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On a frequent misunderstanding in the temporal-aspectual domain:
The 'Perfective = Telic' Confusion.

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to defend the view that Actionality (or Aktionsart) and Aspect should be considered to be independent, although non-orthogonal categories. Although they do interact, their interaction is ultimately amenable to a range of predictable behaviours, that may be understood on the basis of their respective properties.

As suggested by a long-established doctrine, the paper adopts the view that Actionality has to do with the nature of the event type associated with a verbal predicate, and is ultimately rooted in the lexicon, while Aspect (more specifically, the perfective\imperfective contrast) has to do with the perspective adopted in reporting on the relevant event, and is typically expressed through functional devices (tenses), that are part of the compositional system of natural grammars.

From a theoretical point of view, it is suggested that Actionality has to be dealt with in terms of the inner composition of events, while Aspect is ultimately to be accounted for in terms of the notions of closed vs. open interval, where perfective events correspond to closed intervals, and viceversa. The role of the aspectual operators must be that of enforcing the open\closed interval interpretation, which is potentially available for every event type, most properly with respect to an appropriate understanding of the different denotational properties of the various aspectual readings.

The paper claims that Actionality and Aspect are often enough unduly conflated in the specialized literature, giving rise to what might be called the 'Perfective ⇔ Telic Confusion' (PTC), that wrongly assumes that a verb in the perfective Aspect can only express telic eventualities, and viceversa.

It is shown instead that Actionality and Aspect are largely independent of one another (even though they do systematically interact with each other). Their independence may be particularly appreciated in languages with a sufficiently rich morphology, where these two categories manifest themselves in a very perspicuous way. But it may be shown that, even in less complex verbal systems, (im)perfectivity and (a)telicity should normally be kept apart, lest fundamental misunderstandings arise.

After reviewing and refuting various versions of PTC, a simplified typology of possible actional-aspectual systems is sketched, with examples inspired by the Slavonic languages and Ancient Germanic.

The aim of the paper is thus to show that what is at stake with the dichotomy Actionality \ Aspect - and more specifically (a)telicity \ (im)perfectivity - is an important foundational question, concerning the proper treatment of temporal-aspectual phenomena.

1. Introduction. *

Surprisingly enough, although the study of temporal-aspectual phenomena is based on a considerably long tradition within modern linguistics, there is still a remarkable lack of consensus on some of the most basic concepts. The most striking example consists in the assessment of the mutual relationship between the notions of Aspect and Actionality (or, as it is also called, Aktionsart). Here lies the problem I am going to address in this paper.

In order to delimit the scope of the discussion, I shall concentrate on a specific topic, disregarding other possible directions. Moreover, I shall not discuss the position of those who oppose the very need of conceptually separating Aspect and Actionality.[1] I shall thus merely consider the views of scholars who explicitly admit of the independent existence of these two categories. However, it turns out that, for a non-negligible subset of the latter authors, Aspect and Actionality are not truly independent notions, for they are considered to be inextricably intertwined. There may be several instances of this sort of conflation.[2] Here, I shall specifically discuss the views but forth by a number of scholars, to the effect that there be an unavoidable convergence of imperfective Aspect and stelic verbs on the one hand, and of perfective Aspect and telic verbs on the other. Viewed in this way, the categories of Aspect and Actionality turn out to be, to a considerable extent, redundant, for some of the crucial distinctions remain ultimately inert.

The purpose of this paper is to show the weakness of this conception. But before tackling the issue, a few clarifications are in order. In section 2 and 3, I shall review the main problems concerning the categories of Actionality [± telic] and Aspect. In section 4, the proper relationships between the features [± perfective] will be discussed. Finally, section 5 will sketch a typological approach to the problem of the interaction of telicity and perfectivity.

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1 As an example of a defender of this position, see Krifka (1998). For a thorough justification of the need of keeping the notions of Aspect and Actionality wide apart, despite their interactions, cf. Bertinetto & Delfitto (2000).

2 I have already addressed a related issue, concerning the fairly frequent confusion of the notions progressive and stative, as well as habitual and stative (Bertinetto 1998). That is another instance of an unwarranted coalescence of notions belonging to the actional and the aspectual domain, respectively: stativity on the one side, progressivity and habituality on the other side.

5. Actionality.

For the sake of the present discussion, it will be enough to take the category Actionality in the sense of the traditional tom Vendlerian classes (stat(iv)es, activities, achievements, accomplishments: cf. Vendler 1967). Although a number of refinements could be added (cf. for instance Bertinetto 1986; Bertinetto & Squartini 1995; Dini & Bertinetto 1995), these tom classes capture the bulk of the problem. Besides, these are precisely the classes referred to in the works I am going to discuss. Their reciprocal delimitation may easily be assessed on the basis of the features [± homogeneous], [± dynamic], [± durative], as shown in the following table:

	durative	dynamic	homogeneous
stat(iv)es	+	-	+
activities	+	+	+
achievements	-	+	-
accomplishments	+	+	-

Most authors would agree on this picture, although the details of the presentation might differ. Let me review the main points.

The notion 'non-durativity' should obviously be interpreted in a strictly operational sense. Literally speaking, any event takes some amount of physical time to occur. However, it is a fact that while we may say John reached the top of the mountain at noon, suggesting that the very event of reaching the top occurred precisely at that moment, sentences like ??John hiked the marsic at midnight two days ago or ??John wrote his dissertation at 2 o' clock last Tuesday are rather unnatural, and can at most indicate (depending on the situation) the initial or final boundary of the event.

The feature homogeneity refers to the lack of an inherent, internal boundary of the event. This amounts to the distinction, that will prove to be crucial for my discussion, between telic and atelic event (achievements and accomplishments vs. states and activities, respectively). Atelic events are generally said to possess the 'sub-interval' property, by which it is meant that if event ϕ occurs at interval λ, ϕ also occurs at any relevant sub-interval of λ. A few qualifications are in order. First, the sub-interval property holds in a literal sense only with states, whereas with activities one should make allowance for (pragmatically irrelevant) gaps. Thus, although it cannot be the case that, by uttering John worked the whole day or John worked as a lawyer for two years, one actually wants to suggest that John worked all the time without interruption, scholars generally agree that these pragmatic discontinuities within the event may be disregarded for the purpose of the sub-interval property. Second, the correct interpretation of this property should be modulated by the differing granularity of the given event. To see this, consider the following activities: walk, cry, wait. An event of walking consists of a series of rhythmical gestures, that repeat themselves in a

precise order. It is intuitively clear that, beyond a certain limit, further partitioning of interval *I* would amount to isolating but a fragment of the basic rhythmical gestures, that may not any more be understood as an act of walking (the given gesture could in fact be part of another type of event, like lifting one's foot, or the like). On the other hand, *waiting* is very much like a state, in that any sub-interval of waiting may literally instantiate an act of that sort, although one might probably contend that, below a certain time-dimension, there is no psychological plausibility in the assertion that somebody is waiting. As to *crying*, it obviously remains somewhat in the middle; its granularity is finer than that of walking, but coarser than that of waiting. Ultimately, I believe that the correct way of looking at these problems is to take a pragmatically inspired stance. Namely: the sub-interval property holds for activities *salva pragmatica veritate*, i.e. within the limits of pragmatic plausibility (cf. the discussion of *wait*) and obeying pragmatic constraints (cf. the discussion of *work*).

The feature dynamicity is at the same time intuitively clear and very tricky. The most typical states are non-agentive, but also dynamic events may be non-agentive (cf. *stumble*). The feature [- agentive] is of course responsible for the unavailability of the Imperative, or for the incompatibility with the adverb *deliberately*, that holds in general for statives and for all non-agentive predicates. But note that some undoubtedly stative predicates may allow the Imperative, even when no true voluntary control is implied (cf. *be happy!*); furthermore, some basically stative verbs may tolerate the adverb *deliberately*, clearly suggesting control (cf. *John stood deliberately on the way for one hour*). More crucially, statives involve events that hold at a given interval, without any internal development. In other words, nothing actually 'goes on' in states. An alternative way of putting this consists in saying that states, as opposed to dynamic events, have no internal granularity: they are 'dense', i.e. their structure is isomorphic with the structure of time.[3] This formulation appears to me to be more informative than recourse to the somewhat vague notion of lack of 'energy' (Smith 1999), although there is an intuitive appeal to it. Be it as it may be, this is ultimately the reason why states, as opposed to dynamic events, may not normally be employed with the progressive. Note, however, that this cannot be the whole story. In some languages, like English or Portuguese, the progressive is readily available with quite a number of stative verbs; and although in most such cases one might claim that, as a consequence of using the progressive, the state is turned into a dynamic event (cf. *John is resembling his father more and more*), one also finds

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3 A dense temporal structure is to be understood in the sense that between every two points there is a third point (Landman 1991: 106). This cannot be the case of non-stative events, which are composed of dynamic atoms that filter the temporal structure, superimposing the specific type of granularity appropriate to each of them.

situations where the progressive merely suggests a temporal delimitation of the event, rather than its dynamicization (compare *the statue stands in the park* to *the statue is (temporarily) standing in the park*).[4] Thus, the divide between states and dynamic events proves to be more difficult to assess than it is often assumed. Besides, it is not a sharp, dichotomic opposition, but a more structured one (Bertinetto 1986, sect. 4.1.2). Yet, at least operationally, and disregarding limit-cases, the distinction seems pretty robust.[5]

The above classification of event classes may be further enriched on ontological and formal grounds. A possible way of doing this is the following (see Dini & Bertinetto 1995). The minimal sequence of gestures instantiating a dynamic event may be called a dynamic 'atom'. By analogy, states may be conceived of as composed of static atoms. There is however a difference between dynamic and static atoms. The former ones correspond to the minimal granularity allowed by the given event considered; by consequence, they are not indefinitely divisable (see again fn. 3). The latter, by contrast, may be subdivided at will (given that states have no granularity), and ideally correspond to an infinitely minimal portion of time.

