

LUCIEN VAN BEEK, LUK HUITINK

Ancient Greek

Morphosyntactic Structures – Part 4: Mood and Modality



Universiteit
Leiden



Roadmap

- Mood and modality in Classical Greek
- The use of the moods in main clauses
- The use of the moods in subordinate clauses

The Moods of Classical Greek

- Indicative
- Subjunctive
- Optative
- Imperative (2nd/3rd p.)

Other Means of Expressing Modality

- Verbal adjectives in -τέος: κολαστέος ἐστί 'he is to be punished' also impersonal passive: κολακείαν [ACC.] φευκτέον [NOM.] 'flattery should be avoided'
- Verbal adjectives -τός: δίδαξον, εἰ διδακτόν (Soph. *Trach.* 671) 'teach me, if it may be taught'.
- Modal 'auxiliary' verbs: ἐθέλω 'wish, want', δύναμαι 'can', δεῖ 'it is necessary'
- Adverbs and particles: e.g. ἴσως 'maybe', που 'I think', δῆ 'evidently'(?); also e.g. εὖ οἶδ' ὅτι 'surely'
- Epistemic attitude verbs: e.g. νομίζω 'I believe', οἶμαι 'I think'

Factors influencing use and interpretation

- **Type of sentence** (declarative, interrogative, directive)
- Presence/absence of the **modal particle ἄν**
- Presence of a **negative** (οὐ, μή)
- **Person** of the verb (first, second, third)
- **Tense/aspect** of the verb

Subjunctive

- Hortatory: 1st p. (plur.), neg. μή
ἀλλ' ἴωμεν ἐς δόμους (Eur. *El.* 787)
But let us go into the palace
- Deliberative: 1st p. in questions, neg. μή
οἴμοι, τί δράσω; (Eur. *Med.* 1271)
Woe, what should I do?
- Prohibitive: 2nd (/3rd) p. aorist subjunctive with μή
μή οὖν προδότηι γένησθε (Thuc. 3.40.7)
Do not, then, become traitors

Imperative

- 2nd/3rd p. directives (commands requests), neg. μή ποίει 'do', ποιείτω 'let him do'

	present	aorist
pos.	ποίει 'do/continue to do'	ποίησον 'do'
neg.	μή ποίει 'stop doing'	(μή ποιήσης) 'don't do'

Optative

- Cupitive: often with εἴθε, εἰ γάρ or ὥς, neg. μή
γένοιο πατρός εὐτυχέστερος (Soph. *Aj.* 550)
May you become more fortunate than your father
- Potential: with ἄν, in statements/questions, neg. οὐ
γνοίης δ' ἄν ὅτι τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει. (Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.21)
You might/could/may acknowledge that this is so

πρὸς βίαν δ' οὐκ ἄν λάβοις (Soph. *Phil.* 103)
You will never take him by force

‘Modal’ Indicative

- Unrealizable wishes: always with εἶθε or εἰ γάρ, neg. μή
εἰ γάρ τοσαύτην δύναμιν εἶχον. (Eur. *A/c.* 1072)
If only I had such power.
- Counterfactual statements: with ἄν, neg. οὐ
τότε δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἄν ἐκρίνετο ἐφ’ αὐτοῦ. (Dem. 18.224)
At that time, the matter would have been judged on its own merits.

Moods in Some Subordinate Clauses

Purpose Clauses with ὅπως, ἵνα, ὥς and Fear Clauses with μή:

- Subjunctive in primary sequence:

πορεύεσθε ἔμπροσθεν, ὅπως ... λανθάνωμεν (Xen. Cyr. 4.2.23)

You must march in front of us, in order that we may go undetected

- Optative in secondary sequence:

ἐπρεσβεύοντο ..., ὅπως σφίσιν ὅτι μεγίστη πρόφασις εἶη τοῦ πολεμεῖν. (Thuc. 1.126.1)

They sent messengers, in order to have as great an excuse for waging war as possible
(subj. ἦ also possible)

Moods in Some Subordinate Clauses

Temporal, Conditional and restrictive Relative Clauses

- Indicative

ἐπειδὴ δὲ Θησεὺς ... δημοκρατίαν ἐποίησεν ... , τὸν ... βασιλέα
οὐδὲν ἦπτον ὁ δῆμος ἤρεϊτο ἐκ προκρίτων. ([Dem.] 59.75)

And when Theseus had established a democracy, the people
nonetheless chose their king from a select few

Moods in Some Subordinate Clauses

- ‘Prospective’ subjunctive + ἄν:

ὁπότερος ἄν σφῶν ... με μᾶλλον εὖ ποιῆ, | τούτῳ παραδώσω ... τὰς ἡνίας.
(Ar. Eq. 1108–9)

Whichever one of you two treats me better, to him I will return the reins.

- ‘Indefinite’ subjunctive + ἄν:

ὅς ἄν δακρῦσαι μάλιστα ... ποιήσῃ πόλιν, οὗτος τὰ νικητήρια φέρει. (Pl. Leg. 800d)

Whoever best succeeds at making the city cry, that man (always) carries off the palm of victory.

Moods in Some Subordinate Clauses

- ‘Indefinite’/‘iterative’ optative in secondary sequence:

ὅκως γὰρ τειχήρεας ποιήσῃε, τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν χώματα χῶν πρὸς τὰ
τείχεα ἐπόρθεε. (Hdt. 1.162.2)

Whenever he had ensured that they were caught inside the wells, he would next dig moats around the walls and destroy the city.

Moods in Some Subordinate Clauses

In Conditional and restrictive Relative Clauses

- 'Potential' optative

εἰ μὲν τις τῶν τραγικῶν ποιητῶν ... ποιήσειεν ἐν τραγωδίᾳ τὸν Θερσίτην ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων στεφανούμενον, οὐδεὶς ἂν ὑμῶν ὑπομείνειεν. (Aeschin. 3.231)

If some tragic poet should portray Thersites in a tragedy being crowned by the Greeks, none of you would abide it.

- Counterfactual 'modal' indicative

εἰ τὸ καὶ τὸ ἐποίησεν ἄνθρωπος οὕτως, οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν. (Dem. 18.243)

If that man had done this or that, he would not have died.