ASPECT AND IMPERATIVES ONCE MORE

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Abstract: In this paper, I revisit the question of the aspectual nature of the imperative, or rather, examine the aspectual nature of imperatives and some other forms that function alongside the imperative as forms of command and prohibition. I divide my comments into three sections: imperatives and the Greek mood system, verbal aspect and the imperative, and some abiding issues—three in particular—that continue to be raised, despite the discussion that has transpired over the last nearly thirty years. (Article)

1. *Introduction*

The question of the semantics of the imperative form continues to beguile and bewitch interpreters, some of their observations being of merit and others of questionable value because they are based upon a variety of points of confusion. My impression is that many of the comments are made because of a lack of understanding of the Greek verbal system and confusion over some basic definitions. The result is that the imperative form is isolated from the other mood-forms,[1] the notion of command is equated with the imperative mood-form in some instances or

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1.   See Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 8–9, esp. n. 6. The confusion of imperative as form with imperative as semantic category is relatively easily solved by not using the same terminology. Good evidence of the confusion is seen in the works of John Lyons that Fantin cites (Lyons, *Semantics*, 633–35, 745–46; Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, 32–40). I attempt to address some of these problems below.

with multiple other forms in others, lexical semantics are often unnecessarily introduced into the discussion especially for infrequent verbs, misguided notions of context are sometimes imposed upon interpretation, and there is a general failure to appreciate language as system. There is the further consideration that the New Testament as a corpus, as useful as it is, is a relatively small, structured corpus (even if structured by the ancients), and so is not necessarily a representative one. Nevertheless, there are many important observations that can be made about imperatives in the light of recent developments in aspect theory. Having been one of the innovators and leaders in the discussion of the Greek verbal system as aspectually based, I have taken this opportunity to revisit the question of the aspectual nature of the imperative, or rather, to examine the aspectual nature of imperatives and some other forms that function alongside the imperative as forms of command and prohibition. I divide my comments into three sections: imperatives and the Greek mood system, verbal aspect and the imperative, and some abiding issues—three in particular—that continue to be raised, despite the discussion that has transpired over the last nearly thirty years.

2. *Imperatives and the Greek Mood System*

Discussion of the imperative must always take place within discussion of the Greek mood system. Greek has a morphologically rich and complex mood system that enables verbal forms to grammaticalize semantic features that are sometimes reserved for modal systems utilizing verbal adjuncts (such as in English).[2] The result is that the imperative and other

2.   This is a major difference between Greek and English. What might be called modality is grammaticalized by the mood system in Greek, whereas modality in English is syntactically realized by elements of the verb group (or possibly adverbial adjuncts). I have long believed that one must systemically analyze any language on the basis of the language itself, not on the basis of pre-established linguistic categories. This is a problem in a number of areas of Greek linguistics, including not only the mood system but the definitions of the aspects (and their number). I note that my thoughts along these lines are similar

forms must be examined in their systemic relations and their semantics determined based on their function within the Greek language. Discussion of the imperative has a surprisingly rich heritage.[3] The imperative is both formally and semantically related to a set of mood-forms concerned with grammaticalizing the semantic feature of [-assertive], as opposed to the indicative mood form that grammaticalizes [+assertive]. The feature of [-assertive] is the semantic entry point for all the so-called non-indicative mood-forms. There is an alternative perspective that, because of the minimalist morphological bulk of the imperative, its restriction in person, and its syntactical configurations (virtually always as a free clause), opposes the imperative to all the other, finite mood forms. This is worth discussion, even though at this point I have not been convinced by such a reconceptualization (one major problem is that the non-imperative forms are not all free forms, and this makes the mood system into a system merely of clause types)—and some of the further reasons for this will become evident in my further discussion.

The imperative is therefore one of several forms that grammaticalize the semantic feature of [-assertive] along with other semantic features dependent upon their place in the semantic network. The semantics of the imperative grammaticalize the semantic features of [-assertive; +directive]. There is often helpful discussion of the imperative in terms of

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to those of the "radical structuralism" of the Columbia School of functional linguistics, whose perspective and mine have apparently been developing along these lines independent of each other (e.g., with emphasis upon input rather than output). See Otheguy, "Saussurean Anti-Nomenclaturism," 373–403, esp. 373–74, 382–83, with bibliography. I wish to thank my student, Ryder Wishart, for his bringing this and other related issues to my attention in his (prepublication version of) "Monosemy." I would refer to this as a "minimalist formal semantics" (adapted from Porter, "Greek Linguistics and Lexicography," 19–61, esp. 44), developing the approach in my earlier work (from 1986 and after) and conceptualized well in Gotteri, "Toward a Systemic Approach," 499–507.

3. Much of what follows is dependent upon Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, esp. 75–109 and 335–61, with the semantic network refined according to Porter and O'Donnell, "Greek Verbal Network," 3–41.

"volition," but I do not use that term due to confusion over other forms with such names (e.g., in conjunction with the subjunctive or future) and its limitations on the semantics of the imperative itself.[4] The more general and abstract term "directive" or "direction" is more appropriate for the encompassing (monosemous) semantic feature of the imperative (even if volition is understood within this), but it also has similarities to "projective" or "projection," and thus unifies the semantic description of the imperative and subjunctive (along with the optative). Whereas the imperative is volitional (using the term for the sake of convenience), the subjunctive/optative is visional/volitional and hence grammaticalizes the semantic feature of [+projective]. (The semantic distinction between the subjunctive and the optative is [+/-contingent].) The subjunctive/optative grammaticalizes a projected visualization by the speaker, and the imperative grammaticalizes simply the speaker's direction of the audience toward a process. On these grounds, I think that it is rightly within the scope of discussion of formalized Greek commands and prohibitions if one discusses the imperative and its negated forms (the negated present imperative and the negated third person aorist imperative for prohibition), the negated second person aorist subjunctive (and five instances of negated third person aorist subjunctives as prohibitions), and so-called hortatory subjunctives, those subjunctives used with the commanding/prohibitive sense. Since prohibitions are negated commands, I believe that it is appropriate to include the full range of forms that realize these semantic features in Greek. Note that I do not include other forms or types of expressions (a point to which I will return).

This brief summary of a much more extensive system network for the Greek verbal system regarding mood establishes some fundamental parameters that I will return to below in treating some of the abiding issues in discussion.

