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BETWEEN ASPECT AND TENSES IN HOMER AND EARLY GREEK

Perfective aspect is normally considered incompatible with presents and mostly limited to past. Greek fits this expectation in forms but not in function. In this paper I will focus on *imperfective*: *perfective* contrast and the expression of chronologically indefinite and regularly repeated events. Originally, perfectivity was available not only for chronological indefinite events (gnomic aorist), but also for habitual events, giving priority to the conceptualization of each single event – this is also the case in some Slavic languages, such as Czech. So, why is the indicative of *perfective* stem (i.e., aorist) formally restricted to the past? Maybe at an early stage, while a past: non-past dichotomy was more relevant in the *imperfective* stem, a future: non-future dichotomy was more relevant in the *perfective*. I conclude with a look to the two major hypotheses about the source of the Greek future, that's to say either from a subjunctive of the s-aorist or from an old desiderative.

Keywords: aspect, tense, perfective, habitual, future

1. ASPECTS OF THE GREEK VERB

Aspect is an essential feature of the Ancient Greek verbal system. All inflected forms are marked for aspect, except for the *future* stem (shortened FUT). We have three aspects in Greek: *imperfective* (shortened IMPV, this is the present stem)[2], *perfective* (shortened PV, this is the aorist stem) and *perfect* (shortened PRF). *Imperfective* encodes an event as open, ongoing, or simply lacking a natural endpoint; *perfective* encodes an event as completed (i.e., reaching a natural endpoint) or temporally bounded (mostly with States); another crucial function of *perfective*, usually found with States, is the inchoative one (the perfective shifts the meaning of a verb from the encoding of a state to that of the preceding

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[2] In grammatical notations the aspectual/temporal stems of the Greek verb will be cited in shortened form in small capital: IMPV will be used for the *present* stem, PV for the *aorist* stem. IMPV:PV verbal pairs in Slavic will be also cited in small capital. In the text, stems and tenses will be cited in Italic in order to distinguish morphological forms from functions.

change of state). In the early language, the *perfect* has stative or resultative meaning (Schwyzer 1950: 246; Rijksbaron 2006: 5–32, 2019; for Homer, s. Chantraine 1953: 183–196). In Classical Greek, and especially from the later 4th century B.C., the resultative function of the *perfect* becomes progressively more common, and *perfects* can also be found with simple anterior meaning, becoming increasingly interchangeable with the *perfective*. The IMPV:PV contrast is retained in all kinds of subordinate clauses, in deontic modality (notably, the imperative mood) and even in substantivated infinitives. For these reasons Greek strongly resembles Slavic, rather than English or Romance languages. We can also find other similarities between Greek and Slavic languages. According to Napoli (2006), Homeric Greek verbal system resembles Russian for the prominence that gives to actionality (telicity in particular). Probably this is still the case for classical Greek, but determining the exact meaning of perfectivity is beyond the scope of this study.

The perfective is usually considered incompatible with present tense (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 83), and mostly limited to past. Greek, lacking a present *perfective*, fits this expectation in form, but not function. Apart from the fact that all other inflected forms but the indicative are unmarked for tense, the indicative *perfective* itself is a past tense in form, but not always in meaning, and, especially in the early language, seems to behave as a pure tenseless form, as I will show below. The use of *perfective* as indefinite present (also in encoding of regularly repeated events) is not an idiosyncrasy of Greek, having a good parallel in some Slavic languages, particularly in Czech. According to Dickey (2000, 2015), perfective's chief function may be either the expression of totality or temporal definiteness, and some Slavic languages (such as Russian and Bulgarian) would have shifted the meaning from the former to the latter.

2. PERFECTIVITY, INDEFINITENESS AND REGULAR REPETITION

2.1. Perfectivity and not-past reference

In Greek the *perfective* is compatible with non-past meaning, even in the indicative. We leave apart the uses of the English *present perfect*, that are often covered by Greek *aorist* (also *perfect* and sometimes *imperfect*), because such uses have true past meaning, encoding an event anterior to the speech time (or to the given reference time). Following Rijksbaron (2006: 33), we can distinguish at least three uses of the *perfective* indicative with non-past meaning:

1. Encoding of events overlapping with the speech time (actual present).
2. Future-like meaning, in hypothetical period of reality and eventuality.
3. Encoding of Generic truths and/or regularly repeated events (we can call it indefinite or gnomic present).

In all these cases, the *aorist* (i.e., *perfective*) alternates not with other past tenses (*imperfect* and *pluperfect*), but the so-called primary tenses (*present*, *perfect*, and *future*, although the latter mostly after Homer).

