

Burial Rituals, Ideas of Afterlife, and the Individual in the Hellenistic World and the Roman Empire

Edited by Katharina Waldner,
Richard Gordon, and Wolfgang
Spickermann

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IN MEMORIAM

Veit Rosenberger
7. April 1963 – 1. September 2016

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INTRODUCTION

Katharina Waldner, Richard Gordon, Wolfgang Spickermann

This volume is based on the results of a conference held at the University of Erfurt in September 2012. In our call for papers we asked a highly ambitious and complex question: How, in the diverse and heterogeneous cultures of the ancient Mediterranean from Hellenistic to Roman Times, did discourses and practices relating to death, dying, the dead, and their post-mortem existence interact with each other as well as with individuality and the individual? The conference subject itself was developed in the context of two research projects at the Max Weber Centre of Erfurt University: ‘Religious individualisation in historical perspective’¹ and ‘Lived Ancient Religion’.² Both research programmes aim to overcome the dominance of “the public religion perspective (...) of accounts of ancient Mediterranean religion during the last decades”.³ Especially religious practices related to individual crisis, e.g. votive offerings, the use of divination and ‘magic’, but also burial rites and the cult of the dead cannot be adequately grasped by notions such as ‘cults’, ‘polis religion’ or ‘embedded religion’, though each of these terms has its own value at other levels of analysis.⁴ Beyond this, the Lived Ancient Religion approach⁵ focuses in particular on individual choices, inventions (*bricolage*) and ideas produced in response to contingent situations in daily life. These choices and inventions, of course, always relate to a given cultural environment, be it a small village in Latium or the Roman Empire as a whole. Such individual choices produce different types of individuality⁶ as well as contributing to the lifelong process of individuation (i.e. becoming and remaining a coherent ‘person’ in one’s actions, narratives, and thinking),⁷ but also by maintaining a variety of relationships to other individuals, groups and things.⁸ The plethora of ritual practices, discourses and narratives that refer to the mainly individual and contingent event of dying are highly relevant to these fields of research. Conversely, questions about individuality and individuation open up

1 KFG 1013, funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG), see <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/max-weber-kolleg/kfg/> (26.06.2016).

2 ERC 2011-ADG-29555, funded by the European Research Council (ERC), see <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/index.php?id=21031&L=1> (26.06.2016).

3 RÜPKE 2013, 4.

4 RÜPKE 2013, 6 with further bibliography.

5 See e.g. RAJA; RÜPKE 2015.

6 RÜPKE 2013, 12–14 distinguishes five types: practical, moral, competitive, representative, and reflexive individuality.

7 On religious individuation cf. RÜPKE 2013, 14–23; on the function of networks and narratives see EIDINOW 2011.

8 On the relational aspects of individuality see e.g. WOOLF 2013, 153f.

new perspectives on the overwhelming amount of archaeological evidence from the necropoleis of the ancient world.⁹ Moreover, discourses and narratives about death, burial and afterlife were often a medium for reflecting upon theories of the self and the person,¹⁰ reflections that are themselves highly relevant to the question about individualisation in ancient religion.¹¹ The contributions in this volume thus cannot hope to offer more than a few illustrative insights in a still new and promising field of research on death and the individual in the ancient world.¹²

Before we present the main insights of the individual chapters, it might be useful to outline our approach to basic anthropological dimensions of human death, in order to avoid projecting our contemporary view of death on the ancient evidence. In a famous article, the social anthropologist (and grand-nephew of Émile Durkheim) Maurice Bloch made two important observations that emerge from fieldwork concerning death and funerary rituals.¹³ First, in many societies death is not seen as a limited, purely biological, event but as a process reaching far beyond the moment of death as constructed by contemporary medical science. Funerary rituals and death-cult, which often encompass multiple burials and post-mortem manipulations of the corpse, are therefore seen by these societies as essential to enable and further the process of moving from one state to another.¹⁴ The second observation concerns related ideas or theories of the person or the individual. Our own notion of the indivisibility of the individual (what Bloch calls the ‘bounded individual’), who dies at a certain moment, is not shared by many cultures; far more common is the idea of an ‘unbounded person’ whose constituent elements continue to exist at different places and in different forms.¹⁵ Such an assumption is intuitively illuminating for the ancient world, allowing us, for example, to resolve the famous Homeric paradox of the dual existence of Heracles as *autos* in heaven and as ‘shadow’ in Hades (*Od.* 11, 601–604).¹⁶ Bloch goes on to explore an ethnographic example which shows that after death the ‘individual’ part of a person is thought to continue its existence in a certain form and at a certain place (e.g. in heaven with ‘Allah’ vel

9 The bibliography is, of course, abundant. Basic for Ancient Greece are e.g. BREMMER 1983; MORRIS 1989; MORRIS 1992; SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995; JOHNSTON 1999; GARLAND 2001; BREMMER 2002. Ancient Rome: e.g. EDWARDS 2007; HOPE 2009; RÜPKE, SCHEID 2010; BORG 2013. Late Antiquity and Early Christianity: e.g. DIEFENBACH 2007; REBILLARD 2009; AMELING 2011; BROWN 2015. On archaeology in general: TARLOW; STUTZ 2013.

10 Cf. MARTIN; BARRESSI 2006.

11 Cf. RÜPKE; WOOLF 2013. On the myth of Hippolytus as medium for thinking about the boundaries between gods, heroes and human beings, cf. WALDNER 2016 (forthcoming).

12 The topic of the relation between death and individualisation in the ancient world seems to have been almost entirely neglected (but cf. VERNANT 1989, WALDNER 2011), with the exception of the very interesting and relevant discussions in archaeology about body, personal identity and memory, e.g. GRAHAM 2009; DEVLIN, GRAHAM 2015.

