# TENSE AND ITS RELATION TO PARTICIPANTS

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Numerous explanations have been put forth for the uses and derivations of tenses. This paper attempts to show that none of these explanations is satisfactory, since they cannot account for many ways in which tenses are used in English and other languages. While this paper does not try to present an adequate theory, it gives evidence that such a theory, at the very least, must be able to incorporate in its underlying structures concepts such as the interrelationship of the actual time of occurrence of events with the involvement of the speaker, hearer, or other participants in these events.[1]

The assignment of tense has traditionally been viewed as involving only one primary factor: the time at which the act described occurred or is expected to occur, relative to the time of utterance (the latter has been identified recently by McCawley, MS, with the time at which the action of the performative abstract highest verb of the sentence is viewed as taking place). There are other, secondary factors; the time of occurrence of other higher verbs, when non-present, may produce changes in the superficial tense of a lower verb by comparison with its 'deep tense' (cf. Huddleston 1969) by what are traditionally known as sequence-of-tenses rules. So, for example, in 1a the verb is present tense because its time of occurrence is viewed as contemporaneous with the time of the action of the abstract performative verb (cf. Ross 1970), but in 1b its tense is past, because the action it describes is viewed as having occurred prior to the time at which the declaring is taking place:

(1) a. Harry is eating his dinner.
b. Harry was eating his dinner.

In sentences 2–3, the sequence-of-tenses rules operate. So, although semantically John's being here is contemporaneous with the act of saying in 2, the underlying present appears superficially as a past tense in agreement with the higher verb *said*; the 'logical' present *is* is not possible in English (of course, other languages have different sequence-of-tenses constraints). In 3, because the leftmost verb (actually, the verb in the lower sentence of the relative structure) is past tense, the verb that follows it superficially must also be past (counter-examples to this general statement will be discussed below):

(2) a. I said that John was here.
b. * I said that John is here.
(3) a. The boy I spoke to had blue eyes.
b. ? The boy I spoke to has blue eyes.

If these were the only facts true of tense behavior in English (as well as in other languages), any of several current theories of the origin and underlying form of tenses, with more or fewer modifications, might be sufficient to describe

[1] This is a revised version of a paper presented at the December 1969 meeting of the Linguistic Society of America.

them. Briefly, these are some of the major proposals regarding the nature of tenses:

(i) Tense is an obligatory expansion of the node Auxiliary, and its leftmost member. (This is the position taken by Chomsky 1965.)

(ii) Tense is an adverb, synonymous with, e.g., *now*, *then*, *at some future time*, etc. (Kiparsky 1968 takes this position.)

(iii) Tense is a verb, obligatory as part of the underlying structure, taking the sentence containing the 'main' verb as its complement; the superficial subject may be the subject of the tense-verb, as well as (obligatorily) the lower verb, or the tense verb may be impersonal. (This position is adopted in print by Huddleston; it had been suggested informally by Ross as early as 1967.)

(iv) Tense is a two-place predicate: the tense-verb itself has a meaning like 'prior to' for past, 'simultaneous with' (or the like) for present, and so on; and the two events are the arguments of that predicate. McCawley combines this position with (ii) and (iii) above, holding that tense is a pronominalization of the time adverb, and that the predicate mentioned takes the 'main' verb as its complement. (It is not clear to me how this complement is related, in McCawley's view, to the other arguments that he claims occur with these verbs. McCawley's suggestion, being the most inclusive, appears to be the best-adapted for dealing with all the facts known about tenses, but it seems insufficiently explicit.)

If tense could be reliably assigned to a verb by recourse to factors that were observable in the superficial structure of a sentence (as has sometimes been thought), then perhaps these theories might, as noted, be elaborated so that one or all might be viable as a description of tense. I should like, however, to discuss some facts that suggest that these interpretations of tense are insufficient to describe—let alone to explain—the phenomena that occur. I have no solution to offer, but merely wish to point out a number of disparate facts that force us to re-examine tense theory and to admit that tenses are even more complex than was thought. I suggest tentatively that, in most or all of these cases, the problems are related.

