



HAL
open science

The Oblique Optative, a Case of Narrative Tense

Richard Faure

► **To cite this version:**

Richard Faure. The Oblique Optative, a Case of Narrative Tense: The example of the Future Optative. 8th International Meeting on Greek Linguistics “The Greek Verb: Morphology, Syntax, Semantics”, Oct 2009, Agrigento (Museo Archeologico), France. hal-00469847

HAL Id: hal-00469847

<https://hal.science/hal-00469847>

Submitted on 6 Apr 2010

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

THE OBLIQUE OPTATIVE, A CASE OF NARRATIVE TENSE THE EXAMPLE OF THE FUTURE OPTATIVE

Richard FAURE (faurerichard5044(at)neuf.fr)

Université Paris IV-Sorbonne

Abstract

It has been argued that the Future Optative (FO) is rare, but no one has shown yet why it is so. In this paper, I claim that rather than the FO, the contexts where the FO can appear are rare. What is crucial is that in these contexts the FO (a case of Oblique Optative) largely outnumbers its potential concurrent, the Future Indicative. Building on Amigues 1977 remarks that the past context is not sufficient condition for the FO to show up, and that the absolute time must be somehow involved in the explanation, I propose that the main criterion must be Benveniste's 1966 distinction between discourse and narrative. In my view, the FO is a narrative tense. The Future Indicative is used as a stylistic marker much as the historical present is.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Preliminary remarks

The motivation of the oblique optative is a long-standing question. It has been addressed both diachronically and synchronically, but the answers never were satisfactory. One reason for that is that all the properties attached to the oblique optative are placed on the same range, though it is doubtful that some of them are properties of the oblique optative at all. Highly suspect are optionality and mood substitution, at least for a period that goes from the end of the fifth century to the second part of the fourth.

During that time, the oblique optative is by and large more used than the indicative, *ceteris paribus*, that is in embedded clauses in past context. This is shown by the data provided in Sanspeur (in Duhoux 2000 : 238-239) for all the Attic orators, Smyth (1956 : 586), Amigues (1977 : 235) for ὅπως clauses, and for *every* embedded clause in my own corpus, that is Plato's *Republic* and *Protagoras*, and Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia*.

Moreover, there are other pieces of evidence for the optative being the default form at this time. We can mention the oblique optative's spreading to all types of embedded clauses, and after every embedding verb, whatsoever. For example oblique optatives in ὅτι / ὥς substantive clauses were previously found only after verbs of speaking. From Thucydides on, there is no longer such a limitation. Every verb of an ὅτι / ὥς clause in past context can be (indeed must) be at the optative mood, possibly even ὅτι causal clause.

Building on these first few remarks, let us move on to the analysis, and, first of all, justify the title. As was emphasized before, the only firm characteristics of the optative in the synchrony I have defined are the subordination and the past contexts. I will not address the subordination problem here, neither address the issue as to why optative seems to be able to occur as a Free Indirect Discourse marker, and whether this use is related to the « oblique one » or not. I will take for granted, as a first approximation, that the oblique optative is a subordination phenomenon. The clauses where it appears are :

In relation with a subjunctive : conditional protasis, relative and temporal clauses either as iteration in the past or as future in the past ; final clauses, including negative final clauses after verbs of fearing ; deliberative indirect questions.

In relation with an indicative : substantive clauses with *ὅτι* or *ὡς* ; indirect questions ; clausal clauses.

Besides subordinate context, the other condition of appearance is the past context. This is the issue I want to address here. My claim is that this is the only element needed to account for all the features attributed to the oblique optative such as optionality, enonciative distance, evidential effect, mood substitutability.

If you look at (1) and (2), the contexts seem to be equivalent. Both embedding verbs are at a past tense (*εἶδομεν*) or in a past context. In (2), *καταμαθὼν* takes its reference from *ἔρχεται*, which is a historical present. Both verbs are epistemic. This is why optionality has been called for.

(1) Λυκάονας αὐτοὶ εἶδομεν **ὅτι** ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις τὰ ἐρυμνὰ καταλαβόντες τὴν τούτων χώραν **καρποῦνται**. (X., An., 3, 2, 23)

(As for the Lycaonians, we even saw with our own eyes **that** they had seized the strongholds in the plains and **were reaping** for themselves the lands (of these Persians))¹

Xenophon tells Clearetus' attempt to betray.

(2) Τοῦτο καταμαθὼν Κλεάρετος ὁ λοχαγὸς **ὅτι** μικρὸν **εἶη** (...), ἔρχεται ἐπ'αὐτούς. (X., An., 5, 7, 14)

(Clearetus the captain, learning **that** this place **was** small set forth against them)

But a closer examination shows that this is not the case. As shown in Faure (to appear), with the indicative, the state of affairs is always related to the time of speech, while with the optative, there is a gap between the state of affairs' time and the speaker / narrator's. *Καρποῦνται* in (1) is an action that Lycaonians still carry on at the time of speech. On the other side, the place being small or not is not relevant anymore at the time of speech.

