

**THE USE OF THE MODAL PARTICLE WITH THE SUBJUNCTIVE IN  
THE MAIN CLAUSES IN THE *ODYSSEY***

**O USO DA PARTÍCULA MODAL COM O MODO CONJUNTIVO NAS  
ORAÇÕES PRINCIPAIS DA *ODISSEIA***

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**Abstract**

In this article, I will address the use of the modal particle (MP) with the subjunctive in the main clauses in the *Odyssey*. I choose this feature, because this is a usage that is unknown to Attic and even in Ionic this is extremely rare. I first explain how the corpus was obtained, as the forms described as “future indicatives” in the grammars of Classical Greek descend either from the Indo-European desiderative and will be called “future-desideratives” here, or are metrically equivalent to the subjunctive of the sigmatic aorist, and as in the vast majority of cases, the distinction between desiderative and aorist subjunctive cannot be made, these forms are catalogued as “future-subjunctives”. In a second step, I discuss some of the textual issues that could arise in determining whether or not the MP was in fact attested. Thirdly, I outline a working hypothesis, outlining that the MP refers to single and specific action close to hearer and speaker and is only allowed with the *epistemic* modality (as in Allan’s 2013 framework). Fourthly, I provide the fact and figures and then, I start with the actual analysis. I find that there are no “future-desideratives” with an MP in the *Odyssey* and that only a very limited number of (future-)subjunctives are used with an MP in the main clause. This is due to the fact that most of these forms have a desiderative, voluntative and/or

exhortative meaning, which are all three incompatibles with the use of the MP. Besides the passages where the rules seem to be observed, I also discuss those in which the rules seem to have been violated, there are different variants attested or more than one interpretation possible.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Modal particle, main clauses, *Odyssey*, subjunctive.

## Resumo

Neste artigo, analisa-se o uso da partícula modal (PM) com o modo conjuntivo em algumas orações principais da *Odisseia*. O interesse pelo estudo desta característica radica no facto de tal uso linguístico ser desconhecido no grego ático e de ser extremamente raro no grego jónico. Começo por explicar como foi constituído o *corpus* em análise, aventando que as formas descritas nas gramáticas de grego clássico como estando no futuro do indicativo derivam ou do modo desiderativo indo-europeu, a que chamaremos “futuro-desiderativos”, ou são metricamente equivalentes ao conjuntivo do aoristo sigmático. E, como na maior parte dos casos, a distinção entre o desiderativo e o conjuntivo do aoristo sigmático não se pode realizar, estas formas são designadas como “futuro-conjuntivas”. Num segundo ponto, discuto alguns dos problemas textuais que podem surgir na determinação ou não da atestação do uso da PM. Num terceiro, proponho uma hipótese de trabalho, sublinhando que a PM se refere a uma só ação específica ligada à compreensão e à expressão oral, apenas usada na modalidade epistémica (como na estrutura proposta por Allan em 2013). No quarto ponto, procedo à análise propriamente dita, com base nos argumentos e exemplos dados. Não creio que haja “futuro-desiderativos” com PM na *Odisseia* e também parece haver um número muito limitado de futuros do conjuntivo com PM nas orações principais. Tal explica-se pelo facto de a maior parte dessas formas ter significado desiderativo, voluntarioso e/ou exortativo, que são incompatíveis com o uso da PM. Além das passagens onde as regras parecem ter sido cumpridas, procuro discutir também aquelas em as mesmas terão sido subvertidas, atestando-se a existência de diferentes variantes com mais do que uma interpretação possível.

**Palavras-chave:** partícula modal, orações principais, *Odisseia*, modo conjuntivo.

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### 1. Determining the forms: “subjunctive”, “future-subjunctive” and “future-desiderative”

As has been argued elsewhere already,<sup>2</sup> the Greek future forms can be derived from the subjunctive aorist and the Indo-European desiderative. For the verbs with an active future and a sigmatic aorist, it is metrically impossible to distinguish between a short vowel aorist subjunctive and a future indicative. For those forms, I use the term “future-subjunctive”, whereas the other future forms (semi-deponents, future forms of the *verba liquida* or sigmatic future forms of verbs without a sigmatic aorist), are called “future-desideratives”. In this study, only the use and absence of the MP with the unambiguous subjunctives will be studied, while the use of the MP with other ones, future-subjunctives and future-desideratives, and the (alleged) difference in meaning between the subjunctive and the future forms will both be treated elsewhere.

### 2. Determining the MP use

As was discussed in the previous section, it is not always possible to determine the forms with absolute certainty and the same is true for the instances of the MP. The following problems occur (I only list three possible problems):<sup>3</sup> (first) the MP and the *τε-épique* metrically equivalent, (second) καί, δῆ and κεν, τις and κεν and αὖ and ἄν are metrically equivalent and occasionally both transmitted in the manuscripts, and (third) forms in -ωμι or -οιμι and, at verse end, forms such as γένηται or γένοιτο (this applies to all similar present and aorist forms) are metrically equivalent and often both transmitted. Such instances have to be discussed on a case-by-case basis and when the instance in the main clause is disputed, we will delve deeper into it.