**1.** 'TRUE' AND 'FALSE' TENSES: WHAT CAN YOU TRUST? In 4, the tense of the verb in small capital letters is not logically that of the time of occurrence of the action in question:

(4) a. The animal you saw WAS a chipmunk: see, there he is running up a tree.

b. That thing rustling in the bushes over there WILL no doubt BE a chipmunk: let's wait till it comes out.

These tenses should be contrasted with the more typical use of past tense to describe something that is no longer true at present, and future to describe something that has not yet occurred, as in the following:

(5) a. The animal you ran over WAS a chipmunk, but it's dead.

b. The animal the sorcerer got hold of WAS a chipmunk, but now it's a badger.

c. The embryo Dr. Snarp is chuckling over in his laboratory WILL no doubt BE a chipmunk, if the cat doesn't get it first.

It is also the case with 'false' pasts and futures, like those of 4, that they may often be replaced by simple presents, with a slight change in meaning—but certainly nowhere near as profound a change as a similar switch would occasion in 5, where ungrammaticality results. The sentences of 6 are grammatical, but not those of 7:

(6) a. The animal you saw IS a chipmunk; this picture in the guidebook proves it.
b. The thing rustling in the bushes IS no doubt a chipmunk: they make noises like that.

(7) a. * The animal you ran over IS a chipmunk, but he's dead now.
b. * The animal the sorcerer got hold of IS a chipmunk, but now he's a badger.
c. * The embryo Dr. Snarp is chuckling over IS no doubt a chipmunk, if the cat doesn't get it first.

There is one more significant difference in the behavior of the sentences in 4 and 5. The 'true' pasts and futures, those of 5, may be replaced by their periphrastic forms, *used to be* and *is going to be*. This is never true of the 'false' types, as in the following:[2]

(8) a. * The animal you saw USED TO BE a chipmunk: see, there he is running up a tree.
b. * That thing rustling in the bushes over there IS no doubt GOING TO BE a chipmunk: let's wait till he comes out.

Compare the following with 'true' tenses:

(9) a. The animal the sorcerer got hold of USED TO BE a chipmunk, but now he's a badger.
b. The embryo Dr. Snarp is chuckling over IS no doubt GOING TO BE a chipmunk, if the cat doesn't get it first.

Thus there are clear syntactic distinctions made by speakers of English between these two types of tense-uses. How are we to characterize this distinction? Under what circumstances can we speak of the 'false' use of a past or future tense? The future, in this sense, has been discussed at length in the literature—for example, by Boyd & Thorne 1969, and most recently by Huddleston, though its use is discussed in most traditional grammars of English. It is noteworthy, as well, that many other languages employ the future in this same way, in statements which refer to situations existing at the time of the utterance—and are therefore not really 'futures', but in which the speaker wishes to express mere probability, rather than certainty. This definition is often acceptable for this use of the future, but not always. Thus consider the following:

(10) a. Those mangos will be three for a dollar.
b. * Those mangos are probably three for a dollar.

Although a storekeeper can use 10a to a customer, he knows perfectly well that the fruit ARE three for a dollar: it would be ridiculous for him to use 10b (which is often suggested as a paraphrase of this future). So there must be a more gen-

[2] As Huddleston has noted, this is true of the future tense.

eral explanation possible for the use of *will*, which perhaps is correlated with the use of the past tense also discussed here.