The use of *perfective* as actual present is usually found with performative verbs, i.e., verbs encoding events that are ideally completed in the speech act itself, but also with verbs of mental state. The use with performative verbs is frequently found in Attic theatre, and consequently Rijksbaron (2006: 33) names it *tragic aorist*. A good example, also given by Rijksbaron, is the following:

1) ἐπήινεσ′$_{PV}$, ἀλλὰ στεῖχε δωμάτων ἔσω· (Eur. *I.A.* 440)
You *have my thanks*; now go within.[3]

An example with a verb of mental state from Homer is the following one:

2) τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν ὅ μευ ἔτλης$_{PV}$ ἀντίος ἐλθεῖν$_{PV.INF}$; (Il. 21.150)
Who among men art thou, and from whence, that thou *darest come forth* against me?

This first use of the *aorist* is not surprising: throughout the history of the language, the aorist (i.e., *perfective*) is available to encode immediate past, and concerning performative verbs the distinction between an event overlapping the speech time and an immediately anterior event can be very labile. In the case of verbs of emotion and mental state, the *perfective* can express both a punctual change of state and a transitory state, so partially overlapping with the *perfect* (some of these verbs lack an *imperfective*, whose functions are covered by the *perfect*, for example: δέδ(ϝ)οικα$_{PRF}$/ἔδ(ϝ)εισα$_{PV}$ 'to fear').

The second use of the *aorist* is that in the apodosis of a hypothetical period of eventuality, as in the sample (3).

3) εἰ μέν κ′ αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι$_{IMPV.SUB}$′
ὤλετο$_{PV}$ μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται$_{FUT}$·
εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ′ ἵκωμι$_{PV.SUB}$ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
ὤλετό$_{PV}$ μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
ἔσσεται$_{FUT}$, οὐδέ κέ μ′ ὦκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη$_{PV.OPT}$. (Il. 9.412–416)
If I *abide* here and *war* about the city of the Trojans, then *lost is* my home-return, but my renown *shall be* imperishable; but if I *return* home to my dear native land, *lost* then *is* my glorious renown, yet *shall* my life long *endure*, neither *shall* the doom of death *come* soon upon me.

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[3] Translations are not mine. In all cited passages, I provide an already existing English version: for Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* Coleridge's 1891, for *Iliad* Butler's 1898, for *Odyssey* Butler's 1900, for Herodotus Godley's 1920. All the translations are available online at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.

The *perfective* is allowed in the apodosis of a hypothetical period of reality and eventuality (I and II types in Schwyzer 1950: 682–688), alongside the *future* and the *imperative* mood. In the protasis we find the *subjunctive* (II type). In (3), the aspectual contrast between the *perfective* and *future* forms in the apodosis is clear: the realization of one of the two alternative conditions will give the completion of a punctual event (the death of the hero or of his glory), and a durable consequence (an imperishable fame or a long life). So ὤλετο_{PV} "it dies/is dead" encodes an Achievement, while ἔσ(σε)ται_{FUT} "it will be" encodes a permanent State. In the last line, note the shift to the *optative* κιχείη "it would reach"[4], with the modal particle κε: such a shift in form is common in the Greek language.

The most unexpected use is probably the third one, the gnomic aorist, which I will cover in the next section.

2.2. The gnomic aorist

Perfectives are also allowed for generic truths and similes. The traditional definition is gnomic aorist, but this use is not restricted to idioms, as is typically the case with past forms in other languages. The concept of gnomic is explained by Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994: 19): an event abstracted from a chronological line, that may occur at any moment. We can also call it indefinite present.

In generic truths and especially similes (typical of the epic language), we can easily show that IMPV:PV contrast is fully retained in Homer: *perfectives* are used for punctual or completed events, *imperfectives* for atelic, not completed, or continuative events. This is not an idiosyncrasy of the Greek language: for example, in a similar context, PV and IMPV verbs regularly alternate in some Slavic languages, it's to say, Czech, Slovak, Slovene, and (to a lesser degree) Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (Mønnesland 1984; Dickey 2000, ch. 2; 2015: 180). The peculiarity of Greek is not the use of a PV form but the fact that the PV form is formally a past tense and alternates with *present*, *perfect* and also *future* (so called *primary tenses*, i.e., having non-past time reference). We provide the following two samples:

4) ἦμαρ δ' ὀρφανικὸν παναφήλικα παῖδα τίθησι_{IMPV.PRES}·
   πάντα δ' ὑπεμνήμυκε_{PRF}, δεδάκρυνται_{PRF} δὲ παρειαί,
   δευόμενος δέ τ' ἄνεισι_{IMPV.PRES} πάϊς ἐς πατρὸς ἑταίρους,
   ἄλλον μὲν χλαίνης ἐρύων, ἄλλον δὲ χιτῶνος·
   τῶν δ' ἐλεησάντων κοτύλην τις τυτθὸν ἐπέσχε_{PV}·
   χείλεα μέν τ' ἐδίην'_{PV}, ὑπερῴην δ' οὐκ ἐδίηνε_{PV}. (*Il.* 22.490-95)
   The day of orphanhood *cutteth* a child off from the friends of his youth;

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[4] We have to do with an epic verb, whose reduplicated stem has lost its *present* (*κίχημι, replaced by κιχάνω) and is currently used as if it were an *aorist* ([ἐ]κίχην), so synchronically it is a *perfective* form.

ever *is* his head *bowed* how, and his cheeks *are bathed in tears*, and in his need the child *hieth* him to his father's friends, plucking one by the cloak and another by the tunic; and of them that are touched with pity, one *holdeth forth* his cup for a moment: his lips he *wetteth*, but his palate he *wetteth* not.

5) ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀπὸ σκοπιῆς εἶδεν_{PV} νέφος αἰπόλος ἀνὴρ
ἐρχόμενον κατὰ πόντον ὑπὸ Ζεφύροιο ἰωῆς·
τῷ δέ τ' ἄνευθεν ἐόντι μελάντερον ἠΰτε πίσσα
φαίνετ'_{IMPV.PRES} ἰὸν κατὰ πόντον, ἄγει_{IMPV.PRES} δέ τε λαίλαπα πολλήν,
ῥίγησέν_{PV} τε ἰδών, ὑπό τε σπέος ἤλασε_{PV} μῆλα· (*Il*. 4.275–279)
Even as when from some place of outlook a goatherd *seeth* a cloud coming over the face of the deep before the blast of the West Wind, and to him being afar off it *seemeth* blacker than pitch as it *passeth* over the face of the deep, and it *bringeth* a mighty whirlwind; and he *shuddereth* at sight of it, and *driveth* his flock beneath a cave.

The use of a PV in such cases is not unique to Greek: for example, in similar contexts, PV and IMPV verbs regularly alternate in some Slavic languages, it's to say, Czech, Slovak, Slovene, and (to a lesser degree) Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (Mønnesland 1984; Dickey 2000, ch. 2; 2015: 180). The peculiarity of Greek is not the use of a *perfective* form but the fact that the *perfective* is formally a past tense and alternates with *present* and *perfect*.

In Homer, *perfectives* are probably allowed also for explicitly repeated events (6), i.e., in a true habitual sense; in this case, however, evidence is less cogent.

6) νῦν δ' ἤδη τούτων ἐπιδεύομαι_{IMPV.PRES}· ἀλλά μοι αὐτῷ
ἔργον ἀέξουσιν_{IMPV.PRES} μάκαρες θεοί, ᾧ ἐπιμίμνω·
τῶν ἔφαγόν_{PV} τ' ἔπιόν_{PV} τε καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα_{PV}. (*Od*. 15.371–73)
But now I lack all this, though for my own part the blessed gods make to prosper the work to which I give heed. Therefrom have I eaten and drunk, and given to reverend strangers.

Although in the translation above the three *perfectives* in the third line are rendered as English present perfect, they can be understood as present as well, because the swineherd Eumaeus is talking about his own life's condition. While the present ἀέξουσιν "they prosper" encodes a continuous process, the three *perfectives* in the third line focus on each single occurrence. This fact itself, of course, does not require a *perfective*, but just allows it. We can suggest, for

example, that the two verbs for *eating* and *drinking* (atelic) could be better translated as "to have something to eat and drink", or "to satisfy one's hunger" and "quench one's thirst".

The use of a *perfective* in a similar context is admissible in the language of the classical period, as the following Herodotus' passage shows:

7) Δήμου τε αὖ ἄρχοντος ἀδύνατα μὴ οὐ κακότητα ἐγγίνεσθαι_{IMPV.INF} · [...]. Τοῦτο δὲ τοιοῦτο γίνεται_{IMPV.PRES} ἐς ὃ ἂν προστάς τις τοῦ δήμου τοὺς τοιούτους παύσῃ_{PV.SUB} · ἐκ δὲ αὐτῶν θωμάζεται_{IMPV.PRES} οὗτος δὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου, θωμαζόμενος_{IMPV.PART} δὲ ἀν' ὧν ἐφάνη_{PV} μούναρχος. (Hdt. III.82)
Then again, when the people rule it is impossible that wickedness *will not occur* [...]. This *goes on* until one of the people *rises to stop* such men. He therefore *becomes* the people's idol, and *being* their idol *is made* their monarch.