This is highly reminiscent of Benveniste's famous distinction between *discours* on the one hand, and *histoire/narration/récit* (discourse and history/narration), on the other hand. Ancient Greek has this distinction as well as many other languages. Evidence for this comes for

¹ Translations are not mine. See the editions in the references.

example from the deixis difference in time reference between αὔριον ‘tomorrow’ and τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ ‘the next day’.

I argue that, for the period under examination, the distinction between the time of speech and the time of narrative is the feature relevant to account for the oblique optative. That is also why *oblique* optative might not be the appropriate term for this array of optative usages. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience, I shall retain it.

1.2. Issue

Why study the future optative? As I have already successfully analysed in depth present and aoriste in a previous paper, I would like to focus on the future optative with the same method. I am especially willing to get rid of the prejudice that future optative is rare and recessive with respect to the indicative (see for example Goodwin (1889: §128)).

Instead, I claim that it is the contexts of licensing that are rare rather than the form itself. As will be clear, *ceteris paribus*, future indicative is less frequent than future optative.

Along with the future optative, I will also deal with a case where the oblique optative has future reference, namely when it is used in final clauses.

My corpus for this study is made up of Xenophon’s *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia*, and Plato’s *Protagoras* and *Respublica*. In past contexts we find 52 future optatives and 41 future indicatives in subordinate clauses.

1.3. Organization of the study

The study is organized as follows: Before proceeding to the analysis, I first give a sketch of the optative usages and signal the place of the oblique optative among them (Section 2). I recall some previous interesting analyses (Section 3). Then I move on to my own proposal. First, I try to check my discourse/narration hypothesis by comparing two types of texts different by nature: discourse and history (Section 4). It appears that this distinction is not relevant, as both kinds of texts display future indicatives as well as optatives. Thus I attempt to refine the distinction, examining carefully *narration in discourse*. This is far more conclusive. There is a clear-cut line between narrative tenses (optatives) and discourse tenses (indicatives) (Section 5). Then I come back to the narration issue and address the issue as to why moods and tenses do not behave as in the discourse contexts. Although we only expect the optative to occur, some indicatives show up. The solution may be to be found in a distinction between narration and narration in discourse. This is the path we take to settle this problem (Section 6). Section 7 is devoted to the comparison between the various approaches and Section 8 draws some concluding remarks from the analysis.

2. THE PLACE OF THE OBLIQUE OPTATIVE AMONG THE OPTATIVE USAGES

In the literature, the optative is claimed to have two areas of uses : time and modality. For example, in Vairel 1979, the (past) tense usage is referred to the concept of “moindre actualité” (“less present character”), and the (virtual) mood usage to that of “moindre actualisation” (“less actual character”). My claim is that we cannot escape a third category where both concepts merge in order to account for the cases where the optative is used in the past where a subjunctive would be used in the present.

Without further commenting on it, I refer the reader to the table 1, which provides a sketch of the optative usages. The area of the oblique optative is underlined. Italics signal what will be under examination in this paper.

Table 1 : The different usages of the oblique optative

Less actual character	Less present character <u>and less actual character</u>	Less present character
Potential	<u>Past clause of repeated action²</u>	<i><u>ὅτι/ὡς declarative subordinate clauses</u></i>
Wish	<u>Clauses referring to the future in the past³</u>	<i><u>Non deliberative indirect questions</u></i>
	<i><u>Purpose, fearing clauses</u></i>	Free indirect speech ?
	<u>Deliberative indirect questions</u>	<u>Causal clauses⁴ ?</u>

3. FORMER PROPOSALS

There are many hypotheses regarding the oblique optative. I will not review all of them here. I will rather focus on a couple that are relevant to my own one, namely the subordination hypothesis and the evidential hypothesis.

The subordination hypothesis says that the optative is a subordination marker, in the sense of the latin subjunctive in indirect questions. Thus, it calls for the notion of indirect discourse somehow, which besides is inscribed in its name: “oblique” optative refers to the *oratio obliqua* of the Latin Grammarians. But there are many reasons for why this proposal cannot be retained as such (See Méndez-Dosuna 1999: 335). The most obvious is that the

² The matrix verb is at the imperfect indicative tense.

³ In present, that would correspond to [ἐόν, relative or temporal clauses + subjunctive in the protasis, future in the apodosis].

⁴ Only after evaluation or emotion verbs. That is why, they are interpreted in some grammars as substantive clauses, and may boil down to the “ὅτι/ὡς declarative subordinate clauses” case.

oblique optative does not show up in present context or so marginally that it does not compare with the cases of past contexts. We do not see why it should be so if subordination were its single function. Another reason is that in the period under examination it is found in all types of clauses, even clauses that are not dependent upon indirect discourse.