13 BLOCH 1988.

14 BLOCH 1988, 11–15.

15 BLOCH 1988, 15–17.

16 The paradox is discussed in the chapters by Krešimir Matijević and Wolfgang Spickermann.

sim.) whereas the ‘collective’ part exists in a different form, as ‘ancestor’, thus ensuring the continuity of the group.¹⁷

In the ancient field, it is mainly archaeologists who are currently addressing the implications of such ethnographic data for our interpretation of ancient death.¹⁸ Emma-Jayne Graham, for example, has pointed out that one should not take funerary monuments as evidence for the assumption that a given person had just one fixed identity.¹⁹ Rather, such monuments are just one aspect of a complex ritual procedure to cope with a new social situation after death “by removing the dead from their previous position within society and reintegrating both living and dead into a changed world”.²⁰ She convincingly argues that in analysing the remains of funeral rituals we should concentrate on the triangle of “personhood, death and the body”.²¹ Our volume shows that raising questions about the individual leads to new insights on the very same basis. We should however bear in mind that the often deplorable state of the evidence almost invariably limits our contributions to particular stages of the protracted overall process of death, dying and ultimate separation. It is these anthropological and pragmatic considerations we should bear in mind when we turn to look at the individual chapters.

The first section, entitled “From Homer to Lucian – Poetics of the Afterlife”, concentrates on the twofold question of how poetics was used by individuals to express their ideas about death and how they dealt with the highly conventional material of traditional poetry, especially the Homeric epics. Krešimir Matijević (“The evolution of afterlife in Archaic Greece”) shows how difficult it is to take Homeric epics as direct evidence for changing social attitudes towards death in Archaic Greece. He is especially critical of the fairly widespread conviction that one should see a historical evolution from *Iliad* to *Odyssey* with the famous *Nekyia* of Odysseus in Bk. 11.²² He emphasizes rather the sheer variety of epic representations of the heroes’ post-mortem fate. Very few of them – Heracles and Menelaus, for example, but also such hybrid figures as the Dioscuri – are granted the privilege of taking their personal identity beyond the threshold of death. It is hard to say whether we should take these cases as a sort of deification, and thus as a reference to the emergence of the ‘hero cult’ in the early Archaic period. What is clear, however, is that the narrative discourse about these outstanding individuals became a kind of template for further social and cultural practices and discourses seeking to conceptualize the post-mortem existence of the dead in the following periods. Nevertheless, the Homeric poetics of the afterlife was not central for the authors of the so-called Orphic gold leaves that were deposited in graves (most of them belonging to obvi-

17 BLOCH 1988, 18–21.

18 GRAHAM 2009; HOPE 2001; TARLOW, STUTZ 2013; DEVLIN, GRAHAM 2015.

19 GRAHAM 2009.

20 GRAHAM 2009, 53.

21 GRAHAM 2009, 53–55.

22 See also MATIJEVIĆ 2015.

ously wealthy people) mainly in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.²³ Jan N. Bremmer (“The construction of an individual eschatology: The case of the Orphic gold leaves”) shows that the *bricolage* of old and new ideas by which these authors expressed highly individual ideas about the afterlife was inspired by the Eleusinian Mysteries but also by Egyptian materials. He points out that in the Orphic imaginary the dead kept their identities as persons even in Hades by contrast with the Homeric eschatology, whereby the dead are reduced to a shadowy collective existence in the Underworld. It seems likely that these highly original ideas were developed in the stimulating colonist milieu of Southern Italy, which also produced original thinkers such as Pythagoras, Parmenides, and Empedocles.

Matylda Obryk (“Prote im Land der Negationen: Per Negationem definiertes Nachleben in einer griechischen Grabinschrift”) studies the metrical funeraries (dating mainly from the first to the third centuries CE) that give expression to the idea that the dead person will live on not just in the memory of the relatives but that he or she will continue to exist in some other place. Such ideas are extremely uncommon among the huge mass of extant funeral monuments.²⁴ Their very existence is thus in itself evidence for a highly individualized practice in coping with death. Obryk shows in detail how the authors of such texts, who are obviously educated, tackle the very difficult task of representing a better life after death. The general line is some variation on that of the Orphic texts and the Homeric narratives about certain heroes, namely that the identity of the person survives after death. This almost automatically involves mythical stories about divinization, like that of Ganymede, and/or some reference to the idea that the deceased lives now in close companionship with the immortal gods. At this point we may ask whether a growing commitment can be discerned to the idea that ordinary people too may become ‘heroes’ or even gods after their death. Examples of ‘private’ heroisation do indeed become more frequent from Hellenistic times onwards, and the model of ruler cult seems to have made the idea of apotheosis increasingly attractive.

The 2nd century CE satirical writer Lucian of Samosata not only wrote an entire squib (Diatrobe) on mourning (*De luctu*) but harshly criticized and mocked traditional funeral customs as well as related ideas on the afterlife (especially those deriving from the Homeric and Platonic tradition) and the trends towards heroisation and apotheosis we have already mentioned. Wolfgang Spickermann studies the relevant texts in his chapter on Lucian (“Tod und Jenseits am Beispiel des Lukian von Samosata”) and points to the fact that Lucian’s critique is not that far away from contemporary Christian apologists such as Tatian. If one looks at some details of Lucian’s satirical representations of the afterlife it is striking that he seems to insist on a very corporeal and individual form of the ‘souls’ in Hades: one of his protagonists for instance recognizes the soul of Socrates by its protruding belly and bald head (*Philops.* 22–24).

