

Potential and Contrary-To-Fact Conditionals in Classical Greek*)

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Summary: In classical Greek the modal categories of possibility and impossibility seem at first sight strictly distinct: optative inflection is used in potential conditions¹⁾ (the speaker presents fulfilment of the condition as possible, and no more than that). Secondary indicatives are used in contrary-to-fact conditions (the speaker presents fulfilment of the condition as impossible).

Nevertheless, the following questions arise:

1. Both potential and contrary-to-fact conditions referring to the present occur in contexts where they are contrasted with factual situations. What determines the choice between them?
2. What determines the choice of the tense of the secondary indicative in contrary-to-fact conditions?

0. Introduction

Traditionally, in general linguistic or language-specific literature, the following grammatical criteria are used to roughly divide conditionals into two categories. The first category consists of conditionals with an indicative, the so-called open or neutral conditions: the speaker gives no indication concerning the likelihood of fulfilment of the condition, e. g. English 'If it is raining I shall stay at home'. In the other group of conditionals an indication concerning the likelihood of fulfilment is given: the speaker considers fulfilment quite possible, possible and no more than that (the so-called potential condition) or impossible (the so-called contrary-to-fact condition). Means other than the indicative are used: in languages with a full subjunctive inflection (or whatever other name it may have) the values 'possible' and 'impossible' are usually connected with these verbal forms, as in Latin and German. In languages in which 'subjunctive' inflection is lacking, modal past and modal past perfect are

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¹⁾ I shall use the following terms and definitions: conditional period: (the whole of) a - conditional - subordinate clause and main clause: protasis and apodosis; conditional = conditional clause: protasis of a conditional period; condition: the stipulation, terms or hypothesis expressed in the protasis of a conditional period.

often used, as in English and Dutch, e.g. 'If it were raining, I would stay at home' and 'If it had been raining, I would have stayed at home'. In classical Greek the system of these conditionals is even more elaborate than that described above because of the existence of three basically opposed formal categories: (i) conditional clauses with subjunctive ('prospective subjunctive'),²⁾ indicating that the speaker presents fulfilment of the condition as quite possible; (ii) conditionals with optative ('potential condition') indicating that the speaker presents fulfilment of the condition as possible and no more than that; (iii) conditionals with secondary indicative ('contrary-to-fact conditions' with reference to the present, especially in the case of a secondary present indicative or a secondary perfect indicative, or with reference to the past, especially in the case of an aorist indicative) indicating that the speaker presents fulfilment of the condition as impossible (lost possibility).³⁾

This article deals with two problems posed in classical Greek by the group of conditionals in which some indication is given as to the likelihood of fulfilment, focusing on potential and contrary-to-fact conditionals.

I. First problem: the choice between potential condition and contrary-to-fact condition with present reference

I.1. Introductory remarks

Generally speaking, the choice between potential conditions and contrary-to-fact conditions with present reference would seem to depend primarily on the view of the speaker concerning the fulfilment of the condition. It should be noted, however, that both types of conditional may occur in contexts where they are afterwards contrasted with factual situations, often marked by expressions like *ἀλλὰ νῦν* or *νῦν δέ*,⁴⁾ e.g.

²⁾ For the terminology and the distinctions used here cp. Ruijgh (1971: esp. 227–302) and Rijksbaron (1980, 1984).

³⁾ The definition 'lost possibility' seems to be a better characterisation of the contrary-to-fact condition than simply 'impossibility'. A sentence like 'If he had come, he would have told us everything' can only be used if there was a moment in the past at which a future realisation was still possible, so at which 'if he comes, he will tell us everything' could still become true. Basset (1979: 147, 177) speaks of a combination of a prospective and a retrospective vision.

⁴⁾ In these cases the meaning of *νῦν* is not strictly temporal ('now', 'at this moment'), but more metaphorical ('now', 'in actuality/reality').

- (1) (*τὰς οὐράς μακράς*) *τὰς εἴ τις ἐπεὶ σφι ἐπέλκειν, ἔλκεα ἂν ἔχοιεν ... νῦν δ' ἅπας τις τῶν ποιμένων ἐπίσταται ξυλοργέειν ἐς τοσοῦτον ἄμαξίδας γὰρ ποιεῦντες ὑποδέουσι αὐτὰς τῆσι οὐρῆσι ...* ('if one were to allow them [= the sheep] to trail these [sc. long tails] behind them, they would have wounds. In reality, however, every shepherd knows enough about carpentry to make little carts and fix them under the tails', Hdt. 3,113,1)
- (2) ... *νῦν εἰ φοβερόν τι ἐνωρῶμεν, πᾶν ἂν σοι προεφράζομεν. νῦν δὲ ... αὐτοί τε θαρσέομεν καὶ σοὶ ἕτερα τοιαῦτα παρακελεύομεθα* ('if we saw any danger in the present situation we would tell you without reserve. But now we are confident ourselves and advise you to adopt a similar attitude', Hdt. 1,120,6)

Apparently, then, these two constructions are semantically highly similar. It must be asked, therefore, whether the assessment of the likelihood of fulfilment of a certain condition is determined by specific factors.

The traditional grammars⁵⁾ of classical Greek are silent about this question, although some of them⁶⁾ do mention the occurrence of both types of conditional in seemingly identical contexts.

Three factors will be shown to influence the choice of the mood (alone or in combination): two linguistic, interdependent factors (I.2 and I.3), and a more rhetorical or pragmatic one (I.4). It will be argued that all three of them are also relevant for other languages in that they are found among those factors that account for a different semantic interpretation of the subjunctive, or its substitute, the modal past.

I.2. The time referred to

I.2.1. The time referred to: normal pattern

It should be noticed that the near-equivalence of potential and contrary-to-fact conditionals suggested by examples (1) and (2) is by no means a general phenomenon. Using the time referred to by the

⁵⁾ For discussions of potential and contrary-to-fact conditionals, see Humbert 223–225; Kühner-Gerth II 477–480; Schwyzler-Debrunner II 685–687; Goodwin 147–151, 168–170; Stahl 396–412. For a modern approach see Seiler (1971), who proposes some abstract structures representing the semantic properties of the verbal moods in Greek.

⁶⁾ Humbert 223; Kühner-Gerth II 480; Stahl 403, 408, 410.

state of affairs⁷⁾ of the subordinate clause as a criterion we may distinguish the following normal pattern: a potential condition (fulfilment is still considered possible) usually refers to a time following the moment of speaking, whether it be just after the moment of speaking, or longer afterwards (so really in the future). In an English sentence like 'if he inherited his uncle's fortune, he would be rich', we can insert adverbs referring to the future such as 'later on' or 'tomorrow'. A contrary-to-fact condition with past indicative, however, refers to the present only. One can always insert 'now' in the subordinate clause, cp. 'if he were here (now), the party would be more successful'.