4.　But see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 713.

3. *Verbal Aspect and the Imperative*

The aspectual (or equivalent) semantics of commands and prohibitions expressed by the aorist and present tense-forms has been tacitly if not explicitly recognized far longer than has an aspectual semantics of the entire Greek verbal system. The reason for this appears to be that, relatively early in Greek grammatical theorizing and description, grammarians realized that the imperative—regardless of one's view of the temporal semantics of the rest of the Greek verbal edifice—could not be temporal and certainly not future, or if it was future in some sense, only future in a way that could not distinguish between the two major tense-forms used, the aorist and the present.[5] This formulation of the problem pushes towards an aspectual view. As a result, Greek scholars early on posited various analyses that showed the limitations of kind-of-action theories and pushed toward aspectual (or equivalent) theories in their description of Greek.

There have been several useful histories of the scholarly discussion surrounding imperatives and the like, first by me and then followed by others such as Joseph Fantin and Douglas Huffman.[6] However, the broad sweeps of the discussion merit repeating. George Andrew Jacob (1845) was apparently the first to make an aspectual distinction regarding commands/prohibitions, positing a distinction among "Imperfects" (present/imperfect), "Perfects" (perfect/pluperfect), and "Indefinites" (future/aorist).[7] Concerning commands/prohibitions, he apparently "allows for either of the tense-form constructions to be used in prohibitions of future acts not yet begun as well as commands to cease acts already underway," by this formulation thus disputing

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5. E.g., Humbert, *Syntaxe grecque*, 177.

6. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 336–47; Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 91–97; and Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 74–104 (though geared toward prohibitions). One major criticism of Huffman's work is that he confines his discussion to prohibitions, when prohibitions are commands with negative polarity. He also extends the scope of prohibitions to an unnecessary extent.

7. Jacob, *Bromsgrove Greek Grammar*, 227–29 (cited by Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 75–77).

the classic distinction still made in some circles.[8] This opinion was followed in 1895 by J. Donovan, who not only recognized that the non-indicative moods do not make a time distinction in the tense-forms, but instead argues that aorist and present imperatives are found in identical kind-of-action contexts and are used of action which may be variously described.[9] Donovan essentially made one simple and major point, i.e., aorist and present imperatives are found in identical contexts (what some might call similar pragmatic contexts) and are used of action which objectively may be variously described. This is an important observation that should have ushered out the kind-of-action approach to imperatives and paved the way for aspectual theory.

Despite this early work, under the influence of *Aktionsart* theory, much of the debate regarding imperatives revolved around how they did not seem to fit within such an analysis of kind-of-action. As a result, in 1903, W. Headlam, drawing upon some works by Henry Jackson on aorists and Milton W. Humphreys on presents,[10] asserted the persistent view that the aorist prohibition is concerned with not instigating an action and the present prohibition not continuing what is already being done, a view that was picked up and published in numerous grammars since then.[11] R.C. Seaton in 1906 responded to

8.   Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 77, whose summary of Jacob I utilize (as well as finding helpful his entire discussion of other scholars cited below). For those still making the classic distinction between an aorist imperative indicating the beginning of action (or even punctiliar or specific action) and the present imperative indicating continuing action (or even durative or general action), see the chart in Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 27, though geared toward prohibitions.

9.   Donovan, "Sonnenschein's Greek Grammar," 60–67, citing Buttmann, *Griechische Grammatik*, in recognizing that there is no temporal distinction between the present and aorist tense-forms in the non-indicative moods.

10.   Headlam, "Some Passages of Aeschylus," 286–95. See Jackson, "Prohibitions in Greek," 262–63; Humphreys, "On Negative Commands," 46–49.

11.   E.g., Blass, *Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 190–92, and subsequent editions, including BDF §§ 336–37; Moulton, *Prolegomena*,

Jackson and questioned his example of the aorist prohibition (Plato, *Apol.* 20e with μὴ θορυβήσητε and 21a with μὴ θορυβεῖτε), showing that there was interchangeability of the tense-forms so far as kind-of-action.[12] H. Darnley Naylor responded (1905) and cited evidence for and against Headlam's and Jackson's proposals, to the point of admitting that in many instances there is not a definable difference between the use of the present and aorist commands/prohibitions so far as kind-of-action is concerned.[13] Headlam's response (1906) was to marshal more examples, while admitting to exceptions to his generalization.[14] Telling evidence, however, was examples where an aorist prohibition was used to interrupt a person already speaking (e.g., Plato, *Gorg.* 521b; Achilles Tatius 8.6.15–7.1). Naylor responded to Headlam (1906) by providing more examples, although he (unnecessarily) conceded Headlam's argument regarding the aorist, becoming confused over matters of commands/prohibitions occurring in the future.[15] A. Poutsma (1928), although accepting Headlam's distinction, recognized examples of both present and aorist forms that are incompatible with it.[16] There clearly was confusion regarding commands and prohibitions, with all sides admitting that, whereas they were seeking a common meaning, their estimates based upon kind-of-action were not advancing discussion. Levi Arnold Post (1938), also recognizing the strength of the Headlam view, noted that, whatever one may think of the view of kind-of-action with the other tense-forms, it does not work for imperatives.[17] Despite getting mixed up terminologically by referring to both *Aktionsart* and aspect as if they are interchangeable, Post classifies use of the imperative according to "dramatic use," and concludes that there is not interchangeability between the aorist and present, in

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122–26; and many since, such as Moule, *Idiom Book*, 135–36; and Turner, *Syntax*, 75.

