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The Perfect Dilemma: Aspect in the Koine Greek Verbal System, Accepted and Debated Areas of Research

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2009

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

Verbal aspect is a recent but very promising field of study in Koine Greek, which seeks to describe the semantic meaning of the verbal forms. This study surveys the works of the leading contributors in this field and offers critiques of their major points. The subject matter is divided into three sections: methods, areas of agreement, and areas of dispute, with a focus on the latter. Overall, scholarship has provided a more accurate description of the Greek verbal system through the theory of verbal aspect, though there are topics that need further research. This study's suggestions may aid in developing verbal aspect and substantiating certain features of its theory.

Introduction

"There is a prevalent but false assumption that everything in NT Greek scholarship has been done already,"[1] so argues Lars Rydbeck as he urges scholars to continue to work in studying the Koine language. His appeal has been answered by numerous studies in Koine Greek and in the developments in its grammar. There is no area in the study of the Greek language where this is more evident than in the verbal system.

At the time that Rydbeck wrote his article, *Aktionsart* was widely accepted as the essential meaning of the Greek verbal forms.[2] This term was coined by Karl Brugmann, a German scholar, who used it to refer to "the kind of action indicated objectively by a verb."[3] Subsequent to Brugmann, the term *Aktionsart* has been adopted by many Greek grammarians to describe the meaning of the verbal forms.[4] Also, grammarians have used aspect as a term synonymous to *Aktionsart*.[5] For example, Blass and Debrunner write, "The original function of the so-called tense stems of the verb in Indo-European languages was not that of levels of time (present, past, future) but that of *Aktionsarten*

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1. Lars Rydbeck, "What Happened to New Testament Greek Grammar after Albert Debrunner?" *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975): 424.

2. For example, see R. T. France, "The Exegesis of Greek Tenses in the New Testament," *Notes on Translation* 46 (1972): 3 and F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 166.

3. Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 29.

4. Such grammarians include Blass, Moulton, Robertson, Radermacher, Moule, and Turner (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 54-60).

5. Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 30.

(kinds of action) or aspects (points of view)."[6] Within this system, they identify numerous *Aktionsart* categories for the Greek verbal forms, including punctiliar, ingressive, effective, constative, complexive, durative, iterative, and perfective. However, these categories are not solely based upon a verb's grammatical form. This is especially evident considering the fact that more than one *Aktionsart* is attributed to the same grammatical form. Rather, they require an observation of the combination of the verbal form with a lexeme in context to distinguish accurately between the categories.[7] The reason for this is that they are descriptions of the objective nature of an action as indicated by context and not solely the meaning of the grammatical forms.

Recently, scholars have reevaluated the meaning of the Greek verbal system. Instead of *Aktionsart*, scholars, under the influence of general linguistics, have proposed a theory of verbal aspect as the essential meaning of the verbal forms. With this development, they no longer use aspect and *Aktionsart* as synonyms, but they make a fine distinction between the two, with *Aktionsart* being retained to describe the objective nature of an action and aspect being used to describe the grammatical form in accordance with general linguistics. This development of verbal aspect theory in Koine Greek is primarily due to the contributions of Kenneth L. McKay, Stanley E. Porter, Buist M. Fanning, and Constantine R. Campbell.[8]

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6. Blass, *Greek Grammar*, 166. The italics is original.

7. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 33-34.

8. This list of scholars represents a broad range of work beginning around 1972 and continuing until 2008. These contributors are included here, not as an exhaustive list, but rather because they provide the primary sources that will be dealt with in this paper. McKay was the first of these scholars to propose verbal aspect as the semantic value of the Greek verbal system, but it was not largely recognized until the works of Porter and Fanning were published. Campbell is the most recent contributor, and he plays an important role in further establishing verbal aspect.

These scholars have worked to develop a more accurate description of the verbal system in terms of verbal aspect, as Moisés Silva observes concerning this recent research: "It is only a mild exaggeration to say that, with the almost simultaneous publication of these volumes, our knowledge and understanding of the Greek verbal system has taken a quantum leap forward."[9] Therefore, considering the importance of this subject, the purpose of this study is to survey the recent work on the Greek verbal system. This will include an evaluation and critique of the competing theories, with the purpose of investigating the meaning of the Greek verbal forms. Furthermore, this study will address areas of agreement and areas of disagreement, focusing primarily on the latter, which is primarily concerned with temporal reference and the problematic perfect and pluperfect forms.

Methods and Criticism

Before surveying the primary works on verbal aspect, it will be useful to give a brief description of the methods that were adopted by the different contributors in order to shed light on the validity of their conclusions. This will be accompanied with a critique of each method. It will also prove useful to summarize the methods that will be accepted in this paper for establishing the meaning of the Greek verbal forms.

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9. Silva is specifically referring to the works of Porter and Fanning, but the observation may be applied to the developments of verbal aspect in general. Moisés Silva, "A Response to Fanning and Porter on Verbal Aspect," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 80, eds. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, 74-82 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 75.

Kenneth L. McKay

Kenneth McKay has not adopted any formal linguistic method in establishing verbal aspect as the meaning of the Greek verbal forms. He rather begins with the accepted definitions of the tense-forms[10] and tests these definitions in numerous sources (biblical, extra-biblical, and classical), relying upon the context to determine if the definition is valid.[11] For McKay, the context is especially important in determining the meaning of the tense-forms; he stresses this on numerous occasions.[12] His method is not technically "rigorous," as he himself admits; instead, he largely relies upon his intuition.[13] Overall, McKay is really just a grammarian of the Greek language, both Classical and Koine, who has developed a description of the Greek verbal system.

While McKay's work should not be quickly dismissed, the fact that he does not adopt any type of formal linguistic method may cast doubt upon his conclusions. They are especially susceptible to one criticism given by Campbell, who notes that circular reasoning is a significant problem in the attempt to define the meaning of the verbal

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10. Tense is technically defined as the "grammaticalised expression of location in time." See Bernard Comrie, *Tense*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics, ed. Bernard Comrie, C. J. Filmore, R. Lass, D. Lightfoot, J. Lyons, P. H. Matthews, R. Posner, S. Romaine, N. V. Smith, and N. Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9. But it is also used to describe the verbal forms in Greek (i.e., Aorist, Present, Imperfect, Perfect). Thus "tense-form" will be adopted in this paper to refer solely to the verbal forms and tense will retain its technical sense. This terminology is adopted from Campbell. See Constantine R. Campbell. *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 2007): 14n28. (From now on this source will be abbreviated: Campbell, *Indicative.*)

11. Kenneth L. McKay, "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 27 (1980): 24.

12. Kenneth L. McKay, "Syntax in Exegesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972): 56.

13. Kenneth L. McKay, "Time and Aspect in New Testament Greek," *Novum Testamentum* 34.6 (1992): 210.

system. He argues that once a definition of a tense-form is assumed, it is often read into the various contexts of that form, and then these contexts are used as evidence of the definition.[14] Thus, by beginning with traditional definitions of tense-forms, McKay may have often read these definitions into specific contexts and then used them to support his definitions. While McKay may be criticized for using circular reasoning in his studies, the fact that much of McKay's conclusions seem to be solid would suggest that his theory should be considered and tested with more thorough approaches.

Campbell also criticizes McKay's methods because he believes that McKay relied upon a "highly diachronic" approach in his study of the Greek verbal system.[15] McKay's personal belief is that verbal aspect, the meaning of the tense-forms, remained constant from the Classical period into the Hellenistic period and that it did not change until well after the New Testament was completed.[16] While this may be true, many scholars believe that priority should be given to a synchronic study of a language over a diachronic study.[17] The purpose of this priority is to avoid anachronistic errors. However, diachronic studies in a language may provide valuable insights as long as they are used with care, and in McKay's case, he demonstrates knowledge of the distinction between Classical

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14. Campbell, *Indicative*, 240.

15. Campbell, *Indicative*, 23.

16. Kenneth L. McKay, "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in New Testament Greek," *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981): 289.

17. For brief arguments for giving priority to a synchronic approach over a diachronic approach, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 4-5; and Stanley E. Porter, "Studying Ancient Languages for a Modern Linguistic Perspective: Essential Terms and Terminology," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 2 (November 1989): 153.

Geek and Koine Greek. Therefore, his use of diachronic study may provide valid insights, though some scholars criticize him for it.

Stanley E. Porter

In contrast to McKay, Stanley Porter has relied heavily upon linguistic methods in establishing his understanding of verbal aspect in Greek. He accepts systemic linguistics as the general framework from which he has conducted his study.[18] Systemic linguistics was developed upon the influences of J. R. Firth and M. A. K. Halliday, who were primarily concerned with an inductive description of language as opposed to the generative linguistics of Chomsky.[19] Following their model, Porter is concerned with applying descriptive methods as opposed to prescriptive methods. Descriptive linguistics may be identified as an attempt to describe how a language is used, as opposed to prescriptive linguistics, which may be identified as an attempt to define what a language should be like.[20] Since systemic linguistics is a descriptive theory, Porter has applied it to the Greek verbal system. Systemic linguistics is a "system-structure theory," which primarily views languages as a "network of interrelated sets of options." Thus, there is a difference in meaning when there is an option available to the language user (e.g., different tense-forms, which may be chosen in contrast to each other). The choice that the language user makes not only highlights the meaning of that choice but also eliminates

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18. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 7.

19. Generative linguistics may be described as being "concerned with the behaviour of mental patterns underlying the use of language." Campbell, *Indicative*, 217-18.

20. Porter, "Studying Ancient Languages," 153-154.

the meanings of the other options.[21] Therefore, Porter is more concerned with the meaning of the tense-forms in relation to each other (paradigmatic choice) than with the meaning of a specific tense-form in relation to the rest of the clause (syntagmatic choice).[22]

Another important point in Porter's methodology is his distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Porter states, "In the case of Greek verbal structure, semantics can be defined as analysis of the essential meanings of the individual verbal aspects which allows their usage in a variety of contexts."[23] In contrast, pragmatics is concerned with the meaning that a tense-form takes on in a context with all of the contributions of lexeme and adverbs. In his work, Porter is primarily concerned with developing a theory of semantics.[24] He has not attempted to develop a theory of pragmatics.

Because of Porter's concern with the semantics of the verbal system, he has attempted to develop a system that would account for the widest range of uses and thus leave the fewest number of anomalies.[25] In other words, Porter desires to eliminate as many exceptions to his general definition as possible. As will be seen below, this goal has had a very significant affect on Porter's system.

Moving away from Porter's theoretical underlining, it is important to note a few particular methods that he uses, the first of which is the principle of contrastive

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21. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 7-8. For a more detailed description of systemic linguistics, see section 2 of Porter's introduction: Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 7-16.

22. Ibid., 14.

23. Ibid., 15.

24. Ibid., 82.

25. Ibid., 5.

substitutions. This principle proposes that if a specific grammatical feature can function in opposing contexts, then it is evident that the difference in the contexts is not due to this grammatical feature.[26] This principle depends upon a second principle that Porter accepts, the principle of cancelability. This principle states that any supposed meaning of a grammatical feature that can be canceled in a specific use of this feature demonstrates that this meaning is not part of the inherent semantic meaning of the grammatical feature.[27] Porter uses these principles to distinguish between the pragmatic and semantic meaning of the tense-forms.

One criticism that may be given of Porter's methods is the same as that proposed for McKay's methodology: circular reasoning. As noted above, this criticism is proposed by Campbell, who specifically applies it to Porter. He believes that Porter may have assumed theoretical definitions of the tense-forms and then read these definitions into the contexts in which the forms occur, using these as evidence for his definitions.[28] This is an especially significant criticism of Porter because he has not been very specific as to how he arrived at his definitions of the tense-forms.

In addition to the criticism of circularity, Porter has been criticized by numerous scholars for his attempt to leave as few anomalies in his theory as possible. Silva objects: "In Porter's case, the problem comes to expression by his unwillingness to admit exceptions: proposal after proposal is rejected on the grounds that it does not explain

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26. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 77 and Stanley E. Porter, "In Defense of Verbal Aspect," in *Studies in the Greek New Testament: Theory and Practice*, 21-38, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 1996): 27.

27. Campbell, *Indicative*, 26.

28. Ibid., 29-30.

every instance."[29] While this may be a legitimate criticism of Porter's theory, it primarily arises from differing assumptions about language that will be addressed below. Even though there are criticisms of Porter's methods, the thoroughness of his work establishes it as an important influence to be considered in a study of verbal aspect.

Buist M. Fanning

Buist Fanning does not explicitly state a particular linguistic theory that he adheres to in his study of the Greek verbal system. Rather, it seems that he has surveyed different linguistic methods and different approaches to verbal aspect and then applies the particular methods that he believes are best suited to describe the use of New Testament Greek. For example, he seems to adopt the principle of contrastive substitution as Porter does.[30] However, he does not state this explicitly. While this kind of approach is not as technical as Porter's and may thus be criticized as such, it may also be beneficial. By not adhering to a specific linguistic theory, Fanning may maintain flexibility in his approach to verbal aspect and avoid being bound by a particular theory.

In addition to the possible criticism that Fanning does not adopt a specific linguistic theory or at least does not explicitly describe which theory he adheres to, Fanning's work is open to a number of different criticisms. The first is that Fanning may

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29. Silva, "Response," 78-79. This same criticism is given by Fanning and Schmidt. See Buist M. Fanning, "Approaches to Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek: Issues in Definition and Method," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research,* Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 80, eds. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, 46-62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 59, and see Daryl D. Schmidt, "Verbal Aspect in Greek: Two Approaches," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 80, eds. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, 63-73 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 71.

30. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 83-84.

lack an adequate distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Even though Fanning does write that he desires to develop an explanation of the semantic meaning of the tense-forms, more than half of his book deals with pragmatic issues.[31] As a result, at times, he seems to blur the lines between the semantics of the tense-forms and their pragmatic usage.[32] This issue is noted by a number of scholars, including D. A. Carson and Stanley Porter.[33] Though this is a criticism against his semantic theory of the tense-forms, much of his work is helpful in the field of the tense-forms' pragmatics.

In addition to lacking an adequate distinction between semantics and pragmatics, Fanning may be criticized for limiting his study to the New Testament, which is a relatively small sample of the Koine Greek language.[34] Fanning's limitation to this corpus proves to be a hindrance because it is difficult to make assertions about the inherent meaning of a language while only considering a small portion of the language's

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31. Only the first one hundred and twenty-five pages out of four hundred and twenty-two deal specifically with the semantics of the verbal system.

32. The following is an example of such confusion. Commenting on λύσατε and φέρετε in Mark 11:2, Fanning states, "In the light of the usage of φέρω, it seems better to say that these two imperatives [λύσατε and φέρετε] are virtually equivalent in grammatical aspect and the use of φέρετε does not reflect a durative or extended meaning" (Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 348). In this verse, it is clear that λύσατε is an aorist form and that φέρετε is a present form. Thus, for Fanning to conclude that they "are virtually equivalent in grammatical aspect" demonstrates that he has confused the pragmatic uses of these imperatives in this specific context with the semantics of their grammatical form because they are grammatically distinct. Also, his comment that "φέρετε does not reflect a durative or extended meaning" demonstrates that he has attributed an *Aktionsart* value to the grammatical form, which is problematic, as will be demonstrated below.

