# Early Christian Christology Contextualised

## The Graeco-Roman Context of 'Christian' Docetism

Research master Religion and Culture

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# Preface

“Es ist nur Brei, sag ich. So ’ne Universität, das ist ’ne große Breifabrik, mein Lieber. Sie Kauen und kauen und würgen jahrhundertelang. Immer dasselbe. Sie fressen es jahrelang, und dann spucken sie jahrelang wieder aus. Und manchmal gibt es einen, irgendeinen, ’nen Bauernjungen, oder auch ’nen anderen, die finden, daß Goldklümpchen in diesem grauen Brei sind. Und sie stürtzen sich drauf, und in einen wilden Schufterei, in irrer Leidenschaft nächtelang, wochenlang, jahrelang durchwühlen sie den grauen Brei nach Goldklümpchen, sie verlieren die Farbe im Gesicht und ihre Gesundheit, so fürchtbar ist ihre Leidenschaft nach den Goldklümpchen, und dann haben sie eine Anzahl gefunden, da machen sie ein köstliches Geschmeide draus, diese Burschen, ein Buch, ein kostbares Buch, das wirklich wert ist, gelesen zu werden. Aber wenn sie dann sterben, dann wird es alles in den großen Breipott hineingeschmissen, es wird durchgemengt mit dem anderen Gekaue, es wird zerkleinert wie in einer richtigen Papiermühle, und die anderen, die Breikauer, sind froh, wenn sie ihren Brei nun noch dicker und noch grauer kriegen. Sie müssen viel Wasser auf den Brei tun und viel graue Masse, viel Gefasel, damit möglichst wenig von dem Gold übrigbleibt. Und dann komt wieder so ein Besessener, jede Generation einer, so ’n Verrückter, der im Klick was begriffen hat, und wühlt und wühlt, bis er wieder ’nen Haufen Gold zusammengescharrt hat aus der irrsinnig großen grauen Bücherhalde, diesem abgestanden trockenen Brei. Und die anderen, die berufsmäßigen Breikauer, die lachen über ihn, oder sie erklären ihn für gefährlich, oder sie spotten über ihn und sorgen dafür, daß er nur ja keine Revolution macht, damit ihnen der wunderbare Brei, den sie in Jahrhunderten angesammelt haben, nicht weggeschwemmt wird.” [Heinrich Böll, *Die Verwundung*]

To have found such a lump of gold is what I like to think - κενὴ δόκησις perhaps – and if have, I should thank the following people for it: dr. dr. F. L. Roig Lanzillotta because he was the one to put me on the track of docetism in the first place and because he gave me such detailed feedback on my thesis; prof. dr. G. H. Van Kooten because of his fruitful suggestion to look at epiphany and his role as supervisor; prof. dr. M. A. Harder who, though not officialy a supervisor, supervised me nonetheless; my mother for her many brainstorming sessions, talks, and encouragements; my father, who kept being interested even when I could (and sometimes did) not expect him to be so any longer; my brother, who kept me company, studying for his exams, while I was writing; Homer for the many, many conversations, lunches, and ‘studiedagen’; Heiko for his support and companionship in St. Andrews; and lastly, my girlfriend, Maryia for too many things.

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## Abbreviations

For the sake of brevity, abbreviations - according to the second edition of the *SBL Handbook of Style* - have been used in the footnotes.[1] For the meanings of Greek words, if no other dictionary is mentioned, the LSJ - H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon.* 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 - has been consulted.

Also abbreviated are references to the translations from the *Loeb Classical Library* (LCL) by referring only to the number of the LCL volume. Hence, when the LCL's translation of lines 10-13 of Euripides' *Helen* is quoted, the footnotes simply state: Euripides, *Helen* 10-13 (LCL 11). Further bibliographic information for these LCL volumes can be found here.

### Loeb Classical Library volumes

LCL 1 Apollonius Rhodius. *Argonautica.* Edited and translated by William H. Race. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

LCL 9 Euripides. *Suppliant Women. Electra. Heracles.* Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

LCL 11 Euripides. *Helen. Phoenician Women. Orestes.* Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

LCL 56 Pindar. *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes.* Edited and translated by William H. Race. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

LCL 64 Virgil. *Aeneid: Books 7-12. Appendix Vergiliana.* Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough. Revised by G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918.

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[1] Billie Jean Collins et al. eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style* (2d ed.; Atlanta: SBL, 2014). The second edition of the *SBL Handbook of Style* has been followed in general for the footnotes and bibliography of this thesis. However, where I felt it would benefit readability, I have not hesitated to differ from its guidelines - always in a consistent manner. Names of journals, for example, have been abbreviated in the footnotes, but *not* in the bibliography, secondary publication information is set *inside* the parentheses in the footnotes, and primary sources are *not* abbreviated.

LCL 93 Pausanias. *Description of Greece, Volume I: Books 1-2 (Attica and Corinth).* Translated by W. H. S. Jones. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918.

LCL 104 Homer. *Odyssey, Volume I: Books 1-12.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by George E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919.

LCL 105 Homer. *Odyssey, Volume II: Books 13-24.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by George E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919.

LCL 121 Apollodorus. *The Library, Volume I: Books 1-3.9.* Translated by James G. Frazer. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921.

LCL 170 Homer. *Iliad, Volume I: Books 1-12.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by William F. Wyatt. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924.

LCL 171 Homer. *Iliad, Volume II: Books 13-24.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by William F. Wyatt. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.

LCL 234 Plato. *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles.* Translated by R. G. Bury. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929.

LCL 237 Plato. *Republic, Volume I: Books 1-5.* Edited and translated by Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Preddy. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.

LCL 253 Ovid. *Fasti.* Translated by James G. Frazer. Revised by G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.

LCL 276 Plato. *Republic, Volume II: Books 6-10.* Edited and translated by Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Preddy. Loeb Classical Library 276. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

LCL 431 Lucian. *Dialogues of the Dead. Dialogues of the Sea-Gods. Dialogues of the Gods. Dialogues of the Courtesans.* Translated by M. D. MacLeod. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961.

LCL 495 Euripides. *Bacchae. Iphigenia at Aulis. Rhesus.* Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

LCL 496 *Homeric Hymns. Homeric Apocrypha. Lives of Homer.* Edited and translated by Martin L. West. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

LCL 503 Hesiod. *The Shield. Catalogue of Women. Other Fragments.* Edited and translated by Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

## Introduction

Ignatius of Antioch is usually credited with being the first to speak of 'docetism'. In a rather childish 'I'm rubber, you're glue' he writes that those saying Christ only seemed to have suffered (τὸ δοκεῖν πεπονθέναι αὐτόν), themselves only seem to be (αὐτοὶ ὄντες τὸ δοκεῖν).[2] Ever since people have used various words derived from the Greek verb δοκέω 'to seem' to denote traces of docetism - often briefly defined as a Christian heresy denying the reality of the suffering and/or humanity of Christ[3] - in an increasing amount of texts.

Numerous passages in the New Testament are said to be either docetic or, more often, a polemical reaction against docetism. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of Luke both supposedly combat docetism, as does the Gospel of Mark.[4] Paul is said to confront docetism several times in his letters to the Corinthians, Colossians, and Philippians, and the pseudo-Pauline 1 Timothy follows this example.[5] Most frequently mentioned in relation to docetism, however, are the Johannine writings. Virtually every text connected to the name John seems to be either docetic, anti-docetic, or even both: the Apocalypse of John, also known as The Book of Revelation, allegedly functioned as the source for later docetic attitudes; the Gospel of John has been famously deemed 'naively docetic' and fiercely critical of docetism; the Johannine Epistles are widely regarded as dealing

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[2] Ignatius, *To the Trallians* 1.10.

[3] See, for example, Peter Gemeinhardt's definition of docetism as "the view that Christ's body existed in appearance only, not in reality, and that Christ could thus not suffer and die on the cross" or the definition of Christoph Markschies of docetism as a label applicable to "verschiedene Positionen, die die reale Menschheit Jesu Christi in Zweifel ziehen oder sogar leugnen und einen 'Scheinleib' behaupten". Peter Gemeinhardt, "Docetism", *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* 1017-1019. Christoph Markschies, "Doketai", *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* 3:729-730. For an in-depth discussion of the definition of docetism see chapter one.

[4] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 75-76. Daniel A. Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body): The Apologetic Interests of Luke 24:36-43", *CBQ* 72 (2010): 759-761. Charles H. Talbert, "An Anti-Gnostic Tendency in Lucan Christology", *NTS* 14 (1968): 259-271.

[5] John Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ: A Study of Pattern in Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 32. G. Richter, "Die Fleishwerdung des Logos im Johannesevangelium", *NovT* 13 (1971): 106. For more examples see: Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology", *CTQ* 46 (1982): 1-20.

with docetic opponents; and the apocryphal Acts of John are frequently considered to represent a textbook case of docetism.[6]

Besides the already mentioned apocryphal Acts of John, many other non-canonical texts have also been connected to docetism. Most of the Thomas tradition, especially the Acts of Thomas, and its relation to docetism has been discussed several times.[7] The Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3) is well known for its docetic teachings.[8] Many of the other Nag Hammadi texts, such as The Hypostasis of the Archons, On the Origins of the World, and The Second Treatise of the Great Seth, are likewise considered docetic by some.[9] Moreover, many of the patristic writers from the first centuries either describe or denounce docetic beliefs and in rare and debated instances even show a tendency towards docetism.[10]

Notwithstanding the ubiquitous references, docetism per se has received relatively little sustained attention. Usually it is treated as an adjective to be or not be applied to a

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[6] The following publications merely serve as examples, many more could be mentioned. Robert T. Fortna, "Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Redaction-Critical Perspectives", *NTS* 21 (1975): 489-504 discusses docetism in relation to the Gospel of John. B. D. Ehrman, "1 John 4:3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture", *ZNW* 79 (1988): 221-243 discusses docetism in relation to the 1 John. Ulrich B. Müller, "Zwischen Johannes und Ignatius: theologischer Widerstreit in den Gemeinde der Asia", *ZNW* 98 (2007): 49-67 discusses the Revelation of John as source for docetism. Darrell D. Hannah, "The Ascension of Isaiah and Docetic Christology", *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999): 167-168 mentions docetism in the context of the Johannine Epistles and of the Acts of John. Yamauchi, "The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology", 1-20 speaks of docetism in relation to the Gospel of John, the Johannine Epistles, and the Acts of John. Lastly, the statement that the Gospel of John is 'naively docetic' comes from Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, (London: SCM, 1968) 26.

[7] See, for example: Gregory J. Riley, "Thomas Tradition and the Acts of Thomas", in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering, jr; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991), 533-542. David R. Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis Traditions in the Acts of John, Thomas, and Peter", in *The Apocryphal Acts of Apostles* (*Semeia* 38; SBL, 1986) 53-66. Ugo Bianchi, "Docetism, a Peculiar Theory about the Ambivalence of the Presence of the Divine", in *Myths and Symbols* (ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 265-273.

[8] James Brashler and Roger A. Bullard, "Apocalypse of Peter (VII,*3*)", in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Edited by James M. Robinson. Leiden, Brill, 1996), 372-373.

[9] Robert M. Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", *JUS* 2 (1998): 22-29.

[10] One could think of Hippolytus, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Ignatius of Antioch, Origen, and Clemens of Alexandria. All refer to docetism in their works, usually to denounce it as false and heretical. Some of Origen's writings, however, are sometimes thought to be a bit docetic themselfs. John A. McGuckin, "The Changing Forms of Jesus", in *Origeniana Quarta* (ed. Lothar Lies; Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1987), 215-222.

certain text, author, or group: 'does X show traces of docetism?' or 'is X (anti-)docetic?' Interest in docetism as a phenomenon *an sich* is much rarer. The clearest illustration thereof is that until very recently it could be said that there was not even a single published monograph dedicated to the subject, an often mentioned fact.[11] Perhaps as a result such basic questions as 'what is it?' and 'where does it come from?' are not met with satisfactory answers.

'What is it?' can be considered the central issue in chapter one. The chapter starts with a discussion of the various proposed definitions of docetism. This will demonstrate the absence of a commonly accepted definition and, what is more, the difficulties to attain one: not only has the debate over the definition of docetism not yet yielded a consensus, it also appears to have been stuck for nearly the last forty years. At the root of these problems lies among others the intrinsically Christian understanding of docetism. Without exception the various definitions treat docetism as an inherently Christian phenomenon, making it hard to locate docetism's position in a larger non-Christian context, be it diachronical or synchronical. At the end of chapter one, therefore, a new description of docetism is developed based on the analysis of a selection of texts commonly considered docetic. This leads to the preliminary description of docetism as 'the deceptive appearance or presence of a divinity involving the doubling of that divinity in such a way that the resulting unreal double is held to be the divinity itself, thereby separating said divinity from some unbecoming or threatening situation'.

'Where does it come from?' - not only in a diachronical, but also in a synchronical sense - underlies the rest of this thesis. Chapters two and three discuss therefore the two most frequently encountered theories concerning docetism's origin. The first of these, according to which docetism is rooted in Judaism, is treated in chapter two. Initially

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[11] Michael Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", *The Second Century: a Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1981): 165. Norbert Brox, "Doketismus - eine Problemanzeige", *ZKG* 95 (1984): 305. Guy G. Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered", *JECS* 12 (2004): 267. The only monograph on docetism used to be the unpublished dissertation of Peter Weigandt: "Der Doketismus im Urchristentum und in der theologischen Entwicklunf des zweiten Jahrhunderts" (Ph.D. diss., Heidelberg, 1961). Despite the generally comprehensive nature of his study, even Weigandt did not treat all the sources, as, for example, most of the Nag Hammadi texts were not yet published at that time. Recently the first published monograph on docetism appeared: Wichard Von Heyden, *Doketismus und Inkarnation: Die Entstehung zweier gegensätzlicher Modelle von Christologie* (Tübingen: A. Francke, 2014).

developed by J. G. Davies, this theory argues for a Judaic background of docetism, based on a number of passages from the Hebrew Bible and several, mostly Hellenistic-Jewish sources.[12] According to the theory, docetism arose primarily out of the interpretation of these sources, while it was only later shaped by Greek (philosophical) thought.

The second commonly mentioned theory holds docetism to have sprung from the platonic philosophical separation between the divine and the mundane. Docetists presented with the story of Jesus Christ were confronted with an impossibility: a human god. Their answer was to deny the reality of the unity of the divine and human in Jesus Christ: it seemed to be a unity, but in fact, it was not. After summarising the theory, chapter three continues to demonstrate its drawbacks. It is shown that platonic philosophy, though it undeniably influenced some of the features of docetism, is unlikely to have been *the* background of docetism.

The two usual explanations of docetism's origin having been discussed, the latter half of this thesis develops an alternative one. As the deception so characteristic of docetism is mentioned by Plato as a standard aspect of the appearances of the gods in traditional Greek poetry, chapter four turns to 'anthropomorphic epiphanies'- appearances of the gods in human form - as a background for docetism. Such epiphanies are probably best known from Homer, but can be found in a plethora of Greek texts from the very beginning of Greek literature to well within the heydays of docetism, generally considered to be the second and third centuries CE.

With this in mind, chapter five turns to a lesser known theory answering the question 'where does it come from?' by referring to the so-called εἴδωλον- or δόκησις-motif. Because the link between this motif and docetism has already been examined briefly by several scholars starting with R. L. P. Milburn in 1945, the chapter discusses in detail the existing theorisation of the εἴδωλον-motif and its connection to docetism.[13] As none of the previous studies offers a comprehensive treatment of the εἴδωλον-motif, the chapter then proceeds with an extensive survey of all instances of the εἴδωλον-motif up to and including at least the second century CE. Particular attention is paid to the possibility of

[12] J. G. Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", *Studia Patristica* 6 (1962): 13-35.
[13] R. L. P. Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", *JTS* 46 (1945): 68-69.

seeing the εἴδωλον-motif against the background of the anthropomorphic epiphanies from chapter four.

Chapter six completes the circle by connecting the εἴδωλον-motif to the docetic texts discussed in chapter one. Docetism is suggested to be the application of the εἴδωλον-motif to Christ, thereby placing docetism in the larger Graeco-Roman context of the εἴδωλον-motif and its epiphanic background. The chapter ends with a number of implications this newly suggested understanding of docetism has for the study of early Christianity and a few suggestions for further research.

# 1 Defining docetism

The identification of docetism as a phenomenon can be traced as far back as Ignatius of Antioch. The word 'docetism' itself, however, is first recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1846 as used in George Eliot's English translation of the fourth edition of David Friedrich Strauß' groundbreaking *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*.[14] Yet the English 'docetism' and German 'Doketismus' predate both Eliot's translation and the original work of Strauß by quite some years.[15] When exactly the term was first coined, remains unclear. The absence of a Latin or Greek form of 'docetism' in the respective thesauri[16] pleads against any truly early date, but its seemingly self-evident use at the very beginning of the nineteenth century[17] suggests the word to have been in use by now for at least several hundreds of years.

Notwithstanding this, the first substantial study devoted to docetism per se was Peter Weigandt's dissertation from 1961, and in fact, the history of research can be said to have started (anew) at that moment. References to publications predating Weigandt's work are surprisingly rare in later publications concerning docetism.[18] The exception to this rule is Ferdinand Christian Baur's *Die christliche Gnosis, oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*.[19] His definition of docetism, which was of great importance to Weigandt, is frequently mentioned in modern

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[14] David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (trans. George Eliot; 3 vols.; London: Chapman, brothers, 1846) 1:274. David Friedrich Strauß, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (2 vols. Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835), 1:283. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, online: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/56255?redirectedFrom=Docetism.

[15] At the very beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, the respective English and German forms of the word are already used in Robert William Mackay, *The Progress of the Intellect as Exemplified in the Religious Development of the Greeks and Hebrews* (2 vols.; London: John Chapman, 1801), 364 and Johann Ernst Christian Schmidt, *Handbuch der christlichen Kirchengeschichte* (3 vols.; Gießen: Georg Friedrich Hever, 1801), 165. The self-evident manner in which both authors use the term rules out any novelty.

[16] The online editions of the *Thesaurus lingua Graeca* (http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu) and the *Thesaurus lingua Latina* (http://www.degruyter.com).

[17] See footnote 15.

[18] This is, at least partially, due to the developments in the understanding of 'Gnosticism' which used to be very strongly connected to docetism.

[19] Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis, oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835).

publications, but unfortunately, also frequently misrepresented. The following survey of the existing definitions of docetism, therefore, includes Baur's definition, but otherwise only discusses the relevant publications from Weigandt's work onwards.

### 1.1 Docetism as a bridge between the divine and the material

In his work, which otherwise does not deal with docetism specifically, Baur at first describes docetism as the denial of the reality of the human appearance of Christ: "der Doketismus ist im Algemeinen die Behauptung, daß die menschliche Erscheinung [Jesu Christi] bloßer Schein sei, und keine wahrhaft objektive Realität habe".[20] Faced with the question what 'reality' and 'appearance' mean in this context, he specifies his initial description as follows:

"Entweder wird dem Menschlichen im Christus die objektive Realität abgesprochen, sein menschlichen Körper für einen bloßen Scheinkörper erklärt, oder es wird wenigstens das Menschliche vom Göttlichen so getrennt daß zwischen beidem keine persönliche Einheit mehr besteht. Die erste Ansicht ist die rein doketische, da nach ihr Christus nur dem Schein nach Mensch war, aber auch die zweite hat mit dem eigentlichen Doketismus wenigstens dies gemein, daß sie die gottmenschliche Einheit des Erlösers für bloßen Schein erklärt, denn, indem sie zwischen Christus und Jesus unterscheidet, Jesus für einen wirklichen Menschen hält, und ihn, auf sichtbare menschliche Weise für den Zweck der Erlösung tätig sein läßt, ist es bloßer Schein, wenn man Jesus für die wahre Person des Erlösers, für das eigentlichen Subjekt der erlösenden Tätigkeit hält."[21]

Noticeably, Baur distinguishes between two separate, yet very similar, doctrines. The first, rather narrowly defined doctrine he calls 'purely docetic'. The second doctrine, though not purely docetic, he considers at least very closely related to the first and constitutes what is sometimes called 'separationism'. Unfortunately, later scholars have often overlooked this twofold nature of Baur's description and presented him as either defining only the first or both the first and second doctrines as docetism, which has led to some confusion. Michael Slusser, for example, adhering to a broad definition,

[20] Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis,* 258.

[21] Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis,* 258-259.

mentions Baur's definition as broad and acceptable to him.[22] Contrariwise, Norbert Brox sees Baur's definition as very narrow and actually opposes Slusser's definition to that of Baur.[23] To avoid such confusion, it is important to keep Baur's description of 'pure docetism' separate from the second position described by him, while also stressing their proximity.[24]

Upon further investigation, Baur's more elaborate description, however, still looks very much like the former, briefer one. Indeed, the second contains a neat definition of separationism, and instead of the denial of the reality of Christ's human appearance, he now speaks of the lack of 'objective reality' of the humanity of Christ, but his initial question concerning reality and appearance in the context of docetism is still unanswered.

Still not completely satisfied therefore Baur continues to describe the first mentioned, 'purely docetic' doctrine as taking two forms. The first form assumes no strict separation between the pneumatic (from the Greek πνεῦμα 'spirit') and the psychic (from the Greek ψυχή 'soul'), instead equating the two to each other and opposing them to the hylic (from the Greek ὕλη 'matter'). In this case Christ is a purely spiritual being and his perceptible body consequently nothing but a seeming body. A distinction between the pneumatic and the psychic is assumed in the second form of pure docetism. In this case the pneumatic Christ has a psychic body. This normally immaterial psychic body is then, through some special kind of οἰκονομία - to use Baur's words - rendered visible, in the likeness of a truly hylic body.[25]

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[22] Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 166, 171.

[23] Brox, "Doketismus", 305.

[24] Unfortunately, not only Baur's position has been misunderstood. Pieter J. Lalleman, for example, opposes the "limited" definition of Weigandt to that of Baur. As will be discussed, Weigandt actually strongly adheres to Baur's definition. Pieter J. Lalleman, *The Acts of John: a Two Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism* (Leuven: Peters, 1998), 206. Hannah calls Brox's definition "narrow" and opposes it to Slusser's "broad" definition, whereas in fact Brox stays rather close to Slusser's position. In describing Brox's position, moreover, she confuses his position with that of Weigandt - it must be said, however, that Brox in this case fails to mention that he is paraphrasing Weigandt and not formulating his own opinion. Hannah, "The Ascension of Isaiah", 168-170.

[25] Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis,* 259.

Despite - or perhaps exactly because of - the many technical Greek terms, this may not evoke a particularly clear image of the mechanics of docetism, but it certainly does make clear that according to Baur the essence of docetism was located in the general opposition between the transcendental and the material, here described by him in terms of πνεῦμα, ψυχή, and ὕλη. Docetism, according to Baur, tried to explain how Christ could have become human, how the transcendental could have come into contact with matter.

More than a century later, Weigandt uses this 'matter-orientated' approach to restrict docetism again to Baur's 'pure docetism'. More than Baur, however, he stresses that docetism was only *one* way for Christian Gnostics to explain how Christ could have overcome the transcendental-material opposition:

"Die doketistische Christologie, d.h. der Doketismus, im engeren Sinn verstanden, was allein sachgemäß scheint, ist nicht die Lösung, sondern nur eine ganz bestimmte unter vielen anderen, um der Schwierigkeiten Herr zu werden, die sich ergeben, wenn Griechisches beeinflußtes, gnostisches Denken mit der auf dem Dualismus von Geist und Materie sich gründenden Transzendenz Gottes und der Vorstellung von der Selbsterlösung des Menschen in Einklang gebracht werden soll mit dem Christlichen Glauben an die Menschwerdung des göttlichen Erlösers Jesus Christus."[26]

To avoid the opposite - to use 'docetism' as a 'dogmengeschichlicher Sammelbegriff'[27] - Weigandt also restricts the meaning of 'docetism' on linguistic grounds. Docetism, as its name shows, has to do with the Greek δοκεῖν 'to seem': "Diesem Begriff [docetism] liegt dann das entsprechende Textmaterial zugrunde, in dem allein Bildungen aus der Wurzel

[26] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 25-26.

[27] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 2. Used as a "dogmengeschichtlicher Sammelbegriff" 'docetism' refers to all Christologies somehow seeking to answer how the transcendent could come into contact with matter, how Christ became human. Thus it would include, for example, separationism and other duo- and monophysite Christologies Weigandt does not see as docetism. As a 'dogmengeschichtlicher Sammelbegriff' it denotes therefore all the gnostic - it should be kept in mind that Weigandt wrote before the Nag Hammadi finds were published and before such terms as 'Gnosticism' and 'gnostic' became problematic, consequently he uses it rather freely to denote various early Christian heresies - Christologies: "der Doketismus dient hier als umfassender, algemeiner Oberbegriff für die gnostischen Christologien" (page 2). Weigandt, however, thinks this to be too comprehensive a definition: "die mannigfachen Gestalten der Lehre von Christus sind einfach zu gegensätzlich" (page 18).

δοκ-ε in ihrer intransitiven Bedeutung 'scheinen' vorkommen. Nur mit dieser enggefaßten Bestimmung des Doketismus werden wir dieser besondern Christologie gerecht und vermeiden Mißverständnisse."[28] Thus docetism, according to Weigandt, is a particular Christian-Gnostic, monophysite, Christology connecting God's absolute transcendence to his presence on earth in the form of Jesus Christ by declaring the latter one to be a mere appearance, for which purpose the root δοκ-ε in its meaning 'to seem' is used.

As said Weigandt's definition of docetism strongly resembles Baur's. In addition to Baur, however, Weigandt offers not only a description of docetism in abstracto but also as a historical manifestation. Geographically he places docetism in the Eastern part of the Roman empire. It was there that monophysite Christologies were most popular, it was there that the dualistic rift between matter and divine was most pervasive, and henceforth it was there that docetism was most common.[29] Chronologically docetism was relatively short lived. Taking the Gospel of John to contain the earliest indications of docetism, Weigandt suggests late first-century Antioch as its birthplace.[30] Though it quickly spread across the entire Mediterranean region through the missionary activity of alleged 'Wanderlehrer' and especially as the companion of Marcionism, it also quickly vanished.[31] By the end of the second century, the heydays of docetism - and Gnosticism in general - had passed. Docetism continued to exist in the margins of the Graeco-Roman world - Syria and its 'Hinterland' - for some time, before being pushed over the eastern borders of the empire and into oblivion.[32]

Where it concerns the origins of docetism, Weigandt is hard to pin down. At the beginning of his dissertation he briefly treats some possible mythological predecessors, among which is the Greek δόκησις-motif.[33] Yet in his conclusion docetism, being

[28] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 56.

[29] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 148-149. Although it does not directly touch upon the subject of this thesis, it must be said that Weigandt's locating docetism in the eastern part of the roman empire seems rather haphazard considering the unequal distribution of literary sources for early Christianity.

[30] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 153-154.

[31] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 154-155.

[32] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 155.

[33] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 29-39, see especially 32-34. The δόκησις- or εἴδωλον-motif is an element of a number of Greek myths wherein a divinity is doubled to appear to be present in some situation,

inherently rationalistic, is said not to have had any mythological precursors: "der dem Doketismus eigener rationalistischer Zug zeigt weiter, daß der Doketismus als gnostische Christologie keine mythologischen Vorformen gehabt haben kann".[34] Several pages later he repeats this position, writing that the older Greek δόκησις-motif encountered in the discussed sources is only "vielleicht ursprünglich mythologisch" and that docetism, accordingly, knows "keine mythologische Vorformen".[35] Yet later he swirls around again and acknowledges the Greek mythological motif of δόκησις as the precursor to docetism.[36]

At the root of this ambiguity lies Weigandt's separation between δόκησις and docetism. He does draw a connection between the two, but prefers to see the former as a literary element borrowed by the latter, as if it were a tool, which borrowed from a neighbour, could be used to build something completely different from whatever the neighbour build with it. This borrowed character is Weigandt's main way of explaining the backgrounds of docetism.[37] In all cases, furthermore, is this borrowing of the above described superficial form, as becomes especially clear in the case of the borrowed Christian materials: "der Doketismus war im christlichen Glauben ein Fremdkörper, der sich überhaupt nicht assimilieren ließ und nur einer ausgesprochen gnostischen Soteriologie den christologischen Überbau zu liefern vermochte."[38] Likewise the borrowed elements never really influenced the essence of docetism, only its appearance. Accordingly, docetism, although consisting of elements taken from several traditions, is a unique phenomenon: "der Doketismus ist ausschließlich eine christologische Irrlehre".[39]

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without being actually so. For a discussion of this motif see chapter five. The suggestion of a connection between docetism and the δόκησις- or εἴδωλον-motif Weigandt takes over from Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 68-69.

