Worlds full of signs: ancient Greek divination in context
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2. Defining divination

Point of departure for my definition of divination as used in this book is the idea that divination is a phenomenon concerned with a human search, conscious or subconscious, for signs supposedly coming from the supernatural and the interpretation thereof. Many definitions of divination can be found in the literature.[1] Depending on whether these privilege the conceptions of ancient practitioners or those of modern observers, they can be classified as either predominantly emically or as more etically oriented. As has been noted, in emic definitions the supernatural tends to take an important place as the source of the divinatory sign. Auguste Bouché-Leclercq and Georges Contenau, for example, define divination as having, or finding, knowledge about divine thinking by means of signs.[2] Some would say that divination can be defined as the active human extraction of a sign from the supernatural in order to find

1 Johnston, 'Introduction', 10; although Vernant in 'Paroles et signes muets' in: J.-P. Vernant *et al, Divination et rationalite* (Paris 1974) 9-25, at 9, has chosen not to define divination as such. The sort of questions he poses to the material show that he emphasizes the human factor; for the latter see also E.M. Zuesse, 'Divination' in: M. Eliade & L. Jones (eds), *The encyclopedia of religion* vols 16 (1987) Vol. 4, 375-382, at 375; G. van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen 1933) 355-360.
2 Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination*, Vol. 1, 7; Contenau, *La divination*, 9.

answers to questions and acquire knowledge of the unknown.[3] Both types of definition suppose the supernatural plays an active role in the divinatory process.[4] Another variation is the use of the word 'communication' (between man and supernatural) without the etic addition that this would have been *perceived* communication. Such a definition is essentially emic.

Other definitions use both etic and emic wording, inviting confusion. One example is Hartmut Zinser's definition in the *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*: he states that the purpose of divination is to find out what is as yet – and by human means – unknown.[5] Zinser incorporates function in his definition and does not explicitly mention the supernatural, suggesting an etic outlook. Nevertheless his definition is still partly emic in nature because knowledge gained by means of divination is *perceived* knowledge: it is impossible to find out the unknown.

There are etic definitions, too. The *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum* defines divination as the human observation of perceived divine signs and the response to these.[6] The *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* also emphasizes human observation and subsequent

3   M. Loewe & C. Blacker, 'Introduction' in: M. Loewe & C. Blacker (eds), *Divination and oracles* (London 1981) 1-2, at 1.

4   The emic vocabulary related to divination in the three units of comparison is found in Appendix 1.

5   H. Zinser, 'Mantik' in: *HrwG* (Stuttgart 1988) Vol. 4, 109-113, at 109.

6   W. Burkert, '6.a Divination: Mantik in Griechenland' in: *ThesCRA* (2005) Vol. 3, 1-51, at 1.

interpretation, allowing the individual an active role.[7] These defini-tions can be improved upon by assigning the human actor an even more central role: the individual not only interprets the sign but also creates it by detecting and recognizing it. This is an element not made explicit in many of the available definitions.[8]

For the present purpose, what is needed is a cross-culturally applicable, concise, etic definition that takes account of this twofold human role in producing and interpreting the sign. I propose the following etic definition: divination is the human action of produc-tion – by means of evocation or detection and recognition – and subsequent interpretation of signs attributed to the supernatural. These signs can be anything which the supernatural is perceived to place in an object (in the widest sense of the word), whether evoked or unprovoked, whether visible, olfactory or auditory: in all cases the human must recognize a sign as coming from the supernatural in order to consider it as a divinatory sign.[9] Once this has occurred,

7   Maul, 'Omina und Orakel', 45-46.

8   Such as the definition in J.N. Bremmer, 'Divination VI. Greek' in: H. Cancik & H. Schneider (eds), *Brill's New Pauly Online*. Visited 23-1-2010.

9   As appears from this definition, I do not make a distinction between 'prophecy', 'omen divination' and so on – made by, e.g., M. Nissinen, 'Prophecy and omen divination: two sides of the same coin' in: A. Annus (ed.), *Divination and interpretation of signs in the ancient world* (Chicago 2010) 341-351. According to my definition, the sayings of a prophet such as those of Ishtar, or the pronouncements of the Pythia at the Delphic Oracle, are simply auditory signs. For emphasis on how interpretation is culturally specific cf. A. Hollmann, *The master of signs: signs and the interpretation of*

the signs need to be interpreted – whether this task is straightforward or difficult. This (culturally specific) interpretation produces a clear message.[10] On the basis of this definition, the following three constituent elements can be identified in the process of divination: first, the *homo divinans* – a term used here to designate any person divining, whether layman or professional –; second, the sign he detects, recognizes, and interprets; and third, the oral or written textual framework which the *homo divinans* might use while divining. These are the subjects of the chapters in Part II below. This definition allows room for variation in the functions of divination: to receive perceived information from the supernatural, to right what has gone wrong in the past, to know why the present is the way it is or to provide a – more or less detailed – guideline for the future. In short, the function of divination is to diminish uncertainty about the past, present and the future. Although divination is future oriented, it is also concerned with past and present – but it is always connected with uncertainty.[11]

signs in Herodotus' Histories (Cambridge, MA 2011) 32-54.

10   Some have considered divination, especially Greek divination, to be an ambiguous practice. However, in practice, everything was done to make the outcomes of divination as clear as possible. The only sources highlighting ambiguity are such literary sources as Herodotos and it can be argued that they did this for very specific rhetorical reasons. Cf. K. Beerden & F.G. Naerebout, '"Gods cannot tell lies": riddling and ancient Greek divination' in: J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain & M. Szymanski (eds.), *The muse at play: riddles and wordplay in Greek and Latin poetry* (Berlin 2012) 121-147.

11   For example, this uncertainty could be the consequence of the anger

THE DIVINATORY PROCESS AND ITS FUNCTION

My definition of divination consists of a number of elements – human agent (*homo divinans*), text and sign. Evocation, detection, recognition and interpretation are the actions of the individual in the divinatory process.

A sign is 'anything, whether object, sound, action, or event, which is capable of standing for something in some respect'.[12] A divinatory sign had to be recognized. It could be something which an individual detected and recognized as being out of the ordinary: a sign could therefore be a special occurrence, a disruption in the patterns

of the supernatural (as in Ael. *VH* 6.7) or other crises. Divination therefore might be called a 'high-intensity' ritual: it was performed in times of need. The contrasting occasion would be a low-intensity ritual: a ritual which was held to maintain relations with the supernatural, for instance, regular offerings. A special offering in time of crisis, on the other hand, is another example of a high-intensity ritual. It should be noted that this distinction is, in practice, not as very clear-cut as G. Ekroth indicates (G. Ekroth, *The sacrificial rituals of Greek hero-cults in the Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods* (Liège 2002) 326-328), I have therefore not used this distinction in what follows. Cf. A.M. de Waal-Malefijt, *Religion and culture: an introduction to anthropology of religion* (London 1968) 198-227; J.G. Platvoet, *Comparing religions: a limitative approach. An analysis of Akan, Para-Creole and Ifo-Sananda rites and prayers* (The Hague 1982) 27-28; J. van Baal, 'Offering, sacrifice and gift', *Numen* 23 (1976) 161-178, at 168.

12   Hollmann, *The master of signs*, 3.

of normality.[13] However, a sign could also be something perfectly normal which only became significant at the moment at which an individual detected it and recognized it as a sign.[14] It could be argued that the spontaneous occurrence of dark fungus in a house was a special occurrence[15] – if it was taken to be a sign. It was then significant in the mind of the individual who recognized it for what it, in his opinion, was. The supernatural could also be asked to give a sign by the performance of a ritual of evocation. Even in this case, the resulting sign would still needed to be recognized – although it will have been more obvious what was being looked for if the shape of the requested sign had been specified.

A sign should not have been influenced by humans: the sign had to be 'objective'. Fritz Graf mentions the 'randomising element' in divination.[16] A prime example is the use of dice for divinatory pur-

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13   As W. Burkert puts it: 'Chance events could be turned into signs by "accepting" them.' W. Burkert, *Creation of the sacred: tracks of biology in early religions* (Cambridge MA 1996) 159. It should be noted that 'chance events' is a too restrictive term: the events in question might also be 'non-chance'.

14   For which crises and uncertain situations were perfect occasions. Cf. Burkert, *Creation of the sacred*, 162.

15   *Šumma ālu* tablet 12.43 as published by Freedman in: *If a city is set on a height*, Vol. 1.

16   Graf, 'Rolling the dice', 61. This idea is also visible in S.I. Johnston, 'Charming children: the use of the child in ancient divination', *Areth* 34 (2001) 97-117, at 109 – see also the references she provides. For more references on this topic see H.S. Versnel, *Transitions & reversal in myth & ritual* (Leiden 1993) 174 n.158.

poses. However, despite (or perhaps even because) randomization, signs could always be – or be suspected of having been – tweaked or influenced.[17]

Signs could occur in many shapes and forms, but are here categorized into two categories: of observation and discourse.[18] Within

17   But if the validity of divination was called into doubt, it was usually not the sign which was doubted, but its interpretation.

