What is Aspect?
Contrasting Definitions in General Linguistics and New Testament Studies[1]

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1. Introduction

It is common ground among scholars of New Testament Greek that in the nonindicative moods the so-called "tenses" do not encode tense in its narrower sense of location in time (past, present, future, etc.), but rather a property termed *aspect*.[2] Moreover, it is common ground that in the indicative, too, at least some tenses express aspect, whether or not they also express location in time.[3] There is no doubt, therefore, concerning the importance of aspect for understanding the Greek verb.[4]

But despite this consensus there is considerable confusion among New Testament scholars as to what is actually meant by "aspect." Although real progress in understanding the subject has been made over the last thirty years or so, not least through the application of insights from general linguistics, this chapter will argue that the understanding of aspect which has emerged reflects a misunderstanding of the linguistic literature.

Recent studies of aspect in New Testament Greek have taken as their starting point the important doctoral dissertations of Stanley Porter and Buist Fanning, published in 1989 and 1990 respectively.[5] There are significant differences between Porter's approach and

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1. I am grateful to Constantine Campbell, Buist Fanning, and Stanley Porter for their responses to various queries, to Wally Cirafesi, Rob Crellin, James Hely Hutchinson, Mickey Mantle, Steve Runge, Stephen Shead, and Steve Walton for their helpful comments on a draft of this chapter, and to the participants in the conference "Linguistics and the Greek Verb" for their feedback on the abridged version presented there.

2. The term "tense" is used in both a broader and a narrower sense. As John Lyons notes, it has traditionally been used to cover "not only what is here classified as tense, but a range of other time-related distinctions which are nowadays subsumed, by linguists at least, under the term 'aspect.'" *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2:687. Some scholars prefer to refer to the Greek present, aorist, and so on as "tense-forms" rather than "tenses," because they see the distinctions between them as nontemporal; e.g., Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 24.

3. A few scholars have followed Kenneth McKay and Stanley Porter (see n. 5 below) in arguing that there is no tense (in the narrower sense) even in the indicative. As Campbell notes, this position "is still in the minority, being rejected by most grammarians." *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 111.

4. See Stanley E. Porter, *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 198; Campbell, *Advances*, 109.

5. S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood*, SBG

Fanning's, and it is unfortunate that the phrase "verbal aspect theory" has sometimes been used to refer to distinctives of the former, such as the view that Greek tenses do not encode location in time even in the indicative.[6] But there is considerable agreement between these two scholars as to the essential nature of aspect. In particular, both see aspect as a matter of the speaker or author's choice of "viewpoint" on the situation to which the verb relates,[7] although differing as to the extent to which this choice is a subjective one.[8] Moreover, both deny that aspect is a temporal category,[9] seeing the expression of a situation's temporal structure as at most a secondary effect of the choice of aspect in combination with other elements of a clause and its context.

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1 (New York: Lang, 1989); Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). The book-length treatments which have ensued are Mari Broman Olsen, *A Semantic and Pragmatic Model of Lexical and Grammatical Aspect*, ODL (New York: Garland, 1997); Rodney J. Decker, *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect*, SBG 10 (New York: Lang, 2001); Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, SBG 13 (New York: Lang, 2007); idem, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs: Further Soundings in the Greek of the New* Testament, SBG 15 (New York: Lang, 2008); Toshikazu S. Foley, *Biblical Translation in Chinese and Greek: Verbal Aspect in Theory and Practice*, LBS 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); David L. Matthewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation: The Function of Greek Verb Tenses in John's Apocalypse*, LBS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Wally V. Cirafesi, *Verbal Aspect in Synoptic Parallels: On the Method and Meaning of Divergent Tense-Form Usage in the Synoptic Passion Narrative*, LBS 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Douglas S. Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory and the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament*, SBG 16 (New York: Lang, 2014). Campbell has also produced a short introduction, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (see n. 2). Important treatments prior to those of Porter and Fanning are Juan Mateos, *El aspecto verbal en el Nuevo Testamento*, EstNT 1 (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1977), and various contributions from Kenneth L. McKay on both Classical Greek and New Testament Greek, especially *Greek Grammar for Students: A Concise Grammar of Classical Attic with Special Reference to Aspect in the Verb* (Canberra: Dept. of Classics, Australian National University, 1974) and "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in New Testament Greek," *NovT* 23 (1981): 289–329. See now idem, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek: An Aspectual Approach*, SBG 5 (New York: Lang, 1994). Trevor V. Evans discusses verbal aspect in the Septuagint in *Verbal Syntax in the Greek Pentateuch: Natural Greek Usage and Hebrew Interference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and makes a number of important observations in "Future Directions for Aspect Studies in Ancient Greek," in *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography: Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Danker*, ed. Bernard A. Taylor et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 199–206.

6.   E.g., Andrew David Naselli, "A Brief Introduction to Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek," *DBSJ* 12 (2007): 18; Stanley E. Porter, "Prominence: A Theoretical Overview," in *The Linguist As Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Matthew Brook O'Donnell, NTM 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 58; Matthewson, *Verbal Aspect*, 24–25.

7.   Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 98; Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 84–85.

8.   Porter sees "no necessary correlation between aspect form and objective action" ("Aspect Theory and Lexicography," in Taylor, *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography*, 208). Fanning considers aspect "a rather subjective category," but notes that "fully subjective choices between aspects are not common" (*Verbal Aspect*, 85; similarly 50).

9.   See §§3.2 and 3.3 below.

This level of agreement in two independent studies has been described as "nothing short of stunning,"[10] and probably accounts for the fact that subsequent New Testament scholarship on aspect has generally accepted Porter and Fanning's understanding of the concept rather uncritically. Constantine Campbell has noted that while the disagreements between Porter and Fanning provoked interest and debate, the agreements offered "a relatively stable foundation for future aspectual research."[11] He lists aspect as one of the "significant issues within Greek verbal aspect studies" concerning which "there is a great deal of agreement,"[12] and others have made similar comments in recent publications.[13]

It is hoped that the present chapter will prompt scholars to reexamine this foundational question. It will be noted below that despite considerable debate within general linguistics as to precisely how aspect should be defined,[14] there is a consensus that it is a temporal concept, having to do with the way in which a situation is presented not in some abstract or spatial sense but specifically *in relation to time*. For this reason the actual temporal structure of the situation often constrains the speaker or author's choice of aspect, so that the choice is a subjective one only in certain circumstances. Fanning, indeed, recognizes this latter point, but is nevertheless reluctant to define aspect in relation to time, and most of the recent work on aspect within New Testament studies has followed Porter's more subjective approach.

In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding it is worth stressing that the concern of the present chapter is whether *aspect* is or is not a temporal concept. It is not whether the Greek "tenses" ever encode tense (in the narrower sense of location in time) alongside aspect. Because the second question is one of the major areas of disagreement between Porter and Fanning, it is sometimes supposed that the "verbal aspect debate" is really a debate about tense, or that aspect and tense are somehow in competition. As Campbell

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10.   D. A. Carson, "An Introduction to the Porter/Fanning Debate," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNTSup 80 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 22.

11.   Campbell, *Advances*, 46–47 (quoted text from p. 47).

12.   Ibid., 130.

13.   Cirafesi notes that "a somewhat unified definition of verbal aspect has emerged" (*Verbal Aspect*, 22), and Porter describes the definition of verbal aspect as a "point of agreement" between himself, Fanning, and Campbell (*Linguistic Analysis*, 199). Of the scholars cited in n. 5, above, only Olsen and Evans refer to time in their definitions of aspect. Olsen, whose field is general linguistics, follows Comrie's temporal definition (on which see §2.2 below), as does Evans in his study of the Greek Pentateuch (Olsen, *Semantic and Pragmatic Model*, 6–7; Evans, *Verbal Syntax*, 18–19).

14.   Carl Bache noted some time ago that "aspect is probably one of the most controversial areas not only in language-specific grammars but also in general linguistics," so that "it is impossible to refer to any single generally accepted definition." *Verbal Aspect: A General Theory and Its Application to Present-Day English*, OUSE 8 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1985), 5.

rightly points out, this is not the case.[15] Nevertheless, the questions are related,[16] and some of the same methodological issues arise in relation to both. For example, arguments presented in support of the "no tense" view often depend on the assumption that grammatical categories have invariable and "uncancelable" semantic meanings, so that the existence of non-past-referring imperfects (for example) is evidence that the imperfect is not a past tense.[17] In fact there is much to be said for the view that grammatical categories can be polysemous, so that there need not be a single core of meaning found in every context.[18] It will be argued here that a temporal view of aspect is the norm among linguists, and has considerable power to explain aspectual usage in the Greek New Testament. But this should not be interpreted as a claim that there are no idiomatic examples or special cases.

Section 2 below offers an overview of representative approaches to aspect in general linguistics, pointing out that although these differ in their descriptions they are in agreement that aspect is a temporal concept. It will be suggested, however, that in some cases this is obscured by linguists' use of visual and spatial metaphors to describe aspect, which may be a contributing factor in the current confusion within New Testament scholarship. It will be suggested that for this reason a "time-relational" analysis (to use Wolfgang Klein's term) is preferable. Moreover, such an approach clarifies the different ways in which aspect and *Aktionsart* relate to time. Section 3 surveys the definitions of aspect by four New Testament scholars, namely Mateos, Porter, Fanning, and Campbell, showing how the latter three downplay or deny the temporal nature of aspect, in contrast to the linguists discussed in section 2. Section 4 then demonstrates how a temporal understanding of aspect explains the various effects of aspectual choice in combination with different types of verb, and section 5 offers concluding reflections and suggests some desiderata for further work in this area.

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15. Campbell, *Advances*, 109. Both Porter and Decker appear to confuse the two questions when they accuse Fanning of inconsistency for defining aspect without reference to time but seeing the tenses as expressing time in the indicative (Stanley E. Porter, "In Defence of Verbal Aspect," in Porter, *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics*, 37; Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 20).

16. See the comments in the conclusion to this chapter.

17. See, e.g., Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 104, 184; Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 44–48; Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 24–27. The notion of semantic meaning as "uncancelable" meaning has been borrowed from the field of pragmatics, where it is used very differently. Broadly, pragmatic meaning is meaning that is implied by the use of a sentence in a particular extralinguistic context. See generally Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Mira Ariel, *Defining Pragmatics*, RSL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

18. See, for example, Bernard Comrie, *Tense*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 18–23; Moisés Silva, "A Response to Fanning and Porter on Verbal Aspect," in Porter, *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics*, 79; John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, 3rd ed., OTLing (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 176–81; Lotte Hogeweg, "What's So Unreal About the Past: Past Tense and Counterfactuals," in *Studies on English Modality in Honour of Frank R. Palmer*, ed. Anastasios Tsangalidis and Roberta Facchinetti, Linguistic Insights 111 (Bern: Lang, 2009), 181–208; William Croft, *Verbs: Aspect and Causal Structure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 127; Klaas Bentein, "Tense and Aspect from Hellenistic to Early Byzantine Greek," *EAGLL* 3:380. See also Christopher Fresch's contribution in ch. 12 of the present volume.

For the sake of simplicity this chapter focuses primarily on perfective and imperfective aspects, concerning which there is the most consensus among New Testament scholars, and on the indicative mood. However, it will be suggested that a time-relational approach also offers potential for explaining the aspect of the perfect and pluperfect tenses,[19] and that of the future tense in the nonindicative moods.[20]

2. Aspect in General Linguistics

A comprehensive survey of approaches to aspect in general linguistics would be well beyond the possibilities of this chapter.[21] Instead the range of opinion will be illustrated with reference to a few of the works that have proved most influential, both on aspect studies in general and on New Testament scholarship in particular.

Perhaps the biggest difference among linguists when it comes to defining aspect is precisely which of a number of related phenomena should be included under that umbrella, the difficulty being that languages behave rather differently with respect to the phenomena in question. One approach starts with a particular language and uses the term "aspect" to refer to particular grammaticalized distinctions found in that language, while another seeks a broader definition that can be applied cross-linguistically.[22] Studies of aspect in New Testament Greek have drawn on both approaches. As an example of the former we will begin by considering aspect in Russian, and in particular Isačenko's "parade" illustration, a modified version of which has made its way, via Porter, into discussion of New Testament Greek. The remainder of the section will examine various attempts to define aspect as a cross-linguistic category, beginning with the idea of aspect as a view of the "internal temporal constituency" of a situation, of which Bernard Comrie is perhaps the most frequently-cited exponent.[23] After explaining Comrie's view, we will consider Carl Bache's

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19.   The aspectual value of these tenses is complex and disputed. Porter describes it as "stative," grammaticalizing "the speaker's conception of the verbal process as a state or condition" (*Verbal Aspect*, 257). Fanning sees the perfect as "a complex verbal category denoting, in its basic sense, a state which results from a prior occurrence," combining "the *Aktionsart*-feature of stative situation, the tense-feature of anteriority, and the aspect of summary viewpoint concerning the occurrence" (*Verbal Aspect*, 119). Campbell sees it as imperfective (*Indicative Mood*, 186).

20.   See §2.4 below.

21.   The literature is vast. As of 2006, Robert Binnick's "Project on Annotated Bibliography of Contemporary Research in Tense, Grammatical Aspect, *Aktionsart*, and Related Areas" had reached around 9,000 items (http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~binnick/TENSE/Bibliography.html). A useful short introduction to the subject is Hans-Jürgen Sasse, "Aspect and Aktionsart," in *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, ed. Keith Brown, 2nd ed. (London: Elsevier, 2006), 1:535–38, and an up-to-date overview of the field is offered by Robert I. Binnick, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Hans-Jürgen Sasse, "Recent Activity in the Theory of Aspect: Accomplishments, Achievements, or Just Non-Progressive State?" *LiTy* 6 (2002): 199–271.

22.   See Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 6–7.

23.   Ibid., 3.

critique of Comrie, and Bache's explanation of the distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*. It will be noted that he and others who make such a distinction nevertheless define both concepts in relation to time. It will be suggested, however, that their temporal understanding of aspect is in some cases obscured by the use of visual and spatial metaphors, and that a time-relational definition, such as those of Johnson and Klein, is to be preferred.

2.1 Aspect in Russian and Isačenko's "Parade" Analogy

The narrower approach to aspect usually takes as its starting point the distinction between *perfective* and *imperfective* verbs in Slavonic languages such as Russian, which has been called "the aspect language *par excellence*."[24] Indeed, the use of "aspect" as a grammatical term originated in the nineteenth century as a calque or loan translation of the Russian term вид (*vid*). The latter can mean both "form" and "view," and was originally adopted by grammarians as an equivalent to the Greek term εἶδος, referring to a morphological form or type. Smotrickij used the term in the early seventeenth century to distinguish "primary" nouns and verbs from "derived" ones, and Greč in his 1827 grammar used it to distinguish various semantic classes of verb. It was only later that the term came to be reinterpreted in its alternative sense of "view" and used to refer to the distinction between perfective and imperfective verbs.[25] Reiff's use of the calque "aspect" in his 1828 French translation of Greč's grammar was no doubt partly responsible for the first of these developments,[26] even if, contrary to what is usually supposed,[27] he may not have been the first to use "aspect" as an equivalent for вид.[28]

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24. Bache, *Verbal Aspect*, 1. Östen Dahl observes, however, that the Slavonic languages are in fact "rather idiosyncratic in many ways" when it comes to aspect. "Perfectivity in Slavonic and Other Languages," in *Aspect Bound: A Voyage into the Realm of Germanic, Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian Aspectology*, ed. Casper de Groot and Hannu Tommola (Dordrecht: Foris, 1984), 4.

