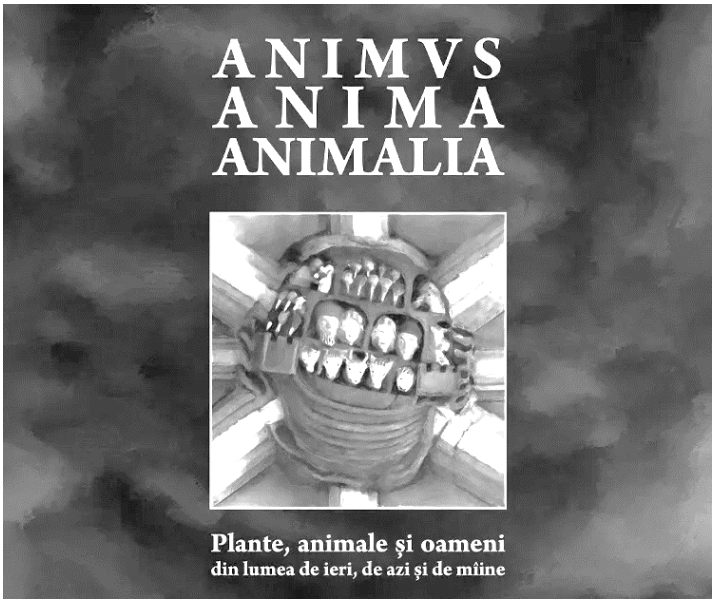
COLLOQUIA CLASSICA



Rubrica „ Colloquia classica" reunește articolele prezentate în cadrul colocviului organizat în luna aprilie a anului 2021 de către Catedra de Filologie Clasică și Neogreacă a Facultății de Limbi și Literaturi Străine a Universității din București, în colaborare cu Societatea de Studii Clasice din România.

Programul integral al colocviului se regăsește la adresa: https://unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/program-colcviu-AAA-1.pdf.

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THE ORPHIC LIFE: ANIMALS, SACRIFICE, AND ONTOLOGY IN EARLY ORPHISM

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Abstract: This paper explores the rationale behind the Orphic rejection of animal sacrifice. Although, the presence of reincarnation and the possibility of killing relatives is often offered as an explanation for the Orphic refusal to sacrifice animals, drawing on the theories of Philippe Descola, I argue that the rejection is better understood as part of a shift in ontological assumptions which occurred during the sixth century BCE. I argue that traditionally Greek sacrifice was a ritual used for establishing a connection with ontologically distinct gods through the use of an intermediary animal victim. The Orphics, however, did not conceive of gods, animals, and humans as ontologically distinct, but as kin related through a shared divine soul. Because of this existing kinship connection sacrifice ceased to fulfil its original purpose. The Orphics, therefore, discarded the rite and developed alternate ritual means of offering gifts to their divine relatives based on sharing.

Keywords: Orphics, Sacrifice, Ontologies, Animism.

INTRODUCTION

Orpheus is remembered today as a mythical bard whose song enchanted humans, animals, and even stones. However, in antiquity he was famed as a theologian and cult leader. While the historical reality of Orpheus remains doubtful, from as early as the fifth century BCE writings attached to his name began to spread across the Greek world and exercised important influences on later traditions including Neoplatonism. Although, the precise nature of Orpheus' teachings remains debated, as I will outline in this paper the early sources repeatedly associate Orpheus and his followers with the attribution of souls to non-humans and the rejection of animal sacrifice. This was part of what Plato (*Leg.* 782c–d) refered to as 'the Orphic life'. This paper will attempt to excavate the implied theological views Plato associates with the Orphic life and in particular to discuss how the Orphic rejection of animal sacrifice was related to wider Orphic assumptions concerning the nature of the soul. Drawing on recent remarks by anthropologist Philippe Descola concerning animist ontologies and sacrifice, I will argue that the Orphics rejected animal sacrifice because their insistence on their kinship to gods and animals made the ritual redundant. However, to understand this argument, prior to discussing the Orphic evidence, it will be necessary to briefly outline the role sacrifice occupied in ancient Greek religion more generally.

