

NOT IN THE MOOD:
MODALITY AND NEGATION IN THE HISTORY OF GREEK*
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Abstract

In all stages of Greek there is a choice between two negators. A recent paper has argued that the reason for the choice also stays the same in all stages, corresponding to the distinction between deontic and epistemic modality. In this paper I confirm that the systems of negation and modality are indeed intertwined. Through an analysis of data from Modern Greek and Classical Greek I show however that the deontic and epistemic distinction is not relevant. I return to the Homeric data to argue for a more finely-grained category of modality and negator-choice.

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of Greek, the systems of modality and negation are rich, complicated, and apparently intertwined in their development. To give a broad outline of the developments in the modal system, in the ancient language (comprising Homeric Greek, the result of a long oral tradition, finishing in around the 8th century BC and Classical Greek, a collection of dialects centering around the language of Athens in the 5th century BC), mood (that is indicative, subjunctive, optative and imperative) is expressed inflectionally. In the subsequent development of the language, the optative soon dies out, and major phonological changes render the subjunctive and indicative largely indistinguishable.¹ In the modern language on the other hand, 'subjunctive mood' is said to be primarily located in the 'modal particle' *na*. Developed from a complementiser (*hina* in Classical Greek, there used primarily with purpose meaning), in Modern Greek it is found as the 'subjunctive complementiser' (in opposition with the 'indicative complementiser' *oti*) and in many other 'modal' contexts.² At all stages of the language, Greek has two negators: first *u:k* and *me:*, and later *den* and *min* (both apparently etymologically related to the Classical forms). The choice between them appears to be linked to modality. Broadly, in the modern language *min* is found in *na* clauses, and *den* elsewhere; in Classical Greek, while all moods are found with both negators, again *me:* appears to be more 'modal', being the negator of imperatives, wishes and purpose clauses, while *u:k* negates assertions.

The primary aim of this paper is to analyse more precisely the choice between these

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¹ For a detailed explanation of the developments, see Horrocks 1997.

² The exact meaning and details of the development of *na* are controversial. The description outlined here follows explanations found in the major grammar books, eg. Holton et al. 1997.

two negators. In a recent paper Philippaki-Warbuton & Spyropoulos (2004) consider this question in the context of a description of the development of the Greek modal and negative systems from Classical to Modern Greek via the Greek of the Hellenistic and Roman koine (HRK). They claim that, given that mood is fused with person and tense in the Classical period, it must therefore be expressed in INFL. The two negators *me:* and *u:k* are said to express deontic and epistemic modality respectively. In the modern language, in contrast, they claim that mood is produced within a separate MOOD head, since it is realised by the ‘modal particle’ *na* (and sometimes *as*), and that the same distinction between deontic and epistemic modality, now ‘mapped’ on the distinction between indicative and subjunctive, is still marked by a choice of the two negators (now *mi(n)* and *den*).

The distinction between deontic and epistemic modality is of course fundamental in studies of modality, being usually exemplified with English modal verbs:

- (1) You must hand in work on time or else = Deontic
- (2) They may be going to India at Christmas = Epistemic

However, in this paper I will argue that this distinction is not relevant for the choice of negator in either Classical or Modern Greek. I will then turn to the evidence for the distinction between the negators in Homeric Greek, which I suggest requires a fine-grained analysis of the functional category of modality. My conclusions have implications for the analysis of later stages of the language, as well as of functional categories more generally.

2. Analysis of the deontic vs epistemic argument

In Modern Greek the choice between the two negators may be stated quite straightforwardly. The negator *mi* is found in *na* clauses, wishes, and in ‘negative imperatives’ (these are formed not with the inflectional imperative form but with the indicative or ‘verbal dependent’ form, see Holton et al. 1997: §5.1.5.3), while the negator *den* is found elsewhere. However, this straightforward situation does not equate to the conclusion that *den* is found with epistemic modality while *mi* is found with deontic modality.

