The Rise And Fall Of The Afterlife
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Having looked at the earlier Greek and Israelite ideas about the soul and conceptions of the afterlife, we will now face the question when and why the soul was 'upgraded' in ancient Greece. An important stage in this process was the rise of the doctrine of reincarnation, of which the earliest representatives were Pythagoras and the Orphics, until very recently a somewhat obscure Greek 'sect'. The evidence about Pythagoras has long been familiar; he himself is the subject of a definitive study by Walter Burkert, and recent years have hardly provided any surprises in giving us new texts. However, in the case of the Orphics we are in a completely different situation. Since 1970, we have had the preliminary publication of a commentary on what may well be the oldest Orphic theogony (the famous Derveni papyrus), the discovery of Orphic bone tablets, a steady stream of Orphic 'Gold Leaves' (the small inscribed gold lamellae found in graves), and the appearance on the market of new Apulian vases with representations of Orpheus and the afterlife. These astonishing new discoveries enable us to place Orphic teachings about reincarnation in the framework of this intriguing movement in a more detailed way than was possible in earlier studies, which are now all to a larger or lesser extent out of date. As each publication in the continuing stream of new Gold Leaves obliges us to revise our ideas, this chapter is more in the nature of an interim report than a definitive statement. We will first look at the rise of the soul as exemplified by reincarnation in Pythagoreanism, Parmenides and Empedocles (section 1), then at Orphic practices, organisation and teachings (section 2), and conclude with an attempt at explaining the rise of the soul at the end of the Archaic period (section 3).

1. Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles

Unfortunately, not much is known about Pythagoras' life. Around 530 BC, during the rule of the tyrant Polycrates, he left Samos and settled in South Italian Croton, a city ruled by an oligarchy, the Thousand, who were the descendants of the original colonists. He will have been a member of the Samian aristocracy, as he was welcomed by the well-to-do Crotoniats with
whom he courted influence after his arrival in Croton. Although Croton never reached the state of luxury that made the Sybarites proverbial, they also seem to have been very affluent. There is a tradition preserved that due to Pythagoras the women of Croton no longer dared to wear expensive clothes but dedicated them in the most prominent sanctuary of the town, the temple of Hera Lacinia, of which the excavated treasures eloquently show its one-time wealth. After Croton had defeated Sybaris in 510 BC, its upper class lapsed into luxury; moreover, trouble broke out over the land conquered in the war against Sybaris. As a result of these developments Pythagoras moved to Metapontum, where lie reportedly died five years later.

Pythagoras' concern with reincarnation is already attested by his contemporary Xenophanes (B 7 DK), who tells the following uncomplimentary anecdote:

And once, they say, when lie passed by a clog which was being maltreated, lie pitied the animal and said these words: 'Stop! Don't beat him! For he is the soul of a friend whom I recognised straigtaway when I heard his voice'.

In his book On the Soul (407b20), Aristotle is equally explicit: 'They try to say what kind of thing the soul is,' but do not go on to specify about the body which is to receive the soul, as though it were possible, as in the tales of the Pythagoreans, for just any soul to clothe itself in just any body. And so is a first-century Ephesian epigram which states 'if according to Pythagoras the psyché passes to somebody else.' Regrettably, we do not know how often Pythagoras thought of a reincarnation, but both Pindar (fr. 133 Maehler) and Plato (Phaedr. 249a) speak of three times, of which the first reincarnation has been occasioned by a mistake in the underworld, in what looks like a Pythagorean context."

According to Porphyry (VP 19), who quotes Dicaearchus (fr. 33 Wehrli), a pupil of Aristotle, it was also Pythagoras who first introduced these opinions into Greece. The statement probably reflects the perceived influence of the Master, but may nevertheless be historically true. Admittedly, the same claim has been made for the sixth-century Pherecydes of Syros, but the earlier (although still not very early!) testimonies about him say only that Pherecydes was the first to consider the soul immortal, whereas it is not before the Byzantine Suda that we hear that Pherecydes was the first to teach reincarnation. In fact, the earliest mention of Pherecydes in connection with the afterlife of the soul explicitly refers to Pythagoras, not Pherecydes, as an authority. This appears from the following poem by the fifth-century Ion of Chios on Pherecydes (fr. 30 West, tr. Schibli):

Thus adorned with manly pride and reverence, lie [Pherecydes] has a pleasant life for his soul even though he be dead, if indeed Pythagoras...
was truly wise, who beyond all knew and searched out the thoughts of men.

The poem clearly attests to Pythagoras' early fame as an expert on afterlife. As such he already figures in Herodotus (4.95-6), who connects him with the introduction of new ideas about life after death by the Thracian Zalmoxis.

