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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OPTATIVE AND THE “MODAL” INDICATIVE IN HOMERIC GREEK: FOUR CASE STUDIES – PART 2: THE INDICATIVE AND THE Εἰ Μῆ-CLAUSES

Keywords: mood and modality, optative, indicative, irrealis, Homeric Greek

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 μῆ 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 2) I address the modal indicatives, and discuss the postposed conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μῆ in the *Odyssey*, both in the indicative and the optative. Subsequently I analyze several instances in which the interpretation depends on the viewpoint of the hearer and the speakers, as what is possible for a speaker might be impossible for the hearer and vice versa. When comparing the data relating to the optative and the indicative, and especially that of the postposed conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μῆ, it can be noted that the indicative has more frequently an exclusively past reference and that it is more often genuinely unreal than

the optative, which often combines the notion of the possible, remotely possible and unreal. In my opinion this clearly indicates that the indicative eventually prevailed and replaced the optative because of the past reference.¹

1. 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 ἴδω, 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 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. There are fifteen (or eighteen, for an explanation of the difference in number, see below) indicatives and four optatives in the *Odyssey* and 39 (or 50) indicatives and two optatives in the *Iliad*. I only discuss the instances in which the indicative appears in the *Odyssey*, but discuss the optative in both works as otherwise there would be too few optative forms, but, as will be argued below, the data relating to the indicatives in the *Iliad* result in similar conclusions as those from the *Odyssey*. In this article I will address the modal indicatives and the postposed conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μή, as well as a passage in which both the optative and the subjunctive have been transmitted.

2. The modal indicatives

In this subsection I discuss the six instances in which the modal indicatives are found in the corpus. In several instances both optatives and indicatives are used

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 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.

within the same passage, permitting an attempt at distinguishing between these two moods. In each passage I will also discuss whether or not the modal indicative can contain (or “hide”) an older optative form.

- (EX.01)² (633) τῶν δ' ὡς τε δρυτόμων ἀνδρῶν ὀρυμαγδὸς ὀρώρει
 (634) οὔρεος ἐν βήσσης, ἔκαθεν δέ τε γίνετ' ἀκομή,
 (635) ὡς τῶν ὤρνυτο δοῦπος ἀπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης
 (636) χαλκοῦ τε ῥινοῦ τε βοῶν τ' εὐποητάων,
 (637) νυσομένων ξίφεσίν τε καὶ ἔγχεσιν ἀμφιγύοισιν.
 (638) οὐδ' ἂν ἔτι φράδμων περ ἀνήρ Σαρπηδόνα δῖον
 (639) **ἔγνω**, ἐπεὶ βελέεσσι καὶ αἵματι καὶ κονίησιν
 (640) ἐκ κεφαλῆς εἴλυτο διαμπερὲς ἐς πόδας ἄκρους. (*Iliad* 16,633–640)³

‘As when a loud thundering noise of oak-cutters rises out of the mountain glens and from far it can be heard, so a loud battle din was rising from the earth with its wide streets, from (the clashing of) the bronze and of the oxhide shields, made of well-wrought oxhides, that were being stabbed against by swords and double-pointed spears. Not even a clever man could *recognize / have recognized* shining Sarpedon, as he was covered with missiles, blood and dust from his head to the end of his feet.’

These lines describe the turmoil after Sarpedon was killed and compare it to the noise of woodcutters in the mountains. Among the fighting and shouting as a result of the ongoing battle, Sarpedon’s body is buried under so many missiles and smeared with so much blood and dust, that one would not be able / would not have been able to recognize that it was in fact Sarpedon’s body. The indicative ἔγνω is not secured by the metre, as the optative γνοίη could equally well be used. In this instance a present and past reference are both possible, but the presence of ἔτι might indicate that a past reference was intended (“no longer”), which makes the interpretation as a past potential the most probable.⁴

- (EX.02) (627) ὡς εἰπῶν ὁ μὲν αὐτίς ἔβη δόμον Ἄϊδος εἶσω,
 (628) αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν αὐτοῦ μένον ἔμπεδον, εἴ τις ἔτ' ἔλθοι
 (629) ἀνδρῶν ἠρώων, οἳ δὴ τὸ πρόσθεν ὄλοντο.
 (630) καὶ νύ κ' ἔτι προτέρους **ἴδον** ἀνέρας, οὓς ἔθελόν περ,
 (631) Θησέα Πειρίθοόν τε, θεῶν ἐρικυδέα τέκνα:

² I started the numbering from scratch rather than continuing the numbering from the previous article.

³ The modal indicatives are in bold face, whereas the optatives are underlined.

⁴ For the interpretation as a past potential see Krüger (1859: 138), Kühner (1870: 173), Ameis and Hentze (1881: 57, with reference to Aken 1861: 57, 1885: 41), Leaf (1888: 167 with reference to Monro’s grammar §326, but in an earlier version than that used by the author of the article), Monro (1891: 294–295), Kühner and Gerth (1898: 212–214), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 346f.), Chantraine (1953: 227), Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 260), and Brügger (2018: 284, with reference to Chantraine 1953: 223f.) – the indication *f* is taken from Brügger and probably means ‘and following’).

The issue was not addressed in Faesi (1858b: 150), Düntzer (1866b: 244, 1873b: 284) or La Roche (1870d: 136).

Janko (1994: 392) translated the fragment as: ‘you could not have recognized’, but failed to discuss the mood.

- (632) ἀλλὰ πρὶν ἐπὶ ἔθνε' ἀγείρετο μυρία νεκρῶν
 (633) ἠχῆ θεσπεσίη: ἐμὲ δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ἦρει,
 (634) μή μοι Γοργεῖνν κεφαλὴν δεινοῖο πελώρου
 (635) ἐξ Ἄϊδος πέμψειεν ἀγαυὴ Περσεφόνηα. (*Odyssey* 11,627–635)

‘So he spoke and he went again down into the house of Hades, but I stayed there in the hope that someone among the heroic men would come, of those who had died before. And at that moment I would have seen many men from earlier times, whom I wanted (to see), Theseus and Peirithoos, well-known children of the gods, but before that the endless throngs of the dead were gathered back by a godspoken cry. Greenish fear took hold of me, that renowned Persephone would send the Gorgo-head of the dreadful creature out of the Hades to me.’

In these lines Odysseus describes what happened after he spoke to Herakles and states he wished to speak to more men, but decided not to do so, as he became frightened that Persephone would send the Gorgo-head after him. Therefore, he ordered his men to start rowing again and leave Hades. The indicative ἴδον refers to the past, as the story has already happened at the moment when Odysseus is speaking and, as the event did not materialize, it is contrary-to-fact. The action of the main clause with ἴδον as the verb was thwarted by another main clause, ἀγείρετο, introduced by ἀλλά. In this instance the modal indicative ἴδον cannot be replaced by an optative.

- (EX.03) (304) Κτήσιππ', ἦ μάλα τοι τόδε κέρδιον ἔπλετο θυμῶ:
 (305) οὐκ ἔβαλες τὸν ξεῖνον: ἀλεύατο γὰρ βέλος αὐτός.
 (306) ἦ γὰρ κέν σε μέσον **βάλον** ἔγχει δξυόεντι,
 (307) καὶ κέ τοι ἀντὶ γάμοιο πατῆρ τάφον **ἀμφεπονεῖτο**
 (308) ἐνθάδε. τῷ μὴ τίς μοι ἀεικείας ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
 (309) φαινέτω: ἦδη γὰρ νοέω καὶ οἶδα ἕκαστα,
 (310) ἐσθλά τε καὶ τὰ χέρεια: πάρος δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα. (*Odyssey* 20,304–310)

‘Ktesippos! This was indeed better for your heart! You did not hit the stranger, as he himself ducked your missile. Without doubt, I *would have hit / would hit* you in the middle (of your chest) with my sharp(-edged) spear and your father *would have had / would have to prepare* a funeral here instead of a wedding. Thus let no-one display such reproachable behaviour in my house. Now I notice and know everything, noble and ignoble. Before I was a (powerless) child.’

In these lines Telemakhos chastizes the suitor Ktesippos for having thrown a stool at the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) and threatens that he would have killed Ktesippos if he had hit the beggar. Moreover, anyone misbehaving will be punished, as he has now come of age and is aware of everything that is happening in his palace. There is a modal construction with **βάλον** and **ἀμφεπονεῖτο**. Both forms are unreal, as Ktesippos has not hit the stranger, but what is remarkable is that neither modal indicative form has an exclusively past reference: **βάλον** and **ἀμφεπονεῖτο** could refer to the past, but also to the present: **βάλον** could mean ‘I would have hit you’ and refer to the past, but also ‘I would hit you now’ and **ἀμφεπονεῖτο** could mean ‘would have been preparing’ but also ‘would still be preparing’. Generally, it is argued

that the modal indicative can only refer to the past in Homer,⁵ and while this is by and large correct, it is possible that this instance could be one of the exceptions. ἀμφεπονεῖτο is equivalent to the optative ἀμφεπονοῖτο, but βάλον cannot be rewritten as an older optative.

Now I would like to discuss the passages in which indicatives and optatives occur. In the first, the same verb is used in the indicative and the optative, in the second, different constructions are used in the same passage, constructions referring to different aspects and different consequences of the same story.

