How to define votive practice?

In the field of religious studies a vast amount of literature has been written on the subjects of sacrifice and gift-giving.[1] With a very inclusive term the ritual expert, Catherine Bell, names this type of religious practice 'Rites of Exchange and Communion'.[2]

Within this large group we find votive practice. A subject on which comparatively very little has been written. To this day scholarly works thematically treating the subject of votive practice in general as well as votive practice in the ancient world are very few. Since William Henry Denham Rouse wrote his very thorough and impressive although now slightly outdated monograph, *Greek Votive Offerings*: *An Essay in the History of Greek Religion*[3], in 1902, which is just as much a catalogue of Greek votive objects as it is a treatment of the phenomenon of votive practice, only a handful of works on the subject have appeared; Folkert van Straten has written two essays on votive practice in Greek religion, *Gifts for the Gods* in 1981[4] and *Votives and Votaries in Greek Sanctuaries* in 1990[5]. In his *Greek Religion* from 1985[6] (1st edition in German 1977) Walter Burkert devotes two brief chapters to Votive Offerings and *Anathemata*.

In the book, *Gifts to the Gods*, from 1987 there are some very informative although brief articles by Jan Bergman, Walter Burkert and Gertie Englund touching upon the more general aspects of votive practice and gift giving.[7]
It is evident from the above mentioned titles that there is a strong preponderance of classicists in the field of votive studies.

A couple of notable exceptions are Lenz Kriss-Rettenbeck's beautifully illustrated book on Christian votive objects, primarily from the second half of the 2nd millennium CE and thus quite late with regard to our area of interest, *Ex Voto: Zeichen, Bild und Abbild im christlichen Votivbrauchtum*, from 1972[8] and Geraldine Pinch's comprehensive *Votive offerings to Hathor* from 1993. Although Pinch's book is primarily a catalogue of votive offerings from a number of Hathor sanctuaries it contains an excellent chapter which attempts to place votive offerings within popular Egyptian religion.

In general most mentions of votive practice are made in catalogues of and articles on votive objects; either diverse assemblies of votive objects as Rouse's catalogue that contains everything from statues, plates and figurines over used tools and garments to locks of hair, and Pinch's catalogue, which is divided in to the subgroups Stelae, Textiles, Hathor Masks, Cows, Cats and Fertility Figurines, or works concentrating on specific types of votive objects, such as Cypriote votive statues[9], Phrygian votive steles[10], Athenian votive statues[11] or Greek anthropomorphic

[1] For a handy bibliography please see Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Macmillan Publishing Company, NY, 1987, 'Sacrifice', Vol 12, p. 556-557 and 'Gift giving', Vol 5, p.557.
[2] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, p. 108.
[3] W.H.D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings: an Essay in the History of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, at the University Press, 1902.
[4] Folkert van Straten, "Gifts for the Gods", in H.S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1981.
[5] Folkert van Straten, "Votives and Votaries in Greek Sanctuaries", in *Le Sanctuare Grec, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, publiés par Olivier Reverdin et Bernard Grange, Tome XXXVII, Vandæuvres, Genève, 1990.
[6] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion, Archaic and Classical*, Blackwell Publishing & Harvard University Press, 1985.
[7] Jan Bergman, "Religio-phenomenological reflections on the multi-level process of giving to the gods", Walter Burkert, "Offerings in perspective: surrender, distribution, exchange", Gertie Englund, "Gifts to the gods – a necessity for the preservation of cosmos and life", all in Gifts to the Gods, Proccedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1985, ed. by Tullia Linders and Gullög Nordquist, Uppsala 1987.
[8] Lenz Kriss-Rettenbeck, EX *VOTO: Zeichen, Bild und Abbild im christlichen Votivbrauchtum*, Atlantis Verlag, Zürich und Freiburg im Breisgau, 1972.
[9] Cecilia Beer, *Temple-Boys: a study of Cypriote votive sculpture*, Åströms Förlag, 1994.

figurines[12] to mention a few. Thus the focus is primarily on the votive objects themselves, their types, manufacture and style, and less on how the practice of bringing votive offerings to the sanctuary fits in to the overall scheme of religious practices.

