REALITY BITES: CONDITIONAL SENTENCES IN PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*

1 Familiar facts

1.1 The types of conditional

Conditionals generally categorised according to tense (past, present, future) and 'mood'.

1a. *If it rained yesterday, they got wet*	**1b**. *If I had known that, I would have behaved differently*
2a. *If it's Wednesday, I'm in Beijing*	**2b**. *If she were Plato, she'd be explaining better*
3a. *If it rains, I'll take an umbrella*	**3b**. *If I won the lottery, I would buy a car*

Generally presented as having some cross-linguistic validity/translational equivalence.

Greek (adapted from Goodwin *Greek Grammar* §1387):

1a. εἰ ἔπραξε τοῦτο, καλῶς ἔχει
  εἰ + aorist, indicative
	1b. εἰ ἔπραξε τοῦτο, καλῶς ἂν ἔσχεν
	  εἰ + aorist, aorist + ἄν

2a. εἰ πράσσει τοῦτο, καλῶς ἔχει
  εἰ + present, indicative
	2b. εἰ ἔπρασσε τοῦτο, καλῶς ἂν εἶχεν
	  εἰ + imperfect, imperfect + ἄν

3a. ἐὰν πράσσῃ τοῦτο, καλῶς ἕξει
  ἐὰν + subjunctive, future indic
	3b. εἰ πράσσοι τοῦτο, καλῶς ἂν ἔχοι
	  εἰ + optative, optative + ἄν

1.2 The terminology

Rejected terminology 1: distinction a vs b = indicative vs subjunctive
>   Refers to form rather than meaning
>   Stems from Latin usage – does not work with English (preterite) or Greek (optative)

Rejected terminology 2: b sentences = counterfactual
>   Can something in the future be counterfactual?
>   Are even past b-types really counterfactual?
>   4. *If the butler had done it, we would have found just the clues that we did indeed find*

Alternative terminologies: Open vs Hypothetical, Real vs Unreal
>   Need to highlight the semantic rather than formal division
>   Any terminology has assumptions about the meaning of the types which must be assessed

2 Previous accounts

2.1 The Unitarians

Quirk etc: §15.35

> Open conditions "leave unresolved the question of the **fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the condition**". Hypothetical conditions convey "the speaker's belief that **the condition will not be fulfilled**… is not fulfilled… or was not fulfilled."

Palmer: 207

> "Notionally the difference is that, with the unreal conditional, the speaker indicates **some doubt about the likelihood of the event indicated in the protasis**, whereas, with the real conditional, the possibility is simply left open."

Goodwin *Greek Grammar*: §1385

> "The classification of conditional sentences is based partly on the time to which the supposition refers, **partly on what is implied with regard to the fulfilment of the condition**, and partly on the distinction between particular and general suppositions"

> Distinguishes past and present from the future:
> Fulfilment left open vs unfulfilled in past/present
> More vivid/less vivid in future

Wakker: 36

> "the mood chosen is thought to be the factor *par excellence* for the description of the 'meaning' of the conditional…The choice of the mood is determined in its turn by the speaker, and depends on **the view he has concerning the fulfilment of the condition**."

> "Greek is exceptional in that it indicates four degrees of probability by the choice of mood"
> εἰ + indicative – neutral value
> ἐάν + subjunctive – very well possible
> εἰ + optative – possible and no more than that
> εἰ + ind II (the main clause containing ind. II + ἄν) – not possible any more

Problems:

> Number and meaning of different types
>> Open conditionals: *"nothing is implied about the fulfilment or probability of fulfilment"*
>> Hypothetical conditionals: *"only conceded as a supposition and may or may not be fulfilled"*
>> (Kennedy *Shorter Latin Primer*: 98)

2.2   The Analysts

Two different types of conditional
eg. Quine, Lewis, Adams, Jackson, Dudman (see Edgington 1995)

> 5. *If Oswald didn't kill Kennedy, someone else did*
> 6. *If O hadn't killed K, someone else would have*

> "Therefore there really are two different sorts of conditional, not a single conditional that can appear as indicative or as counterfactual depending on the speaker's opinion about the truth of the antecedent" (Lewis 1973, p. 3)

Argument over where the division should come. Traditionally, **a** types divided from **b** types
Dudman includes **3a** with the **b** types – all have 'back-shifted' tenses

Problems:
> Relation between the two types
> Future **b** types not really discussed
> Use of grammar

2.3   Aside: further linguistic division

Wakker, following divisions introduced in the school of Functional Grammar, argued for the existence of three types of conditional, where the conditional is "attached to different levels of the [main] clause".