However, if we limit ourselves to large descriptions of events such as the above ones, the use of ᴘᴠ forms seems to be more regular in Homer, while, in the classical period, it looks like a somewhat marked choice, the present being the default option. As an example of it, Table 1 shows data I have collected from three authors – Homer (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*), Herodotus and Thucydides.

	present	*perfective* (i.e., *aorist*)	Tot
Homer	271 (62,59%)	162 (37,41%)	433
Herodotus	439 (95,85%)	19 (4,15%)	458
Thucydides	109 (92,37%)	9 (7,63%)	118

Table 1. Verbs used in indefinite (gnomic) contexts

2.3. Ionic σκ-*preterits*: a second level of aspect in Homer

In Homer, Hesiod (and so in later epic) a suffix -σκ- can be added to both *imperfective* and *perfective* stems to form preterit forms, traditionally called Ionic iteratives (or Ionic imperfects). These forms are scarcely found in tragic poets, and never in prose, except for Herodotus (s. Schwyzer 1939: 710–12; Chantraine 1988: 323–325, Puhvel 1991, Daues 2009), but here I am limiting myself to Homer.

Ionic σκ-preterits have a variety of uses akin to English *used to* and *would* (in iterative sense). We can distinguish basically three functions, following Daues (2009):

1. Encoding of (unquantified) repeated events, either in the same occasion or in different occasions, and often in the descriptions of a typical behavior of a subject (habitual). A particular subcase is the use in presence of subordinate clauses in the optative, meaning *whenever*.

2. Generic continuative meaning, which is found with States and gradual completion verbs. This is more strictly related to events in the background than the simple imperfect. The lack of true repetition is related to the semantic of the verb, and English *used to* can also be used in similar context. Again, the σκ- preterit looks as a habitual.

3. Indefinite/potential meaning, with an indefinite subject (τις, πάντες). In this last case, we have to do with a gnomic, rather than a pure habitual.

For these reasons, Ionic σκ-*preterits* can be better defined as *habitual* (shortened ʜᴀʙ) than iterative. Daues (2009) avoids this definition, because it would be incompatible with the *perfective* stem, and generically speaks of encoding of events in background, but also with this more neuter definition he implicitly admits the imperfective meaning of this suffix. A good example of the first use is the following:

8) αὐτὰρ Πηλεΐδης θῆκεν_PV σόλον αὐτοχόωνον
   ὃν πρὶν μὲν ῥίπτασκε_IMPV.HAB μέγα σθένος Ἠετίωνος· (Il. 23.827–28)
   Then the son of Peleus *set forth* a mass of rough-cast iron, which of old the mighty strength of Eëtion *was wont to hurl*.

In (9) we find three verbs in the σκ-preterit: the first is a frequentative motion verb in a negative clause (the event did not actually occur) and the other two refer to continuous events.

9) αὐτὰρ ὃ μήνιε_IMPV.PAST νηυσὶ παρήμενος_IMPV.PART ὠκυπόροισι
   διογενὴς Πηλῆος υἱὸς πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·
   οὔτέ ποτ᾽ εἰς ἀγορὴν πωλέσκετο_IMPV.HAB κυδιάνειραν
   οὔτέ ποτ᾽ ἐς πόλεμον, ἀλλὰ φθινύθεσκε_IMPV.HAB φίλον κῆρ
   αὖθι μένων_IMPV.PART, ποθέεσκε_IMPV.HAB δ᾽ ἀϋτήν τε πτόλεμόν τε. (*Il.* 1.488-92).
   But he in his *wrath sat* beside his swift-faring ships, the Zeus-sprung son of Peleus, swift-footed Achilles. Never *did he go* forth to the place of gathering, where men win glory, nor ever to war, but *wasted away* his own heart, as he *tarried* where he was; and he *longed for* the war-cry and the battle.

The continuative meaning of the last two σκ-preterits is related to the semantics of the two verbs: φθινύθω (an enlarged form of φθίνω) "waste away, decay", and ποθέω "regret".