What remains true is that oblique optative only appear in dependent clauses and that we will have to deal with this fact at some point.

The other proposal that had much success in the past few years is the evidential hypothesis. To the best of my knowledge, it is the core explanation for oblique optative in two articles: Neuberger-Donath (1983) et Méndez-Dosuna (1999), though it is sometimes encountered elsewhere. There are differences between the two, but the main idea remains the same: The oblique optative is an evidential marker, that is an additional marker on the verb indicating where the speaker got the information from, and consequently the reliability of the information.

But as Méndez-Dosuna (1999) himself points out, this proposal faces too many objections. In my opinion, the problem resides in the fact that the definition of evidential is not firm enough. Indeed, going through the literature on the question, two crucial points must be noted. The first one is that for a mark to be considered as an evidential it has to be the *primary function* and not an effect (Aikhenvald (2003 : 23)). The second one is a language universal “such clauses never have more evidentiality choices than main declarative clauses. They may have none at all” (Aikhenvald (2004 : 253)).

That is why, we will leave this second proposal aside too. Nevertheless those authors might be on the right track, in the sense that the speaker perspective is crucial to account for the oblique optative, as our own proposal will highlight.

4. DISCOURSE AND NARRATION

The first hypothesis builds on a study of Amigues’ (1977 : 234-270), in her book on ὅπως final clauses. She shows that optative and subjunctive are not randomly distributed, but obey a rule. The relevant criterion is the ‘absolute time’, that is the position with respect to the time of speech. In example (3), the speaker hoped that his action in the past would have also effect in the future of the time of speech, that is why the present subjunctive is retained.

(3) Ἀλλὰ γὰρ τούτων οὐ σὺ αἰτία, ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ οὐ τάξας σοι παρέδωκα ὅπου χρῆ ἕκαστα κεῖσθαι, **ὅπως εἰδήης** ὅπου τε δεῖ τιθέναί καὶ ὀπόθεν λαμβάνειν. (X., Ec., 8, 2)

(The fact is, you are not to blame for this, but I, because I handed over the things to you without giving directions where they were to be put, **so that you might know** where to put them and where to find them)

On the contrary, in (4), the speaker (Xenophon) justifies his behavior in the past with his purpose at this time, purpose that is no longer relevant at the time of speech.

(4) Ἄλλον δὲ γε ἴσως ἀπολειπόμενον που διὰ ῥαστώνην καὶ κωλύοντα καὶ ὑμᾶς τοὺς πρόσθεν καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ὀπίσθεν πορεύεσθαι ἔπαισα πύξ, **ὄπως** μὴ λόγχῃ ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων **παίωτο**. (X., An., 5, 8, 16-17)

(In still another case, the man, perhaps, who fell behind somewhere out of indolence and prevented both you in the van and us in the rear from going on, I struck such a one with the fist **in order that** the enemy **might not strike** him with the lance)

These results can be summed up with the simple schemas in (5) and (6).

(5) = (3) time-axis -----action----- time of speech---->
purpose validity ----->

(6) = (4) time-axis -----action----- time of speech ---->
purpose validity -----|

As I have mentioned in my introduction, the gap between the state of affairs at stake and the time of speech reminds us of Benveniste's definition of history. What I would like to do is rephrase these results in a narration/ discourse distinction and see if it carries over to our issue. This is necessary because in historical texts, where the time of speech has "disappeared", things cannot be represented this way.

A short reminder of Benveniste 1966 is in order now. In this paper, Benveniste points out that two forms of the French verb are mutually excluded : the "passé simple" *il fit* and the "passé composé" *il a fait*. Each form belongs to a different kind of context. The first one is characteristic of the history (or narration), the second one of the time of speech. In this way, he defines two different "plan d'énonciation", that is two different pragmatic situations. These results are borne out by another enunciative dimension, that is the grammatical person. The third person prevails in the history, while the first and second persons prevail in the discourse. How to deal with first person in history has been addressed and settled by Genette 1972. But fleshing out this point would take us far beyond the purpose of this study.

We would like to retain from this analysis the fact that a break between the two pragmatic situations comes along with the history. According to Benveniste :

"It must and it suffices that the author remains faithful to his purpose as historian and bans everything that does not belong to the events narration (discourse, reflexions, comparisons). To tell the truth, at this time *there is no narrator anymore*. Events are set such as they occurred, as the same time as they show up in the story. Nobody is talking here, events seem to tell themselves.⁵" (emphasis mine)

⁵ Benveniste (1966: 241) : "Il faut et il suffit que l'auteur reste fidèle à son propos d'historien et qu'il proscrie tout ce qui est étranger au récit des événements (discours, réflexions, comparaisons). À vrai dire, il n'y a même plus alors de narrateur. Les événements sont posés

That leads to the hypothesis that also in Greek there might be a clear-cut line between the two and that the oblique optative would be a piece of evidence for that. Since we do not want our analysis to be circular, we will take our examples from obvious discourse or historical situations, taken from appropriate literary genres, and then check whether optatives show up or not.