### 3. Main and subordinate clauses: negative purpose clauses, *verba timendi* and negative wishes<sup>4</sup>

It is sometimes difficult to draw a sharp line between main and subordinate clauses, and although I cannot address the issue here whether or

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<sup>2</sup> De Decker 2021: 110-111.

<sup>3</sup> See De Decker 2021: 104-108 for a more detailed discussion of the possible issues.

<sup>4</sup> I refer here to De Decker 2022b: 342-344, where this issue has been discussed in much more detail.

not hypotaxis originated from parataxis, it is nevertheless clear that Homer preferred paratactic constructions over hypotactic ones and for a number of subordinate constructions original paratactic ones could be conceived, and it is often particularly difficult to distinguish between negative purpose clauses introduced by μή alone, negative wishes and the constructions of the *verba timendi* (the *verba timendi* might have been negative wish clauses in origin and many negative wishes had a notion of fear in them).<sup>5</sup> As the connection between main and subordinate clause is not entirely clear, I therefore catalogue them into one single category, namely that of the negative wish “may ... not...”.

#### 4. The meaning of the MP: *Arbeitshypothese*

Taking earlier scholarship as starting point and building on Allen's (2013) three axes of modality (*deontic*: obligation, permission) vs. *epistemic* (beliefs of the speaker regarding the proposition) modality, *speaker* vs. *event oriented* modality and the *scale of modality* (realis, necessity, possibility and counterfactuality), we note that the MP is only possible with the *epistemic* modality and excluded with the others, and that the use can be summarised as follows: the MP was used in specific instances with a link to the present situation, and was omitted in a generic instance, in an instance referring to the more remote future or past, and / or in instances with a volutative and / or exhortative meaning.<sup>6</sup> Before we proceed to our analysis, we will first provide the figures for the MP use in the main clauses.

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<sup>5</sup> See Delbrück 1871: 23, Kühner & Gerth 1904: 390-391, Chantraine 1953: 208-209, 288, and also Ameis & Hentze 1901: 87, Chantraine 1953: 208, Russo & Fernández-Galiano & Heubeck 1992: 186 in their analyses of *Odyssey* 21, 324.

For the origins of the conditional clauses as original wishes, see von Thiersch 1826: 603-604, 628. Delbrück 1871: 72-74 was agnostic about this explanation, nothing that it was possible, but that he preferred not to make a judgement on it, but on page 238 he accepted this theory. Besides Delbrück 1871: 238, we find this explanation in Lange 1872: 386, 401-402 *passim* and 1873, Monro 1891: 285-291, Schwyzer & Debrunner 1950: 557, 680-688, Chantraine 1953: 274-279 and De Decker 2022b: 342-344.

<sup>6</sup> See already Hartung 1832: 294-297, von Bäumlein 1846: 208-245, Delbrück 1871: 83-86 and in addition to them, the following explanations can be quoted.

Monro 1891: 266 stated “[t]he Subj. with *κεν* or *ἄν* indicates that a particular future occasion is contemplated”;

Pharr (1920: 330) described the absence as [t]hey are not ordinarily used in conditional, relative, and temporal clauses with the subjunctive in comparisons and similes, or when

## 5. The data of the MP-use in the main clauses

We have the following data for the main clauses in the speeches of the *Odyssey* (I added the data of the future-subjunctives, the future-desideratives, the future-perfects and the optatives to allow for a clear contrast):

Mood	MP	No MP	% MP
“Undisputed” subjunctives.	7	89	
Future-subjunctives.	14	241	
Future-desideratives.	0	267	
Future-perfect.	0	2	
Optatives in speech.	202	91	
Negative wishes in the “undisputed”) subjunctive.	0	76	
Negative wishes in the future-subjunctive.	0	23	

We note that the use of the MP in the main clause seems almost an exception and that only the optative as much more instances with than without it.

## 6. The distribution of the data in the main clauses with the subjunctive

The 95 instances can be divided as follows:

- 7 instances with an MP,<sup>7</sup>
- 65 exhortative subjunctives without an MP,<sup>8</sup>

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they refer to events which occur repeatedly or at an indefinite time, or when they refer to sayings which have a general application, but did not address the absence in the main clause;”

Chantraine 1953: 211-212 argued: “[e]lles (sc. les particules modales) soulignent un cas particulier, marquent une emphase et s’emploient avec le subjonctif éventuel plutôt qu’avec le subjonctif de volonté”;

Ruijgh 1971: 286-288 summarised: “[e]n grandes lignes, Homère tend à employer la particule lorsqu’il s’agit d’un fait temporaire, mais à s’en passer dans le cas d’un fait permanent.”

<sup>7</sup> The instances are *Odyssey* 4,389, 4,391, 10,507, 14,183, 14,184, 14,184, 17,418.

