

“The Poor Man’s Porter”  
A condensation and summarization of  
*Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*  
by Stanley E. Porter (New York: Peter Lang, 1993)  
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The following material attempts to distill the basic system of Porter’s massive work and to summarize the contribution that he has made to the study of biblical Greek. Most is condensed into this writer’s own words, though key statements have been cited as appropriate. (Only direct quotes are noted by page; the remainder may be followed by attention to the headings, which have page references appended in { }.) Some additional material has been included; footnotes identify or contain anything not explicitly from Porter’s work. Examples of actual usage cited here are almost entirely NT examples due to the focus of the original audience of the summary. This should not be viewed as representative of Porter’s work since he includes numerous examples from nonbiblical, Hellenistic Greek as well as Classical Greek.

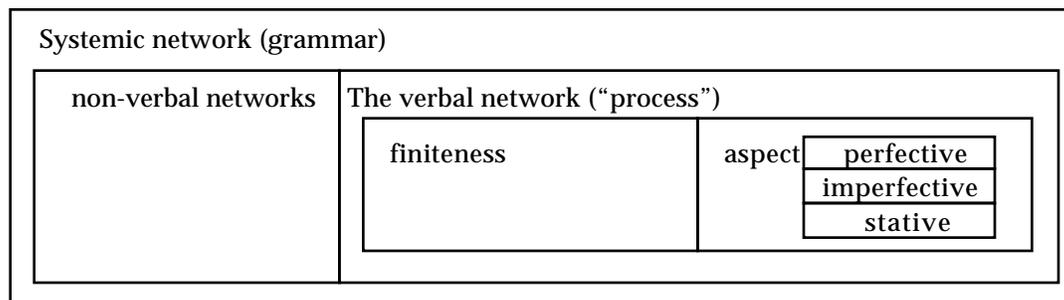
The book is composed of several distinguishable sections. The introduction establishes the linguistic system that is used and defines key terms. Chapter 1 is largely historical, surveying and critiquing previous work on aspect. Chapter 2 summarizes Porter’s overall system of aspect. Chapter 3 is parenthetical for the most part; the nature of the Greek found in the New Testament is evaluated primarily to demonstrate that the influence of the Semitic languages is negligible in regards to verbal aspect. Chapters 4 and 5 delineate the three basic aspects that Porter sees in the Greek of the NT: perfective, imperfective, and stative. Chapters 6 through 10 address other areas of grammar that are impacted by this aspectual system: conditional statements, non-indicative moods, participles, infinitives, the future tense, aspectually vague verbs, and periphrastics.

### **Introduction {1–16}**

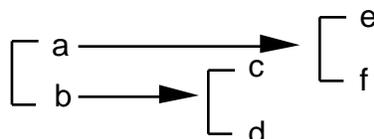
“The major assertion of this work in biblical Greek linguistics is that the category of synthetic verbal aspect—a morphologically-based semantic category which grammaticalizes the author/speaker’s reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process—provides a suggestive and workable linguistic model for explaining the range of uses of the tense forms in Greek” (xi).

This approach is based on systemic linguistics (as opposed to transformational-generative grammar [Chomsky], tagmemic grammar [Pike], or word grammar [Hudson]). Systemic linguistics interprets language as “a vast network of interrelated sets of options” (7, citing Gotteri). The potential of conveying meaning is evaluated on the basis of the “independent paradigmatic options” from which the speaker selects (usually unconsciously). Any part of a language that can communicate meaning is part of a network in which alternate choices are available. This network is essentially the grammar of a language. The discussion of aspect focuses on one part of the total network: the verbal network, which in turn is composed of two major subsystems: aspect and

finiteness. Within the aspectual portion of the network of Greek are three aspects: perfective, imperfective, and stative.<sup>1</sup>



One of the primary tools of systemic linguistics is the construction of a graphic display that visualizes and defines the opposing choices available to a speaker. The choice at any given level in the network is dependent on logically prior choices. To illustrate, in the diagram below, choice *c* is not available to a speaker unless he has already selected *b*. If he *has* selected *b*, choice *f* is not available to him.



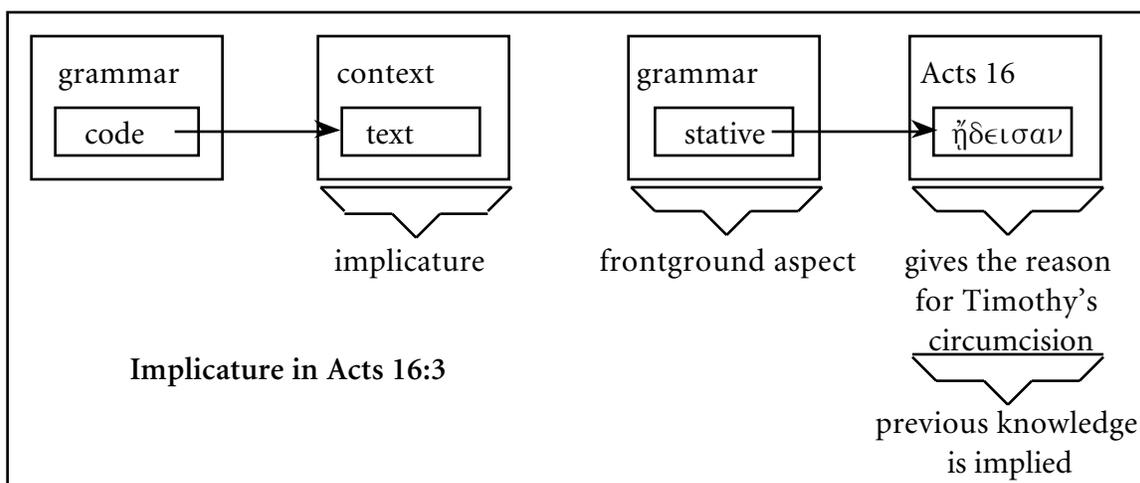
This has obvious implications for exegesis. Too often it is assumed that a speaker has the full range of choices available in any given linguistic situation. At a given point, a speaker's choices are quite limited depending on the logically prior choices as to particular nuances he desires to convey. This will also be relevant in the choice of particular words since many words are not fully developed. A word that has no aorist form, e.g., never offers that choice, which in turn restricts the number of alternatives.

Systemics also makes a conscious distinction between formal and functional items in language, arguing that there is no *necessary* correlation between the forms of an item and how that item is used. (There is, however, a closer correlation in Greek than in many languages.) In discussing function, "an element is only meaningful if it is defined wholly in terms of other elements. A given linguistic phenomenon that is wholly predetermined...offers little for a discussion of meaning" (12). In other words, if there is no other grammatical unit that a speaker might choose, then there is no significance to his choice at that point. For example, since there are no aorist or perfect forms of ἐῖμι, a speaker is restricted to the present/imperfect forms. Imperfective aspect is the only choice, perfective and stative aspects are not possible in this verb.

Porter's approach focuses particularly on a fundamental principle of systemic linguistics as particularly relevant to aspect: paradigmatic choice. This refers to "the choice of a single linguistic item as distinct from other linguistic items of the same class that might fulfill the same function"

<sup>1</sup>The following diagram illustrates Porter's discussion; it is not his diagram. The second diagram below simplifies several similar ones in Porter.

(14). By selecting a specific aspect, and therefore a particular verb form, the speaker determines the aspect for the entire clause in which the verb is placed. This in turn influences the semantic value of the entire context. Semantics (“what the forms mean”) is distinguished from pragmatics (“what speakers mean when they use the forms”). This distinction is also referred to as code (“the shared meaning-system encoded in grammatical, syntactical and lexical items”) versus text (“operational instances’ of language as code”). Speakers draw from the verbal network code of their language to create individual statements (“instances of text”). These two areas of language are connected by the concept of implicature. This refers to “what is implied by the use of the particular verbal aspect within a given set context” (15). In other words, what is the explanation for the relationship between the meaning of a form and its use in a particular context?<sup>2</sup>



### Ch. 1. Research into tense, *Aktionsart* and aspect {17–73}

This chapter summarizes previous work on aspect and evaluates each of the major proposals. Since the primary purpose of this condensation is to present Porter’s own system, the summary of some parts of this chapter will be quite brief. It is, however, a crucial chapter in understanding how the understanding of aspect has developed over the past two centuries. That Porter’s own work very clearly stands on the shoulders of his predecessors is evident in the progressive movement described below.

#### 1. Hellenistic Greek grammars {18–22}

There is formal grammatical discussion from the Hellenistic period, but it is not a sophisticated, theoretical treatment and is incomplete. Of the two positions that are evident, Dionysius Thrax presents a verbal system that is strictly temporal, while the Stoic grammarians pay greater attention aspect.

<sup>2</sup>The following diagram is *not* Porter’s; it does, however, illustrate a passage specifically discussed by Porter (93). See also the chart of the same passage appended to this summary.

## 2. 19th century and traditional grammars {22–26}

Parallels to both Dionysius and the Stoics are found in the 19th century. Madvig (1873), Krüger (1861), and Jelf (1851) all emphasize the temporal role of the tenses. The major grammars that more closely resemble the Stoic approach include P. Buttmann (1st ed., 1800), Jannaris (1897), Goodwin (1894), Kühner (1897), and Smyth (rev., 1956).

## 3. Comparative philology and *Aktionsart* {26–35}

The groundbreaking work that pioneered a shift in treatment of the Greek verb was that of Curtius in the mid-nineteenth century (1846, 1852, 1863). He emphasized *Zeitart* (“kind of time”) rather than *Zeitstufe* (“time-step”). The difference is internal (continuous, completed, etc.) versus external (relation of the action to the speaker [past, present, future?]). Only Stahl (1907) followed Curtius’ lead, identifying three *Zeitarten*: durative, complete, and “in and of itself.” *Zeitart* is related to verbal stem and is dependent on the speaker’s conception of the action; temporal reference is secondary. Other grammarians who followed Curtius include Gildersleeve (1900) and Delbrück (1879).

The term *Aktionsart*—well known in 20th century discussions—was coined by Brugmann in 1885 “to describe the kind of action indicated objectively by a verb” (29). This *Aktionsart* is determined by the stem of the verb (root with affix). He postulated the following *Aktionsarten*: punctual (aorist), cursive (present), terminative, iterative, and perfective (perfect). Without recounting the details of the historical development of this concept of *Aktionsart*, the following conclusions offered by Porter may be listed (33–35 et passim).