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UNDERSTANDING SACRIFICE IN ANCIENT GREECE

Although sacrifice was the single most important ritual in the ancient Greek world, there is little agreement on its meaning. For Jean Pierre Vernant, sacrifice was an act which emphasised the great divide between humans and gods. In sacrifice, the gods receive *knise* or the steam rising from the burnt fat and bones of the sacrificial animal, while humans receive the mortal shares of meat. As Vernant puts it "the division of the animal both provokes and reflects the opposition between the two respective parties. The distance separating mortals from immortals is begun in sacrifice and perpetuated by sacrifice"[1]. Robert Parker, on the other hand, argues that sacrifice rather than stressing difference is primarily concerned with sharing and communal dining. Indeed, in an almost inversion of Vernant's argument, Parker argues that sacrifice was an effort "to communicate with the gods across the great divide"[2]. Given these polarised positions, many scholars have adopted more reserved views on analysing sacrifice. Others have even rejected the possibility of a coherent analysis altogether. Paul Veyne, for example, warns *le sacrifice est très répandu travers les siècles et les sociétés parce que cette pratique est assez équivoque pour que chacun trouve sa satisfaction particulière*[3]. Although Veyne is certainly correct to point towards the widespread variations of sacrifice and its meaning in place and time, it should be pointed out that at least some regularities can be detected. Indeed, while sacrificial rituals occur the world over, not all societies sacrifice. Anthropologist, Philippe Descola, argues that although sacrifice appears in areas as diverse as "Brahmanic India, West Africa, and ancient China… it is virtually unknown in totemic Australia and the regions that are, par excellence, animist, namely Amazonia and subarctic America"[4]. In other words, Descola argues that sacrifice, rather than a universal rite, is a contingent phenomenon associated with particular religious orientations and ontological assumptions.

Descola's remarks on sacrifice form part of a wider ontological project outlined in his influential work, *Beyond Nature and Culture* where he outlines four possible schemas or ontologies: animism, analogism, naturalism, and totemism. These ontologies can be illustrated on the following table:

• Similar Interiorities (continuity of souls) • Dissimilar physicalities (discontinuity of forms)	Animism	Totemism	• Similar Interiorities (soul essences are identical) • Similar Physicalities (substance and behaviour are identical)
• Dissimilar Interiorities (discontinuity of minds) • Similar Physicalities (continuity of matter)	Naturalism	Analogism	• Dissimilar Interiorities (gradual discontinuity of the components of existing beings) • Dissimilar Physicalities (gradual discontinuity of the components of existing beings)

[1] Jean Pierre VERNANT, "At Man's Table: Hesiod's Foundation Myth of Sacrifice", in Detienne, M., Vernant, J. P. eds, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*, Chicago University, 1989, p. 27.

[2] R. PARKER, *On Greek Religion*, Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 141.

[3] Paul VEYNE, "Inviter les dieux, sacrifier, banqueter. Quelques nuances de la religiosité gréco-romaine", in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 55e année, N. 1, 2000, p. 22.

[4] Philippe DESCOLA, *Beyond Culture and Nature*, Chicago University Press, 2013, p. 228.

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Although animism, totemism, and naturalism are well-known terms, Descola has redefined these categories as specific configurations of interiorities and physicalities. Naturalism is described as the ontology predominant in the West and is based on the assumption animals and humans possess similar physicalities (or bodies) but are distinguished by their interiorities (or minds). Animism reverses the assumptions of naturalism. In many Amazonian societies, such as the Achuar, animals, spirits, and humans all have the same souls but are differentiated in terms of their physical forms. Totemism, like animism, develops upon an older anthropological concept. Descola argues that for totemists "specific plant and animal species are believed to share with particular sets of humans an identical complex of essential qualities, but one that is absolutely different from other similar groupings"[5]. Analogism, a term coined by Descola, reverses the assumptions of totemism. Rather than continuity, the central premiss of analogism is that humans, animals, and gods are ontologically distinct and knitted together through a system of analogies or correspondences often within a hierarchal chain of being. This is an ontology which Descola argues predominated in Renaissance Europe, among the Aztecs, and among the Greeks. Importantly for this paper, Descola argues that it is primarily within analogist collectives that sacrifice develops as a means of connecting ontologically distinct beings.