Firstly, not all of the constructions introduced by *na* may be described as deontic. For example, the construction introduces possibility after *bori* (or *isos*). This context seems epistemic, not deontic. For example:

- (3) Μπορεί να βρέξει αύριο αλλά μπορεί και να μη βρέξει
bor'i na vr'eksi a'vrío all'a bor'i ki na mi vr'eksi
may.3.SG NA rain.3.SG tomorrow but may.3.SG also NA MIN rain.3.SG
‘Maybe it will rain tomorrow, but maybe it will not rain’

Holton et al. 1997: 209

The construction is also used as the complement of perception verbs. This again does not appear to be a deontic environment. For example:

- (4) Βλέπω το Γιάννη να σου χαμογελά
 vl'ero to J'anni na su xamojel'a
 see.1.SG the John.ACC NA you.DAT smiling.ACC
 'I see John smiling at you'

Holton et al. 1997: 454

The construction is also used as the complement to certain verbs which may select either *na* or *oti*. The difference between them does not appear to be the difference between deontic and epistemic modality. For example:

- (5) Δε νομίζω να μας καλέσει
 de nom'izo na mas kal'esi
 ΔΕ think.1.SG NA us.ACC invite.FUT.3.SG
 'I don't think that he will invite us'

- (6) Νομίζω ότι δε θα μας καλέσει
 nom'izo 'oti de tha mas kal'esi
 think.1.SG oti ΔΕ FUT us call.FUT.3.SG
 'I think that he will not invite us'

Holton et al. 1997: 453

Sentence 5 might be described as more 'subjective' or 'affective' than the one in sentence 6; what seems certain is that one is no more 'deontic' than the other.

In main clauses, too, it is not clear that *na* always introduces deontic readings. Roberts & Roussou (2003: 75) give two different readings for the following sentence, one of which seems more epistemic, the other seeming more deontic:

- (7) na egrapse to grama
 PRT wrote.3.SG the letter
 'Is it possible/could it be the case that he wrote the letter?' (epistemic?)
 'I wish he had written the letter.' (deontic?)

In addition to *na* clauses, some of which do not appear to be deontic environments, the negator *min* is also found in gerunds. While it has been claimed that these are in some way 'modal' (for example in Roussou (2000: 88), apparently because the gerund is found in the same 'position' as *na*), they do not seem in any way deontic. For example:

- (8) Μην γνωρίζοντας το πρόβλημα αποφάσισε να μείνει
 min gnorizondas to problima apofasise na m'ini
 MIN know.PRTCPL the problem decided.3.SG NA stay.3.SG

‘Ignorant of the problem, she decided to stay’

Roussou (2000: 87)

It has been argued that the gerunds are ‘learnèd’ variants, from the classical stage of the language (Holton *et al* 1997: 130). This non-deontic use could therefore be explained as allowable exceptions, occurring through interference between the different stages of the language.

Another context in which the negator is not explained is conditional clauses, where *den* is used. It has been argued that these may not be analysed as examples of epistemic modality (eg. Willmott 2008). In English, epistemic modal verbs are usually excluded from conditional antecedents. For example:

(9) ?If Fran may be leaving tomorrow, she will miss the talk.

To sum up, there are three counter-arguments for the claim that, in Modern Greek the negators *den* and *min* are used in epistemic and deontic contexts. Not all *na* clauses are deontic, *min* is used with gerunds, and *den* is used in conditional clauses.

To briefly consider the evidence from Classical Greek, at first glance the evidence does appear to support the claim that *me:* is deontic, while *u:k* is epistemic. In subordinate clauses, *me:* is found in purpose clauses, and *u:k* in indirect speech clauses. In main clauses, *me:* is found in directives and wishes, *u:k* in assertions. Leaving aside the question of whether performative constructions should be described as deontic or epistemic (for more on this, see Willmott 2007: 2.3.3), if we again look at the data more thoroughly, we find that *me:* is also found in some non-deontic circumstances, namely in conditional sentences, with participles with a conditional meaning, and as the complement to certain verbs (eg. verbs of expecting and swearing etc., see Goodwin 1889: §685). The choice of negator therefore does not appear to be governed by whether the proposition expresses deontic or epistemic modality in Classical Greek any more than it is in Modern Greek.

