

CHAPTER 5

Killing, Dining, Communicating

It must, however, be remembered that in ancient religion there was no authoritative interpretation of ritual.

— Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 399

I turn now to the central ritual of Greek religion. Seeking to refute the charge that Socrates did not “worship/believe in the same gods as the city,” Xenophon begins with an uncomplicated argument. “First of all, what evidence did they bring that he did not believe in the same gods as the city? For he could often be seen sacrificing at home, and often on the public altars of the city.” The master must have been orthodox in religion because he regularly performed the ritual that, more than any other, achieved communication with the gods. When Plato speaks of the processes of socialization that instill piety into the young, the scene he envisages is that of children watching their parents perform sacrifice. In the comic fantasy of Aristophanes, the Birds seek to replace the gods as rulers of the universe; so they instruct mankind to make sacrifice henceforth first to them and only after that to the gods.¹ Sacrifice was, and was seen to be, the heart of the matter.

Sacrifice was also central to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debate about the origins and essence of religion.² A phenomenon describable by that name was so common among the so-called primitive religions that it could scarcely fail to attract attention; an extra stimulus was

1. Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.2; Pl. *Leg.* 887d (above p. 11); Arist. *Av.* 561–63.

2. Cf. J. Carter, *Understanding Religious Sacrifice: A Reader* (London, 2003).

the transformation of blood sacrifice into the “pure and perfect sacrifice” of Christ that rescued mankind. This modern debate was not or was only marginally an inheritance from the ancients. Sacrifice is our problem, not (or not prior to Neoplatonism)³ theirs.

Insofar as they worried about the point, early Greeks seem to have explained participatory sacrifice, the kind where men ate the flesh of an animal offered to the gods, as an inheritance from the time when men and gods dined together; at a certain point, it would appear, men and gods resolved to dine apart while still sharing the same animal, and the unequal division of meat between men and gods had its origin in the trick played by Prometheus on Zeus on that occasion.⁴ Sacrifice as still practiced was therefore a product of the post-golden age world in which we now live, but a self-evident and unproblematic one. They also had myths that explained how particular animals came first to be sacrificed or why particular sacrificial rites were conducted as they were;⁵ but the need to sacrifice to the gods was too self-evident to require an explanation. When certain unorthodox thinkers declared this most central of ritual acts to be, in fact, a form of impiety, their starting point was hostility to meat eating; had they accepted meat eating, the role of sacrifice would have remained self-explanatory. The vegetarian Porphyry even tolerates the idea that tradition may sometimes require animal sacrifice, but not consumption of the flesh.⁶

Paul Veyne in 2000 issued the robust but not unsubtle announcement that any attempt to offer a general theory of sacrifice was misguided:

Sacrifice is a good example of a particular category of sociological objects: those that, by the chance of their constitution, can combine

3. For Neoplatonist explanations of the rationale and efficacy of sacrifice, see briefly Sallustius *De Mundo* 16, and at length Iamblichus *De Myst.* books 5–6. Cf. L. Gernet in Gernet and A. Boulanger, *Le génie grec dans la religion* (Paris, 1932; repr., 1970), 234: “Il n’y a pas non plus en Grèce, faute d’organisation sacerdotale, ce qu’il y a eu par exemple dans l’Inde: une speculation religieuse sur les forces que le sacrifice met en jeu.” There was, it is true, a strand in pagan philosophical thought that declared sacrifice to be inappropriate to a philosophically conceived deity (Varro fr. 22 Cardauns ap. Arn. *Adv. nat.* 7.1; Seneca fr. 123 Haase ap. Lactant. *Div. inst.* 6.25.3, asking, *quae extrucidatione innocentium voluptas est?*); we learn of it primarily through its endorsement by Christian critics of pagan sacrifice, among which Arn. *Adv. nat.* 7.1–37 is the most extensive.

4. Hes. *Theog.* 535–61 with fr. 1.6–7 (cf. pp. 139–40 below). J. Rudhardt, “Les mythes grecs relatifs à l’instauration du sacrifice,” in his *Mythe, religion*, 209–26, is right that what Prometheus conducts at Mekone is not a sacrifice, but in making the sacrifice later performed by Prometheus’s son Deucalion to Zeus Phyxios (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.2) the true origin of the rite, he gives it a founding significance not present in the sources.

5. For the former see Porph. *Abst.* 2.9–10; works on aitia (Callim. *Aet.*; Plut. *Quaest. Graec.*) are full of the latter.

6. Porph. *Abst.* 2.2.1, 2.4.1.

in themselves a great number of possible meanings (even if these are mutually contradictory) and provide a great number of diverse satisfactions: this richness makes them popular and assures them an almost universal success, while obscuring for the conscious mind their *raison d'être* (so they seem to emerge from mysterious human depths). It is like this with sacrifices, with pilgrimages, or, in the profane sphere, with the importance of sitting at the same table, of eating together. These "black holes" are a kind of social trap: the most varied individuals fall into them, have fallen into them, or will fall into them, because all or almost all the reasons for falling are good; therefore learned discussions on "the" true meaning of sacrifice will continue without an end and without a purpose. Its misleading impression of profundity will lead to the temptation of finding ethological or even "abyssal" explanations. The riddle is, however, easy to solve: sacrifice is widely distributed across centuries and across societies because this practice is sufficiently ambiguous for everyone to find in it their own particular satisfaction.⁷

It would seem that his ban extends not just to transcultural theories of sacrifice, already declared impossible by others,⁸ but to any attempt to generalize about sacrifice within a given culture, and even beyond that to any attempt to explain any particular form of sacrifice, such as "killing followed by banquet," within a given culture.

Veyne's warning is altogether salutary. Any form of sacrifice may well derive its power from responsiveness to a complex mix of human desires, fears, interests, pleasures, and imaginings. Greek sacrifice was entirely unaccompanied by the kind of learned or authoritative exegesis, even in the form of myth, that could have steered understanding in a specific direction. A popular approach has been to distinguish a set of original or ideal types, different in essence even if, as we now observe them, somewhat contaminated one with another.⁹ But no Greek ever encountered these ideal types. Growing up within the Greek sacrificial culture meant on the one hand acquiring a familiarity with many differing but overlapping forms of ritual killing, on the other experiencing a single sacrificial form deployed in a variety of different contexts; one was not taught in school the different theological presuppositions underlying the different forms, or what was the most proper

7. "Inviter les dieux," 21–22; my translation.

8. See, e.g., M. Detienne's introduction to *Cuisine of Sacrifice*.

9. So, e.g., Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 132; and see below on Meuli and *Cuisine of Sacrifice*.

application of a form that was variously applied. The chapter that follows will be an attempt to apply Veyne's insight to Greek sacrifice. To analyze one must separate to some degree, but the separation is the observer's, not the participant's.

The Double Face of Sacrifice: Sacrifice as Feast, Sacrifice as Communication

We can begin with the association between sacrifice and banquet. Polemicists for vegetarianism in antiquity attacked meat eating and animal sacrifice with little distinction, because they regarded them as coextensive. Greek sacrifice is driven by gluttony, they argued: nobody sacrifices inedible species such as elephant or camel or snake, and if Greeks were forced to sacrifice like Semites, by burning the whole offering, leaving no edible remnant, they would abandon the practice.¹⁰ The idea of sacrifice as a necessary preliminary to meat eating was central, if in a less moralizing vein, to some of the most influential theories of Greek sacrifice in the second half of the twentieth century. The great Swiss comparatist Karl Meuli saw Greek sacrifice in origin (an origin that he put far back among Paleolithic hunters) as a form of ritual slaughter preparatory to a feast.¹¹ The division of meat between gods and men as typically (if not wholly accurately) conceived by the Greeks themselves was scandalously unequal: the gods received on the altar little more than the tail, the thighbones wrapped in fat, and (in Homer, and occasionally later) small pieces of meat cut "from all the limbs" placed on them. For Meuli, these facts showed that the logic of the sacrifice leading to a feast (what it will be convenient to call alimentary sacrifice) was not that of providing a gift of food to the gods at all. He compared rather the practice of hunting peoples of giving symbolic special treatment to the bones of the animals they kill, burning being one attested form of such special treatment. What is at issue is the perpetuation of a supply of game. For hunting cultures, it has been brilliantly said, bones are like seeds, from which, if properly

10. Theophrastus ap. Porph. *Abst.* 2.25–26.

11. "Ein Tier wird nach herkömmlichen Ritual geschlachtet, damit es die Menschen essen": "Opferbräuche," 282. On what exactly the gods received on the altar (on the separate issue of table offerings, see n. 70), see van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 118–31, 143–44; for osteological evidence, see Ekroth, "Meat, Man and God," 262–64; "Thighs or Tails?" (where, p. 144, the possibility that pigs were treated differently from other animals is mentioned). The post-Homeric evidence for "small pieces" is SEG 36.206 (= NGSL 3) 16–17.

handled, next year's animals will spring;¹² the pieces of meat "from all the limbs" suggest the restoration of the whole animal.

Few today would regard such an appeal to Paleolithic hunters as a legitimate way to explain the sacrificial practices of the Greeks, agriculturalists and pastoralists of the first millennium BC.¹³ Even if Meuli's highly seductive analogies illuminate the remote prehistory of Greek treatment of sacrificial bones, for the Greeks, bones were not seeds; the burning of the gods' portion was a way of bringing a food offering to them—an odd way and an odd offering, to be sure, but such is the nature of humans' traffic with immortals. Stripped of its Paleolithic dimension, however, the argument that a chief function of Greek sacrifice was to prepare for the feast reappears in the highly influential collective volume edited by J. P. Vernant and M. Detienne in 1979. The approach (further developed by these scholars and their collaborators in several places)¹⁴ is summed up in the volume's title, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice*: this is sacrifice seen as a prelude to a collective meal, and the distribution of meat at that meal, between gods and men and among men, becomes the dominant theme.

Vernant writes that "the ceremony of sacrifice could be defined as the complex of procedures permitting an animal to be slaughtered in such conditions that violence appears to be excluded and the killing unequivocally has a character which distinguishes it clearly from murder." And, as he put it in explicit dialogue with Walter Burkert, who in *Homo Necans* (1972) had transposed Meuli into a quite different key, "To sacrifice is fundamentally to kill in order to eat. But, within this formulation, you put the accent on the killing, I put it on the eating."¹⁵ For Meuli, sacrifice ensured that the killing

12. J. Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in his *Imagining Religion* (Chicago, 1982), 53–65, at 60.

13. "Animal sacrifice appears to be, universally, the ritual killing of a domesticated animal by agrarian or pastoralist societies" (and so quite distinct from hunting): J. Z. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," in *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, 191–205 (Stanford, 1986), at 197. A mundane alternative to Meuli's theory about the original motive for bone burning has recently been offered: they burn well, and could serve as fuel for cooking edible meat: Ekroth, "Thighs or Tails?" 146, with refs.

14. See, e.g., J. L. Durand and A. Schnapp, in *City of Images*, 53–70; J. L. Durand, *Sacrifice et labour en grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1986).

15. "Théorie générale du sacrifice et mise à mort dans la thysia grecque," in *Sacrifice dans l'antiquité*, 1–21, with discussion 22–39, at 7 and 26 (English version without the discussion in Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, 290–302). Professor G. Flood refers me to the exegesis by Hindu Mīmāṃsaka philosophers of how Vedic animal sacrifice (which in fact avoided bloodshed) was compatible with nonviolence: see W. Halbfass, "Vedic Apologetics, Ritual Killing, and the Foundations of Ethics," chap. 4 of his *Tradition and Reflection* (New York, 1991); see too McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*, 51–52, with references.

required by hunting would not terminate the food supply. For Vernant, it licensed killing by ritualizing it. For both theories, as for the ancient vegetarians, it was inextricably bound up with meat eating.

Both theories take up an idea already found in ancient texts that the culpable violence inherent in sacrifice was ritually disguised: the fatal knife was hidden beneath the barley grains in the sacrificial basket, water was sprinkled on the victim's head to induce it to nod assent to its killing (and there were many stories of animals presenting themselves spontaneously for the slaughter). At the Attic festival of Dipolieia,¹⁶ the killing of an ox led to a mock trial: the outcome was the condemnation not of a human but of the knife or ax that did the deed, and the ox's corpse was even stuffed with straw, set on its feet, and yoked to a plow, as though it were not dead at all. For this complex of ritual evasions Karl Meuli coined the term "comedy of innocence." He compared it with the many and varied fictions whereby (in particular) Siberian hunting peoples have excused and exculpated themselves before their prey. A hunter says to a dead bear, "Let us clasp paws in handshake. . . . It was not I that threw you down, nor my companion over there. You, yourself, slipped and burst your belly." Or, "Not by me was the knife fashioned, nor by any of my countrymen. It was made in Estonia from iron bought in Stockholm."¹⁷ Artistic depictions too tended not to depict the moment of killing, except in the abnormal case of mythical human sacrifices. Though one can scarcely speak about sacrifice without using the English word borrowed from Latin *victima*, there were no "victims" in Greek sacrifice:¹⁸ the Greek equivalent ἱερεῖον indicates merely that it is an object on which a priest, ἱερεύς, does his work, ἱερεύω.

Every link in this chain of argument has come under effective attack of late. The main sources that speak of the supposed need to hide the knife and seek the victim's assent are ancient commentaries of uncertain date on Aristophanes and (in the second case) Apollonius Rhodius:¹⁹ the actual passages

16. See Parker, *Polytheism*, 187–91.

17. I borrow these quotations from Smith, "Bare Facts" (n. 12 above), 59–60. Smith shows how fictitious these exculpations are, or, better, how they represent an ideal known to be unrealizable.

18. Noted by P. Brulé and R. Touzé, in *Sacrifice antique*, 111. Killing seldom shown: see most recently A. Henrichs, "Blutvergiessen am Altar," in *Gewalt und Ästhetik*, ed. B. Seidensticker and M. Vöhler, 59–87 (Berlin, 2006), at 81–82; van Straten in *Cuisine et autel*, 20–21; *ThesCRA* 1:116–18; For scenes (still not numerous) relating more broadly to the kill, see van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 103–13; Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 254–89 (on knives, *ibid.*, 513–14, and good comments 256, 289). The differential treatment in art of human and animal victims: Durand, *Cuisine of Sacrifice*, 91 (138 in the Fr. orig.); on the iconography of the former, Durand and F. Lissarague, *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999): 83–106.

19. Knife: Σ RV Ar. Pax 948b. Shake: Σ RV Ar. Pax 960, similarly Σ Ap. Rhod. 1.425.

that they are discussing do not speak in these terms, and the order given in Aristophanes to the sheep on whose head water is sprinkled is not "nod" but "shake yourself," a sign of vitality rather than of agreement.²⁰ The only sources apart from the commentaries that speak of the animal's assent have, certainly or probably, been influenced by Pythagorean opposition to animal sacrifice.²¹ When in stories animals offer themselves spontaneously for sacrifice, this can be seen as a remarkably good omen, a sign perhaps that the god has chosen that animal as its preferred offering, rather than a proof that every ordinary sacrificial victim was required to agree to its death.²² There was no artistic taboo on showing animals vigorously resisting being led to the altar, as of course they often did; men with knives and axes are occasionally shown near animals, and depictions of altars smeared with blood are commonplace, even if the actual coup de grâce is mostly avoided. The "comedy of innocence" at the Dipolieia is therefore a special case, an unusual development at a particular festival, not a general key to the ideology of Greek sacrifice. On this account, sacrifice did not create a horrified fascination with violence, nor go out of its way to preempt the same; violence was simply not an issue.²³

Has the reaction gone too far? It is not a strong argument against the "comedy of innocence" that the comedy was not played out very consistently and that reality often peeked through; all those involved are aware that ritual fictions are just that, fictions.²⁴ The question is whether a comedy of innocence was enacted at all, other than at the Dipolieia, whether, that is, such sources as speak in these terms can be dismissed en bloc as contaminated by Pythagorean ideology even when (as in the scholia on Aristophanes and Apollonius) there is no sign of such influence. That question is, and will probably remain, unanswerable.²⁵

20. Cf. Plut. *De def. or.* 46, 435B–C with 49, 437A–B; cf. Serv. ad *Aen.* 4.61: *hostiae exploratio, utrum apta sit.*

21. The oracle ap. Porph. *Abst.* 2.9.3; Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 8.8.3, 729F.

22. Cf. Macrobian *Sat.* 3.5.8.

23. On all this see S. Peirce, "Death, Revelry and Thusia," *ClAnt* 12 (1993): 219–66 (in particular on the artistic evidence); van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 100–102 ("The Assenting Animal?"); P. Bonnechère, "La machaira était dissimulée dans le kanoun: Quelques interrogations," *REA* 101 (1999): 21–35; S. Georgoudi, "L'occultation de la violence dans le sacrifice grec: Données anciennes, discours modernes," in *Cuisine et autel*, 115–47; "Le consentement de la victime sacrificielle: Une question ouverte," in *Sacrifice antique*, 139–53; A. Henrichs, "Blutvergiessen" (n. 18); F. S. Naiden, "The Fallacy of the Willing Victim," *JHS* 127 (2007): 61–73.

24. See n. 17.

25. I do not find the argument from Ar. *Pax* 960 decisive. An animal sprinkled with water is much more likely to shake itself than to nod, and ritual had to work with that datum; but a shake could have been interpreted in this context as a mark of assent. Perhaps both interpretations coexisted in earlier times as they do in Plutarch (contrast *De def. or.* 49, 437A–B with *Quaest. conv.* 8.8.3, 729F) and, it seems, ethnographically (Meuli, "Opferbräuche," 266).

