

Divination

Occasions for Divination

- times of crisis
- unusual happenings (omens)

Types of Divination

Words for Divination

- mantis (*mania*)
- prophetes (to prophesy, a prophecy)

Natural vs. Artificial Divination

Interpersonal vs. Textual Divination

Methods of Divination

fixed matrix and random element

Hierarchy of Means

Level of complexity

Level of difficulty of access

Level of expense

Level of social prestige

Kinds of Divination

kleromancy

other omens - twitches, sneezes, chance words

scrying - catoptromancy, lekanomancy, and lychnomancy

dreams

dream symbolism - Artemidorus

true and false dreams

inducing dreams

incubation

dream oracles

augury - bird omens

haruspicy - entrail divination

medium divination

necromancy

oracles - Delphi, Dodona, Claros,

Lebedeia

direct vision or *systasis*

Theories of Divination

divine possession

human ecstasy and divine meeting

cosmic sympathy

Social Contexts of Divination

magician and client

ruler and mantis

oracles outside the city

negotiated interpretations

Examine the theories for how divination works in Cicero (Luck #83-85), Plutarch (Luck #92-95), and

Iamblichus (Luck #98-99):- which theories support which forms of divination? (how linked to what)

How do different forms of divination (what) fit into the who, where, and why questions?

Examine PGM IV 930-1114 and IV. 3209-3254 carefully and be prepared to analyze them in discussion

Consider the question of magic vs. religion - is divination not magic but religion, as some have claimed? What criteria can be used to draw the distinction? Consider ancient testimony such as the story of Apollonius of Tyana in Luck 91 as well as the ideas discussed in the secondary readings.

PGM I. 327-331

And when he comes, ask him about what you wish, about the art of prophecy, about divination with epic verses, about the sending of dreams, about obtaining revelations in dreams, about interpretations of dreams, about causing disease, about everything that is a part of magical knowledge.

Apuleius *Apologia* 26

The magician is one who, through communication with the gods, has the power to do whatever marvels he wishes.

Homer *Iliad* . 1.69-70

Among them arose Calchas son of Thestor, far the best of bird-diviners, who knew the things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before, and who had guided the ships of the Achaeans to Ilios by his own prophetic powers which Phoebus Apollo had bestowed upon him.

Aristotle *Rhetoric* 3.17 Epimenides the Cretan, for he used to divine, not the future, but only things that were past but obscure...

[Hippocrates] *Progn.* 1.1.

Knowing beforehand and telling beforehand, in the presence of the patients, what is, what has been, and what will be, and mentioning details which the patients do not mention, he will more easily be believed to know about the patients' condition, so that people dare to entrust themselves to the physician.

Homer, *Iliad* 1.41ff.

So he spoke in prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard him. Down from the peaks of Olympus he strode, angered at heart, bearing on his shoulders his bow and covered quiver. [45] The arrows rattled on the shoulders of the angry god as he moved, and his coming was like the night. Then he sat down apart from the ships and let fly an arrow: terrible was the twang of the silver bow. The mules he assailed first and the swift dogs, [50] but then on the men themselves he let fly his stinging shafts, and struck; and constantly the pyres of the dead burned thick. For nine days the missiles of the god ranged among the host, but on the tenth Achilles called the people to assembly, for the goddess, white-armed Hera, had put it in his heart, [55] since she pitied the Danaans, when she saw them dying. When they were assembled and gathered together, among them arose and spoke swift-footed Achilles:

"Son of Atreus, now I think we shall return home, beaten back again, should we even escape death, [60] if war and pestilence alike are to ravage the Achaeans. But come, let us ask some seer or priest, or some reader of dreams--for a dream too is from Zeus--who might say why Phoebus Apollo is so angry, whether he finds fault with a vow or a hecatomb; [65] in hope that he may accept the savour of lambs and unblemished goats, and be willing to ward off the pestilence from us."

When he had thus spoken he sat down, and among them arose Calchas son of Thestor, far the best of bird-diviners, who knew the things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before, [70] and who had guided the ships of the Achaeans to Ilios by his own prophetic powers which Phoebus Apollo had bestowed upon him. He with good intent addressed the gathering, and spoke among them: "Achilles, dear to Zeus, you bid me declare the wrath of Apollo, the lord who strikes from afar. [75] Therefore I will speak; but take thought and swear that you will readily defend me with word and with might of hand; for I think I shall anger a man who rules mightily over all the Argives, and whom the Achaeans obey. For mightier is a king, when he is angry at a lesser man. [80] Even if he swallows down his wrath for that day, yet afterwards he cherishes resentment in his heart till he brings it to fulfillment. Say then, if you will keep me safe."

In answer to him spoke swift-footed Achilles: "Take heart, and speak out whatever oracle you know; [85] for by Apollo, dear to Zeus, to whom you, Calchas, pray when you reveal oracles to the Danaans, no one, while I live and have sight on the earth, shall lay heavy hands on you beside the hollow ships, no one of the whole host of the Danaans, [90] not even if you name Agamemnon, who now claims to be far the best of the Achaeans."

Then the blameless seer took heart, and spoke:

"It is not then because of a vow that he finds fault, nor because of a hecatomb, but because of the priest whom Agamemnon dishonoured, and did not release his daughter nor accept the ransom. [95] For this cause the god who strikes from afar has given woes and will still give them. He will not drive off from the Danaans the loathsome pestilence, until we give back to her dear father the bright-eyed maiden, unbought, unransomed, and lead a sacred hecatomb to Chryse. Then we might appease and persuade him."

[100] When he had thus spoken he sat down, and among them arose the warrior, son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, deeply troubled. With rage his black heart was wholly filled, and his eyes were like blazing fire. To Calchas first of all he spoke, and his look threatened evil: [105] "Prophet of evil, never yet have you spoken to me a pleasant thing; ever is evil dear to your heart to prophesy, but a word of good you have never yet spoken, nor brought to pass. And now among the Danaans you claim in prophecy that for this reason the god who strikes from afar brings woes upon them, [110] that I would not accept the glorious ransom for the girl, the daughter of Chryses, since I much prefer to keep her in my home. For certainly I prefer her to Clytemnestra, my wedded wife, since she is not inferior to her, either in form or in stature, or in mind, or in any handiwork. [115] Yet even so will I give her back, if that is better; I would rather the people be safe than perish. But provide me with a prize of honour forthwith, lest I alone of the Argives be without one, since that would not be proper. For you all see this, that my prize goes elsewhere."

