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## IV

H. S. VERSNEL

### SELF-SACRIFICE, COMPENSATION AND THE ANONYMOUS GODS \*

In our times an attempt to design an all-embracing general theory on *the* meaning or *the* origin of sacrifice has come to be considered an indecent act. Too often have we observed learned emperors pretending to be dressed in full and rich attire but who were actually clothed, if at all, in shirts, vests or handkerchiefs: useful articles, it is true, but not nearly enough to cover the whole. Those giants of old Robertson Smith and Frazer, Mannhardt and even Mauss, it seems, have been relegated to the imperial gallery of Madame Tussaud's, and whenever a new theory on sacrifice is proposed nowadays, the author rarely forgets to add that his purpose is merely to explain one aspect or one type of sacrifice: it is either Olympian or destructive sacrifice, either the real gift-offering or the sacrificial—communicative sacrifice that receives a separate discussion, and it may be helpful to state in advance that this division into various complexes appearing to go back to divergent ideas and functions seems to be one of the major attainments of modern religious studies: "Überhaupt sind ja die

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Kulthandlungen die man im üblichen Sprachgebrauch Opfer zu nennen pflegt, sehr verschiedenartige Phänomene verschiedensten Ursprungs, und der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion müsste eigentlich eine Abklärung der Begriffe vorangehen, wenn man nicht aneinander vorbeireden will". These are valuable words from a valuable scholar who won his spurs in the field of sacrificial theory, Karl Meuli <sup>1</sup>.

However, even allowing for this fundamental change of approach, problems of a general nature remain or return with increased urgency. If, for the moment, we accept an extremely broad definition of sacrifice as "a sacral act by which an object is transferred from the profane sphere into the sacral sphere or the action by which the sacral potency of beings or objects already belonging to the sacred realm is increased" <sup>2</sup>, the question remains why, after an origin in a hoary past, the various realizations of this overall *sacrificium* continued to be practised by widely diverging civilizations, among them those of classical antiquity. I am not thinking of the explanations proposed by the ancients themselves, although Theophrastus' famous sentence <sup>3</sup> τριῶν ἕνεκα θυτέον τοῖς θεοῖς, ἥ γὰρ διὰ τιμὴν ἥ διὰ χάριν ἥ διὰ χρεῖαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν should, in my opinion, receive much more serious consideration than it has received so far. Rather am I interested in the general psychological, ethological or behavioural impulses that led (and lead) people to give up and renounce (parts of) private or communal possessions, to set them apart, to destroy or manipulate them in a ritual way, irrespective of what *specific form* the ritual may have acquired or what *specific intention* may have been attributed

<sup>1</sup> K. MEULI, « Griechische Opferbräuche », in *Gesammelte Schriften* II (Basel/Stuttgart 1975), 907 n.1. Cf. for some thoughtful remarks W. BURKERT, in *GRBS* 7 (1966), 102 n. 34, and *Structure and History...* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 52 ff.

<sup>2</sup> This definition is suggested by Th. P. VAN BAAREN, *Het Offer. Inleiding tot een complex religieus verschijnsel* (Utrecht 1976), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Thphr. Περὶ εὐσεβείας Fr. 12, 42-44 Pötscher. Some of these aspects have been discussed and illustrated by F. T. VAN STRATEN, in *Lampas* 12 (1979), 50-94.

to it in various periods and various civilizations. What general principle made people accept, continue and pass on the sacrificial act in the way they did ?

If he starts from the data presented by the ancients themselves, anyone who wishes to venture on this slippery path has a choice of two options: either he collects the data and commentaries on the ordinary and 'normal' sacrificial rites, generally not questioned by the sacrificers themselves and performed as a daily routine, or he selects a sample: a sacrificial act which both in value and intensity forms a magnification, a blow-up so to speak, of the customary sacrifice, and which by its monstrous dimensions provoked astonishment and even negative comment in antiquity. Perhaps in an enlarged picture we may distinguish features which are invisible or indistinct in the obligatory snapshots of everyday practice.

Opting for the latter method I propose to make some remarks on the phenomenon of self-sacrifice, the ultimate offering man can make, causing sentiments of admiration, gratitude, awe, terror, and guilt, as no other sacrifice did or may be expected to do. Various reasons have induced me to start from the well-known case of Publius Decius Mus as told by Livy. One is that this legend combines practically all the characteristic elements, the complete 'taxonomy' of self-sacrifice as it may be reconstructed from the cases of self-sacrifice in myth and history of all antiquity. Secondly a treatment of a concrete and well-documented typical case may protect us from excessively theoretical and abstract speculations. And in the third place the impression will be created that I have complied with the request made by Professor Rudhardt to concentrate on a Roman topic. It will, of course, be clear that the latter consideration is in straight contradiction to the first, but I shall strive honestly to adduce Roman material whenever available.

I must emphasize that I have selected only some fundamentally relevant aspects of the *devotio* of Decius, which, as a matter



of fact, has been utilized as a starting-point or major illustration in widely divergent studies on widely divergent topics in recent times <sup>1</sup>. Not only will these and many other relevant works be mentioned only in passing, but it will not even be possible to refer to more than a fraction of the material, ancient and modern, relevant to the subject. I have been collecting material on the practice and ideology of self-sacrifice and *devotio* for some years and have published a few articles which are intended as preparations for a more comprehensive study of the subject <sup>2</sup>. Those who wish to know more than I can give now are referred to these preliminary enquiries or must exercise considerable patience.

In the running commentary on some essential features of the self-sacrifice of Decius the following elements will be touched on: the situation—aspects of the actor (his status, his attitude, some outward features and their meaning: sacredness of the subject)—ways toward death—the subject as living dead—substitution—the authority to which responsibility is remitted. After this very superficial, but indispensable structural enquiry, the second part of my essay will go into the latter two aspects of the *devotio*-complex and discuss two principles which appear to be fundamental in the acts of self-

<sup>1</sup> For instance H. FUGIER, *Recherches sur l'expression du sacré dans la langue latine* (Paris 1963), 45-57, uses it as an illustration of the concept *sacer*; H. FREIER, *Caput velare* (Diss. Tübingen 1963), makes the *devotio* an introduction to his theory of *capitis velatio*; H. GEHRTS, *Das Märchen und das Opfer. Untersuchungen zum europäischen Brüdermärchen* (Bonn 1967) selects the *devotio* as the point of departure for an interesting though with regard to the Roman material very hazardous theory. It figures as a major example in W. SPEYER, «Zorn der Gottheit, Vergeltung und Sühne», in U. MANN (ed.), *Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt 1973), 124-143. Cf. now W. BURKERT, *Structure and History...* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 63.

<sup>2</sup> «Two Types of Roman *Devotio*», in *Mnemosyne* S. IV, 29 (1976), 365-410; «Polycrates and his Ring», in *SSR* 1 (1977), 17-46; «Destruction, Devotio and Despair in a Situation of Anomy: The Mourning for Germanicus in Triple Perspective», in *Perennitas. Studi in onore di A. Brelich* (Roma 1980), 541-618. Henceforth these works will be referred to by author's name and year.

sacrifice (and of human sacrifice in general): the principle of compensation and that of the anonymity of the gods that demand the sacrifice. Finally it will be tentatively suggested that these very principles, so conspicuous in the exaggerated form of self-sacrifice, might very well be the hidden forces behind any act which according to our broad definition may be labelled sacrifice.

# I STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF LEGENDARY CASES OF SELF-SACRIFICE

In 340 B.C. the Roman army under the consuls P. Decius Mus and T. Manlius Torquatus joined battle with the allied Latins near Veseria <sup>1</sup>. Legend has it that the troops commanded by Decius were losing ground and defeat was imminent, when suddenly Decius required the *pontifex maximus* to lead him in prayer and pronounce the formula by which the general devoted his own life and that of the enemies to the gods of the nether-world. After mounting a horse he rode into the midst of the hostile army, there to meet a deliberate death. This *devotio* resulted in the defeat of the enemy troops, and it is reported that both the son and the grandson of P. Decius Mus imitated this heroic act of self-sacrifice (in 295 B.C. in the battle of Sentinum and in 279 at Ausculum respectively). In order to analyse the pattern of the complex ritual of the *devotio* I shall follow the famous description given by Livy in book VIII chs. 9 ff. Although it is obvious that the *devotio* of Decius has a great deal in common with pharmakos-ritual (and human sacrifice in general)—Decius in fact is a prototypical pharmakos—I shall leave out anything that may be typical of pharmakos-ideology but not necessarily present in the taxonomy of self-sacrifice. To mention one instance: the idea that Decius re-

<sup>1</sup> I am not concerned with problems of historicity, nor is it important to my subject whether cases of self-sacrifice really occurred or existed only in the minds of authors and readers.

presents a kind of "plague-bolt", a *piaculum omnis deorum irae qui pestem ab suis aversam in hostes ferret* (Liv. VIII 9, 10), so characteristic, for instance, of Hittite *pharmakos*-rites<sup>1</sup> and, indeed, not absent from Greek myths of self-sacrifice<sup>2</sup>, will not be discussed here.

### *Situation*

The situation that induced the sacrifice of the Roman general is marked as a critical vicissitude during a war: defeat and disaster are imminent both in the present case and in the stories of the other Decii and their *devotio*. It is also one of the prominent motives in the famous Greek cases of e.g. Macaria, Iphigenia (a rather atypical case), Codrus, Menoeceus<sup>3</sup>. The fact that Decius commits an act of *kamikaze* by hurling himself

<sup>1</sup> E.g. H. M. KÜMMEL, *Ersatzrituale für den hethitischen König* (Wiesbaden 1967), 111 ff.; A. GOETZE, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton 1969), pp. 346 ff.; Versnel 1976, 403; O. R. GURNEY, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion* (Oxford 1977), 47-52. For the *devotio* as a *pharmakos*-ritual I may now refer to W. BURKERT, *op. cit.* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 57 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Clearly in the myth of Codrus. Perhaps also in the way Menoeceus killed himself while standing on the walls in order that his blood would drip outside the city (Eur. *Phoen.* 1009 ff.; 1090 ff.; cf. Stat. *Theb.* X 756 ff.). R. REBUFFAT, « Le sacrifice du fils de Créon », in *REA* 74 (1972), 14-31, discovers reminiscences with Punic/Phoenician *molchomor*-sacrifices, where it also occurred that children were killed on the walls of the city in order to keep the enemy at bay. Cf. especially 2 *Reg.* 3, 27 and the discussion on a newly discovered Ugaritic tablet in *CRAI* 1972, 693-703. Also Th. P. VAN BAAREN, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 136 n. 2), 25. Related phenomena in Plut. *Cic.* 47, 6; Liv. II 49, and the death of Dido: A.-M. TUPET, « Didon magicienne », in *REL* 48 (1970), 229-258, espec. 253-256. Generally: M. DELCOURT, « Le suicide par vengeance dans la Grèce ancienne », in *RHR* 119 (1939), 154-171.

<sup>3</sup> It is superfluous to quote the well-known mythical instances of human (self-) sacrifice again. They have been treated many times in comprehensive surveys, firstly and fundamentally by E. von LASAULX, « Die Sühnopfer der Griechen und Römer und ihr Verhältnis zu dem einen auf Golgotha », in *Studien des klassischen Alterthums* (Regensburg 1854), 233 ff., espec. 242 ff. For more modern collections see Versnel 1977, 27 n. 39.

upon the enemy has often been explained as a typically Roman trait, especially in connection with the magical contagion he is expected to communicate to the enemy troops<sup>1</sup>. It need not be so: various civilizations know a type of military self-sacrifice in which a (young) warrior deliberately and voluntarily ventures a lonely attack upon the enemy troops and finds a heroic death<sup>2</sup>. This may very well imply the notion of a bloody 'opening' of the battle comparable with the σφάγιον<sup>3</sup>; it may also be explained as an action of sympathetic magic; probably it is both.

There are, however, more situations that may demand an act of self-sacrifice. The fundamental dangers threatening an early, particularly an agricultural and settled civilization are epitomized in an age-old prayer of the Roman church: *a peste, fame, belloque, domine, libera nos*, which has its roots in ancient paganism<sup>4</sup>. Epidemics and famine, frequently coupled as

<sup>1</sup> The magical function was emphasized by L. DEUBNER, «Die Devotion der Decier», in *ARW* 8 (1905), 66 ff., and W. W. FOWLER, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London 1933), 208, and has found substantiation in Hittite material.

<sup>2</sup> War-leaders devoting themselves to death in Switzerland: H. G. WACKER-NAGEL, *Altes Volkstum der Schweiz* (Basel 1956), 288 f. Among the Armenian Circassians there is the 'Ty lie' ('superfluous ram'), a young warrior who went on horse-back, equipped with offensive weapons only, 50 metres in front of the army to be killed by the enemy: A. ΝΑΜΙΤΟΚ, «Ty lie», in *Travaux du 1<sup>er</sup> Congrès international de Folklore*, Paris 1937 (Tours 1938), 162-165. J. BAYET, «Le suicide mutuel», in *Croyances et rites dans la Rome antique* (Paris 1971), 171, gives more examples. Of course the actions by ἱεροὶ λόχοι, Berserker, *feralis exercitus* (L. WEISER, *Altgermanische Jünglingsweiben und Männerbünde* (Wien 1927); O. HÖFLER, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen I* (Frankfurt 1934); J. de VRIES, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte I*<sup>2</sup> (Berlin 1956), 487 ff.; H. GEHRTS, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 138 n. 1), 127), show comparable traits.

<sup>3</sup> W. BURKERT, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977), 400. Cf. the contribution by A. Henrichs.

<sup>4</sup> Liv. IV 9, 2-3, *factiones ... bella externa ... fames morbive, quaeque alia in deum iras velut ultima publicorum malorum vertunt*; Hor. *Carm.* I 21, 13 ff., *hic bellum lacrimosum, hic miseram famem | pestemque a populo ... | ... aget*. And in opposition the stereotyped combination of εἰρήνη, καρποί, ὑγίεια. Cf. H. W. PARKE/D. E. W. WORMELL, *The Delphic Oracle I* (Oxford 1956), 296, on self-sacrifice: "Either of two



λοιμός and λιμός<sup>1</sup>, are the other two motives for the desperate remedy that is self-sacrifice. Decius has an even more legendary rival in heroism, M. Curtius, whose equally celebrated *devotio* is reported by Varro, Livy and others<sup>2</sup> and was transmitted to the Middle Ages. It is told that in the Forum the earth yawned and that the haruspices declared that the God of the Dead demanded the fulfilment of a forgotten vow, namely that the most valuable possession of the state should be sent down. While others were throwing gold and pieces of money into the chasm, M. Curtius decided that the most precious thing must be the life of a valiant warrior. Consequently he mounted his horse and in full armour plunged into the chasm, which closed up and gave his body a divinely approved burial. The medieval version of the *Narracio de mirabilibus Urbis Rome*<sup>3</sup> adds several details: from the chasm rose pestiferous vapours causing an epidemic, which was not to end *nisi aliquis Romanorum se sponte biatu prefato precipitaret, preferens salutem populi sue proprie saluti*.

It needs no argument that again Greek myth presents manifold samples of drought, famine and plague as motives for self-sacrifice: Athamas, the Coronides, the Leocorides, the daughter(s) of Erechtheus, the daughters of Antipoinos,

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compelling motives is shown as driving the citizens to approve this desperate remedy for the common good. It may have been to cure a violent famine or plague which was depopulating the land, or else it was to avert a foreign invasion". Of course, one of the most serious 'plagues' was στάσις, *discordia*, leading to civil-war: H. KLEINKNECHT, in *Theol. Wörterbuch z. Neuen Testament* V 390, s.v. ὁργή.

<sup>1</sup> M. DELCOURT, *Stérilités mystérieuses et naissances maléfiqes dans l'antiquité classique* (Liège 1938); J.-M. ANDRÉ, in *Latomus* 39 (1980), 3 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Varro *Ling.* V 32, 148-149; Liv. VII 6, 1-6; Dio Cass. VII Fr. 30, 1, I pp. 87-89 Boissevain; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* XIV 11, 20-21; Val. Max. V 6, 2; Ps. Plut. *Parall. min.* 5 b, 306 F-307 A.

<sup>3</sup> Magister Gregorius, *Narracio de mirabilibus Urbis Rome*, ed. R. B. C. HUYGENS (Leiden 1970), cap. 5. Of course the theme of pestiferous vapours emanating from the netherworld is quite common. See e.g. Serv. *Aen.* XI 785.



Metioche and Menippe and the somewhat deviating Oedipus are some of the many examples.

In short, the act of self-sacrifice is generally necessitated by an all-pervading crisis, challenging the continued existence of society as a whole. These threats and crises may be transposed towards less comprehensive or temporal communities: human sacrifices, often staged as voluntary acts of self-devotion, are typical of dangerous situations at sea <sup>1</sup>, and later on we shall discuss a few devotional acts which function in the context of the smallest communities: the family, relationships of lovers, friends and blood-relations.

If then imminent disaster may require that one will pay for all, we now ask who is the one that pays, in what way the transaction is performed and whether the victim receives any compensation.