The link between sacrifice and banquet, however, is not based on the reality of the "comedy of innocence" alone. There is also the issue of the eating of unsacrificed meat. The authors of *The Cuisine of Sacrifice* argue that sacrifice was the ritual that rendered legitimate the killing of animals (domesticated animals, in their more careful formulations), and that meat from them was not normally eaten by Greeks unless it had first been sacrificed. (This argument too goes back to Karl Meuli.) One even occasionally encounters the suggestion (though not in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice*) that sacrifice was a Greek equivalent to kosher or halal butchery. That extreme claim is refuted by the obvious point that Greeks ate game animals killed in no special way,²⁶ whereas (for instance) in Orthodox Judaism wild animals must be trapped in nets and killed according to the normal kosher rules if they are to be eaten. There is also considerable evidence that meat from species that were sacrificed only exceptionally, such as dog, donkey, and horse, quite often found its way onto Greek tables, even if usually processed into a sausage or pie. (Subtle osteological analysis may even show that their meat was sometimes added, unsacrificed, to fill out the portions at a sacrificial banquet in a sanctuary.)²⁷ Some Greeks even apparently ate meat from animals that had died naturally, though others shunned it as impure.²⁸

The claim therefore has probably to be reformulated as "Greeks ate the meat of the typical sacrificial species only after sacrifice." It now acquires considerable *prima facie* plausibility; for there are many references to animals being "sacrificed" where the point is merely to kill them, whether for a feast or for other reasons: Themistocles in Herodotus, for instance, advises the Greek forces to "sacrifice" as many of the herds kept in Euboea as they wish, to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy.²⁹ Even if some difficulties and possible counterexamples remain, the normative pattern seems to have been that a feast required a sacrifice; and a few obscure references occur to "eating unsacrificed things" as a disgusting form of behavior that might

26. Pious hunters offered the god a portion of their catch (Xen. *Cyn.* 6.13) and hung up skin and horns in sanctuaries (Meuli, "Opferbräuche," 263 n. 5), but that is a different matter.

27. See Ekroth, "Meat, Man and God," 275–76; Ekroth, "Meat in Ancient Greece: Sacrificial, Sacred or Secular?" *Food and History* 5 no. 1 (2007): 249–72, at 260–72. On foods actually eaten in Greece, see esp. Hipp. *Vict.* 2.46 and the texts from Galen quoted by P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999), 83–85.

28. Ar. *Au.* 538 and fr. 714; cf. my article "Eating Unsacrificed Meat," forthcoming in *Paysage et religion. Mélanges offerts à Madeleine Jost*, ed. P. Carlier and C. Lerouge-Cohen (*Travaux de la Maison René Ginouvès* 6, 2010), 139–47.

29. 8.19.2; cf., e.g., 6.129.1, Hom. *Il.* 6.174, and numerous other uses of *τερεῖω* in Homer (Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 23), Hom. *Od.* 9.231, Xen. *Anab.* 4.4.9.

offend the gods.³⁰ It would be interesting to inquire how general in societies that perform sacrifice the ban on eating meat non-sacrificially may be; it is certainly common.³¹

The vegetarian critique is well-founded up to a point, therefore: the motive for sacrificing was very often that it was socially impossible to eat the most attractive forms of meat without sacrificing. Yet the proposition that "to sacrifice is fundamentally to kill in order to eat" is wholly inadequate as a general theory even to explain those sacrifices that left edible meat behind them. The objection is not just that the meat from sacrifices of this type was occasionally not eaten but sold.³² In other cases too the rationale for conducting such a sacrifice was manifestly not to provide religious legitimation for human sociability. Odysseus in *Iliad* 1 (430–74) takes a hecatomb to appease Apollo. The sacrifice ends in a feast, but it starts from the urgent need to propitiate an angry god. And cases of this type can be multiplied almost indefinitely. Sacrifices that have a purpose (propitiation, thanksgiving, fulfillment of a vow, or whatever) are commonplace. The sacrifices carefully listed in a group's sacrificial calendar have a purpose too, the systematic cultivation of the deities judged responsible for the particular group's welfare. In some cases participants were probably few, and the fact that the sacrifice produced meat almost incidental.³³

Sacrifice opened the channel of communication between man and god. It enabled prayers to be made for a return of blessings; it required such prayers indeed, since there were no sacrifices without prayers. Fixed formulas seem not to have been used: the essential was to address the god, make a request ("grant health and prosperity"), and identify the recipients of the benefit that was sought. As recipients, "all of us present" would be the simplest form, but absentees such as wives and children could be added; in the fifth century the grateful Athenians included the Plataeans in their prayers.³⁴ Sacrificial divination too is very relevant. At every public sacrifice in the classical period, omens were taken; many sacrifices were performed primarily for divinatory purposes, most obviously in the military sphere but also in private life. It is not coincidence that the will of the gods was revealed so regularly by

30. Semonides fr. 7.56 West; G. Petzl, *Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens* (= *Epigraphica Anatolica* 22, Bonn, 1994), nos. 1 and 123; *LSA* 84.11.

31. For Rome, see J. Scheid in *Cuisine et autel*, 273–88; cf., e.g., Gibson, *Sacrifice and Sharing*, 185.

32. Lupu, *NGSL*, 71–72; cf. Ekroth, "Meat, Man and God," 271 n. 65.

33. See Jameson, "The Spectacular and the Obscure."

34. Hdt. 6.111.2; cf. Pulleyn, *Prayer*, 7–15. Prayer essential: Plin. *HN* 28.10; for prayer gestures accompanying sacrifice, see *ThesCRA* 3, plates 18–19.

the tails and livers of sacrificial animals.³⁵ Sacrifice was a time of close contact between the two worlds. "May he not be able to sacrifice" was a curse one could invoke on a wrongdoer. It was through bad omens at sacrifices that flawed relations between men and gods were typically exposed.³⁶

The mediator of that contact was the animal. Sacrifice, it has rightly been said, turns an animal into a symbol.³⁷ The hopes of a community rest on the back of the victim, which becomes a literal embodiment of its piety. Hubert and Mauss, in their celebrated *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice*, wrote that: "[The victim] is the means of concentration of religious feeling; it expresses it, it incarnates it, it carries it along. By acting upon the victim one acts upon religious feeling, directs it either by attracting and absorbing it, or by expelling and eliminating it."³⁸ The animals offered in public rites were often specified as "selected" (κριτός) victims, and might be subject to an "examination," δοκιμασία, the same word used for the testing of the qualifications of a human candidate for a magistracy.³⁹ The process of choice could itself be turned into a spectacle. For the sacrifice to Zeus Polieus on Cos, wave upon wave of cattle bred up by the various city segments were driven successively into the agora until finally one designated itself as the appropriate victim by (probably) "kneeling to Hestia"; at Bargylia, responsibility for rearing cattle for Artemis Kindyas was distributed among various magistrates and even metics, and the finest specimens were to be chosen by the same judges as judged the human competition in "manliness." A serious issue, therefore, selecting an animal for a god: the fairest pig for Demeter was chosen on Mykonos by the boule.

In Magnesia on the Maeander, the bull that was to be sacrificed to Zeus Sosipolis was "shown" to him months in advance "at the beginning of the sowing"; it was fed during the intervening months by voluntary contributions from the populace. At the great Coan civic festival mentioned above, the ox for Zeus Polieus once selected was "commenced" (that is,

35. On the tail, see now Ekroth, "Thighs or Tails?" [+]; *ThesCRA* 3:7; Ekroth notes that the first literary evidence for the tail as part of the god's portion is Aesch. *PV* 496–97. On livers, van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 156–57; Flower, *Seer*, index s.v. divination, sacrificial.

36. H. S. Versnel, *ZPE* 58 (1985): 247–69 (the curse); Hdt. 7.134.2; Ant. 5.82, cf. *LSA* 16.25–27, with Sokolowski's note (bad omens).

37. J.H.M. Beattie, "On Understanding Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice*, ed. M.F.C. Bourdillon and M. Fortes, 29–44 (London, 1980), at 29–30; cf. de Heusch, *Sacrifice in Africa*, 95: "Sacrifice is a symbolic labour on living matter."

38. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, 60.

39. Cf. *ThesCRA* 1:95–97; Lupu, *NGSL*, 99–100, 355–57; C. Feyel, *RPhil* 80 (2006): 33–55; F. S. Naiden, *JHS* 127 (2007): 70–73 (who, however, runs together the preliminary selection with the sprinkling of water just prior to sacrifice).

the preliminary rites were performed) "with olive branch and laurel" the day before the sacrifice. At a sacrifice to Athena in Hellenistic Ilion, each tribe was required to provide a cow and a sheep; the tribesmen processed behind "their" animals, which were branded with marks identifying them as offered by the particular tribe. A beautifully adorned sacrificial animal is once described in the *Odyssey* as an ἄγαλμα, an "object of delight (to a god)," the term normally applied to dedicated statues.⁴⁰ Some resemblance could be sought between the animal and the divine recipient. At a minimum, gods usually received male animals (if female, never pregnant), goddesses female; the symbolic connection went further when, for instance, earth was given black or pregnant victims. All victims had to be "whole" and "perfect," like the gods.⁴¹

Mauss and Hubert saw sacrifice as a ritual that opened communication with the gods through consecration of a victim; through that consecration the human participants too were temporarily brought into the divine sphere.⁴² In relation to the Greek material, their schema errs perhaps only in trying to define too precisely the steps and modalities of consecration, both of the animal and of the human participants. Little was normally required of humans by way of preparation beyond washing and clean clothes.⁴³ As for the animal, we cannot identify a precise moment when it became the god's. "Beginning" a sacrifice is a function often referred to. In the case just mentioned from Cos it was done by sprinkling with water from a bough; more often, hair was cut from the victim's brow and burned on the altar. After the kill, blood was splattered on the altar (or poured directly into a river, if the river was the recipient), and the officiant in a vitally important

40. Cos: RO 62 (LSCG 151) A 1–19 (selection); ibid. 31–32 (beginning). Bargylia: SEG 45.1508; SEG 50.1101 (the latter decree alters the judging arrangements mentioned in my text). Mykonos: LSCG 96.13. Magnesia: LSA 32, cf. p. 198. Ilion: LSA 9.20–24; for other examples of such branding, see L. Robert, *Hellenica* 11–12, 120 (Paris, 1960). ἄγαλμα: Hom. *Od.* 3. 438. On the beautification of sacrificial animals, see van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 43–46; Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 186–89.

41. See C. Feyel, *RPhil* 80 (2006): 36–42 (but Spartans and Eretrians supposedly tolerated maimed victims, Plat. *Alc.* II 149A, Ael. *NA* 12.34). On pregnant victims, J. N. Bremmer in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 155–65. Despite many exceptions, the sex of animal/sex of deity correlation applies in far more than 50 percent of cases: see *ThesCRA* 1:97–99 and, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 3.103–6; LSA 32.46–59. On the species preferred by individual gods, see *ThesCRA* 1:68–95 (with osteological evidence).

42. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, 97, "This procedure consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of the ceremony is destroyed." The commonest Homeric verb for sacrifice, ἱερεῖω, apparently acquires that sense not directly from the idea of consecration but as "do the work of a priest" (Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 19).

43. The requirement of sexual purity in RO 62 (LSCG 151) A 40–44 (n. 145 below) is unusual.

act placed the god's portion on the altar for burning along with vegetable offerings.⁴⁴ As we have noted, a simple but indispensable accompaniment to the gift was the officiant's prayer. But the animal had started to belong to the god even before the "beginning," through the process of selection. And the procession to the altar, where one occurred, enacted quite literally the approach of all concerned to the divine. A law from Astypalaia stipulates that all animals that are led in the procession for Dionysus be branded, to ensure that they are indeed sacrificed in due course to the god to whom they have been led.⁴⁵ The religious charge built up cumulatively through all these procedures, partly through the spectacle that they presented: even quite a modest procession at a private sacrifice, with the burning of incense and the piping of an aulos player, could become a multisensory experience.⁴⁶

One cannot reduce sacrifice to the ritualized preparation for a banquet, therefore; the gods have to be given their place. The point is reinforced if one remembers an aspect that is obscured by the best-known literary descriptions of sacrifice, which make no mention of it. It is from inscriptions that we learn that public alimentary sacrifices were normally and perhaps invariably accompanied by offerings of wheat or barley cakes.⁴⁷ In some contexts such vegetarian offerings replaced blood sacrifice; and the verb used for bringing them was that used also for animal sacrifice, θύειν.⁴⁸ These side offerings in one sense reinforce the association of alimentary sacrifice with food and eating. But they have nothing to do with the legitimization of killing through ritualization; nor are they, like the thighbones burned for the gods, a token portion set aside from a larger whole that falls to men. They are a food offering to the gods, pure and simple.⁴⁹ Exactly the same considerations apply to the libations, vinous or "sober," which also accompany sacrifice. They

44. Beginning: n. 143 below. God's portion: n. 144 below. Blood splattered: van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 104; G. Ekroth, 'Blood on the altars?', *Antike Kunst* 48 (2005), 9–29; cf. the exceptional Ar. *Pax* 1019. Rivers: LSCG 96.34–37, cf. Hom. *Il.* 23.147–48, and R. Koch Piettre in *Cuisine et autel*, 87–89.

45. LSS 83, Astypalaia, second/first century BC. On branding see C. Feyel, *RPhil* 80 (2006): 49–54.

46. On incense see V. Mehl in *Sacrifice antique*, 167–86; on music, Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 173, 481–82, 488 [+]; *ThesCRA* 2:371–75. Sacrifices unaccompanied by music were unusual enough to be remarked on: F. Graf in *Kykeon*, 117.

47. See especially now SEG 54.214, where priests are systematically reimbursed for the raw materials; also, e.g., LSCG 63, RO 62 (LSCG 151) A 36–37, 47–48; LSA 37.10–12. LSCG 134 (Thera, fourth century BC) is a good illustration from what is apparently a private foundation: "They shall sacrifice an ox, wheat of a *medimnos*, barley of two *medimnoi*, a *metrētēs* of wine, and seasonal fruits"; cf., e.g., LSA 39.14–16. See E. Kearns in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice*, 65–70; van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 139–43; L. Bruit-Zaidman in *Cuisine et autel*, 31–46.

48. See, e.g., LSS 21; 30; LSA 24 A 21–23; Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 73.

49. McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*, stresses the role of vegetarian offerings in Hebrew and Vedic sacrifice in order to move the theory of sacrifice in the direction indicated by her title.

round out the association of sacrifice with eating and drinking, but gods not men are the recipients. Incense too is "sacrificed"⁵⁰ (the original application, as it seems, of the verb θύειν, and one it never loses): the sweet smoke goes up, like the savor of sacrifices, to please the nostrils of the gods. θύειν, we note, relates to what is burned for the gods (whether incense, cake, or bones), not what is eaten by men.

The argument thus far has been intended to bring out the double aspect of Greek alimentary sacrifice, a double aspect of which one side or the other regularly seems in some measure redundant. Even where the primary motivation was propitiation, there normally followed a banquet; even where the primary motivation was meat eating, there preceded a sacrifice. From case to case more emphasis was placed on one aspect or the other, but both were always present. It cannot readily be said that one function is more basic than the other: a means of honoring the gods, and the most basic form of human sociability, are combined in an indissoluble new unity. The contexts in which sacrifices of this type were performed are too numerous to be worth listing; it was all but omni-functional.⁵¹

If asked about the purpose of sacrifice, a Greek would probably have answered roughly in the terms of a much-quoted phrase of Plato, that it was a "giving to the gods."⁵² Two objections can be made to that explanation. In ordinary gift giving, no part of the gift is retained by the giver, whereas in sacrifice the human givers keep the best meat for themselves; many jokes in comedy show how aware the Greeks were of that anomaly. Second, it is not clear why, if an animal is to be given to a god, it must be killed in the first place and not, for instance, kept in a sacred herd.⁵³ (Neoplatonists met the second objection by explaining that the gift was not the animal but the life of the animal.)⁵⁴ But, once one has recognized the double aspect of Greek alimentary sacrifice, one sees why this particular form of giving necessarily could not conform to the principles generally governing that practice. The gift had to be killed and eaten. Nonetheless, Greeks saw it as

50. See, e.g., LSCG 87.10, with Sokolowski's parallels; Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 69–75.

51. Cf. P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 1920), 107–8. In Theophrastus's well-known formula (ap. Porph. *Abst.* 2.14.1), sacrifice was made ἢ διὰ τιμὴν ἢ διὰ χάριν ἢ διὰ χρεῖαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν.

52. Pl. *Euthyphr.* 14C τὸ θύειν δωρεῖσθαι ἐστὶ τοῖς θεοῖς; cf. Pl. *Plt.* 290C. Critics accordingly, taking a lead from Plato (e.g., *Resp.* 365E), could see sacrifice as a form of attempted bribery: Theophr. (?) ap. Porph. *Abst.* 2.60.1, and Christian apologists (e.g., Arn. *Adv. nat.* 7.12).

53. Cf. de Heusch, *Sacrifice in Africa*, 55–57, 96. Jokes in comedy: see, e.g., Men. *Dysk.* 447–53, with E. W. Handley's note ad loc.