18   In the past, signs have been classified in many ways. The first classification is by means of method. Ernest Stefan Magnus has provided a historiographical overview of classifications of methods on the basis of a number of prominent publications about divination. The most used categorization is – what he calls – ecstatic versus technical. This distinction between intuitive ('ecstatic') and technical ('scientific') divination, referring to differences in the ways signs might manifest themselves and in the methods used to interpret them, goes back to Antiquity. (E.S. Magnus provides an overview of divisions of divination: E.S. Magnus, *Die Divination, ihr Wesen und ihre Struktur, besonders in den sogenannten primitiven Gesellschaften: eine einführende Abhandlung auf vergleichender religionsphänomenologischer Basis unter Berücksichtigung von parapsychologischen Ergebnissen und soziologischen Aspekten* (Hannover 1975) 225-243. Note that in the category of prophecy, there are elements which can be called ecstatic, but also interpretive, artificial or 'rational', as Mazzoldi and Bonnechere rightly state: S. Mazzoldi, 'Cassandra's prophecy between ecstacy and rational mediation', *Kernos* 15 (2002) 145-154; P. Bonnechere, 'Mantique, transe et phénomènes psychiques à Lébadée: entre rationnel et irrationnel en Grèce et dans la pensée moderne', *Kernos* 15 (2002) 179-186.) In his *De divinatione* – the most systematic work on divination left to us from the ancient world –, perhaps drawing inspiration from Plato's distinction between 'manic' and 'sane' div-

the category of observation, a human could observe visual or olfactory signs. These signs could be evoked or unprovoked. This category covers methods as varied as zoomancy/theriomancy (including ornithomancy and alectryonomancy), teratomancy, morphoscopy, hieroscopy, astronomy, empyromancy, dendromancy, aleuromancy, cleromancy, hydromancy, lithomancy/psephomancy, brontoscopy, keraunoscopy, nephomancy, anemoscopy, rhabdomancy, tyromancy, axinomancy, koskinomancy, sphondylomancy, ooscopy, libanomancy, and idolomancy.[19]

ination, Cicero distinguishes between *divinatio naturalis* (including prophecies or oracles provided in a state of frenzy and in dreams) and *divinatio artificiosa* (*ars*, basically all other signs) (Pl. *Phdr.* 244a-d; Cic. *Div.* 1.6.12). Two other frequently used categorizations are based on how and where the sign occurred: evoked versus unprovoked divination and terrestrial versus heavenly signs. The latter distinction, derived from the Mesopotamian compendia, is regularly used in Assyriological studies. It refers to the distinction between signs appearing on earth and those appearing in the skies (For example, in the article Maul, 'Omina und Orakel', 54-88.) I hasten to add that these classifications on the basis of the sign are only some of the many possibilities.

19   This is a non-exhaustive list primarily based on Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination*, *passim*. Zoomancy/theriomancy: *Šumma ālu* tablets 23-49; Aesch. *Cho.* 525-550; Ael. *NA* 11.2; Cic. *Div.* 1.18.34; Paus. 6.2.4/ FGrH 325 F 20; Theophr. *Char.* 16; Plaut. *Stich.* 3.2.45; Obseq. 12; Ath. 8.8; Liv. 42.2.3-7 (fish general); Obseq. 67-68; Plin. *NH* 2.96.98-99; Obseq. 16; Cic. *Div.*1.33.73; *Šumma ālu* tablets 65-79; SAA 10 58; Eur. *Ion* 180; Ar. *Av.* 16-22; *Syll.*[3] 1167; Polyb. 6.27; Cic. *Div.* 1.2.3; 2.34.71-72; Lucianus. *Somn.* 2; Amm. Marc. 29.1. Teratomancy: *Šumma izbu*; SAA 8 238; *Šumma ālu* tablets

Divination by means of discursive signs refers to the interpretation of verbal signs either in the shape of human language or meta-linguistic sounds.[20] If a medium was used, this was another being, dead or alive, who provided the *homo divinans* (or his client) with

80-87, 103-104; Liv. 27.4.11-15; Liv. 27.11.1-6; Liv. 22.57.2-6. Morphoscopy: elements from *Alamdimmû and* Melamp., *Peri elaion tou somatos.* Hieroscopy: *Barūtu;* Eur. *El.* 826-833; Cic. *Div.* 1.52.119 ; Liv. 30.2.9-13. Astronomy: *Enūma Anu Enlil* tablets 1-22; Hymn. Hom. *In Lunam* 14; Plut. *Vit. Marc.* 4.1; *Enūma Anu Enlil* tablets 23-36; Herodorus of Heracleia *apud* Ath. 6.231d; Liv. 28.11.1-7; *Enūma Anu Enlil* tablets 37-49; Ar. *Ach.* 171; *Enūma Anu Enlil* tablets 50-70; Liv. 30.2.9-13. Empyromancy: *Šumma ālu* tablets 50-52; Soph. *Ant.* 1005-1011; *CIG* 5763/5771. Dendromancy: *Šumma ālu* tablets 54-60; Soph. *Trach.* 1158-1179; Theophr. *Caus. Pl.* 5.4.3; Plin. 17.38.243; Liv. 32.1.10-14. Aleuromancy: AO 3112; Hesych. s.v. *aleuromanteia.* Cleromancy: Hom. *Il.* 7.175-190; Cic. *Div.* 2. 41.85-87. Hydromancy: in the widest sense of the word: *Šumma ālu* tablets 61-63; Arr. *An.* 4.15.7-8; Plin. *NH* 31.3.27; 2.27; Paus. 3.23.8; Liv. 7.2.1-7.3.8. Lithomancy/psephomancy: LKA 137; Ps.-Plut. *Op. cit.* 21.2; Liv. 25.7.7-9; *Šumma ālu* tablets 1-22. Brontoscopy: SAA 8 1; Xen. *Ap.* 12; Hom. *Od.* 20.105-20.122; Nigid. brontoscopic calendar. Keraunoscopy: Liv. 10.31.8. Nephomancy: SAA 8 78; Liv. 37.3.1-6. Anemoscopy: SAA 8 4; Ael. *VH* 8.5; Obseq. 56a; Obseq. 62. Rhabdomancy: (non-Greek practice according to) Hdt. 4.67; Soph. *Trach.* 1165. Tyromancy: Artem. 2.69. Axinomancy: Plin. *NH* 30.1.14; 36.19.34. Koskinomancy: Artem. 2.69; Theoc. *Id.* 3.31. Sphondylomancy: Poll. 7.188. Ooscopy: Suid. s.v. *egchuton.* Libanomancy: Plin. *NH* 15.30.135.

20   SAA 9 4; Aesch. *Ag.* 1080-1195; Liv. 25.12; Dodonaïc tablets; Cic. *Div.* 1.18.34; Melamp., *Peri palmôn mantikes*; Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 14; 48; Cic. *Div.* 2.40.83-84.

the sign. Dreams and visions can be observational or discursive, or both: the categories are not mutually exclusive.[21]

The *homo divinans*, whether a layman or an expert diviner, interpreted the sign – with the help of an oral or written text, by means of discussion or simply on the basis of his own personal experience.[22] If a lay *homo divinans* was content with his own explanation of a sign, no expert needed to be involved in the process. If he was unsure, he would consult an expert who had, in his opinion, special knowledge:

> Just at this time, as Alexander was sacrificing, wearing garlands, and just about to initiate the first victim according to the ceremonial, a carnivorous bird hovering over the altar dropped on his head a stone which it was carrying in its talons. Alexander asked Aristander the seer what this omen of the bird meant, and he answered: "O King, you will capture the city; but for today you must look to yourself."[23]

21   [d]Zaqīqu; Hdt. 1.108; Hom. *Od.* 19.560-565; Hdt. 3.124 ; Cic. *Div.* 1.20.39-1.30.65. Note that epiphanies were not necessarily considered to be divinatory – it depends on whether or not a sign was provided in the epiphany.

22   See for an example of the idea that a diviner was needed to answer difficult questions: Aeschin. *In Tim.* 75-76. An example of a discussion about the meaning of a sign: Hom. *Od.* 15.160-15.178.

23   Arr. *Anab.* 2.26.4. Translation by P.A. Brunt. Edition: Teubner.
καὶ ἐν τούτῳ θύοντι Ἀλεξάνδρῳ καὶ ἐστεφανωμένῳ τε καὶ κατάρχεσθαι μέλλοντι τοῦ πρώτου ἱερείου κατὰ νόμον τῶν τις σαρκοφάγων ὀρνίθων ὑπερπετόμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βωμοῦ λίθον ἐμβάλλει ἐς τὴν κεφαλήν, ὅντινα τοῖν ποδοῖν ἔφερε. καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ἤρετο Ἀρίστανδρον τὸν μάντιν, ὅ τι νοοῖ ὁ οἰωνός. ὁ δὲ ἀποκρίνεται ὅτι· ὦ βασιλεῦ, τὴν μὲν πόλιν αἱρήσεις, αὐτῷ δέ σοι φυλακτέα ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῇδε τῇ ἡμέρᾳ.