1. Determining *Aktionsart* is an attempt to define *objectively* the kind of action conveyed by a verb. Therefore such terms as punctual, iterative, terminative, cursive, perfective, linear are used.
2. Such conceptions are *not* based strictly upon morphological criteria since similar forms are often subordinated beneath varying descriptive categories....
3. The categories themselves are subjective constructs of highly questionable pertinence.... Perhaps this is the most important point to make regarding *Aktionsarten*.
4. Whereas verbal roots may have conveyed *Aktionsart* at an earlier stage (e.g., in proto IE) these categories are not applicable to Greek from at least Homer onwards....
5. Attempts to equate *Aktionsart* with tense categories have no basis of support in discussion of *Aktionsart*, since tenses are treated as merely convenient ways to describe general tendencies. Appeal is made to the verbal root..., lexis or time....
6. These criticisms can be summarized in this way.... (a) Proponents of *Aktionsart* claim it to be an objective method of characterizing action when in fact it is arbitrary and subjective, since the hearer must construe the meaning apart from any principled grammatical means of determination, such as morphology.... (b) Without formal (morphological) criteria, comparative philologists lack an objective basis upon which to treat systematically all the variables present in Greek (kind of action, temporal distinction), without creating strained categories. (c) The terminology is temporally based; and the *Aktionsarten* are contradictory, mutually exclusive and (ironically) highly subjective appraisals of verbal action. (d) The problem can be laid at the feet of several causes, one being the comparative-diachronic method, since comparative philologists lack sensitivity to any one language as object of analysis.... Therefore, though Greek may appear to have many *Aktionsarten*, these are better viewed as contextual abstractions on the basis of lexis (i.e., attempts to describe each action objectively) and their verbal use must be subsumed under tense forms though *not* temporal categories.

#### 4. Transitional approaches {35–39}

Study of *Aktionsart* and related issues in the early 20th century moved the discussion forward, setting the stage for contemporary formulations. Particularly noteworthy in this regard was an interchange between Jacobsohn and Hermann (1926, 1927, 1933). The significant conclusion by Jacobsohn is that aspect should be defined on the basis of formal verbal opposition as an expression of the speaker's subjective perspective on or presentation of the action, whereas *Aktionsart* is an objective description of the action based on lexis. The major 20th century grammar that pursues these issues is the Schwyzer/Debrunner revision of Brugmann (1939, 1950). In this work aspect is distinguished from *Aktionsart*, the former are formulated as two *Hauptaspekte* (confective and infective), and the latter as the difference between complete and incomplete action.

#### 5. Structural linguistics and aspect {39–50}

The first study of aspect based on structural linguistics is that of Holt (1943). He argues that the Greek tenses cannot be temporally based; that “inflectional aspectual oppositions” include the perfect (positive, devolutive), present (negative, evolutive), aorist (neutral, zero), and the future (non-aspectual); and that “aspectual selection is homonexual (internal), whereas temporal determination is heteronexual (external)” (40).<sup>3</sup>

The most influential modern treatment of aspect on Porter's system is that of Comrie (1976). Porter summarizes his explanations as follows (45–47, et passim).

Comrie's text focuses primarily on the Slavonic languages but he includes able discussions of other languages, including ancient and modern Greek. Comrie differentiates aspect from tense as a way “of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation”..., although he considers both to be time categories, with aspect concerned with “situation-internal time” and tense with “situation-external time”.... He devotes an entire chapter to the important distinction between aspect and voice.... Comrie as well differentiates aspect as a grammatical category from *Aktionsart* as a lexical or lexical/derivational category (...he treats *Aktionsarten* as inherent meanings in various lexical items). ...The major aspectual categories [are] perfective, imperfective, and Perfect.... Regarding ancient Greek in particular..., Comrie posits two oppositions—between the Perfect and non-Perfect forms and between the Aorist and non-Aorist, contending that the Future is an aspectless temporal form.

As an introduction to aspect as a semantic term, especially with reference to other semantic categories like temporal recognition, however, Comrie's book has performed a most commendable and long-awaited service and is not likely to be quickly bettered.

Likewise significant is McKay's grammar of classical Greek in which he emphasizes verbal aspect (*Greek Grammar for Students: A Concise Grammar of Classical Attic with Special Reference to Aspect in the Verb*, 1974). McKay distinguishes between *Aktionsart* (a lexical distinction) and aspect (a grammatical category “by which the author [or speaker] shows how he views each event or activity in relation to its context”) of which there are four: imperfective aspect (“an activity in

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<sup>3</sup>I take this last statement to mean that choice of aspect is subjective, based on the speaker's choice as to how he wants to portray an action and is expressed internally in the morphology of the chosen verb form, whereas temporal reference must be determined by (a series of related factors? heteronexual?) factors external to the verbal form selected (including, presumably, such factors as lexis and deixis). This may read too much of my understanding of Porter's system into the statement.

progress”; present tense), aorist aspect (“a whole action or a simple event”; aorist tense), perfect aspect (“the state consequent upon an action”; perfect tense); and future aspect (“expressing intention”; future tense) (49).

## 6. Grammars of Hellenistic Greek from Winer to the present {50–65}

This section surveys a number of grammars that deal specifically with Hellenistic Greek. Most of the early 19th century grammars are evaluated as severely deficient in their treatment of the verbal system for various reasons, usually including a failure to treat aspect (or even *Aktionsart*) as a separate category from tense, the view that tense is a temporal category, etc. Included are Winer, A. Buttman, Viteau, Abbott, and Green. An advance in the discussion is noted in Burton (1898) who differentiates form and function as well as discusses tense under the categories of progress of action (primary) and time of action (secondary).

The major twentieth century grammars have all come from the comparative philology approach. These begin with Blass (2d ed., 1902) whose treatment of the verb is very similar to Burton’s. In its current English incarnation, Blass/Debrunner/Funk recognize that tense is not a temporal category, but rather one of *Aktionsart* (kind of action) or aspect (point of view), listing five categories of *Aktionsarten*: punctiliar, durative, iterative, perfective, and perfectivizing (§318).<sup>4</sup> Moulton’s grammar is similar; *Aktionsart* is mentioned, but never defined, although the 40+ pages of discussion illustrate a variety of uses of the various tenses, related to both *Aktionsart* and temporal reference (though he states that “For our problems of *Aktionsart* it is a mere accident that [present tense] is (generally) present [time]”) (1:119). Robertson’s tome is judged to be the least systematic of all the major grammars due to his mixing of categories, omitting others, etc. Moule and Turner are judged to be somewhat of an improvement, but Porter notes that their (essentially correct) definitions of aspect are labeled *Aktionsart* in both grammars. The section concludes with brief comments regarding several smaller works, among which he lists Zerwick (“a long awaited effort in the study of aspect”) and Durie (“to be commended for adopting a morphologically-based aspectual system”) (64).

## Ch. 2. A systemic analysis of Greek verbal aspect {75–109}

This chapter is the theoretical heart of Porter’s entire volume and the most crucial to grasp. As a test paradigm against which to validate any proposed explanation of verbal aspect are the following three groups of texts (75–76). Despite their length, the three groups will be included here due to the crucial nature of the questions they raise. (The translations given are Porter’s with only a very few minor changes. The parsing and underlining have been added; a number of sentences have more than one verb form that is used the same way, but only one has been marked.)

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<sup>4</sup>BDF apparently equate aspect and *Aktionsart*, the “or” meaning “equivalent to” rather than “in addition to.” Aspect is mentioned only once (the statement cited above) in the grammar according to the index.

• Present indicative

Matt. 8:25	Κύριε... <u>ἀπολλύμεθα</u>	Lord, <u>we are perishing</u>	1PPMI > ἀπόλλυμι
Mark 11:27	Καὶ <u>ἔρχονται</u> πάλιν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα	and <u>they were coming</u> again into Jerusalem	3PPAI > ἔρχομαι
Matt. 26:18	πρὸς σέ <u>ποιῶ</u> τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου	with you <u>I am going to make</u> the Passover with my disciples	1SPAI > ποιέω
Matt. 7:19	πάν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν <u>ἐκκόπτεται</u> καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται	every tree not making good fruit <u>is cut off</u> and thrown into the fire	3SPPI > ἐκκόπτω
2 Cor. 9:7	ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην <u>ἀγαπᾷ</u> ὁ θεός	for God <u>loves</u> a joyful giver	3SPAI > ἀγαπάω

• Aorist indicative

Luke 16:4	<u>ἔγνων</u> τί ποιήσω	<u>I know</u> what I intend to do	1SAAI > γινώσκω
2 Cor. 11:25	τρὶς <u>ἐραβδίσθην</u> , ἅπαξ ἐλιθάσθην, τρὶς ἐναυάγησα	three times <u>I was beaten</u> , once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked	1SAPI > ῥαβδίζω
John 17:14, 18	ὁ κόσμος <u>ἐμίσησεν</u> αὐτούς...κἀγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτούς εἰς τὸν κόσμον	the world <u>is going to hate</u> them...I am going to send them into the world	3SAAI > μισέω
Eph. 5:29	οὐδεὶς γὰρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα <u>ἐμίσησεν</u>	for no one ever <u>hates</u> his own body	3SAAI > μισέω
Luke 7:35	καὶ <u>ἐδικαιώθη</u> ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς	wisdom <u>is justified</u> by all her children	3SAPI > δικαιώω

• Perfect indicative

Matt. 21:27	καὶ ἀποκριθέντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ εἶπαν, <u>Οὐκ οἶδαμεν</u>	answering, they said to Jesus, " <u>we don't</u> <u>know</u> "	1PRAI > οἶδα
Acts 10:45	ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος <u>ἐκκέχυται</u>	because the gift of the Holy Spirit <u>had been</u> <u>poured out</u> upon the Gentiles	3SRAI > ἐκχέω
James 5:2	ὁ πλοῦτος ὑμῶν <u>σέσηπεν</u> καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια ὑμῶν σητόβρωτα γέγονεν	your riches are going to rot and your garments are going to become moth-eaten	3SRAI > σήπω

2 Peter	ὅ γάρ τις ἤττηται, τούτῳ	for by what someone <u>is overcome</u> , by this	3SRPI > ἠττάομαι
2:19	δεδούλωται	he is enslaved	
1 John 3:14	μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν	<u>we are transformed</u> from death into life	1PRAI > μεταβαίνω

### 1. Grammaticalization of tense {76–83}

Tense is defined as “the grammaticalisation of location in time.... Tense, in those languages which have tense, is part of the deictic frame of temporal reference: it grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context” (76, quoting Comrie). (Grammaticalization is the expression in a formal way [i.e., morphologically] of specific grammatical information; it refers to form, not function.)

Each of the three groups above use the same tense (present, aorist, perfect—all indicatives), but have, in order, five different temporal references: present, past, future, omnitemporal, and timeless. The problem posed is: what is the significance of tense if the same tense forms can all refer to the same range of temporality and if three different tenses can have the same range? This is a very difficult question for the traditional approaches to tense to accommodate in their system. Note, too, that all the examples are from the indicative mood, which is the one mood that almost every system connects with temporal reference in some way. Porter’s conclusion from these examples is that Greek tenses do not grammaticalize time. This does not mean that Greek cannot express time—only that it does not do so through the use of the morphological category of tense. This should not be surprising to someone who has studied classical Hebrew where a similar lack of tense/time forms is accepted with little question. Other languages do the same. To express time, Greek uses both lexis and deictic indicators in the context (ἕως, ἤδη, ὅταν, μέλλω, σήμερον, etc.).

This seems somewhat confusing to those trained in traditional Greek terminology since it says, in essence, that the Greek tenses are not true tenses. Unfortunately the terminology is not likely to succumb to change after several millennia of use. Porter offers several suggestions for offsetting this difficulty. Perhaps the most practical is to expand the grammatical descriptions used to indicate both form and function. For example, instead of referring to, say, the aorist tense, it would be more accurate to refer to the aorist form used of present time. This may be longer, but provides a substantial increase in clarity that more than offsets the slightly clumsier phrase.

