

## VII. Sacrifice as a game-therapy of collective “healing” for cosmically “disturbed” communities

“But what is that ‘supplementary element’ [Johan Huizinga] which comes to play in *cultic* acts and that ‘can only be described with difficulty’ [Huizinga<sup>275</sup>]? According to Huizinga, it is a mystical realization, but he does not adduce anything further on the subject and we are left without answer to this question which is actually a decisive one in the history of culture. “The cultural drama acquires its sacred character precisely through that, that it is a recollection of an elementary event harking back to the origins, and a reawakening of the emotions associated with it. But in this time of creation... the real world must have revealed itself, or a part of itself, to humanity, and this humanity represented in sacred actions, which were not of an order already established by mankind./ We need to grasp the aspect of reality which took hold of the early peoples when they turned the act of killing into the very material of their cultic compositions, which were of utmost importance to them.”<sup>276</sup>

Boulanger already asks the question of what may have happened to the mind of mankind who survived the catastrophes. As modern religious scholars have plainly overlooked these cataclysms, the bizarre forms of ancient religions could only remain obscure to them: “Insensed by their misfortune they could wait only for their undoing, and they did not have enough strength to be able to feel the whole extent of their suffering. Such are the traits with which Ovid and Seneca draw the moral picture of the Flood: they show us the people assembled on the mountain tops, timid, startled, besides themselves and made senseless by the extent of the disaster that befell them.”<sup>277</sup>

In 1931, more than 160 years after Boulanger’s book, the cuneiform epic about the King-Shepherd Etana was published. He was one of the earliest lords of Uruk, which belongs among the first five cultic places of Mesopotamia after the Flood. The introduction presents an - assuredly priestly - explanation for the origins of priestly kingship. Though it does not speak about “speechless,” but still about “obnubilated” or benighted, i.e. confused and bewildered people, to whom help and even healing is brought - through the new means of priest-kingship and its ceremonial performances:

“The great Annunaki who decide upon fate,  
they sat together to advise about the land.  
They created the four parts of the world and fixed their shapes.

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<sup>275</sup> Cf. J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: Versuch einer Bestimmung des Spielelementes der Kultur* (1938), Basel: Akademische Verlagsanstalt Pantheon, 1944.

<sup>276</sup> A. E. Jensen, *Mythos und Kult bei den Naturvölkern: Religionswissenschaftliche Betrachtungen* (1951), with an Introduction by E. Haberland, München: dtv, 1991, p. 85/94/248.

<sup>277</sup> N.-A. Boulanger, *Das durch seine Gebräuche aufgedeckte Altertum: Oder Kritische Untersuchung der vornehmsten Meynungen, Ceremonien und Einrichtungen der verschiedenen Völker des Erdbodens in Religions- und bürgerlichen Sachen* (1766), Greifswald: Anton Ferdinand Rösens Buchhandlung, 1767, p. 529 f.

The Igigi were too exalted for mankind,  
 they established a determined time for mankind.  
 For all the *obnubilated*<sup>278</sup> people they had not yet raised a [priest-]king.  
 In those times no tiara and no crown had yet been worn.  
 And no scepter was set with lapis-lazuli.  
*The sanctuaries had not yet been erected.*  
 The seven Igigi have locked the gates against the settlers.  
 Scepter, tiara and the crooked staff  
 were laid before Anu in Heaven.  
 As there existed *no counsel or relief* for humankind,  
 kingship came down from heaven.”<sup>279</sup>

There is probably no text that has been examined more thoroughly along religious-theoretical and social-theoretical lines than the Etana-epic. What a stroke of luck! The very first step of humankind into urban high culture is seized here in most old and simple terms. And yet their understanding appears so difficult. What is one to evoke under “obnubilated people,” who, “without counsel or relief,” even in need of “healing” are standing there at a loss? No lesser light than Henri Frankfort despairs at this question: “People were confused, they moved about aimlessly as in a fog, *because* there was no king.”<sup>280</sup> But this is not what is said in the Etana-myth. The text argues exactly the contrary. It is not “because there was no king” that the people are confused, but *because* the people are obnubilated and confused that the priest-kinship comes into existence, in order to help them.

The epics stress emphatically that, *before* there was a priest-kingship “mankind

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<sup>278</sup> Instead of «beclouded» another English translation uses «teeming». This suits the context well, if “teeming” is read in the sense of inundating, spilling over, or with the meaning of an exuberant or uninhibited phantasy or attitude of the mind. S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (1989), Oxford u. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, S. 190..

<sup>279</sup> Cf. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 114 - my emphasis.

The great Annunaki, who decree the fate,  
 Sat down, taking counsel about the land.  
 They who created the regions, who set up the establishment,  
 The Igigi were too lofty for mankind,  
 A stated time for mankind they decreed.  
 The *beclouded people*, in all, had not set up a king.  
 At that time, no tiara had been tied on, nor crown,  
 And no scepter had been inlaid with lapis;  
 The shrines had not been built altogether.  
 The Seven [Igigi] had barred the gates against the settler[Settlements].  
 Scepter, crown tiara, and (shepherd's) crook Lay deposited before Anu in heaven,  
 There being *no counseling* for its people. (Then) kingship descended from heaven.»

<sup>280</sup> H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (1948), Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 237, my emphasis.

in the middle of their *destruction*”<sup>281</sup> wailed, “the Flood had rolled over them.”<sup>282</sup> Indeed it is “a power that is not of this world”<sup>283</sup> as Frankfort’s colleague Thorkild Jacobaea might have said, that had precipitated the people into “benightedness.” It is to overcome this benightedness that priest-kingship is created as a power of *this* world.

The Ancient-Orientalists pay for their evolutionist education with confusion. They do not take the texts seriously, they reinterpret them. Already Boulanger criticized this type of thinking and thinkers: “I know, too, that most of the writers have let these traditions go, and have tried to reach over different paths to the origin of societies. The philosopher, the metaphysicist, the jurist have believed that, where history remains silent, reason must be put to task, and that by the way of a close observation of the character and of the nature of mankind its first steps can be deduced. Even if they did not furnish a true history: and if some of them have said things that were obviously senseless and false; one has still encountered many likely and plausible accounts.”<sup>284</sup>

“History” doesn’t even “keep silent” anymore, yet the modern mind - richly furnished with sources - must stand its ground when confronted with severe examiners who know how to declare evolutionary theory right against the evidence of facts.

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<sup>281</sup> Cf. S. N. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Man's Record-ed History*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, p. 149:

«My mankind, in its *destruction* I will...  
I will return the people to their Settlements.  
After the ... of kingship had been lowered from heaven,  
After the exalted tiara and the throne of kingship had been  
lowered from heaven, He perfected the rites and the exalted divine laws ...,  
Founded the five cities in ... pure places,  
Called their names, apportioned them as *cult centers*.»

Cf. also J. B. Pritchard (Hg.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 43 - my emphasis. Für eine deutsche Übersetzung cf. W. H. Ph. Römer, D. O. Edward, *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments. Band 111. Lieferung 3: Weisheitstexte, Mythen und Epen I*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993, p. 449ff.

<sup>282</sup>

Cf. T. Jacobaea, *The Superman Ring List*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939, p. 77.

The Flood had swept there over.  
After the Flood had swept there over,  
when the [priest-]kingship was lowered from heaven  
the [priest-]kingship was in Wish.»

<sup>283</sup> Cf. T. Jacobaea, *Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> N. -A. Boulanger, *Das durch seine Gebräuche aufgedeckte Altertum: Oder Kritische Untersuchung der vornehmsten Meynungen, Ceremonien und Einrichtungen der verschiedenen Völker des Erdbodens in Religions- und bürgerlichen Sachen* (1766), Greifswald: Anton Ferdinand Rösens Buchhandlung, 1767, p.11.

Against all the words of the myths, its scholars insist emphatically that, in their interpretation, they accept only “thunderstorms and the annual high-waters of the river”<sup>285</sup> as forces of nature coming into play - which simply cannot occasion general Floods, darkness and world fires burning.