Although, a full survey of the evidence is beyond the scope of this paper, elsewhere I have argued that Descola's classification of analogism neatly overlaps with many strands of the Greek evidence[6]. Indeed, according to Descola one of the clearest expressions of analogist ontologies is found within what he refers to as "the great chain of being" which he describes as an elaborate assemblage which orders the diverse components of the cosmos "into a web of meaningful affinities and attractions that gives the appearance of constituting a continuity"[7]. Descola argues that chains of being were typical in Greek thought and describes how Aristotle's zoology, for example, presents an immense ontological ladder where "the genera are fixed, the species are indivisible, and living creatures are arranged in accordance with the degree of their perfection, each in its place in a *scala naturae* that also takes account of the differences in the functions of the types of souls with which each organism is endowed"[8]. Although, the complexities of Aristotle's hierarchal chain are unique, simplified models of the chain appear in early Greek literature in the form of the of hierarchal ladder of gods, humans, and animals. As with Aristotle's species, within this hierarchy gods and humans are described as analogously similar but ontologically distinct beings. A key example of this is found in Homer's (*Il.* 5. 39–42) description of the wounded Aphrodite and how:

ῥέε δ' ἄμβροτον αἷμα θεοῖο
ἰχώρ, οἷός πέρ τε ῥέει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν:
οὐ γὰρ σῖτον ἔδουσ', οὐ πίνουσ' αἴθοπα οἶνον,
τοὔνεκ' ἀναίμονές εἰσι καὶ ἀθάνατοι καλέονται.

[5] Philippe DESCOLA, "Presence, Attachment, Origin: Ontologies of 'Incarnates' ", in Lambeck, M. ed. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*, Blackwell-Wiley, 2013, p. 38.

[6] Olaf ALMQVIST, "Hesiod and Analogist Cosmogonies", in *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Volume 10, number 1, 2020.

[7] Philippe DESCOLA, *Beyond Culture...*, p. 203.

[8] *Ibidem.*

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> blood immortal flowed from the goddess,
> ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities;
> since these eat no food, nor do they drink of shining
> wine, and therefore they have no blood and are called immortal[9].

While Aphrodite's may, in some respects, appear mortal, this passage underlines that this resemblance is merely superficial. In fact, the goddess possesses blood that is not blood, eats food that is not food, and, as Jean Pierre Vernant puts it she has "a body that is not a body"[10].

CHALLENGING THIS VIEW

That sacrifice frequently appears in analogist contexts but is absent in animist and totemist contexts is not coincidental. Indeed, Descola suggests that sacrifice precisely emerges as a ritual response to the assumption of ontological difference and develops as "a means of action developed within the context of analogist ontologies in order to establish an operational continuity between intrinsically different singularities"[11]. In other words, sacrifice is a solution to a very particular problem concerning how contact can be established with ontologically distinct beings. It is a means of traversing the ontological discontinuity characteristic of analogist collectives and connecting humans and gods through the use of an intermediary animal. Although this was a deeply held view in the ancient Greek world, it was by no means a universally accepted one. Indeed, from the sixth century CE onwards philosophers and religious groups began to question the assumption of difference. As Aryeh Finkelberg argues in his recent work on the Presocratics:

> The early sixth century witnessed the emergence of a new religious attitude. The traditional 'religion of distance' began to yield to the belief in man's kinship with gods: the soul was identified with the individual's self and came to be seen as divine and only temporarily attached to the perishable body, a belief heavily loaded with eschatological implications[12].

In other words, among Presocratic like Thales and Heraclitus the previous emphasis on ontological distinction found in Homer and Hesiod was dissolved through a new emphasis on a divine soul which not only united humans and gods, but often the entire cosmos. Thales, for example, reportedly said that everything was full of gods, magnets possessed souls, and perhaps even that the cosmos itself was "ensouled" (DK 11 A1). Anaximenes in turn closely identified air, soul, and the entire cosmos (DK 13B 2) noting:

> *οἷον ἡ ψυχή ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀήρ οὖσα, συγκρατεί ἡμάς, καὶ ὅλον τόν κόσμον πνεύμα καὶ ἀήρ περιέχει*

[9] HOMER, *The Iliad*, translated by R. Lattimore, Chicago University Press, 1951.