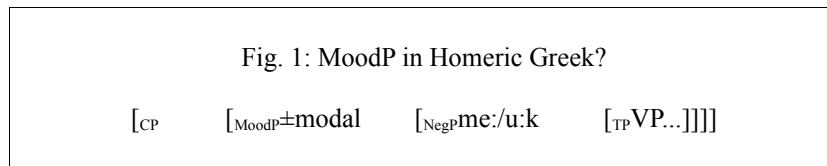
3 The negators of Homeric Greek

In order to suggest a new explanation for the choice of negator in Greek, I will consider the evidence from an even earlier stage of the language, the language of the Homeric epics. I will argue that understanding the choice between the two negators requires a fine-grained analysis of the functional category of mood and its syntactic behaviour. Due to lack of space it is not possible to analyse the later stages. However, the analysis of the Homeric data will hopefully provide a useful basis to carry out such an analysis in the future.

2.1 MoodP in Homeric Greek?

In Homeric Greek as in Classical Greek the grammar books tell us that, in main clauses, *me:* is found in imperatives and wishes, while *u:k* is found in assertions. In subordinate clauses, *me:* is found in purpose clauses, and is the (usual) marker of conditional antecedents, while *u:k* is found in more ‘factive’ contexts, such as in the

complements to verbs of saying and knowing (Chantraine (1948), Monro (1891), Goodwin (1889)). We might therefore conclude that *me:* is more ‘modal’ than *u:k*. The contexts in which *me:* is found certainly appear to correspond to contexts in which we might expect the ‘subjunctive’ to appear in modern European languages. This might lead us to posit a Mood Phrase in Homeric Greek, to be represented diagrammatically as follows:



Philippaki-Warbuton & Spyropoulos (2004: 794) have however pointed to data which would appear to rule out such a model for Classical Greek, and the same problems are found in Homeric Greek. Namely, there does not in fact seem to be a straightforward association with the particular negator and the choice of mood. The example they give is the use of *me:* with the future indicative, which is also found (though very rarely) in Homeric Greek. In Homeric Greek we also find *u:k* with the subjunctive in Homeric Greek.

I would claim that neither of these contexts are in fact problematic for the claim that *me:* is more ‘modal’ than *u:k*. For reasons of space I will not discuss this claim further, but it depends on the observation that future markers are often used in ‘modal’ environments (see further Tsangalidis 1999, as well as the argument that the subjunctive is not clearly distinguishable from the future indicative in Homeric Greek (see Willmott 2007: §4.2.2)). In any case, the claim is irrelevant, as there are some clear uses of the negator *u:k* in modal contexts which prove that the ± modal distinction is not strong enough to capture the difference between *u:k* and *me:*, as I will show in the next section.

2.2 Modal uses of *u:k*

The negator *u:k* is the usual negator of the optative in its potential use in conditional consequents. For example:

- (10) εἰ περ γάρ κε βλεῖο πονεύμενος ἢε τυπείης
 eí per gar ke bleío poneumenos e:e tupeie:s
 if PTCL PTCL PTCL hit.OPT.3.SG.PASS toiling or strike.OPT.3.SG.PASS
- οὐκ ἂν ἐν αὐχέν' ὀπισθε πέσοι βέλος οὐδ' ἐνὶ νότω,
 u:k an en auk^hen hopist^he pesoi belos oud eni no:to:
 U:K PTCL in neck behind fall.3.opt.sg weapon U:K in back

‘If you were hit or struck in battle, the weapon would not land in your neck or back from behind.’

