Impolite orders in Ancient Greek?

The οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type

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In Ancient Greek, an impolite order can be uttered by means of a negative interrogative in the future tense (οὐκ ἐρεῖς; 'Won't you talk?'). The aim of this paper is to understand to what extent this type of utterance is impolite, and to explain how such a conventional and indirect order can frequently take on an impolite meaning. For this purpose, data are taken from classical drama (Aristophanes' and Euripides' plays).

Drawing on criteria put forward by recent work on impoliteness, this study provides an accurate description of uses in discourse, in order to establish that this conventional order is never used with a polite intention, but regularly as an impolite order. Impoliteness can be explained by the locutionary form which gives an orientation to the interpretation of the utterance: an indirect and conventional expression cannot be polite if the locutionary meaning is opposed to it.

1.   Introduction

In Ancient Greek, an impolite order can be uttered by means of a second-person future, used in a negative interrogative sentence. This structure is frequently encountered in classical drama, in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays, and especially in Aristophanes', but is less common, though not unknown, in prose (in his monograph, Magnien, 1912: 179–181, lists several examples in

Plato's, Xenophon's and Demosthenes' works). The prototypical utterance is example (1):

(1)   οὐκ   ἐρεῖς   ;
         Neg.   2nd p. Fut. (say)   Interrogative marker
         'Won't you say?' (Ar. *Ach.* 580, *Peace* 185, *Birds* 67, etc.)

In the literature, classicists have long noticed that these utterances tend to express impolite orders. See, for instance, Kühner and Gerth's remark in their *Syntax*:

> Diesem gemässigten Ausdruck eines Befehls steht die durch eine Negation und den Indikativ des Futurs in der Form einer Frage ausgedrückte Befehlsweise entgegen, in welcher das Begehrte *in strengem und drohendem Tone, zuweilen mit einer gewissen ironischen Bitterkeit* ausgesagt wird. (Kühner and Gerth 1904: 387.7; my emphasis). ['Contrary to this moderate expression of an order, there is another way of giving an order, expressed by means of a negation and the future indicative in the form of a question, in which the desire is uttered *in a stern and threatening tone, sometimes with bitter irony.*' (own translation)]

A similar opinion is expressed by Schwyzer and Debrunner, in their Greek grammar:

> Voluntativ ist die negierte futurische Frage (2. und 3. Pers.) *in der Geltung eines strikten Befehls* (Schwyzer and Debrunner 1958: 292; my emphasis). ['The negated question in the future (2nd and 3rd person) expresses will, *equivalent to a strict order.*' (own translation)]

Nevertheless, these remarks are rather unspecific and need to be more firmly grounded. That is why the first aim of this paper is to analyse this impolite expression in discourse so as to provide a more accurate description of the utterances and their characteristics.

Furthermore, Ancient Greek provides data which are of great interest as far as (im)politeness theories are concerned, since this utterance is an indirect act and a conventional one. The second aim of this paper is therefore to understand why a negative interrogative is impolite in the future tense, whereas the same form of sentence is polite with the potential (a regular verb form which expresses possibility in Ancient Greek):

(2)   οὐκ   ἄν   λέγοις   ;
         Neg.   Mod. Particle   2nd p. Potential (say)   Int. marker
         'Would you say, please?' (literally 'Couldn't you say?')

The data are taken from classical drama, since plays form an important corpus for verbal interaction. Two authors have been exhaustively studied,

Aristophanes and Euripides; the data were collected by reading these texts and comparing the occurrences with the lists given by Magnien (1912: 179–181). Why were these two authors chosen? As far as impoliteness is concerned, dramatic dialogue is a valuable resource (see Culpeper 1998), especially comedy (i.e. Aristophanes' plays, in Classical Greek). In the classical period, beside inscriptions, which do not provide an adequate corpus for the study of verbal interaction, texts are mostly written in a lofty style, so that impolite utterances can be found only on rare occasions. In comedies, in contrast, colloquial expressions are not avoided, giving us insight into less formal types of language, though written with an obvious aesthetic intention. The οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is not limited to Aristophanes' plays, however, and since there are no other comic playwrights in the classical period, tragedy offers a useful counterpart.[1] Among the three classical tragedians, Euripides was chosen for two reasons: his work is contemporary with that of Aristophanes and it contains the largest number of utterances of the expression studied here. In this corpus, the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type accounts for 146 utterances (106 in Aristophanes' plays and 40 in Euripides' plays), most of which are positive orders (133 utterances of positive orders and 13 utterances of prohibitions). Line numbers for utterances are given in the appendix.