[34] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 148.

[35] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 148-149.

[36] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 152.

[37] According to Weigandt docetism also borrowed from Christianity, Gnosticism and Hellenistic Greek philosophy, to mention a few. Notice also that Gnosticism, Christianity and Hellenistic Greek philosophy are all more or less contemporary.

[38] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 152.

[39] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 149, 152.

Several years later Ugo Bianchi shows that Weigandt's study had by no means led to a common understanding of docetism. Doing exactly what Weigandt tried to avoid, Bianchi takes 'docetism' to be a 'Sammelbegriff' for Gnosticism in general: "the entire problem of Gnosticism amounts to defining a specific mode of presence for heavenly beings in this world. In other words, it is the problem of docetism" and that docetism is "a kind of relation and separation between the lower and upper worlds".[40] Like Weigandt, however, Bianchi refers to the idea, first introduced by Milburn, of the Greek motif of δόκησις as a background of docetism.[41] Noteworthy, both Weigandt and Bianchi - and, as will be shown, the later authors mentioning this Greek motif - hardly add to the small collection of examples provided by Milburn.[42]

### 1.2 Docetism as an answer to divine suffering

Some years later, two frequently mentioned articles written by Karl-Wolfgang Tröger take a slightly different view of docetism. Whereas Baur, Weigandt, and Bianchi had taken a predominantly 'matter-orientated' approach of docetism, Tröger sees the avoidance of suffering as its essence. The first of his articles in discussing the Christology of "The Second Treatise of the Great Seth" shows this clearly.[43] Gnosticism -

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[40] Bianchi, "Docetism", 265, 267. This broader understanding of docetism continued to exist, as, for example, Mattill's description of Docetists shows. According to him Docetists were characterised by, among others, a denial of the Last Judgement and any future parousia, the belief in a realised eschatology and libertine behaviour; in other words, docetism equals the stereotypical concept of Gnosticism. A. J. Mattill, "Johannine Communities behind the Fourth Gospel: Georg Richter's analysis", *TS* 38 (1977): 306, 309-310. Nevertheless, the most important publications writing after Weigandt have tended towards a more constrained definition.

[41] Bianchi, "Docetism", 267. Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 68-69. Obviously, Irenaeus, when writing about Simonians (*Adversus Haereses* 1.23), already mentioned the myth of Stesichorus, which features δόκησις. Strictly speaking than, Milburn is not to be considered the first even by a long shot.

[42] Milburn's examples are Ovid, *Fasti* 697 ff.; Euripides, *Helen* 31 ff.; Homer, *Odyssee* 11.601 ff. and Tobit 12:19. Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 68-69. Weigandt adds to this only Euripides, *Elektra* 1280-1283 and a no further specified reference to the myth of Stesichorus, while he ignores the example taken from Tobit. Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 32-35. Bianchi only mentions the Stesichorean myth and *Odyssey* 11.601-604. Bianchi, "Docetism", 267.

[43] Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, "Der zweite Logos des grossen Seth - Gedanken zur Christologie in der zweiten Schrift des Codex VII", in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts* (ed. Martin Krause; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 268-276.

for reasons unknown - took over the Christian passion narrative.[44] However, being radically dualistic in its worldview, Gnosticism could never accept a suffering saviour: the solution was docetism.[45] Accordingly, for Tröger the essence of docetism lies in its denial of the suffering of Christ - "Die Quintessenz is allemal daß, *der himmlische Erlöser nicht leidet*" - and not so much in the bridging of a philosophical gap between the divine and the material, as it did for Weigandt and Baur.[46]

Tröger proclaims a similar understanding of docetism in his second article.[47] docetism is again portrayed as the solution to the unfortunate wedding of Christianity and Gnosticism and the essence of docetism is still the avoidance of a suffering saviour.[48] More explicitly, however, than in his former article is docetism said to be the sole answer to the Gnostic's dilemma of a suffering saviour: "So gesehen hatten de Gnostiker im Grunde nur *eine* Möglichkeit Jesus Christus als Erlöser zu übernehmen."[49] Aware of the broad scope of this definition - Weigandt would say 'Sammelbegriff' - Tröger shifts to a more 'matter-orientated' approach in an attempt to restrict his definition: docetism requires Christ to have come into no contact with the material world and his body, birth, life, suffering, crucifixion, and death may be nothing more than appearance.[50] Consequentially, he refuses the title 'doketistisch' to, for example, the separationist doctrine of the sect of the docetae or δοκηταί, who maintained a docetic, but not a docetistic doctrine according to Tröger's definition.[51] They are, however, not the only

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[44] "Aus welchen Gründen auch immer: aus Gründen der Anpassung, der Selbstbehauptung, der Atraktivität". Tröger, "Der zweite Logos des grossen Seth", 270.

[45] Tröger, "Der zweite Logos des grossen Seth", 269. In this first artice, then, Tröger at times seems to use docetism as a 'Sammelbegriff'.

[46] Tröger, "Der zweite Logos des grossen Seth", 272.

[47] Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie in Nag-Hammadi-Texten", *Kairos* 19 (1977): 45-52.

[48] Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie", 45.

[49] Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie", 45. One page further he repeats this: "Versteht man unter Gnosis und Christentum zwei grundsätzlich verschiedene religiöse Welt-Anschauungen, die sich trotz ihrer vielfältigen Berührungspunkten und gegenseitiger Beeinflussung deutlich voneinander abgrenzen lassen, dann scheint der Doketismus für die Gnosis die nächstliegende, um nicht zu sagen: einzig logische Möglichkeit zu sein, 'Jesus Christus' als Erlöser auf- und anzunehmen."

[50] Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie", 45-46.

[51] Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie", 46. Weigandt had already severed the connection between docetism and the docetae and consistently used 'doketistisch' as the adjective of 'Doketismus', although he did not explicitly make the strict terminological point Tröger makes. Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 74-82, especially 81. The idea is that 'doketisch' and 'Doketen' refer to the docetae, whereas 'doketistisch' and

ones not to be considered Docetists in the strict sense: none of the Nag Hammadi texts contains docetism according to Tröger.[52] Aware that such a strict definition would render itself useless, he suggests a peculiar game of musical chairs, introducing the label 'Doketistische Tendenz' to characterise what formerly was called docetism but can no longer be so under his stricter definition.[53]

If Tröger's second article eventually moved to the stricter end of the spectrum and to a 'matter-orientated' approach, Slusser's should be placed on the exact opposite side.[54] As noted before, Slusser describes Baur's definition as broad and acceptable to him, but he is connected to Baur in another way as well: he confronts anew the issue of reality which was so problematic to Baur. According to Slusser definitions like the that of Weigandt emphasise too much the complete separation of the divine from matter, leading him to ask "how would Weigandt suggest that a truly docetic phantom or manifestation was produced?"[55] Slusser's answer is, of course, that there is no answer to this question: "Weigandt's 'docetistic' Christologies are those which simply gloss over the problem of how the appearance of the Savior's life and death are affected; many of the Christologies which he calls non-docetistic, such as that of the Valentinians, differ from what he considers genuine docetism in that they attempt to articulate a solution to this problem."[56] Thus he solves Baur's issue with the concept of reality by including, rather than excluding, separationist Christologies as long as they "denied that in Jesus Christ the divine Savior was truly the subject of all the human experiences of the historical man."[57] Slusser's reason for such a broad definition is his wish for a 'second-century' definition of docetism - i.e. one which is based on the broad use of docetic accusations by early Christian heresiologists - and he criticises those like Weigandt who do otherwise:

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'Doketisten' have to do with docetism - which for apparent, though inconsistent reasons, is not called 'Doketistisismus'. Many publications, however, do not adhere to this distinction and - since there seems to be no one in modern times arguing that docetism be restricted to the docetae - neither will I. Thus, terms such as 'docetism', 'docetists', 'docetic', 'docetistic', when used in this thesis, refer to docetism and not to the docetae.

[52] Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie", 47.

[53] Tröger, "Doketistische Christologie", 47.

[54] Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 163-172.

[55] Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 167.

[56] Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 168.

[57] Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 172.

"It makes little sense to redefine docetism in terms of issues other than those which were at stake in the second century and then to turn around and accuse early church writers of wrongly accusing their opponents of docetism."[58]

### 1.3 A new understanding of docetism

With Slusser most of the arguments and positions concerning the definition of docetism have been mentioned. Of course this does not mean that the scholarly research into the subject from 1977 onwards has no added value, but the lines along which it would develop had been laid out. The relatively well known publication by Brox, written seven years after Slusser's, for example, essentially offers a summary of the earlier literature.[59] First he states, following Weigandt and Tröger, that 'docetism' should not be restricted to the docetae and that one should therefore distinguish between 'doketisch' and 'doketistisch'.[60] Following Weigandt, he sees two types of definitions: general ones - he actually uses Weigandt's term 'dogmatischer Sammelbegriff' - and specific ones.[61] It goes without saying that he prefers the latter. He then mentions Slusser's critique and position before agreeing with him that "das für Doketismus signifikante Element [war], daß Christus nur Scheinbar ... Mensch war, ganz gleich wie das Zustandekommen oder Ins-Werk-setzen dieses Scheins aussah."[62] Lastly, Brox takes up J. G. Davies's theory of a Jewish origin of docetism.[63] Many similar examples could be given.[64] Accordingly, the

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[58] Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 171.

[59] Brox, "Doketismus", 301-314. The only exception seems to be his statement that the *Acts of John* do not display a docetic, but a polymorphic Christ. Brox, "Doketismus", 309-311.

[60] Brox, "Doketismus", 304-305.

[61] Brox, "Doketismus", 306-307.

[62] Brox, "Doketismus", 309.

[63] For a discussion of Davies's theory see chapter two. Brox is, however, less convinced of the primacy of this Jewish origin than Davies. Brox, "Doketismus", 313-314.

[64] Dietrich Voorgang, *Die Passion Jesu und Christi in der Gnosis* (European University Studies 23.432; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991) 252-257 distinguishes between the two forms of 'docetism' already mentioned by Baur after summarising much of the above mentioned literature. Udo Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium: eine Untersuchung zur Stellung des vierten Evangeliums in der Johanneischen Schule* (Göttingen: VandenHoeck&Ruprecht, 1987) 76-83 follows the definition of Weigandt. Yamauchi, "The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology", 1-20 follows Davies. Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2 and 3 John* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; ed. Harold Atridge; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 69-76 discusses among others the definition of Weigandt - which he thinks too strict - and Brox. He favours a broad definition in the style of Slusser or Brox, listing Weigandt's

more recent publications have focussed less on developing docetism's definition and more on its occurrence in specific texts, its historical presence, and origin.[65]

Several things can be deduced from this overview, first and foremost the absence of an unanimously accepted definition. A closer look reveals, however, that the situation is not as dire as at first sight: indeed, there is no complete consensus, but neither is there complete disagreement. Docetism is either seen as a solution to the platonic problem of a

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strictly defined docetism as only one of several possible forms. Lalleman, although at first (wrongly) criticising the definitions of Weigandt, Davies and Brox, in the end follows them - Lalleman's twofold view of docetism is almost a restatement of Baur's position. Lalleman, *The Acts of John*, 204-208.

[65] Without attempting to offer a complete list, the following publications may be mentioned. Jerry W. McCant, "The Gospel of Peter: Docetism Reconsidered". *NTS* 30 (1984): 258-273 argues against the Gospel of Peter being docetic. Petr Pokorný, "Der irdische Jesus im Johannesevangelium". *NTS* 30 (1984): 217-228 does the same for the Gospel of John. Fernando F. Segovia, "The Structure, Tendenz, and Sitz im Leben of John 13:31-14:31". *JBL* 104 (1985): 471-493 discusses anti-docetic utterances in the fourth gospel. Sherman E. Johnson, "Parallels Between the Letters of Ignatius and the Johannine Epistles", in *Perspectives on Language and Text* (ed. Edward W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 327-338 mentions docetism in relation to 1 John and the letters of Ignatius. Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Menschwerdung des Gottessohnes: Frühchristliche Inkarnationsvorstellungen und die Anfänge des Doketismus* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 140; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990) and Daniel L. Hoffmann, "Ignatius and Early Anti-Docetic Realism in the Eucharist". *Fides et Historia* 30 (1998): 74-88 discuss docetism in the same context. McGuckin, "The Changing Forms of Jesus", 215-222 concerns itself with docetism in the writings of Origen. Ehrman, "1 John 4:3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture", 221-243 mentions docetism as part of his treatment of 1 John 4:3. Jan Helderman, "Zum Doketismus und zur Inkarnation im Manichäismus", in *Manichaica selecta* (Manichean Studies 1; ed. Alois van Tongerloo and Søren Giversen; Louvain: IAMS-BCMS-CHR, 1991), 101-123 discusses Manichean docetism. Riley, "Thomas Tradition and the Acts of Thomas", 533-542 investigates docetism in the Thomas tradition. Georg Strecker, "Chiliasmus und Doketismus in der Johanneischen Schule", *KD* 38 (1992): 30-46 researches chiliastic and docetic doctrines in the Johannine literature. Jean-Daniel Dubois, "La descente du sauveur selon un codex gnostique valentinien", in *Frontières terrestres, frontières célestes dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de Perpignan, 1995) 357-369 argues against a docetic interpretation of the Valentinian texts of NHC I. Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 19-34 suggest a docetic origin of 1 Cor 11:10. Hannah, "The Ascension of Isaiah", 165-196 discusses docetism and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Mary's Virginity *in partu* and Tertullian's Anti-Docetism in *De Carne Christi* Reconsidered", *JTS* 58 (2007): 467-484 discusses docetism in relation to Tertullian's *De Carne Christi*. Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body)", 752-772 investigates anti-docetic tendencies in Luke 24. Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 267-288 and Ronnie Goldstein and Guy G. Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal", *ZAC* 10 (2007): 423-441 argue for Jewish origin of docetism. Müller, "Zwischen Johannes und Ignatius", 49-67 also argues for a Jewish background. Klaus Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 26-27, 44-45 discusses docetism in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3).

materially present divine Christ, or as a solution to the suffering of Christ. The first position, among others presented by Weigandt, tends to lead to a stricter definition; the second to a more inclusive one. In either case docetism denies on some level the reality of Jesus Christ' presence and/or experiences on earth.

For any investigation into the origins of docetism, such definitions are, however, unsuited, because they define docetism as an intrinsically Christian phenomenon: the subject of docetism is Christ. This a priori inseparable connection between Christ and docetism hampers any attempt to see docetism within a larger, not necessarily Christian context. How, for instance, can one compare docetism - defined in terms of Christ - to any possible pre-Christian and therefore inevitably non-Christian precursors? Unfortunately, all definitions of docetism take this intra-Christian perspective.[66] Thus, the challenge is to describe docetism in non-Christian terms without losing oneself in vague statements. Simply changing 'Christ' by the neutral 'a divinity' will not suffice. 'A solution to the problem of a suffering divinity' is hardly a precise description of docetism.

To reach a more adequate description, it is necessary to turn to the primary sources. Which primary sources give an accurate impression of docetism, is, however, a matter of much debate. In the absence of an accepted definition it is hard to exclude sources, while the frequent (mis)use of mirror-reading has led to a significant proliferation of sources deemed related to docetism, which in turn makes it harder to reach a definition.[67] Hence, a detailed treatment of all sources suggested to contain docetism lies beyond the scope of

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[66] The only exception known to me is the the definition of given by Price. Although his theory will be discussed in the following chapter in more detail, it can already be said that his definition is too vague to be useful. At first describing docetism as "that what first seemed to be a shameful and violent act turned out to be a deceptive sham, and that all turned out well despite initial appearances" and its logic as "it wasn't as bad as it looked" (p. 22), he later specifies this to "what has traditionally been dubbed docetism" namely "the feigning substitution of death" (p. 23). The fact that his understanding of docetism is based on René Girard's pseudo-scientific *Le bouc émissaire* does not help either. Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 19-34. René Girard, *Le bouc émissaire* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1982).

[67] When, for example, Ignatius in his letter to the Magnesians writes that his audience should be "fully persuaded concerning the birth and the passion and the resurrection which took place in the governorship of Pontius Pilate" (Magnesians 11), this does not have to be an anti-docetic statement, as Goulder has argued, but may be just a warning against those who deny altogether the existence of Christ or his importance. Michael D. Goulder, "Ignatius' 'Docetists'", *VC* 53 (1999): 20-21.

this thesis. Instead three commonly considered 'docetic' narratives will be analysed to complement the understanding of docetism derived from the overview of secondary literature above. The selected docetic narratives are found in the Acts of John, the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3), and Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* and have been chosen not only because they are generally thought to be docetic but also because these offer somewhat longer docetic narratives providing more material to work with.

According to the docetic account of the crucifixion in the Acts of John,[68] when the Lord was being crucified, John fled to a cave on the Mount of Olives.[69] There Christ suddenly appears standing in the middle of the cave (καὶ στὰς ὁ κύριός μου ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ σπηλαίου) and literally enlightens (φωτίσας) John and the cave in a scene which somewhat resembles an epiphany.[70] Two points may be deduced from this: Christ in the Acts of John is clearly more than human, and Christ is apparently persecuted and in danger of being crucified.

When in the cave, Christ tells John the following:

> Ἰωάννη, τῷ κάτω ὄχλῳ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις σταυροῦμαι καὶ λόγχαις νύσσομαι καὶ καλάμοις καὶ ὄξος τε καὶ χολὴν ποτίζομαι. σοὶ δὲ λαλῶ καὶ ὃ λαλῶ ἄκουσον.
>
> "John, to the multitude down below in Jerusalem I am being crucified, and pierced with lances and reeds, and gall and vinegar is given me to drink. But to you I am speaking, and pay attention to what I say".[71]

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[68] Conventionally chapters 94-102 are considered docetic. Junod and Kaestli's commentary accompanying their edition of the text, which is used here, clearly portrays this. Eric Junod and Jean Daniel-Kaestli, *Acta Johannis* (2 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1983). McGuckin, "The Changing Forms of Jesus", 215-220; Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 39. Not everyone agrees with this: Brox, for example, considers the *Acts of John* not to contain docetism, but only polymorphism. Nevertheless, he admits that it is considered *the* example of docetism. Brox, "Doketismus", 309-311. Lalleman, however, has argued that the polymorphism in the *Acts of John* is docetic. Pieter J. Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ", in *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 108, and Lalleman, *The Acts of John*, 208-210.

[69] *Acts of John* 97.3-5.

[70] *Acts of John* 97.7-8. Some manuscripts read φωτίσας με, others φωτίσας αὐτω. Junodand Daniel-Kaestli, *Acta Johannis*, 209. For the link with epiphany see also page 98.

[71] The translations of the *Acts of John* are taken from J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Again two elements should be noted. Firstly, Christ is apparently present at two places at once: he is 'down below with the multitude in Jerusalem' (τῷ κάτω ὄχλῳ ἐν Ἰεροσολύμοις) and he is 'in the middle of the cave' (ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ σπηλαίου) with John. He is doubled. Secondly, the persecutors do not seem to be aware that they caught a double, or even that Christ has been doubled at all. Both points become even clearer later on in the text:

> οὗτος οὖν ὁ σταυρὸς ὁ διαπηξάμενος τὰ πάντα λόγῳ καὶ διορίσας τὰ ἀπὸ γενέσεως καὶ κατωτέρω, εἶτα καὶ εἰς πάντα πηγάσας· οὐχ οὗτος δέ ἐστιν ὁ σταυρὸς ὃν μέλλεις ὁρᾶν ξύλινον κατελθὼν ἐντεῦθεν· οὐδὲ ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ὃν νῦν οὐχ ὁρᾷς ἀλλὰ μόνον φωνῆς ἀκούεις. ὃ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐνομίσθην, μὴ ὢν ὃ εἰμὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς
>
> This, then, is the cross which has united all things by the Word, and marked off things transient and inferior, and then compacted all into one. But this is not the cross of wood which you will see when you go down here, neither am I he who is upon the cross, whom now you do not see, but only hear a voice. I was reckoned to be what I am not, not being what I was to many others[72]

Clearly the Christ crucified down below on the cross of wood is not the real Christ.[73] The Christ who speaks to John, however, clearly is the real one, being designated even as 'God' (θεός).[74] In contrast the persecutors, designated as 'the many' (οἱ πολλοί), were deceived by his appearance: "I was reckoned to be what I am not, not being what I was to many others" (ὃ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐνομίσθην, μὴ ὢν ὃ εἰμὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς).

Exactly how deceptive Christ's appearance and passion were, becomes quite clear when the Lord tells John:

> ἀκούεις με παθόντα καὶ οὐκ ἔπαθον, μὴ παθόντα καὶ ἔπαθον· νυγέντα καὶ οὐκ ἐπλήγην· κρεμασθέντα καὶ οὐκ ἐκρεμάσθην· αἷμα ἐξ ἐμοῦ ῥεύσαν καὶ οὐκ ἔρευσεν· καὶ ἁπλῶς ἃ ἐκεῖνοι λέγουσιν περὶ ἐμοῦ ταῦτα μὴ ἐσχηκέναι, ἃ δὲ μὴ λέγουσιν ἐκεῖνα πεπονθέναι.

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[72] *Acts of John* 99.1-6.

[73] That the two crosses symbolise or perhaps even are the two Christs is implied among others by their respective locations: the deceived multitude is down below (τῷ κάτω ὄχλῳ) and likewise the cross of wood could be seen by John, would he go down (κατελθὼν ἐντεῦθεν), whereas the Christ speaking to John and the cross of light are contrariwise up there, near to John.

[74] *Acts of John* 97.12.

> You hear that I suffered, yet I suffered not; that I suffered not, yet I did suffer; that I was pierced, yet was I not wounded; hanged, and I was not hanged; that blood flowed from me, yet it did not flow; and, in a word, those things that they say of me I did not endure, and the things that they do not say those I suffered.[75]

It is made very clear that the real Christ did not suffer like a crucified man in any way: it appeared to be so, but in reality he never suffered, bled, was hanged, pierced, or wounded. It is worth noting the important role of deception in this. Not only is it stressed that the Lord did not hang on a cross, suffer, bleed, drink vinegar etc., it is equally important that other, more ignorant people assumed he did do such things. Only to John does the Lord decide to reveal the true nature of events, and, when he has done so, John mockingly laughs at the persecutors: "And when I went down, I laughed them all to scorn" (καὶ κατελθόντος μου κατεγέλων ἐκείνων ἁπάντων).[76]

These same elements - the presence of a divinity, danger threatening this divinity, doubling, and deception - can also be found in the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3).[77] Here it is Peter to whom the truth is revealed by Christ through a vision of the crucifixion:

> When he had said those things, I saw him seemingly being seized by them. And I said, "What do I see, O Lord, that it is you yourself whom they take, and that you are grasping me? Or who is this one, glad and laughing on the tree? And is it another one whose hands and feet they are striking?" The Savior said to me, "He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness. But look at him and me." [78]

Apart from the Christ who speaks to Peter and acts as his guide during his vision, Peter distinguishes two other Christs: one who is being crucified and a second who is laughing. The first is called his 'fleshly part' and 'substitute', who came into being in the

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[75] *Acts of John* 101.6-11.

[76] *Acts of John* 102.3.

[77] For the docetic character of this text see, for example: Brashler and Bullard, "Apocalypse of Peter (VII,*3*)", 372-373.

[78] *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) 81.3-24. All translations of the *Apocalypse of Peter* have been taken from Brashler and Bullard, "Apocalypse of Peter (VII,*3*)", 372-378.

likeness of the second one, who is 'the living Jesus'. Clearly, then Christ is doubled and it is only the unreal copy who undergoes the crucifixion at the hands of the persecutors. That the persecutors are deceived by this scheme is made abundantly clear. When Peter's guide continues to interpret the events for him, he calls them 'blind' and says that "they do not know what they are saying."[79] They are crucifying the wrong man: "for the son of their glory instead of my servant have they put to shame."[80] And the laughing of the second Christ is explained as mockery: "therefore he laughs at their lack of perception, knowing that they are born blind".[81]

In addition another Christ-figure, identified as the 'intellectual Pleroma', is later seen by Peter, so that we arrive at a total number of four Christs - the guide-Christ, the laughing Christ, the Pleroma-Christ and the crucified Christ.[82] The exact relationship between the first three is complicated, but it is absolutely clear that they should be seen in opposition to the fourth Christ, who is the only one really being crucified.[83]

The docetic narrative from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*[84] describes the teachings of Basilides, according to whom the incorporeal and unborn Christ descended to earth in the appearance of a human to save the faithful:

> Et gentibus ipsorum autem apparuisse eum in terra hominem et virtutes perfecisse. Quapropter neque passum eum, sed Simonen quendam Cyrenaeum angariatum portasse

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[79] *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) 81.30-32.

[80] *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) 82.1-3.

[81] *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) 83.1-3.

[82] *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) 83.12-13.

[83] "The material body is placed opposite these immaterial aspects of the Saviour. In this respect the, the Christology of the *Apocalypse of Peter* could be called dualistic indeed". Henriette W. Havelaar, *The Coptic Apocalypse of Peter, Nag-Hammadi-Codex VII,3* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 160. Roughly speaking, however, the distinction between the Christ-figures seems to be modelled on a Platonic distinction between body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή), and mind (νοῦς), with the crucified Christ being the body, the laughing Christ the soul, and the guide-Christ the mind. The Pleroma-Christ is harder to identify. He appears to be quite similar to the guide-Christ - both are noetic beings (83.7-8) and both are called 'the Savior' (81.15 and 82.8-9) - yet is distinguished from him. See Havelaar, as mentioned above, and P. Luttikhuizen for a discussion of this threefold, Platonic separation in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, "The Suffering Jesus and the Invulnerable Christ in the Gnostic *Apocalypse of Peter*", in *The Apocalypse of Peter* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 187-199.

[84] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.24.3-7, in particular 1.24.3-4.

> crucem eius pro eo, et hunc secundum ignorantiam et errorum crucifixum, transfiguratum ab eo, ut putaretur ipse esse Iesus, et ipsum autem Iesus Simonis accepisse formam et stantem irrisisse eos.
>
> He appeared, however, to the peoples of those themselves on earth as a man, and he performed miracles. And therefore he had not suffered, but Simon, some man of Cyrene, having been compelled to carry His cross, instead of him. And accordingly that one on account of ignorance and error was crucified, as he was transfigured by him, so that he was thought to be Jesus himself. Jesus himself, however, assumed the likeness of Simon and stood by laughing at them.[85]

Many of the details of the story are quite different, but the basic elements are by now quite familiar. Again Christ is a divinity, only assuming a human form for his visit to earth. The element of danger in the sense of crucifixion is there as well. The deception is also clearly present. Jesus' scheme is intended to trick people into thinking Simon is Jesus (ut putaretur ipse esse Iesus). When it works, he laughs at the "ignorance and error" (ignorantiam et errorum) of his persecutors. The doubling, however, takes a different form than in the other narratives: Christ does not so much copy himself, as make Simon into his copy by transfiguring him into his own likeness. To better make fun of the persecutors, he then changes himself to look like Simon so he can stand among them while laughing.[86]

Keeping these three narratives in mind, what then would be a description of docetism suitable for an investigation into its origins? Firstly, such a description should contain the important recurring elements of the mentioned narratives:

1) a divinity: in all narratives Christ is portrayed as a god.
2) danger: each time the divine Christ seems to be in mortal danger
3) doubling: none of the stories denies that someone is crucified, but they stress that it is not Christ but someone or something else, a look-alike.

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[85] The Latin text is taken from Norbert Brox, *Irenäus von Lyon* (Fontes Christiani 8.1; Freiburg: Herder, 1993). The translation is my own.

[86] Christ, strictly speaking, does not have to become Simon for the trick to work: he could simply have made himself invisible, as he does a couple of lines later (1.24.4.17).