Herodotus IV.150-157

CL. So far in the story the Lacedaemonian and Theraean records agree; for the rest, we have only the word of the Theraeans. [2] Grinnus son of Aesanius, king of Thera, a descendant of this same Theras, came to Delphi bringing a hecatomb from his city; among others of his people, Battus son of Polymnestus came with him, a descendant of Euphemus of the Minyan clan. [3] When Grinnus king of Thera asked the oracle about other matters, the priestess' answer was that he should found a city in Libya. "Lord, I am too old and heavy to stir; command one of these younger men to do this," answered Grinnus, pointing to Battus as he spoke. [4] No more was said then. But when they departed, they neglected to obey the oracle, since they did not know where Libya was, and were afraid to send a colony out to an uncertain destination. CLI. For seven years after this there was no rain in Thera; all the trees in the island except one withered. The Theraeans inquired at Delphi again, and the priestess mentioned the colony they should send to Libya. [2] So, since there was no remedy for their ills, they sent messengers to Crete to find any Cretan or traveller there who had travelled to Libya. In their travels about the island, these came to the town of Itanus, where they met a murex fisherman named Corobius, who told them that he had once been driven off course by winds to Libya, to an island there called Platea. [3] They hired this man to come with them to Thera; from there, just a few men were sent aboard ship to spy out the land first; guided by Corobius to the aforesaid island Platea, these left him there with provision for some months, and themselves sailed back with all speed to Thera to bring news of the island. ... CLIII. As for the Theraeans, when they came to Thera after leaving Corobius on the island, they brought word that they had established a settlement on an island off Libya. The Theraeans determined to send out men from their seven regions, taking by lot one of every pair of brothers, and making Battus leader and king of all. Then they manned two fifty-oared ships and sent them to Platea. CLIV. This is what the Theraeans say; and now begins the part in which the Theraean and Cyrenaean stories agree, but not until now, for the Cyrenaean tell a wholly different story about Battus, which is this. There is a town in Crete called Oaxus, of which one Etearchus became ruler. He was a widower with a daughter whose name was Phronime, and he married a second wife. [2] When the second wife came into his house, she thought fit to be the proverbial stepmother to Phronime, ill-treating her and devising all sorts of evil against her; at last she accused the girl of lewdness, and persuaded her husband that the charge was true. So Etearchus was persuaded by his wife and contrived a great sin against his daughter. [3] There was at Oaxus a Theraean trader, one Themison; Etearchus made this man his guest and friend, and got him to swear that he would do him whatever service he desired; then he gave the man his own daughter, telling him to take her away and throw her into the sea. [4] But Themison was very angry at being thus tricked on his oath and renounced his friendship with Etearchus; presently, he took the girl and sailed away, and so as to fulfill the oath that he had sworn to Etearchus, when he was on the high seas he bound her with ropes and let her down into the sea and drew her up again, and presently arrived at Thera. CLV. There Polymnestus, a notable Theraean, took Phronime and made her his concubine. In time, a son of weak and stammering speech was born to him, to whom he gave the name Battus, as the Theraeans and Cyrenaean say; but in my opinion the boy was given some other name, [2] and changed it to Battus on his coming to Libya, taking this new name because of the oracle given to him at Delphi and the honorable office which he received. For the Libyan word for king is "Battus," and this (I believe) is why the Pythian priestess called him so in her prophecy, using a Libyan name because she knew that he was to be king in Libya. [3] For when he grew to adulthood, he went to Delphi to inquire about his voice; and the priestess in answer gave him this: "Battus, you have come for a voice; but Lord Phoebus Apollo | Sends you to found a city in Libya, nurse of sheep," just as if she addressed him using the Greek word for "king," "Basileus, you have come for a voice," et cetera. [4] But he answered: "Lord, I came to you to ask about my speech; but you talk of other matters, things impossible to do; you tell me to plant a colony in Libya; where shall I get the power or strength of hand for it?" Battus spoke thus, but as the god would not give him another oracle and kept answering as before, he departed while the priestess was still speaking, and went away to Thera. CLVI. But afterward things turned out badly for Battus and the rest of the Theraeans; and when, ignorant of the cause of their misfortunes, they sent to Delphi to ask about their present ills, [2] the priestess declared that they would fare better if they helped Battus plant a colony at Cyrene in Libya. Then the Theraeans sent Battus with two fifty-oared ships; these sailed to Libya, but, not knowing what else to do, presently returned to Thera. [3] There, the Theraeans shot at them as they came to land and would not let the ship put in, telling them to sail back; which they did under constraint of necessity, and planted a colony on an island off the Libyan coast called (as I have said already) Platea. This island is said to be as big as the city of Cyrene is now. CLVII. Here they lived for two years; but as everything went wrong, the rest sailed to Delphi leaving one behind, and on their arrival questioned the oracle, and said that they were living in Libya, but that they were no better off for that. [2] Then the priestess gave them this reply: "If you know Libya nurse of sheep better than I, | Though I have been there and you have not, then I am very much astonished at your knowledge." Hearing this, Battus and his men sailed back again; for the god would not let them do anything short of colonizing Libya itself; [3] and having come to the island and taken aboard the one whom they had left there, they made a settlement at a place in Libya itself, opposite the island which was called Aziris. This is a place enclosed on both sides by the fairest of groves, with a river flowing along one side of it.

Demosthenes, *Against Macartatos*, 43.66

The Athenian people inquire about the sign which has occurred in the sky, and what the Athenians should do, or to which god they should sacrifice or pray, in order for the best result to come from the sign. Reply: Concerning the sign which has occurred in the sky, it is advantageous for the Athenians to sacrifice with good omens to Zeus Hypatos [Most High], Athena Hypate [Most High]. Heracles, Apollo Soter [Savior], Leto and Artemis, to fill the streets with the aroma of sacrifices, to arrange choirs and bowls of mixed wine and to wear garlands, in the traditional manner, in honor of all the Olympian gods and goddesses, holding up right arms and left, and to bring the traditional offerings. To the founding hero whose name you bear, offer the traditional sacrifices and native gifts. If any persons die on the appointed day, any passers-by are to perform the proper rites for them.

Phlegon of Tralles *Mirabilia* 10

Sibylline Oracles: A hermaphrodite was also begotten in Rome when Jason was archon in Athens and Marcus Plautius Hypsaesus and Marcus Fulvius Flaccus were consuls in Rome. Because of the event the Senate decreed that the priests should read the Sibylline Oracles, and they made atonement and narrated the oracles. The oracles are as follows:

First Oracle: The fate of mortals, who only afterwards learn what place each person is to go, | and all the prodigies and plagues of the goddess Destiny | this loom of mine will reveal, if you consider these things in your mind, | trusting in its strength. I declare that one day a woman will bear | a hermaphrodite having all the male parts | and all the parts that infant women manifest. | I shall no longer conceal but declare to you straightforwardly | sacrifices for Demeter and holy Persephone, | by means of my loom, sovereign goddess that I am, | [sacrifices that you should perform], if you obey me, | for very august Demeter and holy Persephone. First gather together a treasure of coin, | whatever you wish, from the cities with their mingled tribes and from yourselves, | and arrange a sacrifice to be offered to Kore's mother, Demeter. | Thrice nine bulls at public expense I bid you ... [7 lines missing] To sacrifice bright, fine-horned, white-haired, if | they seem to you to be of surpassing beauty. | Bid the same number of girls as I mentioned earlier perform this rite in the Greek manner, | praying to the deathless queen with offerings | solemnly and purely. Thereafter let her receive | lasting sacrifices from your wives, and during your lifetime, | trusting in my loom, let persons carry bright light | to most holy Demeter. Second, let them take | thrice as many offerings [as earlier], unmixed with wine, | and place them into the ravening fire. | This should be done by the old women who are knowledgeable about offerings. | Let all other females zealously make the same number of offerings for Ploutonis, | girls who have minds fresh-budding in their age, | children, let all pray to holy, learned Ploutonis | to remain in the land if war prevails, | and for forgetfulness of war and city to enter their hearts. ...

Theophrastus *Characters* 16

If a mouse nibbles through a bag of barley, he goes to the expounder of sacred law and asks what he should do; and if the answer is that he should give it to the tanner to sew up he disregards the advice and performs an apotropaic sacrifice. ... When he has a dream he visits not only dream-analysts but also seers and bird-watchers to ask which god or goddess he should pray to.

Cicero, *de div.* 1.52 (118)

Their view is that the world was from its beginning set up in such a way that certain things should be preceded by certain signs, some in entrails, others in birds, others in lightning, others in portents, others in stars, others in dream impressions.

Homer, *Odyssey* II.146ff.

[146] As he spoke Zeus sent two eagles from the top of the mountain, and they flew on and on with the wind, sailing side by side in their own lordly flight. When they were right over the middle of the assembly they wheeled and circled about, beating the air with their wings and glaring death into the eyes of them that were below; then, fighting fiercely and tearing at one another, they flew off towards the right over the town. The people wondered as they saw them, and asked each other what this might be; whereon Halitherses, who was the best seer and reader of omens among them, spoke to them plainly and in all honesty, saying:

[161] "Hear me, men of Ithaca, and I speak more particularly to the suitors, for I see mischief brewing for them. Odysseus is not going to be away much longer; indeed he is close at hand to deal out death and destruction, not on them alone, but on many another of us who live in Ithaca. Let us then be wise in time, and put a stop to this wickedness before he comes. Let the suitors do so of their own accord; it will be better for them, for I am not prophesying without due knowledge; everything has happened to Odysseus as I foretold when the Argives set out for Troy, and he with them. I said that after going through much hardship and losing all his men he should come home again in the twentieth year and that no one would know him; and now all this is coming true."