With this in mind, we may assert that events are composed of atoms. Durative events consist of a set of atoms (dynamic or static, as required), while non-durative ones (namely, achievements) ideally consist of a single dynamic atom. However, since achievements are dishomogenous events, in addition to the dynamic atom they also present a static atom, instantiating the 'telos' attained by the completion of the event.[6] Similarly, accomplishments also involve a static atom in addition to a set of dynamic

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4 For an assessment of the progressive as a 'partialization' operator, i.e. an operator that takes but a portion of the given event, see Delfitto & Bertinetto (1995) and Bertinetto (1997, ch. 4).

5 According to Smith (1999), statives differ from activities (the only other major actional class sharing the feature [+ homogeneous] characterizing atelic events) in that they do not have internal boundaries. While with activities the initial and final boundary of the event are considered to be an essential part of it, a state is regarded by Smith as a situation that is brought about or terminated by some other external event. This position has its own merits. For instance, while the situation of *possessing a car* is instantiated by my buying it or by my receiving it as a gift, the act of *walking* is simply instantiated by my beginning to walk. However I see no real advantage in adopting this view, and I am not even sure that it is actually tenable. Even in the case of walking, one might wish to contend that the event is instantiated by a previous act of volition. Besides, if the initial and final point of the event are taken to be (quite correctly, in my view) mere temporal boundaries rather than anything else, statives and activities are completely alike in this respect.

6 Dini & Bertinetto (1995) show that achievements are not the only type of non-durative events. In fact, there also exist purely 'punctual' predicates, characterized as non-durative and non-telic.

ones. Thus, as has often been observed, accomplishments are like activities, except that they present a static telos as a result of the completion of the event. Note that this conception provides further content to the feature [-monogeneous] that characterizes telic predicates. The ultimate reason why they react negatively to the sub-interval property is that these events exhibit a dispromogeneous combination of a set of dynamic atoms (minimally one atom, as with achievements) and a static atom.

In the above presentation, I have taken for granted a point that should be made explicit, lest misunderstandings arise. The assignment of a given predicate to an actional class is subject to at least two conditions. First, the predicate should be understood as an argumental frame, i.e. as a predicate with its arguments. It is indeed evident that while draw is always an activity, draw a circle is an accomplishment. Thus, as a first approximation, one may say that the accomplishment meaning of draw should be understood as referring to the set of contexts in which this predicate appears in conjunction with a direct object. However, this is not enough. The second condition concerns in fact the nature of the determiner phrase that occupies the relevant argumental positions. The crucial features are, in this case, [± determinate] and [± singular]. Thus, while draw a / three / several circle(s) is an accomplishment, draw circles is again an activity, despite the presence of a direct object. Equally, although John fell is an achievement, the stones fell on the road (all along the summer) instantiates an activity. As the examples make clear, most predicates may have more than one actional classification.[7] Moreover, the classification does not concern the pure predicate, but rather the different sets of contexts in which it may occur, specified (at least) in relation to the relevant arguments and to the structure of the relevant determiner phrases.[8]

To complete somehow the picture, one should add that the terminology may oscillate, and sometimes not without consequences. In the literature, activities are often called 'processes'. Besides, some authors use the term 'event' to refer to dynamic events only (see e.g. Jackendoff (1991): indeed, states do not instantiate events in the literal sense, rather they correspond to 'situations'. If such a choice is made, then there is the need for a cover term, such as 'eventuality' (Bach 1986) or 'situation type' (e.g., Smith (1991), to refer to all sorts of actional types. Actually, things are made more

[7] The actional 'privilege' (Bertinetto 1986) of verbal predicates has repeatedly received the attention of the specialists. See the notion of 'coercion' as developed, e.g., by Pustejovsky (1991). Cf. also Jackendoff (1996)

[8] Actually, even this is not enough. For instance, negation may have an effect on actional classification. For instance, while John left is an achievement, John did not leave is a durative event, more specifically a state. But for the sake of our discussion, these details may be disregarded.

complicated by the fact that other authors restrict the term 'event' to telic predicates (see, e.g., Herweg 1991a and 1991b; Egg 1995; De Swart 1998).[9]

In this paper, a very conservative position will be taken. Although the actual terminology employed by each scholar cited may differ, I shall translate it into the traditional Vendlerian one, and I shall use the term 'event' in the most general and neutral sense. Only occasionally, in accordance with the usage of the authors cited, I shall employ the adjective 'eventive' as referring to an actually dynamic, rather than static, situation. In any case, nothing essential impinges on these choices.

3. Aspect.

For the sake of the present discussion, suffice it to illustrate the main features characterizing the contrast perfectivity \ imperfectivity, disregarding minor details.

Within the domain of perfectivity there is a fundamental divide between the aoristic and the perfect Aspect. The former is for instance conveyed, in most of its uses - but see below for further qualifications - by the English Simple Past (cf. at 4 o clock, John went out), the latter by Perfect tenses (cf. by now, John has gone out or by then, John had \ will have gone out). However, for my present purposes, this important contrast will be ignored. Although some scholars consider the perfect Aspect to be an independent aspectual value, alongside the perfective and imperfective ones,[10] there are solid reasons to regard it as a subspecification within the domain of perfectivity. Whatever the case, this solution will certainly do with respect to the problem at issue. Note, in fact, that both the aoristic and the perfect Aspect imply attainment of the telos with telic predicates, as shown by the accomplishment go out (as in the examples just quoted), or by the accomplishment draw a circle (cf. John drew \ has drawn a circle).

The imperfective Aspect, on the other hand, does not imply attainment of the telos (cf. John was drawing a circle). This fact is at the basis of the so-called 'imperfective paradox', that should more properly be called 'telicity paradox'. But, once again, qualifications are in order. Suspension of telicity is involved by specific imperfective values, most typically by progressivity. Note in fact that palpability - that on all relevant counts should be viewed as an imperfective specification (Delfitto & Bertinetto 2000; Lenci & Bertinetto 2000) - is not a property of the predicate as a whole, but rather of the

9 In Pustejovsky (1991) yet another choice is made, whereby telic events are named 'transitions'. Within this class, the distinction between accomplishments and achievements seems to lie, according to this author, in the fact that the former, as opposed to the latter, are agentive predicates. Needless to say, this view is not the traditional one, and I see no reason to adopt it. Agentivity by vs is irrelevant to actional classification.

10 See for instance Costerin (1970), Comrie (1970).

Bertinetto 2000),[11] does not suspend telicity, as shown by: Il. ogni giorno, Gianni lavora i compiti in mezz'ora (‘every day, G. did his homework in half an hour.’), where the presence of the “in X Time” adverbial proves that telicity is preserved (cf. also fn. 8). Because of this, in what follows I shall mainly restrict myself to contrasting the most prototypical perfective and imperfective values, namely aoristicity and progressivity.

The basic opposition [± perfective] is best described with reference to the notion of the interval corresponding to the Event Time (for the latter notion, cf. Reichenbach 1947). Perfective situations are to be construed as closed intervals, for the event is viewed in its entirety, whereas imperfective situations refer to intervals open at their right boundary, such that their conclusion lies outside the horizon of the language user (even though s/he might be perfectly aware of the actual state of affairs). Indeed, speaker and hearer would both agree that in: John wrote a letter a closed interval is involved, since we construe this sentence - in its most natural, i.e. perfective, interpretation - as implementing the inherent telicity of the event. By contrast, a progressive sentence like: John was writing a letter necessarily presents us with an open interval, since the (potential) end-point of the telic event is left unspecified: for all we know, the letter might or might not be written up. On this count, a perfect sentence such as: Il. Gianni scriveva sbezzo lettere ‘G. often wrote(-IMPERFECT) letters’, is ostensibly an instance of imperfectivity, for the entire duration of the reference interval (hence, the number of letter-writing events) is again left unspecified.[12]

Formally, the contrast [± perfective] may be understood in terms of the denotational structure, much along the path laid down by Bonomi’s (1997; 1999) influential work. Perfective sentences should be read in terms of existential denotification over events (Delfitto & Bertinetto 2000; Lenci & Bertinetto 2000), while progressive and perfect sentences possibly involve less standard forms of denotification. Delfitto & Bertinetto (1999), in an attempt at providing a unified approach to both subspecies of imperfectivity, explore the merits of cardinal denotification. More specifically, Delfitto & Bertinetto (2000) suggest that perfectivity is passed on a form of generalized denotification endowed with relational strength, i.e. such as to require the splitting of the sentence into a restrictor and a

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[11] According to Giorgi & Pianesi (1997), perfectivity should belong to the domain of perfectivity. However, most specialists agree that that this is not the case.

