Does Ancient Greek Have a Word for ‘No’?  
The Evidence from οὐκοῦν ... οὐ Questions*

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Abstract  
Among the uses of οὐκοῦν (oukoun) Denniston (1954: 235) mentions ‘οὐκοῦν οὐ, οὐκοῦν ... οὐ, expecting a negative answer.’ This paper argues that Denniston’s view, which is shared by most (all?) other grammars and dictionaries of Ancient Greek (e.g. Kühner-Gerth 2, 164: ‘Wenn nach οὐκοῦν eine verneinende Antwort erwartet wird, so wird demselben die Negation οὐ nachgesetzt’, Smyth § 2651a: ‘οὐκοῦν οὐ expects the answer no’, Liddell-Scott-Jones 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 true, 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. óchi, alongside a proposition negative, viz. δε(ν).

Keywords  
Negatives; answers; Greek; Latin; Old French; Jespersen’s Cycle; positive bias

... negation is to the linguist and linguistic philosopher as fruit to Tantalus: waving seductively, alluringly palpable, yet just out of reach, within the grasp only to escape once more  
– Horn (1989: xiv)

Aus diesen den neueren Sprachen gewidmeten Arbeiten ist auch für Griechisch und Latein viel zu lernen  
– Wackernagel (1928: 249)

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1. Preliminaries

We may readily agree with Horn that negatives are among the most elusive parts of any natural language. One may think of phenomena like the double negation in English (‘I don’t know nothing about it’) and other languages, the presence in French of so-called ‘expletive’ ne after verbs like empêcher, and in plus souple qu’on ne le pensait, the existence of opaque negative conjunctions like lest, and of negative questions with positive meaning like Isn’t that a Rembrandt?, to which I will return in more detail below. Greek is of course a goldmine of such phenomena.¹ One needs only think of the combinations οὔδεὶς ... οὔ nobody ... not and οὐκ ... οὔδεὶς not ... nobody, and of constructions like ἀπαγορεύω μὴ διαλέγεσθαι I forbid (you) to have a discussion and οὐκ ἀπαγορεύω μὴ οὔ διαλέγεσθαι I don’t forbid you to have a discussion, or οὐ μὴ + subjunctive in declarative utterances, as in οὐ μὴ πίθηται he won’t obey. To these phenomena also belongs the use of οὐ in questions which are already negative, type οὐκοῦν ... οὐ; οὐκοῦν ... οὐ?, which will be the subject of the first half of my paper. They are treated in some detail, because the answers to these questions will enable me to propose an answer the question of the title: Does Ancient Greek have a word for ‘No’?

Grammars and monographs alike regard the combination οὐκοῦν (…) οὔ as an expression which expects a negative answer. Here follow the views of Denniston and others:

(1) – ‘Wenn nach οὐκοῦν eine verneinende Antwort erwartet wird, so wird demselben die Negation οὔ nachgesetzt’ (Kühner-Gerth 2, 164)
– ‘οὐκοῦν οὐ, οὐκοῦν ... οὔ, expecting a negative answer’ (Denniston 1954: 435)
– ‘οὐκοῦν οὔ expects the answer no’ (Smyth 1956: § 2651)
– ‘(οὐκοῦν) folld. by οὔ when a negative answer is invited’ (LSJ s.v. οὐκοῦν I)²

Since according to the same authors bare οὐκοῦν expects or invites an affirmative answer one might expect to find some explanation as to how οὐκοῦν ... οὔ comes to have the opposite meaning, but this is not given. Perhaps this should not surprise us, for their view cannot be defended. To show this I start

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¹) For readers who are not familiar with the language I note that Ancient Greek has two negative particles, οὐ and μὴ. Basically, οὐ is used in assertions and in a certain type of questions (more on these below), while μὴ is rather used in directives and wishes, and in a different type of questions than οὐ, as well as in most dependent clauses and with the infinitive after volitional and related verbs. See also fn. 5.

²) Note that Smyth simply gives Engl. no as an answer, while Kühner-Gerth, Denniston and Liddell-Scott-Jones do not specify what they mean by ‘negative answer’. They must have considered it self-evident that this was οὔ, and that this was the equivalent of German nein and Engl. no, as is also implied by Smyth. Wrongly, as I will argue in this paper.
with a discussion of bare οὐκοῦν, which will also involve the rather thorny question as to what exactly is the value of the negative in such questions.

2. Questions with Bare οὐκοῦν and the Answers to οὐκοῦν

In answers to questions with bare οὐκοῦν we find inter alia the following items:

Veridical ἐστί and related expressions: ἐστι ταῦτα ‘that is the case’, ἔστιν οὕτω ‘(that) is so’, ἀληθῆ ‘true’, ὀρθῶς ‘correct’

(2) Euthyphro 7c; Socrates:

Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ τοῦ μείζονος καὶ ἐλάττονος ἐλ διαφερομένα, ἔπι τὸ μετρεῖν

Not then also about the greater and smaller if disagree—would—we, to the measuring

ἔλαττον τοιχόν παυσάμεθ’ ἐν τῇ διαφοράς;

having gone quickly end—should—we MP the disagreement?

Euthyphron:

'Ἅστι ταῦτα.

Is that.

(‘Then, too, if we were to disagree about the relative size of things, we should quickly put an end to the disagreement by measuring? – Yes.’)

(3) Theaetetus 144e

Οὐκοῦν τοιοῦτον (sc. μουσικόν) μὲν εὑρόντες ἐπειθόμεθ’

Not—then of—this—nature (viz. musician) CP having—found, believe—should—we

ἄν, ἄμουσον δέ, ἠπιστοῦμεν

– Ἀληθῆ.

MP no—musician CP not—believe—should—we? – True—things.

(‘Then if we found that he was a musician, we should believe him, but if not, we should refuse to take his word? – Yes.’)

5) My argument is based on the current texts of the authors mentioned, which sometimes do not print a question mark after οὐκοῦν, although they clearly elicit an answer. ‘I should be inclined,’ writes Denniston (1954: 433), ‘to … insert the question-mark everywhere.’ – I am ignoring the difficult problem of the accentuation of οὐκοῦν, for which see Denniston (1954: 430f.).

4) Unless indicated otherwise the examples are from the very rich corpus of interrogative discourse provided by Plato. CP = Contrastive Particle, MP = Modal Particle.

5) I give notably those answers that are relevant for the subsequent discussion of οὐκοῦν … σ. – Question words like ἄρα, bare σ. ἄρ’ σ. μή, ἄρα μή, μῶν are not discussed in this paper, since they turned out to be less relevant for the purpose of this investigation than οὐκοῦν … σ. Where this seemed relevant, however, I have added references to the use(s) of these question words.