4) deception: the persecutors of Christ are always deceived by the doubling. The deception is used to highlight the inequality between the divine Christ and his human persecutors. Hence Christ stands among his persecutors, mocks them, and stresses their ignorance.

Secondly, this description should not be another inherently Christian description of docetism in terms of Christ. Accordingly, this description should therefore not be confused with a definition of docetism as a doctrine or Christology. A definition of docetism necessarily gives such a specific description that it covers nothing but docetism, and as such it could connect docetism intrinsically to Christ. The description to be given here cannot do that since it has to be more inclusive to allow for a comparison of docetism with similar but not-necessarily Christian narratives. Also, the entire analysis given here concerns literary-narrative characteristics of docetism. The description therefore concerns docetism as a type of story, a docetic narrative; it does not treat it as a dogma or doctrine.[87]

Taking these points into account, the following description is suggested: the deceptive appearance or presence of a divinity involving the doubling of that divinity in such a way that the resulting less real double is held to be the divinity itself, thereby separating said divinity from some unbecoming or threatening situation.

[87] As the docetic narratives cover only the passion of Christ, the description to be given also limits itself to the passion. It does not extend to possible beliefs of Docetists where it concerns, say, Christ's dietary needs or his birth.

## 2 A Jewish background

To Weigandt the theory of a Jewish origin of docetism would be counter intuitive to say the least. According to him there are three answers to the problem presented by Christ's humanity. The first is duophysite in nature and equals separationism, the second and third are monophysite solutions respectively acknowledging only the divine or human nature of Christ. If Christ is thought of as purely divine, his presence in this material world can only be explained through docetism. In absolute contrast to docetism Weigandt places the belief in Christ as human and human only. This he calls "eine ausgesprochen Jüdische Lösung des Problems". Hence a Jewish origin of docetism would be illogical.[88] Nonetheless the theory of a Jewish background has received quite some support over the years.[89]

### 2.1 An overview

Grant, arguing for a (heterodox) Jewish background of Gnosticism and the Basilidians of Irenaeus in particular, was one of the first to suggest a Jewish origin of docetism.[90] Supposedly, the Basilidians developed their docetic-gnostic doctrine after the shattering of Jewish apocalyptic hopes in the aftermath of the Jewish revolts. Their docetic ideas were derived from, on the one hand, a misreading of Mark 15:21-24 and, on the other, an interpretation of Ps 2.[91] According to Grant, the laughter of Christ over the ignorance of

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[88] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 147-148.

[89] The most important publications have been: Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", 13-35; Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism", 423-441; Robert M. Grant, "Gnostic Origins and the Basilidians of Irenaeus", *VC* 13 (1959): 121-125; Müller, "Zwischen Johannes und Ignatius", 49-67; Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 19-34; and Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 267-288. Others, albeit not developing the theory of a Jewish origin themselves, have supported it: Brox, "Doketismus", 301-314; Goulder, "Ignatius' 'Docetists'", 16-30; Yamauchi, "The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology", 1-20.

[90] Grant, "Gnostic Origins", 121-125. Grant's is the oldest frequently mentioned publication supporting a Jewish background of docetism. There were similar suggestions before that time however. The suggestion to connect docetism to Jewish angelology was, for example, already made in 1933 in Adolphine Bakker, "Christ an Angel? A Study of Early Christian Docetism", *ZNW* 32 (1933) 255-265. The article has, however, been almost completely ignored. Weigandt mentions it only in passing in a footnote, remarking that 'it does not pay' to discuss it. Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 5 (footnote 68).

[91] Mark 15:21-24, when read out of context, can be taken to state that Simon of Cyrene was in fact crucified. Grant, "Gnostic Origins", 123-124.

his persecutors was taken from Ps 2:4 where 'he who sits in heaven' laughs (LXX: ἐκγελάσεται MT: ישחק) about and the Lord mocks (LXX ἐκμυκτηριεῖ MT ילעג) the rebellious nations and their rulers (LXX: ἄρχοντες MT: רוזנים). The first docetists would have interpreted this as Christ laughing about the demiurgical archons vainly trying to crucify him.

Grant's theory, though perhaps shedding light on the Basilidians, is problematic as a theory about the origin of docetism. Firstly, the connection between docetism and the failure of the Jewish revolts necessitates a rather late date - the last of the revolts ended in 135 - and hence leaves the earliest indications of docetism unexplained.[92] Secondly, the misreading of Mark - leaving aside its likelihood - can only explain the changing of Simon of Cyrene with Jesus and not the docetic stories wherein Simon does not feature. Thirdly, the link to Ps 2 is strenuous. The mere occurrence of such common words as 'laughter' and 'ruler' hardly provides sufficient evidence to assume Ps 2 to be the origin of docetism. Even if Ps 2 influenced docetism at all, it is more likely to be a secondary influence, than its source. But then again, Grant himself never claimed to have found *the* origin of docetism, only an explanation for the laughing of the basilidian Christ.

The first to explicitly claim that docetism was rooted in a Jewish background was Davies, and to a large extent the later supporters of a Jewish background have used his arguments and assumptions. At the kernel of docetism lie according to Davies three 'Judaistic conceptions': "the scandal of the Cross", "the impossibility of the transcendent God becoming man" and "the Judaistic idea of God or angels assuming different human forms, in appearance only, in order to communicate with men".[93] The first two prevented early Christians from accepting the orthodox narrative about Christ, whereas the third served as the solution to the transcendent becoming human. Accordingly, "Jewish Christians ... would see nothing unorthodox in a docetic Christ, especially as this allowed

[92] P. Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand: Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 27-28. It has been suggested that the fighting only ended the following year and accordingly that Hadrian's claim on the title 'Imp II' was made in 136. Werner Eck, "The Bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View", *JRS* 89 (1990): 87-88.

[93] Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", 17, 19.

them to posit no conflict between Law and Gospel."[94] Hence, Davies claims docetism to have been initially Jewish and only later influenced by Greek thought.[95]

In support of his theory Davies referred to the works of Philo of Alexandria and Tobit.[96] Later scholars subsequently extended his selection of sources. In a flurry of more and less credible mythological references, Price refers to the Akedah and its reception as evidence for a Jewish origin of docetism.[97] Ulrich B. Müller, arguing that the docetic doctrine opposed by Ignatius of Antioch claimed Christ to have been an angelic being as found in Jewish traditions, points to Tobit 12:19, Philo's *On Abraham* 23.118; the Testament of Abraham 3, 4.9; and the Apocalypse of Abraham 12.2, 13.3.[98] More recently Wichard von Heyden has followed the example set by Müller and argued for the origin of docetism in Jewish angelology.[99] The most sustained effort to trace the Jewish origins of docetism, however, has been made by Guy. G. Stroumsa and Ronnie Goldstein in two rather recent articles.

In both of these, following in the footsteps of Grant, Stroumsa discusses the origin of docetic laughter.[100] In contrast to Grant, however, Stroumsa does not limit himself to a basilidian context, but discusses docetism in general. Seeing this laughter as "integral to the docetic interpretation of Christ's passion" he argues - like Price, but far more elaborately - that docetism has its roots in the binding of Isaac, who's name after all has to do with laughter.[101] Pointing out the importance of Isaac as the anti-type of Christ in

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[94] Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", 15.

[95] Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", 35. Unfortunately, he does not explain clearly what Greek, or in his own words 'Graeco-Oriental speculation', is.

[96] Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", 15.

[97] Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 25.

[98] Müller, "Zwischen Johannes und Ignatius", 61-64. The idea is older as, for example, Bakker, "Christ an Angel?", 255-265 shows. Bakker's argument is, however, not very well developed and relies in part on the nowadays considered unauthentic Slavonic Jospehus.

[99] Heyden, *Doketismus und Inkarnation*.

[100] Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 267-288. Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism", 423-441. The arguments for a Jewish background are the same in both publications, the second article adds, however, a discussion of a possible Greek origin of docetism, which will be discussed in chapter five. Even though his discussion of the Akedah as the origin of docetism is more comprehensive than that of Price, most of Stroumsa's argument is devoted to the similarities between Christ and Isaac as typos and anti-typos, and not to the connection between the Akedah and docetism.

[101] Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 275. The name Isaac is derived from the root צחק 'to laugh'.

Christianity, Stroumsa argues: "If, as it seems, the first Christians were keenly aware of Isaac as a *typos* of Christ, there existed also, *prima facie*, another possibility for essentially exegetic minds: namely, that Jesus, just like Isaac, had not really died on the cross but had been saved *in extremis* by his father and replaced by a substitute sacrifice, just as Abraham had replaced his own son by a substitute sacrifice."[102]

## 2.2 Problematization

At closer inspection most, if not all, of the arguments for a Jewish origin of docetism turn out to be quite problematic. The three 'Judaistic' conceptions mentioned by Davies are not at all unique to Judaism. The Judaistic character of the first of these, "the scandal of the Cross", Davies supports with several biblical references (Deut 21:23, Gal 3:13, 1 Cor 1:23 and Mark 8:32). Undeniably, these passages show that a suffering messiah was hard to accept for some Jews, and that crucifixion was a shameful death, especially in connection with the idea uttered in Deut 21:23 of a hanged man being cursed. These references, however, hardly show such sentiments to be uniquely Jewish. As is well known, crucifixion was considered a particularly heinous death in the Graeco-Roman world - crudelissimum taeterrimumque supplicium - which is exactly why it had been in use for centuries.[103]

The second of the 'Judaistic' conceptions, "the impossibility of the transcendent God becoming man", is neither uniquely Jewish. To support his claim Davies, citing Philo, remarks that "to Philo God is apprehended by 'the understanding alone'."[104] This, obviously, is a shaky foundation for proving the Judaistic nature of this second conception. Philo was not only well versed in the Jewish traditions but also more than thoroughly acquainted with Greek philosophy, and the passage cited by Davies, in fact, very clearly shows this.

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[102] Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 283.

[103] Cicero, *Verres ii* 5.165. The practice is already mentioned in Herodotus' *Histories* 7.33, 9.120 and 9.122. Both the *Histories* and *Verres* clearly present crucifixion not only as an extremely severe punishment, but also as degrading. Especially Cicero in his *Verres* keeps stressing the horrible fact that Publius Gavius was crucified despite being a roman citizen.

[104] Davies, "The Origins of Docetism", 15. Philo, *On Abraham* 24.119.

The same counter argument can be brought to bear on the last of the 'Judaistic' conceptions: the idea that divine entities can show themselves in human form. In order to establish the Jewish nature of this idea Davies refers to Philo (*On Abraham* 22.113), Josephus (*Antiquities* 1:197) and Tobit 12:19. The Book of Tobit was written around 200 BCE, well within the Hellenistic period, and could easily have been influenced by similar Greek narratives.[105] Josephus, writing in Greek for a Graeco-Roman audience, had most definitely enjoyed a thorough Greek παιδεία, and Philo was an important Greek philosopher. Müller's argumentation for seeking the origin of docetism in Jewish angelology is susceptible to the same counter arguments. Like Davies, he points to Tobit and Philo of Alexandria. In addition, he refers to the Testament of Abraham, dated to the turn of the era[106], and the Apocalypse of Abraham, written some time after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.[107] All of the mentioned sources, therefore, could well have been influenced by the Graeco-Roman discourse of gods taking a human form.

All this is, however, not the main objection to the theory of a Jewish background of docetism. The Greek influence on a source like Tobit 12:19 might be disputed. There are more passages in early Jewish literature testifying to the transcendence of God, angels appearing in human form, and the horrors of crucifixion. The existence of similar concepts in Greek and Roman traditions does, moreover, not exclude the possibility that docetism was derived from Jewish traditions. The counter arguments above cannot deny that scenario, they can only suggest that there is an alternative.

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[105] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 50-52. Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 39.

[106] Dale C. Allison, jr., *Testament of Abraham* (CEJL. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 34-39. Mathias Delcor, *Le Testament d'Abraham: introduction, traduction du text grec et commentaire de la recension grecque longue suivi de la traduction des testaments d'Abraham, d'Isaac et de Jacob d'après les versions orientales* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 73-77.

[107] Although agreement exists about this terminus post quem, scholas are reluctant to give a more precise date. Andrei A. Orlov simply speaks of "the early centuries of the Common Era" in *Heavenly Priesthood in the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1. Belkis Philonenko-Sayar and Marc Philonenko assume the text to have been written only a couple of years after the destruction of the Temple, since this event is mentioned in *Apo.Abr.* 27.3. Belkis Philonenko-Sayar and Marc Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham: introduction, texte slave, traduction et notes* (Semitica 31; Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1981), 34-35.

The main objection must be that none of the above mentioned arguments or sources points to the existence of docetism in pre-Christian Judaism. To both Davies and Müller the appearance of angels in human form is the closest parallel to docetism, and they make a lot of the fact that in some of these passages the angel in question is said not to eat or drink. In Tobit it is Raphael who only appeared to eat, Philo says the three men visiting Abraham in Gen 18 only gave an appearance of eating, and in the *Testament of Abraham* Michael explicitly remarks that the divine cannot eat, because the corruptible, earthly food does not go together with their incorporeal nature.[108] Angels in human form and abstinence from food and drink, however, do not equal docetism.[109]

Firstly, the relation between nutrition and docetism is difficult. According to a definition of docetism as proposed by Weigandt, the real Christ cannot have any contact with matter.[110] Many scholars have on this basis seen anti-docetic tendencies in passages stressing the materiality of Christ. Considering eating a very mundane and material activity, they have attributed an anti-docetic agenda to, for example, Luke 24:36-43.[111] Thus, Davies and Müller, reversing the logic, state that appearing to eat signals docetism. Yet the type of definition given by Weigandt has been criticised for its stringent separation between matter and divine.[112] Even if such a definition is accepted, there remains a problem. If docetism stresses the immateriality of the real Christ and eating is taken to be a material activity, then eating excludes docetism. One can, however, not deduct the presence of docetism from the absence of eating.[113]

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[108] The incorporeal (ἀσώματος) nature of celestial beings is probably taken from Graeco-Roman traditions. Allison jr., *Testament of Abraham*, 118.

[109] Note also the existence of the same commonplace in Greek mythology: Homer, *Iliad* 5.341.

[110] See the discussion of Weigandt's definition of docetism in chapter one and especially Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 22.

[111] Smith discusses Luke 24:36-43 and its alleged anti-docetic character in detail. Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body)", 752-772, especially 759-761.

[112] See in particular Slusser, "Docetism: a Historical Definition", 163-172.

[113] Another argument against a connection between eating and docetism is mentioned by Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body)", 754-755. Ghosts and similar apparitions were not necessarily unsubstantial and eating could, therefore, not always disprove doubts about a possible ghostly nature. Although this is very much true - even the docetic Christ could, for example, still be crucified - and important to keep in mind, stressing the normal human aspects of someone still remains pretty much the only way to refute a docetic claim.

Secondly, the angels' appearances in human form do not share docetism's deception. Deception only occurs in a very mild form in these narratives: deception per se does not occur, and in the end the disguised angel always reveals his nature. Thus, in the Book of Tobit Rapheal is send to heal the blindness of Tobit, bring Tobias and Sarah together, and rid Sarah of Asmodeus presence.[114] Except as a literary topos and strategy[115], there seems to be no reason for Raphael to be disguised as a human and he certainly does not assume a human appearance to fool Tobit or to escape a certain threat. In fact, when he has fulfilled his task, Raphael makes himself known. Deception, although it plays a role, is not nearly as important as in the docetic narratives.

Thirdly doubling is absent from these stories. Neither in the Book of Tobit, the Apocalypse of Abraham, the story of the three men visiting Abraham, nor the Testament of Abraham is there a distinction between the real and original entity and some kind of doppelgänger. The man Tobias sees may actually be an angel pretending to be a man, but the man and the angel are nevertheless one and the same character. Even God's sending a πνεῦμα παμφάγον 'all-devouring spirit' to help the angel Michael maintain the appearance of eating in front of Abraham does not qualify as doubling.[116] Abraham may unknowingly host two guests, but these are not presented as lookalikes and no confusion arises because of the presence of the all-devouring spirit. Docetic doubling, in whatever form, is completely absent from these narratives.

The theory formulated by Price, Stroumsa, and Goldstein concerning the origin of docetism and the Akedah has similar drawbacks. Gen 22:1-18 and its pre-Christian reception do not speak of doubling or deception. Abraham is told to sacrifice Isaac, at the last moment he is stopped, and he decides to sacrifice a ram instead of his son. The ram, though serving as a substitute for Isaac, is not Isaac's double: Isaac and the ram are clearly two separate and different entities. Also, there is no deception: no one confuses

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[114] *Tobit* 3:17.

[115] Angels are more often thought to have taken a human form, especially when coming in peace. In addition there is the well known idea that it is frightening for humans to have contact with a messenger of God. For narrative purposes, therefore, it makes sense that Raphael takes the form of a human. Another reason for his disguise might be purely narratological: in 5:17 and 5:22 Tobit and his wife wish for an angel to look over their son.

[116] *Test.Abr.* 4.10.

Isaac with the ram, nor does Abraham pretend to have offered his son. Gen 22:1-18 tells of a man setting out to do one thing and in the end doing something different, rather than pretending to carry out the first, while secretly doing the second. The Akedah is far from being the most obvious source of docetism.[117]

The perceived connection between the laughter inherent in Isaac's name and the docetic laughter of Christ does not change this. As Stroumsa himself writes, the joyful laughter of Isaac does not resemble the vengeful laughing of Christ about the ignorance of his persecutors.[118] Attempting to bridge this gap, he suggests the laughter of the crucified Christ, at first joyful, only later became the sarcastic docetic laughter we know: "In a second stage, when the docetic attitude became more or less identified with gnostic dualism and antinomianism, Christ's laughter received a new turn, as it came to reflect his sarcasm at the failed efforts of the forces of evil trying to kill him."[119] Unfortunately, however, the existence of an earlier tradition of joyful docetic laughter remains unsupported by evidence. If it is possible at all to trace the laughter of the docetic stories to a certain source - which is doubtful considering its generically mocking nature - it would make more sense to turn to a source containing a similar kind of laughter.

At closer inspection, therefore, the sources used to support the Jewish origin of docetism do not contain docetism. At most these sources can be used to show that there were certain elements present within Judaism which might or might not have been used as part of a docetic understanding of Christ among early Christians. The uniquely 'Judaistic' character of these elements can, moreover, be contested, leaving the door open to explore the origins of docetism in Greek culture.

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[117] Notice also the complete lack of references to Isaac or the Akedah in docetic accounts of Christ's crucifixion: Docetists and haeresiologists were, apparently, not aware of the 'central' role these elements played in docetism.

[118] Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 284-285. Gen 22 ignores the meaning of the name 'Isaac' and leaves the laughter present therein unspecified.

[119] Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 288.

# 3 A philosophical background

The previous chapter discussed and dismissed the theory of a Jewish origin of docetism and simultaneously pointed to an alternative: a Greek background of docetism. The notion of docetism as rooted in Hellenistic-Greek thought is a common one, though, perhaps as a result of its apparently self-evident nature, people have not always felt the need to specify this claim. Usually brief reference is made to concepts of transcendence and dualism in a rather vaguely defined Hellenistic-Greek or Graeco-Oriental context. Thus, the *Encyclopedia of Christianity* speaks of "Hellenistic views according to which there exists a strong contrast between the spirit and things corporeal"[120] and Georg Strecker states that "nach der ihm [dem Doketismus] zugrundeliegenden griechischen Auffassung, kann sich das Göttliche mit dem Menschlichem, das Himmlische mit dem Irdischen grundsätzlich nicht vereinigen"[121]. Slightly more elaborate is Charles Munier: "On sait que le docétisme est né de la difficulté de concilier les données du message chrétien concernant la personne et l'oeuvre de Jésus-Christ Notre Sauveur avec les conceptions hellénistiques relatives à la transcendance de Dieu. Si la pensée hellénistique acceptait l'idée d'un Sauveur divin, il lui fallait trouver une solution rationelle excluant le contact du divin avec la matière, considérée comme un principe contraire à Dieu."[122] What exactly these 'Hellenistic conceptions concerning transcendence' entail, remains unspecified and unsupported by primary sources. To put it differently: the building blocks of docetism are mentioned, but their exact form and location are left unspecified.

Even the most extensive studies on docetism offer a similarly shallow treatment of the subject. According to Weigandt Hellenistic-Greek thought permeated the first centuries and from its rigorous dualism docetism eventually developed. "Gott und Kosmos waren durch einen horizontalen, dualistischen Schnitt von-einander geschieden: Gott war absolut jenseitig, tranzendent".[123] This dualism was reflected by a bipartite anthropology distinguishing between man's immortal soul and temporal body. Combined with the

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[120] Ekkehard Mühlenberg, "Docetism", *Encyclopedia of Christianity* 1:862 = Ekkehard Mühlenberg, "Doketismus", *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon* 1:909.

[121] Strecker, "Chiliasmus und Doketismus", 41.

[122] Charles Munier, "Où en est la Question D'Ignace d'Antiochie? Bilan d'un siècle de recherches 1870-1988", *ANRW* 27.1:359-484. See page 409 for the quote.

[123] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 147.

orthodox Christian message this led to a paradox: "In dieses Welt- und Menschbild hinein stieß die jedes Weltbild sprengende Christusverkündigung der Kirche: Gott ist in Jesus Christus Mensch geworden, um die Menschen zu erlösen. Absolute Transzendenz Gottes und Menschwerdung Gottes standen jetzt einander unversöhnbar gegenüber."[124] Out of the collision of Greek dualism and Christian gospel docetism sprang forth.[125]

Despite stating that this dualism lay at the root of docetism, that this dualism was firmly rooted in Greek philosophy - "Der Dualismus des Materiellen und Geistigen, eine "Urmelodie hellenischen Geistes", läßt sich in der Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie von Platon bis Plotin verfolgen"[126] - and the large size of his study, Weigandt hardly refers directly to any ancient philosophers. In fact, when discussing the philosophical prerequisites of docetism only Numenius of Apamea is mentioned beside Plato and Plotinus and none of their works are discussed in detail or even cited.[127] It may come as no surprise, therefore, that the other, far smaller studies of docetism - if they discuss the Greek philosophical origins of docetism at all - generally also stick to commonplaces.

Surprisingly, this leaves a short excursus on docetism in a commentary on the Johannine Epistles by Udo Schnelle as perhaps the most in depth treatment of the Greek philosophical origins of docetism.[128] Focussing at first just on Plato, he starts out demonstrating the opposition between being and seeming with a reference to Plato's *Politeia* 2.361b-362a. Perhaps this passage, which discusses whether one should be just or only appear to be just, does not provide the clearest statement of this opposition in Plato's works, but its existence can be inferred from other passages as well.[129]

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[124] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 147.

[125] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 25-26.

[126] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 19. Within the quote Weigandt cites Walter Kranz, *Die Griechische Philosophie: zugleich eine Einführung in der Philosophie überhaupt* (Wiesbaden : Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950), 320.

[127] Weigandt only cites Kurt Schilling writing about Plato's *Parmenides* 133d-134e. Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 19-26.

[128] Udo Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe* (THKNT 17; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010), 138-146.

[129] The best known one probably being Plato's story about the cave. Plato, *Republic* 514a-520a.

What this true being is, Schnelle explains with the help of Plato's *Timaeus* 29c: "For as Being is to Becoming, so is Truth to Belief" (ὅ τί περ πρὸς γένεσιν οὐσία, τοῦτο πρὸς πίστιν ἀλήθεια).[130] From this he concludes that true being is "das geistig-ideelle Sein ... die Welt der Ideen ... Sie liegen als eigentliche Wirklichkeit allen sinnliche Wahrnehmungen zugrunde, während die Welt der Wahrnehmungen ... dem Schein unterworfen ist."[131] Earlier on in the dialogue, namely, Timaeus posits that the Being is eternal and apprehensible by thought alone. The Becoming is instead never really existent due to its constantly changing state and can hence only be the object of speculation. He also remarks that all things perceivable by the senses can be said to be becoming.[132] Thus, what is perceived by the senses is liable to change and therefore only seems to be of a certain kind at a certain moment. Contrariwise, that which is permanent, and therefore real, can only be observed with the mind.

Citing the *Phaedrus* Schnelle remarks that the divine is part of this real world, the world of forms, as "die höchste Gottheit ist identisch mit der höchsten Idee: dem Guten."[133] According to Plato this implies that the gods "being the fairest and best possible, each of them always stays purely in his own form" (κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος ὢν εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν ἕκαστος αὐτῶν μένει ἀεὶ ἁπλῶς ἐν τῇ αὑτοῦ μορφῇ).[134] Change, after all, effects the perfect least of all and could, moreover, only imply a deterioration for a being in a state of perfection.[135] Because our world is material and imperfect, this means that God cannot "den Menschen nahe kommen".[136]

This is a prerequisite for the development of docetism according to Schnelle, but not the only one. The other is the separation of body and soul, an often encountered theme in Plato's works.[137] The soul according to this dualism is connected to the divine and eternal, but the body is part of the world of perception and consequently perishable. At death

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[130] Plato, *Timaeus* 29c (LCL 234).

[131] Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe*, 138.

[132] Plato, *Timaeus* 27d-28c.

[133] Plato, *Phaedrus* 246e. Schnelle also refers to *Politeia* 379b. Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe*, 138.

[134] Plato, *Republic* 381c. The translation is my own.

[135] Plato, *Republic* 380d-281b.

[136] Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe*, 139.

[137] Especially the *Phaedo* treats this subject extensively.

therefore, the body and soul, after having been temporarily connected during life, are again separated.

Schnelle then continues to show the continuance of these platonic conceptions in later periods. The soul outliving the body, the reality of the world of forms in contrast to that of the perceivable world, the divine status of the soul, the perfect happiness of the divine, its immateriality, immortality, and unchanging nature, all these ideas Schnelle shows to have continued to exist in the works of later philosophers stretching from Plato's time to well into the Christian era by means of various references and citations.

Thus Schnelle shows the existence and location of the building blocks of docetism, identified by him as the opposition of the divine to the material and the soul to the body.[138] The next question then is whether these suffice to build the structure called docetism and whether there might be a better set of building blocks. The first part of this question is discussed in the remainder of this chapter, the second part can only briefly be referred to here, but will be the focus of the subsequent ones.

When Peter in the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3) first beholds the doubled Christ, he exclaims: "What do I see, O Lord, that it is you yourself whom they take, and that you are grasping me? Or who is this one, glad and laughing on the tree? And is it another one whose feet and hands they are striking?" (81.7-14). As Henriette W. Havelaar commentates on this passage "Considering the questions ... Peter seems to be utterly

[138] One could and should perhaps question the interpretation and representativeness of the sources offered by Schnelle. The images and conceptions of the gods present in the works of ancient philosophers are far from Schnelle's unequivocal description. When reading Plato, it is, for example, not that clear whether the gods change their appearance or not. Indeed in *The Republic* 2.381c it is said that gods do not alter their form, yet the *Phaedrus* 246b mentions the divine soul as constantly changing (ἄλλοτ' ἐν ἄλλοις εἴδεσι γιγνομένη). These and other (perceived) inconsistencies are abundant, a point already made by Cicero in relation to Plato - iam de Platonis inconsistantia longum est dicere (*De Natura Deorum* 1.12.30) - but certainly not just applicable to him. Schnelle's interpretation is, moreover, also not always completely accurate. As Gerd van Riel has argued, the understanding of Plato's theology is often obscured by reading Plato through an Aristotelian lens. Gerd van Riel, *Plato's Gods* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 64-68 in particular. Schnelle's claim that "die höchste Gottheit ist identisch mit der höchsten Idee: dem Guten" is a clear example of such an Aristotelian interpretation and in fact not found in the passages from the Phaedrus and Politeia he refers to (see footnote 14 above). For now, however, this need not be problematic: it is not unthinkable for the earliest Docetists to have read Plato with Aristotle in the back of their minds and to have been somewhat selective in their reading.

bewildered".[139] This wonder is hard to explain solely as the consequence of the idea that the perceptible world "dem Schein unterworfen ist", as Schnelle does.[140] The opposition between the world of forms and the material world is a general one: all that inhabits the world of the senses is 'unreal'. In the docetic narratives, however, the doubling of Christ is something out of the ordinary, a cause for bewilderment.[141] Moreover, whereas the doubles in the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3) and the *Acts of John* could, with some effort, be explained as consequences of Platonic thought, the charade in the docetic narrative from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* - Simon being made into a second Christ, while the real Christ assumes Simon's looks - certainly cannot.