“The “obnubilation” of the people cannot be related to the “Black Cloud”<sup>286</sup> of the mesopotamian Flood-account, or to the “Twilight of the gods” of Nordic myth. Of a sun darkened by immense dust clouds, which in the mean time has come to belong to the standing repertoire of catastrophism,<sup>287</sup> No, the thought is not even allowed to occur. Therefore, the texts have to be reinterpreted. Despite the fact that thunderstorms, and rivers swelled by snow melt have existed before the Bronze Age, without having given rise to myths and sacrificial cults. Therefore, the historical anomalies of this period cannot be explained by meteorological conditions which have been occurring always, at all times.

However widespread the Flood accounts over the world, just as global are the assertions that in their wake, extraordinary men, heroic figures, evtl. the first priest-kings established the rites of sacrifice. In Chaldaea, it is Ziusudra,<sup>288</sup> among the Assyrians Utnapishtim<sup>289</sup> and among the Ancient Israelites, it is Noah.<sup>290</sup> In India, it is the hero Manu who launches the practice of sacrifice after the Flood.<sup>291</sup> In the Greek tradition, Perseus, Megaros, Aiakos and Deucalion take on the role.<sup>292</sup> Even the transformation of the humble hut shared by Philemon and Baucis into a post-Flood temple<sup>293</sup> reminds us that catastrophe and the origin of priesthood are linked. About Samothrace, Diodorus reports that survivors of a natural catastrophe “[marked] the

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<sup>285</sup> Cf. T. Jacobaea, «Mesopotamia», in: H. Frankfort et al. (Hg.), *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago und London: University of Chicago Press, 1972, p. 127.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. M. G. Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 100.

<sup>287</sup> See S. V. M. Clube, W. M. Napier, *The Cosmic Winter*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 44.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 95.

<sup>290</sup> *I. Moses* 8: 20.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. D. Shulman, «The Tamil Flood Myths and the Cankam Legend» (1978), in: A. Dundes (Hg.), *The Flood Myth*, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1988, p. 296.

<sup>292</sup> See H. Usener, *Die Sintfluthsagen*, Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1899, p.51f.; J. G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law*, vol. I, London: Macmillan, 1919, p. 146ff.

<sup>293</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8: 620-674.

level of their salvation in places all around the island and raised altars there, upon which sacrifices are still offered.”<sup>294</sup> An ancient Egyptian text about the bearer of catastrophes, Sekhmet, ends thus: “and the majesty of god said: ‘that your sins be forgiven to you! For the blood sacrifices have overcome the slaughter,’ - this is the origin of the slaying of sacrificial victims.”<sup>295</sup> The Algonquin-Indians of North America have their hero Nanabush establish religious prayer after the Flood.<sup>296</sup> In China, dragons battling in the sky are made responsible for the Flood, after the receding of which priest-kingship is inaugurated along with the Shang Dynasty.<sup>297</sup>

What signifies the benighting, and what are the counsel and help and eventually the healing methods employed by those who advance themselves to king-priests through their ritual creations? “Insensed by their misfortune,” with these words Boulanger describes the post-catastrophic mood, and he goes on: “Therefore there must have been a time when the unfortunate dwellers of the surface of the earth must have been seized by weariness and disgust at the sight of their worldly home having gone to ruin in the most frightening changes, [sic!] and at the perspective of a miserable and fear-plagued life.”<sup>298</sup> Up to this point, his conception is limpid. But then, his understanding fails him at the apprehension of rituals, the horror and sadness of which he cannot grasp. For he believes that “the thousands of practices” of religious man exist in order “to strike down his mood, to poison his days with constant sorrow, and to make his own life miserable.”<sup>299</sup>

We shall see that, besides child’s play, there is another occupation of mankind which often appears frightening and yet is done with pleasure, persistently repeated, because through it a distress is averted. A full understanding of this psychological activity of game-playing is reached only by Sigmund Freud in 1920,<sup>300</sup> so there is no

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<sup>294</sup> Diodorus, FGrHist 548.

<sup>295</sup> Zu dieser Übersetzung vgl. H. Brugsch, *Die neue Weltordnung nach Vernichtung des sündigen Menschengeschlechts nach einer altägyptischen Untersuchung*, Berlin: Calvary u. Co., 1881, p. 187.

<sup>296</sup> See R. Andree, *Die Flutsagen*, Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 1891, p. 71f., 153.

<sup>297</sup> See J. Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins* (1959), Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1980, p. 419 ff.

<sup>298</sup> N.-A. Boulanger, *Das durch seine Gebräuche aufgedeckte Altertum: Oder Kritische Untersuchung der vornehmsten Meynungen, Ceremonien und Einrichtungen der verschiedenen Völker des Erdbodens in Religions- und bürgerlichen Sachen* (1766), Greifswald: Anton Ferdinand Rösens Buchhandlung, 1767, p. 180.

<sup>299</sup> N.-A. Boulanger, *Das durch seine Gebräuche aufgedeckte Altertum: Oder Kritische Untersuchung der vornehmsten Meynungen, Ceremonien und Einrichtungen der verschiedenen Völker des Erdbodens in Religions- und bürgerlichen Sachen* (1766), Greifswald: Anton Ferdinand Rösens Buchhandlung, 1767, p. 180.

<sup>300</sup> See S. Freud, «Jenseits des Lustprinzips» (1920), in: Idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. XIII, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1947, p. 11-15.

point to reproach Boulanger. “Insensed by one’s misfortune” means - in modern terms - traumatized, to be so deeply injured emotionally that the forces of self-healing alone are not enough to return one to functioning reality.

Such an overwhelming state occurs practically when a threat cannot be acted upon either by fight or by flight, nor by bargaining. This is precisely the kind of situation which we must surmise. A vivid example of this is provided by the prophet *Amos*: “And even if they were to bury themselves below with the dead, my hand will dig them out of there, and if they were to climb up to heaven, I would throw them back down. And even if they were to hide on the top of Mount Carmel, I will seek them there and bring them down; and if they retreated from sight into the depth of the sea, I will command the serpent to go after them and bite them.”<sup>301</sup>

Let’s now try to reconstruct the psychic consequences of cataclysms. Even humans who, in the sight of the catastrophe, are not driven to death by fear, but are able to convert their fear into anger, remain helpless against a cosmic catastrophe. Those who want to escape from what is happening cannot prevent it and fall into catatonia. In panic, adult humans lose control over their excrements. In the absence of an enemy which can be overcome, humans scream to heaven. Like “madmen” or children, they defy all of nature. Even male chimpanzees run up to the top of hills when there is a thunderstorm, to rage there with clubs against the unleashed elements.<sup>302</sup> Obscene nudity directed at the sky is also used by men to work through the enormous stress. From the primates, again, we know threatening erection as a means of intimidating the enemy.<sup>303</sup>

A sensibly-targeted and constituted evacuation of the defensive aggressiveness soon fails. It goes on rioting inside of man or expresses itself asocially. In the futility of their excitement, men finally end up throwing themselves at each other. Whatever the cosmic force has spared in the communities, now is in danger to be destroyed in collective rage. The survivors become a danger to their own comrades in misery. Without a controlled evacuation of this aggression, without salvation from the immeasurable fear which - being reactivated - persists in wanting to express itself - in focusing itself into anger, without placating the chaos-generating mass madness, the remaining humans find themselves incapable of rebuilding their communities. The cataclysms which one has just survived, as well as the ones yet to come, remain entirely outside the reach of human influence. Nothing can be done against it. But against panic tearing souls apart, and against the attacks of men against men, something at least can be done.

When a heavy truck drives close by us, forcing us to jump aside in fear of our

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<sup>301</sup> *Amos* 9: 2f.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. J. v. Lawick-Goodall, *Wilde Schimpansen*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1971, p.48f.

<sup>303</sup> W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1979, p. 40f., speculates, if the erect *phalloi* of the Hermes statues might have something to do with the erections of primates, but remains incapable of imagining under what circumstances males can resort to such gestures.

life, we may experience an urge to imitate the loud roar of the motor with our own voice. Children do this with less inhibition and feel better through it. In acting out this game, they anthropomorphize with their own human voice the unanimated internal combustion noise. It was such playful mechanisms of self-healing which the heroes must call upon, systematically and emphatically, in order to bring back their fellow human beings to reason. We understand immediately that the howling imitation of a roaring motor will annoy a third person. What happens to him is most unpleasant. The real thing was already bad enough. Is it not enough if it has been left behind? Why is the unpleasant repeated and thus the pleasure-principle violated?

