

INTRODUCTION

In September 2009 Giulia Sfameni Gasparro organized a conference of the European Association for Religious Studies at the University of Messina.

After decades of argument among Italian “scholarly methods” the congress has been a good opportunity to interact with other research groups and other methodologies. This was a good occasion to bring together a large number of scholars from everywhere and compare our ideas.

At the end of the event we agreed that it was very fitting to publish a book in her honour. We had two different aims: to invite numerous religious history scholars, and to produce a book which reflects one of Giulia’s research fields. Therefore it was appropriate to propose two books, one (i.e. this one) devoted to female divinities, and one open to free contributions on the history of religions. In this way our concern will produce a new form of miscellaneous publications. Giulia, during her career, has been in contact with many colleagues from many countries and using different methodologies. For example, she has been engaged in studies on ancient Christianity and on pagan initiatory rituals, Oriental cults in the Roman empire, and archaeological evidence of ancient religions. Each research field has its academic environment and its methods. The second volume will be open to many friends and colleagues who have been in touch with Giulia and are ready to make their contribution in the field of the history of religions. Giulia’s bibliography will appear in only one volume, i.e. in that of the free contributions, which will be published by Quasar (Rome).

We want to remember here only the more important steps in Giulia Sfameni Gasparro’s public career. She studied with Ugo Bianchi. But leaving aside her academic education, we prefer to present Giulia as a master rather than as a pupil or member of one school. She became professor of History of Religions in Messina in 1981. This year, 2011, is her last year of teaching before her retirement, and her first of free time for research. She was a member and is vice-president of the Italian Society of History of Religions. In 1995 she was elected a member of the executive board of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), and of the editorial board of *Numen*, the famous periodical of History of Religions and official publication of the IAHR. In 2005 the International Committee of the IAHR honoured her with lifelong membership of its executive board. During the period 2000-2007 she was President of the European Association for Religious Studies (EASR). In 1999 she was elected a member of the Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche, and this post was confirmed for the period 2005-2010.

She is a member of the editorial boards of the periodicals *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* (Italy) and *Archeus* (Romania). Among the many awards

she has received for her scientific researches the most important is the Franz Cumont Prize, awarded in 1988 by the Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux Arts de Belgique, (Classe des Lettres, years 1985-87), for her book *Misteri e culti mistici di Demetra*.

Her researches have wandered into numerous crucial topics among the religions of antiquity and late antiquity. We mention early Christianity and Gnosticism, Encratism, Origenes and his influence, Augustine, Manicheism. Among mystery cults she has been engaged in studies of Greek and Oriental initiations, Hermeticism, magic arts, prophecy and mantic. Quite recently she published *Oracoli, Profeti, Sibille* (2002), *Misteri e Teologie* (2003), *Problemi di religione greca ed ellenistica* (2009), *Dio unico, pluralità e monarchia divina* (2010). The female divinities, which are dealt with in this volume, have been her particular research field. We think of Demeter (*Misteri e culti mistici di Demetra*, 1986), Cybele (*Soteriology and Mystic Aspects in the Cult of Cybele and Attis*, 1985), and Isis (see, for ex., *I culti orientali in Sicilia*, 1973).

This volume brings together a series of contributions on Graeco-Roman goddesses, who had many intercultural features, such as Demeter, Isis, Vesta and Cybele. The interaction between Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Anatolian cultures is a typical field in which researches can not proceed along separate tracks, but must be open to receive contributions from different clusters of studies.

Here the authors present articles with different approaches, according to the problems involved. Each problem deserves its peculiar method and its peculiar approach.

Female divine beings have peculiar features. They are often related to the life of women, to the safety of the cities, to the life in the netherworld, to the origin of food. Other features could be focussed and we hope that this volume could be the first of a series, because in fact many crucial and new problems arise from these articles and they could be further investigated.

We, the editors, thank very much all the authors of these articles. And, before closing this introduction, we acknowledge that this book will be, first and foremost, a testimony of our friendship towards Giulia.