[12] An obvious proof of this is provided by the fact that the perfect Imperfect is referred in sentences where the duration of the reference interval is implicitly suggested by a numerical specification: cf. Il. ?? Gianni scriveva lettere dentro ?ogni a. wrote(IMPERFECT) letters from time to time’. By contrast, Gianni scriveva lettere dentro volta dl mese ‘G. wrote(IMPERFECT) letters from time to time per month’ is acceptable, because it projects the recurring series of letter-writing events onto a larger, unspecified period of time.

matrix, even without the presence of explicit frequency adverbs.[13] In addition to this, Lenci & Bertinetto (2000) claim that the particular type of quantification involved in duplicality entails adoption of an intersional perspective.

Note that Aspect is directly conveyed by the various tenses available within any given language. It is thus a completely independent category with respect to Actionality, considering that the latter is ultimately attached to the lexical meaning of the various predicates. In other words, while Aspect is veridicled by morphosyntactic devices, Actionality is a property of the lexicon (although derivational processes may often be involved). However, just as the actional specification of a predicate cannot be assessed without taking into consideration the relevant sets of syntactic contexts in which it may appear (see sect. 5), the aspectual value of a given tense are not specified once and forever. Consider the following examples:

[1] a. (Every day,) John walks to school.
b. (Right now,) John has a terrible head-ache.
c. John often has a terrible head-ache.
d. I promounce you man and wife.
e. John C. receives the ball in the middle-field … gets rid of a couple of opponents … he now prepares to strike …
What a magnificent score!
f. Tomorrow, John leaves to Rome.
g. In the early morning of the 7th December 1941, the Japanese air force strikes the American fleet at Pearl Harpour. This deed changes the future course of the war.

[13] Needless to say, explicit frequency adverbs (like often, several times etc.) yield this sort of splitting even in perfective sentences. However, the important point to understand is that the principal Aspect settles this result by itself.

[5] a. At Midnight, John left.
b. During the whole afternoon, John was very sad.
c. When I came, John was very sad.
d. "And in effect, the sultry darkness into which the students now followed him was visible and crimson [...] Among the tulips mowed the dim red spectres of men and women with purple eyes and all the symptoms of lupus.
The dull and rattle of machinery faintly stirred the air." (Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, Penguin Books 1932, p.50; quoted by Viktor & Viktor 1991)
e. "She turned on the light and looked at Ernest lying beside her. He was sound asleep. He snored. But even though he snored, his nose remained perfectly still." (Virginia Woolf, Lappin and Lappinova, quoted by Smith [1991])

Sentence [1a] exhibits the habitual-generic value often associated to the English Simple Present. However, although this is indeed a prominent aspectual feature of this tense, it is by no means the only one. First, as is well known, with stative verbs the Simple Present often conveys the meaning of an on-going imperfective present, as in [1d], although even with this sort of predicates it may easily express a habitual-generic meaning, as in [1c]. More importantly, the Simple Present may also take on perfective values, as shown by [1b-g], exhibiting the following readings: performative and reportive Present, as in [1b] and [1c] respectively, both corresponding to an on-going perfective present: pro-limmo Present, as in [1i], conveying the meaning of a (perfective) future-time-reference tense; 'historical' Present, as in [1g], conveying the sense of a (perfective) past-time-reference tense. Equally, although the English Simple Past is often regarded as a purely perfective tense, as in prototypical examples such as [5a], with stative predicates, as in [5c], it can also convey the sense of a progressive past,[14] although in [5b] the same verb pretty much retains a perfective meaning. More strikingly, the English Simple Past is often the only option available when translating the Romance Imperfect, for the Past Progressive is not always felicitous even with non-stative verbs: indeed, the forms in italics in [5d] and [5e] provide clear examples of imperfective uses of the Simple Past.

Summing up the preceding discussion, I propose that although tenses may have a unique aspectual specification, as with the Romance Simple

[14] Needless to say, [5c] may also take on an ingressive reading, whereby it retains a perfective value. This is not at all an isolated case: see the discussion in sect. 4.1. Out of context, sentences can often be aspectually ambiguous. This fact struggles the point I am making here.

Past of the Bulgarian Aorist (both invariably aoristic, namely perfective), they normally simply have a predominant characterization. Their actual value varies according to the context, as shown in [1-5] by the English Simple Present and Simple Past.

On top of this, it is important to realize that any tense - in any language - necessarily expresses both temporal and aspectual values. It thus makes no sense to say that, e.g., German has no Aspect, whereas English has. Rather, one could say that German lacks almost completely explicit aspectual markers (although, to be sure, it presents Past and Future Perfects). But even when a given language lacks overt morphological contrasts, the usage of a given tense in a given context necessarily involves a specific aspectual interpretation (see again fn. 14). For instance, although the German Pasts are in themselves aspectually neutral, their interpretation becomes straightforward in context. Consider:

[3] a. Von 1994 bis 1999, studierte Hans in der Uni \ hat Hans in der Uni studiert
'From 1994 to 1997, H. studied at the university'

b. Als ich nach Stuttgart fuhr \ gefahren bin, studierte Hans in der Uni \ hat Hans in der Uni studiert
'When I came to Stuttgart, H. was studying at the university'.

As it appears, [3a] is preferably to be read perfectively, disregarding the specific form employed, while [3b] can only be interpreted imperfectively. Indeed, in many varieties of German there tends to be only one Past tense, either Simple or Compound, which may be interpreted perfectively or imperfectively according to the context. The difference with respect to the English Simple Past is merely that the latter has a prevalent perfective interpretation, as a result of its opposition to the Past Progressive, while the German Pasts are intrinsically neutral, for they do not directly contrast with anything else.

An important consequence of this, often overlooked in the literature, is that the term 'tense' should not be understood as synonymous with 'temporal reference'. The latter is an independent theoretical concept, standing in its own right on a par with Aspect (and Actionality). In fact, tenses are morphological coalescences, that appear in any given language as a result of idiosyncratic diachronic developments. This is the reason why, to avoid confusion, I prefer to speak of 'temporal-aspectual' phenomena, rather than 'tense-aspectual' ones. No doubt, a given tense may have prevalent temporal and aspectual values. Let me recall again the example of the Romance Simple Past, that prototypically has past-time-reference and conveys an aoristic interpretation: two features that distinguish it from the English Simple Past, which may sometimes have future-time-reference and

is aspectually flexible (cf. examples [2-3]).[15] However, as shown above, most tenses simply come with a range of possibilities, so that we need a context in order to assess their actual reading. For instance, the Romance Imperfect should preferably be read imperfectively and with past-time-reference, but in marked contexts it may convey something very close to a perfective meaning (as with the so-called 'narrative' Imperfect, cf. [4a]) and may have present-time-reference (as with the 'politeness' Imperfect, cf. [4b]) or even future-time-reference (as with the 'potential' Imperfect, cf. [4c]):

[4] a. Il 17 dicembre 1770, *nasceva* a Bonn Ludwig van Beethoven
'On Dec. 17th 1770, L.v.B.*was*(-IMPERFECT) *born* in Bonn'
b. Buongiorno. *Volevo* un chilo di mele
Hallo. I *wanted*-IMPERFECT a Kg. of apples
'Hallo. I would like (to buy) a Kg. of apples'
c. Domani sera c'*era* uno spettacolo all'aperto. Purtroppo, é stato rinviato
'An open-air performance *was*(-IMPERFECT) scheduled for tomorrow evening. Unfortunately, it has been postponed'.

Let's now return to the topic of this paper.

In principle, Aspect and Actionality should be regarded as orthogonal categories, for they are attached to different linguistic vehicles (tenses vs. lexical entries). In fact, this is not entirely true, for there are obvious interactions, thoroughly described in the literature (see for instance Bertinetto 1986, 1997, and references therein). Suffice it to recall that the interplay of [± perfective] and [± telic] yields a striking consequence, as shown by the 'imperfective paradox' - referred to above - whereby telic verbs suspend their telic value in imperfective contexts (more specifically, as said, in progressive contexts). Thus, we should be prepared to find cases of convergence between aspectual and actional values. However, I believe that the impact of this sort of convergence is not infrequently unduly overrated. The next section addresses the issue.