*Some aspects of the actor and the action*

*status*

*Illud adiciendum videtur licere consuli dictatorique et praetori (... civem devovere)* (Liv. VIII 10, 11). At the moment of his *devotio* Decius is the highest magistrate of the Roman body-politic. In a more general way Macrobius (*Sat.* III 9, 9) says that *dictatores imperatoresque soli possunt devovere*, and both statements, implying that the act of *devotio* is reserved to those invested with the highest *imperium*, are strikingly corroborated by the legend that the *seniores* who, at the invasion by the Celts in 390 B.C., decide *se pro patria Quiritibusque Romanis devovere*—which means that they will await the enemy without resisting their attack—, are dressed in the robes and with the insignia that mark the highest authority in Rome: *quae augustissima vestis est tensas ducentibus triumphantibusve, ea vestiti medio*

<sup>1</sup> See D. WACHSMUTH, ΠΟΜΠΗΙΟΣ Ο ΔΑΙΜΩΝ. *Untersuchungen zu den antiken Sakralhandlungen bei Seereisen* (Diss. Berlin 1967), 119 ff.; 310.

*aedium eburnis sellis sedere* (Liv. V 41, 2-3). In the story of M. Curtius the state had to sacrifice *quo plurimum populus Romanus posset* (Liv. VII 6, 2), which turns out to be *iuvenem bello egregium* or as Varro (*Ling.* V 32, 148) has it: *civem fortissimum* or *virum fortem armatum*. However, in the *Narracio de mirabilibus urbis Rome* by Magister Gregorius ch. 5, the actor has been promoted to *princeps orbis et urbis huius dominus*. The 'thing of highest value in the state' appears to be a matter of discussion<sup>1</sup>: at first sight the head of state, king or imperator seems to have the highest qualifications, yet, though there are a few examples of kings' self-sacrifice<sup>2</sup>, even myth seems to shrink from this option: a nearest relation, son or daughter<sup>3</sup>, takes his place, or else we hear the demand that a chaste maiden or a valiant adolescent give her/his life for the salvation of the fatherland. Indeed, where the king is practically identified with the state, and his well-being implies that of his country and people<sup>4</sup>, it is natural that the highest possession of the state is not the *patria* itself but the *spes patriae* embodied either in the *virtus* of the young warrior or in the as yet unbroached and untouched reserves of procreation hidden in the virgin. When Epimenides,

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes there is a general demand to sacrifice a thing *πλείστου ἄξιον καὶ ἐπ' ὃ σὺ ἀπολομένη μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀλγήσεις* (Hdt. III 40, 4, on which see Versnel 1977), or the order to offer the 'dearest' of the children (Philo of Byblus, *FGrHist* 790 F 3 b, *vide infra* p. 179). In Statius, *Theb.* X 654 ff. Menoeceus is chosen because his *virtus* is superior: D. W. T. C. VESSEY, «Menoeceus in the Thebaid of Statius», in *CPh* 66 (1971), 236-243, espec. 237. Aelius Aristides is ransomed by τῶν τροφίμων ὁ πλείστου ἄξιος (*vide infra* p. 166). Cf. *infra* n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Codrus and the Spartan king at Thermopylae: Hdt. VII 220. Cf. the general remarks by *I Clem.* 55, 1: πολλοὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ ἡγούμενοι λοιμικοῦ τινὸς ἐνστάτος καιροῦ χρησιμοδοτηθέντες παρέδωκαν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς θάνατον, ἵνα ῥύσωνται διὰ τοῦ ἑαυτῶν αἵματος τοὺς πολίτας and Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F 69.

<sup>3</sup> For royal children in general see Libanius, *Or.* XLII 26 and the *scholia*. The Carthaginians wishing to restore the peace with the god who had been outwitted by substitute-sacrifices, selected the children of their high-placed compatriots: Diod. XX 14, 4-6.

<sup>4</sup> On this identification especially in the late Republic and early imperial period see Versnel 1980.

as legend has it, demanded of Athens an expiation, a μειράκιον εὐμορφον volunteered and offered himself<sup>1</sup>. In the doubtless legendary rite which according to the *Passio maior, Acta S. Caesarii* (AASS Nov. 1, 106 f.), was performed annually at Terracina it was a beautiful young man who offered his own life<sup>2</sup>. First he received a lavish treatment and nourishment for several months, after which *armatus et ornatus ascendit in montem marinum et arreptus equo pro salute rei publicae et principum et civium salubritate, et ut nomen habeat gloriae, ipse se praecipitat morti*. His corpse is burnt and the ashes are conserved *in templo pro salute rei publicae et civium*. In this text we perceive several central features of the complex, to which I shall return, but for the moment it is shown once again that *quo plurimum populus posset* may be interpreted in various, though stereotyped, ways.

#### *attitude*

*In hac trepidatione Decius consul M. Valerium magna voce inclamat: 'deorum', inquit, 'ope, M. Valeri, opus est; agedum, pontifex publicus populi Romani, praei verba, quibus me pro legionibus devoveam'*

<sup>1</sup> Athen. XIII 602 c (= Neanthes, *FGrHist* 84 F 16). Also in the *pharmakos*-ritual the beggar or criminal used to be beautifully dressed. The wife of the Hittite king Mursili II offers a substitute-woman with the words "I am presenting her to thee in fine attire. Compared to me she is excellent, she is pure, she is brilliant, she is white, she is decked out with everything" (O. R. GURNEY, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 1), 55).

<sup>2</sup> V. BULHART, « Eine Selbstaufopferung in trajanischer Zeit », in *WS* 74 (1961), 126-129, gives the text and believes he is the first to discuss this legend. As far as I know J. TOUTAIN, in *Annuaire de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes* 1916-17, 1 ff., was the first to draw attention to this text. It is also discussed by L. DEUBNER, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932), 187. Bulhart wonders whether the act took place under Trajan or under Nero, but M. MESLIN, *La fête des kalendes de janvier dans l'empire romain* (Bruxelles 1970), 92, argues convincingly for a mixture of literary (Curtius) and ritual (1 January) traits, as censured by a Christian. Deubner, too, doubts its historicity. Note the similarity with the texts quoted *infra* p. 153. Cf. especially S. WEINSTOCK, « Saturnalien und Neujahrsfest in den Märtyreracten », in *Mullus. Festschrift Th. Klauser* (Münster 1964), 391-400.

(Liv. VIII 9, 4). Before this the two consuls had agreed *ne mors voluntaria consulis exercitum in acie terreret, comparant inter se, ut ab utra parte cedere Romanus exercitus coepisset, inde se consul devoveret pro populo Romano Quiritibusque*. (VIII 6, 12). In the numerous reports on the death of the Decii in later literature the aspect of voluntariness is rarely lacking. The action is *inter alia* described as: ἀπέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς σφαγὴν (Tzetzes, *ad Lyc. Alex.* 1378); *devotum dis manibus optulit caput* (Flor. *Epit.* I 17, 7); *eamque mortem ardentiore studio peteret* (Cic. *Fin.* II 19, 61); *duo Decios qui ad voluntariam mortem cursum equorum incitaverunt* (Cic. *Cato* 20, 75); *in confertissimos hostes sponte prolapsus occubuit* (Oros. *Hist.* III 9, 3). It is revealing that the oldest testimony on the death of the third Decius emphatically underlines this aspect. In Ennius, *Ann.* 208-210 Vahlen, Decius says:

*divi hoc audite parumper:  
ut pro Romano populo prognariter, armis  
certando, prudens animam de corpore mitto.*

where, as Skutsch has shown<sup>1</sup>, *prognariter* and *prudens* represent a stereotyped element of formulas used for voluntary death: *sciens prudens*.

In the meantime this aspect cannot be called surprising: after all we are talking about self-sacrifice and should naturally expect—here as well as in the famous mythical examples of Greece—that ‘freiwilliger Opfertod’ is indicated by terms such as *voluntarius*, ἐκουσίως, εὖνους, ἐθελοντής<sup>2</sup>. Indeed,

<sup>1</sup> O. SKUTSCH, *Studia Enniana* (London 1968), 54-61, who rightly argues for the third Decius against P. Lévêque and G. Stievano. He also suggests that the element *sciens prudens* or an archaic variant must have figured in the official formula of the *devotio*.

<sup>2</sup> Often required explicitly: Neanthes, *FGrHist* 84 F 16; Serv. *Aen.* III 57; Paus. I 32, 6. And *passim* in tragedy: P. ROUSSEL, « Le thème du sacrifice volontaire dans la tragédie d'Euripide », in *RBPb* 1922, 225-240, and in oracles: H. W. PARKE/D. E. W. WORMELL, *The Delphic Oracle* I 295 ff. Cf. above all J. SCHMITT, *Freiwilliger Opfertod bei Euripides* (Giessen 1921).



Schmitt's study of the theme in Euripides fully bears out this supposition.

The essential question then is not whether self-sacrifice is performed enthusiastically but why the voluntary aspect has been deemed so essential. And a second question is: may we interpret self-sacrifice as a mere variant of human sacrifice in general? It is tempting to give a positive answer to the second question, and that would imply an answer to the first question too. Presents to the gods should be given in a mood that is called *libens laetus* in countless inscriptions; or as Tertullian (*Apol.* 28, 1) says: *divinae rei faciundae libens animus indicitur*. Even the gift itself should display enthusiasm: '*Ego melior sum, me sume, per me Dominum benedic*', a bunch of grapes cries out with truly Christian pathos<sup>1</sup>, and the many instances of authentic or staged readiness of sacrificial animals to be led to the slaughter, both in pagan and in Christian contexts, have been treated too often to be repeated here<sup>2</sup>. Of course a voluntary sacrifice provides a good *omen* and effects *καλλιερεῖν*<sup>3</sup>, and it is in this respect meaningful that the second Decius *in aciem confertissimam incucurrit, de hoc sollicitus tantum ut litaret* (Seneca, *Epist.* 67, 9). There is the other side, the comedy of innocence, the animal by its own eagerness removing the bur-

<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus' translation of a fragment of Papias in A. ROUSSEAU *et alii* (edd.), *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies, livre V*, II (Paris 1969), 415, discussed by H. J. de JONGE, ΒΟΤΡΥΣ ΒΟΗΣΕΙ, in M. J. VERMASEREN (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden 1979), 37-49.

<sup>2</sup> Also in human society voluntary gifts are more welcome: Eur. *Erechth.* Fr. 360 N<sup>2</sup>, *ap.* Lycurg. In *Leocr.* 100 ff. On voluntary sacrifice see especially O. WEINREICH, *Studien zu Martial* (Stuttgart 1928), 134 f. and 139; W. BURKERT, in *GRBS* 7 (1966), 107 n. 43; R. MERKELBACH, in *ZPE* 8 (1971), 116-117, contested by L. ROBERT, *Bull. épigr.* 1972, no. 417 (in *REG* 85 (1972), 460). Cases like Plut. *Luc.* 24, 4-5 have striking parallels in modern folk-lore in Greece (R. and E. BLUM, *The Dangerous Hour* (London 1970), 92) and Italy (S. PEROWNE, *Roman Mythology* (London 1969), 29, quoting M. Vellante).

<sup>3</sup> The reverse in Macr. *Sat.* III 5, 8 and cf. H. PETERSMANN, in *RbM* 116 (1973), 239.



den of guilt from the conscience of the human sacrificer<sup>1</sup>. Would not this very aspect play an essential role in the doubtful and dreadful tragedy of human sacrifice? It does, for, as we shall observe, both gods and human witnesses certainly could do with some excuse or escape<sup>2</sup>. Yet in view of some remarkable cases of personal self-sacrifice for the life of a loved one I think that this explanation, valid though it may be, from an ethological or psychological stand-point must be considered a reduction of the emotional incentives leading towards self-sacrifice. This, however, does not immediately concern the present investigation and from now on we shall not maintain a rigorous distinction between general human sacrifice and self-sacrifice, although the latter will have our special attention.

*Some outward features and their meaning*

*Pontifex eum togam praetextam sumere iussit et velato capite, manu subter togam ad mentum exserta super telum subiectum pedibus stantem sic dicere (...). Ipse incinctus cinctu Gabinio armatus (in equum insilivit) (Liv. VIII 9, 5-9).*

Rigorously pruning everything not immediately relevant to our present issue<sup>3</sup> I shall concentrate for a moment on the dress of the *devovens*. Ever since Deubner many explanations have been proposed: the *cinctus Gabinus* would stamp Decius as a

<sup>1</sup> "Ὅπως εὐαγὲς ἦ τὸ ἀνελεῖν, as Plut. *Lyc.* 28, 7, quotes the Aristotelian interpretation of the comedy of innocence in the Spartan declaration of war to the Helots. On the comedy of innocence see *i.a.* A. HENRICHS, in *Kyriakon. Festschrift J. Quasten I* (Münster 1970), 25 ff.; A. HENRICHS/L. KOENEN, in *ZPE* 5 (1970), 145 ff.; A. M. di NOLA, *Antropologia religiosa* (Firenze 1974), 201-262; E. LEFÈVRE, «Die Lehre von der Entstehung der Tieropfer in Ovids Fasten, I, 335-456», in *RbM* 119 (1976), 39-64.

<sup>2</sup> A survey of various excuses and escapes: J.-P. GUÉPIN, *The Tragic Paradox* (Amsterdam 1968), 100 ff. A very explicit example: Philostr. *Vita Apollon.* IV 16.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.* the *telum* and the *manus ad mentum exserta* on which, after Deubner, there is still much to say. See *e.g.* the adventurous ideas of H. GEHRTS, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 138 n. 1).

priest, the *capitis velatio* as one devoted to death, which produces the picture of the priest being his own victim, an image to which the sacrifice 'des Einen auf Golgotha'—to quote old Lasaulx—has heavily contributed. Decius, however, neither is nor becomes a priest by dressing the way he does: he is the bearer of highest *imperium* officiating in a ritual performance, whose nature it will be useful to analyse. But first it should be noticed that the *cinctus Gabinus*, being a special way of girding the *toga*, usually combined with the *caput velatum*, the cultic dress of any official with *imperium*<sup>1</sup>, especially in a military situation, is *also* the outfit in which Decius makes his charge and finds his death. Besides Livy it is Cassius Dio<sup>2</sup> who mentions this explicitly and tells us that Pyrrhus of Epirus ordered his troops ἄν τινα οὕτως ἐσκευασμένον ἴδωσι (*sc.* τὴν ἱερὰν ἐσθῆτα) μὴ κτεῖναι αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ ζῶον συλλαβεῖν.

This has a striking parallel in a primitive Italic rite in which human beings were removed from their community and sent away with very uncertain prospects to lands unknown: the 'victims' of the *ver sacrum*<sup>3</sup>, who as a redemption of the vow to sacrifice any life that the next spring would produce, were not killed like the animals concerned, but bannished from their country in order—and this is the social motive—to found a new settlement. These human victims, who were consecrated to death without being sacrificed in the sense of 'killed', went *capite velati*: Paul. ex Festo p. 519 f. Lindsay, *sed cum crudele videretur pueros ac puellas innocentes interficere, perductos in adultam*

<sup>1</sup> On *cinctus Gabinus* and *capitis velatio* see H. FREIER, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 138 n. 1) and L. BONFANTE WARREN, « Roman Costumes », in *ANRW* I 4 (Berlin 1973), 596 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Livy says that Decius had to put on the *toga praetexta* which apparently (and naturally) he did not wear before. Dio Cass. Fr. 40, 43, I p. 133 Boissvain and cf. Fr. 35, 6 (= Zon. VII 26, 7): Δέκιος ... τὴν πολεμικὴν σκευὴν ἀποθέμενος καὶ τὴν ἱερὰν ἐσθῆτα ἀναλαβὼν ... ἐσελεύναι τῶν πολεμίων.

<sup>3</sup> The data in J. HEURGON, *Trois études sur le 'ver sacrum'* (Bruxelles 1957); W. EISENHUT, in *RE* VIII A 1 (1955), 911 ff. On the aspect of colonization: P. M. MARTIN, « Contribution de Denys d'Halicarnasse à la connaissance du *ver sacrum* », in *Latomus* 32 (1973), 23-38.

*aetatem velabant atque ita extra fines suos exigebant.* By this act the victims were *sacri* or *consecrati*—one group even bore the name *Sacrani*—and this is literally expressed by Strabo V 4, 12, p. 250, who says that they κατέθυσαν (*mactabant*, killed by way of sacrifice) the animals, whereas they καθιέρωσαν (*sacrabant*, *consecrabant*) the human beings<sup>1</sup>. Thus they were excluded from intercourse with their former social community, expelled and literally left to their fate: if the gods would take them they were welcome; if hostile beings were to kill them, their former compatriots could not be held responsible.

Decius' act of self-sacrifice is essentially an act of self-*consecratio* as has been shown by various experts on phenomenological grounds<sup>2</sup>. Livy is very careful in his formulations, e.g. when he makes Decius say: *Iam ego mecum hostium legiones mactandas Telluri ac diis Manibus dabo* (X 28, 13) or when the Roman Iunius aiming at the *sacratos more Samnitium milites* says *eos se Orco mactare* (Liv. IX 40, 9). Here the essential distinction between *consecratio* and *mactatio* is again emphasized: in the first act the subject is the consul (or comparable *milites*) himself: the *mactatio* however cannot be performed by the same subject, death by his own hand apparently being impossible<sup>3</sup>. It is the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. a typical *pharmakos*-ritual in a Hittite text, where an old woman takes a sheep: "she consecrates the sheep ... but they do not kill it". The name of the sheep is significant: 'nakkušši' from the verb *nake* 'let go, dispatch' (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton 1969), p. 351; O. R. GURNEY, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 1), 51).