Pythagorean teachings comprised both a 'puritan' view of the body and a separate lifestyle. The Pythagorean philosopher Philolaos (B 14 DK) was credited by Clement of Alexandria, probably wrongly, with being the first to have stated that the body was the 'tomb' of the soul, an even more pessimistic view of the body than that of the Orphics, which Plato adopted in his later work. Regarding the Pythagorean way of life, we have a large amount of information, which is often not easy to locate in a precise chronological context. There are persistent traditions that Pythagoras, unlike later Pythagoreans, was not a vegetarian. Apparently, he refrained only from eating the ram and the plough-ox, which it once, reportedly, had also been a crime to kill in Athens, but he liked sucking kids and cockerels. Given that vegetarianism separates its practitioner from the community of sacrifice, it would indeed have been hard to believe that Pythagoras espoused the abstention of meat: his own active participation and that of his earliest followers in politics really speak against early vegetarianism; indeed, it would be hard to believe that those fourth-century Romans who had made their second king Numa a pupil of Pythagoras had done so, if the Master had always been a fully fledged vegetarian. Apparently, the vegetarian fourth-century Pythagoreans no longer had political aspirations and had taken over Orphic practices (section 2). Tradition does mention, though, a great number of taboos and prescriptions, such as 'Do not wear a ring', 'Do not step over a broom', 'Don't use cedar, laurel, myrtle, cypress or oak to cleanse your body or clean your teeth: they are for honouring the gods'. The observance of all these rules must have made the life of the Pythagorean an extremely self-conscious one, in which a moment of carelessness could be fatal. The inclusion among these rules of having to wear white linen clothes clearly points to a well-to-do following, as is also demonstrated by the Pythagorean domination of Croton until the massacre of their elite around 450 BC.

Other thinkers from southern Italy who propagated reincarnation were Parmenides and Empedocles. From the first we have only a rather cryptic fragment (B 13 DK), which is handed down by the Late Antique philosopher Simplicius (In Phys. 39, 20–1 Diels), who still had a copy of Parmenides' work in front of him. After having mentioned a goddess who created the other gods, he adds that she has power over 'the souls of men, which she sends now from the visible towards the invisible and then the other way round'. This is an isolated fragment in our tradition which does not enable to us say much more. However, the tradition that Pythagoras' pupil Ameinias had been the teacher of Parmenides seems to point to a Pythagorean direction.}
Parmenides' fame as a poet was soon outshone by the somewhat younger and, according to the ancients, more attractive Empedocles, about whom Hippolytus states:

Most of all he agrees with metensomatos in the following words: 'already I have been a boy and a maiden, a bush and a bird and a fish jumping up from the sea'.

(B 117 DK)

This changing from one being to another could take a very long time according to Empedocles (B 115 DK), as he tells in one of the longest fragments we have:

whenever one of the daimons [souls] to whom long-lasting life is apportioned defiles his limbs sinfully, through fear, and swears a false oath, lie wanders for thrice ten thousand seasons, far from the blessed ones, being born in the course of time as all sorts of shapes of mortals, exchanging the rugged paths of life one for another. For the force of the air [either] pursues him into the sea, and sea spits him out unto earth's surface . . . and all loathe him. I too am now one of these, an exile from god and a wanderer.'

Unlike Pythagoras, Empedocles drew the extreme consequence from his views about the migration of the soul into animals and considered the danger of some sacrifices being a kind of cannibalism. Like the Orphics, then, he must have practised a kind of vegetarianism. And indeed, a very recently discovered new papyrus of Empedocles has enabled us to rescore a known, but corrupt, fragment (B 139 DK) into a haunting image of his revulsion from meat:

Alas that the merciless day did not destroy me sooner, before I devised with my claws terrible deeds for the sake of food.

The social isolation caused by vegetarianism cannot have been difficult for him, considering that he (B 112 DK) speaks of himself as 'an immortal god, mortal no more', words directed to his friends, who live in the great city of the yellow [river] Acragas, up on the heights of the citadel'. In other words, Empedocles was also part of the ruling aristocracy of Acragas.

We have, then, testimonies for the doctrine of reincarnation in three early fifth-century South Italians: Pythagoras, Parmenides and Empedocles, of whom the latter two were closely connected with Pythagoras: Timaeus (FGrH 566 F 14) accused Empedocles of 'having stolen the theories' of Pythagoras, whereas Theophrastus (F 227 A Forrenbaugh), more generously, stated that he was an admirer and follower of Parmenides 'and even more of the Pythagorean ~' and Parmenides was (made?) the pupil of the Pythagorean Ameinias (above). Evidently, it was in Southern Italy that the definitive foundation was
laid for the idea of the soul as an immortal part of the human existence. Plato, too, connects a myth about afterlife with 'some clever Italian or Sicilian'."