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15 As to future-time-reference, consider the following sentences, contrasting English with Italian:
[i] a. Next Monday, when he comes, he'll discover that Mary *left* the day before
b. Lunedí prossimo, quando arriverá, scoprirá che Maria * *partí* (SIMPLE PAST)/ *é partita* (COMP.PAST) il giorno prima.

4. *Some typical interactions of Actionality and Aspect.*

4.1. *The 'Perfective ⇔ Telic Confusion' (PTC).*

Let us consider the claim put forth by several scholars, to the effect that perfective sentences instantiate telic events, while imperfective sentences give rise to atelic events (let me recall once more that, for reasons explained above, 'imperfective' should more properly be understood here as 'imperfective non-habitual'). Let us dubb this the 'Perfective ⇔ Telic Confusion' (**PTC**). Although this view has often been put forth in connection with French examples, its scope is claimed to be quite general, i.e. not restricted to that specific language or to the Romance family. Note that this type of misunderstanding has a very respectable tradition. Schøsler (1994: 166) - a scholar who shares the view advocated in this paper - points out that this confusion is to be found, e.g., in scholars such as Sten (1952), Martin (1971) and Togeby (1982). More recently, the same claim has at least been put forth by scholars such as Herweg (1991a; 1991b), Vikner & Vikner (1997) and De Swart (1998). But the list is certainly longer, and the problem serious enough to be tackled.

To provide a typical illustration, consider the following sentences, quoted from Vikner & Vikner:

[5] a. Ils *étaient* mariés. Ils *avaient* un bébé
They *were*-IMPERFECT married. They *had*-IMPERFECT a child (= they were parents)

b. Ils *étaient* mariés. Ils *eurent* un bébé
They *were*-IMPERFECT married. They *had*-SIMPLE PAST a child (= they got a child)

c. Ils *furent* mariés. Ils *avaient* un bébé
They *were*-SIMPLE PAST (= got) married. They *had*-IMPERFECT a child (= they were parents)

d. Ils *furent* mariés. Ils *eurent* un bébé
They *were*-SIMPLE PAST (= got) married. They *had*-SIMPLE PAST a child (= they got a child).

The interpretation of these examples is straightforward, and in fact presents no problem. The core of the matter lies in the fact that in languages like French - where an imperfective and a perfective Past contrast - stative verbs often switch on to an ingressive, telic meaning when used with the Simple Past. These facts have been known for quite a longtime (cf., e.g., Lucchesi 1971). This does not imply, however, that this is the only available interpretation for these tenses, as I am going to show in this section.

My strategy will be the following. First, I shall show that this claim (namely, the fact that perfectivity entails telicity) is not substantiated in some obvious cases, concerning activity verbs. Subsequently, I shall show that the same applies to stative verbs, although the latter might at first

glance look more problematic. Finally, I shall reject an equally implausible subspecies of the PTC, which attributes an inherently dynamic character to perfective sentences, as opposed to imperfective ones.

Let us begin with activities. A very straightforward demonstration of the view defended here is provided by Ter Meulen (2000: 153; see also Ter Meulen 1995). Consider the predicate in italics in the following sentences:

[6] a. Jane noticed a car parked in an alley. She carefully *patrolled* the neighbourhood. She was driving along the Rokin
b. Jane noticed a car parked in an alley. She *was* carefully *patrolling* the neighbourhood. She was driving along the Rokin.

The Past progressive (always imperfective) and the Simple Past (in its default perfective reading) produce here two diverging temporal interpretations, as a consequence of their different aspectual values, although the predicate employed is undoubtedly atelic (namely, it is an activity in both cases). From [6b], we infer that Jane's patrolling and driving along the Rokin must have started before she noticed the car. From [6a], on the other hand, no such conclusion may be drawn, for things are not so clear, although the most natural interpretation is that patrolling follows noticing. Thus, the claim that imperfectivity and atelicity necessarily converge is clearly false. If that were so, these sentences would have two different meanings in terms of actional interpretation, just as they have two different aspectual (and, derivatively, temporal) interpretations. Since this is not the case, we may conclude that the PTC has no chance to correctly capture the data, at least with activities.

Let us now tackle the problem of stative predicates. These, as I said, are more troublesome, for the intertwining of actional and aspectual values is often quite evident, as in [5] above. Quite significantly, in Romance languages the possibility of employing perfective Pasts with permanent statives has been severely constrained in modern times, as compared with the situation to be observed up to the 14th-15th centuries [Dauses 1981].[16] However, with contingent (i.e. non-permanent) statives the situation looks different. Although it is indeed the case that perfective tenses often induce an ingressive, hence telic reading, it is not at all impossible to build sentences where these predicates preserve their inherent actional character. Consider the following uses of the Simple Past of *have* and *be* in Italian, to be compared with [5] above:

16 As Dauses notes, the situation differs from language to language. The constraint is strongest in French, weaker but quite apparent in Italian, still weaker in Spanish. For my present purposes, it is not essential to go into these details.

[7] a. La sua sventura trentotto anni fa. Ciarrai ne valse un forte
mal di pancia, che gli quasi per il resto del pomeriggio
'His treatment team had lost. Because of this, G. had (= got) a
bellyache, that lasted for the rest of the afternoon'

b. Non fu possibile battere con lui: Ciarrai valse mal di pancia per
tutto il pomeriggio
'Beating with him proved impossible: G. had (= suffered
from) a bellyache for the whole afternoon'

c. Quando gli accorrai al possibile guadagno, Maria.N
improvvisamente corse e disparipile
'When I hinted at the prospected income, M. was (= became)
suddenly kind and helpful'

d. Non fu possibile offerire il prestito. Maria.N corse ma
inflessipile
'Obtaining the loan proved impossible. M. was kind but firm (=
behaved kindly but firmly)'.

As may be seen, the Simple Past of stative verbs may, in the appropriate contexts, refer either to a dynamic, ingressive event, or to a durative state. There is no doubt that these meaning switches correspond to actional coercions, as is proved by the fact that, when translating into another language, one often has to make use of different verbs (cf. the glosses provided above). Eventually, there is no doubt that the type of coercion induced in [7a] and [7c] by the Simple Past - a purely perfective device in Romance languages - is indeed a shift from stative (and therefore telic) to telic, in agreement with the claim but forth by Vikner & Vikner and other scholars. However, it is misleading to assume that this is a necessary consequence of the Simple Past. In fact, as shown by [7b] and [7d], this tense may also, with stative predicates, convey the meaning of a delimited state. The difference with respect to the Imperfect (as in [2]) lies in the fact that the temporal delimitation of perfective events is potentially very neat (except for the possible vagueness introduced by pragmatic considerations), while the boundaries of the events designated by imperfective sentences are never exactly traceable. In fact, as noted in sect. 3, perfective events correspond to closed intervals, whereas imperfective events correspond to intervals open at their right boundary.[11]

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[11] Note that Vikner & Vikner seem to be aware of the fact that the English Simple Past can also convey an imperfective meaning. In fact, in relation to example [5b], reported above, they observe that "there is no semantic difference in such contexts between the Simple Past and the Past Progressive" (cf. their fn. 13). However, they attribute this merge of aspectual meanings to a "distinctively literary flavour". I fail to understand what 'literary flavour' means in this case, since this use of the Simple Past may easily be found in spontaneous oral narratives as well. Besides, it is not completely true that the Past Progressive may freely appear in such contexts as an

Actually, the ingressivity induced by perfective tenses is not only to be observed in stative verbs, but also in activities. This is in fact a well-known phenomenon (Luccheси 1971: Bertinetto 1986, sect. 3.5.2), as witnessed by [8a] as opposed to [8b]:

[8] a. Leo improvvisò la pistola: tutt'attorno si fece un subito silenzio.
'Leo got holds(-SIMPLE PAST) of his gun: all around a sudden silence arose'
b. Quando Lia entrò, Leo improvvisava la pistola
'When Lia came in, Leo was holding(-IMPERFECT) his gun'.[18]

Apparently, these examples support the PTC view, to the effect that perfectivity in [8a] goes hand in hand with telicity, just as imperfectivity in [8b] suggests stelicity. But a moment reflection tells us that this is not the whole story. It all depends on the aspectual meaning, which is aoristic (put this timely perfective) in [8a]', progressive in [8b]', again aoristic (put this time with non-dynamic, durative reading) in example [i] of fn. 18, and habitual in example [ii] of fn. 18. Thus, the correct interpretation of these facts lies in the proper understanding of the interplay between Actionality and Aspect. It is undeniable that these two dimensions interact, but the product of the interaction differs from case to case in a perfectly predictable way.