Concetta Giuffrè Scibona
Attilio Mastrocinque

Alberto Bernabé

A BRAVE NETHERWORLD: THE ORPHIC HADES AS UTOPIA*

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world!
That has such people in't!
Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act. V, Scene I

And that after this is accomplished, and the brave new world begins
When all men are paid for existing and no man must pay for his sins...
Rudyard Kipling, *The Gods of the Copybook Headings*

1. AIM

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the Orphic image of life in the realm of Persephone as a model of a perfect world for special initiates, where concord and happiness rule with the characteristics of a utopia constructed, as most of them, as a 'negative' foil, an antithesis of the imperfect life in our world above. However, there is a feature that sets it clearly apart from other utopias. A utopia, in its strict sense, is presented as the product of an unattainable exercise of imagination, proposed as a society that does not really live 'anywhere' and that, at most, can serve as criticism to the existing systems or as a raft of ideal proposals from which some particular aspect can be taken in order to apply it to real communities in the future. By contrast, an Orphic utopia does not try to criticise worldly institutions nor to propose a model to modify them. It is not envisaged as a mere exercise of the imagination, but rather purports itself as an alternative reality, situated in another world, the world that will be only accessed after death by a group of privileged people, namely the initiated. This existence in Hades is considered to be so real that it will eventually be defined as true 'life', in contrast to the one in this world, which is qualified as 'death'.¹ The image I will presently focus on is constructed from passages from gold tablets found in Magna Graecia and other places, bone tablets from Olbia, fragments of poems attributed to Orpheus, some evidence found in Plato, as well as from other ancient authors, and ceramic representation of the South Italic area, particularly from Apulia.² I will review the characteristics

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1 Some ideas of this paper were presented in Bernabé 2007.

2 Gold tablets: Bernabé - Jiménez San Cristóbal 2001 and 2008, Tortorelli Ghidini 2006, Graf - Johnston 2007. Olbia bone tablets: West 1982, Bernabé 2008a. Orpheus' fragments: edition, in Bernabé, 2004-2005-2007 (henceforth quoted *OF* followed by fragment number); transla-

of the Netherworld mentioned in these sources, in order to point out how they respond to human beings' dissatisfaction with their present living conditions, and which are the religious and ideological solutions proposed by the Orphics through the interrelation of both worlds.

2. STARTPOINT: A LIFE THAT IS NOT A LIFE

Euripides, in his *Phrixus*, states a paradox:

Who knows if what is called death is life, and living, dying?³

and adds that those who are alive become ill, while those who are already dead neither fall ill nor suffer any ailment. The introductory words of the passage, “who knows”, suggest that the speaker knows about a doctrine with which, in principle, he does not agree, but in which he could or would be willing to believe. The oxymoron is explained because both terms ‘to live’ and ‘to die’ are used in a different sense or connotation, as indicated by the expression ὁ κέκληται. Indeed, the point seems to be that language is insufficient because it does not fittingly describe reality: we say someone has died, although we would be referring to a reality that would not really be death, but rather a way to achieve a more authentic state of living.

In the *Polyidus* the author revisited the oxymoron:

Who knows if life is death, and if in the underworld death is considered life?⁴

In this case, the mistake lies not in language, but in our evaluation of reality. Likewise, the additional κάτω introduces a new degree of accuracy: what we call ‘dying’ is living, not here but in Hades. Such an idea of a new life in Hades is alien to Greek traditional ideology and it is reasonable to ask where it comes from. Fortunately Plato, who quotes the second passage, adds the statement as follows:

And we really, it may be, are dead; in fact I once heard one of our sages say that we are now dead, and the body is our tomb.⁵

Plato engages with the idea in *Cratylus*, speaking of the etymology of σώμα ‘body’ and he informs us about these “sages”:

tion of selected fragments: Bernabé 2003. Plato and orfism: Bernabé 1998 and 2011. Apulian pottery and Orphism: Bernabé 2009.

3 τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ ζῆν τοῦθ' ὁ κέκληται θανεῖν, / τὸ ζῆν δὲ θνήσκειν ἐστί; E. fr. 833 Kannicht. Transl. Ch. Collard - M. Cropp.

4 τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστί καταθανεῖν, / τὸ καταθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν κάτω νομίζεται; E. fr. 638 Kannicht. Transl. Ch. Collard - M. Cropp.

5 καὶ ἡμεῖς τῶι ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν· ἤδη γάρ του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν καὶ τὸ μὲν σώμά ἐστιν ἡμῖν σῆμα Pl. *Grg.* 493a. Transl. W. R. M. Lamb.

