

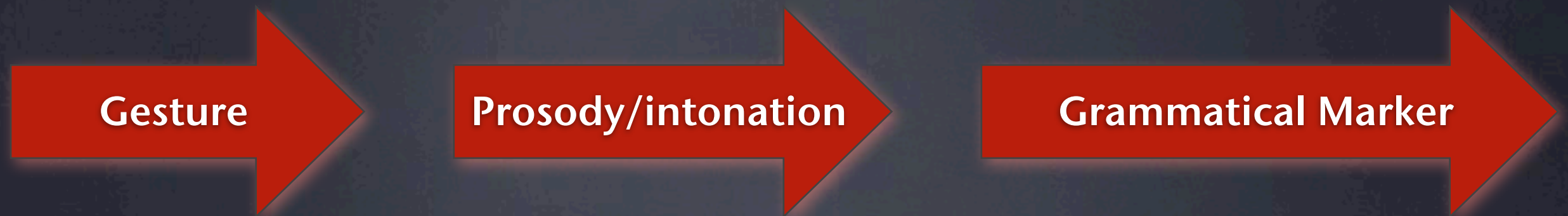
Two Routes from Gesture to Language

Lecture 7

Sherman Wilcox — Beijing, China



The First Route



The Second Route

The First Route

- Futures
- Venitives
- Inferential Evidentials
- Modals of Necessity
- Modals of Possibility

Future

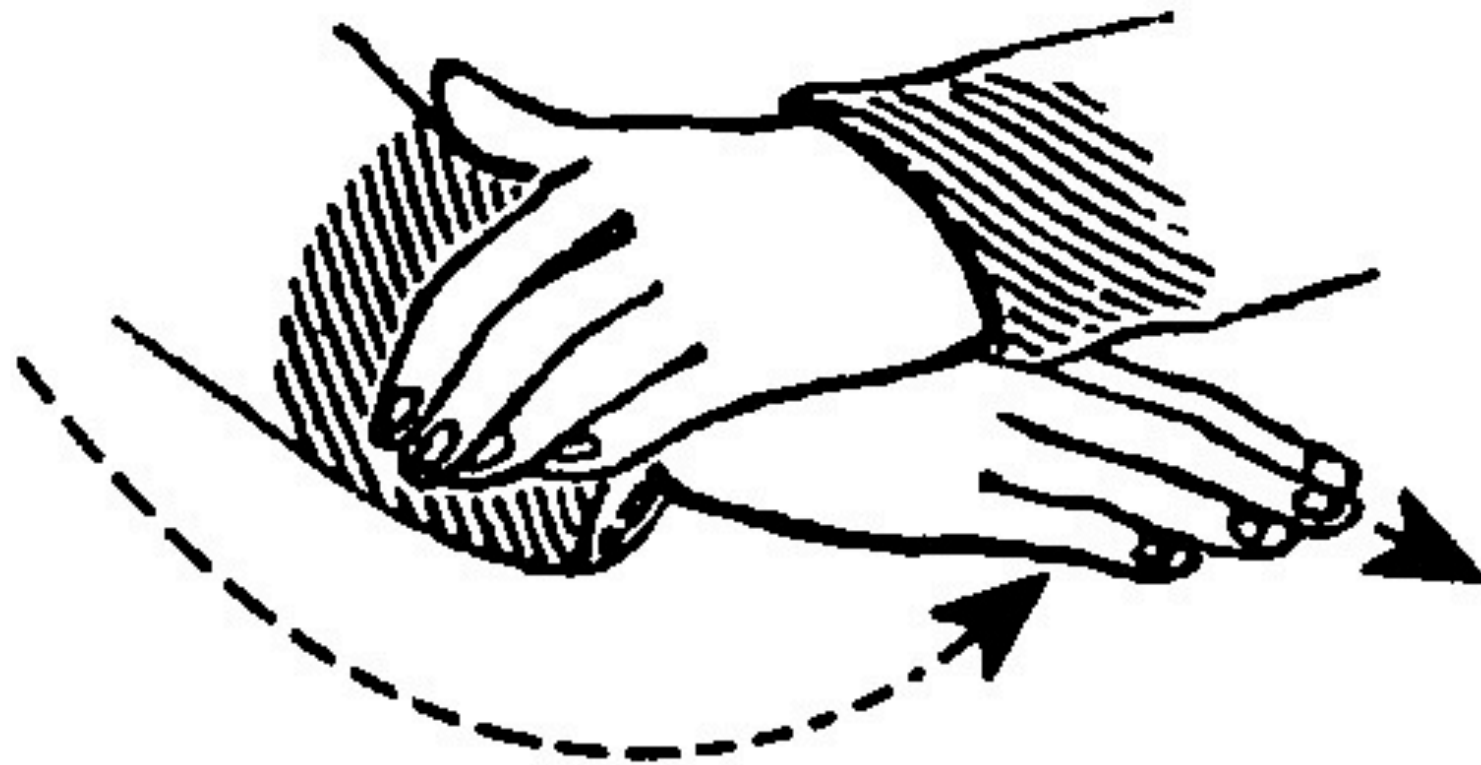
- Futures develop from a limited pool
 - Desire
 - Obligation
 - Movement toward goal (Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca 1994)



**WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND CLEAR WORD WORD
OUR FATHER SELF WILL DO THAT NO-MORE**



**THAT TIME PRESIDENT EMG DEPART
FEW-DAYS-PRIOR EMG DEPART TO CITY PHILADELPHIA**

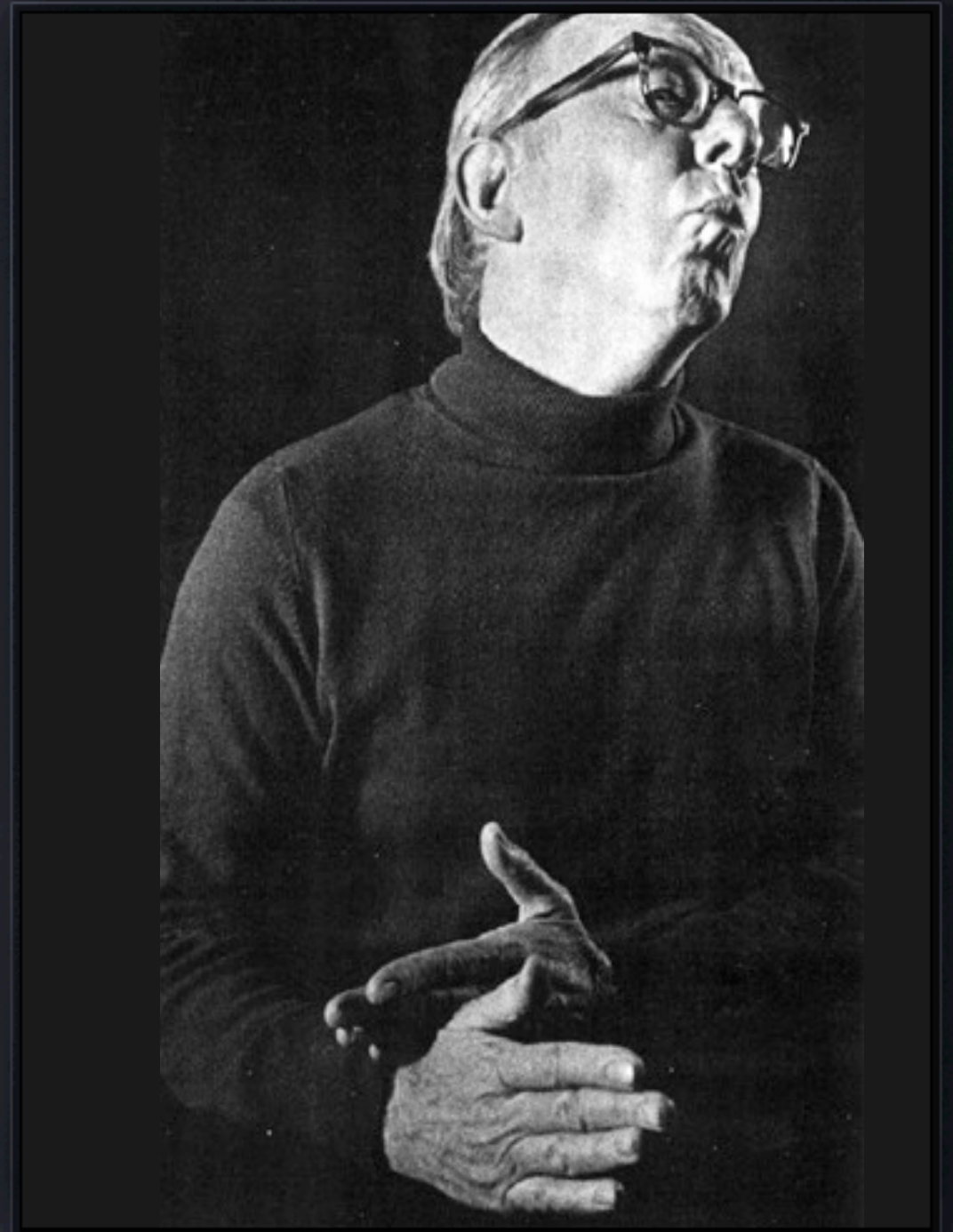


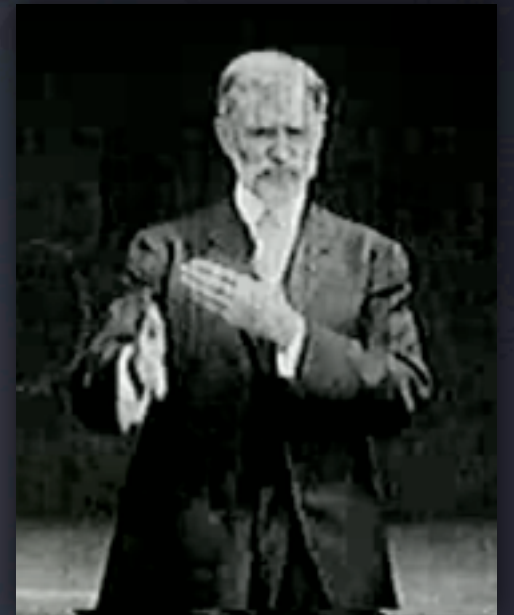
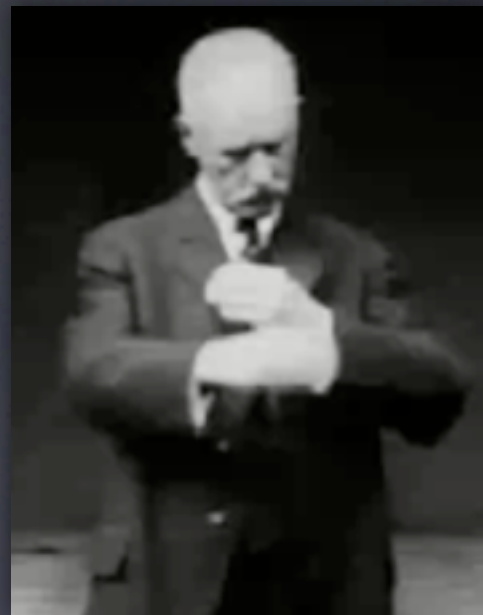
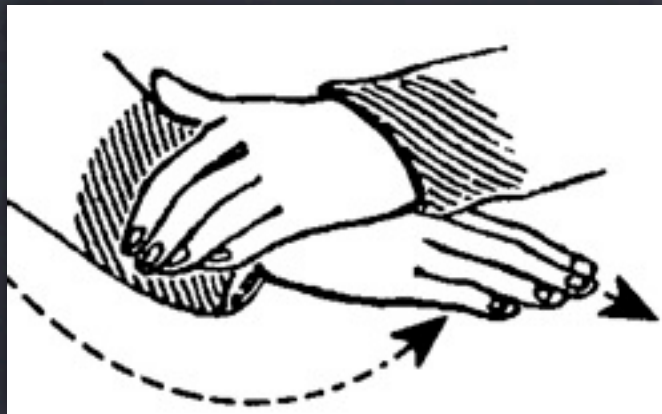
19. — Partir.

Old LSF 'Partir'

Gestural source described by de Jorio as produced with the palm of the hand open and held edgewise, moved upwards several times

Morris and his colleagues identify this as a gesture still in use among hearing people in the Mediterranean region to signal *departure-demand* and *departure-description*





depart > future

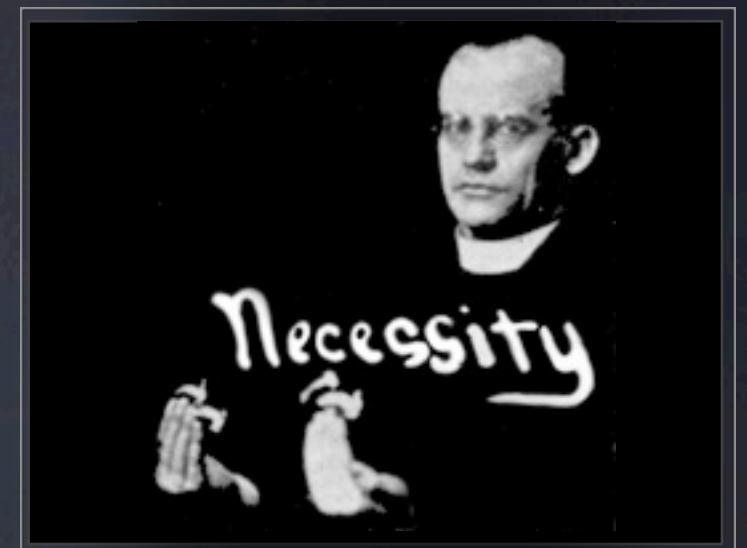
Venitives



LIS



LSC



ASL



Neopolitan gesture: 'Get to the point'



‘Give me more’ (literal)

Inferential Evidentials

EVIDENT



CLAR



PRESENTIR



SEMBLAR



	Lexical	Grammatical
EVIDENT	visual perception, sharpness of an image; 'obvious',	without a doubt', 'obviously', 'logically implied'
CLAR	bright', 'light'	speaker subjectivity
PRESENTIR	sense of smell	speaker's inferences about intentions or actions
SEMBLAR	physical resemblance	speaker's subjective belief that an event is or is not likely to occur

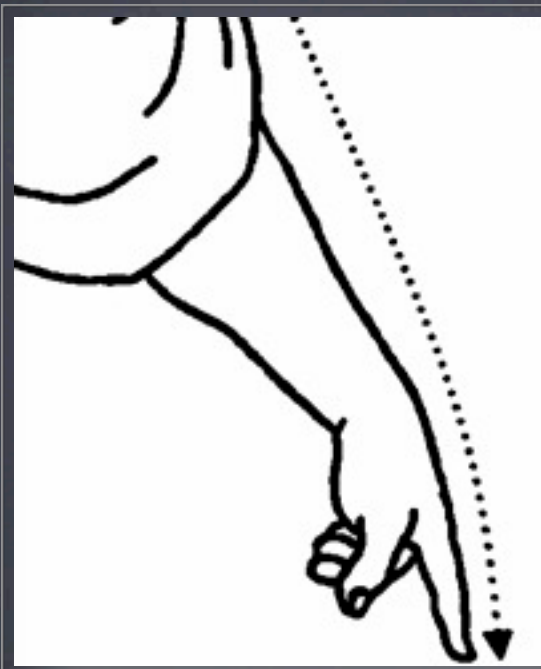
Modals of Necessity

Modals of Necessity

Terence miniatures
(3rd century AD)