- (EX.04) (616) Αἰνεΐας δ' ἄρα θυμὸν ἐχώσατο φώνησέν τε:
 (617) Μηριόνη τάχα κέν σε καὶ ὄρχηστήν περ ἔόντα
 (618) ἔγχος ἐμὸν κατέπαυσε διαμπερές, εἴ σ' ἔβαλόν περ.
 (619) τὸν δ' αὖ Μηριόνης δουρικλυτὸς ἀντίον ἠΰδα:
 (620) Αἰνεΐα χαλεπὸν σε καὶ ἴφθιμὸν περ ἔόντα
 (621) πάντων ἀνθρώπων σβέσσαι μένος, ὅς κέ σευ ἄντα
 (622) ἔλθη ἀμυνόμενος: θνητὸς δέ νυ καὶ σὺ τέτυξαι.
 (623) εἰ καὶ ἐγὼ σε βάλουμι τυχῶν μέσον ὀξείῃ χαλκῶ,
 (624) αἰψά κε καὶ κρατερός περ ἔων καὶ χερσὶ πεποιθῶς
 (625) εὖχος ἐμοὶ δοίης, ψυχὴν δ' Ἄϊδι κλυτοπόλῳ. (*Iliad* 16,616–625)

‘Aineias became angry in his heart and raised his voice: “Meriones, soon my sword would have stopped you forever, even though you are a dancer, if I had hit you.” To him Meriones, famous for his spear spoke back: “Aineias, it is difficult for you, although you are a powerful fighter, to quench the spirit of all the men who come against you and defend themselves. Now you as well will be found out to be mortal. 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 verses (which have previously been partially discussed) Aineias first complains that he missed Meriones and that consequently he survived the attack. Willmott (2007: 49) argued that in this instance the indicative had a positive epistemic stance and Aineias genuinely believed that he could have killed Meriones, because otherwise the taunt would not have made sense. In Meriones’ response to Aineias’ attack he insults Aineias saying that, while he is strong and valiant, he would die and bring him honour if he (M) were to hit him. In this description the optative βάλουμι is used (as opposed to the indicative used a few lines above). This optative 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 now, ...”) or even to the future (although this is less likely). Given the fact that they are engaged in a fight, 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 having not been able to neutralize Aineias.⁶ Ascribing a negative epistemic

⁵ In arguing that the forms only referred to the past Monro (1891: 295) specifically used this example.

⁶ For a more in-depth analysis of this passage see De Decker (2015: 233, 2021: 165–166). 

stance to these verses assumes that Meriones considered his own attack to be futile, because he knew that Aineias was stronger, but why would a warrior in a verbal fight concede defeat when he has yet to lose? I believe that this example shows that the distinction between indicative and optative is invalid. Moreover, the indicative forms can contain an older optative (ἔγχος ἐμὸν κατέπαυσε διαμπερές, εἴ σ' ἔβαλόν περ is equivalent to ἔγχος ἐμὸν παύσειε διαμπερές, εἴ σε βάλοιμί περ), but the optative forms are metrically secure. In several instances the indicative forms can “hide” an older optative, but conversely, almost all the optatives are metrically secure (the reason for their preservation). Although it is not central to the main focus of this article, the conditional clauses here could be reconstructed as old wish clauses (Delbrück 1871: 240; Lange 1872: 356; Ameis and Hentze 1881: 57; Leaf 1888: 265), but if this is the case (and I believe it is), the problem remains the same, as it would mean there was a wish in the indicative and another in the optative, a wish referring to something that could not / did not become a fact.

(EX.05) (278) Αἰνεΐας δ' ἑάλη καὶ ἀπὸ ἔθεν ἀσπίδ' ἀνέσχε
 (279) δείσας· ἐγχείη δ' ἄρ' ὑπὲρ νώτου ἐνὶ γαίῃ
 (280) ἔστη ἰεμένη, διὰ δ' ἀμφοτέρους ἔλε κύκλους
 (281) ἀσπίδος ἀμφιβρότης· ὃ δ' ἀλευάμενος δόρυ μακρόν
 (282) ἔστη, κὰδ δ' ἄχος οἱ χύτο μυρίον ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
 (283) ταρβήσας ὃ οἱ ἄγχι πάγη βέλος. αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
 (284) ἐμμεμαῶς ἐπόρουσεν ἐρυσσάμενος ξίφος ὄξυ
 (285) σμερδαλέα ἰάχων· ὃ δὲ χερμάδιον λάβε χειρὶ
 (286) Αἰνεΐας, μέγα ἔργον, ὃ οὐ δύο γ' ἄνδρε φέροιεν,
 (287) οἴοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσ'· ὃ δέ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἶος,
 (288) ἔνθά κεν Αἰνεΐας μὲν ἐπεσσύμενον **βάλε** πέτρῳ
 (289) ἢ κόρυθ' ἠὲ σάκος, τό οἱ ἤρκεσε λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον,⁷
 (290) τὸν δέ κε Πηλεΐδης σχεδὸν ἄορι θυμὸν ἀπηύρα,
 (291) εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὄξυ **νόησε** Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων·
 (292) αὐτίκα δ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖς μετὰ μῦθον ἔειπεν: (*Iliad* 20,278–292)

‘Aineias shrank down and held the shield away and above him in fright, and the spear went over his back and crashed its way to the ground, and fixed there, after tearing apart two circles of the man-covering shield. But Aineias, free of the long spear, stood still, and around his eyes gathered the enormous emotion and fear, that the weapon had fixed so close to him. Now Akhilleus drew his tearing sword and swept in fury upon him crying a terrible cry, but Aineias now in his hand caught up a stone, a huge thing which no two men *could carry / could have carried* such as men are now, but by himself he lightly hefted it. And there Aineias would have hit him with the stone as he swept in, on helm or shield, which would have fended the bitter death from him, and

That the indicative(s) was (were) unreal was noted by Faesi (1858b: 148), La Roche (1870d: 135 “hätte dich zu Ruhe gebracht”), Düntzer (1873b: 282 “beim Wurfe getroffen hätte”), Ameis and Hentze (1885b: 41 “würde dich zu Ruhe gebracht haben”), and Brügger (2018: 275–276), but none addressed the difference in moods in this passage; von Doederlein (1864: 109) and Janko (1994: 331) did not discuss any of the moods. Leaf (1888: 165 cf. *infra*) discussed the optative, but neither the indicative nor the difference in moods.

⁷ The form is only italicized and not in bold face, because it will be discussed below.

Peleus’ son would have closed with the sword and stripped the life from him, had not the shaker of the earth Poseidon sharply perceived all and immediately spoken his word out among the immortals:’ (translation by the Loeb Classical Library, as found on the online *Chicago Homer* with highlighting of the individual passages as required)

In these lines Homer describes the battle between Akhilleus and Aineias, how Aineias almost hit Akhilleus by throwing a rock so large and heavy not even two mortal men would have been able to carry it, and how Akhilleus in his turn almost succeeded in killing Aineias, but that this was prevented by Poseidon’s rapid intervention. All the elements that are discussed in this article, appear in this passage. First, there is the optative, φέροιεν, which could be a potential (Ameis 1870a: 56; Leaf 1886: 164; Ameis and Hentze 1887: 49), or a potential of the past (both *could carry* and *could have carried* are possible),⁸ as it is expressed in the optative without a modal particle.⁹ It is not entirely clear, therefore, whether or not the form refers to the past alone, as it could be argued that the rock that Aineias threw at Akhilleus would still be too heavy today to be carried by two normal mortal men.¹⁰ The indicatives βάλε and ἀπηύρα are unreal and refer to the past, as the battle has finished and none of the events has been realized. Neither of these forms can be reconstructed as an older optative. The indicative νόησε is used in a postposed conditional clause introduced by εἰ μή and, as will be shown in subsection §4, these describe an event in the past that prevented the action of the main clause from occurring (strictly speaking it is possible, therefore, to even argue that they are not really contrary-to-fact as they describe a fact that did occur). Whether or not ἦρκεσε is a modal indicative, is debatable, as it could be argued that this verb is a realis (Faesi 1858b: 274),¹¹ and simply describes the function of both shield and helmet, which is to ward off attacks and prevent the carrier/wearer from being injured or killed, but it could also be noted that it belongs to a counterfactual construction (as was argued by Düntzer 1866b: 112;¹² Leaf 1888: 304 and Edwards 1991: 325), or alternatively that the indicative is due to modal attraction under the influence of the modal indicative in the main clause (Ameis and Hentze 1887: 48). Leaf (1888: 304) argued that it would be more logical to include ἦρκεσε in the conditional construction given the relative value of τό, but added that such a long and extended conditional construction was unhomeric. This passage thus clearly shows, again, the difference between the optative, which can refer to the past and the present, and the indicative, which only refers to the past.¹³

⁸ I did not find this interpretation in any of the commentaries that I used.

⁹ The absence of the modal particle was mentioned in Krüger (1859: 99), Leaf (1886: 164, who referred to Monro’s Grammar §304 (in an earlier edition of the grammar than that used here)), Monro (1891: 272–273, 277), Chantraine (1953: 244), and Chantraine and Casevitz (2015: 278).

¹⁰ The issue was not addressed in Faesi (1858a: 199, 1858b: 274), von Doederlein (1863a: 107), Düntzer (1866a: 167, 1866c: 111) or Edwards (1991: 324).

¹¹ Faesi (1858b: 274) translated it as ‘abgewehrt hatte’, which is a realis.

¹² Subsequently Düntzer (1878: 122) failed to mention this explanation.

¹³ A similar passage where optatives and indicatives were contrasted in a such way is the *Odyssey* 9,125–139.