[177] Eurymakhos son of Polybos then said, "Go home, old man, and prophesy to your own children, or it may be worse for them. I can read these omens myself much better than you can; birds are always flying about in the sunshine somewhere or other, but they seldom mean anything. Odysseus has died in a far country, and it is a pity you are not dead along with him, instead of prating here about omens and adding fuel to the anger of Telemakhos which is fierce enough as it is. I suppose you think he will give you something for your family, but I tell you - and it shall surely be - when an old man like you, who should know better, talks a young one over till he becomes troublesome, in the first place his young friend will only fare so much the worse - he will take nothing by it, for the suitors will prevent this - and in the next, we will lay a heavier fine, sir, upon yourself than you will at all like paying, for it will bear hardly upon you."

P. Flor. III 391

A quiver of the left buttock signals joy; for a slave, a fine thing; for a maiden, blame; for a widow, quarrels, for a soldier, a promotion. Propitiate Hekate.

A shaking of the right leg signals pain; for a slave, freedom; for a maiden, marriage; for a widow, profit; for a soldier, a fright. Propitiate Zeus.

Homer, *Odyssey* XIX, 535ff.

Listen, then, to a dream that I have had and interpret it for me if you can. I have twenty geese about the house that eat mash out of a trough, and of which I am exceedingly fond. I dreamed that a great eagle came swooping down from a mountain, and dug his curved beak into the neck of each of them till he had killed them all. Presently he soared off into the sky, and left them lying dead about the yard; whereon I wept in my room till all my maids gathered round me, so piteously was I grieving because the eagle had killed my geese. Then he came back again, and perching on a projecting rafter spoke to me with human voice, and told me to leave off crying. "Be of good courage," he said, "daughter of Ikarios; this is no dream, but a vision of good omen that shall surely come to pass. The geese are the suitors, and I am no longer an eagle, but your own husband, who am come back to you, and who will bring these suitors to a disgraceful end." On this I woke, and when I looked out I saw my geese at the trough eating their mash as usual."

"This dream, lady," replied Odysseus, "can admit but of one interpretation, for had not Odysseus himself told you how it shall be fulfilled? The death of the suitors is portended, and not one single one of them will escape."

And Penelope answered, "Stranger, dreams are very curious and unaccountable things, and they do not by any means invariably come true. There are two gates through which these insubstantial fancies proceed; the one is of horn, and the other ivory. Those that come through the gate of ivory are fatuous, but those from the gate of horn mean something to those that see them. I do not think, however, that my own dream came through the gate of horn, though I and my son should be most thankful if it proves to have done so.

Xenophon, *Anabasis* VI.4

[12] After this Xenophon rose and said: "Fellow soldiers, our journey, it seems, must be made by land, for we have no ships; and we must set out at once, for we have no provisions if we remain here. We, then," he continued, "will sacrifice, and you must prepare yourselves to fight if ever you did; for the enemy have renewed their courage." [13] Thereupon the generals proceeded to sacrifice, the soothsayer who was present being Arexion the Arcadian; for Silanus the Ambraciot had by this time stolen away, on a vessel which he hired at Heracleia. When they sacrificed, however, with a view to their departure, the victims would not prove favourable, [14] and they accordingly ceased their offerings for that day. Now some people had the effrontery to say that Xenophon, in his desire to found a city at this spot, had induced the soothsayer to declare that the sacrifices were not favourable for departure. [15] Consequently he made public proclamation that on the morrow any one who so chose might be present at the sacrifice, and if a man were a soothsayer, he sent him word to be at hand to participate in the inspection of the victims; so he made the offering in the immediate presence of many witnesses. [16] But though he sacrificed a second and a third time with a view to departure, the victims would not prove favourable. At that the soldiers were angry, for the provisions they brought with them had given out and there was not yet any market at hand.

[17] Therefore they held a meeting and Xenophon addressed them again. "Soldiers," he said, "as for setting out upon our journey, the sacrifices, as you see, do not yet prove favourable for that; but I am aware that you are in need of provisions; hence it seems to me that we must sacrifice in regard to this latter point alone." Then some one rose and said: [18] "There appears to be good reason why our sacrifices are not favourable; for as I heard from a man who chanced to arrive here yesterday on a ship, Cleander, the Lacedaemonian governor at Byzantium, is to come here with merchant vessels and men-of-war." [19] At that news all deemed it best to stay, but it was still necessary to go out after provisions. With this object in view Xenophon again sacrificed, going as far as three offerings, and the victims continued unfavourable. By this time people were even coming to Xenophon's tent and declaring that they had no provisions, but he said that he would not lead forth unless the sacrifices turned out favourable.

[20] On the next day he undertook to sacrifice again, and pretty nearly the entire army--for it was a matter of concern to every man--gathered about the place of sacrifice; but the victims had given out. Then the generals, while refusing to lead the men forth, called them together in assembly; [21] and Xenophon said: "It may be that the enemy are gathered together and that we must fight; if, then, we should leave our baggage in the strong place and set out prepared for battle, perhaps our sacrifices would be successful." [22] Upon hearing this, however, the soldiers cried out that it was not at all necessary to enter the place, but, rather, to offer sacrifice with all speed. Now they no longer had any sheep, but they bought a bullock that was yoked to a wagon and proceeded to sacrifice; and Xenophon requested Cleanor the Arcadian to give special attention to see if there was anything auspicious in this offering. But not even so did the omens prove favourable.

Xenophon, *Hellenica* III.3

But Diopieithes, a man very well versed in oracles, said in support of Leotychides that there was also an oracle of Apollo which bade the Lacedaemonians beware of the lame kingship. Lysander, however, made reply to him, on behalf of Agesilaus, that he did not suppose the god was bidding them beware lest a king of theirs should get a sprain and become lame, but rather lest one who was not of the royal stock should become king. For the kingship would be lame in very truth when it was not the descendants of Heracles who were at the head of the state. [4] After hearing such arguments from both claimants the state chose Agesilaus king.

When Agesilaus had been not yet a year in the kingly office, once while he was offering one of the appointed sacrifices in behalf of the state, the seer said that the gods revealed a conspiracy of the most terrible sort. And when he sacrificed again, the seer said that the signs appeared still more terrible. And upon his sacrificing for the third time, he said: "Agesilaus, just such a sign is given me as would be given if we were in the very midst of the enemy." There-upon they made offerings to the gods who avert evil and to those who grant safety, and having with difficulty obtained favourable omens, ceased sacrificing. And within five days after the sacrifice was ended a man reported to the ephors a conspiracy, and Cinadon as the head of the affair. [5]

