VI.—THE GREEK INDIRECT NEGATIVE. By E.
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[Read at the Society's Meeting held on Friday, Nov. 6, 1891.]

THE real nature of the particle $\mu\eta$ is allowed to be the greatest difficulty of Greek syntax.¹ I shall endeavour to show that (1) primarily and essentially $\mu\eta$ is not a negative or prohibitive particle, but an interrogative; that (2) many $\mu\eta$ -sentences which are at present printed as assertions might better be printed as questions;² and that (3) even in other cases the apparent negation contains or pre-supposes an interrogative meaning.

(1) Greek $\mu\eta$ is plainly the same word as the Arian $mā$ (Old Persian and Zend $mā$,³ Sanskrit $mā$: 'the so-called 'prohibitive' particle). That both are identical with the Accusative of the Pronoun of the first person (Latin $mē$, Zend $mā$, Sanskrit $mā$ enclitic), used, as in Vergil's 'me, me, adsum qui feci,' to call attention to the speaker, is an old but over-bold suggestion. It is possible that $\mu\eta$ and $\mu\eta\nu$ were originally byforms like $\nu\acute{\upsilon}$ and $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\nu$, $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}$ and $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\nu$, since $\tau\acute{\iota}$ $\mu\eta$ and $\tau\acute{\iota}$ $\mu\eta\nu$ equally mean (like our 'Why now,' introducing a sentence) 'of course'; but in practice $\mu\eta$ was confined to questions, $\mu\eta\nu$ was not.⁴ That

¹ See Madvig, Greek Syntax, sections 122-124, 131, 200-212; Goodwin, Moods and Tenses, sec. 259-283, 289-301, 305-310, 315-316, 333, 352-354, 365-371, 550-551, 576, 595-599, 685-688, 734, 784, 811-819, and Appendix II.; Monro, Homeric Grammar, sec. 278, 281, 303, 316, 328, 358-361; Gildersleeve, American Journal of Philology, I. p. 45-57; J. Cook Wilson, Transactions of the Oxford Philological Society, 1890.

² Of course our present system of punctuation in Greek, dating only from post-classical times, can prove nothing as to the usage of the classical period.

³ See Spiegel, Grammatik der Alteranischen Sprachen, sec. 388.

⁴ Böhtlingk, Sanskrit-Wörterbuch, s. v.; Whitney, Sanskrit Grammar, sec. 679-680; Delbrück, Altindische Syntax, sec. 177, 191, 203, 265-267; Speijer, Sanskrit Syntax, sec. 353, 405.

⁵ Before a mute or spirant $\mu\eta\nu$ regularly became $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$, e.g. in the combinations $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tau\omicron\iota$, $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$, which form then became common before vowels also. See Brugmann, Grundriss, I. sec. 611, and to the consonant combinations there mentioned as shortening the preceding vowel in Greek add $\delta\nu$: $\kappa\epsilon\delta\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ for $*\kappa\eta\delta-\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ must be an Ionic derivative from $\kappa\eta\delta\omicron\varsigma$ (the form in other dialects would be $*\kappa\alpha\delta\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, from $\kappa\alpha\delta\omicron\varsigma$), and $\psi\epsilon\delta\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ stand for $*\psi\eta-\delta-\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ from $\psi\eta\nu$ 'to rub.' The Greek grammarians notice the shortening of the semivowel before ξ in $\phi\omicron\iota\nu\acute{\iota}\xi$ $\kappa\eta\nu\acute{\iota}\xi$ beside $\phi\omicron\iota\nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha$ $\kappa\eta\nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha$.

μή usually begins the clause and *μήν* never does is no objection to their connexion: *δή* is often initial in Homer, though never in Attic.