In Greek the same holds good: potential conditions with optative usually refer to the future. Often the future reference is made clear in various other ways:

a) insertion of temporal adverbs with future reference or of adverbs meaning 'again', 'once more' etc.:

(3) οὐτ' ἂν κελύσαιμι οὐτ' ἂν, εἰ θέλοις ἔτι πράσσειν, ἐμοῦ γ' ἂν ἠδέως δρώης μετὰ ('I would not urge you, nor if you should still want to help me, would you be welcome as a worker with me', *S. Ant.* 69)

(4) ... ἀφ' ὧν ἂν τις σκοπῶν, εἴ ποτε καὶ αὐθις ἐπιπέσοι, μάλιστ' ἂν ἔχοι τι προειδῶς μὴ ἀγνοεῖν, ταῦτα δηλώσω ('I shall describe the symptoms by which any one who knows them beforehand may recognise the disease, if it should ever reappear', *Th.* 2, 48, 3)

b) future indicative, optative of wish, imperative or adhortative subjunctive in the main clause:

(5) ἀτὰρ τοσοῦτόν γ' οὐ δυνήσομαί ποτε, ... οὐδ' εἰ γυναικῶν πᾶν κρεμασθεῖη γένος ('but I shall never be capable of so much, not even if the whole race of women were hanged', *E. Hipp.* 1252)

(6) κάκιστ' ἀπολοίμην, εἴ τί σ' αἰτήσαιμι ἔτι ('May I perish miserably, if I asked you anything else', *Ar. Ach.* 476)

(7) ὑμῶν δὲ μηδεὶς νομίση περὶ βραχέος ἂν πτολεμεῖν, εἰ τὸ Μεγαρέων ψήφισμα μὴ καθέλοιμεν ('let none of you imagine that he would be fighting for a small matter if we were to refuse to annul the Megarian decree', *Th.* 1, 140, 4)

⁷⁾ The terminology used in this section is the one developed within the framework of Functional Grammar, cp. e.g. Dik (1978; forthc.). The term 'state of affairs' designates the situation or action to which the whole of the predicate and its obligatory constituents (arguments) refers.

c) situational or contextual factors:

- (8) *άνηρ μὲν ἄν μοι ἄλλος γένοιτο, εἰ δαίμων ἐθέλοι, καὶ τέκνα ἄλλα, εἰ ταῦτα ἀποβάλοιμι* ('another husband I might get, if a god so willed, and other children, if I were to lose these', Hdt. 3, 119, 6)

Reference is evidently to the future, as appears from the situation: the Persian king has imprisoned the family of the woman speaking here with the intention to put them to death. Moved by her lamentations he grants her the life of one of them. She chooses her brother rather than her husband or one of her children, motivating her choice with the sentence cited above.⁸⁾

Factors a, b, and c will, of course, often be combined, cp. (5) and (6), in which the adverbs *ποτε* and *ἔτι* refer to the future. In sentences of this type a possible future situation is opposed to the real situation of the moment of speaking, which is usually implicitly or explicitly given in the context. The main clause contains the consequences of that possible future situation, usually an advice, a deliberation or a reflection about a possible future situation, in direct and sometimes in indirect speech.

On the other hand, a contrary-to-fact conditional marked by the imperfect indicative usually refers to the present only, e. g.

- (9) *οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἔλεγον, εἰ μὴ μεγάλως ἐκηδόμην συναπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος* ('I would not speak, if I had not a great care for all Hellas', Hdt. 9, 45, 1)

There is clearly reference to the present: the man speaks because he does, in fact, have a great care for Hellas, as appears from the context.

In conclusion it may be said that, whenever a speaker wants to refer to the future, he can only use the optative, and there cannot be an opposition with a contrary-to-fact conditional.⁹⁾

⁸⁾ By the choice of the *potential* condition *εἰ ἀποβάλοιμι* it is, as it were, suggested, that the woman does not want to present the loss of her children as an event *to be expected* (in that case a subjunctive with *ἄν* would have been chosen); in spite of the terrible situation she hopes to save them. This hope will, however, only partly come true.

⁹⁾ In fact, in these cases there is an opposition between the potential optative, the prospective subjunctive and the future indicative. The exact factors determining the choice between these alternatives, however, fall outside the scope of this article. See e. g. Rijksbaron (forthc.).

I.2.2. The time referred to: the problematic case

Although in most sentences with a potential optative the future is referred to (see I.2.1.), there are also cases in which there is clearly present reference. 'Present reference' includes all those examples which are, in some way or another, relevant for the ongoing discourse of that moment, i.e. in my definition 'present reference' is somewhat wider than purely the moment of speaking itself. I would, for instance, still speak of present reference in (10), although the *λέγειν* has not yet begun, because Electra wants her sister to speak *right now*.¹⁰⁾

- (10) *εἴ μοι λέγοις τὴν ὄψιν, εἴποιμ' ἂν τότε* ('If you told me the dream, then I might say that', S. *El.* 413)

Two other examples of a potential optative with present reference:

- (11) *Ἐν γάρ μ' ἄμειψαι μοῦνον ὧν σ' ἀνιστορῶ. εἴ τις σε ... αὐτίκ' ἐνθάδε κτείνουι ... , πότερα πυνθάνουι ἂν εἰ πατήρ σ' ὁ καίωνων ἢ τίνοι' ἂν εὐθέως;* ('I ask you to answer one thing only; if, here and now, someone were to attempt to kill you, would you ask if the killer was your father or would you take vengeance immediately?', S. *OC* 992)
- (12) *ἀεὶ μὲν ἔγωγέ σου τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἄγαμαι, ἀτὰρ καὶ νῦν ἐπαινῶ καὶ φιλῶ, ὥστε βουλοίμην ἂν χαρίζεσθαί σοι, εἴ μου δυνατὰ δέοιο* ('I always admire your love of knowledge, but especially do I commend and love it now, so that I should be very glad to oblige you, if you asked me things that are possible', Pl. *Prot.* 335 e1)

Now it should be observed that there is a very similar type of conditional clause, viz. contrary-to-fact conditionals with imperfect indicative, which also have present reference. The question arises, therefore, what is the exact opposition – if there is any – between potential conditionals with present reference and contrary-to-fact conditionals with present reference. Can this opposition be accounted for? I think it can, partly on the basis of the different semantic features of the states of affairs of the subordinate clauses (I.3) and partly on the basis of pragmatic factors (I.4).

¹⁰⁾ For the value 'right now' cp. the use of *λέγοις*, the present tense, instead of the aorist *εἴποις*. The present tense has an inceptive value in cases like (10) (Rijksbaron 1984: 47/48; Ruijgh 1985).