2. Orphism

In addition to attracting the interest of well-known philosophers, the soul was also the subject of speculation in another movement, Orphism. Unfortunately, the founders of this 'sect' remain totally invisible, since they 'published' only their views under the name of the mythical poet Orpheus. The movement was closely connected with Pythagoras as well, since Ion of Chios (B 2 DK) suggests that Pythagoras ascribed some of his poetry to Orpheus, and Herodotus (2.81) speaks of 'observances which are called Orphic and Bacchic, though they are really Egyptian and Pythagorean' regarding an Egyptian taboo on wearing wool.

There are few indications enabling us to decide the precise moment and place of the birth of Orphism. The oldest Orphic theogony seems to reflect the poem of Parmenides, which is commonly dated to the 490s BC. Orphism will therefore have postdated the first decade of the fifth century but predated Empedocles, who already had been influenced by it."

As perhaps could be expected, the connection with Parmenides and Empedocles points to Southern Italy or Sicily as the birth-place of Orphism."

Can it be that the death of Pythagoras had created a space for new views in the region?

Let us start our discussion of Orphism with a look at its ritual and social aspects. We have always been much less informed about Orphic practices, but in this respect, too, the new evidence mentioned in our introduction is shedding some light, although it is problematic whether we should reconstruct one master ritual or whether Orphic priests performed various kinds of rituals. Perhaps the latter, as also seems to be the case in the Derveni papyrus. Here, before discussing the Orphic Theogony, the commentator mentions that 'the mystai bring a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides according to the rites of the Magi, for the Eumenides are souls' (col. VI). It is very interesting that the same commentator observes in the preceding lines that these Magi (below) sacrifice umbilical cakes and bring libations of milk and water 'as if to pay a penalty', which strongly reminds us of the compensation for Persephone's ancient grief (below).

Albert Henrichs once suggested that the mention of mystai probably points to the Eleusinian Mysteries, but the Orphic context rather suggests an Orphic ritual, since we know that Orphic initiates could also be called mystai. This is the case both in the Gold Leaf from Hipponion (B 10), which speaks of 'bakchoi and mystai', and in the one from Pherae (below), where the Orphic colouring is unmistakable. Moreover, a series of small Gold Leaves with often only the name of a deceased seem to belong to the same Orphic sphere and in some cases carry the name of the deceased with the addition of mystēs. Now an interest of Orphic priests in the dead is well attested by Plato in his Republic (364e–365a),
where lie tells that Orphic priests also perform 'special rites for the deceased, which they call functions, that deliver us from evils in that otherworld, while terrible things await those who have neglected to sacrifice'. The Derveni commentator, then, may have first discussed rituals of Orphic priests before coming to the *Theogony*.

It is in this context, too, that the so-called Orphic Gold Leaves could find a place. From their content, it is clear that they can be both guides to the underworld and passwords into a happy hereafter, although in some Leaves only the 'password' function appears. Similar 'passwords' are mentioned for later Bacchic mysteries, and the new Pherae Leaf (below), which actually starts with 'passwords' (*symboleia*), now proves that this is the correct interpretation of the Gold Leaves.** Taking the first verse of the Pelinna Gold Leaves (P 1, 2), 'Now you have died and now you have been born, thrice blessed, on this day', to refer to a ritual after the funeral, Fritz Graf has suggested, with some hesitation, that the Leaves presuppose a funeral. But would 'priests' always have been available in the case of sudden deaths outside big cities? The words could also be taken as addressing the deceased when starting the journey to Persephone, since the Platonic passage we just quoted shows that initiates were preparing for their later funeral.** The claim in the *Thurii* Gold Leaves (A 1–3) that the owner of the Leaf came 'pure from the pure' seems to point to the kind of purification ritual of which Plato speaks in the *Phaedon* (69b–d), where he relates that 'those who have established the rites of initiation (*teletas*)' maintain the doctrine that 'he who enters the next world uninitiated and unenlightened shall lie in the mire, but he who arrives there purified and enlightened shall dwell among the gods'. He then proceeds to say: 'You know how the initiation practitioners say: "many carry the fennel (*narthex*), but the *hakeboi* are few."'** It fits with these words that on the Hipponion and Pherae (below) Leaves the owners stress that they are *mystai*.