54. Cf. n. 3 above.

a gift, strictly comparable to that more conventional form of giving to the gods that was dedication. We noted above the description in the *Odyssey* of a beautifully adorned sacrificial animal as an ἄγαλμα, like a dedicated statue. The whole Greek conceptualization of the relation between gods and men becomes incomprehensible if one denies that a sacrifice was a gift that would ideally call forth a counter-gift.⁵⁵

There is anyway a sense in which sacrifice was indeed a gift. The use of wild animals such as deer and of fish, even if osteology is extending the evidence in interesting ways, remains rare enough to count as an exceptional extension inviting special explanation.⁵⁶ Among domesticated animals dogs, donkeys, and horses are used only in special circumstances; some gods welcome doves, cocks, and geese, but the central sacrificial breeds are cattle, sheep, pigs, and (rather less common) goats. What these breeds represented, at least in the Homeric world, was productive wealth in its most concrete form.⁵⁷ There is therefore in sacrificial killing an element of surrender of wealth.

The presence in Greek sacrifice of "sacrifice" in the sense the word often bears in English is, to be sure, a delicate topic where alien assumptions are always in danger of insinuating themselves: one cannot translate "that was a great sacrifice for him" into Greek by dipping into any part of the vocabulary of Greek ritual sacrifice. The myths that speak of the requirement to "sacrifice the fairest product of the year"⁵⁸ or something similar (in the event usually a highborn child) are not a reliable guide to the everyday ideology of sacrifice. In such myths, the community is forced without explanation to surrender an object of great value, like Polycrates throwing his ring into

55. Counter-gift: cf. p. x. In two Arcadian inscriptions, δναθύειν was used, remarkably, for "dedicate" (Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 94). ἄγαλμα: Hom. *Od.* 3.438.

56. See, e.g., *ThesCRA* 1:75 (Artemis, at Kalapodi; cf. Ekroth, "Meat, Man and God," 276; Ekroth, "Thighs or Tails?" 141, 144); cf. the votive from Aegina showing a deer brought to Artemis, Athens NM 1950 (*ThesCRA* 1, pl. 3, no. 91), and the "deer" cakes brought to her in Athens during Elaphebolion (Parker, *Polytheism*, 468); on the important iconographic evidence, not of completely clear interpretation, from the sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Kato Symi, see Lebessi, *Tò 'Epeò τοῦ 'Ερμῆ*, 1:113–36; Prent, *Cretan Sanctuaries*, 345, 587, 647 (wild goat); note too the boar shown on a lost Campanian vase (the Rainore vase: D. Gill, *Greek Cult Tables* [New York, 1991], 83–84, with fig. 29). On fish see *ThesCRA* 1:81, 95 (the whole article is a valuable archaeological vade mecum); Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 744–45; B. Kowalzig in *Animal Sacrifice in the Greek World*, ed. S. Hitch and I. Rutherford (Cambridge, 2011). For ancient lists of animals used in sacrifice, see Stengel, *Opferbräuche*, 222–33; for literary evidence on wild animals and fish, *ibid.*, 197–202.

57. On sacrifice and wealth, cf. de Heusch, *Sacrifice in Africa*, 203.

58. Eur. *IT* 20–21; cf. S. Georgoudi, "À propos du sacrifice humain en Grèce ancienne: Remarques critiques," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999): 62–82, at 71. On (mostly mythical) self-maiming, see the brilliant study of H. S. Versnel, "Self-Sacrifice, Compensation and the Anonymous Gods," in *Sacrifice dans l'antiquité*, 135–85; W. Burkert, *The Creation of the Sacred* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 34–40.

the sea. This is self-maiming pure and simple. But few Greek sacrifices are at all like that. The nearest approach perhaps lies in the very rare practice of throwing victims, horses especially, live into rivers or the sea, for Poseidon or the river in question.⁵⁹ It represents an intense and extreme way of achieving communication with the deity; the communication comes through the symbolic link of horses with rivers and the sea, the extremity from the waste of a highly valuable animal. Normal Greek sacrifice, however, is not understood as pointless and self-punishing renunciation, but as the renunciation for another's benefit known as a gift.

All the same, the wealth you give away, with whatever hope of return, you no longer have; the wealth embodied in the sacrificed animal has been used, not stored, and is not available to use again. If one made sacrifice at a public shrine, one was obliged to surrender perquisites of substantial value, which, though ultimately benefiting the priest, were sometimes presented first to the god or said to belong to him; the sacrificer lost the use of them, in favor of god/priest.⁶⁰ J. Z. Smith has pointed out that globally sacrifice is characteristic not of hunters but of pastoralists; with poised irony he suggests that, were it good method to seek an "origin of sacrifice," the best place to look might be the ambiguous emotions (but not guilt) of the stock raiser—perhaps we should rather say, since sacrifice is a collective activity, the "stock-raising society"—who must both increase and selectively cull his herd.⁶¹

59. Hom. *Il.* 21.132 (the Trojans, to Spercheios; possibly envisaged as non-Greek); Paus. 8.7.2 (Argos, in the past); Diod. Sic. 5.4.2 (individuals sink smaller victims, the city sinks bulls, into the lake beside the well Kyane in Syracuse); Harp. κ 7 κάθετος: ὁ καθεύμενος εἰς τὸ πέλαγος ὁμίος (citing Lysias fr. 281 Carey, Meliton *FGH* 345 F 1); *Anecd. Bekk.* 1.270.8 κάθετον βοῶν τινα καθεύμενον εἰς τὴν θάλατταν τῷ Ποσειδῶνι θυσίαν; cf. R. Koch Piettre, "Précipitations sacrificielles en Grèce ancienne," in *Cuisine et autel*, 77–100 (esp. 87 on the element of conspicuous waste). That the animals are alive when thrown in is explicit in Hom. *Il.* 21.132 (and in a myth in Plut. *Conv. sept. sap.* 20, 163B), probable in the other cases. A very spectacular rite is attested for Rhodes by Festus s.v. October Equus: *Rhodii...quotannis quadrigas Soli consecratas in mare iaciunt, quod is tali curriculo fertur circumvehi mundum*. Despite the difference in addressee and periodicity, scholars associate this rite with the Rhodian festival Hippokathesia (*LSS* 94.8–14, which, however, refers to ordinary sacrifice; *ILindos* 490.11), celebrated every eight years (*ASAtene* 30–32 [1952–54]: 256–59, no. 5), which they take to honor Poseidon: D. Morelli, *I culti in Rodi* (Pisa, 1959), 65–66, 98–99, 169. Non-Greek parallels in Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 237 n. 1; Festus (s.v. Hippius) knows of an eight-yearly throwing of four horses into the sea among the Illyrians. On a much humbler level, the throwing of cakes into springs is forbidden in *LSCG* 152.

60. See below nn. 70–71 on table offerings and "entrails on hands and knees." For priestly perquisites said to belong "to the god," see, e.g., *SEG* 28.750 (*NGSL* 24), *LSCG* 55.9–11; Stengel, *Opferbräuche*, 170–71.

61. Smith, "Domestication of Sacrifice," n. 13 above. There are some signs that the timing of sacrifices in Greece was determined by the logic of the stock-rearing year, with sacrifices being most frequent when there was an abundance of surplus young animals: M. Jameson, "Sacrifice and Animal

Sacrifice is a gift to the gods that permits communication between god and man; it is also the indispensable prerequisite for human feasting. Can this double aspect be explained? This may belong to the order of questions that Veyne's warning should discourage one from posing. But it is worth recalling one of the classic theories of sacrifice, the "communion" theory of Robertson Smith.⁶² Robertson Smith saw the rite as a coming together of man and god through the basic form of human sociability, the feast. The sacred banquet forges bonds both between men and between man and god; the emphasis can shift in either direction, toward sociability or toward communication with a god, as the situation dictates. In Plato's *Symposium* too, sacrifice and divination are spoken of as aspects of "the mutual association of gods and mortals" (ἡ περὶ θεοῦς τε καὶ ἀνθρώπους πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινωνία).⁶³ As presented by Robertson Smith, the theory contained the further proposition that what was eaten at the sacred banquet was in a sense the god himself. This disastrous addition, an amalgam of the Christian Eucharist with nineteenth-century theories of the totemic animal, inevitably bred resistance to the whole approach. Stripped of that excess, the theory has considerable appeal.⁶⁴ God is present because, on the rare occasion of a meat feast, men as a group feel themselves supremely well and at peace. As a device for approaching a god, the sacrificial feast represents, therefore, the polar antithesis of asceticism.

There is, however, controversy about the kind of table fellowship, if any, that Greek sacrifice established between man and god, the question whether the rite brought together the two kinds or by contrast confirmed their separation. There had once been a time when "feasts were shared, seats were shared, between immortal gods and mortal men."⁶⁵ Several myths revolve around such table fellowship: those of Lycaon and Tantalus show the abuse of it by wicked mortals that rendered it unsustainable; Pindar poignantly contrasts the brief but extraordinary felicity of Peleus and Cadmus, at whose wedding feasts "gods dined, and they saw the royal children of Kronos on golden seats, and received wedding gifts," with the sufferings that inevitably awaited them later, mortals as they were.⁶⁶ Later Greeks doubtless understood alimentary sacrifice

Husbandry in Classical Greece," in *Pastoral Economies in Classical Antiquity*, ed. C. R. Whittaker, 87–119 (*PCPS* supp. 14, Cambridge, 1988).

62. The theory is developed gradually through the later chapters of Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, and summarized on the penultimate page, 439: "The fundamental idea of ancient sacrifice is sacramental communion."

63. Pl. *Symp.* 188B–C.

64. Cf. Gibson, *Sacrifice and Sharing*, 182–85.

65. Hes. fr. 1.6–7 M/W; cf. Hom. *Od.* 7.201–3 (the Phaeacians); Paus. 8.2.4.

66. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.93–95. Tantalus and Lycaon; cf. Ekroth, "Burnt, Cooked or Raw?" 95–97.

as an altered memorial of the primeval time of actual table fellowship. Hesiod may associate the origin of sacrifice in its present form precisely with the ending of that lost age. He tells how it was at the time when gods and men "disputed," or "were separated" (the Greek verb ἐκρίνοντο is maddeningly unclear), at Mekone that Prometheus tricked Zeus into taking bones wrapped in fat as his portion; Zeus's subsequent revenge on Prometheus locked us into the imperfect world in which we now live.⁶⁷

J. P. Vernant has built on this myth to give what one might call a world-ordering view of Greek participatory sacrifice. Sacrifice is an expression and re-creation of the separation between gods and men. The immortal gods above receive smoke and incense, incorruptible substances, only; mortals feed on putrescent flesh. The third species, that of animals, is confirmed in its separate role as a means of communication between gods and men. Each sacrifice puts the different species of the world in their place. And this symbolic re-creation of the world is a large part of what gives Greek participatory sacrifice its religious charge.⁶⁸ But it seems necessary to charge an interpreter for once not with Christianizing but with Vedianizing assumptions. According to the Brāhmaṇas, every sacrifice is a repetition of the original cosmogonic act, which was itself a sacrifice.⁶⁹ Vernant distinguishes, it is true, his understanding of Greek sacrifice from Vedic, which is not merely world ordering but cosmogonic. But he still ascribes to it a foundational role in Greek understanding of the order of things.

Yet the Greek situation was entirely different from the learned Brāhmaṇas tradition. The myth told by Hesiod was not repeated at every Greek sacrifice; strangely enough, it is not even alluded to by any author of the classical period. Greek sacrifice was entirely unaccompanied by exegesis; there is no reason to think that it was perceived as repeating a world-ordering act. And, as several scholars have observed, actual sacrificial practices conflict with the

67. Hes. *Theog.* 535–36.

68. See, e.g., *Religion grecque, religions antiques* (Paris, 1976), 31 (Englished in *Mortals and Immortals*, 280–81); cf. J. L. Durand in *Cuisine of Sacrifice*, 104 (155 in the Fr. orig.), "Un moment où le monde se met en place sous le regard des dieux"; Durand, *City of Images*, 53, "Eating meat means re-enacting around the smoking and bloody altar the very order of the universe" ("Manger la viande équivaut chaque fois à remettre en place autour de l'autel fumant et ensanglanté l'ordre même de l'univers.") For comparable claims about sacrifice in Indo-European ideology, see B. Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago, 1991), 167–75.

69. S. Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas* (1898; 2nd ed., Paris, 1966), 82: "Le lieu où converge l'univers"; cf. M. Biardieu and C. Malamoud, *Le sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1976), 14–23: "Le sacrifice comme principe cosmogonique"; in brief McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*, 141–42. On the character of the Brāhmaṇas, Lévi, 77: "Le sacrifice est une combinaison savante et compliquée d'actes rituels et de paroles sacrées." It is noteworthy to Herodotus that every Persian sacrifice required the presence of a *magos*, who recited a theogony (Hdt. 1.132.3).

notion, so familiar from literature, that the gods' share of sacrifice comes to them only in the form of smoke.⁷⁰ In addition to the portion burned for them on the altar, it was a common practice to set out further offerings, of raw meat and other foodstuffs, on a table for the gods. These table offerings commonly went in the end to priests as perquisites, but this characteristic piece of religious double accounting does not affect the point that at an ideal level this raw meat was given to the gods. Cooked entrails too could be placed on the hands or knees of divine images before passing to the priest.⁷¹ Sacrifices as actually performed, therefore, were not based on an ontological distinction between flesh-eating men and gods content with smoke alone.

That point aside, is it true that sacrifice affirms the gap between gods and mortals? Two perspectives on the issue are possible. On a very large view, participatory sacrifice as the Greeks knew it was indeed a product of the great divide. Men still share an animal with the gods because they once shared a table with them too; now, however, the two breeds live and eat apart. But this cosmogonic perspective was one that Greeks seldom had reason to adopt. That gods were gods, men men, and that a radical divide existed between the two species was a basic datum of experience, a thing taken for granted. In an everyday perspective the issue was to communicate with the gods across the great divide, and in that perspective the point of sacrifice was precisely to create a bridge.

Anthropologists distinguish between conjunctive sacrifices, those designed to bring men into beneficial contact with supernatural powers, and disjunctive sacrifices, those that separate them from malevolent or polluting powers and other sources of danger.⁷² In those terms Greek participatory sacrifice is unquestionably to be seen as conjunctive. Gods were urged in prayers to "come" and to "receive" their offerings; describing a sacrifice in *Odyssey* book 3, Homer mentions the human participants and adds, "And Athena came to receive her offerings";⁷³ in doing so, she behaves just like the deities shown on votive reliefs standing behind altars to which worshippers are leading a victim. At the ideal level, gods attend their sacrifices, and the gap

70. See, e.g., L. Bruit Zaidman in *Cuisine et autel*, 31; G. Berthiaume, *ibid.*, 241–50 (who, however, probably consigns too much real meat to the gods: Ekroth, "Thighs or Tails?" 127–29). On table offerings, see D. Gill, *Greek Cult Tables* (New York, 1991) (the essential already in his article in *HTR* 1974); Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 136–40; Ekroth, "Meat, Man and God," 267–68.

71. See Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 40–41, on, e.g., LSS 129.4–6, Ar. *Av.* 518–19, *Ecl.* 780–83.

72. See, e.g., Beattie (n. 37 above), 38, adducing de Heusch. Similarly, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford, 1956), 275, cites Georges Gusdorf for the idea that sacrifice "is made not only to the gods but against the gods."

73. Hom. *Od.* 3.435–36; a speaker in Ath. 8, 363D–F draws the correct conclusion from this passage. On the deity awaiting worshippers at the altar in art, see Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 489–90.

between the two worlds is bridged; this point is central. The two conceptions, of the god as invisibly present and as enjoying the scented smoke from on high, coexist in unresolved but unproblematic tension.

There also existed a rite of theoxenia, "god entertaining."⁷⁴ A table of foodstuffs was prepared and a couch with a coverlet was set beside it, on which an image of the god might be placed. As a word, heroxenia, "hero entertaining," is much less common, but the practice of setting out a table for heroes and heroines is very well known from Attic calendars.⁷⁵ Strictly perhaps theoxenia should be distinguished from sacrifice, since the foods served to the gods were predominantly vegetarian, as at ordinary human meals, and were placed on a table, not burned. But there is evident continuity between entertaining a god with table plus couch and the simpler practice of providing table offerings alongside sacrifice; theoxenia goes a step further in make-believe assimilation of the god to a human guest. And we have recently learned that at Selinus, and in the cult of the Corybantes in Erythrai, the procedures of sacrifice and of theoxenia were thoroughly intertwined.⁷⁶

A fragment of Bacchylides invites the Dioscuri (the commonest recipients of theoxenia) to the entertainment prepared for them: "We have here no bodies of oxen, no gold, no purple coverlets; but friendly hearts, a sweet Muse, and delicious wine in Boeotian cups." Greek poets of the Roman period and their Roman followers imitated this style of invitation in poems inviting powerful human patrons to dine: a difference in status and wealth is acknowledged but the attempt still made to achieve a temporary intimacy.⁷⁷ Neither at sacrifice nor even at theoxenia rituals, it is true, did the Greeks claim to be recovering the primeval table fellowship of man with god: in theoxenia, mortals might dine under the same roof as the god, but the god

74. M. H. Jameson, "Theoxenia," in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice*, 35–57; Veyne, "Inviter les dieux"; L. Bruit Zaidman in *ThesCRA* II, 225–29. For theoxenies as based on "Dinge, wie sie eben auch die Menschen essen," see Meuli, "Opferbräuche," 194–95; Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 282.

75. See especially the Marathon calendar, *SEG* 50.168, face A col. 2. The relation of such tables to those shown in the very frequent type of the "banqueting hero" relief is disputed (Dentzer, *Banquet couché*, 513–27), but some connection is hard to doubt.