2.   Description of the data: Degree of impoliteness

2.1   Identifying impoliteness

When trying to apply pragmatic studies to an ancient language, several difficulties arise: there is no access to the opinion of the native speaker, nor to the criterion of intonation, and the only corpus that can be studied is what has been transmitted to us. Another difficulty occurs when the pragmatic study deals with impoliteness: as has been shown by various recent studies (e.g. Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003), impoliteness is neither the negative mirror of politeness nor the lack of politeness. An utterance is impolite only if it is intended to be so. The definition of impoliteness adopted here is Bousfield's (2007):

> [Impoliteness is] the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal
> FTA [face-threatening acts] which are purposefully performed
>   – unmitigated when mitigation is required and/or
>   – with deliberate aggression. (Bousfield 2007: 2186)

Admittedly, it is difficult to sound out a character's intention in a dramatic dialogue without running the risk of extrapolating. However, several clues

confirm the classicists' opinion that the utterance is impolite, which derive from an accurate description of the data. For this purpose, instead of investigating the speaker's intention, the hearer's reaction has been studied whenever possible: thanks to contextual information, the modern reader can understand whether the impolite meaning is recognised by the hearer as intended by the speaker. The relevant criteria used for the description come mainly from the founding model put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987), but more recent research into impoliteness has also been drawn on (viz. Culpeper 1996; Bousfield 2007).

In Brown and Levinson's model, an order is a face-threatening act and as such can be assessed according to several characteristics concerning the type of face threatened, the seriousness of the threatening act and the presence of aggravating devices. All the utterances in the data threaten the negative face of the hearer, since the speaker insists on the hearer performing an action. In 15 utterances, the positive face of the hearer is clearly threatened as well. See, for instance, example (3), which contains a prohibition. In this utterance, Strepsiades, an old man taught by Socrates, has just mentioned Zeus, and the philosopher, who is portrayed by Aristophanes as an eccentric who worships strange deities (i.e. the Clouds), snubs him:

(3)   *Soc.*   Ποῖος Ζεύς ;
             Οὐ   μὴ   ληρήσεις   ;   Οὐδ᾽ ἔστι Ζεύς
             Neg.   Neg.   2nd p. Fut.   Int. marker
             'What Zeus? Won't you stop talking nonsense? There is no
             Zeus.' (Ar. *Clouds* 367; own translation)[2]

In this prohibition, there are two different negations: the scope of the first one οὐ is the sentence (as in positive orders); the meaning of a prohibition is conveyed thanks to the second negation μή, the scope of which is only the verb. In this utterance, the lexical meaning of the verb (ληρέω 'to talk nonsense') entails a positive face-threatening act: using this order, the speaker expresses his contempt for the hearer's previous words.

Brown and Levinson (1987) define the seriousness of a face-threatening act by three factors: the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, the relative power of the speaker and the hearer, and the absolute ranking of impositions in the culture considered. These three criteria are summed up in table 1, which takes into account only utterances in Aristophanes' plays (see below for remarks about Euripides' plays).

Table 1. Seriousness of the face-threatening act performed (in Aristophanes' plays)

Rank of imposition		Degree of intimacy		Degree of power		
Highly threatening	Not highly threatening	High	Low	S > H	S < H	S = H
35	71	43	63	74	10	22

These figures call for some comments. The ranking of imposition is a difficult criterion even in a familiar culture (see Mills 2009), but especially when the observer stands outside the culture he observes. In the utterances which are considered here as "highly threatening", the desired action intrinsically threatens a hearer's face (such as 'go away' or 'stop talking'). Among them, six utterances of curses can be found (*Knights* 892, *Clouds* 789, *Peace* 500, *Lys.* 1240, *Frogs* 178, 1209), which is an interesting possibility when evaluating impoliteness. There are only four examples (*Ach.* 166, 564, *Knights* 240, *Thesm.* 1224) in which the ordered action could be beneficial for the hearer if the utterances are considered outside their context. However, contextual information shows that these examples are not intended for the hearer's benefit in fact:

- in *Ach.* 166, the advice is contradicted by an unpleasant term of address;
- in *Ach.* 564, an explicit threat in case the desired action is not performed is uttered;
- in *Knights* 240, the desired action is primarily for the speaker's benefit;
- in *Thesm.* 1224, the ordered action is claimed to be for the hearer's benefit, but is uttered with a delusive intention.

These remarks about the ranking of imposition are not conclusive as far as impoliteness is concerned: while the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type can be a neutral way of expressing orders, whether highly threatening or not, it can hardly be a polite form of order.