<sup>2</sup> H. WAGENVOORT, *Roman Dynamism* (Oxford 1947), 32; H. FUGIER, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 138 n. 1), 45-57. The act is also called *consecratio*: Flor. *Epit.* I 13, 9; I 17, 7; Aug. *Civ.* V 18, 2.

<sup>3</sup> This is in contrast to some, though not all, Greek examples. Codrus had to be killed by enemy hands. So had the Spartan king in Hdt. VII 220. But apparently Menoeceus was not disqualified by committing suicide. This may seem surprising since suicide is generally viewed as a cowardly and womanly death (and in this case is accepted: Coronids, Anton. Liberalis 25; daughters of Antipoinos αὐτοχειρία: Paus. IX 17, 1), but see the differentiated treatment by J. BAYER, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 144 n. 1), 130-176, and the vast literature in Y. GRISÉ, « De la fréquence du suicide chez les Romains », in *Latomus* 39 (1980), 17-46.

gods (of the netherworld) who must take the *consecratus* either through the mediation of the enemy troops or in some other way—which we shall describe—and thus accept the offer. Here we have one essential difference with the normal animal-sacrifice where *consecratio* and *mactatio*, though ritually distinguished, are nevertheless closely connected and, more important, are practically in the same hands.

Decius, after his self-consecration, is, as *vir sacratus* or *sacer*, referred to the realm of the gods or the realm of death—in this case identical—but has as yet not completed his quest. He is ‘in between’, in the no man’s land between the society of the living and the world of the dead and their gods. The *rite de séparation* has been passed, the *agrégation* not yet been performed; the subject is in the liminal situation of the ‘marge’. That is exactly expressed by his being *sacer* and again this has been pictured by Livy and other authors in an unmistakable, though generally unobserved, way. In his *Thebais* X 757 Statius describes Menoeceus during his act of self-sacrifice: *iam sacer aspectu solitoque augustior ore*. Clearly this passage has been moulded upon the pattern of Livy’s description of Decius<sup>1</sup>, for immediately following the phrase quoted above Decius is described as: *conspectus ab utraque acie aliquanto augustior humano visus*. The word *augustus* is used with obvious intention. Firstly, it implies the notion of *sacer* with which it is combined in numerous places (“*augustus* must be practically synonymous with *sacratus/consecratus*”, Wagenvoort<sup>2</sup>). But secondly *augustus* means ‘sublime’, ‘lofty’, and more literally ‘great, grand’. Livy I 7, 9 pictures Hercules as having *habitus formamque viri aliquantum ampliorem augustioremque humana*, and of the dream-figure announcing the *devotio* by Decius it is said (VIII 6, 9) *visa species viri maioris quam pro humano habitu augus-*

<sup>1</sup> D. W. T. C. VESSEY, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 144 n. 1) has made this observation. This is the only instance of *augustus* being used for a human being in the *Thebaid*.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* (*supra* p. 150 n. 2), 13, where one can find the testimonies.



*tiorisque*. The latter formula <sup>1</sup> is very often used to describe superhuman or heroic figures.

Decius is *sacer* and accordingly receives the 'size of heroes' <sup>2</sup>. In this exceptional case we shall even observe *how* large *aliquanto augustior humano* actually was. But first let us see how the self-sacrificer, who could consecrate but not immolate himself, sought his death. We postpone references to parallel Greek mythical instances to the next paragraph, where we shall meet persons of whom it can be said as it might be of Decius: καὶ ζῶσαν εἰπεῖν καὶ θανοῦσαν ἔστι σοι (Eur. *Alc.* 141).

### *Ways towards death*

(*ipse incinctus cinctu Gabino*) *armatus in equum insilivit ac se in medios hostes inmisit* (Liv. VIII 9, 9).

A general is a 'man on horseback' as 19th-century imagery shows and the same appears to be true for royalty and heads of state. No wonder that the way Decius seeks his death is totally ignored in modern literature. Yet, on the other hand, it receives ample emphasis in ancient texts, where the horse is rarely lacking, surprisingly enough if its presence were so self-evident. Stranger still is its conspicuous presence in legends

<sup>1</sup> On these formulas see H. ERKELL, *Augustus, felicitas, fortuna. Lateinische Wortstudien* (Göteborg 1952), 9 ff., and cf. the discussion between G. DUMÉZIL, in *REL* 35 (1957), 126 ff. = *Idées romaines* (Paris 1969), 79 ff. and H. WAGENVOORT, in *Mnemosyne* S. IV, 5 (1952), 287 ff. = *Pietas. Selected Studies in Roman Religion* (Leiden 1980), espec. 50 ff., on the concept of *maiestas*. The opposition between *augustus* and *humanus* is marked in Livy who has it in 5 of the 13 cases. The word *augustus* occurs four times in the context of the *devotio*. Is it possible that in the *augustus Decius* the original sense of *mactus* glimmers through? Cf. A. PIGANOL, *Recherches sur les jeux romains* (Paris 1923), 127 n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> S. EITREM, « Die Grösse der Heroen », in *SO* 8 (1929), 53 ff.; H. WAGENVOORT, *Pietas*, 50 ff. Much material in F. BÖMER (Hrsg.), *Ovidius. Die Fasten* II (Heidelberg 1958), *ad Fast.* IV 861. The general idea is well formulated by H. ERKELL, *op. cit.* preceding note, 13: « Wer den unterirdischen Göttern geweiht wurde, hat die Welt der Menschen in religiösem Sinne verlassen; er ist *consecratus* und hat als solcher Teil an göttlicher Macht und Kraft ».



which, however related to or dependent on the Decius-story<sup>1</sup>, could easily do without horse or mount. Why should Curtius mount a horse before jumping into the chasm (*equo... exornato insidentem armatum se in specum inmisisse*, Liv. VII 6, 5, and *passim* in other sources)?<sup>2</sup> Why should the youth of Terracina mount a horse before precipitating himself from the rock as Caesarius pretended to have observed himself: *Eadem hora post sacrificium ascendit iuvenis equum et arreptus furia coepit furiose arripere equum et cum ascendisset in montem, praecipitavit se ipse et mortuus est*?

Part of the answer may be hidden in the latter statement: the element of *furor*, ecstasy and rapture, realized by means of the uncheckable impetus of the frantic animal, but I think there is more to it. Liv. XXVII 16, 4 tells us about a traitor Philumenus: *cum citato equo ex proelio avectus esset, vagus paulo post equus [errans] per urbem cognitus... creditum vulgo est in puteum apertum ex equo praecipitasse*<sup>3</sup>. 'It was generally believed'; it was also believed that Sextus Pompeius as a sacrifice for Poseidon ἵππους τε, καὶ ὥς γέ τινές φασιν, καὶ ἄνδρας ἐς τὸν πορθμὸν ζῶντας ἐνέβαλε (Dio Cass. XLVIII 48, 5). In Rhodos there was an annual sacrifice of a four-horse team by driving it from the rocks into the sea<sup>4</sup>, and the jumping of horses, men on

<sup>1</sup> Ps. Plut. *Parall. min.* 6 b, 307 B, illustrates how the theme may expand: Aemilius Paullus receives an oracle that he will gain a victory if he will set up an altar on the place ἐνθα ἂν ἰδῇ χάσματι κρυπτόμενον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπισήμων μετὰ ἄρματος. Μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας Οὐαλέριος <Τορ>κουᾶτος κατ' ὄναρ ἰδὼν ἀναλαβεῖν ἱερέως κόσμον (... ) στρατηγήσας καὶ πολλοὺς φονεύσας ὑπὸ γῆς κατεπόθη.

<sup>2</sup> Provided one does not prefer to follow V. BASANOFF, «Devotio de M. Curtius eques», in *Latomus* 8 (1949), 31-36, which should be advised against.

<sup>3</sup> On similar types of jumps into pits see F. BÖMER, in *ARW* 33 (1936), 280. *Espec. Schol. Bern. ad Verg. Ecl.* III 105: *apud antiquos fuit altissimus puteus in quem descendebat puer quo cognosceret anni proventus ad sacra celebranda...*; H. WAGENVORST, *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (Leiden 1956), 123; W. FAUTH, «Der Schlund des Orcus», in *Numen* 21 (1974), 109 and 115 f.

<sup>4</sup> Festus p. 190 Lindsay. Doubtless an imitation of the typical horse-sacrifice for Poseidon: J. G. FRAZER, *ad Paus.* VIII 7, 2. D. WACHSMUTH, *op cit.* (*supra* p. 143 n. 1), n. 207.

horseback or men from horseback down into pits, chasms or the sea is so (proto-)typical that a children's game could grow of it: λευκᾶν ἄφ' ἑππων εἰς θάλασσαν ἄλατο was shouted by one child that as a turtle had to catch the others <sup>1</sup>.

This type of *katapontismos* or *katakremnismos* <sup>2</sup> is certainly not the only thing horses and men have in common when it comes to the way in which they are ritually killed <sup>3</sup>, but for the moment I wish only to stress that in situations of human sacrifice and self-sacrifice the action of ἀποπέμπειν often takes the immediate form of καταπέμπειν, *demittere*. The jumping from rocks into the sea or into a chasm is a direct passage into the underworld which, after all, is the final goal of the *devotio*. That is why Ennius makes Decius say *animam de corpore mitto* and why *Orco, neci, morti demittere* are usual expressions <sup>4</sup>, as is also shown by Cicero, *Fam.* VIII 16, 5 (= *Att.* X 9, 5) *ne te*

<sup>1</sup> Pollux IX 125; Erinna, Ἡλακάτη 1 f.

<sup>2</sup> On these rites and their implications see *RE* X 2 (1919), 2464 f., 2480 ff., ss. vv.; D. WACHSMUTH, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 143 n. 1), 205 and n. 615. It is the typical method to get rid of human περιψήματα of any sort: J.-P. GUÉPIN, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 148 n. 2), 92-99, especially of *pharmakoi*. Cf. W. SPEYER, *Fluch*, in *RAC* VII (1969), 1187-8. Also prisoners of war: P. DUCREY, *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre dans la Grèce antique des origines à la conquête romaine* (Paris 1968), 201-206. The ancient Icelanders also threw their (two!) *pharmakoi* from the rocks: J. de VRIES, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 141 n. 2), 410.

<sup>3</sup> Both are stabbed with a spear: Porph. *Abst.* II 54; Xen. *Eph.* II 13. Cf. F. SCHWENN, *Die Menschenopfer bei den Griechen und Römern*, RGVV 15, 3 (Giessen 1915), 71, and the Equus October on the other side. On the identity of equine and human sacrifice see J. L. SAUVÉ, «The Divine Victim», in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. by J. PUYVEL (Berkeley 1970), 173-191. Compare also the *consecratio* of the human victims e.g. in the *ver sacrum* with the way a herd of horses is *flumini consecratus* by Caesar (Suet. *Iul.* 81, 4). Significantly in modern Greece, a cow or bull when consecrated to the Panagia or a saint is killed (and consumed) but a horse is let loose and it is often told that the animal suddenly and miraculously disappeared: R. and E. BLUM, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 147 n. 2), 53; 64 f. It may be relevant that boys and girls are called πῶλοι (see S. EITREM, *Die göttlichen Zwillinge bei den Griechen* (Christiania 1902), *passim*, espec. 15-25; 87) and cf. the substitution of the παρθένος ξανθή by a blond mare in Plut. *Pelop.* 20-21. See also W. BURKERT, *Structure and History...* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 113.

<sup>4</sup> «Verben mit dem Präfix *de-* ... bilden einen routinemässigen Bestandteil der Berichte über Beseitigung von Prodigien» (Th. KÖVES-ZULAUF, *Reden und Schweigen*

*sciens prudensque eo demittas*. Curtius was in the position to *demitti* literally, but Decius although he *animam demisit* could not throw himself into the depths of Orcus. Therefore he *se immisit in medios hostes* and is like other Roman heroes consistently pictured with the specific animal that was archetypically connected with death, the netherworld and the abduction of mortals and immortals into the realm of Hades as the myths of Kore, Asklepios and Amphiaraos show. Horizontal and vertical eliminations from the human world alternate. The murderer Althaemenes endeavoured to expiate his crime by seeking a voluntary death in the desert according to Diod. V 59, 1-4, but Apollodorus III 2, 2, 3, tells us that he εὐξάμενος ὑπὸ χάσματος ἐκρύβη. There is a direct way: to jump into a pit or water, to stab oneself so that the blood reaches the netherworld, to be drowned or to be buried alive, and thus to force one's way into the realm of death<sup>1</sup>. In some 'horizontal'

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(München 1972), 43 n. 68). *Mittere*, on the other hand, is *terminus technicus* for offering to the gods of the netherworld: F. BÖMER, *Abnenkult und Abnenglaube im alten Rom* (Leipzig/Berlin 1943), 127 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Jumping: The Cecropides jumped from the Acropolis (Philoch., *FGrHist* 328 F 105). In a few versions of the myth of Menoeceus it is told that the hero threw himself from the walls: Hygin. *Fab.* 68; Stat. *Theb.* X 774 ff. and cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 1009 ff. Even in imperial times *devotio* is realized by jumping from the Tarpeian rock: Suet. *Cal.* 27, 4; Dio Cass. LIX 8, 3; Versnel 1980. In miracle-tales Greek women of modern times consecrate their babies to the Panagia by throwing them from the bell-tower of Tenos: R. and E. BLUM, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 147 n. 2), 45 and 84. Drowning: Antinous is said to have drowned himself in order to 'devote' his life for the salvation of Hadrian (*SHA, Hadr.* 14, 5-7); Macaria is connected with a source. See on her death: R. GUERRINI, « La morte di Macaria », in *SIFC* 45 (1973), 46-59; M. SCHMIDT, « Makaria », in *Ant. Kunst* 13 (1970), 71ff. On the drowning of sacrifices see also G. PICCALUGA, in *Magia. Studi di storia delle religioni in memoria di R. Garosi*, ed. P. XELLA (Roma 1976), 218 ff. Burying alive: the famous cases of the Graeci and Galli and the Vestales in Rome, rightly compared by G. RADKE, *Die Götter Altitaliens* (Münster 1965), 331 f., with the burying of the image of the *devotus*. Cf. also D. BRIQUEL, in *Mélanges offerts à J. Heurgon* I (Rome 1976), 65 ff. On Hittite cases O. R. GURNEY, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 1), 53: "The purpose here is to banish the evil to the Nether World and ensure that it stays there. To dig a hole in the ground is to open a communication with the Nether World". Until recent times in order to avert epidemics living people

cases the gods may help: when the daughters of Orion had killed themselves for their fatherland, Hades and Persephone showed their compassion and τὰ μὲν σώματα τῶν παρθένων ἠφάνισαν (Anton. Lib. 25, 4). The gods of the netherworld here accepted of their own accord what in the other versions was thrust upon them. And this is exactly what Decius is aiming at by his wild dash on horse-back: to transform his 'ἀποπομπή' into a 'καταπομπή'.

*the living dead*

*Illud adiciendum videtur, licere consuli dictatorique et praetori, cum legiones hostium devoveat, non utique se, sed quem velit ex legione Romana scripta civem devovere. Si is homo, qui devotus est, moritur, probe factum videri; ni moritur, tum signum septem pedes altum aut maius in terram defodi, et piaculum hostia caedi; ubi illud signum defossum erit, eo magistratum Romanum escendere fas non esse. Sin autem sese devovere volet, sicut Decius devovit, ni moritur, neque suum neque publicum divinum pure faciet, qui sese devoverit... (Liv. VIII 10, 11 ff.).*

Whoever aspires at heroization after death should preferably throw himself from the rocks into the sea, drown himself or jump into a spring or chasm. *Katapontismos* and related types of death practically warrant heroization<sup>1</sup>. Hardly a single one of the famous mythical persons who gave their life in this way failed to receive a hero-cult. And one need not be mythical: Antinous drowned himself as an act of *devotio* for Hadrian and received heroic honours<sup>2</sup>. And, conversely, there is practically no healing or miraculous spring which does not owe its

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were buried, sometimes in a coffin: D. J. WARD, «The Threefold Death», in J. Puhvel (ed.), *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 154 n. 3), 129 ff. Cf. also W. Burkert, *Structure and History...* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 70.

<sup>1</sup> J.-P. Guépin, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 148 n. 2), 94 ff.; D. Wachsmuth, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 143 n. 1), 205. Cf. W. Burkert, *op. cit.* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 168 nn. 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> *SHA, Hadr.* 14, 5-7. There may be Egyptian influences here: F. L. Griffith, in *Zeitschrift für Ägypt. Sprache u. Altertumskunde* 46 (1909), 132 ff.; M. A. Murray, *ibid.* 51 (1914), 127 ff.



qualities to the fact that a holy man or woman was drowned in it: the self-sacrificer becomes a hero (*augustior humano*), the place where he died or is buried is holy ground.

We described Decius as *sacer*, being 'devoted to' but as yet not accepted by death. Yet he was doomed, 'a dead man', and his unhopd-for return to life and society required drastic measures just as people who had been fancied dead generally had, on their return, to undergo various rites: the *postliminium*, rebirth, a new name and so on<sup>1</sup>. The interdiction of cultic activities as indicated by Livy can be explained in this way, but the measures concerning the *legionarius devotus* who did not die are far more interesting. Although I believe it is not difficult to explain the distinction in the treatment between general and *legionarius*, surprising though it may be at first sight, I shall not touch upon this problem but only point out a salient feature relevant to our subject.