But, rephrased as such, Amigues' distinction does not straightforwardly carry over to our data. Example (7) is taken from a discourse situation and displays an optative, whereas (8) is from a narrative passage of Xenophon and displays an indicative.

(7) Ὡ Ἡρόακλεις, ἔφη, αὕτη ἄκείνη ἢ εἰωθυῖα εἰρωνεῖα Σωκράτους, καὶ ταῦτ' ἐγὼ ἤδη τε καὶ τούτοις προύλεγον, **ὄτι** σὺ ἀποκρίνασθαι οὐκ **έθελήσοις**. (Pl. Rp., 337a)

(Ye gods! here we have the well-known irony of Socrates, and I knew it and predicted that when it came to replying **you would refuse**)

(8) Ἐν ᾧ ἐσκόπει τοὺς Ὑρκανίους ὁ Κῦρος **ὄ τι ποιήσουσιν**, ἐπέστησε τὸ σιγάτευμα· παρελαύνουσι δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ τῶν Μήδων προεστηκότες καὶ ὁ Τιγράνης καὶ ἐρωτῶσι τί δεῖ ποιεῖν. (X. Cyr., 4, 2, 18)

(While Cyrus was watching to see **what** the Hyrcanians **were going to do**, he halted his army. and Tigranes and the officers of the Medes rode up to him and asked what they should do)

Nevertheless, a clue that we might be on the right track is that, statistically, many indicatives appear in discourse situations, while optatives outnumber indicatives in narrative.

Yet we have to amend our hypothesis or abandon it altogether.

5. DISCOURSE-NARRATION

As suggested in introduction, a way to amend our hypothesis would be to refine discourse situations. For nothing prevents a speaker from telling a story in his discourse. For example, in a trial, facts have to be recalled. This can be done either by relating it with the trial situation, or by shifting the viewpoint to the past. We are going to check if Amigues' distinction applies in these cases.

But before doing this, one must find a motivation for distinguishing discourse-narration and history-narration. It is hard to find a proof, but clues are not totally absent that history-narration may be less accessible to the time of speech than discourse-narration. In my corpus, for example, general truth is expressed at the present indicative tense in discourse, even in a discourse-narration, whereas present optative can be used in history-narration, but not in

comme ils se sont produits à mesure qu'ils apparaissent à l'horizon de l'histoire. Personne ne parle ici, les événements semblent se raconter eux-mêmes."

discourse-narration. This last fact is illustrated respectively by (9) (present indicative) and (10) (present optative).

(9) Τοῦτο παρασκευάσας οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς ἐλελοίπει ἄλλο ἢ ἀσκεῖν τὰ ἀμφὶ τὸν πόλεμον, ἐκεῖνο δοκῶν καταμεμαθηκέναι **ὄτι** οὔτοι κράτιστοι ἕκαστα **γίγνονται** οἱ ἂν ἀφέμενοι τοῦ πολλοῖς προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν ἐπὶ ἓν ἔργον τράπωνται. (X. Cyr., 2, 1, 21).

(When he had provided for this, he had left them nothing to do but to practise the arts of war, for he thought he had observed **that** those **became** best in any given thing who gave up paying attention to many things and devoted themselves to that alone)

(10) Λέγειν αὐτὸν ἔφασαν **ὥς δέοι** τὸν στρατιώτην φοβεῖσθαι μᾶλλον τὸν ἄρχοντα ἢ τοὺς πολεμίους, εἰ μέλλοι ἢ φυλακὰς φυλάξειν ἢ φίλων ἀφέξεσθαι ἢ ἀπροφασιστως ἰέναι πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους. (X., An., 2, 6, 10)

(He used to say, it was reported, **that** a soldier **must** fear his commander more than the enemy if he were to perform guard duty or keep his hands from friends or without making excuses advance against the enemy)

Now let us return to the discourse-narration. A close examination shows that when a state of affairs is expressed with the future *indicative*, it overlaps with the time of speech, no matter if it originates in a remote or close past, and no matter if it is part of a narration or not (11). On the other hand, only optatives show up when the speaker remains in the narration and the verb at the future tense expresses a state of affairs that will be realized before the time of speech (12).