As far as the relationship between participants is concerned, the figures about the degree of intimacy are given for the sake of description, but again are not decisive: in slightly over half the utterances, the speaker and the hearer are not on terms of intimacy, but in a significant proportion of cases the opposite situation holds, precluding any conclusion on this point. The situation is clearer in the case of the degree of power: the prototypical situation in which the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is used is when the speaker has a clear superiority (e.g. a god vs. a human being, a master vs. a slave). There are only ten utterances in which the speaker is inferior (*Ach.* 165, 825, *Knights* 1354, *Wasps* 156, *Peace*

1054, *Birds* 1258, 1261, *Lys.* 874, 899, *Frogs* 649);[3] in all these examples, however, the hearer's superiority is questioned, sometimes aggressively. See, for instance, *Birds* 1258 and 1261: the speaker, Pisthetairos, is a human being who is addressing a goddess, Iris, the gods' messenger. Given the extra-linguistic situation, Pisthetairos is inferior to Iris. But in the play, Pisthetairos has founded a city of birds which competes with the power of the gods. When Iris comes as a messenger, Pisthetairos sends her away rather coarsely, even threatening her with rape if she does not leave quickly (lines 1253–1256). In this particular case, the hearer's power is challenged with remarkable violence, but all the ten utterances are orders uttered in a context of challenged power. A sign of this superiority can be seen by the reaction of the hearer to the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type: in 67 utterances, the hearer submits.

While the description of the utterances given by table 1 does not prove the impoliteness of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, it nevertheless clearly indicates that these utterances are not compatible with politeness and are mostly to be found in situations of conflict (see the ranking of imposition and the degree of power). The impoliteness of the utterance itself is signalled by two clues: in Aristophanes' plays, the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is immediately preceded or followed by a threat (29 utterances), or it is accompanied by an insult or a face-threatening term of address (20 utterances). Both features together are observed in nine examples (in bold in the list below):

- with a threat: *Ach.* 564, 822, *Knights* 892, *Clouds* **789, 1296**, *Wasps* 147, **397, 448**, 1340, *Peace* 261, 465, 500, **1124**, 1126, *Birds* 990, 991, 1020, 1032a–b, 1044, 1055, 1258, 1324, **1466**, 1467, *Lys.* **1240,** *Frogs* **178,** *Wealth* 71, **417**.
- with an insult or a face-threatening term of address: *Ach.* 166, *Clouds* 296, 789, 1296, *Wasps* 156, 397, 448, *Peace* 185, 1124, *Birds* 1466, 1568, 1692, *Lys.* 429, 878, 1240, *Frogs* 178, 199, 480, *Wealth* 417, 440.

These remarks do not mean that the majority of utterances are undoubtedly impolite; the figures only show that the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is compatible with face-threatening acts which are highly aggressive. Example (4), where Pisthetairos pushes an informer away, is a prototypical utterance:

(4)   *Pisth.*   **Οὐ πτερυγιεῖς** ἐντευθενί;
            Οὐκ ἀπολιβάξεις, ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολούμενος;
            Πικρὰν τάχ᾽ ὄψει στρεψοδικοπανουργίαν.
            'Won't you fly away from here? Won't you clear off, you most miserable rascal? Or you will soon see what comes of quibbling and lying.' (Ar. *Birds* 1466–1468; transl. by Henderson 2000)

In this example, the rank of imposition is high (the speaker orders the hearer to go away, which threatens his negative face), there is no intimacy between the participants and the speaker is clearly superior to the hearer. The reason for this superiority is given by the informer himself: Pisthetairos is holding a whip (see line 1464). Note also the aggressive term of address and the explicit threat. The desired result is achieved: after these lines, the informer leaves the stage without speaking.

Such violence, both verbal and non-verbal, is not *sui generis* and its roots can be found in the previous context: when the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type appears in the dramatic dialogue, it occurs in a situation of conflict and the speaker reacts to a face-threatening act. The previous face-threatening act can take different forms. Half of the utterances (53) are used after the failure of a first (polite or neutral) order, and, in 29 of these utterances, the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is the second and slightly modified expression of an explicit order, already given in the imperative form. In 25 other utterances, the speaker orders an action which is expected by him and should have already been carried out. Lastly, the expression can be found after a provocative remark: in twelve utterances, the hearer has just said something foolish or coarse; in eight utterances, the hearer has threatened the negative face of the speaker (by stealing, beating or touching him); and in eight utterances, the hearer has threatened the positive face of the speaker (by a criticism, dispute, refusal, etc.). In these previous face-threatening acts, performed before the utterance under consideration, the seriousness of the threat varies: when the speaker orders an action which, according to him, should have already been accomplished, he can hardly feel highly threatened if this expectation was not clear for the hearer. Moreover, the features of the interactional context also play a role: when a previous explicit order has not been obeyed, the face-threatening act is all the more threatening because this previous order was given by a superior speaker. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, when an utterance of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type occurs, the interactional situation is not peaceful and friendly.

In Euripides' plays, the situation is slightly different. The description of the seriousness of the face-threatening act performed is given in table 2.