6) Unless indicated otherwise the translations are taken from the translations in the Loeb series, without adaptations, although these might often be considered. Thus, in (2) the conducive force of the question, i.e. the fact that ‘[it] indicate[s] that the speaker is predisposed to the kind of answer he has wanted or expected’ (Quirk et al. 1985: 868) is not expressed. This could be remedied e.g. by adding a tag question after ‘measuring’: isn’t it?. The answer, too, is unsatisfactory, for ἓστι ταῦτα obviously does not mean ‘Yes’. There is, in fact, a tendency in these translations to abandon the variety of the Greek answers by rendering affirmative answers simply as ‘Yes’.
Verbs expressing agreement: φημί 'I say so', ὁμολογῶ 'I agree' and compounds

(4) Ion 53e

ὢνκόν ... ὅταν ... εἰς τις ἄριστα λέγη, γνώστει τις τὸν
Not-then ... when one person best speaks, will-recognize presumably someone the
εὖ λέγοντα; – Φημ./
well speaking? – Agree-

('Well now ...; when one of them speaks better than the rest, I suppose there is some one
who will distinguish the good speaker? – I agree.‘)

Also ‘narrated agreement’ in a past tense, in dialogues having a narrator,
e.g.7

(5) Protagoras 332c

ὢνκόν, ὦν δὲ ἐγώ, ἐν ἀκάστῳ τῶν ἑναντίων ἐν μόνον ἑτέρι ἑναντίον καὶ οὐ
Not-then said cp I to one each of-the-opposites one only there-is opposite and not
πολλά; – Συνωμολ/ογία.
many? – Admitted-he

('Now, I went on, each single opposite has but one opposite, not many? – He admitted
this.‘)

Words expressing various degrees of likelihood: ἀνάγκη ‘(that’s) inevitable’,
φαίνεται ‘(so) it seems’, εἰκός (γε) ‘(that’s) likely’, δοκεῖ μοι ‘(so) it seems to me’,
κινδυνεύει ‘(that’s) probable’. E.g.:

(6) Phaedo 65c–d

καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἡ τοῦ φιλόσοφου ψυχή μᾶλιστα ἀτιμάζει τὸ σῶμα ... ;
and there the of-the-philosopher soul very-much not-honour the body?
– Φαίνεται.
– Appears-it

('In this matter also, then, the soul of the philosopher greatly despises the body ...?
– Evidently.‘)

Affirmative adverbs and adverbial phrases, the Greek equivalents of ‘Certainly/
Yes/By all means/Of course’: καὶ μάλα, μάλα γε, μάλιστα, πῶς δ’ οὐ, πῶς γὰρ οὐ, πάνυ
greatly despises the body?.

(7) Respublica 524c

ἐντεῦθεν ποθὲν πρῶτον ἐπέρχεται ἡμικ ημί τι οὖν
Not-then there-from somewhere first up-comes-it to-ask us Dative what then

7) This includes ἐπινεύω ‘nod (yes)’, which naturally occurs only in narrated dialogues, e.g. Prt. 360c6–7 ὢκόν ὣ τῶν δεινῶν καὶ μὴ δειενῶ ἁμαθία δειεία ἁν ἐλγ; Ἐπένευε. ('Then ignorance of what
is dreadful and not dreadful will be cowardice? He nodded assent').
ποτ’ ἐστὶ τὸ μέγα αὖ καὶ τὸ σμικρόν; – Παντάπασε μὲν οὖν.

ever is the great in-turn and the small? – All-respects-in certainly

(And is it not in some such experience as this that the question first occurs to us, what in the world, then, is the great and the small? – By all means.)

(8) Laches 185d–e

Οὐχοῦν νῦν φαμεν περὶ μαθήματος σκοπεῖν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνεκα
Not-then now say-we about subject-of-study to investigate the soul for-the-sake-of

tῆς τῶν νεανίσκων; – Ναί.

the of the young-men. – Yes

('And we say that our present subject is an accomplishment studied for the sake of the young men’s souls? – Yes.‘)

Affirmative particle attached to a constituent to be supplied from the question

(9) Laches 194e

Οὐκοῦν τόδε τὸν διὸ ἐρωτᾷς; – Ἐγώγε.
Not-then this-man that ask-you? – I-yes

('Well, will you put that question to your friend here? – I do.‘)

Repetition of the word which was the focus of the question, sometimes with adaptations, often strengthened by an additional affirmative expression, or by an emphatic adverb:

(10) Phaedo 94c

Οὐκοῦν αὖ ὡμολογήσαμεν ...; – Ὡμολογήσαμεν, ἔφη πῶς γὰρ οὖ; Not-then further agree-did-we ...? – Agree-did-we, said-he; how for not?

('Did we not agree ...? – Yes, he replied, we did, of course')

(11) Phaedo 90c–d

Οὐκοῦν οἰκτρὸν ἂν εἴη τὸ πάθος, εἰ ...; – Νὴ τὸν Δία ... οἰκτρὸν Not-then sad would-be the experience, if ... – By Zeus ... sad
dῆται.

definitely

('Wouldn’t it be a sad experience, if ...? – By Zeus, definitely sad‘)

It is clear from this survey that οὐχοῦν expects or invites, in fact, an affirmative answer, i.e. the speaker invites the interlocutor to confirm the truth of the proposition underlying the question. The sequence of questions and answers can be paraphrased as follows:

8) Compare, in a bare yes/no question Andocid. De myst. 14: ἢ σάθα ζητήτης, ὦ Διάγνητς, ἢτε ... ; – Ἦν. – Οἶσθα οὖν μηνύσαντα Ἀνδρόμαχον ... ; – Οἶδα. ('You were on the commission of enquiry, Diognetus, when ...? – I was. – So you know that Andromachus laid an information as to ...? – I know.')—In some languages this type of answer is obligatory, e.g. Old Welsh: A eisteddi di? – Eisteddai. 'Will you sit down? – I will sit’ (Ball 1993: 337).

9) 'Proposition’ is used as in Dik’s Functional Grammar, i.e. a ‘possible fact’, ‘something which can
Q οὐκοῦν X; = ‘Isn’t it true, then, that X?’ = ‘Surely, then, X?’
A ‘Indeed, X’10

3. The Semantics of ο/upsilonpsili in ο/upsilonpsiliκο/upsilonperispomeniν Questions

Before I turn to οὐκοῦν ... οὐ questions perhaps a few words about the semantics of the negative in οὐκοῦν questions are in order, since this may not be immediately clear. In this combination the meaning of ο, just like that of bare ο and ἄρ’ ο.querySelector questions, can be paraphrased as ‘Isn’t it true that X ...?’, which pragmatically, and in positive terms, amounts to ‘Surely X ...?’11 How can it be that a negative particle is meant to elicit an affirmative answer? Observe that the same problem exists for English not, in simple conducive questions, like Hasn’t he told you what to do? = ‘Surely he has told you what to do?’, and especially in questions with checking tags12 (He has told you what to do, hasn’t he?), which express ‘maximum conduciveness’ (Quirk et al. 1985: 810). Of course Dutch niet, French ne ... pas, German nicht, and no doubt the negatives in many other languages pose similar problems.

