The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Conditional Sentences in Greek and Latin:—Indefinite Sentences in Greek

M. A. Bayfield

The Classical Review / Volume 6 / Issue 03 / March 1892, pp 90 - 92

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00185002, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00185002

How to cite this article:

M. A. Bayfield (1892). Conditional Sentences in Greek and Latin:—Indefinite Sentences in Greek. The Classical Review, 6, pp 90-92 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00185002

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

an old-Attic Thucydides was a comparative rarity by the time of Demosthenes, as the process of modernization in spelling would be very rapid: it would occupy, in fact, much the same position as a black-letter Bible now. It is therefore improbable that all our MSS. can be referred to an old-Attic original. The alternative hypothesis is even less likely. Errors of transcription can therefore only be assumed where it can be shown that the usage of Thucydides differed from that of mature Attic: even here correction is rash. In the case of the Tragedians the improbability is even greater, since the orator Lycurgus (X. Orat. 841 F) passed a decree ordering the preparation of an 'Authorized Version,' from which, we may be sure, all subsequent copies would come.

The view here put forward as to errors in transcription into the Euclidean alphabet, as distinct from the itacism of later copyists, is in harmony with Mr. Monro's words (*H. G.*

2nd ed. p. 385): the change, he says, 'would not lead to practical difficulty with a living language.' Of the language of Homer we know actually more in some respects, chiefly owing to the help of Comparative Philology, than did Plato: it would be rash to say we know more of that of Thucydides than did Demosthenes. Accordingly Mr. Marchant's view (in his admirable edition of Thuc. II. p. xxviii.) that 'some of the earliest errors are probably due to the transcribing of his history into the Ionic alphabet after his death' must be pronounced improbable. Nor does Prof. Jebb's preference (in *Soph. Ant.* 572) of Αἴμων of other MSS. over Αἴμων of the Laurentian receive any support from the fact that 'Soph. would have written AIMON,' unless it can be shown that the Attic feeling as to preference of nom. to voc. or *vice versa* in such phrases had changed by 325 B.C.

FRANK CARTER.

CONDITIONAL SENTENCES IN GREEK AND LATIN:—INDEFINITE SENTENCES IN GREEK.

II.

IN May 1890 the editor of the *Classical Review* was good enough to publish a paper in which I ventured to assail the received views held on certain Conditional Sentences in Greek and Latin and Indefinite Sentences in Greek. The paper was in substance the same as one I had read before the Cambridge Philological Society in May 1889. Since the latter date my contentions have been several times adversely criticised in this *Review*; by Mr. Seaton in a brief note in September 1889, by Mr. Caskie Harrison in July 1890, and lastly by Mr. Clapp in Nov. 1891. Also Mr. Whitelaw, who has taken great interest in the discussion, has been so kind as to communicate to me privately two papers in which he maintains with his usual lucidity and vigour the accepted views. Some reply, or an acknowledgment of defeat, seems now due from me, and I proceed to offer the former. I am really sorry to say that at present at any rate I cannot strike my colours.

1. *Conditional Sentences.*—I wrote 'No Conditional Sentence can *of itself* convey any implication either as to the facts or the speaker's impression of the facts. The hearer knows (if he knows at all) whether

the condition is or is not fulfilled, by independent knowledge already in his possession.' Mr. Clapp calls this an 'inexplicable assertion.' Mr. Seaton admits that he 'cannot at the moment point to a case in which this information is conveyed by the conditional sentence alone,' but adds 'that fact by no means proves that it could not have been so conveyed.' But in what part of such sentences as εἰ ἐποίησεν (ἐποίησε), ἤδίκησεν (ἤδίκησε) ἄν, *si fecisset* &c. is the information conveyed? The only answer I can get from those who maintain this view is 'In the sentence'; which reminds me of the art-critic in *Punch* who being pressed to say *where* was the beauty in a certain picture which enraptured him, while he admitted every single detail to be bad, could only continue to repeat 'In the pictchar.' Until a few weeks ago I thought I had my audacious opinion all to myself, when to my surprise I stumbled on the following passage in Kühner's *Grammar*, vol. 3, p. 972.¹

¹ I owe an apology to readers of the *Review* for not having noticed the passage before; but it occurs in his introductory remarks to the Conditional Sentence, and I passed it over thinking it would only express the ordinary view.