This σκ-*habitual* can be derived from both *imperfective* and *perfective* stems. In Homer, we find about 80 *imperfective* stems and 30 *perfective* stems. *Imperfective* and *perfective* forms are rarely attested to the same verb. It may happen because the selection of *imperfective* and *perfective* forms operated primarily on a lexical level (which is plausible considering that we have to do with a secondary imperfective suffix), but it can also be an accident due to relatively little data. However, we find both an *imperfective* and a *perfective* σκ-*habitual* at least with ὠθέω, σπένδω, φαίνομαι and φεύγω. Maybe, we can add to these the couple ἔφασκον:εἴπεσκον, if we accept two conditions: 1) ἔφασκον is a habitual inflection of φημί, and not a different lexeme, as in later Greek (*imperfect* of φάσκω); 2) φημί and εἶπον form a suppletive IMPV:PV pair, with the meaning "to tell, to say". In the following table, we provide the distribution of *imperfective* and *perfective* forms in relation to different meanings of the σκ-*habitual*.

	imperfective habitual	*perfective habitual*	Tot.
Repetition	99	28	116
Repetition + whenever clause	30	22	63
Continuative	82	0	82
Indefinite potential	5	32	37
Tot.	216	77	293

Table 2. σκ-habitual in Homer

As expected, *perfectives* are never found with continuative meaning, while they prevail with indefinite-potential meaning, but it depends on the frequency of the formula τὶς εἴπεσκε "somebody would say" (28x). With true repetitions – as Chantraine (1988: 323–25) rightly observes – the IMPV:PV dichotomy is related to the conceptualization of every single event, as it is clear in the following passage:

10) ἦ τοι ὅτε λήξειεν_{PV.OPT} ἀείδων_{IMPV.PART} θεῖος ἀοιδός,
δάκρυ ὀμορξάμενος_{PV.PART} κεφαλῆς ἄπο φᾶρος ἔλεσκε_{PV.HAB}
καὶ δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον ἑλὼν_{PV.PART} σπείσασκε_{PV.HAB} θεοῖσιν·
αὐτὰρ ὅτ᾽ ἂψ ἄρχοιτο_{IMPV.OPT} καὶ ὀτρύνειαν_{PV.OPT} ἀείδειν_{IMPV.INF}
Φαιήκων οἱ ἄριστοι, ἐπεὶ τέρποντ᾽ ἐπέεσσιν,
ἂψ Ὀδυσεὺς κατὰ κρᾶτα καλυψάμενος_{PV.PART} γοάασκεν_{IMPV.HAB}. (*Od.* 8.87-92)

> Yea, and as often as the divine minstrel *ceased* his *singing*, Odysseus *would wipe* away his tears and *draw* the cloak from off his head, and *taking* the two-handled cup *would pour libations* to the gods. But as often as he *began* again, and the nobles of the Phaeacians *bade* him *sing*, because they took pleasure in his lay, Odysseus *would* again *cover* his head and moan.

So, we can conclude that perfectivity in Greek is compatible with the expression of chronologically indefinite events, and, in Homeric Greek at least, also with regularly repeated events and habitual. This happens both in the present (gnomic *aorist*) and in the past, although in the latter case the help of a habitual marker (-σκ-) is needed. Once again, the situation resembles that of some Slavic languages. From a morphological point of view, we can observe that Bulgarian admits *aorists* (i.e., simple past) and *imperfects* from both IMPV and PV verbs, thus showing two distinct levels of aspect, as it seems the case for Homeric Greek as well. In Bulgarian, the main function of the *aorist* of an IMPV verb is the location of a process in the past with no reference to its duration; on the other hand, the imperfect of PV verbs codifies the repetition of an event (similarly to Ionic σκ-*habitual*), but it is only allowed in subordinate clauses (where Greek has *optative*). However, the full retention of IMPV:PV contrast with regularly repeated events has a good parallel in Czech, Slovak and Slovenian, which Dickey (2000) considers the most conservative of Slavic languages in this respect.

3. THE ASYMMETRY OF TENSES AND ASPECT

3.1. The gnomic aorist and the augment

As well known, Greek, Indo-Iranian and Armenian share a marker of the past tense called augment, consisting in the prefixation of a vowel **e-* to an initial consonant, or in the lengthening of an initial vowel. The augment is not yet mandatory in the epic language. According to some authors, the use of *aorist* in a gnomic context is an innovation because it nearly always shows the augment in Homer (Wakker 2017). According to many other scholars, however, the original function of the augment was not past-time reference, but something as evidentiality (Schwyzer 1939: 651–52), some deictic function (Platt 1891; Bakker 2005; Pagniello 2007) or even perfectivity (Willi 2018: 357–416). Unfortunately, definitions such as "evidentiality" (is this a mood?) or "nearness to the speaker" are too vague and lack to provide a plausible counterpart in other languages. What is more, all these hypotheses are limited to the *aorist* (i.e., PV), systematically ignoring the *imperfect* (i.e., past IMPV), although augmented *imperfects* can be found in Homer. The less unconvincing hypothesis is Platt's (1891), who talks of present-time reference, thus including present properly and immediate past