The reading of the Derveni theogony, though, hardly fits an eschatological or funeral context and we cannot be sure when it was read; in any case, it was not read as a sermon. Instead, one might think, in analogy to Near Eastern practices, of cases of illness, since Near Eastern epics of creation were also read during healing sessions or used on amulets for childbirth.** The poem, then, would not only 'recreate' the primeval order but also explain the present problems by reference to the 'original sin of mankind'. The reading seems to have started with a call for secrecy: 'I will speak for those entitled. Close your doors, ye profane' (Col. I.11.8). If we may compare the end of the so-called *Testament of Orpheus*, the ritual would also have closed with a call for secrecy.**

It is particularly interesting that Orphism had appropriated literacy, whereas normal civic religion continued without books. The circulation of books by Orpheus is already attested at the end of the fifth century, since the sophist Hippias (B 6 D K = FGrH 6 F4) claimed to have made selections from prose authors and poets like Homer and Orpheus, and his claim is born out by Plato, who demonstrably uses his 'Anthology'.** And in Euripides' *Hippolytus*
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Theseus urges the young hero to 'make a display with your food, and with Orpheus as master, revel (bakebene), honouring the smoke of many books'. As the sophists were also negatively associated with books, the remark shows the distrust of traditional, oral Athenian culture in literacy, even though at that very moment books were already rapidly becoming popular. Yet books were not everything for Orphics: the similarities and variances between the different Gold Leaves point to an oral rather than a written tradition in this respect.

Did the initiates distinguish themselves also by a separate lifestyle? According to Burkert, Orphic initiates did not eat meat, eggs and beans (which surely derives from the Pythagoreans), and neither did they drink wine. In fact, evidence for most of these taboos is late and extremely hard to find in classical times. Only vegetarianism is clearly attested by Eutipides (Hipp. 952), Aristophanes (Frogs 1032) and Plato (Laws 782C). Given the eschatological, Dionysiac context of these Leaves, it is interesting to note that on two Locrian reliefs of the first half of the fifth century Dionysos is pictured handing the kantharos to Persephone. In fact, there is no testimony for early prohibitionists, and the mention of wine in the Pelinna Leaves (P 1, 2) now clearly argues against such a taboo.

We learn something else as well from the Derveni papyrus. Somewhat later the commentator declares:

But all those [who hope to acquire knowledge] from someone who makes a craft of holy rites deserve to be wondered at and pitied – wondered at, because, thinking that they will know before they perform the rites, they go away after having performed them before they have known, without even asking further questions . . . and pitied because it is not enough for them to have spent their money in advance, but they also go off deprived of understanding as well.

(Col. XX)

Evidently, the mysteries promised special knowledge to the potential initiates, but this did not come for free: the mention of pay suggests that in the time of the commentator Orphic/Bacchic initiators demanded money for their services. This fits with Plato's denigrating remarks about Orphic 'begging priests and soothsayers' at 'rich men's doors'. The reference to the Orphic clients' wealth is illustrated too by the gold of the Leaves, the impressive nature of the graves in Thurii and the bronze urns in which two of the Thessalian Leaves were found. Herodotus' (4.78–80) mention of the Bacchic initiation of the Scythian king Skyles in Olbia points to the same direction.

Unfortunately, we do not know whether Orphics also assembled as groups outside the mysteries, but none of out admittedly lacunose information suggests this. To call them a church, as Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) once did, is grossly mistaken.
Among the initiates there were a considerable number of women. The Gold Leaves of the Timpone Piccolo of Thurii (A 1–3) all use the feminine form of 'pure', and the Leaves of Hipponion (B 10) and Pelinna (P 1.2) were both found on a woman. This is not really surprising, since we know that women were also followers of Sabazius and Cybele, and until the conversion of Constantine they seem to have constituted the majority of early Christians. This interest in cults outside the established civic religion fits a larger pattern in Western religiosity, where women always have been interested in those cults and movements which would allow them more scope in self-expression, such as the Cathars (Ch. 4.2), Mormons and New Age. In this respect it is highly interesting that Plato (Menon 81a) also mentions Orphic 'priestesses'. Given that upper-class Greek women were hardly free to wander around on the streets, their religious interest could be satisfied best by other females. We may compare early Christianity, where a Syrian Church Order stipulated that a bishop sometimes did better to choose a deaconess as his assistant because she had better access to houses in which both Christians and non-Christians lived.

Orphism, then, was an upper-class movement which paid special attention to the human individual, who was very much concerned with his own survival and salvation. This concentration on the individual also appears from its vegetarianism, which separated the true Orphic from the community-maintaining practice of sacrifice. Dodds has even called the Orphics Greek 'puritans'. Rightly so, considering their asceticism, sense of guilt and deprecation of the body, even though the Orphics did not reject the world at large, as would happen in later Gnosticism. However, Dodds was not the first to make a comparison with strict Protestants. In 1934 a former Senior Scholar of St Catharine's College Cambridge, J.R. Watmough (about whom I have been unable to find any information), published a small book, Orphism, which is hardly ever mentioned in post-war studies of Orphism. The aim of this book was, as the author states in the Preface, to draw 'the obvious analogy between ancient "Orphism" and modern Protestantism'. I find it hard to believe that Dodds never had come across this small book, which is still well worth reading.

