

From snout to tail

Exploring the Greek sacrificial animal
from the literary, epigraphical,
iconographical, archaeological,
and zooarchaeological evidence

Edited by Jan-Mathieu Carbon
& Gunnel Ekroth

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ABSTRACT

Animal sacrifice fundamentally informed how the ancient Greeks defined themselves, their relation to the divine, and the structure of their society. Adopting an explicitly cross-disciplinary perspective, the present volume explores the practical execution and complex meaning of animal sacrifice within ancient Greek religion (c. 1000 BC–AD 200).

The objective is twofold. First, to clarify in detail the use and meaning of body parts of the animal within sacrificial ritual. This involves a comprehensive study of ancient Greek terminology in texts and inscriptions, representations on pottery and reliefs, and animal bones found in sanctuaries. Second, to encourage the use and integration of the full spectrum of ancient evidence in the exploration of Greek sacrificial rituals, which is a prerequisite for understanding the complex use and meaning of Greek animal sacrifice.

Twelve contributions by experts on the literary, epigraphical, iconographical, archaeological and zooarchaeological evidence for Greek animal sacrifice explore the treatment of legs, including feet and hoofs, tails, horns; heads, including tongues, brains, ears and snouts; internal organs; blood; as well as the handling of the entire body by burning it whole. Three further contributions address Hittite, Israelite and Etruscan animal sacrifice respectively, providing important contextualization for Greek ritual practices.

Keywords: Greek animal sacrifice, anatomy, division, butchery, body part, multi-disciplinary approaches, zooarchaeology, iconography, epigraphy, texts, cross-cultural comparisons

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9. Μέχρι σπλάγχων

When is that?

Abstract

The following paper discusses the role of σπλάγχνα (*splanchna*—the victim’s entrails) within standard sacrificial procedures in ancient Greece. As literary and iconographic sources indicate, from Homer until Late Antiquity these internal organs were perceived as distinct from ἔντερα (intestines) and κρέας or σάρξ (meat). As such, they received special ritual treatment, being roasted over the fire in which the gods’ share was burned. Consumption of at least a symbolic quantity of victim’s entrails was an indispensable sign of the worshippers’ participation in the ritual. As I argue, in spite of its social and economic importance, meat usually did not convey similar religious meanings as σπλάγχνα.*

Keywords: Greek animal sacrifice, Greek literature, Greek inscriptions/epigraphy, entrails (*splanchna*), intestines, meat, roasting, altar, participation, honorary share, 2 *Maccabees*, neo-Pythagoreans, oath-sacrifice

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Why σπλάγχνα?

The title of this paper has been inspired by an expression used in the famous sacrificial calendar from the Attic deme Erchia: Διὶ Μιλιχίωι, οἷς, νηφάλιος μέχρι σπλάγχων, “for Zeus

Meilichios, a male sheep, no pouring of wine until entrails.”¹ Although this expression is attested only once in the epigraphical sources and is absent from the literary texts, it seems clear that its meaning was supposed to be self-evident for ancient readers of the inscription. Therefore, it seems likely that it was a fixed formula. Even if it was not, it indicates a special position of the σπλάγχνα within the sacrificial process, seeing that this noun, which primarily refers to animal (or human) entrails, was used here metonymically as an indicator of time. Perhaps in this respect μέχρι σπλάγχων may be compared to the modern “before/after the pudding” which indicates an easily recognisable moment within a standard sequence of actions. It presupposes that there might have been little doubt as to when the time for σπλάγχνα would come and what was to be done with them.² In case of the specific sacrifice in honour of Zeus Meilichios mentioned in the Erchian calendar, it also played a role as an indicator of a shift between two modalities of the ritual performance. It seems that until σπλάγχνα the deity was to be treated as one of the dangerous powers that needed to be placated, whereas after the σπλάγχνα, he was clearly seen as a propitious being. This means that the rite of σπλάγχνα concluded the first part of this highly anomalous ritual sequence, somehow confirming its successful outcome.³

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¹ *CGRN* 42; *LSCG* 18, A lines 40–43; first published by Daux 1963. For the bibliography, see *CGRN*, *ad loc.* and below, *note 2*.

² Unlike ancient readers of the inscription, contemporary scholars struggle to make sense of this laconic statement. See especially Scullion 1994, 79–80; Henrichs 1983, 91, n. 19; Jameson 1965, 164; Daux 1963, 629.

³ This could explain the ambiguous picture of Diasia, the festival during which the sacrifice under discussion took place. According to some sources (esp. *Ar. Nub.* 408–411 and 864), it was a cheerful feast, but according to others, it was celebrated *with a certain grimness* (schol. *Luc.* 24.24 and 25.7; Hesychius, s.v. Διάσια). Rather than representing the confusion of our informers, such ambiguity can result from the fact that the festival was marked by the passage from anxiety to joy, when a (potentially) hostile divinity was appeased. For a brief discussion of an-

The question of what τὰ σπλάγχνα, in the most concrete sense of the word, are, does not seem to be very difficult to answer.⁴ Aristotle in the *Parts of animals* gives what is usually taken as a canonical list: heart, lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys.⁵ He also explains that they are formed of a blood-like substance.⁶ As Guy Berthiaume observed,⁷ within sacrificial practice, these internal organs were markedly different not only from meat, but also from what was collectively called τὰ ἔντερα,⁸ various parts of the digestive system such as intestines and stomach(s). This is clear from a passage in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and from sacrificial regulations from Kos, where the two terms are juxtaposed.⁹

Although this latter category of internal organs (ἔντερα) is much less conspicuous in descriptions, prescriptions and depictions of sacrificial practice, it is not completely absent from our dossier. For example, Aristophanes mentions the task of washing animals' intestines on two occasions, apparently as a part of their preparation for use as sausage skins.¹⁰ In both cases it is apparent that this was understood as a menial and unpleasant job, suitable for those who occupied the lowest ranks within the social hierarchy.

It seems very likely that washing intestines is also represented on the Ricci Hydria in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome, on which two young men are shown with their arms submerged in a large basin. This scene has been interpreted by Goffredo Ricci and some other scholars who followed him as that of ritual ablution in a λουτήριον after a sacrifice.¹¹ This reading has been questioned by Folkert van Straten,¹² who observed that it would make much more sense if the scene, inserted between that of boiling meat in a cauldron and that of displaying meat on a table (or cleaning a table and taking leftovers for storage), also represented some aspect of food processing. If it had shown an ablution, it would curiously break the continuum. Moreover, as van Straten stated, if the scene had a purely ritual meaning, it would have been more natural to represent an officiant washing his hands rath-

er than the ablution performed by his attendants. As a consequence, he suggested that the depiction under discussion may represent kneading dough for sacrificial cakes. However plausible that is,¹³ this interpretation leaves open the question of the sequence of ritual or ritualised actions. If the narrative on the vase develops from left to right, as seems to be the case, then the proper place for kneading dough should be somewhere next to the altar scene and certainly before it. If, however, the picture shows the cleaning of the victim's intestines, the two objections raised by van Straten would be answered. Such a scene would clearly inscribe itself into the context of meaty food preparation (be it for immediate consumption¹⁴ or for storage) and at the same time it would represent a task proper for persons of respectively lower status.¹⁵

