatorial games springs to mind, the Athenian enthusiasm for which Dio strongly censures,[31] to say nothing of the well-known criticisms of Roman philosophers: these are benefactions which earn momentary popularity, but which require constant renewal.[32] Such gifts result in the degradation of the philotimaic relationship between *polis* and benefactor, making it little more than a commercial relationship. Rhodes will be no different from the other "Greeks" of the first century; worse, it will no longer be Rhodes and Rhodian patrons will seek out more worthy beneficiaries.

By destroying the honors of their past benefactors and the memory of them, the Rhodians are not simply removing the impetus and ability for continuing competition, though. The practice actively encourages the withdrawal of true benefactors, for, Dio argues, it is an impious practice, and a true benefactor would not cultivate a relationship with an impious *polis*. Public statues offer a heroization of the individuals commemorated, so that defacing the statue by re-inscribing its base should be comparable to damaging a statue of Zeus or to temple-robbing.[33] The Rhodian practice of re-inscribing statues then becomes much worse than the Athenian practice of re-identifying un-inscribed statues.[34] More tellingly, and perhaps more meaningfully for his audience, Dio cites a practice from classical Athens. When convicted of a capital crime, a citizen's name was removed from the list of citizens, rendering him a foreigner, and no longer a member of the *polis*. The erasure does not simply deny the criminal's citizenship for the future. It also denies his past as a citizen, to say nothing of

29. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.2–22, 110–11, 126–27.
30. See below, pp. 54–56.
31. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31. 121–22.
32. E.g., Sen. *Ep*. 7.1–5; Plin. *Ep*. 9.6.
33. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.80–93.
34. See above, pp. 48–49.

the accompanying shaming of the criminal's family.[35] Like *damnatio memoriae*, the Athenian law and the Rhodian reuse of statues highlight failure. Worse, the city denies any connection or obligation to the benefactor whose statue is so treated, depriving the family of status as well. The reuse of statues in Rhodes, then, offers a patron a treatment similar to that received by the worst sorts of criminals, rendering his statue not an honor, but a shameful dishonor in the waiting. For the honor accruing to a benefactor is temporary and fleeting, lasting only as long as the private memory of the individual, as long as there remain citizens who will oppose the reassignment of public honors.

The fault or crime is not solely of the common, voting "citizens" and the "*polis*," though. Dio's allusion to the Athenian law implies a strong criticism of current benefactors who would accept reused honors: they are as base and as ephemeral as their "benefactions," guilty in many ways of "selling out" the *polis* and the past. The *polis* becomes increasingly simply an association of cohabitants, as "citizens" greedy for continuous gifts and entertainments offer up simulacra of true honors to imposters concerned only with immediate rather than lasting respect, or worse, who confuse immediate acclamation for enduring and true respect. Such benefactors purchase their honors at the expense of the prosperous and flourishing *polis* of the past. The inhabitants of such a city fail utterly in their duty to their past, neglecting or refusing to recall the contributions of their ancestors to their *polis*.[36] Those benefactors who do accept such recycled honors fail to realize that they are depriving their ancestors of lasting honor in exchange for a momentary honor. A recycled statue conveys nothing of any value.[37]

The impiety of the practice, however, functions on another level, since the citizens themselves may not even be able to oppose the reassignment of a statue. The entire city votes on honors (now, simulacra of honors) to benefactors (now, imposters). But, the *strategos* alone is responsible for the erection of a statue, which he does by selecting the statue to be reused:

> ὁ γὰρ στρατηγὸς ὃν ἂν αὐτῷ φανῇ τῶν ἀνακειμένων τούτων ἀνδριάντων ἀποδείκνυσιν· εἶτα τῆς μὲν πρότερον οὔσης ἐπιγραφῆς ἀναιρεθείσης, ἑτέρου δ᾽ ὀνόματος ἐγχαραχθέντος, πέρας ἔχει τὸ τῆς τιμῆς. (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.9)[38]

35. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.84–85; cf. Xen. *Hell*. 2.3.51–56: Critias struck Theramenes' name from the list of 3,000 citizens so that the Thirty could safely and arbitrarily execute him; removal from the list constituted a loss of citizenship. Dio, however, uses the example more generally: a citizen condemned to death is first removed from the list of citizens, becoming in effect a foreigner with all trace of his past association with the city denied.

36. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.109, 134–37, 149–50.

37. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.44.

38. Cf. 31.53, 71, 133–135, 153.

> Your chief magistrate . . . merely points his finger at the first statue that meets his eyes of those which have already been dedicated, and then, after the inscription which was previously on it has been removed and another name engraved, the business of honoring is finished.

The democratic, cooperative element, central to the *polis* and to the conferral of lasting honors and respect, is discredited and ignored at the whim of a single individual. Whereas the entire *polis* of earlier, better citizens deemed certain individuals worthy of permanent and lasting honor, a single individual is now able to overturn that judgment. It is one thing for the citizens to deny another's citizenship after conviction of a crime, but quite another for an individual to undo arbitrarily a decision of those same citizens.[39] Thus, a single individual, who behaves with almost tyrannical authority, undoes the decisions of the entire polis.[40] The *polis*, again, fractures into an alliance of inhabitants rather than a community of citizens.

Even as the reassignment and re-inscription of honorary statues threatens and destroys public memory, however, the process creates new, lesser memories for later emulation. Genuine honors and memory worthy of emulation are replaced by passing honors and memory unworthy of emulation. The "benefactors" who receive statues in Rhodes now have not served with *philotimia*, but merely adequately (though Dio suggests that even adequacy is no longer a requirement for honors in Rhodes).[41] This replacement has obvious implications for the economic, social, and cultural health of Rhodes: the insults to genuine benefactors will inevitably diminish the importance of euergetism as an elite practice in the city. The political consequences loom large as well. The value of honors in Rhodes will naturally decline as the quality of the recipients tarnishes the honors themselves, and as the sheer number of honorands proliferates. The premise behind a reciprocal euergetic relationship is denied: base benefactions will only beget baser benefactions. Rhodes is thus selling itself, but at an ever greater discount. The *polis* then faces a loss of itself and its Greekness. Tim Whitmarsh has noted that we cannot properly speak of Greekness or a Greek identity as a single, institutionalized thing. "Greek identity" or "Roman identity," or any identity, is an ongoing process of construction, assertion, and maintenance.[42] A

39. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.134.

40. The element of tyranny is enhanced by Dio's suggestion that reusing statues is akin to redistributing land (31.70). Cf. Suet. *Cal.* 27: "[Gaius] looked over the row of prisoners, without any regard for their individual records, and, from his position in the middle of the colonnade, announced that those 'between the bald-heads' were to be led away [for execution]."

41. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.40–44, 13; cf. 31.108.

42. Whitmarsh (2001) 36, 88, 90–130, 241, 295; cf. Flower (2006).

"Rhodian identity," then, is not static, and cannot derive simply from being in Rhodes. It is a creation built on the public and tangible memory represented by the honors voted to benefactors of the past and present. However, the continuing status of Rhodes and its identity cannot be assumed simply on the basis of its past reputation and identity.[43] Rhodes has continued the process of identity creation, but the resulting identity now rests on an unstable and unworthy foundation since public memory is manifestly impermanent, intangible, and all but forgotten.[44] Moreover, it is decidedly *not* a Greek identity, however that state should have been conceptualized and represented. The Rhodians may be the best of the remaining "Greek" *poleis*, but that does not make them truly Greek.[45]

To continue the process of identity-making and identity-asserting, Rhodes must recall and respect its own past as well as that of earlier Greek history: failure to do the latter results in an inability to do the former correctly or productively to say nothing of creating a *polis* for the future. Rhodes then fails in its duty to the past (that is, to itself as contemporary citizens fail to live up to the reputations of their ancestors), and in its duty to its benefactors. As the statues and honors are reused, the contributions of earlier benefactors are not simply obscured or forgotten: they are actively denied. The failure to preserve the past, and specifically the honors of the past, constitutes the destruction of the future. Dio urges the Rhodians to compare themselves not to the Greeks of the present, since there are none worthy of the name, but those of the past. Simple comparison is not enough, though. The past, he suggests, should be an active participant in the competition to be the best—it serves as the only standard to measure the "Greekness" of the present. The past, however, is not idealized simply by virtue of its antiquity. Just as an athlete would not choose as his model an unproven or outdated competitor, Dio suggests, the *polis* must select only those *poleis* of the past and present which are worthy of emulation, and only when they are worthy of emulation. The maintenance of public memories of benefactors is a fundamental prerequisite for constructive aristocratic competition, and a flourishing *polis*.[46] As with benefactors, Rhodes risks a diminution of itself if it continues to compare itself to contemporary *poleis*, or to past *poleis* simply because of their antiquity; in doing so, Rhodes facilitates and encourages its own decline, particularly if the inhabitants persist in their belief that being better than contemporary Greek cities is sufficient.[47]

43. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.159.
44. Spawforth (2011) 11–18.
45. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.19–20, 116–19, 158–61.
46. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.16–25, 77, 116–39, 159–65.
47. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.116–27.

Again, this decline threatens both the past and the present of the *polis*, bringing about the very dangers the fear of which encourages the dedication of so many "new" statues. Fear of losing new gifts and benefactions has led to the proliferation of lesser honors for lesser patrons. The greater honor and status a *polis* can offer to its benefactors, the greater the benefactor it can attract. The opposite, however, is equally true: the lesser the *polis*, the lesser the benefactors. An inability to attract high-level benefactors (on the order of, for example, Opramoas or his anonymous competitor in Lycia)[48] has consequences far beyond the loss of handouts and entertainments for the citizens: the *polis* itself faces not only destruction, but also obscurity; we might think of the intentionally unnamed city of the *Euboean Oration*, "practically the center of Greece" (*Or.* 7.1). It becomes indefinite and unknown, a condition which Rhodes itself faces in the *Rhodian Oration*. It is a city unknown beyond its inhabitants, forgotten by the rest of Greece, forgotten even by the descendants of its past and therefore unknowable to later generations. The *polis* faces a loss in the competition for first place among the *poleis*, but it also faces an inability to compete in that competition in that it does not even warrant notice.

At present, Dio says, Rhodes has not fallen so far, but it seems to be on its way down: the city remains sufficiently known to the rest of the Mediterranean, although it is recognized that Rhodes is cheating on its award of honors.[49] Dio emphasizes throughout the discourse that Rhodes remains seemingly high in the competition for pride of place among the Greek *poleis* and serves as a model for other *poleis* to emulate because of its worth, greatness, and continuing prosperity.[50] This pride of place, however, also ensures that outsiders pay closer attention to Rhodes for any sign of fault in its conduct. Such attention is to be expected in any contest, but the attention itself can be either positive or negative. Rhodes is currently receiving the wrong sort of attention:

> Ἐπίστασθε τοίνυν ὅτι μηδένα λανθάνει τὸ γιγνόμενον, ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι διαβόητον καὶ τῶν παρὰ πᾶσι θρυλουμένων, οὐ μόνον ἐπειδὴ λίαν κατακόρως καὶ ἀνέδην αὐτῷ κέχρηνταί τινες, ἀλλὰ ὅτι καὶ παρ᾽ ὑμῖν πράττεται. (Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.39)
>
> Understand that no one is unaware of what is going on, but that it is notorious and a subject of gossip among everyone, not only because some cities practice this [policy] to great excess and without restraint, but also because it appears among you.

48. Kokkinia (2000), Balland (1981) 185–224 and np. 67, Coulton (1987); cf. Mitchell (1990).

49. Rhodes remains "in truth a people of consequence and not utterly despised" (31.158), but it is becoming more and more notorious (31.2, 31–40, 135).

50. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.40, 62–65, 101–7.

No longer are outsiders looking to see "whether you appear to be at fault in any matter" (ἐάν τι δοκῆτε ἁμαρτάνειν, Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.40); outsiders *know* that Rhodes is erring greatly and are enjoying the fall (but even the knowledge that an envying strife is operating in other Greek cities is, of course, no cause for praise). Rhodes is earning for itself disgrace as it follows this practice, but even more so because it leads the practice.[51] The inhabitants must exercise vigilance and discretion to ensure that the method of rewarding current benefactors also contributes to the standing of past benefactors. Failure to do so threatens disgrace and eliminates any chance of Rhodes' continuation in the competition for first place. The *polis* requires the public memory and the honorary record of the city if it is to continue. Rhodes is left with no means of halting its decline save emulation of other *poleis* or heeding the unwanted and distasteful advice of a traveling philosopher.[52] If Rhodes is the leading *polis*, failure to halt its decline also threatens "Greekness."