33. D. A. Carson, "An Introduction to the Porter/Fanning Debate," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 80, eds. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, 18-25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 25; Porter, "Defense," 36.

34. Such criticisms come from Porter, "Defense," 25 and implicitly from Schmidt, "Verbal Aspect," 69. However, it should be noted that Fanning does cite the Septuagint at times, but he does not make extensive use of it in his study.

usage.[35] For example, Fanning concludes that the present form of ἔγειρω "became established as a predominant usage" in the imperative mood on the basis of only eighteen uses of this lexeme in the imperative in the New Testament.[36] Such conclusions cannot account for the use of the language as a whole because there is no possible way to determine what was the real predominant usage of ἔγειρω in spoken Greek during the first century, not to mention the fact that Fanning does not comment concerning the use of this word in extra-biblical, Hellenistic Greek sources.

Constantine R. Campbell

Constantine Campbell's methodology is similar at many points with that of Porter, though he does attempt to improve upon Porter's methods. Specifically, he adopts a descriptive form of linguistics, and he desires a similar distinction between semantics and pragmatics.[37] In addition to these similarities, Campbell accepts the principle of cancelability in determining the semantic meaning of the tense-forms.[38] He also weighs in on the issue of exceptions to a grammatical system. He concludes, "A model will be deemed more successful than another on the basis that it more successfully demonstrates the non-cancelability of its semantic content; in other words the model with the least

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35. McKay, Porter, and Campbell all incorporate numerous sources from extra-biblical Hellenistic Greek, in contrast to Fanning.

36. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 348.

37. Campbell, *Indicative*, 19, 24.

38. Ibid., 26. The principle of cancelability, as Campbell uses it, proposes that any suggested meaning of a grammatical form that can be canceled in a specific use of the form demonstrates that the meaning is not part of the semantic meaning of the form.

'exceptions' will win the day."[39] Thus, he agrees with Porter in the philosophy of developing a semantic system that explains the largest number of uses.

In contrast to Porter, Campbell does not rely upon systemic linguistics. This is evident in the fact that he does not consider the absence of a tense-form opposition in a specific lexeme to negate that lexeme's aspectual value.[40] Porter, on the other hand, does consider the absence of an opposition as an indication of the lack of aspectual meaning.[41] In addition to this difference, Campbell clearly indicates how he has developed his definitions of the semantic meaning of the tense-forms, whereas Porter does not always clearly indicate why he attributes certain aspects to the tense-forms.

The most distinctive feature of Campbell's methodology is his attempt to avoid circular reasoning in defining the meaning of the tense-forms. He attempts to do this through an inductive analysis of the Greek verbal system.[42] This analysis relies upon observing the discourse structure of Greek narratives, as opposed to observing the clausal structures, which is what McKay, Porter, and Fanning have done. Campbell begins by observing the type of contexts in which the different indicative tense-forms occurred (e.g., mainline narrative, offline narrative, direct discourse, and indirect discourse). He observes that there are general tendencies for specific forms to favor specific contexts. He then classifies the aspectual nature of these contexts and concludes that the tense-forms

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39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 27.

41. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 447.

42. Campbell, *Indicative*, 29-30.

that favor a certain context share the aspectual nature of that context.[43] In other words, Campbell begins with the pragmatic meaning of the tense-forms, determining what kind of situation they portray, and derives the semantic meaning from the various pragmatic uses of each tense-form.

While Campbell should be applauded for attempting to provide an inductive study of the Greek tense-forms, he is open to a number of criticisms. Even though he does not limit himself to a single sample of Koine Greek (i.e. the New Testament), he does limit himself to a single genre, i.e. narrative.[44] This limitation was largely necessary for his method of observing the discourse structure of the language, but he could have provided a test of his conclusions from the narrative genre in other genres such as the epistolary genre. This would have strengthened his conclusions.

In addition to this criticism, Campbell's theory is largely dependent upon the way that he defines the aspectual nature of different contexts. It is, after all, upon these definitions that he bases his definitions of the tense-forms. Thus, if his definition of the aspectual nature of a specific context is drawn into question, his theory is undermined. For example, Campbell considers direct discourse to be one kind of context in which he observes a certain aspectual nature, but he does not provide much of an attempt to make any further distinctions within direct discourse and the way that different tense-forms are used within direct discourse. Thus, the aspectual nature of direct discourse could possibly be questioned, and so his whole system would be weakened.

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43. This method will be discussed more under the specific tense-forms.

44. Campbell, *Indicative*, 30-33.

Accepted Methodology

The present study will be conducted with a descriptive approach. It is not the purpose of this study to state how Koine Greek should be written but rather to describe how it has been written. As Campbell proposes, this approach seems best for an ancient language.[45] In addition to this, one purpose of this study is to determine the semantic meaning of the tense-forms. Thus, the pragmatics of the forms will not be considered except for where it is necessary in establishing the semantic meaning. In order to establish the semantic meaning of the tense-forms, both the principle of contrastive substitution and the principle of cancelability will be accepted as valid methods. So, if a specific tense-form is used in contexts with varying meaning, it will be concluded that the difference of meaning in the context is not a result of the tense-form but some other feature in the context. Furthermore, if any meaning that has been associated with a specific tense-form can be cancelled in certain contexts, it will be concluded that this meaning is not part of the tense form's semantic meaning. Finally, it is also accepted that the theory that leaves the least number of anomalies will provide the best description of the semantic meaning of the Greek verbal system.

In addition to the methods listed above, this study will be largely limited to the indicative mood, though other moods may be considered where necessary. The reasoning for this is that the indicative mood is the center for most of the research on the tense-forms, and as a result, the most controversial issues are found in this mood. Also, the

45. Ibid., 14.

indicative mood has the largest number of tense-forms, which signifies its importance.[46] Thus, it will be the primary focus of this study. In addition to this limitation, this paper will primarily draw from the New Testament. This will be done in order to maintain conciseness. While Fanning is criticized for this kind of approach, this problem will be somewhat alleviated by relying upon scholars who have dealt with much wider samples of Hellenistic Greek.

Accepted Areas of Verbal Aspect

Now that the methods of the primary contributors have been summarized and critiqued, it is possible to survey the recent work on verbal aspect and note the areas in which current scholarship is in virtual agreement. This section will consider the general definition of verbal aspect and the aspects of the aorist, present, and imperfect tense-forms. There is a general consensus concerning the meaning of these areas with the exception of the tense-forms' temporal reference, which will be addressed in the following section of this paper.

Verbal Aspect

Bernard Comrie's definition. Before any specific tense-form may be considered, it is necessary to define what verbal aspect is. Fortunately there is little difference in the way that scholars define verbal aspect, and there are few areas in which individual definitions may be critiqued. Bernard Comrie, a general linguist, defines verbal aspect as "'different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation.'"[47] Comrie

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46. Constantine R. Campbell. *Verbal Aspect and Non~Indicative Verbs: Further Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 124.

47. J. Holt, *Études d'aspect,* Acta Jutlandica 15.2, (1943); trans. and quoted in Bernard Comrie, *Aspect*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics, ed. B. Comrie, C. J. Filmore, R. Lass, D.

also clarifies that aspect is not used by a language user to depict the objective nature of an action. He observes that at times more than one aspect can be used to describe the same action. In addition to this, Comrie distinguishes between aspect and tense (i.e., the temporal location of an action), observing that they are distinct categories.[48] This is a helpful basis because it is a perspective that is concerned with the structure that is found in various languages as opposed to one specific language.

Kenneth L. McKay's definition. Specifically concerning the Greek language, McKay was the first of the contributors considered here to suggest verbal aspect as the meaning of the tense-forms. As early as 1972, McKay referred to the essential meaning of the tense-forms as aspects. His initial definition was somewhat dependent upon previous grammarians who used categories of *Aktionsart*, but even this initial definition distinguished itself from an *Aktionsart* approach. This is evident in that he concluded that the aspects referenced "not the kind of action, but the way in which the writer or speaker regards the action in its context."[49] This, however, was not McKay's final definition of aspect. He has refined his definition and states it as follows: "Aspect in the ancient Greek verb I have described as a category system 'by which the author (or speaker) shows how he views each event or activity in relation to its context'. . . ."[50] A few things may be

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Lightfoot, J. Lyons, P. H. Matthews, R. Posner, S. Romaine, N. V. Smith, and N. Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3.

48. Bernard Comrie, *Aspect*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics, ed. B. Comrie, C. J. Filmore, R. Lass, D. Lightfoot, J. Lyons, P. H. Matthews, R. Posner, S. Romaine, N. V. Smith, and N. Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 4-5.

49. McKay, "Syntax in Exegesis," 44.

50. Kenneth McKay, *Greek Grammar for Students: A concise grammar of classical Attic with special reference to aspect in the verb*, Canberra (1974), quoted in Kenneth L. McKay, "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 27 (1980): 23.

noted about this definition. First, McKay, like Comrie, describes aspect as the viewpoint of the language user. Second, McKay emphasizes the context, as was noted in the section on his methodology. Finally, McKay's definition is useful, but it is not very technical.

Stanley E. Porter's definition. In contrast to McKay, Porter was one of the first scholars to provide a technical definition of aspect for the Greek verbal system.[51] According to Porter, ". . . Greek verbal aspect is a synthetic semantic category (realized in the forms of verbs) used of meaningful oppositions in a network of tense systems to grammaticalize the author's reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process."[52] This definition recognizes verbal aspect as the semantic meaning of the tense-forms in Greek. It may be noted that while Porter specifically describes aspect as a "conception of a process," this terminology is not significantly different from the description of aspect as a viewpoint.

Another significant part of Porter's definition is the statement that verbal aspect is a "reasoned subjective choice." With this statement, Porter intends to distinguish aspect from *Aktionsart*, which describes the objective nature of an action.[53] He has developed this distinction and his definition by observing the interaction of the different tense-forms in Greek on the basis of systemic linguistics, and he gives the following examples to illustrate his conclusion:

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51. Porter and Fanning's works were finished within a year of each other, though they were independent. It appears that Fanning's work was finished first (Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, v).

52. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 88.

53. For an in-depth discussion of the distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*, see Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 35-42 and Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 26-35.

Luke 21:10: τότε ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς (then he was saying to them) [Imperfect tense-form]
Luke 20:41: εἶπεν . . . πρὸς αὐτούς (he said . . . to them) [Aorist tense-form]
Acts 20:38: τῷ λόγῳ ᾧ εἰρήκει (the word which he spoke) [Perfect tense-form]

Luke 24:18: οὐκ ἔγνως τὰ γενόμενα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις; (you don't know the state of things in [Jerusalem] in these days) [Aorist tense-form]
John 5:42: ἔγνωκα ὑμᾶς (I know you) [Perfect tense-form]
John 21:17: σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι . . . (you know that . . .)[54] [Present tense-form]

These two sets of examples contain one tense-form of the three main aspects (imperfective, perfective, and stative).[55] In each example, all of the tense-forms share the same lexeme and the same temporal reference. From this, Porter concludes that there must be some distinction between the tense-forms other than a temporal distinction. He also observes that the tense-forms are not used to describe the objective nature of the action (*Aktionsart*) because the same action, as indicated by an identical lexeme, is described by three different types of tense-forms.[56] Thus, he proposes verbal aspect as the semantic meaning of the tense-forms.

While Porter's definition of verbal aspect is very useful and one of the most detailed, his definition has been criticized, especially at one point. It is criticized for over-

54. These examples are taken from Porter, and the translations are his (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 83). The comments provided in the brackets are those of this author, with the exception of "[Jerusalem]" in the translation of Luke 24:18.

55. The number of aspects that Greek has is disputed, though most agree that there are three groups of related tense-forms. The three groups include the imperfective aspect, which includes the present and imperfect tense-forms; the perfective aspect, which includes the aorist; and a third group, which includes the perfect and the pluperfect. As will be discussed below, there is a considerable consensus concerning the first two aspects, but the third group is highly disputed. The future tense-form is not mentioned because many scholars question if it is an aspect. These three groups will be discussed in this section as aspects in accordance with Porter's view.

56. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 83.

emphasizing the subjective nature of aspect.[57] Porter has received this criticism because he claims that aspect was chosen by a language user independent of any influence of the actual nature of the action. He even criticizes other scholars for claiming that one aspect may be more suited to describe specific kinds of actions, stating that these types of statements seem to come for an understanding that is similar to *Aktionsart*.[58] This statement is a result of Porter's understanding of aspect as being a subjective portrayal of the action and *Aktionsart* as being an objective description of how the action actually occurred.[59] But this distinction may be too simplistic. Carl Bache argues that aspect is not totally subjective nor is *Aktionsart* totally objective. He concludes that the choice of grammatical aspect is often limited by contextual features.[60] And he also concludes that *Aktionsart* is not really an objective description of the physical action but rather a "psychological classification" of how people perceive an action to be objectively occurring.[61] Thus, Porter's system may benefit from a finer distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*. While his point is valid that a single action may be described by more

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57. This criticism has come from Fanning, "Approaches," 60 and Silva, "Response," 79.

58. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 104.

59. Ibid., 33.

60. Carl Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart: Towards a Semantic Distinction," *Journal of Linguistics* 18 (1982): 66.

61. Ibid., 70. Further, he comments, "With regard to the precise differentiation between aspect and Aktionsart, I propose the following characterization: Aktionsart concerns the procedural characteristics (i.e. the 'phasal structure', 'time extension' and 'manner of development') ascribed to any given situation referred to by a verb phrase whereas aspect reflects the situational focus with which a situation is represented. Sometimes the speaker/writer has a 'subjective choice' between two ways of representing the situation (in cases of pure aspectual opposition) sometimes he MUST choose one or the other way of representation (in cases where the aspects function in different ways in relation to tense and Aktionsart)" (Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 70-71).

than one aspect, as the examples above demonstrate, it would be wise to note that there may be contextual features that influence the choice of aspect because the language user desires to portray a certain action in a certain way within the context.

Buist M. Fanning's Definition. In addition to Porter's technical definition of aspect, Fanning also provides a technical definition. According to Fanning, "Verbal aspect in NT Greek is that category in the grammar of the verb which reflects the focus or viewpoint of the speaker in regard to the action or condition which the verb describes."[62] Thus, Fanning also uses the concept of viewpoint to describe the meaning of aspect. In addition to this definition, Fanning, like Porter, distinguishes aspect from *Aktionsart*, and he agrees to some extent with Porter that aspect is a subjective category, in that the language user often had a choice as to which aspect to use in describing an action. Fanning also distinguishes aspect from tense (i.e., the grammatical feature of temporal reference). Therefore, in many ways Fanning and Porter's general definitions are very similar.[63]

Constantine R. Campbell's Definition. In contrast to Porter and Fanning, Campbell does not provide an extended development of the general definition of verbal aspect. He rather relies upon the works of Fanning, Porter, and Decker[64] to demonstrate the consensus concerning the general definition, which he identifies as denoting a

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62. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 84.

63. This fact is noted by numerous scholars, including Carson, "Introduction," 21; Schmidt, "Verbal Aspect," 70; Fanning, "Approaches," 49 and even Porter, "Defense," 27.