As for the purely ritual use of ἔντερα,¹⁶ it seems to be marginal at best, given that it is usually passed over in silence. The only exception seems to be provided by the already mentioned sacrificial calendar from Kos, in which a holocaust of a piglet is mentioned as a preliminary rite in honor of Zeus Polieus:¹⁷

τοὶ δὲ κάρυκες κ|αρπῶντι τὸμ μέγ χοῖ|ρογ καὶ τὰ
σπλάγχνα ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ
ἐπισπένδοντες μελίκρατον, ἔ|ντερ|α δὲ ἐκπλύναντες
παρὰ τὸ|μ βωμόν κα|ρπῶντι·
ἐπεὶ δὲ κα καρπω|θη|ι ἄποτα, ἐπισπενδέτω μελίκρατον

Jan-Mathieu Carbon and Saskia Peels (in *CGRN*) offer the following translation:

The [heralds] burn the piglet and the entrails on the altar making a libation of honey-mixture and, after having washed [the intestines] next to the [altar], they burn them. After they have been burned without liquid, let him add a libation of honey-mixture.

According to this interpretation, the holocaust of a piglet involves a similar treatment of both ἔντερα and σπλάγχνα. Nevertheless, the fact that they were burnt in two separate

cient sources and further references, see Scullion 2014, 341–342; 2007, 190–193.

⁴ For some nuances, see Pirenne-Delforge in the present volume, *Chapter 10*.

⁵ Arist. *Part. an.* 3.9.672b8–9: περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς καρδίας καὶ πλεῦμονος εἶρηται, καὶ περὶ ἥπατος καὶ σπληνὸς καὶ νεφρῶν.

⁶ Arist. *Part. an.* 3.4.665b6: ἐξ αἱματικῆς ὕλης.

⁷ Berthiaume 1982, 44–49.

⁸ Many scholars before Berthiaume clearly ignored this distinction. Most notably, Puttkammer 1912, *sparsim*, refers to σπλάγχνα as *intestina*.

⁹ Aesch. *Ag.* 1219–1222; *CGRN* 86 (*LSCG* 151), A lines 33–35. See also Detienne 1989, 10; Durand 1989, 100; Ekroth 2008, 261. It is also worth noting that Aristotle, having stated that cephalopods do not have σπλάγχνα (*Part. an.* 4.4–5.678) only a little further (678b) speaks of their στόμαχος, κοιλία and ἔντερον.

¹⁰ Ar. *Eq.* 160; *Plut.* 1168–1169.

¹¹ Ricci 1946–1948, 49; Durand 1989, 103; Berthiaume 1982, 52.

¹² van Straten 1995, 148–150.

¹³ See Gebauer 2002, 329; Mylonopoulos 2006, 78.

¹⁴ It is interesting that in *Pax* 715–718 Aristophanes mentions three kinds of foodstuff associated with the celebration of the City Dionysia: ζωμός, χόλικες ἐφθαί, κρέα—broth or stew (cooked in cauldrons), boiled (stuffed) bowels (= sausages? black puddings?), meat. Apparently, sausages of some sort were also eaten on such occasions.

¹⁵ On cleaning victims' entrails, see also Németh 1994, 63–64. On sausages, Frost 1999.

¹⁶ By “purely ritual” I mean use of an object that is directly related to the communication with (a) supernatural being(s), for example by means of transmitting it by means of deposition or cremation. Thus, a case of apportioning entrails to the priestly personnel (e.g. *LSCG* 156, A lines 27–28: γέρη φέρει δέρμα καὶ σκέλος καὶ χέλυος ἥμισυ καὶ κοιλίας ἥμισυ) falls outside its scope.

¹⁷ *CGRN* 86, A (= *IG* XII.4 278 = *LSCG* 151 A) lines 33–36.

phases of the ritual clearly presupposes the distinction between them. The opposition between the two kinds of organs seems even more clearly articulated according to the more traditional interpretation of the inscription, in which the words *παρὰ τὸν βωμὸν* are construed with *καρπῶντι*, rather than *ἐκπλύναντες*. This results in the meaning: “The [heralds] burn the piglet and the entrails on the altar making a libation of honey-mixture and, having washed [the intestines], they burn them next to [the altar].” If this were so, burning of intestines did not necessarily take place in a different moment from *σπλάγχνα*. Instead, they were burnt in a different location, which may be suggestive of their lower value or even that they had to be kept away from the altar due to their having some degree of impurity.¹⁸

As for *σπλάγχνα* or viscera proper, their paramount importance can hardly be denied, especially within the unmarked *thysia*. It was already observed by Paul Stengel that Homer pays special attention to two rites within the sacrificial process.¹⁹ The formulaic verse *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρα κἀ καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο*, “when the thigh-bones were wholly burned, and they had tasted of the inner parts,”²⁰ clearly indicates that in the world of the epics the very core of the animal sacrifice may be conceptualised as an act of burning the thigh-bones for gods and sharing some of the entrails between human participants in the ritual. Stengel goes on to suggest that the *σπλάγχνα* were roasted on the same fire on which the thigh-bones burned. His intuition is very well confirmed by later iconographic sources depicting the act of roasting entrails over the fire blazing on an altar on which the gods’ share, usually an *ὄσφῦς*, is burning.²¹ Stengel also emphasised the opposition between *σπλάγχνα* and *σάρξ/κρέ’ ὑπέρτερα*²² (meat/outer flesh), which clearly did not convey the same religious meaning.

¹⁸ The interpretation preferred by Carbon and Peels has been proposed by Scullion (2009, 158; thus also Paul 2013, 37). Both versions give justice to the Greek text and both seem to make sense. What speaks in favour of the traditional reading (preferred among others by Hallof in *IG XII.4 278 A*, lines 33–36; Jameson 1965, 165), although it is far from decisive, is that it may presuppose a distinction between objects burnt on the altar and next to it, as mentioned by Eustathius (*ad Od.* 12.252). With some likelihood, a separate pyre is referred to in lines 37–39, where some objects that are supposed to be burnt on top of the intestines (*τοῖς ἐντέροις ἐπιθεύτ[ω]*) are listed. Given that by that time, the *ἔντερα* must have been already incinerated (as results from line 36), the fact that the place where the objects are to be burnt is stated in an explicit manner may suggest that it was distinct from the altar.

¹⁹ Stengel 1910, 74–75.

²⁰ Translations of the passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are by Murray (Loeb edition 1924 and 1919) with changes. *Il.* 1.464, 2.427; *Od.* 3.461, 12.364 and with some changes: *Od.* 3.9.

²¹ See especially van Straten 1995, 118–141; Gebauer 2002, 352–447; Rizza 1959–1960; Bremmer 2019, 318–319 with further bibliography in n. 71.

²² Homeric formula: *Od.* 3.65, 3.470 and 20.279.