Literally anything can be given as a votive object and votive practice can be found in most cultures during all time periods, but what exactly is understood by *votive*?

The Oxford Classical Dictionary defines votive offerings as

> "voluntary dedications to the gods, resulting not from prescribed ritual or sacred calendars but from *ad hoc* vows of individuals or communities in circumstances usually of anxiety, transition, or achievement...
>
> ..Unlike sacrifice, where one 'destroys', by depositing a perceptible object in a sanctuary one both looses it and makes it eternal…
>
> ..On a personal level, just like prayers, votive offerings emphasize the individual's 'if-then' relations with the gods."[13]

This description touches upon central aspects of votive practice; firstly, votive practice is instigated spontaneously by an individual or a group. Thus the performance of votive practice is a response to something that has happened to the votary/votaries.

Secondly, votive practice is based on a vow.

Thirdly, votive practice is both similar to and different from sacrifice. The votive object is spent from the point of view of the votary since it has been given to the sanctuary and is just as irretrievable as if it had been burned, but concurrently the votive object is not destroyed, but put on display in the sanctuary as an eternal monument to the act of dedication.

And finally that votive practice and prayers are connected.

I shall commence with the second point that votive practice is based on a vow. The term 'votive' is derived from the Latin word, *votum*, meaning a vow. In connection with votive practice the vow is always understood as a conditional vow which is linked to a prayer. Thus the votary promises to dedicate an object to the deity, if the deity answers the prayer put forth with the vow; if you grant me a son/ a bountiful harvest/ a safe journey, then I will give you X. It is implied that if the deity does not answer the prayer, the votary is not obliged to fulfil his part of the bargain. As an example I may mention this archaic Greek votive inscription from the Athenian Acropolis:

> "Alkimachos dedicated (ανέσθεκε) me, a magnificent votive offering (αγλμα), to Zeus' daughter as a (redemption of his) vow (ὲυχολέν)."[14]

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[10] Thomas Drew-Bear, Christine M. Thomas and Melek Yildizturan, *Phrygian Votive Steles*, The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Turkey, 1999.
[11] Catherine M. Keesling, *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
[12] Brita Alroth, *Greek Gods and Figurines: Aspects of the Anthropomorphic Dedications*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1989.
[13] *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, third edition, edited by Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1996, p. 1612-13.
[14] Van Straten 1981, p. 70.

Or this New Kingdom Egyptian inscription to the god Amenra:

> "If I see that you cause my affairs to go (well) then I shall provide for you a jar of potted *sermet*, likewise a *ds* jug of beer, and likewise my people with [cakes] and white bread."[15]

This is votive practice in the narrowest sense of the word, and the performance of this specific kind of votive practice is well documented, especially in the Greek and Roman world. In fact in Roman religion the practice was so common place that a standardized votive formula stating the fulfilment of a vow developed, *votum solvit laetus libens merito* ('vow fulfilled gladly willingly deservedly'), and was turned into an acronym, *VSLM*, that can be seen in numerous inscriptions on steles, votive altars and the like all over the Roman empire.[16]

The disadvantages of applying this very narrow definition is firstly that when working with archaeological material regardless the many mentions of vows in ancient literature and inscriptions more often than not we have simply no chance of determining whether an object interpreted as a votive object has been given on the basis of a vow.

A good example of this problem is the group of so called 'temple-boys' from Cyprus; c. 200 temple-boy statuettes have been found in Cyprus in at least 20 different sites. The contexts are primarily *favissae* or votive deposits related to sanctuaries of Apollo, Melqart, or Aphrodite. Only two of the temple-boy statuettes have inscriptions on them; both saying 'to Apollo'.[17]

The Cypriote temple-boys are interpreted as votive statuettes and I do not dispute this interpretation, but we simply can not know whether the temple-boys were brought to the sanctuaries as gifts to the deity *in fulfilment of a vow* or if the temple-boys were brought to the sanctuaries merely as gifts.[18]

Thus an insistence on the use of the narrow sense of the term considerably cuts down the amount of available material that we can meaningfully use and completely leaves out any non-epigraphic material.