FSL (c. 1865)



FSL



ASL





Neopolitan gesture “to insist”

Modals of Possibility



gesture enacting upper
body strength



lexical morpheme 'strong'



grammatical morpheme
'can' (ability)

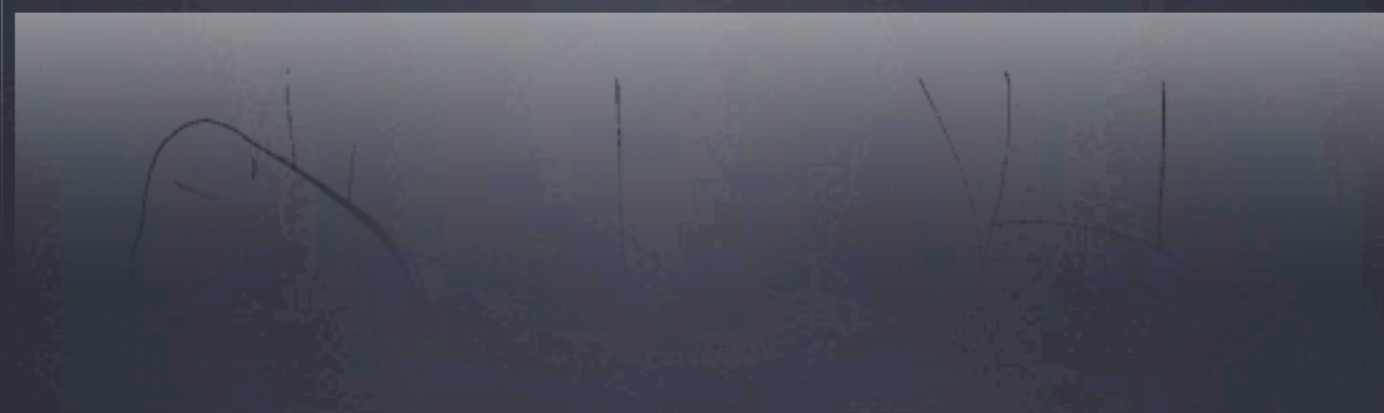
Modals of Possibility

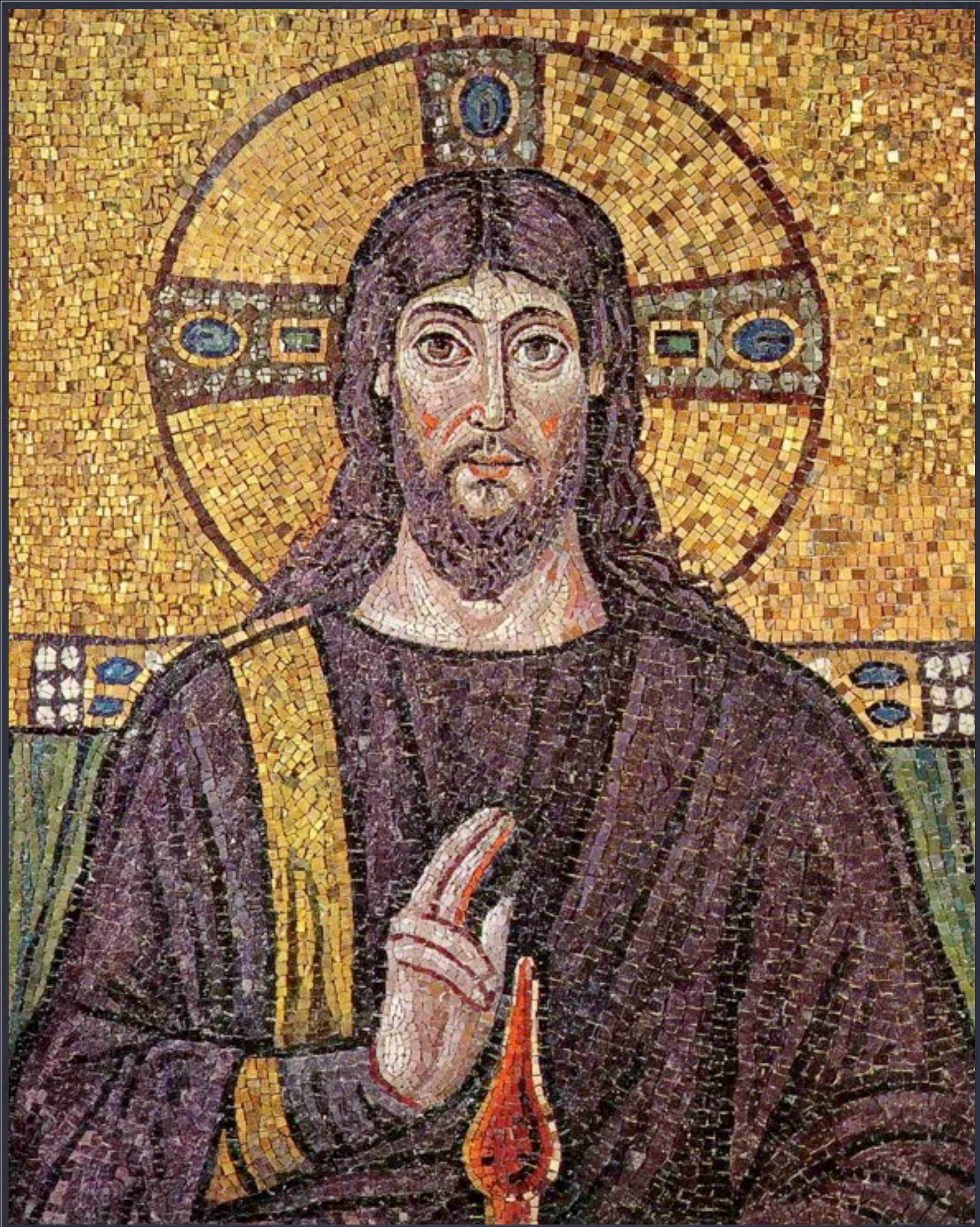
IMPOSSIBLE

A Case Study



IMPOSSIBILE



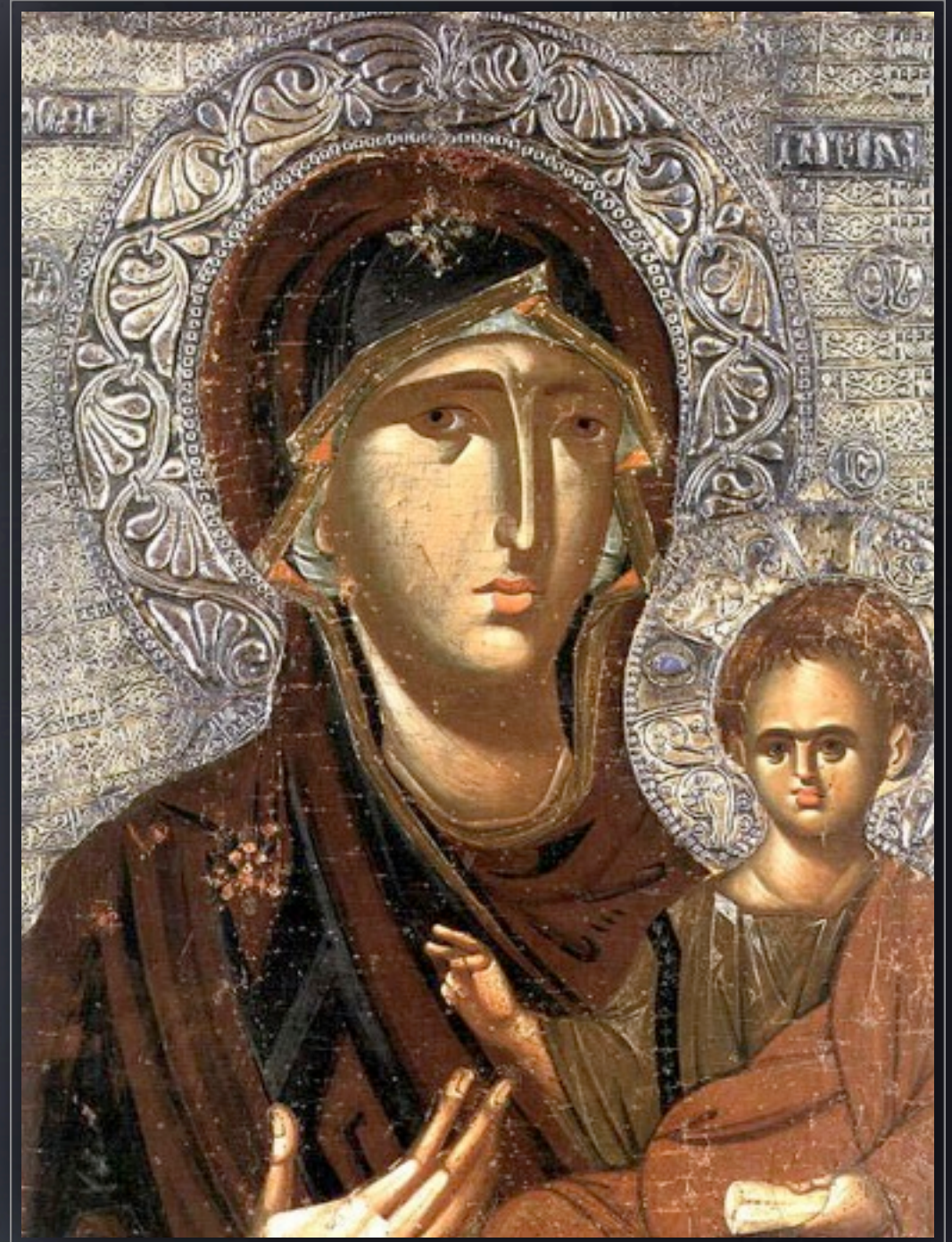


“Overall, the most common gesture in the panels consists of the right arm being outstretched with the index and middle fingers extended and held together, while the thumb and other fingers are curled into the palm.”