Until now we have used the term 'Orphic mysteries', but the continuing discovery of new Gold Leaves has made it finally clear that we are really speaking of Bacchic mysteries. Herodotus (2.81) already connects Orphica and Bacchica; "Euripides (Hipp. 954) lets Hippolytus use the verb bakcheuein for Orphic revels; Dionysos is combined with Orphik(os) on an Olbian tablet (above);" the Pelinna Leaves (P 1, 2) speak of Bakchiios (above) and the Pherae Gold Leaf (below) gives as a symbolon, or 'password', Andrikepaidithyron, a clear reference to the use of the thyrsos in Dionysiac ritual, whereas the first part of the password can hardly be separated from the name Erikepaioi, a well-attested Orphic divine name," which definitively shows the close connection between Orphism and Dionysiac cult." However, we are still badly informed about
Bacchic mysteries in classical times and it may well be that we are dealing with a variety of mysteries, of which some assumed an Orphic colouring. Do we have any indications that Bacchic mysteries attracted people who were withdrawing from public life? Around 500 BC, a philosopher of royal blood, Heraclitus, deposited a book with his philosophical thoughts in the temple of Artemis in Ephesus (Diog. Laert. 9.6), which at the time was in the hands of the Persians. Unfortunately, his work has not been preserved except for some fragments. Now in recent years scholars have increasingly become aware that this process of preservation was not a matter of faithfully handing down the thoughts of the master. On the contrary, the texts of the pre-Socratics were continuously reshaped according to the ideas and purposes of those who cited them. It is therefore questionable whether we will ever be able to reconstruct their thoughts. Fortunately, Clement of Alexandria has preserved a fragment and some context in which Heraclitus (B 14) threatens specific groups of people: 'nightwanderers: magoi, bakteboi, lenai [maenads], mystai'. Although its authenticity has been disputed, this is the first passage in Greek literature where we meet the ritual specialists of the Medes, whom we will meet again in our Chapter 4.

For Heraclitus, the magoi apparently belong to groups of people who practised nightly, presumably private, ecstatic religious rites. The last three terms used by Heraclitus are clearly also used by the worshippers themselves and there seems to be no reason to suppose otherwise regarding the magoi. Apparently, some of the priestly caste of the Medes had wandered from their homeland to other parts of the Persian Empire where they could earn money as 'technologists of the sacred'. Our classical texts, Herodotus in particular, leave no doubt that the magoi practised ritual functions among the Medes and Persians, even those which we nowadays would call magic. We still find this ritual function in Greece in the Derveni papyrus, where the commemorator mentions, without any denigration, that magoi perform certain ritual practices, such as libations of milk and water, and that mystai bring a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides according to the rites of the magoi (Col. VI).

It is clear that Heraclitus is opposed to these private operators and in the course of the fifth century we can see the tide turning. Originally these magoi were Medes, but after their migration to Greece they and their successors must have gradually assimilated and become associated with others outside the sphere of public religion, such as those performing malicious magical acts and necromancy (Ch. 6.2); in addition, they were opposed by doctors who tried, one suspects, to get rid of the competition. It is only at the end of the fifth century, then, that the Greeks started to have a concept resembling our 'magic', but the definitive development of the Western concept of magic would still take a long time to come.

In addition to magoi, Heraclitus also mentions bakteboi and lenai, in other words, male and female followers of Dionysos, whereas the word mystai clearly suggests mysteries. Indeed, in the same fragment we find the word mysteria in
surviving Greek literature for the very first time. As Ephesus did not have any public mysteries comparable to those of Eleusis or Samothrace, Heraclitus must have meant private mysteries. This means that around 500 BC we already find mysteries and private rituals of followers of Dionysos Bauckheios, the Dionysos whose epithet points to ecstatic rituals wherever we have more detailed information. Heraclitus would probably have worried less about these categories had they belonged to the lowest classes of the city. The status of these worshippers will therefore have corresponded with the observed upper-class orientation of Orphism and Pythagoreanism (section 1). Bacchic mysteries, then, must have served the needs of members of the aristocracy beyond the confines of Southern Italy.

Having looked at social and ritual aspects of Orphism, we now turn to its teachings, which seem to have concentrated on three areas: (1) the coming into being of the cosmos, gods and man, (2) eschatology and (3) the transmigration of the soul, a doctrine which was intricately bound up with the other two. Until 1982 we had only the evidence from later Orphic theogonies, but the publication of the Derveni papyrus has not only given us access to what is probably the earliest theogony, but also provided us with hard evidence with which we can judge later theogonies. For example, it is now clear that the earliest theogony started with Night, since the papyrus mentions 'Night-born heaven, who was the first king' (X.6). Such a beginning is supported by Night giving birth to an 'Orphic' egg in Aristophanes' Birds:

In the beginning there was Chaos and Night and Black Erebus and broad Tartarus, and there was no Earth or Air or Heaven; and in the boundless recesses of Erebus, black-winged Night, first of all beings, brought forth a wind-egg, from which, as the seasons came round, there sprang Love the much-desired.

