

## LESSON 25

# Adjectival Clauses

### 25.1. Introduction

An adjectival clause performs the same function as an adjective in qualifying a noun or pronoun. In form, adjectival clauses are introduced by a relative adjective or pronoun and normally contain a finite verb (although this is sometimes only implied in the context). The construction of the adjectival clause may be any of the constructions possible in a Simple sentence or in the Main clause of a Complex sentence—Indicative, Imperative, Jussive (Subjunctive) or potential (ἄν with Indicative or Optative). In Greek (as in English), the antecedent noun or pronoun is not always expressed. Thus, οἱ, for example, may stand for ‘<those> who’.

The present Lesson is concerned primarily with the distinction in form and function between definite and indefinite adjectival clauses. From this point of view, three main categories of adjectival clause will be considered:

1. Definite clauses introduced by ὅς
2. Indefinite clauses introduced by ὅς
3. Indefinite clauses introduced by ὅστις.

### 25.2. Definite Clauses Introduced by ὅς

Definite clauses refer to a particular person or thing as antecedent. Provided that the adjectival clause represents a statement, its verb is in the Indicative Mood. The negative within such a clause is οὐ.

Ἦφαιστε, σοὶ δὲ χρὴ μέλειν ἐπιστολὰς  
ὅς σοι πάτηρ ἐφείτο ... (A.Pr. 3–4.)

*And the commands, **which** the father laid upon you,  
should be your concern, Hephaestus ...*

... νόμον δὲ ἔθεντο ἐν τῷ παρόντι, ὃς οὐπω πρότερον ἐγένετο αὐτοῖς· (Th. 5.63.4.)

... *but in the present situation they made a law, **which did not yet** previously exist for them.*

Negative οὐ compound.

However, if the adjectival clause represents a command, its verb is Imperative or Subjunctive. And the negative within such a clause is μή.

κάτισον τῶν δορυφόρων ἐπὶ πάσῃσι τῆσι πύλῃσι φυλάκουσ, **οἱ λέγοντων** πρὸς τοὺς ἐκφέροντας τὰ χρήματα ἀπαιρεόμενοι ὡς σφεα ἀναγκαίως ἔχει δεκατευθῆναι τῷ Δίῳ. (Hdt. 1.89.3.)

*Set at all the gates guards from among the spearmen, **who are to say** to those carrying out the goods, as they take <them> away, that it is necessary that they be paid as a tithe to Zeus.*

Third person plural Imperfect Imperative Active.

ἦξεῖς δ' Ὑβριστὴν ποταμὸν οὐ ψευδώνυμον,  
**ὄν μὴ περάσης** ... (A.Pr. 717–718.)

*And you will come to the Raging River, not falsely named,  
**which you are not to cross** ...*

A potential Optative may also be used in a definite adjectival clause.

**οὓς** γὰρ **ὀμολογήσαιμεν ἂν** πονηροτάτους εἶναι τῶν πολιτῶν, τούτους πιστοτάτους φύλακας ἡγούμεθα τῆς πολιτείας εἶναι. (Isoc. 8.53.)

*For we think that these, **whom we would agree** to be the most wicked of the citizens, are the most reliable guards of the community.*

### 25.3. Indefinite Clauses Introduced by ὅς

Indefinite clauses do not normally refer to a particular person or thing but to 'anyone who' or 'whoever'. Two types of construction occur:

1. ὅς ἂν with Subjunctive in Primary sequence, and ὅς with Optative in Past sequence
2. ὅς with Indicative.

The negative for both these types of construction is μή.

### 25.3.1. Subjunctive and Optative

πρῶτον δὴ ἡμῖν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐπιστατητέον τοῖς μυθοποιῶσι, καὶ ὄν μὲν ἄν καλὸν ποιήσωσιν, ἐγκριτέον, ὄν δ' ἄν μὴ, ἀποκριτέον. (Pl.R. 377 B–C.)

*<It is> first necessary for us, as it seems, to take charge of the makers of myths, and to accept the one **which they make good**, but to reject the one **which they do not**.*

ὄς ἄν with Subj. in Primary sequence; negative μὴ. As antecedent of ὄν, μῦθον is to be understood from μυθοποιῶσι.

ὁ δὲ Σάκας ... ἐτύγχανε ... τιμὴν ἔχων προσάγειν τοὺς δεομένους Ἄστυάγουσ καὶ ἀποκωλύειν οὓς μὴ καιρὸς αὐτῷ δοκοίη εἶναι προσάγειν. (X.Cyr. 1.3.8.)