(*present perfect*, in English terms). Even this hypothesis fails to explain the lack of augmented *presents*, but it reasonably explains the shift to past meaning as an aoristic drift, that is also Willi's explanation. Willi's hypothesis is indeed closer to Platt's than it looks at first sight: it is sufficient to read *perfect* (in the English sense) instead of *perfective*. De Angeli's (2004) view is completely different: he denies that the augment had any function in Homer and considers all un-augmented forms as relics of older stages of the language.

In my opinion, a clear function of the augment in Homer is hard to be recognized (at a synchronic level), but we can speak of tendences rather than functions. According to Bakker's (2005) data, the augment usually appears in *aorists* used as gnomic or immediate past, while it tends to be omitted in sequences of events in the past (that contradicts Willi's hypothesis of perfective function) and is absent in Ionic iterative σκ-preterits (un-augmented forms don't have to be necessary older than augmented ones). Whatever the function of the augment was – if any – to suppose that IMPV:PV dichotomy previously limited to past was extended to indefinite present, the tense distinction being contextually lost, would sound very unusual: aspect's markers can evolve in tenses, but the reverse is unexpected. A question arises: *Why did Greek never have a present perfective?* The question cannot be solved by invoking the use of the augment.

3.2. Present, past and future time reference

In the reconstruction of IE verbal system, the view that so-called primary endings were just progressive markers (eventually restricted to present use) has become dominant (s., among others, Strunk 1994; Pooth 2009). If we accept the hypothesis that primary endings (*-*ti*) were indeed progressive markers in proto-IE, the protolanguage would have lacked any pure tense at all. In a situation such as this, it is not surprising that a perfective-like stem (or lexeme, if we assign it to derivation) either lacked or was going to lose present-like endings. In most branches *perfect* and/or *perfective* stems evolved in a past tense, and the distinction between primary (*-*ti*) and secondary (*-*t*) endings consequently lost importance, but in Greek *perfective* and *perfect* stems strongly retained aspectual meaning and did not merge. Also the *perfect* (that has stative meaning) originally lacked tense distinction, but a *pluperfect* was created. Why was a *present* not created for the *perfective* stem, if it was not restricted to past meaning in Greek?

So, we can now rewrite the question as follows: *Why did Greek never develop a present perfective*? Maybe a solution can be found to this problem on a synchronic level, leaving apart the augment question, that, in any case – as we have shown above – offers just a diachronic explanation. We can suppose that in a system where the primary distinction was the aspect, a binary (pre-future) tense distinction can develop asymmetrically. Past:not-past distinction is more relevant

in the *imperfective* stem (or lexeme, if we consider it on a derivational level, as Moser 2017 does) rather than in the *perfective*, because a punctual/telic event overlapping with the speech time is ideally completed at the very moment, and so can be easily assigned to the past (s. the *tragic aorist* above). On the contrary in the PV, a not-future: future distinction can be more relevant, and the future meaning was partially covered by *subjunctive*, partially by the *future* (s. below), but usually not by the *aorist* indicative the use of the latter in the hypothetical period being the only exception. So, at an early stage of the Greek language, the situation can be schematized as follows:

Time reference	past	present	future
imperfective stem	*imperfect*	*present*	
perfective stem	*past* (+ gnomic)		*subjunctive*

This situation is well represented in Homer, if we leave the *future* apart, to which we will return below.

Let us look again at Slavic languages. That the *present* of PV verbs can have future meaning in the northern Slavic languages is a well-known fact (for the future expression in Slavic languages, s. Vaillant 1966: 108–109). What is less known is that in South-west Slavic (Czech and Slovak), where *presents* of PV verbs can easily be used as gnomic or habitual, they are nevertheless perceived as *future* and block a periphrastic future, being now limited to IMPV verbs. This probably happens because definite events located on a chronological line are more relevant for the conceptualization of tenses than gnomic or habitual events. An IMPV verb is natural for past, present or future events, but a PV one is unnatural for present events (in this sense we can say that the PV is scarcely compatible with the present). For PVs the only question is if we assign punctual events overlapping with speech time to the past (as it happens in the case of *tragic aorist*) or future (as in Czech, but also Greek, s. below). In South Slavic, where periphrastic futures are freely derived from both IMPV and PV verbs, and PV present is mostly used in subordinate clauses, we can ask if the present of PV verbs is still a tense or a mood.