[10] Jean Pierre VERNANT, "At Man's Table: Hesiod's Foundation Myth of Sacrifice", in Detienne, M.; Vernant, J. P. eds, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*, Chicago University, 1989, p. 46.

[11] Philippe DESCOLA, "Presence, ...", p. 42.

[12] Aryeh FINKELBERG, *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme: A Historical Study*, Brill, 2017, p. 302.

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> our soul, which is air, controls us, so do breath and air encompass the whole world-order[13].

Although the evidence is limited, these ideas were not limited to philosophers, but also seem to have occupied a key role in religious cults such as the Orphics. As Aristotle (*De An.* 410b 27–11a 2) notes:

> *τοῦτο δὲ πέπονθε καὶ ὁ ἐν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς ἔπεσι καλουμένοις λόγος· φησὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ ὅλου εἰσιέναι ἀναπνεόντων, φερομένην ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνέμων. οὐχ οἷόν τε δὴ τοῖς φυτοῖς τοῦτο συμβαίνειν οὐδὲ τῶν ζῴων ἐνίοις, εἴπερ μὴ πάντα ἀναπνέουσιν. τοῦτο δὲ λέληθε τοὺς οὕτως ὑπειληφότας.*
>
> The theory in the so-called poems of Orpheus presents the same difficulty; for this theory alleges that the soul, borne by the winds, enters from the universe into animals when they breathe. Now this cannot happen to plants, nor to some animals, since they do not all breathe: a point which has escaped those who support this theory[14].

That the Orphics understood the soul as a kind of cosmic breath is an idea further confirmed by Proclus and Vettius Valens who describes how for the Orphics (OF 436) "it is by drawing in the air that we acquire a divine soul". Although the evidence is slight, it clear and consistent with wider Presocratic trends which suggest the general idea that the soul is identified as a divine element which both surrounds all beings and forms the inner self when inhaled by animals, plants, and humans.

For the Orphics their discussions of the nature of the soul were not mere cosmological speculation. On the contrary, these ideas were intimately related to a new way of life and in particular to the rejection of animal sacrifice[15]. The earliest testimony for the Orphic refusal to sacrifice is possibly found in Herodotus' discussion of the Orphic ban on wool and a cryptic reference to an *ἱρὸς λόγος* ("sacred story")[16]. Although Herodotus' testimony remains unclear Euripides, Aristophanes, and Plato provide more concrete evidence for the early Orphic practice. The Orphic diet is referred to in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (948–54), where Theseus refers to an Orphic diet of "food lacking souls" (*ἀψύχου βορᾶς*), Bacchic rites involving the burning of books, and a particular lifestyle which makes its practitioners companions of the gods. Aristophanes in the *Frogs* (1032) also describes how "Orpheus showed us rites to refrain from murder". Although Aristophanes refers to a general refrain from murder in this passage, it is improbable that Orpheus would be credited with introducing a prohibition on murdering humans. The most important passage on the Orphic rejection of sacrifice, however, comes from Plato:

[13] ARISTOTLE, *On the Soul*, translated by W. S. Hett, Harvard University Press, 1957; modified by Graham: GRAHAM, Daniel, *The Text of the Early Greek Philosophy Part I*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

[14] Trans. For a more detailed study of this passage see Carlos MEGINO, "Presence in Stoicism of an Orphic Doctrine of the Soul quoted by Aristotle (*de Anima* 410b 27 = OF 421)", in Herrero de Jáuregui, M. ed. *Tracing Orpheus: Studies of Orphic Fragments in Honour of Alberto Bernabé*, De Gruyter, 2011, p. 23.

[15] On the more complicated and conflicting Pythagorean sources see James RIVES, "The Theology of Animal Sacrifice in the Ancient Greek World", in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, Wright Knust, J. and Varhelyim, Z. eds, 2011.