(11) Ἀνὴρ, ᾧ δ' ἐγὼ, ἐπιεικῆς τοιαύδε τύχης μετασχών, ὕδν ἀπολέσας ἢ τι ἄλλο ὧν περὶ πλείστου ποιεῖται, ἐλέγομέν που καὶ τότε **ὄτι** ῥᾶστα **οἴσει** τῶν ἄλλων. (Pl. Rp., 603e)

(“When a good and reasonable man,” said I, “experiences such a stroke of fortune as the loss of a son or anything else that he holds most dear, we said, I believe, then too, **that** he **will bear** it more easily than the other sort”)

(12) Ἀπεκρίνω **ὄτι** τὸ στράτευμα **διαβήσοιτο** εἰς Βυζάντιον. (X., An., 7, 2, 27)

(You answered that the army was going to cross over to Byzantium)

Statistically, among 14 optatives in the corpus in a discourse-narration context, there are two exceptions. The first one (13) can easily be handled. The optative appears only in an apographon, but was adopted by all editors. The original *lectio* was *σκεψόμεθα*. Also Fassbänder (1884 : 16-17) proposes to keep it: “The future optative *σκεψόμεθα* appears in one copy, although indicative is witnessed by the rest of the [manuscripts]. Albeit placed in a suitable position, it has obviously been added.”⁶

⁶ “Optativus futuri *σκεψόμεθα* in uno apogr. exstat, cum reliquorum fide indicativus commendetur. Illum, quamquam idoneo loco positus sit, patet posthabendum esse.” Note that we disagree on the point “idoneo loco positus est.”

(13) Ἡμεῖς που εἶπομεν **ὅτι** τοῦτο μὲν, εἴ που παραπίπτοι, εἰς αὐθις **σχεψοίμεθα**. (Pl. Rp. 466a)

(We, I believe, replied **that** this was a consideration to which we **would return** if occasion offered)

Among 9 indicatives, there is only one apparent exception (14). εὐδοκιμήσει is in the future of Simonides' knowledge, but before the time of speech. This is borne out by the adverb τότε. Nevertheless the sentence can be understood otherwise. Simonides will not be famous among the men of *his* time, as the translator understood. Indeed, he will be the man of his time that will be famous *in the future* (including the time of speech). Thus, the only exception disappears.

(14) Ὁ οὖν Σιμωνίδης, ἅτε φιλότιμος ὦν ἐπὶ σοφία, ἔγνω **ὅτι** εἰ καθέλοι τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα ὥσπερ εὐδοκιμοῦντα ἀθλητὴν καὶ περιγένοιτο αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς **εὐδοκιμήσει** ἐν τοῖς τότε ἀνθρώποις. (Pl. Prot., 343c)

(Then Simonides, ambitious to get a name for wisdom, perceived **that** if he could overthrow this saying, as one might some famous athlete, and become its conqueror, he **would win fame** himself amongst men of that day)

We end up with one exception over 23 instances, which I do not know how to deal with: Pl. Rp. 497c. Note moreover that exceptions can be found, though rarely, in situation à la Amigues. Look at (15) where ἵνα, but not ὅπως is employed.

(15) Πολλάκις ἡ γυνὴ ἀπῆει κάτω καθευδήσουσα ὡς τὸ παιδίον, **ἵνα** τὸν τιθὸν αὐτῷ **διδῶ** καὶ μὴ **βοᾷ**. (Lysias, 1, 10)

(My wife would often leave me and go down to sleep with the child, **so as to be able to give it the breast and stop its crying**)

More generally, it seems that ἵνα-clauses are not as easily amenable to our proposal as ὅπως or future optative clauses. An extensive study of Demosthenes' private speeches shows that, in discourse-narrative contexts, though largely preferred to the subjunctive, the optative constitutes only a heavy trend. See table 2 and table 3.

Table 2 : The optative and the subjunctive in $\iota\upsilon\alpha$ -final clauses in discourse-narration contexts.

	Overlap ping with the time of speech	Unassess able	Stri ctly preceding the time of speech	To tal
Demosthenes' private speeches				
Subjunc tive	20 (80 %)	8	6 (18 %)	34
Optativ e	5 (20 %)	2	27 (82 %)	34
Xenophon's Anabasis and Cyropaedia				
Subjunc tive	0	0	0	0
Optativ e	1 ⁷	0	5	6

Table 3 : The optative and the subjunctive in $\iota\upsilon\alpha$ -final clauses in pure narration contexts.

Xenophon's Cyropaedia	Anabasis and
Subjunctive	6 (35 %)
Optative	11 (65 %)

We can then conclude that our prediction is entirely borne out for the future optative in the discourse contexts, and partially for $\iota\upsilon\alpha$ -final clauses. Let us turn now to historical contexts.