According to Quirk et al. (1985: 808) a question like Hasn’t he told you what to do? implies ‘that the speaker had originally hoped for a positive response, but new evidence now suggests that the response will be negative’.13 Thus, Hasn’t he told you what to do? means “Surely he has told you what to do, hasn’t he? I would have thought that he had told you.” Here there is a combining of positive and

10) To avoid a possible misunderstanding I should add that the affirmative items mentioned above are by no means confined to answers to οὐκοῦν questions. They may also appear, for instance, after (neutral) ἄρα questions, as in Gorgias 462b ἄρα ἐρωτάς ἥντινα τέχνην φημὶ εἶναι; – Ἐγώς (‘Are you asking what kind of art I call it? – Yes’ (liter.: ‘Yes I (am)’)); cp. ex. (g); Respublica 566a ἄρα ἀνάγκη ... ; – Πολλή ἀνάγκη (‘is it then inevitable ...? – Quite inevitable’); cp. ex. (10). See also below, p. 8.
11) As far as ο in οὐκοῦν, this presents the question at hand as the consequence of a point raised and discussed in the preceding discourse. In fact, οὐκοῦν questions never come first in a series of questions. First questions are rather introduced by ἄρα, negative ἄρ’ ο or bare ο. Also, with a different meaning, ἄρα μή and bare μή, and μὼν. See also fn. 36.
12) For the term see Lyons (1977: 764). The positive conducive force of negative questions is generally known as ‘positive bias’. For a discussion of positively and negatively biased questions in English (the latter for instance in Do you really want to leave now? [‘Surely you don’t want to’]; Quirk et al.’s example) see e.g. Quirk et al. (1985: 808–809) and Lyons (1977: 764–766), and, in a formal semantic framework, Romero & Han (2004), and Asher & Reese (2005). See also fn. 13.
13) In the same vein Lyons, in a discussion of the questions (Lyons’ numbers) (21) Is the door open? and (22) Isn’t the door open?, argues (1977: 765) that ‘[t]he speaker utters (22) rather than (21) because there is some conflict between his prior belief that p is true and present evidence which would tend to suggest that ~p is true. He questions ~p because it is the negative proposition that occasions his doubt or surprise.’
negative attitude, which one may distinguish as the old expectation (positive) and new expectation (negative).’ They do not explain, however, how such a sentence can elicit a positive response. Perhaps the simplest explanation of this phenomenon is that of Moore (1934: 165): ‘... the interrogative form is a form of doubt or denial and cancels the ω negation, so that the two negatives make a positive.’ A more elaborate version of this view may be found in Hudson (1975). While discussing the sentences (Hudson’s numbers) (37a) Do you enjoy making me miserable? and (37b) Don’t you enjoy making me miserable?, Hudson notes (1975: 17–18): ‘In both these sentences the speaker is calling into question the truth of the proposition, which in (37a) is positive and in (37b) is negative. From (37a–b) respectively, then, the hearer can deduce that the corresponding negative proposition is true (cf. Surely you don’t enjoy making me miserable?), and that the corresponding positive proposition is true (cf. Surely you enjoy making me miserable?).’ To this we should add that the hearer not only can make deductions, but by the interrogative form is explicitly invited to confirm that the corresponding negative or positive proposition is, in fact, true, in the first case by saying No,( indeed I don’t), in the second by saying Yes,( indeed I do).

All in all, negative questions with positive bias would seem to function as a pragmatic-rhetorical device which is used to ensure the cooperation of the interlocutor in the communicative setting at hand.15 Much more could be, and indeed has been, said about negative questions,16 but for the purpose of this paper the above observations may perhaps suffice.

I now turn to οὐκοῦν ... οὐ questions.

14) For negative questions this analysis might be rephrased in slightly more formal, and speaker-oriented, terms as: by asking a question of the form ~p? the speaker calls into question the truth of ~p, thus implying that he believes that p rather than ~p is true, and asks the addressee to confirm the correctness of this belief. Alternatively, the combined presence of question and negation could also be viewed as involving an entailment relationship: if the speaker questions the truth of ~p, he must consider p true.

15) The invitation to react affirmatively may of course also be rejected, but with οὐκοῦν this seems to have been extremely rare, in Plato, at least. Normally, the interlocutor co-operates. (‘[T]he answers given in the (Platonic) dialogues are usually the expected ones’ (Denniston 1954: 275)). An example of a non-co-operative interlocutor is the rhapsode Ion at Ion 541a5: οὐκοῦν καὶ ὅστις ἄγαθὸς στρατηγὸς τυγχάνει ὤν, ἄγαθὸς καὶ ῥαψῳδός ἐστιν; – Οὐκ αὖ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτο. (‘Is he who happens to be a good general not also a good rhapsode? – This time I don’t agree.’)

16) Recently, negative questions have attracted the interest of several formal semanticists. See e.g. Romero and Han (2004), which is a thorough study of our questions, also in other languages than English, with further literature, and Romero (2005) for some modifications to the earlier paper. To account for the positive bias of negative yes/no questions Romero and Han make use, among other things, of an epistemic operator VERUM, that formally captures the informal paraphrase ‘Isn’t it true that ...?’ used above.
4. Questions with οὐκοῦν ... οὐ and the Answers to οὐκοῦν ... οὐ

In answers to questions with οὐκοῦν ... οὐ we find *inter alia* the following items (for their meaning see above, at bare οὐκοῦν):

**Veridical ἐστί and related expressions**

(12) Ion 538a

Οὐκοῦν ὃστις ἂν μὴ ἔχῃ τινὰ τέχνην, ταύτης τῆς τέχνης τὰ λεγόμενα ἢ πραττόμενα καλῶς γιγνώσκειν οὐχ οἷς τ' ἔσται;

Not then whoever mp not has some art that of the of art of the things-being-said or things-being-done well to-know not will-be-able?

– Ἀληθῶς λέγεις.

– True-things say-you.

(‘Then he who has not a particular art will be incapable of knowing aright the words or works of that art? – True.’)