Homer *Iliad* 13.289

The negator *u:k* is also used in conditional consequents with the indicative in so-called ‘counterfactual’ conditionals. These are surely also +modal contexts (apparently confirmed by the presence of the so-called ‘modal particle’). For example:

(11)	οὐδ’ ἄν	πω	χάζοντο	κελεύθου	δοῖοι	Ἀχαιοὶ	
	u:d	an	pw	k ^h asdonto	keleut ^h ou	diioi	Ak ^h aiioi
	U:K	PTCL	PTCL	give ground.IMPF.3.PL	path.GEN.SG	god-like	Achaeans
	εἰ	μη	Ἀλέξανδρος	Ἑλένης	πόσις	ἡῦκόμοιο	
	ei	me:	Aleksandros	Helene:s	posis	e:ukomoio	
	if	ME:	Paris	Helen.GEN.SG	husband	fair-haired	
	παῦσεν	ἀριστεύοντα	Μαχάονα	ποιμένα	λαῶν		
	pausen	aristeuonta	mak ^h aona	poimena	lao:on		
	stop.3.AOR.SG	beating	Machaon	shepherd	people		

‘The god-like Achaeans would not have given ground from their course, if Paris, husband of fair-haired Helen, had not stopped Machaon, shepherd of the people, as he was in his stride’

Homer *Iliad* 11.504

These two uses of the negator are well established in the grammar books and seem uncontroversially to contradict any claim that *me:* is +modal and *u:k* is -modal.

There are two further uses of *u:k* with the optative, which are rather more tricky to explain, as they rest on recent claims made for the meaning of the optative (Willmott 2007: chapter 5). In the first, *u:k* is found in a seemingly ‘deontic’ context:

(12)	τὸ οὐκ ἄν	βασιληῶν	ἀνὰ	στόμ’	ἔχων	ἀγορεύουσιν,		
	to:	u:k	an	basile:as	ana	stom’	ek ^h o:n	agoreuouis
	PTCL	U:K	PTCL	kings.ACC.PL	on	mouth	having	mention.2.SG.OPT
	καὶ σφιν	ὀνειδέα	τε	προφέροισι,	νόστον	τε	φυλάσσοισι	
	kai	sp ^h in	oneidea	te	prop ^h erois,	noston	te	p ^h ulassois
	and them	insults	PTCL	carry.2.SG.OPT	homecoming	PTCL	look.2.SG.OPT	

‘You must not rail against kings with their names on your lips and proffer insults to them and think of your home-coming’

Homer *Iliad* 2.250

In this sentence the speaker is not making a prediction (‘I don’t think you will rail’) but stating an obligation. For this reason, I have translated the optative with ‘must’ (also cf. *Iliad* 14.126 and *Odyssey* 20.135). This use of the optative has been described as ‘objective deontic’, stating the existence of an obligation rather than

performatively imposing the obligation at the moment of speech (Willmott (2007: 5.5.3)).

It has also been argued that the optative is used to express ‘dynamic’ modality, describing the ability of the speaker (Willmott (2007: 5.5.2)). Here again the negator is *u:k*. For example:

(13)	τὸν δ΄	οὐ	κε	δύ΄	ἄνερε	δήμου	ἀρίστῳ
	ton d	u:	ke	du	anere	de:mu:	aristo:
	that PTCL	U:K	PTCL	two	men	region	best
	ῥῆιδίως ἐπ΄	ἄμαξαν	ἀπ΄	οὐδεοσ	ὀγλίσσειαν		
	r ^h idio:s ep	amaksan ap	u:deos	ok ^h lisseian			
	easily on	wagon from	floor	lift.OPT.3.PL			
	οἳτοι νῦν	βροτοί	εἰς΄				
	hoioi nu:n	brotoi	eis				
	as now	mortals	are				

‘Two men, the best from the region, would not be able to lift it easily from the floor to the wagon, such as men now are.’

Homer *Iliad* 12.448

While the existence of these meanings of the optative has only recently been claimed, it is nonetheless clear that these sentences provide further evidence that the negator *u:k* is found in a +modal environment.