Perhaps more so even than the doubling, the deception inherent to the docetic narratives is difficult to explain in a Platonic, philosophical framework. Plato's gods are perfect which means they do not shapeshift and deceive. In fact, in the *Republic* Socrates discusses with Adeimantus the stories of Greek poets, like Homer, who give a different impression of the gods:

> ἆρα γόητα τὸν θεὸν οἴει εἶναι καὶ οἷον ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς φαντάζεσθαι ἄλλοτε ἐν ἄλλαις ἰδέαις τοτὲ μὲν αὐτὸν γιγνόμενον, [καὶ] ἀλλάττοντα τὸ αὑτοῦ εἶδος εἰς πολλὰς μορφάς, τοτὲ δὲ ἡμᾶς ἀπατῶντα καὶ ποιοῦντα περὶ αὑτοῦ τοιαῦτα δοκεῖν, ἢ ἁπλοῦν τε εἶναι καὶ πάντων ἥκιστα τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἰδέας ἐκβαίνειν;
>
> "Do you think god is a wizard and the sort who treacherously makes himself visible sometimes in one form, sometimes in another, and then again becoming himself, changing his appearance into many forms, then deceiving us and making us believe he has done so, or do you think he is straightforward and least of all one to step out of his own form?"[142]

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[139] Havelaar, *The Coptic Apocalypse of Peter,* 101.

[140] Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe*, 138.

[141] The *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) clearly shows this clearly, as Peter, when confronted with the doubling exclaims "What do I see, O Lord, that it is yourself whom they take, and that you are grasping me? Or who is this one, glad and laughing on the tree? And is it another one whose feet and hands they are striking?" (81.7-14).

[142] Plato, *Republic* 380d (LCL 237). This is the start of their conversation about the gods changing form or not, which ends at 383c.

Arguing that the perfect is not altered by some external force[143] and would not change itself, as this could only imply a change for the worse, they conclude that the gods do not change form.[144] Moreover, being perfect, the gods do not deceive either:[145]

> Κομιδῇ ἄρα ὁ θεὸς ἁπλοῦν καὶ ἀληθὲς ἔν τε ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ, καὶ οὔτε αὐτὸς μεθίσταται οὔτε ἄλλους ἐξαπατᾷ, οὔτε κατὰ φαντασίας οὔτε κατὰ λόγους οὔτε κατὰ σημείων πομπάς, ὕπαρ οὐδ' ὄναρ.
>
> "In that case god is utterly straightforward and true in word and deed; he does not change himself or deceive others either by means of apparitions, or stories, or a parade of signs, in sleeping or waking?"[146]

These passages, though they show that the deceptive aspect of the docetic narratives is difficult to explain as a result of a platonic worldview, do give a good suggestion where this deception - and perhaps docetism itself? - might have come from: the stories of Greek poets such as Hesiod and Homer with their anthropomorphic, cheating, and shapeshifting gods.

These stories have, however largely been ignored in explaining docetism. After all, the existing definitions assume docetism to be an inherently Christian phenomenon. The proponents of the theory concerning the origin of docetism described in this chapter are no exception. For example, according to Schnelle the philosophical concepts above led, when confronted with the Christian narrative, to docetism. Yet why did docetism spring into existence at that time and not at an earlier time? The philosophical concepts seen as the breeding ground of docetism existed already from Plato onwards, offering plenty of opportunities for these philosophical ideas to be confronted with opposing conceptions out of the collision of which some kind of 'docetic' narrative could have developed.[147] Obviously, as long as one adheres to an intra-Christian definition of docetism this question remains unasked: after all, earlier than Christianity means non-Christian and

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[143] Plato, *Republic* 380e-381b.

[144] Plato, *Republic* 381b-381e.

[145] Plato, *Republic* 381e-382e.

[146] Plato, *Republic* 382e (LCL 237).

[147] One only has to think of one of the many myths concerning divinities visiting the earth in human shape. Neither is there a shortage of narratives wherein the gods undergo or perform actions themselves which contradict the philosophical conceptions of the gods as unsuffering - think, for example, of rapes.

therefore by definition non-docetic. Defining docetism in neutral terms, however, one has to find an answer to this question. The next chapters will, therefore, follow up on the lead provided by the discussion of Socrates and Adeimantus and turn to the gods of the poets, in whose writings such 'docetic' narratives did in fact already exist at an earlier time.

# 4 Epiphany

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the deception inherent to the docetic narratives might be similar to the deceptiveness, criticised by Socrates and Adeimantus, of the gods of the poets. To state it more specifically, Socrates and Adeimantus "combat the familiar stories of gods appearing to mortals in different guises".[148] 'The appearance of the gods' can in modern English simply be described with the word 'epiphany' - "a manifestation or appearance of some divine or superhuman being"[149]. To follow up then on the lead of Socrates and Adeimantus means to delve into the concept of epiphany.

Though clearly derived from the Greek ἐπιφάνεια, the etymological relation between 'epiphany' and ἐπιφάνεια is somewhat deceptive since the two words do not have the same meaning. In fact 'epiphany' does not correspond to any ancient Greek word,[150] whereas ἐπιφάνεια has a plethora of meanings, many of them highly specific and unrelated to the English 'epiphany'.[151] Only from Hellenistic times onwards does ἐπιφάνεια also mean 'epiphany', although even this is debated.[152] Yet this does not entail

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[148] Penelope Murray, *Plato on Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 145. Plato, *Republic* 380d-383c.

[149] *Oxford English Dictionary*, online: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/63447?rskey=1pCeR2&result=2.

[150] "Nehmen wir das Ergebnis vorweg: es gibt kein antikes paganes oder jüdisches Wort, weder im Griechischem, noch im Lateinischen, noch in den semitischen Sprachen, das präzise dem modernen Begrif 'Offenbarung' - sei es in spezifisch theologischer, sei es in religionsphänomenologischer Füllung - entspricht. Dieser Sachverhalt, obwohl schon oft beobachtet und in den meisten lexikalischen Darstellungen zur Sache erwähnt, bedarf über die Konstatierung hinaus einer Erklärung. Auch das NT kennt keine Vokabel, die als Oberbegriff über *alle* in Betracht kommenden Erscheinungen Verwendung gefunden hätte." Marco Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie: Grundlagen des spätantiken und frühchristlichen Offenbarungsglaubens* (2 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 1:266. Frenschkowski follows this statement up with a lenghty discussion of various words used for epiphanies, not only in Greek and Latin, but also in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Middle-Iranian.

[151] Elpidius Pax offers a comprehensive overview of the different meanings of ἐπιφάνεια and related forms, although he makes a rather simplistic distinction between its religious and profane meanings. Elpidius Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ: ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie* (München: Karl Zink, 1955), 6-19.

[152] The common view is offered by, for example, E. Pfister, "Epifanie", *PW* Supplementband 4:277-278 and Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ*, 15. Lührmann, however, argues that the meaning of επιφάνεια did not change in the Hellenistic period to one denoting divine manifestation. Dieter Lührmann, "Epiphaneia: zur Bedeutungsgeschichte eines griechischen Wortes", in *Tradition und Glaube: das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt* (eds. Gert Jeremias, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn and Hartmut Stegemann; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1971), 185-199. For a refutation of Lührmann, see H. S. Versnel, "What did

that the Greeks had no words to describe an epiphany; there were various words they could choose from,[153] but these do not mirror the modern 'epiphany'. Thus, there is no easy to recognise linguistic marker of epiphanies in Greek literature.

Perhaps that difficulty is one of the reasons why epiphany, despite its pivotal role in Greek literature, has not always received a corresponding amount of attention, as Elpidius Pax straightaway notes in the first monograph dedicated to the subject.[154] More detrimental, however, has been the longstanding scholarly unwillingness to accept that the Greeks actually found their descriptions of epiphanic gods credible: "it is difficult to understand this in all seriousness ... the epiphany of anthropomorphic gods could never be spoken of in anything but a very vestigial sense".[155] Though it was clear that Greek culture was full of anthropomorphic representations of the gods, be they hewn out of stone, written on papyrus, or painted on pottery, these were not to be taken seriously. A Homer, an Aeschylus supposedly deployed merely dramaturgical and stock in trade literary tricks for the entertainment of their audience.[156] Likewise, temples and temple statues were "more propaganda than religion" arousing "no more than dusty aesthetic, antiquarian interest".[157] Over time Greek paganism became more and more hollowed out, devoid of real religious interest, until by the time Christianity arrived on the scene 'paganism' had been become a complete farce, without any capability of offering religious fulfilment.[158]

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Ancient Man See When He Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany", in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions* (ed. Dirk van der Plas; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 42-55.

[153] Pfister mentions several of them. Pfister, "Epifanie", 4:277-323 especially 279-281.

[154] "Es gehört zu den Eigenarten Menschlicher Unzulänglichkeit, daß wir vielfach mit Begriffen umzugehen pflegen, über deren tragenden Grund wir uns nicht im Klaren sind und die daher überaus leicht der Verflachung verfallen. Ein Musterbeispiel bietet das Wort Epiphanie". Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ*, 1.

[155] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (trans. John Raffan; Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 186.

[156] "We Should then lay aside any notion of Homeric epiphanies as viable theological conceptions". B. C. Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies in Homer", *Numen* 30 (1983): 53-79, 67. See also Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ*, 45-46.

[157] Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 186.

[158] Pax devotes an entire section of his book to a description of this proces, which 'causes the demise of every pagan religion' - obviously in contrast to Christianity. Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ*, 41-61, especially 42. See also Elpidius Pax, "Epiphanie", *RAC* 5:832-909.

Fortunately, this model of progression towards rationality and Christianity was in time left behind, and recent years have seen a rising interest in epiphany judging by the publication of multiple monographs, doctoral theses, and edited volumes.[159] Nonetheless a neat and widely acclaimed definition or categorisation of epiphany does not yet exist,[160] which is understandable in view of the many forms epiphany can take. The modern 'epiphany' clearly includes a divinity showing itself in its own - often considered anthropomorphic - form. What, however, if the divinity shows itself as something else: Athena as a young man, or Zeus in the form of a bull? Considering the difficulties for the divine to appear as they really are, one should include these instances.[161] Do even more indirect manifestations, a conspicuous flash of lightning or an unexplainable voice, then also count? And what about epiphanies occurring in dreams?

Socrates' question to Adeimantus is, however, often seen more precisely as a critique of anthropomorphism, which had also been addressed by philosophers like Xenophanes.[162] Not to burst the bonds of this study then, the rest of this chapter will be limited to anthropomorphic epiphanies with recipients who are awake, thus excluding visions in

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[159] For an overview of the most recent literature see Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9 and its extensive bibliography. Also highly relevant is Georgia Petridou, *Divine Epiphany in Greek Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Claredon, 2015). Some of the smaller, recent publications are: Albert Henrichs, "Göttliche Präsenz als Differenz: Dionysos als Epiphanischer Gott", in *A Different God? Dionysus and Ancient Polytheism* (ed. Renate Schlesier; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 105-116. Robin M. Jensen "Early Christian Art and Divine Epiphany", *Toronto Journal of Theology* 28 (2012): 125-144.

[160] Frenschkowski devotes a considerable amount of attention to these categorisations. Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epifanie* 1:249-265, 285-347. Versnel, for example, even questions one of the most frequently attested distinctions, the distinction between epiphanies occurring to people when awake and when sleeping. Versnel, "What did Ancient Man See When He Saw a God?", 48-49.

[161] There are several myths treating this subject, the most famous being probably the story of Semele and Zeus. As a rule of thumb the unmitigated appearance of the lower ranking divinities posed no problem; the higher gods humans can, however, not behold without the risk of severe consequences. H. J. Rose, "Divine Disguisings", *HTR* 49 (1956): 65-66. As mentioned in the former chapter, philosophers, although for different reasons, also often held it for impossible to perceive the gods as they actually are. See also Warren Smith, "The Disguises of the Gods in the 'Iliad'", *Numen* 35 (1988): 161-178 which argues that the gods needed to appear in a mundane form to interact with the world. In contrast to Smith, however, I do not agree that this renders their shapeshifting any less deceptive: forced to choose *a* form, they can still choose which particular form.

[162] Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 146.

dreams. In addition the epiphanies have to occur in textual sources to avoid differences caused by the medium making a later comparison to docetism more difficult.[163]

### 4.1 Anthropmorphic epiphanies and deception

Epiphanies of this type have received relatively much attention.[164] Accordingly, many features of the gods in these epiphanies are well known. Aside from the more personal ones, such as the spear and helm of Athena, or the ivy belonging to Dionysus, there are also certain general characteristics of the gods when they appear on earth. For one, they tend to be extraordinarily handsome, as when Aphrodite in the form of an old woman is recognised by Helen because of her beautiful neck, desirable bosom, and flashing eyes.[165] They are sometimes said to be remarkably tall and a sweet fragrance envelops them. [166] Their abilities far outrange those of mortals, as they move with incredible speed, have enormous strength and shout far louder than normal men.[167] Though frequently attested, most of these features by itself do not accompany epiphanies often enough to be truly called a standard element of epiphany.

In contrast, the deception referred to in the *Republic* by Socrates may be considered a frequent companion of these epiphanies. Indeed in many epiphanic scenes the divinity in question is not recognised, at least not immediately. In fact, it seems as if the gods are not automatically seen like any other object within one's sight, but rather that they allow themselves to be seen as and when it pleases them. Accordingly, Athena famously grants Diomedes the power to discern the immortals: "and the mist moreover have I taken from

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[163] There exists a fair amount of literature on the epiphanic character of cult rituals and statues and epiphanies depicted on other non-literary works of art. Platt in particular treats many different media. Platt, *Facing the Gods*.

[164] Pfister in fact completely limits his scope to this type: "Bei der Fülle des Materials jedoch, die eine Auswahl verlangt, ist der Hauptnachdruck auf diejenigen Epiphanie gelegt, bei denen es sich um das persönliche, sichtbare Erscheinen des göttlichen Wesens bei wachem Zustand des Schauenden handelt, um eigentliche Epiphanie". Pfister, "Epifanie", 4:279. To be clear: although Pfisters demarcation of epiphany is almost the same as the one used here, I do not intend to imply that this kind of epiphany is the 'eigentliche Epiphanie'. In fact, a more comprehensive understanding of epiphany is very likely to add to the argumentation of this thesis. Its scope, however, imposes certain limits on what can be treated.

[165] Homer, *Iliad* 3.396-397.

[166] Homeric Hymn to Demeter 275-281.

[167] Homer, *Iliad* 13.62-65 and 14.148-151.

your eyes that was over them before, so that you may well discern both god and man" (ἀχλὺν δ᾽ αὖ τοι ἀπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν ἕλον, ἣ πρὶν ἐπῆεν, | ὄφρ᾽ εὖ γιγνώσκῃς ἠμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα).[168] This implies of course that normally the gods were hard to distinguish. Similarly Athena comes to Achilles during his heated argument with Agamemnon and appears to him alone, while "none of the others saw" (τῶν δ᾽ ἄλλων οὔ τις ὁρᾶτο).[169] Apparently Athena made an exception for Achilles, but remained invisible to the others. A similar situation occurs in the *Odyssey* when Athena visits Odysseus to restore his glorious appearance:

> ... οὐδ᾽ ἄρ᾽ Ἀθήνην
> λῆθεν ἀπὸ σταθμοῖο κιὼν Εὔμαιος ὑφορβός,
> ἀλλ᾽ ἥ γε σχεδὸν ἦλθε· δέμας δ᾽ ἴκτο γυναικὶ
> καλῇ τε μεγάλῃ τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα ἰδυίῃ.
> στῆ δὲ κατ᾽ ἀντίθυρον κλισίης Ὀδυσῆι φανεῖσα·
> οὐδ᾽ ἄρα Τηλέμαχος ἴδεν ἀντίον οὐδ᾽ νόησεν,
> οὐ γάρ πως πάντεσσι θεοὶ φαίνονται ἐναργεῖς,
> ἀλλ᾽ Ὀδυσεύς τε κύνες τε ἴδον, καί ῥ᾽ οὐχ ὑλάοντο
> κνυζηθμῷ δ᾽ ἐτέρωσε διὰ σταθμοῖο φόβηθεν.
>
> Nor was Athene unaware that the swineherd Eumaeus was gone from the farmstead, but she drew near in the likeness of a woman, beautiful and tall, and skilled in glorious handiwork. And she stood over against the door of the hut, showing herself to Odysseus, but Telemachus did not see her before him, or notice her; for it is not at all the case that the gods appear in manifest presence to all. But Odysseus saw her, and the dogs, and they did not bark, but with whining slunk in fear to the farther part of the farmstead.[170]

Again Athena is visible to one person, while completely invisible to another and, like in the case of Achilles, Odysseus has no difficulty recognising her.[171] It is made clear, however, that Odysseus' being able to see her is the exception here, rather than

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[168] Homer, *Iliad* 5.127-128 (LCL 170).

[169] Homer, *Iliad* 1.198 (LCL 170).

[170] Homer, *Odyssey* 16.155-16.163 (LCL 105).

[171] It is clear from line 160 that Telemachus did not just not recognise her, but did not see her at all. If he would have seen her, he would most likely have recognised her, as she appeared "in the likeness of a woman, beautiful and tall, and skilled in glorious handiwork", in other words as herself. That this is her real form, or at least the closest thing to it, can also be inferred from *Odyssey* 13.288-289.

Telemachus' not being able to do so, "for it is not at all the case that the gods appear in manifest presence to all" (οὐ γάρ πως πάντεσσι θεοὶ φαίνονται ἐναργεῖς).

That the gods are generally difficult to discern is also suggested by the existence of narratives which tell of gods disguising themselves without mentioning any real motive for the disguisal. To illustrate this four epiphanies, taken from the Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo, Homer's *Iliad*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, will be discussed.

The Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo, for example, has the god setting out to find himself priests for his newly build temple in Pytho.[172] Seeing a ship with suitable candidates on it, he assumes the shape of a dolphin (δέμας δελφῖνι ἐοικώς)[173], throws himself onto the deck, and simply lies there without the crew knowing who he is. While lying there, he hijacks the ship and by means of some invisible power steers it towards Crisa. When they arrive, Apollo, now resembling a star (ἀστέρι εἰδόμενος)[174], leaps from the ship, enters his shrine, and shows through a sudden bright burst of flames his presence to the local population. After that he immediately returns to the ship in the likeness of a vigorous, strong, young man (ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος αἰζηῶι τε κρατερῶι τε | πρωθήβηι)[175] and pretending not to know the crew invites them to disembark. In a scene of dramatic irony the captain praises his beauty and likens him to the gods: "Sir, as you don't seem at all like a mortal in body and stature, but like the immortal gods, I bid you all hail, and may the gods grant you blessings" (ξεῖν', ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν γάρ τι καταθνητοῖσιν ἔοικας, | οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φυήν, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν, | οὖλέ τε καὶ μέγα χαῖρε, θεοὶ δέ τοι ὄλβια δοῖεν).[176] Then he tells him about their strange voyage and in reply Apollo, to the reader's surprise, forthwith discloses his identity and explains the purpose of their voyage.[177] Now Apollo's taking the shape of a dolphin could be explained - anachronistically within the myth - as serving an aetiological purpose: in the hymn the epithet 'Delphian' (Δελφίνιος) is linked to his appearance as a dolphin (δελφίς).[178] Why,

[172] The scene starts at line 388 and continues to 544.
[173] Homeric Hymn to Apollo 400.
[174] Homeric Hymn to Apollo 441.
[175] Homeric Hymn to Apollo 449-450.
[176] Homeric Hymn to Apollo 464-466 (LCL 496).
[177] Homeric Hymn to Apollo 388-544.
[178] Homeric Hymn to Apollo 493-495.

however, he chose to revisit the ship's crew like a strong and sturdy man and pretend not to know them, only to identify himself almost immediately afterwards, is puzzling.

Something similar occurs in a much debated passage from the *Iliad*. "Looking like Calchas in form and untiring voice" (εἰσάμενος Κάλχαντι δέμας καὶ ἀτειρέα φωνήν) Poseidon comes to the two Aiantes, spurs them on to do battle, and speeds of like a hawk. [179] Only at his departure Aias the son of Oileus recognises him to be a god:

> "Αἶαν, ἐπεί τις νῶι θεῶν, οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσι,
> μάντεϊ εἰδόμενος κέλεται παρὰ νηυσὶ μάχεσθαι—
> οὐδ' ὅ γε Κάλχας ἐστί, θεοπρόπος οἰωνιστής·
> ἴχνια γὰρ μετόπισθε ποδῶν ἠδὲ κνημάων
> ῥεῖ' ἔγνων ἀπιόντος· ἀρίγνωτοι δὲ θεοί περ —καὶ
> δ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισι
> μᾶλλον ἐφορμᾶται πολεμίζειν ἠδὲ μάχεσθαι,
> μαιμώωσι δ' ἔνερθε πόδες καὶ χεῖρες ὕπερθε.
>
> "Aias, since it is one of the gods who hold Olympus who in the likeness of the seer tells the two of us to fight beside the ships—he is not Calchas, the prophet and reader of omens, for easily did I recognize the signs he left of feet and of legs as he went from us; and plain to be known are the gods—and my own heart also within my breast is the more eager to war and battle, and my feet beneath and my hands above are eager."[180]

As said the passage has spawned much debate. Did Poseidon merely depart as quickly as a hawk, or did he actually assume the shape of a hawk?[181] What exactly were the signs of feet and legs left behind by Poseidon?[182] And how should we understand Aias' statement that the gods are easily recognisable in relation to the more frequently attested opposite idea: "gods are hard for mortals to see" (χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ θνητοῖσιν ὁρᾶσθαι).[183] For now,

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[179] Homer, *Iliad* 13.43-75 (LCL 171).

[180] Homer, *Iliad* 13.68-75 (LCL 171).

[181] For example: Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies in Homer", 58.

[182] Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies in Homer", 68 argues Poseidon to have had outsized feet and legs. Although one can only speculate whether this is true, it should be noted that footprints, or to be more precise the lack thereof, have been linked to docetism. See, for instance, Stuart G. Hall, "Docetism", *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought: Intellectual, Spiritual and Moral Horizons of Christianity* 173.

[183] Homeric Hymn to Demeter 111 (LCL 496). Some argue that in this context χαλεπός should be taken to mean 'dangerous', rather than 'difficult', cf. Albert Henrichs, "What is a Greek God?", in *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (eds. Jan N. Bremmer and Andrew Erskine; Edinbrough: Edinbrough University Press, 2010) 19. The saying is, however, directly preceded by the words οὐδ' ἔγνον

however, three other points need addressing. Firstly, though it is eventually clear to Aias that he is dealing with a divinity, Poseidon's disguise is not altogether without effect: Aias cannot identify him more specifically than as "one of the gods who hold Olympus".[184] Secondly, Poseidon takes the form of an already existing and clearly defined person, Calchas. This means that for the duration of the epiphany there are two Calchasses, a fact which Aias son of Oileus is keen to point out: "one ... of the gods ... looking like the seer ... but surely not Calchas the bird-skryer he is" (τις ... θεῶν ... μάντεϊ εἰδόμενος ... οὐδ᾽ ὅ γε Κάλχας ἐστί, θεοπρόπος οἰωνιστής). Thirdly, it is unclear why Poseidon assumes a different form. His guise is clearly deceptive - he impersonates Calchas and the Aiacides do not recognise him immediately - yet Poseidon seems to have no motive to deceive.

Similarly, in the Aeneid Ascanius after killing his first opponent in battle is visited by Apollo, who altered his shape (formam vertitur) to that of Butus, an old family friend and battle companion of Ascanius, looking "in all things like the old man, in voice and hue, in white locks and savage-sounding arms" (omnia longaevo similis vocemque coloremque | et crinis albos et saeva sonoribus arma).[185] He tells Ascanius to withdraw from fighting and while still speaking already withdraws himself from the mortals' sight and realm.[186] Only his superhuman departure, like in the case of Poseidon, gives him out as a god. Again the aspect of duplication is implicitly present, and as the reason for the disguise is left unexplained, one might start to think that disguise and deception are simply the default option for epiphanies.

For a final example of these seemingly pointless disguises let's turn to the third book of the *Iliad*.[187] After Aphrodite rescues Paris from a certain death at the hands of Menelaos, she decides to visit Helen to persuade her to join Paris in his bedroom. For the occasion she adopts the likeness of a certain old woman from Sparta, well known and much

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signifying the difficulty the maidens have in identifying the disguised Demeter. There exist, moreover, several other similar passages which explicitly stress the difficulty of seeing the gods, for instance: *Odyssey* 13.312-313 and 17.483-487.

[184] Homer, *Iliad* 13.68 (LCL 171).

[185] Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.646, 650-651 (LCL 64).

[186] Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.656-658.

[187] Homer, *Iliad* 3.386-425. It may be clear that there are many more examples, even within the already mentioned works. See, for example *Aeneid* 1.314-417 or *Odyssey* 13.111-324 for examples of extended encounters.

beloved to Helen.[188] Nonetheless, Helen, being all too familiar with Aphrodite, quickly recognises her by her suspiciously beautiful appearance[189] and boldly asks what evil she has come to do this time, starting her rebuke with a question: "Strange goddess, why is your heart set on deceiving me in this way?" (δαιμονίη, τί με ταῦτα λιλαίεαι ἠπεροπεύειν;).[190] Clearly Helen's question refers to the awkward situation Aphrodite has put her in by hooking her up with the cowardly Paris. One could, however, interpret it differently as well. In the end Aphrodite's disguise as a familiar old woman does not make the slightest bit of difference for the storyline.[191] Either her plan would have worked and she would not have been recognised, or - and this is what actually happens - she is recognised and nonetheless convinces Helen to go to Paris. Seen from this perspective Helen's frank question acquires a wholly new meaning: why do you take the trouble to disguise yourself? An answer to Helen's question according to the second interpretation cannot always be given, as the examples above show. Apparently disguises were such a standard feature of epiphanies, that they were used even when they served no immediate purpose.

In other cases, however, it is quite clear why the gods would not make themselves manifest to all. When one of the suitors of Penelope strikes the disguised Odysseus, the other suitors rebuke him:

> "Ἀντίνοʼ, οὐ μὲν κάλʼ ἔβαλες δύστηνον ἀλήτην,
> οὐλόμενʼ, εἰ δή πού τις ἐπουράνιος θεός ἐστιν.
> καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἀλλοδαποῖσι,
> παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστρωφῶσι πόληας,
> ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες."
>
> "Antinous, you did not well to strike the unfortunate wanderer. Doomed man that you are, what if he be perchance some god come down from heaven? And the gods do, in the

[188] Aprodite's resembling is described in two ways. The first time (3.386) she is said to appear (εἰκυῖα) as on old woman (γρηὶ) en the second time (3.389) she resembles (ἐεισαμένη) that same one (τῇ). Again the aspect of duplication is present, though tacitly.

[189] Homer, *Iliad* 3.396-397.

[190] Homer, *Iliad* 3.383-420 (LCL 170).

[191] Similar situations occur more often. In *Iliad* 21.284-298 Athena and Poseidon come to Achilles in the guise of mortals to help him, yet immeditately tell him who they are and in *Iliad* 2.786-805 Iris comes to Trojans to inform them of the approaching Greek army. She is disguised as Polites and speaks like him, but Hector recognises her nonetheless.

guise of strangers from afar, put on all manner of shapes, and visit the cities, beholding the violence and the righteousness of men."[192]

And the speaker is right. These 'Märchen-Epifanien', as E. Pfister calls them, are quite well attested.[193] They are generally speaking situated in "der ältesten Zeit, als Gott noch auf Erde wandelte" and have the gods come down to earth to test people's piety or, less often, to convince themselves of the bad situation on earth before intervening.[194] As examples, the use of diguises and deception in the visit of Jupiter and Mercury to Philemon and Baucis, the encounter between Hera and Jason, and Jupiter's visit to Lycaeus will be discussed.