From Speaking to Benediction

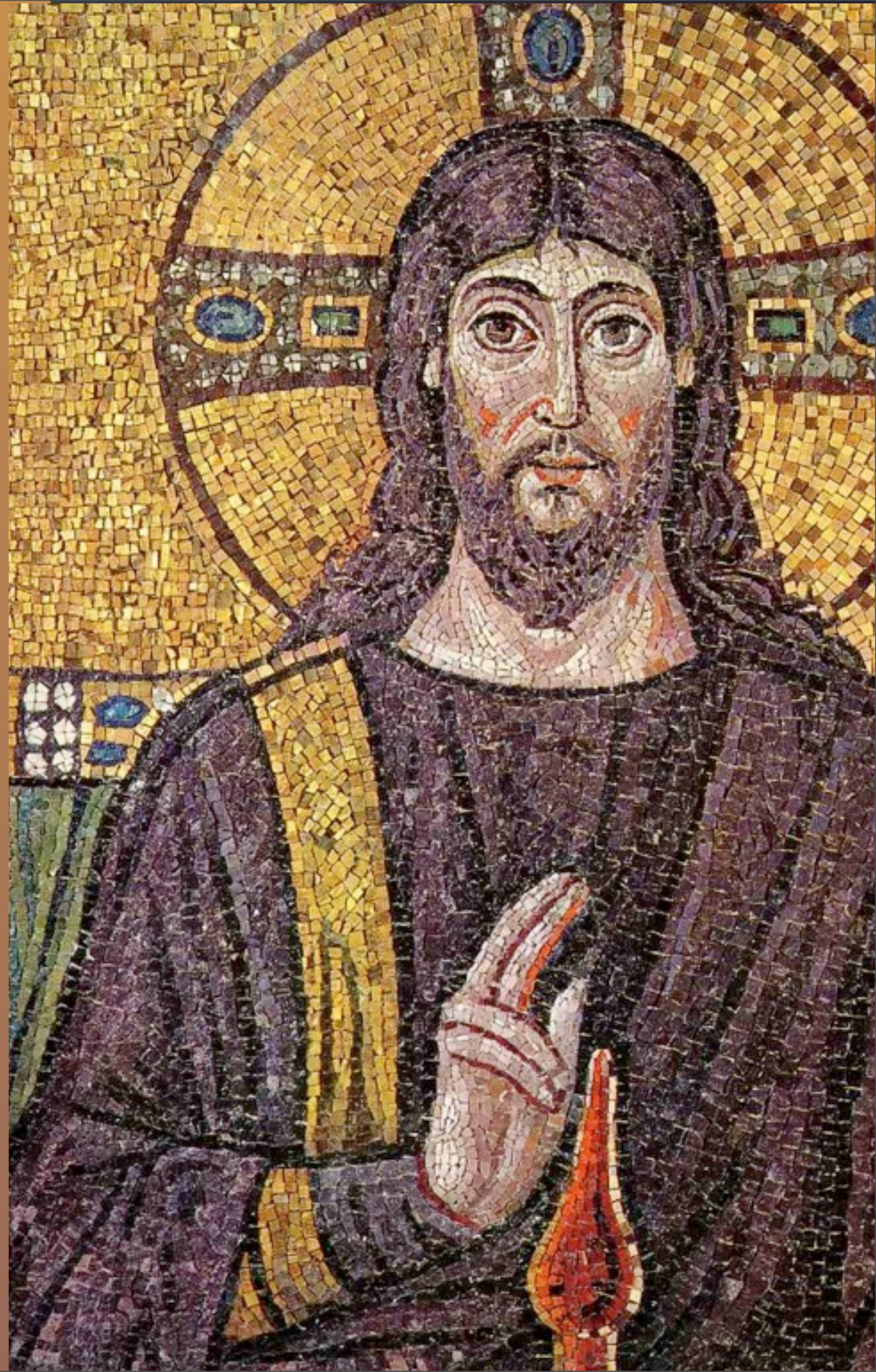




From Benediction to Death

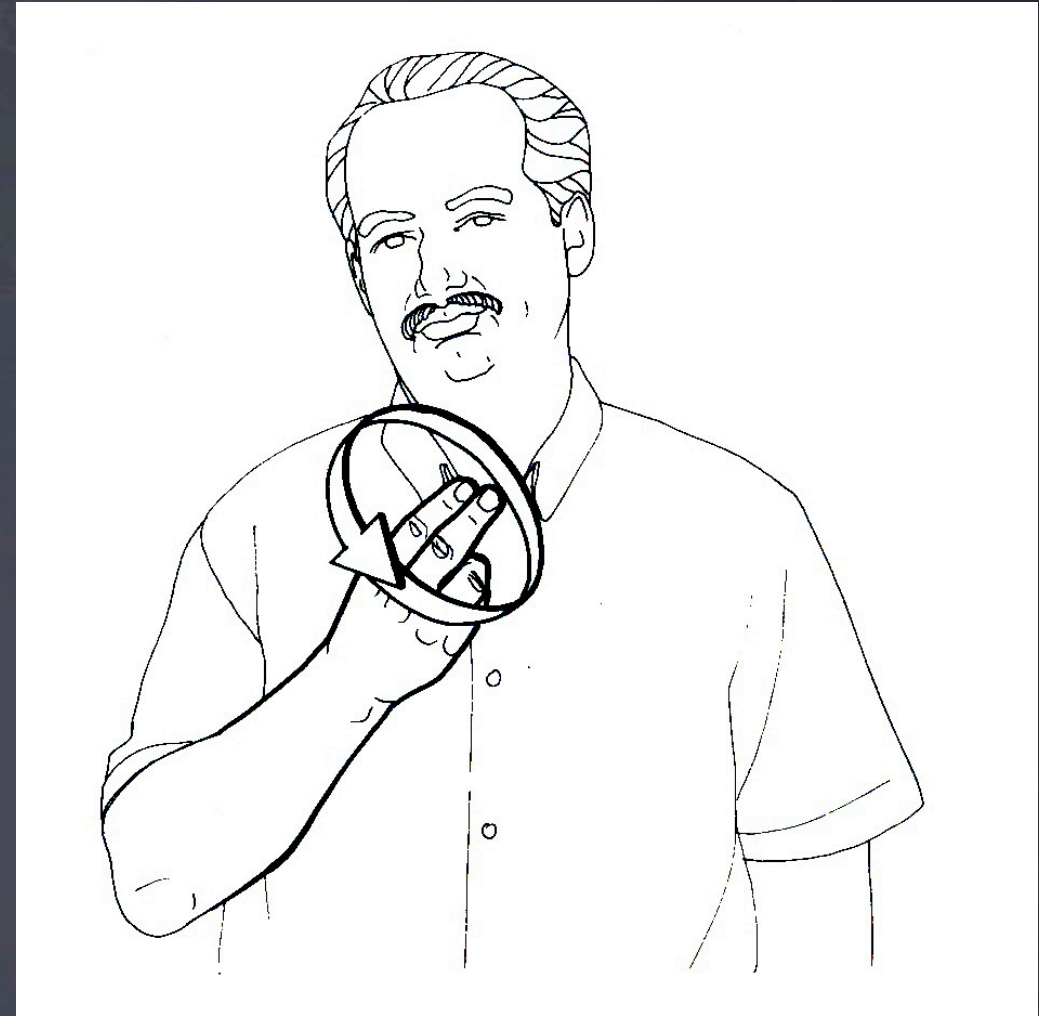


“The sign of the cross is made in the air with an extended hand. This gesture, that is also frequently done with just the index and middle fingers extended, can be used to mean physical death, but it can also refer to moral or political death, since it can be said of someone that he ceases to exist, as far as society is concerned or so far as the estimation of others is concerned.”





DEATH



IMPOSSIBLE

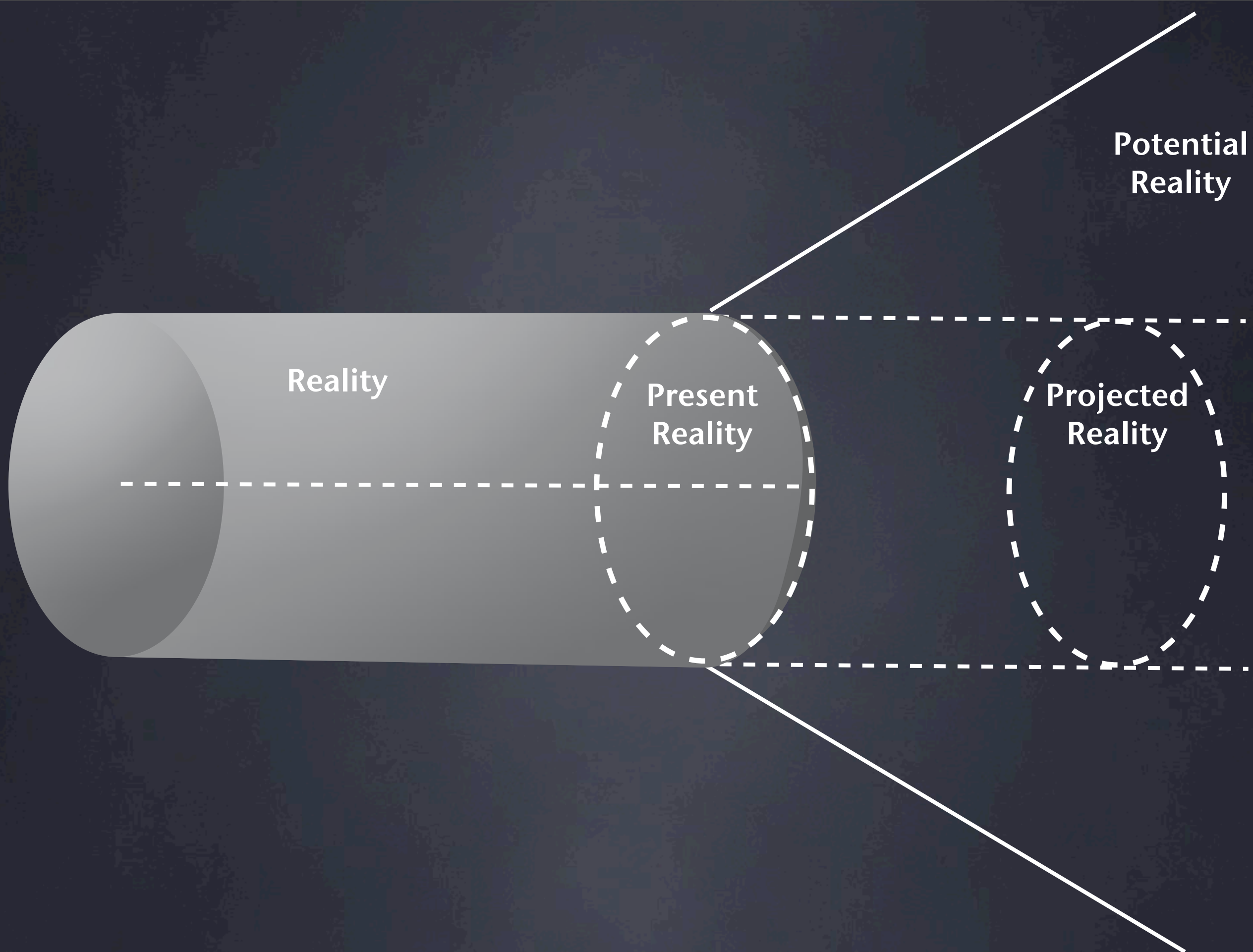
From Death to Modality

Lost hope, despairing of one's business. It is the same as saying “I am lost, it is finished.” Accordingly, if the good outcome of some activity is under discussion, and someone wishes to say that it is finished, that there is no more hope, it will be sufficient to make a cross in the air, either with the hand or with only two fingers.

Absence of future potential

- The model that I adopt for understanding grammatical modality is that described by Ron Langacker. In this model, the subject of a modal verb is the locus of some type of potency. That potency is potential rather than actual -- saying “I can lift 300 pounds” doesn’t imply that I actually am lifting, have lifted, or ever will lift 300 pounds. Only that I could if I wanted to, in some projected future
- Potency also distinguishes root and epistemic modals. In ROOT modals the potency is fairly salient and well-defined: some notion of obligation, permission, desire, or ability.