6. HISTORY-NARRATION

6.1. Proposals

In historical contexts, the optative outnumbers the indicative (39 vs 19), but we expected to find only optatives, as we did in discourse context, given that history-narration and discourse-narration are theoretically not supposed to differ from one another. The amount of

⁷ The manuscripts give both *lectiones*, subjunctive and optative.

indicative is too high to seek for philological or interpretative explanations. None of the following suggestions to get rid these undesirable indicatives works well either.

For example, one could call for the famous possibility of Ancient Greek's of embedding a direct discourse under a complementizer ὅτι (Smyth 1956: 584: § 2590a) as in (16). Indicatives would be ignored direct speech cases. Some editors resort to this option, even in texts where there is no trace of deixis disparity. Look for example at (17), where the translation of the *Les Belles Lettres* edition implies such an interpretation.

(16) Οἱ δὲ εἶπον **ὅτι** ἱκανοὶ **ἐσμεν** εἰς τὴν χώραν εἰσβάλλειν ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ θάτερα τὴν τῶν ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἡμῶν πολεμίων. (X. An., 5, 4, 10)

(They replied: “We **are** able to invade this land of your enemies and ours from the opposite side)

(17) Ταῦτα ἀκούσαντες οἱ στρατιῶται ἀνεθορύβησαν **ὡς εὖ λέγει**. (X. An., 5, 1, 3)

(“**Il a raison**”, proclamèrent les soldats à ces paroles) (Les Belles Lettres)

(Upon hearing these words the soldiers shouted out **that he was quite right**)

But, this solution is precluded by the fact that in some cases there should be this disparity and it is absent as in (18). Moreover, sometimes ὡς appears as a complementizer, which does not seem to be possible with direct speech introduction (but this objection is weak as proved by Smyth (1956: § 2590a)).

(18) Ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος λέγει **ὅτι ἄξει** αὐτοὺς πέντε ἡμερῶν εἰς χωρίον ὅθεν ὄψονται θάλατταν (X. An., 4, 7, 20)

(When the guide came, he said **that he would lead** them within five days to a place from which they could see the sea)

This is also the well-known fact that *verba sentiendi* do not embed the same tenses as *verba dicendi*. Kühner-Gerth (1904 : 362-363) noticed it, and it was made precise in de la Villa (1999) and Faure (to appear). To express simultaneity, *verba sentiendi* in the past (we should say henceforth, in the narration) are followed by a present optative or an imperfect indicative, as if they displayed the sequence of time phenomenon, whereas *verba dicendi* select for a present optative or a present indicative. But in the case at issue, it does not seem to play a role, since we find *verba sentiendi* (19) as well as *verba dicendi* (20) as embedders.

Verba sentiendi

(19) Κλέαρχος (...) ἐπεὶ ἔγνων **ὅτι** οὐ **δυνήσεται** βιάσασθαι, συνήγαγεν ἐκκλησίαν τῶν αὐτοῦ στρατιωτῶν. (X. An., 1, 3, 2)

(Clearchus when he realized that he could not accomplish anything by force, he called a meeting of his own troops)

Verba dicendi.

(20) Τὰς πόλεις ἐκούσας ἔπεισεν ὁδοποιεῖν, λέγων **ὅτι** θᾶπτον **ἀπαλλάξονται**, ἣν εὐποροὶ γένωνται αἱ ὁδοί. (X. An., 5, 1, 14).

(Xenophon persuaded the cities to repair the roads voluntarily, urging that they would be rid of the army the more quickly if the roads should be made easy to travel)

The conclusion is that there is no complementary distribution between indicative and optative in these contexts. Yet, this said we are not released. We must provide an explanation for this concurrence/alternance. But in which terms are we to formulate it? Is there a kind of neutralization? Is one prevalent over the other? Can we still speak of optionality?

6.2. A new proposal

It seems to me that we must first take into account the ratio. We are with 67 % optatives and 33 % indicatives. Obviously indicative is the recessive option. Considering the results of my previous study on the oblique optative, this is expected. But what allows the indicative to pop up in the optative domain?

A motivation might be found in the contrast with the discourse-narration. What is the difference between discourse-narration and history-narration? In the former case, the speaker tells the story himself. Even if it is made on a narrative mode, he never completely disappears as a narrator. We keep following and feeling his presence. That is why he must mark clearly that he is out of his tale. The border between the tale and the time of speech is therefore impassable. Otherwise the two enunciative areas would merge and everything would get entangled.

Under those considerations, we propose to dub the oblique optative ‘a narrative tense’. This name is not unproblematic. The first objection is that the oblique optative is found in all finite clauses apart from main clauses. We do not see why it should be limited to such clauses, especially since the optative oblique occurs in all clause types, disregarding whether or not they are part of an indirect discourse, whether or not the sentence is presuppositional etc. On the other hand, there are tenses that are limited to dependent clauses. In French, I am not aware of a context where one could use the ‘passé antérieur’ in a main clause. But its extension is far more limited than the optative’s. One clue could be that the optative tenses are ‘relative’ and not ‘absolute’, contra Amigues 1977, or, better said, they must be indexed on the time of the main verb action, they have a *relative* feature carried by the aspect-stem.