‘Die Verneinung der Wirklichkeit liegt nicht in der Form des Ausdrückes selbst; denn der Indikativ der historischen Zeitformen bezeichnet nothwendig immer eine vergangene Erscheinung oder Wirklichkeit: *du hattest (besasest), gabst*; die Verneinung ist bloss eine gefolgerte.’ He goes on to show that it is ‘gefolgerte’ through that independent knowledge of which I spoke above:—‘z.B. wenn du Etwas hattest, so gabst du; nun aber hast du, *wie ich weiss*, nichts gehabt; aus diesem Gegensatz wird nun auf die Nichtwirklichkeit der einen wie der anderen Handlung geschlossen.’ My critics will not be surprised if I say that on this great scholar’s support I make bold for the present to rest; and I hope Mr. Seaton will no longer feel any hesitation about joining me. It is the more strange that Professor Goodwin can (apparently) maintain that in such sentences *εἰ ᾗλθε*, when a main condition, implies its own non-fulfilment, when he admits (as of course he must) that it does not do so as a sub-condition.

But if non-fulfilment is not necessarily implied by the form of the expression, is it inseparable from it? Why should it be? Mr. Whitelaw admits that ‘it is possible to frame sentences [of the type in question] in which this [non-fulfilment of condition] is not necessarily implied,’ but adds that ‘usage has stamped sentences of this form with the sense of non-fulfilment.’ He thus grants the very basis of my ‘inexplicable assertion.’ So also does Mr. Harrison, who writes ‘the unreality, though a secondary acquisition, has become inherent.’ I venture to affirm that although in 99 cases out of a 100 we know by independent knowledge, or from the frequency of the formula correctly guess, that the condition is unfulfilled, in the 100th we know nothing at all about it, any more than the speaker himself, who has formed no opinion; while in many sentences of the class the condition is actually fulfilled. I claim to have shown this by some of the examples in my former paper, though I confess that others (*Verres* 3. 29 and *Aen.* 6. 879, for instance) are not in point. Mr. Harrison disposes of *Livy* 22. 24, *Verr.* 4. 23, *Cic. Man.* 11, as ‘potentials of the past not yet developed into unrealed.’ But the translation of *qui videret...diceret* is if any man had seen, he would (not could) have said; and even ‘potentials’ always imply a condition, and the condition is frequently expressed. So *Xen. Hell.* 3. 4. 18 ἐπερώσθη ἄν τις ἰδὼν means a man would (not could or might) have been cheered, if he had seen.

These are general hypothetical statements with a condition appended or implied which we know must have been fulfilled in numberless instances.