76. In Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous* (NGSL 27), A 13–16, a sacrifice is followed by preparation of table, couch, and coverlet; meat, presumably from the sacrifice, is placed on the table, and a portion of offerings from the table is burned. In A 18–20 a table is again placed after a sacrifice, and the instruction follows to "burn a thigh and the offerings from the table and the bones" (trans. the editors): cf. G. Ekroth, "Bare Bones," in *Animal Sacrifice* (n. 56). Erythrai: *SEG* 47.1628.5–7, fees payable if anyone "entertains the gods" (the Corybantes) on the public altars. But Ekroth's argument, "Burnt, Cooked or Raw?" 102, from a supplemented text (*IGLSM* 3.47 [new text of *LSCG* 90]) for the use of roasted meat in theoxeny is insecure.

77. Bacch. fr. 21 ap Ath. 11.101, 500A–B; cf. Hor. *Od.* 1.20, with Nisbet/Hubbard's introductory note.



FIGURE 4. Theoxenia: the Dioscuri arrive on horseback at a table spread for them. Clay votive relief, Taranto, Museo Nazionale, 4118; photo museum, reproduced by permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali-Direzione Regionale per i Beni Culturali e Paesaggistici della Puglia-Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Puglia.

had his own table,⁷⁸ and there was no attempt to localize precisely the whereabouts of the god who "came" to "receive" sacrifices. The difference in nature between man and god was irreducible; these rituals, however, did what

78. So Veyne, "Inviter les dieux," 4, 10–11, 20, 24; L. Bruit Zaidman in *Cuisine et autel*, 40–42. In some Greek families, stories were told of a forebear who had entertained the Dioscuri (Hdt. 6.127.3; Pind. *Nem.* 10.49–51), presumably in person; but these were stories of an earlier time. No goddess, Veyne notes, 20, receives theoxeny.

they could. (Note, however, that a ritual formally very similar to theoxenia could also be applied to polluting spirits with whom intimacy was certainly not desired.⁷⁹ Here the gesture of hospitality was aimed to appease the recipient and thus end a relationship.)

A Labyrinth of Variations: Nonstandard Forms of Alimentary Sacrifice

Not all ritual killings led to human dining, even apart from those such as purifications and oath sacrifices that were not cast in the idiom of foodstuffs at all. Animals and accompanying vegetable offerings could be burned whole, or (for water deities) thrown into water, or (in the cult of the dead) simply abandoned. The word "destruction" is often used in this context, though it has been pointed out that "removal" was really the result sought. An intermediate form has been identified and termed a "moirocaust," "partial burning":⁸⁰ here more meat was burned for the recipient than usual but the majority was still left for human consumption. An inscription first published in 2004 suggests that the valuable pelt was sometimes, and perhaps regularly, taken off before an animal was burned whole; in another form the meat might be eaten but the pelt added to the flames.⁸¹

Karl Meuli assigned such practices an origin quite different from that of ordinary participatory sacrifices: he saw the holocaust as deriving from the cult of the dead, and explained it by the kind of destructive rage displayed by Achilles after the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad*: my friend is dead, let

79. See LSS 115 B 29–39 (RO 97.111–21), with the commentary in RO; also Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous* (NGSL 27) B 3–7 as supplemented in 4 by the editors (for other views see NGSL ad loc.). Cf. p. 147 below on "disjunctive sacrifice."

80. Removal: J. Svenbro in *Cuisine et autel*, 217–24. Moirocaust: S. Scullion, *ZPE* 132 (2000): 163–71; cf. Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 313–18; Ekroth, "Burnt, Cooked or Raw?" 89–93. Where extra meat was burned, the recipients were either the kinds of god who might be given holocausts (Zeus Meilichios, at Selinous), heroes/heroines (Heracles, on Thasos and perhaps at Miletus; Semele on Mykonos), or hero-like figures (the ancestral Tritopatores at Selinous). Different types of figure seem to be involved when the skin is destroyed: Artemis at Erchia, the Graces on Cos (for references see Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 217–25). The position is complicated further if J. Prott is right (*Leges Graecorum sacrae* [Leipzig, 1896], 1:15–16), that the back (plus, in the first case, shoulder blade) "cut out" from several offerings on Mykonos (LSCG 96.7, 12–13, 30–31: for Poseidon Temenites, Demeter Chloe, Apollo Hekatombios) was burned; as he observes, the specification "a libation is poured over the shoulder-blade" points strongly that way.

81. Skin saved: S. Scullion, "Sacrificial Norms, Greek and Semitic: Holocausts and Hides in a Sacred Law of Aixone," in *Norme religieuse*, 153–69, commenting on SEG 54.214. Skin burned: see previous note.

everything else die too.⁸² But, many other difficulties aside, there is no reason to think that the holocaust sacrifices occasionally listed in sacrificial calendars, amid those of the other kind, were conducted with the savage passion of the greatest of epic heroes. The calendars list holocausts, moirocausts, and ordinary participatory sacrifices indiscriminately. This last consideration invalidates the sharp distinction implicitly drawn in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice* between sacrifices followed by a banquet, sole subject of the book, and all other kinds. This distinction is particularly surprising given the strong structuralist imprint on *The Cuisine of Sacrifice*. Sacrifices that do and do not end in a feast are listed in the same sacrificial calendars; the terms applied to them (θύειν, ἐναγίζειν) and the practices associated with them (libations with and without wine) are often contrasting pairs defined by mutual opposition: they look like components in the same structure or system that ought not to be analyzed in isolation one from the other.

It may seem that the holocaust confronts us with a choice: either we must make the absolute but illegitimate separation made in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice* between the majority of sacrifices that were followed by a feast and the minority that were not; or we must abandon the tie between sacrifice and feast altogether. But the dichotomy is too extreme. In its commonest form, an alimentary sacrifice is a combination of food offering to a deity and feast. Sometimes the element of "food offering" is nominal only, and what predominates is the feast. Occasionally the feast (among humans) is suppressed completely, and only the recipient dines. But sacrifice plus feast (accompanied by libations of wine) is certainly the dominant and normative form. Discrepancies are explicitly signaled in the sacrificial calendars: a sheep for x, burned whole, sober. They are variations on a theme.

Such variation on a theme is a characteristic mechanism of ritual, and one that sacrifice invites in particular, because at its center is a body, a ready object of symbolic manipulation. When sacrifices to expiate incest were performed by the Nuer and Dinka, the animal was cut longitudinally down the middle in such a way as to cut the sexual organs into two halves.⁸³ At funerary sacrifices among the Uduk, another Sudanese people, the animal was suffocated without blood being shed, to keep it intact to serve the dead in the other world. A pun in Aristophanes seems to be based on a Greek sacrificial

82. "Opferbräuche," 201–9. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 31.1 speaks of the enemies killed by Pyrrhus in revenge for the death of his son as "so to speak an *enagismos*."

83. G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford, 1961), 285; E. E. Evans-Pritchard describes the same longitudinal cutting (*Nuer Religion*, 184, 216, 298), but interestingly his informants failed to make explicit the point about the genitals; W. James, *The Listening Ebony*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1999), 128–29.

practice of "cutting the tongue [the organ of speech] for the herald."⁸⁴ The blood of an animal sacrificed to a river could be poured directly into it, not as usual onto an altar.⁸⁵ In such cases (which could be multiplied many times), the whole rite has not been invented as a vehicle for the transparent symbolism; these are adaptations for particular purposes of a dominant form, "special functions" to which the general schema is turned in the phraseology of Hubert and Mauss. Holocausts and moirocausts and other sacrifices without a full feast can be seen as similar adaptations, though with symbolism often, alas, much less transparent.

The rare practice of throwing victims live into rivers or the sea was discussed above. As for offerings burned whole, in the cult of the gods the practice was rare, and the victim was usually a small one such as a piglet. These at least are the conclusions to be drawn from the epigraphical evidence. The picture changes if we admit the testimony of Pausanias, but there is reason to doubt whether "potlatch holocausts" such as he occasionally describes occurred earlier.⁸⁶ The "rise of the holocaust" between the fourth century BC and the second century AD (but where in that period?) becomes therefore a theme for investigation: but not in this place.⁸⁷ The small victim of the classical period often served as a preliminary or subsidiary offering within a longer ritual sequence; a distinctive verb "to pre-burn" (προκαυτεῖν), which acknowledges this preliminary function, occurs once.⁸⁸ A pig burned whole as a preparation for the ordinary sacrifice of an ox can be seen as an intensified version of the burning of a portion for the gods in ordinary sacrifice.

There remains a small but obstinate group of holocausts that do not prepare for a subsequent rite. It is tempting to apply here the distinction between "conjunctive" and "disjunctive" sacrifices: the holocaust or quasi holocaust would be a disjunctive sacrifice that created a separation from a power whom

84. Ar. *Pax* 1110. In surviving sacred laws the tongue goes rather to the priest (Stengel, *Opferbräuche*, 172–77); but note the lovely ad hoc rule at Erchia (LSCG 18 E 49–58) where the sacrifice to Hermes is performed by the herald.

85. LSCG 96.34–37; cf. Hom. *Il.* 23.146–48. R. Koch Piettre in *Cuisine et autel*, 87–89, supposes that the bodies were then burned, but I see no reason why they could not have been eaten.

86. See below, pp. 167–69.

87. The issue is not just the mass holocausts discussed below. Holocausts for heroes are far more frequent in Pausanias than in earlier evidence (see G. Ekroth in *Hero Cult*, 145–58; cf. Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 307–8); in a well-excavated case, though the hero cult for Palaimon/Melikertes at the Isthmus goes back on literary evidence to the archaic period (E. R. Gebhard and M. W. Dickie in *Hero Cult*, 159–65), the regular holocausts of bovines begin c. AD 50 (E. R. Gebhard and D. S. Reese in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 125–53) and doubtless attest a Roman-period reconstruction (M. Piérart, *Kernos* 11 (1998): 85–109).

88. RO 62 (LSCG 151) B 12–13. Heracles on Cos receives on the same day both a burned offering and an ordinary sacrifice, but apparently in different places: *ibid.* C 8–15.

the worshippers wished to accord the necessary honor only from a safe distance. When in Smyrna a black ox was cut in pieces and burned for "ravening hunger" (literally "ox hunger," βούβρωστις), it is easy to identify the rite as one of separation; one may suspect that the black bull was seen as embodying βούβρωστις. A holocaust to the Eumenides, figures whose grove prudent persons passed by silently with eyes down, is not a surprise either. The same explanation might fit holocausts to heroes, in the minority of heroic sacrifices that had this form. The practice of depositing "meals for Hecate," the dangerous goddess, at the crossroads is a model example of a somewhat different form of disjunctive offering.⁸⁹

But there are many contexts where separation might seem desirable yet the sacrifice was not a holocaust. One might think that a plague was an occasion calling for a disjunctive offering if ever one did. Yet, in Homer's depiction at least, the Greeks ate of the hecatomb that they brought to Apollo at the end of *Iliad* book one (430–74). No holocaust for Apollo, the sender of plague, is to my knowledge ever attested. The most astonishing prescription in the altogether astonishing Lex Sacra from Selinous is the last: "When (someone) wishes to sacrifice to the *elastēros*, sacrifice as to the immortals, but let him slaughter (so that the blood flows) into the ground." An *elastēros* is in all seeming a polluting spirit, yet it receives sacrifice as to the gods, with the single exception that the blood is directed toward the underworld. There is no sign that sacrifices to "gods who avert evil" or that those involved in the process known as "sacrificing out" (an ill omen, a crime, a pollution) could not be eaten.⁹⁰

Conversely, holocausts occur in contexts where there is no obvious need for disjunction. Why should the men of the Attic deme of Erchia, say, seek separation from "Zeus Overseer (Epopetes)" to whom they made an annual holocaust sacrifice of a piglet on their "hill"? Why was it Xenophon's ancestral custom to make holocausts of pigs to Zeus Meilichios?⁹¹ Much

89. Boubrostis: Metrodorus *FGH* 43 F 3 ap. Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 6.8.1, 694 A–B. Eumenides: Σ Soph. OC 42, Paus. 8.34.3 (holocausts sacrificed by Orestes in the Peloponnese); Soph. OC 125–33. But participatory sacrifices to them were also possible, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous* (NGSL 27) A 8–9, Σ Soph. OC 489, ? Paus. 2.11.4, Paus. 8.34.3 (Orestes' second sacrifice). Meals for Hecate: A. Zografou in *ThesCRA* 2:229–31; cf. n. 79 on "disjunctive" theoxeny.

90. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous* (NGSL 27) B 12–13. "Gods who avert evil": see Parker, *Polytheism*, 413–14; that they receive normal sacrifice is noted by Burkert in *Sacrifice dans l'antiquité*, 123. The killing of a red he-goat to avert "disease or [] or death" for Apollo the Averter outside the gates of Cyrene (RO 97 [LSS 115] A 4–7) sounds like a classic "destroying the embodiment of evil" offering; but the verb used is θβεῖν. "Sacrificing out": see LSJ s.v. ἐκθῶ; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 54.6; J. Gibert, *HSCP* 101 (2003): 167–71.

91. LSCG 18 γ 19–25; Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.4. On these problems see Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," 111 (and the reservation p. 285 n. 7 below); Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 240–41; on

here remains thoroughly uncertain. Only a limited range of gods appear to receive holocausts whether self-standing or preliminary. The observation (if it is sound!—these things are not so easy to control) that Zeus quite often receives holocausts whereas Artemis, say, and Apollo never do is important. It supports the view that the issue is not one of situation (the need for separation) but the character of the god.

A context where, by contrast, the idea of disjunctive sacrifice is clearly helpful is the cult of the dead. The two verbs θύειν and ἐναγίζειν are sometimes explicitly contrasted;⁹² when they are, θύειν denotes sacrifices followed by dining, ἐναγίζειν destruction or removal sacrifices. The primary reference of ἐναγίζειν is to offerings made to the dead. It looks as if the practice of killing an animal as a προσφάγιον, “preliminary slaughter offering,” at funerals went out of use between the fifth and fourth centuries;⁹³ thereafter the offerings (whether at the funeral, or commemorative) removed from human use by the rite of ἐναγίζειν will have consisted of such things as cakes, seasonal fruits, flowers, and libations. But ἐναγίζειν could also be used of animal victims burned whole for heroes;⁹⁴ for one ritual idiom through which heroes could be treated as dead mortals, if still receiving rather grander offerings than did ordinary men. Such a heroic holocaust might be accompanied by a “blood glutting” (αἱμακουρία), whereby the blood of the animal victim was poured onto the ground to seep down to those below. (There also existed a compromise form in which the blood was poured into the earth but the animal still eaten.)⁹⁵ There is an obvious possibility of

the possible influence of the hero Epops, who receives a holocaust in the same calendar, on Zeus Epopetes, Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 183; cf. A. Hollis, *ZPE* 93 (1992): 11–13. Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 307, 326, suggests that a distinction made by some anthropologists between low- and high-intensity rites (i.e., routine rites versus those responding to a crisis) might bear some relation to the *thysia*/holocaust distinction, but notes that regular, calendrically regulated holocausts do not fit the model; even an advocate of it concedes that it is an observer's distinction that fails to track the distinctions in actual sacrificial practice with precision (J. van Baal, “Offering, Sacrifice and Gift,” *Numen* 23 [1976]: 161–78).

92. Hdt. 2.44; F. Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (Berlin, 1909), 468.

93. See the endnote to this chapter.

94. Holocausts for gods were never so designated, even if the meat received objectively exactly the same treatment in the two cases. Confusingly, burned offerings to heroes could be designated either with the ἐναγίζειν or with the “burn” vocabulary. The burned offerings to heroes in the Erchia calendar (LSCG 18) are examples of the latter: they sound exactly like burned offerings to gods. The verb καρποῦν is in sacral usage synonymous with καίειν, burn; how it acquired that sense is a mystery (Stengel, *Opferbräuche*, 166–68; a different view in P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* [Paris, 1968–80], s.v. καρποῦν).

95. See, e.g., Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous* (NGSL 27) B 12–13; Paus. 10.4.10; R. Parker in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 41–42. On blood glutting, Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 171–77; on the mixed form, which she associates especially with military heroes, *ibid.*, 257–68.

aligning the θύειν/ἐναγίζειν distinction with that between conjunctive and disjunctive sacrifices: the gods live apart from us and contact with them needs to be established; the dead must be first separated from mortals and then kept separate. ἐναγίζειν is generally supposed to contain in it the root ἄγος/*ἄγος denoting the sacred in its most dangerous and unapproachable form: ἐναγίζειν is to give something over to that sacredness and put it beyond the human sphere.⁹⁶ An offering made to the dead or to heroes assimilated to them might be described as a “feast,” but one in which no human would care to participate.⁹⁷

Variation in the use of meat and skin and blood was only one of the variations that occurred in sacrifice. Others included the choice of victims (species, age, sex, color), the manner of killing, the types of altar that were used, the accompanying libations, whether “carrying away” of the meat was permitted; also perhaps, if less often, the time of day at which the rite was performed, the direction in which participants faced, and so on. The inventory of differences here is enormous and every new sacrificial regulation that is published adds to it, one might almost say. Patterns certainly exist among these variations, but they refuse to align with one another in any completely systematic way.⁹⁸ There is, for instance, a close but not an invariable relationship between holocausts and “sober” libations, those consisting of honey mixed with water or milk (*melikraton*)⁹⁹ and not (as at most sacrifices) of wine. All the holocausts listed in the calendar of the Attic deme of Erchia were “sober,” but not all sober offerings were holocausts; even the sober non-holocausts, however, were made to figures who in other contexts received holocausts or might have done so. Remarkably, the offering to Zeus Meilichios (who received holocausts elsewhere, though not here) was “sober

96. Cf. Parker, *Miasma*, 5–7, 328–29.

97. “Feast and blood glutting” for the war dead of Plataea: Plut. *Aristid.* 21.5–6; for Achilles: Philostr. *Her.* 53.11–13; Odysseus revives dead souls with blood: Hom. *Od.* 10.504–40, 11.23–50; “banquets” for underworld powers also Aesch. *Eum.* 108–9. Possibly the idea that the dead need sustenance (Meuli, “Opferbräuche,” 189–95) lurks in the background and partly explains the “feasting” language.