**Verbs expressing agreement**

Lacking

**Words expressing various degrees of likelihood: ἀνάγκη, φαίνεται, εἰκός (γε), δοκεῖ μοι**

(13) Euthyphro 15c

Οὐκοῦν ἢ ἂρτι οὐ καλῶς ὁμολογοῦμεν, ἢ εἰ τότε καλῶς, νῦν οὐκ ὀρθῶς τιθέμεθα;

Not then either just now not well agreed-we or if then well now not correctly assume-we? – Seems-it.

(‘Then either our agreement a while ago was wrong, or if that was right, we are wrong now? – So it seems.’)

**Affirmative adverbs and adverbial phrases: καὶ μάλα, μάλα γε, μάλιστα, πῶς γάρ, πάνυ γε, παντάπασι γε, παντάπασι μὲν οὖν**

(14) Philebus 43d

Οὐκοῦν οὐκ ἂν εἴη τὸ μὴ λυπεῖσθαί ποτε ταύτων τῷ χαίρειν;

Not then not mp would-be the not to-feel-pain ever the-same to feel-pleasure.

– Πῶς γάρ ἂν (sc. εἴη)?17

– How for mp (viz. could-be)?

(‘Then freedom from pain would not be identical with pleasure? – Certainly not.’)

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17) Observe that οὐκοῦν questions may be answered by πῶς γάρ οὐ; (e.g. (10) above), while οὐκοῦν...
(15) Respublica 402b

Οὐκοῦν καὶ εἰκόνας γραμμάτων, εἰ ποὺ ἦ ἐν υδάσιν ἦ
Not-then also representations letters-of somewhere either in waters or
ἐν κατόπτροις ἐμφαίνοιτο, σὺ πρέτερον γνωσόμεθα, πρὶν ἂν αὐτὰ γνώμεν, ...
in mirrors were-visible not earlier know-will-we before mp them know,...?
- Παντάπασι μὲν σὺν.
- All-respects-in certainly.

('And is it not also true that if there are any likenesses of letters reflected in water or
mirrors, we shall never know them until we know the originals ...? – By all means."

Affirmative particle attached to a constituent to be supplied from the question
(16) Euthydemus 293c

Οὐκοῦν εἰ τί μὴ ἐπίστασαι, ὥφιλον; ἔκεινος γε
Not-then if something not know-you, not knowing are-you? That-thing-in yes
ὦ φίλε ὅ ἦν δ’ ἐγώ
Interj friend said cp I

('Then if you do not know something, you are not knowing? – Not in that thing, my dear
sir, I replied."

Repetition of the word which was the focus of the question (= οὐ), often strengh-
tened by an additional affirmative expression
(17) Phaedo 105e

Οὐκοῦν ψυχὴ ὁ δέχεται θάνατον; – Οὐ. – Ἀθάνατον ἄρα ψυχή.
Not-then soul not admit death. – Not. – Immortal-thing then soul.
– Ἀθάνατον.
– Immortal-thing.

('And the soul does not admit death? – No. – Then the soul is immortal. – Yes."

(18) Meno 89a

Οὐκοῦν εἰ ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχει, οὐκ ἦν εἰεν φύσει οἱ ἄγαθοι. – Οὐ μοι
Not-then if that so is, not mp can-be by nature the good. – Not to-me
δοκεῖ.
seems

('Then if this is so, good men cannot be good by nature. – I think not."

... οὓ questions may be answered by πῶς γάρ; ((14) above). There is thus a parallelism οὐκοῦν ...
; – πῶς γάρ ὦ; and οὐκοῦν ... οὐ; – πῶς γάρ. Both these rhetorical answer-questions emphatically
confirm the truth of the proposition underlying the preceding question, πῶς γάρ ὦ by expressing
the idea that in no way it cannot be true (πῶς γάρ ὦ sc. ὡμολογήσαμεν 'how/in what way did we
not agree=' πάντως ὡμολογήσαμεν 'in all ways we agreed'), πῶς γάρ ἂν by expressing that in no way
it can be true (πῶς γάρ ἂν, sc. εἰ ἐτούτόν; 'how could it be the same?' = ὡμολογῶς 'in no way', sc. ἂν
eἰ ἐτούτον).
It is clear from this survey that, just like bare οὐκοῦν, οὐκοῦν ... οὐ, too, expects or invites an affirmative answer:

Q οὐκοῦν (…) οὐ X; = ‘Isn’t it true, then, that not X?’ = ‘Surely not X?’
A ‘Indeed, not X’

To be sure, this would seem to be contradicted by the final category, where we find οὐ as an answer. Actually, however, the form of the answer differs in no way from the answers in the final category of οὐκοῦν, see examples (10) and (11). This is seen most clearly in (17); here, the οὐ of the answer repeats the οὐ of the question, thereby confirming its correctness, just as in the answer to the next question Ἀθάνατον affirmatively repeats the Ἀθάνατον of the question.18

In all such cases, then, οὐ should not be taken as No, i.e. an answering particle, but as not, i.e. a proposition negative, which in answers functions as an elliptic substitute for the entire underlying negative proposition of the question: (ex. 17) Οὐκοῦν (ψυχή) οὐ (δέχεται θάνατον); – Οὐ = ψυχή οὐ δέχεται θάνατον (‘Isn’t it true, then, that (the soul) does not (admit death)?’—‘Not’ (= the soul does not admit death)); (ex. 20) Οὐκοῦν (οὕτω γε) οὐ (δεῖ παιδοποιεῖσθαι); – Οὐ γάρ οὖν = οὕτω γε οὐ δεῖ παιδοποιεῖσθαι. (‘Isn’t it true, then, that (in that case) not (one must make children)?’—‘Most certainly not’ (= In that case one must not make children)). Note, in the latter example, the presence of strongly asseverative γάρ οὖν.

18] Cp. also above, fn. 8 and 10. As in the case of οὐκοῦν (see fn. 6), the translations of the answers sometimes have a negative where there is no negative in the Greek, see (14) and (16). These negatives must have been viewed by the translators as the most adequate means to render the meaning of the answer. But this is a matter of English rather than Greek syntax.
If the above analysis is correct it follows that Ancient Greek does not have a separate negative answering particle like Eng. No, Du. Nee, Fr. Non, Ge. Nein, It. No, Russian njet, alongside the proposition negatives not, niet, ne ... pas, nicht, non, ne, respectively. Note also that in (19) οὐ is emphasized by the particle δῆτα certainly, surely. On the assumption that δῆτα is like certainly and similar adverbs in other languages, this, too, points to οὐ being a proposition negative rather than an answering particle. Compare, in English, answers like Certainly not, Perhaps not, where *Certainly no and *Perhaps no are ungrammatical. Further support for this claim can be derived from the combinations Τί οὐ; and Διὰ τί οὐ; = Why not? Cp. indeed Engl. Why not?, not *Why no? Likewise for Dutch Absoluut niet/*Absoluut nee, Waarom niet?/*Waarom nee?; German Bestimmt nicht/*Bestimmt nein, Warum nicht?/*Warum nein? Observe that the answers in the English Loeb translations of (18)–(20) have not, and rightly so: in answers not, too, functions as an elliptic substitute for the entire negative proposition of the question.