### 2. Introduction to verbal aspect {83–97}

Another set of sample texts frames the question of aspect in a helpful way. They are as follows.

### Group 1

Luke 21:10	Τότε <u>ἔλεγεν</u> αὐτοῖς	then <u>he was saying</u> to them	3SIAI > λέγω
Luke 20:41	<u>ἔειπεν</u> ...πρὸς αὐτούς	<u>he said</u> ...to them	3SAAI > λέγω
Acts 20:38	τῷ λόγῳ ᾧ <u>εἰρήκει</u>	the word which <u>he spoke</u>	3SLAI > λέγω

### Group 2

Luke 24:18	<u>οὐκ ἔγνω</u> ς τὰ γενόμενα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις;	<u>you don't know</u> the state of things in [Jerusalem] in these days?	2SAAI > γινώσκω
John 5:42	<u>ἔγνωκα</u> ὑμᾶς	<u>I know</u> you	1SRAI > γινώσκω
John 21:17	σὺ <u>γινώσκεις</u> ὅτι...	<u>you know</u> that...	2SPAI > γινώσκω

Each of the groups above use three different verb forms of the words for *saying* (in imperfect, aorist, and pluperfect forms) and *knowing* (in aorist, perfect, and present forms), yet they all refer to the same time (past in the first group, present in the second). Are these sets of diverse forms (that have similar temporal reference) semantically distinct? Why? How? Appeal to *Aktionsart*is not adequate to explain these two sets.

On the basis of similar lexical content, a theory of *Aktionsart* would be compelled to argue that all three examples depict the event of speaking in the same way.... This not only fails to satisfy an innate sense that each of the three conceives of the event differently (so too most grammars), even if the difference is slight or even unexpressible in German or English translation, but it fails to explain why the Greek language maintained triplicate (if not quintuple!) forms with identical conception of the action, as well as similar temporal reference (83–84).

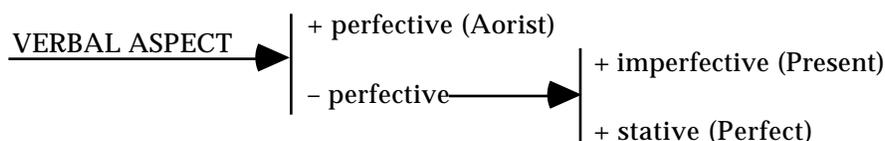
Porter argues that only a proper understanding of verbal aspect is adequate to account for these differences. “This work... asserts that, rather than on the basis of temporal reference, Greek verbal usage must be stringently reformulated on the basis of systemic application of the grammatical category of synthetic or formally-based verbal aspect” (84). (At this point it would be helpful to review the definition of aspect given in the first section of this summary.) This approach would explain the two sets above as follows.

Rather than reflecting a temporal distinction or a differing objective characterization of the kind of action [*Aktionsart*], each choice of verb tense reflects an attempt by the speaker to grammaticalize his conception of the process. Since tense is fully obligatory in Greek, the speaker is called upon to use one verb tense as opposed to some other verb tense form in virtually every verbal situation.... This choice of tense form is best treated as the grammatical realization of a fully exclusive semantic choice of verbal aspect (86).

The terminology that Porter uses to describe this aspectual system is as follows. The verb forms are referred to with the traditional names (Present, Aorist, etc.; note that he capitalizes the names of formal categories but not functional ones, a convention that this summary does not follow unless citing material from Porter’s book). In addition, functional names have been

proposed that describe each aspect: perfective (the aspect of the Aorist forms), imperfective (Present and Imperfect forms), and stative (Perfect and Pluperfect forms).<sup>5</sup>

The semantic value of each of these aspects can be described from several different perspectives, including verbal opposition, visualization, planes of discourse, and systemic display. The concept of verbal opposition builds on the principle of systemic linguistics that describes the significance of a speaker's choice in terms of alternate choices. These alternatives are described in terms of marked pairs.<sup>6</sup> Various forms of opposition are possible. The most frequently suggested for Greek are privative binary opposition and equipollent binary opposition.<sup>7</sup> Porter's preference is the second with two binary pairs arranged in opposition as illustrated in the following diagram.



In this arrangement, the stative is the most heavily marked aspect and perfective the least, to the point where this aspect is the default.

Each of these three aspects may be visualized in a helpful way to illustrate the semantic significance of each. A parade provides an appropriate analogy. In Porter's own words,

If I am a television correspondent in the BBC helicopter flying over the parade, I view the action or process in its immediacy from a vantage point outside the action as "perfective," i.e., in its entirety as a single and complete whole. If I am a spectator sitting in the grandstand watching the parade pass by in front of me, I view the process immersed within it as "imperfective," i.e., as an event in progress. And if I am the parade manager

<sup>5</sup>These terms come from general linguistics; see the material in the appendix of this summary.

<sup>6</sup>See the appendix of this summary for a definition of *markedness*.

<sup>7</sup>The following summary from Buist M. Fanning's complementary volume may be helpful at this point (*Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990], 54–70). This material comes from §1.3.2: The types of aspectual relationships.

Aspect may be considered in pairs of "oppositions" (alternative choices among which the speaker chooses, even if unconsciously). Several types of opposition have been suggested.

1. Pure privative opposition: the marked member indicates the presence of some (aspectual) feature; the unmarked member is neutral and says nothing about the presence or absence of that feature (cannot define the unmarked member as indicating any positive content). The two can be interchanged in that the neutral member can refer to the same action as the positive w/o implying the opposite meaning.

2. Modified privative opposition (a later refinement of the first proposal): the unmarked member possesses two possible meanings, the neutral sense (as above) or the contrastive (negative) sense. The context indicates which of these dual meanings is to be understood. One contextual clue that often indicates the negative sense is the use of the two members in close connection/correlation (one contrasted with the other).

3. Equipollent opposition: all members are marked in some way, i.e., they all have some positive value, there are no neutral members. The relationships between these positive members can be categorized in one of three ways:

3a. contradictory equipollent opposition: only two members, each of which is mutually exclusive of the others;

3b. contrary equipollent opposition: usually has more than two members, all marked in regard to the same basic feature, not as contradictory, but graded on a continuum;

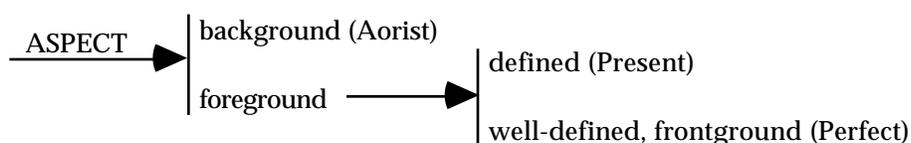
3c. mixed opposition: usually two members with both members marked, but each marked for a *different* value, they are not necessarily contradictory or contrary to each other.

These various approaches to opposition are evaluated in chs. 4–6 of Fanning's book; he indicates that in his judgment, equipollent opposition rather than privative best accords with NT Greek usage.

considering all of the conditions in existence at this parade, including not only all the arrangements that are coming to fruition but all the accompanying events that allow the parade to operate, I view the process not in its particulars or its immediacy but as “stative,” i.e., as a condition or state of affairs in existence. (91)

In this illustration, there is no reference to time. All three aspects are describing the same event, but are doing so from different perspectives. None of these differing perspectives is more correct or more objective than the others; each represents the perspective of an observer and his subjective conception of the action.

These aspects may also be described from a discourse perspective. Speakers use the aspects, not only to depict the way they perceive the action, but in an identifiable pattern in discourse.



In typical discourse,<sup>8</sup> the aorist carries the narrative, the present and imperfect introduce significant characters or noteworthy descriptions, and the perfect is reserved for very well defined points of special interest. (Cf. the appended chart that illustrates this from Acts 16:1–5.)

If this entire picture is brought together and diagrammed as a systematic whole, the chart appended to this summary results (reproduced from p. 109). It is not an easy system to grasp by simply browsing the chart. Porter’s explanation from pp. 93–97 is summarized here. The chart includes not only finite indicative verbs but also non-indicative forms and non-finite forms (infinitives and participles). Since a speaker may use only one form, he must select the particular form that best grammaticalizes his intended affirmation. (This choice is, of course, largely unconscious in most instances.) The choices available to him consist of the pieces that comprise a path through the systemic chart. “Within the network of Greek verbal usage two *simultaneous* systems present the broadest choice: ASPECTUALITY and FINITENESS. The FINITENESS system distinguishes the semantic distinction between limitation on the verbal expression through Person [+finite] and lack of limitation [–finite]” (94, emphasis added). The [–finite] items are either participles (= [+factive]) or infinitives (= [–factive]). The [–finite] cannot also express attitude/mood because that route is blocked (note the significance of the opposing, binary choice in the network at this point). The participle and infinitive do, however, also express aspect. There is essentially a dual entry into the system, both at the point of finiteness and at aspectuality. (This is not obvious from the chart, but that is a limitation of a schematic view, not of the language.)

The initial choice in regard to aspectuality is [±expectation]—the choice of [+expectation] results in partial aspectuality; i.e., the future tense expresses true tense to a greater degree than the

<sup>8</sup>In his SBL summary the following remarks by Porter clarify this use and also add the use in exposition. “In narrative the aorist tense or perfective aspect lays down a basic framework upon which more prominent items in the narrative—whether they be events or descriptions—are placed. In exposition, items are selected for description, analysis and the like, in which the present tense or imperfective aspect may be supported by the aorist tense or further heightened by the use of the perfect tense or stative aspect.” (“In Defense of Verbal Aspect,” in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research* SNTA suppl. series, 80, ed. S. Porter and D. A. Carson, 26–45 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 35.)

other tenses and as a result is not primarily an aspect. This choice can also designate factivity and thus there is a future participle and a future infinitive.

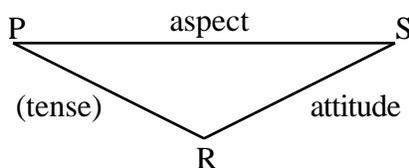
Choices that are “fully aspectual” (i.e., both [+finite] and [–expectation]) “distinguish two subsystems”—ASPECTS 1 and 2 on the chart.

The [+perfective] aspect is the least semantically marked..., in equipollent opposition to the [–perfective] aspects. This is the broadest aspectual opposition in Greek. The [+perfective] aspect is realized by a single simple form, » » Aorist, while the [–perfective] aspects offer a subsequent more delicate choice (ASPECT 2) between [+imperfective] and [+stative] aspect.... The distinction of [+remoteness] and [–remoteness] is the closest that Greek verb forms approach to tense forms as realizations of temporal semantic features.... This is on the basis of their use...in which the speaker stands distanced from the process he describes. Selection of [+imperfective: + remoteness] is realized by the » » Imperfect Indicative, and [+imperfective: – remoteness] by » » Present Indicative, and selection of [+stative: + remoteness] is realized by the » » Pluperfect Indicative, and [+stative: – remoteness] by the » » Perfect Indicative.