12.   Seaton, "Prohibition in Greek," 438.
13.   Naylor "Prohibitions in Greek," 26–30.
14.   Headlam, "Greek Prohibitions," 30–36.
15.   Naylor, "More Prohibitions in Greek," 348.
16.   Poutsma, "Over de tempora," 1–84.
17.   Post, "Dramatic Uses," 31–59.

that the aorist cannot take the place of the present but the present can for dramatic reasons take the place of the aorist (an early understanding of what might be called prominence). The kind-of-action view was giving way to an aspectual view. One of the last to defend a view based upon kind-of-action was J.P. Louw (1959), although with some ambiguity in his approach. Following Poutsma, Louw attempted to ground the conventional event vs. duration approach, which is labeled by Louw as *Aktionsart*, in the ancient grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus (§§ 45–46).[18] Louw can be rightly accused of forcing both his understanding of Apollonius and some of the examples he cites to make them conform to a theory of kind-of-action. However, more than that, he revealed ambiguity regarding the relationship of kind-of-action to the perspective of the language user, thus revealing that the kind-of-action approach is unsatisfactory and implying an aspectual view. Louw seemed to recognize this by allowing for authorial choice, but he was unable to move beyond the language of *Aktionsart* and kind-of-action.[19] Willem Bakker (1966) offered a full treatment in defense of the Headlam view, but his diachronic study imposed a temporal view on the tense-forms from modern Greek that is unjustified at the time of the writing of the New Testament.[20] The fact that so much of the discussion revolved around assessing pragmatic usage and finding numerous exceptions to the kinds of categories based upon kind-of-action laid the ground for a more explicit development of an aspectual analysis of the Greek imperative.[21]

The decisive turn was finally taken in 1977. Suzanne Amigues (1977) recognized the superficial analysis often made (as chronicled above) that the present was durative or iterative

18.   Louw, "On Greek Prohibitions," 43–57.

19.   I am not as positively inclined toward Louw's analysis as is Huffman as a step along the way toward aspectuality. See Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 85.

20.   Bakker, *The Greek Imperative.*

21.   In summary, the examples cited by Donovan, Naylor, Poutsma, Louw, and Bakker provide more than enough evidence to make the kind-of-action approach unsustainable. Similar results have been found for the New Testament. See Boyer, "Classification of Imperatives," 35–54, esp. 43–44.

and the aorist was punctual or semelfactive (punctual but atelic).[22] Concentrating upon the contrast stressed by the common volitional element in both present and aorist-based commands/prohibitions, she selected the verbs ἀναγίγνωσκε and ἀνάγνωθι for analysis. Based on the similar syntactical patterns (e.g., Dem. 56.37 and 35.37) of this verbal opposition, she believed that this indicates subjective aspectual choice and difference. The present represents one view of the action (as prolonged) and the aorist as another (simple fact), which she characterized in terms of emphasis on the action's execution. The next major step in discussing the aspectual semantics of commands/prohibitions occurred in the writings of K.L. McKay, especially but not exclusively his two articles on the imperative published in 1985 and 1986.[23] McKay applies his theory of verbal aspect, developed elsewhere earlier, to the imperative. He concludes that the distinction between the aorist and present tense-forms is aspectual and hence there is no necessary correlation with objective action but instead relative interchangeability,[24] and that "Time is even less important in the imperative than in other moods; logically it cannot be past or present, and it makes no difference to the aspect whether immediate or distant future, or actual or general time is implied."[25] In other words, he reinforces an idea that was already proposed by the end of the nineteenth century. However, he still wishes to differentiate stative and action verbs (a remnant of *Aktionsart*),[26] but believes that the present may be more heavily marked than the aorist.[27] Stanley Porter, first in 1989, and then in 1992, argued for a rigorous aspectual view based upon the Greek tri-aspectual system, with emphasis upon the perfective (grammaticalized by the aorist) and imperfective (gramma-

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22. Amigues, "Les tempes de l'impératif," 223–38.
23. McKay, "Aspect in Imperatival Constructions," 201–26; McKay, "Aspects of the Imperative," 41–58. See also McKay, *Greek Grammar for Students*; McKay, *New Syntax*, 77–84.
24. McKay, "Aspects of the Imperative," 44.
25. McKay, "Aspect in Imperatival Constructions," 207.
26. McKay, "Aspects of the Imperative," 55.
27. McKay, "Aspects of the Imperative," 45.

ticalized by the present) aspects. The imperative and subjunctive are non-temporal along with all the other mood forms (including the indicative) and there is no distinction between singular and ongoing or specific and general uses of the commands on the basis of aspectual choice (and doubtful claims to be made on the basis of context).[28] Since this time, most extended discussions of imperatives and related forms have approached the issue from an aspectual standpoint. Buist Fanning (1990), though he too argued for an aspectual view, also allowed pragmatic factors to influence his analysis, so that he endorsed the influence of kind-of-action and recognized widespread use of the aorist for specific and present for general commands—while also recognizing exceptions.[29] James Voelz (1993), although accepting the notion of aspect, defined it in terms of focus, rather than authorial perspective. Even with his use of "focus," his emphasis upon the connection between the doer and the action in the present and the doer and the act in the aorist results in his formulation being very similar to the traditional view of use of the present tense-form for ongoing and aorist tense-form for instigating action.[30] Daniel Wallace in 1996 took a similar view to Fanning, endorsing an aspectual view of the semantics but a traditional view of the pragmatics of the use of the command/prohibition.[31] Jo Willmott (2007), approaching the problem from the standpoint of the prohibition, in particular the negated present imperative supposedly being equated or interchangeable with the negated aorist subjunctive, believed that the difference is not merely aspectual—a category that she generally recognizes—but is also about mood. She suggests that, at least for the imperative/prohibition, the aorist is used in "preventive" sentences indicating "non-performance of uncontrollable actions" and the

28. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 351–52; Porter, *Idioms*, 220–23. Readers of my *Verbal Aspect* will note that I do not devote a separate discussion to McKay's two important articles. The reason is that I had already arrived at my aspectual analysis of the Greek imperative before his two articles were published, so I simply added references where appropriate.

29. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 325–88.

30. Voelz, "Present and Aorist Verbal Aspect," 153–64, here 159.

31. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 713–25, esp. 717.

present in "prohibitive" sentences for "non-performance of controllable actions."[32] However, she also recognized that there are apparent exceptions, which calls for her to propose a further layer of subjectivity to her categories. She has also not shown the relationship of mood to aspect, an interrelated independence that has already been described in the Greek of the New Testament.[33] Despite her claims, Willmott has not explained why the negated aorist subjunctive has replaced the negated aorist imperative, but has in fact probably illustrated that the similar semantics of the two mood-forms allows if not their interchangeability at least their similar use.[34] Constantine Campbell (2008), although claiming to take an aspectual view, put his emphasis upon what he calls pragmatic use and endorsed the specific/general distinction.[35] Joseph Fantin (2010), although he attempted to bring what he calls neuro-cognitive stratificational linguistics (NCSL) and cognitive linguistics (in particular relevance theory, RT) into dialogue, seems to take a view similar to Fanning and Campbell, recognizing an aspectual approach but claiming that the specific/general or urgent/non-urgent opposition applies similarly to the traditional view.[36] Finally, Douglas Huffman, writing in 2014, endorsed an aspectual view similar to Porter's, noting that the often strained distinctions made on the basis of the traditional or *Aktionsart*-based views are unnecessary and unhelpful.[37] He then goes on to discuss a number of different types of what he characterizes as prohibitions.