Indeed, some affirm that the latter [sc. the body] is the tomb of the soul, as if it were buried in its current situation . . . However, it seems to me that Orpheus and his followers gave it this name above all because the soul, which pays the price for that for which the price must be paid, holds it in a kind of enclosure, like a prison.⁶

The “current situation” is obviously life. Plato interprets σῶμα as an Action noun in -μα from σώζω ‘to save’, with the meaning “salvation”. Also he informs us that those who purport that we are dead in life are the followers of Orpheus, who are convinced that the soul is in the body as if it were inside a grave. The soul, therefore, is only truly alive when it gets separated from the body, whereas, while it is inside the body, it does not live a real life, and thus can be said to be κατ’ ἀντίφρασιν, that it is dead and the body housing it is its grave.

Following our route of literary sources, we come upon shorter, but by no means less interesting evidence. It is a graffito on a bone tablet found in Olbia and dated to the 5th century BC:

Life-death-life | truth | Dio(nysus) | Orphics.⁷

The three first words can be understood in two senses. First, one in which the terms partially preserve their typical sense, so the first instance of ‘life’ would refer to life on earth and ‘death’ to physical death, and the second instance of ‘life’ would refer to a new life, either in another existence on earth, or definitely in the Netherworld. The second meaning, which seems to me most consistent with other textual evidence, in the sense these terms have in Orphic transposition, would imply that the first instance of ‘life’ would refer to the divine life of the soul, prior to its ‘fall’ in the world, ‘death’, to its transit across the world, whereas the second instance of ‘life’ would mean the real one recovered in the Netherworld. In any case, the text echoes a doctrine that proposes a new life after death and that resonates with the idea that ‘having died is to be alive’, formulated by Euripides. Such doctrine is defined in the Olbian tablet as ‘truth’; in this sense, a lie would be the opposite idea, as understood by the majority of people, according to which being dead is running out of life permanently, a process that cannot be reversed. The text is completed with a reference to Dionysus, the god under whose patronage this truth would hold, and a reference to a self-denominated group of ‘Orphics’. This means there was a group of believers who considered themselves to be followers of Orpheus’ teachings in a Dionysian religious environment. Orpheus, therefore, would be the guarantor of a belief they held (and one not to be forgotten, according to the etymological value of ἀλήθεια): there is a real life after death. In other Olbian tablet we read as follows:

Dion(ysus) | lie -truth | body-soul.⁸

6 καὶ γὰρ σῆμά τινές φασιν αὐτὸ εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς (sc. σῶμα), ὡς τεθαμμένης ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι. ... δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὣν δὴ ἕνεκα δίδωσιν, τούτων δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σώιζηται, δεσμοτηρίου εἰκόνα Pl., *Cra.* 400c. Cf. Bernabé 1995.

7 βίος, θάνατος, βίος | ἀλήθεια | Διό(νυσος) Ὀρφικοί Bone plate from Olbia (94a Dubois = *OF* 463).

Dionysus appears to these believers as a divinity guaranteeing a truth, which is now associated with the soul as something true, stable, endowed with a real life, in contrast to the lie of the body, which is apparently alive but whose life is false.

The brief texts from Olbia, as well as Plato's, make evident that the doctrine whose characteristics were not clear to Euripides' characters, but in which they would like to believe, is Orphic and Dionysiac. The result of such a belief is an inversion of concepts between two terms, traditionally clear and antithetic: life-death. Now life, the life of the body, becomes in reality a sort of death (and thus the body is like a grave) and death, a real life for the soul.

It seems that the death-life paradox is concerned with two spheres: one belonging to the body and another belonging to the soul, in light of the idea that what is life for the body, is not for the soul. In the sphere of the body, life would be defined by physical features such as breathing, moving, being warm, thinking and, in general, being active, while death is characterised by the opposite traits, lack of breathing, immobility, coldness, insensibility and suffering the decomposition of the body. All of this process refers to 'life above' in terms of Euripides' second fragment. In the sphere of the soul, the term 'life' is associated to positive features I will try to define, but which are nevertheless not carried out in the world 'above', i.e. ours, but in the Netherworld, while 'death' shares the lack of such positive traits. There is a third factor that is also important in our analysis: the social aspect, specifically how individuals interact in this life and how they do in 'real' life.