The layman could also begin by consulting an expert when special knowledge of the divinatory process was needed. This expert would make a query for the client and interpret the sign. Of course, an expert could also recognize an unprovoked sign on his own account, choosing to share this knowledge with the person for whom the sign was, in his opinion, intended. It is, of course, possible that more than one *homo divinans* took part in this process. The prerequisite for any *homo divinans*, layman or expert, was 'omen-mindedness'. This term expresses the idea that human beings are constantly on the lookout for occurrences to provide them with meaning, as ancient individuals were and modern individuals still are. In other words, it expresses the idea that humans seek to detect agency in the environment – any occurrence is thought to have been brought about by someone or something.[24] In Antiquity, these agents were

24   I thank Dr U. Koch for bringing the cognitive approach to divination to my attention: Koch, 'Cognitive theory and the first-millennium extispicy ritual', 43-59; J.P. Sørensen, 'Cognitive underpinnings of divinatory practices' in: K. Munk & A. Lisdorf (eds), *Unveiling the hidden* (forthcoming) 311-327; A. Lisdorf, *The dissemination of divination in Roman republican times: a cognitive approach* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2007). See further, more generally on cognitive theory the following volumes which I found helpful, T. Tremlin, *Minds and gods: the cognitive foundations of religion* (Oxford 2006), especially 75-200; P. Boyer, *Religion explained: the human instincts that fashion gods, spirits and ancestors* (London 2001); P. Boyer & C. Ramble, 'Cognitive templates for religious concepts: cross-cultural evidence for recall of counter-intuitive representations', *CogS* 25 (2001) 535-564; J. Andresen, *Religion in mind: cognitive perspectives on*

usually people or animals. If an event for which no person or animal could be held responsible took place, humans still required an agent to explain the event: on account of the omnipresent belief in the existence of a supernatural in the ancient world, people could easily attribute otherwise unexplained occurrences to a 'hidden agent' of this type. In the field of cognitive religion this is called the 'Agency Detection Device'. Naturally, some sort of selection of what was a sign and what was not, would need to have been made in what has been dubbed: '[…] the economy of signification.'[25]

The divinatory process could be prognostic or diagnostic. It was prognostic when the sign was used to reveal unknowns still in the future. It could be diagnostic, too: a client could visit an expert sfter some misfortune had befallen him. The expert would ask whether or not the client had seen a particular sign. If so, this sign could be used to explain the particular current misfortune. During this process, the expert reasoned back in time, pinpointing the sign by deducing it from its consequences.[26]

When evoking a sign or interpreting it, or in both stages, the *homo divinans* could use a text. This text could be performative ('I evoke

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religious belief, ritual, and experience (Cambridge 2001); I. Pyysiäinen & V. Anttonen (eds), *Current approaches in the cognitive science of religion* (London 2002); M. Graves, *Mind, brain and the elusive soul: human systems of cognitive science and* religion (Aldershot 2008); J. Sørensen, *A cognitive theory of magic* (Lanham, MD 2007).

25   Smith, *Imagining religion,* 56.
26   This was first pointed out to me in a lecture by Dr U. Koch (2010).

a sign'), informative ('This particular sign X') or prescriptive ('This particular sign should be interpreted as follows'). These three main etic elements in the divinatory process are depicted in relationship to one another (Figure 1).

Figure 1: divinatory elements
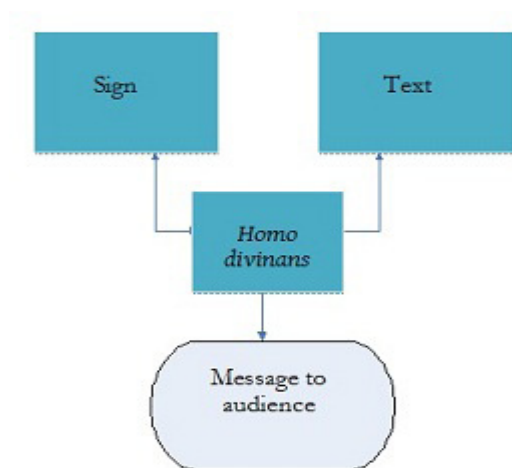
Partly inspired by D. Zeitlyn: 'Finding meaning in the text:
the process of interpretation in text-based divination',
JRAI 7 (2001) 225-240, at 227.

It should be noted that the relative importance of each element could be greater or smaller in any given cultural area: variations in importance between the three elements illuminate what is specific to Mesopotamian, Greek, and Roman divination. The message to the

audience, the final element in the divinatory process, was completely dependent on specific situations and is therefore not suitable for analysis here. Hence, the message will play only a minor part in my investigations.

An etic model, based on an etic definition, provides a deeper understanding of divinatory practice than does its emic counterpart when looking from a scholarly point of view.[27] The model shown in Appendix 2 depicts objects as squares and actions as ovals It works as follows: first the individual detects and recognizes a sign. In the case of evoked divination, he has specifically asked for the sign and in his act of recognition acknowledges the sign to be the one he asked for; in the case of non-evoked divination he needs to designate a spontaneous occurrence as a sign. Then the *homo divinans* interprets the sign in question, after which it acquires an understandable meaning. The sign has become a message. Lastly the meaning provides the audience (either the *homo divinans* himself or his client) with knowledge about an issue about which he might have been concerned (although this concern does not need to have been articulated). This knowledge can stimulate the individual to act or decide, although this is not invariably so. It should be noted that in this etic model, too, misinterpretation of a sign is always possible (although this is a debatable issue in emic practice).

An important aspect that is implicitly depicted in the model is the function of divination. The outcome of the divinatory process, in the

27   For a more emic model see D. Briquel, 'Divination VII. Rome' in: H. Cancik & H. Schneider, *Brill's New Pauly Online*. Visited 23-1-2010.

shape of a message, provided the *homo divinans* with information which led to some perceived degree of certainty about causal links between past occurrences and present conditions, or even about events in the (near) future – for both public and private purposes.

Foundations of the process

The provision of divinatory signs by the supernatural should be seen in a larger context: that of perceived reciprocal relationships between mankind and its supernatural.[28] Ancient reciprocity 'is to be found as an ethical value, as a factor in interpersonal relations, as an element of political cohesion, as economically significant, as a way of structuring human relations with a deity, as shaping the pattern of epic and historical narrative, as a central theme of drama.'[29] Reciprocity lay at the heart of social, economic and political life.[30] Participation in perceived reciprocal relationships between man

28   On reciprocity and tragedy see R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and ritual: Homer and tragedy in the developing city-state* (Oxford 1994); for 'the gift' in mythology see, among others, J.F. Nagy, 'The deceptive gift in Greek mythology', *Areth* 14 (1981) 191-203.

29   R. Seaford, 'Introduction to reciprocity' in: C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite & R. Seaford (eds), *Reciprocity in ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998) 1-11, at 1.

30   H. van Wees, 'The law of gratitude: reciprocity in anthropological theory' in: C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite & R. Seaford (eds), *Reciprocity in ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998) 13-49, at 15.

and supernatural can be said to have been obligatory in the ancient world – for both parties.[31]

Reciprocal exchange creates a relationship between the parties: the transaction was therefore usually not instantaneous and the items exchanged were not required to have the same value.[32] They could, however, be of an economic nature.

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31   If one individual gives to another on the understanding that this person will return the gift in some way, the ultimate purpose of reciprocity is putting another individual under a new or renewed obligation, either positive or negative, thereby creating a new (balance in a) relationship. It has been argued many times that early Greece was a society in which a very 'competitive generosity ruled'. See H. van Wees, 'Greed, generosity and gift exchange in early Greece and the western Pacific' in: W. Jongman & M. Kleijwegt (eds), *After the past: essays in ancient history in honour of H.W. Pleket* (Leiden 2002) 341-378, at 342 n.2. On biological explanations for gift-giving more generally see W. Burkert, 'Offerings in perspective: surrender, distribution, exchange' in: T. Linders & G. Nordquist (eds), *Gifts to the gods: proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1985* (Uppsala 1987) 43-50, at 44.

32   The value of the gifts – in both directions and both positive or negative – is primarily based on the value of the social meaning of the action of giving itself (R. Brown, *Social psychology: the second edition* (New York 1986). Negative reciprocity is of two kinds: the first in which the attitude of one of the parties in the exchange is selfish; the second in which the object given is negative. Cf. Van Wees, 'The law of gratitude', 24. 'The harm of taking away something cannot be undone by simply giving something comparable in return. This might explain why violence and aggression are likely to escalate much faster than kindness and co-operation.

Perceived relationships between humans and the supernatural were of an asymmetrical nature: ultimately humans were completely dependent on the supernatural as a source of benefits, protection and guidance, as well as providing for their afterlives (if applicable). They needed to compensate – although they never fully could! – the supernatural for the good it gave (or to improve on current gifts).[33] This asymmetrical relationship was the least severable reciprocal tie there was: ancient man could not quit this relationship – there was no life without the supernatural.[34] Without this human-divine relationship society was not perceived to be able to function and, more specifically related to this discussion, individuals would have been without divinatory signs to assist them.

The place of Greek divination in the system of reciprocal relationships between human and divine did change over time. The first step in examining the process is to discuss the 'gift' of knowledge of interpretation. The Archaic historical and mythological materials and those sources reflecting these times show unequivocally that knowledge of divination was originally perceived to be a gift from the supernatural, for which something had to be given in return: the

33   H.S. Versnel, 'Self-sacfrice, compensation and the anonymous gods' in: *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (Genève 1980) 135-194, at 177.

34   E.g., R. Parker, 'Pleasing thighs: reciprocity in Greek religion' in: C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite & R. Seaford (eds), *Reciprocity in ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998) 105-125, at 122-124. The sources he used for this argument also deal with *philia* between man and supernatural, among other topics: Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1238b26-39; *Eth. Nic.* 1158b33-1159a12.

mythological Teiresias gained knowledge of divination and his sight was taken in exchange. In other accounts of Archaic or mythological times, too, knowledge of divination could come at a price.[35] Between the Archaic and the Classical period a development can be discerned in accounts of the myth of Prometheus: the Hesiodic and Sapphic myths do not mention divination.[36] However, divination comes to the forefront when Prometheus is made the tragic hero of Aeschylos'

35   Aesch. *Ag.* 248-254; and Phineus' sight in A.R. *Argonautica* 2.178-208. It should be noted that this was not invariably the case: Kalchas, for example, acquired divinatory skills while nothing was taken from him and he was not reported to have sacrificed anything in particular.