This core enigma of playing was given a solution by Sigmund Freud three quarters of a century ago. He was inspired by the strange behavior of a male child, aged one year and a half: "He never wept when his mother let him unattended even for hours, despite the fact that he was tenderly attached to his mother who had not only nursed him, but had tended him and taken care of him all by herself. This good child exhibited the occasionally annoying habit, to throw any small object it could put his hands on far away from himself, in a corner, under a bed, etc. so that picking up his playthings was no light affair. While doing this, it emitted, with a display of interest and satisfaction, a loud, long drawn *o-o-o-o*, which in the consensual interpretation of the mother and of the observer, was not an interjection, but signified 'gone.' I finally came to realize that this was a game, and that the child only used all his toys with the intent to play with them at 'being gone.' Then one day I made the observation which corroborated my intuition. The child had a wooden spool, around which a string was twined. It never occurred to him, for instance, to drag it behind him, to play cart with it, as it were, but he threw with great deftness the spool, holding it by its thread, over the frame of his little curtained bed, so that it disappeared in it, commented this with his significant *o-o-o-o* and then pulled the spool by the thread back out of his bed, but now he saluted its reappearance with a lustful 'Da' ('here'). This was therefore the whole content of the game: to disappear and to reappear. It is not possible that the absence of the mother could have been to him pleasant, or even indifferent. How then does it relate to the pleasure principle, when he repeats this painful experience in play? With an unprejudiced view, one gets the impression that the child had another motivation when he turned his experience into play. He had been passive, and now he put himself into an active role, by repeating the event, despite it being unpleasant, in the guise of playing. One can well see that children repeat in play everything which produces a strong impression on them, that in so doing they shake off the force of the impression on them and make themselves so to speak into the masters of the situation. We also notice that the unpleasant character of an experience does not always make it unusable for play. When the doctor has looked into the throat of the child, or performed some small operation on him, this frightening experience will become with great certainty the content of the child's next play session, but the gain of pleasure from yet another source cannot be ignored. In going from the passivity of life to the activity of play, *he inflicts upon a playmate the unpleasantness which he himself has experienced, and in so doing, he avenges himself upon the person of this*

*substitute.*”<sup>304</sup>

A strong im-pression can only be suffered and retained if the pressure it exerts can be compensated. Therefore children are constantly compelled to play. If their playing is disturbed, or forbidden, they become emotionally ill. Modern child therapy is therefore constructed as play-therapy, the success of which is measured according to the extent that children become again capable to play actively and to become the directors of their own arrangements. Every new information comes with a stress sticking to it, which must be evacuated, so that space is made for the assimilation of that that was heretofore unknown.

“Gods, and other representations which are used in sacrifice, have the role of concepts which give the participants the possibility to classify and interpret their impressions,”<sup>305</sup> suggests Valerio Valeri, in support of Alfred Loisy.<sup>306</sup> But this is not what playing is about. The activity of classification and interpretation with the help of concepts is beyond the grasp of this practically compulsory psychic process. It makes the mind free for analysis, but it is not analysis itself. Nor does the ritually arranged repetition of the once successfully healing sacrifice-play turn this production into a system of comprehensible analysis.

From the understanding of the childish compulsion to play we can grasp why the early cults of the Bronze Age play at “the Flood” and at “world-fire.” It is these very events which produced the overwhelmingly disturbing impressions which threw communities into psychic chaos if they could not be healed. The first priests become the heroes of humanity because they are producers and directors of the healingly-sacred *Agon*. We are no longer surprised to find that next to the parts of afflicted mankind, the presence of actors appearing as annihilating or saving heavenly bodies is also required: “the figure of Assur, who draws into battle against Tiamat, is the one of King Sennacherib.”<sup>307</sup> Boulanger knew this long ago, but could not fathom that this had to be taken literally. “One can see from this, why they came to think that the preservation of the *Mysteries* was of great importance for the human race. One can see from this why all mysteries were assorted with an astronomical ceremonial; for in these ceremonies one priest was called in fact the *Creator of the world*, another was called *Sun*, a third one, played the part of the *Moon*. In the mysteries of *Mithra*”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>304</sup>S. Freud, «Jenseits des Lustprinzips» (1920), in: Idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. XIII, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1947, p. 12/13/14f. /15, my emphasis.

<sup>305</sup> V. Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Sacrifice in Ancient Hawaii*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 347.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. A. F. Loisy, *Essai historique sur le sacrifice*, Paris: E. Nourry, 1920.

<sup>307</sup> A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, revised edition completed by E. Reiner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, p. 185.

<sup>308</sup> On the present state of research, cf. R. Merkelbach, *Mithras*, Königstein /Ts.: Hain, 1984, especially p. 51 ff. und 86-133.



among the Persians, the different classes of initiates carried the names of the signs of *Zodiac* and of the varied constellations of heaven.”<sup>309</sup>

Lucian reports similar things about the education of the artists who were cast in the catastrophic plays of late Antiquity: “A dancer must, among other things, be able to play the following: Deucalion [the Flood hero], the great ‘wreckage’ of life of [Deucalion’s] time, also a Larnax, which saves the rest of humanity, and the new humanity, arising out of stones.”<sup>310</sup>

The great sacrificial cults reveal themselves to be collective healing rituals for communities which have been turned insane, i.e. which have become “insensed by their misfortune” (Boulanger). The anger at the triumphant attack of nature, which cannot be evacuated constructively through aggression, flight or plea bargaining, finds itself pushed back down the throat of humanity, as it were. In the ritual, it is used up in an organized fashion. Now, the collectivity in need of healing inflicts upon human or animal impersonators of the forces of nature “that unpleasantness, which itself it has suffered and avenges itself thus upon the person of this proxy” (Freud). In the butchering of the proxies of falling heavenly objects, sickening anger evaporates: “In mythology, the first murder is identical with the savior.”<sup>311</sup> This sacred-healing aspect of the ritual makes it to a blood sacrifice, the enigma of which is exposed thus: “The blood sacrifices have erased the slaughtering” (Brugsch; Egyptian myth “Annihilation of the sinning humanity”). The healing effect of the slaying is also documented in an inscription in a Mithraeum (Santa Prisca, in Rome) about the Mithraic bull sacrifice, which is construed as a duel between the sun and the moon: “Us, too, thou hast saved, when thou spilltest the eternal blood.”<sup>312</sup>

From an anthropomorphizing and bestiomorphizing perspective, the cosmic collisions of inorganic clumps of matter have often been viewed as duels between warriors, beasts or fabulous beings. The end of the catastrophe is seen as the victory of one of the heavenly combatants, or of one party of gods, with another, or opposing party “losing,” “dying,” evtl. being annihilated. Therefore the cosmic, or “divine” side of this overwhelming impression must be integrating into the healing play of men in the form of a duel: “the slain being - man or animal - represents of course the godhead itself in the same sense that for us an actor on the stage represents King Lear and, for

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<sup>309</sup> N.-A. Boulanger, *Das durch seine Gebräuche aufgedeckte Altertum: Oder Kritische Untersuchung der vornehmsten Meynungen, Ceremonien und Einrichtungen der verschiedenen Völker des Erdbodens in Religions- und bürgerlichen Sachen* (1766), Greifswald: Anton Ferdinand Rösens Buchhandlung, 1767, p. 232.

<sup>310</sup> Lukian, *Salt.* 39.