<sup>8</sup> The instances are *Odyssey* 1,76, 1,85, 1,369, 1,372, 2,168, 2,404, 2,410, 3,240, 4,29, 4,776, 6,31, 6,126, 8,31, 8,100, 8,100, 8,133, 8,292, 8,392, 8,394, 9,37, 10,44, 10,192, 10,228, 10,269, 10,334, 10,549, 12,213, 12,291, 12,321, 13,13, 13,179, 13,215, 13,364, 13,365, 14,45, 14,168, 15,399, 16,304, 16,349, 16,371, 16,383, 16,384, 16,402, 17,190,

- 12 deliberative questions without an MP,<sup>9</sup>
- 12 other instances without an MP.<sup>10</sup>

As several of these instances are disputed, I will discuss most of them below and I start with the instances with the MP.

## 7. The instances with an MP

(EX.01) (388) τόν γ' εἴ πως σὺ δύναιο λοχησάμενος λελαβέσθαι,  
 (389) ὅς κέν τοι εἴπησιν ὁδὸν καὶ μέτρα κελεύθου  
 (390) νόστον θ', ὥς ἐπὶ πόντον ἐλεύσεια ἰχθυόεντα.  
 (391) καὶ δέ κέ τοι εἴπησι, διοτρεφές, αἶ κ' ἐθέλῃσθα,  
 (392) ὅττι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὸν τ' ἀγαθὸν τε τέτυκται  
 (393) οἰχομένοιο σέθεν δολιχὴν ὁδὸν ἀργαλέην τε. (*Odyssey* 4,388-393).<sup>11</sup>

If somehow you were able to lay in ambush and grab him, he would tell you the way, the end of the road and (how to perform) your homecoming, so that you can go through the sea full of fish. And he will tell this to you, nurtured-one-by-Zeus, when you want (him to do that), what evil and good has been done in your palace, while you were away (making) this long and painful trip.

In this passage, Eidothea explains to Menelaos, who is stranded in Egypt, that if he is able to capture and hold her father Proteus firmly, the latter will reveal him what has to be done to continue his journey home. The subjunctives in this passage can be interpreted in two different manners. First, one could analyse them as a main clause subjunctive with an MP.<sup>12</sup> In that scenario the subjunctive aorist εἴπησι is used with an MP twice here,

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17,199, 17,274, 18,420, 20,246, 20,271, 20,296, 21,135, 22,73, 22,75, 22,139, 22,429, 22,487, 23,73, 23,83, 23,117, 23,254, 24,358, 24,405, 24,437, 24,485, 24,495.

<sup>9</sup> The instances are *Odyssey* 3,22, 5,465, 13,203, 15,509, 15,509, 15,511, 19,525, 19,525, 19,528, 21,194, 22,167, 22,168.

<sup>10</sup> The instances are *Odyssey* 2,123, 4,240, 5,465, 6,201, 6,285, 9,369, 11,328, 11,517, 12,383, 16,437, 21,363, 22,30.

<sup>11</sup> The subjunctives with an MP are underlined, the ones without one are put in boldface and the disputed/contested ones are italicised.

<sup>12</sup> The examples are also discussed in Chantraine 1953: 211, De Decker 2015: 215, 218-219, 2022a: 5-6, but they failed to consider that in *Odyssey* 6, 275, both the variant with and without MP had been transmitted (see De Decker 2022b: 383 and cf. *infra*). Monro 1891: 251-252 mentioned both instances, but did not discuss the difference between them.

because it refers to a concrete person and to a situation in the near future, close to both speaker and hearer, and the MP has specific and emphatic value here. There is nevertheless another interpretation possible as well. As one of the reviewers points out, one could interpret ὅς as a relative pronoun and in that case, this would not be a main clause after all.<sup>13</sup> Given the fact that Sanskrit has a pronoun *sās* “that one”, it is not excluded that ὅς is an old demonstrative here. The construction would then be very archaic, with the conditional clause being an original wish and a main clause with an older demonstrative.<sup>14</sup>

(EX.02) (504) διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,  
(505) μή τί τοι ἡγεμόνος γε ποθὴ παρὰ νηὶ μελέσθω,  
(506) ἰστὸν δὲ στήσας, ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκὰ πετάσσας  
(507) ἦσθαι: τήν δέ κέ τοι πνοιὴ Βορέας φέρῃσιν. (*Odyssey* 10,504-507).

Zeus-born son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, let the absence (lit. the desire) for a leader not be of concern to you besides your ship. Erect the mast, spread out the white sails and sit down. Boreas' wind will carry it (sc. the ship).

Kirke answers to Odysseus that he should not worry about the fact that his ship has no captain, because Boreas will lead the ship over the sea until they reach the Hades. The subjunctive φέρῃσιν is used with an MP, because Kirke wants to emphasise that Odysseus, his men and their ship will be taken care of by no-one less than Boreas, one of the wind-gods.

(EX.03) (183) ἀλλ' ἥτοι κεῖνον μὲν ἔάσομεν, ἢ κεν ἁλώῃ  
(184) ἢ κε φύγῃ καὶ κέν οἱ ὑπέροχῃ χεῖρα Κρονίων. (*Odyssey* 14,183-184).

But we shall let him, either he shall be captured or escape and Kronos' son will keep his hand over him (as protection).