The attempts to deal with my Stoic and Wasp example are as unsuccessful as I could wish. Mr. Harrison says, ‘in rendering...I must first determine whether or not I deny that a wasp ever stung a Stoic[!]; for the former interpretation I use only the past unreal formula: for the latter I use iterative, indefinite, general forms, including the Latin imperf. subj. in both members.’ That is to say that when, after reflection, he has come to the conclusion that the ancient wasp did not regard Stoics as *sacrosancti*, he will use one of the formulae in dispute. Perhaps he will rejoin that he is forming his sentence on *Hor. Sat.* i. 3. 4 *Caesar si peteret, non proficeret*; but what if I claim this and kindred sentences as making for my contention? Mr. Whitelaw in dealing with the example adds what he conceives to be the circumstances attending the observation:—‘Somebody has been stung and has jumped. He pleads, or his friends plead for him, “even a Stoic in Chrysippus’ time would have done the same”; the unreal supposition being “If instead of happening to him now, the thing had happened to a Stoic in the time of Chrysippus”.’ But I gave no surroundings, and I now offer the example again thus:—‘Gentlemen, I propose for our discussion this evening *The Limits of Self-control*. By way of a start I make the following proposition, “Even Chrysippus, when far advanced in Stoic discipline, would have jumped, if a wasp had stung him”; *Vel Chrysippus, cum tantos progressus haberet in Stoicis, subsiliret (subsiluisset?), si vespa eum momordisset*.’ Mr. Clapp writes, ‘when we say “Even a Stoic” &c., the form of the sentence shows that the writer is thinking of the case as not having actually taken place.’ But this is to beg the very question we are discussing; and see immediately above. What did Madvig think when he restored the *si* in the following passage—*Cic. Tusc.* ii. 60? *Quia, si, cum tantum operae philosophiae dedissem, dolorem tamen ferre non possem, satis esset argumenti malum esse dolorem. Plurimos autem annos in philosophia consumpsi nec ferre possum: malum est igitur dolor*.¹

¹ Mr. Whitelaw’s explanation of this passage is similar to the one ordinarily given of *Hor. Sat.* i. 3. 4 *Caesar si peteret, non proficeret*.—‘I stood to prove or disprove to myself in my own person the doctrine that pain is no evil: if, after all my application to philosophy, I gave way to pain, then it would be proved [that would be proof enough: *would be* =

Again it must be obvious that in all cases of alternative and mutually exclusive conditions this rule of non-fulfilment cannot hold. Take this instance:—A medical man lets himself into a sick man's house and says to himself, 'I wonder if he is dead, the house is very quiet; but still it would be equally quiet, whether he were dead or not.' Mr. Whitelaw says that my Latin and Greek for this (εἴτε ἐτεθνήκει, εἴτε μὴ, ὁμοίως ἂν ἦν ἡσυχος ἡ οἰκία : *sive esset, sive non esset mortuus, tacerent omnia*) would mean that, in the speaker's opinion, the patient was neither dead nor not dead! But can I never put such an abstract proposition as the following as a basis for argument:—*nonne hoc verum? si dedisses, haberem; si non dedisses, non haberem* (εἰ ἔδωκας, εἶχον ἂν, εἰ δὲ μὴ, οὐ)?¹ Mr. Whitelaw's remark seems to me to reduce the rule *ad absurdum*.

The following examples speak for themselves and, I think, for me. Dem. 28. 5 ἀλλ' ἐρῆν, ἐπεὶ δὲ τάχιστα ἐτελεύτησεν ὁ πατήρ... παρασημειῖσθαι κελεύσαι τὰς διαθήκας, ἵν' εἰ τι ἐγίνετο ἀμφισβητήσιμον (the very thing that did happen), ἦν εἰς τὰ γράμματα ταῦτ' ἐπαγγελθεῖν. Id. 29. 47 εἰ μὲν τοίνυν ὁ πατήρ ἠπίσταιτούτοις, δῆλον ὅτι οὐκ ἂν τὰλλα ἐπέτρεπεν οὗτ' ἂν ἐκεῖν' οὕτω καταλιπὼν αὐτοῖς ἔφραζεν ὥστε πῶθεν ἴσασιν; εἰ δ' ἐπίστανεν, οὐκ ἂν δήπου τὰ μὲν πλείστ' αὐτοῖς τῶν χρημάτων ἐνεχείρισε, τὼν δ' οὐκ ἂν κυρίους ἐποίησεν. Id. 25. 69 εἰ τοίνυν τις ὀφείλειεν τιν' ἡγίατο χρήματα, ὁ δ' ἡρνεῖτο, εἰ μὲν ἐφαίνοντο αἶ τε συνθῆκαι καθ' ἃς ἐδανείσατο κείμεναι καὶ οἱ τεθέντες ὅροι ἐστηκότες, τὸν ἀρνούμενον ἡγείσθ' ἂν ἀναιδῇ δηλονότι, εἰ δ' ἀνρημένα ταῦτα, τὸν ἐγκαλοῦντα. Id. 23. 96 πολλὰ γὰρ προφάσεις εἰσὶ δι' ἃς πολλάκις ὑμεῖς ἐξηπάτησθε. οἷον εἰ τι τῶν ἡλωκότων ψηφισμάτων παρ' ὑμῖν μὴ ἐγράφη, κύριον ἂν δήπουθεν ἦν καὶ μὴν παρὰ τοὺς νόμους γ' ἂν εἴρητο. καὶ εἰ τί γε γραφὴν ἢ καθυφέντων τῶν κατηγορῶν ἢ μὴ δυνηθέντων μηδὲν διδάξαι ἀπέφυγε, καὶ τοῦτο οὐδὲν κωλύει παράνομον εἶναι.