[16] Herodotus (2.81). See R. PARKER, "Early Orphism", in Powell, A. ed. *The Greek World*, Routledge, 1995, p. 502.

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τὸ δὲ μὴν θύειν ἀνθρώπους ἀλλήλους ἔτι καὶ νῦν παραμένον ὁρῶμεν πολλοῖς καὶ τοὐναντίον ἀκούομενέν ἄλλοις, ὅτε οὐδὲ βοὸς ἐτόλμων μὲν γεύεσθαι, θύματά τε οὐκ ἦν τοῖς θεοῖσι ζῷα, πέλανοι δὲ καὶ μέλιτι καρποὶ δεδευμένοι καὶτοιαῦτα ἄλλα ἁγνὰ θύματα, σαρκῶν δ' ἀπείχοντο ὡς οὐχ ὅσιον ὂν ἐσθίειν οὐδὲτοὺς τῶν θεῶν βωμοὺς αἵματι μιαίνειν, ἀλλὰ Ὀρφικοί τινες λεγόμενοι βίοι ἐγίγνοντο ἡμῶν τοῖς τότε, ἀψύχων μὲν ἐχόμενοι πάντων, ἐμψύχων δὲ τοὐναντίον πάντων ἀπεχόμενοι.

The custom of men sacrificing one another is, in fact, one that survives even now among many peoples; whereas amongst others we hear of how the opposite custom existed, when they were forbidden so much as to taste an ox, and their offerings to the gods consisted, not of animals, but of cakes of meal and grain steeped in honey, and other pure offerings, and from flesh they abstained as though it were unholy to eat it or to stain with blood the altars of the gods; instead of that, those of us men who then existed lived what is called an 'Orphic life', keeping wholly to soulless food and, contrariwise, abstaining wholly from ensouled beings.

Plato, *Leg.* 782c–d

Plato in this passage refers to an Orphic life (ὀρφικος βίος) involving a total abstinence from blood rites and replacement with pure offerings. Although, the evidence is slight, Aristophanes, Plato, and Euripides' testimonies provide clear evidence that the Orphic rejection of animals was well known and intimately associated with the presence of souls in animals.

WHY WERE ENSOULED ANIMALS NOT SUITABLE SACRIFICES?

That some connection exists between Orphic ideas on the soul and the rejection of ensouled animals is intuitive. However, it remains more elusive why exactly ensouled beings should be seen as inappropriate offerings for the Orphic gods. Although we do not possess any clear Orphic explanation for this practice, if we turn to a near contemporary and kindred spirit, Empedocles (DK 31 B 137), we have a possible answer:

μορφὴν δ' ἀλλάξαντα πατὴρ φίλον υἱὸν ἀείρας
σφάζει ἐπευχόμενος μέγα νήπιος· οἱ δ' ἀπορεῦνται
λισσόμενον θύοντες, ὁ δ' αὖ νήκουστος ὁμοκλέων
σφάξας ἐν μεγάροισι κακὴν ἀλεγύνατο δαῖτα.
ὡς δ' αὕτως πατέρ' υἱὸς ἑλὼν καὶ μητέρα παῖδες
θυμὸν ἀπορραίσαντε φίλας κατὰ σάρκας ἔδουσιν.

The father lifting up his own son in a changed form
slaughters him with a prayer in his great folly, and they are lost
as they sacrifice the suppliant. But he, not heedful of their rebukes,
having made slaughter has prepared in his halls a ghastly banquet.
Just so the son laying hold of the father and the children of the mother
After depriving them of life devour their own kindred flesh[17].

[17] Trans. Graham, *op. cit.*

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Empedocles was a proponent of reincarnation and in this fragment, he explains how eating meat could involve the literal eating of a relative in a "changed form". For James B. Rives it is precisely the doctrine of reincarnation that offers the key to understanding the rejection of animal sacrifice for Empedocles as well as the Pythagoreans and the Orphics. Rives notes:

> the thinkers of the late archaic and classical period who are commonly said to have rejected animal sacrifice were in fact not concerned with animal sacrifice as a cultic practice intended to establish a connection between the human and divine spheres; their concern was instead with the practice of eating meat, which they regarded as problematic because of their belief in the transmigration of souls between humans and animals[18].