25. See Lawrence W. Newman, "The Notion of Verbal Aspect in Eighteenth Century Russia," *Russian Linguistics* 3 (1976): 38; C. J. Ruijgh, review of *Kontext und Aspekt in der altgriechischen Prosa Herodots*, by Heinrich Hettrich, *Gnomon* 51 (1979): 222–23; Robert I. Binnick, *Time and the Verb: A Guide to Tense and Aspect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 139–40.

26. Nikolaj Ivanovič Greč, *Grammaire raisonnée de la langue russe*, trans. Charles Philippe Reiff (St. Petersburg: Gretsch,1828–29). Reiff's own grammar of 1821 uses "branche" rather than "aspect" as an equivalent to вид, contrary to what is stated in H. M. Sørensen, "Om definitionerne af verbets aspekter," in *In memoriam Kr. Sandfeld udgivet paa 70-aarsdagen for hans fødsel*, ed. Rosally Brøndal et al. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1943), 221. See Charles Philippe Reiff, *Grammaire russe précédée d'une introduction sur la langue slavonne* (Paris: Barrois, 1851), 110 (as p. xv indicates, the 1851 Paris edition is simply a reissue of the 1821 St. Petersburg edition, which I was unable to consult).

27. For this view see, e.g., Newman, "Notion of Verbal Aspect," 38; Ruijgh, review of *Kontext und Aspekt* (by Hettrich), 222; Binnick, *Time and the Verb*, 140.

28. Auroux notes that de Neuville seems to have used "aspect" in the sense of вид in a short article published in 1818; Sylvain Auroux, "Innovation et système scientifique: Le temps verbal dans la Grammaire génerale," in *Hommage à Jean-Toussaint Desanti*, ed. Sylvain Auroux et al. (Mauvezin:

The precise distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect in Russian has been much debated. Some earlier scholars saw the distinction as one between completed action and continuous action, or between actions of shorter and longer duration.[29] But Forsyth represents what is probably the standard view today when he defines a perfective verb as one that *"expresses the action as a total event summed up with reference to a single specific juncture,"*[30] and an imperfective verb as one that is neutral with respect to perfectivity.[31] Isačenko, who understood the distinction similarly, illustrated it using the analogy of a parade, which is often cited in studies of aspect in New Testament Greek.[32] However, the version of the analogy familiar to New Testament scholars is Porter's adaptation, and differs strikingly from Isačenko's own version.

Isačenko suggested that when one uses a perfective verb such as он переписал (*on perepisal*, he rewrote) or он прочитал (*on pročital*, he read), one's perspective can be compared to that of a person watching a parade from the stand. Such a person stands outside the event and experiences the whole thing from beginning to end. By contrast, the perspective expressed by the imperfective equivalents он переписывал (*on perepisyval*) and он читал (*on čital*) can be compared to that of a participant marching in the parade, who does not experience the complete event because he or she cannot see its beginning or end.[33] Isačenko represented the distinction graphically as follows:[34]

Trans-Europ-Repress, 1991), 80, citing Michel de Neuville, "Système des formes du verbe français," *Annales de grammaire* 1 (1818): 543. Archaimbault argues that Maudru also did so in his 1802 grammar, but this seems less clear; Sylvie Archaimbault, "L'aspect: Fortune d'un terme, avatars d'un concept," in *Métalangage et terminologie linguistique: Actes du colloque international de Grenoble (Université Stendhal-Grenoble III, 14-16 mai 1998)*, ed. Bernard Colombat and Marie Savelli, OrbisSup 17 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 86, citing Jean-Baptiste Maudru, *Élémens raisonnés de la langue russe ou principes généraux de la grammaire appliqués à la langue russe* (Paris: Maudru, 1802), 222.

29. A survey of major views is presented in A. V. Isačenko, *Grammatičeskij stroj russkogo jazyka v sopostavlenii c slovackim: Morfologija*, pt. 2 (Bratislava: Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1960), 133–36, and more briefly in idem, *Formenlehre*, pt. 1 of *Die russische Sprache der Gegenwart* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1962), 349.

30. James Forsyth, *A Grammar of Aspect: Usage and Meaning in the Russian Verb*, Studies in the Modern Russian Language Extra Volume (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 8 (emphasis original).

31. Ibid., 14.

32. See, for example, Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 91; idem, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. BLG 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 24; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 500; Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 50; idem, *Basics*, 19–20.

33. The examples using переписать/переписывать (rewrite) and прочитать/читать (read) appear in Isačenko, *Grammatičeskij stroj*, 132–33 and idem, *Russische Sprache*, 348, respectively.

34. Idem, *Grammatičeskij stroj*, 133 (my translation); cf. idem, *Russische Sprache*, 348.

Imperfective aspect:

speaker
is situated as it were within the process itself

Perfective aspect:

speaker
is situated as it were outside the process,
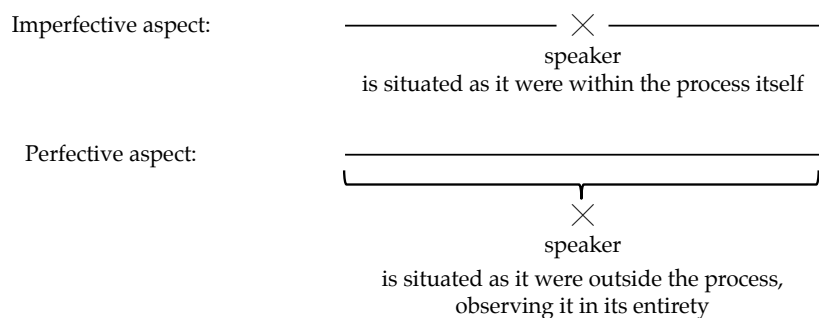observing it in its entirety

Figure 1: Isačenko's Parade Analogy

A weakness which has been noted in Isačenko's analogy, so far as Russian is concerned, is that the comparison of the imperfective to the view from within the parade, not taking in its beginning and end, contradicts Isačenko's own understanding of the imperfective as a neutral form.[35] In other words, the so-called imperfective aspect in Russian *can* be used when speaking of an entire situation from beginning to end, although unlike the perfective aspect it *need* not.[36] Forsyth notes, for example, that the question "Have you read *War and Peace*?" can be phrased using an imperfective verb: Вы <u>читали</u> "Войну и мир"? (*Vy čitali "Vojnu i mir"*?).[37] But although Isačenko's illustration of imperfective aspect does not completely fit his understanding of Russian, it does fit the usual understanding of imperfective aspect when considered as a cross-linguistic typological category. That is, some languages differ from Russian in having a form that is used only when the temporal boundaries of a situation are positively excluded,[38] and within general linguistics the term "imperfective" is normally used to refer to such a form.[39]

It is important to stress (as, indeed, Isačenko himself stressed) that his parade analogy is merely an analogy, and can be accepted only with certain reservations.[40] The analogy can be understood correctly only in the light of Isačenko's accompanying explanation and examples, which suggest that he sees the totality expressed by perfective aspect as primarily

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35. Forsyth, *Grammar of Aspect*, 349. For Isačenko's view of imperfective aspect see his *Grammatičeskij stroj*, 132.

36. Forsyth argues that this is true even in the case of those verbs where the imperfective is a secondary formation from a perfective verb (*Grammar of Aspect*, 29).

37. Likewise, the answer "Yes, I've read it" can be expressed using the imperfective verb Читал (*Čital*) (ibid., 83). The speaker in such cases "is merely interested in the fact that the type of action named did occur" (ibid., 82).

38. Recent works have taken the view that the opposition between perfective and imperfective aspects in New Testament Greek is equipollent, i.e., that neither is aspectually neutral or unmarked (Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 124–25; Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 90; Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 20–21). If this is correct, then the imperfective aspect can fairly be compared to the "internal" view of the participant in Isačenko's parade. But the question of markedness deserves further attention, given the complexities noted by Comrie (*Aspect*, 111–22) and Fanning (*Verbal Aspect*, 55–72).

39. E.g., Pier Marco Bertinetto, "Perfectives, Imperfectives, and Progressives," in Brown, *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, 9:266.

40. Isačenko, *Grammatičeskij stroj*, 133.

temporal rather than spatial. The analogy works because a parade moves through time and space simultaneously; those observing from the stand see the whole length of the parade not at once but over time as it passes by. But Isačenko's examples involve verbs for "reading" and "rewriting," which normally take place in a single location. The difference between referring to the action "to read a book" using the perfective прочитать книгу (*pročitat' knigu*) and the imperfective читать книгу (*čitat' knigu*) is not that the first takes in all of the *space* occupied by the action while the second views it in close-up, with only part of the scene visible. Rather, the difference is that the perfective includes the whole *timespan* of the event from beginning to end, while the imperfective does not (or does not *necessarily*, being aspectually neutral). It is true that Isačenko avoids defining aspect in explicitly temporal terms, and even states that aspect lies "außerhalb der temporalen Kategorien" (outside temporal categories).[41] But this needs to be understood in the context of his rejection of alternative definitions of aspect that identified it with temporal features of the situation itself such as duration or completion. It should also be noted that while Isačenko approved Dostal's description of aspect as expressing the speaker's attitude to a situation, he stressed that this was not a *subjective* attitude, for in most cases the "choice" of aspect is dictated by the semantic task of the utterance.[42]

In Porter's version of the parade analogy the perspective of the person watching from the stand represents not perfective aspect, as it does for Isačenko, but *imperfective* aspect, while perfective aspect is represented by the view from a helicopter, taking in the whole parade at once. This perhaps reflects Porter's move away from a temporal understanding of aspect, since the aspects are now represented by what can be seen of the parade at a particular moment, not what is seen over the course of time.[43] The fact that the view from the stand has been used to illustrate both perfective aspect (by Isačenko) and imperfective aspect (by Porter) is perhaps an indication that the analogy is rather less helpful than it appears at first sight.

2.2 Bernard Comrie and Aspects as Views of Internal Temporal Constituency

Although some linguists have insisted that the term "aspect" should be reserved only for the perfective/imperfective distinction found in Slavonic languages, Bache notes that "the aim of general linguistics is to provide a technical terminology and a linguistic model which may serve as a useful framework for the analysis of any specific language."[44] Not all languages have a straightforward perfective/imperfective contrast. English, for example, can express actions as "simple" (e.g., I walk, I walked), "progressive" (I am walking, I was walking), "perfect" (I have walked, I had walked),[45] or perfect progressive (I have been walking, I had

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41.   Idem, *Russische Sprache*, 348.
42.   Idem, *Grammatičeskij stroj*, 132.
43.   On Porter's view of aspect see §3.2 below.
44.   Carl Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart: Towards a Semantic Distinction," *JL* 18 (1982): 57.
45.   Perfect aspect is not to be confused with perfective aspect. On the distinction see §2.4 below.

been walking).[46] None of these categories corresponds precisely to what one finds in Russian, but it seems too narrow to consider them nonaspectual.[47] Accordingly linguists have sought a broader definition of aspect that can be applied cross-linguistically.

A common understanding of aspect within general linguistics is that the term refers to an expression or "view" of the internal temporal structure of a situation, where the word "situation" serves as a catchall for actions, events, activities, and states.[48] Thus Klein notes that aspect, according to the conventional view, "concerns the different perspectives which a speaker can take and express with regard to the temporal course of some event, action, process, etc.: the speaker may view it as completed, as on-going, as imminent, and possibly in other ways."[49] Perhaps the most influential and frequently-cited representative of this approach is Comrie, who defines aspects as "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation."[50] The phrase "internal temporal constituency" refers to the way in which the situation unfolds through different temporal phases, especially its beginning, middle, and end.[51] Comrie defines perfective aspect as indicating "the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation," while imperfective aspect "pays essential attention to the internal structure of the situation."[52] This definition enables Comrie to include within "imperfective aspect" a variety of more specific aspects such as habitual and progressive aspects.

Comrie's definition of aspect is a semantic rather than a formal one. That is, it is not restricted to distinctions that are grammaticalized in a particular way, or indeed at all, but encompasses the diversity of ways in which the world's languages express internal temporal constituency. For example, Comrie notes that in Finnish the distinction between "He read the book" and "He was reading the book" is expressed not by using different forms of the verb but by placing the object of the sentence (book, *kirja*) in different cases, namely the accusative (*hän luki kirjan*) and partitive (*hän luki kirjaa*) respectively. This distinction can

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46. The simple aspect is usually considered neutral, like the so-called "imperfective" in Russian. See, for example, Binnick, *Time and the Verb*, 296; Olsen, *Semantic and Pragmatic Model*, 182–89; Henriëtte de Swart, "Verbal Aspect," in Binnick, *Oxford Handbook*, 761. However, Carlota Smith argues for its perfectivity. *The Parameter of Aspect*, 2nd ed., SLP 43 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 106–7.

47. Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 57.

48. Among those who use "situation" in this way are Comrie, Lyons, Bache, and Smith. See Comrie, *Aspect*, 13; Lyons, *Semantics*, 2:483; Carl Bache, *The Study of Aspect, Tense and Action: Towards a Theory of the Semantics of Grammatical Categories*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1997), 119; Smith, *Parameter*, xiii–xiv. Others use the term "eventuality;" see, for example, Emmon Bach, "The Algebra of Events," *Ling&P* 9 (1986): 6.

49. Wolfgang Klein, *Time in Language*, Germanic Linguistics (London: Routledge, 1994), 16. Klein himself adopts a time-relational approach similar to Johnson's, on which see §2.4 below.

50. Comrie, *Aspect*, 3.

51. Ibid., 3–4.

52. Ibid., 16.

nevertheless be considered an aspectual one within Comrie's definition,[53] as can information about temporal constituency expressed lexically, through one's choice of vocabulary.[54]

It is important to note that Comrie does not identify aspect with internal temporal constituency, but with a *view* of internal temporal constituency. Aspect, in other words, is a linguistic feature, a feature of utterances about situations rather than of the situations themselves. But there is a connection between the two; the objective nature of a situation constrains the utterances one may fittingly make about it. Someone who regularly played in their school football team could refer to that situation using either of the sentences "I played football for my school" or "I used to play football for my school." The two differ not in the internal temporal constituency of the situation they describe, but in the way they *view* that internal temporal constituency. The first simply views the situation as a whole, while the second looks "inside" the situation and expresses something of its temporal constituency as a regular occurrence. On the other hand, someone who had played only one match could truthfully say "I played football for my school" but not "I used to play football for my school." Similarly, the sentence "The light flashed" could refer to either a single flash or a sequence of flashes, but the sentence "The light was flashing" would normally suit only the second scenario. The reason is that a single flash is usually conceived of as a momentary or *punctual* event, which therefore lacks internal temporal constituency, having no middle phase.[55]

The idea of aspect as a "view" or "perspective" is similar to that reflected in Isačenko's parade illustration, and goes back to the nineteenth-century reinterpretation of the term вид noted above. Whether this metaphor is in fact a helpful one will be questioned below, but it is important to stress that when Comrie and others explain aspect as a "view" they are speaking of a view of the *temporal* structure of a situation. Like Isačenko, Comrie describes perfective and imperfective aspect using the language of "exterior" and "interior" viewpoint, respectively. But these terms refer to positions relative to the *temporal* course of the situation from beginning to end.[56] The imperfective aspect pays attention to the internal temporal structure of the situation, whereas the perfective does not, as it were, "look inside" that temporal structure.[57] So aspect, like tense, has to do with time.[58] But it has to do with

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53. Ibid., 8.
54. On the latter see §4 below.
55. Comrie, *Aspect*, 26, 42. Comrie notes, however, that it is possible to imagine situations where a seemingly momentary event is represented as having duration (42–43). As Bache points out, what matters is whether the event is *conceived of* as momentary or durative ("Aspect and Aktionsart," 65).
56. Comrie, *Aspect*, 4.
57. Ibid.
58. See ibid., 5.