The well-known story of Philemon and Baucis found in the eight book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* presents the 'Märchen-Epifanie' in its most typical form.[195] Although this is the only preserved version, the tale is generally assumed to be older.[196] According to it Jupiter and Hermes disguised as mortal men (*specie mortali*)[197] went from door to door to find a place to stay for the night, but every door was closed upon them except for that of the humble house of Philemon and Baucis. While the old couple serves the strangers to the best of their abilities, Jupiter and Hermes magically refill the bowls of food and drink, thus showing themselves to be gods. They comfort the terrified old couple and tell them of their plan to punish the entire region for its impiousness by

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[192] Homer, *Odyssey* 17.483-487 (LCL 105).

[193] For an overview of this motif see Pfister, "Epifanie", 4:291-292 and Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie*, 2:93-95.

[194] Pfister, "Epifanie", 4:291.

[195] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.611-724.

[196] The episode has often been compared with several biblical passages, the most important of which are: the visit of the three men to Abraham (Gen 18), the subsequent narration concerning the visitors of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra (Gen 19) and the misidentification of Paul and Barnabas as Hermes and Zeus (Acts 14). The popularity of the *Metamorphoses* in combination with the biblical parallels have assured the ongoing attention of both classicists and theologians, yielding a large body of literature. For an overview - though dated - see Franz Bömer, *Publius Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen VIII-IX* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1977), 190-200. More recent and interesting for current puposes is Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie*, 2:10-14 - about the episode as an instance of 'verborgene Epiphanie'. In opposition to Bömer Frenschkowski rightly remarks that it is not very likely for Ovidius to have used Jewish sources. The story of Philemon and Baucis as told by Ovid closely resembles the same author's account of the visit of Iupiter, Hermes and Neptune to Hyrieus (*Fasti* 5.495-536).

[197] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.626.

means of a flood, but promise to save and reward Philemon and Baucis. The disguises are in this case only used for as long is necessary, until Philemon and Baucis have passed the test.

The same motif also features in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius. Here Hera explains her support for Jason by relating a former encounter between them:

> καὶ δ᾽ ἄλλως ἔτι καὶ πρὶν ἐμοὶ μέγα φίλατ᾽ Ἰήσων,
> ἐξότ᾽ ἐπὶ προχοῇσιν ἅλις πλήθοντος Ἀναύρου
> ἀνδρῶν εὐνομίης πειρωμένῃ ἀντεβόλησεν
> θήρης ἐξανιών· νιφετῷ δ᾽ ἐπαλύνετο πάντα
> οὔρεα καὶ σκοπιαὶ περιμήκεες, οἱ δὲ κατ᾽ αὐτῶν
> χείμαρροι καναχηδὰ κυλινδόμενοι φορέοντο.
> γρηὶ δέ μ᾽ εἰσαμένην ὀλοφύρατο, καί μ᾽ ἀναείρας
> αὐτὸς ἑοῖς ὤμοισι διὲκ προαλὲς φέρεν ὕδωρ.
> τῶ νύ μοι ἄλληκτον περιτίεται·
>
> Furthermore, even before that, Jason became greatly beloved by me, ever since he met me by the streams of the flooding Anaurus, when I was testing men's righteousness, and he was returning from the hunt. All the mountains and high peaks were being sprinkled with snow, and down from them torrents were tumbling in crashing cascades. And in my disguise as an old woman he took pity on me and lifting me onto his own shoulders proceeded to carry me through the rushing water. That is why he is ceaselessly held in highest honor by me.[198]

This same event is also mentioned at the very beginning of the *Argonautica*, though in a highly abbreviated form and with a different focus.[199] That both passages refer to the same event is, however, clear: in both cases Jason crosses the explicitly wintry and raging Anaurus. The account in book three, however, clearly revolves around the encounter of Jason and the disguised Hera. In words resembling the suitors' she states she was testing mankind (ἀνδρῶν εὐνομίης πειρωμένῃ) disguised - quite typically - as an old woman (γρηὶ ... εἰσαμένην). Again deception is used to ensure a valid result of the test, but no mention is made of the lifting of the guise afterwards.

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[198] Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 3.66-74 (LCL 1).

[199] Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1.5-11. This passage implies, however, that Hera not only tested and approved of Jason, but also tested and disapproved of his nemesis, Pelias.

The third example is again taken from Ovid, though the same myth is also told elsewhere.[200] Describing the deterioration of the human race from golden to iron, Ovid lets Jupiter relate the misdeeds of humanity and specifically Lycaeus to the assembly of the other gods: "An infamous report of the age had reached my ears. Eager to prove this false, I descended from high Olympus, and as a god disguised in human form travelled up and down the land." (contigerat nostras infamia temporis aures; | quam cupiens falsam summo delabor Olympo | et deus humana lustro sub imagine terras). [201] What he finds is naught but impiety and Lycaeus takes the first prize. Arriving in Lycaeus' kingdom, Jupiter shows himself through some sign to be a god (signa dedi venisse deum)[202], but the king is not convinced and mocks the commoners who are. Lycaeus then decides to test whether the visitor really is a god or merely a human: he tries to trick him into eating human flesh and plans to murder him afterwards. Jupiter perceives the scheme, makes Lycaeus' house come crashing down around him, and turns the king himself into a wolf.[203]

The story is particularly interesting as it addresses exactly the deceptive nature of epiphany. In order for Jupiter's test to work he must disguise himself. To test the piety of the population, however, this same disguise has to be lifted: even a pious population cannot be expected to worship him as long as he seems to be perfectly human. Hence the sign given by Jupiter. Now Lycaeus being the impious person he is, would of course - no matter what the sign - have tried to commit his hideous crimes against the stranger visiting his lands, but his disbelieve does point to the problematic nature of the situation. The reader knows that it was Jupiter who gave the sign; the commoners and Lycaeus, however, saw a human being and something inexplicable. Yet, because it was a human appearing to them, they could not be sure whether he was in fact a god and the sign real or he merely a talented magician and the sign a cheap trick. The commoners chose for the traditionally esteemed reaction; Lycaeus for the sceptic one and paid the price.

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[200] For an overview of the different versions see James G. Frazer's note to pseudo-Apollodorus, *The Library* 3.8 (LCL 121).

[201] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.211-213 (LCL 42).

[202] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.220.

[203] The entire speech of Jupiter runs from 1.209 to 243.

In the previous examples the gods deceived in order to test humans, which may still be considered a benign form of deception. In many other cases, however, the gods deceive purposely and with less noble intentions. One of the clearest examples of this is found in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite. Aphrodite, struck with love for Anchises, visits him: "Zeus' daughter Aphrodite stood before him, like an unmarried girl in stature and appearance, so that he should not be afraid when his eyes fell on her" (στῆ δ᾽ αὐτοῦ προπάροιθε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη, | παρθένωι ἀδμήτηι μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη, | μή μιν ταρβήσειεν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσι νοήσας).[204] Her plan works: Anchises' response to her appearance does not seem to be so much one of fear, as of desire - "and desire took hold of Anchises" (Ἀγχίσην δ᾽ ἔρος εἷλεν).[205] Nevertheless, assuming her to be a goddess - his response makes clear that he does not know which one - he reverently offers to bring her sacrifices and build a shrine in her honour.[206] Yet Aphrodite, flat out lying, tells him she is no goddess: "I am not some goddess. Why do you liken me to the immortals?" (οὔ τίς τοι θεός εἰμι. τί μ᾽ ἀθανάτηισιν ἐΐσκεις;).[207] She even goes so far as making up a lengthy fictitious story asserting her human parentage, explaining how it is that she speaks his language and arrived at his door.[208] Though still not completely assured, Anchises is overcome by desire and lays with her. When he wakes up, she shows her true form and he, terrified "for a man does not enjoy vital vigor who goes to bed with immortal goddesses" (ἐπεὶ οὐ βιοθάλμιος ἀνήρ | γίνεται, ὅς τε θεαῖς εὐνάζεται ἀθανάτηισιν), excuses himself with a reference to her deception: "As soon as I first saw you, goddess, I realized you were a deity, but you did not tell the truth" (αὐτίκα σ᾽ ὡς τὰ πρῶτα, θεά, ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν, |

[204] Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 82-83 (LCL 496). There exist noticeable similarities between this deceptive epiphany and, for instance, those of Demeter in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Zeus in Moschus' *Europa*, Aphrodite in *Iliad* 3.386-425, but also Telemachus' taking Odysseus for a god in *Odyssey* 16.183-195, and Pandarus' doubting whether Diomedes is a god or a mortal in *Iliad* 5.180-183. Andrew Faulkner, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Introduction Text and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 162-253.

[205] Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 91 (LCL 496). Not all fear has been removed though, for Anchises still needs some persuasion. Only after he has been struck by both ἔρος and ἵμερος in lines 143-144 does he cave in. Faulkner, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 172.

[206] Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 92-106.

[207] Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 109. My translation.

[208] Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 108-143.

ἔγνων ὡς θεὸς ἦσθα· σὺ δ᾽ οὐ νημερτὲς ἔειπες).[209] Luckily for him Aphrodite only admonishes him to keep silent about the whole affair and goes her way.

This intentional deception, is however, often of a more malignant type. When in his flight for Achilles Hector has circled Troy thrice, Athena is sent to intervene. First she goes to Achilles. Undisguised and being quite clear about her identity, she tells him to stop running for she will make Hector fight him.[210] Then she goes to Hector "in the likeness of Deïphobus, Hector's favourite brother, in form and untiring voice" (Δηιφόβῳ ἐικυῖα δέμας καὶ ἀτειρέα φωνήν).[211] As Hector thought that all the Trojans, except for himself, were hiding safely behing the walls of Troy, he is overjoyed to see Deïphobus and praises him. Athena in reply invents a story of her royal family and friends begging her not to go down the walls to face Achilles but she feeling the obligation to help Hector.[212] Thus through deceit (κερδοσύνῃ) she convinces Hector to fight Achilles together.[213] When, however, after he has thrown his first spear and missed, Hector turns to Deïphobus for another, his companion is no longer there (ὁ δ᾽ οὔ τί οἱ ἐγγύθεν ἦεν).[214] Then Hector perceives the deceit:

> "ὢ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δή με θεοὶ θάνατόνδε κάλεσσαν·
> Δηίφοβον γὰρ ἐγώ γ᾽ ἐφάμην ἥρωα παρεῖναι·
> ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἐν τείχει, ἐμὲ δ᾽ ἐξαπάτησεν Ἀθήνη.
> νῦν δὲ δὴ ἐγγύθι μοι θάνατος κακός, οὐδ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἄνευθεν,
> οὐδ᾽ ἀλέη·
>
> "Well now! Truly have the gods called me to my death. For I thought that the warrior Deïphobus was at my side, but he is inside the wall, and Athene has deceived me. Now surely is evil death near at hand, and no more far from me, nor is there a way of escape.[215]

Hector leaves no doubt about the nature of the deception. He really (γε) thought at first to be speaking with Deïphobus but now realises it was not his countryman who dared to venture outside the walls of Troy: it was Athena who 'utterly deceived' (ἐξαπάτησεν) him -

[209] Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 189-190 and 185-186 (LCL 496).
[210] Homer, *Iliad* 22.214-223.
[211] Homer, *Iliad* 22.227 (LCL 171).
[212] Homer, *Iliad* 22.238-246.
[213] Homer, *Iliad* 22.247.
[214] Homer, *Iliad* 22.295.
[215] Homer, *Iliad* 22.297-301 (LCL 171).

interestingly ἐξαπατάω is the exact word Socrates uses to describe the gods' deception.[216] That Hector is able to identify the fake Deïphobus as Athena is not surprising: the sudden disappearance of Deïphobus clearly indicated the involvement of a divinity, and he had been told just some lines before that Athena would destroy him by means of Achilles' spear.[217] What is more interesting is the explicit reference to the aspect of duplication. Just as Aias distinguished between the real Calchas and the fake one, Hector realises that there were momentarily two of Deïphobus: "For I thought that the warrior Deïphobus was at my side, but he is inside the wall" (Δηίφοβον γὰρ ἐγώ γ᾽ ἐφάμην ἥρωα παρεῖναι· | ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἐν τείχει).

Equally devastating is the deception in the case of Semele. References to the myth can be found as early as Hesiod's *Theogony* and continue to be made throughout antiquity.[218] The most important accounts are probably those found in Euripides' *Bacchae*, Diodorus Siculus' *Library of History*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, pseudo-Apollodorus' *Library*, and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*.[219] Though differing in details, the kernel of the myth stays the same in all these sources. Zeus has a relationship with Semele and impregnates her. Hera finds out about the adultery of her husband and decides to get back at Semele. Disguised as an old maid of hers, she convinces Semele to ask Zeus to come to her in his real form so she may know that her lover truly is Zeus. When Zeus does so, Semele instantly dies struck by Zeus' lightning.

The myth addresses several important aspects of epiphany. The first and best known has to do with the epiphany of Zeus. The usual summary of the myth holds that Zeus showed himself 'in his true form' and that, being a mortal, Semele could not but die at

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[216] Plato, *Republic* 382e. See also 380d.

[217] ἄφαρ δέ σε Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη | ἔγχει ἐμῷ δαμάᾳ (*Iliad* 22.270-271). Notice the certainty expressed by the indicative. Had Athena not explicitly told Achilles of her support, he might have used a subjunctive.

[218] Hesiod, *Theogony* 940-942. Although the death of Semele is not explicitly mentioned, the remark on Semele's becoming a goddess betrays familiarity with this story, as she was traditionally thought to have become a divinity after she had been killed by beholding Zeus.

[219] Euripides, *Bacchae* 2-3, 6-9, 87-102, 519-529; Diododorus Siculus, *Library of History* 3.64.3-5; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.259-309; pseudo-Apollodorus, *Library* 3.4.3. Nonnus' account, though spanning no less than the entire eighth book of his *Dionysiaca*, was written around 400 CE and will therefore not be discussed in this chapter. Less elaborate versions of the myth as well as mere references can be found in many other sources, but rarely add anything to the ones already mentioned. Hyginus' *Fabulae*, for instance, contains the story twice (167 and 179), yet reads largely as a prose summary of Ovid's narration.

the sight of him.[220] Some scholars have hence considered the myth of Semele to present a similar impossibility of beholding the divine as does Exodus 33:18.[221] This is, of course, not entirely accurate. The sources do not explicitly speak of the true form of Zeus, but of the form he assumes when he lies with Hera, though this could be considered nit picking.[222] More importantly the myth of Semele does not reflect a universally held belief that mortals cannot behold the immortal gods and live, as other examples of gods showing their true form to mortals show.[223] Yet the story of Semele does illustrate how much of an exception it was for the gods to appear as they really were and how much more frequently they appeared in a different guise.

Accordingly, Hera does not show herself to Semele as she is, but changes her appearance to that of an old woman belonging to the retinue of Semele, sometimes identified more precisely as Beroë her Epidaurian nurse. Ovid, obviously interested in the details of the metamorphosis, in particular stresses the verisimilitude of Juno's disguise. She is not merely said to be alike to the old woman, as is the case in the other sources, but the reader is told that Hera went as far as to alter the colour of her hair, wrinkle and age her skin, walk bent over and staggering, and change her voice.[224] She even entertains a prolonged conversation with Semele before embarking on the subject of Jupiter's visits.[225] Ovid's version, however, is not the only one to contain the motif of deception. The others also tell of Hera's metamorphosis, and pseudo-Apollodorus even explicitly writes of Semele making her fatal request "having been utterly deceived by Hera" (ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ὑπὸ Ἥρας), his choice for the word ἐξαπατάω again coinciding with that of Socrates.[226]

Thus, the myth of Semele sheds light on the deceptive nature of epiphany in two different ways: the example of Zeus illustrates the rarity of a non-deceptive epiphany,

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[220] See for example: Theodor Heinze, "Semele", *Brill's New Pauly* online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1107670.

[221] William Henry Covici Propp, *Exodus 19-40* (The Anchor Bible 2a; New York: Doubleday, 2006) 606.

[222] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 284-285 and 293-294. Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Library* 3.4.3.

[223] See, for instance, the before mentioned encounters between Athena and Odysseus, Aphrodite and Anchises or Achilleis and Thetis.

[224] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 275-278.

[225] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.279-280.

[226] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Library* 3.4.3. Plato, *Republic* 382e, see also 380d.

whereas Hera's disguise continues the list of instances where epiphany goes hand in hand with disguises and deception. Yet there is a third way in which the tale of Semele addresses the theme of deceptive epiphanies. Ovid's Juno, pretending to care about Semele's reputation, advises her to ask her lover to prove himself to be Jupiter, because "many under the name of gods have entered chaste bedrooms" (multi | nomine divorum thalamos iniere pudicos).[227] Even though in this case Juno is fully aware that it really is her husband, her admonition carries weight, as is not only shown by Semele's following up her advice.

The notion of gods disguised as humans was so widespread that in more than one case actual humans were purposely passed off as or simply mistakenly held to be gods disguised as humans.[228] Earlier in this chapter Athena's epiphany in the sixteenth book of the Odyssey was mentioned. In that case Telemachus did not perceive Athena, though Odysseus did. During her visit Athena alters - or to be more precise 'restores' - Odysseus' beggarly appearance to the way he used to look when setting out for Troy. When Telemachus sees Odysseus, he takes him to be a god: "Truly you are a god, one of those who hold broad heaven" (ἦ μάλα τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν).[229] In response Odysseus tells him he is no god, but his father - "Be sure I am no god; why do you liken me to the immortals? No, I am your father" (οὔ τίς τοι θεός εἰμι· τί μ᾽ ἀθανάτοισιν ἐίσκεις; | ἀλλὰ πατὴρ τεός εἰμι).[230] In spite of this and the tears of his father, Telemachus does not yet trust the situation, convinced that a divinity (δαίμων) is playing tricks (θέλγειν) with him.[231] Eventually, of course, Telemachus does believe Odysseus, but his initial hesitation and believe that he is being deceived by some god are telling.

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[227] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.281-282. My translation.

[228] Even though Pfister does not focus specifically on the role of deception in epiphany, he does note this aspect: "Bei diesem starken Glauben an die Möglichkeit göttlicher Epiphanie ... ist es kein Wunder, daß nicht selten beim Auftreten eines besonders hervorragenden Menschen oder bei sonst einer wunderbaren Handlung oder unerwarteten Erscheinung der dabei auftretende Mensch für einen Gott gehalten wurde, der menschliche Gestalt angenommen habe." Pfister, "Epifanie", 4:312. Both he and Pax briefly discuss the subject and some of its examples. Pfister, "Epifanie", 4:312-314. Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ*, 58-59.

[229] Homer, *Odyssey* 16.183 (LCL 105).

[230] Homer, *Odyssey* 16.187-188 (LCL 105).

[231] Homer, *Odyssey* 16.192-195.

Odysseus did not intend to deceive, but on several occasions people did and were successful. One of the most famous examples is provided by Herodotus. When Peisitratus tried to regain his position as a tyrant, he marched into Athens in a festive manner accompanied by Phye, a tall and beautiful woman whom he passed off as Athena, thereby legitimising his comeback.[232] The fact that Herodotus expresses his surprise at the success of Peisistratus' attempt is perhaps understandable, may even cast doubt on the veracity of this particular story, but does not dismiss the misuse of epiphany in general. Simply too many similar stories are known according to which humans were imagined to be gods.[233] Gods really did appear as humans and hence humans might be gods.

As a last example it is fitting to mention Acts. There are several instances in Acts when people are mistakenly identified as gods. In Acts 28:6 Paul, apparently invulnerable to a viper's bite, is said to be a god by the inhabitants of Malta.[234] Likewise the population of Samaria thinks Simon Magus to be a god.[235] Probably the most discussed example is, however, found in chapter 14:8-20. After Paul and Barnabas heal a crippled man, the population forthwith exclaims "the gods resembling men have come down to us" (οἱ θεοὶ ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις κατέβησαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς).[236] Subsequently they identify Paul with Hermes and Barnabas with Zeus and are about to start worshipping them, when the two terrified apostles try to persuade them to accept that they are mere humans. Their attempts prove to be of no avail, and in the end it takes a group of Jews to convince the crowds of their misconception.[237]

## 4.2 Overview

[232] Herodotus, *Histories* 1.60-61.

[233] Some examples are: Homer, *Iliad* 6.108-109; Homer, *Odyssey* 6.149; Herodotus, *Histories* 7.56; Lucian, *Dialogues of the dead* 391. Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander* 7.6.6.

[234] Interestingly, Paul does not hasten to deny this claim, as is usually done to avoid the appearance of hubris which in turn could provoke the wrath of the gods or God.

[235] Acts 8:9-10. It is obvious that the local population considers him divine, though what exactly is meant by λέγων εἶναὶ τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν and οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη is unclear.

[236] Acts 4:11.

[237] As has been marked before there exist certain similarities between this passage and Ovid's version of the story of Philemon and Baucis. Cf. page 53.

Though many more examples could be given, the discussed passages may be sufficient to illustrate the importance and prevalence of deception in epiphanies. Sometimes this deception has a clear purpose, as when the gods decide to test humans. At other times there is no clear reason for the deception at all, as if deception and disguises were simply the standard way of imagining an epiphany. When intentional, the deception can be mild natured with little to no consequences, but also vengeful and deadly. It can be plain and simple, or perpetrated with every eye for detail.

Especially when purposefully carried out the actions of the gods are explicitly said to be deceptive, as such words as ἐξαπατάω, θέλγω, ἀπατάω, δόλος, and κερδοσύνη express. Various expressions are used as well to denote how the gods look like someone. Most often these are words based on the roots ειδ-, εικ-, ομοι- and δοκ-.

Doubling is sometimes implicitly present in those cases when a divinity assumes the form of an actually existing human being, as when Aphrodite assumes the form of Helen's much beloved nurse, but does not play an explicit role in most stories. In certain cases, however, the actors refer explicitly to this duplicative aspect. Thus, Hector realises that the real Deïphobus all the time remained in Troy, while the one with him was a fake, and Aias tells his namesake that the seer they just spoke to was not the actual seer but one of the gods looking like him.

Importantly, these two aspects of epiphany, deception and doubling, are already encountered numerous times at the very beginning of Greek literature and never disappear. Starting with Homer and continuing uninterruptedly to the time of the first Christian examples of docetism and beyond, they appear as frequent companions of anthropomorphic epiphanies.

## 5 The εἴδωλον-motif

The deception encountered in the epiphanies in the previous chapters is even more pronounced in what is often considered a specific group of myths containing the so-called εἴδωλον- or δόκησις-motif. Additionally these myths feature the element of doubling, so characteristic for docetism, much stronger. In these myths a divinity, or occasionally a hero, is doubled - the double is sometimes called an εἴδωλον or δόκησις, hence the name of the motif[238] - to escape danger. In the following an overview of the scholarly discourse regarding the εἴδωλον-motif will be given before continuing with a detailed analysis of the εἴδωλον-motif in its primary sources.

The first in modern times to connect the εἴδωλον-motif with docetism was Milburn. In a very short article he notes that "a close parallel to the docetic language [of the Acts of John] ... is provided by Ovid when, in his 'versified Roman calendar', he commemorates the murder of Julius Caesar and represents him as snatched away from outrage suffered merely by a phantom-body".[239] Simply citing the relevant passage[240] without much further analysis, Milburn subsequently mentions two antecedents - *Odyssey* 11.601-604 and Euripides' *Helen* 34-35 - before concluding that these stories might form the origin of docetism.[241]

As mentioned in chapter one, Weigandt took over this theory albeit he was more restrained in his conclusions: the εἴδωλον-motif was certainly used by docetists, but it was merely one of many ingredients of docetism's eclectic mix, which in essence was something wholly original.[242] Nevertheless Weigandt did add to Milburn's theory. Firstly, in addition to the passages mentioned by Milburn, he pointed out another containing the same motif, Euripides' *Elektra* 1280-1283, and rightly noted that Euripides was indebted to Stesichorus for applying the εἴδωλον-motif to Helen.[243] Secondly, though Milburn had drawn attention to the similarity between the εἴδωλον-

[238] The terms 'δόκησις-motif' and εἴδωλον-motif are synonyms, for simplicity's sake only the latter will be used here.

[239] Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 68.

[240] Ovid, *Fasti* 3.697-704.

[241] Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 68-69.

[242] Cf. pages 15-16.

[243] Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 33-34.

motif and docetism, he had not truly analysed either of the two. Contrariwise, Weigandt - followed by Bianchi several years later - suggested that the εἴδωλον-motif and docetism were driven by the philosophers' need to keep the divine separated from the mundane. Having been taken up in heaven, it was no longer possible to leave, accordingly any actions on earth had therefore to be carried out by a substitute.[244]

In contrast to this last point, more recent scholars seeing the εἴδωλον-motif as a background for docetism, have at times quite explicitly relinquished the idea of a philosophical dualism underlying docetism. Thus Stroumsa and Goldstein write that docetism initially had nothing to do with philosophical ideas, but were only added at a later stage, whereas Price simply does not mention any philosophical roots of docetism.[245]

Instead Price sees docetism as by definition revisionary. Basing himself on Rene Girard's *Le bouc émmisaire* he suggests that docetism is not a potential element within a narrative, but a "retelling of an earlier story designed to save face for the characters, to safeguard the sensibilities of a later generation of readers".[246] The logic of docetism therefore basically is "it wasn't as bad as it looked".[247] To illustrate his claim he discusses an example also used by Girard: the myth of the birth of Zeus.[248] According to the well-known story Cronos swallowed his first eleven children, but the twelfth, Zeus, Rhea replaced by a stone before giving it to Cronos. To keep the infant hidden, Rhea placed Zeus in a deep cave, and, according to some versions of the myth, the Curetes, loudly beating their armour, danced around him to prevent Cronos from hearing the infant's

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[244] Bianchi, "Docetism", 267-268. Weigandt, "Der Doketismus", 33-34.

[245] Goldstein and Stroumsa argue that "the Platonic elements" of docetism "became apparent only at later stages". Although they do not specify the period of these later stages, it is clear from their argument that one should think of the Christian era - perhaps the second century?- as Christian docetism originally did not include these Platonic elements according to them. Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism", 425. Milburn also doubted a philosophical background: "Christian docetism is by no means the product of Oriental theories about the corruption of matter and the aloofness from it of the Divine". Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 69.

[246] Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 22. Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*.

[247] Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 22.

[248] It has to be mentioned that Price, albeit he does not alter the theory of Girard, introduces the label 'docetism'. Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 22-23.

cries.[249] With Girard, Price considers this myth to be "a piece of docetism, a rewritten version of an earlier myth in which the young god was in fact collectively murdered by those now presented as protecting him from murder."[250] The original story had to be changed because it did not do justice to Zeus dignity.[251]

The problems inherent to this ratiocination should not be overlooked. Most importantly, it is little more than an exercise in speculation. No version of the myth is known wherein Zeus is killed by the Curetes.[252] The entire 'original' myth is fabricated from the presence of a happy ending in the existing one. From this presence is derived the absence of a contrasting negative scenario, which is automatically claimed to be the original. The coarseness of the alleged original is then claimed to have led to its being reworked into the familiar myth. Hence to every story any conceivable 'original' could be fitted, as long as it could be argued to be somehow less acceptable. 'It wasn't as bad as it looked' is therefore not only a pretty vague but also far too speculative understanding of docetism.

Despite these drawbacks Price's theory was taken over by Stroumsa and later by Goldstein and Stroumsa in an adapted version.[253] Goldstein and Stroumsa held on to the idea of docetism as a revisionary mechanism but limited the definition given by Price and relied on slightly different primary sources. Instead of docetism denoting almost any

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[249] For the myth including the Curetes see, for instance, Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*.

[250] Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 23. Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*, 103.

[251] Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 23. Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*, 104.

[252] Girard's inventive solution - adhered to also by Price - is to turn to a completely different myth concerning the birth of Dionysus and claim this to be a reworked version of the original myth concerning the birth of Zeus. Its unconvincingness requires no explanation. Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*, 105-106. Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 23.