36   Prometheus was a cunning individual who tricked Zeus into accepting the fatty parts of the animal for sacrifice and stole fire from the gods – the gods then gave woman and many other evils to man as a punishment. For a more detailed side-by-side analysis of the slightly different ways Hesiod treats this episode see: R. Lamberton, *Hesiod* (New Haven 1988) 95-100. Sappho, too, appears to have referred to the myth in this Hesiodic form in one of her poems, which leads to the assumption that this rendering of the myth was mainstream in the Archaic age. Servius, commenting on Virg. *Ecl.* 6.42. For a perspective on the development of the myth of Prometheus, which supposedly comes from the Near East and was developed in Greece by Hesiod and Aeschylos see J. Duchemin, *Prométhée: histoire du mythe, de ses origines orientales à ses incarnations modernes* (Paris 1974), especially 59-81. One of the most canonical publications about Prometheus (apart from commentaries) is still K. Kerényi, *Prometheus: das griechische Mythologem von der menschlichen Existenz* (Zürich 1946) although C. Dougherty, *Prometheus* (London 2006) might usurp its place.

tragedy *Prometheus Bound*.[37] In this tragedy, Prometheus had stolen not only fire but also knowledge of divination – both 'natural' in the shape of dreams and 'artificial' as in for example extispicy – , medicine and other arts and has given these to man:

> And I marked out many ways by which they might read the future, and among dreams I first discerned which are destined to come true; and voices baffling interpretation I explained to them, and signs from chance meetings. The flight of crook-taloned birds I distinguished clearly— which by nature are auspicious, which sinister—their various modes of life, their mutual feuds and loves, and their consortings; and the smoothness of their entrails, and what color the gall must have to please the gods, also the speckled symmetry of the liver-lobe; and the thigh-bones, wrapped in fat, and the long chine I burned and initiated mankind into an occult art. Also I cleared their vision to discern signs from flames, which were obscure before this.[38]

37   Usually dated to the first half of the 5th century. This was around the time coinage was introduced and society was greatly changed as a result of this. This is not the place to discuss dating of the play in greater detail, and the dating is certain enough to build this argument on it. For a discussion of the authenticity of this play see M. Griffith, *The authenticity of* Prometheus Bound 2 vols (Cambridge 1977). It has generally been argued that Aeschylos' work reflects some very important changes to the way Hesiod deals with the myth: Aeschylos' Prometheus myth no longer explains human suffering, but human progress. On the depiction of man in a state of need see D.J. Conacher, *Aeschylus'* Prometheus Bound: *a literary commentary* (Toronto 1980) 49-51.

38   Aesch. *PV.* 484-499. Translation: H.W. Smyth.
τρόπους τε πολλοὺς μαντικῆς ἐστοίχισα, | κἄκρινα πρῶτος ἐξ ὀνειράτων ἃ χρὴ | ὕπαρ γενέσθαι, κληδόνας τε | δυσκρίτους | ἐγνώρισ' αὐτοῖς ἐνοδίους τε συμβό-

It seems that in Archaic times divination was perceived as a gift from the supernatural but from early Classical times it was seen as knowledge that now belonged to man, it having been 'stolen' from the supernatural. This may show how, in the Classical period, divination increasingly was perceived to be a knowledge-based skill which could be learned (instead of a primarily inspired practice), in the way, e.g., the expert Thrasullos learned his arts by quite natural means.[39]

The second point to explore is concerned with the place of individual signs in the human-divine reciprocal relationship. Especially in Greece, the idea that individual signs were usually perceived to be a gift from the supernatural was often made explicit, but this perception was less well pronounced in Rome and Mesopotamia.[40] Nevertheless, during Mesopotamian-evoked extispicy, the gods Šamaš and Adad were called upon to provide man with signs (after having received a sacrificial gift).[41] Implicitly, these can be consid-

λους, | γαμψωνύχων τε πτῆσιν οἰωνῶν σκεθρῶς | διώρισ', οἵτινές τε δεξιοὶ φύσιν | εὐωνύμους τε, καὶ δίαιταν ἥντινα | ἔχουσ' ἕκαστοι καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους τίνες | ἔχθραι τε καὶ στέργηθρα καὶ συνεδρίαι· | σπλάγχνων τε λειότητα, καὶ χροιὰν τίνα | ἔχουσ' ἂν εἴη δαίμοσιν πρὸς ἡδονὴν | χολή, λοβοῦ τε ποικίλην εὐμορφίαν· | κνίσηι τε κῶλα συγκαλυπτὰ καὶ μακρὰν | ὀσφῦν πυρώσας δυστέκμαρτον εἰς τέχνην | ὥδωσα θνητούς, καὶ φλογωπὰ σήματα | ἐξωμμάτωσα πρόσθεν ὄντ' ἐπάργεμα.

39   Isoc. *Aegineticus* 5-6.

40   A great many examples could be provided here, also from Classical and Hellenistic times. See among many others: App. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.540-554.

41   See I. Starr, *Queries to the sungod: divination and politics in Sargonid Assyria* (Helsinki 1990) *passim*, for Mesopotamian examples of evoking the

ered gifts from the supernatural – and gifts were given to the supernatural in return. Even in Rome and Mesopotamia (as in Greece), it can be seen that humans attempted either to give back to the supernatural or provided gifts (usually by means of sacrifice) in order to build up some 'credit' in their reciprocal relationship with the supernatural. A spontaneous sign was among the things to be expected among future benefits.[42]

gods in order to receive a sign.

42   On votives and sacrifice see especially their recent explicit contextualization into the 'god-man-communication-debate': C. Frevel & H. von Hesberg (eds), *Kult und Kommunikation: Medien in Heiligtümern der Antike* (Wiesbaden 2007) 183-466; W.H.D. Rouse, *Greek votive offerings: an essay in the history of Greek religion* (Cambridge 1902); F.T. van Straten, 'Gifts for the gods' in: H. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, hope and worship: aspects of religious mentality in the ancient world* (Leiden 1981) 65-151; F.T. van Straten, 'Votives and votaries in Greek sanctuaries' in: A. Schachter *et al.* (eds), *Le sanctuaire Grec: huit exposés suivis de discussions* (Geneva 1992) 247-290; F. Graf, 'Sacrifices, offerings, and votives: Greek' in: S.I. Johnston (ed.), *Religions of the ancient world: a guide* (Cambridge, MA 2002) 342-243; I.S. Ryberg, *Rites of the state religion in Roman art* (New Haven 1955); R.L. Gordon, 'The veil of power: emperors, sacrificers, and benefactors' in: M. Beard & J. North (eds), *Pagan priests: religion and power in the ancient world* (London 1990) 199-231; W. Burkert, 'Glaube und Verhalten: Zeichengehalt und Wirkungsmacht von Opferritualen' in: J. Rudhardt & O. Reverdin (eds), *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (Genève 1981) 91-133.

Contextualization

Magic, science or religion?

In the existing literature, divination has been assigned to the realms of science, magic, or religion.[43] The fly in the ointment is that the definitions of these categories are often vague. Adding to the confusion, both emic and etic definitions are regularly used indiscriminately.[44]

Divination has, by some, been put into the realm of the non-theistic, saying that divinatory signs were perceived not to have come from the supernatural.[45] In so far as this is so, the individuals who

[43]   On relationships between these three, taking special account of B. Malinowski's and J. Goody's ideas see K.E. Rosengren, 'Malinowski's magic: the riddle of the empty cell', *CurrAnthr* 17 (1976) 667-685. A number of key publications discussing religion, magic and science are H.G. Kippenberg, *Magie: die sozialwissenschaftliche Kontroverse über das Verstehen fremden Denkens* (Frankfurt am Main 1978); J. Neusner, E.S. Frerichs & P.V. McCracken Flesher (eds), *Religion, science, and magic: in concert and in conflict* (Oxford 1989) and S.J. Tambiah, *Magic, science, religion, and the scope of rationality* (Cambridge 1990). I shall not venture into this discussion, my only purpose is to provide a background to the discussion about the current state of scholarship in publications about ancient divination on this topic.

[44]   For a concise overview of the 19th- and 20th-century traditions about defining religion and magic see especially G. Cunningham, *Religion and magic: approaches and theories* (Edinburgh 1999) but also, with an emphasis on the way great anthropologists, like B. Malinowski, have dealt with this theme: Tambiah, *Magic, science, religion.*

[45]   W. van Binsbergen & F. Wiggerman, 'Magic in history: a theoretical

reasoned like this were philosophers and other members of the elite

perspective, and its application to Mesopotamia' in: T. Abusch & K. van der Toorn (eds), *Mesopotamian magic, textual, historical and interpretative perspectives* (Groningen 1999) 3-34, at 25-27. At least in the matter of divination, Assyriologists seem, less troubled about the magic-religion than about the magic/religion-science debate. The discussion can be summarized as follows: owing to the systematic nature of the compendia and their casuistic structure it has often been argued that divination is a science. A science would in this case be defined as 'a way to rationally find out what will happen in the future'. In short, the compendia are the rational ways: they provide the guidelines in order to find out about the perceived cause-effect relationship (see for the pros and cons of this argument Guinan, 'A severed head laughed', 19-20). Another approach used to explore the science angle is the use of 'historical omens' (see for some examples of this kind of omen the two published by I. Starr, 'Historical omens concerning Assurbanipal's war against Elam', *AfO* 32 (1985) 60-67). The outline of the discussion is as follows: the 'historical omens' follow the pattern 'when X took place, the liver looked like this'. These 'facts' were written down for future reference when event X took place. The purpose was to ensure that when the liver looked the same at some point in the future, the diviner could predict what would happen on the basis of these 'records'. It should be noted that the historicity of the historical omens is hotly debated. These 'historical omens' would help to argue that the omens were originally noted on an empirical basis (and are scientifically grounded). This empirical basis has also been argued on other grounds, to a fairly persuasive extent. Some of the most important literature on 'historical omens', empiricism and divination as a science (including those for and against the idea) is: Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian astrology*, 13-19; F. Rochberg-Halton, 'Empiricism in Babylonian omen texts and the classification of Mesopotamian divination

– they are not part of this investigation – while the majority of individuals did consider divinatory signs to come from the supernatural.[46] Furthermore, according to my etic definition, divinatory signs are by definition coming from the supernatural – otherwise they would not be divinatory, but just signs. Other scholars have gone further by contextualizing divination as a science.[47] They argue that any attempt to comprehend the world using rationality can be called 'scientific'. However, although divination can be seen as a rational phenomenon looking at causes and effects, backed up by a theoretical background of sorts, this does not necessarily mean it is a science – at least not in our etic sense of the word: the laws behind the divinatory cause-effect relationship were not clear and they could not be tested or verified,[48] but this verifiability is one of the central

as science', *JAOS* 119 (1999) 559-569. For Greece see D. Lehoux, 'Observation and prediction in ancient astrology', *SHPS* 35 (2004) 227–246.