64. Decker's definition of verbal aspect is really only a restatement of Porter's definition. This is evident in that the purpose of Decker's work is to adopt Porter's theory and test it in the Gospel of Mark [Rodney J. Decker. *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect*, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 2001): 1.] Thus, his definition is not considered in this section of the paper.

viewpoint. He then assumes this definition for his work.[65] Although Campbell does not develop his own definition, he does make several points that are worth noting. First, he states that defining verbal aspect as a semantic category that is realized in the tense-forms is an assumption, but he also observes that it is a widely held assumption.[66] He also cautions against defining aspect in terms of temporal relationships (as Comrie has). His concern is that aspect will be confused with tense. Thus, he suggests using spatial terminology as Fanning has.[67] Finally, he asserts that the verbal forms are not the only part of a language that can express aspect. Specifically, he proposes that clauses and sentences can display aspectual character, which he designates as "aspectual context."[68] This observation is especially important within his methodology because he uses this aspectual context to validate the aspectual nature of individual tense-forms. Though Campbell does not develop an independent definition of verbal aspect, these observations are important to consider.

Accepted Definition. Much like Campbell, the present study will accept verbal aspect as the semantic meaning of the Greek tense-forms. This decision is supported by the overall consensus among scholars, as demonstrated above, as to the definition of aspect and to attributing it to the Greek verbal system. Specifically, aspect will be considered the viewpoint of an action that the language user portrays. It is also accepted that aspect is distinct from tense and from the traditional category of *Aktionsart*. It is

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65. Campbell, *Indicative*, 8-9.

66. Ibid., 9.

67. Ibid., 9n8.

68. Ibid., 21-23.

distinct from the latter because it is a subjective grammatical category, though this does not mean that other features within a verb's context have no effect on the choice of a specific aspect.

Perfective Aspect

In the *Aktionsart* system, the aorist tense-form is described as a punctiliar action, and it has been commonly understood as indicating an instantaneous, momentary, or once-for-all action.[69] But this understanding of the aorist tense-form has been demonstrated to be inaccurate and often misleading.[70] One example will clearly demonstrate this fact, though many more could be added. Revelation 20:4 states, καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη ("and they came to live and reigned with Christ for a thousand years").[71] This verse contains two aorist verbs, which describe an action that lasts for a thousand years. Thus, it is clear that the aorist does not describe an instantaneous or momentary action.[72] And while the term "punctiliar" can be used to describe the way that the aorist tense-form portrays an action (i.e., using "punctiliar" to indicate that the action is viewed as a whole with the imagery of a point) rather than the inherent nature of the action (i.e., using "punctiliar" to indicate

69. France, "Exegesis," 5 and Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 222.

70. For a brief demonstration of how the aorist's *Aktionsart* has been misunderstood, see the article written by Frank Stagg.

71. This translation is from the NASB.

72. This example is taken from Stagg, "Abused Aorist," 227-228.

momentary, point action), as Stagg argues,[73] it is best not to use this term for the sake of clarity.

In place of punctiliar *Aktionsart*, grammarians, who propose aspect as the meaning of the tense-forms, suggest that the aorist should be understood as grammaticalizing perfective aspect, though their terminology varies.[74] Perfective aspect, not to be confused with the perfect tense-form, is described by Comrie in general linguistics as, "the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation."[75] It is further defined as a subjective portrayal, so an action described by a perfective aspect is not necessarily a completed action or an instantaneous action.[76] This definition is widely accepted by Koine Greek grammarians for the inherent meaning of the aorist tense-form. For example, apart from any technical linguistic theory, McKay characterizes the aorist tense-form as "the aspect normally used for expressing an activity simply as an act or event, as action pure and otherwise undefined, in its totality."[77] He retains the term "aorist" to refer to this aspect, but his description of the aspect is very much compatible with the linguistic definition of perfective aspect given above.

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73. Stagg, "Abused Aorist," 222.

74. Only the aspectual feature of the aorist will be considered here because there is general agreement concerning this. Its temporal reference will be addressed below.

75. Comrie, "Aspect," 16.

76. Ibid., 16-21.

77. Kenneth L. McKay, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek: An Aspectual Approach*, Studies in Biblical Greek, no. 5, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 30.

While McKay's definition is not identical with the linguistic definition of the perfective aspect, Porter and Fanning give more technical definitions of the aorist's aspect, which are much closer to the linguistic definition. Porter describes the aorist as a view of an action "from a vantage point outside the action as 'perfective,' i.e. in its entirety as a single and complete whole."[78] Even though Porter states that the perfective aspect views the action as a "complete whole," it is important to note that he makes a distinction between "complete" and "completed." "Complete" refers to the fact that the entire action is in view, as opposed to "completed," which describes the action as being finished. In this description, Porter identifies the aorist as grammaticalizing perfective aspect, and he defines it in a similar way to how Comrie defined it. Likewise, Fanning concludes that ". . . the aorist presents an occurrence *in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence*."[79] Fanning retains the term "aorist" to refer to this aspect, but it is evident that his definition is nearly identical with those of Porter and Comrie. Significantly, both Porter and Fanning describe the aorist as viewing an action from an outside perspective and as describing the action as a whole.

As demonstrated above, there is notable agreement among scholars to attribute perfective aspect to the aorist tense-form. Campbell supports this position,[80] and he attempts to strengthen it by providing inductive evidence for this conclusion. McKay's, Porter's, and Fanning's definitions of the aorist as a perfective aspect largely have

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78. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 91.

79. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 97. The italics is original.

80. Campbell, *Indicative*, 103.

depended upon their clausal analysis of various aorists. In contrast to this, Campbell has used the discourse structure of Greek narrative to demonstrate that the aorist is a perfective aspect. He observes that the aorist is most commonly found in narrative proper, "portraying the narrative mainline."[81] This is important because he identifies narrative mainline as a perfective aspectual context.

> Mainline material, by contrast [to offline material], is by nature perfective. When recounting mainline action, the author is presenting an external view. The reader is not invited *inside* the narrative with mainline material; events and actions are viewed in sequence and from a distance.[82]

Thus, Campbell concludes that the discourse function of the aorist tense-form is evidence that it is a perfective aspect, and he uses Fanning and Porter's definitions of perfective aspect as a basis for his own definition.[83]

The overall agreement of scholars that the aorist tense-form grammaticalizes perfective aspect is strong evidence that this is indeed the case. This is further supported by the fact that these scholars have arrived at the same conclusion by using different methods (i.e., clause analysis and discourse structure analysis) and independently of each other (Porter and Fanning). Therefore, perfective aspect will be accepted as the semantic meaning for the aorist tense-form, and it will be defined as the viewpoint of an action from an outside perspective as a whole, entire, or complete action.

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81. Ibid., 108. In addition to this, Campbell observed that 77.7 percent of aorist indicatives in Luke occur in narrative proper (111), and he observed similar tendencies in his other sources (112-114).

82. Ibid., 116. The italics is original.

83. Ibid., 8.

Imperfective Aspect

Like the aorist tense-form, the present tense-form is not adequately described by the *Aktionsart* system. In this system, the present has been defined as denoting a linear action.[84] But the present is often used for actions that are not linear. Such classifications as "instantaneous present" in standard grammars demonstrate this fact to be true.[85] This classification is based upon uses such as Acts 25:11, which states, Καίσαρα ἐπικαλοῦμαι ("I appeal to Caesar").[86] In this verse, Paul appeals to Caesar during his trial. The action of appealing is a performative action. It is completed with the statement, "I appeal."[87] Thus, by making this statement, Paul effectively appeals to Caesar and completed that action. It is clear that the present tense-form in Acts 25:11 cannot be considered as a linear action. Furthermore, the present tense-form cannot be considered to denote a linear action in general. Thus, a different description of this form must be given.

A more adequate description has been given by the verbal aspect system. Grammarians, who propose this system, agree that the present grammaticalizes imperfective aspect. Comrie describes this aspect as "reference to the internal temporal structure of a situation, viewing a situation from within."[88] This definition, though with varying terminology, is accepted by many Greek grammarians. For example, according to McKay, "The imperfective aspect presents an activity as going on, in process, without

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84. France, "Exegesis," 4.

85. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 517-518.

86. This example is from Wallace, 518, and the translation is NASB.

87. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 187-188.

88. Comrie, *Aspect*, 24.

reference to its completion."[89] With this statement, McKay does not mean to imply that an action is viewed as linear or necessarily progressive but that the action is viewed as in process. This definition is compatible with that of Comrie, though the wording is somewhat vague, but it is clear that McKay has a similar notion of imperfective aspect, when his definition of this aspect is contrasted with his definition of the aorist tense-form. In addition to this definition, McKay even proposes to rename the present tense-form, which he labels as imperfective.[90] Thus, he accepts imperfective aspect as the essential meaning of the present tense-form.

Again, far more technical definitions are given by Porter and Fanning. Porter describes the present tense-form as the view of a "process immersed within it as 'imperfective,' i.e. as an event in progress."[91] This definition does not mean that the action is necessarily progressing or linear, but the imperfective aspect simply portrays an action as in process. This is important because Porter emphasizes the fact that the same action can be viewed with either a perfective aspect or an imperfective aspect.[92] Likewise, Fanning concludes, "The present reflects an *internal* viewpoint concerning the occurrence which *focuses on its development or progress* and sees the occurrence *in regard to its internal make-up, without beginning or end in view*."[93] This definition by Fanning is especially helpful because he clearly contrasts the imperfective aspect of the

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89. McKay, *New Syntax*, 29.

90. Ibid., ix.

91. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 91.

92. Ibid.

93. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 103. The italics is original.

present tense-form with the perfective aspect of the aorist tense-form. It should also be noted that both Porter and Fanning's definitions are very similar to Comrie's definition. They all state that the imperfective aspect views the action from within and that it highlights the development or progress of the action.

As with the perfective aspect, Campbell does not seek to develop an independent definition but rather to substantiate the previously proposed definitions. He has attempted this by again observing the kinds of contexts that the present-tense form occupies in Greek narrative. In contrast to the aorist, Campbell has observed that the present is primarily used in direct or indirect discourse.[94] He classifies discourse contexts as naturally imperfective because he believes that discourse is a pause within narrative: "This pausing of the narrative sequence creates the effect of taking the reader *inside* the narrative, and unfolding the communication-event before the view of the reader. In other words, discourse must inherently form an *imperfective context*."[95] Of the present tense-forms that do not occur within discourse, Campbell has observed that they are most often used either to introduce discourse (as with λέγω ["I speak"]) or with a particular type of lexeme, which he classifies as propulsion.[96] Overall, Campbell believes that the uses of the present tense-form in Greek narrative support the conclusion that it grammaticalizes imperfective aspect.

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94. Campbell, *Indicative*, 76. Campbell observed that 96.3 percent of the present indicative tense-forms in Luke occur in direct discourse, with similar percentages in his other sources.

95. Ibid., 54. The italics is original.

96. Ibid., 76. Campbell believes that the imperfective aspect is used to introduce discourse as a result of a "spill over" of the imperfective context. With verbs of propulsion (i.e., verbs that involve motion in their action), he asserts that the imperfective aspect is used in order to highlight the transition that takes place in the action.

Once more, the notable agreement among scholars that the present tense-form should be understood as an imperfective aspect is evidence that such is the case. Thus, imperfective aspect will be accepted as the semantic meaning of the present tense-form in this study, and it will be defined as the viewpoint of an action from within as in progress or in process without concern for the beginning or end of the action. In addition to this, imperfective aspect will also be accepted for the imperfect tense-form. This tense-form will not receive separate treatment because it grammaticalizes the same aspect as the present tense-form. This conclusion is supported by the majority of scholars who propose aspect as the semantic meaning of the tense-forms. They attribute imperfective aspect to both the imperfect and present tense-forms, though they differ in how they distinguish between the two tense-forms.[97]

Before moving on from the perfective and imperfective aspects, it is important to make a note concerning the relation between these two aspects. Generally, aspects are recognized as forming either a privative or equipollent opposition. A privative opposition is a relationship between two grammatical features where one is marked for some feature and the other is not marked and thus neutral. On the other hand, an equipollent opposition is a relationship where all of the members are marked in some way.[98] In the case of the Greek aspectual system, Porter, Fanning, and Campbell all agree that the perfective and imperfective aspects form an equipollent opposition.[99] Thus, both the present and the aorist tense-forms are marked for aspectual meaning. The present and imperfect tense-

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97. Some scholars distinguish the two based on temporal reference, while others distinguish the two by other means. This issue will be addressed below.

98. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 54-72.

99. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 90; Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 124-125; and Campbell, *Indicative*, 21.

forms are marked with the meaning of the imperfective aspect, and the aorist is marked with the perfective aspect.

Disputed Areas of Verbal Aspect

While scholars agree about a number of areas within the Greek verbal system (i.e., the general definition of verbal aspect, perfective aspect, and imperfective aspect), there are a number of areas where there is very little agreement. Two of these areas will be addressed in the following section of this study, namely temporal reference in the Greek verbal system and the semantic meaning of the perfect and pluperfect tense-forms.[100] It is fairly clear that the traditional treatment of these areas is not sufficient, but the problems in these areas have not yet been solved.

Temporal Reference in the Greek Verbal System

Before the recent developments of aspect and the *Aktionsart* system which preceded it, the Greek tense-forms were understood in terms of temporal reference. They were considered to grammaticalize tense proper, which is defined as the "grammaticalised expression of location in time."[101] In other words, the different tense-forms were considered to indicate the time in which the action occurred (e.g., past, present, future), and this was considered to be their primary meaning. Specifically, the

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100. An additional area, which is disputed, is the semantic meaning of the future tense-form. The future tense-form raises many problems of its own. This is demonstrated by the fact that there is little agreement among scholars as to what this form means. Some consider it to be a tense, while others consider it to be an aspect. Then there are scholars who consider it to be a tense and an aspect, and other scholars who consider it to be neither a tense nor an aspect but a pseudo-mood. This topic is complicated by the wide-ranging uses of the future, including modal-like uses. Thus, the issue of the future tense-form will not be addressed in the present study due to necessary constraints.

101. Comrie, *Tense*, 9.

aorist, imperfect, and pluperfect were considered to be past tenses. The present and perfect were considered to be present tenses, and the future was considered to be a future tense. But Fanning notes that this understanding of the Greek tense-forms was largely due to the influence of "the Latin grammatical tradition of the medieval and early modern eras."[102] More recently, scholars have reconsidered the meaning of the tense-forms. In the system of *Aktionsart*, it was recognized that the tense-forms did not only grammaticalize tense but that they also grammaticalized *Aktionsart* (or kind of action).[103] Since the recognition of aspect as the proper meaning of the tense-forms, it has been generally recognized that aspectual distinctions are more important in the Greek verbal system than temporal distinctions.[104] Thus, there has been a slow movement away from understanding the Greek tense-forms in terms of temporal reference, but scholars do not currently agree concerning the validity of temporal reference in the Greek verbal system.

Porter's conclusions concerning temporal reference. The recent discussion of temporal reference in the Greek verbal system has been instigated by Stanley E. Porter with his controversial position. In his dissertation, Porter concludes:

> Greek does not grammaticalize absolute tense, where the speech time is equated with the present; rather, Greek maintains relative tense in all tenses and Moods, i.e. where the time of a situation is relative to a time not necessarily the point of speaking (Comrie, *Tense*, 36-82), and where any tense category may be used in any of the temporal contexts . . . .[105]

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102. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 9.