- What emerges is a view of modals in which a core concept is “the likelihood of reality evolving in a certain way” (Langacker, 1991, p. 274), whether the potency that drives reality forward is a person’s mental or physical ability, general conditions, the force of authority, or the speaker’s subjective assessment of the likelihood of reality evolving in some particular way.
- This view of modality is captured by Langacker in a dynamic evolutionary model. In this idealized cognitive model, reality is conceived as moving forward along a temporal axis, from the present reality into some projected or potential future reality.



Potential
Reality

Reality

Present
Reality

Projected
Reality

- **IMPOSSIBLE** is the denial of a potential future

- Both metaphor and metonymy are at work in the grammaticalization of IMPOSSIBLE



Metonymy



The Second Route

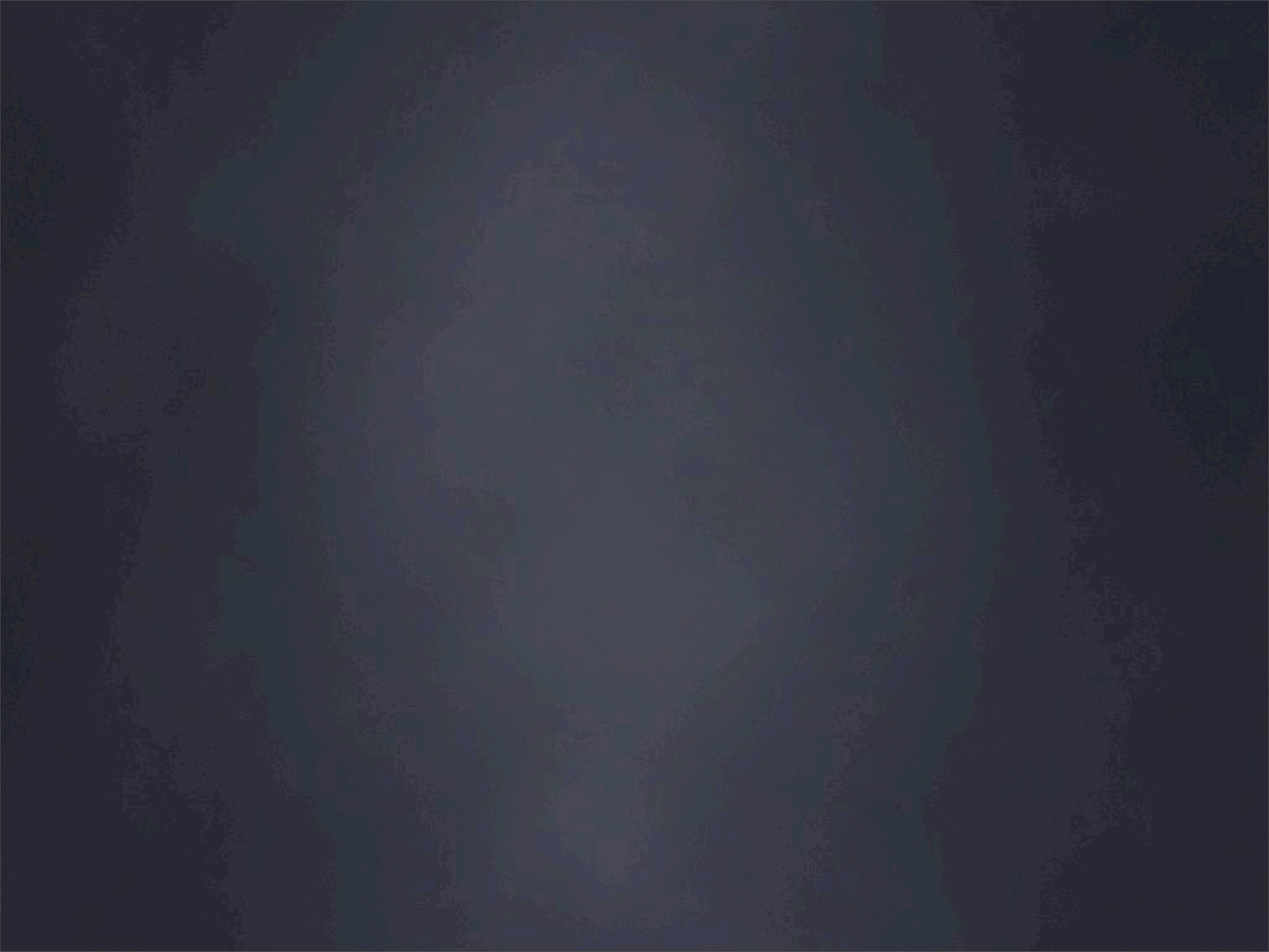


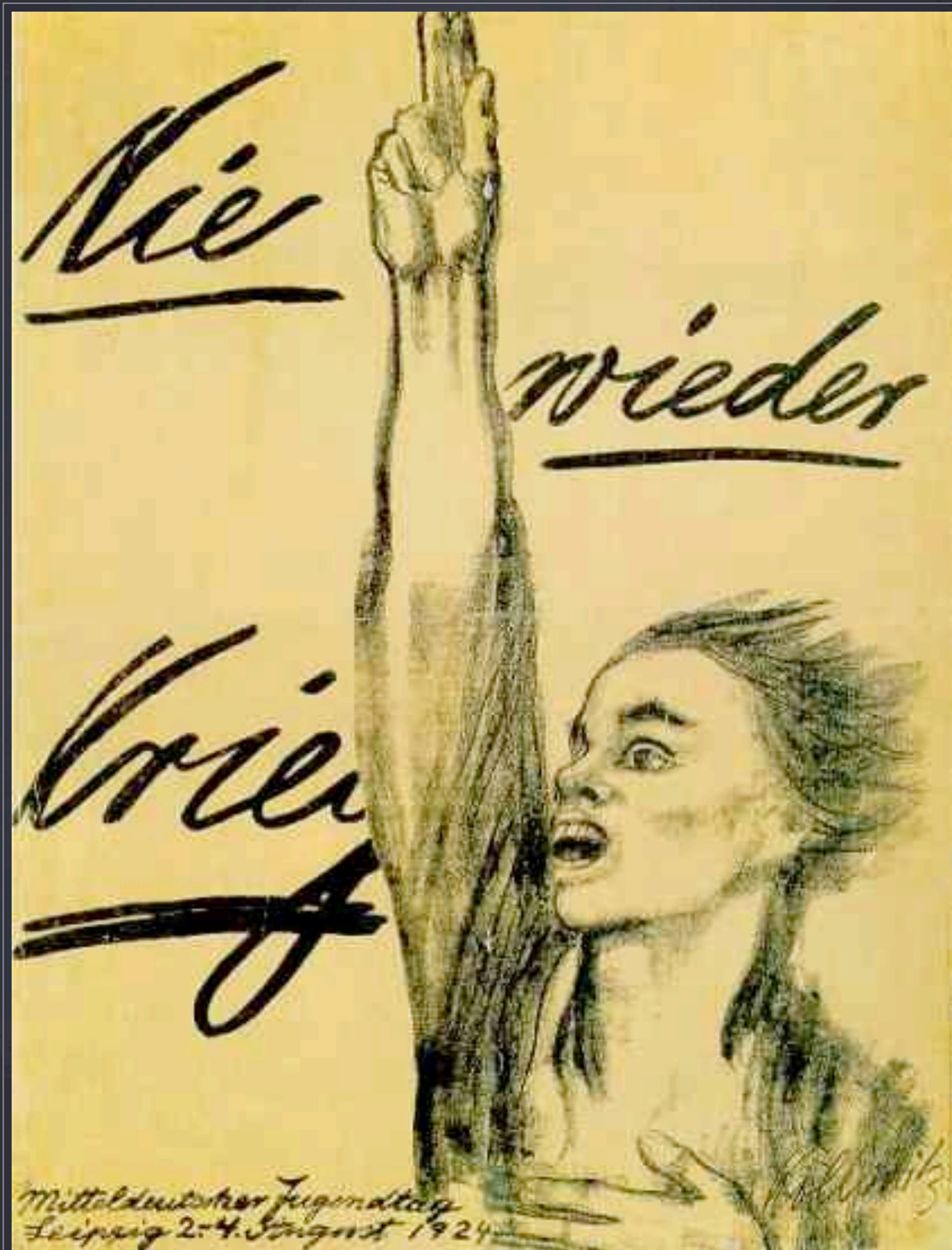
Symbol



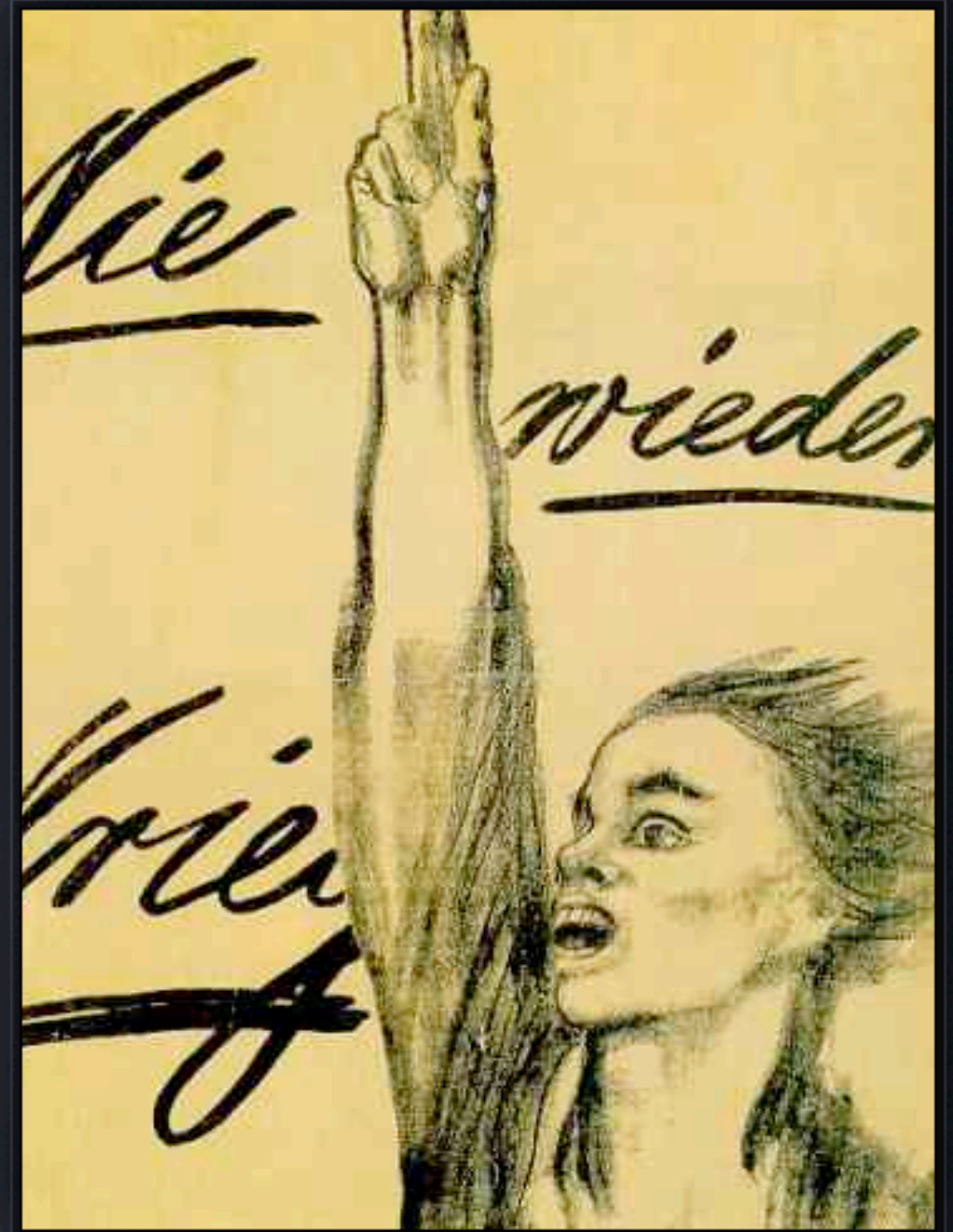
Symptom

- I take this semiotic distinction from the art historian Ernst Gombrich in his essay, “Ritualized Gesture and Expression in Art.”
- An especially telling example of symbol and symptom is Gombrich’s examination of a 1924 anti-war poster by the German expressionist artist, Käthe Kollwitz.





Gombrich says that the two outstretched fingers conventionally accompany the swearing of an oath in Central Europe and notes the resemblance to the “gesture of blessing”. According to Gombrich, the gesture “originally signified neither blessing nor oath” but accompanied any “more solemn spoken announcement”. This aspect of the depiction Gombrich calls a SYMBOL.