It is worth noting, in this connection, that De Swart (1991 - who is perfectly aware of the dichotomy Actionality \ Aspect - views the relationship between Actionality and Aspect in terms of the dominance of the former over the latter. In fact, she asserts, e.g., that French Past tenses "do not trigger any aspectual meaning effects beyond the aspectual class of the eventuality description" (p. 365; where "aspectual class" stands for 'actional class' in my terminology). Thus, according to this author, the type of predicate should always impose its character, independently of the Aspect (ultimately, of the tense) employed. However, this view accounts for only part of the facts. It is indeed true that, in a number of cases, the actional value imposes severe limits on the aspectual interpretation. In [9], for instance, the permanent stative reading of qui 'sey' (put in this context:

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alternative to the Simple Past, for it often sounds inappropriate. So, what is ultimately going on in such cases is the fact that the English Simple Past exhibits some degree of aspectual ventrilization.

18 Note that the interpretations suggested here are only the preferred ones, for [8a] may designate a protracted non-dynamic situation, as in [i], and [8b] may take on a dynamic interpretation in peculiar contexts, as in [ii] (cf. Bertinetto 1986, sect. 3.5.3):
[i] Leo improvvisò solidamente la pistola finché la sparatoria non finì
Leo firmly held(SIMPLE PAST) his gun until the shooting ended.
[ii] Quando Leo improvvisava la pistola, Lia aveva paura
When Leo was holding(IMPERFECT) of his gun, Lia was afraid

'read'), induced by the non-animate nature of the subject, prevents the use of the Simple Past, that would clearly suggest a dynamic interpretation (cf. again [5]). However, this is not necessarily the case, as shown by [9b], again involving a permanent stative:[19]

[9] a. Il cartello *diceva* / **disse*: "Pericolo di valanghe"
'The warning notice *read*(-IMPERFECT / * SIMPLE PAST):
"Danger of avalanches"'

b. Franz Schubert *ebbe carattere* allegro, nonostante la sua infelice vita
'F. S. *had*(-SIMPLE PAST) a cheerful *character*, despite his unhappy life'.

Besides, in quite a number of cases it is rather the selected aspectual value that suggests the preferred actional reading, as proved by *impugnare* 'hold' in [8a-b]. Obviously, one could try to defend De Swart's claim by saying that this amounts to the fact that the original aspectual value is turned into a specific actional characterization; however, it clearly makes much more sense, from the theoretical point of view, to state that Aspect and Actionality interact so as to produce the observed results. What we ultimately need is a fully-fledged model of the whole range of meanings attached to each actional and aspectual specification, and of the possible consequences stemming out of their contextual interaction. For a number of structured suggestions in this direction, concerning the fine interplay of the various actional and aspectual meanings (also involving some intriguing diachronic developments), cf. Bertinetto (1986; 1997) and Squartini (1998).

Turning again to ingressivity as induced by perfectivity - a point on which Vikner & Vikner (1997) put much emphasis (cf. their examples in [5], or: *Mary ran at 2:30*) - it may be useful to append a further caution. As a matter of fact, it turns out that with accomplishments the Simple Past brings about an egressive (rather than ingressive) reading, or at least remains ambiguous between these two interpretations (cf. *John filled the tub at 2:30*). Here again, the only way to make sense of the data consists in considering the proper interaction of Actionality and Aspect, conceived of as two independent notions. If viewed in its proper terms, the ingressivity often attached to perfective Pasts turns out, in most cases, to be the product

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19 Obviously, [9b] is a marked usage (the so-called 'historian's Simple Past'), as is also shown by the fact that in such contexts the Simple Past does not alternate with the Compound Past, that in most cases - particularly in some varieties of Modern Italian, - may be used instead of the Simple form. But for our purposes this is immaterial: the point of example [9b] is to show that permanent statives do not necessarily lose their inherent character when used in conjunction with a perfective Past.

of the interaction of stelic events (statives or activities) and the aoristic - namely, purely perfective - Aspect (Bertinetto 1986, sect. 3.5.2).

The view defended here, namely the fact that Actionality and Aspect are by and large independent of one another, is also supported by the following example proposed by Herweg (1991a), who correctly points out - put with a significantly divergent interpretation, to which I shall return directly - that this sentence may have two readings in terms of temporal localization:

[10] The book was on the table.

This example may either mean: (a) that the book was on the table for a definite period of time, or: (b) that at some specific reference time the book was there for an indefinite period of time (and, for all we know, it might still be there at Speech Time). It is essential to note that, in both cases, the event referred to is a state: the difference is simply that interpretation (a) presupposes a perfective view, while interpretation (b) presupposes an imperfective view. Indeed, it we understand the notion Actionality in its proper terms, i.e. as a characterization of the relevant lexical properties of the predicates, this is the only possible conclusion, for no difference whatsoever is introduced in the stative nature of the event by the two readings of [7]. The only difference lies therefore in the aspectual perspective adopted. This might not be so obvious at first sight, since (as noted above) no overt aspectual marking emerges in English in such cases: but in other languages, like Italian, the contrast is explicit:

[11] a. Il libro è stato sul tavolo (per tutto il giorno)
?The book was (PAST PERFECTIVE on the table (during the whole day)'
b. Il libro era sul tavolo (durando l'intera notte per l'ultima volta)
?The book was (PAST PERFECTIVE on the table (when I last saw it)'.

Incidentally, the important lesson we can learn from this is that, when dealing with temporal-aspectual phenomena, one should always have a typological approach in mind. In order to provide a correct interpretation of a given sentence, one had better consider the behaviour of the languages that, in the same contexts, would present explicit aspectual contrasts. Since Italian presents an aspectual opposition between perfective and imperfective Past, it always needs to make an explicit morphological choice as a consequence of the aspectual character of the situation. By contrast, English - exhibiting no such contrast with stative verbs and often even with non-stative predicates (cf. [5a-c]) - presents some degree of neutralization in this specific area of the temporal-aspectual domain.

The point where - as announced above - I depart from Herweg's view, is where he suggests that readings (a) vs. (b) of [10] correspond to an eventive

(i.e., dynamic) vs. stative situation, respectively. This appears to me as a variant of the PTC syndrome, whereby the main actional divide is not atelic / telic, but rather stative / non-stative; we may call it the 'Perfective ⇔ Dynamic Confusion'. In fact, it is quite obvious that the contrast between the two readings of [10], just as the analogous contrast between [11a] vs. [11b], is purely aspectual, and has nothing to do with Actionality. The predicate is definitely stative in all these sentences. To see a symmetric illustration of this fact, consider Herweg's (1991b) proposal concerning the following English example, to be compared with its Italian equivalent:[20]

[12] a. The book *was* on the table twice yesterday
b. Il libro *é stato* sul tavolo due volte ieri.

Herweg observes that in this context a stative verb like *be* takes on the properties normally associated to typically eventive predicates, as required (so he suggests) by the presence of the adverb *twice*. However, although this is the correct interpretation (for indeed, in these contexts, we tend to read *was on the table* as synonymous of 'was put on the table (by somebody)'), the conclusion is drawn on the wrong premises. Let us see why. To start with, it is certainly true that in [12b] only a perfective Past could be used - here, the Compound Past *é stato* - to the exclusion of the Imperfect (*era*), which would sound pretty strange. But note, first, that the perfectivity of these two sentences is not simply due to the presence of a specification of iterativity, for adverbs such as *often*, *usually* and the like would be quite compatible with the habitual Imperfect, as in:

[13] Il libro *era* spesso / solitamente sul tavolo la scorsa settimana
'The book *was*(-IMPERFECT) often / usually on the table last week'.

What really matters is the nature of the specification. The adverb *due volte* in [12b], in contrast to *spesso / solitamente* in [13], points to a determinate number of iterations, thus forcing us to conceive of the relevant interval as an implicitly closed one (cf. again fn. 12). Hence, the perfective reading of [12b], as opposed to [13]. Second and most important, it should be stressed that the eventive (as opposed to stative) meaning of [12] is preserved in [13], despite the imperfective (specifically, habitual) view.

Note that there are two sides involved in this issue. On the one hand, perfectivity and eventivity do not necessarily entail each other, for imperfectivity may obtain the same result, namely eventivity (compare [12]

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20 Actually, I took the liberty to change the verb of the original example (*be at the sea-side*), in order to show that the effect in question is purely contextual, rather than lexical. Indeed, the different behaviour of the same predicate, in [10-11] as opposed to [12-13], strengthens my claim.

and [13]). On the other hand, eventivity does not necessarily imply telicity, since activities - as opposed to states - are eventive but atelic. Note further that one and the same lexical entry (*be on the table*) may undergo substantial modifications in its actional nature as a consequence of the context in which it appears, irrespective of the aspectual specification. Indeed, in [10-11] this predicate preserves its inherent stative inclination, despite the contrast in aspectual interpretation (perfective / imperfective). In [12-13], on the contrary, the same predicate is coerced into a dynamic reading (at least in the relevant interpretation), again despite the alternative aspectual interpretation. Obviously, the reason why we tend to interpret the latter sentences as referring to an eventive situation depends on pragmatic inferences; in order for the book to be on the table, one ought to have put it there. But the relevant point is that the aspectual value does not force the actional interpretation, and vice versa. As to Aspect, it obviously does, in all these cases, what it is supposed to do; namely, it presents us a closed (perfective) vs. open (imperfective) interval, respectively.