[253] The first publication of Stroumsa seeks only to establish a Jewish origin of docetism and will therefore not be discussed in this chapter - cf. chapter two. For his understanding of docetism Stroumsa is, however, indebted to Price, whose extremely broad definition also explains Stroumsa's including of several stories not featuring docetism as docetic. Despite the fact that neither the article of Stroumsa, nor the article of Goldstein and Stroumsa refers to the publication of Price - the second does neither refer to Milburn nor Weigandt - the similarities are clear. Not only do both articles treat the Greek and Jewish backgrounds of docetism, devoting most attention to narrative precursors (rather than, say, a philosophical background) and adhere to a similar revisionary understanding of docetism, they also introduce largely the same primary sources. As far as the current author is aware, Price was the first to mention the stories of Ixion, Iphigeneia and the Akedah as precursors of docetism and all three are also mentioned by Goldstein and Stroumsa. Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism", 423-441. Price, "Amorous Archons in Eden and Corinth", 19-34. Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter", 267-288.

revision rendering a myth more palatable, they suggest it has to be a specific type of revision entailing the doubling of the character whose reputation is at stake. The prior existence of this phenomenon in the form of the εἴδωλον-motif is then shown by means of references to roughly the same selection of sources mentioned by Milburn, Weigandt, Bianchi, and Price.[254]

This last issue, the selection of primary sources used to support the theory linking the εἴδωλον-motif to docetism, represents one of the major shortcomings of the current research. The existence of the εἴδωλον-motif is, namely, far better attested than one might surmise from the secondary literature mentioned above, and in part it is also far more extensively researched. The εἴδωλον-motif, at least in the case of Helen, has anything but avoided the gaze of classicists. In fact, the starting point for anyone academically interested in Euripides' *Helen*, the as yet unsurpassed commentary by Richard Kannicht, provides a thorough fifty-page discussion of the subject including references to similar myths.[255] Somehow, however, the scholars investigating the εἴδωλον-motif in relation to docetism seem to be unaware of the classicists investigating the εἴδωλον-motif per se. Vice versa, among classicists the connection with the Early Christian phenomenon of docetism remains unmentioned. Also, despite the attention for Helen's εἴδωλον, there exists no comprehensive study of the εἴδωλον-motif in general in Greek and Roman literature.

For the following analysis of the εἴδωλον-motif therefore as many as possible of the relevant primary and secondary sources have been gathered. Specific attention will be given to possible similarities to the epiphanies from the previous chapter and, of course, the docetic narratives, especially where it concerns the elements of deception and duplication, but there will also be eye for the fit of the εἴδωλον-motif as found in the primary sources within the theoretical frameworks suggested by the modern authors mentioned above.

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[254] Though Stroumsa and Goldstein do in a few cases offer a more detailed analysis of an example mentioned before by one of the four earlier authors, the only truly new source they add concerns Aeneas' double: Homer, *Iliad* 5.449-552.

[255] Richard Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena* (2 vols.; Heidelberg: Winter, 1969), 1:21-77. Cf. Norman Austin, *Helen of Troy and her Shameless Phantom* (Myth and Poetics; Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994).

## 5.1 The ancient sources

In the previous chapter the aspect of duplication was shown to be present in several of the epiphanies, most noticeably in the case of Deïphobus and Hector, who remarked that his friend appeared to be outside the city walls but was in reality safely inside them.[256] A passage directly preceding that one exhibits an even closer similarity to the duplication and deception typical of the εἴδωλον-motif. When the gates of Troy are opened to allow those fleeing Achilles to enter, Apollo leaves the city and rouses Agenor to fight Achilles.[257] He throws his spear unsuccessfully, but, when Achilles goes after him, Apollo hides Agenor in thick mist (κάλυψε δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἠέρι πολλῇ) and sends him safely off.[258] Then, "resembling Agenor in every way" (Ἀγήνορι πάντα ἐοικὼς) he leads Achilles away from the Trojans by means of deceit (δόλῳ).[259] And again the deceit is mentioned: "for by craft did Apollo deceive him, so that he ever hoped to overtake him in his running" (δόλῳ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔθελγεν Ἀπόλλων,| ὡς αἰεὶ ἔλποιτο κιχήσεσθαι ποσὶν οἷσι).[260] After all the Trojans have entered the city safely, Apollo holds his pace and tells Achilles his pursuit is useless: "Why, son of Peleus, do you pursue me with swift feet, you a mortal, while I am an immortal god? Not even yet have you recognized me that I am a god, but you rage incessantly! ... You will not slay me, since I am not one appointed to die" ("τίπτε με, Πηλέος υἱέ, ποσὶν ταχέεσσι διώκεις, | αὐτὸς θνητὸς ἐὼν θεὸν ἄμβροτον; οὐδέ νύ πώ με | ἔγνως ὡς θεός εἰμι, σὺ δ᾽ ἀσπερχὲς μενεαίνεις. | ... οὐ μέν με κτενέεις, ἐπεὶ οὔ τοι μόρσιμός εἰμι.").[261] Angrily Achilles rebukes him, saying that he has done him harm (ἔβλαψάς μ᾽) by robbing him of his chance to win glory. He would have taken revenge on Apollo, if only he had the power: "Now you have robbed me of great glory, but them you have saved - easily, since you had no fear of vengeance to come. I would certainly avenge myself on you, had I but the power" (νῦν δ᾽ ἐμὲ μὲν μέγα κῦδος ἀφείλεο, τοὺς δὲ σάωσας |

[256] Homer, *Iliad* 22.298-299. Cf. pages 57-58.

[257] Homer, *Iliad* 21.537-549.

[258] Homer, *Iliad* 21.590-598.

[259] Homer, *Iliad* 21.599-600 (LCL 171).

[260] Homer, *Iliad* 21.604-605 (LCL 171).

[261] Homer, *Iliad* 22.1-13 (LCL 171).

ῥηιδίως, ἐπεὶ οὔ τι τίσιν γ᾽ ἔδεισας ὀπίσσω. | ἦ σ᾽ ἂν τισαίμην, εἴ μοι δύναμίς γε παρείη.").[262]

The similarity with the epiphanies treated in the last chapter can hardly be overlooked: similar scenarios of deception and disguise expressed in more or less the same terminology. More pronounced, however, is the inequality between human and divinity inherent to the deception. Apollo runs just a little ahead of Achilles, easily saves the Trojans, and patronisingly tells Achilles to stop this futile chase. Importantly, Achilles, acknowledges this inequality, thereby avoiding becoming a θεόμαχος. At the same time the deception and the doubling so characteristic of the εἴδωλον-motif are present, with the only difference that the copy is the god and the model a human in this case.

### 5.1.1 Caesar's murder

In the standard version of the εἴδωλον-motif the character in danger is the one copied and the copy is an artificial one, as may be illustrated by a closer look at the passage from Ovid's *Fasti* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Ovid writes that the man (virum) Caesar was removed from the scene and that the murderers killed instead his 'simulacrum' or 'umbra'.[263] According to Franz Bömer the passage presents a peculiar mixture of Greek and Roman conceptions. The role of Vesta, rather than Venus - cf. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15.745 - and the rapture of Caesar's body instead of his soul he judges to be Roman elements: "Die Darstellung der Fasti ist 'römischer' gedacht als die der Metamorphosen, nicht nur, weil die göttliche Mutter aus dem Spiel bleibt: Die römische Apotheose setz den körperlichen Entrückung voraus".[264] Yet he also notes that "die Handlung der Vesta ist ein für die alte römische Religion ganz unvorstellbarer Schwindel" and points to the Greek εἴδωλον-motif as an explanation.[265]

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[262] Homer, *Iliad* 22.18-20 (LCL 171).

[263] It is most logical to interpret the plurals as poetic plurals, rather than to assume the existence of multiple wraiths.

[264] Franz Bömer, "Interpretationen zu den Fasti des Ovid", *Gymnasium: Zeitschrift für Kultur der Antike und humanistische Bildung* 64 (1957): 132-133. See also Franz Bömer, "Über die Himmelserscheinung nach dem Tode Caesars", *Bonner Jahrbücher* 152 (1952): 29-30 and Franz Bömer, *Ovid: die Fasten* (2 vols. Heidelberg: Winter, 1957), 192.

[265] Bömer, "Interpretationen zu den Fasti des Ovid", 133.

The corporality of Caesar's 'virum', however, suits the Greek εἴδωλον-motif equally well, as the other examples will show. The descriptions of the double likewise fit the εἴδωλον-motif. 'Simulacrum' is essentially a translation of εἴδωλον: both have the same range of meanings and can denote more specifically the unreal yet indistinguishably veracious doubles so central to the εἴδωλον-motif. Also 'umbra', although its more basic meaning is 'shade' or 'shadow', can mean 'image', 'semblance', or 'imperfect copy'. Interestingly enough the reality of the double is not limited to its visual appearance but extends to every aspect, including the capability to be murdered. As in the case of many of the epiphanies discussed in the former chapter then, Caesar's copy resembles the original 'in every way'.[266]

Another aspect of the passage also recalls the epiphanies from the former chapter. The murderers obviously thought they were killing Caesar, though in reality their knives plunged into a divinely made imposter. This divine deception is Bömer's the 'ganz unvorstellbarer Schwindel' so peculiar to Roman thought, yet so common to Greek epiphany. The murderers, by the way, get their due reward - "they lie low in deserved death" (morte iacent merita)[267] - further increasing the similarity to many of the deceptive epiphanies featuring dire consequences for the deceived.

### 5.1.2 Iphigeneia's sacrifice

Another instance of the εἴδωλον-motif also features the last minute rescue of a divinised mortal from death. As mentioned in chapter two, Stroumsa and Goldstein and price have argued for the Akedah as an example of docetism. Not surprisingly then they also consider the myth concerning Iphigeneia's sacrifice securing the Greek's departure to Troy to be so. In most of the versions of the myth Iphigeneia is, however, simply replaced at the last moment by a substitute - a deer or a heifer often takes her place. The elements of doubling and deception are in those cases lacking: it is clear that the

[266] See, for instance Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.650 where Apollo is 'omnia longaevo similis' or Homer, *Iliad* 21.600 where the same god is Ἀγήνορι πάντα ἐοικὼς or Ovid's elaborate description of Hera's disguise in the myth of Semele, *Metamorphoses* 3.259-309.

[267] Ovid, *Fasti* 3.707 (LCL 253).

substitute is a substitute and not Iphigeneia. An exception seems to be the version preserved in pseudo-Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*:

> Ἰφιμέδην μὲν σφάξαν ἐυκνή[μ]ιδες Ἀχαιοὶ
> βωμῶ[ι ἔπ' Ἀρτέμιδος χρυσηλακ]ά̣τ[ου] κελαδεινῆς,
> ἤματ[ι τῶι ὅτε νηυσὶν ἀνέπλ]εον̣ Ἴλιον ε̣[ἴσω
> ποινὴ[ν τεισόμενοι καλλισ]φύρου Ἀργειώ̣[νη]ς̣,
> εἴδω[λον· αὐτὴν δ' ἐλαφηβό]λος̣ ἰοχέαιρα
> ῥεῖα μάλ' ἐξεσά[ωσε, καὶ ἀμβροσ]ίην [ἐρ]ατ̣ε̣[ινὴν
> στάξε κατὰ κρῆ[θεν, ἵνα οἱ χ]ρ̣ὼ̣ς̣ [ἔ]μ̣πε[δ]ο̣[ς] ε̣[ἴῃ,
> θῆκεν δ' ἀθάνατο[ν καὶ ἀγήρ]αον ἦμα[τα πάντα.
> τὴν δὴ νῦν καλέο[υσιν ἐπὶ χ]θ̣ονὶ φῦλ' ἀν̣[θρώπων
> Ἄρτεμιν εἰνοδί[ην, πρόπολον κλυ]τοῦ ἰ[ο]χ[ε]αίρ[ης.
>
> The well-greaved Achaeans sacrificed Iphimede on the altar of [golden-spindled] noisy [Artemis], on the day [when they were sailing on boats to] Troy, [to wreak] vengeance for the [beautiful-] ankled Argive woman - a phantom: [herself, the deer-shooting] Arrow-shooter had very easily saved, and lovely [ambrosia] she dripped onto her head, [so that her] flesh would be steadfast forever, and she made her immortal [and ageless all her] days. Now the tribes of human beings [on the] earth call her Artemis by the road, [temple-servant of the glorious] arrow-shooter.[268]

The text is ill preserved yet the occurrence of the εἴδωλον-motif is clear. The εἴδωλον of Iphigeneia, here called Iphimede, is sacrificed by the Greeks, while the real Iphimede (αὐτήν) is saved to become 'Artemis by the road', a narrative reminding of the εἴδωλον-motif in Ovid's *Fasti*. As in the case of Agenor, the divinity - here Artemis - is said to have rescued the real person without any effort (ῥεῖα μάλ'), highlighting the inequality between the deceiving divinity and the deceived mortals. Syntactically, however, the εἴδωλον could also be Helen's, which would corroborate a scholion claiming "Hesiod was the first to tell of Helen's εἴδωλον" (πρῶτος Ἡσίοδος περὶ τῆς Ἑλένης τὸ εἴδωλον παρήγαγεν).[269] Considering the rest of the fragment, however, which clearly speaks of Iphimede being rescued and Hesiod's other statements concerning Helen, it is likely that the scholiast simply mistakenly attributed the εἴδωλον to Helen instead of Iphimede.[270]

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[268] Pseudo-Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women* 19.17-26 (LCL 503) = Merkelbach-West (OCT) fr. 23a.17-26.

[269] LCL 503 fr. 298 = Merkelbach-West fr. 358. My translation.

[270] See also Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena*, 1:24-25 and Austin, *Helen of Troy*, 104-110.

Hesiod may therefore not have been the first to introduce Helen's εἴδωλον, but he probably was the first to introduce Iphimede's.

### 5.1.3 Hera and Ixion

A very well attested version of the εἴδωλον-motif concerns Ixion and Hera. In his second Pythian Ode Pindar relates how Ixion "in her much concealing private quarters once had made an attempt on Zeus' spouse" (μεγαλοκευθέεσσιν ἔν ποτε θαλάμοις | Διὸς ἄκοιτιν ἐπειρᾶτο)[271], but was deceived:

> ... ἐπεὶ
> νεφέλᾳ παρελέξατο,
> ψεῦδος γλυκὺ μεθέπων, ἄϊδρις ἀνήρ:
> εἶδος γὰρ ὑπεροχωτάτᾳ πρέπεν οὐρανιᾶν
> θυγατέρι Κρόνου: ἄντε δόλον αὐτῷ θέσαν
> Ζηνὸς παλάμαι, καλὸν πῆμα.
>
> ... because he lay with a cloud, an ignorant man in pursuit of a sweet lie, for it resembled in looks the foremost heavenly goddess, Kronos' daughter. Zeus' wiles set it a snare for him, a beautiful affliction.[272]

It should be noted that, while living with the other gods on the Olympus, Ixion is presented as lesser, almost as if he never had been taken up by Zeus to dwell among the gods. Thus, he is never called a 'god' or 'immortal' but a 'man' (ἀνήρ)[273] or at most a 'hero' (ἥρως)[274]; his behaviour is characterised as hubris (ὕβρις)[275]; and the narrator summarises the moral of the story as "one must always measure everything by one's own station" (χρὴ δὲ κατ᾽ αὐτὸν αἰεὶ παντὸς ὁρᾶν μέτρον)[276]. In this way the inequality between Ixion, presented as a human θεόμαχος, and Hera is hightened.

Accordingly the element of deception has also been laid on with a trowel: the double is called a "cloud" (νεφέλα) and "a sweet lie" (ψεῦδος γλυκύ), which "resembled" (πρέπεν) the appearance (εἶδος) of Hera, and this was all a deceptive scheme (δόλος), a stratagem

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[271] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.33-34 (LCL 56).
[272] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.36-40 (LCL 56).
[273] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.29 and 37.
[274] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.31
[275] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.28.
[276] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.34 (LCL 56).

of Zeus (Ζηνὸς παλάμαι). An interesting detail illustrating the extreme realism of the double is that Pindar continues his story by mentioning the νεφέλα giving birth.[277]

The same myth is told in slightly differing versions by several other authors. A scholion on Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* simply states that Ixion "had fallen in love with Hera, but Zeus made a cloud resembling Hera lie with him" (ἠράσθη τῆς Ἥρας. ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς νεφέλην ὁμοιώσας Ἥρᾳ παρακοιμίζει αὐτῷ).[278] Diodorus Siculus stays rather close to Pindar's version except that he refers to the double both as εἴδωλον and as νεφέλη.[279] Two scholia on Euripides' *Phoenissae* narrate a more elaborate story: when Hera notices that Ixion has fallen in love with her, she tells Zeus. He in turn, wanting to know whether the rumour is true, forms a cloud resembling Hera (ἀπείκασε τῇ Ἥρᾳ νεφέλην and νεφέλην παρεικάζει τῃ Ἥρᾳ respectively), with whom Ixion assuming it to be Hera herself (ἣν ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰξίων νομίσας τὴν Ἥραν εἶναι) lies.[280] A comparable account is provided by a scholion on *Odyssey* 21.303.[281] Another scholion on line 1185 of the *Phoenissae*, however, tells of Hera making the double herself: "but the goddess made a cloud formed after herself lie with him" (ἡ δὲ θεὰ νεφέλην αὐτῷ παρεκοίμισεν εἰς ἑαυτὴν σχηματίζουσα).[282] A fragment of the tragedy *Pirithous* probably contained a description of Ixion's misstep as well.[283] Also, a very similar story is told about Endymion: according to a scholion on Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 4.58 the *Great Ehoiai* told of Endymion being misled (παραλογισθῆναι) by the εἴδωλον of a νεφέλη when in love with Hera.

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[277] Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.42-44. This element is also mentioned by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 12.211); Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 4.12 and 4.69.

[278] Scholia on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 3.62. Rudolf Merkel and Henricus Keil, *Apollonii Argonautica* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1854), 452-453. My translation.

[279] Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 4.69.

[280] Scholion on Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1185. E. Schwartz, *Scholia in Euripidem* (2 vols.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1887), 1:375. Wilhelm Dindorf, *Scholia Graeca in Euripidis Tragoedias* (4 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1863), 3:316-317.

[281] Wilhelm Dindorf, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam* (2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1855) 2:702-703.

[282] Dindorf, *Scholia Graeca in Euripidis Tragoedias*, 3:315

[283] The author of this tragedy is uncertain, both Euripides and Critias have been suggested. For the extant text and authorship issues see LCL 506 pages 629-33 and 650-51. More references to the myth exist, see for instance Plutarch Moralia 777e lines 4-8, but these do not add much to the accounts mentioned above.

Lastly, a comical, yet interesting, account of the myth is told by Lucian.[284] Hera talks to Zeus about the advances of their new guest, Ixion. Zeus proposes to ease the man's unanswered love by fashioning a cloud resembling Hera, so he could "imagine he's got what he longs for" (οἰηθεὶς τετυχηκέναι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας).[285] Outraged Hera replies that she does not need the accompanying mix up of identities, but Zeus convinces her to go along with the plan; after all, the only thing that can happen is that Ixion will be deceived (ἐξαπατηθήσεται), and he promises her to punish Ixion, should he boast about having slept with her. Obviously Lucian's dialogue, being a deliberate and humoristic reworking of the traditional myth, does not give an accurate portrayal of all the aspects of the εἴδωλον-motif, yet it does provide quite some useful information. Despite its joking nature, Lucian's version has preserved the element of deception very well. Not only is Ixion deceived (ἐξαπατάω) thinking (οἴομαι) he has Hera, it is also mentioned twice that others "not knowing he was with a cloud" (οὐκ εἰδότες ὡς νεφέλῃ συνῆν) might also be deceived by the similarity (ἡ ὁμοιότης) between Hera and the cloud because as Hera says: "I will seem to be the cloud" (ἡ νεφέλη εἶναι ἐγὼ δόξω).[286] Hera's double is, moreover, described in familiar terms: it is a νεφέλη or an εἴδωλον ἐκ νεφέλης shaped (πλάσσω) alike to (ὅμοιος) Hera and hence also called a mere image or delusion (πλάσμα).

Despite the number of sources telling of Ixion and Hera none even so much as refers to the existence of a different version in which Hera was raped by Ixion, let alone suggests such a version to be the original myth: "in beider Geschichten [i.e., the myth of Ixion as told by Pindar and the story about Endymion] ist das Eidolonmotiv offenbar ein ursprüngliches Sinnmoment der Erfindung; denn es läßt sich schwer denken, daß gerade Hera in einer verschollenen Vorstufe den Vereinigungen mit Ixion oder Endymion wirklich ausgesetz gewesen wäre, daß also in der Eidolonversion nur eine moralisierende Reinigung dieser Urform der Geschichte vorläge."[287] This of course casts considerable doubt on the view of the εἴδωλον-motif necessarily revisionary character.

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[284] Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods* 9. In addition a scholion on Lucian's dialogue describes the myth.

[285] Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods* 9.5 (LCL 431).

[286] Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods* 9.5 (LCL 431).

[287] Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena*, 1:35-36.

### 5.1.4 Homer's Aeneas and Heracles

The idea that εἴδωλον-motif is not necessarily an indicator of a revision is highly relevant to two passages from Homer which have traditionally been seen as later interpolations precisely because the εἴδωλον-motif was considered revisionary. In the first Odysseus visits the nether world, where he meets Heracles:

> τὸν δὲ μετ᾽ εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακληείην,
> εἴδωλον: αὐτὸς δὲ μετ᾽ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
> τέρπεται ἐν θαλίῃς καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην,
> παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου.
>
> And after him I marked the mighty Heracles—his phantom; for he himself among the immortal gods takes his joy in the feast, and has to wife Hebe, of the fair ankles, daughter of great Zeus and of Hera, of the golden sandals.[288]

The passage is sometimes said to be a later interpolation, the usual reasoning being that there must have existed two stories concerning Heracles - one which told he went to Hades after his death, the other that he became a god - and that this passage tries artfully to hold on to both.[289] Though very well possible, this theory is founded on the idea that the εἴδωλον-motif is necessarily revisionary; if at least the possibility is taken into account that it might be an original part of a narrative, it becomes far less clear whether these lines should be deemed a revision. As a matter of fact, there is evidence suggesting Heracles was considered to be both a deceased hero and an immortal god. He also occupied an exceptional position in the Greek pantheon, being probably the most successfully divinised mortal.[290] Consequentially he was both venerated as a hero and as a god. The most striking thing is, however, that in certain cases he was worshiped as something in between the two or both at the same time.[291] This then could explain the

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[288] Homer, *Odyssey* 11.601-604 (LCL 104).

[289] Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism", 425.

[290] H. A. Shapiro, "'Hêrôs Theos': The Death and Apotheosis of Herakles", *CW* 77 (1983): 7-18, 9.

[291] According to Pausanias the Sicyonians sacrificed to the Heracles in a special manner: "Even at the present day the Sicyonians, after slaying a lamb and burning the thighs upon the altar, eat some of the meat as part of a victim given to a god, while the rest they offer as to a hero" (καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἄρνα οἱ Σικυώνιοι σφάξαντες καὶ τοὺς μηροὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ καύσαντες τὰ μὲν ἐσθίουσιν ὡς ἀπὸ ἱερείου, τὰ δὲ ὡς ἥρωι τῶν κρεῶν ἐναγίζουσι). Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.10.1 (LCL 93). The existence of a special 'in between type' of temple or shrine for Heracles at certain places further supports the hero's ambiguous status. Shapiro, "'Hêrôs Theos'", 9-13.

equally ambiguous depiction of Heracles as being both in Hades and on the Olympus: as a former hero he inhabited the underworld, as a god the Olympus.[292]

The other instance of the εἴδωλον-motif in the works of Homer is found in the *Iliad*:

> αὐτὰρ ὃ εἴδωλον τεῦξ᾽ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
> αὐτῷ τ᾽ Αἰνείᾳ ἴκελον καὶ τεύχεσι τοῖον,
> ἀμφὶ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ εἰδώλῳ Τρῶες καὶ δῖοι Ἀχαιοὶ
> δῄουν ἀλλήλων ἀμφὶ στήθεσσι βοείας
> ἀσπίδας εὐκύκλους λαισήϊά τε πτερόεντα.
>
> But Apollo of the silver bow fashioned a wraith in the likeness of Aeneas himself and in armour like his; and around the wraith the Trojans and noble Achaeans struck the bull's-hide shields about one another's chests, the round shields and fluttering bucklers.[293]

This passage has also traditionally been regarded as a later addition, because "the mention of the 'wraith' is not like Homer".[294] An objection which is true - if one rejects, for instance, Heracles' εἴδωλον and the similarity to Agenor's rescue - but hardly proves anything.[295] Moreover, Aeneas is subject to peculiar and unique rescues in multiple cases and the fifth book of the Iliad abounds with supernatural events.[296] Thus, the passage may strike the reader as peculiar, but this hardly proves or disproves its authenticity. In

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[292] This explanation might also explain why the element of deception, otherwise so strongly present in the εἴδωλον-motif, is here only encountered in sofar as Odysseus seems to be unaware of the duplication and it is the narrator who reveals the existence of two Heracleses: both Heracleses are real.

[293] Homer, *Iliad* 5.449-452 (LCL 170).

[294] It should be noted that Walter Leaf has a tendency to distinguish between certain 'layers' in Homer, as his other reason to doubt the authenticity of this passage shows. In his commentary on 5.446-448 he argues the mentioning of a sanctuary - referred to in this case as νηός and ἀδύτον - to constitute "clear evidence of the intrusion of later ideas into the primitive Epos." Temples are, however, not that much of a rarity in the Homer, as Leaf himself already mentions eight. Walter Leaf, *The Iliad* (2 vols.; 2d ed.; Amsterdam: Adolph M. Hakkert, 1971), 225.

[295] Underlying the objection is, again, the assumption that the occurence of the εἴδωλον-motif must signify a revision of the original text. Geoffrey Stephen Kirk mentions another parallel passage: in *Odyssey* 4.796 Athena sends an εἴδωλον of Iphthime to Penelope. As this εἴδωλον occurs in a dream, it will, however, not be discussed in detail, yet see footnote 302. G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary, volume II: books 5-8* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 107.

[296] He is rescued by Aphrodite (5.311-318) and by Poseidon (20.321-329) in for the *Iliad* uncommon ways. Some of the other supernatural events in book five are listed by Bernard Fenik, who sees book 5 - perhaps on a par with 20 and 21 - as the most supernatural of the entire *Iliad*. Bernard Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad: Studies in the Narrative Techniques of Homeric Battle Description* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968), 39.

any case, authentic or not, the εἴδωλον-motif in the case of Aeneas clearly does not shield Aeneas from any potential disgrace: it does not save him from defeat by Diomedes, it does not save him from being wounded, and neither does it serve to protect Apollo's reputation. One might of course presume Aeneas to have died in the original version, but this is pure speculation: nowhere in Homer - or anywhere else - is there any clue as to him dying fighting around Troy. To explain this passage as a revision of an earlier, more original text is therefore problematic.[297] In language akin to that found in the epiphanies from the former chapter, however, Apollo creates an εἴδωλον alike to Aeneas and his arms and successfully deceives the Greek and Trojan fighters into thinking it is the real Aeneas.

### 5.1.5 Virgil's Aeneas

That the episode revolving around Aeneas was considered in line with the other instances of the εἴδωλον-motif, Vergil, always keen to imitate and emulate Homer, shows by his incorporation of a similar event in his *Aeneid*. To lead her favourite Turnus away from danger, Juno creates a Doppelgänger of Aeneas:

> tum dea nube cava tenuem sine viribus umbram
> in faciem Aeneae (visu mirabile monstrum)
> Dardaniis ornat telis, clipeumque iubasque
> divini adsimulat capitis, dat inania verba,
> dat sine mente sonum gressusque effingit euntis,
> morte obita qualis fama est volitare figuras
> aut quae sopitos deludunt somnia sensus.
> at primas laeta ante acies exsultat imago
> inritatque virum telis et voce lacessit.
>
> Then the goddess from hollow mist fashions a thin, strengthless phantom in the likeness of Aeneas, a monstrous marvel to behold, decks it with Dardan weapons, and counterfeits the shield and plumes on his godlike head, gives it unreal words, gives a voice without thought, and mimics his gait as he moves; like shapes that flit, it is said, after death or like dreams

[297] Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena*, 1:35.