We will begin, therefore, by analysing the reasons of the above-mentioned conceptual inversions in order to approach the characteristics of the 'real life' in the Netherworld, both with respect to the individual and social dimensions. As I have mentioned before, Orphics conceived this as a utopia, since they imagined in the Netherworld opposite circumstances to the ones typical of our status as individuals and as a group. This life is not for everybody, only for those who had taken part in the τελεταί, the Orphic rites,⁹ and who had fulfilled a series of requirements in this world.

3. THE DEATH/LIFE PARADOX AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A UTOPIA

With regard to my procedure, when defining the features of the 'real life' or the ultra-mundane Orphic utopia, I shall divide my explication according to features of the ultra-mundane utopia for an individual's character and those belonging to the social sphere. In each case, I shall make quick references to basic shortcomings that Greek tradition attributed to human life, in order to present after-

8 Διόν(υσος) | [ψεῦδος] ἀλήθεια | σῶμα ψυχή. Bone tablet from Olbia (94c Dubois = *OF* 465).

9 About τελεταί, cf. Gasparro 1988 (=2003, 99-117); Jiménez San Cristóbal 2002, 2005b, and 2008.

wards the Orphic utopian solutions of the ‘life in the Netherworld’ and so understand why they considered only the second one to be true life.

4. INDIVIDUAL SPHERE

4.1. Insufficiencies of human being in the individual sphere

On a personal level, the human being is conceived of as radically opposed to the gods. This opposition is based on four fundamentals: mortality, old age, unhappiness (due to either physical ailments, such as sickness or pain, or psychological, such as worries or uncertainty) and, finally, submission to others. Limitations in life suggest that, upon its end, the outlook encountered is distressing: Hades and its characteristic ‘terrors’.¹⁰ There is, therefore, remoteness, a polarity between human beings and the gods, which cannot be recuperated within the framework of civic religion.

4.2. Orphic image of the life in Netherworld in the individual sphere

Orphics believe that the initiated (or his/her soul, the distinctions are never completely clear) can be identified upon his/her death with a superhuman being. Let’s leave aside, since it is not pertinent for our present discussion, the question of the transmigration of the souls and the fact that this identification does not occur systematically after death, but only happens at the end of an indefinite chain of deaths and transmigrations. We will itemize the different traits of this identification:

- a) The first condition is that the soul, the bearer of real life in the Netherworld, is immortal and does not know old age.¹¹ It is evident that authors signing their writings as Orpheus consider that the immortality they purport has nothing to do with the existence of souls in Hades as described by Homer.¹² The qualification as ἀθάνατος, in as much as it is a term associated with the gods, has a clear connotation of being ‘immortal in the way gods are’, in the sense of ‘divine’.

10 Some examples will suffice to illustrate the point: Hector’s *adynaton* in *Il.* 8.538-540, the comparison between Penelope and Calypso made by Odysseus in *Od.* 5.218, Ganymede’s privileges in *h. Ven.* 214, and expressions like μάκαρες θεοί *Il.* 1.406, or θεοὶ μάκαρες ... ἀθάνατοι *Il.* 4.127-128. About the “terrors” of Hades cf. *P.Derveni*, col. 5.3 ff., Pl., *Phd.* 69c, Origenes, *c. Cels.* 4,10; 8,48, Bernabé 2001. About Orphic ideas concerning soul cf. Molina 2008.

11 So it is stated in texts such as φασὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἀθάνατον ‘they say that the soul of man is immortal’ Pl., *Men.* 81a (*OF* 424), ψυχὴ δ’ ἀθάνατος πάντων, τὰ δὲ σώματα θνητὰ ‘Soul of everything is immortal, but the bodies mortal’ *OF* 425, ψυχὴ δ’ ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἐκ Διὸς ἐστίν ‘Soul, immortal and ageless goes from Zeus’ *OF* 426, cf. *Hdt.* 2.213.

12 νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα *Od.* 10,521, 536; 11,29.