(693-6, tr. A. Sommerstein, slightly revised)

The fourth-century philosopher Eudemus also knows a theogony beginning with Night, as is the case in the early theogonies of Musaeus (B 14 DK) and Epimenides (B 5 DK). The further genealogical development is not that easy to reconstruct from the fragmentary remains of the papyrus, and to combine the Derveni papyrus with Aristophanes' 'Orphic' parody (above) and the later Orphic rhapsodies in order to reconstruct a genealogy, would presuppose the existence around 400 BC of still only one Orphic theogony. However, in the fourth century there already existed a theogony with Protagonos as first king, and theogonies may already have started to proliferate at the end of the fifth century. What we can say positively, though, is that in the early Orphic theogonies Night, Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus and Dionysos, played the main roles.

The 'wind-egg' in Aristophanes' 'Orphic' probably derives from Egypt where the egg assumes a cosmic significance, since the function of the Orphic Gold Leaves as 'passports' and their dialogue form also seems to derive from
the Egyptian Book of the Dead." On the other hand, Aristophanes is hardly a reliable witness for the presence of Eros and the egg, since these are not attested in any other early Orphic text.\textsuperscript{66} Surely, it would be naive to read him as a historian of ancient philosophy \textit{avant la lettre} instead of an author of comedies, and it may well be that he offers us here a \textit{bricolage} of comparable poems: the egg is attested for Epimenides' theogony (B 5 DK), and Eros played a role in a poem ascribed to Orpheus, which was sung by the Attic Lykomids (Paus. 9.27.2).

Scepticism is also appropriate regarding Martin West's claim of Phoenician influence on the Orphic theogony, even though unmistakable similarities exist with Phoenician cosmogonies as reported by Eudemus and later Phoenician, authors. This was already noted by William Robertson Smith (1846–1894), in the second and third series of his famous lectures on \textit{The Religion of the Semites} (1890–91), which have been published only in the last decade.\textsuperscript{67} However, as the Italian scholar Casadio acutely observed in an important review of West's \textit{The Orphic Poets}, Phoenician mythology, as we know it from the clay tablets of the second millennium BC, shows a completely different creation story. Consequently, the similarities probably show Greek influence on Phoenicia rather than the other way round.\textsuperscript{68}

Unfortunately, the \textit{Derveni} papyrus breaks off at the moment of Zeus' incest with his mother. In later versions Zeus mated with the product of this union, Persephone, and begot Dionysos, whom the Titans slew. The meaning of the episode is clarified by the climax of the Late Antique rhapsodic theogony, which dealt with the origin of mankind, as presumably in the oldest theogony: the murderers were in turn killed by Zeus' thunderbolt, but from the soot of their scorched deposits mankind was created: as descendants of the Titans, men were of tainted but divine origin. Can we assume that the \textit{Derveni} theogony also contained this part of the later versions?\textsuperscript{69} Not necessarily so, since the \textit{Derveni} papyrus has now made it absolutely clear that later Orphic poems could extend the archaic theogony both at the beginning and at the end. However, Pindar (fr. 133 Maehler) already declares that the best roles in future incarnations will be for those 'from whom Persephone accepts compensation for ancient grief' – words which can hardly be separated from this myth.\textsuperscript{70} Although other probable literary allusions exist,\textsuperscript{81} we are extremely fortunate that recent discoveries are more explicit. An Orphic Gold Leaf, which was discovered in Thessalian Pelinna in the 1980s, tells us:

\begin{quote}
Now you have died and now you have been born,\textsuperscript{82} thrice blessed, \\
on this day. \\
Say to Persephone that Bacchios himself has released you. \\
Bull, you jumped into the milk. \\
Quickly, you jumped into the milk. \\
Ram, you fell into the milk. \\
You have wine as your fortunate honour.
\end{quote}
And an end awaits you under the earth such as the rest of the blessed have.

(P 1)

Of the greatest interest is line 2, where the soul is instructed to tell Persephone that the god Dionysos himself has released him. Evidently, this was considered to be an extremely strong argument and it must mean that otherwise the deceased could hardly have faced Persephone. The most likely explanation surely is that the mother should have no objections to his coming, since the victim, her son, has already been forgiven. This forgiving action of Dionysos is probably illustrated on a recently published fourth-century Apulian volute crater of the Darius Painter: Dionysos joins hands with Hades, who is sitting opposite a standing Persephone, while the picture of the deceased at the other side of the vase strongly suggests an intervention of Dionysos on his behalf. The reason why the son has been forgiven perhaps appears from a second Gold Leaf, which was found even more recently in Thessalian Pherae and equally dates from the fourth century (note 6):

Brimo. Brimo. Enter the holy meadow. For the initiate has paid the price.

