THE CASE AGAINST A FUTURE TENSE IN ENGLISH*

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the controversy as to whether English *will* is appropriately analysed as a future tense auxiliary or a modal auxiliary: it examines the place of *will* within the verbal system and argues in detail on both formal and semantic grounds that it belongs with the uncontroversial modal auxiliaries *can*, *must*, *may*, etc. A crucial step in the formal argument is the demonstration that *would* needs to be analysed as the preterite counterpart of *will* (not as a distinct lexeme). The paper demonstrates the modal component in the meaning of *will* and argues against a grammatical split between modal *will* and future tense *will*.

1. Introduction

It has long been a matter of controversy whether English is most appropriately described as having a three-term tense system, past (*took*) vs present (*take/takes*) vs future (*will/shall take*) or a two-term system, past vs present (or non-past), with *will* and *shall* analysed as modal auxiliaries rather than future tense auxiliaries. Numerous modern treatments have adopted this latter position, but the traditional analysis continues to have its adherents, not least among scholars working in the now flourishing fields of typology and grammaticalisation.[1] Indeed, the case for the three-term analysis has been argued the more fully (e.g. Wekker 1976:13–17, Sørenson 1978, Davidsen-Nielsen 1988, Declerck 1991a:9–11). Moreover, Comrie (1989), in an important contribution to the debate, claims convincingly that some of the points standardly advanced in support of a modal analysis of *will* are in fact non-arguments; he does not himself come down decisively on either side, but

leaves it as an open question requiring detailed discussion for its resolution. The purpose of the present paper is therefore to take up the issue again, developing in detail the case for a two-term system and answering the arguments that have been put forward in defence of the traditional analysis. I shall focus on *will* rather than *shall*; the latter is vastly less frequent and generally considered a future tense marker only with a 1st person subject.

Future tense is a grammatical category, and the controversy necessarily concerns the nature of the grammaticalisation of futurity in English: is it grammaticalised as a tense or as a modal category? Comrie (1985:10) contrasts grammaticalisation with lexicalisation: 'grammaticalisation refers to integration into the grammatical system of a language, while lexicalisation refers merely to integration into the lexicon of the language, without any necessary repercussions on its grammatical structure'. This is the framework within which I shall consider the status of *will*: it necessitates examining its role within the verbal system of English.

In order to do this we must first clarify one other part of the system: §2 looks briefly at the preterite and subjunctive categories. Following on from this, §3 examines the relation between the pairs *could~can*, *might~may*, *should~shall* and *would~will*. §§4–5 then set out respectively the formal and semantic/pragmatic arguments for a modal analysis of *will*; these sections assume a unitary treatment of *will*, a position argued for in §6, as against one where two *will*'s are distinguished, one a modal auxiliary, the other a future tense auxiliary. So as not to appear to prejudge the issue, I shall borrow the term 'secondary auxiliary' from Palmer (1987:26) for the class containing *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must* and marginally two or three others.[2]

2.   The preterite and the subjunctive

The inflectionally marked preterite tense has three distinct uses, illustrated in (1):[3]

(1)   a.   *They arrived yesterday*   [past time]
      b.   *Max said he loved her*   [backshifted]
      c.   *If you started tomorrow, you'd have enough time* [modal remoteness]

The first two can be taken for granted for present purposes, but some-

thing should be said about the third, which involves a modal rather than temporal meaning. It is normally restricted to a small range of subordinate constructions: the finite complement of **wish**,[4] *it be time* and the idioms *would rather/as soon*, the apodosis of remote ('unreal') conditionals, after *would that*, *if only*, *as if/though*. The label 'modal remoteness' (which I adapt from Lyons 1977:819) covers cases where the modalised proposition is assumed to be false (*I wish I <u>had</u> more time, If you <u>were</u> a little older you might understand*) or potentially, probably false (*If they <u>knew</u>, they'd surely be doing something about it*) or, with future situations, where actualisation is considered impossible or unlikely (*If I <u>lived</u> to be a thousand/If you <u>doubled</u> your offer, I wouldn't change my mind*). Traditionally, of course, these forms are analysed as past subjunctives, but this analysis seems to be universally rejected in grammars based on modern linguistic principles. Except with **be**, there is no difference in the form of the verb between the past time and modal remoteness uses, and with **be** the contrast between *was* and *were* in the 1st and 3rd person singular is not stable or systematic enough to justify generalising an inflectional distinction of mood to all verbs. In the first place, *was* very often — for many speakers, usually or always — occurs instead of *were* in modal remoteness contexts except in fairly formal style or fixed phrases (e.g. *as it were*) and, secondly, *were* is found instead of *was* in certain past time or backshift contexts. These are contexts which also involve some element of modality — primarily open ('real') past time conditionals or interrogative complements where the tense of the superordinate clause is preterite and/or its time past:

(2) a. *If he <u>were</u> surprised, he did not show it beyond raising his eyebrows a little, in any case a fairly frequent facial movement of his* (Anthony Powell)

b. *I would wake in the morning and even if it <u>were</u> raining I would walk to the fish market* (Ernest Hemingway)

c. *I had already tried phoning Julian's club to ascertain whether he <u>were</u> dining there or not* (Lawrence Durrell)

d. *He tried not to consider whether he <u>were</u> responsible* (Norman Mailer)

These and numerous other literary examples are cited in Jacobsson 1975.[5] The most reasonable analysis is to recognise *were* as a 1st/3rd person singular subjunctive alternating with preterite *was* in a range of contexts. If we were to

generalise the mood contrast to all verbs we would be claiming that the massive coalescence of realisational forms that has taken place has not produced a change in the system of verb inflection itself but merely large-scale homonymy (or syncretism in the synchronic sense), and the analysis of individual forms would very often be quite indeterminate, with no way of telling whether a given form corresponded to preterite *was* or subjunctive *were*. The issue is again one of grammaticalisation: the proposed analysis, which is relatively uncontroversial,[6] is saying that the modal remoteness meaning is grammaticalised in the tense system, not in terms of mood — except for the residual but unstable subjunctive *were*.[7]

3.   The pairs *can~could, may~might, shall~should, will~would*

Of great importance for an understanding of the place of *will* in the verbal system is its relation to *would*: the purpose of this section is to argue that *would* is synchronically, not just diachronically, the preterite counterpart of *will*. We will examine the relation between them and, for comparative purposes, that between the pairs *can~could, may~might, shall~should*.

3.1 *Givón's claim of re-analysis*

That *will* and *would* are present and preterite forms of a single lexeme **will** is by no means universally accepted: a clear statement of the contrary view is to be found in a recent work by one of the leading proponents of functional syntax, Givón (1993:173–174):

(3)   modals [i.e. secondary auxiliaries, RDH] in English cannot be
       marked for past. This is a consequence of fairly recent historical
       developments, some of them still ongoing, whereby the past form
       of the modal had been re-analyzed as another modal with a differ-
       ent epistemic or deontic sense

According to Givón, instead of the older present~past [preterite] pairs *can~ could, shall~should, will~would, may~might* we currently have pairings of secondary auxiliary alone vs secondary auxiliary + *have*, such that *will have taken* is the past form corresponding to the present form *will take, would have taken* to *would take*, and similarly for *could have taken, may have taken, must*

have taken, *might have taken*, *should have taken*. (Givón alleges that *can have taken* is ungrammatical, and concedes that for the pairing of *can* and *could*, but not for any of the other pairings, 'the older distinction of present vs past [is] preserved to some extent'.)[8]

The first point to be made here is that with the secondary auxiliaries we must allow for variation in the scope of *have* of a kind matching the familiar variation in the scope of negation. Compare:

(4)   a.   *You may not see her again*
      b.   *He might have been arrested*

where (a) is ambiguous according to the scope of the negative and (b) according to the scope of the perfect. Thus (a) can have a narrow scope reading (propositional negation) "Perhaps you won't see her again", where the modality is not part of what is negated, or a wide scope reading (modal negation) "You aren't allowed to see her again", where the modality is negated, and similarly (b) can have a narrow scope reading (propositional perfect) "It might/could be that he has been arrested", where the temporal anteriority applies to the arrest, not the modal possibility, or a wide scope reading (modal perfect) "The possibility existed of his being subsequently arrested, though it was not actualised", where the anteriority applies to the unactualised possibility. Only the wide scope perfects could possibly be regarded as giving analytic preterite forms of the secondary auxiliaries. *He can't have hated them* is no more the preterite counterpart of *He can't hate them* than *He seems to have hated them* is of *He seems to hate them*: in the narrow scope case there are no significant differences between secondary auxiliaries and lexical verbs taking non-finite complements, whereas the wide scope perfect is found only with the secondary auxiliaries.[9]

Will have, *shall have*, *can have* and (for many speakers) *may have* allow only a narrow scope interpretation of the perfect:[10] there can thus be no question of these forms having replaced *would*, *should*, *could* and *might* as preterite counterparts of *will*, *shall*, *can* and *may*. There is thus nothing here to support Givón's claim that *would*, *should*, *could* and *might* have been re-analysed as present tense forms of lexically distinct auxiliaries.

It is evident that there are significant differences among these four forms with respect to their relation to *will*, *shall*, *can* and *may* respectively. Although my concern is with the *will~would* pairing, it is relevant to an evaluation of the re-analysis claim to consider all four.

3.2 *'Can' and 'could'*

Could occurs readily in all places where the preterite of a lexical verb is found:

(5) a. *She could swim when she was two*
     b. *In those days you could buy them for less than a dollar*   }[past time]
     c. *When Father was away we could stay up as late as we liked*

(6) a. *I can smell something burning*
     b. *You said you could smell something burning*   [backshift]

(7) a. *I wish I could afford it*   } [modal remoteness]
     b. *I'd buy it if I could afford it*

In all of these the relation of *could* to *can* is just like that of, say, *took* to *take(s)*, and the meaning of *could* is compositionally derivable from those of **can** and the preterite tense: there is here massive evidence against the claim of re-analysis. Note that it is not just the past time cases (5) that argue against treating *could* as a lexically distinct present tense form. In the backshift case illustrated in (6b), we need a preterite analysis of *could* in order to give a general account of backshift constructions, covering such data as:

(8) a. *I want to leave when she returns*
     b. *He said you wanted/*want to leave when she returned*

(9) a. *I can leave when she returns*
     b. *He said you could/*can leave when she returned*

The backshift construction (b) excludes present tense *want* and *can*, requiring the corresponding preterites instead (because the subordinate **return**-clause has backshift). Present tense secondary auxiliaries which have no preterite counterpart, such as *must* and *ought*, can occur here (*He said you must/ought to leave when she returned*): if *could* and *can* were lexically distinct present tense forms, there would be no reason why (b) should allow one but not the other.

Similarly, syntactic rules covering the modal remoteness constructions in (7) cannot be expressed in their proper generality unless *could* is analysed as a preterite:

(10)   a.   *I'm glad they take cheques*
       b.   *I wish they took/*take cheques*

(11)   a.   *I'm glad they can help*
       b.   *I wish they could/*can help*

(12)   a.   *I'll see her tomorrow if time allows*
       b.   *I'd see her tomorrow if time allowed/*allows*

(13)   a.   *I'll see her tomorrow if I can manage it*
       b.   *I'd see her tomorrow if I could/*can manage it*

The complement of **wish** (and one or two other items, such as *would rather*) and remote protases exclude present tense forms, requiring a preterite (or subjunctive *were*).