A more delicate system than ASPECTUALITY, but simultaneous with ASPECT 1 is ATTITUDE, entered when [+aspectual/+ finite] are selected. This semantic feature grammaticalizes the speaker’s view of the process in relation to his conception of reality. ... [+assertion] [expresses] a commitment to the process and [–assertion] [expresses] a volitional orientation.... [+assertion] is realized by » » Indicative, while [–assertion] is realized by the non-Indicative Moods. (95–96)

### 3. Deictic indicators and temporal reference {98–102}

If tense does not grammaticalize temporal reference and if aspect is not temporal in nature, how does the language express time relationships? A three-fold relationship must be kept in mind when addressing temporal issues from a grammatical perspective: the time of the process (P), the time of the speaker/writer (S), and various possible temporal reference points (R).



“Aspect, therefore, grammaticalizes how a specific process (P) is viewed by the speaker. Attitude grammaticalizes the speaker’s perspective (S) on the point of reference (R). And time is a non-grammaticalized category of temporal reference established on the basis of deixis” (99).

Time is classified as either past, present, future, omnitemporal (always true), or timeless (time is irrelevant). Aspect does not convey time, through the implicatures of a given context may incorporate aspect as one element of temporal reference at the level of pragmatics (rather than semantics). Contextual factors that indicate such relationships are referred to as deixis (the adjectival form is *deictic*), which Lyons defines as “the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes, and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatio-temporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee” (99).

Deixis can be divided into four categories: person, time, discourse, and social. Person deixis is expressed grammatically by person and number and by pronouns. Temporal deixis is conveyed by lexis (lexical items that indicate temporal relationships, e.g.,  $\nu\hat{\upsilon}\nu$ ), anaphora (demonstratives, articles, pronouns), and historical reference. Discourse deixis is indicated by connectives, story

line indicators (including word order), and genre. Social deixis is of limited use in Greek, but does include such factors as vocatives and other means of identifying persons involved in the sending or receipt of the communication.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. Standard patterns of verbal usage {102–08}

Despite the strong arguments that preclude temporal judgments made on a strictly formal basis, there is a frequent correlation between temporal reference and tense forms. This correlation is conventional and in itself proves nothing as to the time of the process. Yet speakers/writers follow general patterns of usage which may, in light of the context, incorporate aspect in temporal reference by means of implicature.

In this way, perfective aspect (aorist forms) is common in narrative contexts. This is so, not because it refers to past time, but because it has the least concern for “for the movement, development, progress of a process.” It is an external viewpoint that does not necessarily distinguish internal structure or progress of a process. Imperfective aspect is an internal viewpoint that focuses on the process itself and its internal structure. Stative aspect is also an external viewpoint (but more remote than perfective) that grammaticalizes “reference to a condition or state that depends upon the process” (105).

The natural affinities of these aspects that would tend to make some logical choices for temporal reference is obvious. Actions viewed as a whole (perfective) suits a narrative context well. Processes presently in progress are naturally described with a focus on that development, hence the imperfective aspect is used frequently. These are pragmatic considerations, however, not semantic ones. They describe how people use the code to verbalize text and the resulting implicatures of that usage.

### **Ch. 3. The influence of Semitic languages on verbal aspect in the New Testament {111–61}**

This chapter will not be summarized. It is designed to counter a possible argument against Porter’s system: that the influence of Hebrew or Aramaic accounts for the peculiarities of NT Greek aspect and is therefore not characteristic of Greek usage generally. To do so, Porter discusses the nature of the Greek found in the NT and demonstrates that Semitic influence does not affect the grammar of the language. What influence there is may be found at the level of lexis and syntax (though even that is limited) not at the level of code. “In short, no Semitic intervention in NT Greek verbal aspect can be detected” (156).

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<sup>9</sup>Languages that use different forms for varying personal relationships (e.g., higher, lower, or equal social status) would contain more explicit social deixis.

## Ch. 4. The aorist and present tenses in the indicative mood {163–244}

### Part 1

#### 1. The moods and attitudes of Greek {163–78}

The traditional definition of mood, that it expresses the speaker's visualization of the process as real or actual, encounters difficulties in that the statement made in the indicative may be incorrect or even an untruth. It is more accurately defined as

'the grammaticalization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions,' and thus relates to what is both factual and not factual on the basis of the speaker's belief... Thus the Indicative is used for assertive or declarative statements..., while the non-Indicative forms grammaticalize a variety of related attitudes, having in common that they make no assertion about reality but grammaticalize simply the 'will' of the speaker (165–66).

*Assertion* would be the key word to describe the indicative mood. The indicative is the least heavily marked of the moods and is the default mood ("the normal mode to use when there is no special reason for employing another mode" [166, citing Robertson]).

The non-indicative moods have frequently been viewed as essentially future tenses. That the imperative is not a time-based category is proved by the facts that a command can be rejected or may relate to an impossibility; posited actions do not necessarily relate to future events. Non-indicatives cannot be forced to express absolute future time, though they may express action subsequent to the speaker's point of reference. Indirect discourse also argues against the non-indicative forms being future time, since they may be used to characterize something already spoken. (Mood may change in Greek indirect discourse, but the aspect [tense] is always preserved; this is contrary to English which changes the tense if the original statement was phrased with a secondary tense.)

Porter cites several examples of non-indicative forms that are not future references. Note the optative used in indirect discourse (for the subjunctive) in Acts 25:16, πρὸς οὓς ἀπεκρίθη ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις χαρίζεσθαι τινα ἄνθρωπον πρὶν ἢ ὁ κατηγορούμενος κατὰ πρόσωπον ἔχοι τοὺς κατηγοροὺς τόπον τε ἀπολογίας λάβοι περὶ τοῦ ἐγκλήματος (To whom I answered that it was not the Roman custom to free any man before the one who is accused might have a face to face confrontation with his accusers and might make a defense concerning the charges). This is a past statement, but it does express subsequent action from the speaker's reference point (in this case the reference point is the time of Festus' statement).

The subjunctive used with past reference may be seen in John 9:2, Ῥαββί, τίς ἤμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆ; (Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?). Again, note that the subjunctive refers to an action subsequent to the speaker's point of reference (in this case, the sin of the man's parents), although his birth is obviously past time at the point of speaking.

If future temporal reference is not part of the semantic value of the non-indicatives, what is? Porter argues that the subjunctive grammaticalizes "projection with no expectation of fulfillment" (170). "The speaker views the process denoted by the verb as existing in his mind..., or rather: as not yet having a higher degree of being than mental existence.... A process in the subj.

represents a mental image on the part of the speaker which, in his opinion is capable of realization, or even awaits realization” (172, citing Gonda; note that Porter says Gonda’s description “has limitations”). The Imperative is used to give direction, while the Subjunctive projects a state of affairs” (173). The optative is similar to the subjunctive (the difference is said to be “subtle”) in that it also grammaticalizes projection, but “with contingent expectation of fulfillment” (173).

The future tense is difficult for any system to explain. Porter argues that it “is best seen as semantically designating the speaker’s expectation [+expectation] that an event is coming about.... [it reflects] both attitude and aspectuality... [but is] aspectually vague” (177). (All of the preceding section is treated in greater detail in chapters 7 and 9.)

## 2. Markedness and the assertive attitude {178–81}

The systemic relationship of the aspects is based on an equipollent opposition that is determined by the degree of markedness (see the appendix for an explanation of markedness; see the chart on p. 10 for a schematic view of aspectual opposition). Porter concludes that the perfective aspect is the least heavily marked. This is based on four features. Material markedness (morphological bulk) suggests that the imperfective aspect is more heavily marked. For example, the present stem, if different than the aorist, is normally stronger [βάλλω/ἔβαλον] and internal vowels are often strengthened in the present (e.g., λείπω/ἔλιπον). (Porter lists a number of additional morphological features in this same category.) Second, implicational markedness is evident in the fewer irregularities of the present/imperfect tense form as a verbal category (ctr. the diversity of weak and strong aorists) and the diversity of voice forms in the aorist (separate forms for all three voices contrasted with only two forms for present). Distributional markedness also argues that the aorist forms are least heavily marked. In almost all moods the aorist forms outnumber the present/imperfect in the NT (and those that do not can be easily explained). A similar proportion holds true in extra-biblical Greek. Aorist also carries the least semantic markedness.

### Part 2

Part two of this chapter discusses the pragmatic use of the tenses, discussing each form under five categories: past, present, future, omnitemporal, and timeless. Note that these are not semantic categories; the tense forms are essentially non-temporal and do not grammaticalize time. Each of the tenses can be used in the full range of temporal reference through the use of deictic indicators in the context. *Omnitemporal* refers to verbs that are equally valid in past, present, and future (traditionally classed as gnomic uses). *Timeless* is the use of a verb in a context where the question of time does not arise; it is outside of time altogether (e.g., “1 + 1 equals 2,” or, “God is love” [my examples]; these are “eternal truths” and the time reference of the verbs are totally irrelevant) (233, citing Lyons). The use of a verb in a timeless category portrays the “essentially non-temporal semantic character of the verb itself” most clearly (182).

## 3. Perfective aspect {182–88}

This section summarizes several major articles regarding the aorist. Stagg’s 1972 article, “The Abused Aorist” (*JBL*) is to be judged a classic. It argues one primary point: “though the action

described by the Aorist ‘may be momentary, singular, or “once and for all,”... it is not the use of the aorist that makes it such’” (182, citing, in part, Stagg). The article conclusively sets aside any argument based on punctiliar *Aktionsart* of the aorist.

The second article is Smith’s 1981 article “Errant Aorist Interpreters” (*GTJ*). He makes several points: aorist is not necessarily past time; does not indicate completed or punctiliar, once-for-all action; and does not occur in classes or kinds (i.e., constative, ingressive, etc.). Although Smith makes a number of valid points, Porter indicates that he has failed to distinguish semantics and pragmatics, confuses *Aktionsart* with aspect, and does not discuss the aorist in terms of the other tenses (“no meaningful opposition”).

The third is Armstrong’s 1981 article, “The Ancient Greek Aorist as the Aspect of Countable Action.” The essence of this article is to demonstrate, through the use of the aorist and present with adverbs of counting and frequency (ἄπαξ, δίδυμι, τρίς, ἀεί, etc.), that the aorist does not refer to a “single act.” Adverbs of cardinal count characteristically take the aorist tense and those adverbs of frequency usually have the present. Porter suggests some qualifications to the article, but suggests that the basic point is valid: both aorist and present “may be used in contexts where the event objectively is anything from singular to multifarious” (185).