46   An author such as Artemidoros, for example, was considering other options than the supernatural when it comes to origins of the divinatory sign.

47   For extensive arguments about divination and science see especially the work of F. Rochberg, much of which has conveniently been gathered in: F. Rochberg, *In the path of the moon: Babylonian celestial divination and its legacy* (Leiden 2010). See also F. Rochberg, 'Observing and describing the world through divination and astronomy' in: K. Radner & E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture* (Oxford 2011) 618-636.

48   U. Koch-Westenholz discusses divination as a possible science, conceding that '[Babylonian divination] shares some of the defining traits of modern science: it is objective and value-free, it operates according to

features of what modern individuals call science. Although divination was undoubtedly concerned with finding knowledge, it is not a science from an etic perspective.[49]

known rules, and its data are considered universally valid and can be looked up in written tabulations'. However, she rejects the claim that divination is a science. Her main argument is: 'our own natural sciences are based on a premise so simple that it is usually taken for granted: things behave according to universally valid laws. It is our task to discover those laws, and the mean to do so is observation, supported by controlled experiment. In a similar fashion, Babylonian divination is based on a very simple proposition: things in the universe relate to one another. Any event, however small, has one or more correlates somewhere else in the world. This was revealed to us in the days of yore by the gods, and our task is to refine and expand that body of knowledge. The means to do so is mystical speculation supplemented by observation. There is no evidence that the Mesopotamian scholars ever attempted to verify the results of their speculations by experiment'. Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian astrology*, 13-19. For different views see M.T. Larsen, 'The Mesopotamian lukewarm mind: reflections on science, divination, and literacy' in: F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), *Language, literature, and history: philological and historical studies presented to Erica Reiner* (New Haven 1987) 203-225.

49   I do consider an etic classification a necessity, although it is not my purpose to impose ideas about what is 'currently thought to be "correct" on divination'. On this and on divination as a system for finding knowledge see E. Robson, 'Empirical scholarship in the Neo-Assyrian court' in: G.J. Selz (ed.), *The empirical dimension of ancient Near Eastern studies/Die empirische Dimension altorientalischer Forschungen* (Vienna 2011) 603-629, at 625.

Instead, divination is seen here as essentially a theistic phenomenon: the signs are thought to have emanated from the supernatural – otherwise they would not have been divinatory signs. But should divination be considered as magic or as religion? What are magic and religion anyway? Those using emic definitions argue that religion and magic are plants in the same garden: some practices are socially acceptable and others unacceptable, depending on dynamic social opinions.[50] Although this is a valid argument, the emic discussion about whether or not the ancients 'had' magic or religion, in the sense of the social (un)acceptability of phenomena or in the sense that they defined these concepts themselves, is not of interest here. Etic definitions and distinctions are necessary: 'Magic does not exist, nor does religion. What do exist are our definitions of these concepts'.[51] Distinctions between magic and religion are regularly drawn on the basis of the idea that religion implies a human subjection to the supernatural because man understands he is powerless, whereas magic entails techniques by which man thought he could force the supernatural into action. Following up on this idea, I consider magic and religion to be part of one spectrum of human interaction with the supernatural. This can be visualized as a sliding scale. On the one pole we find 'acting religiously' – asking the supernatural – and on the other end we find 'performing magic' – forcing the supernatural to do or say something. On the basis of these considerations, I shall

50   Parker, *Polytheism and society*, 122.
51   H.S. Versnel, 'Some reflections on the relationship magic–religion', *Numen* 38 (1991) 177-197, at 177.

use 'interaction with the supernatural' (which could also be called 'religion' in the widest sense of the word) as the overarching category, with magic and religion (in their narrow sense) as the two poles on this sliding scale. It follows that divination was always some form of perceived interaction with the supernatural – but it depends on what actually happened during the divinatory process whether this could be labelled magical or religious interaction.

Necromancy, a divinatory method during which a ghost or some other supernatural being was evoked, shows how one particular method of divination could occupy various positions on the sliding scale. In the following scene in Aeschylos' *Persians*, the ghost of King Dareios is evoked:

> Chorus: Shah, ancient Shah, come, draw near
> arrive at the very top of your funeral mound
> raising the yellow-dyed slippers on your feet, [...]
> In the circumstances how can the Persian people do best?
> Dareios: Only if you take no expedition into Greek territory,
> not even if the Persian army is larger.[52]

A question is asked and Darius answers, providing bystanders with a guideline for the future. This example of mantic action is clearly

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52   Aesch. *Pers.* 658-661; 788-791. Translation E. Hall, *Aeschylus: Persians* (Westminster 1997) 76-77; 84-85. See Aesch. *Cho.* 459-460 for another example. βαλήν, ἀρχαῖος βαλήν, ἴθι, ἱκοῦ, | ἔλθ' ἐπ' ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄχθου | κροκόβαπτον ποδὸς εὔμαριν ἀείρων [...] | πῶς ἂν ἐκ τούτων ἔτι | πράσσοιμεν ὡς ἄριστα Περσικὸς λεώς; | εἰ μὴ στρατεύοισθ' ἐς τὸν Ἑλλήνων τόπον, | μηδ' εἰ στράτευμα πλεῖον ἦι τὸ Μηδικόν

religious interaction with the supernatural – as is every purely man-
tic action: the supernatural is never forced to do anything as it is
requested to reveal information.

However, it seems that divinatory interrogation could also be just
a preliminary step after which the ghost could be *ordered* to perform
actions (or to give information!) for the benefit of the human indi-
vidual.[53] In these cases, a mantic element preceded magical interac-
tion and commanding the supernatural became part of divinatory
action. Even if allowance is made for the fact that it is not always
possible to find out what the main purpose of a ritual was, it can
still be argued that whenever a ghost was ordered to harm an enemy
during the mantic session, divination contained a magical element
and the ritual as a whole begins to move along the sliding scale.
Conversely, mantic elements can also be seen during actions with
a primarily magical goal. For example, when (in Plutarch's *Kimon*
6.6) Pausanias, the Spartan commander, wishes to contact a female
ghost in the hope of appeasing her, she also foretells his future.
This mantic (and religious) element in a primarily magical process,

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53   Illustrating the wide variety of categories of necromantic action
by example is: C. Faraone, 'Necromancy goes underground: the disguise
of skull- and corpse-divination in the Paris Magical Papyri (PGM IV 1928-
2144)' in: S.I. Johnston & P.T. Struck (eds), *Mantikê: studies in ancient divi-
nation* (Leiden 2005) 255-282, especially at 264-265. On necromancy see
also the references in D. Ogden, *Necromancy in the Greek and Roman world*
(Princeton 2001); I.L. Finkel, 'Necromancy in ancient Mesopotamia', *AfO*
29-30 (1983-1984) 1-17.

directed towards making the ghost do something, causes it to move along the sliding scale from the purely magical in the direction of religious interaction.

What does this imply for the position of divination in society? Some have argued that interaction with the supernatural was 'embedded' in ancient society. The term was first used by Sir Charles Lyell who described the way a fossil was positioned in its environment as 'imbedded'.[54] These days, 'embedded' is often applied to the way reporters work when they are in a war zone: they are 'embedded' in the military. The underlying idea is that both the fossil and the journalist are part of their environment, but that they are also restricted by it. So the scholars who argue that interaction with the supernatural was embedded in ancient society are not only implying that religion was important but also that it was restricted as well as shaped by its environment (the society in which it occurred).[55]

54   Sir C. Lyell, *Principles of geology, being an attempt to explain the former changes of the earth's surface, by reference to causes now in operation* 3 vols (London 1830-1833) Vol. 1, 85. Since this first use of the word in the field of geology, it has found its way into many other fields of study: those of mathematics, linguistics and economy to name a few. In a linguistic sense, the word 'embedded' refers to a subordinate and a super-ordinate clause, where the embedded sentence has unequal status and is dependent on the other. In a linguistic sense 'embedded' was first used by C.S. Smith, 'A class of complex modifiers in English', *Language* 37 (1961) 342-365, at 346 (*non vidi*). For modern use see, for example, B. Aarts & A. McMahon (eds), *The handbook of English linguistics* (Malden, MA 2007) 198-219, especially 198.

55   In a sociological and economic sense it has been used to show that,

From an emic point of view, interaction with the supernatural is all-pervasive rather than embedded. Yet, from an etic point of view, I espouse the view that the specific features and modes of religion, including divination, are in constant interaction with other aspects of a specific cultural area. This also offers a partial explanation of religious dynamism: when features of religion and society change, this has a concomitant impact on other features.

Building blocks of ritual

A deeper contextualization of divination takes place on the level of ritual. Divination was a phenomenon which could entail ritual: the clearest example of a ritual element in divination is the evocation of a sign, a ritual which was closely connected to prayer and sacrifice.