Note, moreover, that although the preterites of lexical verbs (or primary auxiliaries) are excluded from the apodosis of a remote conditional, the occurrence of *could* to the exclusion of *can* here is evidence for, not against, a preterite analysis of it. Compare:

(14)   a.   *If he comes tomorrow, we can settle the issue then*   [open]
       b.   *If he came tomorrow, we could/*can settle the issue then*   [remote]

The systematic grammatical relation between the two conditional constructions argues for an inflectional rather than lexical contrast between *could* and *can*: the marked term in the system, the remote conditional, allows *could* but not present tense *can*. If we take *could* as the preterite form of **can** the marking of the remote conditional can be stated as follows:

(15)   **Remote conditional**: the protasis must contain a preterite (or subjunctive *were*) with the modal remoteness meaning, while the apodosis must contain a secondary auxiliary, also in the preterite form (provided the lexeme has one)[11]

If we took *can* and *could* as inflectionally alike but lexically different, instead of the other way around, we would have to reformulate (15), but there would be no non-ad-hoc way of excluding *can* from a remote apodosis while allowing *could*.

The major difference between *could* and the preterite of a lexical verb (or a primary auxiliary) is that it occurs with the modal remoteness meaning in a wider range of contexts and with a wider range of interpretations. The remote

apodosis case just considered is one instance, one which, I have argued, still provides evidence for a preterite analysis. Other cases, however, are rather different:

> (16) a. *Can you please turn the radio off*
>   b. *Could you please turn the radio off*

> (17) a. *I've so much work to do I could scream*
>   b. *It could be that he simply misheard what you said*

In (16) there is a contrast between *can* and *could*, but the meaning difference is very slight (*could* is generally said to be more 'tentative') and not transparently derivable from a formal difference in tense. In (17) *can* is effectively excluded, but there is no grammatical reason, certainly no transparent one, why *could* should occur to the exclusion of *can* here. (17a) has some affinity to a remote conditional, but there is no overt protasis and it would be rather unnatural to add one; (17b) involves epistemic modality and we have an apparently idiosyncratic restriction such that epistemic *can* occurs only in non-affirmative contexts.

Data such as (16)–(17) are consistent with Givón's thesis of re-analysis. They are, however, far outweighed by the data supporting the preterite analysis. If we say that *could* and *can* are present tense forms of distinct lexemes we will have to qualify with exceptions major generalisations concerning the phenomena illustrated in (5)–(14). If we say that *could* is the preterite of **can**, we will need to make special statements about the tenses of **can** to handle (16)–(17) (though some of them will generalise to other secondary auxiliaries, as we shall see) — but we shan't lose any major generalisations. I conclude, therefore, that in contemporary English *could* is still very clearly a preterite form — though not, of course, a prototypical one.

3.3 *'May' and 'might'*

The situation with this pair is very different — and we need to distinguish two varieties of the language according to whether or not the form *may* is allowed in examples such as:

> (18) a. *%I thought it may rain before I got home*
>   b. *%If you hadn't told him he may never have noticed*

The more conservative variety, where these are ungrammatical, I shall refer to as Dialect A, the other as Dialect B, and I shall consider them in that order.

In Dialect A, *might* is not used with past time meaning, at least in main clauses.[12] The most obvious and compelling evidence for analysing *might* as the preterite of **may** is thus lacking. Nevertheless, in this dialect, *might* is found to the exclusion of *may* in contexts requiring backshift and in remote apodoses:

(19) a. *It may rain before we get home*
b. *I thought it might/*may rain before we got home*

(20) a. *If you come back tomorrow you may find him in*
b. *If you came back tomorrow you might/*may find him in*

These correspond to (9) and (14) respectively, and like them provide evidence for a preterite analysis. Even here, however, the case is weaker than with *could*. We hardly have contrasts like that in (11): compare *I'm glad Ed can come, but I wish Pat could too* with *I'm glad Ed may come, but I wish Pat might too*, which is of very questionable acceptability in either the epistemic or the deontic reading. Nor do we have clear *may~might* contrasts in conditional protases, comparable to (13): *I'll take this one if I may*, but hardly *I'd take this one if I might*.

Might is used much less readily than *may* for deontic permission. It is found in backshift, as in (21a) (from Coates 1983:156), and in interrogatives used to ask for permission, as in (21b):

(21) a. *May one taste? You said I might*
b. *Might I have a look too?*

but hardly elsewhere; in particular deontic *might* is not found in remote apodoses, so that there is a clear difference between the *can~could* and *may~might* pairs, as illustrated in:

(22) a. *If you apologise you can/may come with us next time*
b. *If you apologised you could/*might come with us next time*

Both *may* and *might* are used for epistemic possibility with little difference between them. For some speakers (but only some) *might* indicates a slightly remoter possibility than *may*, so that *You may be right*, for example, will be felt to be marginally more encouraging than *You might be right* and *may or may not* somewhat more natural than *might or might not*. Palmer

(1990:58) says that *might* 'indicates a little less certainty about the possibility' than *may*, and goes on to say 'Clearly *might* is the tentative or unreal form of *may*' — which (since 'tentative' and 'unreal' are categories of meaning rather than form) I take to be a shorthand way of saying that epistemic *might* is the preterite form of *may* used with the modal remoteness meaning. Coates (1983:146–147), by contrast, considers such an account to arise 'more out of a desire for tidiness than from any actual linguistic evidence', observing that her data leads her to think that epistemic *may* and *might* are 'usually inter-changeable'.

I think we must conclude that the relationship between *might* and *may* in Dialect A is somewhat indeterminate and unstable. There is undoubtedly some evidence for treating them still as preterite and present tense forms of a single lexeme, namely the occurrence of *might* in contrast to *may* in cases like (19b) and (20b), but for the rest the interpretation of *might* is not derivable by general rules from the combination of the meanings of the preterite and *may*. For those speakers who do interpret epistemic *might* as slightly less assured than *may* the relation between them is comparable to that between epistemic *would* and *will* (see below) and — but only in non-affirmative contexts — epistemic *could* and *can*; but this is an extremely small-scale generalisation. The best solution is probably to say that *might* is an extremely peripheral member of the preterite category, with a high proportion of its usage being idiomatic.

In Dialect B the small amount of evidence for an inflectional relationship between *might* and *may* has disappeared: for these speakers *may* is allowed in examples like (19b) and (20b). (23) are from Denison (1992), who provides numerous other examples of this usage:

(23) a. *I thought initially that her reply ... may be a substandard construction .... I was forced to abandon this idea*
      b. *If, improbably, the present generation were to feel too tar-nished to remain in power, the result may not be to the West's benefit*

Note also that *may* occurs with what I have called a modal perfect, as in (24) (also from Denison):

(24) a. *The whole thing may never have happened if it hadn't been for a chance meeting*
      b. *I was thankful that I had no children staying up late who may have heard the crudity and vulgarity of some parts*

(a) is explicitly a remote conditional; (b) is not, but nevertheless clearly has the modal possibility within the scope of the past time marker *have*.[13] Elsewhere in the system modal perfects are not found with the present tense member of a preterite~present pair: *will have, shall have, can have* are all clearly propositional perfects. In Dialect B, then, the evidence for saying that *might* has been re-analysed as a distinct lexeme is overwhelming: there are no constructions where it behaves like the preterite of *may* and it differs from *may* in numerous ways that are quite unpredictable from the combination of preterite tense and **may** as lexeme.

3.4 'Shall' and 'should'

With this pair we need to distinguish those uses that are restricted to occurrence with a 1st person subject and those that are not. I shall represent them as $shall_{1st-p}$ and $should_{1st-p}$ vs $shall_{ord}$ and $should_{ord}$ ($shall_{ord}$ effectively excludes 1st person subjects, but $should_{ord}$ does not).

$Shall_{1st-p}$ and $should_{1st-p}$ are illustrated in:

(25) a. *We shall soon have a new president*
      b. *I shall easily finish before she returns*
      c. *If they offer me the job I shall certainly accept*
      d. *I shall like to read it*

(26) a. *Only two months later we should have a new president*
      b. *I knew I should/*shall easily finish before she returned*
      c. *If they offered me the job, I should/*shall certainly accept*
      d. *I should like to read it*

(26a) is to be interpreted with *only two months later* referring to a time in the past: it is like *Only a few months later their love would change to hate* (=(30d) below), but with the 1st person subject sanctioning *should* instead of *would*. *Should* here is thus the past time counterpart of the *shall* of (25a) — but it is extremely rare and stylistically restricted, a very marginal use. (26b–c) show that $should_{1st-p}$ occurs in place of $shall_{1st-p}$ in backshift and in remote apodoses: the relation between $shall_{1st-p}$ and $should_{1st-p}$ is here just like that of *may* and *might* in Dialect A, and also that between *can* and *could, will* and *would*. In (26d) *should* is not so straightforwardly related to *shall*. (25d), although not impossible, is very unusual, whereas (26d) illustrates a very common usage; the former, moreover, implies iterative, serial reading whereas (26d) has a

salient reading involving a single act of reading. *Should like to* is thus slightly idiomatic, but this *should* is nevertheless very close to that of (26c). As far as *shall*$_{1st-p}$ and *should*$_{1st-p}$ are concerned, therefore, there is no reason to postulate re-analyis: the data of (25b–c) and (26b–c) argue for an inflectional rather than lexical contrast between them, and though *should*$_{1st-p}$ does not (with rare exceptions) express past time the relationship between the forms in these constructions corresponds to that between present and preterite forms elsewhere in the system.

Shall$_{ord}$ and *should*$_{ord}$ are illustrated in (27)–(28) (where (27c) is cited from Coates 1983:224):

(27) a. *You shall have your money back tomorrow*
      b. *The committee shall meet at least three times a year*
      c. *If the tenant shall at any time fail to keep the demised premises as aforesaid the landlord may do all things necessary to effect or maintain such insurance*

(28) a. *You should work harder*
      b. *The next road on the left should be King Street*
      c. *If you should experience any difficulty, please let me know*
      d. *It is essential/desirable that he should be told*

Should$_{ord}$ is not used at all with past time meaning; it is hardly possible as a clearly backshifted counterpart of *shall*$_{ord}$; and it does not occur as the counterpart of *shall*$_{ord}$ in a remote apodosis. Nor are the interpretations of *should*$_{ord}$ systematically derivable from the meaning of *shall*$_{ord}$ in combination with the modal remoteness meaning of the preterite. (28a) has a deontic interpretation, as do (27a–b), but the modal meaning in *should*$_{ord}$ is not a more tentative version of that in *shall*$_{ord}$; (27a) is interpreted in terms of speaker's guarantee (Palmer 1990:74), and (27b) has a constitutive/regulative interpretation limited to legal or quasi-legal contexts: neither of these elements of meaning is relevant to (28a). The salient interpretation of (28b) is epistemic probability: there is no comparable use of *shall*$_{ord}$. (27c) and (28c) both involve conditional protases, but the former is restricted to legal language, and the relation between them is not like that between such pairs as *if we leave tomorrow* and *if we left tomorrow*, for (28c), no less than (27c), is an open condition.[14] Finally *should be* in (28d) alternates with tenseless *be* on its own: there is no analogous use of *shall*. The data of (27)–(28) clearly suggest that *shall*$_{ord}$ and *should*$_{ord}$ contrast lexically rather than inflectionally.