Predicational:
> "providing the condition for the realization of the SoA designated by the main clause" i.e. the traditionally analysed conditional, and the focus of this talk
> 7. *If it rains, I'll take an umbrella*

Propositional:
> "providing the condition for the truth of the proposition presented in the main clause"
> 8. *If I am not mistaken, Peter is at home*

Illocutionary conditionals:
> "providing the condition for the appropriateness of the speech act being performed in the main clause"
> 9. *If you're thirsty, there's beer in the fridge*

Enables comparison of like with like:

> 10. *If it really is a law of nature that people resemble the pets they keep, then what is waiting at home for the Archdeacon is a cute little toy poodle*

> "Here plainly, we have an artful way of describing the Archdeacon. What is not plain is how probability could possibly have a hand in it" (Dudman 'Appiah on 'If'': 78)

3   Objectives

❖ Which is the best way to analyse Greek conditionals? Unitarian or Analyst?

❖ Internal: to consider the meanings of certain Greek conditionals

   Looking at two constructions in particular: **3b** and **1b**

❖ External: to use Greek to refine the theories about the different types

4   Using Plato's *Protagoras*

4.1   Methodology

Many 'abnormal'

> 11. εἰ οὖν μέλλεις ἐμοὶ διαλέξεσθαι, τῷ ἑτέρῳ χρῶ τρόπῳ πρός με, τῇ βραχυλογίᾳ.
> *So if you intend to converse with me, use the latter method, I mean brevity*

335a1

Conditionals taken from all of Plato's dialogues – but enough of interest in one

4.2   The warnings

i.   Socrates' advice on conditionals (331d):

> …οἰόμενος οὕτω τὸν λόγον βέλτιστ᾽ ἂν ἐλέγχεσθαι, εἴ τις τὸ "εἴ" ἀφέλοι αὐτοῦ.
> *I think that the question would be best examined in this way: if one got rid of the 'ifs' from it.*

ii.   Socrates on ascertaining the meaning of poets (347e):

> *"[we have] no need of poets; you can't question them about what they say, but in most cases when people quote them, one says the poet means one thing and one another, and they argue over points which can't be established with any certainty."* (trans. Taylor)

iii.   Holy text?:

> Lombardo and Bell: *"Plato's translators must assume that in his texts everything is of potential philosophical significance. Nothing may be added, deleted, or altered that might possibly affect that significance."*

iv.   Are these Plato's beliefs or Socrates' or those of a straw man to be knocked down? (eg330b2)

> οὕτω καὶ τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς μόρια οὐκ ἔστιν τὸ ἕτερον οἷον τὸ ἕτερον, οὔτε αὐτὸ οὔτε ἡ δύναμις αὐτοῦ; ἢ δῆλα δὴ ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει, εἴπερ τῷ παραδείγματί γε ἔοικε;
> *In the same way, is it not the case that the parts of virtue are different, the one from the other, both in themselves and in their power? Surely it's clear that this is the case, if the analogy holds?*

 Don't listen to Plato anyway? E.g. 328a:

> εἶθ᾽, ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ζητοῖς τίς διδάσκαλος τοῦ ἑλληνίζειν, οὐδ᾽ ἂν εἷς φανείη,
> *You might as well ask, Who teaches Greek? For of that too there will not be any teachers found.*

(trans. Taylor)

5 Future unreal

5.1 Open vs hypothetical?

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12. Ὦ νεανίσκε, <u>ἔσται</u> τοίνυν σοι <u>ἐὰν</u> ἐμοὶ <u>συνῇς</u>, ᾗ ἂν ἡμέρᾳ ἐμοὶ συγγένῃ, ἀπιέναι οἴκαδε βελτίονι γεγονότι,
Young man, this is what you will get if you associate with me: the very day you become my pupil you will go home a better man

318a7

13. ἐπεὶ κἂν σύ, καίπερ τηλικοῦτος ὢν καὶ οὕτως σοφός, εἴ τίς σε <u>διδάξειεν</u> ὃ μὴ τυγχάνοις ἐπιστάμενος, βελτίων <u>ἂν γένοιο</u>.
Even you, however old and wise you are, if someone were to teach you something that you didn't know, you would become better.