3.3. The Greek future

Aorist subjunctives and futures can be often interchangeable in Homer:

11) ἀλλ᾽ ἄγ᾽ ἐγών, ὃς σεῖο γεραίτερος εὔχομαι εἶναι,
    ἐξείπω$_{PV.SUB}$ καὶ πάντα διίξομαι$_{FUT}$ [... (*Il*. 9.60–61)
    But come, I that avow me to be older than thou *will speak* forth and *will declare* the whole [...

12) ἀλλ᾽ ἄγεθ᾽, ὑμῖν τεύχε᾽ ἐνείκω_{PV.SUB} θωρηχθῆναι_{PV.INF}
ἐκ θαλάμου: ἔνδον γάρ, ὀΐομαι, οὐδέ πη ἄλλη
τεύχεα κατθέσθην Ὀδυσεὺς καὶ φαίδιμος υἱός. (*Od*. 22.139-41)
But come, *let* me *bring* you from the store-room arms to don, for it
is within, methinks, and nowhere else that Odysseus and his glorious
son have laid the arms.

In the samples above we find *futures* and *subjunctives* with the same volitional-intentional meaning (typically in 1ˢᵗ person). *Future* can also have imperative force, or prospective meaning, and in most cases, its functions can be partially covered by other tenses (the *present*) or moods, especially the *subjunctive* (s. Schwyzer 1950: 291–92; Magni 1997). In Homer, gnomic futures are not yet found, but, according to Magni (1997), we find epistemic futures referring to present events with modal force.

According to some scholars, such as Hermann (1948), the origin of the s-*preterits* and *futures* is the same in all IE languages and the future is nothing more than the old subjunctive of an s-*aorist*. Willi (2018: 441–451) goes further, tracing back all synchronically irregular futures (including βέομαι "will live" and ἔδομαι "will eat") to a proto-Greek *s*-form (in *ἔδ[σ]ομαι – Willi says – an original *s* would have been dropped to avoid confusion with ἔσομαι). What reason could have caused the split of a *perfective* stem into independent s-*aorist* and *s-future*, with the consequent spread of the latter to all roots, is not completely clear. Such a split would be reasonable if an old perfective aspect had been reanalyzed as a past tense, leaving an old s-subjunctive free to be reanalyzed as a future. But this is not the case for Greek. The perfective meaning is stable throughout the inflected forms of the *aorist* stem, and according to Allan, it was originally retained in secondary (post-Homeric) *futures* formed on passive *aorists* (Allan 2002: 134–149). Many verbs with a regular *s-future* have a completely different aorist (πείσομαι and ἔπαθον, λήψομαι and ἔλαβον). According to Willi (2018: 441, n. 42), the aspectual neutrality of the Greek *future* can be explained by the inherently temporal indefiniteness of the subjunctive, but does it justify a morphological split?

According to a second hypothesis, the source of the Greek *future* would have been a proto-IE desiderative (Meillet 1918: 164–220; Chantraine 1953: 201–204; Schwyzer 1939: 779–89). This old desiderative would have been also the source of the Indo-Iranian *future* (in -sya-) and Lithuanian (in -siu). These forms are probably related, but it is difficult to trace back them to a single source, such as IE *-s[i̯]e/o-. First, there is no evidence of a glide in Greek, although at least in roots ending in a stop it would have disappeared with no reflex (*deik̑-s[i̯]e/o- → δείξω). As Schwyzer (1939: 787) notes, the so-called Doric future in -σέω

cannot go back to an IE *-$s\underset{.}{i}e/o$-. Both Indo-Iranian and Greek FUTs require the full-grade of the root (λήψομαι, present λαμβάνω, τεύξομαι, present τυγχάνω, etc.), but while the Greek *future* is accented on the root, the Indo-Iranian one is accented on the suffix -*syá*-. For this reason, it is normally assumed that the IE desiderative was formed in *-*se/o*-, which is also the source of the true Sanskrit *desiderative* (with generalized accented reduplication, so requiring the 0-grade of the root), and Indo-Iranian enlarged the suffix in -*sya*-, and Lithuanian retained an athematic form in the 3rd person. According to Willi, to suppose that IE had an *s-desiderative* distinct from an *s-aorist subjunctive*, but with identical suffix and partially overlapping meaning is untenable. But we must remind that we find not just s-*aorists* and *futures*, but also *s-presents*, often with a lexicalized suffix (s. ἀλέξω and ἀλαλκεῖν "to ward off"), and maybe all these sigmatic formations go back to some prehistoric suffix, developing different meaning with different roots.