1.3. Type of state of affairs in the subordinate clause

To demonstrate the importance of the semantic features of the state of affairs of the subordinate clause, I shall first of all try to show that these semantic features play an important role in the interpretation of certain English conditional clauses. Some conditionals with modal past can only be interpreted as potential, others only as contrary-to-fact, whereas a third group may have both interpretations. It seems necessary to start by explaining the – semantic – typology of states of affairs. This section is mainly based on the theory of Functional Grammar as developed by Dik (1978; forthc.).

States of affairs can be divided into different semantic types, which appear to be relevant for the explanation of certain semantic and/or syntactic phenomena, e.g. to explain why instrumental constituents can be combined with a verb like ‘to cut down’, but not with ‘to fall down’ (Dik forthc.):

(13) He cut the tree down with an axe.

(14) *The tree fell down with an axe.

I should add here that this categorisation is often applied to verbs rather than to states of affairs, but verbs do not necessarily belong to one and the same semantic category in all sentences (Verkuyl 1972), cp.

(15) Mary painted portraits (for a year).

(16) Mary painted a portrait (*for a year).

Here it is the combination of the verb and its object that accounts for the possibility or impossibility of adding a durative adverb like ‘for a year’. So it seems better to distinguish types of state of affairs rather than types of verb.

I shall try to show that some of these divisions are relevant for the difference between contrary-to-fact and potential conditionals with present reference, that is to say that in Greek they are relevant for the choice between secondary indicative and optative, in other languages for the different semantic interpretations of the subjunctive or its substitute. On the whole, I shall follow the divisions proposed by Dik (forthc.).¹¹⁾

¹¹⁾ Although I know that some distinctions (esp. the definition of the feature ‘dynamic’) are not entirely clear and that some tests are problematic. I shall still make use of this typology, because the main lines, anyhow, are clear and relevant for the explanation of certain semantic and/or syntactic phenomena. For further discussion (esp. concerning the features dynamic and telic/change) within the

As distinguishing semantic features which seem relevant to all languages, Dik mentions:

- a) +/- dynamic [\pm dyn]: a state of affairs is dynamic, if it involves at least some kind of change, i. e., if (at least one of) the entities involved is/are not the same at all points of time of the interval during which the state of affairs obtains. Dynamic states of affairs can be combined with adverbs of speed which specify the internal structure of the state of affairs as such, as opposed to non-dynamic states of affairs:

(17) John was at home (*quickly)¹²)

(18) John came home quickly

Within the group of dynamic states of affairs a distinction can be made between:

- b) +/- telic [\pm tel]: a state of affairs is telic if it reaches a natural end point, if it is fully achieved. The following criteria can be used:

- a non-telic state of affairs can be combined with adverbs like 'for an hour' (cp. example (15)), a telic state of affairs with adverbs like 'in an hour'.

(19) She painted the portrait in an hour

- When a non-telic state of affairs is interrupted at a certain point, the part which obtained before that interruption is the

framework of Functional Grammar, see esp. Vester (1983), de Groot (1983). Outside the framework of Functional Grammar, see e.g. Vendler (1967), Verkuyl (1972) and Dowty (1979: esp. 51–132).

¹²) It must be noted that a sentence like 'quickly, John was at home' is possible. In sentences of this kind, however, the adverb of speed specifies the lapse of time *before* the state of affairs in question is realised, not the internal structure of the state of affairs as such.

For a similar observation concerning classical Greek, cp. Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1173 a 34 ff.), who remarks the following about the ingressive aorist *ἦσθῆναι* and the present stem *ἦδεσθαι* (so in FG-terminology it could be said that in fact two kinds of state of affairs are concerned: the ingressive aorist presenting a dynamic state of affairs, the present *ἦδεσθαι* a non-dynamic one): *ἦσθῆναι μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ ταχέως ὥσπερ ὀργισθῆναι, ἦδεσθαι δ' οὐ, οὐδὲ πρὸς ἕτερον, βαδίζειν δὲ καὶ αὐξέσθαι καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα. μεταβάλλειν μὲν οὖν εἰς τὴν ἡδονὴν ταχέως καὶ βραδέως ἐστίν, ἐνεργεῖν δὲ κατ' αὐτὴν οὐκ ἐστὶ ταχέως, λέγω δ' ἦδεσθαι.* ('One can *become* pleased quickly, just as one can get angry, but not *be* pleased, not even in comparison with someone else, as one can walk or grow, etc. Thus it is possible to pass into a state of pleasure quickly or slowly, but not to actualise that state (i. e. be pleased) quickly').

same kind of state of affairs. So if the state of affairs described by 'Mary was painting' is interrupted, one can say that up to that moment 'Mary has painted'. This does not hold good for telic states of affairs. If 'Mary was painting a portrait' is interrupted it is not implied that up to that moment 'Mary has painted a portrait'.

Within telic states of affairs a distinction has to be made between:

- c) +/- momentaneous [\pm mom]: a state of affairs is momentaneous if it has no duration, if its beginning and end point can not be distinguished. Some criteria:
 - non-momentaneous states of affairs may be combined (unlike momentaneous states of affairs) with aspectual verbs like 'to begin', 'to keep on', 'to finish', 'to stop':

- (20) She finished painting the portrait
- (21) *She finished reaching the school

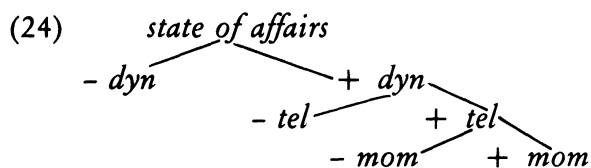
- the combination of a non-momentaneous state of affairs with the adverb 'almost' or 'nearly' yields an ambiguous sentence:

- (22) She almost opened the door

This sentence can be interpreted in two ways: A) the state of affairs in question is nearly attained, and B) she almost finished opening the door, i.e. she almost opened the door entirely. In case of 'almost' combined with a momentaneous state of affairs only interpretation A holds good:

- (23) She almost reached the school.

In summary, features a, b, and c can be interrelated as follows:



Thus, in the case of [$+/-$ mom] the implication is that the state of affairs is [$+ tel, + dyn$] too (the latter features are in this respect redundant) and in the case of [$+ tel$] the implication is that that state of affairs is [$+ dyn$] too. In the case of [$- dyn$] the distinction

between [+ tel] and [- tel] or between [+ mom] and [- mom] is irrelevant, as is the distinction between [+ mom] and [- mom] in the case of [- tel].

- d) The fourth universally important feature is +/- control [\pm con]. A state of affairs is controlled if one of the entities involved has the power to determine whether or not the state of affairs will obtain. A criterion for [+ con] is the possibility to occur with verbs like 'to persuade', 'to decide' and to occur in the imperative. The exact interrelation with the other features is differently sketched by different authors.¹³⁾ I will not deal with this problem because the feature appears to be of no importance for the question of the choice between optative and contrary-to-fact indicative.¹⁴⁾

The exact relevance for our problem of the semantic features mentioned above may be illustrated by the following English examples in which the states of affairs of the subordinate clauses belong to different semantic classes:¹⁵⁾

- (25) if I *earned a little more money*, I would buy that book [+ dyn, - tel]
(26) if I *found/were to find some money*, I would buy that book [+ dyn, + tel, + mom]

¹³⁾ Vester (1983: 20) distinguishes first [+/- con], then within each group [+/- dyn]; Dik (forthc.) distinguishes first [+/- dyn], then within each group [+/- con]; De Groot (1983: 75) presents a totally different picture.