It might be objected that the above claim is too strong, since it is only based on the behaviour of οὐκοῦν ... οὐ. In fact, it is this combination, plus the answers, that allows us to make inferences about the word class of οὐ. Naturally, this has to be checked against the behaviour of οὐ in other environments, e.g., importantly, in answers after non-biased (neutral) questions. These have either no introductory question word, or they are introduced by ἄρα or ἦ. Here follow some examples with οὐ as an answer:

(21) Leges 962c; no question word

ἔχομεν φράζειν; – Οὔ δῆτα, ὦ ξένε, σαφῶς γε.

′Can we answer? – Not certainly inter stranger clearly restrictive ptcle

(′Can we answer? (viz. the preceding question) – Certainly not clearly′)²¹

(22) Meno 73a; ἄρε

′Αφ′

οὐ πάντα εὐ διοίκειν ... πᾶλιν ..., μὴ σωφρόνως ...

²⁰ For the Romance languages see further fn. 20 and section 5.

²¹ For the Latin languages see further fn. 19.

²² Observation mine. The Loeb translation has: ′No Stranger, at least, not clearly′, where δῆτα is not translated, while οὐ is translated twice, first by No and then by not, apparently to avoid the impossible *at least, no clearly.
neutral q word then possible (sc. it is) well to manage a city... not temperately

διοικοῦντα; – Οὐ δήτα.
managing? – Not surely.

(‘And is it possible to manage a state well... if you do not manage it temperately...? – Surely not’)

From the comedies of Aristophanes:

(23) Aristophanes, *Equites* 870; no question word

ἔδωκας ἤδη τουτῳί κάττυμα παρὰ σεαυτοῦ ταῖς ἐμβάσιν... ;
gave you already him here a patch from yourself for the felt-shoes?

– οὐ δήτα μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω.
– Not certainly by Apollo.

(‘Have you ever given him a free patch for his shoes...? – By Apollo, he never has’ (said by a third person))

(24) Aristophanes, *Vespae* 8; ἢ

ἄλλ’ ἢ παραφρονεῖς ἔτεον... ; – οὐκ, ἄλλ’ ὑπνὸς μ’ ἔχει
But neutral q word out of your mind are you really? – not, but sleep me has

tις ἐκ Σαβαζίου
some from Sabazius

(‘Whoa there, are you losing your mind...? – No, Sabazius has put me under a sleepy spell’)²²

In all four cases οὐ can be analysed as an elliptic negative, which denies the truth of the proposition underlying the preceding question.²³ Notice especially οὐ δήτα in (21), (22) and (23), comparing (19) plus discussion. (23) is particularly interesting, since the answer does not stem from the addressee of the question but from a bystander. This makes ‘No’ virtually impossible, for this can only be said by the addressee: Q Are you ill? A No. Q Are you ill? A by third person: *No. This is only acceptable in the form No, he isn’t, or, without No: He isn’t.²⁴

²² In the analysis of οὐ advocated here, the No of Henderson’s Loeb translation should rather be I’m not.
²³ Note that in these cases the οὐ of the answer denies the truth of the underlying positive proposition (e.g. in (24): Q παραφρονεῖς; ‘Are you losing your mind?’, underlying proposition: παραφρονεῖς ‘You are losing your mind’; A οὐκ = οὐ παραφρονῶ ‘I’m not losing my mind’), while in the οὐκοῦν questions of (17)–(20) it confirms the truth of the underlying negative proposition.
²⁴ Οὐ is also found in reactions to statements, e.g. Sophocles *Trachiniae* 414: ἄπειμι. μῶρο δ’ ἦ πάλαι κλών σέεν./ – οὐκ, πρίν γ’ ἐν εἰπησ... (‘I shall be off; I was a fool to listen to you for so long. – No, not before you’ve answered...’). The fact that οὐκ is modified here by a temporal clause to my mind proves that it does not function as an answering particle (‘No, before...’) but as a negative proposition particle (‘Not before...’); the lexicon of Ellendt-Genthe correctly explains: οὐκ, sc. ἀπέτει (‘You will be off’). Note that in the Loeb translation the initial choice for ‘No’ made it necessary to continue with ‘not’.
In sum, since I have found no examples where οὐ must be taken as a negative answering particle, i.e. as No, but several in which οὐ cannot be taken as such a particle (notably in οὐ δῆται and οὐ γὰρ οὖν), I conclude, applying Occam’s razor, that οὐ in answers everywhere functions as an elliptic negative proposition particle.

5. Latin and Other Parallels

Ancient Greek is by no means alone among Indo-European languages in having only one negative particle (apart from prohibitive μή of course). Latin, too, has only one negative (apart from prohibitive nē), which may very well be taken as a proposition negative only, and which goes back to a neuter adverbial accusative *ne + ōinom ‘in not one thing, in no respect’. Thus, I would take Non in Pl. Pseud. 1067: Venitne homo ad te? – Non (‘Has the man come to you? – NegPtcle’) not as the equivalent of No, as proposed by Thesleff (1960: 56), but just like Greek οὐ as an elliptic substitute for the full proposition: ‘Non’ = non venit ad me (= he has not come to me). A fuller phrase, with repetition of the verb of the question, occurs e.g. at Ter. Ad. 569 Estne frater intus? – Non est. (‘Is your brother inside? – He is not’). For more examples see Thesleff (1960: 56) and cp. also Kühner-Stegmann 2, 531.