*And Sacas ... happened ... to have the duty to introduce those requesting <an audience with> Astyages and to exclude those **whom it did not seem** to him to be appropriate to introduce.*

οὓς with Optative in Past sequence; negative μὴ.

### 25.3.2. Indicative

Positive indefinite clauses with Indicative have the same form as positive definite clauses. Their indefinite reference must be deduced from their context and content. However, negative indefinite clauses with Indicative use μὴ, whereas negative definite clauses with Indicative use οὐ.

ὄς δ' ἐπ' ἐόντι φέρει, ὃ δ' ἀλέξεται αἴθοπα λιμόν. (Hes.Op. 363.)

*And he, **who adds** to what is <in store>, [he] then will ward off raging hunger.*

Indicative in positive indefinite clause.

ὄς is masculine; the second δέ is apodotic ('then'), as if the ὄς clause were Conditional.

ὃ δὲ μὴ βλάπτει κακόν τι ποιεῖ; (Pl.R. 379 B.)

*'And does <that>, **which does not cause harm**, produce any evil?'*

μὴ with Indicative in negative indefinite clause.

## 25.4. Indefinite Clauses Introduced by ὅστις

ὅστις, when used as an indefinite relative adjective or pronoun, shows a mixture of the constructions in §§25.2 and 25.3 above. Its antecedent is generally indefinite or negative or interrogative, and it may be unexpressed.

### 25.4.1. ὅστις with Indicative and Negative οὐ

In one usage, ὅστις is treated as containing the notion of indefiniteness within itself. And in texts of Homer it is conventionally written as two words, ὅς τις. The negative within the ὅστις clause is οὐ.

ὅστις ποθ' ὑμῶν Λαΐιον τὸν Λαβδάκου  
κάτοιδεν ἀνδρὸς ἐκ τίνος διώλετο,  
τοῦτον κελεύω πάντα σημαίνειν ἐμοί· (S.*OT* 224–226.)

*I command this <man>, who ever among you  
knows by what man Laius son of Labdacus  
perished, to reveal all to me.*

The grammatical antecedent (τοῦτον) of the ὅστις clause is indefinite.

πέμψει δέ τοι οὐρον ὄπισθεν  
ἀθανάτων ὅς τις σε φυλάσσει τε ρύεταιί τε. (Hom.*Od.* 15.34–35.)

*And indeed **whichever one** of the immortals  
guards and protects you, will send a fair wind behind <you>.*

The antecedent is indefinite and unexpressed.

οὐ γὰρ γυναικὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐρεῖς κακῆ,  
οὐδ' ἥτις οὐ κάτοιδε τάνθρώπων ... (S.*Tr.* 438–439.)

*For you will **not** be addressing your words to an incompetent woman,  
nor (to one) **who** does **not** understand the <ways> of mankind ...*

In this sentence, the antecedent clause is negative (οὐ ... οὐδ(έ)), the negative within the ὅστις clause is οὐ and, although the antecedent is definite (the speaker refers to herself), the ὅστις clause is used in a characterising way. (Deianeira claims not to be an incompetent sort of person.)

οὐ is used as a negative within a ὅστις clause especially in the stereotyped phrase οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ, ‘<There is> no one who does not ...’. (οὐδεὶς is often attracted to the Case of ὅστις in Acc., Gen. and Dat.)

τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ἡμέων ἑόντων τοιῶνδε οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ παρήσει ... (Hdt. 3.72.3.)

*For on the one hand, since we are such as we are, <there is> no one who will not let <us> pass ...*

### 25.4.2. ὅστις with Indicative and Negative μή

ὅστις with Indicative sometimes has μή as its negative, parallel to the use of ὅς with the Indicative and μή in negative indefinite clauses.

τοὺς μὲν Ἀθηναίους ὅστις μὴ βούλεται οὕτω κακῶς φρονῆσαι καὶ ὑποχειρίους ἡμῖν γενέσθαι ἐνθάδε ἐλθόντας, ἢ δειλός ἐστιν ἢ τῇ πόλει οὐκ εὖνους· (Th. 6.36.1.)

*Whoever does not want the Athenians to think so wrongly and to become subject to us when they come here, is either cowardly or not well disposed to the city.*

### 25.4.3. ὅστις with Subjunctive and Optative

ὅστις may also have a construction with ἄν and Subjunctive in Primary sequence and Optative in Past sequence.

... ἅπας δὲ τραχὺς ὅστις ἄν νέον κρατῆ. (A.Pr. 35.)  
... and everyone, **who is new to power**, <is> harsh.

ὅστις ἄν with Subjunctive in Primary sequence.