I summarize from this that there are now essentially two major approaches to imperatives in relation to aspect. The first are those who argue for aspect and the second those who argue for aspect and something else.[38] In other words, whatever one

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32. Willmott, *Moods of Homeric Greek*, 96.

33. See Porter and O'Donnell, "Greek Verbal Network," esp. 14–17.

34. See Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 100.

35. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect*, 79–100.

36. Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 88–98.

37. Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 49, 118–19.

38. For the sake of dividing sheep from goats, the aspect-only people consist of (among those discussed above) Amigues, McKay, Porter, and Huffman, and the aspect-and-"something else" people consist of Fanning,

may think about the dispute over "something else," an aspectual view of the Greek imperative and related forms is clearly predominant. There may be some differences regarding central issues, such as how one defines the aspects, but even here the variability is relatively slight, with most recent discussions part of the more general linguistic discussion of verbal aspect theory. There may also be some differences regarding some related topics, such as whether there are two or three aspects (at least insofar as commands and prohibitions are concerned), but the aspectual view has prevailed, nevertheless. This aspectual view argues for the perfective and imperfective aspects as grammaticalized by the aorist and present tense-forms respectively. The definitions of these aspects may vary (depending upon one's approach to linguistic description),[39] and their relative weighting might be subject to debate (although see below), but the major theoretical discussions all argue along these very similar lines, especially for the imperative mood form.[40] I wish to define the aspects, which may be called perfective and imperfective, on the basis of their relative semantic significance within the Greek verbal system network.

More important for this discussion, however, are questions regarding the relationship of the "something else" to aspect.

Voelz, Wallace, Willmott, Campbell, and Fantin.

39. The major difference seems to be whether one determines the meanings of the categories based on the evidence the language itself presents or whether one uses cross-linguistic or externally defined categories. I have tried to define the aspectual categories based on the evidence of the Greek language, rather than drawing upon categories defined by others, such as what is done by Bernard Comrie (*Aspect*), an example of nomenclaturism.

40. See Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 513–15, who provides a chart for Porter, Fanning, Olsen, Campbell, and Huffman, all with this in common. Others could be added to this list. How one treats the perfect tense-form is relatively incidental to this discussion, in the light of its relatively infrequent use in the imperative mood (around four/five instances in the New Testament: Mark 4:39; Acts 15:29; Eph 5:5; probably Jas 1:19; and possibly Heb 12:17; Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 362). However, I would strongly argue for stative aspect for the perfect tense-form, including in the imperative, based on the evidence of the Greek language (rather than imposing a two-aspect system). See Porter, *Linguistic Analysis*, 195–215, following up on Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 245–90.

Most of those who take the aspect and "something else" view (apart from Voelz and Willmott) endorse a pronounced dichotomy between semantics and pragmatics, in which they attribute the aspectual meaning to the semantic stratum, often stated in terms of non-cancelable features, and the contextual or kind-of-action forces that result in the traditional kinds of generalizations (specific/general or ongoing/punctiliar, etc.) to the pragmatic stratum. The major problem with such a viewpoint—and one that is found within those who recognize exceptions to their generalizations or who divorce pragmatics from semantics—is that the basis for such a distinction is unprincipled and cannot be formalized. By discussing three abiding issues, I attempt to address these problems. As a result, I believe that the semantics/pragmatics divide, if it is necessary at all (and I question it), is at best a necessary evil: necessary perhaps to capture the difference between sentence meaning and discourse meaning, evil because it often ends up creating a dichotomy rather than continuity throughout the understanding of the imperative or commands/prohibitions. However, most of those who endorse a semantics/pragmatics formulation usually take a polysemous and maximalist view of semantics of the imperative itself. That is, they tend to overspecify the various senses of the imperative, and they then find it difficult to identify a common semantic description in numerous instances of uses of commands or prohibitions. These common semantic features are difficult to see distributed across a range of otherwise conceived contexts or kinds-of-action, resulting in so-called exceptions or simply mismatches between the two strata. I believe that a monosemous yet minimalist view of semantics, as a general, abstract sense, allows the cotextual constraints to function in a maximalist way to modulate the semantics within the discourse.[41] This allows the semantics of the command/prohibition form to function within any context without either inconsistency or

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41. Cf. Ruhl, "Data, Comprehensiveness, Monosemy," 171–89, here 172, who defines his "comprehensiveness principle" of semantics: "The measure of a word's semantic contribution is not accuracy (in a single context) but comprehensiveness (in all contexts)."

disconnection. That is what I originally tried to argue in my *Verbal Aspect* and *Idioms*, and I believe it still provides the best aspectual understanding of both the imperative and, as a consequence, commands/prohibitions.[42]

4. *Three Abiding Issues*

There are three abiding issues that seem to have a continuing influence upon discussion of commands/prohibitions. They are questions of frequency and how they relate to markedness, questions of speech functions and their relationship to the clause types with imperatives or negated subjunctives within them, and the question of use versus function and the relationship to speech acts including indirect speech acts.

4.1 *Questions of Frequency*

One of the (surprisingly) major objections to the view that, consistent with the entire Greek verbal system, the aorist imperative (and hence aorist subjunctive) with its perfective aspect is less marked than the present imperative with its imperfective aspect is that the frequency distributions are not consistent. This supposed anomaly is often also linked to the fact that certain verbal lexemes tend to be used in greater frequency than are others, sometimes disproportionately so, to the extent that this is thought by some to call such an aspectual analysis into question. Whereas there are many who recognize that the aorist is the most frequently used tense-form, a pattern that is found in the indicative, subjunctive, and optative moods, the same pattern is supposedly not found in the imperative. Therefore, so the theory holds, one cannot have the same markedness relations in the imperative as in the other mood forms (at least so far as these are established by distributional markedness). This result is supposed to have a major impact on how to understand the meaning of the imperative. Before I turn

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42. I have returned to this in Porter, "Systemic Functional Linguistics," 9–47. The only other recent grammarian to try to formalize such a relationship that I know of is Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 34–42.

to the statistics, I wish first to say that, based on the above history of discussion, one notes that an aspectual view has been established apart from such statistical counting and on the basis of other factors (some of which have not been discussed). Whatever the results of the statistical discussion, the aspectual view remains in place. Second, even if the statistics for the New Testament are what is claimed, the fact that the other moods maintain such a pattern, and that the New Testament is a relatively small unstructured corpus, means that much more analysis is needed than simply abandoning aspect or even finding a major "glich" in the aspectual model concerning imperatives.