318b3

5.2 A closer look 1: Singleton Optatives

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14. καὶ γὰρ εἰ μέν τις περὶ αὐτῶν τούτων <u>συγγένοιτο</u> ὁτῳοῦν τῶν δημηγόρων, τάχ᾽ ἂν καὶ τοιούτους λόγους <u>ἀκούσειεν</u> ἢ Περικλέους ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν ἱκανῶν εἰπεῖν· εἰ δὲ <u>ἐπανέροιτό</u> τινά τι, ὥσπερ βιβλία οὐδὲν <u>ἔχουσιν</u> οὔτε ἀποκρίνασθαι οὔτε αὐτοὶ ἐρέσθαι
Now if you went to any of the orators about this question, you would probably hear similar arguments from Pericles, or from one of the other able speakers; but if you ask one of them anything, then just like books they are not capable either to answer or to ask

329a2

Apodosis is firmly believed

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15. ἀλλὰ δοκῶσιν τῷ μάχεσθαι καὶ ἀνδρείᾳ περιεῖναι, ἡγούμενοι, εἰ <u>γνωσθεῖεν</u> ᾧ περίεισιν, πάντας τοῦτο ἀσκήσειν, τὴν σοφίαν.
Instead, they make it seem as if they excel in manliness and fighting, thinking that, if their real superiority were discovered, everyone would seek to acquire that, *that is, wisdom.*

342b5

Can't think 'it is unlikely that they will discover our real superiority'

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16. "Ἐπὶ πάντας," ἔφη ὁ Ζεύς, "καὶ πάντες μετεχόντων· οὐ γὰρ <u>ἂν γένοιντο</u> πόλεις, εἰ ὀλίγοι αὐτῶν <u>μετέχοιεν</u> ὥσπερ ἄλλων τεχνῶν·
"To everybody", said Zeus, "and let all share in them; for cities would not exist, if only a few shared in those as in the other crafts.

322d3

Does not believe 'it is unlikely that few will share in the skills'

5.3 A closer look 2: Optative in comparison

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17. Τί οὖν; εἴ τις <u>ἔροιτο</u> ἐμέ τε καὶ σέ· "Ὦ Πρωταγόρα τε καὶ Σώκρατες, εἴπετον δή μοι, τοῦτο τὸ πρᾶγμα ὃ ὠνομάσατε ἄρτι, ἡ δικαιοσύνη, αὐτὸ τοῦτο δίκαιόν ἐστιν ἢ ἄδικον;" ἐγὼ μὲν <u>ἂν</u> αὐτῷ <u>ἀποκριναίμην</u> ὅτι δίκαιον·
Well then if someone asked us, "Tell me, that thing that you just mentioned, I mean justice,is it itself just or unjust?", I would reply that it is just

330c2

18. Εἰ οὖν μετὰ τοῦτο ἡμᾶς <u>ἔροιτο</u>· "Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὁσιότητά τινά φατε εἶναι;"<u>φαῖμεν</u> ἄν, ὡς ἐγᾦμαι.
If he then asked us, "Do you say that there is also such a thing as holiness" we should, I think, say that we do.

330d1

19. Εἰ οὖν μετὰ τοῦτο <u>εἴποι</u> ἐρωτῶν ἡμᾶς· "Πῶς οὖν ὀλίγον πρότερον ἐλέγετε; …" <u>εἴποιμ'</u> <u>ἂν</u> ἔγωγε ὅτι…
Suppose he carried on with his questioning: Well, what was it that you were saying a moment ago? … I would say…

330e3

20. εἰ οὖν <u>εἴποι</u>· "…" τί ἂν αὐτῷ <u>ἀποκρίναιο</u>;
Suppose he said "…" What would you say?

331a1

21. Τί οὖν, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, <u>ἀποκρινούμεθα</u> αὐτῷ, ταῦτα ὁμολογήσαντες, <u>ἐὰν</u> ἡμᾶς <u>ἐπανέρηται</u>· "Οὐκ ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁσιότης οἶον δίκαιον εἶναι πρᾶγμα, οὐδὲ δικαιοσύνη οἶον ὅσιον ἀλλ' οἶον μὴ ὅσιον·"
What, Protagoras, will we answer, seeing that we agreed to that, if he asks us "So holiness is not such as to be something just, nor justice such as to be holy"

331a7

Subjunctive used for the most important/relevant question

5.4 The original question

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22. ἐπεὶ εἰ κατ' ἄλλο τι αὐτὸ τὸ χαίρειν κακὸν <u>καλεῖτε</u> καὶ εἰς ἄλλο τι τέλος ἀποβλέψαντες, <u>ἔχοιτε ἂν</u> καὶ ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν· ἀλλ' οὐχ ἕξετε.
For if you call enjoyment itself bad for any other reason, fixed on some other aim, you would be able to tell us what it is. But you won't be able to.

354d1

23. ἐπεὶ εἰ πρὸς ἄλλο τι τέλος <u>ἀποβλέπετε</u>, ὅταν καλῆτε αὐτὸ τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ἀγαθόν, ἢ πρὸς ὃ ἐγὼ λέγω, <u>ἔχετε</u> ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν· ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ἕξετε.
For if you are fixed on some other aim when you call suffering pain itself good, other than the one I say, you will be able to tell us. But you won't be able to.