It seems that we must consider not only the superficially-present elements of the sentence, and the time of utterance, but the point of view of the speaker of the sentence as well, in accounting for tense-uses like these. That is, the choice of tense is based in part on the subjective factor of how the speaker feels himself related to the event. In 4a, perhaps the clearest case, the chipmunk still exists and still is a chipmunk, in the real world; there is moreover no higher or previous verb in the sentence that would cause a change from present to past by sequence-of-tense rules. But in the mind of the speaker, the chipmunk has made his appearance and gone, and is no longer relevant: it is no longer in view, and the speaker is no longer conscious of its existence. Thus, in some cases at least, the realness or vividness of the subject matter of the sentence in the speaker's mind is of greater importance in determining the superficial tense to be assigned to the verb than are such factors as relative (real) time of occurrence. Since the periphrastic *used to* refers only to true past time (action antedating that of the performative verb), it cannot be used. I think the 'future' found in 4b is susceptible to a similar explanation: the identity of the creature is not yet clear in the mind of the speaker, though the fact that something indeed exists at the moment of the utterance is incontrovertible. The speaker of this sentence, aware of the rustling, has nevertheless not connected it with certainty to the existence of a chipmunk: there exists no chipmunk, as far as he is concerned, at the time of the speech act. Therefore he uses the future. This is also true in 10. The actual payment, or exchange of money, is yet to occur, so the reality of the amount is not yet present in the speaker's mind. Obviously, this almost-but-not-quite realness is closely allied with the notion of probability, and in the majority of cases is indistinguishable from it. Therefore it is reasonable that this use of *will* should have been defined this way for so long. Another fact about these periphrastic forms is that, just as they cannot be used for 'false' tense-uses, similarly they cannot be used for past tenses that arise from underlying presents by sequence-of-tenses rules. Therefore, in 11a, if the second verb is contemporaneous with that of the verb of saying, *used to* cannot be substituted for it; hence 11b in this sense is ungrammatical:

(11) a. I said that I was a lexicalist, and proud of it.
b. * I said that I used to be a lexicalist, and proud of it.

Therefore, for my dialect at least, periphrastics like *used to* and *going to* are usable only as replacements for bona fide underlying pasts and futures respectively.

Compare sentences like those of 12, in which the time of occurrence of the second verb actually precedes that of the verb of speaking. In this case, of course, *used to* may substitute for *was*, as in 12b, with no change of meaning:

(12) a. I said that I was a lexicalist, until I saw the light.
b. I said that I used to be a lexicalist, until I saw the light.

**2.** IT'S ALL RELATIVE. Let us return to the point raised in the consideration of 3a–b. In my dialect, at least, the second of these is very odd. This is usually ex-

plained by saying that sequence-of-tense rules must apply under these conditions. But I find both 13a and 13b good—and 13b considerably better than 3b:

(13) a. The boy you spoke to had blue eyes.
b. The boy you spoke to has blue eyes.

It is possible to imagine a situation in which one or the other of these sentences is appropriate, but not both. For example, let us take two possible situations:

SITUATION I:

Speaker 1. When I was with you today, I spoke to a boy, but I don't remember what color eyes he had.

Speaker 2. I remember. The boy you spoke to $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{had}\\ \text{*has}\end{matrix}\right\}$ blue eyes.

SITUATION II:

Speaker 1. I spoke to a boy on the phone today, but I don't know what color eyes he had.

Speaker 2. Well, I'm sure I don't know either.

Speaker 1. Maybe you know him ... his name is Harry Smith.

Speaker 2. Oh, Harry Smith! The boy you spoke to $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{has}\\ \text{?had}\end{matrix}\right\}$ blue eyes.

What is the difference between Situations I and II that causes the sequence-of-tenses rules to work differently? In both, Speaker 2 is speaking of his knowledge of the color of the boy's eyes from the point of view of the time at which he acquired the information that enables him to give Speaker 1 the answer. In Situation I, Speaker 2 acquired the knowledge prior to his conversation with Speaker 1: he has not, at the time of this utterance, been given any new information by Speaker 1 that affects his ability to make his report. But in Situation II, it is new information introduced virtually contemporaneously to Speaker 2's speech act that enables him to identify the boy's eye color, rather than anything that happened previously. So, for Speaker 2, the color of the boy's eyes is a new fact, since not all the necessary knowledge was available to him previously. Hence, he may use the present tense.

Let us consider one more example:

(14) a. What I just stepped on was a kitten.
b. What I just stepped on is a kitten.