The basic figures regarding the imperative form often cited are that there are roughly 764 aorist, 864 present, and 4 perfect imperative mood forms used in the Greek New Testament.[43] These are the raw statistics, and they are raw indeed.

Any claim regarding the significance of these statistics, however, is subject to numerous important qualifications. The first is that such counting virtually always includes the aspectually vague verbs as present tense-forms.[44] These aspectually vague verbs are verbs that paradigmatically (not simply by occurrence) do not distinguish aspect, and are usually categorized as present tense-forms, when they in fact do not offer meaningful aspectual choice. The primary verb is εἰμί, but there are others as well. These verbs must be removed from the calculations. Second, there are also a number of other verbs that have become fixed forms (ἄγε, δεῦρο/δεῦτε, ἰδού, ἴδε, and possibly some forms of χαῖρε/χαίρετε/χάρητε, which overall total

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43. Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 88, but others cite similar statistics. See also Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 464–65 for hortatory subjunctives. I wish to thank Francis Pang for helping me to search for the appropriate sets of forms used in my response. These current figures refine those in Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 181, where I there also noted that the ratios regarding commands/prohibitions should take into account the aorist subjunctive. This argument has apparently been overlooked in subsequent discussion. There I counted 763 aorist and 824 present imperatives.

44. See Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 442–47; Porter, *Linguistic Analysis*, 191–94.

far more aorist forms than present forms, incidentally) that arguably should be excluded from the calculations (and most of them are already removed from the numbers cited above).[45] A third consideration is that if we are going to discuss the imperative in relation to not simply the form but also its relationship to commands/prohibitions, as noted above, we must also discuss the negated aorist subjunctive second and third person where appropriate, and include these within the count so that we can arrive at an accurate count of those forms that are used to indicate commands/prohibitions (excluding the indirect speech acts or metaphorical extensions or whatever they are called; see below). A fourth and final qualification is that to make our calculation of commands/prohibitions complete, we must also consider so-called hortatory subjunctives, or perhaps better commanding/prohibiting first person subjunctives.

Once all these factors are duly considered, we have a new set of comparative figures to consider. The number (these are approximate, but based upon the best information obtainable) of present imperatives is 842 and the number of present hortatory subjunctives around 66 (none in the singular), with a total of 908 present commanding forms (which includes those negated as prohibitions) (some might argue that 16 present imperatives of χαίρω should be deducted from this number, but I have not, although the other verbs listed above are not included). The number of aorist imperatives is 761,[46] the number of negated second person aorist subjunctives used as prohibitions is 84, the number of negated third person aorist subjunctives is 5,[47] and the number of aorist hortatory subjunctives is 85 (including five in

45. See Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 132–33. The number of tense-forms in this list, excluding forms of χαίρω, etc., is 234 aorists vs. 23 presents. There are 16 instances of present and one instance of aorist tense-forms of χαίρω in the imperative. If these figures are included, the relationship of the aorist to the present imperative shifts so that the aorist is more frequent.

46. This includes eight instances of the negated aorist imperative, all in the third person singular: Matt 6:3; 24:17, 18; Mark 13:15 2x; 13:16; Luke 17:31 2x. See Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 197–98.

47. These five instances are: Matt 21:19; Luke 1:15; 1 Cor 16:11; 2 Cor 11:16; 2 Thess 2:3. See Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 196–97.

the singular),[48] with a total of 935 aorist imperatives/subjunctives used in commands/prohibitions (some might argue that the one aorist imperative of χαίρω should be deducted from this number, but I have not done so, although again the other verbs listed above are not included). In other words, the basic frequency pattern of the aorist being used more often than the present is found in the commands/prohibitions as well as in the other moods. The implications of this finding are that one need not make forced attempts to justify the stronger or more focused or more emphatic sense of the present imperative, as if the frequency of use of the present in command/prohibition contexts demanded it. The same markedness pattern (not only based on morphology but distribution) of the aorist being the least marked (or default) command/prohibition form, and of the present the more marked command/prohibition form, is maintained in the commands/prohibitions as it is for the other mood forms.[49]

The issue has sometimes been raised regarding the significance of the fact that sometimes lexemes display an imbalance in distribution throughout their usage in the New Testament. This is a point that has been made throughout the recent discussion of verbal aspect. For example, Amigues makes this point regarding use of the verb λέγει (glossed by her as 'read') in the present imperative tense-form, stating that it was aspectually neutralized in the orators because the aorist is not

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48. These five singular hortatory subjunctives are all in the aorist tense-form: Matt 7:4; Luke 6:42; Acts 7:34; Rev 17:1; 21:9.

49. My use of markedness has been unduly (and I believe mistakenly) criticized. For my comments in response, justifying the approach taken but also pointing out the problematic nature of markedness terminology, see Porter, "What More Shall I Say?" 75–79, esp. 75–77. A second type of distributional argument (related to the morphological one) may also be made for the aorist being the least marked based on the greater diversity of forms included within aorist commands/prohibitions as opposed to present commands/prohibitions. The aorist includes both imperative and subjunctive forms, negation with a wider number of forms, and both singular and plural in the hortatory subjunctive. However, even if the one system within the Greek verbal edifice maintained differing ratios, this would not necessarily nullify the markedness system of the verbal network itself.

used with the sense of 'read.'[50] Fanning seems to take such a view when he notes discrepancies between aspectual and contextual meaning (although I believe that this is probably more related to his retention of categories of kind-of-action).[51] A similar point has been raised several times by Moisés Silva, first in his direct response to my *Verbal Aspect* and then in subsequent work. He notes examples of verbs of motion and becoming, as well as others, as having skewed distributions.[52] The most recent effort to raise this issue is an article by Benjamin Merkle in which he points out skewed distributions primarily among verbs of motion and -μι verbs.[53] All such theories have in common the view that lexical meaning is more significant than grammatical meaning. I believe that this is an untenable position, especially for imperatives, as has been shown in the history of discussion, where decisions based on lexical meaning are inconclusive at best, and contradictory at worst.