But even if the rule could be shown to be sound, I should hold that, whereas it is now made the basis of the classification of Conditional Sentences, it is for teaching purposes worse than useless. (To show this was the main object of my former paper.) The fourth—*ἐμελλεν ἔσεσθαι* that pain was an evil. And now, I have devoted' &c. He thinks the time referred to is not present. Perhaps; but after all, my view of the sentences covers such passages as these: an independent conditional sentence is couched in one of the forbidden formulae, and the condition is not unfulfilled. I should translate:—'Suppose me not to have been able..., although I had applied myself..., that would be proof enough' &c. The time of *esset* might be present, even though that of *possem* were past.

¹ I am aware that in Latin the indicative was usually preferred for alternative conditions.

form boy, even if he stops to think, cannot distinguish between actually contrary to fact and 'subjectively contrary to fact' (to use Mr. Clapp's neat but for schoolboys self-condemnatory phrase), and so blunders hopelessly. If he turns this kind of sentence correctly, he is guided, as I fancy most of us were at his stage, firstly by the time referred to and secondly by the *would have* and *if...had* of the English.

2. *Indefinite Sentences.* Prof. Goodwin, Mr. Arthur Sidgwick, Mr. F. E. Thompson and others distinguish Greek Conditional Sentences as (1) Ordinary and (2) General, and they call εἰ τι μὴ φέρομεν, ὥτρυνεν φέρειν—I think 'General,' but am not quite sure. I submit (1) that these two terms are so alike as to be indistinguishable without special effort by the ordinary or general boy: (2) such sentences as the one just quoted from the *Alcestis* are not essentially conditional at all; the protasis (as the apodosis shows) is always fulfilled and merely designates the *time-when* of the apodosis. It is, therefore, in fact a temporal clause. If any one, after considering the new classification which I propose, still thinks the old is better, there is no more to be said.

I further proposed to exclude from the class 'Indefinite' all sentences in which the *time* is not indefinite, and I attempted to show how this could be done and the desirability of doing it. The present classification confuses indefinite-time sentences with ordinary relative sentences (whereas the moods respectively required are not the same), and this (I wrote in my former paper) 'with injurious consequences to learners.' I am now disposed to add, howsoever at my peril, 'and to others besides.' To my amazement two most eminent scholars, one from each University, tell me they believe *ὅστις ἂν ᾄδῃ* to be good Attic Greek for *whosoever is singing at this moment*. According to my present lights I believe *ὅστις ᾄδει* to be the only good rendering of this English and *ὅστις ἂν ᾄδῃ* to be absolutely incorrect, and I ask for an example from the literature. The present classification (confusion?) of 'Indefinite' Sentences turns upon this point, and until the crucial instance is produced, I hope my *ἀμετάπειστον* will be regarded as excusable.

M. A. BAYFIELD.

P.S.—If the present classification is too dear to be abandoned, what do the grammarians say to calling the first class 'Ordinary Conditional Sentences' and the second class 'Extraordinary Conditional Sentences'?