Herodotus I.46-54

XLVI. After the loss of his son, Croesus remained in deep sorrow for two years. After this time, the destruction by Cyrus son of Cambyses of the sovereignty of Astyages son of Cyaxares, and the growth of the power of the Persians, distracted Croesus from his mourning; and he determined, if he could, to forestall the increase of the Persian power before they became great. [2] Having thus determined, he at once made inquiries of the Greek and Libyan oracles, sending messengers separately to Delphi, to Abae in Phocia, and to Dodona, while others were despatched to Amphiaraus and Trophonius, and others to Branchidae in the Milesian country. [3] These are the Greek oracles to which Croesus sent for divination: and he told others to go inquire of Ammon in Libya. His intent in sending was to test the knowledge of the oracles, so that, if they were found to know the truth, he might send again and ask if he should undertake an expedition against the Persians. XLVII. And when he sent to test these shrines he gave the Lydians these instructions: they were to keep track of the time from the day they left Sardis, and on the hundredth day inquire of the oracles what Croesus, king of Lydia, son of Alyattes, was doing then; then they were to write down whatever the oracles answered and bring the reports back to him. [2] Now none relate what answer was given by the rest of the oracles. But at Delphi, no sooner had the Lydians entered the hall to inquire of the god and asked the question with which they were entrusted, than the Pythian priestess uttered the following hexameter verses: [3] "I know the number of the grains of sand and the extent of the sea, | And understand the mute and hear the voiceless. | The smell has come to my senses of a strong-shelled tortoise | Boiling in a cauldron together with a lamb's flesh, | Under which is bronze and over which is bronze." XLVIII. Having written down this inspired utterance of the Pythian priestess, the Lydians went back to Sardis. When the others as well who had been sent to various places came bringing their oracles, Croesus then unfolded and examined all the writings. Some of them in no way satisfied him. But when he read the Delphian message, he acknowledged it with worship and welcome, considering Delphi as the only true place of divination, because it had discovered what he himself had done. [2] For after sending his envoys to the oracles, he had thought up something which no conjecture could discover, and carried it out on the appointed day: namely, he had cut up a tortoise and a lamb, and then boiled them in a cauldron of bronze covered with a lid of the same. XLIX. Such, then, was the answer from Delphi delivered to Croesus. As to the reply which the Lydians received from the oracle of Amphiaraus when they had followed the due custom of the temple, I cannot say what it was, for nothing is recorded of it, except that Croesus believed that from this oracle too he had obtained a true answer. L. After this, he tried to win the favor of the Delphian god with great sacrifices. He offered up three thousand beasts from all the kinds fit for sacrifice, and on a great pyre burnt couches covered with gold and silver, golden goblets, and purple cloaks and tunics; by these means he hoped the better to win the aid of the god, to whom he also commanded that every Lydian sacrifice what he could. [2] When the sacrifice was over, he melted down a vast store of gold and made ingots of it, the longer sides of which were of six and the shorter of three palms' length, and the height was one palm. There were a hundred and seventeen of these. Four of them were of refined gold, each weighing two talents and a half; the rest were of gold with silver alloy, each of two talents' weight. [3] He also had a figure of a lion made of refined gold, weighing ten talents. When the temple of Delphi was burnt, this lion fell from the ingots which were the base on which it stood; and now it is in the treasury of the Corinthians, but weighs only six talents and a half, for the fire melted away three and a half talents. LI. When these offerings were ready, Croesus sent them to Delphi, with other gifts besides: namely, two very large bowls, one of gold and one of silver. The golden bowl stood to the right, the silver to the left of the temple entrance. [2] These too were removed about the time of the temple's burning, and now the golden bowl, which weighs eight and a half talents and twelve minae, is in the treasury of the Clazomenians, and the silver bowl at the corner of the forecourt of the temple. This bowl holds six hundred nine-gallon measures: for the Delphians use it for a mixing-bowl at the feast of the Divine Appearance. [3] It is said by the Delphians to be the work of Theodorus of Samos, and I agree with them, for it seems to me to be of no common workmanship. Moreover, Croesus sent four silver casks, which stand in the treasury of the Corinthians, and dedicated two sprinkling-vessels, one of gold, one of silver. The golden vessel bears the inscription "Given by the Lacedaemonians," who claim it as their offering. But they are wrong, [4] for this, too, is Croesus' gift. The inscription was made by a certain Delphian, whose name I know but do not mention, out of his desire to please the Lacedaemonians. The figure of a boy, through whose hand the water runs, is indeed a Lacedaemonian gift; but they did not give either of the sprinkling-vessels. [5] Along with these Croesus sent, besides many other offerings of no great distinction, certain round basins of silver, and a female figure five feet high, which the Delphians assert to be the statue of the woman who was Croesus' baker. Moreover, he dedicated his own wife's necklaces and girdles. LII. Such were the gifts which he sent to Delphi. To Amphiaraus, of whose courage and fate he had heard, he dedicated a shield made entirely of gold and a spear all of solid gold, point and shaft alike. Both of these were until my time at Thebes, in the Theban temple of Ismenian Apollo. LIII. The Lydians who were to bring these gifts to the temples were instructed by Croesus to inquire of the oracles whether he was to send an army against the Persians and whether he was to add an army of allies. [2] When the Lydians came to the places where they were sent, they presented the offerings, and inquired of the oracles, in these words: "Croesus, king of Lydia and other nations, believing that here are the only true places of divination among men, endows you with such gifts as your wisdom deserves. And now he asks you whether he is to send an army against the Persians, and whether he is to add an army of allies." [3] Such was their inquiry; and the judgment given to Croesus by each of the two oracles was the same: namely, that if he should send an army against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. And they advised him to discover the mightiest of the Greeks and make them his friends. LIV. When the divine answers had been brought back and Croesus learned of them, he was very pleased with the oracles. So, altogether expecting that he would destroy the kingdom of Cyrus, he sent once again to Pytho and endowed the Delphians, whose number he had learned, with two gold staters apiece. [2] The Delphians, in return, gave Croesus and all Lydians the right of first consulting the oracle, exemption from all charges, the chief seats at festivals, and perpetual right of Delphian citizenship to whoever should wish it.

Pausanias IX.39

On the side towards the mountains the boundary of Orchomenus is Phocis, but on the plain it is Lebadia. Originally this city stood on high ground, and was called Midea after the mother of Aspledon. But when Lebadus came to it from Athens, the inhabitants went down to the low ground, and the city was named Lebadia after him. Who was the father of Lebadus, and why he came, they do not know; they know only that the wife of Lebadus was Laonice. The city is no less adorned than the most prosperous of the Greek cities, and it is separated from the grove of Trophonius by the river Hercyna. They say that here Hercyna, when playing with the Maid, the daughter of Demeter, held a goose which against her will she let loose. The bird flew into a hollow cave and hid under a stone; the Maid entered and took the bird as it lay under the stone. The water flowed, they say, from the place where the Maid took up the stone, and hence the river received the name of Hercyna. On the bank of the river there is a temple of Hercyna, in which is a maiden holding a goose in her arms. In the cave are the sources of the river and images standing, and serpents are coiled around their scepters. One might conjecture the images to be of Asclepius and Health, but they might be Trophonius and Hercyna, because they think that serpents are just as much sacred to Trophonius as to Asclepius. By the side of the river is the tomb of Arcesilaus, whose bones, they say, were carried back from Troy by Leitus. The most famous things in the grove are a temple and image of Trophonius; the image, made by Praxiteles, is after the likeness of Asclepius. There is also a sanctuary of Demeter surnamed Europa, and a Zeus Rain-god in the open. If you go up to the oracle, and thence onwards up the mountain, you come to what is called the Maid's Hunting and a temple of King Zeus. This temple they have left half finished, either because of its size or because of the long succession of the wars. In a second temple are images of Cronus, Hera and Zeus. There is also a sanctuary of Apollo.