It has been suggested that the instruction to bury an image cannot be very old since burial did not take the place of cremation before the third century B.C.<sup>2</sup>. This is an interesting misconception which originates from the assumption that the burial of the image is nothing but a substitute-burial just as, in later times, vicarious burials *per imaginem* occurred<sup>3</sup>. This, however, is a reduction. What we have here is certainly not an ordinary burial but a vicarious redemption of a vow. The *legionarius* was *devotus* to the gods of the Netherworld

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 5, 264 E - 265 B, and H. J. ROSE, *ad loc.* The man announced as dead must not have intercourse and not join cultic acts since he is not ἄνθρωπος. The same in the Middle Ages: K. THOMAS, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth 1971), 44.

<sup>2</sup> There is an interesting suggestion made by L. A. HOLLAND, in *AJA* 60 (1956), 243 ff. and A. BOËTHIUS, in *Eranos* 54 (1956), 202-210, that the 'warrior of Caepetrano' represents an Italic soldier who was devoted but had not died. E. T. SALMON, *Samnium and the Samnites* (Cambridge 1967), 147 n. 2, has a good argument against this theory.

<sup>3</sup> See E. BICKERMAN, in *Le culte des souverains*, Entretiens Hardt 19 (1972), 22; Versnel 1977, 31.



and his vicarious *demissio* is realized by the interment of the colossal seven foot image<sup>1</sup>. 'Colossal' indeed, since what we see here is precisely a *kolossos*, both in size and in function. *Kolossoi* are images of the dead, they are fundamentally substitutes<sup>2</sup> and, as Vernant has shown<sup>3</sup>, have the function of a double: «il permet de rétablir entre le monde des morts et le monde des vivants des rapports corrects». In fact the *kolossos* in his interment precisely depicts the status of the *devotus* as if he had died: it represents his size, the size of the heroes. It represents his situation: dead, but heroized, and therefore instilled with superior life (*Rhet. ad Her.* IV 44, 57: *amisit vitam at non perdidit*). It also represents the *devotus* in his actual situation: he is dead, yet he lives.

The place where this 'double', this ambiguity, is hidden is an ἄβυσσος and should not be trodden. It is the place where death and life meet in a superior identity. It is like the grave of a *fulguritus*, who is killed, yet elevated to heroic status. Here then we find the compensation of the self-sacrificer: it is accurately phrased by Varro *Ling.* V 32, 148 when he says of Curtius after his precipitation into the chasm: *eo facto locum coisse atque eius corpus divinitus humasse ac reliquisse genti suae monumentum*.

<sup>1</sup> The dead are great: P. VON DER MÜHLL, «Der Grosse Aias», in *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Basel 1975), 437 ff.; H. WAGENVOORT, *Roman Dynamism*, loc. cit. See e.g. Lucian. *Philops.* 22; Verg. *Aen.* II 772-3; Ov. *Fast.* II 503; Artemid. *Onirocr.* I 50; Tac. *Hist.* IV 83, 1; Plin. *Epist.* VII 27, 2. The coffin(s) of Numa was/were *octonos ferme pedes longae, quaternos latae*: Liv. XL 29, 3-14. In Hittite substitution-ritual the superior size of the substitute is formulated in a text quoted by H. M. KÜMMEL, *op. cit.* (supra p. 140 n. 1), 111 ff.: «An seinem Kopf ist dieser gross, am Herz ist dieser gross, und am Glied ist dieser gross...». Mind that in one of the Hittite rituals a living substitute is offered to the supernatural gods and an image-substitute to the infernal gods: O. R. GURNEY, *op. cit.* (supra p. 140 n. 1), 57 f.

<sup>2</sup> J. DUCAT, «Fonctions de la statue dans la Grèce archaïque: KOUROS et KOLOSSOS», in *BCH* 100 (1976), 248: «Lorsque le *kolossos* est considéré du point de vue de sa fonction, c'est la notion de substitut qui passe au premier plan».

<sup>3</sup> J.-P. VERNANT, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* II (Paris 1974), 65-78; *idem*, in *Annuaire du Collège de France* 76 (1976-77), 367 ff. and cf. G. ROUX, in *REA* 62 (1960), 5-40.

*Substitution*

The image is the substitute of the *legionarius devotus* who did not die. The *legionarius* is the substitute of the consul, dictator or praetor who devoted an ordinary soldier in his stead. The consul/general (*magistratus cum imperio*) is the substitute of the army and people of the Roman State. Livy VIII 9, 8 makes him say: *ita pro re publica <populi Romani> Quiritium, exercitu legionibus auxiliis populi Romani Quiritium legiones auxiliaque hostium mecum deis Manibus Tellurique devoveo*. In a different <sup>1</sup> *devotio* described by Macrobius (*Sat.* III 9, 9 ff.) the Roman emperor devotes the enemy to death with the words *eosque ego vicarios pro me fide magistratuque meo pro populo Romano exercitibus legionibusque nostris do devoveo*... Here the enemy troops function as *vicarii*, a substitute-sacrifice for all the Romans including the emperor. In the case of Decius the consul offers his life together with that of the enemies as a ransom for all other Romans.

This has been expressed in numerous variations: *consecrationem in victoriae pretium peregit* (Flor. *Epit.* I 17, 7); *pro salute populi Romani victoriaque devovisset* (Cic. *Sest.* 21, 48); *ut is patriae fata capite suo lueret* (Val. Max. I 7, 3); *pro totis legionibus hi* (sc. Decii) *tamen et pro/omnibus auxiliis atque omni pube latina/sufficiunt dis infernis Terraeque parenti; pluris enim Decii quam quae servantur ab illis* (Iuv. VIII 255-258). Decius, in other words, is one of the standard examples of the *unus pro omnibus* <sup>2</sup> sacrifice as they are emphatically characterized in both Roman and Greek mythical examples, like the one of Palinurus *unum pro multis dabitur caput* (Verg. *Aen.* V 815) and the Greek tragic heroes: Soph. OC 498-9, ἀρκεῖν γὰρ οἴμαι πάντι μυρίων μίαν/ψυχὴν τάδ' ἐκτίνουσας, ἦν

<sup>1</sup> On this difference: Versnel 1976.

<sup>2</sup> It is also present in Cicero's exclamation in *Or. p. red. ad Quir.* I, 1: *odium... in me uno potius quam in optimo quoque et universa civitate deficeret* (codd.; *defigeretur*: W. WIMMEL, in *WS* 7 (1973), 105 ff.). Cf. also Eur. *Ba.* 963 and E. R. DODDS and J. ROUX, *ad loc.*; Ps. Seneca, *Epist. Paul.* 11 (12), ed. C. W. BARLOW, ... *ut optimus quisque unum pro multis datum est caput ita et hic devotus pro omnibus igni cremabitur*.

εὔνους παρῇ. Eur. *El.* 1024-6, καὶ μὲν πόλεως ἄλωσιν ἐξιώμενος/ῇ δῶμ' ὀνήσων τᾶλλα τ' ἐκσώσων τέκνα/ἔκτεινε πολλῶν μίαν ὑπερ συγγνώστ' ἂν ῇν. Eur. *Erechth.* Fr. 360 N<sup>2</sup>, 16-18, πόλεως δ' ἀπάσης τοῦνομ' ἔν, πολλοὶ δέ νιν / ναίουσι· τούτους πῶς διαφθεῖραί με χρή, / ἐξδὸν πρὸ πάντων μίαν ὑπὲρ δοῦναι θανεῖν;

One human being gives his life for the salvation of many—as in the examples just mentioned—or in order to save a few or even one other fellow-being, as we shall see. Apparently one life can compensate for another as it is phrased paradigmatically in Caes. *Gall.* VI 16, 3 about the Celts: *pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur non posse deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur*. Man can take the place of man or men, and even a chain of substitutions may be formed: the nation—the chief of state—a soldier—an image; and, of course, we shall meet with other substitutes.

Here then is one of two questions I would like to concentrate upon in the second part of this essay: what made ancient people think that the voluntary offer of a life would save the endangered lives of one or many others? Where did this idea originate? This question must not be confused with another equally important question which will also receive special treatment later: by what authority did the ancient self-sacrificer act as he did? Who told him that the (voluntary) death of a human being would be necessary? Also with regard to the latter question the case of Decius appears to be exemplary. With a short discussion of the motivating authority we shall round off our picture of Decius.

### *Authority*

*Ibi in quiete utrique consuli eadem dicitur visa species viri maioris quam pro humano habitu augustiorisque, dicentis ex una acie imperatorem, ex altera exercitum deis Manibus matrique Terrae deberi. Utrius exercitus imperator legiones hostium superque eas se devovisset, eius populi partisque victoriam fore. Hos ubi nocturnos visus inter se consules contulerunt, placuit averruncandae deum irae victimas caedi,*

*simul ut, si extis eadem quae somnio visa fuerant portenderentur, alteruter consulum fata impleret. Ubi responsa haruspicum insidentiam animo tacitae religioni congruerunt, tum adhibitis legatis tribunisque et imperiis deum propalam expositis...* (Liv. VIII 6, 9-12).

This passage is exceptional in the work of Livy. Dreams with a predictive or imperative value do not occur elsewhere in his work—with one exception: the dream about the unworthy *praesultator* (II 36, 2)—and it will appear that its uniqueness is closely connected with the uniqueness of the Decius-scene. What immediately strikes the reader in the passage quoted is the lack of precision and contours in the indications of supernatural authority. About one thing there is no doubt: a human sacrifice is necessary (*deberi*) but the authority is first an unidentified dream-image, next there is mention of *deum ira, fata*, and after consultation of the *haruspices* it all appears to be summarized as *imperia deum*. No specific god, no identification of the heavenly will, not even a reason for the divine wrath. It is as if Livy himself gives additional emphasis to the anonymity by phrasing the emotional context as *insidens iam animo tacita religio* and once again when Decius takes action: *omnes minas periculaque ab deis superis inferisque in se unum vertit* (VIII 10, 7).

Similar anonymous motivations appear to be characteristic of critical vicissitudes requiring ultimate measures. Why did a human being have to give his life in order to restore normal geology in the forum? In his answer: *ad haruspices relatum esse: responsum deum Maniu<m> postilionem postulare*, Varro (*Ling.* V 32, 148) gives exactly the two elements we discovered in Livy's report: an interpretation by an expert of an alarming event; a remittal to demands of (an) anonymous god(s) in order to clear off a debt and settle the balance. And everybody will immediately recognize the typical scheme of the mythical cases of self-sacrifice in Greek myth. Disaster seems to be conditional for recalling the existence of authorities who know and see what normal people do not know or see: Delphi must interpret



the situation and aged Tiresias must interpret Delphi, both to the displeasure of himself (Φοῖβον ἀνθρώποις μόνον / χρῆν θεσπιωδεῖν, ὃς δέδοικεν οὐδένα, Eur. *Phoen.* 958-9) and of his consultants (τί δῆτα μαντευόμεθα; τοῖς θεοῖσι χρῆ / θύοντας αἰτεῖν ἀγαθά, μαντείας δ' ἔαν, Eur. *Hel.* 753 f.). And the answer is stereotyped too: in the majority of cases a disturbance in the relation between the mortal and the immortal worlds should be removed, well-known terms as *ira deum* and νέμεσις turn up on the divine side and *placare*, *piare*, ἱλάσκεσθαι on the human, and these elements form such a fixed and recurrent pattern that practically every text-book ranges these types of human sacrifice or self-sacrifice among the categories of lustrative, purificative and expiatory sacrifices<sup>1</sup>. One question, however, does not generally receive an answer in the mythical or legendary material: *why* do 'the gods' deem it necessary that a human life—preferably an innocent life—should be paid? The question is certainly not new: sophists, tragedians like Euripides, Epicureans and others have questioned and censured this type of divine commandment<sup>2</sup> and therefore we are justified in giving due attention to the riddle that vexed a character in Cicero, *Nat. deor.* III 6, 15: *Tu autem etiam Deciorum devotionibus placatos deos esse censes. Quae fuit eorum tanta iniquitas ut placari populo Romano non possent nisi viri tales occidissent?*

*Decius. An archetypal case of self-sacrifice*

We have provisionally accomplished our first task. Rough outlines of a structure come in view. In myth and legend self-

<sup>1</sup> I mention *unum pro omnibus* G. WIDENGREN, *Religionsphänomenologie* (Berlin 1969), 289-303.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Plut. *Pelop.* 21; Eur. *Hec.* 117-119. On this typically Euripidean criticism: J. de ROMILLY, « Les 'Phéniciennes' d'Euripide ou l'actualité dans la tragédie grecque », in *RPh* 91 (1965), 28-47, esp. 41 ff.; R. REBUFFAT, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 2), 15; P. ROUSSEL, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 146 n. 2), 225-240; Ph. VELLACOTT, *Ironic Drama. A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning* (London 1975), ch. 7, 178-204: "he severely censures both divine command and human obedience..."; D. SANSONE, « The Sacrifice-Motif in Euripides' *IT* », in *TAPhA* 105 (1975), 283-295.

sacrifice takes place in critical situations where the salvation of a total society is at stake; the victim is the highest valued possession of the state (king, leader, or his daughter/son. Also the valiant young warrior or the chaste virgin), who should give his life with an avowed voluntariness. By and during his action the subject is sacralized, 'excommunicated' from human society but not yet admitted into the world of death. His sacredness is marked by several outward characteristics. The way in which death is sought—variations and transformations of the leap into the underworld—confers heroic status. In the meantime the subject is 'living dead', and his unhoped-for return must be regulated by exceptional measures. Just as the self-sacrificer takes the place of society, so his death may be taken over by various *vicarii*. The sacrifice is demanded by 'the gods' or at least related to their anger.

We shall now pay attention to the latter two elements.

## II THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPENSATION AND ANONYMOUS GODS

### *Compensation*

When Camillus despoiled the enormous booty he had captured from the city of Vei he said: *si cui deorum hominumque nimia sua fortuna populi que Romani videretur ut eam invidiam lenire quam minimo suo privato incommodo publicoque populi Romani liceret* (Liv. V 21, 15). On turning round he happened to fall, which, according to Plutarch, *Cam.* 5, 7, Camillus himself interpreted as the redemption of his vow, although others saw it as a prediction of his future downfall<sup>1</sup>. Anyway the payment is negligible as compared with the heavy price Aemilius Paullus had to pay for his success and the fortune of Rome, as embodied in his triumph<sup>2</sup>. He lost the only two sons that were left to

<sup>1</sup> References and literature on this and following cases: Versnel 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Plut. *Aem.* 34-36. Cf. Diod. XXXI 11, 2, διόπερ εὐχεσθαι τῷ θεῷ τῶν μὲν δημοσίων εἰς μηδὲν ἐμπεσεῖν τὴν μεταβολήν, ἀλλ' εἰ πάντως αὖ τι πράξαι δέδοκται δυσχερές, τοῦτ' εἰς αὐτὸν ἐναπερείσασθαι. Val. Max. V 10, 2, *Cum in maximo*

him. We have several versions of his famous oration to the Roman people in which he confesses that he always had feared that a δαιμόνιον, or τύχη or νέμεσις would not leave him or the state unharmed at the zenith of their prosperity. But now that his own house had been struck by such a loss, enough had been sacrificed to *nemesis*: νῦν οὖν ἀκίνδυνός εἰμι τὰ μέγιστα καὶ θαρρῶ καὶ νομίζω τὴν τύχην ὑμῶν παραμενεῖν ἀβλαβῇ καὶ βέβαιον (Plut. *Aem.* 36, 8).

Both well-known testimonies illustrate excellently the central issue that resulted from our previous enquiry. Both show how the emperor is identified with the state and how *his* 'sacrifice' may ransom the community. On the other hand the principle of substitution is also prominent: not only does one person carry the burden of all, but he does not even pay with his own life. The danger is averted by vicarious events. There is one apparent divergence from the examples we discussed above: here there is no guilt to be expiated, no danger or crisis, but on the contrary a summit of luck and prosperity waylaid by the ever lurking φθόνος, νέμεσις, *invidia* of the gods. I shall, however, defend the thesis that in fact the *ira deum* manifest in disaster on the one hand and the νέμεσις threatening the extremely fortunate on the other, are two expressions of one fundamental concept. In both cases man owes the god(s) something, either because he is guilty or because he is in his/their debt. Germanic languages, by using one term 'Schuld' betray a psychological identity which English (debt/guilt) and French (dette-culpabilité) conceal. We shall return to this central issue after having cast a glance at some types of sub-

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*proventu felicitatis nostrae ... timerem ne quid mali fortuna moliretur, Iovem ... Iunonemque ... et Minervam precatus sum ut si quid adversi populo Romano immineret, totum in meam domum converteretur.* On the triumph of Aem. Paullus as part of a series of tragical reversals in the fortunes of states and persons: F. W. WALBANK, *ad* Plb. XXIX 21, 1, and cf. G. J. D. AALDERS, «The Hellenistic Concept of the Enviousness of Fate», in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, ed. by M. J. VERMASEREN (Leiden 1979), 1-8.

stitution where not the life of the total society but that of one person is saved by the self-sacrifice of another human being or by different substitutes.