354d7

Seem entirely parallel questions: still no explanation for the change of mood

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6 Past unreal

6.1 Two degrees

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24. ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ <u>ἐπενόεις</u> παρὰ τὸν σαυτοῦ ὁμώνυμον ἐλθὼν Ἱπποκράτη τὸν Κῷον, τὸν τῶν Ἀσκληπιαδῶν, ἀργύριον τελεῖν ὑπὲρ σαυτοῦ μισθὸν ἐκείνῳ, <u>εἴ τίς σε ἤρετο</u>· "Εἰπέ μοι, μέλλεις τελεῖν, ὦ Ἱππόκρατες, Ἱπποκράτει μισθὸν ὡς τίνι ὄντι;" <u>τί ἂν ἀπεκρίνω</u>;
Like if you were planning to go to your namesake, Hippocrates of Cos, of the medical guild, and giving him some money in payment for services to yourself – if someone were to ask you "Tell me, this Hippocrates you are about to pay, Hippocrates, what kind of a man is he?", what would you answer?
311b7

25. εἰ οὖν τις ἡμᾶς περὶ ταῦτα οὕτω σφόδρα σπουδάζοντας <u>ἔροιτο</u>· "Εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Σώκρατές τε καὶ Ἱππόκρατες, ὡς τίνι ὄντι τῷ Πρωταγόρᾳ ἐν νῷ ἔχετε χρήματα τελεῖν;" τί ἂν αὐτῷ <u>ἀποκριναίμεθα</u>;
So if somebody saw how very keen we were in this situation were to ask "Tell me, Socrates and Hippocrates, "What kind of a man is this Protagoras you're planning to give money to", what would we reply?
311d4

6.2 A lost possibility?

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26. εἰ μὲν οὖν τότε εὐθὺς ὑμῖν <u>εἴπομεν</u> ὅτι Ἀμαθία, <u>κατεγελᾶτε ἂν</u> ἡμῶν· νῦν δὲ <u>ἂν</u> ἡμῶν <u>καταγελᾶτε</u>, καὶ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν <u>καταγελάσεσθε</u>.
If we had straight away said at that point 'Ignorance', you would have laughed at us; but now if you laugh at us you will be laughing at yourselves.
357d1

Dudman: Latin counterfactuals really were counterfactual - we don't have the 'if the butler did it' according to the *Latin Grammar* of Goldersleeve [sic] and Lodge 1895. The two types are "products, evidently, of quite different systems of thought" ('Indicative & Subjunctive': 6)?

English grammars would also give that impression
27. *If they had invited him to the conference, he would have attended*
Implying: 'but they didn't invite him' (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik: 14.23)

English problems with counterfactuals can apply to Greek too:

28. *If Oswald didn't kill Kennedy, someone else did*
29. *If O hadn't killed K, someone else would have*

30. *If Sly Pete calls he will lose*
31. *If Sly Pete had called he would have lost*

32. *Whether or not the Duke was there, had he been there, he would have been furious*

7

6.3   Difficulty of differentiating

Optative can refer to the present?

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33. "Ἐπὶ πάντας," ἔφη ὁ Ζεύς, "καὶ πάντες μετεχόντων· οὐ γὰρ <u>ἂν γένοιντο</u> πόλεις, εἰ ὀλίγοι αὐτῶν <u>μετέχοιεν</u> ὥσπερ ἄλλων τεχνῶν·

"To everybody", said Zeus, "and let all share in them; for cities could not exist, if only a few shared in those as in the other crafts.

322d3

34. νῦν δ' ἐστὶν ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ <u>δέοιό</u> μου Κρίσωνι τῷ Ἱμεραίῳ δρομεῖ ἀκμάζοντι ἕπεσθαι, ἢ τῶν δολιχοδρόμων τῳ ἢ τῶν ἡμεροδρόμων διαθεῖν τε καὶ ἕπεσθαι,

But now it's as if you were asking me to keep pace with Crison (the runner from Himera) at his peak, or to keep up in a race with some middle-distance runner or long-distance courier…

335e2

Imperfect can refer to the future?

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35. εἰ οὖν οὕτω καὶ ἐν αὐλήσει πᾶσαν προθυμίαν καὶ ἀφθονίαν <u>εἴχομεν</u> ἀλλήλους διδάσκειν, <u>οἴει ἄν</u> τι, ἔφη, μᾶλλον, ὦ Σώκρατες, τῶν ἀγαθῶν αὐλητῶν ἀγαθοὺς αὐλητὰς τοὺς ὑεῖς γίγνεσθαι ἢ τῶν φαύλων;

So if we were all so willing and eager to teach one another the flute as well, do you think, Socrates, that the sons of good flute-players would themselves turn out to be better players than the sons of poor players?