Another variant of the 'Perfective ⇔ Dynamic Confusion' is the frequently advanced claim that, in Romance languages, the Simple Past advances the story (i.e., has a 'propulsive' character), while the Imperfect does not (cf. for instance De Swart 1998; but this claim goes back at least to Kamp & Rohrer 1983). However, although this is often the case - and it is even so obvious that one hardly needs providing examples - it is not invariably so. Consider the following sentences, the first of which modifies in the appropriate way example [27] of De Swart (1998):

[14] a. Anna trascorse le vacanze da sola. Per tutto il tempo, *fu* triste ed irritabile
'A. spent her holidays alone. She *was*(-SIMPLE PAST) all the time sad and nervous'

b. Benché la lezione fosse molto interessante, Giorgio *chiacchierò* ininterrottamente con Teresa
'Although the lecture was very interesting, Giorgio *chatted* (-SIMPLE PAST) uninterruptedly with T'.

As may be seen, in both cases the verbs in italics (a stative and an activity, respectively) indicate an event that does not advance the thread of the narrative, but rather characterize in the appropriate way a period of time already singled out by previous events.[21] Once again, one should underline

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21 Smith (1999: 490), whose approach is by the way rather similar to the one advocated here, seems to fall in the same trap when insisting that "states and imperfective sentences do not introduce a new Reference Time and thus do not advance a narrative". This is fairly easy to disprove. As to stative verbs, cf. [7a] and [7c]. As to imperfectives, consider the well-known case of the "explicative' Imperfect:

that no straightforward correlation exists with respect to aspectual values. On the one hand, as just noted, a perfective Past does not necessarily entail propulsivity; on the other hand, propulsivity may also be instantiated by the Imperfect, as in the case of the 'narrative' Imperfect exemplified in [4a].[22]

It is thus clear that the categories of (im)perfectivity and (a)telicity do not co-vary, but behave to a large extent independently. When these two dimensions interact, the product of the interplay is amenable to a predictable and fairly restricted set of possibilities (see [8-9]). This remains true even if we interpret [± telic] rather coarsely, in the sense of dynamic vs. static. In fact, it is not the case that perfective sentences invariably instantiate dynamic events (see [10-13]), just as it is not the case that perfective events necessarily advance the thread of a narrative (see [14]).

4.2. On the proper relation between perfectivity and telicity.

Yet another variant of PTC consists in claiming that (some type of) telic predicates inevitably correspond to perfective situations, whatever the tense employed (but to the exclusion of the progressive forms; see below for qualifications). A case in point is offered by Giorgi & Pianesi (1997). Although these authors explicitly state (p. 186, fn. 11) that 'telic / atelic' should not be confused with 'perfective / imperfective',[23] they repeatedly claim that achievements (a subclass of telic verbs), such as *reach the top* or *create*, yield a perfective interpretation unless the progressive periphrasis is employed. Note that this particular version of PTC differs from the previous ones in that the entailment goes in one direction only, rather than both ways; accordingly, it should be symbolized as the 'Achievement ⇒ Perfective Confusion'. A sentence like [15] should thus involve the implementation of the telos, namely the fact that the unicorn was actually created, despite the usage of the Imperfect, normally considered to be an imperfective tense:

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[i] Luca giró l'interruttore. La luce l'*abbagliava*
L. made the contact. The light *blinded*-IMPERFECT him.

22 Since the 'narrative' Imperfect is usually considered a perfective device, one might object that at least this side of the problem holds; namely, the Imperfect takes on a propulsive character only when it acquires a perfective value. Note, however, that this is only partially true. As shown by Bertinetto (1986, sect. 6.4), the 'narrative' Imperfect is not to be regarded as a perfective device *tout court*, but rather as a synchretic device that often combines perfective and imperfective features.

23 Actually, things are more complicated than this. In fact, despite their explicit claim, these authors repeatedly fall into a contradiction. For instance, on the one hand they define perfective events as (topologically) closed events (p.156), but on the other hand they state that non-closed events are processes, i.e. activities (p.162), thus merging aspectual and actional notions. This claim is easily falsifiable: a stative event couched into an imperfective morphology does not become a process.

[12] a. Ὀλιγάκις Ἀπῆν ἑαυτῷ, Μενέλαος γενόμενος ἐν πολέμοις
'Μηδεν Ἀπῆν ἑαυτοῦ, Μενέλαος γενόμενος(-IMPERFECT) ἐ πολέμοις'.

This obviously corresponds to a perfective interpretation, for the suspension of the telos is only produced by a strong imperfective reading (excepting deplinellity, as already noted). In order to get the latter interpretation, the progressive periphrasis (ἐιναι γεγάμενο) should be employed. Note, however, that this is not entirely true, for it turns out that the preferred perfective reading of acrisevement verbs is a matter of pragmatic, rather than semantic interest. Consider:

[12] b. Ieri Gianni vaʎʎimvgevu ðiʝ la vetta, dunque nu violento temporale lo fermò
Yesterday G. vanished-IMPERFECT already the (mountain) top, when a heavy storm stopped him
'Yesterday G. John was on the verge of reaching the mountain top, when a heavy storm stopped him'
c. Il tempo peggiore proprio allora, non c'era un minuto da perdere
'The train left(-IMPERFECT) right then, there was no time to waste'.

Example [10a] is taken with a slight modification - namely, addition of the adverb ðiʝ 'already' - from Giorgi & Pianesi [p.177]. Here, according to my intuition, the progressive periphrasis (ἐιναι γεγάμενο) would not alter the meaning of the sentence, since there is no implementation of the telos in either case. It is fair to say (in agreement with Giorgi & Pianesi's view) that this sentence would sound somewhat strange without ðiʝ: put this adverb cannot be the only responsible for the effect, for in [10b] it does not appear. Thus, even with acrisevement verbs, it is not the case that non-periphrastic tenses necessarily imply perfectivity - hence, full instantiation of telicity - disregarding the aspectual nature of the tense used. Consequently, even this weaker version of PTC appears to be untenable. Obviously, the difference with the progressive form is indeed striking, for the latter always prings in a partialization of the event, thus (in most cases) detelicization. To this extent, Giorgi & Pianesi's view may be maintained. However, even without the progressive form, the tenses that periapply express imperfectivity (like the Present and the Imperfect in Romance) may yield the detelicization of acrisevements in the appropriate pragmatic situations.

One objection that might be raised against my reasoning is that a sentence like [12a], in its most obvious reading, does imply telicity, after all. But note that, although this is undeniable, it does not entail that the aspectual interpretation be perfective. To prove this, we simply need to show that even progressive sentences may sometimes suggest telicity, despite their unmistakeply imperfective nature. The (most common)*** stelic interpretation is, once again, only a matter of pragmatics rather than

semantics. Consider the following sentence, that could be meaningfully uttered in a situation in which Arturo is actually putting his left foot on the top of the mountain:

[16] Quando puntai il binocolo, scopersi che Arturo stava giusto raggiungendo la vetta
'When I directed the bynoculars, I found out that Arthur was right then reaching the top'.

This shows that the 'partializing' function fulfilled by the progressive does not necessarily entail that the event is viewed at a stage preceding its conclusion. The focalized portion may also be, in the appropriate context, the final stage of the event. This, of course, undergoes severe pragmatic constraints. To start with, this reading never emerges, for obvious reasons, with inherently atelic predicates, where the conclusion of the event does not play a special role (apart from the trivial fact that things naturally come to an end, sooner or later). Besides, it does not emerge with accomplishments either, due to their durative character, which makes it hardly plausible to refer to the very*** final stage of the event. But with achievements, things are clearly different, as just observed (see the formal treatment of these predicates as sketched in sect. 2 above). Yet, nobody would deny that [16] is an instance of an imperfective sentence, as shown by the progressive morphology. In conclusion, the telic reading of achievements - with or without progressive morphology - is not a compelling reason to attribute a perfective character to these sentences.

A further variant of PTC, only apparently less pervasive than those so far considered, consists in claiming that delimited atelic events are to be interpreted as plainly telic, or at least as a special kind of telic events. The expression 'delimited atelic events' refers to situations where an atelic verb is accompanied by expressions such as "*for* X Time", "*from* t_x *to* t_y", *until t*" and the like, that convey a meaning of temporal delimitation.[24] A case in point is offered by Depraetere (1995). In her view (cf. p. 3), the following sentences depict telic events:

[17] a. Sheila deliberately swam for 2 hours
b. Judith played in the garden for an hour
c. Julian lived in Paris from 1979 until May 1980.

[24] Needless to say, for those who entertain the strong PTC view, delimited events are a fortiori telic (cf., e.g., Vikner & Vikner 1997: 276), since delimited phrases are only compatible with the perfective Aspect.

