The new Standard Model of Ancient History?

An enquiry into the applicability of the Cognitive Science of Religion in the origin and flourishing of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cults

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Introduction

The existence of religion is, as one can imagine one of the most hotly debated and controversial discussions around. The outcome of the discussion, should there ever be one, can have consequences for virtually everyone on the planet. It is no wonder then, that there is a general lack of consensus about the origin and prospering of religion. But what possible explanations for the origin of religion are there? And why, after its genesis, do certain religious ideas flourish? These questions are as pertinent for currently existing religions as for those of the past. I am certain that most readers will have their own suspicions as to why religions come into existence and why they flourish. It are precisely these that Pascal Boyer, who is one of the experts in the study of the inception of religion, notes as some of the most common misunderstandings about the origin of religion and, following that line, why it prospers.[1] It is an interesting exercise to start with these, to see if your own views are among them and why they, possibly, do not work as well as one might have thought.

Shortly summarized, Boyer distinguishes four main forms under which most of the views can be classified. Please note that these do not necessarily represent the opinions of the scientific community, but also those of the 'man in the street', so to say. The first is that religion provides explanations for general intellectual concerns humans have. If we can explain a phenomena, we can predict it and attempt to control it. Religion provides these explanations and has therefore been created by men out of an intellectual need.[2] At first this might sound like a logical explanation, perhaps because it harnesses the same feelings that might have prompted the reader to start reading Boyer's book, or this thesis, in the first place. That is: curiosity. Yet if one thinks on this account some more, problems start to show. For instance, not all cultures have the same need for explanations.[3] The origin of the world, misfortune or mankind are not represented at all in some known religions and can therefore not serve as a good account of the functioning of religion as a whole.[4] Additionally, any explanation that religion does provide for occurrences usually leaves something to be desired. As Boyer remarks, to explain something like thunder for instance as the booming voices of gods or ancestors, we must assume the existence of a 'whole imaginary world with superhuman agents (Where did they come from? Where are they?) that cannot be seen (Why not?) in a distant place that cannot be reached (How does the noise come through all the way?), whose voices produce thunder (How is that possible? Do they have special mouths? Are they

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[1] P. Boyer, *Religion Explained. The Human Instincts that Fashion Gods, Spirits and Ancestors* (London 2001), 1-57.
[2] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 12-14.
[3] Ibidem, 14-15.
[4] Ibidem, 15. For a good overview of different religions practiced in modern times, J. Bowen, *Religions in Practice. An approach to the anthropology of religion* (Boston 1998).

gigantic?).'[5] The point being that this kind of situation often leads to more questions than answers and the construction needed to sustain the explanation will only get more extensive as time goes on. So the conclusion that the origin and success of religion lies in the fact that the human mind demands explanation is not completely satisfactory. However, it cannot be denied that religions do function as givers of information, even if the construction needed to sustain this is very extensive. More complex problems such as starvation, evil, or even why the world exists, also need explanation and these need not be simple.

The second category that Boyer identifies, sees the origin and function of religion as something that provides comfort. Rather than for our rational state of being, we need religion for our emotional one. The most prominent example is of course that of salvation religions, which relieve the fear of death by offering a better place beyond the grave. Life can be full of frightful and nasty things and religion can relieve some of those anxieties. While again, at first sight, it seems to function fairly well as explanation, upon further inspection Boyer claims that problems begin to show themselves. For instance fears are culturally based and the rituals that are used to alleviate the fears often create the need that they seek to fulfil.[6] That is, one culture could possess an entire system against the threat of demons (rituals, amulets and the like), yet another society may have none of these fears. The existence of the ritual in all likelihood reinforces the need for protection from said demons. Very often religious people feel that the odds are increasingly stacked against them and that the supernatural powers, that seek to harm them, cannot be completely warded off. Evidence for bad fortune is all around them (accidents or death) and it only makes them more fearful of the world they live in. Concerning the fear of death the same thing applies as it did for 'religion as an explanation', that is not all cultures have this concern.[7] Mortality, for all, is simply inevitable, however this need not be the end for some.[8] But, again it is quite undeniable that religion does alleviate fears even when it might partly cause them. Though it might not be its primary cause or objective.

The third category of these theories centres on the need for religion in society. The foundation for this theory is certainly no mystery. In most societies, religion forms the backbone of how people interact with each other and what place they take in said society. That is, in all cases religion is strongly connected with moral believes and social stratification. However, religion does not create these things. They exist already, religion simply gives an ad hoc explanation for why the currents system is in place. All societies have some form of prescriptive rules governing social

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[5] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 15.
[6] Ibidem, 22-23.
[7] Note that fear of death is not the same as the biologically ingrained survival instinct, which is of course a pan-human concern. We return to this below.
[8] Ibidem, 22-26.

organization, their religious concepts however, can differ vastly.[9] On the other hand, religion is most assuredly connected to the functioning of society and morality and could play a part in how we acquire it. This is the first point that Boyer believes should be an element that needs to be represented in any theory concerning religion, its origin and its thriving. I agree with him in this, but also believe that the above views should be represented in any theory.

The final category of explanations for the origin and the enthusiastic continuation of religion is one that sees religion as a manner of error in our mental functioning. People are by their very nature superstitious, also religious concepts are not refutable by rational reasoning and besides, it would be therefore be too much effort to even try. Some of these claims are of course reasonable, one cannot, for instance, verify religious claims. The processes and agents their existence cannot be proven in any way, it is after all a matter of belief. Humans are also prone to believing in religious elements, however this is limited in certain ways.[10] This is a point we shall return to below. As we shall see in chapter 2, a theory of the origin and prospering of religion, should certainly take into account the fact that the human mind is receptive to only specific forms of religious belief and not to others.

Were your own views mentioned above? And, if so, are you convinced that they perhaps rest upon a misunderstanding of the phenomenon? What was the point of the exercise above, you ask? To attempt to show that current theories might not function as fully as you believe and to present an alternative. This alternative could very well take the form of cognitive science. Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary and scientific investigation of the mind and intelligence. Its advantages are that it focusses on general 'laws' of thinking that follow out of the structure of our brains. To minimize the influence of culture in the inquiries testing is partly done with children, in whom cultural influence is minimal. It follows then, that these are theories that should be applicable across cultures and, since the structure of our brains has not evolved since the beginning of history (ca. 3000 B.C.), they are also applicable through time. Although cognitive science is not without its controversies and encompasses several competing research traditions that differ from each other primarily in their ideas of the nature of mental representations and of the procedures by which such representations are manipulated.[11] We will go into cognitive science more extensively below (chapter 2), but for now let me elucidate why cognitive science (or more specifically the cognitive science of religion) is the subject of this research.

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[9] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 26-32.
[10] Ibidem, 32-35.
[11] P. Thagard, 'Cognitive science. Approaches', in: The Encyclopædia Britannica ed., *Britannica.com*, 2013, 6-3-2014.

Cognitive science has been on the upswing, however its promise has barely seeped over into other areas of study which could result in a multi-disciplinary approach to some topics.[12] As one can imagine studies in history could have a lot to gain, if cognitive science can live up to its promise. For the biggest issue for historians is that there is a great amount of information from the past, but no single way of interpreting this. Historian L.H. Martin likens it to the children's' game of 'connecting the dots', which I am sure we are all familiar with. In the game a child (or adult if it tickles their fancy) connects the numbered dots on the paper to form an image.[13] This image can be recreated by any who plays the game, as the order of the dots does not change. So if we imagine that the individual dots each represent a piece of historical evidence and the lines between them their relation in our historical narrative we can imagine what Martin means with this metaphor. However, it becomes more difficult in the historians case, because, unlike in the child's game, our dots are not numbered. Consequently, different players of the game might connect the dots in vastly different ways, which greatly influences what picture emerges from it.[14] How a scholar connects these dots is influenced by all sorts of things; one's own culture, political preferences, upbringing and schooling. Cognitive science could help in providing a framework in which these theories can function, by indicating what is even humanly possible to think based on the structure of the brain. It could perhaps, even suggest the most likely theories that can be discovered in certain tendencies the human mind has.

However, as mentioned before, it has not been implemented in a consistent manner in historical studies, while this could in fact provide a key to understanding historical events better. But are cognitive theories indeed useful in looking at historical events? And do they enhance our understanding in matters where, up till now, there has been no consensus? This will be the focus of this research and to answer this question we will examine a certain historical event in which no consensus has been reached. The historical event under investigation will be the origin and flourishing of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cults. To understand this, a short introduction is not out of place.

We start with Plutarch's story about Alexander the Great, who received an oracle in the Siwa oasis in Egypt that his lineage was divine, to illustrate.

"And some say that the prophet, wishing to show his friendliness by addressing him with 'O paidion,' or O my son, in his foreign pronunciation ended the words with 's' instead of 'n,'

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[12] L.H. Martin, 'The Future of the Past: The History of Religions and Cognitive Historiography', *Religio*, Vol. 20.2 (2012), 163.
[13] Martin, 'The Future of the Past', 159.
[14] Ibidem, 159-160.

and said, 'O paidios,' and that Alexander was pleased at the slip in pronunciation, and a story became current that the god had addressed him with 'O pai Dios,' or O son of Zeus." [15]

Although Plutarch clearly expresses his doubt concerning the rightfulness of the oracle, Alexander the Great would, bolstered by this validation of his divinity, go on to conquer the Persian Empire, cumulating in the battle at Gaugamela (331 BC). After his death in 323 BC his kin and generals tried to establish themselves as the sole successor to his empire. However, none of them could achieve this and the land was divided into three kingdoms; the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia and Greece, the Seleucids in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria and Persia and the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, Palestine and Cyprus.[16]

Greeks and Macedonians were now the rulers of oriental empires and were expected to act as the kings of old and yet they introduced innovations in this position as well. Their rule was often a fine balancing act between native and Greek elements, making sure that both groups found the new arrangement acceptable. It is in this situation that we first encounter a cult for the living ruler of the state. The definition that will be used for this research to identify the ruler cult is: a Hellenistic or Roman ruler who is viewed as a god and consequently receives some manner of cultic honouring during his lifetime. None of the cultures involved in the pre-Hellenistic countries had a tradition which entitled the living ruler to his (or her) own cult. Even in pharaonic Egypt, where one might expect a cult given the divine status of the ruler as the personification of the god Horus and keeper of *Ma'at*[17], one does not find a ruler cult. Yet it soon becomes clear that Greeks and natives are, in fact, worshipping their foreign rulers as gods. The existence of these cults for the living ruler was something which might have inspired other empires to follow in their steps. The most significant of these was the Roman Empire. The sole rulers of the realm would soon install cults for their predecessors and expected the same to be done for them upon their own death. But more importantly for this research, there is talk of some rulers having cults during their lifetime, these were however mostly focused in the provinces, for in Rome there was firm resistance against it. However, there are certainly also some elements of the emperor that could be deified during his lifetime, without creating outrage.[18] Interestingly, some people took issue with the deification of the

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[15] Plutarch, Alexander 27.5 (translation: Perrin).

[16] S. Price, 'The history of the Hellenistic period', in: J. Boardman, J. Griffin and O. Murray, *The Oxford history of Greece and the Hellenistic world* (Oxford 2001) 364-389, 365-368.

[17] *Ma'at* was the ancient Egyptian concept of world order as opposed to *Isfet* (chaos). Only the pharaoh could maintain *Ma'at* by performing sacred tasks and thereby preventing the world from being destroyed by chaos. P. Herz, 'Hellenistische Könige. Zwischen griechischen Vorstellungen vom Köningtum und Vorstellungen ihrer einheimischen Untertanen', in: A. Small ed., *Subject and ruler: the cult of the ruling power in classical antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1996) 27-40, 32-33.

[18] Such as his *numen*, that is his divine power. We shall return to this more extensively below in chapter 3.

living rulers in both Hellenistic and Roman times, yet the majority of the population accepted the new cult without scruples and caused it to flourish. So how then can the tension between these two groups exist and what was the cause of it?

The answers to these questions should enlighten the relationship between the rulers of ancient empires (both Hellenistic and Roman) and their subjects. The outcome could also lead scholars to a new interpretation of the position of the rulers within the Hellenistic and Roman empires. However, as indicated above, no consensus had been reached amongst the scholars investigating the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cults. The scholars of this debate can, I believe, be divided into two groups. The first group believes that the Greeks and Romans experienced no fundamental difference between their earlier situation and the new one, in which there was a worshipping of their living and deceased rulers. The 'problem' and the change was something modern scholars have created in their Judeo-Christian mind-set. However, seeing that ancient sources also remark upon the fundamental difference between the two, these theories will not hold up completely. The second group of scholars take this in their stride and recognize that there was indeed a fundamental difference. Yet, this was obviously overcome given our evidence. All off these theories, in different ways, are not adequate and there is no consensus. This will receive more extensive coverage below (chapter 1), however, the conclusion that must be acknowledged, is that all theories lack something. I would like to suggest that this lack in the explanation, for the phenomenon of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cult, can perhaps be overcome with the help of cognitive science. This new theory will be the subject of chapter 2, where its framework will be expounded upon and its possibilities for the study of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cults outlined. We will then try to apply this theory to two case studies, one will be the examination of the ruler cult in the Hellenistic (Ptolemaic and Seleucid) empires and the second will be of the ruler cult in Rome, particularly those of the emperors of the Principate (32 BC- 284 AD). By then it should have become clear whether or not the study of cognitive religion is a useful tool in trying to discover things about a long gone past.

Chapter 1: The road goes ever on and on, out from the door where it began

This chapter will serve as the initiation into the subject under review, with all its problems and nuances. A research such as this would however not be complete without a little historical context. Although I am certain that any reader will be familiar with the period under observation, a short overview of said period, even if it only serves as to refresh it, would not be out of place. I will however, be brief about it as there are more important matters to consider. That will form the second part of this segment, which is a historiographical survey of the secondary material. We will examine numerous theories that make up the debate and consider their faults and strengths, to set the baseline for the following enquiry.

Section 1.1: Sketching a picture

As mentioned above our enquiry starts with the advent of the Hellenistic period, which of course starts with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and the following conflict over his legacy. To go into it in any great detail would be impossible as whole shelves in the library have been filled with books on the history of the Hellenistic era. We will therefore focus on the transitional period after the death of Alexander, as it is then that the position of the Hellenistic rulers becomes clear. Of course, some remarks on later times will be added.

The death of Alexander left a great power vacuum in his still forming empire, which for all intents and purposes was not yet able to function as a state. There was no functioning government as many of the posts were empty upon his death, waiting to be filled. At the same time there was no fixed idea about how this government was going to look, other than an adapted form of the existing Persian structure.[19] However, the most pertinent problem was the lack of an heir. Although Alexander's wife was pregnant upon his death, the child was a far cry from inheriting the massive empire. The other option was Alexander's half-brother, however the man was found to be mentally unfit to rule.[20] A council was called and most of Alexander's generals discuss the future of the empire and while some form of agreement was reached (they would wait until the pregnancy was done to make a decision and Perdikkas was given executive power in the meantime), it was hardly satisfactory. It is therefore no surprise that the army had a different idea and proclaimed Alexander's half-brother king, despite whatever mental disability. However, this did not last as most individual generals were already setting themselves up for a bid at the throne and the Wars of the *Diadochoi*

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[19] W. Adams, 'The Hellenistic Kingdoms', in: G. Bugh (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge, 2006), 28-51, 28-29.
[20] The nature of this mental unfitness is unclear, as several ancient authors state different causes, but they all agree that he was mentally unsuitable for rulership. For instance in Plutarch the man is claimed to be a fool (Plut. *Alex*. 10.2), while Diodorus refers to an incurable mental illness (Diod. 18.2).

(Successors) soon became a fact.[21] In practice the illusion of ruling in the name of the now born son of Alexander (Alexander IV) is upheld, but the empire soon splinters into smaller states. In fact the boy and his mother are murdered by 309 BC and in 306 BC the illusion is abandoned and Antigonos and his son Demetrius are crowned kings by their army.[22] The other generals, not to be outdone, follow their example and the Hellenistic kingdoms are created. This was certainly not the end of the struggles between the *Diadochoi*, as the dream of reuniting Alexander's empire under one single ruler remained alive, it was not until this goal seemed unattainable that we can discern several (somewhat fixed) states.[23] Three major states now emerge; the Antigonid Empire in Macedonia, the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Asia. The two latter are the subject of this paper and we shall shortly go into them further.

All these nations had their specific advantages and disadvantages and these would define what kind of rule was possible for the Macedonian kings. The Ptolemaic Empire was defined by being easily defendable and very wealthy, as the Egyptian land provided both of these. Another advantage that presented itself to Ptolemy I was that the native Egyptians had a strong tradition of a powerful ruler, the pharaoh. It was a position he and his successors could easily claim and it gave them near-absolute control of the nation. This large homogenous native population also meant that Ptolemy would have to conform to whatever image they had for their pharaoh, or risk riots in the land.[24] However, given the fact that he had many of his Greek and Macedonian soldiers with him as well as several Greek cities to rule in Egypt (Alexandria and Naucratis), he needed to be an acceptable king for these too, as it was the Greek population that the Ptolemaic rulers relied on for administration and military might. This split would lead to an interesting form of a dual identity for the kingship, which would always be a fine balancing act.[25] And although the Ptolemaic Empire certainly did not have the largest armies at its disposal, its fabulous wealth, defendable position and their incredible control over the population would ensure that they were the longest standing Hellenistic Empire.[26]

The other Hellenistic subject empire under consideration is that of the Seleucids in Asia. Theirs was by far the largest empire of the three and it entitled them to massive amounts of resources. For not only could they extract tribute from many different peoples around their empire, they also controlled the major trading routes coming out of eastern Asia.[27] Given their incredibly

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[21] A helpful overview may be found in F. Chamoux, *Hellenistic Civilization* (translated by: M. Roussel) (Malden 2003), 39-65.

[22] Adams, 'The Hellenistic Kingdoms', 31-32.

[23] Ibidem, 34-35.

[24] Which did in fact happen later on under Ptolemy IV Philpator and cut the country in half for almost 20 years (206-186 BC). For more information see: G. Hölbl, *A history of the Ptolemaic Empire* (translated by T. Saavedra), 153-159.

[25] Adams, 'The Hellenistic Kingdoms', 38-39.

[26] Their fall was, of course, at the hands of Ocatvian (later Augustus), which we shall return to shortly below.

[27] Ibidem, 43.

diverse population, the Seleucids could not uphold the same policy as the Ptolemaic rulers to deal with them. There was simply a too vast amount to install a Greek/Macedonian layer on top of them for administration and military purposes. They therefore resorted to increase their control through intermarriage and by giving natives in general a large part in the administration of the empire, as they had under Alexander.[28] However, the empire soon proved too large to manage and the Seleucids were forced to give up several of their provinces or risk their forces being spread too thin.[29] Although the causes of the end of the Seleucid Empire are much disputed, Rome clearly had a deciding factor in the matter and took over some of the provinces from the Seleucids while the empire was still in existence.[30] It is not difficult to imagine that, as the power of the Seleucid kings further waned, more area's within the empire began to proclaim their independence until there was nothing left.[31]

This then brings us to the Roman period, as the end of the Roman Republic is also the official 'end' of the Hellenistic period. Rome, by this time, had conquered most of the Mediterranean, but was now struggling internally for its continuation. Political conflict was abound in the tumultuous first century BC, with the Social War in Italian Peninsula and the civil war that plagued Republican Rome until its collapse.[32] It is in this century that the origins of the Roman Empire need to be sought. The lifelong elected dictatorship of Sulla and later Caesar gave unprecedented power to certain individuals which had never before been seen in the Roman political system.[33] This however all came to a culmination under Augustus, who was born Octavian (23 September 63 BC – 19 August 14 AD). Octavian rose through the upper echelons of Roman political life at a very young age, partly through his connection with Julius Caesar, who was by that time the elected dictator for the Roman republic. This tenure would, in 45 BC, be extended to a lifelong one, something which was very much unheard of and a prelude to the position Octavian himself would soon hold.[34] Caesar, as we all know, was murdered that very year in the assembly of the senate because he wanted to formalize his new

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[28] Adams, 'The Hellenistic Kingdoms', 43-44.

[29] Ibidem, 46-48.

[30] S. Sherwin-White and A. Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: a new approach to the Seleucid empire* (London 1993), 217-223.

[31] Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *Samarkhand to Sardis*, 225-228.

[32] A helpful overview of this tumultuous period and its origins can be found in F.G. Naerebout and H.W. Singor, *Antiquity, Greeks and Romans in Context* (Malden 2014), 228-240. Another very extensive overview can be found in the Companion to the Roman Republic, more specifically: C.F. Konrad, 'From the Grachi to the First Civil War (133-70)', in: N. Rosenstein and R. Morstein-Marx, *A Companion to the Roman Republic* (Malden 2006) 167-189. And W.J. Tatum, 'The Final Crisis (69-44)', in: N. Rosenstein and R. Morstein-Marx, *A Companion to the Roman* Republic (Malden 2006) 190-211.

[33] For Sulla see for instance: A. Thein, 'Sulla the weak tyrant', in: S. Lewis ed., *Ancient Tyranny* (Edinburgh 2006) 238-249, 240-242. For Caesar a useful article is; J.F. Gardner, 'The Dictator', in: M. Griffin ed., *A companion to Julius Caesar* (Malden 2009) 57-71, 57-60.

[34] K. Galinsky, *Augustus. Introduction to the life of an Emperor* (Cambridge 2012), 14-15.

position in a monarchy which was modelled on, interestingly enough, the Hellenistic rulers.[35] The young man would then ally himself with Lepidus and Mark Antony to punish the murderers of Caesar, only to later fall into war with both parties over the power in the realm.[36] It is at this point that the final Hellenistic empire is about to come to an end. This end comes in the form of the naval battle of Actium, in which Mark Antony, his army and the Ptolemaic forces were defeated by Octavius (31 BC). The Ptolemaic Empire is now officially a province of the Roman state, although for the people very little change could be felt and as we shall see this even seeped into the religious structure.[37] For the Roman state however, this event triggered the start of the Roman Empire. Octavian received ample reward for the defeat of Mark Anthony and his help in 'restoring' the Roman Republic and thus received the name Augustus.