Roman rule, however, has left Rhodes in a position to preserve both itself and Greece. One of the pillars upon which Rhodes claims pride of place among the Greeks is its current prosperity. Though Dio is often guilty of exaggeration, his consistent references to Rhodian prosperity lend credence to this claim.[53] Like Ephesus, whose treatment of deposits in the Temple of Artemis Dio regards as exemplary and contrasts with Rhodes' treatment of its honored benefactors,[54] Rhodes remains affluent and lacks the major expenses of the past. The peace brought by Rome ensures that the greatest expenditures of Hellenistic Rhodes, the fleet and defensive walls, are no longer necessary. Rome has reduced the actual costs of operation, as it were, to the city, which should allow more, not less, effort to be focused on the rewarding of benefactors. Roman rule should enable the *polis* to better itself and its citizens, by attending to the "moral and political force" of the Greek city, its "assemblies, sacred processions, religious rites, fortifications, jury service, . . . council" and benefactors.[55] Under Roman rule, the city is, or can be, more prosperous than ever, so that the reuse of statues is doubly shameful: it is impious and miserly in prosperous circumstances. The treatment of benefactors is made all the worse by the fact that even during the Roman civil wars, when Rhodes might have benefited from neglecting or even forgetting benefactors on the wrong side of the conflict, the Rhodians made a point of maintaining all honors and statues, regardless of political expediency.[56]

51. Above, pp. 49–51.

52. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.1–4, 124–25.

53. E.g., Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.66–69, 102–4. Dio's recollection of Rhodes' refusal of a remission of debts under Augustus is a suggestion that the past is the first competitor that Rhodes must rival.

54. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.65.

55. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.102; Desideri (1978) 115.

56. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.68.

The current commercialization of euergetism and the *polis* add to Rhodian shame by falsely implying that the imposter-benefactors of the present are more mindful of the *polis* than those of the past. In fact, the *polis* is at present in worse physical upkeep than it had been in the past. Whereas the city walls had to be constantly maintained in the past for the safety of the city, now "they are kept in shape in a leisurely fashion, a little at a time, and whenever a magistrate so desires."[57] Past benefactors demonstrated their concern for the *polis*; current and recent benefactors demonstrate their concern for themselves, and consider the needs of the *polis* only when there is immediate benefit for themselves. They thus exploit the peace and prosperity of Roman rule for private rather than public interest.

Such a misdirected focus threatens the identity of the *polis* as a whole. A *polis* in the Greek world grounded and enhanced its standing and reputation on the deeds and conduct of both its contemporary citizens and their ancestors, and on the past accomplishments of the *polis* as a whole. Athens' emphasis on the battles at Marathon and Salamis in order to claim equality first with Corinth and then with Sparta is perhaps the best example, but it is far from unique.[58] Herodotus also provides an instance of the opposite: the role of the Corinthians at Salamis was called into question as a means of challenging the claims of that *polis* to status among the fifth-century Greeks.[59] The destruction of honorary statues for no reason, let alone a good one, is a parallel questioning of reputation internally, but it has consequences externally as well. Rhodes is calling into question its own reputation and status by attempting to demonstrate its prosperity by the sheer number of present benefactors. In doing so, the citizens insult and diminish the past accomplishments of the *polis* and the deeds of earlier benefactors, leaving their *polis* without a demonstrable past, or a "collective remembrance,"[60] and so lacking in ability to confer genuine honor on new benefactors or past benefactors. Although Rhodian pride insists that its honors are worth more and sought after more than honors in contemporary cities, the reuse of statues diminishes that claim even more than the excessive number of statues.[61] Just as Rhodes offers images of honor to benefactors, it offers itself the image of a prospering *polis* when it is in fact failing as a *polis*.