"*how* the situation relates to time, rather than *when*"[59] or, to put it another way, with "situation-internal time" rather than "situation-external time."[60]

Comrie defines tense as "grammaticalised expression of location in time."[61] It is said to be *deictic* in that it relates the time of the situation to a particular reference point or *deictic center*. In the case of temporal deixis this is a point in time, a "now,"[62] which is normally (but not necessarily) the time of the utterance.[63] As Lyons puts it, tense "grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context."[64] An example of a difference in tense is the contrast between the sentences "I am playing football" and "I was playing football." The first communicates the idea that I am playing at the present moment, the second that I was playing at a reference point in the past. Aspect, on the other hand, is usually said to be *nondeictic*, meaning that it does not indicate *when* the situation occurred in relation to a particular deictic center.[65] But to say that aspect is non*deictic* is not to say that it is non*temporal*, as can be seen from the examples discussed above.

2.3 Carl Bache and the Aspect / Aktionsart Distinction

Bache argues that Comrie's definition of aspect is too broad, in that he fails to distinguish it from *Aktionsart*, a German term that literally means "kind of action."[66] It is important to understand precisely what Bache means by this distinction, because the word *"Aktionsart"* has been used in a variety of ways, both in general linguistics and in New Testament studies. At least six different senses can be discerned in recent literature, and it will be useful to list these before turning to Bache's argument, for confusion arises if they are not carefully distinguished.

First, some scholars have used *"Aktionsart"* to refer to what Comrie calls "internal temporal constituency"—that is, to the way in which a situation actually takes place in time. According to this understanding *Aktionsart* is something objective, pertaining to the situation itself, not to the way in which it is conceptualized or described.[67]

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59. M. Lynne Murphy, *Lexical Meaning*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 200 (emphasis original).

60. Comrie, *Aspect*, 5.

61. Idem, *Tense*, 9.

62. On deixis see ibid., 13–18; Lyons, *Semantics*, 2:677–90.

63. In narrative the deictic center can be a point within the narrative, which explains at least some instances of the historic present (see Binnick, *Time and the Verb*, 128).

64. Lyons, *Semantics*, 2:678.

65. However, Lyons notes that "the distinction between tense and aspect is hard to draw with respect to what is sometimes described as relative, or secondary, tense" (ibid., 2:705).

66. Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart." The term *actionality* is sometimes used as an English equivalent; e.g., Sergej Tatevosov, "The Parameter of Actionality," *LiTy* 6 (2003): 317–401. Bache also critiques Lyons, whose approach is broadly similar to Comrie's and is not discussed here (see Lyons, *Semantics*, 2:703–18).

67. Amalia Moser, "From Aktionsart to Aspect: Grammaticalization and Subjectification in Greek,"

A second way that some, including Bache, have used the term is with reference to one's psychological conception of a situation. Borrowing an example from Dowty,[68] Bache notes that one may conceptualize the activity of reading a book for an hour as a continuous one, even if in actual fact it was interrupted by a visit to the bathroom, periods looking out of the window, blinking, and so on.[69] Since *Aktionsart* is a matter of one's conception of a situation, Bache describes it not as objective but as "quasi-objective."[70]

A third approach understands *Aktionsart* as a property not of situations themselves, nor of conceptions of situations, but of sentences (or more precisely, clauses) about them. In this case the term refers to what is *expressed* of the situation's internal temporal constituency through the various components of the clause, including the choice of verbal aspect and the semantics of the verbal lexeme. Thus Wallace explains *Aktionsart* as "aspect in combination with lexical, grammatical, or contextual features."[71] This understanding of *Aktionsart* is close to Comrie's understanding of *aspect*.

A fourth understanding sees *Aktionsart* as a property not of complete clauses but of the verbal lexeme together with its arguments,[72] arguments being those elements of a clause such as its subject(s) and object(s) "which have a close semantic relationship to their predicate," and "which must be involved because of the very nature of the relation or activity named by the predicate."[73] According to this approach, it is the interaction of *Aktionsart* with the grammatical aspect of the verb (perfective, imperfective, etc.) and with other elements of the clause that expresses the internal temporal structure of a situation. The significance of including arguments is that they can make a difference to the relevant temporal characteristics of the situation described, as explained in more detail in section 4 below.[74] For example, "Bloggs ran" and "Bloggs ran a mile" behave differently because the latter includes the idea of reaching an endpoint. Similarly "Bloggs scored a goal" speaks of a single event, whereas "Bloggs scored goals" speaks of a series of events spread over a period of time. A wide range of other terms have been used to refer to *Aktionsart* in this sense,

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ALH 46 (2014): 67.

68.   David R. Dowty, "Studies in the Logic of Verb Aspect and Time Reference in English" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1972), 55.

69.   Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 65–66.

70.   Ibid., 71.

71.   Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 499. This also seems to be Campbell's approach (see, e.g., *Basics*, 55), despite statements such as "*Aktionsart* refers to what actually happened" (ibid., 22)

72.   Smith refers to the combination of the verb with its arguments as the *verb constellation* (*Parameter*, 17). This terminology will be employed in §4 below.

73.   Paul R. Kroeger, *Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 58.

74.   See also Hana Filip, "Lexical Aspect," in Binnick, *Oxford Handbook*, 725; de Swart, "Verbal Aspect," 754.

including aspectual character,[75] aspectual class,[76] procedural character,[77] situation type,[78] and inherent meaning.[79]

A fifth approach is to see *Aktionsart* as a property of the verb alone, so that the verb "run" has the same *Aktionsart* in the sentences "Bloggs ran" and "Bloggs ran a mile."[80] Robert Crellin, who classifies "run" as an "activity" verb, notes that, "while not finally determining the structure of an event expressed at the sentence level, verbs determine the 'kind of event' that a sentence describes."[81] *Aktionsart* in this sense is sometimes referred to as "lexical aspect."[82] Although the latter term is also used for *Aktionsart* in the fourth sense, Filip argues that it is strictly appropriate only "when just verbs, taken as lexical items, are at stake."[83]

Sixth, within Slavonic linguistics the term has been used to refer to the temporal characteristics of a particular class of verbs also known as "procedurals." These are verbs derived from other verbs through the addition of prefixes or suffixes, and indicate how the action "develops or proceeds in particular circumstances."[84] In Russian, for example, the prefix за- (*za-*) can be added to certain imperfective verbs to generate a perfective verb referring to the beginning of the relevant action. Thus плакать (*plakat'*) means "cry" but the procedural заплакать (*zaplakat'*) means "burst into tears."[85]

As noted above, Bache understands *Aktionsart* in the second of these senses, as one's conception of the temporal course of a situation. In contrast to *Aktionsart*, he sees aspect as reflecting a speaker's or writer's choice of "situational focus" in representing the situation,[86] whether as "a unit, or 'total event' … or as something unfolding, with specific attention to the internal structure of the situation."[87] It is important to note that his objection to Comrie is not related to Comrie's understanding of aspect as a temporal concept. Indeed, he has referred to Comrie's formulation of the distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect as "one of the very best," though critiquing it on the grounds that strictly speaking it

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75.   Lyons, *Semantics*, 2:706.

76.   Filip, "Lexical Aspect," 725.

77.   Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 41.

78.   Smith, *Parameter*, 17–37.

79.   Comrie, *Aspect*, 41–51.

80.   Geoffrey Horrocks and Melita Stavrou, "Grammaticalized Aspect and Spatio-Temporal Culmination," *Lingua* 117 (2007): 637.

81.   Robert Crellin, "The Greek Perfect Active System: 200 bc–ad 150" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2012), 47. Crellin understands "event aspect" as synonymous with *Aktionsart* (40). See also Susan D. Rothstein, "Introduction," in *Theoretical and Crosslinguistic Approaches to the Semantics of Aspect*, ed. Susan D. Rothstein, Linguistik Aktuell 110 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2008), 2–3.

82.   Filip, "Lexical Aspect," 725.

83.   Ibid.

84.   Forsyth, *Grammar of Aspect*, 19. See generally ibid., 19–31.

85.   Ibid., 20.

86.   Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 70.

87.   Ibid., 65.

is the "locutionary agent" and not the aspects themselves that "look at" the situation from the outside or inside.[88] For Bache, similarly to Comrie, "looking at a situation from outside, i.e. with an external situational focus, means to look at it in its entirety, with all its constituent phases viewed as a whole," whereas "looking at a situation from inside, i.e. with an internal situational focus, means to look at it as it unfolds, with special attention paid to the middle part."[89] Thus perfective aspect presents a situation "as a whole," while imperfective aspect presents the situation "as unfolding or continuing over an explicit or implicit stretch of time."[90] The reference in these descriptions to constituent phases and to unfolding or continuing over time should leave no doubt that Bache, like Comrie, relates aspect to time.

Bache also recognizes that "there is telling evidence, both syntactic and semantic, against the optional nature of aspectual choice." For example, "the logical incompatibility of the perfective aspect with reference to a process or activity in progress at the time of speaking is usually considered a central theorem in discussions on aspect."[91] The situations in which there is a genuinely free choice are those which are "distant from the concrete present either temporally or modally,"[92] and which are "conceived of as objectively (a) durative, (b) atelic … and (c) non-stative."[93] These latter three terms will be explained in more detail in section 4, but essentially the situation must be conceptualized as lasting longer than a moment, not having an inherent terminal point, and involving change. The requirement for distance from the "concrete present" means that the situation must "be placed in the past, in the future or be conceived of as hypothetical, necessary etc."[94] Where these conditions are satisfied, there is what Bache calls a "pure aspectual opposition" between perfective and imperfective aspect, and the speaker or writer has a subjective choice whether to present the situation "as a unit" or "as something unfolding."[95]

In all other cases, however, the choice of aspect is constrained by the *Aktionsart* of the situation. For example, "punctual situations cannot be referred to by a construction marked as truly imperfective."[96] Punctual *verbs* can be combined with imperfectivity, but "such constructions invariably express repetition or refer to the period leading up to the act or event concerned."[97] As discussed in section 4.4 below, whether what is expressed in such a case is repetition or a run-up will depend on the semantics of the verb in question. The sentence "The light was flashing" is of the first type, while an example of the second is

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88.   Bache, *Study*, 258.
89.   Ibid., 259–60. See also Bache, *Verbal Aspect*, 6–7.
90.   Bache, *Verbal Aspect*, 126.
91.   Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 66.
92.   Ibid., 67.
93.   Ibid., 68.
94.   Ibid., 67.
95.   Ibid., 65.
96.   Ibid., 68.
97.   Ibid.. 68; cf. 70.

"Bloggs was finding his coat," which in fact relates to the period when Bloggs was *looking for* his coat and had not yet found it. The choice of aspect is likewise not a subjective one in the case of durative but telic situations, which Bache defines as those "which move towards a logical conclusion."[98] In such cases imperfective aspect is used to refer "to the process tending towards, but not necessarily reaching, its goal, whereas a perfective construction makes explicit reference to the goal."[99] Thus the Russian imperfective sentence он умирал (*on umiral*, he was dying) speaks of the period before death, whereas the perfective он умер (*on umer,* he died) refers to death itself.[100]

Since the choice between imperfective and perfective in such cases is not a subjective one, Bache considers it not to be "purely aspectual." Rather, it "involves *Aktionsart*,"[101] and Bache uses the term "aspectual functions" to refer to the uses of the imperfective and perfective in such cases.[102] Yet for Bache the true nature of aspect is displayed in cases where there is a subjective choice between perfective and imperfective, and for this reason he describes aspect as "quasi-subjective." Nevertheless, it is only *quasi*-subjective, because in many cases there is no such subjective choice.[103] Bache is surely right to note that there is a distinction between cases where aspectual choice is constrained by objective (or quasi-objective) factors and those where the choice is more subjective. Yet it may be observed that his argument that only the latter display "pure" aspect is circular, since it is based on the *a priori* assumption that aspect is a subjective category.[104]

Smith makes a distinction between "viewpoint aspect" and "situation aspect" that is similar to Bache's distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*. As with Comrie and Bache, when she speaks of "viewpoint" she is referring to a "*temporal* perspective."[105] "The main semantic difference among aspectual viewpoints is in how much of a situation they make visible. Perfective viewpoints focus a situation in its entirety, including endpoints; Imperfective viewpoints focus an interval that excludes endpoints."[106] Comrie, Bache, and Smith, are not atypical in defining aspect in terms of temporal phases or intervals; there is widespread agreement on this in the linguistic literature.[107]

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98. Ibid., 60.

99. Ibid., 69.

100. Ibid., 68–69, citing Forsyth, *Grammar of Aspect*, 49.

101. Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 69.

102. Ibid., 67–68.

103. Ibid., 70.

104. See ibid., 67.

105. Carlota S. Smith, "A Theory of Aspectual Choice," *Language* 59 (1983): 479; idem, *Parameter*, xiv, 2 (emphasis added).

106. Smith, *Parameter*, 62.

107. Sasse notes a "general consensus that 'aspectuality' is a matter of 'boundaries,'" in the sense of "initial and final endpoints" (i.e., *temporal* boundaries). "Situations may be conceived of as including their starting points or endpoints or both, or may be conceived of as persistent situations with no boundaries implied" ("Recent Activity," 201).

Within general linguistics, therefore, definitions of perfective and imperfective aspect in terms of external and internal "viewpoint" are metaphorical, expressing a distinction in the relationship of the verb to time. But although such definitions are common, even commonplace, they are not unproblematic. As Klein notes, "situations, that is, events, actions, processes, states, do not have an inside or an outside, like a house or a tomato."[108] Since "the characterization is purely metaphorical," it is "far from being clear. Characteristically, it is accompanied by spatial and other circumlocutions, such as 'der Prozeß … liegt geschlossen im Blickfeld des Sprechers [the process as a whole … is in the speaker's field of vision]' (Ružička 1952:4), as if the process were a matchbox or the Eiffel tower."[109] Here Klein notes Isačenko's parade illustration as "a particularly vivid formulation."[110]

If one must use the language of "view" then aspect is in fact more to do with what is *in* view—whether the entire course of a situation (perfective aspect) or a phase excluding endpoints (imperfective aspect)—than the position or viewpoint one views it from. But the language of "viewing" is itself problematic, because a speaker or writer does not use language to view situations, but rather to *speak about* them. To be sure, language sometimes creates a mental picture. But that is a pragmatic effect arising from the way it is used in context, and aspectual forms can be used in abstract prose that does not create any mental picture whatsoever. As noted above, the idea of aspect as "view" or "viewpoint" seems to have arisen from an infelicitous translation of the word вид.[111] It would be preferable to define aspect more literally, as the temporal phase or phases about which the speaker or writer is speaking, rather than the phases they have "in view."