From 27 BC onwards Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, better known as Augustus ruled the Roman Empire. At first though, it was behind the facade of the 'restored Republic', which suited Roman conservatism.[38] Augustus in the *Res Gestae*, makes a great show of rejecting any attempts by the senate and the people to give him sole rule.[39] Augustus was *Princeps*, that is the first citizen of the Roman state, giving him unlimited power in the state in all actuality. However, it was not until 23 BC that his power would be uncontested. He resigned his position as consul, a yearly position which he had held continuously since 27 BC, and was granted *tribunicia potestas* (the tribune of the people) by the senate. This allowed him to pass any legislation as he saw fit.[40] Together with the power he held over the military, Augustus consolidated the position that many emperors would fill after him (albeit with regular changes in constitution and titles).[41] The Roman Empire would, however, prove to be rather unstable as well, as the position of the Roman emperor did not rest on constitutional foundations, but on acclaim of the army. This meant that any with the backing of the army could be proclaimed ruler.[42] Although it was certainly Augustus' intention to create a dynastic succession, this would not be easy for those following him. They were very much limited to what heirs were available and we can see several changes in dynasty as factions of the army could not agree on the succession. These changes are certainly not always peaceful, the most prominent thing that comes to mind is the Year of the four Emperors. This was when, after Nero's suicide, civil war broke out because there

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[35] Naerebout and Singor, *Antiquity*, 238.

[36] Ibidem, 238-240. The entire conflict is too large and detailed to discuss here with any justice. For further information on the matter Galinsky, *Augutus*, 20-60, gives a comprehensive overview.

[37] Especially for the lower class masses not much change was felt, heavier taxation being perhaps the exception. Administration certainly saw its fair share of change and the elite were now themselves subject to a higher class of Romans. However, on the whole, the functioning of the state changed little. N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (Oxford 1983), 14-35.

[38] Naerebout and Singor, *Antiquity*, 298-301.

[39] Aug. Anc. 5-6.

[40] Galinsky, *Augutus*, 72-73. B. Levick, *Augustus. Image and Substance* (Harlow 2010), 89-91.

[41] Galinsky, *Augutus*, 73.

[42] Naerebout and Singor, *Antiquity*, 302.

were several candidates for the throne and all had the backing of the army. The individual emperors were only in power for a short amount of time, no longer then a couple of months.[43] The balance between the emperor and the senate was at this stage still very important and different rulers would interact differently with the senate, which influenced their style of ruling greatly. Some were openly defiant of the senate and its 'power' and it is they who are remembered as the tyrannical emperors (for instance, Nero and Gaius). While others were more subtle in proclaiming their powers and, arguably, got more done in the end (Augustus and Vespasian).[44] Until 160 AD the Roman Empire flourished, afterwards it was under constant threat of invasion and the internal struggles only intensified at the end of the second century AD as strong and able emperors were increasingly replaced by megalomaniacs and poor leaders. This all culminated in the so-called crisis of the third century, in which the empire was showing certain signs of decline and change in general. Internal political instability was great and after the death of Emperor Alexander Severus in 235 AD another civil war broke out. Economic crisis, disease and invaders roamed the empire and reform was needed. This came during Diocletian's reign (284-305 AD), who formally abolished the republic and instituted the Dominate. The emperor was now officially the absolute ruler of the empire and not merely the 'first citizen'.[45]

This is where our overview of Roman history stops, for it is at this time that Christianity was on the rise and it would become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. This is, as one would suspect also the end of the deification of the emperor, as Christian Monotheism does not allow this position for any living man. How then does the ruler cult figure into this? Let us examine the theories in the debate about the matter.

Section 1.2: Colouring the picture

As mentioned, there is no consensus in the debate surrounding the flourishing of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cult. The ongoing discussion stretches several decades and has many contributors. It would therefore be impossible for the purpose of this investigation to give an exhaustive overview of the entire debate, it is however my hope that this will be comprehensive enough to follow the course of the debate and illustrate that no agreement has yet been reached. It is also my intention to illustrate the weaknesses and strengths of these theories.

To give structure to both this section and the debate, the theories on the origin of the ruler cult will be divided into two categories. These categories will be those who see continuity in the phenomenon and those who see discontinuity. This will necessarily mean that some theories are

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[43] For a recent evaluation of this period see: G. Morgan, *69 A.D., The Year of Four Emperors* (Oxford 2006).

[44] G. Rowe, 'The Emergence of Monarchy: 44 BCE- 96 CE', in: D.S. Potter ed., *A Companion to the Roman Empire* (Malden 2006) 115-125, 120.

[45] Naerebout and Singor, *Antiquity*, 305-306.

simplified and perhaps distorted to be able to fit into our divisions. It is however, important to remember that these divisions merely serve as a heuristic devise to structure the debate and the underlying point of the section is to illustrate why the current theories do not solve our question.

Before we start with our analysis another point must be made concerning our source material and the subjects of the theories. When reviewing the material for this research it soon became apparent that not all empires were equally well represented in both the sources and modern literature. The lack in the first is, of course, at least partly the cause for dearth in the second. The lack of evidence is especially troublesome when dealing with the Seleucid Empire and its ruler cult.[46] There is very little secondary material which focusses its explanations specifically on the Seleucid ruler cult. Theories on the Seleucid ruler cult can thus only be found in works which feature a general explanation for the Hellenistic ruler cult and give one (or perhaps two) examples of their theory for the Seleucid empire. However, the bulk of the support in evidence for the theory is found in the material for Ptolemaic Egypt, which is indeed abundant by ancient history standards. The Seleucid Empire will therefore, necessarily, be underrepresented in this section. The Roman ruler cult is equally well attested in the primary material and comprehensively represented in the secondary literature, although it brings with it some further problems of its own. Let us now then turn to the overview of the debate surrounding the origin of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cult.

Section 1.2.1: To make a mountain out of a molehill

This section houses the theories of the scholars who see continuity in the practice of worshipping living men and rulers. The start of the practice is hotly debated, E. Badian for instance would argue that Alexander the Great was the first to be worshipped in such a way.[47] However, some scholars would certainly protest against this. A. Chaniotis gives numerous examples of individuals that precede Alexander that have been given divine honours during the lifetime.[48] Such as the Spartan general Lysander, for whom the Samians erected an altar for sacrifices and renamed the festival of Hera to him (404 BC).[49] Whichever the case, it is certainly clear that there is precedent for the practice.

We shall start examining the theories by looking at one of the most prominent historians of the Ptolemaic period P.M. Fraser. In his monumental work *Ptolemaic Alexandria* [50], he addresses all aspects of life at that time. As the title suggests, the book mostly focusses on Alexandria, but Fraser

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[46] M. Austin, 'The Seleukids and Asia', in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Malden 2003) 121-133, 133.

[47] For his theory see: E. Badian, 'The deification of Alexander the Great', in: C.F. Edson and H.J. Dell ed., *Ancient Macedonian studies in honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki 1981) 27-71, 33-44.

[48] A. Chaniotis, 'The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers', in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Malden 2003) 431-445, 434-435.

[49] Chaniotis, 'Hellenistic Rulers', 434.

[50] P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1-3* (Oxford 1993³).

spends a lot of time in his investigation on the general situation of the country and is therefore very useful material for all studying the Ptolemaic period. He even generalizes to such extent that his theories can sometimes be applied to Hellenistic Empires as a whole.

Fraser spends an entire chapter on the religious life in Ptolemaic Alexandria and dedicates a paragraph to the cults of the royal family and the dynastic cult.[51] However, he only gives a relatively short explanation as to why Greeks would worship their living rulers as gods. According to Fraser, notable men (such as athletes and founders of city) could be given a cult upon their death and would then be worshipped by their fellow citizens as heroes. So the veneration of these men found their origin in the desire to express admiration and gratitude, not as a way to show subordination.[52] Fraser believes that this tendency was susceptible for exploitation by individuals for personal and political gain. Therefore when Alexander demanded that the cities of the League of Corinth worship him as a god, he did this by appealing to an existing trend in Greek city life. That is, to venerate great people for their deeds. Alexander must also have been greatly influenced by his knowledge of the role of the king in oriental empires.[53] The major issue with Fraser's theory is, I believe, that some individuals were deified no matter what their personal achievements, or even in spite of these achievements (if they were, for instance, gruesome) or in fact lacking in all personal achievements.[54] Let us now turn to the theories G. Hölbl who also believes that kingship finds its origin in the cult of heroes.

The work of G. Hölbl is a true masterpiece and almost reads as a handbook on the history of the Ptolemaic Empire (which is in fact the title of the translated work).[55] In this extensive work he covers most of nearly all fields of inquiry surrounding the Ptolemaic empire, this of course includes the divine status of the king in both the eyes of the Greeks and Egyptians. Hölbl believes that the two (Greek and Egyptian) cults mixed into an entirely new form of kingship. One which combined qualities from both traditions. From Greek model, it took the idea that the king had to adhere to certain model of behaviours that befitted a proper king.[56] The performing of these acts would transform him into 'a saviour, a liberator, protector and begetter and guarantor of fertility and affluence'.[57] He thinks that for the Hellenistic *basileus* charisma and superhuman qualities were enough to bring him to the level of the gods, as opposed to the earlier pharaoh, who was merely the

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[51] Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 213-246 and *volume 3*, 361-397.

[52] Ibidem, 213.

[53] Ibidem, 213 and *volume 3* 362-363.

[54] Ptolemy VIII could be an example of this as he was in civil war with his family and not a good example of a strong king. Although he could have had other qualities that made him suitable for deification.

[55] The original work was published under the name *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches: Politik, Ideologie und religiöse Kultur von Alexander dem Großen bis zur römischen Eroberung* (Darmstadt 1994). The new work is referenced under the new title in the bibliography, that is: G. Hölbl, *A history of the Ptolemaic Empire* (translated by T. Saavedra) (New York 2001).

[56] Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 90-91.

[57] Ibidem, 91.

mortal bearer of the divine office of Horus.[58] All this then needs to be seen in the context of Greeks worshipping outstanding individuals as heroes upon their death. It is this practice that, according to Hölbl, caused an unclear distinction between god and man, and caused the cult to be transformed into the ruler cult honouring both the individual rulers as the entire Ptolemaic dynasty.[59]

We can observe a strong resemblance to Frasers theory in this. Both emphasize the blurred line between men and gods and the influence of the native population within the empires. Hölbl therefore falls victim to the same objection as that for Fraser, that is; even non-outstanding individuals or even repulsive ones could receive divine honours in the Hellenistic period. Certainly not all *basileus* possessed the charisma and superhuman abilities needed 'justify' their position as gods, yet all were worshipped in the same manner. This leads me to believe that such considerations are perhaps an anachronistic condition opposed by the scholars themselves. This is a recurring opinion which we shall also observe below in the theories of another author, but first we shall turn to S.R.F. Price.

Both Fraser and Hölbl attest that the separation of humans in gods was not that sharp in Greek minds. S.R.F. Price is of the same opinion. In his book *Rituals and Power* he claims that this way of thinking in sharp distinctions is an exclusively Jewish and Christian occupation.[60] Ancient Greeks, so he claims, recognized more categories than just the ends of the spectrum, divine or human. Unfortunately modern scholars have, in his opinion, not always outgrown this model of thinking, in which Greek (and Roman) religion is defined by its differences from Christian religion.[61]

Price thinks that the reason that Greeks started worshipping kings in general as gods is that in the *polis* society of Greeks there was no acceptable position available for the king.[62] There were no laws for presenting this new power in the cities and Price therefore suggests that the only model available to them was the cult of the gods. The cults represented an absolute and external power outside of the city. It is interesting to see that Price thus disagrees with Fraser and other authors that claim that the origin of the ruler cult can be found in the cult of heroes. To corroborate this he unfortunately gives very few examples of events in antiquity where the separation between heroes and gods is made clear.[63]

The Roman ruler cult was somewhat similar in origin to the Hellenistic variant in that the phenomenon was also created at the end of the Republic to deal with the new power that the

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[58] Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 92.
[59] Ibidem, 93-95.
[60] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and power. The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984), 7-15.
[61] Price, *Rituals*, 13-15.
[62] The 'Greeks' in this sense include of course all the Greeks and Greek colonies around the Mediterranean. Ibidem, 27-30.
[63] Ibidem, 32-33.

emperor represented.[64] However, there are several differences as well. These are not as pronounced in the Roman provinces, the old Hellenistic kingdoms that is. Here ruler cult continued as it had for centuries, only replacing the king with the new Roman emperor.[65] Rome, and the Italian provinces, were another matter altogether. In the early empire, when the façade of the Republic still needed to be upheld, the emperor was only the first among equals and should behave as such. This meant that a cult to his person was certainly out of the question and any emperors who did attempt it were met with hostility and death.[66] Therefore, it was only possible for the emperor to be deified after his death, if this apotheosis was granted by the senate, who would base their decision mostly on the moral character of the emperor.[67] Price sees this as a way for the senate to remain in some form of power. By having the ultimate power over the deification of the emperor allowed them to elicit the desired behaviour from the emperor.[68]

Although a very fine theory, I find it wholly unconvincing that the senate held any sort of power in the deification of the emperor and certainly not that the apotheosis was based on the moral character of the emperor. A good example for this can be found in the deification of emperor Claudius, who was on the whole, not well loved by his contemporaries and by the following tradition. He is often portrayed as a suspicious fool and unnecessarily cruel.[69] Yet he is immediately deified by his successor Nero upon death, despite possible reservations present in the senatorial elite such as Seneca, whose satirical piece the *Apocolocyntosis* vehemently argues against the deification. It claims that Claudius is wholly inappropriate for deification.[70] I think that the myth, if you will, might just have been a way for the (senatorial) elite to deal with the inevitability of deifying the deceased emperor. It was simply tradition and, given the example of Claudius, long before the second century when the power of the senate truly gave way. In addition, Price makes no mention of the private worship the emperor received during lifetime and it is this that is relevant for our research, following the definition.

Another set of views are expounded in a book, edited by P. Green, which brings together the lectures, responses and part of the discussion that were held at the Symposium on Hellenistic History

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[64] S.R.F. Price, 'From noble funerals to divine cult: the consecration of the Roman Emperors', in: D. Cannadine and S.R.F. Price ed., *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge 1987) 56-105, 57-58.

[65] Price, 'Consecration if the Roman Emperors', 84-85.

[66] Ibidem, 85. Although he later adds that the emperor was awarded certain religious honors during life, which would place him close to the gods. Ibidem, 90.

[67] Ibidem, 87.

[68] This of course diminished as the senate lost their political leverage from the second century onward. Ibidem, 91-93.

[69] Suet. *Cl.* 34-38.

[70] Price, 'Consecration if the Roman Emperors', 87-88.

and Culture at the University of Texas in 1988.[71] The book provides articles on a slew of subjects, however for the subject of this research, there is only one contribution (which includes a response and relevant discussion) that is applicable. This is the chapter on the Ptolemaic ideology of kingship by author A.E. Samuel.[72] Amongst a general overview of what he believes is the role of kingship in the governing and administrating of Ptolemaic Egypt, namely not one where the king is all powerful and at the top of the administration, but one where the king is seen as separate from the government and as a protector of the people.[73] Samuel argues that the divine nature of the Ptolemies was based mostly on the divine descent of the rulers. Evidence for this, he believes van be found in a poem Theocritus wrote as a eulogy for Ptolemy II. The poem is shaped like a traditional Homeric hymn and in here Ptolemy II Philadelphus kingship is likened several times to those of Zeus, Ptolemy I and Alexander the Great, all gods and his predecessors.[74] Samuel believes that seeing as there is prove for Philadelphus as a god (mostly in oaths), this association with these gods and kings was enough to make the divinity of the Ptolemaic rulers acceptable.[75] Although he does express his doubt on whether the Greeks in Egypt would exclusively call upon the divine rulers in oaths and would turn to the 'real' gods, such as Sarapis or Isis, for other matters.[76]

His position is attacked by D. Delia who responds in the second part of the chapter to the theory Samuel proposes. Delia points to the fact that there is ample evidence that Greek intellectuals fundamentally disagree with the status of living individuals (even kings) as gods. However, in light of the evidence she must admit that there certainly was a Greek cult which venerated the Ptolemaic dynasty.[77] The reason for this can be found in dual manifestations of the cult that merge into one. One part is the hero cult belonging to Alexander the Great and the second part was simply reverence created by royal power, so it was not the king who was divine, but the office of kingship which he holds.[78] In the discussion later on Delia adds that she would find it hard to believe that both Greeks and Egyptian worshipped Ptolemy VIII as a god for he was caught up in civil war with his family, so it

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[71] P. Green, 'Preface', in: P. Green ed., *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley 1993), ix.

[72] A.E. Samuel, 'The Ptolemies and the Ideology of Kingship', in: P. Green ed., *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley 1993), 168-192.

[73] Samuel, 'Ideology of kingship', summery on pages 192-193.

[74] M. Heerink, in an article about the same poem, has to admit that Ptolemy II Philadelphus is also likened to various heroes and demi-gods. Heerink nonetheless concludes the same as Samuel, that the divinity of Philadelphus is signified by his comparison to Zeus. Interestingly he places this comparison within an Egyptian framework, where the 'Egyptian idea' of the divine pharaoh is translated into Greek so it might become acceptable for the Greek subjects of the Ptolemies. M. Heerink, 'Merging paradigms: translating pharaonic ideology in Theocritus' Idyll 17', in: R. Rollinger, B. Gufler, M. Lang & I. Madreiter ed., *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt: Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* (Wiesbaden 2010) 383-408, 394-403.

[75] Samuel, 'Ideology of kingship', 180-183.

[76] Ibidem, 182.

[77] D. Delia, 'The Ptolemies and the Ideology of Kingship. Response', in: P. Green ed., *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley 1993), 192-204, 195-197.

[78] Delia, 'Response', 197-199.

therefore must have been the office of kingship they worshipped, for Ptolemy VIII would not have many other qualities to worship.[79] Delia adds that this entire thing must be seen not through a Judeo-Christian point of view, but a Greek point of view in which divinity was not absolute. Divinity was an abstract used to signify several levels of power.[80]

Unfortunately by combining the importance of letting go of the Judeo-Christian point of view with the theory about the divinity of the office of kingship, she, in my view, undermines her own argument. Greek mythology is in fact riddled with fallible gods or even gods who struggle for the maintenance of their throne. To name but one example Kronos was still worshiped as a god after he lost his throne to his son Zeus. Yet the Greeks had absolutely no doubt about their divinity and no issue in worshipping them. So Delia might in fact be influenced by the same Judeo-Cristian view that she warned us about. The issues surrounding the kingship did not have any influence on the status of the king as a god. It therefore seems unlikely to me, and in fact unnecessary, to suppose that there was a division between veneration of the office of kingship and that of the king himself.[81] Although it is certainly true that intellectuals, both Greek and Roman, believed that the king should meet certain requirements before he begot his divinity, these were mostly confined to other elements. We saw this above in Price's argument about the Roman emperor, however, the fact that some kings or emperors were deified no matter how great the resistance from the elite is characteristic of the fact that individual characteristics of the king did not matter much.

As we have seen most arguments in this category of opinions centre around the fact that divinity is not as absolute as we, in our modern perception, often perceive it to be, is a recurrent theme for several scholars. It is, after all, a very easy way to explain the phenomenon by simply chalking it up to a different way of thinking, too far removed from us both temporal and culturally to understand. It seems to us as if there might be a contradiction in Greeks and natives worshipping their rulers, when they have not done so before, but it was clearly overcome in light of the evidence. Yet not all scholars believe the explanation for the phenomenon to be so frank. There are authors that believe the difficulties mostly intellectuals experienced for the phenomena was due to a feeling that there was a definite difference between men and gods. The worshipping of a mortal individual as a god, they point out, would be utterly different than anything they had practiced before and was generally undesirable. The following group of authors take this position as their starting point and

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[79] A.E. Samuel, et al., 'The Ptolemies and the Ideology of Kingship. Discussion', in: in: P. Green ed., *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley 1993), 204-210, 207.
[80] Delia, 'Response', 197.
[81] Both authors clearly focus on the Ptolemaic ruler cult, however, one could very easily widen their views to encompass all Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire. Divine descent and general connections of rulers to the supernatural can be found as early as Archaic times and as late as the modern era. And also the opposition alluded to by Delia can as easily be found in the Roman empire as it can amongst Greek intellectuals.

their theories mostly centre on how this fundamental difference between men and gods was overcome.

Section 1.2.2: Or perhaps not

As mentioned, the next group of authors are scholars who claim that the transition to worshipping living rulers as gods was a fundamental change indeed. This group employs more primary material in their arguments than the authors who were mentioned above. This can be expected, for if it were self-evident that the transition could be made then ancient Greeks might not have bothered to write about the start of worshipping living rulers as gods or objection to the fact at all. Yet there are a good deal of sources about this very fact and scholars make good use of them. Let us continue to the authors and their theories.

The first author to represent this different take on things is C. Habicht. Although his theories in his book *Gottmenschentum und Griechische Städte* [82] have been labelled as outdated by several authors[83], this is unsurprising when one considers that Habicht's book is the oldest book in the debate. It is therefore to be expected that he received the most critique of any of the authors. However, despite this fact he is still oft quoted in modern works and is certainly an excellent starting point of this group of authors.

Habicht focusses on the political aspect of the ruler cult in the Greek world, for he believes that the religious side of the cult is (as of yet) inaccessible.[84] From the start it becomes clear that his point of departure differs greatly from the earlier authors who were, at the very least, cautioned by the idea of inaccessibility yet continued nonetheless. Habicht therefore believes that the ruler cult was born from the need of the Greek to honour these great men who possessed the same power as the gods over their lives.[85] The kings fulfilled the same role as that of the old city-gods, they were the protectors of the Greeks. The explanation for why some Greek intellectuals (who were also mostly politicians) objected to the worship of these men can then also be found in the political sphere. Habicht's view of the ruler cult claims that these intellectuals were not opposing the worship of kings out of religious persuasions, but that the worship of these rulers was opposed out of political opinions and aversions.[86] The ruler cult in his eyes was the compromise of between the cultic honouring of the dead and the secular honouring of the living, which were now both inadequate.[87]

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[82] C. Habicht, *Gottmenschentum und Griechische Städte* (München 1956).

[83] Several examples are: M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher, Theomorphes Herrschersbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz 1998), 17. Fraser, Volume 3, 361-362. Badian, 'Deification', 29-31.

[84] O. Murray, 'Christian Habicht: Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte. Zweite Auflage. Review', *The Classical Review* 22.3 (1972), 427, 427. And P.M. Fraser, 'Christian Habicht: Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte. Review', *The Classical Review* 8.2 (1958), 153-156, 153.