Table 2. Seriousness of the face-threatening act performed (in Euripides' plays)

Rank of imposition		Degree of intimacy		Degree of power		
Highly threatening	Not highly threatening	High	Low	S > H	S < H	S = H
22	18	20	20	26	5	9

Table 2 shows that in Euripides' plays the face-threatening acts performed through the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type are less serious than in Aristophanes', and thus less likely to convey impoliteness. The first important difference is that the rank of imposition does not seem to be important: the figures are balanced between highly and not highly threatening imposition. Furthermore, there is not a single example of a curse in the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type. Nevertheless, note that only four utterances (*Cycl.* 49, *Her.* 562, 563, *Phoen.* 624) express an action intended for the hearer's benefit; among them, only *Her.* 562–563 is not contradicted by contextual information (the other two are accompanied by a threat). As far as the relationship between participants is concerned, the situation in Euripides' plays resembles that in Aristophanes'. As in Aristophanes' plays, no firm conclusions can be drawn about the degree of intimacy between interlocutors, and the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is used by speakers who are clearly superior to their hearers.

This contrast with Aristophanes' plays is confirmed by the description of contextual features. Indeed, the discourse situation seems less conflictual in the examples from Euripides: a threat is used in only eight utterances (*Ion* 163, 174, 524, *Hel.* 437a–b, *Ba.* 253, 254, *Rh.* 684) and only three utterances are used with negative terms of address (*Tro.* 464, *Hipp.* 498, 499). However, even if the relationships between the interlocutors are friendlier, the utterance is used in Euripides' plays when the speaker reacts to a previous face-threatening act, as indicated in the following list:

- in 15 utterances, the hearer has not obeyed a previous order (*Cycl.* 49, *Andr.* 240, *Heraclid.* 840, *Hipp.* 498, 499, 780a-b, *Hec.* 1283, *Her.* 1053, *Ion* 163, 174, 524, *Hel.* 458, *Orest.* 171, *Rh.* 684), all of them rephrase the previous order;
- in 25 utterances, an action should have been previously performed (all remaining utterances listed in the appendix, excluding the 15 above).

In Euripides' plays, the description seems to show that the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type cannot be associated with politeness, though impoliteness itself seems less probable than in Aristophanes' plays.

2.2   Gauging impoliteness

Are all the utterances of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type impolite? It seems clear in all the examples from Aristophanes' plays that this expression is never used with a polite intention. In all the examples, where the expression is used with a threat, with a face-threatening term of address or, to a lesser extent, to reinforce a previous order which has not been obeyed, the impolite intention seems well established. Evidence for this impoliteness can also be found in the immediate context, as shown in example (5), where the reaction of the hearer clearly shows how threatening the utterance is. War, who is a god in Aristophanes' play, is addressing his servant, Uproar (the Athenian pestle is an image for Cleon, the warmonger).

(5)   *War*   Οἴσεις ἀλετρίβανον τρέχων;
       Uproar   Ἀλλ᾽ ὦ μέλε,
             οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν· ἐχθὲς εἰσῳκίσμεθα.
       War   **Οὔκουν** παρ᾽ Ἀθηναίων **μεταθρέξει** ταχὺ πάνυ ;
       Uproar Ἔγωγε νὴ Δί᾽ · εἰ δὲ μή γε, κλαύσομαι.
             '(War:) Run and fetch me a pestle. (literally 'Will you run and fetch me a pestle?') (Uproar:) But, my dear, we haven't got one; we moved in yesterday. (War:) Won't you hurry, go and fetch me one from Athens? (Uproar:) Of course, by Zeus; otherwise, I will surely weep.' (Ar. *Peace* 259–262; transl. by Henderson 1998, slightly modified)

The verb in line 259, τρέχων, is a present participle, from the same verb as μεταθρέξει (with a prefix), in the future tense in the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type (in bold). The order in the form of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is the rephrasing of a previous order which has not been obeyed. The tone of War's words is emphasised by Olson's commentary in his edition (1998): "τρέχων: dismissive in tone and thus appropriate for dealing with a servant". Indeed, Uproar submits and indicates that he has understood the threat implied by the order: he knows that there will be tears if he does not obey this time.

     Nevertheless, there are several examples where the impolite intention is debatable. When the speaker has a legitimate power over the hearer, the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, though not polite, is not clearly impolite. The discrepancy between the participants allows such an expression. For example, in (6), Lysistrata is the leader of women who are on a sex strike in order to force men from all the cities to make peace, and she orders other women to struggle against men, and to push away the archers, who try to attack them.

(6)   *Lys.*   Ὦ ξύμμαχοι γυναῖκες, ἐκθεῖτ᾽ ἔνδοθεν,
ὦ σπερμαγοραιολεκιθολαχανοπώλιδες,
ὦ σκοροδοπανδοκευτριαρτοπώλιδες,
οὐχ ἕλξετ᾽, οὐ παιήσετ᾽, οὐκ ἀράξετε,
οὐ λοιδορήσετ᾽, οὐκ ἀναισχυντήσετε;
'Forth to the fray, dear sisters, bold allies! O egg-and-seed-and-
potherb-market girls, o garlic-selling-barmaid-baking-girls,
charge to the rescue, smack and whack, and thwack them, slang
them.' (Literally 'Won't you charge? Won't you smack?' etc.)
(Ar. *Lys*. 456–460; transl. by Henderson 2000)

Lysistrata uses several phrases in the form of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, but with
terms of address which are not face threatening. Her order is binding, but does
not intend to be impolite.