That latter category was playfully called *taratalla* by van Straten,²³ using the Homeric formula describing what happened after the consumption of the *σπλάγχνα*: *μίστυλλον τ’ ἄρα τᾶλλα καὶ ἀμφ’ ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν*, “they cut up the rest and pierced it through with spits.”²⁴ Thus, the edible part of an animal can be divided into following categories: *μῆρα/μηρία* + *σπλάγχνα* + *τ’ ἄρα τᾶλλα*. The first two are of paramount ritual importance, whereas the third consists of everything that is left, the unmarked *rest*, and probably comprises meat as well as *ἔντερα*.

The fact that it is not all about the words, as Jean Rudhardt observed,²⁵ is very well illustrated by a passage in the *Odyssey* in which Telemachus arrives at Pylos, where the local community is offering a hecatomb to Poseidon. The way in which the poet organises the course of events is quite meaningful. The ship reaches the shore exactly when the burning of thigh-bones and sharing entrails is over (3.9–11):

εὖθ’ οἱ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο, θεῶ δ’ ἐπὶ μηρί’ ἔκηαν,
οἱ δ’ ἰθὺς κατάγοντο ἰδ’ ἰστία νηὸς εἴσης
στεῖλαν ἀείραντες ...

“Now when they [men of Pylos] had tasted the entrails and burnt the thigh-bones, the others [Telemachus and his crew] put straight to shore, and hauled up and furled the sail of the shapely ship ...”

Subsequently the poet says that the men of Pylos were making preparations for the feast of meat (33: *δαῖτ’ ἐντυνόμενοι κρέα τ’ ὦπτων ἄλλα τ’ ἔπειρον*: “making ready the feast, they were roasting some of the meat and piercing other pieces [with spits]”), when they suddenly spotted the group of strangers approaching them. Peisistratos (one of Nestor’s sons) invited the newcomers to join the sacrificial circle and, crucially in this context, he offered them portions of entrails along with some wine (40–41: *δῶκε δ’ ἄρα σπλάγχνων μοίρας, ἐν δ’ οἶνον ἔχευεν/χρυσείῳ δέπαι*: “he gave them portions of the entrails and poured wine in a golden cup”). Athena-Mentor and Telemachus duly poured out libations and prayed to Poseidon to accept and reciprocate the hecatomb offered by the people of Pylos, adding their own intentions. Only then could feasting on the meat begin (65–66: *οἶδ’ ἐπεὶ ὥπτησαν κρέ’ ὑπέρτερα καὶ ἐρύσαντο./ μοίρας δασσάμενοι δαίνυντ’ ἐρικυδέα δαῖτα*: “then when they had roasted the outer flesh and

²³ van Straten 1995, 144 after Martial (1.50), who introduces this playful Homerism as the name of a chef: *Si tibi Mistyllos cocus, Aemiliane, vocatur, / dicatur quare non Taratalla mihi?*

²⁴ *Il.* 1.465; *Od.* 3.462, 12.365 and 14.430.

²⁵ Rudhardt 1958, 255.

drawn it (off the spits), they divided the portions and feasted a glorious feast”).

The series of poetic choices in this sequence seems to be hardly a matter of coincidence. For some reason the poet insists that Telemachus and his divine companion take their share in the victim’s entrails, before joining in the feast on the outer flesh (κρέ’ ὑπέρτερα). Moreover, it seems telling that the newcomers, when taking the σπλάγχνα, performed the two other actions that incorporated them into the group of worshippers: they poured a libation and prayed to Poseidon, the same god for whom the people of Pylos sacrificed. This seems to suggest that the sacrifice also became their own and that sharing the entrails is clearly meant to be a *signifier* of this incorporation.²⁶

Having said this, it has to be observed that the centrality of the σπλάγχνα and the opposition with *taratalla* meat has received quite an awkward scholarly treatment. On the one hand, a few illustrious scholars laid enormous stress on it. Thus, thanks to Stengel, Meuli, Rudhardt, Detienne, and van Straten, it seems to have become a commonplace that σπλάγχνα were dealt with in a special way and had special meaning.²⁷ As with many commonplaces, it has been repeated by some other, no less brilliant scholars who often fail to recognise how meaningful the opposition between entrails and meat is. Even more surprisingly, the list of scholars who pay virtually no attention to σπλάγχνα not only is long but also comprises some great names.²⁸ In what follows, I would like to argue that there is quite abundant, even if not always straightforward, literary data to show that, unlike some modern scholars, Greeks themselves until Late Antiquity never ignored the distinction between σπλάγχνα and other meaty parts of sacrificial animals. Having examined the primary sources, I would like to turn attention to their scholarly reception in search for the reasons of misunderstandings surrounding σπλάγχνα.

²⁶ On the role of σπλάγχνα in this passage, see also Detienne 1979a, 76–77.

²⁷ Stengel 1910, 75–77; Meuli 1946, 268–274; Rudhardt 1958, 255; Detienne 1979a, 74–77; van Straten 2005, 24–26. For the special treatment of σπλάγχνα as a distinctive feature of Greek sacrificial practice, as opposed to non-Greek traditions, see Pirenne-Delforge in the present volume, *Chapter 10*.

²⁸ For example, in Burkert’s *Homo Necans* there are only three sentences in which σπλάγχνα are mentioned, of which only one (1983, 6) refers to their role in θυσία sacrifice. Seaford, for whom *sacrificial feast* happens to be one of the key concepts, in his *Reciprocity and ritual* (1994) does not mention the division of entrails even once. Naiden (2013, 115) in one of few passages in which he mentions σπλάγχνα, equates them with *choice cuts of meat*. Otherwise he speaks only about their role in extispicy.

Beyond Homer: old comedy

A suitable foothold for the discussion of the post-Homeric use of a victim’s entrails is provided by comedy. To start with, two Aristophanic characters use a metonymy similar to the one found in Homer, and yet, at least at the stylistic level, they do it completely independently from Homer. In *Wasps*, Bdelykleon (653–654) threatens his son by saying: εἰ μὴ γάρ, ὄπως δουλεύω ἔγω, τουτὶ ταχέως με διδάξεις, / οὐκ ἔστιν ὄπως οὐχὶ τεθνήξῃς, κἂν χρηὶ σπλάγχνων μ’ ἀπέχεσθαι (“If you don’t explain to me quickly in what way I’m a slave, then you will most certainly perish, even if it means that I have to keep away from the sacrificial feasts (σπλάγχνα)”).²⁹ We know from other sources that murderers were required “to keep away from the things laid down by law”, according to an expression (εἴργεσθαι τῶν νομίμων)—probably an official formula—recorded in the *Athenaion Politeia* (57.2) and Antiphon (6.36). Although we do not know the precise list of τὰ νόμιμα, according to Douglas MacDowell it comprised “all temples and public religious ceremonies, the Agora, and law-courts, and presumably public meetings of all kinds.”³⁰ When Bdelykleon says that the murder of his son will deprive him of σπλάγχνα, he clearly makes a choice. The entrails of a sacrificial animal stand here for all sorts of religious and possibly public activities.³¹ This choice may be said to be quite typical for a comic hero, whose concerns revolve around hedonistic aspects of life. This may explain why he mentions σπλάγχνα and not one of the less appealing aspects of cult, such as building temples, for example. Yet, it seems hardly a coincidence that in this very brief allusion to religious matters, which was meant to be understood by ordinary people in the theatre, Aristophanes makes σπλάγχνα and not meat or ζωμός (stew), for instance, a *pars pro toto* signifier of all ritual activity.