Although it is possible that Empedocles rejected sacrifice because it involved the literal eating of relatives, it is unclear whether the same argument can be applied to the Orphic evidence where support for reincarnation, though not entirely absent, is uncertain[19]. Whatever the case, I wish to argue that for the Orphics (and indeed for Empedocles) reincarnation is not the primary reason behind the rejection of sacrifice. Indeed, whether or not souls are reincarnated into human and animal forms, it is sufficient that Empedocles, the Orphics, and the Pythagoreans all considered that similar souls, or in Empedocles' case daimones, are shared by animals, humans, and gods. This shared interiority makes humans and animals related in a more encompassing way than a direct genealogical tie. As Sextus Empiricus puts it in *Against the Physicists* (9.127–129):

> *οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν καὶ τὸν Ἐμπεδοκλέα καὶ τῶν Ἰταλῶν πλῆθος φασὶ μὴ μόνον ἡμῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναί τινα κοινωνίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων. ἓν γὰρ ὑπάρχειν πνεῦμα τὸ διὰ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου διῆκον ψυχῆς τρόπον, τὸ καὶ ἑνοῦν ἡμᾶς πρὸς ἐκεῖνα. διόπερ καὶ κτείνοντες αὐτὰ καὶ ταῖς σαρξὶν αὐτῶν τρεφόμενοι ἀδικήσομέν τε καὶ ἀσεβήσομεν ὡς συγγενεῖς ἀναιροῦντες. ἔνθεν καὶ παρῄνουν οὗτοι οἱ φιλόσοφοι ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἐμψύχων.*
>
> So then, according to Pythagoras and Empedocles, and the rest of the Italian crowd, not only do we have a certain communion with the gods but also with the irrational (*aloga*) animals. For there is one breath that pervades everything in the universe, in the manner of a soul, and this unites us with them. Because of this, to kill them and eat their flesh is a sacrilege as it is a destruction of our own kindred [20].

This passage may initially seem to reiterate Empedocles' warning that sacrifice involves the murder and eating of kin. However, there is an important difference in Sextus' claim. Indeed, although in a world pervaded by a divine breath all creatures are indeed relatives, Sextus emphasises that sacrifice involves far more than the possible murder of our immediate family; it involves the very destruction of the "one breath that pervades everything in the universe, in the manner of a soul, and this unites us".

[18] James RIVES, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

[19] See Gabor BETEGH, "Pythagoreans, Orphism and Greek Religion", in Huffman, C. (ed.) *A History of Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 149–66.

[20] Trans. A. HARDEN, *Animals in the Classical World: Ethical Perspectives from Greek and Roman Texts*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 163.

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This argument importantly provides a crucial link between the Orphic rejection of sacrifice and Orphic speculation on the nature of the soul. Moreover, it points towards a pivotal difference from how Homer and Hesiod understood the ritual. For the Orphics, sacrifice rather than help establish a connection between oppositions, appears to actively harm an existing tie which pervades the cosmos as a whole. And it is precisely because of the presence of this kinship tie that sacrifice becomes problematic.

To understand why sacrifice is problematic in a world pervaded by a divine soul, it may be useful to briefly return to my discussion on why societies sacrifice in the first place. Following Descola discussion of analogist ontologies, I noted that sacrifice in Greece was an effort to connect the two ontologically distinct groups of gods and humans. Descola, however, is emphatic that animist and totemist collectives do not practice sacrifice. This is because animists and totemists already possess a connection to both animals and supernatural beings through their shared interiorities and in the case of totemists through their shared physicalities and interiorities. Given this existing connection, the presence of a ritual used to make a connection with ontologically distinct beings would be "pointless and incongruous"[21]. Although Orphic ontological assumptions are not identical to those of many animist and totemist collectives, given their shared emphasis on ontological continuity and especially the continuity through the presence of a divine soul, an identical argument can be made. The argument in short, is that sacrifice was abandoned not because the presence of souls in animals made the ritual an act of murder, but because the presence of an existing connection through divine souls made sacrifice redundant[22]. Indeed, as far as the early Greek evidence goes, we can even take Descola's claims one step further. For the Orphics and Empedocles, not only did sacrifice cease to perform its proper function, it actively undermined it and harmed humanity's existing kinship connection with the gods and animals alike. A vivid depiction of this can be found in Empedocles' description of an ideal Golden Age (DK 31 B 128):