- (EX.06) (66) τῆ δ' οὐ πώ τις νηὺς φύγεν ἀνδρῶν, ἣ τις ἴκηται,
 (67) ἀλλά θ' ὁμοῦ πίνακάς τε νεῶν καὶ σώματα φωτῶν
 (68) κύμαθ' ἄλός φορέουσι πυρός τ' ὀλοοῖο θύελλα.
 (69) οἷη δὴ κείνη γε παρέπλω ποντοπόρος νηὺς,
 (70) Ἄργῳ πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ' Αἰήταιο πλέουσα.
 (71) καὶ νύ κε τὴν ἔνθ' ὤκα **βάλεν** μεγάλας ποτὶ πέτρας,
 (72) ἀλλ' Ἥρη παρέπεμψε, ἐπεὶ φίλος ἦεν Ἴησων.
 (73) οἱ δὲ δὺν σκόπελοι ὁ μὲν οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἰκάνει
 (74) ὄξειν κορυφῆ, νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφιβέβηκε
 (75) κυανέη: τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτ' ἔρωει, οὐδέ ποτ' αἶθρη
 (76) κείνου ἔχει κορυφὴν οὔτ' ἐν θέρει οὔτ' ἐν ὀπώρῃ.
 (77) οὐδέ κεν ἀμβραίη βροτὸς ἀνήρ οὐ καταβαίη,
 (78) οὐδ' εἰ οἱ χεῖρές τε ἑείκοσι καὶ πόδες εἶεν:
 (79) πέτρῃ γὰρ λίς ἐστι, περιξεστῆ εἰκνία.
 (80) μέσσω δ' ἐν σκοπέλω ἔστι σπέος ἡεροειδές,
 (81) πρὸς ζόφον εἰς Ἐρεβος τετραμμένον, ἣ περ ἂν ὑμεῖς
 (82) νῆα παρὰ γλαφυρὴν ἰθύνετε, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ.
 (83) οὐδέ κεν ἐκ νηὸς γλαφυρῆς αἰζήϊος ἀνήρ
 (84) τόξω οἴστεύσας κοῖλον σπέος εἰσαφίκοιτο.
 (85) ἔνθα δ' ἐνὶ Σκύλλῃ ναίει δεινὸν λελακυῖα.
 (86) τῆς ἦτοι φωνὴ μὲν ὄση σκύλακος νεογιλλῆς
 (87) γίνεται, αὐτῆ δ' αὐτε πέλωρ κακόν: οὐδέ κέ τις μιν
 (88) γῆθήσειεν ἰδών, οὐδ' εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε. (*Odyssey* 12,59–88)

'No ship of men has ever escaped there, any one that's come there, but waves of sea and storms of destructive fire carry ships' planks and men's bodies off together. The only seafaring ship that ever passed that place was the Argon, known to all, sailing from Aiates, and waves would have swiftly thrown even her against the great rocks, but Here guided her past them, since Iason was dear to her. The other way are two cliffs. One reaches the wide heaven with its sharp peak, and dark cloud surrounds it and never streams off it, and clear air never holds its peak in either summer or harvest time. And no mortal man could climb it or step upon its top, not even if he had twenty hands and feet, for the rock is smooth, as though highly polished. Not even a lusty man could shoot an arrow with a bow from his hollow ship and reach into the hollow cave. Skylla lives in there, howling terribly. Her voice is as loud as a newborn puppy's, but she herself is nonetheless an evil monster, and no one would rejoice in seeing her, not even if a god should meet her.' (translation by the Loeb Classical Library, as found on the online *Chicago Homer* with small adaptations)

Odysseus describes the threats posed by the crushing rocks of the Planktai, which had never allowed a ship to pass unharmed, until the Argon of Iason and the Argonauts appeared, but even they could only escape death because Here guided them through the dangerous rocks.

There are four modal constructions. The first has an indicative in a main clause, βάλεν, followed by another main clause with an indicative, παρέπεμψε, introduced by ἀλλά. In the second construction, initially there are two optatives in a main clause, ἀμβραίη and καταβαίη, followed by a postposed conditional clause introduced by οὐδ' εἰ, but also with an optative, εἶεν. In the third construction only an optative appears

in the main clause, εἰσαφίκοιτο, and in the fourth instance the construction is the same as the second, namely an optative in the main clause, γηθήσειεν, followed by a postposed conditional clause introduced by οὐδ' εἰ, with additionally an optative, ἀντιάσειε. In this passage the indicative βάλεν clearly refers to the past as the history of the Argonauts belongs to the mythical past, while the six optatives in this passage (which are as impossible and as unreal as the destruction of the Argonauts' ship) have no temporal reference, as they could refer to the past, the present and even the future. Three describe how it is impossible for any human to climb the highest rock of the Planktai (ἀμβαίη, καταβαίη and εἶεν), one refers to the impossibility of shooting an arrow into Skylla's cave (εἰσαφίκοιτο) and the two final optatives relate how no-one would ever rejoice upon meeting her, as not even a god would find pleasure in this (γηθήσειεν and ἀντιάσειε). All these verb forms highlight something either only remotely possible or even impossible. Personally, I would hesitate to call these forms “counterfactual” and prefer to view these verbs as being at the most unreal end of the optative spectrum (the optative spans all the degrees of (un)likelihood and (im)possibility). It is not possible to classify them as “past potential” either, because none of these verb forms has an exclusively past tense reference, as even today the rocks are still impossible to climb.

In this instance the indicative βάλεν is equivalent to the optative βάλοι, but the optatives are not metrically equivalent to an indicative nor could they be “substituted” by one. For the approximately 90 modal indicatives in the *Odyssey* that are not used in a conditional clause introduced by εἰ μή, 51 can be “rewritten” as an older optative, which is in my opinion additional evidence for the fact that the optative was the original mood in this type of construction. In my opinion this instance is one of the clearest examples that the distinction optative – modal indicative was not linked to the distinction potential – counterfactual, but to the distinction non-temporal, or preferably non-uniquely-past (past, present, future) versus a past reference alone: the indicative βάλεν is the only form that refers solely and exclusively to the past. The fact that the indicative with a past reference is equivalent to an optative, but that the optatives without a past reference are not, is in my view the best evidence for this.

This subsection can be concluded by stating that the indicatives exclusively refer to the past, with the exception of ἀμφεπονοῖτο and βάλον, which could theoretically refer to the present as well (but are nevertheless unlikely or contrary-to-fact) and ἔγνω, which is most probably a potential of the past. The optatives in general have the same unlikely meaning as the indicatives, but lack the exclusively past reference and sometimes describe events with a future reference.

3. The conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μή

In this subsection I discuss the instances of the indicative in modal constructions and the optative in conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μή. There are fifteen (or eighteen, for an explanation of the difference in number, see below) indicatives and four

optatives in the *Odyssey* and 39 (or 50 – the reasons for the difference in number are the same as for those in the *Odyssey*) indicatives and two optatives in the *Iliad*.¹⁴ I only discuss the instances where the indicative appears in the *Odyssey* but discuss the instances of the optative in both works, as otherwise there are too few optative forms, but as will be argued below, the data relating to the indicatives in the *Iliad* result in the same conclusions as those from the *Odyssey*. As was the case with the previous instances, the difference between the indicative and the optative is sometimes due to a different degree of probability, but always to the temporal reference, as all *εἰ μή*-clauses with an indicative refer to the past, while those with the optative do not. Below I will list the different instances and show that the former can be translated ‘had ... not...’ or ‘if ... had not ...’, and the latter by ‘unless ...’ or ‘if ... not ...’. I will start with the fifteen (or eighteen) instances of the indicative.¹⁵

- (EX.07) (360) ἔνθα μ' εἰκόσιν ἤματ' ἔχον θεοί, οὐδέ ποτ' οὐροί
 (361) πνεῖοντες φαίνονθ' ἀλιαέες, οἳ ῥά τε νηῶν
 (362) πομπῆες γίνονται ἐπ' εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης.
 (363) καὶ νύ κεν ἦῖα πάντα **κατέφθιτο** καὶ μένε' ἀνδρῶν,
 (364) εἰ μή τίς με θεῶν **ὀλοφύρατο** καὶ μ' **ἔλέησε**,
 (365) Πρωτόος ἰφθίμου θυγάτηρ ἀλίιοιο γέροντος,
 (366) Εἰδοθέη: τῇ γάρ ῥα μάλιστά γε θυμὸν ὄρινα. (*Odyssey* 4,360–366)

‘There the gods kept me for twenty days and fair winds did not appear nor (did they blow) over the sea, which act as guides of the ships over the broad surface of the sea. And now all my goods would have been lost and also the spirit of my men, if someone among the gods had not pitied me and shown mercy, the daughter of the powerful old man of the sea Proteus, Eidothea. I had moved her heart very much, that she approached me alone wandering far off from my friends.’

In these lines Menelaos describes how he neglected to pay homage to the gods and was punished for it. They did not allow him to sail away from Pharos, an island near Egypt and he became trapped there. His supplies would have been insufficient, if Eidothea, the daughter of Proteus, had not started to take pity on him and approached him to offer him advice. The verbs of the *εἰ μή*-clause, *ὀλοφύρατο* and *ἔλέησε*, describe Eidothea’s pitying, and her compassion that eventually prevented Menelaos from being left without goods and food (*κατέφθιτο*).