Very similar to the previously quoted passage is another from Aristophanes’ *Knights* (409–410) in which Paphlagon exclaims: οὔτοι μ’ ὑπερβαλεῖσθ’ ἀναιδεία μὰ τὸν Ποσειδῶ· ἢ μήποτ’ ἀγοραίου Διὸς σπλάγχνοισι παραγενοίμην (“You shan’t surpass me in shamelessness, no, by Poseidon; else may I never attend to share the sacrificial meats³² of Zeus of the Public Meetings”). In spite of some interpretative

²⁹ Translation by Sommerstein 1983. It seems quite telling that the specificity of the term σπλάγχνα has been lost in many translations (in all I consulted, as a matter of fact). Thus, Meineck (1998) has *sacrificial feasts*; Daele (1938) *partage de viandes*; Lenz (2014) *Opferfleisch*.

³⁰ MacDowell 1978, 111. See also Petrovic & Petrovic 2016, 158–160; Parker 1983, 104–143.

³¹ See MacDowell 1971, *ad loc.*; Biles & Olson 2015, *ad loc.*

³² Translation by Sommerstein 1981. Again, it seems telling that the term σπλάγχνα is translated in a very loose manner. For example Daele (1934) renders it as *tripe* (which falls close to Puttkammer’s *intestina*) and Henderson (1998) *share in the feast*.

difficulties,³³ the sense of the statement seems clear: what the speaker means is that he may lose his position as a democratic leader or an active politician. Within the passage what symbolises his role is an access to σπλάγχνα of animals killed at the altar of Zeus Agoraios. Such an altar was located just behind the orator's platform on the Pnyx.³⁴ Although we know no details of actual ritual activities that took place there, the topography and the very name of Zeus Agoraios indicate that his cult must have been directly connected to public speaking and therefore, to the very essence of political life.³⁵ Once again the poet chooses σπλάγχνα as a *pars pro toto* of a sacrificial ritual which metonymically stands for something even more complex.

Quite surprisingly, also in Aristophanes' *Peace* (922–1126), in the most complex and fullest representation of animal sacrifice in ancient literature, the whole sequence ends exactly where it does in Homer. Having had an animal killed and butchered by a servant inside his house, Trygaeos prepares a fire on an altar. Then, he puts μῆρα and an ὄσφϋς on it. The servant roasts σπλάγχνα. The text also mentions θυλήματα, sacrificial cakes of some sort, and the animal's tongue. No meat is referred to and quite clearly there was no place for it in the performance. As usually happens in comedy, the ritual is disturbed by Hierokles, a parasitic figure of a religious specialist, who under pretence of rendering some services tries to extort some of the entrails. Pretending not to see him, Trygaeos and his servant prepare the σπλάγχνα, pour out the libation,

sip some of the wine, then they try the entrails and offer some of it to the spectators. The episode ends with some slapstick aggression against the intruder, who is chased away. This permits the chorus to be left alone on stage for a few minutes, and to sing a 64-line-long ode (1127–1190). When it is finished, Trygaeos re-enters, giving to his servant instructions to clean the tables after a dinner, during which, we learn from his words, he entertained numerous guests. This obviously means that the dinner party took place after Trygaeos left the stage and while the chorus were singing. Thus, the post-kill phase of the ritual is clearly articulated into two subsequent sequences that may be perfectly summarized by the Homeric formulae: αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρα κὰθ' καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο and μίστυλλον τ' ἄρα τᾶλλα (“when the thigh-bones were burned, and they had tasted of the inner parts” and “they cut up the rest”). What seems worth emphasising is the fact that only the former took place by the altar, whereas the *taratalla* party, the dinner, was held inside the house. Similar division is reflected in various ways by the design of Greek sanctuaries, where sacrificial space is often architecturally separated from dining areas. Moreover, archaeological data show that, more often than not, debris from altars is found in different contexts from the bones left by diners.³⁶ This clearly indicates the practice of separating two ritual sequences one from another.³⁷

Curiously enough, even though it might have become a commonplace that sacrifice in Aristophanes is all about eating, upon closer inspection it turns out that the poet never speaks of meat consumption at sacrifice. There are a few passages that fall close to it but are still far enough to be taken as evidence of the opposite. The meat mentioned in them comes from sacrifice, but it is not eaten at any point of ritual. For example in *Thesmophoriazousae* (558–559) we hear of women who bribe their procuresses with meat from the sacrifice at Apatouria.³⁸

³³ On the sense of the passage, see Sommerstein 1981, *ad loc.* and Merry 1895, *ad loc.* That latter scholar equates the ritual referred to in the present context with purificatory rites or περίστια mentioned in *Ecd.* 128. This interpretation does not seem plausible, as purification would probably exclude consumption of the victim's entrails (see Parker 1983, 21).

³⁴ According to scholia to Aristophanes' *Knights* (409), Zeus Agoraios was worshipped on the Agora and in the place of assemblies (Ἀγοραῖος Ζεὺς ἱδρύεται ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ). This piece of information has been tentatively explained by Thompson (1952, 92–93), who suggested that the scholiast might have ignored a temporal gap between the presence of Zeus Agoraios in these two different locations. Accordingly, he turned attention to a monumental altar found on the Athenian Agora (Stillwell 1933, 140–148; Thompson & Scranton 1943, 299–300) that bears clear signs of having been re-erected in ancient times. The dimensions of this object correspond perfectly with a rock-cut bedding on the Pnyx, which suggests that this was its original setting. The architectural design of the altar indicates that the rites performed on top of it were meant to be in view of the assembly. The stylistic data indicate that the object was first erected as part of Lycurgus' program of rearrangement of the Pnyx (338–326 BC). Subsequently, the altar was moved to the Agora in Roman times, when the former assembly place had lost its previous function. This obviously means that the stonework of the altar is roughly a century later than Aristophanes' *Knights*, which does not change the fact that its original location is very likely to correspond to the location of a similar object, possibly less monumental in size, that stood there in the Classical period. See also Wycherley 1957, 123; Thompson & Wycherley 1972, 160–162.

³⁵ Thompson 1952, 93; Rosivach 1977, 33–35.

³⁶ Cf. e.g. Ekroth 2008; 2007; Gebhard & Reese 2005; Studer & Chenal-Velarde 2003. On the architectural setting of dining space, see Bergquist 1990; Cooper & Morris 1990.

³⁷ It should be noted that there might also have been a clear spatial and temporal distinction between the allotment of choice parts and the distribution of equal parts, as the latter sometimes took place several days after sacrifice and in a completely different setting. For example, the meat of oxen sacrificed on the Athenian Acropolis at Panathenaia was distributed among the citizens in the Kerameikos a few days later (Ekroth 2008, 277–281).