¹⁴⁾ Both [+ con] states of affairs and [- con] states of affairs occur in potential conditionals and in contrary-to-fact conditionals with present reference, so that this feature appears not to be distinguishing:

- if John arrived now, I would be happy (potential condition; [- con])
- if John were to sing now, I would be happy (pot. cond.; [+ con])
- if John were rich, he would buy that house (contrary-to-fact; [- con])
- if John were singing, I would hear him (contrary-to-fact; [+ con])

¹⁵⁾ It must be kept in mind that the English examples are only meant to give a background for the situation in classical Greek (see I. 3. 1), and not to offer a full account of all the possibilities in English. For instance, it seems important to take into consideration the main clause and especially the differences in interpretation due to the choice of a different person, cp.

- if I had some money on me, I would be happy (contrary-to-fact)
- if he had some money on him, I would be happy (contrary-to-fact or potential condition, if the sentence is interpreted as 'if it appeared, that ...')

However, these differences fall outside the scope of this article.

Another interesting problem not dealt with here are the factors accounting for the differences in implications of seemingly similar conditionals, e.g. (25) and (28).

- (27) if I *had some money on me* (now), I would buy that book [- dyn]
- (28) if John *Painted a portrait*, he would certainly show it to me [+ dyn, + tel, - mom]
- (29) if he *arrived* (now), I would be happy [+ dyn, + tel, + mom]
- (30) if he *were at ill*, he would (now) be at home [- dyn]
- (31) if he *were home*, I would be happy [- dyn]
- (32) This is my opinion. If it *were not true*, the results would be different [- dyn]
- (33) If a man *were always serious-minded*, he would be an idiot [- dyn]

The interpretation of the sentences (25) and (28) is ambiguous. They can be seen as potential conditions: the speaker thinks it possible that he will earn more money at some future time (25) or that John will once be painting a portrait (28). The other possible interpretation is a contrary-to-fact one: the speaker presents the realisation of the state of affairs of the subordinate clause as impossible. In (25) the speaker may continue by saying e.g. 'but I don't, so I won't buy the book', in (28) by saying e.g. 'but he does not show me anything, so he is not painting'. So, evidently, the feature [+/- telic] of the state of affairs of the subordinate clause (the only difference between (25) and (28)) is of no importance for the distinction between potential and contrary-to-fact conditions with present reference.

On the other hand, the sentences (26) and (29), in which the states of affairs of the subordinate clauses are [+ mom], can only be interpreted as potential, whether the speaker considers realisation possible in a very near future, so that we can still speak of the 'present' ('now', 'right now', cp. I.2.2), or in a more distant future ('later on', 'once', etc.). How can this be explained? If a speaker wants to employ a present contrary-to-fact condition, he must necessarily be able to observe that the state of affairs of the subordinate clause does, in fact, not obtain at the moment of speaking. The fact that this moment of speaking itself has some duration (viz. the time needed to utter the sentence) makes it necessary that the state of affairs in question has some duration too. For instance, a present contrary-to-fact condition like 'if John were ill, ...' can only be used if the speaker observes or infers from the present situation that John is *not* ill. Momentaneous states of affairs, having no duration, cannot be used in this way. If it is known that the state of affairs is not

realised at the beginning of the moment (or perhaps better: the time) of speaking, a past contrary-to-fact condition is used, e.g. 'if he had arrived, I would be happy'. For this state of affairs cannot be continued during the 'moment' of speaking in such a way that a present contrary-to-fact condition could be used. On the other hand, if at the beginning of the 'moment' of speaking the person in question has not yet arrived, it is always possible that he will arrive even during the 'moment' of speaking, so that a speaker has to allow for this possibility and can only use a potential condition.

The sentences (27) and (30), however, are of an opposite character: the states of affairs of the subordinate clauses are non-dynamic. In these cases it is already evident at the 'moment' of speaking, whether the states of affairs have or have not been realised. There is no room for a possible realisation, so the conditional only has a contrary-to-fact interpretation. This only holds good in the case of purely present reference. Contrast e.g. (31) and (32), which are ambiguous: if only present reference is meant, they have a contrary-to-fact interpretation. But they may have future reference, too (the subordinate clauses are semantically equivalent to 'if it were to appear that he is at home' (31)/ 'that it is not true' (32)). In that case the conditionals are, of course, interpreted as potential. Compare also (33), an example of a timeless general proposition, in the form of a potential condition. In these cases too, as (33) shows, non-dynamic states of affairs may occur.¹⁶⁾

To conclude this section, it can be stated that especially the features [+ mom] and [- dyn] of the state of affairs of the subordinate clause¹⁷⁾ appear to be important criteria for a potential or contrary-to-fact interpretation of the modal past in English.¹⁸⁾

¹⁶⁾ In sentences of this kind in classical Greek (cp. 38) optatives are often used. There is no opposition with contrary-to-fact conditionals, but rather with the primary indicative in assertions. The optative gives the assertion a less certain character. Because opposition with contrary-to-fact conditionals is lacking I will not extensively deal with this type of sentence.

¹⁷⁾ The semantic type of the state of affairs of the main clause is not a determining factor here, cp. e.g. (25) - (27), in which [+ mom] is used in the main clauses of both potential and contrary-to-fact conditional periods, and (29) - (31) in which [- dyn] is used in the main clauses of both types of conditional period.

¹⁸⁾ As far as I know, this holds good for Dutch, French, German and Latin as well, whether they have a subjunctive inflection or a substitute for it. Perhaps the phenomena described here are universally relevant. Further research, however, would be necessary.

I.3.1. Type of state of affairs. Greek examples¹⁹⁾

In this section I shall try to show that in Greek the same phenomena are found, using the facts which I have found for English as a hypothesis for Greek. These English facts may be summarised for Greek by the following rules:²⁰⁾

- (34) 1. the state of affairs of the subordinate clause is [- dyn]:
 - state of affairs is presented as possible → optative (future reference)

¹⁹⁾ I have studied all examples in Hdt. and A. As to Soph., E., Ar., Pl., Th. and X. I have randomly taken a representative number of examples of each of the three groups (potential, past and present contrary-to-fact conditionals), i. e. ca. 20–25 examples per group per author.