- Alternatively, Gombrich characterizes the young man's heightened muscle tone, rigid posture, raised head and forward thrust of the chin, and bristling hair -- as symptoms of the emotion that accompanies mass enthusiasm.
- Symptoms are the visible signs of emotion, while symbols are conventional gestures.



Symbol is suffused with symptom through the way the gesture is made, its *manner of movement* — the muscle tone, the rigid posture — and also through facial gestures such as the raised head and wide open eyes.

Manner of movement



IMPOSSIBILE

Aspect in ASL

- ❖ Modifications to the movement of the verb
 - ❖ Changes in the **manner** of movement
 - ❖ Frishberg: *sharp* and *soft*

Aspect in ASL

❖ Frishberg (1972):

- ❖ “The difference between the signs for DEEP-YELLOW and YELLOW is a difference in intensity of movement. The first sign is made with a single, tense, brisk motion of one hand, whereas the second sign has a rocking motion of the same hand configuration. We can also make a distinction between the kinds of motion in the signs for YELLOW and YELLOWISH. YELLOWISH moves in the same general direction as YELLOW but with smaller, gentler, and more soft motion.”

Aspect in ASL

- ❖ Notice also that the semantic distinctions parallel the articulatory distinctions: the intensity of movement describes intensity of meaning, emphasis, rapid onset of action and total satisfaction of a criterion. We will call this feature **sharp**. The gentler motion indicates uncertainty, gradual onset of action or partial satisfaction of a criterion. We will call this feature **soft**.