A fuller description of the uses of the negators in Homeric Greek finite clauses would therefore run as follows:

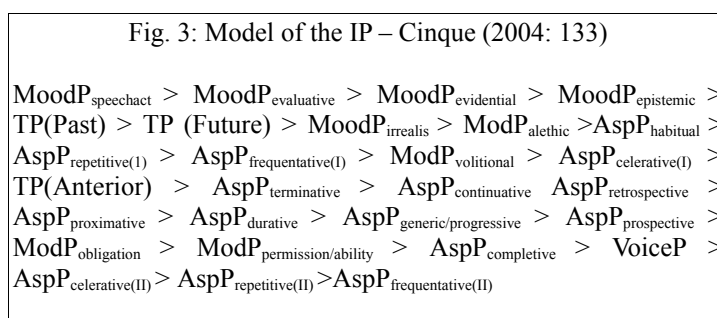
Fig. 2: The uses of the negators in Homeric Greek

Mood	Construction	Negator
Imp/subj	Directives	<i>me:</i>
Opt	Wishes	<i>me:</i>
Opt/subj/indic	Most conditional antecedents	<i>me:</i>
Opt/subj/indic	Purpose clauses	<i>me:</i>
Opt/indic	Conditional consequents	<i>u:k</i>
Opt	Statements of obligation	<i>u:k</i>
Opt	Statements of ability	<i>u:k</i>
Indic/subj	Assertions	<i>u:k</i>

2.3 Articulated mood category

A detailed analysis of the use of the negators in Homeric Greek has shown that the two different negators are found in a range of different contexts, which may not be simply categorised as deontic/epistemic or \pm modal. We therefore need to find a different way of explaining the distribution of the two negators, which could account for the apparent different syntactic behaviour of semantically different types of modality.

It is thus very interesting that Cinque has argued for a model of the IP which implies a more finely-grained functional category of modality. Based on the relative order of a range of different adverbs and other verbal elements in various languages, he proposed a universal hierarchy of functional projections, a subset of which is shown below:



It is particularly interesting that Cinque's model of the clause structure has been

related to different negative markers in different Romance dialects in Zanuttini (1997: 101). Although no one different language exhibits more than one negator, she argues that the ‘scope’ of the negative marker used in different dialects is different.

The different types of modality distinguished in this model have interesting correlations with the environments for the different negators distinguished above in Homeric Greek. The modality of imperatives and wishes would appear to compare semantically to Cinque’s MoodP_{speechact}, while statements of obligation would appear to compare to his MoodP_{obligation} and statements of dynamic modality could be compared to his ModP_{permission/ability}. It is then tempting to correlate the modality of purpose clauses and conditional clauses with another of his types, perhaps MoodP_{irrealis}. These correlations could lead us to redraw figure 2 as figure 4:

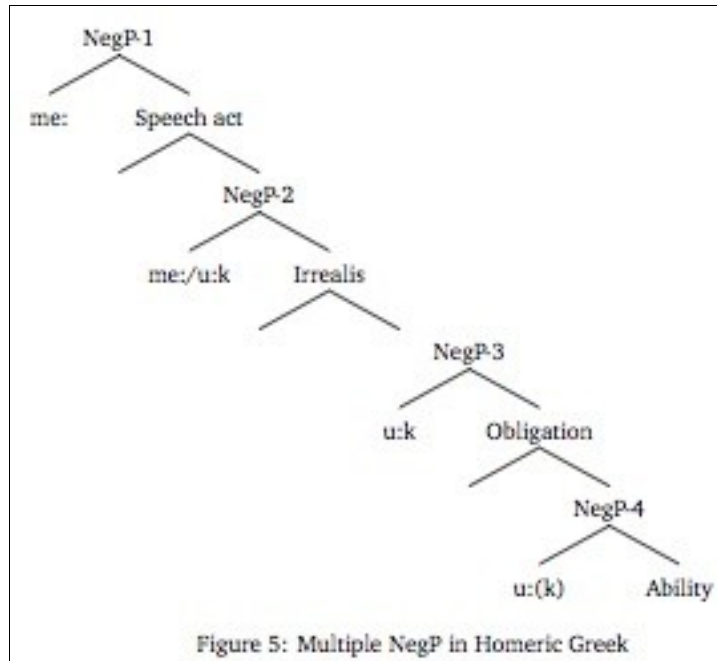
Fig. 4: Uses of the negators in Homeric Greek with types of modality