[85] Habicht, *Gottmenschentum*, 162, 170, 210, 232. Bergmann, *Strahlen der Herrscher*, 17.

[86] Habicht, *Gottmenschentum*, 213-221.

[87] Ibidem, 212-213.

Although his attestation that we cannot access the religious experience of the ancients is laudable, it is after all what this research is ultimately about, Habicht takes it too far. By arguing, for instance, that the opposition of Greek intellectuals was solely based on their political persuasions, he basically denies the existence of the religious sphere in the matter. In such a fundamental matter as the opposition to the idea, religious persuasions cannot be ignored, how troublesome their form might be. Add to this the fact that he focusses exclusively on the Hellenistic period and on the worship in Greek *poleis* and it becomes evident that his theories and research are too limited for the scope of this research.

A. Chaniotis also believes that there is a difference between the Hellenistic kings and the gods. He therefore claims that the Hellenistic rulers were not truly gods, but were on the same level as the gods, courtesy of their ability to offer the same protection.[88] Chaniotis uses a wealth of primary material to make his point and the amount of work is incredible. His main thesis is that the Hellenistic rulers were able to provide the same amount of protection the gods were thought to provide, therefore making them eligible to 'honours equal to those bestowed upon the gods', which is a Greek phrase that is often used.[89] Chaniotis also searches for the reasons for the cities to install the cults they did and for the ruler to accept them. The cities hoped to reaffirm their special bond with the ruler and to invite his favour upon the city. The principle being that if the ruler was worshipped as a god, he should behave as such and provide protection and be benevolent towards them.[90] The rulers certainly also benefited from the arrangement, as it gave them the ideological support for their power. It could also function as a unifying element for the Greek and native population within the Hellenistic kingdoms.[91] The success of the ruler cult was due to its ability to be a medium for communication between ruler and people. In fact, it was so successful that the Romans continued the practice as part of the ideology of the Principate.[92]

It is very difficult to refute Chaniotis' work, his use of primary material is quite convincing, as is the manner in which it supports his argument. The only objection that remains is that of S. Pfeiffer, who follows M. Clauss in saying that it is very likely that, given the fact that ancients did call some of their rulers gods and provided them with cults, they could be considered gods.[93] The fact that kings and emperors received the same worship and were addressed in the same way as the gods, makes them gods. This is obviously not quite satisfying as it does not take into account all the material that Chaniotis uses in which the rulers were addressed as men who had acquired the same worship as the

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[88] Chaniotis, 'Hellenistic Rulers', 432-433.
[89] Ibidem, 433.
[90] The 'do ut des' mentality that characterizes Greek religion can be seen here. Ibidem, 440.
[91] Ibidem, 440-442.
[92] Ibidem, 442-443.
[93] S. Pfeiffer, 'The Imperial Cult in Egypt', in: C. Riggs, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford 2012) 83-102, 84-85.

gods, but were nonetheless men. The problem then is one of definition in antiquity, who or what constituted a god was problematic for some. Yet these were mostly intellectuals who felt this, whereas there is ample evidence of the general populace worshipping the living rulers. Chaniotis' material will however, certainly need to be taken into account in chapter 3 when we examine our case studies.

In the previous section all theories mentioned have unfortunately been inadequate in some manner. Some by claiming that the phenomenon shows continuity and was therefore fairly easily explained as ancient men simply experienced divinity in a different manner than we do now. The 'problem' we perceive is therefore of our own creation. There was certainly a manner of continuity to be found as there are precedents for worshipping living men before the Hellenistic period. However, this is on such a small scale that there is a definite change, which is what the second group advocate. I also believe there is no reason to question the fact that ancients experienced divinity in a different manner then us, as was shortly alluded to above. As M. Clauss formulates it:

> "Weshalb soll in einer Zeit, in der Göttliches in allem und jedem vorstellbar war, in der jeder Mensch in einem Mysterienkult selbst zur Gottheid warden konnte, der Kaiser, der kein beliebiger Mensch war, nicht als Gottheid gesehen worden sein?" [94]

When intellectuals protested against the fact that the kings had no place amongst the gods, they did exactly that. They were not protesting against a watered down position of a god that the ruler could or should possess, but literally against the position of the king or emperor amongst the gods.

On the other hand are those that hold that it was certainly a fundamental switch in thinking and they give different reasons for doing so. It is clearly very difficult to say where the origin or the cause of flourishing lay when looking at the ruler cults. In fact current theories might raise more questions than they answer. So perhaps it is not as much about how new it is, but why it flourishes so suddenly. Why does the phenomenon go from a sporadic custom to the nationwide tradition we see in the Hellenistic period? And what mechanics could lie at the foundation of this? Let us now examine cognitive science in more detail and see if and what these theories could provide as a useful basis from which to examine the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cult.

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[94] M. Clauss, *Kaiser und Gott. Herrscherskult im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart 1999), 470.

Chapter 2: A new method

Current theories are insufficient to explain the occurrence and the persistence of the ruler cult in both Roman and Hellenistic times. A new way of looking at the phenomenon could provide us with fresh ideas and perhaps rule out some of the current theories. The Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) could very well supply us with this new avenue of thinking. As mentioned, it is a new inter-disciplinary approach trying to explain religions and their expressions throughout the world and throughout time. Given the fact that our brain is wired in a certain way, regardless of the cultural influences, and that this has not changed in any significant manner in the last thousands of years, CSR tries to explain religion on the basis of neuroscience.

However, there are issues with the use of CSR and many questions that arise before we can even consider using it. Issues include the fact that there is debate within the community of Cognitive scientist, who cannot reach a consensus on the finer points of their so-called 'Standard Model'. Some of these will feature below, however one example of this debate is A.C.T. Smith who agrees with the general points of the model, yet believes that it overstates the 'naturalness' of religious belief.[95] Yet, there must be a standard model, given the results of empirical experiments and this must then be adhered to by all, it is this that we can use to assess whether CSR has any value for the study of Ancient History and more specifically for the study of the Roman and Hellenistic ruler cult. However, we do need to assess the general validity and the basis of the claims made by the Standard Model. CSR is in no way fixed to its current form and it is not my intention to try and improve the model in any way, as I most assuredly do not have the academic background to do so. What I hope to do in the following sections is, as stated above, appraise if the current model is useful for Ancient History.[96] There are also several other questions that need answering, for instance, what is the influence of culture on religious phenomena? In other words, where does the model stop working and socio-cultural research methods come into play? What is the influence of evolution on our cognitive structure? And is religious thinking something that is special or does anyone possess the capability for religious thought?

The Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) is a very new strand of research, only around 25 years old, but it has quickly gained territory due to its applicability and promise.[97] The strong version of CSR

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[95] While not in any way an insignificant point, the general consensus to the model is still present. A.C.T. Smith, *Thinking about Religion. Extending the Cognitive Science of Religion* (Basingstoke 2014), 9.

[96] If the answer is no, then this does not mean that that will always be so. What it signifies is that the current model, although the parameters state so, cannot function throughout the ages and needs to be modified. The modified version could then, very well function in Ancient History. However, this is obviously putting the cart before the horse and we shall return to this at a later point.

[97] L. Turner, 'Introduction: Pluralism and Complexity in the Evolutionary Cognitive Science of Religion', in: F. Watts and L.P. Turner ed., *Evolution, and Cognitive Science: Critical and Constructive Essays* (Oxford 2014) 1-20, 2.

holds that religion is acquired and spread because it finds support in our cognitive mechanisms. How exactly this is done is one of the best developed and empirically supported research in CSR and this is expounded in seven points in the Standard Model.

This so-called Standard Model is a seven point construct which was first described by Boyer, already referred to in the introduction as one of the most influential names in CSR.[98] The model is believed to exemplify the major areas of consensus amongst those who occupy themselves with the cognitive study of religion. The key-points of the model are those that are the best developed and most empirically supported and it focusses on one of the (or perhaps THE) most important factors in CSR, that is, the belief in supernatural agents.[99] This belief in supernatural agents is what demarcates, what we think of as religious thought, from other thought processes. This is not to say that the current model is definitive in form. Although the broad outline will most likely remain, details will be added or changed depending on ongoing empirical research. Let us examine this Standard Model and the evidence for it, as it will also serve as a more specific introduction to CSR.

The first point of the model is the fact that religious concepts are incredibly successful and inferentially rich by-products of normal brain functions.[100] This statement needs clarification of course. It is based on the fact that there is no specific area in the brain that processes religious thoughts. Our brain processes information in a modular manner.[101] That is rather than being one big problem-solving machine or encyclopaedia, our brain has specific areas dedicated to all manner of very specialized systems that are turned on or off when we behold different kinds of objects and this can be scientifically verified.[102] To illustrate this Boyer gives the following example:

> "When people are presented with a novel artefact-like and animal-like pictures, their brains
> do show different activation. In the case of artefacts, there seems to be enough activity in
> the pre-motor cortex (involved in planning movements) to suggest that the system is trying
> to figure out (forgive the anthropomorphic tone: the system is of course not aware of what it

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[98] P. Boyer, 'A Reductionistic Model of Distinct Modes of Religious Transmission', in: H. Whitehouse and R.N. McCauley, *Mind and Religion. Psychological and Cognitive Foundations of Religiosity* (Walnut Creek 2005) 3-29, 4-7. A.C.T. Smith also gives a clear overview of the model, although he puts more emphasis on the underpinning cognitive assumptions: Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 7-8 and 22. Both will be used to illustrate the model.

[99] Turner, 'Introduction', 2.

[100] Boyer, 'Reductionistic Model', 4-5. S. Atran, *In Gods We Trust. The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (Oxford 2002), 266-267.

[101] Curiously enough there is no immediate consensus on the fact that this is how the brain operates. Opposed to this modular view there is the computational view, which does hold that the brain possesses specific information-processing components and functions. So examining religion would require analyzing how religious representations are formed and processed. CSR nonetheless generally adheres to a modular representation, which I also find most convincing as this most explains what we observe in neuro-imaging and pathology. Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 11-13. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 116-117.

[102] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 115-118.

is doing) some way of handling this new object. But this only applies if the object is tool-like."[103]

But why would the brain not be aware of what it is doing? Because all of these processes happen in a, for us, inaccessible part of the brain. It is intuitive knowledge that does not allow or require conscious examination of the thought process.[104] Certain sets of intuitive knowledge are already present in early childhood.[105] For instance, children from a very early age 'know' that one physical object cannot pass through another (say a ball cannot pass through a wall).[106] However, why or how they know this is beyond them. It simply makes sense to them and that is intuitive knowledge. This knowledge has many variations, but together they form the basis from which we infer information given the impulses that we receive from the world.[107] The fact that this happens in sections and is unconscious due to evolutionary triggers which ensured our survival as a species.[108] If our brain only possessed general purpose intelligence (like the encyclopaedia) and/or had to think about every little decision, it would be far too slow. So-called instincts save you if, in pre-historic times, you hear rustling behind you in the bushes and it turns out to be a bear or such. If you have to consciously think about what it could be and then what your decision should be based on that, you will already have been eaten.[109] This modular nature of our brains also has consequences for religious thinking. Religious concepts are those that the brain finds most 'exciting'. That is, these kinds of thought trigger several parts of our brain, they are therefore more memorable and fit more easily into our expectation.[110] Exactly how this happens is defined in the other six points of the Standard Model.

The second point provides one of the categories which our brains react strongly to, that is inferences about the world that are minimally counter-intuitive. To explain this we must first examine what counter-intuitiveness means and how this can be recognized. To do this we must examine certain templates of intuitive knowledge that our brains have formed. Following that, we must examine the connection of this intuitive knowledge with the supernatural.

Our modular brain forms certain unconscious theories about the world and this intuitive knowledge ensures that we can react to impulses in our world in a speedy manner. In short, it helps

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[103] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 117.

[104] J.L. Barrett, 'Coding and Quantifying Counterintuitiveness in Religious Concepts: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 20* (2008) 308-338, 310.

[105] There is evidence for this in developmental psychology and psycholinguistics. F.C. Keil, *Concepts, kinds and conceptual development* (Cambridge 1989). See also D. Sperber, D. Premack and A.J. Premack ed., *Causal Cognition: A Multidisciplinary Debate* (Oxford 1995). This book holds multiple articles on the subject.

[106] Barrett, 'Quantifying Counterintuitiveness', 310. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 127-132.

[107] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 108-115 and 122-127

[108] Ibidem, 132-137.

[109] The 'Agent detection system' portrayed here will feature again below.

[110] Ibidem, 187.

us to function on a very basic level. By running these theories in an unconscious manner, the conscious part of our brain can occupy itself with more difficult thoughts.[111] Counter-intuitive concepts are those that violate these theories in a certain way, which makes them stand out. Gods, spirits and werewolves are counterintuitive agents, they violate our theories about what this category usually entails in some way. For instance, agents normally have a body, they are physical, yet the Christian, Jewish and Muslim god does not.[112] This makes him counter-intuitive. However, this does not mean that humans will turn any counter-intuitive concept into something supernatural. As Boyer puts it there is no 'intellectual free-for-all where all conceptual combinations are equally possible'.[113] They must be minimally counter-intuitive to be both believable and transferable. Too many counter-intuitive violation and the concept quickly becomes unbelievable and therefore not very likely to be picked up by many people and across cultures, as the theories that govern these expectations are universally human.[114] For example:

> "Compare an invisible buffalo to an invisible buffalo that is immortal, made of steel, experiences time backwards, fails to exist on Saturdays, gains nourishment from ideas, and gives birth to kittens." [115]

The first case is obviously more credible than the second. The first concept only holds one counter-intuitive aspect, that is: the buffalo is invisible, which is not something we unconsciously or consciously expect from a buffalo. The second however, can hardly be considered to be a buffalo at all, but is merely an enumeration of attributes rather than a coherent concept.[116] Minimally counter-intuitive concepts are those that violate just enough unconscious expectation to make them interesting for our brain, this will also make them strong candidates for being successfully spread amongst people.[117] In fact, having minimally counter-intuitive concepts around has been proven to make them far more memorable because they stand out against the background of the ordinary concepts that one possesses.[118]

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[111] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 25.

[112] I. Pyysiäinen, 'The Cognitive Science of Religion', in: F. Watts and L.P. Turner ed., *Evolution, and Cognitive Science: Critical and Constructive Essays* (Oxford 2014) 21-37, 27.

[113] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 70.

[114] J.L. Barrett, 'Why Santa Claus in Not a God', *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 8 (2008) 149-161, 151.

[115] Barrett, 'Santa Claus', 151.

[116] Ibidem, 151.

[117] Ibidem, 151-152. And Turner, 'Introduction', 3.

[118] For evidence see amongst others: J.L. Barrett and M.A. Nyhoff, 'Spreading Non-natural Concepts: The Role of Intuitive Conceptual Structures in Memory and Transmission of Cultural Materials', *Journal of Cognition and Culture 1* (2001) 69-100. And P. Boyer and C. Ramble, 'Cognitive templates for religious concepts: cross-cultural evidence for recall of counter-intuitive representations', *Cognitive Science 25* (2001) 535-564. Interestingly there has also been an investigation into the applicability of this concept in Roman times and the theory holds,

However, where the boundary lies between minimally counter-intuitive and simply counter-intuitive is not exactly clear and determining this is no easy task, although crucial.[119] J.L. Barrett has recently developed a way to code and quantify counter-intuitiveness in objects (broadly construed).[120] Meaning he excludes events, substances and abstractions, as there is little reason to believe that these things activate pan-human cognition in a similar manner to objects and more evidence would be needed to justify doing this. Instead he focusses on ontological categories of concepts such as; 'persons', 'artefacts', 'tools', 'plants', 'animals' and 'living things'.[121] The basic principle underlying the coding is, what Barrett calls the Simplicity Rule. This states that 'when coding concepts, assume the simplest (i.e., least counterintuitive) conceptual representation that captures the object's properties'.[122] With these considerations in mind he identifies six steps for coding counter-intuitiveness.[123] However, this theory is still in his infancy as he himself acknowledges and there are several issues that make the application of his theory troublesome and that goes beyond a lack of empirical evidence.

The first problem that I personally identify lies with the Simplicity Rule itself. If there are two or more breaches in the counter-intuitive concept that you are examining, then, according to Barrett, it will get re-represented in the theory in a simpler (less counter-intuitive) manner.[124] But this just means that you can make anything minimally counter-intuitive as long as you are creative enough with your categories. If you just keep puzzling until you find a minimally counter-intuitive way to represent your concept then it will have moved away from the theory entirely. You will remember, intuitive knowledge is that which you come to in an instinctive and unconscious manner, if you come up with entirely far-fetched constructions in order to make your concept minimally counter-intuitive it will be unnatural and artificial. To illustrate, Barrett believes that god in the Abrahamic tradition would have a counter-intuitiveness 'score' of 10 or more, if represented as a Person with all aspects and powers god is said to possess (bodiless, omnipresent, omnipotent, eternal, etc.). However, if we refashion god's basic category into a Mind, rather than a person, he would only score on one or two

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see: A. Lisdorf, 'The Spread of Non-Natural Concepts. Evidence from the Roman Prodigy Lists', *Journal of Cognition and Culture 4.1* (2004) 151-173, 157-162.

[119] Pyysiäinen, 'Cognitive Science of Religion', 27.

[120] Barrett, 'Quantifying Counterintuitiveness', 313-314.

[121] These are obviously the broadest categories he could think of and for his theory he simply uses more specific categories, as we will see. It is important to recognize that a concept can belong to multiple categories, depending on how you look at it (although not usually at the same time, one category takes precedence). For instance, a fish can obviously belong to the category animals, but also to that of living things. However if you, for some reason, decide to use the fish to slap someone in the face, the fish has become a tool.

[122] Ibidem, 316.

[123] To go into them in length would be impossible for this research, but the six points are explained in his article: Ibidem, 316-325.

[124] Ibidem, 331.

in the counter-intuitive quantification.[125] This seems a troublesome thing to me, given that the Abrahamic god is usually represented as anthropomorphic, a very special kind of person. Seeing supernatural concepts in anthropomorphic manner is a very natural thing to do and is very widespread throughout cultures all over the world.[126] This anthropomorphism is not only something that concerns the physical attributes of the concept (although supernatural beings can certainly be person-like in appearance), but it is mostly psychological. Supernatural agents possess minds and therefore exhibit signs of agency. These aspects however, are not necessarily felt to be human, as it can also be present in animals and anything that appears to be moving of its own accord in pursuance of a goal.[127] So although Barrett's thinking might not be impossible it seems rather implausible in my opinion.

However this is not the only problem that arises, there are for instance many counter-intuitive concepts in our modern world that do not make it into the supernatural realm, such as Santa Claus or Mickey Mouse.[128] Barrett explains this in another article from the same year, there are obviously more criteria that have to be met. Barrett suggests that to become a supernatural concept a minimally counter-intuitive concept must also be an intentional agent, possess strategic information, act in the real world in a detectable way and motivate behaviours that reinforce belief.[129] Barrett plots this information in a table to illustrate:

Table 1 Requisites for Supernatural Agents [130]

	Counter-intuitive	Intentional agent	Possessing strategic information	Acts in the real world	Motivates reinforcing behaviours
Santa Claus	Inconsistent	Yes	Marginal	Yes	Marginal
Mickey Mouse	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Tooth Fairy	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
George Bush	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The point is that a counter-intuitive concept needs to have more aspects to become an acceptable supernatural one for people. While this is most likely true it also raises some questions, for instance

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[125] I understand that this sounds rather incomprehensible, not having explained the general theory behind, I nonetheless hope that the principle is clear. Barrett, 'Quantifying Counterintuitiveness', 326-328.
[126] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 161-164.
[127] Ibidem, 164.
[128] Note that this is not a new point in the Standard Model and simply a continuation on the examination of counter-intuitive concepts.
[129] Barrett, 'Santa Claus', 150 and 152-154.
[130] Ibidem, 159.

why do people not believe in all supernatural concepts? Why would you believe in the Abrahamic god, but not in Zeus?[131] There are also distant high gods that do not interact with the world or motivate reinforcing behaviours, such as in several African religions.[132] These are both after all gods, at least upon a time, in known religions yet according to Barrett they would not qualify. According to Gervais and Henrich, this is because Barrett only takes into account the content of the concepts, but excludes their context.

> "Content biases may explain why both religious beliefs and folk tales involve similar content, but context biases may be required to determine why people believe the former rather than the latter, or to determine which candidate god concepts are believed to exist in a given cultural context." [133]

In sum, although there is clear evidence that religious concepts are minimally counter-intuitive and that this contributes to their memorability and successful transmission, it is not clear how this counter-intuitivism works exactly. There is no clear way yet to distinguish between minimally counter-intuitive concepts and counter-intuitive ones. Additionally it has become all the more clearer that while CSR can provide a basis for religious concepts, it cannot account for their specific expression in different cultural contexts. It can suggest the templates or forms religion can take, but why and how they become widespread and successful remains a matter of cultural circumstances. However, to anticipate on things to come, an excellent example of a minimally counter-intuitive concept is the Hellenistic and Roman rulers who were seen as gods/supernatural agents. They clearly violate the minds standard theories for humans.

In all this it remains important to remember that the recognition of something as a supernatural concept all happens in the unconscious part of our brain, as the first point of the model indicated. There is no ontological category for supernatural concepts, these piggy-back on the normal categories that intuitively exist in our brains. This does not mean that we never consciously interact with these concepts. In every interaction, be that with another human or a supernatural concept, there is always a conscious part of our brain at work against an unconscious backdrop. When conversing with someone the conscious part of your brain is occupied with figuring out what the sounds coming out of the other persons mouth mean and how it should be responded to. However,

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[131] Gervais and Henrich call this the Zeus Problem, as he was once the target for widespread belief, worship and commitment, but no longer. W.M. Gervais and J. Henrich, 'The Zeus Problem: Why Representational Content Biases Cannot Explain Faith in Gods', *Journal of Cognition and Culture 10* (2010) 383-389, 384-385.

[132] Gervais and Henrich, 'Zeus Problem', 384. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 159-160.

[133] Gervais and Henrich, 'Zeus Problem', 386. This same need for a cultural explanation can be seen in Lisdorf's examination of the Roman Prodigy lists, where clear evidence emerges for cultural biases in certain religious templates. Lisdorf, 'Spread of Non-Natural concepts', 165-167.

at the same time, the unconscious part of our brain is busy with things like body language, which can influence the meaning of the sounds. But there is also a part of our brain that functions on a 'deeper' level.[134] That is, all information which has to do with ontological categories and expectations based on that. If we are talking with the person behind the cash register in the local supermarket, we are not consciously busy with the fact that this person is human and therefore has two arms. What does happen consciously is that if we see that both hands are visibly occupied, we should hold on to the money for the groceries until at least one is empty. We rarely function purely on our unconsciousness, the exception perhaps being the running-from-a-bear reflex given above. In every other interaction there is always an interplay between the conscious and unconscious part of our brain.