Here, Eumaios tells Odysseus, still disguised as beggar, that the suitors are planning an ambush for Telemakhos, who –according to Eumaios– was so foolish to go to Pylos and inquire about his missing father, and that they (sc. Eumaios and Odysseus) should let the matter be and wait and hope that

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<sup>13</sup> The referee refers in this respect the commentary by West e.a., who mention both possibilities, admitting that the construction is not entirely clear to Heubeck & West 1981: 352.

<sup>14</sup> For the origins of the conditional clauses as old wishes, see Lange 1872, 1873.

Telemakhos survives by the protection of Zeus. In this specific instance, it is uncertain whether the subjunctive *άλῶη*, *φύγη* and *ὑπέρσχη* belong to the main clause or actually belong to an indirect question after *ἐάσομεν*, which I would consider less likely. The use of the MP with the subjunctive forms is expected, as the death or salvation of Telemakhos are the most important elements in Eumaios' speech.

- (EX.04) (415) δός, φίλος: οὐ μὲν μοι δοκέεις ὁ κάκιστος Ἀχαιῶν  
 (416) ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' ὄριστος, ἐπεὶ βασιλῆϊ ἔοικας.  
 (417) τῷ σε χρὴ δόμεναι καὶ λῶϊον ἢ ἐπερ ἄλλοι  
 (418) σίτου: ἐγὼ δέ κέ σε κλείω κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.  
 (419) καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ποτε οἶκον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔναιον  
 (420) ὄλβιος ἀφνειὸν καὶ πολλάκι δόσκον ἀλήτη,  
 (421) τοίῳ ὅποῖος ἔοι καὶ ὅτευ κεχρημένος ἔλθοι: (*Odyssey* 17,415-421).

Give, friend, you do not appear to be the worst of the Akhaians, but the best, as you resemble a king. You should give in that manner (a) better (part of) food than the others. I will then praise you over the endless earth. As I also once happily lived among mankind in a rich house and regularly give to a beggar of whichever kind he was and with whatever needs he came to me.

This passage describes how Odysseus in his beggar-disguise tries to convince Antinoos, the worst of the suitors, to be hospitable and offer him some food at the table. He states that he once was rich as well and used to give food and gifts to beggars as well, and adds (one could almost say as a provocation) that, if Antinoos decides to give food to him, he (O) would praise him as sign of gratitude. The use of the MP with the subjunctive *κλείω* is expected, as its message is so out of line and almost farcical (a beggar singing the glory in the entire world of one of Ithaka's noble young men).

The use of the MP with main clause subjunctive forms is in agreement with what was noted earlier on, namely that it was used to describe events that would occur in the vicinity of speaker(s) and/or hearer(s) and that it conveyed the notion of emphasis. In the next section, we will investigate under which circumstances it remained absent and if there are instances in which we would have expected the MP to occur after all.



## 8. The instances without an MP

As was stated above, the instances without MP can be divided into 3 categories, exhortative, deliberative and “other” subjunctives.

### 8.1 The exhortative subjunctives

As was stated above, most instances without an MP are exhortative. Of those, most are in the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural, but there are some instances with a singular verb form. In those cases, however, the presence of an imperative or another exhortative form indicates that we are dealing with an exhortative subjunctive.<sup>15</sup> I give one such example.

- (EX.05) (76) ἀλλ’ ἄγεθ’, ἡμεῖς οἶδε **περιφραζόμεθα** πάντες  
(77) νόστον, ὅπως ἔλθῃσι: Ποσειδάων δὲ μεθήσει  
(78) ὃν χόλον: οὐ μὲν γὰρ τι δυνήσεται ἀντία πάντων  
(79) ἀθανάτων ἀέκητι θεῶν ἐριδαινέμεν οἶος. (*Odyssey* 1,76-79).

But well then! Let all of us here consider his homecoming, so that he will return. Poseidon will let go of his anger, for he will not be able to quarrel alone against all of the gods and with them unwilling (to give in to him).

In this instance, Athene and Zeus discuss how they can achieve Odysseus’ homecoming and add that Poseidon cannot hold out against all the other gods and that, eventually, he will have to renounce his anger. The subjunctive *περιφραζόμεθα* has no MP, because it is an exhortative subjunctive.

### 8.2 The deliberative questions

More problematic are the instances in which the subjunctive seems to act as a deliberative question, the instances I give one such example as well.

- (EX.06) (509) πῇ γὰρ ἐγώ, φίλε τέκνον, **ἴω**; τεῦ δώμαθ’ **ἵκωμαι**  
(510) ἀνδρῶν οἳ κραναὴν Ἰθάκην κάτα κοιρανέουσιν;  
(511) ἧ ἰθὺς σῆς μητρὸς **ἴω** καὶ σοῖο δόμοιο; (*Odyssey* 15,509-511).

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<sup>15</sup> The instances are *Odyssey* 6,126, 9,37, 13,125, 20,296, 22,139, 22,429, 22,487, 23,73.

Which way should I go, beloved child? To whose house should I turn to, to that of the men who rule through rocky Ithaka or should I go straight to your house and that of your mother?