¹⁴ The instances are *Iliad* 2,156 (ἔειπεν), 3,374 (νόησε), 5,312 (νόησε), 5,390 (ἐξήγγειλεν), 5,680 (νόησε), 6,75 (εἶπε), 7,106 (ἔλον), 7,275 (ἦλθον), 8,91 (νόησε), 8,132 (νόησε), 8,218 (θῆκ'), 11,312 (κέκλετ'), 11,506 (παῦσεν), 11,751 (ἐσάωσε), 12,293 (ᾠρσεν), 13,725 (εἶπε), 14,259 (ἐσάωσε), 15,124 (ᾠρτο), 16,701 (ἔστη), 17,71 (ἀγάσσατο), 17,531 (διέκριναν), 17,614 (ἦλασεν), 18,167 (ἦλθε), 18,398 (ὑπεδέξατο), 18,46 (ἔκταν'), 18,456 (ἔδωκε), 20,291 (νόησε), 21,212 (προσέφη), 21,213 (ἐκφθέγγατο), 21,545 (ἀνῆκε), 22,203 (ἦντετ'), 23,155 (εἶπε), 23,383 (κοτέσσατο), 23,491 (ἀνίστατο), 23,491 (φάτο), 23,542 (ἡμείψατ'), 23,734 (ἀνίστατο), 23,734 (κατέρυκε), 24,715 (μετηύδα).

The debatable indicatives are *Iliad* 5,390 (ἐξέκλεψεν), 5,681 (βῆ), 7,108 (ἔλε), 7,108 (ἔφατ'), 7,108 (ὀνόμαζεν), 8,92 (ἐβόησεν), 15,124 (λίπε), 15,124 (θάασσε), 15,125 (εἶλετο), 15,126 (ἔστησε), 15,127 (καθάπτετο).

The optatives are *Iliad* 2,492 (μνησαίαθ') and 5,215 (θειῖν).

¹⁵ As was the case above, the modal indicative forms are in bold face, both those of the *εἰ μή*-clauses (which strictly speaking are not really modal) and those in the main clause.

- (EX.08) (499) Αἴας μὲν μετὰ νηυσὶ δάμη δολιχηρέτμοισι.
 (500) Γυρῆσιν μιν πρῶτα Ποσειδάων ἐπέλασσε
 (501) πέτρησιν μεγάλῃσι καὶ ἐξεσάωσε θαλάσσης:
 (502) καὶ νύ κεν **ἔκφυγε** κῆρα καὶ ἐχθόμενός περ Ἀθήνην,
 (503) εἰ μὴ ὑπερφίαλον ἔπος **ἔκβαλε** καὶ μέγ' **ἄασθη**:
 (504) φῆ ρ' ἀέκητι θεῶν φυγέειν μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης
 (505) τοῦ δὲ Ποσειδάων μεγάλ' ἔκλυεν αὐδήσαντος:
 (506) αὐτίκ' ἔπειτα τρίαῖναν ἔλων χερσὶ στιβαρῆσιν
 (507) ἦλασε Γυραίην πέτρην, ἀπὸ δ' ἔσχισεν αὐτήν: (*Odyssey* 4,499–507)

‘Aias was tamed among his ships with men who could row very far. Initially, Poseidon drove him to the great rocks of Gyrai and saved him from the sea. And now he would have escaped the fate (of death), although hated by Athene, if he had not spewed forth arrogant words and become insane. He claimed that he had escaped the great depth of the sea against the will of the gods. When Poseidon heard him speaking so haughtily, he immediately took his trident in his sturdy hands, drove it against the rock of Gyrae and split it through.’

In these lines Proteus relates to Menelaos which Greek heroes were able to reach their homeland safely and which ones died, either during their return or after having arrived home. Here he focuses on Aias, who could have survived in spite of his arrogance and sacrilege (Aias incurred Athene’s eternal wrath for raping Cassandra in Athene’s temple, although this story is not mentioned in the *Odyssey*), had he not boasted that his survival was only due to his own bravery. For that insolence Poseidon sent a storm and caused him to drown in the deep sea. The verbs of the εἰ μή-clause, ἔκβαλε and ἄασθη, describe Aias’ insolence that prevented his salvation (ἔκφυγε κῆρα), and refer to the past as they describe an action that has in fact already occurred.

- (EX.09) (424) ἕως ὃ ταῦθ' ὤρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν,
 (425) τόφρα δέ μιν μέγα κῦμα φέρον τρηχεῖαν ἐπ' ἀκτῆν.
 (426) ἔνθα κ' ἀπὸ ῥινοῦς **δρῦφθη**, σὺν δ' ὄστ' **ἀράχθη**,
 (427) εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ **θῆκε** θεά, γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη:
 (428) ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐπεσσύμενος λάβε πέτρης,
 (429) τῆς ἔχετο στενάχων, εἴως μέγα κῦμα παρῆλθε.
 (430) καὶ τὸ μὲν ὡς ὑπάλυξε, παλιρρόθιον δέ μιν αὐτῆς
 (431) πληξεν ἐπεσσύμενον, τηλοῦ δέ μιν ἔμβαλε πόντῳ.
 (432) ὡς δ' ὅτε πουλύποδος θαλάμης ἐξελκομένοιο
 (433) πρὸς κοτυληδονόφιν πυκινὰί λαιγγες ἔχονται,
 (434) ὡς τοῦ πρὸς πέτρησι θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν
 (435) ῥινοὶ ἀπέδρυσθεν: τὸν δὲ μέγα κῦμα κάλυπεν.¹⁶
 (436) ἔνθα κε δὴ δύστηνος ὑπὲρ μόρον **ᾠλετ'** Ὀδυσσεύς,
 (437) εἰ μὴ ἐπιφροσύνην **δῶκε** γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.

¹⁶ Both κῦμ' ἐκάλυπεν and κῦμα κάλυπεν are transmitted, but the unaugmented form κῦμα κάλυπεν has preference, because the augmented κῦμ' ἐκάλυπεν would have a word ending at both 3a and 5a in the hexameter and this would violate Meyer’s Third (metrical) Law which actually prohibits a word ending in both 3a and 5a. For this discussion it is not of great importance.

- (438) κύματος ἐξαναδύς, τὰ τ' ἐρεύγεται ἠπειρόνδε,
 (439) νῆχε παρέξ, ἐς γαίαν ὀρώμενος, εἴ που ἐφεύροι
 (440) ἠϊόνας τε παραπλήγας λιμένας τε θαλάσσης. (*Odyssey* 5,424–440)

‘When he was pondering this in his heart and spirit, then a big wave drove him against the jagged shore and there his skin would have been ripped off and his bones would have been crushed together, if the goddess, owl-eyed Athene had not put (this suggestion) in his mind: with both hands he stretched out for the rock and grabbed it, which he held sighing in distress, until a huge wave passed by him. That way he escaped from it, but it swept back, rushed at him, hit him and threw him far out of the sea. As when thick pebbles are held by the suckers of an octopus being dragged out of his hiding place, so was his skin ripped from his courageous hands against the walls and a great wave covered him. There miserable Odysseus would have died against his fate, if owl-eyed Athene had not given him prudence. He emerged from the wave, which belched out towards the mainland and swam along it, looking towards the land (to see) if he could somehow find retreating beaches and harbours from the sea.’

In this passage Odysseus is struggling to survive the attacks by Poseidon, who is trying to destroy him by sending storms and high waves. Thanks to Athene’s interventions Odysseus is able to maintain his courage and intelligence, and succeeds in grasping the rocks with his hands in order to avoid drowning. His clinging to the rocks is compared to pebbles that are sucked by the tentacles of an octopus. Both the verb of the first εἰ μή-clause, θῆκε, as well as the verb of the second εἰ μή-clause, δῶκε, describe the manner in which Athene was able to save Odysseus. By instilling common sense, she prevented his skin from being ripped off and averted his untimely death on the rocks (δρῦφθη and ἀράχθη in the first clause, and ὑπὲρ μόρον ὄλετ’ in the second). Both verbs in the εἰ μή-clause refer to the past and describe an action that has in fact already occurred.

- (EX.10) (383) ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ Ἀγαμέμνωνος Ἀτρεΐδαι
 (384) φθίσεσθαι κακὸν οἶτον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔμελλον,
 (385) εἰ μή μοι σὺ ἔκαστα, θεά, κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες.
 (386) ἀλλ’ ἄγε μῆτιν ὕφηνον, ὅπως ἀποτίσομαι αὐτούς:
 (387) πὰρ δέ μοι αὐτὴ στήθη, μένος πολυθαρσὲς ἐνεῖσα,
 (388) οἶον ὅτε Τροίης λύομεν λιπαρὰ κρήδεμνα (*Odyssey* 13,383–398)

‘Oh woe! I would indeed have undergone the same baneful fate in my palace as that of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, if you had not told me everything accurately, goddess. But well then, waive a plan that I *can* / *will make* them pay. Stand by me yourself, blowing courageous strength in (me), as when we loosened the large veils of Troy.’

This passage, which will be discussed in more detail later, describes how Odysseus thanked Athene for warning him about the imminent threat that the suitors posed to him, telling her that she prevented him from being killed in a manner similar to Agamemnon. Then he asked her to remain at his side and states that with her on his side, he would be able to overcome every attack and peril. The verb of the εἰ μή-clause, ἔειπες, describes how Athene (again) saved Odysseus, this time by informing him

beforehand about a possible ambush by the suitors, an ambush which he would not have been expecting (φθίσεσθαι ἔμελλον), and thus preventing them from killing Odysseus upon his return. The verb describes an action in the past that has in fact already occurred and can no longer be undone.