The third point of the Standard Model dictates that Agency Detection leads to suppositions about the presence of supernatural agents.[135] This point is very central to the model, although there is little empirical research supporting it as of yet.[136] Agency detection, as you will remember from above, is an evolutionary trait that ascribes agency to events around us and helps us for instance, to instinctively react to a sound behind us without having to deliberate about the action to take. However, our agency detection is not always right, in fact we have a tendency to jump to conclusions about the presence of agencies.[137] Boyer sees this as an important evolutionary trait that is a remnant from our time as predator or prey, where in either situation it is/was advantageous to over-detect rather than under-detect.[138] This over-detection is called 'Hypersensitive agent detection device' (HADD) and it has been suggested that the individual differences in the activation level of HADD is connected to why certain people are prone to atheism rather than religious believe.[139] All this means that people who have an easily triggered HADD are likely to naturally infer the presence of supernatural agents to ascribe responsibility of the unexplainable.[140] However, crucially we do not only infer their presence, but we also mentality, as was alluded to above in Barrett's theory. According to Boyer and Barrett there are five cues which lead to inference of agency, of which the

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[134] A figure of speech of course, there is no part which is somehow deeper and more unconscious in our brain.
[135] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 25.
[136] Pyysiäinen, 'Cognitive Science of Religion', 28. See also: M. Ruse, 'Biologically Evolutionary Explanations of Religious Belief, in: F. Watts and L.P. Turner ed., *Evolution, and Cognitive Science: Critical and Constructive Essays* (Oxford 2014) 38-55, 48-49.
[137] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 164-165.
[138] Ibidem, 165. As Ruse raises hard evidence for this connection is still lacking, however there is certainly progress which he seems to underestimate. Ruse, 'Biologically Evolutionary Explanations', 48-49. For an example of empirical evidence for the subject see: J.L. Barrett and A.H. Johnson, 'The Role of Control in Attributing Intentional Agency to Inanimate Objects', *Journal of Cognition and Culture 3.3* (2003) 208-217. A very interesting conclusion this experiment yielded was that objects were more likely to be ascribed agency if the test-subject had no control over the situation. Barrett and Johnson, 'The Role of Control', 214.
[139] This point will become more important later on. Pyysiäinen, 'Cognitive Science of Religion', 28. And B. Saler and C.A. Ziegler, 'Atheism and the Apotheosis of Agency', *Temenos 42.2* (2006) 7-41.
[140] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 25.

final two refer to mentality.[141] Number four is crucial: 'the end-result of an action being connected to perceived movement through the link of the intention of the moving organism (intention-ascription)'.[142] As Smith puts:

> "… we possess minds designed for registering agency in uncertain circumstances, which leads to presumptions that supernatural agents take an active role in our lives." [143]

Also recall Barrett's criteria for supernatural agents from the point above. Although this all seems very convincing at first, it must be noted that this does not explain everything. After all we must not only perceive an agent, because religious beliefs are widespread and persistent even if we lack a cue to trigger HADD at that time.[144] Most of the time if we interpret a noise of some sort as indicating the presence of an agent, we quickly verify that there either is one and of what kind this is or that there is none and then move on. If we could not discard such false positives quickly we would most likely spend our lives recoiled in fear.[145] Yet, supernatural agents are perceived as stable, in fact, they must be if an religion is to spring from it.

To conclude, it is most likely that our HADD triggers our first impression of supernatural agents. However, these are set apart from other activations of the system, because these persist even when we have verified that there was no agent truly present. This persistence might be explained due to cultural influences such as imitation of prestigious individuals, the rest of the Standard Model will account for this further. For our purposes, it is important to recognize that the agent detection might be of secondary importance as the deified ruler is already an identifiable agent. What is important is that certain unexplainable happenings must be recognized as his superhuman/supernatural actions, even when he is not physically present.

The next point of the Standard Model, the fourth, expands on the previous one and is rather straightforward given the previous. That is, given that supernatural agents possess agency, we make

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[141] Respectively: *"1) Animate motion that has as its input such things as non-linear changes in direction, sudden acceleration without collision, and change of physical shape that accompanies motion; 2) An object reacting at a distance; 3) Trajectories that only make sense on the condition that the moving entity is trying to reach or avoid something, which leads to goal-ascription; 4) the end-result of an action being connected to perceived movement through the link of the intention of the moving organism (intention-ascription); 5) The experience of joint attention for which we develop a capacity between nine and twelve months of age."* Pyysiäinen, 'Cognitive Science of Religion', 28-29.

[142] P. Boyer and H.C. Barrett, 'Domain-specificity and intuitive ontology', in: D. Buss ed., *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* (Hoboken 2005) 96-118, 106-109. For an overview experiments for agent-attribution, see: B.J. Scholl and P.D. Tremoulet, 'Perceptual causality and animacy', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences 4.8* (2000) 299-308.

[143] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 26. Following D. Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge 1987), 13-42.

[144] I. Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural agents. Why We believe in Souls, Gods and Buddhas* (New York, 2009), 22.

[145] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 167.

assumptions as to their intentions for us.[146] According to Boyer, they are connected with moral institutions as they are interested in decision making. Therefore, 'religious morality is parasitic upon evolved moral institutions that are there, religion or not'.[147] You will recall that I have my reservations about this point, as there is no true evidence to support, for instance that there ever was a world without religion that had functioning moral institutions.[148] Pyysiäinen, amongst others, would argue for the fact that the rise of 'big gods', those with omniscient scope and punitive abilities, is a phenomenon that is strongly connected to the rise of large complex societies.[149] Although I would think that there were also experiences of supernatural agents with punitive powers before the rise of complex civilization. Agents, such as ancestor spirits, would certainly be perceived as having a vested interest in hunter-gatherer societies, it is only logical that they would also have some form of punitive power, otherwise they would not meet the requirements of CSR as supernatural agents, as shown in Table 1. We humans often ascribe intentionality to other agents (whether those are other humans, animals or sometimes even the temperamental computer). This helps us to understand the reasoning behind certain decisions and allows us to anticipate certain behaviours in others.[150] Supernatural agents partly trigger the same response as any other agent would from our social mind.[151] However there is a crucial difference, which has everything to do with Boyer's concept of strategic information. Boyer argues that, at any given time when interacting with another individual, we receive two types of information. For instance, when on a dinner date with someone, there is a part of the brain that is trying to interpret everything the other is saying and the meaning of this (this can be very complicated because of innuendo's and other types of hints). All this is possible because our inference systems for social interactions is busy at work.[152] This is the conscious part of our brain, the unconscious part of our brain is busy with its environment, that is staying seated during the conversation and eating the food instead of the cutlery.[153] As mentioned above, this then creates an interesting an interesting circle of feedback between these two parts. Boyer distinguishes between the socially neutral information and the specific information that activates the social inference systems in our mind. The latter is what he calls strategic information:

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[146] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 26-27.
[147] Boyer, 'Reductionistic Model', 5.
[148] This was Boyer's third category for common explanations for the origins of religion in the introduction.
[149] Pyysiäinen, 'Cognitive Science of Religion', 25. A. Sharriff also argues for the same thing, see: A. Sharriff, 'Big gods were made for big groups', *Religion, Brain and Behaviour 1.1* (2011) 89-93.
[150] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 169-171. Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 26.
[151] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 171.
[152] Ibidem, 172-173.
[153] Ibidem, 173.

"Strategic information is the subset of all the information currently available (to a particular agent, about a particular situation) which activates the mental systems that regulate social interaction." [154]

What is strategic information is dictated by the situation, that is what that specific person hopes to achieve or get out of the interaction.[155] We also base our own action on how much strategic information we perceive our interlocutor to have and a fundamental principle in our intuitive knowledge-system is, that the access to this information is imperfect. In our interactions therefore we presumes that other people's access to strategic information is imperfect (as is our own access to the information of others).[156]

Fundamentally we interact with supernatural agents in much the same way as we do with other humans, which is why interaction with them is often felt as very natural.[157] As you will recall, supernatural agents have minds and perceive things much the same way as humans do and so we speculate as to what their intentions are. The major difference however, is that we perceive supernatural agents as having full access to strategic information, which is why they often possess some form of punitive powers.[158] This ability is obviously counter-intuitive as we discussed in the second point above and it leads to the easier remembrance and, in this case more importantly, to easy transmission throughout a society.[159]

This brings us to the fifth point of the Standard Model, that is religious rituals are constrained by agency assumptions.[160] A difficult point to grasp, but the central idea is that the inferred presence of supernatural agents during the execution of a ritual causes a number of intuitions about other elements in the ritual. A religious ritual is part of social interaction and is cognitively represented as an action as any other, it just so happens that the agent that is being motivated to act is supernatural in nature.[161] However, there is an important difference, because the goal of the religious ritual is to bring about a natural consequence by non-natural means.[162] Experimental evidence indicates that three expectations follow from seeing the ritual as social actions, these would explain the similarities

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[154] Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 173.
[155] Please note that 'strategic information', in this case, is not particularly important or vital. The term is meant in a way in which one's own actions have consequences which depend on other people's moves. Ibidem, 175.
[156] Ibidem, 175-176.
[157] Ibidem, 177.
[158] Ibidem, 178-181.
[159] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 26-27. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 187.
[160] Boyer, 'Reductionistic Model', 5-6.
[161] J.L. Barrett and E.T. Lawson, 'Ritual Intuitions: Cognitive Contributions to Judgments of Ritual Efficacy', *Journal of Cognition and Culture 1.2* (2001) 183-201, 185. This is a response on the original work on the subject, E.T. Lawson and R.N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion. Connecting cognition and culture* (Cambridge 1993).
[162] Yet another example of counter-intuitiveness connected to supernatural agents. Barrett and Lawson, 'Ritual Intuitions', 184.

in ritual actions throughout the world as they are also based in general cognitive patterns. The first expectation is that anyone will be able to deduce whether a certain action will elicit a certain response, that includes whether a ritual is likely to be efficacious.[163] The second expectation is that any person will also appreciate the central importance of a supernatural agent if a ritual provides a non-natural consequence.[164] Finally, given that certain social actions require certain appropriate agents to procure the necessary result, so too does a ritual. Having the right person execute the ritual is felt to be vitally important, this is also connected with the formulaic nature of rituals.[165] To illustrate the concept, please consider this example:

> "A woman striking a sick man with a staff does not cure him unless the woman, the staff, the man, or some combination of them has some special connection to an agent (or agents) with special qualities. Otherwise, instead of recovery you only get bruises." [166]

The expected outcome of the ritual is certainly counter-intuitive, a touch of a staff is not normally thought to cure anyone. There is no logical connection between the action and it's consequence. So if the cure does come to pass, then the influence of a supernatural agent is inferred. This presence is felt to be more important than anything else in the ritual. The staff could very well be substituted with a leek and the woman with a dog, if the outcome is the same then the supernatural agent will just have chosen them as a conduit. However, should the ritual fail in this new situation, the cause of this will most likely be found with the agent performing the ritual (the dog), then with the action.[167] It is important to note for the Standard Model, that the composition and practice of rituals is very important in the experience and the propagation of religious ideas.[168]

This brings us to the next point in the model, which also focusses on why religion is so widespread. Religious ideas and concepts are connected to theories about death and other existential implications that find their origin in non-religious sources.[169] Boyer claims that a great deal of religious elaboration centres on souls and spirits of dead people.[170] That is, exposure to mortality triggers a whole slew of non-obvious cognitive effects (a punishing attitude towards social deviance,

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[163] Barrett and Lawson, 'Ritual Intuitions', 185 and 197-198.
[164] Ibidem, 185 and 198.
[165] Ibidem, 185-186 and 198-199.
[166] Ibidem, 185.
[167] Ibidem, 199.
[168] Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 77.
[169] Boyer, 'Reductionistic Model', 6. For some reason Smith seems to have made this his fifth point rather than sixth. Smith, *Thinking about Religion*, 27.
[170] Boyer, 'Reductionistic Model', 6.

for instance).[171] However, most interestingly, experiments show that 'emotional stress associated with death-related scenes seems a stronger natural motivator for religiosity than mere exposure to emotionally non-stressful religious scenes, such as praying'.[172] On the other hand, people are not only occupied with mortality, but most death rituals focus on what to should be done with corpses. According to Boyer this is caused by the fact that:

> "Dead people create a discrepancy between the output of different mental systems. On the one hand, systems that regulate our intuitions about animacy have little difficulty understanding that a dead body is a non-intentional, inanimate subject. On the other hand, social-intelligence systems do not 'shut off' with death; indeed most people still have thoughts and feelings about the recently dead." [173]

This might also explain why dead people so often feature as supernatural agents. Although this is an interesting point of the Standard Model and likely central to many enquiries, it is not all that relevant for us. The Hellenistic and Roman deified rulers are alive, in fact, that is the whole point. Otherwise we would 'simply' see another manifestation of death cults, but the strange thing about this phenomenon is precisely that a living agent is the subject of supernatural worship. Furthermore, to my knowledge, the deified ruler is only connected to his own death cult and that of his predecessors in Hellenistic and Roman culture. This expression of this part of the cult for the ruler is not part of this research as it falls outside of our definition for ruler cult. Powers and influence in the afterlife was mostly the domain of other gods.

The last and seventh point of the Standard Model, on the other hand, is incredibly relevant for our research. It states that religious concepts are ideally suited for coalitional affiliation, that is because they provide a clear set of markers that separate one social group from another and the whole group had a shared commitment to costly activities.[174] Although this is the final point of the Standard Model, one should not be fooled into thinking it is unimportant or more of an afterthought. In fact, it is perhaps the most practical point in the entire model. If you will remember, one of the common explanations for the origin of religions, was its role in society (both in holding it together and creating order). Many scholars outside of the CSR-community still hold that this is its primary aim and therefore it must be connected to its origin.[175] Although this is certainly a bridge too far, as

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[171] P. Boyer, 'Religious thought and behaviour as by-products of brain function', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences 7.3* (2003) 119-124, 122.
[172] For the experiment please see: Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 177-181.
[173] Boyer, 'Religious thought', 122.
[174] Boyer, 'Reductionistic Model', 6.
[175] Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural agents*, 31.

stated above, religion undoubtedly plays a crucial role in society, but how should we imagine this influence?

The answer to this again stems from the fact that we must view interaction with supernatural agents as social-interaction. Human society functions on cooperation and for that we need trust, in that for it to function we cannot feel cheated out of more resources then we receive in return.[176] In small groups this reciprocity does not need to go beyond relatives, a mother sacrificing herself for her child is detrimental to her own health and survival, but beneficial in the long run for it will allow for her genes to be passed on to future generations through the child.[177] This kind of altruism makes sense from an evolutionary point of view, but it cannot be the basis for large-scale societies as the group would fall apart in short order. For this 'indirect-reciprocity' is needed, as biologist R. Alexander calls it.[178] This means that we must be willing to help strangers, without necessarily expecting something in return directly from them, as you may never meet again.[179] This is where trust comes in, we must trust the persons in our society to do the same for us as we do for them, even if we do not know them and may never see them again.[180] Or alternatively we must trust in our ability to locate 'cheaters' in the system, however this detection takes a lot of energy. This is where the second part of Alexander's indirect-reciprocity comes into play:

> "Consider a population whose individuals have the option to cooperate or not. Suppose individual X randomly meets individual Y. If Y has a reputation for cooperation and if X cooperates with Y, then X's reputation likely increases. If X does not cooperate with Y, then X's reputation likely decreases." [181]

Although this situation raises quite a few questions, for instance how does X even know that Y is known for helping people? It raises an interesting point, that is: reputation. There is quite a bit of proof for the fact that those with a cooperative reputation get rewarded for this in future social interaction, both within as outside of one's group.[182] However, this does not solve the cheater-problem, for this a system needs to be in place to rule out the possibility of cheating.[183] According to Pyysiäinen there is an arms race going on between the co-operators and the cheaters, to develop a

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[176] Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural agents*, 32-33. Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 117-118.
[177] Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 118. This sacrifice can take many forms, for instance giving the child food and keeping little to none for yourself.
[178] R. Alexander, *The Biology of Moral Systems* (New York 1987), 85-88.
[179] Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 118-119.
[180] Alexander, *Moral systems*, 85.
[181] Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 119.
[182] Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural agents*, 33.
[183] Ibidem, 35-36.

system of hard-to-fake and costly signals of commitment and ways to beat this.[184] This is precisely the role that religion plays, according to the Standard Model. Showing your religious commitment signals that you are part of the cooperating group and provides you with status that matches the amount of sacrifice you make.[185] Religion also has the 'added bonus', so to say, that there is a policing force that sees all and patrols for the desired moral behaviour.[186] This point will certainly prove vital, in the examination of the Hellenistic and Roman rulers cults, below.

That concludes our overview of the Standard Model for CSR, what most cognitive scientists acknowledge as the unconscious basis and continuation of religion in human society. The belief in supernatural agents is something natural that follows from the hardware of our brain (although it is by no means inevitable). The first half of the model focuses on the source of this thinking, whereas the last points focus more on the practical consequences of these in human society. The first four points of the model explain that basis for religious thought, that the brain is primed for registering religious concepts. The last three points are the social influences which ultimately ensure that a certain religious concept is successful and widespread. For our inquiry into the origin and flourishing of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cults not all points will prove equally valuable. However, this overview signals the boundaries of possible theories about the subject.

In this chapter we set out to examine Cognitive science, and more specifically the Cognitive science of Religion (CSR), in more detail. The Standard Model generally adhered to by most scholars provides the best way to do this. The seven points of the Standard Model form the basis for an explanation of religion, both its origin and its flourishing. While the finer points of the model are not agreed upon by scholars in cognitive science and not all points are equally pertinent to our current research, it is backed by a generous amount of empirical evidence. Furthermore there are points in the general model which are difficult to put into practice, most prominently the second point of the model, which concerns the minimally counter-intuitiveness of possible supernatural concepts. The point is crucial to the model, but there is as of yet no successful way to determine and quantify counter-intuitiveness. It should therefore be evident that the model is in no way in its final form. There are elements which need rounded out and elaborated with more empirical evidence and these changes should then be taken into account in its uses within ancient history.

So what can CSR and the Standard Model also do to elucidate the phenomenon? To structure the primary material which will feature in the following chapter we must first create a template to put it in, which adequately tests the Standard Model for its validity. To do this we shall employ an Aristotelian form of causality, otherwise known as: if X then Y. If the model is correct we should

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[184] Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural agents*, 36.
[185] This ultimately includes martyrdom and the like, see: Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 128-135.
[186] Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural agents*, 36-37. Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 128-129.

expect to see certain elements based on the seven different points in the source material. Or we can expect NOT to see certain elements. The first point of the model, religious thoughts as a normal by-product of cognition, is the first example of this. This point is only meant as a basis for the other elements and there is no way to infer this fact from primary material.

The second part however, minimally counter-intuitive concepts are the cause of religious thought, is certainly important. If this point of the model holds, then we would expect to see evidence of the rulers supernatural qualities, or more specifically superhuman qualities and powers. If we can see that the ruler is expected, by some/most of his subjects to hold powers that transcend human capabilities, then we can say that he is certainly counter-intuitive. Whether or not he is minimally so, remains a matter for latter as we cannot quantify and establish this. On the other hand we should also expect to find sources that speak against the supernatural qualities of the ruler because, as with any religious believe, we should expect to find opposition and disbelieve.

The third point of the Standard Model, agency detection to suppose the presence of supernatural agents, is not all that relevant of itself. There is after all no need to detect supernatural agents as the deified living ruler is a concrete and physical concept. However, in combination with the second point, one could argue that it is important, given that the supernatural qualities and powers of the ruler must be recognized as such. As with the other gods, actions must be recognized as finding their origin in the supernatural/minimally counter-intuitive realm. The living deified ruler has the added difficulty that his doings must be perceived as more than human. It would therefore be interesting to observe if the actions of the ruler were always thought to be supernatural even if he is exercising his 'normal' kingly tasks. If the model holds we should expect to see actions or happenings that are counter-intuitive (or at the very least unexpected) and see them ascribed to the ruler. In other words, are there any supernatural actions/happenings that are thought to be the doings of the ruler? On the other hand, on the basis of the second and third point, we would expect to see evidence of the ruler worshipped because of his own merits and not because he is the manifestation of another god or assimilation with another god.

The fourth point holds that morality is strongly connected to the supernatural, supernatural concepts that are interested in all our actions and possess punitive powers to enforce morality. This point is certainly interesting although it is not the easiest to find in the primary material. It is, after all, not all that surprising to find in a ruler the interest and power to enforce morality. To observe this it would be interesting to see if we can find the ruler (as a god) safeguarding morality and passing judgement. We should also expect to find evidence of the ruler passing judgement as part of this kingly duty. However, should we find only this and no reference to the supernatural nature of the ruler in enforcing morality, this point would be rather poor.

The fifth point, on rituals for the supernatural, is an interesting point to examine in the sources. What was thought to be the point of rituals performed for the supernatural ruler? Did the subjects expect a natural outcome, by non-natural means? It would also be interesting to see who was expected to properly preform these rituals and where. If the Standard Model holds, then we should expect to see people performing the same rituals and expecting the same kind of results as those for the gods.

The sixth point, the connection between supernatural agents and theories about death and other existential implications that find their origin in non-religious sources, will also be excluded from our further research as we already established that, to my knowledge, the deified ruler is only connected to his own death cult and that of his predecessors in Hellenistic and Roman culture. This expression of the ruler cult falls outside of the scope of this research. Powers and influence in the afterlife was mostly the domain of other gods. This must not be seen as a problem, because in most polytheistic religions there is a division of labour, if you will. There are more gods who have nothing to do with death as these tasks were in the domain of another.

The final point of the Standard Model, religious concepts are ideally suited for coalitional affiliation, is as stated above very important to this research. It would certainly need to be to assure that Greek and Macedonian rulers were accepted as rulers in a strange land, the same would hold for the Roman emperor. The social consequences of the ruler cult are something we can clearly examine in our source material. However, for the point to hold, we would expect to see a clear differentiation between believers and non-believers in the ruler cult and also some consequences connected for this fact. It is especially important, because a declaration of loyalty to the ruler could immediately be seen as a declaration of loyalty to the nation. We would therefore expect some form of endorsement for the ruler cult from the rulers themselves. The rulers would certainly not discourage such actions as it could result in them endorsing dissention from their nation.