After Telemakhos and his men returned from their trips, he ordered them to return to the city while he would first visit some of his kinsmen and join them later in Ithaka. The seer Theoklymenos asks Telemakhos to whose house he should go. The subjunctives ἴω, ἴκωμαι and ἴω are clearly deliberative and thus jussive and not epistemic (in Allan's modality schema).

There are several instances in which one could ask if the deliberative question was indeed a main clause or rather an indirect question dependent on a super-ordinated main verb and they will be discussed later on.

Both the deliberative questions and the exhortative subjunctives belong to the "jussive" modality in Allan's schema and therefore do not use the MP, but for the instances in the category below this does not apply.

### 8.3 The "other" instances

There are 11 instances in which the 3 explanations mentioned above do not apply. In some of them, the readings are disputed because there are several variants in the manuscripts and these passages will be addressed further on in the article. In 3 instances, the subjunctive form was not used with an MP because the verb form preceding it had already been used with an MP.<sup>16</sup> This is a sort of *conjunction reduction*: if one verb is already marked for particularity, it is not necessary to mark it with the following verb forms.<sup>17</sup> This is the case in the formula οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μῠθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω.<sup>18</sup>

- (EX.07) (326) Μαῖράν τε Κλυμένην τε ἴδον στυγερήν τ' Ἐριφύλην,  
 (327) ἥ χρυσὸν φίλου ἀνδρὸς ἐδέξατο τιμήντα.  
 (328) πάσας δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μῠθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,  
 (329) ὅσας ἥρώων ἀλόχους ἴδον ἠδὲ θύγατρας: (*Odyssey* 11,326-329).

<sup>16</sup> See Von Thiersch 1826: 644-645, Hartung 1833: 244, 267, von Bäumlein (1846: 374-380), Krüger 1859: 181, Frohberger 1867, Vogrinz 1889: 247, Kühner & Gerth 1898: 248-249, Ruijgh 1971: 767, Gerö 2001: 193, De Decker 2022b: 368, option 10. The list is not exhaustive.

<sup>17</sup> This principle was first noted for Greek by Kiparsky (1968), but he did not discuss the MP among the instances of possible reductions, see § 6.6.2.

<sup>18</sup> The instances are *Odyssey* 4,240, 11,328, 11,517.

I saw Maira, Klymene and the hated Eriphyle who received valuable gold for (the life of) her beloved husband. I will not mention nor name all of them, whom I saw, the wives and daughters of the heroes.

The formula οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω always refers to an emphatic statement by either the poet himself,<sup>19</sup> or by the speaker in which he states that he will not have the power to mention all the persons he met or saw on a certain occasion. In the passage quoted here Odysseus states that he saw so many heroines, many of them also doomed for what they had done during their lifetimes, that it would be impossible to mention all of them *nominatim*.

Besides this instance with a morpho-syntactic explanation, there are also other instances.

(EX.08) ὦ μοι ἐγὼ, τί πάθω; τί νύ μοι μήκιστα γένηται; (*Odyssey* 5,465).  
Woe me! What will I suffer / do I have to suffer! What will now finally happen to me?

In this instance Odysseus' raft is broken by Poseidon and he narrowly escapes drowning by holding on to a piece of wood that remained from the shattered raft. He calls out in despair after having fled from Kalypso that he is being struck by suffering and hardship again. The subjunctives πάθω and γένηται are clearly emphatic, happening in the immediate future and linked to the speaker, but the MP is missing and while one could interpret πάθω as a deliberative subjunctive (but see below), this is not the case for γένηται and the absence of the MP with that word is thus an exception.

(EX.09) (201) οὐκ ἔσθ' οὗτος ἀνὴρ διερὸς βροτὸς οὐδὲ γένηται,  
(202) ὅς κεν Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἵκηται  
(203) δῆϊοτῆτα φέρων: μάλα γὰρ φίλοι ἀθανάτοισιν. (*Odyssey* 6,201-203).

There is no man alive and this man will not be born who will come to the land of the Phaiakian men and carry destruction. They are very dear to the immortals.

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<sup>19</sup> It also occurs in *Iliad* 2,488, right before Homer starts the *Catalogue of Ships*.

In these lines Nausikaa explains to her friends and servants that the man they see before them cannot be ill-disposed towards them as no-one would ever come to the Phaiakians with bad intentions, as they as people are so beloved to the gods that they would never allow any evil person to arrive there. The absence of the MP with the subjunctive γένηται can be explained by the fact that there is a negative element in the sentence. This also explains why the subjunctive ἴκηται in the relative clause is constructed with an MP (in a similar passage with οὐδὲ γένηται in *Odyssey* 16,437-439, one finds the same distinction of the negative main clause without MP and the positive relative clause with one). A look at the overall figures of negation and the presence/absence of the MP confirms this: in the speeches of the *Odyssey* there are 67 instances with an MP in a negative sentence and 131 without one and only the optative has a clear preference for the MP with negative sentences, as we have 52 instances with and only 11 without one, while the future-subjunctive has 5 instances with and 55 without one (a ratio of 1 to whereas the overall figures for the future-subjunctive are 66 with and 331 without one, a ratio of 1 to 5) and genuine subjunctive has 3 instances with and 8 without (too small to allow for a judgement). The semantic reason for this absence is clear, as the negation removes the link with what will happen and therefore renders the event into something more unreal and more remote. The preference for the optative with an MP is that the MP use makes it “easier” to distinguish the epistemic from the volutive optative.