Aspect in ASL

- ❖ Sharp and soft is not restricted to marking degrees of adjectival meaning ('yellow' vs. 'bright yellow')
- ❖ It can also mark aspectual meaning

Sharp	Standard	Soft
REALLY-YELLOW	YELLOW	YELLOWISH
	GOOD	SO-SO++
BAWL	CRY++	
BEAUTIFUL	PRETTY	
DOWNPOUR++	RAIN++	
BLIZZARD	SNOW	
PAINFUL	HURT	



(a) LOOK-AT



(b) LOOK-AT[m:protractive]



(c) LOOK-AT[m:incessant]



(d) LOOK-AT[m:durational]



(e) LOOK-AT[m:habitual]



(f) LOOK-AT[m:continuative]



(g) LOOK-AT[m:iterative]



```
graph LR; A[Gesture] --> B[Prosody/Intonation]; B --> C[Grammatical Marker];
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Gesture

Prosody/Intonation

Grammatical Marker

The Second Route: Manner of Movement



Facial Gestures

Facial Grammatical Markers

- Negatives
- Polar questions (Y/N)
- Conditionals
- Topics

ASL

Y/N Question



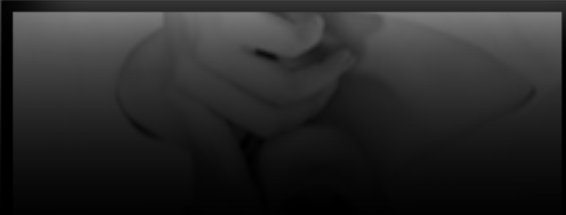


Surprise > Polar Question

Polar Questions

- Data from 35 signed languages
- All 35 used facial marking for polar questions
- Extensive variation in question-word paradigms, but remarkable similarity in the use of facial gestures to mark polar questions
- Eyebrow raise, eyes wide open, eye contact with addressee, head forward position, forward body posture

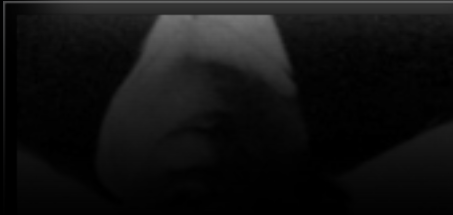
Surprise Gesture



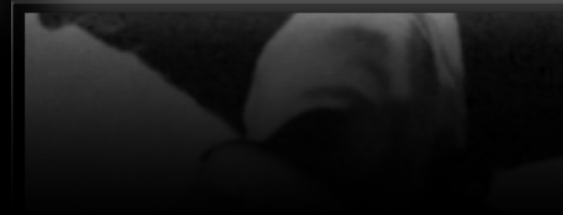
Accompanying
Lexical Sign

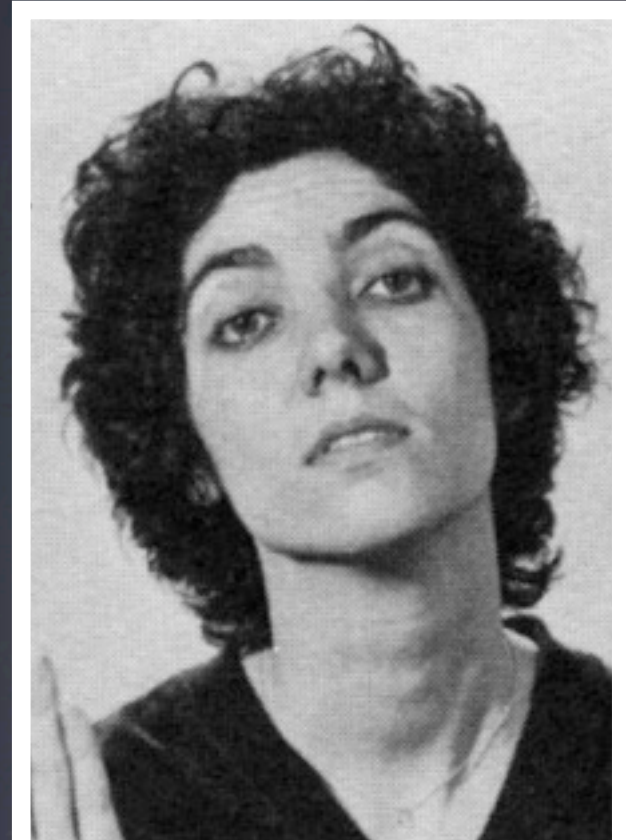


Polar Question



Conditional





Question > Conditional > Topic

- Haiman points out the relations among polar questions, conditionals and topics (“Conditionals are topics”, 1978).
- “Will he come? I will stay.” > “If he will come, I will stay.”
- “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.” > “If any among you is afflicted, let him pray.”

Emotive Function

Paralinguistic Function

Grammatical Function

Facial Gestures

Intonation

Grammatical markers
(polar questions, topics,
imperatives, etc.)

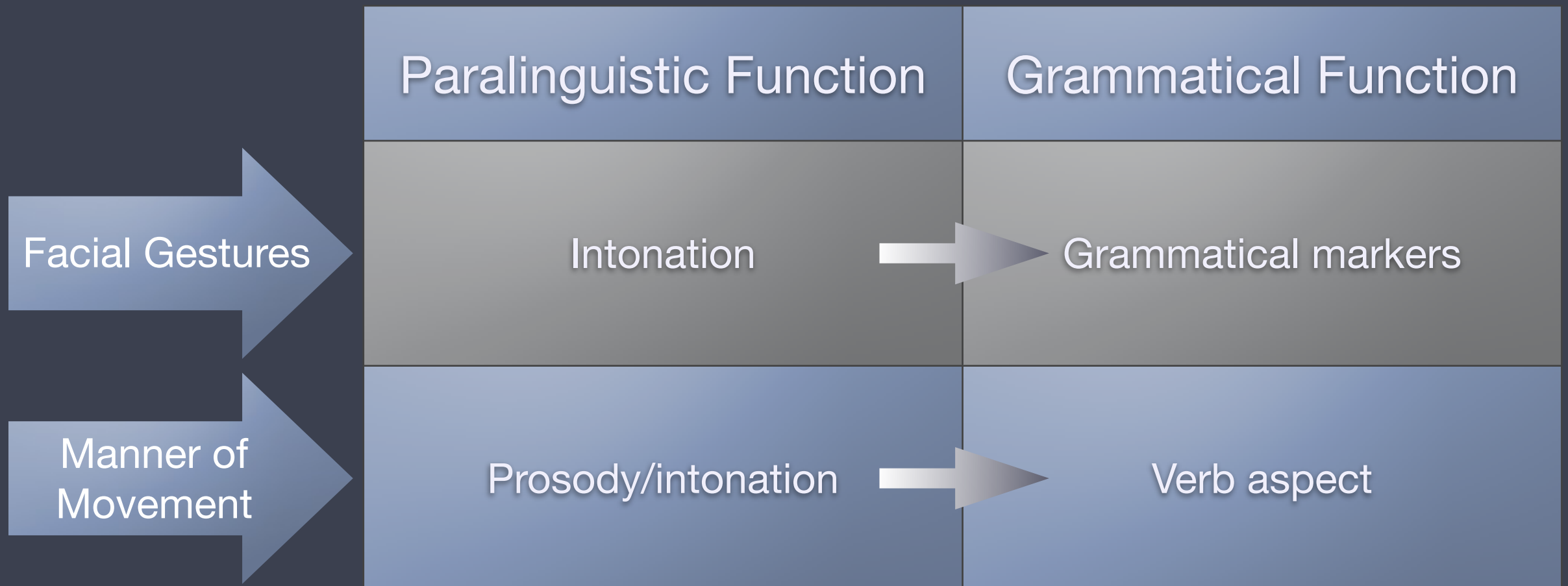
Manner of movement

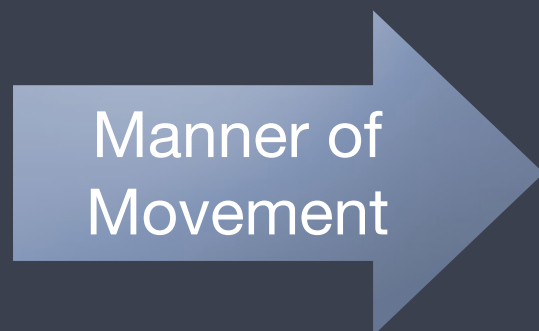
Prosody, phonetic stress

**Markers of modal
strength, verb aspect**

Grammaticalization







Paralinguistic Function	Grammatical Function
Intonation	Questions, topics Grammatical markers (conditionals, imperatives, etc.)
Prosody, linguistic stress	Adjectival & adverbial strength Modal strength Verb aspect

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