²⁰⁾ Arranging the parameters used (time referred to and type of state of affairs) in another way, my conclusions can be sketched as follows:

Time referred to (in relation to moment of speaking) subordinate clause

a) future	potential conditional
b) present	SoA [+ dyn] → a. [+ tel, + mom]: pot. conditional b. [- tel] or [+ tel, - mom]: pot. conditional or pres. contrary-to-fact cond. SoA [- dyn] → contrary-to-fact cond.
c) timeless general	cp. note 16
d) past	past contrary-to-fact conditional

In the literature on potential and contrary-to-fact conditionals I have not found a similar representation. G. Lauerbach (1979: 212) presents a schema of this kind, but her distinctions do not seem sufficiently refined: she looks at the verb of the subordinate clause, rather than at the state of affairs (cp. I.3), and she only distinguishes the features [+ dyn] ('event verbs', in her opinion, only occur in hypothetical, i. e. potential, conditionals with present or future reference) and [- dyn] ('state verbs', in her opinion, only occur in present contrary-to-fact conditionals).

- state of affairs is presented as impossible → imperfect ind. (present reference)
- 2. the state of affairs of the subordinate clause is [+ mom]:
 - state of affairs can only be presented as possible → optative (future or present reference)
- 3. the state of affairs of the subordinate clause is [- mom] or [- tel]:
 - state of affairs is presented as possible → optative (fut. or pr. reference)
 - state of affairs is presented as impossible → imperfect ind. (present reference)

Examples:

1. The state of affairs of the subordinate clause is [- dyn] and is presented as possible: only potential optatives are found with future reference, cp. (8) in which a [- dyn] (*ἐθέλοι*) and a [+ mom] state of affairs (*ἀποβάλοιμι*) are combined. In the case of present reference and a [- dyn] state of affairs contrary-to-fact conditionals are found, e.g. (35):

(35) *εἰ γὰρ ἤμεν νησιῶται, τίνες ἂν ἀληπτότεροι ἦσαν;* ('if we were islanders, who would be more unassailable?', Th. 1,143,5)

Whenever a [- dyn] state of affairs in the optative is found present reference is impossible, because at the 'moment' of speaking it is already clear whether the state of affairs has been realised or not (see I.3.). So in the case of [- dyn] potential optatives we have to do with either clearly future reference as in (8) or with a more implicit future reference as in (36) (cp. (31) and (32) in English), in which *ἐθέλοις* is semantically equivalent to 'if it were to appear that you will'/'if you were to show that you are willing':

(36) *καὶ εἰ σὺ ἐθέλοις, ὅπερ καὶ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἔλεγον, μετὰ σοῦ ἂν ἤδιστα ταῦτα συνδιασκοποίην* ('and as I said at the beginning, if you were willing I should be delighted to examine this with you', Pl. *Prot.* 361d5)

Or we have to do with a timeless general hypothesis, in which there appear to be no selection restrictions at all for the type of state of affairs chosen (especially with regard to the feature [\pm dyn]. Compare (37) and (38):

(37) *εἰ δ' ἄλις ἔλθοι Κύπρις, οὐκ ἄλλα θεὸς εὐχαρις οὕτως* [+ dyn] ('but if Cyprus were to come in moderation, there is no other goddess so winsome as she', E. *Med.* 630)

- (38) *εἰ ἐθέλοι κατεσπουδάσθαι αἰεὶ ... , λάθοι ἂν ἦτοι μανεῖς ἢ ὁ γε ἀπόπληκτος γενόμενος [- dyn]* ('if a man were always at serious work, he would go mad or silly before he knew it', Hdt. 2,173,4)

2. The state of affairs of the subordinate clause is [+ mom]: the state of affairs can only be presented as possible (see I.3. for the reasons why this is so), so only optatives are found with future reference (e.g. *ἀποβάλοιμι* in (8) and (39)) or present reference (cp. e.g. (11)):

- (39) *ἀλγῶ πὶ τοῖς παροῦσιν ὥστ' ἂν, εἰ σθένος λάβοιμι, δηλώσαιμι ἂν οἷ αὐτοῖς φρονῶ· νῦν δ' ἐν κακοῖς μοι πλεῖν ὑφειμένη δοκεῖ* ('I am pained at the present circumstances; so, if I were to find the strength, I would show what love I bear them; but now in these troubles it seems to me best to sail with slackened sail', S. *El.* 333)

3. The state of affairs of the subordinate clause is [- tel] or [+ tel, - mom] and is presented as possible: optatives are found. Reference can be to the future or to the present; for future reference, cp. (40) [+ dyn, - tel] and (41) [- mom], for present reference, cp. (12) [- tel] and (10) [- mom]:

- (40) *μιᾶ τε νίκη ναυμαχίας κατὰ τὸ εἶκός ἀλίσκονται· εἰ δ' ἀντίσχοιεν, μελετήσομεν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν πλέονι χρόνῳ τὰ ναυτικά* ('The chances are that, if they once lose a battle at sea, it will be all over with them. And supposing they do manage to hold out, then that will give us more time in which to improve our own naval tactics', Th. 1,121,4)
- (41) *πῶς ἂν ἐκ τούτων ἔτι πράσσοιμεν ὡς ἄριστα Περσικὸς λεώς; # εἰ μὴ στρατεύοισθ' ἐς τὸν Ἑλλήνων τόπον* ('How, after this, may we, the people of Persia, prosper best in time to come? # If you do not take the field against the land of the Greeks', A. *Per.* 790)

If, however, the state of affairs is presented as impossible, a contrary-to-fact conditional with present reference is found, cp. (42) [- tel] and (43) [- mom]:

- (42) *ταῦτα δὲ οὐκ ἂν ἐδύναντο ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ καὶ διαίτη μετρία ἐχρῶντο καὶ τὸ ὑγρὸν ἐκπονοῦντες ἀνήλισκον [+ dyn, - tel]* ('And this would not be possible for them, if they did not lead an abstemious life and throw off the moisture by hard work', X. *Cy.* 1,2,16)

- (43) *καὶ εἰ τοῦτο ἐποίουν ὃ σὺ κελεύεις . . . , οὐδενὸς ἂν βελτίων ἐφαινόμην οὐδ' ἂν ἐγένετο Πρωταγόρου ὄνομα ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλησιν* [-mom] ('and if I were to do that which you order, I would not appear to be better than anyone, nor would there be any fame of Protagoras among the Greeks', Pl. *Prot.* 335 a)

Conclusion: I hope to have shown that the Greek facts are highly similar to the English facts, be it that in Greek it is not a question of different interpretations of the modal past but of a choice of a different mood. The relevant factors are the features [+mom] and [-dyn] of the state of affairs of the subordinate clause. They are important especially in the domain of present reference²¹⁾ (see the question posed in I.2.2). In the case of a [+dyn] state of affairs the semantic features do not seem decisive for the choice between a potential and contrary-to-fact conditional and in this domain context and situation are in a high degree responsible for the choice. This brings us to the third relevant factor: the pragmatic or rhetorical one.