In the *Anthologia Palatina* VII 691<sup>1</sup> an epigram celebrates a wife who died for/instead of her husband: "Ἀλκηστις νέη εἰμί· θάνον δ' ὑπὲρ ἀνέρος ἐσθλοῦ. About the circumstances nothing is told and the same is true of the even more interesting case of Atilia L. f. Pomptilla, who in the first or second cent. A.D. followed her husband into exile to Sardinia where she sacrificed her own life for her husband who had fallen ill but recovered thanks to the death of his wife. Sixteen inscriptions in a grotto in Sardinia<sup>2</sup> immortalize the devotion of this woman 'greater than Alcestis' (σιγάσθ[ω δ'] "Ἀλκη[στ]ίς ... νικᾷ ... 'Ατιλία: *CIL* X 7577), in such terms as: *vovit pro vita coniugis ipsa mori* (7570); ὥστε θανεῖν μὲν / Πώμπτιλλαν γλυκεροῦ λύτρον ὑπὲρ γαμέτου (7568); 'tempore tu', dixit, 'vive Philippe meo' (7569); ὑπὲρ γαμέτου Πώμπτιλλα / τὴν κείνου ζωὴν ἀντέλαβεν θανάτου (7567). This Alcestis-motif occurs a few more times in the imperial period, e.g. in an epigram from Odessa<sup>3</sup>, and on the way it worked we shall hardly be able to go beyond suppositions such as the one made by W. M. Calder III<sup>4</sup>: "the decease of pious women who pledged their deaths in return for their husbands' lives and did in fact, by coincidence, suicide, disease or autosuggestion perish after their recovery". Very illuminating is the rather psychopathological case of the *malade imaginaire* Aelius Aristides who claimed to have been rescued at least two times from imminent death by the sacrifice of a fellow-human. In either case the phrasing is important enough

<sup>1</sup> W. PEEK (ed.), *Griechische Vers-Inschriften* I (Berlin 1955), Nr. 1738.

<sup>2</sup> *CIL* X 7563-7578; W. PEEK, *Griech. Vers-Inschr.* I, Nr. 2005; F. BÜCHELER (ed.), *Anthologia Latina*, Pars II: *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, II (Leipzig 1897), Nr. 1551; G. KAIBEL (ed.), *Epigrammata Graeca*, Nr. 547.

<sup>3</sup> G. MIHAILOV (ed.), *IGBulg.* I<sup>2</sup>, Nr. 222; W. PEEK, *Griech. Vers-Inschr.* I, Nr. 2088 a, p. 691.

<sup>4</sup> W. M. CALDER III, in *AJA* 79 (1975), 80-83.



to quote: *Or.* XLVIII (= *Hieroi Log.* II) 44: οὐ μέντοι πρότερόν γε ὁ πυρετὸς παντελῶς ἐξέλιπεν, πρὶν ἐτελεύτησέ μοι τῶν τροφίμων ὁ πλείστου ἄξιος (...). Οὕτω τὸν τε ἄχρι τούτου χρόνον δωρεὰν ἔσχον παρὰ τῶν θεῶν καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἀνεβίων ὑπὸ τοῖς θεοῖς, καὶ τις οἶον ἀντίδοσις αὕτη συνέβη; *Or.* LI (= *Hier. Log.* V) 24 f. (a brother of Philumene has died): ἀπέθανεν καὶ αὐτὸς σχεδὸν ὥς εἰπεῖν ἀντ' ἐμοῦ (...) ἡ Φιλουμένη ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σῶμα ἀντὶ σώματος ἀντεδῶκεν, τὰ αὐτῆς ἀντὶ τῶν ἐμῶν.

We know comparable instances of people being saved from sickness or death by others taking over their sufferings. Sometimes (ex)change of name and personality plays a part <sup>1</sup>. Alcestis is the mythical prototype of a wife paying for the life of her husband by her death <sup>2</sup>. No less typical is the liberation of Prometheus by Heracles which could only be effected by the offer of Chiron to die in his stead <sup>3</sup>. Comrades die for comrades, lovers for lovers: when Cleostratus of Thebes is allotted as a sacrifice to a terrible dragon his lover Menestratus παρέδωκεν τῷ δράκοντι ἐκουσίως αὐτόν (Paus. IX 26, 7-8) <sup>4</sup>, and in historic times the Thebans designed a ἱερὸς λόχος consisting of pairs of ἐραστῶν καὶ ἐρωμένων ready to die for their partners <sup>5</sup>. Numerous are the pronouncements that define a

<sup>1</sup> An interesting case of a miraculous cure by Serapis: D. L. PAGE (ed.), *Select Papyri* III (1950), 424 ff.; V. LONGO, *Aretalogie nel mondo greco* I (Genova 1969), no. 66, pp. 118 ff. Change of name: *SHA*, *Heliog.* 7, 8-10. Interesting examples in O. WEINREICH, *Antike Heilungswunder* (Giessen 1909), 87 n. 1, and add Artemid. *Oniocr.* IV 30, where a woman dies instead of her sister with the same name.

<sup>2</sup> See R. M. NIELSEN, « Alcestis. A Paradox in Dying », in *Ramus* 5 (1976), 92-102, for an evaluation of the Alcestis-motif.

<sup>3</sup> Aeschyl. *Prom.* 1026-1029; Hes. *Tb.* 526 ff.; Apollod. *Bibl.* II 5, 11, 10 and J. G. FRAZER, *ad loc.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. S. GERO, « The Legend of Constantine V as Dragon-Slayer », in *GRBS* 19 (1978), 156-159, where in a comparable story *semet ipsum pro omnibus Constantinus periculo dedit*. A similar case in Anton. Lib. 8 = H. W. PARKE/D. E. W. WORMELL, *The Delphic Oracle* II, no. 397.

<sup>5</sup> Plut. *Pelop.* 14 ff., esp. 18; Athen. XIII 561 f; Polyaen. II 5, 1.

friend 'ut habeam pro quo mori possim' (Sen. *Epist.* 9, 10)<sup>1</sup> and Apollonius of Tyana regards it as a commandment of φύσις to die for relatives, friends and lovers (Philostr. *Vita Apollon.* VII 14, vol. I p. 265 ed. C. L. Kayser)<sup>2</sup>. This will eventually result in the *sacramentum militiae* and the *devotio pro principe* which will not be discussed here. Parents wish to die instead of their children: *genibus nixus Lares familiares ut puerorum periculum in ipsius caput transferrent oravit* (Val. Max. II 4, 5), and it occurs that one person is healed by the victimizing of large groups of humans: Qu. Fabius Maximus during a battle recovered from his quartan fever the moment 130 enemies had been killed (Strab. IV 1, 11, p. 185).

Instead of the life of a fellow-human people in distress may offer other ransoms: they may sacrifice a part in order to save the whole. They may undergo in a symbolic way the suffering or death which is thus averted in reality. They may give up an animal or something valuable in order to buy salvation.

When I again quote a few examples from Aelius Aristides this is not in the first place because I generally regard most religious thought and action as inspired by neurotic incentives but mainly because he is so gratifyingly explicit in the information he gives<sup>3</sup>. In *Or.* XLVIII (= *Hier. Log.* II) 26-27 he is told in a dream that he must die, but a series of actions is prescribed by which his death may be prevented: a sacrifice, the crossing

<sup>1</sup> Good examples in G. STÄHLIN, in *Theol. Wörterbuch z. Neuen Testament* IX, 151, s.v. φίλος.

<sup>2</sup> These themes are, of course, not restricted to antiquity. See e.g. S. THOMPSON, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Copenhagen 1955), T 210-224 and K 3; 258; 1845; A 1545.5.1. On the theme of two brothers of which one must die: K. RANKE, *Die Zwei Brüder. Eine Studie zur vergleichenden Märchenforschung*, FFC 114 (Helsinki 1934); H. GEHRTS, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 138 n. 1); *idem*, *Rāmāyana. Brüder und Braut im Märchen-Epos* (Bonn 1977), espec. 27 ff.

<sup>3</sup> On this very interesting crank see A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1954), 85-104; E. R. DODDS, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York 1970), 39-45; P. W. van der HORST, *Aelius Aristides and the New Testament* (Leiden 1980).

of a river and the throwing away of some coins. "Also it was necessary to cut off some part of my body for the sake of the well-being of the whole. But since this was difficult he (the God) remitted it for me. Instead he ordered me to remove the ring which I wore and dedicate it to Telesphorus—for this had the same effect as if I should give up my finger". And in *Hier. Log.* II 11-14 he tells us that he vainly tried to reach Chios by ship but is repeatedly driven back. In the night Asklepios appears in a dream and tells him that "it was fated for me to suffer shipwreck (...) and now it would be necessary for my safety and in order to fulfil my destiny to embark in a skiff and to arrange it so that the skiff overturn and sink in the harbor, and that I myself be picked up by someone and brought to land. For thus necessity would be fulfilled". Elsewhere (*Or.* L 11) he undergoes a sham burial: "he must sprinkle himself with dust in place—as he says—of burial that this might be in some fashion fulfilled".

With the latter words we have the essence of any type of substitute-sacrifice, whether it be a *pars pro toto* (offerings of parts of the body, hair, perhaps also clothes), symbolic replacement of actual distress (by staging, picturing, playing the actual situation), or the offering of *vicarii* in the form of animals or images of animals. Especially in the latter category the intention is sometimes explicitly formulated. So for instance in the famous *molchomor*-sacrifices of Carthage<sup>1</sup> where a child may be replaced by a lamb with the words [*ex voto agnum*] *pro vicario, anima pro anima, vita pro vita, sanguine pro sanguine libens animo reddit*. «Dieser statt meiner, dieser sei meine Stellvertretung, dieser sei mein Ersatz» is said by members of a Jewish community<sup>2</sup> when each member throws a basket with a bean into the water, and nowhere can be found a more precise anatomical equivalence between man and his substitute than in a magical

<sup>1</sup> Fundamentally: M. LEGLAY, *Saturne africain. Histoire* (Paris 1966), 332 ff.; *idem*, in *Chiron* 4 (1974), 644.

<sup>2</sup> I. SCHEFTELOWITZ, *Das stellvertretende Huhnopfer* (Giessen 1914), 37, with many examples.

method of healing a sick boy who is visited by the *Stringes* (bad demons), and who is according to Ovid (*Fast.* VI 158 ff.) thus cured by a witch:

*Extaque de porca cruda bimenstre tenet  
atque ita 'noctis aves, extis puerilibus' inquit,  
'parcite : pro parvo victima parva cadit.  
Cor pro corde, precor, pro fibris sumite fibras  
Hanc animam vobis pro meliore damus'.*

This specific type of sympathetic magic, which has close parallels in magical rituals of the Near-East and especially in Hittite civilization<sup>1</sup>, may serve to summarize the findings of this section. The general idea hidden in any type of compensatory sacrifice, either of the 'one for all' type or in the vicarious death of one person for another, or in various substitutive offerings of symbolic or *pars pro toto* type, is that an indemnity must be paid, a compensation provided. Characteristic terms indicating this central ideology abound in the testimonies referred to so far: *deberi*, 'be in debt'; *pro*, *vicarius pro*, ἀντί, 'instead of'; *pretium victoriae*, 'the price for victory'; *sufficiunt pro*, 'are a sufficient payment for'; *capite suo fata patriae lueret* 'paid the fate with his life'; ἀντὶ μυρίων μίαν ψυχὴν τάδ' ἐκτίνουσιν 'pay full'; λύτρον ὑπὲρ γαμέτου, 'ransom for the husband'. It is *anima pro anima*, *cor pro corde*, ψυχὴ ἀντὶ ψυχῆς, σῶμα ἀντὶ σώματος. The testimonies could easily be multiplied. Nowhere, of course, do we find a closer concentration of relevant terms and ideas than in the Christian interpretation of the death of Jesus<sup>2</sup>, which is both an expiatory sacrifice ἱλαστήριον

<sup>1</sup> V. HAAS, in *Orientalia* 40 (1971), 410-430, discusses a very similar Hittite exorcism and points out the similarity of the text of Ovid. On the supposed continuity between Hittite and Roman material see also H. KRONASSER, in *Die Sprache* 7 (1961), 145 f.

<sup>2</sup> Of the abundant literature I mention only J. JEREMIAS, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*<sup>4</sup> (Göttingen 1967), 211 ff.; *idem*, «Das Lösegeld für viel (Mark 10, 45)», in *Judaica* 3 (1947-48), 249-264. On the Pauline interpretation: L. GOPPELT,



(*Rom.* 3, 25) and a vicarious sacrifice ὑπὲρ πολλῶν (*Mc.* 14, 24); περὶ πολλῶν (*Mt.* 26, 26 ff.) ; ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς (*Jo.* 6, 51); εἰς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν (2 *Cor.* 5, 14 f.). But it is also emphatically classified as a ransom: δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν (*Mc.* 10, 45) which is elaborated by Paul *Gal.* 3, 13 where he uses the verb ἐξαγοράζειν, 'ransom, redeem' and 1 *Cor.* 6, 20; 7, 23, τιμῆς ἡγοράσθητε 'you have been bought for a price'. Rather than going into the Jewish prehistory of vicarious sacrifices, labelled as ἀντίψυχον, καθάρσιον, ἱλαστήριον, λύτρον<sup>1</sup>, I prefer to return to a fundamental question we formulated before.

If then apparently compensation and redemption must be given, it is not out of place to ask *why* and *to whom* the account should be paid. In other words: who is the creditor and what makes man think he is in the creditor's debt ? If we consult two very pious experts, the answers we receive are frustrating. But they will set us, perhaps, on the right path. Asked why Christ's sacrifice was necessary, the author of *Hebr.* 9, 16 ff. says: ἀνάγκη, ἔδει, and in his Christology he interprets this sacrifice as a means of redeeming men from the secular powers: sin, law and above all death. Aelius Aristides competes in vagueness: "it was fated"; "it was necessary"; "in order to fulfil my destiny"; "if I did this, I would be saved". He sees his life as a gift, a bounty from the gods, which could be spared or renewed by handing in another life. Why ? That's why ! Children in Holland express their irritation at this sort of tautological

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*Theologie des Neuen Testaments* II (Göttingen 1976), 424 ff.; R. BULTMANN, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*<sup>5</sup> (Tübingen 1965), 294 ff. The similarity with pagan substitution was pointed out by E. von LASAULX, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 3); S. K. WILLIAMS, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event. The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Missoula 1975).

<sup>1</sup> These terms are typical of the *Books of the Maccabees* and are fully discussed by H. L. STRACK and P. BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum NT aus Talmud and Midrasch* II (München 1924), 274-282; IV (1928), 564, 595, 768, 1109. S. K. WILLIAMS, *op. cit.* (preceding note), 59 ff.

explanation by a rhyme which in my free translation reads: "Why ? That's why ! 'That's why' is no reason. If you tumble from the steps, you come down out of season". Self-evident, tautological, or blank answers betray uncertainty or ignorance. Such answers are irritating and not only to children. I, for one, feel very irritated by a passage of Origenes, *Contra Celsum* I 31, which in the meantime, is a perfect summary and climax of the problem we are confronted with, the more so since it comes from a passage where pagan self-sacrifice is compared with the sacrifice of Jesus, with the conclusion that Christian and pagan beliefs have much in common: εἰκὸς γὰρ εἶναι ἐν τῇ φύσει τῶν πραγμάτων κατὰ τινὰς ἀπορρήτους καὶ δυσλήπτους τοῖς πολλοῖς λόγους φύσιν τοιαύτην ὡς ἓνα δίκαιον<sup>1</sup>, ὑπὲρ τοῦ κοινοῦ ἀποθανόντα ἐκουσίως, ἀποτροπιασμοὺς ἐμποιεῖν φαύλων δαιμονίων, ἐνεργούντων λοιμοὺς ἢ ἀφορίας ἢ δυσπλοίας ἢ τι τῶν παραπλησίων. "It appears that it is in the nature of things, that there is a kind of natural law according to certain mysterious and hidden reasons etc., etc...". Yet here at last we are in *mediis rebus*. Voluntary self-sacrifice in order to save the community from plagues, famine and the like is required by the φύσις τῶν πραγμάτων. Why ? That's why ! Is it perhaps beyond our capacities to find a more satisfactory answer ? Have we reached the limits of human understanding ? Let us propound these questions to some other ancient authorities sophisticated or simple.

### *Anonymous gods*

One of the few things most people seem to remember of their school Greek is the clever way Xenophon managed to get divine permission to join the expedition of Cyrus: he simply did not ask. His old teacher Socrates censured him for this: he should have asked the Delphic oracle whether it was

<sup>1</sup> Of course δίκαιος betrays biblical-Jewish influence.

better to go or to stay, but instead Xenophon questioned *τίνι ἂν θεῶν θύων καὶ εὐχόμενος κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα ἔλθοι τὴν ὁδόν, ἣν ἐπινοεῖ, καὶ καλῶς πράξας σωθείη*<sup>1</sup>. However, Xenophon was not only clever, but also very conventional, for the question to which god(s) of the polytheistic pantheon man in crisis or uncertainty should sacrifice appears to be perfectly customary, both in Delphi and in Dodona<sup>2</sup>. Particularly in the latter oracle we have several examples of enquiries of the type *τίνι καὶ θεῶν εὐχόμενος (ἱλαζόμενος) βέλτιον πράσσοι*<sup>3</sup>, but alas very few answers. Delphic Apollo, however, spoke loud enough to make his answers audible: we have his detailed replies sometimes with series of gods down to local obscurities to which sacrifices should be made<sup>4</sup>. It is revealing to compare those (legendary) responses which concern a human (self)-sacrifice in order to avert some threatening disaster. We have more than ten answers of this type<sup>5</sup>—of course for the greater part the ones regarding the famous mythical instances such as Oenocles, Helena, Erechtheus, the Leocorids, Menoeceus, the daughters of Aristodemus—, but not one mentioning the name of one or several gods who by this sacrifice must be propitiated or reconciled<sup>6</sup>, and a small investigation into the literary

<sup>1</sup> Xen. *An.* III 1, 5.