Prayer could be associated with divination if it was used by an individual to ask the supernatural for a sign. A prayer can be defined as 'asking for good things'[56] (or keeping away bad things) – a sign can be such a 'good thing'. In the case of evoked divination, prayer was often a preliminary to the divinatory process. However, a prayer could also be a formal part of the divinatory ritual, as was the *ikribu*

where economy was a central feature of society, economic activity was constrained by many social restrictions. Economy was seen as embedded in society, meaning that economy was dependent on society. Cf. M. Granovetter, 'Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness', *AJSoc* 91 (1985) 481-510.

56   S. Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek religion* (Oxford 1997) 8.

– the prayer *cum* ritual itself (cf. pp. 287-288) – used by the expert during Mesopotamian extispicy. Unlike a divinatory prayer of evocation, the *ikribu* explicitly guided the expert through the ritual needed to provoke a sign: it asked not only for good things, it was also the expert's 'script', integrating words and action.[57] Therefore, prayer could be a part of evoked divination in more than one way: although mostly a preliminary element, it could also be formalized and become an integral part of the evocation.

Although sacrifice could always precede or follow divination (either to thank the supernatural in the case of a good sign or to appease it in case of a bad sign), there are some very specific instances in which sacrifice was a necessity in the divinatory process. An obvious example is the sacrifice of the animal whose entrails were to be read for divinatory purposes.[58] Also – vice-versa – extispicy was

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57   For *ikribu* texts see, although transliteration and translation are very outdated, H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion: die Beschwörungstafeln Šurpu: Ritualtafeln für den Wahrsager, Beschwörer und Sänger* (Leipzig 1901). See also A. Lenzi, *Reading Akkadian prayers and hymns: an introduction* (Atlanta 2011) 46-49 for an analysis of the *ikribu* in relation to prayer and divination.

58   On extispicy in Mesopotamia see E. Leichty, 'Ritual, "sacrifice," and divination in Mesopotamia' in: J. Quaegebeur (ed.), *Ritual and sacrifice in the ancient Near East: proceedings of the international conference organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of April 1991* (Leuven 1993) 237-242, at 242. On sacrifice in Mesopotamia see further T. Abusch, 'Sacrifice in Mesopotamia' in: A.I. Baumgarten (ed.), *Sacrifice in religious experience* (Leiden 2002) 39-48. On Greece and Rome see, among

usually a part of sacrifice. Despite these two building-blocks often being inseparable, in practice once again an etic separation can be made: sacrifice can be – very concisely – summarized as 'giving to the supernatural'. Sacrifice is like prayer, an action *towards* the supernatural. The sacrifice served to give something to the supernatural before asking it to do something in return or in this case, to provide a sign. Instead of being a mere preliminary, there was yet another way in which divination and sacrifice could overlap (and the two ways do not exclude one another): 'sacrificial divination'. The item or object sacrificed, or part of it, could *become* the sign, which is what happened during the process of extispicy. Another – possible – example in which this intertwinement took place is libanomancy. During libanomancy in Greece and in Mesopotamia, incense – a sacrificial substance – could be used to sacrifice and produce a sign in the shape of smoke.[59] Although it is unclear exactly

many other works, the classic volume S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Oslo 1915) but also the recent D. Collins, 'Mapping the entrails: the practice of Greek hepatoscopy', *AJP* 129 (2008) 319-345.

59   On libanomancy in Greece see Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination*, Vol. 1, 181 or the brief mention in R. Parker, *On Greek religion* (Ithaka, NY 2011) 136. On libanomancy in Mesopotamia (note: sources are from the Old Babylonian period only) see, among other references, E. Ebeling, 'Weissagung aus Weirauch im alten Babylonien', *SPAW* 29 (1935) 869-880 (CBS 14089 and UCLM 9-2433); G. Pettinato, 'Libanomanzia presso i babilonesi', *RSO* 41 (1966) 303-327 (CBS 14089 and UCLM 9-2433); R.D. Biggs, 'A propos des texts de libanomancie, *RA* 63 (1969) 73-74 (CBS 14089); E. Leichty, 'Literary notes: smoke omens' in: M. de Jong Ellis (ed.), *Essays on*

how the ritual was conducted, there is a possibility (although the sources do not state this) that the incense was sacrifice and divinatory sign in one. In short, sacrifice and divination were intertwined phenomena. The examples given above show how divination was a religious phenomenon which cannot be seen to have existed independently of other phenomena – nevertheless, the mantic element in a ritual, with a divinatory or with some other aim, is always sufficiently clear to be able to distinguish it.

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE SOCIAL ORDER

Divination can be contextualized: justice, games and medicine are phenomena that have been linked with divination, both in an etic and and emic sense. It is worth exploring these links in the different societies in order to provide some context to the phenomenon of divination.

the Ancient Near East in memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein (Hamden, CONN 1977) 143-144 (CBS 14089, UCLM 9-2433, CBS 156); I.L. Finkel, 'A new piece of libanomancy', AfO 29/30 (1983-1984) 50-55 (UCLM 9-2433, CBS 156 and a tablet in private possession without number). I owe these references to E. Gutova.

Justice

Links between justice and divination were present in a number of different ways, especially in Mesopotamia. To start with Greece: divination could play a role in a trial. Oracles were used during sessions in the law courts because of their normative force and in this way played a role in public trials, although in themselves they were neither a rule nor a law.[60] Oracles could also convey a rule with respect to cultic matters, as examples from the Greek *leges sacrae* show.[61] In Rome, negative auspices could rule out particular actions.

In Mesopotamia, justice and divination were connected in multiple ways. First, there was the idea that the supernatural had motivated or urged the human law-giver to provide justice by means of law, as in the case of Hammurabi.[62]

The second example is the river ordeal, a form of divination which simultaneously provided a judgement.[63] The accused would be sen-

60   See G. Martin, *Divine talk: religious argumentation in Demosthenes* (Oxford 2009) 28. Cf. 208-209; 219; 223-224. This way of proceeding with respect to oracles appears not to be restricted to Demosthenes.

61   But note that oracles were not used in the law court. Cf., e.g., J. Mikalson, *Athenian popular religion* (Chapel Hill 1983) 48. With respect to Greek sacred laws, I found the following title very useful: E. Lupu, *Greek sacred law: a collection of new documents* (NGSL) (Leiden 2005) 77-78.

62   Codex Hammurabi, introduction.

63   In particular cases: S.M. Maul, 'Divination culture and the handling of the future' in: G. Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian world* (London 2007) 361-372, at 362. The ordeal only took place in particular cases: if a person was accused of sorcery or witchcraft, this was not judged by human judges in

tenced to the river ordeal, 'an ordeal by immersion in the "Divine River" who could pronounce the accused guilty by drowning him, or innocent by letting him survive'.[64] It appears that either Marduk was associated with the river or that the river was considered a divinity itself.[65] The pronouncement of guilt or innocence by means of drowning or surviving can be seen as a sign from the supernatural, which again shows a connection between divination and judgement.

In Mesopotamia, divination and justice were also linked conceptually. Divine signs, especially those occurring as a result of the extispicy process, were considered to be a 'divine verdict': the signs were thought to have had a similar function to the judgements

a normal law court. If, apart from witchcraft trials, there was not enough evidence to make a case and the judge could not decide, he sought a different authority. See for examples R. Jas, *Neo-Assyrian judicial procedures* (Helsinki 1996) texts 47 and 48.

64   W. Farber, 'Witchcraft, magic and divination in ancient Mesopotamia' in: J.M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the ancient Near East* 4 vols (New York 1995) Vol. 3, 1896-1910, at 1898.

65   The ordeal was also practised in Neo-Assyrian times, in Mesopotamia and Anatolia. See the article by K. Radner and the introduction by R. Westbrook in the volume edited by Westbrook: *A history of ancient Near Eastern law* 2 vols (Leiden 2003) Vol. 1, 34; Vol. 2, 891. Also see his references. It is known from Old Babylonian times that poisonous herbs were taken to swear an oath: if the one taking the poison died, he was lying (see S. Démare-Lafont, 'Judicial decision-making: judges and arbitrators' in: K. Radner & E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture* (Oxford 2011) 335-357, at 351).

handed down in the human law courts, namely: deciding what was wrong and right and establishing a scenario of what would happen to the individual in his or her future.[66] Consider a Mesopotamian text known from Old Babylonian times: the so-called 'prayer to the gods of the night'. Law, justice and jurisdiction play a role in this divinatory prayer which was recited during the divinatory ritual: 'In das Orakel, das ich durchführe, in das Lamm, das ich darbringe, legt mir Recht!'[67] *Recht*, justice, *kittum*, was a term normally used in jurisdiction. However, the same word was used to denote what the supernatural did when it was perceived to give a sign during extispicy. Other vocabulary also overlaps (*arkata parāsu* 'investigate the circumstances', *dina dânu* 'give a verdict', *purussâ parāsu* 'make

66   J.C. Fincke, 'Omina, die Göttlichen "Gesetze" der Divination', *JEOL* 40 (2006-2007) 131-147.

67   Edition and translation by C. Wilcke, 'Das Recht: Grundlage des sozialen und politischen Diskurses' in: J. Hazenbos, A. Zgoll & C. Wilcke (eds), *Das geistige Erfassen der Welt im Alten Orient: Sprache, Religion, Kultur und Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden 2007) 209-244 see 225-227.