³⁸ Ar. *Ihes.* 558–559: ὡς τ' αὖ τὰ κρέ' ἐξ Ἀπατουρίων ταῖς μαστροποῖς διδοῦσαι / ἔπειτα τὴν γαλῆν φαμεν ... In the *Acharnians* 145–146 Aristophanes mentions also sausage from the festival of Apatouria (ὁ δ' υἱός, ὄν' Ἀθηναῖον ἐπεποίημα, / ἦρα φαγεῖν ἀλλάντας ἐξ Ἀπατουρίων). At this festival, fathers of boys introduced to their paternal phratries were allegedly urged by other phratry members to offer for a sacrifice as big a sheep as they could (see schol. Ar. *Ran.* 798; Harp. 200.15–201.7; see also Deubner 1932, 232–234; Parke 1977, 88–92; Lambert 1993, 143–189; Parker 2005, 458–461). This may explain the extraordinary abundance of meat that remained afterwards, as the two passages attest. Of special interest is the use of the preposition ἐξ in both passages. Its

The context indicates that under normal circumstances they were meant to cook it at home. In *Acharnians* (1049–1055) Dikaiopolis receives an honorary share of meat sent to him by a groom from a wedding party.³⁹ In these cases the meat resulting from sacrifices is mentioned, but in a context which has little to do with sacrifice as such.⁴⁰

What I obviously do not try to argue is that meat was not consumed in sanctuaries or that a feast did not usually follow sacrifice, as this would go against all evidence we have. However, what clearly results from the passages discussed is that (1) Aristophanes, just like Homer, occasionally draws a neat distinction between the act of sharing σπλάγχνα and the consumption of *outer flesh*, and (2) that neither of these authors ever confused the two sequences. Therefore, it is legitimate to suspect that, just like for Homer, so for Aristophanes the sharing of entrails also concluded the short period of very high intensity communication with divinities. This is where the sacred ends, to speak in terms of Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss,⁴¹ and profane or semi-profane ritualised actions of feasting and sharing honorary portions begin.

Outsiders' views

The fact that participation in sharing the entrails was understood as the very core of participation in the sacrifice is further confirmed by the sources that present the point of view of people whose attitudes towards sacrifice were precisely the opposite of those of comic heroes. The author of the *2 Maccabees* reports with indignation that Antiochus Epiphanes forced Judeans from Jerusalem to share σπλάγχνα at the monthly celebrations of his birthday (6.7: ἤγοντο δὲ μετὰ πικρᾶς ἀνάγκης εἰς τὴν κατὰ μῆνα τοῦ βασιλέως γενέθλιον ἡμέραν σπλαγχνισμόν). A similar policy was subsequently adopted by neighbouring Greek cities, where Judeans who did not conform to the Greek customs and did not take their share in σπλάγχνα were executed (6.8: τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγωγὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἄγειν καὶ σπλαγχνίζειν, τοὺς δὲ μὴ προαιρουμέ-

νους μεταβαίνειν ἐπὶ τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ κατασφάζειν). Regardless of how much historical truth there is in this narration, the emphasis put on σπλάγχνα in this case can hardly be a matter of a frivolous poetic choice. It rather shows the method used by prosecutors.

It may be observed that in the case of a typical Greek sacrifice the division of roles was sometimes very complex. The person (or community) who offered a sacrifice very often could act through other agents, various priests, *manteis*, *mageiroi*, *boutypoi*, and others.⁴² And yet, with no blood on their hands, the sponsor might have remained the real sacrificer or *sacrifiant*, to use terminology proposed by Hubert and Mauss.⁴³ Now, what did it mean to participate in a sacrifice? Clearly, for Antiochus Epiphanes, one did not have to participate in its expenses. Yet, being around somewhere when an animal was being killed was not enough. As the passage in the *2 Maccabees* shows, the real acid test was taking a share of the σπλάγχνα.⁴⁴

A similar perspective is present also in the scholion to *Odyssey* (3.470): τὰ δὲ σπλάγχνα ἤσθιον δεικνύντες, ὅτι ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐγκάτων ἐκ μέσης καρδίας θύουσι τὸ θῦμα τοὺς θεοὺς τιμῶντες καὶ μετὰ προαιρέσεως (“They ate entrails in order to show that they sacrificed from deep inside themselves, from the whole heart honouring gods and out of reverence”).⁴⁵ Although the association between the nature of σπλάγχνα as internal organs and their function as signifiers of profoundness of someone’s piety shall be taken with a pinch of salt, the passage actually shows that in the scholiast’s opinion sharing the entrails confirmed the sincere intention of a mortal to initiate contact with deities.

This notion may also lie in the background of two bizarre passages describing the alleged behaviour of historical neo-Pythagoreans and/or legendary Pythagoreans. Both Plutarch and Porphyry⁴⁶ state that the followers of Pythagoras abstained from animal food, with exception only of the victims they sac-

formulaic or quasi-formulaic use suggests that the notion of eating meat which came from Apatouria was really widespread.

³⁹ On sending honorary shares, see Tsoukala 2009; Jacquemin 2008.

⁴⁰ Similarly, in the *Lysistrata* 1061–1064, the chorus formulates an invitation for a meal in this way: κᾶστιν ἔτνος τι· καὶ / δελφάκιον ἦν τί μοι, καὶ / τοῦτο τέθυχ', ὥστε γίγ/νεσθ' ἀπαλὰ καὶ καλὰ (“and there’s a special pea-soup, and I had a young porker, and I’ve sacrificed it, so it’s getting to be lovely tender meat”, transl. Sommerstein 1990). The sequence of events seems crystal clear: an animal has been killed in an act of sacrifice beforehand, but consumption of its delicious meat still belongs to the future. Similar examples: Epicharm., fr. 146 (Kassel & Austin); Pherecrates, fr. 162 (Kassel & Austin). In both cases there is clear distinction between the sacrifice and the feast, even though the former is an obvious *sine qua non* condition of the latter.

⁴¹ Hubert & Mauss 1899.

⁴² See e.g. Hitch 2009; Berthiaume 1982.

⁴³ Hubert & Mauss 1899.

⁴⁴ It needs special emphasis that forcing Judeans to take part in animal entrails was a particularly effective weapon in a cultural and religious war against them, as it outwardly breaks one of their most fundamental alimentary/religious taboos. Cf. *Sapientia Salomonis* 12 (with many thanks to Jonathan Greer for turning my attention to this passage). On the policies of Antiochus, see e.g. Gruen 2016, 333–357; Mittag 2006, 256–259. On differences between Jewish and Greek sacrifice, Petropoulou 2008, 117–123.

⁴⁵ Cf. schol. *Il.* 1.464c (Erbse): σπλάγχνα: ἀντὶ τοῦ τῶν σπλάγχνων, ὃ ἔσθι τῶν ἐντοσθιδίων, ἥπατος νεφρῶν καὶ τῶν ἐξῆς. τούτων δὲ πάντων ἀπεγεύσαντο, ἀπὸ σπλάγχνων καὶ ψυχικῆς σπουδῆς δηλοῦντες τὴν θυσίαν ποιεῖν (“entrails: instead of: of the entrails, which is, of the innards, liver, kidneys and the like, of all which they tasted, showing that they performed a sacrifice out of the zeal of their soul and guts”).