> that mock the slumbering senses. But the phantom stalks exultant in front of the foremost ranks, provokes the foe with weapons, and with cries defies him.[298]

Like Homer's double this one resembles Aeneas and his weapons. Vergil surpasses him, however, in his highly detailed description of the mechanics of the deception, which reminds one of Ovid's detailed account of Juno deceiving Semele.[299] The double is made from the most unreal of materials, 'empty cloud' (nube cava), yielding accordingly the flimsiest of phantoms, described as a 'thin phantom' (tenuem umbram) and later as a 'light form' (levis imago).[300] It is made resembling Aeneas (in faciem Aeneae) and armed with counterfeit weapons resembling those of the real Aeneas. With 'vain' (inania) utterances and mimicked (effictus) gait it deceives Turnus.[301] The image is, furthermore, likened to those phantoms encountered in dreams or in Hades.[302] Tellingly, when Turnus is lured away far enough[303], the fake Aeneas dissolves into the very element it was made from: "soaring aloft it blends with a dark cloud" (sublime volans nubi se immiscuit atrae).[304] The scene is clearly modelled on Aeneas' εἴδωλον in Homer, yet its

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[298] Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.636-644 (LCL 64).

[299] Cf. page 59.

[300] Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.663.

[301] The mentioning of the mimicked gait as a climax of the preceding lines could well be an alusion to the epiphany of Poseidon in the form of Calchas to the two Aiacides who recognise him by the signs of his feet and legs. Homer, *Iliad* 13.71. Cf. pages 50-51.

[302] 'Umbra' just as εἴδωλον can denote the shades of the deceased. For the use of εἴδωλον to denote an image in a dream see, in particular, Homer's *Odyssey* 4.795-841. Here Athena creates an εἴδωλον of Iphthime and sends it to Penelope to stop her from worrying over Odysseus. The entire passage very clearly resembles the epiphanies described in chapter four, despite Penelope being asleep. Athena tries to deceive Penelope by shaping the εἴδωλον alike to a familiar person, Iphthime, Penelope's sister. Penelope nevertheless thinks her visitor to be a god, although she cannot identify her more precisely (4.831). The εἴδωλον, moreover, is not described as a thought, but as an external and physical entity. Firstly, Athena 'makes' (ποιέω) the εἴδωλον before sending it (4.796-97). Secondly, it "entered into the bedroom past the thong on the hook" (ἐς θάλαμον δ' εἰσῆλθε παρὰ κληῖδος ἱμάντα) (4.802). Thus, it was unreal enough to pass through a closed door, yet also physical to the extent it needed an opening. Thirdly, having entered the bedroom it "stood above her head" (στῆ δ' ἄρ' ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς) (4.803), as would any normal human being talking to person lying in bed. Finally, when it leaves, it again passes the closed door and "into the breeze of the winds" (ἐς πνοιὰς ἀνέμων) (4.839), suggesting the εἴδωλον itself was made out of air or wind, which also explains its habit of passing the door through the keyhole. Homer, *Odyssey* (LCL 104).

[303] The luring away of Turnus can perhaps be seen as mirroring the luring away of Achilles by Apollo in the form of Agenor. For a discussion of the latter episode see pages 67-68.

[304] Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.664 (LCL 64).

description of the ephemeral double connects it firmly to the εἴδωλον-motif as known from, for example Ixion. In addition Vergil's description also ties in to some of the epiphanies from the previous chapter.

### 5.1.6 Demeter and Jason

Before continuing to the famous εἴδωλον of Helen, the εἴδωλον-motif treating Jason' attempted violation of Demeter will have to be discussed as it shows the same concern for female chastity. According to Photius, the mythographer Conon had written that Jason was struck by lightning because he wanted to dishonour a spectre (φάσμα) of Demeter.[305] A comparable story is connected to Hellanicus, Idomeneus and Scymnus, who speak, however, of the statue (ἄγαλμα) of Demeter.[306] Usually ἄγαλμα denotes a man-made image, for instance a sculpture, although it is used on one other occasion to refer to the kind of apparitions connected to the εἴδωλον-motif: in Euripides' *Helen* Menelaos speaks of the ἄγαλμα of Helen.[307] In that instance, however, ἄγαλμα is further qualified by the word νεφέλης, underlining the ethereal nature of the double. It comes to mind then to view the ἄγαλμα of Demeter as a rationalised version of what was originally some kind of εἴδωλον.[308] Further support for this view is found in the fact that, at least in the account of Scymnus, Jason no longer commits a sexual offence, but he is said "to have done some impious act concerning the statue of Demeter" (δυσσέβημά τι πρᾶξαι περὶ Δήμητρος ... ἄγαλμα) as if the original crime did no longer seem plausible with a statue as its victim.[309]

### 5.1.7 Helen

The most famous example of the εἴδωλον-motif concerns the εἴδωλον of Helen of Troy. In all likelihood Stesichorus of Himera was the first to mention Helen's εἴδωλον, but

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[305] FGrHist 26 F 1, 21.

[306] Hellanicus and Idomeneus are both mentioned in a scholion on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.916. Merkel and Keil, *Apollonii Argonautica*, 354-355. For the reference to Scymnus see Arthur Bernard Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914-1940), 3:77.

[307] Euripides, *Helen* 705.

[308] See also Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena*, 1:36.

[309] Cook, Zeus, 3:77. The earliest accounts of meeting of Jason and Demeter noticeably do not contain the εἴδωλον-motif. Hesiod, *Theogony* 969-971 and Homer, *Odyssey* 5.125-128. The latter passage does, however, mention Zeus killing Jason with a lightning bolt.

unfortunately only very little of his *Palinode* remains.[310] Nonetheless a large number of sources refers to, mentions, or elaborately treats the subject. The most important of which is surely Euripides' *Helen*. In the absence of the works of Stesichorus, Euripides' tragedy, first performed in 412 BCE, is also one of the oldest sources for Helen's εἴδωλον.

Already before this, however, Euripides had referred to this version of the Trojan war in his *Electra*, where at the end of the play the Dioscuri, the divinised brothers of Helen, say: "... for she [Helen] comes, Who never saw Troy, from Proteus' Halls in Egypt. But Zeus, to stir up strife and slaughter of men, A phantom Helen unto Ilium sent" (Πρωτέως γὰρ ἐκ δόμων | ἥκει λιποῦσ' Αἴγυπτον οὐδ' ἦλθεν Φρύγας: | Ζεὺς δ', ὡς ἔρις γένοιτο καὶ φόνος βροτῶν, | εἴδωλον Ἑλένης ἐξέπεμψ' ἐς Ἴλιον).[311] All the most important characteristics of the εἴδωλον-motif are present in this brief statement: the involvement of the gods, the doubling, and the deception. The last is two-pronged: Paris is deceived as a lover and the Greeks and Trojans are deceived into fighting a ten-year war. The reason for all this also twofold: Helen's chastity has to be protected - hence her stay with Proteus and the affirmation that she never went to Troy (οὐδ' ἦλθεν Φρύγας) - and Zeus' grant plan was "to stir up strife and slaughter of men" (ὡς ἔρις γένοιτο καὶ φόνος βροτῶν).

In Euripides' *Helen*, however, the εἴδωλον-motif is treated in much more detail. Customarily the play starts with an explanation of the status quo for the audience. In this case Helen herself does the briefing:

> Ἥρα δὲ μεμφθεῖσ' οὕνεκ' οὐ νικᾷ θεάς,
> ἐξηνέμωσε τἄμ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ λέχη,
> δίδωσι δ' οὐκ ἔμ', ἀλλ' ὁμοιώσασ' ἐμοὶ
> εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν οὐρανοῦ ξυνθεῖσ' ἄπο,
> Πριάμου τυράννου παιδί: καὶ δοκεῖ μ' ἔχειν —
> κενὴν δόκησιν, οὐκ ἔχων. τὰ δ' αὖ Διὸς
> βουλεύματ' ἄλλα τοῖσδε συμβαίνει κακοῖς:
> πόλεμον γὰρ εἰσήνεγκεν Ἑλλήνων χθονὶ
> καὶ Φρυξὶ δυστήνοισιν, ὡς ὄχλου βροτῶν

[310] The often mentioned scholion stating Hesiod was the first to mention Helen's εἴδωλον is to be dismissed as a credible source of information. A. M. Dale, *Euripides' Helen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 23. Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena*, 1:24-25.

[311] Euripides, *Electra* 1280-83 (LCL 9). Brackets are mine.

πλήθους τε κουφίσειε μητέρα χθόνα
γνωτόν τε θείη τὸν κράτιστον Ἑλλάδος.
Φρυγῶν δ᾽ ἐς ἀλκὴν προυτέθην ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ,
τὸ δ᾽ ὄνομα τοὐμόν, ἄθλον Ἕλλησιν δορός.
λαβὼν δέ μ᾽ Ἑρμῆς ἐν πτυχαῖσιν αἰθέρος
νεφέλῃ καλύψας — οὐ γὰρ ἠμέλησέ μου
Ζεύς — τόνδ᾽ ἐς οἶκον Πρωτέως ἱδρύσατο,
πάντων προκρίνας σωφρονέστατον βροτῶν,
ἀκέραιον ὡς σώσαιμι Μενέλεῳ λέχος.

But Hera, annoyed that she did not defeat the other goddesses, made Alexandros' union with me as vain as the wind: She gave to king Priam's son not me but a breathing image she fashioned from the heavens to resemble me. He imagines - vain imagination - that he has me, though he does not. Joined to these woes were further woes in turn, the plan of Zeus. He brought war upon the Greeks and the poor Trojans to relieve mother earth of the throng and press of humankind and also make plain who was the most valiant man in Greece. And for the fight against the Trojans I was put forward for the Greeks as a prize of war (though it was not me but only my name). So Hermes took me up within the recesses of the sky, hiding me in a cloud (for Zeus had not forgotten me), and put me down at this house of Proteus, whom he judged the most virtuous man on earth, so that I might keep my bed unsullied for Menelaus.[312]

The familiar nebulous aspect of the εἴδωλον-motif occurs manifold in these lines. Hera literally made Paris victory as vain as the wind (ἐξηνέμωσε) as she gave him an ἔμπνουν εἴδωλον, literally an 'inflated image', made from a piece of the sky (οὐρανός). Even the real Helen is hidden in a cloud by Hermes in order to get her to safety - very much like several Homeric warriors, including Agenor, are hidden in clouds.[313] The double and its similarity are also described in typical terms. It is referred to as an εἴδωλον and a κενὴν δόκησιν, a 'vain fancy' or 'empty phantom'. Deception is the result both for Paris, whose marriage is a fraud and who only seems to have her (δοκεῖ μ᾽ ἔχειν ... οὐκ ἔχων), and for the Greeks and Trojans in general, who have suffered countless sorrows for ten years merely for Helen's name (ὄνομα).

[312] Euripides, *Helen* 31-48 (LCL 11).

[313] See, for instance: Homer, *Iliad* 3.380-81, 5.344-46, or 20.443-44.

All these aspects appear time and time again throughout the play. The fake Helen is an 'illusion' (δόκησις)[314], an εἴδωλον[315], a 'substitute' (διάλαγμα), an 'image made of cloud' (νεφέλης ἄγαλμα)[316], simply a 'cloud' (νεφέλης)[317], and a 'copy' (μιμήματος)[318]. When Teucer and Menealaos respectively meet the true Helen, they cannot believe their eyes and confuse her with the copy. As such she also is referred to as an 'appearance' (ὄψις)[319], an 'image' (εἰκώ)[320], a 'phantom' (φάσμα)[321], and a 'nightly servant of Enodia' (νυκτίφαντος πρόπολος Ἐνοδίας)[322]. Most of these designations feature in passages where people cannot believe their eyes seeing Helen, each of them an affirmation of the deceptive aspect of the εἴδωλον-motif.

References to the copy's air-borne nature are also repeated several times after the introduction of the play. Explaining the situation to Menelaos, Helen says his fake bride had been made by the gods from αἰθήρ, 'sky'.[323] The servant of Menelaos reports that his - fake - wife dissolved and vanished into thin air (βέβηκεν ἄλοχος σὴ πρὸς αἰθέρος πτυχὰς | ἀρθεῖσ' ἄφαντος· οὐρανῷ δὲ κρύπτεται)[324] and quotes her as saying 'to my father, to heaven, I leave' (πατέρ' ἐς οὐρανὸν | ἄπειμι)[325]. Later Helen recounts the same story in short to Theoclymenos.[326] Made from the ethereal, the double returns to the ether just as in several other instances of the εἴδωλον-motif.[327]

The similarity between Helen and her copy is expressed in various manners. At the beginning of the play Hera is said to have made alike to (ὁμοιώσασα) Helen her copy.[328]

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[314] Euripides, *Helen* 119 (LCL 11). See also line 121.
[315] Euripides, *Helen* 582, 683, 1136.
[316] Euripides, *Helen* 705, 1219.
[317] Euripides, *Helen* 706, 750.
[318] Euripides, *Helen* 875.
[319] Euripides, *Helen* 71, 557
[320] Euripides, *Helen* 72.
[321] Euripides, *Helen* 569.
[322] Euripides, *Helen* 570.
[323] Euripides, *Helen* 584.
[324] Euripides, *Helen* 605-606.
[325] Euripides, *Helen* 613-14.
[326] Euripides, *Helen* 1219.
[327] Compare Aeneas' double in the *Aeneid* mentioned above and one of the stories regarding Dionysus mentioned below.
[328] Euripides, *Helen* 33.

Later Teucros tells Helen she looks so much like Helen of Troy that, had he not been on foreign soil, he would have killed her instantly.[329] When leaving, he states that, even though she looks like Helen (Ἑλένῃ δ' ὅμοιον σῶμ ἔχουσ'), her character is different.[330] Likewise, when Menelaos first sees Helen, he remarks he has never seen someone more alike to Helen (οὐπώτ' εἶδον προσφερέστερον δέμας).[331] He afterwards repeats this statement (Ἑλένῃ σ' ὁμοίαν δὴ μάλιστ' εἶδον)[332], admits that Helen really looks like herself (τὸ σῶμ' ὅμοιον) and also repeats that utterance (ἔοικας).[333] Yet even though he mentions one more time how she is alike (προσφερής)[334] to Helen, he for a long time cannot believe it.

Menelaos is not the only one deceived. Paris only thought he had her for a wife (δοκεῖ μ' ἔχειν ... οὐκ ἔχων) and so did the other Trojans and the Greeks, "thinking Paris to have Helen, though he did not" (δόκουντες Ἑλένην οὐκ ἔχοντ' ἔχειν Πάριν).[335] All of them were deceived (ἠπαπτημένοι)[336] as Menelaos says, the verb recalling Athena and Hera deceiving Hector and Semele respectively.[337]

Responsible for the deception are the gods: the fake Helen is a 'a divinely sent illusion' (δόκησις ἐκ θεῶν)[338] and a 'god-made spouse' (θεοπόνητα λέχη)[339], the Greeks and Trojans were deceived by the gods (πρὸς θεῶν δ' ἦμεν ἠπαπτημένοι).[340] Hera in particular is responsible. She made the εἴδωλον to get back at Aphrodite for the lost Paris judgement.[341] Thus a third reason is added to the two mentioned already in the

[329] Euripides, *Helen* 74-77.
[330] Euripides, *Helen* 160-161.
[331] Euripides, *Helen* 559.
[332] Euripides, *Helen* 563.
[333] Euripides, *Helen* 577, 579.
[334] Euripides, *Helen* 591.
[335] Eurides, *Helen* 611.
[336] Euripides, *Helen* 704.
[337] Cf. pages 57-60.
[338] Euripides, *Helen* 119 (LCL 11).
[339] Euripides, *Helen* 584.
[340] Euripides, *Helen* 704.
[341] Euripides, *Helen* 31-35, 261, 586, 674-675.

*Electra*. Not only does the doubling occur to safeguard Helen's marriage bed,[342] or because of the plan of Zeus to reduce the world's surplus population, it also was part of Hera's revenge on Aphrodite for having lost the famous beauty contest to her.[343]

Fully in line with the general pattern of the εἴδωλον-motif Helen, as the doubled person, is herself divine or at least semi-divine as well. That Helen was venerated as a deity of some sort, is well known.[344] More importantly, Euripides' *Helen* itself also presents her as such. At the end of the play the Dioscuri, Helen's already apotheosized brothers, predict that Helen at the end of her life will also "be called divine ... and together with us receive gifts from humans" (θεὸς κεκλήσῃ ... ξένιά τ' ἄνθρωπων πάρα | ἕξεις μεθ' ἡμῶν).[345] In that respect this instance of the εἴδωλον-motif looks a lot like the ones of Caesar and Iphigeneia.

As mentioned, multiple other sources also refer to the εἴδωλον-motif as applied to Helen. A number of these, however, merely mentions the existence of the Stesichorean account of Helen of Troy.[346] Of those which do contain an actual description of the εἴδωλον-motif Plato's Republic is the best known: "... as Stesichorus says the wraith of Helen was fought for at Troy through ignorance of the truth" (... ὥσπερ τὸ τῆς Ἑλένης εἴδωλον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Τροίᾳ Στησίχορός φησι γενέσθαι περιμάχητον ἀγνοίᾳ τοῦ. ἀληθοῦς).[347] Helen's copy is called an εἴδωλον and, though Plato is reluctant to present the gods' actions as such, is clearly deceptive. So far Plato confirms what is told by Euripides. In addition to him, however, Plato connects the εἴδωλον-motif to Stesichorus. Aelius Aristides also connects Stesichorus' name to Helen's εἴδωλον in two of his works.[348] Sextus Empiricus, pseudo-Apollodorus, and P.Oxy 2506 all mention Helen's

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[342] A strict reading of the opening scene of the *Helen* in fact suggests that chastity was the reason for her stay with Proteus, more than for her being doubled.

[343] Euripides, *Helen* 610, 708.

[344] Ruth Elisabeth Harder, "Helena", *Brill's New Pauly* online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e506130. Isocrates, *Helen* 10.61-63; Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations* 21.1; and Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 3.19.13.5-3.20.1.1.

[345] Euripides, *Helen* 1667-69 (LCL 11).

[346] Horace, *Epode* 17.42-44; Isocrates, *Helen* 10.64; Lucianus, *Verae Historiae* 2.15.6-7; Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations* 21.1; Pausanias, *description of Greece* 3.19.13.5-20.1.1; Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a-b. Dio Chrysostomos, *Orationes* 2.13; 11.40-41, and 135.

[347] Plato, *Republic* 9.586c (LCL 276).

[348] Aelius Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 13.130-131, and *Pros Platona peri rhetorikes* 45.54.13-14.

εἴδωλον and tell that the real Helen stayed in Egypt with Proteus.[349] In addition pseudo-Apollodorus mentions that the εἴδωλον was made from clouds (ἐκ νεφῶν) and that the entire scheme was Zeus'. There should be no doubt then that the εἴδωλον-motif was widespread and well known throughout Antiquity.

Two scholia on the above mentioned passage from Aelius Aristides' *Panathenaicus* show, however, that the story was not merely mindlessly repeated. According to one scholiast Stesichorus described how Paris had ended up in Egypt with Helen. There Proteus detained Helen and gave Paris a painting of Helen so that he might satisfy his desire by looking at that Helen (ἔλαβε δὲ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐν πίνακι τὸ εἴδωλον αὐτῆς γεγραμμένον, ἵνα ὁρῶν παραμυθοῖτο τὸν αὐτοῦ ἔρωτα). The other scholion also tells of Proteus taking Helen from Paris and connects this with the εἴδωλον-motif found in the fifth book of the Iliad to conclude that Homer actually did know that Helen was only an εἴδωλον.[350] Though the information of both scholia needs to be treated with caution, they give an interesting insight into the later interpretation of Helen's εἴδωλον and its connection to other instances of the εἴδωλον-motif.

### 5.1.8 Dionysus

Aside from the *Electra* and *Helen* Euripides wrote another play featuring the εἴδωλον-motif. The *Bacchae* in fact contains two such passages; both have, however, largely gone unnoticed.[351] In the first of these Teiresias tells a story about the infant Dionysus:

> ἐπεί νιν ἥρπασ᾽ ἐκ πυρὸς κεραυνίου
> Ζεύς, ἐς δ᾽ Ὄλυμπον βρέφος ἀνήγαγεν νέον,
> Ἥρα νιν ἤθελ᾽ ἐκβαλεῖν ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ,
> Ζεὺς δ᾽ ἀντεμηχανήσαθ᾽ οἷα δὴ θεός·
> ῥήξας μέρος τι τοῦ χθόν᾽ ἐγκυκλουμένου
> αἰθέρος, ἔδωκε τόνδ᾽ ὅμηρον ἐκτιθεὶς
> Διόνυσον Ἥρας νεικέων· χρόνῳ δέ νιν
> βροτοὶ ῥαφῆναί φασιν ἐν μηρῷ Διός,

[349] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1.180; pseudo-Apollodorus, *Epitome* 3.5a/b, 30a/b. P.Oxy. 2506 fr. 26 col. 1.

[350] For both scholia see Kannicht, *Euripides' Helena*, 1:32. The first scholion might have been based on a misunderstanding of Euripides, *Helen* 262-63 where Helen wishes she could be washed over like a painting.

[351] See, however, Cook, *Zeus*, 3:79.

ὄνομα μεταστήσαντες, ὅτι θεᾷ θεὸς
Ἥρᾳ ποθ᾽ ὡμήρευσε †συνθέντες† λόγον

When Zeus had snatched him from the lightning-bolt's blaze and had brought him as a young babe to Olympus, Hera wanted to hurl him out of heaven. But Zeus, god that he is, made a scheme to answer Hera's: breaking off a part of the sky that surrounds the earth, he gave her this as a hostage and thereby rescued Dionysus from Hera's contentiousness. As time passed, mortals said that he was sewn up into the thigh of Zeus, altering the word because they failed to understand that as god to goddess he had served as Hera's hostage.[352]

The story is otherwise unattested and the etymology probably spawned by Euripides' ingenuity, but that does not make this instance of the εἴδωλον-motif any less interesting. The form and precise meaning of the essential lines 293-294 are much debated, it has even been suggested some text is missing in between the two lines, but there exist nonetheless almost unanimous agreement on the general flow of the story.[353] To safe Dionysus from Hera's wrath, Zeus replaced the infant with a copy made from αἰθήρ. As in the other instances of the εἴδωλον-motif deception is present: not only is Hera apparently fooled by the fake Dionysus, Zeus is also explicitly said to have 'counter schemed' (ἀντιμηχανάομαι).[354] The material of the double, αἰθήρ, also fits the pattern as it recalls the ethereal materials usually involved in the production of an εἴδωλον.[355] Finally, it should be noted that there is absolutely no chance in this case of the εἴδωλον-motif being revisionary, in fact, it is presented by Euripides as the original version.[356]

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[352] Euripides, *Bacchae* 288-297 (LCL 495).

[353] "Si le sens du passage est clair, le text en est difficile, et l'on a tenté de le corriger de diverses façons". Jeanne Roux, *Euripide. Les bacchantes* (2 vols.; Société d'édition 'des belles lettres': Paris, 1972), 2:347-351, for the quotation 349. See also: E. R. Dodds, *Euripides' Bacchae* (2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 106-108; Richard Seaford, *Euripides' Bacchae* (Warminster: Arris&Phillips, 1996), 176-177.

[354] The cunning aspect of ἀντιμηχανάομαι is clear from its use in other sources where it is often used in military contexts to describe some contrivance to neutralise a scheme of the enemy, c.f. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.3.16-17.

[355] Dodds writes that "ether is not the air, but te stuff of which the sky is made." Dodds, *Euripides' Bacchae*, 107. A quick glance at the LSJ, however, reveals that αἰθήρ has multiple meanings, including such elusive substances as fumes and cloudless or cloudy sky, air and even fire.

[356] Undeniably Euripides changed the original story - Dionysus was born from Zeus' thigh - into one featuring the εἴδωλον-motif, but this does not mean the εἴδωλον-motif fulfils its 'typical' revisionary role. Euripides' reason for changing the traditional story is the introduction of a highly inventive etymology: "Euripide n'a d'autre que de proposer une explication, peut-être inventée par lui et dont il s'enchante, à un

In the other passage from the *Bacchae* Dionysus, who has taken the form a mortal[357], relates to the leader of the chorus how he managed to escape Pentheus:

> ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ
> αὐτὸς ἐξέσωσ᾽ ἐμαυτὸν ῥᾳδίως ἄνευ πόνου.
> ΧΟΡΟΣ
> οὐδέ σου συνῆψε χεῖρας δεσμίοισιν ἐν βρόχοις;
> ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ
> ταῦτα καὶ καθύβρισ᾽ αὐτόν, ὅτι με δεσμεύειν δοκῶν
> οὔτ᾽ ἔθιγεν οὔθ᾽ ἥψαθ᾽ ἡμῶν, ἐλπίσιν δ᾽ ἐβόσκετο.
> πρὸς φάτναις δὲ ταῦρον εὑρών, οὗ καθεῖρξ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἄγων,
> τῷδε περὶ βρόχους ἔβαλλε γόνασι καὶ χηλαῖς ποδῶν,
> θυμὸν ἐκπνέων, ἱδρῶτα σώματος στάζων ἄπο,
> χείλεσιν διδοὺς ὀδόντας· πλησίον δ᾽ ἐγὼ παρὼν
> ἥσυχος θάσσων ἔλευσσον. ἐν δὲ τῷδε τῷ χρόνῳ
> ἀνετίναξ᾽ ἐλθὼν ὁ Βάκχος δῶμα καὶ μητρὸς τάφῳ
> πῦρ ἀνῆψ᾽· ὁ δ᾽ ὡς ἐσεῖδε, δώματ᾽ αἴθεσθαι δοκῶν,
> ᾗσσ᾽ ἐκεῖσε κᾆτ᾽ ἐκεῖσε, δμωσὶν Ἀχελῷον φέρειν
> ἐννέπων, ἅπας δ᾽ ἐν ἔργῳ δοῦλος ἦν, μάτην πονῶν.
> διαμεθεὶς δὲ τόνδε μόχθον, ὡς ἐμοῦ πεφευγότος,
> ἵεται ξίφος κελαινὸν ἁρπάσας δόμων ἔσω.
> κᾆθ᾽ ὁ Βρόμιος, ὡς ἔμοιγε φαίνεται, δόξαν λέγω,
> φάσμ᾽ ἐποίησεν κατ᾽ αὐλήν· ὁ δ᾽ ἐπὶ τοῦθ᾽ ὡρμημένος
> ᾗσσε κἀκέντει φαεννὸν <αἰθέρ᾽>, ὡς σφάζων ἐμέ.
> πρὸς δὲ τοῖσδ᾽ αὐτῷ τάδ᾽ ἄλλα Βάκχιος λυμαίνεται·
> δώματ᾽ ἔρρηξεν χαμᾶζε· συντεθράνωται δ᾽ ἅπαν
> πικροτάτους ἰδόντι δεσμοὺς τοὺς ἐμούς· κόπου δ᾽ ὕπο
> διαμεθεὶς ξίφος παρεῖται· πρὸς θεὸν γὰρ ὢν ἀνὴρ
> ἐς μάχην ἐλθεῖν ἐτόλμησ᾽. ἥσυχος δ᾽ ἐκβὰς ἐγὼ
> δωμάτων ἥκω πρὸς ὑμᾶς, Πενθέως οὐ φροντίσας.
>
> DIONYSUS I rescued myself: it was easy and cost no trouble. CHORUS LEADER But did he not tie your hands together with a noose? DIONYSUS That was just it, the insult I paid him: he

public friand de ses ἐτυμολογίαι ingénieuses ... Simplement, il cède à ce goût du jeu de mots dont nous trouvons d'autre témoignages dans la pièce même". Roux, *Euripide*, 2:348. That Euripides did not try to actually change the traditional myth is clear from his incorporation of that very myth on several occasions in the same tragedy as, for example, in lines 94-98. Also there exists no story in which Hera actually manages to kill Dionysus by hurling him down the Olympus which could have been the original version.

