



## Determiners

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## Determiners

Determiners are operators used to actualize the reference of an NP. Syntactically, Classical Greek is special in that it has a definite article which serves as a boundary in the NP. Other determiners can/must co-occur with it outside the NP (demonstratives and certain quantifiers) or must not co-occur with it (indefinite *tis*, *wh*-terms). As for the interpretation, the role of the determiners in (in)definiteness, quantification, deixis and anaphora are examined.

A noun by itself denotes a concept ( $\rightarrow$ Noun (*ónoma*), Ancient Theories of); as such, it does not have a referent. In order for it to refer to one or more entities, an extra operation is in order: this operation is sometimes called ‘actualization’ or ‘specification’. Across languages, it tends to be realized by means of operators that are called ‘determiners’, though they are not always obligatory. Once the noun is specified, it can function as an argument. Note that there is also another, more extensive definition of determiner, not adopted here: for some scholars (Biraud 1991), a determiner is everything that bears on the noun, including the modifiers such as  $\rightarrow$ adjectives and adnominal  $\rightarrow$ genitives. Although they may be involved in the specification of the reference (Bakker 2009:225), they do not suffice to effect that specification, and without a further operation their adjunction to the noun forms a complex but not referential expression ( $\rightarrow$ Noun Phrase).

In Ancient Greek, there are many such operators, though the various systems may differ to various extents. Here, we will discuss only Classical Greek (hereafter CG) in detail; some remarks will be made on Homeric Greek at the end.



A crucial split is that of definiteness vs. indefiniteness. CG possesses a definite determiner that is referred to as the ‘definite article’: *ho*, *hē*, *tó* ( $\rightarrow$ Definiteness/Definite Article). Unlike in English, in CG this article tends to co-occur with the other definite determiners and even with some  $\rightarrow$ quantifiers. Moreover, it defines a syntactic domain in which the other determiners can or cannot appear depending on their characteristics.

Bare (non-articular) nouns can have different interpretations. In the first place they can be non-referential, for example in predicative use ( $\rightarrow$ Predicative Constituents), in verbal expressions such as *dexiàn didónai* ‘give the right hand (greeting)’ (for more examples, see Fernández Garrido 2000:475-476). A second interpretation is indefiniteness. The third is  $\rightarrow$ definiteness, applicable to the bare noun only in very specific cases: it is limited to certain nouns that do not necessarily need a definite article because they have a unique referent. This is the case for *hēlios* ‘sun’, *selēnē* ‘moon’ (see, e.g., Aristoph. *Nub.* 754), and for proper names. A similar case is that of  $\rightarrow$ abstract nouns. Abstract nouns like *aretē* ‘virtue’ can be used with or without the definite article and still be interpreted as definite (see Sansone 1993). In cases where the definite article is not necessary for the noun to be interpreted as definite, its use is pragmatically motivated. Though this is still a matter of research, some interesting

results have been achieved in the studies previously mentioned: for example, a proper name tends to be articular if used a second time in a text, thus indicating that the noun becomes the  $\rightarrow$ topic of (a portion of) the text. The last case is constituted by nouns used in generic contexts, i.e., as kind names. Classical Greek allows for bare as well as articular singular and plural nouns to be used in generic sentences (Napoli 2009:585–587). There is debate about whether bare nouns used as kind names have a null article (Guardiano 2012).

The articular noun phrase (NP) is said to be “definite”. Definiteness seems to be a bundle of features (uniqueness, maximality, previous knowledge), though attempts have been made to reduce them to a single notion such as familiarity or identifiability (for details see Lyons 1999, Bakker 2009:153, Napoli 2009). Despite this interpretation, it has been noticed that the definite article may in some cases play only a syntactic role. For example, Sansone (1993) mentions the example *tàs meth’ hugieías kai toû sôphroneîn (hēdonás)* ‘those (pleasures) which are united with health and self-restraint’ (Pl. *Phlb.* 63e), where the latter article is “simply serving to give the infinitive a case-prefix” (as noted by Gildersleeve in his grammar (1911 §567)).



As for its syntax, the definite article occupies a special position in the Greek NP, as clearly shown by Biraud (1991). It does not commute with anything, but creates a domain within which noun modifiers can occur, such as the adjective *iskhurôn* in *toûton tòn iskhuròn theòn* ‘this strong god’ (Aristoph. *Plut.* 946), and outside which other terms bearing on the NP are found, such as the demonstrative *toûton* in the same example. The noun and its internal modifiers form a phrase that is selected by a determiner: Art [modifiers+N]. This phrase can in turn be modified or selected by a determiner such as a demonstrative and form a more complex phrase. The structure of Aristophanes’ example is therefore: [*toûton* [*tòn* [*iskhuròn* [*theòn*]]]].

