

FILIP DE DECKER

Marie Skłodowska-Curie European Fellowship holder

Università di Verona

filipdedecker9@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-2863-5801

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OPTATIVE AND THE “MODAL” INDICATIVE IN HOMERIC GREEK: FOUR CASE STUDIES – PART 1: THE OPTATIVE

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Abstract

In epic Greek both the optative and the indicative (the so-called “modal indicative”) can be used in contexts where the degree of realization is uncertain or even impossible, while in Attic Greek only the indicative is used. In these two articles I discuss whether there is a difference between the optative and the modal indicative in these contexts and/or if it can be determined which was the original mood. As there are about 1500 optatives and 250 modal indicatives in Homer, it is not possible to discuss them all and, therefore, I focus on the passages in which aorist forms of γινώσκω, βάλλω and ἴδω appear, and those conditional constructions in the *Odyssey* in which the postposed conditional clause is introduced by εἰ μή with either a “modal” indicative or optative. The corpus comprises 100 forms (80 optatives and 20 indicatives), but in each example I also address the other modal indicatives and optatives in the passages, which adds another 50 forms to the corpus. In this part (part 1) I address the optative. First, I provide an overview of the research on the optative in Homeric Greek, discuss the different suggestions for the co-existence of the optative and indicative in these uncertain and/or unreal contexts, explanations which can be summarized into two categories, those assuming that the indicative replaced the optative and those arguing that both moods were original, but had different meanings. Then I explain why this corpus was chosen, prior to the analysis that focuses on two elements, namely the temporal reference (does the mood refer to the past or not) and the degree of possibility (is the action described likely, possible, remotely possible or unlikely/impossible). Initially I consider the optatives with a past reference, then the optatives that could be interpreted as remotely possible or

unlikely/impossible (“irrealis” in the terminology of Classical Philology) and conclude by discussing two passages that have been reused in the epics in different contexts with different protagonists and, consequently, with different modal meanings for the same forms. The conclusion of the first part of the article is that the optative was at the most unreal extreme of the irrealis-continuum and could initially refer to the present and future, as well as the past, but that the instances in which there was an exclusive past reference were (very) rare.¹

1. Previous scholarship on the Homeric moods: The optative and the *irrealis-continuum*

The literature on the moods in Homer is extensive,² and in general there seems to be agreement that the subjunctive conveys “will” and “expectation”, with the optative “wish” and “possibility” (in Delbrück’s words “Wille”, “Erwartung”, “Wunsch” and “Möglichkeit”). However, many scholars differ in their analyses of the “Grundbedeutungen” and the origins of the moods: which meaning of the subjunctive and optative was the original can probably never be answered with certainty and it is even possible that both meanings were original.³ One of the

¹ This research was conducted at the Università degli Studi di Verona as part of the project *Particles in Greek and Hittite as Expression of Mood and Modality* (PaGHEMMo), which received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant Agreement Number 101018097. The article has greatly benefitted from the feedback from Paola Cotticelli-Kurras, Federico Giusfredi, Alfredo Rizza, Valerio Pisaniello, Stella Merlin-Defanti, Francesca Cotugno, Jelena Živojinović and Elena Martínez Rodríguez (Università degli Studi di Verona), as well as from the observations given by the audience of the *Linguistisches Kolloquium* at the Ludwig Maximilians Universität München. Finally, I would also like to thank the journal’s reviewers and the secretaries, Barbara Podolak and Anna Tereszkiewicz, for their detailed comments, their helpful remarks and useful suggestions for improvement. It goes without saying that all shortcomings, inconsistencies and errors are mine and mine alone.

² I cite (although the list is not exhaustive) von Bäumlein (1846), Novotný (1857), Aken (1861, 1865), Delbrück (1871, 1879, 1902), Lange (1872, 1873), Weber (1884), Masius (1885), Chitil (1899), Hammerschmidt (1892), Vandaele (1897), Lattmann (1903), Mein (1903), Mutzbauer (1903a, 1903b, 1908), Methner (1908), Walter (1923), Gonda (1956), Brunel (1980), and Willmott (2007, 2008), in addition to the discussions in the grammars of Buttman (1810: 494–514), von Thiersch (1826: 519–538, 607–699), Krüger (1859: 96–110, 130–135, 137–150), Vogrinz (1889: 266–277, 341–383), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 217–289), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 301–338, with a bibliography until 1950), Chantraine (1953: 205–364), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 237–343, 389–415).

³ This discussion is generally believed to date back to Delbrück (1871: 14 and *passim* where it was argued that ‘will’ was the original meaning of the subjunctive and ‘wish’ that of the optative and that the other meanings originated from the two “Grundbedeutungen”, see also 1897: 365–373, 1902: 326–336) and Mutzbauer (1903a: the subjunctive as an original expectation, 1903b: the optative as an original wish, 1908, as well as Walter 1923). Brugmann (1904: 579) considered the original meaning of the subjunctive to be voluntative, but thought that the optative had always possessed the meaning of wish and possibility (1904: 583, 1925: 197). See also the discussions in the traditional Homeric grammars, such as Monro (1891: 287–293)

constructions where the optative seems to have maintained its notion of wish in the conditional clauses and the indirect questions introduced by $\epsilon\iota$: they are believed to continue the old wish clauses, “if only”,⁴ but this theory (although accepted by most scholars), has failed to gain universal agreement,⁵ and only a detailed study per mood and per epic work could resolve the problem. While there is no clear agreement about the origins of the moods, the traditional description of a continuum [as suggested by Vogrinz (1889: 267–274), although without using the term “continuum”], with the indicative being the most “realistic”, the subjunctive referring to the “expected” and the optative to the least certain, best explains the data (in this scenario the optative described something that the speaker considered possible, but which could or could not be realized, and neither the speaker nor the hearer had any certainty about this).⁶ In this “Vogrinz-irrealis-continuum”, the optative expressed both a wish and a possibility across the entire range of nuances (likely, possible, unlikely).⁷ There is also another (more “famous”) continuum

and Chantraine (1953: 206–212), who argued that the subjunctive had initially two meanings, but that the wish was the original meaning of the optative (1953: 212–213, thus agreeing with Mutzbauer 1903b).

⁴ Delbrück (1871: 238–240), Lange (1872: 356, 386, 401–402 passim and 1873), Monro (1891: 285–291), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 680–688), and Chantraine (1953: 274–279). Traditionally, Lange (1872, 1873) is considered to be the first to state that the conditional clauses were original wishes, but this had already been observed at least as early as von Thiersch (1826: 603–604, 628). Delbrück (1871: 72–74) questioned this explanation, noting that it was possible, but that he preferred not to make a judgement on it.

In addition, I also refer to the analyses of $\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\iota\mu\iota$ in *Iliad* 16,623 by Delbrück (1871: 240), Lange (1872: 356), Ameis and Hentze (1881: 57), Leaf (1888: 265) and of $\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota\epsilon$ in *Iliad* 24,74 by von Thiersch (1826: 603–604, 628), Krüger (1859: 98), Delbrück (1871: 196), La Roche (1871: 102), Lange (1872: 326), Ameis and Hentze (1888: 102), Leaf (1888: 441), Monro (1891: 285), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 320–324), Chantraine (1953: 216), and Brügger (2017: 49).

⁵ Tabachovitz (1951), followed by Hettrich (1992: 265–266), vehemently disagreed with this theory and argued that the conditional clauses had always been subordinated and were never independent paratactic wish clauses (see Delbrück’s stance).

⁶ For Homer and Greek in general, see von Thiersch (1826: 520–522), Rost (1826: 451–461 for the main clauses, 463–487 for the subordinate clauses), Matthiae (1827: 974–991 for the main clauses, 992–1031 for the subordinate clauses), Bernhardt (1829: 384–414), Hartung (1833: 233–331 about the optative and indicative), Kühner (1835: 100–111), Krüger (1859: 96–110, specifically for Homer), Goodwin (1865: 65–146, 1900: 280–282), Delbrück (1871 *passim*, but only on the subjunctive and optative), Vogrinz (1889: 266–278, specifically for Homer), Monro (1891: 251–298, specifically for Homer), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 200–260, 1904: 347–558), Gildersleeve (1900: 168–190), Brugmann (1900: 498–514, 551–579), Stahl (1907: 220–596), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 301–354 and 619–689), Chantraine (1953: 204–299), Smyth and Messing (1956: 491–527), Humbert (1960: 110–132, 182–246), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 237–268, specifically for Homer).

For Attic specifically, see – in addition to the works already quoted above – Buttman (1810: 500), Madvig (1847: 120–154), Bizos (1961), Delaunoy (1988: 76–134), Rijksbaron (2002: 39–94) and Van Emde Boas et al. (2019: 438–550).

For the Greek optative being irrealis see Cristofaro (2012: 132–133, 142–143).

⁷ That the optative simply conveyed something that could occur / has occurred, without indicating that this actually would happen, was noted at an early stage (and it was not limited to Homer) by Buttman (1810: 499 using the term “Ungewissheit ohne alle Nebenidee”,

in which the modal indicative is placed at the most unreal end of the spectrum. This is often called the “Greenberg-irrealis-continuum”,⁸ in spite of the fact that this division had already been suggested previously: von Naegelsbach (1834: 49, 98–99, 236–241, especially p. 238), Kühner (1835: 90) and Aken (1865: 21) noted that the past indicative was the most suited to indicate non-occurrence and/or impossibility, because it referred to a context that could no longer be changed, and Aken (1865: 21) as well as Seiler (1971, especially page 87) classified the moods in the order indicative – subjunctive – optative – past indicative (we should, therefore, refer to it as the “Aken-Seiler-Greenberg-irrealis-continuum” instead of simply the “Greenberg-irrealis-continuum”, but sadly this is viewed as being too long and impractical).

Recently, Tichy (2006: 304–305) described the moods as follows: the realis indicated what was foreseen as happening and what had timeless truth, the subjunctive was used for what was expected, and the optative for what was possible, probable or desirable, whereas a negated realis is something that is not foreseen nor has it happened, a negated subjunctive is something that is not expected and a negated optative is something that is improbable or it is desirable that it does not happen. Similarly, Fritz (2010: 393) described the subjunctive as having a future meaning,

yet without discussing the Homeric data in detail, 1819: 324–325, “Ungewissheit ohne solche Nebengedanken”), von Thiersch (1826: 520 “Der Optativ bezeichnet das Gedachte, ein reines Beschäftigen mit der Vorstellung, die sich jedoch auf vielfache Weise mit der Wirklichkeit in Verbindung setzt”), Bernhardt (1829: 404 who described it as “reine Möglichkeit”), Rost (1826: 467 “wobei jede Rücksicht auf die Wirklichkeit gänzlich aus dem Auge gelassen wird”), Matthiae (1827: 974–977, 1014–1015), Hartung (1833: 252 “ohne alle Rücksicht auf Wirklichkeit rein in der Vorstellung”), von Naegelsbach (1834: 236–237 “eine Annahme, die ihr Bestehen nur in der Vorstellung hat”), Kühner (1834: 80–81, 1835: 100–111 “die Vorstellung ohne alle Rücksicht auf Entscheidung und Realisierung”, 1870: 191, 193), von Bäumllein (1846: 246–252 for the wish, 254–255 discussing the “Optativ des rein Gedachten”), Madvig (1847: 120–121 “ganz unbestimmte Möglichkeit”, 133–154), Krüger (1859: 100, 103–104, 138 for Homer specifically), Düntzer (1864: 132), Ameis and Hentze (1871: 72), Delbrück (1871: 28–29, 1897: 371), Gerth (1878), Vogrinz (1887: 267–274), Monro (1891: 273–274, 293–295), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 226–228, 230–232), Brugmann (1900: 505–506, 512–514), Mutzbauer (1902, 1903b), Van Pottelbergh (1939: 8), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 324, 328–329, 344–345), Chantraine (1953: 218), Smyth and Messing (1956: 520), Brunel (1980: 240), Strunk (1997: 148), Hettrich (1998), Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 247, 252–254), and De Decker (2015: 221–240, 2021: 138–170).

Willmott (2008) also discussed the Homeric optative, but did not specifically address the counterfactuality and the remote possibility of the optative (for her standpoint on the optative as a “negative epistemic stance”, which is in agreement with this article, see below).

Bornemann, Risch (1973: 293) argued that if the speaker used the optative, then the irrealis-event was considered theoretically possible in the mind of the speaker, but in such instances it is better to concur with Rijksbaron (2002: 73) who suggested that sometimes in Attic the conditional in the optative was so far removed from reality that it became in fact almost a counterfactual.

Surprisingly, Monro (1891: 275) claimed that there was no difference between the Homeric optative in the main clause and that in later Greek (this had also been proposed by Wilhelmi 1881), but he nevertheless noted that the indicative intruded into the field of the other moods (Monro 1891: 293–296).

⁸ Greenberg (1986: 247–248), but he only discussed Classical Greek and treated neither Homeric nor non-Attic Greek.

with two uses, future / prospective and will / voluntative, and considered the optative to be potential, with two uses, namely wish / cupitive and possibility / potential (ibid.: 394–395).