In the Romance languages, the Latin situation is still present in Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, where there is just one negative, no, não and nu, respectively. Other I-E languages with only one negative are Czech and other Slavonic languages (ne) (but apparently not Russian, which has the proposition negative ne and the answering particle njet) and Albanian (jo). Outside the I-E family one may compare e.g. Hungarian (nem) and Arabic (lā). In all these cases the negative should be considered a proposition negative. As for French, in Oldest French the Latin system, too, was still extant, there being only one negative, non (Cantilène de sainte Eulalie ca 880). Gradually, a differentiation occurred, leading on the one hand to ne, an elided form of non, which was used proclitically and was strengthened ‘dès son apparition’ (Buridant 2000: 707) by

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25) And haud, which has a far more restricted use than non. See Kühner-Stegmann 1, 813–816. Haud is not found in answers.
26) Interestingly, Latin does not have an exclusive word for ‘Yes’ either. The common ita ‘so (is it)’ in answers should probably also be taken as an elliptic substitute for a proposition, which confirms the correctness of the proposition of the preceding question. See e.g. Pl. Capt. 262 captus est? – ita.
27) Orlandini (2001) does not discuss the problems involved in establishing the function of non.
28) Cp. Sp. ¿porqué no?, with Zeijlstra (2004: 154). For French and Italian see above fn. 20.
29) The fact that these languages have only one—proposition—negative pleads against the view that generally in child language the acquisition of ‘no’ precedes that of ‘not’; see for a discussion Horn (1989: 154–168). If this occurs it must be a language-specific phenomenon.
words like *pas, point, mie* (from Latin *mica*) and on the other to *non*, which on its own could be used as an answer. See the detailed discussion in Buridan (2000: 697–726). Next, due to the process known as Jespersen’s Cycle (see Jespersen 1917: 4), proclitic *ne* disappeared, at least in spoken and written informal French, transferring its negative value to *pas, point*, etc.30 Remnants of the old situation, where *non* was used as a proposition negative, are still present in expressions like *je pense que non, qu’il le veuille ou non.*

6. Modern Greek

Unlike Ancient Greek, the modern language *does* have two negatives, ὡς in answers, and δὲν/δὲν with propositions. The latter form goes back to οὐδὲν, itself originally a negative neuter adverbial accusative of οὐδὲς (‘no(t) one’), so ‘in no respect at all’ (cp. Latin *non* < *ne + ōinom*), which after the Classical period gradually ousted ὡς as a negative, or to be more precise as a proposition negative. Cp. the entry in Hesychius’ lexicon (5th–6th c.): οὐδὲν ἀντὶ τοῦ ὡς. The subsequent development of οὐδὲν into δὲν can be explained along the lines described above for French *ne... pas.*31 Incidentally, according to Cowgill (1960), who was followed by Chantraine (1968–1980; hesitatingly: ‘plus plausible’, viz. other than etymologies) and Beekes (1995; unhesitatingly; see now also his etymological dictionary (Beekes 2010)), Ancient Greek οὐ, too, was the result of this process. In Beekes’ words (1995: 144, 122): ‘Greek οὐ from *ne* h₂,ou ‘not ever’ from which *ne* disappeared, as *ne* in spoken French *ne pas.*’32 For some time both οὐδὲν and δὲν were in use, but eventually οὐδὲν became a proclitic particle,

30) Jespersen’s Cycle is still fully alive in French, see *Du tout for Pas du tout* in *Étés-vous originaire de Biarritz? – Du tout. Je suis de Bordeaux.* Perhaps the obligatory final accent of French words and word-groups plays a role here? – The process is also known from Jespersen’s native Danish and the other Scandinavian languages. Cp. Danish *ikke ‘not’ (< *eit-gi, < *ne eit-gi ‘not ever a thing’; for eit(-)- cp. Du. *eeuw* etc. (below, fn. 32)). Note that Dan. has also a separate answering particle, *Nej.*

31) The working of Jespersen’s Cycle in Modern Greek can also be detected in the use of the indefinite pronouns κανείς/κανένας ‘anyone’, τίποτα(-ε) ‘anything’ in answers, where they have the meaning ‘Nobody’, ‘Nothing’. Cp. *Δε θέλω τίποτα ‘I don’t want anything*, with the negative, alongside *Τι θέλεις? – Τίποτα ‘What do you want?’—‘Nothing’, without the negative, and Ποιος ήρθε σήμερα; – Κανένας (‘Who came today?’—‘No one’, without the negative). See Holton et al. (1997: 321–324 and 420–422), with further examples. For the conditions under which κανένας etc. mean ‘nobody’ etc. see Giannakidou (1999). For the working of Jespersen’s Cycle in French see further Rowlett (1998: ch. 6 Jespersen’s Generalization), and in general Zeijlstra (2004: ch. 3.2.3 The Jespersen Cycle).

32) This must be very old for already in Mycenaean there are no traces of an original *ne* before *ou*, the negative being just *ou: o-u-di-do-si = ou-didonsi ‘they do not deliver’. For h₂,ou cp. Greek *αἰών, αἰέν(* < *aiw-), Lat. *aevum*, Du. *eeuw*, Eng. (*n)*ever, Ge. *ewig.*—A survey of I-E languages where Jespersen’s Cycle is or was active is given by Bernini (1987: 64), who, does not, however, refer to Jespersen to explain this phenomenon. For parallels outside Indo-European see Croft (1991).
which in turn led to the weakening and disappearance of οὐ, so that δὲν/δε(ν) became the only form. See Jannaris (1897: §§ 1796–1800). The first occurrence of δὲν is to be found in a 6th c. documentary papyrus, and is thus much earlier than is usually assumed. Cp. Gignac (1976: 186): ‘This Modern Greek form [i.e. δὲν] is anticipated in ὄμος δὲν ἐ ἄμαρτε ὑμὸν ἔσιν (for ὄμως δὲν οἱ ἄμαρτάκει ὑμῶν εἰσίν POxy. 1874.13).’ I should add that the replacement of οὐ by δὲν involved also οὐ in questions: Δέν σου τὸ ἄλεγα γώ; ‘Did I not tell you so?’ (Jannaris 1897: § 2049), with positive bias. In answers, however, Modern Greek uses όχι, which goes back to Ancient Greek οὐχί (or οὔχι), an emphatic variant of οὐ (Jannaris § 2061).33 There was, then, a functional split of the Ancient Greek proposition negative οὐ: while the function as proposition negative was taken over by δὲν, οὐ itself acquired, in a more emphatic form, a new function as an answering particle.34

7. Semantic and Pragmatic Features of ‘No’ and ‘Not’ in Answers

As for the semantics and pragmatics of όχι and the other answering particles meaning ‘No’, it is sometimes claimed that these particles, just like those expressing ‘not’, are substitutes for the preceding sentence, cp. e.g. Sweet (1892: § 368): ‘no in the above example [‘The answer to the question is he here? can be either the affirmative yes or the negative no’] is equivalent to he is not here; it is, therefore, at the same time the absolute form corresponding to the conjoint not.’ I do not think this is correct. If it were, one would expect that ‘No’-words could be modified by adverbs like certainly, which they cannot (see above). In fact, they cannot be modified in any way, unless in mention (a qualified ‘no’, etc.). They are rather like interjections. I believe that No basically expresses the idea that the speaker rejects the truth of the proposition that underlies the preceding question,35 while not denies it. Often, the two are of course combined:

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33) For the etymology see Chantraine s.v. οὐ. Οὐχί is in classical Greek by and large used as οὐ, but 1) *οὐκοῦ… οὐχί does not occur; 2) it is not used in answers, with the exception of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue Hipparchus (date uncertain; 4th c. bc?), at 226b (Οὐχί δέρα εἶται ... – Οὐχί. ‘So he does not think that ... – (He does) not’. Or ‘No?’ see below); 3) unlike οὐ it is used in tag questions with positive bias, e.g. Plato Meno 87ε πάντα ... τὰ ἄγαθα ἐφέλιμα. οὐχί – Ναι. (‘All good things are profitable, [are they] not? – Yes.’). See further the Appendix.

