

## LESSON 44

# Exclamations

### 44.1. Exclamatory Cries

In the English language, a number of terms are used in isolation to express various emotions. These terms often seem to have no etymology, but are merely grunts, cries, screams and so on: ‘wow!’, ‘whew!’, ‘aha!’, ‘ugh!’, etc. Similarly, in Greek there are numerous terms expressing a range of emotions. Most simply, the terms stand alone and are marked off by a full stop or colon in modern editions of Ancient Greek writings. Alternatively, such terms may interrupt a Greek sentence at the beginning, middle or end, and may be separated only by commas. It may be difficult to find suitable English equivalents for some of these terms. And sometimes transliteration is a better solution than translation.

The English exclamation mark (!) is not normally used in Greek punctuation. (Occasionally, some modern editors have used it.) In Greek verse texts, some exclamatory cries are ‘outside the metre’ (*extra metrum*), and may or may not have a line number.

**ὀτοτοτοτοῖ.**

βαρεῖά γ’ ἄδε συμφορά.

οἷ μάλα καὶ τόδ’ ἀλγῶ. (*A.Pers.* 1043–1045.)

***Ototototoi!***

*This calamity <is> burdensome indeed.*

*Alas, I am greatly pained at this too.*

ὀτοτοτοτοῖ (a cry of pain or grief) stands alone.

ὄδ’ ἐγών, **οἰοῖ**, αἰακτὸς

μέλεος γέννα γὰρ τε πατρώα

κακὸν ἄρ’ ἐγενόμαν. (*A.Pers.* 931–933.)

Here I, *alas*, a lamentable,  
wretched <figure>, became a disaster, then,  
for my race and my fatherland!

οἰοῖ (a cry of pain, grief, pity or astonishment) interrupts the sentence.

## 44.2. A Cry with First Person Singular Pronoun

Reflecting the emotional involvement of an individual speaker, the first person singular pronoun may be combined with a cry. Most often the pronoun is a Dative of Interest (μοι), which may be repeated. Sometimes the Nominative (ἐγώ) is added to the Dative.

**ἰὼ μοί μοι·**

τί φῶ; (E.Hipp. 1384–1385.)

*Ab me, ab me!*

*What am I to say?*

ἰὼ (a cry of grief, suffering or appeal) is used with μοι repeated.

**ὦμοι ἐγώ, τί πάθω, τέκνον ἐμόν;** (S.OC 216.)

*Ab me, ab me! What is to become of me, my child?*

ὦ (a cry of surprise, joy or pain) with μοι (Dat.) and ἐγώ (Nom.).

## 44.3. An Exclamation with a Causal Genitive

The reason for an exclamation may be expressed by a Causal Genitive phrase. Such Genitive phrases may be added either to a mere cry, or to an exclamatory Nominative phrase. (Cf. Lesson 36.6.)

**ὄτοτοῖ, βασιλεῦ, στρατιᾶς ἀγαθῆς  
καὶ περσονόμου τιμῆς μεγάλης,  
κόσμου τ' ἀνδρῶν,**

οὗς νῦν δαίμων ἐπέκειρεν. (A.Pers. 918–921.)

*Ototoi, <O> king, for the noble army  
and for the great honour of Persian rule,  
and for the splendour of the men,  
whom now a deity <has> cut down!*

The series of Genitive phrases gives the reason for the Chorus's cry, ὄτοτοῖ.

ὦ,  
**δύστανος ἐγὼ μελέα τε πόνων,**  
 ὦ μοί μοι, πῶς ἄν ὀλοίμαν; (E.Med. 96–97.)

*Ah,*  
**unfortunate <am> I and wretched because of my troubles,**  
*ah me, ah me, may I perish!*

The Genitive πόνων gives the reason for Medea's exclamation that she is unfortunate and wretched. (The term '<am>' would be better omitted if English idiom allowed, since the phrase is an exclamatory Nom. rather than a statement.)

#### 44.4. Exclamatory Infinitive Phrases

In English, an exclamation may be expressed in an Infinitive phrase.

*Oh, to be in England*  
*Now that April's there ...* (R. Browning, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, lines 1–2.)

Exclamatory Infinitive phrases also occur in classical Greek, mainly in drama. The Infinitive may have an explicit Accusative Subject; otherwise, such a Subject is implied in the context. And the Infinitive may have its own neuter Accusative definite article.