Indeed, in many cases, the impolite intention cannot be proved. Out of
the 106 utterances of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type taken from Aristophanes' plays, 57
can be considered undoubtedly impolite if we take into account different
features as described *supra* (extra-linguistic situation, contextual information,
relationship between participants). Given these reservations, can it be asserted
that orders of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type are impolite? Some phrases or linguistic
structures can be found both in polite and in impolite utterances, but there are
expressions which are not possible in polite utterances (such as taboo words)
just as there are expressions not possible in impolite utterances (e.g. "please",
except with an ironic intention). In the case of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, it must be
emphasised that this structure never occurs in polite contexts, and that in many
cases, with a threat or a face-threatening term of address, or as the rephrasing
of an order which has not been obeyed although the speaker is superior to the
hearer, such an expression is intended to be impolite in order to react to a face-
threatening act previously addressed to the speaker. It is therefore compatible
with impoliteness, but not with politeness.

Given this limitation as far as politeness is concerned, a question arises
since the utterance seems to be an indirect one and a conventional one, two
features traditionally linked to polite intentions rather than impolite ones
(e.g. Searle 1975: 59; Leech 1980: 109; Brown and Levinson 1987: 142),
though this link between conventional indirectness and politeness has already
been questioned (e.g. Leech 1983: 171; Blum-Kulka 1987; Culpeper,
Bousfield and Wichmann 2003: 1549). It is noteworthy that with the potential,
as has already been mentioned, the same negative interrogative sentence is
regularly polite. The second part of this paper is thus devoted to the reasons for
the impolite meaning of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type.

3.   Discussion of the data: Origins of impoliteness

Though the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is used as an order, its form is that of an interrogative sentence, which is the prototypical form of a question. Following Austin (1962) or Searle (1969), in speech act theory, one could say that the locutionary form is a question, the illocutionary force a directive act, and the perlocutionary effect impoliteness. Indeed, such an expression is an indirect and conventional order.

However difficult the notion of indirectness may be, it is here described on the grounds of the morpho-syntactic complexity of the utterance, compared to the speech act performed. In an order with a form such as οὐκ ἐρεῖς; it can be claimed that the order is indirect because of the negative interrogative form. Without a directive illocutionary force, the negative interrogative is a way of asserting the idea emphatically. Indeed, the negative inverts the assertion and the interrogative casts doubt on it, so that the two markers counterbalance each other. When a negative interrogative is used with a directive illocutionary force, the hearer has to understand that these two markers interact in order to perform the right action. The negative interrogative sentence in the future is therefore less direct than an assertive statement in the future, which can be used with a directive force as well, in Ancient Greek as in many other languages. The οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is not only an indirect utterance, but also a conventional one: further to the 146 utterances from Aristophanes' and Euripides' plays, ten utterances of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type in the same corpus are not used with a directive force, eight in Euripides' plays (*Cycl.* 632, *Alc.* 1089, *Hipp.* 459, *Suppl.* 1105, *Ion* 1308, *Phoen.* 547, *Orest.* 794, 1525), and only two in Aristophanes' plays (*Ach.* 321, *Clouds* 1252).[4]

Such a regularity tends to support a strong trend to grammaticalisation of this negative interrogative structure as an order: a conventional directive meaning can thus be assumed.

3.1   About non-conventionalised utterances

In order to explain the impoliteness of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, the ten utterances which are not used as orders are worth considering for two reasons:
- they indicate what the locutionary form of the directive expressions literally means;
- they help evaluate to what extent the conventionalised utterances retain the literal meaning.

These utterances can give insight into the path of conventionalisation, which can help explain why conventionalised utterances tend to be found in non-polite utterances.

In example (7), one of the two examples from Aristophanes, Strepsiades has learnt some neologisms from Socrates, and, on the pretext of this new science, he tries to reject a creditor:

(7)   *Str.*   Ἔπειτ᾽ ἀπαιτεῖς τἀργύριον τοιοῦτος ὤν;
          Οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην οὐδ᾽ ἂν ὀβολὸν οὐδενί,
          ὅστις καλέσειε κάρδοπον τὴν καρδόπην.
     Cred.   Οὐκ **ἄρ**᾽ ἀποδώσεις;
     Str.   Οὐχ, ὅσον γέ μ᾽ εἰδέναι.
          '(Strepsiades:) And do you ask me for your money being such an ignorant person? I would not pay, not even an obolus, to anyone who called the "kardopè" "kardopos". (Creditor:) Then, won't you pay me? (Strepsiades:) Not as far as I know'
          (Ar. *Clouds* 1249–1252; transl. by Henderson 1998)