Note that the cases where the aspect-stem expresses not the relative time, but the aspect are just the cases where the oblique optative in discourse-narration is not obligatory: when the optative is in relation with the subjunctive. This is what we saw in Section 5, table 2 for ἵνα-clauses, with a possible extension to the other clause-types where the optative is in relation with a subjunctive such as deliberative indirect questions; conditional-clauses etc (see the introduction for a complete list).

In this somewhat stipulative interpretation, the oblique optative and then the future optative indicate that:

We are in a narrative. The past context is not a sufficient condition. In a sense, it is almost false to appeal to the past, since narration is not exactly an instance of past time.

The tense is to be interpreted with reference to the main tense.

These features should carry over to the history-narration. They roughly do, as we find in these situations a majority of optatives. Yet, with the history-narration, we are dealing with a true narration, meaning that the narrator/speaker distinction disappears altogether (see Benveniste's quotation above). In this case, confusion is out of order. It is hence possible to present the story "from the inside", that is taking the point of view of the action. It is not thus marked as removed in the past, but becomes the absolute time reference. That is why indicative tenses are allowed, and not only narrative tenses (that is the oblique optative).

All this explanation is reminiscent of the so-called historical present description. But it would be dangerous to treat the indicative alternating with the optative in the same manner as the historical present, given that the historical present do not encounter the same limitation as the optative. For example, it occurs as much in discourse-narration as in history-narration. Worse, the same explanation would be called for to account for the historical present as for the indicative at issue. Actually, this is not exactly the case, for the historical present is explained by saying that it is related with the speaker's time and concerns (Sicking and Stork 1997), while the indicative alternating with the optative would simply acknowledge the deletion of the narrator/speaker. In the former case, two levels are in action, in the latter only one.

Unfortunately, both explanations are stipulative and the circularity that Sicking and Stork 1997 were concerned with is far from being avoided here. It must merely be reckoned that in this case both options are available. The best we can do is notice that one form (the indicative) is more marked than the other (the optative).

Another issue is the fact that the distribution in my corpus is clear-cut in discourse contexts but not in narrative contexts. We have already had a clue that this may not be true, given the *ἴνα* counterexample we met in Section 5. As suggested above, it could be a very different case. If not, the way we ought to deal with them is roughly the same as we have just sketched for narrative contexts. Nevertheless, the contrast between discourse and narrative in terms of tendencies remains sharp, and we still must account for it. Thus, the previous explanation is to be retained.

7. A FOLLOW-UP TO THE EVIDENTIAL AND SUBORDINATION HYPOTHESES

Of course, issues remain. Confronting my proposal with others earlier reviewed (Section 2), we see that it roughly faces the same objection as the evidential hypothesis, namely that it is somehow circular. But it also escapes it by focusing on the past. Let me sketch briefly what makes a difference between them and what are the crucial examples.

Our proposal improves the research for it takes into account the past factor. It also provides us with an explanation for the evidential effect, or Louis Basset's "distanciation énonciative" effect, for evidentiality and detachment come for free from the narrative feature as

effects rather than as essential traits of the oblique optative. The narrative implies detachment by the deletion of the speaker's perspective. Recall the introductory formulas of tales: "one upon a time"/ "il était une fois" that say nothing on the reliability of the story.

It remains the subordination issue. I have little to say about it, except that some tenses are limited to dependent contexts. As aforementioned, it is the case of the "passé antérieur" in French that is almost restricted to anterior temporal subordinate clauses. Notwithstanding, oblique optative encounters no such limitation, and is so spread that the parallel is not operative. Amending our theory by adding a condition does not make predictions. Replacing narrative assumptions with indirect discourse ones would take us back and erase the so far achieved results. One would once again face the distributional issue partly resolved in the previous analysis, since indirect discourse is far from tallying with past contexts. Moreover, not every embedding verb implies indirect discourse. Verbs of knowledge for example are not to be matched with this category.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Méndez-Dosuna's (1999: 344) claim that "the past time belongs to the context, it is not part of the meaning of the oblique optative⁸" is therefore not borne out. Past tense is the only feature that is identifiable. Provided that we make precise what "past tense" means, namely, narrative contexts, the distribution of the oblique optative gets clearer, even if not entirely transparent. This outcome is reached through the analysis of clear-cut narrative situations, where the time of speech is remoted, namely narration in discourse.

Surprisingly, in "real" narration, things are not so obvious. The absence of time of speech, so to speak, makes it more easily possible to use this kind of deixis in order to make things more vivid. This is reminiscent of the use of the so-called historical present.