If we now drop the subscripts and work with just one *shall* and one *should*, we shall need to regard *should* as the preterite form of **shall** (to account for (26b–c)), but an extremely peripheral member of the category, with most of its uses idiomatic. Not all speakers have *shall*$_{1st-p}$ and *should*$_{1st-p}$, however, and for those that do not *shall* and *should* are clearly distinct lexemes. The situation is thus partly similar to that obtaining with the pair *may~might* — exhibiting very marginally an inflectional contrast in one variety, and very clearly a lexical contrast in another. But whereas the re-analysis of *might* has been accompanied by an extension in the uses of *may*, the re-analysis of *should* has been accompanied by a reduction in the use of *shall*.

3.5 *Will and would*

The final pair is very similar to *can~could* — far more so than to *may~ might* or *shall~should*. *Would* occurs with past time meaning in a range of uses; the following illustrate this temporal contrast with *will*:

(29) a. [I have no money on me] *but he won't lend me any*
       b. *Whenever he hears her coming he will quickly put out his pipe*
       c. *He* WILL *pour the tea-leaves down the sink*
       d. [Mark my words:] *in a few months' time their love will change to hate*

(30) a. [I had no money on me] *but he wouldn't lend me any*
       b. *Whenever he heard her coming he would quickly put out his pipe*
       c. *He* WOULD *pour the tea-leaves down the sink*
       d. *Only a few months later their love would change to hate*

In case (c) the difference is not purely a matter of time in that the *would* version allows a single event interpretation which is not found with *will*. (29c), for example, describes his typical or habitual behaviour, not a particular instance of it, whereas (30c) can apply to a single actualisation, without implying that he habitually pours the tea-leaves down the sink; there is some connection with multiple occurrence, in that the event is presented as one that is typical — but what it is typical of is not expressed, and we infer something like "typical of the inconvenient/annoying things that he does/that happen (to me)". This *would* is thus marginally idiomatic, but it nevertheless clearly has past time meaning. It is difficult to see any justification for Givón's claim

(quoted above) that 'only for the pairing of *can* vs *could* is the older distinction of present vs. past preserved to some extent', even if by present and past forms he means forms expressing present and past time.

That *would* serves as the preterite counterpart of *will* in backshift is illustrated in:

(31) a. *It will rain before we get home*
      b. *You said it would/*will rain before we got home*

It also occurs in the modal remoteness constructions where we find preterites of lexical verbs (as in (10)–(13)):

(32) a. *I'm glad she will help us*
      b. *I wish she would help us*

(33) a. *If you will help me, I can finish tonight*
      b. *If you would help me, I could finish tonight*

And like *could*, *would* occurs in a remote apodosis:

(34) a. *If you leave tomorrow you will have plenty of time*
      b. *If you left tomorrow you would/*will have plenty of time*

Other examples of the contrast between *will* and *would* are seen in:

(35) a. *[How old is he?] He'll be about seventy*
      b. *[How old is he?] He'd be about seventy*

(36) a. *Will you please open the door*
      b. *Would you please open the door*

(37) a. *I will like to read it*
      b. *I would like to read it*

In (35a) we have a clearly epistemic use of *will*, indicating that I am less assured of his being seventy than if I had said *He is about seventy*; (b) is then slightly less assured again. The difference is similar to that found with epistemic *can~could* and *may~might* in Dialect A, but *will* is not restricted to non-affirmative contexts like *can*, the difference is sharper and more stable than that between *may* and *might*, and this epistemic use of *would* is very much less frequent than that of *could* and *might*. In (36) *would* is more tentative, polite than *will*: the relation is just the same as that between *could* and *can* in (16). The relation between (37a) and (b) is just the same as that

between (25d) and (26d), with *would like to* marginally idiomatic.

Taken in isolation the data of (35)–(37) would favour a lexical rather than inflectional distinction between *would* and *will*, but — as with *could* — this evidence is far outweighed by that of (29)–(33), where the data cannot be satisfactorily handled without an inflectional contrast between *would* and *will*. The main difference between *would* and *could* is that the past time uses constitute a much smaller proportion of instances of the former than of the latter (in the corpus studied by Coates (183:109, 206) the figures are respectively 14% and 52%, though backshift cases are included under past time); this may be conducive to a re-analysis of *would* at an earlier stage of the future development of the language than of *could*, but it is not a reason for handling them differently in a grammar of present-day English.

It is important here to emphasise the distinction between the formal category of tense and the semantic category of time, for quite independently of the secondary auxiliaries the English preterite has a significant use as a marker of modal remoteness as well as of past time. The secondary auxiliaries differ from other verbs in that with them the modal remoteness use of the preterite forms is less restricted grammatically, more frequent, more varied in its possible interpretations.[15] This means these forms are not prototypical preterites, but it does not mean that they have to be treated as distinct lexemes. There is a strong case for re-analysis of *might* and *should* in some varieties of English, but the situation with *could* and *would* is strikingly different: these must still be included in the preterite category.

4.   The formal argument for modal *will*

There are several versions of the argument for modal *will* based on its place within the formal system of the verb: I will start with the weakest and proceed to the strongest.

4.1 *'Will' as an analytic rather than inflectional marker*

One obvious difference between *will* and the markers of preterite and present tense is that it is a separate word, an auxiliary, not an inflection. In the major large-scale modern grammar of English, Quirk et al. (1985:176), this is presented as a reason for adopting a two-term analysis:

(38) morphologically English has no future form of the verb in addition
      to present and past forms. Some grammarians have argued for a
      third, 'future tense', maintaining that English realizes this tense by
      use of an auxiliary verb construction (such as *will* + infinitive): but
      we prefer to follow those grammarians who have treated tense
      strictly as a category realized by verb inflection.

Declerck (1991b:54) alleges (without references) that 'many people hold that
there are only two tenses in English, viz. present and past, because this is the
only distinction that is expressed morphologically'.

Put simply like this, the argument has no force — it is an extreme case of
what Comrie (1989:54) calls the 'formal non-argument'. For, as Declerck
goes on to say, 'there is no a priori reason for assuming that tense can only be
expressed morphologically (and not by the use of auxiliaries)'. Inflection
certainly represents a higher degree of grammaticalisation than auxiliary
marking, but grammaticalisation is a scalar concept — Hopper & Traugott
(1993:7), for example, suggest a 'cline of grammaticality' comprising 'con-
tent item > grammatical word > clitic > inflectional affix' — and it is
unjustifiably restrictive to accept only the endpoint on the scale as a marker of
such a grammatical category as tense (cf. Dahl 1985:22). The formal argu-
ment must clearly be developed further if it is to carry any weight.

4.2 *'Will' belongs to the same grammatical class as the undisputed modal auxiliaries*

The secondary auxiliaries form a highly grammaticalised class in English
in that they have (in addition to the half-dozen properties that distinguish
auxiliary verbs in general from lexical verbs) a whole cluster of distinctive
grammatical properties:

(39) a. Only tensed forms — they have no base form[16] and no parti-
          ciples
      ai. They are mutually exclusive: they do not combine except
           in coordination
      aii. They do not occur in the imperative construction
      b. No agreement — they have no person/number contrast in the
          present tense
      c. Take bare infinitival — except in ellipsis they occur only in
          construction with a bare infinitival

     d.   Remote apodosis — they can occur as first verb in the apodosis
         of a remote conditional

The most prototypical members of the class have all these properties; thus
ought is only a peripheral member in that it lacks (c), usually (though not
invariably) taking an infinitival with *to*. I include (ai–ii) as they often appear
in the literature, but (aii) is predictable from (a) itself and (ai) is predictable
from the combination of (a) and (c). Curiously (d), although it is of consider-
able semantic interest, does not generally figure in standard lists of secondary
auxiliary properties — cf. Halliday (1970:330), Coates (1983:4), Perkins
(1983:56, n.2), Quirk et al. (1985:127–128), Leech (1989:261–2), Palmer
(1990:4).

    Will is undeniably a prototypical member of this class. This constitutes
the first point in Palmer's argument against a future tense analysis of *will*
(1987:144, 1990:160), and also in my own (Huddleston 1984:133), but
Comrie's rejection of the 'formal non-argument' extends to this too. I believe
Comrie's objection is in principle valid: we should not be misled by the
conventional name for this class, modal auxiliary, into excluding prematurely
the possibility that one member (or two) might mark future tense. Thus it
would in principle be legitimate to label the class tense/mood auxiliaries and
to allow that some members are markers of mood (e.g. *must* and *need*
marking the necessity mood, *can* and *may* the possibility mood) while others
mark tense (*will* and *shall* marking the future tense). The grammatical similar-
ity between *will* and the other secondary auxiliaries thus does not of itself
constitute an argument against a future tense analysis; this is not to say that it
is irrelevant to the debate, for we will see, on the contrary, that it supports the
modal analysis when considered in conjunction with other factors.

4.3 *'Will' contrasts in tense with 'would'*

    The strongest formal argument concerns the relationship between *will*
and *would*: as argued in §3, *would* is the preterite counterpart of *will*. It
follows that we cannot analyse *will* as the marker of a future tense contrasting
with preterite and present in a three-term tense system: *will* is not in paradig-
matic contrast with preterite and present tense but combines syntagmatically
with either. If *will* is to be analysed as a future tense auxiliary, then it will have
to be the marker in a secondary tense system that cuts across the primary one:

(40)   PRIMARY TENSE

		Preterite	Present
SECONDARY	Future	*would take*	*will take*
TENSE	Non-future	*took*	*take(s)*

The justification for distinguishing the two tense systems as primary and secondary is that the former is more highly grammaticalised than the latter. One indication of this is that it is marked inflectionally rather than by means of an auxiliary; another is that the unmarked term in the former system is still a tense, whereas that in the latter is not — these correspond to Comrie's twin criteria of morphological boundedness and obligatory expression (1985:10). The present tense *takes* of *He takes care* is distinct from the tenseless *take* of *It is essential for him to take care* or *It is essential that he take care* (cf. note 7 above); the non-future, however, is simply the absence of future tense, so that on the analysis shown in (40) *took* is a simple tense whereas *would take* is a compound tense.

At this point we must take up again the relationship between *will* and the other secondary auxiliaries discussed in §4.2: although *will* is not in paradigmatic contrast with preterite and present tense, it is in contrast with *can*, *may*, etc. It thus enters into a system with them, so that rather than (40) we would need something along the lines of:

(41)   PRIMARY TENSE

			Preterite	Present
		Necessity mood	—	*must take*
	Marked	Possibility mood	*could take*	*can take*
SECONDARY		Future tense	*would take*	*will take*
TENSE/MOOD				
	Unmarked		*took*	*take(s)*

This cannot be ruled out altogether: the formal argument is not itself conclusive. But (41) is very different from the traditional three-term tense system: that, we have seen, the formal argument does exclude. A major part of the appeal of the traditional scheme is that it has three tenses, past, present and future, corresponding to the three intuitively given divisions of time. This simple correspondence is lost in (41), where *will take* is now a compound tense, future in present.