[357] Euripides, *Bacchae* 4 "I have exchanged my divine form for a mortal one" (μορφὴν δ᾽ ἀμείψας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτησίαν) and 53-54 "That is why I have taken on mortal form and changed my appearance to that of a man." (ὧν δ᾽ οὕνεκ᾽ εἶδος θνητὸν ἀλλάξας ἔχω |μορφήν τ᾽ ἐμὴν μετέβαλον εἰς ἀνδρὸς φύσιν) both clearly resemble the language and theme of the deceptive epiphanies discussed in chapter 4. In line 42 Dionysus, moreover, explicitly speaks of his appearance in Thebes as an anthropomorphic epiphany: "appearing to mortals as a god" (φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμον). Further on in the play (cf. 1077-1083) Dionysus abandons his mortal disguise and speaks form the heavens to his maenads in what can only be described as a typical epiphany. Euripides, *Bacchae* (LCL 495).

> thought he was tying me up, but he didn't lay a hand on me, it was an idle hope he fed on. Near the corncrib where he took me to lock me up he found a bull, and it was this animal's legs and hooves that he roped up. He was panting hard, his body was bathed in sweat, and he was chewing his lip. I sat nearby and looked on without a word. While this was going on, Bacchus came and shook the palace and made fire blaze up on his mother's tomb. Pentheus saw this, and thinking that his house was on fire he rushed here and there, ordering his servants to bring water (all his slaves fell to), but it was for nothing. Then thinking that I had escaped he ceased from these efforts, snatched up a dark-gleaming sword, and rushed into the house. And then Bromios, I think—I'm telling you how it seemed to me—caused an apparition in the palace. Pentheus set off in pursuit of this and stabbed at <the air>, thinking he was slaughtering me. And the bacchic god did him other injury beyond this. He razed his house to the ground, the whole thing is shattered: he has seen a bitter end to his imprisoning of me. He has dropped his sword and is exhausted: though a man he dared to fight against a god. As for me, I left the house quietly and came to you, unconcerned about Pentheus.[358]

Two doubles of Dionysus are mentioned in the text. The first is the bull roped up by Pentheus. That it is not simply a bull but to be considered a double of Dionysus is very likely. Dionysus in general has a particularly close connection to bulls and especially in the *Bacchae* the distinction between the symbol and the symbolised, bull and god, is completely blurred. When Pentheus' henchman lead the captive Dionysus before their king, they refer to him alternatively as 'prey' (ἄγρα), 'beast' (θήρ), 'stranger' (ξένος), and 'man' (ἀνήρ).[359] As a double, however, the bull differs from regular pattern in that it was not fashioned for the occasion and surpasses qua physicality the often nebulous εἴδωλα. Yet it has been demonstrated that these doubles, even when they are fashioned from air or something akin to it, can be as physical as anything. The second double fits the stereotypical pattern of the εἴδωλον-motif without any difficulty: it is an apparition

[358] Euripides, *Bacchae* 614-637 (LCL 495).

[359] Euripides, *Bacchae* 434-435, 441, 449. It should be noted that the henchman speaking is not maddened. The scene mirrors the one discussed above in more ways. Whereas Pentheus struggles to bind the legs of the bull, his henchman earlier had no trouble at all to bind the stranger. In fact, Dionysus, laughing, holds out his hands to be tied up. In lines 920-922 Dionysus is again confused with a bull: "and you seem to be going before me as a bull, and horns seem to have sprouted upon your head! Were you an animal before now? Certainly now you have been changed into a bull" (καὶ ταῦρος ἡμῖν πρόσθεν ἡγεῖσθαι δοκεῖς | καὶ σῷ κέρατα κρατὶ προσπεφυκέναι. | ἀλλ᾽ ἦ ποτ᾽ ἦσθα θήρ; τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν). Euripides, *Bacchae* (LCL 495).

(φάσμα) made by Bromios - another name for Dionysus - from air (αἰθήρ), just as Dionysus' double made by Zeus had been.

The fact that Pentheus is being deceived is made particularly clear. Pentheus thought he was tying Dionysus up (με δεσμεύειν δοκῶν); he fed himself with wishful thinking (ἐλπίσιν δ' ἐβόσκετο); he pants, sweats, and chews his lips in concentration, unaware that he is being fooled. When he encounters the second double, he stabs the phantom in vain, as if he is slaughtering Dionysus (ὡς σφάζων ἐμέ). Dionysus not only deceives Pentheus, but the chorus leader as well when he says: "so it appeared to me at least, I tell just how it seemed" (ὡς ἔμοιγε φαίνεται, δόξαν λέγω). Obviously, Dionysus knew exactly what had happened, but in line with his deceptive epiphany as a human, he had to keep pretending to be only a mortal follower of himself.

Striking is the ease with which the deception is pulled off and the concurrent inequality between the mortal Pentheus and the divine Dionysus. Throughout the play Euripides shows Pentheus to be no match for Dionysus, and this aspect is perhaps nowhere as poignantly showcased as here. At the very start of the scene Dionysus states he "easily without trouble" (ῥᾳδίως ἄνευ πόνου) saved himself. When Pentheus "is panting, sweat dripping from his body, biting his lips" (θυμὸν ἐκπνέων, ἱδρῶτα σώματος στάζων ἄπο, χείλεσιν διδοὺς ὀδόντας), Dionysus is "calm, sitting idly, watching" (ἥσυχος θάσσων ἔλευσσον). Whereas Pentheus rushes to and fro ordering his servants about, fetching water, and stabbing apparitions, Dionysus without much ado reduces the palace to rubble. In the end Pentheus gives up and drops his sword "for against a god, though being a man, to battle he dared to go" (πρὸς θεὸν γὰρ ὢν ἀνὴρ | ἐς μάχην ἐλθεῖν ἐτόλμησ'). When Dionysus leaves him, he does not even pay attention to Pentheus anymore (Πενθέως οὐ φροντίσας).

The inequality between the two characters thus stretches to the point where Dionysus can be said to play with or mock Pentheus, just as he had mockingly laughed at the henchmen who tied him up. This laughter and mocking reminds one of the deriding character of the so-called docetic laughter encountered in some accounts of the crucifixion. Another element also calls to mind such descriptions of the crucifixion as described in the Acts of John or the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3). Dionysus sits at a distance looking at the abuse of his double at the hands of Pentheus, just as the real

Christ stands at a distance looking at his own crucifixion. One could go even further and note the similarity between the role of the chorus leader to whom Dionysus reveals what really took place and, for example, John to whom the true Christ reveals what really happens during the crucifixion in the Acts of John.[360]

## 5.2 Overview

A number of things can be concluded from this survey regarding the εἴδωλον-motif itself, its relation to the deceptive epiphanies discussed in chapter four, and the interpretation of the εἴδωλον-motif. To start with, the εἴδωλον-motif is strongly connected to the divine. The doubled persons are never mere mortals. Either they are gods or they are heroes or heroines who are subsequently divinised or have already been so. The sole exception is Aeneas, who has, however, a noteworthily close relationship with the divine both in the Iliad and the Aeneid.[361] The doubles are also always fashioned by a divinity.[362]

The reason for the creation of a double differs from text to text. Demeter and Hera both need to thwart the amorous advances of a human lover. Helen's marriage bed is also a reason for the fabrication of her double, but not the only: Hera seeks revenge for having lost the title 'the most beautiful' and Zeus needs a war. Iphigeneia is in contrast doubled to prevent her being truly sacrificed and because she is divinised as 'Artemis by the road'. The threat of murder and the prospect of divinisation also underlie Caesar's umbra. All three doubles of Dionysus serve to evade the murderous attacks of Hera and Pentheus respectively. In the *Iliad* Aeneas' double is not so much a means to save him, as to keep the Greeks and Trojans unware of his disappearance from the battle field, whereas Vergil uses Aeneas doppelgänger to lure Turnus to safety. Lastly, the εἴδωλον of Heracles might simply reflect his genuinely simultaneous status as a divinity and hero. It is

[360] Contrary to John the chorus leader is told about the true events after, rather than during their taking place. The limitations of the Greek stage with is scarcity of special effects and unchanging scenery, however, rule out the possibility for the chorus leader to hear about the events while they are happening: these events cannot be shown on stage and part of the aim of the conversation between the chorus leader and Dionysus is precisely to overcome this and let the audience know what has occurred.

[361] In addition a cult of Aeneas is attested from the fourth century BCE. Winfried Schmitz et al., "Aeneas", *Brill's New Pauly* online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e110120.

[362] The only exception may be the bull as a double of Dionysus.

difficult therefore to find a single motivation underlying all occurrences of the motif, but if one has to be mentioned, it would that the εἴδωλον-motif is a divine reaction against a severe threat usually coming from a human.[363]

Deception has been demonstrated to be a crucial feature of the εἴδωλον-motif. Often it has the effect of underlining the inequality between the divinity and the human persecutor. The word θεόμαχος has been mentioned several times, initially to state what Achilles was not: he respected, just in time, the unbridgeable difference between himself and Apollo. That is what sets him apart from an Ixion, Pentheus, or Jason, who all tried to do what no human should dare: to fight the gods. Deception is, however, not merely a means to an end, nor is it just an inevitable side effect of the doubling but a primary feature of these stories and in several cases even a motivation for the doubling. Thus, Hera's double needs to protect the goddess' reputation *and* be a punishment for Ixion by deceiving him. Likewise Euripides could easily have made Dionysus evade Pentheus' attacks differently, but chose this way to highlight the difference in power between a god and a θεόμαχος. Vergil's double of Aeneas is perhaps the purest example of the importance of deception for the εἴδωλον-motif as its whole raison d'être is to deceive Turnus.

This deception is also expressed at the word level. Firstly, this done by words actually denoting deceptive action or deceptive schemes such as: ἀντιμηχανάομαι, ἀπατάω, δόλος, ἐξαπατάω, μηχανή, παραλογίζομαι, and the Latin 'effingere'. Secondly, though many words are used to state how the double resembles the original, several words and phrases indicate an extreme similarity between the double and the original, such as παντᾶ ἐοικώς, προσφερέστερος, ὁμοίαν δὴ μάλιστ'. Thirdly, words and phrases denoting the double itself often carry a strong sense of deception. Thus the double is, for example, called ψεῦδος, κενὴ δόκησις, and - most poetically - νυκτίφαντος πρόπολος Ἐνοδίας.[364] Lastly, the often nebulous material of the double can hint at deception as well, as when it is called a 'nube cava', 'tenuem umbram', or εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν οὐρανοῦ.

[363] Aeneas doubling in the *Aeneid* cannot be explained this way and one may wonder whether it is the best explanation for the doubling of Heracles in the *Odyssey*.

[364] Enodia was a different name for Hecate, goddess of sorcery and witchcaft.

Several of these traits the εἴδωλον-motif shares with the deceptive anthropomorphic epiphanies. First and foremost this applies to the element of deception. In one case the gods hide themselves by disguising themselves, in the other by duplicating themselves. That such acts were considered deceptive is often explicitly said in similar or even the same terms. Plato, for example, uses the words ἀπατάω and ἐξαπατάω when criticising the gods' deceptive, shapeshifting appearances, Homer and pseudo-Apollodorus use ἐξαπατάω for the epiphanies deceiving Hector and Semele, and both words appear in the εἴδωλον-narratives as applied to Helen and Hera. Yet within the anthropomorphic epiphanies it can take many forms: it can be malignant, as in the case of Hector and the fake Deïphobus luring him to his death; almost playful, as when Athena speaks to Odysseus and casually remarks after revealing her identity that even he, the most cunning of men and her trustee, did not recognise her; or almost unintentional or irrelevant, as Helen's reaction to Aphrodite shows. In the εἴδωλον-motif, however, the deception is almost always of pivotal importance, malign, and purposely carried out.

The second most characteristic element of the εἴδωλον-motif, the doubling, was likewise already present in some of the epiphanic narratives. When Hector says that he thought Deïphobus was at his side and juxtaposes this to the fact that his friend actually stayed inside the walls, he points out that the gods' appearing in a particular human's shape entails an act of duplication. The same is done when Aias says the real Calchas did not visit him. Apollo's rescue of Agenor exhibits a similar form of doubling. The clouds sometimes used in the epiphany-narratives to hide gods and men, occur in the εἴδωλον-motif as the material from which doubles are made. Both also contain similar phrases stating the similarity between double and original, or god and human. Especially words based on the roots ειδ-, εικ-, ομοι- and δοκ- occur frequently. The main difference is that in the case of the εἴδωλον-motif a third party, the double, is introduced, which necessitates the introduction of an extra set of terms to describe the fashioning of this third party. Hence, words like ποιέω and πλάσσω and their derivatives feature in the εἴδωλον-motif, but not in the epiphanies. In brief, the epiphany-narratives contain many of the same features as the εἴδωλον-motif, but the latter enhances them: the deception is starker, the inequality greater, the doubling more explicit, the similarity expressed in superlatives.

It is possible therefore that the εἴδωλον-motif should be seen in light of these epiphanies. This is not to claim a one-directional, temporal or causal relationship leading from epiphany to the εἴδωλον-motif. Instead I suggest that εἴδωλον-motif might be seen as taking a certain position within a much broader spectrum of epiphanies. Alternatively, one could think of circles encompassing each other: the largest encompassing all sorts of epiphanies, within that one a smaller representing the anthropomorphic epiphanies, and therein a yet smaller one denoting the εἴδωλον-motif. The question 'where does the εἴδωλον-motif come from?' can in my opinion therefore not be adequately answered simply by treating the motif in isolation, but needs to take its larger epiphanic context into consideration.

The existing theories concerning the εἴδωλον-motif have overlooked this context. Instead they explain it as the ancient mythographer's tool for revising stories which he deemed conflicting with his philosophical or other sensibilities. The εἴδωλον-motif is, however, difficult to explain solely as a solution to a platonic philosophical problem, as for instance Weigandt or Bianchi would have it. Aside from question whether the general philosophical distinction between the heavenly and earthly realm sufficiently explains the unique situation encountered in the εἴδωλον-motif, in by far most cases the εἴδωλον-motif is not described in philosophical terms, nor is it interpreted as such. Naturally, this makes a philosophical background at most implausible, but not impossible. Some of the instances of the εἴδωλον-motif, however, are simply too old to have been influenced by any platonic discourse.[365] Contrariwise, the few clearly philosophical interpretations of the εἴδωλον-motif are by comparison quite late.[366] Philosophy, therefore, may be of interest for understanding some of the, especially later, instances of the εἴδωλον-motif, but should not be seen as *the* background of the motif.

The idea of docetism as a revisionary move or mechanism also needs to be treated with caution. If our mythographer felt obliged to remove certain elements from a myth, his most straightforward option was to simply leave out whatever element might be difficult,

[365] The earliest examples are found in the works of Homer, Hesiod and Stesichorus, that is, in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE.

[366] Some examples can be found in the scholia on Homer's *Iliad* 5.449-452 and *Odyssey* 11.601-604. The εἴδωλον-motif then was affected in some cases by the philosophical discourse, but it did not develop therefrom in the first place.

not to come up with artificial doubles onto whom disturbing elements can be projected, while simultaneously casting the original character in a highly dubious light. Put differently, for the εἴδωλον-motif to be a viable option to our revising mythographer, he must have thought it plausible or even logical to ascribe such schemes to the gods, which it could only have been if the gods were already thought to do these, or similar, things more often.

Additionally, for several εἴδωλον-narratives there is no evidence for any earlier version - unless of course we a priori presuppose their existence from the sole fact that the εἴδωλον-motif occurs in the extant versions. Otherwise, there is no version of the myth of Ixion and Hera which has Hera actually being violated by Ixion, let alone evidence suggesting that to be the original myth. Similarly, Hera is never really raped by Endymion; Jason never gets to sleep with the real Demeter; Pentheus never kills the real Dionysus; and Aeneas never really falls around Troy. The innovative application of the εἴδωλον-motif to the infant Dionysus threatened by Hera is, moreover explicitly claimed to be the more original story by Euripides.[367] Clearly, this does not mean the εἴδωλον-motif cannot be used as part of a revised a myth - Helen's εἴδωλον for one demonstrates it can - but it does show that revision is not necessarily the essence of the εἴδωλον-motif.

Lastly, before turning to conclusion of this thesis wherein the εἴδωλον-motif is connected to docetism, it should be pointed out that the motif clearly enjoyed a wide spread. The earliest examples occur already in the Archaic age and later ones can be found in the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, continuing uninterruptedly into the earliest centuries of the common era. Geographically and linguistically by far most sources come from the Greek world, whereas only a few Latin sources can be found. In addition to authors whose texts have been discussed above as witnesses to the εἴδωλον-motif, many more authors must have been familiar with it, as the many brief references to, for instance, Stesichorus make clear.[368] The application of the εἴδωλον-motif to Caesar by Ovid shows, moreover, that the εἴδωλον-motif was not limited to a fixed number of long gone mythical characters: "the application by Ovid of docetic ideas and

[367] Cf. page 85.

[368] Since these references often contain barely any information about the εἴδωλον-motif they have not been discussed above, though it may be safely assumed that their existence indicates familiarity with the εἴδωλον-motif. Cf. footnote 346.

language to Julius Caesar is remarkable in that Caesar is no remote and mythological figure, but the adoptive father of the emperor whom Ovid was trying to placate and an historical character who was living in the recollection of many Roman citizens at the time when the *Fasti* were written".[369]

[369] Milburn, "A Docetic Passage in Ovid's Fasti", 69.

# 6 Docetism and the εἴδωλον-motif

Weigant rightly stated that 'docetism' used as a 'dogmengeschichtlicher Sammelbegriff' lacked much needed specificity. Since that time various definitions have been proposed, some very exclusive, others more inclusive. None of them, however, has gained general approval. As chapter one has shown, docetism was never adequately contextualised in the search for an appropriate definition. Without exception the proposed definitions consider it an intrinsically *Christian* phenomenon, obstructing attempts to understand docetism as part of its broader synchronical and diachronical Graeco-Roman context. In the second halve of the first chapter a closer look was therefore taken at three sources containing important descriptions of docetism - the Acts of John, the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3), and a section from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* - which led to the formulation of a new understanding of docetism more suited for comparison with similar, but not necessarily Christian, sources. This highlighted the characteristic aspects of deception and doubling and lead to the description of docetism as "the deceptive appearance or presence of a divinity involving the doubling of that divinity in such a way that the resulting unreal double is held to be the divinity itself, thereby separating said divinity from some unbecoming or threatening situation."

With this in mind chapters two and three turned to the two most common theories concerning the origins of docetism. Over the years multiple scholars have argued that the background of docetism is to be found in Judaism, referring to, for example, the Akedah, the book of Tobit, and Philo's interpretation of the three visitors of Abraham. The discussion in chapter two of the arguments supporting this theory has revealed significant problems. Most importantly, the Jewish character of many of the adduced sources is contestable - many of them, such as the works of Philo or Josephus are heavily influenced by Greek and Roman traditions - and none of the sources actually contains docetism or its characteristic deceptive doubling.

Others have argued for docetism's origin in platonic Greek philosophy. According to the theory the prevalent distinction between the heavenly and the mundane, the spiritual and the material excluded the possibility of a god truly turning human. Docetism was a way to overcome the conundrum of a human-divine Christ by reducing his humanity to mere appearance. Chapter three, however, has contested whether the general distinction between the world of forms and the material world could have spawned the unique situation of docetism with its deceptive doubling. Yet even if accepting that it could have,

a more pressing question remains: why did docetism come to exist only within the first centuries CE and only within Christianity? The alleged philosophical premisses for the development of docetism according to this theory existed after all already for about half a millennium.

The second halve of this research has therefore focussed on a third lead concerning the origins of docetism. Halfway during the previous century it was first suggested that the εἴδωλον-motif, a phenomenon encountered throughout Greek literature from Homer onwards, could have been the source of docetism. In the following decades this suggestion received little attention and when it did, the εἴδωλον-motif was always considered a revisionary move. Yet, albeit the εἴδωλον-motif can be used to revise a story, this is by no means the case for all its occurrences. Additionally, the background of the εἴδωλον-motif itself had barely been researched.

An alternative understanding of the εἴδωλον-motif was therefore required, were it to be the foundation for a solid theory of the origin of docetism. Hence chapter four looked into the Greek and Roman descriptions of anthropomorphic epiphany. In these epiphany-narratives many of the features of docetism, as described in chapter one, were found, albeit sometimes in an incipient form. Clearly, the gods are involved in these narratives. Deception plays an important and recurring role and can be encountered even when it serves no obvious purpose in the narrative. Lastly, the aspect of doubling is implicitly present in those instances wherein the gods pretend to be an identifiable human and in a small number of cases this is actually explicitly referred to.

An analysis of the εἴδωλον-motif in chapter five has cast doubt on its usual understanding as a means of revising a philosophically or religiously offensive story. Instead, in light of the discussion of the anthropomorphic epiphanies, it was argued that the εἴδωλον-motif might be better seen as a particular kind of epiphany, one which stresses specifically the deceptive and duplicative elements of these epiphanies.

The final step is to link the εἴδωλον-motif and its epiphanic context to docetism. Chapter five already briefly remarked upon the similarity of the docetic account in the Apocalypse of Peter (NCH VII,3) to a passage from Euripides' *Bacchae* featuring the εἴδωλον-motif. The similarities between docetism and the εἴδωλον-motif go, however, much further than that. Most of the points highlighted in the conclusion of chapter five apply equally well to docetism.

Docetism's characteristic doubling, which proved so hard to explain for, especially, the theory suggesting a Jewish background, is inherent to the εἴδωλον-motif. The docetic doubling can take different forms. In the Acts of John the real Christ is in a cave with John and simultaneously another, less real Christ-figure is crucified. According to the account in Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* Christ did not double himself, but made Simon of Cyrene his look alike, while changing himself into Simon. The Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3) speaks of a number of complicatedly related Christ-figures, which, however, are all clearly opposed to another Christ, who is the only one to be really crucified and is called a 'substitute'. In comparison the central feature of the εἴδωλον-motif is its deceptive doubling of a divinity or hero.

The aim of the docetic doubling is clearly to separate Christ from the crucifixion because it was thought to violate his divine status: a god is not crucified. Similarly the divinities to whom the εἴδωλον-motif is applied, are often doubled or double themselves in order to escape death, murder, rape, and adultery, every one of which constitutes a comparably severe threat to their divine dignity.

In addition the doubling serves both in the εἴδωλον-motif and in docetism to stress the difference in power between the god under attack and his or her assailants. The mocking laughter of the docetic Christ and the remarks about the ease with which a Dionysus, Apollo, or Artemis overcomes his or her foes lie at the very core of docetism and the εἴδωλον-motif. Deception is used time and time again to drive home the futility of the θεομάχοι's attempts.

The spread of the εἴδωλον-motif, moreover, makes its influence on docetism plausible. The εἴδωλον-motif can be encountered from a very early period onwards right up to the first centuries CE. The application of the εἴδωλον-motif to Caesar, roughly around the same time docetic understandings of Christ's crucifixion first arose, demonstrates its capability to be applied to new subjects in addition to its more traditional ones. Also, a large number of sources and authors, including some early Christian ones, was aware of its existence, as their references reveal.[370]

As these points show, it is plausible that docetism was in fact no more than the appropriation of the εἴδωλον-motif by early Christians and its application by them to Christ. As such, docetism could be seen as a more specific form of the εἴδωλον-motif,

[370] Irenaeus, for example, mentions Stesichorus' *Palinode* (*Adversus Haereses* 1.23.2).

just as the εἴδωλον-motif could be seen in light of the anthropomorphic epiphanies, which in turn form only a part of overarching concept of epiphany.

That docetism is indebted not only to the εἴδωλον-motif, but also to the more general epiphanic discourse can be seen from the docetic account in the *Adversus Haereses*. There Christ's assuming the form of Simon is very alike to the impersonations of the Greek and Roman gods, be it that Christ also continues to make Simon his double. Even clearer perhaps is its influence on the Acts of John. Strictly speaking, only a small part of the Acts of John consist of a docetic narrative.[371] Scholars have, however, pointed to polymorphism as a leitmotiv in the Acts of John and its importance for its docetism.[372] These polymorphic descriptions of Christ remarkably resemble some of the anthropomorphic epiphanies. Preceding the docetic chapters, for example, John states twice that Christ appeared to be huge, his head reaching the heavens (τὸ πᾶν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀποβλέπων and τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐρειδομένην) and his feet emitting light.[373] He was not at all human (ἄνθρωπον δὲ οὐδὲ ὅλως).[374] At this sight of the divine Christ John is struck with fright and he cries out.[375] Right before and after this, however, Christ looks like a small and ugly man (μικρὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐφαίνετο δύσμορφος).[376] This description of Christ is very comparable to one of the textbook examples of epiphany from Greek literature. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Demeter sits at along the road having 'degraded' or 'disguised' (εἶδος ἀμαλδύνουσα) herself to look like an old crone (γρηῒ παλαιγενέϊ ἐναλίγκιος).[377] When she is brought to the palace of Celeus and Metaneira and she steps through the doorpost, she suddenly fills the doorway with divine light and her head reaches to the roof of the palace.[378] Metaneira's reaction is typical: she is gripped by reverence, awe, and fear (τὴν δ' αἰδώς τε σέβας τε ἰδὲ χλωρὸν δέος εἶλεν).[379] Afterwards Demeter again assumes the form of an old woman. The divine radiance, the huge size, the metamorphosis from a lowly figure into one

[371] Cf. footnote 68.

[372] Cf. footnote 68.

[373] Acts of John 89.9-10 and 90.10-15.

[374] Acts of John 90.10-11.

[375] Acts of John 90.13-14.

[376] Acts of John 89.9 and 90.14.

[377] Homeric Hymn to Demeter 2.94 and 101.

[378] Homeric Hymn to Demeter 2.188-189. The word for roof (μέλαθρον) is sometimes even used to decribe the vaults of the heavens: Euripides, *Hecuba* 1101.

[379] Homeric Hymn to Demeter 2.190.

clearly divine and back again, the frightful reaction, they all appear in both narratives and even in partially similar formulations.

The advantages of the here developed theory suggesting the εἴδωλον-motif as the explanation for the origin of docetism over the existing theories arguing for its roots in Judaism or philosophy lie in its ability to contextualise docetism. Contextualisation can, however, always be taken further. Hence a few points require additional research. Firstly, the relation between docetism, the εἴδωλον-motif, and epiphany to philosophy could be elaborated. It has been argued that the theory locating docetism's origin in Greek philosophy as it stands does not suffice. Nevertheless, that docetism was influenced to some extent by philosophical thought is undeniable. Some of the later interpretations of the εἴδωλον-motif and concepts of epiphany were, moreover, also influenced by the philosophical discourse.[380] Further research should, therefore, try to shed light on both the philosophical influences on the εἴδωλον-motif and docetism and the relation between the two.

The role of epiphany also deserves additional attention. In this research the choice was made only to focus on anthropomorphic epiphanies with waking recipients. As a story like that of the visit of Iphtime's εἴδωλον to Penelope shows, however, it would be very fruitful to broaden this selection to also incorporate epiphanies in dreams.[381] The same may be true for theriomorphic epiphanies.[382] Further research might therefore broaden the understanding of the concept of epiphany underlying the εἴδωλον-motif and docetism.

Most importantly perhaps, the developed understanding would have to brought to bear on the interpretation of the various passages in early Christian literature which have been connected to docetism. More specifically this would entail interpreting these passages not only as part of a Christian debate over the status of Christ, but also as part of a larger Graeco-Roman context concerning the εἴδωλον-motif and the concept of epiphany. Obviously, this would also have implications for the understanding of the strictly

[380] It might well be that part of the philosophical tendencies of later docetic texts run paralel to the increasingly philosophical interpretations of the εἴδωλον-motif. Also, the fact that the doubles in the εἴδωλον-motif are made of such intangible and fleeting substances, might have facilitated their interpretation as pneumatic, or psychich entities.

[381] Cf. footnote 302.

[382] The abduction of Europa by Zeus was shortly referred to. Cf. footnote 204.

Christian debate concerning docetism and incarnation. The relation between these two has usually been considered one of irreconcilable opposition, but it could prove more fruitful to view docetism and incarnation as two extreme positions in a much broader epiphanic spectrum. In the middle of this spectrum one can find the averagely deceptive anthropomorphic epiphany, a divinity pretending to be human. The far ends of the spectrum are occupied by the what-you-see-is-what-you-get incarnation - a divinity truly turned human - and the complete fallacy of docetism, mere deception.

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[383] LCL volumes have not been listed here, as they can be found in the section titled 'Abbreviations'.

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