23 GRAF, JOHNSTON 2013.

24 See also OBRYK 2012.

In the second section, entitled “Individual Elaborations in the Roman Empire” the authors explore cases that show the immense variety of cultural ideas and practices concerning death and the ways that individuals interpret and deploy them according to social status and geographical location. Constanze Höpken describes the archaeological remains of a very striking cemetery (St. Gereon) in the provincial centre Cologne with a disproportionately large number of burials of young men/soldiers, young mothers/*puerperas* and children, many of them buried upside down. The exceptional and sometimes violent treatment of the bodies is not due to ethnic or cultural differences but rather attests to the widespread idea that individuals who suffered sudden or violent death had somehow to be prevented from haunting the living.²⁵ Veit Rosenberger (“Coping with death: Private deification in the Roman Empire”) deals with an unusual type of funerary in Latin in which the dead person – as it happens they are all female – is referred to as a god (*dea*). It is almost impossible to explain this kind of individual behaviour. It might be inspired by the model of imperial apotheosis or understood as a parallel to the general tendency of freedmen to emphasize their (new) identity by erecting extravagant grave monuments (a clear case of ‘competitive individuality’).²⁶ The chapters by Valentino Gasparini (“‘I will not be thirsty. My lips will not be dry’: Individual strategies of re-constructing the afterlife in the Isiac cults”) and Martin Andreas Stadler (“Dioskourides, Tanaweruow, Titus Flavius et al. Or: How appealing was an Egyptian afterlife?”) both discuss the “Egyptological presupposition” (Stadler), the common assumption by Egyptologists that, because Egyptian ideas of the afterlife were the most elaborate, they must also have been the most attractive mortuary belief and practice in the whole Ancient Mediterranean. But Stadler shows that the so called “Egyptian afterlife” was far less homogeneous than one might expect. This conclusion fits with Gasparini’s demonstration of individual variation among funeraries produced by followers of Isis that draw on ideas or even single formulae (e.g. the *eupsychēi* formula) clearly based on Egyptian tradition. One can distinguish between well-informed specialists and others who just present traditional Graeco-Roman ideas in Egyptian disguise. In contrast to Gasparini, whose evidence comes from the whole Roman Empire, Stadler concentrates on Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. By analyzing some cases of mixed Graeco-Egyptian burial practices he shows that they in fact refer to a coherent Egyptian system already attested for much earlier periods. Nevertheless, this system itself encompasses an ambiguous attitude to the afterlife, partly resolved by simultaneously entertaining a variety of different ideas that confirm Bloch’s point about the ‘unbounded person’.

The last part of the book (“Making a Difference: Groups and their Claims”) presents three case studies which all refer to so called ‘religious groups’ in the Roman Empire. Claudia D. Bergmann (“Identity on the Menu: Imaginary meals and ideas of the world to come in Jewish apocalyptic writings”) focuses on a highly original and so far neglected motif of Jewish apocalyptic narratives: the description of an

25 Cf. also JOHNSTON 1999.

26 Cf. RÜPKE 2013, 12–13.

imaginary meal which is enjoyed by the righteous in the world to come. The author shows that these narratives create a post-mortem identity based on commensality as well as on the corporeal materiality of each single individual. The early Christian discourse about the individual and its death, discussed by Andreas Merkt (“‘A Place for my Body’: Aspects of individualisation in Early Christian funerary culture and eschatological thought”) shares this concern about commensality and the body. The famous epitaph of Abercius is read by Andreas Merkt as an example of Christian self-presentation by a certain individual. This individual sees himself separated from the traditional, i.e. familiar social affiliations. Instead there is a strong emphasis on community and commensality, especially between the living and the dead, whereas the body is highly valued as a symbol (or should we say ‘synecdoche’?) of personal identity but not as a means of obtaining a vicarious immortality by engendering children. The contemporaries of Abercius who joined Mithraic groups might have shared his delight for commensality but their common meals were a totally earthly/mundane affair. In his chapter on Mithraism Richard Gordon (“Den Jungstier auf den goldenen Schultern tragen: Mythos, Ritual und Jenseitsvorstellungen im Mithraskult”) thoroughly deconstructs the idea that Mithraism was a coherent system with a certain ‘belief’ in afterlife. Mithraic groups were not funded to overcome the gap between life and death with certain rituals but centered on the prestige of a common meal in an exclusive and essentially male group. One thus has to expect intelligent mystagogues creating local variation of Mithraism. Gordon shows that in the often individual arrangements of the iconographic programme of Mithraic dining rooms/Mithraic sanctuaries there were at least three themes that might form the basis of speculation about the idea of an happy afterlife: the *fons perennis*, Mithras ascending to heaven in the Sun’s chariot, and the exemplary cultic meal first celebrated by Mithras and the Sun-god. It was up to each member of the group in the mithraeum if he wanted to see his own fate mirrored in these images or not.

At the end it is a pleasant duty warmly to thank all those people who made the conference as well as the publication of this volume possible. The Fritz Thyssen Stiftung generously sponsored the conference and the preparation of the manuscripts for publication. As so often in the past, Diana Püschel in the Max Weber Centre supported us in preparing the conference, especially on the administrative side. We also thank our many colleagues at the Max Weber Centre, especially the members of the research groups ‘Religious individualisation in historical perspective’ and ‘Lived Ancient Religion’, for inspiring discussions on our topic during and after the conference. Anja Zimmermann sub-edited the manuscripts provisionally, while Mihaela Holban prepared them for final publication and compiled the indices. Maria Scherrer heroically produced a final ready-to-print version with admirable speed and care. We are most grateful to all of them.

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE AFTERLIFE IN ARCHAIC GREECE

Krešimir Matijević

Abstract

The article discusses different scientific perceptions of the early Greek afterlife. Jan N. Bremmer identifies changes of attitude towards death already within the Homeric epics and links them with a development Philippe Ariès claimed to have proven for the period of the Middle Ages to the Modern times. Ian Morris on the other hand emphasises the continuity of the Greek concepts of afterlife in the Archaic period. The article demonstrates that no developmental change in beliefs relating to the afterlife took place between the composition of the *Iliad* and that of the *Odyssey*. Still, contrary to Ian Morris, further Archaic literary and epigraphic sources prove that the imagination of the Realm of the dead did change though not in a linear way. Furthermore certain parts of the Homeric concepts continued to exist.

Since the 1980's, the changing concepts of the afterlife during the Greek Archaic and Classical periods have been a topic of debate. Disregarding controversy over detailed issues, it is not to be questioned that eventually afterlife became individualized: one hoped to gain advantage in the hereafter from acts done in this world or even merely from privileged knowledge.¹ It is a subject of debate, however, whether a linear development in one particular direction took place such as the one Philippe Ariès claimed to have proven for the period from the Middle Ages to the Modern era.² According to the *communis opinio*, largely formed by various studies from Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and Jan N. Bremmer, one believes to have discovered a development towards an increasingly individualized afterlife even within the Homeric epics.³ Ian Morris on the other hand argued that “the general pattern [...] remained little changed from 800 to 500 B.C.”⁴

1 Cf. e.g. BALTES 1988, 99f.

2 ARIÈS 1974 and 1977.

3 SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 15–39; 1983, 33–48 and 1995, 52–56, 413–441; BREMMER 1994, 94–96 and 2002, 5. JOHNSTON 1999, 95–99 shares this view. Ultimately the idea seems to go back to BURKERT 2011², 302 (304 in the first German edition from 1977 and 197 in the English edition from 1985) who spoke of “contradictory motifs [in Homer] which contain the germs of a radical transformation in beliefs concerning the afterlife.” Cf. MATIJEVIĆ 2015 on the origin and character of the Homeric afterlife.