<sup>311</sup> E. Stucken, *Astralmythen: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (1896 bis 1907), Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1907, s. 433.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. R. Merkelbach, *Mithras*, Königstein/Ts.: Hain, 1984, p. 199.

the duration of the play, is identical with him.”<sup>313</sup>



*Ill. 11: Above: Heaven goddess Maia before her heavenly child (here Hermes), which lay in a so-called swing between cattle (bestiomorphized heavenly object) and which represents the prototype for the crib-birth of the child Jesus.*

*Below:*

*The heavenly child god Hermes with his virgin mother (here named Iris) in the firmament. This motive repeats itself in representations of Maria as the Queen of Heaven with the Christ child (both illustrations images from the 5. Century B.P.).<sup>314</sup>*

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<sup>313</sup> A. E. Jensen, *Mythos und Kult bei den Naturvölkern: Religionswissenschaftliche Betrachtungen* (1951), with an Introduction by E. Haberland, München: dtv, 1991, S. 232

<sup>314</sup> Adapted from K. Schefold u. M. v. F. Jung, *Die Göttersage in der klassischen und hellenistischen Kunst*, München: Hirmer, 1981, p. 47



*Ill. 12: the mythical up-king Pandion of Athens who saves the city through his heroic death is carried away by the sky goddess Athena. As Pandion is equivalent to Hercules seen as equivalent to Herakles and had a Temple and a Feast in Athens, there appears it appears that an originally humanized celestial godhead was later reinterpreted as a human king. His heavenly transportation across the sea ocean sets a scene which became the prototype for the Pietà of Christian iconography (picture from black figure Olpe from 500 BC).<sup>315</sup>*

To play these parts, living humans and animals are covered with ornaments and disguised, in order to impersonate these two heavenly objects. The result of their duel - again in antropomorphizing perspective - are a victor and a vanquished. Central to this is often a vanquished who precisely through his “death” brings salvation to heaven and

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<sup>315</sup> Adapted from K. Schefold u. M. v. F. Jung, *Die Urkönige Perseus, Bellerophon, Herakles und Theseus in der klassischen und hellenistischen Kunst*, München: Hirmer, 1988, p. 72.

earth, that is, puts an end to catastrophic times. These dying savior gods<sup>316</sup> populate in legend and iconography the pre-Christian time in Eurasia. They are often remembered as heavenly children<sup>317</sup> or youths, who were born of a virgin.<sup>318</sup> This representation seems to be inspired by a cosmic perception in which two celestial objects of different sizes, or two differently sized parts of one and the same celestial object have evoked the image of a solitary mother. Christian iconography borrows much of its motives from this material, as is well known.

It is difficult to decide if it was established from the beginnings of the great sacrificial cults who was to die in the role of the falling celestial body and who was to keep to his orbit as a victor. Later the victims were chosen, prepared and trained. Also when using for instance a bull as the impersonator of a celestial object, one hopes “that the bull will walk to the sacrifice docilely, even ‘willingly’ ‘all by himself.’”<sup>319</sup> In both cases the community taking part in the big play can let free run to the aggressivity born out of its helplessness in the catastrophe through the act of killing. The slaying of the sacrificial victim constitutes therefore the end, as well as the cathartic climax of the ceremony. Humans free themselves in this bloody action from the up to now inwardly directed anger which had kept them in helpless catatonia, psychosomatic pain, or in a state of aggressivity endangering their fellow human beings.

Everything which had produced an overwhelming impression must healingly be played through in the ceremonies. Therefore the destructive natural events as well as the unsettling, terrifying extreme behavior of one’s fellows belong in the ceremony. As one of the most embarrassing mysteries of the research on sacrifices appears the distribution of “strong laxatives”<sup>320</sup> to some of the participants in the ritual. The understanding of this procedure will not cause us any difficulty by now. To their own horror and to their fellows’ horror, adults have lost control over their bowels under the impressions of the catastrophe. The “making in one’s pants for fear” belongs therefore in the sacrificial play.

Researchers are also surprised astounded by the staged ecstasy (*Ekstasis*) in

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<sup>316</sup> Cf. p. ex. J. Z. Smith, «Dying and Rising Gods», in: M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York u. London: Macmillan/Collier Macmillan, 1987, vol. 4, p. 521 ff.

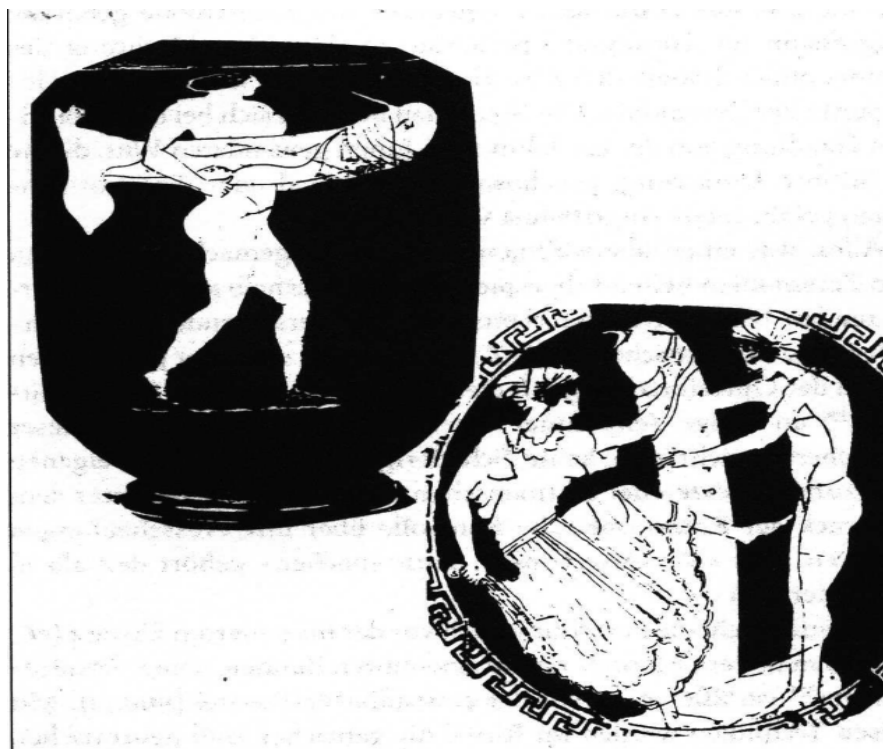
<sup>317</sup> Cf. p. ex. E. Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes: Geschichte einer religiösen Idee*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1924.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. p. ex. D. A. Leeming, «Virgin Birth» in: M. Eliade (Hg.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York u. London: Macmillan/Collier Macmillan, 1987, vol. 15, p. 272ff.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1977, p. 101

<sup>320</sup> Cf. J. Gould, «On Making Sense of Greek Religion», in: P. E. Easterling, J. V. Muir (ed.), *Greek Religion and Society*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 20.

which man “leaves his accustomed familiar orbit, his reason,”<sup>321</sup> as well as by the staged *mania*. With these techniques, panic and neurotic reactions of humans under the impression of catastrophe are rendered. As, during the pious processions, erections reminding of aggression were not as easily performed as bouts of diarrhea, artificial *phalloi* were carried along: “In many variants, there are processions with outsized artificial phalloi; those who carry them must hide their everyday identity, by besmearing themselves with soot or flour, or through the wearing of masks.”<sup>322</sup>



Ill. 13: Left: a woman with phallos in a ritual procession (from the crater of the Pan painter, from the 5th cent. BC).<sup>323</sup> Right: phallos worship rendered by women which probably originated in an early lamenting ceremony, in which the drama of the cosmic tail-loss was felt to be in a very real way as a hail bringing action, healing and was played back in bloody way; see also ill. 7 to 11 chapter IX below (red figure beaker from the 5th cent. B.C.)<sup>324</sup>

<sup>321</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1977, p. 178.

<sup>322</sup> W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1977, p. 171.

<sup>323</sup> Adapted from C. Johns, *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (1982), London: British Museum Press, 1989, p. 146.

<sup>324</sup> Adapted from C. Johns, *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (1982), London: British Museum Press, 1989, p. 43.

The *phalloi*, which are well-documented all the way to China<sup>325</sup> and who must interest us in detail when we come to the sacred marriage and ceremonial castration, appear - besides the besmearing with soot or ashes - as just as enigmatic as the laxatives. Should there have occurred spontaneous erections under the horrific impression of the catastrophes, the survivors may well have been so strongly impressed by the occurrence that these extreme gestures came to belong just as much into the ceremony as the daubing with soot or ash as a postlude to the falling of ashes.