⁴⁶ Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 729c; Porph. *Abst.* 2.28.2.

rificed themselves.⁴⁷ Plutarch writes: μάλιστα μὲν ἐγεύοντο τῶν ἱεροθύτων (“at any rate, they would taste of the sacrificial victims”).⁴⁸ Porphyry: ὅτε δὲ εἰς ἀπαρχὴν τι τῶν ζώων ἀνθ’ ἑαυτῶν μερίσειαν τοῖς θεοῖς, τούτου γευσάμενοι μόνον, πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἄθικτοι τῶν λοιπῶν ὄντες ἔζων (“Whenever they came to distribute an animal victim to the gods, as a sacrifice instead of themselves, they merely tasted of it, and lived in reality without touching the remaining parts [i.e. of the sacrificed animals]”).⁴⁹ None of these passages actually mentions σπλάγχνα explicitly. Yet Porphyry seems to presuppose an opposition between something that Pythagoreans tasted and the remnants of a sacrificial victim that remained untouched. What is even more transparent is that both passages show that consumption of at least a very small piece of animal’s body, as the verb γεύω implies,⁵⁰ was paramount in order to make a sacrifice *valid*, so to speak. Once again, as in case of the 2 *Maccabees*, it is an acid test; this time, however, one performed by worshippers on themselves.

If the essence of participation in a sacrifice consisted of *tasting some of the σπλάγχνα*, the ritual reduced to its very substance (something we might call a *minimal sacrifice*) falls very close to the communion model proposed by William Robertson Smith.⁵¹ It is not about the pleasure of eating large portions of entrails, or at least, it does not have to be. Even though it might have been and probably was a source of sensory pleasure, as the comic image of the ritual suggests, there are good reasons to believe that σπλάγχνα themselves were seen first and foremost as a particularly powerful vehicle of communication with the suprahuman sphere.

Oath-sacrifice

Leaving aside extispicy as an art of reading signs imprinted, most probably, exclusively on one or two of the σπλάγχνα, namely on the animal’s liver and gall bladder,⁵² it is worth no-

ting that entrails were commonly used in oath-taking rituals. An iconic example is provided by the passage in Herodotus (6.67–68):

[Δημαρήτος] παρασκευασάμενος ἔθυε τῷ Διὶ βοῦν, θύσας δὲ τὴν μητέρα ἐκάλεσε. Ἀπικομένη δὲ τῇ μητρὶ ἐσθεις τὰς χεῖράς οἱ τῶν σπλάγχνων κατικέτευε, τοιάδε λέγων. “ὦ μητερ, θεῶν σε τῶν τε ἄλλων καταπτόμενος ἰκετεύω καὶ τοῦ ἑρκείου Διὸς τοῦδε φράσαι μοι τὴν ἀληθείην, τίς μευ ἐστὶ πατήρ ὀρθῶ λόγῳ ... ἐγὼ σε ὦν μετέρχομαι τῶν θεῶν εἰπεῖν τῶληθής”

([Demaratus] made ready and sacrificed an ox to Zeus; after which sacrifice he called to him his mother. She came, and he put a part of the entrails in her hands, and said in entreaty: “My mother, I entreat you in the name of the gods, but especially Zeus of the household in whose presence we stand: tell me now truly, who was in very deed my father ... Therefore I entreat you by the gods to tell me the truth”).⁵³

In this passage, it is interesting that Demaratus is very keen to prepare the stage for his purposes and, taking his mother by surprise, he calls her exactly at the point when the σπλάγχνα are ready to be put in her hands. The pleasure of the text describing this stratagem presupposes that entrails of a sacrificial victim might have been used as an extremely powerful weapon, which leaves no place for evasion.

Although we do not know many details concerning the handling of σπλάγχνα in the oath-taking ritual, it is quite remarkable that our sources insist on taking them into one’s hand.⁵⁴ Whether or not they were subsequently eaten remains unclear, given the scarcity of the available data. It would be tempting to think that such a procedure is attested in the sacrificial calendar from Kos, in which an act of eating σπλάγχ-

⁴⁷ Or in their stead, as Porphyry says, most probably following Theophrastus’ theory of sacrificial substitution. See Obbink 1988, 281–282. On the relationship between Porphyry’s work and Theophrastus, see Fortenbaugh *et al.* 1992, 405–437; Pötscher 1964; Bernays 1866.

⁴⁸ On the rather obscure adjective ἱερόθυτος (which is used substantively here), see Casabona 1966, 144; Winand 1987, 21–27.

⁴⁹ Translation by Obbink 1988, 281.

⁵⁰ The verb γεύω takes σπλάγχνα as a complement often enough to call this a formulaic use (e.g. Pl. *Resp.* *8.*565d; schol. Ar. *Pax* 1109c) moreover, Eustathius in his commentary on the *Iliad* 1.464 explains that the Homeric σπλάγχνα πάσασθαι is an equivalent of γεύσασθαι. Apparently, the latter form was more common.

⁵¹ Robertson Smith 1914, 269–311.

⁵² Furlley & Gysembergh (2015, 4) mention an unpublished papyrus in which reading signs from an animal’s lung is mentioned. To date this is the only known exception of exclusive use of liver and gall bladder in extispicy. At any rate, however, given its late date and Egyptian provenance,

it may hardly be expected to change radically our perception of Greek ritual practice, at least in earlier periods. See also Flower 2008, 153–210; Jameson 1986.

⁵³ Translation by Godley 1922 in the Loeb edition. Torrance in one of most recent publications on the subject matter (Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 140, n. 31) observes that this passage does not actually describe an oath-taking ritual, as “holding the entrails does not itself constitute an oath since there is no appeal to a sanctifying witness”. Indeed, we are not told whether Demaratus’ mother swore by gods or not. It is very likely that the passage describes an *oath challenge* rather than an oath itself. This means that Demaratus made the stage ready in case his mother refused to give satisfactory answers immediately. Only then he would compel her to take a formal oath, making use of the victim’s entrails. Thus, the function of σπλάγχνα remains the same, regardless of whether the oath was really taken or not. See Sommerstein & Bayliss 2013, 101–108.

⁵⁴ Aeschin. *In Tim.* 1.114; Lycurg. *Leoc.* 20. On other instances of touching things with hands or stretching hands towards earth or sky at the time of oath-taking, see Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 143–146.