With the exception of Anatolian, many old Indo-European languages, besides Greek, have counterfactual and/or remote possibility-constructions that contain the Indo-European optative or forms that continue old optative forms.⁹ Following earlier scholars who noted that all these languages use different constructions,¹⁰ Hettrich (1988: 365, 1992, 1998) concluded that the PIE verbal system used the optative for both present and past potential without distinguishing between past potential and present counterfactual and without having a past counterfactual. He suggested the term “Fiktiv” (although he failed to note the term “modus fictivus” had already been used in Lattmann 1903), a term that would refer to a mood describing something unreal without indicating the exact degree of “un-reality”.¹¹ This would in fact only differ marginally from the optative in the “Vogrinz-irrealis-continuum” discussed above.

An entirely different conclusion was reached by Hahn (1953) who argued that both the subjunctive and the optative were originated as future forms. Along similar lines, Willmott (2007: 53–111, especially page 111) claimed that the subjunctive was a future form and that the optative conveyed a “negative epistemic stance” (Willmott 2007: 113–152), and Fritz (2010: 395) posited that there was an “inhaltliche Nähe” between a subjunctive and optative. I would like to make two observations about these suggestions. First, the analysis resulting in the proposal of a “future-origin” poses certain problems, because if correct, it would mean that PIE had three different methods in which to form the future, namely the subjunctive, the optative and also the desiderative suffix **(h₁)s-*. While this is not impossible, it seems nevertheless rather uneconomical. A reviewer of this journal highlighted that, while it would indeed be uneconomical to have three future formations, it might be preferable to omit the desiderative form, instead interpreting it as a genuine desiderative form that had not yet become a simple future form and, thus, simply focus on the two moods. Even if the desiderative form is not included in the discussion, the problem remains that the future formations of Latin and Greek can be traced back only to

⁹ For an overview of the scholarship and a detailed discussion, see the references in Hettrich (1998) and also De Decker (2015: 222–223, 2021: 138–170).

¹⁰ Delbrück (1871: 28–29, 1897: 371, 401), Brugmann (1916: 861–863, 1925: 215), Greenberg (1986: 248), Hettrich (1988: 365, 1992, 1998), Strunk (1997: 148), Tichy (2002: 194, 2009: 98), and Mumm (2011: §2.3).

¹¹ Hettrich (1988: 365), adopted by Tichy (2002: 194) and Mumm (2011: §2.3). Cristofaro (2012: 132–133 and 142–143, see above) applied the term *irrealis* to the Greek optative (both in Homeric and Classical Greek), but did not distinguish between present potential, past potential and optativus obliquus. Delbrück (1871: 28–29) had previously shown that the optative could be used for each nuance of (un)likelihood.

I refer to the editors’ note before Harris 1986: “however, the boundary between potential and unreal conditionals is less clear-cut than between real and either of them, and the time parameter is less clear-cut in potential and unreal conditions than in real conditions” (the underlining is mine).

the subjunctive (such as the Latin *aget* ‘s/he will carry’ and the Greek ἄγγ(σι) from **h₂eǵ-e-e-ti*) and those instances of the Greek optative with a future and/or imperative meaning seem to be secondary and, in addition, can also be explained through the irrealis-continuum. I would, therefore, prefer to adhere to the traditional explanation that only the subjunctive in PIE had a future meaning and not the optative. Second, the interpretation of the optative as a “negative epistemic stance” might seem radically different from what had been argued before, but in spite of what Willmott herself argued, there is not so much difference between her analysis of the optative and that of the more traditional or earlier scholars, such as Delbrück, Kühner, Gerth, Schwyzer, Debrunner or Chantraine. In fact it is possible to label the optative as having an “uncertain epistemic stance” and in that sense it would not be different from Lattmann’s “modus fictivus” nor from Hettrich’s “Fiktiv”. I will, therefore, consider the optative the mood of (remote) possibility and wish.¹²

The continuum mentioned above also provides an explanation for two somewhat more unexpected uses of the optative, namely (first) that there are several examples where the optative (mostly with a modal particle) is used besides a future form and seems to be synonymous with it (although several scholars still note a modal difference),¹³ and (second) that the optative (mostly with a modal particle) could be used as a quasi-synonym for an imperative.¹⁴ These two uses only pose an apparent problem, as they could be interpreted as an extension of the aspect “likely (to occur)” described above.

Two specific uses of the Greek optative can be included in and explained by this framework as well. In Classical Greek the rule is that a subjunctive (and sometimes an indicative as well) in a subordinate clause can be substituted by an optative (which is called an “optativus obliquus”) when the verb in the main clause, or in the clause of which the subjunctive (or indicative) depends, is in the past.¹⁵ While this rule was not absolute in Classical Greek and the reasons for this substitution are

¹² I refer for more details to De Decker (2015: 205–210 and 221–240).

¹³ Buttman (1810: 500, 503), Rost (1826: 453–454), von Thiersch (1826: 641), Kühner (1835: 110, 1870: 199–200), and Kühner and Gerth (1898: 233, 235) considered the forms to be near-synonyms, but still noted a difference in the modal nature, while Aken (1861: 42), Vogrinz (1889: 274), and Ameis and Hentze (1900: 124) considered them to be synonymous.

Willmott (2008) did not see any differences per se, approaching the optative on different modal axes and arguing that the optative had many different meanings related to the abilities of the actor.

Monro (1891: 273) argued that the optative could occur together with the future, but did not state that it was synonymous, while Chantraine (1953: 221) mentioned that the optative and modal particle could be used as a synonym for an imperative, but did not postulate that it could be used for the future.

¹⁴ Buttman (1810: 500, 503), von Thiersch (1826: 641), Bernhardt (1829: 410), Kühner (1835: 108–109, 1870: 198–199), Aken (1861: 44), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 233–234), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 322–323), and Chantraine (1953: 221).

¹⁵ Buttman (1810: 494–495, 1819: 322–323), Kühner (1834: 80–81, 1835: 470–478, 482–488, 1870: 215–222), Madvig (1847: 139–143), Krüger (1846: 184, 186), Aken (1861: 74–76), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 250–259, 1904: 427–436), and Bornemann and Risch (1973: 235–236).

debated (two issues that cannot be addressed here),¹⁶ this was not a mechanical rule in Homeric Greek. In general it is argued that the subjunctive is used after secondary tenses when there is still a connection with the present and/or when the speaker (or narrator) believes that the action can still be accomplished, and while this use is not limited to purpose clauses, the issue frequently occurs in these clauses given their voluntative and/or expectative nature.¹⁷ This means that after a past tense form

The statement that the optative was the past tense of the subjunctive, as made by Kühner (1834: 80), because of the difference in endings and temporal reference is no longer tenable, but the issue cannot be addressed here.

See also the notes below.

¹⁶ Rost (1826: 464–465), von Thiersch (1826: 520–521, 611–612), and Bernhardt (1829: 406–414) considered that both the optative and subjunctive maintained their own meaning, even in the subordinate clauses. Along the same lines, Matthiae (1827: 994–996) argued that in subordinate clauses the subjunctive indicated the will, while the optative only suggested a wish (a view Delbrück would later expand upon).

Curtius (1864: 239–240) claimed that the optative was used when the narrator related the opinion of someone else and not that of him/herself.

Delbrück (1871: 82–83, 248–256, 1897: 402–403) argued that the optative was used in the subordinate clauses, because the events had become less likely and the mood was the only way to indicate this. Similarly, Brugmann (1900: 508–510), Gildersleeve (1900: 128–132, 157–158), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 332–336), Chantraine (1953: 223–224), Humbert (1960: 121–123, 187–188), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 257–258) interpreted the optative as an original past potential.

Kühner and Gerth (1904: 380–381) and Smyth and Messing (1956: 494–495, 584–595) argued that the subjunctive was used when the action was conceived as likely (especially in the purpose clauses).

Stahl (1907: 237, 244, 315–335 (with the data regarding the (non-)substitution in Attic on pages 332–333)) argued that this optative was in origin the “Modus der Vorstellung”.

Kühner and Gerth (1904: 430), Rijksbaron (2002: 52–53) and van Emde Boas et al. (2019: 499–501, 509–511) argued that the optative described the opinion of the narrator, while the subjunctive or indicative (the direct speech moods) referred to what had actually been said.

¹⁷ Most scholars seem to accept this distinction, as in Buttman (1810: 485–486), Rost (1826: 476–477, 481–482), von Thiersch (1826: 657–659, 681), Matthiae (1827: 992–1002 for the purpose clauses), Bernhardt (1829: 401–402), Kühner (1835: 487–488), Krüger (1859: 102, 147), Goodwin (1865: 70–71), Delbrück (1871: 83), Vogrinz (1889: 375–386, with a discussion of disputed readings and a list of possible corrections, although several are unnecessary in my opinion), Monro (1891: 279–280, describing that the optative is used when immediate fulfilment is not envisaged), Ameis and Hentze (1898: 21), Chitil (1899, who called the subjunctive the “modus energeticus”), Mutzbauer (1903b: 632), Kühner and Gerth (1904: 380–381), and Smyth and Messing (1956: 494–495). Chantraine (1953: 269) pointed out that the subjunctive was more common in purpose clauses than the optative, even after verbs of the past and that the optative was used when there was a link with the past but the fulfilment was less certain (*ibid.*: 223, Chantraine and Casevitz 2015: 256).

Other scholars such as Novotný (1857: 1), and Curtius (1864: 242, mentioning that the use of the subjunctive after secondary tenses was very rare), have also argued, however, that the traditional distinction (subjunctive after primary tense and optative after secondary tense) was in fact valid.

The issue was not addressed in Faesi (1862: 18–19), Düntzer (1863b: 133–134) nor in Hoekstra (1989: 182).

The distinctions between subjunctive and optative as described in Willmott (2007) can account for the different uses of the moods as well (I argued earlier that her analysis differs much less from earlier scholarship than she claimed it did).

the difference between a subjunctive and optative is not mechanically regulated, but based on the original meanings of the optative and subjunctive (more specifically the optative indicates that the event was less likely to occur, which is in agreement with its “position” at the end of the “Vogrinz-irrealis-continuum”).

The “optativus iterativus” refers to a repeated action in a subordinated clause that is dependent on a verb form in the past and could, therefore, be considered a special instance with regard to the previous example (the optativus obliquus). The question is whether or not the iterative notion is expressed by the optative. Many earlier scholars assumed that, as in later Attic, the optative in Homer could in fact convey the iterativity,¹⁸ while others assumed that this use did not yet exist in the Homeric conditional clauses.¹⁹ As was the case with the category discussed above, the optative itself might have expressed the possibility (in this case in the past) and the iterative notion might have come from the context.²⁰ This use could also be perfectly explained by the position of the optative at the end of the “Vogrinz-irrealis-continuum”. A special case of this iterative use in epics is that of the optative and an $\sigma\kappa$ -iterative form.²¹ As will be seen later, these optatives often have an exclusively, and indeed solely, past reference, which is relatively rare with the other optatives.

¹⁸ Earlier scholars believed that the optative could in fact convey the iterative notion: Buttmann (1810: 502), Rost (1826: 464), Matthiae (1827: 1005–1008), Bernhardy (1829: 406–407), von Naegelsbach (1834: 91–92), Faesi (1858b: 192), Curtius (1864: 247, 250–251, stating nevertheless that this optative was very close to a potential optative), Goodwin (1865: 130–131, 1900: 297–298 pointing out that this use only occurred once in Homer, 306), and most recently also Jacquiod (2017: 692).

¹⁹ Krüger (1859: 148), Lange (1872: 372–373, 401), Monro (1891: 284, he argued that only in the conditional clauses was this use unknown, while in other clauses the optative might have already had an iterative meaning).

²⁰ Hermann (1831: 141), Kühner (1835: 103–104, 1870: 216–217), von Baumlein (1846: 284–285), Delbrück (1871: 223–227), Lange (1872: 372–373, 401), Vogrinz (1889: 382), Mutzbauer (1893: 7–8, 23–24), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 252–257, 1904: 427), Brugmann (1900: 508–509), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 335–336), Chantraine (1953: 224–226), Smyth and Messing (1956: 528–529 specifying that this type of optative originated in the temporal clauses and was attested only once in a conditional clause in Homer, 546–547), Humbert (1960: 217–218, 221 – considered “iterative” to be an incorrect name and interpreted it as a potential optative, see also below), Pagniello (2007), Willmott (2007: 174–184), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 257–258).

Stahl (1907: 245–246) also highlighted that “iterative” was the wrong name, as the subjunctive too could have an iterative meaning, and the optative in itself only refers to the past here and not to the repetition.

²¹ Many of the scholars quoted above used Homeric examples in which an optative and an iterative form were combined, but the issue itself was discussed in more detail in Stolpe (1849: 36–39), Týn (1860: 677–681, 685–686), Delbrück (1897: 62–63), Kluge (1911: 56–57), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 335–336, explaining this form as a past potential), Chantraine (1953: 223–224 interpreting this form as a past potential as well), Zerdin (2002: 117–118), Pagniello (2007, also interpreting this form as a past potential), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 257–258, interpreting the optative as a potential as well and observing the existence of a very thin line between the optativus obliquus and optativus iterativus).

