

## LESSON 2

# Aspect in the Imperative, Subjunctive and Optative Moods

### 2.1. Introduction

As a general principle, the Moods of the Greek verb other than the Indicative have Aspect but not Time. This generalisation is valid, provided that the so-called 'Future' Optative is treated as belonging to a fourth, 'Intentive' Aspect. (This will also apply to the 'Future' Infinitive and Participle.) At any rate, there are forms for Imperative, Subjunctive and Optative Moods in the Imperfect, Perfect and Aorist Aspects. There are no forms for Imperative and Subjunctive Moods in Present, Past or Future Time. The 'Future' or 'Intentive' Optative is mostly limited to reported discourse in Past sequence, where it represents an original Future Indicative of direct discourse. It is occasionally used in the same way after verbs of effort. The terminology 'Present' Imperative, Subjunctive and Optative has often been used (misleadingly) for what is in fact the Imperfect Aspect of these Moods.

### 2.2. Forms

The usual paradigms for Imperative, Subjunctive and Optative in the Active Voice begin as follows.

#### Imperfect Aspect

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Imperative	παῦε	2nd pers. sg.
Subjunctive	παύω	1st pers. sg.
Optative	παύοιμι	1st pers. sg.

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**Perfect Aspect**

	Regular Form		Periphrastic Form	
Imperative	πέπαυκε	2nd pers. sg.	πεπαυκῶς ἴσθι	(possible)
Subjunctive	πεπαύκω	1st pers. sg.	πεπαυκῶς ᾧ	(usual)
Optative	πεπαύκοιμι	1st pers. sg.	πεπαυκῶς εἶην	(usual)

**Aorist Aspect**

Imperative	παῦσον	2nd pers. sg.
Subjunctive	παύσω	1st pers. sg.
Optative	παύσαιμι	1st pers. sg.

**'Future'/Intentive Aspect**

Optative	παύσοιμι
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**2.3. Functions**

This section gives a brief survey of the uses of the non-Indicative Moods. Most of these uses will receive further attention in later Lessons on particular topics.

**2.3.1. Imperative**

The Imperative expresses commands. Imperfect Aspect expresses continuing or repeated action. Aorist Aspect expresses momentary action. Perfect Aspect is less common in the Imperative. It generally emphasises the state resulting from a completed action. (See Lesson 10 on Commands.) However, as with the Indicative Mood, some verbs by their very meaning express a momentary action. Thus παῦε, although an Imperative form of the Imperfect Aspect, may express a command requiring instant action.

παῦε, παῦε, μὴ λέγε· (Ar. V. 37.)  
*Stop, stop, do not say <any more>.*

**Imperfect Aspect**

καί μοι κάλει τούτων τοὺς μάρτυρας. (And. 1.28.)  
*Now please summon the witnesses of these < matters >.*

The Imperfect Imperative (2nd pers. sg. Act.) κάλει suggests that the summoning may take a while. However, it would not be idiomatic to translate it as ‘be summoning’.

### Aorist Aspect

... φωνήσατ', εἴπερ ὡς φίλοι προσήκετε. (S.Ph. 229.)  
 ...  *speak, if indeed you have come as friends.*

The Aorist Imperative (2nd pers. pl. Act.) φωνήσατ(ε) suggests that the speaking should be brief and prompt.

### Perfect Aspect

νῦν δ' εἰς ἀναιδῆς ἡμέρας μέρος βραχὺ  
 δός μοι σεαυτὸν, κᾶτα τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον  
 κέκλησο πάντων εὐσεβέστατος βροτῶν. (S.Ph. 83–85.)

*But for the present please give yourself to recklessness  
 for a brief part of a day, and then for the rest of time  
 be called the most pious of all mortals.*

The Perfect Imperative (2nd pers. sg. Pass.) κέκλησο, lit. ‘have been called’, implies ‘have the ongoing reputation of’. This stative force, expressing the result of completed action, is emphasised by the adverbial phrase ‘for the rest of time’.

## 2.3.2. Subjunctive

Despite differences of terminology, the following usages are all basically of the same type, expressing an exhortation or command. The negative for each usage is μή, except that οὐ may negate a particular word other than the Subjunctive verb.

### Hortatory

The hortatory use occurs in the first person, usually plural.

χωρῶμεν δὴ πάντες ἀολλεῖς,  
 Νύμφαις ἀλίσαισιν ἐπευξάμενοι  
 νόστου σωτήρας ἰκέσθαι. (S.Ph. 1469–1471.)

*Now let us go all together  
 (after) praying to the Nymphs of the sea  
 that they come as guarantors of our return.*

### Jussive

In the classical period, this construction occurs primarily in the negative with the second person singular or plural of the Aorist Subjunctive. Hence, the usage is often called ‘Prohibitive’. The positive use at *S.Ph.* 300 is exceptional in the classical period, although further positive examples occur in the Hellenistic period. (See Lesson 10 on Commands.)

ὃ μὴ πάθῃς σύ· (E.Ba. 341.)

*And you are not to suffer this.*

ὃ is a coordinating relative pronoun: ‘And ... this’.

The third person of the Aorist Subjunctive used in a prohibition is usually indefinite and equivalent to the second person. (The Imperfect Subjunctive is rare in this usage.)

καὶ μηδεὶς ὑπολάβῃ με δυσκόλως ἔχειν, ὅτι τραχύτερον τούτων ἐμνήσθην ... (Isoc. 4.129.)