χνα (σπλάγχνιζεται) is referred to in a context of a sacrifice to Charites.⁵⁵ However, what is far from certain (but not impossible), is that this sacrifice involved taking oath, as the first editor of the inscription conjectured.⁵⁶

A little more straightforward, but still far from conclusive, seem to be descriptions of some collective oath-sacrifices performed by groups swearing mutual loyalty. Most notably, Cassius Dio (37.30) writes about Catilina: παῖδα καταθύσας καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν σπλάγχνων αὐτοῦ τὰ ὄρκια ποιήσας ἔπειτα ἐσπλάγγνευσεν αὐτὰ μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων (“he sacrificed a boy, and after administering the oath over his vitals, ate these in company with others”).⁵⁷ Leaving aside the problem of the historicity of such allegations of cannibalism, it is worth noticing that Catilina’s perverted ritual must have reproduced structure of something that Dio’s readers were familiar with. Thus, it seems probable that similar rituals were also performed under less extraordinary circumstances, the only difference being that instead of a human, an animal would be killed. To a certain degree, corroboration is also found in the parallels this procedure finds in two fictional oath-taking ceremonies described in Plato’s *Critias* (120a–b)⁵⁸ and Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* (181–239) in which instead of σπλάγχνα, a victim’s blood and wine are used respectively.

As the two latter pieces of evidence suggest, not all oath-taking sacrifices made use of σπλάγχνα. Sometimes the animal’s blood was used, sometimes the person swearing would handle objects called τόμια or they would stand on them. As for the latter, the exact meaning of the word τόμια has been hotly disputed over the last hundred years.⁵⁹ Even though it seems that at least sometimes it could have referred to animal’s entrails,⁶⁰ in many cases it covered other semantic fields. It seems very likely, for instance, that the skeletons of three animals cut in half found on Thasos represent traces of the ritual of cutting τόμια.⁶¹ At any rate, from what we know about oath-taking in ancient Greece, it results that it was a high intensity ritual in which the swearing party would expose themselves to an extremely serious risk of divine wrath, somehow represented by the fate of a slain animal or other objects that

were damaged or annihilated in the process.⁶² Thus, it was very different from the θυσία, a joyful type of sacrifice.⁶³ Yet, seeing that the latter was probably more common than oath-taking rituals, it seems reasonable to think that the structure of the θυσία was the main force shaping the conceptual frame of all kinds of blood rituals. The similarities between the use of σπλάγχνα in θυσία and ὄρκια cannot be said to be merely circumstantial. Of paramount importance seems to be the “old-fashioned” concept of communion coined by Robertson Smith,⁶⁴ which quite clearly underlies all kinds of sharing σπλάγχνα, but is especially manifest in cases of more or less fictional descriptions of oath-taking sacrifices within groups of conspirators, such as in the circle of Catilina.⁶⁵

Towards conclusions

This paper provoked an unexpectedly vivid reaction at the conference in Uppsala in spite of the fact that it presents no new material and that its scope is limited to a humble examination of the logical consequences of some venerable and already classical theories. It has been rightly observed that one should not downgrade the role of honorary shares of meat in various ritualized behaviours such as erotic courtship or rewarding victorious poets at festival contests, to name but two examples.⁶⁶ Nor would it be wise to deny the importance of sharing equal portions within the context of poliadic or any other communal feasts. Having said that, I would like to stress that these long-established aspects of the cultural role of meat in ancient Greece are not what is at stake here.

It is one of the commonplaces of the modern debate on the nature of Greek religion(s) that it was embedded in all other kinds of social or cultural practice and, as such, it cannot be analysed as a phenomenon totally apart from its context.⁶⁷ Yet this well-established fact should not exclude the possibility of looking at Greek religious experience as something that cannot be simply explained away as entirely instrumental to ends that might have transcended it. This observation seems to lie at the roots of the recent opposition to established models of

⁵⁵ CGRN 86 C = IG XII.4 275 C = LSCG 151 D, lines 5–17.

⁵⁶ Herzog 1929, 12–14. See Pirenne-Delforge 1996, 208–214, and her contribution to the present volume, *Chapter 10*. See also Jim 2014, 33–34.

⁵⁷ Transl. Cary 1914 in the Loeb edition.

⁵⁸ For bibliography, see Nesselrath 2006, *ad loc.*

⁵⁹ Stengel (1910, 78–85) argued that the noun τόμια must have referred to the testicles of animals castrated at some point of the ritual process. Although it has been argued that this interpretation is not well grounded in ancient sources (most notably by Casabona 1966, 220–225), it is not without reason still taken as one of the possible options. See Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 138–142 (with further references in n. 32); Ekroth 2014.

⁶⁰ Thus Rudhardt 1958, 283–284.

⁶¹ Blondé *et al.* 2003; 2005.

⁶² Faraone 1993; 2012; Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 143–148.

⁶³ On sacrifice as a joyful occasion (against Burkert’s view) see especially Peirce 1993.

⁶⁴ See also Parker 2011, 139: “As presented by Robertson Smith, the theory contained the further proposition that what was eaten at the sacred banquet was in a sense the god himself. This disastrous addition, an amalgam of the Christian Eucharist with the nineteenth-century theories of the totemic animal inevitably bred resistance to the whole approach. Stripped of that excess, the theory has considerable appeal.”

⁶⁵ On *nomen-omen* συνωμοσίαι, see Sommerstein & Bayliss 2013, 120–128.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Tsoukala 2009; Nagy 1990, 269–275; and Lissarrague in the present volume, *Chapter 4*.

⁶⁷ Cf. e.g. Price 1999, 3.

reading Greek religion and, most notably, Greek sacrifice.⁶⁸ This shift in scholarly paradigms suggests that even without questioning the appropriateness of some answers traditionally given to some questions, one may also observe that neither the answers nor the questions satisfy all our epistemological needs.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the division of sacrificial victims. Since Friedrich Puttkammer, it seems beyond any doubt that apportioning sacrificial meat had serious meanings and consequences, as it served as a means of reflecting and negotiating the social structure.⁶⁹ Yet, reconstructions such as that proposed by Puttkammer, which reproduce the matter of fact tone of inscriptions regulating division of meat, at the same time tend to neglect the temporal aspect of ritual performance and the fluctuation of its intensity, which are crucial when it comes to a discussion of meanings, an aspect indispensable for a thick description of a ritual (as Clifford Geertz called it). Only a little more attention to the vertical axis of communication with divinities was paid by Detienne, who in his *Dionysus Slain*, developed the most influential model of reading the opposition between σπλάγχνα and non-σπλάγχνα (σάρξ). According to him, this dichotomy results in “the opposition between two circles of eaters of sacrificial meat. The first is the relatively tight circle of co-eaters of σπλάγχνα; the other is the larger, less restricted one of participants in the sacrificial meal.”⁷⁰ Or, as Detienne puts it elsewhere:

The ritual insists on the distinction between the viscera and the flesh to be consumed—chronological order and type of cooking—in two ways. The viscera are roasted on skewers in the first phase of the sacrifice and eaten on the spot near the altar by the inner circle of those taking full part in the sacrifice, while the quarters of meat, put to boil in the cauldron, are intended either for a larger feast or for distribution, sometimes over a distance. As for the entrails (ἔντερα), prepared as sausages they are consigned to the periphery of the sacrificial meal.⁷¹

⁶⁸ See especially Bremmer 2019, 303–335; Naiden 2013; Lincoln 2012 (with polemics in Bremmer 2018, 232–236); Graf 2012; van Straten 2005.

⁶⁹ Puttkammer 1912.

⁷⁰ Detienne 1979a, 77.