I.4. Pragmatic or rhetorical factors

The third important factor, pragmatic or rhetorical in nature, has another status. It does not, of course, independently influence the choice of the mood, but works together with the linguistic factors described above.

In principle, the type of state of affairs found in contrary-to-fact conditionals can also occur in potential conditionals, as we have seen above. The most marked of the two constructions, in my opinion, is the contrary-to-fact conditional, because stating implicitly or explicitly that one considers fulfilment impossible is something more marked than only leaving open the possibility of fulfilment, or, in other words, expressing a *lost* possibility (contrary-to-fact condition) is more marked than simply expressing a possibility. It is by this aspect of impossibility of fulfilment in the first place and by the markedness in the second place that the use of the contrary-to-fact conditional is determined. I shall try to illustrate this by discerning

²¹⁾ In the domain of past reference it is not unexpected that there are no selection restrictions for the choice of the type of state of affairs in the subordinate clause. For a state of affairs (whatever semantic feature it may have) which belongs to the past is evidently realised or not realised, so a speaker can make whatever proposition he wants about its realisation or non-realisation (as in the case of the past contrary-to-fact or past potential conditional).

several types of usage in which a contrary-to-fact conditional is chosen.

First of all, there are a number of usages where only a contrary-to-fact conditional may occur, either in view of the immediate context or as a result of the specific semantic properties of the subordinate state of affairs. Examples are:

- Contexts in which the real situation appears to be not only the opposite of the condition, but also of such a nature that it cannot change anymore.

(44) *εἰ μὴ ἄπληστός τε ἔας χρημάτων καὶ αἰσχροκερδής, οὐκ ἂν νεκρῶν θήκας ἀνέωγες* ('if you were not insatiate of wealth and basely desirous of gain, you wouldn't open the coffins of the dead'²²), Hdt. 1,187,5)

This is an inscription on the wall of a tomb that can only be read when the door has already been opened. The fact that someone opens the door proves him to be greedy. This cannot be undone, so it would be impossible to leave open the possibility of his not being greedy.

- Contexts which concern a natural phenomenon which is not likely to change in the near future.

(45) *πολλῶν δὲ ἐόντων ὁμοτρόφων τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι θηρίων πολλῶ ἂν ἔτι πλέω ἐγίνετο, εἰ μὴ κατελάμβανε τοὺς αἰελοῦρους τοιάδε* ('whereas there are many pets, there would be many more, if this didn't happen to the cats', Hdt. 2,66,1)

The most probable interpretation of *κατελάμβανε* is an iterative one. Hereafter it is described how male cats kill the kittens of female cats which do not want to copulate because of their offspring.

Second, there are contexts where to all appearances both a contrary-to-fact condition and a potential condition are possible. Often, in my opinion, the choice of a contrary-to-fact condition is determined by rhetorical reasons, the impossibility being a more powerful means to affirm or to deny the assertion than the potential condition, which leaves open the possibility of fulfilment.

(46) *ἦκει γὰρ ὁ Πέρσης οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον ἐπ' ἡμέας ἢ οὐ καὶ ἐπ' ὑμέας ... εἰ γὰρ ἐπ' ἡμέας μούρους ἐστρατηλάτεε ὁ Πέρσης ... , χρῆν*

²²) *ἀνέωγες* may be interpreted in an iterative way, too: 'then you wouldn't be a desecrator of graves', insinuating that the person in question habitually opens coffins and graves.

αὐτὸν πάντων τῶν ἄλλων ἀπεχόμενον ἰέναι οὕτω ἐπὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν ... νῦν δὲ ... τοὺς αἰεὶ ἐμποδῶν γινομένους ἡμεροῦται πάντας ('For the Persian has come to attack you no less than us. If he were marching against us alone, he would have to leave all the others alone and make straight for us. But now he is taming all those that come in his way', Hdt. 4,118,4)

- (47) *ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτοις ἀντίαν γνώμην ἔχω, πλείω τὰ χρηστὰ τῶν κακῶν εἶναι βροτοῖς· εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἦν τόδ', οὐκ ἂν ἦμεν ἐν φάει* ('I, however, hold the opposite view, that there is more good than evil for the mortals; for if this were not so, we would not be in the light', *E. Sm.* 200)

The reasoning in (46) and (47) can be analysed as follows: 'p. if not p, then q. q is evidently not true, so not-p is not true'.²³⁾ In this case it is impossible or at least not at all rhetorically powerful to leave open the possibility of fulfilment of not-p, i. e. in (46), that the Persian is, in fact, marching against the speakers alone.

The same holds for the following example: "People say p; but if p, then q. q. is evidently not true, so p is not true".

- (48) *... λέγει τοὺς ἐτησίας ἀνέμους εἶναι αἰτίους πληθύνειν τὸν ποταμόν ... εἰ ἐτησῖαι αἴτιοι ἦσαν, χρῆν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποταμούς ... ὁμοίως πάσχειν ... εἰσὶ δὲ πολλοὶ ... ποταμοὶ ... οἳ οὐδὲν τοιοῦτο πάσχουσι οἷον τι καὶ ὁ Νεῖλος* ('People say that the etesian winds are the cause of the river's (i. e. the Nile's) flooding. If the etesian winds were the cause, then the other rivers should be affected in like manner. Yet there are many rivers which are not at all affected in the same manner as the Nile', Hdt. 2,20,3)

Compare also (2): in that context (the Persian king has to be reassured) it is a more powerful reassurance to deny that there is any ground at all to be afraid, than to leave open the possibility that there could once be a ground to be afraid.

We see, then, that the markedness of the contrary-to-fact condition is often exploited for rhetorical reasons. But the optative, which leaves open the possibility of fulfilment, is a more suitable means in general hypotheses which are not bound to the moment of speaking.

²³⁾ In this type of context a neutral condition can be employed too, e.g. in (46) 'if-it is true that-the Persian is marching against us alone (*εἰ ... στρατηλατέει*), he has to leave all the others alone; *quod non*'.

In these cases, there is no reason to suppose that, although the condition has not been fulfilled at the moment of speaking, it will *never* be fulfilled. In the following types of context potential conditions are the rule:

- Contexts in which a qualification of something heard or seen is given. This qualification is explained by a general hypothesis in the form of a pseudo-empirical fact, fulfilment of which is inherently possible, cp. (1) and (49):

(49) *αἱ ... κεφαλαί εἰσι ἀσθενέες οὕτω ὥστε, εἰ θέλοις ψήφω μούνη βαλεῖν, διατετρανέεις* ('The skulls are so brittle that if you were to throw no more than a pebble, you will pierce them', Hdt. 3,12,1)²⁴)

- Contexts in which the speaker first either sketches a general state of affairs or states a question or an order, and then explains this by viewing the consequences in case the state of affairs in question is not realised.

