CONJUNCTIONS IN CLASSICAL GREEK SYNTAX

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The semantic and syntactic role played by the presence or absence of a conjunction as clause connector in Greek has not yet been sufficiently treated in a scientific way that would show the underlying general rules from which generalizations may be made. In this paper an attempt will be made to lay a foundation for a more simplified description of inter-clause syntax in Classical Greek, based on the presence or absence of conjunctions. The lack of such a description must be blamed on the fact that Greek apparently has any verbal form after a conjunction, as is apparent in Kühner's description of conjunctions: 'Die Nebensätze ... haben ... besondere Kennzeichen, durch welche sie sich untereinander unterscheiden, nämlich die einleitenden Konjunktionen und die mit denselben verbundenen Konstruktionen.' As illustration he uses examples of ὁσστε plus infinitive to describe different meanings. Lightfoot, on the other hand, makes a clear distinction between conjunctional syntax and non-conjunctional syntax, however without working out all the implications. An understanding of conjunctional syntax and its alternative is also essential for solving the semantic problem around participles and infinitives, since the difference between the two is not essentially a semantic one, but a syntactic one with semantic implications. Specific attention will not be given to clauses subordinate to subordinate clauses, because the same rules apply to them.

With the term conjunction is meant what is called 'complementizers' in general linguistics, namely a word performing a syntactic and semantic function in connecting two clauses. This use should be distinguished from that of the 'Complementizer school', where different verbal forms are also considered as complementizers.

Based on the minimum number of syntactic differences, all Greek compound sentences fall within one of the following three categories:

1. Conjunctional syntax — When a second clause is linked to a main clause by means of a conjunction.

2. Non-conjunctional syntax — When a second clause is linked to a main clause without a conjunction.

3. Conflation syntax — When a second clause is linked to a main clause syntactically as if there is no conjunction, but, in violation of the distinction
between types 1 and 2, a conjunction is indeed added. Such conjunctions will be called 'pseudo-conjunctions'.

The distinction between type 1 (conjunctural syntax) and type 2 (non-conjunctural syntax) is so obvious, once realized, that it is almost embarrassing to give an academic description of the difference. Nevertheless it has useful implications for the understanding of conjunctions, as well as for the semantic and syntactic functions of the participle and infinitive.

**Type 1 Conjunctural Syntax**

When a second clause is linked to a main clause by a conjunction, the same basic syntactic rules apply to the second clause that apply to the main clause. This rule will be called 'recurrence'. Recurrence involves that the minimum of distinctive syntactic and semantic features to be found as common to all main clauses, are also to be found in second clauses introduced by conjunctions. Consequently, in recurrence syntax, the subject of a second clause is always nominative and the verb always finite. With finite is meant that the verb is in one of the four moods, namely Indicative, Subjunctive, Optative or Imperative. (Syntactically the imperative differs from the other moods in that it cannot be used after a subordinating conjunction.) A few examples will illustrate this point.

**Co-ordinate**

1: τι δ' αὐτή βιάζεται κοῦχαν ἀπαλάσση χθονός;
   (Eur. Med. 339)

'Why do you again force yourself onto me and do you not leave the land?'

Both verbs are finite and the subject, being part of the verb ending, is implied to be nominative (σύ). The conjunction is κατ', in crasis with the negative οὐχ.

**Subordinate**

2: ... ὅταν δ' ἐς εὖν ἡδυκημένη κυρή
   οὕτως ἔστιν ἄλλη φρήν μιαφρωνώτερα
   (Eur. Med. 265-6)

'... when she finds out that she has been wronged in her marriage, there isn't another mind more bloodthirsty (than a woman's).'

After the conjunction ὅταν the verb κυρή is finite, and the subject, if expressed, would be nominative.
There is, however, also a difference between the syntax of co-ordinate and subordinate conjunctions. Except in conflation constructions, all clauses after subordinating conjunctions show recurrence of main clause syntax, in other words the subject noun is nominative and the verb is in a finite mood. Co-ordinate conjunctions, on the other hand, cause 'equalization', that is, the syntax on both sides of the conjunction is the same. This can occur at any level, that is between main clauses or subordinate clauses, between any syntactic unit (clause, phrase, word), for instance between indicative verbs, infinitive verbs, participial verbs, etc, as in the following examples:

**Optative verbs linked**

3: ἀλλ’ εὐτυχοίης καὶ τύχοις ὄσων ἔραξ.
(Eur. Med. 688)
‘But may you prosper and find what you want.’