Monro (1891: 279, 282–283) described the iterative use of the optative, but did not link it with the iterative forms and Mutzbauer (1893: 7–8) stated that not even the iterative forms conveyed the iterative meaning, as they were already moribund, and that only the tenses contained this meaning.

2. “Problemstellung” and explanations for the co-occurrence of the optative and indicative

2.1. “Problemstellung” for the unreal events

While the “optativus obliquus” and the “optativus iterativus” on the one hand, and the future and imperatival use of the optative fit into this schema, the constructions for the unreal events pose a problem, as even in Homer they use both the indicative and the optative. For the former, the term “modal indicatives” is often used.²² In Attic Greek the distinction between the past and present in the irrealis constructions is traditionally described as follows: the imperfect (indicative) refers to the present and the aorist and pluperfect to the past, but often the distinction between the imperfect and aorist is not that of the present versus the past, but rather one of aspect (mostly leading to an imperfect being used in a past counterfactual).²³ In Homer the situation is different, as both the indicative and the optative could be used in contexts in which the realisation of an action was uncertain and/or in which the reference was clearly to the past,²⁴ but even in Ionic prose, mostly in Herodotos,

²² For this term see Monro (1891: 293 “modal uses of the indicative”), Brugmann (1900: 512–514 “Augmentpräterita modal gebraucht”), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 344–354 discussing “modal gebrauchte Indikative”) or Chantraine (1953:225–229), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 258–264 in their subchapter on the “indicatif modal”).

²³ Buttmann (1810: 499, 1819: 324–325, he did not address the aspectual differences, but only stated that the imperfect was used for the present and timeless contexts and the aorist for the past), Rost (1826: 470, without addressing the aspectual differences), Matthiae (1827: 964–967), Bernhardt (1829: 390, without addressing the aspectual differences), Hartung (1833: 233–240), Kühner (1835: 89–93, 546, 554, 1870: 174–175, 191–197), von Bäumlein (1846: 93–169), Krüger (1846: 182–183, 190–191), Madvig (1847: 116–120), Aken (1861: 47–48, 1865: 31–32), Curtius (1864: 245–246), Goodwin (1865: 93–94, 1900: 285–286, 298–300), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 212, 231–233, 1904: 468–472), Brugmann (1900: 513–514), Gildersleeve (1900: 169), Nutting (1901: 298), Stahl (1907: 280–281), Kieckers (1926: 54), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 344–351), Smyth and Messing (1956: 515–520), Humbert (1960: 110–113), Bizos (1961: 158–161), Bornemann and Risch (1973: 229–230), Delaunoy (1975: 5–7, 1988: 96–106), McKay (1981), Krisch (1986: 22), Greenberg (1986: 249), Hettrich (1992: 267, 1998), Gerö (2001: 188), Rijksbaron (2002: 73), and van Emde Boas et al. (2019: 442–443).

²⁴ Von Thiersch (1826, he argued on page 517 that a past reference was possible for the optative and even the subjunctive, and on pages 637–638 that both the indicative and optative had a past reference, but that the optative was only imagined, while the indicative was depicted as “real”), Matthiae (1827: 964–971, noting that the indicative was more certain as to the past reference), Hartung (1833: 252–258, a past tense reference, linked with the past tense), Kühner (1834: 80–81, 1835: 104–111 (in fact timeless), 554–556, 1870: 191–198), von Bäumlein (1846: 71–77, 294–295, stating that this was rare), Krüger (1859: 100, 103–104, 138), Curtius (1864: 247–248, pointing out that the constructions with the optative and indicative were “mixtures”), Düntzer (1864: 132), Aken (1865: 31, but cf. infra), Goodwin (1865: 101–, 1900: 299), Ameis and Hentze (1871: 72), Delbrück 1871: 28–29, 210–214, 1897: 398–404), Lange (1872: 401), Gerth (1878), Koppin (1878: 124–131), Vogrinz (1887: 267–274), Monro (1891: 273–274, 293–295), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 232), Brugmann (1900: 505–506, 512–514, 1904: 584), Gildersleeve (1900: 172–176, with some examples from Attic Greek as well), Mutzbauer (1902, 1903b), Mein (1903: 6), Stahl (1907: 239 – he considered the optative to be timeless and stated that it later lost its past reference, 245, 280–281), Van Pottelbergh (1939: 8), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950:

as well as in Attic drama (as examples I quote Aiskhylos *Agamemnon* 37–38 and Sophokles *Elektra* 548) and prose, there are still instances of the optative, although the Attic prose examples are often corrected into indicatives.²⁵

This raises several issues, such as what is the distinction between present and past potential, what is the difference between past potential and counterfactual, what role does the temporal reference play in this discussion, for in many instances the temporal reference does play a role: an event that is situated in the past and that did not occur, is by definition contrary-to-fact, because it has not happened and cannot happen again, but for many events situated in the future (however unlikely they may be) it might be argued that they could still materialize, and finally, the fact that both the optative and indicative appear in contexts with a low or even non-existent degree of probability puts the validity of both the “Vogrinz-irrealis-continuum” and the “Aken-Seiler-Greenberg-irrealis-continuum” in doubt, because in each scenario there is only one mood to relate the “(very) unlikely” and the “unreal”.

I would agree with earlier scholars that it is (often almost) impossible to distinguish definitively between past potentialis and irrealis,²⁶ and would, therefore, describe the use of the optative as having the following scale of meanings: likely – possible (potentialis in the traditional terminology) – remotely possible – unlikely / impossible / unreal (irrealis in the traditional terminology).

One final remark involves the origins of the conditional clauses. While I personally feel the explanation that they are old wishes to be correct (see the statement above), this issue is not relevant in the current discussion.

2.2. Explanations for the co-occurrence of the optative and indicative

For the origin of the indicative, the co-occurrence of the optative and the indicative, and the expansion of the indicative and eventual disappearance of the optative in

324, 328–329, 344–345), Chantraine (1953: 218), Smyth and Messing (1956: 520), Humbert (1960: 119–121), Brunel (1980: 240), Strunk (1997: 148), Hettrich (1998), Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 246–248, 252–254), and De Decker (2015: 221–240, 2021: 138–170).

This is not discussed in Wachter (2000).

²⁵ Kühner (1870: 196–198) mentioned that the past reference of the optative in Attic was possible, but very rare. For the examples see Hartung (1833: 255, discussing an example from Herodotos), Aken (1861: 44–45), Gerth (1878, accepting the corrections), Gildersleeve (1900: 173–175, also accepting the corrections), Kieckers (1926: 35–36, 53–58), Chantraine (1953: 213), and De Decker (2015: 209–211, 2021: 148–149).

For the use of the optative with (alleged) counterfactual meaning in Attic see footnotes 6 and 7.

²⁶ Goodwin (1900: 285) used the term “potential indicative” instead of “irrealis”. Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 346–347) used the term “Potentialis der Vergangenheit”. Delaunoy (1975; 1988: 96–106) and Basset (1988, 1989: 224–226) argued that there was only a past potential, while Wakker (2006) argued that there was only a counterfactual in Greek. Humbert (1960: 224–225) stated that in the present and future there is a difference between potentialis and irrealis, but that this distinction ceases to exist in the past and similarly, Van Emde Boas et al. (2019: 443) stated that there was in fact no difference between these two terms. See also the terms “modus fictivus” and “Fiktiv”, discussed above. These are terminological discussions.

these contexts, six different explanations have been provided, which can be summarized within two larger categories, namely those assuming that a difference exists between the indicative and the optative, and those assuming that the indicative eventually replaced the optative. I discuss them below, starting with the three that assume a semantic difference, before moving on to those arguing for the substitution.²⁷

1. The past indicative was used for something that could never have happened, while the optative referred to something that might have been unlikely, but could still have happened.²⁸ The problem with this assumption is the same as with the explanation that argues the opposite (explanation 3), namely that the examples that allegedly display this difference are not probative, with unequivocally unreal examples existing with the optative, such as *Iliad* 1,232 and *Iliad* 5,318–319, and additionally in several other instances an unreal reading of the optative is possible, such as *Iliad* 1,255–257 and *Iliad* 24,565–567.
2. Dunkel (1990, 2014b: 33–35, 397, 430) argued that there were three different particles, each with different uses in PIE, which merged in Homeric Greek: the PIE **án* was used with the indicative in counterfactual contexts (still visible in the Greek *ǎv* and in the Hittite particle *man*, which he reconstructed as **ma an*), **ke* was deictic and **kem* was emphatic (it could be argued that this is an extended version of explanation 1). I see at least two problems. Dunkel’s proposal cannot explain how the optative would have intruded into the field of the indicative, if the counterfactual and potential were as sharply distinguished as he argued. At the same time the optative did not replace / “compete with” the indicative in the *ei muh* clauses. If both coexisted and intruded into each other’s domain, it would be expected that specific examples would have been found. Second, the assumption that three different particles originated with three different meanings, which evolved into three particles used interchangeably, each having

²⁷ This transition was analyzed in greater detail in De Decker (2015: 221–240 and 2021: 150–162). Jacquinod (2017: 692) noted that the indicative is already being used for the counterfactual in Homer (“makes its first appearance in Homer”), but does not address the issue in detail.

²⁸ Buttmann (1810: 498–499), von Thiersch (1828: 611–613, 638), von Naegelsbach (1834: 49, 98–99, 236–241, especially p. 238), Kühner (1835: 90), Aken (1861: 26–48, 1865: 21), in his discussion of *Iliad* 5,311 Düntzer (1866a: 168, 1873: 176) argued that normally the indicative aorist was used and that when the optative was used, it still conveyed the notion of a limited and conditional possibility (in his words: “bedingte Möglichkeit”), Delbrück (1871: 211), Wilhelmi (1881, especially page 11 where he discussed *Iliad* 5,679–680 and 1,257–259), and in his discussion of *Iliad* 5,311 Leaf (1886: 164) noted that the optative was timeless without the notion of pastness. See also (the much later) Seiler (1971, especially page 87).

Besides the two scholars mentioned above, many others assume that there is an inherent relationship between the past tense and the counterfactual because both are removed from the present, e.g. Nutting (1901) for Greek and Latin; Kendrick Pritchett (1955: 8–9) and Seiler (1971) for Greek; Steele (1975), Langacker (1978), James (1982, 1991: 285), Fleischman (1989), and Hofling (1998) – these are only selected texts. Others argue that the past tense alone is not enough to mark the contrafactivity, see e.g. Givón (1994), Dahl (1997), Verstraete (2005: 230–231), Lazard (2006), Van Linden and Verstraete (2008: 1867) – Gerö (2001) for Greek. In addition, there are indeed languages where future-based tenses are used for the counterfactual constructions, see Robert (1990), Verstraete (2005), and Michael (2014).

only two meanings, is unfalsifiable, because any difference in meaning between these three can be countered by saying that the meanings had merged.

3. The last semantic suggestion is that the two different constructions coexisted, because they had different meanings, namely the optative referred to an unlikely event and the indicative to something that did not happen, but could very well have happened (the reverse of suggestion 1 and 2).²⁹ As evidence for this, two passages are used, namely *Iliad* 2,155–156 describing in the indicative how Athene prevented the Greeks from returning home before Troy had been laid waste and *Iliad* 5,311–312 relating how Aphrodite prevented Aineias' death. The construction in the optative was thought to be impossible, because Aineias was of divine descent, while the return of the Greeks before the fall of Troy was considered possible. Two observations have to be made: first of all, divine descent is by no means a guarantee for survival, as in the case of Sarpedon and Akhilleus, sons of Zeus and Thetis respectively, and second, that the return of the Greeks would be possible, is highly unlikely, as everybody in the audience knew that Troy was eventually going to be destroyed (as was also argued in De Decker 2015: 233, 2021: 160–162).

Now I proceed to the substitution scenarios.

4. The optative initially expressed the potential and counterfactual nuance, but was replaced by the indicative of the past in the instances that referred to a past event, as the former did not allow for a clear temporal distinction, while the latter permitted a distinction to be made between “this could happen (in the present or future)” and “this could have happened (in the past)”.³⁰ This explanation is supported particularly by the fact that a majority of modal indicatives have a past reference, while only a small majority of optative forms have a past reference. A closer look at the data from the *Odyssey* will make this clear. Of the 105 modal indicatives in the *Odyssey* 15 (or 18, cf. infra) appear in an εἰ μή-clause and have an exclusively past reference.³¹ Of the 90 remaining modal indicatives,

²⁹ Basset (1989: 220–230) noticed the differences between the constructions, but did not state that the indicative replaced the indicative. Willmott (2007: 48–52 – in 2008 she discussed the potential optatives but did not address the issue of the substitution nor the counterfactivity). For a rebuttal of Willmott's arguments, see De Decker (2015: 228–235, 2021: 160–162) to which Polsley (2019: 8) replied that this analysis failed to take into account any narrative factors, but as was argued in De Decker (2021: 160–162), there is no difference in the contexts and appearances of the instances in the indicative and the optative, rendering the narrative and semantic explanations insufficient.