- (EX.11) (213) ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας κατ’ ἄρ’ ἔζετο, Τηλέμαχος δὲ
 (214) ἀμιχυθεὶς πατέρ’ ἐσθλὸν ὀδύρετο, δάκρυα λείβων,
 (215) ἀμφοτέροισι δὲ τοῖσιν ὑφ’ ἴμερος ὦρτο γόοιο:
 (216) κλαῖον δὲ λιγέως, ἀδινώτερον ἢ τ’ οἰωνοί,
 (217) φῆναι ἢ αἰγυπιοὶ γαμψώνυχες, οἴσι τε τέκνα
 (218) ἀγρόται ἐξείλοντο πάρος πετεηνὰ γενέσθαι:
 (219) ὡς ἄρα τοί γ’ ἔλεεινὸν ὑπ’ ὄφρυσι δάκρυον εἶβον.
 (220) καὶ νύ κ’ ὀδυρομένοισιν ἔδυσ φάος ἡελίοιο,
 (221) εἰ μὴ Τηλέμαχος **προσεφώνεεν** ὄν πατέρ’ αἴψα: (*Odyssey* 16,213–221)

‘So he spoke and he sat down. Telemakhos embraced his noble father, wept and shed tears. Both of them developed the desire to wail. They cried clearly, louder than the birds, lammergeyers or vultures with crooked talons, from which the people living in the countryside took away the young before they became able to fly. So pitiful they shed tears from their eyelids and now the light of the sun would have set on them while they were crying, had not Telemakhos suddenly addressed his father:’

In these lines Homer describes how Odysseus and Telemakhos started weeping loudly after Odysseus revealed his identity to his son. The crying was louder than the shrieks of the birds whose young are removed by those working on the land and they would have cried the entire night, if Telemakhos had not spoken to Odysseus. The verb of the εἰ μή-clause, *προσεφώνεεν*, mentions that Telemakhos addressed his father and prevented them both from crying the entire night (ἔδυσ). The verbs describe an action in the past that has occurred and can no longer be undone.

- (EX.12) (221) ὡς εἰπὼν ῥάκεα μεγάλης ἀποέργαθεν οὐλῆς.
 (222) τῷ δ’ ἐπεὶ εἰσιδέτην εὖ τ’ ἐφράσαντο ἕκαστα,
 (223) κλαῖον ἄρ’ ἀμφ’ Ὀδυσῆϊ δαΐφρονι χεῖρε βαλόντε,
 (224) καὶ κύνεον ἀγαπαζόμενοι κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ὤμους
 (225) ὡς δ’ αὐτῶς Ὀδυσσεὺς κεφαλὰς καὶ χεῖρας ἔκυσσε.
 (226) καὶ νύ κ’ ὀδυρομένοισιν ἔδυσ φάος ἡελίοιο,
 (227) εἰ μὴ Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτὸς **ἐρύκακε φώνησέν τε**: (*Odyssey* 21,221–227)

‘So he spoke and he removed the rags from the large scar. When they (then) looked at each other and understood everything, they threw their arms around Odysseus, cried and kissed his head and shoulders with love. So Odysseus kissed their heads and shoulders in the same way. And now the sun would have set while they were crying, if Odysseus had not restrained them himself and raised his voice:’

In these lines Homer relates how Odysseus revealed his true identity to Eumaios and how Eumaios and Telemakhos were filled with joy and would have cried the entire night, if Odysseus had not eventually stopped them both and started to speak. The verbs of the εἰ μή-clause, *ἐρύκακε* and *φώνησέν τε*, describe how Odysseus

prevented Eumaios and Telemakhos crying the entire night (ἔδν). These two verbs have past reference and the actions they describe can no longer be undone.

- (EX.13) (231) ὡς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑφ' ἴμερον ὄρσε γόοιο:
 (232) κλαῖε δ' ἔχων ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, κέδν' εἰδυῖαν.
 (233) ὡς δ' ὄτ' ἄν ἀσπᾶσιος γῆ νηχομένοισι φανήη,
 (234) ὧν τε Ποσειδάων εὐεργέα νῆ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
 (235) ῥαῖση, ἐπειγομένην ἀνέμῳ καὶ κύματι πηγῷ:
 (236) παῦροι δ' ἐξέφυγον πολιῆς ἀλὸς ἠπειρόνδε
 (237) νηχόμενοι, πολλῆ δὲ περὶ χροῖ τέτροφεν ἄλμῃ,
 (238) ἀσπᾶσιος δ' ἐπέβαν γαίης, κακότητα φυγόντες:
 (239) ὡς ἄρα τῇ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εἰσοροῶση,
 (240) δειρῆς δ' οὐ πῶ πάμπαν ἀφίετο πῆχθε λευκῷ.
 (241) καὶ νῦ κ' ὄδυρομένοισι φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως,
 (242) εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ἄλλ' ἐνόησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
 (243) νύκτα μὲν ἐν περάτῃ δολιχὴν σχέθεν, Ἥῳ δ' αὐτε
 (244) ῥύσατ' ἐπ' Ὀκεανῷ χρυσόθρονον, οὐδ' ἔα ἵππους
 (245) ζεύγνυσθ' ὠκύποδας, φάος ἀνθρώποισι φέροντας,
 (246) Λάμπον καὶ Φαέθονθ', οἳ τ' Ἥῳ πῶλοι ἄγουσι. (*Odyssey* 23,231–246)

'So he spoke and the desire to cry increased even more. He wept holding his delightful wife, who knew diligence. As when land appears to welcome people who are swimming (in the sea), so too a well-performing ship Poseidon hits on the seas, being hit by wind and thick waves. Few escape from the grey sea, swimming to the mainland and the foam increases around their skin, gladly they reach land, having escaped misfortune. So the husband rejoiced in his wife who looked at him, and she did not remove her white arms from his neck. And now the rose-fingered Dawn would have appeared to the ones crying, had not owl-eyed Athene noticed it, kept the long night on the opposite side, held Dawn with its golden throne at the Okeanos and did not let it yoke its swift-footed horses, that carry light to the humans, Lampos and Phaethon, the foals who also carry Dawn.'

Here Homer compares the joy that Odysseus and Penelope experience to the relief of shipwrecked swimmers in the sea who finally reach land and states that Penelope would prefer never to release her arms from Odysseus' neck. When the night was about to end with the coming of the dawn, Athene held it back so that both of them could enjoy each other's presence for a little longer. The verbs of the εἰ μή-clause, ἐνόησε, as well as possibly σχέθεν, ῥύσατ' and ἔα, describe how Athene allowed Odysseus and Penelope to enjoy each other's company for the entire night and prevented the day from arriving (φάνη). These verbs refer to the past and the actions they describe have occurred and can no longer be undone. They all follow the schema discussed above with the verbs of the εἰ μή-clauses preventing the completion of the action described in the main clause. It can be debated whether σχέθεν, ῥύσατ' and ἔα belong to conditional clauses or not, but in my opinion they do, because these actions also contribute to averting the action of the modal main clause. If they belong to the εἰ μή-clause, there would be eighteen instances of an indicative in an εἰ μή-clause, if not, fifteen.

- (EX.14) (36) ὄλβιε Πηλέος υἱέ, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
 (37) ὃς θάνες ἐν Τροίῃ ἐκάς Ἄργεος: ἀμφὶ δέ σ' ἄλλοι
 (38) κτείνοντο Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν υἱές ἄριστοι,
 (39) μαρνάμενοι περὶ σείο: σὺ δὲ στροφάλιγγι κονίης
 (40) κεῖσο μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων.
 (41) ἡμεῖς δὲ πρόπαν ἤμαρ ἐμαρνάμεθ': οὐδέ κε πάμπαν
 (42) **παυσάμεθα** πτολέμου, εἰ μὴ Ζεὺς λαίλαπι **παῦσεν**.
 (43) αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ σ' ἐπὶ νῆας ἐνεΐκαμεν ἐκ πολέμοιο,
 (44) κάτθεμεν ἐν λεχέεσσι, καθήραντες χρῶα καλὸν
 (45) ὕδατί τε λιαρῶ καὶ ἀλείφατι: πολλὰ δέ σ' ἀμφὶ
 (46) δάκρυα θερμὰ χέον Δαναοὶ κείραντό τε χαίτας.
 (47) μήτηρ δ' ἐξ ἄλδος ἦλθε σὺν ἀθανάτης ἀλίῃσιν
 (48) ἀγγελίης αἴουσα: βοή δ' ἐπὶ πόντον ὀρώρει
 (49) θεσπεσίη, ὑπὸ δὲ τρόμος ἔλλαβε πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς:
 (50) καὶ νύ κ' ἀναΐξαντες **ἔβαν** κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας,
 (51) εἰ μὴ ἀνὴρ **κατέρυκε** παλαιὰ τε πολλὰ τε εἰδῶς,
 (52) Νέστωρ, οὗ καὶ πρόσθεν ἀρίστη φαίνετο βουλή:
 (53) ὃ σφιν ἐὺ φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν: (*Odyssey* 24,36–53)

'Blessed son of Peleus, god-resembling Akhilleus, you who died in Troy, far away from Argos. Around you many others, the best sons of the Trojans and Akhaians, were killed fighting over your body. You lay in a whirl of dust, great in a great manner. We fought over you the entire day and would not have stopped the war, if Zeus had not stopped (us) with a furious storm. But, when we had brought you back to the ships, we put you on a barrier, cleansed your beautiful skin, with warm water and oil. Many Danaians shed warm tears over you and tore their hair. Your mother came out of the sea with her immortal sea-nymphs, when she heard the news. A loud and superhuman cry arose from the sea and fear took over all the Akhaians. And now they would have rushed and gone to the hollow ships, if someone who knew many old stories had not held them back, Nestor, whose advice had turned out to be the best before. In good intent, he addressed them and spoke:'

In these lines Agamemnon responds to Akhilleus in a long speech explaining how Akhilleus died and received an appropriate burial with much honour and respect, but that before the funeral could be organized, they had to fight a long battle to secure his body and that they were only able to retrieve the body thanks to Zeus. Moreover, at a certain moment all the Greek soldiers started to become frightened when creatures emerged from the sea and it was only after Nestor restrained them and explained to them that it was Thetis with her nymphs arriving to greet her son that the soldiers regained their confidence and stopped being frightened. In this passage there are two instances in which the (completed) event of the εἰ μή-clause prevented the realization of the action of the main clause: in the first, Zeus' intervention, that is creating a storm (λαίλαπι παῦσεν), prevented the Greeks and Trojans from continuing the battle for Akhilleus' body (οὐδέ κε πάμπαν παυσάμεθα πτολέμου); in the second Nestor's intervention (κατέρυκε) stopped the Greeks from fleeing to the ships in fear after seeing the sea creatures (ἀναΐξαντες ἔβαν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας). These two verbs have a past reference and refer to an action that has in fact already occurred.