Johnson takes just such an approach, building on Reichenbach's work on tenses and that of Bennett and Partee on aspect and truth conditions.[112] She distinguishes "three categories of time which are significant in relation to an act of speaking." The "speech time" (S) is "the

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108. Klein, *Time in Language*, 29.

109. Idem, "A Time-Relational Analysis of Russian Aspect," *Language* 71 (1995): 674, citing Rudolf Růžička, "Der russische Verbalaspekt," *Der Russischunterricht* 5 (1952): 161–69 (page numbers cited by Klein *sic*).

110. Klein, "Time-Relational Analysis," 674.

111. Lyons describes "aspect" as a "rather unsatisfactory … translational equivalent" (*Semantics*, 2:705). Similarly C. J. Ruijgh, "Les valeurs temporelles des formes verbales en grec ancien," in *The Function of Tense in Texts*, ed. Jadranka Gvozdanović and Theo A. J. M. Janssen, VKNWL NS 144 (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991), 222–23; Sarah de Voguë et al., "Aspect," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin, trans. Steven Rendall et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 50.

112. Hans Reichenbach, *Elements of Symbolic Logic* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 287–98; Michael Bennett and Barbara H. Partee, *Toward the Logic of Tense and Aspect in English* (Santa Monica, Calif.: System Development Corporation, 1972; repr., Bloomington, IN: University Linguistics Club, 1978). The latter paper is now available in Barbara H. Partee, *Compositionality in Formal Semantics: Selected Papers by Barbara H. Partee*, Explorations in Semantics 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 59–109.

time at which the act of speaking itself takes place," the "event time" (E) is the time at which an event takes place, and the "reference time" (R) is the time the speaker "is principally referring to."[113] Whereas tense concerns the relationship between reference time (R) and speech time (S),[114] aspect is concerned with the relationship between reference time (R) and event time (E).[115] Although Johnson uses the word "event," her analysis also holds for other forms of situation such as activities and states.

Johnson defines perfective aspect (which she terms "completive aspect") using the formula "R = E" and imperfective aspect as "For some t in E, R (<) {t}."[116] In other words, perfective/completive aspect is used when speaking of the whole of the situation expressed by the verb, whereas imperfective aspect is used when there is some part of the event time that is after the reference time, i.e., when the endpoint is excluded from the reference time.[117] Although Johnson's understanding of the distinction is similar to those discussed above,[118] her approach has the advantage that it avoids defining aspect in metaphorical terms, and instead offers a precise definition which clarifies both the temporal nature of aspect and its distinction from tense on the one hand and *Aktionsart* (however defined) on the other.

A further attraction of Johnson's approach over Comrie's is that whereas Comrie's definition refers only to *internal* temporal structure, Johnson's allows for reference to times before and after the situation itself.[119] This enables her to offer a straightforward explanation of perfect aspect, which is not easily accommodated within Comrie's system.[120] Perfect aspect, also known as anterior or retrospective aspect (and not to be confused with perfective aspect), is used when "E (<) R"—that is, when the whole of the event time

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113. Marion R. Johnson, "A Unified Temporal Theory of Tense and Aspect," in *Tense and Aspect*, ed. Philip J. Tedeschi and Annie Zaenen, vol. 14 of *Syntax and Semantics* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 148.

114. This definition perhaps requires slight modification to reflect the fact, noted above, that S is not the only possible deictic center.

115. Johnson, "Unified Temporal Theory," 148.

116. Ibid., 154. For further explanation of her notation see ibid., 150–51.

117. Note that if the clause in question contains a temporal adverb, the adverb does not necessarily designate R itself, but may designate a period of time containing R. For example, "Bloggs was running yesterday" does not mean that Bloggs was running all day, only that at some time (R) during the day he was doing so. See also Binnick, *Time and the Verb*, 210.

118. Binnick notes that Johnson's understanding at first appears incompatible with the "viewpoint" approach (Binnick, *Time and the Verb*, 211), but that there "need be no profound contradiction" between the two (212).

119. Johnson, "Unified Temporal Theory," 152.

120. Bernd Kortmann, for example, argues that the perfect is not an aspect because it is concerned with "situation-external" rather than "situation-internal" time. "The Triad 'Tense-Aspect-Aktionsart': Problems and Possible Solutions," in *Perspectives on Aspect and Aktionsart*, BJL 6 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1991), 18. Comrie himself notes that many linguists "doubt whether the perfect should be considered an aspect," but because it has traditionally been regarded as such he considers it convenient to deal with it in his book, "while bearing in mind continually that it is an aspect in a rather different sense from the other aspects treated so far" (*Aspect*, 52).

precedes the reference time. Johnson illustrates the various aspects diagrammatically as follows, with the brackets indicating the event time (E):
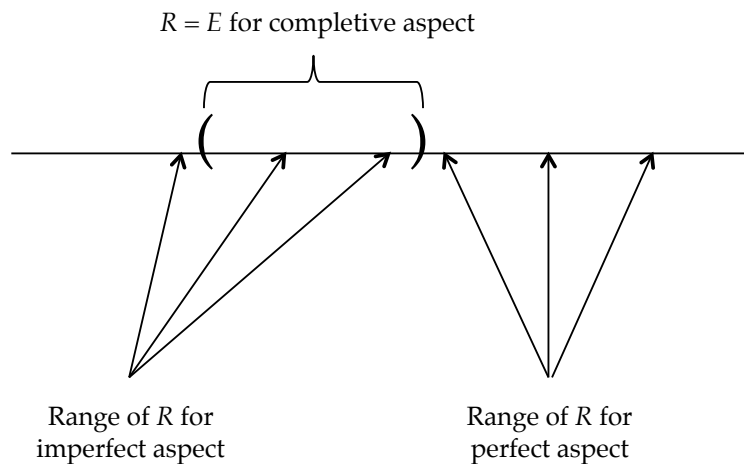

Figure 2: Aspect in Johnson's Unified Temporal Theory

The application of this sort of approach has promise for the analysis of New Testament Greek, and may help to resolve some of the outstanding problems. Klein terms such approaches "time-relational."[121] His own approach is similar to Johnson's,[122] and has been fruitfully applied by Crellin in his analysis of the perfect in Koine Greek.[123]

Although Johnson distinguishes only three aspects, it would clearly also be possible to define posterior or prospective aspect in a similar way, namely as "R (<) E"—that is, the reference time precedes the event time. This offers a satisfying explanation of the aspect of the future tense in the nonindicative moods of New Testament Greek.[124] For example:

> ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν <u>τὸ ἐσόμενον</u> εἶπαν· κύριε, εἰ πατάξομεν ἐν μαχαίρῃ; (Luke 22:49)
> When Jesus' followers saw <u>what was going to happen</u>, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" (NIV)

> ἀλλ᾽ εἰσὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν τινες οἳ οὐ πιστεύουσιν. ᾔδει γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τίνες εἰσὶν οἱ μὴ πιστεύοντες καὶ τίς ἐστιν <u>ὁ παραδώσων</u> αὐτόν. (John 6:64)
> "But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was <u>who would betray</u> him.) (ESV)

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121. Klein, *Time in Language*, 29; idem, "Time-Relational Analysis," 674.

122. Klein, *Time in Language*, 99–119; idem, "Time-Relational Analysis." Similarly Sandra Chung and Alan Timberlake, "Tense, Aspect, and Mood," in *Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, ed. Timothy Shopen, vol. 3 of *Language Typology and Syntactic Description* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 213; Binnick, *Time and the Verb*, 213.

123. Crellin, "Greek Perfect Active System." See also his contribution in ch. 15 of the present volume.

124. In the New Testament the future is relatively rare outside the indicative, with just 13 instances of the future participle and 5 of the future infinitive according to a search using Accordance software. These forms are more common in the Septuagint, which also contains a few instances of the future optative.

3. Definitions of Aspect in Recent New Testament Studies

New Testament scholarship since Porter and Fanning has generally adopted a viewpoint approach to aspect but, in contrast to the linguists mentioned above, has tended to downplay or deny the temporal nature of aspect. This section will briefly survey the definitions of aspect, perfectivity, and imperfectivity offered by four New Testament scholars, namely Mateos, Porter, Fanning, and Campbell. Juan Mateos's 1977 monograph *El aspecto verbal en el Nuevo Testamento* was the first book-length treatment of aspect in New Testament Greek, predating those of Porter and Fanning, and adopts a more clearly time-based approach than subsequent treatments. Most works subsequent to Porter and Fanning largely follow their definitions (and particularly Porter's), and will not be considered separately here.[125] However, Campbell's view merits attention because he departs from Porter and Fanning on a number of points, and because in addition to two monographs he has written a short introduction to aspect, which will provide many students' first orientation to the subject.

3.1 Juan Mateos

Mateos assumes a broad definition of aspect similar to that used by Comrie, and sees the aspect expressed by a verbal form in context as depending on three factors, which he terms "lexematic," "morphematic," and "syntagmatic" aspect. "Lexematic aspect" essentially refers to *Aktionsart* in the fifth sense mentioned in section 2.3, "morphematic aspect" refers to the aspect of the verbal form (perfective, imperfective, etc.), and "syntagmatic aspect" refers to the aspectual information conveyed by the various syntagmatic relationships in which the verb occurs, such as auxiliaries ("try," "begin," "stop," etc.), arguments (e.g., "throw a stone" vs. "throw stones") and adverbs like "frequently."[126]

Mateos sees the aorist as having *punctual* aspect, not meaning that it represents a situation as momentary, but that it presents the situation as a single whole, without regard to its duration. This is essentially the widely accepted "totality" understanding of perfective aspect discussed above. He sees the present stem as ordinarily (except in the present and future indicative) expressing durative aspect, whether iterative or habitual.[127] But although durativity is necessarily *implied* by imperfective aspect, as noted above, scholars now tend to see the defining feature of imperfective aspect as the lack of reference to endpoints, rather than durativity per se. Mateos's analysis of the relationship between lexematic and morphematic aspect (i.e., procedural character and verbal aspect) reflects the sort of interactive approach discussed in section 4.4 below. Accordingly, he first divides lexemes into different classes and then examines the effect of the various verb forms on them.[128] Although Mateos's work is now somewhat dated and lacking in detailed analysis, Porter

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125. Decker, *Temporal Deixis*; Foley, *Biblical Translation*; Matthewson, *Verbal Aspect*; Cirafesi, *Verbal Aspect*; Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*.
126. Mateos, *Aspecto verbal*, 20–22.
127. Ibid., 31.
128. Ibid., 41–133.

and Pitts assess his contribution to the study of aspect in New Testament Greek somewhat unfairly when they describe it as only a "significant forerunner" and "a form of *Aktionsart* theory that goes back to the nineteenth century."[129]

3.2 Stanley Porter

Porter defines aspect as "a synthetic semantic category (realized in the forms of verbs) used of meaningful oppositions in a network of tense systems to grammaticalize the author's reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process."[130] Perfective aspect expresses the conception of an action as "*a complete and undifferentiated process*," and imperfective aspect a conception of the action "*as being in progress*. In other words, its internal structure is seen as unfolding."[131]

The words "process," "progress," and "unfolding" in these definitions might seem at first to point toward an understanding of at least imperfective aspect as having to do with *temporal* structure. But it is striking that the word "temporal" does not appear in these definitions. Instead of Comrie's phrase "internal temporal structure" Porter refers simply to "internal structure," and likewise Porter speaks of "constituency" rather than "temporal constituency." This appears deliberate, for Porter states that, "aspect is not properly speaking a temporal category," although like tense and attitude it is "concerned with processes which occur in time."[132] Moreover, in denying that aspect is temporal he appears not merely to exclude *external* or *deictic* time (i.e., tense), for he critiques Hockett, Comrie, and Moorhouse for defining aspect in terms of temporal distribution or constituency,[133] claiming that Comrie's "attempt to correlate aspect with 'situation-internal time' and tense with 'situation-external time' … runs contrary to his view of aspect as non-deictic" and shifts "to a view of aspect as *Aktionsart*."[134]

Porter's rejection of a temporal understanding of aspect is also reflected in the reconfiguration of Isačenko's parade illustration noted above.[135] Whereas Isačenko's perfective aspect takes in the whole event over the course of time, Porter's perfective aspect views it all at once "in its immediacy."[136] And whereas Isačenko's imperfective aspect never views the beginning or end of the parade, Porter's imperfective aspect simply does not see it at a particular moment in time. Porter's understanding of viewpoint thus leaves out the idea of temporal development, which, it was argued, is implicit in Isačenko's approach.

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129. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics in Recent Research," *CurBR* 6 (2008): 216; similarly Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 61.

130. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 88.

131. Porter, *Idioms*, 21 (emphasis original).

132. Idem, *Verbal Aspect*, 98; see also 46, 50, 99, 105; idem, "Aspect Theory and Lexicography," 208.

133. Idem, *Verbal Aspect*, 84, 105, 181.

134. Ibid., 105; cf. 46.

135. See §2.1.

136. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 91

Porter also rejects the idea that the choice of aspect is affected by the lexical semantics of the verb or by the objective temporal constituency of a situation,[137] an issue to which we will return in section 4. Whereas Isačenko, Forsyth, Comrie, Bache, and others agree that the choice of aspect is not always a *subjective* choice, the element of subjectivity is intrinsic to Porter's definition, and he considers that "there is no necessary correlation between aspect form and objective action."[138]

3.3 Buist Fanning

Fanning defines aspect as "that category in the grammar of the verb which reflects the focus or viewpoint of the speaker in regard to the action or condition which the verb describes. It shows the perspective from which the occurrence is regarded or the portrayal of the occurrence itself apart from the actual or perceived nature of the situation itself."[139] The aorist (i.e., perfective) aspect "presents an occurrence *in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence*,"[140] while the present (imperfective) aspect "reflects an *internal* viewpoint concerning the occurrence which *focuses on its development or progress* and sees the occurrence *in regard to its internal make-up, without beginning or end in view*."[141]

The phrase "apart from the actual or perceived nature of the situation itself" gives the impression that Fanning, like Porter, regards aspect as essentially subjective, although he admits that "fully subjective choices are not common."[142] Like Porter, Fanning describes aspect using the language of "viewpoint" and "perspective," and is reluctant to describe aspect in temporal terms, although he seems more ambivalent than Porter on this point. Like Porter, he describes the imperfective using apparently temporal categories, namely "development," "progress," "beginning," and "end." Moreover, in the very first sentence of Fanning's introduction he appears to approve Hockett's definition of verbal aspect as concerned with an event's "temporal distribution or contour"[143] (a definition which Porter expressly rejects).[144] Yet Fanning's own definition does not use the word "temporal." Similarly to Porter, he refers to "internal make-up" rather than Comrie's "internal *temporal* constituency" And although Fanning recognizes that temporal meanings such as duration, progression, and completion can be produced as "a *secondary* function of aspect when

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137. Ibid., 29–35, 87; Porter, "Aspect Theory and Lexicography."
138. Idem, *Verbal Aspect*, 208.
139. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 84–85.
140. Ibid., 97 (emphasis original). See also 27.
141. Ibid., 103 (emphasis original). Similarly 27, 124.
142. Ibid., 421.
143. Ibid., 1, citing Charles F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 237.
144. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 84.

combined with other elements like the verb's inherent meaning, adverbs, and so forth,"[145] he does not allow that this is a consequence of aspect itself being a temporal concept.[146]

Like Porter, it seems that Fanning wants to say more than simply that aspect is nondeictic. For example, he criticizes Johnson's view, discussed above, for giving "too much emphasis to the *temporal* relation of the event to the reference-point."[147] According to Fanning, the "relationship between the action and the reference-point from which it is viewed is not primarily a *chronological* one, even though it can produce that effect. If the relationship must be pictured in any dimension, a *spatial* one fits better, since the distinction is one of proximity vs. distance."[148]

It is not obvious what Fanning means by picturing the relationship in a spatial dimension. He states that "in order to view the action from within and ignore the initial and final limits, the vantage-point must be *near*, an internal perspective; on the other hand, viewing the whole action from beginning to end without focus on the internal make-up of the action most naturally fits a *remote* or distanced perspective."[149] Fanning cites Bache in support of the view that perfective aspect requires distance, whether temporal or modal.[150] However, Bache does not argue that imperfective aspect requires proximity. His point is rather that it is only where there is distance that there can be a subjective choice between perfective and imperfective aspects.[151] Fanning is certainly correct that aspect is not primarily concerned with the *sequence* of events (although this is less true of the perfect and prospective aspects than of the perfective and imperfective). However, he is mistaken in supposing that it must therefore be to do with *space*, whether literal or metaphorical. The question is which phase or phases of the situation the speaker or writer is speaking about, not from how far away the situation is being presented.