The next instances involve the middle (subjunctive?) forms of the root *\*h<sub>1</sub>ed* “eat”. In Classical Greek, these middle forms act as future form for ἐσθίω, but in Homeric Greek, a verb ἔδω also seems to exist. In one instance, the MP is attested in one manuscript,<sup>20</sup> and in another, the middle form is transmitted besides the active forms and the MP is found in one or more manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> These two instances will be discussed below, but the one undisputed instance will be addressed here.

- (EX.10) (369) Οὐτὶν ἐγὼ πύματον ἔδομαι μετὰ οἷς ἐτάροισι,  
 (370) τοὺς δ’ ἄλλους πρόσθεν: τὸ δέ τοι ξεινήϊον ἔσται. (*Odyssey* 9,369-370).

<sup>20</sup> *Odyssey* 2,123.

<sup>21</sup> *Odyssey* 21,363.

Nobody I shall eat as last one after his friends, the others first. That shall be my guest-gift to you.

In these famous lines, the *Kyklops* reveals that his welcome gift to *Odysseus* (who introduced himself as *Outis* “Nobody”) will be the fact that he will be eaten at the end, after all his other men. The absence of the MP is unexplained here, because *Polyphemos*’ statement that he will eat “*Outis*” (*Odysseus*) as last is clearly the most important element in the story. The only reason one could offer for the absence of the MP is the fact that the subjunctive form acting as future or having future reference is in the middle and might therefore have some more voluntative and desiderative value, which was also the reason why the so-called “future-desiderative” forms were almost never accompanied by an MP and the “future-subjunctive” forms were only irregularly used with one (one could interpret *ἔδομαι* as a sort of semi-deponent verb). This applies also to the other instance where a middle form of *ἔδομαι* is used, namely in *Odyssey* 22,29-30.

## 9. Instances of debated interpretation

In the following instances, the interpretation does not seem to be entirely certain.

(EX.11) ὦ μοι ἐγὼ, τί πάθω; τί νύ μοι μήκιστα γένηται; (*Odyssey* 5,465).

Woe me! What will I suffer / do I have to suffer! What will now finally happen to me?

In this instance, discussed above for *γένηται* already, one can ask what the exact meaning of the subjunctive *πάθω* is, deliberative “what do I have to suffer” or plainly futurative “what will I suffer”. If it is the first, the absence of the MP is expected, if it is the second, the absence is remarkable (as is the case for *γένηται*).

(EX.12) (382) εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τίσουσιν βοῶν ἐπιεικέ’ ἄμοιβήν,  
(383) δύσομαι εἰς Αἴδαο καὶ ἐν νεκύεσσι φαείνω. (*Odyssey* 12,382-383).  
If they will not pay a fitting price for my cows, I will go down into Hades and shine for the dead bodies.

These lines are pronounced by an enraged Helios after he found out that Odysseus' men had slaughtered and eaten his cattle. He threatens to stop shining for the mortals and the gods and go down to Hades and remain there, should they not be punished. The question here is whether φαείνω is an indicative or a subjunctive. The fact that δύσομαι is a future-subjunctive makes it more likely that φαείνω is a subjunctive. In that case, however, the absence of the MP is remarkable, because the statement is highly emphatic and we would have expected the MP to be used. Maybe the fact that future-subjunctives such as δύσομαι did not regularly take the MP caused it to remain absent with the subjunctive φαείνω here, but that is only a tentative explanation. Alternatively, one could argue that φαείνω is an indicative present, used with future meaning (see below).

(EX.13) (193) βουκόλε καὶ σύ, συφορβέ, ἔπος τί κε μυθησαίμην,  
 (194) ἢ αὐτὸς κεύθω; φάσθαι δέ με θυμὸς ἀνώγει. (*Odyssey* 21,193-194).  
 Cowherd, and also you, swineherd, what would should I speak or will I hide myself? My heart bids me to speak.

In this passage, Odysseus is still disguised as beggar but inquires his faithful servants whether they would be willing and able to assist in fighting the suitors, should Odysseus return home. Here one could argue that κεύθω has no MP because it is a deliberative question, but equally possible is the fact that it has no MP, because μυθησαίμην had already been constructed with one (cf. *supra*) and both explanations are not mutually exclusive.

There are several subjunctives for which one could ask if the deliberative question was indeed a main clause or rather an indirect question dependent on a super-ordinated main verb. One passage with three subjunctives is discussed below and the other passage with two subjunctives will be addressed among the textually disputed cases.