34) But just like οὐ in Ancient Greek, όχι is also used as a contrastive negative: όχι o Κώστας, αλλά o Γιάννης βγήκε πρώτος ‘Not Costas but Giannis went out first’, θα πας είτε το θέλεις είτε όχι ‘you’ll go whether you like it or not.’ It is also used in negative complements: νομίζω/ελπίω πως όχι ‘I think/hope (that) not’. Likewise, όχι continues AGρ οὐ in γιατί όχι (‘Why not?’); *γιατί δε(ν); does not occur. Sometimes Ancient Greek οὐ has been preserved unchanged, as in οὐδέλαβος ‘absolutely not’, and οὔτε ... ότε ‘neither ... nor.’

35) One might also say that the speaker refuses to accept the proposition, just as No expresses refusal rather than rejection in cases like Come on, hurry up! – No.
Is John here? – No, he is not (here)/he isn’t, where the underlying proposition ‘John is here’ is first rejected by No, and then denied by not. Straightforward rejection being rather impolite, there is a tendency for such answers to be more complete than is strictly needed: rather No … not, than just No.

8. Summary

Let me sum up. Counter to what is suggested by grammars and dictionaries, οὐκοῦν … οὐ questions do not expect the answer ‘No’.36 From the actual usage of οὐκοῦν … οὐ questions it is clear that these, too, expect an affirmative answer, just like οὐκοῦν questions without οὐ: they ask the addressee to confirm the correctness of the negative. This confirmation can be given in various ways, also by repeating the negative οὐ. In that case the negative is not an answering particle like ‘No’, but an elliptic substitute for the entire proposition of the preceding question. In later Greek οὐ made way for οὐδέν, which in turn led to the modern negative δέν. This is only used as a proposition negative. The development of οὐ > οὐδέν > δέν (δέν) was accompanied by a parallel development οὐ > όψι/όψί > όχι, which is used predominantly as an answering particle, ‘No’.37 In a similar way Latin non, itself from *ne + őinom ‘not one thing’, developed into French (ne ...) pas, a proposition negative, on the one hand, and non, which is mainly an answering particle, on the other.

Schematically the two developments can be presented as follows:

*From Classical Greek to Modern Greek*

("*he* ων κούν ‘not ever’, which through Jespersen’s Cycle >

| Classical Greek:          |
|---------------------------|
| οὐ negative proposition particle; ‘not’, not ‘No’ |

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36) To be complete I should add that besides οὐκοῦν (...) οὐ the combination μῶν (contracted from μή οὐν) οὐ, too, exists. In principle μῶν (‘it is not true, is it?’ — negative bias) οὐ expects a negative answer to a negative question: ‘It isn’t true, then, is it, that not X ...?’. But here the two particles cancel each other, and in actual practice this combination expects an affirmative answer: ‘Surely, then, X ...?’. E.g. Plato *Leges* 657c μῶν όχι όυτοι — Ωτω μεν ουν (‘Is not that so? — Yes, that is so’).

37) As for affirmative answers, ναί, too, may not be simply an answering particle like ‘yes’. At least this is suggested by its use in sentences like Aristot. *Metaph.* 1034a17: δεσω ουν τοιαυτη η ολη, όναν οι λεια, αδυνατον όδι κινητηναι ει μη υπ’ αλλοιν, οδι μεντοι ναι (‘It is impossible, then, for anything whose matter is of this kind (e.g. stones) to be moved in this particular way except by something else; but in that particular way it is possible’). Here ναί is obviously not an affirmative answering particle meaning ‘yes’. It is rather an emphatic affirmative adverb that modifies a proposition and contrasts with the negative prefix of αδυνατον: ‘It is not possible’ as opposed to ‘It is possible.’ Unlike English, that in such cases puts contrastive emphasis on the verb of the second clause, Dutch, like Ancient Greek, uses an emphatic particle, wel: ‘op deze manier niet, op die manier wel’.
Post-classical/Byzantine Greek:

1) οὐδὲν ἀντὶ τοῦ οὐ (Hesychius 5th–6th c.) which through Jespersen’s Cycle > δὲν ‘not’, a proposition negative; as early as 6th c. AD (a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus; the Vita S. Mariniæ) > Modern Greek: δε(ν))

2) > οὐχί/οὔχι > ὄχι negative answering particle: ‘No’; hypothesis: this development occurred when δὲν became more frequent as a replacer of οὐ as a proposition negative. (NB Just as οὐ in ancient Greek, οὐχί is also used as a contrastive negative: οὐχί ο Κώστας, αλλά ο Γιάννης βγήκε πρώτος ‘Not Costas but Gianni went out first’)

From Classical Latin to Modern French

(*ne + oinom ‘not one thing’ >)

Classical Latin:

nōn negative proposition particle: ‘not’, not ‘No’

Oldest French (Cantilène de sainte Eulalie, around 880):

non negative proposition particle

Old French:

1) > nēn > ne > ne ... pas negative proposition particle (La vie de saint Alexis, end of 11th c.); modern spoken French: pas (through Jespersen’s Cycle); ne retained in expressions like je ne saurais le dire

2) non: negative proposition particle in certain fixed collocations ((Voilent o nun ‘qu’ils le veuillent ou non’, La vie de saint Alexis; modern French qu’ils le veuillent ou non, je crois que non, probably also in non pas (x mais y)

3) non: answering particle (Nel feras? – Non. ‘Tu ne le feras pas? – Non’, Le jeu d’Adam, 12th c.)

Appendix: όχι and όχι/εχί/εχτ (Continuation of Footnote 33)

The etymology deriving όχι from όχι is less evident than might seem, for the shift of the accent, and the change of ου to o are both problematic, and have been, and still are, the subject of discussion; for a summary of the discussion see Joseph (2000). Joseph also mentions a third problem, viz. the semantic and syntactic shift of οὐ ‘not’ to όχι ‘no’. I will here go into this matter in some detail.

