

CLASSICS.

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CONDITIONAL SENTENCES IN
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The classification of conditional sentences that has long been generally used may, with profit, be discarded for a more accurate and scientific division, which is also far easier to understand and apply. A conditional sentence is one where the fulfilment or truth of a consequence depends upon the fulfilment or truth of a condition, implied or expressed. It is with the expressed condition that we have to do. Logically the consequence is dependent on the condition; in grammar the consequence or apodosis is the principal sentence, the condition or protasis the dependent one. Where there is such close relation in thought between condition and consequence, it would naturally be supposed that there would be as strongly marked an expression of their connection or assimilation, and such is the case.

The first division of conditional sentences is that into particular and general. The former class is far the larger, and includes all conditional sentences that refer to one special or single definite act; while a general conditional sentence embodies a general truth or the statement of a customary or oft-repeated act: *e.g.*, "If you tell us this, we shall reward you," is a particular sentence, for it refers to a specific, definite act. But "if death comes near, none wish to die," and "if any one slew another, he was liable to the death penalty," do not refer to any definite act, but in the first case to a general truth, in the second to a customary consequence following any repetition of a certain act.

The second division is that of time, for conditions may refer to past, present or future time.

The third division depends upon the implied statement of the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the condition. In "if you were here you would be pleased," it is implied that you are not here, that the condition is not fulfilled. It is possible then for sentences, by their form, to imply without express statement, that the condition was or is not fulfilled. But there is no form that can tell us that the condition *was* fulfilled: that must be gathered from the context. The distinction, then, is between those which imply non-fulfilment, and those which express no opinion whatever on that question.

Of the twelve possible cases seven only are found regularly occurring. For from their very nature, general sentences referring to the future, or implying non-fulfilment, and also particular sentences expressing non-fulfilment in the future, will seldom, if ever, occur. There remain then five classes of particular sentences and two of general. But, first one division more must be noticed, in future particular sentences. The conception of the future condition and its consequence may come before the mind with greater or less vividness. The distinction is not that of Arnold and Buttmann—that in one case there is prospect of speedy decision, in the other there is not—it is not objective but subjective, existing only in the mind, and depending entirely upon the distinctness or vividness of the thought as pictured by the imagination. In Latin as in Greek there are three degrees in this vividness of conception, so that we shall have in all nine classes of conditional sentences.

A. Particular sentences:

I. Not implying the non-fulfilment of the condition.

(a) Present—*Si haec facis, stultus es.*

If you are doing this you are foolish.

Si haec fecisti, stultus fuisti (perfect).

(b) Past—*Si haec faciebas, stultus eras.*

If you were doing this, you were foolish.

Si haec fecisti, stultus fuisti (aorist).