- b) The identification of the initiated with the gods or with a superhuman form of life is postulated in a wide range of texts.¹³
- c) Gold tablets present various μακαρισμοί in which the deceased is saluted for having attained happiness.¹⁴
- d) The life of the *mystes* in the Netherworld is described as liberation. In the gold tablet from Pelinna it is specified that Dionysus has freed the *mystes*¹⁵ not only from the chain of reincarnations, but also from any dependence. Finally, we have already seen that in the gold tablet from Petelia the initiated is promised to ‘reign amongst the other heroes’, which, first and foremost, implies being free of any submission to any other. It is clear that the Orphics have transformed the image of the traditional hero.
- e) In the gold tablet from Pherai, the initiate declares to be free from punishment.¹⁶ The statement presupposes those not initiated will suffer unspecified punishments.
- f) The glory, another feature of the privileged situation of the initiated, is also attested in a tablet from Hipponion. The ‘coveted crown’ that the soul is said to have acquired in a gold tablet from Thurii is also a token of glory.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the crown is open to multiple interpreta-

- 13 We have examples like the following: 1) An expression by Theseus in E., *Hipp.* 948f σὺ δὴ θεοῖσιν ὡς περισσὸς ὢν ἀνήρ / ξύνει; ‘You consort with the gods as a superior man?’ (Transl. M. R. Halleran). In this context ξύνει can be interpreted either as a present possibility, indicating either actual closeness of his son to the gods, or as a future one, the closeness he will have when he dies. 2) A collection of expressions dedicated to the deceased in the gold tablets in which he/she is assured of his/her becoming a hero or a god: καὶ τότ’ ἔπειτ’ ἄλλοισι μεθ’] ἠρώεσσιν ἀνάξεις ‘And afterwards you will reign with the other heroes’ Gold tablet of Petelia *OF* 476.11, or θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου ‘You have been born a god, from the man that you were’ Gold tablet from Thurii (*OF* 487, 4). 3) The Platonic qualification of the destiny of these privileged souls as ‘inhabiting among the gods’ Pl., *Phd.* 69c (*OF* 434).
- 14 Happiness is associated with the process of becoming a god (ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ’ ἔσῃ ἀντὶ βροτοῖο ‘Lucky and fortunate, you will be a god, from the mortal you were’ Gold Tablet from Thurii [*OF* 488,9]), or with a happy birth, which has to be a life different to the one we know (νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῷιδε ‘You have just died and have just been born, thrice happy, on this day’ Gold tablet from Pelinna [*OF* 485,1]). Also the same destiny as the fortunate others is promised to the blessed soul καὶ σὺ μὲν εἰς ὑπὸ γῆν τελέσας ἄπερ ὄλβιοι ἄλλοι ‘And you will go under the earth, once you have accomplished the same rites as the other happy ones’ Gold tablet from Pelinna (*OF* 485.7).
- 15 εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνα σ’ ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε. ‘Tell Persephone that Bacchius himself has liberated you’. Gold tablet from Pelinna (*OF* 485,2). Cf. also Pl., *Phd.* 69c (*OF* 434).
- 16 εἰσιθ<ι> ἱερὸν λειμῶνα. ἄποινος γὰρ ὁ μύστης ‘Enter into the sacred meadow, since the initiate is free from punishment’ Gold tablet from Pherai (*OF* 493).
- 17 καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πῶν ὁδὸν ἔρχεα<ι> ἄν τε καὶ ἄλλοι /μύσται καὶ βάκχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε<ε>ινοί ‘So that, once you have drunk, you too will go along the sacred way /by which the other mystai and bacchoi advance, glorious’, Gold tablet from Hipponion (*OF* 474,15f.), ἡμερτο<υ> δ’ ἐπέβαν στεφάνο<υ> ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι. ‘I launched myself with agile feet after the longed-for crown’ Gold tablet from Thurii (*OF* 488,6).

tions in the tablets, since it can refer to a crown of a deceased person, of a banquet, of a *mystes* or of an athletic victor.¹⁸

5. SOCIAL SPHERE

5.1. Insufficiencies of human being in social sphere

Greek societal shortcomings in response to which this utopia is constructed are revealed precisely to be the ‘photographic negative’ of the organization that imagines itself in the Netherworld, not only in the Orphic utopia, but in others populating Greek comedies, such as *The Birds*. One of them is the injustice that presides over human relations; fair retribution for actions is requested, in contrast to the truism that virtuous people do not see themselves compensated and evil people triumph without receiving punishment. Inequity, another concept closely related to injustice, either between social classes or between sexes, has to be added. A third blight on social relations is conflict, violence and, in its extreme form, blood spilling. In other words, in the real world each individual is within the framework of various groups determining his life, such as: a) a *genos* that marks him or her as belonging to a certain social status; b) a polis where he occupies a better or worse position, but with little chance of modifying it, and whose life is presided over by conflict; additionally, one of the main cohesive elements of life in the polis is bloody sacrifice, and one of the obligations of male citizens is taking part as a soldier in the continuous war conflicts of the city; c) an *oikos* within the framework of the family, where each member plays a role according to their gender. These are well known facts for which, I believe, there is no need to bring in textual evidence¹⁹.