(i) The accent shift may be due to influence from ναχε, the emphatic variant of ναι ‘Yes’. Interestingly, the grammarian Herodian (2th c. AD) observes (De Pros. cath. 3.1, 506, 2) that όχι has an illogical oxytone accent, for just like ναχε it ought to be barytone (ἐχρῆν δὲ καὶ το όχι βαρόνεσθαι, i.e. to be not-oxytone), because it is a lengthened form of oxytone όυ (a form, one might add, which, like ναι, is predominantly found in answers). Herodian’s observation returns in the much later (9th–11th c.?) Commentaria in Dionysii Thracis Artem Grammaticam,

38) Cp. the parallel constructions in Modern Greek mentioned in fn. 34.
Scholia Marciana 432.5 Τὸ οὐχί παράλογον κατὰ τὸν τόν τόνων, ἔδει γὰρ βαρύνεσθαι, ὡς τὸ ναίχι, likewise Scholia Londinensia 563.16. The accent shift may reflect the functional shift from proposition particle to answering particle discussed in the main text, a phenomenon that is also found in mergers like οὐκοῦν, an emphatic variant of οὐ, from οὐκ οὖν, where the accent has shifted from the particle to the negative, distinguishing it from οὐκοῦν; ‘in οὐκοῦν the predominant element is οὐ, in οὐκοῦν, οὖ’ (Denniston 1954: 430). Similar parallel functional and accents shifts are shown by connective ἄλλα ‘but’, from ἄλλα ‘in other respects’, and adverbial σφόδρα ‘exceedingly, very much’, from the adjective σφοδρός ‘vehement.’ Be that as it may, the paroxytone form οὐχί is extremely rare. Checking the TLG for οὐχί brought to light just three instances; the grammarians’ advice was apparently not heeded universally. The first instance is to be found in Joannes Chrysostomus (4th c. AD), De incomprehensibili dei natura (= Contra Anomoeos, homiliae 1–5). 2.288: Ὅρατι ὅτι οὐχί πρὸς τὴν δημιουργίαν τῶν ἐν τῇ γῇ μόνον, ἄλλα καὶ πρὸς …. This seems to be the reading of the MSS, but there is a variant οὐ, see the edition in Sources chrétiennes tome 28bis, Paris 1970. Elsewhere in Joannes the form οὐχί is found. I should add that the accent, like indeed all accents, in all probability was added much later (9th–10th c.), as part of the Byzantine μεταχαρακτηρισμός, the transliteration from uncial to minuscules. There are only two other instances of οὐχί, both in the philosopher Isaac Comnenus, (11th c. AD), at De providentia et fato 5.13 and 15. Again, elsewhere in this author οὐχί is found. The rarity of οὐχί can perhaps be explained as being due to the growing importance of the form ὄχι in early and medieval Byzantine Greek, which is partly visible in our texts, see next point. Or are we perhaps dealing with errors? In that case there is no intermediate form οὐχί between οὐχί and ὄχι.

(ii) As for the single ο- in ὄχι/ὄχι, Joseph rightly points out (Joseph 2000: 208) that ‘from Ancient Greek ου, normally a Modern Greek [u] develops’. He suggests influence from Turkish yo ‘no’ and yok ‘there is not, no’. If so, this can only have been as a reinforcement of a change that had already occurred long before the Turkish domination of the Greek world, for ὄχι is found e.g. in the epic of Digenis Akritis (originally from the 12th c. AD), the romance of Libistrus and Rhodamne (13th–14th c.) and the Polemos tis Troados (14th c.). (See also below.) Moreover, the change from ου- to ο is found in classical Greek. For examples see Thratte (1980: 351–352). To be sure, Thratte observes (p. 352) that ‘examples of ο for ου are rare by 355–350, and only two ... are later than 345 BC.’ But these two are found, interestingly, in the negatives ὅκ (οὐκ) and ὅδε (οὐδέ). Both forms occur also in Greek papyri from the Roman period, see Gignac (1976: 212), ὅκ in a papyrus from the 2nd/3d c., ὅδε in papyrus of AD 112 and the 2nd/3d c. The change from ου to ο is also found in οὖν and several other words, see Gignac ibidem.
The first occurrence of ὀχί in a literary text is found in the famous inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda (first half of 2nd c. AD), in fragment 13 II.10 of the ed. by M.F. Smith (Smith 1993): τὴν οὖν ἀπόφασιν ὁρῶμεν αὐτοῦ ταπεινήν, ἀλλ' ὀχί αὐτὸν ('So it is its image which we see low, not the sun itself', transl. Smith). Smith observes, however, that this may well be an error, since there are in this particular part of the inscription more errors. Even so, it is a significant error, for it points to uncertainty about the correctness of the spelling ΟΥΧΙ. (Which is found elsewhere in the inscription, viz. in fr. 70.II.13.) Also, σχι is probably present in a documentary papyrus of AD 241, POxy. 19.2231, line 15 (ὁ(ὐ)χί τότε), where the editors have put σφι in the text, while adding in a note: ‘the scribe would appear to have written σχι.’ All in all, the σ in ὀχι/ὄχι/ὀχι may be the result of an undercurrent in post-classical Greek which resisted the pressure for ου from the learned language, e.g. of the Second Sophistic.

(iii) The shift of οὐ 'Not' to ὀχὶ 'No'. For this development, and its relationship with the development οὐ > οὐδέν > δέν see the main body of the text. Here I add a few particulars about ὀχὶ as an answering particle.

The first signs of σφι as an answering particle ('No'), alongside its frequent use as a constituent negative (as in the sentence from Joannes Chrysostomus quoted at (i) and, in the form σφι, in countless other places), may be visible already in post-classical Greek, e.g. in the Testamentum Abrahae (1st c. AD) 5, l. 36, where we find the sequence σφι ... αὐ, with emphatic σφι in front position: ἐπέκριναν ἀτόνην. Οὐχὶ, ... σφι ἐπτε στω μῆς ὡς σφι λέγεις: ('He said to her: 'No, it is not as you said'). For σφι as an independent answering particle in Medieval Greek see the entry in Kriaras' lexicon (Kriaras 2010). Significantly, σφι and δέ(ν) are also found combined, as in Damascenus Stoudites (16th c.), Or. 33.659 Σὲ λέγει νά ὁμόση από το σου πειράτη ἢ ἀλήθειαν; ὁσφι: δὲν λέγει τῇτοτε. However, if the date of the source is reliable the sequence Οὐχὶ ... δέν may already be present in the Vita Sanctae Marinae (3, 1.22), from the 6th c. AD: ἢ χάρη ἀπεκρίθη κατὰ τόν εἶπε: Οὐχὶ, αὐθέντη πατέρα μου, δὲν θέλω ἐλθῆ να αύτός λέγεις ('The girl answered and said to him: "No, master, my father, I do not want to go there in the way you describe..."'). For δέν without οὐ(χι) see the main text § 6. For the combination of answering particle and proposition negative see also the end of section 7.

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