Clearly, here we have again a reference to a guilt which had to be atoned for and which was atoned for — presumably by initiation — before the deceased could enter the abode of the blessed (below). The myth about the dismemberment of Dionysos, then, was certainly available in the fourth and probably already in the fifth century.

These Orphic teachings are quite remarkable, since they combine cosmogony, theogony and anthropogony into one genealogy, whereas on the whole Greek mythology shows little interest in the creation of man. Here, on the other hand, man is suddenly promoted to the climax of creation. Moreover, we can observe that the diversity of the Greek pantheon has been reduced to a virtually monotheistic rule by Zeus, although Dionysos, whose position in the normative Greek pantheon was more 'eccentric', is also indispensable.

One of the Thessalian Gold Leaves stresses this divine origin of man, as it lets the deceased claim: 'I am the son of Earth and of starry Heaven, but I am of Heavenly origin' (B 9). In various forms, this claim of divinity is recurrent in most Gold Leaves and must have been an important and desirable promise of the initiators (below). As with vegetarianism, this aspect of Orphism put it completely outside normal civic religion.

The second important area of Orphism is eschatology. From the fifth century onwards we can see in Pinclar, Aristophanes and Plato a picture of the afterlife, in which there is eternal sunlight and a strict separation between the good, who after death are received into a wonderful afterlife, and the bad
who have to wallow in the mud of Hades. A beautiful meadow, which we also find in two Gold Leaves, one from South Italian Thurii (A 4) and, the other, as we just saw, from Thessalian Pherae, is another standard part of this afterlife. The picture is shared by Eleusinian and Orphic—Pythagorean eschatology, although Eleusis is clearly a somewhat later recipient: Orphic influence on Eleusis is not attested before Euripides' *Hypsipyle* and Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

Evidently, the convergence of Orphism and Eleusis developed further in the fourth century, as is demonstrated by the mention of Eleusinian Brimo in the most recently published Gold Leaf (above).

The third area is transmigration or reincarnation. In his history of Greek religion, of which he corrected the proofs virtually till the day of his death, the greatest classical scholar of the twentieth century, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1931), stated in his familiar caustic manner: 'an Orphic doctrine of the soul should first be demonstrated.' His scepticism is understandable, since explicit early testimonies are lacking. Yet there are a number of references, which taken together seem to point to an Orphic doctrine of reincarnation. Plato attributes the doctrine to 'priests and priestesses who try to give an account for the functions of their activities' (*Meno* 81a), and in the *Laws* (870de) he associates it with 'initiations'. The latter passage makes it indeed very likely that Orphic mysteries are meant, since the Eleusinian Mysteries did not propagate the doctrine of reincarnation. And in the same fragment (1 J J Maehler) in which Pindar refers to the ancient grief, he also mentions a kind of reincarnation. It fits in with this interpretation that on one of a small group of bone-tablets from Olbia, which date from about 400 BC, the combination 'life—death—life: truth; Dio—Orphik(oi?)' is found and on another 'Dio(nysos?): (????) — truth: body—soul'.

Orphism, then, must have promoted a view of the soul as being very different from the body. The distance from the Homeric idea of the soul of the living (Ch. 1.1) has taken on startling proportions in a dirge of Pindar's:

In happy fate all die a death/that frees from care, and yet there still will linger behind living image of life,/for this alone has come from the gods.

It sleeps while the limbs are active; but to those who sleep themselves /it reveals in myriad visions/the fateful approach/of adversities or delights.

(fr. 131b Maehler)

Although the soul is called *eidolon* and still described as a typical free-soul (Ch. 1.1), it is now considered divine: 'this alone . . . come from the gods.' In other words, an enormous revaluation of the soul has taken place. We do not know the audience in front of which Pindar sang these lines, but we are probably not very wrong when we suspect it to have had Orphic or Pythagorean sympathies. It cannot be surprising that with such an 'upgrading' of the soul the Orphics
formed the belief that the soul was imprisoned by the body. This is not a happy view, but still less unhappy than the Pythagorean and later Platonic idea of the body as 'tomb' of the soul (section 1): Orphic anthropology was only to a certain extent pessimistic."