(EX.14) (524) ὥς καὶ ἐμοὶ δίχα θυμὸς ὁρώρεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,  
 (525) ἢ ἐ μένω παρὰ παιδί καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσω,  
 (526) κτῆσιν ἐμήν, δμῶάς τε καὶ ὑπερεφές μέγα δῶμα,  
 (527) εὐνήν τ' αἰδομένη πόσιος δήμοιό τε φῆμιν,  
 (528) ἢ ἤδη ἅμ' ἔπωμαι **Ἀχαιῶν** ὅς τις ἄριστος  
 (529) μᾶται ἐνὶ μεγάροισι, πορῶν ἀπερείσια ἔδνα. (*Odyssey* 19,524-529).

So my mind is moving in two directions, back and forth, either to stay with my child and guard everything here against them, my possessions, servants

and the large and high-roofed house, respecting the marital bed of my husband and the reputation of the people, or should I follow the one of the Akhaians who woos me the best in the palace and offers countless bridal gifts.

Penelopeia describes her doubts as to her future: should she remain in the palace, refuse to marry a suitor, guard her possessions, keep the memory to her husband alive, respect her marriage with him and protect her son, or should she in fact choose one of the suitors and go with him to his house? In this passage, there are two problems. First, the subjunctives μένω, φυλάσσω and ἔπωμαι could belong to indirect questions depending on the verb and in that case, they would not need to be discussed here. Second, the subjunctives μένω and φυλάσσω (but not ἔπωμαι) could very well be indicatives as well, but the fact that ἔπωμαι is a subjunctive makes it more likely that the other forms are subjunctives as well. Combinations of these scenarios are also possible, such as the one in which only ἔπωμαι is a subjunctive in a main clause and the others belong to an indirect (and subordinated) deliberative question, and/or only ἔπωμαι being subjunctive and the others being indicatives.<sup>22</sup>

## 10. Textually disputed instances

In this section I discuss these instances in which either the MP was absent in one or more manuscripts and/or another mood besides the subjunctive was attested in the manuscripts.

(EX.15) (123) τόφρα γὰρ οὖν βίότον τε τεὸν καὶ κτήματ' ἔδονται,  
(124) ὄφρα κε κείνη τοῦτον ἔχη νόον, ὅν τινά οἱ νῦν  
(125) ἐν στήθεσσι τιθεῖσι θεοί. μέγα μὲν κλέος αὐτῇ  
(126) ποιεῖτ', αὐτὰρ σοί γε ποθὴν πολέος βιότοιο. (*Odyssey* 2,123-126).  
They will eat your livelihood and possessions as long as she has that mindset whichever the gods put in her mind. For her she obtains great fame, but for you a lack of much property.

After Telemakhos complained about the suitors' misdeeds, Antinoos replied by relating how Penelopeia misled them for three years with the

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<sup>22</sup> The issue was not addressed in Faesi 1862: 180, Düntzer 1864: 96, Ameis & Hentze 1871: 32, Monro 1901: 174, Russo & Fernández-Galiano & Heubeck 1992: 101.

trick of the shroud. As revenge, he states that they will continue to eat and destroy his possessions until she decides on which suitor she wants to marry. In this passage, one manuscript has ἄν instead of οὖν,<sup>23</sup> but as we discussed above, it is likely that ἔδονται has no MP, because it has some type of voluntative and/or desiderative meaning.

(EX.16) (270) οὐ γὰρ Φαιήκεσσι μέλει βιὸς οὐδὲ φαρέτρη,  
 (271) ἀλλ' ἴστοι καὶ ἔρετμὰ νεῶν καὶ νῆες εἶσαι,  
 (272) ἧσιν ἀγαλλόμενοι πολὴν περώωσι θάλασσαν.  
 (273) τῶν ἀλεείνω φῆμιν ἀδευκέα, μή τις ὀπίσσω  
 (274) μωμεύῃ: μάλα δ' εἰσὶν ὑπερφίαλοι κατὰ δῆμον:  
 καὶ νύ τις / κε τις ὧδ' εἴπησι κακώτερος ἀντιβολήσας: (*Odyssey*  
 6,270-275).

(Matters of) arrow and quiver do not occupy the minds of the Phaiakians, but masts and oars of ships and equal ships, by which they gain their reputation and pass over the white sea. I void their unfitting speech, lest someone chastises (me/us) afterwards. Very arrogant they are throughout the city. And *now someone / someone* of lower quality might meet us and say:.

When Nausikaa leads Odysseus to her father's palace, she explains to Odysseus why he should not remain too close to her upon entering the city. She describes an imaginary conversation between some anonymous Phaiakians, who would chastise her for either having prayed to a god to become her husband or for having chosen a foreign husband while spurning the local young noblemen. This is the speech introduction to that speech. In this line, in one manuscript καὶ κε τις is transmitted besides καὶ νύ τις and that would mean that there is a variant *with* an MP in this context. The use of the MP in this context would indeed be surprising, as the subject is undefined and the speech is only imagined in a sort of apotropaic ritual, and thus not in a real situation close to hearer and speaker. Moreover, it has also been argued that the subjunctive εἴπησι was dependent on the negative purpose clause introduced by μή in line 273,<sup>24</sup> but I think that line 275 was a main clause, especially because there is a parenthetical indicative clause between the sentence introduced by μή and the εἴπησι sentence. In favour of

<sup>23</sup> This variant was only attested in the apparatus in Ludwich 1889: 27, as it is not found in that of La Roche 1867: 27, West 2017: 27, Van Thiel 2021 on this passage.