4 MORRIS 1989, 301. He is supported by ENGELS 1998, 43, who nonetheless speaks of an “offense Diskussion”. Cf. also DERDERIAN 2001, 190 n. 1: “[...] ongoing dialogue [...]”.

It is not possible to explore all details of this discussion in this paper. Instead, I would like to briefly acquaint the reader with the positions of the researchers mentioned and then focus on the Early Archaic period, paying particular attention to the Homeric epics.⁵

1. The controversy

In an overview of the evolution of Greek concepts of the afterlife in the Archaic and Classical periods, Jan N. Bremmer summed up the findings of Philippe Ariès's book "L'Homme devant la mort" published in 1977 by stating: "There is, then, in Western Europe a development of an attitude that goes from accepting death, via fearing death, to finally concealing death. At the same time, we see a corresponding change in interest in the afterlife. From relative unimportance, it becomes the overwhelming focus of interest, and at the moment, belief in it seems to be gradually disappearing."⁶ Bremmer himself pointed out various shortcomings of Ariès's study, for example, that the author tends to neglect differences between various social groups.⁷ Bremmer remains nevertheless convinced of the parallel development concerning the link between attitudes towards death and respective concepts of the hereafter, as proposed by Ariès:

Development of attitude towards death and of interest in the afterlife according to Ph. Ariès

Acceptance of death → fear of death → concealment of death
Relative unimportance of the afterlife → great interest in the afterlife → disappearance of afterlife beliefs

Bremmer believes furthermore to have identified such a development from the Greek Archaic to the Classical period.⁸ In accordance with his theory and parallel to Ariès, the first identified phase constitutes "Tamed or Domesticated Death". An example of this attitude is Athena telling Telemachus that death is common to all and not even the gods can save a beloved human from dying.⁹ Further, according to the Homeric concept, personified Death, namely Thanatos, is twin brother to Hypnos,¹⁰ who is the personification of Sleep, which demonstrates in Bremmer's view

5 I will not discuss the dispute over the interpretation of the archaeological finds from the early Greek Archaic and their relation to the Homeric epics; see the different position of SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 33–37 and 1983, 43–47; MORRIS 1989, 314–320.

6 BREMMER 1994, 95.

7 Ibid. n. 12; cf. also MORRIS 1987, 35f.; MIRTO 2012, 162f.

8 BREMMER 1994, 95f. This observation is already made by SOURVINOU-INWOOD (1981, 17; 1983, 34; 1995, 301), though she is not assuming a parallel development of attitudes towards death and interest in the afterlife.

9 Hom. *Od.* 3, 236–238; cf. BREMMER 1994, 96.

10 Hom. *Il.* 14, 231; 16, 672.

that death is a natural occurrence and does not pose a threat.¹¹ Even Heracles perishes.¹²

Bremmer sees a change in this attitude already in the *Odyssey*.¹³ He points out that both, Menelaus and the Dioscuri, escape death, in Hesiod part of the Trojan and Theban heroes lives on the Isles of the Blessed and finally in Classical Greece mystery religions flourished which promised followers a better life after death. Bremmer concludes that “Within the time-span of a few centuries, then, there is a complete change of attitude, even though the old ideas did not die.”¹⁴ While these changes in afterlife beliefs observed by Bremmer are based on Sourvinou-Inwood’s research from the 1980’s,¹⁵ the latter part of the quote honors Ian Morris.¹⁶ Morris opposed Sourvinou-Inwood by including various post-Homeric references which he believes attest more to the continuity of the Greek concepts of the afterlife in the Archaic and less to its evolution.¹⁷ The question arises, however, whether it is possible to unite these divergent positions – one, proposing a complete change of attitude towards death, the other, conversely speaking of the continuity of old ideas.¹⁸

2. The relevance of the ‘Homeric Question’

When using the Homeric epics to mark the beginning of a certain development, not only does the ‘Homeric Question’ immediately draw attention; a further point to consider is whether the concepts conveyed in both poems are truly representative of *the* Greek concept of the hereafter. Assuming the existence of one single author, one must admit that the concept of the afterlife in these epics could certainly be one of many which existed at the same time. Taking two or more authors into account, we can lend Homeric conceptions more importance. I myself belong to those who assume that one author was responsible for both poems, written in Early Archaic times. My further assumption is that the composition of the poems took place after a phase of oral story-telling and standardization of the myths relating to the Trojan Wars and the *Odyssey*.¹⁹ In this process the author most likely chose from different myth versions available to him. I find it less likely though, as the so-called ‘Neoanalysis’ would have it, that Homer not only made choices, but even pointedly kept known versions a secret or single-handedly altered them.²⁰

11 BREMMER 1994, 96; cf. SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 19.

12 Hom. *Il.* 18, 117–119.

13 BREMMER 1994, 96.

14 Ibid.

15 SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 15–39 and 1983, 33–48.

16 BREMMER 1994, 96 n. 17.

17 MORRIS 1989, 306–309. This opinion was already put forward by ARIËS 1977, 13.

18 It has to be remarked though that SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 17, 37 is actually speaking of a “partial shift” towards a more individual concept of death while the “earlier model did not disappear”.