103. For a brief description of the change from a solely temporal understanding to an understanding of *Aktionsart*, see Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 8-15.

104. Stanley E. Porter, "Aspect Theory and Lexicography," in *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography*, 207-222 . (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 208.

105. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 98. Porter seems to misuse the term "relative tense," especially considering the fact that he cites Comrie. Comrie states that relative tense is "where the reference point for location of a situation is some point in time given by the context, not

The last phrase in this quote really demonstrates what Porter believes about the Greek verbal system. He believes that any tense-form can occur in any temporal context because the tense-forms do not grammaticalize tense (i.e., temporal reference is not part of their semantic meaning). Porter has come to this conclusion by observing the fact that a tense-form can occur in multiple temporal contexts in Greek. For example, the aorist has been traditionally understood as a simple past verb, but Porter observes the following uses.

> 2 Cor 11:25: τρὶς ἐραβδίσθην, ἅπαξ ἐλιθάσθην, τρὶς ἐναυάγησα (three times I was beaten, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked)
> Luke 16:4: ἔγνων τί ποιήσω (I know what I intend to do)
> John 17:14, 18: ὁ κόσμος ἐμίσησεν αὐτούς . . . κάγώ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον (the world is going to hate them . . . I am going to send them into the world)
> Eph 5:29: οὐδεὶς γάρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν (for no one ever hates his own body)
> Luke 7:35: καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς (wisdom is justified by all her children)[106]

Each of these examples contains an aorist verb, but they each refer to an action in different temporal contexts, according to Porter. In order, he classifies them as past, present, future, timeless, and omnitemporal. Thus, by the principles of contrastive substitution and cancelability, Porter concludes that temporal reference cannot be part of

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necessarily the present moment" (Comrie, *Tense*, 56). But while a relative tense does not grammaticalize temporal reference in relation to the present moment, as absolute tense does, it does grammaticalize temporal reference in relation to a reference point, which is indicated in the context. This temporal reference is realized as either antecedent, simultaneous, or subsequent action (Comrie, *Tense*, 56-64). This is the point that Porter misses. He certainly does not believe that Greek verbs grammaticalize antecedent, simultaneous, or subsequent action as his chapter on participles demonstrates. Rather, what he means by "relative tense" is that the time of a verb's action is relative to its context. A much clearer statement of his position would seem to be that Greek does not grammaticalize temporal reference in any way.

106. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 75-76. The translations are Porter's.

the aorist's semantic meaning.[107] While someone may disagree with the classification of these specific examples, Porter has provided numerous examples throughout his work to support his general conclusion. In addition to the aorist, Porter provides examples of the present tense-form and the perfect tense-form in each of these temporal contexts and concludes that these forms do not grammaticalize temporal reference.

Even though Porter concludes that the Greek verbs do not grammaticalize time, he does not claim that the Greek language is incapable of indicating temporal reference. Instead of the tense-forms, Porter proposes that Greek uses other means to indicate the time at which the action takes place.[108] He refers to this phenomenon as deixis, and he asserts that deictic indicators refer to spatial and temporal location.[109] Concerning temporal deixis, Porter identifies three different categories of deictic indicators in Greek, including lexical items (such as temporal adverbs), anaphoric words (such as demonstrative pronouns), and reference to specific places. Thus, for example, Matthew 3:1 states, Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις παραγίνεται Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς . . . (Now in those days John the Baptist came . . .).[110] This verse contains a present verb, which is past-referring. The phrase "in those days" is a demonstrative phrase that functions to indicate past reference. In addition to this, the reference to the Jordan River in the contexts also locates the action in Israel, which could have possible clarified the temporal

107. Ibid., 77.

108. Ibid., 81-82.

109. Ibid., 99.

110. Ibid., 101. The translation is that of this author.

context for the original readers. Overall, Porter believes that these types of features in the context are what truly indicate the time of the action, not the verbal form itself.

Criticisms of Porter's temporal conclusions. Although Porter was not the first scholar to propose that the Greek verbal system does not grammaticalize time, he has been the leading proponent of this view.[111] Because of this, he has received a number of criticisms concerning temporal reference. Though it is not possible to summarize all of the criticisms here,[112] a few of the more important criticisms will be given, and they will be followed by an evaluation of the criticism and a response.

One of the most common criticisms of Porter's view is that of the augment, which has been generally considered to be the past time morpheme in the Greek verbal system. It is found as part of the aorist, imperfect, and pluperfect's tense-forms, which are all traditionally classified as past tense verbs. Thus, scholars have considered the augment as indicating past tense. As such, several scholars have raised the augment as proof against Porter's non-temporal understanding of the verbal system.[113] Schmidt even criticizes Porter as demonstrating "complete disregard of the augment as morphologically

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111. Kenneth McKay has proposed that the Greek verbs do not grammaticalize time, though there is a clear development of this thought in his writing. In 1972, he claimed that temporal reference is limited to the indicative mood and that it is not a very important part of the verb's meaning ("Syntax in Exegesis," 45). As early as 1981 (before Porter), he seems to state that time is not a semantic part of the tense-forms ("Perfect New Testament," 290). His most recent work clearly indicates that he does not consider temporal reference as part of the verbs inherent meaning ("Time," 209).

112. For a more extensive list of criticisms of Porter's temporal view, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 506-512. For additional criticisms and responses to most of the criticisms, see Rodney J. Decker. *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect*, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 2001): 38-49.

113. Silva, "Response," 77n1; Schmidt, Verbal Aspect," 71; and Robert E. Picirilli, "The Meaning of the Tenses in NT Greek: Where Are We?," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 48.3 (2005): 543.

significant."[114] While this criticism seems to be a strong one at first glance, further investigation demonstrates that it does not disprove Porter's view. The first point against this argument is that Porter does indeed address the augment in his study, though he does not devote much space to discussing it. Porter's main points are that the meaning of the augment has been debated and that scholars have suggested that it is not a past tense indicator.[115] One such scholar is Arthur Platt, who studied the relation of the augment to the aorist form in Homer's works. He observed that the aorist form can be found with and without the augment and that non-past referring aorists tend to occur with the augment more than past referring aorists.[116] This observation led Platt to conclude, "The augment was a method of emphasizing and not purely a sign of past time."[117] J. Drewitt came to the same conclusions and further concluded that the aorist was originally unaugmented in form.[118] These conclusions are questioned by more recent studies,[119] but they do demonstrate that there has not been an overall consensus that the augment is a past time morpheme.

More recently, additional arguments against the temporal understanding of the augment have been proposed. Rodney Decker raises two objections to appeals to the augment as proof against Porter's view. First, he observes that there are a number of past

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114. Schmidt, "Verbal Aspect," 71.

115. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 208-209.

116. Arthur Platt, "The Augment in Homer," *Journal of Philology* 19:38 (1891): 225.

117. Ibid., 232.

118. J. A. J. Drewitt, "The Augment in Homer," *The Classical Quarterly* 6:1 (January 1912): 56, 113.

119. Campbell, *Indicative*, 89.

referring verbs that do not have an augment. In addition to "historical presents," he observes that there are pluperfects, imperfects, and aorists that do not have an augment.[120] His second objection is that there are augmented forms that are not past referring, including future tense-forms.[121] This evidence would seem to indicate that the augment is not an indicator of past time because past referring verbs do not require it in their morphology and because it is used with verbs that describe actions that are not past referring.

Campbell also objects to the temporal understanding of the augment. He observes that the augment is generally assumed to be a past time indicator, but this is only an assumption. Instead, he proposes a different assumption that will account for the varying uses of augmented forms.[122] Though this is not absolute proof, it may be more promising if it provides a more satisfactory explanation of the language. As demonstrated above, there is no consensus concerning the meaning of the augment, and there is some evidence that it is not past referring. It may often be used in past contexts, but it is also used outside of these as well. Thus, an alternative view, which can account for these uses, will be more acceptable. This view will be addressed below.

An additional criticism of Porter's view is that he builds his theory on exceptions. Commenting on Porter's use of the principle of contrasting substitution, Fanning writes,

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120. He provides the following examples: δεδώκει (pluperfect, Mark 14:44), εὐκαίρουν (imperfect, Mark 6:31; he notes that the diphthong εὐ- can receive the augment ηὐ-, endnote 58), and ἀφεθῇ (aorist, Mark 13:2) (Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 39).

121. κατεάξω from κατάγνυμι (Matthew 12:20) (Ibid.).

122. Campbell, *Indicative*, 90.

". . . I argue that his examples are exceptional and that hard cases make bad law."[123] Instead, Fanning would rather build his theory on the primary use of a tense-form. This criticism is not very strong because it seems to miss the distinction that Porter has made between semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning. Porter is concerned with semantic meaning, so the whole point of his analysis is to find a meaning of the tense-forms that allows no exceptions or as few as possible. One may criticize Porter's view by proposing that the semantic meaning of a tense-form is not invariant and that it may be altered by its context, but one cannot claim to have an invariant meaning for a form that retains many exceptions. This contradicts the concept of invariance, but this is exactly what Fanning has done. He claims to have attempted to find the "invariant" meaning of the tense-forms, but he continues to maintain that this meaning can be suppressed and superseded at times.[124] If this is true, then the meaning of the tense-forms is not truly invariant. It is only the primary use of the tense-form. Thus, it would seem that Fanning either needs to argue that the tense-forms do not have invariant meanings and drop the term "invariant" from his description of their meaning, or he needs to refine his definitions of the tense-forms so that they will account for every use.

In addition to the inconsistency of Fanning's argument, the actual exceptions to the traditional understanding of the tense-forms may not be very exceptional. In his study, Decker has attempted to test Porter's theory by applying it to the Gospel of Mark and observing the results. He has studied the verbal forms in context to determine their relation to certain temporal contexts, and he has also studied non-verbal deictic indicators

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123. Fanning, "Apporaches," 58.

124. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 82.

in order to determine if they provide an adequate indication of temporal reference without the verbs. Overall, Decker concludes, "The data collected demonstrates that each of the indicative verb forms is used in a variety of temporal contexts."[125] Furthermore, he notes that it is not exceptional for a tense-form to be used outside of its traditional temporal context. Specifically concerning the present tense-form, he has observed that only 34.2% of its uses in Mark are present referring.[126] In comparison, 38.8% of present tense-forms are past-referring (i.e., historical presents). Thus, he concludes:

> Appeal to "exceptions" is not realistic with nearly one third of the forms in this category. Second, although Markan style may raise the percentage of historical presents somewhat, this is not idiosyncratic since both John and Matthew also use a large number of historical presents, as does the LXX translator of 1 Samuel.[127]

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125. Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 124-125.

126. Decker's statistics may be somewhat skewed because he considers parables to be "temporally unrestricted" contexts. Thus, any tense-form that occurs in a parable is classified as temporally unrestricted. This conclusion is adopted from Porter, who believes that parables are timeless because they do not refer to actual events (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 234-235).

This type of classification of parables does not seem to be legitimate. McKay concedes that it may be philosophically reasonable to conclude that parables do not refer to actual events and are thus timeless, but he also objects that parables are stories, which linguistically indicate temporal relations and temporal reference within the framework of the story (McKay, "Time," 221). Porter's conclusions about timeless uses of the tense-forms in parables seem to originate in a lack of distinction between portrayal and actual fact. This distinction has been recognized in relation to the indicative mood. The indicative mood does not indicate the actual fact of an action, but rather, it is the language user's portrayal of an action as being related to reality (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 448 and even Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 164-165). Thus, the indicative mood can be used for lies (i.e., actions which are not truly factual). Likewise, it would seem like a person would be able to tell a story or a parable and portray it with temporal reference although the events never happened. Thus, it would be best not to classify parables as timeless.

While this may cast some doubt upon Decker's statistics, the overall affect may be limited. The reason for this is that all of the tenses in parables are classified as temporally unrestricted. Thus, past and present referring present tense-forms in parables will both be classified as temporally unrestricted. In addition to this, even if the verbs in parables were reclassified and all of the present tense-forms in parables were classified as present referring, there would still be a large number of present tense-forms that are past referring. Thus, Decker's analysis retains some force.

127. Ibid., 151.

This indicates that the criticism that Porter's view is based upon exceptions does not have a solid foundation. Not only can multiple tense-forms be used outside of their traditionally assigned temporal context, but also they can be used often in multiple temporal contexts. This would seem to indicate that these exceptions are not very exceptional.

Porter's temporal conclusions are also criticized on the basis of his methodology. Fanning objects to Porter's principle of contrastive substitution by stating, "This sort of analysis is too simplistic, and the examples cited as contrasting pairs cry out for more careful examination."[128] But Decker argues that Fanning's critique of Porter's principle is too simplistic itself. According to Decker, "Porter does not simply cite counter examples and assume his case proven, but systematically demonstrates that in a wide variety of contexts there are numerous examples of form alteration and equivalent temporal reference using divergent forms . . . ."[129] In other words, Porter did not just find one specific use of a tense-form outside of its typical temporal context and then conclude that that one use disproved the general rule. Rather, he has observed that throughout much of the Greek verbal system various tense-forms are capable of being used in multiple temporal contexts. This data has led him to the conclusion that temporal reference is not part of the invariant meaning of the tense-forms.

As noted above, one cannot criticize Porter's view as catering to exceptions and then propose an invariant meaning for the tense-forms which does not account for a wide range of uses. On the other hand, one could claim that the tense-forms do not have

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128. Fanning, "Approaches," 58.

129. Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 38.

invariant meaning. This is exactly what Silva has proposed.[130] He claims that searching for an invariant meaning of the tense-forms is "unrealistic" considering "the fluidity of language."[131] And he draws a parallel between the work of Porter and Fanning, which do so, and the work of earlier grammarians who sought an invariant meaning for the cases of Greek nouns. He claims that since it is recognized "that the semantic information conveyed by the cases can be strikingly diverse," it should also be recognized that the meaning of the tense-forms could likewise be diverse.[132] This conclusion casts doubt on the temporal conclusions of Porter because it implies that a tense-form can have multiple temporal meanings, and as Decker notes, this is a significant objection.[133] But Decker insists that this argument is not flawless because it confuses the methodology of former grammarians with the methodology of Porter. In the past, when dealing with the cases, grammarians often adopted the primary use of a case as its basic meaning. This method is a problem because it does not account for all of the uses, and it simply adopts a pragmatic meaning for a case as its basic meaning. In contrast, Porter has proposed a definition that will account for all of the uses of the tense-forms, and thus, he has attempted to develop a true semantic definition of the tense-forms.[134] Therefore, Silva's analogy is not entirely

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130. Silva, "Response," 78-79.

131. Ibid., 79.

132. Ibid.

133. Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 44.