This brings me to a second disadvantage, which is the actual use of the term votive practice in scholarly literature.

In so far as the term is even defined it is very often done with a reference to the semantic root of the word votive, that is the narrow definition, but it is applied to possibly much more diverse and not solely vow-based groups of dedications. Most authors do not address this circumstance. Geraldine Pinch is an exception to this rule when she in her introduction lets her reader know that she will be using votive practice in the broad sense of the word rather than in the narrow sense of the word: "The term 'votive offering' is used in its general sense of a 'gift to a deity' rather than in its specific sense of a 'gift in fulfilment of a vow'."[19]

A possible recognition of the greater practicability of the general sense of the word is found in the recent edition of Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum, where the term votive in the English and German language entries is replaced with respectively 'dedication' and 'Weihgaben'.[20]

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[15] Ashraf Iskander Sadek, *Poular Religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom*, Gerstenberg Verlag, Hildesheim, 1987, p. 234.

[16] Lawrence Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, B.T. Batsford Ltd, London, 1991, p. 93-94.

[17] Beer 1994, p. 21-22.

[18] For an introduction to the difficulties of determining whether figurines without inscriptions are votive objects at all, please see Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, BAR International Series 636, Hadrian Books Ltd., Oxford, UK, 1996.

[19] Pinch 1993, p.xxv.

[20] *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum*, I, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2004.

The general sense of the term votive could thus be defined with the wording of the opening paragraph in Rouse's essay on votive offerings:

> "Whatever is given of freewill to a being conceived as superhuman is to speak strictly a votive offering."[21]

I would now like to address the first and fourth points in the definition mentioned above; votive offerings are voluntary and to some extent spontaneous dedications and they are connected with prayer.

Votive offerings are not part of a prescribed ritual calendar. Unlike for instance the biblical daily offering, the Tamijd (תמיד), which is to be sacrificed in the sanctuary every day in the morning and in the evening (Num 28:3-4), the votive offering is dedicated to the deity as a response to a tangible occurrence in the life of the group or the individual.[22]

Very often prayers of help in a time of need are combined with a promise to bring a gift to the sanctuary when the crisis has subsided. The crisis may be any conceivable unwanted state of affairs, such as illness, barrenness, economic misfortune or being on board a ship in rough weather and it may be a merely anticipated crisis that motivates man to utter prayers before going to war, embarking on a sea journey, at the beginning of the harvesting season or of a pregnancy.[23] But it need not always be a negative occurrence or anxiety for the future that gives occasion for the gift. Some votive offerings are given to accentuate transitions in life. Thus craftsmen donate their tools at the end of their careers or to give thanks for a particularly successful piece of work, and votive gifts are dedicated to the deity at births, marriages and when coming of age.[24] Sometimes a stroke of good luck, such as an unexpected recovery from illness or a particularly prosperous year, is the reason for the votive offering.

Rouse states that the three main reasons for votive practice are propitiation, intercession and thanksgiving. Pinch adjusts this statement by pointing out that the borderline between propitiation, at least propitiation as a preventive measure, and adoration are fine-drawn.[25] When are we dealing with a votive offering that is meant to prevent an outburst of divine anger and when are we dealing with one meant to maintain the good relationship between god and man? It really comes down to the same thing.