... Ἀντιφῶν ἦν ... πλεῖστα εἰς ἀνὴρ, ὅστις ξυμβουλευσάιτό τι, δυνάμενος ὠφελεῖν. (Th. 8.68.1.)

... Antiphon was ... the one man most able to help anyone **who asked for some advice**.

ὅστις with Optative in Past sequence. ὅστις presumes an indefinite Accusative antecedent, Object of ὠφελεῖν.

## 25.5. Coordinating Use of the Relative Adjective or Pronoun

The relative adjective or pronoun may be used to begin a new sentence. In this situation, ὅς needs to be translated not as ‘Who’, but by such phrases as ‘And he’, ‘But he’ or ‘For he’. To some extent it is a matter of editorial choice whether such occurrences are to be treated as coordinating or subordinating. But certainly some Greek sentences would be artificially long, if this rationale were not adopted.

θεὸς θεῶν γὰρ οὐχ ὑποπτήσων χόλον  
βροτοῖσι τιμὰς ὥπασας πέρα δίκης·  
ἀνθ' ὧν ἀτερπῆ τήνδε φρουρήσεις πέτραν  
ὀρθοστάδην ἄυπνος, οὐ κάμπτων γόνυ· (A.Pr. 29–32.)

*For you, a god, not cowering before the anger of the gods,  
bestowed honours on mortals beyond due measure.  
And in return for **this** you will guard this joyless rock,  
standing upright, unsleeping, not bending the knee.*

## 25.6. Parenthetical ὅστις Clause

A clause introduced by ὅστις may be used parenthetically in Greek, more often with the Indicative (‘whoever he is’), but sometimes with Subjunctive and ἄν (‘whatever it may be’). The idiom occurs both with and without an antecedent.

... κλύω δὲ νεοχμὰ τήνδ' ἀνὰ πτόλιν κακά,  
γυναῖκας ἡμῖν δώματ' ἐκλελοιπέναι  
πλασταῖσι βακχεΐαισιν, ἐν δὲ δασκίοις  
ὄρεσι θαάζειν, τὸν νεωστὶ δαίμονα  
Διόνυσον, ὅστις ἔστι, τιμώσας χοροῖς· (E.Ba. 216–220.)

*... and I hear of new troubles throughout this city,  
that our women have abandoned their homes  
in feigned Bacchic rites, and on shadowy  
mountains are running around, honouring with dances  
this newfound deity, Dionysus, **whoever he is**.*

ὅστις with Indicative and antecedent Διόνυσον.

ὅτι δ' ἂν τούτων πράξει **δυναθῆς** ἢ καὶ μόνον **ἐπιχειρήσης**, οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐ μάλλον τῶν ἄλλων εὐδοκιμήσεις ... (Isoc. 5.123.)

But **whatever** <part> of this **you may be able** to accomplish or even **may only attempt**, it is not possible that you will not become more distinguished than the rest ...

ὅτι with ἂν and Subjunctive but no antecedent.

ὅτι γὰρ **μὴ** τοιοῦτον **ἀποβήσεται** παρ' ὑμῶν, εἰς ἐμέ τὸ ἐλλείπον ἦξει. (X.Cyr. 1.5.13.)

For **whatever does not turn out** from you <to be> such, the deficiency will fall upon me.

ὅτι with Indicative and negative μή (cf. §25.4.2 above), but no antecedent.

## 25.7. Special Uses of ὅστις and ὅς ἂν

In some sentences, ὅστις and ὅς ἂν clauses are not properly related to the Main clause grammatically, but in function they usually serve as Subject for the Main clause. ὅστις and ὅς may appear in any Gender and may be singular or plural, but they are regularly used in the Nominative Case. ὅστις clauses of this type regularly have an Indicative verb. (But, for example, the oldest manuscript of Sophocles's *Ajax* at line 761 has a Subj. φρονῆ [without ἂν], which a later scribe has altered to Indic. φρονεῖ.) ὅς ἂν clauses have Subjunctive verbs.

**ὅστις** μὲν οὖν ἐς μίαν ἀποβλέπων τύχην  
πρὸς θεῶν **κακοῦται**, βαρὺ μὲν, οἰστέον δ' ὅμως. (E.Hel. 267–268.)

Well then, **when any one**, focusing on one fortune,  
**is maltreated** by the gods, <that is> burdensome, but still able to be borne.

Structurally: 'Maltreatment by the gods <is> burdensome'. (Subject)

οὐκ αἰνῶ φόβον,  
**ὅστις φοβεῖται** μὴ διεξελθῶν λόγῳ. (E.Tr. 1165–1166.)