134. Ibid., 44-45.

accurate, and it is demonstrated that it may be possible to develop a definition which truly conveys the semantic meaning of the tense-forms.[135]

The discussion above demonstrates that the objections to Porter's conclusion that the Greek verbal system does not grammaticalize time can be adequately answered. Thus, it seems evident that his general conclusion is valid, but Porter has at times been too dogmatic in the way that he presents his conclusion. He has concluded that Greek verbs do not grammaticalize time and that the language uses other features of the context in order to indicate temporal reference, but he has not considered the contribution that the aspects may have in forming temporal reference in his work.[136]

The relationship of aspect to temporal reference. A treatment of such contributions may be found in Fanning's study. In his dissertation, Fanning concludes that relative tense is a "*secondary* function of aspect."[137] It is not the primary meaning of the tense-forms, but the primary, aspectual meaning of a tense-form may imply a certain relative tense (e.g., antecedent, simultaneous, or subsequent time) in context. More specifically, he observes that the internal (i.e., imperfective) aspect of the present tense-form is "naturally compatible with a 'relative' tense-value of contemporaneous occurrence, since the event is viewed from within."[138] Likewise, he observes that the external (i.e., perfective) aspect of the aorist tense-form is "often associated with

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135. With regard to the cases, Decker even suggests that a semantic meaning can be developed for these, which Louw has attempted with a very basic definition of their function in a sentence (Decker, *Temporal Deixis*, 191n94.

136. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 81-81 and 101.

137. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 26. The italics is original.

138. Ibid., 27.

antecedence, since the view includes the end-point of the action."[139] These observations are supported by the tendencies of Greek participles to function with these types of aspectual and relative tense relationships. The present participle is often associated with contemporaneous time, and the aorist participle is often associated with antecedent time.[140] Porter believes that these relative temporal associations of the participles are not part of their inherent meaning because a specific tense-form is not always used for a specific relative tense, and he proposes that word order is an important consideration in determining temporal relations, though he notes that this is only a tendency (e.g., if a participle precedes a verb, then it tends to be antecedent to that verb).[141] While this is an interesting consideration, it is not necessarily contrary to Fanning's hypothesis of the relation between aspect and relative tense. Word order and aspectual meaning may in fact both be different factors that combine to develop the overall relative tense of the context. Thus, it seems possible that the different aspects of the tense-forms may contribute to temporal relations, even though this is not part of their semantic meaning.

Furthermore, Fanning's hypothesis about the relationship between aspectual meaning of a tense-form and relative tense may possibly be extended to include absolute tense. Thus, imperfective aspect, which views an action from an internal viewpoint as being in process or developing, may imply present temporal reference in certain contexts, and perfective aspect, which views an action from an external viewpoint as a complete whole, may imply past temporal reference. This is supported by McKay, who states that

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139. Ibid.

140. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 614.

141. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 380-387.

actions in these temporal contexts are most likely to be described by these aspects respectively.[142]

Campbell also agrees with this hypothesis, and he has attempted to explain these relationships between certain temporal contexts and certain aspects. Concerning mainline narrative contexts, which are past temporal contexts, Campbell states,

> By definition, with the internal viewpoint [imperfective aspect], the beginning and endpoint of an action are not taken into account, making this viewpoint a less natural option to relay sequential material. The external viewpoint [perfective aspect], however, is the ideal candidate for relaying sequential material, as it is precisely the beginning and endpoint of an action that are in view.[143]

Campbell is primarily concerned with mainline narrative, but his thoughts are relevant when considering temporal reference. While it is widely recognized that a language user's choice of aspect is a subjective choice, it is logical that he would choose the aspect which best suits the contexts and the view that he desires to create. Thus, if a language user desired to describe an action that was completed in the past, the natural choice would be the perfective aspect. This choice is natural because the perfective aspect is suited to describe past, completed actions because it views an action as a whole with the beginning and end in view. Likewise, if a language user desired to describe an action that was happening in the present, the natural choice would be the imperfective aspect because it is suited to describe present actions in that it views an action as in process without regard for the beginning or end of the action.

Such logical considerations seem to suggest that there is often a relationship between aspectual meaning and temporal reference, though this is only a secondary

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142. McKay, "Time," 227.

143. Campbell, *Indicative*, 116.

implication of the tense-forms in context. As Porter has concluded, it is ultimately the context that indicates temporal reference.[144] But on the other hand, as McKay has observed, the tense-forms are a part of the context, and as such, they often contribute to the overall temporal reference of the context.[145] Therefore, the aspectual meaning of a tense-form should be considered when determining temporal reference, even though temporal reference is not part of its semantic meaning.

Spatial remoteness and proximity as a better description of tense-form function. While the aspectual meaning of certain tense-forms may help explain the tendency for certain forms to be used often in specific temporal contexts, it cannot completely explain these tendencies because the relationships described above do not hold for every use (e.g., the present tense-form used for a past action) and because there are tense-forms, which do not conform to this pattern (e.g., the imperfect tense-form, which grammaticalizes imperfective aspect and primarily occurs in past-referring contexts). This demonstrates that the relation of aspectual meaning to temporal reference is only a secondary implication in specific contexts and not part of the semantic meaning. It also demonstrates the need for a better explanation of the varying uses of the tense-forms. One specific issue that must be addressed is the distinction between tense-forms which grammaticalize the same aspect (e.g., the present and the imperfect, which both grammaticalize imperfective aspect). There must be some semantic distinction between these two forms. Otherwise, they would be redundant.

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144. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 101.

145. McKay, "Time," 226.

Such a semantic distinction has been proposed by a number of scholars. They have suggested that the difference between the present and imperfect is a matter of remoteness. McKay was the first to suggest this distinction. He proposes that the imperfect should be understood as "a secondary or more remote form of the imperfective indicative" (i.e., the present tense-form).[146] He came to this conclusion by observing the fact that the imperfect tense-form can be used in "excluded potential" and "excluded wishes" with present temporal reference, and he explains these uses as a feature of remoteness. Furthermore, he explains that the imperfect has been identified as a past tense, not because it is part of its semantic meaning, but because it is most often used in narrative contexts. Thus, he concludes that the past temporal reference is due to the remoteness of the imperfect in a narrative context.[147] Likewise, Porter attributes remoteness to the imperfect tense-form. He primarily follows McKay's conclusion and asserts that ". . . the Imperfect is best understood as the less heavily marked imperfective form, grammaticalizing [+remoteness], i.e. it is used in contexts where the action is seen as more remote than the action described by the (non-remote) Present."[148] Though Porter does not state it explicitly, it seems that he views the imperfect and present tense-forms in a privative opposition, with the imperfect being marked for remoteness. Also, Porter follows this conclusion because it describes the Greek verbal system in a non-temporal way, which he prefers because of the varying uses of numerous tense-forms.

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146. Kenneth L. McKay, "Repeated Action, the Potential and Reality in Ancient Greek," *Antichthon* 15 (1981): 43.

147. Ibid., 43.

148. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 207.

As with his aspectual definitions, Campbell largely builds upon the work of other scholars. In relation to remoteness, Campbell develops this concept with the imperfect tense-form and seeks to further explain the imperfect in relation to the other tense-forms. According to Campbell, "Remoteness is a spatial rather than temporal category, to do with distance or lack of proximity, yet it may express itself temporally in particular contexts. In fact remoteness may be expressed though [sic] temporal remoteness, logical remoteness, or contextual remoteness."[149] Thus, Campbell proposes a very similar definition of remoteness to those of McKay and Porter, and he, likewise, explains the distinction between the imperfect and present tense-forms as involving remoteness.[150] He has observed that the predominant use of the imperfect is in offline narrative (i.e., descriptive narrative), and while it may seem that the imperfective aspect of this form would contradict this use because narrative is a perfective context, he concludes that the combination of imperfective aspect with remoteness explains why the imperfect is used in this context. The imperfective aspect is suited for description, and the remoteness is suited for past actions, which is characteristic of narrative.[151] He also concludes that the remoteness of the imperfect tense-form explains its uses in conditional sentences, where it primarily expresses "logical remoteness."[152]

In contrast to McKay and Porter, Campbell does not adopt a privative opposition between the imperfect and the present tense-forms with reference to remoteness. Instead, he proposes that proximity may be the opposition to remoteness, and he believes that the

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149. Campbell, *Indicative*, 15.

150. Ibid., 84.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid., 99.

present tense-form grammaticalizes proximity.[153] He defines proximity as viewing an action as near in contrast to remoteness, which views an action as remote.[154] This description of the present accounts for its predominant use for actions in present temporal contexts, while still allowing the possibility for the present to be used for non-present actions. In addition to this explanation of the present, Campbell also attributes remoteness to the aorist tense-form. He asserts that this contributes to the tense-form's use in past contexts.[155]

Overall, Campbell's description of proximity and remoteness is similar to the traditional view of temporal reference. Instead of time, he substitutes the spatial relationship of remoteness and proximity. This relationship is evident in that he believes that proximity and remoteness are limited to the indicative mood, which is similar to the traditional understanding of temporal reference being limited to the indicative mood. In addition to this, Campbell proposes that the augment is a marker of remoteness, rather than past tense.[156] He comes to this conclusion by noting that the augment is attached to the tense-forms, which he classifies as being remote, and that it is absent from the non-indicative tense-forms. Thus, Campbell's conclusions concerning remoteness and proximity seem to offer an alternative to the temporal and non-temporal views. It may very well be somewhat of a compromise between the views that explains the tendency for certain forms to be used in specific temporal contexts, while recognizing the flexibility of

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153. Ibid., 49-50.

154. Ibid., 50.

155. Ibid., 117.

156. Ibid., 91.

the tense-forms to be used in multiple temporal contexts. This is in fact the reason that Campbell adopts this view. He believes that proximity and remoteness explain a wider range of uses than a temporal system is capable of explaining.

Temporal conclusion. Concerning temporal reference in Koine Greek, the principle of contrasting substitution and the principle of cancelability demonstrate that temporal reference is not part of the semantic meaning of the tense-forms. This is seen in the fact that numerous tense-forms can occur in multiple temporal contexts, which indicates that temporal reference is not part of their invariant meaning. Therefore, this study agrees with the conclusion of Porter, which is further substantiated by Decker, that Greek does not grammaticalize time in the tense-forms.

However, this conclusion does not mean that the tense-forms do not contribute to the temporal reference within a context. Rather, it seems probable that the meaning of the individual aspects may contribute to the overall development of temporal reference in a specific context, but this is not part of their semantic meaning. It is only an implication in the context.

While temporal reference is not part of the semantic meaning of the tense-forms, remoteness and proximity, a similar category, are to be considered part of their semantic meaning. This feature interacts with the aspectual meaning of the tense-forms and helps explain some of the specific uses of individual tense-forms (i.e., the imperfect's use in conditional sentences). It also provides a necessary distinction between the present and imperfect tense-forms which grammaticalize the same aspect. Furthermore, this theory accounts for the tendency of certain tense-forms to be used in particular temporal contexts, while remaining flexible enough to allow the varying temporal uses of the

tense-forms. Thus, this theory is accepted over the temporal theory because it provides a better description for the varying uses of the tense-forms.

The Perfect and Pluperfect Tense-Forms

Much like temporal reference, scholars currently debate the meaning of the perfect and pluperfect tense-forms, though there have been more theories proposed for these forms than for temporal reference. The only consensus concerning the perfect and pluperfect tense-forms is that they both share the same aspectual meaning. Scholars, however, disagree as to how to distinguish between these two tense-forms, but this issue has largely been addressed above. Because of the consensus that these tense-forms share the same aspectual meaning, this section will primarily deal with the perfect tense-form, and the conclusions for this form will be extended to the pluperfect, which is considered to be the remote form of the perfect.

The traditional *Aktionsart* definition of the perfect tense-form has proven to be more resilient than those of the other tense-forms. This is evident in that there are still scholars who maintain this understanding of the perfect with just a little modification. The *Aktionsart* definition of the perfect is that it describes "a past action with continuing results in the present."[157] Furthermore, the perfect was described as a combination of the *Aktionsart* values of the aorist and the present. The past action is viewed like an aorist as completed, and the continuing results are viewed like a progressive present.[158] This definition was widely accepted, and some scholars still support this definition.

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157. France, "Exegesis," 7.

158. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 251-252.

Buist M. Fanning and the perfect tense-form. Buist Fanning largely accepts the *Aktionsart* definition of the perfect tense-form, though he redefines it in terms of aspect and other features. Specifically, he concludes,

> The perfect in NT Greek is a complex verbal category denoting, in its basic sense, a state which results from a prior occurrence. Thus, it combines three elements within its invariant meaning: the Aktionsart-feature of stative situation, the tense-feature of anteriority, and the aspect of summary viewpoint concerning the occurrence.[159]

A very important part of this definition is that Fanning states that he has developed an "invariant meaning" for the perfect tense-form. With this statement, it seems that Fanning has a goal that is similar to that of Porter, and as such, Fanning's definition will be evaluated on the basis of whether it is truly invariant. Each of the three features of the perfect will be addressed individually.

The first element of the perfect that Fanning lists is the "Aktionsart-feature of stative situation." He establishes this feature as part of the perfect's meaning on the basis of its acceptance since the first ancient Greek grammarians up to the present.[160] One objection to this view is that the stative sense is contributed by the interaction of the perfect with certain types of lexemes and other features of the context. Fanning considers this objection, but he maintains that the stative *Aktionsart* is part of the perfect's meaning because the perfect and the aorist have different affects on certain lexemes. After observing the relationship that these two tenses have when they combine with certain lexemes, Fanning concluded, "In such cases the perfect consistently denotes an *existing condition* as the result of a previous occurrence, while the aorist portrays just the

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159. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 119-120.

160. Ibid., 114.

occurrence without implying the stative idea."[161] Fanning classifies this condition as an *Aktionsart* rather than an aspect because state falls under the category of *Aktionsart* in his system. According to Fanning,

> *Aktionsart* involves how the action actually occurs; reflects the external, objective facts of the occurrence; focuses on something outside the speaker. This is usually expressed lexically, either in the inherent meaning of the lexical form or in the derivational morphology (i.e. by means of prefixes or suffixes which affect the meaning of the verb).[162]

Aspect in contrast is a subjective viewpoint, which is a language user's portrayal of the action, as noted above. Thus, Fanning believes that the stative feature of the perfect tense-form is a description of the objective nature of the action.

Fanning's stative feature of the perfect tense-form is open to a number of criticisms. First, because Fanning largely relies upon the traditional definition of the perfect tense-form, his analysis is open to the criticism that it is circular in reasoning.[163] Even though he has observed that the traditional definition is compatible with a number of uses, this does not adequately demonstrate that it will account for all the uses of the perfect and thus be part of its invariant meaning. Rather, it must be thoroughly demonstrated that the stative sense is part of the perfect's form and not a contribution of the lexeme or the context.

Fanning has attempted to demonstrate that the stative *Aktionsart* is contributed by the form of the perfect and not the lexeme or context by comparing the perfect with the aorist, but the problem with this approach is that it assumes that the perfect is related to

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161. Ibid., 115. The italics is original.

162. Ibid., 31. The italics is original. Fanning does state that the objective nature of *Aktionsart* should not be over-exaggerated (35).

163. Campbell, *Indicative*, 240.

the aorist, which it is in Fanning's system. This view, however, is not accepted by all scholars. Some have suggested that the perfect grammaticalizes imperfective aspect, and thus they consider it to be related to the present.[164] This is especially problematic for Fanning's view because he has asserted that imperfective aspect can emphasize a state with certain types of lexemes.[165] If this is true and the perfect could be considered an imperfective aspect, then this would indicate that stativity is a contribution of the combination of the lexeme with the aspect of the perfect and not the perfect itself. Thus, Fanning has failed to demonstrate adequately that the perfect grammaticalizes stativity because he has not compared the perfect with the present or imperfect tense-forms.