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145. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 26 (emphasis original).

146. Fanning mistakenly cites Comrie in support of the idea that these temporal ideas are "secondary effects of the aspects, rather than a reflection of the essential nature of the aspects as temporal" (ibid., citing Comrie, *Aspect*, 5). As noted above, Comrie *does* consider aspect to be a temporal concept, which is why it combines with other elements of a clause to produce the sorts of temporal meanings Fanning notes. For Comrie, the distinction between tense and aspect is one not between temporal and nontemporal meaning, but between deictic and nondeictic temporal meaning. What Comrie describes as a secondary effect in the passage to which Fanning refers is the *deictic* function of aspectual forms in context, i.e., the function of relating the time of a situation to another point in time. For example, "a sequence of forms with perfective meaning will normally be taken to indicate a sequence of events" (Comrie, *Aspect*, 5). As de Swart notes, the sentence "When Bill came into the office, Sara left through the back door" implies that Sara's leaving followed Bill's entering, whereas "When Bill came into the office, Sara was leaving through the back door" implies that she had started to leave before Bill entered ("Verbal Aspect," 753).

147. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 27 n. 65 (emphasis original).

148. Ibid., 27 (emphasis original).

149. Ibid., 27–28 (emphasis original).

150. Ibid., 28 n. 69, citing Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 67.

151. Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 67. See §2.3 above.

In a footnote Fanning cites several linguists who, he claims, advocate or at least entertain a "spatial" approach.[152] However, in each case this appears to reflect a misunderstanding of their position. Windfuhr understands aspect temporally,[153] but adopts a spatial *model* as a means of *plotting* distinctions in tense, aspect, and mood, given that a third of Persian forms "participate in two different categories each, either in two tenses, and/or two moods, and/or two pasts."[154] Anderson also clearly sees aspect as temporal, being "concerned with the relation of an event or state to a particular reference point: it is located before (retrospective), after (prospective), around (progressive) or simply at (aorist) a particular point *in time*,"[155] these temporal relationships being expressed in spatial *language*.[156] Similarly, Harweg does not consider that aspect could be concerned with spatial rather than temporal relationships, only that applying a notion of perspective to aspect involves picturing time in terms of space.[157]

3.4 Constantine Campbell

Similarly to Porter and Fanning, Campbell sees aspect as a matter of "viewpoint,"[158] defining it as "the manner in which verbs are used to view an action or state. An author/speaker will portray an event either from the inside, as though it is seen as unfolding, or from the outside, as though it is seen as a whole."[159] Campbell approves Porter's understanding of imperfective aspect as conceiving of an action as "being in progress" and its internal structure as "unfolding,"[160] as well as Fanning's understanding of imperfective aspect as focusing on an occurrence's "development or progress … without beginning or end in view."[161] As noted above, the words "progress," "unfolding," "development," "beginning," and "end" suggest temporality.[162] Yet Campbell is even more emphatic than Porter and Fanning that aspect is not a temporal concept, whether deictic or nondeictic. He comments, "It is unfortunate that aspect is occasionally defined in terms of temporal relations rather than simply viewpoint,"[163] and even critiques the idea that imperfective aspect views action

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152. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 27–28 n. 68.

153. Gernot L. Windfuhr, "A Spatial Model for Tense, Aspect, and Mood," *FLin* 19 (1985): 428–31.

154. Ibid., 416.

155. John Anderson, *An Essay Concerning Aspect: Some Considerations of a General Character Arising from the Abbeì Darrigol's Analysis of the Basque Verb*, JLSMin 167 (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 39–40 (emphasis added).

156. On localist approaches such as Anderson's see Lyons, *Semantics*, 2:718–24; Comrie, *Aspect*, 129–30.

157. Roland Harweg, "Aspekte als Zeitstufen und Zeitstufen als Aspekte," *Linguistics* 181 (1976): 6.

158. Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 8.

159. Ibid., 1; similarly 8.

160. Ibid., 35–36, citing Porter, *Idioms*, 21 and *Verbal Aspect*, 91.

161. Ibid., 36, citing Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 103.

162. Even when not citing other scholars, Campbell describes the internal viewpoint as one in which "the beginning and endpoint of an action are not taken into account" (*Indicative Mood*, 116).

163. Ibid., 9 n. 8.

as being "in progress," stating that "imperfective aspect views an action internally, but that action need not necessarily be in progress." According to Campbell, such a notion has to do with how the action occurs objectively, "and thus belongs to the realm of *Aktionsart*."[164]

Elsewhere Campbell comments: "While there is a tendency in some quarters to describe this internal viewpoint in terms of internal temporal relations, imperfective aspect is here understood apart from reference to temporal considerations. … Comrie's now standard definition of imperfective aspect as 'the internal temporal structure of a situation' is *not* adopted here, as the reference to temporality is potentially misleading, especially as we distinguish aspect from tense."[165] Campbell's reference to "some quarters" rather misleadingly implies that a temporal view of aspect is a minority view rather than the norm among linguists.[166] He concedes that "Comrie's approach has its own logic," but states that "it is more useful to avoid temporal descriptions of aspect altogether. Rather, aspect is here regarded as a spatial phenomenon."[167] Campbell cites Fanning in support of this view,[168] but goes far beyond Fanning in the emphasis he places on aspect being spatial. As with Fanning, it is not clear quite what Campbell means by describing aspect as "spatial."[169] But following Porter's adaptation of Isačenko's parade analogy,[170] he sees perfective aspect as offering a "helicopter view" of an action,[171] so that "exactly how the parade is unfolding is not seen."[172] Surprisingly, he takes this to mean that the aorist is not normally used for presenting the details of a narrative,[173] presumably because he rejects the idea that it is internal temporal constituency that is "not seen" by the perfective.

3.5 Observations

A full examination of the aspectual theories of these New Testament scholars cannot be undertaken here. However, this brief summary of their definitions is sufficient to highlight

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164. Ibid., 11.

165. Ibid., 36 (emphasis original), citing Comrie, *Aspect*, 24. Campbell also criticizes Olsen for her dependence on "temporal categories" (Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 104).

166. Campbell cites Evans, *Verbal Syntax*, 18 and Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 64 in support of his understanding of aspect as viewpoint, without noting that both of these scholars clearly understand it in temporal terms (Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 8 n. 18).

167. Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 36.

168. Ibid., citing Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 27.

169. Campbell also replaces the traditional tense distinctions between the present and imperfect indicative and between the perfect and pluperfect indicative with distinctions of spatial remoteness and proximity. In a "Concluding Postscript" in his *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* he expands on what he means by "spatial" in that context, noting that he uses the terms of "remoteness" and "proximity" as "metaphors" (*Basics*, 129). Although Campbell does not directly address aspect in this postscript, he appears to see aspect as likewise spatial only in a metaphorical sense.

170. Idem, *Indicative Mood*, 50; idem, *Basics*, 19–20.

171. Campbell, *Basics*, 38.

172. Ibid., 34.

173. Ibid., 34–35. Similarly Buist M. Fanning, "Approaches to Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek: Issues in Definition and Method," in Porter, *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics*, 49.

the fact that Porter, Fanning, and Campbell each depart, though to varying degrees, from the consensus in general linguistics that aspect is at its root a temporal concept. This appears to be not so much a deliberate rejection of the consensus as a misunderstanding of it, for each of the three criticizes the temporal definitions of certain linguists without acknowledging that a temporal understanding is the norm. Moreover, Porter, Fanning, and Campbell each cite linguists such as Isačenko, Comrie, Bache, and Smith in support of a "viewpoint" definition, but without attention to the way these linguists actually use the metaphor. The problems with the metaphor itself noted in section 2.4 seem partly to blame for the misunderstanding. Another indication that it is indeed a misunderstanding rather than a deliberate departure from the consensus is that Porter, Fanning, and Campbell offer very little by way of argument against the temporal view, besides the observation that aspect is distinct from both tense and *Aktionsart*. Yet the discussion in section 2 shows that it is possible to keep these three concepts distinct while recognizing that they all have to do with time in different ways. The distinction is clearest when a time-relational definition of aspect is adopted.

The remainder of this chapter will attempt to demonstrate how clarity concerning the temporal nature of aspect illuminates the various ways in which aspect interacts with the semantic properties of particular types of verbs.[174] Fanning in particular offers an excellent treatment of such interactions, but his rejection of a temporal definition of aspect leaves him unable to explain quite *why* they occur. Such an explanation will be offered below by combining Johnson's time-relational definition of aspect with Croft's two-dimensional geometric approach to representing aspectual structure.

The account offered below is merely a sketch of the sort of lines along which a fuller investigation of these matters might proceed. As Evans has noted, much more work in this area is needed.[175] The fact that it has received so little attention in the last twenty-five years is no doubt partly a result of Porter's dismissal of such analysis as concerned not with aspect but with *Aktionsart*, and consequently outmoded.[176] But as Fanning himself has noted, "many other writers on aspect in general linguistics and semantics have given attention to such matters and have included them as a central part of their discussion of aspect. A full treatment of aspect in New Testament Greek which professes to be rooted in linguistic theory should hardly ignore or bypass such discussions."[177] This continues to be the case. We shall return to this in the conclusion, but it is worth noting here that Fanning's treatment

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174. As noted below (see n. 184), analysis is possible both at the level of the verb itself and at the level of the verb with its arguments.

175. Evans, "Future Directions," 205; similarly idem, *Verbal Syntax*, 20.

176. Porter considers that the works of Comrie and Fanning are really treatments of *Aktionsart* rather than aspect. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 46; idem, review of *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, by Buist M. Fanning, *JSNT* 43 (1991): 127. As noted above, he and Pitts judge that Mateos's similar approach "goes back to the nineteenth century" (Porter and Pitts, "New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics," 216).

177. Fanning, "Introduction," 61.

of aspect has much more in common with the sort of approach found within aspect studies in general linguistics than do those of Porter and Campbell.[178]

4. Verbal Aspect and Procedural Character

It was noted in section 2 that with certain types of verbs the choice of perfective or imperfective aspect is constrained by the objective (or quasi-objective) temporal constituency of the situation concerned. With such verbs perfective and imperfective aspects express different situations (e.g., "he died" versus "he was dying"),[179] not merely different views of the same situation. This is a point of widespread consensus in aspect studies,[180] although Porter dissents.[181] Fanning in particular has helpfully discussed these interactions between verbal aspect and lexical semantics in relation to New Testament Greek,[182] and this section will show how a time-relational view of aspect offers a straightforward explanation for them.

To be precise, it is the verbal lexeme together with its arguments that interacts with aspect in this way.[183] Following Smith this combination will be called the *verb constellation*, and verb constellations will be expressed using square brackets.[184] For example, the sentence "Bloggs ran a mile" contains the constellation [Bloggs run a mile], which behaves differently from [Bloggs run], as discussed below.[185] Verb constellations can be divided into a number of classes, differing in their temporal characteristics. The standard taxonomy is that of Vendler, who distinguished four classes, namely *states*, *activities*, *accomplishments*, and *achievements*.[186] These differ with respect to the properties of *stativity*, *durativity*, and *telicity* (or *boundedness*), a telic situation being one with an inherent terminal point. As noted above, a wide range of different umbrella terms have been used to refer to these classes and their semantic characteristics, but the terms "procedural class" and "procedural character" are adopted here. Table 1 indicates the characteristics of each class together with English examples (omitting subjects, since Vendler did not include these in his analysis):

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178. Fanning is influenced especially by Bache and Smith (Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, v, 41), which perhaps explains why his analysis seems to reflect their temporal understanding of aspect, despite his assertions to the contrary.

179. As noted above, the distinction between the simple and progressive past tenses in English is not identical to the perfective/imperfective distinction, but the effect in this case is similar.

180. The consensus is noted by Lyons (*Semantics*, 2:706) and Sasse ("Recent Activity," 230).

181. See §3.2 above.

182. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 126–96.

183. Telicity in particular is not determined by the verb alone (see Crellin, "Greek Perfect Active System," 44). However, Crellin points out that the verb "determines certain parameters according to which the property of telicity is set" (47), so that analysis at the level of the verb itself is also possible. See also Susan D. Rothstein, *Structuring Events: A Study in the Semantics of Lexical Aspect*, Explorations in Semantics 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 29–34.

184. Smith, *Parameter*, 2, 7.

185. See §4.2; Filip, "Lexical Aspect," 725; de Swart, "Verbal Aspect," 754.

186. Zeno Vendler, "Verbs and Times," *PhR* 66 (1957): 143–60.

Class	Stativity	Durativity	Telicity	Examples
State	+	+	-	love somebody, believe something
Activity	-	+	-	run, push a cart
Accomplishment	-	+	+	run a mile, draw a circle
Achievement	-	-	+	find an object, win a race

Table 1

Before turning to a discussion of these classes and their interaction with verbal aspect, three caveats should be noted.

First, these classes are *Aktionsarten* in the fourth of the six senses distinguished in section 2.3 above. Thus they do not classify states of affairs objectively existing in the real world, or conceptions of states of affairs, but sets of temporal characteristics communicated by the verb constellation. In Smith's words, they are "semantic categories of language, classes of idealized situations with distinctive temporal features."[187] Someone who is drawing a circle (an accomplishment) is also drawing (an activity), so the sentences "Bloggs is drawing" and "Bloggs is drawing a circle" could be used to speak of the same real-world event. But the latter expresses the idea of an inherent endpoint whereas the former does not. Nevertheless, there is clearly a *correspondence* between these verb constellations and the situations they express.[188]

A second caveat is that although the four classes noted above are the ones most commonly identified, further distinctions and subdivisions are possible, some of which are noted below. The distinction between "prefaced" and "nonprefaced" achievements is particularly significant, as discussed in section 4.3. Croft offers a useful method of representing the various possibilities in a two-dimensional graphical format, and his diagrams have been adopted here with slight modifications.[189] In section 4.4 this graphical approach will be used to illustrate the predictable interactions of procedural character with verbal aspect.

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187. Smith, *Parameter*, 17. Fanning, similarly, notes that "this taxonomy does not classify the characteristics of actual situations, but the *linguistic portrayals* of situations" (*Verbal Aspect*, 127 n. 2; emphasis original).