The significance of *would* is not, in my view, given adequate recognition in the debate. The defenders of the three-term analysis mentioned above do not address the question of explaining the relation between *will* and *would*. And though Palmer makes brief mention of it in his argument for a modal analysis (1987:145, 1990:161), he obscures the point by introducing *would* and *will have* together. *Will have* is not a problem at all for the traditional analysis, since perfect vs non-perfect is an independent system, and the traditional analysis caters quite satisfactorily for it by having past (preterite), present and future as non-perfects, pluperfect (preterite perfect), present perfect and future perfect as the corresponding perfects. Palmer regards the existence of *would* and *will have* as not constituting a strong argument against the traditional analysis; my view is that *will have* is irrelevant while the relation between *would* and *will*, although not itself conclusive, provides a strong formal basis in the argument against a future tense.

5.   The semantic/pragmatic argument for modal *will*

Given that (41) is in principle possible, we must move on to the question of whether such an analysis accounts better for the meaning and interpretation of *will*-clauses than one where *will* is taken to be a marker of mood rather than tense.

It is by now a commonplace observation that future time is intimately linked to modality, in that one cannot know about the future in the way one can about the past and the present. Comrie (1989:53) dubs this a 'conceptual non-argument' against a future tense analysis: 'it is an option left open to a language, whether the greater uncertainty of claims about the future is to be coded linguistically or not'. This is undeniable: it would be as invalid to claim that the close link between futurity and modality excludes the possibility of a language having a three-term tense system, past vs present vs future, as to claim that the natural tripartite division of time entails the necessity of a language having such a system. The issue for English is whether the formal similarity of *will* to the uncontroversial modal auxiliaries is accompanied by a similarity with regard to meaning, whether the semantics/pragmatics of *will* are more illuminatingly handled in the context of the description of mood and modality than in that of tense and time. I shall consider first the present tense carried by *will* (§5.1), then the similarity between *will* and the modal auxiliaries (§5.2), and finally the extent of modal meaning conveyed by *will* (§5.3).

5.1 *The present tense component of 'will'*

According to (41) *will take* is not a simple future but a compound one: it is present in the primary system, future in the secondary one. This suggests that the characteristic meaning should be "future in present", but that is in conflict with the interpretation. If such a description applies to any form it is surely *is going to take*, not *will take*: a feature that commonly distinguishes *is going* from *will* is that it has 'current orientation' (Palmer 1987:146, 1990: 144–146) — and in Halliday's recursive tense system the former is indeed analysed as future in present and the latter as (simple) future (1985:180–181). This problem is avoided under a modal analysis, however, for here the present tense does not contribute directly to the temporal location of the situation, since it is associated with the modality — just as it is in *must/may/can take*, etc.

The present tense is the unmarked term in the primary tense system. In its basic use it expresses the temporal relation of simultaneity, present time (I return to future time interpretations below), but the pragmatic significance of the present time meaning varies considerably, as illustrated in:

(42) a. *She lives in Berlin*
      b. *Fourteen plus seventeen makes thirty-one*

In (a) the present time is important because of the potential contrast with *She lived in Berlin*; but in (b) it isn't, because the truth doesn't depend on the time of utterance. The structure of English requires that such clauses carry tense, and the selection of the default present tense encodes a present time element of meaning even though it may have effectively no pragmatic import. Note, however, that it is possible to heighten the pragmatic significance of the present time component in cases like (b) by making, for rhetorical purposes, the counterfactual assumption that the truth IS dependent on the time, as when a sarcastic teacher says to a pupil: *So fourteen plus seventeen makes thirty-three now, does it?*

With the secondary auxiliaries the pragmatic significance of a present tense likewise shows considerable variation — compare:

(43) a. *She can walk about five steps*
      b. *He may have misunderstood*
      c. *It may still be raining tomorrow*
      d. *Now we may not be in time to see the start*

In (a), as said in a context where we are discussing her progress in learning to walk, the present component is obviously important: the ability is changing and I am asserting what it is at the time of speech. Where modals have an epistemic interpretation, however, the importance is greatly reduced.[17] In (b) the (possible) misunderstanding is in the past and the present merely reflects the non-contrastive time of the epistemic judgement. Prototypical epistemic modality involves situations in past or present time, but the concept also applies to future situations, as in (c). And in this case the pragmatic significance of the present time component may be heightened in a context where there has been a change in circumstances providing the basis for an epistemic judgement that would not have been made before, as is likely to be the case in (d). *Will* behaves in this respect just like *may* — compare:

(44)   a.   *It will still be raining tomorrow*
       b.   *Now we won't be in time to see the start*

5.2   *Semantic/pragmatic similarity between 'will' and the other secondary auxiliaries*

It will be helpful to approach the meaning and interpretation of the modal auxiliaries via the framework used in Palmer's invaluable study (1990). He analyses modality in terms of two dimensions, which he calls 'kind' and 'degree'; he distinguishes three kinds of modality, epistemic, deontic and dynamic and likewise three degrees, possibility, necessity, and a third (un-named) category expressed by *will* and *shall*.

Little need be said at this point concerning the 'kind' dimension. It is clear that all three of Palmer's categories apply to *will*:

(45)   a.   *He will have read it yesterday*   [epistemic]
       b.   *You will report back for duty on Friday morning*   [deontic]
       c.   *Ed will lie in bed all day, reading trashy novels* [dynamic]

(a) is an epistemically modalised version of *He read it yesterday*. If (b) is addressed to you by someone in authority, you will interpret it as an instruction, comparable to deontic *You must report for duty on Friday morning*. (c), in one salient interpretation, describes Ed's characteristic or typical behaviour — it illustrates Palmer's 'subject-oriented' subtype of dynamic modality. It is arguable that deontic modality is not as semanticised with *will* as it is with *must*, etc. (so that SENTENCE (b) is not ambiguous between prediction and

instruction readings, the latter having the status, rather, of a context-dependent implicature), but deontic modality is still relevant to the pragmatic interpretation of *will*-clauses.

The dimension Palmer calls 'degree' I shall rename 'strength' (in order to free 'degree' for a third dimension, to be introduced below) and handle somewhat differently from him. It caters for variation in the strength of the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition conveyed by the propositional content or to the actualisation of the situation described. Palmer's necessity and possibility can be labelled 'strong' and 'weak' respectively,but intermediate between them we have medium strength modality expressed by *should* and *ought* (and such non-auxiliaries as *seem*, *want*, *likely*, etc.). This gives three main categories on the strength dimension:

(46) a. *It must be in the drawer*   [strong]
      b. *It should be in the drawer*   [medium]
      c. *It may be in the drawer*   [weak]

It is important, however, to distinguish — especially with strong modality — between semantic and pragmatic strength. Semantically (a) entails that it is in the drawer, so that it would be inconsistent to say *It must be in the drawer though it could be still in the bank*. Pragmatically, on the other hand, (a) is likely to be interpreted as making a somewhat weaker (less confident) commitment to the truth of "It is in the drawer" than the unmodalised *It is in the drawer*. The pragmatic strength varies according to the content and context:

(47) a. *Ed must have overslept again*
      b. *Ed is Tom's father and Tom is Bill's father, so Ed must be Bill's grandfather*

In (a), assuming a context where, say, Ed has failed to turn up for an early morning rendez-vous, there is significant pragmatic weakening: an appropriate gloss might be "This is the only explanation that comes to mind", not "This is the only explanation that is possible". But there is no such weakening in (b) — note, for example, that we could readily add *necessarily* to (b) but not to (a). The weakening tends to be found where the modality is subjective rather than objective, in the sense of Lyons (1977:797–799).

Palmer assigns *will* to a distinct category, but I would argue that it belongs in the same category as *must*. Like *must*, it is semantically strong. Suppose, for example, you ask where some document is and I reply:

(48) *It will be in the drawer*

As with (46a), I here commit myself to its being there and could not consistently add *though it could still be in the bank*. But *will* is also like *must* in that it often undergoes pragmatic weakening. (48), no less than (46a), is pragmatically weaker than *It is in the drawer*: the latter presents its being there as something I know, whereas the *will*-version presents it as a prediction. Such pragmatic weakening is very common with what I will refer to as 'central-epistemic' *will* — the *will* that uncontroversially indicates epistemic modality, with a situation located either in present time, as here, or in past time marked by perfect *have*, as in (49a) below.[18] This weakening is no doubt what leads Halliday (1985:335–340) to classify central-epistemic *will* with the medium modals ('median value' in his terminology), along with *probably*, *should*, etc., rather than the strong ('high value') ones, *certainly*, *must*, etc. But two points need to be made. First, again as with *must*, the weakening is a matter of pragmatic interpretation rather than the meaning proper, for its extent depends on the content and context; suppose, for example, that we substitute *will* for *must* in (47):

(49) a. *Ed will have overslept again*
      b. *Ed is Tom's father and Tom is Bill's father, so Ed will be Bill's grandfather*

The pragmatic difference between them remains the same, with very clear weakening in (a) but not in (b). The second point is that there is comparable variation in pragmatic strength when the situation is located in future time, as illustrated in:

(50) a. *She will beat him in under an hour*
      b. *He will be two tomorrow*

Assuming that (a) is about some sporting encounter whose outcome has not been fixed in advance, the element of prediction is much more evident than in (b); the difference between (b) and *He was two yesterday* is hardly more than temporal, whereas that between (a) and *She beat him in under an hour* is manifestly modal as well as temporal.

This brings me to the third dimension of modality, which I am calling 'degree'. This has to do with the amount of independent modal meaning to be found. Pragmatic variation on this dimension is to be seen in such a pair as:

(51)   a.   *She can run the marathon in under three hours*
       b.   *I can hear something rattling*

Here we have the dynamic **can** expressing ability, but whereas in (a) the situation is merely potential, in (b) it is currently actualised. (a) thus differs very sharply from the unmodalised *She runs the marathon in under three hours*: the normal interpretation of the latter is as a serial state, with multiple runnings, whereas (a) could be said on the basis of a single marathon under three hours — indeed she may not have actually run a marathon at all but merely displayed potential in training. (b) by contrast differs minimally from *I hear something rattling*. The degree of modality in (a) is therefore much greater than in (b). Note, moreover, that with potential ability, the degree of difference from the unmodalised version will depend very much on the pragmatics of the situation concerned. There is, for example, little effective difference between *She can speak fluent French* and *She speaks fluent French* because it is not easy to see how one could justifiably assert the former without repeated actualisations of the ability.

A second example of variation in the degree of modality is:

(52)   a.   *He should be at school now*
       b.   *It's odd that he should be so late*

(a) can be interpreted deontically or epistemically, but in either case it is markedly different from *He is at school now*; in the deontic reading it is indeed consistent with the speaker knowing that he is not at school. *Should* in (b), by contrast, exhibits low-degree modality: it reinforces, or harmonises with,[19] the emotive element expressed by *odd*: it would make little appreciable difference if it were dropped to yield *It's odd that he is so late*.

The same variation is found with **will**, as we saw with (50): pragmatically (b) is no different from *He is two tomorrow*, whereas we could not similarly replace (a) by an unmodalised version. Note that acceptability of the unmodalised counterpart is not a necessary condition for relatively low modality. The *will* can be much less readily dropped from *It will be dark in a few minutes* than from (50b), but the degree of modality is closer to that of the latter than to that of (50a), because it will be accepted as a more secure, less contingent prediction.