98. “Non seulement le Grec possède des mots nombreux pour désigner les rites sacrificiels, non seulement les êtres en l'honneur desquels ces rites semblent accomplis appartiennent à des catégories inégales, non seulement on consacre tantôt des offrandes végétales tantôt des victimes animales, selon des modes divers d'immolation, de crémation ou de partage, mais surtout il n'y a aucune correspondance systématique entre toutes ces variations”: J. Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse et actes constitutifs du culte dans la Grèce classique* (Geneva, 1958), 253. On “no carry out” rules, see p. 284.

99. See Graf, “Milch, Honig und Wein,” 212. For the evidence on recipients of sober libations, see A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 87 (1983): 96–98; add now the epithet ‘sober’ applied to Zeus Epopetes in IG 2² 2616 as read by N. Papazarkadas, *Horos* 17–21 (2004–9), 99–101.

up to the entrails," that is, the libations switched from sober (or none) to vinous during the ceremony, once the entrails had been roasted and eaten: the god oscillates between types of sacrifice and types of libation alike.¹⁰⁰ But no ready explanation presents itself for the provision in the new sacred law from Selinous that the impure Tritopatores should receive libations of wine, while their pure equivalents are given "honey mix"; the best we can say is that the Tritopatores, like Zeus Meilichios, were on the margin between the two types.¹⁰¹

It is instructive if discouraging to read a passage such as the following, from one of the rare texts that give step-by-step instructions for performance of a ritual:

The [heralds] burn the piglet and the entrails on the altar, making libations of milk and honey over them; they wash the intestines and burn them beside the altar. When they have been burned without libations, let him make libation of honey and milk over them. . . . Let [the priest] sacrifice over the intestines (τοῖς ἐντέροις ἐπιθύετω) incense [or a type of cake: θύη] and the cakes and libations of [unmixed] and mixed [wine] and a woollen fillet.¹⁰²

So even in a holocaust sacrifice, the animal was not necessarily placed whole on the flames.¹⁰³ The inner organs could be cut out and receive elaborate differentiated treatment; and we even seem to find a progression from "honey mix" via unmixed wine to mixed wine.¹⁰⁴ We fumble in interpreting these variations, and it is very plausible that different Greek communities deployed the repertory of symbols in different ways. The basic components, however—foodstuffs—are always the same.

100. Recipients of sober holocausts at Erchia (LSCG 18): α 14–20, Basile (probably a heroine); γ 19–25, Zeus Epopetes (cf. previous note); δ 18–23 and ε 9–15, Epops; sober non-holocausts α 37–43, Zeus Meilichios ("up to the entrails"); γ 48–53, Leukaspis (hero); δ 43–6, Tritopatreis; ε 59–64, Zeus Epakrios. For holocausts to Zeus Meilichios, see Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.4; a holocaust to a hero is always a possibility; for the Tritopatreis/ores as recipients of moirocausts, see n. 80; for Zeus Epakrios, Zeus Epopetes in this same text is a parallel.

101. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous* (NGSL 27) A 9–16, with their agnostic comment p. 72.

102. RO 62 (LSCG 151) A 32–38.

103. See Scullion, in *Norme religieuse*, 158.

104. It is strongly stressed by Graf, "Milch, Honig und Wein," who argues that both sober offerings and those of unmixed wine are marks of abnormality, since normal adult Greek males drank mixed wine with their meals and saw this as the norm of civilized existence. But it is implausible to combine such different forms as sober and unmixed libations in a single category of abnormality; the unmixed wine accompanying an oath is surely not abnormal wine but concentrated wine.

Sacrifice and the Group

We have wandered, in the last few paragraphs, in the sacrificial maze. Details are hard to interpret; and the coherence of a practice that is so intimately related to eating has been challenged by sacrifices that are followed by no human meal. But our starting point was Veyne's warning that the institution is one that is pushed and pulled and reshaped by conflicting imaginings and interests and needs. "Feasting in communication with the gods" is certainly the description that would cover most cases, but the balance shifts between "feasting" and "communication"; and adaptations are possible that eliminate the feast in order to establish the different forms of communication appropriate to different gods (or to heroes and the dead). Another variable ought now to be introduced. It is both conventional and surely correct to think of sacrifice as a preeminently communal activity, one that is performed by groups and also helps form them.¹⁰⁵ Only gluttonous Heracles sacrifices on his own. In the canonical literary descriptions, sacrifice is marked by elaborate preliminaries, many of which involve a group. The participants lead the animal to the altar in procession, form a circle, purify themselves with lustral water, and throw a handful of barley grains at the victim; these practices are consistently alluded to in a wide variety of texts, and their unifying function was so strongly felt that "sharing lustral water" was a way of referring to membership of a group.¹⁰⁶

As for the events that followed the kill, the great contribution of *The Cuisine of Sacrifice* was to stress the sociopolitical importance of the sacrificial feast. The feast had two parts, the immediate roasting and eating near the altar of the unsalted entrails; the more leisurely consumption, at a distance from the altar or even at home, of the animal's flesh, boiled with salt in cauldrons (or distributed raw). The religious power of the sacrifice inhered in its most concentrated form in the entrails, the vital organs (in their conception as well as ours) of the animals.¹⁰⁷ Privileged participants received a portion of the roasted entrails (which could not be distributed to all), or an especially honorable cut or a double share of the remaining meat; the right to at least

105. See the texts cited in Parker, *Polytheism*, 43, esp. n. 21.

106. Aesch. *Eum.* 656; Ar. *Lys.* 1129–30; Eur. *El.* 791–92. For the Homeric descriptions of sacrifice, see G. S. Kirk in *Sacrifice dans l'antiquité*, 41–80 (who stresses variations); the main Attic descriptions are Eur. *El.* 783–843; *HF* 921–30; Ar. *Pax* 937–1043. The collective aspect is almost always present in visual depictions (van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, *passim*).

107. See excellent pages of M. Detienne, *Dionysos Slain* (trans. M. Muellner and L. Muellner, Baltimore, 1979, of *Dionysos mis à mort*, Paris, 1977), 74–77 (174–79 of the Fr. orig.); also J. L. Durand in *Cuisine of Sacrifice*, 92, 99 (140, 148 in the Fr. orig.); van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 190 and in *Cuisine et autel*, 23–24. On salt see Athenio fr. 1.9–26 K/A.

a single "share" was synonymous with full membership of whatever socio-political group was celebrating the rite. Outsiders could be incorporated by being granted the right to a "share," which could even in extreme cases be dispatched overseas; more modestly, private sacrificers distributed portions to absent friends, like slices of wedding cake.¹⁰⁸

The importance of all this in the lived reality of ancient Greece can scarcely be overestimated. The unequal distribution of meat could reinforce hierarchies, equal distribution could negate them, a mixed mode of distribution could allow compromise between different political models. Lienhardt in his study of Dinka religion published a diagram of the cuts of meat on a cow much like those that one sees in a butcher's shop, with the exception that the parts are identified not by their names but by the typical recipients of them: for "brisket" read "people of the sacrificer's cattle camp," for "shank" read "girls of the sacrificer's lineage," and so on.¹⁰⁹ An individual's social relations are mapped out on the body of a cow. *The Cuisine of Sacrifice* encourages us mutatis mutandis to think about the social role of Greek sacrifice in similar terms.

These are manifest truths; and yet some complication is needed even here. It may not be very important that, as Greek societies grew in scale, many sacrifices may have ended not in a group feast but in the "carrying away" (mentioned above) of portions to the participants' separate homes. The practice is sometimes explicitly forbidden, likely therefore often to have occurred.¹¹⁰ Despite the carry-out option, true sacrificial feasts surely remained commonplace. They did not occur, obviously, when the meat of the victim was burned whole. And it is doubtful both in this and in some other contexts whether the collective preliminaries with lustral water and barley grains were actually performed. Philostratus in his *Heroikos* states explicitly that "beginning with the basket and the entrails" did not take place in an ἐνάγισμα, a destruction sacrifice, for Achilles as a hero (in contrast to a subsequent θυσία to him as a god).¹¹¹ Much of the religion of the *Heroikos* (written in the late second century AD) is fantasy, but we can hope that this ritual detail is based on sound antiquarian knowledge. The basket probably takes with it the associated rite with lustral water. An ἐνάγισμα, as we saw, is a good candidate

108. On all this see Ekroth, "Meat, Man and God." Dispatch: see A. Jacquemin, "La participation in absentia au sacrifice," in *Sacrifice antique*, 225–34, with my comment *ibid.*, vi.

109. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience* (in n. 83 above), 24.

110. For a homely example see Herod. 4.92–93.

111. Philostr. *Her.* 53.11–13; on the work see C. P. Jones, *JHS* 121 (2001): 141–49.

for a ritual of separation, being reserved either for the dead or for heroes in their aspect as dead mortals. Perhaps then it is natural that the communal aspect of the event should have been drastically reduced. What preliminaries introduced holocausts to gods is unknown.

The doubts do not concern cases such as these alone. One may wonder how much collective involvement there was, say, in a divinatory sacrifice performed by a seer on campaign.¹¹² Such rituals could certainly attract an attentive audience, but perhaps not one that was invited to participate. The prominence of the seer on such occasions is itself a reminder of the difference between them and ordinary civic sacrifices, presided over by a priest or magistrate. The animal was killed to answer a specific question put to its liver, not to inaugurate a meal; probably its meat was eventually eaten, but as a matter of good housekeeping rather than of religion. This is a different way in which the aspect "communication with the gods" could come to prevail over the aspect "collective feast."

Where Killing Matters: Slaughter-Sacrifices, and the Problem of the Unity of "Sacrifice"

The sacrifices discussed thus far have been what we might call "gift and foodstuff" sacrifices. These divide into those, the majority, that are part eaten by humans and a minority of holocausts that are burned whole for the gods. Even the latter are gifts to identifiable recipients and normally include vegetable offerings alongside the animal victim; they are cast in the idiom of food. The barley grains mixed with salt held by participants in most forms of the rite,¹¹³ and the libations, emphasize the association with nutrition. But the Greeks also practiced various forms of ritual killing that were not food offerings; even their status as offerings to a defined god can be uncertain. Here

112. Or in one conducted in a private house and intended primarily to provide meat for a meal. Eumaeus in Hom. *Od.* 14.419–36 kills a pig for, but not with, a group (no sacrificial word is used, but the rite should probably be accounted a sacrifice: see my "Eating Unsacrificed Meat," above n. 28, 141–42). For a seer performing slaughter-sacrifice alone, see Plut. *De gen.* 27, 594E. Audience: Xen. *Lac.* 13.3–5. Omens were reported from all public sacrifices and this may imply the presence of a seer, but the presiding role always fell to a magistrate or priest; on campaign the seer is in sole charge of the prebattle σφάγια (Thuc. 6.69.2) and has a very prominent role at all sacrifices.

113. Σ *vet. Ar. Eq.* 1167, Stengel, *Opferbräuche*, 13–16; on what was done with them, van Straten, *Hierà Kalá*, 38–39, 66; on their significance, F. Graf in *Kykeon*, 121. The Boeotians used them for their eel sacrifices, *FGH* 86 F 5.

for the first time must be confronted the issue of definition that bedevils all discussion of sacrifice in every culture.¹¹⁴

The difficulty is not precisely or not merely that sacrifice is a class the members of which are held together not by any universally shared characteristics but (in Wittgenstein's famous phrase) by a family resemblance; in a different metaphor Wittgenstein spoke of a rope that "consists of fibres, but it does not get its strength from any fibre that runs through it from one end to another, but from the fact that there is a vast number of fibres overlapping."¹¹⁵ The problem is rather that we are not dealing with an indigenous concept—as it might be αἰδώς, shame—the logic of which we are trying to establish. "Sacrifice" is an observer's category bringing together phenomena that the Greeks described by a variety of terms, a variety that also changed over time; and though those terms often overlap, they do not intertwine so densely as to give the concept the firmness of a rope. As we have already seen, the Greek vocabulary extends out to include practices that we might wish to exclude. The closest multipurpose verb in classical Greek for "to sacrifice," for instance, θύω, is used in Homer for the burning of offerings of any kind for the gods (the related noun refers to incense); it continues to be applied to the burning of vegetable offerings even when, after Homer, it has come to be applied also to the ritual killing of animals (for which Homer has a different vocabulary). Again, we might want to distinguish between sacrifice conceived as a food offering, normally followed by a banquet, and ritual killings performed for other purposes such as to ensure safe passage over a river. And indeed Greeks tend to make such a distinction linguistically, calling the one rite θυσία and the other σφάγιον, slaughter offering. But we find Herodotus blithely applying the verb θύω to a σφάγιον offering.¹¹⁶

114. Cf. J van Baal, "Offering, Sacrifice and Gift," *Numen* 23 (1976): 161–78; van Baal wishes to distinguish sacrifice *stricto sensu* from ritual killing, 161.

115. Preliminary studies for the *Philosophical Investigations*, generally known as the *Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford, 1958), 87; I take the citation from R. Needham, "Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences," *Man* n.s. 10 (1975): 349–69, which leads into the bibliography on these issues.

116. Hdt. 9.62.1; cf. Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 83–84, and on the noun, 129–30. Traditional doctrine is that θύειν has both a "marked" use in which it indicates specifically sacrifices from which mortals ate and an "unmarked" use for a wider range of killings. Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 295–96, notes that no unmarked use can be demonstrated in relation to classical hero cult, but has to concede that θύω/θυσία are also used quite often of human sacrifices, which functionally are σφάγια. An author-by-author study is needed: for the unmarked use in Pausanias, see Pirenne-Delforge, *Pausanias*, 227. "Sacrifice" is a word, a lexical illusion. What exists is the *thusia*," writes Durand, *Cuisine of Sacrifice*, 89 (136 in the Fr. orig.). But *thusia* is also a word, of complicated application. Note, for instance, θυσία ἄπυρος παγκαρπείας of Eur. fr. 912.4. "Unburned sacrifices" violate the requirement of destruction that Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, 11–12, took as the dividing line between sacrifice and offering.

There is then real doubt as to what is to count as a sacrifice and what not; and a sampling of the anthropological literature reveals that similar problems of vocabulary, and similar uncertainties, occur very widely. Was it a sacrifice when a piglet was slain before a meeting of the assembly at Athens and its body carried round the meeting place? The act is normally described as a purification and no divine addressee is ever named. But the piglet rather similarly used to purify a murderer could be spoken of as one element among the sacrifices made in such a case to Zeus of Purification. And when the sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos at Athens was purified, the usual piglet was replaced with a dove, the goddess's preferred sacrificial victim.¹¹⁷ (The overlap here is not one of language but of practice.) Thus a chain of a kind extends from the actions universally recognized as sacrifice to the purificatory slaughter of a piglet.

We are faced with an array of practices that resemble one another in varying degrees and, again in varying degrees, are described in similar terms.¹¹⁸ The answer to a question such as "Is the slaughter of an animal before crossing a river a sacrifice?" is that there is no answer. Such a killing differs in obvious and important respects from alimentary sacrifices. But in this and other such cases the resemblances were also great enough for crossovers in vocabulary to occur. In our inability to answer the question we follow (but with anxiety, whereas they felt no need to know) the Greeks. Does that inability matter? I will revert to that question; but first the slaughter-sacrifices must be briefly described.

Before a battle, both sides commonly killed a goat or a ram as a "slaughter-victim" (σφάγιον). For the Spartans it was an offering to Artemis Agrotera; in the other attested cases (mostly Attic) no recipient is named.¹¹⁹ *Sphagion* killings could also be made to deal with meteorological crises such as a sudden and violent storm. "Slaves, quickly, bring a black she-lamb. A typhoon's on the way!" exclaims a character in Aristophanes. A seer in Xenophon's *Anabasis* advises the ten thousand to "make a slaughter to the wind," the wind being treated as recipient.¹²⁰ A form sometimes found in offerings to

117. Murder: Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4. 700–709; θυηπολίη, 702. Dove: *LSCG* 39.23–24.

118. "A continuous field of overlapping shades of meaning or potential meaning": van Straten in *Cuisine et autel*, 26.

119. See M. H. Jameson, "Sacrifice before Battle," in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. V. D. Hanson, 197–227 (London, 1991). Young she-goat at Sparta: Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.20 (which gives the recipient); Xen. *Lac.* 13.8 (whence Plut. *Lyc.* 22.4); ram: two vases and a relief, Jameson, 217–18; see too his "Athena Nike Parapet" (n. 146 below) at 320–24.

120. Ar. *Frogs* 847–48; cf. Xen. *Anab.* 4.5.4 σφαγιασασθαι τῷ ἀνέμῳ. But "lightning, storms, and thunder" could also receive what Pausanias describes as *thysiai*, Paus. 8.29.1 (Bathos, in Arcadia); so too could hail (ibid. 2.34.3: θυσίαι καὶ ἐπιδαί).

ivers or sea deities was to "cut the throat into the water/river/springs," so that the blood poured out there, water replacing earth as a recipient of the blood. The corpse could then be thrown into the sea. This rite resembles both the killing of a *sphagion* to stay a storm and also the holocaust, hurling replacing burning as a means of removal from the human sphere.¹²¹ At Methana in the eastern Argolid the two halves of a white cock were carried in opposite directions around the vines, then buried, to keep off the destructive wind known as Lips; the Spartans apparently killed horses on Taygetus for similar purposes;¹²² and no doubt many such practices have eluded our sources.