ὦ πλεῖστον ἔχθος ὄνομα Σαλαμῖνος **κλύειν**. (A.Pers. 284.)  
*Oh, <even> to hear the name of Salamis, greatest object of hate!*

Infinitive phrase without definite article and without Accusative Subject. The Messenger, who speaks the line, could easily be supplied as Accusative Subject of the Infinitive: 'Oh, that <I> should even hear ...!'

**τὸ δὲ προσδοκῆσαί σ'** – οὐκ ἀνόητον καὶ κενόν; –  
 ὡς δοῦλος ὦν καὶ θνητὸς Ἀλκμήνης ἔση. (Ar.Ra. 530–531.)

**And that you should expect** – <is it> not senseless and empty-headed? –  
*that, although you are a slave and a mortal, you will be Alcmena's <son>!*

Infinitive phrase with definite article and with explicit Accusative Subject (σ(ε)). (For the sake of clarity, W. B. Stanford's punctuation has been followed.)

## 44.5. Exclamatory Sentences Introduced by οἶος, ὅσος or ὡς

Exclamations may be expressed in a phrase or a full sentence which is introduced by the relative adjectives οἶος and ὅσος or by the relative adverb ὡς. οἶος and ὅσος may be used alone as pronouns, or may qualify a noun. ὡς may modify the verb in its sentence, or an adjective or another adverb.

### 44.5.1. οἶος

οἷμοι μάλ' αὐθις, **οἶα** μ' ἐκκαλῆ, πάτερ,  
φονέα γενέσθαι καὶ παλαμναῖον σέθεν. (S.Tr. 1206–1207.)

*Alas yet again, to what you do summon me, father,  
to become your murderer and blood-guilty!*

οἶα is used as a pronoun.

οἷμοι, τέκνον, πρὸς **οἶα** δουλείας ζυγὰ  
χωροῦμεν, **οἶοι** νῶν ἐφεστᾶσι σκοποί. (S.Aj. 944–945.)

*Alas, <my> son, to what a yoke of slavery  
we are going! What guardians stand over us both!*

οἶα qualifies ζυγὰ, οἶοι qualifies σκοποί.

ἀλλ' **οἶον** τὸν Τηλεφίδην κατενήρατο χαλκῶ,  
ἦρω' Εὐρύπυλον. (Hom.Od. 11.519–520.)

*But what <a man was> that son of Telephus <whom> he killed with his  
bronze spear,  
the hero Eurypylus!*

οἶον is used predicatively in reference to τὸν Τηλεφίδην.

### 44.5.2. ὅσος

ὦ τάλας, **ὅσον** κακὸν ἔχει δόμος. (E.Hipp. 852.)  
*O wretched <man>, how great a trouble the house contains!*

ὅσον qualifies κακόν.

ὦ πλοῦτε καὶ τυραννὶ καὶ τέχνη τέχνης  
 ὑπερφέρουσα τῶ πολυζήλω βίῳ,  
**ὄσος** παρ' ὑμῖν ὁ φθόνος φυλάσσεται ... (S.*OT* 380–382.)

*O wealth and royal power and skill surpassing  
 skill in the greatly-envied life,  
 how great <is> the jealousy <that> is fostered among you ...!*

ὄσος is used predicatively in reference to ὁ φθόνος.

### 44.5.3. ὦς

ὦ δῶμ', ὃ πρὶν ποτ' εὐτύχεις ἄν' Ἑλλάδα, ...  
**ὦς** σε **στενάζω**, δοῦλος ὢν μέν, ἀλλ' ὅμως [...] (E.*Ba.* 1024, 1027.)

*O house, which once in the past were fortunate throughout Greece ...  
 how I, slave though I am, nevertheless lament for you ...*

ὦς modifies the verb στενάζω.

**ὦς θρασύς** ὁ βάκχος κούκ ἀγύμναστος λόγων. (E.*Ba.* 491.)  
*How bold the bacchanal and not unpractised in arguments!*

ὦς modifies the adjective θρασύς.

ὦ δυσπόνητε δαίμον, **ὦς ἄγαν** βαρὺς  
 ποδοῖν ἐνήλου παντὶ Περσικῶ γένει. (A.*Pers.* 515–516.)