*And let no one suppose that I am discontented, because I recounted these points rather harshly ...*

### Deliberative

The Deliberative Subjunctive is an interrogative use of the Hortatory Subjunctive. Instead of stating ‘Let us do this’, a Deliberative question asks ‘What are we to do?’. Deliberative questions occur in Imperfect or Aorist Aspect, primarily in the first person, rarely in the second person (repeating a question) and in the indefinite third person. (See Lesson 17 on Questions.)

... εἶπω Ἀθηναίοις ἅπερ ἤκουσα Εὐφιλήτου αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιήσαντος; (And. 1.51.)

*... am I to tell the Athenians what I heard from Euphiletus himself who did <it>?*

## 2.3.3. Optative

### Wishes

Without ἄν, the Optative in a Main clause expresses a wish for the future. Often, such wishes are introduced by εἰ γάρ or εἴθε; the negative is μή. (See Lesson 11 on Wishes.)

ἐχθρούς γε μέντοι μὴ φίλους δράσειέ τι. (E.Med. 95.)

*However, may she do something to her enemies, not to her friends.*

### Potential

With ἄν the Optative in a Main clause is potential; the negative is οὐ.

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Ιω οὔκουν πόροις ἄν τήνδε δωρειὰν ἐμοί;

Πρ. λέγ' ἥντιν' αἰτῆ· πᾶν γὰρ ἄν πύθοιό μου. (A.Pr. 616–617.)

*Io Would you not, then, grant this gift to me?*

*Pr. Say what <gift> you are requesting; for you would learn everything from me.*

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## References

Goodwin (1889), *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*, §§233–242, 250–293, 720–728.

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§1795–1811, 1814–1842, 1859–1864, 2212.

## EXERCISE 2

Translate the following passages. Give particular attention to the Aspect of the non-Indicative verbs, so far as idiomatic translation allows. The Exercise is concerned with the use of non-Indicative verbs in Main clauses.

1. τούτῳ μέντοι τῷ νόμῳ σκέψασθε ὡς ἐναντίος ἐστὶν ὄν οὗτος τέθεικεν.

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μέντοι	<i>so</i> (Progressive)
σκέπτεσθαι	<i>to consider; to examine</i>
ὡς	<i>how</i> (Modifies ἐναντίος.)
ὄν	Understand νόμος as antecedent.
τιθέναι	<i>to propose</i> (a law)

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2. μέμνησθε δέ, ὦ ἄνδρες, ὅτι καὶ ταῦθ' ὑμῖν προσομολογεῖται ἅπαντα.

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μέμνησθε	Perf. Impv. with Imperf. meaning: <i>remember</i>
προσομολογεῖν	<i>to admit, to confess</i> (here Pass.)

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3. τὸν θεὸν δ' ἐς γῆν δέχου  
καὶ σπένδε καὶ βάκχευε καὶ στέφου κάρα.

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στέφειν (Act. and Mid.)	<i>to wreath</i>
κάρα, τό (irregular)	<i>head</i>

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4. ... περὶ δὲ τῆς εἰρήνης πρῶτον διαλεχθῶμεν, καὶ σκεψώμεθα τί ἂν ἐν τῷ παρόντι γενέσθαι βουλευθῆμεν ἡμῖν.

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διαλέγεσθαι (Mid.)	<i>to discuss</i> (Aor. Pass. in Act. sense)
παρόν, -όντος, τό	<i>the present &lt;situation&gt;</i> (neut. Partc.)

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5. ἀλλ' εὖ σ' ὁ Μαΐας παῖς ἐκεῖσε καὶ πάλιν  
πέμπειεν Ἑρμῆς, ὅς γε φηλητῶν ἄναξ.

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ἀλλ(ά)	<i>well</i> (introducing a prayer: Denniston, 1954, p. 15)
Μαῖα, -ας, ἡ	<i>Maia</i> (mother of Hermes)
πέμπειν	<i>to escort</i>
φηλήτης, -ου, ὁ	<i>thief</i>

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6. ... πολὺ ἂν μᾶλλον καταφρονηθῆμεν καὶ μισηθῆμεν τῶν ταῖς ἄλλαις πονηρίαις ἐνόχων ὄντων.

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καταφρονεῖν	<i>to despise</i>
μισεῖν	<i>to hate</i>
πονηρία, -ας, ἡ	<i>wickedness</i>
ἐνοχος, -ου	<i>liable (for)</i> (+ Dat.)

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7. ποῖ γὰρ τράπωμαι πατρίδος ἐκβεβλημένη;

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τρέπεσθαι (Mid.)	<i>to turn (Intr.)</i>
πατρίς, -ίδος, ἡ	<i>fatherland</i>
ἐκβάλλειν	<i>to cast out</i>

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8. ἀλλ', ὦ ξέν', ἴσθι τοῦτο πρῶτον, οὐνεκα Ἕλληνές ἐσμεν.

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ἀλλά	<i>well (assentient: Denniston, 1954, p. 18)</i>
οὐνεκα	<i>that</i>

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9. τίς ὁδῶ, τίς ὁδῶ; τίς μελάθροις; ἔκτοπος ἔστω, στόμα τ' εὐφημον ἅπας ἐξοσιούσθω

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μέλαθρον, -ου, τό	<i>hall</i>
ἔκτοπος, -ον	<i>out of doors</i>
στόμα, -ατος, τό	<i>speech</i>
εὐφημος, -ον	<i>holy</i>
ἐξοσιοῦν (Act. and Mid.)	<i>to keep pure</i>

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10. And who would try to learn from another these [things], which he knows from his own nature?

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<i>to try</i>	ἐπιχειρεῖν
<i>to learn</i>	μανθάνειν
<i>from</i>	παρά (+ Gen.)
<i>to know</i>	ἐπίστασθαι
<i>nature</i>	φύσις, -εως, ἡ

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