The example contains a real question since the particle ἄρ(α) (in bold) is an interrogative marker used in yes/no questions. A paraphrase of the utterance could be 'Is it true that you won't pay me?', and even 'Is it true that you have no intention of paying me?', since the future is primarily intentional in Ancient Greek. The creditor has just been informed that Strepsiades does not intend to pay him, and he wants Strepsiades to confirm this intention. While commenting on this line, Starkie (*The Clouds* 1966) notes: "a negative answer is confidently expected". Unlike the conventional directive meaning, the expected reaction is a verbal answer and not a non-verbal action. Indeed, the creditor's answer fits this expectation. A very similar use can be found in Euripides (*Orestes* 795).[5]

In several examples from Euripides' plays, indeed, it is clear that the utterance is not an order. In example (8), the nurse tries to make Phaedra accept her feelings, her guilty love for Hippolytos, and has just reminded Phaedra that everyone, including gods, feels love.

(8)   *Nurse*   Σὺ δ᾽ οὐκ ἀνέξῃ;
          'But you, will you not resign yourself to this?' (Eur. *Hipp.* 459; transl. by Kovacs 1995)

The nurse cannot believe that Phaedra tries to resist her feelings and wants to show her that her reaction is unexpected. She wants her to confirm a statement. A parallel use can be seen in Euripides *Phoen.* 547. In such utterances, the speaker would like the hearer to perform the action involved, if possible, even

if the expected reaction is a verbal answer and not a non-verbal action. It is true that the creditor wants his money back, or that the nurse wants Phaedra to accept her feelings. In several cases, however, the speaker not only expects an answer, but also refuses the action to be performed, as in example (9), where the Phrygian, caught by Orestes and threatened with impending death, manages to persuade him to let him go.

(9) *Or.*   Εὖ λέγεις · σῴζει σε σύνεσις. Ἀλλὰ βαῖν᾿ εἴσω δόμων.

    Phry.   **Οὐκ ἄρα κτενεῖς με;**

    Or.   Ἀφεῖσαι.

    '(Orestes:) Well said! Your good sense is your salvation. But go into the house. (Phrygian:) So you won't kill me? (Orestes:) You have been spared.' (Eur. *Orest.* 1524–1525; transl. by Kovacs 2002)

There is no point in assuming that the Phrygian wants to be killed. In such an utterance, the directive meaning is indeed impossible. The speaker utters a question about Orestes' intentions (literally 'you are not intending to kill me?').

Since the utterance can be interpreted as a question rather than an order, the hearer can feign misunderstanding in order to avoid obeying. In the second example from Aristophanes' plays, example (10), Diceopolis is an Athenian citizen who has signed a personal peace treaty with several cities; the chorus, composed of citizens who do not accept such peaceful intentions, is beating Diceopolis while the character tries to explain his action:

(10) *Di.*   Οἷον αὖ μέλας τις ὑμῖν θυμάλωψ ἐπέζεσεν.

           Οὐκ ἀκούσεσθ᾿, οὐκ ἀκούσεσθ᾿ ἐτεόν, ὦχαρνηίδαι;

    Cho.   Οὐκ ἀκουσόμεσθα δῆτα.

    '(Diceopolis:) What black fire-brand has inflamed your heart! You will not hear me? You really will not, Acharnians? (Chorus:) We won't listen at all.' (Ar. *Ach.* 320–322; transl. by Henderson 1998, slightly modified)

In this instance, Diceopolis asks the chorus to hear him: his intention is probably to utter a real order, but it is a debatable point since Diceopolis' position is inferior. The ambiguous indirect form permits both interpretations, and it is even possible that Diceopolis gives the chorus the choice between the two interpretations through this form. Indeed the chorus, in a rather polemical tone, gives Diceopolis a verbal answer, and refuses to obey him. Such a reaction is possible since the locutionary form of the order is an interrogative sentence: one way of refusing to obey is to give an explicit verbal answer. The

comparison between this example (10) and examples (7) to (9) shows an important pragmatic difference, depending on whether the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is intended as a question or as an order. In the literature, attention has already been paid to the pragmatic implicatures of oriented questions (e.g. Heritage 2002; Heinemann 2006), but negative interrogatives are not only to be contrasted with interrogative (positive) sentences; their pragmatic orientation can differ according to the speech act they complete. In the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, when it is used as a question, as in examples (7) to (9), only the action is within the scope of the negation, and the expected answer is 'non *p*'. The utterance is therefore equivalent to 'Is it true that non-*p*?' ([οὐ *p*];). Indeed, in examples (7) and (9), the hearer confirms 'non-*p*'. In contrast, the expected action is the referent of *p* when the expression is used as an order, since it is the whole phrase which is within the scope of the negation. This utterance is equivalent to 'Isn't it true that *p*?' (οὐ [*p*];).