What happens at the oracle is as follows. When a man has made up his mind to descend to the oracle of Trophonius, he first lodges in a certain building for an appointed number of days, this being sacred to the good Spirit and to good Fortune. While he lodges there, among other regulations for purity he abstains from hot baths, bathing only in the river Hercyna. Meat he has in plenty from the sacrifices, for he who descends sacrifices to Trophonius himself and to the children of Trophonius, to Apollo also and Cronus, to Zeus surnamed King, to Hera Charioteer, and to Demeter whom they surname Europa and say was the nurse of Trophonius. At each sacrifice a diviner is present, who looks into the entrails of the victim, and after an inspection prophesies to the person descending whether Trophonius will give him a kind and gracious reception. The entrails of the other victims do not declare the mind of Trophonius so much as a ram, which each inquirer sacrifices over a pit on the night he descends, calling upon Agamemnes. Even though the previous sacrifices have appeared propitious, no account is taken of them unless the entrails of this ram indicate the same; but if they agree, then the inquirer descends in good hope. The procedure of the descent is this. First, during the night he is taken to the river Hercyna by two boys of the citizens about thirteen years old, named Hermae, who after taking him there anoint him with oil and wash him. It is these who wash the descender, and do all the other necessary services as his attendant boys. After this he is taken by the priests, not at once to the oracle, but to fountains of water very near to each other. Here he must drink water called the water of Forgetfulness, that he may forget all that he has been thinking of hitherto, and afterwards he drinks of another water, the water of Memory, which causes him to remember what he sees after his descent. After looking at the image which they say was made by Daedalus (it is not shown by the priests save to such as are going to visit Trophonius), having seen it, worshipped it and prayed, he proceeds to the oracle, dressed in a linen tunic, with ribbons girding it, and wearing the boots of the country. The oracle is on the mountain, beyond the grove. Round it is a circular basement of white marble, the circumference of which is about that of the smallest threshing floor, while its height is just short of two cubits. On the basement stand spikes, which, like the cross-bars holding them together, are of bronze, while through them has been made a double door. Within the enclosure is a chasm in the earth, not natural, but artificially constructed after the most accurate masonry. The shape of this structure is like that of a bread-oven. Its breadth across the middle one might conjecture to be about four cubits, and its depth also could not be estimated to extend to more than eight cubits. They have made no way of descent to the bottom, but when a man comes to Trophonius, they bring him a narrow, light ladder. After going down he finds a hole between the floor and the structure. Its breadth appeared to be two spans, and its height one span. The descender lies with his back on the ground, holding barley-cakes kneaded with honey, thrusts his feet into the hole and himself follows, trying hard to get his knees into the hole. After his knees the rest of his body is at once swiftly drawn in, just as the largest and most rapid river will catch a man in its eddy and carry him under. After this those who have entered the shrine learn the future, not in one and the same way in all cases, but by sight sometimes and at other times by hearing. The return upwards is by the same mouth, the feet darting out first. They say that no one who has made the descent has been killed, save only one of the bodyguard of Demetrius. But they declare that he performed none of the usual rites in the sanctuary, and that he descended, not to consult the god but in the hope of stealing gold and silver from the shrine. It is said that the body of this man appeared in a different place, and was not cast out at the sacred mouth. Other tales are told about the fellow, but I have given the one most worthy of consideration. After his ascent from Trophonius the inquirer is again taken in hand by the priests, who set him upon a chair called the chair of Memory, which stands not far from the shrine, and they ask of him, when seated there, all he has seen or learned. After gaining this information they then entrust him to his relatives. These lift him, paralyzed with terror and unconscious both of himself and of his surroundings, and carry him to the building where he lodged before with Good Fortune and the Good Spirit. Afterwards, however, he will recover all his faculties, and the power to laugh will return to him. What I write is not hearsay; I have myself inquired of Trophonius and seen other inquirers. Those who have descended into the shrine of Trophonius are obliged to dedicate a tablet on which is written all that each has heard or seen. The shield also of Aristomenes is still preserved here. Its story I have already given in a former part of my work.

SIG I. 204, lines 31-51; IG II 204, from 352/1 B. C.

[The Athenian people are unsure whether they may cultivate the sacred plot of the goddesses Demeter and Kore; ... the alternatives are to be engraved on tin plates and the appropriate official] is to wrap each plate in wool and put them in a bronze jar in the presence of the people. The presiding officers [prytaneis] are to prepare these things, and the treasurers of the goddess [Athena] are immediately to bring a gold jar and a silver jar into the midst of the people. The *epistates* is to shake up the bronze jar and draw out each tin plate in turn, and to put the first one into the gold jar and the other into the silver jar, then to tie them up. The *epistates* is to mark it with the public seal, and any other Athenian who wishes may put his own seal on besides. Then the treasurers are to carry the jars to the Acropolis. Next the people are to choose three men, one from the council and two from the whole citizen body, to go to Delphi and ask the god which of the written plans the Athenians should follow in regard to the sacred land, that in the gold jar or that in the silver. When they come back from consulting the god, they are to deliver the jars and both the prophecy and the writing on both tin plates are to be read to the people: whichever writing the god indicates is more advantageous to the Athenian people, so shall it be done...

Euripides, Bacchae 215ff.

Pentheus

[215] I happened to be at a distance from this land, when I heard of strange evils throughout this city, that the women have left our homes in contrived Bacchic rites, and rush about in the shadowy mountains, honoring with dances [220] this new deity Dionysus, whoever he is. I hear that mixing-bowls stand full in the midst of their assemblies, and that they each creep off different ways into secrecy to serve the beds of men, on the pretext that they are Maenads worshipping; [225] but they consider Aphrodite before Bacchus.

As many of them as I have caught, servants keep in the public strongholds with their hands bound, and as many as are absent I will hunt from the mountains, [I mean Ino and Agave, who bore me to Echion, and [230] Autonoe, the mother of Actaeon.] And having bound them in iron fetters, I will soon stop them from this ill-working revelry. And they say that some stranger has come, a sorcerer, a conjuror from the Lydian land, [235] fragrant in hair with golden curls, having in his eyes the wine-dark graces of Aphrodite. He is with the young girls day and night, alluring them with joyful mysteries. If I catch him within this house, [240] I will stop him from making a noise with the thyrsos and shaking his hair, by cutting his head off.

That one claims that Dionysus is a god, claims that he was once stitched into the thigh of Zeus--Dionysus, who was burnt up with his mother by the flame of lightning, [245] because she had falsely claimed a marriage with Zeus. Is this not worthy of a terrible death by hanging, for a stranger to insult me with these insults, whoever he is?

But here is another wonder--I see Teiresias the soothsayer in dappled fawn-skins [250] and my mother's father--a great absurdity--raging about with a thyrsos. I shrink, father, from seeing your old age devoid of sense. Won't you cast away the ivy? Grandfather, will you not free your hand of the thyrsos? [255] You persuaded him to this, Teiresias. Do you wish, by introducing another new god to men, to examine birds and receive rewards for sacrifices? If your gray old age did not defend you, you would sit in chains in the midst of the Bacchae, [260] for introducing wicked rites. For where women have the delight of the grape-cluster at a feast, I say that none of their rites is healthy any longer.

Sophocles, Oedipus the King 300ff.

Teiresias enters, led by a boy.

Oedipus: [300] Teiresias, whose soul grasps all things, both that which may be told and that which is unspeakable, the Olympian secrets and the affairs of the earth, you feel, though you cannot see, what a huge plague haunts our state. From which, great prophet, we find you to be our protector and only savior. [305] Now, Phoebus--if indeed you have not already heard the news--sent answer to our question that the only way to rid ourselves of this pest that afflicts us is to discover the slayers of Laius, and then to slay them or banish them from our land. [310] So do not begrudge us the voice of the birds or any other path of prophecy, but save yourself and your state, save me, save all that is defiled by the dead. We are in your hands, and man's noblest task is to help others [315] to the best of his means and powers.

Teiresias: Alas, how terrible it is to have wisdom when it does not benefit those who have it. I knew this well, but let it slip from my mind: otherwise I would not have come here.

Oedipus: What now? How disheartened you have come!

Teiresias: [320] Let me go home. For you will bear your own burden to the end, and I will bear mine, if you consent.

Oedipus: Your words are strange and unkind to the state which nurtured you, since you withhold this response.

Teiresias: I see that you, for your part, speak inappropriately. [325] Therefore do not speak, so I will not suffer the same.

Oedipus: For the love of the gods, do not turn away, if you have knowledge: all we suppliants implore you on our knees.

Teiresias: For all of you are without knowledge. But never will I reveal my troubles--not to call them yours.

Oedipus: [330] What are you saying? Do you know the secret and refuse to tell it? Will you betray and destroy the state?

Teiresias: I will grieve neither myself nor you. Why do you ask these things in vain? You will not learn the answers from me.

Oedipus: Will you not, basest of the base-- [335] you would anger a stone--speak out? can nothing touch you? Will you never make an end?