In 1932 already, the English eccentric Comyns W. Beaumont had pointed to the symbolic association between the tail of comets and the *phalloi*: "it is truly instructive and also remarkable that the Great War of 1914 was 'announced' by an enormous comet - Delevan's - in the shape of an enormous, luminous *phallos*."<sup>326</sup> In his investigation, too, the phallos cults appear more to be determined by celestial tail losses than through the impressions of panic and publicly displayed erections. Still this possible background should not remain unexamined. Against it speak first of all the voluminosity of the cultic *phalloi* in the ceremonial processions and the ritual of castration (more on this subject in chapters VIII to X).

Next to the befouling with excrements and the smearing of ashes, the cutting and burning of hair<sup>327</sup> has also remained mysterious to the scholarship about sacrifice. Could there be once more question of a flaming hair-star, the tail of which flares up brightly as it approaches the sun? "Then He implored Athena and threw the hair from the brow into the fire,"<sup>328</sup> reports Homer. "With astonishing persistence, scholars have been looking for demons asking for hair,"<sup>329</sup> mocks Burkert. He himself recognizes in it etymologically a reducing "inaugural act"<sup>330</sup> for the sacrificial process. The cutting of the brow locks damages the bull, yet it does not injure it truly. There is little to object to a conciliatory "inauguration." But there is also the covering of the horns with gold. With such a brightening of its own head ornaments, the bull gets to play a role which projects him beyond himself. The hair, after all, is not merely cut off, but also

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<sup>325</sup> Cf. K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, Cambridge/Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 116, 118.

<sup>326</sup> C. Beaumont, *The Mysterious Comet. Or: The Origin, Building up, and Destruction of Worlds by Means of Cometary Contacts*, London: Rider, 1932, p. 85.

<sup>327</sup> On this subject matter, cf. S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer*, Kristiania: J. Dybwad, 1915; Reprint Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms, 1977, Kapitel 7: Das Haar, p. 344ff.

<sup>328</sup> *Odyssey* III: 446.

<sup>329</sup> W. Burkert, «Griechische Tragödie und Opferritual», in: Idem, *Wilder Ursprung: Opferritual und Mythos bei den Griechen*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990, p. 22.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, «Griechische Tragödie und Opferritual», in: Idem, *Wilder Ursprung: Opferritual und Mythos bei den Griechen*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990, p. 22

burned. Through this, the whole process turns into a staging, the cosmic model of which it becomes most legitimate to interrogate. After all the heavenly goddess “Pallas Athena”<sup>331</sup> also takes part in the ritual. From Hittite sources, we also learn that the horn gilding is removable,<sup>332</sup> that it can therefore be reused for the next bull, and so presents a pre-step to the fashioning of a bull statue. In ancient Egypt, one saw the cosmic destroyer “Seth transformed into a red bull in battle against Horus.”<sup>333</sup> In the ritual, this “beast for butchering played the enemy of God and of the King.”<sup>334</sup>

Was the ritual burning of hair preceded by a cosmic loss of hair, which was interpreted as the beginning of the end for a falling celestial body? Homer’s description of Athene by no means excludes an astral appearance: “a star alike... who appears as a sign to the army of peoples in arms, burning radiantly and in its flight throwing off innumerable sparks all around, Pallas Athena sinks hurriedly to Earth, between the warring armies; and astonishment seized those who saw it.”<sup>335</sup> From the history of astronomy we learn: “A bright stream or beams of light are emitted by the nucleus [of a comet] and their activity resembles that of gases. Some streams resemble ram horns, ...others goat horns... Sometimes they appear... as figures like discs, upright cones, the manes of horses, torches, swords, spears, bearded faces..., which evoke red-bearded mischievous satyrs, who are always out to harass mankind - the followers of Dionysos, the serpent god. Comets are seen as monstrous human faces.”<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Odyssey III: 435.

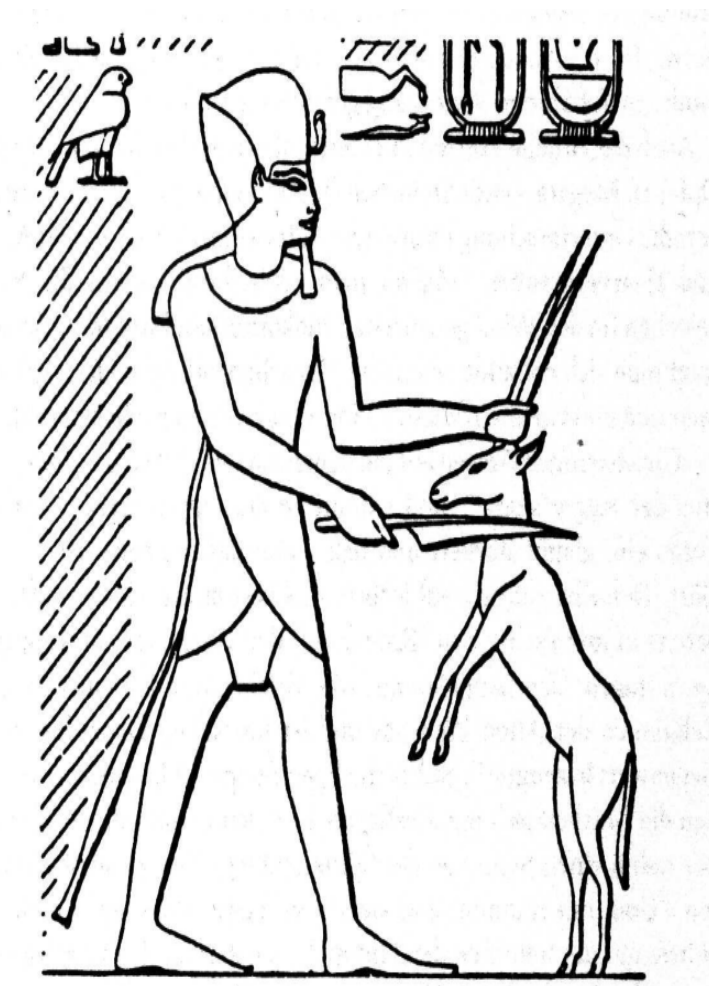
<sup>332</sup> Cf. C. Kühne, «Voropfer im alten Anatolien», in: B. Janowski, K. Koch, G. Wilhelm (ed.), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament: Internationales Symposium Hamburg 17.-21. März 1990*, Freiburg/Schweiz: Universitätsverlag sowie Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, p. 276f.

<sup>333</sup> Cf. H. Junker, «Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer im Tempelkult der Spätzeit», in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, Bd. 47, 1910, p. 72.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. H. Junker, «Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer im Tempelkult der Spätzeit», in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, Bd. 47, 1910, p. 72.

<sup>335</sup> Iliad IV: 75-79.

<sup>336</sup> C. Beaumont, *The Mysterious Comet. Or: The Origin, Building up, and Destruction of Worlds by Means of Cometary Contacts*, London: Rider, 1932, p. 84.



*Ill. 14: Ancient Egyptian sacrifice of a gazelle representing Seth/Apophis and the parts of which will then be destroyed in a total burning sacrifice. Reduced to ashes.<sup>337</sup>*

Even the total sacrifice (holocaust) [where all parts are consumed by fire] is considered to be poorly understood. Might it be interpreted as a relieving postlude to heavenly burning? Again it is the texts and rituals concerning Seth which point

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<sup>337</sup> Cf. P. Derchain, *Rites Egyptiens. 1: Le sacrifice de l'oryx*, Bruxelles: Fondation 1 Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, 1962, p. 9.



precisely to this. Parts of geese - they symbolized the “soul of Seth”<sup>338</sup> - or of gazelles - they stood for Seth himself - “were laid out on the fire and burned; that it was not a mere broiling is clear from the texts. The god [Sachmet, Horus, etc.] must rejoice at the total annihilation of his enemy, therefore must his members be reduced to ashes... To rightly appreciate this idea, one must hark back to the myths telling about the annihilation of Seth, where we are told repeatedly that he was thrown into the fire and reduced to ashes.”<sup>339</sup>

In Ancient Egypt the Seth/Apophis animals - gazelles, red goats, geese, hippopotami, turtles and bulls - could be replaced by, or completed with humans who had been condemned to death. Especially crimes like the profanation of graves, of temples, of sacred enclosures or other sacred facilities exposed one to be compelled to play the “evil one” and to be “burned.”<sup>340</sup> Also someone who acted without adequate respect towards blood sacrifice was to pay for it by being cast in the role of the victim: “Through his actions, the perpetrator revealed himself as a manifestation of Seth or Apophis, the embodiments of disorder. The criminal was therefore lifted on the same level as the animals which in the temple or in the cult of the dead were slain as a symbol for the defeat of evil. From this point of view, the punishment was not merely an act of vengeance, even if such must often have come into play as well. It was much more a method of facing up to cosmic disorder.”<sup>341</sup> We shall see how the scornful, the contempters or merely the critics of blood sacrifice had to be prepared for bloody persecution through the centuries.