Very often a votive inscription does not only contain a thanksgiving for the answering of a prayer or for good fortune, but also an expression of a hope that the deity will continue his or hers beneficent activities. Thus a cyclic process is established linking the acts of prayer, answering the prayer, giving thanks and stating a new prayer.[26]

Volkert van Straten points out this votive epigram by Callimachus as a good example of votive practice as continuous interaction between man and god:

> "Come again, Eilethyia, answering the call of Lykainis, thus alleviating the birth pangs and producing a fortunate delivery. Just as you have now received this, mistress, as thanks for a daughter, so will your fragrant temple receive something else in thanks for a son."[27]

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[21] Rouse 1902, p.1.
[22] I shall return to the topic of spontaneity versus regularity in a later chapter.
[23] See Rouse 1902, pp. 187-239 for numerous examples.
[24] Rouse 1902, pp. 70-75 and 240-258.
[25] Rouse 1902, pp.350-52, Pinch 1993, p.352.
[26] ThesCRA I 2004, pp. 275-6 and Phrygian Votive Steles 1999, p 38.
[27] Van Straten 1981, p. 73.

While giving thanks for the recent birth of a daughter the epigram points to a prayer of safe delivery, perhaps accompanied by a vow, that has been made in the past and promises further gifts in the future in case of the birth of a son.

Jan Bergman describes this relationship by underlining the temporal dimension of votive practice:

> "Theoretically, the strict votive offering constitutes an evident process consisting of at least three moments: the votum, bound to the future, is the point of departure; the decisive event, the activity of the god, marking the presence in a double sense; and the offering itself, promulgating the intimate connection between the three times and eternalizing the interaction between man and god."[28]

If we follow this point of view the differences between the vow-based votive offering, the thanksgiving offering and the completely spontaneous free-will offering are mere nuances within the general scope of the broad definition of votive practice. It is all a matter of where one so to speak 'jumps on the merry-go-round'. Is it at Bergman's point of departure, the vow/prayer, or is it when one has something to give thanks for, perhaps something that one had not requested, or is it as a simple act of adoration or propitiation in shape of a free-will offering?

No matter where the cycle is entered it is important to remember that for all the talk of *do-ut-des* sacrifice and dynamic and reciprocal relations in the act of giving, the rhythm of giving is never initiated by the human being. If the god had not initially given something, man would simply have nothing to give. Therefore the deity is always the first giver, and any human act of 'giving back' is simultaneously recognition of the deity's supremacy.[29]

Here I would like to attract the listeners' attention to a related scheme of classification in the sacrificial system in the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament.

In Leviticus chapters 3 and 7 we find the law concerning the sacrifice of well-being (זבח שלמים). The animal for the sacrifice may be taken either from the flock or the herd and may be both male and female. The blood of the sacrificial animal is dashed against the sides of the altar and its fat and kidneys are burned on the altar as 'a pleasing odour' (לירח ניחח) to Yahweh. Parts of the meat are paid as a levy to the officiating priest, and then the remains of the animal are cooked and eaten by the giver of the sacrifice and his household. The sacrificial meal may be eaten on the first and the second day. On the third day whatever remains must be burned.

In chapter 7:15-17 the rules for the subgroups of the sacrifice of well-being are stated. Those are the thanksgiving sacrifice (תודה), the votive offering (נדר) and the freewill offering (נדבה). The rules themselves are fairly uninteresting; the meat of the votive offering and the freewill offering may be eaten on the second and first day whereas the meat of the thanksgiving sacrifice may only be eaten on the first day. What *is* interesting, however, is that the division in to subgroups fits exactly the division that we applied above. The votive offering, or vow-based offering (*nædær* means vow) corresponds with the definition of votive practice in its narrowest sense whereas all three types of sacrifice make up the definition of votive practice in its widest sense.

Thus if we include sacrificial practice in votive practice, I will return to this point below, we have in the sacrificial system in the Hebrew Bible an entire series of sacrifices that more or less fit the spectre of votive practice in the broad sense as described above, that is vow-based (prayer/intercession), thanksgiving (sometimes with a new prayer) and free-will

[28] Bergman 1987, p.37.
[29] I am indebted to professor Hans Jørgen Lundager Jensen for this incredibly important observation.