A very widely established practice in the cult of Demeter was the throwing of piglets, apparently still live, into underground pits along with cakes; in Attica at least, the rotten remains were later retrieved and mixed with the seed corn.¹²³

Important oaths were almost always sanctified by a killing. Practices varied in detail. Of one Greek people we read that "when the Molossians swear an oath, they provide oxen and bowls full of wine. They cut the oxen into small pieces and pray that those who transgress the oath be cut likewise. And emptying the bowls, they pray that the blood of transgressors be poured out likewise."¹²⁴ The Molossian rite is characteristic in emphasizing the idea of

121. Cutting into the sea plus hurling: Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.1595–1602; Arr. *Anab.* 6.19.5; probably Theophr. fr. 709 Fortenbaugh ap. Ath. 6.79, 261D–E. Note too Cleomenes' two *sphagion* offerings, one to the river Erasinus, one to the sea, in Hdt. 6.76: the former, relating to the crossing of a river, differs in form from the crossing offerings standardly made by Spartans on leaving Spartan territory, of which θῶω is always used (Thuc. 5.54.1; Xen. *Hell.* 4.7.2; Xen. *Lac.* 13.2–3). Speaking of a similar rite performed by the *magoi* at the Strymon, Herodotus uses the extraordinary verb φαρμακεύω, 7.114.1. But Arrian has θῶω for Alexander's river-crossing sacrifices (e.g., *Anab.* 4.4.3). There are clear overlaps between these ad hoc *sphagia* to watery powers and regular cult to them, where blood could also be poured into water but the meat (probably) eaten: nn. 59 and 85 above.

122. Paus. 2.34.2; Festus s.v. October Equus.

123. See, e.g., Σ Lucian p. 275.23–276.28 Rabe with Parker, *Polytheism*, 273; Paus. 9.8.1; U. Kron, "Frauenfeste in Demeterheiligtümern: Das Thesmophorion von Bitalemi," *AA* (1992): 611–50. For deposition in the earth in the cult of Demeter, see Hinz, *Demeter auf Sizilien*, 53; on Demeter and pigs, Ekroth, "Thighs or Tails?" 137.

124. T. Gaisford, *Paroemiographi Graeci* (Oxford, 1836), 126 no. 57 (from Codex Coislinianus 177), also printed in the app. crit. to Diogenianus 3.60 Leutsch-Schneidewin. The treaty formula of the *pater patrius* in Livy 1.24.8 is an excellent Roman parallel (I ignore minor textual difficulties): *si prior defexit [populus Romanus] publico consilio dolo malo, tum illo die Iuppiter populum Romanum sic ferito, ut ego hunc porcum hic hodie feriam*. On "as...so" in oaths (cf., e.g., Hom. *Il.* 3.300), see C. A. Faraone, *JHS* 103 (1993): 72–76; on Homeric oaths, M. Kitts, *Sanctified Violence in Homeric Society: Oath-Making Rituals and Narratives* (Cambridge, 2005), chap. 3; on oath rituals in general, Bickerman, "Cutting a Covenant"; I. Berti, "Greek Oath-Rituals," in *Ritual and Communication*, 181–209. Whether the "as...so" relation between animal and swearer still applies in post-Homeric oaths (that of the Molossians aside) is uncertain: possibly the killing merely strengthens the affirmation (for these distinctions see Bickerman, "Cutting a Covenant," 15–21).

"cutting"—to "cut an oath" was a regular expression, and swearers were often required to hold or stand on "cut pieces"¹²⁵—and probably in suggesting an analogy between the fate of the animal and a perjured swearer. Oaths are thus one of the few forms of Greek ritual killing in which there may occur that symbolic identification between animal and human that in anthropological literature is often seen as intrinsic to sacrifice.¹²⁶ In descriptions of oath-sacrifices in the *Iliad*, the animal victims are "for" the gods by whom an oath is sworn, though in fact they receive no portion of them, and several details of the ritual follow or vary sacrificial forms: those who are to swear wash their hands, and hair is cut from the victim's brow and put in the swearers' hands (in ordinary sacrifice it goes on the altar, and participants receive barley grains).¹²⁷

Later texts contain numerous allusions to oaths but (the Molossian case aside) no detailed descriptions; oaths, however, continue to be sworn "over full-grown sacred things" or "over burning sacred things" or "over new-burned sacred things." (The vagueness of "sacred things" reproduces that of the Greek, and it is not clear whether this is a different mechanism from that with "cut pieces," or the same differently viewed.) These "sacred things" must have derived from sacrifices that had recipients; and oaths were always taken by particular gods who were invoked as witnesses: once we are told that entrails taken from an animal sacrificed to Zeus were employed to administer an oath.¹²⁸ A change is identified by Pausanias when he says that it was only "of old" that, as in *Iliad* 19.266–68, the animals by which oaths

125. What these "cut pieces" were is never made explicit and may have varied; the picturesque theory that they were the animal's testicles has fallen out of favor (Berti, "Greek Oath-Rituals" [n. 124 above], 194). One swears while "cutting the *tomia*" (Aeschin. 2.87, cf. Eur. *Suppl.* 1196), or standing on a rock where *tomia* have been placed (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 55.5), or holding the entrails (Hdt. 6.68.1) or "the *sphagia*" (Ant. 5.12), or, in an extreme case, "standing on the *tomia* of boar, ram, and bull" (Dem. 23.68). A recent archaeological discovery from Thasos is said to confirm that the procedure of walking between the halves of a slaughtered animal (διὰ τομίων πορεύεσθαι), better known as a purification, could also be used to ratify an oath (D. Mulliez, *BCH*, forthcoming); cf. Pl. *Leg.* 753D, and several passages in Dictys of Crete: Bickerman, "Cutting a Covenant," 13; Faraone (n. 124 above), 71. In a military variant animals could be slaughtered to make the blood run into an upturned shield, into which hand or spear was then dipped (Aesch. *Sept.* 43–44, Xen. *Anab.* 2.2.9).

126. Cf. my "Substitution in Greek Sacrifice," forthcoming in *Le sacrifice humain: regards croisés sur sa représentation*, ed. P. Bonnechere (provisional title, Liège). Note, however, that the dire fate of the perjurer could be differently represented, as by the melting wax figurines of ML 5.44–51, or the poured wine of Hom. *Il.* 3.300.

127. *Il.* 3.103–20, 245–301; 19.250–68.

128. Hdt. 6.67.3–68.1. "Over full-grown sacred things (κατὰ ἱερῶν τελείων)": Thuc. 5.47.8 and often; "burning": *Syll.* 3 588.81, *LSCG* 65.2; "new-burned" *IC* 3.4.8.8–9, *OGIS* 229.48; cf., e.g., ἐπιτελεῖν ὀρκωμόσιον ἐπὶ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Σωτήρος τῷ βασιλεῖ, *LSA* 13.28–29. A new Hellenistic treaty from Boubon gives an oath δι' ἐντόμων: N. P. Milner in C. Schuler, ed., *Griechische Epigraphik in Lykien* (Vienna, 2007), 157.

were sworn were not eaten.¹²⁹ In the classical period, it seems that when a father introduced his child to a phratry, for instance, he swore an oath to the child's legitimacy by the same animal that also served to feast the *phratores*.¹³⁰ So an original differentiation between oath-sacrifice and alimentary sacrifice seems to have vanished or become weakened over time.

Purification was performed with the blood of a small animal, a piglet, lamb, or puppy (or occasionally a bird). To purify a place such as a temple or the Athenian assembly, the bleeding corpse of a piglet was carried around it; to purify people, the blood was poured over their hands. An army was purified by dividing a dog's corpse in two and marching it between the two halves. Individuals suspecting bewitchment or other misfortune could have themselves "purified around with a puppy" or "puppied around"; we do not know the exact procedure, but it surely entailed the animal's death.¹³¹ In the one elaborate literary account that we possess of the purification of a murderer, the blood rite was followed by offerings and invocations to Zeus of Purification and the Erinyes; the whole procedure is described by a word from the *θυ-* root (*θυηπολίη*), but the killing itself has no named addressee, is accompanied by no prayer, and is not described as a sacrifice.¹³²

Of the species used in purifications, pig and sheep had a place in sacrifices of every kind. Dogs were apparently reserved for purifications and other slaughter-sacrifices: Spartan ephebes killed puppies for Enyalios immediately before a mock battle, and it was a widespread custom to "carry out [the corpses of] dogs for Hecate to the crossroads," as a way of keeping the dangerous

129. 5.24.10–11. Bickerman, "Cutting a Covenant," 17, takes the "sacred things" of the formulas quoted in the previous note as the entrails, and supposes that the force of the oath was focused on them, not as in Homer on the whole animal, for economic reasons, to allow consumption of the rest of the meat. The explanation is plausible but, in the phrase *κατὰ ἱερῶν τελείων*, *ἱερά* are clearly "sacrificial animals," not "entrails." I am not sure whether the use of the verb *σφαγιάζω* in *σφαγιασθέντος ἱερείου ὁμόσαμεν καθ' ἱερῶν*, *Syll.*³ 685.27, or *σφαγιασάμενοι κατάρας ἡνάγκασαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμπύρων ποιεῖσθαι*, *Polyb.* 16.31.7, proves the old Homeric practice of destruction of the victim to have persisted in some cases.

130. See sources in Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 105. The eating of the meat by the *phratores* itself had ritual meaning; we are not dealing with meat from oath-sacrifices that merely ended up in the market, as is surely likely to have often occurred de facto to avoid waste (the triple offerings often used in oaths, Berti, "Greek Oath-Rituals" [n. 124 above], 194 n. 66, are not merely majestic but also very expensive). On oath and sacrifice, cf. Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 140–41; on the role of gods, Rudhardt, *Essai*, 148–49. A complication is that oaths were often sworn by multiple gods, whereas in sacrifice one animal went to one god.

131. Theophr. *Char.* 16.14, *Plut. Quaest. Rom.* 68, 280B–C.

132. *Ap. Rhod. Argon.* 4.698–717. On all this, see Parker, *Miasma*, 21–22, 30 n. 66, 229–30, 283 n. 11, 370–74. Note, however, the possibility (*ibid.*, 283 n. 11; *FGrH* 356 F 1) that a sacrifice used for the purification of suppliants could be eaten.

goddess at a distance.¹³³ Why puppies were also killed for goddesses of birth is unclear,¹³⁴ but analogy with the other cases suggests that they will not have been eaten. In general, the animals used for pre-battle killings, control-of-the-weather killings, purifications, and (in Homer) oaths were as far as we can tell thrown away (if human scavengers chose to pick them up, that was their affair), not eaten.¹³⁵

These various rites almost explain themselves. The power resides in the killing itself. Specific direction can be given by the manipulation of the body: it is carried around the area it is supposed to protect or purify, or it is cut in half and walked through; it is cut up to prefigure the fate of perjurers; it is thrown into an underground pit as a fertilizing agent; in murder purification, the blood is treated as a kind of washing agent, "purifying blood with blood." Whether, in the pre-battle sacrifice, invocations were employed to make the animal death represent a human one, and what form the representation took if so, is uncertain: Was it "As we kill this goat, so let us kill the enemy," or "Take this animal and spare us," or neither of these things?¹³⁶ All that is certain is that omens were taken from the flow of the blood. As has often been observed,¹³⁷ these are powerful actions more than they are offerings: one kills a black lamb to a typhoon in the hope of making it stop blowing, now. All those who swear an oath must come into contact with portions of the dead animal; but with that exception there is little emphasis on collective involvement in these rites. Before battle, the army looks on while the seer cuts the animal's throat.

133. Sparta: *Paus.* 3.14.9 (also mentioning a Colophonian sacrifice of a black female puppy to Hecate: both are conducted by night); his word is *θύω*, but *Plut. Quaest. Rom.* 111, 290D speaks of whelps "cut" (*ἐντέμνειν*) for Enyalios at Sparta (cf. *Cornut. Theol. Graec.* 21 on dog *sphagia* to Ares). An offering of boar, dog, and kid to Enyalios that appears in the fifth-century Lindian law *LSS* 85.28–30 may, however, to judge from the context, have been eaten; the verb is lost. "To the crossroads": *Aristophanes fr.* 209, *Plut. Quaest. Rom.* 68, 280B–C, and 111, 290D (where he remarks that dogs are consecrated to no Olympians but are used for aversion and purification); cf. n. 89 above; other puppy killings for Hecate: *Sophron fr.* 4.7 K/A, *Orph. Arg.* 959.

134. *Σ Paus.* 1.1.5 (*Genetyllis*); *Socrates of Argos FGrH* 310 F 4 ap. *Plut. Quaest. Rom.* 52, 277B (an Argive deity *Eilioneia*); *Plutarch's* comparison of Roman dog sacrifices to the birth goddess *Genita Mana* (on which see the extraordinary archaeological evidence discussed by R. Gordon, *Revista de historiografia*, 5, no. 3 [2/2006]: 4–14) with Greek to Hecate (*ibid.*) may belong in the same context. Hecate was often worshipped as a birth goddess, but it is not self-evident that the dog sacrifice should have come over to her (and to other birth goddesses) in that aspect from her other aspects.

135. For oaths and purifications, see n. 132 and p. 157. For the other cases there is no explicit evidence, to my knowledge, but analogy suggests it.

136. Cf. "Substitution in Greek Sacrifice" (n. 126).

137. *Nock, Essays*, 590–91 (from *HTR* 37 [1944]: 158–59); M. H. Jameson, *BCH* 89 (1965): 162–63; cf. *Ekroth, Sacrificial Rituals*, 325–30.

"These rites almost explain themselves," I wrote. But they do so only if one accepts the premise that an inflicted death is charged with religious power. The religious force ascribed to killing is one of the mysteries at the heart of sacrifice. Perhaps it is best frankly to admit that we do not fully understand this force, even if we can obscurely feel it. J. Z. Smith's tentative appeal to the stock raiser's dilemma was mentioned above. The Neoplatonist Sallustius explains, not very helpfully, that one can communicate with the givers of "life," the gods, only by means of "life": they give life, and we take it, and that claims their attention and earns their favor! "What pleasure [is there for the gods] in the butchering of the innocent?" asks Seneca.¹³⁸ Two of the most influential writers on sacrifice of the late twentieth century, Walter Burkert and René Girard, built their theories on killing. I confine myself here to the Hellenist Burkert.¹³⁹ To summarize a complex argument briefly, Burkert saw sacrifice as a social ritual that dealt with the problem of human, more specifically male human, aggressiveness in two ways: on the one hand it discharged it harmlessly against an animal victim; on the other hand, even in regard to that discharge it created a sense of guilt which helped inhibit aggression against fellow humans. Burkert linked sacrifice to guilt by taking Meuli's "comedy of innocence" and turning it on its head. The comedy, he claimed, did not efface the moral ambiguity of sacrificial killing, but drew attention to it; and the ambiguity did not concern the killing of animals, but the male potential for violence. (Vernant, as we have seen, restored the comedy to its original way up.)

A plain man's objection to this thesis is that, as a general theory of Greek sacrifice, it is counterintuitive. If one reads the several stately descriptions of sacrifices in Homer, they seem to constitute almost the essence of steady, ordered human existence. To most ears, they do not speak of murderous violence with difficulty restrained and always threatening to burst out catastrophically. "They spent their days sacrificing and having a good time," says Herodotus of certain individuals in a characteristic phrase; Lysistrata reproaches the Greek states for fighting each other, they who also sacrifice together like kin.¹⁴⁰ Burkert would counter that "having a good time" began

138. See n. 3 above. "The meaning of this ritual murder—for that is what sacrifice is—is to appropriate for oneself the mystical strength of the victim's life in order to be able to apply this to one's own goals": Bickerman, "Cutting a Covenant," 8.

139. Above all in Burkert, *Homo Necans* (the German edition of 1997 contains an important retrospect): cf. *Violent Origins* (n. 13 above). Among anthropologists, M. Bloch, *Prey into Hunter* (Cambridge, 1992), chap. 3 (but cf. pp. 6–7), and Gibson, *Sacrifice and Sharing*, 156, both make something of the aggression/violence of sacrifice.

140. Hdt. 8.99.1; Ar. *Lys.* 1128–34; cf. S. Peirce, *CLAnt* 12 (1993): 219–66 and the texts assembled by Casabona, *Vocabulaire des sacrifices*, 131–33.

after the killing had been accomplished: it was the preceding tension that made the subsequent pleasure of meat eating so pleasurable, the release of aggression that made relaxed sociability possible. But was there in fact such tension and such a release? It does not emerge from the combined evidence of literary texts, art, and ritual rules that the act of killing was the central moment in the ritual. The only emphasis placed on it was a cry (of excitement, not distress) raised by such women as were present (an evasive formula, since it is unclear how regular the presence of women was); in the one precise reference,¹⁴¹ they shouted when the animal was struck down with an ax, thus before the throat was cut and blood shed.