**Participles linked**

4: ...πῶς σε σέβιξω,
μηθ’ ὑπεράρας μηθ’ ὑποκάμψας καιρὸν χάριστος;
(Aesch. Ag. 785–87)
‘How am I to honour you without overdoing or falling short in my expression of admiration?’

A distinction ought therefore to be made between 'equalization', as caused by co-ordinating conjunctions, and recurrence of main clause syntax. Recurrence in the second of two co-ordinate clauses is actually an instance of equalization, while the syntax of the main clause itself equates it to recurrence. Conversely, recurrence does not necessarily imply equalization, as in:

5: ...ἀπαγγελλόντων ἡμῶν ὅτι μέλλει ... πορεύεσθαι ...
(Demosth. On the Crown 32.6–7)
‘...we having the chance to inform (you) that he plans ... to march ...

Although after a genitive absolute, ὅτι introduces main clause recurrence, but not equalization.

If recurrence takes place in a regular pattern after subordinating conjunctions, it is necessary to formulate a syntactic definition for subordinating conjunctions accordingly: All words that link a subordinate clause to a main clause syntactically in such a way that recurrence takes place, that is, that the subject of the subordinate clause is nominative and the verb
finite, should be considered as conjunctions. Even relative pronouns should be included, because in the clause introduced by a relative pronoun, the subject is always nominative and the verb always finite. As a matter of fact, Lindeman points out that conjunctions developed from *inter alia* demonstratives, which were not yet clearly distinguishable from relative pronouns in Homer.

The following words all fulfill the abovementioned syntactic requirements of a conjunction: ἐπεὶ, ἐπειδή, ἐπειδή τάχιστα, ὅτε, ὅταν, ἐξ οὗ, ἐπειδάν, ὦς, ἵνα, μή in fearing clauses, ὡστε, ὅτι, ὅκως, εἴ, ἔαν, καὶ ἔαν, πρῶς, ἐκ, εἰ in indirect questions, as well as the morpheme ὁ- in interrogative adverbs and interrogative pronouns in indirect questions, in relative pronouns, and in all conjunctions starting with ὁ. This list of conjunctions is obviously not complete — indeed it does not even contain the Homeric conjunctions, but merely shows how widespread the application of the same syntactical device may be.

Example of μή as a subordinating conjunction:

6: ἦμον δὲ καλέω Παῖάνα,
    μή τινας ἀντιπλόους Δαναίς...
    τεύξῃ ("Ἀρτέμις")...
    (Aesch. Ag. 146-49)

    ‘Iee, I call on the Healer, lest she (Artemis) cause adverse winds for the Danaoi...’

After μή the verb is finite (τεύξῃ) and the implied subject is "Ἀρτέμις, in the nominative.

By inflecting, the relative pronoun differs from the other conjunctions. But the initial ὁ- morpheme (as in e.g. ὅν οὗς) constitutes a conjunction. Since relative pronouns share the characteristics of both conjunctions and pronouns, their conjunctural features should perhaps be referred to as included conjunctions, as in:

7: τούτων λέξασα ὁ τί καὶ δυναστόν
    καὶ θέμις, ... πάλων ... γενοῦ
    τήςδε μερήμης...
    (Aesch. Ag. 97-99)

    ‘Telling (us) of these events what is possible and permissible, become a healer of this worry...’

Although governed by the participle λέξασα, the relative pronoun ὁ, as included conjunction, introduces recurrence. Since ὁ τί is the subject of

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the subordinate clause, it is nominative due to the recurrence, and as such agrees with the nominative adjectives δυνατόν and θέμις. The accepted rule about relative pronouns, namely that their case is determined in their own construction, relies on the fact that the relative pronoun as included conjunction, introduces a new clause with its own subject and verb.

Semantically conjunctions explicate the inter-clause relation, whereas in non-conjunctival syntax this explicit statement of the relation falls away. The next type of syntax is characterized by the absence of an overt statement of the inter-clause relation.

