

LESSON 17

Questions

17.1. Ordinary Questions

Ordinary questions may be expressed with or without an introductory interrogative particle. The particles are normally the first element in a sentence. Interrogative phrases, which include the negative οὐ, generally expect a positive answer. Interrogative phrases, which include μή, are more emotionally charged, but do not necessarily expect a negative answer.

καὶ νῦν φλογωπὸν πῦρ ἔχουσ' ἐφήμεροι; (A.Pr. 253.)
And now do ephemeral <mortals> have flaming fire?

No interrogative particle.

ἦ θεωρήσων τύχας
ἐμὰς ἀφίξει καὶ συνασχαλῶν κακοῖς; (A.Pr. 302–303.)

*Have you come to see
my fortunes and to sympathise with my troubles?*

Question with ἦ is neutral.

ἄρ' ἐγγὺς ἀνὴρ; ἄρ' ἔτ' ἐμψύχου, τέκνα,
κιχήσεται μου καὶ κατορθοῦντος φρένα; (S.O.C. 1486–1487.)

*<Is> the man near? Will he find me, children,
still alive and in my right mind?*

These questions with ἄρα are neutral.

ἄρ' ὑμῖν δοκεῖ
ὁ τῶν θεῶν τύραννος εἶς τὰ πάνθ' ὁμῶς
βίαιος εἶναι; (A.Pr. 735–737.)

*Does it (not) seem to you
that the ruler of the gods in all respects alike
is violent?*

This question with ἄρα expects a positive answer.

ἤδη δεῖ με δουλεύειν πάλιν
 ἐν τοῖσιν ἐχθίστοισιν ἀνθρώπων ἐμοὶ
 φονεῦσι πατρός. **ἄρά** μοι καλῶς ἔχει; (S.El. 814–816.)

*Now I must be a slave again
 among the people most hateful to me,
 the murderers of my father. Does it go well with me?*

This question with ἄρα expects a negative answer.

οὐ τοῦτο δειμαίνεις πλέον; (A.Pr. 41.)
Do you not fear this more?

Question with οὐ expects a positive answer.

ἄρ' οὐκ ἄμεινον ἢ σὺ τὰν Θήβαις φρονῶ; (S.OC 791.)
Do I not understand the <situation> in Thebes better than you?

Question with ἄρ' οὐκ expects a positive answer.

οὐκουν, Προμηθεῦ, τοῦτο γινώσκεις, ὅτι
 ὀργῆς νοσοῦσης εἰσὶν ἰατροὶ λόγοι; (A.Pr. 377–378.)

*Do you not know this, Prometheus, that
 words are healers of the disease of anger?*

οὐκουν with paroxytone accent emphasises the negative, and the question expects a positive answer.

οὐκοῦν, ἔφη ὁ Χρυσάντας, εὖ σοι δοκοῦσι βουλεύεσθαι;
 (X.Cyr. 7.1.8.)

*'Therefore do they not', said Chrysantas, 'seem to you to be laying their
 plans well?'*

οὐκοῦν with perispomenon accent emphasises the inferential force of οὐν, while maintaining the negative value of οὐκ, and the question expects a positive answer.

οὐκοῦν ψυχὴ οὐ δέχεται θάνατον; – οὐ. (Pl.Phd. 105 E.)
Therefore the soul does not admit of death? – No.

The question with οὐκοῦν ... οὐ expects (and receives) a negative answer. For the accent on οὐ, see the comment preceding the second example in §17.2 below.

μή πού τι προύβης τῶνδε καὶ περαιτέρω; (A.Pr. 247.)
Did you perhaps go even somewhat further than this?

μή gives a worried tone to the question.

ἄρα μή δοκεῖς
 λυτήρι' αὐτῇ ταῦτα τοῦ φόνου φέρειν;
 οὐκ ἔστιν. (S.El. 446–448.)

*Do you really think
 that you are bringing these things as a deliverance for her from the murder?
 It is not possible.*

Despite her own attitude, Electra does not expect her sister Chrysothemis to answer 'No'. ἄρα μή indicates Electra's emotion in opposing her sister's action.

τὴν δὲ τῆς μίξεως αἰτίαν καὶ γενέσεως τετάρτην λέγων **ἄρα μή**
 πλημμελοῖην ἄν τι; (Pl.Phlb. 27 C.)

And I would not be making any mistake in calling the cause of mixing and generation the fourth <cause>, would I?