*O troublesome deity, how excessively heavily  
 you leapt with both feet upon all the Persian race!*

ὦς modifies the adverb ἄγαν (which modifies the adj. βαρὺς).

## 44.6. Interrogative Adjective or Adverb

It is sometimes suggested that an interrogative adjective or adverb may introduce an exclamation. However, it seems better to regard such sentences as being rhetorical questions, at least until the end of the classical period. In the Hellenistic period, exclamations may be introduced by an interrogative term. The following examples from early verse, late classical prose and early Hellenistic verse illustrate the usage.

Ἄτρεΐδη, **ποῖόν** σε **ἔπος** φύγεν ἔρκος ὀδόντων;  
**πῶς** δὴ φῆς πολέμοιο μεθιέμεν; (Hom.*Il.* 4.350–351.)

*Son of Atreus, what word escaped from you <through> the barrier of your teeth?  
 How indeed do you say that <we> are holding back from war?*

Although line 350 has sometimes been treated as an exclamation, it is better understood as a rhetorical question in keeping with line 351. ποῖον ... ἔπος (350) corresponds in meaning to πῶς ... φῆς (351).

**πῶς** μὲν γὰρ **δυσδιάβατον** τὸ πεδίον, εἰ μὴ νικήσομεν τοὺς ἰππέας; **πῶς** δὲ ἅ διεληλύθαμεν ὄρη, ἣν πελτασταὶ τοσοῖδε ἐφέπωνται; ἦν δὲ δὴ καὶ σωθῶμεν ἐπὶ θάλατταν, **πόσον** τι νάπος ὁ Πόντος; (X.*An.* 6.5.19–20.)

*For how hard to cross <will> the plain <be>, if we do not defeat the cavalry? And how <hard> the mountains which we have passed through, if so many light-armed troops pursue? And if indeed we get safely to the sea, about how big a ravine <is> the Euxine?*

Xenophon, in a speech, is exhorting his troops to battle and arguing that the ravine in front of them is no more difficult or dangerous than the terrain or sea over which they have already passed or will have to pass. The questions, on the borderline between literal and rhetorical, would not make sense as exclamations. Xenophon does *not* want to say: ‘How difficult it will be!’

ὦ **πῶς** **πονηρόν** ἔστιν ἀνθρώπου φύσις  
 τὸ σύνολον· (Philemo Comicus, *fr.* 2; 4th–3rd century BCE.)

*Oh, how evil a thing is the nature of man  
 in general!*

Here, the interrogative form πῶς modifies the adjective πονηρόν and is definitely exclamatory, as ὦ (or ὦ̄: manuscripts vary) helps to confirm.

## 44.7. Reported Exclamations

Smyth (1956, §§2685–2687) classifies some sentences as ‘indirect’ or ‘dependent’ exclamations, while acknowledging that it ‘is often difficult to distinguish between indirect exclamations and indirect questions’ (§2685). In practice, with one possible exception, all the examples in his §2686 can

be classified as reported questions. And none of the examples in §2687 is a reported exclamation. Instead, there are adjectival clauses (Hom.*Il.* 21.399; Pl.*Phd.* 117 C–D), a direct exclamation (Ar.*Nu.* 1206–1211), an ambivalent adjectival clause or reported question (Pl.*R.* 329 B), a Causal clause (Pl.*Phd.* 58 E) and an adverbial clause of place (Ar.*V.* 1450–1452, metaphorical).

The one possible exception is Pl.*Tht.* 142 B. At this early stage, only Euclides and Terpsion have been involved in the dialogue. Terpsion exclaims:

**οἶον ἄνδρα** λέγεις ἐν κινδύνῳ εἶναι.  
*What a man you say is in danger!*

The grammatical construction is Accusative and Infinitive of reported speech. And yet, this is not a reported exclamation. For Euclides has *not* said ‘What a man!’, he has only said, in different words, that Theaetetus ‘is in danger’, specifically, that he is severely wounded and has dysentery. Terpsion himself, who is not the Subject of λέγεις, is responsible for the exclamatory component of the sentence. The sentence is an abbreviation of the expression ‘What a man <he is, who> you say is in danger!’ Euclides immediately confirms this general value judgment with the specific phrase καλόν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν.