19 Cf. MATIJEVIĆ 2015, 15f.

20 On ‘Neoanalysis’ see WILLCOCK 1997, 174–189; for a recent critique, KELLY 2006, 1–25.

In addition to this, we must take into consideration the widely-accepted fact that over time, irrespective of the authorship question, certain sections of the epics have been interpolated and others possibly eliminated. Those additions relevant to our discussion could document an adjustment to changes in afterlife beliefs. Alternatively, they too could represent simultaneously existing concepts. Under the assumption that the poems were continually worked on, similar to a modern Wikipedia article, right up to the end of the Greek Archaic, it is especially likely that the ideas conveyed in them must have found acceptance beyond the regional level. This argument is supported by Herodotus's well-known claim,²¹ that it was Homer and Hesiod who defined the pantheon of the Greeks. Besides this, the entire portrayal of the Homeric epics reveals a Pan-Hellenic perspective, as Gregory Nagy rightfully determined.²² Hesiod even refers to the Greeks as a whole by using the term *Panhellenes*,²³ showing that we are not necessarily dealing with an anachronism. Regardless of one's stance on the 'Homeric Question', the picture conveyed by the epics is to be given serious consideration, especially since archeological evidence, despite all controversy involving its interpretation, does not seem to directly contradict such a picture.²⁴

Even when taking only one author into account, we can of course not rule out that new beliefs pertaining to the afterlife have found their way into the *Odyssey*, which was probably written at a later time than the *Iliad*. This aspect deserves close examination, for it plays an important role in deciding whether to allow ourselves the assertion that there is a direct relationship between the assumed attitude of indifference towards death in the Early Archaic and a relative lack of importance of the afterlife.

3. Changes between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?

As a prime example of the 'original' or 'traditional'²⁵ viewpoint consider Achilles. As we all know, his mother, Thetis, presents him with two possibilities: he can live a long life without fame or a short but glorious one. The hero does not receive the option 'eternal life' or deification. His fate is well-known: Achilles dies in the fight against Paris and Apollo and reaches Hades. This common belief is interrupted by the fate of the Dioscuri and Menelaus, according to Sourvinou-Inwood and Bremmer.²⁶ Let us now examine the relevant passages in detail.

21 Hdt. 2,53.

22 NAGY 1983, 189f.

23 Hes. *Op.* 528; F 130 M.-W.

24 Cf. e.g. WALTER-KAPYAH 1995, 159–181.

25 SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 16f.

26 *Ibid.*, 20; 1983, 36 and 1995, 17f.; BREMMER 1994, 96.

In the *Iliad*, it is written that Castor and Polydeuces lie buried in Lacedaemon.²⁷ The wording of this passage is highly similar to that of the *Odyssey*,²⁸ only that in the latter the two are described as living, whereas the *Iliad* gives the impression that they are deceased. The *Nekyia* obviously indicates that both together alternate between being dead or alive on a daily basis (whereas in the later version by Pindar they take turns²⁹). Analysts in earlier times considered such seemingly contradictory details in the Homeric poems to be the result of subsequent additions.³⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood and Bremmer believe these to represent a gradual change in beliefs surrounding the afterlife that took place between the composition of the *Iliad* and that of the *Odyssey*.

Let us take Menelaus as a further example. He tells of how Proteus predicted that Menelaus would be sent by “the immortals to the Elysian Plain and to the ends of the earth, where the blonde-haired Rhadamanthys resides. There man leads a life of ease: no snow falls, nor winter weather and never does it rain, but forever more does Oceanus send the breezes of the blazing west wind [Zephyrus], to cool man.”³¹ According to Menelaus, he earns this privilege through his marriage to Helena, which makes him son-in-law to Zeus. Menelaus does not perish as such, but rather is raptured by the gods – along with other mortals – to Elysium.

Too little attention has been paid to the fact that it is not the narrator of the *Odyssey* who tells us of the Elysian Plain.³² Instead, the narrator allows Menelaus to speak, and his fate is in turn prophesied by Proteus. We are also dealing with a privilege which has not yet come into effect and which Menelaus is promised on the

27 Hom. *Il.* 3, 236–244: δοῖω δ’ οὐ δύναμαι ιδέειν κοσμήτορε λαῶν / Κάστορά θ’ ἰππόδαμον καὶ πῦξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα / αὐτοκασιγνήτω, τῷ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ. / ἢ οὐχ ἐσπέσθην Λακεδαιμόνος ἐξ ἐρατεινῆς, / ἢ δεῦρ’ ὅ μιν ἔποντο νέεσσι’ ἐνὶ ποντοπόροισι, / νῦν αὖτ’ οὐκ ἐθέλουσι μάχην καταδύμεναι ἀνδρῶν / αἴσχεα δειδιότες καὶ ὄνειδεα πόλλ’ ἅ μοι ἐστίν. / Ὡς φάτο, τοὺς δ’ ἦδη κάτεχεν φυσίζροος αἶα / ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὐθι φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.

28 Hom. *Od.* 11, 300–304: Κάστορά θ’ ἰππόδαμον καὶ πῦξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα, / τοὺς ἄμφοι ζῶουσ’ ἀνέχει φυσίζροος αἶα / οἳ καὶ νέρθεν γῆς τιμὴν πρὸς Ζηνὸς ἔχοντες / ἄλλοτε μὲν ζῶουσ’ ἐτερήμεροι, ἄλλοτε δ’ αὖτε / τεθνᾶσιν· τιμὴν δὲ λελόγχασιν ἴσα θεοῖσι.

29 Pi. *N.* 10, 55–60: Δ’ μεταμειβόμενοι δ’ ἐναλλάξ ἀμέραν τὰν μὲν παρὰ πατρί φίλῃ / Δὶ νέμονται, τὰν δ’ ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης ἐν γυάλοις Θεράπνας, / πότμον ἀμπιπλάντες ὁμοῖον· ἐπεὶ / τοῦτον, ἢ πάμπαν θεὸς ἔμμεναι οἰκεῖν τ’ οὐρανῷ, / εἴλετ’ αἰῶνα φθιμένον Πολυδεύκης Κάστορος ἐν πολέμῳ. / τὸν γάρ Ὅδας ἀμφὶ βουσὶν πῶς χολωθείς ἔτρωσεν χαλκῆας λόγχας ἀκμῇ.

This later variation might reflect Mesopotamian influence where someone leaving the world of the dead had to be replaced by a substitute; cf. the Sumerian and Akkadian versions of the ‘Descent of Inanna/Ishtar to the Netherworld’ *Il.* 289, 349–368, 14’–73’, 405–410 (Sumerian: RÖMER 1993, 480, 484f., 487–493); *Il.* 126–135 (Akkadian: MÜLLER 1994, 765; FOSTER 1996², 408). See also the myth of ‘Enlil and Ninlil’ (RÖMER 1993, 421–434) who beget three children in order to free the moon-god Nanna/Suen.