AO 6769 22-25: i-na te-er-ti e-ep-pu-šu

ik-ri-bi a-ka-ar-ra-bu

ki-it-tam šu-uk-na

ik-ri-ib mu-ši-tim

Erm. 15642 22-25: i-na te-er-ti e-ep-pu-šu

i-na pu-ḫa-ad a-ka-ar-ra-bu-ú

ki-it-ta-am šu-uk-na-an

MU.BI ik-<ri>-ib mu-ši-tim

a decision'[68]). According to some sources, in this respect the extispicy ritual could even be seen as a law court in which the supernatural sat together, judged and then provided mankind with the judgment by means of a sign.[69] In other words, '[law and religion – this includes divination – serve] to establish and preserve tranquillity in a community of some size'.[70] In a best case scenario, both divination and law provided justice.

A final point of overlap concerns the striking formal similarities between the written texts used for divination and law codes: it has even been argued among Near Eastern scholars that, as a genre, law codes such as the Codex Hammurabi were related to divinatory compendia.[71] In these law codes, the *protasis* and *apodosis* construction (if...then) corresponded to these constructions in the compendia in terms of wording. An example from the Codex Hammurabi:

68   U.S. Koch, 'Sheep and sky: systems of divinatory interpretation' in: K. Radner & E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture* (Oxford 2011) 447-469, at 466. See for an in-depth analysis of *dīnum* J.J. Glassner, 'Droit et divination: deux manières de rendre la justice. À propos de *dīnum*, *uṣurtum* et *awatum*', *JCS* 64 (2012) 39-56.

69   Wilcke, 'Das Recht'*,* 224-243; Fincke, 'Die Göttlichen "Gesetze"', 131-147.

70   G. Schiemann, 'Law [2] IV A' in: H. Cancik & H. Schneider, *Brill's New Pauly Online*. Visited 7-2-2011.

71   The Codex Hammurabi is referred to here because no collection of laws is known to us from the Neo-Assyrian period. See K. Radner, 'Neo-Assyrian period' in: R. Westbrook: *A history of ancient Near Eastern law* 2 vols (Leiden 2003) Vol. 2, 883-910.

> If a slave of the palace or the slave of a working man marries a man's daughter and she bears sons, the slave's owner shall have no right of slavery over any son of the daughter of the man. [72]

And an example from *manzāzu*, part of the *barūtu*, Tablet 3:

> If the Presence is like a knob of a punting pole: the prince will have no opponent. [73]

Although the sentences are semantically different, both the compendia and the codex describe a situation and state the consequence, expressed syntactically in similar ways. These could be a verdict in the codex or a prediction in the compendia, both appearing as casuistic sentences.[74] While at times Greek and Roman laws were also phrased casuistically (as some of the laws in the Twelve Tables and the Laws of Gortyn), we know very little of Greek and

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72   Translation by M.E.J. Richardson, *Hammurabi's laws: text, translation and glossary* (Sheffield 2000) 97. Edition by H.-D. Viel, *The complete code of Hammurabi* 2 vols (München 2005) Vol. 2, 600-601.
175: Šum-ma ˡᵘwarad É.GAL u ˡᵘwarad MAŠ.EN.GAG DUMU.MÍ a-wi-lim i-ḫu-uz-ma DUMU.MEŠ it-ta-la-ad, be-ell wardim a-na DUMU.MEŠ MUMU. MÍ a-wi-lim a-na- wa-ar-du-tim ú-ul i-ra-ag-gu-um.

73   '37 (A r13'). Edition and translation: Koch-Westenholz, *Babylonian liver omens*, 95. The text refers to the shape of the liver. [BE] NA GIM ṣer-ret pa-ri-si NUN GABA.RI NU TUK-šu.

74   Cf. Guinan, 'A severed head laughed', 22.

Roman interpretative texts.[75] Perhaps Melampos' writings could be considered here. Yet, in the matter of conceptual as well as textual overlap between law and divination, only Mesopotamia presents a convincing case.

Games

A number of scholars refer to a link between divination and games, both conceptually and practically.[76] On a conceptual level, games can be primarily defined as a free activity, belonging to the area of the 'as if', in which they create their own space and time in which an inner order is established.[77] The second and third criteria certainly

75   Cf. chapter 6, 252-286.

76   Recently most prominently by W. van Binsbergen. See http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/gen3/mankala/mankala1. htm [visited 2 October 2009] for an otherwise unpublished article by Van Binsbergen about the close relationship he sees between the game *mancala* and geomancy, and between games and divination in general. For an up-to-date, accessible overview of ancient games see M. Fittà, *Spiele und Spielzeug in der Antike: Unterhaltung und Vergnügen im Altertum* [translated from the Italian by Cornelia Homann] (Stuttgart 1998), with games of chance at 108-129.

77   Simplified from the definition by G.G. Bauer, 'Play and research: a contradiction?' in: A.J. de Voogt (ed.), *New approaches to board games research: Asian origins and future perspectives* (Leiden 1995) 5-8, at 6. He bases this definition on that in J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens: proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur* (Haarlem 1938). See page 7 of the same

seem to be applicable to divination. Some would even claim that games based on chance derive from divinatory practice.[78]

The similarities between games and divination are particularly striking in two methods of divination: geomancy and cleromancy. These methods of divination and gaming were both (in an etic sense) partially based on chance, bound by rules, and the same objects could be used for both. The first step is to look at the use of objects: in geomancy, divination was performed by means of patterns drawn on the floor or earth. In board games, a comparable defined space was used – the gaming board.[79] Cleromancy could be conducted by using, among other items, dice and *astragaloi* – in the same way these would function in games or gambling. [80] *Astragaloi* used both

article for a more extensive definition.

78   On the supposed origins of games see H.J.R. Murray, *A history of board-games other than chess* (Oxford 1952) 226-238, divination and games on 233-235; N. Pennick, *Games of the gods: The origin of board games in magic and divination* (London 1988) *passim*; S. Culin, *Korean games: with notes on the corresponding games of China and Japan* (Philadelphia 1895) xviii-xxxvi. Most of their claims are, in my view, far fetched.

79   Note that this is not geomancy in the sense of modern Feng Shui. See W.M.J van Binsbergen, 'Rethinking Africa's contribution to global cultural history: lessons from a comparative historical analysis of mancala board-games and geomantic divination', *Talanta* 28/29 (1996-1997) 219-251, at 225-231.

80   In games: Hdt. 1.94.2-4. In divination: Artem. 2.69; Artem. 3.1; Aeschin. *In Tim*. 1.59; M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca* 4 vols (Rome 1967-1978) Vol. 4, at 107-108. For an example of Mesopotamian rules of a game in which *astraga-*

in divination and games were small, four-sided, knucklebones from the ankle of hoofed animals.[81] These – and later also dice and related objects[82] – would be thrown and the throw was interpreted in a divinatory fashion, possibly with the aid of texts such as the ones known

loi were used and a possible connection between games and divination see I.L Finkel, 'On the rules for the royal game of Ur' in: I.L. Finkel (ed.), *Ancient board games in perspective: papers from the 1990 British Museum colloquium, with additional contributions* (London 2007) 16-32. Another example of a 'gaming board', which the author claims to be at least partly cleromantic, is E. Weidner, 'Ein Losbuch in Keilschrift aus der Seleukidenzeit', *Syria* 33 (1956) 175-183 and cf. J. Bottéro, 'Deux curiosités assyriologiques', *Syria* 33 (1956) 17-35.

81   For a very short introduction to cleromancy, especially astragalomancy see J. Nollé, *Kleinasiatische Losorakel: Astragal- und Alphabetchresmologien der hochkaiserzeitlichen Orakelrenaissance* (München 2007) 6-17. The Greek ἀστράγαλος generally signifies the knucklebones from the hooves of an ox. It should be noted that the dice oracles discussed in this publication are mainly from the first centuries AD.

82   Note that a so-called dice existed in Mesopotamia, where they were used to decide who would become the eponym. This then was not divinatory (as the use of dice in, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 7.177-180 is not divinatory). This dice is depicted and briefly discussed in A. Millard, *The eponyms of the Assyrian empire 910-612 BC* (Helsinki 1992), frontispiece and 8-9, and more extensively in: I.L. Finkel & J. Reade, 'Lots of eponyms', *Iraq* 57 (1995) 167-172. This last publication reveals unequivocally that the dice was actually a lot, but we cannot tell for sure how it was drawn. In any case, its purpose was to decide who would be eponym, but this kind of lot was also cast when someone died, to divide the inheritance among the family.

from later cleromantic oracle sites in Asia Minor, while the outcome of the gaming throw was interpreted according to the rules of the game in question. Another connection here is the use of chance: the randomizing element was prevalent in cleromancy because of the use of dice, in the same way as when games were played and dice were thrown.[83]

Lastly, Mesopotamian gaming boards and the liver are thought to have resembled each other in some ways: both had a grid of twenty squares and a similarity can be seen in their shape.[84] Hence, this has

83   Dice were, among items, used in board games in the Roman world. See N. Purcell, 'Inscribed Imperial Roman gaming boards' in: I.L. Finkel (ed.), *Ancient board games in perspective: papers from the 1990 British Museum colloquium, with additional contributions* (London 2007) 90-97; examples from later times in: C. Roueché, 'Late Roman and Byzantine game boards at Aphrodisias' in: ibidem, 101-105.

84   I.L. Finkel, 'Board games and fortune telling: a case from antiquity' in: A.J. de Voogt (ed.), *New approaches to board games research: Asian origins and future perspectives* (Leiden 1995) 64-72, at 71. But see also about a possible connection between the twenty squares and the grids of liver models and gaming boards: J.W. Meyer, 'Lebermodell oder Spielbrett' in: R. Hachmann (ed.), *Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen in Kāmid el-Lōz in den Jahren 1971 bis 1974* (Bonn 1982) 53-79. Apart from this theoretical similarity, three other objects combining a liver model and a gaming board have been found: see A. Becker, 'The royal game of Ur' in: I.L. Finkel (ed.), *Ancient board games in perspective: papers from the 1990 British Museum colloquium, with additional contributions* (London 2007) 11-15, at 12-15. Another line of enquiry was followed by both E. Weidner and J. Bottéro who have theorized about the nature of a number of cuneiform

led some over-hastily to conclude that this game and extispicy were in some ways related to one another.