Chapter 3: Putting it into practice

This section of the study is most crucial for the entire research, the culmination and combination of all the previous to form the answer to our primary question: is the Cognitive Science of Religion useful in looking at historical events and does it enhance our understanding in matters where, up till now, there has been no consensus, i.e. the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cult? Unfortunately, combining CSR and our primary source material, as is the object of this section, is not as straightforward as portrayed above. Following the Standard Model, as indicated above, is indeed a preferred method for dealing with the primary material. Although we could run the risk of being blind to some sources or forcing some evidence to fit or contradict the model. The alternative would be to examine what the general notion of how this historical period worked and examine whether or not that picture fits the model. However, this task is near impossible as the notion as to how this historical period looked is already influenced by the theories we have contradicted above. There is no piece of primary material that has not already been interpreted to fit a theory and that could influence how they interact with the model. Therefore where the second option would most likely skew the research into speculative territory and would provide little novel material for thought, the first option has more possibilities to function.

This section has been divided into several others to better structure the argument. The first part will concentrate on attestations for the Hellenistic ruler cult, more specifically the Ptolemaic and Seleucid cults. The second section will then focus on the Roman ruler cult in the Principate period. In both sections we will examine the available sources for the cult and immediately link this to the Standard Model of the CSR to examine its validity. Please note that, as indicated above, not all seven points of the model will be equally represented below, as not all are significant for our research. I shall also attempt to treat the most important sources speaking both for and against the Standard Model, however, given the scope of this research, we must necessarily be somewhat concise.

Section 3.1: Ptolemy and Seleucus

We shall start our examination with the Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers. You will recall that in the source material for this period not all empires were equally well represented in both the sources and modern literature. Whereas the Ptolemaic Empire has a relatively large amount of source material, partly due to its dry climate, the Seleucid Empire does not have this luxury. Of course, evidence for the Seleucid ruler cult will be used, where it can be found, but the emphasis of this section will necessarily lie on Ptolemaic evidence. The evidence for this section is further limited by our definition of ruler cult, because this only covers the cult for the living deified ruler and not his predecessors. Therefore most evidence which covers the so-called dynastic cult is for the most part useless, except where it also concerns the cult for the current rulers. Also, given the scope of this research it will be

impossible to address all evidence for the ruler cult, although I shall attempt to be as complete as possible.

We shall start with the evidence for the second and third point of the Standard Model, as these are intimately connected. So, in what way is the Hellenistic ruler counter-intuitive and what powers does he or she possess to merit their deification?[187] The best evidence to answer this in the Ptolemaic Empire are, amongst others, the so-called priestly decrees. These tri-lingual decrees (Hieroglyphic, Demotic and Greek) describe the outcomes of a national synod of native priests. The structure of the decrees is always the same: they mention the reason for the synod (a major victory in battle, coronation or some such) and the decision reached on what type of honour to bestow upon the ruler in question. Most importantly, this always includes the form of the royal imagery to be set up in the innermost part of the temples of the other gods as temple-sharing gods (*sunnaoi theoi*).[188] It is therefore very clear that this concerns the current rulers who beget a cult as honour for deeds performed.[189] These deeds can vary greatly in content, but all apparently justify the foundation of the cult for that individual ruler, or (more often) a king and his wife. The *Canopus decree*, for instance speaks of giving Ptolemy III and his sister-wife Berenice, the *Theoi Euergetai*, a cult because they:

> "… care for what concerns Apis and Mnevis, and the rest of the sacred animals which are honoured in Egypt, and to expend money and to prepare many things on behalf of the divine images which the Persians took away from Egypt –the King having gone to the foreign territories, and having captured them and brought them to Egypt, returning them to their temples, from which they had been taken in the first place, and having preserved the country from strife, by campaigning abroad in the distant places against many foreign countries and the men who rule them…" [190]

They are also accredited with acting beneficent when a famine struck Egypt, by renouncing their claim to many taxes to help ease the peoples suffering and they also shipped copious amounts of grain to Egypt to sustain the population.[191] The decision is therefore taken by the Egyptian clergy that

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[187] Prior to this we have only spoken of the Hellenistic and Roman rulers as men, however, as will become clear in the evidence discussed below, the queens of Hellenistic Empires were as often the objects of worship as their husbands.

[188] S. Pfeiffer, *Das Dekret von Kanopos (238 v. Chr.) : Kommentar und historische Auswertung eines dreisprachigen Synodaldekretes der ägyptischen Priester zu ehren Ptolemaios' III. und seiner Familie* (Munich 2004), 7-8.

[189] The decrees tell us much more, that can be used in the examination of the Standard Model. However, these will be discussed at the relevant points.

[190] *Canopus Decree*, line 9-12. Translation from: R.S. Simpson, *Demotic Grammar in the Ptolemaic Sacerdotal Decrees* (Oxford 1996), 225-229.

[191] *Canopus Decree*, lines 13-20.

Ptolemy III and his queen Berenice should be 'respected in accordance with what is fitting' and that is to provide them both with a cult in the Egyptian temples, which includes sacrifices and participation in festivals.[192] More reasons are given in the *Raphia* and *Memphis decrees*, but they all centre on the rulers beneficent actions and strong military power. However, as Hölbl says, given the fact that in the *Canopus Decree* the decision is made to also deify and worship a princess who died in childbirth, one can see that it was apparently not always dictated by the expressed powers during life.[193] There was a 'intrinsic divinity' in the royal family, or formulated in the CSR terms, there was apparently something counter-intuitive that was indicated or transferred by belonging to the royal family in the first place. Not very surprising if one remembers that these were all gods in some form at that time, albeit living or dead.

Given the tri-lingual nature of the decrees one could speculate on their intended audience. P.E. Stanwick, for instance, believes these decrees were copied and distributed amongst the other priests and officials and were therefore trilingual.[194] S. Pfeiffer deduces the intended audience from the location of the decrees, which is given in the text of each. Given that the decrees were to be placed in the forecourt of the Egyptian temples, it is most likely that the Egyptian population, who would gather for religious assemblies, would see them, read them or be told of their contents.[195] This seems very likely, as the native population of the Ptolemaic Empire was also encouraged to partake in the cults for these rulers.[196]

While the priestly decrees are more in the Egyptian sphere, similar ideas can be found for the Greeks. There are for instance various examples of a cult for the living Hellenistic ruler in several Greek *poleis* throughout the Mediterranean. To name some, Ptolemy I Soter was worshipped during his lifetime by the League of Islanders and by the Rhodians. The establishment of these cults was done by the *poleis* themselves to give thanks and honour that Ptolemy I was due. The decision for the League of Islanders is recorded in an inscription from Miletos, a city in Asia Minor, which dates to around 262 BC.[197] The reasons for this decision are also noted:

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[192] *Canopus Decree*, lines 73-76.
[193] Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 108-109.
[194] P.E. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies, Greek kings as Egyptian pharaohs* (Austin 2002), 6-7. For an overview of the decrees also visit page 7 of Stanwick's book.
[195] S. Pfeiffer, *Das Dekret von Kanopos*, 49-50. This is of course given that most of the Egyptian population will have been illiterate. For more on literacy in Hellenistic Egypt: R. Cribiore, *Writing, teachers, and students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta 1996) (for instance, 3-11).
[196] We shall return to this more extensively when we discuss the seventh point of the Standard Model.
[197] *Milet I 3 139* (= Austin *218*). Used translation: M.M. Austin, *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (Cambridge 1989), 359-361. Also translated in: R.S. Bagnall and P. Derow, *The Hellenistic period : historical sources in translation* (Malden 2004), 41-42.

> "… since King Ptolemy (I) Soter (the Saviour) has been responsible for many great blessings to the Islanders and the other Greeks, having liberated the cities, restored their laws, reestablished to all their ancestral constitution and remitted their taxes… it is fitting that all the Islanders, who were the [first] to have honoured Ptolemy Soter with godlike honours [both because] of his [public benefactions] and because of his [services] to individuals…" [198]

It is clear that the actions recorded here, justified his deification, we must therefore assume that they were experienced as something superhuman/minimally counter-intuitive by those in the League. Now to us these actions might seem as typical exercising of normal kingly duties, which are always, more or less, amazing when viewed from the eyes of the masses. However, in this case it is clearly more than that. This difference can be seen in Diodorus' description of the siege of Rhodes in 305/4 BC. After the siege was lifted the Rhodians honoured those who had shown bravery in the face of danger.[199] They set up statues in honour of King Cassander and King Lysimachus, who had helped in the salvation of the city, however:

> "…But as for Ptolemy, they wished to repay his favour with an even greater one [honour], and sent sacred ambassadors to Libya (Africa) to ask the oracle of Ammon whether he advised the Rhodians to honour Ptolemy as a god. When the oracle had given its assent they consecrated a square enclosure in the city, which they called the Ptolemaeum…" [200]

The most interesting thing about this source is, that we can see that there is clearly a difference between normal kingly tasks (which is honoured with a statue) and superhuman actions or involvement (which is reason for the instigation of a cult). Although the reason for this difference in honour is not given, other than establishing that it is warranted. The ruler is not automatically thought of as a god, he must earn this status by superhuman actions.[201]

In the Seleucid dynasty there is also evidence for what powers or actions made one eligible for one's own cult. Important evidence for this can be found in a letter of a Seleucid governor, which also features an edict of Antiochus III. The letter does not concern the instigation of Antiochus's own

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[198] *Milet I 3 139* (= Austin *218*). Lines 11-16 and 28-30.
[199] *Diod*. 20.100.1.
[200] *Diod*. 20.100.2-4.
[201] Arguably this was only the case at the very beginning of the Hellenistic period, later on rulers were automatically deified as this was custom. This opinion is reflected in the work of many scholars, among others: Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 109. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 220-221.

cult, but that of his sister. His own had already been established at that time, although the date is uncertain.[202] The relevant lines run as follows:

"King Antiochus (III) to Menedemus, greetings. Wishing to increase further the honours of our sister and Queen Laodice, and believing this to be most imperative for us, / not only because of the affection and care she shows in her life with us, but also because of her piety towards the deity, we continue to perform affectionately everything that is fitting and just [for her] to receive from us, / and in particular it is our decision that just as chief-priests (archiereis) of ourselves are appointed throughout the kingdom so too chief-priestesses should be set up in the same [provinces]…" [203]

Queen Laodice is to receive a cult, the same as her husband, not only because she is kind to those around her, but more specifically on account of her piety towards the god(s). It is a theme we also saw above for the Ptolemies. Apparently kings and queens can be a special sort of pious, which then qualifies them for a cult. Following the Standard Model, there would have to be something minimally counter-intuitive about their worship, unfortunately the quoted sources will not allow us to establish what this was.[204]

There is clearly quite a bit of evidence in the sources on reasons why the living ruler begot his cult based on his actions. These powers, which mostly constituted of protecting order, the land and its people by military action or by being beneficent. Also being pious in an apparently superlative degree was minimally counterintuitive enough to serve as justification in our source material for the instigation of a cult. The material examined here is all very public and official in nature and therefore has advantages and disadvantages for our research. Given its public nature, the texts are most likely fairly representative of what citizens generally thought. It is likely that, if such an inscription contained something which was not felt on a large scale, the people responsible would be called out on this. Of course, such a text can also serve a formative end, to shape the already existing cognitive tendency to view their sovereigns as supernatural beings. This more prescriptive alternative would also show an interaction between cognitive basis and cultural support, which could give the final nudge into full-blown worship. Another consequence of the public nature of this material is that represents no more than a very general overview of opinions and feelings. It is therefore lacking in

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[202] M.M. Austin, *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (Cambridge 1989), 263.

[203] Austin 158. Translation: M.M. Austin, *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (Cambridge 1989), 262-263.

[204] That is not to say that this could not be done. Perhaps by delving deeper into the material and then establish if these specific rulers performed some out of the ordinary act of piety, such as the founding of temples or some such. Regrettably this is beyond the scope of the current research.

any details which could provide interesting sentiments to apply to the model. Private and individual worship did happen, but motivations are not discussed in such evidence, we shall return to this below. However there are far larger issues that must be dealt with because, based on the premises of the Standard Model, there are certain things we would not expect to see in the source material. Perhaps the most important of this is the ruler receiving a cult, not because of his or her own individual merits, but because he or she is a representative of, or assimilated with, another god or goddess. For in that case, it is not the rulers themselves who possess counter-intuitive powers, but the god who inhabits him or her. Of course, given the fact that not all people on earth have such a relationship to a god, makes the rulers special and, arguably, somewhat counter-intuitive. However, this does not result in a cult for that ruler specifically, for the counter-intuitive powers recognized belonged to another supernatural concept. But is this always the case? Can we always see a clear segregation between when it is the ruler as a god in his own right or by the grace of another god's power?

There are numerous examples of rulers being worshipped due to their connection with another god. P.M. Fraser gives multiple examples for this phenomenon and we shall discuss several of these and ones identified by other authors.[205] There are cases in which both the ruler and the assimilated deity are mentioned. Arsinoe Philadelphus, for instance is on several occasions identified with a Cyprian form of Aphrodite already during her lifetime. A single act of commemoration has survived in four separate sources, which is a temple commemorated to Arsinoe-Aphrodite by the admiral Callicrates. One dedicatory epigram by Posidippus runs as follows:

> "…Here Callicrates set me up and called me the shrine of Queen Arsinoe-Aphrodite. Come then, ye pure daughters of the Greeks, to her who shall be famous as Zephyyritis, and ye, too, toilers on the sea; for the nauarch built this shrine to be a sure harbour from all the waves."[206]

In this Arsinoe is clearly part of Aphrodite and the powers which she is claimed to have, follow from this association. Arsinoe protects the sailors at sea, however, she can only do so because it is what

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[205] Fraser himself identifies three categories of assimilation, all focusing on the queens of Ptolemaic Egypt. Only the first, the borrowing of the cult-title of a Greek or Egyptian goddess, will be treated here. This has many attestations, but the dating is troublesome and we can therefore not be certain if this identification originated during their lifetime. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 236-237. Examples of this can be found in street names in Alexandria (SB 1025, for translation see H.I. Bell, 'Notes on Early Ptolemaic Papyri', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete 7.1* (1924) 17-29. *PTeb*. 879. *WChr*. 146. *SB* 7630. *SB* 7239.) and in several papyri recording the names of temples (*PEnt.* 26.)

[206] Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 239. Originally A. von Gutschmid, *Kleine schriften* (Leipzig 1889), 159.

Aphrodite does.[207] Another, less clear example, can be seen concerns queen Berenice, wife of Ptolemy Euergetes. She dedicated a lock of her hair in the temple of Arsinoe-Aphrodite for the safe return of her husband from the Third Syrian War, afterwards the lock disappears but is rediscovered as a celestial constellation.[208] According to both Hölbl and L. Koenen such a dedication was inspired by both Greek and Egyptian precedent.[209] Most importantly it is connected to the story of Isis who mourns her husband Osiris by dedicating a lock to him. This might seem like a farfetched connection, however, when looking at depictions of the queen on seals created to mark the favourable outcome of the Third Assyrian War, it becomes clear that it is not. Berenice is clearly depicted with shorn hair and bearing fertility attributes of Demeter and Isis.[210] She may therefore be partially held responsible for the victory of the war, but again because of the powers of another goddess. The dedication of the lock only had the desired effect because of the precedent of Isis making a similar dedication.[211]

This is not to say that only queens were the subject of assimilation, a similar trend can be seen with the Hellenistic kings. Ptolemy Philopator for instance, was frequently identified with Dionysus and attributed much of his characteristics.[212] The Seleucid kings are also often identified with gods, in fact a list of annual priesthoods under Seleucus IV records many examples of kings assimilated with other deities. There is for instance a priest for Seleucus (I) Zeus Nicator and Antiochus (I) Apollo Soter.[213] Following our definition, this is not part of the ruler cult, I believe that it is just another form of an already existing cult for a deity.

Another issue is that while we have clear evidence that there was a difference between kingly actions which warranted a cult and actions which warranted honour but no cult, as was seen above. The source material is not conclusive in what actions warrant what, for example there is an honorary poem by Syracusan poet Theocritus, who enjoyed royal patronage under Ptolemy II Philadelphus. It exalts the virtues of Ptolemy II, including: creating wealth among his people due to

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[207] This connection is also emphasized in the other sources for this dedication. For instance an anonymous hymn to this temple can be found in: J.U. Powell ed., *Collectanea Alexandrina, reliquias minores Poetarum Graecorum Aetatis Ptolemaicae* (Oxford 1925), 82. In 2001 numerous epigrams of Posidippus were discovered in Egypt, these also holds an example of this assimilation: *Pap. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309 VI 30-37. There also evidence for the continuation of the cult after Arsinoe's death: *SB* 7785; *SEG* 8-361.

[208] Although this is also another interesting example of the continuation of the cult of Arsinoe-Aphrodite after her death, this of course falls outside of the scope of this research. Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.24.

[209] Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 105. L. Koenen, 'The Ptolemaic king as a religious figure,' in: A. Bulloch et al. (ed.), *Images and ideologies : self-definition in the Hellenistic world* (Berkeley 1993), 25-115, 89-90 and 108-113.

[210] Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 105. The fertility attributes are further explained in: P.A. Pantos, 'Bérénice II Démèter', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 111.1 (1987) 343-352.

[211] Further evidence for the assimilation of Berenike II with goddesses can be seen in the cult for her, already during her lifetime, in the Fayum. W.J.R. Rübsam, *Götter und Kulte im Faijum während der griechisch-römisch-byzantinischen Zeit* (Marburg/Lahn), 22,134 and 211.

[212] Hölbl, *Ptolemaic empire*, 171.

[213] *OGIS 245* (= Austin 177).

his great rule, protecting the nation from invaders and honouring the gods with riches and elaborate sacrifices.[214] The observant reader will have noticed that several of these actions were already mentioned in the priestly decrees above, where they were given as reasons for installing a cult for the Ptolemaic ruler. However, in this poem the actions signify that Ptolemy II is worthy of praise, but a possible cult as a consequence of these, is nowhere to be found. This apparent display of dissent is troublesome, because it clearly shows that what some experience as counter-intuitive powers, others do not. While not very surprising as there are also non-believers, it does obscure the evidence for the Standard Model.

There is clearly ample evidence that the Hellenistic ruler was not always deified and worshipped because of his own merits. Agency detection, as you will recall from the Standard Model, did obviously recognize that the ruler possessed counter-intuitive superhuman powers. Yet, for the inhabitants of their kingdoms, it was not always so that they themselves were the source of these powers. It is also not clear whether or not ancient men always thought of their rulers as supernatural, even when exercising their normal kingly tasks. Could these sources all be written by 'non-believers'? It is difficult to say, while these people certainly did find the actions of their rulers awe-inspiring, it is not clear whether or not they thought of these actions as superhuman. The source material does not allow us to conclude the underlying experience of ancient men when viewing the actions of their rulers. Were they simply extraordinary or superhuman and the work of a god (whether by the rulers own strength or that of another deity)? In sum, while there is evidence that some rulers were thought to possess counter-intuitive/superhuman powers, it is also clear that this is *not* always the case. The same actions could be seen by one as reason for installing a cult and by another simply enough to honour him with a statue or a poem.

Let us examine the evidence for the next point of the Standard Model, that morality is strongly connected to the supernatural. To assess whether or not the ruler was thought to have a more then human share in morality we shall examine oaths taken sworn in the name of the ruler. These should give us an indication of this matter as these oaths often include a clause which explains what will happen in the event that the oath is broken. Let us examine a deed of cession from the Ptolemaic period, whose contents consist of the deed and the corresponding royal oath. Theon, son of Antiochus swears:

> "… by King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra also called Tryphaena, gods Philopatores Philadelphi, and by their ancestors and the other gods, that I have come to an agreement with you Dionysius son of Apollonius… I shall not break the contract nor resort to fraud in any

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[214] *Theoc.* 17.73-130.

respect regarding the contract of agreement… but if I do not act as aforesaid, I agree that the provisions of the cession and agreement are to remain irrefutable, and that when I am brought to account the remaining portions of my allotment are to revert to the Crown and also I am to be held liable to the consequences of the oath." [215]

Although the oath is clearly sworn to the divine rulers, there is no mention of anything supernatural of counter-intuitive in the consequences for not upholding the oath. This is in fact something which we continuously see in the oaths where we can reconstruct this clause.[216] Another example can be seen in *P.Sorb* I 734, it concerns another individual who swears by the divine rulers and their ancestors. He, Agathinos son of Simôn, concludes that if he keeps his oath that he may be happy and if he breaks it that the opposite might happen to him.[217] Although it is possible that the divine rulers might be responsible for his misery if he were to break the oath, no such thing is said explicitly. In some oaths it is stated that the Crown should profit from the breaking of the oath, as mentioned above, therefore certainly being involved in the punishment of oath breakers.[218] However, nowhere is it mentioned that people experienced their divine rulers as having full access to strategic information. It is therefore rather unclear whether the involvement of the rulers stem from their divine nature or just from their place as king, hence it is a rather poor argument in favour of the Standard Model.

The fifth point of the Standard Model concerns rituals, if you will recall, the model holds if we see people performing the same rituals and expecting the same kind of results as those for the gods. Contrary to the point above, there is ample evidence for the rituals performed for the deified rulers, in fact sources for this fact have already been mentioned above when treating the counter-intuitive powers of the Hellenistic rulers. To start, let us re-examine one of the Egyptian priestly decrees. These clearly indicate that the priests had to perform the same rites for the divine rulers as they performed for the other gods in the temples, they would also be carried out during festivals for the people to see as would those of the other gods. For instance, in the text of the Raphia decree;

"It has come into the hearts of the priests of the temples of Egypt: to increase the afore-existing honors rendered in the temples to king Ptolemy, the ever-living, the beloved of Isis, and to his Sister, queen Arsinoe, the Father-loving Gods, and those rendered to their parents,

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[215] *P.Oxy.* 49.3482. Translation from: A. Bülow-Jacobsen and J.E.G. Whitehorne ed., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, volume XLIX* (London 1982), 169-170.
[216] Examples of oaths where the consequence cannot be discovered can be found in: J.P. Mahaffy and J.G. Smyly ed., *The Flinders Petrie Papyri. With Transcriptions. Commentaries and Index. (*Dublin 1905), 161-163.
[217] *P.Sorb* I 734, lines 12-14.
[218] Other examples of oaths where the Crown profits from the breaking of oaths are mentioned by D.J. Thompson. D.J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies* (Princeton 2012), 126-127.

the Benefactor Gods, and those rendered to their forefathers, the Gods Adelphoi and the

Saviour Gods.