To suppose that the *future* has more than one source is maybe better. Whatever their form was, at some point some future-like desiderative must have merged with old short-vowel subjunctives of the s-*aorist* (subjunctive in general was already available as future). The *future* then spread as an independent category, and some presents frequently used as future were reanalyzed as future. Besides the unambiguous present stems εἶμι$_{IMPV/FUT}$ "will go" and νέομαι$_{IMPV/FUT}$ "will return", also forms such as χέω$_{IMPV/FUT}$ "(will) pour" and τελε(ί)ω$_{IMPV/FUT}$ "(will) accomplish" may be just presents used as futures. If χέω can go back to a proto-Greek *$kheu\text{-}so/e\text{-}$ (Willi's hypothesis), τελείω can only go back to *$teles\text{-}\underset{.}{i}o/e\text{-}$, not to *$teles\text{-}so/e\text{-}$. That a present such as τελε(ί)ω might acquire a future meaning is not surprising considering the inherently telic meaning of this verb. The same can be said for γαμέω$_{IMPV/FUT}$ "(will) marry", which can be derived from *$games\text{-}\underset{.}{i}o/e\text{-}$. but not from *$games\text{-}so/e\text{-}$ (Homer has γαμέσ[σ]εται$_{FUT}$ in passive sense, but the *aorist* is ἔγημα).

I conclude with a few words about the tendency of the Greek *future* to be inflected in the middle voice. Willi (2018: 445–447) rightly notes that this Greek idiosyncrasy is not a proof in favor of an original desiderative meaning, having no parallel in true desiderative forms (for Greek desiderative in -σείω, s. Kölligan 2018). Willi himself, on the contrary, invokes the middle inflection as proof in favor of an s-*aorist* source of the *future*: being the s-*aorist* causative, a middle inflection is needed to neutralize causative meaning (so the middle βήσομαι is related to the active βαίνω "go, walk", while βήσω is causative as ἔβησα "bring" was). But the causative meaning of the s-*aorist* is likely to be a Greek innovation and many middle *futures* are not related to any s-*aorist*. Magni's (1997) view is more elaborate: the original nucleus of the middle *future* would have lain in stative (ἔσ[σ]ομαι "will be") and eventive (βέομαι "will be alive" and θανοῦμαι "will die") verbs, and then spread to other semantic categories by analogy. In any

case, old subjunctives were reanalyzed as future only if inflected in the middle voice (πίομαι "will drink", ἔδομαι "will eat") and it must be related to the spread of the middle voice, in one or the other direction. Then, the spread of the middle voice must have facilitated the emancipation of an independent *future* stem.

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ΜΕΤΑΞΥ ΠΤΥΧΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΧΡΟΝΩΝ ΣΤΟΝ ΟΜΗΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΠΡΩΙΜΗ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ

Περίληψη

Στο πρώτο μέρος αυτής της εργασίας παρουσιάζω τις διάφορες χρήσεις της ελληνικής τελειότητας (ο αορίστας) σε γνωμικά και συνήθη πλαίσια. Χρησιμοποιώ κυρίως ομηρικά δεδομένα, δίνοντας επίσης μια ματιά στους πρώτους ιστορικούς (Ηρόδοτο και Θουκυδίδη). Συζητάω το γνωμικό αόριστο και τα ιωνικά παρελθοντικά σε -σκ- (τα οποία, κατά τη γνώμη μου, ήταν συνηθισμένα). Στην πρώιμη ελληνική, η τελειότητα πιθανότατα σχετιζόταν αυστηρά με την ολοκλήρωση κάθε μεμονωμένου γεγονότος παρά με τη χρονική οριστικότητα και το προσκήνιο στην αφήγηση. Αυτό έχει έναν καλό παραλληλισμό σε ορισμένες σύγχρονες σλαβικές γλώσσες, όπως η Τσεχική. Στο δεύτερο μέρος δίνω μια ματιά στους χρόνους, εστιάζοντας ιδιαίτερα στην έλλειψη ενός τέλειου παρόντος χρόνου και στον μέλλοντα χρόνο. Έχουμε βασικά δύο υποθέσεις για την πηγή του ελληνικού μέλλοντος: μπορεί να ανατρέξει είτε στην υποτακτική του σιγματικός αόριστος είτε σε μια παλιά επιθυμητική. Προτιμώ να θεωρώ το μέλλον ως μια σύνθετη κατηγορία με περισσότερες από μία πηγές.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: πτυχή, χρόνους, τέλεια, συνήθης, μέλλον