(2) In the Homeric interrogative formula *ἤ μή* (Od. 6. 200, 9. 405–406), as in the Attic combinations *ἄρα μή, μὴν μή, τί μή*, the *μή* merely adds a slight emphasis to the initial interrogative particle. In Attic (see Madvig 199 b) *μή* in direct questions has an indeterminate force, the answer expected may range over the whole field of possibilities, from ‘No’ through ‘Perhaps’ and ‘Probably’ to a covert or ironical ‘Yes’; it is only the context that can show which answer is intended. But that this use of *μή* in questions was Homeric as well as Attic may appear if we view the following combinations as interrogative:

(α) *μή* with Indicative: Il. 9. 698 *μηδ’ ὄφελος λίσσεσθαι*; ‘Ought you to have prayed? (We cannot say that in such cases the *μή*, for οὐ, goes with the Infinitive, for then we should have equally *μή χρῆν λίσσεσθαι, μή καλὸν ἦν λίσσεσθαι*.)—Eur. Med. 822 *λέξεις* (*λέξης* is only a conjecture) *δὲ μηδέν*; ‘Will you say anything?—Ar. Av. 195 (see Goodwin 686) *μή γὰρ νόημα κομψότερον ἤκουσά πω*; ‘Did I ever hear?’

(β) *μή* with Subjunctive, used as future: Il. 16. 128 *μή δὲ νῆας ἔλωσι*; ‘Shall they seize the ships?’—Eur. Or. 776 *μή λάβωσί σε*; So, first in Herodotus and often in Plato (Goodwin 265), where the answer really expected is ‘Yes,’ e.g. *μή φαῖλον ἦ*; ‘May it be bad? Quite possibly’: cf. the use of *ἄρα* for *ἄρ’ οὐ*, Soph. Oed. Rex 822 *ἄρ’ ἔφυν κακός*; *ἄρ’ οὐχὶ πᾶς ἀναγνος*;—Also with Optative, a less direct form of the Subjunctive: Od. 7. 316 *μή τοῦτο φίλον Διὶ πατρὶ γένοιτο*; ‘Should this be the will of Zeus?’ and so *μή γένοιτο*; ‘Should it be so? God forbid.’

(γ) *μή* with Imperative, which is really (see Rutherford, Babrius, p. 38) a Future with a sense of command: ‘*μή κλέπτει*; ‘Will you cheat? Don’t.’—The corresponding use of *mā* in Sanskrit with Imperative is not found in the Vedas (the only

* Aristophanes’ *οἶσθ’ ὃ δρᾶσον* and Euripides’ *οἶσθ’ ὃ δρᾶσεις* equally mean ‘Do you know what you must do?’, and so I would explain the Homeric *εἰ δ’ ἄγε* ‘But if you must come—.’ So the Sanskrit Imperative is used in questions (Whitney 572 b).

instance quoted is probably corrupt, Whitney 579 c), though common in Classical Sanskrit; whence we may infer (Monro 328) that the Imperative was originally used only in commands, and perhaps that its extension to prohibitions was due to the analogy of the Subjunctive.

(δ) *μή* with imperativ Infinitive: Il. 2. 413 *μή πρὶν ἐπ' ἡέλιον δύναι*; 'Is the sun to set before?' i.e. let not the sun set before.

(ε) *μή* used elliptically, without a Verb: Soph. Oed. Col. 1441 *εἰ χρὴ θανούμαι. — μή σὺ γ'*; *ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ πιθοῦ* 'What, you die? Nay, hear me;'. Ant. 577 *μή τριβὰς ἐ'*; 'What, still tarrying?' So *μή ὅτι* (or *ὅπως*) is the interrogative equivalent of *οὐχ ὅτι* (or *ὅπως*), and in Dem. 18. 200 (=295) *τίς οὐχὶ κατέπυσεν ἂν σοῦ*; *μή γὰρ τῇ πόλει* &c the latter clause is as much interrogative as the former.

In the same way we may analyse every complex sentence in which the second clause begins with *μή* (usually translated 'lest' or 'whether,' though the latter would properly be *εἰ*) into an affirmative clause + a question:¹

(α) *μή* with Indicative in oaths in Homer: Il. 10. 329-330 *ἴστω νῦν Ζεὺς . . . μή μὲν τοῖς ἵπποισιν ἀνὴρ ἐποχήσεται ἄλλος*; 'Shall any other drive them? I call Zeus to witness, No,' and so 15. 36-42.

(β) *μή* with Subjunctive or Optative in final sentences: Il. 1. 522 *ἀπόστιχε μή τι νοήσῃ*; 'Shall she notice anything? Withdraw,' i.e. 'Withdraw, or she will notice something.'