Teiresias: You blame my anger, but do not perceive your own: no, you blame me.

Oedipus: Who would not be angry hearing such words, [340] with which you now are slighting the city?

Teiresias: The future will come of itself, though I shroud it in silence.

Oedipus: Since it must come anyway, it is right that you tell it to me.

Teiresias: I will speak no further: rage, if you wish, with the fiercest wrath your heart knows.

Oedipus: [345] In my anger I will not spare to speak all my thoughts. Know that you seem to me to have helped in plotting the deed, and to have done it, short of performing the actual murder with your own hands: if you had eyesight, I would have said that you had done even this by yourself.

Teiresias: [350] In truth? I order you to abide by your own decree, and from this day forth not to speak to these men or to me: you are the accursed defiler of this land.

Oedipus: So brazen with your blustering taunt? [355] Where do you think to escape to?

Teiresias: I have escaped. There is strength in my truth.

Oedipus: Who taught you this? Not your skill, at any rate.

Teiresias: You yourself. For you spurred me on to speak against my will.

Oedipus: What did you say? Speak again, so I may learn it better.

Teiresias: [360] Did you not understand before, or are you talking to test me?

Oedipus: I cannot say I understood fully. Tell me again.

Teiresias: I say that you are the killer of the man whose slayer you seek.

Oedipus: Now you will regret that you have said such dire words twice.

Teiresias: [365] Should I tell you more, that you might get more angry?

Oedipus: Say as much as you want: it will be said in vain.

Teiresias: I say that you have been living in unguessed shame with your closest kin, and do not see into what woe you have fallen.

Oedipus: Do you think that you will always be able to speak like this without smarting for it?

Teiresias: Yes, if indeed there is any strength in truth.

Oedipus: [370] But there is, except not for you. You do not have that strength, since you are maimed in your ears, in your wit, and in your eyes.

Teiresias: And you are a poor wretch to utter taunts that every man here will soon hurl at you.

Oedipus: Night, endless night has you in her keeping, so that you can never hurt me, [375] or any man that sees the light of the sun.

Teiresias: No, it is not your fate to fall at my hands, since Apollo, to whom this matter is a concern, is sufficient.

Oedipus: Are these Creon's devices, or your own?

Teiresias: Creon is no trouble for you: you are your own.

Oedipus: [380] O wealth, and empire, and skill surpassing skill in life's keen rivalries, how great is the envy in your keeping, if for the sake of this office which the city has entrusted to me, a gift unsought, [385] Creon the trustworthy, Creon, my old friend, has crept upon me by stealth, yearning to overthrow me, and has suborned such a scheming juggler as this, a tricky quack, who has eyes only for profit, but is blind in his art!

[390] Come, tell me, where have you proved yourself a seer? Why, when the watchful dog who wove dark song was here, did you say nothing to free the people? Yet the riddle, at least, was not for the first comer to read: there was need of a seer's help, [395] and you were discovered not to have this art, either from birds, or known from some god. But rather I, Oedipus the ignorant, stopped her, having attained the answer through my wit alone, untaught by birds. It is I whom you are trying to oust, assuming that [400] you will have great influence in Creon's court. But I think that you and the one who plotted these things will rue your zeal to purge the land: if you did not seem to be an old man, you would have learned to your cost how haughty you are.

Chorus: To our way of thinking, these words, both his and yours, Oedipus, [405] have been said in anger. We have no need of this, but rather we must seek how we shall best discharge the mandates of the god.

Teiresias: Though you are king, the right of reply must be considered the same for both: over that I have control. [410] For I do not live as your slave, but as Loxias'. I will not stand enrolled as Creon's client. And I tell you, since you have taunted my blindness, that though you have sight, you do not see what a state of misery you are in, or where you dwell, or with whom. [415] Do you know who your parents are? You have been an unwitting enemy to your own kin, both in the Underworld and on the earth above, and the double lash of your mother's and your father's curse will one day drive you from this land in dreadful haste, with darkness upon those eyes of yours which now can see. [420] What place will be harbor to your cries, what part of all Cithaeron will not ring with them soon, when you have learned the meaning of the nuptials in which, within that house, you found a fatal haven, after a voyage so fair? And you have not guessed at a throng of other ills [425] which will bring you level with your true self and with your own children. Therefore heap your scorn upon Creon and upon my message: for no man will ever be crushed more miserably than you.

Herodotus VII.140-144

CXL. The Athenians had sent messages to Delphi asking that an oracle be given them, and when they had performed all due rites at the temple and sat down in the inner hall, the priestess, whose name was Aristonice, gave them this answer:

[2] Wretches, why do you linger here? Rather flee from your houses and city,
Flee to the ends of the earth from the circle embattled of Athens!
The head will not remain in its place, nor in the body,
Nor the feet beneath, nor the hands, nor the parts between;
But all is ruined, for fire and the headlong god of war speeding in a Syrian chariot will bring you low.
[3] Many a fortress too, not yours alone, will he shatter;
Many a shrine of the gods will he give to the flame for devouring;
Sweating for fear they stand, and quaking for dread of the enemy,
Running with gore are their roofs, foreseeing the stress of their sorrow;
Therefore I bid you depart from the sanctuary.
Have courage to lighten your evil.

CXLI. When the Athenian messengers heard that, they were very greatly dismayed, and gave themselves up for lost by reason of the evil foretold. Then Timon son of Androbulus, as notable a man as any Delphian, advised them to take boughs of supplication and in the guise of suppliants, approach the oracle a second time. [2] The Athenians did exactly this; "Lord," they said, "regard mercifully these suppliant boughs which we bring to you, and give us some better answer concerning our country. Otherwise we will not depart from your temple, but remain here until we die." Thereupon the priestess gave them this second oracle:

[3] Vainly does Pallas strive to appease great Zeus of Olympus;
Words of entreaty are vain, and so too cunning counsels of wisdom.
Nevertheless I will speak to you again of strength adamantine.
All will be taken and lost that the sacred border of Cecrops
Holds in keeping today, and the dales divine of Cithaeron;
Yet a wood-built wall will by Zeus all-seeing be granted
To the Triton-born, a stronghold for you and your children.
[4] Await not the host of horse and foot coming from Asia,
Nor be still, but turn your back and withdraw from the foe.
Truly a day will come when you will meet him face to face.
Divine Salamis, you will bring death to women's sons
When the corn is scattered, or the harvest gathered in.

CXLII. This answer seemed to be and really was more merciful than the first, and the envoys, writing it down, departed for Athens. When the messengers had left Delphi and laid the oracle before the people, there was much inquiry concerning its meaning, and among the many opinions which were uttered, two contrary ones were especially worthy of note. Some of the elder men said that the gods answer signified that the acropolis should be saved, for in old time the acropolis of Athens had been fenced by a thorn hedge, [2] which, by their interpretation, was the wooden wall. But others supposed that the god was referring to their ships, and they were for doing nothing but equipping these. Those who believed their ships to be the wooden wall were disabled by the two last verses of the oracle: "Divine Salamis, you will bring death to women's sons | When the corn is scattered, or the harvest gathered in." [3] These verses confounded the opinion of those who said that their ships were the wooden wall, for the readers of oracles took the verses to mean that they should offer battle by sea near Salamis and be there overthrown.

CXLIII. Now there was a certain Athenian, by name and title Themistocles son of Neocles, who had lately risen to be among their chief men. He claimed that the readers of oracles had incorrectly interpreted the whole of the oracle and reasoned that if the verse really pertained to the Athenians, it would have been formulated in less mild language, calling Salamis "cruel" rather than "divine" seeing that its inhabitants were to perish. [2] Correctly understood, the gods' oracle was spoken not of the Athenians but of their enemies, and his advice was that they should believe their ships to be the wooden wall and so make ready to fight by sea. [3] When Themistocles put forward this interpretation, the Athenians judged him to be a better counsellor than the readers of oracles, who would have had them prepare for no sea fight, and, in short, offer no resistance at all, but leave Attica and settle in some other country.