³⁰ Koppin (1878: 126–131), Brugmann (1890: 191–194, 1900: 513–514, 1904: 584, 586), Debrunner (1921), Chantraine (1953: 226–228: “Mais, pour marquer plus nettement le passé, on a commencé à se servir de l'imparfait ou de l'aoriste de l'indicatif, à qui la particule conférait une valeur modale”), and Brunel (1980: 236 – he agreed, but did not mention any of these scholars).

This suggestion was not addressed in Krisch (1986), Ruijgh (1992), nor in Hettrich (1998). Willmott (2007: 48–52) only discussed Ruijgh, but did not mention the others.

³¹ The instances are the *Odyssey* 4,364 (ὀλοφύρατο), 4,364 (ἐλέγησε), 4,503 (ἔκβαλε), 4,503 (ἀάσθη), 5,427 (θῆκε), 5,437 (δῶκε), 13,385 (ἔειπε), 16,221 (προσεφώνεεν), 21,227 (ἐρύκακε), 21,227

61 instances have an exclusively past reference,³² and 28 could refer to the past, but also to the present (or even the future).³³ Some instances with both a past and non-past meaning can be questioned,³⁴ as the action could very well be situated in the past and continue into the present, but it could also be argued that the action could refer to an action that is not past. Of the approximately 750 optatives (unreal or not), 377 do not refer to the past (only the present or future), 323 are timeless or can refer to the past, present and future, with only 52 having an exclusively past reference. Of those optatives with a past reference, 24 are used with an iterative form in -σκ-,³⁵ 2 are linked with φάσκω (which might in any case have been an iterative),³⁶ 6 are used in an iterative context without the iterative form

(φώνησεν), 23,342 (ἐνόησε), 24,42 (παύσεν), 24,51 (κατέρυκε), 24,530 (ἦύσεν), 24,530 (κατὰ δ' ἔσχεθε).

³² The indicatives in the *Odyssey* are 1,237 (δάμη), 1,239 (ἐποίησαν), 3,255 (ἐτύχθη), 3,256 (ἔτετμεν), 3,258 (ἔχευαν), 3,259 (κατέδαψαν), 4,292 (ἦρκεσε), 4,293 (ἦεν), 4,363 (κατέφθιτο), 4,441 (ἔπλετο), 4,502 (ἔκφυγε), 4,732 (πυθόμην), 4,733 (ἔμεινε), 4,734 (ἔλειπεν), 5,39 (ἐξήρατ'), 5,40 (ἦλθε), 5,311 (ἔλαχον), 5,426 (δρύφθη), 5,426 (ἀράχθη), 5,436 (ᾠλετ'), 6,282 (εὔρεν), 7,278 (βιήσατο), 9,79 (ικόμην), 9,228 (ἦεν), 9,303 (ἀπωλόμειθ'), 9,304 (δυνάμεσθα), 9,334 (ἦελον), 9,497 (ἄκουσε), 9,498 (ἄραξ'), 11,317 (ἐξετέλεσσαν), 11,418 (ὀλοφύραο), 11,565 (προσέφη), 11,630 (ἶδον), 12,71 (βάλεν), 12,446 (ὕπεκφυγον), 13,137 (ἐξήρατ'), 13,138 (ἦλθε), 13,206 (ἐξικόμην), 14,37 (διεδηλήσαντο), 14,38 (κατέχευας), 14,369 (ἐποίησαν), 16,220 (ἔδου), 19,283 (ἦην), 20,223 (ἐξικόμην), 21,226 (ἔδου), 23,22 (ἦγγειλε), 23,22 (ἀνέγειρε), 23,23 (ἀπέπεμψα), 23,47 (ἰάνθησ), 23,219 (ἐμίγη), 23,220 (ἦδη), 23,241 (φάνη), 24,32 (ἐποίησαν), 24,42 (παυσάμεθα), 24,50 (ἔβαν), 24,61 (ἐνόησας), 24,90 (θηήσαο), 24,381 (ἔλυσσ), 24,382 (ἐγήθεις), 24,528 (ὄλεσαν), 24,528 (ἔθηκαν).

³³ The indicatives in the *Odyssey* are 1,240 (ἦρατ'), 2,184 (ἀγόρευες), 3,261 (καυῖσεν), 4,172 (ἔδωκε), 4,174 (νάσσα), 4,174 (ἔτευξα), 4,178 (ἐμισγόμεθ'), 4,179 (διέκρινεν), 4,180 (ἀμφεκάλυψεν), 5,311 (ἦγον), 9,211 (ἦεν), 10,84 (ἐξήρατο), 13,206 (ἐφίλει), 13,206 (ὄπασσεν), 14,62 (ἐφίλει), 14,62 (ὄπασσεν), 14,67 (ᾠνησεν), 14,67 (ἐγήρα), 14,370 (ἦρατ'), 18,264 (ἔκριναν), 18,402 (μετέθηκε), 19,25 (ἔφαινον), 20,274 (παύσαμεν), 20,306 (βάλον), 20,307 (ἀμφεπονείτο), 24,33 (ἦρα'), 24,284 (κίχεις), 24,285 (ἀπέπεμψε).

³⁴ The debatable examples in the *Odyssey* are 1,240, 4,734, 5,311, 9,211, 10,84, 11,418, 14,370, 20,306, 23,47, 24,42, 24,61.

³⁵ The instances in the *Odyssey* are 2,105 (the optative παραθεῖτο besides the iterative ἀλλύεσκεν), 7,138 (the optative μνησαίατο besides the iterative σπένδεσκον), 8,87 (the optative λήξειεν besides the iterative ἔλεσκε), 8,90, 8,90 (the optatives ἄρχοιτο and ὀτρύνειαν besides the iteratives ἔλεσκε and σπείσασκε), 11,585 (the optative κύψει' or κύψει besides the iteratives ἀπολέσκει', φάνεσκε and καταζήνασκε), 11,591 (the optative ἰθύσει' or ἰθύσει besides the iterative ῥίπτασκε), 11,596 (the optative μέλλοι besides the iteratives ᾤθεσκε, ἀποστρέψασκε and ᾠσασκε), 12,237 (the optative ἐξεμέσειε besides the iterative ἀναμορμύρεσκε), 12,240 (the optative ἀναβρόξειε besides the iterative φάνεσκε, used twice), 12,331 (the optative ἴκοιτο besides the iterative ἐφέπεσκον), 12,381 (the optative προτραποίμην besides the iterative χαίρεσκον), 14,221 (the optative εἴξειε besides the iterative ἔλεσκον), 16,141 (the optative ἀνώγοι besides the iterative ἐποπτεύεσκε), 17,317 (the optative δίοιτο besides the iterative φύγεσκε), 17,421, 17,421 (the optatives ἔοι and ἔλθοι besides the iterative δόσκον), 18, 7 (the optative ἀνώγοι besides the iterative ἀπαγγέλλεσκε – κίκλησκον is a “normal” reduplicated iterative present), 19,77, 19,77 (the optatives ἔοι and ἔλθοι besides the iterative δόσκον), 19,150 (the optative παραθείμην besides the iterative παραθείμην), 22,414 (the optative εἰσαφίκοιτο besides the iterative τίεσκον), 23,66 (the optative εἰσαφίκοιτο besides the iterative τίεσκον), 24,140 (the optative παραθεῖτο besides the iterative ἀλλύεσκεν).

³⁶ *Odyssey* 4,191 (ἐπιμνησαίμεθα) and 4,192 (ἐρέοιμεν).

- in $-\sigma\kappa-$,³⁷ and 1 is a non-iterative instance in which a formula from an iterative context has been expanded to a non-iterative context.³⁸ Additionally, 8 are used in a counterfactual construction,³⁹ 3 in counterfactual constructions that are not consistently attested in the manuscripts,⁴⁰ 2 in a wish with a past reference,⁴¹ 3 in a subordinate clause in which the optative seemed to have neither iterative nor counterfactual meaning, but where the optative almost seems to be an optativus obliquus,⁴² 1 in an insecure instance, where both the optative and the indicative have been transmitted,⁴³ and 2 instances in which it can be debated whether or not the forms have counterfactual meaning.⁴⁴
5. Krisch (1986) argued that the Greek indicative was linked to an older injunctive that had replaced the Indo-European optative. The transition would have started in the postposed conditional clauses introduced by $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\acute{\eta}$ (see also explanation 6). What seems to support this explanation is that the majority of verbs in the $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\acute{\eta}$ -clauses are in the injunctive (as was also stated by Krisch),⁴⁵ but at the same time this is also the main difficulty with this theory. Although I cannot discuss the issue of the augment in this article, it seems that the main function of the augment was to emphasise pivotal actions.⁴⁶ The conditional clauses introduced by $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\acute{\eta}$ describe the action that prevented the action of the main clause from occurring. They are, therefore, realis and very important, as they succeeded in stopping a negative event, and yet they are put in the injunctive and not the indicative. The question, therefore, is why the injunctive would have been the mode in these sentences.
 6. Several scholars argued that the original counterfactual construction in Greek was that of a past potential optative in the main clause, followed by another main clause in the indicative introduced by $\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ (“q could have happened, but p prevented it”). When subordinated constructions started to emerge, viz. were created, the main clauses introduced by $\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ became subordinated negated

³⁷ The instances in the *Odyssey* are 8,70 (ἀνώγοι), 9,94 (φάγοι), 19,371 (ἴκοιτο), 24,254 (λούσαιτο), 24,254 (φάγοι), 24,344 (ἐπιβρίσειαν).

³⁸ The *Odyssey* 9,333 (ικάνοι).

³⁹ The instances in the *Odyssey* are 4,222 (μιγείη), 17,313 (εἶη), 17,315 (θηήσαιο), 22,78 (τοξάσσαιτο), 22,134 (τοξάσσαιτο), 23,102 (ἔλθοι), 23,170 (ἔλθοι), 24,108 (λέξαιτο).

⁴⁰ The instances are 4,547 (κτείνειν/ κτεῖνεν), 11,317 (ἴκoiντο/ ἴκoiντο), 21,128 (τανύσειε/ ἐτάνυσεε).

⁴¹ The *Odyssey* 18,79 (εἶης and γένοιο).

⁴² The instances in the *Odyssey* are 19,464 (πάθοι), 24,237 (ἔλθοι), 24,237 (ἴκοιτ’).

⁴³ The *Odyssey* 20,138 (μιμνήσκοιτο/ μιμνήσκοντο).

⁴⁴ The instances in the *Odyssey* are 2,38 (πύθοιτο), 2,43 (πυθοίμην).

⁴⁵ I agree with Krisch in considering the injunctive to be a living mood in the oldest Greek texts: it was attested in Mycenaean (there are virtually no augmented forms) and in epic Greek, as there are more unaugmented forms (injunctives) than augmented forms, and additionally there is a difference in meaning between them (for the injunctive use in Hesiod see West (1989), Clackson (2007: 130–132) and De Decker (2016)).

⁴⁶ Bakker (1999, 2001), Mumm (2004), and De Decker (2016, 2020a, 2020b) to name but a few.

postposed conditional clauses introduced by $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\acute{\eta}$. The indicative from the negative postposed conditional clauses was then extended to the postposed positive conditional clauses and then to the preposed clauses, before eventually to the main clause of the conditional construction (especially because all the other conditional schemas had the same mood in protasis and apodosis).⁴⁷

Below I will investigate the instances of the indicative and the optative, to determine which / if any of the explanations can offer an explanation for the use of these two moods, but before I start, I would like to state that in this discussion an aspect seems so far to have been overlooked, namely the fact that there are parallels for the substitution of a mood (optative or subjunctive) in favour of the indicative when a past reference was needed. This is the case with the *verba curandi* and the *verba timendi*, for which later Greek uniquely used the indicative,⁴⁸ but in Homeric Greek the use of the indicative is contested:⁴⁹ several scholars assume that the indicative was used because in such instances the fear clause was originally an indirect question (Nitzsch 1832: 48; von Naegelsbach 1834: 83; Krüger 1846: 189; Faesi 1858a: 353, 1860: 170; Vogrinz 1889: 372; Monro 1891: 256–257; Bornemann and Risch 1973: 284), or because the fact that the action had already happened, meant the modal meaning was removed from the passage, as something cannot be “expected” to occur, when in fact the event has already taken place (Rost 1826: 482; Weber 1884: 9; Monro 1891: 324–325; Kühner and Gerth 1904: 391, but none mentioned that the subjunctive had also been transmitted). The explanation

⁴⁷ This suggestion was first made by Gerth (1878) and subsequently by Mutzbauer (1902, see also 1893: 5–6). That it was the basis for the substitution was noticed by Chantraine (1953: 226–227) and Brunel (1980: 242), but they did not elaborate upon it. For the equivalence or the close relationship between $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\acute{\eta}$ and $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ in this context, see Nitzsch (1840: 33), Krüger (1859: 104–105), Faesi (1862: 128), Düntzer (1863b: 145), and Lange (1872: 460), but they did not link this with the issue of the two moods in the potential and contrary-to-fact.