(adoration/propitiation). As we have seen from the example above none of these three categories are mutually exclusive. The conditional vow indicates faith in the deity's capacity to help, the thanksgiving is very often in consequence of a vow, accompanied by a vow or both, and the free-will offering may indicate both thanksgiving and hopes for the future.

At this stage I shall introduce another aspect of votive practice which is not as widely attested as the ones mentioned above. In want of a better term I have named this aspect '*intermediary* votive practice'. It is when a votary asks the deity for blessing on behalf of another human or to put it differently; human actor, A, recommends human actor, B, to a deity, X.
We find examples of intermediary votive practice for instance among the Iron Age II inscriptions from Palestine in Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Kom.
Written on a pillar in a burial cave at Khirbet el-Kom is the following inscription:

1 *'ryhw . h'šr . ktbh*
2 *brk .'ryhw . lyhwh .*
3 *wmsryh . l'šrth . hwš' lh*
4 *l'nyhw*
5 *wl'šrth*

1 (on behalf of) Uriyahu, the notable, (has) he written it.
2 Blessed be Uriyahu to YHWH <and to his Asherah>
3 Save him from his enemies.
4 (written) by Oniyahu,
5 and by his Asherah.[30]

It is unclear whether any of the persons mentioned in the inscription are 'inhabitants' of the burial chamber, but the dynamics in the inscription seem quite apparent. Oniyahu acts as an intermediary on behalf of Uriyahu and intercedes for him with the deitiesYahweh and Asherah.

A similar inscription is found written on Pithos A at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. Here the intercession is on behalf of two human actors::

1 *'mr . [ ]'mr . lyhl[l'l] . wlyw'sh . w[ ] . brkt . 'tkm . lyhwh . šmrn . wl'šrth .*

1 Thus says [X], "say to Yehal[lel'el] and to Yawasah, [ ] "I (hereby) bless you by YHWH, of Samaria, and by his Asherah.""[31]

And another one on Pithos B, where Amaryahu intercedes on behalf of his unnamed master with Yahweh of Teman and Asherah:

[*'mr*]
1 *'mryw '*
2 *mr l .'dny*

[30] Sandra Landis Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*, Society of Biblical Literature, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1998, p. 412. I shall return to the epigraphy and translation of this and the other inscriptions in a later chapter and offer a detailed analysis of their intention and context. For now I merely bring them as examples of intermediary votive practice and I use the transcription and translation done by Sandra Landis Gogel.
[31] Gogel 1998, p. 414.

3 hšlm . ‘[t]
4 brktk . ly
5 hwh tmn
6 wl’šrth . yb
7 rk . wyšmrk
8 wyhy ‘m . ‘d[n]
9 y[ ]k

(Thus) [sa]ys
1 Amaryahu
2 “say to my lord
3 ‘Is it well with y[ou]?
4 I (hereby) bless you by
5 YHWH of Teman
6 and by his Asherah. May he
7 bless (you) and keep you,
8 and may he be with
9 my lo[rd]’”[32]

We have similar examples from Egypt as well. This New Kingdom inscription from Deir el-Bahri is a prayer to the god Amenra on behalf of a deceased family member, the votary’s mother:

> “Grant bread, breezes, water, wine, libation and incense to the Osiris chantress [of] Amenra, king of the Gods, Henutmehyt.”[33]

And another one also from Deir el-Bahri, apparently on behalf of a lady who is still alive:

> “Keep healthy the chantress of Amun, Taqa(t) called Khonswepnofret,
> like him equally.”[34]

The rationale behind intermediary votive practice seems to be that it is regarded as meritorious to intercede with the deity on behalf of somebody else and thus causing blessing to be given to the recommender and the recommended alike. It is simply killing two birds with one stone.

Now let us turn to the final point that votive practice differs from sacrificial practice because the votive offering unlike the sacrifice is not destroyed, but put on display in the sanctuary.
If we apply the broad definition of votive practice as anything that is dedicated to the sanctuary as expression of thanksgiving, adoration or as fulfilment of a conditional vow it becomes apparent that it makes little sense to exclude objects that are perishable, such as sacrifices and food offerings. A sacrifice can be brought as a gift on any of these occasions, just think of the types of sacrifices mentioned above. Furthermore a votive object may very well be immaterial.