(EX.15) (520) ὣς φάτο, καί ρ' ἔμπνευσε μένος μέγα Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
 (521) εὐξάμενος δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα Διὸς κούρη μεγάλοιο,
 (522) αἶψα μάλ' ἀμπεπαλῶν προΐει δολιχόσκιον ἔγχος,
 (523) καὶ βάλεν Εὐπείθεα κόρυθος διὰ χαλκοπαρήου.
 (524) ἢ δ' οὐκ ἔγχος ἔρυτο, διαπρὸ δὲ εἶσατο χαλκός,
 (525) δούπησεν δὲ πεσῶν, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῶ.
 (526) ἐν δ' ἔπεσον προμάχοις Ὀδυσσεὺς καὶ φαίδιμος υἱός,
 (527) τύπτον δὲ ξίφεσίν τε καὶ ἔγχεσιν ἀμφιγύοισι.
 (528) καὶ νύ κε δὴ πάντας ὄλεσαν καὶ ἔθηκαν ἀνόστους,
 (529) εἰ μὴ Ἀθηναίη, κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
 (530) ἦὔσεν φωνῆ, κατὰ δ' ἔσχεθε λαὸν ἅπαντα. (*Odyssey* 24,520–530)

'So he spoke and Pallas Athene blew great strength into him. After he had prayed to the daughter of powerful Zeus, he immediately wielded his spear that casts a long shadow, threw it forth and hit Eupheithes through his helmet with bronze cheeks. This did not ward it off and the bronze went through it. He fell down and made a heavy noise, and his armour sounded on top of him. Odysseus and his famous son fell upon the ones fighting in front, hit them with their swords and doublepointed spears, and now they would have killed them all and made them without a homecoming, if Athene, daughter of Zeus who carries the Aegis, had not shouted with her voice and restrained the entire army.'

In these lines Homer describes how Odysseus begins to kill the suitors' relatives, how he and Telemakhos plan a final attack on them, when Athene intervenes and stops the battle. As was the case in the previous instances, the (completed) event of the εἰ μή-clause, Athene's shouting (ἦὔσεν) and restraining (κατὰ δ' ἔσχεθε), prevented the realization of the action of the main clause, the slaughter of the suitors' families (ὄλεσαν καὶ ἔθηκαν ἀνόστους). These two verbs have a past reference and describe an action that has in fact already occurred.

In all these instances of εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative, the (completed) event of the εἰ μή-clause in the indicative prevented the realization of the action in the main clause. Moreover, in all the examples in the *Odyssey* the main clause of the εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative are already in the indicative (in some instances these main clause-indicatives may contain an older optative such as καὶ νύ κ' ὄδυρομένοισιν ἔδου φάος ἡελίοιο (*Odyssey* 21,226), which could be καὶ νύ κ' ὄδυρομένοις δὴ φάος ἡελίοιο, but not in all of them), while some of the main clauses in the *Iliad* are still in the optative (as *Iliad* 5,311).

I now proceed to analyzing the instances in the optative.¹⁷

(EX.16) (173) ἄλλο τι δὴ σύ, θεά, τόδε μήδεαι, οὐδέ τι πομπήν,
 (174) ἢ με κέλειαι σχεδὴν περάαν μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης,
 (175) δεινόν τ' ἀργαλέον τε: τὸ δ' οὐδ' ἐπὶ νῆες εἶσαι
 (176) ὠκύποροι περόωσιν, ἀγαλλόμεναι Διὸς οὔρω.
 (177) οὐδ' ἂν ἔγωγ' ἀέκητι σέθεν σχεδὴς ἐπιβαίην,
 (178) εἰ μὴ μοι τλαίης γε, θεά, μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμόσσαι
 (179) μὴ τί μοι αὐτῶ πῆμα κακὸν βουλευσέμεν ἄλλο. (*Odyssey* 5,173–179)¹⁸

¹⁷ See also Lange (1872: 461–464) for an analysis of these instances in the optative.

¹⁸ The optative forms, both in the εἰ μή-clauses, as well as in the main clause, are underlined.

‘You are thinking of something else, goddess, and not about the convoy, you who order me to cross the wide surface of the sea on a raft, terrible and painful, that not even balanced and fast-going ships pass, not even when they are glorified by the wind sent by Zeus. I would not go on this raft against my will, unless you, goddess, dare to swear me a great oath that you will not plot anything painful and evil against me.’

Odysseus has been informed by Kalypso that the gods have forced her to let him go and that she will no longer restrain him in Ogygia. She advises him to start building a raft upon which to sail the seas. He reacts with disbelief and suspects that she is preparing to trick him once more. In order to be certain he asks her to swear an oath that she is telling him the truth and not plotting any evil against him. The optative of the (negated) main clause, ἐπιβαίην, has a present or future reference and its completion depends on the condition described in the εἰ μή-clause: if Kalypso agrees to swear the oath (τλαίης), Odysseus will step onto the raft (ἐπιβαίην), but if she does not, he will not.

(EX.17) (273) νήπιός εἰς, ὃ ξεῖν', ἢ τηλόθεν εἰλήλουθας,
 (274) ὅς με θεοὺς κέλειαι ἢ δειδίμεν ἢ ἀλέασθαι:
 (275) οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν
 (276) οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἢ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰμεν:
 (277) οὐδ' ἂν ἐγὼ Διὸς ἔχθος ἀλευάμενος πεφιδοίμην
 (278) οὔτε σεῦ οὔθ' ἐτάρων, εἰ μὴ θυμός με κελεύοι / κελεύει.
 (279) ἀλλὰ μοι εἴφ' ὅπῃ ἔσχεες ἰὼν εὐεργέα νῆα,
 (280) ἢ που ἐπ' ἐσχατιῆς, ἢ καὶ σχεδόν, ὄφρα δαείω. (*Odyssey* 9,273–280)

‘You are a fool, stranger, or have come from afar, when you order me to fear or avoid the gods. The Kyklopes do not care for aegis-bearing Zeus nor for the blessed gods, since we are much stronger. I *would not spare / have spared* neither you nor your friends to avoid the wrath of Zeus, unless my (own) heart *bade / bids* me to do so. But tell me where you come from and where you have (moored) your ship, somewhere at the border or very nearby, so that I know this.’

In these lines the Kyklops tells Odysseus that he (O) is a fool to expect that he and his men would be spared because of his status as a guest and supplicant, as the Kyklopes never accepted the power of the Olympian gods and adds that, unless he (K) himself agrees, he would not show mercy to them. The meaning of the passage is that Polyphemos will not spare Odysseus and his men, unless his own spirit incites him to do so. In this instance both the optative κελεύοι and the indicative κελεύει have been transmitted. The editors of and commentators upon this passage have all chosen the optative,¹⁹ although Kayser (quoted in Ameis and Hentze 1876: 57–58) argued that the indicative was more suited to the Kyklops’ character.²⁰ In this specific instance the optatives have an almost counterfactual meaning, as it is not

¹⁹ Bekker (1843: 135, 1858b: 114), La Roche (1867: 193), Nauck (1874: 150), Cauer (1890: 152), Ludwig (1890: 136), Allen (1908 *on this passage*), von der Mühl (1962: 161), West (2017: 187), and Van Thiel (2021: 120).

²⁰ The issue was not addressed in Nitzsch (1840: 52), Faesi (1860: 245), Düntzer (1863b: 17), Merry and Riddell (1886: 378), or Heubeck (1989: 29), who all adopted the optative.

the intention of the *Kyklops* to spare Odysseus and his men. The use of the indicative *κελεύει* would, therefore, be surprising in this passage. In this instance both optatives refer to something that still has to occur (hence no past reference) and to something that the speaker does not want to happen. As was the case in both the previous and the following instances, the action of the main clause will occur, unless the *εἰ μή*-clause prevents it. This is the only instance in which an *εἰ μή*-clause with an optative describes an action that the speaker does not expect nor want to occur.