Distance and evidential are only effects of this main narrative function. It remains the subordination issue, that is why optative oblique is rare in independent clauses. Those cases might even be to be treated as different usages of the optative, not tied with the oblique optative. They are known under the name of "Free Indirect Speech", which is plausible since it always follows an indirect speech situation. Notwithstanding, such a terminology is not convenient. Free Indirect Speech is not related to another indirect discourse. Its freedom originates in the indetermination of its border and the smooth passage from narration to (indirect) discourse (Rosier 2008). Consequently, that use of the optative is rather a case of what is marginally called "discours indirect libéré" (Free-d indirect speech) or "discours indirect sans *que*" (Indirect speech without [the complementizer] *que*), maybe entering by this way the big picture of what we were dealing with.

⁸ "Le temps passé appartient au contexte, il ne fait pas partie du sémantisme de l'optatif oblique."

REFERENCES

Ancient authors.

Démosthène, 1954-1960, *Plaidoyers civils*, Texte établi et traduit par Louis Gernet, Paris.

Demosthenes, 1936-1939, *Private Orations*, with an English Translation by A.T. Murray, Londres-Cambridge (Mass.).

Lysias, 1930, *Lysias*, with an English Translation by W.R.M. Lamb, Londres-Cambridge (Mass.).

Plato, 1961, *Plato: in twelve volumes*, with an English Translation by H. N. Fowler, W. R. M. Lamb, P. Shorey, R. G. Bury, Londres-Cambridge (Mass.).

Platon, 1923, *Protagoras*, Texte établi et traduit par Alfred Croiset, Paris.

Platon, 1931-1934, *La République*, Texte établi et traduit par Émile Chambry, Paris.

Xenophon, 1968, *Xenophon: In Seven Volumes*, with an English Translation by C. L. Brownson, E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd, W. Miller, G. W. Bowersock, Londres-Cambridge (Mass.).

Xénophon, 1930-1931, *Anabase*, Texte établi et traduit par Paul Masqueray, Paris.

Xénophon, 1971-1978, *Cyropédie*, Texte établi et traduit par Marcel Bizos et Édouard Delebecque, Paris.

Modern authors.

Aikhenvald, A., 2003, "Evidentiality in typological perspective", in *Studies in Evidentiality*, Aikhenvald A., Dixon R. M. W., Amsterdam-Philadelphie.

Aikhenvald, A., 2004, *Evidentiality*, Oxford.

Amigues, S., 1977, *Les subordonnées finales par ὅπως en attique classique*, Paris.

Basset, L., 1984, "L'optatif grec et la dissociation énonciative", *LALIES* 4, 53-59.

Benveniste, E., 1966, "Les relations de temps dans le verbe français", in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* 1, Paris.

Duhoux, Y., 2000, *Le verbe grec ancien : éléments de morphologie et de syntaxe historiques*, Louvain-la-Neuve.

Fassbaender, F., 1884, *De optativo futuri*, Leipzig.

Faure, R., (to appear), "L'Optatif oblique serait-il un temps ?", *LALIES* 30.

Genette, G., 1972, *Figures III*, Paris.

Goodwin, W. W., 1889, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb*, Londres.

Kühner, R. and Gerth, B., 1898-1904, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache II: Satzlehre (1-2)*, Hannover.

Lysias, 1930, *Lysias*, with an English Translation by W.R.M. Lamb. Londres-Cambridge (Mass.).

Méndez Dosuna, J. V., 1999, "La valeur de l'optatif oblique grec : un regard fonctionnel-typologique", *Les Complétives en grec ancien. Actes du colloque international de Saint-Etienne (3-5 septembre 1998)*, Jacquino B. (éd.), 331-352.

Neuberger-Donath, R., 1983, "Die Funktion des Optativs in abhängigen Aussagesätzen", *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Linguistics.*, Shiro H., Kazuko I. (éd.), 715-718.

Rosier, L., 2008, *Le discours rapporté*, Paris.

Sicking, C. M. J. and Stork, P., 1997, "The Grammar of the So-Called Historical Present in Ancient Greek", in *Grammar as Interpretation : Greek Literature in Its Linguistic Contexts*, Bakker E. J., Leiden-New York-Cologne.

Smyth, H. W., 1956, *Greek Grammar*. Revised by Gordon M. Messing, Cambridge, MA.

Vairel, H., 1979, "Moindre actualité et moindre actualisation : sur l'emploi modal des formes verbales de passé en anglais, français et latin. Le problème de l'optatif grec", *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 24, 563-584.

de la Villa, J., 1999, "L'indicatif du passé dans les propositions complétives du grec ancien", *Les Complétives en grec ancien. Actes du colloque international de Saint-Etienne (3-5 septembre 1998)*, Jacquinod B. (éd.), 353-365.