5.2. Orphic image of the life in Netherworld in the social sphere: the thiasos

The first aspect to be highlighted is that the Netherworld designed for the Orphic initiates is always referred to as a destination point of a group: the group that has taken part in the same rites. This implies two things:

- a) A privileged destiny is offered only to some, while the rest are left outside, suffering punishment and consigned to reincarnation. Since this punishment is considered to be warranted, we have to say that punishments in the Netherworld to those who deserve them are also part of the utopia, in as much as they are also a realization of justice.
- b) That happiness in the Netherworld is not understood by the Orphics apart from the group, or rather, that it is the group itself, due to its characteristic of harmonious conviviality, which generates happiness.

18 Cf. Bernabé-Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 121-128.

19 Cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2008.

Gold tablets refer to it as “thiasos”.²⁰ The initiate encounters, or rather reencounters, others that are like him, *viz* the mystai, since it is a group of the same type of people with whom he has shared in rites, and his happiness consists in being with them.

5.3. Loss of a personal identity as a necessary condition

The features that characterise the situation of the individual living on earth, such as name, family, polis, and gender, become meaningless. In order to achieve a privileged situation in the Netherworld *thiasos*, the requested answer to the question ‘Who are you?’ was not to be the same as the one given by a citizen of this world, i.e. including name, genitive of the father’s name (indicating family), and the demos or the polis (indicating his position in it), but rather with the words expressed by the deceased, as in the gold tablet from Hipponion and others, in which he declares himself to be son of the Earth and the starry Sky,²¹ which means he has lost the identity he had before, typical of earthly society, and has acquired another one, typical of his divine condition. Or the statement, found in two gold tablets from Thurii, in which the deceased acknowledges himself to belong to the lineage of the gods.²² The expression should be equivalent to ‘my lineage is heavenly’ attested in gold tablets from Thessaly and Entella.²³

And it is also noteworthy that gender is without significance. For one, because reincarnation could have taken place in either, since the soul is the same, and also because in the gold tablets the speaker refers to himself or herself without distinction²⁴. Therefore, what would later be qualified by Aristotle as ζῶον πολιτικόν²⁵, becomes in the Netherworld, according to the Orphics, a ζῶον θιασικόν, if you will allow me a neologism. His condition would be of a nameless θιασίτης.

5.4. ποινή and ἀμοιβή. Metempsychosis as retribution

Orphics elaborate a complex myth to explain why evil exists on earth,²⁶ understanding as evil injustice, cruelty, finiteness and suffering. Moreover, I would say that this myth is used to explain why there is an imperfect life such as the one in this world and how it may be possible to attain the other life, the perfect one. This

20 πέμπε με πρὸς μυστῶν θιάσους ‘Send me to the thiasoi of the initiates’ Gold tablet from Pherai (*OF* 493a.2), and accepting a reading recently proposed by Santamaría, *per litteras*, δεξιὸν ἐς θιάσ<ον> δεῖ {ξ}<σ’> ἰ<έ>ναι πεφυλαγμένον εὐ μάλα πάντα ‘You must go to the right thiasos, keeping everything very well’ Gold tablet from Thurii (*OF* 487.2).

21 Γῆς παῖ<ς> εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος ‘I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven’.

22 καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος εὐχομαι ὄλβιον εἶναι ‘Since I too boast that I belong to your blessed race’ Gold tablets from Thurii (*OF* 489-490.3).

23 αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνοιν ‘But my race is heavenly’ Gold tablet from Thessaly (*OF* 484,4) = Gold tablet from Entella (*OF* 475,15).

