

## Does Greek have a word for 'no'?

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### *Abstract*

Among the uses of οὐκοῦν Denniston, *Greek Particles* p. 435 mentions: 'οὐκοῦν οὐ, οὐκοῦν ... οὐ, expecting a negative answer.' I will argue that Denniston's view, which is shared by most (all?) other grammars and dictionaries (e.g. Kühner-Gerth 2, 164: 'Wenn nach οὐκοῦν eine verneinende Antwort erwartet wird, so wird demselben die Negation οὐ nachgesetzt', Smyth §2651 a: 'οὐκοῦν οὐ expects the answer *no*', LSJ s.v. οὐκοῦν) should be rejected. Actually, the answer is never *no*. As always, οὐκοῦν expects an affirmative answer, in this case to a *negated* question: 'Is it not the case, then, that not X?' = 'Surely, then, not X?' To be sure, οὐ does occur as an answer, but this can be shown to be a proposition (or sentence) negative (= *not*), rather than an answering particle like *no*. The situation in Greek is compared with negatives in several other languages, notably Latin and Old French. Finally, Modern Greek is briefly discussed, which, unlike Ancient Greek, *does* have a negative answering particle, viz. ὀχι, alongside a proposition negative, viz. δε(v).

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