How is the hearer made aware of these different pragmatic expectations? The context of the utterance plays an important role: in example (7), the creditor knows that Strepsiades won't pay him, and in example (10), Diceopolis wants the chorus to hear him, so that the hearer understands that the creditor asks a question and that Diceopolis utters an order. Since the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is often used as the iteration of a previous order, the illocutionary force is not difficult to understand. It is noteworthy that in all the utterances of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type used as a question the speaker lacks power: this is the case for examples (7) to (9), but also for all the other examples. Given the hearer's expectation about the reaction involved by the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type in context, and the unbalanced relationships between interlocutors, a frame for impolite orders could be assumed (see Terkourafi 2001). In fact, contextual expectations seem to play a more important role than extra-linguistic features, since an impolite order and a negative question (both in the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type) can be uttered in the same utterance, as in example (11). In this example from the *Gorgias*, the distinction between the two different pragmatic uses of the utterance is made perceptible. Socrates is addressing Callicles who questions the dialectic method of the philosopher, so that Socrates insists that Callicles answer his questions:

(11)   **Οὔκουν** σὺ **ἐρεῖς** περὶ τίνων ὁ κρείττων τε καὶ φρονιμώτερος
         πλέον ἔχων δικαίως πλεονεκτεῖ; Ἢ οὔτε ἐμοῦ ὑποβάλλοντος
         ἀνέξει **οὔτ**' αὐτὸς **ἐρεῖς;**

> 'Then, will you tell me in what things the superior and wiser man has
> a right to the advantage of a larger share? Or will you neither put up
> with a suggestion from me nor make one yourself?'
> (Plato *Gorgias* 491 a4; transl. by Lamb 1924)

In the first utterance (οὔκουν σὺ ἐρεῖς; literally 'Won't you tell me?'),
Socrates gives an order. The logical gloss of this utterance is 'Isn't it true that
you will tell me?', and, indeed, Socrates expects Callicles to give him his
opinion. However, in the second utterance, (οὔτ' ἐρεῖς; 'Won't you tell me?'),
Socrates asks a question, which is logically equivalent to 'Is it true that you
won't tell me?'. The expected reaction is therefore quite different since
Callicles is expected to answer 'Indeed, I won't tell you'.

3.2   Impoliteness in conventional utterances

In the light of this distinction between a (neutral) question and an (impolite)
order, it is easier to explain why an order uttered in the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type can
have an impolite meaning. The explanation is made perceptible thanks to the
difference between the polite meaning of the potential and the impolite
meaning of the future in negative interrogatives. One of the main reasons why,
in early studies of politeness, indirectness was closely linked to politeness is
that when uttering an indirect form the speaker provides the hearer with a line
of escape: the hearer can deny the locutionary form, without coming into
conflict with the speaker. The archetype of indirect acts, the utterance "Can
you pass me the salt?", is a conventional directive act: the hearer is expected to
pass the salt. But, if the hearer doesn't want to comply, for whatever reason, he
is not obliged to be aggressive: he can limit his answer to the locutionary form
("No, I can't, it's too far from me"). The problem is that answering the
locutionary form is not necessarily polite. This is probably the difference in
Ancient Greek between the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type ('Won't you do something?') and
the οὐκ ἂν λέγοις; type ('Couldn't you do something?'), which are both
directive. When denying the locutionary form, it is far more impolite to answer
"No, I won't", than "No, I can't". The former is obviously a face-threatening
act, since the speaker confirms that he will not perform an action, without
giving any explanation, so that his choice seems determined only by his will,
as with the Chorus in example (10). As a result, when a speaker chooses to
give an order, using the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, he utters an indirect conventional
order which does not provide the hearer with a reasonable line of escape.

   In addition to the indirectness or the conventionality of an utterance, the
meaning of the locutionary form plays an important role in the definition of the

pragmatic meaning, which includes possible impoliteness. In the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type, the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action, using a locutionary form which is uttered in the future tense. Now, directive acts in the future tense are themselves not polite in Ancient Greek: they are binding, since they predict the hearer's actions, and very often threatening. In example (12), with a directive verb in the future tense, Bdelycleon explains the warmongers' politics by quoting their words:

(12)   *Bd.*   Δώσετε τὸν φόρον, ἢ βροντήσας τὴν πόλιν ὑμῶν
               ἀνατρέψω.
               'You will give the tribute, or else, in a crash of thunder, I will
               turn your city upside down.' (Ar. *Wasps* 671; own translation)

In contrast, when using the οὐκ ἂν λέγοις; type, the speaker asks the hearer to confirm an action in the potential. Now, directive acts with this mitigating verbal form only assert the preparatory condition of the directive act, according to Searle's terms (1969: 109). They are not binding and provide the hearer with an easy line of escape.

4.   Conclusion

Classicists have long noticed that negative interrogatives in the future tense could convey an impolite order. Thanks to the development of studies on impoliteness, it is possible to provide stronger grounds for this impression: this type of utterance is used by a speaker who is in a superior position and whose authority is questioned. The οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type can be used when a previous order has not been obeyed, but different threatening acts may have been performed against the speaker. Frequently, this utterance goes with verbal or physical violence and, in the majority of examples, the hearer submits. With the help of all these features, these utterances exemplify the definition of impoliteness adopted here. Modern pragmatic theories can thus be successfully applied to an ancient language, even if the modern reader has to do without native speaker opinion.