Moreover, the CG article can turn anything into an NP argument, including entire  $\rightarrow$ clauses such as an  $\rightarrow$ infinitive clause, as in example (1).

1. *tò proeidénai ge tòn theòn tò méllon kai tò prosēmaínein hōi bouletai*

‘(In regard to) God’s foreknowledge of the future (lit. ‘(In regard to) the fact that the god foreknows ...’) and his forewarning thereof to whomsoever he will’ (Xen. *Ap.* 13)

In this case it is the article that defines the behavior of the entire phrase with regard to its selector. This is a property of heads. This and the fact that the article has the NP as its domain have led some scholars to think that in a phrase like *tòn iskhuròn theòn* the maximal phrase is headed by *tòn* and not by *theón*. The NP headed by *theón* is selected by the determiner, as defended for the English NP in a very popular dissertation (Abney 1987) and for Greek by Guardiano (2012), among others. The structure of the Greek NP would therefore be [DP [NP]]. But the structure [DP Art [NP]] does not account for all cases. CG offers some challenges to syntactic theories that build too much on constituency. A modified DP can be discontinuous, a phenomenon referred to

as →hyperbaton and extensively addressed in Devine and Stephens (2000). In *tên toû agathoû eikóna êthous* ‘the semblance of the good character’ (Pl. *Resp.* 401b), moving the sequence *toû agathoû* to the left of *eikóna* breaks the constituent [DP *toû* [NP *agathoû êthous*]]. Devine and Stephens propose two explanations. The first is that the structure of the DP *toû agathoû êthous* contains a null head, as in [DP *toû* [NP *agathoû* N]], to which a non-referential noun is adjoined or apposed. The second concerns in particular those occurrences where a verb surfaces inside the DP: the sequence V+N could undergo a reconstruction and the sequence Art+Modifier could be reinterpreted as an adverbial adjoined to the V (→Adverbial Constituents).

In fact, the first hypothesis goes back to Apollonius Dyscolus (Lallot I 139-140 (A 135)), who segmented *ho lógiος ánthrōpos* ‘the eloquent man’ as [[*ho lógiος*] [*ánthrōpos*]] rather than [*ho* [*lógiος ánthrōpos*]], if Basset’s (2006) interpretation is correct. S. Bakker (2009) speaks of an articular modifier in the same terms in this case, as in *anèr ho tòn nómon theïs toûton* ‘a/the man who proposed this law’ (Aristoph. *Nub.* 1421) or in *ánthrōpos ho lógiος*, thus implicitly paralleling [[*ho lógiος*] [*ánthrōpos*]] and [[*ánthrōpos*] [*ho lógiος*]]. The ideas of →apposition and null head are also put forward in structures such as [[*ho ánthrōpos*] [*ho agathós* N]].

Unfortunately, the apposition interpretation does not account for (2):

2. *hoi mèn khrónoi tês hairéseōs [...] kai tà tôn presbeusántōn onómata en toîs dēmosíois anagégraptai grámmasi*

‘The dates of the appointments [...] and the names of the ambassadors are registered in the public archives.’ (Aeschin. *Leg.* 58).

Even if *en toîs dēmosíois* is given a null nominal head, the structure [*en* [[*toîs dēmosíois* N] [*grámmasi*]]] fails to allow a movement of *en toîs dēmosíois* to the left without breaking the constituent. Further research is definitely in order here, if one wants to maintain the constituency approach.

The numerous possibilities of positions (before/after the noun, adjacent or not) provide CG with many nuances. S. Bakker (2009) has studied these nuances, particularly in relation to the different modifiers. It is worth quoting an entire passage here:

**“While the latter [non-articular modifiers] only serve to fulfill the basic function of a modifier, i.e. modifying the head of the phrase (whether or not with the intention to make the referent identifiable), the former [articular modifiers] undertake the additional task of singling out the intended referent by answering the question ‘which x is referred to?’. By the information they provide these modifiers separate the intended referent from other available entities that satisfy the description of the noun. One might say that whereas non-articular modifiers characterize the referent, articular ones specify the reference.” (Bakker 2009:225).**

This idea is similar, though not equivalent, to that developed in Biraud (1991).