Treatment of the victim's blood was, it is true, almost always important; it was normally used to "bloody the altar" by sprinkling. This special treatment linked the victim's death to the gods, but did not underline the very act of killing. The knife entering or even held close to the flesh of an animal is, as was noted above,¹⁴² seldom portrayed in art (the treatment of the human victims of myth, victims indeed, is significantly different); were it never shown, one might postulate a taboo reinforcing the "comedy of innocence," but occasional depiction argues mere indifference. Ritual rules show the main function of the officiant at a sacrifice to have lain in one of two acts: either "beginning the rite," probably by cutting some hair from the victim's brow to place in the altar fire,¹⁴³ or, more commonly, the deposition on the altar of the portions of the animal that were burned for the god.¹⁴⁴ Both seem to indicate that what was central was the giving of the animal to the deity. This

141. Hom. *Od.* 3.450–52, where the women in question are the kin of the sacrificer. The Ἑλληνικὸν νόμισμα θυστάδος βοῆς is still known and associated with women in the fifth century (Aesch. *Sept.* 269; Ag. 595; Hdt. 4.189.3; cf. Xen. *Anab.* 4.3.19: Nilsson's view, *Geschichte* 150, that flute music replaced it ignores this evidence), but the number of women who will have been available at public sacrifices to perform it (priestess, *kanēphoros*, *aulētris*?) is often uncertain; *LSA* 12.25–26 (Pergamum, second century BC) attests an ὀλολόκτρια. Cf. Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 482–86. On the positive character of the *ololygē*, see B. J. Collins, *GRBS* 39 (1995): 315–25; van Straten in *Cuisine et autel*, 19, who cites Hom. *Od.* 4.767, Il. 6.301, Xen. *Anab.* 4.3.19. The timing of the *ololygē* after a *sphagion* sacrifice could be different: n. 148 below.

142. See p. 129.

143. *LSS* 19.31, 61–62; Ma, *Antiochus III*, dossier 18.13; *SEG* 54.214.32–33; cf. Eur. *IT* 40 (with 56, 1154), where Iphigeneia says explicitly, *κατάρχομαι μὲν, σφάγια δ' ἄλλοισιν μέλει*. Cutting the hair: Hom. *Od.* 3.446 with S. West's note ad loc.

144. B. C. Petrakos, *Οἱ Ἐπιγραφεὶς τοῦ Ὁρώπου* (Athens, 1977), no. 27 (*LSCG* 69) 25–29 (along with "pray over the offering," *κατεύχεσθαι τῶν ἱερῶν*); Isaeus 8.16, Arrian *Anab.* 7.25.4; Iscr. *Cos* 145.10–11, 216 B 11–12 (by supplement also 3.9, 15.9, 177.14); *SEG* 55. 926.8–9, 928 A 13–14, B 14, 931. 17–18 (all from *Cos*); *LSS* 14.33; in *LSA* 24 A 33–34 this is the moment for the singing of the paean. Cf. van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 119, 170 (and on scenes showing an officiant pointing to the god's portion, *ibid.*, 136); Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia*, 441–43; Ekroth, "Thighs or Tails?" 132–34.

was the officiant's central duty or privilege. The question by contrast of who wielded the ax or knife was of peripheral importance. Only one sacred law (admittedly one referring to an important civic ritual on Cos) lays emphasis on the selection and obligations of the actual "slaughterer."¹⁴⁵ As for the comedy of innocence, the sustained recent attempts to drive it from the stage were discussed above.

These criticisms all strike Burkert's theory in its application to alimentary sacrifice. Slaughter-sacrifices and their like, on the other hand, as we have seen and as their name suggests, center on killing; and it is conspicuous that the rare artistic depictions of the knife actually piercing an animal's throat almost without exception show such *sphagia*. In Euripides' *Supplikes*, the actual knife used in an oath-sacrifice is to be preserved as a guarantor of its efficacy. The iconographic type "Victory stabbing an animal" derives from the pre-battle *sphagia*; according to a persuasive interpretation it appeared on the parapet of the lovely Ionic temple of Athena Nike at the entrance to the Athenian acropolis.¹⁴⁶ But even in relation to the pre-battle *sphagion* the move from killing to violence can be questioned. The hypothesis speaks of the male sacrificial group unleashing its aggression against an animal victim. When at some festivals hearty young men lifted a young bull over the altar for the slaughter, this was certainly a display of domination over the animal.¹⁴⁷ But, as we have seen, the sacrifices with strong group participation such as these were those where the death of the animal received least emphasis. When a pre-battle slaughter-sacrifice was performed in sight of the enemy, the pipers played (in the Spartan army at least) and every man was garlanded. But they merely watched while a seer or seers performed the slaughter. The rite is an intense focus of communal attention but not of

145. RO 62 (LSCG 151) A 40–44: on the night before the sacrifice to Zeus Polieus, the priest and the heralds both choose a slaughterer and instruct him to remain sexually pure that night. The Homeric verb ἱερεῖω, which is etymologically "act as a priest" but in usage "sacrifice," does not seem to me decisive counterevidence: it simply poses again for an earlier period (in this case insolubly) the question of which action of the priest constituted the essence of sacrifice. Nor does the iconographic use of the sacrificial knife to denote the priest (van Straten in *Cuisine et autel*, 19). For the θύτης as a fairly lowly functionary serving several cults, see Syll.³ 589.18 with note 10 ad loc.

146. See M. H. Jameson, "The Ritual of the Athena Nike Parapet," in *Ritual, Finance, Politics*, 307–24, with the conspectus of such scenes at 320–24 (cf. *ThesCRA* 1:359–63). Almost without exception: for two other scenes that show the knife close to the throat, see the following note and van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 220 V147 (fig. 110), with his comments *Cuisine et autel*, 20–21. Knife: Eur. *Suppl.* 1205–9.

147. See van Straten, *Hiera Kalá*, 109–13. It is true that a black-figure amphora in Viterbo (*ibid.*, fig. 115) shows a young man stabbing the throat of a bullock so lifted, contrary to the usual indifference to the moment of the kill. But is not the point stressed the prowess of the youths who have achieved enough elevation to permit this stabbing from below?



FIGURE 5. The kill explicitly depicted in a "slaughter-sacrifice" associated with conflict. Fragment of an Attic red-figure calyx krater, c. 430 BC, unknown maker (86.AE.213). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California.

communal aggression. In the one allusion to the timing of the "sacrificial cry" after a slaughter-sacrifice, it occurs not at the point of death but a little later when it is known that "the omens are good."¹⁴⁸

Still, killing is unquestionably central to the slaughter-sacrifice. It is at this point that the question postponed above about the definition of sacrifice, which is also a question about the unity of a concept of sacrifice, becomes

148. Communal attention: Xen. *Lac.* 13.8. Sacrificial cry: Xen. *Anab.* 4.3.19, noted by van Straten, *Cuisine et autel*, 20.

important. As we have seen, the vocabulary used of alimentary sacrifice differs from that used of the other forms of ritual killing, but not without some overlapping. In just the same way, the rituals themselves diverge, but not absolutely. The element common to all the rituals is the killing of an animal; one of the most important overlaps in vocabulary lies in the verb σφάζειν, "to slaughter." (But it should be remembered that θύειν, "to sacrifice," is also applied to vegetarian offerings.) Killing receives little emphasis in alimentary sacrifice, at least in many interpretations of the ritual. But it is central to the slaughter-sacrifice. If killing is the one constant within a variety of forms of "sacrifice," it may seem necessary to assign it importance in all those forms; alimentary sacrifice will therefore need to be reinterpreted in a way that allows the kill positive religious force there too. Or should we accept that the kill is a mere necessary preliminary to alimentary sacrifice, an essential only in the rites of slaughter? This approach leaves us with "types of ritual killing" but no overarching concept of sacrifice.

The question is not easy to answer. There is no theological exegesis to guide us, there was no theological exegesis to guide them, as to what to make of these rites. Veyne teaches us that "sacrifice is widely distributed across centuries and across societies because this practice is sufficiently ambiguous for everyone to find in it their own particular satisfaction." Doubtless this ambiguity can inhere in individual forms of sacrifice as well as in the many different practices that can be brought together under the rubric "sacrifice." What satisfactions found in alimentary sacrifice ensured its popularity over so many centuries? It sanctioned and solemnized human feasting; it was also a gift to a god that the god was invited to come and enjoy along with mortals; it established closer contact with the divine, therefore, than did the other modality of gift, dedication. But did the killing that preceded it give it extra solemnity, an added potential to communicate with the divine? At least for some participants? It would be presumptuous to deny the possibility: On what basis could one do so? But this could have been only one "satisfaction" (or better, in this case, source of imaginative power) among several. The structure of the rite certainly did not allow the individual participant the sadistic sense of being one among a group converging on a victim for the kill. The dispatch of a scapegoat is a ritual of quite different type.

As for the theses of Burkert and Girard in their broadest scope, it does not seem possible to establish a relation of co-variability of any kind between animal sacrifice and human violence. One can claim neither that animal sacrifice inhibits violence against humans among societies that practice it (a "safety-valve" theory), nor that such violence diminishes when the practice is abandoned. (This second point strikes hard against theories

that see a subterranean connection between sacrifice and male violence against women.)¹⁴⁹ The two things seem simply to follow their own, distinct trajectories.

"Raw Eating" and Other Wild Rites

Some very violent activities fall too far outside the normal run of sacrificial practices to affect the broad conclusion. But the topic cannot be finally signed off before they have been acknowledged. The "raw eating" associated in some way with Dionysus is famous, but fraught with problems. Sacrifice was often made to Dionysus as to any other god. But myth also ascribes to the female followers of Dionysus the tearing apart of animals by hand; there are also allusions to the "raw eating" of flesh. Who supposedly ate this raw flesh (in the mythical representation) is not clear, since the rite is not described in detail in any source. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the messenger reports the capture and tearing, but not eating, of animals at some length (734–47), amid other manifestations of the women's extraordinary conduct and capacities when possessed by the god. The play elsewhere contains an allusion to "blood of a slain goat, raw-eating delight," but the surrounding context is difficult and interpreters do not agree whether the clause in question speaks of Dionysus or of his followers.¹⁵⁰ (A secondary complication is that on vases maenads are typically shown with the rent pieces of fawns in their hands,¹⁵¹ whereas in *Bacchae* it is domestic animals that they attack.)

One view is that the raw flesh was envisaged as an offering to Dionysus, who bore more than one epithet involving the idea of the raw.¹⁵² But the rite is never described as an offering or a sacrifice. In the most atrocious Dionysiac myth of all, the daughters of Minyas "driven mad, craved human flesh and cast lots" to determine which should offer her child for rending;

149. W. Beers, *Women and Sacrifice: Male Narcissism and the Psychology of Religion* (Detroit, 1992). Beers was influenced (through earlier work) by N. Jay, who in *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago, 1992) sees sacrifice as men's way of asserting their ownership of children against the women who have actually brought them forth in blood. But sacrifice is far too multifunctional for such theories to be plausible.

150. See R. L. Fowler, "Euripides *Bacchae* 135–42," *ZPE* 158 (2006): 43–48.

151. T. H. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens* (Oxford, 1997), 115.

152. A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 82 (1978): 150–52, with references; contrast P. Bonnechere, *Le sacrifice humain en Grèce ancienne* (Athens, 1995), 215, and Goff, *Citizen Bacchae*, 272. Epithets: ὠμάδιος, ὠμηστής.

the women of Argos too ate their children.¹⁵³ If that extreme version can be taken as a guide to what "normal" maenads (those who contented themselves with animal victims) were imagined to do, it follows that those who tore apart an animal victim also ate it raw. This would be not a sacrifice but an anti-sacrifice; for to the obvious inversions (multiple women officiants against single male priest; hands against knife; wild against tame animals; raw against cooked) would be added the fact of eating without offering. Or perhaps they both ate and offered.

So much for the mythical representation. As for reality, we know that in some Greek states (but how many?) bands of women reveled for Dionysus in the mountains in alternate winters;¹⁵⁴ we know too that the mythical practice of raw eating could be symbolically evoked in some way. But the character of that evocation depends on the doubtful interpretation of an enigmatic two-word phrase in an inscription of 276 BC from Miletus. It is defining the privileges of the public priestess of Dionysus, and prescribes, "It shall not be permitted for anyone to throw in an *ōmophagion*, 'a raw bite,' before the priestess throws one in on behalf of the city."¹⁵⁵ Interpretations of the crucial phrase "throw in an *ōmophagion*" have ranged from very drastic to very tame: at one extreme, an animal is hurled into the midst of a circle of worshippers, who then fall upon it (E. R. Dodds thought, unpersuasively, that the maenads were eating their god raw); at the other, a token piece of raw meat is placed in a sacrificial basket.¹⁵⁶ If the more drastic interpretations are correct, such rites must somehow have represented, for the female participants, an awesome extreme of experience. More probably the awesome extreme existed only in the imagination, and any evocation of the mythical practices in the ritual was just a gesture.

What is clear amid all this is that the raw eating (imagined or real) is of a piece with the other reversals of normality of Dionysiac cult. The eating of raw meat, whoever does it, is as bizarre as the dancing of matrons on a

153. Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 38, 299E; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.2. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.636 speaks (as do later authors) of *μαινάδες ὀμοβόροι*.

154. See J. N. Bremmer, "Greek Maenadism Re-Considered," *ZPE* 55 (1984): 267–86. Men may sometimes have joined them (S. Scullion, "Maenads and Men," forthcoming), but at the imaginative level it remained a distinctively female practice.

155. *LSA* 48.2. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 281 n. 47 notes that Plut. *De def. or.* 14, 417C, speaking of "days of ill omen on which raw eatings and rendings occur," should also attest historical practice. The sacrifices to Semele and Dionysus in *LSCG* 18 A 44–51, D 33–40 are marked *παράδοσιμος γυναιξί*, which merely tantalizes, as does the sacrifice to Dionysus Anthius made without mention of fire in *SEG* 54.214.9–11 (cf. Parker, "Aixone," 204–6).

156. Drastic: Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 276, with a vivid modern parallel; tame: some views there rejected by Dodds, and A. J. Festugière, *ClassMed* 17 (1936): 31–34 (= *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* [Paris, 1972], 110–13).

mountain. Whether one interprets the Dionysiac phenomenon as a whole as challenging norms or reinforcing them or simply extending somewhat the possibilities of women's existence,¹⁵⁷ the idea of raw meat eating and the associated violence are parts of that total phenomenon. What is at issue here is not fundamentally a modality of sacrifice; the dialectic is between the need for limits and control and the need for their absence.

Certain other extreme sacrifices are occasionally mentioned. The *non plus ultra* is the festival Laphria, celebrated annually by the people of Patrai for Artemis and mildly described by Pausanias as embodying a "local style of sacrifice" (*τρόπος ἐπιχώριος θυσίας*). According to Pausanias, a stockade of green logs is built around the altar, within which dry wood is piled. A magnificent procession provides a prelude; at its rear rides a virgin priestess on a chariot drawn by deer. On the next day

great enthusiasm is shown for the festival by the city publicly and no less by individuals. For they throw onto the pyre, still alive, edible birds and sacrificial animals of all kinds, also wild boar and deer and roe; some bring wolf and bear cubs, some the full-grown animals. They also put the fruit of cultivated trees on the altar.

He goes on to tell how this great bonfire is kindled and the animals are driven back in as they try to escape the flames.¹⁵⁸

With this we can compare a rite at the sanctuary of Despoina at Lycosura in Arcadia: "The Arcadians conduct a rite at which they bring victims to Despoina in great abundance. Each individual sacrifices what he has. They do not cut the throats of the victims as at other sacrifices, but each participant cuts off a chance limb from the victim." Unfortunately the ethnographer lets us down here, and does not explain what species were brought as victims nor what treatment they received after the cutting off of the limbs. He is a little vague also about a rite in Messene: "There is a megaron of the Kouretes, where they make burned offerings of every kind of animal. They begin by throwing cattle and goats into the fire and work down to birds."¹⁵⁹ "Every kind of animal" ought to include wild animals, but the examples are all from the familiar sacrificial species. They must have been killed before

157. See p. 243 below.

158. Paus. 7.18.11–13.

159. Paus. 8.37.8 (Lycosura); *ibid.* 4.3.9 (Messene).

being thrown on the pyre, though Pausanias is not explicit, or the birds would have escaped.

One or two further similarly extreme sacrifices are also recorded or postulated.¹⁶⁰ They have been taken as illustrations of one distinctive ancient modality of Greek sacrifice, that associated with a huge fire (sometimes identified as a "year-fire"); they have also been traced back, along winding paths, to the secret rituals of warrior bands.¹⁶¹ But it has been pointed out of late that a ritual such as the Laphria attested at Patrai, a city that dissolved into villages in the third century and was refounded, initially as a Roman veteran colony, c. 14 BC, cannot present itself as an unproblematic witness to ancestral traditions of Greek sacrifice. All these extreme sacrifices are attested only in Pausanias or in sources of the same late date; and several were practiced by cities or organizations that demonstrably had undergone drastic historical change in the late classical or postclassical period.¹⁶² The holocausts known from sacred calendars of the classical period are on an altogether more modest scale.

All the same, the argument from silence is scarcely infallible; we can say confidently that extreme sacrifices of this type were exceptional in the classical period (as indeed later), not that they never occurred. Hypothetical rites of the classical period, however, elude inspection; all we can analyze are the practices attested much later. The most fully described is the Laphria, and Pausanias's account well brings out its abnormality. In the classical holocaust the victim was a domestic animal that was killed and, at least in some cases, cut up before being put on the fire. Here wild and domestic animals alike are thrown onto the flames alive. There is none of the usual fussiness about the selection of victims, nor does there seem to be an officiant: everyone hurls on what they have brought. It is all about totality and the abolition of limits: everyone participates (but does this include women?), all species are involved, there is no selection, and the destruction too is total. Any invocations that may have accompanied the rites go unmentioned. In Pausanias's account it is

160. A festival of Isis at Tithorea (Paus. 10.32.14–17); the "Laphria" at Hyampolis, questionably reconstructed from an aition; the Daidala (Paus. 9.3.7–8; cf. p. 221); a festival on Mt. Oeta associated with the death of Heracles: see Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 130–32; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 411–12, 416–17.