In general **will** has a lower degree of modality than **can**, **may**, **must**, etc. There is obviously a connection between degree and strength, in that weak modality will generally be of high degree (differing clearly from an unmoda-

lised version): except where there is pragmatic strengthening (as in (51b)), *can* and *may* will thus be high-degree modals. At the upper end of the strength scale, however, there is greater variation in degree, and I have suggested that *will* has the same strength as **must** but is generally of lower degree. But to locate *will* relatively low on this dimension is not at all the same as treating it as a different kind of element than the other secondary auxiliaries, i.e. as a tense marker rather than a mood marker. The difference between *will* and the central modal auxiliaries is better treated as quantitative rather than qualitative: this accounts more satisfactorily for the formal and semantic/pragmatic resemblance between them and for the fact that although it is relatively low on the degree dimension there nevertheless commonly remains a very significant amount of modality in the interpretation of *will*-clauses. This point I will take up in §5.3.

A further important likeness between *will* and the other secondary auxiliaries is that the time of the situation can be either present or future:

(53) a. *It's only five o'clock: he may/should/will still be in his office*
      b. *He may/should/will be home soon*

The same possibilities are found with various lexical modals, such as the adjectives *bound*, *certain*, **likely**, etc., non-auxiliary **need**, and so on:

(54) a. *It's only five o'clock: he's bound/likely to be still in his office*
      b. *He's bound/likely to be home soon*

(55) a. *One needs to have plenty of patience to solve these problems*
      b. *I need to talk to your father as soon as he gets back*

In the case of (54)–(55), this is clearly a matter of the interpretation of infinitival complement clauses, where properties of the superordinate predicate determine whether the time of the situation expressed in a (non-perfect) infinitival is present/simultaneous (as with **seem** or **believe**), future/posterior (as with **want** or **intend**) or either (as with the above items), and I see no reason not to handle the auxiliaries in the same way. Whether we do this or not, however, treatment of *will* as a future tense auxiliary will require a quite different account of the options of present and future interpretations.

5.3 *Modality in the interpretation of 'will'-clauses*

This section develops the point made in §5.2, that there is often a considerable amount of modal meaning associated with *will*. I first mention summarily three cases standardly recognised as modal uses of *will*, and then turn to a number of other cases where a significant degree of modal meaning is involved.

(a) CENTRAL-EPISTEMIC *WILL*

> (56) a. *That'll be Jill* [response to knock at door]
>   b. *They will have made the decision last week*

These clearly differ from *That's Jill* and *They made the decision last week* not in the time of the situation, but in epistemic modality: they are pragmatically weaker. There is often a connection with futurity — but it is a matter of future verification of the epistemic judgement, not of future actualisation of the situation itself.[20] As illustrated in (35), preterite *would* can also be used in this central-epistemic way, with the modal remoteness meaning contributing additional weakening.

(b) DYNAMIC *WILL*: PROPENSITY

> (57) a. *They'll go for days without speaking to each other*
>   b. *Oil will float on water*

The use I've glossed 'propensity' involves characteristic, typical, habitual, predictable behaviour or properties: the focus is on current disposition or nature rather than on any future actualisation of the behaviour. Preterite *would* occurs readily when the current disposition is in the past: *They would go for days without speaking to each other*.

(c) DYNAMIC *WILL*: VOLITION

> (58) a. *I've explained the position but he won't help us*
>   b. *Will you please move your car*

Again there is focus on current disposition: the implication in (a), for example, is that he has already indicated his unwillingness to help. And again preterite *would* is readily used for past time willingness — or for tentativeness in indirect directives like (b).

(d) CONDITIONAL CONSEQUENCE.

(59) *If it rains again we'll have to cancel the match*

The need to cancel the match is in the future, but it is a modal future, dependent on the fulfilment of the condition. The conditionality is of course expressed by the *if*-construction, but there is a close association between conditional consequence and *will*. Notice first that *will* is used as readily for past and present as for future time consequences:

(60) a. *If it rained last night it will have spoilt their party*
     b. *If it rains tonight it will spoil their party*

(61) a. *If he's watching this he'll be having a fit*
     b. *If he watches this he'll have a fit*

In (60) the spoiling of their party is in both cases seen as a predictable consequence of the (potential) rain; the difference between (a) and (b) is a matter of time, past in (a) (marked by preterite *rained* and perfect *have spoilt*) vs future in (b), and there is no detectable further difference relating to modality. Yet *will* in (a) is clearly not expressing futurity of the situation: the spoiling is not future relative to the time of utterance and nor do we have a future in past interpretation. Future in past is expressed by *would spoil*: the *will have spoilt* has a propositional perfect, with *will* outside the scope of the past time component, so that we have present time modality applying to past time spoiling. Similarly in (61) (where *this* might refer to a TV program in (a) and a video recording in (b), and where I ignore the rather unlikely present time habit interpretation of (b)) we have a difference in time, present vs future (and of course a difference of aspectuality), but no evidence for a difference in modality beyond this. In non-conditional constructions, there tends to be a higher degree of modality attaching to *will* with past/present situations than with future ones: compare central-epistemic (56) with, say, *The main beneficiary will be Jill* and *They will make the decision next week*. This difference is lost in such conditional constructions as (60) and (61). The *if* triggers semantic weakening (whereas (56b) entails that they made their decision last week, (60a) does not entail that their party was spoilt, and so on) and this semantic weakening applies with future situations in the same way as with past or present ones; there is no additional difference in pragmatic strength, for a version without *will* would be equally unlikely in all these examples.

In other cases an apodosis without *will* is pragmatically more likely, but the difference between versions with and without *will* is less than in non-conditional constructions:

(62) a. *They're upstairs*
      b. *They'll be upstairs*

(63) a. *If they're here they're upstairs*
      b. *If they're here they'll be upstairs*

(62b), in its present time, central-epistemic interpretation, is clearly pragmatically weaker than (62a), but there is no such sharp difference in (63). (62a) presents their being upstairs as something I know, whereas the *will* of (62b) changes it into a prediction. (63a) does not present their being upstairs as known because it is conditional on their being here; I would suggest that the *will* of (63b) serves to reinforce the conditional modality rather than to add a separate modal meaning of its own.

Such an interpretation connects with the obligatory presence of **will** in remote conditionals (obligatory, that is, in the absence of any other secondary auxiliary):

(64) a. **If they were here they were upstairs*[21]
      b. *If they were they would be upstairs*

In this construction, such reinforcement of the conditionality is grammaticalised into an obligatory requirement. It does not follow from its non-omissibility that **will** is meaningless, especially in view of the fact that it still contrasts with other secondary auxiliaries (cf. *If they were here they might be upstairs*). Now consider the future time conditionals:

(65) a. *If they come they will sleep upstairs*   [open]
      b. *If they came they would sleep upstairs*   [remote]

I would argue that there are no grounds for saying either that the meaning relationship between remote (b) and open (a) is any different here than with the pair (64) and (63), or that *would* has a different meaning in (65b) than in (64b).

Notice also that the clearly modal use of *will* to indicate present propensity often appears in conditional constructions:

(66) a. *If they have a quarrel, they'll go for days without speaking to
          each other*
      b. *If you pour oil on water it will float*

The only way we can give a general account of the use of **will** in a
conditional apodosis is in terms of the modal concept of prediction/predict-
ability (i.e predicted consequence) rather than the temporal concept of futu-
rity.

(e) CONDITIONAL PROTASIS

(67) a. *If the price comes down in a few months, I'll buy one* [sc. then]
      b. *If the price will come down in a few months, I won't buy one*
          [sc. now]

The difference in interpretation between the italicised clauses here is clearly
modal, not temporal: the time of the possible price reduction is the same in
both cases, namely a few months into the future. (67b) illustrates one of the
cases where the present time expressed by the present tense of **will** is of
pragmatic significance (cf. §5.1 above), for we can gloss it as "If a fall in the
price in a few months is now predictable, then I won't buy one": **will** here
indicates present predictability (cf. Close 1980). This is why, in the most
salient interpretations, the time of buying or not buying is related in (a) to the
time of the price reduction but in (b) to that of its predictability, i.e. to the time
of speaking.

If **will** has a clearly modal meaning in (67b), then it is difficult to deny
that it likewise has a modal meaning in the corresponding main clause.
Compare:

(68) a. *The price will come down in a few months*
      b. *If the price will come down in a few months, I won't buy one*
          (=(67b))

(69) a. *The price may come down in a few months*
      b. *If the price may come down in a few months, I won't buy one*

There is again no reason to say that the relation between (a) and (b) is
different in (68) than in (69). Conditionals like (68b) and (69b) are relatively
uncommon,[22] but this is attributable to the fact that the modality expressed in
the main clause counterparts is most often interpreted subjectively and hence
is characteristically not retained under conditional subordination: both (68a)

and (69a) could naturally be responded to by *If it does, I'll buy one*, with loss
of the secondary auxiliary. What is special about (68b) and (69b) is that the
modality (strong in the former, weak in the latter) is treated as objective, and
hence as part of the proposition that is being conditionally entertained (cf.
Lyons 1977:805–806).

(f)   CONTRAST WITH SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE IN FUTURE TIME USE

   (70)   a.   *Australia meets Sweden in the Davis Cup final in December*
        b.   *Australia will meet Sweden in the Davis Cup final in December*

In (a) we have a (non-subordinate) simple present tense used for a future time
situation — this is sometimes referred to as the 'futurate' use. Again, then, the
difference in meaning between (a) and (b) is modal, not temporal: the time of
Australia meeting Sweden is the same in both cases. (b) is pragmatically
weaker than (a): it requires weaker 'epistemic warrant' (Lyons 1977:808), in
that while (a) can be appropriately used only after the semi-finals have been
played, i.e. after the finalists have been determined, (b) could be said at an
earlier stage in the competition, with the speaker predicting the results of the
pre-final matches. The futurate is of course subject to severe pragmatic
constraints, so that in the following pair (given standard assumptions about
Davis Cup tennis) (a) is pragmatically anomalous:

   (71)   a.   ?*Australia beats Sweden in the Davis Cup final in December*
        b.   *Australia will beat Sweden in the Davis Cup final in December*

The anomaly results from its being stronger than is epistemically warranted,
presenting the result as though it were already known. (b), however, the version
with *will*, is perfectly acceptable, supporting the view that it is epistemically
weaker than the futurate.

    The fact that the pragmatic constraints on a future time present tense do
not apply in certain types of subordinate construction fits in with this account,
for the constructions concerned are ones where the propositional content is
not asserted, such as:

   (72)   a.   *If you see Ed, tell him I'd like a word with him*
        b.   *When you see Ed, tell him I'd like a word with him*

Your future seeing Ed is conditionally entertained in (a), and presupposed in
(b). We have seen that *will* can appear, with a clearly modal meaning, in a
conditional protasis, but it is not used in temporal constructions like (b). If *will*

expressed futurity, there would be no reason why it should not appear in the latter (as the future tense does in the corresponding French construction, for example); if it conveys present prediction/predictability, however, then there is a very straightforward reason for its exclusion: the time we are concerned with in (72b) is the future time of your seeing Ed, not the present time at which the future seeing is predicted/predictable.