<sup>24</sup> Faesi 1860: 19.



the absence in this instance argues also the absence of the MP with the same form εἴησι in *Iliad* 6,459 and *Iliad* 7,89, where other imagined speeches are introduced by undefined and anonymous characters. These introductions are contrasted against the appearance of the MP in the following two, where well-defined speakers are referenced, namely *Odyssey* 4,388-391 (discussed above) and *Odyssey* 10,539 (in this instance the MP is used in a relative clause and is therefore not discussed here).<sup>25</sup>

(EX.17) (362) πῇ δὴ καμπύλα τόξα φέρεις, ἀμέγαρτε συβῶτα,  
(363) πλαγκτέ; τάχ' αὖ σ' ἐφ' ὕεσσι κύνες ταχέες κατέδονται / κατέδουσι  
(364) οἷον ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων, οὓς ἔτρεφες, εἰ κεν Ἀπόλλων  
(365) ἡμῖν ἰλήκησι καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι. (*Odyssey* 21,362-365).

Why do you take the curved bow, you unenviable cowherd, wanderer. Soon the swift dogs will devour you among the pigs, which you fed, alone, away from the humans, if Apollon and the other immortal gods are graceful to us.

This speech is pronounced by an undefined suitor who is annoyed by the fact that Eumaios took the bow in his hands. Unaware of what is about to happen, he insults the swineherd, hoping that he will soon be dead and defiled by the dogs. There are two textual problems here. First, both the indicative present κατέδουσι and the subjunctive κατέδονται have been transmitted and both readings can be defended, the latter as a future form and the former as a present indicative with future meaning. Second, besides αὖ also ἄν is transmitted. As we argued above, the middle forms of \**h<sub>1</sub>ed-* probably conveyed some desiderative notion and were therefore not used with an MP, making the reading αὖ and κατέδονται more likely to be correct.

(EX.18) (164) διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,  
(165) κεῖνος δ' αὖτ' αἰδήλος ἀνὴρ, ὃν οἶόμεθ' αὐτοί,  
(166) ἔρχεται ἐς θάλαμον· σὺ δέ μοι νημερτὲς ἐνίσπες,  
(167) ἧ / εἴ μιν / κεν ἀποκτείνω, αἶ κε κρείσσω γε γένωμαι,  
(168) ἧε σοὶ ἐνθάδ' ἄγω, ἵν' ὑπερβασίας ἀποτίσῃ  
(169) πολλὰς, ὅσας οὗτος ἐμήσατο σῶ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ. (*Odyssey* 22,164-169).

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<sup>25</sup> De Decker 2022b: 383.

Zeus-born son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, this destructive man, whom we both suspected, is going again to the depot. You tell me clearly, either should I kill him, if I have become stronger or send him to you so that he pays for his many transgressions, which that one has committed in your house.

As in *Odyssey* 19,525-529 discussed above), one can ask if the subjunctives ἀποκτείνω and ἄγω here are deliberative subjunctives in a main clause or in an indirect deliberative question (and thus appear in a subordinate clause). A second problem is that besides ἦ also εἰ is transmitted, which would make the two subjunctives belonging to an indirect question. A third problem is that both μιν and κεν are found in the manuscripts, but while both are possible, it seems more likely that the object was expressed with the verb here and that μιν would have been the correct reading. It is, however, possible to interpret this passage as a relic of the original parataxis: the oldest meaning would have been “you tell me, should I ...” and that would then have evolved into “tell me if I have to ...”.

## Conclusion

In this article I discussed the use of the modal particle (MP) with the subjunctive in the main clauses of the *Odyssey*. The reason to study this construction is that this is unattested in Classical Greek and extremely rare in Ionic Greek. First, I determined my corpus, describing how the forms would be catalogued and which problems in transmission and analysis could occur. I thus obtained a corpus of 95 forms. Then, I provided facts and figures and established my working hypothesis, which stated that the MP was used when the form referred to a specific instance close to speaker and hearer that needed to be emphasised, but not with forms having an iterative, voluntative, deliberative or jussive meaning. Most of the subjunctives (65) in the main clauses were exhortative, in the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural and singular, and 12 were used in deliberative questions. The absence of the MP in both these categories was expected. There are 7 instances with an MP and in those cases the MP adds a notion of emphasis and specificity to the verbal action. Finally, there are 11 instances without an MP for which the absence was difficult to explain at first sight, but upon closer inspection, the absence was due to either the fact that the previous verb had already been used with an MP, because there was a negative element in the clause or because the forms belonged to the middle of *\*h<sub>1</sub>ed-*, in which the middle expressed some

type of desiderative and thus was less compatible with the MP. Besides that, there was still the issue of *Odyssey* 5,465 where the two subjunctive forms without MP seemed somehow exceptional.

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