CXLIV. The advice of Themistocles had prevailed on a previous occasion. The revenues from the mines at Laurium had brought great wealth into the Athenians' treasury, and when each man was to receive ten drachmae for his share, Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to make no such division but to use the money to build two hundred ships for the war, that is, for the war with Aegina. [2] This was in fact the war the outbreak of which saved Hellas by compelling the Athenians to become seamen. The ships were not used for the purpose for which they were built, but later came to serve Hellas in her need. These ships, then, had been made and were already there for the Athenians' service, and now they had to build yet others. [3] In their debate after the giving of the oracle they accordingly resolved that they would put their trust in the god and meet the foreign invader of Hellas with the whole power of their fleet, ships and men, and with all other Greeks who were so minded.

Aristophanes Birds 959-991

Oracle-Monger: Let not the goat be sacrificed.

Pisthetaerus: [960] Who are you?

Oracle-Monger: Who am I? An oracle-monger.

Pisthetaerus: Get out!

Oracle-Monger: Wretched man, insult not sacred things. For there is an oracle of Bacis, which exactly applies to Nephelococcygia.

Pisthetaerus: Why did you not reveal it to me before [965] I founded my city?

Oracle-Monger: The divine spirit was against it.

Pisthetaerus: Well, I suppose there's nothing to do but hear the terms of the oracle.

Oracle-Monger: "But when the wolves and the white crows shall dwell together between Corinth and Sicyon ..."

Pisthetaerus: But how do the Corinthians concern me?

Oracle-Monger: [970] It is the regions of the air that Bacis indicates in this manner: "They must first sacrifice a white-fleeced goat to Pandora, and give the prophet who first reveals my words a good cloak and new sandals."

Pisthetaerus: Does it say sandals there?

Oracle-Monger: Look at the book: [975] "And besides this a goblet of wine and a good share of the entrails of the victim."

Pisthetaerus: Of the entrails --does it say that?

Oracle-Monger: Look at the book: "If you do as I command, divine youth, you shall be an eagle among the clouds; if not, you shall be neither turtle-dove, nor eagle, nor woodpecker."

Pisthetaerus: [980] Does it say all that?

Oracle-Monger: Look at the book.

Pisthetaerus: This oracle in no sort of way resembles the one Apollo dictated to me: "If an impostor comes without invitation to annoy you during the sacrifice and to demand a share of the victim, [985] apply a stout stick to his ribs."

Oracle-Monger: You are drivelling.

Pisthetaerus: Look at the book: "And don't spare him, were he an eagle from out of the clouds, were it Lampon himself or the great Diopithes."

Oracle-Monger: Does it say that?

Pisthetaerus: Look at the book [990] and go and hang yourself.

Oracle-Monger: Oh! unfortunate wretch that I am.

Pisthetaerus: Away with you, and take your prophecies elsewhere.

Aristophanes Peace 1048-1110

Trygaeus: Just get this roasted. [1045] Ah! who is this man, crowned with laurel, who is coming to me?

Servant: He has a self-important look; is he some diviner?

Trygaeus: No, it's Hierocles, that oracle-monger from Oreus.

Servant: What is he going to tell us?

Trygaeus: Evidently he is coming to oppose the peace.

Servant: [1050] No, it's the odor of the fat that attracts him.

Trygaeus: Let us appear not to see him.

Servant: Very well.

Hierocles (*Approaching*): What sacrifice is this? to what god are you offering it?

Trygaeus (*To the Servant*): Keep quiet.-- Aloud. Look after the roasting and keep your hands off the meat.

Hierocles: To whom are you sacrificing? Answer me.

Trygaeus: Ah! the tail is showing [1055] favourable omens.

Servant: Aye, very favourable, oh, loved and mighty Peace!

Hierocles: Come, cut off the first offering and make the oblation.

Trygaeus: It's not roasted enough.

Hierocles: Yea, truly, it's done to a turn.

Trygaeus: Mind your own business, friend! (*To the Servant*) Cut away.

Hierocles: Where is the table?

Trygaeus: Bring the libations. (*The Servant departs*)

Hierocles: [1060] The tongue is cut separately.

Trygaeus: We know all that. But just listen to one piece of advice.

Hierocles: And that is?

Trygaeus: Don't talk, for it is divine Peace to whom we are sacrificing.

Hierocles (*in an oracular tone*): Oh! wretched mortals, oh, you idiots!

Trygaeus: Keep such ugly terms for yourself.

Hierocles As before. : What! you are so ignorant you don't understand the will of the gods [1065] and you make a treaty, you, who are men, with apes, who are full of malice?

Trygaeus: Ha, ha, ha!

Hierocles: What are you laughing at?

Trygaeus: Ha, ha! your apes amuse me!

Hierocles (*resuming the oracular manner.*): You simple pigeons, you trust yourselves to foxes, who are all craft, both in mind and heart.

Trygaeus: Oh, you trouble-maker! may your lungs get as hot as this meat!

Hierocles: [1070] Nay, nay! if only the Nymphs had not fooled Bacis, and Bacis mortal men; and if the Nymphs had not tricked Bacis a second time ...

Trygaeus (*mocking his manner*): May the plague seize you, if you don't stop Bacizing!

Hierocles: . . . it would not have been written in the book of Fate that the bonds of Peace must be broken; but first ...

Trygaeus: The meat must be dusted with salt.

Hierocles: [1075] . . . it does not please the blessed gods that we should stop the War until the wolf uniteth with the sheep.

Trygaeus: How, you cursed animal, could the wolf ever unite with the sheep?

Hierocles: As long as the wood-bug gives off a fetid odor, when it flies; as long as the noisy bitch is forced by nature to litter blind pups, so long shall peace be forbidden.

Trygaeus: [1080] Then what should be done? Not to stop War would be to leave it to the decision of chance which of the two people should suffer the most, whereas by uniting under a treaty, we share the empire of Greece.

Hierocles: You will never make the crab walk straight.

Trygaeus: You shall no longer be fed at the Prytaneum; [1085] when the war is over oracles are not wanted.

Hierocles: You will never smooth the rough spikes of the hedgehog.

Trygaeus: Will you never stop fooling the Athenians?

Hierocles: What oracle ordered you to burn these joints of mutton in honor of the gods?

Trygaeus: This grand oracle of Homer's: [1090] "Thus vanished the dark war-clouds and we offered a sacrifice to new-born Peace. When the flame had consumed the thighs of the victim and its inwards had appeased our hunger, we poured out the libations of wine." 'Twas I who arranged the sacred rites, but none offered the shining cup to the diviner.

Hierocles: [1095] I care little for that. 'Tis not the Sibyl who spoke it.

Trygaeus: Wise Homer has also said: "He who delights in the horrors of civil war has neither country nor laws nor home." What noble words!

Hierocles: Beware lest the [1100] kite turn your brain and rob ...

Trygaeus (*to the Servant who has returned with the libations*): Look out, slave! This oracle threatens our meat. Quick, pour the libation, and give me some of the inwards.

Hierocles: I too will help myself to a bit, if you like.

Trygaeus: The libation! the libation!

Hierocles (*To the Servant*): [1105] Pour out also for me and give me some of this meat.

Trygaeus: No, the blessed gods won't allow it yet; let us drink; and as for you, get you gone, for that's their will. Mighty Peace! stay ever in our midst.

Hierocles: Bring the tongue hither.

Trygaeus: Relieve us of your own.

Hierocles: [1110] The libation.

Trygaeus: Here! and this into the bargain. (*He strikes him.*)

Hierocles: You will not give me any meat?

Trygaeus: We cannot give you any until the wolf unites with the sheep.

Hierocles: I will embrace your knees.

Trygaeus: 'Tis lost labour, good fellow; you will never smooth the rough spikes of the hedgehog. [1115] Come, spectators, join us in our feast.