(50) *τὰ τόξα οἱ ἐκτημένοι, ἐπεὰν μὲν δέωνται χρᾶσθαι, ἐντανύουσι, ἐπεὰν δὲ χρήσωνται, ἐκλύουσι. εἰ γὰρ δὴ τὸν πάντα χρόνον ἐντεταμένα εἶη, ἐκραγείη ἄν* ('Men that have bows bend them when they need to use them, but when they have used them, they unbend them. For if a bow were kept forever bent, it would break', Hdt. 2,173,3)²⁵)

(51) *μήτε πάντα φοβέο μήτε πᾶν ὁμοίως ἐπιλέγεο· εἰ γὰρ δὴ βούλοιο ... τὸ πᾶν ὁμοίως ἐπιλέγεσθαι, ποιήσεις ἄν οὐδαμὰ οὐδέν* ('Fear not everything, nor take account of all alike, for if you were minded to take everything alike into account, you would never do anything', Hdt. 7,50,1)²⁶)

It can be shown, therefore, that a speaker often has pragmatic/rhetorical reasons (apart from the linguistic selection restrictions mentioned above in I.2 and I.3) to make a deliberate choice between presenting a state of affairs as impossible (lost possibility) or possi-

²⁴) The choice of the optative is influenced by the second person: Hdt. does not really expect his public to throw a pebble, he just mentions the possibility of this action.

²⁵) In this case an optative is chosen because people avoid keeping a bow forever bent (although someone could possibly do so).

²⁶) Potential optative, presenting the situation as simply possible and no more than that, for the speaker considers the realisation of this state of affairs undesirable.

ble.²⁷⁾ Very often, as the examples given above show, the pragmatic differences are considerable; in other contexts, however, there is only a slight difference of perspective and the other type of conditional could also have been chosen, cp.

(52) ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις με ἔροιτο ἂν νυνδὴ ἔλεγον ... εἴποιμι ἂν αὐτῷ ... ('in like manner: if someone were to ask me what I just said, I would say to him', Pl. *Gorg.* 451b1)

(53) λέγε δὴ μοι ... ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς σε ἠρώτων ('Answer me as if I asked you from the beginning', Pl. *Gorg.* 474c4)

In these cases there is only a slight difference in perspective. In (52) the speaker presents the question as a possible one: it is not the factual question of that moment, but it could be asked too. The optative emphasises this possibility, not the fact that it is not the factual situation, whereas just this is emphasised by the contrary-to-fact conditional in (53).²⁸⁾

²⁷⁾ I have found two examples where after a potential condition the impossibility of its fulfilment is stated. Though at first sight these seem to be counterexamples to my hypothesis, they can, in my opinion, be explained. Take e.g.

εἰ δὲ ὑπ' ἑνὸς ἄρχοιτο ἢ φρονέοι κατὰ τούτο, ἄμαχόν τ' ἂν εἴη καὶ πολλῶ κράτιστον πάντων ἐθνέων ... ἀλλὰ γὰρ τοῦτο ἄπορόν σφι καὶ ἀμήχανον μὴ κοτε ἐγγένηται ('If it (= the Thracian people) were under one ruler or united, it would be invincible and the strongest nation on earth; but (I don't have to speak about that) since there is no way or means to bring this about ...', Hdt. 5, 3, 1). The speaker begins his representation as if the state of affairs of the subordinate clause can still be fulfilled. Then he suddenly interrupts his reasoning with an elliptical *ἀλλὰ γάρ* - 'but I don't need to say more about this hypothesis, because the real situation is (unalterably) different.' It is significant, I think, that this example as well as the other (Hdt. 6, 230, 1) is interrupted by the elliptical *ἀλλὰ γάρ*, which we never find after a contrary-to-fact conditional period. There the real situation is introduced by *νῦν δέ* - 'but in reality' or without any comment at all.

²⁸⁾ In cases of this kind both constructions are sometimes combined:

And. 1, 57 *εἰ μὲν ἦν δυοῖν τὸ ἔτερον ἐλέσθαι, ἢ καλῶς ἀπολέσθαι, ἢ αἰσχροῦς σωθῆναι, ἔχοι ἂν τις εἰπεῖν κακίαν εἶναι τὰ γενόμενα* ('If I could choose one of the two, to die honorably or to save my life at the cost of my honour, one could describe my behaviour as base'). The difference with a full contrary-to-fact period is slight. In that case the apodosis would have been a certain consequence of the fulfilment of the condition expressed in the protasis. The optative implies that the apodosis is a possible consequence of the protasis, if this protasis were true. The opposite combination is found too:

X. *Cy.* 2, 1, 9: *ἐγὼ μὲν ἂν, εἰ ἔχοιμι, ὡς τάχιστα ὄπλα ἐποιούμην πᾶσι Πέρσαις τοῖς προσιοῦσιν* ('if I could, I would make weapons as soon as possible for all the Persians who are coming here'). In these instances of the potential optative the emphasis is not on the potential realisation of the state of affairs mentioned in

I hope that I have sufficiently shown that in a description of potential and contrary-to-fact conditionals at least the three factors mentioned above should be taken into account: 1. time referred to; 2. type of state of affairs; 3. pragmatic or rhetorical factors.

II. Second problem: tense of the contrary-to-fact conditionals

It is generally stated that, as a rule, the secondary *PRESENT/IMPERFECT* indicative is used in present contrary-to-fact conditional periods, the (secondary) *AORIST* indicative in past contrary-to-fact conditional periods; in fact, the secondary present indicative is rather often found in conditionals with clear reference to the past, the aorist indicative sometimes in conditionals with clear reference to the present.

Whereas, however, the first problem discussed in this article is not dealt with in manuals of classical Greek and has – as far as I know – never extensively been dealt with in the general linguistic literature, this second problem is at least briefly mentioned in most handbooks²⁹⁾ and is rather extensively dealt with by Goodwin (1912: 147–148, 151). Therefore, what will be discussed in this section is not something totally new, but I want to stress the importance of its discussion (for although this interchange of tense often occurs, it is discussed – except in Goodwin – as a kind of afterthought rather than as something important). Moreover, I want to explain in what cases and under what conditions this interchange of tense may occur.

First of all, I have to briefly touch upon the semantic character of the secondary present and aorist indicatives.³⁰⁾ Both secondary

the subordinate clause, but rather on the non-occurrence at the speech moment, so that a combination with a contrary-to-fact construction may occur.

²⁹⁾ Cp. Humbert 224, Kühner-Gerth II 469–470; Schwyzer-Debrunner II 686; Stahl 302. Moreover, they all discuss contrary-to-fact conditions in which there is a combination of present and past reference, i. e. a combination of tenses, e. g.

S. *Ant.* 466: ἀλλ' ἄν, εἰ τὸν ἐξ ἐμῆς μητρὸς θανόντι ἄθαρτον ἠνσχόμην νέκυν, κείνοις ἄν ἤλγουν· τοῖσδε δ' οὐκ ἀλγύνομαι ('but if I had suffered my mother's son to lie in death an unburied corpse, that would have grieved me; for this, I am not grieved').