188. For this reason it is not "disingenuous" of Fanning to maintain that these are *linguistic* portrayals (see n. 188 above) and at the same time to discuss the way in which they represent actual situations; *pace* Porter, "Introduction," 37 n. 3.

189. See Croft, *Verbs*, 53. One difference is the labeling of the axes, which Croft marks simply as "t" (for "time") and "q" (for "qualitative state"). Another is that the diagrams are used here to represent construals of verb constellations rather than complete sentences, similarly to Elena Paducheva, who adopts a similar but simpler two-dimensional representation. "Taxonomic Categories and Semantics of Aspectual Opposition," in *Temporal Reference, Aspect and Actionality*, ed. Pier Marco Bertinetto et al., vol. 1 of *Semantic and Syntactic Perspectives* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1995), 80. Croft uses a third dimension to represent the distinct subevents involved in a situation with multiple participants, but this need not be discussed here.

Third, much more work is needed on the relevant semantic properties of Greek verbs. As Evans notes, applications of Vendler's categories to Greek so far "seem to be somewhat arbitrary, and to depend ultimately on the sadly dated English glosses of LSJ. More work on these issues is vitally needed before the relationship between inherent lexical meaning and aspectual choice can be fully explored."[190] The problem is illustrated by the fact that Fanning and Mateos differ in their classifications of certain verbs. For example, Shain notes that "Fanning lists *erchomai* as an activity verb and *eiserchomai* as an accomplishment," while "Mateos lists *erchomai* as an accomplishment and *eiserchomai* as an achievement."[191] Shain herself offers a step in the right direction by describing objective tests for procedural class, which she then applies to these verbs.[192] This type of analysis has not been carried out for the verbs used in the examples below, so their classification here is tentative and provisional. However, verbs have been chosen that Fanning and Mateos assign to the same class, in order to increase the likelihood of a correct classification. English examples will also be offered, and for present purposes it may be assumed that the contrast between simple and progressive aspect in English, at least in the past tense with dynamic verbs, roughly corresponds to the perfective/imperfective contrast discussed above.

4.1 States

As the name suggests, state verb constellations differ from those belonging to other classes in being stative. That is, they do not indicate change over time. They are also generally durative, representing a situation lasting longer than a moment.[193] Moreover, they are unbounded or *atelic*, meaning that the verb constellation itself does not express a natural endpoint to the situation. As Croft notes, it is possible to subdivide the class of states into a number of subclasses, depending on whether the state is transitory or permanent, and in the latter case whether it is acquired or inherent. These types of state are illustrated by the sentences "The door is open," "The window is shattered," and "She is French," respectively.[194] To take just one of these types by way of example, the state expressed by the verb constellation [the door be open] can be represented as in figure 3,[195] with time along the x-axis, and state on the y-axis:

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190. Evans, "Future Directions," 205; similarly idem, *Verbal Syntax*, 20.

191. Rachel Shain, "Exploring Aktionsart in Corpora: A Case Study of Koine Greek *Erchomai* and *Eiserchomai*," *JGL* 11 (2011): 230, citing Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 144, 151 and Mateos, *Aspecto verbal*, 85, 97.

192. Shain, "Exploring Aktionsart," 232–47. See below, §5.3.

193. Croft, following Mittwoch, recognizes a category of nondurative "point states," for example, "the sun is at its zenith" (Croft, *Verbs*, 43, 58). See Anita Mittwoch, "Aspects of English Aspect: On the Interaction of Perfect, Progressive and Durational Phrases," *Ling&P* 11 (1988): 234. However, these are not typical and may be overlooked for present purposes.

194. Croft adds a further category of "point states," on which see n. 194 above.
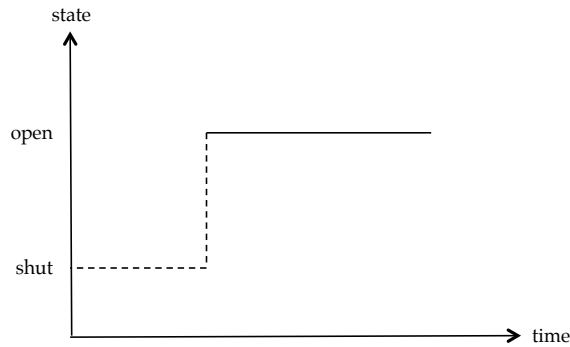
195. Croft, *Verbs*, 58

Figure 3

In this diagram the horizontal dashed line represents the situation preceding entry into the state, i.e., while the door is shut. The vertical dashed line represents entry into the state, i.e., the opening of the door, and the solid line represents the situation after the door has been opened, i.e., the state of openness. In cognitive-linguistic terms, it is this latter state which is "profiled" by "be open" in the verb constellation [the door be open],[196] while the phases represented by the dashed lines are part of the presupposed semantic frame of conceptual knowledge associated with open doors.[197] The solid line is horizontal to represent the fact that there is no change of state during the profiled phase.

The verb constellation [ἡμεῖς (οἱ μαθηταί) πιστεύειν ὅτι κτλ.] ([we (the disciples) believe that etc.]) seems to be used in a stative sense in the following sentence,[198] which can be represented diagrammatically as in figure 4.[199]

ἐν τούτῳ <u>πιστεύομεν</u> ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθες. (John 16:30)
"By this <u>we believe</u> that you came from God." (RSV)
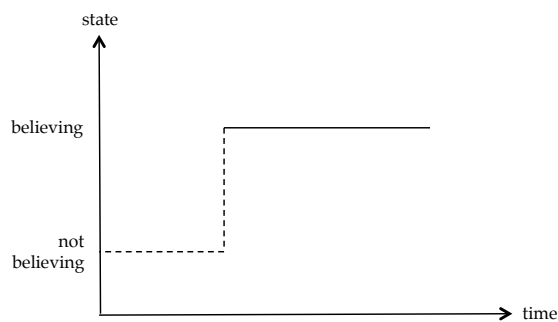
Figure 4

196. Croft describes the profiled phase as "the phase asserted to hold in the world at … the time reference denoted by the tense of the construction" (ibid., 55). But the approach followed here differs from Croft's in that it sees what Johnson calls the "event time" as a profiled phase of the verb constellation, and aspect as relating that event time to the reference time.

197. See ibid., 11–13, 53–57.

198. In Greek examples the present infinitive is used here for the purposes of representing the uninflected verb within the verbal constellation.

199. The verb πιστεύειν is classified as a state by Fanning (*Verbal Aspect*, 136) and Mateos (*Aspecto verbal*, 43).

This sentence presupposes a time when the disciples did not believe, and a point at which they came to believe. However, what the verb πιστεύομεν itself expresses is the state of believing that follows that point.

4.2 Activities and Accomplishments

Activities such as [Bloggs run] are nonstative, but share with states the properties of being durative and atelic. One cannot run for just a moment, and the verb constellation [Bloggs run] does not express an inherent endpoint. By contrast [Bloggs run a mile] is an accomplishment because it is telic; to run a mile is to run until a particular point is reached. It follows that if Bloggs were to stop before that point, Bloggs would not have run a mile.[200] This is not the case with [Bloggs run], for if Bloggs runs for any length of time then Bloggs has run. Figures 5 and 6 represent the verb constellations [Bloggs run] and [Bloggs run a mile] respectively.[201] As in figures 3 and 4, the solid lines in the diagrams represent the situations profiled by the relevant verb constellations. In figures 5 and 6 these lines slope because both situations involve a change of state; running is a dynamic activity. But in figure 5 ([Bloggs run]) the change does not involve progress towards a goal, only a repeated pattern of movements, represented by a zigzag line, whereas in figure 6 ([Bloggs run a mile]) there is progress towards a goal, represented by a line sloping steadily upward toward the finish state.
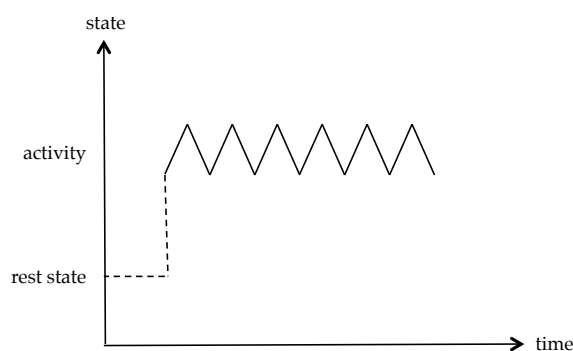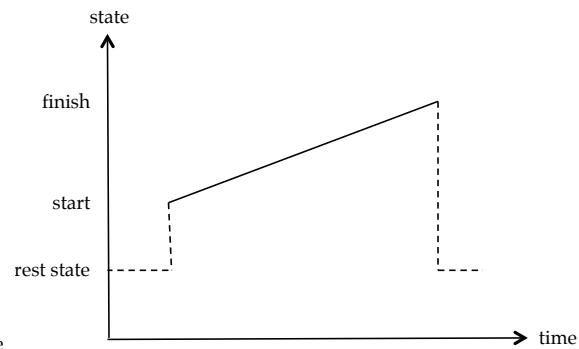
Figure 5   Figure 6

An example of an activity in New Testament Greek might be [γυναῖκες διακονεῖν αὐτῷ] ([women serve him]) in the sentence καὶ <u>διηκόνουν</u> αὐτῷ (and <u>they were serving</u> him, Mark 15:41).[202] This can therefore be represented by figure 5. A likely example of an accomplishment (figure 6) is [Νῶε κατασκευάζειν κιβωτόν] ([Noah construct an ark]) in the following sentence:[203]

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200. See Vendler, "Verbs and Times," 146.

201. See Croft, *Verbs*, 61–62, where different examples are given and further distinctions are made.

202. Mateos and Fanning both classify διακονεῖν as an activity (Mateos, *Aspecto verbal*, 65; Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 144).

203. Fanning classifies κατασκευάζειν as an accomplishment (*Verbal Aspect*, 151), as does Mateos, who calls accomplishments "lexemas dinámicos de acción resultativa" (dynamic lexemes of resultative

Πίστει ... Νῶε ... <u>κατεσκεύασεν</u> κιβωτόν. (Heb 11:7)
By faith … Noah … <u>constructed</u> an ark. (ESV)

4.3 Achievements

Achievements such as [the door open] or [the light flash] share with accomplishments the property of telicity, but unlike accomplishments they are momentary rather than durative. In other words, they express a situation conceptualized as occupying a single point in time. Some achievements, for example [the door open], involve the subject ending up in a new resulting state. Others, such as [the light flash] do not. These two types of achievements can be represented by figures 7 and 8, respectively.
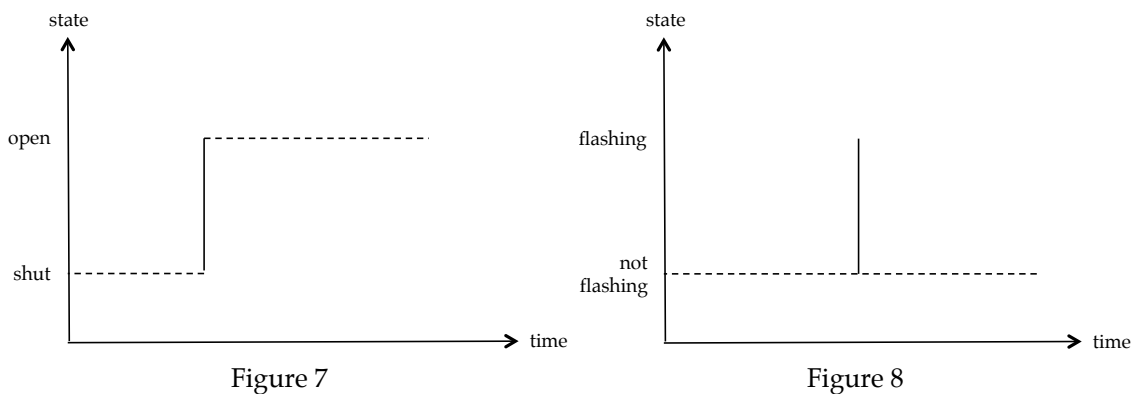
Figure 7   Figure 8

Figure 7 is similar to figure 3, which represented the state [the door be open], but now the solid line indicating the profiled phase marks the transition between states, rather than the resulting state. Figure 8 [the light flash] is similar, except that there is no resulting state, and the light returns to its original state after flashing. An apparent Greek example of this latter kind is the verb constellation [ἄνθρωπος βάλλειν κόκκον σινάπεως] ([a man throw a mustard seed]) in the following sentence:[204]

> ὁμοία ἐστὶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος <u>ἔβαλεν</u> εἰς κῆπον ἑαυτοῦ. (Luke 13:19)
> "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and <u>threw</u> into his own garden." (NASB)

A possible example of the first type is the verb constellation [ὁ πύργος πίπτειν] ([the tower fall]) in the following:[205]

> ἢ ἐκεῖνοι οἱ δεκαοκτὼ ἐφ᾽ οὓς <u>ἔπεσεν</u> ὁ πύργος ἐν τῷ Σιλωὰμ καὶ ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτούς, δοκεῖτε ὅτι αὐτοὶ
> ὀφειλέται ἐγένοντο παρὰ πάντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς κατοικοῦντας Ἰερουσαλήμ; (Luke 13:4)
> Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam <u>fell</u> and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? (ESV)

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action) (*Aspecto verbal*, 97).

204. The *seed*, of course, changes state (location) as a result of the throwing. But our present concern is with the *subject's* change of state or otherwise.

205. Fanning classes both βάλλειν and πίπτειν as punctual achievements (*Verbal Aspect*, 157), while Mateos calls them "lexemas dinámicos de acción instantánea" (dynamic lexemes of instantaneous action) (*Aspecto verbal*, 85).

It was noted above that the Greek verb πιστεύειν can be used in a stative sense, as in John 16:30. However, it seems that it can also be used in an achievement sense, expressing the transition between states. For example, the verb constellation [ὁ ἀνθύπατος πιστεύειν] ([the proconsul believe]) seems to be an achievement in the following sentence:

> τότε ἰδὼν ὁ ἀνθύπατος τὸ γεγονὸς <u>ἐπίστευσεν</u>. (Acts 13:12)
> When the proconsul saw what had happened, <u>he believed</u>. (NIV)

This can be represented as in figure 9:
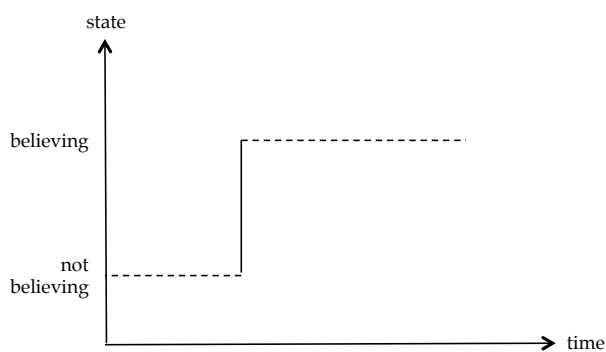
Figure 9

Many state verbs can similarly be used in an achievement sense, illustrating the important point that verbs and verbal constellations are often polysemous with respect to procedural class, or can be construed in different ways depending on context.[206] Croft relates the availability of these different construals to our rich experience of the way in which different types of situations typically unfold.[207]

Fanning, following Østergaard, has noted that some achievements are "prefaced," meaning that they occur in a moment but as "the culmination of a separate process which is its preface: e.g., 'he arrived just in time,' 'she found her coat.' These imply a separate approach-phase which affects their aspectual function."[208] Fanning terms such achievements "climaxes," while those without an approach phase (as in figures 7 and 8) he terms "punctuals."[209] Figure 10 represents the climax [Bloggs find his coat]:

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206. See Croft, *Verbs*, 83–92. For further examples see Smith, *Parameter*, 18.