As a way of summarizing my response to such suggestions, let me quote from McKay's response to Amigues: "While there may be a formulaic element in the way these verbs are used, the choice of aspect in each case is not without appropriate significance," something he then shows for a number of instances.[54] In other words, even if there are anomalies regarding distributions of particular lexical items, the grammatical system still holds, and the grammatical system drives the semantics of the grammatical structure, with lexical meaning providing the lexical input within the grammatical structure.[55] Those who have argued to the contrary have yet to provide a convincing generalizable framework for such an assertion. They confine

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50.   Amigues, "Les tempes de l'impératif," 231–37.

51.   Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 129–30.

52.   Silva, "Response to Fanning and Porter," 74–82, esp. 70–81; Silva, *Interpreting Galatians*, 73–79. He seems to be following the suggestion of Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 340–79, which is a series of supposed exceptions that mitigate aspectual force.

53.   Merkle, "Neglecting the Influence," 57–74.

54.   McKay, "Aspects of the Imperative," 53.

55.   This is what is meant by lexis as most delicate grammar. See Hasan, "Grammarian's Dream," 184–211.

themselves to a few select examples. However, based on a study of all 84 verbs appearing 50 times or more in the Greek New Testament, taking their z-score on frequency and examining their tense-form patterns according to expectation, the results do not confirm the view that lexis drives grammar. Only 19 verbs (less than a quarter of those studied) presented the possibility of a skewed frequency in both aorist and present tense-forms but without exceeding expectations for the aorist, appropriate for the least heavily marked form. Of those 19 (18 are worth examining based on their formal patterns), they were distributed in at least four different categories based on kind-of-action, with no determinative pattern for their selection. My conclusion is that just because in a given instance tense-form selection is skewed, it does not necessarily affect whether such a choice is made or not, especially when the entire verbal edifice must be examined systemically, not atomistically.[56] There is a further difficulty with such an approach. The major issue is that classification of lexical meaning (so-called lexical aspect) is highly problematic. The criteria used in the discussion range from estimations of word values up to clausal and larger values, without any systematic criteria for determination. This lack of definition makes any such proposal highly suspect and unusable in relation to verbal aspect.[57]

4.2 *Questions of Speech Functions*
I have made a distinction above regarding imperative forms and negated second/third person aorist subjunctives (as well as so-called hortatory subjunctives) as the basis for discussion of commands/prohibitions. This distinction is based upon an important differentiation that is sometimes made between form and meaning or the mood system and speech functions. One of the major issues that has been raised regarding aspect itself, and especially in relation to the treatment of the imperative or commands/prohibitions within the Greek verbal network, is the

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56. See Porter, "Aspect Theory and Lexicography," 207–22, esp. 209–15; summarized in Porter, "What More Shall I Say?" 77–78.
57. See Pang, *Revisiting Aspect and Aktionsart*.

relationship between the semantics of certain systems within the Greek verbal network and possible speech functions. Michael Halliday has proposed this as part of his larger agenda to dissolve the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, localizing all meaning in a semantic stratum.

Based on English, Halliday has differentiated between English speech functions and the English mood system (he differentiates the mood system from modality). The first, speech functions, is located in the semantic stratum and the second, mood system, in the lexicogrammar. I have critiqued this analysis on a number of counts, including its basis in English rather than Greek, its imprecision in mixing semantic and formal labels, its confusion of ideational and interpersonal semantics in the proposed labels (information vs. goods and services), and its failure to effect its major purpose, the linkage of lexicogrammar and semantics, among others. Halliday's appeal to probabilistic grammar is only helpful for the most probable function, not the other functions of the form, and hence fails to deal with so-called indirect speech acts (see the next section). Even if one were to admit that such a linguistic description has merit (for English), one must wonder whether such a description has much potential for dealing with an ancient, epigraphic language.[58]

To address these matters, I have proposed a system network of attitude expanded to indicate speech functions based upon clause types. Rather than simply proposing the four English speech functions (offer, statement, command, question), I re-systemicize the Greek mood system on the basis of ten different speech functions within the resources of the Greek language. These speech functions are realized by specific clause types, such as various types of questions, statement, command, and declaration. I realize that this proposed analysis of speech functions may need further refinement. However, the major question is how these speech functions relate to the possible uses of language in discourse and, in particular, indirect speech acts.

Before answering that, I note that there are several features to observe in my formulation. The most important is that such

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58. See Porter, "Systemic Functional Linguistics," 24–26.

linguistic elements as the future form and verbless clauses are not treated in this analysis. They are not included for different reasons. The first is that the future form, not being fully aspectual (or even attitudinal) is not part of the mood system. As aspectually and attitudinally vague, the future form is not semantically analyzable as realizing any of these semantic features but realizes its own semantic feature of [+expectation] and is compatible with many of them, hence such categories as the commanding future, etc. The verbless clause is not included because it does not have the essential element of such a clause type, the finite verbal form.

Silva has pointed out that one of the most important tasks of aspectual analysis, at least in his mind, is to give interpreters "a clearer perspective on the relationship between a scientifically precise analysis of aspect and the work of exegesis."[59] This problem is not unique to biblical studies. In linguistics also, this is a problem, the one mentioned earlier regarding the relationship between what is often called semantics/pragmatics. I prefer to call it the difference between semantics and discourse semantics, that is, the difference between the function of the expression realized lexicogrammatically and its use in discourse (I differentiate between function, in this case speech function, and use). As Christopher Butler has stated, "A crucial question for the discourse analyst [here, the biblical exegete] is whether the communicative function of an utterance can be accounted for within the familiar domain of syntax and semantics, or whether instead a new level of linguistic description is needed."[60] There are three approaches that Butler has identified, on the basis of such sample sentences as: *Can you move that table?* and *That table's in the way*, or *Can you open the window?* and *It's awfully stuffy in here*.[61] The first of the proposals takes an entirely semantic approach, with all four examples having "potential directiveness" that needs to be taken into account in the

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59. Silva, "Response to Fanning and Porter," 78.