Construction	Negator	Functional category
Directives	<i>me:</i>	MoodP _{speechact}
Wishes	<i>me:</i>	MoodP _{speechact}
Most conditional antecedents	<i>me:</i>	MoodP _{irrealis}
Purpose clauses	<i>me:</i>	MoodP _{irrealis}
Conditional consequents	<i>u:k</i>	MoodP _{irrealis}
Statements of obligation	<i>u:k</i>	ModP _{obligation}
Statements of ability	<i>u:k</i>	ModP _{permission/ability}

If these are plausible correlations, it seems that *me:* is found negating the types of modality with the larger scope, while *u:k* is found lower down.

2. A functional difference of scope?

Inspired by the models of Cinque and Zanuttini, I therefore propose the following diagram for the interaction of mood and negation in Homeric Greek, distinguishing four different positions, according to the type of modality they appear to correspond to in Cinque’s model, each of which positions may be negated:



The model captures the difference in scope that is observable between the two negators to which I alluded briefly above. An analysis which distinguishes two different sentential negators in terms of their different scopes seems *prima facie* plausible, and may be compared to Jespersen's distinction between 'special' and 'nexal' negation (Jespersen 1917: 42). In this regard it is surely relevant that *u:k* is found as the 'special' negator of nominal elements (ie with much smaller scope). For example:

- (14) πληγεις οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἐλεύσεται Οὐλύμπων δέ
 ple:geis u: kata kozmon eleusetai u:lumpon de
 struck u:k according-to order come.FUT.3.SG Olympus PTCL

'he will come to Olympus struck, and not in an orderly way'

Homer *Iliad* 8.10

The model implies a more fine-grained model of modality than a 'duplex' deontic/epistemic category. It also suggests that each individual negator is more complex, operating at various different positions. With this latter claim in mind it is interesting that a similar claim has been made for *mi(n)* in Modern Greek. Janda & Joseph (1999) have argued that *mi(n)* must be analysed as a 'morphological constellation' rather than a single entity.

3 Discussion

There are several points about this proposal which deserve to be discussed in more detail. For lack of space, all the implications may not be covered, but the most important details will be addressed.

A first problem is the position of the negative with respect to the first functional subcategory, that of speech act. Previous scholars have objected to the representation of Force in the structure at all (see eg Zanuttini & Portner (2003)). Even ignoring this controversy, it is well known that several languages do not permit negated imperatives. Han argues that this derives from the incoherent interpretive representation that the syntax of those languages would entail (Han (2001)). She points out that the negative imperative ‘Don’t call’ means ‘I require that you not call’ rather than ‘I do not require you to call’ (Han 2001: 289).

However, this objection is to misunderstand the nature of the relationship between the negation and the type of modality that I am proposing. I am not claiming that the negation negates that feature, rather that it functions at the same level as it. It is perhaps easier to understand this in considering the negation at the ‘irrealis’ node, as found, as I argue, in purpose clauses and conditional clauses in Homeric Greek. I am not claiming that a negator functioning at the ‘irrealis’ node negates the ‘irrealis’ nature of the sentence. This would produce a realis reading which is clearly not the case.

In this regard it is perhaps relevant that the ‘negative speech acts’ are not restricted to negative imperatives. Oaths are also negated with *me:*. For example (see also Homer *Odyssey* 9.406):

(15)	ἴστω		νῦν	Ζεὺς	πρῶτα		
	isto:		nun	sdeus	pro:ta		
	know.3.IMPV		now	Zeus	first		
	μη̄	μὲν	ἐγὼ	κούρηι	Βρισηΐδι	χεῖρ’	ἐπένεικα
	me:	men	ego:	ku:re:	brise:di	k ^h eir	epeneika
	ME:	PTCL	I	maiden	Briseis	hand	laid

‘Let Zeus know first... I did not lay a hand on Briseis’

Homer *Iliad* 19.261

In oaths *me:* creates a negated assertion, while in assertions, *u:k* makes the assertion of a negative proposition.