(γ) *μή* in sentences expressing apprehension, with Indicative: Od. 5. 300 *δεῖδω μή δὴ πάντα θεά νημερτέα εἶπεν*; 'Was it all true? I fear it was,' see Fäsi ad loc.; Plat. Theaet. 145 b *ὄρα μή παίζων ἐλεγεν*; 'Was he joking? See to it'; Soph. Ant. 1253 *εἰσόμεσθα μή τι . . . καλύπτει*; 'Is she concealing something? We shall find out' (Goodwin 369 note); Thuc. 3. 53 *φοβούμεθα μή ἀμφοτέρων ἡμαρτήκαμεν*; So with Subjunctive in the sense of a Future: Il. 11. 470 *δεῖδω μή τι πάθῃσιν*; Plat. Gorg. 512 d *ὄρα μή ἄλλο τι . . . ᾗ*;

¹ In Sanskrit the Verb after *mā* is always enclitic (Delbrück 267) i.e. the clause was a principal one, not dependent, and the *mā* cannot be translated 'lest.' In really dependent sentences *nēd*, not *mā*, is used.

(3) Finally, even where we cannot print interrogatively we may fairly see a question underlying the use of *μή*. Instances in Homer are comparatively rare (Goodwin 315, Monro 361), while in Attic they are numerous and in later Greek preponderate (see Gildersleeve): the Greeks increasingly loved 'dubitantius loqui,' to view facts as possibilities.

A. *μή* before a Verb:

(a) After a Relative (Monro 359 b) Homer always has *οὐ*, except in Il. 2. 301 *ἐστὲ δὲ πάντες μάρτυροι οὗς μή κῆρες ἔβαν θανάτοιο φέρουσαι*, which contains the question 'Are some of you gone? Perhaps'; and so Soph. Ant. 546 *μηδ' ἄ μή 'θύγες ποιοῦ σεαυτῆς*, 'Had you a hand in it? No: then do not claim to have had.' So after a 'final' Relativial particle: *ἵνα μή γένηται* is a less original way of saying *μή γένηται*, which (see 2 β) is really interrogative.

(β) In Protasis. A hypothetical sentence may be viewed either affirmatively, 'This is so, then that follows,' or interrogatively, 'Is this so? then that follows.' To the first form belong the Sanskrit hypothetical sentence, which always has the direct negative *ná*, not *má* (Speijer 405 Rem. 2), and the Greek use of *οὐ* after *εἰ*:⁶ Homer always (with one exception, Od. 9. 410, see Monro 359 c) has *εἰ οὐ* with Indicative unless the natural order of the clauses is reversed and the apodosis put first, and so Soph. Aj. 1131 *εἰ . . οὐκ ἔρῃς*, Thuc. 1. 121 fin. *εἰ . . οὐκ ἀπεροῦσιν*, and with Subjunctive Il. 3. 288 *εἰ . . . οὐκ ἐθέλωσιν*, Plat. Apol. 25 b *εἰάν τε . . οὐ φῆτε* (Goodwin 384). We cannot explain such cases by saying that here the Negative forms one idea with the Verb, since this is equally true in all cases, e.g. Dem. 21. 205 *ἂν τε μή φῶ*, Thuc. 3. 68 *ὅποτε μή φαίεν*, 'the negative particle was treated originally like the prepositions, placed immediately before the Verb and closely connected with it' (Monro 355).—But the commoner way in Greek was to regard the Protasis as involving a question: *εἰ μή τι ἔχω οὔτι δίδωμι*, 'Have I nothing? then I give nothing.'

(γ) In Oratio Obliqua after *ὅτι* or *ὥς* the regular Negative is *οὐ*: Soph. Ant. 685 *ὅπως σὺ μή λέγεις ὀρθῶς τάδε* is a kind of anacoluthon for an interrogative *μή λέγεις ὀρθῶς τάδε*. But in later Greek (see Gildersleeve) *ὅτι μή* became common, reported state-

⁶ *εἰ* in itself no more necessitates *μή* than its compound *ἢ-εἰ* does, which is always followed by *οὐ*.

ments were regarded as involving questions.—Before Infinitive also *οὐ* is used (Goodwin 685), except where the narration is but half oblique, after Verbs like ‘hope, promise, swear, agree’: Il. 9. 132 *ὁμοῦμαι μὴ ποτε τῆς εὐνῆς ἐπιβήμεναι* (‘Shall I ever do it? I will swear an oath’), Thuc. 2. 101 *ἀπιστοῦντες αὐτὸν μὴ ἥξειν* (‘Would he come? They doubted’), and so 1. 139 *προῦλεγον . . μὴ ἂν γίνεσθαι πόλεμον*, as if it were ‘They agreed not to fight.’