It seems, then, that Orphism was the product of Pythagorean influence on Bacchic mysteries in the first quarter of the fifth century, but despite their similarities both movements also displayed many differences."" Pythagoras belongs to history, Orpheus to myth. Pythagoreanism was the fruit of one man's activities, whereas Orphism originated from existing Bacchic mysteries. Pychagoreanism was a community without a text,"" Orphism seems to have been all texts and little community. Pythagoreanism stressed the importance of ethics, Orphism of purifications. Pythagoreanism lacked the Orphic interest in mythology, even though Orphism was in this respect both backwards and progressive: incest was coupled with a 'monotheistic', Xenophanean role for Zeus. Pythagoras is closely associated with Apollo, whereas Orphism opted for Dionysos."" Finally, Pythagoreanism lacked the sense of guilt, which we find in Orphism and Empedocles, whose view of the world, though, was more pessimistic than that of Orphism. Indeed in some ways, Empedocles, with his vegetarianism and sense of guilt, was closer to Orphism than to Pythagoreanism, even though antiquity rarely associated him with Orpheus.""

3. The origins of the rise of the soul

But from where did Pythagoras derive his ideas about reincarnation and why did they become so popular? For a long time, influence from shamanism was the answer, if the wrong one as I hope to demonstrate in Chapter 3. Other scholars have suggested that Pythagoras eventually derived his views from ancient India,"" but various reasons make this unlikely. First, it will be hard to prove that contacts between India and Greece existed around 500 BC, although a century later they are already demonstrable."" Secondly, the doctrine of transmigration is still relatively new in the early Upanishads and becomes universally accepted only in Buddhism and Jainism. Unfortunately, though, the date of the Buddha, the only fixed point of early Indian chronology, has recently become the focus of incense discussion. It used to be the accepted orthodoxy that the Buddha died within a few years of 480 BC, but recently many scholars have come out in favour of the 'short chronology', which puts him about a century later. If this redating proves to be correct, influence on Greece becomes even less likely. Thirdly, Indian reincarnation is closely connected with sacrifice. Even if the Greeks had borrowed ideas of the Indians, they had certainly changed them completely.""

If, then, the likelihood of influence from outside Greece is receding,"" can we perhaps identify internal developments which may have played a role? I am fully aware that we have no explicit indications in this respect, and my proposals are therefore no more than speculations, if perhaps reasoned ones.
Let us return to Pythagoras. In our tradition his political activities are consistently connected with Croton, where he lived like a king and had a huge following of 300 youths. It seems therefore more reasonable to think of his views about reincarnation as having been developed or publicised during his exile in Metapontum. This conclusion gains in probability if we consider the possible function of reincarnation in Greece at the turn of the Archaic period.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the ancient Greeks were traditionally much less concerned with personal survival than with social survival in the group. For various reasons, in the course of the Archaic Age this attitude started to change and interest rose in personal survival (Ch. 1.1). The Greeks devised various ways of meeting these new attitudes, such as developing new eschatological ideas as the Elysion (Ch. 1.2), and building grave monuments whose inscriptions reminded passers-by of its dead owners. In a way, reincarnation can be seen as a more radical answer to this general development.

There is a second aspect to reincarnation as well: those who are reincarnated are singled out from those who are not. Pythagoras' loss of political power may well have been an extra stimulus for developing the doctrine of reincarnation, since it would guarantee a 'survival' beyond all previous possibilities. This possibility must have been attractive to his followers but also to the aristocracy in general, since its power and influence was in the process of diminishing in the late Archaic period. On the one hand, aristocrats started to lose their political power through developments, such as the Persian conquests, as will have been the case in Heraclitus' Ephesus, or the rise of tyrannies, as happened in Athens. On the other hand, the value system of Greece had been shifting for some time and aristocratic ideals had gradually come under fire, as is illustrated, for example, by the poetry of Theognis.

The kleos aphthiton, 'eternal fame', of the individual warrior was definitively shifting to the collective fame of the polis. Such a loss of role and position cannot but have had a destabilising influence on some of the aristocrats, who must have been looking for new roles, new activities and a new legitimation. Pythagoreanism, of which we have seen the aristocratic nature, could well be considered as a response to what was, in effect, the beginning of a process of aristocratic marginalisation. The extreme number of rules must have been attractive to people who felt uncertain about their place in the world, as we know from modern sects. Moreover, the fulfilment of these rules may well have given the pupils of Pythagoras a new standing within the community.

Thirdly, the promise of reincarnation must have given the Pythagoreans a sense of importance, which could restore in a way, even if only in the area of religion, their special place in society. We may perhaps remind here of the thesis of Max Weber that the rise of religions of salvation, such as Christianity, were the consequence of a depoliticisation of the Bildungsschichten.

Fourthly and finally, if Pythagoras' views cannot be separated from the religious and political developments of the late Archaic period, at the same time he could never have started to develop his ideas about transmigration,
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if the *psyche* had not already been developing into man's self. Pythagoras' doctrine of reincarnation seized upon this new development. His views were taken over by Plato and via Plato would influence early Christian theologians (Ch. 5.2). The rise of the soul, then, was the fruit of a combination of political and psychological developments not in India or Egypt, but in Greece itself.