The ritual throwing of barley corns<sup>342</sup> or - as in the Tereus sacrifice in Megara - “with pebbles instead of sacrificial barley,”<sup>343</sup> surprises the scholars as much as laxatives, erections, ashes and burning of hair: “When one observes what the rites consist of [grains of sand tossed into the air] and what they aim at, one asks oneself in astonishment, how the idea ever occurred to people in the first place, and more than

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<sup>338</sup> Cf. H. Junker, «Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer im Tempelkult der Spätzeit», in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, vol. 47, 1910, p. 73.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. H. Junker, «Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer im Tempelkult der Spätzeit», in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, Bd. 47, 1910, p. 74f.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. H. Willems, «Crime, Cult and Capital Punishment (Mo'alla Inscription 8)», in: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Bd. 76, 1990, p. 52.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. H. Willems, «Crime, Cult and Capital Punishment (Mo'alla Inscription 8)», in: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Bd. 76, 1990, S. 52.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer*, Kristiania: J. Dybwad, 1915; Reprint Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms, 1977, Kapitel 5: Die Opfergerste, p. 261 ff.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer*, Kristiania: J. Dybwad, 1915; Reprint Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms, 1977, p. 281.

anything, why they remained so faithful to its practice.”<sup>344</sup>

“Simultaneous throwing onto a common target is the original gesture of aggression”<sup>345</sup> and, in the procedure of sacrifice, it puts the participants in the mood of killing, believes Burkert and considers the throwing of stones thus explained and disposed of. But this same author knows that some “piles of stones”<sup>346</sup> carry already in Minoan times (Bronze Age) a sacred character. Most importantly, the “worshiping of stones occurs in all the religions of the old world and is traceable in the Near East all the way to the present.”<sup>347</sup> Such sacred stones - Massebe - “in which the godhead has manifested itself,”<sup>348</sup> are known also to ancient Israel: “He took a stone from the place and laid it under his head./ And he dreamt that he saw a ladder standing on Earth, whose summit touched on the heavens./ Jacob got up early in the morning and took the stone, upon which he had rested his head, and erected it to a monument.”<sup>349</sup>

To the Levantine-Syrian sacred monuments of the Middle and Late Bronze Age “belonged *besides* the altar for the sacrificial cult, the massebas and asheras for the purpose of marking the sacred spot.”<sup>350</sup> To the Phoenician-Carthaginian goddess Tanit too belongs a “sacred stone.”<sup>351</sup> In the same way, the pre-monotheistic Yahweh of the Ancient Israelites is addressed as “Stone.”<sup>352</sup> Mesopotamian Ninurta - yet another cosmic Mercury impersonation - “battles with the help of ‘good’ stones against ‘evil’ stones.”<sup>353</sup> In the largest temple of the Hellenistic world too, a meteoritic stone had

<sup>344</sup> E. Durkheim, *Die elementaren Formen des religiösen Lebens* (1915), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981, p. 469.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, «Griechische Tragödie und Opferritual», in: Idem, *Wilder Ursprung*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990, p. 22.

<sup>346</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1977, p. 76f.

<sup>347</sup> Cf. M. C. A. Korpel, «Stone», in: K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst (ed.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Leiden et al.: E. J. Brill, 1994, Sp. 1547.

<sup>348</sup> Cf. R. H. Faherty, «Sacrifice», in: *The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, Bd. 26, Chicago et al: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1991, p. 795.

<sup>349</sup> I. Moses 28: 11/12/18.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. A. Reichert, «Massebe», in: K. Galling (ed.), *Biblisches Reallexikon*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1977<sup>2</sup>, p. 206.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. W. Huss, *Die Karthager* (1990), München: Beck, 1994<sup>2</sup>, p. 367. Cf. also E. D. Stockton, «Phoenician Cult Stones», in: *The Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. 2/3, 1974/75, p. 1ff.

<sup>352</sup> I. Moses 49: 24

<sup>353</sup> Cf. M. C. A. Korpel, «Stone», in: K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst (ed.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Leiden et al.: E. J. Brill, 1994, Sp. 1547.

achieved the status of object of worship: “Where is there a man who would not know that the city of Ephesus is the keeper of the great goddess Diana and of her image, which fell from heaven?”<sup>354</sup> Five times a day, to this day, one billion Muslims turn themselves to a stone fallen from heaven. The name Kaaba given to the cube-shaped construction, into the South-Eastern corner (*al-Rukn*) of which, according to tradition, the black lump stemming from Archangel Gabriel has been masoned, can be seen as a slurring of the old-Semitic word for star - *kakkabu*. The arabic word for the Polestar - *al-Rukaba* - points into the same direction.<sup>355</sup> Nor does the hailstorm (*barad*) accompanied by fire of the Egyptian plagues of Exodus refer to kernels of ice, but to a rain of hot stones: “The Lord called up thunder and hail, and fire fell onto the Earth./ The hail was so heavy, such as had never been see in all of Egypt until then./ And the hail brought down everything in the whole Land of Egypt, that was in the fields, men and animals/ and tore apart all the trees in the field.”<sup>356</sup>

Could the ritual throwing of barley<sup>357</sup> or stones yield its mystery if it were interpreted as an after play of the actions of meteorite showers, destined to evacuate emotions of fear? The scholars of religions cannot manage to agree on that. Almost 200 years since the natural sciences acknowledged these cosmic phenomena, they are still caught in a hesitation which had made even then the acceptance of the facts so difficult: “From the days of Aristotle, according to whose report a meteorite which had fallen to earth near Aigospotamoi, simultaneously with the appearance of a comet, was picked up by the wind and lifted up from the ground into the air and then let to fall again, all the way to Biot who, in the year 1803, commissioned by the French Academy of Science, examined a swarm of meteorites which had rained down on L’Aigle, in France - during all this time, science did not believe that such a thing as a stone falling from the sky was possible, never mind that Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton and Huygens had lived through these very times... Even shortly before 1803, on another occasion, the Academy of Sciences in Paris had refused to believe that stones had fallen from the sky. The fall of meteorites in the South of France on July 24, 1790 was described as *a physically impossible phenomenon* (“un phénomène physiquement impossible”. Since 1803, though, scholars have learned to believe in it.”<sup>358</sup>

People know what’s up, but the scientists need to be notified. Once more, they pay for their academic-evolutionary bondage with puzzlement and shame. They have

<sup>354</sup> *Apostles* 19: 35.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. M. C. A. Korpel, «Stone», in: K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst (ed.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Leiden et al.: E. J. Brill, 1994, Sp. 1547  
Cf. M. Jastrow, *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, vol. II/2, Gießen: Ricker, 1912, p. 153f.; Cf. D. Cardona, «The Kaaba», in: *Kronos*, Bd. XII, 1988, p.25.

<sup>356</sup> 2. Moses 9: 23/24/25

<sup>357</sup> Cf. also *Iliad* I: 458; II: 410; *Odyssey* III: 447.