Fanning's final observation about stativity is that it should be classified as an *Aktionsart* and not an aspect. This is contrary to conclusions of other scholars, such as McKay and Porter, but Campbell states ". . . stativity is regarded by most linguists as an *Aktionsart* value rather than an aspect."[166] These linguists come to this conclusion because they believe that state belongs to an objective description of an action, which is contributed through the meaning of the lexeme.[167] So, Fanning's classification of stativity as an *Aktionsart* rather than aspect may have some value. However, it may be possible to classify stativity as an aspect so long as it is defined as a subjective view of an action. Also, if this classification is correct, Fanning may be criticized for attributing stative

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164. Campbell, *Indicative*, 210 and Trevor V. Evans, "Future Directions for Aspect Studies in Ancient Greek," in *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography*, 199-206 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004): 206. This view will be addressed further below.

165. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 137.

166. Campbell, *Indicative*, 172. The italics is original.

167. Ibid., 172-173.

Aktionsart to a grammatical form. This is problematic for a number of reasons. First, most scholars believe that *Aktionsart* distinctions are created by lexical and contextual factors.[168] So, if Fanning is to propose that *Aktionsart* can be part of a tense-form's grammatical meaning, he needs to demonstrate that *Aktionsart* can be grammaticalized, which he has not done.

Second, *Aktionsart* is considered to be a more or less objective description of an action.[169] Fanning even writes that *Aktionsart* is generally regarded as being "dictated by the actual character of the action or state described."[170] He has developed a finer definition of *Aktionsart* in relation to aspect, but it is not entirely clear whether he abandons this understanding of *Aktionsart*.[171] Thus, by describing the perfect tense-form in terms of *Aktionsart*, Fanning is in essence claiming that the perfect gives an objective description of the action, though this objectivity may be limited to some extent.[172]

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168. Campbell, *Indicative*, 10 and173; Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 96-97; McKay, *New Syntax*, 24; and to some extent even Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 31.

169. Campbell, *Indicative*, 11; Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 33; with some clarification Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 70 and even Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 31.

170. Fanning, "Approaches," 48.

171. Fanning follows Bache's distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*, which observes that aspect is not entirely subjective nor is *Aktionsart* entirely objective (see the discussion of *Aktionsart* being a "psychological classification" on page 19, especially footnote 58). However, Fanning does not reject the concept of *Aktionsart* being dictated by the actual nature of an action as perceived by the language user. Thus, Fanning's view is somewhat unclear, though he does seem to maintain that *Aktionsart* is dictated by the nature of an action to some extent.

172. The objectivity of the action is limited in that it is a language user's perception of the objective nature of an action, rather than a scientifically accurate description. This understanding of *Aktionsart* is proposed by Bache, who gives a very helpful illustration. His example is the following sentence: "I've done nothing for the past hour except read this [d***] book." He observes that this describes a durative *Aktionsart*, but he notes that in reality the reader probably took a bathroom break, looked out the window several times, and was constantly blinking. Therefore, the action was not truly durative, though it has been perceived this way (see Bache, "Aspect and Aktionsart," 65-66). [The italics is original.]

However, this claim is difficult to maintain because it is clear that different tense-forms can describe an identical action, and thus they do not describe the objective nature of an action. And certainly, the action does not dictate the tense-form that is used.

This may be demonstrated through parallel passages in the Gospels. One such passage is the account of Jesus' cleansing the temple, which is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.[173] These passages describe Jesus coming to the temple in Jerusalem and finding it full of people selling animals for sacrifice and exchanging money. He proceeded to clear the temple and rebuked the people with the following words:

Matthew 21:13- καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Γέγραπται, Ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται, ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν **ποιεῖτε** σπήλαιον λῃστων.
(And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer," but you **are making [present tense-form]** it 'a hideout for robbers.'")

Mark 11:17- καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Οὐ γέγραπται ὅτι Ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ **πεποιήκατε** αὐτὸν σπήλαιον λῃστων.
(And He was teaching and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you **have made [perfect tense-form]** it 'a hideout for robbers.'")

Luke 19:46- λέγων αὐτοῖς, Γέγραπται, Καὶ ἔσται ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν **ἐποιήσατε** σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.
(saying to them, "It is written, 'My house will be a house of prayer,' but you **made [aorist tense-form]** it 'a hideout for robbers.'")[174]

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173. This account is also recorded in the Gospel of John, but it is not included here because Jesus' rebuke is recorded with different phrasing in John and because the key verb is in the form of an imperative in John rather than an indicative. Thus, the description of the action is not close enough to make an adequate comparison. Also, all three of the major tense-forms are accounted for in the Synoptics, and John would only duplicate one of these tense-forms.

174. There are several points to make about these examples. First, the bolded terms (both in the Greek text and in the translation) are the verbs that are being compared. The translations of these verses are those of this author, and the specific translation of the verbs being considered are somewhat basic, with the intent of demonstrating their aspectual difference, though this is somewhat based upon the traditional understanding of these tense-forms, especially concerning the perfect. A better translation would not make a clear distinction between these tense-forms in English (e.g., translating the aorist with a culminative sense). Also, the translations include an identification of the tense-form. Note that, regardless of any specific system, these three verses include a tense-form of each of the major groups (perfective, imperfective, and

This set of examples is problematic for Fanning's view that the perfect grammaticalizes stative *Aktionsart* because the same exact action is described with three different tense-forms. Thus, the objective nature of the action did not require a specific tense-form to be used. Therefore, the conclusion that the perfect grammaticalizes *Aktionsart* seems to be flawed. Furthermore, this set of examples may illustrate the difficulty of establishing stativity as part of the perfect's semantic meaning because the context of each of these verses implies stativity to some extent. When Jesus entered the temple, it was currently in the state of a robber's den, which is why He cleansed it. For example, the aorist tense-form in Luke 19:46 does not indicate that the people had made the temple a hideout for robbers some time in the past with no present results. The whole point of the passage is that it was presently in that state. Therefore, these examples would seem to indicate that stativity could be implied from the context and more importantly that *Aktionsart* should not be considered part of the perfect tense-form's meaning because it does not refer objectively to an action.

The second element of Fanning's definition of the perfect is "the tense-feature of anteriority." Concerning this, Fanning writes:

> One element of meaning in the perfect which is clear from a study of usage is the dual 'time'-reference inherent in virtually all of its occurrences. The perfect forms, with few exceptions, juxtapose two related situations: an occurrence and a consequence of that occurrence. Juxtaposing these produces an inherent temporal sense, since the occurrence is anterior to its consequence.[175]

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perfect/pluperfect). On a side note, Jesus was quoting the Old Testament, but the verbs being considered are not part of the passage that He was quoting (Jeremiah 7:11).

175. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 112.

He identifies this time relation as anteriority, and he supports this conclusion by contrasting the uses of the perfect with those of the present and the aorist. He observes that the perfect is similar to the present in that the state of the perfect is present in temporal reference, but the perfect is different from the present in that it refers to a past action. Likewise, the perfect is similar to the aorist in its reference to a past action, but it is distinct from the same through its present state.[176] Fanning concludes that this temporal anteriority is distinct from the temporal reference of the indicative mood, which he accepts as being grammaticalized in the indicative tense-forms, and he also asserts that it is present outside of the indicative mood. In the indicative, the perfect's element of anteriority is relative to the time of speaking. The present results are simultaneous to the time of speaking, and the past action is anterior to this reference point. Outside of the indicative, the element of anteriority is relative to the context.[177] Thus, Fanning defines anteriority as an invariant part of the perfect's semantic meaning.

This element of Fanning's definition is difficult to maintain as part of the invariant meaning of the perfect tense-form. As with the *Aktionsart* element, this temporal element may be criticized for relying upon the traditional understanding of the perfect form. Fanning accepts the traditional understanding of stativity as part of the meaning of the perfect, and this requires him to explain the temporal relationship between a past action and its present results in terms of anteriority. But as noted above, he has not adequately demonstrated that stativity is part of the perfect's semantic meaning, so using this understanding to develop the temporal element of the perfect is questionable.

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176. Ibid., 112-113.

177. Ibid., 113-114.

In addition to this criticism, Fanning's element of anteriority may be criticized for not adequately accounting for the varying usage of the perfect tense-form. Fanning states that anteriority is part of the perfect's invariant meaning and that there are few exceptions to this element.[178] These two claims contradict each other because if there are exceptions to this description, it cannot easily be considered invariant.

Regardless, if one is allowed to maintain an "invariant" definition with some exceptions, Fanning's description still fails to adequately describe the different uses of the perfect tense-form. Concerning the exceptions to his element of anteriority, Fanning writes, "Some perfects preserve an older sense of 'present state' [i.e. the perfect only indicates the present results of an action which many scholars believe was the original meaning of the perfect], without any allusion to a past occurrence which produced the state (e.g., οἶδα, ἕστηκα)."[179] Thus, they do not indicate the feature of anteriority.[180] The problem with disregarding these verbs as exceptions is that they account for 22.1 percent of the perfect tense-forms found in the New Testament.[181] This percentage is too high to maintain that they are exceptions to an invariant meaning of the tense-form, especially when considering that there could be other verbs that also do not indicate this element of

178. Ibid., 119-120 and 112. These two claims are quoted above.

179. Ibid., 112n74.

180. Other scholars agree that οἶδα does not refer to past action. Concerning this matter, McKay comments, "As a perfect, οἶδα is remarkable in that although it is one of the most commonly used perfects it rarely, if ever, conveys any clear implication of the action by which its state (of knowledge) was established" (McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 299).

181. This statistic is provided through a search in Accordance. Accordance counts 1579 perfect tense-forms in the New Testament. Of these perfects, 284 are from οἶδα, and 65 are from ἵστημι. This problem is even more evident with the pluperfect tense-form, which Fanning classifies as having the same elements as the perfect. There are 86 pluperfects in the New Testament. Of these, 33 are from οἶδα, and 14 are from ἵστημι. These account for 54.65 percent of the pluperfect tense-forms in the New Testament.

anteriority in their context. While some may object that οἶδα only has a present meaning, as many grammars conclude,[182] this kind of classification comes from an English perspective. Just because οἶδα is almost always translated with an English present does not mean that this is how it was understood in Greek. The fact is that οἶδα is clearly a perfect tense-form. Thus, it would have been understood as a perfect by native Greek speakers.[183] Therefore, any theory that proposes a semantic meaning for the perfect tense-form must account for these uses of οἶδα, which Fanning has failed to do with his element of anteriority.

In addition to the problems with Fanning's element of internal anteriority, his classification of the perfect indicative as being a present referring tense is problematic. As discussed above, it is evident that the tense-forms do not grammaticalize temporal reference. This is demonstrated through the principle of contrasting substitution and the principle of cancelability.[184] The following examples demonstrate this fact for the perfect tense-form:

Past-Referring: Acts 7:35- Τοῦτον τὸν Μωϋσῆν, ὅν ἠρνήσαντο εἰπόντες, Τίς σε κατέστησεν ἄρχοντα καὶ δικαστήν; τοῦτον ὁ θεος και ἄρχοντα καὶ λυτρωτὴν **ἀπέσταλκεν** σὺν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου τοῦ ὀφθέντος αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ βάτῳ.

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182. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 299; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 579; etc.

183. For arguments for οἶδα retaining its perfect meaning see McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 298-299 and Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 283-284. The main point of these scholars is that οἶδα was part of the *ειδω paradigm, in which it had aspectual oppositions with εἶδον (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 283).

180. As noted above, the principle of contrasting substitution proposes that if a specific grammatical feature can function in opposing contexts, then it is evident that the difference in the contexts is not due to this grammatical feature (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 77 and Porter, "Defense," 27), and the principle of cancelability proposes that any supposed meaning of a grammatical feature that can be canceled in a specific use of this feature demonstrates that this meaning is not part of the inherent semantic meaning of the grammatical feature (Campbell, *Indicative*, 26).

(This Moses, whom they denied, saying, "Who appointed you as ruler and judge?"—God **had sent** him to be a ruler and deliverer with the hand of the angel who was seen by him in the bush.")[185]

Present-Referring: John 8:52- εἶπον οὖν αὐτῷ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, Νῦν **ἐγνώκαμεν** ὅτι δαιμόνιον ἔχεις . . . (Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we **know** that you have a demon . . .")[186]

Future-Referring: John 17:22- κἀγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι **δέδωκα** αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὦσιν ἕν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἕν· ("And I **will give** them the glory, which you have given to me, in order that they may be one as We are one:)[187]

Timeless: 1 John 2:5- ὃς δ᾽ ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τον λόγον, ἀληθως ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ **τετελείωται** . . . (Whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God **is perfected** in him. . .)[188]

These examples demonstrate that the perfect tense-form may be used in several different temporal contexts. By the principle of cancelability, it must be concluded that temporal reference is not part of the semantic meaning of the perfect tense-form. Thus, Fanning's understanding of the perfect in this area is demonstrated to be inadequate.

The final element that Fanning proposes for the perfect tense-form is "the aspect of summary viewpoint concerning the occurrence." This is the same aspect that the aorist

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185. This example is cited by Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 262. The translation is that of this author. It is important to note that while this verse is in the form of direct discourse, it is an imbedded narrative. Thus, it is an important example because it is a past-referring perfect in a narrative context. It is evident that this perfect is past-referring because God had sent Moses to the people of Israel in the past. While it could be argued that this action still had present results when Stephen said this, the context of this verse does not imply this.

186. This example is cited by Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 265. The translation is that of this author. The perfect tense-form is clearly present-referring because the Jews were claiming that they had just recognized that Jesus had a demon because of what He had just said and also because of the temporal particle, νῦν.

187. This example is cited by Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 267. The translation is that of this author. This verse should be considered to be future-referring because Jesus was referring to people who had not yet believed (John 1:20). D. A. Carson concludes that this verse does refer to people who would believe after Jesus said this, and he notes that this action is proleptic (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar new Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991] 569.)

188. This example is cited by Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 269. The translation is that of this author. This verb should be considered timeless because it is found in an indefinite relative clause. Thus, it refers to what is timelessly true.

tense-form grammaticalizes. So, in the terminology accepted in this paper, Fanning views the perfect as a perfective aspect. His reason for classifying the perfect as this aspect is largely based upon the traditional definition of the perfect.[189] The traditional definition is that the perfect denotes the present results of a completed action. Thus, the completed action is best viewed by a perfective aspect. Fanning also attempts to verify this classification by observing how the perfect interacts with certain types of lexemes. After doing so, he concluded that the perfect does act like the aorist when combined with certain lexemes.[190] Therefore, he believes that the perfect tense-form grammaticalizes perfective aspect.

Like the other elements of Fanning's definition of the perfect, this final one is open to a number of criticisms. Again, Fanning may be criticized for being circular in his reasoning because he has relied upon the traditional definition of the perfect. If it can be demonstrated that the traditional definition of the perfect is incorrect, then Fanning's classification of the perfect as a perfective aspect is seriously weakened. As already noted, οἶδα accounts for a large number of the perfects in the New Testament (17.99 percent), but this verb does not often refer to a previous action.[191] Thus, to conclude that part of the perfect's semantic meaning is that it refers to a past action completely ignores a significant number of usages. Also, there are other perfects in the New Testament that do not indicate a past-completed action. One example is found in Luke's account of

189. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 117-118.