<sup>2</sup> See H. S. VERSNEL, in *Lampas* 12 (1979), 9 ff. = H. S. VERSNEL (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship* (Leiden 1981), 4 ff.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. H. W. PARKE, *The Oracles of Zeus* (Oxford 1967), 260 no. 3; 267 no. 14; *SEG* XV 386; 395; 405.

<sup>4</sup> J. FONTENROSE, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley 1978), 36 ff., shows that in the Delphic material the question *τίνι θεῷ (θεῶν) θύων καὶ εὐχόμενος κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα ποιήσω*; occurs three times. For some answers see H. W. PARKE/D. E. W. WORMELL, *The Delphic Oracle* II, no's 102, 282, 283.

<sup>5</sup> Statistical calculations in J. FONTENROSE, *op. cit.* (preceding note), 29. In Parke/Wormell, the following items should be considered: 195, 196, 209, 215, 397, 415, 499, 527, 529, 530, 532, 551, 552, 556, 604. Discussion on pp. 295 ff. (*The Delphic Oracle* I).

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Parke/Wormell, no. 210, the order to send boys and girls to Minos: *οὕτω θεὸς Ἰλαὸς ἔσται*; no. 362 (daughter of Aristodemus): *νεπτέροισι δαίμοσι ... θυηπολεῖτε* and cf. R. REBUFFAT, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 2), 20: «les sacrifices de

references concerning human (self)-sacrifice largely confirms this picture. Whether it is Apollo or some seer who announces the measures to be taken, at best they remit the commandment to 'the gods', sometimes, understandably, the 'gods of the netherworld' with as variant κόρη Δήμητρος<sup>1</sup> in the case of Macaria (Euripides, *Herac.* 408-409); very often we are confronted with a mere command, the irritating anonymous "necessity of the nature of things": τοῦτο γὰρ προῖξαι με δεῖ, says Agamemnon<sup>2</sup> about the sacrifice of his daughter, and this sacrifice which is demanded by a specified goddess, Artemis, and the one of Phrixos (and Helle) to Zeus (Laphystios)<sup>3</sup>, as exceptions, prove the rule: for in the majority of the versions of these two sacrifices the victims are *not* executed: the victim does not die, but is saved by a ruse, or by the intervention of the deity. Decisive is a version that explicitly declares the oracle-response to have been forged by an envious human<sup>4</sup>. In this way both the victim and the god(s) are spared. The names of these gods could apparently not be smuggled out of the aetiological stories. But a solution had to be found to the problem raised by Cicero above (p. 162) and worded by Plutarch in the context of the human sacrifice of a blonde maiden in the *Life of Pelopidas* 21 that "such a barbaric and unlawful sacrifice could not possibly please *any* of the gods" (οὐδενὶ τῶν κρείττονων). In this case then the solution was achieved in an Old-Testament way: in the end Abraham was dispensed from the obligation of sacrificing his own child and so was Agamemnon.

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Macarie et de Ménécée sont presque des sacrifices 'sans divinité'. A similar observation concerning apotropaic ritual: W. BURKERT, *op. cit.* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 52.

<sup>1</sup> R. REBUFFAT, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 2), 20: « à peine une destinataire caractérisée, mais la mort elle-même personnifiée ».

<sup>2</sup> Eur. *IA* 1258.

<sup>3</sup> Parke/Wormell, no. 196. In no. 551 the god is Dionysus and again there is a substitution. Dionysus, however, is different.

<sup>4</sup> Apollod. I 9, 1; Hygin. *Fab.* 2; Zenob. IV 38.



Generally there are two escapes: either the victim offers himself voluntarily, forcing his way to death even against common opinion <sup>1</sup>, or the gods are bereaved of their names, their personality, their individuality. Yet, as we have already observed for the first way of escape, in the second, too, there is a more fundamental and profound general principle at work. Although it is to my mind one of the most important things to be considered when approaching ancient religious attitudes and as such it is also essential to my thesis, I must maintain severe restrictions and am enabled to do so by the circumstance that we all know what I am talking about since the matter is one of the most heavily discussed in specialized studies and general textbooks. I mean the question of what the (or most) ancient Greeks tried to express when they were speaking of (or to) (οἱ) θεοί, (ὁ) θεός, (ὁ) δαίμων, or even Ζεός, or the Romans when they pronounced the terms *di*, *superi* especially in such formulas as *ira deum* <sup>2</sup>. Let us boldly summarize many comprehensive

<sup>1</sup> This trait is prominent in the Menoeceus-legend but occurs also in the story of the white mare forcing her way through the army-lines in order to offer herself: Plut. *Pelop.* 22.

<sup>2</sup> Just a few exemplary formulas: M. P. NILSSON, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I<sup>3</sup>, 219 about an anonymous 'unheimlichen und sogar feindseligen Macht': «Der Mensch nennt diese Macht δαίμων oder θεός (τις), θεοί, auch Ζεός (...). Die Götter sind individuell; in diesen kollektiven oder unbestimmten Bezeichnungen wird das Individuelle verwischt, (...). So können die Götter in ihrer Allgemeinheit und Unbestimmtheit für diese geheimnisvolle Macht eintreten...»; W. BURKERT, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 141 n. 3), 407 f.: «Man setzt mit *theós* oder *theoí* einen nicht überbietbaren, absoluten Bezugspunkt für alles, was Wirkung, Geltung und Bestand hat». For general discussions see: G. F. ELSE, «God and Gods in Early Greek Thought», in *TAPhA* 80 (1949), 24-36; I. M. LINFORTH, «Named and Unnamed Gods in Herodotus», in *Univ. of Calif. Publ. in Class. Phil.* 9 (1928), 201-243, and G. FRANÇOIS, *Le polythéisme et l'emploi au singulier des mots θεός, δαίμων dans la littérature grecque d'Homère à Platon* (Paris 1957) with full bibliography. On the development in Hellenistic times F. W. WALBANK, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* I (Oxford 1957), 17: «... τύχη or θεός τις, or the θεοί who nurse their μηῆνις, or (elsewhere) τὸ δαίμονιον or ταῦτόματον (for all these phrases seem to be roughly synonymous)». On death = fate = the gods see also B. C. DIETRICH, *Death, Fate, and the Gods* (London 1965), espec. 327 ff.

studies in a few sentences. A. D. Nock<sup>1</sup> has hit the mark when he says: that from Homer on down “θεός, θεοί, δαίμων, Ζεύς, and *words for Fate* (my italics) convey various nuances of meaning but are to some extent interchangeable, and throughout Greek literature we find the use of θεός, θεοί, to denote the incalculable non-human element in phenomena”. We have seen that both in the story of Decius and in several other testimonies, gods, the god, fate, τύχη, *ira deum*, and necessity freely interchanged and we know that this is both typical of e.g. Herodotean mixing up of ὁ θεός, οἱ θεοί, and τὸ θεῖον including the νέμεσις or φθόνος τῶν θεῶν<sup>2</sup> on the one hand, and the identification of the *ira deum* with *fata, fatum* in Roman ideology e.g. Tac. *Hist.* IV 26... *quod in pace fors seu natura, tunc fatum et ira dei vocabatur*<sup>3</sup>. Down to late antiquity these different terms are not used in exclusive *aut—aut* disjunctions, but in a *vel—vel* choice of equally possible or even identical predicates as is perfectly proven by Zosimus I 1, 2, ἀλλὰ τούτων μὲν οὐκ ἂν τις ἀνθρωπίνην ἰσχὺν αἰτιάσαιτο, Μοιρῶν δὲ ἀνάγκην ἢ ἀστρώων κινήσεων ἀποκαταστάσεις ἢ θεοῦ βούλησιν...<sup>4</sup>

Essentially θεοί, *di*, can be the expression of an immanent, ‘natural’, super-human principle that guides those incomprehensible yet all-pervading contrasting mechanisms as growth and decrease, rise and fall, birth and death, health and disease, wealth and poverty, war and peace, in short: happiness and unhappiness. As such ‘the gods’ must inevitably confront the human observer with an insoluble inconsistency: on the one

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* I (Oxford 1972), 260.

<sup>2</sup> On the *phthonos*-motif as a regulating and supernatural principle see the literature in G. J. D. AALDERS, *De oud-Griekse voorstelling van de afgunst der godheid*, Med. Kon. Ned. Ak. Wet. Lett. 38 (1975), 47-65 and Versnel 1977, 22 ff. Cf. A. MANTEL, *Herodotus Historiën. Patronen en historische werkelijkheid bij Herodotus* (Diss. Amsterdam 1976), 20 ff. on τίσις and 89 ff. on φθόνος.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Tac. *Ann.* I 39; Liv. XXV 6, 6; H. KLEINKNECHT, in *Theol. Wörterb.* 5. *Neuen Test.* V, 391, s. v. ὀργή; I. KAJANTO, *God and Fate in Livy* (Turku 1957).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Liban. *Or.* I 1: ὡς εἰδεῖν ἅπαντες ὅτι μοι τὰ τῆς τύχης ἐκέρασαν οἱ θεοὶ καὶ οὔτε εὐδαιμονέστατος οὔτε ἀθλιώτατος ἐγώ, Νεμέσεως δὲ ἡμᾶς μὴ βάλοι βέλος.

hand their intervention may indeed be viewed as a mechanical, non-moral principle of equilibrium and balance, whose disturbance must be restored by compensatory acts. This is exactly what Ps.-Aristoteles (*De mundo* 400 b 27 f.) means when he says: νόμος γὰρ ἡμῖν ἰσοκλινῆς ὁ θεός, it is τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες of Herodotus (I 32, 1), it is blind-folded Tyche<sup>1</sup> with her scales, amoral, super-human and a paragon of injustice. She is τὸ αὐτόματον (Arist. *Ph.* 195 b 31 ff.; Philemon Fr. 137; cf. Menander Fr. 275); she gives three bad things for one good one (Diphilos Fr. 107), she is blind and wretched (Menander Fr. 417); she is unfair, arbitrary, and makes the rich poor<sup>2</sup>. Whoever wishes to have a good impression of what ancient man thought and felt when speaking of τύχη or 'the gods' should read Polybius, who knows that man when he feels incapable of finding the cause of events περὶ τούτων ἴσως ἂν τις ἀπορῶν ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν τὴν ἀναφορὰν ποιοῖτο καὶ τὴν τύχην (XXXVI 17, 2, IV p. 458 Büttner-Wobst), who interprets the rise and fall of states as caused by Τύχη, but in the meantime calls this alternation φύσεως οἰκονομία (VI 9, 10)<sup>3</sup>, and who significantly illustrates her compensating activities by the story that the Carthaginian mercenaries take their crucified leader down from the cross in order to make place for the hostile general they have taken captive<sup>4</sup>. Everywhere old Nemesis glimmers through. However, there is another side, a different pair of scales: those in the hands of Δίκη, Θέμις,

<sup>1</sup> On the transition from οἱ θεοί, τὸ θεῖον or τὸ δαιμόνιον to τύχη and the essential identity of these concepts see M. P. NILSSON, *GGR* II<sup>2</sup>, 200 ff. On φθόνος, νέμεσις, τύχη in Hellenistic times: G. J. D. AALDERS, *art. cit.* (*supra* pp. 163-4 n. 2). On the arbitrariness of the gods see S. RANULF, *The Jealousy of the Gods and Criminal Law at Athens* I (London/Copenhagen 1933), 33 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Blind: Demetr. Phaler., *FGrHist* 228, II. Teil: Komm. p. 652; E. BAYER, *Demetrios Phalereus der Athener* (Tübingen 1942), 164 ff. For the other predicates see H. IACOBI, *Comicae Dictionis Index*, in A. MEINEKE (ed.), *FCG* V, 1081 f.

<sup>3</sup> W. W. FOWLER, in *CR* 17 (1903), 445-449, rightly concludes that Polybius' concept of τύχη is practically identical with φύσις.

<sup>4</sup> Plb. I 86, 6-7 and cf. F. W. WALBANK, *Commentary on Polybius* I, pp. 16-26.

*Iustitia*, *Aequitas* or whatever name one wishes to give to this aspect of the anonymous divine world.

Gods, even anonymous, are also guarantors of a morally just and fair compensation<sup>1</sup>. Where man is powerless against experiences of injustice beyond his sphere of influence, 'the gods' are expected to restore just and equitable conditions. Contrasting with the amoral expectation that too great a happiness must alternate with disaster (νέμεσις)—unless some ransom is paid in advance—, there is the idea that actual disaster must have its cause in the reaction of 'the gods' to human lapses or mistakes (*ira deum*), which must be propitiated by penance. Although both types of compensation often occur in combination in both Greek and Roman thought, it may be suggested that the latter is more typical of the Roman view, where the *ira deum*, manifest in prodigies, expresses a more legal-ethical aspect of the actions of fate, necessity, 'the gods', as opposed to the Greek νέμεσις or φθόνος.

The conclusion important to our issue, however, is that irrespective of the interpretation, be it *debt* or *guilt*, man always *pays*. Call it τίσις (τίνω, ἐκτίνω, ἀποτίνω) and translate either 'payment, recompense' or 'punishment, penance'<sup>2</sup>; call it λύτρον (λύω, ἀπολύω) or Latin *luere*, and translate either 'ransom' or 'atonement', it all amounts to the same thing. The fortunate should pay in order that his happiness should not be disturbed or given to another (ἄλλοτε ἄλλος)<sup>3</sup>, the unfortunate must pay in order to buy improvement.

<sup>1</sup> While W. SPEYER, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 138 n. 1), 125 ff., pays attention to the mechanical principle of balance, P. VEYNE, in *Annuaire du Collège de France* 76 (1976), 570 ff., makes some very interesting remarks on the revenging anonymous gods.

<sup>2</sup> A. MANTEL, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 175 n. 2), 20-21, gives a good demonstration of the ambiguity of the term τίσις in Herodotus, where τίσις certainly is not always the result of ἀδικία.

<sup>3</sup> J. KRAUSE, ΑΛΛΟΤΕ ΑΛΛΟΣ. *Untersuchungen zum Motive des Schicksalswechsels in der griechischen Dichtung bis Euripides* (München 1976), who shows *passim* the alteration of θεοί and τύχη.



Pay to whom ? Have we made any progress in our quest ? I think we must confess we have not and that we must realize we never shall. Where even great Apollo appears to be powerless and uncertain as to his possibilities we would do better to resign. His impotence is exemplarily explicated in the opening of the *Alkestis*. It is true, the god has cheated the Moirai who had decided the death of Admetus: for the time being Admetus may live, on the condition (v. 14) ἄλλον διαλλάξαντα τοῖς κάτω νεκρόν. Why is the substitution necessary ? Why does Thanatos refuse Apollo's request to let the substitute live ? Because it all amounts to the honour of Thanatos: (53) τιμαῖς κἀμὲ τέρπεσθαι δόκει, which τιμή nobody, not even Apollo, is allowed to offend: (30-31) ἀδικεῖς αὖ τιμὰς ἐνέρων / ἀφοριζόμενος. Death has a *right* to his victims<sup>1</sup>. His τιμή must receive its payment. At the utmost, death may be delayed in exchange for a substitute. Apollo himself has only very rarely managed to ransom a favourite for a limited period<sup>2</sup>. Isis, incomparably greater than he, commanded εἰμαρμένη<sup>3</sup>, identified herself with Tyche, and specialized in shifting the boundaries of life and death<sup>4</sup> but did *not* succeed in liberating man from natural death. And so we have reached the end, the *non plus ultra*. In the passage of *De bello Gallico* quoted the Celts remitted the

<sup>1</sup> So have the gods: Eur. *IT* 1458-1461, where the τιμή is paid by means of ἄποινα. Cf. Paus. IX 17, 1, where two sisters who sacrifice themselves have a father *Antipoinos*. The Sumerian myth of the 'Descent of Inanna' already phrases that a victim claimed by the Nether World can only be rescued by the provision of a substitute: S. N. KRAMER, *The Sacred Marriage Rite* (Bloomington/London 1969), 116-117. Cf. W. BURKERT, *op. cit.* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 101; 109; and for another example 90.