<sup>358</sup> I. Velikovsky, *Wolds in Collision* (1950), p. 50f.

in front of them all the elements needed for the understanding of sacrifice, yet are forbidden to make sense out of it. For some, “men dance or jump or growl through the bush in the course of some kind of ritual.”<sup>359</sup>

But even those who - like Walter Burkert - sense the cataclysms quite well, fail to integrate their significance into the ritual: “What in reality gets into motion in the ‘unspeakable sacrifice’ is not the order of nature but the one of the community and of the life of the mind. The commotion thus activated is so powerful indeed that the whole cosmos seems to be swinging along to the same rhythm.”<sup>360</sup>

This assessment is not really that far from the enthusiastic academics and artists who for decades and in a great display of Marxist wisdom have revealed to the author the global catastrophes of the past to be allegories of the class struggle, which managed nevertheless somehow to reach out into space. Meanwhile, though, some movement is coming to the left political camp. The readiness to acknowledge cosmic facts has markedly increased: “From the geological standpoint, impact craters are functionally equivalent to wars and revolutions in the history of mankind.”<sup>361</sup>

Just like Burkert - the foremost scholar in the field of ancient Greek religion - Thorkild Jacobaea - the foremost researcher scholar in the field of religion in Ancient Mesopotamia - decided in favor of an upheaval in the heavens as an effect of the ritual on Earth, so as not to have to verify the reverse. Basing himself on the cataclysmic language in the so-called “curse of Akkades” - the first imperial capital - he attributes to the destruction of the step-tower “cosmic consequences” and effects “on nature,”<sup>362</sup> instead of looking for cosmic or other natural causes of the collapse of the mighty building.

The original texts themselves do not by any means tell of a reversal of cosmic causes and earthly consequences to one of earthly causes and cosmic consequences. First there is something coming from the sky, and then there comes the ritual. In a Late Bronze Age sacrificial text of the East Anatolian Hurrites (the ancestors of the Kurds), a star jumps in the sky, following which his impersonator - a bird - gets killed:

“But when this day, at evening  
a (shooting) star springs up, the lord of the ritual  
goes to the old temple; he bows to the godhead  
and makes himself up for the blood ritual;

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<sup>359</sup> Cf. K. Heinrich, *Dahlemer Vorlesungen 2: Anthropomorphe*, Basel und Frankfurt: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1986, p. 39

<sup>360</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen*, Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1972, p. 131 f.

<sup>361</sup> M. Davis, «Cosmic Dancers on History's Stage. The Permanent Revolution of the Earth Sciences», in: *New Left Review*, Nr. 217, 1966, p. 84.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. T. Jacobaea, *The Harps that once ...*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987, Chapter: «The Cursing of Akkade», p. 366f.

and others perform with the help of a bird the blood ritual.”<sup>363</sup>

Burkert too knows the myths of the raging sky and disquiet stars, but he has interiorized the notion that such a thing is astrophysically unthinkable. He is also aware of the mental excitation of those ready to take part in the sacrifice. The ritual - he is entirely conscious of this - “creates situations of fear, in order to overcome them, and delivers in so doing a model for the overcoming of fear in the first place.”<sup>364</sup> It serves “to overcome “fearful situations of an outside origin.”<sup>365</sup> Burkert does not want to deny either human worries nor the catastrophic materials, but wants to be fair to both. Therefore the fearful souls of mankind must be made capable of shaking up the whole cosmos, but cannot ever, in any way, have come to be afraid of terrifying cosmic occurrences. Why they would play at Floods, World Burning and Colliding Celestial Bodies Bleeding to Death can no longer be even guessed at. That humans were made mentally ill by somewhat certainly inhuman - but by no means unnatural - and that they would search for unconventional remedies to this, remains unexamined. And yet even in the word *pharmakeia*, for remedies (cf. Pharmacy), there is a return of the *pharmakos* which “in the middle of Greek civilization attests to sacrifice as an allusion, a possibility, if not downright a stable institution,”<sup>366</sup> for which only later a ram victim is substituted.

If the great sacrificial rituals and the ceremonies which accompany them came into the world as healing plays, they may also be able to throw light onto “ceremonial healing,”<sup>367</sup> which confronts anthropology with a special mystery. The mentally ill are not in this occurrence given over to the local habitual healers, but the rank and file organize for their benefit the great religious ceremony of the tribe. The Navajos for instance (from Arizona and New Mexico) perform the *Mountain Chant*. Sand figurines, which represent “nature deities, maybe celestial objects bodies”<sup>368</sup> are not

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<sup>363</sup> Cf. V. Haas, «Ein hurritischer Blutritus», in: B. Janowski, K. Koch, G. Wilhelm (ed.), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament: Internationales Symposium Hamburg 17.-21. März 1990*, Freiburg/Schweiz: Universitätsverlag sowie Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, p. 75.

<sup>364</sup> W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1977, p. 396.

<sup>365</sup> W. Burkert, «Glaube und Verhalten: Zeichengehalt und Wirkungsmacht von Opferritualen», in: J. Rudhardt, O. Reverdin (Hg.), *Le Sacrifice dans L'Anti-quite*, Geneve: Vandoeuvres, Fondation Hardt Pour l'Etude de L'Antiquite Classiques, Entretiens, Tome XXVII, 1981, S. 111.

<sup>366</sup> W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1977, S. 139.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. H. F. Ellenberger, *Die Entdeckung des Unbewussten*, Bern, Stuttgart & Wien; Hans Huber, 1973, p. 58.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. O. Pfister, «Instinktive Psychoanalyse unter den Navaho-Indianern», in: *Imago*, vol. 18, 1932, Nr. 1, p. 86.

prepared only for the community - which can count up to two thousand people - but are executed for the suffering member and administered to him at the end. The colored sand is brushed in a heap and thrown over him. Why a healing of the mind should be expected from this process is hard to understand. In the light of views here developed, the Navaho must still remember vaguely that religious ceremonies have been invented long ago for healing purposes. To apply a primordial religious 'collective therapy' in the treatment of an individual appears much less obscure than the expression 'ceremonial' healing may convey. So long as the original ceremony remains misunderstood, it goes without saying that its modern therapeutic usage can easily be held to be simply bizarre.

## VIII. The creation of the *professional* arts

“The ancients myths of the gods remained unforgettten in the temples of later periods; on the occasion of certain feasts they were dramatically represented.”<sup>369</sup>

“The king and other actors in seasonal rites merely embody actions which were performed originally by the gods... The presentation becomes a representation; the ritual turns into drama.”<sup>370</sup>

We can only glance here at the conception that, together with sacrifice and with priestly kingship, the *professional* arts, the arts on command, were created. *Spectacle* is born from the need to remember exactly the behaviors of men and of the cosmic forces, so that the great games can be repeated faultlessly. What had been seen in the sky, and had then disappeared, could at first only be evoked through speech, the content of which gave poetry its material. So, for instance, in the “Dramatic papyrus of the Ramesseum,” which treats of a battle in the sky by using the means of the beheading of rams, goats and geese as well as castration and blinding, the lines are precisely indicated which must be said by the impersonator of each of the star-gods.<sup>371</sup> The victor Horus and his armies, Osiris torn to pieces by Seth, Thot, Nephtys, Geb, Sdokar as well as Seth castrated by Horus and his own armies are all present in the procession ritual: “The king, who accomplishes the ceremony, is again the awesome vanquisher of the demons, who throws their limbs into the fire.”<sup>372</sup> In other Egyptian blood rituals, a victim bull plays the role of Osiris.<sup>373</sup> Its slayer Seth represents the “disarray of things cosmic.”<sup>374</sup> The overwhelming impressions which must be rendered in play stem from a destructive sky and not from sowing and reaping, the alternance of winter cold and the heat of summer, the eclipses of Moon or Sun in the course of the seasons, or even the inundations of the Nile, as the otherwise so perspicacious

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<sup>369</sup> Cf. H. Junker, «Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer im Tempelkult der Spätzeit», in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, vol. 47, 1910, p. 70.

<sup>370</sup> T. H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (1950, 1961), New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p. 18.

<sup>371</sup> See K. Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen. II. Der dramatische Ramesseumpapyrus: Ein Spiel zur Thronbesteigung des Königs*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1928.

<sup>372</sup> Cf. H. Junker, «Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer im Tempelkult der Spätzeit», in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, vol. 47, 1910, p. 74.

<sup>373</sup> W. Helck, «Opfertier», in: *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Band IV, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982, Sp. 594.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. H. te Velde, «Seth», in: *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Band V, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984, Sp. 909.