This question with ἄρα μή (delayed) expects a negative answer. ἄρα μή, used in this and the preceding example, is not common in classical Greek.

μῶν ἄλγος ἴσχεις τῆς παρεστῶσης νόσου; (S.Ph. 734.)
Do you have pain from your current sickness?

μῶν (derived from μή οὖν) expresses Neoptolemus's concern at Philoctetes's pain.

17.2. Alternative Questions

Alternative questions are regularly introduced by πότερον (πότερα) ... ἢ ... ; Further alternatives may be added by repetition of ἢ. The initial πότερον (-α) is often omitted in Greek. And an initial 'whether' is no longer used in direct alternative questions in English.

πότερα δ' ἄν, εἰ νέμοι τις αἴρεσιν, λάβοις
 φίλους ἀνιῶν αὐτὸς ἡδονὰς ἔχειν,
 ἢ κοινὸς ἐν κοινοῖσι λυπεῖσθαι ξυνῶν; (S.Aj. 265–267.)

And, if someone were to give <you> a choice, would you choose [lit. accept] to have pleasure yourself while distressing your friends, or to be grieved while being together as a partner among partners?

The second alternative is sometimes a mere negative. If οὐ is immediately followed by punctuation at the end of a clause or sentence, it has an oxytone accent, οὔ.

... **πότερον** ταῦτα ποιῶν ἡδίκηει καὶ παρεσπόνδει καὶ ἔλυε τὴν εἰρήνην, ἢ οὔ; (D. 18.71.)

... in doing these things was he acting wrongly and was he violating the treaty and was he breaking the peace, or not?

In the following example, continuous with the preceding, the Infinitive construction with ἐχρῆν justifies μή as the negative for the second alternative. (Cf. Smyth, 1956, §2714.)

καὶ **πότερον** φανῆναί τινα τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὸν ταῦτα κωλύσοντα ποιεῖν αὐτὸν ἐχρῆν, ἢ μή; (D. 18.71.)

And was it right that one of the Greeks should appear as the one to prevent him doing this, or not?

17.3. Questions with Interrogative Adjectives or Adverbs

Questions may be introduced by interrogative adjectives or adverbs. The adjectives may be used with or without a noun. Without a noun, they function as pronouns.

τίς ἀχώ, **τίς** ὀσμὰ προσέπτα μ' ἀφειγγής; (A.Pr. 115.)
What sound, what smell came upon me, unseen?

τίς is used as an interrogative adjective.

τίς ὧδε τλησικάρδιος
θεῶν, ὅτω τὰδ' ἐπιχαρή; (A.Pr. 160–161.)

*Who <is> so hard-hearted
among the gods, that this <is> a joy to him?*

τίς is used as an interrogative pronoun.

πῶς ἐτόλμησας, λιπῶν
ἐπώνυμόν τε ῥεῦμα καὶ πετρηρεφῆ
αὐτόκτιτ' ἄντρα, τὴν σιδηρομήτορα
ἐλθεῖν ἐς αἶαν; (A.Pr. 299–302.)

*How did you dare, leaving
the stream named after you and rock-vaulted
caverns formed by yourself, to come to this
iron-producing land?*

πῶς is an interrogative adverb.

17.4. Deliberative Questions

Deliberative questions normally occur in the first person singular or plural, and ask, for example: ‘Am I to do this?’ or ‘What are we to do?’ or ‘Where are we to go?’ They may be addressed to oneself, or to some other person. The Mood is Subjunctive, and the negative is μή.

οἷμοι, τί δράσω; ποῖ φύγω μητρὸς χέρας; (E.Med. 1271.)
Alas, what am I to do? Where am I to flee from my mother's hands?

Deliberation may also be expressed by the Future Indicative, by the modal expressions δεῖ or χρή, or by the verbal adjectives expressing necessity.

17.5. Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions have the form of a question, but the function of a statement or a command. Thus, either they do not expect any answer or an answer is provided by the speaker. Rhetorical questions differ from other questions only in function, not in form.

τίς οὐ ξυνασχαλᾷ κακοῖς
 τεοῖσι δίχα γε Διός; (A.Pr. 162–163.)

*Who does not sympathise with your
 troubles, apart from Zeus at least?*

Function: *There is nobody who does not sympathise ...* (Statement).

εἶέν, **τί** μέλλεις καὶ κατοικτίζῃ μάτην; (A.Pr. 36.)
Enough! Why do you delay and pity <him> in vain?