(EX.18) (337) ὦ Κίρκη, πῶς γάρ με κέλη σοὶ ἥπιον εἶναι,
 (338) ἢ μοι σῦς μὲν ἔθηκας ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἑταίρους,
 (339) αὐτὸν δ' ἐνθάδ' ἔχουσα δολοφρονέουσα κελεύεις
 (340) ἐς θάλαμόν τ' ἰέναι καὶ σῆς ἐπιβήμεναι εὐνῆς,
 (341) ὄφρα με γυμνωθέντα κακὸν καὶ ἀνήνορα θήῃς.
 (342) οὐδ' ἂν ἔγωγ' ἐθέλοισι τεῆς ἐπιβήμεναι εὐνῆς,
 (343) εἰ μή μοι τλαίης γε, θεά, μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμόσσαι
 (344) μή τί μοι αὐτῷ πῆμα κακὸν βουλευσέμεν ἄλλο. (*Odyssey* 10,337–344)

'Kirke, how do you order me to be friendly towards you, you who turned my friends into swines in your halls. You hold me here, plan some trick (against me) and order me to enter your bedroom and step into your bed, so that you can turn me, naked, into a weak person and castrate me? I would not step into your bed, unless you, goddess, dare to swear a great oath to me that you will not plot anything painful and evil against me.'

These lines, which are very similar in form and content to the passage about Kalypso, are taken from the so-called *Apologoi*, and in this passage Odysseus describes what happened after one of his men, Eurymakhos, told him that Kirke had turned all the men into pigs. He (O) decided to go to her in order to save his men and on his way he encountered Hermes, who provided him with an antidote against Kirke's spell. Once he had arrived at her house, she approached him and suggested he enter in order to sleep with her. He answered that he feared she would try to trick him and attempt to castrate him, adding that he would only enter if she agreed to swear an oath that she was not plotting anything against him. The optative of the (negated) main clause, *ἐθέλοισι*, has a present or future reference and its completion depends on the condition described in the *εἰ μή*-clause: if Kirke agrees to swear the oath (*τλαίης*), Odysseus will enter her house and go to bed with her (*ἐθέλοισι*), but if she does not, he will not.

(EX.19) (99) αἶ γάρ ἐγὼν οὕτω νέος εἶην τῷδ' ἐπὶ θυμῷ,
 (100) ἢ παῖς ἐξ Ὀδυσῆος ἀμύμονος ἠὲ καὶ αὐτός:
 (101) ἔλθοι ἀλητεῦων ἔτι γάρ καὶ ἐλπίδος αἶσα:²¹
 (102) αὐτίκ' ἔπειτ' ἀπ' ἐμείο κάρη τάμοι ἀλλότριος φῶς,

²¹ Aristarkhos (according to the *Loeb Classical Library* it was Zenodotos who made this observation) rejected this line, although according to the *Loeb Classical Library* many modern editors accepted it. Despite this, the line was preserved in La Roche (1868: 75), Ludwig (1891: 53), von der Mühl (1962: 295, noting that many editors had deleted the line), West (2017: 337) and van Thiel (2021: 219).

- (103) εἰ μὴ ἐγὼ κείνοισι κακὸν πάντεσσι γενοίμην,
 (104) ἐλθὼν ἐς μέγαρον Λαερτιάδew Ὀδυσῆος.
 (105) εἰ δ' αὖ με πληθυῖ δαμασαίαιτο μούνον ἐόντα,
 (106) βουλοίμην κ' ἐν ἐμοῖσι κατακτάμενος μεγάροισι
 (107) τεθνάμεν ἢ τάδε γ' αἰὲν ἀεικέα ἔργ' ὀράασθαι,
 (108) ξείνους τε στυφελιζομένους δμῳάς τε γυναῖκας
 (109) ῥυστάζοντας ἀεικελίως κατὰ δώματα καλά,
 (110) καὶ οἶνον διαφυσσόμενον, καὶ σῖτον ἔδοντας
 (111) μὰς αὖτως, ἀτέλεστον, ἀνηγύστῳ ἐπὶ ἔργῳ. (*Odyssey* 16,99–111)

‘If only I were so young in this heart, either as blameless as Odysseus’ son or he himself: would he come home from his wanderings, for then there would be a portion of hope (left). May now immediately some foreign man cut off my head, *if I were not to become / unless I became* evil to those individuals, once I entered the hall of Odysseus, Laertes’ son. If because of their multitude they were to tame me, being alone, I would rather long to die in my own house than to have to witness for eternity these unspeakable deeds, guests being harassed, (these creatures) dragging female servants in dishonour through the beautiful dwellings, wine continuously being drawn, and (these creatures continuously) eating food, recklessly, in the same manner, over and over again without end, in an ineffective activity.’

In these lines Odysseus, still disguised, addresses Eumaios and Telemakhos, and asks them if they are hated by the gods in that they have to undergo such suffering and endure the suitors’ transgressions. The optatives (both wish and potential) in this passage all have a present or future reference and, while they do not refer to something that is impossible, the realization of the actions they describe is nevertheless very unlikely. The optative in the main clause, *τάμοι*, describes an action that should occur if the action of the conditional *εἰ μή*-clause, *γενοίμην*, is not realized: the disguised beggar hopes to be killed if he is unable to become a threat to the suitors. The second set of optatives is a “normal” unreal construction and relates how the disguised Odysseus states that he would prefer to be killed in a battle with the suitors rather than living in constant dishonour and humiliation at their hands. These optatives describe an unreal event, but one without a past reference, as the statement can only refer to the present and future.

I now proceed to the two *Iliadic* instances in the optative.

- (EX.20) (488) πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
 (489) οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,
 (490) φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δὲ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη,
 (491) εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο
 (492) θυγατέρες μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον:
 (493) ἀρχοὺς αὖ νηῶν ἐρέω νῆας τε προπάσας (*Iliad* 2,488–493)

‘I will not be able to tell nor name the multitude (of men), not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, and an unbreakable voice and a bronze heart were inside me, unless the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus, were to remember how many men had come to Troy. I will name the leaders of the ships and all the ships.’

In these lines Homer states that enumerating all the leaders and their contingents is an impossible task and that he would not do so, not even if he had ten mouths and tongues. As was the case in the previous instances, the optative in the εἰ μή-clause, μνησαίαθ', does not prevent the action of the main clause, but has in fact the opposite meaning, thus indicating what needs to happen for the action of the main clause to occur: Homer could only relate who participated in the war, if the Muses were there to help him remember all the warriors. The first conditional clause is not introduced by εἰ μή, but by οὐδ' εἰ and describes an element that would not be sufficient to enable the action of the main clause: it is best translated by 'not even if ...', while εἰ μή is translated by 'unless'.

- (EX.21) (212) εἰ δέ κε νοστήσω καὶ ἐσόψομαι ὀφθαλμοῖσι
 (213) πατρίδ' ἐμὴν ἄλοχόν τε καὶ ὑπερεφές μέγα δῶμα,
 (214) αὐτίκ' ἔπειτ' ἀπ' ἐμεῖο κάρη τάμοι ἀλλότριος φῶς
 (215) εἰ μὴ ἐγὼ τάδε τόξα φαεινῶ ἐν πυρὶ θεῖην
 (216) χερσὶ διακλάσας: ἀνεμῶλια γάρ μοι ὀπηδεῖ. (*Iliad* 5,212–216)

'If I return home and behold with my eyes my fatherland, my wife and my large house with a high roof, may then someone chop off my head from my body, *if I do not / unless I* break these bows into pieces with my hands and put them in the famous fire, for they go uselessly with me.'

In these lines Pandaros tells Aineias he wished he had not aimed an arrow at Menelaos and had not hit him, causing the hostilities to resume. He states that if ever he returns home, he should be killed unless he destroys the cursed bow with which he fired the fatal shot. The optative θεῖην (which is equivalent to the unaugmented indicative θῆκα) explains under which circumstances the action of the main clause should occur. This instance is similar to those described above (and is a verbatim echo of the *Odyssey* 16,102 or vice versa), as the εἰ μή-clause relates under which circumstances the action of the main clause can be avoided: if Pandaros burns the arrow, no-one should decapitate him. As with the other instances in the optative, this specific instance does not refer to the past.

To conclude this subsection, it should be noted that the indicative in the εἰ μή-clauses always refers to the past and always describes an action that has already occurred, and additionally it has prevented the action of the main clause from taking place. In this sense they are not really "modal" indicatives in the strict sense, as they describe a real event and are, therefore, "realis". A second important element to note is that in all the examples in the *Odyssey* the main clause of the εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative is already also in the indicative (in some instances these main clause-indicatives could contain an older optative, but not in all of them). Contrary to the εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative, the action of the εἰ μή-clauses in the optative does not prevent the action of the main clause, but describes the condition on which the realization of the main clause depends: if the action of the εἰ μή-clause does not materialize, then that of the main clause should be performed. This is exactly the opposite of the εἰ μή-clauses with an indicative. The clauses with the εἰ μή-clauses in the optative are linked to four negative and two positive main clauses. In five of the

six instances, the action of the εἰ μή-clause is that which the speaker hopes to happen (Odysseus *wants* Kalypso and Kirke to swear the oath, and to become a threat to the suitors, Homer *wants* the Muses to help him remember all the Greeks who participated in the Trojan War and Pandaros *wants* to burn the bow as he certainly does not relish the thought of being decapitated), while the Kyklops actually **does not want** his mind to order him to spare Odysseus and his men (in this case it is much more likely that we are dealing with a counterfactual). In all the instances the actions described by the optatives, both in the main clause and the εἰ μή-clause, might not be entirely possible, but they can be realized.

The results confirm the distinctions reached in the other subsections and in part 1 of the article, namely (1) that the optative can refer to the past, but mostly does not do so, in contrast to the indicative, which in most instances does refer to the past and (2) that the optative does not necessarily have an unreal or unlikely meaning, contrary to the indicative, which almost always has this notion, especially in the main clauses superseding the εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative. This is an element in favour of the explanation that the transition occurred first in the main clauses which appeared in a construction with a postposed εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative.