Similarly (Egg 1995) introduces the notion of 'intergressive' to designate precisely this type of eventuality.[25]

This version of PTC (the 'Delimited atelic ⇒ Telic Confusion') is even more insidious than the previous ones, for it hides a subtle misconception of the proper relationship between perfectivity and telicity. As noted above, these two notions are not orthogonal, because imperfective (specifically, progressive) contexts enforce the detelicization of telic predicates (e.g., *John was eating an apple* does not entail *John ate an apple*, namely completely). Nevertheless, these two notions should not be merged, because of all the good reasons discussed above. Now, the semantics of delimiting phrases provides another important reason to justify this distinction (cf. also [19a-b] below). In fact, if this distinction is not done, one inevitably falls into a contradiction, for delimiting phrases would then end up serving, at the same time, the purpose of: (a) detelicizing telic predicates (cf.: *John painted the wall for one hour*, that does not entail *John painted the wall*, namely completely), and: (b) telicizing atelic predicates (should Depraetere's claim concerning [17] be correct).

Yet, *prima facie*, delimiting phrases seem to have much in common with telicity. Indeed, just as telicity refers to the completion of an event of the appropriate type, delimiting phrases point to the right boundary of the event. To clarify the matter, it may be appropriate to introduce a terminological distinction. This is useful in the following sense. Since both perfectivity and telicity insist on the end-point of the event, it is crucial to distinguish the specific way this comes about in the two cases. I shall therefore set apart the 'terminativity' yielded by perfective situations from the 'boundedness' brought about by telic events. I am perfectly aware that other, possibly better terms might be suggested; but whatever the terminological choice, the point to be understood is that these two notions should not be confused. In fact, although both terms refer to the end-point of the relevant interval (corresponding to the Event Time of the given predicate), they are intended to suggest that this occurs in a crucially diverging way.

As here defined, terminativity concerns the aspectual domain, while boundedness concerns the actional domain. In the case of the former notion, the end-point is obviously EXTERNAL to the event; it only depends on the perfective viewpoint that is assumed by the speaker, who chooses to view the event in its entirety - i.e. as corresponding to an interval closed at its right boundary - irrespective of the actional nature of the predicate involved (provided no constraints impose themselves; cf. [9a]). With boundedness, instead, the end-point is INTERNAL to the telic event; cf. the notion of heterogenous event presented in section 1, precisely with respect to these

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25 Löbner (1988) and Herweg (1991b: 1002) use the term 'intergressive' in a different meaning, namely to designate purely punctual events, like *flash*. For a semantic assessment of punctual predicates, cf. Dini & Bertinetto (1995).

predicates. The end-point coincides in this case with the consequent state implied by telic events in their perfective reading, i.e. the reading that typically carries out the inherent telicity of telic predicates. If, for instance, John ate an apple, there is a state of the apple being eaten as a consequence of the event of eating. Note however that, although telicity implies perfectivity (i.e., boundedness entails terminativity), perfectivity is neutral with respect to telicity (i.e., terminativity does not entail boundedness). In other words, the relationship between boundedness and terminativity is not symmetric: both telic and atelic events may be viewed as aspectually terminated. For instance, [18] presents a terminated situation referring to an unbounded event. Here, the aspectually induced end-point has nothing to do with the inherent actional properties of the predicate:

[18] Marco *è stato malato* per un mese (l'anno scorso)
'M. *was*(-PERFECTIVE) *ill* for a month (last year)'.

Note that according to Egg (1995: 325) a predicate such as *be ill*, although basically "unbounded", may be coerced into a bounded one by means of delimiting phrases, as in [17], or by means of the appropriate verbal morphology - such as the Simple Past in Romance languages - as in [18]. But this cannot be the correct interpretation. The point is that, whatever the meaning attributed by Egg to the term 'boundedness', the predicate *be ill* normally preserves its basic character even when modified by delimiting phrases or when used at the Simple Past. The only difference is that in sentences such as [18] the situation is presented perfectively, namely as terminated (i.e. confined to a closed interval). Indeed, as shown by Bertinetto (1986) and Bertinetto & Delfitto (2000), delimiting phases presuppose a perfective context. The only way to coerce *be ill* into a bounded predicate would consist in building a context that brings about an ingressive reading, as in: *Appena ricevuta la brutta notizia, Teo fu malato* 'as soon as he got the bad news, T. was (= became) ill', at least to the extent that this sentence sounds acceptable (cf. anyway the examples of coercion discussed in [5]).[26]

5. *A typological perspective.*

The topic addressed in this paper concerns the very core of the aspectual domain. Although I endeavoured to show, in the preceding section, that PTC stems from a less than satisfactory assessment of the relation between actional and aspectual matters, it is fair to say that this type of misunderstanding can arise not only as the result of theoretical mix-up, but to some extent also, and quite interestingly, as a possible direction

[26] For further support to the view presented here, cf. also Heinämäki (1994).

spontaneously taken by natural languages in their evolution. Although this does not diminish the potential disruptiveness of this sort of misunderstanding, it is important to stress that it is no wonder that theorists may go astray here, for even the native speaker does: and since s\he is the depository of the ultimate linguistic wisdom, there must be a serious reason behind all this.

In order to understand the issue, one should best but it in the framework of the typological diversity of natural languages. Let us start from the following assumption: Every language has to cope with the fundamental problem of expressing the idea of the presence vs. absence of the event's end-point. However, there are two ways in which an event may have an end-point. Either: (i) it is telic, i.e. it has a (possibly potential) internal, or inherent, end-point: thus, in my terminology, it is 'bounded'. Or: (ii) the event is depicted according to a perfective viewpoint, i.e. it has an external end-point: thus, it is viewed as 'terminated'. In the ideal situation, languages develop independent devices to express these alternative ways of indicating the presence or absence of end-points. A case in point is Bulgarian, that sums up the aspectual structure of Romance languages (actually, enriched with further possibilities in the model domain of evidentiality) and the structure of Slavic languages. In fact, this language exhibits - on the one hand - not less than four Past tenses (Aorist, Perfect, Imperfect, Pluperfect, plus a further set of Past forms devoted to convey the notion of non-testimoniality(ity)', while - on the other hand - it exhibits a fairly systematic articulation into so-called 'perfective' \ 'imperfective' predicates (as they are called in Slavic grammars),' that in the case of Bulgarian, or for that matter of Ancient Slavonic, should more properly be understood as fundamentally rooted on the strictly actional distinction 'telic \ atelic' (i.e., bounded \ unbounded, to use the words introduced in sect. 4.5). Bulgarian is therefore able to independently express the contrast [± perfective] by means of the relevant inflectional distinctions (e.g., by means of the Aorist as opposed to the Imperfect), and the contrast [± telic] by means of the appropriate lexical selection.[15] Thus, the Bulgarian translation of [1a]

[15] Ultimately, even this contrast is in most cases based on morphological devices. The difference is that in the latter case the distinction is mostly based on derivational processes (unless otherwise obtained), while in the former case it is based on inflectional processes.
It should be stressed that the terminology traditionally employed to designate the members of verbal pairs in the Slavonic languages ('perfective' \ 'imperfective') is a treasury source of confusion, for the same terms are also used with reference to the two major aspectual values. Actually, as I am going to show, this terminology is not multistitied in a language like Russian, characterized by and large by a pervasive actional-aspectual syncretism. However, for a language like Bulgarian this merge appears to be photography misleading. Thus, in order to avoid misunderstandings, I shall skip in most cases the use of 'perfective' \ 'imperfective'

involves an atelic verb, as in [19a], in contrast to the inherently telic situation depicted in [19b]:

[19] a. Sheila *pluva* s namerenie dva casa
S. *swimm*-AORIST-UNBOUNDED deliberately two hours
b. Sheila *dopluva* s namerenie do brega
S. *swimm*-AORIST-BOUNDED deliberately to shore.

Incidentally, this definitely settles the matter concerning the 'delimited atelic ⇒ Telic Confusion'.

Note, now, that the double contrasts [± perfective] and [± telic] (or, equivalently, [± terminative] and [± bound]) are not completely orthogonal; indeed, as already remarked in connection with the 'imperfective paradox' mentioned in sect. 3, telicity can actually be implemented only in perfective contexts, whereas it remains a mere potentiality in imperfective ones (to the exclusion, let me repeat, of habitual sentences). We may conceive of these facts as in the following table:

[20]

	+ perfective	- perfective
+ telic	[a] YES	[b] (NO)
- telic	[c] YES	[d] YES

As may be seen, of the four conceivable possibilities, the only problematic combination is [b], concerning the intersection [+ telic, - perfective]. This, of course, comes as no surprise. If imperfectivity is viewed as involving open intervals, it is simply to be expected that this property clashes against the defining feature of telicity, that crucially involves the closure of the event as a prerequisite for its proper implementation. Recall that telicity, i.e. boundedness, implies the presence of an internal end-point; if the aspectual perspective on the event is non-terminative (imperfective), i.e. such that the end-point of the event is eliminated from the horizon of the language user, then the telic character of the predicate cannot emerge. See the discussion at the end of the preceding section (but recall the important proviso put forth with respect to habituality, as opposed to progressivity).