**Type 2 Non-Conjunctival Syntax**

When a second clause is linked to a main clause without a conjunction, recurrence does not take place. The subject of the second clause is not necessarily nominative, and the verb cannot be finite. Rather the syntactic relation of the subject and verb of the second clause to the main clause is indicated by case. The semantic relation is deduced from the context.

8: σὲ ... ἀνείπον τῆς ἡγίκ ἐξω περάν
(Eur. Med. 271-2)

'I told you to get out of this land'.

In this example the main verb is transitive and its lexical and syntactical valence determines both the case of the subordinate subject and the form of the subordinate verb.

The genitive absolute is the most common example of non-conjunctival syntax in an intransitive inter-clause relation:

9: νῦν δ' εὐτυχῆς γένοιτ' ἀπαλλαγή πόνον,
εὐαγγέλου φανέντος ὀρφανίου πυρὸς.
(Aesch. Ag. 20-21)

'... may there now come a prosperous relief from the toils, with the beacon fire appearing with good news in the darkness.'

A legitimate combination of the two types of syntax occurs when the subordinate clause starts off with a case-determined pronoun or noun, but a conjunction is inserted before the verb. The conjunction then ends the case-determination and recurrence takes over, as in:

10: ... μὴ παύση, ποτὲ
λέγουσ' 'Ἰάσον' ὡς κάκιστος ἐστ' ἀνήρ
(Eur. Med. 451-2)

'... do not stop saying of Jason that he is the worst of men...’
In non-conjunctural syntax, one may subdivide ‘infinite forms’ into those that are alternatives for conjunctural syntax and those that are not. The former may be called ‘reduction forms’, in the sense that they imply deleted conjuctions, but the term non-conjunction alternative is probably a better choice. The question of alternative syntax or not, can only be understood within the appropriate classification of subordinate syntactical constructions.

1. Logical relations

To this group belong causal, temporal, conditional, concessive, final and consecutive clauses. These names are derived from the semantic relations that exist between the governing and subordinate clauses. The conjunctions used are lexical explicators of these relations. Any lexical choice of verb may be used in either of the clauses.

2. The content group

To this group belong all expressions where either a conjunctural clause or an infinite clause constitutes the content of the main verb. Lightfoot objects to the fact that ‘prolative’ infinitives are distinguished from infinitives in indirect speech. It is indeed possible to classify prolatives with other ‘content’ infinitives, as Rijksbaron does in his excellent book. The whole range of main verbs within the semantic domains of ‘plan’, ‘desire’, ‘say’, ‘ask’, ‘command’, ‘tell’, ‘think’, ‘know’, ‘perceive’ have a semantic relation of ‘content’ with their subordinate clauses. This relation is lexically indicated by the main verbs, and not by conjunctions. Consequently, unlike in the logical relations group, there is a restricted number of lexically different verbs that may serve as such main verbs. After any of these verbs an infinitive may be used as a syntactical object clause. Semantically, such clauses convey ‘content’, because of the meanings of the main verbs. Subdivisions within the content group are not caused by different inter-clause relations, but by different semantic domains of the main verbs. Thus, for example, participial clauses dominate after verbs of knowing and perception, and δτι-clauses after verbs of saying. Although a few different conjunctions are used, they all share the notion of ‘content’. Thus δτι states only that content follows, but ei in indirect questions adds a notion about the veracity of the content as well.

Non-conjunctural syntax in the logical relations group and in co-ordination

The only use of a pure infinitive (i.e. not conflation infinitives) here is the final infinitive, which is an original dative infinitive with a case meaning of directedness.
11: κέλεται δὲ ἐ γαστήρ
μῆλων περίκειντα καὶ ἐς πυκνόν δόμον ἐλθεῖν
(OWN 6, 133-34)

'His belly urges him even to go into the fold and attack the sheep.'

ἐλθεῖν, as a final infinitive, is an alternative for an ὑφα/Ἰνο plus subjunctive construction.