As previously mentioned, the definite article and the position D define an internal and an external domain. Only items appearing in the external domain are able to actualize a noun, i.e., are endowed with the role of determiner. This includes demonstratives and some quantifiers. They can precede or follow the DP (see *toûton* in the aforementioned example of Aristoph. *Plut.* and *ho kíndunos hoûtos* ‘this danger’ (Lys. 34.9)). They can also be disjoint. Several syntactic structures have been put forward to explain these phenomena. These determiners may either project their own phrase [DemP [DP [NP]]] or be apposed to the DP [[DemP] [DP]]. Both hypotheses account easily for the cases of postposition of the demonstrative and of disjunction. Parenti (1997) opts for the latter hypothesis, building on cross-linguistic data. Across languages three patterns are observed (see Diessel 1999:57-74):

- Demonstratives are both determiners and  $\rightarrow$ pronouns. (German)
- Demonstratives must show up with a nominal head, i.e., are only determiners. (Ainu)
- Demonstratives cannot show up with a nominal head, i.e., are only pronouns. (Tuscarora)

Greek could illustrate the last pattern. Such an interpretation would accord well with the capacity of CG to have NPs apposed to a pronoun, as in [[*toîs loipoîs*] [*hēmîn*]] (Dem. Or. 21.112), lit. ‘for us the rest’ (‘for us who are left’).

Another point is the semantic interpretation of both the co-occurrence of some determiners with the definite article and the position of the quantifier (sometimes before, sometimes after the definite article). A careful analysis could provide new insight for the debate in formal semantics about whether generalized quantifiers select for two predicates or for an entity and a predicate (i.e., whether they are of the type  $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, \langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle\rangle$  or of the type  $\langle e, \langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle\rangle$ ; see Giannakidou 2004). CG does not seem to be uniform in this respect, for *olígos* necessarily follows the article, whereas *pâs* can precede or follow, depending on its status (see below).

As for the interpretation of the co-occurrence of the article with demonstratives, two opposite positions are tenable: on the one hand, the article is redundant and then expletive; on the other hand, the article and the demonstrative each carry different information (Fernández Garrido 2000:467). That is why a noun could (very rarely) appear with a demonstrative and without an article (as in  $\rightarrow$ Ionic, a dialect related to  $\rightarrow$ Attic, *gunaîka taútēn* (Hdt. 1.115.6)).

Be that as it may, demonstratives do provide information. CG has three demonstratives (*hóde*, *hoûtos*, *ekeînos*) that have both exophoric (deictic) and endophoric (discourse-internal) usages. In the deictic usages, *hóde* and *ekeînos* pose no problems of interpretation: *hóde* is proximal and *ekeînos* distal (following Diessel’s 1999 classification). They are traditionally tied to a person, *hóde* characterizing what is in the sphere of the speaker, and *ekeînos* what is absent, thus referring to the third person.

Assumptions about *hoûtos* are more doubtful. If it is parallel with the other two, it should be medial and in the sphere of the hearer. It is, however, rather neutral, i.e., it designates without any further information ( $\rightarrow$ Pronouns;  $\rightarrow$ Deixis;  $\rightarrow$ Anaphoric Processes).

The deictic  $\rightarrow$ particle *-í* can be added when the referent is present, as in Aristoph. *Ach.* 908, where the appearance of Nicarchus nearby on the stage allows the speaker to use *hodì*:

### 3. *kàì mēn hodì Níkarkhos érkhetai phanôn*

‘Hah! here we have Nicarchus, who comes to denounce you’.

The particle *-í* is accompanied by a gesture of the speaker towards the designated referent, which explains why it is rare with *ekēînos* (Biraud 1991:191-192). It has been argued that this particle *-í* is the same *-i* as in the primary verbal endings, as in *hístēm-i* ‘I (am) stand(ing)’. In the endophoric usages, *hóde* seems to be able to refer only to what follows (cataphoric usage), *hoûtos* to both what precedes (anaphoric usage) and what follows. *Ekeînos* also seems to have cataphoric usages, but its behavior is still poorly understood (see the entry  $\rightarrow$ Deixis and Biraud 1991:172-192 for further detail). Demonstratives are also of use in information packaging. A demonstrative *hóde* or *hoûtos* often signals a topic-shift (which seems to have been the role of *ho*, *hē*, *tó* in Homer before it became an article (as per Basset 2006)).