#### 4. Past-referring imperfectives and perfective aspects {188–208}

Four explanations for the historic present have been offered. The traditional explanation for the historic present is that by presenting a past action as present the speaker turns “the passage from mere narrative into vivid actuality” (189). Among the objections to this view is the “difficulty in establishing any objective criteria for determining the dramatic value” (190), the assumption that tense is a temporal category, and the difficulty of explaining why the various tenses alternate in a given context. The second explanation (tense reduction; present = past = zero tense) is dismissed as having little to commend it. The third appeals to discourse function. Except for λέγω (“apparently haphazard”), the historic present “is used in the beginning sentence of a paragraph and describes a change in the geographic setting of participants already on stage, or introduces participants who were off-stage” (Buth, cited on 192). Although this may be one of the functions of the present in past time contexts (and Porter will incorporate it in his own explanation), it is not adequate as a comprehensive explanation. [It provides the results but not an adequate reason for the tense choice.] The fourth explanation is McKay’s appeal to aspect. Porter rejects all the criticisms of this view and uses it as the basis for his own, more nuanced, view.

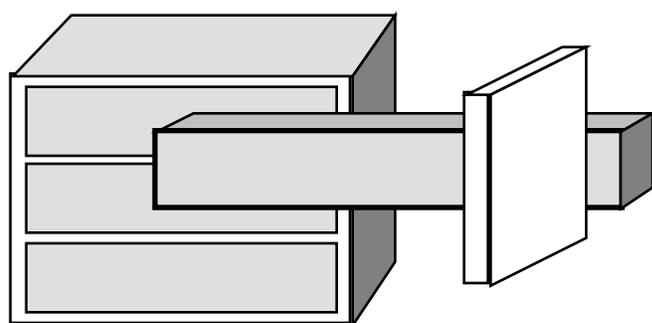
Since tense forms do not specify a temporal relationship but only aspect, it is not surprising to find present tense forms used in a context of past time. It represents the speaker’s grammaticalization of imperfective aspect which is marked in relation to both aorist and imperfect forms. Use of this aspect does render the action described as more vivid (though not because it is brought into the present and described as if it were presently happening). The reason the speaker chooses it relates primarily to discourse functions.

The “historic” Present is used at those places where the author feels that he wishes to draw attention to an event or series of events. This includes the beginning of units of discourse, and thus it is used to highlight

possibly the discourse unit itself but certainly the transition to the new unit, often including setting and participants...; events within a discourse unit selected for special significance, such as the climactic turning point...; dialogue considered as specially pertinent to a discussion...; and final closing events (196).

Although this is a subjective choice by the speaker and it is often difficult to state precisely why he made his choice, a careful analysis of the context often provides a better understanding of the development of the argument.

The next section addresses the use of perfective (aorist) and remote imperfective (imperfect) forms in narrative. In narrative contexts, the perfect is least frequent (though in evidence); the aorist and imperfect carry the main narrative line, with the present used for emphasis. Being the least heavily marked, the aorist tense/perfective aspect is most frequently used as the background narrative tense. The imperfect is more heavily marked and is thus used as the foreground tense. The choice of these two portrays the speaker's viewpoint on the action: presented as a whole with the aorist, described and developed with the imperfect. It is important to remember that this description of the action is not an objective one, but is the way the speaker chooses to present it. Different writers will describe the same action differently as it suits their purpose and emphasis and even the same writer may present the same action differently at different times. This explanation best accounts for the alternation of tenses in narrative.

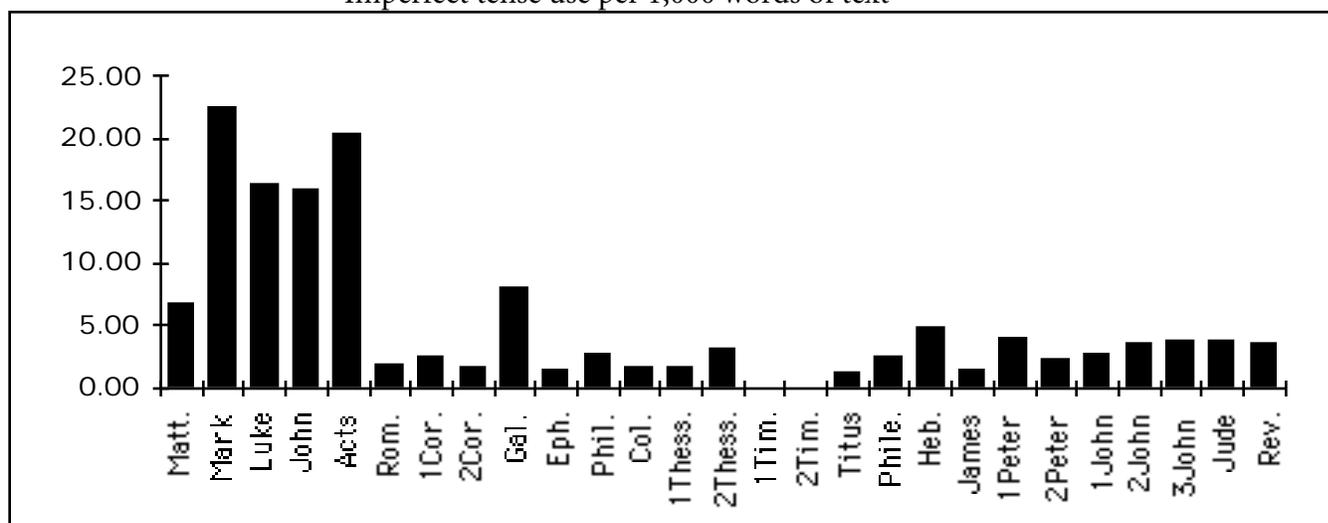


Background (aorist)  
 Foreground (present/impft.)  
 Foreground (perfect)

[Illustration taken from Porter,  
*Idioms of the Greek NT*23.]

The difference between imperfect and present is next addressed. In this instance there is no aspectual difference (as there is between aorist and imperfect)—both are imperfective aspect. The traditional explanation is a temporal one: the present referring to imperfective aspect in present time and the imperfect referring to imperfective aspect in past time. Porter concludes that the imperfect is the less heavily marked form and grammaticalizes [+remoteness]. This is not a remoteness in time (i.e., “past”) although it is understandable that it would appropriately be used of temporal remoteness. That it is frequently so used has occasioned many statements of the imperfect being a preterite form. The logical relationship of [+remoteness] and past time narrative accounts for the frequency of use in those portions of text (note chart below [which is not from Porter] illustrating the relative distribution of imperfect tense forms). (Additional discussion of the imperfect is included in a later section.)

Imperfect tense use per 1,000 words of text



### 5. Introduction to non past-referring tenses {208–11}

Porter suggests that “it is almost axiomatic within Greek grammar to assert without argument that the Imperfect and especially the Aorist Indicative are preterites, because of the presence of the augment.... Recognized usage that does not appear conducive to such a scheme must nevertheless be explained from this point of reference” (208). These conclusions are not valid.

The role of the augment has been disputed in the literature. Although most have viewed it as a preterite marker, not all have done so. In Homeric Greek the augment is “purely scansional”<sup>10</sup> (208, citing Drewitt). Although the augment is invariable in NT Greek, that is not the case in older Greek. In support of this, note the following patterns of usage in Homer. In the similes and gnomes [i.e., literature that is predominantly either omnitemporal or timeless], the aorist is usually augmented, though there are sixteen such aorists without the augment. Iterative aorists (a past-referring narrative use), however, do *not* take the augment. In narrative texts both the aorist and imperfect are frequently not augmented. In the speeches, present-reference aorists “nearly always” have the augment, but preterite-reference aorists often do not. These factors suggest that “it is not the augment that creates or emphasizes the past meaning in any tense” (209, citing Drewitt). The augment is probably a later development in the history of Greek. “By the classical period it was simply a formal feature of the imperfect, aorist and pluperfect indicative. By the Hellenistic period it was so devoid of special significance that it ceased to be attached to the pluperfect, and in later centuries it disappeared altogether except when accented” (McKay, cited on 209).

The imperfect, despite its frequency in past time narrative contexts, is not an exception to the atemporal nature of the Greek verbal system. This is evident in its use in non past-time contexts; examples of this use are as follows. The imperfect may be used in the protasis of I.b. conditionals [traditionally = 2d class] that have present reference and in the apodoses of II.c. conditionals

<sup>10</sup>*Scansionis* defined as “the analysis of verse into its rhythmic components.” It can also refer to accents or other “scansional marks.”

[traditionally = 1st class with future tense protasis] which “reflect hypothetical and not time-based discussion” (210). (These categories are illustrated from classical texts.) In addition, a dozen NT texts are cited, including the following. John 11:8, λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί, Ῥαββί, νῦν ἐζήτουν σε λιθάσαι οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ πάλιν ὑπάγεις ἐκεῖ; (The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews are now seeking to stone you, and again you are going there?”). (Note the explicit deictic indicator.) Rom. 9:3, ἠὺχόμην γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου (I indeed pray to be anathema from Christ on behalf of my brothers). Porter’s conclusions from the data in this section are as follows.

Three important observations may now be made: (1) showing the augment not to be a temporal indicator eliminates one of the most widely noted points of support for assertions about the essential temporal nature of at least the so-called preterite Indicatives in Greek; (2) the emphasis shifts from explaining apparent aberrations in the temporal scheme..., to an emphasis upon the non-temporal nature of Greek verbal usage, thus making prima facie a strong case for the approach used in this work: to analyse the range of usage and to formulate a synthetic analysis which is faithful to the formal evidence of the language; and (3) the predominant usage of the Imperfect within narrative contexts must not be minimized, although the use of the tense form must be seen as semantically contrastive to other available verb tenses for speaker use, grammaticalizing the semantic feature of [+remoteness]. (211)

## 6. Non past-referring perfective and imperfective aspects {211–38}

Recent study of the aorist by Péristérikis recognizes the widespread use of an intemporal aorist that is parallel to the present tense. He uses three criteria to establish this use: context, synonymous expressions, and verbal aspect. Although Porter challenges several items in connection with Péristérikis’ treatment of aspect, he suggests that the chief value is in the “large number of examples from poetry and prose, both early and late but virtually all pre-hellenistic, which show that the Greek Aorist is capable of non-past reference in a variety of contexts,” not only in isolated instances, “but it well illustrates that the Aorist could be used in sustained discourse without past reference” (213, 216). Particularly intriguing is Péristérikis’ argument from tense substitution as is illustrated in the following excerpt from Thucydides: ἄδηλα γὰρ τὰ τῶν πολέμων, καὶ ἐξ ὀλίγου τὰ πολλὰ καὶ δι’ ὀργῆς αἱ ἐπιχειρήσεις γίνονται· πολλάκις τε τὸ ἔλασσον πλήθος δεδιὸς ἄμεινον ἡμνατο τοὺς πλέονας διὰ τὸ καταφρονούντας [PAPMPA] ἀπαρασκευoύς γενέσθαι [AMN] (unclear are the things of wars, and the attacks become many from little reason and through anger; and many times the less in number fearing worse defends against the many because the contemptuous are unprepared, Th. 2.11.4).<sup>11</sup> Note that both aorist and present are used with identical temporal reference in the same sentence. Both the aorist (γενέσθαι) and the present (καταφρονούντας) are used with identical temporal reference in the same sentence: “the ones who are contemptuous” are also the ones who “are” unprepared. “The principle of substitution points clearly to the non time-based nature of the tense forms” (214).

<sup>11</sup>A somewhat more polished translation may be helpful: The events of war are unpredictable, and the attacks are frequently sudden and furious. Often the smaller force, fearing abler [opponents], defend [themselves successfully] against the larger force because those who are contemptuous are unprepared.