161. So respectively Nilsson and Graf, cited in previous note.

162. See V. Pirenne-Delforge, "Ritual Dynamics in Pausanias: The Laphria," in *Ritual and Communication*, 111–29; Pirenne-Delforge, *Pausanias*, 218–29. Messene was founded in 371; the Daidala (p. 221 below) was a restructured ritual; a festival of Isis cannot be ancient. Pirenne-Delforge explains the Laphria as "an Augustan reconstruction... perfectly in accordance with the violent Roman shows and the taste for presumed antiquity," *Ritual and Communication*, 126.

the killing that creates the communication. Mutatis mutandis, similar observations could be made about the other extreme rites that he describes.¹⁶³

This, it seems, is a perfect expression of sacrifice as theorized by Burkert and Girard, sacrifice as pure and comprehensive violence. The urgent next question concerns the social context in which raw killing was credited with such power. The Laphria was celebrated, Pausanias told us, "with great enthusiasm... by the city publicly and no less by individuals"; the city that celebrated it, Patrai, was one put together from disparate elements, Greek and Roman. A festival that also concluded with a bonfire holocaust, the Great Daidala, was a Pamboeotian celebration of regional unity. These instances point, it has been suggested, to "the strong federal impact of this form of spectacular and participatory ceremony." A grim device for reinforcing group and federal solidarity, if so!¹⁶⁴ The link between collective violence and group formation rests, however, on too few cases to be wholly secure. What is certain is that such rites were exceptional.

Endnote: Blood Sacrifice for the Dead

If we set aside as historically problematic the luxuriant slaughter (sheep, oxen, horses, dogs, and prisoners of war) conducted by Achilles in Homer on Patroclus's pyre,¹⁶⁵ the best evidence relates to what is called a *prosphagion*. A fifth-century inscription from Ioulis on Ceos regulating funerary practices says that a "*prosphagion* should be employed in accord with tradition," but a passage in Ps.-Plato that speaks of a *prosphagion* being performed "before the carrying out" (a useful detail) consigns the practice to "former times."¹⁶⁶

163. But Pirenne-Delforge, *Ritual and Communication*, 123–24, doubts whether the burning of live animals should be generalized from the Laphria; she notes that Paus. 9.3.8 on victims at the Daidala stuffed with wine and incense implies butchery and extraction of the entrails.

164. So Pirenne-Delforge, *Pausanias*, 229. But the bonfire holocaust at the Pamboeotian Great Daidala may have been borrowed from the Plataian Lesser Daidala, which was not a federal festival (see p. 222 below).

165. *Il.* 23.166–76. For archaeological parallels suggesting some basis in eighth-century reality, see *ThesCRA* 1:108–9; cf. Lane Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 55–58. The sheep and oxen provided fat that Achilles wrapped around Patroclus's body; the role of the other victims is not explained, but one can guess that the prisoners of war were killed in revenge, the dogs and horses to allow Patroclus to be accompanied by what he loved in life.

166. *LSCG* 97 A 12; [Pl.] *Min.* 315C. L. Robert, *Études anatoliennes* (Paris, 1937), 306–8, however, plausibly reads *προσφογίωνες* in a funerary context in an inscription from Amorium, "basse époque impériale." The sacrifices to gods performed at or after the conclusion of mourning (e.g., Plut. *Lyc.* 27.4; Plut. *Quaest Graec.* 24, 296F–297A; D. D. Hughes in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 75–83) are different.

Several passages in tragedy also refer to it; in Euripides' *Alcestis*, Heracles ghoulishly supposes that he will be able to find Death "near [Alcestis's tomb], drinking the *prosphagmata*."¹⁶⁷ Possibly we can reconcile the evidence about where and when it took place by supposing that it happened at the grave but before the corpse had been brought thither. What became of the animal's body once its blood had been poured out is unclear; Ps.-Plato shows that the custom went out of use by the fourth century, but the archaeological evidence of animal bones at graves is slight even before that. A *prosphagion* is clearly an offering made to the dead person or possibly the underworld powers more generally (is Death, in Heracles' imagining, drinking it by right, or by usurpation?).¹⁶⁸ Beyond that general formulation, we do not know how a *prosphagion* worked, what rituals accompanied it, and what words of invocation.¹⁶⁹ At the commemorative rituals performed for the dead in subsequent years, they were urged to "send up good things," that is to say, like the gods they were urged to make a return for the gifts brought to them;¹⁷⁰ but the offerings burned, left, or (above all) poured for them on these occasions were apparently bloodless as a rule.

167. Eur. *Alc.* 845; cf., e.g., Eur. *Hel.* 1255, which stresses its preliminary quality, Eur. *Hec.* 41, where the location is clearly the tomb itself. Solon's ban on the funerary sacrifice of an ox (smaller victims were therefore still permitted) probably refers to the *prosphagion* rather than to subsequent commemorative rites (Plut. *Sol.* 21.5).

168. Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 229–30 argues that it was addressed to the dead person rather than to a god; the evidence from tragedy confirms this view, insofar as a specific addressee was envisaged; the possibility that it was addressed more generally to the dead or to underworld powers, but certainly not the gods, is raised by Eur. *Hel.* 1255 (plans for the fictitious sea burial of Menelaus) προσφάζεται μὲν αἷμα πρῶτα νεπτόροις; but *ibid.* 1564, the same sacrifice is σφάγια τῷ τεθνηκότι.

169. Unless we treat the killing of a human victim by Neoptolemus for his father Achilles in Eur. *Hec.* 521–82 as a model, which would be rash despite the application of *prosphagma* to it in 41 (for other allusions to the rite, see 126, 260–61, 391–93).

170. Ar. fr. 504.14 with Kassel/Austin's note. Bloodless: Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 278; Parker, *Polytheism*, 29. On the content of libations to the dead, see Hom. *Od.* 10.518–20, Aesch. *Pers.* 611–17, Eur. *IT* 159–65; Or. 115; LSCG 97 A 8–10; Lucian *Luct.* 19.

CHAPTER 6

The Experience of Festivals

A speaker in one of Plutarch's dialogues remarks at one point that "during a long stay in Crete I got to know of a strange festival they performed, at which they display an image of a headless man and explain that this was Molos the father of Meriones, and that after raping a young woman he was discovered headless."¹ Plutarch's puzzlement may be shared by us today in relation not just to the Cretan festival of the headless man but a great number of the details that are recorded about other ancient rituals. Much here appears bizarre, fragmentary, inconsequential. One reason is the character of two main sources, Plutarch's own *Greek Questions* and Callimachus's *Aitia*, which approach the Greek festivals in the spirit of *Trivial Pursuits*: it is the piquant and puzzling that constitutes a Question in Plutarch's terms, or that provides a starting point for Callimachus's witty and whimsical explanations.

Only rarely are other sources any more helpful. The very few accounts of ancient festivals that extend to more than a sentence or so were given for special purposes: Plutarch in a fragment of a lost work was concerned to allegorize the Boeotian festival Daidala, the source of two anonymous scholia on Lucian that discuss a cluster of Attic festivals had similar aims, and Theophrastus offered

1. *De def. or.* 14, 417E.

to scale down the honors it had accorded to King Eumenes II of Pergamum not, they explained, out of hostility, but because they had been out of proportion to the benefits he had actually conferred.¹⁰ The many splendid festivals suited the hellenistic appetite for entertainment, and might help to efface memories of earlier less happy phases in the dealings between the king and city in question.¹¹

What remains problematic¹² is how to interpret the ambiguity of 4 above, the position of the monarch as both god and mortal.¹³ Was 'mortal' the real perception of celebrants, 'god' a metaphor or convenient fiction? Or have we a compromise between an awestruck response to power/benefaction perceived as being on a truly superhuman scale, and awareness that its agent was after all mortal? (And how relevant was the thought that death was not the end for exceptional mortals?) Did the intensity of the ritual experience obliterate for its duration awareness of the recipient's mortality? Answers to these questions are likely to have varied according to time, place, and individual.

10. Polyb. 28.7.11 with 27.18.1–3; for graded rewards, cf. Diod. 20.100.2–3. "Openly expressed": see, e.g., Ma, *Antiochus III*, dossier 17.29.

11. See the brilliant section of Ma, *Antiochus III*, 219–26, "Ruler cult as social memory."

12. There also remain many uncertainties about the detailed history of the phenomenon before the Hellenistic norms were established early in the reigns of the first Successors: for a survey, see K. Buraselis in *ThesCRA* 2:164–71; and cf. now M. Mari, "The Ruler Cult in Macedonia," *Studi Ellenistici* 20 (2008) 219–51.

13. S. R. F. Price points out (*JHS* 104 [1984]: 79–81) that the question "Is x a god?" like the question "Is x a person?" is one that admits of borderline cases. But immortality is such a standard and central feature of the typical image of a god that the lack of it might be thought immediately to exclude a candidate from the category.

APPENDIX 4

Types of Chthonian Sacrifice?

This appendix continues the argument of p. 84 above.

The case for replacing the exploded single concept of "chthonian sacrifice" with a cluster of types of chthonian sacrifice runs roughly as follows:¹

- a. The following are the most diagnostic non-standard traits in sacrifice (not a complete list, but the most identifiable features): burning of the victim whole, or burning of more than occurs in normal Olympian sacrifice; wineless libations; pouring of the blood into the ground; black or pregnant victims; the requirement to consume the meat on the spot.
- b. Not every sacrifice to a chthonian will display any of these traits, because all Greek gods including chthonians had a double aspect, favorable as well as frightening, and the separation / marking of difference created by the nonstandard features was not obligatory; sometimes the two aspects might be evoked successively in a single ceremony. But any chthonian will predominantly receive rites that show some of the diagnostic traits.

1. Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian."

- c. All or almost all the non-standard forms of sacrifice listed in (a) occur in one of two contexts (inevitably, given the character of our evidence, there are one or two irresolvable cases): they are made either to a chthonian god, or to a god in whose cult other forms of reinforced sacrificial action are also found or might be predicted. "Other forms of reinforced sacrificial action" here refers to those (what A. D. Nock termed *heilige Handlungen*) used in crises such as storms or a forthcoming battle; they stress killing, renunciation, and immediate ritual efficacy (the two black lambs to stay a storm) rather than feasting and a long-term relation of reciprocity with a god. The non-standard forms can serve as mitigated variants, in regular cult, of these more drastic destruction sacrifices. In both cases (when addressed to chthonians; when serving as mitigated *heilige Handlungen*) the non-standard forms evince a similar attitude of nervousness vis-à-vis the recipients.²

Proposition (b) depends heavily on the claim that the requirement to eat the meat of a sacrificial victim "on the spot" marks out a special form of sacrifice with a special mood in the same sense as does, say, a ban on libations of wine. The claim is necessary in order to show that the cult of one class of chthonians, the heroes, was ritually differentiated from that of Olympian gods. "On the spot" rules were frequent and perhaps universal in heroic cult; those aside, the forms of heroic cult are often indistinguishable to our eyes from those of divine cult.³ Against the argument that "no carry out" rules had special ritual significance, it has been objected that eating the meat on the spot was the norm, to judge both from literary descriptions and from the banqueting rooms so abundantly attested archaeologically in Greek sanctuaries. Such rules would therefore not mark out a special class of sacrifices, but make obligatory in particular cases what was anyway common; the motive would be to encourage/discourage the active participation of particular classes of worshipper.⁴ The objection is inconclusive: even if "on the spot"

2. "Recipients of the various ritual features traditionally assembled under the rubric 'chthonian' almost always display a connection with the earth; those who do not will fall into a restricted class of beings, including weather gods of the heights and recipients of wartime *sphagia* or mythical human sacrifice, who are in temperament similar to the chthonians": Scullion (previous note), 116.

3. To preserve a difference, one will need to postulate (not wholly unreasonably, but quite unverifiably) distinctions, such as in the treatment of the blood, which sacred calendars seldom had reason to record: cf. R. Parker in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 41–43.

4. So Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 310–25. She also (313) adduces two instances of sacrifices to heroes that she argues were certainly "carried out"; but in the one case (*LSS* 19.19–24) the issue seems to me indeterminable, and in the other she relies on a doubtful reading in *SEG* 33.147 (*NGSL* 1) 27 (see Jameson, "The Spectacular and the Obscure," 329 n. 29).

dining was the norm, the carrying away of some part of the meat even after such communal banquets was doubtless very frequent. Proof positive, however, that an "on the spot" rule gave the banquet a special, chthonian intensity is not available. And the adoption of such rules as a criterion opens the door uncomfortably wide. They are found in many cults of gods as well as of heroes, of whom some can be explained as chthonian or otherwise formidable but a few create real difficulty.⁵

As for proposition (c), it is an attempt to maintain the diagnostic value of the non-standard forms of sacrifice. The epigraphic discoveries of the twentieth century showed that these could occur in the cult of manifest non-chthonians such as Zeus Overseer (*Epopetes*) or Zeus of the Heights (*Epakrios*).⁶ Proposition (c) seeks to isolate the exceptions within a single class, so that the occurrence of a non-standard form will indicate one of two things: the god in question will either be of the type for whom "reinforced sacrificial action" (*heilige Handlung*) is appropriate, or he will be a chthonian. But even if we allow the first part of this either/or (non-standard sacrificial forms serving as a weakened form of *heilige Handlung*),⁷ the second part (all other recipients of non-standard forms chthonian) can be doubted. "Sober offerings," for instance, were supposedly made to the nymphs and to the Muses in Attica. But there is nothing obviously chthonian about Muses and nymphs. On the other hand, non-standard forms of sacrifice cluster in the cults of certain gods, Zeus above all, but are absent from those of others (e.g., Apollo), in a way that suggests that the character of the god is indeed relevant. The preliminary offering to Zeus of the City (*Polieus*) before his great festival on Cos, for instance, was a piglet, burned whole; an interpretation in terms of an oppositional logic within the ritual (the pig burned as a preliminary contrasts with the ox sacrificed in the normal way the following day) has been influential, but a good case has been made that Zeus *Polieus* on Cos had, in fact, a strong connection with agriculture not revealed in his

5. No proof positive: but Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," 102, adduces an Old Testament parallel and a passage of the Orphic *Lithika* (699–747, esp. 732–33 Abel; 693–741 Hermann). Real difficulty: in particular Apollo Lykeios (whom Scullion struggles to explain, "Olympian and Chthonian," 109–10). The table in Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 156, is useful.

6. See Ekroth, *Sacrificial Rituals*, 156.

7. It was argued in chap. 5 that "sacrifices" divide into those that are cast in an alimentary idiom and those that are simple killings: on this view, a holocaust accompanied by sober libations to Zeus the Overseer, for example, belongs to a quite different category from, say, the slaughter of black lambs to the winds, whereas Scullion sees the former as a mitigated form of the latter. I also note the different recipient in the two cases.

epithet "of the City" and so was an appropriate "chthonian" recipient of the small holocaust.⁸

The main offering to Zeus Polieus in that Coan festival was accompanied by the offering of a pregnant sheep to Athena Polias. That is the detail that, above all, suggests that these gods of the city were also concerned with the city's fields; for the connection between pregnant victims and agricultural growth is, surely, one of the rare transparent elements in Greek ritual.⁹ It is, however, startling, here and in one Attic instance, to find none other than Athena as recipient of the pregnant victim. What should we then say? That Athena (Polias) is a (part) chthonian? That she has a chthonian aspect? It might be easier merely to say that here, unusually, she has an association with agriculture. And here lies the weight of the case for describing as chthonian only the limited number of gods so described in ancient sources. To establish that the cult of Zeus Polieus has an association with agriculture advances our knowledge. To label it chthonian merely substitutes for that precise description a vaguer one.

8. RO 62 (LSCG 151 A) 29–38; see Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," 81–89, dissenting from Graf, "Milch, Honig und Wein." Muses and nymphs: Suda v 356 = Polemon of Ilium fr. 42 Preller.

9. Though for a different view, see J. N. Bremmer in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 155–65. Athena Polias on Cos: RO 62 (LSCG 151 A) 55–56; Athena Skiras receives a pregnant sheep in LSS 19.93 (Salaminiotai, Attica).

APPENDIX 5

The Early History of Hero Cult

The first principle in the study of ancient religion should be to observe what can be observed, and refrain from fantasizing about "origins" that are not open to investigation. But the cult of heroes is a special case, because it is arguable that its origin, or at least a radical change of direction, is indeed available for inspection. The topic is highly obscure, but also highly important, because here for once the word "history" found in the titles of *Histories of Greek Religion* may have a justification: a key transformation in the very hierarchy of the divine world perhaps occurs before our eyes.

The conception of hero cult as a phenomenon stretching back into the mists of time (still found, for instance, in Brelich's *Gli eroi greci* of 1958) has been problematic since archaeologists observed that, in several areas of the Greek world, Mycenaean tombs, unused for centuries, were reopened for cult purposes in the late eighth century; the new cult was often evanescent, but in a few cases continued for several centuries.¹ Classical sources speak of the typical location of a hero cult as the hero's tomb, and it is intuitively plausible

1. The phenomenon was first emphasized by J. N. Coldstream, "Hero-Cults in the Age of Homer," *JHS* 96 (1976): 8–17. The archaeology is now surveyed by Antonaccio, *Ancestors*, and Boehringer, *Heroenkulte*. Written sources treating tombs as location for hero cult: R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual* (Oxford, 1994), 114–23.