A second problem is how to account for the fact that, at the irrealis node, either negator appears to be possible. This would seem to suggest that even the more finely-grained category of modality cannot explain the choice of negator. The model explains the facts that *u:k* is found in ‘counterfactual’ consequents with the optative and the indicative, while *me:* is found in conditional antecedents. All these

contexts may be described as irrealis. However, given their different syntactic position, there would be reason to distinguish two different modes, each modified by the different negator. This proliferation of the number of different functional categories which would apparently have been distinguished by speakers of Homeric Greek may seem undesirable to some. However, the use of particular negators in very particular situations has to be explained in some way. The refined model of five nodes would appear to be one way of capturing this reality.

There is one further related detail to iron out, which is the variance of negators in conditional antecedents. It was mentioned above that *me:* is the negator of *most* conditional antecedents. Occasionally, *u:k* is found instead. However, this is not too much of a problem for my assertion that *me:* is the negator of 'irrealis' modality in this context. Conditional antecedents differ in how 'irrealis' they are. Indeed, it could be argued that they are sufficiently marked as 'irrealis' by the conditional marker, thus not requiring any further marker. The environment of conditional sentences would appear to be one of tension which is resolved in different ways at different times in a language (see Willmott (2008)). We have seen that in Modern Greek, the negator of conditional clauses is *den*, otherwise only used outside of *na* clauses and negative directives. In Homer, the majority of the uses of *u:k* in this context are described as 'adherescent', where the negator has a particularly close relationship with the verb (for this term see Smyth 1956: §2691-2697). In other examples, it is functioning as a 'special' or 'constituent' negator. (For more discussion, see Basset (1989)). Otherwise *u:k* is only found in a certain type of conditional clause in Homeric Greek, namely the future-referring 'real' conditionals. It could be argued that these are less 'irrealis' than other conditionals (see further Willmott (2008)).

Finally, any attempt to analyse the structure of mood in Ancient Greek cannot ignore the existence of the particle *an*. This particle (which has an 'alternative' *ke* in Homeric Greek) has been described as a 'modal particle', being found in such modal contexts as indefinite conditional and temporal clauses and counterfactual conditional consequents. However, its exact meaning is unclear and debated. Certainly it does not appear in all modal contexts. For example it is (usually) not found in wishes (with the optative), hortations (with the subjunctive), or negative directives (with the subjunctive) (for some exceptions to this rule see Willmott (2007: §8.1)). It has been claimed that the presence of the modal particle again the distinction between deontic and epistemic modality. However, it has been pointed out that the full details of its distribution argues against this claim. Instead, it has been argued that the particle is most likely to have originally had some lexical meaning which is consonant with 'epistemic' contexts, and that it is undergoing a process of grammaticalisation being found more and more regularly in certain constructions (Willmott (2007: §8.1)). In the context of this paper it is important to note that its presence is not sufficient or necessary for a particular modal reading. Given that its analysis is not straightforward, and given that there are interesting conclusions to be reached about negator choice and type of modality without accounting for it, it has been left out from the above syntactic analysis of Homeric

Greek. Clearly, an attempt to give a fuller syntactic explanation of the expression of mood in this language would have to account for it in more detail.

4 Conclusion

There are several pieces of evidence which cast doubt on the claim that the underlying difference between the two negators in Greek corresponds to the difference between deontic and epistemic modality. A thorough investigation of the Homeric data has suggested that the functional category is more complex than the bipartite division into deontic and epistemic would allow. Typological parallels have led me to claim that the different negators can each operate at different 'levels' of the clause, with *me*: having larger 'scope' than *u:k*. This conclusion implies that the functional category of modality operates separately from the inflectional category of 'mood', suggesting that functional categories project independently of morphological properties. While the proposal is still preliminary, it is hoped that it will stimulate further discussion, as well as being useful in the analysis of later stages of the language.

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