The largest single section in this chapter discusses the temporal implicatures of the non past-referring aspects (217–39). It is important to remember that this section is directed towards pragmatics, not semantics; i.e., it does not suggest that the tense forms convey time in and of themselves, but rather that the way they are used in various contexts is suited to the range of temporal reference illustrated below. Semantics or code is restricted to aspect but the contextual considerations of pragmatics may result in temporal implicature.

*Omnitemporal.* An omnitemporal proposition is “one that says that something has been, is and always will be so” (217, citing Lyons). Often this has been called the gnomic use; Porter uses *omnitemporal* instead because it “is more precise as a linguistic category” and because *gnomic* “seems to imply a value-structure” in addition to the atemporal reference (218). Probably the most common explanation of the gnomic aorist posits a specific past action behind the tense reference (e.g., BDF §333; MHT 1:135). This explanation (and several others as well) is judged inadequate by Porter and inconsistent with his thesis that there is no temporal reference in the Greek verb. If aspect is the only category, then it is not difficult to see the aorist tense form used to describe events that are omnitemporal in nature.<sup>12</sup>

Illustrative examples of the omnitemporal aorist include the following. John 15:6a, 8, ἐὰν μὴ τις μένη ἐν ἐμοί, ἐβλήθη ἔξω ὡς τὸ κλήμα καὶ ἐξηράνθη... ἐν τούτῳ ἐδοξάσθη ὁ πατήρ μου (If anyone does not remain in me, he is cast out as a branch and burned... in this my father is glorified). Although ἐὰν... μένη is best classed as timeless, the underlined forms seem “to establish a general rule of nature... with the aorist depicting the event as complete” (222). Likewise in Rom. 3:23, πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (for all sin and fall short of God’s glory). Though this could refer to Adam’s sin (or the sin of all in Adam), more likely the πάντες and the parallel aorist and present forms indicate an omnitemporal reference. A classic example is found in 1 Peter 1:24–25, πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῆς ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν· τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (all flesh is as grass, and all of its glory is as the flower of the field; the grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides forever). See also Eph. 5:29; 1 Tim. 6:7; and Jas. 1:11.

The omnitemporal Aorist, therefore, should be recognized as a non-past use of the Aorist Indicative.... This does not mean that the omnitemporal aorist is to be treated as a Present or Future Indicative, though that may be the best translation in English. Instead the Aorist grammaticalizes perfective aspect. The omnitemporal Aorist, therefore, is time-bound in the sense of being omnitemporal..., yet not tense bound, as tense is normally conceived (223).

Omnitemporal use of the present tense provides a helpful comparison in these examples. Mat. 6:26, ἐμβλέψατε εἰς τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὅτι οὐ σπείρουσιν οὐδὲ θερίζουσιν οὐδὲ

<sup>12</sup>Almost as an aside (222, ¶ 1), Porter makes an observation in this section that helps explain why there is so much confusion as to the semantic value of the aorist. The aorist is the unmarked form in Greek, whereas the present is the unmarked form in English. It is very easy for students to assume that the unmarked forms are the same in both languages (even if they do not understand that terminology). If present is the default in English, surely the present is the default tense in Greek as well, which means that there must be some semantic weighting of the aorist in comparison with the “milder” present.

συνάγουσιν εἰς ἀποθήκας, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τρέφει αὐτά (Observe the birds of heaven, that they do not sow nor harvest nor gather into storehouses, and the your heavenly Father feeds them). Also worthy of note is “perhaps the largest section of omnitemporal Present usage in the NT”: James 3:3–12, “horses are led (μετάγομεν) by bridles, ships are steered (μετάγεται) by rudders, and the animal kingdom is being subdued (δαμάζεται; cf. omnitemporal Perfect δεδάμασται) by humankind. But no one is able (δύναται) to control the tongue of man” (224).

The omnitemporal Present grammaticalizes a different aspect than does the omnitemporal Aorist.... The omnitemporal Aorist grammaticalizes conception of the process as complete, without reference to internal time; the omnitemporal Present grammaticalizes conception of the process as in progress, with attention paid to the internal, phasal structure.

Since the imperfective in relation to the perfective is semantically more heavily marked in Greek, special attention should be paid to use of the omnitemporal Present in contrast to the omnitemporal Aorist. Nothing makes a process better suited intrinsically to the Aorist or to the Present, since the author chooses to grammaticalize his conception of it.... The examples chosen by the authors reinforce the selection of aspect, though this is not to say that the other aspect could not have been used. In that case, however, the semantic meaning would be altered. So the omnitemporal Aorist and Present, though different, are different for specific reasons on the basis of verbal aspect” (224–25).

*Present time.* The aorist may be used to describe events in present time. When this is done, the action is viewed as a complete process with no reference to its progress. More than twenty examples are cited, including the following. Matt. 25:24, ἔγνων σε (I know you). Luke 8:52, οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει (she is not dead but sleeping). Note that here “the difference in verbal aspect is clearly seen; the author contrasts the condition of deadness with her being in progress sleeping, with stress falling on the latter” (227). Rom. 5:11, δι’ οὐ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν (through whom now we have reconciliation). James 2:6, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχόν (you treat the poor shamefully); note that the aorist is followed by two presents (καταδυναστεύουσιν and ἔλκουσιν).

The epistolary aorist is explained as the normal use of the aorist at the time a writer composes a letter that is then interpreted by the reader “from the same perspective as the author, beginning from an understanding of the coding-time implicatures implied by the author’s use of temporal deictic indicators” (228). This is not a common use in classical; about two dozen NT examples are cited, including a lengthy discussion of 1 John 2:11–14 (229–30).

*Future time.* Greek does not grammaticalize reference to future time, though some uses come close to that. Non-indicative forms can grammaticalize projection [subjunctive and optative] and the future form grammaticalizes expectation. “In some instances this may resemble reference to the future, and in actual instances may require future fulfillment, but speakers did not grammaticalize this conception in tense forms” (230).

The present tense form is used with future reference in the NT. Of the more than two dozen examples cited, the following are representative. Matt. 26:2, μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας τὸ πάσχα γίνεται, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι (after two days the Passover comes about, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified) [these could be translated with a more explicit future reference: “will come...will be betrayed]. 1 Cor. 15:26, ἔσχατος

ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος (death the last enemy is destroyed [will be...]). Rev. 9:6, ἐπιθυμήσουσιν ἀποθανεῖν καὶ φεύγει ὁ θάνατος ἀπ’ αὐτῶν (they will desire to die and death flees [will flee] from them).

If a speaker desires to portray a future event as complete, he may chose to use the aorist form (perfective aspect). This is not as common as the future use of the present, but adequate examples may be cited to substantiate the validity of the category (this is true of both classical and Hellenistic Greek). John 13:31, Νῦν ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη ἐν αὐτῷ (now the Son of Man is to be glorified, and God is to be glorified in him); this example requires that *νῦν* be taken in a logical rather than deictic sense; also note the support of *v. 32* for a future reference. John 17:18, καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, κἀγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον (as you sent me into the world, I send them into the world) [? will send, or, am sending? there is a future sense no matter how one decides to translate]. Perhaps the clearest example is Jude 14, Ἴδοὺ ἦλθεν κύριος ἐν ἀγίαις μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ (behold, the Lord is coming with his many saints) [will come]. “There is sufficient proof in the diversity of syntactical constructions in which future reference may be found that although this usage is not widespread it is a category of usage that cannot be ignored. It cannot be adequately explained on the basis of a time-based conception of the tenses, but is fully commensurate with an aspectual model” (233).

*Timeless.* Describing a statement as timeless means that it is “one for which the question of time-reference... simply does not arise: the situation, or state-of-affairs, that is described is outside time altogether” (233, citing Lyons). The timeless aorist is used in several specific genre as well as in other individual uses. Parables, by their nature are timeless. Porter cites numerous examples from the parables of the house on a rock (Matt. 7:24–27), the weeds and wheat (Matt. 13:24ff), the treasure in the field (Matt. 13:44), the mustard seed (Luke 13:19), the great banquet (Luke 14:16–23), the forgiving father (Luke 15:11–32), and the vineyard owner (Luke 20:9ff). These may sometimes be treated as narrative, yet the point of a parable is not intended to be historical but timeless.

Didactic passages conveying theological truth also use the aorist frequently. Zecharias’ prophecy (Luke 1:68–79) is a case in point. “The hymn begins with a verbless clause giving praise to the God of Israel, because” ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤγειρεν κέρασ σωτηρίας ἡμῖν (he cares for and makes redemption for his people and raises a horn of salvation to us).

Past implicature may be appropriate ..., although the redemption he anticipates appears to be current; a present sense..., referring to God’s current salvific action, excludes much of God’s work; and omnitemporal implicature appears inappropriate since the point is not that God is always performing this redeeming act. The parallel of this passage with others noted above with future reference makes future use of the Aorist a possibility, with the author grammaticalizing his reference to the complete care and redemption of God still to come. The example is placed under timeless reference, however, since the opening lines of the hymn seem to be definitional, elucidating who is the God of Israel.... He is the God of care and redemption (235–36).

Romans provides another helpful example, particularly the initial section of 1:18ff. The following quote is lengthy, but it provides a helpful illustration of how Porter evaluates an extended passage. (Note present and aorist forms.)

Paul begins with the timeless statement that the wrath of God ἀποκαλύπτεται (is revealed) on all ungodliness and injustice of men, since the knowledge of God is manifest in all men. God, he says, ἐφανερώσεν (makes it clear) to them (v 19). From the foundation of the world his unseen attributes, etc., καθορᾶται (are perceived) (v 20). Then he shifts to the Aorist to specify the nature of this revelation, maintaining the timeless implicature. Although they know (γνόντες) God, οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἠψυχάριστησαν, ἀλλ' ἐματαιώθησαν (they do not glorify or give thanks to him as God, but make foolishness) in their discussions and their heart ἐσκοτίσθη (is darkened) (v 21). Saying to be wise ἐμωράνθησαν καὶ ἥλλαξαν (they are foolish and exchange) the glory of the uncorrupt God (vv 22–23). The result is that God παρέδωκεν (hands them over) to untrained minds (v 28), etc. Paul concludes by saying that those who know (ἐπιγνόντες) but more importantly practice (πράσσοντες [imperfective aspect]) are worthy of death, they not only ποιοῦσιν (do) these things but συνευδοκοῦσιν (approve) those who do (v 32). Several times perfective and imperfective Participles and Infinitives are used within the passage, but the movement is clear and forceful, with the imperfective Present Indicative setting the stage and concluding, and the perfective Aorist Indicative specifying details. (236)

Numerous individual passages might also be cited; these are representative. Luke 12:48, παντὶ δὲ ᾧ ἐδόθη πολὺ, πολὺ ζήτηθήσεται παρ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ᾧ παρέθεντο πολὺ, περισσότερον αἰτήσουσιν αὐτόν (to everyone to whom much is given, much shall be required from him, and to whom much is entrusted, they will request much of him). Eph. 2:4, God is rich in mercy according to the love ἣν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς (which he loves us). 1 John 2:11, ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν (the darkness blinds) his eyes.