        Furthermore, classical studies can provide us with data which are interesting as far as (im)politeness theories are concerned. The οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type is an example of an indirect and conventional utterance which can be impolite. More puzzling, a very similar utterance, the οὐκ ἂν λέγοις; type, is in contrast a polite request. The comparison of the two types leads to several remarks. Firstly, the same syntactic marker (the negative interrogative sentence) leads to different preferred answers, depending on whether the

illocutionary force of the utterance is that of a question or an order. Secondly, the locutionary form of the utterance plays an important role in the elicitation of the meaning, even in the case of a grammaticalised, conventional utterance. The morpho-syntactic markers used in order to express a polite request or an impolite order are not identical: with the future, the utterance conveys an illocutionary force (an impolite order) in addition to the locutionary meaning (since the speaker asks the hearer to perform the action, according to the binding and predictive utterance). With the potential, however, the polite request is conveyed in addition to the locutionary meaning (the speaker asks the hearer to confirm the preparatory condition of the directive act). In the elicitation of the politeness or impoliteness of an utterance, it seems necessary to study indirect and conventionalised utterances by taking into account the locutionary form of the utterance.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. It would be interesting to take papyri into account, especially for private letters, though Mayser (1926: 212–215) does not mention any order of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type in these later texts. It is a perspective for further research.
2. In several editions, the question mark is not written for this utterance, and more generally for all the prohibitions, following the suggestion of Goodwin (1897: 101–103, 389–397). This choice is debatable and leads to considerable difficulties when a positive order (which is a negative interrogative) and a prohibition are coordinated. For discussion of the data and the difference with the expression οὐ μή plus subjunctive, see Rijksbaron (1991: 167–174) and Denizot (2009).
3. In *Frogs*, the relationship between the god Dionysos and his slave Xanthos is rather complicated: in several passages, Dionysos shows his (expected) superiority, which is considered legitimate by Xanthos. Nevertheless, in this play, the god is a coward who lets his slave take all the risks, even by giving him his clothes, so that Xanthos, pretending to be Dionysos, takes advantage of the opportunity to give his master a bad time. All the utterances of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type are used when the speaker is temporarily superior to the hearer.

4. Although several of them are listed as real orders by Magnien (1912: 179–181).

5. In this utterance, the particle ἄρα (with this accent) is used. All the editors (in OCT, Loeb, Teubner, CUF editions) choose the connective particle ἄρα and not the interrogative particle ἆρα. The same remark applies to example (9) (Euripides, *Orestes* 1525).

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Appendix

Utterances of the οὐκ ἐρεῖς; type with a directive meaning
Aristophanes [Ar.]:
Acharnians [*Ach.*] 165, 166, 283, 564, 580, 822, 825;
Knights 240, 336, 338, 728, 892, 1198, 1354;
Clouds 296, 367, 505a–b, 735, 789, 1253, 1296;
Wasps 138, 147, 156, 397, 400, 448, 942, 1152, 1340;
Peace 166, 167, 168, 169, 179, 185, 261, 274, 309, 465, 500, 950, 1054, 1124,
      1126, 1275;
Birds 67, 225, 354, 990, 991, 1020, 1032a–b, 1044, 1055, 1258, 1261, 1324,
      1466, 1467, 1568, 1692;
Lysistrata [*Lys.*] 383, 429, 437, 459a–c, 460a–b, 515, 731, 874, 878, 899,
      1240;
Women at the Thesmophoria [*Thesm.*] 617, 689, 696, 697, 1224;
Frogs 178, 193, 199, 201, 202, 298, 299, 339, 462a–b, 480, 524, 525, 649,
      1209;
Assemblywomen [*Ass.*] 43, 1144, 1145, 1146;
Wealth 71, 417, 440, 974.

Euripides [Eur.]:
Cyclops [*Cycl.*] 49, 242, 243, 632;
Andromache [*Andr.*] 240;
Heracleidae [*Heraclid.*] 840;
Hippolytus [*Hipp.*] 498, 499, 780a-b, 1084;
Hecuba [*Hec.*] 1282, 1283, 1285;
Suppliant Women [*Suppl.*] 1104;
Heracles [*Her.*] 562, 563, 1043, 1053;
Ion 163, 174, 524;
Trojan Women [*Tro.*] 341, 464;
Iphigenia among the Taurians [*IT*] 803, 1424, 1425, 1426, 1427;
Helen [*Hel.*] 437a–b, 458;
Phoenician Women [*Phoen.*] 624;
Orestes [*Orest.*] 171, 1023, 1346, 1622;
Bacchae [*Ba.*] 253, 254;
Rhesus [*Rh.*] 684.