In the following I shall give examples of immaterial votive objects but first I shall allow myself a brief digression to discuss the matter of positive and negative cult and diverted from these, positive and negative vows.

[32] Gogel 1998, p. 414-15.
[33] Sadek 1987, p. 225.
[34] Sadek 1987, p. 227.

Émile Durkheim divided cult into positive and negative cult. The negative cult is constituted by religious prohibitions and taboos. The religious prohibition emanates from respect for the sacred and it serves as a mean to separate anything sacred from anything profane. Thus the negative cult is a means to an end. In order to approach the sacred sphere a person has to remove himself from the profane. This is done by rites of initiation and sanctification, often connected with ritual abstinence. Ritual abstinence is merely the practical application of a specific religious prohibition. Abstinence is so to speak to offer up one's profane interests.[35]
Opposite the positive cult is represented by the act of offering. The offering is a gift. When practising the positive cult one renounces a physical object and gives it to the deity.[36]

Durkheim's terminology has also been applied to types of vows; with a positive vow one promises to *give* something and with a negative vow one promises to *abstain* from something. The question is whether, from the point of view of the donor, it really makes a difference if you give something or give something up? In both cases you end up having less.
I think Tony W. Cartledge is perfectly right when he says about negative and positive vows that

> "Either type of vow involves some sort of self-deprivation: whether one gives up a prize goat, a sum of money, a period of time, or sexual intercourse, it is still a sacrifice of something ordinarily enjoyed."[37]

Thus we can view initiation and sanctification of a person as a kind of votive practice. By sanctifying oneself and abstaining from certain things for a given period a person may, depending on which way one looks at it, give as immaterial votive objects either himself or the things that he denounces during his sanctified state. The laws of the Nazirite in Num 6:1-21 are an example from the Hebrew Bible of initiation/sanctification as votive practice with immaterial votive objects.[38]

Another example of an immaterial votive object is praise and worship. On a group of steles from New Kingdom Egypt material offerings are depicted, such as food, drinks, flowers and incense, but on one of them an immaterial votive object is depicted, namely a queen playing the sistrum and offering music.[39]

The stele is most likely given as a memento of the act of worshipping with music and thus representing a combination of an immaterial and a material votive object.

If Tony W. Cartledge's reading of some psalms of lament in the Hebrew Bible is correct, then they offer an indication of immaterial votive objects as well. Cartledge proposes that the change of mood from mourning and lament to joy and thanksgiving in Psalm 22, 54, 56, 59, 61, 69, 71 and 109 is not an indication of a sudden change in the psalmist's current situation, but rather the second half of a conditional vow expressed in the psalm and thus relating to the future rather than the present; If you help me now, then I shall praise you in the future. In some places the 'if' and 'then' of the vows in the psalms are separated by several verses.[40]

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[35] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Oxford's World Classics, Oxford University Press (1st edition 1912), 2001, p. 221-4, 230, 234.
[36] Durkheim 2001, p. 254-6.
[37] Tony W. Cartledge, *Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near east*, JSOTS, Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, p. 71-2.
[38] Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, *Nyere Ritualteori appliceret på Gammeltestamentlige Tekster: En ritualteoretisk undersøgelse af 'Loven om Nasiræerne" i Num 6,1-21*, København 2006 (unpublished), p. 76-9. Tony W. Cartledge, "Were Nazirite Vows unconditional?", CBQ, 1989, p. 409-22.
[39] Sadek 1987, p. 216.
[40] Cartledge 1987, p. 85-86.

Thus in Psalm 54 a free-will offering (נדבה), a kind of sacrifice, and thanksgiving, an immaterial votive object, is promised in return for help in a difficult situation:

> Verse 3-4: "Save me, God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might. Hear my prayer, God; give ear to the words of my mouth."
>
> Verse 8: "With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you (בנדבה אזבחה־לך); I will give thanks to your name (אודה שמך), Yahweh, for it is good."