That it was the basis for the substitution was noticed by Chantraine (1953: 226–227) and Brunel (1980: 242), but they did not elaborate on it. Ruijgh (1992) and Hettrich (1998) made similar suggestions, but Ruijgh worked with an intermediate stage of a subjunctive which was replaced by an optativus obliquus. For the postposed $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\acute{\eta}$ -clauses see also Wakker (1994: 206–214). The details differed among the different scholars. A more in-depth discussion can be found in De Decker (2015: 221–240, 2021: 150–162).

⁴⁸ Rost (1826: 482), Von Thiersch (1826: 541, 653), Matthiae (1827: 1001), Bernhardt (1829: 402–404, “dubitanter”), Kühner (1835: 493), Krüger (1846: 189), von Bäumllein (1846: 101–103), Goodwin (1865: 83–85), Monro (1891: 324–325), Kühner and Gerth (1904: 391), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 354, 675), Smyth and Messing (1956: 502), Bornemann and Risch (1973: 284), Rijksbaron (2002: 58), and Van Emde Boas et al. (2019: 524–525).

Buttmann (1810: 537–538) did not discuss the use of the indicative with *verba timendi* in Attic.

⁴⁹ The use of the indicative in Homer was mentioned in Rost (1826: 482), von Thiersch (1826: 541, 653, cf. *infra*), Matthiae (1827: 1001), Nitzsch (1832: 48), von Naegelsbach (1834: 83), Kühner (1835: 493), Krüger (1846: 189, 1859: 103), von Bäumllein (1846: 101–103), Faesi (1858a: 353, 1860: 170), Weber (1884: 9), Merry and Riddell (1886: 236), Vogrinz (1889: 372), Monro (1891: 256–257, 324–325), Kühner and Gerth (1904: 391), Walter (1923: 21), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 354, 675), Chantraine (1953: 299), Smyth and Messing (1956: 502), Stanford (1959: 302), and Hoekstra (1989: 177, cf. *infra*).

This issue was not addressed in Kirk (1985: 110–11) nor in Willmott (2007).

by Monro (1891: 324–325) that the use of the indicative in this context was due to the tendency of Homeric and indeed later Greek to expand the use of the (past) indicative into contexts with a past reference to avoid temporal ambiguity and the contention by Delbrück (1900: 291–292) that the subjunctive was the original and normal mood in this construction, although the indicative was used when the past meaning needed to be emphasised are in my opinion correct.⁵⁰ In this context I refer to *Iliad* 1,555 and *Odyssey* 5,300 and 13,216, with the first including the subjunctive in all the manuscripts, while the remaining two show the subjunctive in most codices and the indicative in only a few (it is not possible to discuss the issue in detail in this article).⁵¹

3. Why this corpus?

As there are approximately 1500 optatives and 250 modal indicatives in Homer, not all can be discussed in this text and, therefore, I decided to limit myself to the aorist forms of γιγνώσκω, βάλλω and of ἴδον, as well as the conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μή. The reasons for this are that these are relatively common verbs with instances in both the optative and the indicative, and that in most cases the aorist indicative form is metrically equivalent to the optative, so that the metre plays only a limited role. By limiting myself to the aorist, the issue of the aspect plays a lesser role, as all the forms are in the same tense/aspect. Following the advice of the journal's reviewers that the corpus should contain enough data to permit a comparison, I decided to add the εἰ μή-clauses, because they act as a control to determine if the assumptions made for the verb forms are confirmed in a different syntactic environment (they are addressed in part 2).

4. The optatives: Remotely possible (potential of the past) and unlikely (irrealis)

In this subsection I analyze the optatives that describe events that are only remotely possible or even unlikely (in the traditional terminology they would be called a potential of the past and an irrealis). It has to be noted that this is difficult to determine, as the distinction between likely, possible, remotely possible and impossible often depends on the interpretation of the narrator, the audience, the speaker and/or the hearer, and sometimes what one considers to be possible, another can interpret as only remotely possible or even impossible. This is particularly striking in the five

⁵⁰ In Delbrück's own words (1900: 291–292) "soll der thatsächliche Eintritt in der Vergangenheit besonders stark hervorgehoben werden, so wagt man statt des allein konstruktionsberechtigten Konjunktivs den Indikativ".

As was the case with the scholars listed in the previous footnote, Delbrück too failed to mention that in the *Odyssey* 5,300 most codices had the subjunctive and not the indicative.

⁵¹ Only West (2017: 112) printed the subjunctive in the *Odyssey* 5,300, which is in my opinion the "lectio difficilior" and, therefore, to be preferred.

instances in which a formula is reused in another context and/or is pronounced by another person (i.e. Odysseus) who knows more than his addressees and, therefore, means something other than that of which his audience is aware (which will be discussed later in the article). There are only sixteen instances in which an optative (with or without a past reference) could refer to the remotely possible (potential of the past) and unlikely (irrealis), which is much less frequent than the “likely” or “possible” potentialis-instances. I will, therefore, focus on those sixteen cases in which such a remote or unlikely interpretation is possible (though not always certain), and also discuss the temporal reference.

- (EX.01) (52) οὐκ ἄν δὴ μείνειας ἀρηϊφίλον Μενέλαον;
 (53) γνοιῖς χ’ οἴου φωτὸς ἔχεις θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν;
 (54) οὐκ ἄν τοι χραίσμη / χραίσμοι κίθαρις τὰ τε δῶρ’ Ἀφροδίτης
 (55) ἢ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος ὄτ’ ἐν κονίησι μιγείης / μιγείης.
 (56) ἀλλὰ μάλα Τρῶες δευδῆμονες: ἢ τέ κεν ἦδη
 (57) λάϊνον ἔσσο χιτῶνα κακῶν ἔνεχ’ ὅσσα ἔοργας. (*Iliad* 3,52–57)

‘Would you not (stay to) face Menelaos, loved by Ares? You would soon *find out / have found out* what human being you are holding the beautiful wife. Your cither and Aphrodite’s gifts will then certainly not be of any use to you, your hair and your looks, when you are mingled in the dust. But the Trojans are really cowards, undoubtedly, you would already have put on a stone coat (i.e. you would have been stoned) because of all the evil that you have done.’⁵²

In this passage Hektor⁵³ reproaches Paris because he avoided facing Menelaos in battle. If he had done so, he would have found out how strong Menelaos really was.⁵⁴ Moreover, Hektor adds, the only reason why he (P) is still alive, is that the Trojans are cowards, because otherwise they would have stoned him to death a long time ago. In general the optative can either refer to something that is (almost) synonymous to a future or imperative (“stay here and face”),⁵⁵ is likely (“you could face”) or (highly) unlikely (“you could have faced” or “you could face” in the unreal sense),⁵⁶ but as Hektor is “not impressed” with Paris’ behaviour in battle, it can reasonably be assumed that he considers it unlikely that Paris will accept his suggestions and act upon them. In this passage there is also a modal indicative, ἔσσο, which could be a pluperfect or a root aorist. Contrary to the optatives, the indicative form clearly

⁵² Unless noted otherwise, all translations are my own.

⁵³ Hermann (1827: 34 – the original dates from 1812) stated that Helen was speaking, but this must be a (rare) “lapsus” by this great philologist.

⁵⁴ Contrary to the normal *usus* in English, I decided to use a transcription of the Greek names that is as close as possible to the original Greek writing, unless there is an idiomatic English version. I therefore write “Hektor”, “Menelaos”, “Akhilleus”, but “Homer” and “Hesiod”.

⁵⁵ This is the interpretation by Düntzer (1866a: 110 for μείνειας but not for γνοιῖς, see the following footnote), Leaf (1886: 90–91).

⁵⁶ Faesi (1858a: 131) translated μείνειας as ‘stand hieltest’, Düntzer (1866a: 110) γνοιῖς as ‘dann würdest du fühlen’ and Ameis (1868a: 103) as ‘dann würdest du inne werden’.

refers to the unlikely, unreal and/or impossible (it would be very unlikely that the Trojans would dare to stone Paris as long as Priam and Hektor were alive). It also refers to the past, as is clear by the adverb ἤδη ‘already’. The issue of the problematic transmission of χραίσμη / χραίσμοι and μυγείης / μυγείης will be discussed at the end of part 2 of the article.

- (EX.02) (451) ἀλλ’ οὐ τις δύνατο Τρώων κλειτῶν τ’ ἐπικούρων
 (452) δεῖξαι Ἀλέξανδρον τότ’ ἀρηϊφίλῳ Μενελάῳ:
 (453) οὐ μὲν γὰρ φιλότητί γ’ ἐκεύθανον εἴ τις ἴδοιτο:
 (454) ἴσον γὰρ σφιν πᾶσιν ἀπήχθετο κηρὶ μελαίνῃ. (*Iliad* 3,451–454)

‘But no-one among the Trojans and their famous companions could show him to Menelaos, loved by Ares, for they would not have hidden him out of love, if someone had seen him, for he was hated by all as the dark fate.’

These lines describe how Paris disappeared after the duel with Menelaos and how the latter was unable to find him. Not even the Trojans knew where he was, as they would gladly have handed him over to the Greeks, since Paris was much hated for being the cause of the war. This passage has been interpreted in various ways, with agreement failing to be reached on the unreal notion for ἐκεύθανον nor for ἴδοιτο. Some (Faesi 1858a: 152; von Naegelsbach and Autenrieth 1864: 430) assumed that the indicative ἐκεύθανον was not unreal, but described a statement of fact, while Ameis (1868a: 128, 1868b: 91) ascribed an iterative notion to both the indicative ἐκεύθανον and the optative ἴδοιτο, and argued that this was a generic statement that did not describe the specific instance. In his view, this was proved by the fact that ἐκεύθανον and ἴδοιτο had a different subject, which would not be possible if the passage dealt with a single instance and also by the fact that Homer stated in the next line that Paris was hated by everybody. Ascribing an iterative notion to ἴδοιτο is problematic, because, as was stated above, the iterative notion of the optative seems to be secondary (from a possibility in the past) and is not common in the conditional clauses, and this is also the only context where it is explicitly stated that the Trojans were unwilling to hide Paris. Explaining ἴδοιτο as a possibility in the past or as an unreal event seems more likely (La Roche 1870a: 118, see also Leaf 1886: 113–114, who stated that οὐ μὲν γὰρ φιλότητί γ’ ἐκεύθανον had the meaning of ἔμελλον δεῖξαι, in which case it would be unreal as well, Chantraine 1953: 227). The fact that the imperfect ἐκεύθανον was used without a modal particle also contributed to the interpretation as a “real” indicative, while others have suggested maintaining the irrealis-meaning by changing γ’ ἐκεύθανον into γ’ ἐκευθον ἄν (Heyne 1802a: 549; Düntzer 1866a: 128, 1873: 129) or into κ’ ἐκεύθανον (Düntzer 1866a: 128, 1873: 129; La Roche 1870a: 118 also considered this change possible).⁵⁷ Personally, I do not believe that this correction is necessary, as the modal indicative can – albeit very rarely – be used without a modal

⁵⁷ See the discussion in Ameis (1868b: 91 “die von Heyne erwähnte und gebilligte Conjectur”).

It should be noted that Heyne suggested this correction, but in his Homer editions and commentaries (1802b: 178, 1804a: 157, 1804b: 185, 1824: 79) he did not adopt this reading nor did he mention or discuss it.

particle in the main clause.⁵⁸ I consider the co-occurrence of a modal indicative and an optative within the same passage is a clear indication that there was a period in which the indicative (here ἐκεύθανον) and optative (here ἴδοιτο) were used in the same counterfactual and remotely possible contexts.⁵⁹ The use of a modal indicative without a particle is not impossible, but not common either. The optative ἴδοιτο is clearly counterfactual and refers to the past, because it is anterior to the action of ἐκεύθανον. The interpretation of εἶ τις ἴδοιτο as an old wish (Lange 1872: 400–401; Leaf 1886: 113–114) is in my opinion correct, and would be a remarkable archaism, as it would have an original paratactic construction and an optative for a wish in the past, yet it would not change the analysis here, as in Lange’s analysis of the optative as a wish, the optative also refers to the past.

(EX.03) (223) ἔνθ’ οὐκ ἄν βρίζοντα ἴδοις Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον
(224) οὐδὲ καταπτώσσοντ’ οὐδ’ οὐκ ἐθέλοντα μάχεσθαι,
(225) ἀλλὰ μάλα σπεύδοντα μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν. (*Iliad* 4,223–225)

‘And there you would not have seen shining Agamemnon asleep or ducking (from battle) nor refusing to fight, but very eager in battle that brings fame to men.’

In these lines Homer describes how Agamemnon excels after Akhilleus left the army and the hostilities resumed after the duel between Paris and Menelaos failed to determine the outcome of the war, because Paris escaped and the Trojans did not / could not hand him over to the Greeks. ἴδοις is a textbook case of a potential in the optative with a past reference (see also the following example), and could serve as indication that the original mood in this context was the optative.