190. Ibid., 118-119.

191. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 112 and 299; McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 299; and Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 579.

Jesus' anointing. Luke 7:48 states, εἶπεν δέ αὐτῇ, **Ἀφεωνταί** σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι.[192] (But He said to her, "Your sins **are forgiven**.") Some people believe that this perfect refers to a past event, but Köstenberger objects that there is no reason to hold this view. Rather, he concludes that the verb is simply focused on the state of the woman at the present time.[193] These examples provide evidence that the traditional definition of the perfect as referring to a past-completed action is questionable. Thus, Fanning's classification of the perfect as a perfective is also questionable. Furthermore, the function of the perfect tense-form in discourse units seems to indicate that the perfect is not a perfective aspect.[194] Therefore, Fanning has not adequately demonstrated that the perfect tense-form should be considered a perfective aspect, and it is doubtful that it should be.

Overall, Fanning's definition of the perfect tense-form seems to be heavily based on the traditional understanding of this form.[195] Each element of his definition seems to come from this previous definition. It is as if he simply described the traditional definition in more technical terms and in relation to aspect. As such, he is especially susceptible to circular reasoning because it seems that he has assumed the traditional definition and then described the form in relation to this definition without providing adequate proof that his conclusions are valid.

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192. This example is taken from Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Comparison of the Pericopae of Jesus' Anointing," in *Studies in John and Gender*, 49-63 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001): 61.

193. Köstenberger, "Comparison," 61n22.

194. Campbell, *Indicative*, 184-187. This topic will be addressed below.

195. Ibid., 190.

Kenneth L. McKay and the perfect tense-form. In contrast to Fanning, many scholars have abandoned parts, if not all, of the traditional definition of the perfect tense-form. One of the first to do so was Kenneth McKay. He classifies the perfect tense-form as an aspect, and he writes, "The perfect aspect expresses the state or condition of the subject of the verb, as a result of an action (logically a prior action), but most often with comparatively little reference to the action itself."[196] This definition is similar to the traditional definition of the perfect tense-form and also to Fanning's definition, but McKay has abandoned parts of the traditional understanding of the perfect. One of the most notable is temporal reference. McKay notes that the perfect is often used in present temporal contexts, but he concludes that temporal reference is ultimately indicated by the context and not the perfect tense form.[197] This is demonstrated in the examples above (Acts 7:35; John 8:52, 17:22; and 1 John 2:5). In addition to this, McKay does not require the perfect to include a reference to a past action from which the present state resulted. Rather, he concludes that this is an implication of the context. He supports this conclusion with οἶδα ("I know"), which usually does not refer to the acquisition of knowledge itself.[198] Thus, McKay eliminates the reference to the past action from the semantic meaning of the perfect, which is another distinguishing feature of his definition.

In addition to redefining the perfect tense-form, McKay focuses on two issues that have surrounded the perfect. The first issue is the relation of the state to the members involved in the action. The question that has been posed is whether the state that the

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196. McKay, *New Syntax*, 31. McKay developed this definition as early as 1980 (McKay, "Perfect Papyri," 25).

197. McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 296 and McKay, "Time," 209.

198. McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 299.

perfect indicates is that of the subject of the verb or of the object also. This question is not an issue for intransitive or passive verbs, but there are a number of transitive perfects for which this question is relevant.[199] McKay has surveyed numerous transitive perfects in Greek papyri and in the New Testament, and he has concluded that the state is always concerned with the subject.[200] The second issue that McKay addresses is the distinction between the perfect tense-form and the aorist tense-form. Some have suggested that the perfect and the aorist tense-forms were being confused during the Hellenistic period, and so the perfect was losing its meaning.[201] Their support for this conclusion is that the perfect tense-form seems to focus on the action rather than the state in some of its uses. Thus, it has been concluded that the perfect was used instead of an aorist. However, according to McKay,

> . . . many of the variations which have been alleged as evidence of confusion show signs of careful choice and subtle distinction which would no doubt have been appreciated by readers more aware of aspectual nuances and less dominated by considerations of time.[202]

In other words, the claims of confusion between the aorist and the perfect have resulted from a temporal understanding of the verbs and misunderstanding of the aorist and the perfect's aspectual meanings.

Overall, McKay believes that the perfect tense-form focuses on the state of the subject that is a result of an action which may have been completed in the past, but this

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199. Ibid., 310.

200. McKay, "Perfect Papyri," 33 and McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 310.

201. McKay, "Perfect Papyri," 31.

202. McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 315-316.

must be indicated by the context. He also has concluded that many uses of the perfect do not refer to the action but are completely focused upon the state. With this definition, McKay has contributed to the study of the perfect by eliminating the problems that were demonstrated with Fanning's element of anteriority. This, however, does not mean that McKay's definition of the perfect is without problems.

As with Fanning, McKay may be criticized for being circular in his reasoning. As he has noted, McKay assumed the traditional definition of the perfect when he began his study and then refined it to account for the varying uses of the form.[203] While he has improved upon the traditional definition by eliminating the element of anteriority, he has assumed other features without proving that these are parts of the perfect's semantic meaning. These features may have been read into the context, and so McKay has concluded that they are part of the perfect's meaning. Rather, these features must be demonstrated to be part of the perfect's semantic meaning, which McKay has not done. Instead, he has strongly emphasized context in studying the tense-forms,[204] but this can be problematic because McKay has not demonstrated that stativity is part of the perfect's meaning rather than being contributed by other elements in the context, such as lexeme. Furthermore, McKay has classified stativity as an aspect, but many scholars believe that stativity can only be classified as an *Aktionsart*.[205] By doing so, McKay may not have made an adequate distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*, which would cast doubt on his classification of the perfect. Therefore, while McKay's definition has improved upon

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203. McKay, "Perfect Papyri," 24 and McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 294.

204. McKay, "Perfect Papyri," 24; McKay and "Perfect New Testament," 294, 328-329.

205. Fanning, "Approaches," 49-50 and Campbell, *Indicative*, 172-173.

the traditional definition of the perfect tense-form, he has not provided adequate evidence that his definition is truly the semantic meaning of the perfect.

Stanley E. Porter and the perfect tense-form. Stanley Porter has developed a semantic definition of the perfect tense-form, which has provided a better description of the perfect than the *Aktionsart* definition and is similar in many ways to McKay's definition. According to Porter,

> . . . the Perfect grammaticalizes the state or condition of the grammatical subject as conceived by the speaker. Whether a previous event is alluded to or exists at all is a matter of lexis in context and not part of aspectual semantics.[206]

Porter classifies this state as a distinct aspect, which he labels "stative," and he believes that the stative aspect is in opposition to the perfective and imperfective aspects.[207] This definition of the perfect tense-form is similar to McKay's definition in that Porter understands the state of the subject as the main feature of the perfect. Also, Porter notes that the reference to a previous action is indicated by the context and not the perfect itself. While Porter's definition is similar to McKay's, he has provided more rigorous proof of his definition than McKay has.

Porter has concluded that the perfect tense-form grammaticalizes stative aspect on the basis of the tense-form's markedness. Of all the tense-forms in Greek, the perfect is the most heavily marked form.[208] He supports this conclusion by means of several criteria for measuring markedness. First, the perfect is the most heavily marked tense-form distributionally because it is not used nearly as often as the other tense-forms. This is

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206. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 259.

207. Ibid., 91.

208. Ibid., 245.

especially evident outside of the indicative mood.[209] In addition to this, the perfect's morphology indicates its markedness. Of all the tense-forms, the perfect and the pluperfect have the most distinctive morphological features (e.g., "unthematic root, endings and reduplication").[210] Finally, the perfect tense-form has the fewest irregularities of all the tense-forms, which demonstrates an implicational markedness.[211] Thus, Porter concludes that the perfect is the most heavily marked tense-form, and as such, he has remarked that "the perfect represents an event that in some way encompasses the fullest complexity represented in a single tense-form."[212] Porter follows J. P. Louw in using this formal markedness and complexity to establish the perfect's stative aspect. He writes,

> The formulation of the aspect shows that the stative is distanced form the action itself in its conception of the event, unlike the perfective and imperfective. This distancing of action from the 'sprecksituase' ('conversation situation,' as he calls it) brings the verbal aspect into focus as the one concerned with an entire state.[213]

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209. Ibid., 246.

210. Ibid.

211. Ibid., 247.

212. Stanley E. Porter, e-mail message to author, 27 January 2009.

213. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 257-258. Porter heavily relied upon Louw in his development of stative aspect. The following is a quote from Louw, which indicates the distancing that Louw and Porter used in establishing the meaning of the perfect: "The Greek Perfect, which also differs sharply morphologically form the other so-called tempora, does not simply distance it from the conversation situation but also from the events themselves so that it bring aspect, which is traditionally called *state*, but which could better be described by the term *stative*, clearly to the fore. By *stative* I mean that *not the events but the whole affair is established as completed*. Here lies the essential difference with regard to the traditional definition, namely continuance of a completed *action*. In the concept *stative* which points to the whole affair, established as complete, there lies the nucleus of the semantic level of the perfect, and linguistic entities must of course be defined semantically." (J. P. Louw, "Die Semantiese Waarde von die Perfektum in Hellenistiese Grieks," *Acta Classica* 10 [1967], 27, 29; translated and quoted in Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek, gen. ed. D. A. Carson [New York: Peter Lang, 1993], 258n9. The italics is original.)

In other words, Porter believes that the formal markedness indicates that the perfect's aspect views the action from a distance, and as such, it views the entire action as a "state of affairs," as he labels it.[214]

In addition to establishing the stative aspect of the perfect, Porter, like McKay, addresses the issue of the perfect being confused with the aorist in the Hellenistic period. He lists a number of arguments for the confusion of these two tense-forms, which center upon the use of the perfect in relation to the aorist, and he gives rebuttals for each of these arguments.[215] The primary argument for the confusion of the two tense-forms is the decreasing use of the perfect in the first century, but Porter notes that there were new perfect forms being developed in the first century, which indicates that the perfect still maintained its distinct aspectual meaning.[216] Thus, Porter concludes that the perfect tense-form was distinct from the aorist and that parallel uses of the two tense-forms should be explained as being semantically distinct because of their aspects rather than as a confusion of their forms.

A related issue for the perfect tense-form is the debate over whether the state is always that of the subject or is also that of the object. Porter follows McKay and argues that the perfect is always concerned with the state of the subject. The primary argument that the perfect is at times concerned with the object is based upon morphological

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214. Ibid., 91.

215. Ibid., 270-273.

216. Ibid., 273. Concerning the disappearance of the perfect tense-form, Porter states, "Whereas the Perfect did eventually lose its semantic value and disappear . . . probably because of its morphological bulk, its semantic complexity and its continued use in narrative contexts where simpler forms existed, this did not occur until at leas the 4th-5th cent. A.D." (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 273).

changes in the perfect tense-form between classical Greek and Hellenistic Greek. However, Porter questions the validity of this argument and demonstrates that the different morphological forms of the perfect overlapped in meaning even in the Classical period.[217] Furthermore, Porter notes that all scholars agree that the perfect originally was solely concerned with the state of the subject, so it must be thoroughly demonstrated that there was a change in the meaning of the perfect, which resulted in a focus on the object of the verb. He concludes that this may only be done by analyzing examples of the perfect in context.[218] After examining numerous perfect tense-forms and allowing for some subjective use of the form, Porter concludes, "In the overwhelming majority of cases where the transitive Perfect occurs the emphasis appears to be on the subject."[219] Thus, Porter believes that the perfect focuses upon the state of affairs in relation to the subject of an action.[220]

While Porter has provided a more rigorous analysis and description of the perfect tense-form, his definition is not without problems. One major criticism of Porter's view is that he does not make a fine enough distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*. Fanning states,

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217. Ibid., 274-275.

218. Ibid., 275.

219. Ibid., 280.

220. Campbell has argued that Porter no longer maintains the view that the perfect views an action in relation to the state of the subject. He came to this conclusion by noting different statements in Porter's dissertation and later comments in an intermediate grammar, written by Porter (Campbell, *Indicative*, 170). However, this conclusion is simply inaccurate. Porter clearly writes in his dissertation that he believes that the Perfect focuses on the state of the subject. Furthermore, Porter also writes in his intermediate grammar that the perfect focuses on the state of the subject (Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 40.) Campbell must have overlooked this.

> I wonder, however, how his analysis of the perfect can be incorporated into the category of 'aspect as a conception of a process', since *stative* (his label for the perfect) is an *Aktionsart*, not an aspect. I think Porter has not been rigorous enough in grasping the difference between aspect and *Aktionsart* and in pursuing that all the way through his analysis.[221]

As noted above, Fanning understands *Aktionsart* as a somewhat objective category that relates to the character of a situation, and so he classifies stativity as an *Aktionsart* because he understands this as being related to the objective nature of an action. If this is a correct understanding of stativity, then Porter has incorrectly classified stative as an aspect. However, it seems that Porter understands stativity in a different sense than Fanning. He believes that, in relation to the perfect tense-form, stativity is a subjective category, which is a language users portrayal of an action as a state of affairs.[222] Thus, it does not necessarily relate to the objective nature of an action. So, within Porter's understanding of the perfect, it may be legitimate to classify stativity as an aspect.

While Porter's description of the perfect tense-form as a stative aspect may be consistent within his understanding of stativity and aspect, he has not adequately demonstrated that stativity is contributed by the perfect's tense-form and not other features of the context. Porter has attempted to establish stativity as part of the perfect's semantic meaning through the means of its markedness, and he has provided adequate evidence to demonstrate that the perfect is the most heavily marked tense-form. However, this does not demonstrate that the perfect grammaticalizes stativity rather than some other feature, such as emphasis or intensification. Therefore, Porter may be criticized for being

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221. Fanning, "Approaches," 49-50. The italics is original.

222. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 91.

influenced by the traditional definition of the perfect, even if ever so slightly, because he did not demonstrate that stativity is the proper understanding of the perfect's markedness.

More specifically, Porter's identification of the state being concerned with the subject has been criticized. Concerning the use of the perfect tense-form, Fanning writes, ". . . there are clear cases which emphasize a condition of the *object* (i.e. the 'goal' of the action rather than the agent), reflecting how it has been effected or affected by the action of the verb."[223] In the examples that Fanning lists, the state of the object may be important within the context. However, his examples are compatible with understanding the perfect as focusing on the state of the subject, especially when considering that stative aspect is a subjective category, but appealing to the subjective nature of aspect, as Porter does,[224] is not a very solid defense. The strongest argument that Porter has given for the subjective nature of the perfect's stativity is the agreement among scholars that this was the original meaning of the perfect in combination with the lack of evidence that the perfect's meaning did change.[225] However, the claim that every perfect tense-form focuses on the state of the subject is difficult to defend and may not be true to the perfect's semantic meaning.

Overall, Porter's analysis of the perfect tense-form is one of the most helpful in that he attempted to thoroughly demonstrate the semantic meaning of the tense-form. His demonstration of the perfect's markedness is especially helpful and significant because it

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223. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 295. The italics is original.

224. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 275.

225. Ibid., 274-275.

demonstrates that the perfect is an emphatic form. However, Porter's definition of the perfect is not without problems and areas that need improvement.