Regardless of the existence of immaterial votive objects as well as perishable votive objects it can not be denied however that the aspect of *anathema*, putting on display, seems to be a very central aspect of votive practice, when bringing imperishable votive objects.

By leaving an eternal memento of the act of worship and giving, one creates a special link to the deity and sends an important signal to the surrounding world as well. As Walter Burkert puts it:

> "With *anathemata*, giving to the gods is not so much giving away as setting up a monument of ones own action, thus perpetuating a claim to special relations with higher powers."[41]

Without a doubt votive practice has an element of human desire for self-glorification, but there is also the need to be noticed and remembered, not only by fellow humans but by the deity. To be *remembered* by ones god is to be 'saved', to be taken care of. Just think of the parallelism in psalm 8:5:

> "What is humankind that you *remember* (זכר) us, and man that you look after us?"

Quite a few of the votive inscriptions explicitly mention the aspect of remembrance. Among these are some of the votive inscriptions found on Mount Gerizim in Palestine. Some of the Gerizim inscriptions follow a short dedication formula, type a: "That which (זי) PN son of PN (from GN) offered (הקרב) for himself, his wife and his sons."
Others follow a longer formula, type b, which consists of type a, with the attachment "for good remembrance (לדכרן טב) before the god (קדם אלהא) in this place (באתרא דנה)".[42]
The inscription Gerizim 147 is a good example of the long dedication formula, type b. Gerizim 147 is written in Proto-Jewish script in one line on a rectangular stone block with comb dressing.

> "Dealyah son of Shim'on offered [this] stone (אבנא) for himself (עלוהי) and his sons for good remembrance before the god in this place."[43]

In return for the dedicated stone the votary, in this case Delayah, reguests to be remembered for good before the deity.
Volkert van Straten brings a couple of wonderful examples as well. For instance this votive inscription to Dionysos:

> "To Dionysos who has answered his prayer (ευχαν εκκτελέσαντι) Neomedes dedicates (ανέθεκε) this in remembrance, in exchange for favours."[44]

[41] Burkert 1987, p.49.
[42] Magen, Yitzhak, Misgav, Haggai and Tsfania, Levana, 2004, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, Volume 1, Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem, 2004, p. 16-19.
[43] Magen 2004, p. 137.

And this very straightforward epigram by Callimachus, where the votive object is intended to serve not so much as a remembrance of the votary himself, but rather as an remembrance that the debt, probably the fulfilment of a previously made vow, has been paid:

> "Know that you have received the debt, Asklepios, which Akeson owed you because of his prayer (ευξάμενος) for his wife Demodike; were you to forget it and claim it a second time, the votive tablet (πίναξ) will serve as evidence."[45]

Here we should recall the temporal aspect of votive practice and Jan Bergman's insistence that votive practice be seen as a process.[46] When performing votive practice explicitly or implicitly the votary gives thanks, promises further dedications and asks for continued help in the future all at the same time. One leaves something behind in the sanctuary not merely as a one-time act of worship but to establish and maintain a good relationship with the deity.

In this way, although the objects vary, the act of giving an imperishable votive object does not seem all that different from dedicating a perishable votive object or even an immaterial votive object; the incentives as well as the expected effects are the same.

For the sake of terminology and classification I do believe it to be preferable to maintain a differentiation between imperishable, perishable and immaterial votive objects as long as we remember that the *practice* behind the dedication basically is the same.
Namely a practice which is intended to establish and maintain a beneficent relationship between deity and man based on a mutual exchange.

Along these lines I propose a system of subdividing votive objects in to dedication (possibly vow based), vow based dedication and intermediary dedication.
These groups are not exhaustive, but they will help to classify and thereby I hope clarify our view on votive objects.

[44] Van Straten 1981, p. 71.
[45] Van Straten 1981, p. 71-72.
[46] Bergman 1987, p.42.