Rhodes faces destruction because of the conduct of its own citizens. The reuse of statues destroys the ability of the city to recall its past, its citizens, and its

57. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.104.
58. Lendon (2007).
59. Hdt. 8.94; cf. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 37.7, 17–20.
60. Flower (2006) 3.
61. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.106.

benefactors. In doing so, it undermines its ability to attract worthy benefactors in the present, and reduces the chances of future citizens undertaking munificent roles on behalf of their fellow citizens. The energetic competition for eternal first place, which is necessary for a *polis* to flourish, has devolved into a scramble for immediate, ephemeral recognition, encouraged by both the benefactors and the citizens. The city, benefactors, and citizens collectively lose sight of the lasting value of the honorary capital embodied in a statue or honorific decree and its inherent value to the *polis* and citizens. In its place, they offer only a temporary image of that honor, and only a present moment for the *polis*. Roman rule and peace among the Greek cities, however, offer an opportunity for citizens, behaving as true citizens, to create a genuine *polis,* not to replace or revive the Classical *polis*, but to rival and perhaps surpass the Classical *polis*.

Although I have focused on Rhodes in this article, I have done so on the premise that Dio uses it in many ways as a sort of test case to say something about the *polis* more generally. The potential threat of Roman power is certainly present in the *Rhodian Oration*, but at the same time Roman rule frees the Greek *poleis* to compete with one another in terms of civic virtues and to compete with their own ancestors in being true *poleis* and true citizens. Dio suggests the Rhodians have confused the role of benefactions and honorary statues in a Roman-ruled Mediterranean. Quantity has come to be more important than quality. The more contemporary benefactors the *polis* can point to, the more prosperous it is, and the more deserving of continued Roman patronage and protection. If Rhodes can display many contemporary benefactors, Roman travelers, governors, and emperors will be more appreciative of their own statues in Rhodes and so more willing to support Rhodes' "freedom" and status within the empire. Paolo Desideri has noted that Dio's hypothetical interlocutor supports this belief, while Dio himself refutes it, arguing that voting statues to all passing Romans only enhances Rhodian servility.[62] Rhodes, in other words, has mistakenly assumed that its statues survived Nero's agents because of the quantity of Rhodian benefactors, when in fact they survived because of the quality of Rhodian benefactors and citizens. Currently, Rhodian activities threaten the value of all statues, past, present, and future, by calling into question the nature of the honors represented by the statues. This threat is rendered worse by the interlocutor's claim that the Romans still receive proper honors, since their statues are both new and not under threat of being reused. Such a twofold treatment of statues in Rhodes highlights the Rhodian failure, Dio suggests. By distinguishing between Romans and its own citizens, Rhodes

62. Desideri (1978) 114; Dio Chrys. *Or*. 31.43, 106.

advertises and enhances its servility, denying its ability to confer statues and honors on its own terms. The implication is that the Rhodian citizens require Roman permission to pass honorary decrees, denying its independent rights, and asserting and accepting its servility in the worst sort of sycophancy even as it acknowledges the shame in reusing statues. Far better that the Rhodians should recall and preserve their past, Dio urges, and the honor of their *polis*; far better that the Rhodians restore the eternal honors of their benefactors and recognize that past, present, and future benefactors, competing with one another, are far more able to defend the status, identity, and independence of Rhodes than Roman power can. That is, Rhodes' ability to celebrate its religious festivals and processions, to hold its assembly and council meetings, and to vote on honorary decrees is based on the reputation of Rhodes as embodied in its past and present, not on Roman authority.[63]

Roman rule is not incompatible with the ideals of the Greek *polis* as a community of citizens: it may actually allow the Greek *polis* to reach its potential. The *polis* is no longer threatened by foreign conquest, but faces the very real threat of destruction all the same. An unruly *polis* must face the possibility of Roman retaliation and force, a point which Dio also suggests in the *Tarsian* and *Alexandrian Discourses*. The *polis* and citizens themselves, however, will provoke such retaliation. It is within the power of the *polis* to ensure its survival by viewing the past not as a source of escape or even a model for copying, but rather as an active participant in a competition among *poleis*. The Roman peace ensures that this competition can focus on the virtues of citizens and *poleis* as such: citizens competing with one another for first place in *being* citizens, and the *poleis* competing with one another in terms of the status of their citizens and their benefactors. Individually, the citizens of a Greek city must themselves be vigilant of their own moral conduct and focus their competition on appropriate models which the past can provide if citizens and *poleis* recognize the past as a competitor with themselves. The Roman peace and the empire allow citizens to assert and preserve their character as citizens and the character of the *polis* in the past, present, and future.

MacEwan University baileyc26@macewan.ca

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