As for quantifiers, the situation is even more puzzling, as some of them are in the domain of the article (*hoi olígoi*), while others can be inside or outside, or even appear without any article. Hence we find each of the following three: *pántes hoi ándres*, *hoi pántes ándres* and *pántes ándres* ‘all men’. This means that not all quantifiers are able to actualize, and therefore not all quantifiers are determiners. Another speculative position would be that the sequence [article+quantifier] is restructured as a complex determiner, a situation also arguable for the possessives which occur with the article: *ho emòs patér* ‘my father’ (Pl. *Euthphr.* 4a).  $\rightarrow$ Numerals follow the article, if the NP is definite; *heîs* is special in that it means both ‘one’ and ‘a single one’.

Some items pose specific questions. The indefinite *tis* shares with the demonstratives the property of preceding or following the noun, as well as of being able to be disjoint, but differs from them in that its relation to the noun is not mediated through another item. Note that this is expected, given that the expected item would be the indefinite article, which does not exist in CG: *tis* is used only as a specific indefinite or in general sentences (*eí tis...* ‘if someone’), but cannot be non-specific as in the sentence *Mary wants to marry a Canadian, but she does not know any*.

As for the *wh*-terms, two items deserve attention: *tís* and *hós* (the third item *hóstis* being syntactically even more poorly known). With *tís* the noun tends to move up to the left of the clause (4), whereas it tends to remain *in situ* with *hós* (5).

### 4. *toû d’ éphexin, ô mátaie, taûta drân se bouúletai; tína próphasin ékhōn?*



‘But, poor fellow, what is his aim? What is his object?’ (Aristoph. *Vesp.* 339)

5. *kataphōrāi dē málīsta kai hēn eīpe próphasin ou komísas tās naûs*

‘But what convicts him most clearly is the excuse that he put forward for not bringing the ships.’ (Thuc. 8.87.5)

*Hós* seems to be used when the referent or the property of the referent that the clause denotes is identifiable (furthermore, in Ionic, the definite article can be used as a relative term). If not, *tís/hóstis* is used in interrogative or in [→relative clauses](#). Note that *tís* and *tis* are homonymous, except for the accent.



In Homeric Greek, the system is quite different, due to the fact that *ho, hē, tó* does not play the role of definite article. This means that any bare noun can be *a priori* definite. As for the demonstratives *hóde, hoûtos*, and *ekeînos*, they behave as in Classical Greek, although they do not show up with *ho, hē, tó* but bear directly on the noun (Monro 1891 §249-251; Chantraine 1963 §251-254). Nonetheless, part of their future endophoric usages is held by *ho, hē, tó* (Monro 1891 §251), whose functions in Homer are quite different from its functions in Classical Greek. Nouns, including definite nouns, can appear without a determiner in Homer. The occurrence of some nouns with *ho, hē, tó* is not, however, to be accounted for by the coexistence of several chronological layers; *ho, hē, tó* serves in most cases rather as a demonstrative pronoun or determiner, whose uses show that it is involved in a grammaticalization process towards its role as definite article in Classical Greek. Its use as a pronoun probably came first, and an apposition of the noun to the pronoun must be assumed to be the first step before *ho, hē, tó* could function as a proper determiner. Although *ho, hē, tó* is described as demonstrative, its deictic value survives only in the demonstrative *hó-de*; otherwise, it displays only endophoric values (Monro 1891 §256). Another clue to this grammaticalization is that *ho, hē, tó* seems to be used as a full (non-demonstrative) article in some examples, although it is optional even in these cases. Rather than actualizing a definite noun, it plays a pragmatic role. As put by Monro (1891 §259; §264): “the Homeric Article contrasts, the Attic Article defines”. It is even compatible with an indefinite interpretation, as in *toûs állois* ‘certain others’ (Hom. *Il.* 15.67). It marks a topic-shift or a focal contrast (Monro 1891 §259; Chantraine 1963 §240). The latter use is actually clear from its high frequency with adjectives meaning “a distinction, an opposition” (Chantraine 1963 §242, cf. Monro 1891 §260) such as *állos* (Hom. *Il.* 2.665 *apeílēsan gàr hoi álloi* ‘for the others threatened him’). The neuter *tó* can also be followed by an epexegetic infinitive, thus foreshadowing the substantivized infinitive (see *tò phulássein* in Hom. *Od.* 20.52), albeit *tó* and the infinitive need not be adjacent (see Hom. *Il.* 17.407). The grammaticalization process may have come to an end in the substantivization of adverbials as in *tòn ópisthen* ‘those whom we left behind’ (Hom. *Od.* 11.66). The frequent use of the article with certain nouns (*gérōn* ‘old man’, *ánax* ‘leader’, etc.) remains largely unexplained (Monro 1891 §261.3; Chantraine 1963 §243) ([→Epic Diction](#)).

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