207. "The particular words and constructions used to verbalize a particular scene highlight or draw out certain details over others in the rich understanding we have of those particular scenes" (Croft, *Verbs*, 16). For example, "reach the summit" can be construed either as momentary ("They reached the summit") or durative ("It took them two hours to reach the summit") (ibid., 37). Croft argues that "state and achievement are not inherent aspectual types of predicates but aspectual types or construals that different predicates have the potential to possess," and calls "the class of predicates that have the aspectual potential of states or achievements that result in the state inceptive states" (ibid., 38).

208. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 155.

209. In the case of punctuals, "the event is not linked with another action as its preface" (ibid., 156). Punctuals are sometimes called "semelfactives" (*semel* means "once" in Latin), but the latter term is not entirely felicitous, for a punctual verb constellation can be used to express a repeated occurrence
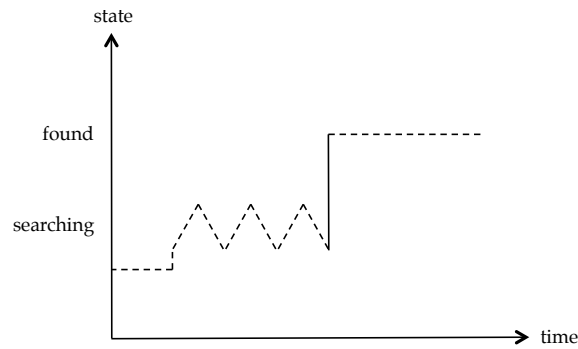
Figure 10

In this diagram the achievement itself (the finding) is represented by the solid vertical line marking entry into the new state in which the coat is found. The dashed lines preceding it represent the preface, i.e., the activity of searching.[210] A possible example of a climax in Greek is [ἡ παῖς ἀποθνῄσκειν] ([the girl die]) in the following sentence:[211]

> καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ εἰδότες ὅτι <u>ἀπέθανεν</u>. (Luke 8:53)
> And they began laughing at Him, knowing that <u>she had died</u>. (NASB)

This can be represented as in figure 11.[212]
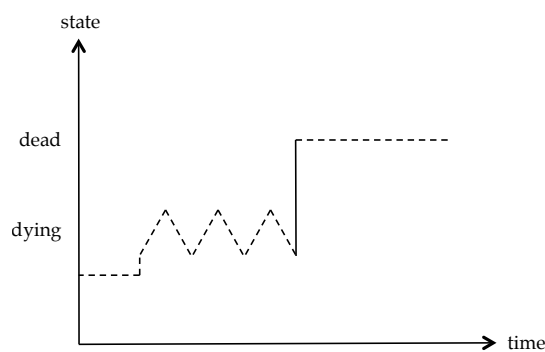
Figure 11

(e.g., "he was coughing") (see Comrie, *Aspect*, 42).

210. [Bloggs find his coat] can also be construed as a punctual, i.e., as an achievement without a preface, if the sense is that Bloggs stumbled on his coat without looking for it.

211. Fanning lists ἀποθνῄσκειν as a climax (*Verbal Aspect*, 157). Mateos, who does not distinguish punctuals and climaxes, classes it as a "lexema dinámico de acción instantanea" (dynamic lexeme of instantaneous action) (*Aspecto verbal*, 85).

212. Other construals of ἀποθνῄσκειν are possible, depending on what is understood about the event from the context. For example, if death were sudden and unexpected then it could be construed as a punctual rather than a climax.

4.4 The Interaction of Verbal Aspect and Procedural Character

As mentioned above, it is widely recognized that aspect interacts with the procedural character of a verb constellation. These interactions are predictable,[213] and can be easily explained if the temporal nature of aspect is kept in mind. For example, one consequence of accomplishments having an inherent endpoint is that perfective aspect communicates the idea of reaching that endpoint, since it speaks of a complete situation from beginning to end,. In figure 12, the shaded area highlights the period of time Johnson calls the "reference time" (the time being spoken about) when perfective aspect is used with an accomplishment verb. In the case of perfective aspect the reference time is identical with the event time, and it can be seen that in such a case the reference time includes the endpoint of the situation.
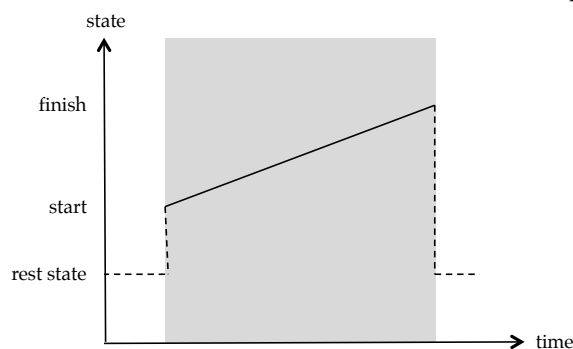
Figure 12

Assuming that the Greek aorist is perfective rather than aspectually neutral,[214] figure 12 could represent a sentence such as Νῶε κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτόν (Noah constructed an ark). This sentence would simply be untrue if Noah gave up construction at the halfway point and did not complete the project. This is probably why some earlier linguists understood the essence of perfective aspect to be completion. But the better analysis seems to be that the decisive feature is complete*ness* rather than comple*tion*. The idea of completion comes from the combination of perfective aspect with a telic verb constellation.

But although one cannot be said to have constructed an ark or to have run a mile if one stops before the end, one can truthfully be said to have been constructing an ark or running a mile. This so-called "imperfective paradox" is partly explained by the fact that imperfective aspect, and progressive aspect in English, speak of a phase of the situation not including its terminal point, i.e., a point in time or a period of time before the endpoint has been reached.[215] This is illustrated by the shaded portion of the timeline in figure 13.

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213. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 41, 43.

214. On this point Mateos, Porter, Fanning, and Campbell are in agreement. See Mateos, *Aspecto verbal*, 31; Porter, *Idioms*, 21; Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 71, 97; Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 21, 125.

215. For the term "imperfective paradox" see David R. Dowty, "Toward a Semantic Analysis of Verb Aspect and the English 'Imperfective' Progressive," *Ling&P* 1 (1977): 45–77.
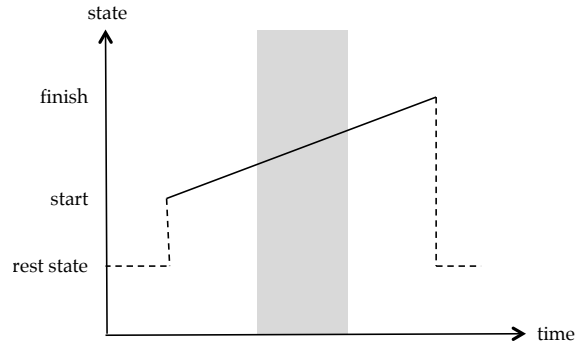
Figure 13

If the Greek imperfect tense is indeed imperfective, as is widely believed,[216] then the shaded portion of the timeline in figure 13 can serve to represent the reference time of the sentence Νῶε κατεσκεύαζεν κιβωτόν (Noah was constructing an ark). This sentence would remain true if Noah began construction but did not finish; what actually happens in the time subsequent to the reference time is not material.

The question remains how a verbal constellation can be conceptualized as having an endpoint when the endpoint is not in fact reached, or even known not to have been reached. One answer that suggests itself is that the constellation is telic because of an *intention* at the reference time that the endpoint would be reached. This would account for the so-called *conative* use of the imperfective, speaking of *attempted* accomplishments. For example:

> ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ <u>ἐπόρθουν</u> αὐτήν. (Gal 1:13)
> I persecuted the church of God … and <u>tried to destroy</u> it. (ESV)

Assuming that πορθεῖν here is a telic verb, Paul "was destroying" (ἐπόρθουν) the church in the sense that at the past reference time (indicated by ποτέ earlier in the verse) he was pursuing a project which, if carried on to completion as he intended, would culminate in the extinction of the church. Yet Dowty notes that not all cases of the imperfective paradox can be solved this way, for example those where the accomplishment has no sentient agent.[217] The problem is a complex one which cannot be discussed in detail here.

In contrast to the situation with telic verb constellations, perfective forms in conjunction with atelic verb constellations do not imply completion, because the situation has no natural endpoint. This can be seen from figure 14, which illustrates the combination of perfective aspect with the activity [(Ὀνησίφορος) διηκόνειν] ([he (Onesiphorus) serve] in the following sentence:

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216. See Porter, *Idioms*, 21; Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 240; Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 101. Mateos speaks of durativity rather than imperfectivity (*Aspecto verbal*, 31; see §3.1 above).

217. Dowty, "Toward a Semantic Analysis," 46. Among the examples Dowty gives is the sentence "The river was cutting a new channel to the sea, but the men with the sandbags stopped it from doing so" (ibid.).

καὶ ὅσα ἐν Ἐφέσῳ <u>διηκόνησεν</u>, βέλτιον σὺ γινώσκεις. (2 Tim 1:18)
And you well know all the <u>service he rendered</u> at Ephesus. (ESV)
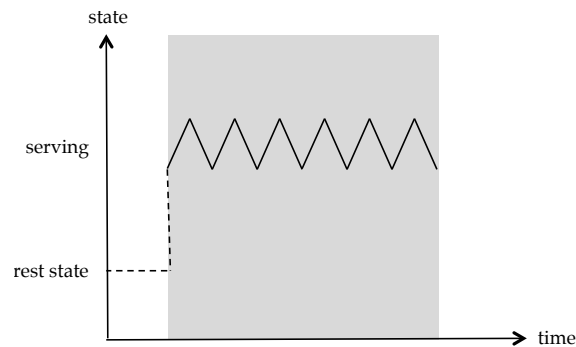

Figure 14

The aorist tense, being perfective, expresses the totality of the situation of Onesiphorus's serving expressed by the verb constellation, but since this situation does not include an inherent endpoint, the use of the aorist does not imply that such an endpoint is reached. This is a case where the imperfect ὅσα ἐν Ἐφέσῳ διηκόνει could perhaps have been used instead. If so, this would be an example of what Bache calls "pure aspectual opposition." A New Testament example using the imperfect is Mark 15:41, mentioned already in section 4.2:

αἳ ὅτε ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ <u>διηκόνουν</u> αὐτῷ. (Mark 15:41)
When he was in Galilee, they followed him and <u>ministered</u> to him. (ESV)

The sort of analysis offered here explains why "Bloggs was swimming" implies "Bloggs swam" (swimming being an atelic activity), whereas "Bloggs was drowning" doesn't necessarily imply "Bloggs drowned." There is nothing contradictory about the sentence "Bloggs was drowning, but the lifeguard rescued him." On the other hand, it would be contradictory to say "Bloggs drowned, but the lifeguard rescued him." Indeed, it is hard to imagine a context in which "Bloggs drowned" does not express Bloggs's death, indicating that this is a semantic feature, not a pragmatic one.[218] Whether drowning is considered to be a climax (i.e., an achievement with a preface) or an accomplishment is a moot point, and arguably either construal is possible. However, it is certainly telic; there is a definite point at which one dies. Perfective aspect is used to speak of the whole situation including that endpoint, while imperfective aspect is used to speak of a period before the endpoint has been reached.

Similar considerations explain why in the case of punctual verbs imperfective or progressive aspect conveys an iterative sense, and cannot be used with reference to a single

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218. See Smith, *Parameter*, 106–7. On pragmatics see n. 17 above. It has become common in New Testament studies of aspect to state that *Aktionsart* is a pragmatic rather than a semantic category (e.g., Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 26; Campbell, *Basics*, 23), but this reflects a use of the terminology which is misleading and unconventional.

instance.[219] The English verb constellation [the light flash] can be construed as referring either to a single flash (figure 15) or a series of flashes (figure 16).[220]
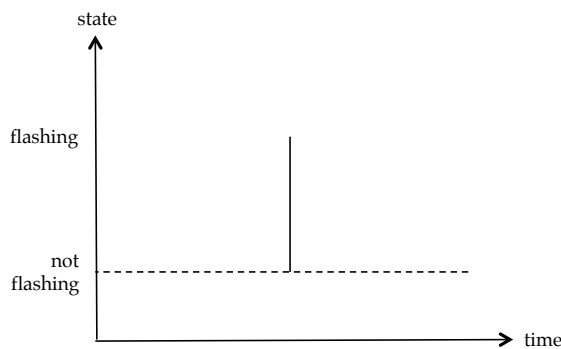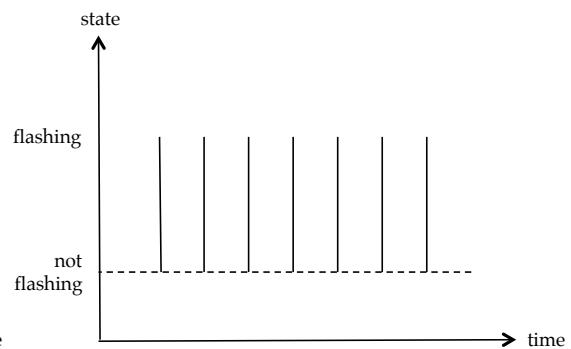

Figure 15

Figure 16

But imperfective aspect, or the progressive aspect in a sentence such as "the light was flashing," cannot normally be used to speak of a single momentary event, since there is no possible reference time, however small, that does not include the situation's endpoint (see figure 17). A single flash does not have what Comrie calls "internal temporal structure."[221] Accordingly, the use of the imperfective aspect requires an interpretation such as that shown in figure 18.
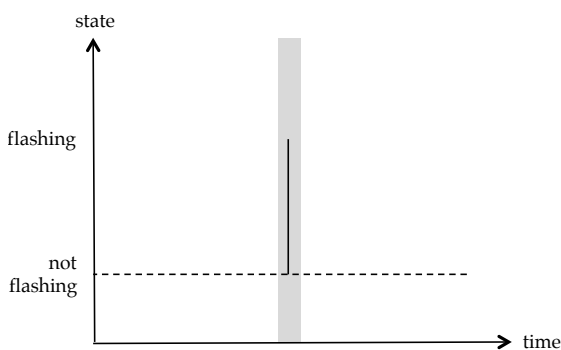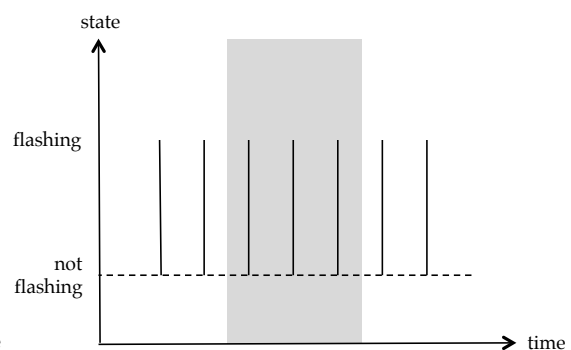

Figure 17

Figure 18

If βάλλειν (throw, put) is rightly classified as a punctual verb, then the following sentence using the imperfect must refer to a *series* of deposits, rather than a single simultaneous deposit:

καὶ πολλοὶ πλούσιοι <u>ἔβαλλον</u> πολλά· (Mark 12:41)
And many rich people <u>were putting in</u> large sums. (NIV)

As noted above, therefore, imperfective aspect can be used with punctual *verbs*, but not to

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219. Comrie, *Aspect*, 26; Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 58. It is in fact possible to contrive counterexamples, but these involve construing the situation as nonpunctual (see Comrie, *Aspect*, 42–43).
220. See Croft, *Verbs*, 94.
221. See n. 56 above.

speak about punctual *situations*. With punctual verbs the imperfective indicates repetition.