Any conjunction construction in the logical group, as well as any co-ordinate sentence, can be replaced by a participial construction, as is evident from the following examples:

**Participle as alternative for an irrealis condition**

12: ... οὖ γὰρ ἂν ἦψατ' αὐτῶν παρόντων ἠμῶν...
(Demosth. On the Crown 30.8-9)

'...because he wouldn't have touched them if we were there...'

**Participle as alternative for a co-ordinate optative**

13: αἱ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοιόδε πόσις κεκλημένος εἶ
ἐνθάδε ναιετάων, καὶ οἱ ἂδοι αὐτόθι μὴς εν
(OWN 6, 244-45)

'If such a man could be called my husband, living here, and be pleased to remain here!'

ἐνθάδε ναιετάων is a participial alternative for a co-ordinate optative since it is one in a series of three wishes.

In example 7 above a participle acts as alternative for a co-ordinate imperative, which must be repeated here:

14: τοῦτων λέξασας' ὅτι καὶ δυνατὸν
καὶ θέμις, πατῶν ... γένοι
(Aesch. Ag. 97-99)

λέξασα is a participle for an imperative co-ordinate with γένοι: 'say as much as you can and be a healer...'

These participles obviously have the same truth value as the conjunctional syntax from which they are derived. Thus, participles of these types give no indication of truth value, either 'factual' or otherwise. Conjunctional syntax of both logical subordinate and co-ordinate clauses may, therefore, be replaced by participles as non-conjunctional alternatives. This point about the syntactic function of the participle is brought home even further...
by the fact that a participle can also be an alternative for a co-ordinate infinitive, while the opposite is not possible.

15: σέ ...

Μήδει', ἀνείπον τῇς νῆς ἔξω περαν
φυγάδα, λαβοῦσαν δισά σὺν σαυτή τέχνα
καὶ μή τι μέλλειν
(Eur. Med. 271–4)

‘You, Medea, I have told to leave this land as a fugitive, taking your two children with you, and not to stay around.’

This sentence is derived from a main verb of commanding (ἀνείπον) plus a deep-level series of three co-ordinate infinitives: περαν... + λαβείν... + μή μέλλειν. By changing the second co-ordinate infinitive to a participle, it becomes syntactically subordinate to the preceding infinitive, without any change in truth value.17

The question now arises: why does a participle have this ability, but not the infinitive? Firstly, the Greek infinitive is derived from an early nominal verb form which operated like a noun. In contrast, the participle is a nominal verb form that operates like an adjective. It is thus apparent that the adjective can qualify another verb in a noun form, but that a noun form verb cannot qualify an adjectival verb form. Furthermore, such examples serve as additional proof that participles are alternatives for any conjunctival syntax, while most infinitives are not.

**Infinite forms in the content group**

As explained above, infinitives in the content group are syntactic objects.18 This puts them in the accusative case. In the light of Fillmore’s Case Grammar,19 this author ascribes no semantic function to the accusative. It only indicates syntactically that a word or clause is an immediate constituent of the governing verb. Thus, infinitives in the content group do not have semantic case functions. Consequently they lack such own meaning as is necessary to make them alternatives for conjunctival syntax. In other words, whereas the inter-clause meaning of the final conjunction ἵνα can be substituted by the dative meaning of the final infinitive, accusative infinitives have no case meaning with which to substitute the inter-clause meaning of a conjunction. It may therefore be inferred that infinitives in indirect speech did not originate as non-conjunctival alternatives for ὅτι constructions, but that ὅτι and infinitive constructions developed independently of each other. Such a conclusion seems to be corroborated by the material which Moorhouse presents.20 In Homer ἔρχεται plus infinitive is
mostly used, while ἀγορεύω, ἐνέκνω and βάζω take only the ὅτι construction. It is, however, most likely that these distinctions became blurred and that the infinitive was later seen as a non-conjunctional alternative.

There is quite a number of examples of Greek texts that suggest that there is no semantic difference between the infinitive and participle after verbs of saying, which would lead to the conclusion that participles are used in the same way as in the logical relation group, namely as real conjunctional alternatives for ὅτι constructions, thus merely duplicating the infinitives. Cf. the following three syntactic variations in the same section of text:

16: ἔξαγγέλλει, ὡς οἱ παῖς γέγονε
   (Hdt. 6, 63)
   ‘... he announces that a son has been born for him...’