The present tense form is also used in timeless contexts, frequently in parabolic literature and doctrinal texts (as is the aorist; the difference is aspectual). Luke 6:39ff, “μήτι δύναται (it is not possible) for a blind man to lead a blind man, is it? A disciple is (ἔστιν) not greater than his teacher. Why βλέπεις (do you see) the speck in your brother's eye but οὐ κατανοεῖς (do not consider) the log in your own? How δύνασαι (are you able) to speak to your brother? (238). In a doctrinal text, Rom. 2:1–8, “whereas the use of the timeless perfective Aorist in Rom 1:18ff. to specify the sinful nature of man is cited above, the imperfective Present is used in 2:1–8 to explain the righteous judgment of God. The contrast of verbal aspect appears intentional” (238). Individual uses include John 3:18, ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται (the one who believes in him is not judged); and James 1:13, ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστίν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα (for God is untempted of evil, and he himself tempts no one).

Deictic reference in Greek is not a matter of tense-form usage, since the same form may refer to several different deictic spheres. The constant factor is the tense form itself, which grammaticalizes the speaker's conception of the process... A range of deictic categories to which the verb tenses may be applied is discussed, illustrating that the individual tense forms are compatible with a number of different deictic categories established by discourse features, and at the same time reinforcing the contention that Greek verb forms are not absolutely temporally referring (239).

## Ch. 5. The stative aspect and perfect tense {245–90}

### 1. Markedness and the stative aspect {245–51}

The stative aspect is the most heavily marked of the three aspects. This judgment is based on four factors. The perfect and pluperfect forms are marked distributionally; i.e., they are the least frequently used of all the verb forms. (NT use in this regard parallels classical and other extra-biblical writers.) Frequency alone is not decisive, but does carry significance when combined with

the three following factors. Second, the perfect and pluperfect forms have the greatest material markedness (i.e., morphological bulk). Third, implicational markedness is evidenced in the morphological regularity (endings added to a regular stem; consistent endings in both first and second perfect forms) and the defective range of forms (no optatives, only four imperatives and ten subjunctives) in the perfect.<sup>13</sup> Fourth, functional evidence of markedness can be seen in the greater complexity of the stative aspect.

A syntactical pattern is discernible in the NT that is based on the stative aspect being the most heavily marked: the less heavily marked form usually follows the more heavily marked form when used in a parallel syntagmatic unit. Numerous examples are cited; note the following: Matt. 8:14, βεβλημένην καὶ πυρέσσουσιν [“thrown down and feverish,” R > P]; Luke 13:25, ἐστάναι καὶ κρούειν [“standing and knocking,” R > P]; Acts 5:25, ἐστῶτες καὶ διδάσκοντες [“standing and teaching,” R > P]; Col. 1:23, τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἔδραῖοι καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι [“grounded and steadfast and not moved,” R > adj. > P]; 1 John 1:2, ἑώρακαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν [“we have heard and bear witness and announce,” R > P > P]. The same pattern is evident with perfect and aorist forms: Mark 5:19, σοὶ πεποίηκεν καὶ ἠλέησέν σε [“has done for you and has been merciful to you,” R > A]; κεκοινῶνηκεν... καὶ... μετέσχευ [“shared and shared,” R > A].

This is an understandable progression whereby the less heavily marked form is used in support of the more heavily marked... Although in certain cases the less heavily marked member of an opposition is able to function parallel to its more heavily marked member, the marked member virtually always serves as a focal item. (251)

## 2. The perfect as stative aspect{251–59}

The traditional conception of the perfect tense defines it as a combination of aorist and present (so most grammars, classical and Hellenistic, including BDF [“The perfect combines in itself...the present and the aorist in that it denotes the *continuance of completed action*, §340], Robertson, Zerwick). In response, the rejection of any temporal reference in the tense forms and the noteworthy exceptions unexplainable with this definition render the traditional explanation unworkable. Porter’s counterproposal is consistent with previous discussion: the perfect does not grammaticalize temporal reference, though it may have temporal implicature on the basis of lexis or other contextual factors. He prefers to build on McKay’s description of the perfect:

The perfect tense expresses the state or condition of the subject of the verb mostly in present time, but also without specific time reference, and in some circumstances...with an added strong reference to a past event. In fact, it applies the state principle of the perfect aspect...to present time, timeless situations, extensions from past to present, and the implications of future reference. (McKay, cited on 257)

“The Perfect grammaticalizes the speaker’s conception of the verbal process as a state or condition .... The formulation of the aspect shows that the stative is distanced from the action itself in its conception of the event, unlike the perfective and imperfective. This distancing of action...brings the verbal aspect into focus as the one concerned with an entire state (257).

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<sup>13</sup>It apparently requires a more extensive background in linguistics than this writer has to understand why this is, indeed, a sign of greater markedness.

The Perfect is used to grammaticalize a state of affair, the Present a process in progress, and the Aorist a process seen as complete, with the Perfect the most heavily marked.... (This serves first and foremost to give the Perfect the appearance of something precisely more emphatic than the aorist).

...While there may be reference to a previous act that results in a state or condition, this is a matter of lexis in context (258–59).

### 3. Pragmatic usage of the stative aspect {260–70}

In pragmatic usage, the perfect may be found in contexts that specify the same wide range of temporal reference as the other tenses: past, present, future, omnitemporal, and timeless. Porter discusses more than 60 examples from 15 different NT books to show that past reference is valid for the perfect. Selected examples include Mark 5:33, the woman with the flow of blood knew ὃ γέγονεν αὐτῇ (what had happened to her); John 6:32, οὐ Μωϋσῆς δέδωκεν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (Moses did not give you the bread from heaven [note that person deixis (the ref. to a person already dead) established the temporal reference]); and Rom. 16:7, οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ (the ones who were in Christ before me [note the temporal implicature of πρό]).

Present temporal reference is seen in John 1:26, μέσος ὑμῶν ἕστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε (in the midst of you he whom you do not know stands); Acts 4:10, οὗτος παρέστηκεν ἐνώπιον ὑμῶν ὑγιής (this one stands before you healthy [referring to the lame man who had been healed]); and 2 Tim. 4:6, Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἀναλύσεώς μου ἐφέστηκεν (For I am already poured out, and the time of my release is imminent [Porter translates, “is upon me”]).

There are only a few perfects used in future contexts. Porter suggests six passages that contain this use, the best examples of which are John 17:22, κἀγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς (and I am going to give to them the glory which you give me); and James 5:2–3, ὁ πλοῦτος ὑμῶν σέσηπεν καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια ὑμῶν σητόβρωτα γέγονεν, ὁ χρυσὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ὁ ἄργυρος κατίωται καὶ ὁ ἰὸς αὐτῶν εἰς μαρτύριον ὑμῖν ἔσται καὶ φάγεται τὰς σάρκας ὑμῶν ὡς πῦρ. ἐθησαυρίσατε ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (your riches are going to rust and your garments are going to become moth food, your gold and silver will rust and their rust will be a testimony against you and will consume your flesh like fire [note the parallel future forms]).

Omnitemporal use of the perfect is seen in Rom. 7:2, ἡ γὰρ ὑπανδρος γυνὴ τῷ ζῶντι ἀνδρὶ δέδετα νόμῳ (for the married woman stands bound to her husband by law) and in 2 Peter 2:19, ὃ γὰρ τις ἠττηται, τούτῳ δεδούλωται (for by what someone is overcome, by this he is enslaved).

Timeless uses include Mark 13:46, εὐρῶν δὲ ἕνα πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην ἀπελθὼν πέπρακεν πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν καὶ ἠγόρασεν αὐτόν (but finding one pearl of great value, going he sold all that he had and bought it [the parabolic form suggests timeless reference despite the narrative development in the parable]) and John 1:18, θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε (no one sees God ever). Porter comments in regard to this last example that “it would be difficult to posit temporal implicature for this verse, since the discourse indicates that this state applies to no temporal sphere in particular (πώποτε)” (269).

#### 4. Viability of the perfect form during the Hellenistic period {270–81}

It has been argued that the perfect form had begun to lose its distinctiveness in expressing verbal aspect against other tenses by the Hellenistic period. Turner (MHT 3:81ff) argues this by suggesting that the perfect tended to be confused with the aorist—a confusion which eventuated in the disappearance of the perfect. In response Porter first suggests several “groundrules” (there must be systemic opposition to convey meaning; translation of two forms may be identical in a receptor language without the necessity of “identical semantic values”; etc.) and then responds to Turner’s individual arguments (concluding that his position “must in general be dismissed”).

The perfect did eventually disappear, but “this did not occur until at least the 4th–5th cent. A.D.” (273). In Hellenistic Greek the perfect maintained its semantic distinctiveness in contrast to other forms. “Virtually all grammarians are agreed that originally the Perfect’s aspectual value...originally resided on the subject. The aspectual value then is supposed to have shifted to a condition whereby subjective and objective values were both maintained” (275). This is the argument, e.g., of Chantraine, who suggests that “once the Perfect is used to emphasize the effect on the object it becomes like a narrative Aorist and thus loses its distinct aspectual value” (Porter’s summary, 275). Porter acknowledges that the perfect may function like a narrative aorist and did eventually fade, but that this does not prove that the forms carry an identical force nor that they were confused. He refers to McKay’s detailed analysis of Chantraine’s examples and agrees with McKay’s conclusion that

There appears to be no compelling need to explain these [examples of perfects in the NT], or any of the other transitive perfects, other than as expressing the state of the subject, any more than there is in the language of the papyri or elsewhere in ancient Greek, and the most scientific approach would be to adopt the single explanation which covers all the examples rather than assume a different explanation for a minority (276 [of Porter]).

He then discusses 50 NT examples (and cites numerous others) to demonstrate that the focus of the perfect is on the grammatical subject, not on the object or on the results (i.e., subjective use rather than objective or resultative, even with transitive and passive verbs). It is this that gives the stative aspect its unique value as over against the perfective. Several examples from his five pages of discussion will illustrate his point.

John 2:8–9: at Canaan, the servants are told to fill up the water pots, then to draw some off (ἀντήσατε) and take it to the steward. When he tasted it he did not know where it came from, but the servants, οἱ ἠντήκοτες τὸ ὕδωρ (they who drew off the water), knew. Several factors are at work here. While it is true that the water is not wine, even more important is the contrast between the steward and the servants. The latter’s role is emphasized by the subjective Participle. As McKay...says “equally clearly, although with less emphasis, the state of the servants described by the participle is being signaled, and not that of the water.” (276)

2 Corinthians 5:16, Ὡστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν, illustrates a “precise use of aspect.” He explains that, with respect to ἐγνώκαμεν, “the emphasis is not on Christ [Χριστόν, grammatical object of ἐγ.] but on the status of those who know” (277).