<div align="center">*****</div>

The argument is, therefore, that although *will* is frequently associated with future time, it is also associated with a very considerable amount of modal meaning of one kind or another. Given that in terms of both form and meaning it bears a massive resemblance to the core modal auxiliaries, greater generality and insight is achieved by analysing it with them rather than as a distinct kind of element. It would be no answer to this argument to point out that languages which do have a future tense often employ it in some of the modal uses outlined above (or exclude it from certain subordinate contexts such as those in (72)): apart from the fact that well-established future tenses do not have such an extensive range of modal uses as English *will*, it must be remembered that the question under consideration in this section has been whether the meaning and use of *will* differs in kind from that of the other secondary auxiliaries in such a way as to override the extensive formal properties it shares with them and hence to justify an analysis along the lines of (41) — I believe that the answer is overwhelmingly negative.

6.   The unitary nature of *will*

In view of the large amount of modal meaning attaching to *will*, it is not surprising that those who have argued for a future tense analysis have not claimed that it applies to all instances of *will*, but have drawn a distinction between future tense *will* and modal *will*. Those taking this view are agreed in taking volitional *will* as modal but differ in their treatment of central-epistemic *will*: some, such as Declerck (1991a:87–88), handle this as a modal use of the future tense auxiliary, while others, such as Halliday (1985), analyse it as a modal auxiliary. I will refer to these two conceptions as respectively the 'broad' and 'narrow' future tense *will*.

The argument against a split between modal *will* and either broad or narrow future tense *will* is simply that there is no grammatical basis for it. The

issue, as I emphasised at the start, concerns grammaticalisation: is futurity grammaticalised as a tense or within the modal system? To say that English has a future tense is to claim that there is some formally distinct grammatical category whose primary or characteristic meaning is to locate a situation in future time. Analysis (41) satisfies the requirement of formal distinctiveness (the category is marked by *will*) but, I have argued, fails the semantic condition; attempts to remedy this deficiency by splitting *will* into two result in a failure of the analysis to satisfy the formal condition. Sørenson (1978: 114) suggests that refusing to distinguish two *will*'s is like refusing to distinguish the verbal 3rd person singular ending (as in *she works*) and the nominal plural ending (as in *these works*). But the two cases are different in precisely the way that is relevant here. The two inflections are grammatically distinct in that one occurs on verbs, the other on nouns — and also in that they have different realisations with irregular lexemes (compare, for example, irregular verbal *has* and regular nominal *haves*, as in *the haves and have-nots*): the two *will*'s exhibit no such grammatical difference.[23]

Attempts have been made to give a grammatical justification for distinguishing a future tense auxiliary and a modal auxiliary, but I shall argue that they cannot be regarded as successful. In some cases the alleged differences are advanced simply to distinguish the two *will*'s: the implication is that when modal *will* is split off the semantic arguments against a future tense *will* evaporate; in other cases, specifically those concerning passivisation and negation, the differences advanced are intended not merely to distinguish two *will*'s but also to show that one of them behaves like a tense marker. These latter are the more interesting and merit fuller discussion.

6.1 *Passivisation*

According to Wekker (1976:14), the future tense auxiliary 'contrasts clearly' with volitional *will* in that passivisation 'is always possible' with the former, while the latter 'cannot be passivised, at least not without radically changing the meaning of the sentence'. Davidson-Nielsen (1988:56) gives 'occurrence in passivised sentences' as a syntactic property distinguishing the future tense auxiliary from the modal auxiliary, but this formulation is clearly invalid: volitional *will* can undoubtedly occur in passivised sentences, as in *She won't be interviewed by a male reporter*.

The issue is thus that of the contrast between voice-neutrality and voice-sensitivity, familiar from the classic transformational distinction between

raising and equi verbs. Raising verbs like *seem* are voice-neutral, while Equi verbs like *want* are voice-sensitive:

(73) a. *Kim seemed to have offended the PM*

[voice-neutral: a=b]

     b. *The PM seemed to have been offended by Kim*

(74) a. *Kim wanted to interview the PM*

[voice-sensitive: a≠b]

     b. *The PM wanted to be interviewed by Kim*

The clearest indication of the non-equivalence between members of such a pair with a voice-sensitive verb is that (a) can be acceptably coordinated with the negation of (b):

(75) *Kim wanted to interview the PM but the PM didn't want to be interviewed by Kim*

Wekker is claiming (a) that futurity *will* is voice-neutral and hence like a tense marker, and (b) volitional *will* is voice-sensitive and hence like a modal:

(76) Since passivization is only normal with simple phrases without modals or with phrases containing primary auxiliaries only, this [sc. the fact that passivization is possible with futurity *will* but not (without a radical change of meaning) with futurity *will*] is a particularly important piece of evidence of the primary, non-modal status of future *will* (Wekker 1976:14)

Similarly, Palmer (1990:158) says that 'volitional *will*, being subject oriented, is not voice-neutral; the volition is that of the subject. In contrast, futurity *will* is always voice-neutral', and although he adopts a modal rather than future tense analysis he regards the voice-neutrality of futurity *will* (along with its behaviour with respect to negation, which I take up below) as 'the strongest argument for a future tense analysis' (1990:160, cf. also 1987:145).

There are two points to be made here. The first is that the undoubted voice-neutrality of futurity *will* cannot be used as an argument for a future tense rather than modal analysis because it is equally consistent with either. The premise in (76) is manifestly false, for voice-neutrality is 'normal' with epistemic modals (not to mention numerous non-auxiliary items like *seem*, the classical raising predicates); compare:

(77) a. *The rain delayed/may delay/will delay the start*
      b. *The start was delayed/may be delayed/will be delayed by the rain*

One can't say that **will** here behaves like the past tense marker as opposed to the modal auxiliary **may** when in fact all three behave alike.[24]

The second point is that there are grounds for distinguishing between semantic and pragmatic voice-sensitivity. Semantic voice-sensitivity arises where members of the pair differ in truth conditions, as reflected normally in the acceptability of coordinations like (75). Pragmatic voice-sensitivity arises where members of the pair tend to differ in their acceptability, as in:

(78) a. *Kim can speak fluent French*
      b. *Fluent French can be spoken by Kim*

Here (b) is much less natural than (a), but of course its negation could not be coordinated with (a). Not one of the secondary auxiliaries can occur in coordinations like (75). In the case of **dare** this is consistent with its being semantically voice-sensitive since its exclusion from such constructions could be attributed to the fact that it is restricted to non-affirmative contexts — but precisely by virtue of this restriction **dare** is a marginal member of the modal auxiliary class. Independent evidence for treating **dare** as semantically voice-sensitive is that it imposes selectional restrictions on its subject and excludes dummy subjects:[25]

(79) a. *I daren't jump*
      b. *?The branch daren't fall*
      c. **There daren't be any students on the committee*

Other members of the secondary auxiliary class differ sharply from **dare** in these respects and from clear voice-sensitive verbs like **want**. At most, then, they display pragmatic voice-sensitivity. This is characteristic of the modal auxiliaries in their dynamic uses — (78), for example, illustrates dynamic **can**, whereas epistemic **can**, by contrast, is clearly voice-neutral (cf. *Kim can't have broken the vase* and *The vase can't have been broken by Kim*). **Will** fits in with this pattern, clearly neutral in examples like (77), but exhibiting some measure of pragmatic voice-sensitivity in dynamic (80):

(80) a. *Kim won't accept work of such poor quality*
      b. *Work of such poor quality won't be accepted by Kim*

But Wekker's claim of a 'radical change of meaning' accompanying passivisation of volitional *will* cannot be sustained. If, for example, *I certainly won't clean up the mess* implies refusal on my part, the same implication can be found in *The mess certainly won't be cleaned up by me*. There is, then, just a limited amount of pragmatic voice-sensitivity with volitional *will*. But this doesn't establish a GRAMMATICAL difference between volitional *will* and a future tense auxiliary — there isn't even a semantic difference.

6.2 *Negation*

Wekker claims that futurity *will* is also like a primary rather than secondary auxiliary in that 'there seems to be no possible distinction between negating *will* and negating the full [lexical] verb' (1976:15). Similarly, Palmer regards the similarity of futurity *will* to the past and present tenses with respect to negation as part of the 'strongest argument' for a future tense analysis: 'There is no independent marking of negation, as there is with other modals and even the *will* of volition' (1990:161).

It is very doubtful, however, whether negation provides any real evidence for a future tense analysis. The first point to note is that futurity *will* is not an exception to the general pattern concerning modals and negation; on the contrary, it fits in with the general tendency (81), illustrated in (82):

(81) Strong and medium modal auxiliaries tend to take propositional negation, while weak ones tend to take modal negation

(82) a. *He mustn't/shouldn't go with them*   [strong/medium: propositional negation]
      b. *He can't go with them*   [weak: modal negation]

In (a) the modals are outside the scope of negation: there is a positive obligation on him (strong with *must*, medium with *should*) not to go with them; in (b) the modal is inside the scope of negation: it isn't possible for him to go with them. Negation of a weak modal auxiliary implies non-actualisation, so that even in (82b) there is negation associated with the proposition, but indirectly rather than directly, as in (a).

The main exceptions to (81) are that strong *need* (a marginal member of the class of secondary auxiliaries in that it is restricted to non-affirmative contexts) takes modal negation and that weak *may* takes propositional negation in its epistemic use:

(83) a. *He needn't go with them*   [strong: modal negation]
      b. *He may not have seen it*   [weak: propositional negation]

Thus (a) means "It is not necessary for him to go with them" and (b) "It is possible that he has not seen it" — (b) contrasts with *He can't have seen it*, which follows (81).[26]

Will is semantically strong, and in conformity with (81) it takes propositional negation:

(84) *He won't like it*

This entails his future not liking it: it is the prediction of a negative situation, not the negation of a prediction.

Palmer claims that volitional *will* behaves differently from futurity *will*; he draws a contrast (1990:151–152) between such examples as:

(85) a. *They won't give me a key to get into the building*
      b. *I won't ask for details*

saying that the former, representing the usual pattern, has modal negation, the latter propositional negation ("I am willing not to ask"). Declerck (1991b: 363) allows the same variation in scope, contrasting *They won't let me in because I'm too young* ("not willing to") and *I won't tell your parents if you promise never to come back here* ("willing not to"). Coates, however, recognises only the first type and differentiates between futurity *will* and volitional *will* as follows (1983:176): 'With Root *will*, negation affects the modal predication, not the main predication (*I am not willing to x, I do not intend to x*). This contrasts with negation and Epistemic *will*', where the latter subsumes futurity *will*. An example she gives is:

(86) *I will not give in*

which she glosses as "I am not willing to give in"/"I refuse to give in". The trouble with all these statements is that they are based on pragmatic glosses that do not accurately reflect the meaning of *will* — because they involve items which differ from *will* on the dimension of strength. *Intend* is of medium strength and *willing* is somewhat weaker, whereas *will* is strong — in its volitional use, no less than its other uses. Thus (85)–(86) entail their not giving me a key, my not asking for details, my not giving in, whereas the proposed glosses do not. The negation is therefore propositional in (85)–(86),

as in (84) (cf. Leech 1987:93): there is prediction, overlaid with volition in (85)–(86), of a negative situation.