In 14a, the speaker may have been aware before he stepped that a kitten was present. Again, he may not: the sequence-of-tenses rules operate in the neutral cases as well as those that unambiguously refer back to past time. But in 14b, the speaker is unaware of the identity of what he has stepped on until he turns around and looks at it, and speaks. Its identity is new information, so the present tense is used. Facts of this sort are probably related to a phenomenon well known in Classical Greek: in indirect discourse, if the verb of communication is past tense, the verb in the embedded sentence is generally changed from indicative (if this is what it would normally be) to optative. But sometimes the indicative is retained under these circumstances: the usual explanation found in grammars is that the indicative is used for great vividness. Sentence 15a is an example of the

normal optative, and 15b of the 'vivid' indicative:

(15) a. *Élexan hóti* PÉMPSEIE *sphâs hò Indôn basileûs* (Xenophon, *Cyropaideia*, 2.4.7). 'They said that the king of the Indians had sent them.'

b. *Diêlthe lógos hóti* DIÔKEI *autoùs Kûros* (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1.4.7). 'A report spread that Cyrus was pursuing them.'

It seems as though the Greek sentences that retain the indicative (like 15b) should be viewed as analogous to English sentences like 13b or 14b. The speaker of the whole sentence views the information contained in the subordinate clauses as new to him. In a sentence like 15b, this is a rhetorical device, since of course Xenophon has not just received any new information. But in using the indicative, he appears to be putting himself in the place of someone to whom the report has spread, rather than remaining the omniscient historian (as he does in 15a). Moreover, the tense of the subordinate verb in 15b is present—although the action of course occurred considerably prior to Xenophon's writing about it (cf. §4, below).

**3.** HAPPENINGS. The verb *happen* may occur in either of two forms, with respect to its tense and the tense of the verb following it:

(16) a. George Washington happened to be an honest man.

b. George Washington happens to have been an honest man.

The existence of these two possibilities is reminiscent of a similar duality with the modals *may* and *can*, where *might* (*could*) *be* and *may* (*can*) *have been* coexist. But the uses of the two variants of *happen* are of particular interest in view of the kinds of facts I have been discussing. The modals do not behave similarly in this regard. Both the sentences of 16 refer to a characteristic of Washington's that was true of him in the past and, since he is now dead, is presumably no longer true of him at the time of utterance. Thus:

(17) a. * George Washington is an honest man.

b. George Washington was an honest man.

ut analogs of 16a do not exist in sentences containing modals:

(18) a. George Washington may have been an honest man.

b. George Washington can't have been an honest man.

c. * George Washington might be an honest man.

d. * George Washington could be an honest man.

With *happen*, both types exist but with different meanings. Ex. 16a would be used to describe how a contemporary of Washington's discovered the fact of Washington's honesty: the entire action takes place in the past, from the point of view of the past and not the present-day speaker. Therefore, a context such as the following is appropriate for 16a:

(19) The Hessians had a plan whereby they would win the battle by bribing all the American officers. They were doing very well: they had gotten to all but the Commander-in-Chief. But, unfortunately for their plans, George Washington happened to be an honest man, so the whole plot fizzled.

In order to use 16b, on the other hand, we must have a conflict of some sort in present time, or time contemporaneous with that of the speech act. Here, *happen* functions as an emphatic: 'I dispute your contention to the contrary: he WAS honest.' Therefore, the tense of *happen* can be said to emanate from the point of view of the speaker of 16b, by contrast with that of 16a. Here, the fact of Washington's honesty, itself related purely to past time, is brought into contention in the present: hence the present tense of *happen*, past of *be*. A suitable environment here is quite different from, and not interchangeable with, that of 16a:

(20) You say your history teacher—that draft dodger—says that the history books are wrong about Washington, eh, sonny? He says Washington never chopped down a cherry tree, and that he lied to Martha about an affair he was having with Lafayette's wife? Well, let me tell you something: Washington happens to have been an honest man, and don't you forget it.

Thus, the two sets of circumstances are the same with respect to the time at which it was true that Washington was honest, relative to the time of utterance and to the tenses of other verbs involved. But the speaker is involved in the second, not in the first.