Constantine R. Campbell. Of all the contributors to the field of verbal aspect in Greek, Campbell has deviated the most from the traditional understanding of the perfect tense-form. He defines the perfect as a discourse tense-form that grammaticalizes imperfective aspect and heightened proximity.[226] With this definition, Campbell has almost completely abandoned the traditional understanding of the perfect, which he considers really to be a description of the perfect's pragmatic use.

In place of the traditional view, Campbell proposes two features as the semantic meaning of the perfect, imperfective aspect and heightened proximity. As with the other tense-forms, Campbell analyzed the perfect tense-form by observing its function in Greek narrative. He observed that the perfect has a very high proportion of uses in direct and indirect discourse.[227] Thus, he has concluded that the perfect is primarily a discourse tense-form and that it must be related to the present tense-form because it shares an identical discourse function.[228] As noted above with the present tense-form, Campbell classifies discourse as an imperfective context because it slows the narrative down and unfolds the dialogue for the reader to see.[229] In addition to this correlation with the present, Campbell notes that the perfect's other functions are also similar to those of the

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226. Campbell, *Indicative*, 210.

227. Campbell observed that in Luke 96.6 percent of the perfects are used in direct or indirect discourse, and he notes similar percentages in his other sources (Campbell, *Indicative*, 175-183).

228. Campbell, *Indicative*, 183.

229. Ibid., 54-55.

present.[230] Therefore, Campbell believes that the perfect grammaticalizes imperfective aspect.[231]

The second feature that Campbell attributes to the perfect is heightened proximity. He concludes that the perfect tense-form grammaticalizes proximity because it has similar discourse functions with the present tense-form.[232] So, the perfect views an action as spatially close. However, concluding that the perfect grammaticalizes imperfective aspect and proximity creates a problem. These features are identical to those of the present tense-form, but there must be some semantic meaning that distinguishes between these two tense-forms. Otherwise, they would be semantically identical and thus redundant. In order to solve this problem, Campbell proposes that the perfect grammaticalizes a heightened proximity, i.e., it views an action from an even closer viewpoint than the present.[233] Campbell believes that these features (imperfective aspect and heightened proximity) provide the best description of the varying uses of the perfect form, and so he limits the perfect's semantic meaning to these two features.

One of the most distinctive features of Campbell's definition of the perfect is the lack of stativity as being part of its semantic meaning. Most other scholars, as noted above, have included some form of stativity in their definition of the perfect tense-form. Campbell, however, believes that stativity is not part of the perfect's semantic

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230. Ibid., 186-187.

231. Ibid., 189.

232. Ibid., 196.

233. Ibid., 197.

meaning.[234] He came to this conclusion because he believes that stativity cannot account for all of the uses of the perfect and that stativity is better understood as an *Aktionsart*.[235] Rather, he believes that stativity is contributed by various lexemes in combination with the imperfective aspect of the perfect tense-form.[236]

Throughout his study, Campbell has sought to provide an inductive analysis of the Greek tense-forms, and thus, he has attempted to provide a system that is not just a theoretical hypothesis but that can be established inductively. While this type of approach is commendable, Campbell's analysis of the perfect tense-form is not without problems. There are a number of criticisms that may be given. First of all, Campbell begins his analysis of the perfect by demonstrating that the definitions of McKay, Porter, and Fanning are inadequate. The problem with this analysis is that he has misrepresented the definitions of each of these scholars. For example, Campbell states that ". . . McKay's approach [concerning the perfect] mandates that it is the responsibility of the subject that is in view . . . ," and he provides a number of examples from McKay's work that produce awkward interpretations with this understanding.[237] The problem with this analysis is that McKay simply does not "mandate" that the perfect tense-form indicates the responsibility of the subject. Rather, McKay proposes that this may be an implication of the perfect with certain verbs in context.[238] He does not consider this to be part of the perfect's semantic meaning. Thus, Campbell has misrepresented McKay's definition and

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234. Ibid., 166-175.

235. Ibid., 174.

236. Ibid., 187-188.

237. Ibid., 168-169.

238. McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 296-297 and McKay, "Perfect Papyri," 26.

dismissed it based upon his misrepresentation. This clearly does not adequately interact with McKay's definition.

Similarly, Campbell has misrepresented Porter and Fanning's definitions. Concerning Porter's view, Campbell claims that Porter does not consider that the perfect indicates the subject as being the focus of the state but rather the whole state as being the focus.[239] As such, Campbell criticizes Porter's definition as being similar to that of the resultative perfect and being open to the same criticisms as this view.[240] However, this assertion is simply not true.[241] Thus, Campbell has not adequately handled Porter's theory. Furthermore, in a recent review of Campbell's book, Fanning writes that ". . . his assertion that my treatment 'is unable to cope with purely transitive perfects' (p. 190) is a cavalier dismissal, since he never discusses what I actually say about transitive perfects (cf. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 293-98)."[242] This is a problem because Fanning himself does not believe that his theory was adequately addressed by Campbell. Overall, it seems that Campbell has consistently misrepresented the views of other scholars. While this does not disprove Campbell's view, it does cast doubt on the validity of his conclusions in dismissing the views of other scholars.

In addition to misrepresenting other views of the perfect tense-form, Campbell dismisses the stative description of the perfect on an inadequate basis. Concerning Louw

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239. Campbell, *Indicative*, 169-170. For further comments, see footnote 216.

240. Ibid., 171-172.

241. See Porter, *Idioms*, 40 and Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 273-281.

242. Buist M. Fanning, review of *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, by Constantine R. Campbell, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51.2 (June 2008), 397.

and Porter's definitions of stativity, Campbell writes, "On the other, however, theirs is a highly vague definition of stative aspect. It is enormously difficult to ascertain how several perfect indicatives are to be translated under this scheme."[243] This criticism has two problems. First, dismissing a theory because it is vague is a poor argument. In fact, it may be argued that Campbell's feature of heightened proximity is vague. While it may be a problem that Porter's definition of stativity is vague, this does not disprove that stativity is part of the perfect tense-form. Second, difficulty in translating a verbal form based upon its meaning in a certain theoretical system cannot be used as an argument against that system. Translation is not an accurate means to establish meaning in the Greek verbal system.[244] This is especially evident when dealing with the perfect tense-form because perfects in the New Testament are often translated with English simple past, simple present, and present perfect tenses. This demonstrates that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between Koine Greek and English and that there is not a simple way to translate the meaning of the perfect into English. Difficulty in transferring meaning from one language to another is an unavoidable problem of translation. Meaning is often lost or added. This is just the nature of the process.[245] Therefore, these objections to Porter's description of stativity are inadequate.

Not only does Campbell's analysis of other theories have problems, but his own theory may be questioned on a number of points. First, Campbell concludes that the perfect tense-form is an imperfective aspect on the basis of its similarity to the present in

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243. Campbell, *Indicative*, 170.

244. McKay, "Perfect New Testament," 329 and Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 16.

245. D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 58-61.

its discourse function. However, as indicated in the discussions of McKay and Porter, some scholars have proposed that the perfect and the aorist tense-forms were being confused during the Hellenistic period because the two tense-forms were used in similar contexts. While the confusion of these two tense-forms has been demonstrated to be false, Porter notes that the perfect did eventually disappear from the Greek language because of the influence of the aorist.[246] This may be problematic for Campbell's theory because if the perfect did disappear because of the influence of the aorist, this may indicate that the perfect is related to the aorist and not to the present tense-form. Campbell does consider this objection, and he concludes that the discourse use of the perfect tense-form is strong enough to indicate that the perfect is related to the present and not the aorist.[247] However, this conclusion may be limited by Campbell's classification of different portions of narrative. He classifies direct discourse as an imperfective context, but he does not consider the possibility of a tense-form being used in direct discourse for other reasons than being an imperfective aspect. Thus, Campbell's classification of the perfect tense-form as an imperfective aspect is especially dependent upon his classification of direct discourse as an imperfective context and his assumption that a tense-form's use in this context indicates that it is itself imperfective.

The second feature that Campbell attributes to the perfect tense-form is heightened proximity. This feature creates problems because he limits the spatial categories of proximity and remoteness to the indicative mood.[248] He even claims

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246. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 275.

247. Campbell, *Indicative*, 184-185.

248. Campbell, *Non-Indicative*, 28-29.

"Oppositions outside the indicative mood are purely aspectual."[249] If this is true, then there is no distinction between the present and perfect tense-forms outside of the indicative because they both grammaticalize imperfective aspect. Campbell does conclude that the present and the perfect tense-forms are distinct outside of the indicative, and he claims that they are distinguished by the perfect grammaticalizing spatial proximity even outside of the indicative. Thus, it is "an 'enhanced' imperfective" aspect.[250] This conclusion, however, contradicts his statement that the spatial categories are limited to the indicative mood. While Campbell attempts to resolve this contradiction by stating that the perfect tense-form is an exception, this contradiction does seem to indicate that heightened proximity does not adequately differentiate between the present and perfect tense-forms.

Overall, in attempting to provide an inductive analysis of the perfect tense-form, Campbell has produced a number of important observations, and he has raised a number of important objections to other theories of the perfect. However, his system has not provided an undisputable definition of the perfect. There are many problems within his system. But his analysis is important to consider because of the contributions that he has made.

Conclusion for the Perfect Tense-Form. As indicated by the discussion above, there are many issues that surround the semantic meaning of the perfect tense-form that have resulted in varying definitions of this form by different scholars. In fact, there is not one part of the perfect's meaning that is not questioned by someone. However, these

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249. Ibid., 29.

250. Ibid.

disagreements do not indicate that the meaning of the tense-form cannot be determined. Several conclusions may be proposed. First, through the analysis of Fanning's definition, it is evident that the traditional *Aktionsart* definition of the perfect can no longer be maintained. The description of the perfect as the present results of a completed action cannot adequately account for the varying uses of the perfect tense-form, as indicated above. Thus, as with the *Aktionsart* descriptions of the other tense-forms, the *Aktionsart* definition of the perfect must be abandoned as the semantic meaning of the perfect tense-form.

Since the traditional definition of the perfect has been demonstrated to be inadequate, some other definition must be proposed in its place. This, however, is not a simple task, and two general replacements have been proposed, namely imperfective aspect and stative aspect. Imperfective aspect shows some promise because it seems to account for the discourse function of the perfect tense-form in Greek narrative and because it would provide an explanation of the stative sense that has been traditionally attributed to the perfect tense-form (i.e., the combination of imperfective aspect with certain lexemes). However, this proposal creates the problem that the present and perfect tense-forms would share the same aspect. Thus, some other semantic meaning, in addition to the imperfective aspect, must be proposed for the perfect tense-form. As demonstrated above, Campbell's feature of heightened proximity is inadequate because it is inconsistent within the overall verbal system. Nevertheless, a different feature, such as intensity or some kind of emphasis, may be proposed to distinguish between these two tense-forms. Intensity may even be supported by the perfect's markedness. But this must be clearly demonstrated through an analysis of the perfect's uses.

In contrast to imperfective aspect, a stative aspect may prove to be the proper understanding of the perfect tense-form. However, further study must be conducted to demonstrate that this is indeed the case because scholars have not yet clearly demonstrated that stativity is part of the perfect's semantic meaning. In order to firmly establish stativity as part of the perfect's semantic meaning, it must be thoroughly demonstrated that it is contributed by the perfect tense-form and not the lexical meaning or the context of the verb. This will require a detailed analysis of the perfect in context, considering the lexical value of each form and their contexts to demonstrate that it is not contributed by these features.

Furthermore, work must be done to demonstrate that stativity may be considered a grammatical feature. As noted above, Fanning and Campbell have objected to the conclusion that stativity can be considered an aspect. Instead, they have classified it as an *Aktionsart*. However, considering the general understanding of *Aktionsart* as being an objective description of an action, which is indicated by lexis and context, *Aktionsart* should not be attributed to the grammatical form, as Fanning has proposed. Thus, if stativity is to be considered part of the perfect tense-form's semantic meaning (i.e., an aspect), a description must be given of how stativity may be considered a subjective portrayal of an action. Such a description should improve upon the current definitions in order to avoid vagueness. If these things can be done, then it may be concluded that the perfect is a stative aspect.

However, until this is done, it may be only tentatively concluded that the perfect tense-form is a stative aspect, which portrays a language user's view of an action as a state in relation to the subject of the verb. While this definition is not without problems

and stativity has not been clearly demonstrated to be part of the perfect tense-form's meaning, this definition is supported by a long history of grammarians' understanding the perfect as indicating some form of state in relation to the action. This support, however, must be recognized as only an assumption that the intuition of these grammarians indicates some truth. With more confidence, the only conclusions that may be made are that the perfect is the most heavily marked tense-form, which emphasizes the action in some way, and that the perfect, like the other Greek tense-forms, does not grammaticalize temporal reference.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, several recent theories have been surveyed that seek to explain the Greek verbal system in terms of verbal aspect. Both positive developments within these views and criticisms of them have been noted, and similarities and disputes have been recognized. The areas of agreement among scholars indicate that the semantic meaning of the Greek tense-forms should no longer be understood in terms of *Aktionsart*. Rather, they should be understood as grammaticalizing verbal aspect. Students of Koine Greek may now be confident that the tense-forms indicate an author's subjective view of an action. Moreover, they may also be confident about the specific aspects of the aorist, imperfect, and present tense-forms. The aorist grammaticalizes perfective aspect, that is, a viewpoint of an action from an outside perspective as a complete whole, and the imperfect and the present grammaticalize imperfective aspect, that is, a viewpoint of an action from within as being in process.

Furthermore, anyone who desires to learn Koine Greek and to study the New Testament in this language must gain an understanding of verbal aspect, and one must

apply this knowledge to an interpretation of the text. One may no longer observe the tense-form of a verb and jump to a conclusion about the objective nature of the action, as was often done in the *Aktionsart* system. Rather, one must consider the subjective view that the tense-form grammaticalizes within the overall context before making any conclusions. This will prove to develop a more accurate and truthful exegesis of the New Testament.

Even though there are many encouraging areas of agreement in current scholarship concerning the semantic meaning of the Greek tense-forms, there are also several areas of dispute, namely the grammaticalization of temporal reference and the semantic meaning of the perfect and pluperfect tense-forms. Concerning temporal reference, the tense-forms in the Greek verbal system appear not to grammaticalize temporal reference. Rather, temporal reference is indicated by other features within the overall context. While not every scholar agrees with this conclusion, it does provide the best description of the varying uses of the tense-forms.

The issue of the perfect and pluperfect tense-forms has proven to be one of the most problematic areas within the Greek verbal system. It is evident that these forms are the most heavily marked tense-forms in the Greek verbal system, and thus, they place some kind of emphasis on the action, which may be best described as stativity. However, further studies need to be conducted in order to substantiate this claim. Specifically, it must be demonstrated that stativity is contributed by the perfect tense-form and not from the lexis or context. Also, the semantic meaning of the perfect must be considered in relation to the perfect's discourse function, demonstrating how these two features relate. Until these things are done, additional studies need to be conducted within the Greek

verbal system. Therefore, while Rydbeck's appeal for further studies in Koine Greek has been answered by a revival in the study of the language, specifically with reference to the tense-forms, there still remains much work to be done in developing a comprehensive grammar of New Testament Greek.

τῷ θεῷ μόνον ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων

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