17: ὅτε οἱ ἔξαγγειλε ὁ οἰκέτης παῖδα γεγονέναι
   (Hdt. 6, 65)
   ‘... when the butler announced to him that a son had been born...’

18: ὅτε αὐτῶ σὺ ἡγεῖλθης γεγενηµένος
   (Hdt. 6, 69)
   ‘... when it was announced to him that you had been born...’

But, on the other hand, after verbs of knowing and perception, which by virtue of their lexical meaning imply a factual truth value of the content, participles are used more generally than the infinitive. This indicates a possibility that, semantically, participles might function differently in the content group than in the logical relations and co-ordinate group, because of the grammatical role played by main verbs in the content group. If we take into account that no grammaticalized distinctions based on the main verbs are made within the logical relations group, and that all subdivisions within the content group are based on the meanings of the main verbs, it might be that due to the duplication of infinite forms, a semantic distinction between the infinitive and participle could have developed. Since the infinitive after verbs of ‘planning’, ‘desiring’, etc. refer to hypothetical events, the participle would then have to assume the role of factual expression.

**Type 3 Conflation Syntax**

It was said that in conjunctional syntax the conjunction causes syntactical recurrence and that it gives a preciser meaning of the semantic relation between the two clauses. Conjunctions before infinite forms can, therefore,
only have semantic functions. These pseudo-conjunctions are often optional, in other words, they are not always essential for the interpretation of the inter-clause relation. They rather function as modal modifiers, which means that they give information about the modality of the subordinate clause: whether the truth is vouched for, and from whose perspective. 24

In causal clauses ἀπό indicates that 'the onus of the reason is on the speaker/narrator', while with ὡς 'the onus is left on the subject of the main verb'. 25

19: αὐτὸν ἐνταῦθε ἔμενον ὡς τὸ ἀκρον κατέχοντες; οἱ δ' οὐ κατείχον... (Xen. Anabasis 4, 2,5)

'They remained at the post themselves, supposing that they held the height; in fact, they were not holding it'. 26

20: Κύρος δὲ ἀποφήσε ἐνείχετο ἄπε χρόνου... ἔγινομένου συχνοί... (Hdt. 1,190,2)

'Cyrus knew not what to do because a lot of time was passing...'

If neither of these pseudo-conjunctions are used, the participle is understood only as causal, in the same way as a conjunctional ὡς or ὅπως clause, where no suggestion about truth or perspective is made.

Likewise ὡς with a final participle presents the perspective of the subject of the main verb. 27 ὡςπερ in comparative clauses also presents the opinion of the subject of the main clause, but the speaker/narrator thinks that it is not true. In concessive clauses καθπερ presents a fact, while καὶ ἢ or ἢ καὶ plus conjunctional syntax presents a hypothesis.

Perhaps ἢ μὴ — 'except if' — also serves to present the perspective of the speaker in:

21: δοξείς γὰρ ἐν με τόνδε θωπεύσαι ποτε, ἢ μὴ τι κερδαίνουσαν ἢ τεχνημένην; (Eur. Med. 368–9)

'Do you think that I would ever have planned this, if I did not think that I would gain or achieve something?'

Without ἢ the two participles would have been part of what the main subject thinks.

In the case of conflation infinitives, the pseudo-conjunction is the same as the real conjunction and modal differences are presented by the verb form itself. Thus, in consecutive clauses ὡςπερ plus indicative presents a fact, while ὡςπερ plus infinitive makes no statement about the truth value.
Another type of conflation occurs when in indirect speech an expected finite verb after a conjunction is attracted into concord with a governing infinitive, as in:

22: λέγεται δὲ καὶ τάδε... ἐπειδὴ ἐκ τῆς Ὁ又好又快ς ταύτης λέναι..., ...

επιπευότα τὸν μέγαν...

(Hdt. 3,26,3)

'And this, too, is said: when they were leaving that Oasis..., a great south wind arose.'