4. The variants in *Iliad* 3,52–57

As was mentioned above, in *Iliad* 3,52–57 there are two instances where both the subjunctive and the optative have been transmitted. Below I discuss these *variae lectiones*.

- (EX.22) (52) οὐκ ἂν δὴ μείνειας ἀρηΐφιλον Μενέλαον;
 (53) γνοίης χ' οἶου φωτὸς ἔχεις θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν;
 (54) οὐκ ἂν τοι χραίσμη / χραίσμοι κίθαρις τά τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης
 (55) ἢ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος ὄτ' ἐν κονίησι μυγείης / μυγείης.
 (56) ἀλλὰ μάλα Τρῶες δειδήμονες: ἢ τέ κεν ἦδη
 (57) λαῖνον ἔσσο χιτῶνα κακῶν ἔνεχ' ὄσσα ἔοργας. (*Iliad* 3,52–57)

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

The content of this passage has previously been discussed. There are two forms in this passage, namely χραίσμη and μυγείης, which can be questioned. The latter is disputed, because it is an optative depending on a subjunctive (χραίσμη) and as a result, the subjunctive μυγείης has been suggested.²² In my opinion such a correction

²² Von Thiersch (1818: 496, 1826: 616–617); later, also Naber (1884b: 342–343, apparently unaware of von Thiersch’s suggestion). Earlier he (1877: 94–98) had already argued that constructions with an optative and a subjunctive were inadmissible and that when the sentence depended on a past tense form, the optative should be restored on all occasions.

is unnecessary, as the optative refers to something that Hektor only imagines (as he cannot know in detail exactly how Paris will die).²³ The first form, *χραΐσμη*, is a subjunctive, but Bekker suggested changing it into the optative *χραΐσμοι* and this was also attested in one papyrus.²⁴ The use of the subjunctive is somewhat surprising and could be used as evidence that Hektor considers his suggestion not entirely impossible after all. In my opinion the subjunctive can be upheld among these optatives and is not necessarily an indication that Hektor thought Paris would actually engage in battle. First, *χραΐσμη* is the only form that refers to something that Hektor knows for certain, namely that when Paris does decide to face Menelaos, he will not be supported by Aphrodite's gifts,²⁵ although the irony is that both his assumptions will prove to be false: Paris will confront Menelaos in a duel and Aphrodite will indeed save him from an untimely death. Second, *χραισμ-* never appears in the optative (as had already been observed by von Naegelsbach and Autenrieth 1864: 352–353; Düntzer 1866a: 110). Thirdly, and more importantly, the use of a subjunctive among a number of optatives to indicate something more certain, is not without parallels in Homer, and in one instance the aorist subjunctive of *χραισμ-* is used.²⁶ I will discuss that passage below (there are more passages in which the optative and subjunctive are used in parallel in the same passage with different meanings,²⁷ but space constraints prevent me from analyzing them all).

(EX.23) (385) τοξότα λωβητήρ κέρα ἀγλαῆ παρθenoπίτα
 (386) εἰ μὲν δὴ ἀντίβιον σὺν τεύχεσι *πειρηθείης*,
 (387) οὐκ ἄν τοι *χραΐσμησι* βιὸς καὶ ταρφέες ἰοί: (*Iliad* 11,385–387)

'Arrowsooter, foul slanderer, shining in your hair, looking at your girls, if only you dared (me) with your armour in a face-to-face battle, certainly then your bow and sharp arrows will not help you!'

²³ Hermann (1827: 34), Faesi (1858a: 131), von Naegelsbach and Autenrieth (1864: 352–353), Ameis (1868a: 103, 1868b: 107), and Ameis and Hentze (1884: 107, 1896: 179). The optative is accepted in the editions by Bekker (1858a: 46), La Roche (1873: 74), Nauck (1877: 63), Cauer (1890: 66), Monro and Allen (1902 on this passage), West (1998: 92), and Van Thiel (2010: 49).

²⁴ Bekker (1858a: 45, 421), followed by von Doederlein (1863: 61). Faesi (1858a: 131) noted that an optative would be expected instead of the transmitted subjunctive, but did not state that it had to be changed, while Nauck (1877: 63) quoted the suggestion *χραΐσμοι* with an “?” in the apparatus. The papyrus is POxy 751 (the reading is found in superscript) and is quoted in West (1998: 92), but not in Van Thiel (2010: 49).

Other editors printed the subjunctive (La Roche 1873: 74; Cauer 1890: LIV, 66; Monro and Allen 1902 on this passage; West 1998: 92, and Van Thiel 2010: 49).

²⁵ This was noted already by Hermann (1827: 31), von Naegelsbach and Autenrieth (1864: 352), Düntzer (1866a: 108), Ameis (1868a: 103), La Roche (1870a: 94), Leaf (1886: 90–91), and Ameis and Hentze (1896: 179).

Aken (1861: 30–31) and Monro (1891: 253) stated that the subjunctive in this case was an emphatic future.

²⁶ As was already noted by Hermann (1827: 34), von Naegelsbach and Autenrieth (1864: 352–353), La Roche (1870a: 94), von Christ (1881: 26–27), Leaf (1886: 90–91), and Ameis and Hentze (1896: 179).

²⁷ Examples are *Iliad* 24,653–655 and *Odyssey* 22,76–78 and 22,132–134 (the list is obviously not exhaustive and several passages are in fact debatable).

In these lines Diomedes addresses Paris and dares him to engage in man-to-man combat, adding that if he (P) decided to do so, he (P) would certainly find no support in his bow and arrows, and assures him (P) that his (P) missiles would not hurt him (D) at all, but that if he (P) were to hit him, he (D) would certainly be seriously injured. As in *Iliad* 3, Faesi (1858a: 396) argued that the optative would have been expected (see also La Roche 1870c: 91), with Düntzer (1866b: 77) explaining the use of the subjunctive as an expression of an expected consequence, but assuming that the choice was necessitated by the metre. Assuming metrical needs is in my opinion unnecessary and the use of the subjunctive can be supported. The action when using the subjunctive is much more emphatic:²⁸ as in *Iliad* 3, the optative *πειρηθείς* refers to an event that is considered less likely, since it is highly improbable that Paris would dare to face Diomedes in battle, whereas the subjunctive *χραίσμησι* (which is secured by the metre here, as von Christ 1881: 27 and Ameis and Hentze 1896: 179 also highlighted) describes the certainty that Paris would not be helped by his missiles in direct combat.

5. Conclusion

In these two articles I addressed 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 such contexts (the so-called “modal indicatives”), both the optative and the indicative appeared in these contexts 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. In the first part I discussed previous scholarship with regard to the meaning of the optative and the co-existence or co-occurrence of the modal indicative and optative in epic Greek. As there are about 250 modal indicatives and 1500 optatives in the Homeric corpus, discussing all instances was impossible and, therefore, I decided to investigate a corpus of common verbs for which neither the metre nor the aspect play a significant role, and additionally to chose the passages in which the aorist forms (optative or modal indicative) of *γινώσκω*, *βάλλω* and of *ἶδον* occurred (they are all in the aorist and in most cases the indicative and optative form are metrically equivalent). I analyzed all the forms in the passages, and also 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. In the second part I analyzed the modal indicatives and included a discussion of the use of

²⁸ Delbrück (1871: 128) describes the subjunctive in both passages as “eine sehr bestimmte Aeuserung”, Lange (1872: 364), and Ameis and Hentze (1877: 67 with reference to *Iliad* 3,54).

Aken (1861: 30–31) and Monro (1891: 253) stated that the subjunctive was an emphatic future here. La Roche (1870c: 91) agreed, but stated that normally the optative would be expected.

Leaf (1886: 375) stated that the subjunctive had the value of a future, but also noted that the mood expressed the certainty of the outcome.

The issue was not addressed in von Doederlein (1863: 255).

the indicative and optative in the postposed conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μή. Finally, I addressed a difficult passage where both the subjunctive and optative had been transmitted, a passage still debated by scholars. In my analysis I focused on two elements, the temporal reference (does the modal form refer to the past or not?) and the degree of (im)possibility and (un)likeliness (or are they potentialis or irrealis). My investigation found that both the indicative and the optative forms can be used to refer to something impossible or unreal, but that the indicative is used more often in these contexts, and additionally that both moods can have a past reference. However, although the indicative almost always has a notion of pastness, this meaning is relatively rarely attested with the optative. This distinction was particularly striking in the postposed conditional clauses introduced by εἰ μή. The εἰ μή-clauses with an indicative describe a scenario in which the action of the main clause has been prevented by the action of the εἰ μή-clause, a scenario that belongs to the past and has already occurred (translation ‘if not ...’, ‘had... not ...’), while the main clauses with an εἰ μή-clause in the optative have a present or future reference, are still realizable, establishing the conditions based upon which the action of the main clause would occur and describing an action that should happen if that of the εἰ μή-clause is not completed (they can be translated by ‘if not ...’, ‘unless...’). An additional and very important fact is that in all the examples in the *Odyssey* the main clause of the εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative are already in the indicative (in some instances these main clause-indicatives could contain an older optative, but in many of them this is not the case). These two elements make it in my opinion likely that the indicative replaced the optative, because the latter was ambiguous as to the temporal reference, and that the transition occurred first in the main clauses, which appeared in a construction with postposed εἰ μή-clauses in the indicative. This explanation is supported by a similar change in the construction of the verba curandi and verba timendi where Homeric Greek originally also used the subjunctive for the past (cf. *Iliad* 1,555, and *Odyssey* 5,300 and 13,216), but gradually replaced it with the indicative, which became the rule in Attic Greek.

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