<sup>2</sup> Hdt. I 91; cf. R. RIECKS, « Eine tragische Erzählung bei Herodot », in *Poetica* 7 (1975), 23-44, espec. 32; Aeschyl. *Eum.* 723 ff.; Eur. *Alc.* prol. On the theme of postponing ruin for the maximum of ten years: S. LEVIN, « Diotima's Visit and Service to Athens », in *Graz. Beitr.* 3 (1975), esp. 234 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Hymn of Isis* K, 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> D. L. PAGE (ed.), *Select Papyri* III 96; *Hymn of Isidorus* I 29 (= *SEG* VIII 548); Apul. *Met.* XI 6 and 25, and J. GWYN GRIFFITHS, *ad loc.* Cf. H. S. VERSNEL, *De tyrannie verdrijven?* (Leiden 1978).

demand of a *vita pro vita* to the *deorum immortalium numen*. Philo of Byblus (*FGrHist* 790 F 3b) gives a perfect summary of all we have seen so far: "Ἐθὺς ἦν τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἐν ταῖς μεγάλαις συμφοραῖς τῶν κινδύνων ἀντὶ τῆς πάντων φθορᾶς τὸ ἀγαπημένον τῶν τέκνων τοὺς κρατοῦντας ἢ πόλεως ἢ ἔθνους εἰς σφαγὴν ἐπιδιδόναι, λύτρον τοῖς τιμωροῖς δαίμοσι, and now we have seen Alcestis equating the rights of 'the gods', 'fate', or τύχη, with 'the τιμή of Death'. We have gone from Decius to Alcestis, from self-sacrifice to self-sacrifice, from death to death. This at least explains why we cannot explain: we cannot explain death. He is as inescapable as the φύσις τῶν πραγμάτων. He may be bribed and bought off but only for the time being and only in exchange for a compensation. I do not know a clearer illustration of the practical identity of the gods (or the god) and the necessity of death than what Procopius, *Goth.* III 14, 23, tells us about a Gothic tribe whose members believe in θεὸν... ἓνα... ἀπάντων κύριον μόνον...· εἰμαρμένην δὲ οὔτε ἴσασιν οὔτε ἄλλως ὁμολογοῦσιν ἐν γε ἀνθρώποις ῥοπὴν τινα ἔχειν, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴν αὐτοῖς ἐν ποσὶν ἤδη ὁ θάνατος εἴη, ἢ νόσῳ ἀλοῦσιν ἢ ἐς πόλεμον καθισταμένοις, ἐπαγγέλλονται μὲν, ἦν διαφύγωσι, θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ ἀντὶ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτίκα ποιήσιν, διαφυγόντες δὲ θύουσιν ὅπερ ὑπέσχοντο καὶ οἴονται τὴν σωτηρίαν ταύτης δὴ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῖς ἐωνῆσθαι.<sup>1</sup>

### Epilogue

Compensation and anonymous gods are apparently two complementary aspects of one fundamental principle: nothing for nothing, man always pays. The question we asked before, of where the idea originated, is not a question to be answered by the classicist. He should consult his psychiatrist to find that the principle of compensation and *anima pro anima* has been signalized and described in psychiatric literature, among others

<sup>1</sup> Greek antiquity called these sacrifices ἀντιψύχοι: E. von LASAULX, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 3), 255 and n. 145.

by Freud<sup>1</sup>; he should consult his sociologist to find that phenomena of *self*-sacrifice have been frequently observed, especially in times of danger and disaster<sup>2</sup>; he should consult his ethologist in order to find that next to 'aggressive Ausstossreaktionen' responsible for *pharmakos*-rituals<sup>3</sup> there is a deeply rooted mechanism of altruistic and self-denying behaviour in both the animal and the human social context<sup>4</sup>; he should consult his anthropologist to discover that the principle of life for life is still a customary fundamental principle in e.g. Mediterranean para-medical treatment<sup>5</sup>. After having found all this, he will discover that these disciplines rarely arrive at real explanations, any more than the classicist does; and that often they do not come beyond observation, description and organization, since the real object appears to be 'in the nature of things'. And the thought might force itself on him—only just for a moment—that perhaps he would have got just as far if he had only consulted his eyes, ears and common sense, or the eyes, ears and common sense of ancient man whom he is studying. Does not everybody *see* that old people die and are replaced by their grand-children (who for that very reason are

<sup>1</sup> S. FREUD, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*<sup>5</sup> (Leipzig 1917), ch. 8; R. LAFORGUE, *Psychopathologie de l'échec*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1944). Quoted by G. GUSDORF, *L'expérience humaine du sacrifice* (Paris 1948), 120 ff., who gives a splendid case on pp. 200 ff.

<sup>2</sup> E. DURKHEIM, *Le suicide*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1967), 233 ff.: 'le suicide altruiste'. On reactions of self-denial after a catastrophe see M. WOLFENSTEIN, *Disaster. A Psychological Essay* (London 1957), esp. 72 ff. (reference of my colleague H. F. J. Horstmanshoff). In battle: J. KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle* (New York 1976).

<sup>3</sup> Rich material in D. FEHLING, *Ethologische Überlegungen auf dem Gebiet der Altertumskunde* (München 1974), 59-79.

<sup>4</sup> E. O. WILSON, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass./London 1978), ch. 7: 'Altruism', pp. 149-167, with examples of human self-denial explained by animal behaviour on the basis of *idem*, *Sociobiology. The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass./London 1975), 106-129. Altruism as selfishness in disguise: R. DAWKINS, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford 1976), 197 ff.

<sup>5</sup> R. and E. BLUM, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 147 n. 2), 164; *idem*, *Health and Healing in Rural Greece* (Stanford 1963), 182 ff. It is, of course, one of the methods of mesmerists.

given the same names)<sup>1</sup>, that in wartime some must die in order that many live<sup>2</sup>, that after the war some are punished and must atone for many, because unfortunately it is not possible to kill all the enemies<sup>3</sup>, that in the case of childbirth it is often a choice out of two: either the life of the mother or that of the child? Is it not a matter of observation that the shepherd leaves one sheep to the wolves in order to save the flock<sup>4</sup>, that one may offer his own freedom and become a hostage or a slave in order to buy the liberation of others<sup>5</sup>, that one grain of corn must descend into the netherworld in order that many will come to life? Is not social-economic life as a whole dominated by the alternation of gift and return, *δόσις* and *ἀντίδοσις*, to quote Aelius Aristides? And have not the Greeks themselves made the principles of balance and compensation between opposing concepts the basis of theories of science, medicine and politics?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See on the numerous forms of substitution in human social situations A. METZINGER, *art. cit.* (*infra* p. 182 n. 3), 166 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Eur. *Phoen.* 997 ff. and *Erechth.* Fr. 360 N<sup>2</sup>, 20 ff., produces this fact as a positive argument for the (self-)sacrifice of the hero and is severely censured for this by Ph. VELLACOTT, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 162 n. 2), 196 and T. B. L. WEBSTER, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967), 130: "Praxithea's speech to the modern ear is unforgivable...". In a coptic Manichean hymn the saviour is pictured as a voluntary sacrifice and compared with a vanguard offered up by a general in order to save the whole army: G. WIDENGREN, *Mani und der Manichäismus* (Stuttgart 1961), 53 ff. On this theme and a comparison of biblical and pagan cases: S. K. WILLIAMS, *op. cit.* (*supra* pp. 169-70 n. 2), 144 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See the striking instances given by J. BAYET, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 141 n. 2), 172-4, and the act of decimation.

<sup>4</sup> This image is also used in the psalm mentioned above in n. 2. Cf. W. BURKERT, in G. STEPHENSON (ed.), *Der Religionswandel unserer Zeit im Spiegel der Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt 1976), 173, and *idem*, *Structure and History...* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 71. A perfect example of the combination of the military and the animal sacrifice of the 'one for all' type in the rite of the 'superfluous ram' mentioned above p. 141 n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *I Clem.* 55, 1: ἐπιστάμεθα πολλοὺς ἐν ἡμῖν παραδεδωκότας ἑαυτοὺς εἰς δεσμὰ ὅπως ἑτέρους λυτρώσονται.

<sup>6</sup> K. WEIDAUER, *Thukydides und die hippokratischen Schriften* (Heidelberg 1954); G. E. R. LLOYD, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge 1966); J. MAU and



Yet we immediately reject our revolutionary ideas; it may be true that the disciplines of human science do not generally explain the mechanisms we have in view, but they certainly provide a platform and foundation on which other explanations may be built. And one of these concerns sacrifice. When I now propose to conclude with a hypothesis I do not pretend at all that it is a new or original one. The same line of thought has been followed by Hubert-Mauss from a sociological viewpoint<sup>1</sup>, by Gusdorf from a psychological one<sup>2</sup>. Particularly among Old-Testament scholars these ideas have been proposed and disputed<sup>3</sup>, for pagan antiquity J.-P. Guépin has exploited the basic idea<sup>4</sup>, and in a fascinating book *La violence et le sacré*,

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E. G. SCHMIDT, *Isonomia. Studien zur Gleichheitsvorstellung im griechischen Denken* (Berlin 1964); J. de ROMILLY, in *WS* 10 (1976), 93-105; J.-P. GUÉPIN, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 148 n. 2), 168 ff.

<sup>1</sup> H. HUBERT and M. MAUSS, *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice* (Paris 1901); M. MAUSS, « Essai sur le don », in *Annales de Sociologie* N. S. 1 (1924); R. FIRTH, *Symbols public and private* (London 1973); Cl. LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris 1949); J. van BAAL, *Symbols for Communication. An Introduction to the Anthropological Study of Religion* (Assen 1971), 183. Cf. W. BURKERT, *op. cit.* (*infra* p. 183 n. 2), 52 ff. I cannot accept his interpretation "to prevent the clash of greediness".

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, *supra* p. 180 n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The older literature is critically reviewed by A. METZINGER, « Die Substitutions-theorie und das alttestamentliche Opfer », in *Biblica* 21 (1940), 159-187; 247-272; 353-377, which is fundamental. On its development: S. H. HOOKE, « Theory and Practice of Substitution », in *VT* 2 (1952), 2-17, who gives for the Semitic field a view which is closely parallel to the one defended in my essay. On the transposition to N. T. theory: S. K. WILLIAMS, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event. The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Missoula 1975) and the ample references in R. J. THOMPSON, *Penitance and Sacrifice in Early Israel outside the Levitical Law* (Leiden 1963), 256-272; *Theol. Wörterbuch z. Neuen Testament* X 2, 1111 ff., s.v. θύω. Of special interest are the recent theories which connect the West-Semitic holocaust fire-sacrifices 'ôlâ with (Hittite) substitution ritual: H. M. KÜMMEL, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 140 n. 1), 23 ff.; *idem*, in U. MANN (ed.), *Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt 1973), 84 f. and literature there.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* (*supra* p. 148 n. 2).

René Girard<sup>1</sup> has made it the centre of his explanation of sacral thought and action. I should add that in his Sather Lectures, which I received and read only after having completed both my text and the foot-notes, W. Burkert has also very much to say concerning this matter<sup>2</sup>. If I have not adduced this and other literature before, this is partly because I did not wish to give the impression that I agreed with everything they claim, but mainly because I wished to start from a *case* and additional *facts*, and not from theory. If I now emphatically refer to them and explicitly profess my views to be in general agreement with theirs it is because I believe these theories have been greatly underestimated and sometimes even neglected in the general literature on sacrifice and particularly in specialized studies on sacrifice in the ancient world.

We have put sacrifice under a magnifying-glass and considered it in an enlarged form. Asked why human (self)-sacrifice

<sup>1</sup> R. GIRARD, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris 1972). Cf. R. GIRARD/G. LEFORT/J. OUGHOURLIOU, *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* (Paris 1978); Ph. VELLACOTT, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 162 n. 2), 182; W. BURKERT, *Homo necans* (Berlin 1972), *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> W. BURKERT, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1979). I have only added references to this book wherever it seemed useful. Whoever would compare the fascinating pages on the 'Transformations of the Scapegoat' (59-77), where Burkert discusses *i.a.* the *devotio* in the light of *pharmakos*-ideology, with what I have argued above and in previous studies, will find that we are in practically complete agreement. As to the ultimate interpretation of human (self)-sacrifice Burkert, as usually, looks for biological-ethological motives going back to or comparable with animal behaviour. On the one hand there is the aggressive group-reaction 'hacking at the outsider' (see D. FEHLING, *op. cit.*, *supra* p. 180 n. 3), on the other there is the situation of the group surrounded by predators: men chased by wolves must offer a prey in order that the others will be saved (cf. the example mentioned above in the text). Although, again, I accept the main line of argument the reader will easily notice where our views diverge: my argument is that the idea of the vicarious (human) sacrifice should not only (!) be explained by references to 'aboriginal experience' going back to times immemorial, but also, or primarily, by the investigation of psychological and ethological reactions to the principles of balance and compensation that dominate every facet of actual life and of actual human societies. I am convinced that both types of approach are valid and do not exclude each other but, on the contrary, form two complementary parts of one indivisible whole.

is necessary ancient man answers: because 'the gods' are entitled to 'compensation', interpreted either as penalty for guilt or as the redemption of a debt. We have also seen that 'the gods' is a term that freely alternates with 'fate', 'fortune', 'necessity', 'death', in sum with the φύσις τῶν πραγμάτων. Should we not seriously consider the proposition, then, that any type of sacrifice that forces people to renounce a possession, to eliminate it from society, to destroy, kill, spill, bury or burn it—either as ἀπαρχή or as χαριστήριον, as θυσία or as σφάγιον, as σπονδή or *daps*, as *piaculum* or φαρμακός, as *votum* or *donum*—is ultimately motivated by the same innate feeling of compulsion that payment must be made and compensation provided? It may be wise, in order to anticipate possible questions and preclude misunderstanding, to add a few clarifying remarks.

First it should be emphasized that this hypothesis does not imply a 'theory on *the origin* of sacrifice'. I do hope that the material I have adduced in the light of the religious mentality of the ancient world has proved that the principle of compensation is the matrix in which certain types of what W. Burkert labelled as 'Preisgabeopfer' or 'Hingabeopfer' have originated. It is equally clear that various other types of sacrifice have their roots in different soil. This leads me to a second observation. My suggestion does not contradict (nor is it contradicted by) existing theories on the origin of distinct types of sacrifice. I am not concerned with the possibly palaeolithic origin of the Olympian sacrifice, as defended by Meuli, nor do I feel an impulse to discuss or controvert the possible origin of the 'first-fruits offerings' as acts 'to prevent the clash of greediness' or the association of the libation with canine acts of marking the territory, as suggested by Burkert. My interest starts where the 'original' functions of these rituals got lost to sight, whereas the rituals themselves did not disappear but on the contrary were maintained and remoulded into elements of sacrificial activity. I believe this reinterpretation was facilitated, if not conditioned, by the concomitance of the existing rite of

abandonment with the 'sense of compensation'. Thirdly I should point out that the theory of compensation cannot be refuted by references to the relative worthlessness of some objects given or renounced. The scantiness of the 'gift' in *primitiae* or libation, and above all in the Olympian sacrifice may very well be explained by the supposed origins of the rites. However, apparently it was not deemed necessary, once these acts had received their later sacrificial functions, to increase the value of the 'gifts', and this notwithstanding the derision by comedians, atheists or sceptics. After all, we are speaking of ritual, which both in the customary and in my compensatory interpretation, is dominated by symbolic action. The self-sacrifice is an extreme example of what may be called 'high intensity rites'; for the daily routine of the 'low intensity rites' people would restrict themselves to meagre or symbolic payment. Let us recall that Camillus prayed to be 'redeemed' by as small a price as possible. That this is the general human wish may be illustrated by the 'knock on wood' ritual which survived the ages. Finally, the idea of compensation does not explain the forms which the various sacrifices have taken. Partly, again, explanations must be sought in their origins; in other cases, especially the ones of the σφάγιον type, human aggression may play an important part. But the way in which objects were eliminated from human society has no immediate bearing on the general impulse that may have motivated the action.

The compulsory feeling that somehow compensation should be given for anything people receive or wish to receive does not explain the origins, the actual functions and the various forms of sacrifice. It does explain, I believe, the fact that sacrificial acts so numerous and diverse have been accepted, performed and passed on as a matter of fact by so many civilizations for so long a period. In the background there is—always and everywhere—one and the same matter of course: 'the nature of things'. Why? That's why!



## DISCUSSION

*M<sup>me</sup> Piccaluga* : Occorre distinguere tra ciò che teoricamente è *sacrificio* (atto rituale di offerta a destinatari sovrumani) e ciò che, invece, è *uccisione rituale* (che non prevede necessariamente destinatari sovrumani, ma ha valore in sè). Ugualmente, occorre tener presente la particolarità della religione romana che:

1) arrivata molto in fretta ad un livello politeistico, accanto agli dèi (che talvolta possono anche non avere un ruolo chiave nella soluzione di determinate crisi) mostra di conservare strutture sacrali tipiche di fasi culturali più arcaiche ;

2) dà di conseguenza enorme importanza al rito, che funziona, da sè, anche a prescindere dall'(eventuale) intervento di divinità.

Ciò può aiutarci a capire la *devotio* (vale a dire, quel meccanismo rituale mediante il quale il *magistratus cum imperio*, o un suo sostituto che lo rappresenta, in caso di gravissima crisi militare, agendo allo stesso tempo sia come vittima che come sacrificatore, riesce a portare i nemici di Roma nell'aldilà). (Questa distinzione è già in A. Brelich, *Il sacrificio umano*, Roma 1967). Nella *devotio*, infatti, ciò che funziona è il rituale (o meglio, la « vittima/sacrificatore » che lo celebra), mentre le divinità invocate servono solo per indicare e materializzare la sfera subumana dell'aldilà nella quale devono essere condotti i nemici. In questo senso si può capire perchè — mentre nel testo di Livio esse sono nominate esplicitamente, appunto al fine di caratterizzare il mondo dei morti — in genere esse vengono lasciate nell'ombra: la religione romana, ormai politeisticizzata, può 1) rifiutare di legare ad un rituale del genere gli dèi; 2) sentire un certo imbarazzo nei confronti di un meccanismo sacrale indipendente.