**4.** A PERFECT MYSTERY AT PRESENT. It is by this time a truism that the perfect tense describes action in the past with 'present relevance'. This has most recently been stated by McCawley and by Huddleston. One unsatisfactory point in all these discussions is the complete absence of a definition of 'present relevance', or a statement as to when something can have it, and when it can't. This will not be remedied here. I want merely to state that 'present relevance' is not a sufficient distinction, because of the existence of sentences like 21a, and the corresponding lack of 21b. If 'present relevance' is a meaningful concept, only 21b, and not 21a, ought to be acceptable:

(21) a. Are you now or have you ever been a lexicalist?
b. * Are you now and have you ever been a lexicalist?

To explain why 21b is bad while 21a is good will require more precise definition of the relationship between present and perfect tenses, and the relation between the perfect tense and the time of utterance.

It has been noted, again by McCawley, that perfects cannot ordinarily be used when their subjects are no longer in existence: this is part of the reason for the 'present relevance' definition of the perfect. But, as McCawley also notes, if the action of the subject as described by the verb in question is one which continues to affect the present, the perfect may be used, as in 22a, but not 22b:

(22) a. Shakespeare has written impressive dramas.
b. * Shakespeare has quarreled with every other playwright in London.

Related to this is an interesting use of the present tense, as in 23a, which is grammatical, while 23b is not:

(23) a. Shakespeare is a renowned playwright.
b. * Shakespeare is a notorious drunkard.

It seems to me, in light of 23, that the sentences of 22 are not to be viewed as manifesting peculiar properties of the perfect tense per se, and that it will probably be fruitless to attempt an explanation of 22 in terms of the 'present relevance' of the perfect tense. Sentences 22 and 23 are analogous: it is the use of the PRESENT tense that is peculiar; and insofar as the perfect shares some of the semantic features of the present, it partakes of this peculiarity.

**5.** THE FUTURE IS JUST AS DARK. Related to these facts, and therefore equally impervious to explanation, are some facts about a form of the future which occurs without the (supposed) marker of futurity, *will*. It has been discussed often in the literature: by Palmer 1965 and by Huddleston for instance. In a work extant at present in manuscript,[3] I have also attempted to define the conditions under which it can occur.

Palmer and Huddleston view the future without *will* as used to describe an action SCHEDULED by the speaker or known by the speaker to be scheduled. Hence, according to Huddleston, it frequently occurs with adverbs of specific future time. (But this might just as likely be true in order to avoid cases of ambiguity with the simple present.) I have suggested that the notion of control by the speaker, or his knowledge of control, is the relevant factor. There are counter-examples to both of these suggestions. Thus, for example, the notion of scheduling is not necessary to ensure *will*-deletion:

(24) Either that alligator goes or I go.

Nor is it sufficient to account for why 25a and 25c are grammatical, but not 25b or 25d, when the notion of scheduling is present in all:

(25) a. It will rain Thursday, because the weatherman predicted it.
b. * It rains Thursday, because the weatherman predicted it.
c. Men will reach Mars in 1976.
d. * Men reach Mars in 1976.

But the notion of control is not sufficient either, unless one can perhaps assume control by the Deity or the forces of nature:

(26) There is a solar eclipse next week.

However, some pairs of *will*-containing vs. *will*-deleted future sentences appear to differ in that only the latter involve control. Compare the following:

(27) a. John will die tomorrow at 9 A.M.
b. John dies tomorrow at 9 A.M.
c. If John eats any more of that fugu fish, he will die.
d. If John eats any more of that fugu fish, he dies.

Sentence 27a might be spoken by John's doctor, who knows John's illness is mortal and knows its normal course, but is helpless to do anything about it. He could not use 27b. But the latter might be used by an executioner, who determines that John is to die: he controls John's destiny. Similarly, the two other sentences differ in that the first is merely a prediction, but the second a threat.