327b4

In English, future 'counterfactuals' and past 'potentials' are possible, if marginal:

36. *If Schumacher were racing next year, he'd win*
37. *If the butler had done it, he would have left these clues*

Comrie claims that Latin makes a three-way distinction (93), cf Wakker's 'exceptional' 4-way division of Greek

But with this 'distinction' doing very similar things to English.

"It is interesting to speculate on why counterfactuality should be a stronger implicature with conditionals that have past time reference than with those that have future time reference… Presumably, it is connected with the expectation that one should have greater certainty about past events than about future events, so that a past situation that is nonfactual will probably be counterfactual".

(Comrie: 90)

6.4   Indicative = irrealis?

Type **1a** – only different in apodosis from **1b**
Aspect doesn't help

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38. Ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, ἐγὼ πολλοῖς ἤδη εἰς ἀγῶνα λόγων ἀφικόμην ἀνθρώποις, καὶ εἰ τοῦτο
<u>ἐποίουν</u> ὃ σὺ κελεύεις, ὡς ὁ ἀντιλέγων ἐκέλευέν με διαλέγεσθαι, οὕτω διελεγόμην,
οὐδενὸς <u>ἂν</u> βελτίων <u>ἐφαινόμην</u> οὐδ' <u>ἂν ἐγένετο</u> Πρωταγόρου ὄνομα ἐν τοῖς Ἕλλησιν.
Socrates, he said, I've had verbal contests with a great many people, and if I had done what you are
telling me to do, and spoken according to the instructions of my antagonist, I would never have bested
anyone, nor would the name of Protagoras have become known in Greece

335a5

39. τοῦτο αὖ μάθε· οὐδὲν γὰρ θαυμαστόν, εἴπερ ἀληθῆ ἐγὼ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν <u>ἔλεγον</u>,
Let me explain this also: it is no wonder, granted that I was right in stating just now

326e7

Homeric evidence

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40.   ἔνθά <u>κεν</u> Ἀργείοισιν ὑπέρμορα νόστος <u>ἐτύχθη</u>,
       εἰ μὴ Ἀθηναίην Ἥρη πρὸς μῦθον <u>ἔειπεν</u>·
       And now the Argives would have won a fate-beating journey home,
       if Hera had not had a word with Athena

Il. 2.156

41.   καί νύ <u>κεν</u> ἔνθ' <u>ἀπόλοιτο</u> ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Αἰνείας,
       εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὀξὺ <u>νόησε</u> Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη,
       And then Aeneas, the captain of men, would have died,
       if Zeus's daughter Aphrodite had not been quick to notice him.

Il. 5.311

Indicative originally used in situations that *almost* happened?

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42.   Μηριόνη, τάχα κέν σε καὶ ὀρχηστήν περ ἐόντα
       ἔγχος ἐμὸν <u>κατέπαυσε</u> διαμπερές, εἴ σ' <u>ἔβαλόν</u> περ.
       Meriones – even though you're a dancer,
       my spear would have stopped you completely, if I'd hit you!

Il. 16.617

43.   ἔνθά κέ τοι, Μενέλαε, <u>φάνη</u> βιότοιο τελευτή
       Ἕκτορος ἐν παλάμηισιν, ἐπεὶ πολὺ φέρτερος ἦεν,
       εἰ μὴ ἀναΐξαντες <u>ἕλον</u> βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν·
       Menelaus, the end of your life would have come
       at the hands of Hector, since he was far mightier than you by far,
       if the kings of the Achaeans had not sprung up and taken you off.

Il. 7.104

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7 Conclusions

- ❖ Philosophical discussions of conditional sentences can be useful in analysing linguistically

- ❖ Grammatical realisation can be useful in establishing semantic categories

- ❖ But care must be taken, and evidence from more than one language used

- ❖ Greek type **3b** does not mean 'I believe that it is unlikely that *p*'

- ❖ This similar to the philosophers' conclusions about (English) **1b**

- ❖ Hypothesis: 'mood' does not affect the status of the SoA (how likely it is to be fulfilled), but the nature of the conditional sentence

- ❖ More work needs to be done on ascertaining this 'nature' and how other types fit in

- ❖ Past 'unreal' and future 'unreal' conditional sentences have different implications

- ❖ The system in Plato (and of any synchronic snapshot) is the result of a complicated history

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