24 Cf. Bernabé-Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 59.

25 Arist., *Pol.* 1253a 3.

26 Cf. Megino 2010.

is explained in and by the myth of the Titans. When Zeus gives the ruling power to Dionysus, still a child, the Titans took advantage of his innocence, killing, cooking and devouring him; for this reason, they would be immolated by Zeus' thunderbolt and from the blood and ashes of these wicked creatures, mixed together with the earth, rise the first human beings, with a divine part, namely the soul, mixed together with a perishable part, his body. The soul, in turn, has a positive component, from Dionysus, and a negative one, from the Titans, origin of all evil. The perverse Titanic act produces a split that has to be resolved: the souls at the end of their residence in a body have to undergo suffering and return to the world again and again, reincarnated in various bodies, until the punishment for the crime committed is fully paid (ποινή) or until, in a wider sense, they obtain a compensation (ἀνταμοιβή) for the things done during their time on earth, purging their crime and achieving liberation.²⁷

In this regard, it will suffice to mention a few pertinent examples:

- a) Pindar's reference in a fragment to Persephone's accepting compensation from some souls for their past sufferings, at which point when their liberation is granted.²⁸
- b) The reference in the *Derveni Papyrus* to the fact that some *magoi* perform the sacrifice as if they are paying a blood-price.²⁹
- c) The mention of δίκην διδούσης in the *Cratylus*.³⁰
- d) The statement of an initiate in a tablet from Thurii, which would allow him to become a god.
- e) The presence of the 'daughter of Justice, the very famous Compensation' in a passage from the *Bologna Papyrus*, of Orphic content where rewards and punishments in the Netherworld are described.
- f) The mention of 'Compensation' (personified or not) in a gold tablet from Thurii.

In order to achieve the reconfiguration of the perfect, divine community in the Netherworld there must be, therefore, a rigorous selection process in advance. The *thiasos* of the Netherworld is a chosen collective, an elite group, because its members have passed the controls that prevent anyone unworthy from entering it. It is also a cohesive community, because they share the same beliefs and lifestyle. It is, therefore, a homogeneous, peace loving, fair and happy community, whose members are prepared in this world to belong to it in the other.

Those who are unable to belong to it, however, will suffer legitimate punishments and will be reincarnated as long as they do not become worthy of joining the perfect community.

27 About the Orphic myth of the Titans, cf. Bernabé 2002, Johnston in Graf - Johnston 2007, 66-93. *Contra*: Brisson 1992 (= 1995, VII), Edmonds 1999.

28 Pi., fr. 33,1 Maehler = 65 Cannatà Fera (*OF* 443) οἷσι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος / δέξεται 'The souls of those whom Persephone accepts compensation for her ancient sorrow'. Cf. Bernabé 1999. About ποινή among Orphics, cf. Santamaría Álvarez 2005.

29 *P. Derveni*, col. 6,4-5.

30 Pl., *Cra.* 400c (*OF* 430 I).

5.5. Purity and justice

The Netherworld *thiasos* is also characterised by its purity. Thus, the deceased makes a claim to it in order to be admitted in the Netherworld. Purity implies liberation from the Titanical aspects, with the result that, once this status is achieved, there is liberation from evil. Purity is also a sign of identity of the elite of the Netherworld.

To a certain extent, purity is identified with justice, so a fundamental aspect of evil is injustice. It would suffice to mention some passages where the important role of justice in Orphism, and its frequent identification with purity, is mentioned:

- a) A text by Pseudo-Demosthenes that attributes to Orpheus a description of Justice as a goddess who constantly watches the behaviour of human beings.³¹
- b) Orphic hymn number 62 dedicated to Justice, where she is presented as punishing the unfair.³²
- c) A passage by Plato, where ‘Musaeus and his son’ are said to promise a banquet to the pious and the fair and a sentence of terrible punishments to the impious and unfair.³³
- d) A fragment of the *Rhapsodies*, which describes different destinies for human beings after death: the plain of Acheron for the pure and the realm of Tartarus for those who acted unfairly.³⁴ At minimum, the implication leads us to conclude that the pure have not acted against justice and that those who have acted against it are impure. We should suppose that, similar to these εὐαγέωσιν being fair, the εὐαγαεῖς mentioned in the tablets from Thuri and Amphipolis are as well.³⁵
- e) For his part, Pindar also makes a reference to justice as a prerequisite to obtain a privileged situation in the Netherworld.³⁶
- f) In a vase from Ruvo, now lost but from which a drawing is preserved, Dike is portrayed alongside Nike and Orpheus, next to the palace of Hades and Persephone.³⁷

31 Ps.-Dem. 25,11 (*OF* 33). About Justice among the Orphics cf. Jiménez San Cristóbal 2005.

32 «Orpheus», *Hymn* 62, cf. Ricciardelli 2000, *ad loc.*

33 Μουσαῖος ... τὰγαθὰ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ παρὰ θεῶν διδῶσιν τοῖς δικαίοις ... τοὺς δὲ ἀνοσίους αὐτὸ καὶ ἀδίκους κτλ ‘Musaeus and his son ... concede to the just on the part of the gods good gifts ... On the other hand, the impious and the unjust...’ etc. Pl., *R.* 363c.