[3] Tentatively titled *Manual for teachers of English as a foreign language*, written for and unavailable from the Language Research Foundation, Cambridge, Mass., but to be published (eventually) by the TEC Co., Tokyo. The material referred to is in Chapter I.

Ex. 27c means, 'If he eats it, it will kill him'—the speaker has nothing to do with it. But 27d means, 'If he eats it, I will kill him.'

A possible source for these futures is in sentences containing *be* (*supposed*) *to*: thus, 'I leave tomorrow' may be equivalent to 'I am to leave tomorrow.' But these are not, I think, true equivalents. The first generally implies both desire and intention to perform the action emanating from the speaker; the second, an externally imposed obligation. Hence 28a is good, 28b bad:

(28) a. I leave tomorrow—no one can stop me.
b. * I am to leave tomorrow—no one can stop me.

We have thus eliminated all of the proposals about the *will*-deleted future that have been made. There is only one thing left to say, which is unfortunately just as unsatisfactory as the others, due to its lack of specificity. That is to say that the *will*-deleted future is used under the same circumstances as the present referring to a past event: when the event has 'present relevance.'[4] This is reasonable, at any rate, in that the morphological present tense figures in both. So, for instance, a sentence like *I leave tomorrow* is used when the event is more vivid to the speaker: he sees the event as already a reality as he speaks. I think *will*-deletion is somewhat more natural in sentences with first-person subjects, or in sentences the actions of which are assumed to affect the speaker directly, and in sentences in which the future time is not too distant. For example, compare:

(29) a. ? The Afghans attack the Basques in 1972.
b. The Afghans attack us in 1972.
c. We attack the Afghans in 1972.
d. ? We attack the Afghans in 2068.

This is by no means a hard-and-fast rule, but as even a general tendency it appears to encourage optimism about a theory connecting *will*-deletion with the uses of present and perfect discussed in §4.

**6.** THINGS ARE TOUGH ALL OVER. I should like now to devote a little space to a comparison of certain facts of English with those of one or two other languages. Often different languages exhibit oddities of tense-use that are far from universal, and must be learned, usually with difficulty, by the non-native speaker. Since the meanings of these sentences are always translatable into a language in which the peculiarity doesn't exist, given the opportunity to extend and paraphrase, it is reasonable to suppose the oddities in question are merely superficial, and that all languages employ similar underlying tenses to express similar time-relationships. But different languages make different uses, more or less, of the points of view of speaker and hearer. Let us examine a few relatively clear cases.

**6.1.** HISTORICAL PRESENTS: LATIN AND ENGLISH. One of the difficulties the neophyte Latinist encounters is the tendency of many writers of Latin to switch into the present tense to describe obviously past actions. This is said to lend vividness: it implies the involvement of the narrator in the action. The use of the present tense in 30 indicates that Cicero views the actions described as contemporaneous with his speech—but only for rhetorical effect; in the real world, the actions have already been completed.

[4] This has also been suggested recently by Fillmore (oral communication, February 1970).

(30) *Affertur nuntius Syracusas; curritur ad praetorium; Cleomenes in publico esse non audet; includit se domi* (Cic., *Verr.*, v, 92). 'The news is brought to Syracuse; they run to headquarters; Cleomenes does not venture to be in public; he shuts himself up at home.'

It is of course possible to translate this passage using present tenses, as I have done for the sake of clarity. But doing so here, and in many other passages even more strikingly, produces a highly artificial and un-English effect: we cannot use historical presents as freely as they were used by writers of Latin. The only way to look at this discrepancy, I think, is to say that speakers of Latin were freer, in these instances, to incorporate their own points of view into descriptions of past actions.

**6.2.** EPISTOLARY TENSES. Another odd Latin tense-use occurs only in letters, and only optionally there. In describing actions or thoughts contemporaneous with his act of letter-writing (essentially, that of the performative verb), the writer of Latin may use a past tense. To describe an act performed prior to the writing of the letter, he may use a pluperfect, where a simple past would be logical. The following is an example:

(31) *Neque tamen, haec cum scribebam, eram nescius quantis oneribus premere* (Cic., *Fam.*, v, 12, 2). 'Nor while I write this am I ignorant under what burdens you are weighed down.'