Also a royal statue shall be put up of king Ptolemy… in every several temple, in the most

conspicuous place in the temple, fashioned according to Egyptian art. Also they shall cause

an image of the local God to be shown in the temple and set it up at the table of offerings at

which the image of the king stands, the god giving the king a sword of victory. The priests

who are in the temples shall offer homage to the images three times each day and set the

temple-furniture before them and perform the other things for them, which it is proper to

do, as is done for the other gods on their festivals and processions and special days… There

shall be celebrated a festival and a procession in all the temples throughout Egypt for king

Ptolemy, the ever-living, the beloved of Isis, from the 10th of Pachon, the day whereon the

king conquered his adversary, for five days each year, with wearing of wreaths and offering

of burnt offerings and libations and all the other things which it is proper to do, and it shall

be done according to the beautiful command…" [219]

The kings would become so-called *sunnaoi theoi*, that is: temple-sharing gods.[220] In Greek context the

kings also beget cults similar to those of the gods, or in the Greek term, as Chaniotis tells us *isotheoi*

timai ('honours equal to those bestowed upon the gods').[221] We have also already seen that

individuals set up temples to worship certain rulers, such as Arsinoe Philadelphus whose temple was

built by the admiral Callicrates. Even if this temple was, in fact, dedicated to a syncretized version of

Arsinoe Philadelphus as Arsinoe-Aphrodite it is still an honour/ritual which is also similar to those for

the gods. There are many examples of temples being built by private individuals and *polis* to honour

their rulers similar to the dedications to the gods and, given the supernatural statues ascribed to the

rulers, probably with the hope for similar results.[222] We shall return to this below, but for now let us

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[219] English translation of the German text of the *Raphia Decree*, lines 30-37. H-J. Thissen, *Studien zum Raphiadekret* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1966), 22-23. Something similar can be seen in the *Canopus decree* in lines 20-25. For the translation and commentary on the decree see; Pfieffer, *Dekret von Kanopos*, 101-104.

[220] E. Winter has assembled chronological lists of where the ancestors are directly worshipped or depicted as *sunnaoi theoi* (temple-sharing gods), but he fails to mention any examples of the veneration of the living rulers. E. Winter, 'Der Herrscherkult in den ägyptischen Ptolemäertempeln', in: H. Machler and V.M. Strocka ed., *Das ptolemäische Ägypten. Akten des Internationalen Symposions 27.-29. september 1976 in Berlin* (Mains am Rhein 1978) 147-160, 149-152. Winter's earliest example comes from the time of Ptolemy III, in which he offers to his deified parents Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II from Karnak.

[221] Chaniotis, 'Hellenistic Rulers', 433. This is deduced based on *IG* 12.7, 506 and *SEG* 41.75. He then concludes, as was indicated in chapter one, that this meant that the rulers were not truly thought of as divine and that the title of *theos* was only awarded to rulers upon death. Given our evidence from the Ptolemaic rulers, who were called *theos* during their life, we can conclude that this is false.

[222] For a very extensive overview of honors for Hellenistic rulers in Greece and *poleis* in Asia-Minor, see: H. Kotsidu, *Timē kai doxa. Ehrungen für hellenistische Herrscher im griechischen Mutterland und in Kleinasien unter besonder Berücksichtigung der archäologischen Denkmäler* (Berlin 2000).

examine other rituals performed for the deified rulers, such as festivals. As was already indicated above festivals and the rites performed there were also a major part of the ruler cult. These festivals were often named after the intended ruler (such as the Ptolemaia) and usually took place on their birthday or for another occasion.[223] For instance, Ptolemy III received a festival every month on the 25th to commemorate his ascension to the throne.[224] And Seleucus II received the same in Ilion as a *euangelia* (a sacrifice for good tidings).[225] The point of all these rituals, similar to those of the gods, is the principle of *do ut des*-principle. The perpetual cycle of reciprocity of exchange between human being and deity underlies all interactions in ancient religions.[226] By honouring the Hellenistic rulers the citizens and polies expected to benefit from the powers of these rulers or perhaps encourage them to continue acting as they did when they earned these honours.

It was also obviously very important that the rituals were executed by the proper agents. There is ample evidence that priests were instituted to oversee the rituals in the temples for the deified rulers, even if they were *sunnaoi theoi*. These were clearly different priests than those for the other gods, it must therefore have been the case that the other priests were not sufficient or proficient enough to oversee the cult.[227] This was most likely not out of practical considerations, because the priests would otherwise be too busy, for the execution of the rites would probably be done by the same priests as those for the other gods. It is in the higher ranks that we see a differentiation for the priests. Take for instance the *Raphia decree* quoted above. There is no differentiation between priests exercising the cultic rituals for the rulers and the other gods. Even if the decrees dictate that all priests should now be given the title to be named priests of the rulers, in practice the title was only given to some and these were mostly high-ranked priests.[228] What does this mean for the Standard Model? That is somewhat unclear, on the one hand there is no difference in priests exercising the rituals for the deified rulers and those of the other gods, this is only the case on the higher levels. However, more importantly, the rites in the temples still had to be exercised by priests and not the local farmer. That is not to say that the local farmer did not perform rites to honour the rulers, in fact, at least in Ptolemaic Egypt, the population was clearly expected to participate in the cult of the divine rulers as much as they were expected to participate in the regular

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[223] Just as in the worship for the gods, these sacrifices would be repeated every month on the same day, say the 25th. Chaniotis, 'Hellenistic Rulers', 438.

[224] *I.Louvre* 5.

[225] *I.Ilion* 35. Chaniotis, 'Hellenistic Rulers', 438.

[226] One will recall the large role reciprocity plays in the Standard Model, specifically in the seventh point, which is also something we shall address below.

[227] A useful survey of the priests for the Ptolemaic rulers remains P.M. Fraser; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 214-226.

[228] For the declaration that all priests now hold the priesthood for the deified rulers the Theoi Euergetai, see the *Canopus Decree*. An overview of who was awarded the priesthoods for the deified ruler in Ptolemaic Egypt is given by D.J. Thompson. Thompson, *Memphis*, 124.

cults of the gods.[229] Private worship can be attested in numerous sources. Widespread worship amongst the population of Ptolemaic kingdom may be indicated by the vast amount of small terracotta busts of Ptolemies that have been found.[230] The quality and material suggests that they might have been mass-produced for alters in the homes of the population.[231] The priestly decrees also indicate that it was expected of the population to actively participate in the festivals for the rulers or at least that it should be made possible to them.[232]

In sum, the dedication and rituals performed for the deified Hellenistic rulers are the same as those performed for the gods. This is not very surprising as cognitive science describes rituals as a social interaction and an action just as any other, the only difference being that the agent that is being motivated to act is supernatural in nature.[233] The motivation and form of these offerings must therefore be the same as those for the gods as it is based in the same interaction system. The interesting element that is added in this case is that the ruler is both a 'normal' social actor and a supernatural being. The *do ut des*-principle dictates the interactions of ancient men, both with the ruler and with the gods. What can we conclude from this evidence? In this case, our expectations based on the perimeters of the Standard Model have been fulfilled. We expected to see people performing the same rituals and expecting the same kind of results as those for the gods and we have seen nothing less. Let us examine if the next point of the Standard Model fares as well.

This brings us to the final point of the Standard Model and one of the most important. It holds that religious concepts are ideally suited for coalitional affiliation and is one that prominently features in the source material. The social function of religion as enforcing a system of hard-to-fake and costly signals of commitment can clearly be seen in ancient sources. An example of this comes in the form of a dedicatory inscriptions from military troops found in the excavations a temple in Hermoupolis Magna.[234] It reads:

"The catoecic cavalry serving the Hermoupolite nome [dedicated] the statues, and the temple and the other buildings within the sanctuary, and the stoa, to King Ptolemy, the son of Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Theoi Adelphoi, and to queen Berenice, his sister and wife, the

[229] We shall not delve too deeply into attestations of private worship as I believe this is more relevant for the attestation of coalitional affiliation for the seventh point of the Standard Model.
[230] Thompson, *Memphis*, 128.
[231] D.B. Thompson, *Ptolemaic oinochoai and portraits in faience : aspects of the ruler-cult* (Oxford 1973), 78-101. For a broad ranging survey of the sources.
[232] As can be seen in the closing lines of the *Raphia decree*.
[233] See page 34 above.
[234] A.T.B. Wace, 'Recent Ptolemaic Finds in Egypt: Alexandria', JHS 65 (1945), 106-109.

Theoi Euergetai, and to Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Theoi Adelphoi, for their benevolence towards them." [235]

This was constructed by a permanent military garrison stationed in the region, with enough funds to create this structure. This sanctuary was clearly dedicated to the current ruler, his spouse and their parents and is an example of Greek soldiers worshipping their rulers. This example is quite exceptional in its magnitude as the construction of an entire sanctuary would be beyond anyone of more modest means. We have seen a similar dedication above where admiral Callicrates built his temple for Arsinoe. This is a perfect example of a costly and hard-to-fake signs of commitment, as it is a very visible and permanent reminder of the loyalty and piety of these soldiers. It might not be very surprising to find such a costly declaration of loyalty coming from soldiers, as the fact that they *are* soldiers is already a sign of loyalty towards the Ptolemaic ruler. However there are also other, more modest, private dedications to be found all linked to specific members of the Ptolemaic dynasty.[236] These are often simple plaques dedicated to the ruler, in which his or her divinity is explicitly recognized. These were most likely erected at already existing shrines and therefore do not record the foundation of them, as others often do.[237] These dedications are often rather short and the person dedicating them is almost always named in the inscription, which is crucial for our investigation. To give two examples of these kinds of dedications, again both by military personnel:

"[to] King Ptolemy and Arsinoe Philadelphus [by] Ptolemaios, the phrourarch and those under his command" [238]

"To King Ptolemy, God Epiphanes [dedicated by] Kallistratos the commander, and the soldiers under his command" [239]

Chaniotis notes that garrisons and soldiers were often the primary bearers of royal ideology, especially in the form of the ruler cult.[240] They were often the establishers of the cults in dependent cities, such as Thera, Itanos and Ephesos.[241] Such garrisons 'reminded the local population that there was a divine element inherent in kingship', according to Chaniotis.[242] While I have my doubts about

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[235] Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 234.
[236] Dedications of altars, shrines and other objects, for instance; *OGIS 103*, *SEG ii 867* and *OGIS 732*.
[237] Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 235.
[238] *SB 1104*, translation from: Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 235.
[239] *SB 3993*, translation from: Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 235.
[240] Chaniotis, 'Hellenistic Rulers', 441.
[241] Ibidem, 441. Even if they were sometimes the only followers, as was probably the case in Thera.
[242] Ibidem, 441.

the inherent nature of the divine element, given that we have seen that worship was often thought to be earned by the powers displayed by the rulers, it is clear that soldiers served as a reminder for these cities of the strength of the rulers. So while we clearly see worship among soldiers is more difficult to say whether the population of Egypt worshipped their Ptolemaic rulers in their own homes, although the evidence discussed above of the small terracotta busts is compelling. If we combine this with statements made in the *Memphis decree* which was, probably, directed at the general public (limited as this may be due to the high illiteracy rate). The relevant lines are as follows:

> "… and it should be made possible for the private persons also who will (so) wish, to produce the likeness of the shrine of the Manifest God whose excellence is fine, which is (mentioned) above, and to keep it in their homes and hold the festivals and the processions which are described above, each year, so that it may become known that the inhabitants of Egypt pay honour to the Manifest God whose excellence is fine in accordance with what is normally done." [243]

It is clear that private worship was something which needed to be addressed as well as the practical side of this. At the same time we can see that it was possible that the rulers themselves endorsed the private worship of themselves. By giving it specific mention in such a public degree it is clear that they were not indifferent towards the phenomenon, otherwise why go through the trouble of letting it be known that private worship (in the form of images or participation in festivals) is possible. The decrees may have been written in the name of the Egyptian priests, however the involvement of the rulers in the synods cannot be denied.[244]

We have clearly seen that the ruler cult could function as a declaration of loyalty to the crown, which is probably why such a large amount of soldiers adhered to the cult and spread it wherever they were stationed. What we have not seen is a differentiation between believers and non-believers in the ruler cult and also some consequences connected for this fact. We have already observed above, when examining the powers of the ruler, that it is difficult to assess sometimes whether or not we are dealing with a non-believer or someone who just does not say it explicitly. There is only one group of which we can be certain that they did not find their ruler divine and those are the Jewish people who live under the rule of Hellenistic kings. Kings in Jewish tradition had a vastly different role than those in the Hellenistic tradition. Jewish kings functioned purely in the

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[243] *Memphis decree*, lines 13-15. Translation from: R.S. Simpson, *Demotic Grammar in the Ptolemaic Sacerdotal Decrees* (Oxford 1996), 271.
[244] Thompson, *Memphis*, 112-124.

profane sphere, they were no cultic leaders, they did not sacrifice or interpret the will of their God.[245] These tasks were exclusively fulfilled by the priests in the temple though conflicts often broke out between the kings and the priests as to who had the ultimate say in matters. This could of course not be the case in the Hellenistic kingdoms as the Jewish people had to function in a larger and more multicultural society then just their kingdom surrounding Jerusalem.

We shall shortly examine two examples from the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms which signify how the Jews interacted with the ruler cult. The most illustrating example, I believe, is how Jewish people in Alexandria 'worshipped' the Ptolemaic ruler. They could of course not offer directly to him, as he was no god in their eyes: there was only one god, while he is simply king. However, the cult of the Ptolemaic rulers could not and would not be ignored by the Alexandrian Jews.[246] In the evidences, from this time, we can observe that a middle way was found which was acceptable for both groups. There are numerous plaques found in synagogues which dedicate part of the temple or furniture to Yahweh on behalf of the reigning Ptolemy and his spouse.[247] The formula 'on behalf of' is crucial, as it is a loyalty formula which side-steps explicitly stating the divinity of the rulers. This excluded them from any other dedication they needed to make, there were for instance, no statues of the rulers in synagogues as should be obvious.[248] While this was obviously enough for the Ptolemaic rulers to satisfy them of the loyalty of the Jews, it was not felt as fair by the Greek segment of the population and was a major source of anti-Jewish sentiments. With the risk of getting ahead of ourselves, in Roman Alexandria, tensions had risen between the Jews and the Greeks and this culminated in an embassy sent to Rome in 40 AD to emperor Caligula. Philo describes the episode; the Jews have come to complain to the emperor that they were being harassed by the Greeks while they had made all the sacrifices to the emperor which were needed. To which Caligula replied:

> "… that all this is true, and that you did sacrifice; nevertheless you sacrificed to another god and not for my sake; and then what good did you do me? Moreover you did not sacrifice to me."[249]

While this is a source from the Roman period, it clearly illustrates that a clear distinction was felt between offering to someone or on behalf of someone and that this difference excluded one group

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[245] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the gods. A study of the Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago 1978)*,* 337-344.

[246] Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 1*, 282.

[247] Amongst others *CPJud.* 1432, *SB* 589, *OGIS* 726, *OGIS* 96 and *OGIS* 101. For a complete overview of these dedication: Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria, volume 3*, 441.

[248] Philo, *Leg. Ad Gai.* XX, 137-138.

[249] Philo, *Leg. Ad Gai.* XLV, 357. Translation from: C.D. Yonge, *The works of Philo Judaeus, the contemporary of Josephus* (London 1855).

from the general population. The ruler therefore fulfils his final prerequisite, based on the seventh point of the Standard Model, a transparent difference between believers and non-believers and consequences that follow from this differentiation. To put it in terms of CSR the Jews were seen by the Greeks as cheaters in the system, profiting from their worship and dedication to the Ptolemaic rulers, without making similar costly signals of commitment.

To summarize this section, the Standard Model does not appear to have survived unscathed when confronted with the evidence from the Hellenistic kingdoms. This might not entirely be due to a fault in the model, but also brought on by difficulties in the source material. When observing what the counter-intuitive powers of the rulers were thought to be, it is difficult to explain why one sees these powers as reason for deification, while another sees the same and concludes that a different kind of honouring is fitting. On the other hand, there is nothing in the model to properly explain why some rulers were worshipped only because they were the conduit of another god's power on earth, rather than by their own merit. Another example of troublesome sources was seen when examining the oaths. While it was obvious that they were sworn by members of the royal house, they make no reference to any kind of supernatural consequences if the oath is broken. It is therefore impossible to establish if these actions were thought to be the result of the rulers supernatural nature or simply caused by his kingly tasks. When examining the rituals and suitability for coalitional affiliation of the Hellenistic ruler cult it appears as if the sources fully support the Standard Model. Altogether it is as of yet unclear if the Standard Model can hold up completely. Let us now examine the Roman material and see if this changes our preliminary conclusion.

Section 3.2: Rome's Princeps

The Roman imperial material provides us with an interesting view on their ruler cult. Which, on the one hand, is somewhat similar to the Hellenistic cult, especially in the provinces, something we shall observe below. Yet, on the other hand, it provides us with sometimes confusing material when it comes to the existence of a cult for the living ruler in Rome and Italy. The Roman *Princeps* undoubtedly had an extensive connection to the supernatural world. For Augustus for instance there is extensive anecdotal material which signifies his connection to the supernatural. His birth is said to have been heralded by several omens, these too focus prominently on his divine ancestry.[250] Also during his lifetime numerous dreams and omens are recorded which concern Augustus' connection

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[250] Suetonius for instance tells us that Augustus' mother was thought to be impregnated by a serpent, while purifying herself in the temple of Apollo, Augustus is therefore thought to have been the son of Apollo. Suet. *Aug.* 92. Another omen can also be found in Suetonius and Cassius Dio, these also focus on Augustus' powerful connection to the supernatural, likening his birth to the cosmos and cosmic events. Suet. *Aug.* 92 and Dio 45.1.2.

with the supernatural, presenting him as supported by the gods or sent by them.[251] Although these are literary sources, provided to us by elitist writers who most certainly had an agenda, the connection need not be doubted. It is when we wish to examine the cult of the living emperor that we run into contradicting evidence and discussion, both in ancient times and with modern scholars. Was the emperor part of the supernatural world, rather than only connected to it? In modern scholarship it has often been concluded that there is a difference in the worship of the living emperor between the provinces and the Italian peninsula, we shall examine both to examine whether this is justified. Now, with these preliminary considerations in mind, let us now turn to the application of the Standard Model.

As we did with the previous section, we shall start with the examination of the counter-intuitiveness of the Roman rulers and what powers they are thought to possess to merit their deification.[252] As is tradition in discussing the Roman ruler cult we shall divide our discussion of the second and third point below between the provinces and the Italian Peninsula, including Rome. This division is not merely a matter of tradition, as we shall observe below, although I shall not adhere to it as strictly as some scholars have, as it might obscure more than illuminate.[253] Traditionally the view was that the ruler cult was a Greek phenomenon and completely alien to the 'original' Roman culture.[254] Although this view is now thought to be old-fashioned, there are still many scholars that hold that there was no cult for the living ruler in the Italian Peninsula, though there was a longstanding tradition in the East which continued in the Republican and later Imperial periods.[255] This complicates matters for our research, as scholars cannot seem to agree on whether or not there was worship of the emperor, let alone what form it took. This is not entirely due to a different interpretation of the sources, the Roman material is itself not entirely clear on the matter and sometimes even contradictory, nor is it complete. I shall attempt not to take sides in this discussion by evaluating their arguments (though sometimes this will be inevitable), however we shall see whether their opinions and interpretation can be combined with the Standard Model.

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[251] An example of this are dreams which Cicero and Catulus had, in which they see a boy singled out, by several means, as a favorite of Jupiter and stressing his prominent role in Rome's future. The boy is of course Augustus, then Octavian. Suet. *Aug*. 92. Other reverences to Cicero's dream can be found in Dio 45.2.2, Plut. *Cic.* 44.2-4 and Tert. *Anim.* 46.7.

[252] As mentioned we shall only examine the emperors of the Roman Principate, to limit our material to a manageable quantity for this research. It follows that Caesars ruler cult falls outside of the scope of this research, although it is often included in other examination as the immediate precedent for the cult of Augustus and his successors.

[253] J.B. Rives, 'Imperial Cult and Native Tradition in Roman North Africa', *The Classical Journal 96.4* (2001) 425-436, 427.

[254] If such a thing ever existed in the first place. I. Gradel, 'Roman apotheosis', in: V. Lambrinoudakis and J.-C. Balty ed., *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum (ThesCRa) II. Purification, Initiation, Heroization, Apotheosis, Banquet, Dance, Music, Cult Images* (Los Angeles 2004) 186-199, 188.

[255] M. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus. Precedents, Consequences, Implications* (Cambridge 2013), 2.

The Roman material is somewhat different in nature from the Hellenistic material above, as it rarely states why the emperor deserved to be worshipped. Generally speaking the Roman emperor was worshipped in three manners in his realm, although some will disagree with this conclusion.[256] Either he was worshipped, as we have seen above, as a god himself (albeit sometimes assimilated with another deity). As we have already established the consequences of this above, we shall be brief about this. F. Lozano tells us that the emperor was mostly worshipped for his good and pious deeds and for the wealth he brings to the world, this concerns not only physical wealth but also a rich social and political life.[257] This can, for instance, be seen in a decree from Halicarnassus, which concerns honours for Augustus:

> "Immortal Nature, after Overwhelming Benefactions, has bestowed on Men the Greatest Good of all. She has given us the Emperor Augustus, who is not only the Father of his Country, Rome, Giver of Happiness to our Lives, but also the Fatherly God and Saviour of all Mankind. It is He whose Providence has not only fulfilled but even surpassed the Prayers of all. For Land and Sea lie at Peace and the Cities bloom with the Flowers of Order, Concord and Prosperity." [258]

Although there is no mention of cult, we can deduce some minimally counter-intuitive strengths that Augustus is thought to have had, these look quite similar to the Hellenistic examples above. He is the father and saviour of mankind, a role which is usually in the domain of the gods and thoroughly counter-intuitive power for any to have, let alone a human.[259] Augustus is also thought to answer, or even surpass, the prayers given to him by safeguarding the inhabitants of the Empire. These duties of protecting the empire can be seen as part of the emperors standard kingly tasks, yet were also clearly part of his superhuman strength.[260] Another illustrating example given the reasons why the emperor is worshipped comes from another Greek city, Akraiphia:

> "Since the lord of the entire world, Nero, pontifex maximus, in his 13th year of tribunician power, father of his country, New Apollo that has shone on the Greeks, has decided to

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[256] For instance some would argue that all these different kinds of worship can be seen as part of one kind of worship.