60. Butler, "Discourse Systems," 213–28, here 214.

61. Butler, "Discourse Systems," 212, 214; cited in Porter, "Systemic Functional Linguistics," 35.

"semantic representation" of them. The problem is that there is no principled way to establish "potential directiveness," for these or other example sentences, such that the strata are connected and the semantics clearly related to formal features. These examples are potentially non-congruent, without lines of congruent connection or typicality. The second alternative recognizes that some such sentences have "potential directiveness," the questions, whereas the others do not (this is a mediating position). The defense of such a position is that one can identify the purpose for which they are being used. Butler criticizes this position for appealing to non-linguistic and even extra-discourse considerations. The third alternative is what Butler calls a "surface meaning" approach, in which the above example sentences are either questions (in the first and third) or statements (in the second and fourth), "whatever their actual communicative function [which I would call their use] in an interaction between participants."[62] The result is that the so-called illocutionary force is not part of either the semantics or of the lexicogrammar.

The third proposal marks an important step forward in Greek grammatical analysis. First, it preserves the important semantic/ lexicogrammatical linkage. Second, it also promotes what Nigel Gotteri calls a Formal Systemic Functional Grammar, in which the semantics of the lexicogrammar provides minimal meaning, even if general and abstract, that is formally realized and then modulated by the discourse.[63] Third, there is the need not to propose a further semantic stratum (or to differentiate it from pragmatics), but to recognize the level of discourse, however that might be conceptualized. It is the level of discourse where "use" occurs, in which speech functions are instantiated in instances of usage. Fourth, this analysis overcomes the notorious semantics/ pragmatics divide, which has proved intractable and unprincipled in linguistics as there has been no approach devised that can generalize semantic categories in relation to the various proposed

62.   Butler, "Communicative Function and Semantics," 212–29, here 212.
63.   Gotteri, "Toward a Systemic Approach," 505–6.

pragmatic uses of language.[64] Fifth, the result is an inversion of the usual approach to analysis found in biblical studies. Biblical studies usually begin with a maximalist view of semantics and a minimalist view of context (hence some of the notorious abuses such as those of the Biblical Theology movement and its more recent rejuvenation). In this regard, I am recommending a minimalist view of semantics and an explicitly maximalist view of context, such that the minimalist monosemous semantics, as generalized, abstract meaning, is modulated and regulated by the maximalist discourse use.[65]

For discussion of imperatives, this means that imperatives and appropriately identified subjunctives realize their semantic features of [+directive] (with a possibility of [+negative] apart from the second person aorist form) or [+projective] (with the probability of [+negative] higher for the negated aorist subjunctive) in all contexts (their semantic relationship is explained above). These semantic features are realized regardless of the uses to which they may be put within a given discourse, however these may be described, categorized, or differentiated. Therefore, an aspectual view of imperatives, in this configuration, grammaticalizes the semantics of the mood forms in the choice of aspect. The obvious implication of this analysis is that much of what is discussed under the heading of "imperatives" or "commands/prohibitions" is, in fact, not semantic in nature, nor is it even particularly pragmatic in orientation (due to the failure to generalize the relationship between semantics and pragmatics), but is instead simply a collection of various categories of use. There has been no

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64. This critique of course depends upon how one defines "pragmatics." I am responding to a formalized view of pragmatics as indicating a definable "stratum" within linguistics. My impression is that pragmatics is in turmoil, as it has failed to be adequately formalized and linked to semantics.

65. See Porter, "Systemic Functional Linguistics," 44. Cf. Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 125, who speaks of discovery of the semantic meaning as "*boiling down*" of the usages to the least common denominator." Fantin moves from pragmatics to semantics, which I believe is a move in the wrong direction, and his use of the "least common denominator" seems to imply a maximalist semantics. I am arguing for the opposite.

consistent, principled method for defining these uses that has so far been developed, and I do not believe that there will be one. Instead, what we find is simply the set of all instances of the appearance of the imperative, as well as a variety of other linguistic elements (see the next section), with lines mostly arbitrarily drawn according to discourse or even extra-linguistic criteria.

4.3 *Questions of Use including Indirect Speech Acts*
Much of the recent discussion regarding commands and prohibitions has concentrated upon what I have called "use" rather than semantics, although it is sometimes couched in a weakly defined pragmatics (see above for discussion of the relationship to pragmatics). That is, much of the response to an aspectual approach, even by those who have had a role in defining the aspectual nature of the Greek verbal edifice, continues to debate "uses," without a sense of what the relationship is between these "uses" and the semantics grammaticalized by the form(s). This has also led to some of the criticisms of an aspectual approach, when emphasis is placed upon "use" rather than exegeting the semantics within or as an essential part of the use. This tendency is seen in such treatments as Fanning, Wallace, McKay, Campbell, Fantin, and Huffman, as well as possibly others.

For example, in his chapter on commands and prohibitions, Fanning briefly discusses aspect and then moves to the distinction between general and specific commands (he seems to think that this was suggested by Blass in 1896, when Blass himself had adopted it from what we have seen is a problematic discussion mired in kind-of-action), but the majority of his space is devoted to "exceptions" based upon individual verbs, and then a short section on "indirect commands" such as participles and infinitives.[66] This is a classic example of allowing so-called pragmatics of individual use to drive discussion, no doubt encouraged by a weak view of semantics and of language as system (and perhaps an over-developed sense of pragmatics).

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66. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 340–88.

This discussion would appear to be an attempt to implement the first proposal mentioned in the section above (there called a semantic approach, but here clearly pragmatically based).

In his chapter on Volitional Clauses (Commands and Prohibitions), Wallace treats, under commands, the future indicative, aorist imperative as ingressive and constative, present imperative as ingressive-progressive, customary, and iterative, and, under prohibitions, the future indicative, negated aorist subjunctive, and negated present imperative as progressive and customary.[67] There is a mix of at least three different classificatory principles here, including lexical meaning, formal semantics, pragmatics, and possibly other factors. The only question is why Wallace does not include a variety of other proposed constructions, such as participles or infinitives or other linguistic entities. This appears to be an attempt at either the first (semantic) or second (mixed) proposal mentioned above.