In this instance, a literal translation using past tenses to translate the imperfect *scribebam* 'wrote' and *eram* 'was' would be ludicrous: English does not possess this option at all. In Latin, the point of view of the speaker may be ignored, as may the point of view of the real world, which is identical with that of the speaker. Rather, the point of view of the hearer (or rather, the reader) is relevant, since actions contemporaneous with the letter-writing will be a part of the past by the time the reader sees the letter. It is not clear how these facts are to be incorporated into a grammar; but it seems that any theory that can handle the foregoing cases should be able to handle this one automatically, and any that cannot handle the others cannot deal with this.

**6.3.** GNOMIC AORISTS, GNOMIC PRESENTS, GNOMIC PERFECTS, and GNOMIC FUTURES: WHY? In both Greek and English, proverbial expressions are frequently encountered. In both these languages, they may occur in a wide variety of tenses: future, present (generic), preterite, and perfect. What is odd about this is that, whatever tense they occur in, they refer invariably to the same span of time: all time. Thus, we have examples from Greek in all four:

(32) a. *Anèr epieikès huiòn apolésās rhâsta oíseɪ tôn állōn* (Plato, *Republic*, 603e). 'A reasonable man, if he loses a son, will bear it more easily than other men.' [future]

b. *Áɢeɪ dè pròs phôs tèn alētheian khrónos* (Menander, *Sententiae*, 11). 'Time brings the truth to light.' [present]

c. *Pathôn dé te nḗpios ḗɢnō* (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 218). 'A fool learns by experience.' [aorist]

d. *Hè ataxía pollòus ēdē* APOLÓLEKEN (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 3.1.38). 'Lack of discipline has already been the ruin of many.' [perfect]

In English, I have found examples corresponding to all but the fourth, the perfect tense. (I think this gap reflects merely an oversight on my part: it seems perfectly within the spirit of the English language and its tense-system for proverbial expressions to be used in the perfect tense.) The following sentences are examples:

(33) a. Boys will be boys.
b. A stitch in time saves nine.
c. The course of true love never did run smooth.

Why does this multiplicity of tenses occur in both languages? To attribute it to idiomatic peculiarities in both, separately, is unnatural; to claim borrowing from Greek to English is ridiculous, particularly since Latin does not exhibit all these possibilities. Rather, there must be rules within each language, independently justifiable in each, to account for all these tense-uses. It seems that these facts are to be explained much as the others were, however that is. With expressions true for all time, one has a choice of the moment from which one wants to view the action: one may look at it from the viewpoint of the cases that were already authenticated in the past; or the situation viewed from the present, as ongoing and continuing; or as a continuation of these. Or one might take the observed instances from past and present, and present a point of view about future events based on it, as a prediction or a deduction, but not a certainty. All these choices are plausible; one's choice in a particular instance depends purely on one's idiosyncratic view—the only difference from the types discussed earlier being the greater choice found here. Some languages may have more possibilities; some may for one reason or another restrict the permissible points of view. Greek presents an extremely unrestricted situation, though one might conceive of freer ones.

Where does this leave us? I have not attempted to present anything like a complete or satisfactory explanation for any of these facts. My aim was rather this: to discuss examples showing that none of the theories of tense-use and derivation available at present is capable of accounting for a significant and large body of data, which any adequate theory will have to deal with. Such a theory will have to take cognizance of elements that some have considered extra-linguistic: assumptions made by speakers concerning the relationship between the actual time of the speech-act and that of an event in the physical universe, and the perception by the speaker of the temporal gap between event and speech. The choices of tense allowed a speaker—as reflected by the possible superficial sentences that are found—may differ from language to language, or even from speaker to speaker; but the distinctions of form and meaning that are made are very much a part of our linguistic knowledge, and must be incorporated into any theory of linguistics that aims at being more than merely descriptive.

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