Greek Lessons 10 and 11

The goal of this video presentation covering Greek Lessons 10 and 11 is to continue our study of words from idiomatic sources, in this case two types of terms and phrases: those which come from expressions and those which come from Christian sources. In the accompanying audio presentation, we'll address one other goal, to review the Greek suffixes and bases Mr. Ayers introduces in these lessons. Please don't forget to listen to that audio presentation when you've finished here.

Sometimes these video presentations are long; sometimes they're short. I know what you're thinking. "Sometimes they're short? Like when?" Fine, you're right. Sometimes they're long and sometimes they're really long, but contrary to all historical precedent, *this* is going to be a very short presentation, assuming I ever get to it.

In Greek Lesson 10, Mr. Ayers continues our tour of words from idiomatic sources by examining how popular expressions ─ or at least expressions that were at one time popular ─ can leave behind new words and sayings, even after they've stopped being used and have become relics of some extinct cultural phenomenon. Once an expression has passed its sell-by date and no longer has the sort of favor that once made it seem vivid and current, it's often subject to other processes of linguistic change, in particular, folk etymology. For example, the phrase "a forlorn hope," meaning "a desperate venture" ─ Ayers discusses this on page 212 ─ began life as a Dutch expression *verloren hoop* meaning "a lost troop (of soldiers)," a reference to a battalion sent off on some mission from which it never returned. Not knowing either of those Dutch words, English speakers preserved the sense but folk-etymologized the expression into a "forlorn hope." Trying to stop the creation of folk etymologies, even the most ridiculous ones, is a good example of a forlorn hope.

And while we're on those subjects ─ expressions and the Dutch, I mean ─ let's pursue a few words and phrases which still exist but reflect sentiments once popular but now forgotten which have left behind terms based on popular expressions. Dutch people in early America were often treated with contempt and suspicion, because to some extent they were confused with people of German extraction ─ racism is hardly a science ─ remember "okay" and how it probably comes from a mocking imitation of the German accent, "oll korrect"? Well, this disdain of Germans was carried over to Dutch people, who are not Germans. They're very different. Dutch people are superior. For instance, me. I am of Dutch descent. Now, because of our superiority, Dutch people naturally intimidate non-Dutch people who often compensate for their feelings of inferiority by associating unpleasant behaviors with the Dutch of whom they are jealous. They view the Dutch as cowards, for example, when what we actually are is judicious, thus expressions like "Dutch courage," meaning "bravery fueled by drinking alcohol." Also, "Dutch leave" which refers to "a soldier's failure to return to duty," or "to do the Dutch act," that is, "to escape," later "to commit suicide." All atrocious lies, I assure you.

The Dutch in early America were also associated with cheapness, another mistaken impression. We're simply frugal. That's why we're all so rich. Thus, a "Dutch auction" is "a sale in which the price is lowered (not raised) until there is a bid, whereupon the item is sold." Now, I ask you, how does that *not* make sense? A "Dutch date" is one in which the woman pays her own way.

But that's not a problem. Many women want to date Dutch men. It only makes sense that they should pay for the pleasure. I think it's actually very generous of us to pay our part. Many women would be glad to do that too. Please, ladies, take a number.

To early Americans, being Dutch was also synonymous with "strangeness," as is any matter of common sense to fools. From this misconception comes the expression "that beats the Dutch," meaning something is "highly unusual and surprising," which is, of course, pure nonsense. Nothing beats the Dutch. Or "it's all Dutch to me," meaning "it's gibberish." Wait! Here's an idea. Learn Dutch.

If, however, there is one expression that captures the Dutch perfectly, it's "to talk like a Dutch uncle," in other words, "to speak bluntly and inelegantly." "Bluntly" is just another way of saying "speak the truth," and "inelegantly" is the only way to communicate with morons. So, people, please learn to recognize these references to the Dutch as the product of expressions, along with those which you'll find on pages 211-212 in Ayers' textbook. Remember, too, that I expect you to know what each expression means ─ you'll be asked to match them to their definitions ─ and that they belong to the category words/phrases from expressions.

In Greek Lesson 11, Mr. Ayers directs your attention to another type of idiomatic source for words and phrases, Christian religion, and he lists and discusses quite a few: Gnostic, agnostic, Apocrypha, apostle/apostolic, and so on. Please learn what these terms mean and that they belong to the category of words which come from Christian sources. I think Ayers' list is long enough, so I won't introduce any additional words here.