⁷¹ Detienne 1989, 10. Cf. Detienne 1979b, 20: “*Le rituel insiste sur l’opposition entre les viscères et les chairs de consommation, de deux manières : par l’ordre dans le temps et par les modalités de cuisson. Les viscères sont rôtis à la broche, dans la première phase du sacrifice, et mangés sur place à proximité de l’autel par le cercle étroit de ceux qui participent pleinement au sacrifice, tandis que les quartiers de viande, mis à bouillir dans les chaudrons, sont destinés soit à un banquet plus large, soit à des distributions parfois lointaines. Quant aux entrailles, accommodées en saucisses et boudins, elles sont reléguées en lisière du repas sacrificiel.*”

This reading gives justice to all aspects that were central to Detienne’s ambitious plan of interpreting sacrificial practices as a matrix of the socio-political structure of Greek *poleis*. On the assumption that virtually all meat came from sacrifices,⁷² it seemed plausible that every sausage consumed at any distance from an altar logically presupposed and symbolically evoked a sacrifice. Thus, it operated as a link between the periphery where a consumer could have been located and the symbolic centre of the social cohesion incorporated by an altar. Yet, given the emphasis that has been laid recently on the fact that not all meat that was eaten in ancient Greece came directly or even indirectly (e.g. via markets) from sacrifice, the notion of close and obligatory association between meat consumption and ritual practice is no longer tenable.⁷³ This does not mean, however, that Detienne’s theory collapses or stops being useful. Within the model that postulates reading Greek religion as an integral part of the cultural system, it might have been convenient to dissolve or ignore the boundaries between the experience of the sacred and all other phenomena it came into contact with.⁷⁴ Yet, however productive this approach might be, it seems quite natural that it gives justice only to a chosen part of the reality (as a map by definition is not a territory), at the cost of ignoring what might have seemed central for those who were involved in actual ritual practices.

Shifting perspective towards an emic approach permits us to grasp the opposition that is to a large degree reflected on the horizontal axis of social interaction (individuated by Detienne), but which, at the same time, is distinct from it, as it operates on the vertical axis of communication between human and suprahuman. The data examined in this paper show that for the Greeks participation in σπλάγχνα distributed immediately (or almost immediately, as in the case of Telemachus) after roasting them over the fire blazing from the gods’ share was essential for *θυσία* sacrifice, just as much as eating outer flesh was apparently often irrelevant⁷⁵ from the point of view of the implicit grammar of the ritual conceived as a means of communication with gods. Thus, given that the meat

⁷² Detienne 1989, 3 (= 1979b, 9).

⁷³ The picture, certainly too complex to be treated at length here, comprises two problematic facets: on one hand, we know that some sacrificial meat was sold (we also know that not only sacrificial meat was sold; see especially Naiden 2013, 232–275). On the other hand, it seems clear that meat consumed in sanctuaries did not necessarily come from sacrifices performed on the spot or even from sacrificial species of animals (Ekroth 2007; 2008; 2009; Scullion 2013). Both aspects combined seem to suggest that the origins of meat were irrelevant from a religious point of view (see also Bednarek 2017).

⁷⁴ On limitations of the functionalist approach (in broad sense of this term that embraces structuralism) see recently Kindt 2012. See also Harrison 2015.

⁷⁵ Obviously, I do not mean rituals that were markedly different from *θυσία*, such as those that may not have required any consumption of all animal’s meat.

could have been completely devoid of sacredness, referring to the opposition between its lower and higher degree may simply be inappropriate in this context. This means that even though sharing special/honorary and equal/democratic portions of meat was clearly a means of creating and negotiating social bonds and distinctions, it does not amount to the fact that Detienne's outer circle of participation in victims' flesh was distinguished from the inner circle of those who shared the σπλάγχνα by what can be legitimately called a lower degree of sacredness.

To put it in a sharp relief, it seems legitimate to underline that the sacrificial ritual contributed to the creation of strong bonds within the narrow group of those who participated in it by sharing σπλάγχνα. The outer circle is marked by lack of participation in the sacrifice (= total lack of participation in σπλάγχνα, not lower level of participation) combined with participation in shares of outer flesh. This meat might have resulted from sacrifice, but from the point of view of its religious meaning, it was understood as its irrelevant by-product. Nevertheless, outside the sphere of communication with the superhuman it conveyed an important message, being used as a highly praised vehicle of prestige, not to mention its more mundane aspects, such as taste and nutritious value. Thus, portions of an animal victim's meat may be described as analogous to various other objects such as fish⁷⁶ or booty,⁷⁷ whose distribution was highly meaningful from a socio-political point of view, but did not necessarily reflect any kind of religious concerns.⁷⁸ Unlike them, σπλάγχνα were central both for religious and social reasons.

Robert Parker very aptly compared sending honorary portions of sacrificial meat to the contemporary practice of send-

ing slices of a wedding cake to friends and relatives.⁷⁹ I would like to push this figure of speech a little further than Parker probably intended by observing that this latter ritualised form of behaviour expresses strong distinction between two groups of people related to those who perform the rite. At the same time it indicates some degree of proximity and distance from ego. If you send a piece of wedding cake to your neighbours, it is not only because you care for good relationship with them, but also because you did not invite them to the wedding itself. And being at a wedding is very different from receiving a slice of cake, not only because the opposition between the two modalities of participation in an event articulates two distinct levels of social bonds, but also because it involves two different kinds of bonds. The same may be true in the case of the distinction between being at sacrifice, which involved sharing σπλάγχνα from the altar on one hand, and being allotted a piece of meat from the victim on the other. Even an honorary share sent to someone might have meant *I'm thinking of you, but in a different way than I think of those whom I invited to share σπλάγχνα*.

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⁷⁶ Fish are notorious for the social and political significance of their consumption, apportioning, prices, etc., as well as for possessing relatively little religious significance. See Wilkins 2000, 293–304; Davidson 1993.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Van Wees 1992, 299–310; Benveniste 1973, 334–345.

⁷⁸ It may be instructive to look at Jacquemin's stimulating article 'La participation *in absentia* au sacrifice' (2008) in which the author quotes a number of decrees regulating sending portions or special cuts of sacrificial meat. According to Jacquemin, this act of sharing animals' flesh amounts to participation of some special persons in sacrifices in spite of the fact that they were not present at the spot when the rituals took place. This is absolutely convincing as long as we tend to focus on the social side of sacrifice, as Jacquemin admittedly does. Her essay begins with the statement: "*La sacrifice est l'occasion d'affirmer l'unité d'une communauté qui peut être civique, infra-civique ou supra-civique, mais qui peut être aussi un groupement d'individus sur une base culturelle par le partage communautaire de viande (et du vin) avec les dieux et à l'intérieur du groupe.*" The two aspects of sacrifice that are conspicuously absent from this account are the vertical axis of communication with divinities and the distinction between σπλάγχνα and meat. I tend to believe that in order to make someone participate *in absentia* in a sacrifice conceived as a religious ritual and not merely a social event, one had to bring them a piece of viscera, exactly as people of Pylos did when they met Telemachus.

⁷⁹ Parker 2005, 43.

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