Function: *Do not delay ...* (Command).

ἔνερθε δὲ χθονὸς
 κεκρυμμέν' ἀνθρώποισιν ὠφελήματα
 χαλκὸν σίδηρον ἄργυρον χρυσόν τε, **τίς**
 φήσειεν ἂν πάροιθεν ἔξευρεῖν ἐμοῦ;
 οὐδεῖς, σάφ' οἶδα, μὴ μάτην φλύσαι θέλων. (A.Pr. 500–504.)

*And <as for> aids
 for mankind hidden beneath the earth,
 bronze, iron, silver and gold, who
 would say that he discovered <them> before me?
 No one, I am sure, unless wishing to babble on in vain.*

The question is answered by the speaker, who thereby shows that the question is equivalent to a statement: *No one would say that he discovered ... before me.*

References

Denniston (1954), *The Greek particles*, pp. 46–51 (ἄρα), 282–284 (ἦ), 430–436 (οὔκουν, οὐκοῦν).

Goodwin (1889), *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*, §§287–293.

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§1805, 1807–1809, 2636–2662.

The present Lesson agrees with Denniston (1954) and Humbert (1954) on the use of μή, ἄρα μή and μῶν, contrary to Smyth (1956, §2651), Montanari (2015) and Liddell and Scott (1996). Smyth (1956) in §2657 has misquoted D. 18.71, which should be placed in §2656.

EXERCISE 17

Translate the following passages.

1. καὶ σὺ δὴ πόνων ἐμῶν
ἤκεις ἐπόπτης;

ἐπόπτης, -ου, ὁ	<i>observer</i>
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2. πῶς εἶπας; ἢ ἴμὸς παῖς σ' ἀπαλλάξει κακῶν;

λέγειν, εἶπεῖν	<i>to say; to mean</i>
ἀπαλλάσσειν	<i>to release</i>

3. ἄρ' ἂν παρ' ὑμῶν, ὦ ξένοι, μάθοιμ' ὅπου
τὰ τοῦ τυράννου δώματ' ἐστὶν Οἰδίπου;
4. ἄρ' οὐκ ἂν, εἰ μὲν ἐπιθυμῶν τοῦ δοκεῖν ἱκανὸς εἶναι ταῦτα
πράττειν μὴ δύναίτο πείθειν, τοῦτ' εἶη λυπηρόν ...;

δοκεῖν	<i>to seem</i>
λυπηρός, -ά, -όν	<i>distressing</i>

5. μὴ τί σοι δοκῶ
ταρβεῖν ὑποπτήσσειν τε τοὺς νέους θεοὺς;

ταρβεῖν	<i>to be fearful</i>
ὑποπτήσσειν	<i>to cower before (+ Acc.)</i>

6. τῆς δὲ κακῆς τε καὶ αἰσχρᾶς παιδείας ἐν πόλει ἄρα μὴ τι
μεῖζον ἔξεις λαβεῖν τεκμήριον ...;

τεκμήριον, -ου, τό	<i>evidence (here + Gen. τῆς ... παιδείας)</i>
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7. τίνες κατήρξαν, πότερον Ἕλληνες, μάχης,
ἢ παῖς ἐμός, πλήθει καταυχήσας νεῶν;

κατάρχειν	<i>to begin (+ Gen.)</i>
καταυχεῖν	<i>to be overconfident</i>

8. τί φῶ χέουσα τάσδε κηδείους χοάς;
πῶς εὐφρον' εἶπω;

χεῖν	<i>to pour</i>
κήδειος, -ον	<i>(funereal, sepulchral) for the dead</i>
χοή, -ῆς, ῆ	<i>(pouring out,) drink-offering</i>
εὐφρων, -ον	<i>gracious</i>

9. Therefore, the names of the men, against whom that [man] laid information, are these?

<i>against</i>	κατά (+ Gen.)
<i>to lay information</i>	μηνύειν

10. Does Aeschines seem to you, O men of Athens, to be an employee or a guest-friend of Alexander?

<i>Does ... or</i>	Use πότερον ... ἢ.
<i>Aeschines</i>	Αἰσχίνης, -ου, ὁ
<i>employee</i>	μισθωτός, -ου, ὁ
<i>guest-friend</i>	ξένος, -ου, ὁ
<i>Alexander</i>	Ἀλέξανδρος, -ου, ὁ

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