34 οἱ μὲν κ' εὐαγέωσιν ὑπ' αὐγὰς ἡελίου, /... οἱ δ' ἄδικα ῥέξαντες ‘Those who have been pure beneath the rays of the sun, . . . Those who have worked against justice’ *OF* 340.

35 νῦν δ' ἐκέτις ἦκω παρὰ ἄγνην Φερσεφόνειαν, /ὥς με πρόφρων πέμψη ἔδρας ἐς εὐαγέων ‘Now I come as a suppliant before chaste Persephone, to see whether, benevolent, she may send me to the dwelling of the pure ones’ Gold tablets from Thuri (*OF* 489-490,6-7), εὐαγῆς ἱερὰ Διονύσου Βακχίου εἰμι ‘I am a pure one, consecrated to Dionysus Bacchius’ Gold tablet from Amphipolis (*OF* 496n).

36 ὅσοι δ' ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρίς / ἐκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ πάμπαν ἀδίκων ἔχειν / ψυχάν ‘And all those who have dared to keep their soul, three times in this and the other world, completely free from injustice’ Pi., *O.* 2.68ff.

5.6. Characteristics of elite's thiasos

Therefore, the traits that define the group, apart from their initiate status, are: Bacchic, pious, fortunate, even 'thrice fortunate', pure, fair, free from punishment and, even more so, free in the full sense of the word, because Dionysus himself has liberated them. We should add to all these characteristics that they are heroes who preserve the memory, supposedly, of the initiation,³⁸ and that they have recuperated their heavenly lineage as gods, who, like other gods, meet together in banquets.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Orphics, convinced that it is not possible to live an authentic life in this world, fashion a utopia of an ideal existence similar to a god's, free from death and old age, fair, pure and free and place it in the Netherworld. The utopia they create is no longer fanciful. It becomes a real situation and space, truly, by contrast to the ephemeral existence in this world. To this end, Orphics must subvert the Homeric image of Hades as a dark and sad place for everyone, populated by ἀμνηνὰ κάρηνα, and create a space that cannot be, like the Homeric Beyond, egalitarian, but rather dual. And, as a consequence, they modify the Homeric outlook of our world, in order to change it into a place of transit, testing souls again and again and giving them the possibility of freeing themselves. Those aware of the divine origin of their souls and of the reasons of the punishment suffered by human beings, who ritually prepare themselves for the privileged place and behave fairly and piously in this life, and decide to leave behind their earthly identity, will merit, at the end of a long series of reincarnations, recognition and compensation. Those who have adhered to the Titanical sphere of unfairness and evil will never attain it.

The lack of justice, the failures in compensation, unhappiness, the lack of freedom, violence, old age and mortality, all are explained as transitory components and the result of an original punishment that forces us to spend a long time in an imperfect world, a world organised by sexual roles, γένη and πόλεις, all structures which generate unhappiness and violence. In the world's vision of the initiated, those who have acted according to Titanic evil and to the lifestyles typical of our systematized society are to be punished in Hades and/or returned to the trial zone, while those passing the test of this world will attain in the Netherworld justice, compensation, freedom, happiness, peace, immortality and, by implication, eternal youth, all of which are wished for but not attained in this world. They

37 Cf. Bernabé 2008b (drawing in p. 628).

38 Gold tablet from Entella (*OF* 475,2); also reconstructed in the Petelia tablet (*OF* 476,13). Cf. also ἡρώεσσιν in the Petelia tablet (*OF* 476,11).

will become then members of an elite without gender, family, identity, hierarchy or political institutions. According to these ideas, the order (κόσμος) is re-established and the world acquires sense for the initiated who detach themselves from admitted values. This is the world of truth, which in the tablet from Olbia is claimed to be the life of the soul, truthful, unforgettable and perfect. The utopia made true.

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