To conclude: Greek syntax becomes considerably easier to describe and to learn if a distinction is made between pure conjunctional syntax which repeats main clause requirements, and non-conjunctional syntax. Where pseudo-conjunctions are used together with non-conjunctional forms, they supply semantic information about modality.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank the following colleagues for their valuable criticism: Prof. J.P. Louw, mr. M. Swart and mr. C.M. Jooste.
4. (My terminology.) The first application of Transformational Grammar to the Classics is the work of R. Lakoff, Abstract Syntax and Latin Complementation, Cambridge and London 1968, and Lightfoot (above, n.3). They work with 'complementizers', or 'complements', which for them means the subordinate clauses in the broad category of indirect speech.
5. F.A. Ponelis, Afrikaanse Sintaksis, Goodwood 1979, 429, mentions this syntactical distinction in Afrikaans, without, however, realizing its fundamental importance.
6. Consequently, the rule can be made that when καὶ does not cause equalization, it is epexegetical and means 'even', 'also'.
7. Kühner (above, n.2) 350, 'Zu den unterordnenden Konjunktionen gehört auch das Relativpronomen...'.
9. From the demonstrative τος according to Lindeman (above, n.8) 99.
10. This statement is not meant as an over-simplification. Several other factors also play a role, such as the mood of the subordinate verb. Preceding an indicative, ἐστὶ and ἦλθε in Homer mean 'when, where'; preceding the subjunctive they both mean 'so that'. Kühner (above, n.2) 350, summarizes it as follows: '...während die Partizipialen das Verhältnis nur unbestimmt andeuten, stellen die Nebensätze dasselbe auf das deutlichste dar, nicht allein durch die einleitende Konjunktion die besondere Art der Beziehung, in welcher der Nebensatz zu dem Hauptsatz steht, auf eine bestimmte Weise bezeichnet, sondern auch durch die Flexion des Prädikats das Zeit- und Modusverhältnis, in dem dasselbe zu der Anschauung des Redenden steht, ausgedrückt wird.'

12. These divisions correspond in principle with those made by A. Rijksbaron, *The Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek*, Amsterdam, 1984, chapters 3, 4. Indeed he also seems to consider 'content' as a common criterium for the one group.

13. (Above, n.3) 39: 'There is no logical or semantic basis for this distinction and it is ridiculous to specify two types of infinitives for βούλομαι ἄπειναι and βούλομαι σε ἄπειναι, simply because the former has co-referential subjects ... and the second subject is deleted.'

14. (Above n.3) chapter 4.

15. Whether 'result' is logically connected to 'purpose', or derives from the associative case, is not important, since both have case meaning. See Kühner, (above n.2) 2 ff. for examples. The closeness (or ambiguity) between purpose and result is demonstrated in '1, 143 οοδέ προφασάνει' ἦσσοθα — es war nicht hell zum Sehen' (p.3).

16. Mainly concerning indirect speech, a controversy has been raging for more than a century, as to the semantic nature of participles and infinitives. In this paper two possibilities will emerge as regards 'content' clauses.

17. For this phenomenon with prolative infinitives, cf. *Od*. 6, 110–11:

'Αλλ' ὅτε δὴ ὧρ' ἐμελλε πάλιν οἰκόνθε νέεθα
ζεύξασ' ἠμόνους...

Of the two original prolative infinitives after ἐμελλε, the one was changed to a participle (ζεύξασ').


21. Examples taken from Lightfoot, (above n.4) 46, who comments: 'There are many cases where precisely the same meaning can be conveyed by a number of different complement types — although the participle construction is always subject to the semantic constraint that the speaker presupposes the complement to be true.'

22. Cf. Rijksbaron, (above n.12) 101, who calls such infinitives dynamic, in distinction from declarative infinitives that are found inter alia after verbs of saying.

23. G. De Boel, 'Towards a Theory of the Meaning of Complementizers in Classical Attic', *Lingua* 52 (1980) 285–304, in reaction to Lightfoot, argues for paradigms of complementizers. The infinitive paradigm would be without 'existential presupposition', while all participles would have such a presupposition. More research is necessary to solve this problem.

24. For the concept of modality, see Palmer, (above n.11).

25. Rijksbaron, (above n.12) 123.

26. Examples 19 and 20 from Rijksbaron, (above n.12) 122.

27. Rijksbaron, (above n.12) 123.

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