In the case of climaxes, imperfective aspect is normally construed as speaking of the preface rather than the moment of the achievement itself. The imperfective effectively forces the climax to be construed as an accomplishment, i.e., as having duration, so that its endpoint can be excluded from the reference time. Thus the imperfective sentence αὐτὴ ἀπέθνῃσκεν (Luke 8:42) means "she was dying" (and had not yet died),[222] whereas the perfective ἀπέθανεν (Luke 8:53) means "she died" (and subsequently was no longer alive). These two sentences are represented in figures 19 and 20, respectively.
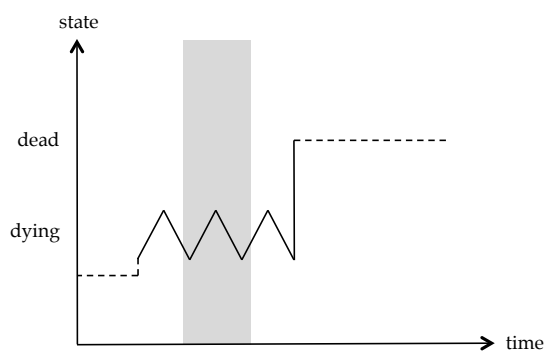

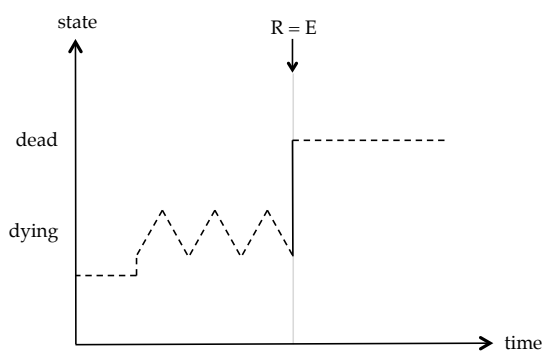Figure 19   Figure 20

It is perhaps because of effects such as these that the essence of imperfective aspect has sometimes been thought to be durativity. Since the imperfective can only be used with reference to a situation having duration, its use necessarily *implies* duration. But durativity is not generally considered to be the *defining* characteristic of the imperfective, since it cannot be used to speak of a durative situation including its endpoints.[223] Thus Fanning notes that "with verbs of a 'bounded' sort" the present aspect (Fanning's term for the imperfective aspect in Greek) "usually denotes the action as 'in progress but not carried to completion.'"[224] For example:

ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης διεκώλυεν αὐτόν. (Matt 3:14)
But John tried to deter him. (NIV)

Fanning comments: "This is difficult to account for on the basis of the durative view of the present, since there is nothing in the concept of *duration* which is inimical to completion."[225]

The type of analysis and graphical representation outlined in the preceding paragraphs explains why there is only in certain circumstances a subjective choice between perfective and imperfective aspect. It also has the potential to explain the various nuances of the

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222. See Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 158.

223. As noted above, the Russian "imperfective" can be used in this way, but only because it is aspectually neutral and not marked for imperfectivity.

224. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 99.

225. Ibid. (emphasis original). A possible weakness in this argument is that Fanning does not demonstrate that the lack of completion is conveyed by the semantics of the verb form διεκώλυεν, rather than by the context.

perfect or retrospective aspect, and although space prevents a detailed discussion of this here a few brief comments are worthwhile. As noted above, perfect aspect normally has as its reference time a time after the situation expressed by the verb constellation. This explains why, when the perfect is used with verb constellations that involve the subject transitioning into a resulting state, the perfect expresses the idea of the subject being in that state.[226] For example, figure 21 represents the following sentence:

> <u>τέθνηκεν</u> ἡ θυγάτηρ σου. (Luke 8:49)
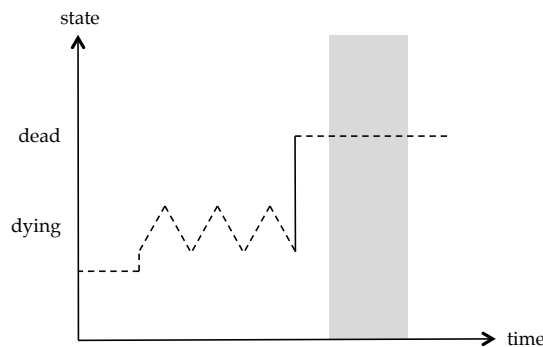> Your daughter <u>has died</u>. (NASB)

Figure 21

In the case of a lexeme such as "believe" which can denote either a continuing state or entry into that state, the use of perfect aspect normally requires the latter interpretation, because the state itself cannot usually be construed as prior to the reference time. For example, ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν in the following sentence can be represented as in figure 22, which explains why it has a stative sense close to that of the present πιστεύομεν (compare figure 4).

> ἡμεῖς <u>πεπιστεύκαμεν</u> καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ. (John 6:69)
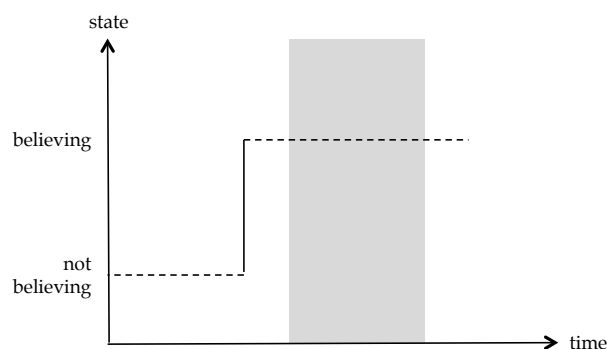> We <u>have come to believe</u> and to know that you are the Holy One of God. (NIV)

Figure 22

Contrary to what is supposed by Porter, however, stativity does not appear to be the *essence*

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226. See Crellin, "Greek Perfect Active System," 281–82.

of perfect aspect,[227] any more than durativity is the essence of imperfective aspect or completion the essence of perfective aspect. Rather, the stative effect depends on the procedural character of the verb in question. Crellin has argued that in the case of verbs that do not involve the subject participating in a state, the perfect has an anterior rather than a stative sense.[228]

The purpose of going into these interactions between procedural character and verbal aspect in some detail is to make the point that they are readily intelligible—indeed predictable[229]—precisely because aspect is related to time, and in particular to temporal phases and boundaries. Mateos and especially Fanning have offered useful accounts of these relationships in New Testament Greek, although Fanning's ambivalence concerning the temporal nature of aspect leaves him unable to explain quite *why* these predictable effects occur. The same is true of Campbell's brief account in *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, which is rather less successful than Fanning's because his account of the relevant lexical-semantic characteristics is idiosyncratic, treating punctuality as a subset of transitivity and ignoring telicity, which is arguably the most important factor alongside durativity.[230] Porter, on the other hand, seems to deny the existence of this kind of interaction between aspect and lexical semantics altogether, seeing the two as independent. His reasoning suffers from the flaw that it is based on the statistical co-occurrence of aspects with particular lexemes,[231] without regard to the constraints on the types of *situations* (or more precisely, *conceptualizations* of situations) that can be expressed by those combinations.

It is because of these interactions between aspectual distinctions such as perfectivity or imperfectivity on the one hand and procedural character on the other that some linguists consider the latter to be itself an aspectual phenomenon, using the term "lexical aspect" to distinguish it from verbal or grammatical aspect. The appeal of treating lexical and grammatical aspect as subcategories of the same overarching category is that the two interact because they both have to do with the expression of the temporal constituency of a situation, and in particular with its temporal boundaries.[232] But doing so obscures the fact that they interact precisely because they perform different functions within the temporal domain. The procedural character of the verbal constellation conveys information (or activates background knowledge) about the phases and boundaries of the situation in question, and the choice of verbal aspect then selects one or more of those phases as the reference time.[233] Thus what Sasse terms "unidimensional" and "bidimensional" approaches

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227. See Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 251–59.

228. Crellin, "Greek Perfect Active System," 279, 283, 297. See also Crellin's contribution in ch. 15 of the present volume.

229. See Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 41.

230. Campbell, *Basics*, esp. 55–59.

231. See Porter, "Aspect Theory and Lexicography."

232. See, for example, Smith, *Parameter*, xiv.

233. Another way of putting this is to say that aspect and procedural character have to do with different kinds of boundaries. As Croft puts it, "the property of boundedness that is considered to be a part of the root of the verbal meaning, i.e. the existence of a natural endpoint or telos for the event,

both contain an element of truth,[234] at least in relation to a language such as Greek with clear grammaticalized aspectual distinctions.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the denial by Porter, Fanning, and Campbell that aspect is a temporal concept is at odds with the prevailing understanding within general linguistics. I have suggested that the precise sense in which aspect relates to time, and the various ways in which it interacts with procedural character, are clarified when one abandons visual and spatial metaphors and adopts a more literal time-referential definition. Fanning's account of the interactions between aspect and procedural character is extremely helpful and insightful, but would be strengthened by a recognition that these interactions occur because of the temporal nature of aspect.

I will conclude by suggesting some desiderata for future work on aspect in New Testament Greek that emerge from the present examination.

5.1 Recognition of the Temporal Nature of Aspect

First, it follows from the preceding discussion that future studies would do well to revisit the definition of aspect and the question of aspect's relationship to time.

5.2 Engagement with Literature on Aspect within General Linguistics

Second, future work on aspect in New Testament Greek will benefit from engaging widely and carefully with the work that has been done and continues to be done on the subject within the field of general linguistics. Whether or not one accepts Porter's argument that the adoption of a specific linguistic theory is a prerequisite for identifying and interpreting linguistic evidence,[235] the adoption of a particular theory should not lead one to overlook the insights of those working within a different framework.

5.3 Analysis of Procedural Character

Third, as Evans has noted, much more analysis is needed of the procedural character of Greek verbs and verb constellations.[236] Shain makes an important step forward by investigating procedural character using tests of the sort typically utilized by linguists. For example, "An appropriate test for dynamicity … is whether a predicate can have a habitual

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is represented by the states defined on the q dimension, while boundedness of a particular event in a particular occurrence is defined by the existence of profiled beginning and ending phases on the t dimension" (Croft, *Verbs*, 81). See also Sasse, "Recent Activity," 205–6.

234. See Sasse, "Recent Activity," 202.

235. Porter adopts a particular theoretical framework, namely Systemic Functional Linguistics, and argues that "without a linguistic theory as the basis of examination of the language, it is very difficult to determine what counts as evidence and how any such evidence should be interpreted" (*Linguistic Analysis*, 200).

236. Evans, "Future Directions," 205; similarly idem, *Verbal Syntax*, 20.

interpretation in an imperfective aspect: if it can, then it is not stative."[237] In addition to the tests she employs, she notes that many others could be developed. For example, "adverbial phrases, particularly time phrases" can be used to diagnose procedural character. Typically "atelic predicates take duration adverbials, and telic predicates take time-frame adverbials."[238] This is a promising avenue, despite some weaknesses in Shain's analysis that illustrate the complications inherent in such an approach.[239]

Attention to procedural character is relevant not only for understanding aspectual usage in the Greek New Testament, but also for the ongoing debate over whether Greek verbs express tense (location in time) alongside aspect. For example, Campbell cites the clause ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα in Mark 1:11 as an example of a non-past-referring aorist, on the basis of the translation "with you I am well pleased." He comments "Suffice to say that *no one* translates the last clause of this verse, "*in you **I was well pleased**.*"[240] But this does not suffice. What is needed is a principled consideration of the procedural character of εὐδοκέω along the lines suggested above. Campbell appears to assume, on the basis of its English translation equivalent, that it is a stative verb meaning "be pleased." But if a possible construal of εὐδοκέω is as an achievement expressing *entry into* a state (i.e., if it is what Croft calls an inceptive state),[241] then the event time is indeed prior to the speech time.[242]

5.4 Scrutiny of Linguistic Assumptions

A final desideratum for future work on aspect in New Testament Greek is that the linguistic assumptions on which it and earlier studies are based be identified and scrutinized. A case in point is the assumption, noted in section 1, that each tense (present, aorist, etc.) has one and only one meaning, regardless of the mood, lexeme, or construction in which it occurs.

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237. Shain, "Exploring Aktionsart," 227.

238. Ibid., 246.

239. Some of Shain's tests seem difficult to apply without circularity. For example, she states that "the discovery of an instance in a text in which an event is ultimately unrealized and the predicate denoting it is in an imperfective aspect constitutes conclusive evidence of the telicity of that utterance" (ibid., 227). But the question whether an event is unrealized or not involves a judgment concerning its telicity. Thus her conclusion that ἀναγκάζειν in Gal 6:12 refers to an unrealized event depends on the assumption that it has the telic sense "compel." If it had an atelic sense such as "urge," then the event would have been realized and the test would fail. Similarly, Shain assumes that the existence of a goal or destination indicates telicity (228). However, this is only true if the use of perfective aspect implies that the goal has been reached. Thus [Bloggs move to the door] is telic but [Bloggs move toward the door] is atelic. Telicity is determined here by the difference between "move to" and "move toward," not by the presence of "the door."

240. Campbell, *Basics*, 36 (all emphasis original).

241. Compare ἐπιστεύσαμεν in Gal 2:16, which clearly does not indicate that Paul has stopped believing.

242. Campbell's argument is all the more surprising given that the English construction "I am pleased" is a resultative, and resultatives typically "signal that a state exists as a result of a past action." Joan Bybee, Revere Perkins, and William Pagliuca, *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 54.

This is a bold claim and one that is hardly self-evident, since many linguists take the opposite position.[243] It cannot be assumed without argument, for example, that the tenses have the same aspectual value in every mood, or that a particular aspect always has the same markedness.[244] Thus the fact that the present appears to be imperfective in the nonindicative moods does not exclude the possibility that it is aspectually neutral in the indicative.[245] A methodologically sound investigation will so far as possible investigate aspectual contrasts by means of minimal pairs, where other elements of the sentence (mood, lexeme, etc.) remain constant and only the tense changes.

In short, much work remains to be done, and despite the criticisms articulated here, Porter, Fanning, and Campbell are to be thanked for stimulating interest in this important area of New Testament Greek research.

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243. See, for example, those cited at n. 18 above. Some scholars have sought to justify this position by suggesting that any variation in meaning is *by definition* "pragmatic." But this is based on a misunderstanding of what linguists mean when they distinguish semantics and pragmatics (see n. 17 above).

244. Comrie notes that "in combination with past tense there is generally in languages a tendency for the perfective aspect to be unmarked, while with present tense the tendency is for imperfective aspect to be unmarked" (Comrie, *Aspect*, 121).

245. For the view that the present indicative is aspectually neutral see, for example, Mateos, *Aspecto verbal*, 31; Yves Duhoux, *Le verbe grec ancien: Éléments de morphologie et de syntaxe historiques*, 2nd ed., BCLL 104 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 143; Comrie, *Aspect*, 71.

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