[257] F. Lozano, 'The Creation of Imperial Gods: Not only Imposition versus Spontaneity', in: P.P. Iossif, A.S. Chankowski and C.C. Lorber ed., *More than Men, Less Than Gods. Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship* (Leuven 2011) 475-520, 502.

[258] *GIBM* 894. Translation from: K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge 1978), 217.

[259] One might also remember the honorary title of Ptolemy I, Soter, which signifies a similar occupation.

[260] Certainly in the east where terms such as king were less problematic then in Rome, where the Republican façade needed to be upheld.

bestow benefice upon Greece and has rewarded and shown piety toward our gods, who have stood by him everywhere for his care and safety; since he, Nero, Zeus the Liberator, the one and only greatest Imperator of our times, friend of the Greeks, has bestowed the eternal indigenous, native freedom that had formerly been taken from the Greeks, he has shown his favor, he has brought back the autonomy and freedom of the past and to this great and unexpected gift has added immunity from taxation, quite complete, which none of the previous Augusti gave us. For all these reasons it has been decided by the magistrates and councilors, and the people to worship him at the altar dedicated to Zeus the Savior […].”[261]

There are several interesting things to be deduced from this decree, the first of course being the reasons why the emperor, Nero in this case, should be worshipped. In this we can see something very similar to what we observed in the Hellenistic material, that is, the emperor shows great piety towards the gods and also great beneficence to the people of the *poleis*. We can also observe that in the exertion of these tasks he is supported by the native pantheon, while at the same time being part of it as manifestation of the New Apollo or Zeus the Liberator at which altar he is also going to be worshipped. We have already discussed the difficulties of the application of the Standard Model when it concerns the assimilation of the ruler with another god, but we can nonetheless see that similar reasons are mentioned throughout these two periods.[262] However, this is not the only way in which the emperor receives worship.

A second form that the ruler cult takes in the Roman empire, one which was unfamiliar in the Hellenistic kingdoms, is the worship of the emperors *numen*. The term *numen* means the divine power of the emperor. It is a property of an emperor, 'a divinized abstraction to be treated the same way as a traditional god', yet it can only exist within the emperor.[263] Alternatively it can also distinguish the divinity and divine power of the Roman gods and characterize their represented forces.[264] An example of worship of an Imperial *numen* can be seen in the following inscription from an altar in Narbo, Gaul:

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[261] *IG* 7.2713, lines 31-50. Translation from: C.B. Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period* (Cambridge 1997).

[262] C.J. Simpson takes an interesting position and claims that, in Rome and Italy, the people might already have been influenced in their thinking about the living emperor, by the fact that they accepted his future divinity after death as a *divus*. Although this is a very interesting point and can certainly be seen as a minimally counter-intuitive property of the emperor, it is not entirely clear whether this should be seen as ruler cult (defined as the worship and cult of the living ruler). This would need more investigation then this research can allow for. C.J. Simpson, 'Caligula's cult: immolation, immortality, intent.' in: A. Small ed., *Subject and ruler: the cult of the ruling power in classical antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1996) 63-71, 68-69.

[263] D. Fishwick, 'Numen Augustum', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 160* (2007) 247-255, 247.

[264] Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus*, 157.

"May it be good, favorable, and fortunate for Imperator Caesar Augustus, son of the divus,

[…] and for the colonists and residents of the colony of Iuliu Paterna Narbo Martius, who

have obligated themselves forever to the worship of his numen." [265]

Unfortunately they do not mention why they have obligated themselves, what it was that Augustus did to merit this worship. The text further tells us on which days the inhabitants of Narbo would provide sacrifices.[266] These dates are not surprising, his birthday and the day he first assumed the *fasces* and, interestingly, on the date that Augustus intervened in a conflict between the inhabitants and *decurions*.[267] This last event stands out as it seems of importance for the locals and could possibly be the reason for the worship of Augustus, but this interpretation cannot be supported by other evidence. A similar structure can be seen in another inscription on an altar, which comes from Forum Clodii close to Rome. The inscription, set up in 18 AD, records the regulations of rituals to be performed to several members of the Imperial family.[268] Several of those mentioned are already deceased at the time of the inscription and therefore fall outside of the research, however, the current ruler Tiberius is also presented with sacrifices on several days and his *genius*, which we shall return to below, is also invited to partake in other offerings.[269] Again, as above, the rituals take place on very specific dates, birthdays of Augustus, Tiberius and Livia and also the anniversary of the local dedication of statues of the Caesars and Livia. The inscription on the altar mentions no reasons as to why the *numen* of these Caesars is to be worshipped, but interestingly we see a similar division as in the other inscription. The dates for the offerings are a combination of celebrations of local and more general significance.[270]

Although no clear ascription of counter-intuitive aspects can be found leading to the worship of the emperors *numen*, we should not overlook one important aspect. That is, the fact that the emperor even possesses *numen*, something which normally belongs to the gods and their powers, is in itself a counter-intuitive quality.[271] That we possess as many mentions as we do of the emperors

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[265] *ILS* 112. Translation from: M. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus. Precedents, Consequences, Implications* (Cambridge 2013), 171.

[266] We shall return to this when discussing the fifth point of the Standard Model below.

[267] Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus*, 171.

[268] Fishwick, 'Numen Augustum', 249-250.

[269] *ILS* 154, lines 4-17.

[270] The content of this inscription is the subject of some discussion. I. Gradel has used this inscription to argue that the cult of the *numen* is simply a synonym for a direct cult, this based on the neuter gender of the *numen Augustum* named in the inscription and therefore the impossibility to offer it animal sacrifice of the same gender. The cult must therefore have been to Augustus and Tiberius directly. I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford 2002), 103-106. D. Fishwick stands against him, Fishwick, 'Numen Augustum', 249-251.

[271] Although *numen* can be ascribed to other non-divine elements, it is never attributed to individual humans other than the emperors. Thus, according to Cicero there exists a *numen* of the senate and a *numen* of the Roman people (Cic. *Phil.* 3.32 and Cic. *Or. Post red. ad Quirites* 18). Fishwick argues that, from this, it was a

numen, and its often costly worship, is an interesting and striking phenomenon.[272] Therefore, even the tasks he performs as part of his position as *Princeps* and a slew of other positions, cannot be separated from his internal divine powers. D. Fishwick tells us that although the emperor possessed *numen* during his life, he did not possess the status of a *numen*. He was not divine, nor a divine power.[273] However, even he is forced to admit that this difference, which is of prime theological significance, probably was not experienced by the bulk of the worshippers. The awkward position has also been formulated another way:

> "There must have been, in other words, all the difference (and yet almost none at all) between worshipping Augustus himself and worshipping his numen." [274]

I. Gradel believes that worship of the *numen* did not in fact exist and that it was merely a synonym for the worship of the emperor himself.[275] Whichever the case, the conclusion, that the fact that the emperor is even thought to possess a *numen* can be seen as a minimally counter-intuitive, still stands.

This brings us to the last manner of worship, the cult for the emperors *genius*, which stands almost opposite to the emperors *numen*. *Genius* is something which all living men possess, as well as the gods.[276] It could possibly be used synonymously with *numen*, although scholars do not agree on this interpretation.[277] Yet the *genius* is something which should be seen as separate from a man, it is his personal god under whose *tutela* he or she lives. This *genius* was seen as a divinity in ancient times and worshipped alongside the other gods of the Roman pantheon.[278] The *genius* of an emperor was a divinity in his own right and not a divine property of the emperor. Therefore technically it falls outside of the definition of ruler cult, for although the *genius* was intrinsically connected to the emperor, it nonetheless was a separate being. That is not to say that this theological difference was felt by everyone, in fact, chances are it was not. However, this difference cannot be observed in the sources, although there has been speculation that the emperors *genius* was sometimes seen synonymous with his *numen*, as discussed above. All in all, this is a clear example of the troubles of

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relatively short step to ascribing it to living individuals. D. Fishwick, 'Genius and Numen', *The Harvard Theological Review 62.3* (1969) 356-367, 361-362.

[272] We shall observe the exact costliness of these rituals below when discussing the fifth point of the Standard Model.

[273] Fishwick, 'Numen Augustum', 247.

[274] M. Beard, J. North and S. Price ed., *Religions of Rome. Vol. I: A History* (Cambridge 1998), 207.

[275] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 245.

[276] Ibidem, 7.

[277] D. Fishwick argues for the separate existence of the two, yet that they were on occasion used synonymously. Fishwick, 'Genius and Numen', 356-357. While I. Gradel argues, not entirely convincingly, that the interpretation is based on a misreading of the sources. Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 236-238.

[278] Fishwick, 'Genius and Numen', 360-361.

combining CSR with the ancient source material. For what we wish to see might not be there or only there through speculation, which would bring us no further than our theories in the first chapter. In sum, we can clearly identify certain minimally counter-intuitive aspects and powers in the ancient source material that the emperor was thought to possess. However, there continue to be problems with the application of the Standard Model, mostly because of the assimilation problem which we saw in the Hellenistic period as well and with the added difficulty that the sources are not all unambiguous. This is not just a matter of interpretation, but also because of the influence of culture.

There is one final aspect of these points of the Standard Model which we have yet to address, that is opposition and disbelieve. There is ample evidence of this for the Roman ruler cult stemming mostly from the elite layers of the empire, although this might simply be a consequence of what sources are preserved. It has led some to conclude that there was no cult in Italy and Rome and although this might be true for public worship, private worship was most likely widespread as our sources attest.[279] The source of this believe is a passage in Cassius Dio:

> "He [Caesar Augustus] commanded that the Romans resident in these cities should par honour to these two divinities [Roma and Caesar]; but he permitted the aliens, whom he styled Hellenes, to consecrate precincts to himself, the Asians to have theirs in Pergamum, the Bithynians theirs in Nicomedia. This practice, beginning under him, had been continued under other emperors, not only in the case of the Hellenic nations but also in that of all the others, in so far as they are subject to the Romans. For in the capital itself and in the rest of Italy no emperor, however worthy of renown he has been, has dared to do this; still, even there various divine honours are bestowed after their death upon such emperors as have ruled uprightly, and, in fact, shrines are built to them." [280]

The text seems quite clear on the matter and has been interpreted that no worship was allowed to the living emperor in Italy and Rome. However, archaeological and epigraphical evidence speaks against this and shows that there was most certainly a functioning cult for the emperor, which constituted worship, temples and priests.[281] I. Gradel has, I believe, solved this dichotomy rather neatly. He argues that Dio's outlook is that of the typical Roman historian (although he is himself Greek), he is only concerned with state matters and therefore ignores the private sphere from which

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[279] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 73-75.
[280] Dio. 51.20. 7-8.
[281] Gradel gives a rather extensive overview if the material, although there is more evidence available. Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 77-108. For instance another overview of Augustan temples from around the empire can be found in the excellent work of H. Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti. Eine Studie zu den Templen des ersten römischen Kaisers* (Rome 1985).

our other evidence comes.[282] Yet this is not the most expressive material for non-believers, as there is even evidence of emperors themselves being sceptical of their own divinity.[283] Philosophers and other elite writers created strict divisions in status between the gods and men and therefore which honours were appropriate for which category. Any violation of these categories would bring ire and scorn form the elite and sometimes even murder.[284] Cultural influences and most importantly dogma spark this resistance to the ruler cult. The phenomenon is contradictory to their *weltanschauung* and this triggers their non-believe. However, their experience of the world is often different, in the world outside of writing there is a certain flexibility when it comes to belief.[285] K. Hopkins formulates it thus:

> "There was a wide spectrum of values, beliefs and attitudes. At a rational level, several of them were probably incompatible, yet in fact held by the same people simultaneously." [286]

D. Fishwick gives several examples of these strange dedication by elites, yet he concludes that if we observe these things, we must not take them literally. For instance, when the prefect of Egypt refers to Claudius as 'our god Caesar', it is a statement meant for those reading it, not a reflection of his own opinion.[287] I firmly disagree with this assessment and even more with his conclusion that if Jews or Christians chose martyrdom rather than give cult to the emperor, that this was a theological error on their part.[288] We have already clearly seen above, that a clear difference was felt in offering to someone or on behalf of someone, with respect to the Jews, and that this difference excluded one group from the general population. This cannot have been the case if it was simply a misinterpretation of the Jews of theology, they were called out on this difference by the other inhabitants of Alexandria.

All in all, there were certainly disbelievers for the Roman ruler cult and some (perhaps even most) were part of the elite in the Roman Empire. This certainly provides us with an interesting view in how a cognitive basis can be combined with cultural influences. For instance seen in the flexibility of belief in the face of a contradicting worldview. However, this combination does provide us, as it

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[282] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 74-75 and 110-112.

[283] Many refusing worship when it was offered to them, for instance Augustus (Suet. *Aug.*, 51-3.). And sometimes even ridiculing it (Suet. *Ves.* 23.).

[284] For Suetonius opinion of divine honors during life; D. Wardle, 'Suetonius on Augustus as God and Man', *Classical Quarterly 62.1* (2012) 307-326, 307-312. For the connection of state cult for the living emperor and death; Gradel, 'Roman apotheosis', 191.

[285] Crucially this also finds support in CSR, albeit outside of the Standard Model. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 101-103 and 308-327.

[286] K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge 1978), 216.

[287] Fishwick, 'Genius and Numen', 365. Based on the text in E.M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge 1967), 99 (number 370).

[288] Fishwick, 'Genius and Numen', 366.

did above, with some questions which the Standard Model cannot easily solve, or at the very least, not yet. The issues created by assimilation, which we also saw in the Hellenistic period and the added difficulty that the sources are not all unambiguous concerning how the emperor was worshipped. Let us continue with the overview of the Standard Model.

The fourth point, if one recalls, holds that morality is strongly connected to the supernatural, supernatural concepts are interested in all our actions and possess punitive powers to enforce morality. This can be observed in the Roman material. It would not surprise anyone that oaths similar to the Hellenistic ones above, were sworn in name of the Emperor. This seems to be a practice that was continued in Roman Egypt and is encountered on several occasions in papyrus texts from Egypt.[289] The Romans themselves also had a tradition of swearing oaths in the name of gods, for instance Jupiter, but never to a living human. According to De Jong oaths, both public and private in nature, were in the Imperial period sworn to the divine facets of the emperor, the problematic aspects of *numen* and *genius*.[290] There are several examples of these oaths to be named, which are sworn by the emperor as god and in name of several different emperors. The most prominent one is Augustus, who is regularly sworn by and is even, on occasion named a god in these oaths as are other Julio-Claudian emperors.[291] Yet, as with the Hellenistic oaths, it remains unclear whether the involvement of the rulers stem from their divine nature or just from their place as king.[292] For example, this example is given by De Jong, who translates the oath as:

"I swear by Caesar Imperator, son of a god, Zeus Eleutherios Augustus."[293]

De Jong indicates that, in this case, it is unclear whether Augustus is assimilated with Zeus or that we should see them both separately as guarantors of the oath. Although it is an interesting case there is no mention of anything supernatural or counter-intuitive in the consequences for not upholding the oath.[294] De Jong further identifies two more phases in which these oaths develop, when the imperial *Tyche* is introduced and when this variant takes over completely.[295] The *Tyche* was probably the

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[289] J. de Jong, 'Celebrating Superman: Divine Honors for Roman Emperors In Greek Papyri From Egypt', in: P.P. Iossif, A.S. Chankowski and C.C. Lorber ed., *More than Men, Less Than Gods. Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship* (Leuven 2011) 619-647, 633.
[290] De Jong, 'Celebrating Superman', 634.
[291] For instance *BGU* XVI 2590, *P.Vindob. Sal.* 3 (for Tiberius) and *P.Vindob. Tandem* 10 (for Claudius).
[292] Although De Jong would certainly argue for this, even though the consequences of breaking the oath are unknown. The presence of the gods in the formula and that of *Tyche* would suggest that it had sacral implications. J. De Jong, *Emperors in Egypt. The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power in Greek Papyrus Texts from Egypt, AD 193-284* (Nijmegen 2006), 72.
[293] *BGU XVI* 2591, Translation used: De Jong, 'Celebrating Superman', 635.
[294] De Jong, 'Celebrating Superman', 637.
[295] Ibidem, 635-636.

Greek translation of the *genius* of the emperor. Therefore her conclusion that oaths were sworn to the *numen* and the *genius* is based on this later evidence, from around the reign of Vespasian.

These oaths provide us with no more evidence then the Hellenistic versions, however, there is more material linking the emperor to morality and its safeguarding, although this is equally dubious in nature. There is, again according to De Jong, a connection between the temples of the imperial cult and the settling of judicial matters.[296] That is, as well as being the centre of the cultic rituals for the emperor in Egypt, it had another purpose as heart of legal affairs of that particular region. However, additionally to this role in legal matters it was also a centre of administration in the immediate area. Although it could be that the emperor, in his role as god, presided over both legal and administrative matters in Egypt, it seems somewhat unlikely. The matter could be put to rest if we could establish whether the priests of the imperial cult were also responsible for the administrative tasks of the temple. Unfortunately for the regional cults in Egypt, we are poorly informed about the tasks of the priest, as we are equally ill-informed about priesthoods in the remainder of the empire.[297] The 'high priest of Alexandria and the whole of Egypt' who is frequently attested in the sources as a Roman of equestrian rank, was most likely responsible for the administration of all the temples in Egypt, including the imperial temples.[298] However, nowhere is he connected with the legal matters settled in the temples. The regional priesthoods can also not be connected to the justice system. The temples were most likely the most prominent, visible and widespread of Roman power and therefore the focus point of state affairs. It is unclear, and in my opinion unlikely, that the presence of a justice system in the temples was brought on by a connection with the deified ruler.[299] If we take this together with the ambiguous evidence in support of the Standard Model, makes this a point which is best left untouched until perhaps more evidence comes to light.

The fifth point, on rituals for the supernatural, is quite visible in the source material as it was above and yields some interesting evidence. If the model holds we shall expect to see people performing the same rituals and expecting the same kind of results as those for the gods. We have

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[296] J. de Jong, 'Egyptian Papyri and 'Divinity' of the Roman Emperor', in: L. de Blois, P. Funke and J. Hahn ed., *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, Ritual and Religious Life in the Roman Empire* (Leiden 2006) 239-252, 244.

[297] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 85. Pfeiffer, 'The Imperial Cult in Egypt', 91.

[298] Pfeiffer, 'The Imperial Cult in Egypt', 91-94.

[299] One might have noticed, the heavy preference to evidence from Roman Egypt, this is mostly because Egypt offers the best evidence as it did in the Hellenistic Period. I have been challenged to locate many similar sources in other provinces or in Italy. There might have been several in Asia Minor, with similar function to those in Egypt, although here the emperor (we possess mostly Augustan evidence) was worshipped together with Roma. This reportedly to satisfy the request of the Eastern provinces to worship Augustus, however, with the murder of Caesar because he demanded more honors then he was due, Augustus would have been more cautious accepting this without scruples. He therefore demanded that the cult be given to him and to the goddess Roma, who was the personification of Rome, or more broadly the Roman state. Suet. *Aug*. 52.

already discussed several sources, when treating the second and third point of the Standard Model, which outline 'why' emperors were worshipped, but these also outline the form that the worship should take.[300] The inscription from Narbo, Gaul, prescribes the dates which are relevant for the cult and more importantly what action should be taken on that date and by whom.

> "The people of (Gallia) Narbonensis have set up an altar in the forum at Narbo, at which, every year on the 9th day before the Kalends of October, on which day the happiness of this era proclaimed him as the ruler to the whole world, three Roman Knights from the people and three freedmen shall each sacrifice an animal and they shall provide incense and wine, at their own expense […] on the 8th day before the Kalends of October, they shall also provide incense and wine." [301]

The inscription mentions more dates then these, however these all include the same kinds of sacrifice by the same people. The offering of an animal, incense and wine is similar to the cult of the gods, although the animal which was offered could differ. It is also interesting to note that the sacrifice needed to be performed by the appropriate agents, in this case three Roman knights and three freedmen. Supposedly the ritual would otherwise be less effective or perhaps even invalid. Although there is no mention of what the intended outcome of this ritual should be, yet it would not be a stretch to see its source in the *do ut des*-principle as we did above. The social interaction with the living emperor is based on the same basic assumptions as for those with the gods.[302] Further evidence for rituals performed for the emperor can be found in multiple calendars that have been preserved, these mark certain prominent events in the lives of the emperors and also record days on which sacrifices would be made to the emperor and the gods that support him.[303] They also recorded many other non-imperial festivals, which only makes the case for the Standard Model stronger. The fact that there was felt to be no difference between a festival for one of the traditional gods and festival in honour of the emperor's birthday is significant. As we observed above concerning the emperors numen this is a telling sign as to the attitudes of the Romans towards their ruler. An example of such an calendar is the *Feriale Cumanum*, which concerns the civic cult of Augustus in Cumae, and records numerous rites (*supplicationes*) to both the traditional gods and Augustus.[304] D.

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[300] Rituals were already attested before the start of the Roman Empire for Julius Caesar, who was the problematic first recipient of many of these honors. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus*, 29-30.

[301] ILS 112. Translation from: M. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus. Precedents, Consequences, Implications* (Cambridge 2013), 171.

[302] One will recall the evidence for this in CSR.

[303] Lozano, 'The Creation of Imperial Gods', 506-507.

[304] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 96-97.

Fishwick argues that the emperors could not have been of the same status of the gods, because we have no record of prayers to the emperor.

> "Yet we have no record that anyone ever said his prayers to the emperor to recover, say, from illness, or called on him in the moment of peril, and until we do, it would be a mistake to think that Augustus or his successors were ever accorded outright divine veneration." [305]

Aside from the fact that focusing on prayers as a criterion for divinity is quite a Judeo-Christian way of looking at things, as there were in fact other manners of cultic veneration that did take place. There is also the issue that in the ancient pantheon there was a 'division of labour' if you will. Different gods had different powers and therefore different responsibilities when it came to the needs of the Roman people. One did not pray to Mars for a safe journey at sea, or to Jupiter for a successful love-life. It is therefore logical that we would not find any prayers to the emperor asking him for health and prayers in a moment of peril are hardly attested in the sources to begin with.[306] I therefore believe that it would be wrong to assume that the emperors were not viewed as gods simply because we would not possess any prayers to them. Especially given the fact that other rituals and the locations for these rituals, as we shall observe below, was identical to those of the gods.