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμός
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν,
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια.
τὴν οἵ γ' εὐσεβέεσσιν ἀγάλμασιν ἱλάσκοντο
γραπτοῖς τε ζῴοισι μύροισί τε δαιδαλεόδμοις
σμύρνης τ' ἀκρήτου θυσίαις λιβάνου τε θυώδους,
ξανθῶν τε σπονδὰς μελίτων ῥίπτοντες ἐς οὖδας·
ταύρων δ' ἀκρήτοισι φόνοις οὐ δεύετο βωμός,
ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ' ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον,
θυμὸν ἀπορραίσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἠέα γυῖα.

They had no Ares as their god, nor Tumult,
not Zeus the king, nor Cronus nor Poseidon,
but Cypris the queen…

[21] Philippe DESCOLA, *Beyond Culture...*, pp. 229–30.

[22] The emphasis on soul as a means of connecting humans and non-humans is, on the surface at least, similar to how Descola understands animism as a continuity of souls and a discontinuity of bodies. However, as I have argued elsewhere, ontological continuity for the Presocratics occurs in terms of both bodies and souls. See Almqvist (Forthcoming). Rather than animism, this ontology, replacing Descola's classification of totemism, is referred to as homologism or pantheism. The difference between these ontologies is not important for this paper, and whether we speak of animism, homologism, or pantheism, all can be understand as undercutting the distinction of analogism through a focus on ontological continuity.

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whom they propitiated with reverent statues,
with pained pictures, delicate perfumes,
and offerings of undiluted myrrh and fragrant frankincense,
pouring to the ground libation of yellow honey,
the altar was not moistened with the pure blood of bulls,
but this was the greatest abomination to men,
to take away their life and devour their goodly limbs[23].

The horror of sacrifice described in this passage has little to do with reincarnation. Instead, Empedocles outlines how sacrifice results in distancing humans from gods, and even humans from animals. In this passage it emerges that it is because of sacrifice that humans lose the Golden Age under the rule of Cypris, and that once peaceful animals become wild. Hostilities are even introduced among the divinities Kronos, Ares, Tumult, Poseidon, and Zeus[24]. In short, Empedocles outlines how sacrifice rather than a source of unity, is a source of tension and divisions, among humans, and among gods. Although the evidence remains controversial, it is likely that the Orphics also told a similar myth associating sacrifice with the creation of distinctions rather than connections. The myth known as the Orphic anthropogony describes how the Titans sacrificed the god Dionysus and Zeus in retaliation destroyed them with a thunderbolt. From their ashes humanity was born[25].

CONCLUSION: APPROPRIATE OFFERINGS TO THE GODS

My argument in this paper is that sacrifice is not a universal practice, but a response to particular ontological assumptions. In early Greece sacrifice was a means of establishing a connection between ontologically distinct humans and gods. However, from the sixth century on religious groups such as the Orphics and philosophers such as Empedocles rejected the traditional distance between gods, humans, and animals by suggesting that we possess a similar interiority in the form of soul. Because of this shared kinship, sacrifice ceased to fulfil its original purpose. Indeed, not only did it not help establish a connection, I have suggested that for the Orphics and Empedocles alike animal sacrifice actively strained existing kinship ties. Before concluding, I would like to tackle a possible objection to my argument raised by Rives who argues that the Orphics, Pythagoreans, and Empedocles despite the rejection of animal meat continued to sacrifice. What changed according to Rives was simply the nature of the offerings deemed suitable for the gods. In some respects, Rives is correct that the Orphics and others continued to make offerings to the gods through the traditional Greek vocabulary, θύω or sacrifice. However, given the Orphic reconceptualization of the gods, the soul, and animals, I argue that the meaning of this word has shifted from an offering made to establish a connection with ontologically opposed beings, to an act of sharing amongst ontologically similar ones. In other words, the meaning of the ritual and the word itself had fundamentally changed as a result of an ontological transformation. An example of this new orientation can perhaps be detected in the offerings described in the Orphic *Hymns* which frequently begin by allocating a particular perfume or incense to an

[23] Trans. Daniel GRAHAM, *op. cit*.