Which means, we're done! I told you it would be a short trip this time. Trust your Dutch uncle. I may be strange but I'd never lie to you. Next you should listen to the audio presentation on the suffixes and bases in these lessons. You'll find a link to that audio presentation on the course web site.

Happy etymologizing!

ASSIGNMENT

This is the audio presentation covering the assignments in Greek Lessons 10 and 11. Please open your textbook to page 213.

The first suffix -ast/-st ("one who does") is a combination of the verb-forming suffix -ize ("to make, do") in a variant form -aze, to which has been appended the next prefix on this list, -t ("one who"). So etymologically it means exactly what it says, "one who (-t) does (-aze)." Please note that Mr. Ayers glosses that prefix, -t/-te, as "he who," but let's remove the gender from his definition and make it "one who." Women also can be the doers imbedded in -t, as in gymnast. Lots of those are female.

The final suffix here -y/-ia ("the quality of, the state of, the act of") has a number of other senses Ayers does not include, for instance, "the country, territory or area of" as in Micronesia, academia and suburbia. Also, -ia serves as the plural of some words like criteria (the plural of

criterion) and scientific terms like ganglia. It also is used to refer to some classifications in science, for example, Mammalia, Reptilia and Sauria.

Now let's look at the bases in Lesson 10 which are right below these suffixes, starting with ALL- which Ayers defines as "other." But you should note that the sense of ALL- is "*an*other," as in allegory, a story in which the people and happenings have another meaning, in other words, a fable or a parable. The other derivatives Mr. Ayers lists on the right are actually not from this base but a slightly different one, ALLEL- which represents another form of other, "one another." Par*allel* lines run right next to one another, or *allel*es are genes which correspond to one another on different chromosomes. And remember there's yet another "other" base: HETER- ("the other") which we've already studied in Lesson 9. So to sum up all these "others": ALL- = "another"; ALLEL- = "one another"; and HETER- = "the other." You need to learn them all.

To CAC-, the next base, meaning "bad," add the sense "evil." It can denote moral turpitude as in cacodemon ("an evil spirit").

Skipping down to CLA- meaning "break," add the sense "bend." Anaclasis, literally "the bending up of light," is a scientific term for refraction, when light is bent into its frequencies creating a rainbow.

Note that the base ERG-/URG- which means "work" is actually cognate with the English word "work" (also "wreak" as in "wreak havoc"). Remember that Grimm's Law predicates /g/ will become /k/. The loss of the 'w' on the front of the Greek base is to be expected. All w's were lost in ancient Greek at one point.

The next base LAT(E)R- ("to worship excessively, to be fanatically devoted to") originally meant only "to serve with prayer," but underwent degeneration and came to have a more negative, fanatical sense. Be careful not to confuse this Greek base with its Latin twin LATER- meaning "side," totally unrelated roots.

To the next base PATH- ("feel, suffer, disease"), add the sense "disordered condition" which is what it means in many medical terms.

The next base PHY- ("grow") has a variant form you should add here: PHYT- which is really the base PHY- plus the suffix -*t* ("one who"), meaning "a thing which grows." So, what sorts of things grow? Obviously, plants! So the study of plants ought to be called "phytology," but instead we say "botany," a remnant of the fact that early studies of plants focused on pasturage, the sorts of plants that herd animals eat. The initial impulse to study plants naturally centered on the fodder which cows and sheep ate because they were a very important type of plants to humans. Indeed, the BO- in "botany" means "cow" and is the basis of the Greek word *botane* ("pasture grass"). From that developed the adjective *botanikos*, and ultimately the back formation "botany."

Moving on, to STA- add the variant STE- (its e-grade) seen in the word "sy*ste*m." Also, add the meaning "regulate." When the base STA- is followed by the suffix -*t* (literally "that which stands"), the result is the sense "to stop," literally, "to cause to stand (still)." That's what -stats

do. They stop something, in other words, regulate it, make it not go too far. A thermostat, for instance, regulates temperature. A rheostat regulates electrical current. It shows up so much that you should probably add -*stat* to your list of Greek suffixes, but since you can etymologize it as a base plus a suffix, I won't demand that you do that.