Certainly divination and games were bound by a set of pre-defined rules, which could be flexible. When it was a matter of a divinatory session, the rules could have been written down but this did not necessarily mean they were unalterable: rules could be negotiated before the commencement of a divinatory session. The same applies to games: anthropological evidence shows that in a session of *mancala*, an ancient African game, the rules are established locally. When two individuals from different towns meet, they settle the rules there and then. Change can occur in the process of establishing these rules.[85] New rules are learned and used.

Finally, the matter of context has to be settled: when does a person play a game and when does he divine? Where did divination begin and throwing the dice for gaming purposes end?

> Upon entering we found that the boys had just been sacrificing; and this part of the festival was nearly at an end. They were all in their

tablets which appeared to link astragalomancy, games and divination by the zodiac. See Weidner, 'Ein Losbuch', 175-183 and Bottéro, 'Deux curiosités', 17-35. For a more anthropological angle on the connections between games and divination using the distinction between constitutive and regulative rules (which I have not used here) see E.M. Ahern, 'Rules in oracles and games', *Man* n.s. 17 (1982) 302-312.

85   A.J. de Voogt, *Mancala: board games* (London 1997) 22-27.

white array, and games at dice were going on among them. Most of them were in the outer court amusing themselves; but some were in a corner of the apodyterium playing at odd and even with a number of dice, which they took out of little wicker baskets; and there were others standing about them and looking on.[86]

While the distinctions between games and divination might seem blurred to us, for the person throwing the dice or using a game-board it was usually obvious whether he was divining or playing a game: this depended on both the rules agreed on and on the context in which the game was played. These rules were normally decided and defined in advance and were partly dependent on the context. They were decided upon explicitly by means of the spoken word or by the use of a special board for ritual or for gaming purposes, or otherwise were agreed upon implicitly.[87]

Divination and games resembled each other in a number of ways but a distinction can still be made. First on an etic level: during divination the purpose was to obtain perceived information from the supernatural – this was not the purpose of gaming; during gaming

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86   Pl. *Lys.* 206e3-9. Translation W.R.M. Lamb.

Εἰσελθόντες δὲ κατελάβομεν αὐτόθι τεθυκότας τε τοὺς παῖδας καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰ ἱερεῖα σχεδόν τι ἤδη πεποιημένα, ἀστραγαλίζοντάς τε δὴ καὶ κεκοσμημένους ἅπαντας. οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ ἔπαιζον ἔξω, οἱ δέ τινες τοῦ ἀποδυτηρίου ἐν γωνίᾳ ἠρτίαζον ἀστραγάλοις παμπόλλοις, ἐκ φορμίσκων τινῶν προαιρούμενοι· τούτους δὲ περιέστασαν ἄλλοι θεωροῦντες

87   In the way recreational and ritual boards can be used during *mancala*: De Voogt, *Mancala*, 28-32.

a competitive element which was absent during divination was visible. To the individual, it was clear in advance whether the play was for fun, material gain or for seeking information from the supernatural. Gaming and certain methods of divining were therefore related in terms of a number of practicalities. Yet, they both served different purposes.

Medicine

In ancient societies, illness was often seen as a sign from the supernatural either as a punishment for religious transgression or, more generally, just being of divine origin.[88] In Greek, the word *nosos* can be etymologically explained as 'not having' divine favour.[89] In the Graeco-Roman tradition, the inscriptions from the healing shrines of Asclepius attest to an overlap between the practices of medicine and divination.[90] The incubation dreams recorded in these texts can

88   E.g., Burkert, *Creation of the sacred*, 102-128; for disease as a visitation of the divine see among others Hippoc. *Morb. Sacr.* 5.

89   A more linguistic explanation in: A. Willi, 'νόσος and ὁσίη: etymological and sociocultural observations on the concepts of disease and divine (dis)favour in ancient Greece', *JHS* 128 (2008) 153-171; and a historical study in: A. Chaniotis, 'Illness and cures in the Greek propitiatory inscriptions and dedications of Lydia and Phrygia' in: H.F.J. Horstmanshoff, Ph.J. van der Eijk & P.H. Schrijvers (eds), *Ancient medicine in its socio-cultural context* 2 vols (Amsterdam 1995) Vol. 2, 323-344.

90   For an interesting passage about this overlap and distinction is Plut.

be categorized into prescriptive and healing dreams. In prescriptive dreams, which appear to have been more prominent after the first century BC, the person received instructions by which he would be cured. In the case of a healing dream, the person reported to have actually been cured in his sleep. The same process of incubation could have a medical result and one which could be called divinatory: the individual had received information from the supernatural.[91]

The practices of medicine and divination were intertwined in Mesopotamia too – albeit in a different way.[92] One obvious example is that part of the Mesopotamian compendium *Sakikkû* called *Enūma*

Vit. Per. 6, in which a sign is interpreted in a divinatory and in a biological manner. Eventually the divinatory manner turns out to be the correct one.

91   K. Beerden, 'Dromen van genezing: een verkenning van Griekse incubatiepraktijken', *Lampas* (forthcoming).

92   Cf. T.S. Barton, *Power and knowledge: astrology, physiognomics, and medicine under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, MI 1994) 133-168 – Barton focuses on the Roman world but many issues she addresses are equally valid for Greece and Mesopotamia. Early Greek diviners would also be healers, for example, and the term *iatromantis* is a familiar one in these early sources. R. Parker explores the field of purifiers, doctors and seers in R. Parker, *Miasma: pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford 1983) 207-216. But see also for a more radical distinction between 'quack doctor' (including 'diviners') and 'a real physician', based on the two attacks on diviners in the Hippocratic corpus (*Virg.* 1 & *Acut.* 8): J. Jouanna, *Hippocrate* (Paris 1992) 261-267. For a brief and clarifying overview in which the various roles of the *iatromantis* are shown see I. Löffler, *Die Melampodie: Versuch einer Rekonstruktion des Inhalts* (Meisenheim am Glan 1963) 14-17.

ana bīt marṣi āšipu illaku ('when the *āšipu* goes to the house of the sick'), which relates the contextual signs an *āšipu* might observe on his way to visit the house of a patient.[93] These were divinatory signs. In other parts of the same compendium, where the same *āšipu* is at work, the physical symptoms of the patient himself functioned as signs – which were medical signs. Both types of sign were seen as providing the *āšipu* with information which could be used for diagnosis, prognosis and treatment.

A more structural point of overlap – in all three areas – is that both divination and medicine were based on the idea that 'an anticipation of the future' was possible.[94] The doctor would observe and interpret contextual and medical signs during diagnostic activity, after which a diagnosis and prognosis would follow (diagnosis might be implicit in prognosis and vice-versa – but the one was not pos-

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93   The edition of these tablets is R. Labat, *Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux* (Paris 1951) 6-7; 32-33.

94   L. Edelstein, 'Hippocratic prognosis' in: O. Temkin & C.L. Temkin (eds), *Ancient medicine: selected papers of Ludwig Edelstein* (Baltimore 1967) 65-85, at 69. The *mantis* and poet were both familiar with past, present and future, and were divinely inspired: see Hes. *Th.* 25-34. Similar questions about the education and practice of doctors might be – and have been – asked: see L.M.V. Totelin, *Hippocratic recipes: oral and written transmission of pharmacological knowledge in fifth- and fourth-century Greece* (Leiden 2009); M.M. Sassi, *The science of man in ancient Greece* (Chicago 2001 [translated from Italian]) 140-148.

sible without the other), resulting in treatment.[95] This is similar to the actions of the *homo divinans:* he also provided a prognosis which influenced a future action.

Despite these similarities, it is possible to make an etic distinction between medicine and divination, which is in my opinion not visible in *Sakikkû.* From an etic point of view, in medical prognosis there was an actual cause and effect relation between illness and outcome. There was no such cause and effect relationship between divinatory signs and the predicted consequences.[96]

Having discussed and analyzed the phenomenon of divination from multiple angles it can be said that divination was a central

95   See the model (of which the third option is relevant) in M. Hulskamp, *Sleep and dreams in ancient medical diagnosis and prognosis* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2008) 259. Cf. J. Althoff, 'Das Verhältnis von medizinischer Prognose zur religiösen Divinatorik/Mantik in Griechenland' in: A. Imhausen & T. Pommerening (eds), *Writings of early scholars in the ancient Near East, Egypt, Rome, and Greece: translating ancient scientific texts* (Berlin 2010) 47-68. On diagnostic and therapeutic activity in the Mesopotamian world (much focused on the texts available) see N.P. Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik* (Münster 2000) 5-6; N.P. Heessel, 'Diagnosis, divination and disease: towards an understanding of the rationale behind the Babylonian diagnostic handbook' in: H.F.J. Horstmanshoff & M. Stol (eds), *Magic and rationality in ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman medicine* (Leiden 2004) 97-116. For a guideline to a system of ancient medical prognosis see, e.g., Hippoc. *Prog.* 1-2; 25.

96   Cf. M.J. Geller, *Ancient Babylonian medicine: theory and practice* (Chichester 2010) 15.

means for perceived interaction with the supernatural on a reciprocal basis and was closely connected to its societal context – ritual and otherwise. These etic foundations of the divinatory process apply to all three of the cultural areas discussed in this monograph.