[24] Claude PICOT, "Empédocle, fr. 128 – Cronos, Poséidon, Cypris, Hadès – Mythe hésiodique des races", in *RMM* 3/2012 (2012).

[25] On the debates surrounding the early presence of this myth see R. PARKER, "Early Orphism", in Anton Powell (ed.), *The Greek World*, 1st ed., London, Routledge, 1995.

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appropriate god. Recent studies of these hymns suggest that the incense mentioned in these poems may constitute the core offering[26]. This makes sense as incense also appears as a key meat substitute in Theophrastus' speculative history of sacrifice where incense offerings are described as original gifts made to the gods prior to animal offerings (Porph. *Abst.* 2.5.3). Empedocles also favoured incense to meat and reportedly offered an ox made of incense in favour of a real one (D.L 8.53). Although the existing fragments of Empedocles' poetry do not explain the meaning behind this offering, an explanation is provided by Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonious*:

> *Ἀνελθόντι δὲ αὐτῷ ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν ὁ μὲν κόσμος ὁ περὶ αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ λόγος θεῖός τε ἐφαίνετο καὶ κατὰ σοφίαν ξυντεθείς, τὸ δὲ τῶν ταύρων αἷμα καὶ οἱ χῆνες καὶ ὁπόσα ἐθύετο, οὐκ ἐπῄνει τὰ τοιάδε, οὐδὲ ἐς δαῖτας θεῶν ἤγεν· ἐρομένου δ' αὐτὸν τοῦ ἱερέως, τί μαθὼν οὐχ οὕτω θύοι, 'σὺ μὲν οὖν' εἶπεν 'ἀπόκριναί μοι μᾶλλον, τί μαθὼν οὕτω θύεις;' εἰπόντος δὲ τοῦ ἱερέως 'καὶ τίς οὕτω δεινός, ὡς διορθοῦσθαι τὰ Αἰγυπτίων;' 'πᾶς' ἔφη 'σοφός, ἢν ἀπ' Ἰνδῶν ἥκῃ. καὶ βοῦν' ἔφη 'ἀπανθρακιῶ τήμερον καὶ κοινώνει τοῦ καπνοῦ ἡμῖν, οὐ γὰρ ἀχθέσῃ περὶ τῆς μοίρας, εἰ κἀκείνην οἱ θεοὶ δαίσονται'.*
>
> When Apollonius had climbed to the sanctuary, its decoration and the lore attached to every part he considered inspired and arranged with wisdom, but he did not approve of the bull's blood, the geese, and all the things offered for sacrifice, nor did he consider them feasts for the gods. The priest asked him on what ground he did not practice this kind of sacrifice, and he replied, "Rather you should answer me on what ground you practice it". The priest replied, "Who is so clever as to correct the customs of Egypt?" "Any wise man", said Apollonius, "if he comes from India. I will roast a bull today", he continued, "and you can join with us in tasting the smoke. You will not complain about your portion, since that is what the gods devour too".

In this passage incense does not appear as a simple substitute for meat, it presents a new means of communicating with the gods. Sacrifice is not about surmounting a division and connecting ontologically opposed beings, rather it is about sharing amongst kin. For Apollonius the offering of an incense bull is superior to meat because gods and humans enjoy equal communion and equal shares of the indivisible smoke. Of course, the ritual act, it may be argued, is still referred to as sacrifice (*θύω*) and we may wish to retain this in our translation. However, even if the word remains stable, we should nonetheless emphasise that the meaning of the term has substantially changed and shifted from an emphasis on hierarchy to equality and ontologically distinct shares to identical shares.

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