Theodor Gaster has assumed. From his terrestrially limited access he was then no longer able to explain why the original “urge of the primitive seasonal rites tends to disappear,”<sup>375</sup> despite the fact that even to this day, the seasons still preoccupy humans. What recedes into the far past together with the astounding catastrophes is therefore something else than the seasons. It is the appeasing distance in time from the *cataclysmos* which brings about the rash and carefree treatment of the old drama as a *burlesque*, in which the theme of castration only activates sexuality as such in phallic-amusing grossness, in short, that turns it into a true carnival.

The connexion of drama with the stories of the heavenly “birth” of the gods and their cataclysmic destinies is also preserved in Herodotus’ account of Persian bull sacrifice: “Then when he has parceled up the victim of the sacrifice and cooked all the meat, he lays out all the meat on very tender grass; most often it is clover, which is chosen as a the underlayer. Then a magus joins in and sings the theogony [the hymn of the birth of the gods], for this is the name by which the sacrificial song is known. Without the participation of the magus, no sacrifice is allowed to take place.”<sup>376</sup> Quite similarly, according to Tacitus, among the Germans “a human being is sacrificed for reason of state and they celebrate *frightful world beginnings* through barbaric customs.”<sup>377</sup>

*Dances* - as well as *sportive competitions (agone)* - were created in order to make certain natural events which by then were known only through tales, representable by humans. During the ritual, these cosmic events are reproduced through dance. For this, the art of choreography and constant practice are necessary.

That both tragedy and comedy in classical times are tightly knit in with the rituals, to the extent that they are derivative forms of these, is at any rate undisputed.<sup>378</sup> Greek tragedy is born out of the “song of the buck sacrifice” where not *tragoidia*, but *tragos* (the goat-buck) and *tragoidos* (the singer of the buck) deliver the primary roots of the words: the tragedians “are originally a group of men who execute the buck sacrifice which is due in Spring; they perform with laments, song, disguises and are allowed in the end to eat the buck.”<sup>379</sup> The buck sacrifices were sacrifices to Dionysos. Through their slaying, the animals played the role of the falling-dying celestial body-god.

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<sup>375</sup> Cf. T. H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (1950, 1961), New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p. 18.

<sup>376</sup> Herodotus, *Historien*, I: 132.

<sup>377</sup> Tacitus, *Germania* 39, emphasis mine.

<sup>378</sup> Cf. already G. Murray, «Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy» (1927), in: J. E. Harrison, *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903, 1922<sup>3</sup>). And: *Themis. A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912, 1927<sup>2</sup>), New York: University Books, 1962, p. 341 ff.

<sup>379</sup> W. Burkert, «Griechische Tragödie und Opferritual», in: Idem, *Wilder Ursprung: Opferritual und Mythos bei den Griechen*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990, p. 26.



“Bit by bit the meaning of a sacred action penetrates the play. The cult grafts itself onto the play, but the play itself was the primary element”<sup>380</sup>, complained Huizinga. Surely the psychic potencies of child play precede the cults of the adults and the drama which follow suit. Nonetheless, the cult does not subjugate the play, but it is through the playing out of catastrophic impressions that the cult is created in the first place. It originates as therapeutic practice. By no means does the cult intrude undesirably upon something at first gratuitous and innocent. Rather, it makes the best known method of childish healing forever available for the mental recovery of whole communities.

The *visual arts*, even fashion, are born of the making of masks, ornaments and costumes,<sup>381</sup> with which animals and men are adorned to be made into celestial objects. When creating this kind of *props*, the artists do not work in direct imitation of nature. What have you seen, they ask mankind and literature, which has been built on the oral traditions of the survivors? At the beginning of the visual arts stands the *word*, which has wrested forth from cataclysmic nature its most powerful creations.

Brigitta Bergquist has remarked that Bronze Age constructions, which are generally interpreted by archaeologists as altars or even holocaust altars, look very differently from the small altars undoubtedly used for fire sacrifices in the Iron Age. In the Bronze Age, we have elevated platforms in the shape of rectangles which, as in Kato Syme in Crete - can be 150 square meters in surface, or oval facilities with a diameter of up to 10 meters, - as in israelitic Megiddo. “Some kind of ritual sacrifice, the qualities and forms of which remain fully unknown to us,”<sup>382</sup> took place there. According to the views presented here, these platforms served as *stages* for earthly imitation of the celestial battle, which indeed ended in killings.

Finally, professional *music* is systematically called on to provide the sounds which simulate the growling of the forces of nature as well as the panic screams of those affected on earth: Even evolutionary sacrifice scholarship agrees to that: “There is almost no cult without music.”<sup>383</sup> What music expresses - Burkert for one insists on that - are not the unsufferable sounds of bursting nature, of clumps of heaven tumbling down, and of humans howling at this occurrence. No, much more “the overwhelming

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<sup>380</sup> J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: Versuch einer Bestimmung des Spielelementes der Kultur* (1938), Basel: Akademische Verlagsanstalt Pantheon, 1944, p. 29.

<sup>381</sup> Costumes for the god impersonators and statues have been documented not only for the Near East but for the Minoan and Palace-area of Crete. Cf. P. M. Warren, *Minoan Religion as Ritual Action*, Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1988, p. 20ff.

<sup>382</sup> Cf. Bergquist, B., «Bronze Age Sacrificial *Koine* in the Eastern Mediterranean», in: J. Quaegebeur (ed.), *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to 20th of April 1991*, Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters & Department Orientalistik Leuven, 1993, p. 31.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. G. van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (1956<sup>2</sup>), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1970, p. 517.

power of music stems from the transformation and overcoming of death.”<sup>384</sup>

The strident screams of women, which repeat the terrible shouts of humans during catastrophe, must be practiced for a timely precise entrance and deployment in the cyclic ritual and - probably harking back to the screams of women in childbirth - at the origins of the *chorus*: “Warlike Thrasymedes, his sharpened ax in his hand, stood there, ready to kill the cow. Perseus held a container to receive the blood. The father first washed his hands and threw the sacred barley, then prayed lengthily to Athena and threw the hair from the brow into the fire. After they had thus supplicated, the brave hero Thrasymedes stepped closer and struck; the ax chopped in two the sinews of the neck and, bereft of strength, the cow fell into the sand. *And lamentingly prayed all the daughters.*”<sup>385</sup> Later on, in Aeschylus, Eteokles says: “Begin the pious procession’s festive song in the *sacrificing way* of the Hellenes.”<sup>386</sup>

Not to be finished in time with the labor of preparation for the blood sacrifice to the godhead abduces the fear of the god’s vengeance, which might be averted only through the sacrifice of the artist himself. Professional artists - psychologically akin to children frightened by having forgotten their mother’s birthday - also participate through their actions in averting anguish and misfortune.

The situation of the professional artists during the Bronze Ages must not be confused with the difficulties of the *first* artists of the epoch of sacrifice. These aesthetic pioneers have even less in common with the Stone Age artists which preceded them, whose animal or vagina pictures hardly elicit puzzlement. What did you see? What did you hear? How did you tremble? Thus were the psyches of the survivors of catastrophes intruded upon. The answers told about the sky, yet nevertheless must make use of the language of Earth for comparison and image. They always sounded incredible and also up to a point doubtful - not because they were false, but because the adequate words were missing. Anthropomorphizing and zoomorphizing images were inevitable, yet the painters knew that their animals and humans had to look different from the familiar beings surrounding them. Snakes hiss, rams and bucks clash in duel their horns against each other. Already in themselves, these are exciting happenings. Yet they stand only as weak indications for that, which the artists must communicate. The force of their pictures depends on the impression they are able to give, that divine hurlers of lightning resemble more interstellar discharges than they evoke the familiar lightning flashes of a summer storm. Their images could never achieve the realism of the pictures of a space based telescope, which captures exploding stars and rotating nebulae. Yet one can sense that even then, such an impression was strived for.

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<sup>384</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen*, Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1972, p. 50.

<sup>385</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, III: 442-451; emphasis G. H.

<sup>386</sup> Aeschylus, *The Seven against Thebes*, 268f.; emphasis G. H.; cf. W. Burkert, «Griechische Tragödie und Opferritual», in: Idem, *Wilder Ursprung: Opferritual und Mythos bei den Griechen*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990, p. 22.