The same objection applies to the claim made by Quirk et al. (1985:795) that the distinction between modal and propositional negation is neutralised for *will* in all its uses. Their examples include:

(87) a. *Don't worry. I won't interfere*
      b. *They won't have arrived yet*

Each is given two glosses, one with modal, the other with propositional negation: "I don't intend to interfere"/"I intend not to interfere", "It's not probable that they have arrived yet"/"I predict that they haven't arrived yet". *Intend*, as noted, is of medium strength, so neither gloss for (a) is adequate, and the pragmatic equivalence between the two glosses reflects the fact that the phenomenon commonly (but inappropriately) referred to as 'neg-raising' applies quite generally to expressions marking medium strength modality (*appear*, *seem*, *want*, *intend*, *likely*, etc.): *I don't intend to interfere* covers both the case where I intend not to interfere and that where I have no intentions one way or the other, but is usually pragmatically narrowed down to the former, bringing Quirk et al.'s two glosses together — this, however, is telling us something about the meaning and use of *intend*, not of *will*. The same applies to *probable* in their gloss for (b) — they might have given "It's probable that they haven't arrived yet" as the second; but strong *will* is not paraphrasable with medium *probable*, since (87) entails that they haven't arrived while the "probable" gloss does not. It is thus not a matter of the distinction between modal and propositional negation being neutralised with *will*, in the sense that it can be interpreted indifferently in either way: rather, *will* non-contrastively takes propositional negation.

Non-contrastive propositional negation is found also with medium strength *ought* and *should*, and with strong *had better*[27] and *must* (though the modal meaning of *must* can be negated by use of *need*). The behaviour of *will* with respect to negation thus cannot count as an argument for a future tense analysis, for it is perfectly consistent with an analysis of *will* as a strong modal.

A further argument of Wekker's is related to negation and can conveniently be dealt with here. It concerns short answers given by informants to question (88) by completing the frames in (89):

(88) *Do you think Mary might go?*

(89) a. *Yes, I think she* ___   [14 *might*; 1 *will*]
      b. *No, I don't think she* ___   [12 *will*; 3 *would*]
      c. *Maybe she* ___   [1 *might*; 10 *will*; 4 *would*]
      d. *No, she* ___   [14 *won't*; 1 *wouldn't*]

The responses were as shown on the right. Wekker asks where the *will* comes
from in the responses, and suggests that it might be an underlying future tense
element which is deleted in certain environments, such as after *may* and
might, but appears intact in the above responses when the *might* instead is
deleted. The idea that *might* is derivationally deleted from the responses is
surely untenable (even if one were to admit the long outmoded model of
syntax which it implies): it is not a matter of its meaning being understood
while not overtly expressed. Its non-occurrence in the negatives (b) and (d)
reflects the fact that *She might not come* is not the contradictory of *She might
come*, but an implicature of it. Thus one cannot express the opinion that "She
might come" is false by saying *She might not come*: one needs a formulation
that excludes the possibility of her coming. *Won't* serves this purpose, but that
doesn't mean that *will* is a future tense element, for the data are equally
consistent with it being a strong modal. The alternation between *might* and
will in (c) is due to the fact that the possibility modality is expressed in *maybe*:
might is acceptable but redundant, so that the strong, low-degree modal *will* is
favoured.

6.3 *Further arguments*

I turn now more briefly to other arguments that have been advanced in
support of a grammatical distinction between future tense auxiliary *will* and
modal auxiliary *will*.

(a) CONDITIONAL PROTASES. Wekker (1976:14), Davidson-Nielsen (1988:56)
and Matthiessen & Martin (1991:60) all distinguish the future tense auxiliary
from the modal auxiliary by reference to conditional protases. Davidson-
Nielsen gives a categorical formulation: 'non-occurrence [of the future tense
auxiliary] in conditional ... clauses'; this is clearly invalid, for there is no
question of non-volitional *will* being syntactically excluded from conditional
protases. It is thus a matter of relative frequency. The infrequent occurrence
of non-volitional *will* is explicable in terms of its modal meaning, as discussed
in §5.3. The greater frequency of volitional *will* in this construction is likewise
attributable to the meaning. In

(90)   *If you will lend me your drill I'll be able to do the job myself*

the volitional component is treated as part of the propositional content that is conditionally entertained: it is a matter of your disposition, not of subjective prediction, and hence there is no barrier to the inclusion of the modality within the propositional content. A difference in relative frequency, explicable in terms of the varying modal interpretations, provides no evidence at all for a grammatical distinction between two *will*'s. Not surprisingly, those who invoke behaviour in conditional protases as a factor distinguishing two *will*'s do not say how the behaviour of non-volitional *will* supports its analysis as a future tense auxiliary: as we saw in §5.3, the contrast between futurity *will* and a simple present in conditional protases provides strong evidence in favour of a modal analysis.

(b) PROGRESSIVE AND PERFECT. Davidson-Nielsen claims that volitional *will* differs syntactically from the future tense auxiliary in that only the latter occurs with a progressive or perfect infinitival. Again no such categorical distinction can be empirically justified. A prototypical use of volitional *will* is in 2nd person interrogatives used as indirect directives, as in *Will you open the door* and progressives and perfects are not grammatically excluded from this use: *Will you please all be sitting quietly at your desks when the headmaster comes in at ten o'clock, Will you please have checked it all carefully by this evening*. The infrequency or unlikelihood of such examples is comparable to that of progressive or perfect complements to verbs like **persuade** or **order**, which assign an agentive interpretation to the complement subject: in neither case are there grounds for positing a syntactic rule excluding progressives and perfects.

(c) REPLACEMENT BY *SHALL* IN INDIRECT SPEECH. Davidson-Nielsen's final criterion is not exemplified or explained, but presumably he is suggesting that while (91a) can be reported by (91b) because it contains the future tense auxiliary, (92a) cannot be reported by (92b) because it contains volitional *will*:

(91)   a.   *He will get over it in a day or two*
       b.   *Liz thinks/says I shall get over it in a day or two*

(92)   a.   *He won't help me*
       b.   *Liz thinks/says I shan't help her*

It must be emphasised, however, that conversion of direct into indirect speech

is not a matter of syntactic rule.[28] In saying (91b), for example, I simply express the content of what I take (or purport to take) Liz to think or to have said, whether she in fact uttered (91a) or not. There is no question of a rule of syntax stipulating that the future tense auxiliary *will* can be reported by *shall*, whereas volitional *will* cannot. (92b) is obviously not ungrammatical: the only issue that it raises is how faithful a report it is in a context where Liz has uttered (92a). The fact that *won't* is much more faithful and likely than *shan't* reflects a difference in meaning between *will* and *shall*: the latter does not exclude volition or agentivity (as is evident from the acceptability of examples like *She wants me to help her but I shan't*), but the former indicates volition more directly. Alternation between *will* and *shall* thus provides no evidence for the view that the distinction between volitional and non-volitional *will* is grammaticalised.[29]

(d)   ALTERNATION WITH *I THINK* AND *PROBABLY*. Matthiessen & Martin follow Halliday in contrasting modal *will* with a narrow future tense auxiliary — i.e. in subsuming the central-epistemic use under modal *will*. One of the 'grammatical arguments' they advance to support the distinction (1991:60) is that 'modal *will* alternates with other strategies for expressing modality — for example *I think* and *probably*'.[30] However, there is no grammatical difference between central-epistemic and futurity *will* regarding their relationship with such expressions. Neither is paradigmatically contrastive with them, and both combine syntagmatically with them:

(93)   a.   *She'll have missed yesterday's meeting, I think*
       b.   *He'll probably be on holiday now*

(94)   a.   *She'll miss tomorrow's meeting, I think*
       b.   *He'll probably be on holiday then*

(f)   COMBINATION WITH SIMPLE PRESENT TAG. A further argument advanced by Matthiessen & Martin is that modal *will* allows a simple present in a 'mood tag', whereas future tense *will* requires the repetition of *will*:

(95)   a.   *She'll like fairy tales, does she?*
       b.   *It'll rain later on, will it?*

There are three points to be made here. First, Martin & Matthiessen make no mention of volitional *will*; this would seem highly resistant to a simple present tag (e.g. one would not add *does he?* to *John will take you home*, an example

of volitional-modal *will* from Halliday 1985:336), so that insofar as there is a
tangible criterion here it doesn't draw the boundary between modal and future
tense *will* in the right place. Second, examples like (a) (there is no indication
that it is other than an armchair example) are rare and marginal: this is not the
kind of data that will support a major distinction between a tense auxiliary and
a mood auxiliary. Normally the auxiliary in the tag is determined by the form
of the host clause (so that the normal tag for (a) as well as (b) has *will*), but
some departures from the norm are acceptable, provided there is no meaning
clash between host and tag: *You ought to have told them the whole truth,
shouldn't you?*, *It may have been an accident, mightn't it?*, *He's got prob-
lems, doesn't he?* — (a) is of this kind. Third, such a departure from the
normal pattern cannot be ruled out for futurity *will*, given a context that avoids
the meaning clash that would characteristically arise if we attached *does it?* to
the host in (b). If, for example, we are watching a video-movie for the second
time, there will be little pragmatic difference between, say, *She will recover
soon* and *She recovers soon*, and in this context *She will recover soon, doesn't
she?* would be indistinguishable in acceptability from Matthiessen & Martin's
(a). Similarly in a context where futurity *will* and a simple present futurate are
equally appropriate, they might be blended in the tag construction to give, say,
There'll be a full moon tonight, isn't there?

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I conclude that there are no grammatical grounds for splitting **will** into
distinct future tense and modal auxiliaries. Haegeman (1983), moreover,
mounts a very persuasive case for a unitary SEMANTIC treatment of *will* too.
And indeed a major problem with the modal/tense split is how to apply it in
practice.

It is instructive in this regard to consider some of the examples given in
Declerck (1991b). (96) (from p.111) illustrate the future tense, while (97) (p.
362) contain modal *will*:

    (96) a.   *We'll go camping next week if the weather is fine*
          b.   *I'll tell her everything about it when she comes tomorrow*

    (97) a.   *He'll no doubt help you if you ask him kindly*
          b.   *If you like, my daughter will accompany you*

Declerck doesn't say that the sentences are ambiguous, but on the assumption
that there are distinct *will*'s they must be, for nothing in the semantics of (96)

is inconsistent with a volitional reading and nothing in the semantics of (97) is inconsistent with a futurity reading. Nor does Declerck discuss the pragmatic factors that lead him to the future and modal (willingness) interpretations respectively — an omission encouraged precisely by treating one *will* in the tense system and the other in the modal system, with these sytems described in separate chapters.