30 This opinion is still favoured by GANTZ 1993, 323.

31 Hom. *Od.* 4, 561–569: σοὶ δ’ οὐ θέσφατόν ἐστι, διοτρεφὲς ὦ Μενέλαε, / Ἄργει ἐν ἱπποβότῳ θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπισπείν, / ἀλλὰ σ’ ἐς Ἥλύσιον πεδίον καὶ πείρατα γαίης / ἀθάνατοι πέμπουσιν, ὅθι ξανθὸς Ῥαδάμανθς, — / τῇ περ ῥήϊστη βιοτῇ πέλει ἀνθρώποισιν· οὐ νικητός, οὔτ’ ἄρ’ χειμῶν πολὺς οὔτε ποτ’ ὄμβρος, / ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ ζεφύριοι λιγὴ πνεύοντος ἀήτας / Ὠκεανὸς ἀνίησιν ἀναψύχειν ἀνθρώπους, — / οὐνεκ’ ἔχεις Ἑλένην καὶ σφιν γαμβρὸς Διὸς ἐσσι.

32 But see FOSS 1997, 165 n. 19, who thinks, that this is stated by Homer himself.

Island of Pharos, a location in close proximity to Egypt. It is even up for discussion whether Proteus himself is, in fact, an Egyptian.³³ The entire episode could be seen as a reference by the author to a foreign set of beliefs which is gaining influence. It is also possible, though, that it is an expression of the author's scepticism regarding the traditional story of Menelaus being raptured (although this is not necessarily a contradiction).³⁴ Of course the Elysian episode or selected verses of it are also regarded by some members of the scientific community as interpolation.³⁵ However, we cannot limit the discussion to the Elysium. One could assume that this section is a subsequent addition or that the narrator of the *Odyssey* is distancing himself from these ideas by reporting on it indirectly. Yet even under these assumptions, it represents only one of several locations in which eternal life was possible.³⁶ There are further, albeit isolated examples, such as that of Ganymede: Because of his beauty, he was made to be Zeus's cup-bearer on Olympus,³⁷ which should have given him immortality. Ino Leucothea even experiences deification.³⁸ Tithonus and Cleitus are also each granted eternal life at the side of Eos,³⁹ although Tithonus is denied eternal youth since Eos did not explicitly request it (according to the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*⁴⁰). A further consideration is that Calypso offers Odysseus immortality, should he decide to remain with her.⁴¹ He rejects this offer in order to return home. This last example, similar to Achilles when he tries to achieve an eternal life of sorts by choosing eternal glory,⁴² demonstrates to my mind that not only did people contemplate various forms of immortality, they also discussed its advantages and disadvantages. It is therefore surely no coincidence that Odysseus, who rejected Calypso's offer, is told by Achilles in the underworld that a life of any kind is preferable to Hades.⁴³

33 Cf. BÉRARD 1967⁷, xvii-xviii; KNIGHT 1968, 111f.; see also LLOYD 1993, 43f., who believes the name to be Greek.

34 Cf. GRIFFIN 1977, 40: "Aristotle [F 163 ROSE] pointed out that Homer puts many things into the mouths of his characters, when he himself does not wish to vouch for their truth [...]."

35 E.g. ROHDE 1898², vol. 1, 70, 77; he was followed by WASER 1905, 2470; DIETRICH 1967, 347 n. 5; MARZULLO 1970², 214f. CAPELLE 1927, 260–262 takes the lines 351–569 in book 4 of the *Odyssey* for a part of a lost *nostos* of Menelaus. KROLL 1953, 14 considers only the explanation of the privilege (vers 569) to be posthomeric in contrast to ELLIGER 1975, 115–118, who thinks, that the characterization of the Elysium (564–568) was interpolated.

36 All alternatives to death are naturally part of the Greek Afterlife; cf. DIETZ 1990, 6: "Was verstehen wir in diesem Zusammenhang [the Homeric epics] unter 'Jenseits'? Das Jenseits ist die dem Menschen normalerweise nicht sichtbare Dimension der Wirklichkeit, sie kann vor dem Tod (prä mortal) in besonderen Fällen vom Menschen erfahren werden, und sie ist für den Menschen nach dem Tod (post mortal) der vermutete Bereich des menschlichen Weiterlebens." This applies not only to the Elysian Plain and Hades but also to the "Bereich der Götter, vor allem der olympischen Götter", DIETZ 1990, 7.

37 Hom. *Il.* 20, 232–235.

38 Hom. *Od.* 5, 333–335.

39 Hom. *Il.* 11, 1; *Od.* 15, 250f.

40 H. Hom. *h. Ven.* 218–238.

41 Hom. *Od.* 5, 135–139. 206–210; 7, 254–258.

42 Hom. *Il.* 9, 413; cf. SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 32.

43 Hom. *Od.* 11, 488–491; cf. SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 24.

Aside from Menelaus and the Dioscuri, the different fate of Heracles in the Homeric epics is said to demonstrate the change in afterlife beliefs. In the *Iliad*, Achilles notes that even Heracles, Zeus's favourite son, cannot escape death.⁴⁴ This gives Achilles reason, then, to courageously meet his own fate. In the same passage, Heracles's death is attributed to *moira*, but more significantly to Hera's anger (*cholos*). In this way Homer hints that Zeus may originally have had other plans for his favourite son. In the *Odyssey*, as we all know, Odysseus meets the *eidōlon* of Heracles in Hades, whereupon it is said that his *autos* lingers among the immortal gods.⁴⁵ Consequently a part of the hero was deified after he had died.⁴⁶ Although even in Ancient times the respective verses were considered to be interpolated by Onomakritos,⁴⁷ the deification of Heracles is mentioned even thrice by Hesiod.⁴⁸ That these passages are also later additions, as Kjeld Matthiessen and Timothy Gantz propose,⁴⁹ I consider less than convincing. More likely we are dealing with a case similar to that of the Dioscuri, in which we see Zeus, at a later time, prevailing over Hera or reaching an agreement with her but without us hearing about it from Homer.⁵⁰ With respect to the Dioscuri, Homer also withholds clarifying details. This aside, Zeus does generally try save his sons from dying, as in the case of Sarpedon. Again it is Hera who prevents Zeus from intervening in Sarpedon's fate, which foresees his demise in the fight with Patroklos.⁵¹

44 Hom. *Il.* 18, 115–119: κῆρα δ' ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι ὀππότε κεν δῇ / Ζεὺς ἐθέλῃ τελέσαι ἡδ' ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι. / οὐδὲ γάρ οὐδὲ βίῃ Ἡρακλῆος φύγε κῆρα, / ὅς περ φίλτατος ἔσκε Διὶ Κρονίῳνι ἄνακτι· / ἀλλὰ ἐμοῖρα δάμασσε καὶ ἀργαλέος χόλος Ἥρης.