*M. Versnel* : Sur l'aspect typiquement rituel de la religion romaine, nos avis concordent. Il en va de même pour le 'destinataire absent'

de la *devotio*, pour reprendre l'expression de R. Rebuffat (in *REA* 74 (1972), 20): « à peine une destinataire caractérisée, mais la mort elle-même personnifiée ». Chose importante, cette observation porte sur Korè; elle illustre par conséquent la thèse que j'ai placée au centre de ma démonstration, à savoir que l'anonymat, voire l'absence de destinataires divins, caractérise la plupart des sacrifices humains, qui, de ce fait, sont assimilables à des 'meurtres rituels'.

Il me paraît dès lors inadmissible d'isoler la *devotio* de Decius et de considérer que l'absence des dieux dans le rituel de la *devotio* est un trait spécifique de la religion romaine.

*M. Burkert* : Ich habe drei Fragen von sehr verschiedener Reichweite:

1. Was bedeutet die Haltung, bei der *devotio*, *manu subter togam ad mentum exserta*, *super telum subiectum pedibus stantem* ?

2. So gewiss es sich bei der 'Kompensation' durch Opfer um ein sehr allgemeines Prinzip handelt, gibt es nicht besondere geistesgeschichtliche Entwicklungen zumindest in der Verbalisierung ? Konkret: gibt es in der griechischen Literatur vor dem 5. Jh. Belege für θανεῖν ὑπέρ ? Τεθνάμεναι... περὶ ἧι πατρίδι μαρνάμενον (Tyrtaios Fr. 6, 1-2) ist doch etwas anderes.

3. Ist das 'Gefühl' oder der 'Zwang' zu Kompensation und 'Bezahlung' angeboren, d.h. allgemein menschlich ? Ich fürchte, dass die am Rande des Existenzminimums vegetierenden Slumbeohner oder auch unsere wohlstandsverwahrlosten Jugendlichen keine solchen Gefühle haben. Handelt es sich doch um eine — wenn auch sehr allgemeine, rund um den ganzen Erdball nachweisbare — kulturelle Errungenschaft ?

*M. Versnel* : Hinsichtlich Ihrer ersten Frage beschränke ich mich auf die folgenden Bemerkungen: Seit Deubner hat man die *manus... exserta* meistens, wohl mit Recht, als Akt der Selbstweihung (*consecratio*) verstanden. Das *telum subiectum* ist — fast wie der Speer des Romulus — zu einer Art *arbor felix* von Interpretationsversuchen

herangewachsen. Hier bieten sich zahllose Anknüpfungspunkte, z.B. mit der *festuca*, mit dem Marsspeere, mit der Lanze der *Fetiales*, mit Pestpfeil oder Pestlanze u.s.w. Die Literatur ist ausgiebig und ich habe sie nur teilweise in meinen Fussnoten erwähnt. Ich verweise z.B. für eine weitgehende rezente Theorie auf H. Gehrts, *Das Märchen und das Opfer* (Bonn 1967).

Zur Frage nach möglichen Entwicklungen wenigstens in der Verbalisierung muss ich einfach gestehen, dass ich in dieser Hinsicht keine systematische Forschung betrieben habe und somit die Antwort schuldig bleiben muss. Ich kann sogar die Ungewissheit noch vergrössern durch die Bemerkung, dass über die genaue Aussage und Anwendung von Wörtern wie ὑπέρ, ἀντί, πρό, u.s.w. in diesem Kontext auch und eben in der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft gar keine Einstimmigkeit herrscht. Sie sind nur dort mit Sicherheit zu deuten, wo die ganze Lage mit gewisser Ausführlichkeit gezeichnet ist, wie in den von mir gegebenen Belegstellen. Ich halte es durchaus für möglich, dass Sterben für das Vaterland oder für den Mitmenschen als Ideal und Ausdruck erst später aufgekommen ist, gleich wie wir z.B. eine sehr wesentliche Änderung, ja Umwandlung in der römischen *devotio* von der frühen Republik bis in die Kaiserzeit beobachten. Ich sehe aber die Selbstaufopferung, beziehungsweise das Menschenopfer, weder als Urtypus sonstiger 'Preisgabe-Opfer' noch als Endergebnis einer Evolution aus niedrigeren Kompensationstypen. Sie ist eine aus jeweiligen Not- und Angstsituationen hervorgehende monströse 'Vergrösserung', die sich unter gewissen Umständen — ich denke vor allem an die Zeit des frühen Prinzipats — in ideologisch-ritualisierten Formen gelegentlich durchsetzen und fixieren mag.

In Ihrer letzten Frage spüre ich einen gewissen Zusammenhang mit der vorhergehenden Bemerkung. Wäre das 'Kompensationsgefühl' letzten Endes nicht das Produkt eines kulturellen 'Lehrprozesses', ein sozialer Luxus, der auch wieder abgestossen werden kann, wie es z.B. C. M. Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York 1972) bezüglich Mitleid, Fürsorge, Gerechtigkeit, sogar Liebe gezeigt hat? Nein, das glaube ich nicht, und zwar deswegen nicht,

weil wir es hier m.E. mit einem nicht notwendig sozial bedingten Prinzip zu tun haben. Wenn ich das Wort 'innate' gebraucht habe, habe ich genau dies gemeint: ein allgemein menschliches Reaktionsmodell, das sich genau wie z.B. die religiöse Erfahrung sowohl im Laufe der menschlichen Evolution als im individuellen Leben entwickeln und manifestieren kann. Allerdings fehlen hier auch kulturelle Aspekte keineswegs. Die 'Slumbewohner' werden sich vielleicht (ich kann und will darüber nicht urteilen) 'altruistische', 'preisgebende' oder 'selbstaufopfernde' Leistungen nicht erlauben können, aber das Prinzip, dass einer — oder viele — geopfert werden, um anderen das Leben zu garantieren, ist eben für das Ik-Volk von Turnbull auf erschütternde Weise beschrieben worden. "Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia!", schreit der Held in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* und ich wüsste nicht, warum derartige Not-schreie nicht auch in den 'Slums' klingen könnten.

*M. Kirk*: Could I interject a general question? That is, *how far* should the classicist allow himself to 'become' a psychologist? I do not mean to imply, of course, that we should remain entirely confined within our own discipline; but it is one thing to identify and offset our own psychological prejudices and preconceptions—perhaps even an amateur could and should attempt that—, quite another thing to set ourselves up as experts in determining the details of universal human motivation (if there is such a thing).

*M. Versnel*: My answer is definite, though no doubt not very satisfactory. To my mind the classicist must allow himself to 'become' a psychologist (or a sociologist, anthropologist, ethologist for that matter) as far as his health, capabilities and efforts will allow him. The alternative is that he refrains categorically from any interpretation in the real sense of the word. The simple fact that we all unconsciously or consciously allow our own attitude to enter into our interpretation of both detailed and general problems of ancient antiquity would clearly tell for an attempt to collect as much information as possible. Experts, I am afraid, we shall never be.



The way I phrased my final suggestion shows that I for one do certainly not set myself upon as one. I think we should *consult* the experts and use their information instead of pretending to provide 'independent' interpretations.

*M. Henrichs:* Specialists in other disciplines often encounter similar difficulties, and are equally exposed to the possibility of error, when they apply their methods and minds to classical texts and subjects. If examples are needed, I single out the interpretations of Euripides' *Bacchae* by R. Girard (in *La violence et le sacré*) and M. Simon (in *Mind and Madness*), which ignore the conventions of Attic tragedy and the cultic side of Greek maenadism. Yet both books are stimulating reading. Yes, classicists who feel like it, and who have acquired the necessary expertise in other disciplines, should cross the border and speak out, as long as they know their own place.

*M. Burkert:* Soweit wir uns in unserer wissenschaftlichen Arbeit nicht nur als Automaten verstehen, ist Psychologie im Spiel; es könnte sein, dass diejenigen, die die Psychologie ignorieren möchten, lediglich unreflektierte Psychologie treiben.

*M. Turcan:* Je crois qu'il faut faire une distinction entre la *devotio* de Curtius et ce que j'appellerais la *devotio* 'militaire'. Vous semblez penser que Decius prend l'initiative de sa propre *devotio*, alors que les dieux demandent à l'Etat de sacrifier *quo plurimum populus Romanus posset* dans le cas de Curtius. Mais surtout la *devotio* 'militaire' a pour fin de détourner une *pestis* sur l'ennemi (Liv. VIII 9, 10), alors que la *devotio* de Curtius sert, en somme, à conjurer un prodige et à éliminer un danger, sans le transférer aux dépens d'un ennemi extérieur et, surtout, Curtius n'est pas décrit comme étant *velato capite*.

Dans l'iconographie religieuse romaine, je connais trois cas de *velatio*: sont voilés: 1) les offrandes que contient une corbeille avant le sacrifice; 2) le prêtre sacrificant; 3) les empereurs déifiés après leur mort.

Decius est-il voilé en tant qu'offrande, en tant que prêtre ou en tant que voué aux *Manes*, appartenant déjà à un autre monde ?

Lorsqu'il tombe sous les coups des conjurés, César se voile. Est-ce, tout simplement, parce qu'il va mourir, ou parce qu'il a conscience de se 'dévouer', comme les *Decii*, pour le salut de l'Etat romain ?

*M. Henrichs* : The face of a person who dies an unnatural death is an unbearable sight. Caesar veiled his head, including his face, while dying, and so did Socrates (*Phaedo* 118). To this day, victims of executions die with their faces covered. By contrast, the ritual *capitis velatio* was usually a partial veiling of the head which left the face exposed and open to view.

*M. Versnel* : Il y a, certes, des différences entre les deux cas de *devotio* ; mais il y a aussi des convergences : dans l'une et l'autre *devotio*, ce sont des dieux 'anonymes' qui demandent 'le plus haut sacrifice', comme je l'ai démontré, et ce sont des héros humains qui s'offrent de plein gré. C'est là l'aspect déterminant, comme le prouvent l'étymologie du mot *devotio* et l'usage qui en est fait dans la littérature latine. Mais alors, en quoi les deux types se distinguent-ils ? Decius, en 'dévouant' sa propre vie, 'dévoue' en même temps la vie des ennemis, puisque sa mort entraîne la leur. On se trouve donc en présence d'un type archaïque de 'sacrifice' militaire, qui apparaît aussi dans d'autres civilisations (cf. p. 141 n. 2). J'y ai déjà consacré une étude antérieure (*Mnemosyne* 29 (1976), 365-410) et j'y reviendrai. Pour mon thème actuel cette distinction n'a aucune importance, pas davantage, d'ailleurs, que la question de savoir si la légende de Curtius dérive ou non de l'histoire de Decius.

J'en viens à la *capitis velatio*. La *consecratio* de soi-même est ambiguë. On peut dès lors interpréter la *velatio* de deux façons. Elle est, certes, le signe qui désigne le sacrificateur, mais elle peut désigner aussi le sacrifié en tant qu'il est 'voué' aux *Manes*. On se gardera toutefois de confondre le verbe *velare*, qui désigne l'acte de se voiler partiellement, avec le verbe *obnubere*, qui implique qu'on se voile

entièrement. On se reportera sur ce point aux indications que donne H. Freier, *Caput velare* (Diss. Tübingen 1963). Le geste de César mourant correspond vraisemblablement à la seconde catégorie. Pour la première — la *velatio* proprement dite — on se reportera notamment à ce que Plutarque (*TG* 19, 5; comp. App. *BC* I 16, 68) dit de Scipion Nasica, qui se couvre la tête de sa toge au moment où il déclare la guerre à Tiberius Gracchus.

*M. Scholz* : Nur eine kurze Bemerkung zur *capite-velato*-Diskussion: Livius mischt in seinem *devotio*-Bericht übliche Elemente römischer Kultpraxis (*capite velato*) mit Besonderheiten der *devotio*-Handlung (*manus subter togam...*); ob Decius tatsächlich *capite velato* in den Kampf stürmte, ist zumindest fraglich. Daher sollte man keine tiefgründigen, speziell die *devotio* betreffenden Deutungen an das *capite velato* knüpfen.

*M. Versnel* : Für Ihre Bemerkung habe ich soviel Verständnis, dass auch ich anfänglich mit Misstrauen die öfters sehr weitgehenden Theorien der Priester-Opfer-Dualität entgegentrat. Doch scheint mir die wirklich schlagende Parallele der *sacra*ti des *ver sacrum*, die als Opfer — und nicht als Priester — *velati* waren, wenigstens die Möglichkeit einer Doppelfunktion der *velatio* zu erlauben.

*M. Vernant* : Ne conviendrait-il pas, au terme de votre exposé, de distinguer deux ordres de faits, très différents à mes yeux, et dont je me demande si vous ne les confondez pas quelque peu dans "the same innate feeling of compulsion that payments must be made".

Il y a d'abord le sentiment de la dette: non seulement il y a toujours, pour tout, un prix à payer, mais le fait même d'exister nous met en position de débiteur par rapport aux dieux, au cosmos. Notre vie est 'dépendante'. Elle finira. Nous n'en sommes pas maîtres. Si nous la possédons, avec tous les biens qu'elle suppose, c'est qu'elle nous a été donnée, ou mieux, concédée. En ce sens, naître, c'est déjà contracter une dette. Ce sentiment de la dette, certaines religions, comme celle de l'Inde védique, l'ont orchestré avec une puissance et

une subtilité remarquables, en posant, de façon explicite, au fondement même du sacrifice, l'exigence d'une dette dont nous ne nous acquittons qu'en nous offrant nous-mêmes finalement sur le feu du bûcher funèbre. Les Grecs, au contraire, n'ont pas, dans la pratique usuelle du sacrifice, donné à ce sentiment de la dette une place comparable. La notion de *τιμή* occupe, je crois, une position plus centrale.

Le second ordre de phénomènes auquel vous vous référez me paraît se situer sur un tout autre plan, qu'on pourrait désigner, pour faire vite, sous le nom de conduites de substitution: la partie pour le tout, un animal pour l'homme, un ami, un parent, voire n'importe qui, au lieu de la personne elle-même, un simulacre de paiement en guise de rétribution véritable. Se sentir congénitalement en dette est une chose; s'en acquitter par une sorte de subterfuge, par la substitution de tiers, en est une autre.

Ces comportements, qui font assumer à un être le rôle qui incombe à un autre, ont un caractère spécifiquement humain. Ils sont un aspect de ce qu'on a nommé la fonction symbolique: nous ne pouvons rien penser, rien atteindre directement; il nous faut toujours utiliser des 'substituts' du réel, des signes au lieu des choses que ces signes désignent.

Comment voyez-vous, dans votre perspective, l'articulation de ces deux ordres de faits; et pouvez-vous préciser comment la 'compensation' peut, selon vous, englober l'un et l'autre ?

*M. Versnel* : Le rôle central de la *τιμή* dans le sacrifice atteste que la notion de dette est présente également en Grèce, et, je dirai même, essentielle. *Τιμή* signifie, certes, 'honneur', 'présent d'honneur', mais aussi 'compensation', 'satisfaction', et, sémantiquement, ces sens sont interdépendants.

J'en viens à vos questions concernant la relation entre la notion de 'dette' et celle de 'substitution'. Tout ce que vous observez sur la nature de l'idée de dette correspond à mes vues sur la relation entre les dieux anonymes (c'est-à-dire la nature des choses, le destin, etc.), qui sont créanciers, et l'être humain, qui est (ou qui se sent) débiteur. Sur ce point, il n'y a pas de divergence entre nous. Je n'ai pas



confondu le concept de dette avec le principe de 'substitution'. Au contraire j'ai essayé de montrer quelques manières de se libérer de la dette: la substitution est le procédé le plus remarquable, mais non pas l'unique, de payer la dette et de se rédimier. Ainsi, la substitution est une des manifestations pratiques qui trahissent le sentiment humain de culpabilité ou de redevance.

Dans le cas de Decius, c'est bien d'une substitution qu'il s'agit. J'en ai cité d'autres exemples (notamment celui d'Aelius Aristide). Vous avez toutefois noté que, dans la partie générale de mon exposé, je parle non pas de 'substitution', mais de 'compensation'; c'est qu'à mon sens renoncer, abandonner n'est pas nécessairement un acte de substitution. L'anneau d'Aelius Aristide est, sans doute, une compensation par substitution (il le dit lui-même); mais on n'en peut dire autant de l'anneau de Polycrate. Il demeure toutefois que dans l'un et l'autre cas, l'homme paie — et, comme l'écrit Hérodote (III 40), Polycrate est invité à payer un prix élevé: τὸ ... πλείστου ἄξιον καὶ ἐπ' ὃ σὺ ἀπολομένῳ μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀλγήσεις; en d'autres termes, il est invité à abandonner, à perdre (ἀπολομένῳ !) ce qu'il a de plus précieux.

Bref, "compensation and anonymous gods are two complementary aspects of one fundamental principle", comme je l'ai dit, et la substitution n'est pour moi qu'une des formes de la compensation.