Volition implies futurity, so that the relation between the future and volitional readings is not that they are mutually exclusive and contrastive, but rather that the latter contains an extra element of meaning not present in the former. And just what this extra element is remains unclear. Consider such a simple example as (98a):

(98) a. *He won't help us*
      b. *He didn't help us*

(a) is a prototypical example of volitional *will*, but again there is no principled syntactic or semantic reason for excluding the future tense *will*, so that the analysis requires us to say that the sentence is ambiguous. What then is the difference of meaning? Possible approximate interpretations include:

(99) a. "What he does/says won't be of any use/help to us"
      b. "He won't be willing to help us"
      c. "He isn't willing to help us"

In (a) his not helping results from inability, whereas in (b–c) it results from unwillingess. But this is hardly distinguishable from agentivity and won't serve as a satisfactory basis for a tense/modal distinction since we can find a comparable range of interpretation for (98b): it could be that what he did/said wasn't of any use/help to us or that he didn't try to help. We might then draw the line between (a–b) (future) and (c) (modal) — suggesting that 'current volition' would be a more appropriate label than simply 'volition'; future (a–b) would be predictions, while modal (c) would be a statement about the present. But this is not an easy distinction to apply — and in the case of (97a) the future interpretation "He will no doubt be willing to help you if you ask him kindly" seems more salient than the modal "He is no doubt willing to help you provided you ask him kindly" in spite of Declerck's analysis of it as modal.

In summary, splitting *will* into distinct tense and modal auxiliaries leads to the postulation of a massive and unwarranted amount of grammatical/

semantic ambiguity which will often be difficult to resolve by the context. There is a remarkable contrast between the case of *will* and that of the preterite inflection. With the latter we have a very sharp distinction between the past time and modal remoteness meanings (as in *I'm glad they liked it* vs *I wish they liked it*), and ambiguities are far less prevalent and much easier to resolve. Yet modern grammarians do not split this inflection into a past/ preterite tense marker and a subjunctive mood marker: because of the common form they treat it as a single grammatical category (a tense rather than a mood because the past time meaning is more frequent and not subject to the grammatical restrictions that normally apply to the modal remoteness meaning). A final argument against those who split *will* is thus that this is inconsistent with their treatment of the preterite.

NOTES

1.   Cf., for example, Hopper & Traugott (1993:3, 91), Bybee & Pagliuca (1987:1–2), Bybee (1990:17), Dahl (1992:144).

2.   Palmer's 'primary auxiliaries' are **have, be** and **do**.

3.   I use the term 'preterite' in preference to the more common 'past tense' in order to reserve the latter as a more general term covering the preterite (the primary past tense) and the perfect (the secondary past tense).

4.   I use bold italics to represent lexemes, in abstraction from their inflectional form.

5.   A third type of case, involving a relative clause within a modalised context, is seen in the following example from the text of a book on the modal auxiliaries (Perkins 1983:22): *The two theoretical extremes of such a scale of formal explicitness would be (a) the case where no information at all were expressed formally, and (b) the case where no information were expressed pragmatically.*

6.   Dahl (1985:25), however, uses the pair *If you are rich, you can buy that car* and *If you were rich, you could buy that car* to illustrate the category of mood, contrasting *are* as indicative and *were* as subjunctive. He does say that 'mood is not well represented in English', so it is not clear whether he would treat *have plenty of money* vs *had plenty of money* in the same way, but I would argue that there is no more reason to postulate syncretism in *you were* on the basis of the overt mood contrast of *I was* vs *I were* than there is to postulate mood syncretism in *took* or whatever.

7.   There are no synchronic grounds for analysing *were* as a PAST subjunctive: it is marked in mood but tenseless; traditional grammar distinguishes *it were* and *it be* as past and present

subjunctives, but there is no justification for regarding them as contrasting tenses of the same mood, for the semantic difference between them is clearly not a temporal one (cf. *If that were so ...* vs *If that be so ...*). This was argued in Huddleston (1976) — though in that paper I did, regrettably, generalise the mood contrast to other verbs than *be*.

8. Curiously, on p. 175 Givón writes: 'At least historically [*could, should, would, might*] are the past tense forms of *can, shall, will,* and *may,* respectively', with 'at least' implicating that it may not be solely a historical matter.

9. And with *be*, as in *The meeting was to have been chaired by the Vice-Chancellor*; this use of *be* has some grammatical as well as semantic affinity to the secondary auxiliaries in that the base and participle forms are excluded (cf. (39a)); it is sometimes included in the secondary auxiliary class (as in Pullum & Wilson 1977), though it lacks the remaining three properties in (39).

10. In the case of *may have*, there is a variety of English for which this is not so: I return below to the variety that does allow a wide scope interpretation.

11. This proviso allows for the occurrence of defective *must*, as in *If he had stayed in the army he must surely have become a colonel* — but such examples are very rare and somewhat marginal.

12. Occasional examples are found in subordinate clauses, as in: *In 1814 the completion of the Mons-Conde canal increased the ease with which Mons coal might be sent to Nord* (cited in Coates 1983:156). However, as the superordinate clause in such cases is in the preterite there may be some influence from the backshift construction.

13. One case not covered by Denison is illustrated in the following example from a relatively formal letter: *He was also aware of what his father's reactions may have been, i.e. perhaps refusing to see him, but hoped this would not occur*. The context was such that the writer knew that the father did refuse to see the child concerned, so that *may have* does not here have the actual or potential counterfactual meaning that it does in Denison's examples; Dialect A would here have *might be*, not *might have been*: the *have* appears to be a marker of backshift, which is of course not a normal role for it.

14. One respect in which it formally resembles a remote condition is that it allows the protasis to be marked by subject–auxiliary inversion rather than *if*: *Should you experience any difficulty, please let me know*. The handful of other verbs that invert in this way are all preterite auxiliaries with the modal remoteness meaning (or subjunctive *were*): *had, were* and (rarely) *could* (*Could he have cast himself in the part of Mr Copthorne, ... he would not have attempted to run away from his captors*).

15. For an insightful account of the semantic development of *would* and *should*, see Bybee (1990).

16. The base form covers the traditional imperative, infinitive and present subjunctive, as in *Be careful, He should be careful, It is essential that he be careful*: I take the view that although these are SYNTACTICALLY different constructions they do not contain different INFLECTIONAL forms of the verb (since there is no lexeme where they have different realisations).

17. Halliday (1970:330, n.11) treats such examples as tenseless; such an analysis is in my view in clear conflict with the form, but it would seem to support the intuition that the present time associated with the modality is of little pragmatic importance.

18. The label 'central-epistemic' enables us to distinguish this use from the futurity use without prejudging the question of whether the latter is a matter of epistemic modality, for the futurity *will* is obviously not a prototypical or central case of epistemic modality.

19. The idea of two modal elements combining to reinforce each other derives from Halliday (1970:331); the term 'harmonic combination' is from Lyons (1977:807).

20. This element of future verification is seen clearly in Lakoff's (1970:839) example *That thing rustling in the bushes over there will no doubt be a chipmunk: let's wait till it comes out*. Lakoff calls this a 'false' future tense in that the tense 'is not logically that of the time of occurrence of the action [sic] in question'. Curiously, Wekker (1976:14–15, 137–138) invokes Lakoff's discussion as one of his arguments for a future tense analysis of *will*: the idea is that as there is a comparable 'false' past tense (*The animal you saw <u>was</u> a chipmunk: see, there he is running up a tree*) this shows *will* to be tense-like. However, Lakoff notes that a present tense could be used in place of the 'false' future or past — with the resultant difference in meaning being modal, not temporal: her commentary on the *will* example is that 'the identity of the creature is not yet clear in the mind of the speaker', as it is in the version with *is*. Examples where the meaning difference between *will be* and *is* is a matter of modality rather than time cannot be used to SUPPORT the thesis that *will* is a tense auxiliary.

21. The asterisk does not of course apply to the open conditional reading, where the preterite indicates past time, not modal remoteness.

22. But certainly not ungrammatical, pace Hopper & Traugott (1993:3).

23. A different invalid analogy is drawn by Davidson-Nielsen (1988:54–55), who compares the differentiation between two ***will***'s with that made between two suffixes *-able* in Aronoff (1976:48, 121–125). Davidson-Nielsen is in fact arguing that a split should be allowable on semantic rather than formal grounds and is citing Aronoff's two suffixes as a precedent: he claims that words containing the suffix #*abl* have a meaning which is a compositional function of their parts, whereas this is not the case with words containing +*abl*. This is not a faithful report: Aronoff says, on the contrary, that the suffixes have the same meaning and syntactic properties, although the consistency with which these properties appear is greater with #*abl* than with +*abl* (1976:122). The major justification for Aronoff's split is found in pairs like *cómparable* vs *compárable*, *divisible* vs *dividable*, *navigable* vs *navigatable* (where the first in each pair has +*abl*, the second #*abl*), but again there is no comparable justification for splitting ***will***.

24. Palmer (1990:161) does admit that the epistemic modals are voice-neutral — a few lines after the 'strongest argument' passage I have quoted.

25. Occasional examples are found where ***dare*** is used in passives implying a voice-neutral interpretation: *These two aspects of death cannot be successfully separated, but they dare not be confused or identified* (Ehrmann 1966:71), *Inflation is a problem which dare not be neglected* (Pullum & Wilson (1977:785). Their frequency and acceptability are not great enough to demonstrate a re-analysis of ***dare*** in this regard, but they do suggest an analogical influence from other members of the secondary auxiliary class.

26. There are two further, relatively minor, cases where weak modals take propositional negation. One involves the 'existential' use of ***may*** ('existential' in the sense of Palmer 1990:107–109), as in *The hairs are there all the time, although they may not grow*

noticeably before puberty, "... sometimes they don't ...". The second concerns both *can* and *may* when they are separated from *not* by one or more words (e.g. *You could always not answer the phone*) or strong prosodic juncture (a highly marked structure, as in *You may/can not answer if you prefer*). In addition, negative interrogatives, used as questions biassed towards a positive answer, have modal negation irrespective of the strength of the modality: *Mustn't it be wonderful to have so many admirers?* ("Is it not the case that it must be wonderful?", not "Is it the case that it must not be wonderful?"), *Won't he have paid it yesterday?, Shouldn't you tell them we'll be late?*; a special case of this is in tags: *We must stop soon, mustn't we?*

27. The *had* of this idiom is a peripheral member of the class of secondary auxiliaries. Note that the negation is semantically propositional whether the marker attaches syntactically to *had* (*He hadn't better go with them*) or to the infinitival (*He had better not go with them*).

28. The process term 'backshift' is perhaps unfortunate in that it may promote misunderstanding on this point. Although I used this term in §3, the argument in no way implied that backshifted preterites arise through a syntactic rule changing a present tense into a preterite: what was crucial to the argument was (a) that the backshifted preterite represents a distinct sense of that form from the past time one (as evident from cases like *If she knew you <u>disliked</u> him she wouldn't invite him*, where there is clearly no past time meaning) and (b) that there are grammatical rules governing the distribution of this type of preterite; for further discussion, see Huddleston 1989.

29. A sharper restriction on *shall* is that it doesn't occur in the central-epistemic use (cf. Palmer 1987:136) — though Davidson-Nielsen explicitly subsumes that under the future tense auxiliary use of *will*. Alternation with *shall* thus does not provide a criterion of any kind for distinguishing between future and modal *will* in Davidson-Nielsen's analysis.

30. As we have seen, they also invoke the argument concerning occurrence in conditional protases. Apart from the objections made above to this argument, it is relevant to add here that central-epistemic *will* clearly belongs with futurity *will* in this regard, not with volitional *will*: the criterion thus does not draw the line between modal and future tense *will* in the place where Matthiessen & Martin would have it.

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