(EX.04) (84) ὡς οἱ μὲν πονέοντο κατὰ κρατερὴν ὑσμίνην:
(85) Τυδείδην δ’ οὐκ ἄν γνοίης ποτέροισι μετεῖη
(86) ἢ ἐ μετὰ Τρώεσσιν ὀμιλέοι ἢ μετ’ Ἀχαιοῖς. (*Iliad* 5,84–86)

‘So they laboured through the powerful battle. You could not have known with whom Tydeus’ son belonged, whether he would frequent the Trojans or the Akhaians.’

In these lines Homer describes Diomedes’ bravery: he storms through the ranks with such great fury that it was impossible to determine if he fought with the Trojans or with the Greeks. The optative aorist γνοίης describes a possibility in the past (“past potentialis”):⁶⁰ if one had been present at that specific moment in the battle, one would not have been able to determine on which side Diomedes was fighting.

⁵⁸ Hartung (1833: 231, 237), Madvig (1847: 120), Faesi (1862: 27), Düntzer (1863b: 145), Kühner (1870: 178–179), Ameis (1871: 28), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 212), Mutzbauer (1902: 490, 500), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 308), Chantraine (1953: 227), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 261).

This was, surprisingly enough, not addressed in Krüger (1859: 96–97, 103–104 – in 1861: 183–184 he only addressed the Attic use in which the modal particle could be left out when ὀλίγου was used), Monro (1891: 294–296, 327–335) nor in Brugmann (1900: 511–513).

⁵⁹ The modal uses of the indicative and optative were not discussed in von Doederlein (1863:77), nor in Kirk (1985: 330).

⁶⁰ Faesi (1858a: 140), Krüger (1859: 100, 103–104, 138), von Naegelsbach and Autenrieth (1864: 389 on *Iliad* 3,220), Düntzer (1873: 164 – in 1866a: 157 he did not discuss the issue), Ameis (1868a: 113,

(EX.05) (281) αἶ κ' ἐθέλησ' εἰπόντος ἀκουέμεν: ὥς κέ οἱ αὔθι
 (282) γαῖα χάνοι: μέγα γάρ μιν Ὀλύμπιος ἔτρεφε πῆμα
 (283) Τρωσί τε καὶ Πριάμῳ μεγαλήτορι τοῖό τε παισίν.
 (284) εἰ κείνόν γε ἴδοιμι κατελθόντ' Ἄϊδος εἴσω
 (285) φαίην κεν φρέν' ἀτέρπου οἴζυος ἐκλελαθέσθαι. (*Iliad* 6,281–285)

'If he is willing to listen to the one speaking. May the earth open for him then! The Olympian has raised him as a great suffering for the Trojans, the magnanimous Priam and his children. If I saw him go down into the Hades, I would say that my mind can forget this joyless affliction.'

In these lines Hektor tells his mother that he will search for Paris to incite him to return to battle and adds that Zeus behind Paris being the cause of so much Trojan suffering, stating that he would even be happy if Paris went down to Hades (a very difficult thing to say about his own brother in the presence of their mother). As Hektor knows that this will not happen in the immediate future, the optative ἴδοιμι (and φαίην) is (are) an irrealis.⁶¹ As he had had this thought before (one can refer to his statement about Paris facing Menelaos in *Iliad* 3,52–57, a passage that will be discussed below, and to his insult Δύσπαρις 'Paris of bad luck'), the statement was valid in the past as well, but it is still valid today. As such, the statement can refer to the past, the present and the future.

(EX.06) (327) λαοὶ μὲν φθινύθουσι περὶ πτόλιν αἰπύ τε τεῖχος
 (328) μαρνάμενοι: σέο δ' εἴνεκ' ἀυτή τε πτόλεμός τε
 (329) ἄστν τόδ' ἀμφιδέδῃε: σὺ δ' ἄν μαχέσαιο καὶ ἄλλῳ,
 (330) εἴ τινά που μεθίεντα ἴδοις στυγεροῦ πολέμοιο. (*Iliad* 6,327–330)

'People are dying throughout the city and the high wall, in battle, because of you cries and war are burning around the city. You (yourself) would also fight another man, if you noted that he were holding back from the hated war.'

In this passage Hektor tries to encourage Paris to fight more bravely and adds that he (H) has every right to chastise him (P), as the entire city is under attack because of his irresponsible behaviour. Additionally, he (P) would also verbally confront another soldier if he noted that that soldier was holding back or behaving in a cowardly manner. The use of the optative ἴδοις in this passage can be interpreted in various ways. It can be a "simple" potential optative 'if you saw someone holding back ... you would fight', but it could also be a counterfactual, present or past, 'if you had seen / if you saw' and it could even be an optative with an iterative notion 'you would fight ... whenever you were to see ...'. A sharp distinction between these different categories cannot be made and in my opinion Hektor wanted to communicate all three notions (as was also the case in *Iliad* 3,52–53, discussed above). All the codices have the reading

1870a: 42), La Roche (1870a: 104, 1870b: 8), and Leaf (1886: 100, 151). See also the discussion in the "Forschungsgeschichte".

The issue was not addressed in Kirk (1990: 62–63).

⁶¹ See the previous footnote.

εἴ τινά, but Aristarkhos changed this into ὄν τινα, which was printed by most editors, because of the parallellism with *Iliad* 4,240.⁶² This passage is formally similar, but the meaning is clearly different. In 4,240, which will be discussed below, Homer describes how Agamemnon incites the army by repeatedly speaking to the soldiers and leaders who hold back from battle. That passage (4,240) clearly has a repetitive meaning, but in the passage here the repeated meaning is by no means certain. We have no indication whatsoever that Paris would repeatedly confront someone he saw holding back from a battle. It is more likely that this instance refers to a single event. For this reason, the transmitted reading εἴ τινά has preference in my opinion. The optative μαχέσαιο has the same modal ambiguity, as it can refer to something that is possible, remotely possible or even unlikely. The reference can be to the past, present and future, because Hektor might refer to an attitude Paris had in the past, but it might also describe a reaction that Paris could have now or in the future.

(EX.07) (388) νῦν δέ μ' ἐπιγράψας ταρσὸν ποδὸς εὔχεται αὐτῶς.
 (389) οὐκ ἀλέγω, ὡς εἴ με γυνὴ βάλῃ ἢ παῖς ἄφρων:
 (390) κωφὸν γὰρ βέλος ἀνδρὸς ἀνάκιδος οὐτιδανοῖο. (*Iliad* 11,388–390)

‘Now you hit the flat of my foot and boast even about this. I do not care (about it), as if a woman or a witless child had hit me. Empty is the missile of a spineless nobody without courage.’

These lines describe how Diomedes defiantly responds to Paris after he hit him with an arrow, telling him that the arrow has the same effect on him as if it had been thrown by a woman or a young child. The optative βάλῃ, which is metrically equivalent to the indicative βάλει, is unreal, as it refers to an imagined situation, but the past reference is not definite, as βάλῃ could, on the one hand, refer to the arrow released by Paris, in which case it has a past reference, yet at the same time, it could also be a more general statement, in which case the reference would be timeless. The degree of probability is closer to an irrealis than to a potentialis.

(EX.08) (53) ἦ δὴ ταῦτά γ' ἐτοῖμα τετεύχεται, οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως
 (54) Ζεὺς ὑπιβρεμέτης αὐτὸς παρατεκτῆναιτο.
 (55) τεῖχος μὲν γὰρ δὴ κατερήριπεν, ᾗ ἐπέπιθμεν
 (56) ἄρρηκτον νηῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν εἶλαρ ἔσεσθαι:
 (57) οἱ δ' ἐπὶ νηυσὶ θοῆσι μάχην ἀλίσστον ἔχουσι
 (58) νωλεμές: οὐδ' ἂν ἔτι γνοίης μάλα περ σκοπιάζων
 (59) ὀπποτέρωθεν Ἀχαιοὶ ὀρινόμενοι κλονέονται,
 (60) ὡς ἐπιμιξ κτείνονται, αὐτὴ δ' οὐρανὸν ἵκει. (*Iliad* 14,53–60)

⁶² The correction was adopted by Bekker (1858a: 100), Faesi (1858a: 247 without discussing the issue), Doederlein (1863: 139 without discussing the issue), Düntzer (1866: 209 referring to 4,240, 1873: 223 without discussing the issue), Ameis (1870a: 113, without discussing the issue), La Roche (1870a: 68,1873: 180), Leaf (1886: 218–219, referring to Aristarkhos but without discussing the issue), Cauer (1890a: 155), and Monro and Allen (1902a on this passage, stating that two codices have this reading as well).

The transmitted text was preserved in Barnes (1711: 249), Heyne (1804a: 318), Nauck (1877: 151), West (1998: 195), and Van Thiel (2010: 115).

Kirk (1990: 203) did not discuss this issue.

‘Indeed, these things have been fittingly accomplished. Not even Zeus himself who thunders high in the sky could *make / have made* them in another way. The wall, in which we had confidently considered to be a unbreakable shelter for our ships and ourselves, has been torn down. They unceasingly engage in an unabating battle against the fast ships. Looking around from a high tower you would not *know / have known* from which side the Greeks are being stirred up and scattered into confusion and how mingled with each other they are being killed, and how their shouting reaches the heavens.’

In these lines Nestor relates how the wall the Greeks had built to protect themselves, has been torn down and how they are now being chased and killed in scenes of complete confusion. Nobody present would have been able to see from where the danger was coming. The optative aorists γνοίης and παρατεκτῆναιτο are both secured by the metre and cannot be substituted by an indicative. As in the previous instances they could both describe an action that Nestor considers possible, but at the same time, given that the situation is so dramatic, it is more likely that Nestor thinks that no intervention or turnaround remains possible and that we are dealing with an unreal or unlikely statement. The forms can refer to the past or to the present (past or present potentialis), but as Nestor describes a situation that is taking place, a present reference seems more likely for γνοίης, although for παρατεκτῆναιτο the interpretation is different, as this refers to an action in the past. The meaning could be ‘Zeus himself can no longer change it’, but ‘Zeus could no longer have changed it’ is equally possible. For both forms a past reference is not impossible, but not certain either.

(EX.09) (623) εἰ καὶ ἐγὼ σε βάλωμι τυχῶν μέσον ὀξεῖ χαλκῷ,
 (624) αἰψά κε καὶ κρατερός περ ἔων καὶ χερσὶ πεποιθώς
 (625) εὐχος ἔμοι δοίης, ψυχὴν δ’ Ἄϊδι κλυτοπόλῳ. (*Iliad* 16,623–625)

‘If I *hit / had hit* you striking you in the middle with the sharp bronze, soon you would *give me / have given* me fame and Hades, famous for its horses, your soul, although you are strong and trust the power of your hands.’

In these lines (which will be continued in part 2 of this article) Meriones insults Aineias saying that, while he is strong and valiant, he would still die and bring honour upon himself if he (M) were to hit him. The optative βάλωμι can refer to the past (‘if I had hit you a moment ago, you would have given me ...’), but can also refer to the present (the current moment in the battle: ‘if I hit you right now, ...’) or even to the future (although this is less likely). Given the fact that they are engaged in fighting, the present or past reference seems the most probable. The degree of probability is closer to an irrealis than to a potentialis, because Meriones exclaims this after failing to neutralise Aineias.

(EX.10) (629) ὦ πόποι ἦδη μὲν κε καὶ ὃς μάλα νήπιός ἐστι
 (630) γνοίη ὅτι Τρώεσσι πατὴρ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀρήγει. (*Iliad* 17,629–630)

‘O woe to us, now even a child could *notice / have noticed* that father Zeus himself is supporting the Trojans.’

In these lines Aias exclaims in despair that it should now be clear to anyone, even to a child, that Zeus is supporting the Trojans. The optative γνοιή is clearly not unreal, and can refer both to the present (‘could notice’) and the past (‘could have noticed’). As the verb does not have an exclusive past reference, the optative is the most appropriate, but the optative is not secured by the metre, as the indicative ξγνω would fit the metre equally well. In these lines it is thus unclear whether Aias was speaking about the past or not, but in my opinion instances such as this contributed to the expansion of the indicative for statements with a past reference.

- (EX.11) (366) τῶν εἴ τις σε ἴδοιτο θοῆν διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν
 (367) τοσσάδ’ ὀνειάτ’ ἄγοντα, τίς ἂν δὴ τοι νόος εἴη;
 (368) οὔτ’ αὐτὸς νέος ἔσσι, γέρων δέ τοι οὔτος ὀπηδεῖ,
 (369) ἄνδρ’ ἀπαμύνασθαι, ὅτε τις πρότερος χαλεπήνη. (*Iliad* 24,366–369)

‘If someone saw you through the black night carrying so many goods, what would then be your plan? You yourself are not young (anymore), and that old man is guiding you, (so he is unable) to ward off a person, when he attacks you first.’