McKay has two pertinent chapters in his book on the New Testament Greek verb, one on exhortations and commands and the other on indirect commands and wishes. The first, on exhortations and commands, is concerned with "expressions of will," "exhortations," "commands" (both positive and negative), and "alternative expressions," such as indirect commands, purpose expressions, obligation statements, the future indicative, infinitives, and participles. The second, on indirect commands and wishes, essentially repeats the last section of the earlier chapter.[68] This encompassing view mixes at least three different classificatory principles, including lexical meaning (McKay differentiates tendencies with lexical types of verbs), formal semantics, pragmatics, and a variety of possible uses to which other linguistic expressions may be put. This proposal is definitely of the first type mentioned above (semantic).

In his chapter on the imperative mood, Campbell, following Fanning and after a discussion of confusion between aspect and *Aktionsart*, returns to the specific vs. general command, recognizing it as representing what he calls "pragmatic

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67. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 718–25.
68. McKay, *New Syntax*, 77–84, 113–17.

implicature."[69] He further distinguishes for the aorist, present, and perfect imperative specific instruction and general instruction, as well as a few other categories.[70] It is difficult to know what an aspectual view of the imperative means in this scheme, especially in light of the earlier discussion in the history of linguistics. This seems to be a proposal of the second type above (mixed).

Fantin's treatment is confined to the imperative mood form. This is not the place to offer a critique of his neuro-cognitive stratificational linguistics (NCSL) and relevance theory (RT), except to say that, with these cognitive/pragmatic theories in place I can see no reason to confine discussion to the imperative mood form. Nevertheless, he defines the meaning of the Greek imperative mood based on presenting a survey of what he calls the "range of usage."[71] This includes commands, request/ entreaty, permission/toleration, and prohibition, an odd collection to be sure, especially in light of even the few categories mentioned above in some other works treating the imperative. In fact, his subsequent discussion is an attempt to show how NCSL and RT either support or thwart these categories. He concludes that they reinforce the imperative as what he calls "*directional and volitional*."[72] Even with this definition, however, Fantin must admit that, with his more precise semantic definition, it is difficult to find both these features in every instance. This appears to be an attempt to implement the first proposal above, with the maximalist semantics of most New Testament studies.

Finally, Huffman presents a treatment devoted in its bulk to prohibitions. After a study of the development of aspect theory regarding the imperative, he discusses what he calls "All the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament" (his heading).[73] These include negated present tense-form prohibitions; negated aorist

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69. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect*, 81.
70. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect*, 79–100.
71. Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 76–81.
72. Fantin, *Greek Imperative Mood*, 196–97.
73. Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, viii. I take the list that follows from his table of contents on viii–ix.

tense-form prohibitions including both subjunctives and imperatives; and prohibitions using other negated verbal constructions including negated future indicatives, hortatory subjunctives, optatives, infinitives, and participles. He goes further and then also includes negated dependent object and final clauses; lexical prohibitions in a variety of contexts; prohibitory emulative statements (his example: *We do not do that*) including statements of lawfulness or obligation, verbs of will or desire, other prohibitory emulative statements, and reports with negated permissive verbs; prohibitory questions; warnings and promises such as woes, warnings, and promises; and (as if this were not enough) other negative expressions used as prohibitions (his example: *No, don't!*) including negatives dependent upon earlier prohibitions and miscellaneous negated adverbial phrases, complements, and prohibitory exclamations. The major problem with Huffman's analysis is that, with all that he has done to marshal such evidence, he is still not complete. There are in fact still other constructions that might be used, in a given discourse, to promote or prohibit action. For example, Huffman does not include a simple declarative statement that might be used either to promote or prohibit an action, for example, a statement that makes an observation as a means of asserting the statement that they are not to do something. This is not significantly different from any number of the categories that Huffman uses elsewhere, especially those that are based upon lexical choice and a variety of other clause types. In fact, is there any kind of expression that Huffman does not consider a prohibition? Nevertheless, Huffman still does not include many significant examples of what might be called indirect speech acts, where there is no generalizable relationship between the linguistic form and the use in discourse context (e.g., based on the kind of logic Huffman uses elsewhere, Rom 12:1 is arguably a prohibition: 'I beseech you to present your bodies . . . because you have not been presenting your bodies, so stop not doing that and get to it'). Huffman is clearly emphasizing discourse considerations—or at least his perception of them—over anything else. His proposal expressly follows the first proposal above, taken to an extreme form.

The above examples well illustrate some of the major problems in recent discussion of verbal aspect in discussion of New Testament Greek, in this instance focused upon discussion of the imperative mood form and related forms. The major problem is that the discussion is, in fact, only partly about the imperative and more about all the possible uses to which the imperative or not the imperative (including virtually everything else) might be put. These grammarians are free to multiply categories beyond recognition if they wish, but I fear that something important has been lost—and that is the sense of the meaning of the Greek language, how it might be systemically described, and (then) how it might employ its semantically definable resources in a variety of uses that recognize and retain these semantic features even in the midst of various discourses.

5. *Conclusion*

The desire in biblical studies is, it seems from my observation of a variety of commentators and grammarians, to achieve what might be called exegetical certainty. This exegetical certainty focuses upon a full and developed sense of what the text means, and demands that observations made at the discourse level of the text (or beyond) be as exegetically certain as the observations made at a lower or more fundamental level, the language system itself. The result is that the full discourse meaning of the text— which seems to be assumed as an already known fact—becomes the starting point for understanding both the text and the language in which it is written. This seems to motivate the repeated efforts by those observing the debate over aspect—as well as a good number of those involved within it—to attempt to ground their intuitive or traditional understandings of texts in the system of the language. However, so far such an approach has simply multiplied categories beyond necessity and lost sight of the nature of linguistic modeling. The nature of linguistic modeling is not to model individual instances of discourse, but to model the language system that provides the potential for such discourses to be created. The instances of discourse—as contributory as they are to monosemic abstraction—do not

provide direct means of arriving at this linguistic system. As a result, I believe that we must return to first principles to reformulate our approach to the study of ancient Greek. We must begin with the Greek language itself and its linguistic system, without preconceptions of how this system is organized or is to be labeled or described. When we do so, we realize that the aspectual semantics of the Greek verbal system provide the only starting point for such a discussion and must always set the semantic parameters for discussion of speech functions and discourse uses.

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