Note, however, that the constraint shown by combination [b] does not entail that telic predicates may never appear in imperfective contexts. In the relevant languages, it simply means that, whenever this happens (and excepting habituality), telicity remains a sheer potentiality. Thus, in English (as well as in Romance language), *John was eating an apple* is a perfectly

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with respect to the lexical structure of Slavonic, or - when doing so - I shall put these words between single quotes, to suggest that they should no be understood in their most typical aspectual interpretation.

acceptable sentence, conveying the meaning that the event referred to did not necessarily come to its natural end. The real problem concerns the languages - such as Bulgarian, and in general the Slavonic ones - that exhibit overt means to express the distinction telic \ atelic, so that the lexical choice of the predicate unavoidably involves a specific actional meaning. When this is the case, major consequences arise. Namely, not only combination [d] is rare,[85] but - because of this - combination [a] ends up assuming a privileged role in connection with the value [+ telic]. And this, in turn, may be the beginning of further developments.

Let us in fact assume that a given language (say, Ancient Slavonic) has acquired, in addition to the overt marking of the aspectual distinction [± perfective], a morphological apparatus to mark the contrast [± telic], for instance by means of prefixes that modify the telic character of the predicate. We now have an almost systematic presence of pairs of predicates whose basic meaning is very similar, only contrasting with respect to the feature [± telic]. Since our language is equally able to express the aspectual contrast [± perfective] and the actional contrast [± telic], then we have to do with a very rich system, perfectly equipped for conveying the finest temporal-aspectual nuances. However, quite paradoxically, the

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[85] Actually, even in a language like Bulgarian combination [d] is not strictly impossible. It simply undergoes severe restrictions, for it may only be found in peculiar contexts. In Bulgarian, combination [d] (rendering an imperfective tense, like the Imperfect, and a 'bounded' - i.e. 'perfective', in the meaning attached to this term by Slavic grammars - predicate) is only accessible when the peculiar sub-events (i.e., the repeated occurrences of the peculiar event) are in themselves telic. This is for instance the case in:

[i] αλλιώς σύτιν, οβλέσχε χε, ι ἐζιντιχες ἐχαι ανε ροῆσε
He got up-IPF-bd in the morning, but on-IPF-bd his clothes, and changed-IPF-bd those two pools

where each subevent can be viewed as telic (with IPF = 'Imperfect', bd = 'bounded'). Note however that, whenever an explicit adverbial of iteration is present (like *vsyaki den* 'every day'), then the telic interpretation is directly accessible with 'unbounded' predicates (i.e. 'imperfective', in the relevant sense), and indeed their 'bounded' cognates would sound quite inappropriate. Thus, combination [d] does impose strong constraints even in this kind of language.

The facts pointed out in [i] entail an important consequence. Since each subevent is viewed as telic, it is also by definition perfective. Indeed, peculiar subevents admit of delimiting phrases, that - as said in sect. 4.5 - presuppose perfectivity (cf. Bertinetto & Delfitto 2000):

[ii] Ogni giorno, Karlo mangiava in quel mirani \ dalle 13 alle 13,30
'Every day, K. ate(-IMPERFECT) in ten minutes \ from 1 p.m. to 1:30.'

Thus, although peculiar events are imperfective, as suggested by several authors (cf. the justification of this claim in Bertinetto 1991 and Lenci & Bertinetto 2000), it is correct to assert that each subevent of a telic event may be conceived of as perfective.

extreme richness of this system hides a possible danger of instability. It may in fact happen that the speakers of this language begin to avoid not only combination [d] (restricted to some types of dependent situations: see fn. 18), but also - as a result of the increased functional load of combinations [s] - combination [c], thus enhancing the purely statistical correlations that spontaneously tend to arise between talic predicates and perfective contexts on the one hand, and (to some extent at least) stelic predicates and imperfective contexts on the other. If this occurs, then a redundant system will arise, in which actional and aspectual morphology, instead of reinforcing each other, in fact delete each other. The next stage can possibly consist - as was indeed the case in several Slavonic languages, like Russian, Polish, Czech - in abandoning the previous aspectual morphology, and in refunctionalizing the originally actional morphology. In fact, as compared to Bulgarian (see above), these languages present a very simplified system of tenses. Russian, for instance, has just one Past form, while the Future is only used with so-called 'imperfective' verbs, for with 'perfective' ones the Present normally acquires future meaning. Thus, due to the extreme poverty of the inflectional system, the lexical oppositions of these languages (originally conveying an actional meaning) had to take upon themselves the functional burden previously carried by the inflectional (namely, aspectual) morphology, giving rise to a synthetic system where Actionality and Aspect turn out to be strictly intertwined.[95]

This amounts to saying that the PTC is not merely a theoretical mirage, due to imperfect understanding of the theoretical issues involved, but does indeed correspond to a development that some languages have gone through. The mistake obviously consists in generalizing this development to languages that do not behave in this way: i.e. languages where the contrast [± telic] is not an inalienable, morphologically expressed, feature of verbal predicates, but rather a purely semantic specification. To repeat once more the problem, the essential divide opposes systems like those of the Slavonic languages - as well as the Baltic languages, Georgian and Hungarian (the latter, to a large extent) - on the one side, and systems like those of the remaining European languages on the other side.[96] The criticisms illustrated

[95] There is a possible danger of misunderstanding here. I am not at all suggesting that in Russian - or similar languages - all that happens, from the temporal-aspectual viewpoint, is that there is a conflation of telic with perfective and of stelic with imperfective. The situation is much more complicated than that (cf. Bertinetto & Delfitto 2000). For further information on the aspectual structure of Russian, the reader should at least see Forsyth (1970). For a comparative overview of the various Slavic languages, one can now usefully consult Bran (2000), although it is fair to say that the theoretical approach proposed by this author is similar, but not identical, to the one proposed here.

[96] It is very important to realize that the Western European type does not constitute the only alternative. As a matter of fact, it turns out that many languages of Asia,

in sect. 4 should therefore be understood precisely in this sense, rather than as suggesting that telicity and perfectivity never show a tendency to converge in natural languages.

Note that the development described above is not the only conceivable one. The transition from Ancient Germanic to Modern German presents us with yet another possibility. Ancient Germanic had in fact gone several steps into acquiring a system of overt actional oppositions centered on the feature [± telic], for the prefix *ga- was mostly used to mark telicity, i.e. to create the telic cognate of basically atelic verbs (cf. Ravera & Bertinetto 1998/99, and references quoted therein). However, this system never reached maturity. At a given point, the language started to abandon this possibility, and the prefix *ga- was reconverted to become a marker of perfectivity in the Perfective Participle of most verbs. This, again, must have started out from the convergence of telicity and perfectivity in combination [a] of table [20].[31]

Thus, once more, the strong statistical correlation of (inherently) telic predicates and perfective contexts can be viewed as the weak ring in the

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several languages of Africa, and possibly several Native American languages, present a more or less systematic underspecification of the feature [± telic]. Thai is an extreme example in this sense. In this language, every predicate may be used, in the appropriate context, in either a telic or an atelic meaning [Jenny, 2000]. Needless to say, this may also be observed in Western European languages, being typically at stake in transitive accomplishments (cf. *to eat an apple* vs. *to eat apples*); however, this possibility undergoes severe restrictions at least in the case of achievement verbs, whose telic character is quite salient (see the discussion in sect. 4.2). One should therefore view the contrast [± telic[as a sort of polar orientation, with languages of the Slavonic type at one extreme of the scale and languages like Thai at the other extreme, with several intermediate positions depending on the number of telically underspecified predicates available in the given language.

31 Another interesting fact, in this respect, is Ramchand's (1997) claim to the effect that in Scottish Gaelic the perfective Pasts entail telicity, while the imperfective Past entails atelicity. This might look like another instance of a Russian-type language, except that this result is obtained with alternative devices. Scottish Gaelic does not present morphologically marked lexical contrasts of bounded / unbounded predicates; it rather presents - in the domain of Past tenses - an inflectionally marked opposition between the two basic aspectual values.

What makes me doubt about the correctness of this proposal is that this author is rather reticent about the really crucial examples that might provide substantial support to her claim. For instance, what would be the Scottish Gaelic translation of *Peter cried for half-an-hour*? Note that, according to the observations presented in sect. 4.2 concerning delimiting phrases, this sentence implies a perfective view; hence, the perfective Past should be used. Does it then entail that the given event is *ipso facto* telicized? I find this highly implausible. However, since I have not been able to collect data from native speakers of the language, I have to leave this for further research.

actional \ aspectual interaction. However, this does not imply that one should endorse the TTC claim. The purpose of this paper was in fact to show that a thorough understanding of the Actionality \ Aspect interplay leads us to an alternative view, endowed with a far broader explicative power.

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