A comment from the Chorus-leader in the *Trachinae* follows a similar pattern.

ὦ τλήμων Ἑλλάς, **πένθος οἶον** εἰσορῶ  
ἔξουσαν ἀνδρὸς τοῦδέ γ’ εἰ σφαλῆσεται. (S.*Tr.* 1112–1113.)

*O poor Greece, what grief I see  
that it will have if it is (going to be) cheated of this man!*

The Vocative phrase is exclamatory, not a genuine address. The following grammatical construction is Accusative Participle of reported mental perception: ἔξουσαν (Acc. fem. sg.) refers to Ἑλλάς, implicitly third person as σφαλῆσεται shows.

If the reading ἄλλ’ οἶον (rather than ἄλλοῖον) is accepted, then Hom.*Il.* 5.638–639 would already provide another example.

ἀλλ' οἶόν τινά φασι βίην Ἡρακλεΐην  
εἶναι ...

*But what a <man> they say that the strength of Heracles  
was ...!*

(The phrase 'strength of Heracles' for 'strong Heracles' is a standard idiom;  
cf. Hom.*Il.* 2.658; 11.690.)

Each of these three examples occurs in a passage of direct speech. The speaker is responsible for the exclamatory component of each sentence, whether she is reporting her own observation (*S. Tr.*), or he is reporting an interlocutor's implied comment (*Pl. Tht.*) or the statements of people in general (*Hom. Il.*). It is not so much that the sentences themselves are reported (or indirect or dependent) exclamations. Rather, the exclamations occur in a subordinate phrase of the sentences: Accusative and Infinitive or Participle.

## References

Goodwin (1889), *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*, §§787, 805 (Infinitive).

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§2015, 2036, 2575.4, 2681–2687.

## EXERCISE 44

Translate the following passages.

- οἷ γὰρ τάλαινα διαπεπραγμένου στρατοῦ  
ὡ νυκτὸς ὄψις ἐμφανῆ ἐνυπνίων,  
ὡς κάρτα μοι σαφῶς ἐδήλωσας κακά.

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διαπράσσειν                      *to bring to an end, to destroy* (here Pass.)

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- τὸ οὖν τοιούτων μὲν πέρι πολλὴν σπευδὴν ποιήσασθαι, Ἔρωτα δὲ μηδένα πω ἀνθρώπων τετολμηκέναι εἰς ταυτηνὶ τὴν ἡμέραν ἀξίως ὑμῆσαι·

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οὖν                                      *well then*

τοιούτων (neut.) ... πέρι    See Lesson 42.8.

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3. ὦ δυστάλαινα, τοιάδ' ἄνδρα χρήσιμον  
φωνεῖν, ἃ πρόσθεν οὗτος οὐκ ἔτλη ποτ' ἄν.

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ὦ δυστάλαινα	The speaker addresses herself.
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4. εἰ δέ γε δοῦλος ἢ ὑποβολιμαῖος τὰ μὴ προσήκοντ' ἀπώλλυε  
καὶ ἐλυμαίνετο, Ἡράκλεις ὅσω μᾶλλον δεινὸν καὶ ὀργῆς  
ἄξιον πάντες ἂν ἔφησαν εἶναι.

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ὑποβολιμαῖος, -α, -ον	<i>substituted, suppositious (esp. child)</i>
λυμαίνεσθαι (Mid.)	<i>to misuse</i>
Ἡράκλεις	exclamatory Voc.

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5. ὦ φίλτατ', ὦ Τρυγαί', ὅσ' ἡμᾶς τάγαθὰ  
δέδρακας εἰρήνην ποιήσας·

6. ὦ ὦ,  
οἷά μ' ἐκέλευσεν ἀναπυθέσθαι σου.

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ἐκέλευσεν	The Subject is Peace personified (fem.).
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7. φεῦ, τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ὡς στένω μεμνημένος.

8. O men, how pleasant [it is] to see your faces!

9. And how many cities he captured without crossing the ford of the  
river Halys  
nor rushing off from his hearth...!

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<i>ford</i>	πόρος, -ου, ὄ
<i>Halys</i>	Ἄλυσ, -υος, ὄ
<i>to rush off</i>	σύεσθαι (Pass.), συθῆναι (Aor.)

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