To be alive is to be engaged in the striving for control. In the case of humans, this takes many forms and occurs on different levels: physical, perceptual, mental, social. Language is both an instrument and a product of this striving, which thus has numerous linguistic reflexes. In particular, it is evident in modals, as the basis for their force-dynamic nature. The generally successful description of modals along these lines, in English and other languages, has left certain classic issues unresolved. One such issue is “transparency”, the characteristic property of so-called “raising” constructions. Another is the distinction between “root” and “epistemic” modals. A third is the grammatical status of modal elements (e.g. as “main” vs. “auxiliary” verbs). Though related, these issues are distinct and largely independent. They can only be resolved through clarification of the conceptual factors involved. In each case the notion of striving for control proves to be a central factor.