In these verses Hermes, disguised as inconspicuous passer-by, approaches Priam and his servant, asking them how they would be able to defend themselves if they were attacked in the middle of the night outside the city. The reference is to the present or future, as Priam and his herald have not so far met anyone on the road, although a past reference can strictly speaking not be ruled out (‘if you had met someone, what would you have done then?’). The reason why Hermes appears is that he has been sent by Zeus to protect Priam and his question is, therefore, not non-committal, but driven by a serious fear, as he considers an attack to be possible and is not talking about an unlikely or unreal event.

- (EX.12) (653) τῶν εἴ τις σε ἴδοιτο θοῆν διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν,
 (654) αὐτίκ’ ἂν ἐξείποι Ἀγαμέμνονι ποιμένι λαῶν,
 (655) καὶ κεν ἀνάβλησις λύσιος νεκροῖο γένηται. (*Iliad* 24,653–655)

‘If someone saw you here through the swift black night, he would immediately tell Agamemnon, the shepherd of men and there *will/would* be a delay in the return of the body.’

These verses, pronounced by Akhilleus but echoing those by Hermes, serve as warning to Priam that he should leave. Remaining any longer in the camp might lead to him being discovered by a soldier, who might tell Agamemnon about his presence, and if he learns about this, the return of the body would probably no longer take place. The reference of ἴδοιτο (and ἐξείποι) is either to the present or to the future (as seems to be confirmed by the subjunctive γένηται), as Priam has not yet been discovered. As was the case with the verses pronounced by Hermes, Akhilleus too considers discovery by a soldier possible and, therefore, this passage is neither remotely possible nor an unlikely optative, but the description of an event that could occur.

- (EX.13) (163) εἰ κείνόν γ’ Ἴθάκηνδε ἰδοίαιτο νοστήσαντα,
 (164) πάντες κ’ ἀρησαίαιτ’ ἐλαφρότεροι πόδας εἶναι

- (165) ἢ ἀφνειότεροι χρυσοῖο τε ἐσθῆτός τε.
 (166) νῦν δ' ὁ μὲν ὡς ἀπόλωλε κακὸν μόρον, οὐδέ τις ἡμῖν
 (167) θαλπωρή, εἴ πέρ τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 (168) φῆσιν ἐλεύσεσθαι: τοῦ δ' ὤλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ. (*Odyssey* 1,163–168)

'If they saw him returning home to Ithaka, they would all pray that they were lighter of foot than richer in gold and clothes. Now that one has died a baneful death and now there is no comfort for us anymore, even if someone among the people living in this country tells us that he will come (home). The day of his homecoming has been lost.'

In this instance Telemakhos tells Athene (who is disguised as a mortal guest) that if Odysseus were to come home, all the evildoers would wish they could run very quickly (in order to escape) rather than attain wealth, but this thought does not help him (T) anymore, as he is certain that Odysseus has died and will never return home. The optatives ἰδοῖατο and ἀρησαίαιτ' do not have a temporal reference, because they are valid for the past, present and future: if Odysseus came home last year, the evildoers in his palace (i.e. the suitors) would wish they were fleet of foot, and if he came home now or even next year, they would still wish it. We are clearly dealing with an unlikely event (irrealis), as is proved by νῦν δ'.

- (EX.14) (219) ἔνθ' αὐτ' ἄλλ' ἐνόησ' Ἐλένη Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα:
 (220) αὐτίκ' ἄρ' εἰς οἶνον βάλε φάρμακον, ἔνθεν ἔπινον,
 (221) νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων.
 (222) ὃς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπὴν κρητῆρι μιγείη,
 (223) οὐ κεν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν,
 (224) οὐδ' εἴ οἱ κατατεθναίῃ μῆτηρ τε πατήρ τε,
 (225) οὐδ' εἴ οἱ προπάροιθεν ἀδελφεὸν ἢ φίλον υἷον
 (226) χαλκῷ δηϊόφεν, ὃ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄρῳτο. (*Odyssey* 4,219–226)

'But then Helen, born from Zeus, thought of something else. She immediately threw a drug in the wine from which they were drinking, a painkilling and angersolving one, that made one forget all evil. Who swallowed it, after it had been mixed in the mixing bowl, would not shed a single tear from his cheeks, not even if his father and mother died, or if they chopped down his brother or beloved son in front of him and he saw it with his own eyes.'

In these lines Homer describes how Helen decided to intervene after she noticed that Telemakhos, Nestor and Peisistratos had begun to cry over the misery they had to endure. She mixes a drug into the wine, a drug that causes all evil and suffering to be forgotten, and renders an individual immune to grief. The optatives καταβρόξειεν, μιγείη, βάλοι, κατατεθναίῃ, δηϊόφεν and ὄρῳτο belong to an unreal description of what the drug could do if it had been mixed in wine that would subsequently be drunk. All these forms are timeless, because they can refer to an event that could happen in the past, present or future. This is an irrealis, as it refers to an event that has not taken place.

- (EX.15) (355) Ἀλκίνοε κρεῖον, πάντων ἀριδείκετε λαῶν,
 (356) εἴ με καὶ εἰς ἐναυτὸν ἀνώγοιτ' αὐτόθι μῖμνεν,
 (357) πομπήν τ' ὀτρύνοιτε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῖτε,
 (358) καὶ κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καὶ κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἶη,

- (359) πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἰκέσθαι:
 (360) καὶ κ' αἰδοιότερος καὶ φίλτερος ἀνδράσιν εἶην
 (361) πᾶσιν, ὅσοι μ' Ἴθάκηνδε ἰδοίαιτο νοστήσαντα. (*Odyssey* 11,355–361)

‘Ruler Alkinoos, most glorious of all men, (even) if you ordered me to stay here for another year, urged (your servants to prepare) a convoy (to take me home then) and gave me splendid gifts, even then I would want this, and it would be much better, namely to return with a fuller hand to my beloved fatherland, and I would be more respected and beloved by all men, who saw me return home in Ithaka.’

In this passage Odysseus thanks the king of the Phaiakians, Alkinoos, for his offer to stay with them and marry his daughter or to stay longer and receive many more gifts, but adds that in spite of all this he still prefers to return home, as returning home with many gifts after such a long period will gain him the love and respect of his countrymen. The optatives ἀνώγοιτ', ὀτρύνοιτε, διδοίτε, βουλοίμην and εἶη can be a potential and irrealis, but as Odysseus has already decided to return home, he considers this event to be unlikely and the optatives are thus a probable irrealis. The question is how to analyze εἶην and ἰδοίαιτο. As those two forms refer to his homecoming, which in his mind will happen, it could be argued that they are probable and possible and not contrary-to-fact, but given the fact that he uses the optative καὶ κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἶη to describe the value of his return and not the indicative, some doubt seems to remain. In any case, this is not a completely certain case of an optative with a remote/unlikely meaning. The optative ἰδοίαιτο does not refer to the past, as Odysseus still has to reach his home.

- (EX.16) (245) κόυρη Ἰκαρίοιο, περίφρων Πηνελόπεια,
 (246) εἰ πάντες σε ἴδοιεν ἀν' Ἰασόν Ἄργος Ἀχαιοί,
 (247) πλέονές κεν μνηστήρες ἐν ὑμετέροισι δόμοισιν
 (248) ἠῶθεν δαινύατ', ἐπεὶ περίεσσι γυναικῶν
 (249) εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε ἰδὲ φρένας ἐνδον εἴσας. (*Odyssey* 18,245–249)

‘Daughter of Ikarios, shrewd Penelope, if all Akhaians around the Iasian Argos saw you, there would be many more suitors dining in your palace from the morning on, since you excel above (all) women in looks, stature and balanced mind inside (your body).’

In these lines the suitor Eurylokchos states that if every Akhaian saw Penelope now, there would be even more suitors in the palace. The optatives ἴδοιεν and δαινύατ' describe an unlikely event, as it is clearly impossible that every Greek would be able to see her. There is no clear temporal reference, as this statement is valid today but also next week, and might also have been true months ago.

- (EX.17) (366) Εὐρύμαχ', εἰ γὰρ νῶϊν ἔρις ἔργοιο γένοιτο
 (367) ὥρη ἐν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τ' ἤματα μακρὰ πέλονται,
 (368) ἐν ποίῃ, δρέπανον μὲν ἐγὼν εὐκαμπὲς ἔχοιμι,
 (369) καὶ δὲ σὺ τοῖον ἔχεις, ἵνα πειρησαίμεθα ἔργου
 (370) νήστιες ἄχρι μάλα κνέφαος, ποίῃ δὲ παρείη.

(371) εἰ δ' αὖ καὶ βόες εἶεν ἐλαυνέμεν, οἳ περ ἄριστοι,
 (372) αἰθωνες, μεγάλοι, ἄμφω κεκορηότε ποίης,
 (373) ἥλικες, ἰσοφόροι, τῶν τε σθένος οὐκ ἀλαπαδνόν,
 (374) τετράγυον δ' εἶη, εἵκοι δ' ὑπὸ βῶλος ἀρότρω:
 (375) τῷ κέ μ' ἴδοις, εἰ ὄλκα διηνεκέα προταμοίμην.
 (376) εἰ δ' αὖ καὶ πόλεμόν ποθεν ὀρμήσειε Κρονίων
 (377) σήμερον, αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ σάκος εἶη καὶ δύο δοῦρε
 (378) καὶ κυνὴ πάγχαλκος, ἐπὶ κροτάφοις ἀραρυῖα,
 (379) τῷ κέ μ' ἴδοις πρώτοισιν ἐνὶ προμάχοισι μιγέντα,
 (380) οὐδ' ἄν μοι τὴν γαστέρ' ὄνειδίζων ἀγορεύοις.
 (381) ἀλλὰ μάλ' ὑβρίζεις, καὶ τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηγής:
 (382) καὶ πού τις δοκέεις μέγας ἔμμεναι ἠδὲ κραταῖός,
 (383) οὐνεκα πὰρ παύροισι καὶ οὐκ ἀγαθοῖσιν ὀμιλεῖς.
 (384) εἰ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔλθοι καὶ ἵκοιτ' ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν,
 (385) αἰψὰ κέ τοι τὰ θύρετρα, καὶ εὐρέα περ μάλ' ἐόντα,
 (386) φεύγοντι στείνοιτο διέκ προθύροιο θύραζε. (*Odyssey* 18,368–388)

'Eurymakhos, why, I'd like us to have a work contest, in the season of spring, when the days are getting long, in cutting grass. I'd have a well-curved scythe, and you'd have one like it, and there'd be grass at hand, so we could test each other's work, fasting till the very twilight. I'd also like there to be oxen to drive, the very best ones, tawny, big ones, both fed full of grass, of the same age and equally able to carry, whose strength is inexhaustible, and that there'd be a four-acre field, and the clods yield to the plough. Then you'd see if I could cut unbroken furrows before me. I'd also like Kronos' son to start a war somewhere, today, then that I'd have a shield and two spears, and a solid-bronze helmet, fitted to my temples. Then you'd see me mixing among the first of the front-line fighters, and you wouldn't speak reproachfully of this belly of mine. But you act so very wantonly, and have a mind that's cruel, and, I suppose, you think you're someone big and mighty because you consort with the small ones, and not the good ones. If Odysseus were to come and reach his fatherland, suddenly these doors, although they're very wide, would be narrow for one fleeing through the doorway to outside.' (Translation from the *Loeb Classical Library* as printed on the *Chicago Homer*, with small adaptations for the readability.)

In these lines Odysseus (still disguised as beggar) challenges the suitor Eurymakhos to a contest to see who could endure the most while working the land, so that he (E) would see that he (O) is not a glutton after all and that he (E) should refrain from insulting him again. There are sixteen optatives in this passage and no past indicative forms. γένοιτο, ἔχοιμι, ἔχοις, εἶεν, προταμοίμην, ὀρμήσειε, ἔλθοι and ἵκοιτ' appear in a conditional clause, πειρησαίμεθα is used in a purpose clause, but it has both the meaning of a (remotely realizable) wish and a (remotely possible) potential, and the other forms are used in a main clause. None of these optatives is very likely to occur, most of them being unlikely or completely impossible (the idea that a suitor would engage in a contest working the land with an unknown beggar is so unreal that it becomes almost ridiculous). The return to reality after the unreal optatives ἴδοις and ἀγορεύοις is made by ἀλλά. None of these forms refers to the past, however, as Odysseus suggests something in the future.

In this subsection I analysed 16 instances from the 51 optatives with the aorist forms of γινώσκω, βάλλω and of ἴδον which could be interpreted as referring to a remotely possible or unlikely event, and in 11 cases this analysis was confirmed (*Iliad* 3,53, 3,453, 4,223, 5,85, 6,284, 6,330, 11,389, 14,58, 16,623 and *Odyssey* 1,163, 4,223, 11,361, 18,246, 18,375, 18,379).