(δ) *οὐ μὴ γένηται* (or *γενήσεται*) plainly, see Goodwin p. 391 note 1, contains the question *μὴ γένηται* (or *γενήσεται*); ‘Shall it be? No,’ and so—‘There is no question of its being.’

(ε) *ὥστε οὐ* with Infinitive (instances in Goodwin 598) contains an assertion, Soph. El. 780 *ὥστ’ οὔτε νυκτὸς ὕπνον . . ἐμέ στεγάζειν*, ‘I never slept: such was the consequence of my alarm,’ while the more usual *ὥστε μὴ* contains a question, ‘Did I ever sleep?’

(ζ) Before a Participle: *οὐ πιστεύων* involves the assertion ‘He disbelieves,’ *μὴ πιστεύων* (‘if he disbelieves’) the question ‘Does he believe?’ So Soph. Oed. Rex 397 *ὁ μὴδὲν εἰδὼς Οἰδίπους* (‘Do I know anything? Perhaps’), 289 *μὴ παρὼν θανμάζεται* (‘Is he here? It is strange if he is not,’ while *οὐ παρὼν* would involve a definite *οὐ πάρεστι*). So Thuc. 2. 40 fin. *εἰδὼς οὐκ . . ἀποδώσων*=‘He will not pay, and he knows it,’ while 2. 17 *προῆδει μὴ . . κατοικισθσόμενον*=‘Would it be occupied? The oracle knew,’ 1. 76 *ἴσμεν μὴ ἂν ἦσσαν ὑμᾶς λυπηροὺς γενομένους*=‘Would you have been gentler? We know all about *that*.’

B. *μὴ* before a Noun: Ar. Eccl. 115 *δεινὸν . . ἢ μὴ ῥμπειρία* involves the question ‘Is there experience?’, Thuc. 1. 137 fin. *τὴν τῶν γεφυρῶν . . οὐ διάλυσιν* contains the assertion *τὰς γεφύρας οὐ διέλυσαν*. So Thuc. 1. 22 *τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν* presupposes ‘Is there a mythical element in it? Perhaps not.’ In Soph. Aj. 1231 *ὄτ’ οὐδὲν ὦν τοῦ μὴδὲν ἀντέστην ὕπερ* we have both the assertion ‘You were worth nothing’ and the question ‘*Was* he worth anything?’—But in Thuc. 1. 118 *μὴ ταχεῖς* can only be a Byzantine gloss (see Rutherford, Thuc. IV. p. xxxiv) which has taken the place of the original *βραδεῖς*.

The particle *mā* is used (α) in Old Persian, the Gāthās, and Sanskrit, with the '*Injunctive*,' i.e. Aor. or Imperf., almost always unaugmented and so having no connotation of time;⁹ (β) in Old Persian, the younger Avesta, and Classical Sanskrit, with *Optative* (or '*Potential*'); and in the two former languages also with *Subjunctive* (in Old Persian only after *mātya*), while in Vedic both Moods almost always take *nā*, not *mā*; (γ) in Classical Sanskrit alone, see above, 2 γ, with *Imperative*; (δ) in Sanskrit epics with *Future*. In Sanskrit (see note 7), and therefore doubtless in the Iranian languages too, *mā*-clauses were always regarded as principal, not dependent; and I would explain them in just the same way as Greek *μη*-clauses, sec. 2, *i.e.* as really questions. The *Injunctive* then will be a 'timeless' Indicative, the *Subjunctive* a direct (the *Optative* a less direct) *Future*, the *Imperative* a *Future of command*.

⁹ The *Injunctive* in Sanskrit often takes *nā* instead of *mā*, Delbrück 203.