45 Hom. *Od.* 11, 601–604: τὸν δὲ μετ' εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακλεῖην, / εἰδῶλον· αὐτὸς δὲ μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι / τέρπεται ἐν θαλῆς καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην, / παῖδα Διὸς μέγαλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου.

46 In the early Greek Archaic the *autos* usually designates a hero's body; cf. BÜCHNER 1937, 116; PFISTER 1948, 150 n. 3; NAGY 1979, 208; ROLOFF 1970, 93 n. 103 takes it here as the *psychē* of Heracles. In later times it is usually the body that ends up in Hades while the *psychē* rises; see from 432 B.C.: *IG* I² 945 = *IG* I³ 1179 = PFOHL 1967, 32f. no. 94; cf. for the 5th century further Epicharmus F 245 KAIBEL and Euripides F 971 NAUCK.

47 See the Scholia to Hom. *Od.* 11, 601–604; cf. PETZL 1969, 28–41 with all relevant details for the discussion and reflection of this passage in antiquity.

48 Hes. *Th.* 950–955; F 25 und 229 M-W.

49 MATTHIESSEN 1988, 41f.; GANTZ 1993, 460f.

50 Cf. ROLOFF 1970, 93; further HEIDEN 1997, 229: “If the gods did not provide life after death at the time of the events narrated in the *Iliad*, they might have done so later; since the events narrated in the *Odyssey* occur mythically later than those in the *Iliad*, this, and not a deep eschatological disagreement between the poems, might explain why afterlives are mentioned in one and not the other.”

51 Hom. *Il.* 16, 431–461. According to NAGY 1983, 189–217 the whole passage implies Sarpedon's “immortalization after death” (204), but see the commentary of JANKO 1994, 377.

All this can be summarized in a table:

Hero	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Achilles	His death is mentioned repeatedly.	Dwells in Hades.
Dioscuri	Buried in Lacedaemon (<i>Il.</i> 3, 236–244)	Every other day they are together alive or dead, an honor they have been granted by Zeus (<i>Od.</i> 11, 300–304).
Menelaus	No information	Proteus predicted that Menelaus would be sent by the immortals to the Elysian Plain (along with other mortals) because of his connection to Zeus (<i>Od.</i> 4, 563–569).
Ganymede	Zeus's cup-bearer on Olympus (<i>Il.</i> 20, 232–235; cf. 5, 265f.)	No information
Ino Leucothea	No information	Deified (<i>Od.</i> 5, 333–335).
Tithonus	Partner of Eos (<i>Il.</i> 11, 1).	No information
Cleitus	No information	Partner of Eos (<i>Od.</i> 15, 250f.)
Odysseus	No information	Calypso offers him immortality, should he decide to remain with her (<i>Od.</i> 5, 135f., 209f.; 7, 255–257; 23, 333 and 336)
Heracles	His death is attributed to fate, but more significantly to Hera's anger (<i>Il.</i> 18, 117–119)	His <i>eidolon</i> is in Hades, his <i>autos</i> among the gods (<i>Od.</i> 11, 601–604; Hes. F 25 and 229 M-W; <i>Th.</i> 950–955)
Sarpedon	Hera prevents his rescue (<i>Il.</i> 16, 431–461)	No information
Orion	The hunter Orion is described as a stellar constellation (<i>Il.</i> 18, 485–489)	Artemis killed Orion (<i>Od.</i> 5, 121–124). He is a stellar constellation (<i>Od.</i> 5, 274) and his <i>eidolon</i> hunts in Hades (<i>Od.</i> 11, 572–575).

When viewing all cases in table form, it becomes apparent that no developmental change in beliefs relating to the afterlife took place between the composition of the *Iliad* and that of the *Odyssey*. Both epics display heroes who are either removed from the clutches of death and made immortal or who initially die, only to be deified later on.

Orion, appearing last in the table, has been ignored in past discussions. In my opinion he also experiences posthumous deification; this could at any rate explain the details known about him: death at the hand of Artemis, the *eidolon* in Hades, hunter in the skies.⁵²

52 Cf. also the *Minyas* F 6 WEST.

We can therefore conclude that in both Homeric epics, the belief that all people die and go on to dwell in Hades exists alongside another – one which sees a few individuals experiencing a different fate after or aside from death. This conclusion is further underlined by the fact that in both, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, death is, general speaking, unavoidable.

<i>Il.</i> 21, 462–466 (Apollo to Poseidon):	<i>Od.</i> 3, 236–238 (Athena to Telemachus):
<p>“Shaker of the earth, you would have me be as one without prudence / if I am to fight even you for the sake of insignificant / <u>mortals, who are as leaves</u>⁵³ <u>are, and now flourish and grow warm / with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again / fade away and are dead.</u>”</p> <p>(trans. by R. Lattimore)</p>	<p>“But yes, not even gods can ward off <u>death, / common to all</u>, even from a dear man, when / baneful doom, of death that brings long woe, takes him down.”</p> <p>(trans. by J. Huddleston)</p>