I do not approve fear,  
**when someone has fear** without examining it with reason.

Structurally: ‘I do not approve irrational fear’. (In this passage, the ὅστις clause serves as Object in apposition with φόβον, the grammatical Object of the Main clause.)

τὸ δ’ εὐτυχές, **οἱ ἂν** τῆς εὐπρεπεστάτης **λάχωσιν**, ὥσπερ οἶδε μὲν νῦν, τελευτῆς ... (Th. 2.44.1.)

*And <it is> good fortune, **when** <men> **obtain** a most decent end, just as these <do> now ...*

Structurally: ‘Obtaining a most decent end <is> fortunate’. (Subject)

## References

Goodwin (1889), *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*, §§514–564.

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§2488–2552(–2573).

Lesson 25 does not cover all issues in the Sections of Goodwin (1889) and Smyth (1956), and it is not always in agreement with them.

## EXERCISE 25

Translate the following passages.

1. σποράς γε μὴν ἐκ τῆσδε φύσεται θρασύς, τόξοισι κλεινός, ὃς πόνων ἐκ τῶνδ’ ἐμέ λύσει.

---

σπορά, -ᾶς, ἡ	<i>origin</i>
γε μὴν	<i>but at any rate</i> (Denniston, 1954, p. 348)
θρασύς, (-εῖα, -ύ)	<i>(a) courageous (figure)</i> (Subject)
κλεινός, -ή, -όν	<i>famous</i> (+ Causal Dat.; in apposition with Subject)

---

2. ὃς πρῶτον μὲν τῆς προτέρας ὀλιγαρχίας αἰτιώτατος ἐγένετο, πείσας ὑμᾶς τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν τετρακοσίων πολιτείαν ἐλέσθαι.

---

αἴτιος, -α, -ον	<i>responsible (for)</i> (+ Gen.)
ἐπί (+ Gen.)	<i>in the time of</i>
πολιτεία, -ας, ἡ	<i>administration, government</i>

---

3. ... καὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς τούτους κυρίους ἀπάντων τῶν κοινῶν καθίσταμεν, οἷς οὐδεὶς ἂν οὐδὲν τῶν ἰδίων ἐπιτρέψειεν.

---

κοινῶν (Gen. neut. pl.)	<i>public affairs</i>
καθίσταμεν	Pres. Indic.
ἰδίων	neut.

---

4. τοιαῦτα φῆμαι μαντικά διώρισαν, ὧν ἐντρέπου σὺ μηδέν·

---

ἐντρέπειν	<i>to pay attention (to) (+ Gen.)</i>
-----------	---------------------------------------

---

5. οἷ δὲ δίκας ξείνοισι καὶ ἐνδήμοισι διδοῦσιν ἰθείας καὶ μή τι παρεκβαίνουσι δικαίου, τοῖσι τέθηλε πόλις, λαοὶ δ' ἀνθεῦσιν ἐν αὐτῇ·

---

δίκη, -ης, ἡ	<i>judgment</i>
ξείνος	ξένος
διδούσιν	διδόασιν(ν)
ἰθύς, -εῖα, -ύ	<i>straight</i> (lit. and metaphorical)
τοῖσι	demonstrative pronoun, antecedent of οἷ
θάλλειν	<i>to sprout</i> ; (Perf. in Imperf. sense)
	<i>to flourish</i>
ἀνθεῖν	<i>to bloom</i> (here Ionic 3rd pers. pl.)

---

6. ταῦτ' οὐχὶ δεινῆς ἀγχόνης ἔστ' ἄξια, ὕβρεις ὑβρίζειν, ὅστις ἔστιν ὁ ξένος;

---

ἀγχόνη, -ης, ἡ	<i>hanging</i>
ὕβρις, -εως, ἡ	<i>(act of) insolence</i> (here internal Acc. with cognate verb)

---

7. ... I became reconciled on account of this danger with none of my enemies, who more gladly speak ill of me than commend themselves.

---

<i>to reconcile (with)</i>	διαλλάσσειν, Aor. Pass. διαλλαγήναι (also διαλλαχθῆναι) (+ Dat.)
<i>to commend</i>	ἐπαινεῖν

---

8. ... but they are sending against me such [men], whom *you* [pl.] would not rightly trust.

---

<i>to send</i> (Acc.) <i>against</i> (Dat.)	ἐπιπέμπειν
<i>to trust</i>	πιστεύειν (+ Dat.)

---

This text is taken from *Intermediate Ancient Greek Language*,  
by Darryl Palmer, published 2021 by ANU Press, The Australian  
National University, Canberra, Australia.