Finally, to the last base THE- add the sense "set." Now, this is the THE- I warned you about in Lesson 4 when we encountered its doppelganger, the THE- base which means "god." There's no way to tell at first glance whether a Greek THE- derivative is using the god-base or the place-base. You just have to try them both and guess which one suits the context better. Remember that I'll never deduct points for guessing wrong, as long as you follow the rules.

Now let's move on to Lesson 11. Please turn to page 217 where you'll find a very important Greek suffix, -*ma*/-*m*/-*me* ("the result of, the thing that is the result of"), and let's simplify that second definition. How about just "the thing done"? Add that meaning please. And put three ─ no, four! ─ stars next to it. This suffix appears in thousands of English derivatives from Greek. Also, add two variants to this suffix. In addition to -*ma*/-*m*/-*me*, this suffix can also appear as -*eme* as in phoneme and morpheme, as well as -*em* as in theorem. Think of it this way: this suffix is really just -*m*- with an *e* on either side, or one on each side, or an -*a* after it. And there's one more important thing to note about this suffix: if there's another suffix following -*m*, then the suffix expands to its original Greek form -*mat*-. Ayers talks about this at the top of the next page (page 218). Thus, a proble*m* becomes proble*mat*ical, but only if you don't remember this rule. So learn it!

The next suffix, -*sis*/-*se*/-*sy*/-*sia* ("the act of, the state of, the result of") is another big and important one. Put … however many stars you need to make it stand out in your memory. The simple truth is you need to remember this one! The first form -*sis* is the original Greek form; all the others are variants which have entered English through other languages like French. Note, please, that the plural of -*sis* words also retains the Greek original form, -*ses*. Thus, the plural of analysis is analyses, or of crisis is crises.

Finally, let's look at the bases in this lesson, beginning with ANDR- ("man, male"). It also occurs in another variant which you should add here, ANDER-, as in philander. If you don't know what that word means, look it up. And here's an important distinction to make. ANDR- is used in reference to men (versus women), whereas ANTHROP- ─ we studied that base in Lesson 7 ─ means "man" as in "human being." The counterpart of ANDR- is seen below on this list: GYN-/GYNEC- ("woman"). So, does an android have to be male? Should we then call a female cyborg a "gynoid"? "gynecoid"? Yuck, no. That is just ugly!

The next base GEN(E)- ("kind, race") is the noun form of the verb base GEN- ("originate, produce") which we also saw in Lesson 7. According to Greek thinking, what a word with the GEN- base in it "produces" is "race, kind" ─ that's "kind" in the sense of "type" as in humankind, not kind as "compassionate."

The base IDI- ("one's own, peculiar") originally meant in ancient Greek "a private person," someone who doesn't participate in government or public office," but that was a type of person many Athenians looked down on because they believed people should participate in communal

activities, should run for office, should vote and serve on juries. The Romans picked up on that negativity and borrowed this base from Greek with the sense "uneducated, lacking professional skill." So it had already undergone a certain amount of degeneration before it entered English. Once there, IDI- came to be used to describe a peculiar habit or mannerism and produced the word "idiom," a distinctive expression often unique to a language. At the same time, this base was also being used in technical terminology. For instance, according to old English law, idiots were different from lunatics inasmuch as lunatics were born healthy but became insane later, presumably because of the moon (hence the LUN- base). At the same time in medical terminology, idiots were also associated with a variety of mental disorders in which patients appear to inhabit their own world, a condition we today might diagnose as severely autistic. And that's how a base that originally meant "private" (and still does in some derivatives) came to designate stupidity. Quite a journey!

The next base LITH- ("stone") has a variant LITE-, most often used with minerals and fossils, as in chrysolite.

And to end this presentation, let's skip down to the bottom of this list ─ remember that you still have to memorize all the bases in this lesson! ─ and look at the last base TYP- ("stamp, model"), to which you should add the sense "impression." TYP- has a fascinating history! Originally in Greek this base meant "hit, strike" and was used in reference to coins on which images were "struck," the way we put a president's portrait on a quarter or a dime. Those frozen, "stamped" depictions became emblematic of the way the Greeks envisioned different personality types as composed of indelible character traits. The word "character" is, in fact, another term used in ancient coinage. So according to the ancient Greeks, you were born with a "character type" impressed into your brain just as a coin is stamped with the face and expression of some god or political figure. Thus, TYP- as "blow" came to mean "character."

And that's all for this audio presentation of Greek Lessons 10 and 11. Study hard …

… and happy etymologizing!