As for the locations of this rituals, they were often performed on altars and temples, especially dedicated to the emperor.[307] The most interesting thing to note about these temples is that they were virtually indistinguishable from the temples of the traditional gods.[308] Hänlein-Schäfer has shown in her overview of Augustan temples that standard architectural models were followed in the design of the temples, similar to those of the gods.[309] Without further inscriptional or iconographic evidence on such monuments, they would be indistinguishable from other temples to the traditional gods.[310] These temples clearly support the statement that the Roman ruler cult was similar to the cult of the gods and therefore in full support of the fifth point of the Standard Model.

In sum, we have observed, as we did above that the emperor was given the same cultic reverence of the gods. Although it is sometimes not entirely clear what those offering hoped to

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[305] Fishwick, 'Genius and Numen', 365.

[306] Lozano mentions several examples of worship to ensure the health of the emperor, to guaranty that the Roman nation would continue to flourish (for instance, *ILS* 108). Lozano, 'The Creation of Imperial Gods', 507-508. In this case one could argue that the emperor ensured stability as the personification of the Roman empire. However, I believe that it is somewhat unclear if these prayers were addressed to the emperor, or were merely 'on behalf of' the emperor.

[307] Koortbojian gives an overview of several altars erected for the emperors, but we shall mostly return to these below when assessing coalitional affiliation. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus*, 160-170.

[308] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 81.

[309] Although not all were designed in the Roman tradition, some could be Greek in their architecture. Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 49-68.

[310] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 81.

achieve, that is what natural consequence they hoped to elicit by non-natural means. While we might not possess any prayers to the divine living emperor, this should not mean that he was any different from the gods as he might simply have other tasks. The fact that the emperor is no different from the traditional gods in his cultic reverence, is further underlined by the fact that his temples are indistinguishable from those of the other gods. If not for the inscriptional or iconographic evidence, they can be mistaken for any other temple to any other Roman deity. It should be clear that this is merely a cursory overview of rituals performed to the emperor, it nonetheless serves to illustrate the applicability of the Standard Model in this respect.[311] Let us now turn to the final point of the Standard Model.

The seventh point of the Standard Model holds that religious concepts are ideally suited for coalitional affiliation. We have numerous examples of costly and hard to fake signals of commitment to the divine, living emperor. I believe the most striking example is a contest which was instituted by the Asian League, which would grant a crown to the man who could come up with the best proposal to adequately honour Augustus.[312] The winning proposal came from the proconsul of Asia, Paulus Fabius Maximus and was met with much enthusiasm. Part of his proposal is lost, but the outline and reasons of his proposal have been preserved.

"[It is difficult to know whether?] of the most divine Caesar is a matter of greater pleasure or greater benefit. We could justly consider that day to be equal to the beginning of all things. […] Since on no (other) day could each one receive a starting point more beneficial for corporate and personal improvement than the day which has been beneficial to all;
And since it happens that all the cities of Asia have the same date for entrance into local office, which is an arrangement that has clearly been formed according to some divine counsel in order that it might be the starting point of honors to Augustus;
And since it is difficult to give thanks to such benefactions as his unless we devise some new manner of reciprocation for each of them;
And since people could celebrate more gladly the birthday common to all because some personal pleasure has been brought to them through (his) rule;
Therefore, it seems to me that the birthday of the most divine Caesar be the one, uniform New Year's day for all the polities. On that day all will take up their local offices, that is, on

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[311] Other examples of rituals performed for the emperor can be seen in the Arval Acta, which although incomplete, provides a good overview of the cultic veneration for various emperors. Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 192-193. Sometimes there is much discussion on which rites were actually performed for a certain emperor, especially if this emperor was latter deemed to be a 'bad' one. Gradel gives an overview of the cult of Caligula and the corresponding discussion on the matter. Ibidem, 149-159.
[312] Lozano, 'The Creation of Imperial Gods', 475-476.

the ninth day before the Kalends of October, in order that he might be honored far beyond any ceremonies performed for him and that he might rather be distinguished by all, which I consider the greatest service rendered by the province. A decree of the koinon of Asia should be written encompassing all his virtues, so that the action devised by us for the honour of Augustus should endure forever. I will command that the decree, engraved on a stele, be set up in the temple, having arranged for the edict to be written in both languages." [313]

While it, interestingly, reconfirms the reasons for worshipping Augustus as a god, that is as a saviour and stabilizer of the world and beneficent ruler, it also gives us insight into expression of loyalty. A contest of this sort must have been extremely public and on the minds of many people. Citizens of the Asiatic province could show their loyalty to Augustus by entering their idea into the contest. This show of loyalty was also strongly supported by the members of the Asian League who organized it. It is also quite likely that they, or the winning proconsul would have send word to Augustus about the contest, further showing their loyalty. The crown awarded to the winner and the fact that people would go through the trouble of organizing and participating in the contest all show costly and hard-to-fake signals of commitment.

As with the Hellenistic rulers we also possess many structures that people have dedicated to the living ruler to honour him and show commitment. These offerings always emerged on the initiative of individuals, acting on their own behalf or on behalf of *collegia* or as public representatives.[314] An example of this is a monuments set up at Corduba and Herculaneum, which bear the text:

"Sacred to Augustus. Aulus Lucius Proculus and Aulus Lucius Julianus, sons of Aulus, of the Menia tribe, to mark [this] dedication, [made] at their own expense, gave a banquet for the town councilors and the Augustales." [315]

In this case not only is the monument a declaration of coalition and costly sacrifice to the divine emperor, it also records a similar act: the banquet given at their own expense to the town councillors and the imperial priests. There are of course far more private dedications to be mentioned in this

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[313] *OGIS* 458, lines 3-30. Translation from: S.J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John. Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford 2001).
[314] Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus*, 159.
[315] Corduba: *CIL* II 2197. Herculaneum: *AE* 1979, 169. Translation from: M. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus. Precedents, Consequences, Implications* (Cambridge 2013).

category, however this is beyond the scope of this research.[316] What is important to note that the dedicators of these monuments were, unlike in Hellenistic times, not part of the army, although they might be part of the imperial administration. There is also evidence for extensive monuments for the cult of the emperors in Puteoli, where an astounding imperial presence can be seen in the forum. There were two altars, who were both connected with two statue galleries (supposedly with portraits of the imperial family) and a *chalcidicum Caesonianum* and a *chalcidicum Octavianum*.[317] These monuments were erected by one of two noble families in Puteoli and this has led I. Gradel to conclude that they were 'virtually' competing with each other in erecting monuments to the emperor.[318] They were showing of, not only their wealth, but also their loyalty to their ruler.

Loyalty to the emperor was further expressed in an oath of fidelity sworn to the Caesars every year on the third of January and other significant days (birthdays and ascensions).[319] This oath is known from several sources, including the letters of Pliny the Younger, who reports to emperor Trajan that:

> "We have celebrated, Sir (with those sentiments of joy your virtues so justly merit), the day of your accession to the empire, which was also its preservation, imploring the gods to preserve you in health and prosperity; for upon your welfare the security and repose of the world depends. I renewed at the same time the oath of allegiance at the head of the army, which repeated it after me in the usual form, the people of the province zealously concurring in the same oath." [320]

The emperor responds with:

> "Your letter, my dearest Secundus, was extremely acceptable, as it informed me of the zeal and affection with which you, together with the army and the provincials, solemnised the day of my accession to the empire." [321]

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[316] Koortbojian gives a good overview of several of these dedications. Koortbojian, *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus*, 160-170.

[317] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 84.

[318] Ibidem, 84.

[319] Lozano, 'The Creation of Imperial Gods', 189.

[320] Plin. *Ep.* 60. Translation from: W. Melmoth (translator), in: F.C.T. Bosanquet ed., *Letters of Pliny* (Gutenberg project 2001).

[321] Plin. *Ep.* 61. Translation from: W. Melmoth (translator), in: F.C.T. Bosanquet ed., *Letters of Pliny* (Gutenberg project 2001).

He clearly supports this act of loyalty to his person, it would be strange if he did not after all. However, so far the oath looks like it has little to do with the ruler cult and is simply a declaration of loyalty to a ruler. Yet, when seen in context it becomes clear that it is certainly connected to the divine ruler. The pledge was usually accompanied by festivities and rituals to mark other honours in the imperial worship.[322] The pressure of the environment to participate in such events would most likely be large and any non-participants and non-believers would immediately stand out. We had already mentioned the Roman Jews when dealing with the Hellenistic non-believers above, but it is an example worth repeating in this context. Another group which did not participate in the ruler cult for the Roman emperor were, of course, the Christians. They were also placed outside of society due to their non-conformant behaviour and general lack of signals of commitment, not only in respect to the divinity of the ruler.[323] The Roman evidence is therefore fully in support of this final point in the Standard Model. We can observe clear and costly signals of commitment from the citizens of the Roman Empire and we can see a transparent difference between believers and non-believers and consequences that follow from this differentiation.

Of course, as one might suspect from the length of this section, the mentioned evidence is incomplete. I have tried to give a sufficient overview and to address material both in support and against the Standard Model of CSR to assess its strength. Although this is by no means every argument which can be raised and there is certainly far more work to be done. Yet, for now, let us examine what we can conclude from this survey of the Roman material. Let us first remark that, while it is at times quite similar to the Hellenistic material, some clear differences come to light. We run into the same issues with the Standard Model when the assimilated form of the Roman emperor is examined, as this cannot be properly explained. Although there are certainly minimally counter-intuitive powers and attributes that are ascribed to the emperor, we are also left with numerous questions as to how exactly the emperor was worshipped and by what graces he was thought to do so. The different values and interpretations given to the concepts of *numen* and *genius*, already in antiquity, give rise to confusion in assessing the material now. All in all it provides an interesting case study for the influence of culture on a cognitive basis and would be interesting to explore further. When examining the connection of the ruler with morality, we are again left with similar problems as with the Hellenistic material. That is, it remains unclear whether the involvement of the rulers stem from their divine nature or just from their place as king. Although it is possible that the emperor, in his role as god, presided over both legal and administrative matters in Egypt, it seems somewhat unlikely. The possible connection between the imperial temples and their role in the criminal justice system does not seem brought on by a connection with the deified ruler. The cultic rituals performed

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[322] Lozano, 'The Creation of Imperial Gods', 490.
[323] D.S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180-395* (London 2004), 38.

for the emperor were the same as those performed for the gods and executed in similar temples. This fifth point of the Standard Model seems to be in complete accordance with the expectations expressed. This can also be said about the final point of the model about coalitional affiliation. There is ample evidence for public expressions of loyalty to the divine emperor, mostly accompanied by various costly sacrifices to further signify participation in the system and this is encouraged by the emperor. It is significant to note that these declarations do not all find their origin in the army, as with the Hellenistic declarations, but a great range of participants can be seen. There is also a clear differentiation between believers and non-believers and for some groups this could have extreme consequences.

This concludes our survey of the Standard Model in Hellenistic and Roman times and although it did not survive unscathed, there are certainly interesting conclusions which we can deduce.

Conclusion:

How does religion come to be? The origin of religion is a hotly debated issue, logically, as the answer has some far reaching consequences for, arguably, the entire world. This discussion has many camps and while not all are equally scientific, there are certain aspects which cannot be denied in these theories. Religion functions as a giver of information, even if the construction needed to sustain this is very extensive. Religion can provide comfort, it does alleviate fears even when it might partly cause them. Religion is also surely connected to the functioning of society and morality and this could play a part in how we acquire it. Finally, religion is present in this world because it lies within human nature that we are prone to believing in supernatural elements. With the exception of this final point, all others are functionalistic in their approach. They try to deduce why religion is present by examining which roles it fulfils, but while these all play a part, it cannot be their origin. The origin should lie in human nature and it is this school of thought which is central to the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR). CSR bases its theories on general laws that follow out of the manner our brain is structured. These laws should be applicable across culture and across time, given that the structure of the brain remains the same. So is this the case? Can we apply CSR to historical questions and learn more than what we know now, or create consensus where there has been none? This has been the question which has prompted this research.

We have tried to answer this question by taking a case study of a new religious phenomenon which came into prominence in the third century BC, the cult for the living ruler. A cult for living persons had, until then, been a sporadic occurrence, but with the advent of the Hellenistic kingdoms became institutionalized and increasingly widespread. The practice was also taken up by the Roman emperors, where new developments were taken up in the cult. Current theories on the matter have offered no consensus as to how this phenomenon came into existence and why it flourished as it did. There are those who see continuity with the period before the Hellenistic. According to them the phenomenon is therefore fairly easily explained as ancient men simply experienced divinity in a different manner then we do now. The perceived contradiction within and the newness of, the ruler cult are of our own creation. Contradicting them are those who believe that there certainly is discontinuity, but they offer different reasons why such a fundamental switch in thinking could have come to pass. These theories all raise more questions than they answer and are all in some manner inadequate. The fact that divinity is not as absolute as we, in our modern perception, often perceive it to be, is a recurrent theme for several scholars. This is a very easy way to explain the phenomenon by simply chalking it up to a different way of thinking, too far removed from us both temporal and culturally to understand. However, evidence suggests that the worshipping of a mortal individual as a god is felt to be something vastly different than anything they had practiced before and was sometimes found to be an undesirable action. On the other hand there are authors are scholars who

claim that the transition to worshipping living rulers as gods was a fundamental change indeed and employ copious amounts of source material to support this. However, their arguments are too limited in scale to be applicable across the board and deny the influence or accessibility of the religious sphere of ancient men, or even deny the existence of the divine ruler. Both are unfounded and needlessly limiting, although present interesting evidence for non-participants or alternative forms of the ruler cult.

The Cognitive Science of Religion offers a Standard Model of the most empirically supported thesis and it focusses on the most important factor in CSR, the belief in supernatural agents. This Standard Model is a seven point construct which was first described by Boyer and has since then served as the basis for many expositions on the matter. The model is not, yet, in its final from but its current points will allow for an overview in the primary material to assess its usefulness. The first point of this model is the fact that religious concepts are incredibly successful and inferentially rich by-products of normal brain functions. Meaning that there is no specific area in the brain that processes religious thoughts. Religious concepts are those that the brain finds most 'exciting'. That is, these kinds of thoughts trigger several parts of our brain, they are therefore more memorable and fit more easily into our expectation. The second point holds that we react strongly to minimally counter-intuitive inferences about the world. These concepts must violate our expectations only minimally to be both believable and transferable. Too many counter-intuitive violation and the concept quickly becomes unbelievable and therefore not very likely to be picked up by many people and across cultures. Although it is not entirely clear where the difference lies between minimally counter-intuitive concepts and simply counter-intuitive ones, it is an important point in the model. The third point of the Standard Model dictates that Agency Detection leads to suppositions about the presence of supernatural agents. This evolutionary trait that ascribes agency to events around us can be hyperactive and has a tendency to jump to conclusions about the presence of agencies. We then infer the presence of supernatural agents to ascribe responsibility of the unexplainable and find their human mentality behind these events. By inferring the presence of supernatural agents we ascribe them agency and therefore mentality as these beings are perceived to take an active part in our lives. The fourth point follows from this and holds that given the fact supernatural agents possess agency, we make assumptions as to their intentions for us. We perceive supernatural agents as having full access to strategic information, which is why they often possess some form of punitive power as they have a vested interest in morality. The fifth point is that religious rituals are constrained by agency assumptions. The goal of this social interaction with the supernatural (the ritual) is to bring about a natural consequence by non-natural means. There is often no logical connection between the action and its consequence and therefore the influence of a supernatural agent is inferred. The sixth consensus in the Standard Model says that religious ideas and concepts are connected to theories

about death and other existential implications that find their origin in non-religious sources and are therefore so widespread. The final point of the Standard Model says that religious concepts are ideally suited for coalitional affiliation, because they provide a clear set of markers that separate one social group from another and the whole group had a shared commitment to costly activities. Showing signals of religious commitment indicates that you are part of the cooperating group and provides status that matches the amount of sacrifice that has been made.

With the help of this Standard Model we could then deduce certain markers which must be seen in the sources from the Hellenistic and Roman material, for the model to hold true. Yet not all points are equally relevant for this research and some have been left out. The first point provides the cognitive basis for the theory and can impossibly be observed in the source material. However, the second and third find ample representation in the Hellenistic and Roman material. Based on the model we expect to find evidence that the ruler is expected, by some/most of his subjects to hold powers that transcend human capabilities. His acting and his being must be perceived as counter-intuitive in certain manners. In the Hellenistic and Roman material there is ample evidence for this, although for some it was not always the case that the rulers themselves were the source of these counter-intuitive powers. They could be assimilated with various other gods who would then be the source of their power and worship. This cannot be explained by the Standard Model. There are also additional difficulties in the Roman material as they themselves were not clear on whether the emperor was worshipped or which section of him and if these theological differences were thought to be equally experienced throughout the empire. However, given the nature of the sources and their contents seem to insinuate that the emperor was placed amongst the gods in his divine qualities (*numen*) and his worship.

If the fourth point of the Standard Model holds true, then we should expect to find the ruler, as a god, safeguarding morality and passing judgement. Not only as part of his kingly duties, but with a specific connection to the supernatural. While we see oaths in both Hellenistic and Roman times which were sworn to the divine ruler, it remains unclear whether this has anything to do with their divine judicial powers or simply their place as king. They are nowhere said to possess full access to strategic information. In Roman times there was a link with the imperial temples and judicial matters, which were settled there, but I believe that this was rather due to the fact that the temples were the most prominent, visible and widespread of Roman power and therefore the focus point of state affairs.

For the fifth point we should expect to see expectations for the natural outcome of rituals by non-natural means. We should also expect that the persons executing the ritual and the locations would not differ from those for the cult of the gods. We see both in Hellenistic and Roman times that the same social interaction system for the gods underlies the rituals for the divine ruler, the *do ut*

des-principle. It was also crucial for the rituals to be performed by the right actors and these were usually prescribed beforehand. Both priests and other individuals were needed in the cult for the living ruler, which differed not from the cult for the other gods. This is further underlined by the fact that the emperor's temples are indistinguishable from those of the other gods. This point finds full support in the source material.

The sixth point of the Standard Model falls outside the scope of our research as it does not conform to the pre-established definition for the ruler cult as a Hellenistic or Roman ruler who is viewed as a god and consequently receives some manner of cultic honouring during his lifetime. The seventh point however is crucial for this research. We should expect to see a clear differentiation between believers and non-believers in the ruler cult and also some consequences connected to this fact. We would also expect some form of endorsement for the ruler cult from the rulers themselves. We can observe many costly sacrifices made by inhabitants of the Hellenistic and Roman nations, which clearly signify their loyalty to the king or emperor we can also observe the ruler supporting these actions, as we would expect. In the Hellenistic period we mostly observe private dedications set up by soldiers and garrisons, while in the Roman era we observe all manner of individuals, acting on their own behalf or on behalf of *collegia* or as public representatives, setting up costly dedications to signal their loyalty. We can also see a clear differentiation between believers and non-believers and consequences for this. The clearest example of this are the Jewish and Christian people, who would not participate in the ruler cults and would suffer persecution and exclusion from society, at least partly, based on this fact.

All in all we can clearly observe that some points of the Standard Model find extensive representation in the ancient source material, while others cannot be found at all or what is found, can be unexplainable. What does this mean for our main question, how useful are cognitive theories in looking at historical events? And do they enhance our understanding in matters where, up till now, there has been no consensus? We must remember that CSR can provide and explain a cognitive basis for religious concepts, but it cannot account for their specific expression in different cultural contexts. It can suggest the templates or forms religion can take, but why and how they become widespread and successful remains a matter of cultural circumstances. The Standard Model has limited success in recognizing and therefore explaining the religious phenomenon of the ruler cult for the living king or emperor. This can mean one of two things, either the model is incomplete or our sources are of such a nature that they are inadequate. We can adept the model, however, the sources are what they are and can therefore not be at fault. Although they may present us with troubles in interpreting them, as well as being incomplete and perhaps provide a limited perspective.

While it is undeniable that the model is not in its final form and should be expanded, with both more detail and more empirical evidence, it also lacks explaining power. Elements such as the

assimilated ruler, who begets his cult solely by his association with another deity, cannot be properly explained in the current model. On the other hand, we must recognize that the model can only provide us with very broad perimeters in which to put our evidence and we must not expect everything to be explainable through it. The fact that the Romans worshipped their divine emperor in several different manners, which are not at all clear categories or even followed unanimously, should be recognized as a cultural variation on the cognitive basis and not a refutation. There are obvious issues with the sources as well, we are limited to (sometimes) only a hand full of source material and these usually offer only the view of the elite on a matter.

It is my believe that the Standard Model of CSR certainly has a lot of potential, but must first be supported in all its facets by material from Hellenistic and Roman times, before we would be justified in using it as a tool for explanation in several religious phenomena. By further researching religious phenomena, other than the ruler cult, in these eras we can hope to find more support for the Standard Model. If all facets of the Standard Model can be located within the source material, we could use its contents to enlighten certain phenomena for which we lack the materials. Yet only on the level of the cognitive basis and not its specific form which it takes under the influence of that specific culture. Or if we cannot find the support, await a new model which perhaps is up to the challenge, for the underlying thought remains solid. If we can assess the general tendencies of the brain when dealing with supernatural phenomena, which is based on its structure, then whatever holds true now should hold true in other cultures and in other ages.

The current model, or the possibly adjusted model, would then also need further support from other cultures and throughout time, for the Greco-Roman culture bears some similarity to our own (even if the native aspects of the ruler cult do not). Also, as stated, the model would need more explanatory power for other phenomena and therefore on the modern end of the spectrum research would also need to continue, as I am sure it will. A final complicated possibility is that CSR and the Standard Model focus on religion in general and not the individual expressions of religions as a plural, such is the entire point of the model. However, it is in its individual expression that religion is influenced most by culture and will therefore show discrepancies or variations with the model. It could therefore be that the Standard Model can never be used as an explanatory model for such expressions. We should be aware of this possibility in further researching the possibilities of CSR and the Standard Model. For now, it is too early to apply the Standard Model of CSR to matters in Ancient History where there has been no consensus, but this was only one of the first forays into the combination of the two and signs so far are promising and beg further investigation.

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