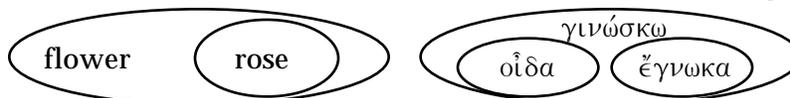
Likewise in Hebrews 1:13, πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκέν ποτε, Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου..., the rhetorical question places the emphasis, not on what is said [the direct discourse statement serving as the direct object of εἴρηκέν], but on the fact that “God’s action lies behind this status,” God being the understood subject of the verb (278). This is consistent with the entire chapter’s argumentation. Although θεὸς does not recur as the explicit subject after the first phrase of verse one, the emphasis throughout is on the fact that *God* has spoken.

### 5. Οἶδα and γινώσκω {281–87}

Because of the unique form and use of οἶδα Porter includes several pages to explain how this verb fits into his aspectual system. After summarizing several recent studies on the relation between οἶδα and γινώσκω (de la Potterie, Burdick, Silva—which this synthesis will skip), he suggests several conclusions. First, οἶδα is to be viewed as the perfect opposition to εἶδον from the root \*ειδω and “therefore is to be treated as a genuine Perfect” (283) rather than as aspectually vague or as a present [traditionally: perfect form, present meaning—but this implies a temporal conception of the form]. This suggests that although it will often be translated as a present in English, it carries the full aspectual weight of the perfect: stative. “The criterion of translation proves deceptive to understanding the Greek verb, since... identical temporal implicature in no way determines meaning” (284).

Second, “οἶδα offers no semantic choice in the Passive” because it never developed a passive or a middle/passive form. If a passive form was needed to express the concept of knowing, γινώσκω had to be used by default [though there are only 13 passives of γν. in the NT (out of 222 uses)].

Third, where there is verbal opposition, “it is legitimate to posit a lexical semantic difference” (284). In this regard Porter evaluates Erickson’s suggestion as an insufficiently rigorous treatment of the aspectual question and as “highly suspect” in regard to lexis. McKay’s distinction is “far more useful.” This defines the perfect form ἔγνωκα as a state of knowledge with reference to its acquisition and the perfect form οἶδα as also referring to a state of knowledge but with no reference to its acquisition (285). The two terms are thus in hyponymous relation with γινώσκω as the superordinate term. [See Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* 126–27 for a detailed explanation of these terms. The chart below summarizes the essence of them.]



“This incorporates the non-contiguous availability of verbal aspect in the tenses, includes both terms within the sphere of verbs of knowing, distinguishes them along the lines of whether reference is made to the means of acquisition, and is able to handle contexts both where reference to acquisition of knowledge is referred to (using γινώσκω) and where it is not (using οἶδα)” (285). As just one example (of eight discussed), Porter provides the following explanation of John 21:17.

There is no formal criterion for making a distinction in John 21:17: Κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε (lord, you know everything, you know that I love you). John writes that “you are in a state of knowledge without reference to its acquisition,” and he elucidates this with a specification intro-

duced by a contrastive, less heavily marked aspect, “you are in progress knowing that I love you.” Although γινώσκω may simply be used stylistically to avoid repetition or to allow emphasis to fall on the ὅτι clause, the context seems to indicate another reason for its use. Whereas the lord’s knowledge with reference to the cosmos is seen as unlimited and not requiring reference to its acquisition, the second clause specifies knowledge that the lord has regarding Peter, acquired through Peter’s being a follower. (285)

In other words, the difference is first of all aspectual: perfect tense/stative vs. present tense/imperfective. But since οἶδα is chosen deliberately, there is a second difference in that Peter chooses not to refer to how Jesus knows all things. Jesus’ reply, according to Porter, does imply reference to the acquisition of knowledge: Jesus’ (human) knowledge gained from Peter’s companionship.<sup>14</sup>

The following chart is a development of material suggested by Porter’s discussion; neither the chart nor the conclusions below are Porter’s. (Statistics come from acCordance.)

Occurrences in NT (#)	*εἶδω				
	γινώσκω to know	οἶδα see mentally	εἶδον to see	ὁράω to see	βλέπω to see
Present	80	0	0	20	127
Imperfect	5	0	0	0	2
Aorist	97	0	340°	25*	3
Perfect	21	284†	0	34	0
Future	18	1	0	34	2
Pluperfect	1	32	0	1	0

= “primary [formal] oppositions”

° = εἶδον (active only); † = οἶδα; \* = passive only (all other forms include all voices found)

Only where there are opposing forms may a distinction be suggested. I.e., there is no difference between γινώσκω and οἶδα in present, imperfect, and aorist (because there is no meaningful opposition), and probably not in future or pluperfect; there may be legitimate distinction in the perfect forms. With ὁράω and βλέπω a similar pattern is evident: distinction might be possible in the present but not in the imperfect, perfect, or pluperfect, and probably not in the aorist and future.

## 6. The pluperfect {287}

Chapter five concludes with a brief discussion of the pluperfect: proportionate with the occurrence of that form in the NT. The traditional definition of the pluperfect is that it combines the aorist and the imperfect (as perfect is said to combine aorist and present). There are several problems with this explanation. First, “there are several instances where the aoristic past act is not of importance”; e.g., Mark 1:34, Jesus οὐκ ἤφιεν λαλεῖν τὰ δαιμόνια, ὅτι ἤδειςαν αὐτόν (did not permit the demons to speak because they did not know him). Second, “there are several

<sup>14</sup>Should this distinction require that the second phrase have used ἔγνωκα? Porter’s conclusion seems to suggest that either the use of ἔγνωκα or the juxtaposition of οἶδα with (any?) form of γινώσκω is significant.

instances where result is lacking”; e.g., John 11:13, εἰρήκει δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς περὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ (Jesus spoke concerning his death). Third, “there are instances where the context is not past-referring”; e.g., Matt. 12:7, εἰ δὲ ἐγνώκειτε τί ἐστίν, Ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν, οὐκ ἂν κατεδικάσατε τοὺς ἀναιτίους (if you knew what is, “I desire mercy not sacrifice,” you would not condemn those who are not guilty). He concludes with the following definition of the pluperfect (288).

Morphological features and the predominant use of the Pluperfect in narrative or past-referring contexts points to the Pluperfect as grammaticalizing [+stative; +remoteness] aspect. The Perfect grammaticalizes [–remoteness], since it shares the same aspectual semantics but appears more readily in a variety of contexts. The Pluperfect is not past-bound but appears predominately in contexts with this implicature, although also in remote contexts such as I.b. conditionals [traditionally = 2d class conditions].” (289)

### Appendix: Explanatory material from linguistics

The following material defines several linguistic concepts that arise in Porter’s discussion. It is not exhaustive and does not attempt to survey all areas of linguistics that might be relevant to the present discussion. It is not specific to Greek, but defines terms as they are used in linguistics generally. Definitions and explanations are from the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*<sup>5</sup>.

**Markedness** is “the concept by which a particular quality is regarded as neutral or expected, i.e., ‘unmarked’, whereas an alternative, more unusual quality is considered ‘marked’ (2:390). The term originated in Chomsky’s generative grammar as related to phonology and has only received significant attention in syntax in the 1980s

**Tense** is “the grammatical category, typically associated with verb morphology, which refers to differences in time.... An alternative is to view ‘tense’ as a cover term for those inflectional categories whose semantics is dominated by temporal notions” (4:144). [This alternative is what Porter appears to be arguing: tense in Greek is an inflectional category (only) and time arises from semantic (and pragmatic) considerations.]

**Aspect** “designates the internal temporal organization of the situation described by the verb. The most common possibilities are PERFECTIVE, which indicates that the situation is to be viewed as a bounded whole, and IMPERFECTIVE, which in one way or another looks inside the temporal boundaries of the situation.... These aspects are usually expressed by inflections, auxiliaries, or particles. In addition, the perfective/imperfective distinction may be derivational” (4:145). [This probably explains Porter’s choice of terminology to classify aspect. Perfective/imperfective is confusing to someone who has had a traditional Greek grammar approach but is not familiar with linguistic terminology, largely because perfective has nothing to do with the perfect tense. Porter is simply using standard linguistic terminology.]

**Pragmatics** and related terms: “Syntax deals with the formal relations of signs to one another; semantics with the relation of signs to what they denote; and pragmatics with the relation of signs to their users and interpreters. More generally, contemporary pragmatics is ‘the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed’...; it involves the context-dependent

<sup>15</sup>*International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, ed. William Bright, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992).

aspects of meaning... The pragmatic aspects of meaning involve the interaction between the context in which an expression is uttered and the referential interpretation of elements within that expression. The sub-domain of pragmatics which is called DEIXIS or INDEXICALITY seeks to characterize the properties of shifters or indexicals: expressions such as *I, you, here, there, now, then, hereby*, or tense/aspect markers, whose meanings are constant, but whose referents vary with the speaker, hearer, time and place of utterance, style or register, purpose of the SPEECH ACT, etc. One of the principal goals of pragmatics is to ‘characterize the features of the speech context which help determine which proposition is expressed by a given sentence... A persistent goal of pragmatic theory has been the explanation of a speaker’s ability to assign interpretations to given utterances in given contexts, and draw inferences from them. What is conveyed by a given message may be (and generally is) far richer than what is said; pragmatic principles must be invoked to bridge this gap.’ (3:260)

**Deixis:** “Expressions whose reference or extension is systematically determined by aspects of the speech situation (words like *I, you, now, this* and *here*) are called DEICTIC or INDEXICAL terms... Linguists tend to think of deixis as a unitary field, anchored around the speech event, embracing PERSON DEIXIS (1st and 2nd person pronouns and forms of address); SPATIAL DEIXIS (demonstratives, locative adverbs like *here*, relational positionals like *in front of*); TEMPORAL DEIXIS (tense, adverbials like *today, now*, and *next week*); as well as SOCIAL DEIXIS (e.g. honorifics) and DISCOURSE DEIXIS (like *the latter, the aforesaid*). Typically the unmarked ‘anchor’ or deictic center is the current spatio-temporal locus of the speaker” (1:343).

“Deixis has a fundamental importance for theories of meaning, because it relativizes the content of utterances to the situation of the utterance; in short, deixis makes it necessary to talk about the interpretation of utterances, not of sentences in the abstract... This context-relativity of interpretation proves pervasive; thus in the familiar European languages (but not in Chinese) virtually all sentences, even if they lack indexical words, have tense and are thus interpreted relative to the time of speaking. Other languages force other kinds of obligatory deictic relativity; e.g., Kwakiutl requires all N[oun] P[hrases] to be marked for visibility/invisibility from the speaker’s locus, while Javanese forces encoding of the social rank of speaker relative to addressee in most sentences. In general, there is a great deal of cross-linguistic variability in deictic categories. Taking systems of demonstratives and locative adverbs as an example: Malagasy encodes seven degrees of extension away from the speaker; Samal appears to encode proximity to speaker vs. addressee vs. non-addressed participant vs. non-participant; and Dyirbal encodes ‘above’, ‘below’, ‘level with speaker’, and ‘upriver’ vs. ‘down river from speaker’ (1:343). [These last examples illustrate the problem of addressing Greek usage when English forces different deictic choices (such as time) to be encoded, whereas (as Porter will argue) Greek does not.]