5. The optatives: Past reference

As has already been stated above there are 51 optatives in the corpus being analyzed. Of those, only 8 unambiguously and uniquely refer to the past,⁶³ 23 can refer to the past, present and future,⁶⁴ and 20 cannot have a past reference and only refer to the present or future.⁶⁵ In this subsection I discuss those with an exclusively past reference. Of the 8 optatives with an exclusively past reference, 5 are used in a subordinate clause with a main verb that indicates an iterative action and 3 in a sentence that has a “modal” meaning (*Iliad* 3,453, 4,223, 5,85). These 3 modal optatives have been discussed in the subsection above and so will not be included here.

(EX.18) (198) ὃν δ' αὖ δῆμου τ' ἄνδρα ἴδοι βοόωντά τ' ἐφεύροι,
(199) τὸν σκήπτρω ἐλάσασκεν ὁμοκλήσασκέ τε μύθῳ: (*Iliad* 2,198–199)

‘Whomever from the people he saw and noted to be shouting, he would drive forward with the sceptre and call him out with (this) word:’

These lines describe how Odysseus restored order in the Greek army after Agamemnon suggested leaving Troy and sailing home. Contrary to his (A) expectations, the Greeks reacted enthusiastically to his suggestion and stormed towards the ships. Instructed by Athene to do so, Odysseus began to exert his control over the kings and common soldiers and forced them to remain in Troy.

(EX.19) (232) καὶ ῥ' οὖς μὲν σπεύδοντας ἴδοι Δαναῶν ταχυπάλων,
(233) τοὺς μάλα θαρσύνεσκε παριστάμενος ἐπέεσσιν: (*Iliad* 4,232–233)

“Whom of the fastmounted Danaans he would see making efforts, he would stand next to him and encourage him warmly with words.”

⁶³ The instances are *Iliad* 2,198 (ἴδοι), 3,453 (ἴδοιτο), 4,223 (ἴδοις), 4,232 (ἴδοι), 4,240 (ἴδοι), 4,516 (ἴδοιτο), 5,85 (γνοίης), 12,268 (ἴδοιεν).

⁶⁴ The instances are *Iliad* 3,53 (γνοίης), 3,325 (γνοίην), 6,284 (ἴδοιμι), 6,330 (ἴδοις), 11,389 (βάλοι), 14,58 (γνοίης), 16,623 (βάλοιμι), 17,630 (γνοίην), 24,366 (ἴδοιτο), *Odyssey* 1,163 (ἰδοίατο), 4,223 (βάλοι), 8,216 (βάλοιμι), 8,280 (ἴδοιτο), 10,574 (ἴδοιτ'), 11,366 (ἴδοιτο), 17,251 (βάλοι), 17,494, (βάλοι), 18,246 (ἴδοιεν), 18,375 (ἴδοις), 18,379 (ἴδοις), 19,310 (γνοίης), 20,237 (γνοίης), 21,202 (γνοίης).

⁶⁵ The instances are *Iliad* 12,333 (ἴδοιτο), 15,571 (βάλοισθα), 17,681 (ἴδοιτο), 18,125 (γνοίεν), 18,524 (ἰδοίατο), 23,487 (γνοίην), 24,583 (ἴδοι), 24,653 (ἴδοιτο), *Odyssey* 6,113 (ἴδοιτ'), 9,229 (ἴδοιμι), 10,147 (ἴδοιμι), 11,361 (ἰδοίατο), 13,192 (γνοίην), 15,537 (γνοίης), 16,458 (γνοίην), 17,164 (γνοίης), 17,363 (γνοίην), 20,65 (βάλοι), 20,80 (βάλοι), 24,491 (ἴδοι).

(EX.20) (240) οὐς τινας αὐ̄ μεθιέντας ἴδοῑ στυγεροῦ πολέμοιο,
 (241) τοὺς μάλα νεκείεσκε χολωτοῖσιν ἐπέεσσιν: (*Iliad* 4,240–241)

‘The ones he saw withholding from woeful battle, he would scold heavily with insulting words.’

In these two passages Agamemnon, the head of the army, proceeds to exhort the leaders and soldiers.

(EX.21) (514) ὥς φάτ’ ἀπὸ πτόλιος δεινὸς θεός: αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὺς
 (515) ὥρσε Διὸς θυγάτηρ κυδίστη Τριτογένεια
 (516) ἐρχομένη καθ’ ὄμιλον, ὅθι μεθιέντας ἴδοιτο. (*Iliad* 4,514–516)

‘The fear instilling god spoke thus from the city (wall), but Zeus’ daughter, most famous Tritogeneia, walked through the ranks and incited wherever she saw men holding back.’

In this passage Athene motivates the Greek soldiers she observes to be slacking and holding back from the fighting. As was the case with the previous instances, ἴδοιτο refers to an action in the past.

(EX.22) (265) ἀμφοτέρω δ’ Αἴαντε κελευτιόωντ’ ἐπὶ πύργων
 (266) πάντοσε φοιτήτην μένος ὀτρύνοντες Ἀχαιῶν.
 (267) ἄλλον μειλιχίους, ἄλλον στερεοὺς ἐπέεσσι
 (268) νείκεον, ὃν τινα πάγχυ μάχης μεθιέντα ἴδοιεν: (*Iliad* 12,265–268)

‘Both Aiantes went through the ranks everywhere, ordering and inciting the bravery of the Akhaians. One they incited with nice words, another they chastised with hateful words, whom they noted to be entirely holding back from battle.’

In these lines the two Aiantes moved through the ranks of the Greek army and encouraged the soldiers, either with pleasant words or with insults, and chastised anyone they viewed as being reluctant to fight.

In these five passages, the optatives (in three cases ἴδοι, ἴδοιεν, ἴδοιτο but also ἐφεύροι) describe an action that occurred before that of the main clause which caused the action of the main verb. The optatives refer to the past, but they are not unreal. As becomes clear from the last two passages, the verb form expressing iterativity does not have to be marked by the -σκ-suffix.

The forms used in an iterative context refer to actions that occurred, while the other instances (the so-called “modal” optatives) describe events that did not happen.

6. Reuse of a single passage in different contexts with different protagonists

Besides *Iliad* 24,366–369 and 24,653–655 in which a single formula was used twice, which were discussed above (and interpreted as being possible and not unreal), there are two other formulae that are reused in different contexts, with different speakers and hearers, and consequently, also with different degrees of temporal reference and modal meaning, depending on what the speakers and hearers (do not) know.

Below I discuss a passage that reoccurs thrice and has three different temporal and modal meanings, and another that appears twice with two possible meanings.

(EX.23) (536) αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο, ξεῖνε, ἔπος τετελεσμένον εἶη:
 (537) τῶ κε τάχα γνοίης φιλότητά τε πολλά τε δῶρα
 (538) ἐξ ἔμευ, ὡς ἂν τίς σε συναντόμενος μακαρίζοι. (*Odyssey* 15,536–538)

‘If only, stranger, that word could be fulfilled! You would soon know friendship and many gifts from me, so that anyone (who) would meet you would call you blessed (forever).’

These lines appear in Telemakhos’ answer to the seer Theoklymenos who predicted that Telemakhos would fare well, as a good omen had appeared in the form of a passing bird. Telemakhos answered that if that were to be true, he (Th) would be forever his friend.

(EX.24) (163) αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο, ξεῖνε, ἔπος τετελεσμένον εἶη:
 (164) τῶ κε τάχα γνοίης φιλότητά τε πολλά τε δῶρα
 (165) ἐξ ἔμευ, ὡς ἂν τίς σε συναντόμενος μακαρίζοι. (*Odyssey* 17,163–165)

‘If only, stranger, that word could be fulfilled! You would soon know friendship and many gifts from me, so that anyone (who) would meet you would call you blessed (forever).’

These lines appear in Penelope’s answer to that same seer, Theoklymenos, who has just informed her that he has predicted a safe passage for Telemakhos. She replies with the same wishes.

(EX.25) (309) αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο, ξεῖνε, ἔπος τετελεσμένον εἶη:
 (310) τῶ κε τάχα γνοίης φιλότητά τε πολλά τε δῶρα
 (311) ἐξ ἔμευ, ὡς ἂν τίς σε συναντόμενος μακαρίζοι. (*Odyssey* 19,309–311)

‘If only, stranger, that word could be fulfilled! You would soon know friendship and many gifts from me, so that anyone (who) would meet you would call you blessed (forever).’

These lines are pronounced by Penelope in response to the “stranger in the court” (Odysseus in disguise) who predicts that Odysseus will return soon and enact vengeance. The optatives, which are all metrically secure, pose similar problems to those previously discussed, but their meaning differs each time since the context is different, and it is, therefore, entirely possible that the poet deliberately repeated these lines (as noted by Russo 1993: 26). Do they refer to something that the speakers consider possible or impossible? Do they refer to the present or past? In the first passage Telemakhos certainly hopes that his trip will end well and thus considers it possible. The second passage is more difficult to judge, because Penelope hopes that Telemakhos will return safely, but given her experience with the evil natures of her suitors she cannot be certain. In that passage I would argue that the optatives have different nuances at the same time. The same applies to the third passage, because in Odysseus’ mind everything will be completed and is very likely, while in Penelope’s mind this remains

something for which she can only hope, so she remains careful not to allow herself to have high expectations, and thus the events described continue to be a remote possibility. In the first two passages, addressing Telemakhos' journey, it is much more likely that γνοίης and τετελεσμένον εἶη have a present reference ('you would know' and 'may this be fulfilled'), as he has yet to set out in the first passage and has yet to arrive in the second, so that a past reference is not possible. The third passage is more ambiguous, because in Odysseus' mind a part of the statement has already been completed (he has in fact returned home) and the remainder will be completed very soon, while in Penelope's mind none of this has happened and may not even happen, so that a past reference seems excluded. The same ambiguity can be observed in the two passages below in which Eumaios and Odysseus engage in conversation.

(EX.26) (236) αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο, ξεῖνε, ἔπος τελέσειε Κρονίων:
(237) γνοίης χ' οἷή ἐμή δύναμις καὶ χεῖρες ἔπονται. (*Odyssey* 20,236–237)

'If Kronos' son could fulfil this word, stranger, you would know how strong my power is and how my hands will follow.'

In these lines the swineherd Eumaios responds to the stranger's prediction (Odysseus in disguise) that soon he would be able to witness his master's return and the enactment of his revenge upon the suitors. In this instance γνοίης is not secured by the metre, as ἔγνωσ would have fitted the metre equally well. The optatives refer to something that Eumaios wishes for, but about which he cannot be certain. It is, therefore, unclear whether Eumaios considers it likely, possible or impossible that Odysseus' words will be fulfilled. The same ambiguity as in the passage with Odysseus and Penelope is noticeable here too, as in Eumaios' mind none of this has happened yet, so the optatives refer to the present, while for Odysseus some of these actions (his return) have already been completed.

(EX.27) (200) Ζεῦ πάτερ, αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο τελευτήσειας ἐέλωρ,
(201) ὡς ἔλθοι μὲν κείνος ἀνήρ, ἀγάγοι δέ ἐ δαίμων:
(202) γνοίης χ' οἷή ἐμή δύναμις καὶ χεῖρες ἔπονται. (*Odyssey* 21,200–202)

'Father Zeus, if you could make that wish come true, that that man would come and that a god would lead him, you would know how strong my power is and how my hands will follow.'

This is Eumaios' response to the beggar's question (Odysseus in disguise) as to what they would do if Odysseus returned and whether they would be willing to help him in his confrontation with the suitors. The observations made above about the past or present reference and the likelihood, possibility or impossibility of the event materializing also apply here, and are also present in the two optatives, ἔλθοι and ἀγάγοι, in the subordinate clause, as the actions of these verbs are also dependent on how the speaker and hearer view the current situation: for Odysseus a part of the statement has been completed already and another part will soon become real, but for Eumaios it is not at all certain that his master will return and remove the suitors forever.

7. Conclusion

In two articles I investigate the co-occurrence of the optative and the indicative in remotely possible, unlikely and impossible events. While Attic Greek almost exclusively uses the indicative in these contexts (the so-called “modal indicatives”), both the optative and the indicative appeared in Homeric Greek, although it has not been conclusively determined whether the indicative or the optative was the oldest mood, or if they both coexisted with a difference in meaning. As there are about 250 modal indicatives and 1500 optatives in the Homeric corpus, discussing all instances was impossible and, therefore, I decided to address this difficulty by investigating a corpus of common verbs for which neither the metre nor the aspect play a significant role, as well as choosing the passages in which aorist forms (optative or modal indicative) of γιγνώσκω, βάλλω and of ἴδων occurred (they are all in the aorist and in most cases the indicative and optative form are metrically equivalent). In this article I initially provided an overview of the existing scholarship on the optative mood and on the *irrealis*-constructions in epic Greek, then I analyzed all the optative forms in those passages and finally discussed certain passages with the same formulae in which the exact modal meaning (possible or unreal) did not depend on the mood, but on the viewpoint of the hearers and speakers. My analyses found that the optative was at the most unreal extreme of the *irrealis*-continuum and that it could initially refer to the present and future, and additionally to the past, but that the instances in which there was an exclusively past reference were (very) rare.

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