As a result, I feel one must disagree with Sourvinou-Inwood and Bremmer in this respect. Still, contrary to Morris, the mentioned examples do appear to indicate a development, albeit one which is still in its preliminary stages or is just gaining momentum. How else to explain that in the course of the Archaic period, in addition to those heroes already mentioned, an increasing number of Homeric figures gain immortality?⁵⁴ For instance, as early as the *Aithiopis*,⁵⁵ Thetis brings her dead son to the Island of Leuke. It is here, in the missing section of this lost epic, that he is possibly revived and made immortal, as already Erwin Rohde suspected.⁵⁶ In contrast, Ibycus and Simonides (from Keos) report in the 6th or 5th century BC that Achilles resides in the Elysian Plain.⁵⁷ In either case there is a tendency towards the posthumous deification or heroisation of known heroes. This could be related to the archeologically proven rise of the hero cult in the early Archaic.⁵⁸

Furthermore, Hesiod confirms the image produced by Homer: he too reports on the heroes of Thebes and Troy being raptured, albeit to the Isles of the Blessed (*makarôn nêsoi*), which display paradisiacal conditions.⁵⁹ The relationship between

53 The same comparison is used in Hom. *Il.* 6, 146–149, cf. further 322–328.

54 Cf. SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 37; SOLMSEN 1982, 22f.

55 WEST 2003, 113.

56 ROHDE 1898², vol. 1, 86f.; likewise CAPELLE 1927, 252; for the ‘neoanalytic’ view see EDWARDS 1985, 215–227; BURGESS 2009. A fragment of the *Little Iliad* (P. Oxy. 2510) seems to tell a similar version; cf. BRAVO 2001, 49–114.

57 F 10 and 53 PAGE.

58 For the different explanations regarding the rise of hero cult see the useful summary given by BOEHRINGER 2001, 13–15.

59 Hes. *Op.* 166–172: ἐνθ’ ἣ τοι τοὺς μὲν θανάτου τέλος ἀμφεκάλυνε / τοῖς δὲ δίχ’ ἀνθρώπων βίοντι καὶ ἦθε’ ὀπάσσει / Ζεὺς Κρονίδης κατένασσε πατὴρ ἐς πείρατα γαίης. / καὶ τοὶ μὲν ναῖουσιν ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες / ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι παρ’ Ὠκεανὸν βαθυδίνην, / ὄλβιοι ἥρωες, τοῖσιν μελιδέα καρπὸν / τρις ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα.

elysion pedion and *makarôn nêsoi* in the early Archaic is not entirely clear⁶⁰ – in later times they are occasionally identified⁶¹ or the former becomes part of the latter.⁶² Yet we are still not necessarily dealing with differing concepts, especially since the basic idea – eternal life in a distant paradise – is the same in both cases.

It is difficult to say whether or not in Hesiod a further development of the ideas in Homer can be detected as Sourvinou-Inwood assumes.⁶³ This partly depends on whether one considers Verse 166 to be a subsequent interpolation (it is missing in two papyri from early imperial times).⁶⁴ By leaving the verse in its place, only one group of heroes lives on the Isles of the Blessed, the other dies and descends to Hades.⁶⁵ By removing it, all are raptured.⁶⁶ Since we find several hints towards a later deification or heroisation in Hesiod,⁶⁷ including those passages on Heracles mentioned above, there is to my mind no reason for questioning the authenticity of the verse in question.⁶⁸

Both poets therefore present us with exceptions in which individuals escape death – some initially perish while others are carried off directly. As a rule, death is unavoidable. Additional Archaic texts from the seventh century by Callinus, Tyrtaeus and Mimnermus indicate directly or indirectly the same.⁶⁹ Later sources affirm that this statute was operative for a period extending, at the very least, into classical times.⁷⁰ An inscription from the 6th century from Athens shows furthermore that universality of death was not a concept limited to intellectuals:

60 According to WEST 1978, 193 the Isles and the Elysium are aside from their name “indistinguishable”; similar already ROHDE 1898², vol. 1, 104 and GATZ 1967, 180. WEST points to ps.-Aristot. *peplos* 3 (F 640 ROSE), where Menelaus is spoken of as being on the Isles of the Blessed. A different view is held by BEEKES 1998, 23, who thinks that the Elysium is “probably different in origin from the Islands of the Blest” and SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995, 51: “[...] two early versions of paradise [...]”.

61 Cf. Ps.-Aristot. *peplos* 3 (F 640 ROSE): Menelaus on the Isles of the Blessed; see further Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 84; Pi. *O.* 2, 68–80; E. *Hel.* 1676f.

62 See Lucianus *JConf.* 17: [...] ἐν Μακάρων νήσοις πίνειν μετὰ τῶν ἡρώων ἐν τῷ Ἠλυσίῳ λειμῶνι κατακείμενος.

63 SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1981, 18, 20 and 1983, 36. A part of the scientific community considers the poetry of Hesiod to be older than the Homeric epics – to my mind unconvincingly; e.g. BETHE 1922, 299–303; CORSEN 1930, 104f.; REINHARDT 2011, 450.

64 Cf. WEST 1978, 192.

65 WEST 1978, 192; EDWARDS 1985, 217; DIETZ 1990, 17; GANTZ 1993, 133; BREMMER 1994, 96.

66 Cf. NAGY 1979, 164, SOLMSEN 1982, 22–24, GÖRGEMANN 1988, 31 and BURKERT 2011², 303, who translates: “Die Heroen, die vor Troia oder Theben gefallen sind, erhalten ein ‘Leben’ am Rand der Welt, auf den ‘Inseln der Seligen’ [...]”.

67 Semele: Hes. *Th.* 940–942; Dionysus and Ariadne: *Th.* 947–949; Phaethon: *Th.* 986–991.

68 This is also the view of SOURVINOU-INWOOD (1981, 20; 1983, 36) who nonetheless wants to observe that “the theme of paradise is developed further” in Hesiod.

69 Callinus F 1 WEST; Tyrtaeus F 10 WEST; Mimnermus F 2 WEST. See also Simonides F 15 and 17 PAGE. – It has to be noted that the ‘hedonistic’ *carpe diem* approach, which SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1983, 46 wants to observe for the first time in the fragments of Mimnermus (F 1; 2; 4; 6 WEST) and Simonides (F 8 PAGE) was already known to Homer; cf. *Il.* 24, 128–132.

70 Pi. *N.* 30–33; S. *El.* 137–139.