³⁰⁾ I will not enter into the difficult but interesting question whether the difference between the present and aorist stem is one of tense, aspect or of a combination of both. For a recent discussion and bibliography see e. g. Ruijgh (1985).

indicatives are past tenses. The present stem expresses that at a moment given in the context or situation the state of affairs still continues (so it is described as not-completed). In the case of a secondary present/imperfect indicative the moment given is a moment in the past. The aorist indicative, on the other hand, describes a state of affairs as completed: the completion is attained before a given moment ('moment' of speaking or a moment in the past given in the context or situation). The main usages of both indicatives find their origin in this difference. Thus a secondary present indicative in a narrative context is often used to describe simultaneous states of affairs (e.g. by creating a framework within which other states of affairs may occur) or repeated states of affairs. The aorist indicative simply describes a state of affairs as completed before the 'moment' of speaking or before an other state of affairs mentioned in the preceding or following context (thus creating a 'past in the past'). On the basis of these semantic values we might explain that in most cases a secondary *present* indicative is used in present contrary-to-fact conditional periods, since the state of affairs would have been continuing at the 'moment' of speaking, if in the past its realisation had not become impossible. Because the decision about the non-realisation is made in the past, it is the *secondary* present indicative which is used. The secondary *aorist* indicative is preferred in past contrary-to-fact conditional periods: the decision about the non-realisation of a state of affairs in the past is taken at some earlier moment in the past.

If this preference were a more or less established rule – as is often suggested –, prescribing to use the secondary present indicative in contrary-to-fact conditional periods referring to the present and the aorist in those referring to the past, a speaker could not make use of the specific semantic values of both indicatives, although often he might like to do so. That is why, to my mind, the situation in classical Greek is best described as follows: in the case of a contrary-to-fact conditional period referring to the past a speaker has the choice either to indicate that the past is concerned by means of the aorist indicative or to make use of the specific semantic values of the secondary present indicative to characterise the described state of affairs as, for instance, a continuing or iterative one, or as a situation in the past. In this case (Goodwin does not mention this restriction) it has to be sufficiently indicated by other means that the past is referred to. This can be done by using an aorist in either the main clause or the subordinate clause or by contextual or situational indi-

cations (cp. (54) –(56)). In the same way an aorist indicative in present contrary-to-fact conditional periods can be explained. It is used to express that if the protasis were true, the state of affairs of the apodosis would *at once* be true (so that it can already be presented as completed),³¹ cp. (57). That there is present reference is clear from the present indicative in the main clause and/or from the context or situation.

Some examples:

- (54) ἔφη Καλχηδονίους τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον τυγχάνειν ἔοντας τυφλοῦς· οὐ γὰρ ἂν τοῦ καλλίονος παρεόντος κτίζειν χώρου τὸν αἰσχίονα ἐλέσθαι, εἰ μὴ ἦσαν τυφλοί ('He said the Calchedonians must at that time have been blind; for if they had not been blind, they would never have chosen the meaner site for their city when they might have had the fairer', Hdt. 4,144,2)

The secondary present indicative ἦσαν³² (being simultaneous with ἐλέσθαι) indicates that a quality in the past is mentioned. By τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ('at that time') and the aorist ἐλέσθαι it is sufficiently indicated that the past is referred to.

- (55) εἰ γὰρ δὴ μὴ παρέπηξε μηδέν, ἐπ' ὃ δὲ ἐστάλη ἐποίεε, εἶλε ἂν τὴν ... χώραν ('If he had not done anything beyond, but had kept on doing for which he set out, he would have taken the region', Hdt. 5,45,1)

Here we see a secondary present indicative, being simultaneous with εἶλε, with continuative value ('if he had kept on doing') in a conditional with clearly past reference.

- (56) καίτοι οὗτοι, εἰ ἦσαν ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί, ὡς σὺ φῆς, οὐκ ἂν ποτε ταῦτα ἔπασχον ('And yet, these men, if they had been good in the way that you describe them, would never have met with such a fate', Pl. Gorg. 516e)

The use of the secondary present indicative in both protasis and apodosis indicates that several cases are concerned. Since these cases all belong to the past (Pericles, Cimon, Miltiades, Themistocles), the past reference is made sufficiently clear.

³¹) For this use of the aorist see Kühner-Gerth II 163–166; Schwyzer-Debrunner II 282–283; Goodwin 18; Stahl 135.

³²) Moreover, it has to be noted that verbs like εἶναι, κεῖσθαι have no aorist stem of their own. So they are used in the present stem or the aorist of another verb must be chosen (γενέσθαι in the case of εἶναι).

- (57) ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἐτύγχανεν ὦν ὑποδημάτων δημιουργός, ἀπεκρίνατο ἂν δήπὸ σοι ὅτι σκυτότομος ('as, if he were to be a maker of shoes, he would – at once – answer you, I think, that he was a cobbler', Pl. *Gorg.* 447d)

In conclusion: although we can see a tendency to use different verb forms in the two contrary-to-fact conditionals, this appears to be no absolute grammatical rule. Often it is evaded as a result of pragmatic factors, that is to say as a result of the speaker's preference to throw light upon a certain aspect of the state of affairs on the understanding that it is sufficiently indicated by other means which time is referred to.

III. Conclusion

I hope to have indicated some factors necessary to solve the two questions posed in the introduction about potential and contrary-to-fact conditionals. The first question seems to have universal importance, the second seems to be a problem more specific for Greek. Seeing that among the factors discussed pragmatic factors play an important role, I should like to stress the importance of the incorporation of pragmatic factors – so often forgotten – in linguistic descriptions: as for the questions posed in this article, anyhow, the factors accounting for the choice between a potential and a contrary-to-fact conditional appear to be a combination of syntactic-semantic and pragmatic ones, the factor accounting for an – at first sight unexpected – indicative in contrary-to-fact conditionals is a purely pragmatic one.

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Greek ῥώμη, ῥῶσις

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Georgi T. Rikov gives an excellent analysis (*Linguistique Balkanique* 25, 1982, 81–2) of Greek ῥώμη and ῥῶσις. Both formations in IE **-mā¹*) and **-ti-* should show zero-grade; therefore **rH-*. However, the initial **s-* which is posited depends crucially on the equation with Skt. *sāra-*.

Yet a plausible account of *sāra-* in this context requires Brugmann's Law, i.e. **sóro-*, which in turn presupposes an *aniṭ* formation. Unless further cognates can be identified this ingenious equation hangs on a very slender thread – joining an isolated *set* (*set* with a solitary *aniṭ*) instance.

At this point the original Greek initial remains ambiguous.

¹) See E.P. Hamp, *KZ* 96, 1982–3, 171–77.