Hierocles: And what am I to do?

Trygaeus: You? go and eat the Sibyl.

Hierocles: No, by the Earth! no, you shall not eat without me; if you do not give, I shall take; it's common property.

Trygaeus (*To the Servant*): Strike, strike this Bacis, this humbugging soothsayer.

Hierocles: I take to witness--

Trygaeus: [1120] And I also, that you are a glutton and an impostor. (*To the Servant.*) Hold him tight and I'll beat the impostor with a stick.

Servant: You look to that; I will snatch the skin from him which he has stolen from us. Let go that skin, you priest from hell! [1125] do you hear! Oh! what a fine crow has come from Oreus! Won't you stretch your wings quickly for Elymnium?

Hierocles flees. Trygaeus and the Servant go into the house.

Aristophanes Knights 960 ff.

Cleon: [960] Master, I adjure you, decide nothing till you have heard my oracles.

Sausage-Seller: And mine.

Cleon: If you believe him, you will have to prostitute yourself for him.

Sausage-Seller: If you listen to him, you'll have to let him peel you to the very stump.

Cleon: [965] My oracles say that you are to reign over the whole earth, crowned with chaplets.

Sausage-Seller: And mine say that, clothed in an embroidered purple robe, you shall pursue Smicythe and her spouse, standing in a chariot of gold and with a crown on your head.

Demos: [970] Go, fetch me your oracles, that the Paphlagonian may hear them.

Sausage-Seller: By all means.

Demos: And you fetch yours.

Cleon: Here goes. (*He rushes into the house of Demos.*)

Sausage-Seller: Here goes, by Zeus! There's nothing to stop us. (*He departs in haste.*)

... [997]

Cleon (*coming out of the house with a large package*): There, look at this heap; and yet I'm not bringing them all.

Sausage-Seller (*entering with an even larger package*): Ugh! The weight of them is squeezing the crap right out of me, and still I'm not bringing them all!

Demos: What are these?

Cleon: Oracles.

Demos: All these?

Cleon: Does that astonish you? [1000] Why, I have another whole boxful of them.

Sausage-Seller: And I the whole of my attic and two rooms besides.

Demos: Come, let us see, whose are these oracles?

Cleon: Mine are those of Bacis.

Demos (*to the Sausage-Seller*): And whose are yours?

Sausage-Seller (*without hesitating*): Glanis's, the elder brother of Bacis.

Demos: [1005] And of what do they speak?

Cleon: Of Athens and Pylos and you and me and everything.

Demos: And yours?

Sausage-Seller: Of Athens and lentils and Lacedaemonians and fresh mackerel and scoundrelly flour-sellers [1010] and you and me.

Ah! ha! now watch him gnaw his own tool with chagrin!

Demos: Come, read them out to me and especially that one I like so much, which says that I shall become an eagle and soar among the clouds.

Cleon: Then listen and be attentive! [1015] "Son of Erechtheus, understand the meaning of the words, which the sacred tripods set resounding in the sanctuary of Apollo. Preserve the sacred dog with the jagged teeth, that barks and howls in your defence; he will ensure you a salary and, if he fails, will perish as the victim of [1020] the swarms of jays that hunt him down with their screams."

Demos: By Demeter! I do not understand a word of it. What connection is there between Erechtheus, the jays and the dog?

Cleon: I am the dog, since I bark in your defence. Well! Phoebus commands you to keep and cherish your dog.

Sausage-Seller: [1025] That is not what the god says; this dog seems to me to gnaw at the oracles as others gnaw at doorposts. Here is exactly what Apollo says of the dog.

Demos: Let us hear, but I must first pick up a stone; an oracle which speaks of a dog might bite my tool.

Sausage-Seller: [1030] "Son of Erechtheus, beware of this Cerberus that enslaves free men; he fawns upon you with his tail when you are dining, but he is lying in wait to devour your dishes should you turn your head an instant; at night he sneaks into the kitchen and, true dog that he is, licks up with one lap of his tongue both your dishes and ... the islands."

Demos: [1035] By god, Glanis, you speak better than your brother.

Cleon: Condescend again to hear me and then judge. "A woman in sacred Athens will be delivered of a lion, who shall fight for the people against clouds of gnats with the same ferocity as if he were defending his whelps; care ye for him, [1040] erect wooden walls around him and towers of brass." Do you understand that?

Demos: Not the least bit in the world.

Cleon: The god tells you here to look after me, for I am your lion.

Demos: How! You have become a lion and I never knew a thing about it?

Sausage-Seller: [1045] There is only one thing which he purposely keeps from you; he does not say what this wall of wood and brass is in which Apollo warns you to keep and guard him.

Demos: What does the god mean, then?

Sausage-Seller: He advises you to fit him into a five-holed wooden collar.

Demos: [1050] Hah! I think that oracle is about to be fulfilled.

Cleon: Do not believe it; these are but jealous crows, that caw against me; but never cease to cherish your good hawk; never forget that he brought you those Lacedaemonian fish, loaded with chains.

Sausage-Seller: Ah! if the Paphlagonian ran any risk that day, it was because he was drunk. [1055] Oh, too credulous son of Cecrops, do you accept that as a glorious exploit? A woman would carry a heavy burden if only a man had put it on her shoulders. But to fight! Go to! he would empty his bowels before he would ever fight.

Cleon: Note this Pylos in front of Pylos, of which the oracle speaks, "Pylos is before Pylos."

Demos: How "in front of Pylos"? What does he mean by that?

Sausage-Seller: [1060] He says he will seize upon your bath-tubs.

Demos: Then I shall not bathe to-day.

Sausage-Seller: No, as he has stolen our baths. But here is an oracle about the fleet, to which I beg your best attention.

Demos: [1065] Read on! I am listening; let us first see how we are to pay our sailors.

Sausage-Seller: "Son of Aegeus, beware of the tricks of the dog-fox, he bites from the rear and rushes off at full speed; he is nothing but cunning and perfidy." Do you know what the oracle intends to say?

Demos: The dog-fox is Philostratus.

Sausage-Seller: [1070] No, no, it's Cleon; he is incessantly asking you for light vessels to go and collect the tributes, and Apollo advises you not to grant them.

Demos: What connection is there between a galley and dog-fox?

Sausage-Seller: What connection? Why, it's quite plain --a galley travels as fast as a dog.

Demos: [1075] Why, then, does the oracle not say dog instead of dog-fox?

Sausage-Seller: Because he compares the soldiers to young foxes, who, like them, eat the grapes in the fields.

Demos: Good! Well then! how am I to pay the wages of my young foxes?

Sausage-Seller: I will undertake that, and in three days too! [1080] But listen to this further oracle, by which Apollo puts you on your guard against the snares of the greedy fist.

Demos: Of what greedy fist?

Sausage-Seller: The god in this oracle very clearly points to the hand of Cleon, who incessantly holds his out, saying, "Fill it."

Cleon: That's a lie! Phoebus [1085] means the hand of Diopceithes. But here I have a winged oracle, which promises you shall become an eagle and rule over all the earth.

Sausage-Seller: I have one, which says that you shall be King of the Earth and of the Red Sea too, and that you shall administer justice in Ecbatana, eating fine rich stews the while.

Cleon: [1090] I have seen Athena in a dream, pouring out full vials of riches and health over the people.

Sausage-Seller: I too have seen the goddess, descending from the Acropolis with an owl perched upon her helmet; on [1095] your head she was pouring out ambrosia, on that of Cleon garlic pickle.

Demos: Truly Glanis is the wisest of men. I shall yield myself to you; guide me in my old age and educate me anew.

Haruspicy - liver divination



Figure 1.1: A sheep's liver with the main anatomical features. 1. lobus dexter, 2. lobus sinister, 3. lobus caudatus with processus caudatus (3a) and processus papillaris (3b) 4. lobus quadratus, 5. porta hepatica, 6. lymph node, 7. gall-bladder

